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Wanderings Among the Living: Ghosts in British Literary History

Toulky po světě živých: Duchové v britské literatuře

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Prohlášení

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Podpis

Poděkování

Děkuji Mgr. Emě Jelínkové, Ph.D., za odborné vedení práce, ochotu, poskytování rad a materiálů k práci.

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Introduction

There is no other topic that generates more questions than answers. Supernatural is, in many respects, a phenomenon that attracted many people in the past and attracts them today, especially because of its versatility. To begin with, the supernatural is unthinkable without ghosts. They are caught between two worlds because they do not belong to Hell nor Heaven. Their intentions are rarely clear, but perhaps they are the souls of people who were not ready to die yet, and hence they wander around in hopes of finishing what they have begun. They are able to walk through walls and disappear whenever they want. Their color is usually white but they can also be fully materialized. They haunt the castles as well as old houses. This list of qualities is never-ending, and it is therefore no surprise that ghosts are so frequently employed in literature and films. Unlike other monsters, zombies, and vampires, their existence has never been completely disproved, at least in the eyes of general public. And despite all the exposure and debunking of mediums, the ghosts live on in documentaries and supposedly truthful accounts of supernatural encounters, which keeps widening the gap between the believers and the non-believers.

Real or fictional, it is evident that people have always been fascinated by the mysterious, the inexplicable, and it is perhaps for this reason that the genre of ghost story thrives. Thus, this thesis explores ghosts and other supernatural entities reappearing in the British literature throughout the 19th and early 20th century, encompassing what is traditionally called ‘the Golden Age of the ghost story.’ However, the subject of this study are not only ghost stories but also certain Victorian novellas that feature very memorable spooks. The word ‘spooks’ is used because many of the authors here do not reflect on what a ghost ought to look like but rather on its effect on the protagonist as well as the reader. So, what initially was intended to be a study of ghosts has become a study of all the spooks.

Each chapter is dedicated to one or two authors and the ghosts that frequently appear in their fiction. The first and the second chapter are dedicated to ghosts and their social as well as literary history. There, the distinction between the Gothic ghost and the modern ghost is made. The third chapter explores the way Charles Dickens uses ghosts to communicate moral messages. The fourth chapter focuses on Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu and his malevolent spectral animals that always win over the desperate mortals. Since many of the 19th-century ghost story writers were women, the fifth chapter takes

a look at Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Marjorie Bowen and how their female revenants avenge themselves on their former lovers. The sixth chapter is dedicated to Oscar Wilde and his use of spectrality in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and the seventh chapter pays homage to Montague R. James and his religious ghosts.

The relationship between the ghost and the protagonist is the primary interest. Sigmund Freud's theories provide the basis of this thesis, namely his theory of the unconscious and the uncanny. The unconscious is the protagonist's weak spot, if you will, and whatever comes out of it poses a danger to his or her consciousness. In most cases, the spook is subjective, meaning that only the protagonist can understand the spook's relevance. However, it is apparent that many ghost story authors focused more on the final effect rather than on establishing elaborate psychological patterns. The stories were created to shock and scare the readers, which also accounts for the fact that many of them are short and have a limited number of characters. Still, what looks like a simple plot on the surface is, in fact, a complex structure shaped by folk beliefs, religion, and psychology. Like any other supernatural entity, ghosts are defiant and transcend all categories. For this reason, various studies on fictional ghosts are employed as well, for instance Andrew Smith's historical view and Zoë Lehmann Imfeld's theological view.

1. Ghost as a Sensation

There are many terms that come to mind—specter, apparition, spirit, undead—that are associated with the category of supernatural. They are present in many cultures, and their abilities and powers grow dependent on the beliefs of such cultures. For skeptics, they are just obsolete ideas that can be explained by science, and the way they are exaggerated by the mass media helps them to become established even in the most atheistic societies. For believers, they are the souls of the dead. As already observed, there is a group of terms that is associated with such concepts, and a good deal of debate surrounds it. Throughout this work, the term ‘ghost’ is widely employed, following the traditional connection between the soul of the dead and the mentioned term. There are also mentions of ‘apparitions,’ and its use largely coincides with Owen Davies who, in his *Haunted*, connects apparitions with “the visual appearance of a ‘ghost-like presence.’”¹ So, an apparition is a ghost, but in this thesis, it suggests an entity that is much less specific. Spirit, too, is universal, since the term encompasses “entities such as fairies, devils, and angels,”² and hence is not so frequent here.

