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“Immoral Lifestyles and Repentance in Selected
Short Stories by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu”

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Elisabeth Königshofer BA

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Declaration of Authenticity

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Elisabeth Königshofer

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1 Introduction

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness. According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. (Ps. 51.1-5)

In Christianity, the Bible teaches that those who believe have to repent for the Original Sin committed by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. If one does repent, God will absolve all sins and salvation is ensured for the Christian soul. Therefore it is essential to stick to God's Commandments and to keep away from sin and vice. The borders of acceptable behaviour are guarded by morality.

Moral conceptions are one of the key features of every society. These codes determine what is considered right and what is considered wrong. Any acts that transgress the borders of morality can pose a threat to the stability of any social order and thus have to be punished and suppressed. Every era and all societies have adapted moral codes that would suit their needs to ensure the stability and conformity of their members. Literary production tends to reflect the norms and irregularities of the time, place and society that it has emerged from. Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, an Irish writer of Anglo-Irish descent, whose works have often been considered as distinctively English, was born in 1814 and died in 1873. During his lifetime he witnessed all the changes and disruptions of the Victorian period in Ireland, ranging from the Tithe Wars to the emerging consequences of the Industrial Revolution. As an author, his vast oeuvre ranges from novels and short fiction to poems and newspaper articles, making him a highly productive writer. Nevertheless, he has been almost forgotten until very recent times in the twentieth century.

Le Fanu's time, the period of Queen Victoria's reign, has been renowned for its strict moral ideas. For example, the angel in the house, like she was described by Coventry Patmore, had become the symbol of purity, the Victorian woman's virtue was immune against any vice. At the same time, the era saw massive changes that became increasingly challenging to the established order. Different social and religious groups and the advanced pace of life due to industrialisation called for rigid morals in order to keep people in their place. In literature, the Gothic novel had emerged at the beginning

of the nineteenth century, providing an outlet to cope with the vast changes. A conscious exploration of the unknown and probably dangerous Other and “Gothicism’s obsession with guilt” (Nelly 219) are part of the first chapter of this thesis which tries to provide a theoretical background for the subsequent analysis of ten short stories by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu.

A thesis on fundamental moral concepts like sin, immorality and repentance must take a quick glance at the author’s personal background which might have influenced his works in terms of moral conservatism. Next to a short biography, the theoretical chapter gives information on the Victorian and Irish background of Le Fanu’s short fiction as well as an overview of Gothic literature from Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* to the emergence of the sensational novel. Furthermore, a background on the Christian understanding of immorality must be provided in order to understand why the immoral characters and their sinful actions in Le Fanu’s fiction are subject to punishment. Additionally, a short introduction to Emanuel Swedenborg follows, since his religious teachings had a strong influence on Sheridan Le Fanu’s writing. Moreover, motifs of Irish folklore, which formed a part of Le Fanu’s heritage and interest, have to be considered. The author successfully integrated the Celtic belief in fairies into the world of his stories.

After the theoretical part, ten short stories by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu will be analysed. These stories cover a timespan of more than thirty years of literary production. They have been chosen from the vast corpus of Le Fanu’s works in order to show that he has maintained central motifs throughout the years. Furthermore, these stories show that his attitude towards immorality, sin and repentance has not significantly changed in more than thirty years, retaining his staunch moral conservatism. A plot synopsis of each short story can be found in the appendix for readers who are not familiar with the texts under discussion.

The analysis focuses on a variety of motifs which are relevant to varying degrees in the ten short stories selected. The first section of this practical part is concerned with the invasion of evil into the world of Le Fanu’s fiction. Very often, the main characters are not as good and nice as they pretend to be. Their moral and pious mask is prone to fall as soon as evil invades. This first unspecified evil tries to harm the sinner in order to take revenge or to reform his or her lifestyle. Whatever their intentions, the

consequences for the immoral person are most often lethal. Revenants, abductors or hellish visions haunt those who must atone for the sins which they have committed.

The second part of the practical analysis turns to the immorality of the characters and their aims to repent for any act of transgression against the Ten Commandments of the Christian God and how they seek forgiveness for their sinful behaviour and conduct. Various attempts of repentance and the striving for absolution are discussed with regard to Christian rites and sacraments.

The evil that invades Le Fanu's fiction does so from within and without. It is a strong power that could only be conquered by a constant safeguarding of the soul and an imperturbable trust in God. Unfortunately, Le Fanu's God does not forgive easily. More often, a once committed transgression forfeits the sinner's path to salvation.

2 A Short Biography of the Author

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu was born as the son of a Protestant priest on the 28th of August 1814 in Dublin, Ireland.¹ Despite their French-Huguenot origin, his family had long been naturalised in Ireland² and become part of the Protestant ascendancy. At the age of twelve his family moved from Phoenix Park in Dublin to the rural Catholic countryside of County Limerick, where the Le Fanu family experienced overt hostility because they were members of the Church of Ireland.³ During Joseph's teenage years, Ireland witnessed the Catholic Emancipation, the Tithe Wars and the rise of Daniel O'Connell: events, which all affected the Protestant Anglo-Irish community. Before Joseph and his younger brother William started their college years at Trinity College Dublin, their father and a tutor educated the boys. Their parish was small and the children scarcely found company to keep because their belief and social status excluded them from everyday life.⁴ His background, experiences and education led to a strictly conservative attitude, which became obvious during his studies at Trinity College.

Because of the so-called country-list system, the Le Fanu family did not have to support their sons in Dublin but the children only returned to college for examination.⁵ Nevertheless, Joseph became deeply involved with the Historical Society – who also named Edmund Burke as a member back in the 1700s – and was able to practice his interest in debate and he found similar-minded, conservative students:

I intend speaking on every occasion at the Historical Society, of course in a favourably conservative strain, and it is no small consolation to me to think that while I am abusing the *Pisantry* [sic!] in Dublin city, my brother may be shooting them in the country. (qut. Le Fanu in McCormack *Victorian Ireland* 49-50).

Clearly, Joseph was not in favour of the developments of the Catholic Emancipation movement.

Le Fanu started his writing career during his legal training as a writer for the *Protestant Guardian*. He was introduced to the editor of the monthly Tory magazine *Dublin*

¹ Cf. McCormack *Victorian Ireland* 1.

² Cf. Punter 231.

³ Cf. Achilles 3, Moynahan 112.

⁴ Cf. McCormack *Victorian Ireland* 23-35.

⁵ Cf. McCormack *Victorian Ireland* 41-42.

University Magazine (D.U.M.) in 1837 and published his first story, one of *The Purcell Papers*, *The Ghost and the Bonesetter*, in 1838.⁶

While buying himself into various conservative papers, he married Susanna Bennett in 1844. Her death in 1858 was a severe shock for Le Fanu and paralysed his literary production of essays in the *D.U.M.*, of which he became owner, editor and chief contributor from 1861 to 1869. During this time he was able to publish a considerable amount of his stories in his own magazine. His literary production consists of two phases: The first phase lasted from 1838 to 1851, the second and more productive one from 1861 to 1873.⁷ After he had sold the *D.U.M.*, Sheridan Le Fanu's became more reclusive. During the introduction of his two daughters into the appropriate circles of Dublin society, he came to be known as the "the invisible prince" (McCormack 197-203).

Richard Bentley, a renowned publisher, agreed to publish three of Le Fanu's novels – one of them being *Uncle Silas* – which were formerly released as a series in the *D.U.M.* It was this newly formed partnership with Bentley that caused Le Fanu to transport his formerly Ireland-based fiction to an English setting: an English environment should supposedly increase the profit of the publisher and the audience for Le Fanu's work.⁸ Sheridan Le Fanu published a large amount of his later work, such as *The Rose and the Key* in Charles Dickens's *All the Year Round*. Dickens had a particular liking for the publication of supernatural stories.⁹

Le Fanu died in January 1873 after an attack of bronchitis. His four children buried him in his wife's tomb.¹⁰ Some of his work, such as the *In a Glass Darkly* collection was published posthumously.

In his fiction conservative strands and various spiritual influences are at work: although he was closely linked to the Church of Ireland through his father, he felt some connection to Irish Catholicism due to his Huguenot and thus suppressed ancestral background. Both groups were victims of persecution and confiscation. Nevertheless, his Irish nationalism, which he had inherited from his mother,¹¹ found an outlet in the

⁶ Cf. McCormack 55.

⁷ Cf. Achilles 5-7.

⁸ Cf. Murphy 97.

⁹ Cf. Punter 216.

¹⁰ Cf. McCormack 270.

¹¹ Cf. Moynahan 113.

Historical Society and his publishing activities. Furthermore, his sensational writing was influenced by the doctrines of Emanuel Swedenborg. Swedenborg's influence is covertly and overtly present in much of his fiction, for example, in *Uncle Silas*¹² and *Green Tea*.

¹² Cf. Punter 236.

3 Gothic

3.1 From Gothic Origins to Victorian Gothic

The rise and popularity of Gothic literature is linked to the rise of the novel as the dominant literary form in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The novel found a new readership in the ascending middle-class. While the taste of the eighteenth century was dominated by the sentimental novel, which focused on a minute documentation of emotions and the exaggeration of feelings, the development of so-called “graveyard poetry” was one of the cornerstones of the developing Gothic fiction.¹³ Next to entertainment, the conveying of contemporary moral standards was a principal purpose of the textual production of the eighteenth century.¹⁴

The aesthetics of Edmund Burke’s theory of the sublime which forced modes of terror into the centre of attention,¹⁵ John Dennis’s principle of fear, and the emphasis on repressed passion and melancholia, first culminating in Pope’s *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717),¹⁶ served as the foundation to the earliest Gothic works. These early works of Gothic fiction include Tobias Smollett’s *The Adventures of Ferdinand, Count Fathom* (1753) and Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), which is widely claimed to be the first real work of Gothic fiction. The author of this highly successful novel labelled it a “Gothick story” in the preface to the second edition,¹⁷ although the contemporary reading public did not explicitly distinguish between Gothic and Romantic fiction.¹⁸ *The Castle of Otranto* featured already all elements that are typical of Gothic literature: the action is centred on a dark secret from the past, a malicious aristocrat, Manfred, brings ruin to those around him in the sublime setting of a remote country and the ruins of a formerly magnificent medieval castle. This focus on the past was a distinctive feature that added the Gothic mode to the exaggerated description of emotion, which works in the tradition of Ann Radcliffe shared with the earlier sentimental novel.¹⁹ In this way, most stories were “set in a Catholic Mediterranean country – Italy, Spain, or Provençal France – at a medieval, or at least a pre-Enlightenment remove of time.” (Moynahan 109)

¹³ Cf. Punter 28-33.

¹⁴ Cf. Punter 22-25.

¹⁵ Cf. Trott 485.

¹⁶ Cf. Trott 484.

¹⁷ Cf. Sage *Gothick Novel* 9.

¹⁸ Cf. Gamer 3.

¹⁹ Cf. Punter 29, 30.

It is not surprising that Gothic emerged during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, an age that witnessed the emergence of reason and rationality as its highest doctrines. This period was dominated by an Augustan mode of thinking which can be found in the works of Pope, Fielding and Johnson:

The Augustans saw their period of national history as [...] a silver age: that is, it seemed poised between golden achievements in the past and possible future collapse in to a barbarian age of bronze. In Augustan thinking, the barbarians are forever at the gates; the writer's role is to maintain the defensive fires of culture. In this sense, Augustanism was perforce conservative; reason was again the dominant mental faculty, and was the main barricade against invasion and the death of civilization. [...] The Augustan critical attitude despised spontaneity and wildness and argued instead for a controlled, reasonable poetry marked by balance and closed structure. The argument is not that poetry has nothing to do with emotion or passion, but that these must accept the dominion of reason; (Punter, 31, 32)

Gothic fiction provided an outlet for uncontrolled and inexplicable ferocity, passion and violence which was oppressed in earlier fiction that focused on exaggerated composure and rationality. Thus, it rejected Wordsworth's doctrine of literature's essential purpose to educate the reader.²⁰ It also replaced former closed-structured plots by open structures based on specific events and more dynamic and pluralistic forms that mingled narratives genres such as letters, didactic tales and poems²¹ and focused on the evocation of the reader's suspense.²²

The concern of Gothic fiction with taboo-topics such as murder, betrayal and incest proclaims an overt antagonism against the realism of earlier fiction, dominated by reason. Difficulties in naming and expressing the taboo as well as solving problems resemble a symptomatic Freudian struggle of language. In this way, the texts are simultaneously marked as Gothic and as expressions of the suppressed aspects of the era.²³ The attempt to control the world under the guise of rationality and reason caused an extremely controlled and restricted society in which suppressed fears became the driving force behind the Gothic. It turned into a way of coping with this fear, terror and angst, which were earlier conquered by religious faith²⁴:

[There is] a contradiction between "official culture" and actual taste. On the official side, the eighteenth century was the great era of rationalism and

²⁰ Cf. Punter 9.

²¹ Cf. Gamer 4.

²² Cf. Punter 1.

²³ Cf. Punter 20.

²⁴ Cf. Punter 21, 27.

Enlightenment. Associated principally with the French thinkers Diderot and Voltaire, but also in different ways affecting English thinkers from David Hume to William Godwin, the Enlightenment saw itself as the bearer of a radically progressive philosophy. [...] The human reason was the only guide to truth; if there was a God, his only function had been to create the universe, and he had no further role to play. (Punter 26)

Therefore, a symbolic language was created to deal with immorality, ruined homes, broken family lines, supernatural appearances and unknown aggressors who reflected the invading of the inexplicable. In literature, the fear of unknown and hidden taboos created a wild, demonic Other which could not be controlled by Puritan ethics and Calvinist/Protestant theology anymore.²⁵

Works of the first Gothic period such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), C. R. Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) and Ann Radcliffe's novels are just a few popular milestones which present their plots as historically and geographically distant and avoid direct references to contemporary difficulties, although social and political discrepancies play a major role in the literature.²⁶ The vast majority of this work was written by members of the middle-class for a readership from the same background, engaging in a well-established bourgeois urban lifestyle that was well-distanced from the novel's apparent setting. In the Victorian period not only early Gothic writing but also sensational fiction and city novels showed a strong exchange between English and Irish authors.²⁷ In Britain, after the 1820s, Gothic literature developed into various directions and genre boundaries were wilfully blurred by authors such as Wilkie Collins or Bulwer Lytton.²⁸

3.2 The Sensational Novel

The sensational novel or sensation fiction saw its peak in the 1860s, including works such as Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* or M. E. Braddon's *The Moonstone*. Sensation in this label refers for one to extraordinary events in the stories, set in a middle-class milieu. These include Gothic taboo topics such as murder but in comparison to the early Gothic setting, the assault is found close to home.²⁹ "Sensation fiction often relocates the uncanny into recognizable modern, urban settings." (Murphy 110).

²⁵ Cf. Moynahan 110, 111.

²⁶ Cf. Punter 59-62.

²⁷ Cf. Murphy 93.

²⁸ Cf. Punter 230-231.

²⁹ Cf. Murphy 95.

Secondly, sensation refers to the evocation of suspense and the tickled nerves of the reader who is always kept on the verge of discovering the truth behind supernatural or seemingly supernatural events.³⁰ Information gaps between different characters within a piece of fiction contribute to the creation of suspense.

3.3 Irish Gothic

Dublin, political and cultural capital of the green isle, was the centre of literary production in Ireland throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. Starting with C. R. Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, followed by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu and succeeded by Oscar Wilde, Bram Stoker and Elizabeth Bowen, the Irish established themselves as masters of Gothic writing in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Many of them were representatives of a Protestant Gothic, born from a middle-class Anglo-Irish Protestant background, which presented a difficult starting point, bridging loyalty between English ascendancy and Irish birth.³¹

Protestantism owed its emergence to forces which stopped believing in the medieval traditions, turning away from superstitions and giving way to the Enlightenment:

By suggesting Sublime Catholic nature as the solution to the negative theology of ultra-Anglican rationalism, Burke's theories surfaced at the same time [as a] more tolerant approach to Catholicism was emerging among Anglicans in Ireland in the political and cultural zone [...] A rapprochement with both Irishness and Catholicism can be discerned in Anglican writing in this period. (Killeen *Gothic Ireland* 132)

Irish Gothic in this period then refers mainly to the Protestant Anglo-Irish origin of the authors because finding the Irish in Irish fiction of the nineteenth century is considerably difficult. Obvious Irish topics and settings were often dismissed because they would have diminished the author's success. "Ireland, as far as Britain was concerned, was a problematic country and the Irish immigrants who crowded the poorer parts of large British cities, especially after the famine, were feared and disliked." (Murphy 112) Le Fanu abandoned Irish topics when his work should be published on the bigger British market. Simultaneously the above mentioned Irish immigrants and problems with Ireland within the British realm became part of the literary production. The Irish became the Gothic Other, they became stereotyped objects that invoked pictures of savagery, fear, terror, cunningness and general – mostly Catholic

³⁰ Cf. Murphy 95.

³¹ Cf. Killeen *Gothic Literature* 111.

superstitious – evil. This savage picture of the Irish was mainly proclaimed by English authors.³² The Other was also physically different from the English; the Irish were described as ape-like, primitive creatures.³³

In comparison to this, the Irish landscape at the edge of the British Empire was perceived as an ideal Gothic setting of the first wave. It was full of abandoned ruins, vast landscapes and remote villages full of Catholic and Celtic lifestyle which presented a stark contrast to urban, modern Britain.³⁴

3.4 Le Fanu's Fiction

Although Irish by birth, Le Fanu was often considered a writer of British sensational fiction because of the frequent use of British Victorian background in his stories.³⁵ Nevertheless, Irish Gothic found one of its key figures in Sheridan Le Fanu.³⁶ In Britain, after the 1820s, Gothic literature developed into various directions. However, despite the authors' will to experiment, "the year 1864 saw the publication of a novel which could be regarded as the first properly Gothic masterpiece in England since *Melmoth the Wanderer*, Sheridan Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas*." (Punter 230-231) Maturin, Le Fanu's precursor, was also Irish and of Huguenot descent, making both authors part of the Protestant Irish Gothic. According to Sage, Le Fanu's fiction was the representation of an "attenuated, hyphenated existence of a dying Protestant Ascendancy caste." (*Rhetoric of Darkness* 1) His works were published halfway in between the first wave of Gothic and the Gothic revival of Yeats and Stoker, mingling the earlier rural approach to Gothic with a more sensational urban terror. In his later work, Le Fanu turns to well-established motifs of Gothic writing, such as the setting of an asylum in *Wylder's Hand* and scientific horror in *Checkmate*.³⁷ His "Gothic masterpiece" *Uncle Silas* includes classic elements such as the damsel in distress, the ruined house, a remote setting and a familiar and unavoidable persecutor. His work is considered a final instance of "traditional accounts of nineteenth-century Irish fiction." (Murphy 93)

According to James H. Murphy, it would be wrong to label Le Fanu exclusively as an author of Gothic fiction. His writing was never labelled Gothic during his own time, but

³² Cf. Murphy 114.

³³ Cf. qut. Curtis in Nally 220.

³⁴ Cf. Moynahan 111.

³⁵ Cf. Murphy 100.

³⁶ Cf. Killeen *Gothic Literature* 111.

³⁷ Cf. Punter 231.

his works can be divided into three sections: the historic novel, the sensational novel and stories about the supernatural.³⁸ Nevertheless, while Le Fanu claims that his romantic writing was highly influenced by Walter Scott, his violence resembles Ainsworth, Reynolds and Radcliffe – acclaimed representatives of the Gothic genre – in most of his work. His style prompted a comparison to Wilkie Collins,³⁹ but while Collins is today well known as a Victorian writer, Le Fanu had been denied this fame.⁴⁰

David Punter tries to provide an explanation why Le Fanu's fiction failed to reach a large audience – claiming that it was already too focused on psychological modes:

[...] in LeFanu's work, precisely *because* it was being bypassed by sensationalism, the Gothic is pared down to psychological essentials. There is very little historical or political interest in his supernatural novels, for they are consciously and almost resignedly archaic: they are exercises on a pre-established theme or a set of themes, and for this very reason LeFanu is able to use his skill of refinement, on taking up Gothic settings, characters, themes and moulding them into those exquisite shapes which can result when wider kinds of literary purpose have temporarily atrophied. (237)

In terms of the quality of Sheridan Le Fanu's work, opinions strongly differ: David Punter points out that his best works were written later in life when he "had become a creature of odd and irregular habits, living a largely nocturnal and reclusive life" (Punter 232), while others such as Victor Sage believe that his abilities have diminished in his final production, although his personal retreat from social and political life seems to have enhanced the Gothic aspect in his work. In these texts, the female perspective and narrator moves into focus.⁴¹

The psychological workings in his stories are central and essential to the Gothic twist in his writing. They are mixed with the Chinese Box Effect and layering of Gothic stories as well as backdating and thus providing a (fictional) historical context to his tales:

Le Fanu's typical plot is one in which the protagonist, whether deliberately or otherwise, opens his mind in such a way as to become subject to haunting by a figure which is unmistakably part of his own self. These figures are truly imaginative, from the malignant monkey in "Green Tea" to the vision of vengeance seen in "Mr Justice Harbottle", and Le Fanu also has a light and memorable touch in drawing more conventional phantoms. (Punter 232)

³⁸ Cf. Murphy 94.

³⁹ Cf. Punter 231, 232.

⁴⁰ Cf. Sage *Rhetoric of Darkness* 2.

⁴¹ Cf. Sage *Rhetoric of Darkness* 2-6.

Punter's argument that the haunting figures in Le Fanu are part of the self of the haunted is reasonable, but his notion of them being mere products of the imagination is questionable because their effect on the haunted is lethal for their real self. The blurring of the boundaries of reality is essential to Le Fanu's Gothic. Because of his limited range of themes and plots, he is able to refocus on these in a different angle in his novels, short stories and novellas, exploring the boundaries of his genre.⁴²

In terms of the thematic complexity of the nature of sin and repentance, Sage stresses that in the author's earlier works "the notion of testimony is framed as an antiquarian and anthropological necessity" (Sage *Rhetoric of Darkness* 6), which creates various layers of truth not only out of the Chinese Box Effect but also through language itself, parodying a divine discourse in search for irrevocable truth.⁴³ Again, the Gothic instability obstructs these unalterable notions and opens grounds for addressing taboo issues.

Major works like *Uncle Silas* show that "LeFanu also re-uses the old Gothic theme of religious fanaticism, both in connexion with Silas, where it is both in some sense genuine and also a mask for conspiracy and evil, and in Maud's father, in whom is portrayed a tendency towards Swedenborgianism modelled on LeFanu's own life" (Punter 236). Le Fanu's interest in spirituality and the mystical writings of Emanuel Swedenborg⁴⁴ influences his focus on the sensational tradition and inner modes of horror. In his works, he bridges the gap between the external threat of the first Gothic wave and the internal, psychological terror of the second wave at the end of the nineteenth century.⁴⁵

The ghosts in his fiction present one possible outlet for this psychological terror⁴⁶ and guilty memories. These demons from the past can then also be found in the discrepancies between psychological possession and the loss of political, social and financial status:

[T]here is a significant interplay [...] between the idea of possession, by apparent demons or ghosts, and the idea of dispossession, as in the loss of property, power, status. [Le Fanu converges] demonic and supernatural "possession" and the age-old Irish tragedy – never to be eluded by Anglo-Irish

⁴² Cf. Punter 231.

⁴³ Cf. qut. Gordon in Sage *Rhetoric of Darkness* 7.

⁴⁴ Cf. Murphy 95.

⁴⁵ Cf. Murphy 93.

⁴⁶ Cf. Imhof 56.

persons of tender conscience – of appropriation and dispossession. [His fiction is] full of hauntings: his special gift and effect, however, is often to make it appear that the living are being haunted by the living, by material creatures commanding fell physical force and an intense mental desire to exact revenge and do mischief far beyond the powers of the insubstantial dead. (Moynahan 127, 128)

In Le Fanu's writing the feared intruder is often described as physically different, referring to a colonial Other, which the Irish had become to many writers of the British Empire. This Other is signified by its physical features. Descriptions of the body as distinctively different were part of "the Victorian's faith in physiognomy" (qut. Curtis in Nally 220). Many of Le Fanu's characters are described as obviously foreign or at least as exotic in the chosen setting.

3.5 The Other and Moral Taboo

"Gothic texts are not good in moral, aesthetic or social terms. Their concern is with vice: protagonists are selfish and evil; adventures involve decadence or crime. [...] The definition of Enlightenment and reason, it seems, requires carefully constructed antithesis, the obscurity of figures of feudal darkness and barbarism providing the negative against which it can assume positive value." (Botting 2, 3) By juxtaposing reason and morality⁴⁷ the monstrous Other becomes one of the main features which is always there but only subconsciously perceived. It provokes a duality of the self, which can be the reflection of an inner, subconscious process. The proximity of the Other and thus of the taboo causes its horror.⁴⁸

If we now consider the apparitions in Le Fanu's fiction as

[r]eturns of the past, in an opposing direction, involve the very characteristics – superstition, tyranny, violence – [they are] supposedly banished by the light of reason. In more psychological renderings, ghostly recurrences manifest an unease and instability in the imagined unity of self, home or society, hauntings that suggest loss or guilt or threat. Generations are subject to the crossing of temporal lines: an ancestor's crime threatens a family's status; immature desires upset social mores; an old misdeed tarnishes paternal respectability. In seeing one time and its values cross into another, both periods are disturbed. (Botting 3)

As we will see, the lack of morality is a prevalent feature in Le Fanu's fiction. This immorality becomes a taboo that finds its outlet in a monstrous, ghostly, demonic manifestation. This feature again bridges the first and the revived Gothic in Le Fanu:

⁴⁷ Cf. Botting 3.

⁴⁸ Cf. Nally 218.

“Morality and monstrosity were two of the hallmarks of eighteenth-century aesthetic judgement. The lack of the former and the abundance of the latter, in the eyes of the reviewer for *The British Critic* (1796), distinguished M. G. Lewis’ *The Monk* as a particularly deserving object of critical vitriol.” (Botting 20) Likewise, as they stem from the same tradition, Le Fanu explores the boundaries of morality and allows the monstrosity of his characters dominate their cursed lives. In line with later Gothic fiction, its proximity causes true terror.

4 The Victorian Age

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu worked as an author during the long reign of Queen Victoria, whose name became a notorious labelling for a period in history which lasted, according to J. B. Schneewind, from approximately 1828 to 1906 (vii), although the queen ascended the throne only in 1837. Victoria's reign probably saw the most influential changes in human history of the last centuries: the Industrial Revolution,⁴⁹ the transgression from rural to urban life and the establishment of reason and science. Ireland, which was then still the cultural edge of the British Empire on the British Isles, experienced a number of significant changes during the first half of the nineteenth century, thus at the beginning of Victoria's reign.

4.1 Ireland

Ireland had been a Christian country since the settlement of Palladius and Patrick in the 5th century A.D. From then on, the Christian missionaries had skilfully incorporated earlier Celtic belief into their religion's rituals and faith so that more than 800 monasteries existed in Ireland at the end of the sixth century.⁵⁰ The island remained a predominantly Catholic country after the reformation and the establishing of the Church of England (1534) and the Church of Ireland (1536) under King Henry VIII. Queen Elizabeth I extended the Reformation and granted tenure to fellow-Anglicans but beyond the pale she had little success although Catholic monasteries were dissolved or suppressed. Also, the Catholics were discriminated and had to pay tithe like the Protestant dissenter groups such as the Huguenots and the Quakers in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Discrimination ended in 1869, when the Church of Ireland was established.⁵¹ Before its establishment, Catholic Emancipation and the Tithe Wars had a massive impact on Ireland's religious landscape. The uproar of the suppressed Catholic majority was a considerable threat to the Anglo-Irish, Protestant minority. Le Fanu's family had to experience hostility themselves when Joseph's father became a parish priest in County Limerick. Religious and economic class conflicts dominated nineteenth-century Ireland.

Furthermore, the economic crisis caused many Irish to leave their home-counties and lethal threats such as An Gorta Mór, the Great Hunger, which was caused by the potato

⁴⁹ Cf. Killeen *Gothic Literature* 11.

⁵⁰ Cf. Edwards 105-107.

⁵¹ Cf. Edwards 111-115.

blight in the years 1844 to 1846 in which more than 1.5 million people died and forced about a million people to leave the country.⁵² Also, “[...] the Irishman-as-ape was a familiar image to the English public, through the pages of *Punch* magazine.”(Killeen *Gothic Literature* 113) Thus the Irish became a caricature of the less educated, less dutiful, more savage countrymen and a threat to the establishment, which was “undermined from within by the forces of religious crisis and social and moral uncertainty, and from without by the resurgent masculinity of the regional male.” (Killeen *Gothic Literature* 114) In various works of fiction the Irish became the stereotypical Other, a serious threat to the establishment.

4.2 The Age of Reason and Victorian Morality

Boyd Hilton claims that “it is impossible to define Victorian morality or Victorian values with any precision, if only because the Queen’s reign was an extremely long one.” (224) This is doubtlessly true and the interplay of the rise of rationality, newly established natural sciences and the church doctrines add to the complexity of the subject. Nevertheless, George Levine notes that Victorian behaviour and production is essentially determined by the principle of “Goodness is truth, truth goodness. [...] Their literature, their philosophy, and their social criticism is all marked by the struggle to get it right because getting it right seemed a condition for ethics itself.” (vii) This wish to decide objectively and justly caused massive struggles of choosing between religion and science. Science, naturalists and atheists were a severe threat to the Victorians’ world view because “for most Victorians religion was the sanction for morality; take religion away and they were threatened by moral anarchy and despair.” (Levine vii) Thus, one of the essential keys to the understanding of the morality and ethics of the nineteenth century is the advent and exploration of reason and rationality, freed from religious superstition and faith.

