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ÚSTAV ANGLOFONNÍCH LITERATUR A KULTUR
Psychological Aspects of the Gothic in Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's Fiction
BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a pouze na základě uvedených pramenů a literatury.

V Praze dne 24.8. 2009

I declare that the following B.A. thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned.

Prague, 24.8. 2009

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1 INTRODUCTION

What is usually understood by the term “Gothic” is the distant and rather obscure period of Middle Ages connoting severe wars, fortified inhospitable castles and the burning of witches. Apart from that, the word is very often used specifically to describe the architecture of this time. However, especially in an English cultural context this word gained a secondary meaning which is not completely unrelated to the first one and which is to a large extent connected with literature. Under the influence of Romanticism, the second half of the eighteenth century bears witness to extended interest in uncanny Gothic castles or ruins, forlorn scenery and other melancholy places, with even greater stress put on its mysterious, obscure and frightening aspects that finally resulted in something which may be called the Gothic revival. Victor Sage writes that, “‘Gothic’ could connote any of a wide range of overlapping senses: horrid, barbarous, superstitious, Tudor, Druid, English, German, and even Oriental.”¹ One of the primary goals of Gothic literature was to create strong emotion of fear or even horror. Among the most popular settings of its fiction belong gloomy ancient chambers, buildings with rich pasts, abandoned decaying mansions, graveyards and similar places which help to establish the right atmosphere for ghosts, revenants and other supernatural beings that form an intrinsic part of the Gothic genre.

The Gothic trend in literature is often considered to be initiated by Horace Walpole’s novel *Castle of Otranto*, published in 1764. Nearly a century later, when the popularity of the Gothic seemed to be in its end, it was revived again by the Victorians and began to bloom to an extent that today it is referred to as “Victorian Gothic.” One of the most prominent writers of this period, who eminently contributed to the Gothic

¹ Victor Sage, “Introduction to *The Gothick Novel: A Selection of Critical Essays*,” (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1990) 17.

genre, was Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-1873).

Coming from Dublin and being related to another significant writer Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Le Fanu is noteworthy for his novel *Uncle Silas*, published in 1864, and for his numerous and tremendous horror stories. These often take place, as it is typical of the Gothic genre, in remote, dark and fearsome places, arousing the necessary dread by means that are also characteristic of the Gothic; that is by introducing supernatural beings and occurrences, which figure in most of Le Fanu's works. However, it is still possible to say that Le Fanu's treatment of the supernatural is in some way untypical.

Except for the fact that Le Fanu frequently prefers to leave some space for rational explanation of the supernatural occurrences in his fiction, leaving it to the reader whether he decides to put the event on the account of a being from the other world or not, it is remarkable that the supernatural beings in his stories never appear by accident, without any particular reason. On the contrary, their appearance and also their form and shape is practically always firmly connected with the character of the person who is pursued by these spectres. In other words, as E.F. Bleiler had already noted, the outer supernatural element in the stories is in fact often far less important than the personality of the hero who perceives them. Bleiler says that, "In his best work Le Fanu was primarily a psychologist, although not in the modern understanding of the term,"² and he also points out that, in comparison with other Irish ghost story writers of this era, "only Le Fanu seems to have equated the haunted swamps and strange fluttering birds and fierce ancestral portraits with the guilt layers of a man's mind."³

What haunts the heroes seems to be commonly rather part of themselves than anything coming from the outside. They are harassed by remorse or bad conscience, by

² E.F. Bleiler, "Introduction to Dover Edition of *Best Ghost Stories of J. S. Le Fanu*," E.F. Bleiler, ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1964) vii.

³ Bleiler ix.

feelings that they suppress, or they are tormented by other dark places of their minds, which adopt a material or nearly material form. These materialized fears, obsessions and paranoias then often take shape of a person they had injured or become a symbolical embodiment of the suppressed emotion, and moreover, quite ironically, they sometimes represent a precise copy of the heroes themselves. The aim of this work is to trace and explore in detail these psychological elements in a selection of Le Fanu's stories, with a special focus on three areas which seem to be key for his best stories: sexuality, madness and persecution and the concept of death. Each of these topics is discussed in relation to two stories that are first explored individually and then compared. Now I am going to introduce briefly the stories that had been selected and explain the reasons that lead to this particular choice.

Le Fanu's finest and most popular stories are included in the collection that was published in 1872 under the title *In a Glass Darkly*, composing of five stories: "Green Tea," "The Familiar," "Mr. Justice Harbottle," "The Room in the Dragon Volant" and "Carmilla." Richard Dalby describes *In a Glass Darkly* as a "stunning collection,"⁴ viewing it as the "climax of Le Fanu's literary career."⁵ Probably the best known story not only of the collection but of all Le Fanu's stories is "Carmilla." This story, or due to its length we might even speak about a novella, about a young girl who is harassed by a lesbian vampire, first appeared in the magazine *Dark Blue* in 1872, a short time before the collection *In a Glass Darkly* was issued.

What is exceptional in this story is firstly that it fundamentally helped to develop the use of vampirism in literature, serving as essential source of inspiration to Bram Stoker and his famous novel *Dracula* that was published in 1897. Secondly, it is worth noticing that "Carmilla" dares to deal very openly with the topic of homosexuality. If

⁴ Richard Dalby, "Introduction to *The Mammoth Book of Victorian and Edwardian Ghost Stories*," Richard Dalby, ed. (London: Robinson, 1995) xi.

⁵ Dalby xi.

we realize that it was in 1895 when Oscar Wilde had to spend two years in prison because of his orientation and that homosexuality ceased to be a crime in Britain only in 1967, Le Fanu's fiction seems to be a rather assertive one. Even though Robert Tracy claims that Le Fanu is "introducing a kind of sex he would have considered illicit in order to emphasize the unnatural in his supernatural tale,"⁶ many modern critics began to speculate over Le Fanu's sexuality and to doubt his true sexual orientation, partly because of this story.

In "Carmilla" an interesting connection between the supernatural element and human sexuality can be found, which does not seem to be used the same way in any of Le Fanu's other stories. Nevertheless, it may be argued that "Green Tea," a story of a man who is haunted by the spectre of an evil black monkey, touches the topic of sexuality as well, even though much less explicitly than "Carmilla." André de Cuir argues that the monkey is in fact nothing other than the embodiment of the suppressed homosexual sexuality of the narrator,⁷ which creates close connection between "Green Tea" and "Carmilla." The first chapter is therefore dedicated to these two brilliant stories and the exploration of sexuality within their context.

Being followed or haunted is obviously one of Le Fanu's favourite topics, which appears in several of his stories. In contrast to "Carmilla" and "Green Tea," where the following seems to be at least partly connected with the characters' sexuality, in others the existence of the supernatural beings refers to different aspects of the heroes' psychology. The protagonists of "The Familiar" and "Mr. Justice Harbottle" share not only the fact that they both have a "follower," but also their unacknowledged but deep feelings of guilt. In both stories Le Fanu offers irrational explanation of the paranormal

⁶ Robert Tracy, "Introduction to Sheridan Le Fanu: *In a Glass Darkly*." Robert Tracy, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) xix.

⁷ André L. DeCuir, "Homosexuality at the Closet Threshold in Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's 'Green Tea,'" *Mapping Male Sexuality: Nineteenth-Century England*, Jay Losey and William D. Brewer, ed. (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2000).

occurrences, as well as a more or less rational one, ascribing all the strange events to deviations of human mind. The second chapter is going to study the origin of the supernatural elements in these two stories, in connection with the heroes' minds.

Even though the collection *In a Glass Darkly* represents the best of Le Fanu's work, his other stories are certainly worth noticing as well. There is one especially that can hardly be omitted and about which Dalby says that, "this was the first important ghost story to be published in the Victorian era, and is still regarded as among the finest of the whole century"⁸: "Schalken the Painter." This story about unhappy love of a young but poor painter Schalken, the subject of whose affection was forced to marry a man who was, unlike Schalken, appropriately wealthy but physically reminiscent of a walking corpse, was published in 1839. Even though also in this story a possible rational explanation is offered – that the poor girl, being forced to marry to this highly unlikeable person and to leave behind the one she loved, simply went mad – in this case the narrator nevertheless supports rather the version that all was caused by a real encounter with a ghost.

When the painter after some years sees the girl again in a dream or a vision, it may remind us of the similar thing taking place in "Carmilla." While here the hero meets his former, assumedly dead love, in "Carmilla" the heroine is visited by a beautiful young lady who is soothing her in a place of her long dead mother, which calls upon an idea that they are both emotionally attached to the dead ones who thus return to them. In the third chapter, the relation between the returning dead and the heroes' possible share in it is going to be studied in these two stories.

Finally, before starting the interpretation, let me say that even though a close study may often bring many interesting and enriching ideas and new points of view, the

⁸ Dalby v.

greatest charm of the gothic genre lies in the fact that every story will still continue to keep its air of mystery.