Ghosts have had a complex history. The early Middle Ages treated them as aliens caught between two worlds, which ultimately gave rise to the concept of Purgatory. There, the souls of the dead were punished for their sins, and the only way to Heaven was through an atonement.³ However, after the Reformation, the concept was criticized for its freedom. In other words, only God decided whether the soul belonged to Heaven or Hell, and no amount of expiation could help a sinful soul. Crucially, then, with iconoclasm and the hatred towards the established Catholic practices, the lowest classes lost touch with the supernatural. This changed with the introduction of ghosts to theater, which helped to re-establish ghosts in the British society.⁴ Still, no matter what belief systems people in the past followed, ghosts were to be feared because of their connection with the demonic.

As Owen Davies notes, not even the arrival of the Enlightenment could eliminate the common people’s beliefs about the supernatural,⁵ and the numerous publications describing close supernatural encounters provide evidence. One of the

¹ Owen Davies, *The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 2.

² Davies, *Haunted*, 2.

³ Davies, *Haunted*, 104–106.

⁴ Leo Braudy, *Haunted: On Ghosts, Witches, Vampires, Zombies, and Other Monsters of the Natural and Supernatural Worlds* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 54–57.

⁵ Davies, *Haunted*, 120.

greatest sources of ghostly visitations is *The Night Side of Nature* by Catherine Crowe, published in 1848. The book is a collection of accounts of supernatural phenomena, ranging from vampires to ghosts. Crowe also touches upon doppelgänger, which proves that such topic had been of interest for quite some time, even before Freud. The work thus serves as a counter-reaction to the skeptics of the time, and shows that there are not just one or two, but hundreds of accounts of supernatural encounters.

Simone Natale suggests that spiritualism and the communications with the dead had been practiced long before the Victorians, but it was the middle of the 19th century that experienced its peak. The reason behind such popularity was the fact that the entertainment business was booming, and the supernatural became closely associated with it.⁶ So, séances were not restricted to private circles anymore, they became an attraction and the ghost seeing a public affair. According to Davies, broadsheets were quick to understand the value of the supernatural, and many of them informed and updated readers on ghost sightings, immediately provoking uproars. For instance, the greatest ghost hunt was recorded in 1874, when over five thousand people gathered at a churchyard in London, to see a ghost.⁷ It is not clear whether it was literature that imitated reality or it was the other way round, but people's interest in mysteries of life and death was evidently strong. Ghosts gave rise to many spiritualist stars, such as Georgiana Houghton who, in her own autobiography *Evenings at home in Spiritual Séance* (1882), recounts various supernatural encounters including a one with a ghost setting up and clearing the table:

When we had finished our meal, we put all the things in the middle of the table, ... and extinguished the light. We then again heard a clatter with the cups and saucers, and after a minute or so had elapsed, we were told to strike a light, a found that *they* had vanished.⁸

It is the darkness that plays the central part in many of Houghton's accounts, making the modern reader aware of the machinations that were happening while the light was gone. Undoubtedly, however, publications of this kind only helped to maintain society's obsession with the supernatural and further blurred the distinction between the reality and fraud.

⁶ Simone Natale, *Supernatural Entertainments: Victorian Spiritualism and the Rise of Modern Media Culture* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016), 8.

⁷ Davies, *Haunted*, 91.

⁸ Georgiana Houghton, *Evenings at Home at Spiritual Séance: Welded Together by a Species of Autobiography* (London: E. W. Allen, 1882), 143.

1.1 Ghost as a Window to One's Soul

The life after death has been something of a question mark for many. While some refuse to believe in ghosts and attribute supernatural encounters to hallucinations, others believe that there may exist something beyond our understanding. Real or not, there are times when ghosts and other spooks do not seem so distant. So, this quick feeling of uncertainty suggests that there is a cause that makes us return back to fears we have spent centuries overcoming.

It is no surprise that the oldest fear is the fear of the dead. And be it fear of dead bodies, or fear of a soul returning to earth, it is apparent that our primitive ancestors had established a way of thinking about the supernatural. Magic, now considered an entertainment no longer worthy of debunking, used to be widely accepted. In essence, people used to believe that there was some 'magical link' between a person and their soul, and this connection was retained even after death. This belief thus gave rise to the tales of ghosts that haunted the living relatives who buried them improperly. Possibly influenced by such fears, people started to devise ways to prevent the dead from leaving their graves, which still survives in old superstitions, such as the taboo of calling the dead by their name.⁹ These fears, nearly forgotten by the modern society, are frequently depicted in literature because they have the ability to correspond to our instincts.

Primal instincts considered, Charles Darwin was not the first scientist whose theory has become associated with the general public's idea of the origin of humans. As Susie Steinach notes, long before him, there was mesmerism that was based on the assumption that all living things contain a magnetic fluid that can be controlled. Therefore, mesmerists could manipulate with the patient's fluid and thus force their body to heal itself.¹⁰ Due to such theories, one acquired the impression that people were not what they seemed to be. On the outside they were considered the most intelligent species, but on the inside, they were no different from animals. This, as well as Darwin's theory, proved that all humans, however moral, had a hidden potential for evil which was back then synonymous with the primitive. The terror created by this dichotomy of good and evil, light and dark, moral and immoral, is present in many works of the time. In Stoker's *Dracula*, the Count's hypnotic abilities turn young, demure ladies into the cruel creatures of the night that succumb to their animal instincts.