4.2.1 Reason, Science and Religion

Philosophy tried to merge religion and science in order not to see them as opposing poles. Especially the contested issues of morality proved problematic. Emmanuel Kant wondered if human beings still possessed their free will or if they were just part of a big mechanic process of cause and effect which science seemed to convey. Kant developed a dualism which argued that reason is needed to understand this effect and reason is the

⁵² Cf. McNamara <http://history1800s.about.com/od/immigration/a/famine01.htm>.

guide of our will, which is free.⁵³ In this way he harmonised the notion of divine free will and the mechanical concept of nature. Morality became a consequence of logical thinking. “Moral experience is the experience of duty, of actions that must be willed or not willed simply because they are right or wrong. For instance, telling the truth is right, Kant argued, and stealing wrong, not by virtue of culture or experience, but because to claim the opposite is irrational.” (Gregory 104)

For Schleiermacher religion was the feeling and intuition of the existence of the universe. This knowledge fulfils human beings like nothing else, in the sense that all things are in God and God is in all things, making God inclusive and infinite.⁵⁴

“Coleridge [then] argues [that] reason enables our recognition of God’s revelation, as represented in the Scriptures. For Coleridge, the truths of revelation – Trinity, Incarnation, Atonement – prove themselves in the rigours of a moral life, acquainted as it must be, with sin and the need for redemption.” (Gregory 107) Further in Coleridge’s theory, reason is a form of understanding God’s ways and symbols which are able to reveal what words could not or what would remain hidden. To know that God exists was a distinctive form of knowledge which was rejected by atheists such as Percy Shelley.⁵⁵

4.2.2 Morality and Sexuality

Morality had a direct influence on the people during Victoria’s reign. Morals and the ability to distinguish acceptable from unacceptable behaviour were essential to everyday life. The first source for morality was – at least in the wealthier middle-classes – the mother. The poorer working-class tried to imitate the norms and morality of the middle-class. Unfortunately, parenthood in the working-classes was often associated with mothers who were incapable of keeping the household in proper order and fathers who were often brutes and drunkards. Thus, children from poorer background were often under the state’s authority to be taught the morals of the dominant middle-class.⁵⁶ A mother was ideally the “angel in the house”, living a life in the domestic realm that should not transgress any boundaries of the feminine orthodox. She became “a quasi-

⁵³ Cf. Gregory 103, 104.

⁵⁴ Cf. Gregory 105.

⁵⁵ Cf. Gregory 107, 108.

⁵⁶ Cf. Nelson 70-73.

spiritual being selflessly dispensing love and moral guidance to her family” (Adams 129) who should expect nothing in return from the poor or their families.⁵⁷

Victorian morality was ultimately linked to concepts of sexuality. During this period the first discourses about the conceptualisation of sexuality arose. Although the Victorians were much more open and less prudish than Foucault would allow in his *History of Sexuality*, their ideals were dominated by sexual restrictions, such as the immovable importance of family and the threat of adultery. Although far from sexual repression⁵⁸ control of desire, self-control and dutifulness distinguished the elevated middle-class from the poor, uneducated working-class people. In the role of the angel in the house Victorian women were able to distance themselves from the female temptress that had been emphasised by the Bible. Orthodox teaching always had a difficult relationship with the body and the more pleasant aspects of natural reproduction.⁵⁹ This outwardly asexual state led to a notion that purity, i.e. morality, was linked to female power which did seldom show in an era when husbands “had their wives declared insane and incarcerated when they became too difficult to handle” (Killeen *Gothic Literature* 22).

While earlier periods linked sexual and political power to male aggression, men of the Victorian era were expected to conform to Protestant work-ethics, to be industrious and not lazy. This led to a connection between self-regulation as a sign of virtue and success, while those who were unable to control their lust would not advance.⁶⁰ Towards the end of the Victorian era another male stereotype was evoked, the dandy. He was a decadent creature whose time was spent searching for and enjoying aesthetics and loyal integrity with his friends like ideal submissive wives had to show to their husbands.⁶¹

Therefore, exaggerated lifestyles and a lack of self-control became a sign of immorality. As a prominent Irish example we might consider Charles Parnell whose extramarital affair was not overlooked but publicly despised and seen as a sexual scandal that forced him to give up his political power. Likewise, excessive drinking and violence, which were often associated with the poorer and morally inferior working-class, became indicators for morality. While wives began to abhor sex when they had already given birth to a large number of children because the female orgasm was considered essential

⁵⁷ Cf. Killeen *Gothic Literature* 23.

⁵⁸ Cf. Killeen *Gothic Literature* 9.

⁵⁹ Cf. Adams 126 – 129.

⁶⁰ Cf. Adams 127.

⁶¹ Cf. Killeen *Gothic Literature* 23–25.

to conception,⁶² prostitution posed an outlet for (male) sexual desires and was simultaneously despised as an immoral threat to the (sexual) health of the middle-class and the military. Not without reason a prostitute would never have been considered a morally “respectable” woman.⁶³ Respectability, a monogamous home and piety were linked to economic and social stability in the smallest unity of society. Thus passionate affairs outside marriage posed a threat to this security.⁶⁴ In order to live a morally good life, one was expected to live up to the norms of society and to restrict oneself to a life within these norms.

4.3 Contesting Religious Beliefs in the Nineteenth Century

Christianity was dominant on the British Isles in the nineteenth century. Most inhabitants were members of the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church or some Protestant Dissenter group. In Ireland, the majority was Roman Catholic while the Pale saw a large Anglican population who were members of the privileged Church of Ireland.

During Victoria’s long reign, many people, no matter if they were members of the ordained clergy or lay preachers or believers, felt a religious vocation while priests became authors and politicians. This is not surprising because only the Catholic clergy lived in celibacy. Protestants, on the other hand, did not only perform their vocational deeds but they also “functioned in a network of domestic relationships, and [...] members of their families [...] were expected to share parish duties, though they had no formal status.” (Krueger 141, 142). Both, Protestants and Catholics had a common ground of debate, namely the Bible.⁶⁵

Unfortunately, the scripture itself proved difficult for the Victorian reader who had been educated in an Evangelical teaching. Evangelicalism emphasised the individual’s intimate relationship with God.⁶⁶ Evangelical teaching had been influenced by Unitarianists, who believed in a loving God while the earlier Church of England (i.e. Church of Ireland) was dominated by the view of a less loving and more punishing deity.⁶⁷

⁶² Cf. Adams 131, 132.

⁶³ Cf. Adams 133.

⁶⁴ Cf. Buckley 117.

⁶⁵ Cf. Krueger 142.

⁶⁶ Cf. Krueger 146.

⁶⁷ Cf. Hilton 238.

The strict exterior morality discussed in the above, led to the individual's attempt to appear to others as pure and controlled as possible:

Although this morality was religiously inspired, it also highlighted that the God of the Old Testament did not behave in the same way that a good Victorian Christian man believed morally right. Indeed, in the light of Victorian moralism, Yahweh looked like a sociopath to many honest Victorians, especially in his orders to the Israelites to wipe out neighbouring tribes in the Middle East. Hell, to which sinners were sent after death, also seemed intolerable: how could an almighty, omniscient, merciful Deity consign large numbers of his own creations to everlasting torment? (Killeen *Gothic Literature* 125,126)

Consequently, the punishing God of the Old Testament was outrun by the loving God of the New Testament. Likewise, the belief in purgatory and hell declined when the influence of science increased. During this bridging of religion and natural sciences, the Victorians turned to a variety of occult disciplines because explanations provided by Christian faith of the Established Church, such as God revealing himself in a miracle, were no longer applicable. Metaphysical morality and “mesmerism, electro-biology, phrenology, spiritualism, ghost-hunting, Swedenborgism, alchemy, theosophy, esoteric Buddhism, Brahmism, telepathy, Rosicrucianism” had a significant impact on Victorian views of reality and human existence (Killeen *Gothic Literature* 126, 127).

While the middle-class engaged in occultism, the poor were a scandalous mass in the eyes of the Established Church: despite various missionary attempts, also by Protestant Dissenter sects, the poor retained a folk religion which stayed very vital, “especially in remote rural areas.” (Krueger 148) Thus, it is not surprising that the Christian belief of the Irish countryside did still feature folklore-influenced superstitions such as the belief in fairies. These superstitions remained strong despite the Catholic devotion of Ireland's inhabitants.

4.4 Morality, Ethics and Literature

Romanticism has often been described as a “revolt” against the eighteenth-century “Enlightenment”. Enlightenment thinkers emphasized the role and authority of “Reason” in religious matters and in assessing traditional Christian ideas such as miracles, original sin, and the atoning death of Christ. (Gregory 102)

Naturally, romanticism and the struggle of faith and reason did not stop at the advent of the nineteenth century. The struggle for morality and ethics found an outlet in the vast body of Victorian literature which focused strongly on the newly-discovered self and

“the need to engage with an otherness that transcends the self.” (Levine 3) The former homogenously perceived community became invaded by alien forces which were hard to understand because God and religions which used to explain the people’s world had become obsolete.⁶⁸ In this way, religious thought was intruded by science that caused discrepancies and major conflicts within the individual on which Victorian literature focused.

The emerging children’s literature during the reign of Queen Victoria was used to emphasise “either Evangelical religion or secular rationalism” as well as training the children’s ability to distinguish the moral and the amoral in “religion, social class, gender and sexuality” (Nelson 74, 75). In terms of religion, children learned ways of achieving salvation in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Later they learned that self-sacrifice and a conscience of the individual self were trustworthy means to answer moral uncertainties. Salvation of the soul had become less important.⁶⁹

The advent of the sensational and the Gothic novel in the eighteenth century replaced the educational novel. This development is also related to the complex merging of science and religion. David Hume had proclaimed God as an illusion and revealed inconsistencies in the Protestant literal reading of the sacred text, Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859) added to the crisis of faith.⁷⁰ The Victorians developed an interest in the occult which can also be seen in their literary production. One might take Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* as a prominent example of the successful merging of science, faith and the occult or supernatural.

4.5 Sin and the Bible

As already discussed earlier, the reign of Queen Victoria saw a shift from religion and faith as the sole provider of truth and moral stability to a more diverse picture, influenced by the insights that science had gained.

In the beginning of the century, evangelical eschatology influenced the Victorian perception of a world that had been alienated from God and was dominated by sin without the prospect of atonement, as William Wilberforce put it, if the writer did not

⁶⁸ Cf. Levine 3.

⁶⁹ Cf. Nelson 75, 76.

⁷⁰ Cf. Killeen *Gothic Literature* 124, 125.

perform his duty to morally instruct the reader.⁷¹ As mentioned above, this morality strongly grounded on self-discipline in order to prevent the soul from becoming stained by vice.⁷²

Despite the discrepancy of faith and science, the Bible was still one of the most influential texts of the Victorian era:

An appreciation of the extent of lay people's Bible literacy is key to understanding Victorian culture. The Bible was preached from pulpits, read daily by heads of households to family members and servants and by Bible readers in the homes of the poor, dispensed through domestic and foreign mission societies, studied in Church-sponsored and nonconforming study groups, as well as by clerical biblical scholars. Victorian printing technologies enabled the realization of evangelical dreams of mass Bible distribution. (Krueger 142)

Protestant Dissenter sects, the revival of the Established Church and similar movements made the Bible accessible to all members of society, to the poor, the middle-class, the working-class and the aristocracy alike. One of the essential duties of believers was the spreading of the gospel.⁷³ Although literacy increased throughout the nineteenth century, impoverished groups did not have access to the freedom of thought that the advances of science provided for the educated middle-class. Thus, doubts in the validity of the Bible remained amongst intellectuals. To constitute oneself as an unbeliever or an atheist who was not affected by notions of original sin, the soul, repentance and eternal punishment, was reserved for the more educated members of society.

Despite the working class' attempt to imitate the superior middle-class in their morals and mores, the poorer remained influenced by folk belief, superstition and the teachings of the Scripture. Not only the text of the Bible and the Ten Commandments, which were approved by the Established Church, but also the thirty-nine articles of the Anglican Church and The Second Book of Homilies prescribed acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Therefore,

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church. (<http://ireland.anglican.org/worship/14>)

⁷¹ Cf. Wright 148.

⁷² Cf. Achilles 13.

⁷³ Cf. Krueger 146.

A sinful lifestyle as depicted in Le Fanu's fiction is based on general assumptions of immoral conduct and the sins which are prohibited by religious teaching. For example, the thirty-nine articles and the Bible state that gluttony, avarice, drunkenness and extramarital intercourse are sinful and thus a good Christian should abstain from them. Le Fanu's characters face severe difficulties in controlling their forbidden desires.

In Le Fanu's writing both Roman Catholic and Anglican Christian faith are at work. These two Christian beliefs show strong similarities but also a stark contrast in their canon law. One of the differences lies in the notion of pardon and repentance. While the twenty-second article exposes purgatory (the place in hell where the sinner's soul should be cleansed) and pardon (God's forgiveness of man's sin after purgatory) as false notions,⁷⁴ they are essential to Catholic belief. Likewise, the Roman Catholic canon law stresses the importance of all seven sacraments, whereas the Anglican faith considers baptism and the Holy Communion as the only two true sacraments.

4.5.1 Unbelievers and Blasphemy

Darwin's *Origin of Species* challenged the evolutionary history of mankind and the accounts of the *Genesis*. Scientific findings and the "abandonment of religion felt like a deep spiritual loss" (Levine 101) for many Victorians. Thus a revised look on the promoted fall of mankind and original sin became central to the Victorian belief system, because it questioned the essentials of Christian faith. Eventually, this challenge led to a shift from the atonement to the incarnation as the main focus of Victorian faith and a belief in a good, loving God rather than a punishing deity.⁷⁵ Wright concludes that Christian belief became most diverse towards the end of the nineteenth century. Writers realised that it was impossible to grasp theological truth in its totality. Nevertheless it was possible to gain an understanding of certain aspects which then determined the individual's morality and religious conduct.⁷⁶ For some, science substituted religion as a means of finding truth and knowledge. This compensation of authority was needed because otherwise moral chaos would have reigned, like Thomas Henry Huxley and other naturalists feared.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Cf. http://anglicansonline.org/basics/thirty-nine_articles.html.

⁷⁵ Cf. Wright 149, 150.

⁷⁶ Cf. Wright 151.

⁷⁷ Cf. Levine 119.

The nineteenth century accepted – although reluctantly – atheists and unbelievers as part of the social network and not as a threat to society as a whole. One of most ground-breaking texts was Thomas Paine’s *The Age of Reason*, which changed the view on blasphemy and its punishment. Paine’s concepts posed a threat to the authorities and were seen as revolutionary due to their concern with working class issues.⁷⁸ Richard Carlile became famous for reading it in full aloud to a court. This way, Carlile became a symbol for the Enlightenment at the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁷⁹ Paine’s book “transformed England’s policy on toleration of deists, made deism an unendurable threat to Christianity, and radicalized religious thinking on the political left.” (Levy 330)

Still, religion was an essential part of jurisdiction: “[The Bishops] sat as judges in the Ecclesiastical Courts which heard cases ranging from heresy to (until 1857) inheritance.” (Krueger 144) The law of blasphemy might be taken as an example here.

Grounded on one of the Ten Commandments that Moses had received from God in the *Book of Exodus*, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Ex. 20.7), religion became part of jurisdiction for a surprisingly long time. The law of blasphemy continued to be part of the common law until 2008, although the last case of punishment was noted in 1922.⁸⁰ People who did object to the view of the Established Church of England such as Unitarians were prosecuted. As Professor David Feldman put it in 1993,

“Blasphemy is committed “by anyone who makes public words, pictures, or conduct whereby the doctrines, beliefs, institutions, or sacred objects and rituals of the Church of England by law established are denied or scurrilously vilified or there is objectively contentious, violent or ribald conduct or abuse directed towards the sacred subject in question, likely to shock and outrage the feelings of the general body of Church of England believers in the community.” (qut. Feldman in Maer 16–17)

In Le Fanu’s fiction blasphemies illustrate how the characters fell from orthodox teaching.

⁷⁸ Cf. Levy 331.

⁷⁹ Cf. Nash 75-77.

⁸⁰ Cf. Maer 3, 18.

4.5.2 Death and Repentance

While the newly advanced sciences contested the established orthodox world view, they had positive effects on the overall quality of living in the nineteenth century. When sanitation and medicine advanced, death started to lose some of its dreadful power because

[...] life and death expectancy came more predictably under human control; this matter of fact soon became (what is not the same thing) a matter of faith, and it did so the more readily with the recession of orthodox belief that marked the last quarter of the [nineteenth] century. As moral psychology uncoupled convictions about sin from certainties of penal torment in Hell (in which fewer and fewer Victorians put real faith), the physical pain of dying came into focus as a *summum malum*. (Gerhard Joseph and Herbert F. Tucker 115)

In Le Fanu's fiction, the ideas of hell and purgatory as a place of purification and punishment for the soul are still relevant and not yet overruled by an essentially physical perception of death and dying, as the above quote would suggest. The Roman Catholic Church specified her notions of hell, purgatory, heaven, salvation and the last judgement in Catechism articles 1020 to 1060.⁸¹ Simply put, the souls of those who believe are promised salvation. Souls who are still tinted by sin will be cleansed in purgatory and afterwards they will move to their destined place in heaven. In Le Fanu's writing, physical death is less important than the soul's afterlife.

Repentance for the committed sins, which Le Fanu's characters frequently fail to accomplish, is essential for the soul's salvation in the Roman Catholic belief system: "To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him for ever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called "hell." (Catechism 1033) Roman Catholics do penance by indulging in the sacrament of penance and reconciliation, asking God for his pardon and mercy. In the Anglican Church the private sacrament of reconciliation is no essential part of the Gospel and members are not required to confess in front of a priest but may do so silently during service and by prayer.

⁸¹ Cf. http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p123a12.htm.

4.5.3 Folk Belief

As stated above, poorer social groups were determined on the orthodox teaching and still influenced by prevalent folk belief. With regard to Sheridan Le Fanu's fiction, Irish folklore deserves our attention. For one, Le Fanu's writing influenced folklore-collector Patrick Kennedy, who is one of the lesser known figures of the popular folklore-collectors such as Crofton Croker, Lady Wilde and to a lesser extent William Butler Yeats.⁸² Kennedy dedicated his book *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts* (1866) to Sheridan Le Fanu, thanking him for his encouragement although he had been just a bookseller.⁸³ Irish folk belief then consists of a large set of stories about the fairies, "or "good people", or Tuatha De Danann, as they are called; of pookas, leprachauns, ghosts, apparitions, water-horses etc." (xxxv), as Douglas Hyde observes. These creatures from the otherworld are also found in Le Fanu's fiction, for example, in *Laura Silver Bell*. They play a prominent part but like in most folklore, Le Fanu's texts centre "round a human hero" (Hyde xxxv).

Folk belief which is conveyed in folklore is often the last retreat of older religions when they are overruled by new faiths. Thus, the earlier pre-Christian motifs can be found in these stories⁸⁴ and have found their way into Le Fanu's fiction. Alfred Nutt distinguishes various kinds of folklore which often have a moral aspect, including "the unquestioning acceptance of fatalism, though not in the sense which the Moslem or the Calvinist would attach to the word. [The results are definite and predestined] and this fatalism [of action] puts on a moral form, and gives rise to the conception of Nemesis." (Nutt lv-lvi) The Christian influence abolished the tragic hero of earlier stories and substituted them with a positive ending of the final conflict.⁸⁵

One of the essentials of Christianity is salvation. Notions of the eternal soul have merged with earlier superstitions in some Irish folklore such as Thomas Crofton Croker's *The Priest's Supper*. "The good people, or the fairies, are some of the angels who were turned out of heaven, and who landed on their feet in this world, while the rest of their companions, who had more sin to sink them, went down farther to a worse place." (qut. Croker in Yeats 9, 10) In the story, a fairy asks the good Christian Dermot Leary "whether our souls will be saved at the last day, like the souls of good Christians;

⁸² Cf. Alspach 404, 405.

⁸³ Cf. Kennedy *Dedication* v.

⁸⁴ Cf. Hyde xxxviii-xxxix.

⁸⁵ Cf. Nutt lvi.

and if you wish us well, bring back word what he says without delay.” (Yeats 12) The priest presses the fairies to ask for themselves. They are revealed as evil, hellish creatures when they do not dare to approach the priest, a representative of God. Thus, it is clear that they are excluded from salvation. Likewise, the fairies flee when they are asked if they love their Lord Saviour.⁸⁶

In comparison to this, priests are both, symbolic and real representations of good in the Irish folktale. He is the one who can absolve sins and can reconcile man with God and the saints because he is allowed to communicate with them.⁸⁷ Not only fairies but also the devil functions as a counterpart of the priest. The devil is often depicted as a member of the Protestant gentry, finely dressed, with an English accent.⁸⁸ Frequently good wins over evil and the priest can ban the devil and other malicious creatures. One example might be the priest in William Carleton’s *Frank Martin and the Fairies* who baptised Frank in order to protect him against the fairies.⁸⁹

In another legend told by Jenny McGlynn, one of the few female Irish storytellers, fairies cannot bleed because they are no children of Adam and Eve. For this reason, they are banned from the kingdom of heaven. Again the priest has discovered their true evil nature.⁹⁰ Like in the above folktales, pre-Christian belief, the symbolism of the Scripture and everyday religious belief have merged into one.

4.6 Emanuel Swedenborg and Sheridan Le Fanu

Devin Zuber and others have noted that the references to Emanuel Swedenborg’s philosophy are striking in Le Fanu’s works. During Le Fanu’s lifetime Swedenborg was a well-known scientist and mystic. His theories about the influence of the spiritual world on the human mind paved the way for Le Fanu’s conception of psychological terror.⁹¹

Swedenborg was born 1688 in Stockholm as the son of a preacher at the court of King Charles XI of Sweden. Emanuel received an excellent education at the University of Upsala from 1699 onwards, where he indulged in mathematics and physical sciences. After taking his degree in philosophy in 1709, he travelled through Europe, professing

⁸⁶ Cf. Kennedy 87-89.

⁸⁷ Cf. Nuttall 34-36.

⁸⁸ Cf. Nuttall 36.

⁸⁹ Cf. Yeats 6.

⁹⁰ Cf. Lysaght *Fairylore* 33.

⁹¹ Cf. Zuber, 75.

in various mathematical and physical studies, for example in the early attempts to design an air vehicle. Throughout the years, Swedenborg became an expert for mining, engineering, geology and mineral studies. It is interesting to note that his Latin works were not only connected to science but he combined them with religious philosophy, such as the nature of the soul and the immediacy of God.⁹² A sudden change took place when the acclaimed scientific scholar was 55 years old.⁹³ The change must have been fairly immediate, and he seemed to have become an “illuminated Seer” (de Beaumont 20) who gave up all his scientific works to devote himself entirely to the religious calling which he believed to have received. He states in one of his numerous works, the *Arcana Celestia*:

It may therefore be stated in advance that of the Lord’s Divine mercy it has been granted me now for some years to be constantly and uninterruptedly in company with spirits and angels, hearing them speak and in turn speaking with them. In this way it has been given me to hear and see wonderful things in the other life which have never before come to the knowledge of any man, nor into his idea. I have been instructed in regard to the different kinds of spirits; the state of souls after death; hell, or the lamentable state of the unfaithful; heaven, or the blessed state of the faithful [...] (Swedenborg *Arcana Celestia* par. 5)

When Swedenborg was allowed to retire from his offices, he enhanced his religious writing and composed a number of works which presented an account of his visions. *Arcana Celestia* (1749-56), which is cited above, was the first theological book he wrote, containing already the essentials which he elaborated in other works such as *Heaven and Hell* (1758). In his works, he discussed passages of the Scriptures and interpreted them in great detail.⁹⁴ Because of his extensive interpretation of the books of *Genesis* and *Exodus* in the *Arcana Celestia*, W. J. McCormack notes in his *Dissolute Characters* that William Blake, J. W. von Goethe and others were fascinated by so-called Swedenborgianism. Its strong focus on language provided a world view allowed to perceive all events in life as metaphors and symbols of spiritual importance.⁹⁵

Eventually Swedenborg’s work led to the establishment of the New Jerusalem Church. The doctrines of his teaching were published in 1763.⁹⁶ Octavius Brooks Frothingham, a nineteenth century American clergyman, who did not hold Swedenborg’s writings in high favour, states that nineteenth century theology and Christian religion did already

⁹² Cf. de Beaumont 10-18.

⁹³ Cf. Ward, 89.

⁹⁴ Cf. de Beaumont, 29,30.

⁹⁵ Cf. McCormack 1993, 8.

⁹⁶ Cf. de Beaumont 31.

incorporate many of the ideas that were expressed by Swedenborg, basically the doctrines of “love to the Lord and charity toward the neighbour”(Frothingham 604). His argument that there was no need for the existence of the New Jerusalem Church in the nineteenth century because its teachings had already become incorporated into the Established Church, describes some of the essential ideas that he has noticed in Swedenborg’s writings:

The doctrine was little short of a new gospel when it was delivered. [...] That there is but one life, and that life from the Lord; that Satan has no substantial being or existence; that there is no principle of evil; that heaven and hell are both from the same source; that no man is born predestinated [sic!] to hell; that heaven removes hell in man; that true religion consists in love to God and love to man; that the sacraments are signs; that the church is representative. Such are a few of the divine commonplaces which are scattered up and down the pages of Swedenborg’s writings [...] (Frothingham 602, 603)

The notion that there is no evil or Satan as such, would lead one of the keystones of Christianity and the Established Church ad absurdum. Thus, the deceit by the serpent, the fall of Adam and Eve, their expulsion from paradise, and man’s burden to endure the hardships of life would be obsolete.

The Christian church, of whatever approved denomination, rests upon some theory of evil as an independent, demonic, self-subsisting dominion, governed by its appropriate authorities, and organized against Deity, who, through his ministers, keeps up an incessant warfare against it; [...] the sacraments [are] his appointed “channels of grace”, the Bible his revealed communication to mankind. (Frothingham 610-611)

If there was no evil, one would not have to take measures of protection against it. The sacraments, which played an important role in every-day life in the nineteenth century and also in the works of Sheridan Le Fanu, could have been abandoned.

Swedenborg died in 1772 and William Blake and August Strindberg were two major authors who were highly influenced by his works.⁹⁷ The authors of Romantic sensationalism discovered his theories only about a century after his death. It was not so much the charitable deity and the absence of evil that aroused their interest, but the correspondences between the mortal and the spiritual world. “Swedenborg taught that the universe was composed of “correspondences”, and that for humans true character was not revealed in this mortal body but only when freed and released into the corresponding world of the spirits.”(Killeen *Gothic Literature* 119) Also, in *Uncle Silas*

⁹⁷ Cf. Crawford <http://www.lefanustudies.com/swedenborg.html>.

Swedenborgianism provides the tool to open a “second sight” and thus see the dead and other hidden secrets, also rendering those visible that already seem to have been forgotten.⁹⁸

These ideas fell on fruitful soil during the Romantic sensationalist period when psychologically motivated narratives focused on ghosts, visions and hallucinations.⁹⁹ Le Fanu’s interest in Emanuel Swedenborg’s teaching which continued into the (spiritual) works of William Butler Yeats,¹⁰⁰ was first shown in the extensive studies by William McCormack. According to him, the ideas of evil spirits are dominant in Le Fanu’s works such as *Uncle Silas*.¹⁰¹ Zuber suggests that Le Fanu draws heavily on Swedenborg’s notion that each individual is accompanied and watched over by celestial spirits.¹⁰² Swedenborg’s ideas invoke the Doppelgänger motif, presenting a doubled self of the human who is haunted by spirits. These spirits have direct access to all memory and language. Keeping this in mind, it is not surprising that the evil characters in Le Fanu’s short fiction represent guilty memories of the past. These notions become most apparent when considering a lengthy passage from Le Fanu’s short story *Green Tea*. This story is part of the *In a Glass Darkly* collection and the following passage describes an incidental discovery of Dr Hesselius in his patient’s, Mr Jennings’s, library.

While he is waiting for Mr Jennings, Dr Hesselius picks up Swedenborg’s *Arcana Caelestia*. Swedenborg’s essential ideas about evil spirits were marked by Mr Jennings. He added “Deus miseraeatur [sic!] mei”¹⁰³ (Green Tea 15) as a footnote at the end of the page. Dr Hesselius ceases to read Jennings’ note as he considers it too private. The utterance “Deus miseraeatur [sic!] mei” indicates also a wish of safeguarding against evil. Mr Jennings prays for the redemption of his soul which he seems to have maculated by investigating pagan metaphysics.¹⁰⁴ In the passage given, Swedenborg elaborates how evil spirits perform as shape-shifters, “when seen by other eyes than those of their infernal associates, present themselves, by “correspondence”, in the shape of the beast (fera) which represents their particular lust and life, in aspect direful and atrocious. This is a long passage, and particularizes a number of those bestial

⁹⁸ Cf. Killeen *Gothic Literature* 117.

⁹⁹ Cf. Burwick 73.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Nally 221-227, Crawford <http://www.lefanustudies.com/swedenborg.html>.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Crawford <http://www.lefanustudies.com/swedenborg.html>.

¹⁰² Cf. Zuber 77.

¹⁰³ „Deus misereatur mei“, which was misspelled in the *In a Glass Darkly* collection can be translated as “Lord, have mercy”.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Burwick 75, 76.

forms.”(Green Tea 15) According to a commentary footnote, the monkey, which haunts Mr Jennings in *Green Tea*, is not a beast which is a representative of a particular sin.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, as Rowenta Hametner explains in her thesis on the decay of the Anglo-Irish family,¹⁰⁶ Le Fanu’s presentation of Swedenborg’s teachings provides an essential key to the author’s conception of spirits, ghosts, supernatural apparitions and evil invaders that inhabit his works:

When man’s interior sight is opened, which is that of his spirit, then there appear the things of another life, which cannot possibly be made visible to the bodily sight.

By the internal sight it has been granted me to see things that are in the other life, more clearly than I see those that are in the world. From these considerations, it is evident that external vision exists from interior vision, and this from a vision still more interior, and so on.

There are with every man at least two evil spirits.

With wicked genii there is also a fluent speech, but harsh and grating. There is also among them a speech which is not fluent, wherein the dissent of the thoughts is perceived as something secretly creeping along within it.

The evil spirits associated with man are, indeed, from the hells, but when with man they are not then in hell, but are taken out thence. The place where they then are is in the midst between heaven and hell, and is called the world of spirits – when the evil spirits who are with man, are in that world, they are not in any infernal torment, but in every thought and affection of the man, and so, in all that the man himself enjoys. But when they are remitted into their hell, they return to the former state. (Green Tea 14)

While the second sight offers a glimpse of the world of spirits (which is usually concealed) otherworldly creatures are also able to attach themselves to humans.

Swedenborg notes that these evil spirits who can afflict human beings have left hell and walk in a world in between, being neither here nor there. Their sentiments are in line with those of men. This idea of spirits who accompany the lives of humans and want to be like them evokes reminiscences of some notions of Irish fairies. According to one variant of the lore, fairies are either angels who were cast out of heaven after Lucifer’s rebellion, and during their fall they were caught in between heaven and hell. These fairies have the same needs as humans, for example, home, family, food, entertainment, but the way they live differs considerably.¹⁰⁷ This way, creatures such as Laura Silver Bell’s lover are evil spirits striving to act like humans in order to take possession of their helpless victims. Although the spirits are able to possess a human for a certain

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Tracy 322.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Hametner 44.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Curran 9.

period of time, they are damned to return to hell and eternal suffering and their fate is inevitable.

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 in into the things of his body, they would attempt by a thousand means to destroy him; for they hate man with a deadly hatred.

