



Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of English Language and Literature

British Cultural Studies Programme

**REPRESENTATION OF RELIGIOUS TRAUMA IN
JOSEPH SHERIDAN LE FANU'S GOTHIC SHORT STORIES**

Rana ULUSOY

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2025

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ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

The jury finds that Rana ULUSOY has on the date of 19/06/2025 successfully passed the defense examination and approves her Master's Thesis titled "Representation of Religious Trauma in Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's Gothic Short Stories".

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17/07/2025

Rana ULUSOY

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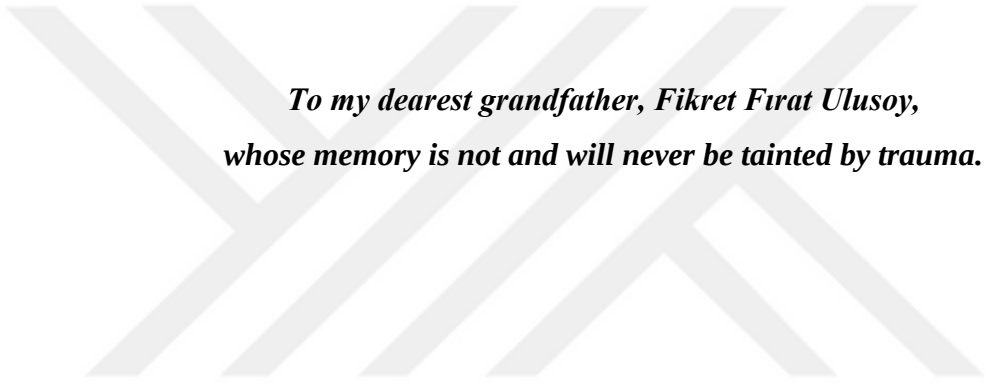
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ETİK BEYAN

Bu alıřmadaki bütn bilgi ve belgeleri akademik kurallar erevesinde elde ettiğimi, görsel, işitsel ve yazılı tüm bilgi ve sonuçları bilimsel ahlak kurallarına uygun olarak sunduğumu, kullandığım verilerde herhangi bir tahrifat yapmadığımı, yararlandığım kaynaklara bilimsel normlara uygun olarak atıfta bulunduğumu, tezimin kaynak gösterilen durumlar dışında özgün olduğunu, **Prof. Dr. Şebnem KAYA** danışmanlığında tarafımdan üretildiğini ve Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Yazım Yönergesine göre yazıldığını beyan ederim.

Rana ULUSOY



*To my dearest grandfather, Fikret Fırat Ulusoy,
whose memory is not and will never be tainted by trauma.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere thanks to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Şebnem Kaya, for her expertise and observations in the development of this study. I would like to extend my gratitude to the distinguished members of the jury, Prof. Dr. Nazan Tutaş, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Alev Karaduman, Assist. Prof. Dr. İmren Yelmiş and Assist. Prof. Dr. Aslı Değirmenci Altın for their insightful advice and constructive feedback that allowed me to shape the final version of my thesis. I would also like to offer my deepest thanks to my professors and lecturers at my department at Hacettepe University, whose vast academic knowledge and sincerity have played a formative role in shaping my academic growth. Additionally, I would like to thank our department's secretary, Meral Elcan, for her constant kindness and gentle support whenever I needed. Their guidance and support have been invaluable for this study.

I would like to express my gratitude also to Michael Grant Kellermeyer and PD Dr. Zoë Lehmann Imfeld for their significant help during my research. Their studies on Sheridan Le Fanu have been a guiding light in my research, and their kind words encouraged me to see the end of my thesis.

In addition, I would like to thank The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) for supporting this study financially with the 2210-A graduate scholarship programme.

My deepest gratitude and heartfelt thanks are reserved for my family, who always believed in and trusted me. I thank my father, Fatih Ulusoy, and my mother, Gülhan Ulusoy, for always having my back, watching out for me and guiding me wisely as I grew up to be the person I am today. I hope you are proud of me. My special thanks to my little sister, Rabianur Ulusoy, for being the joy of my life. I would also like to express my gratitude to my grandmothers, Rabia Ulusoy and Gülay Tortop, for always protecting me with their prayers. Significantly, I thank my older sister, Kübra Güngör, who requested a separate paragraph for herself for the troubles I have put her through for 25 years. I am sorry I cannot afford that, but I appreciate you greatly. While I was trying to give birth to this thesis, you gave birth to a real-life human being, and I think that earns the biggest praise in the whole world. You have pulled through it successfully before me, champ. Therefore, I thank my little nephew Aras Güngör as well, for being the ball of sunshine during my darkest hours. I would also like to thank my relatives, specifically Nur Özer Köroğlu, for their unflinching love and support throughout this journey. I love you all so much.

In the moments between writing my thesis and nearly losing my sanity, it was my friends who held me together and did not allow me to lose myself to hopelessness. From the delusional moments to tear-jerking bonding talks, their sincerity, laughter, ridiculousness, compassion, and adoration allowed me to remain tethered to joy and life, even in the most chaotic hours. I am eternally grateful for their precious existence and indebted to their never-ending support; thus, I would like to express the love I have for them in a few words in no particular order. I want to thank Ezgi Ece Odabaş, my best friend; Dr. Ece Çakır, the sun in my life; Doğa Yalçın, my iconic baby girl; Dilşad Nilsu Güzeler, my precious angel and Dainora Bručaitė, my little nymph. Specifically, I would like to scream my undying gratitude and love for Nur Yağmur Bayat, the gold to my silver. We might have suffered less if we had carried the ring across Mordor... Nevertheless, we succeeded in this odyssey together. Most importantly, I would like to thank Alya Ürkmez, my one and only roommate, as historians will call us. Out of everyone, you are the single person who witnessed my breakdowns, hopelessness and tiredness the most. Yet, every single time, you held my hand and lifted me without any complaint, even though I know I am not the easiest person to live with. Thank you for believing in me and never giving up on me. I am eternally grateful to you for always offering a crying shoulder and the warmest hugs. You make me feel like the luckiest person in the whole world, my ongshimi. Additionally, I would like to thank my other friends and classmates, Canan Uyumaz, Feride Zeynep İçsen, Emre Avcı, Mehmet Utku Çakır and Onur Çifiliz, for their support and encouragement. I love you all with all my heart. Thank you for never allowing me to feel lonely in this journey.

Additionally, I would like to thank the cast of *Critical Role* for introducing me to the fantastic world of *Dungeons & Dragons*, allowing me to enjoy my time with the amazing entertainment they have provided through tears and laughter and the members of *SHINee* and *Monsta X* for giving me the distraction I needed from my studies. I would also like to thank Aneurin Barnard for his portrayal of Richard III and triggering my hyperfixation over history and academics once again. Thank you, sir, for giving me the delusions and willpower to finish this thesis and continue my way in the literary world. In the same manner, I would like to thank the cast of *Interview with the Vampire* for their portrayal of mesmerising vampires and for making me fall in love with the fantastic Gothic world once again.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my children, my cats, Turşu and İrmik, who had no idea about my struggles but still provided me comfort through their unconditional love. I will carry your love in my heart and your bite and scratch marks on my skin for eternity. I love you.

ABSTRACT

ULUSOY, Rana. *Representation of Religious Trauma in Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's Gothic Short Stories*, Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2025.

This thesis explores the representation of religious trauma in the Gothic short stories by Joseph Thomas Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-1873) within the framework of literary trauma theory. Influenced by his Anglo-Irish Protestant upbringing and the fraught religious landscape of nineteenth-century Ireland, Le Fanu constructs narratives that reflect both personal and collective expressions of trauma rooted in religious experience. In these short stories, including “Green Tea” (1872), “The Familiar” (1872), “The Vision of Tom Chuff” (1870), “Squire Toby’s Will” (1868), “Wicked Captain Walshawe, of Wauling” (1864), and “The Last Heir of Castle Connor” (1838), Le Fanu presents supernatural intrusions that unsettle narrative structure, fragment the sense of self, and reveal the lingering effects of faith, guilt, and repression. The haunting figures in these stories function as manifestations of repressed wounds, shaped by religious identity and belief, which emerge as sources of both internal and inherited suffering. The major aim of this thesis is to argue that Le Fanu’s Gothic short stories portray both an individual affliction and a collective experience, shaped by personal belief, cultural inheritance, and the fractured religious landscape of nineteenth-century Ireland. In his short stories, Le Fanu does not present trauma as a simple recollection of past events but engages with it as an ongoing act of remembering, reframing, and reinscribing. The analysis draws on literary trauma theory to examine how supernatural figures such as demonic animals, doppelgängers, and ghostly apparitions illustrate both psychological collapse and the fracturing of identity. Through the use of gothic elements, the short stories are structured to reflect the ongoing effects of trauma, where the influence of religion is expressed through haunting, fragmentation, and emotional unrest.

Keywords

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Gothic Fiction, Short Story, Irish Literature, Literary Trauma Theory, Trauma Studies

ÖZET

ULUSOY, Rana. *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu'nun Gotik Öykülerinde Dini Travma Temsili*, Yüksek Lisans, Ankara, 2025.

Bu tez, Joseph Thomas Sheridan Le Fanu'nun (1814-1873) Gotik kısa öykülerinde dinsel travmanın temsili edebi travma kuramı çerçevesinde incelemektedir. Bir Anglo-İrlandalı Protestan olarak yetiştirilmesi ve on dokuzuncu yüzyıl İrlanda'sının çekişmeli dini ortamından etkilenmesi nedeniyle, Le Fanu öykülerini dinsel deneyimden kaynaklanan hem kişisel hem de toplu travma ifadeleri üzerine inşa eder. “Green Tea” (1872, Yeşil Çay), “The Familiar” (1872, Tanıdık Bir Yüz), “The Vision of Tom Chuff” (1870, Tom Chuff’un Rüyası), “Squire Toby’s Will” (1868, Derebeyi Toby’nin Vasiyeti), “Wicked Captain Walshawe, of Wauling” (1869, Wauling’li Bela Kaptan Walshawe) ve “The Last Heir of Castle Connor” (1838, Connor Kalesi’nin Son Varisi) adlı öykülerinde Le Fanu, anlatı yapısını sarsan, benlik duygusunu parçalayan ve inanç, suçluluk ile bastırılmış duyguların kalıcılığını ortaya koyan doğaüstü müdahaleleri resmeder. Bu öykülerdeki musallat figürler, dinsel kimlik ve inancın şekillendirdiği hem içsel hem de miras edinilmiş yaralar olarak işlev görür. Tezin temel amacı, Le Fanu’nun Gotik öykülerinin kişisel bir rahatsızlık ve kültürel bir deneyim olarak dinsel travmayı, kişisel inanç, kültürel miras ve on dokuzuncu yüzyıl İrlanda'sının parçalanmış dinsel ortamı tarafından biçimlendiği şekliyle ortaya koyduğunu savunmaktır. Le Fanu’nun öykülerinde travma, geçmiş olayların basit bir anlatımı olarak değil, sürekli bir anımsama, yeniden yorumlama ve yeniden yazma süreci olarak ele alınır. Analiz, şeytani hayvanlar, görsel ikizler ve hayaletler gibi doğaüstü figürlerin hem psikolojik çöküşü hem de kimlik parçalanmasını nasıl ortaya koyduğunu inceler. Gotik unsurların kullanımıyla, öyküler travmanın devam eden etkilerini yansıtmak şeklinde yapılandırılmıştır; burada dinin etkisi musallatlık, parçalanma ve duygusal huzursuzluk aracılığıyla ifade bulmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Gotik Kurgu, Öykü, İrlanda Edebiyatı, Edebi Travma Kuramı, Travma Çalışmaları

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INTRODUCTION

I believe in fiction and the power of stories because that way we speak in tongues. We are not silenced. All of us, when in deep trauma, find we hesitate, we stammer; there are long pauses in our speech. The thing is stuck. We get our language back through the language of others. We can turn to the poem. We can open the book. Somebody has been there for us and deep-dived the words.

--Winterson, *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?*

Literature has a profound ability to give voice to what remains unspoken and to offer a form to what resists expression. When experience fractures language and memory, fiction offers a space where hidden wounds find articulation and recognition. This thesis addresses that space, where literature engages with the complexities of faith, fear, fractured identity, and survival within the psychological unrest. To frame this exploration, this study employs the lens of literary trauma theory. Trauma studies is defined by psychological trauma's role in shaping the memory of a subject, individual and cultural identities, and its representation in language. Rooted in interdisciplinary studies, the theory uses ideas and studies from psychology, psychoanalysis, history, and cultural studies to explore how writers incorporate and represent and how readers interpret and empathise with experiences of suffering, loss, and dislocation which are the general causes of psychological trauma. In other words, the causes or triggers of trauma can be classified as "severely disruptive experience[s] that profoundly impacts the self's emotional organisation and perception of the external world" (Balaev, "Trauma Studies" 360). In this sense, trauma studies examine how such experiences influence literature, language, and society by focusing on the psychological, rhetorical, and cultural implications of trauma as well as analysing the portrayal of identity, memory and the psyche that is shaped by traumatic events. Religion, through contemporary studies, has become one of the main sources of trauma, and it is reflected in literature as well. In literature, the Gothic tradition provides a significant literary field to represent the different expressions of trauma. Trauma is often expressed through symbolic structures such as haunting, confinement, silence, and fragmentation. However, the time of religious conflicts and changes in attitude towards religious institutions during the emergence of the genre makes the Gothic tradition important in the representation of different and traumatic impacts of religion.

Accordingly, one of the writers who wrote in the Gothic tradition and incorporated religious trauma in his fiction is Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-1873). His literary works, specifically his short stories, offer compelling examples of this mode by portraying religious trauma as a personal affliction, but also, as an Anglo-Irish Protestant, he situates it within a broader cultural and religious framework. Through haunting figures, psychologically unstable characters, and unreliable narrative structures, Le Fanu explores the fear imposed by religion, spiritual isolation, and feelings of distrust towards religious institutions as personal and collective representations of religious trauma. Using trauma theory, the major aim of this thesis is to argue that Le Fanu's Gothic short stories portray different expressions of religious trauma buried in personal connection to faith and collective religious identity. Drawing inspiration from his personal life and the fraught relationship of Irish people with religion due to sectarian differences, this thesis examines how Le Fanu depicts supernatural entities and events in those works to portray the personal and collective traumatic effects of religion, regarding faith and religious identity.

Though the field of trauma studies emerged in the 1990s, the definition and recognition of trauma from "physical damage to psychical wounding" is rooted in the later nineteenth-century studies of Jean-Martin Charcot, Pierre Janet, Josef Breuer, and Sigmund Freud (Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* 34). The possibility of the psychological effects of a physical accident on a victim was first recognised by the British physician John Erichsen when he was studying railway accidents¹ during the 1860s, and he attributed the traumatic symptoms of the victims to "shock or concussion of the spine" (Leys 3). Yet, it was Hermann Oppenheim who named this condition "traumatic neurosis" and claimed that traumatic experiences caused organic but treatable changes in the brain (Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* 34). Following these studies, French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot studied the relationship between mental illness and trauma by analysing the causes of

¹ Roger Luckhurst states that "the general scholarly consensus is that the origin of the idea of trauma was inextricably linked to the expansion of the railways" in the nineteenth-century Europe (*The Trauma Question* 21). This expansion led to a rise in railway accidents, which resulted in an analysis of the link between the physical and psychological effects of an accident. People who suffered from the railway accidents, or "railway spine," exhibited lasting symptoms such as anxiety, paralysis, and emotional distress, which "seemed to ramify and worsen over time" (22). These symptoms were later regarded as the symptoms of psychological trauma.

hysteria (Sarıkaya-Şen 8). Through the analyses of hysteria, Charcot claimed that hysteria which “was etymologically and historically associated only with women,” could also affect men, and instead of physical, hysteria had a psychical origin (Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* 35). Later on, Charcot’s student and Freud’s contemporary, Pierre Janet, coined the term “traumatic memory” by focusing on trauma as the reason for dissociation and claimed that “in weakly organized nervous systems sudden shock can cause partial disintegration of a person’s capacity to synthesize impressions into a conscious whole” (Kenny 153). Thus, by analysing the source of trauma and its symptoms, starting with physical causes and moving to psychological origins, these studies laid the groundwork for literary trauma studies.

However, it was Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytical studies and his model of trauma that created the necessary framework for the field of trauma studies. Freud’s trauma model “imagines an extreme experience which challenges the limits of language and even ruptures meaning altogether” (Balaev, “Trauma Studies” 360). While his model has been subjected to critique, Freud’s foundational theories in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), written with Joseph Breuer, and later his revised theories in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), continue to significantly influence how literary trauma critics conceptualise and analyse trauma. Freud’s model of trauma, at first, was based on his earlier studies in shock and hysteria, and he argued that “the symptoms of hysteria could only be understood if they were traced back to experiences that had a traumatic effect, specifically early experiences of sexual ‘seduction’ or assault” (Leys 20). To further explain, this theory, known as the seduction theory, proposes that neuroses in adulthood are caused by the repressed memories of sexual abuse or seduction experienced during childhood. Even though Freud in his later studies abandoned the seduction theory and further developed psychoanalytical theory by focusing on the unconscious, he initially argued that traumatic sexual experiences disrupted the psyche, the splitting of consciousness, which was repressed and later manifested as psychological symptoms (Freud and Breuer 189-90).

Concerning this, Ruth Leys suggests how Freud problematises the origin of trauma not by his “commitment to the seduction theory,” but rather by his argument on how the cause of trauma is “not the experience itself which acted traumatically, but its delayed revival

as a memory” (20). Freud named this situation *Nachträglichkeit* (Freud and Breuer 18), which is translated into English as – Caruth, in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), writes – “afterwardness” (147), “belatedness” (148), “deferral” (148), “delay” (148) or “latency” (151). In this way, it is suggested that the traumatic event cannot be understood at the moment of the catastrophe, and its effects and meaning are delayed until they can be remembered or recalled by a repressed memory at a different time. Freud and Breuer explain why and how trauma is delayed as follows:

By reversing the proposition ‘*cessante causa cessat effectus*’ [when the cause ceases the effect ceases] we may conclude from these observations that the precipitating event in some way still continues to exercise an effect years later, not indirectly through a chain of intermediary causal links, but as a directly releasing cause, in something like the same way that psychical pain remembered in waking consciousness will still produce the secretion of tears later on: *hysterics suffer for the most part from reminiscences*. (47, emphasis in original)

The unprocessed events or incidents can cause a wound in the psyche; thus, they cannot be processed. Such events can lead to repetitive reminders or echoes in the unconscious of the traumatised person. Trauma is therefore defined “in relation to the remembering and as an event harbored within the unconscious that causes a splitting of the ego or dissociation” (Balaev, “Trauma Studies” 361). Originated from the Greek language, *trauma* (τράυμα) actually refers to an injury or damage inflicted upon a body, but one of the pioneers of literary trauma studies, Cathy Caruth explains that in Freud’s work, his usage of trauma as a term “is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind” (*Unclaimed Experience* 3). Thus, trauma becomes “the wound of the mind—the breach in the mind’s experience of time, self, and the world” (*Unclaimed Experience* 4).

The concept of trauma causing dissociation or breach in the psyche, the repetition of the traumatic event through the latency period, and its effects are the subjects Freud addressed in his later work, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), which has been a significant influence on literary critics. In this context, Cathy Caruth defines trauma as “an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (*Unclaimed Experience* 11). Ruth Leys, in her book

Trauma: A Genealogy (2000), further explains the experience of trauma and how it causes dissociation and repetition in the psyche:

The experience of the trauma, fixed or frozen in time, refuses to be represented as past, but is perpetually reexperienced in a painful, dissociated, traumatic present. All the symptoms characteristic of PTSD – flashbacks, nightmares and other reexperiences, emotional numbing, depression, guilt, autonomic arousal, explosive violence or tendency to hypervigilance – are thought to be the result of this fundamental mental dissociation. ... Trauma is preserved in the memory with a timeless accuracy that accounts for the long-term and often delayed effects of PTSD. Thus they hold that the traumatic event is encoded in the brain in a different way from ordinary memory. (2, 7)

Without the control of the person, trauma repeats itself in the way the person acts or perceives themselves or the world. Like a bodily wound, the scars left untreated in the psyche, or similar to how Freud defines them, repressed by the unconscious, cannot be healed. Thus, it reenacts the disruptive event against the person's will by breaching "the protective shield against stimuli," which Freud calls "traumatic neurosis" (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure* 25). In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud argues that the mind, as an organism, has outer and inner layers, with the outer layer possessing a "protective shield" against harmful external stimuli (21). He likens the development of the mind to that of the body, which needs a protective layer, like a strong immune system, to ward off illnesses and dangers (22). In this sense, he adds that "consciousness arises out of the need to protect" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 60) the inner layers of the mind, the psyche, to ward off dangerous stimuli "charged with the most powerful energies" (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure* 21). This barrier, the protective shield of consciousness, is "a barrier of sensation and knowledge" that protects the inner layer through "an ordered experience of time" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 60). Therefore, the psyche can be prepared to experience the outside world and process knowledge. However, trauma occurs when the person is not prepared for the danger or the catastrophe, and it causes a rupture on the protective layer, forcing its way into the psyche to harm it. Thus, Freud further describes trauma as "any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield ... with a breach in an otherwise efficacious barrier against stimuli" (*Beyond the Pleasure* 23).

In this regard, it can be argued that while trauma harms the psyche by causing it to fragment and repress the memory, it is also a form of self-defence that protects the psyche from losing its connection with the self. Caruth calls this situation “an enigma of survival” (*Unclaimed Experience* 58), which can also be explained as the late defence of the self in the face of unexpected catastrophe which leads to the development of anxiety. Leys adds that “Freud characterizes anxiety ... as the ego’s guard against future shocks and as what plunges it into disarray” (28). By developing anxiety, the psyche protects itself from unseen threats by repeating the traumatic event in peculiar and uncanny ways. Dreams, or nightmares, are one of the ways trauma returns to haunt the individual. In these dreams, traumatised patients may relive the disruptive event to “master the stimulus retrospectively, by developing the anxiety whose omission was the cause of the traumatic neurosis” (Freud 26). While trauma repeats itself and forces the person to recount the tragic events that left their mark on the psyche, the repetition itself is not always the same. The psyche “repeat[s] the repressed material as a contemporary event instead of ... remembering it as something belonging to the past” (12), and as dreams or nightmares can take any shape, trauma is lived through in new settings, situations, or even in new emotions. Thus, the act of waking up can be traumatic as consciousness needs to re-adjust itself to be aware of what is real and what is not. It tries to process reality and separate one’s self from the dream.

This process can further exploit the memory as “[t]raumatic memory is abnormal and lacks the narrative necessary to integrate it into the psyche” (Balaev, “Trauma Studies” 363), and it requires a different approach to narrate events “involving bodily memories of skills, habits, reflex actions, and classically conditioned responses that lie outside verbal-semantic-linguistic representation” (Leys 7). For the literary and critical perception of trauma, memory, being the “storehouse of experience” (Balaev, “Trauma Studies” 362), is significant in comparing traumatic memory to narrative memory in order to analyse the difference between them and their representation in texts. Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart describe traumatic memory as “inflexible and invariable” in contrast to narrative memory “which is a social act,” and they add that “[t]raumatic memory has no social component; it is not addressed to anybody, the patient does not respond to anybody; it is a solitary activity” (163). To comment on this distinction, it can

be argued that traumatic memory lacks a cohesive narrative as it consists of fragmented pieces with an inability to describe and verbalise the experiences. While narrative memory counts as a social act, traumatic memory isolates the individual and problematises the process of understanding and communicating trauma. Thus, traumatic memory requires different approaches to depict the effects of trauma and turns to literature to make use of a variety of representations such as fragmented timelines, unreliable narrators, and inconsistent speeches with silences. On this matter, Caruth observes the connection between Freud and the literature concerning their approach to trauma:

If Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing. And it is, indeed at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet. (*Unclaimed Experience* 3)

In this context, literature, with its capacity for narrative gaps and its ability to represent ambiguity and disconnectedness through expressions, becomes an effective medium for representing the complex nature of trauma. Accordingly, Freud's theories on trauma concerning repetitiveness, disruption of the psyche, and influence on memory form the basis of the earliest scholarly approaches to literary trauma studies. As this traditional model of trauma relies on "the idea of trauma as an unrepresentable event" (Balaev, "Literary Trauma" 1), a literary theory "emerges focusing on the relationship of words and trauma, and helping us to 'read the wound' with the aid of literature" (Hartman, "On Traumatic Knowledge" 537).

Following Freud's model of trauma, the pioneers of literary trauma studies in the 1990s – Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, and Geoffrey H. Hartman – conceptualise trauma as an event that ruptures the barriers of consciousness, causing fragments and gaps in the memory, and thus restricting the articulation and recollection of narrative memory. As Caruth employs Freud's idea of belatedness or latency, she further argues that this lack of immediate processing of the traumatic experience not only causes gaps in the memory but also strips the mind of "simple knowledge" ("Trauma and Experience" 7). The collapse of meaning or understanding at the time of the event affects the mind's ability to

comprehend. As a result, trauma becomes the defining feature of the mind and attributes meaning to inexplicable ordeals. In other words, trauma “*creates them*” as its nature is “flexible and adroit, passing from one context of expertise to another, slipping across borders to be readily recruited to new discourses, new practices, and new contexts of explanation” (Stevens 178, emphasis in original). Even though trauma remains on the margins of the consciousness, it affects the formation of the memories by reshaping them and in turn, it reshapes knowledge.

In this perspective, it can be argued that reshaping knowledge may influence the formation of identity. As mentioned above, in this traditional trauma model, the obstruction of clear meaning regarding the disruptive event is caused by the intensity of the experience repressing the ability of consciousness to process and encode it into language; thus, trauma is viewed as an internal wound that prevents the mind from constructing a coherent narrative. In other words, it emphasises the inevitable consequences of the external force altering the structure of identity and memory. A fundamental interpretation of this trauma model is the argument that as extreme experiences fracture both consciousness and language, they bring forth a necessity to find innovative forms to express and fill the gap in the mind (Balaev, “Trauma Studies” 363). Hence, identity is never fixed but continually reshaped by trauma, disrupting the self’s established narrative and finding expression in literature’s attempt to convey that trauma.

Geoffrey H. Hartman, another key figure in trauma studies, notably focuses on the connection between literature and psychoanalysis by analysing the representation of trauma in the literary works produced during and after the Holocaust in his book, *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust* (1996). Similar to Caruth’s theories, Hartman supports the idea that trauma disrupts articulation, making it difficult to express directly. However, he adds that traumatic experiences are conveyed through indirect forms such as “testimony” and literary devices (“On Traumatic Knowledge” 541). For example, he identifies the Holocaust as a shared historical trauma among Jewish people and argues that its representation in literature through survivor or witness accounts both depends on and struggles with the processes of remembering and forgetting (*The Longest Shadow* 8-9). In other words, he examines the knowledge of trauma and the role of

literature in representing it. On this subject, Geoffrey H. Hartman comments on the knowledge of trauma and how trauma theory understands it:

The theory holds that the knowledge of trauma, or the knowledge which comes from that source, is composed of two contradictory elements. One is the traumatic event, registered rather than experienced. It seems to have bypassed perception and consciousness, and falls directly into the psyche. The other is a kind of memory of the event, in the form of a perpetual troping of it by the bypassed or severely split (dissociated) psyche. On the level of poetics, literal and figurative may correspond to these two types of cognition. ("On Traumatic Knowledge" 537)

As previously discussed, Hartman's emphasis on the paradoxical nature of traumatic knowledge mirrors Freud's conception of trauma, but it also indicates the role literary representation plays in the understanding of it. While a traumatic event embeds itself in the psyche, causing a dissociative split in the mind, the psyche attempts to express this fragmentation through metaphors and symbolism. On that note, Hartman associates this contradictory structure of traumatic knowledge with both literal and figurative language. While unprocessed trauma remains in a literal state within consciousness, its fragments take on a figurative form through breaches in narrative, metaphor, and symbolism. In the context of literary trauma studies, this interpretation is crucial for understanding why trauma often resists direct representation through "literal" language and seeks expression in literature to manifest itself through gaps, silences, and non-linear plot structures.

On the use of language to narrate or represent the trauma, in her co-authored book *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992) with Dori Laub, Shoshana Felman shifts the focus to being a "witness" and giving "testimony" to trauma ("Education and Crisis" 3). In the same manner as Hartman and Caruth, Felman argues that trauma fundamentally disrupts language and representation, making proper and direct articulation nearly impossible. To explore this theory, Felman explores how trauma survivors, particularly Holocaust survivors, struggle to articulate their experiences, asserting her view on testimony as a "crucial mode of our relation to events of our times—our relation to the traumas of contemporary history" (5), which allows survivors to share their experiences indirectly. Yet testimony is not merely a way of telling stories. For Felman, testimony involves a "responsibility" as "[t]o testify is not merely to narrate but to commit oneself, and to commit the narrative, to others" ("The

Return” 204). Thus, this conceptualisation places the responsibility on both the person sharing the trauma and those who are listening to it, creating a correspondence between the two based on their communication and recognition. Even though Felman adds that “to bear witness is to *bear the solitude* of a responsibility” (“Education and Crisis” 3, emphasis in original), she also asserts that trauma cannot be processed in isolation however much the responsibility of narration falls on an individual.

By pointing out the solitude of the speaker, Felman draws the distinction between the narration of trauma and the recognition of/hearing about it. Specifically in the discussion of Holocaust testimonies, Felman’s co-author Dori Laub supports her argument and adds that “[t]he absence of an empathic listener, or more radically, the absence of an *addressable other*, an other who can hear the anguish of one’s memories and thus affirm and recognize their realness, annihilates the story” (“Bearing Witness” 68). Therefore, they argue that testimony is not just about speaking or telling about the traumatic experience. Without an empathetic audience who can validate and recognise the effects and experiences of the survivor, the traumatic story or narration loses its credibility and risks being forgotten.

This argument is crucial for literary trauma theory as literature, a form of testimony, serves as a medium for trauma to be processed and articulated within the shared context and transmission of a narrator and an audience; in other words, an author’s text and a reader’s interpretation. Representing the trauma through literature not only makes it evidence of the experience but also solidifies it by creating a body of work that can be shared between readers and opens it up to interpretation. Felman adds, “[t]o testify—to *vow to tell*, to *promise* and *produce* one’s own speech as material evidence for truth—is to accomplish a *speech act*, rather than to simply formulate a statement” (“Education and Crisis” 5, emphasis in original). By stressing the performative nature of testimony, Felman suggests that the representation of trauma in literature is not merely a recounting of fragmented past events but an active and ongoing process of remembering, rewriting, and reinterpretation. In this regard, literary trauma theory emphasises how trauma is not confined to the past; rather, it continues to shape and influence identity, history, and cultural memory in the present. As Felman’s work specifically focuses on the Holocaust,

a historical trauma, and how first-hand experiences are related to and shared with the following generations, it is essential to analyse the trauma not only as an individual experience but as a collective one. Therefore, Felman's approach to trauma studies, as well as her conception of witnesses to testimony – the readers, in this case – broadens the definition of trauma and brings forth a contemporary case of collective cultural trauma.

This interpretation of collective cultural trauma and its relation to personal trauma is further explored in Cathy Caruth's work *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (1996). Her interpretation is central to the discussion about how trauma is represented in literature, with a specific focus on history. In her reading of Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), which is about Freud's interpretation of the origins of monotheism and Jewish history, Caruth argues that individual trauma is related to historical and cultural trauma. She adds that "history, like trauma, is never simply one's own, that history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" (*Unclaimed Experience* 24). Building on Freud's claim of latency, which suggests that individual trauma cannot be comprehended at the moment of its occurrence and is instead remembered in the course of time, Caruth argues that historical and cultural trauma function in the same manner (17). This means that if individual trauma (e.g. loss, abuse, and rape) is affected by the collapse of meaning, so too is collective historical trauma (e.g. wars, famine, and genocide). They are only remembered by the continual but interrupted referentiality of the event, and not by the time of the occurrence as both of them lack a necessary linguistic encoding/structure (11). In other words, cultural and historical trauma is also unrepresentable due to the unreliability of the historical and literary accounts as they are reconstructed or even fictionalised from the fragmented memories of witnesses.

It should be pointed out that history itself is not claimed to be false; rather, it is suggested that "a rethinking of reference is aimed not at eliminating history but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, at precisely permitting *history* to arise where *immediate understanding* may not" (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 11, emphasis in original). Caruth's remark illustrates the similarity between the structures of history and trauma based on their narration characterised by gaps, silences, and disruptions. There is always

a lost part of history open to interpretation, which mirrors the impact of trauma on the psyche. Furthermore, this interpretation suggests that a traumatic experience shared within a specific culture is not confined to an individual's consciousness; it has "a transhistorical or intergenerational quality" (Balaev, "Trauma Studies" 365). That is, apart from personal experience, cultural trauma can be transmitted among the impacted cultural or historical group. Thus, its effects, transcending time and generations, can still be observed in the cultural narratives or historical records that are reconstructed from these fragmented and haunting memories of the given community.

By linking individual trauma to collective trauma, literary trauma theorists provide a framework for understanding how historical catastrophes can still influence cultural identities over time and across generations. Within this framework, the psychological impact of trauma on the individual is frequently used as a lens to explore collective trauma in literary texts, establishing a connection between personal and societal experiences or between individual and political dimensions. With the developments in research and the shifts in focus and knowledge, cultural theorists, historians, and others began to dissect and merge the medical and psychiatric definitions of trauma. This progress resulted in a substantial and vast field of research exploring "history and memory, narrative and its limits, memorialization, cultural representation of trauma and genealogies of trauma" (Wertheimer and Casper 3). These explorations contributed to new definitions of trauma within the humanities and social sciences by centring trauma in these fields and "recognizing and naming 'trauma' not only as a condition of broken bodies and shattered minds, but also and primarily as a cultural object" (3). From this perspective, trauma is viewed as a phenomenon shaped by history, culture, and politics, allowing it to be interpreted and re-examined according to the circumstances and conditions of time.

As trauma is a wide field of study, its definitions are complex and varied. Although Caruth's model has been accepted for emphasising trauma with its "unassimilated nature," always returning to haunt the traumatised person (*Unclaimed Experience* 4), this representation of trauma can be seen as insufficient. Accordingly, Michelle Balaev, one of the contemporary theorists, broadens the definition and representation of trauma by challenging Caruth's model of trauma. Balaev calls the Caruthian model a "shattering

trope” due to the portrayal of trauma as an inevitable phenomenon that fractures the psyche and identity, leaving a pathological fragmentation in memory (“Trends” 150). She mainly criticises the representation of trauma as an unspeakable event which manifests through gaps, silences, and repetitions. Furthermore, Balaev asserts that Caruth’s transhistorical approach to trauma also disregards the various possibilities of representation by creating a “causal link between collective and individual experience [which] obscures the different forms of violence, torture, and abuse that can produce different responses in different individuals” (“Trauma Theory” 16). While Balaev accepts the importance of cultural trauma and how it is transmitted across generations, she claims that the same lived experience of a traumatic event cannot be conveyed to other generations in its original form and considered traumatic for the reason that it “undoes its own referential basis because once trauma is ‘spoken’ and passed to another, it no longer remains unspeakable, and, thus, no longer ‘traumatic’ according to the model’s own definition of the term” (16).

For this reason, Balaev argues for a pluralistic model of trauma, which includes the influence of individual experience, social context, and environmental factors on the formation of identity. She claims that employing a pluralistic approach in literary trauma theory allows for an in-depth reading of trauma texts beyond the traditional model by focusing on the given contextual factors (*Nature of Trauma* xiii-xv). In this approach, the usual manifestation of trauma through gaps and silences in literary texts is not enough to analyse the traumatic representation, and it calls for the consideration of the characters’ racial, ethnic, national, religious, class, and gender identities, the conditions of the time period the work is produced or the story set, and, in some cases, the author’s personal background. These kinds of identities and the time period frame the cultural context of the literary work, and with this contemporary interpretation of trauma theory, it diversifies literary depictions of trauma. This diversification occurs because individuals “do not respond uniformly when exposed to the same potentially traumatizing event” (Young 284). While traumatic memory can strip the psyche of meaning-making, the unconsciousness attributes meaning to those traumatic gaps based on the social and cultural knowledge by which it is shaped:

Registration, rehearsal, and recall are governed by social contexts and cultural models for memories, narratives, and life stories. Such cultural models influence what is viewed as salient, how it is interpreted and encoded at the time of registration and, most important for long-term memories that serve autobiographical functions, what is socially possible to speak of and what must remain hidden and unacknowledged. (Kirmayer 191)

In this regard, the cultural factors that shape our identity can play a determinate role in the creation and processing of trauma. While individual experiences can be personal and affect the self, the cultural part of identity can attribute different meanings and understanding to traumatic experiences. To give an example from the main focus of this thesis, religion can be studied and analysed as one of the prevailing examples of individual and cultural trauma in literature. Religious trauma refers to an individual's psychological and emotional distress due to their involvement in or exposure to religious beliefs, practices, or institutions, whether or not these experiences include violence or abuse. While many psychiatrists and psychologists study religious trauma by focusing on organised religions and their influence over individuals, religious trauma can also be studied as a cultural phenomenon. In other words, religious identity, being a follower or a member of a specific religious group, can lead to traumatic situations or experiences. Accordingly, in Sheridan Le Fanu's short stories – which will be thoroughly studied in the following chapters – Catholic, Protestant, and pagan religious identities are represented not only on individual levels but also as a collective group. Thus, this representation suggests that religion may not only be traumatic to individuals, but being identified by it or being recognised as a particular religious group can also be a traumatic experience in itself.

Religious trauma, or religious trauma syndrome, was first coined in 2011 by psychotherapist Marlene Winell, who specialised in the traumatic effects of religion. Winell argues that religions with ties to authoritarianism and strict theology can be traumatic to believers, which makes religious trauma “a complete upheaval of a person's construction of reality, including the self, other people, life, the future, everything” (16). Another psychotherapist, Dr Alyson M. Stone, supports Winell's argument, but she also adds that “religious trauma generally accrues gradually through long-term exposure to messages that undermine mental health” as individuals are usually born into religious

communities or brought up religiously by their parents in which “they are steeped in messages that affect their ideas about themselves and the world” (325). For example, regarding moral issues, in general, Abrahamic religions dictate what is right and wrong, what is good and bad, and what is beautiful or not. In this context, religion deals with absolutes and does not allow space for personal interpretation or questioning, which can cause a person to doubt their own beliefs, upbringing, and personality as it affects their worldview. Thus, this process can cause one to have challenging views about life and the world, which can negatively affect one’s psychology. In other words, like other causes of trauma, religion can disrupt individuals’ perception of themselves, their lives, and the world, and this disruption can cause them to repress their emotions or memories.