⁹ Daniel Cohen, *In Search of Ghosts* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1972), 15–20.

¹⁰ Susie Steinach, *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture and Society in 19th century Britain* (London: Routledge, 2017), 286.

Equally significant is also Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, a story of a man who creates a potion that enables him to transform into his despicable self and enjoy his life to the fullest.

Ultimately, fear reveals how our beliefs are based on oppositions such as the rational and the irrational, the conscious and the unconscious, and the known and the unknown. And these oppositions became the inspiration for Freud's essay "The Uncanny" (1919). In view of the connection between fear and the objects that produce fear, he challenges the theory of Ernst Jentsch who attaches the feeling of uncanniness to objects which have a human quality but are not alive. Freud explains that the term 'uncanny,' as opposed to 'fearful,' refers to "the class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar."¹¹ The ambiguity is incorporated in the term itself: 'uncanny, unhomely,' originally *unheimlich* in German, is included in the meaning of *heimlich*, 'homely, familiar.' Therefore, the word *heimlich* itself includes its own opposite among other meanings. With that being said, Freud touches upon doubles as well as ghosts who can only be uncanny when they lead to the exposure of the repressed primitive beliefs or infantile beliefs.¹² As a result, Freud brings about an interesting notion, the subjectivity of our fears.

Also relevant to this thesis is Freud's description of uncanny reflections. Mirrors or looking glasses are a man's creations and therefore, like any other inventions, may turn against their own masters. Freud writes:

I was sitting alone in my *wagon-lit* compartment when a more than usually violent jerk of the train swung back the door of the adjoining washing-cabinet, and an elderly gentleman in a dressing-gown and a traveling cap came in. ... Jumping up with the intention of putting him right, I at once realized to my dismay that the intruder was nothing but my own reflection in the looking-glass of the open door. I can still recollect that I thoroughly disliked his appearance.¹³

Freud does not recognize himself at first, but then he slowly realizes who the man in the mirror is. This initial uncertainty, however momentary, becomes of importance because it shows that a seemingly ordinary object, like a mirror, can serve as the medium for the uncanny. The mirror then becomes the source of the ghostly and ceases to be an

¹¹ Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," in *On Creativity and the Unconscious: Papers on the Psychology of Art, Literature, Love, Religion*, ed. Benjamin Nelson, trans. Joan Riviere (New York: Harper, 1958), 123–124.

¹² Freud, "The Uncanny," 122–161.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 156.

ordinary object, even if it is just for a few seconds. In his own words, “a piece of his own self [was] strange to him.”¹⁴ This estrangement, this fleeting nightmare of not recognizing the self, is central to many ghost stories and stories with supernatural. It is in the essay that Freud attempts to make sense of the phenomenon, and through the unmasking of the mysterious figure in the mirror, Freud initiates a debate about our ‘humanness.’ The reflection in the mirror is his own, but in that moment of surprise it does not feel so. What then, to return to the spooks, constitutes the difference between ghosts, illusions, and humans. In many ghost stories, there is seldom any difference. Spooks seem to go from an illusion to a material person, and at the same time seem to represent the protagonist’s haunted mind. This concept of the ‘haunted mind’ would perhaps be considered a Gothic cliché by today’s standards, but many ghost stories (here included) do rely on this concept.

Needless to say that Freud’s strict reading of ghosts does not agree with some authors. Howard P. Lovecraft, in his *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, writes that “no amount of rationalisation, reform, or Freudian analysis can quite annul the thrill of the chimney-corner whisper or the lonely wood.”¹⁵ Through this, Lovecraft shows that nothing can prevent us from feeling the way we do when we encounter a ghost. Of course, the ghost may not be a ghost at all. It may turn out to be a shadow or an optical illusion and we are scared of it because it threatens our life. What Lovecraft emphasizes here is the atmosphere, an essential component of any good ghost story. Protagonists, bereft of the idea that something supernatural may appear, are rendered speechless.

Paradoxically, even this speechlessness ‘speaks’ a lot. The author spins the web of psychological patterns, and though the focus is on the atmosphere of the story rather than on the discriminated ‘message’ of the story, the protagonist is the one through whom the reader experiences the action. The atmosphere, then, is a surface, but it is the deep level—the emotions of the protagonists, their feeling when something inexplicable is seen—that makes the story a fascinating insight into a man’s unconscious. Upon seeing a ghost or any other spook, each of the protagonists sees a different truth in it. As Stephen Frosh notes, “These lost truths keep coming back to haunt us, and demand recompense. They are unwanted apparitions, ... we often wish they would let us

¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, “A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis,” in *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, vol. 22, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis and Other Works* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1964), 245.