Knowing, therefore, that I was a man in the body, they were continually striving to destroy me, not as to the body only, but especially as to the soul; for to destroy any man or spirit is the very delight of the life of all who are in hell; but I have been continually protected by the Lord. Hence it appears how dangerous it is for man to be in a living consort with spirits, unless he be in the good of faith. (Green Tea 14, 15)

Despite Frothingham's notion that Emanuel Swedenborg has abolished the idea of actual hell in his teaching, the danger of the evil spirits is still dominant. Swedenborg's body and soul have been protected by the Lord. Apparently divine support is the only means of protection applicable against the evil creature. Unfortunately, as Julian Moynahan puts it, "in Swedenborg's scheme of things the human subject, as he or she falls under the influence of evil, is usually singled out and overmatched." (130) In terms of Le Fanu's short fiction which is discussed in this thesis, the revenants who attach themselves to the characters try to destroy them. They do not take their place but leave as soon as they have accomplished their task. Thus, in line with Swedenborg's teaching, living with the spirits is dangerous. Eventually there is no hope for the haunted because they are not in good faith and turn away from the Christian God who could be their only saviour.

5 The Evil Invades

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's ghost stories do not present explicit accounts of immoral lifestyles. Their focus is on the consequences of committed sins which become manifest in one way or another in the sinner's life.¹⁰⁸ In order to present this research in a comprehensible way, some intertwining motifs have been distinguished that are recurrent in the short stories selected. Evil characters appear as revenants or the devil, often connected to some kind of Faustian pact, or abductors who are reiterations of folklore motifs. Additionally, hellish visions and dreams complement the pictures of terrors and agony. Le Fanu's characters are not clear cut but move at the boundaries of established categories and on the verge of human imagination. Remedies against these evil invaders are often provided but the characters in the stories seldom use them to defend themselves against their pursuers.

5.1 Revenants

In Nordic and Germanic beliefs, revenants are creatures who returned from the dead for a broad range of reasons. Some function as messengers for the living, threatening, demanding, predicting the future or revealing secrets. Others have been evil throughout their lives and continue to do mischief from the grave.¹⁰⁹ The word revenant itself derives from Latin "revenire" – "to return". The motif of the revenant or people who are resurrected from the dead, is fairly old and closely related to the "doppelgänger"-motif. Horst S. and Ingrid G. Daemmrich have noted two traditions of the doppelgänger-phenomenon: the first one is the introduction of another, very similar character that causes tumult and confusion. Most often, this is a formerly unknown relative, e.g. a brother or sister. Other characters mistake the two by chance or are deceived on purpose.¹¹⁰ While this first type can often be found in comedies of error, the second doppelgänger is more relevant for Le Fanu's Gothic stories. Here, the doppelgänger character represents an aspect of a character in the text. It is the manifestation of fears, intuition, wishes, hallucinations¹¹¹ and shows what would otherwise remain hidden. It can represent a crisis of identity. The literary tradition after E.T.A. Hoffmann, part of the German Gothic tradition, shows many doppelgängers who are messengers of future

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Achilles 120.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Lecouteux 173-177.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Daemmrich 109.

¹¹¹ Cf. Daemmrich 109.

events, often evil ones. They also appear as enemies that have to be eliminated.¹¹² In the case of Le Fanu's short stories, we frequently encounter a doppelgänger as the revenant of a deceased. The revenant functions as a physical manifestation of an immoral event, a haunting memory. According to Hametner, some of the revenants are "based on an ancestral crime or guilt which returns to haunt and ruin the present in the form of a revenant who seeks revenge." (81) In this case, the revenge is often postponed by many years, even decades and thus an ancestral sin is avenged. Posteriors have to suffer for their ancestors' sins although they are technically innocent.¹¹³ Often the sinners such as in *The Familiar* and *Ulltor De Lacy* seem to be "haunted by the living, by material creatures commanding full physical force and an intense mental desire to exact revenge and do mischief far beyond the powers of the insubstantial dead." (Moynahan 127,128) Also, the "Victims of evil in LeFanu divide up into sinners – mainly the Faustian Bargainers – and those more or less innocent like the de Lacey and Mr. Jennings [in *Green Tea*]." (Moynahan 131)

In the short stories discussed in this thesis, the absolutely innocent victim is used as a messenger figure to firmly establish the presence of a revenant. All characters who are haunted by some revenant, or who return as revenants themselves, have either committed an unspeakable crime or they have to stand up for their ancestors' sins.

5.1.1 Avengers

As stated above, some of the revenants in Le Fanu's stories function as avengers. *Ulltor De Lacy* shows the longest time span between sin and revenge of the stories considered here. Rowenta Hametner states that *Ulltor De Lacy* shows a "narrative pattern in which the continuity of a family is sacrificed to the aims and requirements of the dead. [This] is based on an ancestral crime or guilt which returns to haunt and ruin the present in the form of a revenant who seeks revenge." (81) The crime for which the revenant seeks revenge is only revealed towards the end of the story, sustaining suspense throughout the reading process. The de Lacy family executed a presumed traitor who cursed them before his death and has haunted the family ever since to fulfil his curse:

A.D. 1601, in the month of December, Walter De Lacy, of Capperullen, made many prisoners at the ford of Ownhey, or Abington, of Irish and Spanish soldiers, flying from the great overthrow of the rebel powers at Kinsale, and among the

¹¹² Cf. Daemmrich 108,109.

¹¹³ Cf. Hametner 88.

number one Roderic O'Donnell, an arch traitor, and near kinsman to that other O'Donnell who led the rebels; who, claiming kindred through his mother to De Lacy, sued for his life with instant and miserable entreaty, and offered great ransom, but was by De Lacy, through great zeal for the queen, as some thought, cruelly put to death. When he went to the tower-top, where was the gallows, finding himself in extremity, and no hope of mercy, he swore that though he could work them no evil before his death, yet that he would devote himself thereafter to blast the greatness of the De Lacys, and never leave them till his work was done. (Ultror 465¹¹⁴)

The curse is fulfilled when the revenant of Roderic O'Donnell abducts Una, the youngest daughter of the last living De Lacy, Ultror. She is the only person in the family who could continue their lineage. Her sister Alice survives and functions as the story's direct source for the narrator because she has taken the vow and has become a nun. Clearly, the need to fulfil his postponed revenge is the primal force behind the avenger's return from the dead.¹¹⁵ The De Lacy family has been aware of this threat for years and thus it has become a tradition to inform the younger generations about the intruder Roderic O'Donnell. Ultror De Lacy, father of abducted Una, had to memorise the horrible features of a painted miniature on his own father's deathbed to be constantly aware of the threat. The 12-year old boy was then put under the charge of a priest. This way, with spiritual support, young Ultror passed his youth unharmed.

The circumstances of his daughters' upbringing present an immediate threat to their moral wellbeing. During the rebellion of '45 the family is expelled from their Clare home. Luckily, the priest has secured some money for the girls and thus they are able to return undercover to their estate in Cappercluan. While they hide themselves, they are unable to attend clerical service but a priest cares for their souls' salvation. The spiritual support seems to prevent the revenant's intrusion. Only after the priest is deterred from his duty, the revenant can begin his vengeance. "The interruption of the old priest's secret visits was the earliest consequence of the mysterious interference which now began to display itself." (Ultror 451) In the first night, the priest intends to reach the castle on foot. The night is particularly dark and the moonlight very faint. When he reaches the part of the glen where the castle stairs should be, he is unable to find them. He starts an exhausting climb up the rocks and eventually he can see the castle in front of him. When he emerges at the top, there is only a bare heath. He believes to see the castle in another place but it turns out to be only an odd stone formation. The night is

¹¹⁴ For reasons of readability, the abbreviation "Ultror" will be used when referring to and quoting from *Ultror de Lacy*.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Hammett 88.

passed in search and fatigue; the priest cannot read mass to the two girls. Next time he rides up to the castle and just before turning at his customary tree, he hears a horrible shriek and a carcass falls down in front of his horse. To his and the horse's surprise the white-faced gigantic corpse springs up and move rapidly towards them. The horse panics and runs off.

As a consequence, the priest stops to visit the castle altogether. He is afraid of the nightly visits and he finds it only prudent to refrain from visits during daytime because he does not want to be suspected by other people. Without spiritual support, the ladies are left unprotected. Now the evil intruder seems to be able to enter the castle grounds and appears in the bell tower, the former rooms of justice, where Roderic O'Donnell was found guilty:

And Peggy Sullivan, the old dame of all work, when, by chance, for she never willingly looked toward the haunted quarter, she caught the faint reflection of its dull effulgence with the corner of her eye, would sign herself with the cross or fumble at her beads, and deeper furrows would gather in her forehead, and her face grow ashen and perturbed. And this was not mended by the levity with which the young ladies, with whom the spectre had lost his influence, familiarity, as usual, breeding contempt, had come to talk, and even to jest, about it. (Ultor 454)

While the housekeeper is utterly upset by the intrusion, the two young ladies ignore it. The elderly lady protects herself with signs of the cross and prayers. When the candle in the bell tower window has become a familiar sign, the housekeeper meets a stranger with a startling claret mark on the castle grounds and the same person is seen in the bell tower. Laurence, a servant, tries to shoot the intruder, but

As Larry gazed, the figure somehow dissolved and broke up without receding. A hanging tuft of yellow and red ivy nodded queerly in place of the face, some broken and discoloured masonry in perspective took up the outline and colouring of the arms and figure, and two imperfect red and yellow lichen streaks carried on the curved tracing of the long spindle shanks. Larry blessed himself, and drew his hand across his damp forehead, over his bewildered eyes, and could not speak for a minute. It was all some devilish trick; he could take his oath he saw every feature in the fellow's face, the lace and buttons of his cloak and doublet, and even his long finger nails and thin yellow fingers that overhung the cross-shaft of the window, where there was now nothing but a rusty stain left. (Ultor 455-456)

The apparition is described as a vanishing illusion. Likewise, the figure "disappeared in the general darkness; and the rest, with a sudden flicker, shot downwards, as shadows will on the sudden movement of a light, and was lost in one gigantic leap down the

castle wall" (Ultor 462), when Alice sees the revenant outside her sister's window. The revenant's physical form is shifting in shape and texture to delude spectators, it seems.

When Ultor returns to Clare to visit his daughters and bring news about a potential suitor for Una and a retreat to France, he encounters the revenant himself and eventually the reader is introduced to the creature in the oil-portrait which Ultor had to memorise in his childhood:

"But there was more in this apparition to excite unpleasant emotions, than the mere circumstance of its unexpectedness. The figure was very strange, being that of a tall, lean, ungainly man, dressed in a dingy suit, somewhat of a Spanish fashion, with a brown laced cloak, and faded red stockings. He had long lank legs, long arms, hands, and fingers, and a very long sickly face, with a drooping nose, and a sly, sarcastic leer, and a great purplish stain over-spreading more than half of one cheek.

As he strode past, he touched his cap with his thin, discoloured fingers, and an ugly side glance, and disappeared round the corner. The eyes of father and daughter followed him in silence." (Ultor 457)

The revenant's clothes mark him as distinctively foreign, the stranger, the invader from outside being a common motif in Gothic literature. In the Gothic tradition the stories were often set in Catholic countries such as Spain and France, which were considered more medieval and superstitious. Because of this, the Spaniard in this story becomes associated with Catholicism, a connection to the continent, and an old evil.¹¹⁶

Ultor panics, when he encounters the living incarnation of the oil painting:

Would to heaven we could leave this accursed haunt tonight. Cursed be the stupid malice that first provoked this horrible feud, which no sacrifice and misery can appease, and no exorcism can quell or even suspend. The wretch has come from afar with a sure instinct to devour my last hope – to dog us into our last retreat--and to blast with his triumph the very dust and ruins of our house. What ails that stupid priest that he has given over his visits? Are my children to be left without mass or confession--the sacraments which guard as well as save – because he once loses his way in a mist, or mistakes a streak of foam in the brook for a dead man's face? D--n him!" (Ultor 458)

Christian tradition plays an important role in *Ultor De Lady*. Sacrifices and exorcism as a means of salvation are useless against this evil, the revenant can only be kept in place but the curse cannot be destroyed. While the housekeeper trusts in prayers and signs of the cross, Ultor's only hope to secure his daughters' souls from the evil intrusion is

¹¹⁶ Cf. McCormack 74-76.

constant clerical support, but the priest has neglected his duty. The girls cannot attend mass and confession and because of this they are doomed. It is important to note that the immortal soul is by far more important than bodily security. In a wave of fury Ultor curses the priest who did not obey. This strong religious motivation including the Spanish invader binds the De Lacys, by name and heritage of French origin, more closely to the continent, devouring them in a remote world of malicious superstition.

When the priest refuses to visit the castle, Ultor urges his daughters to write down their confessions. It is too late for Una who is already in the claws of the revenant and has become distant, quiet and lost her spirit. The girl's hope for salvation is taken when she stops sleeping in the same room with her sister Alice who is bound to become a nun and prays frequently. This way, Alice's soul is safe while hers is lost. Relieving news come too late: "'I have been with Father Denis," said De Lacy, next day, "and he will come to-morrow; and, thank Heaven! you may both make your confession and hear mass, and my mind will be at rest; and you'll find poor Una happier and more like herself.'" (Ultor 462) Unfortunately, Una will not confess anymore, she is taken this very night.

When the father finds out that his daughter has been abducted, "De Lacy's rage and horror were boundless. He charged the priest, in frantic language, with having exposed his child, by his cowardice and neglect, to the machinations of the Fiend, and raved and blasphemed like a man demented." (Ultor 464) The curse has been fulfilled due to the lack of firm faith and clerical support. Una has to suffer for her family's guilt. Had the priest continued his visits, the fulfilment of the curse might have been postponed for another generation.

The revenant's victim has not chosen to leave the path of a good Christian. Instead, outer circumstances, caused by her family's guilt, have forced her into this situation and have turned her into a scapegoat, a person who needs to reconcile man with God by means of sacrifice. When she is abducted, the curse is fulfilled and the hauntings cease, simply because there is no De Lacy left to be haunted. This end of the curse is also marked in the chalk notice that Alice finds on her sister's bed:

"Ultor De Lacy, Ultor O'Donnell." (Ultor 464) The doubling of the name Ultor has a twofold meaning here: Le Fanu, a student of classics in Trinity College, was well aware of the Latin meaning of this deliberately chosen name. "Ultor" means "avenger" and it is also the name given to the last man in the De Lacy family line. The revenant has not

used his Christian name “Roderic” for he is no more part of a Christian environment. Instead, the name Ultor explains Roderic’s function in the story. He took revenge for the deed of the de Lacy family. Alice is saved by her vow because she is a firm Christian nun and thus cannot contribute to the family lineage.

Like in most of Le Fanu’s stories, the revenant’s physical apparition is postponed to a later stage in the story. First, there are audible, visual and tactile hauntings, such as footsteps or, in this case, a burning candle. Then the persecutor appears at a determined point in time, when an event connected to his purpose or his death occurs. Le Fanu chooses the most plausible moment to underline the intention of the revenant. In *Ultor De Lacy* Roderic starts his hauntings when Ultor tries to secure the lives of his children by appropriate marriage and the prospect of continuing his lineage. When the priest ceases to visit, the way is open for the revenant’s vengeance.

A similar plot timing can be found in *The Familiar*, the second of the stories comprised in the posthumously published *In a Glass Darkly*-collection. It is based on earlier publications from the *Dublin University Magazine*, presenting the fall of Captain Barton due to moral failure.¹¹⁷ The revenant who lusts for Captain Barton’s life starts his haunting when the Captain has secured an engagement with a young lady and their relationship starts to blossom. This event coincides with the original sin that has initially caused the haunting:

It appeared that some six years before Captain Barton’s final return to Dublin, he had formed, in the town of Plymouth, a guilty attachment, the object of which was the daughter of one of the ship’s crew under his command. The father had visited the frailty of his unhappy child with extreme harshness, and even brutality, and it was said that she had died heart-broken. Presuming upon Barton’s implication in her guilt, this man had conducted himself toward him with marked insolence, and Barton retaliated this, and what he resented with still more exasperated bitterness – his treatment of the unfortunate girl – by a systematic exercise of those terrible and arbitrary severities which the regulations of the navy placed at the command of those who are responsible for its discipline. The man had at length made his escape, while the vessel was in port at Naples, but died, as it was said, in an hospital in that town, of the wounds inflicted in one of his recent and sanguinary punishments.”(Familiar 81,82¹¹⁸)

Again, the revenant’s – the impregnated girl’s father, Sylvester Yelland, – vengeance is postponed until Barton seems to find love and a secure relationship. The revenant tries

¹¹⁷ Cf. Achilles 124, 125.

¹¹⁸ For reasons of readability, the abbreviation “Familiar” will be used when referring to and quoting from *The Familiar*.

to destroy this new attachment by all means.¹¹⁹ The captain's sin is twofold: He has ruined the girl's reputation and by leaving her, he has made her an outcast. Her father, who treated her badly after the incident might have been partly responsible for her death but his behaviour was likewise punished by Barton's severe treatment aboard. In Naples, Yelland dies from the inflicted wounds. Again, the Gothic evil is associated with the continent, in this case Italy. This notion stems from early Gothic fiction which was set in medieval times in a presumably Catholic country such as Spain, Italy or France.¹²⁰ The revenant's aim is to avenge his daughter's shame and his own death.

Before Barton actually encounters the familiar face, he is haunted by footsteps in the night, anonymous letters and an assault on the street which he should not pass when leaving his love's lodging. When he finally encounters his pursuer physically, he recognizes him instantly because he is "short in stature, looked like a foreigner, and wore a kind of fur travelling cap" (*The Familiar* 51). Most of Le Fanu's persecutors are similar in their looks, appearing distinctively foreign and hiding at least parts of their heads beneath hoods, wigs and caps. Other examples would be the devil in *Shalken the Painter* or the consultor in *The Fortunes of Sir Robert Ardagh*.

In comparison to Roderic O'Donnell *Ultor De Lacy*, the revenant in *The Familiar* is much more developed. He is able to talk to his victim and communicate via other media such as letters. This makes him by no means less dangerous but the revenant in *The Familiar* is more easily comprehensible. Sylvester Yelland does not return from a distant past but he is directly connected to his victim. His vengeance is connected to an immediate sin in the fairly recent past. The revenant who calls himself *The Watcher*, based on an earlier publication by the same name,¹²¹ advises his victim in a letter to avoid specific places. Furthermore, while *Ultor* accepts the haunting as part of the family tradition, Captain Barton also tries to communicate with his pursuer by means of a newspaper advertisement. Although Le Fanu denotes that "the utmost possible publicity, suggested to Dr R--- the idea that Captain Barton's extreme uneasiness was somehow connected with the individual to whom the advertisement was addressed, and he himself the author of it. This, however, it is needless to add, was no more than a conjecture." (*The Familiar* 55) The reader is never assured by the narrator if the revenant is actually Yelland or some different creature.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Achilles 125, 126.

¹²⁰ Cf. Moynahan 109.

¹²¹ Cf. Tracy xv.

In comparison to Ultor De Lacy, Captain Barton does not simply believe in the revenant as a real threat but he strives for a rational explanation. Before turning to ecclesial advice, he consults a doctor, probing the possibility that Yelland is in fact still alive and that the Captain might suffer from a mental disease. Unfortunately, the doctor can assure him of neither and Barton burns the given prescription. When the hauntings do not stop, he searches for advice from a member of the Protestant clergy. His sin has a moral background¹²² and thus moral support can be the only remedy.¹²³ Captain Barton eventually accepts the existence of his personal supernatural revenant. Also, he realises that he has committed a sin for which he is destined to atone:

“[...] no, sir, I am not a credulous – far from a superstitious man. I have been, perhaps, too much the reverse – too sceptical, too slow of belief; but unless I were one whom no amount of evidence could convince, unless I were to condemn the repeated, the *perpetual* evidence of my own senses, I am now – now at last constrained to believe – I have no escape from the conviction – the overwhelming certainty – that I am haunted and dogged, go where I may, by – by a DEMON!”(Familiar 61)

His scepticism is replaced by a radical belief but his earlier conviction keeps him from praying. Or at least it seems so at first sight and by what Barton states in front of the cleric:

“God help you, my poor friend,” said Dr ----, much shocked, “God help you; for, indeed you *are* a sufferer, however your sufferings may have been caused.” “Ay, ay, God help me,” echoed Barton, sternly; “but *will* he help me – will he help me?”

“Pray to him – pray in an humble and trusting spirit,” said he. “Pray, pray,” echoed he again; “I can’t pray – I could as easily move a mountain by an effort of my will. I have not belief enough to pray; there is something within me that will not pray. You prescribe impossibilities – literal impossibilities.” (Familiar 61)

The Protestant clearly remarks that God’s help must be called for, but the Captain is a sceptic. He knows that he has neither been a good Christian nor innocent. He cannot trust in higher matters and Barton states that there is “something” in him that prevents him from turning to spiritual aid, which is not only his conviction but more than this, most likely the demonic spirit who has already taken possession of Barton’s life. This reminds of Swedenborg’s spirits that start to possess their human host before they destroy him or her. He tells the clergyman about Yelland’s ghost who, in the latter

¹²² Cf. Achilles 125.

¹²³ Their conversation will be examined more closely when this thesis turns to attempts of repentance in Le Fanu’s short stories.

course of the story seems to transform himself into the pet owl of the captain's fiancé.¹²⁴ When Barton is discovered dead, the mischievous bird flies from the room through the skylight, a last visual sign of the revenant. In the scene mentioned above, the animalistic transformation is antedated here. Barton echoes the clergyman's words and their sound reminds one of a bird's cry: "ay, ay", and "pray, pray". It can be assumed that it is the demon that speaks through Barton here, which prevents him from praying and turning to celestial aid. The end of the haunting is indicated by the bird's escape after Barton's death.

5.1.2 The Return from the Dead as Punishment

The revenant ghost which we encounter in *Madam Crowls Ghost* differs significantly from the first two mentioned above. In this story, the sinner herself turns into a revenant. In comparison to Roderic O'Donnell and Sylvester Yelland, she is not an avenger but her apparition reveals a dark secret that brings her sinister actions to light. When she died, she was unable to participate in the last rites and she did not confess. Christian rites of transition were not completed¹²⁵ and her guilty secret would have died with her if she had not returned from the dead.

Christian religious items and behaviour are found as aids against presumed evil. The main character of *Madam Crowl's Ghost*, a young girl, Mrs Jolliffe, who should attend the old lady, is brought to the estate by a coachman and other travellers from the area comment on the girl's task:

"'Ho, then,' says one of them, 'you'll not be long there!'

"And I looked at him as much as to say 'Why not?' for I had spoken out when I told them where I was goin', as if 'twas something clever I hed to say.

"'Because,' says he, 'and don't you for your life tell no one, only watch her and see--she's possessed by the devil, and more an half a ghost. Have you got a Bible?'

"'Yes, sir,' says I. For my mother put my little Bible in my box, and I knew it was there: and by the same token, though the print's too small for my ald eyes, I have it in my press to this hour.

"As I looked up at him saying 'Yes, sir,' I thought I saw him winkin' at his friend; but I could not be sure.

"'Well,' says he, 'be sure you put it under your bolster every night, it will keep the ald girl's claws aff ye.' (Crowl 48, 49¹²⁶)

¹²⁴ Cf. Achilles 126.

¹²⁵ Cf. Lecouteux 33.

¹²⁶ For reasons of readability, the abbreviation "Crowl" will be used when referring to and quoting from *Madam Crowl's Ghost*.

For one, they compare the old lady to the devil and even before her return as a revenant, she is considered an otherworldly being. This disrespectful talk about Madam Crowl should be kept secret, and though the two fellow-travellers seem to be only joking, the girl is quite tempted to believe them. Their advice against evil powers is the protection by the bible which the girl's mother has given to her. In fact, the girl is the one who encounters the revenant when she is in her bed, where presumably her bible lay beneath her pillow.

When the old lady has died in one of her fits, the employees have to wait for the heir to arrive and settle the old lady's business. During this time the girl meets the revenant because she had to move to another bedroom. In this room, Madam Crowl's stepson was locked up in a hidden cabinet by his stepmother to die, while she had everybody believe that he had drowned in a lake nearby:

Well, it could na be a full quarter past twelve, when I sees a lightin' on the wall befoore me, as if something took fire behind, and the shadas o' the bed, and the chair, and my gown, that was hangin' from the wall, was dancin' up and down on the ceilin' beams and the yak pannels; and I turns my head ower my shouther quick, thinkin' something must a gone a' fire.

And what sud I see, by Jen! but the likeness o' the ald beldame, bedizened out in her satins and velvets, on her dead body, simperin', wi' her eyes as wide as saucers, and her face like the fiend himself. 'Twas a red light that rose about her in a fuffin low, as if her dress round her feet was blazin'. She was drivin' on right for me, wi' her ald shrivelled hands crooked as if she was goin' to claw me. I could not stir, but she passed me straight by, wi' a blast o' cald air, and I sid her, at the wall, in the alcove as my aunt used to call it, which was a recess where the state bed used to stand in ald times wi' a door open wide, and her hands gropin' in at somethin' was there. I never sid that door befoore. And she turned round to me, like a thing on a pivot, flyrin', and all at once the room was dark, and I standin' at the far side o' the bed; I don't know how I got there, and I found my tongue at last, and if I did na blare a yellock, rennin' down the gallery and almost pulled Mrs. Wyvern's door off t' hooks, and frightened [sic!] her half out o' wits. (Crowl 57)

Like in *Utor De Lacy* and *The Familiar*, the revenant is preceded by signs, in this case a change of light. The light flickers and casts shadows like flames of fire would. When Madam Crowl's ghost eventually appears, it is surrounded by a red fiery glow around her feet. This reminds one of the flames of purgatory blazing around the sufferers. Madam Crowl is a distorted version of herself, resembling the devil that she was called by the two travellers in the beginning of the story. The claws move towards the girl but they pass her to turn to a niche in the wall. The ghost, although surrounded by a hellish

glow, causes an icy breeze when she passes the bystander. Madam Crowl grabs for a door that the girl did not notice before and seems to extract something from inside. She holds a brass key in her hand that is familiar to the girl's aunt. Suddenly the revenant turns around to the girl, but instead of attacking, she dissolves. The girl is released from her freeze and can cry for help.

In the aftermath of the event, when Madam Crowl's nephew arrives, the secret of the dead boy, a potential heir to the estate, is revealed. He did not drown as everyone believed but was locked up by his stepmother behind a secret door. When the door that the ghost indicated is opened, the heir finds the skeleton of the starved boy.¹²⁷

Two questions remain open: why did the ghost appear at this point in time and why did it reveal itself to the young girl? First, the ghost appears at the perfect moment in time, when the old lady is dead and the estate is about to change its master – the fate of rightful master, though dead, is revealed at a moment when the truth would otherwise be forever lost. “Then there are the sheer innocents such as Maud Ruthyn in *Uncle Silas*, whose only crime has been to come into the property desperately coveted by her homicidal uncle and his brutish son, Dudley Ruthyn.” (Moynahan 131) The girl is such an innocent and she functions as a filter for the ghost: she is unaware of the lady's past, she is well connected to the house inmates and the reader has encountered her as a communicative character. When she narrates the events to her aunt, the housekeeper can draw the right conclusions and urges the girl to talk to the heir. He is then able to reveal the truth.

Interestingly, Madam Crowl seems to be haunted as well, as long as she is still alive. It is revealed that she has suffered from vision and has been put into a strait jacket to keep her calm. Furthermore she whispers to her attendant about hellish spirits that seem to haunt her. Obviously, it is her guilty consciousness that distresses her.

“The evil one can't hurt no one, ma'am, bout the Lord permits.”

Then the same queer voice from the bed says something more that I couldn't make head nor tail on.

And my aunt med answer again: “Let them pull faces, ma'am, and say what they will; if the Lord be for us, who can be against us?” [...]

Well, she didn't. She pined, and windered, and went off, torflin', torflin', quiet enough, till a day or two before her flittin', and then she took to rabblin', and

¹²⁷ Cf. Crowl 59.

sometimes skirlin' in the bed, ye'd think a robber had a knife to her throat, and she used to work out o' the bed, and not being strong enough, then, to walk or stand, she'd fall on the flure, wi' her ald wizened hands stretched before her face, and skirlin' still for mercy." (Crowl 53, 56)

Madam Crowl experiences physical pain from her mental torture. The evil one refers to the devil, and the housekeeper tries to assure the old lady that a devout Christian cannot be harmed. This would require that she would be without guilt in the Christian sense but in fact Dame Crowl has sinned threefold: for one, she has neglected her duties as a mother, even though she was only a stepmother. Second, she has confined the innocent child to death by her own hands. Third, she has deceived others by giving false clues about the whereabouts of the boy. The fiendish visions are an outlet for the secret which she did not confess to anybody. Confession to a priest might have brought her peace but when the priest eventually arrives for the last sacraments, "T' sir was there, and prayed for her; but she was past praying with. I suppose it was right, but none could think there was much good in it, and sa at lang last she made her flittin', and a' was over, and old Dame Crowl was shrouded and coffined [...]" (Crowl 56). Madam Crowl has lost herself to madness or the demons that torture her.

As we have already seen in *The Familiar* it is of little use to the sinner that somebody else prays for him or her. Likewise, without confession, Madam Crowl is not entitled to leave for heavenly realms but she will remain between the worlds until her sins are discovered. After the girl has encountered the revenant, the heir arrives and talks to his young servant. He tells her that the secret chamber was used for keeping fine dishes in earlier days and the ghost might have tried to show the girl a hidden treasure. When they open the secret door, they find "shut up to die thar in the dark by that wicked beldame, whar his skirls, or his prayers, or his thumpin' cud na be heard" (Crowl 60).

Before turning to other ways of the intruding evil, two more short stories should be considered which present two sides of the same coin. *An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street* was published in 1853. *Mr Justice Harbottle* is a revised and significantly changed version of the former story and was republished in the *In a Glass Darkly* collection in 1872. In fact, this is *The Haunted House in Westminster* retitled, and as the earlier title indicates, the setting is only one of the modifications Le Fanu made.¹²⁸ The 1853 version focuses on two students who take their lodging in a

¹²⁸ Cf. Tracy xvi.

mansion on Aungier Street in Dublin and encounter the revenant of a malicious judge during their stay. *Mr Justice Harbottle* on the other hand centres on Elias Harbottle, a hanging judge, who indulges in frivolous hobbies and is eventually executed by the revenants of his consciously committed unjust crimes.

