LEABHARLANN CHOLÁISTE NA TRÍONÓIDE, BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH | TRINITY COLLEGE LIBRARY DUBLIN
Ollscoil Átha Cliath | The University of Dublin

Terms and Conditions of Use of Digitised Theses from Trinity College Library Dublin

Copyright statement

All material supplied by Trinity College Library is protected by copyright (under the Copyright and Related Rights Act, 2000 as amended) and other relevant Intellectual Property Rights. By accessing and using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you acknowledge that all Intellectual Property Rights in any Works supplied are the sole and exclusive property of the copyright and/or other IPR holder. Specific copyright holders may not be explicitly identified. Use of materials from other sources within a thesis should not be construed as a claim over them.

A non-exclusive, non-transferable licence is hereby granted to those using or reproducing, in whole or in part, the material for valid purposes, providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. Where specific permission to use material is required, this is identified and such permission must be sought from the copyright holder or agency cited.

Liability statement

By using a Digitised Thesis, I accept that Trinity College Dublin bears no legal responsibility for the accuracy, legality or comprehensiveness of materials contained within the thesis, and that Trinity College Dublin accepts no liability for indirect, consequential, or incidental, damages or losses arising from use of the thesis for whatever reason. Information located in a thesis may be subject to specific use constraints, details of which may not be explicitly described. It is the responsibility of potential and actual users to be aware of such constraints and to abide by them. By making use of material from a digitised thesis, you accept these copyright and disclaimer provisions. Where it is brought to the attention of Trinity College Library that there may be a breach of copyright or other restraint, it is the policy to withdraw or take down access to a thesis while the issue is being resolved.

Access Agreement

By using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you are bound by the following Terms & Conditions. Please read them carefully.

I have read and I understand the following statement: All material supplied via a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of a thesis is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or for educational purposes in electronic or print form providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone. This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

'They said she was mad': Insanity in the Fiction of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu

by

Valeria Angela Cavalli, M. Phil

This thesis is submitted to the University of Dublin, Trinity College
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of English
Trinity College Dublin

Supervisor: Dr Jarlath Killeen

2014

TRINITY COLLEGE
0 7 JUN 2014
LIBRARY DUBLIN
Thesis 10381

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and that it is entirely my own work.

I agree to deposit this thesis in the University's open access institutional repository or allow the library to do so on my behalf, subject to Irish Copyright Legislation and Trinity College Library conditions of use and acknowledgement.

Valeria Angela Cavalli

Valeria Angela Cavalli

ABSTRACT

This thesis contextualises the work of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu in nineteenth-century debates on insanity. Le Fanu lived at a time when psychiatry was establishing itself as a new branch of medicine, and its advances, together with the scandals related to medical corruption, became topical subjects of discussion in the popular press and in fiction. Le Fanu's knowledge of and interest in insanity were not primarily derived from his involvement in periodical and newspaper culture. He had direct experience of nervous instability in his very household, through contact with his afflicted wife and cousin. Throughout his fiction, insanity is presented in the many various forms described by Victorian alienists, to reveal the author's strong criticism of the increasing ease with which eccentric behaviours began to be labelled "mad", and idiosyncratic, unconventional or troublesome citizens diagnosed insane and even confined to asylums. Particular emphasis is placed on the connections between insanity and alternative spiritualities, and insanity and the "Woman Question", which become predominant in four of his later novels. Bearing the clear imprint of the Victorian "crisis of faith", *All in the Dark* (1866) and *A Lost Name* (1868) show Le Fanu's support of those people who experienced religious doubt, like his sister and wife, and who looked for peace in the occult, just as he did. In the context of the ongoing campaigns for women's rights, of which his activist cousin Caroline Norton was in the vanguard, *The Wyvern Mystery* (1869) and *The Rose and the Key* (1871) express Le Fanu's concern about the physical and psychological abuse experienced by women in their own homes. While investigating the still unexplored relation between Le Fanu and contemporary discourse on insanity, this thesis sheds new light on some of his lesser-known fiction, and offers suggestions for future research on the author.

For my mother, Angela Saibene
(13/02/1949 – 17/07/2013)

And for my good friend Simone Grassi
(05/07/1973 – 22/02/2013)

Loved and missed

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincerest thanks go to my supervisor, Dr Jarlath Killeen, for his invaluable advice and guidance over the years.

I would like to thank the library staff at Trinity College Dublin, particularly Simon Lang and his colleagues in the Department of Early Printed Books. Many thanks also to the staff at the National Library of Ireland, the Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds, and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.

This project could not have happened without the financial support of Dublin City Council, to whom I am deeply grateful. Thanks are also due to the Trinity Trust for kindly covering additional travel expenses.

My warmest thanks go to my parents, for their pride and encouragement from the day I was born.

Many thanks to my friends and colleagues at Trinity College; Ruth Doherty, Laura Habbe, and Triona Kirby, for their daily support, advice and enthusiasm. My deepest gratitude goes to Kait Forrester and Paula Keatley, who read and proofread every single page I wrote.

Thank you to Stephany Micallef, Jennifer Fitzgerald, Maryline Cauvin, Jennifer Six, and the volleyball team of Trinity College, for always reminding me that a healthy mind is in a healthy body.

Special thanks to my good friends Rachel Perkins, Róisín McGarr, Orla Dunne, and Clelia Pagano, who took care of me when I had no time to do so myself.

To the many other friends in Italy, Ireland, and all over the world, thank you for your kind words of support throughout the years.

CONTENTS

Introduction
The Mad Tree: Insanity in the Fiction of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu 1

Chapter One
Subversive Commodities: *All in the Dark* (1866) 48

1.1 The "Crisis of Faith" at Merrion Square 61
1.2 Unsound Objects 70
1.3 The Laughable Supernatural 90

Chapter Two
Family Curses: *A Lost Name* (1868) 105

2.1 The Cup of Madness 120
2.2 Bewitched and Haunted 138
2.3 The Witch 153

Chapter Three
The Monstrous Feminine: *The Wyvern Mystery* (1869) 165

3.1 The Other 181
3.2 The Monster in the Mirror 202

Chapter Four
The Demon in the House: *The Rose and the Key* (1871) 221

4.1 The Demon in the House 235
4.2 The Ghost of the Father 261

Conclusion 281

Bibliography 289

INTRODUCTION

The Mad Tree: Insanity in the Fiction of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu

'The world is a mad tree, and we are branches', says Sir Jekyl Marlowe in *Guy Deverell* (1865).[1] The nineteenth century was a revolutionary era for the study of the mind: hundreds of asylums were erected all over Britain with the specific aim of treating and curing the insane, and the alienist imposed himself as the sole expert in the new medical branch of psychiatry. Coming from a family afflicted with nervous disorders, and being very much a man of his time, the Irish writer Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu shows particular interest in the topical subject of insanity, and throughout his fictional work he lingers on the many different branches of madness recognised by Victorian psychiatry. This thesis will focus on Le Fanu's use of the trope of insanity in order to show the author's suspicion and strong criticism of the increasing ease with which eccentric behaviours began to be labelled "mad", and idiosyncratic citizens diagnosed insane and even confined to asylums through the nineteenth century. Particular attention will be given to the connection between mental instability and both alternative spiritualities and the "Woman Question". Although these links recur in much of Le Fanu's work, they become predominant in four of his late novels, namely *All in the Dark* (1866), *A Lost Name* (1868), *The Wyvern Mystery* (1869), and *The Rose and the Key* (1871), which will therefore be analysed individually in the body of this dissertation. This introductory chapter will first offer a historical context for the emergence of modern psychiatry and position Le Fanu in the debate surrounding the treatment of the insane. It will then consider some examples from the broad range of Le Fanu's fiction in which madness is present, but not prominent, and finally place this research in the current scholarship on the author.

---

[1] J. S. Le Fanu, *Guy Deverell*, *Dublin University Magazine* (January-July 1865); quotation from the April issue, pp. 417-50, p. 430.

According to Andrew Scull, one of the leading historians of psychiatry, '[o]ver the course of the first half of the nineteenth century, [...] the typical response to the deranged underwent dramatic and radical changes'.[2] First of all, insanity was no longer considered as a nebulous, 'culturally defined phenomenon', but was instead recognised as an illness which could be diagnosed, treated, and possibly cured by the rising figure of the mind-doctor, the so-called alienist.[3] The insane, then, were identified as individuals different from the poor or the unruly, with whom they had so far shared a place in the workhouse or the prison. On the basis of their difference, the insane were now to be confined in specific institutions, the lunatic asylums, not chiefly to protect society from the dangerous deranged, but instead to heal the afflicted and allow their possible reintegration in the community.[4] However, despite these revolutionary ideas in the treatment of the insane, and the general optimism surrounding them, the nineteenth century also witnessed an increasingly common fear of the nightmarish possibility of not only actually going insane, of being locked up in a lunatic asylum to be forever silenced and forgotten, but also of being wrongfully incarcerated in a madhouse by antagonistic relations, restless spouses or greedy parents. How this significant shift in the perception of insanity and of the asylum institution came about can be explained through a brief overview of the history of madness.[5]

---

[2] Andrew Scull, 'Psychiatry and Social Control in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', *History of Psychiatry*, No. 2 (1991), pp. 149-69, p. 149.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., pp. 149-50.

[5] For this brief introduction of the history of madness I make reference to the following texts: Roy Porter, *Madness: a Brief History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), *Madmen: a Social History of Madhouses, Mad Doctors & Lunatics* (Stroud: Tempus, 2004), W.F. Bynum, Roy Porter, and Michael Shepherd, eds, *Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry,* 2 Vols (London: Routledge, 2004), Roy Porter and David Wright, eds, *The Confinement of the Insane: International Perspectives, 1800-1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); William F. Bynum, 'Psychiatry in its Historical Context', M. Shepherd and O. L. Zangwill, eds, *Handbook of Psychiatry: General Psychopathology*, 5 Vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), Vol. 1, pp. 11-38; Andrew Scull, ed., *Madhouses, Mad-doctors, and Madmen: the Social History of Psychiatry in the Victorian Era* (London: Athlone, 1981); Janet Oppenheim, *"Shattered Nerves": Doctors, Patients, and Depression in Victorian England* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and the English Culture 1830-1980* (London: Virago, 1987); Michel Foucault, *History of Madness* (London: Routledge, 2006), and *Madness and Civilization: a History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2001).

Roy Porter, another eminent name in the history of psychiatry, has affirmed that '[m]adness may be as old as mankind'.[6] From the study of human remains dating as early as BCE 5000, archaeologists have theorised that ancient civilizations believed that madness was both 'judgement and punishment' inflicted by supernatural entities.[7] The Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, and even the early Greeks believed that diseases and illnesses were the will of the gods, and therefore turned to "priest-doctors" for help, and practised incantations and sacrifices as forms of therapy.[8] The modern idea of the "psyche" developed in Greece only around the fifth and fourth centuries BC, when philosophy and medicine began to challenge the belief in a supernatural cause of illness and insanity.[9] It began to be recognised that humans were not simply driven mad by external forces, but could also 'bring their own madness upon themselves', through pride, grief, shame, or guilt.[10] Madness, then, was taken away from the gods and naturalised.

The medical theories developed by Hippocrates and his disciples explained health and illness (both physical and psychological) according to the balance or imbalance of the bodily humours.[11] The so-called humours were believed to be four distinct kinds of fluid: blood (vitality), choler or yellow bile (gastric acid), phlegm (various lubricant and coolant secretions), and black bile or melancholy (a problematic juice accountable for darkening the other fluids). With regards to mental illness, a surplus of either blood or yellow bile could cause mania, while an excess of black bile would induce melancholy or depression.[12] Therapy involved a change of diet and, in the specific case of mania, venesection (blood-

---

[6] Porter, *Madness: a Brief History*, p. 10.
[7] Ibid., 10-13. Archaeologists have found skulls which show signs of trepanation, and they have interpreted that as an attempt to allow the demon possessing the person to escape.
[8] Ibid., pp. 15, 34. On the Greeks, see also Bynum, pp. 12-16.
[9] Porter, p. 14.
[10] Ibid., pp. 15, 35-6; quote p. 15.
[11] Ibid., pp. 36-43; Bynum, p. 13.
[12] Porter, particularly pp. 41-2.

letting), a practice that was still in use in the nineteenth century.[13] In pre-Christian times, the insane were considered the responsibility of their families.[14]

With the advent of Christianity, Porter explains, there was a return to a belief in the supernatural as the main cause of insanity: '[u]nlike Greek philosophy, Christianity denied that reason was the essence of man: what counted were sin, divine will, and love, and a believer's faith'.[15] Although the Church sustained the idea of a "good madness", manifested in the ecstasy and revelations of the saints and prophets, insanity was generally associated with diabolic possession, and treated with exorcisms, masses, prayer, and Bible-reading.[16] Between the late fifteenth century and the end of the seventeenth century, over 200,000 people (mainly women) became victims of a witch craze in Europe alone.[17] The brutality of heresy-hunting, together with the bloodshed caused by the religious wars that stirred those centuries, eventually began to foment public scepticism about diabolical invasion and condemnation of religio-political extremism.[18] Doctors and philosophers found new confidence in advancing organic reasons for diseases and illnesses. The famous doctrine of humours was still widely accepted, and reached its peak in popularity with Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621).[19]

However, it was also in the seventeenth century that the association of madness with the human mind received particular attention, thanks to the influential work of René Descartes. Descartes identified the mind with the soul, and claimed that it provided man with consciousness, rationality, moral responsibility, and immortality.[20] Although the mind itself was immaterial, Descartes placed it inside the brain, a theory which challenged the contemporary study of madness as 'it implied that as consciousness was inherently and definitionally rational, insanity, precisely like regular physical illnesses, must derive from

---

[13] Ibid.
[14] Bynum, p. 16.
[15] Ibid., p. 17. On the Christian era, see pp. 17-33.
[16] Porter, p. 19.
[17] Ibid., 25; Bynum, pp. 19-21.
[18] Porter, pp. 25, 28; Porter, Bynum, Shepherd, eds, p. 3.
[19] Porter, p 52.
[20] Ibid., pp. 56-8; Bynum, p. 22.

the body, or be a consequence of some very precarious connections in the brain'.[21] Upon these premises, materialists like Thomas Hobbes re-interpreted "diabolical intervention" and "witchcraft" as misinterpretations of behaviours originating in organic disorders of the brain. Similarly, and significally, intense religious enthusiasm also came to be considered as a delusion of the mind. The seventeenth century closed with John Locke's optimistic reflections on madness. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), Locke agreed that insanity was the fruit of delusion, but attributed delusion to an error of cognition: 'Mad Men put wrong Ideas together, and so make wrong Propositions, but argue and reason right from them'. Therefore, madmen could be taught to think correctly.[22]

The eighteenth century medicalised Locke's philosophical thinking on the mind, counting mainly on the scientific work of William Cullen and of his disciple Thomas Arnold (whose work continued in the first decade of the nineteenth century). Cullen attributed insanity both to an organic irritation of the brain, which would affect the body via the nerves (he coined the word "neurosis"), and to a mental disorder, psychological in nature; a theory which was supported and developed by Arnold in the second half of the century.[23] Madness, then, was no longer a matter of humours or supernatural possession, but was rather a natural phenomenon which had both somatic and psychological causes. Either way, the insane person was not to be feared and punished, but pitied and treated. In fact, until the end of the eighteenth century, the harmless melancholic and "idiot" had remained under the care of their families and been tolerated to roam, while the dangerous insane had been confined in order to protect society. Religious houses, workhouses, prisons and hospitals had over the centuries kept thousands of mentally unstable people, who were treated in the same inhumane manner as beggars, orphans, prostitutes, thieves, and criminals. Since insanity was considered to consist of a lack of reason, the insane were seen as having been reduced to the status of animals, and treated as such. Violence,

[21] Porter, p. 58.
[22] Ibid., pp. 59-60, quote p. 60.
[23] Ibid., 127-9; Bynum, pp. 24-7.

restraint, drugs, bloodletting, purges and forced vomiting were commonly applied in order to manage the deranged.[24]

The revolutionary switch from containment to treatment happened in the very last years of the eighteenth century, and took off in the first decades of the nineteenth century. The Retreat Asylum at York was founded in 1796 by the tea merchant and Quaker William Tuke, and was the first charitable institution to promote kindness in the care of the insane.[25] More and more asylums were opened in the early 1800s, under the management of both lay and medical superintendents. As Elaine Showalter has pointed out in *The Female Malady* (1985), therapeutic optimism mirrored contemporary economic and political successes. Internal economic growth brought about by industrial advances, together with the intercontinental expansion of the Empire, nurtured the feeling that 'no conquest seemed impossible'.[26] Philanthropists and medical practitioners alike believed that lunatics could actually be cured of their illnesses and reintegrated into society. The new way of dealing with the insane was termed "moral management" and revolved around the innovative theory of the domestication of insanity: lunatics were treated like children, to be (re)educated back into the community through the same balance of kindness and authority which was applied by fathers to preserve order within the family. Asylums took the shape of home-like structures, and were initially managed by a superintendant and his wife, playing the role of father and mother.[27] The practice of non-restraint became increasingly popular in the first half of the nineteenth century, thanks to the pioneering work of both lay and medical men: three generations of Tukes at the Retreat, William Ellis at Wakefield asylum in the 1820s, Robert Gardiner Hill at Lincoln asylum in the 1830s, and most importantly, John Conolly at Hanwell asylum in the 1830s and 1840s. Conolly's

---

[24] Porter, Ch. 5; Bynum, p. 24; Porter, Bynum, Shepherd, eds, pp. 16, 21-2.
[25] On the Retreat, see Janet Anne Digby, 'Moral Treatment at the Retreat 1796-1845', in Bynum, Porter and Shepherd, eds, *Anatomy of Madness*, Vol. 2, pp. 52-72.
[26] Showalter, p. 33.
[27] On moral management, see Showalter, Ch. 1.

charisma (initially, at least) made moral management 'a world-known success', and 'the symbol of Victorian psychiatric leadership'.[28]

However, over time, moral management, the supposedly peaceful process of liberating the mad from the shackles of insanity, revealed itself as a powerful form of social control. Non-restraint treatment certainly promoted the abandonment of physical constraints, but only to introduce a more effective practice of mental abuse and psychological control.[29] Moral management was based on the tension between moral discipline and self-government, punishment and reward, guilt and remorse, and had the ultimate aim of enforcing conformity. This 'moral machinery', as Dr William Browne would call it in 1837, had as its strength the production of docile patients, and, while it facilitated the cessation of many physically cruel methods of management, simultaneously made this new reality of psychological imprisonment more difficult to detect.[30]

Self-control became the key to the treatment of madness, both inside and outside the asylum. Samuel Tuke, grandson of the founder of the York Retreat, stressed the benefits of self-restraint. As early as 1813, Tuke made clear in his *Description of the Retreat* that his patients 'quickly perceive, or if not, they are informed on the first occasion, that their treatment depends, in great measure, on their conduct'.[31] Similarly, both Conolly and Ellis reiterated the vital importance of self-policing. In *An Inquiry Concerning the Indications of Insanity* (1830), Conolly explained that sanity and insanity were not polar opposites, but rather stages of an ever-shifting continuum which depended on self-control: anyone was liable to suffer from mental strain, and it was only through self-restraint that

---

[28] Ibid., p. 33. Porter, Bynum and Shepherd have defined Conolly as 'the arch-hero of liberals for pioneering 'non-restraint'', p. 15.

[29] Scull, pp. 154-5.

[30] Dr William Alexander Francis Browne was superintendent of Montrose lunatic asylum and Crichton Institute at Dumfries in 1839, and then became Commissioner in lunacy for Scotland between1857 and 1870. Quotation from Browne, *What Asylums Were, Are, and Ought to Be* (Edinburgh: Black, 1837), in Scull, p. 154.

[31] Samuel Tuke, *Description of the Retreat* (York: Alexander, 1813), p. 141; quoted in Scull, ibid. The York Retreat was founded in 1796 by Samuel Tuke's father and grandfather, Henry and William. The Tukes were Quakers with no medical education. They represent the early category of lay superintendents.

the threat of derangement could be kept in check.[32] In fact, as Ellis wrote in his *Treatise on Insanity* (1838), madness could be provoked by the most heterogeneous of factors: organic disorder of the brain; direct causes, like concussion, compression, inflammation, and over-exertion; sympathetic causes, such as diseases of the stomach, liver, lungs, intestines, or other organs, whose irritation would spread to the brain through the chain of nerves; or, finally, disturbance of the mind, like grief and distress, humiliation, remorse, a sense of ingratitude, of abused confidence, wounded love, mortified pride, terror and fear, religious beliefs, and so forth. Therefore, Ellis stated that it was 'manifestly important' for parents to teach their children, 'from the earliest infancy, habits of self-government'.[33]

Given the sheer number of potential causes of mental distress, insanity was transformed from a misfortune suffered by the few into a constant threat to all, all the more terrifying because of its invisibility. As Sally Shuttleworth has pointed out in her study of the treatment of Victorian psychology in the fiction of Charlotte Brontë, it was a relatively common belief that the most respectable citizens might have had the germs of insanity incubating in their bodies for years without knowing it.[34] Husbands and wives might be incapable of noticing any symptoms of the disease in their spouses or children, despite their claiming to know their dear ones better than any others, and they would be as surprised as others when it broke out. In this atmosphere of doubt and fear the alienist imposed himself as the authority in the detection of madness. On the basis of their supposed medical competence in this new branch of science, mind-doctors claimed exclusive expertise in the recognition of symptoms which did not always manifest somatically, but belonged to the inscrutable recesses of the soul. This asserted supremacy led to inevitable problems when doctors' utopian dreams of delivering society from madness came to clash with the exponential increase in the number of alleged lunatics, the

[32] See Sally Shuttleworth, *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Ch. 3.
[33] William Charles Ellis, *A Treatise on the Nature, Symptoms, Causes, and Treatment of Insanity* (London: Samuel Holdsworth, Amen Corner, 1838), p. 44
[34] Shuttleworth, ibid.

lack of regulations, their actual limited knowledge of the mind, and their personal, financial interests in many of their cases.

Both Porter and Scull agree that 'the massive internment of the mad is essentially a nineteenth century phenomenon': in England, certified lunatics doubled in number between 1844 and 1869, while the population increased by 20 per cent only.[35] This trend continued throughout the century, reaching the high figure of 100,000 supposed lunatics by the early 1900s.[36] In the specific case of Ireland, historian Mark Finnane has pointed out in his *Insanity and the Insane in Post-Famine Ireland* (1981) that the growth in the number of asylum patients between 1851 and 1901 was shocking. In 1851, 950 lunatics were admitted to public asylums, the total amount of insane adding up to a little more than 3,000 people, which equalled a rate of 14.5 committals per 100,000 of the population, since Ireland counted about 6.5 million inhabitants in the mid-nineteenth century. However, at the end of Victoria's reign in 1901, the number of first admissions had tripled to 2,800, while the population had declined to 4.4 million in the second half of the century. Hence, the admission rate had grown more than four-fold to 63.4 per 100,000, amounting to a startling 337 per cent.[37]

To the patients of these overcrowded institutions, life inside the asylum was actually far removed from the ideal of the Victorian family, or from society as a whole, for a return to which they were being cured.[38] Elaine Showalter argues that by the second half of the century, the wave of optimism which had nurtured the hopes of theorists and practitioners of moral management had already faded away.[39] Economic stasis, combined with new theories of hereditary pathology, fomented a shift towards a grim pessimism in

---

[35] Porter, *Madmen*, p. 20; quote from Scull, p. 150. Statistics in Porter, *Madmen*, p. 14; Porter and Wright, eds, p. 6; Scull, p. 156.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Mark Finnane, *Insanity and the Insane in Post-Famine Ireland* (London: Croom Helm, c1981), p. 130 and Table F, Appendix, pp. 232-33. See also Porter and Wright, eds, p. 6, and Elizabeth Malcom, ''Ireland's Croweded Madhouses': the Institutional Confinement of the Insane in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Ireland', in Porter and Wright, eds, pp. 315-33, particularly p. 318.
[38] Scull, p. 156.
[39] Showalter, Introduction, particularly p. 18.

assessing the therapeutic powers of psychiatry. Madness was now perceived as the inevitable result of mental degeneration and decay; lunatics were seen with contempt as evolutionary failures, and doctors responded to the unmanageable number of patients with a return to violence and restraint.[40] Asylums were left falling apart and slowly turned into eighteenth-century-like cold and damp dungeons, where patients were strapped to their beds, constrained in straitjackets, subjected to purgatives, bleedings, or the innovative system of shower-baths – in other words, the mission of psychiatry reverted to the protection of society from the mad.[41]

When the failure of psychiatry in curing the insane became evident, the alienists' reputation and power was undermined.[42] In 'Liberty and Lunacy' (1978), Peter McCandless has shown that the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s witnessed an upsurge of attacks in the popular press against the medical profession: mad-doctors were called 'hypocrites, frauds, sadists, knaves, and moneygrabbers'.[43] Since the realm of the mind was still a relatively underexplored area, doctors often confided in their personal instinct for the detection of symptoms, or believed what the relatives of the alleged lunatic reported as irrational behaviour. Therefore, they sometimes made mistakes and committed sane persons out of ignorance or narrow-mindedness, since madness was frequently confused with immorality and eccentricity.[44] The public grew understandably suspicious of alienists, and anxious about the possibility of being unjustly committed to an asylum. In fact, wrongful incarceration was popularly perceived as one of the greatest indignities it was possible to suffer: an individual admitted to an asylum would become for the law a *civilitus mortuus* (as a citizen, dead), that is, s/he would lose all rights regarding his/her person and

[40] Ibid., Ch. 4, particularly p. 102.
[41] Ibid.; Scull, pp. 156-7. See last chapter below for Le Fanu's use of the shower-bath.
[42] See Peter McCandless, 'Liberty and Lunacy: the Victorians and Wrongful Confinement', originally published in the *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Spring 1978), pp. 366-86. I make reference to the reprint which appeared in Andrew Scull, ed., *Madhouses, Mad-doctors, and Madmen*, pp 339-62.
[43] Ibid., p. 342.
[44] Ibid., pp. 340, 347, 353, 357.

property, and his/her reputation, together with that of his/her family, would be forever damaged.[45]

Legislation was slowly introduced to prevent wrongful confinement and to guarantee a prompt restoration to liberty for those acquitted of the charge of insanity. The 1845 Lunacy Act, which required two certificates signed by doctors who were not in partnership with each other, and which established the Commission in Lunacy for the supervision of asylums, was amended on different occasions in the course of the following decades.[46] Two changes were introduced in 1853, forbidding doctors to use hearsay as evidence on their certificates, and making Chancery inquisitions cheaper and quicker. The 1862 Lunacy Amendment Act forbade doctors who shared profits with an asylum, or who had not seen the patient within the previous month, to sign certificates. Furthermore, the Commission expected copies of the certificates within one day of admission, and Chancery inquisitions were made even less expensive and more expedient.[47] Despite such precautions, the fear of wrongful confinement brought about periodical peaks of excitement, whenever cases of real or imagined injustice reached public opinion, or even culminated in sheer "lunacy panics", as in 1858, when several cases of unjust committal were proved to be of a malicious nature.[48]

Reports on court cases, pamphlets, open letters and campaigns for legal changes began to fill more and more pages of newspapers and magazines. Furthermore, insanity quickly became the subject of sensational fiction, among which Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860), and Charles Reade's *Hard Cash* (1863) can be counted as the most significant examples. Sheridan Le Fanu was certainly aware of the ongoing concerns about psychiatry, both through his embeddedness

---

[45] Ibid, pp. 348-9, 342.
[46] For a brief summary of legislations on lunacy, see Sarah Wise, *Inconvenient People; Lunacy, Liberty and the Mad-Doctors in Victorian England* (London: The Bodley Head, 2012), Appendix I, pp. 387-91.
[47] Ibid., pp. 388-9.
[48] McCandless, passim; Wise, passim. "Lunacy panics" will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter Four, which considers wrongful confinement in *The Rose and the Key*.

in periodical and newspaper culture, and his personal familial experience. Le Fanu had a background in law, but he soon abandoned the prospect of the bar to dedicate himself to journalism and fiction. Interestingly, his first writings appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine* as early as 1838, at the very same time as the publication of a thirteen-page long article on Ellis's above-mentioned *Treatise on Insanity*.[49] Throughout his life, Le Fanu was deeply involved in the Irish press and he owned several newspapers and magazines, which also frequently covered debates about insanity in their pages. Furthermore, Le Fanu was a constant contributor to the British press, and it is important to note that his *Rose and the Key* was published in Charles Dickens' *All the Year Round*, the same magazine that issued the polemical work of Collins and Reade.[50]

Le Fanu's experience with madness also came first hand from his own household. When he was still in his early twenties, his family was afflicted because of the aggravating nervous condition of their cousin Frances. Not much is known about Frances's ailment. Le Fanu's best biographer W. J. McCormack has reported that a crisis arose in July 1838 and that the family doctor believed that the woman manifested suicidal tendencies.[51] While her siblings denied Frances the help she needed, it was Le Fanu's father, Rev. T. P. Le Fanu, who showed Christian charity by taking care of his sick relative.[52] Le Fanu's wife Susanna also suffered for years from recurring crises, probably of a psychosomatic nature, and died after a strong hysterical attack in April 1858, at the young age of thirty-four.[53] Just as Rev. Le Fanu stayed close to cousin Frances twenty years before, Le Fanu looked after his wife himself in their own house in Merrion Square, Dublin.

---

[49] The anonymous review of Ellis' *Treatise on Insanity* appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine* in October 1838. Le Fanu published five of the stories which were then collected in *The Purcell Papers* (1880) between January and November 1838, and an article on Jonathan Swift's letters in September 1838.

[50] Both Collins' *The Woman in White* (1860) and Reade's *Hard Cash* (1863) criticised the ease with which sane citizens could be wrongfully confined in lunatic asylums, and the conditions of such institutions. Both novels will be analysed in more detail in Chapter Four.

[51] W. J. McCormack, *Sheridan Le Fanu* (Oxford: Sutton Publishing, 1997), p. 60.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid., p. 122. On Susanna's illness, see Ch. 4.

Again, little is known about Susanna's nervous condition. It seems that ill health ran in her family and Le Fanu recalled in his diary how she became obsessed with sickness and death. He wrote that 'if she took leave of anyone who was dear to her she was always overpowered with an agonizing frustration that she should never see them again. If anyone she loved was ill, though not dangerously, she despaired of their recovery'.[54] At the same time, Susanna grew increasingly concerned about the afterlife and whether she would be accepted into heaven, a thought which constantly troubled her mind and, eventually, consumed her body. Le Fanu was saddened at having to witness 'how my darling's mind was occupied about the great subject of religion, how she searched the Scriptures, how she prayed & strove, how she hoped & feared, & was plainly struggling', and he was frustrated at not being able to help her.[55] Moreover, she even began to doubt his love, and there was nothing that Le Fanu could do to convince her of his affection, though his journals confirm the constancy of his feelings for her: 'Did not *you* love her, & yet was she ever quite confident of your love?' [...] I loved her almost to idolatry, & yet she was always doubting & sometimes actually disbelieved my love, although I was there both declaring & showing it, day & night'.[56]

Susanna's persistent preoccupation with death, religion, and her husband's affection would have been sufficient reason, according to psychiatric orthodoxy, to take precautions about her sanity. In fact, as Ellis had pointed out in his *Treatise*:

> By far the most general primary cause of diseased action, and therefore of insanity, is over-exertion. When the brain has been for too long a time intensely employed on any subject, it is thrown into such a state of excitement that its operations are no longer under the control of the will: the incipient state of insanity then commences, a superabundant flow of blood is propelled to the head; irritation and want of sleep are the immediate consequences, and if proper treatment be not applied, inflammation is the ultimate result.[57]

---

[54] Jean Lozes, ed., 'Fragment d'un journal intime de Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu: document inédit en date du 18 mai 1858', *Caliban* (Annales de l'Université de Toulous-Le Mirail), new series, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1974), pp. 153-64, p. 161.
[55] Ibid., p. 160.
[56] Ibid., p. 162.
[57] Ellis, pp. 57-58

Although Susanna's anxieties would have justified medical intervention, there is no evidence that Le Fanu consulted a specialist about her case. His conscious decision to take care of his nervous wife is, I believe, indicative of a suspicion of doctors that is borne out in his fictional treatment of psychiatry and insanity.

Susanna's death, proved a crucial moment in his personal life and in his literary career. Within an hour of her passing away, Le Fanu wrote to his mother that: '[t]he greatest misfortune of my life has overtaken me. My darling wife is gone. The most affectionate the truest I think. [...] My head is confused & I cannot say more. [...] My light is gone'.[58] As McCormack has pointed out, Le Fanu's letter shows not only the distress and disorientation which naturally follows the bereavement of a loved one, but also an insecurity about himself with regard to the way he dealt with his wife's tribulations in his closing sentence: 'copy any words in which she said I loved her & was kind to her'.[59] These feelings of doubt and guilt also recur in his journal, where Le Fanu's resignation towards death, as due to the will of God rather than the negligence of man, can be interpreted as a desperate attempt to exculpate himself from any responsibility for his wife's early demise:

> I will not trouble myself with the faithless thought that the errors of art or the misapprehensions of the beloved patient hastened her death. In these events there is no such thing as chance, and, over all seeming accidents presides *(sic)* the eternal dominion of our Heavenly Father [...]. I must trouble my self no more about Doctors, or their measures, or what might have been. It was the will of my heavenly Father that she should die exactly when & as she died & in that certainty ends all speculations.[60]

McCormack argues that Le Fanu's anxieties were totally understandable, since he and Susanna had contrasting views on the efficacy of conventional medicine as opposed to that of homeopathy.[61] Although McCormack affirms that it is not easy to determine which of

---

[58] Letter dated 28 April 1858, *Le Fanu Papers*, microfilms, N. 2973-88, P. 2594-609, The National Library of Ireland; also quoted in McCormack, p. 128.
[59] *Le Fanu Papers*; McCormack, p. 129.
[60] Lozes, pp. 157, 160; also in McCormack, pp. 129-30.
[61] McCormack, p. 130.

them supported homeopathy, I argue that Le Fanu's fiction is revelatory of the author's suspicion of the medical profession in general.

Throughout his work, physicians are presented as incompetent, unprofessional, and incapable of curing their patients. For instance, in *The House by the Churchyard* (1863), Paul Dangerfield sends for the infamous Dr Black Dillon, a drunkard closer to a butcher than a medical doctor, because he is convinced that he will finish off the man Dangerfield had tried to kill, and thus leave Dangerfield clear of all suspicions of attempted murder. Dr Drake of *All in the Dark* is also described as constantly indulging in brandy, and his efforts at curing old Dinah of her "dangerous" belief in Spiritualism end up in making her convictions even stronger. Dinah is not cured and inevitably dies at the end of the novel, as does Jekyl Marlowe in *Guy Deverell*, Amy Shadwell and Carmel Sherlock in *A Lost Name*, Rev Jennings in 'Green Tea' (1869), and both Laura Gray's sister and Guy de Beaumirail in *Haunted Lives* (1868), despite (or because of) the consultation with doctors. De Beaumirail, particularly, expresses his own distrust of medicine by saying, 'I don't mind doctors; but there's an understanding between the dying man and death, and signs as slight as lovers' exchange, of which *they* see nothing'.[62] An even stronger negative opinion of physicians appeared as early as 1845 in Le Fanu's first novel *The Cock and Anchor*, where the narrator thus describes the figure of the doctor:

> The physician of those days was a solemn personage: he would as readily have appeared without his head, as without his full-bottomed wig; and his ponderous gold-headed cane was a sort of fifth limb, the supposition of whose absence involved a contradiction to the laws of anatomy; his dress was rich and funereal; his step was slow and pompous; his words very long and very few; his look was mysterious; his nod awful; and the shake of his head unfathomable: in short, he was in no respect very much better than a modern charlatan. The science which he professed was then overgrown with absurdities and mystification. The temper of the times was superstitious and credulous, the physician, being wise in his generation, framed his outward man (including his air and language) accordingly, and the populate swallowed his long words and his electuaries with equal faith.[63]

---

[62] Le Fanu, *Haunted Lives*, *Dublin University Magazine* (May-December 1868), quotation from the December issue, p. 691.
[63] Le Fanu, *The Cock and Anchor* (New York; London: Garland, 1979), Vol. 1, pp. 340-41.

Susanna Bennett's death was a milestone in Le Fanu's life, leading the author to a gradual retirement from the public scene which earned him the name of the "Invisible Prince".[64] This loss also coincided with a return to fiction writing, after over a decade of silence. The 1860s marked the publication of most of Le Fanu's longer fiction, that is, fourteen out of his sixteen novels, together with two collections of short stories, out of a total of three issued in his lifetime. Significantly, his work became heavily charged with references to nervous strain, hysteria, melancholia, and other forms of mental derangement. Le Fanu was certainly following the literary trends of the period, hoping to receive the same acclaim as his successful contemporary sensationalists Collins and Reade, as will be shown in more detail in the body of this dissertation. However, the problem of madness recurs mainly in association with religious anxiety and women's emancipation. Again, this particular choice can be read in an autobiographical key. In his fiction, Le Fanu shows sympathy for those characters who, like his wife and sister, and himself, respectively experience spiritual uncertainty and look for peace of mind in the occult. Also, at a time when many husbands were locking up their difficult wives, Le Fanu shows that his rebellious heroines are far from being irrational in their demands for domestic happiness, a belief that bears the influence of his activist cousin Caroline Norton.[65]

Before focusing on the two main topics of interest of this research, it is important to consider the several and most various forms of insanity which occur in Le Fanu's work. Madness pervades Le Fanu's fiction, taking all possible shapes. First of all, the words "mad" and "madly" seem to be on everyone's lips, and all sorts of characters employ them to carelessly label everything that is excessive or uncommon. Thus, to take just a random sample, haste makes one ride madly, wild uproar is compared to the 'mad gusts of a tempest', excitement makes one speak madly, an uncomfortable journey is blamed on 'the

[64] On Le Fanu as "Invisible Prince" see McCormack, Ch. 6. After the death of Susanna, Le Fanu began to be an irregular presence at 'Club dinners', and to prefer intimate gatherings at Merrion Square. He did not neglect his daughters' introduction in society, but delegated his brother to accompany them; p. 197.

[65] On Caroline Norton, see pp. 25-8 below, and Chapters Three and Four in particular.

mad springing up and down of the vehicle', fierce conflict is defined as 'the maddest strife', a fright makes one 'start[…] up madly', the wind blows the clouds 'across the moon like mad things', emergency makes one ring the bell madly, the revelation of a murderous plot 'thunder[s] so madly in the ears of the hearer', rough seas have 'mad waves', compliments make a woman flush 'to a sort of madder crimson', an incensed argument is described as a 'mad scene', and fury is compared to uncontainable rage of a 'mad bull', a 'mad dog', or a 'mad beast'.[66]

Furthermore, madness is connected with an unwise decision, an unreasonable expectation, an unfounded accusation, an inexplicable or uncontrollable feeling, or the impossibility of accepting reality as it is. In 'The Last Heir of Castle Connor', O'Connor confesses to Father Purcell his intention to fight the bloody Fitzgerald in a duel after a dispute of which he has a blurred memory. Father Purcell finds O'Connor's stubbornness dangerous: 'My dear O'Connor, are you mad?' […]. 'Why will you seek to drive to a deadly issue a few hasty words, uttered under the influence of wine, and forgotten almost as soon as uttered? A quarrel with Fitzgerald it is twenty chances to one would terminate fatally to you'.[67] Similarly, in *The Fortunes of Colonel Torlogh O'Brien* (1847), Sir Willoughby sees the enemy's army approaching and realises that staying in his castle and attempting resistance would be 'madness', while in *Uncle Silas* (1864), Monica Knollys strongly reproaches her cousin Austin for his intention of risking his daughter's life by making his murderous brother Silas her guardian: 'And I know the spirit *you* speak in, the

---

[66] Respectively, Le Fanu, 'The Last Heir of Castle Connor', *The Purcell Papers* (New York; London: Garland, 1979), Vol 1, pp. 98-200, p. 192; 'Spalatro', *Dublin University Magazine* (April 1843), p. 456; *The Cock and Anchor* (New York; London: Garland, 1979), Vol. 2, pp. 48, 170; *The Fortunes of Colonel Torlogh O'Brien* (Dublin: James McGlashan; William S. Orr and Company, London, 1847) pp. 96, 121; 'Some Gossip about Chapelizod', *Dublin University Magazine* (April 1851), p. 427; *Uncle Silas: a Tale of Bartram-Haugh* (Stroud: Nonsuch, 2006), p. 149, 488; 'Beatrice', *Dublin University Magazine* (November 1865), p. 542; *The Tenants of Malory*, *Dublin University Magazine*, (February 1867), p. 137; 'The Bird of Passage', *Temple Bar* (June 1870), p. 350; on the animalistic comparison, see 'Spalatro', p. 454, *The Fortunes of Colonel Torlogh O'Brien*, pp. 107, 254, 344. Note that the phrase 'madder crimson' could be read as a pun on the word 'madder', meaning Rubia tinctorum, a plant of the family of the Rubiaceae whose roots are employed as a source of red colouring matter; see *Oxford English Dictionary*, www.oed.com, under the entry "madder" [accessed February 2014].

[67] Le Fanu, 'The Last Heir of Castle Connor', pp. 126-27.

spirit of *madness* […]. I can't conceive how you *can* be so *demented*, Austin. What has perverted you? Are you *blind*?'.[68]

In *The Cock and Anchor*, Henry Ashwood laughs at his father's valet Parrucci when the latter asks for an unreasonably high sum of money as a token for his services to the baronet: 'Parrucci, you are either mad or drunk, or take me to be so. […] Don't talk like a madman, Parrucci'.[69] Seemingly, unfounded accusations are defined as madness in both *The House by the Churchyard* and *Guy Deverell*. In the former novel, Paul Dangerfield rejects both charges of murder and attempted murder as the accusations of a raving lunatic: ''tis an agreeable society this; bedlam broke loose – the mad directing the mad, and both falling foul of the sane.' […] Doctor Sturk charges me with having assaulted him! Why – curse it, Sir – it can't possibly be – you can't believe it; and, if he said it, the man's raving still'.[70] In the latter novel, Jane Lennox is outraged at Lady Alice's assumption that she is having an affair with Sir Jekyl Marlow, and briskly replies that, 'I think you're *mad* – I do, I assure you'.[71]

The idea of madness as an inexplicable or uncontrollable feeling appears in several novels by Le Fanu. In *Guy Deverell*, Lady Alice cannot help believing that the young Guy Deverell is in fact her son, lost in a duel over twenty years before, although '[h]er reason told her loudly that a such thought was mere insanity'.[72] In *Wylder's Hand* (1864), Rachel Lake begs her cousin Dorcas Brandon never to mention the unpleasant name of Mark Wylder, for whom she feels a strong antipathy, which her cousin could well define as madness.[73] In *Haunted Lives*, Laura Gray's hatred of Guy de Beaumirail, who broke her sister's heart and caused her death, nurtures an uncontrollable desire for revenge, for which, she tells the Reverend, '[y]ou would think me mad!', while in *Willing to Die* (1873), Ethel

---

[68] Le Fanu, *The Fortunes of Colonel Torlogh O'Brien*, pp. 88, 113; *Uncle Silas*, p. 105.
[69] Le Fanu, *The Cock and Anchor*, pp. 68, 70.
[70] Le Fanu, *The House by the Churchyard*, pp. 377-78.
[71] Le Fanu, *Guy Deverell* (March 1865), p. 331.
[72] Le Fanu, *Guy Deverell* (April 1865), p. 441.
[73] Le Fanu, *Wylder's Hand*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2009), p. 137

Ware wonders whether the unconditional grief for the villain who ill-treated her is 'mere madness'.[74]

Finally, when characters find themselves facing a reality that makes no sense, they also wonder whether this might be an indication that they are suffering from a variety of madness: in *Guy Deverell*, when Jane Lennox cannot believe that her husband has really left her, and that her lover can do nothing to protect her reputation, she asks herself if what she is going through is reality or madness: 'is it all true? My God! Is it true, or am I mad?'.[75] The opposition between reality and insanity gains more power in Le Fanu's later fiction of the supernatural, where the characters find it hard to reconcile events they experience with the laws of this world, and find in the derangement of their mind the only plausible explanation. In 'Green Tea', Rev. Jennings writes in his diary that, 'I tried to comfort myself by repeating again and again the assurance, "the thing is purely a disease, a well-known physical affection, as distinctly as small-pox or neuralgia"'; in 'Mr Justice Harbottle' (1872), the judge concludes that, '[t]his could not be real. He must be either mad, or going mad'; in 'Carmilla' (1871), the heroine affirms that her sceptical father received the General's theory of Carmilla being a vampire with a look that revealed a strong suspicion of his friend's sanity.[76]

The examples above show a careless use of the idea of madness, which the characters employ to express their excitement about a situation which they find irrational, rather than a genuine belief in the other's actual mental derangement (this excludes the stories of the supernatural, where insanity becomes a plausible assumption). However, these characters do not consider the damage that their accusations may do to other parties. Madness is widely talked about, and often becomes the subject of rumours and gossip; the effect of all this talk is described in 'The Dead Sexton' (1871) as 'a vial poured on the air. It travels, like an epidemic, on the sightless currents of the atmosphere, or by the laws of a

---

[74] Le Fanu, *Haunted Lives*, (May 1868), p. 589; *Willing to Die* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1873), p. 411.
[75] Le Fanu, *Guy Deverell* (July 1865), p. 85.
[76] Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 25, 108, 294.

telluric influence equally intangible'.[77] *Talk* of madness is as dangerous as madness itself. *The House by the Churchyard* opens with a funeral, and with the village memories of an old woman who had died forty years before, who was still remembered for her fancy of being buried in white satin and rings on her fingers: '[t]hey said she was mad'.[78] '[A]necdotes about lunatics' are the subject of everyday correspondence, together with 'the sufferings of Fleet prisoners, and all the statistics, and the enquiries, and dry little commissions', and in *Checkmate* (1871), madness is rumoured to be the cause of the brutal murders of Thames Street.[79]

Although many of these rumours are never proved to have any foundation, they suffice to compromise reputations. Zedkiel Irons has to give evidence that, '"No, it was not true that he had ever been confined in a mad house". "He had never had delirium tremens". "He had never heard that his wife thought him mad"', before his deposition regarding Paul Dangerfield's charge of murder is accepted by the court, and Cleve Verney has to personally meet and fall in love with the new tenant of Malory in order to crush the rumour concerning her family madness, which even anticipated their arrival:

> "And *what* is it, what do you know of them, or the people here what do they *say*?"
> "Well, they say, putting this and that together, and some hits from the servant that comes down to order things up from the town, for servants, you know, will be talking, that the family is *mad*".
> […] "And what is she mad upon?"
> "Well, they don't say. I don't know – melancholy I suppose".
> "And what is the old gentleman's name?"
> "We don't *know*, the *servants* don't now, they […] never saw the old gentleman, nor the young lady, till after they were two or three days in Malory; and one night comes a carriage, with a mad-house gentleman, they do say, a doctor, in charge of the old gentleman and the young lady, poor thing! […]"
> "And what sort of lunacies do they commit? They're not pulling down the house among them, I hope?"
> "Very gentle – very. I'm told, quite, as you may say, *manageable*".[80]

---

[77] Le Fanu, 'The Dead Sexton', *Once a Week*, 31 December 1871, pp. 10-19, p. 11.
[78] Le Fanu, *The House by the Churchyard*, p. 10.
[79] Le Fanu, *Checkmate*, (Stroud: Sutton, 1997), p. 2.
[80] Le Fanu, *The House by the Churchyard*, p. 409; *The Tenants of Malory*, *Dublin University Magazine* (February 1867), p. 128.

In the nineteenth century, accusations of insanity, founded or unfounded, could turn a free person into a *civilitus mortuus*, and throughout Le Fanu's fiction, the association of madness with death is repeated on several occasions. In 'The Last Heir of Castle Connor', the protagonist thanks God for having spared him from both death and madness, which equally represent a form of non-life; in 'Spalatro' (1843), the eponymous character describes his experience of madness as the loss of self; in *The Cock and Anchor*, uncle Oliver threatens his abusive servant that, 'I'd see you in hell or bedlam first!', as if death (and damnation) and insanity are equally appalling options; in *Wylder's Hand*, the old servant Tamar wears 'a dress very odd and unpleasant to behold, [which] suggested the idea of an hospital, or a madhouse, or death'; in *Checkmate*, Sir Arden complains that 'there's a conspiracy to drive me into a mad-house, or into my grave', which would have the same result of silencing him forever, as Maud Vernon experiences in first person in *The Rose and the Key*, where the asylum appears like a sepulchre.[81]

In the nineteenth century, the confinement of a family member affected the whole household, and not only the afflicted individual. Since some mental disorders were believed to be provoked by religious anxiety, parental authority, or perverse sexual drives, and, above all, since insanity was believed to be a hereditary disease, cases of mental instability within the family were kept secret. When, in 1838, Frances Le Fanu's condition became more serious, her sister Alicia estranged herself completely from her sibling and even refused to have her name mentioned. As in real life, the silence surrounding madness and fear of discovery return in Le Fanu's later novels *The Wyvern Mystery* and *The Rose and the Key*. In the former, Charles Fairfield keeps everybody so much in the dark about his insane wife that he actually manages to remarry with no impediments. In the latter, Lady Vernon's desire to hush up the nervous condition of her daughter is repeated several times throughout the novel, and Maud's confinement in a private asylum is made out to be

[81] Le Fanu, 'The Last Heir of Castle Connor', p. 192; 'Spalatro', *Dublin University Magazine* (April 1843), p. 448; *The Cock and Anchor*, Vol. 3, p. 268; *Wylder's Hand*, p. 37; *Checkmate*, p. 181; *The Rose and the Key*, passim.

a long-term visit to a distant friend (of course, for Lady Vernon there is more at stake than the family reputation, since Maud is not insane but wrongfully confined for her mother's personal gain).

Although committal to a lunatic asylum is used as a threat to obtain obedience from rebellious characters on different instances, which will be briefly suggested below and dealt with in more detail in Chapter Four, no character in a Le Fanu novel is confined on the grounds of his or her *actual* insanity. Nevertheless, many manifest the most various symptoms of mental strain, as described in the medical texts of the time: in 'The Last Heir of Castle Connor', O'Connor's body, debilitated after a duel, falls into a dangerous form of brain fever, which brings on ravings and delirium, while concussion of the brain heavily affects Dr Sturk's 'sensorium', leaving him unconscious to the outside world but prey to never-ending nightmares.[82] Organic disorder of the brain also depends on drunken excesses, as in 'Spalatro', where the protagonist's indulgence in alcohol brings on *delirium tremens* and recurring epileptic fits; on dyspepsia, which troubles Sir Marlowe with 'stirrings' of the mind in *Guy Deverell*; or on the apparently harmless consumption of green tea, which is diagnosed as the main cause of Rev. Jenkins's hallucinations in 'Great Tea', and which recurs also in *Wylder's Hand*, where the narrator blames the strong beverage for his unsettled nerves, and in *Haunted Lives*, where the doctor reproaches de Beaumirail for his abuse of tea, 'which lowers the action of the heart and works his nerves into hysteria'.[83]

Mental disturbances may be provoked also by non-organic causes related to the upsetting of the soul. For instance, debts, money problems, and, by extension, gambling, affect the minds of several characters. Henry Ashwood, in *The Cock and Anchor*, is said to be 'in a state of excitement which nearly amounted to downright insanity', resulting in temporary loss of lucidity, and described as the bursting of both brain and heart; similarly, Richard Arden in *Checkmate*, Mark Shadwell in *A Lost Name*, and Francis Ware in *Willing*

[82] Le Fanu, 'The Heir of Castle Connor', p. 192; *The House by the Churchyard*, pp. 173-4, p. 173.

[83] Le Fanu, 'Spalatro', p. 458; *Guy Deverell* (March 1865), p. 314; *In a Glass Darkly*, pp. 26, 38; *Wylder's Hand*, p. 63; *Haunted Lives* (October 1868), p. 449.

to Die are described as nervous and driven 'half-mad' with despair, because of which the last two eventually take their lives.[84] Guilt is the reason why it is said that Rachel Lake 'can't reason; she runs away with things', and is later believed to be a victim of 'hysterics, or something even worse', while isolation also contributes to de Beaumirail's decline in prison, his hysterical fits, and eventual death.[85]

Mortified pride throws Lady Stukely, in *The Cock and Anchor*, into hysterics accompanied by piercing shrieks, and convinces Mark Shadwell to murder his cousin in *A Lost Name*.[86] In *The House by the Chruchyard*, Mrs Sturk suffers from 'a long fainting-fit', followed by fearful screams and hysteria, when she sees the woman who claims to be her husband's legitimate wife, while jealousy also affects Edith Aubrey's nerves in *Loved and Lost* (1868), at the sight of a letter proving that the man she loves intends to marry someone else: '[t]he suddenness of the blow coming [...] utterly stupefied me, and for a few minutes I sat stunned, not even thinking, but then it all came in a rush, pressing so vehemently on my brain that I felt as if I were going mad'.[87] Jealousy is considered as a cause of nervous strain also in the case of Mark Shadwell, Bertha Velderkaust, and, in *Guy Deverell*, of General Lennox, who, after discovering his wife's betrayal, is pronounced to be 'on the verge either of a fit or of insanity'.[88] The feeling of revenge, which is frequently connected with jealousy, appears in both *A Lost Name* and *The Wyvern Mystery*, as will be shown in detail in Chapters Two and Three. Revenge plays a crucial role in Laura Gray's nervous decline in *Haunted Lives*, and is identified as the motivation for Ethel Ware's attack on Mr Droqville in *Willing to Die*, after which she spends weeks in bed 'in pain, giddy, confused', in a semi-unconscious state provoked by brain fever.[89]

---

[84] Le Fanu, *The Cock and Anchor*, Vol. 2, p. 147; *Checkmate*, pp. 262, 265; *A Lost Name*, p. 38; *Willing to Die*, p. 228.
[85] Le Fanu, *Wylder's Hand*, pp. 277, 390; *Haunted Lives*, ibid.
[86] Le Fanu, *The Cock and Anchor*, Vol. 2, p. 142; *A Lost Name*, p. 463.
[87] Le Fanu, *The House by the Churchyard*, pp. 185-88, p. 185; *Loved and Lost*, *Dublin University Magazine* (April 1869), p. 388.
[88] The cases of Mark Shadwell and Bertha Velderkaust will be analysed in more detail in Chapter Two and Three; *Guy Deverell* (May 1865), p. 533.
[89] Le Fanu, *Haunted Lives* (September 1868), p. 293, *Willing to Die*, p. 262

Another common cause of mental strain is grief, which recurs in many of Le Fanu's works. For instance, in 'The Fatal Bride' (1848), Miss Chadleigh falls into a 'brain fever, which threatened her life and reason', after learning that her husband had died in a duel with her own brother; Lady Alice, in *Guy Deverell*, admits to having a troubled mind and to have been suffering from 'nervous pains [...] in her head' since the death of her son; Laura Gray hears the news of de Beaumirail's death with 'a face so wild and pale, her hand pressed to her temple, [... and] large affrighted eyes'. She then bursts into a 'long, low, and bitter cry', followed by convulsive sobs, which the doctor believes save her sanity; and, in *Willing to Die*, Ethel Ware remembers that when her sister passed away 'I was in a stupor, or a trance. [...] For a time I was all but mad. [...]. I began to sob distractedly. I do really believe I was half out of my mind', while her mother suffers from 'violent palpitations' and nervous debilitation after her husband kills himself.[90]

Finally, one last important representation of nervous disease is in connection with fear. For instance, in 'Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess' (1838), which was later expanded into *Uncle Silas*, Lady Margaret is intimidated by her uncle and cousin, who want her to marry the young man so that he can inherit her huge fortune. She admits to 'weeping in strong hysterics' and spending her nights incapable of sleeping. Similarly, Mary Ashwood in *The Cock and Anchor* is also threatened into a marriage prospect which horrifies her, and these threats induce hysterics and fever, just like Alice Arden in *Checkmate*, who is frightened into hysterical weeping and a fainting fit by a terrifying and unrequited admirer.[91] The fact that all these women respond to male coercion with fear and nervous collapse is not interpreted in these narratives as a sign of weakness; in fact, it is the heroines' very strong will which induces men to resort to their physical strength in order to overpower them. Le Fanu's female characters are self-assertive, stubborn, and brave, and,

---

[90] Le Fanu, 'The Fatal Bride', *Dublin University Magazine* (January 1848), p. 43; *Haunted Lives* (December 1868), pp. 692-93; *Willing to Die*, pp. 24, 253

[91] Le Fanu, 'Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess', *The Purcell Papers*, Vol. 2, pp. 1-102, pp. 44, 69; *Uncle Silas*, pp. 65, 407; *The Cock and Anchor*, Vol. 3, pp. 97, 126; *Checkmate*, pp. 272, 288.

through the use of the trope of madness, the author supports a new generation of women who were beginning to claim more freedom to choose for themselves.

Le Fanu's interest in the "Woman Question" was likely to have been influenced by his life-long relationship with the activist Caroline Norton.[92] Norton was a cousin of Le Fanu on the Sheridan side and one of the few intimates he would still admit at Merrion Square in his late years as a recluse.[93] A spirited and witty woman, Caroline Norton married a selfish and violent man, who abused her physically and psychologically for most of their married life. A battered wife and a good mother, who would not give up her children for the sake of being delivered from her husband's ill-treatment, Norton played a key role in the campaigns which led to the passing of the Child Custody Bill in 1839 and the Divorce Act in 1857. The Child Custody Bill granted non-adulterous wives the right to raise the children of a broken marriage, while the Divorce Act finally enabled women to petition for a divorce. Despite her battle for women's rights, Caroline Norton never claimed women's equality to men; what she demanded for a woman was not independence but simply love, respect, and protection from a husband. Caroline's influence on Le Fanu will be analysed in more depth in the following chapters; suffice it to say here that her marital experience and personal temperament may have contributed to the moulding of the Le Fanuian heroine.

Le Fanu's women are usually young heiresses who have lost their mothers and sisters, and who live with their fathers or guardians in big country houses. They all share the same pride in their family names and are aware of their position in society. As Maud Ruthyn says in Uncle Silas, 'I knew I was an heiress; I knew I was somebody'.[94] Raised in solitude, generally without female companionship, these heroines have no knowledge of

---

[92] On Caroline Norton, see Alan Chedzoy, *A Scandalous Woman: the Story of Caroline Norton* (London: Allison & Busby, 1992), Randall Craig, *The Narratives of Caroline Norton* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), Oliver Lovesey, ed., *Victorian Social Activists' Novels*, Vol. 1 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), pp. 1-119. Although only a few letters between Le Fanu and Caroline Norton survive, they were certainly in touch most of their lives, and on good terms, as will be shown in the body of this dissertation. See particularly pp. 28, 187-9, 237-43 below.

[93] McCormack, p. 197.

[94] Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas*, p. 94.

love and marriage, which they regard with a certain awe. In the extreme cases of Laura Gray in *Haunted Lives* and Maud Vernon in *The Rose and the Key*, suitors and husbands become the destroyers of familial harmony (by killing Laura's sister and misusing Maud's mother), and these tragic events justify their suspicion of the male sex and their aversion to marriage. Whether because of a lack of experience or because of a negative experience of love, Le Fanu's women present themselves as self-reliant and determined not to compromise on their decisions. Their fathers are generally not tyrants in such matters and, although they desire that their daughters marry a man with good prospects, they limit themselves to expressing their opinion without imposing it. Thus, some of these heroines marry only for love, never for money or titles, while others refuse altogether to give up the freedom of unmarried life: in *Guy Deverell*, Lady Lennox, married to a man she does not love, advises young Beatrix Marlow that 'if you can't marry who you love, marry no one else'; in *Checkmate*, Alice Arden affirms that 'I would rather die [than marry Lord Wynderbroke]! If this goes on, I shan't stay here. I'd go and be a governess rather', and her uncle explains to her perplexed father that 'she's not the kind of girl who would marry for a mere title. [...] Alice is a spirited girl – all the women of our family were'; in *Uncle Silas*, Maud Ruthyn strongly rejects her cousin's proposal by telling him that 'but that you are as stupid as you are impertinent, brutal, and ugly, you must, long ago, sir, have seen how I dislike you'.[95]

While these heroines believe in the happiness of married life to the point that they refuse to compromise on the choice of their husbands, other young women in Le Fanu's fiction insist on the privilege of their independence and regard as pure madness the prospect of losing it to any man: in the very first chapter of *Haunted Lives*, Laura Gray states that 'if I am to be happy it must be independently of human society', an idea which she sustains throughout the novel.[96] Later, she reiterates that 'anyone who's entirely his

[95] Le Fanu, *Guy Deverell* (April 1865), p. 428; *Checkmate*, pp. 178, 181; *Uncle Silas*, p. 376.
[96] Le Fanu, *Haunted Lives* (May 1868), p. 565.

own master and leading so happy a life, is a fool to change everything and put his happiness in another person's keeping'.[97] In *The Rose and the Key*, Maud Vernon insists that she will never marry, her independence being too important to her. She does not care about not having 'a shilling that I can call my own [because ...] if I could earn enough by my drawing to live on, I think I should prefer it to any other way of living I can imagine'.[98] And when Charles Marston confesses his love for her, Maud cuts him short by saying: 'Now, Mr Marston, you are talking like a *madman*. There must be no more of that' [p. 40, my italics]. However, at the end of the novels, both heroines fall in love with the faithful men who have always loved them deeply, and recognise the advantage of a marriage based on love and trust.

Women's claim to independence was seen as a threat by very many Victorian men. This fear was reflected in the transformation, in the popular imagination, of the "angel in the house" into the many "Lady Audleys" of the new sensation fiction. Alienists, meanwhile, explained that woman's place was in the house because of her natural constitution. Doctors affirmed that the female body was controlled by her womb and ovaries, and that physical and intellectual activities could drain her reproductive system of its "nerve force", thus affecting the brain and endangering the woman's mental stability. For this reason, as Victorian alienist Henry Maudsley stated, 'the educations of girls certainly ought not to be such as would in any way clash with their organization, injure their health, and unfit them for these functions [being wives and mothers]. In this matter the small minority of women who have other aims and pant for other careers, cannot be accepted as the spokeswomen of their sex'.[99]

Therefore, it became relatively easy for men to threaten rebellious women into obedience with the terrifying image of the asylum. This happens repeatedly in Le Fanu's

---

[97] Le Fanu, *Haunted Lives* (December 1868), p. 694.
[98] Le Fanu, *The Rose and The Key*, p. 8.
[99] See Henry Maudsley, 'Sex in Mind and in Education', *Fortnightly Review*, No. 21, pp. 466-83, p. 483; Showalter, pp. 55-57; Oppenheim, pp. 81-82

fiction, where Lady Margaret, Mary Ashwood, Maud Ruthyn, and Alice Arden find themselves trapped into the prospect of a life of obedience:

> I give you fair warning; you're my property now – to do what I like with, just as much as my horse or my dog; and if you won't obey me, why I'll find a way to make you; [...] if I had to get you into a strait-waistcoat and clap a plaster over your mouth to keep you quiet, married we shall be [...] do you understand me, and no mistake; and if you're foolish enough to make a row about it, I'll tell you what I'll do in such a case [...], I have a particular friend, do you mind – a very obliging particular old friend that's a mad doctor; do you hear me; not a very lucky one to be sure, for he has made devilish few cures.[100]

However, none of these characters actually marry under these conditions, nor will they be locked up in an asylum. Furthermore, the only woman in Le Fanu's fiction who is actually committed to an institution, Maud Vernon in *The Rose and the Key*, is eventually declared to have always been perfectly sane and marries the man she has chosen for herself. Le Fanu's heroines marry for love and are offered a peaceful ending as happy wives and mothers. Le Fanu's use of madness in connection with the "Woman Question", then, becomes indicative of what I read as his moderate support for a new generation of women who, like Caroline Norton, demanded the right to be happy, respected, and safe within their households. This idea is disseminated throughout his fiction, but it becomes predominant in *The Wyvern Mystery*, and, even more significantly, in *The Rose and the Key*, which receive particular attention in Chapters Three and Four below.

The other major use of the trope of insanity is in association with forms of alternative spirituality. Le Fanu's fiction is populated by characters experiencing religious doubt and uncertainty with regard to their faith, and *Uncle Silas* and *In a Glass Darkly* (1872) have been interpreted as revelatory of the author's interest in Swedenborgianism. Religious anxiety was not only a topical issue within Victorian society, but a subject of deep concern for the Le Fanu family. The nineteenth century witnessed a "crisis of faith", owing to a number of social and intellectual developments such as the doubt which

[100] Le Fanu, *The Cock and Anchor*, Vol. 3, p. 137.

geological discoveries as well as Darwinian evolutionary theory seemed to cast on a literal interpretation of the Bible. As a result, many believers distanced themselves from orthodox Christianity. However, the majority did not simply lose their faith, but looked elsewhere for answers to their epistemological doubt. In this context, occult doctrines, old and new, like Spiritualism, millenarianism, mesmerism, and Swedenborgianism, offered comfort to many because they could explain the supernatural according to the laws of nature. Scientists, though, often dismissed these new doctrines as mere forms of religious enthusiasm.[101] Occultism was often classified as "theomania", since its practice sometimes resulted in an enthusiast presenting the symptoms of religious delusions. Trance-like states, ghost-possession, and other kinds of suspension of everyday consciousness were likened to hysteria and other pathological conditions, and thus required medical intervention. An increasing number of treatises and articles appeared in the scientific and general press comparing occult beliefs and practices to the superstitions of the Middle Ages, pitying the believers, and accusing mediums, prophets, and clairvoyants of profit-driven mass manipulation and attempts to subvert social hierarchy.

Le Fanu was the son of a Protestant rector, and grew up in the countryside of Co. Limerick during the turbulent years of the Tithe War. This early experience of sectarian hatred scarred the dean's children and probably contributed to Catherine Le Fanu's religious anxiety. An invalid from an early age, Le Fanu's sister soon began to consider seriously the reality of death and the afterlife, and her concern about her salvation wore her out in the last years of her life. In her diary she expressed the pain that religious doubt was inflicting on her, and how she believed that 'it is not faith, but want of faith, that makes it necessary to fill our minds with any set of doctrines before we go to the Bible, as though that book would otherwise mislead us'.[102] Catherine found new strength in Christianity before she died, but Le Fanu somehow feared that his own spiritual levity might have been

[101] Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), Introduction.
[102] *Le Fanu Papers*; also in McCormack, p. 62.

a contributory factor in his sister's uncertainties, which he later thought had also been the case with his wife.

Susanna Bennett also suffered from religious doubt, which contributed to her physical ill health. After the death of her adored father in 1856, Susanna fell into a state of nervous excitability, and began to feel anxious about her admission into heaven, and Le Fanu remembered how 'my darling wife's mind was harrassed *(sic)* with incessant doubts about the truth of revealed religion'.[103] She finally found peace of mind before she died, but her desperate desire for a quickening of faith in her husband, which never happened, was a major point of tension in their marital life. Le Fanu never was a fervent believer, in any orthodox sense. His brother William remembered in his *Seventy Years of Irish Life* (1893) how young Joseph's practical jokes used to irritate their father, and his diaries show that Le Fanu did not habitually join William and Susanna for the Sunday service, but would meet them afterwards for a stroll.[104] Furthermore, his fiction displays several examples of characters troubled by religious doubt, and the numerous allusions and references to the occult doctrines of the eighteenth century Scandinavian mystic Emanuel Swedenborg have justified speculations about Le Fanu's *penchant* for this form of alternative spirituality.

Swedenborg's theology affirms that the Other World is a universe symmetrically positioned above and below the mortal world, whose features are correlated with the latter by means of "correspondences".[105] The entities inhabiting the spiritual world, both heaven and hell, are only men deprived, after death, of their "external", that is, their physical body.[106] After death, the good individuals become angels and ascend to heaven, while the

---

[103] Lozes, p. 160.
[104] William Richard Le Fanu, *Seventy Years of Irish Life, Being Anecdotes and Reminiscences* (London: Edward Arnold, 1893), pp. 11-12; unpublished diaries, July 1855 to January 1857, MS 7695-97, Manuscript Department, Trinity College, Dublin.
[105] Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heaven and Its Wonders and Hell – From Things heard and Seen*, (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1946), § 89.
[106] Ibid., § 75.

evil ones become mere spirits and descend to hell.[107] Salvation is not granted according to one's deeds during mortal existence, nor is it a question of predestination; it depends on the inner nature of the person, which is slowly revealed in the world of the spirits.[108] Men in the mortal world cannot see angels with their bodily eyes, but only with the eyes of the spirit within them. This gift, though, is not granted to everybody, but only to those few whose spiritual sight has been opened.[109] Swedenborg was quite popular in his own lifetime and in later centuries, and his Church of the New Jerusalem and a Swedenborg Society still exist today. However, Victorian psychiatrists laboured to prove that Swedenborg was in fact insane, and the alienist Henry Maudsley dedicated a whole essay in his *Body and Mind* (1870) to the figure of Swedenborg.[110] In Le Fanu's fiction, characters reminiscent of Swedenborg or following his doctrine, or other occult spiritualities, are also routinely described as mad by those around them. Nevertheless, either the reader is left in doubt about their actual insanity, or it is altogether disproved.[111]

In both 'Spalatro' and 'Green Tea', the protagonists are said to be suffering from hallucinations induced by *delirium tremens* or hereditary insanity. They complain of being haunted by evil spirits and are aware of the fact that their condition may be interpreted as being due to mental derangement. Spalatro is described as a man who has distanced himself from the Christian faith. The confessor who visits him in prison explains that

---

[107] Emanuel Swedenborg, *Introducing the New Jerusalem* (London: The Swedenborg Society, 2003), Ch. 3.
[108] Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*, § 421
[109] Ibid., § 76.
[110] On Maudsley's essay, see section 2.1 below.
[111] Le Fanu's rhetorical use of "explanation" to inspire doubt or disbelief in the reader serves two purposes: on the one hand, it allows Le Fanu to express his opinion on the occult through plot-manipulation; on the other, it reveals Le Fanu's talent in playing with the rhetorical devices of the Gothic tradition. As George Saintsbury points out in 'Explained Supernatural' (1916), eighteenth-century Gothic of the line of Ann Radcliffe challanged the readers with natural explanations so as to position them in relation to matters of belief or prejudice. Saintsbury affirms that an updated version of this 'machinery' reappeared in Victorian sensation fiction. He mentions Wilkie Collins but, as will be shown below, Le Fanu also made a clever use of the 'machinery', and was acutely aware of its potential to create doubt, to inspire or satisfy prejudice in individual readers. See George Saintsbury, 'Explained Supernatural', in Victor Sage, *The Gothick Novel: a Casebook,* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 75-6, quotation on p. 75; on Le Fanu's use of the "machinery", see below: p. 33, note No. 115, p. 38, note No. 135, p. 51, note No. 9, p. 59, note No. 39, p. 77, note No. 89, p. 79, note No. 90, p. 90, note No. 112, p. 131, note No. 78, p. 135, note No. 88, p. 146, notes No. 109 and 110, p. 152, note No. 128, p. 163, note No. 149.

Spalatro admits to belief in both God and the devil, but also to having no interest in the Christian religion. His view of eternity echoes Swedenborg's concept of heaven and hell:

> Were I to tell you why I believe in the great spirits I have named, you would think me mad. I have seen things, these eyes have seen them, which my lips shall never tell. Were I to speak them, you and all other men would laugh at me, and you would pronounce the TRUTH, because it is unlike what you are in the habit of seeing every day, an impossibility and a lie [...]. You can alter no man's condition. You and your fraternity of monks could more easily dislodge the island upon whose breast this prison sits, than sway in the least degree the immutable destiny of a human soul, or bring its future dwelling one inch nearer to heaven, or farther from hell.[112]

Rev. Jennings is a religious man who has nevertheless been indulging in late night readings of Swedenborg's *Arcana Coelestia*, a text investigating 'some of the profoundest arcana of our dual existence, and its intermediates'.[113] Despite Jennings admitting that Swedenborg's book is enough to make a solitary man nervous, Dr Martin Hesselius, the metaphysical physician who has been consulted on Jennings' case, explains that the patient might have experienced an involuntary opening of the inner eye through abuse of green tea.[114] Significantly, Hesselius notes that the same incident may occur through *delirium tremens*, the nervous condition by which Spalatro is said to be affected. When Hesselius fails to save Jennings from suicide, he attributes the death of his patient to hereditary suicidal mania, rather than to his own professional incompetence or to Jennings' occult readings. However, in stories of the supernatural such as 'Spalatro' and 'Green Tea', the reader is left in doubt whether to believe in the rational explanation of the weird events as the consequence of insanity, or to accept the possibility of the existence of an Other World which Le Fanu represents as an equally plausible alternative.[115]

---

[112] Le Fanu, 'Spalatro' (March 1843), p. 339.
[113] Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly*, p. 243.
[114] Ibid., p. 39.
[115] As introduced in note No. 111 above, Le Fanu's balancing of natural and supernatural explanations was a conscious rhetorical choice. In 1870 he explained to his editor, George Bentley, with regard to 'The Haunted Baronet' (1870), that he expressly intended to keep a state of 'equilibrium' between natural and supernatural explanations to grant his readers freedom of interpretation: 'The 3rd Vol. is a story in equilibrium – between the natural & the *super*-natural. The super-natural phenomena being explainable on natural theories - & people left to choose what solution they please'. See letter to George Bentley dated 12 March 1870, in Walter

Uncle Silas, another text heavily charged with Swedenborgianism, also rejects all suspicion of religious insanity concerning the Swedenborgian characters.[116] Austin Ruthyn is a Swedenborgian, an oddity considered disapprovingly by his family and acquaintances: the Rector, representing orthodox Anglicanism, describes Austin as 'a cloud without water, carried about of the winds, and a wandering star to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness'; Mrs Rusk, 'who was a sound and bitter churchwoman, said he fancied he saw visions and talked with angels like the rest of that 'rubbitch''; while cousin Monica, embodying Anglican Protestant common sense, calls Swedenborgians 'a sort of pagans, [...] all likely to be damned'.[117] Austin's daughter Maud is raised an Anglican, and confirms that she goes to church every Sunday, to everybody's relief. However, she feels a strange combination of attraction to and awe of her father's religion, which is indicative of her personal crisis of faith: '[a]ll kinds of shapeless fears environed me in silence. For the first time, dire misgivings about the form of faith affrighted me. Who were these Swedenborgians who had got about him [...] and held him so fast to the close of his life?'.[118] She is concerned that this occult doctrine might be a form of heresy or witchcraft, and that her father might have gone mad because of it. It is Dr Bryerly, Austin's spiritual guide, who explains to Maud the arcana of Swedenborgianism, which she had tried to access by reading *Heaven and Hell*, but without success. A doctor of theology, rather than a physician, and a character who is slowly revealed as loyal and protective, despite the aura

---

E. Edens, *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu: a Minor Victorian and His Publisher* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Illinois, 1963), p. 238; also, Victor Sage, *Le Fanu's Gothic: The Rhetoric of Darkness* (Houndsmill; Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 210, note No. 20.

[116] For an extensive analysis of Swedenborgianism in *Uncle Silas* see McCormack, *Sheridan Le Fanu*, Chapter 5.

[117] Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas*, pp. 29, 73. In his Introduction to the Penguin edition of *Uncle Silas*, Victor Sage interprets Monica's (and Maud's) 'orthodox prejudice' against Swedenborgianism as the source of the novel's Gothicism: 'much of the book's "Gothic" rhetoric of horror and darkness comes not from the representation of Swedenborgianism itself, but from Maud's and Monica's orthodox prejudice, suspicion and fear'; Victor Sage, Introduction to *Uncle Silas* (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. ix-xxxv, particularly pp. xxvi-xxx, quotation on p. xxx.

[118] Ibid., p. 162.

of mystery surrounding him, Bryerly insists that there is '[n]ot a saner man in England' than Austin.[119]

In Le Fanu's fiction Swedenborgianism is freed from any implication of insanity, and later in *Uncle Silas*, also from any negative association with the murderous figure of Silas Ruthyn, who, although a nominal Swedenborgian, is said not to have 'any heart left for religion'.[120] The novel concludes with Maud's reflections on the mysteries of the Other World, which betray the influence of her father's faith: '[t]he world is a parable – the habitation of symbols – the phantoms of spiritual things immortal shown in material shape. May the blessed second-sight be mine – to recognise under these beautiful forms of earth the ANGELS who wear them; for I am sure we may walk with them if we will, and hear them speak!'.[121] Le Fanu's inclination towards Swedenborgianism also becomes evident in his later novels *All in the Dark* and *A Lost Name*, which deal with the wrongful association of madness with Spiritualism and prophecies, and which will be analysed in detail in Chapters One and Two below.

As has been shown, discussions of insanity permeate Le Fanu's fiction, and madness is described with extreme precision, using all the different forms advanced by Victorian psychiatry in the numerous treatises of mental medicine which had been published or publically discussed in the press of the time. However, despite the topicality

---

[119] Ibid., p. 119. Again, Victor Sage rightly points out that the slow revelation of Bryerly (and Swedenborgianism) as benign belongs as much to Maud's changes of perception as to Le Fanu's direct authorial relationship with the reader: 'Swedenborgianism is indeed treated benignly, but this is not quite the way the text presents it: we only come to this judgement by rationalizing the Gothic distortion of Maud's childhood point of view. [...] Maud, having been brough up by servants, is obsessed both by the horror of heresy and the frightening mystery of what her orthodoxy apparently requires her to believe. Her reaction to Bryerly is totally prejudiced: [...] both Maud and Monica have to learn that he is a good man and a good friend'; Introduction, p. xxx.

[120] Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas*, p. 508.

[121] Ibid., p. 511. Although Swedenborgianism is eventually depicted in a positive light, McCormack offers a different interpretation of Swedenborg's "system", which accounts for the novel's Gothicism. In his chapter on *Uncle Silas*, McCormack interprets Silas as 'the post-mortem existence of Austin', that is, he argues that Maud's murderous uncle embodies 'the gradual revelation of [Austin's] soul's real moral condition', which, according to Swedenborg, happens only after a man's death; p. 182. Upon this basis he believes that, no place is safe for Maud, who thus becomes the persecuted heroine of the Gothic novel. Swedenborg's idea of Resurrection (the final revelation of one's soul's real nature) will be introduced in Chapter One on *All in the Dark*, pp. 68-70, and dealt with in more detail in Chapter Two on *A Lost Name*, with regard to the character of Carmel Sherlock. For yet another study of the Austin/Silas relationship, see Sage's Introduction to the novel, where he argues that '[t]he Bluebeard figure has [...] been decomposed into the two brothers, Austin and Silas, both of whom conspire to keep Maud in the dark and issue prohibitions'; p. xvii.

of this subject in Le Fanu's life and work, no critical study has yet attempted to ground its analysis in social and psychiatric history. Since his rediscovery in the 1920s, Le Fanu has become best known as a writer of short stories of the supernatural.[122] In a post-Freudian era, Le Fanu's interest in psychological states meant that much of his fiction seemed ready-made for psychoanalytic interpretation, a dominant interpretative model for Gothic, horror, and the supernatural for decades. However, an increasing number of literary and film scholars have begun to find faults with the "universalising" nature of psychoanalysis.

In *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction* (1999), Robert Mighall complains that the psychoanalytic approach replaces the novelist with 'the "dreamer", abandoning all conscious design in his or her fictions to the dynamics of a suprahistorical unconscious'.[123] As Mighall's title makes clear, far from being irrelevant, time and space play 'an important part in making Gothic representations credible at any given time'.[124] Mighall reiterates the importance of a historicist approach to Gothic fiction in a provocative article written in collaboration with Chris Baldick for David Punter's *Companion to the Gothic* (2000).[125] In 'Gothic Criticism', Mighall and Baldick offer a brief account of the critical discussion of literary Gothic, highlighting how the early historicist approach to the genre was replaced by a Freudian approach in the 1930s:

> Gothic Criticism has abandoned any credible historical grasp upon its object, which it has tended to reinvent in the image of its own projected intellectual goals of psychological "depth" and political "subversion". It has erased fundamental distinctions between Gothic suspicion of the past and romantic nostalgia, mistakenly presenting Gothic literature as a kind of "revolt" against bourgeois rationality, modernity, or Enlightenment. Misconceiving Gothic fictions as examples of anti-realist "fantasy" or dream-writing, it has repeatedly overlooked their manifest temporal, geographic, and ideological referents while constructing

---

[122] Le Fanu was in fact a prolific and eclectic writer, whose literary production totals over eighty pieces including novels, novelettes, short stories, verse, drama, and journalism. For an up-to-date list of Le Fanu's works see Gary William Crawford, Brian J. Showers, *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu: a Concise Bibliography* (Dublin: The Swan River Press, 2011).

[123] Robert Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. xiii. Mighall's contextualisation of the trope of insanity will be subject of analysis in Chapter Two on *A Lost Name*; see pp. 148-9 below.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, 'Gothic Criticism', in David Punter, ed., *A Companion to the Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 209-28.

> increasingly implausible models of their supposed latent fears, desires, and "revolutionary" impulses.[126]

Mighall's and Baldick's advocacy of historicism has been embraced by Jerrold E. Hogle. While Hogle's contribution to this discussion is already evident in the editorial stance he takes in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (2002), where the genre is contextualised in specific times and places, it is even more explicit in his historicist analysis of Gaston Leroux's *Phantom of the Opera* (1909).[127] In *The Undergrounds of The Phantom of the Opera* (2002), Hogle rejects psychoanalytic studies of the novel as unconvincing, and affirms that theorists who employ psychoanalysis alone 'cannot confidently limit their ranges of reference to the visceral memories of the individual body. They must confront the political and social behind the psychological'.[128] He does not dismiss psychoanalytic readings of *The Phantom* as simply invalid, but rather emphasises the necessity of contextualisation.[129] Similarly, film critic Matt Hills also observes in his work on *The Pleasures of Horror* (2005), that the main problem with psychoanalysis is that it ignores history in order to validate its theories: '[p]sychoanalytic approaches have thus tended to discursively police and categorize horror texts while also bidding for horror's cultural value as a sign of allegedly transhistorical, psychical processes (e.g. 'the unconscious', 'the Oedipal complex'), and thus as a validation of psychoanalytic theory itself'.[130]

In the specific case of Le Fanu's fiction, criticism has also shifted from a psychoanalytical to a historicist perspective over the twentieth century. Thus, while Le Fanu's ghosts were interpreted as the "return of the repressed" or the resurfacing of some surmounted beliefs, and were often employed to analyse the psyche of the author himself,

---

[126] Ibid., pp. 209-10.
[127] Jerrold E. Hogle, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), and Jerrold E. Hogle, *The Undergrounds of The Phantom of the Opera: Sublimation and the Gothic in Leroux's Novel and its Progeny* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).
[128] Hogle, *The Undergrounds of The Phantom of the Opera*, p. 52.
[129] Ibid., p. 53.
[130] Matt Hills, *The Pleasures of Horror* (New York: Continuum, 2005), Ch. 3, quotation of p. 46. Although Hill's analysis focuses on film, his arguments can be effectively applied to horror fiction as well.

in more recent years they have been contextualised in the chronotope of Victorian Ireland and in the wider context of nineteenth-century Europe. With regard to the early Freudian interpretation of Le Fanu's supernatural creations, V. S. Pritchett's *The Living Novel* (1946) stands as a case in point. In the chapter on 'An Irish Ghost', Pritchett praises the power of Le Fanu's spirits in evoking terror, a power which he attributes to the fact that these ghosts are not mere 'pereambulatory figments [...] clanking about in fancy dress', but rather expressions of our own most hidden fears, coming back to haunt us from the recesses of our mind.[131] Pritchett makes direct reference to Freud and his theories of the unconscious as the key to interpret Le Fanu's horror: '[i]t is we who are the ghosts. [...] We haunt ourselves. Let illness or strain weaken the catch which we keep fixed so tightly upon the unconscious, and out spring all the hags and animals of moral or Freudian symbolism'.[132]

Le Fanu's biographer Nelson Browne and scholar of the supernatural Peter Penzoldt have gone a step further, and applied Freud's theories to the "nervous" mind of the author. In *Sheridan Le Fanu* (1951), Browne affirms that '[u]ndoubtedly both the man and his works present a rich field of investigation to psychologists of the Vienna School'.[133] Browne argues that Le Fanu's horror was inspired by real dreams that haunted the writer, and which he interprets as a 'projection' of Le Fanu's unconscious.[134] Browne speculates that Le Fanu died of an aneurism of the heart as a result of several consecutive nervous crises brought about by a recurrent, terrifying dream. Browne draws probably from S. M. Ellis' sensational, and almost certainly fictitious, recounting of the nightmare of "the falling house that never falls", according to which, Le Fanu dreamt persistently of an old, delapitated, big house threatening to collapse and kill the dreamer.[135] Browne also

[131] V. S. Pritchett, *The Living Novel* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960), p. 96.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Nelson Browne, *Sheridan Le Fanu* (London: A. Barker, 1951), p. 120.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Stewart Marsh Ellis, *Mainly Victorian* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1925), p. 150.

ascribes to Le Fanu's personal experience with mental strain his extraordinary capacity to describe the symptoms of a troubled mind 'with the precision of an alienist'.[136]

Similarly, in *The Supernatural in Fiction* (1952), Penzoldt maintains that 'Le Fanu describes the symptoms of mental and nervous disease with almost uncanny accuracy', and also affirms that his talent originated in the author's neurosis.[137] Penzoldt focuses particularly on the collection *In a Glass Darkly* and, while he recognises the figure of Hesselius as the prototypical psychic doctor in English fiction, he directs his attention to the Freudian analysis of Le Fanu's own personality, which he reads between the lines of these stories. From his investigations, Penzoldt concludes that Le Fanu was a neurotic, whose fears are reflected in his fiction; that his identification with weak, feminine, and child-like heroines proves that Le Fanu reacted to neurotic terrors as a helpless child; and finally, that the creation of Hesselius, shortly before he died, was proabably an attempt on the part of the author to cure his own psychological problems.[138]

This early criticism exemplifies the type of transhistorical, self-validating psychoanalytic theory to which Mighall, Baldick, Hogle, and Hills, among others, object. While Pritchett, Browne, and Penzoldt recognise Le Fanu's talent, they force a diagnosis of the author's mental disturbance based on the interpretation of his stories or on rumours about his dreams, rather than through an engaged research of Le Fanu's actual experience with insanity and a contextualisation of the author in the milieu in which he lived. The work of Julia Briggs and Jack Sullivan has approached Le Fanu's supernatural from a different angle. Written in the years of increasing scholarly interest in the Gothic, *Night Visitors* (1977) and *Elegant Nightmares* (1978) focus on the genre of the ghost story in the

---

[136] Browne, p. 108.
[137] Peter Penzoldt, *The Supernatural in Fiction* (1952), extract in Gary Crawford, Jim Rockhill, and Brian J. Showers, eds, *Reflections in a Glass Darkly: Essays on J. Sheridan Le Fanu* (Hippocampus Press: 2011), pp. 96-114, p. 100.
[138] Ibid., p. 102.

context of the Victorian crisis of faith.[139] Both Briggs and Sullivan argue that the success of the ghost story derives from the doubt cast by 'science's dominance' over the supernatural, which leaves the reader in that state of uncertainty which Tzvetan Todorov has defined as the "hesitancy" typical of the fantastic.[140] As Briggs explains:

> The philosophical problem of whether apparently supernatural phenomena have any independent existence or are created in human imagination, with all its implications for a 'living' universe or a totally subjective human vision are implicit in the question most basic of the ghost story, 'was it real or imaginary?'[141]

For this reason, they conclude, Le Fanu is 'one of the finest ghost story writers of all times', in that he seems to offer a rationale behind the supernatural, but never gives enough information to exorcise the experience through reason.[142]

Although Briggs' and Sullivan's works are valuable contributions to the canonisation of Le Fanu within the scholarship of the Gothic, they focus specifically on the genre of the short story, and limit their attention to only a few of Le Fanu's most famous items. While Briggs recognises that '[b]ehind Le Fanu's imaginative descriptions of psychological states [...] lay a profound concern with the relationship between the mind and the body', she does not investigate reasons for this other than his following a successful literary trend of the time.[143] Sullivan also acknowledges that 'Le Fanu is certainly concerned with psychology. His tales deal repeatedly with dark states of consciousness', but somehow ends up falling back into the net of psychoanalysis, despite his stating that '[t]his is not a Freudian study' and criticising scholars like Pritchett and

---

[139] Julia Briggs, *Night Visitors: the Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story* (London: Faber, 1997), Introduction and Ch. 1; Jack Sullivan, *Elegant Nightmares: the English Ghost Story from Le Fanu to Blackwood* (Athens; Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1980), Introduction, Chs 1 and 2.