¹⁵ H. P. Lovecraft, “Supernatural Horror in Literature,” in *H. P. Lovecraft: The Fiction* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 1042.

alone.”¹⁶ Some may believe that the ghost is a message of a forgotten sin, while for others it is a sign that their demanding dead relative needs to be reburied.

Freud’s view considered, the ghosts and those who see them are seldom separable. Indeed, ghosts are usually dependent on those who invoked them, accidentally or deliberately, and are not able to disappear until they fulfill their purpose. They are seen as traumas or hidden thoughts of the protagonists that come to light in the moment of weakness, and they may come from the Great Beyond which stands for the protagonist’s mind. The result is a psychological ghost story. However, it is evident that Freud’s concept of ghosts has been reevaluated so that nowadays even they can have a character of their own, which means that they can become a possible subject of a psychological analysis.

2. Ghosts in British Literature

2.1 The Gothic Ghost

People believed in ghosts more in the past than they do today. It was the general public’s imagination that helped to popularize them, and the tales of supernatural visitations were told so frequently that they have become an integral part of the British folklore. Katharine Briggs collects and studies such tales, and her *Encyclopedia of Fairies, Hobgoblins, Brownies, Bogies and Other Supernatural Creatures* offers a wide range of supernatural entities seen in the countryside of Great Britain. Of course, there are also accounts of supernatural entities that are related to Britain’s very history. In his *British Folklore*, Marc Alexander states that the most notable ghosts appearing throughout Britain are its past kings and queens, which is expected since the members of the ruling class treated each other atrociously.¹⁷ The reason for mentioning folklore is the fact that these accounts of ghosts and demons anticipate the ghost story. Not only did they help to shape the form of supernatural fiction, but they also established some universal assumptions about the supernatural. With that being said, let us now take a look at early literary ghosts that have captured the imagination of many readers.

The most prominent example of a ghost in the English medieval literature comes from *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer. In “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale” the

¹⁶ Stephen Frosh, “Hauntings: Psychoanalysis and Ghostly Transmission,” *American Imago* 69, no. 2 (2012): 247, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26305019>.

¹⁷ Marc Alexander, *British Folklore* (New York: Crescent Books, 1982), 134.

reader is told a story of Chanticleer the cock, who relates his dreams to his skeptical wife, Pertelote. One of his examples involves a man who sees his friend's ghost in a dream, not knowing that he is somewhere being murdered.¹⁸ As Penzoldt notes, ghosts are quite frequent also in Elizabethan plays.¹⁹ A good ghost is used in George Peele's *The Old Wives' Tale*. The Ghost of Jack, as the character is aptly named, appears in the middle of the play to become Knight Eumenides's companion because the knight had paid for his funeral. Rather than being the embodiment of the knight's sins, he is a ghost with gratitude who, in the end, helps to conquer the evil sorcerer Sacrapant.

William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, on the other hand, use ghosts as the messengers of death. In relation to ghosts in the 16th and 17th-century literature, Julia Briggs states that they clearly "had certain functions to fulfill which, it was supposed, they alone could carry out."²⁰ The ghost of Hamlet has the knowledge that no one else has and therefore can be considered as the main instigator of the action. He brings the message of death, hence his arrival can be considered a bad omen. Of course, it is his own death that the ghost talks about, but when he appears it is clear that he will tragically alter the events in the castle. The ghost only talks to Hamlet, which suggests that his appearance is not a mere coincidence. His son has been suspicious of the situation all along and might as well have hoped for the ghost's arrival. Ultimately, Hamlet's wish for the resolution of his father's death is fulfilled when the ghost appears. The ghost of Banquo in *Macbeth* also functions as a reminder of one's past sins. Banquo, like many others, died because of Macbeth's greed, and when his ghost appears at the feast, he undermines Macbeth's confidence. These ghosts are able to move between the worlds and reveal secrets, or in case of Ghost of Jack, fight the greater evil that could not be defeated without the help of the supernatural.

The ghosts presented in the paragraphs above can be described as Gothic. Now, the term 'Gothic' must be examined. As Punter and Byron observe, the Goths were a Germanic tribe that stood behind the destruction of Rome in AD 410, and through the time they have acquired a mythical status. It was in the 18th century that 'Gothic' merged with the 'medieval,' and so even the 17th century was thought of as Gothic.²¹ Put succinctly, our idea of the Gothic comes from the 18th-century conception of the

¹⁸ Julia Briggs, *Night Visitors: The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story* (London: Faber, 1977), 26.