In the introduction part of her book, *Discovering the Religious Dimension of Trauma* (2022), Caralie Cooke focuses on this disruptive effect of religious trauma. Cooke addresses Ronnie Janoff-Bulman’s ideas about the “assumptive world,” which concerns how people live under a set of assumptions, including the belief that the world is benevolent and meaningful, and that the self is worthy (Janoff-Bulman 6). Yet, similar to what literary trauma theorists suggest, trauma disrupts this assumptive world and leads to a crisis of self in which beliefs are shattered. Utilising religion as the cause of trauma, Cooke argues that over time a person’s perception of the world and self can change slowly, but when it changes drastically, “their world shutters further” (Cooke 2). Concerning this argument, it can be suggested that before a person can develop their own perception of the world, religion offers a pre-made assumptive world to people. Cooke uses Christianity to exemplify her arguments, and, in this context, Christianity’s idea of the afterlife and the existence of heaven and hell can be used to illustrate how it is a constructed concept for a child who has yet to develop their perception of the world and life. In another study focused on religious trauma and how it is related to a child’s upbringing by their parents, Gostečnik et al. claim that “early traumas often manifest as extreme fear of closeness and intimacy, and as fear of God, who gets perceived as a cruel judge” (700). Turning back to Caruth’s idea of consciousness needing “an ordered experience of time” (*Unclaimed Experience* 60) to experience the outside world and process knowledge, it can be argued that religion, which can be taught from birth, could become a traumatic experience for the person if the doctrines are forcefully taught and

imposed upon the person. Hence, it can become a threat to consciousness; it can break the order of understanding, which further corrupts a person's perception of the world and life through a conditioned perspective of a religion.

On the other hand, being raised religiously or living a religious life is not the only possibility of having a religious trauma. While the general understanding of trauma centres around extreme situations like war and genocide, trauma studies also “draws attention to ‘familiar’ violence” (Hartman, “On Traumatic Knowledge” 546), which can be classified as emotional disturbances or simple but hurtful incidents that occur on a daily basis. Religious trauma can be categorised as this “familiar violence.” Both on individual and cultural levels, religion plays a role in shaping identities and thoughts that may occur in everyday life. Even the lack of belief or distancing oneself from religion can be traumatic due to the disruption of one's identity and perception of the world, or of knowledge. For example, living in a religious community as a non-religious person and not conforming to the religious group's standards and notions can isolate an individual. In extreme cases, it may lead the individual to be shunned from society.

With this perspective, in literature, religious trauma is often represented through characters struggling with faith, shame and in some cases, with the identity imposed upon them by religion. As religion affects both individuals and groups of people, literary trauma theory deals with how literature represents religious trauma not only as a personal ordeal but also as a cultural phenomenon that can be disruptive to communities:

The experience of suffering, no matter how private the experience, is situated in relation to the context of a culture that ascribes different value to the experience and to the individual's feelings about the experience. If the self is conceived as a product of both culture and individual idiosyncratic tendencies and behaviors, then it follows that the meaning of trauma is found between the poles of the individual and society. A central thematic dynamic in [literary works] that describe suffering is thus located in the representation of the individual experience of trauma that necessarily oscillates between private and public meanings, between personal and social paradigms. (Balaev, “Trauma Theory” 17)

The traumatised characters in literary works not only reflect their personal traumas but also mirror the society or culture in which they live. Thus, in terms of religious identity,

these traumatised characters can become the “everyperson figure” to “reference a historical period in which a group of people or a particular culture” may have gone through traumatic ordeals (17). The personal suffering of the character can become a collective representation of the hardships a religious group has gone through. In turn, being identified with that specific group can also lead to traumatic situations for an individual. Furthermore, the author’s personal beliefs or their own religious identity may also influence how religious trauma is depicted. In this way, personal and collective trauma find representation within literature’s diverse genres, creating a space where complex and often unspoken experiences find necessary forms and recognition.

Among other literary genres, Gothic fiction provides the necessary framework to establish and portray religious trauma as it can be argued that “Gothic is above all, perhaps, a way of representation” (Punter and Byron xix). During the emergence of the term, “Gothic” was pejoratively used to critique art, literature, and architecture that deviated from the neoclassical ideals, which represented “the lack of reason, morality, and beauty of feudal beliefs, customs, and works” (Botting, “In Gothic Darkly” 13-14). With the invention of the genre, dating back to 1764 and credited to Horace Walpole and his novel *The Castle of Otranto*, Gothic literature began to give voice to the excluded or marginalised narratives which had been subdued by the eighteenth-century culture valuing logic and human mind over imagination and emotion (Blair viii; Çakır 15). For example, in these narratives, mentions of supernatural, folkloric, and mythological elements can be found. From apparitions of ghosts to the existence of vampires or figures corrupted by demons, the limits of logic and reality are challenged, creating new opportunities to deal with the extreme human emotions arising from the perceived threats. These threats are not mere figures contributing to the plot; in fact, they are reflections of the tensions and concerns of the period. As Fred Botting explains,

Gothic figures have continued to shadow the progress of modernity with counter-narratives displaying the underside of enlightenment and humanist values. Gothic condenses the many perceived threats to these values, threats associated with supernatural and natural forces, imaginative excesses and delusions, religious and human evil, social transgression, mental disintegration and spiritual corruption. If not a purely negative term, Gothic writing remains fascinated by objects and practices that are constructed as negative, irrational, immoral and fantastic. (*Gothic* 1)

Botting characterises the Gothic as a space in which cultural tensions and repressed fears are depicted through the use of metaphors, symbols, and fragmented or unreliable narratives. In that sense, it can be argued that the Gothic can be read “as a form that is founded within trauma” (Smith 64). From its emergence, Gothic fiction genre has reflected the qualities of trauma and how it is manifested in literature. Emotional distress, the disintegration of identity and morality, and the haunting of an individual with traumatic memories find corresponding representation in Gothic literature through the gloomy atmosphere, isolated places, the existence of supernatural monsters, and the theme of fear that generally dominates the text. Yet, this similarity between Gothic and trauma “is not limited to conveying the impacts of trauma on the individual psyche” (Joyce 18). Moreover, Roger Luckhurst asserts that “the tropes and narratives of genre are good devices with which to think unthinkable or say unsayable things” (“Beyond Trauma” 17); Ece Çakır adds that “[a]ssociated with an untamed energy over calm logic, Gothic emphasizes imaginative powers, unbound by order or reason” (17). With these definitions, it can be said that Gothic literature is not limited to conventional expressions. Thus, as a way of representation, the Gothic genre offers – sometimes unconventional, sometimes exaggerated – literary techniques to think about, write about, and represent distorted or fractured human psychology, anxieties about the world and society, and concerns over societal norms – including religion and religious beliefs. In that respect, Gothic fiction provides a necessary ground for the representation of religious trauma, whether personal or collective, through its exploration of the rational and irrational, the sacred and blasphemous, and the moral and immoral.

One of the key works of Gothic fiction that portray the intertwined nature of Gothic and religious trauma is Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). Regarded as “a major work of Anglo-Irish literature,” *Melmoth* is a complex Gothic novel structured with a “framing narrative and the six framed and nested main tales” to largely deal with the religious critique of Catholicism (Moynahan 116). Just like Sheridan Le Fanu, Maturin came from an Anglo-Irish family and shared a Huguenot background, but unlike Le Fanu, Maturin was “a Protestant clergyman ... clearly against Catholicism in particular” (Punter and Byron 204). His opposition to Catholicism mostly stems from the social, religious,

and political climate of nineteenth-century Ireland in which he lived. At the same time, “Maturin vastly exceeds his brief against the Catholic Church and brings most of the edifice of religion, or perhaps indeed of belief itself in a more general sense, down on his head” (Punter and Byron 204). While the critique of Catholicism is a central theme in his literary works, it is not rooted in bigotry. It is less directed at Catholic figures and more focused on religious authority and institutions like the Catholic Church, as seen in the characters of *Melmoth*. Yet, it is important to note that “[t]he law of Maturin’s narrative is that whoever speaks breaks the representational frame in which they are embedded. When Catholics speak, they always speak as *representations* of Catholics, and they often ironically serve the cause of Protestant propaganda” (Sage, “Irish Gothic” 140, emphasis in original).

In this regard, *Melmoth*, is a novel interwoven with numerous tales, giving different accounts of a central figure called Melmoth the Wanderer who made a Faustian pact for an extended life. The multiple narratives in the novel offer glimpses into the psychological conditions of the characters while taking the reader through multiple settings, namely Ireland, Spain, and India. Therefore, the book delves into varied accounts of suffering, hopelessness, and spiritual torment that can be regarded as the personal and cultural dimensions of religious trauma. Significantly, the portrayal of religious trauma can be observed in two prominent characters: Immalee, later named Isidora, and Alonzo di Monçada. The trauma of both characters is usually revealed through their interactions with Melmoth the Wanderer. As the gothic figure, Melmoth haunts Immalee and Monçada by preying on their shaken faith and spiritual confusion and acts as a tempting figure to take advantage of their weakened mental states.

Both characters offer a distinct and compelling representation of religious trauma. For instance, Immalee’s religious trauma stems from her ambiguous past and upbringing. She is a Spanish maiden who was lost during a voyage and raised in isolation on a remote island like an indigenous person. After the revelation of her familial origins as the lost daughter of a wealthy Spanish family, Immalee is taken from the island and confined in her real family’s house to be “[e]mbraced” back into her true heritage (Maturin 343). However, Immalee, now renamed as Isidora, rejects her situation: “Oh no! they seized on

me — they dragged me here — they made me a Christian. They told me all was for my salvation, for my happiness here and hereafter — and I trust it will, for I have been so miserable ever since, that I ought to be happy somewhere” (343). Immalee/Isidora’s confession to Melmoth portrays her as a traumatised character who has been forcefully taken from the place that she calls home to an unknown place. By claiming that her newly found family compelled her to accept a foreign religion, Immalee/Isidora later emphasises the unhappiness from which she is suffering: “Isidora wept, and confessed she had not found Christianity what she had at first believed it; ... she added, ‘I am so ignorant in this new world, — I have so much to learn, — ... I should not speak or think but as I am taught’” (344). The struggle Immalee/Isidora faces between her past and present is reflected in her confession. She is lost in a foreign place and finds herself acting as someone she is not. Her upbringing as a “native” person devoid of Christianity is challenged by the newly taught beliefs, and she “finds it difficult to learn to reconcile the behavior of the nominal Christians (mere ‘Catholics,’ she calls them) with the ‘purity’ of that religion and of her own youthful impulses” (Lew 181). She finds happiness not through religion, but through the dreams that take her back to “that island of enchantment” on which she grew up (Maturin 344).

Throughout her story, Immalee/Isidora is taken “into smaller and smaller spaces, into increasingly claustrophobic confinement” (Lew 180). Ralf Haekel links the confined spaces in the novel to traumatic spaces that religion induces by saying that “[t]he claustrophobia that threatens to destroy the character’s sanity is not only caused by Melmoth himself. Rather, it is created by the boundaries of a corrupt and tyrannical society. Most of the time, this tyranny is linked to Catholicism” (90). The last time Immalee/Isidora is seen before her death is in another claustrophobic space: the dungeons of the Inquisition. Maturin’s focus on this claustrophobic space, the confinement in a monastery, helps to create the Gothic atmosphere of the novel. As David Punter comments, “[t]he monastery or convent was throughout the history of the early Gothic a site of hypocrisy and violent incarceration” (“Scottish and Irish Gothic” 118). In this way, these religious spaces can become the source of traumatic experiences as “[r]eligion ... does not preserve and save the spirit” (121), which can be observed in the story of Alonzo

di Monçada, who is forced to be a monk by his family and confined in a monastery against his will.

Even though Monçada is represented as a Catholic figure, he has “instinctively ‘Protestant’ leanings” that speak for Maturin’s Protestant sensitivities through Monçada’s “attachment to the Bible as God’s full revelation of Himself, by his habit of appealing to reason and conscience, instead of to ecclesiastical authority and tradition in determining moral cruxes, and in his spontaneous revulsion against such mortifications as self-flagellation and fasting” (Moynahan 123). Therefore, Monçada’s trauma can also be analysed as the representation of the traumatic experiences stemming from the dispute between Protestant and Catholic identities as his difference from the others in the monastery is regarded as blasphemy. This difference results in his punishment in the form of isolation from the outside world, humiliation, and, in some cases, psychological and physical torture. During those punishments, Monçada witnesses “indescribable horror[s]” filled with images of “[d]ungeons, chains, and scourges” and “terrors of convents, — of their punishments, often carried to the infliction of death, or of reducing their victim to a state in which death would have been a blessing” (Maturin 141). Thus, in Monçada’s experiences, religion and monastic life become “synonymous with a system of surveillance and total control” (Haekel 91), which inflicts Monçada with fear not only against the Catholic institution and figures but also against religion itself. Therefore, it can be argued that religion and religious institutions can generate trauma by enforcing doctrines on individuals, using them as apparatuses to suppress the expression of different identities and framing such expressions as violations of religious teachings.

Similar to Maturin’s novel, Matthew Lewis’s (1775-1818) novel *The Monk* (1796) is set in a monastery and exemplifies religious trauma through its protagonist Ambrosio, a devoted Catholic monk who descends into a moral and spiritual doom after being seduced by a demonic figure named Matilda. Supernatural figures like Matilda are usually the manifestations of the characters’ fears, and they sometimes, as in this novel, “tempt the characters into committing sin and crime” (Çakır 17). The novel follows Ambrosio’s succumbing to Matilda’s manipulation and his alienation from his religion and position. He betrays his vows of celibacy, then rapes and murders Antonia, thus becoming a

monster ruled by his desires. Still, the narrative reflects his dilemma regarding the trauma he inflicted on others and himself:

He had no resource to comfort him in his distress. Religion could not inspire him with fortitude: If He read the Books of morality which were put into his hands, He saw in them nothing but the enormity of his offences; If he attempted to pray, He recollected that He deserved not heaven's protection, and believed his crimes so monstrous, as to baffle even God's infinite goodness. For every other Sinner, He thought there might be hope, but for him there could be none. (Lewis 353)

The reader witnesses the shattering of Ambrosio's identity and the fragmentation of his beliefs and psyche. In the end, by the declaration above, he is aware that there is no salvation for him due to his actions, but he is still remorseful. While his internal conflict is marked by guilt and fear of damnation due to his religious background, his violent actions as an authoritarian religious figure are another source of spiritual crisis. He is both a traumatised character and a figure that causes trauma. As a monk, he abused his power to inflict pain on others, which can be argued as a trauma caused by a religious institution similar to the events in *Melmoth the Wanderer*. Furthermore, it can be argued that as "the book is full of psychological contrasts" (Punter and Byron 197), Lewis both criticises religious doctrines of Catholicism, but also sympathises with the suffering of the characters based on their connection with the religion.

To delve deeper into the representation of religious trauma beyond the personal aspect, two Gothic short stories, Elizabeth Gaskell's (1810-1865) "The Poor Clare" (1856) and Robert Louis Stevenson's (1850-1894) "Thrawn Janet" (1881), can be examined. It has been established that the Gothic genre has "a capacity for managing the unspeakable," which reflects the "inaccessible and repressed past trauma" (Beville 52). In this regard, Maria Beville states that "[t]he Gothic is well known as a mode that gives a voice to the terror, taboo, and transgression of the contemporaneous collective unconscious" (64). Hence, the genre can also function as a narrative shaped by a specific culture or society's unconscious, revealing underlying collective fears and concerns. By doing so, the use of suspense, horror or the supernatural becomes more than a gothic element; it serves as an illustration of the collective unconscious. In the mentioned two Gothic short stories, Gaskell and Stevenson respectively portray the underlying collective anxiety by revealing

how religious sects can shape religious identities, which can lead to unease in communal life by making references to the pagan past of the Irish and Scottish people and how it is demonised in a religious society.

In “The Poor Clare,” Gaskell centres the story on an Irish Catholic woman named Bridget FitzGerald whose curse, a common gothic motif, unknowingly affects her estranged granddaughter. Due to her national and religious identity, Bridget is already othered in a Protestant community, but her invocation of the curse provokes the people to hail her as a witch, causing her to be isolated and become a symbol of blasphemy (Styler 39-41). As the narrator states, “[h]er words of passion, and cries for revenge – her unholy prayers could never reach the ears of the holy saints!” (Gaskell 4364). Bridget’s story not only explores her personal guilt and suffering but also emphasises the trauma of marginalisation based on religious identity. Her Irish Catholic identity is used against her as the fundamental reason for her revenge-driven actions, categorising her identity as a possible threat to society. Similarly, in “Thrawn Janet,” Stevenson portrays the eponymous character as a victim suspected of witchcraft due to her abnormal behaviours as a woman, which includes her having a disfigured child, not taking communion, and wandering around woods on her own. In the story, her true religious identity is not revealed, but as she acts outside of society’s accepted religious norms, she becomes the target of the community, which is depicted as “the disjunction between enlightenment rationality and folk belief” (Watson 145). The fear of the community is nearly confirmed when Janet herself becomes disfigured with a twisted neck after renouncing the Devil, and “frae that day forth she couldnae speak like a Christian woman, but slavered and played click wi’ her teeth like a pair o’ shears; and frae that day forth the name o’ God cam’ never on her lips” (Stevenson 133). Thus, through Janet’s story, Stevenson mirrors the fear of spiritual corruption in a Protestant-dominated community, and, in a way, condemns religious deviation.

Here, it can be seen that both stories represent how Gothic literature engages with religious identity and illustrate how those identities can cause collective trauma or be affected by a previous trauma. Taken together with the other literary examples that have been discussed here, it can be argued that Gothic literature speaks of the wound inflicted

by religion and religious institutions and that “wound signifies trauma” (Punter, Introduction 2). Using themes such as the haunted church or abbey, the corrupted priest or monk, or cursed families, the Gothic genre provides the authors with a literary field to integrate spiritual and emotional turmoil driven by personal and collective experiences in their works to represent religious trauma.

In this light, one of the significant writers who incorporated religious trauma into his literary works and used gothic themes to amplify the representation of trauma is Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-1873). Writing in the mid-nineteenth century, Le Fanu is regarded as a key figure in the Gothic tradition when the genre “mutates everywhere” and is seen as “a cultural response” (Sage, *Le Fanu’s Gothic* 5). His literary works, specifically his later short stories, reflect the fraught religious atmosphere of nineteenth-century Ireland, particularly the tension between Catholic and Protestant identities during the Victorian crisis of belief (Imfeld 7-8). In that period, Le Fanu emerges as “a man of his time” (McCormack, *Sheridan* 20), as a prolific writer who emphasises psychological suffering and guilt, spiritual dread and doubt, and the haunting inflictions of institutional religions in his literary works. His literature not only mirrors the cultural scene of Victorian Ireland but also shares a connection with his personal experiences as an Anglo-Irish Protestant man who experienced both the personal and societal turmoil that religious identity can cause. Though Sheridan Le Fanu’s Gothic works are widely recognised, their exploration of religious trauma at both personal and collective levels remains understudied. This thesis aims to fill that gap in Gothic scholarship by focusing on how Le Fanu makes use of the Gothic tradition’s capability of representing trauma by combining personal and collective experiences of suffering to explore the psychological impact of a belief system.

To better understand Le Fanu’s body of work, his upbringing needs to be considered in relation to his inspirations for writing. Born on 29 August 1814 in Dublin, Joseph Thomas Sheridan Le Fanu was the middle child of the Le Fanu family who descended from Huguenot nobility and had ties to the Protestant Ascendancy (Melada 1-3). His father, Thomas Philip Le Fanu, was a strict Anglican clergyman who raised his children in a manner similar to the Calvinist tradition, which is a highly disciplined and stern branch

of Protestantism that emphasises predestination, human sinfulness, and salvation only through God's mercy. On the other hand, his mother, Emma Lucretia Dobbin, was kinder and had sympathy for the Catholic Irish people and their traditions, which contributed to Le Fanu's interest in the Catholic Irish people and their folklore (3-4). In 1826, when he was twelve, the family relocated from Dublin to Abington in County Limerick, Ireland, where his father was appointed as Dean of Emly (Rockhill 28). In that predominantly Catholic city, Le Fanu's views on Irishness and Christianity started to take shape as the family struggled against the hostility of the parish due to their connection to the Protestant Ascendancy². Namely, during the Tithe War³ (1831-1838), the Le Fanu family became one of the targets of the angry Catholic people. Sheridan Le Fanu's brother, William, in his memoir, mentions that the members of their family were stoned due to their father's position as the Dean and their connection to the Church of Ireland (63). Therefore, it can be argued that Le Fanu's perception of religion, religious doctrines, and how they were used against people started to change in his years in Abington as he witnessed and even became the victim in these types of violent incidents between the two religious groups.

However, the Catholic-Protestant conflict Le Fanu witnessed during his lifetime in Abington was not the only source of his conflicted perspective on religion. His relationship with his father, along with his religious upbringing rooted in Calvinist doctrine, also played a significant role in shaping his attitude against rigid religious authority and his interest in other theological studies, specifically Swedenborgianism (McCormack, *Sheridan* 18, 87). Unlike the stern determinism of Calvinism,

² The Protestant Ascendancy refers to the historical period in Ireland, from the late 17th century to the early 19th century, when Protestants held significant political, economic, and social power over the Catholic population (Connolly 466). It was a result of the political and social changes that took place after the victory of the Protestant William of Orange over the Catholic King James II in 1690. During this time, Anglo-Irish Protestants, belonging to the Church of Ireland, were appointed to key positions in government, law, land ownership, and business (McCormack, *Sheridan* 24-26). While Protestants had privileges, basic rights were denied to Catholic Irish people, such as voting or owning land. Additionally, with the Ascendancy, the Penal Laws were established. These laws were traditionally seen as discriminating against Catholics, further restricting their civil, political, and religious rights, which included the limitation of religious practice, education, property ownership, and holding a public office (Connolly 438). Thus, the Catholic majority in Ireland was marginalised, which contributed to the tension between Protestants and Catholics in the country. This systemic inequality continued for nearly a century, which culminated in open resistance.

³ The Tithe War (1831-1838) is an example of the Catholic majority's uprising against the oppressive authority of the Protestants. During that time, Irish Catholics refused to pay tithes to the Church of Ireland and reacted with social protests or, even in some cases, violent acts, like stoning clergymen or Protestants (Byrne 82; Rockhill 28).

Swendenborgian theology suggests a more spiritual interpretation focused on free will and morality, which answers to Le Fanu's inner conflict with his beliefs. Thus, this conflict and interest would later emerge in his literary works, namely "The Mysterious Lodger" (1850) and *Uncle Silas* (1864), through the use of "Swedenborgian definitions of evil and evil spirits" (Moynahan 130).

One of the brief but significant interactions between father and son is recorded in William Le Fanu's memoir. In his book, William Le Fanu mentions that his brother, Sheridan Le Fanu, started writing poems about Ireland and nature during his childhood, but he never shared his writings with his father, even though Sheridan Le Fanu spent most of his time in his father's large library in Abington (8-9). While William Le Fanu does not offer a reason for his brother's reluctance to share his works, he suggests that it might be Sheridan Le Fanu's fear of "his father's criticism" (11-12). In another anecdote written by William Le Fanu, it is implied that Sheridan Le Fanu was usually late for prayers or simply did not attend them, which angered and saddened their father (12). Through these anecdotes, it can be concluded that Sheridan Le Fanu did not share his father's sensibility regarding religion as he was negatively affected by it in his personal and social life.

In 1832, Le Fanu left Abington to attend Trinity College, Dublin, to study law, and in 1837, he received honours in Classics. Various career routes scattered across his life, such as "a lawyer, journalist, magazine writer, newspaper editor [for *Dublin University Magazine*], and even would be Tory politician," Le Fanu became an important figure in the Dublin scene (Sage, "Irish Gothic" 141). He married Susanna Bennet, a lawyer's daughter, in 1843, but he abandoned law for journalism as he became more invested in writing during his college years (Melada 7-10). However, even in Dublin, Le Fanu could not escape the problems that clouded his life. He lost his family members in a short period, and when his father-in-law died, his wife started to have troubles with her mental health and faith, which also affected and made him stop going to religious services (McCormack, *Sheridan* 145-47). Susanna's mental problems did not resolve, and in April 1858, after a hysterical attack, she died. After her death, Le Fanu became more secluded and stopped socialising, which resulted in people calling him the "Invisible Prince" as he was "rarely seen in public, except when his tall, stately, muffled figure was seen creeping, or rather

silently stealing into some old and out of the way bookshops, with a request for ancient books on Demonology and Astrology” (Byrne 92). Apart from the publication of his literary works, little is known about the rest of his life as he closed himself off even from his closest friends and relatives (McCormack, *Sheridan* 261). However, during this period, he produced his most well-known novels and short stories, like *Uncle Silas* (1864), *The House by the Churchyard* (1863), and the short story collection, *In a Glass Darkly* (1872), which includes his praised female vampire story, “Carmilla.” Until he died in 1873, Sheridan Le Fanu continued to write to support his family, and even after his death, his Gothic short stories were so influential to his predecessors that they continued to be published posthumously in collections, such as *The Watcher and Other Weird Stories* (1894) and *Madam Crowl’s Ghost and Other Tales of Mystery* (1923).

Concerning Le Fanu’s literary works and style, Victor Sage describes him as “a comic writer, drawn to mixed effects: to the violent, the dreamy, the learned, and the grotesque, sometimes all at once. His tone is richly ambiguous, and not always obvious. His symbolism is frequently occult. Despite the fact that he wrote very rapidly, Le Fanu is an artist and a stylist. The language of his texts is distinctive” (*Le Fanu’s Gothic* 3). The ambiguity of his narrative and his use of occult symbolism are critical as they serve to set the tone of his texts with the psychological and spiritual tension that characterises most of his Gothic short stories. Specifically, Le Fanu’s narrative technique expresses the traumatic tone through its various approaches. Regarding those approaches, Sage further states that “Le Fanu’s texts are acutely, but deceptively, aware of the act of narration itself, poised in a space between written and spoken language, which from the outset of his career employ their own poetics of interruption and alienation” (*Le Fanu’s Gothic* 2). His stories consist of embedded narratives, unreliable narrators, and incomplete testimonies, and he “has a habit of layering and back-dating his texts which sometimes gives them a double or triple sense of time, affecting their reader’s point of view” (3). Besides enhancing the gothic atmosphere, this type of narrative technique is the reflection of the fragmented psyche of traumatised characters and the inconsistency of the collective cultural memory. Thus, religious trauma, regardless of whether it is personal or collective, slips through the fragmented voices and eerie gaps, finding direct representation through the gothic narrative.

Apart from the gothic elements in his narrative, Le Fanu's fiction contains metaphors of spiritual decay, not only from a psychological perspective but also from political and cultural ones. One of the recurring symbols he uses is the image of a ruined castle or a crumbling mansion. As a Gothic story usually takes place in an "antiquated or seemingly antiquated space," the characters are psychologically, spiritually, and sometimes physically haunted by the "hidden some secrets from the past (sometimes the recent past)" (Hogle 2). In Le Fanu's stories, the Gothic spaces, which, according to David Punter, can be referred to as "the monument and the ruin," not only manifest as claustrophobic spaces that haunt the characters but also symbolise the disintegration of historical and cultural Catholic Irish estates under a Protestant authority, but in turn, Anglo-Irish estates are affected by these tensions due to erupting conflicts between the two groups ("Scottish and Irish Gothic" 105). These spaces act as vessels for unresolved trauma in which external and interior struggles are contained together, and as vessels, they "speak always of history, but of a history that is constantly under the threat of erasure" (105). For example, in one of his earlier stories, "The Fortunes of Sir Robert Ardagh" (1838), Le Fanu uses an old castle in rural Ireland to set the gloomy and isolated atmosphere of the story that deals with a Faustian pact between a devil and the head of the castle. A similar setting and storyline can be seen in "The Haunted Baronet" (1871) and "Sir Dominik's Bargain" (1872) as Le Fanu prefers to represent "the psychological and political nightmare, for a landed class, of dispossession" (Sage, "Irish Gothic" 142). Regarding this imagery, Julian Moynahan states:

Perhaps that is a common effect in nineteenth-century Irish life because of the two communities: one apparently in control yet outnumbered; the other in servitude yet much larger and longer in the land; both occupying the same small territory side by side and sometimes closer than that, but not reconciled, the majority constantly watching the privileged minority, coming to haunt its dreams, which are of crumbling mansions under ghostly siege, or at the point of falling. (128)

Le Fanu's inclusion of the Catholic-Protestant polemics enables the reader to look between the lines, acknowledge the cultural implications of the period, and recognise the representation of religious trauma through the use of gothic symbolism. Here, it is important to note that while Le Fanu's stories specifically deal with Ireland, the religious

struggles between Catholic and Protestant Irish people, as well as personal experiences, and some of his works exhibit his inspiration from Irish folklore and pagan traditions, the majority of his stories are not set in Ireland after 1863. Due to the demand of his London publishers, particularly Richard Bentley's insistence, and Le Fanu's income being dependant on his writing, the Anglo-Irish writer had to change the settings of his stories from an Irish one to an English one (McCormack, *Sheridan* 160). Yet, the change in setting did not mean that "the essential and symbolic content of the fiction turned English as well" (Moynahan 134). For example, one of Le Fanu's celebrated novels, *Uncle Silas*, is set in a rural region of the northern part of England, and on that matter, Elizabeth Bowen observes that the novel is simply "an Irish story transposed to an English setting" (8). Victor Sage further comments that by transposing Ireland's "landscape and social conditions into various English counties and parts of Wales," and specifically choosing regions that are similar to Irish scenery – with their meadows, great old trees and weather – the fiction "retain[ed] the special melancholy of Irish Big House isolation" ("Irish Gothic" 144). Thus, throughout his writing career, Le Fanu preserved his Anglo-Irish sentiments concerning the struggles of his people divided by sectarian conflicts in his fiction.

Accordingly, the author's representation of trauma is layered with the political implications of the existing religious conflict of nineteenth-century Ireland. Yet, at the same time, in some of his stories, like "The Drunkard's Dream" (1838), Le Fanu builds the narrative around the personal struggles of the characters against the religious doctrines, morality, and spirituality. His portrayal of personal religious trauma is often materialised through the use of supernatural elements and figures that resonate with the fears of characters regarding their spiritual suffering. For example, in the mentioned story, which is later rewritten as "The Vision of Tom Chuff" (1870), the protagonist Connell, is haunted by a vision of Hell which condemns his faithless and immoral lifestyle. Later on, the haunted character seeks out a priest to beg for help, and he is advised to change his behaviour to become a moral figure. For some time, Connell tries to change his way of life, but he soon succumbs back to his depraved habits, and in the end, the vision of Hell returns to claim his life, condemning him to damnation. According to Zoë Lehmann Imfeld, the theological journey in Le Fanu's stories "serves to highlight the tragedy which

permeates stories in which the haunted protagonist remains static, or only recognises his own fallen condition too late, thus damning himself to remain haunted” (9), and she later asserts that “Le Fanu’s characters are haunted by the possibility that they can be saved” (133).

The supernatural events or figures, such as visions of Hell, ghosts or demons, materialise the suffering and struggle of the characters dealing with religious guilt, doubt, and oppression, further intensifying the traumatic effects on them. In other words, as the characters in Le Fanu’s fiction “live in various degrees of symbiosis with their natural surroundings,” the spaces they inhabit start to mirror their psyches and reflect their self-awareness through a series of supernatural incidents (107). In some cases, due to this symbiosis, the characters in Le Fanu’s short stories are haunted by their internal and repressed selves, which are in conflict with their religious beliefs or with the lack of that spiritual connection (Punter and Byron 138). Furthermore, it can be claimed that the ghosts or demons do not accidentally appear in the story, but they emerge through the triggering of the suppressed past traumas. In this regard, in Le Fanu’s short stories, religious beliefs rarely offer comfort to the haunted characters but instead become the source of anxiety, fear, and oppression.

While Le Fanu is best remembered for his Gothic short stories of suspense and the supernatural, his body of work extends beyond the religious concerns on which this thesis focuses. As a prolific writer, his literary works are marked by a notable thematic and generic range. His first short story collection, *The Purcell Papers* (1880), which was written and published in *Dublin University Magazine* between 1838-1840, reveals an experimentation with multiple themes: comic anecdotes such as “The Quare Gander” (1838), nostalgic tales of aristocratic decline like “The Bridal of Carrigvarah” (1839), historical fiction exemplified by “An Adventure of Hardress Fitzgerald, a Royalist Captain” (1840), and supernatural tales including “Strange Event in the Life of Schalken the Painter” (1839) and “The Fortunes of Sir Robert Ardagh” (1838) (Melada 13-18). These early works particularly emphasise Le Fanu’s initial interests in Irish folklore, aristocratic sentiments, and national memory. Furthermore, he also experimented with thrillers such as “Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess” (1838) and “A

Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family” (1839), which later, respectively, were developed into his significant novels, *Uncle Silas* (1864) and *The Wyvern Mystery* (1869).

After *The Purcell Papers*, Le Fanu began to expand his scope by writing multiple novels. Beginning with *The Cock and Anchor* (1845) and *The Fortunes of Colonel Torlogh O'Brien* (1847), Le Fanu pursued historical fiction that reflected his strong attachment to Ireland's past due to “the relation of his family to Irish history” (Melada 30). Later novels such as *The House by the Churchyard* (1863), *Uncle Silas* (1864), *Wylder's Hand* (1864), and *The Rose and the Key* (1871) reveal an exploration of Gothic themes by a shift toward psychological suspense, isolation, and identity fragmentation. Near the end of his career, Le Fanu returned to the short story form, producing *Chronicles of Golden Friars* (1871) and *In a Glass Darkly* (1872) collections, and as Melada comments, these short story or novella collections “demonstrate that his true artistic medium was the short novel” (90). His broad oeuvre shows that while religious trauma features in some of his Gothic works, it is not widely represented in his engagement with various genres and themes. This thematic variety with different literary forms, ranging from the comedic to the tragic, the historical to the supernatural, emphasises that Le Fanu's creativity was not limited to spiritual crisis or religious dread, even though he incorporated religious themes in his numerous fictions.

Although Le Fanu's literary career spans a broad range of themes and genres, the theme of religious trauma in his Gothic short stories remains critically underexplored. While much of the critical discourse has centred on his supernatural motifs, domestic tensions, and folkloric influences, the spiritual aspects of suffering embedded in his Gothic fiction have yet to receive academic attention. Therefore, this thesis aims to bring new insights into literary and cultural studies by offering a trauma-based analysis of six of Le Fanu's Gothic short stories, particularly focusing on the representation of personal and collective religious trauma. In this light, this study intends to reveal that literary trauma theory allows a close reading of Le Fanu's Gothic short stories to explore how individual and collective trauma emerge through the psychological and spiritual wounds caused by religious belief, doubt, and inherited identity within the context of nineteenth-century Ireland. Moreover, this thesis aims to extend the scope of cultural studies by situating Le

Fanu's Gothic literary works within the critical framework of contemporary literary trauma theory, emphasising how his narratives reflect both the inner struggles of individual religious trauma and the enduring presence of unresolved sectarian conflicts imprinted on collective memory.

To address these representations, the thesis focuses on Le Fanu's six Gothic short stories that centre religion as a force that inflicts both individual and collective forms of trauma. Taking these arguments into consideration, one may contend that Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's short stories employ the Gothic tradition not merely for atmosphere but as a medium for exploring religious trauma in its many forms. Significantly for the argument of this thesis, the personal and cultural forms of religious trauma are in the foreground of Le Fanu's literary works in order to explore the traumatic impact of religion on individuals and the suffering it can cause to a religious group or the harsh ordeals a religious identity may entail. Moreover, these Gothic works are chosen not only for their thematic relevance but also for the way they reflect trauma through the condensed and suggestive form of the short story. Compared to the longer narratives, the short story's limited structure allows the expression of the ambiguous nature of trauma, relying heavily on the use of literary devices such as atmosphere, symbolism, and narrative fragmentation to evoke psychological fracture and spiritual unrest. In this sense, the form itself reflects the fragmentary and complex manifestation of trauma. Accordingly, this thesis opens with an analysis of three of Le Fanu's Gothic short stories, "Green Tea" (1872), "The Familiar" (1872), and "The Vision of Tom Chuff" (1870), which revolve around the depictions of individual characters afflicted by personal religious trauma. These stories are selected for the way they externalise spiritual trauma through Gothic tropes such as spectral animals, the return of the repressed, and visions of damnation, all of which embody the profound inner torment projected onto supernatural forms.

Following this, Chapter 2 proceeds to examine "Squire Toby's Will" (1868), "Wicked Captain Walshawe, of Wauling" (1864), and "The Last Heir of Castle Connor" (1838), which portray trauma as inherited and entangled with the collective experience of religious identity, particularly in the context of Ireland's sectarian history. These stories are chosen for their portrayal of religious trauma as an affliction rooted in both religious

and cultural identity, expressed through Gothic conventions such as spectral inheritance, ancestral curses, and the decline of aristocratic families. These elements underline the burden of collective suffering as an inescapable legacy. Through these stories, Le Fanu portrays religious trauma as a phenomenon capable of shaping both personal suffering and collective memory. Illustrating how faith can wound deeply and how identity can become entangled with pain, these Gothic narratives dwell in the crises of belief, where trauma unsettles meaning and leaves its mark on both individual consciousness and shared cultural memory.



CHAPTER 1

HAUNTED BY BELIEF: PERSONAL RELIGIOUS TRAUMA IN “GREEN TEA,” “THE FAMILIAR,” AND “THE VISION OF TOM CHUFF”

God, but life is loneliness, despite all the opiates, despite the shrill tinsel gaiety of “parties” with no purpose, despite the false grinning faces we all wear. And when at last you find someone to whom you feel you can pour out your soul, you stop in shock at the words you utter - they are so rusty, so ugly, so meaningless and feeble from being kept in the small cramped dark inside you so long. Yes, there is joy, fulfillment and companionship - but the loneliness of the soul in it’s appalling self-consciousness, is horrible and overpowering.
--Plath, *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath*

This chapter analyses the representation of religious trauma as a phenomenon rooted in personal experiences in reference to Sheridan Le Fanu’s three selected short stories: “Green Tea” and “The Familiar” from *In a Glass Darkly* (1872), and “The Vision of Tom Chuff” from *Madam Crowl’s Ghost & Other Stories* (1923). These stories, though varied in setting and protagonists, each depict characters confronted with psychological and spiritual crises that emerge from a troubled relationship with faith, guilt, or moral failure. By focusing on personal religious trauma, Le Fanu’s stories reveal how spiritual affliction can manifest as haunting, despair, and fragmentation, which causes the psychological and spiritual collapse of the characters. In this sense, the present chapter also examines how Sheridan Le Fanu makes use of Gothic elements, such as supernatural occurrences, prophetic dreams, and spectral doubles to convey the intensity of personal religious trauma. As the Gothic tradition helps illustrate how inner torment externalises, it also amplifies the failure of confession, redemption, and salvation. By employing literary trauma studies, this chapter aims to analyse how Le Fanu portrays characters whose different degrees of struggle with faith and morality leave them psychologically disturbed, illustrating how the Gothic genre expresses the emotional impact of spiritual suffering.

Set in mid-nineteenth-century London, Sheridan Le Fanu’s “Green Tea” (1872) is a psychologically and theologically intricate story about the spiritual collapse of the

Reverend Robert Jennings, an Anglican clergyman who succumbs to a mysterious haunting after immersing himself in unorthodox theological studies. As the first entry in the collection *In a Glass Darkly*, this story introduces the audience to the narrator Dr. Martin Hesselius. However, Le Fanu uses him as a “literary device to frame the tales. The haunted narratives thus become cases from the notes of this self-styled ‘metaphysical physician’” whose claims to metaphysics restrict the stories in a “medicalised or empiricist” framework (Imfeld 162). Therefore, regarded as a case study, the story portrays Jennings’s internal conflict and eventual demise as a result of religious doubt, guilt, and isolation. While Jennings is initially described as “a charitable man” and “the most happy and blessed person on earth” (Le Fanu, “Green Tea” 3), Hesselius, being the detective-physician, soon detects signs of suppressed distress and learns that Jennings lives “a life whose transactions and alarms were carefully concealed ... from, not only the world, but his best beloved friends” (5). After securing an audience with Jennings, Hesselius finds out that the vicar has been afflicted with an apparition of a sinister black monkey. Coinciding with his pursuit of theological studies on ancient pagan beliefs and his habitual use of green tea, the monkey starts evolving from a passive but disturbing presence to an intrusive, violent, and vocal Gothic double. The destructive monster starts interfering with his spiritual life and duties, forcing him into isolation and self-doubt. After a severe confrontation with the demonic monkey, Jennings succumbs to his psychological tormentor and eventually commits suicide in a gruesome act of slicing his throat. Hence, the clergyman’s gradual descent into madness represents the substantial effects of personal religious trauma through the use of Gothic imagery as the manifestation of his inner conflict, concerning his spiritual fear, guilt, and doubt.