In *An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street* the two young men, narrator Dick and his cousin Tom Ludlow, see a strange figure disturbing their dreams:

I became somehow conscious of a sort of horrid but undefined preparation going forward in some unknown quarter, and by some unknown agency, for my torment; and, after an interval, which always seemed to me of the same length, a picture suddenly flew up to the window, where it remained fixed, as if by an electrical attraction, and my discipline of horror then commenced, to last perhaps for hours. The picture thus mysteriously glued to the window-panes, was the portrait of an old man, in a crimson flowered silk dressing-gown, the folds of which I could now describe, with a countenance embodying a strange mixture of intellect, sensuality, and power, but withal sinister and full of malignant omen. His nose was hooked, like the beak of a vulture; his eyes large, grey, and prominent, and lighted up with a more than mortal cruelty and coldness. These features were surmounted by a crimson velvet cap, the hair that peeped from under which was white with age, while the eyebrows retained their original blackness. Well I remember every line, hue, and shadow of that stony countenance, and well I may! The gaze of this hellish visage was fixed upon me, and mine returned it with the inexplicable fascination of nightmare, for what appeared to me to be hours of agony. At last ——

The cock he crew, away then flew
the fiend who had enslaved me through the awful watches of the night; and, harassed and nervous, I rose to the duties of the day. (Aungier 364¹²⁹)

Dick encounters the portrait of judge Horrock who committed suicide in the same house, hanging himself from the bannister and the ghost repeats this action,¹³⁰ trying to kill Tom Ludlow, who encounters the revenant in a physical form because he sleeps in the judge's bedroom. First, the apparition only crosses the room. During the next night, the revenant repeats the words of a song, frightening Tom to the bones. Tom hears a drunkard singing outside and while he falls asleep, he sings along:

“Through this ballad I continued with a weary monotony to plod, down to the very last line, and then da capo, and so on, in my uncomfortable half-sleep, for how long, I can't conjecture. I found myself at last, however, muttering, ‘dead as a door-nail, so there was an end’; and something like another voice within me, seemed to say, very faintly, but sharply, ‘dead! dead! dead! and may the Lord

¹²⁹ For reasons of readability, the abbreviation “Aungier” will be used when referring to and quoting from *An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street*.

¹³⁰ Cf. Tracy xvii.

have mercy on your soul!’ and instantaneously I was wide awake, and staring right before me from the pillow.

“Now — will you believe it, Dick?— I saw the same accursed figure standing full front, and gazing at me with its stony and fiendish countenance, not two yards from the bedside.” (Aungier 373)

Throughout the story, there are various references made concerning the revenant’s looks and visage. All of them describe him as hellish creature, having the features of a malicious devil. There is no doubt that the apparition intends harm by the words he utters. One is reminded of Sylvester Yelland in *The Familiar* who encounters Captain Barton with the words “Still alive! Still alive!” (Familiar 58) After this encounter the figure dissolves in black vapour and Tom ceases to sleep in the house altogether. When he is eventually overwhelmed by fatigue and falls asleep in the cursed bedroom, he wakes up at night, to find the judge’s double sitting in a chair, a rope in hand, prepared to hang Tom. Tom flees but the revenant follows him to fulfil his task:

But the spell was not yet broken; the valley of the shadow of death was not yet traversed. The abhorred phantom was before me there; it was standing near the banisters, stooping a little, and with one end of the rope round its own neck, was poising a noose at the other, as if to throw over mine; and while engaged in this baleful pantomime, it wore a smile so sensual, so unspeakably dreadful, that my senses were nearly overpowered. I saw and remember nothing more, until I found myself in your room. (Aungier 375, 376)

Sheer panic takes over Tom’s consciousness. He does not act rationally anymore but follows his own fear and before he faints he rescues himself into his cousin’s room. The reader is reassured in the passage presented that Tom is convinced to encounter a creature from hell because he refers to his nightmare as a journey through “the valley of the shadow of death”, referring to Psalm 23, the Lord is my Shepherd: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”(Ps. 23.4) After this encounter, Tom leaves the house and Dick is left to look for new lodgings because both are not willing to spend another night in the haunted house.

Interestingly in this story, like in *Madam Crawl’s Ghost*, the revenant does not pursue Tom for any personal reason. The revenant must return as a punishment for his sins,¹³¹ like Madam Crawl and Justice Harbottle. When Dick and Tom leave, they are not

¹³¹ Cf. Achilles 155.

persecuted anymore because they have not committed any crime like Captain Barton. The maid, who took care of the household, explains why the judge has become a revenant:

It was his housekeeper's daughter owned the rope, my mother often told me, and the child never throve after, and used to be starting up out of her sleep, and screeching in the night time, wid dhrames and frights that cum an her; and they said how it was the speerit of the ould Judge that was tormentin' her; and she used to be roaring and yelling out to hould back the big ould fellow with the crooked neck; and then she'd screech 'Oh, the master! the master! he's stampin' at me, and beckoning to me! Mother, darling, don't let me go!' And so the poor crathure died at last, and the docthers said it was wather on the brain, for it was all they could say. [...]and what made it worse for the unnatural ould villain, God rest his soul, to frighten the little girl out of the world the way he did, was what was mostly thought and believed by every one. My mother says how the poor little crathure was his own child; for he was by all accounts an ould villain every way, an' the hangin'est judge that ever was known in Ireland's ground. (Aungier 376, 377)

The haunting has started immediately after the judge's suicide. Like in *Madam Crowl's Ghost*, the girl is haunted by spirits. After her death, scientific but not very convincing explanations are given. The description of the broken neck expressed here identifies the revenant as the same one, having haunted the house since his death. The reason for Horrock's return from the dead is found in his immoral life: he was a hanging judge who condemned others to death and he inflicted harm upon his own illegitimate child by using its rope to kill himself. Furthermore, the suicide and the haunting punish the existence of this child¹³² who should not have been conceived in the first place if the judge had led an honourable life.

The ruthless character of the judge is one of the features that are significant in *An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street* and *Mr Justice Harbottle*. The latter story focuses on the judge's immoral life, using the apparition of the judge's ghost as a starting point to narrate events from the past. His appearance is confined to a specific space but his intention is not to right a long-forgotten wrong, like in *Madam Crowl's Ghost*: In *An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street* he inflicts evil upon those who take lodging in his house. The revenant is condemned to stay in the house and cannot leave for heaven or hell. In *Mr Justice Harbottle*, on the

¹³² Cf. Achilles 155.

other hand, the apparition causes irritation, but does not afflict the lodger in a harmful way:

He heard the old clock at the stairhead strike one; and very shortly after, to his alarm, he saw the closet-door, which he thought he had locked, open stealthily, and a slight dark man, particularly sinister, and somewhere about fifty, dressed in mourning of a very antique fashion, such a suit as we see in Hogarth, entered the room on tip-toe. He was followed by an elder man, stout, blotched with scurvy, and whose features, fixed as a corpse's, were stamped with dreadful force with a character of sensuality and villainy.

This old man wore a flowered-silk dressing-gown and ruffles, and he remarked a gold ring on his finger, and on his head a cap of velvet, such as, in the day of perukes, gentlemen wore in undress. [...]

“The direful old man carried in his ringed and ruffled hand a coil of rope; and these two figures crossed the floor diagonally, passing the foot of his bed, from the closet-door at the farther end of the room, at the left, near the window, to the door opening upon the lobby, close to the bed's head, at his right. [...] In answer to a question of mine, he said that neither appeared the least conscious of his presence. They did not seem to glide, but walked as living men do, but without any sound, and he felt a vibration on the floor as they crossed.”(Harbottle 85, 86¹³³)

From the description of the various characters in the story we learn that the two figures are Lewis Pynewick and Elias Harbottle, the murderer of the first following his victim. Pynewick is described as a man in mourning throughout the story, while his counterpart Harbottle is the spitting image of gluttony. Their clothes transport them back in time and mark them as distinct others; the rope indicates the instrument of Harbottle's suicide or murder. It is interesting to note that the apparitions do not seem unearthly in any way apart from the lack of sound. When we look back at the stories considered before, sound was one of the indications of ghostly apparitions. Here, the two pass in total silence. Nevertheless, they do not go unnoticed, but they cause the floor to vibrate, which marks them as non-human. Nevertheless they resemble their living selves, wearing the same clothes as they did on their dying day. They do not glow like Mrs Crawl or vanish like Roderic O'Donnell but they walk through opened doors and thus appear less supernatural. Furthermore, both are completely ignorant of the living person in the bed. It is not their intention to harm this person.

¹³³ For reasons of readability, the abbreviation “Harbottle” will be used when referring to and quoting from *Mr Justice Harbottle*.

Frightened, the landlord tries to find new lodgings and thus tries to get the monthly rent off his tenant a bit earlier. He had lived in his lodging for almost a year, when the apparition occurred on the day on which Harbottle had died many years before. The landlord has witnessed the anniversary of the hanging. Judge Harbottle found justice when he hanged himself on the 10th at one o'clock, the exact time when the revenant appears.

Why is Elias Harbottle punished to return as a revenant and experience his dying day again and again? The answer lies, in line with the pattern of Sheridan Le Fanu's other short stories, in the sinful acts committed by Justice Harbottle during his lifetime.¹³⁴ Approximately five or six years prior to his death¹³⁵ he dragged a grocer named Lewis Pynewick falsely to court and sent him to jail where he was supposed to receive a death sentence. His wife, who seemingly had a secret affair with Harbottle, left Pynewick's abandoned lodgings with her daughter for the judge's house. No one but the two of them is aware of this secret. Shortly before Pynewick is to be hanged, Harbottle receives a strange visitor who "bore a wonderful resemblance to a prisoner in Shrewsbury jail named Lewis Pynewick" (Harbottle 97), only some years his senior. He tries to convince the judge that people conspire against his person, involving the High Court of Appeal. The judge does neither believe the old man, nor in this supposedly fictive court. When followed by a footman, the old man is discovered as a liar.

A few days later, Justice Harbottle travels to Shrewsbury to sentence Pynewick to death despite the warning. He consciously condemns the man although the evidence is false. A letter reaches the judge, announcing his trial before the High Court of Appeal for his actions. Again, he does not take the warning seriously and thus he is kidnapped after a theatre performance in his own coach. Before the kidnapping, Lewis Pynewick appears for the first time in Harbottle's court. Pynewick was found guilty of forgery and thus shows up at a forgery trial. He stands among the persons of small importance, dressed again in seedy black. He stretches his carvat and this way shows the judge from the distance "a stripe of swollen blue round his neck, which indicated, he thought, the grip of the rope." (Harbottle 101) The judge demands that the court is searched but nothing can be found and bystanders in court question the judge's mental reliability.

¹³⁴ Cf. Achilles 155, 159.

¹³⁵ Cf. Harbottle 95.

When Elias Harbottle realises that he has been kidnapped, he encounters another revenant. The coach stops at a black moor and “a footman came to the window. He knew his long face and sunken eyes. He knew it was Dingly Chuff, fifteen years ago a footman in his service, whom he had turned off at a moment’s notice, in a burst of jealousy, and indicted for a missing spoon. The man had died in prison of the jail-fever.” (Harbottle 105) The judge is responsible for another innocent death and when the coach reaches the ominous court, he meets his accuser, Lewis Pynewick. Found guilty, the judge is brought back to the coach through a hellish torture room and only the pain in his ankle remains from his vision.¹³⁶ Harbottle consults a doctor who treats the pain as a severe inflammation of gout. He is advised to move to Boxton to be relieved from his pain. In the course of the story, he will not return alive from the countryside.

The 10th of the following month has been set as the date of execution by the High Court of Appeal. His depressive moods force him to tell Pynewick’s widow about his experiences and he finds consolation in her words. Her simple superstitious belief raises his hopes:

He was sinking into the state of nervous dejection in which men lose their faith in orthodox advice, and in despair consult quacks, astrologers, and nursery storytellers. Could such a dream mean that he was to have a fit, and so die on the 10th? She did not think so. On the contrary, it was certain some good luck must happen on that day. The judge kindled; and for the first time these many days, he looked for a minute or two like himself, and he tapped her on the cheek with the hand that was not in flannel. “Odsbuds! odsheart! you dear rogue!” (Harbottle 112)

The text states that Harbottle does not seek clerical advice but he finds consolation in less acknowledged sources, such as his housekeeper’s words. The comparison of her reassurance to the reliability of statements of astrologers and other non-scientific or clerically accepted sources of truth implies that the orthodox advice might have been the reverse, and Harbottle might have been found guilty. The exclamation “Odsbuds! odsheart!” (Harbottle 112) is again a euphemistic expression, acclaiming a deity whose official representatives and advice from the Scripture are not taken into consideration.

At the mansion in Boxton, the judge consults Dr Hedgestone because of his moods and the pain in his ankle. “And Judge Harbottle [sitting in front of a blazing fire in his drawing-room], in what was then called a brigadier-wig, with his red roquelaure on,

¹³⁶ This vision will be discussed in further detail in section 5.3.

helped the glowing effect of the darkened chamber, which looked red all over like a room on fire.” (Harbottle 112) Again, red is the colour of choice which moves the living judge already into the realms of the hell in which his soul will suffer. The reader only shortly revisits the judge when servants look after his well-being but the revenants have started to invade the house. Like in *Madam Crowl’s Ghost* and they show themselves to the innocent to prove their existence. First, the housekeeper’s daughter sees her deceased father Lewis Pynewick sitting in a chair. When she tells her mother about it, she is overwhelmed by fear, connecting the innocent child’s story to everything she has learned about Pynewick’s death and the judge’s visions. She searches the house for the ghost and is eventually glad not to find him. Instead, she encounters the hangman who “leant his odd peering face over the banister. In his other hand he held a coil of rope, one end of which escaped from under his elbow and hung over the rail.” (Harbottle 115) The rope, which is dragged along by the judge’s revenant in the beginning, is the instrument of his death which Horrock uses in his attempt to murder Tom Ludlow in *An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street*. This scene foretells the upcoming doom. Furthermore, the housekeeper sees it dangling down the bannister where the judge will be hanged. She follows the stranger into another room where she finds nothing but the rope. The rope reminds the reader of the hanging of Justice Horrock who used his illegitimate daughter’s toy. In *Mr Justice Harbottle*, the housekeeper cries in the lap of her daughter when Pynewick has been killed. Therefore, the assumption that Harbottle might be the child’s father is not very valid.

In a third and final instance the scullery-maid has a vision of the smith in the vault who welded the gyves around the judge’s ankle at the High Court of Appeal. She is also only an on-looker, the smith’s hammering sounds hollow and far away although it is “a sound like heavy strokes, that seemed to shake the earth beneath her feet. [...] She walked out into the passage, and was surprised to see a dusky glow issuing from this room, as if from a charcoal fire” (Harbottle 116). The vibration recurs when the judge’s revenant crosses the tenant’s room on his dying day. Also, the room is tinted in a dark glow, resembling the fiendish realms of Justice Harbottle’s vision. The scullery-maid’s vision is also foretelling, like the hangman’s rope: “The man stopped, and pointed for something on the floor, that, through the smoky haze, looked, she thought like a dead body.” (Harbottle 116, 117) The servants are superstitious and check on their ill master. He sends them away harshly and afterwards no one sees the judge alive. On the

morning of the 10th he seems to have committed suicide by hanging himself from the bannister. Nevertheless, to those who knew about his visions, it was not suicide but murder by supernatural forces.

According to Robert Tracy's commentary, the story ends in a biblical quote taken from Luke 16:22: "the rich man died and was buried" (Harbottle 118, Tracy 333). This quote needs a closer look at the biblical reference to detect its underlying meaning: In the Bible, the beggar Lazarus and the rich man die. While Lazarus receives a seat at God's side, the rich man is buried and not resurrected. He goes straight to hell. During his agonies, the rich man sees Lazarus sitting next to Abraham:

[...] Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Laz'arus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.
"But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Laz'arus evil things: but now he is comforted and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would *come* from thence. (Luke 16.24-26)

God explicitly states that no one can escape and that suffering is irreversible. Likewise, even if Lazarus wanted to help, he could not do so. The rich man's pain is caused by fire, Justice Harbottle is surrounded by red gloom and his hellish visions are tinted in red. Furthermore, the suffering is a logical consequence and explains why Harbottle has to fulfil his fate and must re-experience his hanging every year. The rich man begs God, if Lazarus cannot help him. He should visit his brothers, warn them and force them to repent. God simply tells the rich man that they could have read the Scripture. The prophets have warned them many times. The rich man objects: 'Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. (Luke 16.30-31)

This quote reflects perfectly on the function of many revenants in *Mr Justice Harbottle* and the revenants in Le Fanu's short stories in general: those who will not turn to the Scripture to repent and find salvation, can neither accept the warning of a dead person. God's prophecy in Luke 16 is fulfilled in Justice Harbottle's fate. He does not once turn to the Scripture but he finds consolation in his housekeeper's reassurance and his doctor's remedies against gout. Pynewick's revenant tried to change the judge's mind by warning him of the hellish trial and pleading to take back the unjust death sentence

when he would have still been able to. The judge objected and continued his ill treatment. Thus, his fate is only a logic consequence and the fulfilment of God's will.

5.1.3 Silence, Visual Evidence and Lost Hopes

Interestingly, the revenants in *Mr Justice Harbottle* talk to nobody but the judge. The same pattern occurs in *Ulltor De Lacy*, *Madam Crowl's Ghost* and *The Familiar*. In the first story, the revenant talks to Una who is eventually abducted to fulfil O'Donnell's revenge. In the second story Madam Crowl's revenant does not talk to anybody and the haunting demons are only heard by the old lady. Captain Barton is the only one to whom the deceased shipman talks, except for one instance when he advises his future father-in-law to look after Barton. This leads to the conclusion that only those are lethally hurt who can hear the revenants speak. One is then tempted to assume that the revenants are only chimaeras which exist in the sinner's mind. Nevertheless, this explanation is not plausible because bystanders also witness the apparitions. The visual manifestation of Le Fanu's revenants indicates that the sinners have lost every chance to repent. As long as the haunting consists of sounds, vibration or a change in lightening, there seems to be a slight chance to right the inflicted wrong. Support is sought too late and in vain, as we have seen in *The Familiar*, *Ulltor De Lacy* and *Madam Crowl's Ghost*. A visual appearance of the revenant, the manifestation of sin, reveals the sinister secret to the sinner's environment, marking him or her as an immoral, sinful character in this world and the realms beyond.

5.2 The Motif of Abduction

Although the Irish oral traditions were not immediately accessible to the Anglo-Irish gentry and their descendants because of the language barrier, the lore was very popular at the time of Sheridan Le Fanu, as the frequent publication of collections shows. Thomas Crofton Croker's *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland*, Lady Gregory's and William Butler Yeats' works¹³⁷ and not to forget Patrick Kennedy's *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts* were all published in the nineteenth century, reflecting the interest in the oral Gaelic heritage. Kennedy even dedicated his book *Legendary Fictions of the Irish Celts* to Le Fanu because the author had encouraged him in his enterprise. From Le Fanu's short stories it is clear that he also had an interest in retelling the ancient lore. *Laura Silver Bell*, a story which features in this thesis, is one

¹³⁷ Cf. Vejvoda 41, 42, Hyde x, xi.

of his best known folklore-based writings, next to *The Child that Went with the Fairies* and *The White Cat of Drumgunniol*.

Motifs of folklore have been frequently catalogued because they can be found throughout different societies and thus form a basis of human culture. One of the most important works was done by Stith Thompson in 1932. The motif of abduction can be found in Thompson's motif index in sections R10 to R99. "Whether the abductors are gods, spirits, fairies, dwarfs, goblins, witches, or aliens from outer space, there are striking similarities. The seduced or captured abductee is always taken to another place, used or manipulated in some way, and, if released, returned in an altered form or with continuing aftereffects." (Silver 381) Silver explains furthermore that abductions can also be associated with possessions when in earlier times extrasomatic journeys were performed by priests and shamans.¹³⁸

5.2.1 The Abducted Maiden

One of the oldest motifs that can already be found in the myth of Persephone or Proserpina is the abduction of the maiden. Hades, the god of the Greek underworld, abducts Persephone to make her his wife. Her mother can convince Hades that she is allowed to return every half year, to bring fertility upon the earth before she returns to the underworld for winter again.¹³⁹ The abductor is often a magical creature¹⁴⁰ who abuses the abductee for ill purposes.

In Irish folklore, the abductees can be both female and male. Males are taken to the fairy land because of their physical strength or their talents.¹⁴¹ In *The Child that Went with the Fairies* a small boy is abducted by a fairy queen and only seen again as a revenant by his siblings. Beautiful children are most frequently taken by the fairies, either because the fairies would sacrifice them to the devil or because childbirth is very difficult for fairies and therefore they prefer human children which then again can plead for them on Judgement Day.¹⁴² This logic is then connected to another motif, "V. 236. Fallen Angels become Fairies" (Cross 515), adding a Christian twist to the older Celtic and Gaelic folklore. *Laura Silver Bell* and *Ultor De Lacy* feature a female who is abducted, similar to the abduction of Proserpina but without the hope of a return to the

¹³⁸ Cf. Silver 381.

¹³⁹ Cf. Ovid *Metamorphosis* 5.341.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Silver 382.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Silver 385.

¹⁴² Cf. Silver 386.

human world. In both stories “the victims are young women taken to be brides of fairy kings and princes” (Silver 385) although they are different in their conduct. While Una in *Ullor De Lacy* is abducted by a revenant ghost because the evil intruder wants to extinguish the family line, in *Laura Silver Bell* Laura is seduced by a mischievous fairy who pretends to be a rich prince. This fairy shows similarities to the tempting devil who functions as a sexual aggressor,¹⁴³ trying to abduct the immaculate maiden. Those who are not seduced are able to perceive his real, miserable self, like Laura’s friend Bessie Hennock:

[...] she on a sudden saw a very tall big-boned man, with an ill-favoured smirched face, and dressed in worn and rusty black [...] and while looking at this dirty, wicked, starved figure, Laura Silver Bell touched her, gazing at the same tall scarecrow, but with a countenance full of confusion and even rapture [...] “Is na that a conny lad? Agoy! See his bonny velvet clothes, his sword and sash; that’s a lord, I can tell ye;” (Bell 101¹⁴⁴)

Again, like in most of Le Fanu’s short fiction, the evil intruder is dressed in black and an extraordinary sickening sight. Laura “is witched” (Bell 100) and cannot discern the ugliness of the creature. She is blinded by love and the magic falsification. Laura follows the creature across a stream, moving with him into the underworld or fairyland. When reading Le Fanu’s story, one realises that Laura could not have been abducted if she had been baptized. Farmer Lew who took care of her when her mother died (as a child seemingly out of wedlock she was already predestined to suffer from supernatural influence), did not baptise her.¹⁴⁵ The fairy could abduct her because she was not christened and thus unprotected.

Although she announces “Fares te wee, Bessie, I’m gain my ways,” she called, leaning her head to his shoulder; “and tell gud Fadder Lew I’m gain my ways to be happy, and may be, at lang last, I’ll see him again” (Bell 101), the only person who sees her ever again is the old midwife and witch Mall Carke who is called to her assistance when she gives birth to her fairy child. Laura cannot be rescued from the power of the fairies because she had no celestial support from the start. Also, the happiness that she hopes to find is far from what Laura awaits, as the course of the story reveals.

¹⁴³ Cf. di Nola 286, 287.

¹⁴⁴ For reasons of readability, the abbreviation Bell will be used when referring to and quoting from *Laura Silver Bell*.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Bell 96.

One night, a man in an elegant coach calls at Mother Carke's door and asks her to help Lady Lairdale deliver her child. She is promised a good fortune and, therefore, accompanies the gentleman in the dead of the night. While they travel, their ride gets rougher and suddenly she realises that she has been deceived by the fairy who she saw some years ago when Laura Lew had vanished. The scene she witnesses in the hovel is more than devastating: "Old Mall Carke recognized in the faded half-starved creature who lay on the bed, as dark now and grimy as the man, and looking as if she had never in her life washed hands or face, the once blithe and pretty Laura Lew." (Bell 103) Laura Lew has become a prisoner and found misery instead of happiness by following her fairy lover and straying from God's path. She gives birth to a deformed, yelling creature and its screams call the father of the monster upon the scene. Mother Carke shall not go unrewarded for her service but Laura warns her, "If ya had not been at ill work tonight, he could not hev fetched ye. Tak no more now than your rightful fee, or he'll keep ye here." (Bell 103) When Mother Carke takes only a few coins, the fairy feels offended and tries to harm her when she hurriedly leaves. Like Laura, Mother Carke was not protected by God when she was abducted because she had indulged in witchcraft in order to find the killer of her goat.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, she is allowed to leave, which is typical for the prominent figure of the midwife in Irish folklore.¹⁴⁷ In Le Fanu's interpretation of the midwife to the fairies, the story ends in the conversion of Mother Carke. She stops performing spells and witchcraft because she is afraid of the fairies. Other narrations such as Patrick Kennedy's *The Fairy Nurse* or Éilís Ní Dhuibhne's *Midwife to the Fairies* give the story another twist because the midwife only learns that she has been abducted when she puts some fairy ointment by accident into her eye.

[...] and gave me a bottle of green ointment to rub the child all over. Well, the child I rubbed, sure enough; but my right eye began to smart me, and I put up my finger and gave it a rub, and purshin to me if ever I was so frightened. The beautiful room was a big rough cave [...] and the lady, and the lord, and the child, weazened, poverty-bitten crathurs – nothing but skin and bone and the rich dresses were old rags. (Kennedy 108)

The midwife tries to conceal her mistake and pretends that nothing has happened until she is brought back home. In the end of the story, the midwife's transgressing is

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Bell 102.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Silver 385.

recognised. She meets the fairy again after a long time and because she is the only one who can see him, he finds out her secret. Her eye is then plucked out as a punishment:

“Which eye do you see me with?” he asked.

“With the right eye,” she said.

Before he said another word he raised his stick and struck her eye and knocked her eye out on the road.

“You’ll never see me again as long as you live,” he said. (Ní Dhuibhne 3)

Le Fanu does not inform the reader about the possible punishment but his midwife receives a second chance to reform her lifestyle. She finds herself at her own doorstep and her resolution to abstain from witchcraft is instantly taken.

In comparison to the midwife, Una in *Ultor De Lacy* cannot escape her fate. She functions as a scapegoat for her ancestor’s guilt but her suitor reminds one of Laura’s fairy lord. Like Laura, Una can be abducted because she lacks spiritual support, “[a]nd so at last these spiritual visits quite ceased; [...] So the young ladies of the castle were more alone than ever.” (Ultor 452) After his misfortune in the glen, the priest stops visiting the secret abode and when he finally agrees to return for the girls’ confession, it is already too late, because Una will be gone the night before the priest arrives (Ultor 462). Also, like Laura, Una is the only one who can perceive her suitor as the amiable person she believes him to be:

“Hark! – listen! – hush!” and Una, with her delighted gaze fixed as if she saw far away beyond the castle wall, the trees, the glen, and the night’s dark curtain, held her hand raised near her ear, and waved her head slightly in time, as it seemed, to music that reached not Alice’s ear, and smiled her strange pleased smile [...] recalling, as Alice fancied, the strain to which she had just listened in that strange ecstasy, the plaintive and beautiful Irish ballad, “Shule, shule, shule, aroon,” the midnight summons of the outlawed Irish soldier to his darling to follow him. (Ultor 463)

The music is destined to be only heard by Una’s ears. Una is already under the spell of the fairy and her destiny is sealed. She has been taken and there is no chance for her to be rescued from her fate to leave for the otherworld. Interesting is the song chosen by Le Fanu, which adds further to the scene: *Siúil a Rúin* is a traditional Irish song sung by a woman lamenting over her lost love. In Le Fanu’s story this could be interpreted in two ways: for one, it might present the lamentation of the lost life and sisterly love, because, when Una has vanished, a purse is found, bearing the embroidery “Una’s love” (Ultor 464). However, it is more likely to be interpreted as a longing for the fairy lover,

“Siúil a ruin” translating from the Gaelic imperative to “Walk, my love”. In the lyrics, the lover has left for war, leaving behind a lamenting woman. Le Fanu turns the story around by telling the reader that it is “the midnight summons of the outlawed Irish soldier to his darling to follow him.” (Ullor 463) and he has power over the woman’s decision.

Furthermore, the song’s alternation of English verse and Irish chorus represents the two worlds that Una is about to transgress. She moves from her enlightened French foreign gentry background to the fairy world which is closely connected to archaic Gaelic/Celtic traditions of the past. This notion is anchored in the contrasting character of Gothic and supernatural fiction during the Victorian period, which has already been explored in more detail in the above. Thus, “the definition of Enlightenment and reason, it seems, requires carefully constructed antithesis, the obscurity of figures of feudal darkness and barbarism providing the negative against which it can assume positive value.” (Botting 3) Una is the representation of a modern rationality which is subsequently consumed by the guilt of the past. O’Donnell’s revenant functions as a physical manifestation of this feudal darkness that breaks out and prevents any forward motion, when progress should take place. Religion and spirituality are part of the old feudal, Catholic system and at the same time celestial support is the only protection against any harm that comes from this world. The chorus lyrics emphasise these notions of spirituality:

Siúil, siúil, siúil a ruin
siúil go sochair agus síl go ciúin
siúil go doras agus éalaigh liom
Is go dté tú mo mhúirnín slán¹⁴⁸
(<http://www.ceolas.org/artists/Clannad/lyrics/Siuil.html>)

“Is go dté tú mo mhúirnín slán” is a blessing, wishing for the protection of the one who leaves, Una in this case. One wonders, if Una’s singing is self-referred and an attempt to protect herself or if the blessing is a mockery because a trip to the fairy world is evidently all but save. Either way, the verses of the song foretell the end of the story. Una returns to her sister’s room once more during this dreadful night but then she leaves quietly by the door, as the lyrics suggest. She does not return but it seems that she has

¹⁴⁸ Go, go, go my love
Go quietly and peacefully
Go to the door and flee with me
And may you go safely my dear. (<http://www.ceolas.org/artists/Clannad/lyrics/Siuil.html>).

become a ghost or a fairy herself because she is frequently seen around the castle and her melancholy singing is often heard in the glen.

5.2.2 Taken by the Devil

Not only fairy intruders or revenant spirits function as abductors, but also the devil himself likes to have his share in Le Fanu's short stories. He claims his victims who have formed a pact with him, but he does not take the innocent like Una in *Ultramarine*. To the reader, this pact is usually rendered in the effect, in the actual abduction, rather than by witnessing the pact-making:

Überdurchschnittliche Leistungen und Erfolge eines Menschen, vor allem solche, die für das allgemeine Empfinden etwas Dunkles und Unheimliches an sich hatten [...] schrieb die Sage gern dämonisch-teuflischem Einfluß zu. [...] Das für das Teufelsbündner-Motiv typischen Moment des Verrats an der göttlichen Welt, die Verpfändung des Seelenheils, fehlte in der Antike. (Frenzel 681)

Le Fanu, who was raised in a dualistic world view, is well aware of the dichotomy of good and evil powers in which traditionally the devil possessed the highest malicious powers to tempt and convert human beings. His powers were recorded in the Bible, presenting the devil not only as a tempter like the snake in *Genesis* but also as a figure challenging God the Almighty:

Again, the devil taketh him [Jesus] up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. (Matt. 4.8-10)

If Jesus had consented in the above, he would have committed a deliberate sin, which weighs more than a sin that the sinner has not been aware of. The devil offers power, fortune and knowledge for the fall from the true Christian God.¹⁴⁹ Jesus cannot be tempted by the prospect of mortal kingdoms and power, but various literary characters were prone to be deceived by the devil, one of the most famous probably being Marlowe's and Goethe's Faustus. The devil features prominently in a variety of Gothic novels, such as M. G. Lewis's *The Monk*, Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* and E. T. A.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Frenzel 683.