¹⁹ Peter Penzoldt, *The Supernatural in Fiction* (New York: Humanities Press, 1965), 33.

²⁰ Briggs, *Night Visitors*, 29.

²¹ David Punter and Glennis Byron, *The Gothic*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 3–5.

Middle Ages. Cloisters, ruins, and ghosts inhabiting these mysterious objects became an inspiration to what came to be known as the Gothic fiction.

According to Frederick S. Frank, the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) marks the beginning of the Gothic literature in England and the publication of Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) its decline.²² For Punter, the Gothic fiction "is the fiction of the haunted castle, of heroines preyed on by unspeakable terrors, of the blackly lowering villain, of ghosts, vampires, monsters and werewolves."²³ Fred Botting in his *Gothic* also speaks of "spectres, monsters, demons, corpses, skeletons, evil aristocrats, monks and nuns, fainting heroines and bandits."²⁴ It thus can be said that the Gothic fiction includes either literal or psychological hauntings, and sometimes a combination of both. For instance, *The Castle of Otranto* is teeming with ghosts. Manfred's castle is haunted by the ghost of Alfonso who is the symbol of the family's brutal past. Alfonso is a harmless ghost, but his actions are spectacular. He grows bigger and bigger because his size equals the sins of Manfred's ancestors. In addition to Alfonso, there is also a skeleton-monk wearing a shroud, which gives the reader a vivid image of what the Gothic apparitions are all about—death, sins, bad omens and a medieval imagery. This medieval appearance is later seen also in modern ghost stories that draw on the Gothic fiction.

It is entirely fitting that we should consider also the second-generation of the British Romantics since their literary career was much affected by Gothic. Although their most famous works include vampires and invisible powers rather than ghosts, the impact of George Gordon Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Mary Shelley on the supernatural lore is outstanding. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is now considered a classic and the theme of moral responsibility lives on in many other works. Equally significant is Polidori's *The Vampyre*, a work of fiction on vampirism. Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem *The Past* also offers a peculiar supernatural experience: "Forget the dead, the past? Oh, yet / There are ghosts that may take revenge for it, / Memories that make the heart a tomb."²⁵ As Shelley's poetry shows, ghosts have the ability to move from the haunted castle to one's mind, which makes them even more powerful. His

²² Frederick S. Frank, "The Early and Later Gothic Traditions, 1762–1896" in *Fantasy and Horror: A Critical and Historical Guide to Literature, Illustration, Film, TV, Radio, and the Internet*, ed. Neil Barron (London: The Scarecrow Press, 1999), 6.

²³ David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*, vol. 1, *The Gothic Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1.

²⁴ Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), 2.

²⁵ Percy Bysshe Shelley, "The Past," in *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (London: Oxford University Press, 1905), 553.

comparison of the heart to a tomb expresses the notion that the voices from the Great Beyond may as well be ours.

Thus, the Gothic ghost's 'territory' encompasses the period between the late 16th century and the 18th century. Their modest beginnings in the folk stories helped them gain a reputation. They were associated with death, resided at cemeteries, and were seen only at night. Later, Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights gave them a much bigger role, turning them into bearers of the truth and universal helpers that disappear when the act is done. True to the spirit of the Romantics, troubled consciousness became central to story-telling and the supernatural was employed to communicate the otherwise invisible mental processes to the reader. At the same time, writers like Walpole were desirous of evoking the atmosphere of a long-lost past, and by placing ghosts in medieval castles and cloisters restricted their movement.

2.2 The Modern Ghost

Important to this thesis is what Dorothy Scarborough calls 'the modern ghost,' a kind of a ghost that starts to appear in fiction in the 19th century. This modern ghost is "not dependent upon a setting of sullen scenery as in Gothicism."²⁶ Of course, there are many modern ghost story writers, such as M. R. James, who rely on the ancient cathedrals and ruins. Still, it is not so much about the setting as it is about the ghosts themselves. The modern ghosts are "ghosts that eat and drink, play cards, dance, duel, and do anything they wish, that are so lifelike in their materialization that they would deceive even a medium."²⁷ They have more powers than their Gothic predecessors because they are allowed to be like humans. What Scarborough says about the ghosts' versatility holds true for most of the ghosts. It does not mean, however, that they are always stronger than humans. Ghosts have always been limited by their death, and even though they come back and haunt others, their 'life after life' is nearly always a misery. A perhaps more striking characteristic of the modern ghosts is their shape-shifting ability. They "can come in sections, which indefinitely multiplies [their] powers of haunting."²⁸ For instance, in Mary Braddon's "The Cold Embrace," a man is haunted by the cold, ghostly hands of his dead lover.

²⁶ Dorothy Scarborough, *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction* (New York: Octagon Books, 1967), 104.