From the beginning of the story, Reverend Jennings is perceived as a well-liked and morally upstanding man in society, a model clergyman admired for his “modesty and benevolence,” and recognised for his charitable works (7). Moreover, as Hesselius discusses the vicar’s character with his patron, Lady Mary, she comments that “he’s so painstaking, he takes so much trouble— you have no idea— ... he’s so good-natured and so sensible” (7). This portrayal emphasises his altruism and piety in an attempt to illustrate an example of how a clergyman ought to be. Yet Le Fanu undermines this saintly image by introducing signs of internal conflict. For example, Hesselius remarks on Jennings’s

mysterious breakdowns which usually happen “in the very act of officiating in his old and pretty church at Kenlis” (3). While Jennings is described as “most anxious to be actively employed in his sacred profession” (3), he repeatedly retreats from his duties without explanations due to these emotional episodes, which becomes an issue for his image and position in society. As a religious leader, his position requires emotional stability and moral restraint which can cause a person to repress unwanted feelings or inappropriate ideas.

The suppression of feelings or ideas can therefore cause traumatic symptoms to appear. As suggested by Cathy Caruth, repressed emotions or thoughts are not forgotten by the psyche, but they are only delayed to reappear at an unpredictable time. Sometimes triggered by a similar event, setting or memory, the effects of trauma can symptomatically cause the traumatised person to dissociate, which frequently happens to Jennings in his church (*Unclaimed Experience* 11). He experiences sudden breakdowns during his services, at times falling into “solitary, inaudible prayer, his hands and eyes uplifted,” only to descend “pale as death” and trembling into the vestry-room in “shame and horror,” leaving his congregation without an explanation (Le Fanu, “Green Tea” 3). Apart from the unpredictability of trauma, what happens to Jennings during his religious service is an example of how trauma can manifest physically and publicly. While Hesselius is yet to hear about the details of Jennings’s suffering in this part of the story, he still tries to offer an understanding of the reverend’s physical symptoms. He remarks, “[i]t may be his heart, it may be his brains” (3) which refers to the ambiguity surrounding the root of Jennings’s problems, and it suggests a blurred line between a physical illness and a psychological disorder. Hesselius’s comment is significant as bodily complications can be the signals or symptoms of unknown psychological problems, which is how trauma can be represented in Gothic fiction. By allowing the reader to guess the origin of Jennings’s condition, Le Fanu represents the complex nature of religious trauma by refusing to reduce it to either a physical or psychological cause. The heart and brain are not only the representations of bodily organs sustaining life, but they also stand for the emotional and intellectual nature of an individual. To illustrate this point, in his analyses of the short story, Michael Grant Kellermeyer interprets “Heart” as “a metonym for a personal loss and Brain [as] referring to insanity” regarding Jennings’s traumatic

symptoms (317). In Jennings's situation, he is not only psychologically afflicted; his body also suffers from the way trauma disrupts his emotional and rational faculties.

When these shameful and horrifying episodes manifest, Jennings finds comfort in withdrawing to London, living alone in "a dark street off Piccadilly" in "a very narrow house," where he is "always perfectly well" after these retreats (Le Fanu, "Green Tea" 4). Jennings's self-imposed isolation can be regarded as a symptom of his ongoing trauma as "[a]ll traumatized people develop their own peculiar defenses to cope with intrusive recollections" (van der Kolk and McFarlane, "The Black Hole" 7). Furthermore, people who experience extreme shame and humiliation due to their trauma, as Bessel A. van der Kolk claims, "often fail to maintain a personal sense of significance, competence, and inner worth" ("The Complexity" 197). Hence, he adds that "[t]his inner sense of hatefulness and unpredictability will generally be expressed in social isolation and avoidance of intimate relationships" (198). While Jennings adopts isolation as a form of defence mechanism to seek refuge and peace, it also functions as a sort of self-punishment. This self-imposed withdrawal can be viewed as a subconscious need to atone for what he perceives to be spiritual or moral failure, particularly regarding his theological pursuits. Rather than reaching out for help, Jennings turns inward, trapping himself in a confined space, which allows his guilt to fester further. This isolation provides temporary comfort to his troubled mind, but also cuts him off from potential support. His solitary lifestyle, distance from his family, and failure to confide in his community all contribute to the deterioration of his religious trauma and its symptoms.

In that respect, Le Fanu's representation of Jennings's isolation is illustrated through the gothic setting of his house with its narrowness, "darkness," and "sombre feeling" (Le Fanu, "Green Tea" 9). In addition, the use of his drawing room as his personal study indicates Jennings's preference for solitude. When Dr. Hesselius is summoned to the vicar's house, his first observation of the study is how it is "almost a library" with "books on every side, from the floor to the ceiling," and how tall windows are covered with "rich dark curtains" (9). Transformed from a drawing room, the almost-library study creates an atmosphere of an enclosed space with little light, offering limited space for a haunted character to exist. Traditionally, drawing rooms are spaces in which the household gathers

or entertains guests, offering a social sphere for interaction in a house (Kellermeyer 323). In this case, Jennings's conversion of the room into his personal study is a reference to his choice of companions – books over humans. Later, regarding the room, Dr. Hesselius comments on the multiple carpets decorating the floor so that his steps “fell noiselessly,” and adds that “[t]he effect of the room was, although extremely comfortable, and even luxurious, decidedly gloomy, and aided by the silence, almost oppressive” (Le Fanu, “Green Tea” 9). Hesselius's description of the room is unexpected for a house setting as it causes the room to feel depressing and foreign in that it does not provide warmth or familiarity. Kellermeyer notes that “[t]he difference between a library and a study is that a study [is] more of a private den” while the library is simply “devoted to the storage of books” (324). In this case, the blurred identity of the room shows that not only does Jennings prefer to be alone due to his isolating tendencies, but he is also uncomfortable with himself in an intimate space. Being alone in an intimate setting can cause an individual to confront their repressed emotions and thoughts which is one of the problems Jennings is facing. By changing his environment, it can be suggested that Jennings is trying to find solutions to his problems; but at the same time, by keeping himself in that restricted space, he is allowing trauma to control his behaviours.

Considering these interpretations, Dr. Hesselius draws a similarity between the study and Jennings:

Perhaps, however, I ought to have allowed something for association. My mind had connected peculiar ideas with Mr. Jennings. I stepped into this perfectly silent room, of a very silent house, with a peculiar foreboding; and its darkness, and solemn clothing of books, for except where two narrow looking-glasses were set in the wall, they were everywhere, helped this sombre feeling. (Le Fanu, “Green Tea” 9)

For Hesselius, the room is a reflection of Jennings's mind and character. It is silent and peculiar like Jennings himself, and the dark curtains hide the windows, symbolising Jennings's habit of keeping his inner thoughts and emotions to himself. As Daniel Cook claims, “Jennings can be conjured in the design of his library and the reading of his books” (113). Furthermore, mirrors are used to reflect a person's likeness, and in this case, they reflect the emptiness of the room, much like Jennings's nature. On the other hand, as Jennings uses the study as his personal confinement, mirrors can only offer him the

reflection of his self, which does not offer him comfort as he is forced to confront his inner turmoil. Thus, what exists in the study can be considered an illustration of what Jennings's psyche is suppressing in that "library and scholar are mutually illuminating" (113).

Furthermore, the next object Hesselius finds in the study is "a complete set of Swedenborg's 'Arcana Cælestia,' in the original Latin, a very fine folio set" (Le Fanu, "Green Tea" 9) with "paper markers in several of these volumes" (10). Marked by Jennings, the chapter lists several of these excerpts from the volumes, all of which highlight the ideas of Emanuel Swedenborg, an 18th-century Swedish theologian and mystic, about spiritual and material worlds, specifically focused on the evil spirits. Taken from Swedenborg's book, which is "a vast extrapolation from literalist readings of scripture" (McCormack, *Dissolute Characters* 22), the passages in the story explain that people who are interested in spirituality or have spiritual sensitivity have a chance of opening their inner eye or developing the spiritual perception which allows them to see the things in the spiritual world that cannot "be made visible to the bodily sight" (Le Fanu, "Green Tea" 10). Among these things are evil spirits which usually are unaware of their connection to an individual, but Swedenborg states that if the evil spirits are made aware of that connection, "they would attempt by a thousand means to destroy him; for they hate man with a deadly hatred" (10). While Le Fanu uses Swedenborg's definition of evil spirits throughout his fiction, in Jennings's case, he uses Swedenborgian theology to explicitly frame the trauma in a spiritual-religious context. This theological framework allows trauma to be portrayed as an enigmatic spiritual crisis that blurs the boundaries between the material and the supernatural. By creating a connection between Swedenborgianism and Jennings, the narrative reveals how his suffering is tied to an internal struggle with faith, emphasising his susceptibility to haunting. This way, the reverend's affliction can be argued to have a metaphysical origin which is rooted in his religious instability and vulnerability.

Concerning this, Swedenborg's books are the first indication of the interest Jennings has taken in new theological studies, specifically pagan traditions. Compared to Protestant rationalism, Swedenborgianism allows esoteric explanations and promotes a mystical

insight and symbolic worldview that goes against the orthodox boundaries of institutionalised religion. Jennings's interest in Swedenborg's ideas clashes with his Protestant education, undermines his belief, and changes his perception of the world. For example, according to Swedenborg, "[t]he whole natural world corresponds to the spiritual world, not only the natural world in general but also in every particular. Therefore, whatever in the natural world comes into existence from the spiritual world is said to be in correspondence with it" (McCormack, *Dissolute Characters* 22). In one of the pages Jennings marked, Hesselius reads his annotation "*Deus misereatur mei*—'May God compassionate me'" (Le Fanu, "Green Tea" 11, emphasis in original), which offers a glimpse into the fear Jennings harbours due to his doubt and inner conflict. Even though Jennings refuses to acknowledge his fear, stating, "I think [Swedenborg's books] are rather likely to make a solitary man nervous—that is, judging from the very little I have read—I don't say that they have made me" (12), it can be assumed that his fear is another emotion that he is suppressing as it is related to his religious doubt and guilt. Then, it can be concluded that Jennings's suffering starts with the scholarly pursuit that causes him to stray away from his religious teachings due to his interest in non-Protestant spirituality, and it provides the grounds for his religious trauma to materialise.

Beginning with the annotation he left, Jennings's private, repressed, and traumatised self starts revealing itself to Dr. Hesselius. Significantly, the first impression he receives of Jennings's disrupted self is reflected in the mirrors in the room, standing behind him and "reading the page at which I was busy, and with a face so dark and wild that I should hardly have known him" (12). When Hesselius turns to him, Jennings quickly masks his face to his usually expected kind one, but as a gothic device, mirrors often symbolise the character's fractured psyche and repressed identity (Çakır 44), which suggests that the dark and wild face in the mirror is what Jennings hides. In other words, how Hesselius describes Jennings here is not intended to portray him as a man fatigued by an illness, but as someone crushed under an invisible burden, making him appear alien to even a familiar person. Moreover, this change in his demeanour happens unconsciously, symbolising the dissociative effect of trauma as Jennings becomes unknown not only to others but also to himself.

Following their interaction, Jennings admits to seeking psychological help for his troubles by mentioning Dr. Harley, another fictional physician, one that Hesselius regards highly; yet, unlike the narrator, Jennings describes him as “one of the very greatest fools” he has ever met, which startles Hesselius as it is “the first time [he] had ever heard him say a sharp thing of anybody” (Le Fanu, “Green Tea” 13). Apart from Jennings’s unusual comment, his narration here is incoherent as he continuously interrupts himself with tense stops and agitated glances, which is entirely different from his usual collected self. Hesselius also realises the change in his tone as he stops smiling from time to time and finishes his speech by drawing “his breath in, through his teeth as men do in pain” (13). This gradual change in his demeanour and his visible struggle with articulating his thoughts is an example of how trauma can strip a person of his speech, referring to its unspeakable nature. It further reveals Jennings’s conflicted psyche, torn between his rational, responsible self and the traumatic self, which is stricken with shame and guilt. Slowly, but surely, Jennings’s religious trauma starts overpowering his self-control, breaking through his carefully crafted façade, which even unnerves a professional like Hesselius, as he admits that “[o]ne look of Mr. Jennings haunted me. It had seized my imagination with so dismal a power” (14). This encounter between them marks Jennings’s unravelling and portrays how trauma begins to manifest publicly, undermining not only the authority Jennings has as a clergyman but also the crumbling of his sense of self in his and Hesselius’s eyes.

After this encounter, there is a period of lack of communication between Hesselius and Jennings as the latter claims to be in better spirits, deciding to make “a little experiment, and run down for a month or so to his parish” to both perform his duties and celebrate his new-found wellness with prayers (14). While this sudden change can be regarded as a positive outcome of the two men’s interaction, Jennings’s escape to his parish after his meeting with Hesselius can be interpreted as his attempt to ignore the physician and his own traumatic condition. Jennings’s refusal to acknowledge his trauma can be explained by Felman and Laub’s trauma theory which suggests that an individual processes the trauma through testimony, requiring an audience or simply a listener (Foreword xvii). However, during the testimony, both parties, the narrator and the listener, become witnesses to the trauma once again, which can be triggering for the traumatised subject.

If the listener is not empathetic, the traumatised person can be discouraged from speaking (Laub, "Bearing Witness" 68). Therefore, it can be argued that Jennings's attempt at seeking help can be considered as a triggering experience, and his later reaction can be interpreted as emotional ambivalence. His suffering is not only rooted in his belief system; it is also intimately related to his identity as a clergyman, a man of religious authority, for whom acknowledging his critical condition can be seen as a weakness and a failure in his position. It is clear that Jennings fears his trauma being perceived by others, leading him to isolate himself and not share his struggles. That is why after reaching out to Dr. Hesselius and asking for his help, Jennings tries to escape and isolate himself to find comfort as his attempt at confronting his condition and sharing it can be considered another fear-inducing experience.

However, Jennings's little experiment does not last long as he returns "disappointed" and "too low" in spirits, feeling that he "can see no one" (Le Fanu, "Green Tea" 14). His period of isolation continues despite his attempt at normalcy, and he sends a note to Hesselius to request a little more time before seeing him again. As an accomplished physician, Hesselius immediately recognises Jennings's conflicted psyche: "In those words, of which healthy people think so lightly, what a world of suffering is sometimes hidden!" (15). This comment is recognised as "[a] biographical sentiment" by Kellermeyer, as Le Fanu, like the clergyman, had an unstable relationship with religion, largely after his wife's death, and he preferred to detach himself from society (333). Considering this statement, the narration, specifically Hesselius's statements about Jennings's psychology and condition, can be evaluated as the author's own voice. Hence, Le Fanu's commentary influenced by his own lived experiences. His representation of Jennings's suffering can be regarded as an attempt at constructing his traumatic memory. As Hartman argues, "[t]he literary construction of memory is obviously not a literal retrieval," but it is a reference to "the negative moment in experience" that is left unknown and unrecognised ("On Traumatic Knowledge" 540). By saying so, he asserts that "the artistic representation modifies" the negative moment through "figurative or poetic language" which allows it to be known through representation (540). Thus, it can be claimed that the manifestation of Jennings's personal religious trauma, which mirrors Le Fanu's own religious crisis and social withdrawal, not only reflects the fragmented and

delayed characteristic of religious trauma but also allows the articulation of trauma through the narrative technique by blurring the line between fiction and reality.

After this moment in the story, the narrator shifts from Hesselius to Jennings, making the physician the witness/listener to the reverend's account of his troubles. Through this shift, Le Fanu deepens the tone of the story by allowing Jennings to talk about his trauma, making it representable. Besides, by employing gothic elements, such as the haunting figure, he further materialises the effects of personal religious trauma on Jennings. In his approach to the representation of personal religious trauma, Le Fanu's portrayal allows trauma to be articulated and not fragmented, which challenges the traditional trauma model. To further explain, in contrast to the accepted notion of trauma causing fragmented memory and being unspeakable, Jennings starts his account with a precise recollection of time: "It began ... on the 15th of October, three years and eleven weeks ago, and two days— I keep very accurate count, for every day is torment" (Le Fanu, "Green Tea" 17). The specific declaration of time and recognition of his torment does not align with the Freudian and Caruthian models of trauma which prioritise latency and dissociation; however, this does not disregard the existence of trauma and its effect on the clergyman's psyche. Jennings's situation can be explained by Michelle Balaev's pluralistic trauma model as she offers diverse ways of representation. She claims that "meaning and memory of trauma are contingent upon an assortment of factors" and suggests that literary works "show a spectrum of different types of trauma and acts of remembering that produces a specific articulation of trauma in which the response to a traumatic event may or may not produce pathology ("Trauma Theory" 26). Therefore, following Balaev's model, the clergyman's ability to remember the event in detail can be considered an implication of how religious trauma is central to his perception of time and self. Rather than repressing the moment, his psyche has inscribed the trauma, making it always exist and accompany him in his present moment. Furthermore, Le Fanu's choice of words, "for every day is torment," as the reason for this clear memory, emphasises the psychological toll that remembering takes on Jennings and offers an interpretation of how memory can stay whole against a traumatic event while still being afflicted with its impact.

Taking this into account, Jennings's clear recollection of his suffering is charged with religious imagery and spiritual struggle. His story emphasises the effects of personal religious trauma on an individual, but also, through his narration, it can be observed that Jennings's suffering is actually self-realised in the way that he is aware of the reasons for his torment due to his strong belief in God and spirituality. Yet, his awareness is not effective in his efforts to overcome the suffering; instead, it causes him to feel more guilt and shame. From the beginning, after specifying the time when his haunting started, Jennings shares that he had been searching for "the religious metaphysics of the ancients," which he refers to as "the actual religion of educated and thinking paganism"; however, then he admits that it is

not good for the mind—the Christian mind, I mean. Paganism is all bound together in essential unity, and, with evil sympathy, their religion involves their art, and both their manners, and the subject is a degrading fascination and the nemesis sure. God forgive me! ... I was always thinking on the subject, walking about, wherever I was, everywhere. It thoroughly infected me. (Le Fanu, "Green Tea" 17)

In this passage, Jennings's language is quite telling of the progress of his trauma as he defines his curiosity over paganism as infectious. The use of this specific word is closely related to the gothic trope of forbidden knowledge or desire to acquire it which is often portrayed as a corrupting disease or infection of the mind, or a disaster (Punter, *The Literature of Terror* 105-106). In this way, Le Fanu presents the disease as a metaphor for forbidden knowledge as something that corrupts the mind and poses a threat to the clergyman's faith. In relation to this, it can be claimed that Jennings regards "the Christian mind" as the healthy and proper state of mind or he accepts it as such due to his indoctrination as a clergyman. Therefore, through this perspective, pagan ideals or beliefs are accepted as an illness, something that is infectious and harmful to the Christian mind as it clashes with its teachings. The specific example Jennings uses is the understanding of evil in both religions, which deepens this gothic representation. Kellermeyer comments that Christianity associates evil or evilness with Satan while paganism allows the coexistence of evil with "goodness in a cyclical harmony" as "evil is a part of the human condition" (336). In other words, paganism's perspective on evil offers a more lenient approach to its understanding, but Christian doctrines classify it as a notion that estranges one from the righteous and from God. Consequently, Jennings's curiosity turns into a

corruptive force which prepares the deranged moral space for a gothic haunting to emerge. His theological explorations further estrange him from his faith, and referring back to Balaev's argument about how trauma can exist in various forms, the discrepancy between Jennings's personal beliefs and lived experiences can cause trauma to appear, especially when the mentioned experiences threaten the religious worldview with which Jennings has been living ("Literary Trauma" 4). Thus, Jennings is forced into a gothic descent or madness which is caused by the undermining and contamination of his faith and personality through his theological curiosity and pursuit.

However, there is a paradoxical situation for Jennings here. He is the victim of his religious upbringing and restrictive knowledge, but the clergyman can also be viewed as a participant in the process of his trauma. He recognises the dangers of spiritual deviation, but he is unable to resist his pursuit of unorthodox theological studies as his intellectual curiosity becomes an impulsive act. Considering Jennings's background as a Victorian clergyman, his curiosity reflects the conditions of the period itself. The nineteenth century was marked by the questioning of religion and religious institutions, and there was a growing interest in comparative theological studies, including pagan spirituality (Killeen 269). Yet, through Jennings's spiritual dilemma, Le Fanu portrays the anxiety surrounding the pursuit of other theological interpretations. In the reverend's case, the focal point of his suffering is his doubt in religious doctrines, but the guilt he experiences due to his pursuit of knowledge that his faith deems forbidden can also be considered a significant issue in his spiritual crisis. His exclamation, "God forgive me!" (Le Fanu, "Green Tea" 17), indicates his moral and emotional dilemma, revealing the mental state he is in and how he is haunted by his guilt and doubt. The invocation can also be interpreted as his spiritual alienation from the Creator, as it is not only a plea for compassion but also an indication of how he has been estranged from God with whom he used to be close. Therefore, this incident emphasises one of the issues religious trauma proposes in which the source of psychological torment is contradictorily rooted in the structure of a system that is meant to be peaceful and offer salvation.

In light of this paradoxical nature of Reverend Jennings's personal religious trauma, it can be said that his suffering did not originate from a single disruptive incident, but from

a culmination of incidents that stretched over a period of time, causing him an internal crisis concerning his religious guilt and alienation from his faith. Hence, while his trauma is not repressed and unknown in the Freudian sense, it still resembles the Caruthian model by the repetition of traumatic feelings and memories that are triggered by similar situations (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 2-4). As a duty-bound clergyman, Jennings does not have the opportunity to forget the cause of his suffering, and he is in a way consumed by it. Yet, as explained above, his awareness is not enough to resolve his conflict, and as a participant in his torment, Jennings repeatedly exposes himself to situations that can trigger his trauma both mentally and physically.

Following this framework, Jennings's consumption of green tea is a significant motif representing his willingness to expose himself to traumatic circumstances, and later it leads to the emergence of the gothic haunting figure. The motif is vital to the story with its symbolic function in the narrative and its role as the story's title. Naming the story after green tea emphasises its metaphorical weight in the narrative rather than making the beverage a simple character detail. In his confession to Dr. Hesselius, Jennings shares that he began drinking green tea to help him focus on his studies and his connection to it:

I found the effect pleasanter, it cleared and intensified the power of thought so. I had come to take it frequently, but not stronger than one might take it for pleasure. ... I used to sit up very late, and it became a habit with me to sip my tea— green tea— every now and then as my work proceeded. ... I had a little kettle on my table, that swung over a lamp, and made tea two or three times between eleven o'clock and two or three in the morning, my hours of going to bed. (Le Fanu, "Green Tea" 18)

The description of Jennings's consumption of green tea here illustrates the transformation of a mundane act into an obsessive and ritualistic habit. A solitary act that he performs in the stillness of the night, repeatedly brewing the tea in the confinement of his dark and claustrophobic study, creates a gothic atmosphere filled with tension and foreboding. Le Fanu's association of an ordinary beverage with a negative, depressing environment and mood may be influenced by the reputation of green tea in Victorian society. Once popular, it later became suspected of being "frequently adulterated" with other harmful substances (Sweet 101-102). Matthew Sweet addresses the perception of green tea in the mid-nineteenth century as "a stomach-churning, nerve-jangling threat to health" that "might

be capable of breaking the barriers” of our universe (101). This hysteria-inducing effect of the beverage is reasserted in Dr. Hesselius’s case notes. The physician argues that, unlike the heart, the brain is not fed by the blood in the veins but by a spiritual fluid in the nerves that allows the supernatural information to be processed by the soul, and he adds that “[b]y various abuses, among which the habitual use of such agents as green tea is one, this fluid may be affected as to its quality, but it is more frequently disturbed as to equilibrium” (Le Fanu, “Green Tea” 34). Thus, Hesselius’s suggestion links the overconsumption of green tea to the unbalancing of Jennings’s spiritual fluid. The drink functions as a key that unlocks Jennings’s spiritual perception and serves as a stimulant that bridges the material and metaphysical realms. In this way, the beverage becomes the focal point where Jennings’s psychological and spiritual unravelling meet with the supernatural apparition that haunts him.

The manifestation of the haunting figure of the story as the spectral monkey is a culmination of Jennings’s guilt, doubt, fear, and ritualistic habits – in other words, the embodiment of Jennings’s personal religious trauma. Jennings himself regards the monkey as “a character of malignity— unfathomable malignity” (22), portraying the spectre as inherently evil and destructive. Hence, Jarrold E. Hogle states that the gothic figures take the shape of ghosts, animals or monsters “to manifest unresolved crimes or conflicts that can no longer be successfully buried from view” (2). Similarly, Andrew Smith argues that these haunting figures “[seek] ... to understand, to control and to alleviate trauma by focusing such emotions through familiar Gothic devices centred on how lost selves can be regenerated” (3). In other words, these apparitions can be regarded as an extension of the repressed emotions, guilt, and secrets that the traumatised and haunted characters fester within themselves. For example, the figure first appears to the reverend when he is alone in a dark omnibus, on his way to buy old books, once again, about some ancient theological studies that go against his Protestant upbringing (Le Fanu, “Green Tea” 18). While the monkey cannot be seen by other people, it only shows itself to Jennings during the times he follows his desire for forbidden knowledge, like an omen crafted for the clergyman. Therefore, it can be argued that “given the painfully reserved and studious nature of that clergyman, and his obsessive interest in pagan mythology, the

monkey seems just as likely to be the embodiment of some aspect of his repressed self” (Punter and Byron 138).

The description of the monkey is important in its connection to Jennings. He recounts that he first saw “two small circular ... reddish light” (Le Fanu, “Green Tea” 18) moving with him as he shifted his position, and then he began “to perceive an outline of something black” (19), which turned out to be “the outline of a small black monkey, pushing its face forward in mimicry to meet” his face (19). Stricken with horror in the face of a grinning, red-eyed monkey, the clergyman tries to push it away with his umbrella, but the figure stays “immovable” as his umbrella passes through it “without the slightest resistance” (19). At first, this spectre looks “sullen and sick” but with an “intense malice and vigilance” that has always been concealed under that “surly languor” (22). Then, Jennings adds that “in total dark it is visible as in daylight,” always accompanied by “a halo that resembles a glow of red embers” (22). While it can be perceived as a common spectre or an illusion, its malignant character with predatory behaviour makes it a symbolic reflection of Jennings’s psychological and spiritual collapse as “the rational subject becomes prey to the uncanny, unseen, and often unfathomable machinations of the psyche” (Brewster 483).

In relation to this, Le Fanu’s choice of the word “mimicry” is significant as it implies that the monkey has a certain connection to Jennings, more than just being an extension of his repressed self. Like a reflection of the reverend’s face in the mirror, it copies his movements, expressions, and behaviours. For example, when Jennings walks, the monkey walks “at exactly [his] pace” (Le Fanu, “Green Tea” 20); when he sits down in his study room, it gets “upon a small table” (21) to stand there; and when Jennings drinks alcohol to distract himself, it also becomes “dazed and languid” (22). Yet, what is crucial in the monkey’s behaviour is that “in all situations, at all hours, it is awake and looking at” Jennings, which “never changes” (22). Like an apex predator, the monkey’s attention is always on the reverend, always making him aware of its existence to torment him. On the one hand, the watchful, glowing red eyes of the monkey can be interpreted as Jennings’s struggle with his own conscience against the religious doubt and guilt he is repressing. These eyes serve as a constant reminder of his internal conflict: a silent

witness and accuser that always follows him. Hence, it can be argued that the watchful eyes of the monkey also symbolise the shame Jennings feels for his wavering faith and the spiritual distance growing between him and his God. Yet, as David Punter regards the gothic figure as an “unmistakably part of his own self” (*The Literature of Terror* 202), and borrowing from Freud’s psychoanalytical theory, Kellermeyer views the monkey as a “Doppelgänger— a manifestation of his repressed Id” (313), the monkey becomes an unmistakable reflection of Jennings’s own traumatised and corrupted self – his Gothic double.

Freud explains the doppelgänger or the Gothic double with the uncanny, which is a certain experience, a figure or an item that “arouses dread and creeping horror” (“The Uncanny” 368). To further explain, the uncanny is “a hidden, familiar thing that has undergone repression and then emerged from it” (390), and it is particularly frightening “because it is not known and familiar” (370). Therefore, the connection between the uncanny and the double lies in the origin of the psychic double of the self, which emerges as a protective mechanism of the early stages of the ego, but then, in later stages of life, returns as an unfamiliar and threatening manifestation of the repressed (387-89). In Gothic literature, the double or the doppelgänger is a motif that represents the fragmentation of the self, and it reveals the repressed parts of the psyche, like deviant emotions, traumatic incidents or corrupted morals, in addition to often mirroring the protagonist’s appearance by being their alter ego, shadow or even twins. In “Green Tea,” however, the demonic monkey is not a traditional doppelgänger as it does not reflect Jennings’s likeness. Yet, its intentional mimicry of his behaviours and Le Fanu’s representation of it through Swedenborg’s ideas about evil spirits can classify it as a form of a doppelgänger.

Le Fanu introduces the gothic figure as an evil spirit in reference to Swedenborg’s theories. In Jennings’s annotated passages, the theologian claims that “[t]here are with every man at least two evil spirits” (Le Fanu, “Green Tea” 10). He regards these spirits as a part of a person that is hidden from each other, but when a person’s inner eye is opened to the spirit world, it is explained that “evil spirits, when seen by other eyes than those of their infernal associates, present themselves, by ‘correspondence,’ in the shape of the beast (*fera*) which represents their particular lust and life, in aspect direful and

atrocious” (Le Fanu, “Green Tea” 11, emphasis in original). While Hesselius chooses to use “beast” for *fera*, the Latin word specifically stands for “wild animal” or “beast of prey” (Kellermeyer 327), which intensifies the aggressive and predatory nature of the apparition. This specific use of the word strengthens the idea that the monkey is more than a representation of Jennings’s guilty conscience; it is a direct manifestation of his repressed and corrupted morals, desires, and religious deviation. In other words, it becomes a manifestation of Jennings’s hidden self, his doppelgänger as “the double portrays the consequences of repression: monster becoming the repressed second self” (Çakır 45).

Considering the monkey as Jennings’s Gothic double, as Jennings continues to steer away from his religious upbringing and pursues heretical studies, his haunting intensifies as his moral and religious degeneration echoes in the evolution of the monkey from a malignant being to an aggressive tormentor. On this transformation, Jennings comments that “the change was shown only in an increased vivacity, and an air of menace, as if it was always brooding over some atrocious plan” (Le Fanu, “Green Tea” 23). In a classic gothic fashion, Jennings always senses the threatening nature of his double, becoming more aware of its existence, and always notices and sees its approach even with his “eyes closed” (25). While the monkey’s presence is not constant at the beginning, it always returns to Jennings’s side after a period of time and remains there which makes the clergyman feel that “it is prevailing, little by little, and drawing [him] more interiorly into hell” (23). However, Jennings’s struggle reaches a new tension when the Gothic double begins to intrude into his religious services in his church, signalling a greater divide between the clergyman and his faith:

The thing exhibited an atrocious determination to thwart me. It was with me in the church— in the reading-desk— in the pulpit— within the communion rails. At last, it reached this extremity, that while I was reading to the congregation, it would spring upon the open book and squat there, so that I was unable to see the page. This happened more than once. ... It seemed to be actuated by intense and increasing fury, whenever I said my prayers, or even meditated prayer. It amounted at last to a dreadful interruption. You will ask, how could a silent immaterial phantom effect that? It was thus, whenever I meditated praying; it was always before me, and nearer and nearer. (24-25)

The haunting figure's rigorous and persistent intrusion into the religious space, specifically Jennings's church and its embroilment in his prayers, which can be considered as the reverend's effort in trying to seek solace and reconnect to his faith, marks the crucial moment of complete spiritual corruption in Jennings's personal religious trauma. As mentioned before, concerning religious trauma, religion and its teachings are a site of conflict in that they both offer salvation and damnation. While Jennings's trauma does not necessarily stem from this conflict, his attempts at recovery and healing are met with this opposing ideology which contributes to his traumatic symptoms. As can be inferred from the passage, the clergyman's need to find comfort in the pages of the Bible and his prayers are met with the monkey's sacrilegious acts as it always "deadens and dulls all forms of relief" (Kellermeyer 347). In that sense, if the function of the monkey is considered a Gothic double, it can be claimed that Jennings is the one who prevents himself from achieving tranquillity. In other words, the clergyman's continuous haunting and deprivation of salvation is not caused by a simple supernatural spectre but by his fragmented and conflicted selves – the believer and the heretic.

As Caralie Cooke, in her study of religious trauma, regards religion as a notion that shatters a person's worldview, she claims that "when an assumptive world shatters, sometimes persons' understandings of themselves shatter as well" (79). To this degree, it can be claimed that the monkey is the shattered and repressed heretic side of Jennings, one that is unknown and unfamiliar to him or the one that he refuses to acknowledge as a part of his self, but always disturbs his psyche. Therefore, Jennings struggles "to live with the cognitive dissonance brought on by wounding" (Vickroy). Concerning this, Zoë Lehmann Imfeld asserts that "[f]or Le Fanu, the gothic motif of doubling becomes central to describing a mode of being which, in its fallen state, responds both to the call of grace and demonic destruction" (107). Le Fanu's use of the Gothic double, in this sense, is reflected in Jennings's condition as he is torn between his devotion to faith and his spiritual trepidation. This way, the monkey exists as a reminder and embodiment of his sins and deviation, the representation of his guilt, but it also acts as a grotesque reminder for him to seek forgiveness even if it is futile. Ece Çakır states that "[a]s excess come to life, the uncanny monster ... thoroughly disrupts order and always signifies threat" (43), and for Jennings, who suffers from his religious trauma, the Gothic double is the constant

warning of his impending doom which he tries to ignore and refuses to recognise as a part of himself. Through this, Le Fanu's shaping of the doppelgänger reveals the personal religious trauma and its psychological consequences in the form of a haunting spectre, one that acts as both a condemning and tempting figure and symbolises the fractured psyche of an individual caught between salvation and spiritual ruin.

The final confession of Jennings to Hesselius, which subsequently leads to his tragic death, is revealed towards the end of their meeting when Jennings's speech starts breaking as he is "overcome" (Le Fanu, "Green Tea" 24) with emotions while trying to articulate his traumatic experience in a "rapidly and trembling" way (27). Once again, Jennings's struggle with the unspeakable nature of his trauma resurfaces, portraying him as the suffering religious person that he is. In striking contrast to his struggle with his speech, his last statement about the horrifying "peculiarity" of his Gothic double is its ability to speak:

The thing began to speak to me. ... speak in words and consecutive sentences, with perfect coherence and articulation; but there is a peculiarity. It is not like the tone of a human voice. It is not by my ears it reaches me— it comes like a singing through my head. This faculty, the power of speaking to me, will be my undoing. It won't let me pray, it interrupts me with dreadful blasphemies. I dare not go on, I could not. Oh! Doctor, can the skill, and thought, and prayers of man avail me nothing! (Le Fanu, "Green Tea" 26)

Jennings's frantic declaration, his apparent horror and worry at this terrifying development in his haunting signifies the transformation of the monkey from the symbolic spectre to the fully vocal and invasive traumatic entity. By granting the monkey the articulation of thought and ability to speak, Le Fanu, in a way, anthropomorphises the spectre with human faculties, which enhances the haunting presence of the doppelgänger, making it more a tangible being than an evil spirit. Considered an "auditory hallucination," this symptom of trauma can cause experiences of "thought withdrawal, delusions of passive influence, and other symptoms suggestive of schizophrenia" (Davidson and van der Kolk 515). While Dr. Hesselius does not diagnose Jennings with schizophrenia or dissociative identity disorder, he suggests that Jennings's habitual use of green tea and his obsession with new theological studies caused him to suffer from "spectral illusions" and "hereditary suicidal mania" (Le Fanu, "Green Tea" 33-34), which

are not caused by a supernatural being but by Jennings's inner conflict. On that note, Bassel A. van der Kolk suggests that people who suffer from psychological illnesses caused by traumatic events are more likely "to have psychosomatic problems, to make suicide attempts, and to engage in self-mutilation and substance abuse" ("The Complexity" 192). Furthermore, for traumatic individuals who experience these types of auditory or visual hallucinations, it is easier for them "to concretize delusions as reality" (de Vries 411). Thus, as Jennings struggles with his haunting and these auditory and spectral illusions, the monkey's haunting speech intensifies his psychological and spiritual collapse. As his condition deteriorates further, the beast starts "gaining such an influence over" him:

[S]ir, you don't know, it is gaining such an influence over me: it orders me about, it is such a tyrant, and I'm growing so helpless. ... it is always urging me to crimes, to injure others, or myself. May God deliver me! ... As we loitered slowly on together the brute that accompanied me was urging me to throw myself down the shaft. I tell you now— oh, sir, think of it! (Le Fanu, "Green Tea" 27)

Such use of this faculty can be interpreted as Jennings's suppressed thoughts of guilt and self-blame returning to his consciousness to voice his complete alienation from his faith, accusing him of blasphemy and urging him towards his awaited punishment. The monkey's authoritative presence increases; it leaves the confines of solitude and becomes the ever-following and speaking figure of Jennings's inner turmoil to further persecute him even when the clergyman is in the presence of other people. This demonstrates how his trauma infiltrated his spiritual defences, breaking his connection to his faith which consequently led to the dismantling of his cognitive boundaries. As Marten W. de Vries names the condition "chronic stress" (411), by becoming a chronic issue of his trauma, the Gothic double is indistinguishable from his reality, becoming an inseparable part of Jennings's identity the influence of which he can no longer resist. By urging him to commit crimes or inflict violence on others, the haunting figure seizes the clergyman's linguistic control and gains the authoritative voice over his fragmented psyche, which represents how religious trauma can lead to the alienation of one's own self and thoughts, resulting in the loss of their agency.

In that respect, this control escalates with the suicidal thoughts the monkey feeds to Jennings, and as Dr. Hesselius fails to help the clergyman in time, “Jennings succumbs to a feeling of powerlessness suggestive of a despair numbed and accepted rather than one that pointedly pains the self” (Hughes 61). In his final attempt at seeking help, Jennings sends an urgent note to Hesselius, informing him that the haunting beast has returned. Jennings shares that he is “confused, very incoherently” and “interrupted, disturbed” as the monkey is aware of everything that has passed between them (Le Fanu, “Green Tea” 29). He specifically states: “It knows all that has happened. It knows everything— it knows you, and is frantic and atrocious. It reviles. ... It knows every word I have written— I write” (29). The final reference to the monkey as an omniscient entity can be analysed as a reference to the deity, Jennings’s God, being displeased with his blasphemous curiosity and pursuits. At the same time, it can refer to the monkey as a part of his identity, always hidden in his unconscious to watch over his guilt and keep him responsible. Regarding this, Jennings’s meeting with Hesselius is not only an acknowledgement of his issues to an expert, but it is also a confession to himself, a recognition of his repressed troubles with his faith. This becomes the last trigger for Jennings as he cannot reconcile his admission with the present disillusionment due to the repression of the traumatic memory. Dori Laub calls this situation the “collapse of witnessing” (“An Event” 80). He states that “the longer the story remains untold, the more distorted it becomes,” which can lead an individual to have difficulties with differentiating between distortion and reality, resulting in the failure of being “an authentic witness” to themselves (79). Thus, for Jennings, who is dominated by the embodiment of his religious trauma, death emerges as the only escape from his afflicted psyche and memory.