[140] Briggs and Sullivan, Introductions, passim; quote from Sullivan, p. 3. On Todorov's theory of the fantastic, see Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1973), Ch. 3.

[141] Briggs, p. 22.

[142] Ibid., p. 44, Sullivan, p. 51. Again, Briggs's and Sullivan's argument implies an artful rhetorical use of "equilibrium" on the part of Le Fanu, which the author had clearly admitted to exploit in his letter to Bentley (see note No. 115 above). M. R. James already attributed Le Fanu's talent to his success in keeping 'the loophole [for natural explanations] so narrow as not to be quite practicable'. See M. R. James, Introduction to *Madam Crowl's Ghost and Other Stories* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1994), p. v; also, p. 90 and note No. 112 below.

[143] Briggs, p. 51.

Penzoldt as 'theory-obsessed'.[144] Thus, he affirms that 'Le Fanu's life does not explain his works. The reverse process has more validity', and interprets the sullennes and isolation of his late stories as a reflection of Le Fanu's dark years as a recluse.[145]

The ahistorical approach of these early studies may also be attributable to the lack of a comprehensive biography of the author (as Sullivan has pointed out), so that, before W. J. McCormack's *Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland* appeared in 1980, David Punter could still see 'very little historical or political interest in [Le Fanu's] "supernatural" novels'.[146] McCormack's work marks a turning point in the critical studies of Le Fanu. His complete, precise, and meticulous biography positions Le Fanu and his fiction within the historical, socio-cultural, and political context of Victorian Ireland, thus opening the way to more accurate and sensitive author-focused research. With *Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland* Le Fanu begins to be presented as a specifically *Irish* writer. Since then his name has appeared alongside better known Gothic novelists, such as Charles Maturin and Bram Stoker, as a representative of the so-called "Irish Gothic tradition", thanks to the invaluable research of scholars like Victor Sage, Julian Moynahan, and Terry Eagleton, among others.[147]

The contextualisation of Le Fanu in Victorian Ireland partly reflects what Victor Sage has defined as the historicisation and feminisation of the Gothic that began in the 1980s, and which will frame this current study on madness in Le Fanu's fiction.[148] However, it is not as an Irish Victorian alone that Le Fanu has been critically considered. In fact, as McCormack, James Walton, and Gaïd Girard have successfully argued, Le

---

[144] Sullivan, pp. 6, 17.
[145] Ibid., pp. 35-7, p. 35.
[146] David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: a History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* (London: Longman, 1996), p. 207.
[147] See, for instance, Victor Sage, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1988); W. J. McCormack, 'Irish Gothic and After (1820-1945), in Seamus Deane, ed., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. 2 (Derry: Field Day Publications, 1991), pp. 831-949; Julian Moynahan, *Anglo-Irish: The Literary Imagination in a Hyphenated Culture* (Princeton; NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), Ch. 6; and Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1995), Ch. 2.
[148] Sage, *Le Fanu's Gothic*, p. 1.

Fanu's contribution to and editorship of the *Dublin University Magazine* and other national and international papers positioned him in a wider European context. In *Dissolute Characters* (1993), McCormack maintains that Le Fanu's uncertain place in the *Irish* Gothic tradition (the author having Irish and French origins, and having sought a place on the English literary market) is made all the more uncertain through the influence of Honoré de Balzac's fiction, Emanuel Swedenborg's mysticism, and the visual art of Dutch painters like Gerard Dou and Godfried Schalcken on his writing.[149] McCormack places particular emphasis on Le Fanu's interest in Swedenborgianism (he interprets the doctrine as a major link between the author and both Balzac and W. B. Yeats), which he considers in the context of the Victorian crisis of faith, as he does in his biography.[150] In both *Sheridan Le Fanu* and *Dissolute Characters*, McCormack emphasises Le Fanu's vain appeal to Swedenborgianism as a way to appease his spiritual anxieties:

> Swedenborgianism offers some escape from, or at least explanation of, this fallen world but the explanation disappears into solipsism and the escape is the purely formal urge towards nihilism. In advancing salvation to the seeker after truth, the Doctrines merely provide Le Fanu with a more comprehensive delineation of his anxieties.[151]

Le Fanu's 'urge towards nihilism' becomes the subject of further analysis in James Walton's *Vision and Vacancy* (2007), which investigates Le Fanu's work on the basis of an epistemological "vacancy" lying behind his entire production. In Le Fanu's fiction, doubt becomes a void upon which the author projects his hauntings, to symbolise sexual, domestic, historical, and ultimately theological conflict:

> [Le Fanu's] ghosts and hauntings, literal and metaphoric, emerge from a void left by the abdication of spiritual authority. They represent the consequences of an

---

[149] W. J. McCormack, *Dissolute Characters: Irish Literary History Through Balzac, Sheridan Le Fanu, Yeats and Bowen* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).
[150] Ibid., pp. 54-5.
[151] McCormack, *Sheridan Le Fanu*, p. 194. See also *Dissolute Characters*, pp. 27-8. Victor Sage has recently offered an alternative reading of McCormack's interpretation of Le Fanu's religious anxiety, suggesting that McCormack is rather too influenced here by Marxist sympathies. See Sage, 'The Smashed Looking-Glass": Fragmentation and Narrative Perversity in *Willing to Die*', in Crawford, Rockhill, and Showers, eds., *Reflections in a Glass Darkly*, pp. 417-34, particularly p. 417, note No. 1.

> original sin historicised as a criminal inheritance and subject to a medley of interpretations, orthodox and mystical, spiritual and secular.[152]

Walton successfully traces this idea of vacancy throughout Le Fanu's literary productions in the recurrence of Gothic tropes like haunted houses, persecuted heroines, undead fathers, and the supernatural. Despite the extensiveness of his literary analysis and the precision of his Swedenborgian readings of Le Fanu's work, little is said of how that "abdication of spiritual authority" came about. Walton introduces Catherine's, Susanna's, and Le Fanu's religious anxiety, but fails to emphasise the calibre of the crisis of faith in the Victorian era, so that, at times, it is hard to grasp the motives behind their troubles, and Le Fanu's own interest in the occult. This study intends to provide a more detailed background of the state of spiritual uncertainty that was assailing the Victorians, so as to facilitate the interpretation of Le Fanu's work, which is indeed heavily charged with characters suffering from religious troubles. Furthermore, by focusing on the important association of alternative spiritualities with insanity, this thesis will demonstrate that Le Fanu was aware of the medical discourses of the time and used them in his fiction to show sympathy for those characters who, like him, seek comfort away from orthodox Christianity.

Gaïd Girard's extensive, but sadly still untranslated, *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu: une écriture fantastique* (2005) tackles the subject of spiritual uncertainty as the background for nineteenth-century interest in psychopathology. This connection had already been suggested by Briggs and Sullivan; Girard, though, provides a fuller discussion of the medical debates on mesmerism, hysteria, hallucinations, and other forms of mental disturbances which appeared in the press of the time. As she correctly affirms, 'Le Fanu était très au fait des théories médicales, scientifiques et spiritistes de son temps et [...] le *DUM*, entre autres, en rendait compte régulièrement. La maladie de sa femme Susanna [...] ne pouvait que le rendre sensible aux débats du temps sur les traitements médicaux des

[152] James Walton, *Vision and Vacancy: the Fictions of J. S. Le Fanu* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2007), p. 3.

tempéraments "nerveux", féminins en particulier'.[153] She dedicates three chapters to the study of Le Fanu's representation of mesmerism (Chapter 9), paranoia (Chapter 10), and hysteria (Chapter 11) and demonstrates that Le Fanu's attribution of hysteria to female characters and mania of persecution to male characters reflected the gender division presented in Victorian discourses on mental insanity.[154] However, despite her meticulous historical contextualisation, Girard, like Briggs and Sullivan, focuses mainly on Le Fanu's *fantastique*, and particularly on the figure of the metaphysical doctor Hesselius. While stressing Le Fanu's knowledge of Victorian psychiatry, she overlooks Le Fanu's critical view of the power-game played by alienists, particularly at the expense of rebellious women, a component of the fiction which this research addresses.

Le Fanu's support of subversive heroines has, however, been noticed by several scholars. In *Dissolute Characters*, for instance, McCormack argues that 'Le Fanu's unconscious feminism acts to undermine old patriarchal assumptions'.[155] In his analysis of *Wylder's Hand*, McCormack interpretes Rachel and Dorcas' sailing happily in the Venetian lagoon as a sign of release from a patriarchal house charged with oppression and murder, and reads the 'defeat of male power' in the narrator's description of those waters as the place 'where so many rings of Doges lie lost beneath the waves'.[156] Moreover, McCormack points out that *Uncle Silas* had originally been titled *Maud Ruthyn*, in full acknowledgement of the important role of the female narrator, which proves 'Le Fanu's commitment to the feminist aspect of his new fiction'.[157] In *Le Fanu's Gothic: the Rhetoric of Darkness* (2004), Victor Sage rightly affirms that '[o]ne of the pleasures of reading Le Fanu's later work is the great flowering of women characters'.[158] Sage's book is a reader-

---

[153] 'Le Fanu was very aware of the medical, scientific, and Spiritualist theories of his time, and [...] the *DUM*, among others, covered them regularly. His wife Susanna's illness [...] could only make him more sensible to the current debates on the medical treatment of "nervous" cases, particularly those concerning women', Gaïd Girard, *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu: une écriture fantastique* (Paris: Champion, 2005), p. 362, my translation.
[154] Ibid., pp. 24-5.
[155] McCormack, *Dissolute Characters*, p. 64.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid., p. 66.
[158] Victor Sage, *Le Fanu's Gothic*, p. 5.

focused analysis of a rich selection of major and minor works by Le Fanu, a textual study of the steps and layers of narrative which the reader is obliged to negotiate, a "rhetoric of darkness" exploited by the narrators at the expense of the reader's security. In his investigation of the *chiaroscuro* which characterises *The Tenants of Malory* and *Haunted Lives*, in particular, Sage points out the recurrent use of the word "perversity" with regard to the spirited temperament of the rebellious heroines, whose erotic passion he interprets as 'a morbid and perverse condition which leads to death'.[159]

The most attentive study of Le Fanu's women remains Allison Milbank's *Daughters of the House* (1992). Milbank focuses on *Uncle Silas* and *The Rose and the Key* as the best examples of Le Fanu's experiments in the female Gothic, that is, that specific branch of Gothic which revolves around the heroine's imprisonment. According to Milbank, Le Fanu's detachment from the traditional use of the castle as a setting in favour of the Victorian home is revelatory of his engagement with the topical issue of female domestic powerlessness and women's subjection to abuse within their houses. In his novels, the enclosure in the house becomes associated with women's live burial, whether literal, as the digging of Maud's grave in *Uncle Silas*, or metaphorical, as the loss of rights, voice, and identity experienced by the other Maud in *The Rose and the Key*, after her confinement in a mental institution.[160] Milbank's critique of *The Rose and the Key* is invaluable in the parallel that it draws between the asylum and Victorian society, which highlights an important attempt on the part of Le Fanu to build a 'feminist hermeneutics'.[161] However, Milbank's focus on insanity originates in Le Fanu's use of the asylum as a setting, in line with the popular fiction of the time. Therefore, she does not investigate Le Fanu's interest and involvement in the topical debate on Victorian psychiatry. Le Fanu was certainly aspiring to the successful career of Wilkie Collins, but his familial and cultural background

[159] Ibid., p. 6.
[160] Alison Milbank, *Daughters of the House: Modes of the Gothic in Victorian Fiction* (London: Macmillan P., 1992), pp. 158-97.
[161] Ibid., p. 21.

offer a more complex interpretative model for his use of insanity and the asylum. As will be argued, Le Fanu's personal experience with madness and his awareness of too many cases of wrongful confinement certainly influenced his views of medicine, and of mind-doctors in particular.

This thesis, then, intends to contextualise Le Fanu within Victorian discourses on insanity in order to indicate his suspicions of contemporary psychiatry as a practice which was trying to silence eccentric or difficult citizens into "normality", particularly a new generation of independence-seeking women, and believers in occult forms of spirituality. Therefore, this research fills the gap between a historicist approach to Le Fanu's experience of the crisis of faith and the still limited analysis of his contribution to the female Gothic genre. Much has been said about madness with regard to the unconscious in the creation of Le Fanu's horror. This thesis does not intend to approach Le Fanu's work from a psychoanalytical perspective, but rather aims at framing the author within the medical, socio-cultural and literary context of the era. While Sullivan argues that 'Le Fanu's life does not explain his works', this study intends to at least complicate this judgement, by showing that Le Fanu's fiction is partially motivated by his reflection on his familial experience with insanity and of the milieu in which he lived. The following chapters will focus on four of Le Fanu's late novels, which have been overlooked even by most recent criticism.

Chapter One will introduce the subject of the crisis of faith as a phenomenon deeply felt by Victorian society, and as a source of particular concern within Le Fanu's household. *All in the Dark* revolves around a woman's search for spiritual peace through the new, occult doctrine of Spiritualism. In the novel, Le Fanu makes use of contemporary studies of insanity to show how a person could have been easily diagnosed as mad because of her unorthodox beliefs. While Dinah Perfect is protected from those accusations by being depicted as an eccentric, rather than a madwoman, Le Fanu's derisory representation

of Spiritualism is indicative of his utter contempt for the practice, against which he offers a submerged Swedenborgianism as a possible alternative way of communication with the Other World.

Chapter Two will continue investigations into alternative responses to the crisis of faith. In *A Lost Name*, Carmel Sherlock is represented as a Swedenborg-like figure, a prophet and a visionary who is accused of being mad on the basis of his claimed connection with the world of spirits. Again, Le Fanu significantly acquits Sherlock of the charge of insanity, while he instead afflicts the rationalist philosopher Mark Shadwell with the taint of madness. In this regard, the idea of insanity as a curse is also put forward: at a time of revived interest in witchcraft, the superstitious omen of family destruction, emblematically represented by a sexualised and independent woman, finds physiological explanation in the hereditary nature of madness.

Chapter Three will examine the themes of erotomania and the domestic abuse of women, thus functioning as a bridge between *A Lost Name*, where love-madness is revealed as the origin of a curse, and *The Rose and the Key*, where a difficult woman is easily disposed of in an asylum by being labelled mad. Reflecting Le Fanu's own experience with mental strain, as well as those of a society in which men were finding it easier to lock up their wives for their own gain, *The Wyvern Mystery* criticises both the physical and the psychological ill-treatment of women, by recurring, once again, to the idea of madness as a curse to the family.

Chapter Four will analyse in depth the role of women in the Victorian home and the danger of wrongful confinement for those who dared to rebel. *The Rose and the Key* focuses on the figure of the rebellious daughter in the turbulent years of women's emancipation, when women's desire for independence became a "question" to solve. While novelists and poets reminded female readers that the ideal woman was "the angel in the house", Victorian doctors offered scientific explanations for women's necessary

domestic confinement and their restriction to the primary roles of wife and mother. In the novel, Le Fanu saves his strong-willed heroine from the lunatic asylum in which she had been wrongfully interned, thus showing his sympathy for a new generation of women, while criticising asylums as places of torture rather than cure.

The conclusion will bring these analyses together and offer suggestions for future research on Le Fanu. While McCormack claimed that '[m]uch of Le Fanu's later fiction deserves the silence it has provoked', I believe that, far from being the fruits of a tired imagination, *All in the Dark*, *A Lost Name*, *The Wyvern Mystery*, and *The Rose and the Key* have much to say about Le Fanu and Victorian society.[162] The following chapters intend to provide a more careful and original interpretation of these novels, by reframing them within Le Fanu's somehow neglected familial, cultural, and historical backgrounds, and thus making them invaluable instruments for the understanding of an author and of his time.

[162] McCormack, *Sheridan Le Fanu*, p. 231.

CHAPTER ONE

Subversive Commodities: *All in the Dark* (1866)

All in the Dark first appeared in Le Fanu's *Dublin University Magazine* between February and June 1866, and was then published in two volumes by the Bentleys of London straight after the appearance of the fifth and last instalment. As early as 1 November 1865 Le Fanu wrote to George Bentley, who was at that time preparing a third edition of *Guy Deverell*, that he was thinking of 'an Irish story say in Two Vols. to be ready in March or April'.[1] No further mention of it was made until 31 January 1866, when he wrote to Richard Bentley that 'I have commenced a short tale in the *Dublin University Magazine* called *All in the Dark*. I think it will make about two volumes [...] and I think I could give you all the Copy for publication about the middle of April'.[2] Disagreements concerning Le Fanu's earnings delayed the whole business for about a month. On 12 February 1866, Richard Bentley offered Le Fanu a deal for both *All in the Dark* and another novel in three volumes, which became *A Lost Name* (1868): £200 would be paid for the former and £400 for the latter.[3] In his two following letters to both Richard and George Bentley, Le Fanu expressed his regret at having to refuse their terms, but he felt that his editors were not acknowledging the attention excited by *Uncle Silas* or the author's potential 'as a spinner of such tales', if they were still suggesting the same figures as those of one year and a half before.[4] On the very next day after receiving Le Fanu's letter, George Bentley explained that 'I cannot tell you how sorry I am to see you leave us', but that their decision was justified by the fact that the returns from the publication of *Wylder's Hand*, *Uncle Silas*, and *Guy Deverell* had not been satisfactory: '[b]y *Wylders (sic) Hand* we made no profit, the loss being, however,

---

[1] Walter E. Edens, *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu: a Minor Victorian and His Publisher* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Illinois, 1963), p. 204. *All in the Dark* is not an Irish story, and in the correspondence between Le Fanu and Bentley the subject of the Irish settings was never discussed. Le Fanu well knew Bentley's opinion in these regards, since the editor had expressly requested Le Fanu, as early as 1863, to provide him with stories of 'an English subject and in modern times'; letter dated 26 February 1863, p. 164.
[2] Ibid., p. 209.
[3] Ibid., p. 210.
[4] Ibid., letters dated 16 and 18 February 1866, pp. 210-12; quote p. 211.

trifling: £15 or £16. Our profit on *Uncle Silas* is under £100 on both Editions, partly owing it is true to the large sum spent in advertising the work. Our profit at present on *Guy Deverell* is £45'.[5] Bentley's straightforwardness must have induced Le Fanu to reconsider his expectations, since on 21 February he wrote that, although there were indications that other houses would pay not less than £1,000 for both novels, he would be willing to accept £800 for the two tales.[6] This may have been a final attempt by Le Fanu to get a better deal from the Bentleys. However, at that time, he was also in touch with the Tinsley Brothers, with whom he then published *The Tenants of Malory* in 1867 (thus delaying the serialisation of *A Lost Name*), *Haunted Lives* in 1868, and *The Wyvern Mystery* in 1869. No correspondence survives between Le Fanu and the Tinsleys; therefore it cannot be established whether his acceptance of Bentley's terms depended on his business relationship with Tinsley. Bentley's final offer was for £750 cash and £50 worth of books from their catalogue, which Le Fanu accepted on 27 February 1866.[7]

Announced in the *Dublin University Magazine* as expected for publication in June 1866, *All in the Dark* is Le Fanu's only "Comic Gothic" novel, his first and last to approach the supernatural in a derisory way. The story revolves around Dinah Perfect's strong belief in Spiritualism and the grave consequences that her supposed spirit communication has for her and those who love her. Dinah affirms that she is in contact with a ghost called Henbane, who advises her on matters of everyday life by means of table-rapping and automatic writing. Like many Spiritualists of the time, Dinah can easily reconcile the new occult movement with the old Christian faith. She reads both the Bible and the teachings of the "prophet" Elihu Bung, and interprets dreams as the mysterious communications of Providence. Dinah's syncretism is received with awe by her young niece, and with derision by her male friends and relations, who represent the law, science, and the Church. Nevertheless, she retains complete faith in Henbane's words, which

[5] Ibid., letter dated 19 February 1866, p. 212.
[6] Ibid., pp. 212-3.
[7] Ibid., p. 214.

accounts for her irrational behaviour and the sad turn that events take at Gilroyd Hall. The novel opens with Miss Perfect, an elderly but healthy maiden aunt, summoning her nephew William Maubray and her acquired niece Violet Darkwell to her deathbed. Although her doctor confirms that his patient suffers from nothing more serious than the common ailments of advanced age, she behaves as if she is going to die the following day, as prophesised by Henbane.

Back in Gilroyd Hall from St John's College, Cambridge, William meets again with his childhood companion Violet. The two fall in love but their happiness is confounded by their coyness and, above all, by Henbane's words. The spirit foresees a proficient career in the Church for William and a very advantageous marriage with a wealthy gentleman for Violet. William's refusal to comply with his aunt's wishes for a clerical career leads to his estrangement from the family mansion and to a series of humorous events that have him as protagonist in the role of mistaken heir-in-disguise at the Kincton Knoxes, while Violet is left to deal with the indecisive courtship of a vain young man who cannot decide if her beauty and manners can compensate for her lack of a title and fortune. When the moment of death actually arrives for Dinah, she finally rejects Spiritualism and dies embracing the Christian faith alone. Ghosts are revealed as nothing more than the fruit of a credulous woman's imagination or the unconscious acts of a natural somnambulist. The novel ends with the happy marriage of William and Violet. This is a union based on love, Violet having rejected the more socially promising proposal made by Vane Trevor of Revington for the sake of William's true affection.

Spiritualism was a very topical subject in the 1860s. Emerging in America in the late 1840s, this movement spread almost immediately to Europe, finding fertile terrain in the state of religious uncertainty which was troubling part of the population, regardless of class, age, or gender.[8] When scientific discoveries in the fields of biology, geology, and

[8] On the crisis of faith and its relation to Spiritualism, see Jarlath Killeen, *History of the Gothic: Gothic Literature 1825-1914* (Cardiff: Wales University Press, 2009), pp. 124-8, Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room:*

physics brought the credibility of the Bible into question, believers began to feel uneasy with the way Christianity explained the supernatural. However, far from becoming atheists, many Victorians experienced a "paradigm shift" towards alternative forms of spirituality which could reconcile the supernatural with the teachings of science. Old and new occult discourses like Spiritualism, Swedenborgianism, millenarianism, mesmerism, phrenology, telepathy, and many others, emerged as the means to bring together religion and science. The occult offered comfort because it could account for the supernatural according to the laws of nature.[9] In fact, occultists explained that whatever forces were inexplicably ruling the Universe or man, they were completely natural, and their present state, if still unknown to science, was open to investigation.

The dawn of Spiritualism is usually seen as coinciding with the so-called "Rochester knockings" experienced by Kate and Margaret Fox on 31 March 1848.[10] At the very early age of twelve and thirteen, the Fox sisters realised that they could communicate, by means of raps, initially with the spirit of a pedlar who had been murdered in their house, and then with many more of the departed. Their gift soon became a local and national sensation, which the spirits asked to be revealed to the entire world: 'Dear friends', a message received during a séance read, 'you must proclaim this truth to the world. This is the dawning of a new era; you must not try to conceal it any longer'.[11] Spiritualism found a prompt and enthusiastic response in the United States, in consequence of the widespread interest in phrenology and mesmerism, religious unorthodoxy, and social utopianism,

---

Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England (Chicago, Ill.; London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), Ch. 1, and Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World*, Introduction.

[9] As has been shown in the Introduction, from a rhetorical perspective, this idea of comfort also conveys the principle of "equilibrium" which Le Fanu expressed in his letter to Bentley; see p. 33, note No. 115 above.

[10] Some historians of Spiritualism, like believer Arthur Conan Doyle and non-believer Frank Podmore, pointed out that A. J. Davies claimed communication with the Other World, through clairvoyance and trance states, years before the Fox sisters, and that in 1848 he also heard a voice saying 'brother, the very good work has begun'. See Frank Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism: a History and a Criticism*, 2 Vols (London: Routledge/Thoemmes, 2000), Vol. 1, pp. 154-71, and Arthur Conan Doyle, *The History of Spiritualism*, 2 Vols (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2009), Vol. 1, pp. 36-53; quote in Conan Doyle, p. 52. For a background of the movement, see also Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room*, and Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World*.

[11] Quoted in Owen, p. 18.

while the crisis of faith which was afflicting Europe offered an audience equally ready for the reassurance Spiritualism offered. Thus, four years after the Hydesville phenomena, in 1852, a certain Mrs Hayden arrived in London and began to advertise her services as a medium, shortly followed by her fellow-countrywoman, Mrs Roberts. The two American Spiritualists were an immediate success at private séances and evening parties, where they charged a minimum of half a guinea per consultation. The way was now open and the atmosphere prepared for the clamorous entrance of Daniel Dunglas Home, universally recognised by historians of Spiritualism as the most influential medium of the time, admired by the general public, and welcomed at the courts of Napoleon III and Empress Eugenie, Queen Sophia of Holland, and Tsar Alexander II, as well as at the salons of the Marchioness of Ely, the Duchess of Sutherland, the Countess of Medina Pomar, Lady Fairfax, and Le Fanu's distant cousin Lord Dufferin.[12] Home's appearance in 1855 and his return, after a long residence on the continent, in 1859, helped to reignite and sustain general Spiritualist enthusiasm, so that by the 1860s Spiritualism had gained strength as a movement. The increasing demand for Spiritualist séances was paralleled by a proliferation of new mediums, among them Agnes Guppy, Mary Marshall, Emma Britten and the Davenport brothers, in the 1860s, and Florence Cook, Henry Slades, Rosina Showers, Annie Fay, Mr and Mrs Holmes, and James Morse in the following decades.

Mediums were extremely diverse: some were men, most of them were women; some would charge for their services, others, like Home, would not accept money; some would only practice table-rapping and tilting, others would perform automatic writing, clairvoyance, and trance-speaking, while the most powerful would even astonish their public by means of invisible music-playing, body elongation and levitation (Home), and partial and full-form spirit materalisation (Florence Cook). Despite this variety in

[12] Lord Dufferin was connected to Le Fanu via his mother, Helen Selina Sheridan, sister of Caroline Norton and grand-daughter of the playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who was Le Fanu's great uncle. Conan Doyle pointed out that Lord Dufferin was among many who defended Home from the accusation of imposture by saying that the theory of trickery was insufficient to account for the phenomena; Vol. 1, p. 216.

performance, all mediums shared two beliefs: the immortality of the human soul, and the possibility of communicating with the dead. In a period when everyday life was still afflicted by regular family bereavement, Spiritualism was 'true to the cravings of the human heart', by claiming that life was not broken by the incident of death.[13] The strength of the movement lay in its rationale for the soul's survival, which, while not in direct competition with the Christian religion, did not require a Christian framework. Believers in the divinity of Christ found in Spiritualism a confirmation of their faith, whereas non-believers could still find comfort in the evidence of an afterlife that did not depend on religious dogma. In fact, the movement proved successful because it allowed a paradigm shift towards a spirituality governed by naturalism. Spiritualists thus took pride in their success in solving 'the most agonizing of Victorian problems', that is, how to synthesise scientific knowledge and religious tradition.[14] One boasted that Spiritualism was 'the platform on which alone religion and science can meet', while another claimed that 'standing midway between the opposing schools [of faith and science], it gives to the one a scientific basis for the divine things of old, whilst it restores to the other the much needed evidence of its expressed faith in the duality and continuity of life'.[15]

Based on these very ambitious premises, the movement rapidly spread from London to the countryside and provinces of the Midlands and the North of England, finding support both among the higher classes and among members of the working class of a free-thinking and socialist orientation, especially, in the latter case, after the conversion of their octogenarian leader Robert Owen.[16] Believers soon felt the need to organise themselves in casual or subscription-based associations and clubs, within which they could meet to share and discuss experiences and, most importantly, practise séances. At the same time, their voices and interests started to spread all over the country in the form of various

[13] T. S., 'Spiritualism and Popular Novelists', *Spiritual Magazine* (July 1861), pp. 308-22, p. 310.
[14] Oppenheim, p. 59.
[15] Respectively, Spiritualists Stainton Moses and J. S. Farmer; quoted in Oppenheim, p. 62 and p. 59.
[16] Rober Owen converted to Spiritualism at the age of 83, after participating at a séance with Mrs Hayden in 1854. On Spiritualism and the middle and working classes, see Oppenheim, pp. 28-44, and Owen 21-3.

periodicals: the *Spiritual Magazine* ran from 1860 to 1877, *Human Nature* appeared monthly between 1867 and 1877, the *Spiritualist Newspaper* was founded in 1869 and lasted until 1882, the *Medium and Daybreak* flourished between 1870 and 1895, while further publications, like *Light*, *Two Worlds*, and *Borderland* began to be circulated in the 1880s and 1890s.[17] The impressive life span of these periodicals is evidence of a strong and long-lasting readership, and consequently, of an increasing interest on the part of believers, whom historians have counted between 10,000 and 100,000.[18] In *The Other World* (1985), Janet Oppenheim explains how difficult it is to produce accurate statistical tallies of the numbers of Spiritualists in this period: some working-class believers could not afford a membership fee or the luxury of magazines, but would still meet informally; the middle and upper classes, on the other hand, had no monetary constraints, but might have preferred the privacy of their homes so as to avoid any public affiliation with Spiritualism.[19] In fact, as Frank Podmore has pointed out, in the 1850s Spiritualists practised their faith in a more timid and reserved way, while the 1860s witnessed a drop in anonymity among believers, especially after public figures of the calibre of John Ruskin, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Anthony Trollope, Frederick Tennyson, and William Thackeray all indulged their curiosity.

Spiritualism was not a major subject of interest and discussion among believers only; numerous non-believers, especially scientists and members of the Church, raised their voices in opposition to the movement from its very first appearance, and criticism poured from the pages of periodicals and newspapers like *The Times*, the *Irish Times*, the *Examiner*, the *Westminster Review*, *All the Year Round*, the *Cornhill*, the *Critic*, and the *Saturday Review*. As early as July 1854, not even two years after the arrival of Mrs Hayden, the *Scottish Review* wrote that 'the *epidemic* which has recently prevailed in our country [...] has now, we trust, so nearly run its course that we may treat it as a matter of

[17] On associations and the press, see Oppenheim, pp. 44-57.
[18] Oppenheim, p. 50; Owen, p. 25.
[19] Oppenheim, p. 49.

history'.[20] Although the optimism of the reviewer was not rewarded for another thirty years or so, it is interesting to note the metaphor associating Spiritualism with a contagious disease, which was echoed in other magazines.[21] However, the idea of a spiritual epidemic began to be employed literally by members of the scientific community, who intended to prove the dangerous effects that the movement could have on the human mind. Eminent psychiatrists like Lyttelton Forbes Wilson and Philibert Burlet defined Spiritualism as an 'epidemic delusion' or 'une veritable épidémie intellectuelle'.[22] In 1858, Charles Lockhart Robertson explained that:

> This movement presents to the psychologist or student of mental philosophy, a most remarkable assemblage of facts illustrative of the power of fraud, hallucination, deception, and self-deception; furnishing him with another instance of those epidemic maladies of opinion which merit more scientific treatment than they have yet received [...] *but equally unquestionable indications of mental disease*.[23]

Over two decades later, many sections of the scientific establishment were still strongly positioned against Spiritualism, Sir George Henry Savage, superintendent to Bethlem Royal Hospital, insisting that 'all manifold tales one hears of miracles, all the tales of ghosts, many of the instances of the thought-reader and spiritualist, are, in my opinion, the result of cases of hysterical insanity'.[24] Spiritualism was almost immediately labelled a fraud potentially dangerous for weak minds. As Alex Owen has pointed out, many medical men regarded the movement with distaste and suspicion in part because of

---

[20] Quoted in Podmore, Vol. 2, p. 21, my italics.
[21] See also, A. Bierre de Boismont, 'Mind and Body', *Saturday Review*, 8 October 1859, pp. 424-26, p. 425: 'delusions may affect any of the senses [...] and [...] may occasionally become epidemic'; Anon., 'Spirit and Spirit-Rapping', *Westminster Review* (January 1858), pp. 29-66, pp. 30, 34: 'an epidemic has spread through all classes', 'it may never re-appear in this country [...] but the conditions of mind which permitted and developed it will survive, like the physical conditions favourable to cholera.
[22] 'A true intellectual epidemic', my translation. Respectively, Anon., 'Dr Forbes on Spiritualism', *Spiritual Magazine* (June 1860), pp. 277-80, p. 278; Philibert Burlet, *Du spiritisme considéré comme cause d'aliénation mentale* (Lyon: Richard et Co., 1863), p. 4.
[23] Charles Lockhart Robertson, '*The Homeopathic Principle applied to Insanity: a Proposal to Treat Lunacy by Spiritualism* by James John Garth Wilkinson, M. D. (London: 1857)', *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, No. 4 (April 1858), pp. 360-96, http://bjp.rcpsych.org [accessed February 2011], p. 395-6. It has been argued that Le Fanu may have been in favour of homeopathy; see p. 66 below.
[24] George H. Savage, *Insanity and Allied Neuroses Practical and Clinical* (London: Cassell & Co., 1893), p. 84.

the increasing role it offered to women.[25] Their intention was the construction of normalcy and, by extension, normative womanhood. In Spiritualism, doctors recognised elements subversive of conventional behaviour, which they sought to portray as symptoms of pathological conditions representing a malfunction of normal femininity. Therefore, women needed to be protected from the contamination of this religious mania, as newspapers reminded their readers: 'fathers and mothers, if you do not desire to develop premature feelings in your daughters, husbands who regard the peace of your wives, be mistrustful of the magnetic chain in general and of the dancing of tables in particular'.[26]

Such strong opposition came as a blow to believers in the Spiritualist movement, whose intention was to ally with science in the explanation of phenomena still unknown, as suggested by Sophia De Morgan: 'if these phenomena are not the result of imposture or delusion, then the study of them involves questions worthy of the deepest considerations of the theologian and the man of science'.[27] The genuineness of their intention was proved by the foundation of several societies aiming at undertaking carefully documented scientific research: the Ghost Society appeared in 1850, the Oxford Phasmatological Society, the British National Association of Spiritualists, and the Psychological Society of Great Britain were founded in the 1870s, while the Society for Psychical Research was established in 1882. As early as 1860, Henry Sidgwick, future President of the SPR, stated that '[t]o-night I am going to witness some spirit-rapping. I do not know the least what phenomena I shall see, but I intend to have as absolute proof as possible whether the whole thing be imposture or not'.[28]

Despite Spiritualists' efforts to provide science with facts, the general scientific opinion of the movement remained sceptical and Spiritualism was associated with fraud.

---

[25] Owen, Ch. 6. The subject of subversive womanhood in Spiritualism will be analysed in more detail in section 1.2 here below.
[26] Tisdall, Charles Edward, 'The Davenport Brothers', *Irish Times*, 19 January 1866, p. 4
[27] Sophia Elizabeth De Morgan, *From Matter to Spirit: the Result of Ten Years' Experience in Spirit Manifestations* (London: Routledge/Thoemmes, 2000), p. 2.
[28] Quoted in Oppenheim, p. 123.

The press too constantly referred to séances as trickery, humbug, and legerdemain, and hoped that the exposure of cheating mediums would convince people that there was nothing behind such phenomena but fraud: 'it is to be hoped that this revelation will open the eyes of the people to the manifold impostures and humbuggeries which [...] mediums are constantly palming off upon them. Let them no longer be deceived'.[29] Believers, like poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, would reply that 'mediums cheat certainly [...] so do people who are not mediums', and sometimes went as far as to justify fraud as a medium's extra-ordinary expedient to avoid disappointing her public in case of the momentary exhaustion of her power. This last excuse was satirised by Elizabeth Browning's husband Robert, a sceptic, in his long poem 'Mr Sludge "The Medium"' (1864): 'Now, don't, sir! Don't expose me! / Just this once! This was the first and only time, I'll swear, / [...] I ever cheated'.[30] For over thirty years, believers and non-believers continued to oppose each other publicly and in the pages of newspapers and magazines, the non-believers insisting that mediums were taking advantage of the credulity of weaker minds, and the devotees complaining about the impossibility of convincing obstinate sceptics in spite of the facts brought to their attention.

Although Spiritualism was on everybody's lips, Le Fanu was one of the first writers in the British Isles to depict this practice in a work of fiction. Numerous novels and stories of the time featured ghosts and haunting spirits, but, in 1860s' England and Ireland, still only a very limited amount concentrated on séances and table-rapping. While this trend would become a literary subject in the following decades, *All in the Dark* received no acclaim for its pioneering treatment. In fact, apart from one early positive review, both the Victorian press and modern criticism have declared *All in the Dark* the weakest of all Le Fanu's literary productions. The first review appeared in the *Examiner* on 9 June, praising the author for 'succeed[ing] where the mere compounder of what is commonly called a

[29] Anon., 'Spiritual Humbug Exposed – The Davenport Brothers', *Irish Times*, 6 October 1864, p. 4
[30] Robert Browning, 'Mr Sludge "The Medium"', *Robert Browning: the Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 771-850; p. 780.

"sensation story" fails'.[31] The novel is described as 'a half-earnest and half-playful story of the misreadings of tender hearts, with a mystification of a ghost and no ghost that is one of the very cleverest inventions of its kind. Far from appealing to mere appetite for coarse excitement, this book relies for its charm upon the delicacy with which it suggests the natures of two loving women'.[32] The reviewer continues, praising 'the delicacy of Mr Le Fanu's touch' in characterisation, and the novel's refined tone, which 'raises kindly smiles, and now and then passes naturally into a simple pathos', and concludes by exalting Le Fanu 'as one who is advancing rapidly towards the front rank of our living novelists' and by wishing the best of luck to 'a book that deserves to be reprinted many times in years to come'.[33]

A mild review followed in the *Reader* on 16 June, saying little more than that 'the plot is slight; the sketches of character are amusing. [...] The dialogue is easy, and some situations humorous', and ridiculing Miss Perfect's 'witcheries' by calling them the prophecies of 'her pet table'.[34] The *Athenaeum* and the *Saturday Review* did not share the same positive opinion as their competitors. In the issue of 30 June 1866, the former magazine warns its readers that if they 'take up Mr Le Fanu's new novel with the idea of finding any weird or ghostly interest, they will not meet with it', but instead with a story 'very light and slight, and too carelessly put together to stand comparison with some of Mr Le Fanu's former works', and which, obviously, ends cheerfully, because 'it is too slight to have borne anything heavier or graver than the perplexities and cross-purposes of a farce'.[35] The *Saturday Review* dedicates one whole page to Le Fanu's new novel, which it demolishes on every level. First of all, the plot is very slender, it 'excites, and does not

[31] Anon., '*All in the Dark* by J. S. Le Fanu', *Examiner*, 9 June 1866, p. 358.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Anon., '*All in the Dark* by J. Sheridan Le Fanu', *Reader*, 16 June 1866, pp. 584-85, respectively pp. 585, 584.
[35] Anon., '*All in the Dark* by G. J. Sheridan Le Fanu', *Athenaeum*, 30 June 1866, p. 860.

gratify expectation'.[36] The opening chapters are said to be quite lifelike, 'but as the story goes on, it gets inconceivably wearisome and stupid [...]. Fine situations are spoilt by careless handling; first-rate characters are ruined by clumsy drawing'.[37] Then, most importantly, the reviewer pauses on the peculiar theme of the story:

> In this new tale Mr Le Fanu has brought into play the unsatisfactory subject of spiritualism; and he has, moreover, introduced a somnambulist effect [...]. These are subjects which are in themselves hurtful to the interest of a book. [...] What good end does it serve to introduce either subject in a work of fiction? Spirit-rapping can never be made pictorial, unless treated as a ghost story, with thrilling effects and ghastly adjuncts; and somnambulism, to be valuable, should include the immediate probability of personal danger. [... These subjects,] without real humour yet without belief, can be pleasant to no one, since the sceptics get no fun, and the believers no confirmation, out of an incident of this kind tamely narrated and coldly ridiculed.[38]

This story of 'Radcliffian supernaturalism' (the explained supernatural), which the reviewer finds dangerous if in unskilful hands, compromises the integrity of its characters: thus, a middle-aged lady like aunt Dinah is represented as an old fool, and William Maubray is seen as an offensive representation of young manhood, because 'that such ravings could influence any sane young man just leaving college passes all license of fiction'.[39] Therefore, to conclude, the reviewer blames Le Fanu's carelessness and hurry for the failure of a work that could have been good, if only he would have stopped to mature his thoughts.

In all probability, Le Fanu read those reviews and regretted experimenting with a genre, the Comic Gothic, that he had never approached before. In a letter to George Bentley dated 1 August 1866, he admitted that, 'I am half sorry I wrote *All in the Dark* with my own name to it. I am now convinced it is a great disadvantage to give the public something quite different from what your antecedents had led them to expect from you,

---

[36] Anon., 'All in the Dark', *Saturday Review*, 14 July 1866, p. 59.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid. If we return to Le Fanu's letter to Bentley of March 1870, we clearly see that the reviewer is wrong in invoking 'unskilful hands', as Le Fanu was self-consciously artful about his use of the "machinery"; see p. 33, note No. 115 above.

although it may be better'.[40] As to the quality of the novel offered to the Victorian public, even sympathetic modern criticism has not found valid reasons for rescuing the novel from the oblivion into which it fell straight after publication.[41] Le Fanu's greatest disciple, M. R. James, finds this domestic story with a sham ghost 'an offence hard to forgive' of the master of the supernatural, whereas the author's main biographer, W. J. McCormack, considers this 'colourless tale of village wooings, ridiculous séances, and hesitant heroes' to be 'universally disappointing'.[42]

More recent criticism has begun to see *All in the Dark* from a new angle. In *Vision and Vacancy*, James Walton attributes the novel's peculiarity to 'its critical coverage of ways in which custom has defined the supernatural – romantic, realistic, occult and orthodox – and its assigning all of them to the order of the imagination'.[43] Thus, the naturalisation of William Maubray's ghost as the dream of a troubled conscience (which Walton analyses through Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*) is not read as a flaw but rather as the crucial point which positions the novel in the school of Gothic naturalism. A different analysis comes from Stephen Carver's '"Addicted to the Supernatural": Spiritualism and Self-Satire in Le Fanu's *All in the Dark*' (2011).[44] In his essay, Carver expands greatly on Nicholas Rance's statement that Le Fanu's novel is 'a squib on spiritualism', an idea that Rance merely suggests on one page of his book on *Wilkie Collins and Other Sensation Novelists* (1991).[45] While Carver admits that Rance is the only critic who 'seems to get the point regarding *All in the Dark*', he also insists that the

---

[40] Edens, p. 221.
[41] In his letter to George Bentley of 1 August 1866, Le Fanu wrote 'I wish *All in the Dark* could manage a 2nd Edition', which however never happened; ibid.
[42] Respectively, M. R. James, 'M. R. James on J. S. Le Fanu', *Ghosts and Scholars 7*, www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~pardos/ArchiveLeFanu.html [accessed July 2010] and McCormack, *Sheridan Le Fanu*, p. 232.
[43] Walton, *Vision and Vacancy*, p. 83.
[44] Stephen Carver, '"Addicted to the Supernatural": Spiritualism and Self-Satire in Le Fanu's *All in the Dark*, in Crawford, et al., *Reflections in a Glass Darkly*, pp. 334-50.
[45] Nicholas Rance, *Wilkie Collins and Other Sensation Novelists: Walking the Moral Hospital* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), p. 61.

novel is 'no mere squib'.[46] Carver interprets *All in the Dark* as 'a satire that enables Le Fanu to express his opinions on a credulous bourgeoisie'.[47] Furthermore, he maintains that the text provides a cunning interrogation of the author's work within the boundaries of the Gothic genre.

Although I do not think that Le Fanu's intention was to experiment with a Gothic novel *à la* Radcliffe (Walton), or that his only Comic Gothic novel was meant to be read as the *Northanger Abbey* for the Victorian Gothic (Carver), I agree with both critics when they affirm that *All in the Dark* has much to say about its author and its time. The novel is indeed a form of social criticism from the point of view of the sympathiser with Swedenborgianism. Not only was Le Fanu irritated by the similarities that Spiritualism claimed to share with Swedenborgianism, but he recognised the threat that such an association would pose to the respectability of Swedenborg's name. The Comic Gothic, then, was both a way of ridiculing the new movement effectively and of defusing the menace that it presented to Swedenborgianism. Upon these premises, this chapter will open with an account of Le Fanu's experience of the crisis of faith and his ensuing interest in Swedenborgianism. It will then focus on the association made by Victorian medicine between Spiritualism and insanity, and show how the novel offers a warning to rebellious women. Finally, it will analyse the specific use of the Comic Gothic as a genre and Le Fanu's intention behind such a choice.

1.1 The Crisis of Faith at Merrion Square

The religious anxiety which characterised the Victorian era was not exclusively an English issue. On the other side of the channel, the Irish population was struggling with the same doubts, amplified by the sectarian strife among two opposing denominations which called

[46] Carver, p. 336.
[47] Ibid.

themselves Christian. As children of a dean, Le Fanu and his siblings, William and Catherine, experienced at first hand the distress of the religious conflict which afflicted the country in the 1830s and 1840s. While Joseph and William spent most of the year in Dublin, where they attended Trinity College, Catherine, a semi-invalid since the age of fourteen, lived with her parents in the glebe-house at Abington, in the county of Limerick. Catherine was the first of the Le Fanus to experience the trials of faith: her fragile health caused her to face the reality of death and the afterlife from a very early age, while also providing her with plenty of time for reflection; at the same time, the violence which was perennially raging in the countryside led her to believe that the people were growing disillusioned with the Scriptures and desperately dependent on the "quality" for guidance.[48]

In his *Seventy Years of Irish Life* (1893), William Le Fanu recalled the good old times when his family was admired and respected by the Catholic community, and how peace suddenly turned into hatred with the Tithe War in the early 1830s:

> From the year 1826 to 1831 we lived on most friendly terms with the peasantry. They appeared to be devoted to us [...]. But in 1831 all this was suddenly and sadly changed when the tithe war [...] came upon us.
> [... O]ur friendly relations with the priests and people ceased. The former, not unnaturally, threw themselves heart and soul into the agitation. The Protestant clergy were denounced by agitators and priests from platform and from altar, and branded as the worst enemies of people, who were told to hunt them like mad dogs from the country; they were insulted wherever they went, many were attacked, some were murdered. It is hard now to realize the suddenness with which kindness and good-will were changed to insult and hate; for a short time we were not so badly treated as some of the neighbouring clergy, but the people would not speak to us, and scowled at us as we passed.[49]

Shortly afterwards, the Le Fanus began to try to confine themselves to the house, and to always carry weapons for self-defence. Catherine, who until a few months before had been

[48] On Catherine Le Fanu, see McCormack, pp. 28-9 and pp. 61-2.
[49] William Richard Le Fanu, *Seventy Years of Irish Life*, pp. 44-5 and p. 58. In the following pages, William Le Fanu offers more anecdotes on the Tithe War, specifically on how their friend Rev. Coote was threatened and insulted by the Catholic community for trying to collect his tithes, and how William himself was attacked on his way home and nearly killed with a spade; see Ch. 5.

idolised by the community for her charitable activities, was attacked during a drive out with her friends. This sudden violence came as a blow to the family, not only because it was a sign of ungratefulness towards a person who had been carrying out untiring work in the neighbourhood, but especially because Catherine's delicate constitution was common knowledge.[50] After this incident, which probably happened in the spring of 1832, Catherine's health declined and she became a recluse, spending her days studying, occasionally writing for the *Dublin University Magazine*, and fighting against doubts about the righteousness of the Bible and the hypocrisy of denominational Christianity.

Her private diaries are precious material for the understanding of her troubled mind.[51] The pages of her journals are covered in poems and prayers to God to protect her from sin, temptation, and the religious scepticism into which she was constantly falling back. Catherine was pained by her own disillusionment with the Bible, which led her to confess that 'I find myself not knowing what to believe, my head filled with creeds and doctrines which perhaps are not in the Scriptures, unwilling to doubt anything, and yet inclined to doubt everything'.[52] Still, the more she investigated the Bible in search of confirmation of its veracity, the more uncertain and distressed she grew:

> What is the use of reading, if we only find doubts and difficulties increase by study. I find myself in an inextricable maze of doubt and uncertainty on almost every subject to which I have given my thoughts. [...] Study, fair and bright outside but false and illusive, when I pursue thee I catch but a shadow! Why is doubt so painful to me?[53]

Catherine Le Fanu died on 25 March 1841, to the great despair of her beloved brothers and mother, and of a father who never recovered from the loss.[54]

---

[50] McCormack, p. 61.
[51] Catherine's diaries are included in the *Le Fanu Papers*, preserved in microfilm at the National Library of Ireland, P. 2594-609.
[52] Ibid., entry dated 12 April 1834.
[53] Ibid., entry dated 4 October 1834. See also McCormack, p. 62.
[54] William Le Fanu remembered that moment with these words: 'In the spring of 1841 a grief befell us in the death of our only sister, the constant and loved companion of our young days. Her cleverness. Her sweet temper, and, above all, her wondrous goodness, had endeared her, not to us alone, but to all who knew her.

Although Catherine finally overcame her crisis just before passing away, Le Fanu somehow feared that his own spiritual levity, in both life and fiction, might have infected her, thus depriving her of the faith necessary to her eternal rest.[55] Le Fanu never was a pious child, and he gradually grew into a sporadic church-goer, and the use of a Catholic priest as the narrator of *The Purcell Papers* and 'Spalatro' has been interpreted as a sign of a greater alienation from Christianity than the conventional anti-Catholicism implied in this literary device.[56] According to his main biographer, Le Fanu's anxieties with regards to his sister's peace appeared in his longer tale 'Spalatro', which was the only piece of fiction he wrote between Catherine's death in 1841 and his marriage in 1843. The story of the Italian bandit, published anonymously in the *Dublin University Magazine*, features a beloved sister, and a dead woman who tries unsuccessfully to rescue Spalatro from eternal damnation. Denominational hostility appears in the figure of the evil monk, who firstly assaults the protagonist's sister, and then takes pleasure in unsettling Spalatro's religious conviction, thus plunging him in a life-long state of religious uncertainty and scepticism. Spiritual anxiety and sense of guilt haunted both Le Fanu and his characters, particularly after the illness and death of the author's wife Susanna.

Le Fanu married Susanna Bennett in St Peter's Church on 18 December 1843.[57] Between 1845 and 1854 the couple had four children, all of whom reached adulthood and survived their parents by years. Although premature deaths were not exceptional in the Victorian age, the Bennetts were cursed with a high mortality: three of Susanna's twelve siblings died under one year of age, Jonathan died of pleurisy at the age of twenty, George of fever at forty, her niece Cecilia died aged eleven months, and her brother Edmund's two sons also died in childhood. Susanna also had a very fragile constitution. She fell seriously ill in the spring of 1851 and, according to her husband's letters to his sister-in-law, she did

---

[...] she was the idol of the poor in our neighbourhood. There are still old people at Abington who speak of her as "the good Miss Catherine", and tell of all the good she did'; p. 149.

[55] See McCormack, pp. 61-71.

[56] Ibid., pp. 66-67. See also Girard, p. 41

[57] On Susanna Bennett, her married life, her illness, and death, see McCormack, Ch. 4.

not recover until the end of May.[58] Over the following years she became increasingly nervous, her mental troubles with regard to death and the afterlife affecting her already weak body. In those years of religious anxiety, Susanna found helpful company in her brother-in-law William. The two would meet on Sunday at the Le Fanus' house on Merrion Square to attend the service at St Stephen's Church and then enjoy the afternoon promenading in the Donnybrook area. According to William's diaries, Joseph would join them for dinner or the walks, but there is no reference to his attending church, a circumstance which pained Susanna.[59] William's devotion lasted only over a year, ending with his marriage in January 1857, thus leaving Susanna alone with her uncertainties.

In the meanwhile, the death of her adored father on 26 May 1856 left her in a state of highly nervous excitability, and, as Le Fanu remembered in his private journal, her mind became 'harrassed *(sic)* with incessant doubts about the truth of revealed religion' and increasing concern about admission into heaven.[60] Susanna's desperate desire for a quickening of faith in her husband, which never happened, was a major point of tension in their marital life. While Susanna felt abandoned in her troubles by the very man who should always be at her side, and whose love she was constantly doubting, Le Fanu's inability to force himself to accept a faith he could not share with the same strength left him with the pain of having to witness his beloved's torment without any power to help her:

> I knew better than anyone else how my darling's mind was occupied about the great subject of religion, how she searched the Scriptures, how she prayed & strove, how she hoped & feared, & was plainly struggling, though sometimes in sore perplexity fear & sorrow, on the way her conscience & the word of God pointed to her.[61]

---

[58] See Le Fanu's letter dated 20 May 1851, where he wrote that '[p]oor little Sue is now thank God doing well'; Le Fanu's unpublished letters to Bessie Bennett, Brotherton Collection MS 19c Bennett, Manuscript Department, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.
[59] See William Le Fanu's unpublished diaries, July 1855 to January 1857, MS 7695-97, Manuscript Department, Trinity College, Dublin.
[60] Lozes, ed., 'Fragment d'un journal intime de Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu', p. 160.
[61] Ibid., p. 162.

According to Le Fanu, Susanna's uncertainties gradually vanished within little more than a year before she passed away and, although the idea of death never left her mind, it was no longer associated with gloom and horror, but with a certain peace and longing for eternity. It is probably at that time that she had the vision of her father coming to her bed while asleep to tell her that '[t]here is room in the vault for you, my little Sue', a vision that she interpreted as a warning from God, and which she received with a sort of yearning, rather than with agitation or grief.[62]

After Susanna's peaceful death, Le Fanu was once again assailed by the same feeling of guilt which he had experienced when his sister Catherine passed away. He believed that his religious shallowness had deprived her of strength and reassurance, leaving her in doubt and thus compromising her salvation. Furthermore he felt responsible for his wife's uncertainty about his love for her, and for the grave decision concerning the choice of the best doctor for the treatment of her illness, the couple having had conflicting views on medicine.[63] Disturbed by all these tribulations, Le Fanu himself suffered from a crisis of faith, and seemed to find comfort in the very orthodox Christianity he had neglected all those years:

> Does my faith stagger under the immensity of the obligation & the unintelligible bounty of my God? Fool & blind! Dost thou not know & see that the *life* thou – sinner – *now* enjoyest is 'the Gift of God', from its inception to its last moment? [...] Your whole actual acquaintance with God is as *God the Giver*. Your present life is earnest in hand of the promise. Grasp it – Let not your faith falter. [...] With awe, & wonder, & love, delight then, exult in the promise for yourself & the beloved dead.[64]

---

[62] Letter from Le Fanu to his mother of 3 May (no year); *Le Fanu Papers*, also quoted in McCormack, pp. 133-34, p. 133.

[63] According to McCormack, it is not completely clear who was in favour of homeopathy rather than conventional medicine. Possibly Le Fanu, since in a letter to his mother, dated 22 May 1858, he wrote: '[y]ou, my dear mother, must consult somebody upon the symptoms which you mention. If you will not, at least apply a wet towel to your head [...] but you ought to see a homoeopathist'; *Le Fanu Papers*, also quoted in McCormack, p. 130. However, there is no evidence that Le Fanu considered engaging a homeopathist to treat Susanna.

[64] Ibid., p. 157.

His faltering faith seemed eventually to find stability in confidence in God the Giver, whose benevolence was granted to both the living and the dead, to both himself and Susanna. Hence, almost a month after his wife's death, Le Fanu could finally write to his mother that '[m]y tears are happy now' and that 'I would not wish my grief less for it brings me nearer to my Saviour'.[65]

Le Fanu's religious certitude did not last long. There is no record of his spiritual constancy in the fifteen years he outlived his wife, and his novels abound in characters beset by religious doubt, looking for certainty and peace away from orthodox Christianity. Among his prolific literary production, his novel *Uncle Silas* and the collection of short stories *In a Glass Darkly* stand out for the representation of Swedenborgianism as a spiritual alternative to conventional Anglicanism. In 1976, his descendant William Le Fanu of Chelmsford insisted that the author never was 'a sectarian mystic'.[66] Certainly, Le Fanu never joined the Church of the New Jerusalem; nevertheless, his extremely precise knowledge of Swedenborgianism, and the positive depiction he provides of it in his most famous novel, have led scholars to speculate about his deep interest in Swedenborg's teachings.

In her article on the origin of 'The Mysterious Lodger', Marie-Noëlle Zeender demonstrates Le Fanu's authorship of this tale by showing traces of Swedenborgianism which then recur in his later fiction. What is interesting to note is that 'The Mysterious Lodger' was written as early as 1850, fourteen years before *Uncle Silas*. Zeender argues that this biographical precision is essential, since critics too often seemed to attribute Le Fanu's interest in Swedenborgianism to the spiritual disorientation he experienced *after* his wife's death, whereas his interest in the occult sect might already have been a major cause

[65] Letter to his mother, dated 22 May 1858; ibid., p. 130.
[66] William Le Fanu, 'Notebooks of Sheridan Le Fanu', *Long Room*, No. 14-5, (Dublin: Trinity College, Dublin, 1976-77), pp. 37-40, p. 39.

of dispute between the couple.[67] The story is charged with autobiographical details, in the figures of the son of a clergyman who could never share his family faith, and his pious wife, whose growing doubts concerning the mysterious ways of the God of Christianity become detrimental to her mental health, to the despair of her powerless husband.[68] Furthermore, Zeender proves that 'The Mysterious Lodger' shows latent traces of Swedenborgianism in the portrait of spirit-like characters, in the innocence of children, and in the description of death as a gateway to a beautiful world of perfection, thus preceding the extremely sympathetic portrayal of Swedenborgianism in *Uncle Silas* by some fourteen years.[69]

Le Fanu's most famous novel is his first work to explicitly mention Swedenborg and his theories, and ends with the protagonist longing to communicate with the spirits. Maud Ruthyn is introduced to Swedenborgianism by her father's physician Dr Bryerly, a character modelled on Swedenborg himself, in his being both a scientist and a visionary, and recalling, in his black clothing and mysterious ways, the ghost of the mystic, which had been seen in London on several occasions in the mid-nineteenth century.[70] Through Dr Bryerly the reader gains knowledge of Swedenborg's doctrine, as explained in his *Heaven and Hell*, a book that Maud admits trying to read but with no success in understanding. Published in 1758 as *De Coelo et Ejus Mirabilibus et de Inferno, ex Auditis et Visis*, Swedenborg's ninth work describes the Other World as a universe symmetrically positioned above and below the mortal world, whose features are correlated with the latter by means of correspondences: '[t]he whole natural world corresponds to the spiritual world, and not merely the natural world in general, but also every particular of it; and as a consequence everything in the natural world that springs from the spiritual world is called

---

[67] Marie-Noëlle Zeender, 'Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu and Swedenborg: an Inquiry into the Origin of "The Mysterious Lodger"', *Études irlandaises*, No. 5 (1980), pp. 75-89. See also McCormack, p. 301.
[68] Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, 'The Mysterious Lodger', *Dublin University Magazine* (January 1850), pp. 54-71, (February 1850), pp. 225-35.
[69] For McCormack's Gothic version of the Swedenborgian universe, see p. 34, note No. 121 above.
[70] See Zeender, p. 84.

a correspondent'.[71] Thus, the spirits inhabiting the spiritual world, both in heaven and hell, are but men deprived, after death, of their "external", that is their physical body: '[f]rom all my experience, which is now of many years, I am able to say and affirm that angels are wholly men in form, having faces, eyes, ears, bodies, arms, hands, and feet; that they see and hear one another, and talk together, and in a word lack nothing whatever that belongs to men except that they are not clothed in material bodies'.[72]

Swedenborg explains that all human beings are created to be both in the spiritual and in the natural world, and therefore are given an "internal" (spirit) and an "external" (body). The good individuals have their internal in heaven and their external in the world, while the evil ones have both their internal and their external in the world. After death, the good individuals become angels and ascend to heaven, while the evil ones become mere spirits and descend to hell.[73] Hence, salvation is not granted according to one's deeds during mortal existence, nor is it a question of predestination; it depends on the inner nature of the person, which is slowly revealed in the world of spirits: '[t]he world of spirits is not Heaven, nor is it Hell, but it is the intermediate place or state between the two; for it is the place that man first enters after death; and from which after a suitable time he is either raised up into Heaven or cast down into Hell'.[74] Men in the mortal world cannot see angels with their bodily eyes, but only with the eyes of the spirit within them. This gift is not granted to everybody, but only to those few whose spiritual sight has been opened by the Lord, and are consequently named "seers".[75] Swedenborg claims to be one of the chosen few, and emphasises that his gift 'might not be said to be a delusion or a vision of fancy, [since] I have been permitted to see angels when fully awake or in possession of all

[71] Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*, § 89.
[72] Ibid., § 75.
[73] See Swedenborg, *Introducing the New Jerusalem*, Ch. 3.
[74] Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*, § 421.
[75] Ibid., § 76.

my bodily senses, and in a state of clear perception'.[76] This is Maud Ruthyn's aspiration at the end of *Uncle Silas*, where she wishes: 'May the blessed second-sight be mine – to recognise under these beautiful forms of earth the ANGELS who wear them; for I am sure we may walk with them if we will, and hear them speak'.[77]

As will be shown below, similarities between Swedenborgianism and Spiritualism had been traced since the emergence of the latter movement, much to the annoyance of Swedenborg's followers. In *All in the Dark*, Le Fanu tries to minimise the threat that the association with the infamous movement of Spiritualism may pose to the more respectable doctrine of Swedenborgianism. Meanwhile, he also touches on another topical subject, the association of alternative spiritualities with insanity. Drawing upon his personal experience with the coupling of religious uncertainty and nervous weakness as well as his professional familiarity, in his work for the national and international press, with contemporary debates on these topics, Le Fanu investigates the power game played by Victorian psychiatry over difficult citizens, women in particular. Although the novel is a satire of Spiritualism, it nevertheless dismisses the accusations of madness levelled at the believer, thus becoming a warning to women readers.

1.2 Unsound Objects

Spiritualism emerged in the turbulent years of women's struggle for emancipation. In the mid-nineteenth century women had no separate identity from that of their husbands, so that, legally, 'husband and wife [were] one person, and the husband [was] that person'.[78]

---

[76] Ibid., § 74. Swedenborg must have been conscious of the fact that his visions might have been interpreted as delusions and felt the necessity of justifying himself in this regard. Centuries later, British psychiatrist Henry Maudsley dedicated a whole section of his *Body and Mind* to Swedenborg, opening the chapter with the following statement: 'he is commonly accounted a madman, who has had the singular fortune to persuade certain credulous persons that he was a seer'; *Body and Mind: an Inquiry into Their Connection and Mutual Influence, Specially in Reference to Mental Disorders* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1873), pp. 196-266, p. 196. Swedenborg's case will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter Two.

[77] Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas*, p. 511.

[78] Lee Holcombe, quoted in Owen, p. 3.

Women did not obtain the right to divorce their husbands until 1857, they had no right to control their own property until 1870, and no right to vote until 1918. The "Woman Question" and the medical response to the female desire for emancipation will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter Four, in relation to *The Rose and the Key*. Suffice it to say here that, in those years, the ideal woman was the submissive wife and mother, "the angel in the house" in charge of the domestic sphere. When the novelty of table-rapping reached the Old World, it is unsurprising that it appealed mightily to the housebound woman, the bored middle-class housewife or spinster, providing them with excitement, escapism, and, at times, real fame. Nevertheless, the higher rate of female mediumship did not depend merely on these factors, but also on women's supposedly "natural" predisposition for spirit communication.

The Victorian ideology of femininity emphasised female passivity (as opposed to masculine will-power), female frailty (as opposed to masculine strength), moral and spiritual sensibility (as opposed to the rationality of man's public sphere), and woman's (relative) asexuality (she is possessed by man rather than the possessor). Paradoxically, the very characteristics that justified woman's powerlessness in society were exactly those that apparently made her perfect as a medium. Woman's innate submissiveness made her the "repository", the "vessel", the "bearer" of spiritual messages or spirit manifestations, while her natural role of procreator allowed her also to direct spirit power on extra-corporeal bodies, as argued by Dr Samuel Guppy in *Mary Jane; or, Spiritualism Chemically Explained* (1863):

> A medium, a thinking being, places her hands on a table, and after a lapse of some minutes, holds conversation with another being, which has been eliminated from her body, as distinct as the child at the breast is from the mother, and exists just as the child, on condition of the supply of nutriment being kept up – and this being is composed of nothing else than the vapours which have emanated from the medium's body; and this being can tell the medium things which her own faculties are unequal to [...]. The other persons sitting at the table affect the quality of the manifestations, although the Odylic vapours from them are not sufficiently strong to move the table or act intelligently alone [...]. The female of all animals, as well

> as the man, is so constituted for the purposes of gestation and lactation as to eliminate more liquids and probably consequently more vapours – that hence more women are mediums than men.[79]

However, in giving women the authority and the right to exercise their innate spiritual powers, Spiritualism infringed on the culturally imposed limits of respectable womanhood. In the darkened room, not only did women become the principal actors of the séance, they also transgressed gender norms, by assuming male roles or highly sexualised trance personae.

The subversiveness of the movement alarmed and alerted the medical profession, which was in charge of policing any deviations from the social order imposed by Victorian patriarchy.[80] Spiritualism was quickly associated with insanity, specifically with a form of religious monomania called 'theomania'. As French psychiatrist Philibert Burlet explains:

> Le spiritisme agit dans la production de la folie [...] pas différemment que toutes les autres causes morales qui peuvent entraîner après elles l'aliénation mentale. Et ces causes, en agissant subitement ou à la longue sur l'intelligence, en concentrant la pensée le plus souvent sur un seul objet [...] finissent par ébranler, par troubler les operations de l'esprit [...].
> Toutes les religions, sans exception, on été des causes puissantes, incessantes, de perturbation mentale. [...] Le spiritisme n'echappe pas à cette condition [...]. Pendant un temps plus ou moins long, toutes ses facultés [du spiritiste], tout son être, [...] convergent vers [le] seul but [d'acquérir la médiumnité]. Cette tension de l'esprit n'est pas sans s'accompagner d'un sérieux danger; et l'on peut dire, *ou que le spiritiste est déjà fou avant d'être medium, ou que, s'il n'est pas encore fou, il ne tardera pas à le devenir.*[81]

---

[79] Dr Samuel Guppy, *Mary Jane; or, Spiritualism Chemically Explained with Spirit Drawings. Also Essays by and Ideas {Perhaps Erroneous} of, 'A Child at School'* (London: John King, 1863), pp. 337-8.

[80] For a historical context on Spiritualism and Victorian medicine, see Owen, Ch. 6.

[81] 'Spiritualism produces insanity [...] no differently than all other moral causes which might provoke mental alienation. And these causes, working on the intellect in the short or long term, and making the mind concentrate more frequently on one sole object [...] end up upsetting, troubling the operations of the spirit [...]. All religions, without exception, have been important, constant causes of mental perturbation. [...] Spiritualism is no exception to this condition [...]. For a period more or less long, all the faculties [of the Spiritualist], all his being, converge towards [the] only aim [of obtaining mediumship]. This tension of the spirit does not come without serious danger; and we can say that, *either the Spiritualist is already mad before he becomes a medium or, if he is not mad yet, will be soon*'; Burlet, *Du spiritisme considéré comme cause d'aliénation mentale,* pp. 9-10, my translation, my italics. Note that extracts of this treatise were published in English in *The Medical Critic and Psychological Journal*, Vol. 3 (July 1863), pp. 542-54. See also 'Fire-Side Gossip about Ghosts and Fairies', *Dublin University Magazine* (December 1863), pp. 691-99, where the anonymous author points out that the impulse for communion with the spirits of the departed provided clairvoyants and table-rappers with a profession, 'and introduced so many of their nervous disciples to the lunatic asylum', p. 691.

As argued above, the dangerous repercussions that Spiritualism was held to have for the human mind were double-edged: on the one hand, Spiritualism could provoke mental derangement in weaker minds and even induce psychological regression to lower levels of function and personality; on the other hand, it attracted the incipiently insane, like rebellious women seeking emancipation. The emerging medical branches of psychiatry and gynaecology effectively teamed up to prove that women's health depended on female biology. Since women's role was primarily that of generator, physical and intellectual activities would compromise the balance of nerve force necessary for the functioning of the reproductive organs, thus causing mental instability. Most cases of insanity due to sexual illness tended to result in monomanias, among which Spiritualism was counted, and doctors began to consider any kind of suspension of everyday consciousness suspicious and to associate mediumistic trance, with its uncontrollable convulsions and frequent use of inappropriate language, with the pathological symptoms of hysteria.

While medicine explained Spiritualism as a malfunction of femininity, some scientific sceptics used empirical investigation to prove that the phenomena which believers claimed to be spirit communications were nothing more than self-deception or, as physiologist William Benjamin Carpenter defined it, "unconscious cerebration".[82] Tables, for example, were being tilted by ordinary, although unintentional, mechanical power; in other words, the expectations of success were so high in séance participants that they involuntarily moved the furniture by the mere pressure of their hands, and no other electrical or magnetic force was involved. Unsurprisingly, the reaction of Spiritualists to these assumptions was one of offence and disdain. The 'spiritual carnival' which ensued is best represented by physicist Michael Faraday's sarcastic letter to *The Times*, which appeared on 2 July 1853, where he depicted victimised believers as people who referred 'to

[82] On the theory of "unconscious cerebration", see Oppenheim, pp. 241-4; Podmore, Vol. 1, pp. 287-90, Vol. 2, pp. 8-9; Michael Faraday, 'Experimental Investigation of Table-Moving', *Athenaeum*, 2 July 1853, pp. 801-03.

the rotation of the earth, as if the earth revolved round the leg of a table'.[83] As Daniel Cottom has pointed out in his 'On the Dignity of Tables', shortly after the famous "Rochester rappings", with the beginnings of Spiritualism, tables took on a new and controversial life. They were chosen by spirits as their organs of speech. In their tapping, and thrilling, and tilting, they spoke of more than the Other World; indeed, they told of everyday life, they gave advice and warnings. Far from being mere objects, they became invested with a human integrity and morality. In other words, they became human: Spiritualist Sophia De Morgan explained, 'I have witnessed [...] the *thrilling* of the table. [... A]n acute surgeon present said that this *thrilling* [...] was exactly like what takes place in that affection of the muscles called *subsultus tendinum*'.[84]

Scholar Sarah A. Willburn pushes this argument even further by attributing a gender to tables, which is rigorously female.[85] Deprived of any rights, Victorian women, like tables, were mere commodities, whose use and exchange value could be expressed on the "marriage-market". With the emergence of Spiritualism, both women and tables began to receive attention and impose themselves as authorities in the séance room, thus turning from objectified subjects into subjectified objects. Among the frequent linguistic slippages between the categories of "table" and of "Victorian woman" the use of the word "sound" is revealing of the negative opinion held about these "subversive commodities". Just as sound tables are solid and firm, and thus do not tilt or turn, sound women are sane when they remain within the boundaries of respectable femininity. In *All in the Dark*, Le Fanu questions the authority held by Victorian doctors over strong-willed and "extravagant" women – in this case, women who step away from orthodox Christianity and embrace alternative forms of spirituality that invests them with new power. Yet the novel also criticises Spiritualism for manipulating credulous people for unscrupulous monetary gain.

---

[83] The phrase "spiritual carnival" is by Bayard Taylor, quoted in Daniel Cottom, 'On the Dignity of Tables', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Summer 1988) pp. 765-83; Faraday, p. 801.
[84] De Morgan, p. 27.
[85] See Sarah A. Willburn, *Possessed Victorians: Extra Spheres in Nineteenth-Century Mystical Writings* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), Ch. 3.

All in the Dark is set in the year 1860, when Spiritualism had already reached its peak. The events take place at Gilroyd Hall, 'an old red-brick house of moderate dimensions' not too far from the village of Saxton, in Yorkshire.[86] The English countryside and this solitary mansion are described as 'rather slow quarters', so that 'the arrival of William Maubray for the holidays was an event full of interest and even of excitement' [I, pp. 2, 3]. While young Violet Darkwell enjoys the pleasant solitude tending to her pets and flowers, her eccentric aunt, Miss Dinah Perfect, tries to escape the boredom of everyday life by playing the medium around her coffee table. Aunt Dinah is depicted as a stereotype of the credulous woman who gets 'excited oftenest upon the absurdities which she liked letting into her active and perverse little head, which must have been the proper *nidus* of all fancies, they so prospered and multiplied there' [I, p. 2]. Her extravagance dates to long before she embraced Spiritualism, so that her faithful servant is not surprised to learn that Dinah's strict directions with regard to the placement of her corpse were that it should be kept in the tiled room in the gardener's house until the funeral. Old Winnie Dobbs explains that:

> She was very particular, [...] and would have her way; [...] she had her coffin in the house this seven years – nigh eight a'most – upright in the little press by the left of the bed, in her room – the cupboard like in the wall. Dearie me! 'twas an odd fancy, [...] and she'd dust it, and take it out, she would wi' the door locked, her and me, once a month. She had a deal o'them queer fancies, she had. [II, pp. 168-9]

Aunt Dinah's obsession with her coffin and the fact that she does not wish to live (so says her maid) could be interpreted as unequivocal signs of her incipient madness if looked at through the lens of Victorian psychiatry. Thus, while her concern about death and the afterlife justifies her disposition towards Spiritualism, her possible mental instability, as Dr Burlet had argued, would explain how she becomes fertile soil for the occult movement. The crucial question, then, is whether or not Dinah Perfect is mad.

---

[86] J. S. Le Fanu, *All in the Dark*, 2 Vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1866), Vol. 1, p. 1. All further quotations refer to this edition and will be parenthesised in the text.

Dinah affirms that the eight volumes that form the '*Revelations of Elihu Bung, the Pennsylvanian Prophet*' have taught her that 'we are surrounded by spirits' and that 'spirits, grown intimate by a long familiarity, will, in a properly regulated twilight, make themselves visible to those whom they habitually favour with their advices' [I, pp. 44, 45]. Dinah admits that many spirits have unequivocally declared themselves to her, and, among them, Henbane has been the most frequent contact and advisor. Dinah's total faith in Henbane's 'very delightful *communications*' has nurtured a constant need for séance practice, even after her insistence on the veracity of her spirit's prophecy begins to compromise her health and culminates in the estrangement of her beloved nephew [I, p. 11]. The novel opens with William rushing home from university after receiving a letter from his aunt, where she insists that 'you *must* come *immediately*, if you care to see poor Aunt Dinah before she departs' [I, p. 12]. At her deathbed, William grows more and more concerned at seeing her upset. When she tells him of the recent communications concerning her death, 'Aunt Dinah quite broke down, and cried and hooted hysterically'; similarly, a change in the verdict of her departure from this world also provokes a nervous reaction: 'Dinah Perfect was taken with a violent shivering, in which her very teeth chattered. Then she cried, and then she laughed' [I, pp. 37, 56].

Dr Drake, the family physician, explains to a worried William that, although physically his aunt suffers from nothing more serious than the ailments of a woman of her age, she has recently fallen victim to self-deception. Echoing Dr Carpenter's theory on unconscious cerebration, the non-believing, sceptical physician explains the dangerous effects that Spiritualism could have on Dinah's mind, by convincing her of the reality of her delusions to the point that her body comes to provoke the effects that she expects to happen. The physician gives the example of Lord Lyttleton, who is said to have died as a consequence of such persuasion. The story of Lord Lyttleton is also mentioned by Sir Walter Scott, of whom Le Fanu was a great admirer, in his *Letters on Demonology and*

Witchcraft (1830).[87] In his tenth letter, Scott relates how the second Lord Lyttleton prophesied his own death within a few minutes, upon the information of an apparition. This is a story which also appeared in Le Fanu's *Dublin University Magazine* at the same time as *All in the Dark*.[88] Dr Drake is afraid that Dinah will 'frighten herself out of her wits', and explains to William that Spiritualism is dangerously connected with hysteria [I, p. 60]:

> Why, you know what hysteria is. Well, she is in a highly hysterical state. She's a woman who resists; it would be safer, you see, if she gave way and cried a bit now and then, when nature prompts, but she won't, except under awful high pressure, and then it might be serious; those things sometimes run off' into fits. [I, pp. 38-9]

Aunt Dinah needs to be constantly monitored in her present state of health. Nevertheless, she peremptorily refuses the assistance of a physician, affirming that 'I have no faith in him, or indeed in medicine', and again, that her fate 'is not quite in *his* department' [I, pp. 11, 23]. Dinah's reasons for dismissing the doctor depend on her blind belief in the word of her friendly spirit and on her resentment of her medical doctor's scepticism. However, the way in which Le Fanu chooses to represent Dr Drake in the novel would justify Dinah's mistrust even if she were not biased by her religious views.[89] The physician is described throughout the book as what we would call an alcoholic, who spends most of his time indulging in brandy. Although he is aware of the current theories on theomania and unconscious cerebration, and although he tells William that Dinah's case is not to be treated lightly, he does not consider consultation with a specialist, but rather thinks it of more effect to impersonate a medium and convince Dinah that she is not going

---

[87] Sir Walter Scott, *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2001), pp. 202-33. Scott is likely to have also influenced Charles Robert Maturin, as the story of Lord Lyttleton is mentioned in the first chapter of *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820); see C. R. Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 6. Carpenter's theory of "unconscious cerebration" also appears in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897); see William Hughes's analysis in *Beyond Dracula: Bram Stoker's Fiction and its Cultural Context* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 141-51.

[88] Anon., 'Dreams, Omens, and Predictions', *Dublin University Magazine* (May 1866), pp. 506-22.

[89] The fact that Dinah has two reasons for dismissing the doctor is another example of Le Fanu's use of "equilibrium", in that he provides the reader with both a natural and a supernatural explanation.

to die, through the very form of self-deception that he himself has diagnosed as deleterious to his patient's nervous stability.

Thus, Dr Drake insists on having a séance, and in Chapter Seven, titled 'The Familiar Speaks', Le Fanu makes use of all the best-known aspects of Spiritualism only to turn them against the movement, by representing the believer as a credulous fool who cannot realise that she is being obviously cheated. The room is kept in 'a properly regulated twilight' by use of candles the participants begin by verifying if there are any spirits desiring to communicate, and the medium is ready to record any information with pencil and paper [I, p. 45]. The doctor then puts his plan into action by stating that he has felt some wind behind his back or that he has heard a crack, by pushing the table, and even by trying to get William to back up his bluff , by pressing his 'large foot in a slipper under the table [... with the] air of an intentional squeeze' [I, p. 49]. William does not get the doctor's hints (he simply cannot imagine a respectable gentleman cheating around with a piece of furniture) and is dismissed from the circle as an unbeliever, so that Dr Drake can proceed with his deceptive plan:

> "Did you give Miss Dinah Perfect a message on Monday last?"
> "Yes".
> "Did it concern her death?"
> "Yes".
> "Is her death to take place at the time then appointed?"
> Here the table made a positive jump, and in spite of a grasp made at it by the doctor's fingers, it fell flat on the floor, and it must have been a very violent impulse, for Dr Drake's slipper was off, and he, very red, no doubt from his effort to prevent the wilful fall of the table.
> "Very extraordinary!" exclaimed he, standing up.
> "Most wonderful!" said my aunt.
> [...] "That's a tilt", said the doctor, "that means *no* – a very *emphatic* tilt".
> "I think it was a *jump*?" said my aunt, sadly.
> "No, Ma'am, no – a tilt, a tilt, I'll take my oath. Besides a *jump* has no meaning", urged he with energy. [I, pp. 54-5]

Despite the fact that Dinah is the authority on Spiritualism, she is made to embrace the reassurance offered by a disbeliever with no expertise in the field. Here, Le Fanu is

criticising the relative ease with which charlatans could succeed in convincing people in need of spiritual comfort. Furthermore, his choosing to charge the doctor with the role of the humbug can be interpreted as the author's equal suspicion of both Spiritualism and conventional medicine, which is even further emphasised by the fact that on one occasion the name of the doctor gets mixed up with that of the spirit, and on another, Dr Drake himself is briefly mistaken for a spirit-form of Henbane [I, pp. 25, 47].[90]

Le Fanu's strong feelings against Spiritualism will be subject of analysis in the next section, on the use of the Comic Gothic form. This section, instead, will proceed to investigate the dangers lying behind the power held by Victorian psychiatry over extravagant and independent women. Dinah Perfect is unquestionably a bizarre character, with her many fancies and her addiction to table-turning. However, her oddities do not seem sufficient to diagnose her as incipiently insane. Dinah is an elderly woman troubled by the frightening thought of upcoming death. Her anxiety and hysterical crises echo the spiritual uncertainty that afflicted both Catherine and Susanna Le Fanu, while her uneasy shifting between her family's orthodox Christianity and the occult is reminiscent of Le Fanu's own crisis of faith. Having experienced first hand the anxiety of spiritual doubt, Le Fanu is far from labelling Dinah mad, even though he does not sympathise with Spiritualism.

Like Le Fanu, Dinah is the daughter of a dean, Rev. Simeon Lewis Perfect of Crutch Friars, and like him, she also indulges in the occult, only to cling to the Bible at critical times of her life. Thus, when Dinah is relieved of the thought of her imminent death, she descends on her knees and gives thanks to God by reciting 'the twentieth chapter of the *Second Book of Kings*, in which we read how the good kind Hezekiah

---

[90] In this comic scene Le Fanu offers another instance of the use of the rhetorical principle of "equilibrium", which can be inferred from the suspicion that the author inspires in the reader with regard to both Spiritualism and medicine. In *A Lost Name*, Le Fanu will go back to the association of the occult with madness, but, in the case of Swedenborgianism, he will manipulate the plot with the double intention of warning the reader against the malicious exploitation of unorthodox beliefs, and of proving Swedenborg's theology as a valuable way of communicating with the Other World; see pp. 132-5 below.

obtained by prayer ten years more of the light of life' [I, p. 57]. Later, when her moment comes, she takes the sacrament twice, and writes to William that she has chosen the Bible as her only guide. Nevertheless, when her life is not under threat, she likes to believe that the "gospels of the new religion" are actually revealing the Truth of the mysteries of the Other World. Like many contemporary Spiritualists, Dinah can easily reconcile the Bible with the revelations of the prophet Elihu Bung, and uses the medium's word to interpret the Scripture, just as the Spiritualist Sophia De Morgan, among others, drew comparisons between her belief and orthodox Christianity, in order to lend respectability to the former.[91] The parallels between Le Fanu's life and that of his Spiritualist character, along with the negative representation of Victorian medicine via the figure of the incompetent doctor, suggests that while Dinah is an eccentric, anxious woman, she is not to be read as a mad woman. In fact, all throughout the novel, Dinah sounds reasonable and practical, advising Violet on the importance of a good match in marriage, and William on the more advantageous prospect of the Church rather than the Bar as a profession.[92] Even on spiritual matters, the Rector confirms that, 'I found her views [...] all very sound; indeed, if it had not been for that foolish spirit-rapping, which led her away – that is, confused her – I don't think there was anything in her opinions to which exception could have been taken' [II, pp. 171-2]. On all subjects but Spiritualism, Dinah is perfectly sound. However, her fancy for table-turning would, for orthodox Victorian psychiatry, be a strong enough proof of her insanity, as the real case of Louisa Nottidge had shown.[93]

---

[91] Chapter 15 of De Morgan's *From Matter to Spirit* concentrates exclusively on a reading of the Bible through the theories of Spiritualism and concludes wondering how one could accuse Spiritualism and accept the Bible.