²⁷ Scarborough, *Supernatural in Modern English Fiction*, 86.

²⁸ Scarborough, *Supernatural in Modern English Fiction*, 89.

The explanation behind the Gothic ghost transformation, as Dorothy Scarborough points out, can be attributed to the ways of how certain social habits have developed. People keep their treasures in the banks now, which considerably reduces the ghost's need to protect it. When it comes to the burial, the situation has changed as well. With the rise of cremation, modern ghosts feel no need to come back because of an improper burial.²⁹ So, burial and hidden treasures were no longer the only reasons for bringing the dead back since the mystery that surrounded it disappeared.

Surprisingly, what is considered to be the first modern ghost story was published over a hundred years before the Golden Age of the Ghost Story. Daniel Defoe's pamphlet, *A True Relation of the Apparition of one Mrs. Veal, the next Day after her Death: to one Mrs. Bargrave at Canterbury. The 8th of September, 1705*, features a ghost of Mrs Veal who returns to the world of the living to bid her friend Mrs Bargrave farewell.³⁰ The ghost of Mrs Veal resembles a human being to such an extent that Mrs Bargrave does not consider her to be a ghost. There is nothing supernatural about her since she comes through the door and has an ordinary conversation with Mrs Bargrave. Of course, humans can do much more than that, but in this case, such features are sufficient enough to differentiate her from the ghost of Alfonso who with his dramatic ghostly entrance at the end of Walpole's novel tears down the walls of the castle.

It is evident that the transformation from the Gothic ghost, such as Alfonso, to a modern ghost, Mrs Veal, has been a long one. Plays like *The Old Wives' Tale* and *Hamlet* present ghosts as simple characters. They may be both good and bad, but they usually return for reasons such as murder, death, property, and improper burial. Such ghosts haunt the castles of the Gothic fiction and are meant to make a statement. They may stand in the background since the story focuses on the relationships of the protagonists—relationships that are no less haunting, but they lay the foundations of how ghosts ought to be. Contrary to the Gothic ghosts who appear to create a scene because it is expected of them, the modern ghosts are not as elusive. This is exactly the case of Mrs Veal who, with her perfectly tangible appearance, undermines not only Mrs Bargrave's but also the narrator's beliefs about ghosts.

What also helped to shape the modern ghost was the domestication of Gothic in the 19th century. That is, the spooks of the 19th-century Gothic fiction were not

²⁹ Scarborough, *Supernatural in Modern English Fiction*, 112.

³⁰ Briggs, *Night Visitors*, 30.

restricted to castles and dungeons anymore, but could appear also in more domestic surroundings, for instance in a house in an urban area.³¹ In her essay “Sensation and the Fantastic in the Victorian Novel,” Lyn Pykett attributes this to Brontës who were a part of the Victorian Gothic revival. The bringing together of the domestic setting and horror created a new kind of haunted house, a house that is *familiar*, and yet rendered *unhomely* because of the complex relationship of its members.³² For instance, in *Wuthering Heights*, the ghosts of Catherine and Heathcliff embody the sorrowful history of the house even after their own death. At the end of the novel, Mr Lockwood remarks that *Wuthering Heights* is now “for the use of such ghosts as choose to inhabit it,”³³ suggesting that the ghostly lovers may return to the place that gave rise to their happiness as well as their suffering. While it is true that the early Gothic fiction could, and did employ the psychological hauntings, it is evident that it was really the 19th century that truly enhanced the ghost story genre. Now, seemingly ordinary households are the center of the supernatural activities, and the ghosts’ purpose is more diverse.

2.3 The Golden Age of the Ghost Story

The beginnings and the decline of the Golden Age of the ghost story are not so easily established. While Simon Hay in *History of the Modern English Ghost Story* considers the period between 1880 and 1920 the Golden Age of the ghost story,³⁴ Andrew Smith assigns it to the period from 1840 to 1920.³⁵ With regard to the amount of ghost stories written in the middle of the 19th century, it is apparent that focusing solely on the turn of the 19th century, like Hay does, seems too restrictive. He thus leaves out some of the popular Victorian writers who wrote stories with ghosts as well, such as Charles Dickens. Smith, on the other hand, not only offers a wide study of the Victorian and the Edwardian age, but he also relates the development of the ghost story to the changes in the British society. Therefore, this work follows Smith and his ‘Golden Age’ that starts a few years after Queen Victoria acceded to the throne. By far the most notable writers associated with this period are Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Montague Rhodes James,

³¹ Punter and Byron, *Gothic*, 26.

³² Lyn Pykett, “Sensation and the Fantastic in the Victorian Novel,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Novel*, ed. Deirdre David (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 198–199.

³³ Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (Oxford: Clio Press, 1992), 356.