Hesselius finds out about Jennings’s suicide through his grieving servants after going to his dark, sombre house. A few hours after sending the note to Hesselius, Jennings “cut his throat with his razor,” which the physician describes as “a frightful gash” on his neck as he steps into the clergyman’s room to see his lifeless body before “the immense pool of blood on the floor” (Le Fanu, “Green Tea” 30). Even if it is a gruesome act, the form of Jennings’s suicide is symbolic as Kellermeyer states that the slashing of the throat ultimately creates another opening, similar to the mouth, “allowing a subliminal part of

your spirit to have a voice in the very act of self-destruction” (355). It can also be interpreted as Jennings’s attempt at silencing the Gothic double to resolve his spiritual turmoil as its voice is the same as Jennings’s voice in his head. Furthermore, targeting the throat is representative of his suffering because the throat, where the vocal cords are located, is a significant part of his body on which he used to rely for performing his religious services and praying through which he once connected to God and his faith. Yet, Le Fanu’s portrayal of Jennings’s suicide does not suggest a failure of morality; rather, he portrays it as the inevitable end of a traumatic individual who is afflicted with guilt, isolation, and the oppressive weight of religious expectation. While Le Fanu does not portray religion as an entirely oppressive institution or a belief system that condemns people, he draws attention to how disruptive religion can be to an individual’s psyche as it partakes in shaping a person’s worldview and personal beliefs – a type of indoctrination that is restrictive but can be challenged even by one’s own peculiar pursuits.

With that being said, Le Fanu explores personal religious trauma and its manifestation through a pious religious man’s descent into a spiritual ruin in “Green Tea.” In “The Familiar” (1872), previously titled “The Watcher” in a prior publication in 1852, the Irish author presents a distinct but similar case of religious anxiety. This time, Le Fanu does not portray religious trauma through a spiritual individual; instead, he focuses on a “freethinker” (“The Familiar” 37), an atheist man named Captain Barton, to reflect on how the absence of faith or spiritual guidance can leave an individual vulnerable to a supernatural haunting as a substitute for divine order or punishment. In both stories, Le Fanu deals with the influence that religion and its teachings can have on an individual’s formation of the psyche and the self, regarding the ability of religion to shape a person’s perception of the world and knowledge. Therefore, in “Green Tea” and “The Familiar,” Le Fanu “exemplif[ies] the dangers of ‘free thinking’” outside of a religion’s boundaries (Corran 46). Moreover, Le Fanu employs the technique of the unreliable narrator not only as a conventional Gothic device but also as a narrative strategy that reflects the fragmented and subjective nature of trauma from a variety of perspectives. For example, even though “The Familiar” is considered another case of Dr. Hesselius in his papers, the story is a second-hand account of a Protestant clergyman named the Reverend Thomas Herbert. According to William McCormack, by listing “The Familiar” immediately after

“Green Tea” and making a Protestant clergyman the main narrator, “the suicidal victim of the first story (the Reverend Jennings) is succeeded and survived by a reliable and unremarkable member of his own profession” (*Dissolute Characters* 145), which frames Barton’s atheism and subsequent spiritual defiance within a religious context. By doing so, once again, Le Fanu layers the story with unreliability, making Barton’s religious trauma unfamiliar to witnesses, or in Shoshana Felman’s words, making the captain’s testimony “*pervasive*” to “*encounter—and make us encounter—strangeness*” (“Education and Crisis” 7, emphasis in original).

Therefore, in this story, Le Fanu employs familiar Gothic motifs of vengeance, guilt, and spectral haunting to represent the psychological unravelling of a former naval officer, Sir James Barton, upon his return to Dublin around 1794 after commanding a royal frigate in the war against the American colonies (“The Familiar” 37). Directly tied to the Protestant Ascendancy, Barton is referred to as “a man of perfect breeding,” an “intelligent and agreeable companion” with “easy, quiet, and even polished” manners making him sought after in refined Dublin society (37). However, with his tendency to be “unsocial” (37), “generally reserved, and occasionally even moody” (38), Le Fanu illustrates a man who hides a secret, a horrifying murder he committed, which will result in his haunting. Barton encounters the Gothic haunting figure for the first time after publicly mocking faith and spirituality as the phantom figure begins echoing and mimicking his footsteps and stalking him late at night. Soon after, the Gothic figure transforms into a material presence and starts sending him threatening letters signed “The Watcher” (41). It appears in the form of a very short man, nearly a dwarf-like figure, who looks like the crew member Barton murdered wearing a “fur travelling-cap” (45), “a red vest and a bad face” (59). Even though he reaches out to a clergyman to find solutions to his suffering, paranoid and horrified Barton starts isolating himself from his friends and fiancée and even runs away from Dublin to escape the torment of the Watcher, as he refuses to confess his sin and seek repentance from God. He refuses to confess his crime not only because of his rejection of admitting his wrongdoings but also because of his terror of acknowledging “a dreadful God” (53) which poses a threat to Barton’s guilt-free existence. Therefore, “the secret of Barton’s persecutions is sustained till the very end of the narration” (Łowczanin 116) as the captain’s trauma is rooted in his denial, moral cowardice, and

inability to confront a spiritual or ethical reckoning. After some time following his return to Dublin, an owl makes its way to Barton's room at night which ends up in the ambiguous death of the captain; his body is found cold in bed, eyes open in terror, with the impression of another presence left on the mattress beside him. Only after his death, the nature of the sins he committed is revealed: Barton is exposed as a lecherous and cruel man who abused his authority as a captain. The man whom Barton murdered and who later haunted him is also revealed to be the father of the girl Barton seduced, whose death he ultimately caused. Thus, "The Familiar," in terms of personal religious trauma, focuses on the psychological costs of a non-believer whose religious fear arises not only from his past sins catching up to him but also in his existential horror of recognising a system designed by a malevolent God to target him.

Julia Briggs considers "The Familiar" as a ghost story, a sub-category of Gothic fiction by stating that "[g]host stories commonly provide an alternative structure of cause and effect, in which the supernatural is not explained away but offers its own pseudo-explanation according to some kind of spiritual law of action and reaction" (177). For example, the return of a wronged soul or the body of a murder victim who is after revenge is a common theme in these stories which "represent[s] the return of the repressed in its most literal and paradigmatic form" (178) or simply the uncanny as can be observed in "The Familiar." Therefore, the return of the murder victim to haunt the perpetrator in the story creates suspense and sustains "the spiritual law." Yet, the action or the cause of the spiritual law is concealed throughout the story due to Captain Barton's initial dismissal of spirituality and his refusal to confess to the crime or hold himself accountable for his past actions.

As "a confirmed atheist who is so assured of his materialism" (Kellermeyer 50), Le Fanu positions Barton as a representative figure of Enlightenment scepticism for the first time at the party he attends with his fiancée, Miss Montague, and her aunt, the Dowager Lady L—⁴. Unlike Jennings, Barton does not refrain from stating his thoughts about religion

⁴ In many of his fiction, Le Fanu omits the names of people, places or some cities as "[i]nitials, blanks, or both were often substituted for proper names in nineteenth-century fiction to enhance the illusion of reality. It is as if the author felt it necessary to delete the names for reasons of tact or legal liability" (John Barth 77).

and religious issues. At the gathering, he disputes “the evidences of revelation” with “the callous scepticism of a confirmed infidel,” aligning himself with the popular “French principles” of the “fashionable” Victorian society (Le Fanu, “The Familiar” 39). In this way, Le Fanu portrays Barton’s situation as a spiritual deficit, a “taint” that renders him vulnerable when confronted with a reality beyond his comprehension (39). Yet, the Irish author does not use Barton’s disbelief as a subject of ridicule or criticism as the narrator notes that “Captain Barton, was guilty of no affectation— the doctrines upon which he insisted, were, in reality, but, too truly the basis of his own fixed belief” (39). The emphasis on his sincere but empirical worldview is crucial to understanding the captain’s character as it portrays him not as a man who is caught up in an ignorant whim, but as an individual who lives his life within the framework of his own set of rules. Moreover, the use of descriptions such as “fearful influences,” “utter disbeliever,” and “preternatural agencies” (39) creates an ironic contradiction between Barton’s fixed materialistic beliefs and the supernatural and spiritual Gothic haunting that will torment him. Thus, it can be argued that Barton’s haunting does not begin with a spectral illusion or an apparition that triggers his repressed memories, but it starts with his determined refusal to believe in the supernatural/spiritual.

What follows the captain’s public refusal of the supernatural/spiritual immediately after the party is the uncanny phantom footsteps stalking him late at night on his “solitary walk homeward” (39). Le Fanu carefully frames the gothic atmosphere to set the scene highly capable of disturbing Barton’s psyche:

He had now reached the lonely road, with its unfinished dwarf walls tracing the foundations of the projected row of houses on either side—the moon was shining mistily, and its imperfect light made the road he trod but additionally dreary—that utter silence which has in it something indefinably exciting, reigned there, and made the sound of his steps, which alone broke it, unnaturally loud and distinct. (39)

Le Fanu’s attention to detail with the silences, lights, and restless isolation creates a foreboding atmosphere which only breaks “unnaturally” with Barton’s movements. Through the use of this traditional gothic landscape, a liminal, eerie urban space, Le Fanu prepares the moment in which the boundaries between the real and the supernatural begin to blur. Concerning this, William Hughes argues that “[t]he supernatural is, in many

respects, a catalyst rather than a discrete cause” (55). The use of supernatural figures or settings is not the reason for the torment Barton will endure. It is, in a way, a precondition for his haunting, symbolising the extent to his lack of belief can inflict harm on him.

It is in this gloomy environment that the captain transitions from a sceptic to the confused target of the uncanny figure when he first hears the “sudden” footsteps, “pattering at a measured pace” behind him (Le Fanu, “The Familiar” 39). As the sound of footsteps continues to follow him, Barton becomes suspicious of being stalked late at night and turns around “to confront his pursuer,” but he sees that “no form of any kind was visible” (39). As he was “by no means a fanciful person” (40), he tries to rationalise the sounds as illusions in order to continue his walk. Yet, as Briggs explains, “[t]he ghost story reverts to a world in which imagination can produce physical effects” (178), a world in which an individual can rationalise the uncanny situation but still suffer from unexplainable ordeals like illusions or hallucinations. Therefore, when Barton tries to reason with himself, the sound of the phantom footsteps returns, but this time, it defies natural explanation: “as if with the special design of showing that the sounds were not the responses of an echo—the steps sometimes slackened nearly to a halt, and sometimes hurried for six or eight strides to a run, and again abated to a walk” (Le Fanu, “The Familiar” 40). The change in the steps, which used to mimic the captain’s steps, is deliberate, aiming to halt his attempts to rationalise the sound, which emphasises the origin of the echo not as a product of imagination, but as an external threat, a possible supernatural being stalking Barton.

Every time Barton turns back to face his stalker, he finds himself alone on the road, and “[i]n spite of all his scepticism, he felt something like a superstitious fear stealing fast upon him” (40). This incident is the first break in his assured materialistic disbelief, the first shatter in his assumptive world as he is filled with “unwonted and uncomfortable sensations” (40). The auditory haunting, preceding the appearance of the gothic supernatural, creates an absence, a gap, in his understanding of the World, and as Cooke explains, “[c]oincident with the loss of the assumptive world, a person enters a state of not knowing; the construct by which they had that structured their world is gone” (146). However much Barton tries to protect his rational mind due to his “stubborn pride” (Le Fanu, “The Familiar” 40), his psyche is already wounded by the incomprehensible event,

“dissociated from symbolization, meaning, and the usual processes of integration” (Leys 239). In accordance with this idea, the first haunting Barton experiences also represents the indirectness of the trauma of the Caruthian trauma model. He is haunted by a repetitive occurrence that cannot be seen but can be heard and felt, breaking through his mind’s defences and unsettling the unconscious where trauma takes root. Furthermore, as Caruth states, “[t]o be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event” (“Trauma and Experience” 4-5), which can manifest through the senses, in this case hearing, to target an individual.

The next incident in the story marks the change in the haunting presence from a possible illusion, as Barton convinces himself, to a materialised, threatening external being. The captain receives an anonymous letter addressed to him as “late captain of the ‘Dolphin’” and signed by “THE WATCHER” (Le Fanu, “The Familiar” 41). In the letter, the sender warns the captain of “DANGER,” advising him against walking the street from the last night if Barton does not wish to “meet with something unlucky, for he has reason to dread” (41). Without a “slightest mark, or clue of any kind” (41), Barton finds himself rereading the letter, trying to ascertain the origin of the sender, though he finds no relief, even if there is an implied connection between himself and the Watcher, as the latter knows the name of the captain’s ship and his profession. Also, Barton convinces himself that the Watcher is the owner of the phantom footsteps, even though this is not implied in the letter. The anonymity of the letter with a sinister epithet maintains the suspense of the gothic story; however, in the same manner, the obscurity of the letter signifies the return of the repressed past to force recognition on Barton. As Julian Moynahan states, the haunting figure “will invade the captain’s living space” to not only threaten him but also coerce him into “surrender[ing] his tormented existence” by admitting his failures (129). The letter is the first physical intrusion into Barton’s living space, but it also serves as the second sign of an imposed threat on the captain’s materialistic scepticism and atheism. In terms of the representation of trauma, the warning concerns the repetition of the previous night’s events, the possibility of triggering a similar horrifying situation which distresses Barton’s psyche. Moreover, the capitalisation of “DANGER” and “THE WATCHER” can be regarded as intentional as not only the content of the letter is menacing, but the capitalised words are also visually threatening. Individually, the two

words have implied grim meanings, but when they are taken together as “DANGER THE WATCHER,” it can be interpreted as an ominous warning to Barton, advising him against a malevolent talking being, preying on his every move.

Barton does not share his troubling situation with anyone because of his “pride,” choosing to “treat the whole affair as unworthy of a thought” (Le Fanu, “The Familiar” 42). However, Barton begins to avoid the street, as the letter and the events of the night “haunted him pertinaciously, tormenting him with perplexing doubts, and depressing him with undefined apprehensions” (42). Similar to Jennings, the contrast between his inner disturbance and the outward fake indifference represents the isolating effect of trauma, signalling his estrangement from his close circle due to the inner conflict he cannot accept. He further becomes a recluse when he accidentally visits the same street at night, once again hears the sounds of invisible footsteps, and receives a second letter in the morning:

You may as well think, Captain Barton, to escape from your own shadow as from me; do what you may, I will see you as often as I please, and you shall see me, for I do not want to hide myself, as you fancy. Do not let it trouble your rest, Captain Barton; for, with a *good conscience*, what need you fear from the eye of ‘THE WATCHER.’ (43, emphasis in original)

The second letter emphasises the omnipresence of the Watcher, portraying him as an inescapable being, which establishes the power dynamic between Barton and the Watcher. The Watcher claims visibility and transparency, contrasting with Barton’s silence, repression, and hidden guilt. Furthermore, by claiming that he is closer to Barton than his shadow, the Gothic figure transforms into a doppelgänger, becoming “inextricable from Barton” (Kellermeyer 58). However, the Watcher’s implication being an omniscient and omnipresent being can also suggest that the Gothic figure is a representative of a deity or a god. While the identity of the god in the story, whether it is the Catholic God or the Protestant God, remains unknown, a supernatural figure capable of tormenting a person is no different from a malevolent God for Barton’s atheism. Thus, Imfeld regards “the *immanence* and persistence of a ghostly presence” as the reason for Barton’s confrontation with his repressed self as “a man in need of salvation” (127, emphasis in original) and considers the Watcher to be one who “directly links the haunting to Barton’s conscience” (132). Therefore, even if Barton does not regard the

Watcher as a god, the emphasis on his conscience under the surveillance of a supernatural or spiritual being aligns the Watcher with the force of divine punishment. Thus, this incident, which directly clashes with Barton's sceptic worldview, results in the captain's becoming "out of spirits," "absent[,] and silent" (Le Fanu, "The Familiar" 43-44).

With these continuous hauntings in multiple forms, Barton starts, "in his own mind, vaguely and instinctively connect[ing] with certain passages in his past life, which, of all others, he hated to remember" (43). The implied memories concern the murder he committed, but avoid dwelling on those specific memories, the captain tries to keep himself busy with business. Yet, upon the first encounter with the physical form of the Watcher, he falls in "a spasm of agony or terror," becoming "ghastly and haggard" as he recognises the face of the Watcher as that of the man he murdered years ago (45). The physical manifestation of the Watcher, as a dwarf-like man in a "fur travelling-cap" (45), wearing "a red vest and a bad face" (59), marks a significant transition of the Watcher from a vague terror to an embodied Gothic double. Concerning the development of the haunting figure's presence in the story, Agnieszka Łowczanin claims that "[i]t is very characteristic of Le Fanu's stories that his supernatural tormenting can be divided into stages, in which its intensification is accompanied by a progressive deterioration of the physical and mental state of the haunted person" (116). As the intensity of the Gothic double's influence on Barton increases, the captain's physical and mental condition starts deteriorating, causing him to isolate himself and become emotionally distant as a sign of his trauma. Similar to Jennings, Barton finds himself unable to hide his reactions when confronted with the physical manifestation of his tormentor, but unlike the guilt-stricken vicar, Barton's terror arises not from his "good conscience" but from his desperation at the prospect of the terrible retribution directed against him.

Furthermore, the Watcher's form reflects the escalating intensity of the haunting. He assumes a material form, which can be seen not only by Barton but by others as well. By crossing the threshold between the real and the supernatural, Barton's Watcher infiltrates the captain's consciousness, hastening his psychological decline. For example, Barton tries to leave Dublin with his fiancée and her family to distance himself from the Watcher, but his tormentor follows him to the destinations where he interacts with General

Montague, Barton's friend and soon-to-be father-in-law: "'He touched your arm—he spoke to you—he pointed to me. God be merciful to me, there is no escape,' said Barton, in the low, subdued tones of despair" (Le Fanu, "The Familiar" 63). This shift from a private affliction to a socially observable, talking, interacting figure of torment reinforces the Watcher's increasing influence and power over Barton. Julia Briggs notes that ghost stories tend to stage "the most primitive, punitive, and sadistic of impulses," with revenge being one of the genre's most dominant motifs to reflect "the degree of physical disgust or horror evoked" (182). In this sense, more than just a haunting figure, the Watcher symbolises the return of the wronged soul, transgressing the laws of nature, which stands for the Gothic theme of vengeance and moral haunting in the story. Thus, as mentioned above, only through the Watcher's persistent haunting "does Barton recognise his own sin against the man who haunts him" (Imfeld 132) and starts questioning his weak belief or his perception of the world, which leads him to recognise "his own inadequacy in the face of God" (130).

As these horrifying incidents become common and his mental condition declines, Barton decides to seek help; nevertheless, initially, instead of a religious authority that can help in his spiritual plight, he approaches a doctor, a man of logic and science. Barton's insistence on choosing a doctor emphasises his persistent reliance on materialistic and logical explanations as a way to rationalise the mysterious situation he is in. During his consultation, in which the doctor declares that there "was nothing amiss" (Le Fanu, "The Familiar" 46) except for some digestive issues, Barton starts questioning the doctor about the possibility of falsely declaring a man dead as the Gothic figure repeated "Still alive—Still alive!" (51) to him during his hauntings. Barton tries to theorise a way of identifying the return of the dead man with "lock-jaw," or tetanus, with a disease "causing the man to shrink in all his proportions," or with medical malpractices in other countries his ship has sailed before (47). All of his questions receive the same negative answer which further confuses Barton as it leaves him without any rational explanation. As Jarlath Killeen argues, "ghosts could not exist, according to both Protestant theology and dogmatic naturalism," and even if they did, there would be a more "intellectual and existential" interpretation of their presence (270). Thus, through this perspective, Le Fanu's implied criticism of the limits of logic and rationalism suggests that psychological or spiritual

crises can escape even scientific observation, ultimately forcing a sceptical individual like Barton to seek meaning in spiritual or metaphysical explanations.

Therefore, at the moment when Barton's logic fails him and he finds himself unable to account for his lack of belief, he turns to a clergyman who is the symbol of every notion he rejects. The captain's return to mysticism or his attempt at understanding the possible spiritual existence marks a crucial psychological turning point in the story. He confesses that he has been "too much the reverse— too sceptical, too slow of belief," but "the perpetual evidence of [his] own senses" with "the overwhelming certainty" compels him to believe, as he states: "I have no escape from the conviction— ... I am haunted and dogged, go where I may, by— by a DEMON!" (Le Fanu, "The Familiar" 54). Identifying the Watcher as a demon, a supernatural but religious figure signifies the change in Barton's perception of his situation. Moreover, accepting the Watcher as a "preternatural creature" compels him to accept the being as a revelation "of an entire metaphysical system based on punishment and the infliction of apparently arbitrary human suffering" (Killeen 272), which is a direct contradiction of what Barton believes in.

Thus, with this acknowledgement, his haunting or his suffering shifts from an external threat to an internal collapse when "Barton is forced to confront his *actual* identity as a sinner in need of salvation," and he "re-examines his being in relationship to God" (Imfeld 130, emphasis in original). This confrontation, in a way, reveals the source of Barton's religious trauma which stems from the void left by scepticism in the form of an existential dread. Specifically, his estrangement from God is the crucial point of his religious trauma since "people's assumptions about God may shatter" in the process of their suffering (Cooke 156). Therefore, in an effort to make sense of his torment, Barton reveals his thoughts to the clergyman:

"The fact is," said Barton, "whatever may be my uncertainty as to the authenticity of what we are taught to call revelation, of one fact I am deeply and horribly convinced, that there does exist beyond this a spiritual world— a system whose workings are generally in mercy hidden from us— a system which may be, and which is sometimes, partially and terribly revealed. I am sure— I know," continued Barton, with increasing excitement, "that there is a God— a dreadful God— and that retribution follows guilt, in ways the most mysterious and stupendous— by agencies the most inexplicable and terrific;— there is a spiritual system— great God, how I

have been convinced!— a system malignant, and implacable, and omnipotent, under whose persecutions I am, and have been, suffering the torments of the damned!— yes, sir— yes— the fires and frenzy of hell!” (Le Fanu, “The Familiar” 52-53)

His desperate declaration is observed by the clergyman, who is not named but referred to as the Doctor—. He becomes alarmed by Barton’s behaviour, particularly when his speech turns into a “wild and excited rapidity” with a look of “indefinable horror” on his face (53). In these confrontations or confessions of his repressed fears, Barton starts to acknowledge a higher being suppressing the limits of his comprehension, which results in the shattering of Barton’s assumptive world. Regarding this perception of God, not as a merciful redeemer but as a vengeful persecutor, Cooke explains that “[t]he loss of the assumptive world allows for a discussion of God” in such a way that “the understanding of God can become an even stronger force in protecting their assumptive world than it was previously” (154-56). In this manner, Barton’s shattered assumptive world tries to bridge itself back by accepting a form of spirituality, but his interpretation is structured by the fear of punishment and vengeance. Thus, Barton’s new-found belief, rooted in Gothic horror, portrays God not as a source of mercy or salvation, but as an incomprehensible authority of divine punishment.

Jack Sullivan states that the doctor and the clergyman Barton visits “become associated in our minds with ineffectual orthodoxies and institutions” as both of them fail to help the captain with his affliction (58). The doctor fails by dismissing Barton’s psychological state, and the clergyman fails by not believing in the apparition of the demon and offering false hopes of salvation to Barton, which he replies with “I have no hope to cling to ... I am lost— now and for ever lost” (Le Fanu, “The Familiar” 54). Against of Barton’s hopelessness, the clergyman tries to offer him some hope by suggesting that the non-believer Barton should pray for God to help him, but this time, Barton harshly rejects the Doctor—’s advice:

“Pray, pray,” echoed he again; “I can’t pray— I could as easily move a mountain by an effort of my will. I have not belief enough to pray; there is something within me that will not pray. You prescribe impossibilities— literal impossibilities. ... I have tried, and the attempt only fills me with confusion; and, sometimes, terror; I have tried in vain, and more than in vain. The awful, unutterable idea of eternity and infinity oppresses and maddens my brain whenever my mind approaches the

contemplation of the Creator; I recoil from the effort scared. I tell you, Doctor—, if I am to be saved, it must be by other means. The idea of an eternal Creator is to me intolerable— my mind cannot support it.” (55)

His response to the clergyman reveals the extent of his religious trauma as Kellermeyer notes that “humanity is ignorant of the greater systems that exist beyond our ken” (51) and outside of control and complete recognition. This concept threatens Barton’s psyche and his perception of the self since it makes him feel insignificant and powerless against “a dreadful God” that watches over him. Therefore, for Barton, the concept of the divine becomes an unbearable structure, an idea that can cause traumatic dissociation. As Balaev suggests, trauma is not simply a return to a moment of violence; it is also a dissonance created in an individual’s mind through various experiences (“Trauma Studies” 366). Therefore, Barton’s torment is not caused by the consequences of his sin, but by the disorientation he goes through to incorporate the spiritual experiences he is forced to endure and accept. In this sense, it can be argued that the Watcher carries another symbolic meaning of his trauma as its manifestation renders the captain’s spiritual crisis visible and inescapable. Therefore, as Hughes suggests, “the sight of the uncanny in itself is supposedly sufficient to destabilise the mind and to bring death” (58), but the apparition of the haunting is not the only reason that Barton’s fate is doomed. His inability to comprehend a spiritual system and his reluctance to confess his sins and seek repentance lead him to his tragic end.

Barton spends his final days under surveillance by his close circle and in isolation to be protected from the Watcher. His traumatic symptoms worsen as he becomes “no longer the excited and despairing man he had been before; a strange alteration had passed upon him— an unearthly tranquillity reigned in his mind— it was the anticipated stillness of the grave” (Le Fanu, “The Familiar” 67). The specific phrase Le Fanu uses, “unearthly tranquillity,” is ironic in Barton’s condition as he is neither at peace nor has metaphysical sentiments; rather, Le Fanu’s phrase suggests a psychological dissociation. Due to the intensity of his trauma, a traumatised individual, in this case Barton himself, can become a shell of his former self, turning into a silent and emotionally paralysed person, incapable of regulating his fragmented mind (van der Kolk and McFarlane, “The Black Hole” 16-18). Moreover, in his dissociative state, Barton declares, “my punishment is nearly ended.

... my agony is almost over. Comfort has been revealed to me, and what remains of my allotted struggle I will bear with submission—even with hope” (Le Fanu, “The Familiar” 67), which does not suggest a turn for religious devotion or surrender to the divine; instead, it emphasises the captain’s resignation. As Geoffrey H. Hartman argues, since the use of literature helps attribute meaning to the traumatic memory and negative events in the fragmented mind, it follows that the traumatic unconscious “provokes symbolic language” (“On Traumatic Knowledge” 540-41). That is why Barton’s description of his current condition as hopeful is not a sincere and positive consideration of his life; it is a false comfort within a concealed fear that he clings to. However, as Agnieszka Łowczanin states, “[h]aving an indelible mark on his past, Barton cannot change his fate—the sin, once committed, cannot be erased” (117). Thus, his past, the repressed and ignored sins he committed, catches up to him, revealing the extent of his trauma.

Not only does Barton encounter the Watcher’s physical form a few more times before his death, but his haunting has also transformed into a fully spiritual horror. He is terrified of the spiritual and supernatural system that is ready to judge him and of confronting his tormentor before his impending death:

when the justice of Heaven permits the Evil one to carry out a scheme of vengeance— when its execution is committed to the lost and terrible victim of sin, who owes his own ruin to the man, the very man, whom he is commissioned to pursue— ... the torments and terrors of hell are anticipated on earth. ... But though death is welcome, I shrink with an agony you cannot understand— ... I am to see him again— once more— (Le Fanu, “The Familiar” 68).

In Gothic terms, the Watcher is the uncanny spectre, who returned from death for his final revenge. Yet, due to Barton’s personal religious trauma, he assumes the role of an agent of the “dreadful God,” standing for the captain’s apprehension against an unforgiving spiritual system. In Barton’s eyes, his tormentor has permission from a divine being, and he has no power to resist it. Even though his Gothic descent, on account of his trauma, suggests an inclination to accept the supernatural, Barton still lacks the belief to seek redemption. Regarding this, Killeen suggests that Barton’s journey is “not just a journey from ‘doubt’ to faith,” but from a lack of faith to an unknown religious framework, which forces him “to confront the possibility of a cosmos under the control of an ‘inexorable’

force” (271). Even if Barton tries to accept it, as he confessed to the clergyman, his psyche or “mind cannot support it” (Le Fanu, “The Familiar” 55).

At last, Barton’s mysterious death arrives on the wings of an “ill-favoured bird,” an owl (70). To intensify the psychological and spiritual collapse through gothic imagery, similar to the monkey in “Green Tea,” Le Fanu chooses to use “a sinister animal to embody a vengeful spirit” (Shaw 200). Traditionally regarded as a death omen, the owl starts to aggravate Barton: “I can’t get it out of my head that that accursed bird has got out somehow ... I have been dreaming about him. ... Such hateful dreams!” (Le Fanu, “The Familiar” 71). The captain’s last moments occur late at night, when he is locked in his room with the owl. Barton repeats “Oh, God— oh, my God!” in horror before releasing “a yell of agony so appalling and hideous” that the servant bursts through the door in horror (71). The owl flies “through the doorway, ... away into the darkness of the outer space,” while the servants find Barton’s body “huddled together ... sightless eyes, still open” (72). To their horror, the bed bears “a deep indenture, as if caused by a heavy pressure” (73), implying the Watcher’s possible physical presence in the final moments of the captain’s life. Thus, through the use of gothic conventions, like the Watcher who follows the captain everywhere, his personal religious trauma is represented as an affliction that cannot be ignored, evaded or repressed. In other words, as defined by Caruth, trauma, in its unassimilated and unknown form, always finds a way to return to haunt the victim (*Unclaimed Experience* 4-5).

The topic of haunting in relation to trauma is present in the other stories written by Sheridan Le Fanu, and “The Vision of Tom Chuff” (1870) offers a different perspective. As Julia Briggs argues “[t]he source of terror may intrude into the familiar in the form of the past ... as dreams do” (176). This story reveals the haunting in the form of a hellish vision of a terrifying dream sequence. In this way, Le Fanu weaves dreams and reality, the rational and the supernatural, life and death in the discussion of trauma. Therefore, the trauma in this story is not only about the character’s relationship with religion; it is also about how moral awakening through a catastrophic revelation of damnation can produce traumatic symptoms and affect an individual’s identity and behaviour.

Originally written as “The Drunkard’s Dream” (1838) from the narration of Father Purcell⁵, “The Vision of Tom Chuff” is published thirty-three years later anonymously in the literary magazine *All the Year Round*. Gathered and edited by M. R. James, the story was republished in Le Fanu’s posthumous short story collection, *Madam Crowl’s Ghost and Other Tales*, in 1923. It is one of the stories that Le Fanu rewrites to appeal to his English audience; thus, he changes the setting from an Irish one to the fictional “melancholy Catsteane Moor, in the north of England,” centred around the remote village of Shackleton (“The Vision” 157). Compared to the previous version, Le Fanu also changes the narrator to an unknown one, once again making the narrator unreliable and a distant, unfamiliar figure to the protagonist, while in “The Drunkard’s Dream,” Father Purcell is the first-hand witness to Pat Connell’s traumatic unravelling. The last change Le Fanu makes in the story is the protagonist. Connell becomes Tom Chuff, but the two characters, based on their personality and fate, largely remain the same.

Therefore, in “The Vision of Tom Chuff” the narration follows Tom Chuff who is an abuser, a brutal poacher, and a drunkard, who “beat his wife, and led his children a life of terror and lamentation” and “hardly made an ostensible pretence of earning his bread by any honest industry” (157). One night, Chuff returns to his cramped and shabby house, “with his cudgel in his hand,” drinking as usual (157). After falling into a sudden slumber by the fireside, which makes his family think that he is dying, Chuff finds himself in a trance, standing in the churchyard of Shackleton. His vision starts there as he falls down an open grave to descend into the underworld in which the images of hell and torture welcome him. There, Tom Chuff sees the ghost of his late father, who informs him about the eternal damnation that is waiting for him. Chuff, terrified by what he witnesses in his vision, pleads to his father to help him, begs for another chance to change his way of life, and in a similar way to a Faustian pact, he strikes a deal with the image of his father. The spectral figure issues a warning: “The command is given to let you forth for one trial more. But if you are found again drinking with the drunken, and beating your fellow-servants, you shall return through the door by which you came, and go out no more” (163). Although the deal he struck is bargained for his life and “not for money or

⁵ The titular character and narrator of Le Fanu’s earliest short story collection, *The Purcell Papers* (1880).

knowledge[,] ... [t]he bargain with the devil is an inescapable pact and it eventually causes eternal damnation” (Königshofer 70). As Kellermeyer notes, Chuff is “a person who yearns for redemption and agency, but is robbed of it by his own weaknesses” (41). Even though he tries to change his way of living when he returns to life, he soon succumbs back to his old habits, sealing his fate for eternity. Thus, the vision he sees serves as a gothic prophecy, leading to his death, which he foresaw in his vision. Compared to the previous stories, “The Vision of Tom Chuff” has an inclination towards Calvinism in its tone as “Calvinism rejected the idea that mankind was capable of progress and true reformation” and without “harsh external incentives, mankind would at any point devolve into chaos” (29). What unfolds then, as Chuff’s haunting vision reveals the workings of personal religious trauma through gothic imagery, is a narrative that represents how the soul’s failure to reform can lead to a traumatising encounter with divine judgement and how moral transformation becomes difficult when it is driven more by fear and religious obligation than by a sincere desire for renewal.

As stated above, the story immediately starts with establishing Tom Chuff’s character as a cruel man whose corrupted morals invite a religious reckoning. The narrator sets the gothic scene on a “very dark” winter night and compares Chuff’s approaching figure to “a bogie from the moor” (Le Fanu, “The Vision” 157). His family is described as living in constant fear, “cowering in a corner,” and watching him anxiously as “Jack did the ogre in the nursery tale” (157). McFarlane and van der Kolk claim that “[tr]aumatized individuals challenge the limits of the human capacity for compassion” (“Conclusions” 562). Even though Chuff has yet to demonstrate any trauma symptoms, from the start of the story, Le Fanu establishes the struggle of dealing with a trauma victim who is violent and susceptible to addiction. On the other hand, by employing such a portrayal, Le Fanu also illustrates domestic horror as an example of trauma beyond religious representation. Yet, the irony here lies in the fact that while Chuff’s wife and children are expected to be traumatised by their husband and father, Tom Chuff ends up being the one who experiences the trauma manifested as a horrifying vision of hell.

As “a death-like pallor came over his face,” Chuff’s visionary journey into the depths of hell begins with disorientation as “a sudden “swimming in his head” and a sound “like

one stroke of a loud church bell smote his brain” (Le Fanu, “The Vision” 159). The toll of the church bell is suggestive of a funeral bell, also signalling the start of Chuff’s psychological descent. When he comes to his senses, the poacher finds himself at the edge of Shakleton churchyard, under a “moonless” night in which “sky and land blended together in an undistinguishable and awful blank” (159). The silent, eerie landscapes give the impression “of the character of silent menace and fury” as Chuff realises the “quaking of the heart that seems to portend the approach of something awful” (159). These descriptions further invoke the gothic sense of dread, increasing the anticipation of the upcoming terror. Moreover, in this way, Le Fanu creates a liminal space in which he “explor[es] the nonexistent boundaries between reality, fantasy, and delusion” to further delve into “an inner world of images, dreams, trance states, and catalepsy” in his Gothic fiction to represent trauma (Briggs 179).

Maria Beville argues that “the Gothic offers perspectives on the past as inaccessible and on memory as unreliable or unstable” and refers to the Gothic fiction’s capability of revealing past sins or past traumas to the present consciousness (55). Therefore, the first association Chuff makes with this transitional environment comes from his repressed past and memories, which are described as uncomfortable, “nothing but menace and misgiving” (Le Fanu, “The Vision” 160). He recognises the place he is in as the training spot “in his lawless calling” where his father used to bring him as a boy to meet with other poachers (160). Therefore, as suggested by Imfeld, Le Fanu uses landscapes or the natural environment as a reflection of his characters, which removes the dream space from the natural ground and makes it a site of Chuff’s culminated sins (121). On another note, the place that is marked by his sins is still a part of the churchyard, a sacred ground which implies Chuff’s disconnection from his religious practices and beliefs. Even if he is not a non-believer, Chuff is a man who is deeply in error.

Łowczanin states that “[w]e can also trace the author’s indebtedness to the Terror Gothic in his enhancing the supernatural by means of imagery,” specifically in Le Fanu’s descriptions of the uncanny settings, as it can be observed in “The Vision of Tom Chuff” (117). Yet, she also adds that concerning “the ingenious malignity of the supernatural and the way it influences the characters’ lives are concerned, the more likely tradition seems

to be rather that of the Horror Gothic school” (117). Thus, in a blend of the two Gothic schools, Le Fanu increases the horror and terror in the story starting with an open grave imagery:

About a yard away, in rear of the tree, behind himself, and extending to his left, was an open grave, the mould and rubbish piled on the other side. At the head of this grave stood the beech-tree; its columnar stem rose like a huge monumental pillar. He knew every line and crease on its smooth surface. The initial letters of his own name, cut in its bark long ago, had spread out and wrinkled like the grotesque capitals of a fanciful engraver, and now with a sinister significance overlooked the open grave, as if answering his mental question, “Who for is t’ grave cut?” (“The Vision 160)

As explained by Freud’s concept of the “uncanny,” the scenery is one that Chuff knows by heart, even from the “smooth surface” of the tree to the carvings on its bark. He is no stranger to the place, and yet it feels eerily unfamiliar to him, evoking the feelings of suspense and panic. Moreover, as the image centres around the open grave with a tree resembling a tombstone, with carved initials on its bark, it exemplifies Le Fanu’s use of Gothic horror and terror together in his fiction, as explained by Łowczanin. Sally E. Corran explains that “[i]n Le Fanu’s tales, the supernatural moves beyond ghostly warnings and signs, taking up residence in the material world” (64), and thus, the grave’s uncanny presence in a familiar real setting suggests that Chuff’s eternal damnation has already taken its roots in the material world and is waiting for him. Therefore, the imagery is both psychologically disturbing and religiously charged in the way that it appears to him in a dream, as both a sign from a higher being and from deep in his unconscious. Even before he can confirm the question in his mind – “Who for is t’ grave cut?” – the image before him answers, recalling how he engraved his initials on the bark in the past, signifying the fact that he caused his condemnation by his own hand. In terms of a symbol for personal religious trauma, Hartman asserts that “[w]here there is dream there is (was) trauma” (“On Traumatic Knowledge” 546), suggesting how dreams are not solely whimsical images or symbolic occurrences, but they often carry traces from repressed trauma. The parenthetical “was,” in that sense, also suggests that trauma can belong to the past, but haunting happens in the present and will/can continue to exist in the future. Therefore, the vision before Chuff, in a way, is a site of his trauma, or repressed memories, returning back to haunt him, while also warning him of impending descent into hell.