[92] As Stephen Carver has pointed out, William's horror at the idea of exploiting religion as a way to make a profit can be interpreted as direct criticism of fake mediums; p. 342.

[93] On Louisa Nottidge, see Sarah Wise, *Inconvenient People*, Ch. 4; Owen, pp. 151-54; and Joshua John Schwieso, ''Religious Fanaticism' and Wrongful Confinement in Victorian England: the Affair of Louisa Nottidge', *The Society for the Social History of Medicine* (1996), pp. 159-74. Further cases of wrongful confinement based on religious grounds followed in the 1870s. Of particular interest is the case of Louisa Lowe, who was incarcerated by her husband for over a year between 1870 and 1871 because of her Spiritualist beliefs. After her liberation, she became an activist in the cause of wrongful confinement and was made Honorary Secretary of the Lunacy Law Reform Association in 1872; Owen, Ch. 7, and Roy Porter and Helen Nicholson, eds, *Women, Madness, and Spiritualism: Georgina Weldon and Louisa Lowe*, 2 Vols (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), Vol. 1.

Like Dinah Perfect, Louisa Nottidge was a wealthy middle-aged spinster who had also spent money 'very wildly' upon the word of a Spiritualist [I, p. 8]. In 1846, Nottidge decided to leave her mother's home to follow the influential millenarian prophet Henry Prince, best known as the "Beloved". Prince was the founder of a small community in Somerset called the Agapemone (the Abode of Love), where he taught about free love and preached of everlasting life to a group of devotees who had agreed to donate all their wealth to the congregation. Three of the five Nottidge sisters had already joined the Beloved (who had thus gained some £18,000), so that when Louisa communicated her decision to her mother, the latter had to act quickly in order not to lose another daughter, and her considerable fortune, to an unscrupulous charlatan. With the aid of her son and of her son-in-law, Mrs Nottidge had Louisa abducted and confined to the majestic Moorcroft House private asylum at Hillingdon, in Middlesex, on the grounds of theomania. Louisa spent seventeen months at the Hillingdon, and was released only because the Commissioners in Lunacy were summoned upon concerns about her failing health. After her liberation, Louisa joined the millenarian community, transferred all her possessions to Henry Prince, and took legal action against her wrongful confinement.

The case was heard in court in 1849 before the Lord Chief Baron, the Right Hon. Sir Frederick Pollock, while the attention it received in the press provoked responses from alienists John Conolly and Forbes Benignus Winslow, and Lord Ashley, Chairman of the Commissioners in Lunacy.[94] The Lord Chief Baron accepted Louisa Nottidge's plea and ordered a compensation of £50 (a fraction of the £1,000 for which she had asked) for the

[94] See Anon., 'Court of Exchequer, Tuesday, June 26', *The Times*, 27 June 1849, p. 7, Anon., 'Specimen of a Lunatic Commissioner', *Examiner*, 30 June 1849, p. 403, Anon., 'The Lord Chief Baron's Law of Lunacy', *Fraser's Magazine* (October 1849), pp. 365-73. As Sarah Wise has pointed out, Conolly's open letter supported the family's decision to commit Louisa, and showed faith in the power of the alienist to cure the mentally deranged. However, this assertion seemed to contradict the thesis of his *Inquiry Concerning the Indications of Insanity* (1830), where he explained that confinement should be limited to the raving and the idiotic, since it could have bad effects on other patients. Financial gain may have been the key to his change of mind: in the 1840s Conolly was the proprietor of three private asylums, and, most importantly with regards to this case, a consultant at Moorcroft, from which he received a percentage on the patients' fees. As a Victorian commentator affirmed, 'Conolly's changing views appear to mark an almost perverse shift, from enlightenment to error'; Wise, pp. 115-8, quotation on p. 118.

damages received. The suit made clear that Louisa's admission to the Hillingdon had not been fraudulently obtained, since two doctors, Thomas Morton and Richard Rowland, certified her insane on the grounds that she had 'estranged herself from her mother's house [...] to follow a person of the name of Prince, whom she believed to be Almighty God, and herself immortal'.[95] However, as Joshua John Schwieso has pointed out, although the two doctors had been summoned by the family physician on the basis of their 'experience in cases of insanity', their biographies suggest that neither of them was an expert in the field.[96] Despite all this, the final verdict was reached because the Commission in Lunacy, in the person of Mr Mylne, failed to convince the Lord Chief Baron of the necessity of keeping Miss Nottidge confined, as shown in the following report which appeared in *The Times* in 1849:

> The Lord Chief Baron: Mr Mylne, was this lady in such a state of mind as to be dangerous to herself or to others?
> Mr Mylne: Not so as I was aware of; not so far as I knew.
> The Lord Chief Baron: If she were not so, then how was it that you kept her in this asylum for seventeen months?
> Mr Mylne: My lord, it was no part of my duty to keep her there. I was only to liberate her if I saw good and sufficient reason for adopting that course.
> The Lord Chief Baron: It is my opinion that you ought to liberate every person who is not dangerous to himself or to others. If the notion has got abroad that any person may be confined in a lunatic asylum or a madhouse who has any absurd or even mad opinion upon any religious subject, and is safe and harmless upon every other topic, I altogether and entirely differ with such an opinion; and I desire to impress that opinion with as much force as I can in the hearing of one of the commissioners. [...]
> You say unsound mind, Mr Mylne. Had she any unsoundness of mind upon any other subject under heaven except as to entertaining these peculiar religious notions?
> Mr Mylne: Miss Nottidge did not exhibit any symptoms of insanity of any other subject, my lord, that I observed.[97]

Not only did the Lord Chief Baron support an individual's freedom to hold religious opinions (as long as they remained harmless to both the person and other parties), he, most

[95] Wise, p. 102; Schwieso, p. 161.
[96] Schwieso, ibid.
[97] Anon., 'Court of Exchequer, Tuesday, June 26', *The Times*, 27 June 1849, p. 7. See also Anon., 'Specimen of a Lunatic Commissioner', *Examiner*, 30 June 1849, p. 403.

importantly, stated that he 'very much doubted whether, if in this case the plaintiff had been a man, or living under the protection of a husband, the defendants would have dared to have taken the steps they had'.[98]

This case made evident how women, and particularly single women, were in danger of wrongful incarceration, since their unorthodox religious views (Louisa's own mother affirmed that 'she worships a false god') could be easily exploited for financial gain.[99] In fact, in the case of Louisa Nottidge, what her family were trying to save was the £5,728 7s 7d that she had bequeathed to the Beloved. After her death in 1858, which occurred while she was still residing at the Abode of Love, the Nottidges brought Henry Prince to court and succeeded in obtaining the return of Louisa's property on the grounds of the prophet's unwarranted influence upon the deceased.[100] Thus, in the early 1860s, the case of Louisa Nottidge received new attention in the press, and was associated with the increasing number of cases of wrongful confinement which were causing much sensation, both in real life and in fiction (see Chapter Four below).[101]

In *All in the Dark*, Dinah, unlike Nottidge, is surrounded by relatives and friends who love her, and who will miss her dearly after her death; William, above all others, will regret not showing her enough of the love he bore her: 'I wish [...] I had been better to her. She was always so good to me. [...] I'd give anything, I would, for a few minutes to tell her how much I really loved her; I'm afraid [...] she did not know' [II, p. 173]. However, in discursively associating Spiritualism with madness, Le Fanu is reminding the reader of the existing danger that even an alcoholic doctor like Drake, with no specific knowledge or experience of insanity, could actually provide enough evidence to have a woman like

---

[98] Anon, 'Court of Exchequer', p. 7.
[99] Wise, p. 108.
[100] Schwieso, p. 174.
[101] Anon., 'Vice-Chancellor's Courts, May 7', *The Times*, 9 May 1859, p. 11, Anon., 'Nottidge v. Prince', *The Times*, 5 June 1860, p. 12, Anon., 'Nottidge v. Prince', *The Times*, 6 June 1860, p. 11, Anon., 'The Agapemone', *Examiner*, 9 June 1860, p. 355, Anon., 'The Agapemone in Chancery', *Saturday Review*, 16 June 1860, pp. 772-3, Anon., 'Nottidge v. Prince - Judgement', *The Times*, 26 July 1860, p. 10, Anon., 'Swindling on a Small, not Swindling on a Large Scale', *Examiner*, 28 July 1860, pp. 467, Anon., 'The Week', *Examiner*, 28 July 1860, p. 468, Anon., 'Miscellaneous News', *Examiner*, 28 July 1860, p. 476, Anon., 'Vice-Chancellor's Court, June 7', *The Times*, 8 June 1861, p. 11.

Dinah confined on the grounds of her unorthodox beliefs. At the same time, an analysis of the character of Dinah is revelatory of Le Fanu's ideal of femininity.

Dinah Perfect is a strong-willed, independent woman. From the very first page, she is said to possess a 'whimsical and despotic' temper, which becomes manifest in the course of the story [I, p. 2]. She desires to have her way in everything and becomes cold and distant to those who oppose her. Thus, Old Winnie subjects herself to what she recognises as Dinah's extravagances, and does not complain when her mistress wakes her up in the middle of the night to have a séance. On the other hand, when Dr Drake ventures to call her belief a bosh, she becomes furious and alienates him from her circle of friends, until he agrees to read 'those wonderful queer books from America [...] to please her', and is made again welcome in her house [I, p. 58]. In the same way, when William Maubray refuses to comply with her directions regarding his own life, and takes Henbane's word with a large pinch of salt, if not derision, she casts him out of her house, with a 'countenance which indicated something different from anger – a cold alienation' [I, p. 164].

Dinah is an old spinster, and very much aware of her power and property. She is in possession of two annuities, an income of £400 a year, and the family house of Gilroyd Hall. But she also seems to believe that the people she favours with her financial support become part of her belongings: thus, Violet Darkwell is considered as 'some sort of [...] property', for staying at Gilroyd Hall eight out of the twelve months of the year, and it is Dinah, rather than Violet's father, who supervises the young girl's matrimonial options [I, p. 2]. In the same way, William, who is said to be 'very nearly absolutely dependent upon the kindness of his aunt', is made to recognise that pecuniary support gives her every right on his life, so that his refusal to enter the Church is interpreted not only as heartless ingratitude, but as mere perversity in the pleasure felt in crossing and thwarting her [ibid.]. Furthermore, Dinah draws an equation between penury and liberty on one side, and wealth and slavery on the other, when she tells William that he would have been nothing more

than a beggar without her, and that that is where his desire for freedom is going to lead him. In a milder way, Dr Drake is also accused of ingratitude for opposing the "gospels of the new religion" she professes, as if she expects that her favours can buy his conversion to Spiritualism.

Dinah's strong will, her independence, and particularly her active role as a Spiritualist associate her character with a "difficult" kind of femininity. At a time when the ideal woman was the "angel in the house", a commodity, or, as Wilburn has renamed her, an "objectified subject", the medium became a dangerous figure because she broke rules and trespassed boundaries, by claiming power and invading the public sphere. Thus, at the peak of her row with William, Dinah is said to look 'transformed', 'her face [...] darkened by a dismal anger; her look [...] hard and cold', and to be speaking with 'with a vehemence that half awed' him, with the imposing authority of a 'Pythoness' [I, pp. 164, II, 110]. The figure of the pythoness is crucial in the representation of subversive femininity. In Greek mythology, a pythoness was a prophetess and a priestess of Apollo at Delphi. According to the legend, the young Apollo went to Delphi with the intention of killing there the serpent which had tried to molest his mother while she was pregnant with him. The python would communicate through a cranny in the rock, and a priestess, named the Pythia, would interpret its revelations and give voice to them in cryptic utterances, known as the prophecies of the Delphic Oracle.[102]

An even stronger association of subversive femininity with the figure of the snake and the invoking of spirits comes from the Bible. First of all, there is Eve, a woman who loses her place in Paradise because of her attempt at gaining a knowledge which is forbidden to her. Interestingly, this 'rebellion against the hierarchical status quo', as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar call it in their *Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), is an act of

[102] Arthur Cotterell, *Oxford Dictionary of All Mythologies*, www.oxfordreference.com under the entry "Apollo" [accessed December 2012].

insurgence that Eve shares with Satan.[103] Like Eve the fallen woman, Satan is the fallen angel who has also been diminished to vile serpentine features because he was dissatisfied with his place and 'secretly preoccupied with questions of "equality"'.[104] The connection between woman, Satan, and the snake found expression in nineteenth-century literature and visual arts, where the angel-like ideal of femininity was opposed by a new, satanic, and serpentine version of womanhood claiming more power, knowledge, and independence.

Secondly, the image of the Pythoness as she who communicates with the spirits appears in the Old Testament with the story of the witch of Endor. This story is told in the first book of Samuel (28: 7-25), where it is related how Saul disobeyed the Lord and was therefore left without guidance. When Saul's people came under the threat of the Philistines, and he could not communicate with the Lord, he decided to try and contact the spirit of Samuel, who had died in the meantime, and ask his assistance. For this purpose, Saul employed a woman who was known for having a familiar spirit, despite the Levitical warnings against such communications: in Leviticus (20:27) it is said that 'A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them'.[105] Furthermore, in Deuteronomy (18:10-14) men are taught that:

> There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,
> Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.
> For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.
> Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.
> For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.[106]

---

[103] Sandra M. Gilbert, Susan Gubar, eds, *The Madwoman in the Attic: the Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven, Conn., London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 187-212, quotation on p. 202.
[104] Ibid., p. 196.
[105] Leviticus, 20: 27, *King James' Bible*, www.kingjamesbibleonline.org [accessed April 2011].
[106] Deuteronomy, 18: 10-14, *King James' Bible*, www.kingjamesbibleonline.org [accessed April 2011].

Saul did not respect the commands given by the Lord and was punished with death, and the Kingdom of Israel was offered to David, son of Jesse.

In *All in the Dark*, Dinah embodies the role of the Pythoness in her communication with spirits and the authoritarian tone with which she claims the exclusivity of her gift. The daughter of a dean, Dinah knows that, like the witch of Endor, she is also disobeying God's orders. For this reason she sits up at night and goes over her father's sermon on that passage of the Scripture, but through 'the lights thrown by Elihu Bung' [II, p. 128-9]. The reinterpretation of the Bible from the perspective of the Pennsylvanian prophet allows Dinah to drop the derogatory appellation of "Witch" and to refer to the "Woman" of Endor instead. However, throughout the novel, the practice of Spiritualism is repeatedly described as 'necromancy' and a '*diablerie*', echoing the contemporary accusations against the movement by religious bodies, the Catholic Church in particular, in relation to its association with witchcraft [I, p. 57, II, p. 110].

In Victorian England clerical opposition to mediumship was partially motivated by a desire to monopolise all routes to the Other World. Thus, the Catholic Church excommunicated D. D. Home in 1864 on the charge of sorcery, while Spiritualists like William Howitt affirmed that 'miracles just as wonderful were done [...] in the Roman Catholic Church, and its votaries claimed the performers as saints and angels. Why should the spirits evoked at the present day be devils, while those evoked long ago were angels?'.[107] Nevertheless, the general public seemed to share the idea that Spiritualism was nothing more than a modern version of witchcraft, as expressed in the *Saturday Review*: 'The belief of one class in witchcraft, and that of another in table-turning, spirit-rapping, and the quasi-supernatural attributes of mesmerism, are probably at least as strong now as analogous beliefs ever were when they resulted in sending people to the gallows or the stake'.[108] As will be shown in more detail in Chapter Two on *A Lost Name*, witchcraft, like

[107] Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 23 October 1860, p. 2.
[108] Bierre de Boismont, A., 'Mind and Body', *Saturday Review*, 8 October 1859, pp. 424-26, p. 42.

Spiritualism, came to be connected with old superstitions and irrational beliefs, exploited by cunning people in order to obtain power. Sir Walter Scott explained the workings of their deception in his second letter on demonology and witchcraft, which uses the passage on the witch of Endor as an example. Scott points out that the Hebrew word for witch, "*chasaph*", means also "poisoner", and may be understood as denoting a person intending to hurt her neighbours either by noxious potions, by charms or similar mystical means, thus emphasising how this category of women practised 'tricks of legerdemain or jugglery' upon their credulous clients.[109]

Contrary to this idea of the nineteenth century witch, Dinah does really believe in spirit communication, and genuinely means to be useful, rather than harmful, to the people with whom she shares the precious information received from Henbane. Nevertheless, as a medium, and a strong-willed and independent woman, she is still stepping beyond the boundaries of ideal femininity. Where the "angel in the house" is like a solid and firm piece of furniture sold on the marriage market, the Spiritualist becomes a "subversive commodity", a "subjectified object" which tilts and turns just like the table at which she practises her séances. As has been shown, the danger for women like Dinah (and Louisa Nottidge) is to be labelled unsound. *All in the Dark*, then, expresses Le Fanu's strong criticism of Victorian psychiatry and its threat to subversive women, notwithstanding the author's personal opinion of Spiritualism. For this reason, despite her blind belief and bad temper, Dinah remains a positive character throughout the novel, and is pitied for her credulity and deeply mourned after she dies.

Le Fanu's ideal woman is far from being the insipid "angel in the house". His heroine is spirited and assertive, brave enough to speak her mind, but wise and humble enough to accept guidance and support in everyday decisions. While Dinah's somewhat arrogant self-reliance precludes her from such role, it is her niece Violet who embodies Le

[109] Scott, p. 41.

Fanuian femininity. Like Dinah, Violet is presented as a strong-willed young woman, who has always had her way around the house. William remembers how, when she was only a child, little Violet used to make him visit and kiss her kittens, whistle for her bullfinch, dig in her garden, mend and even nurse her doll, 'and perform many such tasks, quite beneath his dignity as a "swell" at Rugby, which, however, the gentle fellow did very merrily and industriously for the *imperious* little woman' [I, p. 4, my italics]. As a grown-up girl of seventeen, suitable for marriage, Violet still boasts 'a temper of her own' in her defiant rejection of Vane Trevor's advantageous proposal: '[t]here's nothing to explain; I've said everything [...]. Did I ever lead you to think I thought otherwise? [...] You can have no right to make me say one word more than I please. I've said all I mean to say – more than I need have said – and I won't say more' [II, pp. 201, 198-9]. It is no surprise, then, that William fancies he sees in the oval of her pretty face 'a serpent's head'; but he immediately continues by saying that really, 'she has nothing of that in her, only the wisdom [...], and, perhaps, the fascination' [I, p. 76].[110]

Violet certainly has the potential to be transgressive; however, her wisdom and strength reside in her seeing through the absurdities of Spiritualism. Violet interprets the occult doctrine as the source of her aunt's ailments, and is relieved when she hears William call Spiritualism 'bosh and nonsense': 'Oh, William, I am so delighted to hear you say so! [...] And you're quite right, I *know*, about grannie. It *is*, really [...] all, all about that awful spirit-rapping. Grannie never speaks of it to me; I believe she's afraid of frightening me; [...] and I *am* so afraid of it; and it is *entirely* that' [I, pp. 29-30]. While Dinah invests herself with the power of the witch, Violet accepts guidance, both in her spiritual and

[110] As Patrick O'Malley has argued in *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), the term fascination implied the 'irresistible and frequently erotic attraction to evil', p. 92 (on the subject of fascination, see particularly pp. 4-12, 88-93, 103-13, 138-61). Although O'Malley focuses on Catholicism as opposed to Anglicanism, the image of the snake, as has been shown, can also be associated with the idea of subversive femininity that was proper of Spiritualism. William is clearly drawn to the occult, which is proved by his unconscious attraction to Violet's potential "snakiness", and his later acceptance of the existence of ghosts (see Section 1.3 below). However, the novel will resolve into the final dismissal of Spiritualism: Violet will be wise enough to maintain her faith and confide in a loving husband, and the ghosts that haunt William will be revealed as the harmless acts of a natural somnambulist.

familial life, thus becoming a devoted wife and a mother. However, she is no mere commodity. Her strong will and determination are employed to break free from the conventionalism of loveless marriages based on money. In rejecting Vane Trevor's valuable proposal in favour of William Maubray's true affection, Violet comes to represent Le Fanu's ideal woman, and is therefore repaid with a happy ending: Dinah leaves everything to William, who also inherits a title, thus making them Sir William and Lady Maubray, a change that, the reader is told, will not spoil either.

1.3 The Laughable Supernatural

All in the Dark is the only novel by Le Fanu in which the supernatural is explained (or rather, explained away) through the laws of nature. According to James Walton, the domestication of the ghost in *All in the Dark* positions the novel on the 'line of descent from the Clara Reeve-Ann Radcliffe school of Gothic naturalism', while Stephen Carver affirms that '*All in the Dark* is a *Northanger Abbey* for the Victorian Gothic'.[111] However, Le Fanu is best known as a horror writer, due to his many stories of the supernatural. M. R. James places him 'absolutely in the first rank as a writer of ghost stories', since he excels in keeping 'the loophole [for natural explanations …] so narrow as not to be quite practicable'.[112] It is hard to believe that, after establishing his name as the author of mystery novels like *The House by the Churchyard*, *Wylder's Hand*, *Uncle Silas*, and *Guy Deverell*, Le Fanu deliberately decided to try his hand at a Radcliffian novel or to parody the genre to which he had attached his name. It is more plausible to think that, the aim of *All in the Dark* being the ridicule of *Spiritualism* (and not the Gothic), the author decided

---

[111] Walton, p. 83; Carver, p. 336.

[112] M. R. James, Introduction to *Madam Crowl's Ghost and Other Stories*, p. v. M. R. James's theory on the success of horror consists of the following: 'It is not amiss sometimes to leave a loophole for a natural explanation, but I would say, let the loophole be so narrow as not to be quite practicable', quoted in Jack Sullivan, *Elegant Nightmares,* p. 17. Again, I make reference to Le Fanu's own theory of "equilibrium", expressed in his letter to Bentley of March 1870 (p. 33, note No. 115 above). See also, Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 26.

to disclose that *its* ghosts, in the novel as in real life, were the result of mere trickery and self-deception. It is to the Comic Gothic, rather than the "naturalised" Gothic of Reeve and Radcliffe, that Le Fanu turned. However, it is a comic turn based on satire, rather than the parody of Austen's famous novel.

The presence of elements of irony, laughter, and the comic has attracted the attention of several scholars of the Gothic over the decades. In the specific case of Le Fanu, Jack Sullivan has noticed the recurrence of irony in many of his short stories of the supernatural, of which Le Fanu, 'a careful artist', was certainly aware.[113] In *Elegant Nightmares*, Sullivan argues that the general assumption that 'humor is anathema to horror' is 'most erroneous'.[114] Humour, especially when ironic or absurd, can actually increase the sense of horror, because it shows that the characters are at the mercy of the supernatural.[115] In 'Green Tea', for instance, the very title already 'registers the fundamental irony: the awful disjuncture between cause and effect, crime and punishment'.[116] Jennings has done nothing wrong to deserve spiritual persecution, and therefore he stands defenceless against the absurd cruelty of the supernatural. Furthermore, the fact that the spirit that haunts him is a monkey does not mitigate the power of the story, since its horror 'lies in the irony that something intrinsically ridiculous can drive a man to destroy himself'.[117] In 'Strange Event in the Life of Schalken the Painter' (1839), an element of farce is catalytic to an increased sense of doom and horror.[118] After escaping from her demon-husband, Rose looks for asylum at her uncle's house and begs him and Schalken never to leave her alone, for fear that the monstrous Vanderhausen might come back to claim her. Still, just after she has made her appeal, they both leave her room, and thus leave her to her fate: '[o]ne *last* shriek, so long and piercing and agonised as to be

[113] Sullivan, p. 13.
[114] Ibid., p. 14.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid., p. 18.
[117] Ibid., p. 14.
[118] Ibid., p. 43.

scarcely human, swelled from the room, and suddenly there followed a death-like silence'.[119] Although Sullivan remarks on Le Fanu's clever use of irony in others of his stories of the supernatural, like 'The Ghost and the Bone-Setter' (1838), 'The Watcher' (1847), and 'Carmilla' (1872), to name a few, he does not attempt to articulate a proper theory on the specific use of humour in the creation of horror.

It is only in recent years that the Comic Gothic has begun to be understood as a genre of its own. In 'Gothic Laughter' (1994), Victor Sage analyses the presence of laughter in five Gothic novels, from Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797) to Stephen King's *'Salem's Lot* (1975), including Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas*. Sage focuses specifically on the use of theatrical farce as a way to intensify horror and concludes that '[the Gothic laughter] is not simply polyphony [...]; but rather a pattern of readerly doubt, unease, and horror, codified in bathos – in the staggeringly banal mechanisms of exaggeration, mistaken identity, misunderstanding and cross purposes which are the driving force of the theatrical farce'.[120] In the specific case of *Uncle Silas*, Sages argues that laughter and horror come together on the occasion of Maud's first walk with her new governess, Mme de la Rougierre. In the gloomy and awe-inspiring surroundings of a churchyard, Madame abandons herself to a joyful dance among the graves; she sings and laughs, and finally invites Maud to take part in her merriment. Maud's annoyance at Madame, rather than fear, adds up to the already farcical staging of this *danse macabre*. However, while the exaggeration of Madame's delight provokes laughter, the inappropriateness of her behaviour gives way to unease and fear in the reader, especially since Maud points out that '[s]he was laughing, and really looked quite mad'.[121]

---

[119] Le Fanu, 'Strange Event in the Life of Schalken the Painter', *Dublin University Magazine* (May 1839), p. 589.
[120] Victor Sage, 'Gothic Laughter: Farce and Horror in Five Texts', in Victor Sage, Allan Lloyd Smith, eds, *Gothick: Origins and Innovations* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), pp. 190-203, quote on p. 203.
[121] Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas*, p. 63; see also Sage, p. 194.

Julian Wolfreys has also recognised that comic discourse is one of the various "apparitions" through which the Gothic returns.[122] In *Victorian Hauntings* (2002) he dedicates a chapter to 'Dickens and the Comic-Gothic', in which he focuses specifically on the figure of the "Fat Boy" in *The Pickwick Papers* (1837). Wolfreys demonstrates that Dickens resorts to unconventionally Gothic tropes (a summer's day rather than a winter's night, shouting rather than whispering, a cottage rather than a castle, and an overweight boy rather than a disembodied spirit) to inspire both laughter and unease, when the reader realises that the fear felt by the old lady is no less intense in this farcical setting than it would be in a Gothic scene. The importance of the comic effect, Wolfreys argues, is that it allows us to become aware of our fears:

> Taking the vestiges of the gothic and exploring its tropes comically, tracing those tropes' manifestations in the comic, is one method of assuming haunting proximity, if not intimacy with the subject (the phantom knows more about us than we do). Comic discourse and performance brings down the defences of the psyche. It allows the connection to be made between high and low, self and other. In so doing, it seeks to make us face the 'monstrous' within ourselves, so to make our flesh creep, making us tremble simultaneously with laughter *and* fear, just enough so as to allow us a view of ourselves we had always striven to deny and to project onto others.[123]

While Sage and Wolfreys have investigated the sporadic appearance of laughter in the Gothic, Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik have advanced the idea that the Comic Gothic is a genre of its own.[124] In *Gothic and the Comic Turn* (2005), Horner and Zlosnik argue that the comic turn has not received the attention that it deserves, and has been instead either 'too quickly pathologized as the hysterical laughter of comic relief', or overlooked as 'merely responsive to, or parasitic upon, serious Gothic writing'.[125] The main difference between the Gothic and the Comic Gothic lies in their divergent approach to fear. Serious Gothic is concerned with boundaries and the anxiety related to their permeability. It

---

[122] Julian Wolfreys, *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).
[123] Ibid., p. 53.
[124] Avril Horner, Sue Zlosnik, *Gothic and the Comic Turn* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). See also ibid., 'Comic Gothic', in David Punter, ed., *A Companion to the Gothic*, pp. 242-54.
[125] Ibid., *Gothic*, p. 3; 'Comic Gothic', p. 242.

challenges the reader with the question: "what are you afraid of?", and embodies internal fears in external threats, in the shape of monsters, and invoke feelings of horror, terror, and revulsion.[126] The Comic Gothic, instead, 'recuperates the "supernatural" Other into the material', into the natural world.[127] The use of comic elements allows a 'conscious, self-reflexive engagement with the Gothic mode' which grants a measure of detachment from scenes whose nature would prove disturbing in a Gothic context.[128] Thus, the two forms of Gothic offer different emotional contracts between the reader and the writer: where the Gothic invokes the terror of disorientation, the Comic Gothic promises the laughter of accommodation, which is not the hysterical laughter produced by the comic or farcical moments that can be found in serious Gothic writing.[129]

Horner and Zlosnik find in parody the privileged literary form of the Comic Gothic. Drawing on the work of Linda Hutcheon, Margaret Rose, and Simon Dentith, they define the key features of parody as 'a keen sense of the comic, an acute awareness of intertextuality and an engagement with the idea of metafiction'; in other words, the parody text, while mocking one text, also holds up a mirror to its own fictional practices, thus becoming simultaneously a fiction and a fiction about fictions.[130] The intertextuality which characterises parody is the crucial point upon which it differs from satire, since the latter does not necessarily draw on precursive texts. Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1817) is a good example of Comic Gothic based on parody. In the novel, Austen uses the comic mode to ridicule such stories of romance and terror as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). By showing that the destructive forces actually lie in the real world rather than in the supernatural, Austen criticises the irrationality and the excesses of Gothic

[126] Ibid., *Gothic*, p. 1-2, 'Comic Gothic', p. 243.
[127] Ibid., 'Comic Gothic', p. 243.
[128] Ibid., *Gothic*, p. 13.
[129] Ibid., 'Comic Gothic', p. 252.
[130] Ibid., *Gothic*, pp. 11-12; Simon Dentith, *Parody* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 14.

literature, which end up misleading readers like Catherine Morland in their interpretation of reality.[131]

All in the Dark, I argue, differs from *Northanger Abbey* in that its aim is not the criticism of a genre but of contemporary society, particularly its addiction to Spiritualism. Although it uses the comic mode, the novel does not direct its mockery towards a specific genre or form, and therefore fails in the metafictional function which Horner and Zlosnik claim as a key feature of parody. *All in the Dark*, then, can be defined as a satire, being a work of fiction where 'prevailing vices or follies are held up to ridicule'.[132] In the novel, Le Fanu recognises the threat posed by Spiritualism and, by ridiculing its folly, he offers his readers the laughter of accommodation – if the ghosts of Spiritualism are nothing more than trickery or self-deception, then the Swedenborgian should not feel menaced. Meanwhile, though, Le Fanu does not dismiss the supernatural altogether, but rather suggests the existence of an Other World that can be accessed by means other than séances, as Swedenborg has taught.

The problem with Spiritualism lay in the similarities it shared with Swedenborgianism: both doctrines asserted the survival of the soul after death, the possibility of mediums gifted with second sight to communicate with spirits, and also that these mysterious processes could be explained scientifically. Arthur Conan Doyle even opened his *History of Spiritualism* with a chapter dedicated solely to Emanuel Swedenborg, whom he defined as 'the first and greatest medium'.[133] Nevertheless, he continued by explaining that, when Spiritualism broke out in 1848, the Church of the New Jerusalem decided to stress the points of difference, rather than the many points in common between Spiritualism and Swedenborgianism. Swedenborgianism, after all,

---

[131] Ibid., *Gothic*, passim; 'Comic Gothic', p. 82; Dentith, p. 64; Nancy Armstrong, 'The Gothic Austen', in Claudia L. Johnson, Clara Tuite, eds, *A Companion to Jane Austen* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), Part III, Ch. 20.

[132] *Oxford English Dictionary*, www.oed.com, under the entry "satire" [accessed December 2012]; see also Margaret Anne Rose, *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 80-86.

[133] Conan Doyle, p. 8.

depended on a strong theoretical basis, both scientific and theological, which Spiritualism totally lacked. The son of a Lutheran bishop, Swedenborg was a natural scientist who became increasingly interested in biology, and specifically in the position of the soul within the body. Thus, he focused his studies of anatomy on the brain and, in 1744, he published a volume entitled *The Kingdom of the Soul, Studied Anatomically, Physically and Philosophically.*[134] This work was followed by an immense bibliography, through which he reconsidered Christianity from a completely new angle, which became the basis of a new theology and a new church, named the Church of the New Jerusalem.

Spiritualists, though, had no proper manifesto or creed and, instead of mastering the sciences to prove their arguments, they simply claimed to provide material for someone else to analyse. Add to this the bad reputation which the movement quickly gained, and it becomes clear why followers of Swedenborg disdained the association with Spiritualism, a reaction that aroused both surprise and indignation in adherents of the latter. For instance, in 1860, the *Spiritual Magazine* issued an article entitled 'Spiritualism, Swedenborg, and the New Church; an Examination of Claims', which expressed their resentment:

> None are so jealous of these revelations as the Swedenborgians. They seem to hold that Swedenborg was allowed the free range of Heaven, but that at his death the door was locked, and the key thrown away. Their jealousy seems to verge into spite at the very idea of any one having even a peep at the glories their prophet saw. Even Swedenborg's words are wrested to frighten seekers from the gates of the spirit-land, for in a recent lucubration of one of this school, we read 'Swedenborg unequivocally discountenances and strongly admonishes against open communication with spirits as destructive of man's freedom, and dangerous to his soul'; which, were it true, Swedenborg is his own condemnation; for herein he is the greatest of sinners; unless, indeed, he held a special license to take his swill of that peculiar sin.[135]

Again, in 1861, the *Spiritual Magazine* defined contemporary followers of Swedenborg as "pseudo-Swedenborgians", since they limited themselves to idolising a man instead of pursuing the same inquiries in his grand spirit and temper. William Howitt, author of this

[134] See Swedenborg, *Introducing the New Jerusalem*, Introduction by Dr John Chadwick, pp. xi-xv.
[135] Edward Brotherton, 'Spiritualism, Swedenborg, and the New Church; an Examination of Claims', *Spiritual Magazine* (1860), pp. 526-27.

article, reiterated Swedenborg's hypocritical warning about the dangers of communication with the dead, and went as far as wondering 'whoever would have dreamed of Swedenborgianism and Popery leaguing together to crush freedom of opinion?', associating the two churches in their claim for monopoly over the afterlife.[136]

The son of a Protestant dean and a crypto-Swedenborgian, Le Fanu maintained a position of firm disbelief towards Spiritualism over the years. As editor of the *Dublin University Magazine* between 1861 and 1869, he published several articles on the subject, all of them characterised by the same derisive treatment of the practice of séances and the dangerous effects that Spiritualism could have on the human mind. A ten-page-long article entitled 'Spiritualism' opened the July issue in 1862. The anonymous author affirmed that 'no more pitiable madness ever seized on large multitudes, than that which has lately been sending so many educated people of these islands to consult such theatrical ghostseers as Messrs. Home and Foster. For an age which calls itself enlightened, this nineteenth century has seen the growth of delusions many a gross enough to prove its mental kinship with ages of peculiar darkness'.[137] A few months later, Le Fanu published 'An Authentic Narrative of a Haunted House', which he introduced as a true story of marvellous phenomena. As the editor, he felt compelled to write a prologue to the tale in order to emphasise its veracity and keep the name of his magazine clear from any connections with Spiritualism:

> The Editor of the UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE submits the following very remarkable statement, with every detail of which he has been for some years acquainted, upon the ground that it affords the most authentic and ample relation as a series of marvellous phenomena, in nowise connected with what is technically termed "Spiritualism", which he has anywhere met with. The Editor begs most pointedly to meet *in limine* the suspicion that he is elaborating a trick, or vouching for another ghost of Mrs Veal. As a mere story the narrative is valueless: its sole claim to attention is its absolute truth. For the good faith of its relator he pledges his own and the character of this magazine.[138]

---

[136] William Howitt, 'Spiritualism v. Pseudo-Swedenborgianism', *Spiritual Magazine* (1861), pp. 134-41, pp. 134-35.
[137] Anon., 'Spiritualism', *Dublin University Magazine* (July 1862), p. 4.
[138] Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, 'An Authentic Narrative of a Haunted House', *Dublin University Magazine* (October 1862), p. 476.

All in the Dark appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine* when the controversy surrounding Spiritualism had just reached a further peak after the arrival of the famous Davenport brothers, who performed in Dublin, as part of their European tour, in January 1866. On this occasion, the mediums were exposed by the illusionist and anti-Spiritualist Dr Lynn, who explained to the audience how the brothers were performing the same tricks as many other professional magicians. The Davenports' representative Robert Cooper responded to the scandal by stating that the brothers never laid any claims to supernatural powers nor attributed their phenomena to what was known as spiritual manifestations.[139] However, the general public had for years associated their séances with the practice of Spiritualism, and was now to interpret their exposure as an example of the fraudulent activities carried out by Spiritualists. In the light of these events, Le Fanu's novel becomes a prompt reply to the ridiculous claims moved by Spiritualism.

All in the Dark opens on a desolate big house, enclosed by brick walls and imposing tall elms, and situated off the main road to the village of Saxton. What seems to be a perfect setting for the Gothic is quickly turns into the comic with the introduction of the mistress of the house and her queer practices:

> It was about this period, as we all remember, that hats began to turn and heads with them, and tables approved themselves the most intelligent of quadrupeds; chests of drawers and other grave pieces of furniture babbled of family secrets, and houses resounded with those creaks and cracks with which Bacon, Shakespeare, and Lord Byron communicated their several inspirations in detestable grammar, to all who pleased to consult them.
> Aunt Dinah was charmed. Her rapid genius loved a shortcut, and here was, by something better than a post-office, a direct gossiping intimacy opened between her and the people on t'other side of the Styx. [I, p. 8]

Le Fanu's irony at the expense of Spiritualism and the figure of the Spiritualist thus sets the tone for his Spiritualist novel. As has been shown, the similarities between the two "schools" were causing unease among Swedenborg's followers, while the new power with

[139] Robert Cooper, 'The Challenge to the Brother Davenport', *Irish Times*, 10 January 1866, p. 3. Note that numerous articles appeared in the *Irish Times* with regards to the Davenport Brothers, their arrival in Dublin and their exposure, particularly in January 1866; see bibliography.

which women mediums were being invested menaced patriarchal stability. The problematic figure of Dinah has been investigated at length in the previous section. What is interesting here is how Le Fanu minimises the threat posed by the medium through laughter.

The events are set in motion by a letter to William Maubray, in which his aunt writes that '[y]ou will be sorry [...] to hear that poor old auntie is not long for this world' [I, p. 11]. However, this initial alarm immediately collapses into bathos, with Dinah digressing on such silly details that the narrator humorously notes that it would be plausible to argue, 'from the commissions about scents, dog-collars, and snuff, that the old lady had no honest intention of dying' [I, p. 13]. Dinah's claims of power to contact the Other World are repeatedly defused throughout the novel as the whims of an attention-seeking old woman who wants to be told what she wants to hear and who wants other people to do as she wishes. The scene of séance in which Dr Drake impersonates a medium is a case in point. Le Fanu's use of farce offers the laughter of accommodation, since both Spiritualism and the powerful woman medium are made harmless through irony. Dinah's Spiritualist activities never embody a real danger to anyone, and even if she threatens to come back from the Other World to haunt William and 'watch you as an old grey cat watches a mouse', after death she makes nothing more terrifying than 'a very pretty corpse' (the old grey cat also sounds like the inoffensive simile of an amateur witch) [II, pp. 133, 168].

Just like the pythoness, Spiritualism is also recognised as a threat but made harmless by means of irony. Le Fanu's choice of names is already indicative of his feelings towards the movement. Stephen Carver argues that the figure of the Pennsylvanian prophet may be a caricature of D. D. Home, who had already been the target of Browning's satrical poem 'Mr Sludge'.[140] Although this is a plausible suggestion, the peculiarity of the

[140] Carver, p. 338.

name Elihu may refer to another less known Spiritualist, that is, Elihu Rich. The name of Elihu Rich appeared in different newspapers in the 1850s and 1860s, initially in conjunction with Swedenborgianism, and then with Spiritualism. Elihu Rich published *A Biographical Sketch of Emanuel Swedenborg, and an Account of His Works* in 1849, with the intention of gratifying 'the growing interest of the public in its subject'.[141] In the following years though, his name became increasingly associated with Spiritualism, and he was said to have 'matriculated at the University of Rappingdom'.[142] If this shift can be interpreted as a clear sign of the danger lurking behind the similarities between the two schools, the ridicule of the prophet's word in *All in the Dark* is both indicative of Le Fanu's low opinion of Rich, and of his attempt to minimise the threat of Spiritualism.

Similarly, the name of Dinah's friendly spirit was not chosen at random. According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the word "henbane" indicates a 'highly toxic plant [...] found growing wild in waste places and on rubbish heaps. [...] The whole henbane plant has a powerful, nauseous odour [... and] yields three dangerous drugs: atropine, hyoscyamine, and scopolamine'.[143] Known in England since the Middle Ages, henbane causes hallucination and restlessness, and can be lethal. Le Fanu's choice of this specific plant reveals again his sceptical opinion of Spiritualism: firstly, its strong and fetid smell, and its growing on rubbish, communicate an immediate image of unpleasantness and degradation; secondly, its connection with drugs implies the danger of addiction; and thirdly, its effects range from the suspension of reality to poisoning and death. In *All in the Dark*, henbane is quite explicitly associated with poison, but once again, Le Fanu employs

---

[141] Anon., 'Our Literary Table', *Athenaeum*, 13 April 1850, p. 396. On Elihu Rich, see also Anon., 'Contemporary Literature of America', *Westminster Review* (July 1852), pp. 271-87, Anon., 'Notices', *Journal of Science and Art*, 28 April 1855, p. 265, Anon., 'Supernatural Logic and Grammar', *Saturday Review*, 14 June 1862, pp. 692-93, Anon., 'Review of The History of the Supernatural, in All Ages and Nations, and in all Churches, Christian and Pagan: Demonstrating a Universal Faith', *Athenaeum*, 28 February 1863, pp. 288-90.

[142] Anon., 'Supernatural Logic and Grammar', p. 693. Also note that the name Elihu will recur in *The Rose and the Key*, where Le Fanu attributes it to a one-eyed spy involved in the conspiracy which will lead to the wrongful incarceration of Maud Vernon.

[143] See *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, www.britannica.com under the entry "henbane" [accessed April 2011]. Carver erroneously defines "henbane" as 'literally, a ruinous and/or poisonous chicken', p. 339.

the comic mode, here of mistaken identities, to render the threat inoffensive: when Dinah tells William that her fate is connected with Henbane, the young man immediately exclaims 'Poison! [...] under his breath, with a look of pale inquiry at Doctor Drake', which ignites in the doctor 'an explosion of coughing, sneezing, and strangling, which compelled him to jump to his feet, and stagger about the room with his face in his pocket-handkerchief', all this to Dinah's increasing irritation [I, p. 25].

However, the poisonous belief soon becomes contagious. William Maubray initially states that spirit-rapping is nonsense and, when forced to take part in a séance, indicates that he 'would have liked to kick the table up to the ceiling and go off to bed' [I, p. 50]. Nevertheless, like Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*, and 'like other young men who sit up late, and read wild books, and drink strong coffee', William also seems to become 'addicted to the supernatural' [I, p. 58]. William does not want to believe, but somehow he cannot help it, and struggles unsuccessfully to keep on the side of rationality. After Dinah dies, William cannot stop thinking of her threat to watch him if he disobeys Henbane's warning and marries within five years, and for the first time in his life he fancies that the cracks "uttered" by the furniture in his room could actually have a meaning. William immediately tries to dismiss such thoughts through rational explanations: '[t]he fire's gone out; the room is cooling, and the wood of that ridiculous cabinet is contracting. What can it do but crack?', while the narrator joins in to humorously describe the talkative cabinet as 'the spiritual tympanum on which above all other sympathetic pieces of furniture in the house [Dinah] placed her trust [...,] a spirit-gauge [...which] thrummed so oracularly [... and] cracked with such a significant emphasis', thus minimising William's doubts through laughter [II, pp. 216, 215-6].

Despite his own efforts, however, William cannot find another explanation than the supernatural for the mysterious events that follow. In a room locked from the inside, he finds Dinah's warning letters he had been reading, and which he had safely locked in his

desk, placed on his bedside table instead; the morning stick which he had left in the hall is now hanging over his bed, in a sign, 'as it seemed to him, of suspended castigation'; the love stanzas he had written to Violet are mysteriously torn to pieces; and finally, the print of a cat (Dinah's haunting simile) slyly watching a mouse is left nailed to the floor [II, p. 226]. Failing to come up with an explanation for these events within the laws of nature, William convinces himself that these occurrences should be attributed to the work of his aunt's vengeful spirit, which had already visited him during his sleep, and whose 'tremendous gripe' of his wrist had left visible marks that outlasted what he had initially believed to be only a nightmare [I, p. 64].

To William's rescue come Dr Wagget and Dr Drake, who improvise themselves "witch-finders" in another farcical climax. In Chapter Sixty-Four, titled 'An Ambuscade', Le Fanu shows how Dinah's poisonous belief in spirits manages to infect even the rector and the physician, before accommodating their terror with the laughter of derision:

> I don't know whether the parson had really any faith in ghosts or not. [...] Doctor Drake was utterly sceptical. [...] The Churchman sipped his tea, and the physician his strong drink, and there was adjusted a plan for the operations of the night.
> "Now, Mr Maubray, you must do as we order; when we bid you, you go to bed [...], and Doctor Drake and I will sit up and watch here [...] and we'll be on the alert, and ready to – to – "
> "To arrest the cabinet – egad! – and garrotte the clock, if either so much as cracks while we are on duty" [...].
> The clergyman was wakened by some noise. [...] On turning in the direction of the noise, the clergyman saw a gaunt figure in white gliding from the room. On seeing this form I am bound to confess the clergyman was so transported with horror, that he seized the sleeping doctor by the head, and shook it violently. [...]
> The doctor's hand was on the candlestick, and uttering a prayer, he flung it, in a paroxysm of horror [...].
> One word they did not utter, but groped and pulled one another fiercely, and groaned, and panted, and snorted, like two men wrestling, and I am afraid that each would have liked to get his friend between himself and the object. [II, pp. 233-8]

The ghost is revealed as William himself, a somnambulist, and the terror that 'unmanned' them all is ridiculed as totally unwarranted [II, p. 239].

In *All in the Dark*, Le Fanu explains his ghosts away as mere tricks of the mind. William had been going through a difficult period of his life: he had fallen in love with a woman he could not marry because of his financial instability, and was further frustrated by the possibility of her engagement to his wealthy friend; he had argued with his beloved aunt, was estranged by her as a consequence, and finally lost her without getting a chance to say goodbye, or to tell her how much he loved her. William's concerns, combined with the strong tea he liked to drink (a recurring theme in Le Fanu's fiction), the heavy tobacco he liked to smoke, and the supernatural stories he liked to read, provoked nightmares and somnambulistic states.[144] While the spirit of Dinah was the fruit of his imagination, it was his own hand that had grasped his other wrist in sleep, and left the mysterious mark. Such a naturalist explanation of mysterious bruises had been offered by an article titled 'Dream, Omens, and Predictions', which Le Fanu published in his magazine in May 1866, while he was still writing *All in the Dark.* The article quotes Sir Walter Scott, in what he defines as 'double touch':

> I believe the phenomena of dreaming are in a great measure occasioned by the *double touch* which takes place when one hand is crossed in sleep upon another. Each gives and receives the impression of touch to and from the other, and these complicated sensations our sleeping fancy ascribes to the agency of another being, when it is in fact produced by our own limbs rolling off each other.[145]

As will be shown in Chapter Two on *A Lost Name*, in the analysis of the suicidal case of Mark Shadwell, financial problems, disappointment in love, bereavement, and hereditary disposition were all considered by Victorian psychiatry to be factors in the detection of mental insanity. William Maubray has suffered from nervous strain and hallucinations, and also admits that 'I think I'm growing as *mad* as [...] poor Aunt Dinah' when he first begins to believe in spirit communication [I, p. 216, my italics]. However, no

---

[144] According to Victorian psychiatry the abuse of tea was indeed a possible cause of nervous disorders. While this theory is cleverly exploited in Le Fanu's famous story of the supernatural 'Green Tea', it also features in his lesser-known novel *A Lost Name*, and will be analysed in depth in the following chapter.
[145] Anon., 'Dreams, Omens, and Predictions', p. 512.

judgement is made about the possibility of his being a case of incipient insanity, which seems to validate the words of the Lord Chief Baron in charge of the case of Louisa Nottidge, who doubted whether the same precautions would have been taken if the plaintiff had been a man.

All in the Dark presents a reflection on the double standard with which Victorian psychiatry was dealing with its patients. Although it is considered Le Fanu's worst novel, it helps contextualise its writer in the topical debate on Spiritualism and its association with insanity. Not only does it provide a warning to women readers, but, through the use of the comic turn, it also offers the laughter of accommodation which exposes the ghosts of Spiritualism, in fiction as in real life, as mere trickery and self-deception. The use of the Comic Gothic reveals Le Fanu's opinion of the Spiritualist movement, and further becomes an effective means to minimise the threat that Spiritualism was posing to both followers of Swedenborg and to society as a whole. Thus, *All in the Dark* ends without a ghost, but it does not exclude the existence of the Other World. The rector, whom Carver correctly interprets as a mature version of Le Fanu himself, affirms that 'about spiritualism, [...] I don't say there's *nothing* in it [...], there may be a great deal too much. [...] The spirit world is veiled from us, no doubt in mercy [...] and we have no right to lift that veil; few do it with impunity; but of that another time' [II, pp. 172-3]. What is an evident allusion to Swedenborg's belief in the spirit world can find no place in a satire on Spiritualism. It is in *A Lost Name*, which Le Fanu had already in mind while writing *All in the Dark*, that he finds an appropriate place to deal with Swedenborgianism and its connections with insanity.

CHAPTER TWO

Family Curses: *A Lost Name* (1868)

A Lost Name first appeared in Richard Bentley's *Temple Bar* between May 1867 and May 1868 (thirteen instalments), and was then published by the Bentleys as a triple-decker on 27 March 1868. As early as 29 January 1866, while writing to congratulate Richard Bentley on the purchase of the magazine, Le Fanu took the chance to inform him that he had made up a plan for a three-volume novel which he believed would be better than *Guy Deverell*, or 'at least afford more forcible & fertile situation', and that he should be prepared to start it in a magazine in a month or two.[1] Le Fanu also advised his editor that he was currently in touch with other parties and would accept the best offer, but Bentley was not ready to grant him more than £400 for both the run of the tale in *Temple Bar* and the rights on the publication of the first edition of the triple-decker, a sum which he believed to be fair, considering that '*Temple Bar* will bring your name well before the English Press'.[2] How an agreement on the joint publication of *All in the Dark* and *A Lost Name* was finally reached in February 1866 has already been summarised in Chapter One.

Although Le Fanu had confirmed that his story would be ready for serialisation from March 1866, in mid-February he began to buy time, saying that any publication earlier than June would do no justice to it (he was at that time busy finishing *All in the Dark*, which he hoped to have ready for the press in April), the subject being 'so good that it wd. be a pity to risk a false start'.[3] No further mention of the still untitled tale was made until 27 November 1866. On this date, Le Fanu wrote to George Bentley that, since he would require some money for personal purposes in early May, it would be more advantageous for both parties if the story was run rapidly through the *Dublin University*

---

[1] For all information about the correspondence on *A Lost Name* between Le Fanu and the Bentleys, see Edens, pp. 208-35; quotation on p. 208.
[2] Letter from Richard Bentley to Le Fanu of 12 February 1866; see Edens, p. 210.
[3] Letter from Le Fanu to George Bentley of 21 February 1866; ibid., p. 213.

Magazine with an immediate start, so as to be ready for publication in book form by the beginning of that month.[4] In this way Le Fanu would be certain of an income reaching him in May, and the Bentleys would save £150 agreed for the serialisation in *Temple Bar*, thus owing Le Fanu only £450 for the triple-decker edition.

Financial pressure on Le Fanu's side is a very plausible reason for his change of plan. However, his personal interests as the editor of the *Dublin University Magazine* may have played an important role in his proposal to his publisher, since in his letter to Richard Bentley of 1 December 1866 Le Fanu alluded to the necessity to 'hit upon something' for his magazine, and expressed his fear of it being too late to plan and write a tale in time to fill the pages of the January issue.[5] Notwithstanding Le Fanu's attempt at diverting the publication of the story, Bentley refused to modify their agreement, but tried to accommodate Le Fanu by proposing to begin the serialisation in February 1867 instead of April.[6] On 16 December, Le Fanu stated that now he would rather meet the date initially agreed, that is April 1867, since, having written enough to supply *Temple Bar* for between four to five months, he had also started a new three-volume novel to be published in June (which became *The Tenants of Malory*) and would not be free to continue *A Lost Name* before then.[7] In February 1867, over a year after their initial correspondence on this project, Le Fanu wrote to George Bentley that he had more than one volume written, but that he should like to revise a little, 'following your hint – to interpolate a few chapters of brighter material with some humorous & kindly characters who can be woven into the story'.[8] It was in this letter, dated 20 February, that Le Fanu finally announced the title of the novel, saying that '[i]t is much the best I can think of that would at the same time fit the

---

[4] Letter from Le Fanu to George Bentley of 27 November 1866; ibid., p. 223. Edens attributes Le Fanu's suggestion to serialise the story in his *Dublin University Magazine* to his personal reluctance to conform to the unfamiliar format of *Temple Bar*, note No. 2, p. 223.

[5] Letter from Le Fanu to Richard Bentley of 1 December 1866; ibid., pp. 223-4.

[6] The letter of refusal from Bentley to Le Fanu is missing. However, its contents can be inferred from in Le Fanu's reply of 16 December 1866; ibid., p. 224.

[7] Le Fanu tried to have *The Tenants of Malory* serialised and then published by the Bentleys but, upon their refusal, he issued it in 9 instalments in his *Dublin University Magazine* (February-October 1867), and had it published as a triple-decker by the Tinsley Brothers immediately afterwards; ibid., p. 224-6.

[8] Letter from Le Fanu to George Bentley of 20 February 1867; ibid., p. 225.

story'.[9] Serialisation started in May 1867 and continued for just over a year, amounting to a total of 346 pages of *Temple Bar*, for which Le Fanu received half a guinea per page.[10]

The plot of *A Lost Name* is a re-elaboration of the short story 'Some Account of the Latter Days of the Hon. Richard Marston of Dunoran', which Le Fanu had published in the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1848 (April-June) and had later reissued as 'The Evil Guest' in the now rare collection *Ghost Stories and Tales of Mystery* (1851).[11] The two early versions are perfectly identical but for their location, which moves from Dunoran, a place some twenty miles away from Dublin, to Gray Forest, an estate equally distant from the old town of Chester, on English shores. Richard Marston is a middle-aged man whose pride has been wounded by a state of indigence caused by his early dissipation. Financial troubles are accompanied by sentimental dissatisfaction, since for the past sixteen years he has been married to a woman he stopped loving soon after their wedding, and whose broken heart is for him a constant source of guilt. The tragic events of the story are set in motion by the arrival of Sir Wynston Berkley, Marston's rich and arrogant cousin. Enmity between the two men dates back to their youth, both because they once happened to be rivals in love, and, above all, because rumour has it that there might be a legal problem with Marston's right to the estate, and that the lawful successor might in fact be Sir Wynston. However, Marston is not the only one to feel anxious about Sir Wynston's visit. Marston's steward, Mr Merton, is afraid that some misfortune will happen if he sleeps under the same roof as the baronet, an idea which is quickly dismissed by the family as a superstitious fancy attributable to his natural oddity. Mlle de Barras, Rhoda Marston's attractive French governess, is also uneasy about Sir Wynston's arrival, because, as will be eventually revealed, they know each other from her school days in Rouen and she is afraid that he will compromise her reputation. Marston is constantly provoked by his cousin's

---

[9] Ibid.
[10] Letter from Le Fanu to George Bentley of 12 September 1867; ibid., p. 228, also footnote No. 2.
[11] According to Nelson Browne only four copies of this collection survive today, thus making it the rarest item in the Le Fanu bibliography; see Edens, pp. 56-8.

jokes at his expense and by the inappropriate attentions that the baronet pays to the governess, with whom Marston is infatuated. He eventually kills Sir Wynston during a nocturnal argument. Mlle de Barras witnesses the murder and blackmails Marston into running away with her, and then marrying her after Mrs Gertrude Marston dies of a broken heart. Mr Merton is blamed for the murder, though he is guilty only of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, and of being too loyal to his master. However, Marston's nerves begin to crack under the pressure of recent events and he asks for admission to a local lunatic asylum with the hope of preventing what he believes to be the incipience of madness. All efforts prove unsuccessful, and Marston cuts his throat in his cell rather than facing the humiliation of being exposed by Mr Merton's deathbed confessor.

Also set in the lonely Cheshire countryside in the year 1860, the novel version adds to the strong sensationalism of this chapbook-like story of revenge and adultery the typically Le Fanuian horror of supernatural persecution, to which the author returned after acknowledging the failure of *All in the Dark*.[12] In *A Lost Name*, Mark Shadwell of Raby Hall is the last heir of a family haunted by a vindictive spirit that wishes its extinction. Misused by one of Mark's ancestors, Lady Mildred killed herself by jumping out of the attic window of her mansion at Wynderfel, but not before threatening to return in different shapes every one hundred and ten years in order to destroy the Shadwell line of descent forever. As the legend goes, the persecuting spirit known as the Gaze-Lady is due to come back in the very year 1860. The arrival of Rachel Shadwell's new governess, the enticing

[12] In the epilogue to *Madam Crowl's Ghost*, M. R. James points out that the story of the murderer whose intended victim has already been murdered is derived from a popular sixpenny chapbook concerning Jonathan Bradford, the owner of an inn who entered one of his guests' room in order to kill him, only to find that he had already been murdered. The story became the subject of a famous melodrama by Edward Fitzball, *Jonathan Bradford, or Murder at the Roadside Inn* (1833), performed at Queen's Theatre, Dublin still in 1860, 1861, and 1863. Charles Dickens also mentions this story in the first section of 'The Holly-Tree Inn' (1855), entitled 'The Guest': 'Then, I remembered how the landlord was found at the murdered traveller's bedside, with his own knife at his feet, and blood upon his hand; and how he was hanged for the murder, notwithstanding his protestation, that he had indeed come there to kill the traveller for his saddle-bags, but had been stricken motionless on finding him already slain; and how the ostler, years afterwards, owned the deed', p. 5. For bibliographical reference, see Edens, p. 141, note No. 26; J. S. Le Fanu, *Madam Crowl's Ghost and Other Stories*, edited by M. R. James (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1994), Epilogue; and Charles Dickens, 'The Guest', *Household Words*, Christmas Special (1855), 12 January 1856, pp. 1-9. The performances of the melodrama were widely advertised, both in *The Times* and the *Irish Times*; see Bibliography.

and calculating Agnes Marlyn, together with the shocking train of murder, blackmail, adultery, madness, and suicide which follows her appearance, is interpreted as the fulfilment of Lady Mildred's curse, although most of the inhabitants of Raby Hall are reluctant to admit their superstitious belief. Mark Shadwell finds the legend amusing rather than frightening because of his firm commitment to rationalism; his steward Carmel Sherlock, however, begs him to listen to his ominous visions in order to save himself and his family from destruction. While the plot of the novel is not substantially different from the short story, the character of the steward is greatly developed, and his gift of second-sight becomes a major interpretative key to the events. Despite Carmel's prophecies being dismissed as the ravings of a madman obsessed with astrology, their veracity casts both characters and readers into a state of Todorovian hesitation: is Mark's death, which eventually makes his name a lost one, the result of his insanity, or is it the fulfilment of Lady Mildred's curse?

Carmel Sherlock's faith in second-sight and his interest in astrology were not unusual in this period. Although the figures of the prophet, the fortune-teller, the alchemist, and the witch were usually associated with the dark Middle Ages, belief in their powers never really died out. In fact, as has already been shown with regards to Spiritualism, the state of spiritual anxiety that afflicted Victorian Britain induced many people to look for comfort and reassurance outside of orthodox Christianity, in alternative occult doctrines. In an article entitled 'Imposture and Credulity', which appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine* in February 1866, while Le Fanu was already sketching *A Lost Name*, an anonymous author satirised what he characterised as ancient superstitions, and emphasised the irrationality of the contemporary fad of spirit communication and Spiritualism:

> In all ages and countries, up to a comparatively recent period, and under every degree of civilization, a belief in witchcraft, sorcery, and astrology has been prevalent. Strong and highly cultivated minds have bowed under this conviction. [...] The present enlightened age looks back with contempt on mediaeval Europe as

> utterly given over to ignorance and superstition, but affords daily, hourly instances of gullibility, calculated to disturb our remote ancestors in their graves [...].[13]

However, if the writer was convinced that witchcraft, sorcery, and astrology were things of the past, and that his contemporaries were now occupied with the equally irrational practice of table-rapping, he was wrong.

As Peter Marshall has pointed out in his *World Astrology* (2004), attempts to predict the future can be traced back to the Neolithic.[14] Astrology, the study of how the stars, the moon, and the planets affect human behaviours, dates back to centuries before Christ, but the discipline reached its apogee in the seventeenth century. It declined after the Restoration, when a new entrepreneurial class emerged, promoting self-help, free will, and progress instead of believing that the stars could influence men's lives.[15] However, the religious and social fomentation raised by the American and French revolutions led to a remarkable revival of astrology in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. As the contemporary state of turmoil began to be interpreted by many as a sign of the approaching Doomsday, more and more people went back to the stars in search of certainties, a practice that continued well into the Victorian period, as a consequence of the social agitations that were shaking mid-nineteenth century Europe.

Modern astrologers like John Varley, Raphael, and Zadkiel, were still looking up at the sky and filling with their predictions up to 150,000 copies per year of issues such as the

---

[13] Anon., 'Imposture and Credulity', *Dublin University Magazine* (February 1866), pp. 218-34, pp. 220-1.
[14] Peter Marshall, *World Astrology: the Astrologer's Quest to Understand the Human Character* (London: Macmillan, 2004), Ch. 30. For a historical background on prophets see: Patrick Curry, *A Confusion of Prophets: Victorian and Edwardian Astrology* (London: Collins & Brown, 1992), Owen Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture 1736-1951* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), Owen Davies (ed.), *Ghosts: a Social History* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010), Vols. 3 and 4, John F. C. Harrison, *The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism 1780-1850* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: a History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Susan Juster, *Doomsayers: Anglo-American Prophecy in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press; Bristol: University Presses Marketing, 2006), William H. Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists: the Uses of Biblical Prophecy in England from the 1790s to the 1840s* (Auckland: Auckland University Press; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), Stephen Pumfrey, Paolo L. Rossi, Maurice Slawinski, eds, *Science, Culture and Popular Belief in Renaissance Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991) Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Belief in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London: Penguin, 1991).
[15] Marshall, ibid.

Prophetic Almanac or *Zadkiel's Almanac*, which appealed to lower and upper classes alike.[16] Moreover, in the context of the Victorian crisis of faith, the Bible became the subject of further study by amateur and professional occultists, who were particularly interested in Revelations and the prophetic books, and new prophets began to recalculate the numbers in the Scripture in order to obtain a definite date for the second coming of Christ and the last Judgement.[17] Just as astrologers based the veracity of their predictions on painstaking mathematical calculations of astral movements, prophets boasted an exclusive status in their knowledge of arcane languages and obscure texts, skills available only to a select group. Prophecy, though, was not merely an exercise of intellect, but also implied the gift of vision. Prophets went beyond the realm of the natural world and its dry calculations, into the supernatural one, which inspired their predictions through visions, dreams, voices, and apparitions. The prophet Zadkiel, for instance, was renowned for using a crystal ball, in which participants in his crystal-gazing sessions admitted to have seen on different occasions biblical characters like Judas Iscariot, Eve, and St Luke, while one party had a glimpse of one of the expeditions undertaken by the explorer John Franklin.[18]

The occult powers of prophets and visionaries quickly moved from the pages of everyday papers into fiction. For instance, George Eliot's novella *The Lifted Veil* (1859) focuses on the gift of clairvoyance, which she presents as utterly deleterious. In the story, the narrator, Latimer, is inexplicably capable of hearing other people's thoughts and seeing into the future, a power which he describes as a curse rather than a gift, since it shows the true, evil nature of his friends and family. It is to Edward Bulwer-Lytton's darker fiction, though, that Le Fanu probably looked during the writing of *A Lost Name*. Bulwer-Lytton was an extremely prolific writer, whose works are almost unknown to today's general public. However, they were best-sellers at the time, probably because they often

---

[16] Curry, passim.
[17] Juster, Introduction. For a historicist study of how theological questions concerning eschatology were represented in nineteenth-century works of fiction, see Michael Wheeler, *Heaven, Hell, and the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
[18] Curry, pp. 85-97.

dramatised the popular debate concerning a scientific approach to the world of spirits. In this regard, his novels *Zanoni* (1842) and *A Strange Story* (1862) stand as cases in point.[19] The two novels concentrate on the occult study of alchemy, a subject of particular interest for Bulwer-Lytton, who is believed to have been member of the secret society of the Rosicrucians.[20] Both Zanoni in the homonymous book and the mysterious Margrave of *A Strange Story* are revealed to have been living for a longer span of life than is humanly possible, thanks to the effects of the elixir of life. They are also gifted with second sight and with the power of influencing other people's dreams, opinions, and actions.

As was the case with Spiritualists, prophets boasting the gift of communicating with the Other World also welcomed scientific investigation to shed light on their incredible power. However, the mysterious mechanisms of the mind inevitably made prophecy a question of faith and trust on the part of the general public. As happened with Spiritualism, many opportunists tried their luck with prophecy, so as to make some easy money at the expense of naïve people's credulity. Messages from the Other World could be read everywhere: in events like a storm, a comet, the birth of a malformed animal, or a natural catastrophe. Therefore, prophets only had to wait for a fortuitous guess in order to have their names established. Zadkiel, for example reached a peak in popularity in 1861, when his correct prediction of the death of the Prince Consort prompted a public sensation. Prophets also began to be denounced as charlatans: in December 1851, the *Athenaeum* reported that '*Raphael* and *Zadkiel* continue their trade in the credulity of mankind: growing more and more boastful, vulgar, illogical, and mendacious year by year'.[21] A decade later, one of Zadkiel's several enemies accused him of exploiting young boys to cheat people for pecuniary returns: '[o]f course the information was false. He took the

[19] On Bulwer-Lytton and for an analysis of these texts see Killeen, *Gothic Literature*, pp. 153-9.
[20] The origin of the Rosicrucian society is still uncertain. Its name first appeared in anonymous pamphlets in the early 17th century, in connection to either a secret society named Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross, or to a 15th century German monk called Christian Rosenkreutz and the small group of disciples who shared his knowledge of Eastern magic. The Rosicrucians were believed to dedicate themselves to the study of alchemy with the intention of eventually taking control of the world; see Killeen, ibid; Howard, Ch. 3; Hutton, p. 69-75.
[21] Anon., 'Almanacs and Pocket Books', *Athenaeum*, 6 December 1851, pp. 1274-5, p. 1274.

money [...] for these profane acts, and made a good thing of it. [...] I had reason to be much disgusted with this personage, and the reason to which I allude is that the boy's mother confessed to me the trick he had played'.[22] An anonymous non-believer affirmed in the *Dublin University Magazine* that 'I have myself known [...] hundreds of people, some highly-educated men and women among them, who have often neglected to attend to their worldly advancement and security by the ordinary prudential means, in expectation that the false promises of the so-called prophecies – many of the gross forgeries of our own day'.[23] And in 1866, *Temple Bar* also pointed out that 'the practices of these astrologers were productive, in a large number of cases, of much disturbance among neighbours and relatives, and great mischief to all concerned, except the man who profited by the credulity of his dupes'.[24]

Moreover, prophets, like Spiritualists, were quickly associated with madness and witchcraft, connections which recur in Victorian literature, and which Le Fanu also maintains in *A Lost Name*. For instance, in *A Strange Story*, visions and prophetic dreams are explained away as the results of mental strain by the more rationalistic characters. When Lilian Ashleigh admits to having been cursed with second sight since a very young age, and to be subject now to some kind of magnetic control by an unknown force, her mother consults their physician, Dr Allen Fenwick, Lilian's fiancé and a firm materialist, about Lilian's malady: 'I am convinced it is something in the reach of your skill as physician – it is on the nerves, the system'.[25] Furthermore, Dr Fenwick never fails to soothe his patients into the conviction that apparitions are 'reducible to natural causes', until he personally experiences the existence of a world controlled by forces which he cannot explain with the laws of nature.[26]

---

[22] Anon., 'Zadkiel's Almanac', *Irish Times*, 1 July 1863, p. 3.
[23] Anon., 'Irish Materials for History', *Dublin University Magazine* (December 1861), pp. 661-72, pp. 662-3.
[24] Anon., 'Modern Eccentrics', p. 572.
[25] Bulwer-Lytton, *A Strange Story*, p. 198.
[26] Ibid. p. 74.

Those who were instead more inclined to accept the supernatural believed that those powers had been granted by Satan in exchange for a soul. The trope of the compact with the devil, then, linked modern prophets, together with alchemists, Rosicrucians, and other practitioners of the occult, to the figure of the medieval witch, and witches too enjoyed a revival of interest in the mid-nineteenth century, as evidenced by the work of William Harrison Ainsworth and Elizabeth Gaskell. Ainsworth's *The Lancashire Witches* (1848) and Gaskell's 'Lois the Witch' (1861) bring the reader back to a time when belief in witchcraft was plausible and when people, mainly women, were killed on suspicion of their evil powers. In 'Lois the Witch', Gaskell portrays belief in witchcraft as the result of ignorance and superstition, by showing how the unjustified accusations brought against the protagonist (out of envy and jealousy from the part of her cousins), end in the execution of an innocent young woman. Ainsworth, though, depicts a world where the supernatural really exists. While the pious Alizon Device experiences the same fate as Lois Barclay, the famous witches of Pendle Hill actually sign a pact with the devil, either as the fulfilment of a curse placed upon them, or because Satan promises a better prospect of life than God. Although *A Lost Name* is set in England in the year 1860, Le Fanu goes back to the figure of the witch as a way to reflect on the current state of womanhood, as will be analysed in the last section of this chapter.

Belief in witchcraft was not widespread in the nineteenth century; nevertheless, it was certainly still alive, especially in Ireland. In the late 1880s, Lady Wilde insisted that despite the fact that '[d]ogmatic religion and science have long since killed the mytho-poetic faculty in cultured Europe', it still existed in 'child-like races, like the Irish', who never ceased to believe in fairies and witches.[27] Although Lady Wilde's collection of *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland* (1887) was published fourteen years after Le Fanu's death, the stories that she put into writing belonged to the

[27] Lady Francesca Wilde, *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland*, 2 Vols (Boston: Ticknor & Co., 1887), Vol. 1, p. 11.

same oral tradition with which Le Fanu and his brother William were familiar. In fact, several similarities can be detected between Lady Wilde's tales and William's anecdotes in *Seventy Years of Irish Life*, particularly with regard to the vengefulness of the fairies. Thus, well into the nineteenth century, it was not unusual (although infrequent) to hear or read of cases of witchcraft. For instance, in October 1864, Mary Doheny, known as "the wise-woman" or "the witch" in the village of Carrick-on-Suir, was sentenced to twelve months imprisonment with hard labour for making some neighbours believe that she had supernatural powers and taking advantage of their credulity.[28] Again, in August 1867, a certain Ann Davis of Somerset was summoned by Elizabeth Williams for cutting her arm with a knife. In her defence, Davis said that Williams was a witch, who had her thrown from a cart on several occasions, and had killed her donkey and her cat. Davis admitted scratching the witch's arm with a pin, believing that if she drew blood Williams would have no further power over her.[29] Accounts and studies of witchcraft abounded in Victorian newspapers and magazines, where the word "witch" began to be associated with the most heterogeneous variety of occult practitioners who were indistinguishably guilty of cheating credulous victims, or of being "victims" themselves because of the hallucinations of their diseased minds.

Dr William Charles Ellis, an eminent name in British psychiatry, explained in his *Treatise on Insanity* that prophets, witches, and their believers were affected by religious insanity:

> The subject of religious insanity is either one who would be at all events mad, or who, having a peculiar temperament, takes up notions of religion as false as the hallucinations of witches, ventriloquists, poisoners, and magnetizers, which form so large a portion of maniacal fantasies.[30]

---

[28] Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 25 October 1864, p. 2.
[29] Anon., 'A Somerset Witch', *Irish Times*, 19 August 1867, p. 3.
[30] Ellis' treatise was reported and commented on in an article that appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine* in October 1838: Anon., 'Ellis' *Treatise on Insanity*', pp. 459-71, quotation on p. 467.

Prophets, or those who believed they were deities and archangels, or inspired or guided by divine impulse were categorised as 'theomaniacs', whereas individuals who believed in demonic possession were defined as 'demonomaniacs'.[31] Insanity was considered a hereditary taint, but it could also be triggered by several somatic factors, such as exhaustion, fever, and delirium; abuse of alcohol, tea, and tobacco; fear, guilt, and disappointment. These elements were thought to provoke hallucinations (visual and acoustic) and the hysterical twitching and convulsions that accompanied the trance states experienced by prophets.[32] However, despite the negative association with madness, nineteenth century society was still intrigued by the practice of astrologers and accounts of witchcraft. Astrologers must have enjoyed a very advantageous business if they could afford to advertise their services in the *Irish Times* almost on a daily basis (and considering the readership of the newspapers they must have appealed to the higher classes as well).[33] Furthermore, continual reprints of tales of the occult, like those by Bulwer-Lytton, Ainsworth, Gaskell, and Eliot also demonstrates a continuing interest in the subject on the part of the general public.

Although *A Lost Name* presents the same strong sensationalism and topicality of subjects as its best-selling competitors, neither reviewers nor readers received it with the enthusiasm expected by the author. On 9 May 1868, the *Athenaeum* opened its 'New Novel' section with over one and a half columns on Le Fanu's new work, commenting that '[e]ven wilder and more powerful than the first strange story by which Mr Le Fanu made for himself an honourable place amongst writers of prose fiction, *A Lost Name*, through

---

[31] Crichton J. Browne, 'Psychical Diseases of Early Life', *The Journal of Mental Science*, No. 6 (1860), pp. 284-320, pp. 306-7.

[32] For further details about the medical attribution of madness to prophecy and witchcraft see also: A. Brierre de Boismont, *Des Hallucinations* (Paris: Germer Baillière: 1862); Louis-Florentin Calmeil, *De la Folie*, 2 Vols (Paris: J. B. Baillière, 1845); Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture*, pp. 39-60, Judith Devlin, *The Superstitious Mind: French Peasants and the Supernatural in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), Ch. 3 and 5, passim; Harrison, Ch. 8; Juster, Ch. 1; and Patrick Vandermeersch, 'The Victory of Psychiatry over Demonology: the Origin of the Nineteenth-Century Myth', *History of Psychiatry*, No. 2 (1991), pp. 351-63.

[33] For reference on astrologers' advertisement in the *Irish Times* see Bibliography.

lack of artistic construction, fails to hold the reader's fancy in the first volume'.[34] The reviewer continues by saying that the rest of the story atones for its faulty beginning, and that, 'until the mystery is solved, no reader who has been drawn into the fascinating perplexities and doubts of the puzzle is likely to lay aside the book'.[35] However, with the most absorbing parts of the novel coinciding with the most repulsive of events, the anonymous critic is left wondering why a novelist of Le Fanu's ability 'pander[s] to that morbid appetite for the horrible which would die out if writers of his calibre and influence would only refrain from giving it new stimulants'.[36]

A second, and even less positive, review followed in the *Examiner* on 30 May, concentrating mainly on characterisation. The author defines Mark Shadwell as a 'brute', who is 'constantly cursing his hard fate' and who, together with Sir Wycherley and Agnes Marlyn, is 'detestable – [...] thoroughly selfish and utterly unscrupulous'.[37] Agnes, in particular, is found 'simply repellent', to the point that 'it is scarcely possible to believe that so young a woman could be so utterly bad, shameless, and cruel'.[38] Carmel Sherlock is said to be 'a most unearthly character, a sort of myth of a man', whose visions and prophecies are described as the 'lucubrations of a disturbed imagination, in which we can discover but little of either poetry or reason, and they are terribly tedious to those who feel themselves in duty bound to read the book through word by word'.[39] In conclusion, the characters are lacking in those elements of everyday life which give reality to a work of fiction: '[t]he plot is improbable, the actors diabolical – their cold-blooded villainy revolting alike to reason and good taste'.[40]

Confronted with these reviews and with the fact that out of 1,000 copies of the triple-decker published only 482 were sold, Le Fanu wrote to Bentley on 6 June to justify

---

[34] Anon., 'New Novels', *Athenaeum*, 9 May 1868, p. 657.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Anon., '*A Lost Name.* By J. S. Le Fanu. Bentley', *Examiner*, 30 May 1868, pp. 342-3.
[38] Ibid., p. 343.
[39] Ibid., p. 342.
[40] Ibid.

the poor sales and his optimistic views for the future.[41] In his letter, Le Fanu reiterated his opinion that '*A Lost Name* is better than *Uncle Silas*', in fact, 'much the best thing I ever wrote'.[42] If it did not sell out it was simply because it had been placed in the back pages of *Temple Bar* and because its publication in three-volume shape had been delayed: '*Uncle Silas* wd. have done even less than it, if it had been placed so much in the shade'.[43] Le Fanu suggested that Bentley should not withdraw the work in case a positive review appeared in *The Times* and the lack of copies on the shelves would leave them in an uncomfortable position. Le Fanu was probably alluding to a forthcoming review by his cousin Caroline Norton, who had always been (excessively) flattering of his work.[44] The much awaited review did not appear until late September and, as expected, it did not spare words in the praise of Le Fanu's talent. Over almost three columns, Caroline Norton offered an indirect response to the previous criticism. Thus, where the *Athenaeum* complained about the partial tediousness of the plot, Norton counters that '*A Lost Name* is equal from the first page to the last. The interest never flags, the characters never swerve one little from the expectation formed of them in the opening sketches'.[45] With regard to the second review, which accused the characters of being unrealistic, Norton expresses the contrary opinion, defining them as '[t]rue to nature [...], distinct and definite, with a breadth of colouring and mastery of outline such as prove him a skilled anatomist of the human heart'.[46]

Despite Caroline Norton's words of adulation, *A Lost Name* did not receive further attention, neither in Le Fanu's time nor afterwards. Even modern criticism has not had much to say on Le Fanu's ninth novel: in 1951 Le Fanu's first biographer, Nelson Browne, passed briefly over *A Lost Name*, commenting that '[i]t is not a distinguished work' and 'to

[41] Figures concerning the sale of *A Lost Name* can be found in Edens, p. 234, note No. 2.
[42] Ibid., p. 234-5.
[43] Ibid., p. 235; see also note No. 1.
[44] Edens points out that Caroline Norton's lack of objectivity annoyed the editor of *The Times*. Thus, when the printer of the paper enquired about a review by Mrs Norton, the editor replied: 'Never mind Mrs Norton; she has lost her head'; ibid., p. 144, note No. 31.
[45] Caroline Norton, 'Mr Le Fanu's Novels. *A Lost Name*', *The Times*, 21 September 1868, p. 4.
[46] Ibid.

any reader who has not developed the art of skipping, much of the story is so tedious that it is doubtful if he would open the second volume of this three-decker after having read the first'.[47] Browne recognises that 'The Evil Guest' has intrinsic merits sufficient to justify its reissue in a single volume in 1895. However, although Browne thinks the short story 'the most consistently impressive of all Le Fanu's shorter pieces, surpassed only by the five tales which form the contents of *In a Glass Darkly*', the only review of the posthumous publication found the author's style 'distinctly tedious and quite inartistic', and his method 'the primitive and barbaric one of "piling up"'.[48] In 1971, Michael H. Begnal complained that *A Lost Name* is 'little more than suspense or murder myster[y]', that it has 'its share of shadowy intrigues and bloodletting, but it can offer only this surface', and that '[t]he psychological perception which had given life to [Le Fanu's] earlier works is at this time not so evident, and it is for this reason that the novels are something less than memorable', while a decade later, Le Fanu's most complete biography by W. J. McCormack explained that '[m]uch of Le Fanu's later fiction deserves the silence it has provoked'.[49]

It is only in very recent years that *A Lost Name* has received new attention. As with *All in the Dark*, James Walton's *Vision and Vacancy* sheds light upon and re-evaluates another of Le Fanu's underrated works, concluding that: '[a]mong Le Fanu's novels, the touch of *un*-naturalised supernaturalism in *A Lost Name* has no counterpart, the nearest approach to such intervention coming perhaps in the final paragraph of *Uncle Silas* where the heroine, in the voice of her dead father, redefines her autobiography as an occult spiritual allegory'.[50] While dedicating just under five pages to the novel, Walton carries out a clever analysis of Swedenborgian echoes in the mystical utterances of Carmel Sherlock, whom he regards as 'a distorted reflection of the author in the text', which has somehow

---

[47] Nelson Browne, *Sheridan Le Fanu*, p. 61.
[48] Respectively, Browne, p. 77, and Anon., 'The Evil Guest. By J. Sheridan Le Fanu. London: Downey & Co. 1895', *Saturday Review*, 27 April 1895, p. 557.
[49] Michael H. Begnal, *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1971), p. 65, and McCormack, *Sheridan Le Fanu*, p. 231.
[50] Walton, p. 79.

been missed by McCormack in his *Dissolute Characters*, a meticulous study of Swedenborg's influence on Balzac, Le Fanu, Yeats, and Bowen.[51]

This chapter intends to continue along the line of Walton's argument by investigating those "Swedenborgian echoes", so as to shed more light on Le Fanu's interest in the occult doctrine. In *All in the Dark* Le Fanu mentions the existence of an Other World which is veiled to most people, and for a reason. While the Comic Gothic novel is not an appropriate place to begin a serious approach to the world of spirits, in *A Lost Name* Le Fanu expresses his belief that there are indeed a few men and women who are gifted with second sight and who can communicate with the ghosts that surround us, as Swedenborg taught. This chapter will attempt to demonstrate this argument through an analysis of Le Fanu's use of the trope of insanity. The first section will focus on the Swedenborg-like figure of Carmel Sherlock, a prophet and a visionary who is initially accused of being mad only to be eventually acquitted of that charge. Section Two will concentrate on the rationalist philosopher Mark Shadwell, who strongly rejects any supernatural or paranormal agency, and for this reason, suffers from a nervous breakdown which will lead him to suicide. Finally, the supernatural curse cast by Lady Mildred will be the subject of investigation. At a time of revived interest in witchcraft, the superstitious omen of family destruction finds physiological explanation in the hereditary nature of madness, while the emblematical representation of the witch as a sexual and calculating woman offers further insight into Le Fanu's ideal of womanhood.

2.1 The Cup of Madness

A Lost Name revolves around the apparent madness of Carmel Sherlock, which is exploited by Mark Shadwell to implicate him in a murder he has not committed. By tailoring Carmel after the prototypical prophet and astrologer, and by making his accusers

[51] Ibid., p. 77.

the representatives of rationalism and orthodox Christianity (initially, at least), Le Fanu offers a literary example of the discrimination against believers in alternative occult doctrines which was indeed frequent in his time. Moreover, and most importantly, the similarities connecting Carmel Sherlock to the historical figure of Swedenborg allow us to interpret the novel as a defence of Swedenborgianism in its capacity to unveil the Other World.

Carmel Sherlock is a very enigmatic character. Unlike his predecessor John Merton, who was little more than a selfish servant, Carmel is a much more complicated figure. When we first encounter him, he is reminiscent of the clichéd image of the diviner, as represented in the Victorian press:

> The astrologer [...], or, as he is denominated in some districts of England, [...] "a planet ruler", and sometimes "a wise man", is of a higher order [than the fortune-teller]. He does not itinerate, is generally a man of some education, possessed of a good deal of fragmentary knowledge, and a smattering of science.[52]

Modern historians provide additional details on the character defined by the catch-all term "astrologer": this figure was usually an eccentric individual, who spoke in an obscure way. He was generally well educated (although self-educated rather than formally), and socially ranged from the rural craftsman to the middle-class civil engineer. The astrologer boasted a good knowledge of astronomy and a high competence in mathematics, his "science" being based on fixed rules necessitating complex calculations for the interpretation of astral movements. He was often learned in Hebrew and other ancient languages, and also capable of demonstrating a precise knowledge of the Bible.[53]

For the character of Carmel Sherlock, Le Fanu seems to have drawn also on different historical examples, such as diviners John Varley, Raphael, and Zadkiel, who,

---

[52] Anon., 'Modern Eccentrics', *Temple Bar* (July 1866), pp. 562-76, p. 572.
[53] On the figure of the astrologer and the prophet, see Curry, Chs 1-3; Davies, passim; Harrison, Chs 1-3; Juster, Introduction.

though unfamiliar to today's readers, were well known to their contemporaries.[54] The three seers claimed the ability to invoke spirits and study the stars in order to predict the future, thus positioning themselves outside the boundaries of orthodox Christianity. Their syncretism in combining orthodox and heretical beliefs, and orthodox text with heretical interpretation could not fail to intrigue the general public: the spirit-painter Varley counted among the guests of his atelier many famous personalities, from politicians like Henry Brougham and a young Benjamin Disraeli, to men of letters of the calibre of Lord Byron, William Blake, John Ruskin, Charles Dickens, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton (the literature of the latter, in particular, is said to have been influenced by the figure of Varley; one of Bulwer-Lytton's favourite characters being the elderly master who initiates the protagonist into the arcane mysteries). Raphael and Zadkiel, instead, reached popularity with the several weekly periodicals on astrology which they edited throughout a large part of the nineteenth century, such as the emblematically titled *Royal Book of Fate, Destiny and Foreknowledge*; *Raphael's Witch!!! or The Oracle of the Future*; *The Familiar Astrologer*; and *Herald of Astrology*, to cite only a few.