³⁴ Simon Hay, *A History of the Modern English Ghost Story* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 91.

³⁵ Andrew Smith, *The Ghost Story, 1840–1920: A Cultural History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 2.

Algernon Blackwood, and from women writers it is Amelia B. Edwards, Elizabeth Gaskell, Mary E. Braddon, Vernon Lee and Charlotte Riddell.³⁶

Many of these writers were also said to belong to the ‘Sensation School’ with Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens as the leading figures. The sensation fiction offered a quick entertainment for those in need of mystery and suspense, and moreover, made it possible for the arrival of detective fiction.³⁷ Charles Dickens, writer productive in the field of ghost story, provided readers with stories like “A Christmas Carol,” “The Signal-Man” and “To Be Read at Dusk” and influenced the next generations of ghost story writers. Collins’s *The Woman in White* (1859) and Le Fanu’s collection *In a Glass Darkly* are the prime examples of the combination of supernatural elements and detective story. *The Woman in White* concerns a woman with an inheritance, who finds herself in the middle of dangerous machinations planned by her husband, and it is only at the end that the mystery behind his motivations comes to light. Meanwhile, Le Fanu’s collection revolves around Dr Hesselius investigating several supernatural cases, from a demonic monkey in “Green Tea” to a lesbian vampire in *Carmilla*.

When it comes to defining a ghost story, various studies focus on the content and the length. As far as the content is concerned, ghost stories tend to involve a supernatural entity and a protagonist who somehow angers it. In her work *Night Visitors*, Julia Briggs points out that the ghost story is no longer associated only with ghosts. She recommends using the term ‘supernatural story’ that truly captures the essence of a story that is haunted by all supernatural entities.³⁸ The term ‘supernatural story’ is not used frequently here, as this thesis focuses primarily on ghosts and the ghost story. As for the length, ghost stories are usually short. According to Briggs, this is caused by the fact that horror works only within a small number of pages. She admits that there are some novellas that use the supernatural elements, such as Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw*, but they very much resemble short stories with their lack of secondary plot and characters.³⁹

Short supernatural stories such as those mentioned above were published in magazines such as *Belgravia*, *Blackwood’s*, *Temple Bar*, and *The Strand*, that

³⁶ Jack Sullivan, ed., “Golden Age of the Ghost Story,” in *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural* (New York: Viking Press, 1986), 174–175.

³⁷ Michel Parry, ed., introduction to *Reign of Terror* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1980), 14–15.

³⁸ Briggs, *Night Visitors*, 12.

³⁹ Briggs, *Night Visitors*, 13.

entertained people of all classes.⁴⁰ The Gothic tales of mystery, murder, ghosts, and criminals were also being published under the name ‘penny bloods,’ later ‘penny dreadfuls.’ These were weekly periodicals which were popular especially with the lower classes because of their price. Parry also notes the existence of a ‘cock,’ a broadsheet with comic stories, some of them of supernatural character, like *An Account of the Dreadful Apparition that appeared last Night to Henry – in this street, of Mary – the shopkeeper’s daughter round the corner, in a shroud, all covered in white.*⁴¹ It is evident that combination of a quick entertainment and the domestic setting gave rise to the classic ghost story.

Thus, ghosts had traveled through plays and novels and arrived in the 19th-century short story. Magazines popularized the form, and with the names like Charles Dickens, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, and Wilkie Collins, ghosts became an established phenomenon. In essence, ghosts in fiction have evolved with the society, and their place in it is different from what it used to be. Once distant and vague entities, they materialize right there in the Victorian homes. From this standpoint, they represent complex figures that are worthy of investigation. Freud, and his essay “The Uncanny,” published in the early 20th century, helped to decode such complexities that the Gothic novels as well as short stories offered. The modern ghost, now a liaison between the conscious and the unconscious, was finally given the space to show its true powers.

3. Dickens and His Moral Ghosts: “A Christmas Carol” and *The Haunted Man and the Ghost’s Bargain*

Charles Dickens was one of the most prolific writers of the 19th century. In addition to social novels, his work encompassed ghost stories which were published in his Christmas Books and various Christmas annuals. He also published ghost stories by other authors, for instance Elizabeth Gaskell and Wilkie Collins, in magazines *All the Year Round* and *Household Words* where he worked as an editor.⁴² Dickens’s work is influenced by the behavior of the Victorian society and his social commentary is present also in the ghost stories. As Simon Hay states, “what realism makes visible is society’s ghosts.”⁴³ There are plenty of ghosts, ghostly figures, and other supernatural creatures in

⁴⁰ Briggs, *Night Visitors*, 14.

⁴¹ Parry, introduction to *Reign of Terror*, 20–22.

⁴² Lyn Pykett, “Sensation and the Fantastic in the Victorian Novel,” 196–197.