Chuff's confrontation with his past takes a new form as he sees an approaching figure, who "whistled through his finger by way of signal," just as his father used to do "in old times" (Le Fanu, "The Vision" 160). As the phantom figure gets closer, it resembles more of his father as he "held up the bag" in his hand, as it "was his custom to call out to" his son about what he had in the bag (161). Now, his past is closer than ever, appearing before him in his father's likeness to deepen his haunting. Much to his horror, Chuff hears the phantom yell of his father: "Tom Chuff's soul!" (161). Combined with the open grave, the calling of his soul solidifies a shift in his situation, signalling a rupture from his real life and a sign of realisation that has come too late for him. In other words, the call answers the unvoiced question in his mind, "Who for is t' grave cut?" To borrow from Caruth's phrase, the yell is the "otherness of a human voice that cries out from the wound, a voice that witnesses a truth" that Chuff cannot see or know (*Unclaimed Experience* 4). While it is his father who declares the claim of his soul, it is actually a cry from his unsaved soul itself, returned from his unconscious to confront his consciousness.

From this moment onward, the vision escalates as the call of his soul serves as an alarm, which brings Chuff to a realisation. As he recognises the situation he is in, the phantom of his father "suddenly cast itself down" in alarm as "an enormous black dog with a rough coat like a bear's" emerges behind and bounces towards Chuff to either attack him or, this time, claim his body alongside his soul (161). Once again, Le Fanu's interest in Swedenborg can be observed here as his characters, with a tendency to be Swedenborgian, are haunted or preyed upon by evil spirits in the shape of animals, and it is suggested that "[t]hose whose hearts are good will follow the angels to heaven, and those who are selfish or egotistical will follow their demons into hell" (Imfeld 128). Hence, terrified by the approaching beast, Tom Chuff, stumbling back, falls down the open grave, "which represents the door to death and hell" (Königshofer 74), and follows the demonic figure into the depths of hell:

down he went, expecting almost at the same instant to reach the bottom. But never was such a fall! Bottomless seemed the abyss! Down, down, down, with immeasurable and still increasing speed, through utter darkness, ... second after second, minute after minute, through the chasm downward he flew, the icy perspiration of horror covering his body, and suddenly, as he expected to be dashed

into annihilation, his descent was in an instant arrested with a tremendous shock, which, however, did not deprive him of consciousness even for a moment. (Le Fanu, "The Vision" 161)

Le Fanu emphasises the contrast between Chuff's bizarre descent into hell and his abrupt but safe landing. The transformation of the grave from an open pit to a nearly endless gate signifies the transition between life and death, as well as the real and the supernatural as Chuff himself crosses the threshold into the infernal space from a familiar setting. Elisabeth Königshofer argues that "Tom's fall is twofold," which she compares to "the notion of the fall in a biblical sense" (73). He first falls into the grave in this dream-vision because of the dog and later is pushed into the same grave to die by his brother-in-law. Königshofer relates this fall to the fall of Eve from Eden as she is tempted by an outside force, and argues that Chuff's second fall is a moral one, paralleling the fall of Satan (73). In both cases, referring back to Le Fanu's Swedenborgian approach to the story, it can be argued that no matter the outside influence, Chuff has an active role in both of his falls as he possesses free will, but lacks the necessary conviction to save himself. Moreover, regarding the author's Calvinist tone in the story, Chuff's predestination is certain as the dream also serves as a prophetic vision that is expected to unfold in reality.

Upon landing, he finds himself in "a smoke-stained cavern or catacomb," mainly dark but faintly lit by "a dull glow as of charcoal" from the numerous passages going deeper into the earth (Le Fanu, "The Vision" 161). The scene before him evokes the image of the traditional Christian Hell, an underworld of fire and darkness. Within this space, the phantom of his father approaches, but this time, he "could barely recognise him, he was so monstrously altered" (161), which indicates that his father is condemned to eternal punishment like himself. His father beckons him: "I've been looking for you, Tom. Welcome home, lad; come along to your place" (162). The words Le Fanu uses here are significant as they stress the horrific but prophetic position that Chuff is in – he no longer belongs to the material world; his place is in the infernal realm. Moreover, the sentence his father utters can be viewed as sympathetic and even affectionate, but his "hollow and ... derisive voice" terrifies his son as it is unfamiliar and strange to him. Similar to how the Watcher symbolised the divine punishment, the ghost of his father is not the man Chuff used to know. It stands for a higher judgement devoid of familiar relations:

“Who are they?”

“New-comers, like yourself, lad,” answered his father apathetically. “They give over that work in time, finding it is no use.”

“What shall I do?” said Tom, in an agony.

“It’s all one.”

“But what shall I do?” reiterated Tom, quivering in every joint and nerve.

“Grin and bear it, I suppose.”

“For God’s sake, if ever you cared for me, as I am your own child, let me out of this!”

“There’s no way out.” (162)

The phantom father’s apathy continues as he takes Chuff deeper into the hell, ignoring the pleas of his son as he demands help. As Julia Briggs argues, “Gothic writing had displayed a marked tendency to represent the family as a source of danger, even as a model of false consciousness” (181). Therefore, the ghost of Chuff’s father transforms into a vessel of divine judgement, not a familiar comfort. The ghost of his father does not share sympathy with his son as he pays no attention to Chuff’s words, “if you ever cared for me.” Regarding Chuff’s pleas and memories of his father, it also implies that the paternal figure did not care for his son in his life either. As the familiar becomes estranged, Le Fanu uses gothic elements to portray how trauma can also sever emotional bonds and leaves Tom Chuff utterly isolated, without comfort, in a vision of eternal damnation.

The dream/nightmare continues with a series of images, sounds, and sensations to intensify Chuff’s psychological torment. He hears “dreadful cries and appeals for mercy,” and as he follows his father further, the sounds increase; “myriads and myriads of voices” start “calling him by his name, ... in rapidity and multitude, and mingled with laughter, with flitting blasphemies, with broken insults and mockeries” (Le Fanu, “The Vision” 162). He finds himself being watched by other figures, “each with a faint red halo round it, staring on him with frightful eyes, images, all in hideous variety, of eternal fury or derision” (162). Königshofer suggests that “the red, dim light indicates the arrival of a hellish creature,” to further inflict madness on Chuff, confusing his senses and breaking his psyche (77). Therefore, the intensity of the sensations reaches a new height and becomes overwhelming for Chuff’s mind to endure. As explained by Patrick Thomas McAleer, the “focus on destruction and the barbarous [in the Gothic fiction] cannot be reduced to pure spectacle—these are often transformative moments that alter perspectives

because of the trauma involved” (19). Thus, due to the intensifying “epilepsy of terror,” Tom Chuff’s psyche can no longer stand the visions before him and “with a long and dreadful scream he los[es] consciousness,” in a way, to protect his psyche from further damage (Le Fanu, “The Vision” 162).

However, the damage is done as the next time Chuff wakes up, he still finds himself in the vision. This time, in his father’s place, Chuff finds “a venerable man with a snowy beard of immense length” before him, described as “an image of awful purity and severity” (162). The figure resembles a person in authority and power, and he declares Chuff’s fate: “The command is given to let you forth for one trial more. But if you are found again drinking with the drunken, and beating your fellow-servants, you shall return through the door by which you came, and go out no more” (163). With these words, the old man throws Chuff out of the gate to let him return to his life. As mentioned before, this moment resembles the Gothic motif of the Faustian pact; yet, instead of making a deal with a devil for richness and knowledge, Chuff makes a deal with a righteous-looking man for the salvation of his soul. However, Chuff is already traumatised, and the deal is not struck out of sincerity, but out of fear. Through the emphasis on his illicit habits, Le Fanu centres Tom’s trauma firmly within the framework of religious morality. The “command,” while giving a second chance to Chuff, reads as a threat, with a warning of his death, which “is styled as eternal and Tom is denied the Christian hope for resurrection in the afterlife” (Königshofer 80).

Tom Chuff returns to life in the same place where he ventured into his vision, before the fireplace, under the anxious gazes of his family. Under the influence of his horrible dream, Chuff apologises to his wife and declares that he is “a changed man” (Le Fanu, “The Vision” 163). He requests the clergyman to come, to confess and repent of his sins. The exchange between Chuff and the clergyman can be recognised as the relationship between the speaker who gives the testimony and the compassionate listener, who is the witness, as Shoshana Felman names it. While Caruth regards trauma as an unspeakable event, for Felman, putting the unspeakable event into words, to share with a willing witness is “profoundly *freeing*” as it helps the victim to reach the truth of his situation (“Education and Crisis” 46, emphasis in original). Therefore, after this exchange between him and the

vicar, Chuff seems to be working on himself as “[t]he effect of the vision upon Tom Chuff was powerful, and promised to be lasting” (Le Fanu, “The Vision” 164). He begins to go to church, quits drinking, and treats his family better. During this time, Chuff tries to visit the vicar as much as he can and stands in the churchyard to “look at the scenery of his vision, and to fortify his good resolutions by the reminder,” even though he forces the vicar to promise him that he would “be laid in anither churchyard just to be shut o’ [his] fear” (164). In other words, Chuff uses the image of the churchyard as a repetitive reminder of his trauma to deter himself from reverting to his old self.

By doing so, a symbol of religiousness and acceptance for others, the church transforms into the symbol of horror and terror for Tom Chuff. As mentioned before, according to Stevens, traumatic memory, or the fragmented psyche, starts recreating or reshaping meaning and attributes it to the symbols to make sense of its situation. Yet, these repeated attempts to remember and harness the fear of divine warning of punishment for his reformation are neither resourceful nor helpful. As Caruth suggests, “the endless *inherent necessity* of repetition ... ultimately may lead to destruction” (*Unclaimed Experience* 63, emphasis in original). In other words, as the gothic nature or structure of the story turns divine vision itself into a form of trauma, the repeated remembrance can further harm the psyche instead of helping Chuff in his transformation. Rather than providing a hopeful change, the dream vision promises Chuff an eternal punishment for his wrongdoings. Therefore, his reason for reformation is forced upon him, and it is not out of his free will. Specifically, people who struggle with trauma can get “stuck” in its haunting, which can generate the feeling of “futility” when they try to get better (van der Kolk et al. “History of Trauma” 57). Thus, Chuff’s attempts to be a good person out of fear soon come to a stop:

Impressions upon the imagination, however, are but transitory, and a bad man acting under fear is not a free agent; his real character does not appear. But as the images of the imagination fade, and the action of fear abates, the essential qualities of the man reassert themselves. ... Tom Chuff began to grow weary of his new life; he grew lazy, and people began to say that he was catching hares, and pursuing his old contraband way of life, under the rose. (Le Fanu, “The Vision” 164)

This failure of reformation emphasises the irony at the core of Chuff's vision. This vision, "the nasty epiphany" Victor Sage calls it (*Le Fanu's Gothic* 23), loses its effect on him. With time traumatic memory loses its immediacy, and the continuous reminders tire the psyche as the reminders become the futile attempt to be good. In other words, "the effect of fear could not bring about true repentance" (Königshofer 91), and the fixation on trauma can trigger further violent dissociative states, which can cause disturbance in those around the traumatised individual (van der Kolk et al. "History of Trauma" 58). Tom Chuff's failure not only harms him but also harms the people around him. He starts to neglect his family once again, inflicting terror on his children and agony on his wife, who soon dies under mysterious conditions. Thus, due to Chuff's religious and moral re-collapse, the gothic prophecy, the vision of eternal damnation, fulfils itself.

In a classic return of the traumatic memory, Tom Chuff relives nearly every detail of his dream "on a moonless night" (Le Fanu, "The Vision" 166). Unaware of his wife's death and the preparation for her funeral, he passes over the dark "moor of Catstean," and trespasses into the churchyard, where the tower of the church casts "a black shadow against the sky" (166). As "the chill of horror" settles on him, Chuff sees an approaching and whistling figure, calling out to him menacingly (167). The reappearance of the exact vision parallels the uncontrollable return of the traumatic memory, unbeknown to the psyche, and it is re-experienced in an uncanny accuracy (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 58). Reliving the same horror and "a strange quaking" in his heart, Chuff finally sees the open grave, in the same spot in his vision, as the strange figure advances towards him (Le Fanu, "The Vision" 166). In an attempt to protect himself,

Tom Chuff recoiled, stumbled, and fell backward into the open grave. He caught at the sides as he fell, but without retarding his fall. An hour later, when lights came with the [his wife's] coffin, the corpse of Tom Chuff was found at the bottom of the grave. He had fallen direct upon his head, and his neck was broken. His death must have been simultaneous with his fall. Thus far his dream was accomplished. (167)

Chuff's death, as it was foretold in his vision, not only emphasises the inescapable nature of fate but also symbolises that trauma does not remain in memory or past. It materialises, manifests, and haunts the victim throughout his life. In Le Fanu's stories, therefore, trauma is portrayed through supernatural hauntings to emphasise the intensity of its

effects and the extension of its manifestation. Chuff is a man who is guided by his base instincts, like fear and his inability to recognise his sins and flaws in his character without an external force cost him his life. Religious trauma, in this sense, in “The Vision of Tom Chuff,” is represented as a phenomenon that can prevent someone from changing their personality, behaviours, and morality by instilling fear rather than providing genuine understanding, which leads to collapse under the weight of spiritual dread.

In this way, the three short stories examined in this chapter, “Green Tea,” “The Familiar,” and “The Vision of Tom Chuff,” collectively represent various forms of religious trauma based on belief, disbelief, and moral vacancy which are exposed to the Gothic terror and horror in the form of supernatural spectres and visions. In “Green Tea,” Jennings’s descent into madness and suicide is driven by doubt and the inescapable guilt and self-blame, through which the spectral monkey is manifested as a symbolic embodiment of his inner torment. Although Barton’s personality contrasts sharply with that of the Reverend Jennings, “The Familiar” presents a similar representation of haunting due to religious trauma. Yet, the haunting of the captain is rooted in his atheism, through which his torment arises from spiritual fear and the paralysis caused by the loss of his assumptive world and fractured sense of identity. Meanwhile, “The Vision of Tom Chuff” highlights the inescapable nature of fate and illustrates how religion cannot be sufficient as a reason for an individual’s salvation. In this sense, Chuff’s haunting represents how religious trauma can trap someone in fear rather than offer true understanding and lead to a collapse under spiritual dread. In all three stories, these haunting spectres and visions energise “the reflections and remembrances which cause death to be enacted or contemplated by the sufferer” (Hughes 59). Death, the shared demise that marks the end in these stories, emerges as a profound symbol: it can be interpreted as divine punishment or as the tragic, inevitable culmination of unassimilated trauma. In each of these Gothic narratives, the psyche, unable to regulate and control religious guilt, belief, and identity, shatters under the overwhelming force of the supernatural as a manifestation of inner torment. Thus, Le Fanu, in these short stories, not only illustrates the detrimental toll of personal religious trauma but also represents a deeper reflection on how spiritual crises can fracture the self, strip away the meaning, and leave a lasting wound on individual consciousness.

CHAPTER 2

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY, DIVISION, AND THE INHERITANCE OF TRAUMA: COLLECTIVE RELIGIOUS TRAUMA IN “SQUIRE TOBY’S WILL,” “WICKED CAPTAIN WALSHAW, OF WAULING,” AND “THE LAST HEIR OF CASTLE CONNOR”

Experiencing trauma is an essential part of being human;
history is written in blood.

--Van der Kolk and McFarlane, “The Black Hole of Trauma”

This chapter aims to examine how Le Fanu’s selected short stories, “Squire Toby’s Will” and “Wicked Captain Walshawe, of Wauling” from *Madam Crowl’s Ghost and Other Stories* (1973) and “The Last Heir of Castle Connor” from *The Purcell Papers* (1880), use gothic elements to represent the tension between Protestant and Catholic identities in nineteenth-century Ireland, showing how religious identities and divisions between them create lasting cultural and emotional religious trauma. The use of gothic tropes in these stories functions as a literary response to collective trauma, which includes the influence of culture on an individual’s psyche by becoming a site of rupture and loss. Marten de Vries defines culture as “a double-edged sword” (400). He states that culture allows people to connect and base their identities on a shared concept, but the loss of culture itself can become traumatic “[b]ecause of human beings’ dependence on it” (400). In the Irish context, this type of trauma takes shape in the fraught relationship of its Catholic and Protestant people. As Maria Beville argues, Ireland’s “difficulties of Irish national and social memory have, over time, been frequently challenged through Gothic literary forms,” which foreground the “unspeakable national traumas” embedded within cultural identity (59). Le Fanu’s Gothic fiction traces how sectarian division lingers as a wound that never quite heals, returning through haunted lineages, inherited ruin, and the slow, inevitable collapse of families burdened by history. In this respect, his fiction, specifically his short stories, are generally structured by what David Punter calls “the perverseness of power” and “the unreliability of history,” which are “common themes” within Irish Gothic literature (“Scottish and Irish Gothic” 107). Fractured families, suicidal heirs, and decaying estates populate Le Fanu’s short stories to represent “the past ... mercilessly and violently encroaching on the present” (Sage, “Irish Gothic” 144). Far from offering a

hopeful reconciliation, these stories confront the unresolved tensions of historical division, portraying a landscape in which trauma endures and memory unsettles more than it restores. What emerges is a narrative mirroring the collective memory of Catholic Irish and Protestant Anglo-Irish people. In these narratives, individuals who are identified with these religious sects are haunted by loss, broken allegiance, and cultural inheritance. In other words, concerning his Gothic fiction, Moynahan claims that “there is a convergence in LeFanu’s imagination between demonic and supernatural ‘possession’ and the age-old Irish tragedy ... of appropriation and dispossession” (127). However, in such a context, it is crucial to emphasise that “the recapitulation of the past is never neutral” (Punter, “Scottish and Irish Gothic” 122). Le Fanu’s retreat from the genre of historical romance, following the failed 1848 insurrection and the disillusionment with Young Ireland nationalism, marks his political withdrawal (Sage, “Irish Gothic” 144), which reflects the turn of his narrative towards a more allegorical mode, allowing a trauma narrative to emerge. In this way, Le Fanu portrays identity as fragmented and memory as incomplete, wounded by past cultural losses. It is within this framework that this chapter aims to analyse how Le Fanu, in his three Gothic short stories, expresses and reflects collective religious trauma through images of decline, dispossession, and rupture between religious identities.

With this in mind, Le Fanu presents his Gothic short story, “Squire Toby’s Will” (1868), as a political allegory of the fraught relationship between Catholic Irish and Protestant Anglo-Irish by framing the tension between the two religious identities in a dysfunctional familial bond. Therefore, in the story, Le Fanu uses the discord between the Marston brothers as an allegorical representation of national and religious division in Ireland in the context of cultural/collective religious trauma. As discussed before, Balaev claims that trauma can be “connected to larger social factors and cultural ideologies,” which can target a specific group of people; therefore, in literary works, the traumatised protagonist or a group of characters can be referred to as an “everyperson figure” to illustrate the collective trauma inflicted on that specific group (“Trauma Theory” 17). In line with this argument, it can be argued that Le Fanu centres the collective religious trauma as an inherited conflict between identities in “Squire Toby’s Will.” As suggested by Kellermeyer, the older brother, Scroope, symbolises the dispossessed native Catholic Irish

people and the younger brother, who is known as “Handsome Charlie” (Le Fanu, “Squire” 17), stands for the privileged Protestant Anglo-Irish people (165). The dispute between them goes back to their individual relationship with their father, Squire Toby, and in this context, he represents the British Government. Based on this suggestion, it can be claimed that the personal feud in the Marston family reflects a deeper trauma rooted in betrayal, erasure, and unresolved historical grievances based on the identities of the religious groups.

While Le Fanu did not claim or state such a representation in this short story directly, the historical events he witnessed in Ireland contributed to his “broadening awareness of social issues,” which influenced his writing as he became interested in the possible effects of “psychological problems as effects of society on the individual” (Corran 150). Even though he was a part of the Protestant Ascendancy, his interest in and sympathy for the cause of Catholic Irish people greatly increased after witnessing the cost of the Great Famine on them and the subsequent mistreatment to which they were subjected (Kellermeyer 165). Therefore, it can be claimed that, with his changing and shifting beliefs and ideas about religion and religious groups, Le Fanu’s writing also started to change and shift to portray the traumatic incidents in his Gothic short stories. In this story, for example, to represent this aspect of religious trauma, Le Fanu uses gothic elements, such as cruel and oppressive patriarchal figures, the revenge-seeking spectres, hidden truths haunting the narrative, and decaying estates, to amplify the conflict between the two brothers. Therefore, by transforming the collective/cultural religious trauma into a familial haunting within a gothic framework, in which repressed and unresolved conflicts return to plague the characters repeatedly, Le Fanu suggests that historical injustices rooted in religious identity can inflict persisting trauma across generations, one that distorts memory, disrupts identity, and threatens the agency of individuals or communities.

Considering this framework, set in early nineteenth-century England, Sheridan Le Fanu’s “Squire Toby’s Will” is about the two estranged brothers, Scroope and Charles Marston, who fall into a bitter fight over the inheritance of the family estate, Gylingden Hall. Their father, the old Squire, Toby Marston, who “carried with him some blessings and a good

many curses" (16), leaves behind a will upon his death which states: "Now the Squire's will despoiled his eldest son of Gylingden, which had descended to the heir time out of mind" (18). The break in primogeniture and the symbolic erasure of Scroope's birthright trigger a series of events, mainly centring around their conflict and Charlie's haunting, which reflects not only familial betrayal but also a broader historical pattern of displacement, echoing the dispossession of the Catholic Irish. Enraged Scroope sues his brother for the inheritance, but he loses. The strife between the brothers does not end; it only increases with time. Years later, now known as "the young Squire" (19) for the role he usurped, Charlie suffers a dreadful fall on one of his hunts which nearly costs him his life and causes him to stay "five days in a state of coma" (19). In the coma, Charlie experiences the start of his haunting as he sees his dead father in his dreams. From this point forward, the gothic tone of the story intensifies with the increasing suspense and uncanny incidents as Charlie's haunting exceeds his dreams and externalises in the form of a black-headed bulldog. Upon seeing the creature, Charlie is struck by the strong "likeness it presented to the character of his father's fierce pug features" (21-22). Even though he is disturbed by the dog's features, he allows it into the house, which only causes his horrifying visions to get worse, urging him to fix an unnamed wrong. The visions lead Charlie to a hidden chamber in one of the rooms in the old house where he discovers "a parchment deed," proving his brother's legitimacy as heir and "placing Gylingden under strict settlement to the elder son" (27). Terrified by what he has found, Charlie goes through an intense dilemma about revealing the truth, but he decides to destroy the deed to protect himself and keep the estate under his control. Through this act, Charlie re-enacts a symbolic erasure that mirrors the historical silencing of the Catholic Irish under Anglo-Protestant rule. After this act, due to the intensity of his torment, his physical and mental health deteriorates with ghostly whispers, physical apparitions, and visions of his father and brother condemning and blaming him. Then, all of a sudden, before Charlie can fix what he has done, Scroope dies and, as the sole heir of the family, Charlie inherits his fortune as well. Guilt and fear of spectral retribution madden Charlie and cause him to be constantly in a state of agitation. His health collapses as he becomes "delirious, talking of all sorts of things," about his need to repent, and make amends, and specifically, he starts "talk[ing], as it were, to his brother Scroope" (37). In all these ordeals, the haunting never ceases; it only increases, which even attracts the attention of the household as their

master isolates himself. Then one day, Charles Marston disappears, only to be found dead with “[h]is cravat ... tight round his throat” (40) in the room where he found the hidden deed. Thus, the familial conflict in the story, which turns into a gothic haunting due to intense guilt, becomes a metaphor for collective trauma as it mirrors the sins of erasure and displacement based on religious identity. Furthermore, this conflict and its consequences are inherited. They pass from one generation to the next, and in doing so, the trauma resulting from religious identity is inherited among people, carrying its destructive and isolating effects.

The narrative in the story is carefully crafted and structured, creating an atmosphere of unease, decay, and ruin, which introduces the subject of the debate between the two brothers: Gylingden Hall. As Agnieszka Łowczanin states, the beginning of the story serves as a “preparation stage,” which is crucial in Gothic tradition because it serves as an “introduction of the supernatural” (114). She continues stating that one of the significant elements in this preparation stage is the setting of the story, which helps to create “an enhanced background against which the supernatural emerges,” and due to that preparation, “its appearance becomes even more terrifying and overwhelming” (114). Therefore, the story opens with a first look at the “large black-and-white house ... with broad lattice windows” as it stands “dilapidated and weather-stained” on “a dense background of ancient elms” (Le Fanu, “Squire” 15). The condition of the ancient house is significant in the story as the old Irish houses or estates in Gothic fiction signify “a problematic and contested place; a site of anxiety and terror” (Fahey 152). In this context, the narrative emphasises that the ancient house is striking in appearance due to “so many signs of desertion and decay” (Le Fanu, “Squire” 15). As the narrator describes,

the tufted grass sprouting in the chinks of the steps and window-stones, the smokeless chimneys over which the jackdaws are wheeling, the absence of human life and all its evidence, that you conclude at once that the place is uninhabited and abandoned to decay. ... Tall hedges and old timber quickly shroud the old place from view, and about a quarter of a mile further on you pass, embowered in melancholy trees, a small and ruinous Saxon chapel, which, time out of mind, has been the burying-place of the family of Marston, and partakes of the neglect and desolation which brood over their ancient dwelling-place. (15)

The description of Gylingden Hall, the ancestral house of the Marston family, reflects both grandeur and withering. With the emphasis on “the absence of human life” and the occupying “grand melancholy,” the state of the estate is portrayed as a place burdened by legacy and haunted by forgotten tradition and fractured familial ties. From the outset, the current situation of the house does not offer an atmosphere of domestic space, but it highlights the unresolved tensions that permeate the environment. Tracy Fahey suggests that Gothic castles, houses, or monuments, specifically in Irish Gothic literature, “can be seen as a manifestation of earlier tropes of dark domestic space in folklore, transmitted to contemporary culture through tradition, collective memory, and social memory” (152). Therefore, Gylingden Hall serves as an echo of past trauma, of the religious and colonial displacement of Catholic Irish people under the Protestant Anglo-Irish authority. It signifies, as a part of the collective memory, how the wounds created by trauma stand against the passage of time and erasure. Not only the house itself but the entirety of the estate, specifically the ruined burial ground, is the echo of this troubled past. To be precise, architecture in gothic stories often signals “the spatial and temporal separation of the past and its values from those of the present” (Botting, *Gothic* 2). Therefore, even though the story is set in England, the description and recollection of the estate evoke the loss of Catholic tradition and identity in the ancient houses of Ireland – in other words, the loss of religious identity. It can be argued that the current condition of the estate symbolises a Protestant inheritance, but it still is haunted by the repressed Catholic grievances.

Furthermore, although the “neglected” house is portrayed as “rotting,” with its “ceilings and walls are mildewed and green with damp stains,” it serves not only as a gothic device to amplify the bleak atmosphere but also as a voice for the past: “On stormy nights, as the guard described, you can hear the doors clapping in the old house, as far away as old Gryston bridge, and the howl and sobbing of the wind through its empty galleries” (Le Fanu, “Squire” 15-16). The human emotions attributed to the house portray it as an independent entity capable of expressing feelings, rather than merely an abandoned building. The expressions “the howl and sobbing” connote negative emotions, which are usually conveyed in the moments of mourning. Previously, David Punter considers the existence of “the monument and the ruin” in gothic fiction to be “uncanny” because “they

speak always of history, but of a history that is constantly under the threat of erasure”; however, he adds that the gothic constructions “speak of history not as a living presence nor yet as an irrecoverable absence, but as inevitably involved in specific modes of ghostly persistence” (“Scottish and Irish Gothic” 105). According to Punter, the crumbling estate functions as a testament to and reminder of a historical (religious) trauma that refuses to be forgotten or repressed in the collective/cultural memory. In this way, Gylingden Hall is not solely the object of conflict for the family; it is also the embodiment of the suppressed violence, guilt, and discrimination contained within. If the mournful sounds which the house produces are considered its “speech,” they can be interpreted as the testimony of bygone injustices. In that respect, the members of the Marston family can be seen as extensions of the religious trauma embedded in the house. It can be seen that by representing the family members as allegorical figures of Ireland’s fractured religious and political identities, Le Fanu treats the house as the land, as Ireland itself. Therefore, by using the battered state of Gylingden Hall as a vessel for the family’s conflict, Le Fanu suggests that not only are the people, whether individuals or not, collectively affected by trauma but also Ireland, the land, is affected and carries the wounds of its traumatic past.

While the ancient house represents the deeply troubled past of Ireland, the story’s domestic conflict, a father disinheriting his oldest son in favour of his younger son, parallels the historical dispossession of the native Catholic Irish by Protestant Anglo-Irish under the British rule. Although the three characters have some similarities, they are characterised in distinct and detailed ways. For example, the old Squire, the father, Toby, is represented as a man resembling the stereotypical characteristics of imperial rule. He is a man whose good deeds are eclipsed by his cruelty: “[He is] famous in that part of the world for his hounds, his hospitality and his vices. He had done kind things, and he had fought duels: he had given away money and he had horse-whipped people” (Le Fanu, “Squire” 16). This juxtaposition of generosity and violence captures the moral ambivalence of colonial authority as it is reflected in the old Squire’s personality. Since “the rhetoric of power all too easily produces an illusion of benevolence when deployed in an imperial setting” (Said xvii), the acts of charity or gestures of benevolence can be used to conceal deeper intentions of control or power over the oppressed. Moreover, Toby

is also portrayed as someone reckless with money, as he nearly “run[s] the estates into insolvency” and is prone to violent outbursts, specifically against his sons (Le Fanu, “Squire” 16-17). On the one hand, this portrayal of Toby, with his patriarchal dominance and violent tendencies with unpredictable temper, reflects the image of British imperial rule that has been embedded in the collective memory of Irish people. On the other hand, Kellermeyer suggests that Le Fanu employs major vices, “the Seven Deadly Sins,” in the portrayal of the Marston family’s personality, behaviour, and habit to introduce a discussion of morality (165). Even though the patriarch of the Marston family “does not exhibit all seven” of the sins, he is still “the fountainhead from which the sins of his children are inspired. Specifically, “the family curse of violence, self-violence, and stubborn rage come directly from the squire” (167).

The two characters who are plagued by and inherited their father’s sins are Scroope and Charles, or “Handsome Charlie” Marston. From the beginning, it is emphasised that “[t]hese brothers differed in some points” (Le Fanu, “Squire” 16). They not only “differ in the way that they [are] treated and in the legacies they are left” (Kellermeyer 168), but their personalities and even their appearances also contrast reflecting the complicated relationship between Catholic Irish and Protestant Anglo-Irish identities. Scroope, the eldest son and rightful heir to Gylingden Hall is depicted with a “lean sallow face, piercing black eyes, and black lank hair,” and it is remarked that he “was slightly deformed” (Le Fanu, “Squire” 16). While he is “the more dangerous man of the two,” the older brother “had no taste for the sports of the field” and did not inherit the good looks of the Marston family (16). Even though both brothers “had no taste for business or accounts” (16) or showed any sympathy towards their father, the old Squire still favoured Charlie over his eldest son:

“I’m no feyther o’ that hog-backed creature. I’m no sire of hisn, d— n him! I’d as soon call that tongs son o’ mine,” the old man used to bawl, in allusion to his son’s long, lank limbs: “Charlie’s a man, but that’s a jack-an-ape. He has no good-nature; there’s nothing handy, nor manly, nor no one turn of a Marston in him.” And when he was pretty drunk, the old Squire used to swear he should never “sit at the head o’ that board; nor frighten away folk from Gylingden Hall wi’ his d— d hatchet-face—the black loon!” (16-17)

His deformity and differences in appearance not only set him apart from the rest of the family, but also Scroope mirrors the way “rural Celts were stereotyped as having swarthy complexions, black, coarse hair, and black, beady eyes” in the Victorian period (Kellermeyer 168). Furthermore, his personality as a lazy, dangerous, and inefficient man is reflective of the stereotypical way Catholic Irish people are represented. Thus, Toby’s explicit resentment of his son’s difference evokes the treatment of Catholic Irish people, specifically rural ones, who were marked as “Other” and discriminated against, which further divided the two religious identities, creating a “cultural divisions between rulers and ruled, a binary very much premised on the ‘them and us’ – Catholics and Protestants” (Lane 234). In the same way, Toby’s declaration of disinheritance and disownment correlates with the Penal Laws which were enacted to “exclud[e] [Irish Catholics] from a say in the governance of their own country” (Carey 42). In this context, it can be argued that Scroope represents the trauma experienced due to institutionalised discrimination based on a person’s identity, which makes him an allegory for Irish Catholics as he is the embodiment of the trauma experienced due to an individual’s religious identity.

In contrast to his brother, Charlie is “the man for his money” as he “knew what a horse was, and could sit to his bottle; and the lasses were all clean *mad* about him” (Le Fanu, “Squire” 17, emphasis in original). For the old Squire, Charlie is “a Marston every inch of his six foot two” (17); he is his preferred heir and, symbolically, the embodiment of the Protestant Anglo-Irish. Compared to his brother, Charlie’s good looks, social charms, and similarities with his father distinguish him in the eyes of the old Squire. In striking contrast to Scroope’s disinherited position, Charlie benefits from what Kellermeyer identifies as the dynamic of “enjoying the lavish gifts of a distant national Father while their elder siblings, ... clearly have a greater claim to their land as a birthright than the ‘younger,’ transplanted Anglo-Irish,” are suffering from dispossession (200). While Charlie does not actively participate in Scroope’s disinheritance, just like the Protestant Anglo-Irish, he is still complicit in his brother’s usurpation. Therefore, it can be said that, by comparing Charlie and Scroope’s situations, Protestant Anglo-Irish individuals can be regarded as bystanders to the collective trauma to which the Catholic Irish have been exposed by the imperial power.

To recall back to what Julia Briggs suggested, Gothic fiction “has tendency to represent the family as a source of danger, ... not merely as failing its individual members, but as a source of dangerously concealed secrets” (181). Therefore, in “Squire Toby’s Will,” Le Fanu’s focus on the Marston family is deliberate as the secret of the will and Charlie’s later haunting caused by the guilt over his brother’s inheritance is at the centre of the conflict, mirroring the domestic relations and political conflicts in Ireland’s troubled past. Yet, in both instances, the conflict is not caused by the sons (Catholic and Protestant), but rather by the patriarch (the imperial authority): “The will was so framed as to set the two brothers instantly at deadly feud” (16). The old Squire, who “planted an irreconcilable quarrel” between his sons, is responsible for the trauma that will haunt the family in the years to come. Yet it is his sons who inherit the conflict that carries it forward.

His sons not only inherit the conflict, but also their father’s vices respectively. Individually, the men of the family are marked by moral ambiguity; each of them is associated with a defining vice that illustrates their moral depravity and symbolic function. Charlie is associated with pride and greed, aligning with stereotypical characterisations of the Protestant Anglo-Irish elite, while Scroope is associated with envy and sloth, reflecting the pejorative depictions of the Catholic Irish. In the same respect, Toby is a metaphor for gluttony and wrath, the latter of which is equally inherited by his sons like a family curse (Kellermeyer 199-200). This inheritance of the vice is not solely figurative as it manifests in their behaviour throughout the story. After the first hearing of the will, it is emphasised that “Scroope Marston was furious,” pounding the table with “stormy recriminations,” while Charlie’s “rougier voice” joined the shouting match in an escalating chorus of anger and accusation, culminating in “the convulsions of [Scroope’s] fury” (Le Fanu, “Squire” 18). While the only inheritance he receives from his father is his violent temper, the excessive expression of his fury causes him to look “more ungainly and deformed than ever,” highlighting his deformity (18). His physical difference, the disfigurement of his body, which is “deemed aberrant, often linked to portrayals of monstrosity” in Gothic fiction (Çakır 22), is emphasised by the intensity of his anger, signalling his demonic return later in the story to haunt his brother. Yet, long before his death, Scroope’s fury starts haunting Charlie as he starts “breathing vengeance and aggression, ... quite willing to wreck himself provided he could run his brother down” (Le

Fanu, “Squire” 18). His promises of aggression manifest in the form of legal assaults and futile attempts at trying to hold the estate by force, which can be regarded as a hopeless rebellion against a traumatising order. In this way, Scroope becomes both the victim and agent of inherited violence.

The anger feeds the animosity between the brothers, expressing the trauma inflicted upon their collective memory and seeping into their unconscious like a family curse. In her study on religious trauma, Caralie Cooke also acknowledges collective trauma and discusses it as “the event that damages the bond that connects people and erodes the sense of community. Trauma can shape the community so that the culture becomes centred around this trauma, but the social ties of the community are damaged” (18). In Le Fanu’s story, the trauma stemming from cultural dispossession and injustices based on religious identity is similarly presented as a hereditary curse that damages the bonds between the brothers and scars the land on which their ancestral home stands. This event, thus, erases the connection between them, wounding their shared sense of belonging, and causing a rift between the brothers over time. As Cooke notes, “[c]ollective trauma is a slower process than individual trauma. It takes time for the effects of trauma to seep into the bonds of the community” (18), which resonates profoundly with both the Marston brothers and the broader conflict between Catholic Irish and Protestant Anglo-Irish identities. The narrator observes this deeply rooted feud: “Years flew, and brought no healing on their wings. On the contrary, the deep corrosion of this hatred bit deeper by time” (Le Fanu, “Squire” 19). Following Cooke’s explanation, the escalating hostility between the brothers exemplifies how collective trauma embeds itself over time, destroying familial and cultural bonds alike. As the years pass, this inherited conflict and its traumatic impact, mirroring the historical discord between religious identities, fester in Charlie’s unconscious and soon return in the form of visions and spectral manifestations to haunt him.

Before analysing Charlie’s haunting, it is necessary to clarify that while Charlie, as the personification of Protestant Anglo-Irish, does not experience the same injustice and discrimination as his brother, he can still be traumatised by the same event – he can still be a victim. Yet, the definition of victim problematises the understanding of historical

collective trauma, as it generally connotes an explicit perpetrator and a specific group of victims. Therefore, to make the distinction and recognise Charlie's haunting and suffering as part of the collective religious trauma, Dominick LaCapra's theory can be employed here. Like Caruth, LaCapra bases his trauma theory on the idea of belatedness, the latency and temporality of trauma to specify the collective trauma. According to him, collective trauma should be categorised into two different types: historical and structural. LaCapra claims that "[h]istorical trauma is specific, and not everyone is subject to it or entitled to the subject position associated with it," but he limits it to a specific group of people, to culture, geography, and time (78). On the other hand, he states that "[e]veryone is subject to structural trauma" (80) whether they are "victims, perpetrators, [... or] bystanders" (79). It is, in a sense, a universal experience and it "is often figured as deeply ambivalent, as both shattering or painful and the occasion for *jouissance*, ecstatic elation, or the sublime" (80, emphasis in original). In this sense, structural trauma does not have a specific target; rather, it is about feelings that are invoked, positive or negative, in an individual when faced with collective trauma, be it historical or otherwise.