Carmel is not only physically similar to these three seers but he also shares with them a common temperament and philosophical outlook. Carmel's 'woe-begone' and 'fine' eyes are reminiscent of both Varley's 'wistful eyes' and Raphael's 'fine intelligent eyes', while Carmel's kindness, gentleness, and harmlessness echo Varley's generosity and Raphael's 'engaging manners'.[55] Like the three astrologers, Carmel possesses an extensive knowledge: Mark Shadwell defines him as 'a genius of a particular kind', and a man 'wonderfully clever', while Rachel admits that 'he taught me [...] ever so much. He taught me writing, and arithmetic, and French, and Italian, and some German, and some music

[54] Curry dedicates a chapter to each of the prophets analysed. Varley, Raphael, and Zadkiel are covered in Chapters 1, 2, and 3 respectively.

[55] J. S. Le Fanu, *A Lost Name*, 3 Vols (London: R. Bentley, 1868), respectively Vol. 2, p. 258, Vol. 1 p. 218 for a description of Sherlock's eyes, and Vol. 2 pp. 24, 158, 174, 182 for his good nature. All further quotations refer to this edition and will be parenthesised in the text. On Varley and Raphael, see Curry, pp. 20, 47.

too' [I, p. 218, III, p. 123, II, p. 24]. With Zadkiel in particular, he shares the mastery of both modern and ancient tongues, and of astronomy.[56]

Carmel is not expressly said to be a scholar of astronomy, but he is seen looking intently at the stars and the moon on different occasions, and when he confesses to Mark Shadwell his fear of Sir Wycherley's arrival, he does it while contemplating 'a lonely planet shining clear in the sky' [I, p. 15, II, p. 109, I, p. 150]. Carmel's interest in astral movements reveals his firm belief in fatalism, that is, the doctrine claiming that all events are inevitable because predetermined by fate. As he explains to Mark Shadwell, fate is subject to laws, for which he offers to provide a scientific explanation:

> It's quite plain. I'll show you the principle any day, sir [...] with algebraic proof, the exact sciences. A creed should rest on numbers [...] not on imagination; fancy is the decorative faculty, but number is demonstration – and demonstration is fact – the whole thing is necessity. According to the doctrine of Chance, there is *no* chance. The whole of the stars up there; it's all *coercion*, and yet it's all chance, don't you see? Chance is only limited rotation, you know; and the combinations of rotation itself are limited – and [...] – it ends in coercion. [I, p. 17]

Moreover, stars and planets are presented as more than simply material objects, but also as being influenced by spiritual powers. While Varley supported astrology's ancient association with pagan polytheism (interpreting the planets as gods), Zadkiel introduced a more Christian reading of the influence of the celestial bodies on men, which, he believed, was useful in refuting atheism and materialism by showing God's action on his creation by means of the stars as His instruments:

> None of the great men who have taught and practised astrology have ever supposed that the brute masses of planetary bodies could influence the minds of mortals. They ever held that those bodies were the habitations of good and evil angels; and that it was by *their* actions that mundane events were operated.[57]

As Zadkiel explained, spirits were thought to rule the planets; similarly, Carmel applies to the moon the name of the Roman mythological figure Aegeria, who was believed to have a

[56] Curry, p. 65.
[57] Ibid., p. 83. See also p. 65.

prophetic gift and was commonly associated with the idea of a female advisor or counsellor [II, p. 126].[58]

The crucial difference between Carmel and his historical counterparts is that, while the latter intentionally invoked spirits for their personal gain (Varley and Zadkiel were committed to study zodiacal physiognomy and Raphael was merely interested in sensational predictions to sell), Carmel is gifted with second-sight, an unsought power that he shares with Swedenborg. In *All in the Dark* Le Fanu expresses his disapproval of Spiritualism as a practice through which men *actively* try to discover the arcana of the Other World. Similarly, in his little known, occult story 'Borrhomeo the Astrologer' (1862), Le Fanu punishes the diviner who probes beyond the boundaries of nature for his selfish purposes. Borrhomeo is an astrologer living in Milan in 1630, the year of the terrible plague which he correctly predicted as the consequence of the appearance of the 'pale comet'.[59] After a lifetime of experimenting in alchemy for the production of the elixir of life and the philosopher's stone, Borrhomeo is now an old man worried about the approach of death and dissatisfied with his financial constraints. Therefore, when the devil tempts him with immortality and wealth, he agrees to spread the plague around the city and is executed for this crime. He is convinced that he will outlive the hanging, the impalement, and the final burial, but the consequences of his greed prove to be very different from what he had expected , as the devil explains:

> Well, a man who having swallowed the elixir vitae, suffers that sort of shock which in other mortals is a violent death, is afflicted during the remainder of his period of life, whether he be decapitated, or dismembered, or is laid unmutilated in the grave, with that sort of catalepsy, which you experienced for a minute – a catalepsy that does not relax or intermit. For that reason you ought to have carefully avoided this predicament.[60]

---

[58] See *Encyclopedia Britannica Online* under the entry "Egeria"; www.britannica.com [accessed October 2011].
[59] Le Fanu, 'Borrhomeo the Astrologer', *Dublin University Magazine* (January 1862), p. 55.
[60] Ibid., p. 61.

Man's abuse of occult knowledge is punished also in the fiction of Edward Bulwer-Lytton. While in *Zanoni*, Clarence Glyndon's selfish desire to be superior to mankind by becoming a neophyte Rosicrucian is punished with spirit haunting (which will culminate in the death of his beloved sister), in *A Strange Story* the mysterious Margrave is destroyed for exploiting his supernatural powers in order to discover the composition of the elixir of life. In fact, Margrave is not afraid of taking control of the mind of the innocent Lilian so as to bribe her fiancé, the materialist scientist Allen Fenwick, into helping him with his occult researches. However, Bulwer-Lytton does not condemn all attempts to understand the Unknown. As the wise alchemist Sir Philip Derval explains to Fenwick, '[t]here is magic of two kinds – the dark and evil, appertaining to witchcraft or necromancy; the pure and beneficent, which is but philosophy, applied to certain mysteries in Nature remote from the beaten tracks of science, but which deepened the wisdom of ancient sages, and can yet unriddle the myths of departed races'.[61] Bulwer-Lytton represents investigation of the arcane side of nature as a duty, since the supernatural is nothing more than the realm of what science is yet incapable of explaining. The only concern is the use made of such revelations. If knowledge would be deleterious in the hands of a Margrave-like figure, we see that the generous Zanoni, although accused of being a 'sorcerer', 'the Devil' himself, a 'soothsayer', 'a prophet, a reader of the future', an 'associate of genii and spirits', is actually a wise and worthy possessor of the occult secrets, remains a positive character throughout the novel, and eventually sacrifices himself for love of his wife.[62]

In contrast to Bulwer-Lytton, Le Fanu does not justify direct contact with the spirits since, like Swedenborg, he believes man has no right to lift the veil to the Other World and that second-sight is a rare gift, rather than a skill than anybody can aspire to attain. Carmel Sherlock, then, is subtly revealed as a Swedenborg-like figure in his unsought power of spirit communication, his organisation of the spirit world, and his alleged madness. Both

[61] Bulwer-Lytton, *A Strange Story*, p. 137.
[62] Ibid., *Zanoni*, Vol. 1, pp. 47, 288; Vol. 2, pp. 2, 3.

Swedenborg and Carmel had their inner eye opened. Swedenborg claimed this event coincided with his divine calling in April 1745.[63] He affirmed that towards the end of a heavy meal his sight began to grow blurred and he started to see repellent animals crawling on the floor and, in the corner, the figure of a man who suddenly said to him '[d]on't eat so much', and revealed himself as the Lord God, who had chosen Swedenborg to explain the spiritual contents of the Holy Scripture to mankind.[64] From that night the spiritual world of both heaven and hell was opened to him; he was constantly attacked by spirits and often did not know immediately whether they were good or evil.[65]

Carmel does not claim to have received a visit from God. The rationalist Mark Shadwell attributes Sherlock's visions to his unhealthy diet, particularly to his abuse of tea and tobacco [I, p. 8] – an idea that reflects the general view held by Victorian psychiatrists, as will be shown below. Le Fanu also presents the excessive consumption of tea, in particular, as the cause of Carmel's visions. However, Le Fanu does not imply that too much tea gives Carmel hallucinations, rather that it opens his inner eye, a device which the author would exploit again in his more successful short story 'Green Tea', published in Dickens' *All the Year Round* between October and November 1869, and then included in the collection *In a Glass Darkly*. 'Green Tea' is a story of demonic possession induced by the abuse of the stimulating beverage. Dr. Martin Hesselius, the Swedenborgian physician who tried to cure the protagonist, Rev. Jennings, explains the following:

> By various abuses, among which the habitual use of such agents as green tea is one, this fluid [a spiritual, though not immaterial, substance by which the nerves transmit information to the brain] may be affected as to its quality, but it is more frequently disturbed as to equilibrium. The fluid being that which we have in common with spirits, a congestion found upon the masses of brain or nerve, connected with the interior sense, forms a surface unduly exposed, on which disembodied spirits may operate.[66]

---

[63] See Lars Bergquist, *Swedenborg's Secret: the Meaning and Significance of the Word of God, the Life of the Angels and Service to God: a Biography* (London: The Swedenborg Society, 2005), pp. 190-1, and Christopher Hasler, John Kaczmarcyck, *Emanuel Swedenborg* (London: The Swedenborg Society, 1982), pp. 7-8.
[64] Bergquist, p. 190.
[65] Ibid., p. 208, and Hasler and Kaczmarcyck, p. 8.
[66] Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly*, p. 39.

Spirits communicate with Carmel through what he describes as the effect of "vibration". In Chapter Four, Carmel explains that '[s]pirit is vibration, and vibration is music', a statement which links to Swedenborg's theory of thought transfer [I, p. 32]: '[i]t often happens that one person comes to think about another, and that he knows what the other is doing and thinking. This [involves the fact that] his membranes are vibrating from the motions in membranes in the other person's brain, in the same way that one string [on a musical instrument] affects another when they are both tuned to the same note'.[67] Swedenborg's theory can be recognised as the basis of other occult practices, like clairvoyance and telepathy, which feature in much of the fiction of the time. In *The Lifted Veil*, Latimer wonders whether his inexplicable gift of precognition may have resulted from a recent illness. He contemplates the possibility that a disruption of his nervous system may have caused the opening of his inner eye: '[w]as it that my illness had wrought some happy change in my organization – given a firmer tension to my nerves – carried off some dull obstruction?'.[68] Telepathy, as has been already mentioned above, also appears in Bulwer-Lytton's fiction, as when Zanoni and Viola keep mental contact despite the several miles that separate them, and Margrave finds in geographical distance no impediment to his manipulation of Lilian's mind.

In *A Lost Name* Le Fanu applies Swedenborg's theory of cerebral vibration to explain how spirits influence mortals, both through dreams and visions, and through possession of material objects. Thus, in Chapter Forty-Two Carmel Sherlock is found playing, or better, being played by his Stradivarius. The narrator says that '[t]hat night his fiddle [...] would not play exactly what he wished, but seemed to take the control of the music, and by an irresistible influence to draw his bow and infuse odd vibrations into his elbow', while Carmel himself, looking at his violin 'in the face', admits that '*I* could not do *that*. It wasn't I. [...] You or I *master*?' [II, p. 119-20]. Carmel as possessed violinist

[67] Emanuel Swedenborg, 'Proof that Our Innermost Being Consists for the Most Part of Small Vibrations, that is, Tremulations', quoted in Bergquist, pp. 70-80.
[68] George Eliot, *The Lifted Veil and Brother Jacob* (Seaside, OR: Watchmaker Publishing, 2010), p. 13.

bears a striking resemblance to Bulwer-Lytton's Gaetano Pisani in *Zanoni*. Not only is Pisani 'worn and haggard, with black, careless locks tangled into a maze of curls, and fixed, speculative, dreamy stare in his large and hollow eyes' (a description which is reminiscent of Swedenborg too), but he is also a talented musician, whose eccentric melodies are believed to be inspired by 'the harpies or witches who [...] had clawed hold of his instrument'.[69] Like Carmel, Pisani talks to his violin, and uses his strings to communicate his feelings, in a way which Anthony Trollope later employed in his realist novel *The Warden* (1855).[70] Unfortunately, Bulwer-Lytton does not develop the character of Pisani, and in fact has him die of an epidemic fever in the first book. However, it is as if the violinist's supernatural ability to communicate with spirits lives on in his daughter, emblematically named Viola, the only one who can distinguish the man's voice in his music and who is gifted with psychic powers.

Viola, Lilian, Latimer, Jennings, and Carmel all feel cursed rather than blessed with second-sight and are represented as tired victims of a fate they have not chosen for themselves. Viola shudders at her power and begs Zanoni to spare their child from initiation in the arcana of the Other World. Lilian is trapped in a reality she cannot control. Latimer complains of being 'weary of incessant insight and foresight, without delusions and without hope'.[71] Jennings eventually kills himself out of despair. Carmel also regrets

---

[69] Bulwer-Lytton, *Zanoni*, Vol. 1, pp. 4, 5. The motif of the possessed violinist cannot fail to recall the historical character of Niccolò Paganini (1782-1840). The Italian virtuoso was an international sensation, and his talent was rumoured to have been granted by the devil, who manifested himself not only through music but also in the violinist's tortured and ecstatic facial expressions. For instance, the French publication *Musée Dantan* wrote in 1838 that '[v]oici un homme qui est fort heureux de vivre en l'an de grace 1838, car s'il étail venu au monde en l'an de fagots 1560, bien certainement il aurait été brûlé comme convaincu de sorcellerie, sinon même comme présumé d'être le diable en personne'; 'here is a man who is very lucky to be living in the year of grace 1838, because if he had been born in the year of faggots 1560, quite certainly he would have been burned on the stake for witchcraft, or even for being believed to be the devil himself'; Jean-Pierre Dantan, *Musée Dantan: galerie des charges et croquis des célébrités de l'époque* (Paris: H. Delloye, 1839), p. 144, my translation. See also Max Milner, *Le Diable dans la literature française de Cazotte à Baudelaire 1772-1861*, 2 Vols (Paris: Corti, 1971), Vol. 1, pp. 474 ff.

[70] In Trollope's first novel in the "Chronicles of Barsetshire", the warden, Mr Septimus Harding, is depicted as a quiet man, who finds it easier to express his troubled mind with music rather than words. As the narrator explains, '[Mr Harding's] language [...] is wordless and intuitive, the language of his beloved cello, which is soon silenced by his troubles and turns into the soundless mime which is 'his constant consolation in conversational troubles''; Anthony Trollope, *The Warden* (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 232.

[71] Eliot, p. 5.

the opening of his inner eye; he quotes from Psalm 55 and wishes 'Oh! that I had wings like a dove [*for then* would I fly away, and be at rest]', and later in the story he warns Marlyn against encouraging contact with the other world and thus succumbing to the practice of prophetic dreaming: '[d]on't mind your dreams [...]. Dreams are not sent from God, nor caused by him, but must be demoniacal, since nature is demoniacal, not divine. Come, come, don't you enter into the conspiracy' [I, p. 18, II, p. 133].[72] It is important to note here, that the word demon does not relate to the Devil as opposed to God, but rather to the spirits of men and women after death. In *Historical, Physiological and Theological Treatise of Spirits* (1705), John Beaumont explains that the ancient Greeks called daemons men who, after death, achieved the middle nature mediating between men and God.[73] Le Fanu must have been aware of Beaumont's thought, as indicated by the terminology and ideas which appear in this chapter of *A Lost Name*.[74] In particular, Le Fanu has Carmel Sherlock cite the same two verses by the Greek poet Menander quoted in Beaumont's work: 'Unicuique homini statim nascent / Adest Daemon vitae mystagogus' (as soon as each man is born, he finds beside him a spirit guide) [II, p. 137].[75] The idea of spirits co-habiting the earth with humankind is crucial also to Swedenborg's theology, thus strengthening the link between the historical and the fictional character.

Swedenborg believed that, after death, men lost their mortal bodies (although they retained their external appearance) but still inhabited the places where they used to live, now as spirits, until they were ready to transition either to heaven or to hell. This process Swedenborg called the three states of awakening: in the first state the spirits behave in the same way as on earth, their actions concealing their true feelings. Thus, some spirits would appear to be good that were really evil inside. In the second state their true nature would

---

[72] Psalm 55:6, *King James' Bible*, www.kingjamesbibleonline.org [accessed October 2011].
[73] John Beaumont, *An Historical, Physiological and Theological Treatise of Spirits: Apparitions, Witchcrafts, and Other Magical Practices. Containing an Account of the Genii ... With a Refutation of Dr. Bekker's World Bewitch'd; and Other Authors* (London: Browne & Co., 1705), p. 2.
[74] See Le Fanu's use of the word 'demon', and the idea of 'demoniacal' as related to the Other World rather than to Hell. Most importantly, see Le Fanu's quotation of the Greek poet Menander, just below.
[75] Ibid., p. 13.

come to light, when they could no longer conceal their inner intentions. This determines their movement towards the third state, where they would either ascend into heaven or descend into hell. What is important is that no spirit is judged for the evil done on earth but for what transpires as their true nature. Thus, one's Judgement happens immediately after death, when people awake in the spirit world; this awakening is what Swedenborg defines as Resurrection.[76]

In *A Lost Name*, Carmel Sherlock tries to warn Mark Shadwell of the consequences of his evil intentions by outlining an idea of spiritual evolution which echoes Swedenborg's states of awakening:

> The act of death, you know, is the labour of the man in the flesh, and the bringing forth of the intermediate man, who in turn evolves the man immutable. [...] Two processes of life, leading up to finality. This present state in the flesh is the first subterranean germination of life, compared with the next, feeble, inapprehensive, and ugly. [...]
> This self-evolution, in triplet, is a moral law, desert, judgment, execution; the moral life is self-evolving. It projects a second state from its first, and a third, which is final, from the second. [I, pp. 288-9][77]

On leaving Raby Hall, he explains to Rachel that he does not believe in palingenesis (rebirth, from the Greek, "palin" meaning "again" and "genesis" meaning 'birth'), but that 'when I die, I'll come – yes, I'll come again – not to be seen – only to wander here [...]. Or at Wynderfel, [...] where I may chance to meet that poor lady who died for her love' [II, pp. 64-5]. Carmel justifies his attempted murder of Sir Wycherley through Swedenborg's theory of Resurrection: no matter how the baronet might have appeared to the physical world, his evil nature would have become clear in the after life, 'when the essence of things will appear' [III, p. 85]. Therefore, Carmel does not interpret the killing of the baronet as murder, rather as the release of a malignant entity:

---

[76] Hasler, pp. 12-3. As has been shown above, McCormack applied the mechanism of Resurrection to *Uncle Silas* and interpreted Silas as the spiritual continuity of Austin; p. 34, note No. 121.

[77] Sherlock continues by explaining that Shadwell's evolution is contained in the triplicate lust – sin – death expressed in the Epistle of James, which, significantly, was the subtitle to both previous versions of the novel. However, Mark quickly dismissed his talk by stating that his creed was dust to dust; see James, 1:15, *King James' Bible*, www.kingjamesbibleonline.org [accessed October 2011].

> You call all the immortal sights and voices that are about us, fancies proceeding from our own perishable brains; but I perceive, and consider them, as belonging to God's outer household of immortal spirits. [...]
> Your evangelists and apostles [...] believed in demons, because they knew the signs of their tenancy, and saw that they fought murderously against expulsion [...]. They did it with a spell [...]. I was told to cast him out another way. [III, p. 81]

Of course, as was the case with Swedenborg, Carmel's controversial theology is interpreted as the ravings of a madman.[78]

In *A Lost Name*, Carmel Sherlock is repeatedly called "mad", by almost every single character. Mark Shadwell defines him as a queer fellow with no brains, and affirms that 'he is mad! He'll be up in a madhouse so sure as I stand here'; Mark's wife Amy concurs that '[o]dd he always was; but now his language, like the incipient mutterings of actual insanity, was wild and ominous'; the vicar believes his warnings 'but a symptom of his crazy state', and the servants find him 'more than half-crazed' [I, pp. 151, 277, II, pp. 171, 155]. However, nobody really believes that Carmel is clinically insane until a brutal murder is committed and he becomes the most plausible culprit. In fact, when Amy is concerned about Carmel's irrational talk, her husband reassures her that 'he's no more mad than you or I. He has very odd ways, I grant, and theories [...]; but with that dreamy way of his, he's as wide-awake and sharp as any lawyer in Westminster', and similarly, the vicar is convinced that Carmel is 'always eccentric, but quite sane – where he chooses to talk rationally', when Carmel informs him that his services are needed at Raby after the murder has been committed [I, pp. 278-9, II, p. 168]. The violent death of Sir Wycherley turns odd but gentle Carmel into a 'wretched maniac' and a 'lunatic', and his inoffensive dreams are then read as '[a] lunacy – an idea of a duty, or a mission' [II, pp. 269, III, p. 141]. Carmel's visions and dreams become clear evidence of his mental instability, particularly in the eyes of rationalist Mark Shadwell and the vicar, Rev. Temple, who tend to disagree about most other things. Mark emphasises his steward's suspicious "otherness"

[78] Here, Le Fanu's characters become "readers" of Carmel's character, and thus, they are also allowed freedom to interpret Carmel's ideas by choosing between natural and supernatural explanations.

by calling him an astrologer, a fortune-teller, a prophet, a new evangelist, a witch, a cabalist, and a Rosicrucian, reflecting the contemporary tendency of non-believers to consider all occult practices as synonymous with one another on the basis of their irrational claims [I, pp. 15, 150, II, p. 51, III, p. 133].

Mainstream nineteenth century psychiatry, both in England and France, diagnosed insanity as a somatic disease transmitted through the nervous system. According to eminent names such as C. W. Ellis, Henry Maudsley, William Ireland, Louis-Florentin Calmeil, and A. Brierre de Boismont, theomania was a form of monomania subject to hallucinations, as a result of an inflammation of the brain.[79] The irritation started from the brain and then descended to the sensory nerves via the sensory tracts. The afflicted individual experienced the creation of a mental image first, followed by sensory impressions, of which the most common originated in the optic and/or the auditory tracts, respectively in the form of spectres or sounds. Calmeil also added that hallucinations could continue when the subject was asleep, thus explaining that the theomaniac's good faith in his visions could be extended to his dreams as well. Despite Ireland admitting that '[t]he exact conditions under which this [hallucinatory process] takes place are not known to us', psychiatrists had a vast and various list of plausible causes for the induction of cerebral irritation.[80]

In the analysis of the specific case of Carmel Sherlock, these "causes" can be identified as intoxication, mental strain, and melancholia. Interestingly, the same causes were attributed to Swedenborg's insanity, as Henry Maudsley summarised in an essay on the mystic, which was included in his *Body and Mind*.[81] Intoxication involved the abuse of

---

[79] See Anon., 'Ellis' *Treatise on Insanity*' p. 463; Maudsley, *Body and Mind*, Part 2, Ch. 2; H. W. 'The Blot upon the Brain. Studies in History and Psychology: By William W. Ireland, M.D. Edin.', *The Journal of Mental Science*, No. 31 (1886), pp. 540-9, Brierre de Boismont, Introduction and Ch. 1; Calmeil, Vol. 1, Livre Premier, Introduction and Chapitre Unique.

[80] H. W., p. 542.

[81] Although Maudsley's *Body and Mind* was published two years after *A Lost Name*, the essay on Swedenborg summarises many articles that had appeared in the press throughout the nineteenth century. For instance: Anon., 'The Swedenborgians', *Newcastle Magazine* (April 1822), pp. 185-91; Anon., 'The Nature of the Intercourse between the Soul and the Body', *Christian Remembrancer* (January 1833), pp. 8-15;

food or stimulating substances. Swedenborg's heavy dinners was considered as the cause of his nocturnal delusions (inclusive of the frightening figures and repulsive animals described by Brierre de Boismont), while his consumption of coffee and snuff was thought to have contributed to aggravating his nervous condition, by extending it to his state of awaking. Similarly, Carmel Sherlock's "abuse" of tea and tobacco can be interpreted as the cause of the cerebral irritation which gives way to both his hallucinations and his dreams, so that Mark Shadwell's opinion on the case, and his labelling of tea as a "cup of madness", does nothing more than mirror the common talk of the time. In fact, the belief that intoxication was a cause of hallucinations, and indeed madness in the long term, was not only held by scientists, but was also part of popular culture, and had a long history. In his *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, Walter Scott reflected on the topic on several occasions, particularly with regard to the abuse of alcohol and drugs:

> There is reason to believe that such cases [of apparitions] are numerous, and that they may perhaps arise not only from the debility of stomach brought on by excess in wine or spirits, which derangement often sensibly affects the eyes and the sense of sight, but also because the mind becomes habitually predominated over by a train of fantastic visions, the consequence of frequent intoxication; and is thus, like a dislocated joint, apt again to go wrong, even when a different cause occasions the derangement.[82]

Moreover, according to Victorian psychiatrists, hallucinations and dreams took the shape of the subjects on which the brain had been focusing for a long time. Ellis explained that when the brain was overworked, it became the slave of its favourite dispositions and ruling passions, which interfered with its daily activities and its nightly rest:

> When [...] the brain has been for too long a time intensely employed on any subject it is thrown into such a state of excitement that its operations are no longer under the control of the will: the incipient state of insanity then commences; a

---

Forbes Winslow, 'The Plea of Insanity in Criminal Cases', *British and Foreign Review* (July 1843), pp. 152-69; Anon., 'Swedenborg and his Opinions', *Sharpe's London Journal* (March 1849), pp. 152-6; Anon., 'A Biographical Sketch of Emanuel Swedenborg', *Critic*, 1 October 1849, p. 446; C. P., 'Emanuel Swedenborg', *Fraser's Magazine* (February 1857), pp. 174-82; Anon., 'Swedenborgiana', *National Review* (April 1858), pp. 336-59; Anon., 'Emanuel Swedenborg', *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* (May 1867), pp. 434-41.

[82] Scott, p. 19.

> superabundant flow of blood is propelled to the head; irritation and want of sleep are the immediate consequences, and [...] inflammation is the ultimate result. The diseased action [...] produces diseased organization.[83]

Both Swedenborg and Carmel are described as constantly immersed in their readings, mainly concerned with philosophy and religion. Both of them are said to carry on their solitary studies until the very early hours of the morning. Swedenborg's friend Carl Robsahm remembered that the fire in his study was never allowed to go out, since Swedenborg never had a specific time for sleeping, while Agnes Marlyn finds Carmel still up and reading the Bible when it is past one o'clock, and both Sir Wycherley and his servant Clewson confirm that Carmel woke them up in the middle of the night on several occasions [Chs 43, 29, 45].[84] Furthermore, both Swedenborg and Carmel dream of the spirits with which their minds have been encumbered during the day, find sleeping difficult, if not frightening, and experience the influence of their nocturnal visions during their waking state, when they believe they hear voices belonging to spirits and state that they can even see them. In this regard, Maudsley was quite explicit in associating the trespassing of dreams into waking states as a form of insanity:

> A person may of course dream extraordinary dreams, and keep a record of them, without justly incurring the suspicion of any mental derangement. The notable circumstances in connection with Swedenborg's dreamings are the indistinguishable blending of dreams and waking visions and the entire faith with which he accepts and interprets them as spiritual revelations.[85]

Finally, Ellis also counted among the causes of cerebral irritation disappointed love (which Calmeil included in the broader category of melancholia), and insisted that 'however the nature of the moral affection connected with the stronger passions may vary, their organic effects on the seat of thought and feeling must be nearly if not wholly, the same'.[86] Both Swedenborg and Carmel suffered from unrequited love: Swedenborg loved and was

---

[83] Anon., 'Ellis' *Treatise on Insanity*', p. 465. See also, Brierre de Boismont, p. 568.
[84] Bergquist, pp. 316-7.
[85] Mausdley, p. 229.
[86] Anon., 'Ellis' *Treatise on Insanity'*, p. 466.

rejected by the two daughters of his master engineer Christopher Polhem when he was a young apprentice, and decided never to marry afterwards.[87] Carmel Sherlock confesses his love for Rachel Shadwell to Agnes Marlyn and to the vicar, although he never tells Rachel herself, knowing that their union would not be permitted and that she has no feelings for him other than respect and compassion.

For Victorian psychiatrists both Swedenborg and Carmel, then, could be diagnosed as insane, specifically with that religious form defined as theomania. However, in *A Lost Name*, Le Fanu rescues his Swedenborg-like character from the accusation of madness, with the double intention of showing how belief in unorthodox doctrines could be exploited for malicious purposes (in line with his previous novel on Spiritualism), and of proving Swedenborg's theology as a valuable, alternative way of communicating with the Other World.[88] At the end of the novel, the doctor explains that 'a fellow may be very eccentric indeed, and yet be perfectly free from madness. [...] If it turned out that there was madness in Carmel's family, I should have very little doubt; but it is possible that his motive may have had nothing illusory about it' [III, p. 14]. Carmel's belief in a different afterlife from the one suggested by orthodox Christianity, just like Dinah Perfect's practice of Spiritualism, would have been enough to have them locked up in an asylum for the benefit of an unscrupulous third party.

Swedenborg himself risked being confined in a madhouse, when his increasing popularity became too difficult to contain. In 1857, the *Fraser's Magazine* wrote that 'Swedenborg's doctrines found supporters among the doctors of the Lutheran Church, to such an extent that the ecclesiastical authorities considered it necessary to check the growing heresy, and, if possible, to confine the heresiarch upon the plea of madness', while the following year, *The National Review* also remembered how '[t]he plan of his

---

[87] Bergquist, Ch. 7.

[88] As has been shown already with regard to *All in the Dark* (p. 77, note No. 89), Le Fanu's ambiguity about natural/supernatural explanations is not simply a form of authorial expression which emerges in plot-manipulation, but also corresponds to the rhetorical strategy that he defined as "equilibrium"; see p. 33, note No. 115 above.

adversaries was to put him on his trial, when, no doubt, he would declare his divine commission and spiritual powers; on which declaration a charge of insanity was to be founded, and he was to be confined in a madhouse'.[89] Maudsley pointed out that among the members of the clergy who conspired against Swedenborg was his nephew Bishop Filenius, who might have also nurtured motives which went beyond theological differences.[90] Swedenborg was not confined, and always remained in possession of his property. However, Maudsley himself admitted that the mystic was lucky that he lived in another century, rather than the current one:

> Perhaps it was fortunate for the prophet of the Church of the New Jerusalem that he lived in Sweden, and in the last century; for had he lived at the present day in England, it is very doubtful whether he would have been left in undisturbed possession of his freedom and his property. There might, indeed, have been no small danger of the extinction of his prophetic mission in a lunatic asylum.[91]

While Maudsley's words express the dangers against which *A Lost Name* stands as a warning, the novel goes even further in supporting Swedenborg's thought. Not only is Carmel no murderer and no madman, but his dreams, visions, and prophecies prove correct, and their veracity is endorsed by the narrator. For instance, in Chapter Forty-Two Carmel's violin is possessed by a spirit which inspires the musician with visions of mythological woods equally haunted by spirits, visions that are revelatory of events connected with Raby Hall. Carmel starts by reciting from the third book of Virgil's *Aeneid*, where the wood of a Thracian tree is revealed as the murdered spirit of Polydorus, who was killed by his host, anticipating what will happen to Sir Roke.[92] He then continues by quoting from the thirteenth Canto of Dante's *Inferno*, where the dead trees are the souls of

---

[89] Respectively, C. P., 'Emanuel Swedenborg', *Fraser's Magazine*, p. 181; Anon., 'Swedenborgiana', *The National Review*, p. 351.
[90] Maudsley, p. 257.
[91] Ibid., p. 263.
[92] Allen Mandelbaum, *The Aeneid of Virgil: a Verse Translation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, c1981), pp. 57-80.

suicides, like Lady Mildred, and prophetically, Mark Shadwell.[93] In Chapter Two, Carmel's citation of Psalm 55, which Mark dismisses as unintelligible ravings, foresees the master betraying his faithful friend: 'For *it was* not an enemy *that* reproached me; then I could have borne *it*: neither *was it* he that hated me *that* did magnify *himself* against me; then I would have hid myself from him: / But *it was* thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance'.[94]

Carmel's dreams, above all, repeatedly predict Sir Roke's violent death: even before the baronet writes to invite himself to Raby Hall, Carmel tells Mark Shadwell that he has dreamt about the guest two or three times already, 'stiff in the corner, with a star of blood', while later in the novel, Carmel has another nightmare in which Sir Roke enters his room in the shape of a 'great cock [...] with a bloody comb – head, eyes, neck, all bloody, [...] taller than the door, and crow[ing]' [I, pp. 12, 34]. The first dream can be easily interpreted as predicting the violent death of Sir Wycherley in connection with the legend of Lady Mildred, who had a scar in the shape of a star on her hand, whereas the second dream becomes clearer, and yet again predictive, if read as concerning St Peter's betrayal of Jesus. Furthermore, as Walton has pointed out, the narrator gives authority to Carmel's visions: for instance, where Carmel confronts Agnes by saying that '*genii* came in different shapes', the narrator observes, with regards to the same, that '[i]n fairy lore we read of wondrous transmutations and disguises. How evil spirits have come in the fairest and saddest forms' [II, p. 132, I, p. 41]; also, while Carmel reflects on how things belonging to everyday life take a different, terrible shape in hell, the narrator sees 'glimmerings and shadows of hell' when he looks around 'on the gloom of this transitory world' [II, p. 21].[95] Carmel Sherlock, then, is presented as a scapegoat rather than a mad murderer, and through this figure, Le Fanu tries to warn believers of occult doctrines of the constant

[93] Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia* (Firenze: Accademia della Crusca, 2000), pp. 58-63.
[94] Psalm 55:12-3, *King James' Bible*, www.kingjamesbibleonline.org [accessed October 2011].
[95] See Walton, pp. 75-9, particularly p. 77.

danger surrounding them, while showing his support for Swedenborg's theology as a point of contact with the world of spirits.

2.2 Bewitched and Haunted

In *A Lost Name* the apparent "madness" of the visionary Carmel Sherlock is significantly opposed to the actual madness of the intensely rational Mark Shadwell. Through the figure of Mark Shadwell, Le Fanu represents another aspect of the crisis of faith, concerning sceptics who scorn all forms of spirituality on the basis of their impalpability and improvability. By making Mark the villain of the novel, and by punishing him with madness and suicide, Le Fanu expresses his disapproval of staunch materialism, which is revealed as dry and without hope.

As has already been introduced in Chapter One, the crisis of faith resulted in a paradigm shift away from orthodox Christianity towards alternative forms of spirituality, exemplified in Le Fanu's fiction by the Spiritualism of Dinah Perfect and the Swedenborgianism of Carmel Sherlock. Although most Victorians experienced a reconfiguration rather than a total loss of faith, the straightforward scepticism of Mark Shadwell was not all that unusual in the nineteenth century. In fact, as Raymond L. Brett explains in his *Faith and Doubt* (1997), some Victorians 'took seriously questions of faith and doubt, but not all of them made the journey to a new or renewed religious faith. Some never started the journey, others became agnostic on the way'.[96] According to Brett, by the mid-nineteenth century the idea of the universe as a clockwork and God as watchmaker was no longer widely accepted.[97] Advances in science, particularly in the disciplines of geology and physiology, undermined the veracity of the Bible. Charles Lyell's *Principles*

[96] Raymond L. Brett, *Faith and Doubt: Religion and Secularization in Literature from Wordsworth to Larkin* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1997), p. 5. On agnosticism and scepticism as results of the crisis of faith see also: Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Anthony O. J. Cockshut, *The Unbelievers: English Agnostic Thought 1840-1890* (London: Collins, 1964); and Andrew N. Wilson, *God's Funeral* (London: Abacus, 2000).
[97] Brett, p. 92.

of Geology (1830-3), Robert Chamber's *Vestiges of Creation* (1844), and Charles Darwin's *Origins of Species* (1859), among others, proved that the Book of Genesis could not be taken literally, while suggesting an idea of progress by natural selection which contrasted with the more static concept of the divine design of nature.[98]

Most scientists, among them the biologist Thomas Huxley, best known as Darwin's firmest advocate, were aware of the fact that scientific discoveries could not eradicate the notion of God, since investigation in the sphere of the natural could not prove or disprove the existence of the supernatural. However, because the Protestant conception of God was strongly invested in the Bible, by contesting the Bible scientists questioned the very existence of God, thus turning many believers into "honest doubters".[99] According to Owen Chadwick, 'the success of science made ever more powerful the old agnosticism of Hume and the Enlightenment'; man became more cautious in believing without proof and began to look for facts.[100] For the sceptic, then, religion could be reduced to myth, magic, or superstition.[101] Nevertheless, as Chadwick argues in the conclusion of his book on *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (1977), secularisation did not mean that '[w]e got rid of imps and demons but we pushed them into the subconscious and called them by different names. We got rid of witches by learning to take no notice of their spell'; and this, it seems, is what happens to Mark Shadwell.[102]

Mark Shadwell defines himself as an independent thinker, inspired by Socrates, David Hume, and other important figures in the history of the Western Philosophy:

> I'm a philosopher [...]. I don't say I'm a Platonist, an epicurean, or a stoic; *nullius addictus*, I don't deal all in one shop; every man who thinks frames a system for himself. I'm an eclectic philosopher, [...] and I'm very well satisfied with my credo! [I, p. 107]

---

[98] Ibid.
[99] Chadwick, p. 167; Brett, p. 93.
[100] Chadwick, p. 187.
[101] Cockshut, 117.
[102] Chadwick, p. 258.

If Mark cuts short Carmel Sherlock's theories on spirit communication by stating that his creed is 'dust to dust', his reaction to the vicar's urge for his embrace of the true faith is more elaborate in its convictions [I, p. 17]:

> I don't believe it; I think your New Testament is all a myth; Christianity is simply a philosophy which has survived other and better ones, just because it has condescended to ally itself with the principle of superstition, which is *part of human nature*. [I, pp. 106-7, my italics]

Mark admits that a superstitious vein is intrinsic to man's nature, and claims that this explains man's need to believe in religions, like Christianity or occultism, which satisfy such an irrational trait. Simultaneously, Mark blames ignorance and the solitude of the country life for nurturing superstition, while he recognises in education and the press the weapons that enlightened men like himself must adopt to advance its extinction, a thought that had already been put forward by the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham: 'before this talisman [the daily newspaper] not only devils but ghosts, vampires, witches and all their kindred tribes are driven out of the land, never to return again, for the touch of holy water is not as intolerable to them as the bare smell of printer's ink'.[103]

Belief in witchcraft and prophecies remained more rooted in the isolated countryside and among the lower, less educated classes, which were considered more vulnerable to the trickeries of charlatans. Raby Hall is said to be located near the old London road, a liminal space on the way to the city, but still near the site of habit and superstition, in an inland county which is described as melancholy and neglected. Despite Mark's offering his family a good education and his attempt at disabusing them of belief in the country folk-tales, they all seem to respect and share the traditions related to the

---

[103] Owen Davies explains that urbanisation, the press, and scientific discoveries allowed a redefinition of the belief in occultism as superstition, enthusiasm, or ignorance. See particularly 'Newspapers and the Popular Belief in Witchcraft and Magic in the Modern Period', *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (April 1998), pp. 139-65; and 'Urbanization and the Decline of Witchcraft: an Examination of London', *The Journal of Social History*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Spring 1997), pp. 597-617. The citation by Jeremy Bentham is taken from his *The Book of Fallacies* (London, J. & H.L. Hunt, 1824), quoted in R. F. Foster, *Words Alone: Yeats and his Inheritances* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 98.

Shadwells: his wife and daughter, his cultured steward, his metropolitan cousin, and even the vicar, all believe in the legend of the Gaze-Lady. Mark laughs at them all with the sarcasm of the philosopher, at least until the train of events begins to shake his rational convictions, and the superstitious beliefs he had rejected long ago come back to haunt him.

According to Sigmund Freud, the human mind stores in the unconscious all information that was once considered true and has since been surmounted, as, for instance, childhood complexes or primitive beliefs. In his essay on 'The Uncanny' (1919), Freud explains his theory, with particular regard to the belief in ghosts, spirits, and the return of the dead:

> We – or our primitive forebears – once regarded such things as real possibilities; we were convinced that they really happened. Today we no longer believe in them, having *surmounted* such modes of thought. Yet we do not feel entirely secure in these new convictions; the old ones live on in us, on the look-out for confirmation. Now, as something *happens* in our lives that seems to confirm these old, discarded beliefs, we experience a sense of the uncanny, and this may be reinforced by judgements like the following: 'So it's true, then, [...] that the dead really do go on living and manifest themselves at the scene of their former activities'.[104]

Modern film scholar Steven Schneider has developed Freud's theory of the reconfirmation of the surmounted in connection to the evolution of the figure of the horror monster. Although 'Monsters as (Uncanny) Metaphors: Freud, Lakoff, and the Representation of Monstrosity in Cinematic Horror' (1999) is obviously concerned with contemporary film, Schneider's argument can be applied to Victorian horror fiction as well.[105] Starting from Freud's idea that the mechanism behind horror narratives is the reconfirmation of the beliefs of childhood that have long since been abandoned, Schneider suggests that horror monsters are conceptual metaphors of those very narratives.[106] That means, first of all, that as metaphors, monsters reconfirm surmounted beliefs by their very presence; and then, that

---

[104] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 154.
[105] Steven Schneider, 'Monsters as (Uncanny) Metaphors: Freud, Lakoff, and the Representation of Monstrosity in Cinematic Horror', *Other Voices*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (January 1999), www.othervoices.org [accessed February 2013].
[106] Ibid., § 6.

they are conceptual in the sense that they originate in the mind rather than on the screen, or in our case, on paper. Furthermore, and most importantly, Schneider affirms that:

> [A]lthough the metaphorical nature of horror [...] monsters is psychologically *necessary*, their surface heterogeneity is historically and culturally *contingent*. Not only is it the case that 'the monster is the reification, the embodiment in a symbol, of an unconscious content in the mind', it is also the case that 'the monster [...] is an embodiment of a certain cultural moment – of a time, a feeling, and a place'.[107]

Since a monster's success in provoking horror depends on its cultural relevance, it follows that, at a time when the belief in witchcraft was being revived, it is unsurprising that the monster of *A Lost Name* is configured as a witch.

In the novel, the legend of the supernatural return of the Gaze-Lady is presented as one of Mark's surmounted beliefs of childhood come back again. Sir Roke tells Rachel how 'Mark's mother [...] believed every word of it as religiously as she did her Church-catechism', and told them many times, 'at the age when little fellows are easily frightened, and remember better than we do afterwards' [I, pp. 257-8]. As far as the legend goes, old Lady Mildred has returned, as punctually as she threatened, first in the shape of a young Italian widow, to seduce the heir and cause jealousy, litigations, and feuds, before going back to her country, or, as wiser forefathers have thought, 'to a still more ardent climate' [I, p. 259]. One hundred and ten years later, she has returned in the form of a young English novice near Vienna, once again, to bewitch the heir and involve him in all kinds of ruin. From these two instances, Sir Roke can provide his listeners with the prototype of the "evil genius" of the Shadwells, due to return in the current year 1860:

> Well, they say she comes like a beautiful woman, and very plausibly – more as if a chance brought her, than by design – and so she grows into an influence which she uses, with a fiendish wisdom, to entangle and beguile, and draw them into those dangerous currents of life which are strewn with dead men and shipwreck.
> [I, p. 258]

[107] Ibid.

Agnes Marlyn seems to appear at the Shadwells' door suddenly and rather mysteriously, just when she is needed. She is described as 'a very beautiful creature', who easily conquers Amy's heart with her sad stories of an orphaned childhood and of the hardship experienced at the French school, while her girlish blushes and coy elusiveness slowly manipulate Mark into an uncontainable passion for her [I, p. 51]. However, her malevolence gradually surfaces, initially in sudden glimpses, and afterwards, once she has established her grip on Mark, in all its insolence and devastating power.

Throughout the novel, Le Fanu provides hints of Agnes's possible connection with Lady Mildred, from her wicked and sinister looks, to possessing the same star-shaped scar that was the mark of the Gaze-Lady, to her hatred of men and her vengefulness. The figure of the witch will be subject to further analysis in the next section of this chapter; what is interesting here is Mark's change of opinion with regard to the supernatural, and its association with insanity. Initially, Mark calls Carmel mad because of the irrationality of his talk about spirits, which Mark considers from the perspective of the enlightened philosopher he claims to be. However, over the course of the novel, Mark's convictions begin to be shaken given the veracity of Carmel's visions. Therefore, Mark's insistence that Carmel is mad until the very end has more to do with his attempt to divert any possible suspicion of culpability from his person, and to save his faithful servant from the scaffold through the plea of insanity, rather than with his claimed rationalism.

This does not mean that Mark eventually embraces any spiritual creed. Mark never admits to belief in spirits, but he certainly begins to doubt pure materialism. As Freud has theorised, 'as something happens in our lives that seems to confirm these old, discarded beliefs, we experience a sense of uncanny': when Agnes begins to hold an inexplicable power over him, the legend of Lady Mildred comes back to his mind, and he struggles with himself in the attempt to dismiss it. Mark's struggle between his mature rationalism and his

infantile beliefs positions him in that moment of hesitation between the natural and the supernatural which Tzvetan Todorov has defined as the fantastic:

> In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, [...] there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of *an illusion of the senses*, of a product of the imagination – and the laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality – but then this reality is controlled by *laws unknown to us*. [...] The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event.[108]

All throughout the novel, Mark tries hard to re-establish the laws of this world, but the supernatural challenges him and his sanity. When Agnes Marlyn first displays signs of an innocent infatuation for him, he smiles satirically at the whole situation, telling himself that she has mistaken him, that a stoic like him is quite above all that. However, soon afterwards he has to admit that the girl is 'quite bewitching', and that he begins to find her attentions flattering, although still rather embarrassing to his pride [I, p. 88]. He suddenly feels strangely, his initial indifference turning into a passion driven by jealousy. He feels that Agnes's image has taken possession of him and that the thought of her is constantly haunting him. Mark starts to wonder who Agnes is and why she is there: a French girl, raised in the city, cannot feel at home in a place like Raby, and her looks are not those of a governess, so much beauty being '*funeste* and ominous' [II, p. 255]. He realises that if she had not come, Roke would have not come either, and feels haunted by unnameable 'wild thoughts', probably concerning the surmounted curse [III, p. 23]. Therefore, he tries to repress his irrational beliefs by questioning the strength of his convictions: 'was he not a philosopher? Did he not believe in enlightened reason, and the omnipotence of will? What had he to fear?' [ibid.].

Despite his efforts, Mark affirms that on several occasions Carmel's talks about spirits have made him nervous. When Sir Roke's first letter of invitation arrives, Mark is

[108] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic*, Ch. 3; quote p. 25, my italics. See also Lucy Armitt, *Theorising the Fantastic* (London: Arnold, 1996), pp. 30-8.

caught between contrasting feelings: 'Devil a thing can he do to hurt me by coming down here; and yet, ever since I opened his note, it seems to me that I've been as mad [...] as Carmel Sherlock, almost. I feel there's some d---d mischief gathering, and I can neither shape nor prevent it' [I, pp. 152-3]. Similarly, when Rachel tells him about Carmel's promise to return to Wynderfel, Mark reproaches her that 'your dream about Sherlock [...] has made me a little bit fidgetty *(sic)* – contrary to reason, contrary to belief; but this miserable month has unstrung me, and I'm growing like an old woman or a *child*' [II, p. 252, my italics]. If Carmel's beliefs induce the reappearance of Mark's childhood superstitions, his rationalism is still strong enough to dismiss them, and he recognises the danger that indulgence in such thought might have for the nerves.

However, after his confrontational meeting with Agnes, Mark seems more prone to accept the supernatural and submit to her power, so that the reader is left wondering whether the secret she told him was actually the revelation of her identity as the reincarnation of the Gaze-Lady, rather than her witnessing the murder. Indeed, from that moment, Mark starts thinking more and more of Carmel and his visions, of Lady Mildred and her curse, and when he looks at Agnes, with the lights of Wynderfel falling upon her face, he sees her features turning 'cold and even cruel', and her distorted smile 'arch and sinister' [III, p. 243]. He begins to call her '[m]y own beautiful little Witch', and 'my star of Bethlehem', and even has a premonitory nightmare, where Sir Roke comes back for revenge, accompanied by a death-like huge gaunt figure in black against whom Mark tries to defend himself, only to find his attempts frustrated by his wife's terrifying laughs, eventually silenced by the dreadful roar of water [III, pp. 249, 250]. Water will indeed be the death of Mark, who is found, face up to the moon, drowned in the tarn just beside the tomb of his ancestor. It is not revealed whether he commits suicide because, in a moment of lucidity, he finds death preferable to his incipient madness (as happens in the short story

version), or because he accepts his fate as prophesised in the legend, and is taken away by Sir Roke and Death just as he has dreamt.[109]

Once Mark Shadwell is dead the readers also find themselves hesitating between natural and supernatural explanations of the plot. Todorov has explained that the sense of hesitation which qualifies the character is extended to the reader as well.[110] The reader enters the fictional world, not necessarily through identification with a character (as is the case in *A Lost Name*, where Mark Shadwell is depicted as a villain), but rather through what Lucy Armitt defines as 'interaction with the fantastic itself'.[111] The reader, then, experiences the same sense of uncertainty that left the character hesitating between "illusion of the senses" or "laws unknown to us". Le Fanu's novel closes on the narrator's reflection that 'this evil angel, so beautiful and fatal, her mission ended, vanished, and ceased to be seen and heard at Raby', while the vicar's last words on the subject seem even more supportive of the supernatural thesis [III, p. 290]:

> Certainly, according to the old prophecy, she was due [...] just at the time when Miss Marlyn appeared at Raby, and then, you know, it was to be for the disastrous extinction of the old family name; and see what accompanied it – I may say, what was brought about by it – a great scandal – murder, suicide, and the predicted utter obliteration of the ancient name of Shadwell; and she had the mark of a star in her left hand, also – it tempts one to superstition. [III, pp. 297-8]

A clinical study of Mark's behaviour would easily prove him mad and explain his death as the consequence of his delusions rather than the fulfilment of his family curse. According to nineteenth century psychiatrists, apart from organic causes and over strain of the brain, insanity could also be provoked by grief, distress, remorse, abused confidence, strong indignation following an insult, wounded love, and excess of ambition or pride.[112] Calmeil even pointed out that the stability of reason usually began to be affected in one's

[109] This is another instance of the textual strategy which Le Fanu defined as "equilibrium" (p. 33, note No. 115 above).
[110] Todorov, pp. 26-31; and, again, Le Fanu's theory of "equilibrium".
[111] Armitt, p. 32.
[112] See Anon., 'Ellis' Treatise on Insanity', p. 465, and Calmeil, Vol. 1, p. 389.

thirties or forties.[113] From the very first pages of the novel, Mark Shadwell, aged forty-nine, is described as an ambitious man with dreams of a career in politics, but who is instead bound to this desolate countryside by a distressing financial situation against which he finds relief in cigars and sherry. While his mind is initially burdened with money problems only, his unexpected passion for Agnes Marlyn does nothing but increase his concerns. In fact, he had thought that he had grown immune to such boyish feelings, and having to admit to himself that he has not deeply wounds his pride. Furthermore, after he opens his heart to Agnes, he discovers that she is having an affair with the man he hates the most, and that they ridiculed him in their private correspondence. His jealousy drives him to murder his enemy and blame his innocent and faithful servant, two sins for which he feels abhorrence and remorse. Blackmailed by his governess, he leaves his wife, knowing that this will kill her, and mistreats their daughter, again, to his self-disgust and mortification. It is after this series of very psychologically challenging events that his nerves begin to shake, and insanity manifests itself in the symptoms of demonomania.

Although Mark strongly affirms that he does not believe in witches and superstition, the environment to which he has been and is still exposed is instead supportive of such ideas, and overworking his brain against them paradoxically influences the subject of his delusions. Again, as Ellis and Calmeil have pointed out, demonomania is characterised by fear of being bewitched and possessed, suspicion of conspiracy, and suicidal instincts.[114] In the novel, Mark becomes convinced that Agnes has bewitched him and is now haunting his mind with her image in order to make him do what she wishes. He does not understand why the police cannot content themselves with Carmel Sherlock's confession but insist on the possibility of the murderer having had an accomplice, a thesis that he takes very personally, as if they all meant he was the culprit:

---

[113] Calmeil, ibid.
[114] Anon., 'Ellis' Treatise on Insanity', p. 469, Calmeil, Vol. 1, p. 84, Vol. 2, p. 229.

> I think you have all got a way of peering at me – I don't know what you want, it is the most offensive thing on earth. [...] I hide nothing, absolutely, and you can't imagine, when one is harassed by never-ending real vexations, as I am, about which, heaven knows! I have never made a secret; how it pesters one to be watched and wondered at as if I were a *witch.* [III, pp. 7-8, my italics]

Finally, he states that it is better for a man to be dead than be in debt and, although he constantly jokes about intending to put a pistol in his mouth or drown himself, like other men in his position would certainly do, he eventually proves that his suicidal instincts were not to be taken lightly, but rather as serious threats. He drowns at Feltram, in what is announced as a tragic accident. But the narrator, like everybody else, concludes that Mark's death was not accidental, that this 'impulsive, violent, and hypochondriac man, [...] made away with himself, in his despair, deliberately' [III, pp. 287-8].

In *A Lost Name*, supernatural curse and scientific explanation progress simultaneously towards the end, leaving the reader in doubt as to which interpretation to accept. However, a third line of reading can be followed which, combining the two, positions the novel in the context of Victorian anxieties concerning mental degeneration. In *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction* (1999), Robert Mighall explains that what early Gothic presented as a supernatural curse was reconfigured in wholly material terms in the age of scientific discoveries and rationalistic thought.[115] According to Mighall, 'hereditary disease is the ghost that haunts the present descendants of a House, an emphasis that indicates the contemporaneity of [Victorian Gothic], appearing at a time when medical science was just beginning to look to hereditary etiologies to explain moral dysfunction'.[116] Therefore, the Gothic omen that saw the sins of the fathers being visited upon their offspring took on a pathological form in the Victorian novel. The great House is no longer simply a building haunted by a ghost, but a family, a lineage, possessed by a hereditary disease. The crucial point that connects these two forms of haunting lies in the new

[115] Robert Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares*, particularly Ch. 3.
[116] Ibid., p. 79.

association of ghost with disease, which as early as 1833 the philosopher Thomas Carlyle had thus expressed: 'Witchcraft, and all manner of spectre-work, and Demonology, we have now named Madness and Diseases of the Nerves'.[117] Hence, in the novel, the family curse of the Shadwells is both the supernatural threat that Lady Mildred pronounced against her descendants to punish them for the crimes of their brutal ancestor, *and* the hereditary insanity that consumed her and returned in the following generations.

Lady Mildred is said to have committed suicide by throwing herself from the window of the attic room where she was confined, and, as Rachel Shadwell tells Agnes, '[s]he [...] has *haunted* us, you know, ever since' [I, p. 236, my italics].[118] While suicide was considered by Victorian psychiatrists as a clear sign of madness, the idea of insanity as a hereditary pathology is represented in Carmel's dream of Mark '[c]limbing with a body like a black monkey's' to Lady Mildred's window [I, p. 149]. In fact, in the second half of the nineteenth century the monkey came to signify Darwin's theory of evolution and heredity (both of moral and mental traits). Le Fanu exploited this idea again in 'Green Tea', where Rev. Jennings is driven to suicide by the disturbing appearance of an evil spirit in the shape of a monkey, which symbolises the nervous disease Jennings has inherited from his father.[119] Similarly, in *A Lost Name*, Mark is naturally bound to his family heritage, be it through mental instability or the superstitious vein which he cannot repress.

Le Fanu's use of the theme of madness in the novel becomes indicative of his rejection of materialism in favour of a spiritual approach to life after death. Carmel Sherlock is believed to be mad, mainly on the basis of his indecipherable visions. However, by the end of the story, not only is he cleared of the wrongful accusations made against him, but his very dreams appear truly prophetic to those who, unlike Mark, are

---

[117] Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, (London: Chapman & Hall, 1869), p. 251.

[118] The similarity with Charlotte Brontë's "madwoman in the attic" is already evident here, and will be emphasised even more in Le Fanu's next novel, *The Wyvern Mystery*. For an analysis of the influence of Le Fanu on *Jane Eyre* (1847) see Chapter Three.

[119] Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly*, pp. 5-40; on Jenning's father, p. 12. Robert Tracy also analyses the image of the monkey in Le Fanu's 'Green Tea' in his Introduction to this collection, p. xiv. However, Tracy's study focuses on the interpretation of the Darwinian monkey as the symbol of Irish racial inferiority.

willing to listen. The fact that Carmel's philosophy holds strong similarities with Swedenborgianism can be interpreted as the reason for Le Fanu's sympathetic representation of the character, which is further emphasised by the narrator's voice in the text.[120] Instead, Mark Shadwell, the enlightened rationalist, is the one who is actually mad and dies of his insanity. This is not simply due to his suspicion of superstition, but rather his conviction of man's self-sufficiency and his rejection of spirituality, be it orthodox or occult. In fact, even in the previous short story versions, where there is no trace of the supernatural, the protagonist is destined to a similar fate. Richard Marston is also a sceptic, who does not believe in superstition, and wholly rejects the vicar's religion (although not in the same strong tones as Mark Shadwell). He is also driven mad by financial worries and romantic passion, but he believes that science can control and cure his ailment. He voluntarily confines himself to a lunatic asylum and asks the proprietor whether he can '*prevent* the malady you profess to cure? – can you meet and defeat the enemy half way?'; nevertheless, Richard also dies at his own hand, despite his faith in medicine.[121] Just as Carmel's Swedenborgian ideas are the key to his positive representation, Mark Shadwell's enlightened scepticism can be read as the reason behind his negative traits, his madness, and violent and shameful death.

In 'Protestant Magic', Roy Foster explains that Irish Protestants like Le Fanu were adverse to eighteenth-century rationalism and nineteenth-century materialism because they held these beliefs partly responsible for the decline of the Protestant Ascendancy.[122] Although Foster's essay focuses on W. B. Yeats who, like Le Fanu, was a quasi-Swedenborgian with a wider interest in occultism (and interestingly linked to Varley

---

[120] This is another instance of Le Fanu's use of the narrator's voice in the text, already seen in Chapter One on *All in the Dark* with regard to the author's intention of defusing William's fear of the supernatural through laughter; see p. 101 above.

[121] Le Fanu, 'Some Accounts of the Latter Days of the Hon. Richard Marston, of Dunoran' (June 1848), p. 743.

[122] R. F. Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (London: A. Lane, 1993), Ch. 2, particularly p. 221.

through his maternal aunt Isabella Pollexfen, who married the prophet's son), it also draws connections among other exponents of Anglo-Irish Protestantism:

> [F]rom Maturin and Le Fanu to Bram Stoker and Elizabeth Bowen and Yeats – marginalized Irish Protestants all, often living in England but regretting Ireland, stemming from families with strong clerical and professional colorations, *whose occult preoccupations surely mirror a sense of displacement*, a loss of social and psychological integration, and an escapism motivated by the threat of a takeover by the Catholic middle class.[123]

In his more recent *Words Alone* (2011), Foster develops this concept of Protestant insecurity by separating it from the idea of Ascendancy guilt with which it is usually, but wrongly, associated.[124] In order to feel guilty, the Irish Protestant should have identified with 'the expatriate English', whereas, he argues, 'the Anglo-Irish were very far from seeing themselves as belonging to England. They thought they had a country, and their consciousness remained no less intense as their world increasingly became part of the past'.[125]

The Irish Protestants' interest in antiquarianism, superstition, folklore, fairy tales, and occultism, then, became an attempt at justifying their own Irishness and their sense of belonging there, since the belief in spirits and fairies was shared by the native, Catholic peasantry. Like Yeats and the Wildes, Le Fanu also held a particular interest in the peasantry of Ireland and, being very imaginative from an early age, he was naturally drawn to the fairy-lore and the superstition of his country, as he himself admitted: '[i]n my youth I heard a great many Irish traditions, more or less of a supernatural character, some of them very peculiar, and all, to a child, at least, highly interesting'.[126] Therefore, even as a boy, Le Fanu was well aware of the traditions of Ireland, while he also cultured his inclinations

---

[123] Ibid., p. 220, my italics. On Yeats's connections with John Varley, see Curry, p. 25.
[124] Foster, *Words Alone: Yeats and his Inheritances* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), Ch. 3, particularly p. 114.
[125] Ibid. p, 115.
[126] Quoted in S. M. Ellis, *Wilkie Collins, Le Fanu and Others* (London: Constable, 1951), p. 149. Also note that William Le Fanu dedicates much space of his autobiography to the fairy-lore of the Irish countryside, collected with his brother during their boyhood years in Co. Limerick; see William Le Fanu, pp. 37-9, 101-18.

towards these subjects in his father's well-stocked library, rich in old volumes on demonology, occultism and folk-lore.[127] His specific interest in Swedenborgianism, then, comes as no surprise, since, as Foster has pointed out, the occult religion bears striking correspondences with Irish fairy-lore, in its idea of a parallel world inhabited by spiritual entities who carry out similar activities to ours, and who have the power of affecting our lives.[128]

Le Fanu, and his supernatural fiction, are now well established in the branch of Irish Studies, and the figure of Mark Shadwell as irresponsible landlord (the opposite of Le Fanu's father, and further contrasting in his lack of religion) could be a starting point for further research in that direction. However, Mark Shadwell's scepticism is a danger not only to Irish Protestants; he is equally dangerous, from a non-Irish perspective, in his materialistic rejection of any form of spiritual reality. To return to the figure of the sceptic in the context of the crisis of faith, Chadwick explains that, since morality was associated with religion, the loss of faith threatened a consequent loss of morality: '[t]ell a child that he must do good because he will go to hell if he does bad – when he ceases to believe in hell [...] he will suppose that now he need not do good'.[129] Thus, when Mark the superstitious child grows into Mark the rationalist man, he loses his morality, becomes a murderer, an adulterer, and a suicide. Apart from being an Irish Protestant suffering from a sense of displacement, Le Fanu is also a man who never lost his religious sensibility, whether the orthodox Christianity of his young years, or the more loose Swedenborgianism of his later days. For this reason, Carmel Sherlock becomes the real hero, vindicated and greatly missed at the end of the novel, while Mark Shadwell turns from protagonist to (his own) antagonist and is eventually pitied, rather than mourned.

---

[127] Ibid., p. 149.
[128] Foster, *Words Alone*, p. 122. The idea of parallel worlds is crucial to Le Fanu's theory of "equilibrium", since it allows a parallel between natural and supernatural; see Le Fanu's letter to Bentley of March 1870 (p. 33, note No. 115 above).
[129] Chadwick, p. 32, quote p. 234. See also Wilson, p. 56.

2.3 The Witch

The fate of the Shadwells and of the rest of the inhabitants of Raby Hall changes, suddenly and tragically, after the appearance of Agnes Marlyn, the new, bewitching governess. Depending on whether the reader decides to explain the Todorovian hesitancy brought about by this character by accepting the supernatural (the marvellous) or by attributing the events to Mark's incipient insanity (the uncanny), Agnes is revealed either as the embodiment of the suicide Lady Mildred, or as a calculating, independent woman who is after a title and a fortune. However, this section intends to show that the witch and the governess are closer to each other than one may think, their similarity lying in their both living outside the boundaries of patriarchy.

As has been introduced above, belief in witchcraft finds strong parallels in Irish fairy-lore. Lady Wilde explains that the *Sidhe* (Irish for spirit race) or *Feadh-Ree* (fairies) were once angels, until God cast them out of heaven because of their proud hearts.[130] In their fall, some of these fairies ended up on earth, some in the sea, and some in hell. The spirits who inhabit the earth and the sea are described as beautiful races, who live in fairy castles, enjoy music and dancing, and sometimes marry humans in the attempt to achieve the immortality that God has promised them. The fairies who fell to hell, though, are demoniacal, and are reminiscent of Lucifer in their pride, in the punishment to which they were subjected, and in their malevolence. These fairies live underneath the earth, and come to the surface only to tempt the living with the promise of whatever humans are ready to barter their souls for. These spirits are called witches, as are the persons whom they ensnare.

While Le Fanu was certainly familiar with the figure of the evil fairy in Irish folklore, he must have been aware also of the historical and fictional representation of the witch in a wider, European context, from the many articles that appeared in the *Dublin*

[130] Lady Wilde, pp. 68-71.

University Magazine both at the time when he was publishing his early stories and during his editorship.[131] In these texts, the prototypical witch is a widow or a spinster. She is believed to have signed a contract with the devil, who appears to her in the shape of a goat, a black cat, a black dog, a black man, or a man dressed in black with cloven feet and answering to the name of Robin. Such contracts enable witches to commit evil actions towards enemies such as killing their cattle, spoiling their butter, ruining their crops by the raising of storms, or even torturing and murdering them by placing pins and stones in their stomachs, after which they would vomit through tremendous fits and spasms. The witch finds advice and help in her familiar or imp, a spirit who, like her, can appear in the shape of a rabbit or hare, a cat, a toad, or a horse. The familiar summons her to the Sabbath on their master's order, and they fly to this promiscuous meeting on a broomstick. Because of her evil nature, the witch is believed to be unable to shed tears or to say the Lord's prayer. Further tests that can prove her guilty of witchcraft and thus condemn her to the stake are her being weighed against a Bible (if she proves lighter than the Holy Book she is guilty), or "swum" in water (her hands and feet tied together, she is thrown in a river or pond; if she floats, it means that the sacred water of baptism rejects her because of her crimes, alternatively she is embraced by God's water and drowns, despite her innocence).

Ainsworth's *Lancashire Witches* perfectly exemplifies the nineteenth century revived interest in witchcraft, featuring Mother Demdike and Mother Chattox, both widows who have sold their souls to the devil in order to gain power on Pendle Hill; mysterious appearances and disappearances of the witches in animal forms; Nancy Redfern being weighed against the Bible and swum in the river on suspicion of witchcraft; Jennet's imp in the shape of a black cat; Alice Nutter flying on a broomstick, unable to cry or to pray; the devil watching his victims disguised as a raven or a hound, and commanding

[131] I make reference mainly to the following anonymous articles appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine*: 'An Evening with the Witchfinders' (July 1847), 'Another Evening with the Witchfinders' (August 1847), 'A Third Evening with the Witchfinders' (April 1848), 'The Science and Tradition of the Supernatural' (May 1863), and 'Imposture and Credulity' (February 1866). For more articles on witchcraft and superstition see Bibliography.

them in the guise of an imposing black man; children vomiting pins and nails, milk turning sour and fire not burning, property boundaries shifting; lovers cursed out of jealousy, and the innocent Alizon Device being accused of witchcraft only because she descends from a line of witches. Of course, at the end of the novel, the hill is delivered from these dangerous women. However, the narrator sets a warning against a different kind of witch:

> Jennet was the last of the Lancashire Witches. Ever since then witchcraft has taken a new form with the ladies of the county – though their fascination and spells are as potent as ever. Few can now escape them – few desire to do so. But to all who are afraid of a bright eye and a blooming cheek, and who desire to adhere to a bachelor's condition – to such I should say, 'BEWARE OF THE WITCHES OF LANCASHIRE'.[132]

This warning is obviously meant as an ironic remark about the enticing beauty of the local girls. But if taken seriously, it reveals the threat embodied by a new generation of women who are capable of manipulating men by means of their potent physical attractiveness.

Agnes Marlyn, the evil spirit of Raby Hall, represents both the traditional and the modern witch, depending on whether the reader comes to an uncanny or marvellous resolution of this instance of the hesitancy of the fantastic. The reader who is willing to accept the supernatural can detect similarities between Agnes and the more famous Lancashire witches. Agnes appears at the Shadwells' door suddenly and rather mysteriously, just when she is needed. No concern about how the young governess has found out about a vacancy in this desolate country house while living in France is expressed by the Shadwells, nor do they request a reference from a previous employer, as was common practice. She simply presents herself and somehow persuades the Shadwells to employ her. Agnes soon begins to hold a strange power over Mark, while his daughter Rachel remarks that, when their conversation touches the subject of the old Lady Mildred and her desperate love, Agnes's face suddenly looks wicked and sinister, as if her usual playfulness gave way to 'a sort of malign revelation' [p. 126]. Rachel also notices that her

[132] Ainsworth, p. 376.

governess bears the same scar as the Gaze-Lady on her palm, which, interestingly, is in the shape of the star of Bethlehem. The star which Christians believe to have led the magi to Jesus' nativity also represents the fulfilment of the Star Prophecy in the Book of Numbers, which reads: 'I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab and destroy all the children of Sheth'.[133] The star-shaped scar of the witch, then, represents the fulfilment of a prophecy revolving around a significant appearance and, above all, involving the destruction of a whole lineage. Furthermore, Agnes points out that at times the scar pains her, as on the occasion of their visit to the chapel, thus strengthening the link with the traditional witch who finds holy places repulsive. And finally, later in the novel, she even admits to owning a little black cat, which visits her only when people mistreat her, listens to her complaints, and teaches her tricks on how to obtain revenge.

For the reader who dismisses the supernatural and attributes the extinction of the Shadwell family to Mark's insanity and suicide, the modern witch is nothing other than a calculating adventuress, perfectly represented by the suspicious foreign governess. In *The Victorian Governess* (1993), Kathryn Hughes investigates the figure of the governess, a figure who achieved popularity in reality as in fiction, around the mid-nineteenth century.[134] Drawing on private journals, conduct manuals, and advertisements in the press of the time, Hughes reveals the social and emotional tensions experienced by a woman who had to fill the role of a surrogate mother while being compelled to celibacy, and who felt that she did not belong to either the family or the servants. According to Hughes, the economic boom witnessed in the first half of the nineteenth century made it possible for an increasing number of *nouveaux riches* to employ a governess; and in fact, her very presence in the household became a prerequisite for those families who wished to display

[133] Numbers, 24:17, *King James' Bible*, www.kingjamesbibleonline.org [accessed March 2013].
[134] Kathryn Hughes, *The Victorian Governess* (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), p. xiii.

their middle-class status.[135] However, while more and more young women were being educated to become governesses in order to improve their situation or to maintain financial security, in the 1860s their number amounted to the exorbitant figure of 25,000, while the eligible households that could employ them was under 15,000.[136] High competition meant that employers could get the best at the cheapest price, sometimes as little as £10 a year, and in certain cases nothing at all beyond a bed, board, and travelling expenses; for the governess this meant the impossibility of saving for their old age, so that many had to face destitution after they retired.[137] Unfair remuneration, combined with solitude and the frustration of being limited to needlework, nursing and teaching, became a major cause for their falling into alcoholism or nervous problems (it seems to be no coincidence that in almost all asylums governesses constituted a third of female patients). For the unemployed, though, the prospect was even direr, with prostitution or starvation as the only alternatives.[138]

Hughes has argued that marriage was the only way out, but governesses residing in their employers' house were required to remain single. At a time when the role of a woman was mainly to be a wife and a mother, the spinster was pitied as someone who had failed in life.[139] The single status of the governess, though, was often considered more dangerous than pitiful, since it combined the frustrated sexual desire which Victorian psychiatrists attributed to celibacy with the sexual aggressiveness which was associated with the independent, working-class woman. The threat posed by the governess lay in the fact that, unlike the working-class woman, she lived at the heart of the middle-class household, and thus exposed its inhabitants to the influence of her 'unregulated sexuality'.[140] Numerous manuals were published in the mid-nineteenth century to advise both governesses and their

[135] Ibid., Ch. 2. See also Teresa Magnum, 'Sheridan Le Fanu's Ungovernable Governesses', *Studies in the Novel*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Summer 1997), pp. 214-37, p. 216
[136] Hughes, p. 22.
[137] Ibid., p. 45; Anon. 'Womanhood and its Mission', *Dublin University Magazine* (June 1859), pp. 696-711, p. 699.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Hughes, pp. 117-8.
[140] Ibid., p. 119.

employers on the best way to interact with each other, while Victorian social commentators like Harriet Martineau and Anna Jameson cautioned families against adventuresses who tried to obtain personal advantages through flattery and obsequiousness, or even 'hoped to catch a husband or an establishment of one or another degree of value'.[141] The mistress of the house, to whom the governess responded, should be warned never to befriend her, so as to avoid encouraging in their employee abuse of authority and a feeling of indispensability; and, at the same time, they should supervise their governess's behaviour towards the male inhabitant of the house, who was to be regarded as sexually vulnerable. This applied especially to foreign governesses, and the French in particular, who, though admired for their superior education and mastery of several languages, were also believed to be 'less tenacious of their dignity', sexually and morally lax.[142] The governess, then, became quickly associated with easy sex and money, that is, with the prostitute.

It is this image of the fallen woman which brings the governess closer to the figure of the witch as the angel who fell from heaven. As has been argued already in Chapter One with regards to Dinah Perfect's independence, woman was cast from Paradise because, like the fallen angel Lucifer, she rebelled against 'the hierarchical status quo'.[143] The modern witch, then, is a woman who does not live within the boundaries of patriarchy, who cannot or will not be a wife and a mother, who is sexual, and economically independent. Many characters answering the description of the modern witch can be found in Victorian literature, especially in the new branch of sensation fiction which became popular in the 1860s. Among these controversial women, Becky Sharp in William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848), Lucy Graham in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), and

[141] Ibid., p. 120; quote in Magnum, p. 222.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, p. 102.

Lydia Gwilt in Wilkie Collins's *Armadale* (1866) stand as cases in point.[144] All of them have humble origins, and become governesses not merely with the intent of supporting themselves through honest work, but with the specific purpose of gaining admittance to a prestigious home and working their way to the status of mistress through seduction and marriage, or blackmail. Gifted with handsome looks, extraordinary wits, and theatrical talent, they play the role of the much admired "angel in the house", but eventually reveal themselves as demons instead, as the fallen angels which they really are. Thus, Becky Sharp is depicted as a calculating seductress, an unfaithful wife, a prostitute, a thief, a cheater, a liar with no moral; Lucy Graham is exposed as a bigamist, an arsonist, and a murderer; and Lydia Gwilt, in the course of her short life, becomes a forger, a temptress, an adulteress, a poisoner, a convict, and a blackmailer.

Like her fictional colleagues, Agnes Marlyn also personifies the Victorian witch. She is gifted with an extraordinary beauty, boasting 'deep grey eyes', glowing red lips, 'rich, wavy hair', and a 'pretty little foot' [I, pp. 224, 233, II, p. 144]. But above all, she is described as an extremely clever woman, whose skills go well beyond teaching piano or French to the master's daughter. In fact, her genius for numbers earns Raby Hall a saving of several hundreds a year, and the prospect of a much larger improvement of the family income in the near future. She is more practical than a man, since not even Carmel Sherlock could rescue the estate from bankruptcy, and the family attorney goes as far as to admit that 'he never met a professed accountant who could match that girl in disentangling complications, and reducing confusion to order' [III, p. 232]. Therefore, although the Shadwells are a bankrupt family at the start, they would not forego such a governess for Rachel, especially considering Mark's pride in the family's past splendour and in his ambitions for a similarly glorious future. However, it seems that the Shadwells are not

[144] Le Fanu's most famous governess, Mme de la Rougierre in *Uncle Silas*, cannot fail to be mentioned in a discussion on governesses. However, in this section I am considering enticing governesses who use their looks (not only their wits) to manipulate their employers. Therefore, Madame, who is represented as a grotesque parody of femininity, cannot find a place among the bewitching governesses of sensation fiction. For an analysis of the character of Mme de la Rougierre, I refer the reader to Magnum's article.

familiar with the many manuals which were circulating at that time, since they do not recognise in Agnes the stereotypical opportunist against whom the press was warning its readers.

Agnes arrives at Raby Hall straight from France. Although, unlike Becky Sharp, she has no French origins, Agnes has lived and studied there for most of her life, so that her 'slight foreign accent' and her lascivious behaviour complete the clichéd image of the French woman [I, p. 39].[145] Agnes' tasks are initially concerned only with Rachel's education and entertainment in the solitude of the countryside. However, Agnes is described as too artful and ambitious to let herself become the prey of frustration and loneliness. She soon becomes a daughter-like figure to Amy Shadwell, so that Rachel begins to feel suspicious about her governess's intentions: '[w]hy should there be loving and liking so soon? What, in seven months' time, has she done for them, or they for her, that could found a serious sentiment of that kind? Was it a suspicion of a sham, with the impatience that accompanies it?' [I, p. 67]. In befriending the governess, Amy permits a shift in authority from herself to her subordinate, who soon overpowers her in the role of domestic decision-maker. Furthermore, Amy also fails to protect her husband from the seductive lasciviousness of their "Frenchasised" employee, thus losing her spouse's support against the subversive governess at first, and her very status as mistress of the house afterwards.

Agnes's sexual laxity is emphasised on several occasions: when still at the French school, she is said to have left her rooms at least five times at night, without permission, and by means of a key improperly obtained, to meet with a gentleman who had plans of marrying her; at Raby, she entertains a secret correspondence with Sir Roke (who was the gentleman she had met in France); she seduces Mark into an adulterous relationship, and finally betrays him with his friend Clayton, who had been invited to the estate with the

[145] Note that in both the previous versions Mlle de Barras was French.

specific purpose of arranging a marriage with Rachel. The common denominator in Agnes's conquests is not only a desire for financial and social success, but mere sexual pleasure, since she still conspires with Roke while flirting with Mark, and has an affair with Clayton when she is already the mistress of the house, and cannot therefore gain any further power from such an alliance. In her drive for money and sexual hunger she comes to represent the prostitute and the fallen woman, the very creature against which the Latin inscription on the walls of Wynderfel warns, and which Carmel Sherlock decodes for Mark Shadwell as the immoral woman of the fifth chapter of the Book of Proverbs: 'Remove thy way far from her. / Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel. / Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell' [I, p. 147].

The fallen woman was commonly associated with the figure of Eve and, by extension, with the snake. Unsurprisingly, Agnes is said to have luxurious wavy hair, and is seen gliding sinuously along the corridors at night [II, p. 224, I, p. 77]. While her outfit is very conservative, there is always a *tournure* (that is, a twist) in what she wears, which is usually given by an apple-red scarf wrapped around her neck [I, p. 232]. And above all, she is revealed as the snake disguised as angel when honest Robert, the rector's brother, associates her with Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Geraldine in *Christabel* (1816):

> A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy,
> And the lady's eyes shrunk in her head,
> Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye,
> And with somewhat of malice and more of dread
> She looked askance. [II, p. 227]

Agnes is a witch and a fallen woman because she places herself beyond the rules of contemporary society; she is not a threat to patriarchal security merely because a hypothetical child of hers might be Roke's, Mark's, or Clayton's, but rather because her desire for independence and her claim of self-sufficiency can provoke the final destruction of the lineage if she decides not to have any children.

Ainsworth scholar Stephen Carver has argued that the fallen women in *The Lancashire Witches* succumb to Satan because they know that they stand a much better chance with him than with God.[146] The witches of Lancashire, like the modern witches of Victorian literature, are often sinners by necessity. However, the sexual perversion which characterises the latter can be interpreted as a form of criticism of the unjust social rules to which they are submitted:

> [I]n their obvious role of gothic Other to patriarchal versions of femininity, they are allowed, like a medieval fool, to say and do things that would be taboo outside the carnival realm to which such figures belong. Like a playful regiment of Bertha Masons, they torment male authority figures, personify the frustration of the culturally-imprisoned female characters, and ultimately facilitate the true desires of such heroines, although they themselves are invariably destroyed in the process.[147]

In the specific case of *A Lost Name*, the witch Agnes Marlyn is also punished for her subversiveness in the end. However, it is important to notice that the real villain of the novel is not so much the independent, sexually liberated governess, as the male figure who has caused her fall. Sir Roke is the man who has seduced Agnes in France and then moved back to England without considering the repercussions that his behaviour would have for the young woman, and unsurprisingly he is the first man to die. Furthermore, and most importantly, Agnes embodies the fulfilment of Lady Mildred's curse against the Shadwells. Mark Shadwell, like his ancestors, has misused his wife and caused her death; therefore, he also is punished with death.

Both Lady Mildred and Amy Shadwell experience a similar kind of fall into insanity which takes the shape of erotomania. Erotomania, or love-madness, was diagnosed as a form of madness which usually afflicted women who were mistreated or abandoned by the men they loved. Women who suffered mental instability because of love tended to react in two opposing ways: either they yielded to violent instincts towards

---

[146] Stephen Carver, 'The Lancashire Witches', *Literary Encyclopedia*, § 3, www.litencyc.com [accessed January 2013].
[147] Ibid.

themselves and/or the source of their pain (mania); or they succumbed to despair and inaction (melancholia).[148] In *A Lost Name*, Lady Mildred exemplifies the first case, in that she commits suicide and casts a revengeful curse against the man who broke her heart. Amy Shadwell, instead, is the melancholy woman whose unrequited love is silently endured, until it provokes the epileptic fit which finally kills her. Although both cases are only sketched, Le Fanu shows an obvious interest in love-madness in this novel, and will further develop this theme in *The Wyvern Mystery*, which will be the subject of analysis in Chapter Three. Like *A Lost Name*, *The Wyvern Mystery* also features two women who suffer from erotomania (in its manic and melancholy forms) as a reaction to a broken heart. Furthermore, also in the later novel madness becomes the natural version of the supernatural curse, and the man who causes it, who likewise belongs to a line of men who misused their wives, is not allowed to live.[149]

As far as *A Lost Name* is concerned, though, Mark Shadwell is the man against whom Le Fanu warns his readers. But while he is obviously the villain, neither of his two victims can be recognised as a heroine. Of Agnes Marlyn, the perverse and self-sufficient witch, much has already been said. Her passive rival in love Amy Shadwell, on the other hand, gets no better reward in Le Fanu's world. Bed-ridden by a nervous exhaustion caused by her inability to accept Mark's indifference, Amy is said to be 'no more good in the house than a picture, [...] such a drag, a dead weight' [I, p. 161]. Her feelings for her husband are noble, deep, and genuine, but nevertheless, she remains passive before circumstances, and even blames herself for Mark's detachment. She dies in a fit provoked by events that her passivity contributed to producing. Le Fanu's ideal woman, then, can be found half way between these two extremes.[150] Rachel Shadwell is said to be wise and romantic, and a very affectionate and submissive daughter. She grows up in awe of her

---

[148] On erotomania see Chapter Three below.
[149] Madness as a natural version of the supernatural curse is another instance of "equilibrium", in the opposition of natural/supernatural explanations.
[150] The dichotomy between ideal and monstrous women will be subject of discussion in Chapter Three on *The Wyvern Mystery*.

father, and tries to do everything to please him. However, she refuses to compromise on her matrimonial choice, here echoing Violet Darkwell and her strong temper. As she has already told Agnes, she will not marry for money only and therefore rejects her father's plan, despite this resulting in her disinheritance and estrangement from her own house. However, her integrity and endurance are finally rewarded with a happy marriage to her beloved Charles Mordant, financial prosperity (after Mark admits being wrong on the matter), an heir, and sanity.

Written shortly after the terrible failure of *All in the Dark*, *A Lost Name* marks Le Fanu's return to the supernatural with a strongly sensational story of murder, adultery, and occult powers. Despite its poor reception, the novel offers a further perspective on Le Fanu's position within the topical debate concerning alternative spiritualities and woman's position in society. Once again, the theme of madness is employed to issue a warning to the reader. First of all, Le Fanu represents the dangerous and not uncommon practice of silencing unorthodox believers by accusing them of suffering from hallucinations. The visionary Carmel Sherlock is accused of insanity on the basis of his prophecies. However, Le Fanu absolves him of all charges and instead depicts the rationalist Mark Shadwell as the actual madman, thus expressing his support of Swedenborg's doctrine and his aversion to gross materialism. The second threat against which Le Fanu cautions his reader is personified by both Mark Shadwell as the bad husband, and the perverse woman as the modern witch. Like his ancestors before him, Mark has misused his wife to the point of driving her insane, and insanity becomes the very curse that comes back to afflict the lineage and leads it to its final destruction. Moreover, the curse takes the shape of the sexual woman who is sterile in her desire for independence, thus reinforcing the figure of the heroine as the strong-willed woman who is nevertheless a submissive wife to a husband who loves her, a theme which is greatly developed in *The Wyvern Mystery*.

CHAPTER THREE

The Monstrous Feminine: *The Wyvern Mystery* (1869)

The Wyvern Mystery was first published in Le Fanu's *Dublin University Magazine* between February and November 1869 in ten instalments, and was then released by the Tinsley Brothers of London as a three-volume novel in the same year. Le Fanu's relationship with the Tinsleys dated back to 1863, when the English company agreed to publish *The House by the Churchyard*, thus launching the author onto the British market.[1] William Tinsley explained in his *Random Recollections of an Old Publisher* (1900) that he believed that *The House by the Churchyard* was definitely Le Fanu's best work of fiction, and it 'sold very well indeed'.[2] However, Walter E. Edens has pointed out that sales were in fact far smaller than Tinsley remembered, and that the only review which appeared in the *Athenaeum* was (unjustly) 'harsh and shallow'.[3] Le Fanu's other publisher, Richard Bentley, was clearly not deterred by the poor sales and the bad review, and he became Le Fanu's second English publisher.[4] From 1864 most of Le Fanu's fiction was published by these two well established London companies, and he used his connections with both, and the fact that they were competitors, to try to increase his returns. As shown in Chapter One on *All in the Dark*, Le Fanu expressed his dissatisfaction with Bentley's financial terms based on the fact that other houses would offer much more for the deal. Le Fanu might

---

[1] By that time Le Fanu had already published anonymously *The Cock and Anchor* (1845), *The Fortunes of Colonel Torlogh O'Brien* (1847), and *Ghost Stories and Tales of Mysteries* (1851), all with Irish companies, and had personally undertaken to issue *The House by the Churchyard* in triple-decker form in Dublin, with major changes intended to remove material which might have alienated English readers; see Edens, pp. 85-92.