Hoffmann's *Die Elixiere des Teufels*.¹⁵⁰ Thus, the devil and especially Faustian pacts are a familiar sight to the reader of Gothic and supernatural fiction:

[...] the figure has been associated with magic, a pact or wager with Mephistopheles, the denial of Christian virtues, insatiable hunger for the pleasures of life, the thirst for knowledge, guilt, suffering, and the transgression of the limits imposed by society and human nature. Faust is always connected to Mephistopheles, a coupling that creates coincidental oppositions of the demonic-enlightened principles, light-darkness, and order-disorder. (Daemmrich *Themes and Motifs* 108)

Horst and Ingrid Daemmrich's definition of the importance of the Faustian pact in literature supports the claim why it is an essential feature of this theses. Evil in Le Fanu's short fiction intrudes ordered life and represents the darker aspects of morality and society. Likewise, those who sin have abandoned Christian values and have transgressed the limits of moral behaviour. Their life is not dedicated to the worship of God but their own passions and wishes. In Le Fanu's fiction, the devil, like Mephistopheles in the Faustus-motif claims the soul of his victims in exchange for the power and fortunes he has given them. None of them can escape fate and must bear the consequences of entering a pact with the devil:

The only occasion upon which he broke through the solitary monotony of his life, was during the continuance of the racing season, and immediately subsequent to it; at which time he was to be seen among the busiest upon the course, betting deeply and unhesitatingly, and invariably with success. Sir Robert was, however, too well-known as a man of honour, and of too high a family to be suspected of unfair dealing. (Ardagh 342¹⁵¹)

In *The Fortunes of Sir Robert Ardagh* an interesting version of the Faustian pact can be found. Robert Ardagh is the last heir of his family and labelled a "dark man; that is, he was considered morose, reserved, and ill-tempered" (Ardagh 342). Despite his unsocial disposition, he takes actively part in the races every year and his bets are unbelievably successful. Although this is quite surprising, his ancestry prevents him from being accused of cheating. Thus, his fortune grows during each racing season in a wondrous manner. His solitary character seems also changed during the racing season when he is accompanied by a stranger:

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Frenzel 690.

¹⁵¹ For reasons of readability, the abbreviation "Ardagh" will be used when referring to and quoting from *The Fortunes of Sir Robert Ardagh*.

Gossip, however, was not silent – it was remarked that Sir Robert never appeared at the race ground, which was the only place of public resort which he frequented, except in company with a certain strange looking person, who was never seen elsewhere, or under other circumstances. It was remarked, too, that this man, whose relation to Sir Robert was never distinctly ascertained, was the only person to whom he seemed to speak unnecessarily; [...] the stranger possessed some striking and unpleasant peculiarities of person and of garb [...] but they, in conjunction with Sir Robert's secluded habits, and extraordinary run of luck – a success which was supposed to result from the suggestions and immediate advice of the unknown – were sufficient to warrant report in pronouncing that there was something *queer* in the wind, and in surmising that Sir Robert was playing a fearful and hazardous game, and that in short, his strange companion was little better than the devil himself. (Ardagh 342)

The account is presented as hear-say, using blurry expressions such as “Gossip”, “[i]t was remarked”, “warrant report in pronouncing there was something queer in the wind” (Ardagh 342), in order to distance the narrator and the original source from what is told. Furthermore, it emphasises the suspicion of the resident population, similar to the mode of narration in *The Dead Sexton*: “but was not Lincote a doctor – and an army doctor to boot – when he was young; and who, in Golden Friars¹⁵², could dispute with him on points of surgery.” (Sexton 381, 382¹⁵³) Thus, the reliability and judgement of the presumably honourable characters such as the gentry or doctors are questioned. Also, we learn that Ardagh's remorse character only opens up in the company of a complete stranger, whose unfamiliar and extraordinary sight already causes suspicion, while he is completely ignorant of the society that he should communicate with. Whoever the stranger may be, some observers might have considered him to be the devil himself. This association of the stranger with the devil or a demon as a destructive entity in a stable homogenous group – like the gentry at the races – is a common phenomenon in superstitious beliefs.¹⁵⁴

First, he seems to be the one whose advice is necessary for Sir Ardagh's financial success at the races. Second, his physical appearance is typical for one of Le Fanu's villains: “[H]e wore a large felt hat, with a very heavy leaf, from under which escaped what appeared to be a mass of long sooty-black hair; - his feet were cased in heavy riding boots. [...] “Sir,” said the servant, “a strange gentleman wants to see you below.” (Ardagh 345) Again, like in *The Familiar*, dress is extraordinary and the figure has a

¹⁵² Golden Friars is a village in which, and around which, many of Le Fanu's supernatural short stories are set.

¹⁵³ For reasons of readability, the abbreviation “Sexton” will be used when referring to and quoting from *The Dead Sexton*.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. di Nola 276, 277.

scruffy touch. Nevertheless, the servant announces the visitor as a gentleman, although a strange one who returns to Castle Ardagh in the dead of the night. His visit causes utter distress. In *The Dead Sexton* the stranger is a “tall, sinewy figure. He wore a cape or short mantle, a cocked hat, and a pair jack-boots [...] He looked like a gaunt, athletic Spaniard of forty, burned half black in the sun, with a bony, flattened nose. A pair of fierce black eyes were just visible under the edge of his hat; and his mouth seemed divided, beneath the moustache, by the deep scar of a harelip.” (Sexton 388, 389) Again, the style is strange and unfamiliar in the rural setting and intimidating because some part of the body, in this case most of the face, is concealed. Both devils are dressed as travellers, the devil in *The Dead Sexton* even brings his hellish horse, a “powerful black horse, something like the great Irish hunter” (Sexton 388). They do not intend to stay like the revenants in Le Fanu’s ghost stories but their appearance is limited to a very short period of time. In the progress of the short stories, they vanish as soon as their task is completed without further delay.

The devil in *The Dead Sexton* is extraordinary because he appears to be a creepy supernatural creature that gets down from the horse “as light as shadow falls” (Sexton 388) but also “I wonder you didn’t hear him trampin’ like a wild horse; and he clapt his door that the house shook again” (Sexton 393). Also, he is generous and eloquent for deceiving purposes, resembling a biblical Satan. Furthermore, he hints at his true nature:

“Saint George, King George, the Dragon, the Devil: it is a very grand idol, that outside your [inn] door, sir. You catch all sorts of worshippers – courtiers, fanatics, scamps: all’s fish, eh? Everybody welcome, provided he drinks like one. Suppose you brew a bowl or two of punch. I’ll stand it. How many are we? *Here* – count, and let us have enough.” (Sexton 390)

The pub of Golden Friars is called “The George and The Dragon”, referring either to King George the Second of England, during whose reign the pub was established,¹⁵⁵ or to Saint George, the patron Saint of England who slew a poisonous dragon. The dragon then is a symbol for the devil, as already the horseman in Le Fanu’s story points out. This refers to the biblical dragon, an incarnation of the devil: “And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his head.” (Rev. 12.3) In the Bible, the dragon is defeated by Christianity and Saint George also kills the dragon to save a princess. The notion of a

¹⁵⁵ Cf. The Haunted Baronet 64.

Satan who longs for worship is missing in this context and the devil styles the innkeeper as a heretic pope, a fisher,¹⁵⁶ when he argues that he “catches all sort of worshippers” (Sexton 390).

In the above conversation drinking is presented as a substitute for religion and Christianity, provided that the future worshippers are able to pay the price. In this case the devil pays for all the people in the pub and everybody drinks the devil’s punch. This way, they become sinners because they commit the deadly sin of avarice and the devil offers another accurate figural description: “Where the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” In the mouth of the devil, this biblical quote from Matt. 24.28 becomes blasphemy, and simultaneously everyone in the pub becomes a sinner. The conversation which follows the devil’s generosity shall be considered later.

Why does the devil consider his claim justified? In the first part of the twofold story of *The Fortunes of Sir Robert Ardagh* the devil claims his wage for his help, for being successful at betting and gaining a fortune. His claim is Faustian in the sense that Robert Ardagh abandoned God and eternal salvation for “zeitweilige Seinserhöhung und ewige[n] Fall.” (Patočka 292) Sir Ardagh’s reaction to the strange visitor makes it clear that they had a pact:

“Can’t you send him away? Why does he come so soon? Oh God! oh God! let him leave me for an hour . a little time. I can’t see him now – try to get him away. You see I can’t go down now – I have not strength. Oh God! oh God! let him come back in an hour – it is not long to wait. He cannot lose any thing by it – nothing, nothing, nothing.” (Ardagh 345, 346)

His agitation is expressed by the numerous repetitions in his speech. It is interesting to see the time factor here, which is also expressed in *The Drunkard’s Dream* when Pat Donnell is allowed to depart from hell for a season. Like in most Faustian Pact situations, the arrival of the devil comes too early for the sinner and although a time has been set, it always seems to be a surprise. These motifs are strong in folklore, having been identified by Thompson as motif M 211, “Man sells soul to the devil” and similar ideas.¹⁵⁷ Despite the notion of the witty human, Sir Robert does not try to outwit the devil but he tries to fight him with human weapons, his sword, his hands and his fighting skills. Unfortunately, physical violence that would harm any human fiend is

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Achilles 180.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Underberg 304-306.

useless against supernatural or hellish powers, as Le Fanu in *The Dead Sexton* explains: “I knew one fired a gun at an apparition and the gun burst in a hundred pieces in his hand [...] and ‘tis next to madness for anyone to go that way to work with any spirit, be it angel or be it devil.” (qut. Moreton in Sexton 396) Thus, Robert Ardagh is dragged out into the night against his will, and on the next day, he is found dead.¹⁵⁸ Only the tuft of sooty black hair in Robert’s hand that was not smashed gives evidence that it had not been a suicide but a struggle for life and death. Ardagh has no chance to survive for two reasons: first, because Le Fanu does not allow any sinner to go unpunished in his fiction and second, because Ardagh had tried to use his human power against the fiend instead turning to God pleading for help. His frequent exclamation “Oh God” comes too late, God does not answer his entreaty.

In *The Dead Sexton* the devil is able to take possession of the sexton’s corpse because he has been accidentally summoned by curious bystanders when they find the victim in the bell tower:

“What d’ye think o’that?” said Tom Scales, the old hostler of the George, looking pale, with a stern, faint smile on his lips, as he and Dick Linklin saunterd out of the coach-house together. “The deaul will hev his ain¹⁵⁹ noo,” answered Dick, in his friend’s ear. [They recount numerous mischief which the sexton has done in his youth. The wounds inflicted by the bell look the same.] “By ma sang, I wonder the deaul did na carry awa’ his corpse i’ the night, as he did wi’ Tam Lunder’s at Mooltern Mill.”
 “Hout, man, who ever sid’t t’deaul inside o’ a church?”
 “The corpse is ill-faur’d enew to scare Satan himsel’, for that matter; though it’s true what you say. Ay ye’re reet tul a trippet, thar; for Beelzebub dar’n’t show his snout inside the church, not the length o’ the black o’ my nail.” (Sexton 386)

Typically for Le Fanu, history repeats itself when the sexton is found dead with marks that resemble those that he had inflicted upon others. What is interesting to note is that the devil’s name is whispered like a secret that should not be heard. The devil soon would possess the sinner’s “brain”, his soul. Simultaneously the church is presented as a sacred haven in which Satan has no power. Because of this, he could not take the corpse the instant when the sexton died. What is more, only after the carcass is brought to the inn, the devil appears as a hellish horseman to claim his tribute. The conversation above even indicates that the devil is afraid of the church, so the corpse was safe as long as it remained there. Thus, when the devil takes the corpse from the inn, he does not function

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Ardagh 347.

¹⁵⁹ i.e. brain.

as God's avenger for the crimes committed against the church but he does work in his own right. Although avarice is immoral and stealing possessions of the church is a sin, it would not directly be equal to a bargain with the devil. Nevertheless, the notion of a twelve-year long absence, which resembles the mysterious absence of Sir Robert Ardagh and the survival of a gun-shot into the temple, might be interpreted as a lapse of time that would allow for a deal with the devil. Joachim Achilles interprets Toby Crooke's fraud against the church as a sign that he is by far not the "reformed man" who he pretended to be and thus the devil's claim is justified.¹⁶⁰

For the people in Golden Friars, the sexton's fate is sealed by his immoral actions. Like Mother Carke, who indulged in witchcraft in *Laura Silver Bell*, he committed crimes against the church and Christianity. Nevertheless, it frightens the inhabitants of Golden Friars when the stranger, the infernal horseman, mentions his name in the inn:

"He's met an accident, sir; he's dead – he's elsewhere – and therefore can't be here", "The man's in Heaven, so sure as you're not," said the traveller so soon as the story was ended. "What! he was fiddling with the church bell, was he, and d---d for that - eh? Landlord, get us some drink. A sexton d---d for pulling down a church bell he has been pulling at for ten years!" (Sexton 390)

While the inhabitants are rather vague about Crooke's eternal whereabouts, the devil suggests instantly that he would be in heaven, being such a good Christian. Blasphemy rings in every word of the devil's description. He trivialises the sexton's theft and asks for more drinks to entertain his company, while he does not drink himself.¹⁶¹

The devil tries to deceive Tom Scales who

happened to be at that moment in a state of mind highly favourable to anyone in search of a submissive instrument. He was in great perplexity, and even perturbation. He suffered the stranger to lead him to the coach-house gate. "You must come in and hold the lantern," said he. "I'll pay you handsomely." (Sexton 392)

In fact, Scales holds the lantern because he is given no other choice by his current state of mind and the power of the devil. Also, Scales describes himself as a sinner and thus it is easy for the devil to have power over him. Instead of paying him a fortune, the Fiend frightens him almost to death. When he recovers from the shock, Scales proposes to the innkeeper to seek ecclesial help: "We've the deaul himsel' in t'house! By Jen! ye'd best

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Achilles 179.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Sexton 391.

send fo t'sir" (the clergyman). "Happen he'll tak him in hand wi' holy writ, and send him elsewhidder deftly. Lord atween us and harm! I'm a sinfu' man." (Sexton 392) Scales knows already what Moreton suggested: human power does not help against supernatural forces like the devil. Furthermore, he uses phrases such as "Lord atween us and harm!" to protect himself from the devil's influence, apparently successfully. Also, he confesses that he is a sinner, although only the ridiculed pseudo-pope, the innkeeper, is there to listen to him. Eventually the devil can abduct the corpse because no measures have been taken to protect it with prayers or Christian rites from the fiend's power, while the guns explode in the innkeeper's hands.¹⁶²

5.2.3 The Devil, the Evil Eye and the Changeling

In the second part of *The Fortunes of Sir Robert Ardagh*, which is only mentioned because "this story, as I have mentioned, was current among the dealers of such lore; but the original facts 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 two narratives are totally irreconcilable" (Ardagh 347), the devil appears to be a mixture between a fairy and a hellish creature. His looks and behaviour remind more of a changeling than of the devil:

Sir Robert had brought with him from abroad a valet, who sometimes professed himself to be a Frenchman; at others an Italian; and at others again a German. he spoke all these languages [...] This man's appearance was, to say the least of it, extremely odd; he was low in stature; and this defect was enhanced by a distortion of the spine, so considerable as almost to amount to a hunch; his features, too, had all that sharpness and sickliness of hue which generally accompany deformity; he wore his hair, which was black as soot, in heavy neglected ringlets [...] he never raised his eyes so as to meet those of another; this fact was often cited as a proof of his being SOMETHING NOT QUITE RIGHT, and said to result not from the timidity which is supposed in most cases to induce this habit, but from a consciousness that his eye possessed a power, which, if exhibited, would betray a supernatural origin. (Ardagh 350-351)

Again, the intruder is seemingly foreign and this even is capable of speaking various tongues which were incomprehensible for most people. The puzzling effect must have reminded of the tower of Babel (Gen.11) and surely caused suspicion. Furthermore, the servant was not a pleasant creature to look at: the description above bears close reference to the description of a changeling. A hunch, the skin is sickly coloured and the

¹⁶² Cf. Sexton 395.

happiness he shows when he finds out that Lady Ardagh gave birth to a stillborn after many years in which the couple's hopes had already been disappointed, remind one of the typical features of a changeling.¹⁶³

The evil eye then has a long tradition in Irish as well as Judaic mythology. Balor, a legendary Irish persona, was said to possess a destructive evil eye after he had looked into his father's potions. A lid that only four men can open keeps the eye closed which would kill everything with its gaze.¹⁶⁴ In the second battle of Moytura the eye is opened in an attempt to destroy Lugh and his followers.¹⁶⁵ In the Judaic tradition and the Hebrew Bible, the eye is one of the most important organs of the body, often associated with good or evil. Nevertheless, the evil eye does not necessarily refer to an eye that can cause harm and mischief but to a notion of antisocial, pitiless or outrageous behaviour towards others. The idea of the gaze's capability to cause destruction, harm or evil became manifest in Judaism and has since prevailed to the middle ages and the present.¹⁶⁶ It is not surprising then that Ardagh's valet became known as "Jack the Devil" (Ardagh 350) among his fellow servants. His mischievous character becomes apparent in the following, regarding Lady Ardagh who despises the wicked creature and bore a stillborn child:

"[...] so, after all the pother, the son and heir is still-born." This remark was accompanied by a chuckling laugh, only, the only approach to merriment which he was ever known to exhibit. [He is scolded by a fellow servant...] and his temerity punished, by the little man's raising his head and treating him to a scowl so fearful, half demoniac, half insane, that it haunted his imagination in nightmares and nervous tremours for months after. (Ardagh 351)

Although his wife is reluctant to have the valet around, Sir Robert is deeply attached and bursts into fury when he is asked to get rid of him. Likewise, he despairs when Jack the Devil eventually leaves. The valet leaves in a carriage at night, only to turn up a few miles from the castle, stopping the same which supposedly should bring him to the next village.¹⁶⁷ Strangely enough, Jack disappears from the story altogether then. What remains of the Faustian pact is the proposed hour when the soul should expire from the body. In comparison to the first account of Sir Ardagh's death, this time he meets his fate in absolute calmness, giving detailed instructions upon his funeral and "when this

¹⁶³ Cf. Curran 32, 33.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. di Nola 130.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Stokes http://www.ancienttexts.org/library/celtic/irish/2nd_moytura.html.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Ulmer 1-5.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Ardagh 352-353.

clock shall strike the hours of three, I shall be anything but a helpless clod” (Ardagh 358). There is no struggle against death or the devil, only defeat and the despair of Sir Robert’s wife and her sisters. Considering the hour chosen by Le Fanu and the biblical importance of the ninth hour – three o’clock in the afternoon – one might discern a well-depicted allusion here. While Jesus died on the cross at three o’clock in the afternoon to eventually surrender his human existence¹⁶⁸ to become God’s right hand, Sir Robert’s death is an inversion: he dies at three o’clock in the morning and thus he is not delivered into the hands of God but into the power of the devil with whom he has bargained as the reader has gathered from the first half of the story.

Joachim Achilles suggests two more examples of bargains with the devil in Le Fanu’s fiction worth noting, namely *The Vision of Tom Chuff* and *The Drunkard’s Dream*. In them, two sinners plead in hell that their punishment should be postponed. A promise to return allows them to live on earth once more, styling their bargain as Faustian which is closely related to the story of original sin. In their case it is only their lives that they beg for, not money or knowledge.¹⁶⁹ Both stories will be treated in the next section on hellish visions in more detail, this time focusing on the experiences of the sinners in hell where they try to negotiate with the devil. In these two stories, the sinners are unable to escape their fate, like Robert Ardagh and Toby Crooke in the above. The bargain with the devil is an inescapable pact and it eventually causes eternal damnation.¹⁷⁰

5.3 Hellish Visions

Not only the devil and Faustian pacts can be found in Le Fanu’s short fiction but the hellish realm itself is opened again and again before the sinner’s and the reader’s eyes. These visions are diverse but similarities can be found throughout the discussed oeuvre. They present a taste of what the sinner will encounter if he or she does not repent immediately. Unfortunately, this warning comes often too late or the impression does not last and sinful lifestyles are taken up again while reason is abandoned.

5.3.1 The Metaphor of the Fall

The original sin was the reason why God expelled Adam and Eve from paradise. Lucifer was filled with pride when he rebelled against God and, therefore, the usurper

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Luke 23.44, Mark 15.33.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Bohnenkamp 97-99.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Achilles 188-190.

was cast out of the heavenly realms, making his fall a literal one. These two examples from Christian tradition show the close connection between sin and the metaphor of the fall. The metaphor has extended, for example, in the phrase “a fallen woman”, meaning a female of bad reputation. Stanley Fish, in his analysis of Milton’s epic *Paradise Lost*, emphasises that sinning is a deliberate action: “To fall not deceived is to fall because you are not deceived, to fall to your own analysis of what is involved in a decision to break union with God.” (241) This also brings in the notion of reason, which has been considered extensively in the forth chapter of this thesis. Although it might be reasonable to resist temptation, “the rational faculty, which distinguishes man from the animals and testifies to the residence within him of the image of God” (Fish 241) is overrun by the sinner’s desires. Considering the importance of reason and rationality, the difference between the fall of Adam and Eve and Lucifer’s fall becomes evident:

Eve is tempted by the serpent and then she tempts Adam to eat from the forbidden fruit,

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. (Gen. 2.4-6)

Their sin was provoked by an intruder from the outside, referring to the conception that sins can be an objective power. This notion has prevailed because Christianity, and especially Catholicism, provides external means to tackle sin.¹⁷¹ In the above, the idea of choice is essential: good and evil were irrelevant opposites before the fall. The fall is then a metaphorical one for Adam and Eve because God drove man out of heaven but he did not throw him down unto earth.¹⁷² Although Eve was deceived by the snake and it might not have occurred to her to taste the forbidden fruit if the snake had not suggested it, she reasoned herself that the fruit was edible. Thus it was her decision to give in to temptation which was only possible because God had given his creation the ability to reason and choose.¹⁷³

In comparison to this, Lucifer’s fall is grounded on a deliberate act against God, although he does not have free will as such because free will was reserved for man. He was God’s best creation and this circumstance provoked his sinning against his maker:

¹⁷¹ Cf. Bloomfield 28.

¹⁷² Cf. Gen. 3.23-24.

¹⁷³ Cf. Fish 241.

Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God [...] Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground [...] (Ezek. 28.15-17)

Lucifer's sins were arrogance and pride and he tried to claim God's throne. The Book of Isaiah is even more explicit:

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lu'cifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground [...] For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God [...] I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. (Is. 14.12-15)

Lucifer committed an act of hybris and tried to become God's equal. His fall was literal and not metaphoric because he was cast out of heaven and fell down into hell, destined to tempt and torture humans until his return which has been predicted in the Revelation of Saint John the Divine.¹⁷⁴ This idea of the fallen angels is also found in the fairy belief in Irish folklore that has been discussed earlier. It should be emphasised here that Lucifer's fall was caused by his own actions and reasoning, whereas Adam and Eve's fall was preceded by temptation. Thus, the consequences are more severe for Lucifer and lead to eternal suffering because he did not give in to a proposed temptation but his own mind was already deliberately set to commit sin, grounded on his hybris and pride.

5.3.2 The Sinner's Fall in Sheridan Le Fanu's Short Fiction

In literature, the fall of Satan has been given prominent attention, for example in Milton's famous epic poem *Paradise Lost*. Here the narration centres on Satan as the first who has fallen and the consequences of his fall in the further course of biblical history. In Le Fanu's fiction, it is not Satan who falls but the sinner. Also, we do not encounter metaphorical falls but actual, physical falls which coincide with falls in hellish visions.

In *The Vision of Tom Chuff*¹⁷⁵, the main character, Tom Chuff, falls into a coma-like state after having drunk too much gin one night. In his drunken vision he finds himself close to the churchyard of Shackleton, in the area where his father and his malicious companions taught him how to be a lawless drinker and poacher. Tom discovers a

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Forsyth 40.

¹⁷⁵ For reasons of readability, the abbreviation "Chuff" will be used when referring to and quoting from *The Vision of Tom Chuff*.

freshly opened grave beneath the beech-tree that has borne his initials for ages. When he imagines his father to cross the moor as he did many years ago, he discerns an enormous black dog in the distance. The beast leaps towards Tom and in his panic he falls

[...] into the open grave behind him. The edge which he caught as he tumbled gave way, and down he went, expecting almost at the same instant to reach the bottom. But never was such a fall! Bottomless seemed the abyss! Down, down, down, with immeasurable and still increasing speed, through utter darkness, with hair streaming straight upward, breathless, he shot with a rush of air against him [...] and suddenly, as he expected to be dashed into annihilation, his descent was in an instant arrested with a tremendous shock, which, however, did not deprive him of consciousness even for a moment. (Chuff 157)

Le Fanu skilfully stresses the seemingly endless fall by elaborate description which contrasts with the sudden and surprising end of the descent. The way down is of course much too long for the depth of a grave and when Tom investigates the new realm around him, he realises that he must be in some kind of hellish assembly room. In the course of the story these stark contrasts of intensity resemble the discrepancy between the endless humiliation that Tom's family has to endure and the sudden reconciliation with family, love, industry and religion. While the fall stops suddenly and the sinner returns to life after his short glimpse of hell, his immorality has momentarily come to an end, only to culminate in the death of his wife.

It is interesting to note that Tom's fall is twofold, like the notion of the fall in a biblical sense. First, both his falls into the grave, on the one hand in his dream-vision, on the other hand, when he is pursued by his brother-in-law and breaks his neck after he stumbled into his wife's open grave, are caused by an outside force, like Eve was destined to fall because she was tempted by the serpent. Second, his moral fall is a deliberate one, like Satan's fall, although it might have played a considerable role how his father had raised him in an environment of drunkenness and violence and therefore predestined him to sin.¹⁷⁶ This assumption would place Tom more closely to Eve who eventually had the option between eating the apple and refusing it.

His sins are yet unforgiven, although he is given a second chance by the old porter in hell: "The command is given to let you forth for one trial more. But if you are found again drinking with the drunken, and beating your fellow-servants, you shall return through the door by which you came, and go out no more." (Tom Chuff 158) Tom's

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Achilles 189.

death – falling into an open grave which represents the door to death and hell – is already predicted here and the reader who is familiar with Le Fanu's fiction will correctly predict that sinners might try to repent but eventually they will fail to act as morally correct beings.

Tom is not the only character who falls in more than one sense. In *The Drunkard's Dream*¹⁷⁷ the reformed sinner Pat Connell turns to religion and repentance after he has recovered from his fall into hell which he experiences after another night of heavy drinking: "When I came to the first landing-place, God be about us always! – the floor of it sunk under me, and I went down, down, down, till the senses almost left me. I don't know how long I was falling, but it seemed to me a great while." (Drunkard 169, 170)

Again, the fall is an unnaturally long experience which is in no relation to the fall from the last step onto the landing place. Also, it is an unsettling event. In this case, it prepares Pat for the hellish council that will hold trial. In comparison to Tom, Pat is told straight away that "if you promise to return, you may depart for a season" (Drunkard 170). It is out of question that he will escape hell. He must return to life to repent. Like in the above, he comes back as a reformed man, trying to behave morally correct and resist all temptation. Nevertheless, fate is against him and a friend of the past urges him to start drinking again. When he returns home, the vision repeats itself:

In going down the stairs, for what purpose can never now be known, he had fallen helplessly and violently to the bottom, and coming head foremost, the spine at the neck had been dislocated by the shock, and instant death must have ensued. The body lay upon that landing-place to which his dream had referred. (Drunkard 173)

Pat dies on the very spot he has dreamt of although he had secured it by additional planks shortly before. In this way, he tried to calm down his mind but it did not save him.

5.3.3 On Hellish Grounds

Le Fanu sends his sinners to hell to experience a foretaste of what will await them when they continue their immoral and sinful behaviour. In *The Drunkard's Dream*, Le Fanu uses William Beckford's novel *Vathek* (1786) as a reference work for his own

¹⁷⁷ For reasons of readability, the abbreviation "Drunkard" will be used when referring to and quoting from *The Drunkard's Dream*.

descriptions of hell. In *Vathek* we also encounter the motif of the descent or fall into hell, when Vathek and Nouronihar try to reach the realm of Eblis:

As they descended [...] the only circumstance that perplexed them, was their not arriving at the bottom of the stairs. On hastening their descent, with an ardent impetuosity, they felt their steps accelerated to such a degree, that they seemed not walking but falling from a precipice. (Vathek 91)

Beckford continues to describe the halls of Eblis as vast and gigantic, first full of gold, delight and lascivious dancers, then inhabited by death-pale spirits, wandering at random, screaming with agony and not regarding each other as if they were alone despite their multitude. Furthermore, torches, braziers and fire illuminate the vault.¹⁷⁸ Here, Vathek and Nouronihar “fall” deliberately in order to gain even more power.

The imagery of hell which is commonly known in the Christian tradition, draws on the classical tradition of Hades. In early Jewish literature, Sheol, the place where the dead go to, is rather a burial ground where the dead are burnt rather than a place of torment in the Christian sense. More elaborate descriptions draw on folk belief and on the epic descriptions of Homer and later Virgil, whose imagery was then extended and elaborated by Dante, Milton and others.¹⁷⁹

“The dismal Situation waste and wilde,
a dungeon horrible, on all sides round
as one great furnace flam’d, yet from those flames
no light, but rather darkness visible
serv’d onely to discover sight of woe,
regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
and rest can never dwell, hope never comes
that comes to all; but torture without end
still urges, and a fiery Deluge, fed
with ever-burning Sulphur unconsum’d:
[...]
in utter darkness, and thir portion set
as far remov’d from God and light of Heav’n
as from the Center thrice to th’ utmost Pole.
O how unlike the place from whence they fell!
There the companions of his fall, o’erwhelm’d
with Floods and Whirlwinds of tempestuous fire”
(Paradise Lost 1. 60-77)

Milton’s *Paradise Lost* has all the typical features of hell: a dungeon-like environment, darkness, flames, heat, sickening odour and eternal torture. God and the hope for

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Vathek 91, 92.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Forsyth 201.

salvation are far removed from the sinners who are condemned to pass eternity in hell. In Le Fanu's works similar descriptions of hellish councils and jury can be found. If his sinners are thrown into hell, they must participate in their trials as passive agents.