This duality of structural trauma is significant in literature as the suffering characters may also reach intense emotional or existential states without being subjected to a specific historical trauma. Yet, these concepts are not mutually exclusive. To clarify it, LaCapra explains that "the traumatizing events in historical trauma can be determined, ... while structural trauma (like absence) is not an event but an anxiety-producing condition of possibility related to the potential for historical traumatization" (82). In other words, while historical trauma is linked to identifiable events, structural trauma refers to unspecified conditions shaped by the threat or memory of such events. Therefore, in the context of collective trauma and "Squire Toby's Will," Charlie is not the targeted victim of the initial disinheritance, but he still suffers the belated psychological effects of the family's inherited conflict/trauma. It can be argued that this case is similar to the way Protestant Anglo-Irish people, while not the target of the British rule in Ireland, still suffered from the oppression directed at the native Irish Catholics. Thus, as Charlie's experience aligns with LaCapra's concept of structural trauma, it can be claimed that he, as a Protestant Anglo-Irish character, is not affected by that single event alone; instead,

he is impacted by the enduring and collective unresolved problems regarding that traumatic event, as it is shared through generations and distorts the cultural memory.

Consequently, until the time of his haunting, Charlie does not realise the impact collective trauma had on him. The ghosts of the past do not arrive immediately. To borrow the term from Caruth, the ghosts, that is trauma and its effects, arrive belatedly. Twenty years after the death of the old Squire, his haunting begins with Charlie's "fall from his hunter" (Le Fanu, "Squire" 19). The severity of his accident does not cost him his life, but the young Squire "chang[es] in two essential particulars": the injury he received in his hip "doom[s] him never more to sit in the saddle," causing him to limp rest of his life and after waking up from his coma, he loses his lively spirit as "he [is] haunted by an indescribable anxiety" (19). The change in his life and demeanour, his becoming solitary and gloomy, can be viewed as symptoms of trauma – this time caused by his near-death experience. As trauma is not caused by a singular event and can be repressed in memory, another traumatic event can trigger a "domino effect," which brings forth the "intrusive and distressing memories ... of earlier experiences" (van der Kolk and McFarlane, "The Black Hole" 9-10). Moreover, when Charlie opens up to Cooper, the old butler of the Marston family, he shares that his near-death experience is not the only trouble in his mind, as during the time he has been "lying like dead," he dreamed of his dead father:

I was with the old master. ... I thought I'd never get out of his hands again, and all the time he was bullying me about some one thing; and if it was to save my life, Tom Cooper, by — from the time I waked I never could call to mind what it was; and I think I'd give that hand to know; and if you can think of anything it might be—for God's sake! don't be afraid, Tom Cooper, but speak it out, for he threatened me hard, and it was surely him. (Le Fanu, "Squire" 20)

His repressed memories, the sense of emerging guilt, and the return of the fear of his father are first revealed in his dream, which signals the awaiting spectral haunting that will follow. He is tormented by the vision of his father, accusing him of something that Charlie cannot remember. More than the vision itself, he is agitated over the unknown. His anxiety dwells on the message or knowledge that is inaccessible to his conscious memory. As Caruth explains, "[t]he return of the traumatic experience in the dream is not the signal of the direct experience but, rather, of the attempt to overcome the fact that it

was not direct (*Unclaimed Experience* 62). This statement suggests that Charlie's haunting is less about a specific memory and more about his failure to process the traumatic event in the first place. While the reading of the will is a one-time event, the issue surrounding the disinheritance is not; the impact of the conflict is akin to structural trauma in that it haunts all lives connected to Gylingden Hall in the following years. Yet, in both situations, trauma is often overlooked or not entirely registered by the psyche. Therefore, as trauma returns in indirect ways, Charlie is made aware of it through his dreams after experiencing an overwhelming event, his accident. In other words, the ghost of the past starts imposing itself upon his psyche again, urging him to recognise the fragments of his recollection.

Accordingly, Corran states that "Le Fanu recognizes the power a person's conscience can have over" them as they are often afflicted by their guilty conscience, struggling with the acknowledgement of their past sins (119). In line with this statement, Charlie's guilty conscience emerges not with the horrifying vision of his father, but with the accusation he directs at his son. Charlie, begrudgingly, admits that even though he "*can't* bring it to mind," he thinks that his father "knew something about that d— hump-backed villain, Scroope, that swore before Lawyer Gingham I made away with a paper of settlements— me and father" (Le Fanu, "Squire" 20, emphasis in original). Here, he refers to the longstanding accusation by Scroope about the possibility that Charlie and his father falsely forged the deed of settlement to exclude him from the line of inheritance. While Charlie claims it to be a lie, "his subconscious is aware of [the claim's] importance, evidenced by the way in which his mind latches on to that issue rather than another one" (Corran 126).

It follows that he stresses the severity of the implication in his dreams: "[Father] swore he'd hang me yet for it. He said it in them identical words— he'd never rest till he *hanged* me for it, and I think it was, like enough, something about *that*, the old master was troubled" (Le Fanu, "Squire" 21, emphasis in original). The gothic haunting of the story emerges from this ominous promise of retribution. The old Squire's threat to hang him is parallel to Scroope's promise of revenge against his brother as both men pass the blame onto Charlie. In this manner, Charlie, as a bystander to the inflicted past trauma, becomes

the collateral damage, unable to escape the haunting. What has transpired in the past follows him and starts troubling his mind, but he refuses to seek help, saying: “I would not tell it to the parson nor the doctor; for, God knows what they’d say” (20). What he means is that “the doctor would claim him mad, and the parson would claim him damned” (Kellermeyer 173), and along these lines, Le Fanu presents a significant tension in his gothic fiction, where madness and damnation become indistinguishable threats. For Charlie, these threats manifest through the emergence of his guilt, reflecting his inner turmoil characterised by psychological unrest and moral dread.

However, Charlie’s anxiety over the unnamed error and the following guilt, starting to take hold of his mind, are not recognised by Cooper as he is unaware of the implications of his master’s dream. Since he is not privy to the underlying reason behind the feud, the old butler interprets the old Squire’s restless appearance in Charlie’s dream as the result of “having no stone over him,” as he lies dead without “a scratch o’ a chisel to say who he is” (Le Fanu, “Squire” 21). However, the old butler’s rather innocent suggestion carries profound cultural symbolism. The failure to mark the old Squire’s grave, the neglect to his memory over two decades, portrays a split in familial, and therefore historical, continuity. Leaving the grave to “look shabby,” can be seen as an intentional act by Scroope to deny social and narrative closure, as Charlie points out that putting a gravestone over their father is “the elder brother’s business” (22). Scroope’s refusal, as the rightful heir, to memorialise his father emphasises the extent of their estrangement. In this context, the unmarked grave can be viewed as indicative of a broader cultural trauma: a loss of memory, identity, and tradition. As Elizabeth Hallam et al. argue, the lack of “appropriate social context, the representation of the deceased at the site of the body carries no meaning” as “the absence of any grave” indicates a loss of “social connection,” and therefore, a loss of cultural identity (115-17). Within the Gothic tradition, such absences evoke uncanny, horror, and suspense, as “ruins, graveyards and vaults ... signal the awful presence of the Gothic past” (Botting, *Gothic* 95). Thus, by denying the old Squire a gravestone for twenty years, Scroope, in a way, denies the familial connection between them, which undermines the possibility of resolution. Instead of his brother, and to put an end to the troubling dreams, Charlie declares that he will be the one to erect a tombstone for their father, stating “that the elder son having refused to lend a hand the

stone was put there by the younger,” thereby materialising the divide between them and highlighting the social ties of the religious identities they symbolise (Le Fanu, “Squire” 22).

What first appears as a troubling dream soon takes a physical form in the shape of a bulldog when Charlie visits the family’s burial ground. In his first encounter with the “large, half-starved bull-dog,” whose dirty white coat contrasts with its large black head, Charlie, despite his better judgement, thinks about “how strong a likeness it presented to the character of his father’s fierce pug features when he was clutching his horsewhip and swearing at a keeper” (21-22). The resemblance between the dog and Toby Marston is intentional, as the dog’s face not only is similar to the old Squire’s features, but its black and large head is identical to the condition in which Toby’s dead body was found: “his face very black and swollen” (18). Apart from the physical likeness, the bulldog is “an accurate representation of Squire Toby’s inner state: powerful, mean, and ready to fight” (Corran 130). This moment in the story can be considered a classic example of Freud’s idea of the uncanny: the bulldog is familiar to Charlie due to its resemblance to his father, who favoured this breed, but it is also an alien being, one that troubles the young Squire’s mind.

On the other hand, as Le Fanu pays attention to the psychological impact of a guilty conscience on his characters, and in this story, “the psychological force is connected with the guilt of the main character” (125-26). Corran argues that the author presents their “subconscious as an external projection” to emphasise the devastating effects of a traumatised psyche on a person’s life (120). As the theme of the story focuses on “guilt and retribution,” the external projection of Charlie’s inner guilt manifests in the form of an animal, illustrating how “the supernatural soliciting [becomes] directed towards a guilty victim” (Shaw 200). The guilt that Charlie’s psyche has been repressing materialises before his eyes on the very day his haunting starts, demanding recognition from his conscious mind. However, it is important to note that Charlie’s haunting, while portrayed as akin to personal trauma, does not represent an individual trauma. The return of his father’s spirit in his dreams and the form of an animal is symbolic of the tainted inheritance he has received. By taking over the estate, Charlie not only acquired

generational (cultural) wealth, but he also inherited his father's sins and the responsibility to make amends for those wrongdoings. As previously stated, Charlie's role as a bystander makes him an accomplice in Scroope's disinheritance. Therefore, the supernatural haunting extends beyond personal conscience; it becomes a gothic representation of the generational guilt festering in the collective unconscious of Protestant Anglo-Irish people, reflecting how they, too, are held accountable for the injustices of colonial rule as they were "decried as the alien occupiers of Irish land" (Lane 226).

Furthermore, during Charlie's observation of the bulldog, Le Fanu refers to Goethe's *Faust*: "The dog ran round them in wide circles, like the infernal dog in 'Faust'; only he left no track of thin flame behind him" ("Squire" 22). The allusion to Mephistopheles's first appearance as a "black dog," who "spirals all around" Faust with "a fiery eddy" behind him, intensifies the meaning behind the supernatural visitation of the animal (van Goethe, line 1147-54). In this tragic play, the demon Mephistopheles is sent from hell to tempt Faust into selling his soul, promising to become his servant in life, yet the threat of the demonic agent is made clear: "Where such a servant lives, danger is near" (1655). The direct reference reveals Le Fanu's intention behind the portrayal of the bulldog; even though it is not a demon from hell, its menacing appearance and infernal associations invoke the same feelings of dread and threat. Later, Charlie sees the dog "stretched upon Squire Toby's grave, looking at least twice his natural length," with its body grotesquely distorted as it performs "such antics as made the young Squire stare" (Le Fanu, "Squire" 22). On the old Toby's grave, the dog is seen "straining, writhing, rubbing its jaws in long-drawn caresses ... in the absorption of a sensual ecstasy" (22). This grotesque display of affection or interest in the grave suggests an eerie, almost sensual attachment, symbolising the old Squire's desire to return to the present, his struggle to rise from the grave and mingle among the living.

Directly after this weird spectacle, Charlie's haunting through symbolic dreams escalates into material and terrifying manifestations, marking the return of the repressed inherited trauma. Parallel to his brother's deformity, the "lameness" caused by his accident forces him into inactivity, which not only strips him of the qualities his father admired, but also

makes him emotionally unstable, causing him to become vulnerable to frequent “dreams and nightmares” (Le Fanu, “Squire” 23-24). In these nightly troubles, the bulldog is his constant companion:

the dog seemed to stretch himself up the side of the Squire’s bed, and in dilated proportions to sit at his feet, with a horrible likeness to the pug features of old Squire Toby, with his tricks of wagging his head and throwing up his chin; and then he would talk to him about Scroope, and tell him “all wasn’t straight,” and that he “must make it up wi’ Scroope,” that he, the old Squire, had “served him an ill turn,” that “time was nigh up,” and that “fair was fair,” and he was “troubled where he was, about Scroope.” (23-24)

The unnatural bodily transformation of the dog, with its human-like feature and ability to speak, suggests a “type of the guilty ghost coming back to earth to try and make amends for some wrong committed whilst alive” (Shaw 201). The emergence of guilt, while not recognised in life, still torments the collective memory of the family, forcing its way into the minds of the living. These nightly apparitions become more physical as days go by, which blurs the line between reality and dream, especially when the dog lies “heavy as lead” on Charlie’s chest, mirroring both the physical weight of trauma and the mental burden of unresolved guilt (Le Fanu, “Squire” 24). Le Fanu intensifies this ambiguous but dreadful gothic atmosphere with the depictions of “green eyes staring at [Charlie] in the dark, from which he could not remove his own” as the “semi-human brute” lies on top of his body to do “the same odious caresses and stretchings and writhings” that it exhibited on the Squire’s grave (24). The disturbing intimacy functions as a physical and psychological violation, as the haunting becomes increasingly invasive. The repetition of the same act can be seen as a symbolic transfer of the generational guilt and sin onto Charlie’s body. Moreover, the dog repeats the same sentence in Squire Toby’s voice: “The eleventh hour be passed, Charlie, and ye’ve done nothing— you and I ’a done Scroope a wrong! ... The time’s nigh up, it’s going to strike” (25). This incident stresses Charlie’s need to make amends with his brother to relieve the family from this generational guilt. In this manner, the gothic haunting represents how past injustices directed at Scroope (Catholic Irish), and the related collective (religious) trauma persist and return not only in dreams but also in physical form, imposing the unresolved guilt and historical violence on the responsible party.

After a particularly terrifying night, Charlie's thoughts are clouded by uncertainties, and he decides to look for an unused room in Gylingden Hall, which is suggested by the voice in his nightmares: "Do you know a room, old Cooper ... they used to call King Herod's Chamber?" (25). The hidden chamber, named after a paranoid and vicious "historical ruler in Roman Palestine who had his own wife and children assassinated out of fear of a plot against him" (Kellermeyer 180), functions as a gothic space in which secrets or repressed truths are revealed through architectural symbolism. In this context, the chamber also functions as the space where Charlie confronts the root of his family's collective trauma. Tucked away at the end of a "dusty gallery" on the third floor, the unused room is in a state of decay – with "mildewed" wallpaper hanging from the walls and "a thick mantle of dust" covering broken furniture – and has a hidden press on the wall, which attracts Charlie's attention (Le Fanu, "Squire" 26). About Le Fanu's use of locked rooms, Jochen Achilles suggests that these secret rooms often "are supplemented by an alcove, passage or dressing room, thus forming the dual arrangement of a closed and an accessible room which can be understood to represent the interrelation between the conscious and the unconscious" (156). Using such architectural symbolism, Le Fanu draws a line between the "conscious aspect of a situation and ... the unconscious one" (157) by projecting the internal conflicts of his characters onto a martial, external world. Therefore, when Charlie finds the hidden press, "emptied and locked up" by the old Squire and "papered over" to conceal its contents, he rips the old wallpaper and forces the compartment open to find "a supplemental deed" which "plac[es] Gylingden under strict settlement to the elder son, in what is called 'tail male'" (Le Fanu, "Squire" 27).

This moment of revelation happening in the hidden and unused room aligns with Balaev's argument about trauma being deeply related to a place, "not only [as] the physical environment, but also in relation to particular landscapes and communities" (*Nature of Trauma* xvii). Hence, the ancestral home reflects its significance as the place where the historical injustices/traumas are carried in its cracks, but are still revealed to the members of its community, of its successors. In other words, people are not the sole victims of the trauma; environment, communities, and culture can also suffer and carry the wounds of it collectively. The revelation of the original deed further agitates Charlie as he becomes aware that the deed would not only "transfer the house and lands to his brother Scroope,

but [also] leave him at the mercy” of his brother (Le Fanu, “Squire” 27). Shaken by the discovery and overwhelmed by the haunting he experienced, Charlie hesitates to decide what to do with the deed as he does not want to give up the estate to Scroope. His major vice, greed, emerges in this moment as he decides to “not inform his brother of his discovery, nor yet ... destroy the deed” but prepare a letter to be delivered to his brother’s rightful heir after his own death to resolve the tension within the family (28). The solution he finds allows him to keep the inheritance in his control, but also eases his guilty conscience, giving him a moment of solace. Yet, as Balaev suggests, “[i]n the remembrance of the traumatic event, protagonist must return to notions of totality and redemption in terms of specific relationships to family, ancestors, and land” (*Nature of Trauma* 53), which Charlie refuses to do, causing the cycle of repression to continue.

Following the discovery of the hidden deed, Charlie’s guilty conscience remains restless, becoming increasingly agitated, which is reflected in the escalating aggressive behaviours of the bulldog. Day by day, the animal starts to resemble the haunting appearance in his dreams as its “ugly head [looked] twice the natural size” (Le Fanu, “Squire” 28), the bony body “twining after it like a huge white lizard” (29) and his growl growing “louder and fiercer” than ever before (28). The change in the dog’s appearance and behaviour mirrors the growing anxiety in Charlie as it can also be regarded as “the embodiment of the guilt he feels but will not acknowledge” (Coughlan 33). At last, Charlie decides to shoot the dog, an act that can be interpreted as his attempt at repressing his conscience “by confining it, and now decides to murder it” (Kellermeyer 185). Hence, he orders his keeper to do it, and the dog dies with “a yell—not like a dog—like a man caught in a mill-crank,” further paralleling its connection to the old Squire (Le Fanu, “Squire” 29). Yet, even the death of the eerie beast does not put an end to Charlie’s struggle as he is still plagued by the threats of his brother in life and his father in his dreams. Thus, after much hesitation, Charlie makes up his mind about the deed and destroys it, finding a momentary “relief in this, but also the new and terrible sense of actual guilt” (30) takes root in him. This heightened terror culminates in a horrifying nightmare on the same night:

[H]e imagined, he was awakened by a violent shaking of his bed. He could see, in the very imperfect light, two figures at the foot of it, holding each a bed-post. One of these he half-fancied was his brother Scroope, but the other was the old Squire—

of that he was sure— and he fancied that they had shaken him up from his sleep. Squire Toby was talking as Charlie wakened, and he heard him say: “Put out of our own house by you! It won’t hold for long. We’ll come in together, friendly, and stay. Fore-warned, wi’ yer eyes open, ye did it; and now Scroope’ll hang you! We’ll hang you together! Look at me, you devil’s limb.” (30)

The increase in the intensity of his dreams reaches to a point where Charlie finds himself unable to distinguish between reality and dream. Initially, his haunting began with the return of his dead father’s memory/spirit in the form of a dog, but now his living brother also joins his torment, threatening his life. Moreover, Charlie sees the old Squire’s face, “torn with shot and bloody,” grotesquely morphing into the features of the dead dog, while a “black shadow” of his brother “begin[s] to scale the bed,” verbally abuse and ridicule the youngest Marston with laughter (30). Jack Sullivan suggests that dreams “function as a subtext, a constant analogy” (54) of the repressed memory, unresolved trauma, or psychological fragmentation the characters are suffering from. Therefore, this nightmare foregrounds the unresolved family tension and the guilt that revolves around the destruction of the deed, the source of the trauma in the family. In that sense, the blame for usurping his brother’s, or the Catholic Irish’s rights entirely falls on Charlie, the Protestant Anglo-Irish. By destroying the deed, he stopped being an accomplice but became an active agent in the violation of his brother’s rights. Yet, as he refuses to acknowledge his part in this conflict, Charlie’s role as the dutiful son changes, and he starts being perceived as the “perverse deformity” in the family for not being “true to his nature – not brotherly or filial” (Kellermeyer 187).

Charlie wakes up in horror on the floor, away from his bed, with “a crash and ringing of fragments” in his ear (Le Fanu, “Squire” 30). Disoriented by the unsettling dream, Charlie notices that “[t]he great china bowl, from which for generations the Marstons of Gylingden had been baptized,” had fallen and shattered on the floor (31). The breaking of the china bowl is significant in two ways. Firstly, it emphasises the blurred lines between reality and dreams and how the supernatural influences the external world. In this way, it deepens Charlie’s confusion over what is real and what is a dream, which marks the critical condition he is in because “[f]or Le Fanu’s characters, reality is inherently dark and deadly” (Sullivan 75), meaning that his nightmares have now become his reality. Secondly, the shattering of the bowl symbolises the rupture in the family,

between the two religious identities of Ireland. As Kellermeyer suggests, “Charlie’s treason has destroyed the heart and soul of his family— it is no longer a family, no longer protected and united by the shared rite of baptism” (187). In other words, the broken bowl symbolises the fragmentation of identity, the breakdown of communal bonds, and the severance of cultural inheritance between Ireland’s Catholic and Protestant communities.

Yet the final rupture of the story does not stem from Charlie’s ambiguous haunting; rather, it arrives unexpectedly with Scroope’s sudden death. The unforeseen death occurs due to a heart disease when the older brother is preparing to sue Charlie over his disinheritance for the last time. Even though shocked by this incident, Charlie receives the news in an unrestrained “exultation” (Le Fanu, “Squire” 31). Not only does he rejoice in being freed from the responsibility of making amends, but he also receives “all [Scroope’s] possessions ... unconditionally” as his brother’s heir (31). This moment marks the end of any possible salvation for Charlie as Scroope’s death prevents any potential reconciliation between the brothers, as well as between Catholic and Protestant identities. However, the conflict does not end here, as Charlie states that he “would gladly have prevented his brother’s being buried in the old Gylingden chapel” (Le Fanu, “Squire” 32). Although he cannot prevent it, he offers no ceremony to Scroope and does not prepare the house, which is because, as Cooper notes, he “was very much vexed that the eldest son of the old Squire should be buried in the old family chapel, and no sign of decent respect from Gylingden Hall” (32). The absence of funeral rites, which are culturally and socially crucial for “reinforc[ing] the remaining social ties,” is significant as such customs determine “who is in the group and who is not” (de Vries 405). Therefore, Charlie’s lack of respect for his brother’s death and his disinterest highlights the final split within the family, as he marks his brother, once again, as the other. In this light, as de Vries discusses, cultural or collective trauma not only disintegrates cultural bonds but also impacts the individual’s sense of self by creating vulnerability in the self, where “aggression replaces nurturance” and “identity confusion or a negative identity substitutes for a positive identity” (408). Thus, it is not death, but Charlie’s lack of respect and attention to his brother’s death that severs all remaining connections, which symbolises the loss of sympathy between religious identities due to their shared trauma.

Scroope's death does not finalise Charlie's haunting; instead, as the story comes to an end, the consequences of Charlie's moral failure with the accumulation of his sins, inherited and personal, become inescapable. Although Charlie does not attend the funeral, "two gentlemen in black cloaks, and with crapes to their hats," arrive unexpectedly at Gylingden Hall, and with "a great liberty," they climb the "steps into the house" (Le Fanu, "Squire" 32). Only the old butler, Cooper, sees their entry into the house and follows them, but "[can]not find them then, nor ever. And from that hour the house [becomes] troubled" (32). Their disappearance in the house immediately "give[s] the impression that something out of this world is going to take place" (Łowczanin 114). The spectral intrusion of these two figures, who closely resemble the dead Marston men, Toby and Scroope, marks the transition of the ancient house from a ground of family legacy to a site of gothic retribution. As people move around the house, "[s]teps and voices followed them sometimes in the passages, and tittering whispers," infusing into the very building itself as "[t]hey called, ... through the walls" (Le Fanu, "Squire" 33). Similar to how Le Fanu employs hidden rooms to portray the unconscious of his characters, through the use of settings, he also "creates a dual world which symbolizes both the overt and the covert side of the human soul" (Achilles 157). Nevertheless, this time, by transforming the ancestral home into an environmental haunting, Le Fanu externalises Charlie's repressed guilty conscience, crafting an enclosed space inflicted by and built upon the Marson family's sins.

Sullivan argues that "for Le Fanu's doomed heroes, there is no release," and that the suffering "repeats itself in strange, unremitting cycles" (67). As the house transitions into a reckoning of his sins, Charlie succumbs to despair. Projected onto the outer world, his guilty conscience starts tormenting him "physically as well as psychologically" (Corran 119). He becomes sleepless, agitated, and physically ill, "damp and cold, and trembled very much" (Le Fanu, "Squire" 35). One of the spectral figures appears to him, looking like a "thin, hump-backed chap in mourning" (36), who silently beckons from the young Squire's doorway repeatedly. Later, "the fugitive shadow" starts "re-arranging itself," taking the likeness of Scroope with his "long, sharp nose," "fierce eye," and hump-back (38). The similarity does not escape Charlie's attention as he starts, in his delirious state, calling out Scroope's name, warning his servants of his visitations, and talking to him in

his sleep. These incidents suggest that the return of the unresolved collective trauma not only torments him externally but also leads Charlie to acknowledge the retribution waiting for him from within. In other words, it can also be claimed that with this vision, Charlie internalises the sectarian divide, but as a representative Protestant Anglo-Irish figure, it is too late for him to atone or make amends.

As his conscious mind further shatters under the weight of his haunting and guilt, Charlie confesses that “[Scroope’s] looking angry. He’s nigh took my life wi’ this fever. But he’s not done wi’ me yet, and he looks awful wicked” (39). Charlie’s awareness of Scroope’s apparition, even in his hysterical state, is crucial. As Hughes argues, “[t]he concrete existence of what the sufferer *sees* matters little in context: it is what the sufferer perceives he has *done*, embodied symbolically in the spectre, which forces him towards his untimely end” (62, emphasis in original). Therefore, Charlie’s haunting by the spectral form of his dead brother can also be considered the younger Squire’s confrontation with his past sins, his acceptance of the wrongdoings he inherited, and his resignation in the face of approaching death. In this context, the gothic haunting does not merely represent personal suffering, but it acts as a vessel of the deeply problematic and internalised cultural divide. In Charlie’s final haunting by his brother, their respective symbolic identities are foregrounded as Protestant and Catholic: the fragmented memories of the oppressed Catholic Irish return to haunt the collective unconscious of the Protestant Anglo-Irish, destabilising the dominant narrative and imprinting historical trauma onto the present.

The story comes full circle as Charlie is found dead in King Herod’s chamber, losing his life without reconciliation in the place where he revealed the truth of his family’s inheritance. After vanishing from his room, old Cooper searches the house and forces the door, which opens with “a heavy crash, shaking the whole floor, and sending an echo flying through all the silent corridors, with a sound like receding laughter” (Le Fanu, “Squire” 40). There, on the floor, he finds his master “lying dead upon the floor,” his “cravat ... tight round his throat,” which is a death concluded in ambiguity and isolation (40). Due to the horrifying state in which Cooper finds his master, the coroner holds an inquest, stating that Charles Marston “had died by his own hand, in a state of temporary insanity” (40). This is not a moment of madness, but rather a psychological unravelling,

unfolded by familial betrayal and ancestral sins. Furthermore, Achilles suggests that in his final moments, Charlie “revokes the rebellion against his father,” as he resisted the old Squire’s bullying by “strangling him with his cravat” and “converts it into an act of auto-aggression” (162). In this way, the young Squire “play[s] both victim and villain in the Herod chamber,” enacting punishment on himself and echoing “the death Scroope promised he would ... as a thief and a liar” (Kellermeyer 198). The setting, the very room of his brother’s symbolic dispossession, intensifies the finalisation of the gothic revenge as Charlie is not only haunted by the dead but also becomes a tool in their hands to carry out the sentence on himself. In other words, as an allegory, the Protestant heir’s death in the symbolic space of Catholic dispossession does not portray resolution or redemption, but it represents a violent persisting division between two religious groups, still carrying the wounds of their traumatic past on their bodies and in their collective memories.

Le Fanu often structures his Gothic stories around the tension in the family or the severing of ties between blood relatives. While this can be considered a technique that he uses to implicitly represent the historical conflicts in his stories, the traces of “[t]he marital discord and religious doubt that marked his marriage” can still be found in Le Fanu’s fiction (Melada 11). In this sense, similar to the allegorical portrayal of the traumatic dispossession of a Catholic Irish character within a fictional family, Le Fanu, in “Wicked Captain Walshawe, of Wauling” (1864), focuses on a problematic marriage to represent the traumatic cultural division and religious intolerance. In both stories, Le Fanu focuses on domestic spaces to reflect the broader historical conflicts between Catholic and Protestant identities, drawing attention to their respective sufferings. Although W. J. McCormack regards “Wicked Captain Walshawe, of Wauling” as the only short story in which Le Fanu “attempted to discuss contemporary Catholicism ... in hostile and satirical terms” (*Sheridan* 249), the story can still be interpreted as a reflection on the loss of Catholic traditions and identity under the rule of imperial authority. While “Squire Toby’s Will” is implicit in its political allegory, in “Wicked Captain,” Le Fanu is more explicit in his political and cultural critique. By exploring the dismissal of religious traditions of an Irish Catholic wife by her English Protestant husband, which ultimately leads to his supernatural punishment, Le Fanu is in fact “quick to warn England of the repercussions of her mistreatment” on native Irish Catholics (Kellermeyer 164).

Even though the focus shifts from familial conflict to marital neglect to portray Protestant households unsettled by the lingering effects of cultural and religious trauma, Le Fanu continues to make use of gothic conventions like supernatural haunting, liminal settings, and unreliable narrators to represent how repressed offences return to plague the minds and consciences of the characters. Specifically, the unreliable narrator plays a central role in Le Fanu's fiction in terms of how trauma is represented, relayed, and remembered. While the narrator in "Squire's Toby's Will" is considered to be person from the local community, in "Wicked Captain," the narrator is identified as Mr Watson's, the heir of Captain Walshawe's, nephew, who explicitly records that he did not witness the events. He starts the story by saying, "[a] very odd thing happened to my uncle, Mr. Watson, of Haddlestone" (Le Fanu, "Wicked Captain" 109), suggesting that he gathered the details of the story from others through hearsay. This similar narrative technique in both stories helps to represent how trauma, particularly collective trauma, which is tied to religious identity in this context, is not told like a historical record, but instead is inherited and shared like folklore among people and becomes distorted over time. LaCapra states that "all narratives 'construct' or shape and some narratives more or less drastically distort their objects" (10). Hence, the narrators do not simply report the events like reading from a history book, but they actively shape how the past is understood and retold. The contradictions, uncertainties, and gaps in recollections that appear in the narrative mirror the fragmented nature of traumatic memory, which, particularly in these two stories, reflects the collective memory of Protestant and Catholic identities affected by the events of Ireland's past. Tracy Fahey maintains that Irish Gothic literature carries the traces of Irish folk legends or tales through common features, such as "unreliable narrators, improbable tales presented as truth, psychological archetypes, monsters, dreams, visions, supernatural sites, and a paradoxical obsession with both boundaries and liminal spaces, both physical and spiritual" (155). Therefore, both narrators reflect this past tradition by treating the stories as part of their folk memory.

However, it is crucial to note that even though the unreliable narrators are not exposed to the traumatic event directly, their accounts of those incidents reinforce the idea of how trauma circulates through the collective or cultural memory in distorted or second-hand

forms. In this context, Beville argues that the Gothic “reveals historical scepticism via an uncanny presentism that is haunted and rendered unstable by lingering and unresolved past events” (65), and therefore, it provides a unique framework, “a valuable medium for communicating the uncanny nature of the past and for culturally translating the past in conflicted situations” (66). In both stories, the use of this narrative technique becomes part of the portrayal of collective religious trauma, as the retelling of past events reflects how unresolved and incomplete issues resurface in cultural consciousness or are preserved as stories that stand as testaments to the passage of time. In this way, the traditional trauma model defines collective trauma as “timeless and unknowable,” but with “the potential to *infect another*” (Balaev, “Trauma Theory” 12, emphasis in original). Therefore, the retelling of past trauma still infects the narrators, changing their own perception of the past. However, Balaev argues that the idea of transgenerational trauma may overlook the fact that “different forms of violence, torture, and abuse ... can produce different responses in different individuals” (16). This suggests that although trauma may be transmitted across generations or through storytelling, its reception and impact remain specific to the narrator’s position and experience. What is conveyed in these stories, then, is not a singular encoded traumatic event, but a layered and reconstructed form of cultural trauma in the collective memories of individuals with the same or different religious identities.

As a narrative shaped by gothic tropes within this framework, Le Fanu’s “Wicked Captain Walshawe, of Wauling” can be analysed as a form of “supernatural surrealism” (Melada 112), in which Le Fanu addresses the consequences of the loss of religious identity and tradition, fractured marital bonds, and the lingering tension of the unsettled wrongs. Set in a fictional city in Lancashire, England, during the early nineteenth century, the story recounts “the effect of a curse on the soul of a wastrel” (113). Mr James Walshawe, who also goes by Captain Walshawe even though he had never reached the rank, is a former Anglo-English officer. To acquire wealth and pay off his debts, he elopes with Peg O’Neill, who is a wealthy Irish Catholic heiress raised in a nunnery. Their union is not based on love but on deception. Soon after they are married, Captain Walshawe “spent her income, frightened her out of her wits with oaths and threats, and broke her heart” (Le Fanu, “Wicked Captain” 110). In a foreign land, in Wauling, away from her homeland,

Peg O'Neill becomes a recluse, shutting herself in her room and spending the rest of her days only in close contact with her loyal Irish Catholic servant, Molly Doyle. After years of negligence and emotional abuse, Peg loses her life, much to Captain Walshawe's indifference. During her wake, Peg's loyal confidant is the one who conducts a vigil for her with other Irish Catholic women by placing candles around her corpse and a single candle in her hands with a rosary around her fingers. This moment marks the start of Walshawe's curse as upon seeing "a half-dozen crones" around her body, he accuses Doyle of witchcraft and disturbs the peaceful traditional Catholic funeral rite by snatching the candle (111). Enraged by his intrusion and ruining Peg's funeral, Molly Doyle curses his soul to be imprisoned in "[t]he holy candle" until the wick is burnt out (112). Decades pass, and Walshawe dies alone in 1822, leaving the Wauling estate to his only living relative, Mr Watson, who visits to settle the inheritance. On the first night, a storm breaks out, disturbing Watson's sleep, and he lights a candle, the very holy candle in which Walshawe's soul is trapped. Soon after, a distorted spectral figure emerges from the wick's light, first presenting "a small human face, no bigger than a thumb-nail," which then enlarges in size to look like the dead Captain (118). In a few minutes, the spectral figure changes from a young, handsome man to an old, malignant-looking man after he reveals the hidden location of the necessary legal documents for Watson to claim the estate. Then, the figure's body dissolves into "ashes, float[es] away" into the old chimney for his soul to be taken to the depths of Hell (119). In this story, Le Fanu sets Protestant rationalism against Catholic mysticism and tradition not only to emphasise the difference between the two religious identities but also to portray the misrepresentation of religious practices and the erasure of religious traditions under an oppressive authority. The haunting in the story, even though Watson is subjected to it, is not directed at him and remains limited to personal revenge. Watson, symbolising the future generations of Protestants as a Methodist, becomes a witness to trauma due to his closeness or blood-relation to Walshawe, which refers to the collective memory of Protestants plagued by past mistakes. In other words, it can be claimed that the haunting figure becomes the haunted one as Walshawe is the one who remains trapped within the consequences of his own actions. In this way, in "Wicked Captain," Le Fanu crafts a gothic narrative in which a domestic space becomes the site of religious repression and reckoning, and the haunting

emerges not only as punishment but also as a form of self-confrontation with suppressed guilt, broken bonds, and cultural traumas that cannot remain buried.

As mentioned above, Le Fanu, in several of his Gothic short stories, “incorporates elements of ... ‘supernatural surrealism’ for the purpose of historical and political analysis” (Achilles 151). According to Ivan Melada, the “distinguishing characteristic” of these stories “is the surrealistic special effect,” which incorporates “folklore or family legend” and presents scenes with “distortions of reality that occur in the dream state” (112). In “Wicked Captain,” Le Fanu employs supernatural surrealism through the vision of Walshawe’s emerging from the candle due to the curse placed on his soul. However, he does not simply employ it as a stylistic preference; rather, he uses it as a means of emphasising the psychological and cultural aspects of the story. As Achilles argues,

these fantastic effects are expressions of theological and political crises, their significance is essentially psychological. Le Fanu does not depict religious and historical change with a view to suggesting practical solutions of the problems involved. His fantastic treatment of such problems aims instead at conveying emotional attitudes towards them. (152)

In this way, Le Fanu’s treatment of historical issues and cultural tensions in his stories, specifically the ones dealing with sectarian division and subsequent traumatic events, can be regarded as his attempt to sympathise with and give voice to the unrepresented sufferings through the use of gothic tropes. Hence, the psychological weight of these unresolved issues is not simply employed to confront the perpetrators, but it is used to shape the characters, their relationships, and the domestic space they occupy within a gothic setting. In this manner, the relationship between Captain Walshawe and his wife, Peg O’Neill, and the following supernatural appearance in the story can be analysed within this framework as Le Fanu starts the narrative with a brief recollection of the strained marital relationship to set the emotional, psychological, and historical focus of the story between opposing religious identities:

his debts had grown so troublesome, that he was induced to extricate himself by running away with and marrying an heiress. ... When he married his wife, he was quartered in Ireland, at Clonmel, where was a nunnery, in which, as pensioner,

resided Miss O'Neill, or as she was called in the country, Peg O'Neill — the heiress of whom I have spoken. ("Wicked Captain" 109)

Peg O'Neill's introduction as an Irish Catholic woman brought up in a convent not only depicts her as a pious and traditionally subservient wife, but, through her elopement, also positions her as a symbolic representative of a threatened religious and cultural identity. As Punter notes, the monastery or the life in a nunnery in Gothic fiction can be understood in two ways: it is "a monument," which "transcends" the individual concerns to stand as enduring values of Catholic tradition; on the other hand, it is "a ruin," a relic of a deteriorating tradition, "which will always be on the other side of a great divide" ("Scottish and Irish Gothic" 118). In this light, Peg O'Neill is placed in a liminal space, in which the nunnery stands both as the place of protection of her Irish Catholic identity and as a space already unsettled by political and cultural shifts marked by religious tension. Moreover, the emphasis on her wealth is crucial for the role she will play in the marriage as "[h]er situation was the only ingredient of romance in the affair, for the young lady was decidedly plain, though good-rumoured looking, with that style of features which is termed *potato*" (Le Fanu, "Wicked Captain" 109, emphasis in original). Her description as plain-looking paints her as an undesirable woman in the eyes of men, but the term "potato"⁶ also underlines her ethnic Irish features, further devaluing her identity and individuality.

For Walshawe, Peg O'Neill is not his equal or a favourable partner, but rather a means to secure financial gain: "In England there are traditions of Irish fortune-hunters, and in Ireland of English" (110). This comparison draws attention to the similar attempts from both nations to acquire wealth, but within the context of the story, fortune-hunting becomes a form of exploitation of the oppressed. Peg O'Neill is therefore reduced to a tool for him to use and direct. Furthermore, as a woman, her being a representative of Ireland is also symbolic as the country itself "has a long history of being represented as feminine" (Nash 108). Catherine Nash argues that "images of women have been used in

⁶ While this description emphasises Peg O'Neill's plain and unattractive looks, the use of "potato" can also be read as a reference to the Great Famine (1845-1852). Although "Wicked Captain Walshawe, of Wauling" is set in the early nineteenth century, Le Fanu wrote it many years after the Famine, in 1864, thereby linking Peg's appearance to the malnourishment and bodily deformity that Irish people suffered during those times.

Western culture as symbols which stand for other concepts such as vulnerability, charity, chastity or corruption” (110), and by employing this perspective to represent Ireland through Peg O’Neill’s character, the land and the female body⁷ become the reflection of one another. In this way, Peg O’Neill is deemed lesser by Walshawe and treated as an object of transaction for his control and personal use. Therefore, Walshawe not only usurps her wealth but also dismisses and exploits her national and religious identity that is tied to Ireland. Kellermeyer also considers Peg as the representative of the Catholic Irish as she is “devout, endowed, sincere, receptive, and trusting” (163), but these characteristics also cause her to be exploited by her husband as she is also described as “impressible” (Le Fanu, “Wicked Captain” 109). The arrival of “the handsome young English lieutenant” (109) is described as “too much for her monastic tendencies” (109-10) that she “got over the nunnery garden wall, and jumped into the handsome Captain’s arms, for love” (110). Her portrayal as a naive woman who cannot see a man’s true intentions brings forth the loss of her religious and traditional identity, which marks the traumatic turn of her life.