[2] William Tinsley, *Random Recollections of an Old Publisher* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co), Vol. 2, pp. 222-4, p. 223.

[3] Edens, p. 88.

[4] Edens has pointed out that, when offered the copyright of *Wylder's Hand* in 1864, Bentley affirmed that he was familiar with Le Fanu's work. This may have been due to the fact that *The House by the Churchyard* had been well advertised in the press, and also on the verso of the title page of the seventh edition of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's best-selling novel *Lady Audley's Secret*; see Edens, pp. 93-4, 164. Advertisements for the novel appeared in the *Athenaeum* on the following dates: 6 December 1862, 27 December 1862, 3 January 1863, 24 January1863, 31 January 1863, 7 February 1863, 14 February 1863, 21 February 1863, 28 February 1863, 14 March 1863, 21 March 1863, 28 March 1863, 18 April 1863, 25 April 1863, 2 May 1863, 9 May 1863; see also the *Examiner*, 10 January 1863.

have bluffed in the attempt to get a higher offer, but he was certainly in touch with Tinsley at that time, since he published both *The Tenants of Malory* (thus delaying the serialisation of *A Lost Name*) and *Haunted Lives* with the company, in 1867 and 1868 respectively. *The Wyvern Mystery* was the last novel issued by the Tinsley Brothers, and Le Fanu did not go back to Bentley until the early 1870s with *Chronicles of Golden Friars* (1871) and *In a Glass Darkly*.

While Le Fanu's correspondence with Bentley has been meticulously documented in Walter E. Eden's unpublished thesis, no trace remains of his communication with Tinsley. In *A Minor Victorian and His Publisher*, Eden has described Tinsley as a careless manager, 'the mad-cap of London publishers [who] never kept records on any of the more than two thousand publications he issued in his thirty years of business'.[5] As Tinsley's employee Edmund Downey recalled in his *Twenty Years Ago* (1905), the publisher 'had no respect for account books. He kept his financial affairs mostly in his own head', which explains the lack of records concerning most of his publications.[6] Furthermore, Downey affirmed that Tinsley 'was never in the habit of fixing up long-winded agreements. A simple exchange of letters was our usual style', a method which could have still proved efficient, if Tinsley's motto had not been '[l]etters answer themselves'.[7] Therefore, except for a praise of *The House by the Churchyard*, which Tinsley included in his autobiography, no mention of any of Le Fanu's other novels can be found in his papers. And about Le Fanu himself, all Tinsley briefly stated was that he 'was a very generous and very pleasant author to do business with, and although rather a prolific letter writer to his publisher, I do not remember one letter from him of a disagreeable kind'.[8]

---

[5] Eden, p. 90.
[6] Edmund Downey, *Twenty Years Ago: a Book of Anecdotes Illustrating Literary Life in London* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1905), p. 5.
[7] Ibid., pp. 24, 26. Percy Fitzgerald also commented that '[w]ith this excellent man [...] we have had innumerable transactions – I never had a scrap of writing in the shape of an agreement. His word and my word were sufficient and made the bond', footnote p. 24.
[8] Tinsley, p. 223.

The Wyvern Mystery is the lengthened and revised version of a short story that Le Fanu had published anonymously in the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1839, under the title 'A Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family', as part of the narratives collected by the fictional Father Purcell. The short story revolves around the young and tame Fanny Richardson, the heir of a distinguished family from County Tyrone, who is married off by her parents to the frank but kind Lord Glenfallen, a man she does not love but whom she highly respects. The couple move to his desolate castle in the Irish countryside where, after seeing an ominous black curtain fall before her eyes and then mysteriously disappear, Fanny is immediately frightened with stories of supernatural curses. The servant explains that, in the past, every time someone saw the black veil a member of the Glenfallen family died. However, her words are dismissed as mere superstition. In the following days and nights Fanny's room is visited by an old, blind, ghostly woman, who claims to be the real Lady Glenfallen, and who threatens to kill Fanny unless she gives up her position. These events are received with extreme unease by the Lord, who explains that the woman is mad, but does not justify her presence in the castle. When the strange woman, whose name is Flora Van Kemp, tries to murder Fanny, she is arrested and executed. Her alleged husband goes mad with guilt and eventually cuts his throat.

The novel version changes the plot of the short story significantly and, although it loses in power by trying to fill a third volume with the tedious account of the female protagonist's later days as a widow and mother, it offers interesting insights into Le Fanu's position regarding insanity and femininity. Like all of his novels published after 1864, *The Wyvern Mystery* is set in England. Alice Maybell is an orphan who was raised by the old and vindictive squire of Wyvern, father of two dissipated men in their forties, Charles and Harry Fairfield. Amy and Charles fall in love and get married, thus provoking the ire of old lecherous Fairfield, who was planning to marry the young girl himself. No longer welcome at Wyvern, the couple move to Carwell Grange, the isolated country house Charles has

inherited from his late mother. Here, Alice sees the black drape fall and is told of the curse of the Fairfields. The servant, Mildred Tarnley, explains how the men in the Fairfield family have always had a very spirited temper, and have always mistreated their wives. After one of Charles's ancestors left his wife to die of a broken heart, all the Fairfields moving to the Grange have had their wives taken away by violent death or madness. Alice is frightened but does not pay too much attention to the story, her thoughts occupied by her husband's distress about debts, and her pregnancy. However, she soon finds herself attacked in her bed by the same old, blind, ghostly woman of the short story, here renamed Bertha Velderkaust. The Dutch woman also claims to be Charles' legitimate wife and Charles accuses her of being mad and does not give any explanation for her presence in the house, although he admits that Bertha was his former lover. Bertha is imprisoned for attempted murder and Charles, distracted with guilt for his behaviour towards both women, dies of brain fever years before Bertha kills herself or is killed in prison. After Charles' death Amy falls dangerously ill with grief, and the doctor fears for her life and her mental stability. A son and heir is born but Charles's penniless brother Harry replaces him with a sick changeling in order to inherit the estate once the baby is declared dead. Amy recovers, adopts a girl, and moves away from Carwell. Years later, mother and son are reunited, the boy marries his step-sister and they all live happily at Wyvern.

The Wyvern Mystery returns to and develops the theme of domestic abuse as the cause of erotomania, which Le Fanu had begun to sketch in *A Lost Name* with regard to the characters of Lady Mildred and Amy Shadwell. *The Wyvern Mystery* also features an unjust man who, in breaking his women's hearts, becomes the cause of their nervous conditions. Bertha Velderkaust and Alice Maybell experience a fall into erotomania, of which they take the manic and the melancholy form, respectively. Le Fanu's profound interest in the subject is not unusual. The theme of love-madness can be found in literature of all eras, and the attempt to define such a form of insanity from a scientific perspective

also dates back centuries. According to Philip W. Martin, the term erotomania was well established in the language of English medicine as early as 1640, when Jacques Ferrand's *De la maladie d'amour, ou melancholie érotique* (1623) was translated and published in Britain under the title *Erotomania*.[9] In his renowned *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Robert Burton dedicated hundreds of pages to the history, symptomatology, and reputed cures to the ailment of love melancholy, from classical, through medieval literature, to his own time. According to Burton, an attack could be brought on by various causes: humours, the stars, diet, climate, idleness, dancing, kissing, or amorous tales. The chances for recovery were discouragingly limited: a third party persuading the lover out of his affliction, the removal of the cause of affliction, or, most effectively, the gratification of the man's desire.[10] However, the crucial point of his meticulous work was that love could also be a disease of the mind and not only of the body, affecting 'both imagination and reason', an idea which preceded nineteenth century psychiatry by some two hundred years.[11]

Helen Small has pointed out in *Love's Madness* (1996) that until the late seventeenth century this condition was depicted as a male malady, and attributed to the positive figure of the tragic hero.[12] She then adds that it is not clear how and when erotomania changed from being a male malady of the tragic hero to a female malady of the pathetic deserted woman or of the sexualised demon.[13] What I believe is clear, instead, is how fathers, husbands, and doctors manipulated the nebulous scientific theories in order to place women under their authority, claiming that women's natural constitution was more easily upset and therefore required guidance. A first step towards this reclassification was made by Erasmus Darwin at the end of the eighteenth century. In *Zoonomia* (1794-96), Darwin theorised that erotomania was not a complaint brought about by a mixture of the

---

[9] Philip W. Martin, *Mad Women in Romantic Writing* (Brighton: Harvester, 1987), p. 1.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 3 Vols (Oxford, 1989-94), Vol. 3, p. 58, quoted in Helen Small, *Love's Madness: Medicine, the Novel, and Female Insanity, 1800-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 6.
[12] Small, pp. 6-7.
[13] Ibid, p. 7.

body's humours, but rather a disease that affected human reason, and which was more frequent in women on account of their higher sensibility, more delicate passions, and refined tastes.[14] Erotomania could either produce minor or violent muscular action to gain or avoid the object of interest, or cause despair and inaction. In the first case it would take the name of mania, and in the second it would be termed melancholia.[15]

The sub-categorisation of erotomania into mania and melancholia became the basis of nineteenth century psychiatry and was given equal importance in the fictional representation of madwomen as either feverish, passive figures, or strong-willed, revengeful monsters (examples below). In fact, David Skae, superintendent of the Royal Edinburgh Asylum, explained in the course of his *Morisonian Lectures on Insanity for 1873*, that 'up to the last 12 years or little more, our only method of classifying the insane was that offered by Pinel, modified by Esquirol, and was founded entirely upon *mental symptoms*'.[16] Philippe Pinel and his disciple Jean-Étienne Dominique Esquirol concurred that the environment was the cause of the imbalance of passions which ended in madness, and that women, because of their natural sensibility, were particularly susceptible victims.[17] Esquirol classified erotomania as a form of monomania, since it focused on one specific object, and thus defined the disease in the entry he wrote for the *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales* (1812-22):

> L'érotomanie consiste dans un amour excessif, tantôt pour un objet réel, tantôt pour un objet imaginaire; dans cette maladie, l'imagination seule est lésée; il y a erreur de l'entendement. C'est une affection mentale, dans laquelle les idées amoureuses

[14] Erasmus Darwin, *Zoonomia; or the Laws of Organic Life*, 2 Vols (Philadelphia: Edward Earle, 1818), Vol. 2, p. 275. Darwin started from the premise that the object of love was beauty, in the pleasure that it gave to the senses, and argued that such object could be recognised firstly through the sense of sight. Therefore, brute animals could not partake of such pleasure because of their inaccurate sense of vision, and men and women who had not cultivated their taste for beauty, through art, poetry, and romance, were less liable to sentimental love; p. 311. For a contextualisation of Darwin's theories see John Brewer, *Sentimental Murder* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005), Ch. 7.

[15] Darwin, p. 300.

[16] David Skae, 'The Morisonian Lectures on Insanity for 1873', *British Journal of Psychiatry* (1873), No. 19, pp. 340-55, p. 341.

[17] Martin, Introduction.

> sont fixes et dominantes comme les idées religieuses sont fixes et dominantes dans la théomania ou mélancolie religieuse.[18]

He proceeded to explain that, contrary to nymphomania and satyriasis, where the disease came from the reproductive organs, whose irritation finally affected the brain, erotomania originated in the *mind* and debilitated the body in two major ways: through hallucinations, despair, loss of appetite and sleep and, most importantly, a delirious kind of fever which caused chloroses and hysteria (melancholia); and also through onanism, nymphomania, and satyriasis when it affected the generative organs (mania). Erotomania, it was held, might lead to suicide.

As Martin and Small have pointed out, madwomen in the literature of the early nineteenth century inspired pity because, in their weakness, they confirmed the role of man as the protector of both body and mind. Thus, particularly in the verse tradition, mad women told their own stories, looking for sympathy in their readers.[19] When women's position in society began to change during the Victorian Age, the attribution and fictional representation of female madness undertook a significant shift. Women's emancipation, which will be the subject of further analysis in Chapter Four on *The Rose and the Key*, was interpreted as a threat to man's power, hence the urge to reposition rebellious women within the boundaries of the home. While madness had been considered as a female malady for over a century, on the basis of woman's "natural" sensibility, Victorian psychiatry began to strongly stress the determinant role played by the reproductive organs, thus extending the potential risk of insanity to the whole of womankind, and not, as Erasmus Darwin had claimed, to the most refined part of it. Furthermore, this disease was no longer looked upon with sympathetic eyes but rather warned against as a hidden

---

[18] 'Erotomania consists of an excessive love, sometimes for a real object, and some other times for an imaginary object; in this malady, only the imagination is damaged: there is a mistake in understanding. It is a mental affection, where the ideas related to love are as fixed and predominant as the ideas related to religion are fixed and predominant in theomania or religious melancholy'; Jean- Étienne Dominique Esquirol, 'Érotomania', in *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales, par une société de médecins et de chirurgiens*, 60 Vols (Paris: Panckoucke, 1812-22), Vol. 13, pp. 186-92, 186, my translation.

[19] Martin, Introduction; Small, Preface.

menace lying in every woman's body. The erotomaniac was now configured as ready to burst out in a paroxysm of jealous violence if the disease was not detected in time by the expert eyes of the new alienist. The uterus continued to be associated with insanity but, as Elaine Showalter has pointed out, '[w]hen anatomists proved that the uterus did not migrate, doctors relocated the centers of hysteria to the nervous system'.[20] Therefore, menstruation (or the lack of it) was considered determinant of the mental stability of a woman, since blood blockages were believed to flood the brain, or to provoke indirect strain through the violent agitation induced in the heart and arteries.[21]

In *The Physiognomy of Mental Diseases* (1840), Alexander Morison, President of the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh, developed Esquirol's studies on erotomania by adding to the possible causes not only disappointed love, but also irritation produced by herpetic eruptions, acrid discharges, and determination of blood.[22] Morison depicted "monomania with love" as a passion which took control of the reason, and included a mental as well as a physical affection, being a compound of both sentiment and animal propensity. When the sentiment predominated the disease was termed erotomania (previously melancholia), whereas when the animal propensity was more conspicuous, the result was nymphomania or satyriasis (previously mania). However, the interesting point is that nymphomania was no longer a separate form of insanity arising from a physical irritation of the reproductive system, but rather a different expression of the *same* passion, which, in women, was constantly trying to come to the surface:

> When the reason is thus controuled by the passion of love, the character of the insane state is modified by the predominance of the sentiment, or of the animal propensity; when the sentiment predominates, [...] the patient is disposed to silence and melancholy, to lose his appetite and sleep, to become thin and to have febrile symptoms [...]; but in those in whom reason is overturned, and in consequence the power of self-controul weakened, the animal propensity is, [...] more or less developed; at the same time there is in females a struggle between the modesty, natural to the sex, and the lasciviousness, which, when wholly unrestrained,

[20] Elaine Showalter, *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* (London: Picador, 1997), p. 15.
[21] Martin, p. 31.
[22] Alexander Morison, *The Physiognomy of Mental Diseases* (London: Longman & Co., 1843), pp. 127-9.

> constitutes Nymphomania; upon other subjects the patient may be able to talk rationally.
> Erotomania is met with more frequently in females than in males, in whom, when deprived of reason, and under the influence of unbridled desire, a tendency to unnatural practices is a form this disorder sometimes assumes.[23]

These unnatural practices were labelled "moral insanity" by J. C. Pritchard, physician at the Bristol Royal Infirmary and at St Peter's Hospital, and, from 1845, one of the first three Commissioners in Lunacy. An admirer of Esquirol, and his populariser in England, Pritchard defined moral insanity as 'a morbid perversion of the natural feelings, affections, and active powers, without any illusion or erroneous conviction impressed upon the understanding: it sometimes co-exists with an apparently unimpaired state of intellectual faculties'.[24] As Sally Shuttleworth notes in her work on *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* (1996), Pritchard's theory was revolutionary in that it did not imply the presence of outward signs of madness, thus claiming the total power of the doctor as the sole interpreter of the human mind.[25] If Romantic madwomen told their own tragic stories, their Victorian successors had their stories told by others, usually male authorities, and many times these stories were distorted in the telling.

Alienists' authority in the detection of insanity, which often led to the wrongful confinement of sane but rebellious women, was representative of men's interest in keeping their wives and daughters safe and confined to the domestic sphere. In parallel, Victorian fiction revealed men's fear of a new generation of women in the increasing dichotomy of ideal and monstrous women, whose love madness was exploited to inspire sympathy for the deserted angel, and terror of the strong-willed, independent demon.[26] Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *Lucretia* (1846) is a case in point. Lucretia Clavering and Susan Mivers are half-sisters, born of the same mother from a successful and an embarrassing match respectively.

---

[23] Ibid., pp. 126-27.
[24] J. C. Pritchard, *A Treatise on Insanity and Other Disorders Affecting the Mind* (London: Sherwood, Gilbert, and Piper, 1835), p. 12.
[25] Sally Shuttleworth, *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology*, p. 49.
[26] Le Fanu's ideal of femininity has been briefly introduced in the previous chapters; see the discussion on Dinah/Violet, Chapter One, pp. 84-90, and on Agnes/Amy/Rachel, Chapter Two, Section 3.

Lucretia is the heiress of an immense fortune and, from her childhood, has proved stronger and more determined than any of her sex, having 'a temper so vehement, so self-willed and sternly imperious, so obstinately bent upon attaining its object, so indifferently contemptuous of warning, reproof, coaxing, or punishment'.[27] Susan, her opposite, is born of a marriage with a man of a lower class, which cost her mother the estrangement from both home and her family's affections. After her mother's death, Susan is raised by a clergyman, and always proves humble and obedient. Both young women are in love with William Mainwaring who, although attached to Susan, somehow gets entangled in an engagement to Lucretia.

When Susan hears the news, she bears it with composure, but slowly declines in health to what is foreseen as a certain death from a broken heart. The condition is described with a sentimentalism which aims to raise sympathy for the ideal woman:

> "Poor, dear, dear Susan!"
> "Susan behaved like an *angel*; and when I broached it to her, I thought she was calm; and I am sure she prayed with her whole heart that both might be happy". […] She fancied she could die happy if she could remove that cloud from his brows [William's remorse], that shadow from his conscience.
> Die; for she thought not of life. She loved gently, quietly, – not with the vehement passion that belongs to stronger natures; but it was the love of which the young and the pure have died.[28]

However, when William finally breaks his engagement with Lucretia because of his love for Susan, the protagonist promises revenge and then falls into immorality and from this to insanity. Here, the novel offers the perfect example of how an extraordinarily beautiful and feminine woman can hide inside herself the unsuspected germs of moral insanity. In her descent into madness, Lucretia kills two husbands, makes attempts on the life of her sister, and finally murders her own son (whose identity was unknown to her). The reader sees her last in the asylum:

---

[27] Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Lucretia; or, the Children of Night*, 2 Vols (Leipzig: Bernh. Tauchnitz Jun., 1846), Vol. 1, p. 45.
[28] Ibid., pp. 133, 135, my italics.

> Lucretia Dalibard – a grisly, squalid, ferocious mockery of a human being, more appalling and more fallen that Dante ever fabled in his spectres, than Swift ever scoffed in his Yahoos! Only, where all other feature seems to have lost its stamp of humanity, still burns with unquenchable fever the red, devouring eye. [...]
> For days, for weeks, that awful maniac will preserve obstinate, unbroken silence [...]. Then, out from prolonged silence, without cause or warning, will ring, peal after peal [...], the frightful laugh.[29]

Lucretia's terrifying laugh and looks precede by one year the figure that has become the icon of Victorian paranoia with insanity and, particularly, female madness: Charlotte Brontë's Bertha Mason. In *Jane Eyre* (1847), soon after her arrival at Thornfield, the namesake protagonist hears 'a curious laugh – distinct, formal, mirthless [...] as tragic, as preternatural a laugh as any I ever heard', a laugh which 'passed off in a clamorous peal that seemed to echo in every lonely chamber'.[30] That laugh belongs to Bertha, Mr Rochester's once beautiful wife, whose madness, in the form of moral insanity, had turned her into an indefinable monstrous creature:

> What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.[31]

Feminist critics such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have pointed out how Bertha's insanity is not simply the consequence of her excesses, but rather depends on an inescapable taint inherited from her mother, and, most of all, the rejection, abandonment, and confinement at the hand of her own husband.[32] Rochester's guilt later plays a central role in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, her 1966 prequel to *Jane Eyre*, but is already dealt with in a significantly different way in Le Fanu's short story and novel, which bear a striking resemblance to Brontë's work.

---

[29] Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 273.
[30] Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 108.
[31] Ibid., p. 291.
[32] Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, eds, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, pp. 336-71.

Similarities between Brontë's and Le Fanu's stories were observed already at the end of the nineteenth century. In a review on *Purcell Papers* of 19 June 1880, the commentator noticed that '"A Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family" reminds one of an incident in *Jane Eyre*', without taking into account that the Le Fanu's story was written almost a decade before Brontë's novel, and only reissued in a collection in 1880.[33] Le Fanu and Brontë scholars have pointed out that, in fact, it is possible that Charlotte Brontë had read and been influenced by Le Fanu's early story. In the chapter on the Brontës, which appeared in the thirteenth volume of *The Cambridge History of English Literature* (1917), A. A. Jack argues that Brontë was a habitual reader of the *Dublin University Magazine*:

> Charlotte Brontë herself, in requesting Messrs Aylett & Jones to send out review copies of the *Poems*, mentions alone among Irish papers the *Dublin University Magazine*. A favourable notice appeared in writing the editor to thank him for it, 6th October, 1846, she signs herself, 'Your grateful and constant reader'. Later, 9th October, 1847, she makes a special request that Messrs Elder & Smith should send *Jane Eyre* to the same review. It is not improbable that a forgotten remembrance of Le Fanu's story, read years before, supplied what was never a fertile inventiveness with the machinery it wanted.[34]

As further evidence of this indebtedness, Jack quotes an exchange of correspondence between Brontë and W. M. Thackeray (via her editors): on 23 October 1847, Thackeray wrote that '[t]he plot of the story is one with which I am familiar', a statement that seemed to surprise Brontë.[35] A few days later, on 28 October, she replied that '[t]he plot of *Jane Eyre* may be a hackneyed one; Mr Thackeray remarks that it is familiar to him; but having read comparatively few novels, I never chanced to meet with it, and I thought it original'.[36] Although it is probable that Thackeray was alluding to his personal experience of dealing

---

[33] Anon., '*The Purcell Papers*', *Saturday Review*, 19 June 1880, pp. 802-3, p. 802.
[34] A. A. Jack, 'The Brontës', in A. W. Ward, A. R. Waller, eds, *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, 15 Vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964-67), Vol. 13, pp. 403-7. Edna Kenton also points out that in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857), the *Dublin University Magazine* appears with *Blackwood's* in the list of Brontë's reading sources; see Edna Kenton, 'A Forgotten Creator of Ghosts – Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Possible Inspirer of the Brontës', in Gary Crawford et al., eds, *Reflections in a Glass Darkly*, pp. 83-95, p. 87.
[35] Margaret Smith, ed., *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë: With a Selection of Letters by Family and Friends*, 3 Vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Vol. 2, p. 319.
[36] Ibid., p. 553.

with his own insane wife, a fact of which Brontë was unaware, Jack claims that 'A Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family' 'was just one of those stories eminently adapted for floating in the back of the mind', a theory held also by Victor Sage, who interprets Le Fanu's change of the name of the madwoman from Flora to Bertha as 'a nod to Brontë'.[37]

The Wyvern Mystery never achieved the popularity of *Jane Eyre*, and a second edition was not issued until 1889. However, the reviews were not totally negative. In fact, on 25 September 1869, the *Athenaeum* praised the frightening contents of the novel:

> [B]y those many persons who delight in strong hysterical emotions and are of opinion that the romance-writer labours within the proper province of his art when he alternately freezes the reader's heart and causes his hair to stand on end by pictures of eccentric vice and cruel violence, a rush will be made to the libraries for the new tale of the novelist, whose present performance surpasses all his previous wild stories in sensational inhumanity.[38]

The reviewer continues by stressing the author's 'cleverness' and 'cunning workmanship', especially in the drawing of the three Fairfields, whom he defines as 'creatures of human flesh and blood, surcharged with some of the most odious qualities of the race that they dishonour'.[39] Charles Fairfield is recognised as the most important character in the novel. His 'selfishness and moral imbecility' induce him to first ruin Bertha Velderkaust, and then marry Alice Maybell, thus doing her 'the greatest injury [...] in his power to inflict'.[40] Despite his abhorrent nature, his role is decisive to the plot so that 'after his death the interest of the tale sensibly diminishes, and more than once in the course of the third volume the threads of the narrative seem to be falling from the weaver's hand, whilst he appears to be in doubt how to work them into an appropriate ending'.[41]

---

[37] Respectively, Ward and Waller, eds, p. 407; and Sage, *Le Fanu's Gothic*, p. 20. Thackeray's wife Isabella Shaw started to show signs of mental instability after the birth of their third child in 1840. After an attempt to her own life, she was placed in two different public asylums, and finally in a quieter private institution in London. Brontë's dedication of *Jane Eyre* to Thackeray provoked various malicious rumours about the possibly biographical details contained in the novel, and involving the dedicator and the dedicatee in an illicit relationship; see Margaret Smith, ed., p. 23, notes No. 2, 3.
[38] Anon., 'New Novels', *Athenaeum*, 25 September 1869, pp. 398-9, p. 398.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., p. 399.

On 2 October, the *Spectator* also acclaimed the novel, saying that:

> Mr Le Fanu has written nothing nearly so clever as this since he wrote *Uncle Silas*. Indeed, this book has more of literary power, though less of melodramatic effect than that, and might, we think, rank in some respects next to, though much beneath, his first and best book, the *House by the Churchyard*.[42]

In agreement with the reviewer for the *Athenaeum*, this anonymous commentator also affirms that 'the strong points of the book are the powerful but disagreeable sketches of old Squire Harry Fairfield of Wyvern, and his younger son' and that 'it is a blunder [...] in such a sensation story to let the sensation culminate in the middle of the book, and leave us nothing but a rather struggling piece of supplementary plot, [...] adapted to eke out two volumes into three'.[43] Therefore, and somewhat in contradiction to the enthusiasm shown in the opening lines, the reviewer concludes that *The Wyvern Mystery* is no mystery at all, and Le Fanu should take more care in polishing and correcting his own proofs so as to avoid inconsistencies in the plot and characters.

On the same day a very harsh article appeared in the *Saturday Review*, a paper that rarely had kind words for Le Fanu. The commentator seems strongly biased against the author from the very start:

> The name of Mr Le Fanu is a guarantee for a ghastly kind of sensationalism, vigorous if one will, though unwholesome and of bad style; but though his former works were coarse as well as horrid, they were not so coarse, not so intolerably vulgar, as this *Wyvern Mystery*, into which he has infused some of the most objectionable qualities of his peculiar school.[44]

The reviewer criticises the story as 'insincere and ugly', and describes most of the characters as 'foul and bad', and the Fairfields and the Dutch woman, in particular, as 'unutterably disgusting and unnatural'.[45] Not even Alice's purity is appreciated, and she is described as 'one of those exasperatingly weak and timid idiots whom some writers would

---

[42] Anon., 'Mr Le Fanu's New Novel', *Spectator*, 2 October 1869, pp. 1157-8, p. 1157.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Anon., 'The Wyvern Mystery', *Saturday Review*, 2 October 1869, pp. 457-8, p. 457.
[45] Ibid.

have us accept as the ideal of womanhood'.[46] Finally, the conclusion to a satirical summary of the plot reads:

> And this is the stuff into which a clever man puts his energy, and which some people accept gravely as a picture of human society. [...] To those who are fond of garbage we can recommend this *Wyvern Mystery*; while we warn against it all who care for purity, refinement, scholarly workmanship, or artistic beauty.[47]

On a similar line, the reviewer for the *Examiner* wrote on 23 October 1869 that 'Mr Le Fanu's *The Wyvern Mystery* is hardly worthy of an author who could write *The Tenants of Mallory (sic)* and *Guy Deverell*, or conceive so powerful a character as 'Uncle Silas''.[48] While the story is 'in many respects clever', and the character of Bertha is 'certainly an original conception', Alice should have been drawn as 'a more demonstrative prominent character', and her companions made more realistic figures.[49] The main criticism, though, regards the plot of the novel, which is said to be 'the old tale over again', and induces the reviewer to hope that in his next production, Le Fanu 'will travel out of the beaten path' (the reviewer could be referring here to the echoes of the more famous novel by Brontë).[50]

Despite *The Purcell Papers* being published in a collected edition in 1880 and the novel itself being reissued in 1889, no further criticism appeared in the nineteenth century, and very little has been written even since the more recent revival of interest in Le Fanu. The three reviews of *The Purcell Papers* which appeared in 1880 merely describe Le Fanu as the "Irish Wilkie Collins" for his tales of mystery, and the heir of "Monk" Lewis for his interest in the weird and the terrible, and offer nothing more than a list and short description of the Irish stories of the supernatural collected in the book. As for the second publication of the novel, it is only mentioned in the *Athenaeum* (26 September 1889) as among the new editions of works of fiction. The twentieth century has not shed any light

---

[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., p. 458.
[48] Anon., '*The Wyvern Mystery*. A Novel', *Examiner and London Review*, 23 October 1869, p. 679
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

on *The Wyvern Mystery*, Le Fanu's biographers initially focusing on his more famous fiction, and W. J. McCormack surprisingly concluding that 'of *The Wyvern Mystery* (1869) or *The Rose and the Key* (1871) little may be usefully said'.[51] Scholars like Victor Sage and Gaïd Girard have found something useful to say about 'A Chapter of the History of a Tyrone Family', and they have analysed the Gothic settings and tropes in both *Le Fanu's Gothic* and *Une écriture fantastique* respectively, but again, have not examined the later novel in their studies. It was only in 2011 that Sally C. Harris dedicated an article to considering how the novel challenges the boundaries of the Gothic. According to Harris, Le Fanu's characters 'act for themselves', thus crossing the boundaries of literary genres and introducing realism and the fairy-tale alongside mystery and horror (see Section Two below).[52]

Therefore, *The Wyvern Mystery* still remains a largely unexplored text in the fictional work of Sheridan Le Fanu. This chapter will examine erotomania and the domestic abuse of women in depth, thus functioning as a bridge between *A Lost Name* and *The Rose and the Key*. Drawing on his personal experience with mental strain in his marriage to Susanna, and living at a time when more and more men were locking up their wives for their own gain, Le Fanu criticises both the domestic and the psychological abuse of women and their disposal. Furthermore, in *The Wyvern Mystery*, Le Fanu goes back to the Gothic trope of the supernatural curse which was central to *A Lost Name* and associates it again to the hereditary taint on insanity. The first section of this chapter will focus on the character of Bertha, and on how the independent, sexual woman is represented as a threat to society, as the Other. However, while emphasising her dangerous influence, Le Fanu continues to criticise male constraining authority over women, and how it affects their nerves. In the second part, Bertha's monstrous Otherness will be contextualised in Le

[51] McCormack, *J. S. Le Fanu*, p. 231. Of 'A Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family' he only said that the story 'concludes its tale of bigamy with a too convenient madness and suicide', p. 78.
[52] See respectively, Sage, Ch. 1; Girard, Chs 6, 11; and Sally C. Harris, 'Crossing Boundaries, Mixing Genres in *The Wyvern Mystery*', in Crawford et al., pp. 373-89.

Fanu's horror. As in *A Lost Name*, this family home is also cursed with the taint of madness and haunted by a revengeful ghost, both embodied by the subversive woman. While Bertha's monstrous femininity is interpreted as a threat to ideal womanhood, Le Fanu also issues a warning against the man who has the power to create such a monster.

3.1 The Other

The mystery at Wyvern revolves around the enigmatic figure of Bertha Velderkaust and her supposed marriage to Charles Fairfield. Bertha insists that they are married and that, therefore, she is Charles' legitimate wife and mistress of Wyvern. Charles, though, swears that he was never legally married to Bertha, although they certainly lived as if they were husband and wife for years, and that Bertha's allegations are nothing other than the fruit of her insanity. At the end of the novel the mystery is not solved, so that after Bertha and Charles die both characters and readers are left in the dark about whether Alice and her son are the lawful inheritors of the estate and of the fortune of the Fairfields. However, the crucial point is that whichever woman Charles has legally married, the result is that the other is inevitably ruined. Charles' behaviour is the cause of the two women's sinking into erotomania. Le Fanu exploits the manic and melancholy forms of the illness to present his ideal of womanhood: while Alice's melancholia inspires sympathy for the loving wife and mother, Bertha's mania highlights her dangerous and subversive nature. Bertha's character echoes the description of the erotomaniac of *A Lost Name* and of her incarnation in the bewitching adventuress. Like Lady Mildred and Agnes Marlyn, Bertha is depicted as an evil spirit, whose revengeful words thunder about the house, and her claims of self-sufficiency also associate her with the sexual aggressiveness of the prostitute and of the independent woman. Most importantly, though, Le Fanu does not stop at the idealisation of

Alice and demonisation of Bertha, he goes a step further and criticises male power over women's nerves.

The story of Bertha Velderkaust bears many similarities to the story of the other more famous Bertha, Brontë's Bertha Mason. Like Bertha Mason, Bertha Velderkaust is a foreign woman. Although she is Dutch, young Bertha boasts the same extraordinary beauty and dark features as Brontë's Caribbean character. Charles remembers her beautiful locks, 'that once were as black as a raven's wing', while his brother Harry describes her as a 'devilish fine woman', and admits that '[t]here was no lass that ever I met, gentle or simple, that could match [Bertha] for good looks and pleasant talk'.[53] Charles must have met her when he was in his early twenties (he is now forty-three and Bertha mentions living at Carwell eighteen years before), possibly during the grand tour that young men of his class took at that age, and which sometimes included Holland on the way south or as a last stop before crossing the Channel back to England.[54] Like Rochester, Charles might have been badly advised in his match, or even not advised at all, so that perhaps he mistook a genuine attraction to an irresistible, sensuous woman as love and realised the difference between the two feelings when it was too late. While these remain speculations, what is certain is that Charles took Bertha back to Carwell Grange with him and that they lived there as a couple for years.[55] As his brother Harry says to the old servant Mildred Tarnley, '[y]ou and I know how they lived here, and I have heard her call him husband as often as I have fingers and toes' [p. 229]. Neither Harry nor old Tarnley can be trusted when it comes to the truth about the marriage: Harry, in conversation with Charles, states that 'I think you're married to t'other woman [Bertha]', but he may be lying, since he knows that if Alice is Charles' lawful wife, then their son will be heir of Wyvern instead of

---

[53] J. S. Le Fanu, *The Wyvern Mystery* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2005), pp. 227, 178, 242. All further quotations refer to this edition and will be parenthesised in the text.

[54] On the Grand Tour, see Rosemary Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour: the British in Italy, c. 1690-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Introduction.

[55] Bertha says that she lived at Carwell eighteen years before, while Charles complains about her giving him problems for the past ten years. If we consider these dates alongside those of her arrival at Carwell and of his desertion, Charles and Bertha lived as a couple for eight years, pp. 136, 90.

him [p. 95]. Tarnley expresses disbelief in the marriage, saying that Charles 'could not 'a' brought down the Fairfield to that', but, again, she may be lying as a loyal servant would do to protect her master [p. 229].

However, with regard to Bertha's insanity, whether she was Charles' actual wife or simply his mistress is of relative unimportance. The essential point is that he initially loved her and treated her as his wife, and then broke her heart through betrayal and desertion, thus triggering what, I argue, is the same form of violent and revengeful erotomania which affected Lady Mildred in *A Lost Name*. While Bertha Mason is revealed as descending from a family tainted with madness, no mention of hereditary insanity is made in the case of Bertha Velderkaust, who must have grown mad during her years at Carwell, likely because of Charles. Charles himself admits to being the cause of Bertha's suffering: '[w]hatever she is, she has suffered – she has been cruelly used, and I am to blame for all' [p. 153]. Bertha mentions Charles' infidelity and profligacy, and Charles later describes her as 'the reckless, forlorn, guilty old love cast off', and as a 'maddening picture of degradation and cruelty', thus proving that he once loved her, that he misused her, and finally abandoned her [p. 178]. In fact, Charles is said to have led 'a wandering life, and tried a good many things. He had been fond of play, and other expensive follies' [p. 13]. And even at the age of forty-three, when the events take place, he is still losing money through gambling, and spends his days smoking, strolling, and riding, 'not well know[ing] what to do with himself' [p. 26]. Charles might have then grown tired of Bertha, just like Rochester with his own Bertha, and decided to carry on with his dissipated life while keeping his "wife" secured at Carwell. The Grange can then be seen as Bertha Velderkaust's Thornfield attic: she lived there with only the company of the old, loyal servant Mildred Tarnley, and no one but Charles' brother actually knew of their connection, not even their father, since old Fairfield does not mention Charles' first wife when he is informed of his son's marriage to Alice. Significantly, when Alice then moves

to Carwell and Charles forbids her to tell anybody that she is there while he is away, he uses the word 'immure' to describe her secret confinement – a word that is reminiscent of Bertha's treatment and that hints at the possibility of Alice sharing her fate [p. 87].

Alienists attributed an important role to disappointed love and desertion in the inception of love-madness. Dr Mason Cox, in particular, affirmed in his *Practical Observations on Insanity* (1806) that seduction was a cruelty and a crime, which strongly impressed the disappointed hearts, especially of young women, whose love was driven by tenderness rather than passion:

> The common consequences of seduction are the fear of discovery, consciousness of guilt, and the reproaches of the world. The female sufferer sinks to despondency while experiencing the neglect of the inhuman being in whom she confided: her tenderness is thrown back on her own heart, with no eye to pity, no ear to listen to her tale of woe. Can we wonder if women suffer the loss of reason in such distressing circumstances?[56]

During her years at Carwell, Bertha suffers from several nervous fits, which still affect her in her older age [pp. 128, 144]. Old Tarnley complains that '[i]t's in a madhouse and not here the like of her should be, wi' them fits and frenzies', when she finds herself having to 'resuscitate' Bertha from a nervous attack which left her with 'her feet's stuck out, her thumbs tight shut in her fists and her teeth set' [p. 189].

However, a wounded heart could also inspire jealousy and stimulate the commission of the most atrocious crimes, which Dr Morison had described as the surfacing of the animal propensity, and the upsurge of nymphomania, latent in every woman.[57] Such crimes were directed to the removal of the pain which was afflicting the woman, through the destruction of the man who caused it and/or through self-destruction.[58] Bertha is described as a 'wild beast', 'a wretched maniac', 'cold and hard', 'violent and wicked', and 'always a bit rash, and too ready wi' [her] hand' [pp. 128, 204, 242]. As the

---

[56] Joseph Mason Cox, *Practical Observations on Insanity* (London: Baldwin, 1806), pp. 25-6.
[57] Morison, p. 127.
[58] Brewer, p. 300.

narrator explains, her animal instinct is driven by the desire to take revenge on Charles and his new family:

> But she was stung with a furious pang of jealousy [...], being in its essence the sense of property invaded, supremacy insulted, and self despised. In this sort of jealousy there is neither the sublimity of despair nor the pathos of sorrow, but simply the malice, fury, and revenge of outraged egotism. [p. 134]

Bertha will eventually make an attempt on the life of Alice, pregnant with the heir of Wyvern. Moreover, her suicide also strengthens the diagnosis of love-madness: although the inquest published in *The Times* leaves doubts about the motive, witnesses state that she may have 'pitched herself out o' the window', just like Bertha Mason, and Lady Mildred, the erotomaniac of *A Lost Name* [p. 286].

Bertha was probably treated for insanity, as it can be inferred from her blindness and the scars of small-pox on her face. Blindness was a complication of small-pox, a disease which was employed by Victorian doctors in the treatment of madness. In *Practical Observations*, Mason Cox introduced the benefits to be derived from inoculation of the insane with small-pox:

> As insanity often suspends and sometimes terminates other diseases, [...] so various other complaints which have been attended with violent symptoms have removed affections of the mind. [...] [T]hus small-pox has dissipated the most obstinate melancholia, and where affections of the intellect have resisted common remedies I should place considerable hopes on inoculation, had the party not previously had small-pox, taking care by proper medicines and management to increase symptoms that usually attend this disease to such a degree that the whole system should be considerably affected without endangering.[59]

Although alienists claimed that the procedure would not harm the patient, Bertha was probably blinded by it. She describes her blindness as a 'curse' and a 'rank injustice', and threatens to seek revenge for that too: '[t]hings are topsy-turvey a bit just now, but we'll see them righted yet' [p. 137]. Charles is to blame for Bertha's disgrace, and Le Fanu does

[59] Mason Cox, pp. 176-7.

not spare his life. However, by punishing Bertha with desertion, contagion, blindness, and madness, Le Fanu also expresses his aversion to the rebellious, sexual, and independent form of femininity for which she stands.

If Bertha is not married to Charles, then she has no claims on his property, and thus, like Agnes Marlyn, she comes to represent the adventuress who intrudes into a household in search of a fortune. If she *is* married to Charles, still, her husband's money is all that she seems to be interested in now. In fact, as the narrator points out, '[n]ot caring a farthing about Charles, she did not grieve at his infidelity; taking profligacy for granted as the rule of life, it did not even shock her' [p. 134]. Hence, she is reminiscent of Mrs Agnes Shadwell, the bad, manipulative, and selfish wife. Either way, Bertha embodies the kind of dangerous womanhood associated with the figure of the modern witch. As has been highlighted in Chapter Two, the modern witch is recognised as a threat to the family and to society as a whole, which she infects with the lasciviousness and sexual aggressiveness typical of the prostitute. She is accused of sneaking into the healthy middle-class family through intercourse (sexual and economic), thus endangering its health through the transmission of sexual diseases. She undermines the family through the subversion of patriarchy by either refusing to procreate or by introducing doubt regarding the paternity of her offspring, and by stepping out of the boundaries of the domestic sphere into the active realm of masculinity.

Bertha is no angel in the house, but rather an evil spirit – 'Satan's her name', says the old servant [p. 128]. She is said to be an 'unmanageable' beast, 'devilishly troublesome', 'ungrateful, and artful, and violent', and a 'selfish person' [pp. 89, 90, 122]. Furthermore, old Tarnley calls her a 'blind serpent', a phrase that recalls Eve's fall and, simultaneously, her insidiousness and danger [p. 198]. Bertha has always behaved as a figure of authority in the house, whose 'idea is simply to bully her way to her object', and for this reason she becomes known as the 'old soldier' [p. 153]. It is of her, and not of

other debtors, that Charles complains when he says that he is not the master of himself [pp. 31, 57]. What Bertha comes back to claim is the title of wife to Charles Fairfield and the estate that comes along with it at the death of his father. She plans her eventual entrance of Wyvern in minute detail, and, even in prison she chooses to be known as 'Madame Bertha Fairfield of Wyvern', and laughs a 'discordant laugh', a laugh that is 'purely emotional, an escape for pent-up scorn and fury', when Harry mentions Alice as Charles's wife [p. 239, 240]. But, most of all, her strong will and determination are evident in the argument she has with her husband right after the attempted murder:

> 'Wife and husband are terms very easily pronounced', said he.
> 'And relations very easily made', she rejoined. [...]
> 'You'll make nothing of the magistrates. You have no rights, and you know it'.
> 'An odd country where a wife has no rights'.
> 'Come, Bertha, there is no use in picking a quarrel. [...] You used to be reasonable'.
> 'A reasonable wife, I suppose, gives up her position, her character, her prospects, whenever it answers her husband to sacrifice these trifles for his villanous pleasures. Your English wives must be meek souls indeed if they like it'. [...]
> 'For God's sake say what you want, and have done with it'.
> 'You must acknowledge me before the world for your wife', she answered with resolute serenity, and raising her face and shutting her mouth, she sniffed defiantly through her distended nostrils.
> 'Come, come, Bertha, what good on earth could come of that?'
> 'Little to you, perhaps'.
> 'And none to you'.
> She laughed savagely. 'That lie won't do'. [...]
> 'I'm your wife, and I'll have my rights'. [pp. 186-88]

Bertha's claims certainly do not sound totally irrational, and only confirm Le Fanu's favourable treatment of his female characters, which may have been influenced by his closeness to the activist Caroline Norton. The historical figure of Caroline Norton will receive particular attention in Chapter Four, where the "Woman Question" is analysed in depth. What is important to briefly introduce here is Caroline's disastrous marriage, and how this experience turned her into one of the leading nineteenth-century activists for women's rights. Caroline Sheridan, Le Fanu's second cousin and intimate friend, married

the Honorable George Norton, and soon discovered that he was a selfish and violent man.[60] Over the years, Norton repeatedly abused her physically and psychologically. However, when Caroline finally decided to leave him, she realised that, not only would she lose all rights to her children, but that separating from her husband would make her penniless. According to English law, upon marriage a woman was bound to transfer all her property to her husband. Thus, Norton had every right to deny her an allowance (which he did), and even to claim all earnings that she was making as a writer (which he also did), leaving her completely destitute.

A witty and spirited woman, Caroline used the pen to her own advantage, and began to write pamphlets and polemical fiction with the express intention of publicly condemning women's limited rights. While her novel *Stuart of Dunleath* (1851) criticises the way the female character is "legally robbed" by her guardian first, and then by her husband, in her later pamphlet titled *English Laws for Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1854), Caroline compared English women to American slaves in their utter powerlessness in financial and legal matters. In the following year, she even wrote an open *Letter to the Queen*, in which she pleaded for the protection of England's female citizens with regard to the management of their own affairs in the specific case of separation and divorce. The delicate question of women's rights to their own property was still topical at the time when Le Fanu was writing (the Married Women's Property Act was not passed until 1870), and in the passage above, Le Fanu highlights the difficult position of women in the house, which will become the subject of *The Rose and the Key*. The problem with Bertha, though, is that she hides malicious intentions behind her false concern for the social and legal conditions of English women and wives. Bertha's interest is merely pecuniary and she shows no desire to lead the life of a wife. It is crucial, then, that Le Fanu does not make Bertha identify with '[*y*]*our* English wives', for whom he shows sympathy [p. 187, my

[60] On Caroline Norton, see Alan Chedzoy, *A Scandalous Woman: the Story of Caroline*; Randall Craig, *The Narratives of Caroline Norton*; and Oliver Lovesey, ed., *Victorian Social Activists' Novels*, Vol. 1, pp. 1-119. On Norton's relationship with the Le Fanus, see pp. 237-43 below.

italics]. In stressing Bertha's foreignness, Le Fanu separates her from his feminine ideal on the basis of her selfishness and claimed self-sufficiency. Thus, her geographical foreign status becomes a metaphor for her Otherness.

In *Disease, Desire, and the Body in Victorian Women's Popular Novels* (1997), Pamela K. Gilbert considers the paradoxical position of subversive women in Victorian society.[61] Drawing on Luce Irigaray and Catherine Gallagher, Gilbert argues that this new generation of women attempted to "de-commodify" themselves through independence only to find themselves paradoxically confined under the very label of "commodity" because of their refusal to (pro)create. Women who claimed to be self-sufficient, physically and economically, remained commodities because, like the prostitute, they were unchangeable in their sterility:

> Women are items of exchange, a form of currency and also a type of commodity [...] The prostitute never makes this transition from exchange to production [as wife and mother]; she retains her commodity form at all times. Like money, the prostitute, according to ancient accounts, is incapable of natural procreation. For all her sexual activity, indeed because of all her sexual activity, she fails to bring new substances, children into the world. Her womb, it seems, is too slippery.[62]

While the ideal wife and mother was primarily associated with the act of feeding wholesome food through her healthy breasts, the grotesque bodies of the diseased woman and the prostitute were defined in terms of their 'lower strata' (digestive, excretory, genital, and reproductive) and connected with the idea of barrenness or contagion. Furthermore, where health was aligned with morality within the British, middle-class household, disease was represented as the morally corrupted, foreign enemy attempting to penetrate the domestic soil. In *The Wyvern Mystery*, this foreign enemy is the subversive, Dutch woman, Bertha Velderkaust.

---

[61] Pamela K. Gilbert, *Disease, Desire, and the Body in Victorian Women's Popular Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), particularly Introduction, Chs 1 and 2.
[62] Catherine Gallegher, 'George Eliot and Daniel Deronda: the Prostitute and the Jewish Question', in Ruth Bernard Yeazell, ed., *Sex, Politics and Science in the Nineteenth-Century Novel*; quoted in Gilbert, p. 24.

As the independent woman usurping male power, Bertha is represented as both the prostitute and the sterile old spinster. As Sander L. Gilman points out in *Difference and Pathology* (1985), Victorian criminologists described the stereotypical prostitute as a woman with the same 'black, thick hair' as Bertha's.[63] More interestingly, the study of the aged prostitute showed an even stronger resemblance to Bertha:

> [W]hen they age, their 'strong jaws and cheek-bones, and their masculine aspect [...] hidden by adipose tissue, emerge, salient angles stand out, and the face grows virile, uglier than a man's; wrinkles deepen into the likeness of scars, and the countenance, once attractive, exhibits the full degenerate type which early grace had concealed.[64]

When Bertha returns to Carwell as an older woman, her 'changed appearance' strikes the old servant: she is described as a 'tall female figure', with a hand that 'was not a young hand nor very refined – lean and masculine, on the contrary, and its veins and sinews rather strongly marked' [pp. 125, 6, 7]. She speaks in 'a sharp undertone' and is said to have 'an odd drawling voice', and, overall, 'she was not pleasant to look at. Her large features were pitted with the small-pox, and deadly pale with the pallor of anger, and an unpleasant smile lighted up the whiteness of her face' [pp. 8, 117, 127]. In this light, Bertha's face, scarred with small-pox, can also be read as a metaphor for the diseased genitalia through which the sexual woman infects the family, and the fact that old Mildred Tarnley refuses more than once to drink from the same bottle as Bertha, or to share her pipe, is indicative of the correlated fear of contagion surrounding this character.[65]

Bertha is too old and unhealthy for reproduction. Significantly, her blindness also comes to indicate the impossibility of her ever embodying the figure of wife and mother. According to contemporary scholar David Bolt, blind women in the nineteenth century

---

[63] Gilman, p. 96.
[64] Ibid.
[65] I owe the association of scarred face and diseased genitalia to Gilman, who first made this connection with regard to Émile Zola's novel *Nana* (1880); ibid., pp. 104-5. I also refer back to Gilbert's argument on the grotesque body, summarised in the previous page, where she affirms that the bodies of the diseased woman and the prostitute (which coincide in the figure of Bertha) were usually defined in terms of their lower strata, p. 17.

were not thought to be marriageable.[66] Bolt argues that love was depicted as ocularcentric, that is, based on voyeurism in men, and exhibitionism in women. Flirtation, which is the first step of sexuality, depends on the gaze and the knowledge of being looked at. If this rule is valid for all women, it is even more important for prostitutes and erotomaniacs, who want to seduce or gain the attention of a lover. In *Prostitution* (1857), William Acton included a love of dress in the characteristics of the prostitute, while W. C. McIntosh, Superintendent at Murthly Asylum, observed in his 'Varieties of Morbid Impulse' (1866) that asylum patients affected by love-madness were curiously interested in their dress, which they 'generally displayed by careful and studied toilets and bedeckings with supposed fineries [...] often manifested at the sight of any one of the opposite sex indiscriminately, when languishing glances, smiles, and unmistakable fondness are displayed'.[67]

Certainly, Bertha's interest in dress is pointed out on several occasions: remembering her early days at Carwell, she recalls that 'I was well dressed – something better than the young dowdies and old fromps in this part of the world. How I used to laugh at them!' [p. 138]. She then asks old Tarnley to extract a copy of the *Magazine of the Beau-Monde* from her box, and has her read the description of the dress she would like Mildred to wear when they eventually move to Wyvern, a long passage which she remembers by heart. Furthermore, even in prison, Bertha boasts a magnificent outfit, accurate in all details:

> She had on a sky-blue satin dress, caught up at one side with a bunch of artificial flowers. She had a lace scarf and a lace coiffure lying flat across her head, with a miniature coronet of Roman pearl in the centre, and lappets depending at each side.

---

[66] On blindness see David Bolt, 'Castrating Depictions of Visual Impairment: The Literary Backdrop to Eugenics', *The Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness* (March 2005), pp. 141-50; 'The Blindman in the Classic: Feminisms, Ocularcentrism, and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*', *Textual Practice*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (2008), pp. 269-89; Elisabeth G. Gitter, 'The Blind Daughter in Charles Dickens's 'Cricket on the Hearth'', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (Autumn 1999), pp. 675-89. Interestingly, Dickens's blind girl is also named Bertha.

[67] William Acton, *Prostitution: Considered in its Moral, Social, and Sanitary Aspects* (London: Churchill, 1857), pp. 166; W. C. McIntosh, 'On Some of the Varieties of Morbid Impulse and Perverted Instinct', *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, No. 11 (1866), pp. 512-33, p. 523.

> She had a double necklace of enormous Roman pearls about her throat, and a pair of pink velvet slippers, embroidered with beads and bugles [...]. She accumulated her finery in this way [...] for the purpose of impressing the people about the prison with a due sense of her position and importance. [p. 239]

Bertha's obsession with appearance is explained by a "natural" hypersexuality which is common to both the prostitute and the erotomaniac. Furthermore, Bolt argues that hypersexuality is the very feature of the blind woman that the male gazer finds sexually intimidating.[68] Starting from the premise that sight is the first step of flirtation, blind women have no choice but to move on to the next level, that is, touch. However, the lack of a preliminary intimacy implies an inevitable association of blindness with deviance. Moreover, in the case of the blind person, the usually soft touch of the lover's hand feels more like 'a grope and ultimately a lecherous grip', which emphasises the blind lover's animality [p. 275]. Unsurprisingly, Bertha is described as a beast, and her unfeminine hand as 'the claws of a crab upon its back' [p.140]. The blind woman is therefore the cause of repulsion and consequent guilt in the male lover. Unmarriageable, she is believed to satisfy her hypersexuality by means of the solitary practice of masturbation (usually associated with blindness) which, if not already indicative of a perverse sexuality, is deemed to provoke mental disturbances.[69]

Finally, Bertha's sexual aggressiveness is further emphasised by her voracity. In *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body* (2002), Anna Krugovoy Silver links hunger with sexual depravity.[70] Silver argues that the ideal woman in the Victorian age was represented as spiritual, and therefore dissociated from all aspects of physicality, among which sexuality was also included. Therefore, a small appetite and a thin body proved a woman's incorporeality, while also showing 'a denial of the animal propensities'.[71] On the

---

[68] Bolt, 'Castrating Depictions', pp. 145-8.
[69] Ibid., p. 147; Gilman, p. 40.
[70] Anna Krugovoy Silver, *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Introduction. See also Katherine Byrne, *Tuberculosis and the Victorian Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 111.
[71] Krugovoy Silver, p. 13.

other hand, women who indulged in food, and particularly in meat consumption, were viewed as potential demons – aggressive, angry, and sexually voracious', incapable of controlling their instincts.[72] Thus, in the novel, while Alice refuses the food that old Tarnley offers her to help her recover after she is attacked, and is never described in the act of eating, Bertha demands food as soon as she arrives at the Grange, and even before she is offered any. She says that 'I have grown hungry' and, when advised that she could have eggs, meat, or cheese, she replies that '[t]he [half a cold] chicken will do very nicely, and don't forget bread and salt, Mrs Tarnley, and a glass of beer' [p. 127]. Bertha does not show any kind of self-discipline, and indulges in cigars, alcohol, and opium.

A foreigner, a fallen woman, mad, blind, scarred with small-pox, Bertha represents the ultimate threat to the Victorian family. As Stephen Carver has argued, the subversiveness of modern witches can be interpreted as a form of criticism of the unjust social rules to which they are subjected. Bertha Velderkaust is indeed part of that 'playful regiment of Bertha Masons' which provokes male power while expressing the frustration of the emotionally restrained female characters.[73] Bertha Velderkaust, then, plays the 'obvious role of gothic Other to patriarchal versions of femininity' and, like Lady Mildred and Bertha Mason, she is inevitably destroyed.[74] However, while Bertha is too dangerous to be tolerated, Le Fanu emphasises, once again, his disapproval of male control over women's nerves. A man like Charles is also a menace to the family, both because his behaviour can be deleterious to the health of his women, and because he can exploit their nervous instability for his own gain.

The crucial problems with mental insanity were the difficulty of its detection and the consequent power claimed by doctors on the basis of their expertise, problems which will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter Four. In *An Inquiry Concerning the Indications*

---

[72] Ibid., p. 10.
[73] Carver,'The Lancashire Witches', *Literary Encyclopedia*, § 3.
[74] Ibid.

of Insanity, John Conolly explained that sanity and insanity were not polar opposites, but rather extremes of an ever-shifting continuum, which depended on self-policing:

> It is only when the passion so impairs one or more faculties of the mind as to prevent the exercise of comparison that the reason is overturned; and then the man is mad. He is mad only whilst this state continues; but whilst it continues, whether for a short or a long time, he is mad on the subject of his fear. *He ceases to be mad when he can correct the erroneous judgement of his excited state*; and not before.[75]

The main points of Conolly's argument were that, first of all, anyone was liable to suffer from mental strain, and secondly, that the constant threat of mental derangement could be kept within the boundaries of normality by means of self-control. Therefore, social conformity became an index of sanity, while pathology was believed to ensue from any excessive activity. Furthermore, even those qualities deemed valuable might provoke physical or mental breakdown if developed to an abnormally high degree. In this regard, J. C. Pritchard, the theorist of moral insanity, argued in his *Treatise on Insanity* (1835) that madness sometimes did not offer clear symptoms, but could remain latent behind an appearance of normality.[76] Therefore, the expert gaze of the alienist imposed itself as the sole means of detecting mental instability.

It soon became "evident" to Victorian psychiatry that, because of their higher sensibility and consequent propensity to react emotionally to everyday traumas, women would find self-control a more frequent and difficult challenge than men. True selfhood implied the containment and concealment of the inner impulses, which in women were consistently associated with a perverse and animalistic form of sexuality. As feminist critics such as Shoshana Felman, Elaine Showalter, and Athena Vrettos have pointed out, women's struggle to repress their passions in order to conform to the notion of "normality"

---

[75] Conolly, p. 227, my italics. On self-control, see also Shuttleworth, Ch. 3, and Beth Torgerson, *Reading the Brontë Body: Disease, Desire, and the Constraints of Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), Introduction.

[76] Pritchard, p. 12.

paradoxically came to prove their very insanity.[77] In fact, when women tried to control their actions and to hold back the verbal expression of their emotions, their bodies began to articulate their distress. However, this articulation was precisely what led to their being diagnosed insane, since their bodies were read as displaying symptoms of insanity. Doctors interpreted the somatisation of emotions as further evidence of the 'dangerous permeability between self and other, body and mind', which they declared to be a source of dysfunctional health.[78] Thus, mutism, paralysis, seizures, loss of sleep and appetite, and various other expressions of women's internal struggle were categorised under the catch-all label of hysteria, a nebulous term inevitably connected with the female body via the uterus, which recurred in the symptomatology of most categories of insanity.

Examples of women's distressful attempts to conform to Victorian standards of public and private behaviour abound in nineteenth-century literature. Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853), Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Aurora Floyd* (1863), among many, present heroines succumbing to hysteria and pining away with grief as a result of sexual and emotional frustration. *Villette*'s protagonist Lucy Snowe suffers from hysterical attacks and repeated hallucinations at moments of heightened sexuality, which she struggles to repress. Elaine Showalter argues in *The Female Malady* that Lucy begins to show signs of depression, loneliness, and anxiety after she takes up a job in the house of a crippled woman who, interestingly, has been suffering from hysteria since her fiancé's death.[79] Later, when she finds employment in a girls' school, she becomes subject to hallucinations in the shape of a nun, reminding her of her own celibacy every time she tries to contain her sexual desires. She finally collapses while caring for a deformed idiot, more similar to a tameless animal than a human being, which

---

[77] Shoshana Felman, *La folie et la chose littéraire* (Paris: Eds du Seuil, 1978), Parts 1 and 3; Showalter, *Hystories*, passim; Athena Vrettos, *Somatic Fictions: Imagining Illness in Victorian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), passim.
[78] Vrettos, p. 46-7, p. 46.
[79] Showalter, pp. 69-71. See also Torgerson, Ch. 3.

Showalter indentifies as 'an externalized representation of Lucy's own primal but now stunted desires'.[80]

Cathy Earnshaw's demise in *Wuthering Heights* is another instance of a woman's decline and death as a result of her unsuccessful attempt to control her instincts. In his very original analysis of the novel, Philip W. Martin interprets Cathy's illness, following the return of Heathcliff, as the consequence of the emotional battle between her duty as Edgar's wife and her sexual passion for Heathcliff.[81] While Edgar superficially calls Cathy's obsession "insanity", Martin points out that the text defines her illness as "brain fever", and that the description of her decline conforms to the Victorian symptomatology of insanity, in the specific form of erotomania. In *Aurora Floyd*, Mary Elizabeth Braddon has both her female characters react to the loss of their lover in a similar way to Cathy Earnshaw. Lucy and Aurora Floyd suffer, at different times, from the loss of their beloved, Talbot Bulstrode. Although the two cousins are depicted as complete opposites in appearance and temperament, they both experience a similar decline in health when they have to cope with emotional trauma without losing their usual composure. Thus, Lucy's pale cheeks become a source of concern for her family, while she secretly wishes that she will be dead before spring comes, bringing with it the wedding of Aurora and Talbot. And when Bulstrode breaks his engagement to Aurora, the latter is found 'in a raging fever, with burning cheeks and blood-shot eyes, her long purple-black hair all tumbled and tossed about the pillows, and her dry hands scorching to the touch'.[82] All these fictional women come to exemplify the bodily articulation of emotional distress which Elaine Showalter has named a 'Mother Tongue'.[83]

In *The Wyvern Mystery*, Le Fanu also presents a heroine struggling to control her love-related anguish. Alice Maybell slowly sinks into erotomania caused by the same man

---

[80] Ibid., p. 71.
[81] Martin, pp. 107-13.
[82] Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Aurora Floyd* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 77-8, 108.
[83] Showalter, 'On Hysterical Narrative', *Narrative*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (January 1993), pp. 24-35, p. 29.

who has compromised Bertha's mental health. However, the choice of melancholia over mania and Alice's eventual recovery reveal the character as Le Fanu's ideal woman, while emphasising Charles' culpability. Alice is described as a very beautiful girl: '[w]hat struck one at first sight as a slender figure, with a prettiness in every motion. A clear-tinted oval face, with very dark grey eyes, [...] with very long lashes; her lips of a very brilliant red, with even little teeth, and when she smiled a great many tiny soft dimples' [p. 17]. Not only does she have the look of innocence but she proves to be well-mannered and respectful, a caring companion to her old aunt, and a grateful daughter to the benefactor who raised her after the death of her parents. However, she is strong enough to renounce the prospect of a life of wealth and comfort as the wife of old Fairfield for the love of his penniless son Charles (Alice's aunt also mentions a Lord Tremaine as a possible suitor). At Carwell Grange, she is determined to become the perfect wife and mistress of the house. She knows that she will need help and guidance but, as the narrator points out, 'the new responsibilities and dignities of her married state were full of interest and importance' [p. 54]. She listens carefully to whatever the old servant has to teach her in order to become the ideal housekeeper and save money for the estate for her husband's benefit.

Alice loves Charles to idolatry. It is this very deep love of Charles, together with the unspoken doubts of his affection and trust, and his final loss that slowly drive Alice love-mad. From the very beginning, Alice is said to be nervous and easily frightened, like a child, because of her secret relations with Charles, so that, when she goes to the Grange in search of news from him, she is said to look pale, 'as if she were going to her execution' [p. 9]. As she reads the letter Charles has left there for her, her reaction provides an early example of self-control, in that she suppresses her anger with hushed sobs: 'the young lady looked angry, with bright eyes and a brilliant flush, then pale, and then the tears started to her eyes, and [...] she wept in silence' [p. 10]. Charles' enigmatic behaviour upsets Alice with uncertainties concerning his love and intentions. She constantly asks him whether he

still loves her, and needs to be reassured that she is the only one he has ever loved and will ever love. Alice cannot help fearing that Charles might decide to abandon her, and she admits that 'I could have thrown myself from the rock over that glen', when she did not find him at the Grange, a grave statement, that alone would have been considered as a clear sign of madness [p. 31]. Later, she makes Charles promise to tell her everything that troubles him, and expresses her satisfaction with 'an exclamation which seemed to say, "If only I could be sure that you meant it"'; her annoyance here emerging in her tone but still kept under control through sober phrasing [p. 83]. Although she suffers terribly at the thought of her husband keeping some important secret from her, which she interprets as a lack of trust in her, she endures the pain in silence, not willing to displease him with her suspicions. In fact, she always puts him first, and tries to soothe his worries and nurse 'his sick spirits, as such angelic natures will', which was exactly what was expected from a good wife [p. 85].[84] However, in her distress, she finally confesses that 'I shall go mad' if Charles continues to keep her in the dark, another strong statement which nonetheless sounds like a genuine possibility, since her 'gaze of wildest misery [...] looked in reality so near despair, so near insanity' [pp. 108, 109].[85] On another occasion, she bursts into tears and cries herself to sleep, wondering whether there is 'ever an unreserved and complete confidence after marriage' [p. 165].

---

[84] As Victorian anti-feminist commentator Sarah Ellis explained, a woman should never neglect her spouse, not even for the care of their children, because in that case 'she is guilty of an act of unfaithfulness to her husband, [and] at the same time that she places herself in a perilous position, from whence the first shock of disease, or the first symptom of ingratitude, may cast her down into utter wretchedness'; Sarah Stickney Ellis, *The Mothers of England, their Influence and Responsibility* (1843), quoted in Sally Shuttleworth, 'Demonic Mothers: Ideologies of bourgeois motherhood in the mid-Victorian Era', in Linda M. Shires, ed., *Re-Writing the Victorians: Theory, History, and the Politics of Gender* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 31-51, p. 43 Through her care, Alice guarantees that her husband will not need to seek comfort elsewhere, thus keeping their bodies, and the family, clean from external threats.

[85] "In the dark" is one of Le Fanu's favourite phrases. It implies, on the one hand, the power role played by male characters over their women, which Victor Sage has pointed out with regard to the Bluebeard figure embodied by Austin/Silas in *Uncle Silas*; see Introduction to *Uncle Silas*, pp. xv-xviii; see also his analysis of Perrault's *Bluebeard* in connection to 'A Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family', *Le Fanu's Gothic*, pp. 18-21. On the other hand, darkness becomes a metaphor for the process of fiction itself, in that the reader shares the female characters' ignorance and unease about the plot and what will happen to them; for a study of Le Fanu's rhetoric of darkness, see Sage's *Le Fanu's Gothic*.

Charles' death comes to represent the ultimate form of abandonment, which Alice's nerves, already shaken by Bertha's attempt on her life, cannot endure. Her first reaction to it is an agony of weeping and wild crying, followed by a quick decline into what psychiatry would have defined as a passive state of melancholia [p. 220]. Alice is confined to bed, where she worsens by the hour. Her hand is icy, her eyes clouded, and she is said to be 'past the effort of speaking, almost of thinking, and [to lie] like a white image' [p. 231]. Alice's illness is recognised as a threat to her life and to the life of the child she is carrying, a threat the narrator deems all the more dangerous because she cannot count on 'the support of a husband's love or consolation' [p. 231]. The family doctor affirms that she might not survive the night, and regrets not being in the position of doing anything to help her because her illness is beyond the power of a physician:

> There are sicknesses that will not be cured through the body. The *mind diseased*, which is the parent of these impracticable maladies, of which, when people die, they are said to have died of a *broken heart* – disdains the apothecary's boxes and bottles – knows nothing of them. The heart-ache, of which it is no more than an unusually protracted fit, has its seat in that which no apothecary can hear, see, feel, or understand. When the immortal, and in this life, inscrutable, spirit, which is the unseen lodger, the master, of the body, sickens, all sickens. In its pain all below it writhe and wither, and the body, its ultimate expression, reflects but cannot mitigate its torment. [p. 266, my italics]

Alice does not die. She slowly recovers and is eventually granted a happy ending as a mother and a widow. Le Fanu's decision not to make her happiness depend on the presence of Charles is indicative of his disapproval of such husbands, who are more likely to endanger their women than to protect them.

Of Charles's misuse of Bertha little more is known than what can be gathered from his confession and the sense of guilt which compels him to provide for her even after his death. If he is not married to Bertha, then he has at the very least deceived her and ruined her, before carrying on with a better prospect; if he is indeed married to her, then his subsequent "marriage" to Alice makes him a bigamist, who protects his interest by

denouncing his unwanted wife as insane. In either case, Charles is the cause of Bertha's erotomania. As far as Alice is concerned though, Charles deliberately brings her into a situation, the nature of which he is aware from the very beginning. In their early married days, when she is trying to improve the state of their house, he reminds her that 'you knew very well [...] when you married me, that I owed money, and was a poor miserable devil, and not my own master' [p. 57]. However, what he cannot force himself to reveal is that one of his creditors, the old soldier, is in fact his "first wife" Bertha, believing himself safe now that she is sick and blind: 'who could have fancied she'd have dreamed, in her state of health, and with her affliction – her sight, you know – of coming down here again' [p. 155]. While the possibility of Charles' not being married to Bertha makes him no more dangerous than a liar who keeps his wife in the dark about his reproachable past, if he really is married to Bertha, then *Alice* is the 'sham wife', the ruined woman [p. 153]. And, as will be shown in the next section, this possibility could turn Alice into the monstrous Other which Bertha embodies. In fact, from a clinical perspective, Alice is suffering from the passive form of erotomania which may burst into its more violent kind in what W. H. O. Sankey, Superintendent at Hanwell Lunatic Asylum, defined as *folie circulaire* (circular insanity). In his article 'On Melancholia' (1863), Sankey explained that:

> A very little experience in insanity also proves that one individual may in a first attack be melancholy and in a second maniacal. It is also well established that a very large majority of cases of mania are preceded by a stage, of shorter or longer duration, of melancholia; and again, the phenomena of the form of the disease called *folie circulaire*, in which the two conditions alternate also with each other, militate strongly against any special and specific difference existing between the two forms.[86]

Not only does Charles have the power to drive his women mad, but he represents a threat also because he can manipulate their madness to his own advantage. By claiming that Bertha is insane, Charles' past is never investigated and his union to Alice never

[86] W. H. O. Sankey, 'On Melancholia', *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, No. 9 (1863), pp. 173-96, p. 192.

contested. As John Sutherland has pointed out in *Victorian Fiction* (1995), insanity became 'a very useful weapon in the hands of vindictive spouses', a subject which will be analysed in more detail in the next chapter.[87] Sutherland provides the examples of Edward Bulwer-Lytton and Charles Dickens, with whom Le Fanu was both professionally familiar and personally acquainted, and how they respectively confined a wife in a madhouse and (possibly) threatened another with incarceration thanks to the help of corrupt medical practitioners in lunacy. At a time when wrongful confinement was a matter of course, Le Fanu proved harshly critical of men who have their wives incarcerated in his fiction. This may be due to the fact that Le Fanu experienced first hand the tragedy of having a wife genuinely afflicted by nervous problems, but whom he nevertheless did not have locked up. McCormack has explained in his biography of the author that Susanna, like Alice Maybell, could not convince herself of her husband's love, despite the lack of evidence of the contrary. Le Fanu himself had noted it in his diary, how 'I loved her almost to idolatry, & yet she was always doubting & sometimes actually disbelieved my love, although I was there both declaring & showing it, day & night'.[88] Susanna died of a hysterical fit at the age of thirty-four, leaving Le Fanu in utter despair. It is his affection for her, I would argue, that can be interpreted as the rationale behind Charles' punishment.

Charles cannot make a good husband; his egotism compromises the social respectability, the economic security, and the sanity of the two women to whom he attaches himself. For this reason, he is eliminated so as to grant a better future to his wife and son. It is important to note that Le Fanu chooses to have Charles suffer a fatal form of brain fever, of which he dies after experiencing the anguish of intermittent insanity. Charles' distraction is provoked by the burden of his guilt. He contemplates suicide on more than one occasion, an option which old Tarnley points out is the easiest and the more selfish. He then grows 'feverish – worn out in body and mind – literally', and begins to

[87] John Sutherland, *Victorian Fiction: Writers, Publishers, Readers* (Bakingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 55-86, p. 76.
[88] Lozes, pp. 161-2.

suffer from hallucinations, which the narrator defines as 'tricks' of the brain, 'spectral illusions', and 'odd flickerings that seem to mock and warn' [p. 206, 207]. And indeed Charles's nervousness reads as a mockery and a warning: Le Fanu's decision to punish him with the same condition that Charles induced in his women can be interpreted as a way to take revenge on the male character; simultaneously, Le Fanu issues a warning against men like Charles and the threat they pose to women.

3.2 The Monster in the Mirror

In 'Crossing Boundaries, Mixing Genres in *The Wyvern Mystery*' (2011), Sally C. Harris argues that, in Le Fanu's novel, 'Gothic, realism, supernatural, and fairytale battle for primacy'. In the novel there is the familiar face of the old benefactor turning into an 'amorous ogre' and a Gothic villain (old Fairfield), locking the heroine in her room until she has made up her mind about his marriage proposal [p. 29]; there is a romantic hero transforming into a Bluebeard figure, forbidding his wife to have any contact with the external world during his absence; there are a supernatural curse and a murderous monster, threatening the life of the heroine in a locked room; there are a fairytale-like cottage and a child who has disobeyed an order; and finally, there is the realist experience of death which subverts the expectations of a happy ending.[89] Although *The Wyvern Mystery* cannot be contained in one specific genre, this section will focus on the Gothic and the supernatural, and will interpret the curse and the monster in the light of the contemporary concern with insanity and with the female question.

As David Punter and Glennis Byron explain in their guide to *The Gothic* (2004), the genre 're-emerges with particular force during times of cultural crisis and [...] serves to negotiate the anxieties of the age by working through them in a displaced form'.[90] At the

[89] Harris, p. 380.
[90] David Punter, Glennis Byron, *The Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 39.

time *The Wyvern Mystery* was published, Victorian Britain was experiencing a surge of fear about personal, social, and national decay. The decline of the empire raised doubts about the morality of its mission, the increase of criminality and disease shed new light on the (dis)advantages of the Industrial Revolution, and, within the family, the homosexual and the rebellious woman began to pose a threat to its traditional values and structure. Having left behind the ancient ruined castles in exotic countries, the depraved monks and the scheming bandits, Victorian Gothic appeared more disturbing because of its actualisation of the horror: the danger menacing the heroine was here and now – in the family home, in the well known streets of the city, in the laboratories of the new scientists, or in the local lunatic asylums. At a time when women were fighting for equality, Gothic fiction proved both subversive and conservative: subversive, in that it became a further instrument of social protest, showing women's lack of social identity, their economic powerlessness, and their domestic victimisation.[91] Conservative, because it also depicted apparently defenceless women as well capable of transgressing, thus turning them into the mad or criminal characters of sensation fiction. In *The Wyvern Mystery*, the heroine is not the typical protagonist of the female Gothic, kidnapped and imprisoned by the male villain, nor is she the schizophrenic criminal of the sensation novel. Le Fanu uses the female monster according to the etymological signification of the word monster, that is "to show", "to warn": Bertha serves the purpose of presenting to the reader, and especially to women readers, who formed the majority of the readership of sensation novels, the dangers of trusting men like Charles.[92]

The novel opens with Alice and her maid Dulcibella's night journey back to Wyvern after a visit to an old aunt in Oulton. They are driving through a 'broad, shaggy heath, rising in low hillocks, and breaking here and there into pools – a wild, and on the

---

[91] Ibid., pp. 26-31; Tamar Heller, *Dead Secrets: Wilkie Collins and the Female Gothic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 13-37.

[92] On the definition of monster see the *Oxford English Dictionary*, www.oed.com under the entry "monster"; also, Punter and Byron, p. 263.

whole a monotonous and rather dismal expanse', when Alice decides to get off the straight way home and head to Carwell Grange instead, despite the driver telling her that nobody lives there anymore, and Dulcibella's dread of anything secretive [p. 4]. The Grange does indeed appear as a deserted mansion, and a perfect setting for the Gothic:

> Under the leafy darkness stood two time-stained piers of stone, with a wicket open in the gate. Through this she peeped into a paved yard, all grass-grown and surrounded by a high wall, with a fine mantle of ivy, through which showed dimly the neglected doors and windows of out-offices and stables. At the right rose, three storeys high, with melancholy gables and tall chimneys, the old stone house.
> So this was Carwell Grange. Nettles grew in the corners of the yard, and tufts of grass in the chinks of the stone steps, and the worn masonry was tinted with moss and lichens, and all around rose the solemn melancholy screen of darksome foliage, high over the surrounding wall, and out-topping the grey roof of the house. [p. 9]

Alice learns that the master is not at home, and that the house is being looked after by old Mildred Tarnley, an awe-inspiring housekeeper with an unearthly appearance. While old Tarnley's name recalls the suicidal woman who cast the curse in *A Lost Name*, her ways are also reminiscent of an evil spirit: she is 'sour and hard', she has a laugh that chills, she looks 'black and stern', and moves 'noiselessly as a shadow [...] as if she was "laying out" a corpse', and, above all, she knows all the secrets of the house [p. 112]. However, she proves loyal to the family and kind to Alice, initially by protecting her from the 'dark stories about the Grange', and then, by warning her of the dangers surrounding her at Carwell [ibid.].

As soon as Alice enters the Grange, she witnesses mysterious supernatural manifestations. Before even setting foot in the gallery, she is startled at the sight of 'a great heavy curtain of black [falling] down in folds from the top to the floor just as I was going to step through. It seemed to make a little cloud of dust about our feet; and I felt a wind from it quite distinctly' [p. 51]. Upon Alice's insistence, old Tarnley explains to her that the drapery is not of this world, but that '[t]hem as weaves the web is light o' hand and heavy o' heart, and the de'el himself speeds the shuttle'; the cloud of dust is not real dust,

'no, a finer dust by far – the dust o' death [...]; no dust at all, but sich dust as a ghost might shake from its windin' sheet'; and that this apparition is connected with the ancient omen of the Carwells [pp. 69, 70]. As the story goes, over a hundred years ago, Sir Harry Fairfield married a beautiful heiress of the Carwell family. The Fairfields were 'wild folks', bad husbands who were seldom kind to their wives. [p. 70]. Harry's spouse had rejected a good suitor who adored her, for the love of Sir Fairfield, only to find herself neglected and lonesome in her big house. Harry was constantly away and probably unfaithful to her, and one day they found his wife drowned in the glen at Carwell, possibly by accident, but more likely by her own hand, since she was said to have been suffering from a broken heart. Sir Harry Fairfield had the gallery and staircase hung with black drapery, the same curtain that four wives also see fall, to their own peril. The first to witness this was Harry's second wife, not even one year after the first one had died. In less than two months, Fairfield was killed in a duel against Carwell's old suitor, and his wife was in a madhouse. And in the following decades, three more wives saw the black drape, and either died or went mad: one fell over the pixie's cliff, another died in fits with her first baby, and the last one fell from her horse and was injured in mind and body. Therefore, as Tarnley concludes: 'no Fairfield has any business bringing his wife to Carwell Grange; and Master Charles knows that as well as me; [...] and, now, [...] ye've got your warning, and ye had better quit this without letting grass grow under your feet' [pp. 73-4].

The veil that Alice sees is a typical image of the Gothic, one usually associated with sexuality.[93] Just as female sexuality was believed to be inseparable from insanity, the veil was a symbol charged with the connotation of madness. As seen in the previous section, women were expected to control their inner passions and instincts lest they should be judged insane. Such a form of self-control could be interpreted as their hiding their real selves, their "I", behind a mask or a veil (twentieth-century psychiatry would go on to use

[93] On the veil, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (London: Meuthen, 1986), Ch. 4; and Elizabeth P. Broadwell, 'The Veil Image in Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*', *South Atlantic Bulletin*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (November 1975), pp. 76-87.

the image of the veil to describe the virtual line between the conscious and the unconscious, between the individual and his/her repressed instincts and illicit desires).[94] In *The Wyvern Mystery* Alice, like her predecessors, sees the black curtain fall after stepping into the Grange as the new Mrs Fairfield. As a bride, Alice can be associated with the white veil, a symbol of her virginity and, by extension, of her unbroken hymen. During the wedding ceremony, Charles is entitled to remove the veil, just as he has the right to penetrate the hymen on their wedding night, thus *revealing* to his young, inexperienced wife her new sexual role in marriage. In this light, Tamar Heller even interprets the colour white as reflective of woman's invisibility, her identification with a blank page to be written on by man.[95] The drapery then, with its ominous blackness, comes to signify, in Eve Sedgwick's words, 'a carrier of death': it is the death of a woman's identity, since she loses her name and property in marriage; it is the death of her sexuality, since she is identified with the role of wife and mother; and, in the specific curse of the Fairfields, it is the death of the mind through abuse and abandonment, and the ultimate death of the body through nervous strain, parturition, or suicide.[96]

When Alice sees the curtain fall, it is as if her "I" also begins to prove unstable, and her concerns about her place in the domestic sphere come to the surface. As has been shown, immediately after she moves to the Grange, Alice becomes suspicious of her husband's conduct. While she struggles to keep her feelings in check, the veil of self-control drops again and again, so that Charles has to remind her not to behave in a 'foolish' way [p. 57]. With Charles' death, the veil eventually falls completely, and Alice becomes dangerously ill. At this stage, Alice is described as 'a white image', recalling Heller's idea of the white sheet, upon which the doctor writes his diagnosis of 'mind diseased' because of a 'broken heart' [pp. 231, 266]. Charles' death and Alice's mental strain fulfil the curse of the Fairfields. Significantly, though, the omen becomes real with the revelation of a

[94] On Freud, see Sedgwick, p. 141; on Jung, see Broadwell, p. 79.
[95] Heller, p. 112.
[96] Sedgwick, p. 148.

secret, emblematically represented by the unveiling of another woman. In fact, the first encounter with the veil happens as early as Chapter Three, where Alice, on her mysterious journey to Carwell, finds her way obstructed by a carriage occupied by a tall woman, whose 'face she could not see, for it was thickly veiled' [p. 7]. At a first glance, that veiled woman could have been any woman of the upper class. However, when she returns, unveiled, as Mrs Charles Fairfield, the truth of (possible) bigamy and madness comes to light, and remains as a warning to the heroine.

As long as Alice is Charles' wife, she is in constant danger of becoming Bertha. In fact, since Victorian doctors explained that melancholia could turn into mania, Alice's mild reaction to the constraint imposed by self-control is an indication that her mental weaknesses could develop into Bertha's blinding revengefulness. It is not on the grounds of contemporary medical associations between blindness and insanity alone that Bertha's blindness is indicative of her mental condition; this physical disability is also symbolic of her mental disability if it is interpreted, again, through the image of the veil. Where the veil stands for self-control, which is the premise for the construction of the "I", blindness can be seen as a veil obscuring the "eye".[97] Interestingly, the word "cataract", which is used on one occasion to define Bertha's ailment, derives from both the Latin "cataracta", and the Greek "καταρ(ρ)άκτης", meaning waterfall and giving the idea of something dropping [p. 176].[98] Therefore, the loss of the "I" / "eye" symbolises both one's fall into darkness and the upsurge of one's darkest instincts. Furthermore, blindness is identified with the inability to see light, which is not necessarily associated with the colour black, but rather with an indefinite idea of darkness.[99] Sedgwick interprets the white veil as virginity, the red or purple as desire, and the black as death, and argues that revenge is 'the passion most

[97] On the parallel "I" / "eye", I draw loosely from Broadwell, pp. 80, 84.
[98] See *Oxford English Dictionary*, www.oed.com, under the entry "cataract". The image of the veil dropping in front of the eye echoes the dropping of the black drape at Carwell Grange, which Bertha, as Mrs Fairfield, may also have seen.
[99] See *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, www.britannica.com, under the entry "blindness".

nearly stripped of affective coloration', and the only passion that lasts until death.[100] Revenge is the passion that has been driving Bertha since her "I" fell, and its connection with darkness perfectly symbolises the loss of the "eye": as Shoshana Felman has affirmed, 'l'aveuglement est le caractère distinctif de la folie', that is, madness blinds reason and will only follow its irrational passions.[101]

Bertha's insanity is another instance of the fulfilment of the curse of the Fairfields. As in *A Lost Name*, the family curse is embodied by the independent woman who returns to seek the destruction of the man who caused her fall, and is further materialised in the taint of hereditary insanity, which weakens a family from generation to generation. Different from her predecessors at Carwell, Bertha does not die within a few months of her arrival, but lives on for nearly two decades, with the aim of haunting Charles. Since Bertha is incapable of giving an heir to Charles, it appears that she survives in order to drive her husband mad, and thus ensure that his offspring will pay for his guilt, thus completing the Gothic curse which sees the sins of the father visited upon their children. As Helen Small has noticed with regard to Charlotte Dacre's *The Passions* (1811), a wronged woman's best revenge is provoking madness in her enemy, a statement which the narrator of *The Wyvern Mystery* must also deem true, since he affirms that it would be better if 'the finger of death than of madness should touch his [Charles'] brain' [p. 208].[102] Charles does not turn into a raving maniac, but Bertha (and Le Fanu) take their revenge by driving him to exhaustion and thus inducing the brain fever which proves fatal to him.