5.3.3.1 The Dungeons of Hell

The place resembled a smoke-stained cavern or catacomb, the roof of which, except for a ribbed arch here and there faintly visible, was lost in darkness. From several rude passages, like the galleries of a gigantic mine, which opened from this centre chamber, was very dimly emitted a dull glow as of charcoal, which was the only light by which he could imperfectly discern the objects immediately about him. (Chuff 157)

One may be reminded of *Paradise Lost* here, where hell is a place of darkness. The words to describe this hell, cavern, catacomb or mine reinforce the fall that Le Fanu depicted so vividly in *The Vision of Tom Chuff*. Similar to this depiction of a dungeon-like hell is the court of Justice Twofold, the evil invocation of justice in *Mr Justice Harbottle*:

The Judge found himself in a corridor lighted with dingy oil lamps, the walls of bare stone; it looked like a passage in a prison. [...]Dingy enough it looked, in spite of candles lighted in decent abundance. [...] After he was found guilty, the] place seemed to the eyes of the prisoner to grow gradually darker and darker, till he could discern nothing distinctly but the lumen of the eyes that were turned upon him from every bench and side and corner and gallery of the building. (Harbottle 107-109)

Like in Tom Chuff, darkness prevails and the dim light only illuminates the miserable inmates of hell. The light of heaven, as Milton calls it, is removed and darkness has replaced hope. In the course of the story, Justice Harbottle is forced into another dark vault which is only illuminated by "red-hot chains" (Harbottle 110) with which he is tortured by two smiths. Frequent expressions of darkness dominate these scenes. The second prominent feature is the description of a reddish glow that evokes reminiscences of the fires of purgatory, for example, when they surround the feet of Madam Crowl's ghost or when Pat Connell finds himself sitting at a large table in hell:

I did not know at first was it in the open air; but there was a close smothering feel in it, that was not natural, and there was a kind of light that my eyesight never saw before, red and unsteady, and I did not see for a long time where it was coming from, until I looked straight up, and then I seen that it came from great balls of blood-coloured fire, that were rolling high over head with a sort of rushing, trembling sound, and I perceived that they shone on the ribs of a great roof of rock that was arched overhead instead of the sky. (Drunkard 170)

The light is red and clearly perceived as unnatural and its glimmer has been never seen before. This is not surprising, as a living being would have never had the opportunity to look at the fires of hell. Only characters like Hercules or Orpheus would have been able to have a look around hell and return unaffectedly. Also, the room is vast but closed, indicating a sense of freedom that is eventually betrayed by the enclosing walls and roof. The inmates “can *never* leave this place” (Drunkard 170). Throughout all the stories considered in this thesis, the red, dim light indicates the arrival of a hellish creature, as has already been discussed in the section on revenant ghosts. Another example would be the damned in the hell of *The Vision of Tom Chuff*, who all wear “a faint red halo” (Tom Chuff 158). Hell or hellish environments are momentary visions of the future dwelling of the sinner and when they leave, it is only for a short while during which they try to repent and prevent themselves from a return to their infernal home.

5.3.3.2 Trials, Judgement and Conversing with the Deceased

Le Fanu’s hell is a place of trial and punishment. The sinners who are damned to become inmates of the infernal realm have to face their judge to receive their eternal fate. In comparison to the revenant ghosts who walk the earth, hell is a place where conversations between the deceased, the damned and the soon-to-be-dead are possible. Neither party of any conversation is deprived of speech and argument:

[...] I got up, and I said, “I have no right to be here; I must go,” and the man that was sitting at my left hand, only smiled, and said, “sit down again, you can *never* leave this place,” and his voice was weaker than any child’s voice I ever heard, and when he was done speaking he smiled again. Then I spoke out very loud and bold, and I said – “in the name of God, let me out of this bad place.” And there was a great man, that I did not see before, sitting at the end of the table that I was near, and he was taller than twelve men, and his face was very proud and terrible to look at, and when he stood up, all that was there, great and small, bowed down with a sighing sound, and a dread came on my heart, and he looked at me, and I could not speak. I felt I was his own, to do what he liked with, for I know at once who he was and he said, “if you promise to return, you may depart for a season”; [...] and I said, with all the strength I had, “I promise to come back; in God’s name let me go.” (Drunkard 170)

Pat Connell’s speech is directed to the general audience at the great table in hell and one of the damned answers him. When he repeats his pledge, significantly adding “in the name of God”, the devil, lord of all lost souls, rises from his seat to answer him. Pat’s speech indicates that he is aware that this is not the right place to be for a living, “I have no right to be here” (Drunkard 170), although his wording indicates that he is a deliberate intruder. Also, the conversation shows the power relations on hellish grounds.

The damned one who answers Pat, speaks in a very soft voice and smiles – one does not know if it is the innocent smile of a child like his voice or if it is a malignant smile because he is aware of the horror that will await Pat. The voice of the devil is “terrible and mournful, and the echoes of it went rolling and swelling down the endless cave” (Drunkard 170) and it is in his power to let Pat go for another season. Not only the devil’s words, but also his size and the submissive and pained reaction of the damned depict his immense power. His charisma causes Pat’s courage to wither and his glare deprives Pat of his power to speak. He must be submissive and hold his tongue in front of his superior until the devil allows him to talk. In this scene, a bargain with the devil can be found because when the devil grants the sinner the right to speak, he utters a promise. When he has returned from the dead, Pat becomes a reformed Christian, industrious, pious and kind. His repentance comes to a sudden stop when he meets an old friend who takes him to the pub and forces him to drink (Drunkard 172). Nobody can tell who the stranger was but it might have been the devil as well who came to claim Pat.

Closely related to the account of Pat Connell is the experience of Justice Harbottle in hell. While the reader gets to know what Pat actually says, the judge

[...] actually pleaded! He pleaded “Not guilty”. [...] Nothing the prisoner could argue, cite, or state was permitted to retard for a moment the march of the case towards its catastrophe. [...] “How say you, gentlemen of the jury, guilty or not guilty?” came in a melancholy voice the finding “Guilty”. (Harbottle 108, 109)

In comparison to Pat, Justice Harbottle’s pleadings are not heard. He is absolutely unable to influence the procedure in any way. Furthermore, the reader only learns that Harbottle pleaded, but no exact wording is given. Thus, the judge cannot negotiate with those who hold the trial. The jury does not allow the prisoner to interfere with the decision about his fate in any way. In this scene again, power relations are expressed by the ability to speak. The powerful jury use their voices freely while Harbottle is forced to be silent or to go unheard.

Tom Chuff’s encounter in hell is far more personal than Pat Connell’s: in *The Vision of Tom Chuff* an actual dialogue between him and his damned father develops:

“I’ve been looking for you, Tom. Welcome home, lad; come along to your place.” Tom’s heart sank as he heard these words, which were spoken in a hollow and, he thought, derisive voice that made him tremble. But he could not help accompanying the wicked spirit, who led him into a place, in passing which he

heard, as it were from within the rock, deadful [sic!] cries and appeals for mercy.
 “What is this?” said he.
 “Never mind.”
 “Who are they?”
 “New-comers, like yourself, lad,” answered his father apathetically.
 “What shall I do?” said Tom, in an agony.
 “It’s all one.”
 “But what shall I do?” reiterated Tom, quivering in every joint and nerve.
 “Grin and bear it, I suppose.”
 “For God’s sake, if ever you cared for me, as I am your own child, let me out of this!”
 “There’s no way out.”
 “If there’s a way in there’s a way out, and for Heaven’s sake let me out of this.”
 But the dreadful figure made no further answer [...] (Chuff 157, 158)

Tom and his father’s ghost have an actual dialogue, although Tom’s questions dominate. In the beginning, the ghost greets Tom in a human fashion and beckons him to follow. Although Tom is reluctant, he must follow his father’s revenant. The cries of the damned frighten him and he turns to his infernal companion for information. Tom has to repeat and specify his questions in order to get a more appropriate but far from informative answer. The ghost seems to have retained some of his human qualities when asked what could be done about the situation: “grin and bear it”. One is instantly reminded of the encounter at the table in hell in *The Drunkard’s Dream* when Pat is answered by one of the other inmates who cannot help but smile.

Tom treats the ghost like a living being because he accuses the apparition that he had never cared for him and now refuses to help. Tom, like Pat, uses God’s name but this time it is no use because the name is used in vain in a set curse phrase and thus Tom sins again. As a consequence of Tom’s demands, the ghost leaves him and Tom is in the course of the scene surrounded by other creatures of hell. After he has lost consciousness,¹⁸⁰ Tom wakes up in another chamber. Here, power relations are exposed. While his father spoke with a hollow but derisive voice, the old man in charge of his fate is marked as such by his appearance and words:

This old man’s eyes were brilliant and awful, and fixed on him as they were, Tom Chuff felt himself helplessly in his power. At length he spoke: “The command is given to let you forth for one trial more. But if you are found again drinking with the drunken, and beating your fellow-servants, you shall return through the door by which you came, and go out no more.” (Chuff 158)

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Chuff 158.

The old man has the power to hold Tom with his gaze and then he forces him out of hell again. The wording of his speech, “the command is given” (Chuff 158), indicates, that he is not the one who makes decisions but his power is to exercise them. His voice does by no means quiver or appear fragile. As in the above, we find the notion of the second chance. This time, Tom does not form a pact with the devil but they leave it to him to change his life or be damned. Also, the instructions are very concrete: lead a moral life, stop drinking and stop harming innocent people. Tom is not allowed to speak but he must obey and act as a submissive, powerless character in this scene.

The old man’s words evoke a number of Christian allusions which are essential for the next chapter, centring on sin and repentance. First, Tom is given another trial which refers to the notion that life is a trial and people will receive their earnings in heaven in their afterlife. Second, Tom will “return through the door by which [he] came, and go out no more” (Chuff 158). This door is the grave that he fell into and when he dies, he will also use a grave as his door to heaven, purgatory or hell. In the course of the story the reader learns that Tom falls into his wife’s grave and breaks his neck. The notion that he will never leave indicates that he will definitely go to hell and will be doomed forever. Death is styled as eternal and Tom is denied the Christian hope for resurrection in the afterlife. Typically for Le Fanu, those who are once damned can never escape their fate.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ Cf. Achilles 188.

6 Sin and Repentance

6.1 Christian Rites as Means of Protection Against Evil

As noted above, the evil in Le Fanu is often understood to be a manifestation of some former guilt that needs to be revenged, or sinners are given a glimpse of their future fate in order to refrain from their immoral lifestyles. In order to safeguard oneself, both Swedenborgianism and the Established Churches declare that only true faith and a devotion to God can save the sinner. This protection could either result from participating in the sacraments or in everyday devotion such as carrying a Bible or saying one's prayers.

6.1.1 The Sacraments

In Christianity, the sacraments have received unique standing and importance in the ritual life of the community. "There it became the fundamental system and institution for the perpetuation of the union of God and man in the person of Jesus Christ through the visible organization and constitution of the church, which was viewed as the mystical body of Christ." (James <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/515366/sacrament>.)¹⁸² Their function is varied: purification, initiation, communion, renewal, etc. After the Reformation, Catholic and Protestant (and in the latter course of events also Anglican) believers put varying emphasis on the sacraments. From the twelfth century onwards, seven sacraments were defined as binding by Bishop Peter Lombard, namely baptism, communion, Eucharist (the Lord's Supper), penance, holy orders, matrimony, extreme unction. While these seven prevailed in the Roman Catholic Church, Protestantism established only two or three sacraments: baptism, Eucharist and, to a lesser extent, penance¹⁸².

In Sheridan Le Fanu's short stories the sacraments of baptism and extreme unction are very prominent. Whereas scenes of the holy communion are absent, penance is prominent, providing a means to forgive the devoted Christian's sins.

6.1.1.1 Baptism

For Christians, baptism is the ritual of initiation. Its origin can be found in the Bible, where the baptism of Jesus is recorded in various passages (Matt. 3.13-17, John 1.28-36), when John baptises Jesus in the river Jordan. This marks the beginning of Jesus's

¹⁸² Cf. James <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/515366/sacrament>.

activity and for Christians it is the beginning of the union with God and the Church, his representative on earth (Aldebert 65-69). Although Jesus was baptised as an adult, it was already long-established and common to baptise people as infants during Le Fanu's time, for it provided a cleansing from the Original Sin: "Baptism not only purifies from all sins, but also makes the neophyte "a new creature," an adopted son of God, who has become a "partaker of the divine nature," member of Christ and co-heir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit."¹⁸³

As long as a person was not christened, he or she would not be received into the body of the church, and thus would be more vulnerable to attacks by evil spirits. Jeffrey Barton Russell claimed that "[u]nbaptized, we remain the prey of demons; baptized, we have the power of Christ over them and can repel them with his help." (100, 101) The cleansing effect of baptism is elaborated in the Bible: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22.16) In Le Fanu's *Laura Silver Bell*, Farmer Lew, Laura's foster father, tarries and his postponing of Laura's christening ultimately allows the fairies to take possession of her. This is already indicated in the first meeting of Mother Carke and the fairy prince: "'One name's as good as another for the one that was never christened, mother.'" "How know ye that?" she asked grimly; for it is a received opinion in that part of the world that the fairies have power over those who have never been baptised." (Bell 95) Laura was given a name but it had never been officially confirmed by a representative of God. The incident alarms Mother Carke and she tries to convince Laura to get christened as soon as possible:

"I conceited there would come something o't", she said to herself. "Farmer Lew must git it done nesht Sund'. [...] Farmer Lew was one of that sect who insist that baptism shall be but once administered, and not until the Christian candidate had attained to adult years. The girl had indeed for some time been of an age not only, according to this theory, to be baptised, but if need be to be married. [...] "I mun tell ye there's ill folk watch' ye. What's auld Farmer Lew about, he doesna get t' sir" (the clergyman) "to baptise thee? If he lets Sunda' next pass, I'm afeared ye'll never be sprinkled nor signed wi' cross, while there's a sky aboon us." (Bell 96, 97)

Mother Carke insists on the importance of the sacrament, although she is far from being a devoted and true Christian herself because she frequently practices witchcraft and dark arts. Nevertheless, she seems well aware of the danger and that Laura needs to be

¹⁸³ Catechism 1265, <http://www.scborromeo.org/cc/p2s2c1a1.htm#1261>.

christened immediately in order to protect her from the fairy who wants to abduct her.¹⁸⁴ The postponing of the christening caused the opportunity for deceit and abduction. Also, the old woman realises that this is Laura's last chance because otherwise she cannot escape the fairies. Her fate will be eternally unchangeable. Laura would hear nothing of it but she asks the old woman to tell her fortune, hoping that she will become happy with her fairy lover. Mother Carke knows that the girl is in love and thus would not listen to her warnings. Therefore, she declines any advice but "Say yer prayers lass; *I* can't help ye" (Bell 99), emphasising again the importance of the sacrament. The "*I*" in italics stresses that Mother Carke's witchcraft and spells will not protect Laura from the evil at her heels. Therefore, Laura's reluctance or inability to be baptised seal her fate.

6.1.1.2 Extreme Unction

On the other end of life, the Roman Catholic Christian at least finds the sacrament of extreme unction, which is also called the anointing of the sick or the last rites. The Protestant or Anglican Church does not consider the anointing of the sick a sacrament. These rites were traditionally administered to the sick and the course of time established them as a sacrament for those who would die soon. Roman Catholicism considers the following passage as essential for the importance of the last rites: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven." (James 5.14-15)

Essential elements are thus the prayer of, or with a clergyman and the anointing with oil. It is interesting to note that the application of oil cannot be found in any of the short stories considered here, but the necessity to pray in the presence of and with a priest is dominant because it is essential to forgive all sins before death. Theologians have disputed whether it would be necessary for the sinner – in the Roman Catholic sense – to go through the sacrament of repentance before receiving extreme unction in order to be absolved from all the committed sins or if extreme unction would fulfil the function of both sacraments. Either way, it is important that the sacrament is received while the sinner is still alive.¹⁸⁵ This is also apparent in Le Fanu's fiction:

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Harris 129.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Toner <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05716a.htm>.

“T’sir was there, and prayed for her; but she was past praying with. I suppose it was right, but none could think there was much good in it, and sa at lang last she made her flittin’, and a’ was over, and old Dame Crowl was shrouded and coffined, and Squire Chevenix was wrote for. But he was away in France, and the delay was sa lang, that t’sir and doctor both agreed it would not du to keep her langer out o’ her place, and no one cared but just them two, and my aunt and the rest o’ us, from Applewale, to go to the buryin’. So the old lady of Applewale was laid in the vault under Lexhoe Church.” (Crowl 56)

In *Madam Crowl’s Ghost* the old lady is visited by the priest shortly before her death. Although the priest prays for her, it is essential to note that she seems to be unable to pray with him because of her fits. She cannot repent for her sins anymore and thus absolution seems to have been denied, because only a short time later, her ghost returns to the mansion. The revenant then confesses the sin she has committed by revealing her dark secret.

When turning to *The Drunkard’s Dream* we find that Father Purcell notes in his manuscript that “As the Catholic Church holds her last rites to be totally indispensable to the safety of the departing sinner, no conscientious clergyman can afford a moment’s unnecessary delay.” (Drunkard 165) He emphasises the importance of the reception of the last rites in order to save the sinner’s soul from damnation. It is the priest’s duty to accompany the girl who calls at his door in the middle of the night. She is reluctant to give the name of the dying, and for good reason, because the clergyman admits that

The name, indeed, was most unpleasantly familiar to me; but, however fruitless my visits and advice might have been a another time, the present was too fearful an occasion to suffer my doubts of their utility [...] to visit the death-bed of a presumptuous sinner, to endeavour, almost against my own conviction, to infuse a hope into the heart of a dying reprobate – a drunkard. (Drunkard 166)

Father Purcell knows that his guidance had been in vain on earlier occasions and he doubts that his visit would bear any fruit. Nevertheless, he hopes that his visit might reconcile the dying carpenter with God, although he is a drunkard. The “presumptuous sinner” (Drunkard 168) then, is found in an already deathlike state, although the priest and the girl did not waste any time. The physician who attends the sick attests that the man has died. “[D]ead! without an hour for repentance, even a moment for reflection – dead! without the rites which even the best should have. Is there any hope for him?” (Drunkard 167) For Father Purcell this is shocking because it would mean that another soul would be lost to the devil and hell which Pat Connell had visited during his vision. Apparently the clergyman doubts that there is any hope because the presumed corpse

seems to “embody the fixed despair of the nethermost hell.” (Drunkard 167) Still, he asks the family “to accompany me in prayer, and all knelt down, while I solemnly and fervently repeated some of those prayers which appeared most applicable to the occasion.” (Drunkard 167) The prayer should at least console the living even if Pat is lost. Shockingly, the prayers seem to have resurrected Pat from the dead because all of a sudden, the corpse starts to move when the priest has completed his task and the family is still engaged in prayer. Still, the resurrection does not provoke cheers of happiness at the first sight: “I had often read that the body of a presumptuous sinner, who, during life, had been the willing creature of every satanic impulse, after the human tenant had deserted it, had been known to become the horrible sport of demoniac possession.” (Drunkard 168) Here, the resurrection does not imply the human’s ascent to God as Jesus’s resurrection attested in the Bible. Pat Connell, who has returned into his physical body is thought to be possessed by some demonic creature because he was already a sinful and immoral person during his life and thus it would be his fate to become the vehicle of an evil spirit. Simply put, the deceived would be possessed by the devil, the outcome of his devotion to Satan during his life. Then, the situation would ask the priest to perform an exorcism rather than the anointing of the sick. Exorcisms had been part of the Christian and Catholic practice since the time of the patriarchs, like Tertullian and Lactantius. The sign of the cross, the invocation of the Lord’s name, repentance and fasting would have been appropriate measures against a demonic possession of the body. These measures were still employed during Le Fanu’s time because they were still noted in the *Rituale Romanum* dating back to 1614 and the *Codex Vindobonensis Palatinus* from 1888.¹⁸⁶

However, soon “superstition gave way to reason” (Drunkard 168) and it is discovered that the presumed dead was actually still among the living. His condition is severe but not fatal. It is interesting to note the opposition of superstition and reason here, posing the older, religious belief against the rationality of the enlightenment and the medical advances of the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

In *The Vision of Tom Chuff*, reason and rationality outrun religious belief and the sacrament of the extreme unction becomes obsolete. When Tom sinks into his death-like slumber, it is not the “sir”, as he is often called in Le Fanu’s fiction, but the doctor for whom the inhabitants of the hovel send. However, in the doctor’s thoughts an

¹⁸⁶ Cf. di Nola 345-355.

afterglow of religion's importance can be found: "What the plague is the woman crying for? Could she have desired a greater blessing for her children and herself than the very thing that has happened?" (Chuff 155) The doctor considers Tom's death a "blessing" for the whole family, using a religious term to express the happiness that should be felt now that the tormentor is gone. His exclamation is furthermore tinted by "[w]hat the plague". Thus, the inappropriate perception of a person's death as a happy event does not maculate God's name by making it sound like a curse but "the plague" is appropriately chosen instead of "God's" to merge with the inner opposition of death and blessing.

Also, in *Ultor De Lacy* an extreme unction is abused for presumably evil purposes. When Ultor's father is dying, the young boy is called to his father's deathbed and together with the confessor, he explains the boy's unfortunate fate. "The deeds and this black box constituted the most important legacy bequeathed to his only child by the ruined Jacobite [...]" (Ultor 445). Ultor was traumatised by the cruel handling and what he learned had haunted him ever since. The confession might have brought absolution to his father, but the boy's life was from then on overshadowed by the dark prophecy of the extinction of his family by a revenant persecutor from this moment onwards.

6.1.1.3 Penance and Absolution

"Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5.16), "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1.9) Next to these quotes, also Psalm 51, which has been quoted in the introduction to this thesis, presents some biblical evidence for the possibility and necessity to confess and repent.

The sacrament of penance in the Catholic Church offers an opportunity to cleanse the soul from sin and vice through confessions and acts of repentance after the first cleansing and initiation which happened through baptism. This sacrament had been massively abused during the Middle Ages and eventually led to the Reformation. Martin Luther, one of the key figures of the Reformation, objected to acts of penance such as the selling of indulgences. Nevertheless, Luther approved of the idea of repentance of the individual to gain salvation.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Eberts 255-256.

The sacrament of penance and acts of repentance are essential in Le Fanu's short fiction. Although the Catholic rite would insist on the presence of a clergyman, sinners in Le Fanu often repent in front of other people, transgressing into a more Anglican setting, where the communal repentance is popular, under the notion "all may, some should, none must." (<http://ireland.anglican.org/information/209>.) The idea of repentance as an essential for salvation in Christian religion can already be found in the Lord's Prayer: "And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." (*The Lord's Prayer*) Le Fanu's sinners confess to clergymen of all confessions as well as to their acquaintances:

[...] and it was not until the fourth day [...] that it was though expedient that importunity and impatience were likely to retard his recovery more than the mere exhaustion attendant upon a short conversation could possibly do; perhaps, too, my friend entertained some hope that if by holy confession his patient's bosom were eased of the perilous stuff, which no doubt, oppressed it, his recovery would be more assured and rapid. [...] On my entering the room he raised himself in the bed, and muttered twice or thrice – "Thank God! Thank God!" [...] So soon as we were alone, he said, rather doggedly – "There's no use now in telling me of the sinfulness of bad ways – I know it all. I know where they lead to – I seen everything about it with my own eyesight, as plain as I see you.[...] Look, sir, there is no use in mincing the matter; I'm blasted with the fires of hell; I have been in hell; what do you think of that? – in hell – I'm lost for ever – I have not a chance – I am damned already – damned – damned ---." The end of this sentence he actually shouted; his vehemence was perfectly terrific; he threw himself back, and laughed, and sobbed hysterically. [...] It's only foolishness, " he continued, "for me to try to thank you for coming to such a villain as myself at all; it's no use for me to wish good to you, or to bless you; for such as me has no blessings to give." (Drunkard 169)

Pat Connell, the sinner in *The Drunkard's Dream* awakes from a death-like state and urges his family to fetch the priest for him. When Father Purcell eventually arrives, Pat is almost overwhelmed by relief. Before this day, the priest was doubtful whether his religious support would be any help to reform the drunkard but apparently his experiences during his state of sickness have totally changed him. The clergyman's visit could only advance the healing process. After he has expressed his gratefulness, Pat turns immediately to confession, admitting that he has been a villain and a sinner. He doubts that the priest could help him because he confesses to have looked into the depths of hell and he does already consider him damned because of what he saw in his hellish vision.¹⁸⁸ The memory agitates him and thrusts him into a state of panic and madness. Also, he seems to be forsaken, unworthy of Father Purcell's attendance. Thus,

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Section 5.3.

Pat has already confessed his immoral lifestyle and more importantly he has realised that his actions were ill. After this early confession, he relates what has happened to him in hell. Afterwards he seeks the advice of the clergyman:

At length he said, with an expression of horrible, imploring earnestness, which I shall never forget – “Well, sir, is there any hope; is there any chance at all? or, is my soul pledged and promised away for ever? is it gone out of my power? must I go back to the place?”

In answering him I had no easy task to perform; for however clear might be my internal conviction of the groundlessness of his fears and however strong my scepticism respecting the reality of what he had described, I nevertheless felt that his impression to the contrary, and his humility and terror resulting from it, might be made available as no mean engines in the work of his conversion from profligacy, and of his restoration to decent habits, and to religious feeling. I therefore told him that he was to regard his dream rather in the light of a warning than in that of a prophecy; that our salvation depended not upon the word or deed of a moment, but upon the habits of a life; that, in fine, if he at once discarded his idle companions and evil habits, and firmly adhered to a sober, industrious, and religious course of life, the powers of darkness might claim his soul in vain, for that there were higher and firmer pledges than human tongue could utter, which promised salvation to him who should repent and lead a new life. (Drunkard 171)

Pat Connell obviously fears that his soul might not be saved and that he would have to return to hell and suffer eternal torments. Father Purcell then relates his doubt about the authenticity of Pat's experience. Even though he does not seem convinced that the sinner has returned from actual hell, he is convinced that the evoked terror and fear can have a reformatory effect on Pat's lifestyle. Thus, he suggests that the sinner should abstain from his bad habits and repent. One may note that the priest tells the sinner that no single actions but the overall lifestyle constitutes whether the soul will be saved or not. Thus, his idea of salvation is in line with Reinhold Seeberg's explanation of lifestyle in a Christian-Protestant sense:

„In das inwendige Leben [zur Seele] weisen die Kämpfe der Buße, nichts dient so zur Reifung des inneren Lebens als diese Kämpfe.

Durch sie wird der Widerstand der Sünde überwunden. Mit anderen Worten: trotz der Unterbrechungen, die die Sünde verursacht, bleibt der Mensch auf dem Weg der sittlichen Entfaltung.“ (Seeberg 211)

Therefore, Pat needs to reform his whole life in order to safeguard his soul and turn the prophecy into a warning. Repentance is only a part of the process on the way to the reformed sinner. As one gathers from the course of the story, the terror of the vision and the priest's advice seem to have a positive effect on Pat's life:

I saw that man shake of the idle and debauched companions, whose society had for years formed alike his amusement and his ruin, and revive his long discarded habits of industry and sobriety [...] I applauded his resolution to pay off his debts, and the steadiness with which he pursued his plans of conscientious economy [...] Many months elapsed, and still there appeared no alteration in his resolutions of amendment. [...] Every thing seemed to promise comfort and respectability. (Drunkard 171, 172)

Thus, Pat tries to become a new man in all aspects: he stops drinking, he becomes industrious and he is dedicated to a respectable lifestyle. Furthermore, his resolution is not only momentarily but continuous. The Drunkard has become a reformed man, although it does not seem that he inclines more in prayer and ecclesiastic service than he used to. Rather, his reformation is a reformation of life itself. Although Father Purcell is a Roman Catholic priest, Pat's hopes for salvation are not only justified by the Catholic ideas of confession and repentance but also by the 39 Articles, a doctrine of the Anglican Church:

Not every deadly sin willingly committed after Baptism is sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after Baptism. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and by the grace of God we may arise again, and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned, which say, they can no more sin as long as they live here, or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.

(Article XVI http://anglicansonline.org/basics/thirty-nine_articles.html.)

Nevertheless, Pat's resolution fails when he encounters an old friend who takes him to the pub. They drink, although the sinner was determined to be abstinent. That night, Pat dies, returning to hell after the predicted season.

In comparison to Pat, the sinner in *The Vision of Tom Chuff* did not only reform his life but he also dedicated himself to worship and frequent visits to the church and the vicar. Like Pat, a traumatic vision has caused the transformation:

"Wife, forgie me. I'm a changed man. Send for't sir."

Which last phrase means, "Send for the clergyman."

When the vicar came and entered the little bedroom where the scared poacher, whose soul had died within him, was lying, still sick and weak, in his bed, and with a spirit that was prostrate with terror, Tom Chuff feebly beckoned the rest from the room, and, the door being closed, the good parson heard the strange confession, and with equal amazement the man's earnest and agitated vows of amendment, and his helpless appeals to him for support and counsel.

These, of course, were kindly met; and the visits of the rector, for some time, were frequent. (Chuff 159)

It is interesting to note that the priest, like in *The Drunkard's Dream*, is only to enter after the physician. In this case, the doctor has restored Tom and he is the one who asks for the clergyman and thus for an ointment for his soul. Again, the confession takes place behind closed doors and Tom's attempts to repent consist of this confession and the vows of amendment to become a reformed man. In order to be able to do this, he seeks the clergyman's counsel, thus moving back closer to the church and divine support. Furthermore, Tom does not only ask the priest but also his wife for forgiveness. In comparison to Pat Connell, Tom visits the clergyman frequently and thus keeps himself close company of the divine. So far, both sinners seem to act in a familiar way, but the fear that was evoked in Tom is not as long-lasting as in Pat and his reform is less honest than the carpenter's. His repentance is a bargain with the priest rather than a true act of remorse:

“Ye'r vicar o' Shackleton, sir, and if I sud dee, ye'll promise me a'e thing, as I a promised ye a many. I a said I'll never gie wife, nor barn, nor folk o' no sort, skelp nor sizzup more, and ye'll know o' me no more among the sipers. Nor never will Tom draw trigger, nor set a snare again, but in an honest way [...] ye'll no let them bury me within twenty good yerd-wands measure o' the a'd beech trees that's round the churchyard of Shackleton.” (Chuff 159)

For his pious behaviour, the sinner wants more than salvation. He urges the priest to promise him to bury him far away from the grave which he saw in his vision, hoping thus to escape the misery. The priest consents to keep his promise if he outlives Tom who assures the priest again that he will never harm his wife and family again and that he will take up an honest business:

The effect of the vision upon Tom Chuff was powerful, and promised to be lasting. With a sore effect he exchanged his life of desultory adventure and comparative idleness for one of regular industry. He gave up drinking; he was as kind as an originally surly nature would allow to his wife and family; he went to church; in fine weather they crossed the moor to Shackleton Church; the vicar said he came there to look at the scenery of his vision, and to fortify his good resolutions by the reminder. (Chuff 160)

Tom tries to change and to foster the effect by reminding himself of the terrible vision and the disastrous effects. He also continues to seek clerical support by going to the church and in this way integrated himself again into the community. Unfortunately the effect was not as powerful and lasting, as the above would passage suggest:

He came home one hard night, with signs of the bottle in his thick speech and violent temper. Next day he was sorry, or frightened, at all events repentant, and

for a week or more something of the old horror returned, and he was once more in good behaviour. But in a little time came a relapse, and another repentance, and then a relapse again, and gradually the return of old habits [...] Tom had long lost sight of the honest old parson. There was shame mixed with his degradation. He had grace enough left when he saw the thin figure of “t’ sir” walking along the road to turn out of his way and avoid meeting him. The clergyman shook his head, and sometimes groaned, when his name was mentioned. His horror and regret were more for the poor wife than for the relapsed sinner, for her case was pitiable indeed. (Chuff 160)

Tom eventually relapses into sin because the effect of fear could not bring about true repentance. Even though he tries to abstain from his old habits, they are too tempting and Tom is overwhelmed by his own vice despite the horrible prospects. He resumes his immoral lifestyle returns even more intensely than before because it does not only affect his daily routine but also his spiritual life. Shame governs his behaviour whenever he meets the parson. In the Bible, shame is a consequence of sin, like in the case of Tom Chuff. When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they became aware of their nakedness and thus they felt ashamed.¹⁸⁹ Similar expressions can be found in *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*:

Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. [...] For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. (Rom. 6.18-22)

During his sinful actions, Tom did not mind his state and he did not feel guilty because he was not aware that he should be ashamed. After his vision, his eyes were opened like the eyes of Adam and Eve and suddenly he could see how he had sinned and thus he began to feel ashamed. Now, when he is unable to control his vices, he feels even more ashamed when he meets the clergyman whom he had promised to stay sober and kind. Also, he broke his promise and it is very likely that Tom is afraid that the parson might break his promise too and arrange that he would be buried in the grave which he saw in his hellish vision. Although he knows that his behaviour is wrong, he cannot help but misbehave. Therefore, sin, and as a result shame, advance the death of Tom Chuff and his vision comes true.