The elopement and the marriage life soon turn out to be a disappointment as they signify the loss of monastic ideals and a symbolic departure from Catholic tradition to an authoritative Protestant English one. In other words, in the form of Peg O’Neill, “Ireland sells her soul for English promises of devotion, and finds herself impoverished, neglected, and damned to boot” (Kellermeyer 164). Walshawe’s treatment of his wife after their marriage mirrors this statement as he “spent her income, frightened her out of her wits with oaths and threats, and broke her heart” (Le Fanu, “Wicked Captain” 110). In turn, Peg starts to change into a woman who cries more than she smiles and gradually becomes a figure who is silenced and erased as she becomes invisible by “shut[ting] herself up pretty nearly altogether in her room” (110). Balaev notes that trauma “reorders identity and the relationship between the self and external world” (*Nature of Trauma* 73) through

⁷ This symbolism can also evoke the long-standing colonial practice of imagining Ireland as a “wanton woman” who “evokes disgust and must be tamed” (Nash 112). Furthermore, the period in which the story takes place coincides with the Acts of Union (1800), which politically united Britain and Ireland, and in this context, the marriage between the Protestant English man and the Catholic Irish woman reflects a wider colonial practice of control and assimilation. This union is framed through ideals of “male affection, patronage and benevolence” combined with “unquestioned male discipline, authority and control” (Nash 113), revealing how the domestic institution becomes a site where political and cultural domination is enacted to subjugate the Other.

revisiting past modes of subjectivity. However, for Peg, this exploration is marked not by self-reclamation but by a slow dissociation from both personal and religious sense of belonging. However, Elizabeth Tilley points out that “nothing about the Irish heiress” is known except for “the ease with which she was lured away from the protection of the convent and separated from her fortune” (141). Therefore, Peg O’Neill is forced to experience and struggle with the traumatic loss of her religious identity alone. Yet Tilley stresses that there is a reason why “[t]he main characters of this story are not allowed a voice” (141). This not only strengthens the idea of an unrepresentable history that exists only in the collective mind, but it also underlines the narrator’s omission and interpretation of the story “at a double remove from the action,” allowing the ambiguous and possibly forgotten voices of traumatised people to be remembered in this fashion (Tilley 141). Therefore, the fractured marriage and the power imbalance between the couple reflect the relationship between the exploited Irish Catholics and their oppressor, the Protestant English. Through this portrayal, Le Fanu moves from the internal sectarian conflicts to an external threat to the Catholic identity of the Irish people, which is also deeply scarred and traumatised by the attempts made to erase its existence.

Following this dynamic, the domestic space of their house at Wauling in Lancashire becomes a site of conflict where the inhabitants, the Catholic figures, are only allowed to exist on the margins. Their identities and traditional practices are suppressed and resented under the Captain Walshawe’s authority. Within the bleak atmosphere of the house, the servants and other visitors are forced to be the ghosts of Wauling before the supernatural events. In other words, they become ghosts because their presence disturbs the Captain’s authority. Namely, the religious Molly Doyle is “an old, rather grim, Irish servant-woman” in personal attendance of Peg O’Neill. Her confrontational presence in the house gravely unsettles Walshawe who “often threaten[s] to put her out of the house, and sometimes even to kick her out of the window” (Le Fanu, “Wicked Captain” 110). He often swears and curses at her, calling her “a *diddled* old mischief-maker” and claiming that she is “always troubling the house with her cursed stories” (110, emphasis in original). His severe disdain for Molly’s presence in the house is rooted in what she stands for: the native Catholic Irish domestic influence, superstition, and memory. Specifically, her stories are perceived as harmful and unsettling by Walshawe, as these “cursed stories”

evoke the legacy of Irish folklore, in which “the culture of superstitions, stories, and codes [are] transmitted” and “passed down from generation to generation” as a means of preserving cultural memory and identity (Fahey 155). As Molly’s religious identity is foregrounded in her personality, the active sharing of these stories in Walshawe’s Protestant English household can be considered disruptive and threatening to his control, leading him to be cruel and ignorant which culminates in him being cursed.

According to Edward Said, imperial power relies on control over narrative: “The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism” (xiii). In this light, Walshawe’s resentment towards Molly’s stories and his threats of violence and displacement can be regarded as his exertion of authority to restrict the expression of Catholic identity within his Protestant territory. Even the figure of a Catholic priest, “in a long black frock, with a low standing collar” (Le Fanu, “Wicked Captain” 110), is not given a voice and is forced to move around the house like a spectre, described as looking “severe and self-possessed” (111) while “glide[ing] up and down the stairs, and through the passages” (110). Although the Captain “treated this cleric exceptionally, and even with a surly sort of courtesy” (110), he still “grumbled about his visits behind his back” (111) as he resented his presence in the house alongside other Catholic servants. This portrayal of the priest suggests that, rather being welcomed as a spiritual guide, he is merely tolerated as his presence fades into a ghost, mirroring the fragmentation and erasure of Catholic identity under this traumatising control. In this way, Walshawe actively silences and invalidates Catholic voices, contributing to the already evolving collective trauma within the household’s shared memory. Yet, the continued presence of Catholic figures in the house suggests otherwise since they preserve the fragmented religious identity around Peg O’Neill and within themselves.

These Catholic figures become Peg O’Neill’s “defenders” in her final moments of life (Kellermeyer 164). The week before her death, the priest visits her daily to pray for her soul, while the female servants do not leave their lady’s side, in contrast to Walshawe who barely stays by his sick wife. Even when Peg O’Neill dies, he prefers to drink “a great deal of brandy and water that night” instead of preparing for her funeral (Le Fanu, “Wicked Captain” 111). In this way, Peg O’Neill’s identity and her need for funeral rites

are once again ignored as her death marks the symbolic erasure of a religious identity that had long been suppressed within the Protestant household. Instead of Walshawe, her funeral is conducted by “some half-dozen crones, chiefly Irish, from the neighbouring town” (111), under Molly Doyle’s guidance, and they act as “the keepers of the Irish soul” (Kellermeyer 164). The women, “sitting over tea and snuff,” gather around her corpse “with candles lighted” around her body and dress her in “a strangely cut robe of brown serge” (Le Fanu, “Wicked Captain” 111). They place “a wax candle” in her hands, together with a rosary, “a large wooden beads and cross,” to evoke a Catholic burial custom, paying their last respects to the lost soul (111). This moment reflects the traditional Irish wake, and it is a significant moment in the story as the characters with whom she shares her religious identity help her reclaim her Catholic heritage for the last time by taking “[Walshawe’s] dead wife out of her husband’s control and placing her back into her religious role” (O’Rourke 277).

Disturbed by the silence in the house, Walshawe gathers himself to see “what the devil Doyle and the other old witches were about in poor Peg’s room” (111). Upon his entrance, he sees the burning “wax candle, shedding its white light over the sharp features of the corpse” as the other women are gathered around, and he becomes “startled, for the spectacle was grisly enough” for his restless mind (111-12). In his drunken, hostile, and agitated state, the Captain storms the room, snatches the candle from dead fingers, and attempts to throw it at Doyle’s head:

‘The holy candle, you sinner!’ cried she. ‘I’ve a mind to make you eat it, you beast,’ cried the Captain. ... ‘You know devilish well you had no business going on with y-y-your d— *witch*-craft about my poor wife, without my leave – you do – and you’ll please to take off that d— brown pinafore, and get her decently into her coffin, and I’ll pitch your devil’s waxlight into the sink.’ (112, emphasis in original)

The Captain’s need to reassert his authority over the loss of the brief space after the momentary reclamation of Catholic identity and tradition is revealed through his aggression. Walshawe’s furious reaction and accusations of witchcraft emphasise a deeper mischaracterisation of Catholics that is embedded in the collective memory of Protestants. In the story, not only does Walshawe, as the Protestant figure, disregard the traditional funeral rites of his deceased Catholic wife, which prevents her soul’s peaceful

passage into the afterlife, but he also accuses the women of heresy, reframing culturally significant Catholic rituals as deviant practices that threaten his Protestant rationalism. Furthermore, the Captain categorises “the apparently Catholic rituals and the women who perform them as other and crucially, through the insult ‘witch,’ unreal” (O’Rourke 277). In this way, the story reveals the extent of discrimination and oppression that an individual from a specific religious identity can experience, with trauma unfolding through the systematic denial of religious expression and recognition.

On the other hand, Walshawe’s accusation of witchcraft by calling Molly Doyle and others “cheating old witch[es]” reflects not only the Captain’s ignorant perception of Catholic practices but also his perception of defiant women and the shared past of Catholic and pagan traditions in Ireland. Tracy Fahey suggests that “[i]n many legends, women subvert the idea of natural order; they are aligned with the archetypes of the witch, the banshee, the fairy-woman, the changeling” (160), and in this way, Molly Doyle and the other old women transform into figures of cultural memory rather than mere representations of unruly and heretic women. Their presence at Peg O’Neill’s bedside and the performance of the funeral rite with beads, a candle, and a robe bring back a form of religious expression that had been viewed as sacrilegious under the Captain’s Protestant authority. Jenny Butler explains that “the transition from paganism to Christianity was a more harmonious process in Ireland than in other areas of the world” due to the lack of Roman state enforcement, which allowed for a more gradual “accommodation between the pagan religion and the incoming Christian faith” (210). Consequently, “older pagan elements survived” in Catholic practices (Butler 211), often performed in the folk tradition and passed down through generations by women like Molly. Furthermore, the setting of the story is also significant in the discussion of witches. With Le Fanu’s growing interest in “traditional Irish folklore,” as noted by Shane McCorristine, in his Gothic literary works, he starts incorporating places rich in “popular superstitions ... particularly relating to witchcraft”; that is why he sets “Wicked Captain Walshawe, of Wauling” in Lancashire, a region with a history of witch trials that had taken place in the seventeenth century (287). By situating the narrative in this specific geography, Le Fanu mirrors the repression of Irish Catholicism with English witch trials in order to emphasise the severity

of the traumatising cultural erasure and to portray how different religious/spiritual identities are judged as threats to the dominant authority.

In this overlapping reference to pagan and Catholic traditions, “the holy candle” emerges as a religious symbol that brings together the customs of past and present, sparking Walshawe’s fury which leads to the cursing of his soul that triggers the Gothic haunting of the story. The candle is charged with such supernatural energy that after discovering its purpose, Walshawe, despite his blasphemous threats, decides to lock the candle away in a press “with a tipsy gravity, and then with something of that reverential feeling for the symbolic” (Le Fanu, “Wicked Captain” 112). Even though he spares the religious symbol from further humiliation due to the uneasiness he feels, his disrespectful intrusion into the sacred ceremony causes him to be cursed by Molly Doyle: “An’ now her poor sowl’s in prison, you wretch, be the mains o’ ye; an’ may yer own be shut into the wick o’ that same candle, till it’s burned out, ye savage” (112). Le Fanu heightens the Gothic tension in the story with this curse, as it transcends Molly’s individual voice and echoes a collective voice of the repressed and outraged Irish Catholics. At this moment, she becomes more than just a grieving servant. She transforms into a spokesperson, or the everyperson figure as Balaev suggests, of the collective suffering, the fading religious tradition, and folklore. Her words combine Catholic and pagan elements. She claims that Walshawe’s intervention in the funeral rite has condemned Peg’s soul from salvation, invoking the Catholic belief that souls denied proper burial would remain in purgatory for eternity (Hallam et al. 24). In turn, by cursing him, Molly dooms the Captain’s soul by confining it within the candle’s wick until it burns out, which transitions a sacred symbol into a tool of vengeance, stripping it from its purpose.

After Peg’s funeral and Walshawe’s cursing, the narrator leaps forward in time, “[f]orty years” later to the death of Captain Walshawe (Le Fanu, “Wicked Captain” 113). The passage of time is described as a “great *edax rerum*, and a wonderful chemical power” that “acted forcibly upon” the Captain to draw attention to his gradual moral and physical decay (113, emphasis in original). Once a “gay” and handsome officer, he evolves into a “bloated old sinner” with “crippled claws” and “bad legs” over the years, becoming dependent on the wheelchair in the last period of his life (113). Yet, despite his

deteriorating health, the narrator notes that he “never heard that he repented, or turned his thoughts seriously to the future” (113). Instead, the Captain’s speech becomes “fouler,” and his humour takes a sadistic turn as he indulges himself in “his favourite sins,” and his “temper waxed more truculent” (113). In other words, all his faults and errors in his youth further develop in his later life, especially his hatred and greed. While the narrative does not mention the curse on his soul during these passing years, it can be claimed that the haunting, although not yet supernatural, starts to affect him by making him paranoid, bitter, and violent. It is implied that after Peg’s death, none of her female servants remain in the house, but the blessed candle still exists in the forgotten corners of the Captain’s room, waiting for the day to trap his cursed soul. In the end, Walshawe dies alone at Wauling, in his isolated house, where the memories of the past Catholic identities are embedded into the nooks and crooks.

Herein, once again, Le Fanu transforms the house into a haunted place and incorporates hidden deeds. Towards the end of his life, Walshawe, in a futile attempt to hold the estate under his name, tries to hide leases and treaties of the estate from his distant relative, “his heir-at-law,” Mr Watson, of Haddlestone (Le Fanu, “Wicked Captain” 113). Watson is identified as a Methodist, symbolising the future and different branches of Protestants, and in the narrative, he is positioned as a foil to Captain Walshawe with his good nature and status in life, as the narrator calls him a “class-leader” (113). Including these differences, the narrator notes that Walshawe “bore him a grudge for being richer than he, and would have liked to do him an ill turn” (113), which he attempts by hiding his will. The treaties and leases remain hidden after the Captain’s death, which compels Watson to travel to Wauling himself in hopes of finding the missing will and settling the inheritance. However, upon his arrival, he unknowingly steps into the Captain’s haunted memory.

On the day of his arrival, Watson is described as “perturbed” by the unknown whereabouts of the leases. He spends the evening praying with the doctor and the attorney, who is later revealed to know about the hidden deeds (Le Fanu, “Wicked Captain” 114). In his prayers, which seem to be directed at the attorney, Watson declares that “the hard heart of the sinner who had abstracted the leases might be softened or broken” (114) so that the

sinner would willingly reveal the whereabouts of the documents; if not, he adds, with “the will of Heaven” (114) he would find the missing leases and “bring [the sinner] to public justice and the documents to light” (114-15). Through Watson’s speech here, as Achilles suggests, Le Fanu gives a brief but “drastic demonstration of the corruption of the originally sound squirearchy” (152) by turning figures like Captain Walshawe into a gothic representation of a fallen ruling class that once upheld rural order. Now, by portraying Captain Walshawe and his attorney as power-hungry individuals, Le Fanu represents the moral decay and political decline in the squirearchy as these Protestant figures become the operators of Catholic oppression under “an alien regime” (Lane 229). Furthermore, as a more sympathetic Protestant figure, Watson’s prayers align with the lingering Catholic curse which seeks to expose the errors of the late Captain. In this way, Watson’s voice also mirrors Le Fanu’s voice as a writer, who, despite being “a Protestant, a Tory, and of Huguenot heritage,” expresses sympathy for the suffering of the Catholic Irish (Kellermeyer 164).

Unbeknown to Watson, his prayers, filled with pleas for resolution and revelation, set in motion the events of the night, unleashing the supernatural haunting of the story. As the night falls, Watson retreats to the room, previously occupied by Walshawe, and from that moment onwards, Le Fanu transforms the house into a gothic place, steeped in uncanny tension. The dying fire of the hearth and the candle flames “throbbing strangely in their sockets” cast shifting and twirling “glare and shadow round the old wainscoted room” (Le Fanu, “Wicked Captain” 115). Outside, the “wild thunder and piping of the storm” and the “rattling of distant windows” echo “like angry people astir in the house,” unsettling the quiet atmosphere of the house and blurring the line between human realm and supernatural presence (115). At this point, the narrative takes a turn, revealing the repressed trauma that returns to haunt the living and, in turn, the restless soul hanging around in the house. Furthermore, the narrator emphasises his uncle Watson’s sensitivity to supernatural presences as he “belonged to a sect who by no means reject the supernatural, and whose founder, on the contrary, has sanctioned ghosts in the most emphatic way” (115). While Methodism and Swedenborgianism are not essentially the same, Tilley argues that Le Fanu implicitly positions Uncle Watson as a Swedenborgian to represent a rational yet spiritually perceptive Protestant figure, capable of witnessing

and interpreting supernatural occurrences (140-41). In this way, it can be claimed that, with his sensitivity to spectral figures, Watson, a representative of future generations, reinforces the idea that he is part of a collective memory and trauma. He remains a victim of the lingering fragments of a tormented past due to his religious identity, despite not experiencing them first-hand.

In this instance, the candle returns as a powerful gothic symbol, charged with the spectral and emotional weight of the past. During his search of the house late at night, Watson comes across “some six inches of wax candle in the press in the parlour,” feeling a pull towards the object as he lights it and finds himself strangely at ease under its light (Le Fanu, “Wicked Captain” 115). The coincidental finding of the candle suggests his unconscious gravitation towards the very object that holds his relative’s soul inside. As Cooke argues, “one way to incorporate emotions into trauma literature comes through the use of symbols,” and these symbolic objects “provide some distance from the traumatic event so that individuals and communities can begin to approach the trauma” (37). Therefore, after acquiring the Captain’s soul and being lit, the candle ceases to be an ordinary object and becomes a symbol of inherited trauma and a tool of vengeance, imbued with the fragmented memory of past suffering, grief, and repression of religious identity. Upon lighting the candle, “an unusually violent gust of the storm blew a handful of gravel against the parlour window,” and the flame itself became “agitated by the air” (115). The sudden and unsettling changes in nature, such as storms or gushes of winds, generally represent the internal struggle of the characters or anticipate the apparition of supernatural disturbances in Gothic literature. In a similar sense, in her analysis of nature’s representation in trauma novels, Balaev suggests that nature or wilderness functions as “a multifaceted arena of action and emotion that holds a spectrum of value,” emphasising a character’s psychological suffering and in some other cases, their association of cultural values with the external world (*Nature of Trauma* 88). Therefore, the natural reaction outside functions as an extension of the inner unrest, externalising Watson’s psychological tension and the cultural weight the candle carries.

Unnerved by this moment and unable to find the necessary documents, Watson retreats to his room once again, keeping the candle’s flame alight. In the room, the ultimate haunting

begins with subtle disturbances in Watson's surroundings, increasing the tension and the suspense in the story. Before sleeping, Watson feels restless by a "tall looking-glass" opposite at the foot of his bed, and he turns it away, trying to cover the mirror with curtains to stop them from moving (Le Fanu, "Wicked Captain" 115). As he tries to sleep, the howling sounds of the storm continue outside, but then he hears "a sound at the foot of his bed" (116). Confused by the sound, he wakes up to see the curtains loose and rustling free: "he saw them resuming their perpendicular dependence, and sat up in his bed almost expecting to see something uncanny in the aperture" (116). His anticipation to see something "uncanny," which is sudden and bizarre, can be related to the deeper, collective tension and dread existing within the spiritual unrest of the house. Watson keeps sleeping and waking throughout the night, hearing knocks on the door and feeling fingers pressing on his body, as if "the whole bedroom episode [is] a dream" in which the boundaries between reality and dreams steadily collapse (Shroyer 85). This ambiguity deepens the nature of haunting as it disrupts Watson's perception of reality, which portrays a similar situation with Charlie's dream-hauntings in "Squire Toby's Will."

This uncertainty intensifies Watson's fear, leading him to decide to extinguish the candle, which keeps on "fluttering and flaring" every time he opens his eyes: "he popped the extinguisher on the socket, and almost at the same time there came a tap at his door, and a sort of crescendo 'hush-sh-sh!'" (Le Fanu, "Wicked Captain" 116). As these intrusions increase, Watson, unable to sleep, closes his eyes in an attempt to ignore the sounds and ghostly tugs on his body by praying. Yet, he then opens his eyes to be welcomed by the candle before him, a strange sight that "made him quite misdoubt the evidence of his eyes" (117-18). As the narrator continues,

He saw the extinguisher lifted by a tiny hand, from beneath, and a small human face, no bigger than a thumb-nail, with nicely proportioned features peep from beneath it. ... Out came a little foot then and there, and a pair of wee legs, in short silk stockings and buckled shoes, then the rest of the figure; and, with the arms holding about the socket, the little legs stretched and stretched, hanging about the stem of the candlestick till the feet reached the base, and so down the Satyr-like leg of the table, till they reached the floor, extending elastically, and strangely enlarging in all proportions as they approached the ground, where the feet and buckles were those of a well-shaped, full grown man, and the figure tapering upward until it dwindled to its original fairy dimensions at the top, like an object seen in some strangely curved mirror. (117-18)

Emerging from the candle, the spectre takes the shape of “a handsome and elegantly shaped young man, in a bygone military costume,” assuming the appearance of Walshawe’s past alluring looks, but the ghost looks “like a man going to be hanged— in unspeakable despair” (118). This apparition exemplifies the return of repressed trauma, evoking the curse that was placed decades before in a moment of religious and emotional rupture. Furthermore, the rebuilding of Walshawe’s body, beginning from his youthful appearance, functions as both a recognition and distortion of identity in the collective memory, as trauma intrudes upon the familiar, disrupting the order through an uncanny repetition of the past. Achilles compares this scene to “a quick-motion effect ... which foreshadows cinematic techniques” (151), emphasising Le Fanu’s talent in portraying a terrifying moment in realistic imagery. In this manner, this time Walshawe transforms into the figure who is stuck in a liminal space, between life and death. The ghostly figure of Walshawe, “over whom twenty years seemed to have passed in his brief transit to the dressing-table and back again,” begins to “grow exhausted and malignant” as his ghostly body approaches the fire (Le Fanu, “Wicked Captain” 119). The moment he sits down, his legs and feet swell grotesquely into “a great mass of corpulence, with a cadaverous and malignant face,” until “the fine regimentals fade away” into “a loose, gray, woollen drapery” (119). Kellermeyer comments on this transformation as “a tremendously fleshy phantom – corpulent, repellant, and bloated,” which emphasises “Le Fanu’s signature atmosphere of moral rot” (151). Yet, this time, this moral decay is reflected in the Captain’s ghostly body as it becomes “stained and rotten,” with “swarms of worms” creeping around in his flesh (Le Fanu, “Wicked Captain” 119). This grotesque image explicitly portrays his spectral return as an embodiment of decay and retribution. Moreover, it can be claimed that the decay of the body can be considered a reflection of the haunting and punishment taking place on Walshawe’s spirit due to Molly’s curse. Hence, the spectre does not only represent personal sins and guilt but also portrays the collective religious trauma embedded within the house, forcing the Captain’s soul to confront his past sins beginning from his youth to his old age.

However, Walshawe’s metamorphosing ghostly body is not the only figure that connects the past and present trauma in the story: Watson, as a relative of the Captain, becomes the

figure who inherits the religious trauma by reluctantly witnessing the haunting. This act of witnessing and spectral inheritance underlines what McCorristine identifies as “the impossibility of manumission from this ghostly horde,” a common message in Le Fanu’s literary works, specifically his late fictions, which serves as a “disembodied reminder of the weight of the past” concerning the fraught relationship between Catholics and Protestants (292). Therefore, in “Wicked Captain,” Watson’s role as a witness emphasises the persistent burden of collective religious trauma that cannot be erased from the collective memory, returning not only in the form of Walshawe’s cursed soul but through the Protestant heir’s inability to escape the echoes of the past sins he did not commit. In addition to this, Watson’s chances of relieving himself from this burden are prevented by Walshawe’s ghost. The Captain, in his final act, whether out of his need for repentance or his attempt at washing his hands of his sins, reveals the hidden documents by “press[ing] a spring at the side” of the looking-glass and removing “a parcel of papers tied together with pink tape” from a secret compartment (Le Fanu, “Wicked Captain” 118). Holding up “the little parcel of papers,” the horrifying spectre finally turns “its livid stare full upon” Watson, as “a hateful smile of significance” forms on his decaying face before cunningly winking at his terrified heir (119). With this sinister and dramatic gesture, Walshawe not only confesses his mistakes in life by revealing the hidden leases, but also symbolically passes his legacy to Watson, compelling him to inherit not just the estate but also the burden of his unatoned sins, unresolved guilt, and moral corruption.

After traumatising Watson, who later confesses to his nephew that “never did [he] pray with so much agony before or since,” Walshawe’s body further disintegrates, and his spectral form changes “to the colour of tobacco ashes” before the last remains of his soul are taken away:

And so with the strong draught caused by the fire, and the current of air from the window, which was rattling in the storm, the feet seemed to be drawn into the fireplace, and the whole figure, light as ashes, floated away with them, and disappeared with a whisk up the capacious old chimney. (119)

Nature, for a final time, acts as an extension of the lingering trauma in the gothic house to take the suffering soul away as “Molly Doyle’s curse [has] worked its full effect upon

the captain,” reflecting not only the emotional unrest in the house but also the repressed heritage of Ireland, rooted in the shared past of pagan and Catholic identity (Melada 114). In this sense, the dissolution of the corrupted soul marks the fulfilment of the gothic revenge that has long haunted the inhabitants of the estate. O’Rourke claims that “there are often otherworldly presences that commandeer power from the communities they encounter” (274), referring to the ghost as a manifestation of unresolved collective trauma that belatedly returns and forces the living to confront the ignored and concealed injustices and tensions of the past. Regarding this, it can be claimed that Walshawe’s ghost does not only embody the sins of the past while suffering under the curse; he also continues to manipulate the atmosphere and structure of the house to reclaim the loss of his power and authority in his final moments. Yet his corrupted soul cannot exist for long. Immediately after he is whisked away, “the fire suddenly darken[s] and the air [grows] icy cold,” and the house is shaken by “an awful roar and riot of tempest,” which echoes “the yelling of a blood-thirsty mob on receiving a new and long-expected victim” (Le Fanu, “Wicked Captain” 119). Thus, the disappearance of Walshawe’s ghost, followed by the overwhelming force of the storm and the trembling house, finds itself a gothic representation of collective religious trauma, as the roaring mob, formed by the enduring Catholic memory and historical grievances, finally returns to claim the justice that has been withheld.

The story of “Wicked Captain Walshawe, of Wauling” ends without a clear resolution for Watson about “that horrible night” except for his claim to the inheritance (120). However, traumatised by the spectre, Watson does not retain possession of the house for long: “Wauling was sold in the year 1837, and the old house shortly after pulled down, and a new one built nearer to the river” (120). The demolition of Wauling is viewed as “certainly suspicious” by the narrator (120), which can be interpreted as another example of identity erasure. The architectural demolition serves not only as a material conclusion to the inheritance problem, but also as a metaphorical silencing of the remaining memories of Catholic identity in the house. The narrator points out that even after Walshawe’s funeral, the house “was rumoured to be haunted,” but “what stories were current about it” remains unknown (Le Fanu, “Wicked Captain” 120). In this sense, O’Rourke argues that the destruction of the house may be read as yet another attempt to dominate the narrative of

Irish Catholics, as “[a]n Irish Catholic framework has left a mark on the landscape precisely because of an English character’s attempt to foreclose challenges to” his Protestant authority (277). Once again, Le Fanu ties the fates of the characters to the buildings to emphasise the gothic setting’s influence on the characters and to form a symbolic connection between religious identities and the deterioration of the house itself.

Among Le Fanu’s Gothic short stories, “The Last Heir of Castle Connor” (1838) is a significant example of the symbolic use of architecture in his fiction. Even if “[t]he castle is not the scene of any action in Le Fanu’s narrative, ... its presence is a verification of” the systematic removal of Catholic Irish families from their ancestral lands and estates during the Protestant Ascendancy (Melada 26). Hence, similar to the previous two stories, Le Fanu portrays a connection between the characters and the architectural structures, one that specifically reflects the dispossession of estates once held by landed Catholic Irish families and the gradual extinction of their ancestral lines (Melada 16). However, unlike the above Gothic short stories, “The Last Heir of Castle Connor” is not essentially a Gothic short story. As one of Le Fanu’s earliest short stories, which was later posthumously collected and published in his short story collection *The Purcell Papers* (1880), “The Last Heir of Castle Connor” is, at first glance, “a grim, realistic narrative” that tells the death of a young nobleman as a result of a duel born out of a misunderstanding (Shroyer 57). Yet, Victor Sage defines it as “a story of romantic Catholic martyrdom that turns to horror at the possibility of the death of the soul with the body” (*Le Fanu’s Gothic* 21). In this sense, while there are no ghostly disturbances or supernatural occurrences, the story is structured with gothic effects to represent the collective trauma of Irish Catholic identity, especially as it confronts the loss of land, lineage, and cultural inheritance. Even without supernatural elements, as Corran suggests, Le Fanu “does rely on Gothic techniques to emphasize the spiritual struggle of” his characters, employing a bleak atmosphere, spectacles of violence, and Gothic settings; as Corran adds, “[t]he primary Gothic setting upon which Le Fanu relies is the old, decaying castle or mansion” (42). Hence, “the first hints of spiritual unease” emerge either from the familial tension or a foreboding sense of external threat while the characters are in their domestic Gothic spaces (42); in this manner, “the isolated and decaying Gothic estate

... indicates the spiritual threat to the family,” which substitutes for the supernatural by producing similar effects (43).

Another literary device Le Fanu employs to amplify the gothic effect in the story is the unreliable narrator. Despite the use of distant relatives or anonymous narrators in “Squire Toby’s Will” and “Wicked Captain Walshawe, of Wauling,” this time Le Fanu frames the narrative with the direct accounts of Father Purcell, the titular character and the narrator of twelve stories in *The Purcell Papers*. Some of the stories in this collection are his personal memories. The rest usually consists of “the legends and traditions of [Purcell’s] parish” (Melada 13) that he collected during his pastorate, given to his interest in history and literature. Here, Melada suggests that Le Fanu uses the character as “his distancing device,” which allows the author to experiment or “bear witness” to various emotional, religious, and historical backgrounds in Ireland (13). In this light, the stories Purcell collected often include insights or commentary that can be accepted as Le Fanu’s own voice. Having said that, McCormack stresses the “paradoxical” situation in which “a rector’s son, writing at the end of a humiliating and costly Tithe War” chooses to use “the parish priest, sometimes as narrator, sometimes as a moral and religious standard in the stories” (*Sheridan* 71). To avoid being perceived as sympathetic to Catholicism in the aftermath of the Tithe War, Le Fanu problematises the reliability of the narrator by “placing the stories in the remote early decades of the previous century,” which are collected as Father Purcell’s posthumous papers (71). McCormack also draws attention to the fact that these papers, passages or extracts – the terms used in the stories – are edited by “an anonymous ... friend of the late Fr Purcell,” which “underline[s] the unavailability of a complete text, even the impossibility of such a thing” (*Dissolute Characters* 69). Moreover, this editor friend is suggested to be “implicitly of Protestant sympathy” for choosing stories that “will be of most interest to ... his Protestant audience” (Sage, *Le Fanu’s Gothic* 11). In this way, Le Fanu adds “several layers” to the narrative, complicating the authenticity and credibility of Purcell’s stories, which intensifies the gothic atmosphere of his fiction.

Particularly in “The Last Heir of Castle Connor,” Purcell’s role as a narrator is crucial for analysing how Le Fanu utilises Gothic literature to represent religious trauma since it

resonates with Shoshana Felman's trauma theory. The story is set in the late eighteenth century, "allud[ing] to historical events" that have taken place in the prior decades, but it is not a historical fiction; rather, it centres on the "personal reminiscences of Father Purcell's youth" (Melada 17). This autobiographical framing changes the direction of the narrative as Purcell becomes the witness to the traumatic death of O'Connor, which later manifests as his personal trauma and transforms him into a representative of the collective religious trauma, carrying the wound of the disruptive events throughout his pastorate. As Felman suggests, "[t]o bear witness is to take responsibility for truth" and "[t]o testify is thus not merely to narrate but to commit oneself, and to commit the narrative, to others: to *take responsibility* — in speech — for history or for the truth of an occurrence" ("The Return" 204). Thus, when Purcell commits his memories to paper, they stop being his personal past but become a personal testimony to a shared historical event, the traumatic experience, that marked his spirituality and collective religious identity. While his testimony cannot be regarded as a valid historical record of past incidents, his narration allows the continuation of religious trauma in the collective memory of Catholic Irish people. Besides, this testimony, as Corran states, is "the story behind Father Purcell's decision to enter the Church," and in this way, the narrative carries a "heightened awareness of the struggle between the material and the spiritual world" (43).

After witnessing the death of his close friend, O'Connor, who is also a person he shares his Catholic Irish identity, Purcell begins to embody "one of the recurring issues of Le Fanu's fiction ... as a solitary figure in a withered landscape, the custodian of painful memories and confessions" (McCormack, *Sheridan* 97). McCormack emphasises the importance of Purcell's isolation as the last remaining person who remembers O'Connor:

[This] provides another context for the Gothic deaths and damnations. The narrator is a Christian believer but, even in those tales where he is involved in the melodrama, his belief cannot reach others. He is condemned to be a looker-on, sometimes racked by guilty feelings of his inadequacy, and always bringing his sacred office to bear on the same grim experience — the death of those who have left behind his consoling creed. (*Sheridan* 97)

This portrayal of Father Purcell as a solitary observer, burdened by the weight of collective memory and spiritual inadequacy, reveals how the story is structured around

the lingering trauma of the loss of Irish values and Catholic identity. His failure to provide comfort or inspire change transforms the narrative into a mourning, filled not only with personal loss but with Catholic guilt and despair. In this way, Purcell dismisses the “PICTURESQUE effects of ruin and decay” (Le Fanu, “The Last Heir” 47), and instead preferring to address “the real suffering of families who were the victims of the confiscations following the Revolution of 1688” (Melada 15). This refusal in reducing loss to a visual motif reflects the story’s portrayal of collective trauma, in which ruins stand as reminders and evidence of a repressed Irish Catholic past. As Corran argues, Le Fanu often “drew upon Irish history and the demise of the landed Irish to show the effects that the past had on his own generation” (81), such as the condition of numerous Irish families in the decades following the accession of William III. In his other stories, Le Fanu represents the struggle of native Irish families who supported the Jacobite rebellions, and the O’Connors can be considered a part of this lineage. However, the story focuses less on the immediate effects of rebellion and more on the symbolic death and decay that emphasise the loss of identity and heritage.

Just as the landscape is marked by cultural and identity erasure, the narrative itself is structured by how the testimony is framed and presented. Yet, the story is noted to be the “third Extract from the legacy of the late Francis Purcell, P. P. of Drumcoolagh” (Le Fanu, “The Last Heir” 46), indicating the editor’s intervention in the preservation of Purcell’s testimony. In this sense, the narrative is shaped not solely by the words of the witness, but also by an unnamed editor with Protestant leanings. Drawing on Shoshana Felman’s assessment of the translator, or the editor in this case, the third person between the testifier and the witness of the testimony, “fail[s] to witness history in its original occurrence” by trying to “render—to bear witness to—the original” (“After the Apocalypse” 159). The editor’s work, his act of transmission, even if it is with good faith, censors Purcell’s articulation of his past trauma. In a way, this act contributes to the silencing of Catholic voices by positioning Purcell’s testimony behind a Protestant gaze. Moreover, before the editor intervenes, the original event, or Purcell’s exact feelings and thoughts after witnessing the trauma, is lost in two ways. Firstly, the initial traumatic effect is lost in Purcell’s memory until it returns belatedly, but as trauma fragments the psyche, its original form would still be unknown. Secondly, while the act of writing allows one to

articulate trauma, following the Caruthian model, it is still regarded as an unrepresentable event; thus, it cannot be known (*Unclaimed Experience* 4). In this context, the layered narrative of “The Last Heir of Castle Connor” is marked not only by editorial framing but also by the belated structure of trauma itself, where the past returns incompletely, fractured, delayed, and never quite as it is.

It is within this fragmented recollection that the impact of cultural loss begins to emerge in the collective memory. Set in the last decade of eighteenth-century Ireland, “The Last Heir of Castle Connor” tells the story of the tragic death of a young Irish Catholic heir, who comes from “an ancient Irish family” and whose death marks both the end of a family line and traditional Catholic identity (Le Fanu 47). The story begins with a short essay by Father Purcell who reflects on the state of his homeland and its great past families in sorrow. As Shroyer observes, “[t]he melancholy ruminations about the sad state of present Ireland are in harmony with the melancholy story which follows,” setting the tone of the narration as both a personal and cultural mourning (58). After reminiscing, Purcell begins to narrate the story and demise of his old friend, young O’Connor, whose first name is omitted, but with whom Purcell met when he was fifteen years old. Even though O’Connor grew up without a father, Purcell notes that “[h]e had all the frankness and gaiety which attract, and the generosity of heart which confirms friendship,” but he still “was wild, extravagant, thoughtless, and fearlessly adventurous — defects of character which, among the peasantry of Ireland, are honoured as virtues” (Le Fanu, “The Last Heir” 48). In this way, O’Connor becomes the last symbol of the revered ancient families and Catholic Irish identity. Hence, he is greatly adored not only by Purcell but also by his devoted mother and the local community. Purcell focuses on the events following O’Connor’s return from the continent after completing his education. Shortly thereafter, he attends a race-ball where he meets the cold, professional duellist Fitzgerald, who has a bad reputation and stands for the non-existing gothic haunting figure in the story. Their fateful encounter results in a misunderstanding between the parties which culminates in a duel. Despite Purcell’s desperate pleas and intervention, O’Connor’s pride shadows his rationality, and he agrees to face Fitzgerald. However, O’Connor, fearing that he will die with blood on his hands, refuses to shoot with intent. His honourable fear ends up with Fitzgerald insisting on the rules of the duel, and he shoots O’Connor below his chest,

mortally wounding him, which mirrors Jesus's wound by the Lance of Longinus. Yet, the story's gothic violence does not end here as Purcell continues to witness O'Connor's prolonged, agonising death. O'Connor becomes paralysed but increasingly aware of his fate. The young withering heir is consumed by fear of death and spiritual terror in his final hours. Throughout this ordeal, Purcell's psyche gradually breaks down, and after the death of his friend, he finds himself lost, without an aim in his life. Yet, he notes, "God dealt very mercifully with me" (87), suggesting that by finding religion and God, Purcell got better, devoting himself to spirituality rather than letting himself be consumed by the weight of traumatic memories. However, the tone of his narration never changes from a melancholy one as he confesses that he "can never forget" the last hopeless moments of O'Connor (86). Thus, the story ends with the trauma's impact on and continuation in Purcell as he becomes a living and breathing symbol of the collective memory of Catholic Irish people, who carry the burden of witnessing and remembering. In this way, Purcell not only suffers from the loss of a dear friend as an individual but he is also tormented by the extinction of an entire lineage through the death of the heir, symbolising the declining identity and the fading culture of Irish Catholics.