In the economy of *The Wyvern Mystery*, Bertha is no enticing witch but rather appears as a Gothic monster, a mad creature described as half ghost, half vampire. Bertha's ghostliness reflects woman's position in Victorian society. As Vanessa Dickerson explains in *Victorian Ghosts in the Noontide* (1996), in the nineteenth century a middle-class woman was no longer required to carry out domestic work, thanks to industrial advances,

---

[100] Sedwick, p. 164.
[101] 'Blindness is the distinctive character of madness', Felman, p. 37, my translation.
[102] Small, p. 85.

but was now to dedicate herself to the welfare of her family, from their physical health to their moral and spiritual needs.[103] In order to maintain stability in the house, Dickerson argues that '[i]t was mete that woman give up, rein in, be silent, be still. She was to fulfil her role by disappearing into the woodwork to watch over the household, by becoming a ghost'.[104] Beth Torgerson has further interpreted female ghostliness as the result of woman's dispossession in a male-centred system.[105] In her analysis of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, Torgerson maintains that the patriarchal system was founded on the acquisition of land, money, and power, and that it perpetuated itself by preying upon the life-energies of the disempowered, that is women and outsiders (Cathy and Heathcliff). Women had limited rights to their own land, and in most cases their inheritance passed from their fathers to their husbands. In the same way, their bodies and names were lost in marriage, making them perfect examples of dispossession – ghosts, whose life has been drained by the vampiric patriarch. According to Torgerson, 'male vampire and female ghosts are two sides of the same coin'; upon these premises, Bertha embodies the monster because she occupies both sides of the same coin: as a woman and an outsider, she represents the ghost of the dispossessed; in her revengeful attempt at usurping Charles' power, she is analogous to the male vampire.[106]

Bertha's ghostly appearance pervades the novel: she is described as a 'gaunt figure' with 'no [...] life in her', her features 'deadly pale with the pallor of anger, and an unpleasant smile light[ing] up the whiteness of her face' [pp. 122, 127]. She also complains that 'I never *have* any colour now, they tell me – always pale, pale, pale', an evident index of the lack of energy symptomatic of her ill status, and symbolically, of her lack of blood [p. 136]. Bertha moves around the house 'like a black shadow', her incorporeality and malicious intentions allowing a comparison with an 'evil spirit', a

[103] Vanessa Dickerson, *Victorian Ghosts in the Noontide: Women Writers and the Supernatural* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996), Introduction.
[104] Ibid., p. 4.
[105] Torgerson, Ch. 4.
[106] Ibid., p. 16.

'restless spirit', 'something not altogether of this earth' [pp. 147, 173, 169]. Even her deep sleep is associated with the other world: old Tarnley wonders 'what makes her sleep so like dead?' and would have liked 'to shake her up and bide her "snore like other people, and give over her unnatural ways"' [p. 168]. Also Alice, when disturbed in her room during the night, freezes with terror at the sight of her visitor, 'not knowing whether the apparition was that of a living person or not', and after the attempted murder, she wants to be taken away from the house, feeling as if the place was 'haunted' [p. 176, 183].

Bertha's ghost-like features echo those of another fictional erotomaniac, Charles Dickens' famous Miss Havisham. The madwoman of *Great Expectations* (1860) falls victim to the cruel machinations undertaken by her envious half-brother in order to dispossess her of her fortune. An accomplice makes her fall in love with him and, after depriving her of a huge sum, he abandons her on their wedding day. Mortification and pain drive her mad, so that years later, at the time when the events take place, she is still wearing her wedding dress and living like a 'faded spectre' in a house where all decorations still lie untouched, although looking like they might crumble from decay.[107] Like Bertha, Miss Havisham is also described as a revengeful spirit: she is dressed in white and is pale from the lack of sun (which she has not seen for years), she moves in a 'ghostly manner' and looks 'most unearthly' by candlelight.[108] While still alive, she is believed to be a ghost by her half-brother, who has gone mad with remorse and has convinced himself that she is haunting him to take her revenge: '[s]he's all in white, [...] wi' white flowers in her hair, and she's awful mad, and she's got a shroud hanging over her arm, and she says she'll put it on me at five in the morning. [...] And over where her heart's broke – *you* broke it! – there's drops of blood'.[109] Miss Havisham's revenge goes beyond the punishment of the man who conspired against her, since she extends her hatred to all men by attempting to have as many of their hearts broken as possible.

---

[107] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 113.
[108] Ibid., p. 280.
[109] Ibid., p. 319.

While Miss Havisham's revenge is motivated by emotional frustration, Bertha Velderkaust is mainly interested in what she claims to be her property. Bertha's ghostliness, then, represents the dispossession experienced by women under patriarchy, which Torgerson has identified with the character of Cathy. Moreover, Bertha's foreign status, which she shares with Heathcliff, further emphasises her disempowerment in the patriarchal system. Bertha Velderkaust is Dutch, a detail that Le Fanu did not change in the rewriting of his short story into the novel format. However, he did change her name, which was originally Flora Van Kemp. The connection with Brontë's Bertha Mason has already been discussed; interestingly though, the author also renamed his madwoman after the dispossessed female protagonist of another of his short stories, namely, 'Strange Event in the Life of Schalken the Painter'.[110]

Published in the *Dublin University Magazine* in May 1839, five months before 'A Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family', and also collected in the posthumous *Purcell Papers*, 'Schalken the Painter' tells the story of Rose Velderkaust, who is "sold" in marriage by her uncle and ward to a vampire-like man, of whom very little is known, apart from his being extremely wealthy, and therefore too good a prospect to reject. After the 'contract of marriage' is signed, Rose is "plucked" by her new possessor and taken away.[111] As the new Mrs Vanderhausen, Rose literally disappears for months, thus symbolising her total loss of identity in marriage. Interestingly, as Alison Milbank points out in her *Daughters of the House*, Rose's surname, Velderkaust, in Dutch means "of price", while Vanderhausen can be translated as "of the house".[112] Milbank rightly associates Rose's name with the idea of 'value on the market-place', and points out that she becomes dispossessed when she is 'framed by male possession, enclosed within the

[110] Le Fanu, 'Strange Event in the Life of Schalken the Painter', *Dublin University Magazine* (May 1839), pp. 579-91.
[111] Ibid., p. 385. The association of the name Rose with the idea of a plucked flower can be extended also to the name Flora in 'A Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family'; see McCormack, *J. S. Le Fanu*, p. 76.
[112] Milbank, p. 160. On 'Schalken the Painter', see pp. 159-62.

house', that is, when she marries into the name of Vanderhausen.[113] Woman's ghostliness in the house will be analysed in depth in Chapter Four; what is important to note here is that, when Rose suddenly reappears, seeking asylum from her demon-lover, her resemblance to Bertha is striking: Rose looks 'wild and haggard, and pale with exhaustion'; she also wears the same 'kind of white woollen wrapper' that Bertha wears the night she attacks Alice; she seems starved and asks for food and wine, at which she darts 'with the rapacity of a vulture', in a 'paroxysm of hunger'; and she speaks 'mysterious and broken sentences', which make her uncle fear that 'the poor girl, owing to terror or ill-treatment, had become deranged'.[114]

Both Rose and Bertha Velderkaust embody the ghostliness of the dispossessed woman. However, where Rose is finally lost to her husband, who comes back to claim her forever, Bertha rebels and turns into the vampiric dispossessor. Again, her evil traits are reminiscent of the 'Schalken' story, this time though, of the demon-lover Minheer Vanderhausen: like Bertha, the man seems to move around the house like a shadow, passing through walls rather than exiting doors, and, like Bertha, his otherworldly features are the source of sheer horror:

> A quantity of grizzled hair descended in long tresses from his head [...]; the eyes were enormous, and the white appeared both above and below the iris, which gave to them an expression of insanity, which was heightened by their glassy fixedness; [...] the mouth was writhed considerably to one side, where it opened in order to give egress to two long, discoloured fangs, which projected from the upper jaw, far below the lower lip [...]; the character of the face was malignant, even satanic, to the last degree; and, indeed, such a combination of horror could hardly be accounted for [...]. There was something indescribably odd, even horrible, about all his motions, something undefinable, that was unnatural, unhuman.[115]

In stepping beyond the boundary of victimised ghostliness, Bertha positions herself in the sphere of masculinity, that is, the other face of the coin. This trespassing results in her transformation into a grotesque form of woman, a monster, and a threat to male power.

---

[113] Ibid., p. 160.
[114] Ibid., pp. 588, 589.
[115] Ibid., p. 586.

Contemporary feminist scholars of the horror genre have explained that female monsters have developed in parallel with the growth of the women's movement. Although these critics, such as Barbara Creed, Juliet Mitchell, Susan Lurie, and Laura Mulvey, refer specifically to the history of horror in the twentieth century, women's first steps towards emancipation in the nineteenth century also allow for a similar reading of the female monster in Victorian literature.[116] Women in horror fiction are identified as either castrated, castrating, or phallic.[117] Castrated women are passive, tame, domesticated victims, who are chased and punished by the male monster/castrator. According to Lurie, this association is the result of man's instinct for self-protection, since it is more comforting to think of a woman 'as pitifully harmless as a castrated man' rather than having to face the reality of her being different, and a (w)hole.[118] In fact, woman's power-in-difference ignites in men a fear of active castration on her part. The *castrating* woman threatens male power because, by incorporating the penis, she undermines the symbol of the phallus. Castrating women are often embodied in fiction in the shape of devouring creatures, destructive, savage, aggressive, who use knives or their sharp teeth to incorporate their victims.[119] Both the image of the castrated woman and the more terrifying figure of the castrating woman justify the creation of a fetish in the form of the phallic

---

[116] On the female monster, see Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1993); Juliet Mitchell, *Women: the Longest Revolution: Essays on Feminism, Literature, and Psychoanalysis* (London: Virago, 1984); Susan Lurie, 'The Construction of the "Castrated Woman" in Psychoanalysis and Cinema', *Discourse*, No. 4 (1981-82), pp. 52-74; and Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

[117] Creed, Mitchell, Lurie, and Mulvey position themselves in contrast to Freud. While Freud's Oedipus complex claimed the supremacy of the penis/phallus, and identified women as either castrated (women are men who have been castrated by the father/castrator) or phallic (man produces a fetish to respond to his fear of being castrated), feminist psychoanalysis introduced the figure of the castrating woman, that is a woman who is not identified by the lack of her penis, but who is different and whole in her own gender. See Sigmund Freud, 'Medusa's Head', *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* 24 Vols (London: Hogart, 1953-74), Vol. 18, pp. 273-74; also Creed, Ch. 8; Lurie, p. 52-3; Mitchell, pp. 248-77; Mulvey, p. 6; and Felman, p. 140.

[118] Lurie, pp. 52-3, quotation on p. 53; Creed, Introduction.

[119] Creed, p. 107. The image of the incorporating vagina is reminiscent of the myth of the vagina dentata. As Creed has pointed out, this belief has been found all over the world, with prevalence of India, the Americas, Africa, and Europe. Freud must have been aware of it, since he describes the customs of some primitive cultures in his essay 'The Taboo of Virginity' (1917); however, he does not make any connections. Similarly, he interprets the snakes on the head of Medusa as a fetish against the frightful image of Medusa as the castrated genitalia, but does not comment on her 'huge mouth, lolling tongue, and boar's tusks', nor on the snakes' open mouths and pointed fangs – 'an act of wish fulfilment *par excellence*'; Creed, Ch. 8.

woman. The phallic woman is constructed as a grotesque parody of man, with her bass voice, unladylike language, and sexual violence.[120] The phallic woman can offer consolation against the threat of castration, but her fetishised penis positions her at the same level as man, in that she also claims the power symbolised by the phallus. For this reason, non-castrated women, whether castrating or phallic, are fictionalised as monstrous and subjected to castration through the infliction of wounds and mutilation, or eventually destroyed if their difference cannot be contained.[121] The castrated woman, instead, is elevated to the role of victimised heroine, since she allows the concept of male superiority in man's possession of the penis/phallus.

Woman as monster is primarily represented in relation to her sexuality, with particular emphasis on the abjection of her reproductive organs. Julia Kristeva, the main theorist of the abject, has defined abjection as that which does not 'respect borders, positions, rules', that which 'disturbs identity, system, order'.[122] In a society founded on the law of the father, where the 'clean and proper body' is associated with the wholeness of the penis, woman's body, with its threatening (w)holeness, comes to represent the unclean, improper body, characterised by its menstrual waste – a source of unease, loathing, and disgust.[123] Thus, woman's abjection stands as the key to the preservation of patriarchal order, since her monstrosity justifies her destruction and re-establishes the symbolic value of the phallus.

In *The Wyvern Mystery*, the dichotomy between castrated and castrating femininity becomes evident in the opposition of the ideal woman and the independent woman, and is highlighted in the climax of their only encounter. In Chapter Thirty-Six, Alice is found lying in bed, her sleep already troubled by the absence of her husband. When Bertha enters her room and attacks her, her reaction is described as total hopelessness, passivity,

---

[120] Ibid., p. 157.
[121] Lurie, pp. 59-60.
[122] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 4. For an analysis of Kristeva's theory, see also Creed, Ch. 1.
[123] Creed, ibid.

dependence on the protection of her man: '[f]light was her one thought, and that ended suddenly, for, tripping in the upturned carpet, she fell helplessly to the floor' [p. 178]. When death confronts Alice, Charles breaks into the room and rescues her, and she recognises him as 'my Ry, my saviour, my Ry' [ibid.]. Facing Alice in the locked room is monstrous Bertha, already identified as the hungry dispossessed woman, who invades man's territory and incorporates what she claims to belong to her. In an attempt to minimise her castrating power, Bertha is fetishised into the phallic woman: she penetrates the room by cutting the wallpaper with a knife, she stands 'erect' in front of Alice's bed, 'holding her underlip slightly in her teeth, with just a little nip', her features 'exaggerated and evil' [p. 176]. Bertha traps Alice by twisting the key in the door with her 'strong hand', thus making it impossible for the girl to escape, and then, she literally flings herself onto her defenceless victim with an inhuman violence: 'the tall woman instantly grasped her near the shoulder, and, scrambling on the bed on her knees, she dragged her down upon it, and almost instantly struck at her throat with a knife' [pp. 176-77].

However, Bertha as phallic woman is no less terrifying than Bertha as castrating woman, because she claims the rights of the phallus without possessing a penis. In her attempt on the life of Alice she turns from the disempowered ghost into the vampire who wants to feed on what Alice represents: the name and land of the Fairfields in the body of her unborn son. Since Bertha is a threat both as castrating and phallic, she must be reduced to the state of 'pitifully harmless' castrated woman for patriarchy to keep its power.[124] Thus, Charles as the patriarch (penis and phallus), intervenes in order to tame the monster back within the boundaries of inoffensive femininity. He bursts into the room and strikes Bertha on the head, then leaving her bleeding on the floor. The fact that Charles resorts to physical violence and directs his blow to Bertha's head is crucial here, because while Lurie interprets the infliction of any wounds as a sign of castration, Freud has identified the very

[124] Lurie, p. 53.

act of beheading the monster as the ultimate form of castration.[125] Despite Charles' attempt to reconstitute the law of the father, Bertha keeps escaping male control and, as the subverter of the phallic order, she is finally destroyed in the violence and gore associated with the abject:

> Some swore she was out of her mind with drink, and pitched herself out o' the window; and some thought it might ha' bin that chap as went in to rob her, thinkin' she was stupid; and so there was a tussle for't – she was main strong, ye know – and he chucked her out. Anyhow she got it awful, for she fell across the spikes of the area rails, and she hung on them with three lodged in her side – the mad dog-fox, she was! [p. 286]

Although the monster is finally ejected, the potential for subversion still remains. In fact, it is through the very contact with the monster that the castrated woman realises the power-in-difference proper of her sexuality.

In 'When the Woman Looks', Linda Williams theorises on the different reactions experienced by men and women at the sight of the monster.[126] According to Williams, where the traumatised male sees in the creature 'a biological freak with impossible and threatening appetites that suggest a frightening potency precisely where the normal male would perceive a lack', the woman is also paralysed with fear of its grotesquery, 'but [...] recognizes the sense in which this freakishness is similar to her own difference'.[127] Hence, the female victim develops a sympathetic identification with the creature standing before her, because she sees the monster as a distorting mirror reflecting nothing other than herself. Therefore, the monster becomes 'a particularly insidious form of the many mirrors patriarchal structures of seeing hold up to the woman': while woman's affinity with the

---

[125] Creed, p. 121.
[126] Linda Williams, 'When the Woman Looks', in Mary Ann Doane, Patricia Mellencamp, and Linda Williams, eds, *Re-Vision: Essays in Feminist Film Criticism* (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1984), pp. 83-99.
[127] Ibid., pp. 87, 88.

monster justifies her pity at its destruction, the breaking of the mirror does not cancel the revelation of her potential as a threat to a vulnerable patriarchy.[128]

In *The Wyvern Mystery*, the ideal woman and the monstrous feminine are represented as complete opposites: Alice is young, pretty, tame, pregnant, and an English wife, whereas Bertha is old, ugly, savage, sterile, and a foreign mistress. However, on a closer examination, their differences are not so striking, and even Charles, at one point, is confused about what he feels for the two women:

> Could he, even in a moment of frenzy, have struck down any creature so – that ever stood to him in the relation of that love? What a rush of remembrances and hell of compunction was there! – and *for a rival*! She the reckless, forlorn, guilty old love cast off, blasted with deformity and privation, and now this last fell atrocity! Alice was clinging to him, [...] and *he felt as if he hated Alice* – hated her worse than himself. [p. 179, my italics]

On the night when victim and monster come face to face, Bertha penetrates Alice's room by cutting her way through the wall with a sharp knife. Where Freud has interpreted the house and the human body and the passageways as vaginal, Barbara Creed has pushed this association further, linking the image of the barred and dangerous entrance with the *vagina dentata*.[129] Therefore, although herself castrated, Alice also possesses the potential to castrate. Alice immediately notices the knife 'pass slowly and tremulously along the wall', but she cannot distinguish the nature of that 'glittering object' and, significantly, she thinks that it 'might be a little bit of looking-glass', so that she is already reflecting her image into an extension of the monster's body [p. 175].[130] The sight of the mysterious intruder, 'pale, seamed with small-pox, blind', freezes Alice with terror: she is 'almost breathless', as in a dream, or worse, 'a catalepsy of horror' [pp. 176, 177]. Alice eventually manages to scream and is saved by her husband. However, though Bertha has tried to kill her, Alice

---

[128] Ibid., p. 88.
[129] Creed, pp. 118, 107.
[130] In the short story, Flora enters Fanny's room by a secret passage hidden behind a big mirror, thus making the symbolical reflection of victim onto monster even more effective; see Le Fanu, 'A Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family', *Dublin University Magazine* (October 1839), pp. 398-415, p. 411.

does not resent her for what she has done. She remarks that if 'she is mad, it accounts for everything' and she promises Charles that she will never prosecute Bertha, a promise she keeps [p. 286]. She does not stop paying Bertha the allowance that her husband used to give her even after he dies, and, finally, when Harry announces Bertha's death to Alice with quite disrespectful words against the deceased, Alice begs him not to speak in such a way and looks 'intensely pained' [ibid].

Alice's sympathy towards the monster can be interpreted as the recognition that one day she could be Bertha, because, if Charles was truly married to Bertha, then Alice is, in fact, the fallen woman and Bertha the mistreated wife. The truth about the matter is never known, nor even investigated, and suspicion pervades the novel: if Harry questions Charles's marriage to Alice, 'or whatever you call it', because its invalidity would make him heir of Wyvern at Charles's death, Charles' own words on the subject are ambiguous enough to allow conjectures about Alice's status: 'Alice, poor little Alice! Merciful Heaven! what had she done to merit this long agony and possible *ruin*?' [pp. 93, 191, my italics]. In this light, the qualities which have so far differentiated the two women come to emphasise their similarity. First of all, Alice's role of wife can be read as a form of legal prostitution, where the wife becomes the sexual and economic slave of her husband.[131] The whiteness of the bridal dress, which associates the wife with the blank page upon which the husband writes, finds a parallel in the madwoman's white nightdress, which can also be interpreted as a blankness filled by the male doctor. Moreover, even her pregnancy paradoxically brings Alice closer to the figure of the prostitute because, although she is fulfilling the ideal of womanhood in the part of mother, the possibility that she is in fact carrying an illegitimate child links her to the abjected woman. Finally, Alice the orphan, like Bertha the foreigner, also stands as the outsider, the "identityless" invader of the Fairfields' Englishness.

---

[131] See Heller, pp. 22, 130.

In her orphan status (another nod to Brontë), Alice is not so different than Bertha. As Laura Peters points out in *Orphan Texts* (2000), orphans were usually associated with foreigners in their inability to find a place in the community.[132] At a time when both the family and the nation were suffering from a crisis of identity, the outsider came to embody the role of both threat and scapegoat, or better, in Jacques Derrida's term, the *pharmakon*:

> The *pharmakon* is an alien intruder or 'housebreaker' which threatens [...] the 'internal purity and security'. Yet simultaneously the *pharmakon* is the structure by which this difference is 'put outside back in its place'; it is the process by which the 'excess' is eliminated and the composition of the inside remains intact. Thus, the *pharmakon* both contains the threatening difference and is the process by which this different is expelled.[133]

Derrida's *pharmakon* is another way to define the abject, that something which 'threatens to destroy life [but] also helps to define life', and it is no coincidence that both orphans and foreigners are sometimes represented and ejected as monsters.[134] Therefore, Alice has the potential to turn into Bertha. According to Linda Williams, a woman's power to resist the monster depends on the nature of her sexuality.[135] The more innocent she is, the fewer are the chances for her to identify with the monster. Alice does not transform into Bertha but perhaps only because the source of dangerous sexuality, embodied by Charles, is eradicated. By killing Charles, Le Fanu ensures that Alice will not be misused, betrayed, and abandoned, thus sparing her decline from angel to fallen woman, and from melancholy into moral insanity.

In *The Wyvern Mystery* Le Fanu exploits the theme of erotomania in order to offer his ideal of femininity in the figure of Alice Maybell. Like all his heroines, Alice is the submissive wife and mother, who still proves strong enough to marry the man she loves rather than

---

[132] Laura Peters, *Orphan Texts: Victorian Orphans, Culture and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 40.
[133] Ibid., p. 22.
[134] Creed, p. 9; Peters, p. 47.
[135] Williams, p. 93.

take mercenary advantage of a better financial prospect. For this reason she is granted sympathy in her illness through a return to sentimentalism. In contrast, Bertha's hypersexuality and claims over her man's property, which identify her as the independent woman, are punished through her transformation into a grotesquery of femininity, and her descent into a form of insanity which does not elicit pity, but rather horror. Furthermore, Le Fanu's decision to have Charles die is indicative of his opinion of the role of the husband as the protector of his wife's physical *and* psychological health. With his first-hand experience of mental strain in the person of his wife Susanna, and at a time when more and more men were getting rid of their wives by declaring them insane, Le Fanu thus proves his abhorrence of domestic psychological abuse, a topic to which he would return in *The Rose and the Key*.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Demon in the House: *The Rose and the Key* (1871)

The Rose and the Key is Le Fanu's fourteenth novel. It first appeared in Charles Dickens' *All the Year Round* between 21 January and 23 September 1871 in thirty-six instalments. No letters from Le Fanu to Dickens survive, but from Dickens' correspondence, meticulously collected by Madeline House, Graham Storey, and Kathleen Tillotson, it seems that Le Fanu had a rough plan of this story in mind as early as the autumn of 1869.[1] Nevertheless, he published two novels, a poem, and several short stories before finally getting the chance to serialise it in Dickens' magazine.[2] Le Fanu had just published 'Green Tea' in *All the Year Round* (October – November 1869, four instalments) when he submitted to Dickens an outline of *The Rose and the Key*. Dickens replied on 24 November 1869 assuring Le Fanu that 'I shall be truly glad to count upon you as a very frequent contributor' and that '[y]our sketch is very new, striking, and touching. It should make a remarkable story'.[3] However, Dickens also pointed out to Le Fanu that, at the time, the twenty-four pages of the magazine were already filled with two serial stories, and that adding a third one could confuse the reader, thus doing no justice to any of the tales.[4] In

---

[1] On Dickens' correspondence with Le Fanu with regard to The Rose and the Key, see Madeline House, Graham Storey, and Kathleen Tillotson, eds, *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12 Vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), Vol. 12, 1868-1870, pp. 442-4, 502-3, 535-6.

[2] *The Wyvern Mystery* was serialized in the *Dublin University Magazine* between February and November 1869 and then published by Tinsley at the end of the same year. *Checkmate* appeared in *Cassell's Magazine* between August 1870 and February 1871 and was then published by Hurst and Blackett in the same year. 'The Bird of Passage' appeared in *Temple Bar* between April and June 1870, 'The Haunted Baronet' in *Belgravia* between July and November 1870, 'A Strange Adventure in the Life of Miss Laura Mildmay' in *Cassell's Magazine* between June and July 1870 (these three short stories were then collected in *Chronicles of Golden Friars,* published by Bentley in 1871), 'The Dead Sexton' in *Once a Week* in December 1870, 'The Child that Went with the Fairies', 'The White Cat of Drumguinniol', 'Stories of Lough Guir', 'The Vision of Tom Chuff', and 'Madam Crowl's Ghost' in *All the Year Round* between February and December 1870 (these stories were then collected by M. R. James in *Madam Crowl's Ghost,* published by G. Bell in 1923). In 1871 Le Fanu's famous Irish ballad 'Shamus O'Brien' (which had already appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine* in July 1850) was published by New York publisher Amsterdam News. Bibliographical details in Gary William Crawford, *J. Sheridan Le Fanu: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1995).

[3] House, Storey, and Tillotson, eds, p. 442.

[4] The two stories Dickens referred to in his letter were Percy Fitzgerald's 'The Bridge of Sighs: a Yachting Story' and Frances Trollope's 'Veronica'; ibid., p. 443.

January 1870, Le Fanu decided to turn to Bentley and tried to convince him to accept the novel unseen. In a letter dated 3 January Le Fanu admitted to George Bentley that 'I am vain enough to think that if you do [accept my M.S.S.], you will not repent it. I have never written anything more carefully'.[5] He continued by copying Dickens' positive remarks on the plot and reassured his editor that Dickens also 'has accepted every paper I sent him [...] before he had read it himself'.[6] Bentley's reply does not survive, but he was probably cautious enough to decline Le Fanu's proposal.

On 31 March 1870 Dickens wrote to Le Fanu again to inform him of a possible change in his serial-story arrangements which would involve an opening in some eight or nine months' time, and that he would be interested in receiving the scheme of his story.[7] Le Fanu's plan must have been still at a very early stage since, two months later, Dickens wrote to him that:

> I quite agree with you that no story should be planned out too elaborately in detail beforehand, or the characters become mere puppets and will not act for themselves when the occasion arises. But your story is so very slightly sketched in some of its most important stages, that I cannot yet see it as you see it, or feel its capacity as you feel it.[8]

Nevertheless, he added that 'I do not doubt [...] the strength of its leading ideas', thus expressing his confidence in the author.[9] Serialisation began in January 1871, according to plans, and in June Le Fanu wrote to Bentley, with whom he was still in touch regarding the publication of his *Chronicles of Golden Friars* (1871), explaining that he expected *The Rose and the Key* to appear in three volumes in August, or September at the latest.[10] According to Walter E. Edens, Bentley must have 'merely inquired' about the publication of the novel, but Le Fanu probably interpreted this inquiry as a manifestation of interest, so

---

[5] Letter to Bentley of 3 January 1870, Edens, p. 237.
[6] Ibid.
[7] House, Storey, and Tillotson, eds, p. 502-3.
[8] Letter to Le Fanu of 26 May 1870, ibid., p. 535.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Letter to Bentley of 6 June 1871, Edens, p. 240.

that he answered that 'I am [...] quite free to entertain any offer you may make me, for the collective publication'.[11] There is no trace of a proposal for *The Rose and the Key* on the part of Bentley, however, and if one was made it was not accepted, since the novel eventually appeared as a triple-decker by Chapman and Hall, the publishers of *All the Year Round.*

The Rose and the Key tells the story of young Maud Vernon, a beautiful heiress whose free spirit prevents her complying with the strict rules of Victorian society, embodied by her bigoted and tyrannical mother. Convinced that a humble life as a countryside painter would make her happier than the gilded slavery of high society, Maud rebels against her mother, who has always hated her, and against a society that rates money and social position higher than love and liberty. However, she soon realises that she has exchanged the suffocating monotony of domesticity for the deceivingly amiable environments of what turns out to be a madhouse. Self-willed and impetuous Barbara Vernon gave birth to Maud after marrying Lord Amyrald Vernon, a man she had always despised. It eventually transpires that Lady Vernon has some skeletons in her closet, including a secret earlier marriage to vicar Elwyn Howard, a man with no title or wealth, with whom she had a son, named after his father. This baby was sent away under the care of a family friend, Mr Dawe, and the whole business forgotten after the sudden death of the vicar, until discovered by Lord Vernon, who then blackmailed Barbara into marrying him and saving him from ruin. When Lord Vernon died Maud lived on to remind her mother of her vicious husband, of the past and long lost happiness with Elwyn Howard, and of the abandoned son she had always loved from a distance. The thought that Maud would go on to inherit the family estates, money, and titles instead of her beloved son, is enough to make Lady Vernon despise her and plot against her person. But when Lady Vernon starts to dread that her son might incestuously unite himself in marriage with his

[11] Ibid., p. 241.

natural sister, she turns her plans into action. She claims Maud's rebelliousness as a sign of insanity and, with the help of a corrupt doctor and thousands of pounds at her disposal, she has her daughter locked up in a lunatic asylum under the charge of a power-hungry foreign mesmerist, thus rendering her incapable of inheriting the property.

Maud is eventually rescued by the faithful Charles Marston, a noble young man who had met her during a holiday in the rough Welsh countryside, and who had immediately fallen in love with her, despite Maud pretending to be only a peasant. It is Charles who then tells Maud the legend of the Rose and the Key, according to which Lady Rhoda Vernon, known as the Rose of Wyke, was once kidnapped and imprisoned by enemies of her family, and liberated by her lover, Sir Guy Marston, to whom she had sent a rose from the place of her captivity. Maud will use the same stratagem to communicate her whereabouts to her own Marston, who will also prove as successful as his ancestor. At the news of Maud's liberty and of Elwyn's elopement with a country girl, Lady Vernon dies in a fit, with hard words of hate and vengeance on her lips. The novel ends with Maud and Charles, now Lady and Lord Warhampton, happily united in marriage and parents of an heir and more children.

The subject of wrongful confinement in lunatic asylums was quite popular at the time when *The Rose and the Key* was published, and Le Fanu's novel echoes the work of other Victorian writers in condemning alienists for abandoning those humanitarian principles which they had claimed to be the basis for a new, revolutionary way to cure the insane. The writings of Le Fanu, like those of Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade, offer a strong criticism of alienists' shameful fall from philanthropy to corruption, which cost the liberty, respectability, and actual sanity of many innocent people, maliciously incarcerated in asylums for the personal gain of relatives and doctors.

Until the end of the eighteenth century lunatics had shared overcrowded dungeons with common criminals and, like them, had been kept in chains, underfed, and in appalling,

unhygienic conditions.[12] The new century saw the rise of moral management as an innovative way to deal with insanity, introduced by William Tuke at the York Retreat, and popularised by William Ellis and Robert Gardiner Hill in the first decades of the nineteenth century.[13] It was John Conolly, in the 1840s, who made moral management a world-wide success, thus claiming for Victorian England the leadership of the new science of psychiatry. In a period of intercontinental expansion and economic growth, the Victorians started to believe that no conquest was impossible. Medicine as well was overwhelmed by this wave of optimism, and many practitioners affirmed that, not only could lunatics be treated in a more peaceful and humane way, but they could actually be cured of their illness. Starting from Philippe Pinel's conviction that 'madmen are so intractable only because they have been deprived of air and liberty', alienists introduced the innovative theory of the domestication of insanity.[14] This practice involved both the taming and the treatment of beastly lunatics by means of a system that recalled the family model, with a view to their final reassimilation into society.

Thus, from the early nineteenth century, asylums began to be managed by a superintendent and his wife, playing the role of father and mother to their child-like patients. As alienist John Haslam explained: 'the patients [...] have, like children, their whims and tempers, and are governed by a similar kind of discipline, the same mixture of kindness and authority which is necessary to preserve order in a family'.[15] Along this line, new structures were erected under the influence of moral architecture: asylums were not to remind the inmates of prisons but imitate the architecture of country houses, surrounded by beautiful gardens and, beyond them, gentle and soothing landscapes. Public asylums would thus emulate the structure of the English mansion, stretching in a long line with different areas dedicated to men and women, masters and servants, carefully demarcated. Private

[12] See John Bender, *Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth Century England* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 18.
[13] For more details on the rise of moral management, see Showalter, Ch. 1.
[14] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, p. 230.
[15] Quoted in Showalter, p. 28.

asylums were usually converted houses, offering a familial and reassuring atmosphere.[16] Nowhere were high walls and iron gates to be seen and, in some asylums, double windows were preferred to metal bars. Other aspects of moral management included a healthy diet and several daily activities, which depended on the patients' sex and class: in public asylums, men would work in the garden or help with the maintenance of the buildings while women would act as seamstresses or tailors. In private asylums, which usually hosted members of the upper classes, patients would attend lectures, concerts, theatrical productions, and balls, and at times the asylum would even be open to the general public.

This idyllic situation did not last long. Public asylums quickly became overcrowded, the incredibly high number of patients outnumbering the small groups of very underpaid, unqualified, and unmotivated attendants. Superintendants soon realised that philanthropy did not go hand in hand with high remuneration, and therefore dedicated less and less time to their pauper patients or rather turned to private business, as external inspectors or independent consultants in big cities.[17] By the end of the 1860s therapeutic optimism had dwindled. Moral management gave way to disinterest and non-restraint to a return to discipline: public asylums were left falling apart in the damp and cold of the long country winters and their inmates once again chained to their beds or kept quiet with opiates. Private asylums, meanwhile, maintained their usual magnificence and comfort, but only to hide behind their majestic façades the dreadful threat of wrongful confinement.[18]

The general public showed an enormous interest in insanity. While the Victorians were terrified at the thought of dangerous lunatics wandering about their neighbourhood, they were also horrified at the idea of sane people being locked up in asylums out of greed or revenge, a fear that increased in parallel with the number of cases reported in the press. In *Inconvenient People* (2012), Sarah Wise has collected dozens of true stories that

---

[16] For a description of private asylums, see William Llywelyn Parry-Jones, *The Trade in Lunacy: a Study of Private Madhouses in England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1971), Ch. 5.
[17] Oppenheim '*Shattered Nerves*', p. 25.
[18] Showalter, Ch. 4.

scandalised nineteenth-century English readers when revealed in the press: from Edward Davies, who was confined in 1829 by his mother's order because she did not agree with his way of managing the family tea company, to Richard Paternoster, who spent forty-one days in Kensington House Asylum in 1838 on the basis of a disagreement with his family in relation to money he had been promised; from Lewis Phillips, who was also incarcerated in 1838 on his brothers' instruction so that they could get his share in the family enterprise, to Louisa Nottidge, whose improper affiliation with the religious sect of Rev. Prince cost her eighteen months in Moorcroft House Asylum between 1846 and 1848, and Catherine Cummings, who was confined to York House in Battersea in the same year as Nottidge because her greedy daughters had £30,000 to gain from proving her incapable of managing her own property.[19]

According to Wise, in the year 1858 the general public experienced a real, widespread "lunacy panic", when numerous cases of malicious asylum incarceration came to light.[20] Of particular importance to this study is the story of Edward Fletcher, a young heir who was locked up in Kensington House Asylum, London, by his uncles, who were interested in his inheritance. Fletcher managed to escape in July 1858 and, after many misadventures, he found shelter in the house of Charles Reade, who then took inspiration from Fletcher's experience for his novel *Hard Cash*.[21] Even more notorious than Fletcher's was the case of Lord Edward Bulwer-Lytton's wife Rosina.[22] The story of Rosina Bulwer Lytton will be subject of further analysis in the following section, which will focus on the (ab)use of female madness to silence rebellious women. Suffice it to say here that Rosina was a strong-willed woman who stood up to the physical and psychological violence inflicted by her powerful husband. Bulwer-Lytton's fame as a writer and a politician attracted enormous publicity to her case, as did Rosina's continual, public, and irreverent

[19] Wise, *Inconvenient People.* See also McCandless, 'Liberty and Lunacy', pp. 338-62, passim.
[20] Wise, Ch. 8.
[21] Ibid., p. 396.
[22] Ibid., p. 252. The case of Rosina Bulwer Lytton is dealt with in Ch. 7. Note that Rosina, unlike her husband, used to spell her name without the hyphen with the specific purpose to irritate him.

denunciations of his wrongs: her first novel *Cheveley; or, the Man of Honour* (1839) contained many sarcastic allusions to her husband and his entourage; she used to send libellous letters to his club, with obscenities scribbled all across the envelopes; and she even appeared during one of his public speeches and insulted him in front of his audience.[23] Bulwer-Lytton found in the asylum an effective way to silence his wife. However, Rosina was liberated from Dr Gardiner Hill's private institution after only a few weeks of captivity, following a public outcry.

Rosina's story raised new awareness to the plight of wrongful confinement, and more and more cases were discovered in the following years, horrifying the general public who read of them in the pages of newspapers and magazines. As Wise explains, 'the "lunacy panics" of the nineteenth century highlighted the fear that the English were sleepwalking into allowing the medical profession to curb individual freedom by labelling unconventional behaviour as a pathological condition, in need of cure or containment'.[24] In fact, doctors still held a limited knowledge of mental pathology. Thus, they often mistook mere eccentric behaviour or sexual immorality for insanity, and ended up confining sane people simply because they did not conform to the public idea of normality.[25]

As early as the 1820s and throughout the following decades, the ongoing concern with wrongful confinement resulted in the passing of two main lunacy bills and several amendments.[26] The Madhouse Act of 1828 imposed the condition that commitment of a pauper patient required an order signed by two magistrates or by an overseer and a clergyman of the parish along with one signed medical certificate. With regard to private patients, it was necessary to present an order of admission signed by a relative or friend of the patient, a statement answering questions about the symptoms affecting the patient, and

---

[23] Ibid., pp. 216, 220, 224-5.
[24] Ibid., p. xvii.
[25] McCandless, passim.
[26] For a detailed overview of the regulations concerning lunatic asylums in Europe and in the United States see, Lyttlelton Forbes Winslow, *Manual of Lunacy: a Handbook Relating to the Legal Care and Treatment of the Insane in the Public and Private Asylums of Great Britain, Ireland, United States of America, and the Continent* (London: Smith, Elder, 1874). Also, Wise, Appendix 1; and Finnane, Ch. 3.

two medical certificates signed by doctors who had visited the patient at different times and who had no personal connection whatsoever with the family or the asylum.[27] The 1845 Lunatic Act further established the Lunacy Commission as a national institution in charge of the inspection of all asylums on a permanent basis. The Commission was made up of three doctors, three lawyers, and up to five unpaid laymen, who alone had the power to prosecute asylum proprietors and alienists for not respecting the Act.[28] Despite constant attempts on the part of the legislators to make wrongful confinement as hard as possible (three Amendments Acts were passed in 1853 and 1862 to increase security on the presentation of medical certificates), the combination of difficult diagnoses and corruption proved ruinous for many more sane persons.

The cases mentioned above took place on English soil, and Le Fanu was almost certainly familiar with those stories because of his connection with the English press. However, similar occurrences were recorded in Ireland: in the decade preceding the publication of *The Rose and the Key*, hundreds of articles dealing with lunacy scandals appeared in the *Irish Times* alone. For instance, the case of Captain Crosbie filled the pages of the national papers for months between 1859 and 1860, telling of how he was confined for half a year in Richmond asylum because of his extravagance.[29] A similar story reported one Dr Kilroy, from Co. Cavan, as the victim of malicious relatives in pursuit of his fortune. The doctor's indulgence in alcohol and opium, the consequence of the end of a romantic relationship, was exploited by his siblings, who easily attributed his delusions to madness rather than to the abuse of those substances, and had him confined in

---

[27] Before the Madhouse Act of 1828 an individual could be interned simply on the presentation of a certificate of insanity signed by a physician, a surgeon, or an apothecary. Note that, before the Apothecary Act of 1815, no standards of education or proficiency were requested to become an apothecary, that is, any dealer in drugs with no medical studies, and even his apprentice, was allowed to sign certificates; see Oppneheim, p. 18.
More details on the documentation needed for private asylums in Forbes Winslow, Ch. 5.

[28] On the Lunacy Commission, see N. Hervey, 'A Slavish Bowing Down: the Lunacy Commission and the Psychiatric Profession 1845-60', in W. F. Bynum, Roy Porter and Michael Shepherd, eds, pp. 98-131. Also Oppenheim, p. 24; Wise, ibid..

[29] *Irish Times*, 13 August 1859, 8 February 1860, 21 May 1860, 22 May 1860.

Glasnevin asylum in 1863.[30] Furthermore, the cases of Margaret Kelly, confined to Maryborough asylum in 1860 despite the fact that she 'did not exhibit any symptoms of unequivocal insanity', and Edward Crooke, whose daughters had him interned in Richmond asylum in 1870 as incapable of running his own property, showed the bureaucratic difficulty experienced by wrongfully confined individuals in the attempt to regain their freedom.[31] The widely felt exasperation towards profit-based private asylums was reiterated in the press, as shown by the following excerpt taken from the *Irish Times* (1859):

> Private Lunatic Asylums are found to be a profitable speculation. It is not pretended that these Asylums are undertaken from the sole influence of philanthropy. It is convenient often to those who are willing enough to undertake the management of a man's property, though not of his person, to consign him to an Asylum, where it must be the interest of the Manager to retain him. The Manager of a Private Asylum gains an annual stipend from every lunatic committed to his charge. He loses that the moment the lunatic is cured. To force any man to enter into a conflict with his pecuniary interest is to institute too great a trial for poor human nature. Our deliberate opinion is, that no Private Lunatic Asylums should be tolerated.[32]

The topicality and the sensational nature of such cases of wrongful confinement in England and Ireland, made them popular subject for popular fiction, whose potential for success Charles Dickens promptly recognised and helped establish in the pages of his magazine. Two novels in particular highlighted the problem of wrongful confinement in the decade preceding *The Rose and the Key*. Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* was serialised in *All the Year Round* in 1859-60, and it 'burst like a meteor on an unprepared public', quickly followed by a substantial merchandising industry which provided fans with *Woman in White* perfumes, garments, and dances.[33] Collins' novel tells the story of Laura Fairlie, a young heiress whose uncanny similarity to a woman who has escaped from a madhouse is exploited by her villainous husband in order to have her incarcerated and

---

[30] Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times,* 7 August 1863.
[31] On Margaret Kelly, see *Irish Times*, 13 October 1860. On Edward Crooke, see *Irish Times*, 11 May 1870.
[32] Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times* 12 December 1859, p. 2.
[33] Matthew Sweet, Introduction to *The Woman in White* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. xx.

thus inherit her fortune. Charles Reade's less renowned but equally sensational *Hard Cash* also appeared in Dickens' magazine in 1863 and distinguished itself for the more polemical tone with which it depicted the experience of wrongful confinement. Inspired by the real case of Fletcher vs. Fletcher, the novel revolves around young Alfred Hardie, who discovers that his father has misappropriated a huge amount of money belonging to his intended future father-in-law. Out of a fear that Alfred will denounce him, the father arranges for his son's confinement in a private asylum under the care of Dr Wycherley, a satirical representation of Dr John Conolly, which became a source of embarrassment for the real alienist's family and friends.

The work by Collins and Reade indicated to the general public that both men and women were in danger of being locked away by unscrupulous relatives. However, Sarah Wise has pointed out that 'malicious asylum incarceration [...] was slightly more likely to have been a problem for men than for women, certainly in the first sixty years of the century'.[34] From the 1860s, however, women became victims of wrongful confinement more frequently as a consequence of their recent legal victories and of the threat that female emancipation began to pose to man's power.[35] By 1860, women had won two important battles, that is, the passing of the Child Custody Bill in 1839, which granted non-adulterous wives the right to raise the children of a broken marriage, and the Divorce Act in 1857, which finally enabled them to ask for a divorce (although they were required to prove their husbands' adultery plus an additional misdemeanour such as incest, rape, sodomy, bestiality, or desertion for more than two years, whereas their husband only needed proof of adultery).[36] It is important to note that both acts were passed after decades of campaigning initiated and carried out by Le Fanu's cousin Caroline Norton. The second half of the century continued to witness women's attempts to achieve equality in terms of

---

[34] Wise, p. xvii.
[35] Ibid. See also Showalter, p. 3.
[36] See Lyn Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine: the Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), Ch. 8, passim; also Carolyn Christensen Nelson, ed., *A New Woman Reader: Fiction, Articles, and Drama of the 1890s* (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview, 2001), pp. ix-xiv.

education, suffrage, and the management of their own property, a rebellion which urged their repositioning within the boundaries of home.

As Lyn Pykett has pointed out, sensation novels often revolved around women's sufferings, which were represented as consequences of the wrongful marriage customs and laws, of the regulations on social and sexual behaviour, and of the laws concerning the custody of their children and the running of their own property.[37] Sensation fiction became a form of personal or political unconscious, through which subjugated or silenced social groups revolted against the institutions which sought to contain them.[38] Certainly, an increasing number of novels, such as Collins' *The Woman in White* and Le Fanu's *The Rose and the Key*, focused on women's preoccupations with domestic imprisonment. However, although *The Rose and the Key* earned Le Fanu the title of the "Irish Wilkie Collins", the novel was not received with the same enthusiasm that welcomed *The Woman in White*.[39] The first review appeared in the *Athenaeum* on 28 October 1871. The reviewer finds its secrets 'tolerably harmless' and the novel altogether 'an exemplification of the vivid details so characteristic of our author, but in other respects [...] not one of his most successful efforts'.[40] A far worse critique appeared in the *Saturday Review* on 24 February 1872. After a long sarcastic comment on the apparently confusing plot, the reviewer concludes the article with even harsher words:

> We have before noticed in reviewing his novels the bad taste he always shows in deathbed scenes, and the pleasure he has in dwelling on that which to any but the most vulgar of medical students is so repulsive. All other writers, however much they dwell on the dying hours, yet have decency enough to leave the corpse alone.

---

[37] Lyn Pikett, 'Sensation and the Fantastic in the Victorian Novel', in Deirdre David, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel* (Cambridge; New York, N. Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 192-211.

[38] Ibid., pp. 193-4. For a political interpretation of female fiction see Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: a Political History of the Novel* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[39] S. M. Ellis, *Wilkie Collins, Le Fanu and Others*, p. 171. Nelson Browne, one of Le Fanu's first biographers, did not agree with this theory. In fact, he wrote that 'it is doubtful if Le Fanu ever acknowledged Collins as his master since the broad outlines of the way in which Le Fanu was to travel were laid long before the publication of Collins's first novel in 1851. In *Wylder's Hand*, Le Fanu exhibits a grasp of the art of mystery-story writing which has been equaled only in *The Woman in White* or in *The Moonstone*'; see Nelson Browne, *Sheridan Le Fanu*, p. 110.

[40] Anon., *Athenaeum*, 28 October 1871, pp. 558-9

> Mr. Le Fanu, on the contrary, like those women who perform the saddest and most revolting of all offices, thinks that when the breath is out it is then that his special duties begin. [...] So long as there are vulgar readers there will be vulgar writers, and, in spite of School Boards and compulsory education, many a day must pass away before there will be any cessation in the demand and the supply of foolish and offensive stories.[41]

Very little has been written on *The Rose and the Key* since those negative reviews.[42] Le Fanu's early biographers merely synopsise the plot of the novel, while W. J. McCormack concludes that '[t]he novels which he published after 1869 – especially *The Rose and the Key* and *Willing to Die*, [...] abound in the wild and ludicrous, and in their spasm-like narrative spurn the conditions of human action'.[43] David Punter briefly mentions the novel in his *Literature of Terror* (1980), where he compares Le Fanu to another Irish Gothic writer of Huguenot descent, Charles Maturin, for their similar use of the 'symbolic theme of the horrors of the private lunatic asylum'.[44] The first lengthy analysis of *The Rose and the Key* appeared in Alison Milbank's *Daughters of the House*. Milbank dedicates a whole chapter of her book to Le Fanu's Gothic, and argues that *The Rose and the Key* is an important attempt on the part of Le Fanu to build a 'feminist hermeneutics'.[45] According to Milbank, the Victorian home comes under attack in the novel as the symbol of patriarchal authority.[46] Furthermore, by playing with the uncanny similarity between the house and the asylum, Le Fanu shows that 'Victorian society not merely shuts its awkward women in madhouses but is itself one giant system of repression and control' in the hands of fathers, husbands, and doctors.[47] In *Le Fanu's Gothic: a Rhetoric of Darkness*, Victor Sage also points out how male authority defines the female characters. Sage reflects on how a girl's early reluctance to get involved in a romantic relationship, an experience shared by several

---

[41] Anon., *Saturday Review*, 24 February 1872, pp. 255-6.
[42] A further review appeared in 1984 in *The Reprint Bulletin*. It is very short and concentrates mainly on the plot of the novel, adding only that 'The late novel *The Rose and the Key* is seldom less than entertaining, but seldom more than that'; *The Reprint Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1984), p. 23.
[43] W. J. McCormack, *Sheridan Le Fanu*, p. 203.
[44] Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, pp. 201-2.
[45] Milbank, Introduction and Ch. 7, particularly pp. 166-9; quotation on p. 21.
[46] Ibid., p. 165.
[47] Ibid., p. 167.

of Le Fanu's heroines, is here defined as a 'perversity' which contains the 'germs of insanity', and is thus exploited to trigger 'a fully fledged, Gothic madhouse conspiracy'.[48]

Milbank's and Sage's arguments are further developed in James Walton's *Vision and Vacancy*, which also considers Maud's rebelliousness and the parallel between society and the asylum.[49] In a chapter titled 'Vanity Fair', Walton interprets *The Rose and the Key* as a female Bildungsroman, where the heroine 'move[s] from the circumference to the presumed vital centre of a civilisation only to find that the centre is hollow or corrupt with a corruption that infects the whole system'.[50] The interchangeability of the house with the asylum suggests the identification of civilisation with madness, which can be read as a strong critique of a society that imposes silence upon its more turbulent members. Finally, another contribution to the scholarly study of *The Rose and the Key* is Frances Chiu's introduction to the 2007 Valancourt edition of the novel. Chiu offers a different approach to the text, from an Irish Studies perspective: she argues that the difficult relationship between mother and daughter, which Chiu finds rare at a time when bad mothers are described as 'overprotective' rather than 'malignant', makes sense if interpreted as an allegory of the conflicting relationship between Ireland and England.[51] Chiu reads the novel in the light of the outbursts of Fenian violence of the late 1860s and argues that the representation of Maud as the humble and oppressed country girl, as opposed to the haughty and authoritarian Lady Vernon, is influenced by 'contemporary nationalist ideas on land, religion, and Irish identity'.[52]

Although Chiu's contribution highlights the fact that much of Le Fanu's lesser-known fiction still needs to be given a place within the crucible of Irish Studies, this chapter does not intend to move in that direction. Instead, it will expand on Milbank's and

---

[48] Sage, p. 157.
[49] Walton, Ch. 5, particularly pp. 150-62.
[50] Ibid., p. 160
[51] Frances Chiu, Introduction to *The Rose and the Key* (Kansas City: Valancourt, 2007), p. xxvii. All quotations from the novel will refer to this edition and will be parenthesised in the text.
[52] Ibid.

Walton's idea that *The Rose and the Key* is a form of criticism of both a society which proves hostile to its women, and of the asylum as a place of torture rather than cure. The next section of the chapter will contextualise the novel in the light of Le Fanu's direct and indirect experience with rebellious women and insanity, to strengthen the argument that Le Fanu's abhorrence of domestic abuse and the consequent disposal of inconvenient women at the hand of their husbands and relatives led him to treat "mad" women so sympathetically in his fiction. The second section will focus on women's ethereal nature. While the ideal woman was the "angel in the house", Le Fanu reveals his angel-like character as a ghost instead, to show that woman's incorporeality is the result of her civil death under the law of the father. Furthermore, by constructing a parallel between the house and the asylum, Le Fanu emphasises their frightening similarity as places of coercion, and the wrongfulness of the principles upon which they are both based.

4.1 The Demon in the House

The Rose and the Key revolves around the wrongful confinement of Maud Vernon, a spirited girl who will not accept her role as "angel in the house", and whose rebelliousness is exploited by her mother to get rid of a child she despises and make use of her daughter's fortune as she pleases. Throughout the novel Le Fanu shows that domestic life can be far from angelic, and that women who are labelled difficult can actually be quite reasonable in their demands. Furthermore, by rescuing Maud and punishing her evil mother, Le Fanu expresses his strong disapproval of the inhumane practice of malicious asylum incarceration, to which many unscrupulous relatives resorted at that time.

In the turbulent years of women's struggle for emancipation, both the press and Victorian doctors tried to remind them that their place was in the house. Anti-feminist magazines and reviews praised Britain's ideal woman as innocent and meek, self-

sacrificing and non-sexual, best represented in Eliza Lynn Linton's 1868 description of the 'fair young English girl' of old times:

> A creature generous, capable, and modest; something franker than a French woman, more to be trusted than an Italian, as brave as an American but more refined, as domestic as a German and more graceful. [... A] girl who could be trusted alone if need be, because of the innate purity and dignity of her nature, but who was neither bold in bearing nor masculine in mind; a girl who, when she is married, would be her husband's friend and companion, but never his rival; one who would consider their interests identical, and not hold him as just so much fair game for spoil; who would make his house his true home and place of rest, not a mere passage-place for vanity and ostentation to go through; a tender mother, an industrious housekeeper, a judicious mistress.[53]

Victorian scientists also stressed that women's role was exclusively that of wives and mothers, on the basis of their natural constitution. As Janet Oppenheim has pointed out, the woman's body was thought to be controlled by her womb and ovaries, thus inevitably linking her social role to her reproductive system.[54] In *Shattered Nerves* (1991), Oppenheim explains that Victorian doctors attributed the different nervous maladies to the 'excessive accumulation or discharge' of that 'nerve force' which gave energy to the body.[55] Overworking one part of the body would affect other physical functions by drainage of this nerve force. In a woman's case, physical and (in particular) intellectual activities represented a serious threat to the reproductive system. Therefore, before puberty girls would enjoy 'the freedom of androgynous childhood, their games and activities being very similar to their brothers'; however, menstruation would come to mark, not the privileges of adulthood, but the beginning of their dependent status as home-bound invalids.[56] In fact, menstruation was believed to be the first step towards potential insanity: an "abnormal" quality or quantity of blood could affect the brain, and because of this

---

[53] E. L. Linton, 'The Girl of the Period', *Saturday Review*, 14 March 1868, pp. 339-40.
[54] Oppenheim explains that this is the reason why gynaecologists and obstetricians became prominent in the treatment of functional nervous disorders, p. 32.
[55] Oppenheim, pp. 81-2; quotations on p. 81.
[56] Ibid., pp 55-7.

menstruation needed to be supervised and controlled by a healthy diet and venesection.[57] Women's role, then, was dictated by their own bodies and, as British psychiatrist Henry Maudsley affirmed, they 'cannot choose but to be women; cannot rebel successfully against the tyranny of their organisation'.[58] Therefore, when they did choose to rebel, the asylum was at times employed as a form of "preventive care".

Le Fanu's opinion on the "Woman Question" was most likely influenced by his life-long relationship with the activist Caroline Norton. Caroline Norton was Le Fanu's second cousin on the Sheridan side; her father was Thomas Sheridan, the actor, while her grandfather was the more famous Irish playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan, whose sister Alicia had married into the Le Fanu family, and then became Le Fanu's grandmother.[59] Although she grew up in England, Caroline kept regular contact with her Irish cousins, and several letters to the Le Fanus still survive. The Norton Collection counts approximately fifty items, which are included in the *Le Fanu Papers* and preserved at the National Library of Ireland.[60] Norton's letters are evidence of a constant, close intimacy with the Le Fanu family. For instance, when Joseph was considering moving to England to study law, Caroline wrote to Mrs Le Fanu that 'when your son, Mr Joseph Le Fanu, comes to London, he will not forget that he has friends & relations at 24 Bolton St who will always be happy to welcome him'.[61] Particularly touching is the correspondence with Mrs Le Fanu on the occasion of Catherine's death in 1841, when Caroline wrote '[w]ell do I know how little power to comfort a mother's grief the most earnest eloquence of man can have, and how

---

[57] Ibid., p. 56.
[58] Henry Maudsley, 'Sex in Mind and in Education', *Fortnightly Review*, No. 21, pp. 466-83, p. 468. See also Showalter, pp. 121-5.
[59] On Caroline Norton, see Alan Chedzoy, *A Scandalous Woman*, Randall Craig, *The Narratives of Caroline Norton*, Oliver Lovesey, ed., *Victorian Social Activists' Novels*, pp. 1-119, and pp. 25-8, 187-9 above. On the Sheridan family, see McCormack, *Sheridan Le Fanu*, passim.
[60] *Le Fanu Papers*, National Library of Ireland, N. 2973-88; P. 2594-609. Norton's letters are catalogued as a batch, they are mostly undated and, from one can gather from the contents, they are not in chronological order. See also McCormack, passim.
[61] Letter dated 5 March 1838, *Le Fanu Papers*. Throughtout the decades, Caroline repeated her invitations to London, which she extended to all members of the family, and several cards show that she always tried to meet with the Le Fanus when she was in Ireland, or when any of them happened to be in England.

flatly the sentences fall on the sad ear of one who mourns for the lost'.[62] Almost twenty years later, Caroline shared the same motherly despair with the Le Fanus, when her eldest son Fletcher died of tuberculosis. In 1859, she wrote a fifteen-page letter to her Irish relatives, in which she related in detail the decline and death of her beloved son, his unflinching faith, and her feelings of helplessness.

While, in her correspondence, Caroline never failed to enquire about the health of each member of the extended Le Fanu family, she also showed deep concern for the well-being of the whole population of Ireland, a country to which she felt close, although she had no experience of it. In various letters to dean Le Fanu and to his son William (whom she affectionately called "Brute"), she lamented the lack of peace in Ireland, due to the Tithe War in the 1830s and to the rebellion in 1848: in 1836, she wrote 'I regret most earnestly and sincerely the effect upon your comfort of the present unsettled state of Irish tithes. I do trust governments may be able to meet this evil'.[63] Later, in 1848, she affirmed that 'I feel awed sometimes, at the general confusion and want of peace', while a year later, she wrote from Portugal (a country which she believed to be as rebellious as Ireland but not as miserable) that 'I fear Ireland is again in an awful condition of starvation & misery; what is to be done!'.[64]

A writer, a poetess, a pamphleteer, and a journalist, Caroline had much in common with Sheridan Le Fanu. Only three letters addressed to Joseph survive, which merely concern some affairs related to the Dufferin family, and express Caroline's bad opinion of the *Saturday Review*.[65] However, Caroline and Joseph must have been in touch for most of their lives, and were certainly on good terms. As early as 1841, Caroline wrote to Mrs Le

[62] Letter dated 30 April 1841, ibid.

[63] Letter dated 13 October. 1836 appears at the top of the page in a different handwriting, followed by a question mark; ibid.

[64] Letters dated 11 October 1848 and 29 May 1849, respectively, ibid.

[65] The first letter on Lady Dufferin's baby is dated 29 May, the year 1863 is added in a different handwriting, followed by a question mark; the second letter relates of Lady Dufferin's illness and is dated 24 May 1869; the third letter concerning the *Saturday Review* is dated 'Saturday' only, ibid.

Fanu that '[y]ou must have pleasure in looking proudly forward to the career of your sons, who appear to combine the supposed incompatible qualities of genius & steadiness'.[66] Caroline's confidence in Le Fanu's literary talent then became evident in the flattering reviews that she wrote for three of Le Fanu's novels (*Uncle Silas*, *Guy Deverell*, and *A Lost Name*). As McCormack has rightly noticed, 'her criticism can hardly be taken as independent and disinterested'.[67] In 1864 Le Fanu dedicated *Wylder's Hand* to her, and Caroline remained one of the very few intimates, among relatives and friends, that Le Fanu admitted at Merrion Square in his late years as a recluse.[68]

As Alan Chedzoy has pointed out in his biography of Norton, Caroline had been a free spirit from a very early age.[69] While her sisters spent hours talking about being presented to society, about balls, dresses, and marriage, Caroline was uninterested, and quite bored.[70] Moreover, she was unruly and had a very sharp tongue, so that her mother found it necessary to send her to a finishing school, where she would learn the virtue of docility and get a chance to marry well, just like her sisters.[71] In 1827, she became the wife of the Honorable George Chapple Norton, a barrister, a politician, and the brother of Fletcher Norton, the 3rd Baron of Grantley.[72] With Norton, Caroline had three boys, two of whom died young (one, she claimed, because of her husband's neglect), and of Norton she later said that '[n]o man ever admired me more or loved me less'.[73] In fact, Norton tired quite soon of her cleverness, and for the nine years they lived together, he abused her physically and psychologically, with the intent to show her where 'her place' was.[74]

---

[66] Letter dated 30 April 1841, ibid.
[67] McCormack, p. 234.
[68] Ibid., p. 197. The dedication read: 'To the Hon. Mrs Norton, whose kindness will overlook its many faults, this tale is inscribed by the author'; J. S. Le Fanu, *Wylder's Hand*, p. v.
[69] Chedzoy, p. 42.
[70] Ibid., p. 35.
[71] Ibid., pp. 31-2. Helen Sheridan married Price Blackwood, the 4th Baron of Dufferin and Claneboye, while Georgiana married Edward Seymour, the 12th Duke of Somerset.
[72] Ibid. Note that Caroline did refuse him the first time he proposed.
[73] Letter to Lord Melbourne of 21 June 1836, quoted in Chezoy, p. 7.
[74] Ibid., p. 50.

In numerous letters to her family, Caroline wrote of Norton throwing books and an ink stand at her when drunk, and of burning her correspondence, stating that this would teach her not to complain about him. On other occasions, he reacted to her satirical comments by kicking her, seizing her by the neck and throwing her violently of the floor, scalding her with a kettle, and taking her by the throat until she was nearly strangled.[75] Once, while she was pregnant with their third child, he smashed the door behind which she was hiding, 'thinking it necessary as a husband, to resist such extravagant and disrespectful proceedings' as being denied access to any room of his own house.[76] The beating continued over the years, resulting even in her miscarrying their fourth baby. Although she considered leaving him numerous times, she endured his abuses for almost a decade, only for the sake of her children, since the law did not grant mothers of separated couples any access to their children.

Norton knew the law quite well, and used it against his wife to take revenge for her rebelliousness. Eventually, when Caroline decided to leave her husband in 1836, Norton refused to allow any sort of contact between the children and their mother; furthermore, he stopped all allowances in her favour and even seized her earnings as a writer, which, as has been noticed already, he had every legal right to do. Over those critical years, Caroline continued to confide her distress to the Le Fanus, as is shown in this letter to the dean, dated 1836, which is worth quoting at length:

> My dear Sir,
>
> I received with much pleasure the letter which proved you had still a remembrance of me. [...] I have suffered most unjustly, as far as regards the injustice of a man [...]. If I could have my dear boys restored to me I could look back on the past without bitterness – as a lesson – and nothing more. But while they are denied me I still must feel restless and miserable. They were growing to the age when a mother's lessons are of most value, and not to be allowed to guide and teach them is a bitter trial. They were fine creatures, noble natured & free

[75] Ibid., pp. 51, 56, 53, 55, 90, 95.
[76] Ibid., p. 91.

> spirited and with great intelligence, and I hoped much from them – and in losing them I may indeed say "my punishment is greater than I can bear".
> However I will hope this deprivation will be but temporary – it is not one voice, but all voices which cry out against the measures adopted towards me by Mr Norton; and I look forward to the time when I trust some friendly arrangement may be made, by which each parent may obtain a share of the seeing of those little beings precious to both father & mother and intended by Heaven to be a bond of love – and not a source of struggling and bitter dispute.
> [...] But the fact is that [...] last year (July /35/) Mr Norton's conduct to me was such, that Brinsley [Caroline's brother] & Lord Seymour [Caroline's brother-in-law] wished me to part from him which I refused to do, in compliance with his own earnest petition which I still have in his own handwriting. Vexation brought on a long illness, during which I was tenderly nursed by my brother [...].
> The consequence of all this was, that Mr Norton was much irritated with my family [...].
> Always cruel and hard in his anger, he took the only methods left in his power [...] to make me feel his displeasure. He divided my children utterly from me, not even allowing me to hear from, or of them – and he gave up my wardrobe, jewels, & books for sale [...].
> My present plans are, to live for the next year conjointly with Charles Sheridan [Caroline's uncle], trusting to my literary talent, such as it is, to support me until my husband will make me some allowances. My friends & family are most generously disposed towards me, but dependence is very bitter, let it be on whom it may.[77]

Caroline fell into a depressive state in the aftermath of these events (the long illness mentioned in her letter), but was motivated to campaign to change the law to protect the interests of separated mothers. Caroline's hopes for and involvement in the cause are expressed in another letter to Mrs Le Fanu, dated 5 March 1838, in which she informed her relative that:

> Serjeant Talfourd, one of our leading barristers, has brought forward a bill in the House of Commons, to alter the law of Custody of Infants, so far as to give the judges power to order that the mother shall have access, (if thought proper), to her children; even against the will of her husband. In this measure I take a deep & painful interest for it is months since I even heard of my boys, & they have been utterly kept from me, tho' their father has never had them with him, or shown any affection towards them – but merely keeps them in Scotland to torture me, & forbids those who have the care of them, to forward any news to me concerning them. Lately I have been very ill [...].[78]

[77] Letter dated 13 October 1836 (?), *Le Fanu Papers*.
[78] Letter dated 5 March 1838, ibid.

The Child Custody Bill of 1839 and the Divorce Act in 1857 were the result of her tireless campaigns and hundreds of pages of political protest. Caroline's correspondence with the Le Fanus is again evidence that she trusted the family would agree with her political views and would offer support to her cause. The letter mentioned above bears a post scriptum which reads '[i]f you will let me send the pamphlet on the law of custody, or rather on the mother's natural claim which I once before troubled you with, & would give it to any one who would interest themselves in the question, you would do me a favour. I will send 3 or 4 copies'.[79] The pamphlet in question is the one titled *Separation of Mother and Child by the Laws of Custody of Infants Considered*, which Caroline published for private circulation in 1838, and which she probably sent also to dean Le Fanu. In fact, in an undated letter to the dean, she expressed her hope that he 'will read with interest a woman's attempt to reason against an unjust and grievous law. I therefore enclose to you my pamphlet and hope you will tell me frankly your opinion of it'.[80]

Like Le Fanu's ideal woman, Caroline Norton 'never pretended to the wild and ridiculous doctrine of equality', but accepted woman's 'natural' position of inferiority to man.[81] What she claimed was simply respect and protection within marriage: '[t]o say that a wife should be otherwise than dutiful and obedient to her husband, or that she should in any way be independent of him would be absurd. [...] But there is a very wide difference between being subject to authority and subject to oppression'.[82] Caroline's idea of happiness within marriage is expressed in another touching letter that she wrote to William Le Fanu in 1857, when she heard that he was going to be married:

> Oh dear "Brute"!
> [...] I still believe – tho' I have been a most unhappy wife – that the road to true happiness is thro' the gates of a married home – and I also believe, both that you would choose well, & deal tenderly with the wife you <u>had</u> chosen - & that

[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid. 1839 (?) is written in a different handwriting at the top of the page. However, from Caroline's mention of the pamphlet, I would believe this letter to have been written in 1838.
[81] Letter to the *Examiner* of 1838, quoted in Chedzoy, p. 155
[82] *A Plain Letter to the Lord Chancellor on the Infant Custody Bill* (1839), quoted in Craig, p. 189.

> whoever made her home with you, would never repent that you had made her your choice – and that she had accepted you as hers.
> [...] with every earnest wish that your future may be the exact contrary of my past, & that you & Miss Barrington, as "you & Mrs Le Fanu", may be "as happy as the day is long", and that Heaven may give you 'a long day' before the happiness of this world shall melt & fade into the happiness of the world to come [...].
> God bless you, and the young thing who is putting her future in your hands. And tho' I believe in you, it is not without a sigh & a trembling of the heart that I think of any bride, knowing all I know, of life and its vicissitudes!
> Speak kindly of me – & from me – to her.[83]

Despite her turbulent life, her temporary depression, and her husband's revengefulness, Caroline Norton did not experience the horror of the asylum, which was used against two other innocent women, indirectly connected to Le Fanu.

Rosina Bulwer Lytton was another battered wife, who realised quite soon after her wedding, in August 1827, that '[m]arriage is Saturnalia for men, and tyranny for women'.[84] She was kicked, threatened with a knife, bitten, and before Caroline Norton's legal achievements, deprived of her children and of her fortune. She used her pen to attack her husband, only to find herself ostracised in an environment where he was becoming increasingly powerful. When Rosina's public accusations became seriously compromising to Bulwer-Lytton's career, and he could find no grounds for divorce, he arranged to have his wife confined in a private asylum.[85] It was June 1858. Sarah Wise has offered new evidence that Bulwer-Lytton actually conspired with illustrious names in Victorian psychiatry, such as Dr. John Conolly, Dr. Forbes Benignus Winslow, John Forster, and even Lord Shaftesbury, who at that time was the head of the Lunacy Commission, to prove that Rosina was mad. Her certificates stated untrue allegations regarding hereditary insanity in her family, Rosina's suicidal tendency, and her addiction to alcohol. Conolly certified her as demented and, only three weeks later, declared her perfectly sane, when

---

[83] This letter is not dated but 1857 is written at the top of the page in a different handwriting, *Le Fanu Papers*.
[84] Wise, p. 214. On Rosina Bulwer Lytton, see Wise, Ch. 7, and Sutherland, *Victorian Fiction*, pp. 69-74.
[85] Curiously, Bulwer-Lytton's first novel, *Pelham* (1828), features a sane woman maliciously incarcerated in a lunatic asylum. Rosina claimed that she was to be congratulated for this plot twist, which she suggested to her husband three decades before her own confinement.

Bulwer-Lytton changed his mind on the whole case as a consequence of the public scandal which followed her imprisonment. Rosina was liberated upon agreement that she would keep quiet, and in exchange for a high allowance and the company of her only surviving child. However, in later years, she began to harass her husband again, and even got in touch with Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade, whose work she admired, to offer fresh material for their novels. To Collins, for instance, she wrote: '[t]he great failure of your books is the villain; Count Fosco is a very poor one, and when next you want a character of that sort, I trust you will not disdain to come to me. The man is alive and constantly under my gaze. In fact, he is my own husband'.[86]

In the middle of the "lunacy panics" of 1858 another scandal inflamed the public opinion, this time having as protagonists Charles Dickens and his wife Catherine. Dickens, whom Rosina Bulwer Lytton used to call the 'arch-humbug' on account of his 'sham philanthropy', was a close friend of Bulwer-Lytton (Dickens even named one of his children after him), and like the baronet, he was also intimate with Dr Conolly and John Forster, at that time secretary of the Commissioners in Lunacy.[87] After twenty years of marriage and ten children, Dickens fell out of love with his forty-three year old wife and manifested interest in the nineteen-year-old actress Ellen Ternan. Dickens' main biographers Michael Slater, Claire Tomalin, and Peter Ackroyd have shown that for years Dickens confided to his friends his dissatisfaction with his marital life, for which he repeatedly blamed his wife.[88] According to Tomalin, Dickens' daughter Katey later affirmed that in 1858 'there was misery at home and that he behaved like a madman', and that '[s]he saw her mother humiliated'.[89] During their separation, which occurred in that year, a private letter to his manager Arthur Smith was published (according to Dickens

---

[86] Wise, p. 249.
[87] Sutherland, p. 70, Wise, p. 220.
[88] See Michael Slater, *Charles Dickens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), Ch. 19; Michael Slater, *The Great Charles Dickens Scandal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), Ch. 1; Claire Tomalin, *Charles Dickens: a Life* (London: Penguin, 2012), Chs 18-20; Peter Ackroyd, *Dickens* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1990), Ch. 27.
[89] Tomalin, p. 294.

without permission) in the *New York Herald-Tribune*. In what became known as the "Violated Letter", Dickens claimed that his wife had always lacked in maternal love for her children, and that she was now labouring under 'a mental disorder'.[90]

While biographers have dismissed Dickens' claims as 'ludicrous', literary historian John Sutherland has argued that Dickens, having no grounds on which to ask for a divorce, might have considered the asylum in order to dispose of his inconvenient wife, on the advice of Conolly and Forster.[91] Sarah Wise has further revealed that descendants of Dr Thomas Harrington Tuke, who ran Manor House asylum, Chiswick, between 1848 and 1888, 'are believed to have seen' letters by Dickens to Tuke concerning the possible confinement of his wife, and Tuke's written refusal on account of Catherine's sanity. It seems that these letters were lost in the 1970s, and since no copies were made, there is no evidence against Dickens.[92] Both Sutherland and Wise have expressed the belief that Dickens had no real intention of locking his wife away: Sutherland has claimed that, with his letter, Dickens only meant to 'show her the instruments', while Wise finds it unlikely that Dickens could have been so imprudent as to attempt to confine his wife in the critical days of the "lunacy panics".[93] In favour of this argument, it appears that Dickens' relationship with both Conolly and Bulwer-Lytton became much colder after 1858, and that Dickens then welcomed the polemical work of Wilkie Collins, Charles Reade, and Sheridan Le Fanu for publication in his periodicals.[94]

Like *The Woman in White* and *Hard Cash*, *The Rose and the Key* is also a critique of the horrific practice of malicious asylum incarceration, which here has as its victim an admittedly difficult young woman. Maud Vernon is the greatest heiress in England, with a

---

[90] The text of the "Violated Letter" appears as an Appendix in Slater's *The Great Charles Dickens Scandal*, pp. 195-8; quotation on p. 196.
[91] Tomalin, p. 301; Sutherland, pp. 77-8.
[92] Wise, pp. 247-8, quotation p. 248.
[93] Sutherland, p. 80, Wise, p. 248.
[94] Sutherland points out that Dickens did indeed write an editorial disclaimer to Reade's *Hard Cash*, dissociating himself from the contents of the novel. However, Sutherland also stresses the point that '[t]he most he would do [...] was in fact less than nothing', considering his power as an editor; p. 86.

prospect of over one hundred and fifty thousand pounds a year in land and money, to be inherited after her mother's death, in the event that Lady Vernon does not produce an heir [p. 86]. Despite her position, Maud does not behave as the angel-like lady she is expected to be, much to her mother's embarrassment and irritation. The novel opens with the heroine enjoying the last days of holiday in the roughness of the wide Welsh countryside. Here, she is first found by the reader dressed in dark serge, with a small black straw hat on her head and a pair of coarse boots at her feet [p. 3]. She travels under the name of Maud Guendoline, and presents herself as a penniless but talented artist, who has 'not a shilling I can call my own', but who is willing to earn her living by drawing or teaching [p. 17]. She is described as 'a proud young lady', impetuous, with the sharp tongue and 'unseasonable frankness' of Le Fanu's cousin Caroline [pp. 9, 18, 17]. Like the teenage Caroline Norton, Maud is defiant of anybody who stands between herself and her happiness, so that when a frightening-looking one-eyed man intrudes on her holiday, she wishes she 'were a man, that I might give him a sound drubbing' [p. 6]. She pities '[t]hose fine ladies who go everywhere in their carriages' and therefore cannot experience the sense of independence that the direct, but unladylike, contact with nature can offer [p. 14]. Finally, and most importantly, like the young Caroline she has no interest in dreams of marriage and a family; in fact, she strongly affirms that 'I shall never marry at all', when the honest Charles Marston falls in love with the poor artist she pretends to be [p. 8].

Maud's behaviour initially appears as the innocent game of an heiress who, tired of being wooed for her fortune, pretends to be a nobody in order to enjoy her holiday. However, when it is time for her to go home, her tone becomes grave and concerned. Despite the name of her family being well respected in the country and her mother boasting an immaculate reputation in the neighbourhood, Maud is terrified at the idea of returning to Roydon Hall, 'the home she loves not', and would give all her riches in exchange for the freedom of a farmer's life [p. 47]. In her enigmatic discussions with her

cousin and companion Maximilla, Maud claims that at her mother's house she is not free but a slave, and that she 'can trust no one – assassins in masquerade' [p. 25]. Although Lady Vernon is still living, Maud insists that she has 'no father, no mother, no relation', since no one seems to 'care for me, and many [...] wish me dead' [pp. 56, 25]. And, at the climax of her obscure burst of despair, she goes as far as to confess that she has lost all hope for domestic happiness, that she cannot find a reason for living, and is therefore 'so willing to die' [pp. 56, 24]. Cousin Max, who, as her chaperone, stands for wisdom and common sense, gently reproaches the young girl for her spirited talk, calling her a 'radical' for her total disinterest in money and in the duties of rank, and a '*morbid* creature', for her fantasies of a family conspiracy [pp. 18, 24, my italics]. Maud's fears certainly sound irrational, and this apparent irrationality will indeed be exploited to "prove" her mad. However, her paranoia is finally revealed as a perfectly legitimate realisation that her mother is plotting against her.

From the very beginning, both the idea of home and of family inspire suspicion. The past of the Vernons is revealed as far removed from harmonious representations of the Victorian hearth. Rather, marriage is a matter of money, secrets, and blackmail at the expense of women and children, as Caroline Norton repeatedly affirmed. Maud grows up as an only child in a hostile house, in the care of an unloving mother. All she knows about her father comes from the tales of the old servant, who relates that 'no blacker villain ever lived on earth than your papa', which explains Lady Vernon's disdainful silence upon the subject [p. 76]. Amyrald Vernon was a ruined baronet, who saw in his young and wealthy cousin the solution to his financial problems. He began to court her without her father's consent, but 'she could not endure him, and treated him with utter contempt, and he grew to hate her' [p. 74]. Surprisingly, though, he proposed to Lady Vernon, and she agreed to marry him. They never seemed to be fond of one another and, as cousin Max recalls, after he died, 'I don't think she cried a single tear, and I never heard her speak of him except

now and then, as coolly and curtly as you might mention a not very pleasant acquaintance who had gone to Van Diemen's Land' [p. 76]. Although Maud will not learn the truth about her father's villainy until the end, the half-told story of her parents' marriage justifies her desire for independence and her suspicion that any young man who courts her might turn out as malicious as her father. Lady Vernon, on her part, has always been an absent mother for Maud, and would appear only when 'the spirited little girl became unmanageable' [p. 56]. She has never had a smile for her daughter, but has always tried to make her feel like 'a black sheep, a scamp, and a reprobate' [p. 48]. She takes no pride in Maud's beauty, rather, she stresses the similarity with her father's looks, 'with a cold little laugh, that [...] rang with cruelty and disdain' [p. 100]. Maud cannot reconcile her mother's hatred with anything she may have possibly done to her and is resigned to the fact that 'she [simply] can't love me [...]; it can't be helped' [p. 53]. From her mother's evident hostility, Maud nurtures the not implausible idea that she might wish her dead. Coming from such a cold familial environment, Maud's claims and fears do not sound totally unreasonable, although they are expressed in an over-emphatic way.

At this point, Maud finds herself in a vicious circle, in that her struggle to cope with everyday life in the home becomes the very evidence of her insanity; her difficulty to conform to the figure of the angel inevitably makes her appear a kind of demon to some observers. Janet Oppenheim has pointed out that, paradoxically, in a culture that glorified domesticity, most cases of insanity originated in a family context.[95] As has already been discussed in Chapter Three, self-control was considered the key to a balanced mind and social conformity was interpreted as an index of sanity. Victorian doctors affirmed that women were naturally more sensitive and emotional than men, and explained that self-control proved to them a more frequent and difficult challenge in the dealing with daily traumas. Therefore, a balanced woman was one who could contain and conceal her inner

[95] Oppenheim, p. 124. See also Showalter, p. 3; Finnane, pp. 132, 161-2; Joseph Reynolds, *Grangegorman: Psychiatric Care in Dublin Since 1815* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1992), p. 62.

impulses. In fact, the struggle that a woman experienced in repressing her passions was read on her body as a clear symptom of mental distress.

Hysteria, "nervous weakness", or "shattered nerves", became common catch-all labels for a very wide range of ailments, which Oppenheim has recognised as often attributable to women's dissatisfaction with their role in society: hopelessness, emptiness, impotence, uselessness, diminishment of self-esteem, longing for freedom, insomnia, weight loss, excruciating headaches, to the extreme case of suicidal thoughts.[96] Attempts at suicide were considered irrefutable evidence of a person's insanity.[97] However, thoughts or threats to do away with oneself were also enough to justify the need for asylum care. Thus, many committals were the preventive response to an expressed desire to die or to an attempt to get to a window or a knife. Under these circumstances, Victorian doctors would recommend a change of scene, where the patient could replenish her exhausted nerve force away from the neighbours' eyes, so as to spare the family's reputation from the stain of madness.[98] Women would be withdrawn from the detrimental environment that Victorians called home and only restored there after a few months of "cure". Ironically enough, Elaine Showalter has remarked, '[e]ven when doctors observed the longings in their female patients, and noted the women's powerless position in their families, they did not make the obvious connection'.[99]

According to Oppenheim, the terms "nervous" and "nervousness" scarcely concealed broad extents of medical ignorance, as doctors would easily use those general, although often unmeaning, phrases to label symptoms they found difficult to categorise. Similarly, historian Mark Finnane has argued in his *Insanity and the Insane* that alienists' authority was not founded on their specialised knowledge of insanity but rather on their

---

[96] Nearly everything could be assimilated into the category of nervous disease, see Oppenheim, Introduction and Ch. 1.
[97] On suicide see Finnane, pp. 150-2, 209; Oppenheim, p. 44.
[98] On madness as a shame for the family see Oppenheim, pp. 10, 107.
[99] Showalter, p. 132.

rising professional status.[100] In other words, doctors still knew little about the pathology of insanity; however, since they claimed to be the sole experts in this new branch of medicine, their opinion was not questioned. Therefore, while the word "nervous" strictly referred to the somatic structure and activities of the nerves, mind doctors widened its meaning to include the psychological symptoms of edginess, agitation, and irritability, and used it to disguise the varied histories behind the committal of asylum patients.[101]

Given these premises, the everyday conflicts of adolescent children were easily translated into madness, especially if the subjects were particularly sensitive and expressed their disappointment or anger instead of quietly submitting to the rule of obedience. In fact, domestic disagreement and disappointed affections were among the most common "causes" of insanity indicated on the medical certificates. In *Jane Eyre* (1847), Charlotte Brontë offers a case in point. When still a child, Jane Eyre's patience and sense of righteousness are constantly challenged by her cousin John's insults and tyrannies, his sisters' indifference, their mother's hatred, and the servants' partiality. When she finally responds with violence to her cousin's mockery of her orphaned status and physical attack, she is immediately blamed for the accident. She is said to be wicked, to be 'like a mad cat'. The maid affirms that this insanity 'was always in her. [...] I've told missis often my opinion about the child, and missis agreed with me. She's an under-hand little thing: I never saw a girl of her age with so much cover'.[102] They lead her to the red room, the very room where her uncle died, and there threaten to tie her to a stool if she would not stay still and think over her wickedness. Horrified by her whereabouts and the upcoming darkness, Jane's nerves are shaken with agitation, she feels oppressed and suffocated, and finally

[100] Finnane, p. 109. For this reason the category of "mad-doctors" was surrounded by an aura of suspicion, since they were believed to exercise their power to name people sane or insane to force conventional values on disruptive members of society. See also Oppenheim, pp. 49-50.
[101] Oppenheim, p. 9. The introduction, entitled 'The Enigma of "Nervous Breakdown"' offers a detailed description of the medical scenario in the Victorian era; pp. 3-15.
[102] Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, p. 14.

breaks down screaming and sobbing until a fit renders her unconscious. In her aunt's eyes her rebelliousness is enough to label her mad and have her removed from the house.

In *The Rose and the Key*, Maud's "insanity" is also diagnosed through her reactions to domestic psychological abuse. Despite being raised with all comforts, Maud suffers from the loneliness of a monotonous existence in the countryside: 'she has never been presented', cousin Max complains, 'nor been to town for a single reason, and Lady Vernon has never taken her out, and I don't think has any idea of doing so. [...] [S]he has lived all her life like a recluse' [p. 83]. Not only does Lady Vernon not encourage her daughter to help her with the many charitable activities to which she dedicates herself, she even proves restrictive when Maud takes the initiative and suggests a diversion from the monotony of her lonely life at Roydon. As she explains to Charles Marston, 'mamma is the only person living who can prevent my doing exactly what I please', and, unfortunately, her judgment on all matters, and particularly with regards to leisure, differs significantly from Maud's [p. 159]. Even a simple tête-à-tête with her mother only takes place six times a year, and usually ends in a quick dismissal or an argument [p. 57]. Throughout the novel, Maud struggles to repress her frustrations, since, until the very end, the reasons behind her mother's hostility remain inexplicable to her. She confesses to the servant that she is sometimes afraid of her mother and this fear makes her nervous [p. 52]. Furthermore, she is wounded by Lady Vernon's sharp comments and cold laughter at her expense, and although on some occasions she 'felt that tears were rising to her eyes [...] her pride suppressed them' [p. 100]. However, her efforts to control her emotions eventually fail, and disappointed affection and forced obedience culminate in open rebelliousness, when her mother accuses her of having secretly attached herself to Captain Vivian (Maud's unknown half-brother):

> 'How dare you look at me, your mother, so? [...]
> 'I question your right to catechise me', returned Maud, now thoroughly roused. 'If I am to remember your rights, you must remember mine. I shall be of age in a few weeks, and my own mistress. You are not to treat me any longer like a child'. [...]