While it is Pat’s and Tom’s own fault that they are eventually damned, the daughters of Ultor de Lacy are deprived from the opportunity to receive the sacrament of penance

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Gen. 3.7-10.

and to confess their sins by an outside force. In *Ultor De Lacy* the priest stops visiting the girls after various creepy incidents and thus they are left all to themselves.

“Are *my* children to be left without mass or confession – the sacraments which *guard* as well as save [...] See, Alice, if he won’t come,” he resumed, “you must only *write* your confession to him in full – you and Una. Laurence is trusty, and will carry it – and we’ll get the bishop’s – or, if need be, the Pope’s leave for him to give you absolution. I’ll move heaven and earth, but you *shall* have the sacraments, poor children! [...] and be strict in fasts and constant in prayer – *I* can do nothing – nor devise any help. The curse has fallen, indeed, on me and mine.” (Ultor 458)

Ultor, enraged by the priest’s failure to administer to his children, emphasises the essentials of the sacrament of repentance: it guards and saves the soul. For one, it re-establishes the relationship with God and second, the acts of repentance that follow confession guard the sinners determination to abstain from his or her vices. Ultor seems truly afraid and because he considers his daughters virtuous, there is no foregrounding of a change in their lifestyles like Tom Chuff and Pat Connell, who had to reconsider their ways of living. Confession should solely protect the girls’ souls from evil and ensure their salvation. Therefore, he is determined to get protection from high ecclesiastical institutions, be it the bishop or the Pope, if the ordinary priest does not dare to ride to the caste to provide the sacraments. Also, like Mother Carke in *Laura Silver Bell*, the personal inability to offer any useful support is stressed: “*I* can do nothing” (Ultor 458). Ultor knows that only a correct giving of the sacrament by an ordained clergyman can save his daughters:

“I have been with Father Denis,” said De Lacy, next day, “and he will come to-morrow; and thank Heaven! you may both make your confession and hear mass, and my mind will be at rest; and you’ll find poor Una happier and more like herself.” (Ultor 562)

When Ultor eventually convinces the father, it is actually too late to save his daughter Una. He expects the Christian rites to have a redeeming effect on Una’s mental health. Unfortunately, she cannot confess anymore and thus she is doomed to follow the revenant and become a part of the otherworld.

In *The Familiar*, Captain Barton considers himself an unbeliever: “I am an unbeliever, and, therefore, incapable of deriving help from religion” (Familiar, 59). Nevertheless, in a final attempt he seeks the help of a preacher at (Trinity) College to rescue him from his mischievous persecutor:

“I am deeply and horribly convinced that there does exist beyond this a spiritual world – a system whose workings are generally in mercy hidden from us [...] I have no hope to cling to but one, and that is, that by some other spiritual agency more potent than that which tortures me, *it* may be combated, and I delivered. If this may not be, I am lost – now and for ever lost.” (Familiar 60, 61)

Barton is well aware of the danger and although he does not believe, he considers hell a real entity. Furthermore, he knows that only spiritual support can guarantee protection. Nevertheless, his expressions are vague, God or ecclesiastical advice is not explicitly mentioned, rather he refers to an undefined spiritual world. Only his doom seems inevitable, he will be forever lost if no aid can be found:

“God help you, my poor friend,” said Dr ---, much shocked “God help you; for, indeed, you *are* a sufferer, however your suffers may have been caused.”

“Ay, ay, God help me,” echoed Barton, sternly; “but *will* he help me – will he help me?”

“Pray to him – pray in a humble and trusting spirit,” said he. (Familiar 61)

Praying, which will be considered in the following, is impossible for the unbeliever. Furthermore, his consent is full of doubt. He does not know whether God would assist him, even if he tried to pray. “I stand in the gaze of death, in the triumphant presence of infernal power and malignity. My strength, and faculties, and memory, all forsake me. O God, I fear, sir, you know not what I speak of. Mercy, mercy; heaven have pity on me!” (Familiar 63) After his various unsuccessful attempts to confess his agony to the clergyman, Barton falls into a state of hysteria before he collapses into passive helplessness. Now the powers that try to possess him are infernal and malignant. One may note the allusion to Swedenborg’s teaching here, when Barton states that his memory is possessed. In Emanuel Swedenborg’s teaching, the evil ghosts which accompany every human are able to puzzle the victim’s mind and eventually try to take over and destroy their helpless host.¹⁹⁰ Unable to attain God’s assistance, the captain begs the priest to take over this part for him:

“I implore of you, I adjure you in the name of the Most High, give me the benefit of that influence – deliver me from the body of this death. Strive for me, pity me; I know you will; you cannot refuse this; it is the purpose and my object of my visit. Send me away with some hope, however little, some faint hope of ultimate deliverance [...]” (Familiar 64)

Barton’s fault in his useless attempt to confess and repent is simple: he does neither the one, nor the other. He does not feel guilty of any vice or sin but seems to be an innocent

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Section 4.6.

victim of some mischievous revenant. Unaware of his sinning, he is unable to find God's help and to take measures to protect himself. Furthermore, he asks the clergyman to do this task instead of striving for salvation with his own prayers. His repentance is a farce and far from the essence of the Christian sacrament.

Likewise, Justice Harbottle is misled in his assumption that confession to anybody would offer him any protection from the impending destruction. His condition and general disposition have caused that

[h]e described to his housekeeper, having sent for her to his study to drink a dish of tea, his strange dream in his drive home from Drury Lane playhouse. He was sinking into the state of nervous dejection in which men lose their faith in orthodox advice, and in despair consult quacks, astrologers and nursery storytellers. Could such a dream mean that he was to have a fit, and so die on the 10th? She did not think so. On the contrary, it was certain some good luck must happen on that day. The Judge kindled; [...] "Odsbud! odsheart! you dear rogue!" (Harbottle 111, 112)

Although the judge is well aware of this immoral action, deceiving and falsely accusing others in order to secure the best options for him, he does not realise that only an act of true repentance might save him. Instead, he confesses his strange vision and experience at the High Court of Appeal¹⁹¹ to his housekeeper and affair who is little less guilty in the case of Lewis Pynewick's unjustified death. He has no faith in the church or any other official representative of God. Furthermore, he searches for reassurance rather than for an opportunity to repent his immoral actions. Thus, the address "Odsbud! odsheart" – "God's blood, God's heart" (Tracy 332) as grateful expressions for the housekeeper's misleading interpretation of the dream sound blasphemous. Justice Harbottle fails to confess and to repent and thus his damnation is sealed.

6.1.2 Prayers

One of the most striking features of Le Fanu's short stories is the strong emphasis on prayers as a measure of protection against evil. His characters do not carry holy water or crosses, but they use much simpler measurements in which signs and words are sufficient, namely prayers and the sign of the cross.

Captain Barton in *The Familiar* is advised to pray for salvation but his mind has already been perturbed too much by the Swedenborgian evil spirits so that it is too late and he is

¹⁹¹ Cf. Harbottle, 107 – 110.

deprived of his ability.¹⁹² Others, for example Laura and Alice, try to protect themselves with invocations of God. This refers to the idea that the Lord is “their help and their shield” (Ps. 115.9):

“I do not know whether I dream or wake when I hear and see these sights; [...] May the holy saints keep and guard us!” And in her terror she buried her head under the bed-clothes, and whispered her prayers for an hour. (Ultor 462)

“Get ye heyame, and don’t delay on the way; and say yer prayers as ye gaa; and let none but good thoughts come nigh ye; and put nayer foot outside the door-steyan again till ye gaa to be christened; and get that done a Sunda’ next.” [...] Her fancy being full of strange thoughts, she was frightened, and she fancied that it [the black cat] was haunting her steps, and destined to undergo some hideous transformation, the moment she ceased to guard her path with prayers. (Bell 100)

While Alice invokes the saints as her guards, Laura’s prayers are not further specified. Nevertheless, the effect is the same: they get the girls safely through the night. What is significant in both accounts is the mutual fear of an unnamed evil which can only be averted by praying. By surrendering themselves to God, they are immune from the abductors (at least for the moment): “The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Ps. 27.1) As long as Laura prays and does not transgress, she has nothing to fear. Unfortunately she transgresses the river one day and falls into the hands of the fairies of the otherworld. Alice, on the other hand, is safe because of her pledge to become a nun and the firmness of her belief.

And Peggy Sullivan, the old dame of all work, when, by chance, for she never willingly looked toward the haunted quarter, she caught a faint reflection of its dull effulgence with the corner of her eye, would sign herself with the cross or fumble at her beads, and deeper furrows would gather in her forehead, and her face grow ashen and perturbed. (Ultor 454)

Prayers are even more specified in the description of Peggy Sullivan’s means of protection. She “fumbles at her beads”, at i.e. her rosary beads, thus praying the rosary, which consists of praying the Ave Maria and the Pater Noster repeatedly.¹⁹³ Furthermore, the old woman protects herself by the sign of the cross, which is “a weapon against the spirits of darkness” (*Thurston Cross*). The sign of the cross is one of the most powerful and earliest means of protection in Christianity it seems, as it was already used from the second century onwards and it is part of important sacraments

¹⁹² Cf. Familiar, 61-64.

¹⁹³ Cf. qut. Piers in Lysaght *Hospitality* 406.

like baptism and extreme unction.¹⁹⁴ Thus, the housekeeper is protected from O'Donnell's evil intruding ghost.

One final instance for the trust in the protecting power of prayer and God shall be mentioned. In *Madam Crowl's Ghost*, the old lady has been forced into madness by her guilt that haunts her seemingly since she has killed her stepson. Fear seems overpowering at times:

“The devil can't hurt no one, ma'am, 'bout the Lord permits.” [...] And my aunt med answer¹⁹⁵ again: “Let them pull faces, ma'am, and say what they will; if the Lord be for us, who can be against us?” (Crowl 53)

The aunt is a steadfast Christian like Alice and thus she does not fear any evil. On the contrary, the old lady seems well aware of her sins and thus doubts about her salvation prevail. From the course of the story one gathers that she is doomed because first she is “beyond praying” when the priest tries to bless her with the sacrament of extreme unction and second her ghost returns to confess her guilt.¹⁹⁶

6.1.3 Religious Items

Now and again, a consecrated item is used as a means of protection but these instances are far less frequent than moments of prayer and the sign of the cross:

“[...] but I know there's but one safe way – and – and – keep you each a bit of this – (he opened a small silver box) – about you while you stay here – fold and sew it up reverently in a bit of the old psalter parchment and wear it next to your hearts – 'tis a fragmet of the consecrated wafer – and will help, with the saints' protection, to guard you from harm – and be strict in fasts and constant in prayer [...]” (Ultor 458)

Ultor knows that his daughters can only be saved by God's protection. Therefore, he offers them a piece of a consecrated wafer and reminds them of remorseful fasting and devoted prayer. In the above, one reads the only indirect reference to the sacrament of Eucharist which has been found in the stories by Le Fanu that were considered in this thesis. Basically, the consecrated wafer is a sacrifice. Those who eat this special kind of bread are considered faithful and blessed by the reception of the wafer.¹⁹⁷ In *Ultor De Lacy* it should prevent the daughters from harm. The wafer is only mentioned in this scene, so it is not clear whether Alice had sewn it into the psalter parchment and the

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Thurston *Cross*.

¹⁹⁵ i.e. answered

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Crowl 56, 57.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Goggin <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02749a.htm>.

sisters wore it, or if they did not. As Una is eventually abducted, it is likely that she either did not carry the wafer or that its power was not strong enough:

“Because,” says he, “and don’t you for your life tell non one, only watch her and see – she’s possessed by the devil, and more an half a ghost. Have you got a Bible?”

“Yes, sir, “ says I. For my mother put my little Bible in my box, and I knew it was there: by the same token, though the print’s too small for my ald eyes, I have it in my press to this hour. [...]

“Well,” says he, “be sure you put it under your bolster every night, it will keep the ald girl’s claws aff ye.” (Crowl 48, 49)

Mrs. Joliffe, who used to be the young servant of Madam Crowl, is still superstitious and has kept her Bible ever since the encounter with the ghost many years ago. A Bible can protect because the Scriptures are the word of God and thus has similar effects to a prayer. The idea of keeping the tokens of protection close to oneself has already become evident in the above example of the consecrated wafer. They protect their carrier or the one uttering words dedicated to God: “I will say of the LORD, *He is* my refuge and my fortress: my God, in him I will trust. [...] There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee. to keep thee in all thy ways.” (Ps. 91.2, Ps. 91.10, 11) The idea that God’s protection is immediate, prevails here. Another example of biblical evidence would be, “Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him.” (Prov. 30.5)

6.2 Acts of Sin and Immoral Lifestyles

To sin is to fail in the eyes of God. Already Saint Augustine distinguished between “peccatum mortale” and “peccatum veniale”, i.e. deadly and venial sins. The former are more severe and lead directly into hell, while the latter would throw the souls into purgatory where they would not be doomed forever but cleansed for their ascent to heaven.¹⁹⁸ Traditionally pride, avarice, envy, wrath, unchastity (lust), excess and sloth are considered the seven deadly vices. For Luther, these sins are not inherited by humans but they arise from distrust in God.¹⁹⁹ There is a long tradition of listing and cataloguing sins, but which actions are classified as sins, is varied. Bloomfield suggests that one of the reasons for this is that “[t]he listing of sins has a purifying effect.” (37) For example, “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit,

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Berns 87.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Ebert 252.

lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these things come from within, and defile the man.”(Mark 6.21-23) Similarly, in the *Letter to the Galatians*, it is stated that

[...] ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5.17-21).

Evagrius Ponticus († 399) was the first to catalogue the vices or “evil thoughts”. The basic list appears again and again in his writings: gluttony (*gastrimargia*); fornication (*porneia*); love of money (*philarguria*); sadness (*lupe*); anger (*orge*); listlessness (*akedia*); vainglory (*kenodoxia*); pride (*huperephania*).” (Harmless and Fitzgerald 507) In a Roman Catholic sense these vices lead to the commitment of sins, the acts in which the vice is expressed.²⁰⁰ Evagrius’s list was later turned into that of the Seven Deadly Sins, gaining popularity through Dante and others who made them accessible to a larger group than the ascetic monks for whom they were first written.²⁰¹ Pope Gregory declared pride the worst of all vices because it is the roof of all other vices. In order to advocate the Seven Deadly Sins, he re-established envy as a vice while combining sadness and listlessness into one. Thus, the list is as follows: pride (*superbia*), envy (*invidia*), wrath (*ira*), sloth (*acedia*), avarice (*avaritia*), gluttony (*gula*) and lust (*luxuria*). Despite this traditional listing, the official church also focuses on acts of sins which have been forbidden by the Ten Commandments.²⁰²

In Le Fanu’s fiction we encounter a strong Gothic element when he focuses on sins: either, sin causes madness, which is then a state between salvation and punishment, or the reader follows the sinner down the road to perdition, or, the sinner tries to regain the hope for salvation from within, fighting the demons and guilt that have possessed him.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Cf. Ebert 253.

²⁰¹ Cf. Harmless and Fitzgerald 507-509.

²⁰² Cf. Ebert 254, 255.

²⁰³ Cf. Brown 173, 174.

6.2.1 Transgressing the Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments, which form the basis of Christian living, were given to Moses on the mountain Sinai²⁰⁴ and transgressing the boundaries of these Commandments would be considered a violation of God's will.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images, or any likeness of *any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. [...]

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbour's.

(Ex. 20.3-17)

Le Fanu's sinners are guilty of many transgressions of God's commandments to various degrees. In *Laura Silver Bell*, "Laura's gullibility is a manifestation of her materialism: [...] due to his apparent possessions, indicating her pretensions towards economic progress – and a testament to the phenomenon in the nineteenth century of young country women of aiming by the 1880s to marry upwards. The fairy in fact is an impoverished being – materially and spiritually [...]" (Harris 129). Thus, she covets what is not hers to have. Because of this, she warns the midwife not to take more than she should when she delivers Laura's fairy child. The midwife is guilty of witchcraft and thus worshipping other deities than the Christian God.

Some of Le Fanu's sinners are guilty of stealing, for example the dead sexton Toby Crooke and Robert Ardagh in the first narration of his fate. Both augment their fortunes by taking unjustly. Ardagh gains vast sums by betting, assisted by the devil who

²⁰⁴ Cf. Ex. 19.20.

represents a false god. Therefore Ardagh is also guilty of transgressing the First Commandment. Toby Crooke then steals from the church, an even more severe criminal offence because he stole from God's representative on earth. Tom Chuff is also a thief because he earns his living by poaching.

Captain Barton, Justice Harbottle and judge Horrock are guilty of adultery or coveted what is not theirs because all three ruined somebody's life by abusing a woman. Captain Barton maculated the sailor's daughter, Horrock forced his own offspring that originated out of wedlock to die and Justice Harbottle took Pynewick's wife as his new housekeeper. Harbottle furthermore bore false witness against his former grocer who provided him with lodging and thus transgressed another of God's laws.

Moreover, some of Le Fanu's sinners are killers: Madam Crawl starved her stepson to death and only her ghost could exhibit her guilt. Captain Barton and Tom Chuff might also be considered here because their immoral action eventually led to the death of two women, even though they might not deliberately have caused these deaths. Nevertheless, they are found guilty and thus have to be punished for their transgression.

6.2.2 Blasphemy and Taking God's Name in Vain

One of the recurring transgressions of the Ten Commandments is the disregard of "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." (Ex. 20.7) During Le Fanu's time, blasphemy was still a crime in terms of the secular law, despite the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' emphasis on reason and toleration of other religious groups. Therefore, not only the church, parish and priest could punish blasphemy, but also secular officials. It is interesting to note here that in Le Fanu, blasphemy is primarily perceived as a crime against divinity. Profane cursing had become common among soldiers, mariners and the less lucky groups of society.²⁰⁵ The origin of blasphemy as a crime lies in the authoritative intention of most organised religious groups. Taking a divinity's name in vain becomes a taboo when it would threaten the power of a religious group. These assumptions were already present in the pre-Judeo-Christian era.²⁰⁶

*And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death,
and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that*

²⁰⁵ Cf. Nash 12, 13, 75.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Levy 3-8.

is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name *of the LORD*, shall be put to death. (Lev. 24.16)

Although the above quote is taken from the Old Testament and the nineteenth century had a more optimistic and benevolent perception of God, it is closely related to the Ten Commandments which are part of the *Pentateuch*, the Books of Moses. Blasphemy used to be a severe crime, but was no longer judged strictly in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, for devoted believers it was still an affront. In his fiction, Le Fanu's treatment of blasphemy is relatively simple: those who take the Lord's name or the teaching of the Established Church in vain, will suffer for their transgression of the Commandment.

One of the most striking examples that surpasses the oral blasphemy and ridicules the Established Churches' authority and the sanctity of the Christian Sacraments, can be found in *Mr Justice Harbottle*:

Instead of stumping upstairs forthwith to his scandalous hilarities, his profane company, and his great china bowl of punch – the identical bowl from which a bygone Bishop of London, good easy man, had baptized this Judge's grandfather, now clinking round the rim with silver ladles, and hung with scrolls of lemon-peel [...] (Harbottle 90)

In the beginning of the story the reader is constantly reminded of how immoral the judge's life is and the above scene marks just another climax. The consecrated bowl is abused as a vessel for alcoholic drink. As already noted before, drinking is considered immoral according to the homilies included in the 39 Articles of the Anglican Church. Thus the bowl is maculated by the judge's ridicule of what he should venerate because his office would force him to hold trial over blasphemers. Rather, he is one most extraordinary specimen. His inability to see his erratic behaviour continues throughout the short story, ending in his damnation at the High Court of Appeal and his unavoidable death.

God, and likewise the devil, are often invoked in exclamations. For example, "with the most imploring earnestness of despair, for God's sake to lose no time in coming to here" (Ardagh 355), is how Lady Ardagh implores her sister to come to the castle as quickly as possible. She beseeches God to assist her claim. While this is considered acceptable in Le Fanu's fiction, her husband's talk about his own death, a possible suicide, is scorned: "Sir, you should not jest; you should not even speak lightly upon such subjects.

You trifle with what is sacred [...]” (Ardagh 358). Taking one’s own life which is given by God is a severe crime.

The devil in *The Dead Sexton* also speaks blasphemously, calling Sunday (Sabbath) a dismal holy day and the sinner Toby Crooke a saint: “[...] I have seen the place before – you all looked sad. It was on a Sunday, that dismalest of holidays; and it would have been positively melancholy only that your sexton – that saint upon earth – Mr Crooke, was here.” (Sexton 390)

In terms of Christianity, the devil does not have to fear damnation anymore because he is already damned. His speech is mocking, and his intention is to cause disruption. He also invites all the people in the pub to drink with him.²⁰⁷ Blasphemy was often connected to excessive drinking and gambling, thus representing an immoral lifestyle: “Sometimes a charge of blasphemy also aimed at casting aspersion upon other aspects of lifestyle such as drinking, vagrancy, or gambling, a phenomenon which has a singular longevity.” (Nash 2007 3) The devil might have intended to take more people than only Toby Crooke with him that night. Instead, the characters in *The Dead Sexton* behave like most other characters in Le Fanu’s fiction: they use God’s name as a blessing and protection. The housekeeper in *An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street* may serve as an example for illustration:

“She was oath to let me be going in and out of that room even in the day time, let alone for any Christian to spend the night in it; for sure she says it was his own bedroom.”

“Whose own bedroom?” we asked, in a breath.

“Why, *his* – the ould Judge’s – Judge Horrock’s, to be sure, God rest his soul”; and she looked fearfully round.

“Amen!” I muttered. “But did he die there?”

“Die there! No, not quite *there*,” she said. “Shure, was not it over the banisters he hung himself, the ould sinner, God be merciful to us all? and was not it in the alcove they found the handles of the skipping-rope cut off, and the knife where he was settling the cord, God bless us, to hang himself with? (Aungier 376)

[...] and what made it worse fot he unnatural ould villain, God rest his soul, to frighten the little girl out of the world the way he did, was what was mostly thought and believed by every one. (Aungier 377)

Whenever the housekeeper refers to the malicious judge, she utters a pious exclamation. She has a varied repertoire which either expresses her wishes for the deceased, “God rest his soul” or what she has in mind for herself and the two gentlemen, “God be

²⁰⁷ Cf. Sexton 391.

merciful to us all” and “God bless us”. Furthermore, one of the young lodgers replies to her exclamation “Amen”, thus confirming her prayer. The utterance “Amen” was derived from the Hebrew “aman”, “to confirm”.²⁰⁸ These pious exclamations have a long tradition that can also be found in Irish lore:

The attempted abduction of the bride usually takes place during the wedding meal, but is invariably foiled by the human helper. Usually, conscious of traditional precepts, he utters a pious exclamation (for example, *Dial inn!*, God with us!) when the bride sneezes for the third time; the fairies must then vanish. (Bourke and Lysaght 1307)

Thus, it is not surprising that the housekeeper has never been harmed throughout all the years that she has served in the haunted house, despite all the other suicides and crimes committed by inmates who were persecuted by the revenant of judge Horrock.

6.2.3 The Power and Fear of the Name

Names, and especially God’s name, have always had some special power and significance, as the above examples have shown. But why was so much attributed to the deity’s name in prayer and pious exclamation? The problem of naming was already present in Judaism and the Talmud. Here, the Hebrew “tetragrammaton” represents God’s name. It is not quite clear how YHVH, as it is written in English, has been pronounced. God’s name became a sacred entity and thus the mere naming of God became blasphemy.²⁰⁹ Nevertheless, the above examples have shown how the positive connotation can turn a possible curse into a blessing:

“Like the other fathers, Irenaeus argued that the Christian’s defense against the Devil is Christ. The Devil flees Christian prayers and the uttered name of Christ. Only those fearful and weakened by sin can be destroyed by demons; those fortified by baptism and loyal to their faith are protected by the Lord.” (Russel 87).

Even without baptism, God’s name and praying to God can provide protection, as the case of Laura Silver Bell has shown. Unfortunately, although the pious utterance of God’s name serves as a means of protections, the knowledge of one’s name also invokes power over a person and as a result causes the fear of the name. Again, Laura might serve as the most prominent example. Her name bears significance because of “the ubiquitous belief in the power of the name, the feeling that the possession of the

²⁰⁸ Cf. Thurston *Amen*.

²⁰⁹ Cf. Levy 12, 13.

right name will give the possessor power over the being or thing being named.” (Bloomfield 37) The stranger whom Mother Carke meets only knows Laura’s byname, “Laura Silver Bell” (Bell 95). By accident the old woman gives him Laura’s real name, Laura Lew. Although the fairy states that “One name’s as good as another for one that was never christened” (Bell 95), he abducts Laura as soon as her true name has been made known. Mother Carke reacts with anger when she realises that the fairy knows that Laura was never christened. There is the so-called “fear of the name” (Bloomfield 40) which refers to mechanisms of preserving anonymity because exact naming would mean controlling the person or the object. Eventually the fairy takes over control when Laura has been persuaded to cross the stream into the otherworld.

Likewise, the revenant of Tom’s father in *The Vision of Tom Chuff* is able to force his son to follow him through hell because he is able to call him by his name:

“I’ve been looking for you, Tom. Welcome home, lad; come along to your place.”
[...] [H]e could not help accompanying the wicked spirit, who led him into a place, in passing which he heard, as it were from within the rock, deadful [sic!] cries and appeals for mercy. (Chuff 157).

Tom is welcomed to the place of doom and he seems to be under a spell because the ghost was able to take possession of him. Later, “[...]myriads and myriads of voices were calling him by his name, some far away, some near [...]” (Chuff 158) and thus try to grab for Tom. He faints and wakes up in a small chamber where he gets to know the imposed sentence. He would get one last chance to repent, “But if you are found again drinking with the drunken and beating your fellow-servants, you shall return [...]” (Chuff 158). As the reader already knows, Tom cannot abstain from his old habits and thus his hellish vision will come true.

6.3 The Inevitable Doom

In the above it was stated that Le Fanu’s sinners were offered a variety of means to protect themselves from infernal suffering and damnation. Nevertheless, none of them can escape their fate. The reason for this can be found in Le Fanu’s writing as well as Swedenborg’s philosophy and is fairly obvious:

In order to be absolved from all sins and immorality, one would have to repent truly. The above analysis has shown that this does not happen with the characters in the stories discussed. The sinners have to pay the price for transgressing God’s law and

indulging in one or the other sin, be it gluttony like the excessive drinkers, or avarice like those who crave for money and fortune, or lust like those who tempt and cause others to fall. Therefore, Le Fanu's sinners are not worthy of God's mercy and thus of salvation. This is in line with Swedenborg's philosophy:

Innocence is the essence of every good and good is truly good to the extent that it has innocence within it. [...] Therefore, when they are not innocent, people cannot enter heaven. [Furthermore,] [w]hat I call enlightenment is the perception that we cannot independently achieve good separate from the Lord God in heaven. Without this perception, we cannot attain innocence. (Suzuki, 78-81)

Nobody who was prone to an immoral lifestyle in the stories considered in this thesis was truly innocent. All of the characters did either have to pay for their ancestors' sins (and as it is established in the Old Testament, God does not forgive for many generations) or their own behaviour was immoral and sinful. Because of this, nobody can become good and therefore entitled to be resurrected into the heavenly realms. Le Fanu's moral views are strict and, therefore, he does not let anybody escape their supposedly rightful fate.

In *The Drunkard's Dream*, Pat Connell, one of Le Fanu's sinners who made best progress to get back into the sacred haven of belief, eventually falls because one of his former drinking companions re-establishes his old habits and thus fulfils the prophecy and damns his soul. As Patricia Lysaght put it in her study on the tradition of the Irish wake, excessive drinking often resulted in "unchristian behaviour" (Lysaght *Hospitality* 405). Furthermore, when reading Le Fanu, one gathers that the author is far from willing to transgress his own value and belief system and thus even the best, like Pat Connell, do not stand a chance:

[W]ho can describe the inveterate tenacity with which a drunkard's habits cling to him through life. He may repent – he may reform – he may look with actual abhorrence upon his past profligacy; but amid all this reformation and compunction, who can tell the moment in which the base and ruinous propensity may not recur, triumphing over resolution, remorse, shame, everything, and prostrating its victim once more in all that is destructive and revolting in that fatal vice. (Drunkard 172)

A similar expression can be found in *The Vision of Tom Chuff*:

Impressions upon the imagination, however, are but transitory, and a band man acting under fear is not a free agent; his real character does not appear. But as the images of the imagination fade, and the action of fear abates, the essential qualities of the man reassert themselves. (Chuff 160)

Two essential ideas can be gathered from the above: if one does not repent because it is his or her free intention and will to do so, failure is inevitable. It is irrelevant when this downfall happens because it will happen anyway. Furthermore, if one then fails, it shows the true, immoral self of the sinner and any sin is committed for the vice's sake. In Le Fanu's short fiction those who repent and abhor their immoral behaviour have participated in a laudable task. However, their inability to dedicate themselves to a new, reformed life without an agent who forces them by the fear for their dear lives, can never produce the enlightenment within them that they would need to become good, innocent creatures again. The sinners' abstinence from sin and immorality is only temporary and in this way, any act of repentance is a useless attempt to regain God's mercy and salvation. These have been irrecoverably lost.