In "The Last Heir of Castle Connor," the narration not only positions the young O'Connor as the symbol of the past, but the castle itself and the surrounding nature also mirror his identity. In this way, as suggested before by Imfeld, O'Connor is among Le Fanu's characters who live in association with their surroundings; the settings are "portrayed as something constitutive for the characters" (121). In this manner, the name O'Connor, throughout the ancient Irish lineage, "is generally to be found in a prominent place whenever periods of tumult or of peril called forth the courage and the enterprise of this country" (Le Fanu, "The Last Heir" 47). Not only the young heir but his entire ancestry is tied to the landscapes and architecture that define the Catholic Irish identity. Moreover, the family's courage and sense of duty are considered crucial qualities attributed to their identity, which is reflected in young O'Connor's personality and appearance. He is described as "rather tall, very slightly and elegantly made," although "his beauty had a peculiar charm" (49). According to his mother, who had "intense ... love" and affection for her son (48), O'Connor's oval face "bore a striking resemblance to" his father, "the last O'Connor," through which his connection to the past is emphasised (49). For Purcell

as well, this young man transforms into “a representative of an ancient Irish Catholic family ... of the old faith” (48), one who commands both affection and respect as a “scion of a prostrate and impoverished family” enduring the passage of time among the ruins (46). Here, the castle, though absent from the scene of action, becomes the visual representation of the “desolation and decay” of the family who once stood as figures of “greatness, of power, and of pride” (46). The state of the castle mirrors O’Connor’s own fading presence and decay in his final moments. As Melada suggests, the O’Connors “are destined to die out after over a century of living on diminished means” (15-16), a quiet decline marked by gradual repression. It is due to this fading of presence, identity, and culture that Purcell chooses to write about his memories of O’Connor, as the symbolic buildings are also decaying, losing the traces of their identity to remember the people who are no longer there. Sage suggests that for Purcell, “the preservation of a person’s words preserves the teller from that ‘extinction’ from which ... he is concerned to rescue national tradition” (*Le Fanu’s Gothic* 13). Therefore, the parallel between the castle and O’Connor is made prominent by Purcell’s papers, testifying to keep the lingering memories of identity alive in his words.

In the same manner, Purcell underlines the similarity between nature and the persisting family by comparing them to “the remnants of [Ireland’s] aboriginal forests” in the way that they still “linger” in “VERY fragments,” being “tolerated in the land which gave them birth” (Le Fanu, “The Last Heir” 47). This comparison not only connects the ancestral line and landscape but also emphasises how both have been reduced to relics of a bygone Catholic heritage, enduring more as symbols than as living presences. Patricia Coughlan points out the importance of the forests, which are “usually of aboriginal oak,” as they can be observed in many stories of Le Fanu, and she emphasises that “[s]ometimes [the forest] has suffered or is suffering denudation, which is the result and sign of evil-doing of some kind. Many of these forests contain — are — the forest of the past” (37). As much as the buildings, the wilderness and the land itself are forced to bear witness to the traumas of the past, carrying the marks of loss and historical displacement. In this sense, the land, or nature, functions as a living archive, with trees recording a history of erasure in their roots and bark, just like the stone walls of the castles. This type of memory-keeping is mirrored in Purcel’s writings, in his way of inscribing the traumatic event on

paper and ink to remember. Particularly in this short story, Purcell's recollection is dedicated to preserving the memory of O'Connor, and by employing the priest's voice, Le Fanu's language evokes an elegiac tone. Moreover, the language he uses indicates the collective loss of tradition not only through O'Connor's approaching death but by drawing a parallel between him and the landscape.

After O'Connor's return, Purcell shifts the narration to the night when they come across Fitzgerald at the race-ball. Fitzgerald emerges in the narrative as a disruptive figure who immediately catches Purcell's eye, as he stands apart from the crowd and does not look like he belongs in their community: "He seemed to have secluded himself from the busy multitudes — and nobody seemed to observe or to converse with him" (Le Fanu, "The Last Heir" 51). Even before he is named, his presence arouses suspicion in Purcell as he feels a "foreboding of something calamitous" dawning on him (55). Unable to contain his intrigue, Purcell inquires O'Connor about the nameless man, but the young heir evades his question, saying that the man is "too mysterious a personage to have his name announced in so giddy a scene as the present scene" (52). The delay in revealing Fitzgerald's identity not only amplifies the suspense but also frames him as a figure who unsettles both the narrative and the community he occupies. Moreover, by withholding his name, Le Fanu substitutes Fitzgerald for the Gothic supernatural figure, whose ambiguous presence slowly intensifies the dread and terror in the story. In this way, when O'Connor reveals the identity of the mysterious man, he simply states: "You will recognise the individual at once when I tell you that his name is — Fitzgerald" (53), which is indeed what follows as Purcell recognises him as "Fitzgerald the duellist" (54). The late reveal of the name allows the foreboding to settle, and this scene establishes his role as a vessel of conflict. In this way, in "The Last Heir of Castle Connor," as Richard Jorge Fernández argues, "the Other is impersonated in the character of Fitzgerald, the duellist. Fitzgerald is O'Connor's Anglo-Irish reversed image, representing treachery, disloyalty and lack of human compassion" (241). This direct comparison positions O'Connor as a representative of tradition, religious identity, and morality, while Fitzgerald becomes the figure of ambiguity, pride, and social unrest. Le Fanu fills the absence of a supernatural figure by setting Fitzgerald in the scenes of violence, misunderstanding, and moral dilemma that shape the story.

His arrival marks both the symbolic and literal end of O'Connor, whose religious and cultural identity cannot survive in the world where Fitzgerald represents the Protestant Anglo-Irish. In this context, Fernández argues that as Fitzgerald is accepted as the Other, he is also the monster in the story, as "the source of monstrosity stems directly from Anglo-Irish sense of guilt, fear and loss," which are usually expressed in Le Fanu's characters directly linked to the legacy of "the colonial order" (241). Although Le Fanu, in the major part of his life, supported the Tory party and sided with Protestant Anglo-Irish values, his upbringing in the rural parts of Ireland allowed him to witness the sectarian conflict and the dispossession of Catholic Irish people closely. Despite the fact that he personally suffered from the ongoing conflict as a Protestant, he still, specifically in his stories, "extends a genuine sympathy to the landed Catholic families who were dispossessed of their estates," representing the struggles they had to experience under the oppressive order (Melada 16). Hence, this colonial guilt that Le Fanu employs in his stories is usually manifested as monsters or supernatural figures, whose appearances foretell approaching threats and confrontations, and these manifestations can lead to psychological instability and moral collapse in Le Fanu's stories. On the other hand, similar to "The Last Heir of Castle Connor," Le Fanu does not use supernatural elements in all of his stories, and to sustain the uncertainty and suspense, Le Fanu presents uncanny figures in ambiguous terms. Fitzgerald is portrayed in that manner as well: initially, he is polite and seductive, but later, he becomes secretive and aggressive. To further illustrate, the night before Fitzgerald extends a challenge for a duel, he invites O'Connor and Purcell to have dinner with him, which Purcell refuses, but he finds himself surprised with Fitzgerald's "manners" which are "perfectly those of a gentleman" (Le Fanu, "The Last Heir" 56). Purcell expresses his shame for judging Fitzgerald by his reputation:

His appearance certainly WAS against him; but then, under the influence of his manner, one lost sight of much of its ungainliness, and of nearly all its vulgarity; and, on the whole, I felt convinced that report had done him grievous wrong, inasmuch as anybody, by an observance of the common courtesies of society, might easily avoid coming into personal collision with a gentleman so studiously polite as Fitzgerald. (56)

This moment of misjudgement illustrates how Le Fanu strategically employs ambiguity in his characterisation, as Fitzgerald's polite demeanour reveals his violent intention the next morning. When Purcell arrives at Castle Connor to call upon O'Connor, his earlier belief that a confrontation with Fitzgerald could be avoided collapses entirely upon finding out that Fitzgerald challenged the young heir for a duel. In this way, it can be claimed that Fitzgerald's ambiguity is weaponised by himself to assert his control and dominance over other individuals. Even O'Connor admits his astonishment at the turn of the events: "I cannot say that the man directly affronted me — I cannot recollect any one expression ... as offensive — but his language was ambiguous, ... and his manner throughout was insupportably domineering" (59). Sullivan identifies this situation as "grim absurdity," in which serious matters such as honour, death, and identity are revealed within a scene of escalating misunderstanding (37). This grim absurdity continues through the back-and-forth of their correspondence, as Purcell initially convinces O'Connor to turn down Fitzgerald's challenge. At first, Fitzgerald accepts this outcome by stating that he does not "wish to quarrel unnecessarily with Mr. O'Connor" (Le Fanu, "The Last Heir" 61). However, a following letter arrives quickly before Purcell can be at ease about the duel: "Mr. Fitzgerald begs leave to state, that upon re-perusing Mr. O'Connor's communication of this morning carefully, with an experienced friend, he is forced to consider himself as challenged" (64). This escalating misunderstanding turns out to be an intentional provocation by Fitzgerald as this time he also sends his friend, Captain M'Creagh, to coerce O'Connor into accepting the challenge. With Purcell's guidance, O'Connor evades the risk of duelling two times, but third and a final letter compels him to accept the challenge:

[O'Connor] showed me the communication which had determined him upon hostilities. Its language was grossly impertinent, and it concluded by actually threatening to 'POST' him, in case he further attempted 'to be OFF.' I cannot describe the agony of indignation in which O'Connor writhed under this insult. He said repeatedly that 'he was a degraded and dishonoured man,' that 'he was dragged into the field,' that 'there was ignominy in the very thought that such a letter should have been directed to him.' It was in vain that I reasoned against this impression; the conviction that he had been disgraced had taken possession of his mind. He said again and again that nothing but his DEATH could remove the stain that his indecision had cast upon the name of his family. (66)

With this final letter, Fitzgerald abandons civility altogether, pushing O'Connor to the edge of despair and forcing him into a conflict he previously tried to resist. Now fully revealed as the threat, Fitzgerald's relentless insistence on the duel can be considered an echo of trauma itself. His repeated challenges impose a cycle of compulsion and coercion that strips O'Connor of agency. With each new letter, O'Connor's mental endurance breaks down as he finds himself confronting the possibility of death that he wishes to avoid. In this way, Fitzgerald also mirrors the "uncanny repetition" of trauma (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 9), with his letters arriving at unexpected times to disrupt O'Connor's mental stability. This repetition, where initial civility conceals threat and intimidation breaks down patience, positions Fitzgerald as the enforcer of violence that brings the end of an ancient family line.

Furthermore, Fitzgerald's career as a duellist is considered "a remarkably successful one" (Le Fanu, "The Last Heir" 61–62). That he killed nine men out of thirteen duels positions him as "an experienced antagonist" of a violent nature (63). Le Fanu's choice to represent Protestant Anglo-Irish through such an aggressive character problematises the morality of his sect, but at the same time, he challenges the prevailing anti-Catholic narratives in the Gothic tradition. As Fernández argues, the "portrayal of Gaelic Irish Catholics as wrongdoers" in a country where they are oppressed "had the paradoxical effect of unveiling Anglo-Irish misdemeanours" (241). Through Fitzgerald, Le Fanu exposes the hypocrisy of Protestant hegemony by portraying him as intentionally targeting the last representative of an ancient Irish family. Subsequently, it can be claimed that he also criticises the way Protestant authority is exercising power under a rhetoric of civility, mirroring the very approach Fitzgerald adopts with O'Connor. Following this, Jim Shanahan emphasises this contradiction by distinguishing Irish Gothic from traditional Gothic, stating that the former reveals "the contradictions of contemporary Protestant oppression," while the latter tends to present "Catholic atrocities of the past" (84). Fitzgerald's character embodies these contradictions as well. Although Fitzgerald hides behind an appearance of civility, his role in the narrative is structured around moral decay and coercive power. In this context, he embodies the deeper historical conflict of Protestant dominance, marking him as a figure through which the story enacts the trauma of cultural loss and the disintegration of Catholic identity.

The day before the duel passes in quiet dread as O'Connor decides not to tell his mother about his fatal conflict and spends the day preparing his will to leave his wealth to his cousins, O'Gradys. Purcell witnesses this depressing process, which "filled [his] heart with misery" (Le Fanu, "The Last Heir" 68), marking the moment he begins to feel the weight of O'Connor's hopeless fate. The tragedy becomes unbearable in his reflection on the "sickening conviction that those two beings, so dear to one another, so loved, so cherished, should meet no more" (69), referring to O'Connor and his mother. One of the significant, or fateful, decisions of the young heir occurs that day again when he confides to Purcell that he will not fire at Fitzgerald:

‘I feel convinced that I shall not leave the field alive. If I must die today, I shall avoid an awful aggravation of wretchedness. Purcell,’ he continued, after a little space, ... ‘Yes, *I*— *I* who will be, before this evening, a cold and lifeless clod, was ashamed to have spent my last moment of reflection in prayer. God pardon me! God pardon me!’ he repeated. (70, emphasis in original)

In refusing to shoot Fitzgerald, O'Connor implicitly renders his death a sacrifice; in other words, his death becomes a symbolic suicide caused by the past torment inflicted on his Catholic identity. As Corran suggests, Le Fanu often "shows through suicides that the destruction of Ireland comes from within, from the divided Irish and Anglo-Irish," and he blames this domestic division as the cause of the problems Ireland is experiencing, which "returns to haunt the people currently living in Ireland" (88). In this way, O'Connor's decision transcends the narrative as he embodies a Catholic Irish class that clung to "a sentimental and noble belief in nationalism and their religious freedom" and sacrificed itself by remaining faithful to its identity during a time "when being a Catholic meant being denied education and land" (Corran 84). From this moment onwards, the narrative turns into "a farewell to a noble class of Irish" as he chooses to die rather than inflict guilt or dishonour (85). In a similar manner, McCormack interprets O'Connor's suicide not as "a single act of violence on his own body," but rather as "an attitude towards his fate," leading him towards an inevitable end and making him "a representative figure absorbed into a dying landscape" (*Sheridan* 98). Within this context, O'Connor's decision to embrace death reveals how the trauma of Catholic identity is internalised, with self-erasure emerging as the only path to preserving spiritual and moral integrity. Therefore,

his death/suicide is not only a personal tragedy but a collective one, emphasising the symbolic self-erasure of a collective identity that can no longer endure in a world that denies its legitimacy.

Following this discussion, O'Connor and Purcell, with O'Connor's cousins, leave the castle to go to the designated duelling grounds. A sense of foreboding is heightened by the description of the environment. Purcell notes that "[t]he chill mists of night were still hovering on the landscape" when they left, describing the morning as "raw" and comfortless," in which "a kind of drizzling fog hung heavily over the scene, dimming the light of the sun" (Le Fanu, "The Last Heir" 72). Once again, as Jean Lozès notes, such imagery is "employed to stress the dreadfulness of the whole affair" (95), mirroring the psychological toll the approaching duel takes on O'Connor and his reflection, that is nature. As Balaev suggests, "a place in nature expresses the value of a traumatic experience" (*Nature of Trauma* 120), and in "The Last Heir of Castle Connor," the bleak landscape surrounding the duel becomes inseparable from the story's collective grief, reflecting the psychological dread brewing in the characters' unconscious. In this way, nature reclaims its role in Gothic literature and becomes a haunted setting onto which the trauma of identity erasure and cultural loss is projected. These natural descriptions intensify the gothic tone of the story, but what substitutes for the unnatural manifests during the duel.

Once O'Connor's party reaches the designated location, Purcell realises that the antagonist has already arrived. With disdain, he notes that somehow "the affair had unaccountably taken wind" (Le Fanu, "The Last Heir" 74), causing people around the villages to gather in the field to witness the young heir's tragic end. However, the encounter between Fitzgerald and O'Connor is more than a mere public spectacle as it is an allegorical confrontation between a vanishing Catholic heritage and the aggressive Protestant authority that divides the country's people apart. On that account, the duel scene also reveals Fitzgerald as a manifestation of moral decay, alluding to gothic elements. Fitzgerald arrives "sullenly" (75), no longer masking his violent intentions beneath a veneer of civility, while O'Connor stands "perfectly motionless," trying to preserve his dignity, but "the death-like paleness of his features" gives away the

underlying fear of death festering in his mind (79). The tension intensifies with each passing moment as the parties decide on their positions, rules, and conditions for the duel; then, the tension comes to a break when one of the O'Gradys attempts to interrupt the process. His patience running thin, Fitzgerald savagely lashes out: "who the devil are you, that DARES to object? ... what d—d presumption prompts you to DARE to wag your tongue here?" (78). Purcell, in astonishment, observes the change in Fitzgerald's features as his fury reaches a level of "appalling ferocity," causing him to look "actually like a man possessed" (79). The language the narrator uses aligns with Corran's claim, which suggests that Fitzgerald's physical appearance "reflects his spiritual state; he is possessed by evil" (44). This is a possession without ghosts or demons, but it enacts the Gothic haunting through the character's own descent into violence. Fitzgerald's violence does not require spectral apparition, for he is, as Corran continues, "a human manifestation of that evil" (45). The absence of literal haunting, devoid of a supernatural explanation, makes him all the more terrifying. In this way, more than a haunting figure, Fitzgerald becomes the tormentor in Ireland's historical and religious conflicts, which is embedded in the collective memory of Irish Catholics.

Although there are no supernatural occurrences in the story, Lozès argues that Fitzgerald's aggression is still marked by an "unnatural, almost supernatural" quality (94). His determination to kill O'Connor is not personal but systemic as "a mysterious character;" his social interactions are utilised to "precipitate an immediate duel" (Lozès 94). Therefore, it can be argued that apart from being a violent man, Fitzgerald is also a figure shaped by a culture that rewards authority and weaponizes aggression. His desire to destroy O'Connor after days of social interaction, pleasantries, and conversations can be seen as a reflection of the betrayal felt in Ireland, for "his desire to kill O'Connor after they have developed a friendship almost parallels the way in which the Irish people were divided" based on their identities (Corran 84). Hence, when Fitzgerald shoots to kill O'Connor, who later "dies of the wounds inflicted by Fitzgerald" and "stands out as the moral winner," Fitzgerald finds himself forced to flee by becoming the target of "the raging mob, who perceive O'Connor as nothing less than a martyr" (Fernández 241). In this way, the duel becomes a Gothic confrontation between the symbols of religious sects

which ends up being an intense traumatic event that continues to exist in the memories of every witness.

Even though Fitzgerald shoots O'Connor in his chest, his death is neither a swift nor peaceful. Immediately after the duel, his body is brought to Castle Connor where he can close his eyes to life. Yet, his final hours are marked by a slow descent into terror and bodily collapse, mirroring the story's broader atmosphere of "helplessness in a malign universe" (Sullivan 38). Throughout those hours, Purcell does not leave his friend's side, observing his condition: "He seldom opened his eyes, and was perfectly still, excepting a nervous WORKING of the fingers, and a slight, almost imperceptible twitching of the features" (Le Fanu, "The Last Heir" 81). His consciousness comes and goes, but when he opens his eyes at Castle Connor, his home, a momentary relief takes over him, believing that he can be healed as he "feel[s] so little pain — almost none" (82). However, that hopeful outlook does not last long after the surgeon's examination. When the surgeon confirms that the spine has suffered a fatal injury and "all that part of the body which lay behind the wound was paralysed" (84), O'Connor's head falls forward, and his limbs go limp, "as if horror and despair had unstrung every nerve and sinew; he appeared to collapse and shrink together as a plant might under the influence of a withering spell" (85). Yet, death does not come easy. It gradually descends on him, making him suffer by "vomiting blood in quantities" and repeatedly lose consciousness (83). Although Purcell, having witnessed numerous deaths due to his profession, claims that death typically numbs the senses, that "a dull consciousness of approaching dissolution" clouds the mind and objects "float cloudily before it" (85), O'Connor's death defies this idea entirely. O'Connor's agony before death is what remains with Purcell, his memory haunted by "the appalling and heart-sickening groans" and the "expression of hopeless, imploring agony" with which O'Connor turned his eyes from object to object (86). In the end, when he passes, his death is described as his life being brought to an end "in an instant," at the "very verge of the fathomless pit of death, with all his recollections awake, and his perceptions keenly and vividly alive" (85). Sullivan considers this a state beyond suffering, "as if awakening from a nightmare into something far worse" (38). Therefore, in his final moments, O'Connor emerges as a symbol of collective religious trauma, his death marking not redemption but the inherited cost of cultural erasure.

The aftermath of O'Connor's death leaves a landscape shaped by absence, grief, and inherited burden. His last description, "the pale serenity of the beautiful features" (Le Fanu, "The Last Heir" 87), contradicts the physical and mental suffering he endured in the last moments of his life. While in death O'Connor is redeemed of the burden of trauma, those left behind are not spared from its impact as his mother and Purcell struggle to bear witness and blame themselves for his death. Purcell blames himself for O'Connor's death because he believes himself to be "accursed" until he finds peace in his religion by joining the priesthood (87). On the other hand, the young heir's mother blames herself because she "idolised him" and ignored "other holier affections; and God may have taken him from" her to teach a severe lesson (90). Still, this theological devotion and mind do not save her from becoming a symbol of collective grief. After the death of her beloved son, she becomes isolated and remains the only inhabitant of the decaying Castle Connor.

Purcell returns to Castle Connor a decade later, but even in those years, his haunting does not end. Memories of his late friend are embedded in his grief and guilt. These memories intensify and overwhelm his perception upon his return to Castle Connor. His visit, though driven by duty, is marked by "emotions ... so acutely painful" that he nearly turns away, unable to confront the place of the trauma he witnessed (88). He draws attention to his condition, about how he is "completely changed" in "feature," "bearing," and "character" (89), which emphasises the transformative impact of trauma on an individual's physical and psychological state. The change is inevitable, yet the pain and trauma remain the same. In addition, Purcell's return to the castle mirrors the belatedness of trauma; however, Corran describes it as the "power of the past, [which] makes itself felt in the material world through loss and destruction" (81–82). In this way, the story does not come to a closure, leaving the impression of a trauma unresolved in the characters' collective memories. Corran notes that Le Fanu's Ireland is a landscape where "past events emerge in and affect the present state of the nation" (103), and the final sentences of the story are indicators of that belief:

‘I will not ask you to delay your departure,’ said she; ‘your visit here must have been a painful one to you. I cannot find words to thank you for the letter as I would wish,

or for all your kindness. It has given me a pleasure greater than I thought could have fallen to the lot of a creature so very desolate as I am; may God bless you for it!’ And thus we parted; I never saw Castle Connor or its solitary inmate more. (Le Fanu, “The Last Heir” 90-91)

Therefore, it can be seen that even if Purcell physically leaves Castle Connor behind, his wounded psyche retains the record of the past traumatic events, which he carries as part of his identity. In this way, an ancient Catholic Irish family is lost to history, silenced by a horrible murder, and the living Catholic witness becomes the bearer of its memory. Thus, by adopting gothic elements, “The Last Heir of Castle Connor” presents a story lingering with the ghosts of the past, whose wounds carry “a guilt as ancient as the history of the relationship between England and Ireland” (Lozès 99). Spectral hauntings, fractured kinship, and a heritage remembered only through ruins are part of Le Fanu’s Gothic imagery to illustrate the intensity of this wound inflicted on the collective memory.

In this sense, in “Squire Toby’s Will,” “Wicked Captain Walshawe, of Wauling,” and “The Last Heir of Castle Connor,” Le Fanu examines the collective religious trauma as a condition inherited from a religious group’s shared memory, belief, and burden, which is transmitted through families, houses, and the land itself. The return of the wronged ghosts, the tension between what is allowed to be told and what remains withheld, and the gradual disintegration of inherited religious identities reveal how religion becomes an instrument by which the unresolved weight of collective trauma is carried. The three short stories that have been examined in this chapter deal with these issues by articulating collective trauma through Gothic elements and symbolism. Namely, “Squire Toby’s Will” explores the traumatic dispossession of the Catholic Irish by the Protestant Anglo-Irish through an allegorical representation of a violent inheritance dispute within the Marston family. In the same manner, “Wicked Captain Walshawe, of Wauling” portrays a Protestant-Catholic marriage as a microcosm of sectarian oppression. Moreover, the house becomes a site of unresolved tensions, in which the lingering resentments materialise as a haunting curse. While not strictly Gothic fiction, “The Last Heir of Castle Connor” incorporates Gothic elements to replace the ghost with absence itself, portraying cultural extinction as a trauma that cannot be erased from the collective memory. These narratives move beyond the individual torment to emphasise how the persistence of past suffering shapes collective identity and influences present relationships through echoes of wounded

memory and inherited pain. In this light, the supernatural elements are not merely devices of horror, but expressions of inherited trauma embedded in the collective unconscious, which Le Fanu himself shares, as “[h]is interest in history is thus not merely an intellectual avocation but a passionate expression of his being” (Melada 24). Hence, in these stories, history is not only retold but also relived through individuals haunted by the past and their fragmented narratives. Nevertheless, as Caruth states, “history is not only the passing on of a crisis but also the passing on of a survival that can only be possessed within a history larger than any single individual or any single generation” (*Unclaimed Experience* 71). This statement suggests that collective religious trauma involves not only the transmission of pain and suffering but also the preservation of collective identity and shared culture through the endurance of traumatic memory. Therefore, rather than providing a resolution to past sins and injustices, Le Fanu allows the burden of the past to haunt living memory, revealing how the religious divisions of nineteenth-century Ireland remain imprinted on the fragmented culture. Thus, across all three short stories, Le Fanu presents a haunted cultural memory in which the religious identity is marked by shared suffering, grief, and loss.

CONCLUSION

People who deny the existence of dragons are often eaten by dragons. From within.

--Le Guin, *The Wave in the Mind*

In light of the expressions and theories of trauma, it is clear that in his selected Gothic short stories, Sheridan Le Fanu represents the effects of both personal and collective religious trauma by drawing on the writer's private spiritual struggles and the broader sectarian divisions and anxieties that shaped nineteenth-century Ireland. Through the lens of literary trauma theory, the thesis has argued that Le Fanu's Gothic fiction, employing allegorical haunting and discussions on morality, creates a necessary ground for the analysis of religious trauma. In this way, the influence of religion and religious identity on individuals and communities takes on a narrative form. Hence, it has been emphasised that the trauma in these stories is both represented thematically and employed structurally. The trauma becomes embedded within the narrative structure itself, traced in what the text withholds and in the recurring figures whose return remains unexplained yet significant. Therefore, the use of Gothic elements, such as supernatural figures, whether they take the shape of demonic animals or spectral illusions, do not solely terrify the haunted characters but become entangled with the manifestation of guilt, grief, and fractured identities due to a troubled past. Instead of explaining the suffering of characters, the function of these haunting figures is to disrupt and symbolise what has been suppressed by religious teachings, lineages identified with religion or the fear of spiritual collapse. While these figures reveal the inner torment of the characters, their impact lies in what is left unresolved, lingering in that uncertain space between confession and silence. By focusing on both the narrative construction of Le Fanu's stories and the personal and cultural influence of religious experience, this thesis has proposed how trauma persists within Le Fanu's fiction, suspended in memory, identity, and spiritual unease.

Through the lens of literary trauma theory, Le Fanu's fiction in many ways highlights how trauma is reflected in narrative by repetition, the return of the repressed, and the distortion of structure. In this context, Freud's understanding of trauma, which is a

catastrophe that breaches the barriers of the psyche and disrupts the formation of the self, and later his idea of the uncanny, has shaped the supernatural appearances in the stories as representations of psychological disturbance and fragments in the unconscious. Following Freud's ideas, Caruth's model of trauma has offered a way of thinking about trauma as a notion that cannot be represented directly but can be observed through its belatedness, fragmented form, and repetition. Furthermore, Felman's focus on testimony and the position of the witness in trauma narratives has helped to establish the position of narrators as the ones who bear witness to trauma and carry the weight of its narration. This has led to the viewing of narrators as unreliable in the stories, as traumatic memories are difficult to articulate and represent through language, which can distort both the act of narration and the memory itself. At the same time, Hartman's emphasis on the significance of literature in expressing trauma has contributed to the analysis of Le Fanu's Gothic short stories as a literary form in which internal crises and inherited struggles have found a voice in language, in the narrative. In line with this, Balaev's pluralistic trauma model has been particularly helpful in establishing trauma's relationship with religion, culture, and identity. This pluralistic approach to trauma has allowed the analysis of the short stories within the contexts of collective memory and trauma. In this way, this thesis has argued that historical and cultural conflicts based on the characters' religious identity are transgenerationally transmitted and preserved in the collective unconscious of the impacted groups.

Following these ideas, Cooke identifies religious trauma as a form of psychological distress that occurs when deeply ingrained belief systems collapse, fracturing the individual's assumptive world and causing the fragmentation of the self that cannot be resolved through faith alone. This understanding underlines how religious trauma extends beyond a simple loss of faith. In this way, religious trauma causes a profound disruption of identity and worldview that ruptures the foundations upon which individuals construct meaning. Thus, it has been proposed that Le Fanu's short stories align with literary trauma theory through the theory's attention to what resists expression and what returns to haunt the narrative. His stories progress with repetition; the delayed meaning increases the suspense; and the characters lose mental stability. Moreover, in the selected short stories analysed in this thesis, personal and collective trauma are represented through a shared

focus on religious anxiety and identity, which are inspired by the writer's own personal struggles in his past. In this way, Le Fanu presents religious trauma by portraying it as persisting across narration, silences, and repressed issues that plague both personal and collective psyches.

As one of the aims of the present thesis is to represent religious trauma in relation to the struggle with personal faith, it has been argued that in "Green Tea," "The Familiar," and "The Vision of Tom Chuff," Le Fanu illustrates religion and an individual's connection to it as a site of confusion, guilt, and distress. In these three short stories, it has been found that religious trauma begins to be observed when the internal suffering of the characters is made external by supernatural means. In other words, the haunting first arises within and then manifests in the outer world when repressed memories and emotions can no longer be contained. These manifestations usually take the form of animals, ghosts or possessed figures from the past. Moreover, this study reveals that religious trauma in these stories is concerned with the influence of a belief structure on an individual's psyche rather than a specific religion's teachings and their impact. That is why this thesis has argued that Le Fanu, by presenting different relationships between individuals and their faith, illustrates how religious experiences can lead to spiritual anxiety and fragmentation of the self.

Following this argument, it is observed that in "Green Tea," a clergyman's, Jennings's, faith is shaken by his theological pursuits. Here, religious trauma emerges from Jennings's doubt as his intellectual speculations lead to the collapse of his perception of the world and the self. The monkey, as his Gothic double, symbolises the self that has been repressed under strict teachings, and it is shown that Jennings's interest in metaphysical studies contrasts with his strict religious upbringing, which triggers the subsequent manifestation of his repressed self. What has been repressed returns without his control, and gradually, his mind breaks under the weight of his religious trauma. In contrast to Jennings, in "The Familiar," Le Fanu portrays a disbeliever, a vocal atheist, through Barton. By representing direct opposites in belief, what has been shown in this study is that religious trauma, regardless of the presence or absence of faith itself, can still emerge due to the pressure belief or disbelief places on the self when it is faced with a

concept exceeding the limits of the mind. In other words, when the self lacks the necessary language or knowledge to comprehend the concept of religion or spirituality, it can breach the psyche, fracturing the self. Therefore, through Barton, it has been claimed that his reliance on rationality leaves him without a structure to understand and confront the haunting figure who targets him. Furthermore, the difference in haunting between Jennings and Barton has been demonstrated through the contrasting apparitions of their Gothic doubles. While Jennings's tormentor is confined to the boundaries of the reverend's psychological instability, Barton's Watcher crosses the boundary between the real and the supernatural to become a part of the external world, challenging the limits of the captain's psyche to accelerate his psychological descent. This analysis demonstrates that the impact of religious trauma exceeds the boundaries of faith by affecting an individual's unconscious through the way religion structures identity, memory, and the perception of one's world.

While the two stories, "Green Tea" and "The Familiar," offer contrasting perspectives of personal religious trauma through a devoted vicar suffering from religious doubt and a captain devoid of spiritual comprehension, the manifestation of their trauma is similar in the form of a Gothic double. However, in "The Vision of Tom Chuff," instead of a grotesque spectre, the haunting comes in the form of a hellish vision, a terrifying dream sequence. Tom Chuff is not an atheist like Barton, but he does not live a religious or moral life, and compared to the respected Jennings, he is not a welcome figure in his community. Therefore, it has been observed that his experience is shaped by indifference, by a life lived without spiritual reflection and moral accountability. The hellish vision arrives as a reckoning he cannot escape, passing a form of judgement on him that he was never prepared to receive. Compared to Jennings and Barton, whose hauntings are represented by their internal turmoil rooted in their degree of beliefs, Tom Chuff is a man unaffected by reflection as he lacks the depth of personality the other characters have. Therefore, even when he attempts to reform, he soon succumbs back to old habits, as fear alone is not enough for a spiritual change. Herein, this study reveals that the religious trauma of the story has been demonstrated as stemming from the failure of fear itself to guide the self toward genuine change or spiritual understanding. Overall, even with the different plots and narrative structures, what connects the three short stories is the perception of

religion when it becomes traumatic, giving rise to fear, solitude, and the disintegration of identity in the individual.

In contrast to the personal religious trauma, this study also aims to examine how religion inflicts trauma across cultural and collective lines in Le Fanu's other three short stories: "Squire Toby's Will," "Wicked Captain Walshawe, of Wauling," and "The Last Heir of Castle Connor." Here, it has been argued that religion is not only a matter of inner turmoil, but also of inherited identity, fractured communal bonds, and historical grievances. Thus, these stories reveal the ways trauma can be both shared and sustained, and that religion becomes a source of harm even within communities bound by a shared religious identity. This time, it has been analysed that Le Fanu, in his allegorical short stories, employs gothic elements to represent the unresolved tensions between Protestant and Catholic identities by portraying the cultural legacies as wounds that cannot be repressed. Furthermore, trauma no longer resides solely within individuals, but it is embedded in cultural memory. Yet, it continues to function similarly to personal trauma as it resurfaces through the belated return of traumatic memories, and in these stories, the traumatic events are revealed through the repetition of spectral returns, loss, and grief. In this way, it has been found that more than a mere reflection of historical conflict, Le Fanu's Gothic short stories incorporate the traumatic past of religious identities into a narrative to represent how the past refuses closure. Hence, the supernatural elements offer a way to explore how religious identities within a community are vulnerable to fragmentation when their past is shaped by dispossession, discrimination, and oppression.

In this light, "Squire Toby's Will" becomes more than an exploration of the rift between brothers as they stand for Protestant and Catholic Irish identities. The story allegorically reflects the conflict between Protestant Anglo-Irish and Catholic Irish under the colonial English authority. While the haunting seems to target the younger favoured brother, Charlie, who represents Protestants, the trauma of their conflicted past can be observed in the rest of the family as well. The older brother Scroope, a symbolic reflection of the Catholic Irish, is disinherited by their father, regarded as the British rule in Ireland, before his death. While Charlie inherits the estate, he also inherits his father's sins, mirroring the association between the Protestant Anglo-Irish and the English. Therefore, it is observed

that when his haunting manifests in the form of his father and brother's ghosts, his guilt becomes the symbolic vessel of the historical wrongdoings that refuse to be buried. The analysis of the story also reveals that the disinheritance of Scroope refers to the historical dispossession of Catholic Irish people. Still, Scroope is not given a voice in the narrative, which represents the silencing of the Catholic community. His thoughts are relayed by an outsider who narrates the story, marking the narrative as unreliable, but this unreliability emphasises the role that collective memory plays in the transmission of trauma.

Accordingly, the narrator in "Squire Toby's Will" mirrors that in "Wicked Captain Walshawe, of Wauling." Neither story is told by a direct witness or a named character. In "Squire Toby's Will," the narrator's relation to family or the land is unknown; they remain unnamed and distant. Still, the narrator is intimately familiar with the Marston family's history, suggesting that the story has been passed down within the local community and retold through the years. In "Wicked Captain Walshawe, of Wauling," the narrator is revealed to be the nephew of Mr Watson, who witnesses the Captain's ghostly return. This analysis claims that in both stories, an unreliable narrator is employed to emphasise how trauma is represented, relayed, and remembered. Another similarity between these two stories is Le Fanu's transformation of the house into a haunted place and incorporation of hidden deeds: in both stories, the estates or the houses become the site of spectral return. The repressed injustices and errors resurface through gothic elements and expose the lingering effects of religious transgression. In "Squire Toby's Will," Gylindden Hall is at the centre of the conflict surrounding inheritance issues, but it becomes a vessel for past grievances to emerge and haunt Charlie. Similarly, in "Wicked Captain Walshawe, of Wauling," the house is a part of the inheritance problem. Still, it also serves as the physical space where the captain's curse and moral decay manifest, transforming the house into a site of spiritual torment which reflects the consequences of past sins. In "Wicked Captain Walshawe, of Wauling," Le Fanu represents the sectarian conflict in the form of a married couple. Walshawe's, the English Protestant authority's, dismissal of his wife's Catholic heritage and Molly Doyle's curse on him proclaims that the trauma may not resolve with death. Therefore, his ghostly return reveals how past errors cannot be forgotten, and because of that, the haunting becomes a reckoning through which religious and cultural memory continues to shape the present.

It has been observed that, unlike the other two short stories, “The Last Heir of Castle Connor” does not represent the collective religious trauma based on identity through supernatural figures or haunting, but instead, it employs gothic elements to amplify the horror of losing religious and cultural identity. The haunting nature of trauma is reflected by the act of narration. This study reveals that Father Purcell, the Catholic priest, becomes the living and remaining witness, the embodiment of the collective memory, of Catholic Irish people after experiencing the traumatising death of the last heir of Castle Connor. The death of the young O’Connor, whose family intimately identifies with Catholicism, marks the final rupture in a family line, symbolising the erasure of religious identity, tradition, and the loss of community. Here, the lack of spectral apparition or supernatural return enhances the weight of this loss and amplifies the toll witnessing this death takes on Purcell. Hence, what is demonstrated is that religious trauma can take the form of disappearance rather than confrontation, yet continue to haunt the living by returning in memory, plagued by grief. On that account, “The Last Heir of Castle Connor” emphasises the weight of cultural loss and how the lost Catholic identity and tradition survive only in the memories of those who remain to witness its vanishing.

In conclusion, in this thesis, it has been observed that Le Fanu deals with religious trauma as both a personal affliction and a collective wound, shaped by individual crises of faith as much as by cultural and historical conflicts regarding religious identities. In “Green Tea,” “The Familiar,” and “The Vision of Tom Chuff,” religious trauma is represented through individual experiences, where belief or the lack of it disrupts the perception of the self. In these stories, Le Fanu portrays religious trauma through manifestations of gothic figures that blur the line between reality and the supernatural, mirroring the rupture in the psyche. Furthermore, in “Squire Toby’s Will,” “Wicked Captain Walshawe, of Wauling,” and “The Last Heir of Castle Connor,” it is revealed that religious trauma can also be shaped by cultural and collective identity associated with a specific religious group. Hence, it can be claimed that when trauma based on religion emerges, it can persist across generations, marked not only in collective memory but also in the land, traditions, and belief systems which are inherited. Taken together with these analyses, this thesis has addressed a critically understudied theme in Le Fanu’s Gothic short stories, revealing how

literary trauma theory offers a profound framework for understanding the psychological and spiritual suffering caused by personal faith and inherited religious identity within the context of nineteenth-century Ireland. Through this lens, it is argued that Le Fanu's narratives articulate both the intimate struggles of individual religious trauma and the persisting, unresolved sectarian conflicts engraved upon collective memory. Thus, through these six stories, Le Fanu's Gothic fiction demonstrates how the literary imagination can help to articulate the psychological impact of religious trauma, allowing both personal suffering and collective unease to be represented through haunting figures, fractured narration, and the lingering presence of what refuses to remain repressed.



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Tarih: 14/07/2025

Tez Başlığı: Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu'nun Gotik Öykülerinde Dini Travma Temsili

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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