2 Sexuality in “Carmilla” and “Green Tea”

2.1 Sexuality in “Carmilla”

Although a horror story, it is hard to tell whether the prevailing feature of “Carmilla” is its fearsome tone, or its strongly erotic nature. The main protagonist experiences not only horror of the vampiric attacks, but also a rather confused mixture of feelings springing from the very strange behaviour of her secret murderous guest. She is touched by her with an intimacy far overreaching the boundaries of physical contact that is standard between friends, and is subject to a very unusual, perverted kind of adoration. Laura’s experience is generally, on the surface, described as horrific, but in fact there can be found a close connection between the heroine and her persecutor, to whom it may be argued she feels even certain unacknowledged inclination. Even though the existence of the vampire is in case of this story, rather atypically of Le Fanu, described as objective, its features are actually to a large extent nothing but a subjective reflection of Laura’s personality, and the relationship between the two is of essential importance for the operation of the whole story.

First of all, it is interesting to notice that, for some reason, Laura is a “privileged” sort of victim, being eminently attractive for the vampire. As its habits are described in the story, “the vampire is prone to be fascinated with an engrossing vehemence, resembling the passion of love, by particular persons. In pursuit of these it will exercise inexhaustible patience and stratagem, for access to a particular object may be obstructed in a hundred ways,”¹ while, “in ordinary ones it goes direct to its object, overpowers with violence, and strangles and exhausts often at a single feast.” (317)

¹ Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, “Carmilla”, *In a Glass Darkly*, Robert Tracy, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 317. All subsequent quotations are from this edition and are cited in text.

Judging from Carmilla's passionate confessions of love, and considering the relatively long period for which she enjoyed Laura's society, gradually preparing with great expectations for the final feast, it seems that Laura really is an ideal prey for her, and has a special status in her eyes

What is the cause of this special unlucky magnetism Laura radiates? There are several of them, beginning with her descent from the family of Karnsteins, due to which she represents, as Victor Sage puts it, "future Karnstein blood"² and therefore a promising continuation of the vampiric clan. However, the main deal of attraction is caused by Laura's personal charm and beauty. Carmilla's fascination with her can be traced in her description of Laura as, " a beautiful young lady, with golden hair and large blue eyes, and lips – your lips – you as you are here." (260) As Sage suggests, an erotic overtone is hidden here, "Carmilla can't resist the rush of flattery and erotic suggestion. [...] She is genuinely distracted for a moment by the oral."³ Clearly it is above all Laura's favourable appearance that induces the vampire's lust, which means, in other words, that the vampire's thirst is closely connected with physical attractiveness and sexuality.

However, it is not only the vampire who is drawn towards her victim. The preoccupation with appearance operates on the other side as well, beginning at the moment when Laura saw the apparition as a mere child, "I saw a solemn, but very pretty face looking at me from the side of the bed. [. . .] I looked at her with a kind of pleased wonder, and ceased whimpering," (246) and having even stronger impact on her during the later encounter. When Laura meets Carmilla after years for the second time, the recognition rises in her, quite understandably, rather mistrust, fear and suspicion. However, she is also fascinated with her guest's outstanding beauty, which plays an

² Victor Sage, *Le Fanu's Gothic: The Rhetoric of Darkness* (New York: Macmillan, 2004)184.

³ Sage 184.

essential role in overcoming this initiatory reluctance and building trust and sympathy in her. Laura is impressed by the vampire's pretty face, by her long thick hair and by her slender figure, i.e. she is preoccupied with her perfect body. When she describes her, she professes, "I was charmed with her in most particulars," (246) and later she shows fascination with Carmilla's hair and the pleasure she found in touching it:

It was exquisitely fine and soft, and in colour a rich very dark brown, with something of gold. I loved to let it down, tumbling with its own weight, as, in her room, she lay back in her chair talking in her sweet low voice, I used to fold it and braid it, and spread it out and play with it. (262)

Moreover, even after one of Carmilla's professions of love, the narrator's reaction is an exclamation, "How beautiful she looked in the moonlight!"(273)

Here it is interesting to notice that the two ladies have a lot of things in common: they are both of the same age, outstandingly beautiful, with long hair and generally exquisite visage. The difference in their appearance is then very symbolic. Laura's golden hair and blue eyes create an angelic look that is contrasted with Carmilla's dark countenance. It is obvious that Le Fanu plays with the colours that are commonly used to represent the opposition of good and evil, building thus the characters as opposite polarities both internally and externally. Kelly Hurley writes that, "Victorian representations of women tend to polar extremes: women are saintly or demonic, spiritual or bodily, asexual or ravenously sexed, guardians of domestic happiness or unnatural monsters,"⁴ and it is clear that such a depiction can hardly ever hit the midstream of reality. In "Carmilla," however, both of these sides are represented at once.

The question is then, whether the white, pious, virtuous and generally good Laura, and the dark, evil and perverted Carmilla stand for two separate individuals, or if

⁴ Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin de Siecle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996) 121.

they should be approached rather as one entity containing both of these extremes, similarly as Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Exactly as it is between these two, Carmilla is also something like a dark shade to the outwardly perfect Laura, who seems to be very close to the Victorian ideal of a "good" woman, but evidently lacks all of the opposite qualities. Such representation reflects religiously inspired idealism and the related social pressure to draw oneself near to this ideal, which at the same time inevitably leads to pretense and suppression of "undesirable" qualities that then both due to the concealment and their exaggerated mythicisation and demonization result in overblown images of the reverse side.

The attachment of the two counterparts is demonstrated also by the interconnection of their health and prosperity: the good and the evil side are in a kind of struggle for strength and supremacy, so that when the good part sickens and fades away, the evil on the contrary grows in power. Laura has to give her blood and energy to the vampire, who is thus reinforced. Carmilla's "loving" concern for Laura's beauty in fact takes a rather ironic effect when it becomes clear that her interest may spring purely from the craving to drain all the energy from her and use it as nourishment for her own exquisite visage. That is why, as Sage mentions, Carmilla's magnificent figure awakes rather controversial feelings, because "we must no doubt think of the blood of all the young women which has nourished this body and given its hair its weight and colour"⁵. The more young ladies die and the more blood and strength Laura loses, the more beautiful and lively are the vampire's features.

Laura's blood as a nutrition that should support Carmilla's body and maintain her existence can be considered as an explanation for the vampire's homosexual orientation. In the conclusion of the story a heterosexual affair of Millarca, countess

⁵ Sage 188.

Karnstein is mentioned, which suggests that her alignment with young girls came with her vampiric transformation. In her life she was interested in men but as a vampire she needs to imbibe the substance that is identical with her own basis. On the other hand, as the embodiment of all evils and perversions that the perfectly right Laura could never think of or even express, Carmilla is on the contrary thoroughly ill in nature, including even her sexuality. According to Robert Tracy, this is so “to emphasize the unnatural.”⁶

Carmilla’s “love” is nevertheless not unnatural only because it is lesbian, but because of its generally ill concept. She overpowers the subject of her affection and demands complete devotion from her, leaving her no free will and leading her gradually to death. For her love is naturally inseparable from death, because a true love goes beyond the grave. It is obvious when she says, “You must come with me, loving me, to death,” (276) or “But to die as lovers may – to die together, so that they may live together” (270). Sage claims that “This is a profane parody of Christian paradox.”⁷ True love that is stronger than death is a frequent element of a large number of Christian myths. The notion of love here is, however, absolutely reversed, because the bloodthirsty Carmilla functions as an abuser who extorts the sacrifice by intimidation and compulsion, while she is absolutely unwilling to sacrifice anything for her perverted lesbian love herself.

This uncompromising understanding of love reminds the principles of sadomasochism: Carmilla dominates and overpowers her victim, who has to surrender and give away, being paralyzed and helpless, as she describes,

From these foolish embraces, which were not of very frequent occurrence, I must allow, I used to wish to extricate myself; but my energies seemed to fail me. Her murmured words sounded like a lullaby in my ear, and soothed my resistance into a trance, from which I only seemed to recover myself when she withdrew her arms. (264)

⁶ Robert Tracy, “Introduction to *Sheridan Le Fanu: In a Glass Darkly*,” Robert Tracy, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) xix.

⁷ Sage 196.

Laura is forced to suffer whatever the vampire pleases, and has to endure the pain of the vampiric “killing kiss of blood.”⁸ However, it is interesting that, in spite of Carmilla’s blatant insistence and selfish, hurtful treatment, Laura acknowledges a partial liking of her conduct, “I experienced a strange tumultuous excitement that was pleasurable, ever and anon, mingled with a vague sense of fear and disgust.” (264) It seems that the vampire’s influence awakens in her a new sense of eroticism that is on one hand fearful and offensive to her, but on the other hand is not absolutely refused, which may be one of the reasons that is making Laura such a suitable victim for the vampire’s attacks.

The story brings an interesting view of womanhood and female sexuality of the Victorian period, building on a distinctive clear-up between two antipodes of a woman’s character. It symbolically contrasts the ideal of saintly good and morally incorrupt Laura with her reversed mirror reflection, Carmilla, whose lesbian orientation, together with the perverted idea of vampiric love, make her a perfect representative of evil and deviation. However, the innocent Laura is partly biased by the vampire, becoming fascinated and preoccupied with her beautiful appearance, and experiencing even a sort of excitement in her subjugating clasp. It seems that the young girl during the process of reaching adulthood becomes aware of her sexuality that is nevertheless inadmissible for her, and haunts her in the form of a malignant and depraved vampiric shade.