7 Conclusion²¹⁰

In the ten short fiction that have been discussed in the above, various patterns have been discovered and explored, concerning the topics of immorality, sin, repentance and guilt. Nevertheless, if the author's vast oeuvre is taken into consideration, a further investigation of a larger corpus of Le Fanu's texts would allow an even more thorough analysis of the complex themes that this diploma thesis has dealt with.

Le Fanu wrote short fiction and novels for more than thirty years of his life. His fiction is situated between the sensational and the earlier Gothic tradition. On the one hand, he features the dangerous Other, castles, foreignness and sets his stories in the distant past. On the other hand, the suspense and terror in his fiction are highly psychological. His ability to merge and transgress these two spheres of Gothic is often found in Irish Gothic fiction, in which he is only one key figure next to Charles Maturin, Matthew Gregory Lewis and even Bram Stoker.

Throughout his life, Le Fanu remained a fairly conservative writer when it comes to moral conceptions in his fiction. Within the ten short stories considered in this thesis, his attitude remained the same from the very early *The Drunkard's Dream* (1838) to the *In a Glass Darkly*-collection (1872) that was published at the end of his life. Furthermore, he rewrote many of his works and turned them into new stories. Thus he was able to deal with a number of themes in greater detail. Especially topics of morality fascinated him throughout his writing career. Le Fanu was a member of various conservative circles in Dublin and although he does not seem to have been an active member of the Established Church, his upbringing as the son of a clergyman and as a student at Trinity College obviously had some effect on his moral views. The rationality and scientific achievements that became essential to the Victorian era and constituted its modernity, are outrun by an earlier Christian perception of the world in Le Fanu's texts. The conservatism of his fiction is essentially found in the Old Testament: One should abide by God's law and God does not forgive any transgressions easily. But not only established Christian teachings, also the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg and Irish folk belief influenced Le Fanu's stories and the fate of his characters.

²¹⁰ The major points and findings of this thesis are summarised in this section without citing specific reference sources in order to avoid redundant repetitions and to facilitate readability. Please see the previous chapters for exact references.

The driving force behind the inevitable fall of any of Le Fanu's protagonists is either a sin that had been committed in the past or a generally immoral lifestyle that causes a transgression of God's Ten Commandments. The protagonists of the stories are guilty of some kind of sin (and it should be noted that sin had been usually committed deliberately) which must be expiated. Therefore, the person who has sinned or transgressed moral norms needs to be punished in order to be reconciled with God.

However, Le Fanu's characters do not suddenly die or become victims of lethal accidents and suffer in purgatory after their death. Their road to perdition is long and most often predetermined by the fact that they do not have any valid chance to be saved from their doom. Therefore, some are haunted by an evil intruder from the past, or by figures from folklore, i.e. fairies or the devil himself, who try to abduct them. Others receive a vision from hell which should warn them of the things to come. Either way, some do recognise the threat they are in, while others try to ignore the negative shift in their lives. Many protagonists try to find rational explanations for the strange events when the haunting starts. Science and doctors are consulted, but no sufficient explanation can be found. Therefore, the protagonist's nightmare continues. In Le Fanu's fiction, the only way to escape the fatal consequences is to turn to God. Prayer, the sacraments and a firm belief in the divine can protect from evil.

Evil intruders such as revenants are manifestations of sin and connected to the past of the haunted characters. For example, they resemble the ones who have suffered from the sinner's actions. They aim to destroy the immoral character and take revenge for whatever divine law was transgressed. Sometimes, the sinner becomes a revenant him/herself in order to atone for the committed sin. They can also function as messengers and reveal a sinful secret instead of avenging it. Eventually, those who are haunted cannot escape their fate and even though they attempt to repent for what they did. Their belief in salvation is not earnest and firm enough.

Because of their immoral lifestyles and sins, other characters are abducted. Usually, the abductor does not have any connection to his victim but is rather a generalised entity such as the devil or a fairy or some creature from a very distant past that tries to expiate a crime that was committed back then.

Only a few sinners who have been discussed in this thesis stand an actual chance to save themselves from their doom. They are shown a hellish vision and if they take it

seriously, they try to repent. Unfortunately, their remorse and repentance is not earnest. After a while, these protagonists relapse into sin again although they pretend to lead a moral life. Most often they confess their transgression of morality, but their remorse is not genuine. No actions of sincere repentance are taken after their confession. In comparison to this, those characters, who firmly believe in God, are not harmed. They protect themselves from evil by praying or carrying consecrated objects such as a Bible. Therefore, the immoral protagonists' lives remain full of vice and it is only a question of time until they have to pay the price for a lifestyle which is considered immoral by the standards of the Bible and orthodox Christians.

The sinners in Le Fanu's stories may for a long time escape without punishment, but in the end they are all confronted with their past influences and doomed to die without being granted forgiveness.

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9 Appendix: Plot Summaries of the Discussed Short Stories

9.1 An Account of Some Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street

This story presents an earlier but quite different version of *Mr Justice Harbottle*. The narrator and his cousin Tom Ludlow are medical students in Dublin. Tom's father has purchased three or four old houses in Aungier Street and the students can stay in one of them because it is not occupied. The house is very old and a fifty-two year old handmaid takes care of it and keeps the house orderly for the students. She remembers when Judge Horrock, a hanging judge, resided there. The judge ended his life by hanging himself from the bannister. After a few nights, the narrator's sleep is disturbed by frightful dreams. He wakes up and sees the portrait of a sinister old man flying up onto the wall. Tom is also haunted. One night he runs into Dick's room and stays there until the morning. Tom then decides to leave for the countryside and asks his cousin to look for new lodgings in the meantime. One night, Dick hears strange noise but cannot find the source of the flapping sound. The next night, he hears the same noise again and he arms himself with a poker to hunt down the monster. However, he does not kill a monster but only breaks the china in a cupboard. Next night he finds out that a rat has caused the scary noises, but he is sure that it has the infernal eyes of the portrait which he saw a few nights earlier. When Tom returns on the next day, the narrator has found new lodgings and tells Tom the whole story. Tom then confesses that he also saw a ghost and that this apparition was the reason why he left for the countryside. He saw the man in the portrait walk across his room. At the first encounter the apparition only passed by the bed, but at the next it was standing at the bed, facing Tom. It then disappeared into black vapour. After this, Tom stopped sleeping in his bedroom until he was overpowered by sleep. When he awoke, he saw the ghost again who had a rope around his neck and another noose ready for Tom. The ghost tried to hang Tom but he escaped to the narrator's room. When he has finished revealing his secret encounter, the handmaid explains whom they saw. They saw the ghost of Judge Horrock who has been haunting the house since he had killed himself with the rope of his bastard daughter. Later, she was his first victim. The handmaid gives an account of other strange deaths that have happened in the house before the students have moved in. When they leave, the ghost stays in the house. Two years after the students have left, the house burns partially down.

9.2 The Dead Sexton

Toby Crooke is the sexton of Golden Friars. Before the vicar entrusted him with this position, he was a scamp. After twelve years, he returns to Golden Friars as a reformed man. He is punctual and seems trustworthy. One night, the housekeeper of his lodgings finds him in her kitchen, roaming through the drawers where she usually keeps her wage. Only this time she has kept it somewhere else. Crooke states that he was looking for peppermint against physical pain. After this incident, the sexton is gone. Later that day, a church bell is found in a boat at the lake and people realise that Toby Crooke is missing. When the vicar and some other men climb up into the bell tower to inquire which bell was found in the boat, they discover the sexton's corpse. Obviously he has tried to steal another bell and various other valuable items such as silver spoons are found. All items have been stolen over the past few months. Some of the bystanders discuss whether the devil will take Toby Crooke or not. The corpse is brought to the inn's coach-house. Suddenly a stranger on a great black horse arrives. There is something strange and scary about the animal and his rider. The stranger pays for all the drinks before he takes a room at the inn. The people in the inn talk about Toby Crooke whom he seems to know. When the crowd has left, the stranger forces the hostler to accompany him to see the corpse. The stranger wants to take away the corpse, which suddenly opens its eyes and its mouth as if it were alive. The hostler flees back into the inn and together with the innkeeper they try to protect the corpse from the stranger who is seen laughing and playing tricks in the window of his room. Both men take arms and wait for the stranger to return to the corpse. When he arrives, they cannot shoot him but their guns recoil and destroy everything except for their target. The stranger, who is actually the devil, puts the corpse onto his horse and rides away with it.

9.3 The Drunkard's Dream

This story was integrated into the Purcell Paper's collection and is told by Father Purcell who is called to a dying man in the dead of the night. The daughter of the carpenter and drunkard Pat O'Connell asks the priest to come to their house where the doctor already waits at the sick bed. The carpenter is pronounced dead when the priest arrives. Nevertheless he asks the family to accompany him in prayer. Suddenly, the assumed dead returns to life, and as soon as the doctor allows, he confesses a hellish vision to the priest. Pat is convinced that he is damned because he sat at a table in hell but was allowed to leave again for a season. He tries to change his life: He goes back to

work, becomes a decent man and stops drinking. Unfortunately he meets an old friend some time later and they end up in the pub. He returns home drunken. All of a sudden he gets up during the night and his wife is sure that she saw two people leaving the room. A loud crash follows. Pat Connell is found dead at the foot of the stairs where he thought he had fallen into hell.

9.4 The Familiar

The Familiar is part of the *In a Glass Darkly*-collection comprised of Dr Hesselius's fictive manuscripts. Captain James Barton is an intelligent and agreeable gentleman. After many years at sea he returns to Dublin and gets engaged to Miss Montague. When the engagement is sealed, he is suddenly followed by mysterious footsteps one night. The next morning, a letter reaches him, warning him of taking the usual street away from his fiancée's house. It is signed by "The Watcher", a synonym of somebody he does not know. Barton ignores the warning and takes the street again a few days later. Again a letter from The Watcher reaches him. In company of his friends he meets the persecutor for the first time. His friends advise him to go home and rest. Barton sends for the doctor and asks him strange questions. For example, if a person who has been pronounced dead could actually still be alive. A few days later an advertisement appears in a newspaper, dedicated to a person called Sylvester Yelland. Nobody answers the advertisement and Barton starts to act more freely again sometime later. Again, he takes the street which he has been warned of from his fiancée's house. This time, footsteps follow him and somebody tries to shoot him. Therefore, Barton goes to see Dr Macklin, a celebrated preacher. He confesses that he is an unbeliever but he thinks that he is damned and followed. He states that he cannot pray for his soul but the priest should do so for him. After a while, his changed behaviour starts to affect the relationship with his fiancée. Therefore, her father asks Barton what the matter is and suddenly he can also see The Watcher. The Captain's future father-in-law tries to follow him but it is an impossible task. The girl's father takes the Captain for a trip to France. At the moment when Barton believes that he is safe, he sees his persecutor again. They return to Ireland and seek refuge in a country house. Barton is accompanied by his fiancée and her family. He is not allowed to leave the house except for the enclosed courtyard. For half a year, everything is fine. Then a maid sees a stranger close to the estate, trying to break into it, when she is sent into the garden to pick some herbs. On the same day, Barton is found unconscious in the courtyard. He did also see the evil watcher and had a vision from

which he awoke in utter despair, sure that he was damned. He is confined to his room where he is only afraid of his fiancée's pet owl. He has a servant who sleeps in the same room. One night Barton is sure that he has heard the dreaded bird and sends the servant to look for it. Meanwhile the door of the room closes. When the servant hears Barton scream, he tries to get back into the room but it is locked. Together, the fiancée's father and the servant can open the room. The owl flies out and they find Barton curled up in his bed, dead. The indenture of another body or creature is found on the other side of the bed. In the postscript it is revealed that Barton seems to have abused the daughter of a seaman called Sylvester Yelland. Yelland tried to take revenge but he was disciplined on Barton's ship and eventually died in Naples of his inflicted wounds, long before his revenant was seen in Dublin.

9.5 The Fortunes of Sir Robert Ardagh

This story has a twofold structure. First, the legendary life of Sir Robert Ardagh in Limerick is described. He is said to be the last heir of his family and has served the army before he has returned to Castle Ardagh, now a wealthy man. He is also a morose and ill-tempered character who does not mix with the other gentry. Only during the racing season he is seen, always accompanied by a stranger who seems to bring him luck. Suddenly the stranger is gone and despite his wealth, the gentleman does not spend his money but becomes even more reclusive. He adapts strange habits close to insanity, roaring and screaming or being depressed and unable to eat and drink for many consecutive days. One night, when his servants are afraid that he might have died in one of his fits, a stranger knocks at the door. He wants to see Sir Robert. When the servant tells him that a visitor is waiting, Ardagh becomes agitated and tries to avoid the meeting. When they eventually meet, they struggle and fight and both men fall out of the castle door and down the brink on which the castle is standing. Only the black hair, that is found in Sir Robert's hand, proves that two people have been fighting and that Ardagh has not committed suicide. After this account, the narrator reveals what has actually happened: Sir Robert was a restless young man and went abroad for a long time. When he returns, he courts two sisters and eventually marries one of them. They move into his castle on the countryside. They give parties and many people frequently visit the castle. Then Sir Roberts brings back a new servant from one of his trips. This servant, Jacques, pretends to be French, German or Italian. Nobody knows anything about him and he arouses suspect. When Lady Ardagh gives birth to a stillborn, he is

the only one who is happy. She despises this servant. One night, he and Robert have an argument and he leaves. After this, Sir Robert becomes morose and indifferent. The festivities at the castle stop for years until Sir Roberts asks his wife to invite many people for Christmas. Lady Ardagh instantly writes to her sisters and arranges that they should arrive prior to all other guests. When the two ladies are on their way, the younger one has a vision of Lady Ardagh who is crying. The vision begs them to come as quickly as possible. When they eventually arrive, it is revealed that Sir Robert has told his wife that he would die that very night. He has already arranged his funeral and nothing can change his opinion. He sees his wife for one last time and when he leaves for another room she tries to follow him. But the door is closed and when it is opened by force, Sir Robert is found dead.

9.6 Laura Silver Bell

The story starts with Mall Carke, the midwife in the valley of Golden Friars, who meets a stranger when she returns from the fair at nightfall. He offers her tobacco but she does not take it. When he inquires about a girl named Laura Silver Bell, she refuses to answer his questions about this girl who is actually called Laura Lew. Her mother had died in childbed and as there was nobody else around Farmer Lew (who belongs to a sect that prefers adult baptism) took care of her. He is not really able to control the girl and thus she can do whatever she wants. After the incident on the road, Laura visits Mother Carke's hut to have her fortune told. Soon both realise that they have met the same stranger. While the midwife met him as a haggard and scary figure, the girl encountered a prince in black velvet who was having a party with his court across a small river. He told her that he was in love with her and wanted to marry her. Mother Carke is aware of the fact that fairy folk is after Laura. She advises her to get baptised as quickly as possible to be save. The advice comes too late. Soon after, Laura and her friend Bessie go out to pick blueberries. They meet the stranger again and while Bessie is scared, Laura takes his hand and follows him. Her friend cannot persuade her to leave with her. Thus Bessie returns alone and nobody ever sees Laura again. Years later, in a night when Mother Carke performs witchcraft in order to find out which other witch has killed her goat, a stranger knocks at her door and asks for a midwife to help deliver the child of Lady Lairdale. The sage femme has never heard of her before but she follows the stranger onto his cart, tempted by the money. She falls asleep on the cart. When she wakes up during the ride, she realises that the fairies have taken her because the cart is

transformed into a hurdle and the gentleman has turned into a bony figure in rags. When they arrive, Mother Carke realises that Laura Lew is the woman who is about to give birth. When the deformed baby is born, Laura tells the midwife not to take more money than her rightful fee because otherwise she would have to stay with the fairies. Also, the fairy would not have been able to find Mother Carke if she hadn't practiced witchcraft. When the midwife takes only her rightful fee, the fairy gets very angry and flings the bag of money after her. It hits the midwife on the shoulder and she wakes up at her own doorstep, determined to stop witchcraft forever.

9.7 Madam Crawl's Ghost

Mrs Jolliffe tells a story to two other ladies that happened to her when she was a young girl. In the story, she is brought to Applewale House near Lexhoe to assist her aunt who takes care of an elderly lady called Arabella Crawl. After she has been warned of the old woman during her coach ride up to the house, she is quite nervous and curious to meet the old lady. Another woman, Mrs Wyvern, also assists her aunt. The girl is given a room next to Madam Crawl's. Her curiosity forces her to walk into the lady's room and look at the sleeping old woman when nobody else is watching. Suddenly Madam Crawl awakes and tries to follow the girl. She hallucinates that the girl accused her that she killed a boy. The girl is scared to death and tells her aunt and Mrs Wyvern what has happened. Years ago, Madam Crawl's stepson seems to have drowned but the circumstances of his death have remained unclear. A few months later, Madam Crawl dies in fits of madness. The servants call for her nephew and heir to settle her business. During this time, the girl moves to another room and there she sees Madam Crawl's ghost, gliding through a wall with a key in her hand. When the heir arrives, the girl's aunt tells him about the incident and he questions the girl. They go up to the room and find a chamber that has been closed up many years ago. When they open it, they do not find a treasure but the bones of Madam Crawl's stepson whom she had locked up in the chamber to die.

9.8 Mr Justice Harbottle

Mr Justice Harbottle is also part of the *In a Glass Darkly*-collection. The story starts by the narrator meeting his landlord who asks for an earlier payment of the rent because he needs the money to move out of his house. He saw the ghosts of two men walking through his bedroom. The house used to belong to Justice Harbottle before he killed

himself. The actual story sets in when Harbottle is on his way home in 1746. He meets an elderly man who urgently wants to talk to him. The stranger reveals that there is a conspiracy planned against the judge. Furthermore, he mentions a man called Lewis Pynewick who is imprisoned in jail for forgery. He used to provide the judge with lodging in Shrewsbury and after his imprisonment his wife became the judge's servant in London. Harbottle listens to the old man and sends one of his servants after him when he has left his house. He does not believe the old man because his looks remind him of Pynewick. His servant is hurt and the stranger escapes the persecution. A few days later, Pynewick's trial takes place and he is hanged. When the judge is back in London, he sees the deceased forger in his court, the blue strip of the rope around his neck. Then he receives a letter by a person called Caleb Searcher of the High Court of Appeal which informs him that a trial will be held against him because he has murdered Lewis Pynewick. The letter also states that Harbottle will be executed if he is found guilty. The judge goes to see a play with friends at a theatre and have dinner afterwards. Instead of arriving at dinner, his coach is kidnapped and after crossing a black moor he and two men who have entered the coach arrive at the High Court of Appeal. There the judge is found guilty and two smiths forge a chain around his ankle. He suddenly awakes in his coach and his two friends are shocked by his yelling. He dream or vision has left him with gout in his foot. The doctor tells him to go to the countryside to recover. He leaves London, accompanied by Pynewick's widow and other servants. In the house at Buxton, her daughter sees the ghost of Pynewick and she sees the hangman. The judge is again very depressed and wishes to be left alone. One of the scullery maids sees a vision of a smith in the kitchen, forging a chain. In the morning the judge is dead, he has been found hanging from the banister. It is believed to be a suicide, a strange coincidence with the date that was given for his execution by the High Court of Appeal.

9.9 Ultor De Lacy

Ultor is the last male successor of the De Lacy family. When he is twelve years old, his father dies. At his deathbed the boy is forced to look at a full-length miniature portrait of a man who has hunted the family for many years. When he leaves France to return to the family castle in County Clare, his bride accompanies him. They have two daughters, Una and Alice. Their mother dies soon and after the Rebellion of '45 their father must flee and the girls hide in the castle, pretending that it is not occupied. They scatter rumours that only fairies live in the castle or pretend to be fairies themselves. When the

pursuit relaxes, their father can return to the castle. He asks a priest to visit his daughters frequently and hear their confession. The first supernatural perturbations affect the priest's secret visits. First, he does not find his way to the castle. Second, he rides up the glen and suddenly a giant falls down in front of his horse. The gigantic human tries to grab the priest but the horse and his rider have already run off. Afterwards the priest gives up his nightly visits. Next, the old housekeeper sees a strange light in the bell tower. He tries to find the source of the light but it disappears before he can reach it. Peggy Sullivan, the dame of all work, sees a stranger on the castle grounds when the light has become a normal phenomenon. He is very ugly and the housekeeper Laurence tries to shoot him. He fails. When Ultor returns, he talks at length to his daughter Alice, who is destined to become a nun, about her younger sister Una's marriage which he is about to arrange. When they walk through the castle, they also encounter the stranger. It is the very man whose portrait Ultor saw when he was a boy. He tries to follow and kill the man but he is not successful. Ultor is determined to bring the priest back to the castle. Meanwhile, Una becomes morose, depressed and solitary. The sisters used to sleep in the same room since their childhood, but suddenly Una wants to sleep in another room, without her sister. When this is arranged, Alice hears strange voices coming from her sister's chamber. She believes to see somebody outside Una's window, descending into the glen. During another night, she hears her sister talking to an unfamiliar voice and she also sings an Irish song.. This happens when their father returns to inform them that the priest will come to hear their confessions. During the last night, Una comes into her sister's room and leaves again. Alice runs to her room and finds her sister in bed, sleeping. When Alice has returned to bed, Una steps into her room once more, closes the door and leaves. She has left forever and only a little purse is left behind. Ultor De Lacy accuses the priest that he has not taken better care of his daughters. Una is still believed to be heard singing in the glen. After her father's death, Alice, now a nun, finds the portrait of the stranger in his belongings and a short narrative telling the story of the stranger who was unjustly killed by the De Lacy family many years ago.

9.10 The Vision of Tom Chuff

Tom Chuff is a drunkard, a poacher and his family's tyrant. After another night of heavy drinking he returns home and demands his usual cup of gin before he beats up his wife and children. However, this time he sinks into a deathlike state so that his wife

sends her sister for the doctor. When the doctor arrives he pronounces the drunkard dead but suddenly the bloods starts the flow at the little wound where he tried to bleed him. Suddenly Tom awakes and seems altered. Tom had a dream or vision of the churchyard of Shackleton where his father used to trade and drink with other poachers and introduced young Tom to his fishy business. He thought to see his father come across the moor. Tom saw an open grave and was suddenly haunted by a big dog. He fell into the grave and straight into hell. In hell, he met his father again who intended to take Tom to his destined place. Surrounded by the eyes and voices of the damned, he collapsed and when he awoke, he was allowed to return on the condition that he would stop drinking and beating other people. After this incident, Tom shows remorse and tries to become a better man. At first he keeps close to the clergyman and treats his family well, but then his old habits gradually return. After a while, his wife dies and her brother tries to set up her funeral while Tom is away drinking. He does not even know that his wife has died. Tom meets his brother-in-law by accident at the churchyard and Tom believes that his vision has come true. He stumbles into his wife's grave and is dead at once. When the funeral guests arrive at the churchyard, the corpse is discovered.

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Abstract in German

Der anglo-irische Autor Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-1873) ist heute fast in Vergessenheit geraten, obwohl er zu den populärsten irischen Autoren seiner Zeit zählte. Sein gewaltiges Werk umfasst neben einigen Romanen und Gedichten eine Vielzahl von Kurzgeschichte und bildet eine Schnittstelle zwischen der Frühphase der Gothic Fiction, die mit Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* einsetzt und der Spätphase des Gothic Revival am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts. Le Fanus Texte bewegen sich zwischen der klassischen Ausformung der Schauerliteratur, in der das Gruseln vor allem durch das Seufzen des Windes in den Gemäuern längst verfallener Schlösser und durch schreckenerregende Monster entsteht, während in späterer Zeit das Grauen seine Ursache oft in inneren, psychologischen Prozessen hat. Aus dem Werkkanon des Autors wurden zehn Kurzgeschichten ausgewählt, die einen zeitlichen Längsschnitt durch sein Werk bilden und eine Fülle von Motiven aufweisen.

Le Fanus Schaffen war von verschiedenen Strömungen beeinflusst, die in dieser Arbeit in einem theoretischen Kapitel behandelt werden. Hierzu zählen die Tradition der Gothic Fiction, Moralvorstellungen der Viktorianischen Zeit, religiös motivierte Konflikte im Irland der Zeit sowie verschiedene christliche Glaubensrichtungen, nämlich der sogenannte Swedenborgianismus nach Emanuel Swedenborg und die Lehren der römisch-katholischen als auch der anglikanischen Kirche.

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich vor allem mit den Themen Schuld und Sühne, die in der Gothic Fiction eine tragende Rolle spielen. In Le Fanus Werk treffen christliche Schuld und Moralvorstellungen, die sich vor allem aus den biblischen Grundideen der Ursünde und der Vertreibung von Adam und Eva aus dem Paradies speisen, auf rationalistisch geprägte Erklärungsversuche der Welt. Glaube und Rationalität bilden einen unvereinbaren Gegensatz in Le Fanus Texten. Während im realen Leben im langen neunzehnten Jahrhundert unter Königin Victoria versucht wurde, Religion und Rationalität bzw. Wissenschaft nicht einander ausschließend zu betrachten, erweist sich in Le Fanus Werk die religiöse Welterklärung als einzig wahre. Obwohl in den vorliegenden Texten immer wieder versucht wird, rationale Erklärungen für das Unerklärliche zu finden, bleibt letztendlich nur der Glaube als einzig plausibles Werkzeug, um die mysteriösen Situationen zu begreifen.

In den zehn ausgewählten Kurzgeschichten geht es um Schuld und die Suche nach Vergebung. Die Protagonisten haben sich in der einen oder anderen Form schuldig gemacht; sei es, dass sie gemordet, betrogen oder verführt haben, sei es, dass sie einem Lebenswandel gefrönt haben, der nach christlichen Idealen sündhaft ist. Hierzu zählen exzessives Trinken, Gewalt an den Nächsten oder Pakte mit dem Teufel. Diese Schuld manifestiert sich in Le Fanus Geschichten entweder als ein tatsächlicher Gegenspieler, der versucht, den Sünder um sein Glück und sein Leben zu bringen, oder als psychologischer Prozess, z.B. als höllische Visionen und Träume, die den Protagonisten dazu bringen sollen, von seinem falschen Weg umzukehren. Egal ob nun eine Person aus der Vergangenheit, ein Geist, eine irische Fee, die eigene Fantasie oder doch der Teufel selbst hinter dem Sünder her ist: in jedem Fall wird schnell erkannt, dass nur die aufrichtige Hinwendung zu Gott den Sünder retten kann. Davor scheitern rationale Erklärungsversuche und allzu menschliche Gewaltanwendung oder Diskussionsversuche mit dem Bösen, das sich Zugang zum Leben verschafft hat.

Nach der Erkenntnis, dass nur der Glaube retten kann, versuchen die Sünder mit unterschiedlichen Mitteln Vergebung zu erwirken. Entweder haben sie die Absicht, sich durch christliche Sakramente zu schützen, oder sie beten, oder, und dies ist besonders wichtig, sie ändern ihren Lebenswandel und lassen von ihrem unmoralischen Verhalten ab. Leider kommt die Erkenntnis, dass das eigene Verhalten jeder christlichen Moralverstellung zuwider ist, viel zu spät und oft nur halbherzig. Letzten Endes gibt es keine Rettung vor der ewigen Verdammnis und die Sünder erfahren keine Vergebung ihrer Schuld, sondern müssen für ihre Sünden büßen.

Curriculum Vitae

Persönliche Daten

Name	Elisabeth Königshofer BA
Geburtsdatum	10. Juli 1987
Geburtsort	Bruck/Mur, Steiermark
Staatsbürgerschaft	Österreich

Ausbildung und Stipendien

Jänner 2014	Zuerkennung des Leistungsstipendiums der Universität Wien für das Studienjahr 2012/2013
Sommersemester 2013	Fachbezogenes Praktikum (FAP) für das Unterrichtsfach Latein im ORG Hegelgasse 14, 1010 Wien
seit Oktober 2012	Masterstudium Anglophone Literatures and Cultures an der Universität Wien
September 2011 – Mai 2012	Akademisches Auslandsjahr (zwei Semester) am University College Dublin (UCD), Irland, mit dem ERASMUS Mobilitätsstipendium
2. August 2011	Abschluss des Bachelorstudiums English and American Studies an der Universität Wien
seit Oktober 2010	Bachelorstudium Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft an der Universität Wien
Sommersemester 2010	Fachbezogenes Praktikum (FAP) für das Unterrichtsfach Englisch im Privaten Gymnasium Sacre Coeur mit Öffentlichkeitsrecht, Rennweg 31, 1030 Wien
Oktober 2006 – September 2010	Bakkalaureatsstudium Japanologie an der Universität Wien

seit Oktober 2006	Lehramtsstudium Englisch und Latein an der Universität Wien
Oktober 2005 – September 20005	Bakkalaureatsstudium Übersetzen/Dolmetschen an der Universität Wien
2005	Matura
2001 – 2005	Oberstufe BG/BRG Mürzzuschlag
1997 – 2001	Unterstufe BG/BRG Mürzzuschlag
1993 – 1997	Dr. Hans Ferbar Volksschule, Mürzzuschlag

Berufserfahrung

August 2013 – November 2013	Praktikantin bei Albatros Media, Grüngasse 16, 1050 Wien
März 2013 – Oktober 2013	Bibliothekspraktikantin in der Fachbereichsbibliothek Bildungswissenschaften, Sprachwissenschaften und Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft, Sensengasse 3a, 1090 Wien
Februar 2013 – Mai 2014	Freie Dienstnehmerin im Bereich Volksschule/Neue Mittelschule bei Österreichischer Bundesverlag Schulbuch (ÖBV), Frankgasse 4, 1090 Wien
September 2012 – Jänner 2013	Fachlehrerin für Latein in der Friedrich Eymann-Waldorfschule mit Öffentlichkeitsrecht, Feldmühlgasse 26, 1130 Wien
August 2012 – Oktober 2012	Praktikantin bei Braumüller Verlag, Servitengasse 5, 1090 Wien
Juli 2012	Ferialpraktikantin in der Wienbibliothek im Rathaus, Handschriftensammlung, Rathaus 6/1, 1010 Wien
September 2009 – Juni 2011	Freie Dienstnehmerin bei Lernen 8, Hörlgasse 9, 1090 Wien

Juli/August 2008	Auslandspraktikum bei Dokoka Farm, Nakafurano, Hokkaidō, Japan
April 2008	Organisation der Ausstellung „Hiroshima und die Folgen“ in Zusammenarbeit mit Irene Konrad im Japanischen Kulturzentrum Wien, Heßgasse 6, 1010 Wien