> 'I can't command affection, but I can command respect. You shall obey me. I'll make you obey me'. [...]
> 'That is not the way to make me obey you. That is not what you want. You wish to wound me, and to trample me. You never loved me; you hate me; yes, you hate me – your own child, your only child. And what have I done? [...] I wish it were God's will to take me. Oh! This dreadful world!' [pp. 208-9]

Like little Jane Eyre, Maud is not mad but simply tired of being abused, and in her appeal for respect and justice in the house, she is reminiscent of Caroline Norton, who also fought for her rights. Cousin Max defines Maud's outburst of rage against her mother as nothing more serious, or dangerous, than a 'kind of impetuosity' [p. 172]. However, Lady Vernon firmly states that '[s]he has always been perverse and ungovernable, [...] and a want of self-restraint induces the violent and hysterical state in which she often is' [p. 169]. As Nicholas Rance has rightly noticed, Lady Vernon is conscious of the fact that her daughter is not insane, but she 'has a sharp eye for what may conventionally count as evidence of madness'.[103] Maud is nearly of age, hence Lady Vernon needs to act quickly before her daughter can exercise the legal rights on her property and destroys her plans for the welfare of her beloved son. To this purpose, she employs a spy to produce evidence in favour of her claim, and succeeds in proving her daughter mad. The affidavits and certificates present Maud as a difficult case: she is subject to 'a growing eccentricity and violence', and to 'extreme anxiety', which has 'become distinctly morbid' [p. 339]. She has 'a highly nervous temperament, with strange ideas, such as are popularly termed flighty', and is 'hysterical and impetuous, and without sufficient self-control to counteract the obvious tendencies of such a mental and nervous condition' [ibid.]. And, above all, Maud shows suicidal inclinations [ibid.]. In other words, Maud's role-playing is interpreted as 'dissociative hysteria', her belief that her house hides assassins reveals a persecution mania, and her wish for death is a clear symptom of suicidal mania.[104] A party indifferent to the secret questions related to the Vernon inheritance would agree with

[103] Rance, p. 115.
[104] Walton, p. 157.

cousin Max, when she dismisses Maud's oddity as nothing but the fruit of 'the high and wayward spirits of a girl emancipated for a brief holiday from the gloom and formality of a cold and joyless home'. However, such behaviour is enough for Victorian medicine and the law to declare rebellious Maud insane and to have her locked up, allegedly for her own benefit [p. 325].

Lady Vernon's success is certainly dependant on the flaws in the legislation concerning the insane, and on the corruption of the medical authorities. However, I argue that it is her impeccable public image and her angel-like nature, which make her claims against her extravagant daughter plausible, as has been the case for other fictional (and real life) villains who hid behind a respectable reputation. Lady Audley, for instance, is a submissive and timid wife, whose child-like innocence makes her totally irresistible. Nobody could possibly think her guilty of a malicious act, and she knows it. Therefore, when her husband's nephew confronts her with her bigamy and the apparent murder of her legitimate husband, she defies him to accuse her publicly, since she is sure that his own odd behaviour and eccentricity are sufficient to prove him mad, and herself the victim of his delusions: 'I would warn you that such fancies have sometimes conducted people, as apparently sane as yourself, to the life-long imprisonment of a private lunatic asylum'.[105] In *Hard Cash*, Mr Richard Hardie is the trustful owner of a well-established bank, 'a man of iron', who easily uses his name and power to prove that his son's righteous accusation are the fruit of incipient insanity, just like the frequent headaches, irritability, insomnia, and lack of appetite which young Alfred has been experiencing since the discovery of his father's crimes.[106]

Barbara Vernon is also described as the ideal woman. Her features are reminiscent of what anti-feminist writers identified as "Britain's old beauty" in contemporary magazines, as opposed to the vulgarity of the "Girl of the Period":

---

[105] Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (London: Penguin, 2010), p. 307.
[106] Charles Reade, *Hard Cash: a Matter-of-Fact Romance*, 3 Vols (London: Sampson Low & Marston, 1863), Vol. 1, p. 187.

> Sitting at a table in the middle of this room is a very handsome woman of forty years upwards, with skin smooth as ivory, and jet-black hair, divided in the middle, and brought down over her white temples and small pretty ears smoothly in the simple classic fashion, now out of date. Her finely pencilled black eyebrows, and her features with a classic elegance of outline, carry an expression of cold hauteur. Her slight embonpoint becomes her grave but rich dress, which is that of a woman of rank and wealth, by no means indifferent to the impression produced by external.
> This lady, with one handsome foot upon a stool, and a desk before her, is in a leisurely way writing a letter, over which she bends just the least thing in the world. Her pose is decidedly elegant. [p. 54][107]

Barbara Vernon is a Lady in all respects: she is the perfect housekeeper, supervising her servants, entertaining her guests, managing her property in an irreproachable way.[108] She is the "angel in the house", praised in the conservative press as the 'old English ideal, [...] the most beautiful, the most modest, the most essentially womanly in the world'.[109] Her benevolence, though, extends beyond the domestic sphere, and she fills 'the rôle of the Christian matron with punctilious completeness' [p. 227]. She is said to be the most religious woman in all England, and her generosity is so great that she would happily spare tens of thousands of pounds for the destitute of the county. Therefore, when she confines her daughter in an asylum, she is confident of the world's sympathy: 'what motive, [...] but the noblest, can a mother have in making so terrible a sacrifice of feeling?' [p. 332].

However, like the murderous bigamist Lady Audley and the unscrupulous bankrupt Richard Hardie, Lady Vernon also hides a secret behind her 'marble-like and serene' face,

---

107 Compare Linton's description of the independent woman: '[t]he girl of the period is a creature who dyes her hair and paints her face, as the first articles of her personal religion; whose sole idea of life is plenty of fun and luxury; and whose dress is the object of such thought and intellect as she possesses. Her main endeavour in this is to outvie her neighbours in the extravagance of fashion. [...] With purity of taste she has lost also that far more precious purity and delicacy of perception which sometimes means more than appears on the surface. [...] Men are afraid of her; and with a reason. They may amuse themselves with her for an evening, but they do not take her readily for life'; 'The Girl of the Period', p. 340.

108 Anti-feminists writers complained about the unproductive idleness of the "Girl of the Period", praising the ideal woman's skills as a housekeeper. See 'What is Woman Work?', *Saturday Review*, 15 February 1868, pp. 197-8: 'The usual method of London housekeeping [...] is for the mistress to give her orders in the kitchen in the morning [...]. There is none of the clever marketing by which fifty per cent is saved in the outlay if a woman knows what she is about, and how to buy; none of the personal superintendence so encouraging to servants when genially performed, and rendering slighted work impossible; none of that 'seeing to things' herself, or doing the finer part of the work with her own hands, which used to form part of a woman's unquestioned duty. [...] Many women boast that their housekeeping takes them perhaps an hour, perhaps half an hour, in the morning, and no more; and they think themselves clever and commendable in proportion to the small amount of time given to their larges family duty'.

109 Linton, p. 340.

a secret concerning an early, scandalous marriage which turned out to be a nugatory one, and a baby who is therefore illegitimate [p. 326]. Her legitimate child, then, is an inconvenient presence in her life, and she needs to be disposed of in a way which will not affect her mother's public image, but rather enhance her charitable spirit. Similar stories of wrongful confinement to private asylums abound in Victorian literature. In Thomas Preskett Prest's penny blood *The String of Pearls* (1846), the demon-barber Sweeney Todd silences his shop assistants by declaring them mad and having them confined in Mr Fogg's country asylum, a pre-moral management institution, where patients still sleep on straw in damp cells with no windows, are chained to the walls, and kept quiet with the use of a whip. As in the case of Lady Vernon, Todd hides behind his benevolent mask when young Tobias finds out that his employer is a murderer and a thief, and insists: 'I am only anxious about him, in order that some effort may be made to cure him of such a malady, for it is a serious, and a dreadful one, and one which, unless taken in time, will yet be the death of Tobias'.[110] At the asylum, the reader learns two more stories of wrongful confinement, concerning young ladies who had become obstacles between their families and an immense inheritance. The first one was brought there by her brother, who paid a good sum of money to the asylum keeper to hasten her death, so that he could finally inherit her property. The second case was admitted through an order of her parents, who had been neglecting her and attempting to kill her since her childhood. Once again, she was the only heiress of a fortune left to her by a late aunt, and the object of family jealousy and hatred. Neither of them is ever restored to society.

Wilkie Collins uses the theme of wrongful confinement not only in his most famous novel *The Woman in White*, but also in his lesser-known, but equally sensational, *Armadale*. In the latter, the bewitching governess Lydia Gwilt marries the dark-haired Allan Armadale, alias Ozias Midwinter, with a specific plan in mind. This involves leaving

[110] Thomas Preskett Prest, *The String of Pearls: a Romance* (London: Penguin, 2010), p. 208.

him and pretending instead of being the wife of his homonymous friend, the fair-haired Allan Armadale. Eventually, she lures the fair Armadale into an asylum and arranges to have him murdered, in order to inherit his extensive property. Unfortunately for her, things do not go as she has planned, and she falls into her own murderous trap. In Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, Lady Audley also becomes the victim of her own malicious plan. After surviving her threats of asylum incarceration and an attempt to his life, Robert Audley eventually manages to unmask his uncle's wife as the criminal that she actually is. In order to avoid public scandal, Lady Audley is secretly dispatched to Belgium, and destined to spend the rest of her days in a luxurious private asylum under the false identity of Madam Taylor. Her last words, directed at her nephew, are '[y]ou have brought me to my grave, Mr Audley [...]; you have used your power basely and cruelly, and have brought me to a living grave'.[111] Emblematically, the chapter is titled 'Buried Alive'.[112]

In her book *The Bastille of England* (1883), Louisa Lowe, Secretary of the Lunacy Law Reform Association, defined private asylums as 'whited sepulcher[s]'.[113] In fact, once in an asylum, an inmate would become a *civilitus mortuus*, a dead individual, because legally deprived of all rights on their property and their own person. Moreover, according to Lowe, who in the 1870s had herself been wrongfully confined because of her belief in Spiritualism, the danger of private asylums lay in the fact that it was incredibly easy to get into them and tremendously hard to get out, a fact which Charles Reade, as narrator of *Hard Cash,* also expressed in a more emphatic way: '[a] little push behind your back and

---

[111] Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (London: Penguin, 2010), p. 348. The image of live burial is also employed by the doctor who suggests the asylum to Robert Audley as an effective way to silence his uncle's wife: '[i]f you were to dig a grave for her in the nearest churchyard and bury her alive in it, you could not more safely shut her from the world and all worldly associations', p. 427. Braddon will go back to the theme of wrongful confinement in her later novel *Taken at the Flood* (1874).

[112] For a different perspective on the subject of live burial in Braddon's fiction, see Holly Furneaux, 'Gendered Cover-Ups: Live Burial, Social Death, and Couverture in Mary Braddon's Fiction', *Philological Quarterly*, Vol. 84, No. 4 (2005), pp. 425-49, where Furneaux focuses on Braddon's use of the trope of live burial for male characters, by (anti)heroines who wish to widen their social horizons.

[113] Louisa Lowe, *The Bastille of England; or, the Lunacy Laws at Work*, reprinted in Roy Porter and Helen Nicholson, eds, *Women, Madness, and Spiritualism: Georgina Weldon and Louisa Lowe*, 2 Vols (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), Vol. 1, pp. 197-353; quotation on p. 85 of the original edition.

you slide into one; but to get out again is to climb a precipice with crumbling sides'.[114] A relative who incarcerated a sane family member could be quite confident that nobody would believe the protests of a mad person, but would rather interpret them as clear symptoms of insanity, as happens to both Alfred Hardie and Maud Vernon. Reade also explained in his 'fiction built on truths' that corrupt asylum doctors employed a set of standard sentences, which he called 'formulas', to minimise their patients' rational claims when the Commissioners in Lunacy inspected their premises: 'be calm: or you will be here all the longer', '[t]ake care, sir. Dangerous!', '[d]on't excite yourself', or '[h]e is my most interesting patient [...], though terribly violent at times'.[115] Furthermore, such doctors aimed at driving sane inmates mad through contact with real insanity. Victorian psychiatrist Joseph Mortimer Granville argued that the association of sane with insane persons would almost certainly upset the mind of any sane individual. Also, in the case of the nervous and excitable, but sane, man or woman, twenty-four to thirty-six hours in an asylum would suffice to produce insanity.[116] In *The Rose and the Key*, Maud's nerves are certainly put under intense pressure during her stay at Glarewoods, and she begins to suffer from nervous trembling, disorientation, and hysterical crying. However, she is rescued in time and offered a happy ending with her saviour. It is important to note that, at the end of the novel, a wiser Maud recognises the privilege of having a loving husband who takes care of her. Abandoning what Caroline Norton described as 'the wild and ridiculous doctrine of equality', Maud is granted a happy ending, not simply because she submits to the rules of society and marries a good prospect, but because she is strong enough to stand up for her rights and choose the man whom she knows is going to make her happy.[117] This

---

[114] Respectively, Lowe, p. 1 and Reade, Vol. 3, p. 34.
[115] Reade, respectively, Preface; Vol. 2, pp. 303, 310, 311, 313.
[116] Lowe, p. 41. In *Grangegorman*, Joseph Reynolds reports on the Lord Mayor of Dublin's concerns at the new regulations for public asylums: 'wives and husbands trying who would first get the other to Bethlem. Many heirs would try to render the possessors disordered and *get them confined and soon run them into real madness*', p. 3, my italics.
[117] Chedzoy, p. 155.

is the kind of marriage that Norton sought and promoted, a union based on respect, and not on oppression.

While the novel questions a woman's right to be happy in the house, it can also be interpreted as a strong critique, à la Collins and Reade, of the practice of wrongful confinement, and, as will be shown in the next section, of asylums as places of torture rather than cure. Le Fanu's interest in the subject may have been caused not simply by his involvement in the literary and press culture of the time, but possibly by his own familial experience with this illness. When he was still in his early twenties, the Le Fanus were afflicted with the aggravating nervous condition of their cousin Frances. Not much is known about Frances' ailment, except that a crisis arose in July 1838 and that the family doctor affirmed that the woman's 'secret determination now was to put an end to herself'.[118] Even though it was widely spoken of in the press, madness always remained a taboo subject for the Victorians, and most families considered insanity a shame to be kept secret. This would explain why Frances' sister Alicia estranged herself completely from her sibling's society and even refused to have her name mentioned. In a letter to Rev. Le Fanu, his cousin complained that 'Lissy has given no manner of assistance on this trying occasion; she will not even allow Fanny's name to be mentioned in her presence; nor has she even read your letter lest you should have spoken of Fanny in it'.[119] Under these circumstances, the dean showed his Christian charity by taking care of Frances when her own siblings denied her the help she needed. Nearly two decades later, Le Fanu's wife Susanna suffered for years from recurring crises, probably of a psychosomatic nature.[120] Ill-health running in her family, the thought of sickness and death became for her an obsession. In her last years of life she became haunted with religious doubt, of the same kind that also consumed Le Fanu's beloved sister Catherine, and his brother William remembered how Susanna refused to be their first child's god-mother at the christening in

[118] McCormack, p. 60.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid., p. 122. For more details on Susanna Bennett's health see Ch. 4.

what at first he believed to be a fit of grumps. Only two months later she suffered from a strong hysterical attack and died on 28 April 1858.

Moreover, an account of the realities of asylum life may have reached Le Fanu through his distant relations, the Knowles. The Knowles had been connected with the Le Fanus since the second half of the eighteenth century, when Rev. Peter Le Fanu had married Frances Knowles, daughter of John Knowles and Hester Sheridan.[121] Despite the Knowles living in England, the families always kept on friendly terms: when young Joseph visited London as an Irish Bar candidate in May 1838, and complained about not having enough money for a busier social life, Sheridan Knowles was kind enough to buy him tickets for the Haymarket. And when, a few summers later, a novel was dispatched to London, it was the same Sheridan Knowles who helped to mediate between Le Fanu and his publisher.[122] Soon after their marriage, Susanna Le Fanu was introduced to her husband's relations and, according to a letter Sheridan wrote to Bessie Bennett a few days after the wedding, '[d]ear Sue is looking very well, [...] [s]he & Miss Knowles are becoming bosom friends, sing duets together, etc'.[123] Only just over a month before Le Fanu's wedding, in 1843, Richard Brinsley Knowles' sister-in-law, Mary Anne Crowley, married John Maxwell, the London publisher. It seems that after their seventh child Mrs Maxwell began to suffer from mental instability. The couple separated and she returned to Ireland, where she spent the rest of her life in a private asylum.[124] John Maxwell then began an affair with the novelist Mary Elizabeth Braddon, whom he called his wife in some newspapers and among his circle of friends. Maxwell certainly tried to keep his wife's insanity a secret, and when she died in 1874, he wrote a discrediting note in a paper

---

[121] Rev. Peter Le Fanu was the brother of Joseph Le Fanu, who married Alicia Sheridan, daughter of Thomas Sheridan and sister of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and was father of Rev. Thomas Philip Le Fanu, and grandfather of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. See P. T. Le Fanu, *Memoir of the Le Fanu Family* (Manchester: privately printed, Sherratt and Hughes, 1924), pp. 63-5, tables I and II.

[122] McCormack, pp. 54, 90. William Le Fanu also remembered Sheridan Knowles as an absent-minded gentleman, pp. 229-32.

[123] Ibid., p. 114.

[124] On John Maxwell's marriage to Mary Anne Crowley, see Jennifer Carnell, *The Literary Lives of Mary Elizabeth Braddon* (Hastings: The Sensation Press, 2000), pp. 114-5.

and three telegrams to Richard Brinsley Knowles in the attempt to hush the rumours. Knowles later quoted all correspondence in a public letter. In his letter, dated 28 September 1874, Knowles explained how he had advertised his sister-in-law's death in several newspapers on four different occasions. He continued saying:

> With this tribute of respect to my relative's memory, the matter, as far as I am concerned, would have ended; but I have discovered, by the merest accident, that though Mr Maxwell did not dare publicly to deny the truth of my advertisement [... he] has privately distributed the following circular, obviously with the intention of discrediting it altogether: 'Mr and Mrs Maxwell [...] beg to disclaim any knowledge of the maliciously-intentioned announcement of a death on the 5th instant'.[125]

Knowles insisted that he had been strongly and publicly contradicting Maxwell's duplicity, ever since news of his marriage to Mary Braddon was reported in the press in 1864. As evidence of Maxwell's misbehaviour, he reported three telegrams sent to his late wife's brother, where he wrote: '[r]egister death forthwith. Get certificate. [...] Neither advertise nor telegraph anybody', 'do things quietly; funeral should be strictly private', and finally, 'if you have written to your sister, telegraph requesting her not to advertise death, as I shall do whatever is necessary'.[126]

Le Fanu's direct experience with domestic abuse and insanity certainly shaped what Milbank has described as his feminist views. His life-long friendship with Caroline Norton, his family's Christian attitude towards its weaker members, and, above all, his unconditional love and his care for his afflicted wife, at a time when some husbands were producing false certificates to dispose of their difficult spouses, all come together in a novel that criticises the wrongful confinement of a clearly oppressed young woman. However, Maud is not the only woman who has been victimised. Lady Vernon suffers first from her family's disapproval and estrangement, when her early marriage and pregnancy are revealed, and then she is blackmailed into an unhappy marriage, the memory of which

---

[125] Richard Brinsley Knowles's public letter in defense of his sister in law Mary Ann Crowley can be found in Lowe, pp. 147-8.
[126] Ibid.

is even too painful to speak. To redeem herself for her wrongs she takes up the role that society expects her to fill and becomes the ideal woman, invisible, like a 'phantom' [p. 56]. Nevertheless, Le Fanu shows that being ethereal does not necessarily mean being an angel, and that ethereality is also found in demons, as will be demonstrated in the section below.

4.2 The Ghost of the Father

The "angel in the house" was embodied by the submissive wife and mother who dedicated herself to the physical, moral, and spiritual welfare of her family. The discrepancy between the ideal and the real nature of women's ethereality has already been introduced in the analysis of the character of the ghostly and monstrous Bertha Velderkaust in *The Wyvern Mystery*. While Vanessa Dickerson has defined women's spectrality as a function of the dutiful fulfilment of their role, 'by disappearing into the woodwork to watch over the household', Beth Torgerson has interpreted it as the result of women's dispossession in a male-centred system, which turned many angels into angry, vengeful ghosts.[127] In *The Rose and the Key*, Lady Vernon, unlike Bertha Velderkaust, is a powerful widow in charge of an immense fortune. However, she is also revealed to be a woman who has greatly suffered from the restrictive rules of Victorian society, and is repeatedly described as a ghost. This section intends to show that it is Lady Vernon's very attempt to embody the figure of the "angel" that turns her into a vengeful spirit.

The idea of women as haunting, incorporeal entities has been the subject of further study in Diane Wallace's 'The Haunting Idea' (2009) and in Jarlath Killeen's 'Victorian Women and the Challenge of the Phantom' (2010).[128] In her article, Wallace investigates

[127] Dickerson, p. 4; Torgerson, Ch. 4.

[128] Diane Wallace, 'The Haunting Idea: Female Gothic Metaphors and Feminist Theory', in Diane Wallace and Andrew Smith, eds, *The Female Gothic: New Directions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 26-41; Jarlath Killeen, 'Gendering the Ghost Story? Victorian Women and the Challenge of the Phantom', in Helen Conrad O'Briain and Julie Ann Stevens, eds, *The Ghost Story from the Middle Ages to the 20th Century: a Ghostly Genre* (Dublin: Four Court Press, 2010), pp. 81-96.

the relationship between female Gothic metaphors and feminist theories. The "haunting idea", Wallace explains, is a phrase that was coined in 1946 by historian and activist Mary Ritter Beard who, some decades before Dickerson and Torgerson, already noticed the duality of women's ghostliness. According to Beard, femininity was recurrently represented as either 'the image of woman throughout long ages of the past as a being always and everywhere subject to [...] man or as a ghostly creature too shadowy to be even that real'.[129] Like Beard, Dickerson, and Torgerson, Wallace also attributes woman's ghostliness to the fact that she is 'disembodied/disempowered through being subjected to [...] man'.[130] However, she further explores the specific use of metaphors of death and burial in connection to woman's position within a patriarchal society. In her analysis of both biographical and literary texts, dating as far back as the seventeenth century, Wallace points out the recurring use of images such as graves, burials, nocturnal animals and corpses, to represent women's married life.[131]

In 'Victorian Women and the Challenge of the Phantom', Killeen maintains that the spectre in the Victorian ghost story represents, not simply women's ethereal nature, but the threat that male power poses to women. Focusing on a number of stories by female writers such as Dinah Mulock, Amelia Edwards, Mrs Henry Wood, and Mrs J. H. Riddell, Killeen argues that Dickerson's interpretation of the ghost as signifying woman's status in the house is not always convincing. While Dickerson (and Torgerson) read spirit haunting as women's attempt to take their revenge upon men, Killeen points out that in most cases ghosts are male in gender, while both men and women are among their victims. Therefore, he suggests a more complex way to interpret the ghost:

---

[129] Wallace, p. 26.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid., pp. 28-9. Wallace concentrates in particular on Margaret Cavendish's 'Female Orations' (1662), Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and *Maria or the Wrongs of Woman* (1798), and John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869).

> Perhaps, far from just articulating the liminal position of women in the Victorian home, the ghost also acts as a spectral manifestation of the physical and financial threat that men posed to women.
> Many women saw in ghosts not a representation of their own precarious positions in Victorian society but an expression of the very forces, usually, let us be frank, male forces, which had made these positions precarious in the first place.[132]

Although in the nineteenth century women achieved important legal results, like the Infant Custody Bill and the Divorce Act, the experience of married life was still very limiting, so that, when a woman was 'to define explicitly who she [was], the only criteria she ha[d] available [were] the names of her father and husband'.[133] As William Blackstone explained in what would become the standard manual for trainee lawyers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, upon marriage a woman's identity was incorporated into that of her husband, who automatically took control of her property, her earnings, her children, and even her own body:

> By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law; that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs everything.[134]

Feminist scholars, such as Elaine Hobby, have translated this legal definition of marriage in this way: '[h]usband and wife were one person, and that person was the husband'. This definition succinctly indicates a woman's complete loss of identity and rights.[135] While this notion of utter powerlessness explains the use of metaphors of death in the depiction of domesticity, the image of live burial is even more appropriate, since women were not physically dead, but 'civilly dead'.[136] The concept of civil death, which Wallace associates with Victorian womanhood, has already been introduced with regard to the state of

---

[132] Killeen, p. 85.
[133] Wallace, p. 29.
[134] William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-9), quoted in Wallace, p. 31. As Lyn Pykett has pointed out, a husband was civilly responsible for his wife's acts, since she lived under his protection. As she was in his custody, he could enforce his right by a writ of habeas corpus; see *The 'Improper' Feminine*, p. 58.
[135] Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing 1649-88*, quoted in Wallace, p. 29.
[136] Wallace, p. 31.

helplessness which characterised inmates of the asylum. In the context of the current study of insanity and wrongful confinement, this connection between women and asylum patients becomes crucial. In fact, by drawing a parallel between the asylum and the Victorian home, Le Fanu criticises both spaces as systems of male control over women. Furthermore, as Killeen has argued, ghosts are not only the representation of women's disempowerment, but also stand for the threat posed by this very male authority. In *The Rose and the Key*, both expressions of the ghost's duality come together in the character of Lady Vernon, who first suffers under man's power, and then embodies it, thus becoming the ghost of Roydon Hall.

Lady Vernon has not always been the ideal woman she is introduced as early in the novel. When she defines Maud's passion for the penniless and title-less Captain Vivian as a perversity, cousin Max points out to her that '[t]hat kind of impetuosity runs very much in families, and you certainly did not marry for money' [p. 172]. In fact, Barbara Vernon married the equally penniless and title-less Elwyn Howard in 'extreme rashness', and in spite of the strong disapproval of her father, who is still remembered as 'a most upright, honourable man' [pp. 365, 75]. Their secret marriage is somehow, mysteriously, annulled. No explanations are given in the novel, but it is possible that the Vernons used their power to end such an embarrassing relationship, much to the lovers' despair: Lady Vernon still calls him 'my first, and best, and only beloved' and insists that the vicar was 'pure, noble' and died 'heartbroken' [p. 332]. Lady Vernon is sent away to give birth to her illegitimate child, and a scandal is avoided through secrecy. At this stage, all that Barbara Vernon can do is submit to the "law" of her father, marry a baronet, and disappear into 'the woodwork to watch over the household'.[137] It is as if she kills her real self and returns in the shape that she is told to be the more appropriate for a lady, just as conduct books used to teach

[137] Dickerson, p. 4.

young girls preparing for marriage: '[you must] be *buried alive* and *come to life again* in a total different form'.[138]

With regard to Lady Vernon's "death" and return as the ethereal woman, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar offer another interesting perspective on the idea of patriarchal laws as the catalytic force which turns 'the angel-woman' into 'the monster-woman'.[139] In the first chapter of their *Madwoman in the Attic*, Gilbert and Gubar focus on the relationship between (step-)mother, daughter, and absent father in the fairy-tale 'Little Snow White' (1812) by the brothers Grimm. According to Gilbert and Gubar, the wicked step-mother, who replaces the good Queen after her early death, is nothing other than the very first Queen metamorphosed into a witch through her submission to the rules of a patriarchal society. Similarly, in *The Rose and the Key*, the "evil" Lady Vernon can be interpreted as the metamorphosis of the "good" Barbara Howard, who turns into the ideal woman that her father wishes her to be. Unlike the good Queen in 'Snow White', the death of Barbara Howard and her return as Lady Barbara Vernon do not depend on the loss of innocence and freedom through sexuality (Lady Vernon's first marriage was certainly consummated) but rather, I argue, on the renunciation of her freedom of choice in marriage. Lady Vernon's first marriage to the vicar is based on love and trust, the kind of union which Le Fanu celebrates throughout his literary work, while her second marriage to Lord Vernon is one of interest, founded on the importance commonly attributed to rank and fortune. Certainly, Lord Vernon blackmails Barbara into marrying him. However, had he not discovered her secret, her family would have probably married her off to some other baronet. Therefore, it is her submission to her father's will that transforms her into an evil spirit. Particularly, by embodying man's law, she becomes the ghost of the father that Killeen recognises as the entity that haunts Victorian womanhood.

---

[138] Dinah Craik, *A Woman's Thoughts About Women* (1858), quoted in Furneaux, p. 430.
[139] Gilbert and Gubar, Ch. 1, p. 36.

Obviously, Lady Vernon is a mother, not a father. Nevertheless, as Gilbert and Gubar have pointed out, when the wicked Queen settles in, the King exits the narrative, since his presence is no longer necessary: 'the woman has internalized the King's rules: his voice resides now in her own mirror, her own mind'.[140] Thus, in *The Rose and the Key*, Lady Vernon has absorbed the law of the father to the point that the presence of a man, father or husband, is no longer needed, because she can hear their voices in the mirror of her own mind. The looking glass, then, represents 'the patriarchal voice of judgment that rules the Queen's – and every woman's – self-evaluation', including Lady Vernon.[141] In the mirror of patriarchy, the wicked Queen and Barbara Vernon alike see the freedom of youth which now characterises their (step-)daughters, as it once characterised them, as a source of regret and jealousy. For this reason these mothers hate their own daughters and wish to punish them: 'women almost inevitably turn against women because the voice of the looking glass sets them against each other'.[142] Therefore, although she is initially presented as the quintessential "angel in the house", Lady Vernon is revealed as a *revenant*, the ghost of the father that comes back to haunt the next generation.

Indeed, throughout the novel, Lady Vernon is described as a spectre. Maud remembers that, when she was a child, Lady Vernon reminded her of a 'phantom', whose 'proud still face', 'large grey eyes', and 'cold [dreadful] tones' used to terrify her on the spot and cow her into obedience, so that 'her idea of a "mamma" was an embodiment of power, and something to be afraid of' [p. 56]. The narrator describes Lady Vernon as 'mov[ing] like a ghost along the galleries', and when Mr Dawe reveals her scandalous past, her face grows '[w]hiter and whiter', and she rises 'like an evoked spirit to his incantation, and [stands] with a countenance in which fear, and rage, and derision [are] blended with a force worthy of an evil spirit' [pp. 211, 333]. Lady Vernon's curse falls onto her own house, a place which Wallace interprets 'not just [as] the domestic space, but

[140] Ibid., p. 38.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.

[as] a metaphor for the legal institutions of marriage and patrilineal inheritance [...] which erase the female name'.[143] Similarly, Killeen also remarks that it is not surprising that 'the home itself should be the site of invasion [...]. It was the female sphere but it was men who were believed to have trapped the women there'.[144]

Roydon Hall, then, replaces the haunted castle of the early Gothic tradition, and brings the horror straight to the present readers' doorsteps, in line with the new trend of sensation fiction and Victorian Gothic. The novel is set in the late 1860s in a luxurious mansion in the English countryside, which is described as 'a grand Elizabethan structure – broad, florid, built of white stone, [...] with [a] peculiar combination of richness, lightness, and solidity' [p. 48].[145] The house is surrounded by wide, florid lawns, where peacocks roam in the sun, murmuring fountains, and 'spacious waters', with 'swans [...] grandly gliding round and up and down' [ibid.] However, this façade of welcoming brightness hides dim-lighted rooms and dark corridors, reminiscent of the prison-like spaces of Radcliffe and Lewis, and which Maud believes to conceal assassins:

> [Lady Vernon's is] a spacious room, hung with gilded leather; the blinds are down, the sun by this time shining on this side of the house, and a mellow, cathedral-like dimness prevails. There are three or four antique bookcases, carved in ponderous relief, through the leaves and scrolls of which are grinning grotesque and ugly faces, rich with a cynical Gothic fancy, and overhung by fantastic cornices, crowned with the heralding shield and supporters of the Vernons. They are stored with gilded volumes; portraits hang here, and in other parts of this rich old house, and cold marble busts gleam on pedestals from the corners. [pp. 53-4]

Maud is indeed right in thinking that she is at the heart of a conspiracy, and Le Fanu's portrayal of his heroine as the protagonist of what Milbank has defined as the female Gothic becomes indicative of his intention to reveal 'patriarchal order [...] as

---

[143] Wallace, p. 29.
[144] Killeen, p. 95.
[145] In Chapter 43, cousin Max and Mr Dawe remember an old acquaintance of theirs and how she must have been twenty-eight or twenty-nine years in 1834. If she is sixty-three or sixty-four in the year when the events take place, then the current year must be 1868 or 1869, p. 181.

malignant and in need of replacement'.[146] According to Milbank, the female Gothic usually opens with 'a pastoral idyll' (Maud's Welsh holiday), which is followed by 'a period of imprisonment [...] under the authority of a male tyrant [... or] a female surrogate' (Lady Vernon as the embodiment of patriarchal power).[147] The heroine is pursued by a character, who is often one related to her, and the events narrated revolve around her attempt to escape from the house, which turns from place of protection into a dungeon, or the prospect of a tomb.[148] Therefore, when Maud leaves Roydon Hall for Carsbrook, her friend's house, Le Fanu offers the sense of relief which comes with long-sought liberty. However, his talent resides in not letting that relief settle completely, and in eventually creating new horror out of the very topical fear of the asylum:

> It is a strange, wild, ominous sunset. [...] [T]he vaporous scenery fades and blackens, leaving on Maud's mind a vague sense of the menacing and portentous. [...] But is she not leaving Roydon and its troubles fast and far behind her, and is she not driving now [...] towards Carsbrook, and its pleasant excitements, towards her new and hospitable friend [...]? [p. 238]

When Maud reaches Carsbrook (which is in fact Glarewoods), her first reaction is to exclaim '[a]t home at last!', since she associates her friend's house with the sense of protection and peace which is characteristic of the idea of "home" [p. 265]. However, in typically Le Fanuian style, history repeats itself and Maud's journey home ends, once again, with the revelation that the house is no safe place, but hides assassins attempting to take her life. Le Fanu had already successfully employed this twist in *Uncle Silas*, where another Maud sets off on a journey away from Bartram-Haugh, much to her relief, only to discover that she has travelled all the way back there again, and that her uncle's house, instead of offering her shelter, is intended as her prison and her tomb. In *The Rose and the Key*, Maud Vernon does take a journey to a new house, and I believe that Le Fanu makes this choice very carefully. In fact, by turning the house into an actual lunatic asylum, Le

[146] Milbank, p. 11.
[147] Ibid., p. 10.
[148] Ibid., pp. 10, 2-3.

Fanu achieves not one, but two goals: firstly, he offers a provocative criticism, à la Reade, of madhouses as places of torture; secondly, through the uncanny similarity between the asylum and the house, he shows that the Victorian home can be an equally restrictive and repressive place for women.

Maud's arrival at Carsbrook is reminiscent of her return to Roydon Hall after her holiday. Just as Roydon is described as a magnificent country mansion, whose bright and amicable external appearance masks its Gothic interiors, Carsbrook also presents itself as an imposing but hospitable structure, which proves nevertheless far from welcoming once Maud has crossed its threshold. Carsbrook is 'a huge black and white house', lying 'up a gentle, undulating slope' and surrounded by a grand Dutch flower garden, and 'tall, trim hedges, in the bygone Dutch taste' [p. 190]. On her way up the hill, Maud passes under arches cut through the luxurious foliage, admires the 'fantastic patterns' made by the flowers all around, and notices the croquet pitch on which she has heard that Lady Mardykes' guest spend many delightful hours [ibid.]. And when she finally sees the house '[t]he scene [is] so pretty, the contrast between the lights in the house and the cold, silver brightness of the moonbeams so striking, and the character of the whole so festive and hospitable, that [she] silently enjoy[s] the picture' [ibid.]. However, as soon as she steps in, the gloomy environment immediately makes her uneasy. Despite her hearing music and dances taking place in the house, nobody is there to welcome her, and the 'chill reception' is made all the more suspicious by the appearance and the poor manners of the servants. Maud notices that they have something 'a little unusual about them', and are all wearing some kind of uniform, which makes Maud think that Lady Mardykes must enlist her housemaids and rule her house 'with military way' [pp. 260, 278]. The house is also oddly unwelcoming, and the idea of warmth that she has felt from looking at it from the outside is quickly erased when she walks up the stairs and through 'passages [which are] lighted, rather dingily, by small muffed lamps, which seem [...] to be fixed in the ceilings'

[p. 264]. The corridors end with 'heavy door[s], which close[…] by a spring bolt, with a clang that boom[s] through the long passage', and all rooms are marked with numbers and letters, more like a hotel than a private house [p. 260]. Finally, just as she has walked through the dark corridors at Roydon to meet her mother in Lady Vernon's awesome room, at Carsbrook she is expected by Lady Vernon's surrogate tyrant, Dr Antomarchi, in his equally terrifying chamber:

> There is something queer, and almost dismaying, in the effect of this bare and massive room, with its four huge, modern, purple leather chairs.
> The immense solidity of the mouldings and panelling that surround it, as well as its peculiar shape, would reflect back and muffle any sound uttered within. And, somehow, it suggests vaguely the idea of surgery, the strap, the knife, and all that *therapeutic torture*.
> The effect of the mild equable light is odd, and the monotony with which the doors, or the sham doors, match one another all round, has something bewildering and portentous about it. [p. 262, my italics]

Unlike Roydon Hall, Lady Mardykes' house does not simply turn into a metaphorical prison for the heroine, but is slowly revealed as a real place of confinement in the shape of the lunatic asylum at Glarewoods. In 'The Uncanny', Freud theorises that the feeling of unease which characterises the horror genre derives from the fact that something we have so far believed familiar, the *Heimliche*, is slowly revealed as strange and unfamiliar, the *Unheimliche*. Le Fanu's talent in *The Rose and the Key* resides in his subtle and original use of the uncanny, in that he does not merely transform familiar Carsbrook into unfamiliar Carsbrook, but rather destroys the illusion of familiarity with the revelation of an *Unheimliche* which is a completely different place altogether (Glarewoods), and the initial familiarity of which depends on nothing other than what Freud defines as an uncanny coincidence.[149] In the specific case of private asylums, this uncanny coincidence was made possible by the innovative theory of moral architecture and moral management.

---

[149] On the uncanny, see Freud, *The Uncanny*, pp. 121-62. With regard to uncanny coincidences, Freud speaks particularly of the uncanny effect of 'chance' in the repetition of events, things, numbers, etc; pp. 144-5

In the nineteenth century, asylums went through a major architectural revolution. Victorian alienists believed in the domestication of insanity, that is, the taming of madness by means of paternalistic therapeutic techniques in a homelike environment. Aimed at all kinds of patients, and especially at the increasing number of female hysterics, the 'homishness' (as Dr Daniel Tuke described it) of moral architecture was believed capable of stimulating inmates into social intercourse and teaching rebellious daughters their role in society by the celebration of domesticity:

> It is by domestic control, by surroundings of the daily life, by such details as the colouring of walls, the patterns on floor-cloth, the furniture and decoration of rooms, by the influence of pictures, birds, and draperies, the judicious use of different kinds of clothing, suitable occupation and diversions, and, generally, by moulding and controlling the life of a lunatic, that the psychologist hopes to reach, capture, and re-educate the truant mind, and perhaps reseat the dethroned intelligent will of his patient.[150]

Asylums were designed in the style of big country houses, and were often located on a gentle hill, thus enabling the contemplation of the rural and idyllic landscape.[151] Moral architecture, like moral management, was the pride of Victorian psychiatry, praised in the press as evidence of English innovation over the continental practice:

> When the intelligent foreigner is making his way towards London by the South Eastern Railway, and sees on every side magnificent buildings rising majestically from woods and gardens rich in stately timber, and glowing with rare plants and flowers, he is apt to inquire the names of the great English milords who own those splendid seats. [...] This mansion on the right with broad terraces, sparkling fountains, and velvet lawns. The ancestral seat of a duke? No, it is but an asylum for idiots. [...] Happy idiots![152]

---

[150] Quote from Mortimer Granville, *The Care and Cure of the Insane*, in Showalter, p. 34. Also, on moral architecture see Finnane, pp. 37, 190; Oppenheim, p. 51; Reynolds, pp. 16, 20, 97-8, 101, 130; Showalter, pp. 17, 23, 28-9, 33-6. The term "homishness" was coined by Dr. Daniel Hack Tuke, visiting physician at the York Retreat; see Showalter, p. 28.

[151] Reynolds points out that the architect chosen for Grangegorman, Dublin, was Francis Johnston, the same who designed St George's Church, Hardwicke Place, the General Post Office, the Chapel at Foundling Hospital, Dublin, and the Chapel Royal in Dublin Castle, p. 20.

[152] Charles Dickens, 'Happy Idiots', *All the Year Round*, 23 July 1864, p. 565.

Balls, concerts, and activities were part of the therapy of moral management. Based on the idea of *mens sana in corpore sano* (a sound mind in a sound body), this practice combined a good diet with a regime of labour and healthy amusements, in the conviction that a properly functioning body would stimulate the mind to mend itself. Inmates would play music and participate in weekly dances, enjoy walks and sports in the open air, play cards and table games in the dayrooms, read books, newspapers and magazines, and also go to church on Sundays, just like they would outside the asylum.[153] The illusion of normality would help restore order, decorum, and obedience among the patients, and many members of Victorian society reported their admiration after visiting the asylums on open-days:

> A series of athletic games, diversified with musical interludes and refections, took place yesterday [...]. Twenty years since he would have been consigned to Bedlam who permitted the insane to 'run in sacks', organise brass bands, and figure in reels and country dances. Happily the era of iron cages, wild beast dens, bolt, chains and shackles, has passed away, and the law of kindness nourishes the faint spark of reason into flame. [...] The order, gentle demeanour, and self-restraint of the patient yesterday was the triumph of the mental physician.[154]

It is this very illusion of normality that deceives Maud into the belief that she is really at Carsbrook. Maud has heard that Lady Mardykes' house is a black and white country mansion, surrounded by a flower garden, arches cut through the foliage, a croquet ground and a mulberry tree, and, above all, that its host entertains famous, eccentric, and extravagant people with balls, games, and concerts. Therefore, she does not realise that Carsbrook is Glarewoods until the asylum reveals itself for what it really is: a place of 'therapeutic torture' rather than gentle treatment [p. 262]. Le Fanu knew better than the occasional Sunday visitor what asylums hid behind their façades, as his brother William

---

[153] On moral management see: Finnane, p. 197 on recreation, p. 198 on dances, p. 199 on education, pp. 202-3 on diet; Oppenheim, p. 57 on amusements, p. 123 on education and outdoor activities; Reynolds, pp. 38, 67 on exercise and books, p. 114 on dances, p. 136 on sports and amusements, p. 142 on education, p. 53 on religious services; Showalter, pp. 38-40 on recreational activities, p. 82 on work in public asylums; Janet Anne Digby, 'Moral Treatment at the Retreat 1796-1845', in W.F. Bynum, Roy Porter and Michael Shepherd, eds, pp. 52-72 on the specific case of Tuke's asylum in York.

[154] Anon., 'Athletic Games at the Richmond Lunatic Asylum', *Irish Times*, 26 August 1864, p. 3. See also Dickens, 'Happy Idiots': 'I noticed some hundreds of men, women, and children, [...] disporting themselves on the grass, or marching in procession, preceded by a band of music', p. 565.

held the position of Commissioner of Control of Lunatic Asylums in Ireland, under the inspectorate of Dr John Nugent, between 1863 and 1891.[155] In his *Seventy Years of Irish Life*, William rehearsed anecdotes from his time as an inspector, which he probably shared with his very close brother.[156] For instance, in Chapter XVI, William tells the story of his first visit as a Commissioner to Mullingar Asylum, a story which initially casts suspicion on the actual welfare of the inmates, but then resolves into a harmless joke. William Le Fanu and John Nugent, accompanied by the resident doctor, went through the house and met a patient who complained that the attendant was depriving him of his food. Mistreatment of the patients being a very serious charge, the doctor showed deep concern and invited the inmate for tea in his rooms. It was only after enjoying the doctor's generosity that the patient denied the accusation, seeing that he was in earnest.[157] Although this may have genuinely been an innocent prank on the part of the patient, reports on the mistreatment of inmates were also appearing in the daily papers, and Charles Reade insisted in *Hard Cash* that many patients were suffering from daily violence and neglect. However, according to Reade, they declared otherwise because 'they knew by experience that, if they told the truth, the justices could not at once remedy their discomforts, whereas the keepers, the very moment the justices left the house, would knock them down, beat them, shake them, strait-jacket them, and starve them: and the doctor, less merciful, would doctor them'.[158]

Although Le Fanu does not offer a description of the mistreatments of asylum patients as meticulous as Reade's, he also denounces the horrific use of 'violent shocks of electricity', and the employment of a straight-waistcoat to restrain an unruly inmate

---

[155] P. T. Le Fanu, *Memoir of the Le Fanu Family*, p. 61.
[156] William Richard Le Fanu, *Seventy Years of Irish Life*, Ch. 16.
[157] William Le Fanu goes on to report a story he heard from Nugent: during the Crimean War a recruiting sergeant enlisted two men who, after having eaten and drunk with him in a pub, refused to follow him to the Royal Barrack, claiming to be two dangerous lunatics who had escaped from Richmond Asylum. The sergeant did not believe them but, when the police arrived and controls were taken, that resulted to be the truth; ibid.
[158] Reade, Vol. 2, p. 313.

[pp. 298, 300]. Moreover, particular attention is given to the 'outrageous' practice of the shower-bath, followed by the administration of nauseating emetics, which is worth quoting at length:

> 'You have taken an ordinary shower-bath, I dare say, Miss Vernon [...]? This, from its greater height, has a fall more than twice as heavy. [...] Yours, probably, contained between two and three stone weight of water; this will discharge between eight and nine tons'. [...]
> 'How long, please, sir?'
> 'Thirty-five minutes', said the doctor.
> 'But please, sir', said Creswell, growing paler, 'that is five minutes longer than the longest. [...] She never had it before, sir'.
> 'Better *once* effectually, than half-measures repeatedly'. [...]
> The cries and shrieks of the unfortunate patient are soon hushed. No sound is heard in that torture-room but the ceaseless, thundering fall of the water. [...] The 'patient' is lifted out [...]. She looks lifeless. [...]
> There must be the agonies of drowning in all this; worse than common drowning, drowning by a slower suffocation and with a protracted consciousness. [...]
> 'Give her the white mixture'. [...]
> 'Oh sir, please, doctor, not this time, sir'. [...]
> 'Do your duty, Creswell'.
> She took the bottle [...], and, with a frightened face, did as she was ordered. [pp. 308-09]

At this point in the story, Le Fanu even feels the urge to express his criticism directly in first person, and he enters the text by means of a footnote in which he explains that 'this peculiar use of the shower-bath in the treatment of the insane is no fiction' [p. 309].[159] In all probability, Le Fanu's brother told him details of this method, with which he must have been familiar from his visits to Irish asylums, but the author might as well have read the frightening particulars of this practice in the press of that time.[160]

In fact, the scene just narrated recalls the real case of Daniel Dolley, who, in 1857, died in Surrey Lunatic Asylum after a twenty-eight minute long shower-bath followed by

---

[159] For a history of hydropathy, see Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, pp. 313-8, and *Madness and Civilization*, pp. 158-67.

[160] For reports on the use of shower-baths in the press see, Dr Graham, 'The Shower Bath', *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal*, 21 August 1847, p. 128, Anon., 'Tretment of the Insane', *Quiver*, (December 1868), pp. 170-2, A. De Bragelonne, 'A Visit to the Lunatic Asylum at Auxerre', *Reynold's Miscellany of Romance, General Literature, Science, and Art*, 11 October 1856, pp. 165-7, Anon., 'A Visit to the Montrose Asylum', *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal*, 10 October 1835, pp. 293-5, Anon., 'Eight Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy to the Lord Chancellor', *London Quarterly Review* (January 1855), pp. 457-83, Anon., 'Cold Water on Cold Water', *Chamber's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts* (April 1859), pp. 245-7.

the administration of 'a good dose of the light-coloured mixture'.[161] Dolley's story was investigated by the Lunacy Commission, whose report was published in Dickens' *Household Words* on 16 May 1857. The patient was submitted to a shower-bath as a punishment for his disruptive behaviour, which culminated in the striking of the physician in charge. The attendant was reported to have pointed out that the duration instructed by the doctor was longer than the usual practice. Still, he did what he was ordered. The investigations that followed the death of the patient showed that other well-respected medical superintendents like Dr Conolly, Dr Forbes Winslow, and Dr Lawrence had never ordered shower-baths longer than a few minutes, disapproved of treatments over ten minutes in duration, and would therefore regard a twenty-eight minute long shower-bath utterly unjustifiable and possibly fatal in its effects.[162]

Le Fanu concluded his footnote by pointing out that this horrific therapy was no longer accepted or administered in any institution, thus offering a counterbalance to the shocking revelation that hydropathy is no fiction. Nevertheless, given that the novel is set only two or three years before the actual time of publication, this paratextual qualification would hardly reassure the reader that such practice belonged to a darker age, especially since Dr Antomarchi does not seem to respect any law but that of his own interest. Glarewoods asylum, then, is depicted as an institute founded on coercion and corruption rather than philanthropy. Maud's nurse admits that '[t]here's never a room empty in this house; and one *customer*'s money is as good as another's', and carelessly adds that another rich patient was kept in the asylum as long as the (corrupt) Chancellor, who 'was making a nice thing of his money and estates, while he was locked up here [...] found he could not keep him shut up no longer' [pp. 316, 335, my italics].[163] Maud is not mad, yet she is

---

[161] Henry Morley, 'Grand Jury Powers', *Household Words*, 16 May 1857, pp. 457-63, p. 458.
[162] Ibid., p. 460. It is possible that Le Fanu had read this article also because his description of the reasons for the use of shower-baths and their effects on the patients recall Dr Elliotson's words in *The Principles and Practice of Medicine*, quoted in 'Grand Jury Powers', p. 461.
[163] According to the law, recovered patients could not be kept in the asylum even when they were not removed by their friends; see Finnane, p. 116.

admitted upon payment of five thousand pounds a year, when her boarding 'would not have cost us seven hundred a year' [p. 357]. Maud is eventually liberated by the proprietor of the asylum, Mr Damian, for whose help Charles Marston and cousin Max plead after all attempts to employ the law in her favour have failed.

Both Milbank and Walton erroneously call Damian 'doctor', but I believe it significant that Le Fanu depicts him as a lay superintendent rather than an alienist, thus recalling the category of lay governors who were in charge of asylums in the early days of moral management.[164] In the first half of the nineteenth century, madhouses were organised like families, with the proprietor and his wife assisting the patients, trying to familiarise themselves with each of them and their cases, and treating them like parents would their own children.[165] Le Fanu witnessed the example of his father taking care of his mentally ill cousin, and he himself remained close to his wife in the last, difficult years of her life. Therefore, it is no surprise that, in his fiction, Le Fanu elevates the idea of the asylum as an institution based on Christian charity and criticises the corruptness of power-hungry doctors. Furthermore, the medical profession was always one that Le Fanu regarded with suspicion. From the letters he wrote to his mother after Susanna's death, we can detect unease and a frequent self-questioning about the choice of her doctors, and the couple appear to have had diverging ideas about the efficacy of conventional medicine rather than homeopathy.[166] The figure of Mr Damian, who is both shocked and furious at the idea that his 'house and name should be abused to such a purpose [as the malicious incarceration of sane people for money]!' is reminiscent of the image of the early Christian martyr Saint Damian, a physician who nonetheless used to refuse any form of payment in return for his services [p. 357]. In this light, Glarewoods comes to represent Le Fanu's vision of the degeneration of the asylums from philanthropic sanctuaries to profit-driven prisons in the care of greedy doctors.

---

[164] Respectively, Milbank, p. 168, Walton, p. 150.
[165] See Reynold, Ch. 2.
[166] See McCormack, pp. 130-2.

But as Alison Milbank and James Walton have correctly pointed out, Le Fanu went beyond the criticism of asylums *per se*. In building his horror on the uncanny similarity between the madhouse and the home, he further emphasised a resemblance that was not merely architectural, but which was founded on the restrictions imposed on women by a male authority, of which he knew first hand from his closeness to his cousin Caroline. According to Walton the analogy between the house and the asylum begins to take shape with the ball held at a friend's house at Wyverly. First of all, it is on this occasion that Lady Mardykes and Dr Antomarchi are introduced and seen to converse together. Secondly, and most importantly, the illustrious guests, ladies, lords, and captains, are presented as names and titles which hide a lack of 'autonomy and substance', just like '[t]he identities of the ambassador, the duchess, and the professor [at the asylum], of course, prove spurious: *petit-bourgeois* fantasies of high life taken to a morbid extreme'.[167] Following the ball, Maud's arrival at Carsbrook/Glarewoods marks her entry into society, which can be interpreted as her stepping out of childhood into womanhood. However, such an important step in the life of a girl does not translate into freedom (at last), since life as a grown-up woman is still, in fact, very limiting. As Milbank has pointed out, both life in the house and life in the asylum demand a woman's obedience to an autocratic male figure, the father (or his surrogate imposing the law of the father) or the doctor.[168] Therefore, while Lady Vernon thunders 'I [...] command respect. You shall obey me. I'll make you obey me', Antomarchi, who is supposed to embody a fatherly affection in an institution based on moral management, explains to Maud that 'it is my duty to treat you with what skills I possess; it is yours to submit; and submit you shall. [...] Violence, here, leads necessarily to repression; contumacy, in the most trifling particulars, to increased restraint' [pp. 208, 307]. The forms of repression and restraint employed in the asylum, Milbank argues, are exaggerations of the most common aspects of a woman's everyday life: thus, the strait-

[167] Walton, pp. 151, 153.
[168] Milbank, p. 166.

waistcoat can be seen as a perversion of the corset, coercive feeding recalls some women's practice of self-induced vomiting in the interest of remaining slim, and the shower-bath is a bitter caricature of a woman's toilette. Furthermore, the emphasis placed by Le Fanu on the humiliation which such practices imposed on rebellious women strengthens his criticism of a repressive domesticity.[169]

However, it is important to note that obedience is far from being represented as the key to freedom. Maud submits to Antomarchi's mesmeric control, but, by passively accepting his will, she is incapable of defending herself, and she inevitably remains trapped in the asylum. Similarly, her mother surrendered to the will of her father, only to find herself buried alive in the house, and to become a threatening presence to her daughter. The house, like the asylum, then, is for all women, defiant and tame alike, a place of confinement. Hence, Carsbrook/Glarewoods is described as 'a huge structure of the *cagework* sort', characterised by 'lofty, clipped hedges, tall and straight as *prison* walls', by doors and windows which cannot be opened at one's pleasure, and where silence is broken only by 'loud and horrible sound[s]', by 'howling and weeping', by 'gasping, tugging and panting, as if a determined struggle [is] going on', and where, emblematically, the only way out is in a coffin, such as the one that Maud sees leaving Lady Mardykes' house in the middle of the night [pp. 190, 258, 267, 268, my italics]. The coffin is the ultimate symbol of a woman's condition in the house and in the asylum: in both places, she is civilly dead, *civilitus mortuus*, since she has no rights to her own property (Maud is unceremoniously deprived of her belongings in the asylum, like Caroline Norton of her letters and writing material), to her own fortune, to her own body. Therefore, *The Rose and the Key* does not simply accuse society of wrongfully confining its unruly women; it

[169] Ibid.

suggests that society itself is 'a giant system of repression and control', and that the asylum is but the latest means of subjugation employed by Victorian patriarchy.[170]

For this reason Lady Vernon, like Lady Audley and Bertha Velderkaust, is represented as both monster and martyr, and while she has to be eliminated, she also inspires pity because she is herself a victim of the "system". Interestingly, Le Fanu's portrayal of the dying Lady Vernon echoes the description of the tamed Duchess of Falconbury after she has been subjected to the shower-bath, both showing dishevelled hair and water dripping down their faces:

> She [the Duchess] looks lifeless. Her long dark hair clings about her shoulders. Her arms hang helplessly and the water streams over her, over her hair, over her closed eyes, in rivulets; over her pretty face that looks in a sad sleep; over her lace and vanities; over her white slender hands that hang by her side, and over her rings, making little rills and pools along the tiles. [p. 309]

> [Lady Vernon's] head sinks and rolls, this way or that, as the weight inclines. [...] [T]he elegant little lace coiffure and its long, dark, grey-and-blue silk ribbons flutter about the dead face and open mouth. Mr Dawe has sprinkled water on her face. It streams over it as rain would over a marble bust. [p. 364]

In conclusion, it becomes evident that, as Gilbert and Gubar have theorised, it does not matter whether women 'are inclined to immobilize themselves with suffocating tight-laces in the glass coffins of patriarchy, or they are tempted to destroy themselves by doing fiery and suicidal tarantellas out of the looking glass', the result is always death.[171] In this light, Le Fanu's novel stands as a social critique of Victorian domesticity, where the ideal of the angelic woman is inevitably replaced by the malevolent ghost. Lady Vernon is punished because, by submitting to the law of the father, she has turned into that tyrant herself. Rebellious Maud, instead, is rescued from the house and blessed with a loving husband, a family, and a title, because, like a true Le Fanuian heroine, she learns the privilege of being

---

[170] Milbank, p. 167. Also note that, while Louisa Lowe compared the asylum to the French Bastille, Jarlath Killeen has defined the Belgian asylum where Lady Audley is confined as 'the equivalent of a Spanish convent in all but name; modernity has not produced means by which to end the abuse of women but merely provided new means of perpetuating this abuse', *Gothic Literature 1825-1914*, p. 22.
[171] Gilber and Gubar, p. 44.

loved and respected by a faithful man, and does not compromise on her choice in marriage. Maud, then, is not mad, and the real problem, both in the home and in the asylum, is man's abuse of power.

In *The Rose and the Key*, Le Fanu expresses his strong disapproval at the practice of asylum incarceration of unruly or inconvenient women for the malicious gain of their relatives, and of asylums as structures aiming at silencing patients through violence, threats, and neglect, rather than at curing them through kindness and understanding. Most probably influenced by the pioneering activism of his cousin Caroline Norton, and following the example of his father in the care of their afflicted relative, Le Fanu proved a loving husband to his nervous wife, at a time when many men were producing false certificates to confine their sane partners. Like the polemical work of Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade, *The Rose and the Key* criticises the corruption hidden behind the high gates of the asylums, and the total uninterest of their unscrupulous managers and attendants. Furthermore, by building his horror on the uncanny similarity of the asylum and the house, Le Fanu extends his accusations to Victorian society as a whole, whose members wished women to be "angels in the house" and did not realise that repression and control could only turn them into dangerous monsters. While both angels and monsters are associated with death, Le Fanu's ideal woman is revealed as she who is strong-willed enough to stand up for her rights, but also wise enough to recognise the benefits of a union based on love and trust, in a harmonious home.

CONCLUSION

> Lady Vernon was astounded. Maud had never disputed a distinct command of hers before.
> 'Think again, Maud, you had better. I fear you are losing your head a little, she said, coldly.
> 'I need not think again [...]' answered Maud, with all the fiery blood of the Vernons careering in her veins.
> '*Then take the consequences of your insanity*', said Lady Vernon, almost in a whisper, but with an audible stamp on the floor.
>
> *The Rose and the Key*, pp. 209-10, my italics.

As has been shown, Maud Vernon's "insanity" is really nothing more than a strong will, a sharp tongue, and a yearning for freedom; however, the consequences of her rebelliousness slowly take the disproportionate and horrific shape of a private lunatic asylum. Although Maud Vernon is the only character in Le Fanu's fiction to be wrongfully confined to a madhouse (Richard Marston asks to be admitted of his own will), many others could have experienced a similar fate, had they been confronted by someone as unscrupulous as Lady Vernon. The pages of this thesis have endeavoured to show that the danger of wrongful confinement in the nineteenth century was no mere fiction, but a real possibility of which Le Fanu was certainly aware.

At the dawn of modern psychiatry, being a doctor was no easy task, and many alienists genuinely misjudged eccentric behaviour or moral laxity as symptoms of insanity. While the possibility of being misdiagnosed insane was alarming enough, reports of actual cases of malicious incarceration on the part of greedy relatives and corrupt doctors inspired widespread panics among the Victorian public. For most of his life, Le Fanu was deeply involved in the national and international press, having been the editor of several magazines in Ireland and a frequent contributor to the British press. The "lunacy panics" of 1858 cannot possibly have escaped his attention, especially considering the publicity received by the case of his fellow writer Edward Bulwer-Lytton. Similarly, he could not

have ignored the success of Wilkie Collins' sensational novel *The Woman in White* or the controversy provoked by Charles Reade's *Hard Cash*.[1] Critics like Julia Briggs, Jack Sullivan, and Alison Milbank have argued that Le Fanu's use of the trope of madness reflected his attempt to conform to the literary trends of the time, that is, the ghost story (Briggs and Sullivan) and the sensation novel (Milbank). However, I have sought to demonstrate that Le Fanu's interest in insanity was also deeply rooted in his personal experience of mental illness. The early case of his cousin Frances, who suffered from suicidal tendencies, Susanna Bennett's nervous disorders and hysterical crises, and William Le Fanu's familiarity with the institution of the asylum, as Commissioner of control of Irish asylums, certainly played a crucial role in moulding Le Fanu's opinion of psychiatry and its practices. Therefore, the recurrence of insane characters in his fiction did not depend merely on literary ambition (although the prospect of success certainly informed his stylistic choices) but also expressed Le Fanu's anxieties about the increasing ease with which inconvenient people could be disposed of.

Notwithstanding Le Fanu's direct and indirect experience of insanity, the main scholarly approach to the subject in his fiction has for decades been the ahistorical perspective of psychoanalysis. V. S. Pritchett in the 1940s, Nelson Browne and Peter Penzoldt in the 1950s, and Jack Sullivan in the 1970s all interpreted insanity and the supernatural in Le Fanu's fiction as the representation of the characters', and even of the author's, unconscious. Thus, Le Fanu stands out as a talented writer in terms of the depiction of the most hidden recesses of the human mind, but also as a neurotic, who created the metaphysical doctor Martin Hesselius in the hope of curing himself of his own psychological troubles. It is true that a complete biography of the author did not appear until 1980, and that therefore these critics could not know of Frances' and Susanna's

[1] Reade's "fiction based on facts" quite subtly exposed Dr Conolly's corruption, so that Charles Dickens, who at that time was the editor of *All the Year Round*, in which Reade's novel was published, had to write a disclaimer to distance himself from the contents of *Hard Cash*, being a friend of Conolly and having received several complaints from the doctor's family.

problems. Nevertheless, William Le Fanu's *Seventy Years of Irish Life* was published in 1893, and there, as I have indicated, the author rehearses anecdotes of his years as a controller of Irish asylums. Nelson Browne points out that, in the specific case of *The Rose and the Key*, Le Fanu makes use of a 'shocking realism' in the description of the shower-bath, but does not connect the writer's knowledge with his brother's daily experience of asylums, and concludes that 'Le Fanu had no intention, contrary to Charles Reade, of exposing a serious evil in his account of the happenings at Glarewoods', since the irregularities took place during the absence of the proprietor.[2] While the universalising angle employed by psychoanalysis inevitably results in misinterpretations of Le Fanu's work, and even in unfounded diagnoses of the author's presumed nervous disorders, the historicist approach which I have applied to the texts allows a more plausible reading of Le Fanu's interest in insanity, since it takes into account Le Fanu's familial and cultural background.

In this thesis, I have argued that Le Fanu makes use of the trope of insanity and wrongful confinement to warn readers against the power held by Victorian alienists over people's fortunes, their reputations, and their very bodies. In particular, Le Fanu focuses on characters professing forms of spirituality other than orthodox Christianity, and on rebellious women who seek more freedom within the house. Thus, Dinah Perfect in *All in the Dark* is called mad on the basis of her belief in Spiritualism, while Carmel Sherlock in *A Lost Name* is said to be a raving madman simply because he claims to have prophetic dreams and visions. Throughout the novels, though, both characters are depicted in a very sympathetic way, and by the end they appear to be eccentric, certainly, but also perfectly sane. While Le Fanu is shown to support the profession of occult doctrines (for all his criticism of Spiritualism), he also emphasises the dangerous possibility that unorthodox beliefs may be interpreted as clear symptoms of insanity and the believers locked away in

[2] Browne, *Sheridan Le Fanu*, pp. 65, 66.

asylums, as had really happened to Louisa Nottidge and as had almost happened to Emanuel Swedenborg.

With regard to the difficult women that feature in Le Fanu's fiction, a diagnosis of insanity is either maliciously exploited in order to silence them, or proves to be the result of constant domestic abuse perpetrated by the men on whom they are dependent. Maud Vernon in *The Rose and the Key* is confined to an asylum because she refuses to embody the Victorian ideal of "the angel in the house". However, at the end, she is liberated on account of her actual sanity, she is granted the freedom to choose her own husband, and is rewarded with a man who loves her, a title, and an heir. Victorian society is exposed as a male-centred system of repression and control, in which women are buried alive in their houses. Similarly, in *The Wyvern Mystery*, Le Fanu criticises man's power over women. While opposing forms of erotomania, the manic and melancholic, are employed by the author in order to present his ideal of womanhood, the warning that Le Fanu issues to the reader is not simply against monstrous Bertha Velderkaust, but also against Charles Fairfield, the man who ruins her, abandons her, and drives her mad.

Again, it has been my concern to demonstrate that Le Fanu's specific interest in the crisis of faith and the "Woman Question" may be traced to his personal life. As I have argued in Chapters One and Two, Le Fanu experienced first hand the spiritual uncertainty that affected many of his contemporaries. Both his sister Catherine and his wife Susanna suffered from a protracted state of anxiety caused by religious doubt, which troubled their mind and consumed their body. While the two women eventually found peace in the family Anglicanism, Le Fanu was instead probably drawn to the teaching of Emanuel Swedenborg, although there is no evidence that he ever joined the Church of the New Jerusalem. Upon this basis, I have argued that Le Fanu's sympathetic portrait of those characters who are prey to religious doubt stems from his direct experience of it. Furthermore, by emphasising the ease with which unorthodox beliefs were translated into

insanity, Le Fanu casts suspicion on the authority invested in psychiatry and puts the readers on their guard.

Le Fanu's concern with the "Woman Question", on the other hand, may have been influenced by his close relationship with his activist cousin Caroline Norton. A clever, spirited woman and a battered wife, Caroline Norton struggled all her life to improve the welfare of women in their homes. She never claimed woman's superiority to man but simply demanded that wives be respected and protected by their husbands. Chapter Three and Four have focused specifically on women's difficult position in the house and I have sought to demonstrate that Caroline Norton's idea of domestic harmony is reflected in Le Fanu's representation of the perfect marriage, a union based on love and mutual respect. While Caroline Norton never experienced the horror of the asylum, Le Fanu was certainly aware of the fact that many husbands succeeded in locking their difficult wives away by claiming their yearning for freedom as a sign of madness. Le Fanu was a caring husband to his nervous wife, and his criticism of the practice of malicious incarceration is therefore indicative of his disapproval of man's power over woman, be he an alienist or a husband.

In this thesis I have narrowed my study of the fiction of Sheridan Le Fanu to the theme of insanity, and I hope to have shed more light on four of his lesser-known novels, in which the subject dominates the plot. During the course of my analysis, though, it has become evident to me that Le Fanu's concerns with rebellious femininity and alternative spiritualities extend beyond their connection with madness, and could easily be the subjects of full-length studies of their own. Several critics have already pointed out that Le Fanu's work is populated by spirited girls demanding more freedom in the house. In *Dissolute Characters* McCormack interprets *Wylder's Hand* and *Uncle Silas* as the expression of Le Fanu's 'unconscious feminism', in the way the author rescues the female characters from their oppressive houses.[3] Alison Milbank has further considered less famous texts like 'Schalken the Painter' and *The Rose and the Key*, and in her *Daughters*

[3] McCormack, *Dissolute Characters*, p. 64.

of the House she convincingly argues that Le Fanu was in fact consciously trying to build a 'feminist hermeneutics'.[4] In *Le Fanu's Gothic*, Victor Sage analyses *The Tenants of Malory* and *Haunted Lives* and highlights the recurrent attribution of the word "perversity" to the passionate temperament of the novels' heroines. Finally, in a recent study of 'Carmilla,' Jarlath Killeen offers further evidence in favour of Le Fanu's concern for the welfare of women in the house. In 'In the Name of the Mother: Perverse Maternity in 'Carmilla'' (2011), Killeen argues that the real threat in Le Fanu's best known story is not embodied by the vampire but by the male characters, who are trying to impose their authority over women. Carmilla, then, is interpreted as a saviour, because by killing Bertha and trying to kill Laura before they reach womanhood, she spares them 'the miseries going to be inflicted on daughters by fathers and future husbands'.[5] While Le Fanu's (mild) feminism has been recognised, and scholars have already begun to direct their attention to some of his less popular stories and novels, an engaged and comprehensive study of the Le Fanuian heroine still awaits to be written.

Similarly, Le Fanu's position in the context of the crisis of faith has been the subject of increasing critical interest, especially since the publication of McCormack's biography in 1980. McCormack offers a precise background to Le Fanu's spiritual troubles, which he contextualises in his family and in the cultural milieu of Victorian Ireland. He then extends his study to a wider European context in his *Dissolute Characters*. McCormack's lengthy analysis of Swedenborgianism in *Uncle Silas* has inspired further research, but critics have focused mainly on Le Fanu's best-known novel and the collection *In a Glass Darkly*, where Swedenborg is mentioned explicitly. James Walton's *Vision and Vacancy* is the first scholarly work that attempts to trace Le Fanu's spiritual anxiety throughout the entirety of his literary production. While Walton's ambitious work is an invaluable contribution to the Le Fanu studies, the space limitations

[4] Milbank, p. 21.
[5] Jarlath Killeen, 'In the Name of the Mother: Perverse Maternity in 'Carmilla'', in Crawford et al., *Reflections in a Glass Darkly*, pp. 351-72, p. 363.

of the book form have allowed only a brief, although excellent, overview of each of the several texts considered. Nevertheless, it is a useful starting point for further research. Thus, in this thesis I have expanded on Walton's analysis of *All in the Dark* and *A Lost Name*, and I have also pointed out the relevance of religious anxiety in 'Spalatro' and 'Borrhomeo the Astrologer'. Swedenborgian echoes and spiritual uncertainty abound in Le Fanu's fiction, and many more of his stories and novels could help to further our understanding of both Le Fanu and Victorian religious culture if someone was willing to probe them.

Finally, although this thesis has been concerned with Le Fanu's involvement in the British literary market, his Irish origins have not gone unrecognised. Le Fanu's name has been for years a well-established one in the crucible of Irish studies. As early as 1946 Elizabeth Bowen described *Uncle Silas* as 'an Irish story transposed to and English setting', on the basis of the 'hermetic solitude and the autocracy of the great country house, the demonic power of the family myth, fatalism, feudalism and the "ascendancy" outlook' contained in the novel.[6] McCormack, likewise, has interpreted the Ruthyns' Swedenborgianism as the cause of their isolation within the community, which reflected the daily experience of the Protestant Anglo-Irish in Catholic Ireland.[7] The important work of Victor Sage, Julian Moynahan, and Terry Eagleton, among others, has also contributed to attempts to position Le Fanu alongside better-known Irish Gothic novelists, such as Charles Maturin and Bram Stoker. But while scholars have mainly focused on *Uncle Silas*, Frances Chiu has shown that other novels, like *The Rose and the Key*, can effectively be read in an Irish key. In this thesis I also have considered less popular works by Le Fanu, and merely advanced a few suggestions for future research in the field of Irish studies: in Chapter Two I have argued that Le Fanu was well aware of the traditions and superstitions

---

[6] Elizabeth Bowen, Introduction to *Uncle Silas*, p. 8.

[7] McCormack, 'Sheridan Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas*: an Anglo-Irish Provenance', *Long Room*, No. 4 (Dublin: Trinity College Dublin, 1971), pp. 19-24; 'Swedenborgianism as Structure in Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas*', *Long Room*, No. 6 (Dublin: Trinity College Dublin, 1972), pp. 23-9; *Sheridan Le Fanu*, Ch. 5.

of Ireland, and I have introduced a parallel between the figure of the modern witch in *A Lost Name* and the Irish Sidhe, which could be researched in more depth. Mark Shadwell, the protagonist/antagonist of the novel, is not only a rationalist and a philosopher, but could be interpreted as the bad landlord who does not take interest in his tenants. Moreover, in my analysis of *The Wyvern Mystery* I have concentrated on rebellious womanhood, but it is interesting to note that the last volume of the novel revolves around a changeling, which is another recurrent theme in Irish folklore.

In recent years Le Fanu has begun to receive more critical attention: three monographs have appeared in the 2000s, such as Sage's *Le Fanu's Gothic*, Walton's *Vision and Vacancy* and Girard's *Sheridan Le Fanu*, a website dedicated exclusively to the Le Fanu studies opened in 2006 (www.lefanustudies.com), and a recent collection of essays titled *Reflections in a Glass Darkly* was published in 2011. However, Le Fanu sadly remains an underrated author. While most of his late fiction has been deemed undeserving of scholarly interest, it has been my contention in this thesis that novels like *All in the Dark*, *A Lost Name*, *The Wyvern Mystery*, and *The Rose and the Key* are useful tools for understanding not only Le Fanu as a man and a writer, but Victorian society as a whole. One can only hope that the upcoming bicentenary of Le Fanu's birth in 2014 will inspire new interest both within the scholarly community and among the general public.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Texts by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu:

— *All in the Dark* (London: Downey & Co., 1898)
— 'An Authentic Narrative of a Haunted House', *Dublin University Magazine* (October 1862), pp. 476-83
— 'Beatrice', *Dublin University Magazine* (November 1865), pp. 533-44; (December 1865), pp. 671-83; (January, 1866), pp. 110-6
— 'The Bird of Passage', *Temple Bar* (April 1870), pp. 59-88; (May 1870), pp. 228-48; (June 1870), pp. 350-84
— 'Borrhomeo the Astrologer', *Dublin University Magazine* (January 1862), pp. 55-61
— 'A Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family', *Dublin University Magazine* (October 1839), pp. 398-415
— *Checkmate* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997)
— *Chronicles of Golden Friars* (London: Bentley, 1871)
— *The Cock and Anchor* (New York; London: Garland, 1979)
— 'The Dead Sexton', *Once a Week*, 31 December 1871, pp. 10-19
— 'The Fatal Bride', *Dublin University Magazine* (January 1848), pp. 15-44
— 'Fireside Horrors for Christmas', *Dublin University Magazine* (December 1847), pp. 631-46
— *The Fortunes of Colonel Torlogh O'Brien* (Dublin: James McGlashan; William S. Orr and Company, London, 1847)
— *Guy Deverell* (London: Richard Bentley, 1865)
_____ *Dublin University Magazine* (January 1865), pp. 36-56; (February 1865), pp. 158-83; (March 1865), pp. 310-38; (April 1865), pp. 417-50; (May 1865), pp. 519-57; (June 1865), pp. 661-86; (July 1865), pp. 66-92
— *Haunted Lives: a Novel* (London: Tinsley, 1868)
_____ *Dublin University Magazine* (May 1868), pp. 564-90; (June 1868), pp. 698-702; (July 1868), pp. 63-98; (August 1868), pp. 162-90; (September 1868), pp. 287-313; (October, 1868), pp. 438-53; (November 1868), pp. 571-84; (December 1868), pp. 686-97
— *The House by the Churchyard* (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1992)
— *In a Glass Darkly* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)
— 'The Irish League', *Dublin University Magazine* (July 1848), pp. 115-8
— 'Laura Silver Bell', *Belgravia* (December 1872), pp. 33-40
— 'Lord Dufferin on Ireland', *Dublin University Magazine* (July 1866), pp. 116-20
— *A Lost Name* (London: Bentley, 1868)
— *Loved and Lost, Dublin University Magazine* (September 1868), pp. 254-67; (October 1868), pp. 381-94; (November 1868), pp. 500-18; (December 1868), pp. 617-32; (January 1869), pp. 19-33; (February 1869), pp. 142-54; (March 1869), pp. 259-70; (April 1869), pp. 381-95; (May 1869), pp. 505-11
— *Madam Crowl's Ghost and Other Stories* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1994)
— 'My Aunt Margaret's Adventure', *Dublin University Magazine* (March 1864), pp. 268-80
— 'The Mysterious Lodger', *Dublin University Magazine* (January 1850), pp. 54-71, (February 1850), pp. 225-35
— 'The Opening Session', *Dublin University Magazine* (February 1866), pp. 235-40
— 'Original Letters – Swift – No. I', *Dublin University Magazine* (September 1838), pp. 269-72

— 'Original Letters – No. II – Political', *Dublin University Magazine* (April 1939), pp. 431-8
— 'Pawn-Broking in Ireland', *Dublin University Magazine* (December 1839), pp. 675-81
— *The Poems of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu*, Alfred Perceval Graves, ed. (London: Downey & Co., 1896)
— *The Purcell Papers* (New York; London: Garland, 1979)
— 'The Reform Bill', *Dublin University Magazine* (May 1866), pp. 597-600
— *The Rose and The Key* (Kansan City: Valancourt Books, 2007)
— 'The Session of 1866', *Dublin University Magazine* (September 1866), pp. 355-60
— 'Some Accounts of the Latter Days of the Hon. Richard Marston, of Dunoran', *Dublin University Magazine* (April 1848), pp. 473-97, (May 1848), pp. 585-607, (June 1848), pp. 728-56
— 'Some Gossip about Chapelizod', *Dublin University Magazine* (April 1851), pp. 427-34
— 'Spalatro', *Dublin University Magazine* (March 1843), pp. 338-51; (April 1843), pp. 446-58
— *Spalatro: Two Italian Tales* (Mountain Ash: Sarob Press, 2001)
— *A Stable for Nightmares, or, Weird Tales* (New York: New Amsterdam Book Co., 1896)
— 'The State Prosecutions', *Dublin University Magazine* (June 1848), pp. 785-8
— *A Strange Adventure in the life of Miss Laura Mildmay: a Tale from Chronicles of Golden Friars* (London: Home and Van Thal, 1947)
— *The Tenants of Malory* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1889)
_____ *Dublin University Magazine* (February 1867), pp. 123-54; (March 1867), pp. 259-78; (April 1867), pp. 414-33; (May 1867), pp. 534-52; (June 1867), pp. 658-80; (July 1867), pp. 49-72; (August 1867), pp. 180-210; (September 1867), pp. 260-92; (October 1867), pp. 432-65
— *Uncle Silas: a Tale of Bartram-Haugh* (Stroud: Nonsuch, 2006)
— *Willing to Die* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1873)
— *Wylder's Hand* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009)
— *The Wyvern Mystery* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2005)

Secondary Sources:

— A., M. H., 'Narrative of a Trial for Witchcraft', *Dublin University Magazine* (July 1845), pp. 26-9
— A. W., 'A Self-Searcher', *Dublin University Magazine* (November 1860), pp. 551-9
— Abrams, M. H., ed., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 6th edn, (New York; London: Norton & Co., 1993)
— Acton, William, *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs* (London: J. & A. Churchill, 1875)
_____ *Prostitution, Considered in its Moral, Social, and Sanitary Aspects* (London: John Churchill, 1857)
— Ackroyd, Peter, *Dickens* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1990)
— Addison, Adam, 'Clinical Notes Regarding Epileptic Insanity', *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, No. 12 (1866), pp. 63-74
— Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, translated by John Stuart Blaikie (London: J. W. Parker, 1850)
— Ainworth, William Harrison, *The Lancashire Witches: a Romance of Pendle Forest* (London: Herbert Jenkins, c. 1920)
— Alighieri, Dante, *La Divina Commedia* (Firenze: Accademia della Crusca, 2000)

— Allen, John, 'Guardian Angels', *Spiritual Magazine* (October 1860), p. 459
— Anderson, John Henry, 'Extraordinary Manifestations', *Irish Times*, 10 November 1864, p. 4
— Anon., 'An Act of Mercy', *All the Year Round*, 20 December 1862, pp. 344-50
— Anon., 'Advertisement', *Athenaeum*, 6 December 1862, p. 721
— Anon., 'Advertisement', *Athenaeum*, 27 December 1862, p. 855
— Anon., 'Advertisement', *Athenaeum*, 3 January 1863, p. 26
— Anon., 'Advertisement', *Athenaeum*, 24 January 1863, p. 104
— Anon., 'Advertisement', *Athenaeum*, 31 January 1863, p. 164
— Anon., 'Advertisement', *Athenaeum*, 7 February 1863, p. 202
— Anon., 'Advertisement', *Athenaeum*, 14 February 1863, p. 239
— Anon., 'Advertisement', *Athenaeum*, 21 February 1863, p. 270
— Anon., 'Advertisement', *Athenaeum*, 28 February 1863, p. 279
— Anon., 'Advertisement', *Athenaeum*, 14 March 1863, p. 373
— Anon., 'Advertisement', *Athenaeum*, 21 March 1863, p. 381
— Anon., 'Advertisement', *Athenaeum*, 28 March 1863, p. 414
— Anon., 'Advertisement', *Athenaeum*, 18 March 1863, p. 532
— Anon., 'Advertisement', *Athenaeum*, 25 April 1863, p. 563
— Anon., 'Advertisement', *Athenaeum*, 2 May 1863, p. 572
— Anon., 'Advertisement', *Athenaeum*, 9 May 1863, p. 629
— Anon., 'Advertisement', *Critic*, 12 November 1859, pp. 480-1
— Anon., 'The Agapemone', *Examiner*, 9 June1860, p. 355
— Anon., 'The Agapemone in Chancery', *Saturday Review*, 16 June 1860, pp. 772-3
— Anon. 'Almanacs and Pocket-Books', *Athenaeum*, 6 December 1851, pp. 1274-5
— Anon., '*All in the Dark* by G. J. Sheridan Le Fanu', *Athenaeum*, 30 June 1866, p. 860
— Anon., '*All in the Dark* by J. S. Le Fanu', *Examiner*, 9 June 1866, p. 358
— Anon., '*All in the Dark* by J. Sheridan Le Fanu', *Reader*, 16 June 1866, pp. 584-5
— Anon., 'All in the Dark', *Saturday Review*, 14 July 1866, p. 59
— Anon., 'Ancient Magic and Astrology', *Dublin University Magazine* (June 1869), pp. 603-21
— Anon., 'Ancient Physic and Physicians', *Dublin University Magazine* (April 1856), pp. 405-14
— Anon., 'Anecdotes of the Insane', *Mirror Monthly Magazine*, 23 March 1839, pp. 182-3
— Anon., 'Another Cluster of Novels', *Dublin University Magazine* (May 1865), pp. 570-6
— Anon., 'Another Evening with the Witchfinders', *Dublin University Magazine* (August 1847), pp. 146-61
— Anon., 'Asylum for Lunatics', *Irish Times*, 16 December 1859, p. 3
— Anon., 'Athletic Games at the Richmond District Lunatic Asylum', *Irish Times*, 26 August 1864, p. 3
— Anon., 'Barbarity in a Lunatic Asylum in England', *Irish Times*, 10 August 1860, p. 4
— Anon., 'A Biographical Sketch of Emanuel Swedenborg', *Critic*, 1 October 1849, p. 446
— Anon., 'The Birth-Day of Burn', *Dublin University Magazine* (April 1859), pp. 407-10
— Anon., 'Book Review', *Athenaeum*, 29 June 1889, p. 823
— Anon., 'Books of the Week', *Examiner*, 10 January 1863, pp. 24-5
— Anon., 'The Brothers Davenport', *Irish Times*, 25 October 1864, p. 4
— Anon., 'The Brothers Davenport', *Irish Times*, 10 November 1864, p. 4
— Anon., 'The Brothers Davenport', *Irish Times*, 6 January 1866, p. 3
— Anon., 'Callcotts Witches' *Irish Times*, 10 March 1864, p. 4

— Anon., 'The Challenge to the Davenport Brothers', *Irish Times*, 9 January1866, p. 4
— Anon., 'The Channel Fleet', *Irish Times*, 26 September 1863, p. 4
— Anon., '*Checkmate*', *British Quarterly Review* (July 1871), pp. 248-9
— Anon., '*Checkmate*', *Saturday Review*, 18 March 1871, pp. 351-2
— Anon., 'Christmas Amusements', *Irish Times*, 25 December 1865, p. 3
— Anon., 'Clairvoyance', *Reynolds's Miscellany*, 27 April 1850, pp. 220-1
— Anon., 'Cold Water on Cold Water', *Chamber's Journal of Popular Literature, Science and Arts* (April 1859), pp. 245-7
— Anon., 'Combined View of the Prophecies of Daniel, Exodus, and St John', *North British Review* (November 1862), pp. 397-421
— Anon., 'Commission of Lunacy', *Irish Times*, 7 December 1859, p. 4
— Anon., 'Concert Room, Rotundo', *Irish Times*, 9 February 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Contemporary Literature of America', *Westminster Review* (July 1852), pp. 271-87
— Anon., 'The Contemporary Review', *Review of Reviews* (April 1895), p. 357
— Anon., 'Continental Gossip', *Irish Times*, 25 October 1865, p. 3
— Anon., 'The Corporation', *Irish Times*, 25 January 1861, p. 4
— Anon., 'Correspondence – District Lunatic Asylum', *Irish Times*, 11 November 1859, p. 3
— Anon., 'Correspondence – Irish Antiquities', *Irish Times*, 14 June 1867, p. 3
— Anon., 'Correspondence – What, Ho! A Light', *Irish Times*, 31 December 1861, p. 3
— Anon., 'Court of Chancery – Canning Re Cambell, a Lunatic', *Irish Times*, 18 June 1862, p. 4
— Anon., 'Court of Chancery – In Re Hamilton, a Lunatic', *Irish Times*, 7 July 1859, p. 3
— Anon., 'Court of Chancery – Lahiff, a Lunatic', *Irish Times*, 2 May 1870, p. 3
— Anon., 'Court of Chancery – Shee v. Newton', *Irish Times*, 6 July 1859, p. 3
— Anon., 'Court of Exchequer, Tuesday, June 26', *Times*, 27 June 1849, p. 7
— Anon., 'Court of Queen's Bench – Extraordinary Case of Alleged Lunacy', *Irish Times*, 24 January 1860, p. 3
— Anon., 'A Criminal Responsibility of the Insane', *University Magazine*, 21 May 1843, pp. 626-47
— Anon., '*Chronicles of Golden Friars*', *Saturday Review*, 12 August 1871, p. 223
— Anon., 'Curious Prophecies of the War', *Critic*, 15 June 1855, pp. 293-4
— Anon., 'Darkness in High Places', *Saturday Review*, 4 July 1863, pp. 15-6
— Anon., 'The Davenport and Dr Lynn', *Irish Times*, 9 January 1866, p. 4
— Anon., 'The Davenport Brothers', *Irish Times,* 20 October 1864, p. 3
— Anon., 'The Davenport Brothers', *Irish Times,* 1 November 1864, p. 3
— Anon., 'The Davenport Brothers', *Irish Times*, 14 September 1865, p. 2
— Anon., 'The Davenport Brothers in Dublin', *Irish Times*, 8 January 1866, p. 3
— Anon., 'The Davenport Brothers in Liverpool', *Irish Times*, 18 February 1865, p. 4
— Anon., 'The Davenport Brothers – Public Séance in Dublin', *Irish Times*, 8 January 1866, p. 3
— Anon., 'The Davenport Manifestations', *Irish Times*, 29 December 1864, p. 3
— Anon., 'The Dead', *Spiritual Magazine* (September 1861), p. 409
— Anon., 'Death Dramatised', *Critic*, 15 October 1859, pp. 373-4
— Anon., 'Degeneration', *Saturday Review*, 9 March 1895, pp. 323-4
— Anon., 'The Devils of Loudun', *National Review*, 11 July 1860, pp. 70-94
— Anon., 'Doctor Pentagram on Divers Things', *Dublin University Magazine* (August 1863), pp. 210-5
— Anon., 'Dreams, Omens, and Predictions', *Dublin University Magazine* (May 1866), pp. 506-22