2.2 Sexuality in “Green Tea”

“Green Tea” is by its key motif very similar to “Carmilla,” dealing as well with a character who has a supernatural follower. While Carmilla is the reversed, dark and evil

⁸ Ken Gelder, *The Horror Reader* (London: Routledge 2000) 203.

reflection of Laura, we may speculate that the monkey which follows Mr. Jennings in “Green Tea” also has some symbology of the unacknowledged evil in Mr. Jennings. It is questionable whether it can be connected with the hero’s sexuality as in “Carmilla,” but such explanation is, if not absolutely certain, than at least very well possible.

The hero, Mr. Jennings, is characterized as an intelligent, kind, pious and overall amiable, though somewhat shy bachelor. As most Le Fanu’s heroes “earn” a follower because of their impurity or bad deeds from the past, Mr. Jennings’ torture in comparison to that appears groundless and unjust. However, there is in fact enough space to doubt Mr. Jennings’ seeming blamelessness in many respects. Or, even if his offences may not be that much serious, it must be taken into account that the rules applied to him to judge his morality should be somewhat stricter because of his being a man of religion and that, moreover, this stricter evaluation does not mean only judgment of other people, but also Mr. Jennings’ rating of himself. As a preacher, Mr. Jennings should be a moral model for the other believers and his behaviour should correspond to the Christian principles dictated by the Church. He is described to be, “most anxious to be actively employed in his sacred profession”⁹ and the general account of him makes impression of him being very much concerned about religion, even nearly pedantic.

That is why, even though Mr. Jennings probably does not need to have seriously bad conscience as for example the characters of “The Familiar” or “Mr. Justice Harbottle,” he is likely to have much stronger tendency to reproach himself even for minor aberrances, and to suppress the feelings that are from the perspective of his religion inappropriate. These then, remaining unexpressed, consequently materialize and take form of the horrid black monkey.

Some critics ascribe the apparition of the monkey to Mr. Jennings’ religious

⁹ Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, “Green Tea”, *In a Glass Darkly*, Robert Tracy, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 7. All subsequent quotations are from this edition and are cited in text.

instability. For example according to Richard Haslam, “the source of the infection is a crisis of faith.”¹⁰ This explanation has certain logic, because Jennings mentions his religious doubts and also, as Thomas Loe reminds, “. . . the fiercest interference from the monkey came when Jennings was preaching to his congregation in Kenlis”¹¹ Jennings’ possible religious instability, together with his interest in ancient pagan multi-deistic religions, is one of the weak points that this otherwise almost saint man has, and he is obviously aware of it, as he comments on his interest in the ancient materials, “. . . the subject is a degrading fascination and the nemesis sure. God forgive me!” (21) However, it is questionable whether Jennings’ persecutor really springs from his inner resistance of Christian faith that would inhibit him from his prayers and the administration of religious service, or if his inability to do this is caused rather by some other disturbing substance.

Loe suggests that the monkey, “is a type of counter to the ‘good’ Rev Jennings,”¹² and if we consider the counteractive qualities of his character, what we must arrive at is not only the opposite of his religious zeal, which may be expressed for example by his interest in pagan literature but, in addition to that also a polarity to his bachelor state and his apparent asexuality, which is somehow so prominent that the first thing Dr. Hesselius states about him after the first short encounter is, “Yes, to begin with, he is unmarried.” (11) The marriage status, if we cannot judge from the presence of a wedding ring, is something which can usually be very hardly observed merely from one single brief interview, but Mr. Jennings’ bachelorhood appears to be rooted in his personality, dressing style and manners to the extent that it is obvious at the first sight.

¹⁰ Richard Haslam, “Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu and the Fantastic Semantics of Ghost-Colonial Ireland,” *That Other World: The Supernatural and the Fantastic in Irish Literature and its Contexts*, ed. Bruce Stewart (Gerrards Cross: Smythe, 1998) 273.

¹¹ Thomas Loe, “The Strange Modernism of Le Fanu’s ‘Green Tea,’” *That Other World: The Supernatural and the Fantastic in Irish Literature and its Contexts*, Bruce Stewart, ed. (Gerrards Cross: Smythe, 1998) 305.

¹² Loe 303.

He sacrificed his life to the study of religion and to his profession of a vicar, and shifted aside the worldly aspects of his integral personality. Then, it seems logical that the monkey as an animal which is very close to man, but which nevertheless still remains to be something inferior due to its animal instincts and drives, embodies exactly those qualities that the Rev Jennings ostentatiously lacks: absence of spirituality, and possession of base, animal appetite. If symbolism of colours is applied, the monkey's black colour evidently represents its evil nature, while the hot, reddish eyes suggest deep, glowing passion inside.

Le Fanu, inspired by the works of the Swedish philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg, uses his doctrines in the story as a possible explanation of Mr. Jennings' case. From the passages Dr. Hesselius reads, it is deducible that the monkey is according to the Swedenborgian theories, viewed as embodiment of the "particular lust and life" (15) of its pursued victim, Mr. Jennings. Moreover, it is interesting to notice that, as Loe adds to the preceding, the second most violent interference of the monkey comes when Mr. Jennings was, "walking alone in the Shropshire countryside with his niece,"¹³ which supports the above stated theory that clarifies the monkey's fury during Jennings' encounter with his young and assumedly attractive niece.

André DeCuir goes even further than that in his interpretation of the way how the monkey usually leaves Mr. Jennings throughout the chimney, viewing the "movements of the monkey within the 'phallic' chimney"¹⁴ as a metaphor for "masturbation and climax."¹⁵ Even though this assertion may seem at the first sight improbable and rather ridiculous, we must admit that the scene, if explored more closely, makes such explanation relatively admissible, ". . . and it draws nearer and

¹³ Loe 305.

¹⁴ *Male Sexuality: Nineteenth-Century England*, Jay Losey and William D. Brewer, eds. (Place: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2000) 207.

¹⁵ DeCuir 207.

nearer to the chimney, quivering, it seems, with rage, and when its fury rises to the highest pitch, it springs into the grate, and up the chimney, and I see it no more.” (27)

Even though it is Mr. Jennings who stands at the centre of the story and who is also subject to the monkey’s tormenting, it is nevertheless equally important to notice the general circumstances of the story and the way it is presented to the reader, because its presentation is rather complicated and unusual, and because its projection into the layout of the story may be important for exploration of the topic of sexuality as well. The narrator of the story is Dr. Hesselius’ disciple whose identity is not fully disclosed, and who, long time after Hesselius’ death, rearranges the story from the doctor’s letters to his friend. The prevailing part of the story is then narrated by Dr. Hesselius, whose letters are quoted by the disciple, and thirdly some passages are narrated directly by the central character Rev. Jennings.

DeCuir comes with an argument that the black monkey is in fact nothing else than the embodiment of perhaps homosexual suppressed sexuality of the narrator, saying that, “the editor’s repressed homosexual desire for Hesselius surfaces through his depiction of Mr. Jennings’s ‘visions’ of a ‘small black monkey,’”¹⁶ and then he continues that, “the monkey can be seen [...] as representing the editor’s repressed homosexual libido.”¹⁷ This thesis is certainly interesting, but for several reasons it must be opposed. Firstly, in spite of DeCuir’s claim, there is not any clear evidence of the narrator’s inclination to Hesselius in the story. Even when the narrator says, “He was the very man to inspire a young enthusiast, like me, with awe and delight. My admiration has stood the test of time and survived the separation of death. I am sure it was well founded,” (5) and therefore existence of the narrator’s liking for the doctor cannot be denied, this liking seems to have rather profession-bound roots and to state that the

¹⁶ DeCuir 207.

¹⁷ DeCuir 207.

nature of the relationship is homosexual inclination is definitely greatly exaggerated and groundless.

Moreover, secondly, provided that the narrator relates the story according to the records he had found in Hesselius' letters, it is then impossible, as it was already cited, that “the editor's repressed homosexual desire for Hesselius surfaces through his depiction of Mr. Jennings's 'visions' of a 'small black monkey,’”¹⁸ because the frame of the story is already firmly given by the letters and cannot be freely changed to suit the narrator's emotions. Finally, what the author most probably tries to achieve by using this effect of a “story within a story” is, as Loe writes, “to generate a sort of credibility for the context of the story in the first place – a testament to its authenticity,”¹⁹ and the narrator's role in the story is not much greater than that of an instrument to achieve this particular effect.

Therefore, it seems that the little black monkey following Mr. Jennings is an embodiment of his darker side in general, and its shape and qualities symbolically express essential paganism as opposed to Mr. Jennings' ostensible religious zeal, together with base, animal instincts that are connected with his sexuality, but must be suppressed and concealed under the veil of his pious and purely spiritual mission that leaves no space for corporality.

2.3 Comparison: Sexuality in “Carmilla” and “Green Tea”

The two stories have obviously many things in common. Robert Tracy explains the meaning of the name of the story collection *In a Glass Darkly* as, “a mirror in which we

¹⁸ DeCuir 207.

¹⁹ Loe 296.

glimpse our own darker nature,”²⁰ and both of the stories faithfully support this notion, providing its heroes with an evil-minded double that reflects their inferior and undesired qualities.

Even though the monkey in “Green Tea” is explained merely as a special feature of a psychical illness, while the heroine of “Carmilla” is followed by a “real” vampire, the difference between the two is not that marked, because their origin is, in spite of the explanation provided, practically the same. In other words, no matter whether the prosecutor is a ghost or a mere illusion, it is in both cases derived from the personalities of the characters, and shaped just according to their peculiar delinquencies. Also, while Dr. Jennings is finally driven to death by the spectre, “Carmilla” is very close of destroying her victim as well.

The fact that the qualities represented by the followers are distinctly inferior and instinctual is accentuated by their animal form in both stories. Dr. Jennings’ black monkey is quite obviously subhuman, as opposed to “Carmilla” who appears to be nearly her victim’s equal counterpart. However, her character corresponds, if examined more closely, rather to that of a beast than a human. She is strongly driven by her instincts and interested mainly in the “hunt” for her prey, without any spiritual values, and even if she may seem to possess some due to her emotive expressions of love, yet her conduct is again motivated purely by her vampiric instincts and the desire for blood.

Moreover, she is able to change her shape into a “sooty-black animal that resembled a monstrous cat,” (278) which even extends the contrast between the sensitive, human Laura, and the beastly vampire. Hurley speaks about “the opposition between animal-women and ‘God’s women’²¹ being used in Gothic fiction, which nevertheless does not, as we can see in case of Le Fanu’s “Green Tea,” always apply

²⁰ Tracy xv.

²¹ Hurley 122.

merely on women. In many ways the two stories actually express the same paranoia, only that one of them works within the feminine context, while the other focuses on masculinity.

3 Madness and Persecution in “The Familiar” and “Mr Justice Harbottle”

3.1 Madness and Persecution in “The Familiar”

Captain Barton’s follower from “The Familiar,” in spite of being the source of great thrill and uneasiness to him, raises due to his shape an amused smile rather than feelings of terror. This figure of a mariner, who has after his death shrunk to a half of the original size, is definitely quite far from the usual notion of a ghost, and with his fur-cap evokes much more a Russia than an Anglo-Irish background. Le Fanu does not give us a definite clue about his origin: while the hero’s friend, who figures as the narrator of the story, refers to him as “this apparition,”¹ Barton’s becoming father-in-law considers him to be a real person, and moreover there is a suggestion that he may originate in “the supposed incipiency of mental disease.” (65) Therefore, we might speculate whether Captain Barton was followed by a ghost, or simply went mad because of the reproaches induced by an encounter with a person reminding him somebody from his past. Certainly it would be possible to find various other solutions, but the clue seems to be neither determinable, nor essential for the whole story, which is on the contrary intentionally designed as an account of an unexplainable mystery.

Much more important than the secret of the “Watcher” is the way Captain Barton reacts to him. Robert Tracy notes about the stories of *In a Glass Darkly* that, “Strictly speaking, none of these stories are about ghosts. But they are about hauntings.”² Barton is haunted by his past and no matter whether his persecutor is an illusion or a ghost,

¹ Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, “The Familiar”, *In a Glass Darkly*, Robert Tracy, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 51. All subsequent quotations are from this edition and are cited in text.

² Robert Tracy, “Introduction to Sheridan Le Fanu: *In a Glass Darkly*.” Robert Tracy, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) xi.

without feelings of guilt it would never have such a strong effect on him. As it had been said, the odd figure in the fur-cap is, if not ridiculous, than by no means that much fearsome. Even though the other characters feel somewhat uncomfortable in its presence, it is only Barton who suffers and absolute breakdown whenever he sees it. The narrator describes that the encounter made him feel, “[. . .] an undefined sense of danger, such as I have never felt before or since from the presence of anything human; but these sensations were, on my part, far from amounting to anything so disconcerting as to flurry or excite me,” (51) and he adds that, “I was absolutely astonished, however, at the effect of this apparition upon Captain Barton. [. . .] He coiled a step or two as the stranger advanced, and clutched my arm in silence, with what seemed to be a spasm of agony or terror.” (51)

In spite of these strong emotions of horror recalled in Barton, we may even doubt to what extent the follower is really evil. He is undoubtedly described as strongly disagreeable and malicious, but on the other hand it seems that it appears only because Barton did not take his warning seriously, acted against it, and therefore in a way provoked it. His initial intention, manifested by the warning letter, appears to be not absolutely wrong-minded, but on the contrary gives Barton a possibility to save himself. As the letter is commented, “the writer’s object seemed a friendly one.” (47 – 8)

However, as it commonly occurs in many mythological stories and fairy tales, also here the hero is bound to break the ban and be punished for it. Even though the punishment may seem to be the result of the hero’s disobedience, in this case not avoiding the particular street against which he is warned, in fact it goes far beyond this. Barton’s punishment is not connected that much with the street he is ordered to avoid, as with the girl to whose house this particular street leads.

Barton’s new relationship with Miss Montague brings on the surface his

previous “guilty attachment,” and if he wants to live in peace, the only possibility seems to be not only to avoid the forbidden street, but also to break his relationship and lead a solitary life to his death. Considering that the girl from the previous relationship not only lost her honour for his sake, but finally even died because of him, it would probably be an appropriate thing to do in respect of her memory. Although Barton is very well aware of his past delinquency, he tries to ignore it and suppress the memory of it, but with the upcoming wedding his remorse grows, and at the same time the torture of the following worsens.

This, however, is not due to the greater frequency or intensity of the following. Barton stays in isolation for some time in order to refrain from the contact with the Watcher and even though he really remained preserved from him successfully for some time, yet he “continued to amend, though slowly.” (73) Though the Watcher is not present physically, he still continues to inflict Barton’s mind. The second letter Barton got from him says, “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,” (49) and then adds quite ironically, “Do not let it trouble your rest, Captain Barton; for, with a *good conscience*, what need you fear from the eye of ‘THE WATCHER’” (49) Barton can escape from his follower for a time, but he cannot escape from his conscience, and it is his own critical insight that functions as the “Watcher” and tortures him.

The only thing that could bring Barton at least partial relief is prayer that would win him grace. However, he describes himself as an unbeliever, and moreover says to a clergyman that, “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.” (61) His crisis therefore becomes not only a problem of past guilt and resulting bad conscience, but also a problem of

faith. His situation may be viewed as an ordeal brought upon him for his bad deed, but also for his religious infidelity, and the suffering is to direct him to the right way, which at least partly really happens. As Barton admits, “I am now – now at last constrained to believe.” (61)

His inability to pray nevertheless remains, so that he has to stay with his remorse without a chance of mercy. His fear gradually grows and increases, changing into unbearable terror. When he then finally dies under mysterious circumstances, we may wonder whether he was killed by a supernatural being that was concealed in the form of an owl and had possibly a connection with the Watcher, or if it was merely his own dread, incited by the animal, that destroyed him. Nevertheless, the previously mentioned warning letter is perfectly right when it says, “With a *good conscience*, what need you fear from the eye of ‘THE WATCHER,’” (49) for whatever the cause may be, without bad conscience Barton would hardly ever suffer that much or even die.

3.2 Madness and Persecution in “Mr Justice Harbottle”

If “The Familiar” was somewhat complicated in terms of finding distinction between illusion and reality, “Mr Justice Harbottle” definitely exceeds it in these terms. Justice Harbottle is visited by an apparently living person looking like his future victim Pyneweck, then he has a sensation of seeing Pyneweck himself, in spite of him having been just recently executed, later he experiences an utterly strange mixture of dream and reality, and finally his house is haunted not by one ghost, but by several of them. Did the deep feeling of guilt make him so mad that it finally drew him to suicide, or was he guided by some mysterious supernatural force? This is what we probably cannot say for certain, but nevertheless what is unmistakably obvious is the fact that in any way he

was, more or less, destroyed by himself, and moreover that this process of destruction had, quite ironically, a form very similar to the way the Justice himself used to efface his victims.

What is no doubt strange about Justice Harbottle's story is the fact that, while the hero of "The Familiar" was haunted supposedly by a ghost of a man long time dead, Harbottle is in the first place visited by a man whose visage is strikingly similar to that of his future victim, even though Pyneweck is at that time still living, and moreover safely guarded in prison. The man, called Mr Peters, who comes to warn Harbottle against trying Pyneweck, is observed by the judge to be looking very much like Pyneweck himself, "His shrewd eye told him that allowing for change of tints and such disguises as the playhouse affords every night, the features of this false old man, who had turned out too hard for his tall footman, were identical with those of Lewis Pyneweck."³ Although it may be Pyneweck's brother, whose reported death is not absolutely certain, coming suddenly to frighten the judge and thus save Pyneweck, it may also be suspected that seeing Pyneweck's features in the face of this man is merely a result of the judge's anxious imagination.