— Anon., 'Dr Forbes Winslow on Spiritualism', *Spiritual Magazine* (June 1860), pp. 277-80
— Anon., 'Dr Lynn', *Irish Times*, 16 December 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Dr Lynn', *Irish Times*, 19 January 1866, p. 3
— Anon., 'Dr Lynn's Entertainment', *Irish Times*, 4 October 1865, p. 3
— Anon., 'Dr Lynn's Entertainment', *Irish Times*, 28 October 1865, p. 3
— Anon., 'Dr Lynn's Séance', *Irish Times*, 1 November 1865, p. 3
— Anon., 'The Dublin University Magazine', *Irish Times*, 8 June 1859, p. 4
— Anon., 'Earlier Types of Sensation Novel', *Dublin University Magazine* (April 1864), pp. 460-9
— Anon., 'Early Celtic Stories', *Dublin University Magazine* (December 1865), pp. 603-19
— Anon., 'Effects of "Spirit-Rapping" in America', *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, No. 9 (December 1853) pp. 1147-8
— Anon., 'The Egmont Case', *Irish Times*, 7 August 1863, p. 3
— Anon., 'Eight Reports of the Commissioners in Lunacy to the Lord Chancellor', *London Quarterly Review* (January 1855), pp. 457-83
— Anon., 'Elderly Females', *Irish Times,* 21 April 1864, p. 3
— Anon., 'Ellen Raymond; or, Ups and Downs', *Athenaeum*, 9 April 1859, pp. 483-4
— Anon., 'Ellis' Treatise on Insanity', *Dublin University Magazine* (October 1838), pp. 459-71
— Anon., 'Emanuel Swedenborg', *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* (May 1867), pp. 434-41
— Anon., 'English Lunatic Deported From France', *Irish Times*, 14 June 1859, p. 4
— Anon., 'Essay on Partial Derangement of the Mind, in Supposed Connexion with Religion', *English Review*, 6 December 1865, pp. 332-70
— Anon., 'Ethel in Fairyland', *Novel Review* (May 1869), pp. 363-5
— Anon., 'An Evening with the Witchfinders', *Dublin University Magazine* (July 1847), pp. 1-16
— Anon., 'The Evil Guest. By J. Sheridan Le Fanu. London: Downey & Co. 1895', *Saturday Review*, 27 April 1895, p. 557
— Anon., 'Extraordinary Arrest of a Gentleman Alleged to Be a Lunatic', *Irish Times*, 3 November 1859, p. 4
— Anon., 'Extraordinary Manifestations', *Irish Times*, 10 October 1864, p. 4
— Anon., 'Extraordinary Manifestations', *Irish Times*, 27 October 1864, p. 4
— Anon., 'Extraordinary Manifestations', *Irish Times*, 5 November 1864, p. 3
— Anon., 'Fairy Mythology of Ireland', *Dublin University Magazine* (June 1864), pp. 640-58
— Anon., 'Fire-Side Gossip about Ghosts and Fairies', *Dublin University Magazine* (December 1863), pp. 691-9
— Anon., 'The Folk Books of France', *Dublin University Magazine* (November 1865), pp. 516-33
— Anon., 'Foreign Crime and Credulity', *Dublin University Magazine* (January 1855) pp. 27-39
— Anon., 'French Literature', *Speaker*, 5 August 1893, pp. 128-9
— Anon., 'Frosts – Ancient and Modern', *Irish Times*, 17 January 1867, p. 3
— Anon., 'Fun's Derby Prophecies', *Fun*, 6 June 1868, p. 136
— Anon., 'Genius and Insanity', *Speaker* 6 February 1897, pp. 161-2
— Anon., 'The Ghost of the Cock Lane Ghost', *Household Words*, 20 November 1852, pp. 217-23
— Anon., 'The Ghost of the Day', *Dublin University Magazine* (September 1863), pp. 337-42

— Anon., 'Ghostly Business', *Eclectic Review*, No. 4 (May 1863), pp. 455-64
— Anon., 'Gipsy Language, With Other Gipsy Items', *Dublin University Magazine* (July 1867), pp. 38-49
— Anon., 'A Gossip on Fortune', *Dublin University Magazine* (August 1856), pp. 234-8
— Anon., 'A Group of New Novels', *Dublin University Magazine* (March 1865), pp. 339-51
— Anon., '*Guy Deverell*', *Athenaeum*, 21 October 1865, pp. 536-37
— Anon., '*Guy Deverell*', *Examiner*, 14 October 1865, p. 650
— Anon., '*Guy Deverell*', *Reader*, 7 October 1865, p. 397
— Anon., '*Guy Deverell*', *Saturday Review*, 25 November 1865, pp. 682-3
— Anon., 'Habeas Corpus', *Irish Times*, 11 May 1870, p. 3
— Anon., 'Hibernian Demonology and Fairy Lore', *Dublin University Magazine* (August 1864), pp. 203-13
— Anon., 'Hidden Depths', *Reader*, 24 February 1866, pp. 197-8
— Anon., 'High Water at Dublin Bar', *Irish Times*, 3 August 1864, p. 2
— Anon., '*The House by the Churchyard*', *Athenaeum*, 14 February 1863, pp. 225-6
— Anon., 'How Murders Have Been Discovered', *Dublin University Magazine* (June 1865), pp. 650-61
— Anon., 'The Horrible Story, *Irish Times*, 22 March 1864, p. 4
— Anon., 'Icelandic Legends', *Dublin University Magazine* (July 1864), pp. 65-72
— Anon., 'Imperial Parliament', *Irish Times*, 5 August 1861, p. 4
— Anon., 'Important Inquest', *Irish Times*, 12 May 1862, p. 3
— Anon., 'Imposture and Credulity', *Dublin University Magazine* (February 1866), pp. 218-34
— Anon., '*In a Glass Darkly*', *Examiner*, 6 July 1872, pp. 675-6
— Anon., '*In a Glass Darkly*', *Saturday Review*, 17 August 1872, pp. 222-3
— Anon., 'Indian Witches', *Irish Times*, 22 September 1860, p. 3
— Anon., 'Insanity and its Treatment', *Athenaeum*, 9 September 1871, pp. 340-1
— Anon., 'Irish Demonology and Fairy Lore', *Dublin University Magazine* (September 1864), pp. 243-55
— Anon., 'Irish Magic in the Days of Cormac', *Dublin University Magazine* (April 1864), pp. 424-40
— Anon., 'Irish Materials for History', *Dublin University Magazine* (December 1861), pp. 661-72
— Anon., 'Irish Popular Superstitions', *Dublin University Magazine* (May 1849), pp. 543-60
— Anon., 'Irish Popular Superstitions', *Dublin University Magazine* (May 1850), pp. 540-55
— Anon., 'Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu', *Dublin University Magazine* (March 1873), pp. 319-20
— Anon., 'The Last of the Davenports', *Irish Times*, 17 April 1865, p. 4
— Anon., 'Law and Theatricals', *The Times*, 18 January 1843, p. 6
— Anon., 'Law Intelligence', *Irish Times*, 21 May 1860, p. 4
— Anon., 'Law Intelligence', *Irish Times*, 27 June 1861, p. 4
— Anon., 'Law Intelligence', *Irish Times*, 18 November 1861, p. 4
— Anon., 'Law Intelligence', *Irish Times*, 11 July 1863, p. 4
— Anon., 'Law Intelligence', *Irish Times*, 8 December 1863, p. 4
— Anon., 'Lecture at the Centenary Chapel', *Irish Times*, 3 September 1862, p. 3
— Anon., 'Lecture in Spiritualism', *Irish Times*, 20 February 1866, p. 3
— Anon., 'A Legend of the Euphrates', *Dublin University Magazine* (April 1861), pp. 488-9

— Anon., 'Leinster Folk-Lore No. VI', *Dublin University Magazine* (January 1863), pp. 81-93
— Anon., 'A Lively Fire – Barnum at Home', *Irish Times*, 28 July 1865, p. 3
— Anon., 'Local Prophecies', *East Anglia* (October 1858), p. 3
— Anon., 'The London Journals', *Irish Times*, 3 June 1861, p. 4
— Anon., 'The Lord Chief Baron's Law of Lunacy', *Fraser's Magazine* (October 1849), pp. 365-73
— Anon., 'Lord Dufferin's Yacht Voyage', *Dublin University Magazine* (December 1857), pp. 723-31
— Anon., '*A Lost Name.* By J. S. Le Fanu. Bentley', *Examiner*, 30 May 1868, pp. 342-3
— Anon., 'Love's Fits and Fevers', *Temple Bar*, 26 May 1869, pp. 213-23
— Anon., 'Lunatic Asylums in Ireland', *Irish Times*, 2 September 1865, p. 2
— Anon., 'Lunatic Asylums (Ireland)', *Irish Times*, 21 September 1859, p. 4
— Anon., 'A Mad World', *Examiner*, 10 November 1860, p. 707
— Anon., 'The Madhouse of Charenton', *Irish Times*, 15 March 1870, p. 2
— Anon., 'Madmen of Letters', *Dublin University Magazine* (September 1865), pp. 276-86
— Anon., 'The Magazines', *Literary Gazette*, 7 January 1860, p. 28
— Anon., 'The Manifold Phases of Spiritualism', *Spiritual Magazine* (February 1860), pp. 49-56
— Anon., 'Maryborough District Lunatic Asylum', *Irish Times*, 13 October 1860, p. 3
— Anon., 'Medical Annotations: The Brothers Davenport', *Lancet*, 8 October 1864, pp. 418-20
— Anon., 'Mental Epidemics', *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* (April 1862), pp. 490-505
— Anon., 'Mental Evolution in Animals', *Saturday Review*, 19 January 1884, pp. 88-9
— Anon., 'The Millennial Reign of Christ: Being an Exposition of the Prophecies of the Old and New Testaments Relating to the Conversion and Restoration of the Jews to the Promised Land; and the Millennial Reign of Christ', *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, (June 1852), pp. 599-600
— Anon., 'Miscellaneous News', *Examiner*, 28 July 1860, p. 476
— Anon., 'Modern Eccentrics', *Temple Bar* (July 1866), pp. 562-76
— Anon., 'Modern Scepticism', *Dublin University Magazine* (May 1865), pp. 589-600
— Anon., 'Moral Consequences of Spiritualism', *Spiritual Magazine* (September 1860), pp. 403-4
— Anon., 'More Ghosts: Old and New', *Dublin University Magazine* (October 1868), pp. 394-407
— Anon., 'Mr Bull's Somnambulist', *Household Words*, 25 November 1854, pp. 337-9
— Anon., 'Mr George Combe and his Phrenology', *Rambler*, No. 10 (December 1858), pp. 373-88
— Anon., 'Mr Home and Spiritualism', *Irish Times*, 14 January 1864, p. 4
— Anon., 'Mr Le Fanu's New Novel', *Dublin University Magazine* (February 1871), pp. 235-40
— Anon., 'Mr Le Fanu's New Novel', *Spectator*, 2 October 1869, pp. 1157-8
— Anon., 'Mr Robert Browning on Spiritualism', *Spiritual Magazine* (July 1864), pp. 310-7
— Anon., 'The Mystery at Bantry Hall – Advertisement', *Irish Times*, 30 September 1861, p. 3
— Anon., 'The Nature of the Intercourse between the Soul and the Body', *Christian Remembrancer* (January 1833), pp. 8-15
— Anon., 'A New Natural Hypothesis', *Spiritual Magazine* (February 1862), pp. 92-4
— Anon., 'New Novels', *Athenaeum*, 12 March 1864, pp. 371-2

— Anon., 'New Novels', *Athenaeum*, 7 January 1865, pp. 16-7
— Anon., 'New Novels', *Athenaeum*, 9 May 1868, p. 657
— Anon., 'New Novels', *Athenaeum*, 7 November 1868, pp. 598-9
— Anon., 'New Novels', *Examiner*, 4 February 1871, pp. 130-1
— Anon., 'The New Year', *Spiritual Magazine* (January 1861), p. 39
— Anon., 'A Night at Lord Rosse's Telescope', *Irish Times*, 8 January 1834, p. 3
— Anon., 'Notices', *Journal of Science and Art*, 28 April 1855, p. 265
— Anon., 'Nottidge v. Prince', *The Times*, 5 June 1860, p. 12
— Anon., 'Nottidge v. Prince', *The Times*, 6 June 1860, p. 11
— Anon., 'Nottidge v. Prince – Judgement', *The Times*, 26 July 1860, p. 10
— Anon., 'Of the Nightmare', *Dublin University Magazine* (January 1845), pp. 32-40
— Anon., 'Novels of the Week', *Athenaeum*, 6 July 1872, pp. 13-5
— Anon., 'Novels of the Week', *Athenaeum*, 24 May1873, pp. 659-60
— Anon., 'Novels of the Week', *Athenaeum*, 15 May 1880, pp. 630-1
— Anon., 'The Old Couple Homeward Bound', *Spiritual Magazine* (September 1861), pp. 415-6
— Anon., 'Our Literary Table', *Athenaeum*, 13 April 1850, p. 396
— Anon., 'Outlines of *Ten Years of Investigations into the Phenomena of Modern Spiritualism*', *Spiritual Magazine* (June 1862), pp. 284-5
— Anon., 'Over the River', *Spiritual Magazine* (August 1862), p. 375
— Anon., 'Pagan Relics and Fairy Lore in a County of the Pale', *Dublin University Magazine* (February 1862), pp. 239-47
— Anon. 'Paracelsus and the Revival of Science in the Sixteenth Century', *Dublin University Magazine* (July 1866), pp. 3-24
— Anon., 'The Penitent Forgiven', *Spiritual Magazine* (April 1860), p. 192
— Anon., 'The Phantom House', *Dublin University Magazine* (April 1965), pp. 458-62
— Anon., 'Phases of Physiognomy', *Dublin University Magazine* (October 1866), pp. 466-80
— Anon., 'Phrenology', *Dublin University Magazine* (August 1864), pp. 158-60
— Anon., 'The Poems of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu', *Bookman*, 10 August 1896, pp. 150-1
— Anon., 'The Poems of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu', *Spectator*, 26 June 1897, p. 897
— Anon., 'Political Prophecies', *Saturday Review*, 11 September 1858, pp. 253-4
— Anon., 'Premonitions of the Impending Doom of the Papacy, Derived from a Critical Examination of the Chief Prophecies Relating to Antichrist and Attested to a Certain Extent by Roman Catholic Authorities', *Journal of Sacred Literature and Biblical Records* (April 1856), pp. 216-7
— Anon., 'Presbyterian Young Men's Association', *Irish Times*, 29 May 1863, p. 3
— Anon., 'Pritchard's Ghost', *Irish Times*, 29 September 1865, p. 4
— Anon., 'Private Correspondence', *Irish Times*, 1 November 1859, p. 2
— Anon., 'Prophecies for 1861', *Irish Times*, 7 January 1861, p. 4.
— Anon., 'Prophecies for 1868', *Judy*, 18 November 1867, p. 108
— Anon., 'Prophecies for the Coming Year', *Musical World*, 17 December 1853, p. 797
— Anon., 'Public Amusements', *Irish Times*, 18 April 1860, p. 2
— Anon., 'Punch Again, and Mr Dickens', *Spiritual Magazine* (August 1860), p. 384
— Anon., 'Punch's Cartoon of the Spirit Hand. Illustrated by the Past and Present', *Spiritual Magazine* (June 1860), pp. 241-8
— Anon., 'The Purcell Papers', *Saturday Review*, 19 June 1880, pp. 802-3
— Anon., 'The Purcell Papers', *Spectator*, 31 July 1880
— Anon., 'The Queen's Royal Theatre', *Irish Times*, 23 April 1860, p. 1
— Anon., 'The Queen's Royal Theatre', *Irish Times*, 13 March 1863, p. 1
— Anon., 'Queen's Theatre', *Irish Times*, 19 April 1860, p. 2

— Anon., 'The Questioning of Paddy Mullowney's Ghost', *Dublin University Magazine* (July 1869), pp. 50-6
— Anon., 'The Religious Revival', *Saturday Review*, 24 March 1860, pp. 374-5
— Anon., 'A Remarkable Poem', *Spiritual Magazine* (April 1861), pp. 187-8
— Anon., 'A Remnant of Olden Days or the Powers of a White Witch', *Irish Times*, 23 August 1866, p. 4
— Anon., 'Review of The History of the Supernatural, in All Ages and Nations, and in all Churches, Christian and Pagan: Demonstrating a Universal Faith', *Athenaeum*, 28 February 1863, pp. 288-90
— Anon., 'The Revolution in East and West', *Dublin University Magazine* (August 1861), pp. 251-6
— Anon., 'Richmond Lunatic Asylum', *Irish Times*, 1 August 1862, p. 3
— Anon., 'Richmond Lunatic Asylum', *Irish Times*, 18 September 1868, p. 2
— Anon., 'Rope-Dancing and its Victims', *Irish Times*, 20 August 1862, p. 4
— Anon., 'Rotundo', *Irish Times*, 18 January 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Rotundo, Dublin', *Irish Times*, 17 May 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Royal Marylebone Theatre', *The Times*, 18 May 1854, p. 8
— Anon., 'Royal Victoria Theatre', *The Times*, 20 November 1841, p. 4
— Anon., 'Sceptical and Critical Mr Bull', *All the Year Round*, 6 May 1865, pp. 357-60
— Anon., 'Science', *Westminster Review* (July 1857), pp. 259-77
— Anon., 'The Science and Traditions of the Supernatural', *Dublin University Magazine* (June 1863), pp. 687-703
— Anon., 'A Second Sitting with the Brothers Davenport', *Lancet* (October 1864), pp. 500-1
— Anon., 'Sensation! A Satire', *Dublin University Magazine* (January 1864), pp. 86-9
— Anon., 'Sensation Novels', *Medical Critic and Psychological Journal*, Vol. 3 (July 1863), pp. 513-9
— Anon., 'Seven Years' Writing', *London Review*, 27 February 1869, pp. 204-5
— Anon., 'Shocking Tragedy in Sussex', *Irish Times*, 21 December 1860, p. 4
— Anon., 'Short Stories', *Athenaeum*, 16 February 1895, pp. 214-5
— Anon., 'Sleep', *Spiritual Magazine* (January 1862), pp. 30-5
— Anon., 'The Slowness of Belief in a Spiritual World', *Spiritual Magazine* (September 1860), p. 432
— Anon., 'A Somerset Witch', *Irish Times*, 19 August 1867, p. 3
— Anon., 'The Song of the Survivor', *Spiritual Magazine* (January 1860), p. 10
— Anon., 'Specimen of a Lunatic Commissioner', *Examiner*, 30 June 1849, p. 403
— Anon., 'Spirit and Spirit-Rapping', *Westminster Review* (January 1858), pp. 29-66
— Anon., 'Spirit Rapping', *London Review and Weekly Journal of Politics, Literature, Art, and Society*, 1 March 1862, pp. 206-7
— Anon., 'Spirit-Rapping Unmasked', *Irish Times*, 21 December 1860, p. 4
— Anon., 'Spiritual Humbug Exposed – The Davenport Brothers', *Irish Times*, 6 October 1864, p. 4
— Anon., 'The Spiritual Manifestations', *Irish Times*, 22 October 1864, p. 3
— Anon., 'Spiritual Séance at the Tuileries', *Irish Times*, 30 December 1862, p. 3
— Anon., 'The Spiritual Sight of Animals', *Spiritual Magazine* (August 1861), pp. 352-3
— Anon., 'Spiritualism', *Dublin University Magazine* (July 1862), pp. 3-13
— Anon., 'Spiritualism', *Irish Times*, 6 January 1866, p. 2
— Anon., 'Spiritualism in the Church of England', *Spiritual Magazine* (May 1860), pp. 210-19
— Anon., 'Spiritualism and Mesmerism', *Irish Times*, 29 August 1863, p. 3
— Anon., 'Spiritualism – Dr Lynn's Performance', *Irish Times*, 1 November 1865, p. 4
— Anon., 'Spiritual Wives', *Dublin University Magazine* (March 1868), pp. 261-7

— Anon., 'Stranger than Fiction', *The Cornhill Magazine* (August 1860), pp. 211-24
— Anon., 'Supernatural Logic and Grammar', *Saturday Review*, 14 June 1862, pp. 692-3
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 14 June 1833, p. 5
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 17 June 1833, p. 2
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 19 June 1833, p. 4
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 24 June 1833, p. 4
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 1 July 1833, p. 2
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 4 July 1833, p. 2
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 10 July 1833, p. 6
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 22 July 1833, p. 2
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 24 July 1833, p. 3
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 1 August 1833, p. 2
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 5 August 1833, p. 2
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 17 August 1833, p. 4
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 26 August 1833, p. 2
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 2 September 1833, p. 2
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 9 September 1833, p. 2
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 7 October 1833, p. 2
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 7 October 1833, p. 3
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 25 November 1833, p. 2
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 27 December 1833, p. 3
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 29 January 1835, p. 4
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 20 July 1835, p. 2
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 8 September 1836, p. 2
— Anon., 'Surrey Theatre', *The Times*, 6 November 1847, p. 4
— Anon., 'Swedenborg and his Opinions', *Sharpe's London Journal* (March 1849), pp. 152-6
— Anon., 'Swedenborgiana', *National Review* (April 1858), pp. 336-59
— Anon., 'The Swedenborgians', *Newcastle Magazine* (April 1822), pp. 185-91
— Anon., 'Swindling on a Small, not Swindling on a Large Scale', *Examiner*, 28 July 1860, pp. 467
— Anon., 'A Table-Rapping Story', *Irish Times*, 16 October 1963, p. 3
— Anon., 'Taxation of the City', *Irish Times*, 14 February 1861, p. 3
— Anon., 'Tennyson and Browning', *Eclectic Review*, No. 7 (October 1864), pp. 361-89
— Anon., 'The Theatres', *Irish Times*, 21 October 1861, p. 2
— Anon., 'The Theatres', *Irish Times*, 13 March 1863, p. 2
— Anon., 'The Theatres', *Irish Times*, 14 March 1863, p. 2
— Anon., 'A Third Evening with the Witchfinders', *Dublin University Magazine* (April 1848), pp. 440-55
— Anon., 'The Treatment of the Insane', *Household Worlds*, 6 September 1851, pp. 572-6
— Anon., 'Treatment of the Insane', *Quiver* (December 1868), pp. 170-2
— Anon., '*Uncle Silas*', *Reader*, 14 January 1865, pp. 36-7
— Anon., '*Uncle Silas*', *Saturday Review*, 4 February 1865, pp. 145-6
— Anon., '*Uncle Silas*', *Theatre*, 1 March 1893, pp. 163-4
— Anon., '*Uncle Silas: a Tale of Bartram-Haugh*', *Examiner*, 24 December 1864, p. 824
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 5 April 1859, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 23 April 1859, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 6 July 1859, p. 3
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 11 August 1859, p. 4
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 23 August 1859, p. 4
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 12 December 1859, p. 2

— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 15 December 1859, p. 3
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 7 February 1860, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 15 February 1860, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 31 March 1860, p. 4
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 22 May1860, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 15 June 1860, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 20 June 1860, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 15 October 1860, p. 3
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 23 October 1860, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 29 October 1860, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 31 October 1860, p. 3
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 9 November 1860, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 4 January 1861, p. 4
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 19 January 1861, p. 3
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 9 February 1861, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 5 August 1861, p. 4
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 23 August 1861, p. 4
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 22 October 1861, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 9 June 1862, p. 3
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 1 November 1862, p. 3
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 10 December 1862, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 8 January 1863, p. 3
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 12 January 1863, p. 4
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 29 May 1863, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 29 April 1864, p. 3
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 11 June 1864, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 14 June 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 16 June 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 17 June 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 18 June 1864, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 20 June 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 22 June 1864, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 25 June 1864, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 5 July 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 30 July 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 26 August 1864, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 29 August 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 1 September 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 2 September 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 5 September 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 6 September 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 17 September 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 21 September 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 22 September 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 30 September 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 1 October 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 3 October 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 5 October 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 8 October 1864, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 14 October 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 15 October 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 17 October 1864, p. 1

— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 18 October 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 19 October 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 21 October 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 25 October 1864, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 27 October 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 28 October 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 29 October 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 1 November 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 3 November 1864, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 7 November 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 8 November 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 9 November 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 12 November 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 17 November 1864, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 21 November 1864, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 25 November 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 26 November 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 28 November 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 29 November 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 30 November 1864, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 1 December 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 2 December 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 3 December 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 5 December 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 10 December 1864, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 14 December 1864, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 29 December 1864, p. 3
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 13 January 1865, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 23 January 1865, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 27 January 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 28 January 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 1 February 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 4 February 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 9 February 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 11 February 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 13 February 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 23 February 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 24 February 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 25 February 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 28 February 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 20 March 1865, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 17 April 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 21 April 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 29 April 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 2 May 1865, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 13 May 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 22 May 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 19 June 1865, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 21 June 1865, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 7 July 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 8 July 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 10 July 1865, p. 1

— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 28 July 1865, p. 3
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 29 July 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 1 August 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 2 August 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 13 September 1865, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 14 September 1865, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 19 September 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 23 September 1865, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 27 September 1865, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 29 September 1865, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 30 September 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 2 October 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 3 October 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 4 October 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 5 October 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 7 October 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 9 October 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 10 October 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 16 October 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 25 October 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 25 October 1865, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 25 October 1865, p. 3
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 26 October 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 27 October 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 28 October 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 1 November 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 2 November 1865, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 3 November 1865, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 13 November 1865, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 18 November 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 25 November 1865, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 8 January 1866, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 12 January 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 13 January 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 15 January 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 17 January 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 19 January 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 3 February 1866, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 9 February 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 10 February 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 13 February 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 21 February 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 22 February 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 27 February 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 28 February 1866, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 1 March 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 14 March 1866, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 22 March 1866, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 23 March 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 24 March 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 27 March 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 31 March 1866, p. 3

— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 4 May 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 10 May 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 14 May 1866, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 15 May 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 17 May 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 23 May 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 24 May 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 30 May 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 14 June 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 27 June 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 29 June 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 13 July 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 11 August 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 14 August 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 20 August 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 21 August 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 11 September 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 24 September 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 28 September 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 9 October 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 15 October 1866, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 17 October 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 24 October 1866, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 13 November 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 22 November 1866, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 10 January 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 17 January 1867, p. 3
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 10 April 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 24 April 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 12 June 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 18 June 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 29 June 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 16 July 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 18 July 1867, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 27 July 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 2 August 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 5 August 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 16 August 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 17 August 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 27 August 1867, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 30 August 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 31 August 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 3 September 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 14 September 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 17 September 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 18 September 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 23 September 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 26 September 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 27 September 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 7 October 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 12 October 1867, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 16 October 1867, p. 1

— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 28 October 1867, p. 1
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 11 November 1867, p. 2
— Anon., 'Untitled', *Spiritual Magazine* (January 1861), p. 38
— Anon., 'Vice-Chancellor's Courts, May 7', *The Times*, 9 May 1859, p. 11
— Anon., 'Vice-Chancellor's Court, June 7', *The Times*, 8 June 1861, p. 11
— Anon., 'A Visit to the Montrose Asylum', *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal*, 10 October 1835, pp. 293-5
— Anon., 'The Week', *Examiner*, 28 July 1860, p. 468
— Anon., 'What is Woman's Work', *Saturday Review*, 15 February 1868, pp. 197-8
— Anon., 'The Windham Lunacy Commission', *Irish Times*, 15 January 1862, p. 4
— Anon., 'The Witch of Kilkenny', *Dublin University Magazine* (May 1846), pp. 535-42
— Anon., 'Witchcraft in the Nineteenth Century', *All the Year Round*, 6 November 1869, pp. 541-4
— Anon., 'Womanhood and its Mission', *Dublin University Magazine* (June 1858), pp. 696-711
— Anon., 'Workhouse Visiting Society', *Irish Times*, 7 June 1859, p. 4
— Anon., 'The Worshippers of Mercury; or, Paracelsus and His Brother Alchymists', *Dublin University Magazine* (April 1858), pp. 419-30
— Anon., '*Wylder's Hand*', *London Review*, 2 April 1864, p. 370
— Anon., '*The Wyvern Mystery*', *Saturday Review*, 2 October 1869, pp. 457-8
— Anon., '*The Wyvern Mystery. A Novel.* By J. S. Le Fanu', *Athenaeum*, 25 September 1869, pp. 398-9
— Anon., '*The Wyvern Mystery*. A Novel. By J. S. Le Fanu', *Examiner*, 23 October 1869, p. 679
— Anon., 'Zadkiel's Almanac', *Irish Times*, 1 July 1863, p. 3
— Anon. 'Zadkiel's Prophecies', *Irish Times*, 11 January 1861, p. 3
— A., W., 'A Self-Researcher', *Dublin University Magazine* (November 1860), pp. 551-9
— Anstruther, Ian, *Coventry Patmore's Angel: a Study of Coventry Patmore, His Wife Emily, and "The Angel in the House"* (London: Haggerston P., 1992)
— Appignanesi, Lisa, Mad, *Bad and Sad: a History of Women and the Mind Doctors From 1800 to the Present* (London: Virago, 2009)
— Arlidge, John Thomas, 'Foreign Psychological Literature', *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, No. 10 (1864), pp. 416-29
_____ 'Psychological Excerpta from Foreigh Journals', *The Journal of Psychiatry*, No. 8 (1862), pp. 250-62
— Armitt, Lucie, *Theorising the Fantastic* (London: Arnold, 1996)
— Armstrong, John, 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 19 January 1866, p. 4
— Armstrong, Nancy, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: a Political History of the Novel* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987)
— Atticus, 'Philosophy', *Critic* (August 1856), pp. 388-90
_____ 'Philosophy', *Critic* (December 1857), pp. 558-9
— Auerbach, Nina, *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1995)
_____ *Woman and the Demon: the Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1982)
— Bann, Jennifer, 'Ghostly Hands and Ghostly Agency: the Changing Figure of the Nineteenth-Century Specter', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (Summer 2009), pp. 663-85
— Barrow, Logie, *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plebeian 1850-1910* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986)
— Beaty, Jerome, *Misreading Jane Eyre: a Postformalist Paradigm* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1996)

— Beaumont, John, *An Historical, Physiological and Theological Treatise of Spirits: Apparitions, Witchcrafts, and Other Magical Practices. Containing an Account of the Genii ... With a Refutation of Dr. Bekker's World Bewitch'd; and Other Authors* (London: Browne & Co., 1705)
— Bede, Cuthbert, 'Ruling the Planets: an April Essay on Certain All-Fools Observances in the Year 1863', *The Rose, the Shamrock and the Thistle*, No. 3 (May 1863), pp. 79-90
— Begnal, Micheal H., *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1971)
— Bell, Rev. John, *An Essay on Somnambulism or Sleep-Walking Produced by Animal Electricity or Magnetism, as well as by Sympathy* (Dublin: Butler, 1888)
— Bender, John, *Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth Century England* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1987)
— Benjamin, Marina, *A Question of Identity: Women, Science, and Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ.: Rutgers University Press, 1993)
— Bergquist, Lars, *Swedenborg's Secret: the Meaning and Significance of the Word of God, the Life of the Angels and Service to God: a Biography* (London: The Swedenborg Society, 2005)
— Bierre de Boismont, A., 'Mind and Body', *Saturday Review*, 8 October 1859, pp. 424-6
— Blanford, G. Fielding, 'The Lumleian Lectures of the Diagnosis, Prognosis, and Prophylaxis of Insanity', *The British Medical Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1790, 20 April 1895, pp. 855-9
— Blum, Deborah, *Ghost Hunters: William James and the Search for Scientific Proof of Life After Death* (London: Century, 2007)
— Bolt, David, 'Castrating Depictions of Visual Impairment: The Literary Backdrop to Eugenics', *The Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness* (March 2005), pp. 141-50
_____ 'The Blindman in the Classic: Feminisms, Ocularcentrism and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*', *Textual Practice*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (2008), pp. 269-89
— Botting, Fred, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1999)
— Boucicault, Dion, 'The Davenport Brothers', *Irish Times*, 14 October 1864, p. 4
— Boyce, George, *Nineteenth Century Ireland* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2005)
— Braddon, Mary Elizabeth, *Aurora Floyd* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
_____ *Lady Audley's Secret* (London: Penguin, 2010)
— Brady, M. C., 'General Orders in Lunacy', *Irish Times*, 14 February 1860, p. 3
— Brandon, Ruth, *The Spiritualists: the Passion for the Occult in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983)
— Brantlinger, Patrick, 'What is "Sensational" About the "Sensation Novel"?', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (June 1982), pp. 1-28
— Brett, Raymond Laurence, *Faith and Doubt: Religion and Secularization in Literature from Wordsworth to Larkin* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1997)
— Brewer, John, *Sentimental Murder: Love and Madness in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005)
— Brierre de Boismont, Alexandre J. F., *Des hallucinations, ou histoire raisonnée des apparitions, des visions, des songes, de l'extase, du magnétisme et du somnambulisme* (Paris: Germer Baillière, 1862)
— Briggs, Julia, *Night Visitors: the Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story* (London: Faber, 1997)
— Bristowe, H. C., 'Lunacy in Private Practice', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, No. 45 (1899), pp. 66-9
— Broadwell, Elizabeth P., 'The Veil Image in Ann Radcliffe's "The Italian"', *South Atlantic Bulletin*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (November 1975), pp. 76-87

— Brockman, H. J., 'The Brompton Oratory', *Irish Times*, 16 January 1865, p. 3
— Brontë, Charlotte, *Jane Eyre* (London: Penguin, 1994)
_____ *Villette* (Chatham: Wordsworth, 1993)
— Brotherton, Edward, 'Spiritualism, Swedenborg, and the New Church; an Examination of Claims', *Spiritual Magazine* (November 1860), pp. 526-7
— Brown, Nicola, Burdett, Caroline, and Thurschwell, Pamela, eds, *The Victorian Supernatural* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)
— Browne, Nelson, *Sheridan Le Fanu* (London, A. Barker, 1951)
— Browne, J. Crichton, 'Psychical Diseases of Early Life', *The Journal of Mental Science*, No. 6 (1860), pp. 284-320
— Browne, W. A. F., 'The Moral Treatment of the Insane; a Lecture', *The Journal of Medical Science*, No. 10 (1864), pp. 309-37
— Browning, Robert, *Robert Browning: the Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)
— Bucknill, John Charles, 'Observations of the Grounds of Belief in Medical Evidence Touching Insanity', *The British Medical Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 840, 3 February 1877, pp. 125-7
— Bulwer-Lytton, Lord Edward, *The Haunter and the Haunters* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, 1925)
_____ *Lucretia; or, the Children of Night*, 2 Vols (Leipzig: Bernh. Tauchnitz Jun., 1846)
_____ *A Strange Story* (Boston: Gardner A. Fuller, 1862)
_____ *Zanoni* (London: Saunders & Otley, 1842)
— Bulwer-Lytton, Rosina, *A Blighted Life* (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1994)
— Burlet, Philibert, *Du spiritisme considéré comme cause d'aliénation mentale* (Lyon: Richard et Co., 1863)
_____ 'On Spiritualism as a Cause of Insanity', *Medical Critic and Psychological Journal*, Vol. 3 (July 1863), pp. 542-54
— Bynum, William F., 'Psychiatry in its Historical Context', M. Shepherd and O. L. Zangwill, eds, *Handbook of Psychiatry: General Psychopathology*, 5 Vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), Vol. 1, pp. 11-38
_____ Porter, Roy, and Shepherd, Michael, eds, *Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry*, 2 Vols (London: Routledge, 2004)
— Byrne, Katherine, *Tuberculosis and the Victorian Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)
— C., 'The Rev. Dr Maitland on Spiritualism', *Spiritual Magazine* (January 1860), pp. 22-3
— Cahalan, James M., *'Great Hatred, Little Room': the Irish Historical Novel* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1983)
— Caldicott, C.E.J., J-P. Pittion, H. Gough, eds, *The Huguenots and Ireland: Anatomy of an Emigration [Proceedings of the Dublin Colloquium on the Huguenot Refuge in Ireland 1685-1985, 9th-12th April, 1985, Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin]* (Dun Laoghaire: Glendale Press, 1987)
— Calmet, Augustin, *The Phantom World: Concerning Apparitions and Vampires* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions in association with the Folklore Society, 2001)
— Carnell, Jennifer, *The Literary Lives of Mary Elizabeth Braddon: a Study of Her Life and Work* (Hastings: Sensation Press, 2000)
— Carroll, Noël, *The Philosophy of Horror: or, Paradoxes of the Heart* (London: Routledge, 1990)
— Carlyle, Thomas, *Sartor Resartus*, (London: Chapman & Hall, 1869)
— Carver, Stephen, 'The Lancashire Witches', *Literary Encyclopedia*, www.litencyc.com [accessed January 2013]

— Castle, Terry, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)
_____ 'Phantasmagoria: Spectral Technology and the Metaphorics of Modern Reverie', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Autumn 1988), pp. 26-61
— Chadwick, Owen, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977)
— Chedzoy, Alan, *A Scandalous Woman: the Story of Caroline Norton* (London: Allison & Busby, 1992)
— Chew, Samuel Claggett, Altick, Richard Daniel, eds, *A Literary History of England: the Nineteenth Century and After (1789-1939)* (London: Routledge, 1967)
— Christensen Nelson, Carolyn, ed., *A New Woman Reader: Fiction, Articles, and Drama of the 1890s* (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview, 2001)
— Clarke, Liam, *Fiction's Madness* (Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books, 2009)
— Cockshut, Anthony Oliver John, *The Unbelievers: English Agnostic Thought 1840-1890* (London: Collins, 1964)
— Collins, Wilkie, *Armadale* (London: Penguin, 2004)
_____ *The Woman in White* (London: Penguin, 2003)
— Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur, *The History of Spiritualism*, 2 Vols (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2009)
— Conolly, John, *An Inquiry Concerning the Indications of Insanity* (London: John Taylor, 1830)
— Conrad O'Briain, Helen, Stevens, Julie Anne, eds, *The Ghost Story from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century: a Ghostly Genre* (Dublin: Four Court Press, 2010)
— Cooper, Robert, 'The Challenge to the Brother Davenport', *Irish Times*, 10 January 1866, p. 3
_____ 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 13 January 1866, p. 3
— Cooter, Roger, *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science: Phrenology and the Organization of Consent in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984)
— Cornwell, Neil, *The Literary Fantastic: from Gothic to Postmodernism* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990)
— Cottom, Daniel, *Abyss of Reason: Cultural Movements, Revelations, and Betrayals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991)
_____'On the Dignity of Tables', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Summer 1988), pp. 765-83
— Coughlan, Patricia, 'Doubles, Shadows, Sedan-Chairs, and the Past: the "Ghosts Stories" of J. S. Le Fanu', Allen, Michael, Wilcox, Angela, eds, *Critical Approaches to Anglo-Irish Literature* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble, 1989), pp. 17-39
— Cox, Joseph Mason, *Practical Observations on Insanity* (London: Baldwin, 1806)
— Craig, Randall, *The Narratives of Caroline Norton* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)
— Crawford, Gary William, *J. Sheridan Le Fanu: a Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, Conn.: London: Greenwood Press, 1995)
_____ and Showers, Brian J., eds, *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu: a Concise Bibliography* (Dublin: The Swan River Press, 2011)
_____ Rockhill, Jim, and Showers, Brian J., eds, *Reflections in a Glass Darkly: Essays on J. Sheridan Le Fanu* (New York: Hippocampus Press: 2011)
— Creed, Barbara, *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1993)
— Crosbie, J. G., 'The Recent Lunacy Case', *Irish Times*, 24 May 1860, p. 3
— Crow, Louisa, 'An Hour with the Dead', *Spiritual Magazine* (November 1861), p. 524
— Crossan, Greg, 'Proverbs and Proverbial Sayings in J. S. Le Fanu's *The Wyvern*

Mystery', *Notes and Queries*, No. 52 (2005), 481-5
— Crowe, Catherine, *The Night Side of Nature: an Investigation of the Paranormal and the Unexplained* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 2000)
— Cruickshank, George, Cruickshank, Robert, eds, *The Gentleman's Pocket Magazine* (New York: Joseph Robins, 1828)
— Cunningham, Gail, *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel* (London: Macmillan, 1978)
— Curl, James Stevens, *The Victorian Celebration of Death* (Stroud: Sutton, 2000)
— Curry, Patrick, *A Confusion of Prophets: Victorian and Edwardian Astrology* (London: Collins & Brown, 1992)
— Custred, Glynn, 'Sheridan Le Fanu, the Supernatural and the Sounds of the Irish Countryman', *Neohelicon*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2009), pp. 215-36
— D. H., 'Suggested by Lines in *Punch* on Macaulay in Westminster Abbey', *The Spiritual Magazine* (May 1860), p. 221
— Dagg, T. S. C., *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-1873): a Memorial Discourse Delivered in the Chapel of Trinity College, Dublin, on Trinity Monday, 13th June, 1949* (Dublin: Dublin University Press, Trinity College, 1949)
— Dantan, Jean-Pierre, *Musée Dantan: galerie des charges et croquis des célébrités de l'époque* (Paris: H. Delloye, 1839)
— Darwin, Erasmus, *Zoonomia, or the Laws of Organic Life*, 2 Vols (London: Edward Earle, 1818)
— Davenport Brothers, 'The Davenport Brothers', *Irish Times*, 20 January 1866, p. 3
— David, Deirdre, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel* (Cambridge; New York, N. Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2001)
— Davies, James, 'New Novels', *Academy*, 3 July 1880, pp. 5-6
— Davies, Owen, 'Charmers and Charming in England and Wales from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century', *Folklore*, Vol. 109 (1998), pp. 41-53
_____ ed., *Ghosts: a Social History,* Vol. 3 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010)
_____ ed. *Ghosts: a Social History,* Vol. 4 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010)
_____ *Murder, Magic, Madness: the Victorian Trial of Dove and the Wizard* (Harlow: Pearson/Longman, c2005)
_____ 'Newspapers and the Popular Belief in Witchcraft and Magic in the Modern Period', *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (April 1998), pp. 139-65
_____ 'The Nightmare Experience, Sleep Paralysis, and Witchcraft Accusations', *Folklore*, Vol. 114, No. 2 (2003), pp. 181-203
_____ 'Urbanization and the Decline of Witchcraft: an Examination of London', *The Journal of Social History*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Spring 1997), pp. 597-617
_____ *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture 1736-1951* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999)
— Davis, Andrew Jackson, 'The Principles of Nature: Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind', *Edinburgh Review* (October 1865), pp. 565-604
— De Blécourt, Willen, 'Witch Doctors, Soothsayers and Priests. On Cunning Folk in European Historiography and Tradition', *Social History*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (October 1994), pp. 285-303
— De Bragelonne, A., 'A Visit to the Lunatic Asylum at Auxerre', *Reynold's Miscellany of Romance, General Literature, Science, and Art*, 11 October 1856, pp. 165-7
— D'Esterre-Keeling, Elsa, 'The Poems of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu', *Academy*, 29 August 1896, pp. 140-1
— De Gasparin, Agénor, *Les tables tournantes* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1888)
— De Morgan, Sophia Elizabeth, *From Matter to Spirit: the Result of Ten Years' Experience in Spirit Manifestations* (London: Routledge/Thoemmes, 2000)
— Dentith, Simon, *Parody* (London: Routledge, 2000)

— Devlin, Judith, *The Superstitious Mind: French Peasants and the Supernatural in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987)
— Dickens, Charles, 'A Curious Dance Round a Curious Tree', *Household Words*, 17 January 1852, pp. 385-9
_____ *David Copperfield* (London: Penguin, 2012)
_____ *Great Expectations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
_____ 'Happy Idiots', *All the Year Round*, 23 July 1864, pp. 564-9
_____ 'The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices', *Household Words*, 3 October 1857, pp. 313-9
_____ 'The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices', *Household Words*, 10 October 1857, pp. 337-49
_____ 'The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices', *Household Words*, 17 October 1857, pp. 361-7
_____ 'The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices', *Household Words*, 24 October 1857, pp. 385-93
_____ 'The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices', *Household Words*, 31 October 1857, pp. 409-16
_____ 'M. D. and M.A.D.', *All the Year Round*, 22 February 1862, pp. 510-3
_____ *Mugby Junction: the Christmas Numbers of All the Year Round* (London: Chapman and Hall Ltd., 1866)
_____ 'Note', *All the Year Round*, 26 December 1863, p. 419
_____ 'The Spirit Business', *Household Words*, 7 May 1853, pp. 217-20
_____ 'Well-Authenticated Rappings', *Household Words*, 20 February 1858, pp. 217-20
_____ 'Where We Stopped Growing', *Household Words*, 1 January 1853, pp. 361-3
— Dickerson, Vanessa D., *Victorian Ghosts in the Noontide: Women's Writers and the Supernatural* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996)
— Dijkstra, Bram, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986)
— Diskin, Patrick, 'Poe, Le Fanu and the Sealed Room Mystery', *Notes and Queries*, No. 13 (September 1966), pp. 337-9
— Doane, Mary Ann, Mellencamp, Patricia, Williams, Linda, eds, *Re-Vision: Essays in Feminist Film Criticism* (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, c1984)
— Donaldson, Elizabeth, 'The Corpus of the Madwoman: Toward a Feminist Disability Studies Theory of Embodiment and Mental Illness', *NWSA Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Fall, 2002), pp. 99-120
— Doten, Lizzie, 'The Kingdom', *Spiritual Magazine* (March 1862), pp. 134-6
— Douglas, Mary, *Implicit Meaning: Selected Essays in Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 1999)
— Downes. R. James, 'The Challenge to the Davenport Brothers', *Irish Times*, 10 January 1866, p. 3
— Downey, Edmund, *Twenty Years Ago: a Book of Anecdote Illustrating Literary Life in London* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1905)
— Drummond, W. H., 'Compassion', *Spiritual Magazine* (December 1861), p. 539
— Duggan, John, 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 20 January 1866, p. 3
— Eagleton, Terry, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1995)
— Edens, Walter E., *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu: a Minor Victorian and His Publisher* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Illinois, 1963)
— Edmonds, Judge John Worth, 'The End and Aim of Spiritual Intercourse', *Spiritual Magazine* (January 1860), pp. 2-4
— Eliot, George, *The Lifted Veil; Brother Jacob* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

— Ellis, Havelock, 'Retrospect of Criminal Anthropology', *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, No. 37 (1891), pp. 299-309
_____ 'The Study of the Criminal', *The Journal of Mental Science*, No. 36 (1890), pp. 1-15
— Ellis, Kate Ferguson, *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989)
— Ellis, Stewart Marsh, 'Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu', *Bookman* (October 1916), pp. 15-21
_____ *Mainly Victorian* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1925)
_____ *Wilkie Collins, Le Fanu and Others* (London: Constable, 1951)
— Ellis, William Charles, *A Treatise on the Nature, Symptoms, Causes, and Treatment of Insanity* (London: Samuel Holdsworth, Amen Corner, 1838)
— Esquirol, Étienne, *Des maladies mentales: considérées sous les rapports medical, hygiénique et medico-légal*, 2 Vols (Paris: J. B. Baillière, 1838)
— Faraday, Michael, 'Experimental Investigation of Table-Moving', *Athenaeum*, 2 July 1853, pp. 801-3
— F. S., 'Divination, Witchcraft, and Mesmerism', *Dublin University Magazine* (December 1851), pp. 687-707
— Farrall, J. J., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 19 January 1866, p. 4
— Felman, Shoshana, *La folie et la chose littéraire* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978)
— Figuier, Louis, 'The Devils of Loudun', *National Review* (July 1860), pp. 70-93
— Finnane, Mark, *Insanity and the Insane in Post-Famine Ireland* (London: Croom Helm, c1981)
— Fitzgerald, T. C., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 19 January 1866, p. 4
— Flanders, Judith, *The Invention of Murder: How the Victorians Revelled in Death and Detection and Created Modern Crime* (London: Harper Press, 2011)
— Fleenor, Juliann, *The Female Gothic* (Montreal: Eden Press, 1983)
— Forrest, G. Andrew, 'Religious Controversy within the French Protestant Community in Dublin, 1682-1716: An Historical Critique', Kevin Herlihy, ed., *Irish Dissenting Tradition*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1995), pp. 96-110
— Fosgate, Blanchard, *Sleep Psychologically Considered with Reference to Sensation and Memory* (Charlestown: Bibliobazaar, 2009)
— Foster, Robert Fitzroy, *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (London: A. Lane, 1993)
_____ *Words Alone: Yeats and his Inheritances* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)
— Foucault, Michel, *History of Madness* (London: Routledge, 2006)
_____ *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977)
_____ *Madness and Civilization: a History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2001)
— Freud, Sigmund, *The Uncanny* (London: Penguin, 2003)
— Fulford, William, 'To My Love in Heaven', *Spiritual Magazine* (October 1863), p. 479
_____ 'The Spirit-World', *Spiritual Magazine* (April 1863), pp. 178-9
— Furneaux, Holly, 'Gendered Cover-Ups: Live Burial, Social Death, and Couverture in Mary Braddon's Fiction', *Philological Quarterly*, Vol. 84, No. 4 (2005), pp. 425-49
— Gall, F. J., 'A Letter From Charles Villier to George Cuvier, Member of the National Institute of France, on the New Theory of the Brain, as the Immediate Organ of the Intellectual and Moral Faculties', *Edinburgh Review* (April 1803), pp. 147-60
— Garber, Frederick, 'Self, Society, Value, and the Romantic Hero', *Comparative Literatures*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Autumn 1967), pp. 321-33

— Garstin, John Ribton, *Memorandum as to the Terms on Which Government Loans Are Made for Public Works in Ireland, and Particularly for the Building etc., of Lunatic Asylums: ... Submitted ... to the Royal Commission ... 1895* (Dublin: Richmond District Asylum, 1895)
— Gaskell, Elizabeth G., *Cranford & Other Stories* (London: Wordsworth, 2006)
— Gettmann, Royal A., *A Victorian Publisher: a Study of the Bentley Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960)
— Gibbons, Luke, *Gaelic Gothic: Race, Colonization, and Irish Culture* (Galway: Arlen House, 2004)
_____ 'Some Hysterical Hatred: History, Hysteria and the Literary Revival', *Irish University Review*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (1997), pp. 7-23
— Gibson, Matthew, *The Fantastic and European Gothic: History, Literature and the French Revolution* (Cardiff : University of Wales Press, 2013)
— Gilbert, Pamela K., ed., *A Companion to Sensation Fiction* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley & Sons, 2011)
_____ *Disease, Desire, and the Body in Victorian Women's Popular Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)
— Gilbert, Sandra M., Gubar, Susan, eds, *The Madwoman in the Attic: the Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven, Conn., London : Yale University Press, 2000)
_____ *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: the Tradition in English* (New York; London: Norton & Co., 1985)
— Gilman, Sander L., *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1895)
— Gilmour, Robin, *The Victorian Period: the Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature, 1830-1890* (London: Longman, 1993)
— Girard, Gaïd, *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu: une écriture fantastique* (Paris: Champion, 2005)
— Gitter, Elisabeth G., 'The Blind Daughter in Charles Dickens's "Cricket on the Hearth"', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (Autumn, 1999), pp. 675-89
— Godfrey, Rev. N. S., 'Table-Turning; the Devil's Modern Master-Piece, Being the Result of a Course of Experiments', *The Journal of Sacred Literature* (October 1853), pp. 223-7
— Graham, Dr, 'The Shower Bath', *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal*, 21 August 1847, p. 128
— Gregory, William, 'German Popular Prophecies', *Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine* (May 1850), pp. 560-72
— Griffiths, A. Phillips, ed., *Philosophy and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984)
— Guerlac, Suzanne, 'Phantom Rights: Conversations Beyond the Abyss (Hugo, Blanchot)', *Diacritics*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Autumn 2000), pp. 73-89
— Gully, J. M., 'Dr Gully's Facts', *Spiritual Magazine* (February 1861), pp. 63-6
— Guppy, Samuel, *Mary Jane; or, Spiritualism Chemically Explained with Spirit Drawings. Also Essays by and Ideas {Perhaps Erroneous} of, 'A Child at School'* (London: John King, 1863)
— H. W., 'The Blot upon the Brain. Studies in History and Psychology: by William W. Ireland. M. D. Edin.', *The Journal of Mental Science*, No. 31 (1886), pp. 540-9
— Hall, Thomas, 'In the Matter of John Gustave Crosbie, a Lunatic', *Irish Times*, 13 August 1859, p. 3
— Hall, Wayne E., *Dialogues in the Margin: a Study of the Dublin University Magazine* (Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 2000)

— Hancock, Thos., 'On Lunatic Asylums', *Belfast Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 4, No. 22, 31 May 1810, pp. 344-7
— Hannigan, D. F., 'Sex in Fiction', *Westminster Review* (January 1895), pp. 616-25
— Harris, Sally C., 'A Realistic Fairy Tale: *The Wyvern Mystery*', *Le Fanu Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (May 2008), www.lefanustudies.com [accessed April 2012]
— Harrison, John F. C., *The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism 1780-1850* (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979)
— Harrison, Kimberly, Fantina, Richard, eds, *Victorian Sensations: Essays on a Scandalous Genre* (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 2006)
— Haslam, Richard, 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach', *Irish Gothic and Horror Studies*, No. 2 (March 2007) http://irishgothichorrorjournal.homestead.com [accessed February 2009]
_____ 'Theory, Empiricism, and 'Providential Hermeneutics': Reading and Misreading Sheridan Le Fanu's 'Carmilla and 'Schalken the Painter', *Papers on Language & Literature: a Quarterly Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (Autumn 2011), pp. 339-62
— Hasler, Christopher, Kaczmarcyck, John, *Emanuel Swedenborg* (London: The Swedenborg Society, 1982)
— Heller, Tamar, *Dead Secrets: Wilkie Collins and the Female Gothic* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1992)
— Hillouse, 'Evening Music of the Angels', *Spiritual Magazine* (May 1860), p. 227
— Hills, Matt, *The Pleasures of Horror* (New York: Continuum, c2005)
— Hoffmann, Ernst T. W., *Weird Tales*, 2 Vols (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1885)
— Hogle, Jerrold E., *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)
_____ *The Undergrounds of The Phantom of the Opera: Sublimation and the Gothic in Leroux's Novel and its Progeny* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002)
— Hopkins, Paul, 'An Unknown Annotated Copy of the Tenants of Malory: J. S. Le Fanu Regrets Some Anti-Semitic Expressions', *Long Room*, No. 30, (Dublin: Trinity College, Dublin, 1985), pp. 32-5
— Horner, Avril, Zlosnik, Sue, *Gothic and the Comic Turn* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)
— House, Madeline, Storey, Graham, Tillotson, Kathleen, eds, *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12 Vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), Vol. 12
— Howard, Michael, *The Occult Conspiracy* (London: Rider, 1989)
— Howe, Ellic, *Astrology and the Third Reich: a Historical Study of Astrological Beliefs in Western Europe Since 1700 and in Hitler's Germany 1933-45* (Wellingborough: Aquarian, 1984)
— Howitt, William, 'The Davenport and the Press', *Irish Times*, 1 December 1864, p. 4
_____ 'Spiritualism v. Pseudo-Swedenborgianism', *Spiritual Magazine* (March 1861), pp. 134-41
_____ 'War on Spiritualism Proclaimed by the Pope. Proceedings in France', *Spiritual Magazine* (April 1864), pp. 145-52
— Hughes, Kathryn, *The Victorian Governess* (London: Hambledon Press, 1993)
— Hughes, William, *Beyond Dracula: Bram Stoker's Fiction and its Cultural Context* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000)
— Hurley, Kelly, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
— Hutton, Ronald, *The Triumph of the Moon: a History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

— Ingelbien, Raphael, 'Gothic Genealogies: Dracula, Bowen's Court, and Anglo-Irish Psychology', *EHL*, Vol. 70, No. 4 (Winter 2003), pp. 1089-1105
— Jacks, Lawrence Pearsall, *Mad Shepherds, and Other Human Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979)
— Jackson, Rosemary, *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion* (London: Routledge, 2003)
— James, Henry, 'Miss Braddon', *Notes and Reviews* (Cambridge, Mass.: Dunster House, 1921)
— Johnston, Edith, *Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1974)
— Jones, Darryl, *Horror: a Thematic History in Fiction and Film* (London: Arnold, 2002)
— Juster, Susanna, *Doomsayers: Anglo-American Prophecy in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press; Bristol: University Presses Marketing, 2006)
— Kenton, Edna, 'A Forgotten Creator of Ghosts: Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Possible Inspirer of the Brontës', *Bookman*, No. 69 (July 1929), pp. 528-34
— Killeen, Jarlath, *Gothic Ireland* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, c2005)
_____ *History of the Gothic: Gothic Literature 1825-1914* (Cardiff: Wales University Press, 2009)
_____ 'Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction', *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies,* No. 1 (October 2006) http://irishgothichorrorjournal.homestead.com [accessed February 2009]
_____ 'Irish Gothic Revisited', *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies,* No. 4 (June 2008) http://irishgothichorrorjournal.homestead.com [accessed February 2009]
— *King James' Bible*, http://kingjamesbibleonline.org [accessed April 2011].
— Koger, Grove, 'Review of The Rose and the Key', *Reprint Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (1984)
— Kristeva, Julia, *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982)
— L., G., 'Mother Shipton: Her Life and Prophecies', *Once a Week*, 3 August 1861, pp. 158-62
— L. J. W. T., 'Dickens's Hypnotic Powers: an Interesting Unpublished Letter', *Dickensian*, Vol. 28, No. 224 (Autumn 1932), pp. 322-4
— Lachman, Gary, *Into the Interior: Discovering Swedenborg* (London: The Swedenborg Society, 2006)
— Larcom, T. A., 'Transmission of Lunatics to Asylums', *Irish Times*, 5 March 1868, p. 4
— Latham, R. G., 'Passages in Irish Ethnology – Relation of the Kelts and Northmen', *Dublin University Magazine* (March 1858), pp. 293-8
_____ 'Passages in Irish Ethnology – Relation of the Irish to the Northmen', *Dublin University Magazine* (January 1858), pp. 90-6
— Lauder, Edmond S., 'The Davenport Brothers', *Irish Times*, 18 January 1866, p. 3
_____ 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 20 January 1866, p. 3
— Laurent, Émile, *Les habitués des prisons de Paris: étude d'anthrolopogie et de psychologie criminelle* (Paris: G. Masson, 1980)
— Laycock, Thomas, *A Treatise on the Nervous Diseases of Women* (London: Longman & Co., 1840)
— Le Fanu, Thomas Philip, *Memoir of the Le Fanu Family* (Manchester: privately printed, Sherratt and Hughes, 1924)
— Le Fanu, William, 'Notebooks of Sheridan Le Fanu', *Long Room*, No. 14-5, (Dublin: Trinity College, Dublin, 1976-77), pp. 37-40
— Le Fanu, William Richard, *Diaries*, MS 7686-7734, Manuscript Department, Trinity College, Dublin

_____ *Seventy Years of Irish Life, Being Anecdotes and Reminiscences* (London: Edward Arnold, 1893)
— Legrand du Saulle, Henri, *La folie devant les tribunaux* (Paris: F. Savy, 1864)
— Lennard, David J., *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (London: Verso, 1995)
— Lewis, Joseph, 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 19 January 1866, p. 4
— Lightman, Bernard, 'Victorian Science and Religion: Discordant Harmonies', *Osiris*, 2nd Series, Vol. 16 (2001), pp. 343-66
— Linton, E. L., 'The Girl of the Period', *Saturday Review*, 14 March 1868, pp. 339-40
— Lord, J. R., 'Hypnotism', *Journal of Mental Science*, No. 61 (1915), pp. 134-8
— Lovesey, Oliver, ed., *Victorian Social Activists' Novels*, 4 Vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), Vol. 1
— Lowe, Louisa, *The Bastille of England, or the Lunacy Laws at Work* (London: Crookenden and Co., 1883)
— Lozes, Jean, 'Un choix raisonné: le mode fantastique chez Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, *Études Irlandaises*, No. 9 (1984), pp. 57-66
_____ ed., 'Fragment d'un Journal Intime de Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu: Document Inédit en Date du 18 Mai 1858', *Caliban*, (Annales de l'Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail), new series, Vol. 10, No. 1 (1974), pp. 153-64
_____ ''The Mysterious Lodger', ou Le Fanu a cœur ouvert', *Études Irlandaises*, No. 22.1 (June 1987), pp. 53-8
— Luckhurst, Roger, ed., *Late Victorian Gothic Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
— Ludlow, Johnny, 'Reality or Delusion', *Argosy* (December 1868), pp. 522-35
— Lurie, Susan, 'The Construction of the "Castrated Woman" in Psychoanalysis and Cinema', *Discourse*, No. 4 (1981-1982), pp. 52-74
— Lynn, Hugh Simmons, 'The Davenport Brothers and Dr Lynn', *Irish Times*, 10 January 1866, p. 3
_____'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 6 November 1865, p. 3
— M., K. R. H., 'How Somnambulism is Treated by Learned Professors', *Spiritual Magazine* (May 1863), pp. 228-31
— MacPherson, John, 'The Presidential Address on Conceptions of Insanity and their Practical Results, delivered at the Sixty-Ninth Annual Meeting of the Medico-Psychological Association, held in Edinburgh on July 21st and 22nd, 1910', *The Journal of Mental Science*, No. 56 (1910), pp. 589-612
— Madoc-Jones, Enid, 'Sheridan Le Fanu and North Wales', *Anglo-Welsh Review* (1968), pp. 167-73
— Manara, Frank, 'Une eau fantastique: lecture de 'The Haunted Baronet' de Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu', *Études Irlandaises*, No. 29.2 (Autumn 2004), pp. 121-34
— Mandelbaum, Allen, *The Aeneid of Virgil: a Verse Translation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, c1981)
— Mangham, Andrew, 'Buried Alive: the Gothic Awakening of Taphephobia', *The Journal of Literature and Science*, Vol 3, No. 1 (2010), pp. 10-22
_____ *Violent Women and Sensation Fiction: Crime, Medicine and Victorian Popular Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)
— Mares, Frederick H., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 19 January 1866, p. 4
— Marshall, Peter, *World Astrology: the Astrologer's Quest to Understand the Human Character* (London: Macmillan, 2004)
— Martin, Philip W., *Mad Women in Romantic Writing* (Brighton: Harvester, 1987)
— Matlock, Jann, 'Ghostly Politics', *Diatrics*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Autumn 2000), pp. 53-71
— Maturin, Charles Robert, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (London: Penguin, 2012)

— Maudsley, Henry, *Body and Mind: an Inquiry into Their Connection and Mutual Influence, Specially in Reference to Mental Disorders* (London: Macmillan & Co, 1873)
_____ 'The Correlation of Mental and Physical Force; or, Man a Part of Nature', *The Journal of Mental Science*, No. 6 (1859), pp. 50-78
_____ *Responsibility in Mental Disease* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1898)
_____ 'Sex in Mind and in Education', *Fortnightly Review*, No. 21, pp. 466-83
— Maury, L. F. Alfred, 'La magie et l'astrologie dans l'antiquité et au Moyen Age: étude sur les superstitions païennes qui se sont perpetuées jusqu'à nos jours', *Westminster Review* (January 1864), pp. 48-88
— Mayo, Robert, 'The Contemporaneity of the Lyrical Ballads', *PMLA*, Vol. 69, No. 3 (June 1954), pp. 486-522
— McCormack, W. J., *Dissolute Characters: Irish Literary History Through Balzac, Sheridan Le Fanu, Yeats and Bowen* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993)
_____ 'Irish Gothic and After (1820-1945)', Seamus Deane, ed., *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing,* 5 Vols (Derry: Field Day Publications, 1991), Vol. 2, pp. 831-949
_____ 'J. S. Le Fanu; Letters to William Blackwood and John Foster', *Long Room,* No. 8 (Dublin: Trinity College, Dublin, 1973), pp. 29-36
_____ 'J. Sheridan Le Fanu's 'Richard Marston' (1848): the History of an Anglo-Irish Text', Barker, Francis, ed., *1848: The Sociology of Literature* (Essex: University of Essex, 1978), pp. 107-25
_____ ''Never put your name to an anonymous letter': Serial reading in the *Dublin University Magazine*, 1861 to 1869', *Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol. 26 (1996), pp. 100-15
_____ *Sheridan Le Fanu* (Oxford: Sutton Publishing, 1997)
_____ 'Sheridan Le Fanu's Uncle Silas: An Anglo-Irish Provenance', *Long Room*, No. 4, (Dublin: Trinity College, Dublin, 1971), pp. 19-24
_____ 'Swedenborgianism as Structure in Le Fanu's Uncle Silas', *Long Room*, No. 6 (Dublin: Trinity College, Dublin, 1972), pp. 23-9
— McCorristine, Shane, 'Ghost Hands, Hands of Glory, and Manumission in the Fiction of Sheridan Le Fanu', *Irish Studies Review*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (2009), pp. 275-95
— McIntosh, W. Carmicheal, 'Notes on Asylums and the Insane in France and Belgium: (July and August 1861)', *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, No. 8 (1862), pp. 1-36
_____ 'On Some of the Varieties of Morbid Impulse and Perverted Instinct', *The British Journal of Psychology*, No. 11 (1866), pp. 512-33
— Melville, Herman, *The Apple-Tree Table and Other Stories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1922)
— Menzies, Robin P. D., Fedoroff, J. Paul, Green, Christopher M., Isaacson, Kari, 'Prediction of Dangerous Behaviour in Male Erotomania', *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, No. 166 (1995), pp. 529-36
— Mckle, W. Julius, 'The Varieties of General Paralysis of the Insane', *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, No. 24 (1878), pp. 24-49
— Mighall, Robert, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)
— Milbank, Alison, *Daughters of the House: Modes of the Gothic in Victorian Fiction* (London: Macmillan P., 1992)
— Mill, John Stuart, *On Liberty and The Subjection of Women* (London: Penguin, 2006)
— Millard, Robert. 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 20 January 1866, p. 3
— Milner, Max, *Le Diable dans la literature française de Cazotte à Baudelaire 1772-1861*, 2 Vols (Paris: Corti, 1971)
— Monnier, Henry, *La réligion des imbéciles* (Paris: Dentu, 1865)

— Morison, Alexander, *The Physiognomy of Mental Diseases* (London: Longman & Co., 1843)
— Morley, Henry, 'The Cure of Sick Minds', *Household Words*, 2 April 1859, pp. 415-9
_____ 'Grand Jury Powers', *Household Words*, 16 May 1857, pp. 457-63
_____ 'The Star of Bethlehem', *Household Words*, 15 August 1857, pp. 144-50
_____ 'Things Within Dr Conolly's Remembrance', *Household Words*, 28 November 1857, pp. 518-23
— Mowatt, J. A., 'The Davenport Brothers and Dr Lynn', *Irish Times*, 12 January 1866, p. 3
_____ 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 19 January 1866, p. 4
— Moynahan, Julian, *Anglo-Irish: The Literary Imagination in a Hyphenated Culture* (Princeton; NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994)
— Mulvey, Laura, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)
— Mulvey-Roberts, Marie, 'Fame, Notoriety and Madness: Edward Bulwer-Lytton Paying the Price of Greatness', *Critical Survey*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2001), pp. 115-35
— Murray, I. J., 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 26 January 1866, p. 3
— Myers, Frederic W. H., *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (Norwich: Pilgrim Books, 1992)
— Neale, John Mason, *The Unseen World: Communications with it, Real or Imaginary* (London: James Burns, 1847)
— Newbolt, Peter, *William Tinsley (1831-1902): 'Speculative Publisher'* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001)
— Noble, James Ashcroft, 'The Fiction of Sexuality', *Contemporary Review* (April 1895), pp. 490-9
— Norton, Caroline, 'Mr Le Fanu's Novels. *A Lost Name*', *The Times*, 21 September 1868, p. 4
— Ogawa, Kimiyo, ''Strangers within our Gates' in Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas*', *Journal of Irish Studies*, Vol. 22 (2007), pp. 16-23
— Oliver, William H., *Prophets and Millennialists: the Uses of Biblical Prophecy in England from the 1790s to the 1840s* (Auckland: Auckland University Press; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978)
— O'Malley, Patrick, *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)
— Oppenheim, Janet, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)
_____ *"Shattered Nerves": Doctors, Patients, and Depression in Victorian England* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991)
— Orel, Harold, '"Rigid Adherence to Facts": Le Fanu's *In a Glass Darkly* (1872)', *Eire-Ireland*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (1985), pp. 65-88
— Owen, Alex, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (Chicago, Ill.; London: University of Chicago Press, 2004)
— P., C., 'Emanuel Swedenborg', *Fraser's Magazine* (February 1857), pp. 174-82
— Paget, George E., 'Dr. Paget on the Study of Natural Science as a Branch of Higher Education', *The Journal of Mental Science*, No. 11 (1865), pp. 140-4
— Parker, Patricia, Hartman, Geoffrey, eds, *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory* (London: Meuthen, 1985)
— Parry-Jones, William Llywelyn, *The Trade in Lunacy: a Study of Private Madhouses in England in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1971)
— Penzoldt, Peter, *The Supernatural in Fiction* (New York: Humanities Press, 1965)
— Peters, Laura, *Orphan Texts: Victorian Orphans, Culture and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000)

— Peterson, Audrey, *Victorian Masters of Mystery: from Wilkie Collins to Conan Doyle* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1984)
— Podmore, Frank, *Modern Spiritualism: a History and a Criticism*, 2 Vols (London: Routledge/Thoemmes, 2000)
— Pole, David, *Aesthetics, Forms and Emotions* (London: Duckworth, 1983)
— Porter, Roy, *Madness: a Brief History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)
_____ *Madmen: a Social History of Madhouses, Mad Doctors & Lunatics* (Stroud: Tempus, 2004)
_____ *Mind-Forg'd Manacles* (London: Penguin, 1987)
_____ and Nicholson, Helen, eds, *Women, Madness, and Spiritualism: Georgina Weldon and Louisa Lowe*, 2 Vols (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), Vol. 1
_____ and Wright, David, *The Confinement of the Insane: International Perspectives, 1800-1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)
— Prest, Thomas Preskett, *The String of Pearls: a Romance* (London: Penguin, 2010)
— Pritchard, James Cowles, 'Somnambulism and Animal Magnetism', *The Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine*, 4 Vols (London: Marchant, 1835), Vol. 4, pp. 21-39
_____ *A Treatise on Insanity and Other Disorders Affecting the Mind* (London: Sherwood & Co., 1835)
— Pritchett, V. S., *The Living Novel* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960)
— Pumfrey, Stephen, Rossi, Paolo L., Slawinski, Maurice, eds, *Science, Culture and Popular Belief in Renaissance Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991)
— Punter, David, ed., *A Companion to the Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000)
_____ ''A Foot is What Fits the Shoe': Disability, the Gothic and Prosthesis', *Gothic Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2000), pp. 39-46
_____ *The Literature of Terror: a History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* (London: Longman, 1996)
_____ *Gothic Pathologies: the Text, the Body and the Law* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2004)
_____ and Byron, Glennis, *The Gothic* (Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004)
— Pykett, Lyn, *The 'Improper' Feminine: the Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992)
— Radcliffe, Ann, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (London: Penguin, 2010)
— Rafroidi, Patrick, Brown, Terence, eds, *The Irish Short Story* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1979)
— Rance, Nicholas, *Wilkie Collins and Other Sensation Novelists: Walking the Moral Hospital* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991)
— Rashid, S., 'Political Economy in the *Dublin University Magazine*, 1833-40', *Long Room*, No. 14-15 (1977), pp. 16-9
— Reade, Charles, *Hard Cash: a Matter-of-Fact Romance*, 3 Vols (London: Sampson Low & Marston, 1863)
— Reynolds, Joseph, *Grangegorman: Psychiatric Care in Dublin Since 1815* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1992)
— Rigney, Barbara Hill, *Madness and Sexual Politics in the Feminist Novel Studies in Brontë, Woolf, Lessing and Atwood* (Madison; London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978)
— Robbins, Ruth, Wolfreys, Julian, eds, *Victorian Gothic: Literary and Cultural Manifestations in the Nineteenth Century* (Basinstokes: Palgrave, 2000)
— Robertson, Charles Lockhart, '*The Homeopathic Principle applied to Insanity: a Proposal to Treat Lunacy by Spiritualism* by James John Garth Wilkinson, M. D. (London: 1857)', *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, No. 4 (April 1858), pp. 360-96 http://bjp.rcpsych.org [accessed February 2011]

— Robinson, James, 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 18 January 1866, p. 3
_____ 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 20 January 1866, p. 3
— Rose, Margaret Anne, *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)
— Rosenberg, Charles E., 'Medicine and Community in Victorian Britain', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Spring 1981), pp. 677-84
— Royle, Nicholas, *The Uncanny: an Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003)
— S., 'Dr Bailey on Spiritualism', *Spiritual Magazine* (February 1861), pp. 70-3
— S. T., 'By the Shore', *Spiritual Magazine* (October 1862), p. 473
_____ 'A Midnight Vision', *Spiritual Magazine* (May 1863), p. 239
_____ 'The Orphan Child's Wish', *Spiritual Magazine* (June 1860), p. 285
_____ 'In Reply to a Sceptical Friend', *Spiritual Magazine* (August 1863), p. 380
_____ 'Spiritualism and Popular Novelists', *Spiritual Magazine* (July 1861), pp. 308-22
_____ 'Where are the Dead?' *Spiritual Magazine* (December 1862), p. 549
— Sadleir, Michael, *XIX Century Fiction: a Bibliographical Record Based on His Own Collection* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951)
— Sage, Victor, *The Gothick Novel: a Casebook,* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990)
_____ *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1988)
_____ Introduction to *Uncle Silas* (London: Penguin), pp. ix-xxxv
_____ *Le Fanu's Gothic: The Rhetoric of Darkness* (Houndsmill; Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)
_____ Smith, Allan Lloyd, eds, *Gothick: Origins and Innovations* (Amsterdam; Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994)
_____ *Modern Gothic: a Reader* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996)
— Saintsbury, George, 'Degeneration', *Bookman*, 8 April 1895, pp. 13-4
— Sampson, George, *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970)
— Sankey, W. H. O., 'On Melancholia', *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, No. 9 (1863), pp. 173-96
— Savage, George H., *Insanity and Allied Neuroses Practical and Clinical* (London: Cassell & Co., 1893)
— Schneider, Steven, 'Monsters as (Uncanny) Metaphors: Freud, Lakoff, and the Representation of Monstrosity in Cinematic Horror', *Other Voices*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (January 1999), www.othervoices.org [accessed February 2013].
— Schwieso, Joshua John, ''Religious Fanaticism' and Wrongful Confinement in Victorian England: the Affair of Louisa Nottidge', *The Society for the Social History of Medicine* (1996), pp. 159-74
— Scott, Sir Walter, *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2001)
— Scull, Andrew, ed., *Madhouses, Mad-doctors, and Madmen: the Social History of Psychiatry in the Victorian Era* (London: Athlone, 1981)
_____ 'Psychiatry and Social Control in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', *History of Psychiatry*, No. 2 (1991), pp. 149-69
— Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (London: Methuen, 1986)
— Seymour, St John Drelincourt, *Irish Witchcraft and Demonology* (London: Portman, 1989)
— Shires, Linda M., ed., *Rewriting the Victorians: Theory, History, and the Politics of Gender* (London: Routledge, 1992)

— Shortt, Samuel Edward Doyle, ed., *Victorian Lunacy: Richard M. Bucke and the Practice of Late Nineteenth-Century Psychiatry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986)
— Showalter, Elaine, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and the English Culture 1830-1980* (London: Virago, 1987)
_____ 'On Hysterical Narrative', *Narrative*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (January, 1993), pp. 24-35
_____ *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* (London: Picador, 1998)
— Shuttleworth, Sally, *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
— Signer, Stephen F., 'Declérambault's Concept of Erotomania and its Place in His Thought', *History of Psychiatry*, No. 2 (1991), pp. 409-17
— Silver, Anna Krugovoy, *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)
— Skae, David, 'The Morisonian Lectures on Insanity for 1873', *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, No. 19 (1873), pp. 340-55
— Slater, Michael, *Charles Dickens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011)
_____ *The Great Charles Dickens Scandal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012)
— Smajic, Srdjan, *Ghost-seers, Detectives, and Spiritualists: Theories of Vision in Victorian Literature and Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)
— Small, Helen, *Love's Madness: Medicine, the Novel, and Female Insanity, 1800-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996)
— Smith, Andrew, Hughes, William, eds, *The Victorian Gothic: an Edinburgh Companion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012)
— Smith, Margaret, ed., *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë: with a Selection of Letters by Family and Friends*, 3 Vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)
— Smith, Roger, *Trial by Medicine: Insanity and Responsibility in Victorian Trials* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, c1981)
— Stanley, Michael, ed., *Emanuel Swedenborg: Essential Readings* (Wellingborough: Thorsons, 1988)
— Stern, Rebecca F., 'Gothic Light: Vision and Visibility in the Victorian Novel', *South Central Review*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Winter, 1994), pp. 26-39
— Stewart, Bruce, ed., *That Other World: the Supernatural and the Fantastic in Irish Literature and its Contexts*, 2 Vols (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1998)
— Stoddar, Helen, 'The Precautions of Nervous People are Infectious: Sheridan Le Fanu's Symptomatic Gothic', *Modern Language Review*, Vol. 86, No. 1 (January 1991), pp. 19-34
— Stoker, Bram, *Dracula* (London: Penguin, 2003)
— Strahan, Richard, 'Untitled', *Irish Times*, 20 January 1866, p. 3
— Strauss, Jonathan, 'After Death', *Diacritics*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Autumn 2000), pp. 90-104
— Sullivan, Jack, *Elegant Nightmares: the English Ghost Story from Le Fanu to Blackwood* (Athens; Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1980)
— Sullivan, Kevin, 'Sheridan Le Fanu: The Purcell Papers, 1838-40', *Irish University Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Spring 1972), pp. 5-19
— Summers, Montague, ed., *The Supernatural Omnibus* (London: Bracken, 1994)
— Sutherland, John, 'Dickens, Reade and *Hard Cash*', *Dickensian*, Vol. 81, Part I, No. 405 (1985), pp. 5-12
_____ *Victorian Fiction: Writers, Publishers, Readers* (Bakingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)
— Swafford, James, 'Tradition and Guilt in Le Fanu's 'Schalken the Painter'', *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (January 1989), pp. 48-59

— Swedenborg, Emanuel, *Introducing the New Jerusalem* (London: The Swedenborg Society, 2003)
_____ *Heaven and Its Wonders and Hell – From Things Heard and Seen*, (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1946)
— Sweet, Rosemary, *Cities and the Grand Tour: the British in Italy, c.1690-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)
— Sword, Helen, 'Necrobibliography: Books in the Spirit World', *Modern Language Quarter* (March 1999), pp. 85-112
— Taylor, Jenny Bourne, *In the Secret Theatre of Home: Wilkie Collins, Sensation Narrative, and Nineteenth Century Psychology* (London: Routledge, 1988)
— Tennyson, Lord Alfred, *Works* (London: Macmillan, 1908)
— Tearle, Oliver, 'Reality or Delusion in 'The Spirit's Whisper'', *Le Fanu's Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (May 2010), www.lefanustudies.com [accessed August 2012]
— Thackeray, William Makepeace, *Vanity Fair* (London: Penguin, 2012)
— Thomas, Keith, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Belief in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (London: Penguin, 1991)
— Thomas, Ronald R., '*The Moonstone*, Detective Fiction and Forensic Science', in Jenny Bourne Traynor, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Wilkie Collins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)
— Thurschwell, Pamela, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001)
— Tisdall, Charles Edward, 'The Davenport Brothers', *Irish Times*, 19 January1866, p. 4
_____ 'The Davenport Séances', *Irish Times*, 13 January 1866, p. 3
— Todorov, Tzvetan, *The Fantastic: a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1973)
— Tomalin, Claire, *Charles Dickens: a Life* (London: Penguin, 2012)
— Tomalque, M., 'Extraordinary Manifestations', *Irish Times*, 8 October 1864, p. 3
_____ 'Extraordinary Manifestations', *Irish Times*, 12 October 1864, p. 4
— Torgerson, Beth, *Reading the Brontë Body: Disease, Desire, and the Constraints of Culture* (New York; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)
— Trodd, Anthea, *Domestic Crime in the Victorian Novel* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989)
— Trollope, Anthony, *The Warden* (London: Penguin, 2012)
— Tromp, Marlene, 'Spirited Sexuality: Sex, Marriage, and Victorian Spiritualism', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2003), pp. 67-81
— U. L. A., 'Voices Calling', *Dublin University Magazine* (April 1868), p. 414
— Vandermeersch, Patrick, 'The Victory of Psychiatry over Demonology: the Origin of the Nineteenth-Century Myth', *History of Psychiatry*, No. 2 (1991), pp. 351-63
— VV. AA., *Bennett Papers*, Brotherton Collection MS 19c Bennett, Manuscript Department, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds
— VV. AA., *Dufferin and Ava Papers*, Public Record Office of Norther Ireland, D 1071, D 1231, MIC 22
— VV. AA., *Dictionnaire des sciences medicale*, 58 Vols (Paris: Panckoucke, 1812)
— VV. AA., *Le Fanu Papers*, microfilms, N. 2973-88, P. 2594-609, The National Library of Ireland
— Veeder, William, 'Carmilla: the Arts of Repression', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Summer 1980), pp. 197-223
— Vickery, Amanda, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *Historical Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (June, 1993), pp. 383-414
— Vrettos, Athena, *Somatic Fictions: Imagining Illness in Victorian Culture* (Stanfor, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995)

— Wallace, Diane, Smith, Andrew, eds, *The Female Gothic: New Directions* (Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, c2009)
— Walton, James, *Vision and Vacancy: the Fictions of J. S. Le Fanu* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2007)
_____ 'Vision and Vacancy: 'Schalken the Painter' and Le Fanu's Arts of Darkness', *Papers on Language and Literature*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Autumn 2004), pp. 353-83
— Ward, A. W., Waller, A. R., eds, *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, 8 Vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964-1967), Vol. 8
— Watt, George, *The Fallen Woman in the Nineteenth Century English Novel* (London: Croom Helm; Totowa (N. J.): Barnes & Noble, 1994)
— Watt, Ian, ed., *The Victorian Novel: Modern Essays in Criticism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971)
— Wheeler, Michel, *Heaven, Hell, and the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)
— Willburn, Sarah A., *Possessed Victorians: Extra Spheres in Nineteenth-Century Mystical Writings* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006)
— Winslow, Lyttleton Forbes, *Manual of Lunacy: a Handbook Relating to the Legal Care and Treatment of the Insane in the Public and Private Asylums of Great Britain, Ireland, United States of America, and the Continent* (London: Smith, Elder, 1874)
_____ 'The Plea of Insanity in Criminal Cases', *British and Foreign Review* (July 1843), pp. 152-69
— White, Arnold, 'Efficiency and Vice', *English Review* (May 1916), pp. 446-53
— White, William, 'Emanuel Swedenborg', *Spiritual Magazine* (December 1863), pp. 529-45
— Wilde, Lady Francesca, *Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland*, 2 Vols (Boston: Ticknor & Co., 1887)
— Wilson, Andrew Norman, *God's Funeral* (London: Abacus, 2000)
— Wilson, Crawford, 'Flights to Fairyland', *Dublin University Magazine* (April 1855), pp. 401-8
— Wise, Sarah, *Inconvenient People: Lunacy, Liberty and the Mad-Doctors in Victorian England* (London: The Bodley Head, 2012)
— Wolfreys, Julian, *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002)
— Wood, David, ed., *Derrida: a Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992)
— Wood, Juliette, 'The Celtic Tarot and the Secret Tradition: a Study in Modern Legend Making', *Folklore*, Vol. 109 (1998), pp. 15-24
— Wood, Robin, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, c2003)
— Woodward, Rev. Thomas, 'The Bible History of Satan: is He a Fallen Angel?', *Dublin University Magazine* (April 1859), pp. 421-37
— Wright, Angela, *Gothic Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)
— Zack, Wolfgang, Kosok, Heinz, eds, *Literary Interrelations: Ireland, England and the World*, 3 Vols (Tübingen: G. Narr, 1987)
— Zangwill, I., 'Without Prejudice', *Nash's Pall Mall Magazine*, 3 June 1894, pp. 344-52
— Zeender, Marie-Noëlle, 'Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu and Swedenborg: an Inquiry into the Origin of 'The Mysterious Lodger'', *Études Irlandaises*, No. 5 (1980), pp. 75-89
_____ 'Miroir de l'Âme Irlandaise: aspects du fantastique chez Le Fanu, chez Wilde et chez Stoker, *Études Irlandaises*, No. 9 (1984), pp. 67-80