Mr Peters, whatever his true identity is, brings the judge a last warning, giving him the last possibility to give up the revenge on Pyneweck, and thus save himself from being tried before the "High Court of Appeal." Peters's warning sows the first seed of fear and doubt to Harbottle's mind, since he is otherwise obviously perfectly cold and unemotional. Even his mistress Misses Carwell is unable to coax mercy for her husband, and even though she is probably the person who is closest to the judge, he does not display much love or feeling for her. Though his desire to destroy Pyneweck is partly motivated by jealousy, it is rather a selfish ambition to possess his lady than love

³ Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, "Mr Justice Harbottle", *In a Glass Darkly*, Robert Tracy, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 97. All subsequent quotations are from this edition and are cited in text.

which motivates him.

It is interesting to notice that considering Mr Pyneweck, we are not told whether he is really guilty from what he is accused of, or not. This is in fact information of a very little importance. In other words, Pyneweck is clearly not completely innocent and virtuous, and it is very well possible that he even deserves the capital punishment, but the problem from the judge's part is that he seeks only his own vengeance, completely ignoring the truth about Pyneweck, who is practically sentenced to death long before the trial even begins.

The strange dream in which Mr Justice Harbottle is tried is nothing but a symbolic alternation of the last judgement. According to the religious concept, God may be seen as a judge, who judges souls and decides of salvation or damnation. However, while God is an ideal, perfectly right judge, the Justice Twofold who tries Harbottle is an absolute opposite of this notion, and at the same time a precise copy of Harbottle himself. As the name "Twofold" suggests, he is a doubled copy of all Harbottle's qualities: "This Chief-Justice Twofold, who was knocking him about at every turn with sneer and gibe, and roaring him down with his tremendous voice, was a dilated effigy of himself; an image of Mr Justice Harbottle, at least double his size." (108) Tracy writes that Harbottle, "must recognize his own guilt, when he is judged by Mr Justice Twofold – a crueller and more arbitrary image of himself."⁴ Therefore, Harbottle gets what he deserves when he is tried exactly in his own manner, so that the trial becomes not only a means of finding a verdict, but also a punishment in itself. As it is suggested by the announcement, "'The King against Elijah Harbottle!' shouted the officer," (108) Harbottle is not tried by God in his "last judgement", but is prosecuted by him. Of course the "King" theoretically offers many possible references, but its strongly

⁴ Tracy xvii.

religious association can hardly be denied.

We cannot say whether this God's tribunal is a mere creation of the judge's reproaching mind, or if it has a "real" basis, but the distinction between the two potentialities partly fades away. In both cases, the main thing that determines the extent of the judge's blame is not the "High Court of Appeal" that only puts a mirror before him, but the judge himself and the heaviness of his conscience.

The trial Harbottle experiences in the dream actually represents a perfect mixture of religious notion of the judgement, and the technical form of a trial that is part of Harbottle's routine. It is then exactly this cold, impersonal routine which shocks Harbottle so much when he becomes not its administrator, but its passive sufferer, "Whenever the Judge fell into a brown study, he was always conning over the terms of the sentence pronounced upon him in his vision – 'in one calendar month from the date of this day'; and then the usual form, 'and you shall be hanged by the beck till you are dead.'" (111) While the judge was always absolutely indifferent to this brutal machinery during the time of his efficacy, he finally realizes its bestiality when he is to experience it itself and is sentenced exactly according to all the formal rules, without any chance of defence.

His execution is then carefully prepared by the apparitions in his own house, but nevertheless it is very hard to tell whether he was really hanged by the spectres, or of it was done by himself. After the one month, the judge was so broken-down, being constantly tormented both by his remorse and by the approximating date of his designated execution, that he did not need much help to end with himself. As the story says,

There was not the smallest sign of any struggle or resistance. There had not been heard a cry or any other noise in the slightest degree indicative of violence. There was a medical evidence to show that, in his atrabilious state, it was quite on the cards that he might have made away with himself. The jury found accordingly that it

was a case of suicide. (117)

3.3 Comparison: Madness and Persecution in “The Familiar” and “Mr Justice Harbottle”

In both “The Familiar” and “Mr Justice Harbottle,” Le Fanu combines the suggestion of the supernatural with psychical states of deep discomposure or even madness. Though it can be hardly distinguished from one another, offering a free possibility of choice rather than providing definite resolution, it is at the same time deeply interesting how the two aspects are interconnected together.

Captain Barton from “The Familiar” may be suspected to die simply of fright, while Justice Harbottle appears to have been driven to committing suicide by his guilty conscience, but at the same time the unsound state of mind of both the heroes was induced by an element from the outside. In other words, though it is always hard to distinguish a mental state or hallucination from a “real” ghost or follower, it seems that the two could hardly exist without one another. On one hand, the heroes probably would not ever have fallen into the deep states of depression and remorse if they were not forced to look into their conscience by a possibly supernatural thing influencing them from the outside, but at the same time its impact could never be so greatly devastating as it is if they did not have a black corner hidden deep inside. When they are involuntarily directed to explore these dark corners and get trapped in the more and more maddening whirl of their own reproachful thoughts, additional supernatural inducement becomes quite unnecessary, because they become their own judges and destructors.

The supernatural beings that follow the characters of the stories have often much more real and tangible basis to be regarded as mere illusions. The “Watcher” from “The

Familiar” is observed by several characters, as well as the ghost of Lewis Pyneweck in “Mr Justice Harbottle,” so that these apparitions cannot be that easily reduced to mere creations of one man’s ill mind. However, even though they are objective, they take a symbolic shape of the heroes’ guilt and are, in a way, also part of themselves. E.F. Bleiler says that Le Fanu was, “greatly interested in the barrier between the ego and the non-ego, in the manner that each creates the other, and the osmotic process which can penetrate the seal between the two areas of existence.”⁵ The supernatural beings have individual existence of its own, but at the same time their form is greatly personal, representing the suppressed fears of their “owners.” Bleiler concludes that,

Within his better fiction Le Fanu so blended and intertwined the natural and the supernatural that his work is a fugue of strange states of consciousness, linkages between the outside world and man, and a hidden, often diabolic morality, that will not suffer evil to go unavenged or unbetrayed.⁶

⁵ E.F. Bleiler, “Introduction to Dover Edition of *Best Ghost Stories of J. S. Le Fanu*,” E.F. Bleiler, ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1964) vii.

⁶ Bleiler viii.

4 Death and the Supernatural in “Carmilla” and “Schalken the Painter”

4.1 Death and the Supernatural in “Carmilla”

The sexual odour of “Carmilla,” explored in detail in the first chapter, is a fundamental building stone of the whole story, but at the same time it must be taken into account that Laura’s relationship with Carmilla is in course of the story not merely sexual. Even though the young lady’s beauty plays an essential role for the vampire’s interest in Laura, she was nevertheless chosen to become her victim much earlier. The first Laura’s meeting with Carmilla is of quite a different character than the following ones: while at the beginning of the story Laura is an attractive young girl of nineteen, the first meeting with the vampire takes place when she is but a six year old child. Carmilla seems to be resistant to any time changes due to the ghostly basis of her existence, and therefore remains to be the same beautiful young lady from the very beginning anticipating the whole affair, till the end of the story. When she later appears to be an ideal friend to Laura because of their age closeness, before the relationship between the two girls is of a different nature.

As Laura discloses, she lost her mother at an early age, so that she could not even remember her and she does not convey practically any details of her perception of the loss. However, interestingly it seems that in the first episode of the story Carmilla stands for something very close to the qualities of a mother. For Laura she represents a kind, very likeable lady who calmed her and lovingly cradled her as a mother should do her child. The heroine also makes clearly noticeable that she felt very agreeable, safe and well comforted in her presence: “I looked at her with a kind of pleased wonder, and

ceased whimpering. [. . .] I felt immediately delightfully soothed and fell asleep again.”¹

Laurence A. Rickles points out that, “Laura felt neglected, abandoned by her lost mother. It was the magic moment of Carmilla’s debut as Laura’s vampire.”²

Carmilla’s connection with the heroine’s mother is suggested in several ways. Firstly, Laura’s mother comes from the Karnsteins, as does Carmilla. We gain this information from Laura’s father, in the scene when Laura sees the portrait of Mircalla, countess Karnstein and is fascinated with its resemblance to Carmilla, when he says that, “My dear wife was maternally descended from the Karnsteins.” (249) Rickles argues that, “this is a doubly maternal link to a family that is extinct in name but lives on through vampiric doubling of woman’s image.”³ Moreover, it is Carmilla who figures in Laura’s memories instead of the dead mother. Laura says that, “I do not even remember [my mother], so early I lost her,” (245) and then tells us about her first encounter with Carmilla that it was, “one of the very earliest incidents of my life that I can recollect.” (246) The earliest memory of a pleasing woman who is lovingly soothing a child should certainly record the girl’s mother, but her place is occupied by the vampire.

After the pleasant motherly consolation, however, the dreadful infliction takes place when Carmilla’s vampiric teeth pierce Laura’s throat for the first time and the sense of confidence and security is betrayed. In this initial scene, Carmilla represents a depraved notion of motherhood, supplying Laura’s lost mother by offering her love and protection, which is nevertheless not real, but comes beyond the grave, and is lethal and pernicious.

It is a question where the tradition of a vampire has its roots in general, but it

¹ Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, “Carmilla,” *In a Glass Darkly*, Robert Tracy, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 246. All subsequent quotations are from this edition and are cited in the text.

² Laurence A. Rickless, *The Vampire Lectures* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999) 165.

³ Rickles 166.

seems to be connected with the folk tale and fear of the return of the dead. Donald Tuzin explains it on the basis of popular superstitions as “fear that the shade will take the soul of the living.”⁴ In “Carmilla,” the vampire certainly is in some way connected with the heroine’s mother and may symbolize her return, and moreover it seems that she really came to seize Laura’s soul, killing her body by her bloody strain of love.

It is probable that for “Carmilla” Le Fanu found inspiration in Irish mythology.

Tracy reminds us of the figure of a banshee in connection with “Carmilla,”

As for Laura, Carmilla has apparently watched her for some time. In Ireland, incidentally, the word ‘follow’ is often used to suggest that a supernatural being is attached to a certain family over many generations: ‘a banshee always follows the O’Sheerans.’ As a descendant of the Sheridans, Le Fanu himself could claim a banshee.⁵

However, as Ann Cahill writes,

Although Le Fanu draw on folktales for the themes and plots of his stories, these were rewritten with different emphases and to fulfil different functions remote from those of traditional folk tales and intended rather to investigate the inner person, particularly in spiritual matters.⁶

Carmilla as a descendant from the Karnsteins really seems to be linked with the particular family, but her presence at the same time reflects the heroine’s strong need of maternal affection, and later also her awakening sexuality.

It is not only this first encounter during which Carmilla is associated with the girl’s mother. Much later she has a dream,

One night, instead of the voice I was accustomed to hear in the dark, I heard one, sweet and tender, and at the same time terrible, which said, ‘Your mother warns you to beware of the assassin.’ At the same time a light unexpectedly sprang up, and I saw Carmilla, standing, near the foot of my bed, in her white nightdress, bathed, from her chin to her feet, in one great stain of blood. (283)

Interestingly, Laura describes the voice as “sweet and tender,” but also “terrible,” which

⁴ Donald Tuzin, “The Breath of a Ghost: Dreams and the Fear of the Dead,” *Ethos III* Dec. 1975.

⁵ Robert Tracy, “Introduction to Sheridan Le Fanu: *In a Glass Darkly*,” Robert Tracy, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) xi.

⁶ Ann Cahill, “Irish Folktales and Supernatural Literature: Patrick Kennedy and Sheridan Le Fanu,” *That Other World: The Supernatural and the Fantastic in Irish Literature and its Contexts*, ed. Bruce Stewart (Gerrards Cross: Smythe, 1998) 311.

demonstrates a very similar contradiction to that which she always experiences in Carmilla's presence. This may be explained by the fact that in both cases she feels certain affinity and attraction, but at the same time she is, either consciously or intuitively, aware of the proximity of death, since both Carmilla and her mother's voice come from beyond the grave.

This brings out another aspect of the relationship between Laura and Carmilla: Carmilla comes to love, possess and kill, so that if Laura returns her feelings, she must give in completely, which means to sacrifice her life and basically to commit suicide. The way Carmilla characterizes her affection as love and death at once is more than accurate, and Laura's mixed feelings of fear and attraction express her attitude not only to Carmilla's inclination, but also to death as such. That is why Joseph Adriano calls her the "suggestress of suicide,"⁷ and also suggests the symbolic meaning of the tapestry in Carmilla's bedroom, "This death goddess, whose 'home lay in the direction of west,' cannot be completely explained in sexual terms. The tapestry opposite the foot of her bed 'representing Cleopatra' shows the queen not in the act of vamping, but 'with the asp to her bosom' – killing herself."⁸

Carmilla is introduced into Laura's life as a substitute for her dead mother, filling the gap that ensued in the child's life from the loss, but as a compensatory mother she brings except for tender motherly soothing also something of evil and perversion. Her later attempts to seduce Laura may be viewed not only as erotic suggestions, but also as a temptation to death. Therefore, Carmilla as Laura's follower embodies, above the more obvious sexual drives that are repressed and in a way dead within Laura, also her craving for motherly consolation, while the extent of her being attracted to Carmilla reflects her bigger or smaller inclination to suicide.

⁷ Joseph Andriano, *Our Ladies of Darkness: Feminine Daemonology in Male Gothic Fiction* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1993) 103.

⁸ Andriano 103.

4.2 Death and the Supernatural in “Schalken the Painter”

The theme of “Schalken the Painter” is in many respects similar to that of “Carmilla”: it tells about a beautiful young lady who is to be joined with a being from the other world. However, the mysterious Vanderhausen and the disaster he brings to the poor girl do not seem to be called in only by her, but also by her unhappy admirer Schalken. In fact, if the two characters of Schalken and Vanderhausen are put together, we must notice a great deal of irony in the comparison, as well as in Schalken’s position. Each of them represents totally different qualities. Schalken is a young, likeable and loving man, but without means, while Vanderhausen, on the contrary, offers material abundance as compensation for his direful personality. The wealthy but repulsive suitor appears on the scene just at the moment of Schalken’s utmost despair, and without Schalken’s realizing it makes him contribute to his own ruin with respect to all his hopes and dreams about Rose. The marvelously rich Vanderhausen actually personifies the obstruction that stands between the two lovers, which is wealth, but the story at the same time points to the fact that material goods is not what a marriage can built on, since all the material things are dead – as dead as the figure of Vanderhausen.

While in most Le Fanu’s stories we can find a supernatural being or follower that is attached to one particular character, reflecting his or her fears and dark places of mind, the strange figure that appears in “Schalken the Painter” seems to be in a way common to both the heroes of Schalken and Rose, symbolically representing the fears and obstacles that haunt them and divide them from one another. It is Schalken’s cursing that provokes Vanderhausen’s arrival, “‘Curse the subject!’ said the young man aloud; ‘curse the picture, the devils, the saint -’ At this moment a short, sudden sniff uttered

close beside him made the artist turn sharply round, and he now, for the first time, became aware that his labours had been overlooked by a stranger.”⁹ Vanderhausen appears out of the blue, like a devil, just after the painter’s offending words by which he expresses his being unnerved to the highest level because he realizes that the possibility of his future success, and therefore his connection with Rose Velderkaust, is very unlikely.

Although Rose’s uncle makes impression of a rather reasonable and sensitive man, it is his greed, together with his blindness that causes the disaster to take place. W.J. McCormack compares this situation to that of “Carmilla,” where “[. . .] the reluctance of the narrator and her father to believe in the supernatural reality of their guest recalls the catastrophes of Schalken’s daemon rival.”¹⁰ While for both Schalken and Rose the material aspects are of very low significance, Gerard Douw views it as the most important criterion, and therefore gives his assent to the unknown applicant even without seeing his face and knowing the slightest piece of information about him. Rose on the contrary, quite ironically without knowing he is to become her future husband, reacts to him by saying that, “I would not see him again for the wealth of the States.”

(39)

Douw, nevertheless, does not consider any emotional aspects, and instead marries his niece, quite literally, to “wealth,” or in other words to a man who, though being fabulously wealthy, lacks not only emotions, but also life. His deadness is illustrated by his stiffness and by the absence of bodily functions, “During his stay his eyelids did not once close, or, indeed, move in the slightest degree; and farther, there was a deathlike stillness in his whole person, owing to the absence of the heaving

⁹ Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, “Schalken the Painter”, *Best Ghost Stories of J. S. Le Fanu*, E.F. Bleiler, ed (New York: Dover Publications, 1964) 31. All subsequent quotations are from this edition and are cited in text.

¹⁰ W.J. McCormack, *Sheridan Le Fanu* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton, 1997) 190 – 191.

motion of the chest, caused by the process of respiration.” (39) The contrast between this lifeless figure and the living is later demonstrated also by Rose’s wild insisting to be fed and given drink. Her acceptance of wine and food definitely has religious connotations, referring to the ceremony of communion, but at the same time the act of eating and drinking, as an activity that is common to all living creatures, symbolizes the girl’s belonging to the world of the living.

Similarly as in the other stories discussed in this thesis, also in “Schalken the Painter” Le Fanu suggests a rational explanation of the strange events, pointing to the girl’s possible madness,

Gerard Douw began to fear, naturally enough, that terror or ill-treatment, had unsettled the poor girl’s intellect, and he half suspected, by the suddenness of her appearance, the unseasonableness of the hour, and above all, from the wildness and terror of her manner, that she had made her escape from some place of confinement for lunatics. (43)

It is up to the individual reader to decide whether she really went mad or not, but what is in any way certain is the fact that she was driven to this hopeless state, by means either psychical or supernatural, because of the ruinous impact of her dreadful husband whose wealth had separated her from the loved Schalken.

The final scene when Schalken has a dream or a vision of Rose in the church of Rotterdam, depicts Rose “clothed in a kind of light robe of white, part of which was so disposed as to form a veil.” (46) At the same time the narrator points that she was not dressed like a nun. Rather, she is actually dressed like a bride. Because of the unfulfilled love with Schalken, she seems to become a kind of eternal bride, wandering around in a wedding dress and sharing bed with her horrible and lifeless husband.

In case of this story, the assumedly supernatural figure of Vanderhausen, though making impression of being dead, can be seen not only as a revenant that is coming from beyond the grave, but can be viewed, more logically, to symbolize the unnatural

attachment to a lifeless, material thing, which is preferred to love and life. This is also supported by the fact that he is several times identified with a wooden figure, which is not “dead” in the right sense of the word, but at the same time is by no means alive. It is this horrid husband, but at the same time also the unnatural approach to marriage as a bargain and the obstruction between the girl and the man she loves, both of which Vanderhausen personifies, that drive her to madness and possibly even to suicide.

4.3 Comparison: Death and the Supernatural in “Carmilla” and “Schalken the Painter”

“Carmilla” and “Schalken the Painter” share many common features, first of them being the two central female figures, Laura and Rose, that are both beautiful, fair and generally of somewhat angelic appearance, but are troubled by demoniac supernatural beings. “Carmilla,” however, differs by its lesbian theme with a much stronger sexual overtone, and moreover by the vampire’s close, familiar and intimate approach to its victim. While Carmilla is strongly driven by her passionate “love,” even though it is rather an instinct than an emotion, Vanderhausen is on the contrary completely cold, unemotional and even quite characterless.

Even though “Schalken the Painter” is not a part of the story collection *In a Glass Darkly*, the person of Vanderhausen also gives a kind of mirror reflection of the fears and faults of the characters, and the nature of these gives the difference between Vanderhausen and Carmilla. Carmilla draws attention to the heroine’s desire for closer contact, namely her lack of maternal love and her unexpressed sexuality, which is why she demonstrates exactly these qualities by her perverse familiarity. Vanderhausen, on the contrary, points to abundance of love that has to be suppressed, being replaced by a

relationship based on cool calculation, and therefore also he is cold and detached.

The key motif of both stories is torment of the heroes by a creature that should be dead, and this intrusion of the dead into the world of the living becomes the source of trouble, since, as Rose Velderkaust says, “the dead and the living cannot be one: God has forbidden it.” (43) Rickles notes that it is “loving the dead” which causes the problems, because if Carmilla’s, or that is to say Mircalla’s, remains were not replaced and hidden by her lover, the vampire could have been extinguished a long time ago. He says that, “So everything about the Mircalla story is filled with stories of loving the dead. It is the lover who hides her remains.”¹¹ It is the lover who is unable to give up his loved countess, and as a result of his unwillingness to leave her, she survives in the vampiric form. Very much like that, Laura seems to be, more or less consciously, preoccupied with the loss of her mother, who then returns to her through the vampiric projection of Carmilla, who is also her female ancestor. Finally, in “Schalken the Painter” an analogous situation takes place when Schalken experiences the vision of his long time gone love Rose Velderkaust, whom he is unable to forget.

¹¹ Rickles 163.

5 CONCLUSION

The five stories discussed in this thesis are written in a similar manner playing with the undefined border between illusion and reality, objectivity and subjectivity, and the supernatural blending with human psychology. Each of the stories expresses a definite explanation of the supernatural phenomena. Le Fanu obviously prefers to make hints in several directions and leave the reader to reckon with it as he pleases. He often uses means of narratorial distance, so that his stories are presented as events that took place long time ago and are retold several times, not providing an eye witness or a person directly involved in the described incident, which gives the story a bigger veil of mystery, and moreover leaves more space for free speculations about its trueness.

The border between the supernatural and fantasy sometimes remains undistinguishable not merely because the story does not provide clear account of past events, but also because the two are, in Le Fanu's realization, very closely interconnected, so that they can hardly be separated. It cannot be determined with certainty whether it was the character whose torments of mind gave existence to the supernatural follower, or if it was the being from the other world that induced the mental problems of the hero. Nevertheless, it is perfectly obvious that the first influences the second and vice versa. In other words, the follower personifies and takes shape of the fears, torments and deviations of the hero's personality, while his troubles are on the other side provoked and strengthened by the follower's influence.

In "Carmilla" the heroine suffers from the loss of her mother, and also begins to realize her maturing sexuality, and at the same time she is haunted by Carmilla who, quite ironically, approaches to her through the gap created by her missing mother, and builds a relationship that is overtly sexual. Carmilla offers her close contact that she

evidently lacks, but her concept of contact is inverted and depraved, gradually leading the heroine to destruction. Great conformity can be found between “Carmilla” and “Green Tea,” where the central character leads a lonely life of a bachelor, fully devoting his efforts to his religious mission, but suffering from the dogging vision of a black monkey whose animality and malice forms a contrast with his outer image. Both the stories support Hurley’s thesis that the Victorians often tended to see a man in terms of polarities, either as good, moral, pious and sexually reserved, or evil, devilish, wild and perverted. While the characters lead a life of honest, decent and well-ordered members of the society, their followers figure as their meanest antipodes.

“The Familiar” and “Mr Justice Harbottle” are based on practically the same strategy, only with the difference that they operate more specifically with the feeling of guilt and bad conscience. In “The Familiar,” the situation of the upcoming wedding reminds Captain Barton his past trespass against a girl who loved him, and on her father, who then starts to haunt him in a slightly changed form, presenting himself as “The Watcher.” This act of watching and the Watcher’s omnipresence symbolize the bad conscience that stays with him and from the presence of which he cannot escape.

Mr Justice Harbottle is also punished for his bad deeds, but compared to Barton has to endure a punishment that is more elaborate and organized. Even though he sees the apparition of Lewis Pyneweck several times, he is not followed in the right sense of the word, at least definitely not with such an intensity and effect as Captain Barton from “The Familiar.” He is not brought to destruction so much by Pyneweck as by himself and by the verdict of the monstrous judge who mirrors his own crudeness and relentlessness.

“Schalken the Painter” is with its topic of marriage with the dead close to “Carmilla,” even though the character of the vampire and the strange suitor is

essentially different. While Carmilla tries to create as close and intimate relationship with her victim as possible, desiring her love and full devotion, Vanderhausen comes to separate the two young lovers by his cold and stiff materiality. Although he represents an ideal husband as far as fortune is considered, ironically he is as cold and inanimate as his gold.

Le Fanu's horror stories work with the traditional instruments of the gothic style, using forlorn sceneries and supernatural elements, but the greatest amount of its effectiveness lies not in the outer fearsome arrangement, but in the subjective experience of horror that is given by the specific qualities of the characters. Instead of producing generally frightening scenes, Le Fanu creates to his heroes a special made-to-measure nightmare, and thus shows that the greatest horror is not hidden in the graveyards and castles of the outer world, but within ourselves.

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Czech Summary

Ačkoli se označením „gotika“ v českém kontextu rozumí především období pozdního středověku, s ním spojená kultura a zvláště architektonický styl, za našimi hranicemi můžeme narazit na alespoň zdánlivě velmi odlišný význam tohoto slova. Zejména v souvislosti s anglickou kulturou gotika značí nejen onu vzdálenou středověkou kulturní epochu, během níž vznikaly majestátní, avšak často chladné a nehostinné gotické stavby, ale také daleko pozdější trend, jenž je do značné míry spojen s literární tvorbou.

V tomto novějším smyslu tak můžeme hovořit o gotické literatuře, či přesněji o gotickém hororu, který se objevuje přibližně ve druhé polovině osmnáctého století a částečně pod vlivem romantismu čerpá inspiraci právě v temných dobách středověku, odkud má i svůj název. K navození správné hororové atmosféry totiž využívá scénérie odlehlých zákoutí gotických hradů, strašidelných starodávných pokojů a polorozpadlých hřbitovů. Krom toho jsou však neodmyslitelnou součástí tohoto žánru také nadpřirozené jevy a bytosti jako duchové, upíři a nejrůznější strašidla či monstra, jejichž podobu i hrůzostrašnost omezují pouze hranice takřka bezuzdné lidské fantazie.

Za iniciátora tohoto gotického literárního trendu je často považován Horace Walpole a jeho román *Otranský zámek* (*Castle of Otranto*), jenž vyšel v roce 1764. Téměř o století později ve viktoriánské éře, kdy se popularita literární gotiky zdála být u konce, došlo k jejímu oživení a opětovnému rozkvětu, a to do té míry, že se pro ni vžil ustálený termín „viktoriánská gotika.“

Mezi přední představitele viktoriánské gotiky patří i Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, který se vedle svého románu *Strýc Silas* (*Uncle Silas*) zapsal do povědomí především množstvím hororových povídek. Přestože Le Fanu často zasazuje děj svých povídek do

odlehých krajů, starých strašidelných domů či opuštěných ulic nočního města a přinejmenším naznačuje přítomnost nadpřirozených sil, a tedy využívá prostředků pro gotický horor charakteristických, zároveň lze jeho tvorbu do jisté míry označit za netypickou.

Krom toho, že Le Fanu s oblibou mnohdy nechává prostor pro racionální vysvětlení nadpřirozených jevů ve svých povídkách a ponechává tak na čtenáři, zda se rozhodne danou událost připsat na účet nadpřirozené bytosti či nikoli, je pozoruhodné především to, že nadpřirozené bytosti se v jeho povídkách neobjevují zcela náhodně a bez příčiny. Jejich přítomnost a nezřídka dokonce i podoba je naopak obvykle úzce spjata s povahou postavy, kterou tyto přízraky pronásledují.

To, co Le Fanuovy hrdiny sužuje je ve své podstatě spíše součástí jich samých, nežli něco přicházejícího z vnějšího světa. Le Fanu nám umožňuje nahlédnout hluboko do temných zákoutí jejich duší, kde se skrývají ty nejtajnější touhy, strachy i pocity viny, a nechává všechny tyto emoce, aby se zhmotnily ve formě přízraku, který pak tu či onu postavu pronásleduje. V tomto smyslu se Le Fanu stává jakýmsi předchůdcem moderní psychologie.

Jeho neznámější a kritiky nejdiskutovanější povídkou je „Carmilla,“ příběh o mladé dívce pronásledované lesbickou upírkou. Hrdinka Laura žije se svým otcem v sídle, jež stojí uprostřed hlubokých styrijských lesů, nedaleko hrobky rodu Karnsteinů a také ruin přilehlé záhadně vymřelé vesnice. Upírka Carmilla, která se stane hostem nic netušící Laury a jejího otce, svým zjevem představuje přesnou kopii své oběti, od níž se odlišuje pouze prostřednictvím barevné symboliky. Stejně tak jako Laura, i Carmilla je mladou, neobyčejně krásnou dívkou, avšak její dlouhé tmavé vlasy a tmavé oči kontrastují s andělským zjevem plavovlasé modrooké Laury.

Carmilla svou oběť sice postupně zbavuje sil a posouvá ji blíž a blíž smrti, ale

zároveň k ní projevuje neobyčejně silnou náklonnost, takže i sama Laura na okamžik zapochybuje, zda si k ní v přestrojení neprorazil cestu ctitel opačného pohlaví. Přestože v ní zamilované projevy a erotické doteky její upří přítelkyně vyvolávají jistý odpor, překvapivě nejsou z její strany zcela odmítány. Zdá se, že Carmilla představuje jakýsi zvrácený protipól ctnostné Laury a jako její stín upozorňuje na tu součást její osobnosti, která není navenek plně vyjádřena.

Podobně lze chápat i soužení ctihodného pána Jenningse v povídce „Zelený čaj,“ („Green Tea“) který je pronásledován spektrem zlovolné černé opice. Ačkoli Carmilla je prezentována coby skutečná upírka s objektivní existencí, zatímco opice pana Jenningse existuje podle všeho pouze v jeho hlavě a je nakonec vysvětlena jako příznak dědičné psychické choroby, lze mezi oběma povídkami najít mnoho společného.

Důstojný pán Jennings je snad ještě více než Laura hotovým ztělesněním ctností: nejenže je nesmírně milý a laskavý, ale svůj staromládenecký život plně věnuje službě bohu a druhým. Přesto však lze v jeho povaze zpozorovat i letmé náznaky nejistoty a pochybností. Opice, která Jenningsovi začne znepríjemňovat život, ztělesňuje ironicky právě ty vlastnosti, které panu Jenningsovi tak nápadně chybí. Svou zvířecí živočišností a pudovým instinktem namísto povznesených duchovních hodnot kontrastuje se spořádaným asketickým životem pana Jenningse, stavícího do popředí před veškeré ostatní zájmy právě náboženství a duchovno.

Tak jako je pan Jennings pronásledován a doháněn k nepřičetnosti malou černou opicí, i hrdina povídky „Pronásledovatel“ („The Familiar“) má svého pronásledovatele, kterého nedokáže setřást a který jej pomalu dohání k šílenství. Z povídky sice nelze jednoznačně určit, zda jde o reálnou osobu, přízrak či výplod hrdinovy fantazie, ale jisté je, že jeho zhoubný vliv na něj je do značné míry způsoben asociacemi, které v něm vyvolává.

Hlavní hrdina kapitán Barton se chystá do ženění, avšak čím více se blíží svatba, tím větší jsou Bartonovy výčitky svědomí ohledně dívky, které kdysi zlomil srdce a také nepřímo zabil otce. Ten jej v mírně změněné podobě pronásleduje a nejen že jej zbaví myšlenek na chystanou svatbu, ale přivede jej na pokraj nervového zhroucení. Poté už je na nás, zda Bartonův nešťastný konec přičteme působení nadpřirozených sil či jeho napjatým nervům, ale v obou dvou případech za ním stojí Bartonovo špatné svědomí.

To je také hlavní příčinou zkázy hrdiny další Le Fanuovy povídky „Soudce Harbottle“ („Mr Justice Harbottle“). Harbottle má coby tvrdý a nelítostný soudce na svědomí množství životů, když z pravomoci svého soudcovského křesla posílá bez milosti na smrt lidi, kteří si jistě ne vždy takovýto trest zasloužili. Jeho proces s hokynářem Pyneweckem není ničím jiným, nežli aktem pomsty a zadostiučiněním jeho vlastní ješitnosti.

Proto jej stihne spravedlivý trest: Harbottle je sám předveden před soud, jemuž předsedá soudce, který je hrozivější obdobou Harbottla samotného. Nastavuje zrcadlo jeho vlastní krutosti a bezcitnosti, a tak v něm hluboko uvnitř probouzí výčitky svědomí, které mu, stejně jako v případě kapitána Bartona, způsobí nesnesitelné soužení a následně i brzký konec. Ten lze opět vykládat přinejmenším dvěma různými způsoby, buď jako zásah nadpřirozených sil, nebo jako vyvrcholení jeho výčitek do té míry, že si soudce nakonec sám vezme život.

Téma sebevraždy je tedy evidentně přítomno ve více z Le Fanuových povídek. Dokonce lze mezi ně zařadit i „Carmillu“, v níž lze Lauřinu povolnost vůči Carmillinu milostnému vábení, které je zároveň neoddělitelně spojeno se smrtí, vykládat jako ochotu Laury k dobrovolnému odchodu ze života, což je symbolicky naznačeno i obrazem královny Kleopatry s hadem na prsou, který má Carmilla ve své ložnici.

Carmilla nepřináší Lauře smrt pouze prostřednictvím své zvrácené lesbické

lásky, ale také v první části povídky figuruje jako jakási náhrada dívčiny zesnulé matky, když ji ještě coby dítě přichází ukonejšit a poskytnout pocit bezpečí. I v tomto případě je však její zdánlivá laskavost zhoubná a smrtící, protože zanedlouho po tom, co je Laura upírkou utišena, jí prorazí hrdlo její špičaté zuby.

Poslední Le Fanuovou povídkou diskutovanou v této práci je povídka „Malíř Schalken“ („Schalken the Painter“). S „Carmillou“ má společné především téma spojení mezi živým a mrtvým. Zatímco Lauře se dvoří upírka Carmilla, hrdinka povídky „Malíř Schalken“ Rose je donucena se provdat za podivného cizince Vanderhausena, který nejen že děsí svým hrozně mrtvolným vzhledem, ale dokonce ani nejeví známky dechu.

Valderhausen představuje protiklad k dívčině chudému, avšak sympatickému a z její strany vítanému nápadníku, začínajícímu malíři Schalkenovi. Na rozdíl od něj oplývá nezměrným bohatstvím, ale zato značně zaostává co do ostatních kvalit, či, přesněji řečeno, žádnými dalšími kvalitami vůbec nedisponuje. Je jen jakousi bezduchou postavou, ne nadarmo přirovnávanou k dřevěné figuríně, ztělesňující překážku mezi Rose a jejím milovaným Schalkenem, kterou tvoří právě peníze. Nešťastný osud Rose je pak trestem za hrabivost a zaslepenost jejího strýce, který ji bez rozmyslu proti její vůli provdává za kohokoli pouze na základě materiálních hodnot.

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu využívá tradičních prostředků hororové gotiky jako odlehlá a strašidelná místa děje i nadpřirozené jevy a bytosti, avšak největší podíl na efektivitě jeho povídek nenesou tyto vnější prvky, nýbrž vnitřní zkušenost hororu prožívaná jeho postavami. Le Fanu vytváří svým hrdinům noční můry doslova šité na míru a jejich prostřednictvím tak odhaluje horory skrývající se nikoli za zdmi gotických hradů či starobylých sídel, ale v hlubinách lidské mysli.