⁴³ Hay, *History of the Modern British Ghost Story*, 62.

Dickens's fiction, and he always finds a way of revealing either personal or social issues through them.

When reading his ghost stories, one notices the background that Dickens gives to his ghosts. They are not silent figures that are meant to scare the protagonist and quickly disappear but they have a story to tell. In a way, the ghosts offer a journey to their past, which proves that Dickens's ghost stories are more about the consequences of one's actions than they are about ghosts. This is not to say that his stories lack entertainment because Dickens also authored some comic ghost stories. For instance, "The Lawyer and the Ghost" is a ghost story in which a lawyer manages to remove a sad ghost by advising him to go and haunt a nicer place. Still, many of his ghost stories focus on the origin of the ghosts and the woes experienced by them. "Christmas Ghosts" tells a story of a ghost of a small boy who was murdered for money, and in "The Ghost in the Bride's Chamber," a ghost of a bride haunts her abusive husband. Such cruel, but nevertheless realistic backstories give 'life' to Dickens's ghosts.

The two stories that are explored here are emblematic of Dickens's role as a moralist. "A Christmas Carol" and *The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain* concern two men who are visited by supernatural entities. Scrooge, a miser with a fear of poverty that he developed in his youth, and Redlaw, a Chemistry professor who cannot forget the past sorrows, are taken on a life-changing journey. Before proceeding to the analysis, it must be noted that Dickens does not differentiate between ghosts and spirits and calls all the supernatural entities in his works both 'ghosts' and 'spirits.' Here, the term 'ghost' is used only in relation to the ghost of Marley and the spectral double of Redlaw.

3.1 Ghosts and Doubles from the Past, Present, and Future

Published in 1843, "A Christmas Carol" is a product of its age. Hypocrisy, avarice, and ignorance of the less privileged are explored in this work. Scrooge, initially the ultimate embodiment of avarice, undergoes a transformation into a generous man who no longer judges others on the basis of their possessions. This change is initiated by the arrival of the ghost of Jacob Marley, his long-dead business partner. The ghost appears on Christmas Eve, with "cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel"⁴⁴ wrapped around him. Like the perfect Gothic ghost, he rumbles with

⁴⁴ Charles Dickens, "A Christmas Carol," in *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Books*, ed. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 19.

his chains and screams, all in order to instill fear in Scrooge. Then, Marley tells the skeptical mortal that “[he] will be haunted . . . by Three Spirits,”⁴⁵ which turn out to be his past, present, and his future. Indeed, the ghosts stand for Scrooge’s personal fears and anxieties, although perhaps long forgotten.

It is important to mention that “A Christmas Carol” is a moral tale that revolves around a man who still has the chance to change his destiny. Marley and other ghosts in the background—those who Scrooge sees roaming the streets with their chains and boxes—cannot alter their past to change their ghostly future. It is therefore the idea of free will that permeates Dickens’s story, as that is something the ghosts cannot have. Here, ghosts are rendered desperate because only those who sin, either by amassing money or doing any other kind of dishonorable activity, stay on earth without the possibility of ever leaving it. Their unenviable situation creates the feeling of dread in the reader and inevitably leads to the question of whether our afterlife really reflects our earthly actions.

The Haunted Man and the Ghost’s Bargain (1848) also tells story of a man who estranged himself from the community. Mr Redlaw, the protagonist, is haunted by his own past. One evening, he is visited by a spectral double who offers him the gift of forgetting sad memories. It is apparent that the ghost tempts him, and Redlaw, blinded by the idea of living without the past, accepts the offer and forgets the traumatic events in his life, including his sister’s death. However, he is now forced to bestow this gift on the people he meets. The gift ultimately proves dangerous, and those who have forgotten their troubles become indifferent towards others. Throughout the story, Redlaw is followed by a small child in rags that the double conjured up, and the child is the “growth of man’s indifference.”⁴⁶ It is only after he becomes aware of the child and its misery that he realizes no woes should ever be forgotten because even the saddest moments make life worth living. It is not clear whether Redlaw gains all of his memories back at the end of the story, but since he admits his failure, he is at least able to return memories to those he has met.

A striking characteristic of Dickens’s ghosts in these two stories is their human form. The strong emphasis on their appearance suggests their connection to the world of humans, which is needed for their reliability. In other words, they must be authentic

⁴⁵ Dickens, “Christmas Carol,” 24.

⁴⁶ Charles Dickens, *The Haunted Man and the Ghost’s Bargain*, in *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Books*, 388.

because the messages they bear are of utmost importance. Scrooge indeed recognizes his long-dead business partner by "... his pigtail, usual waistcoat, tights and boots; the tassels on the latter bristling, ... his coat-skirts ... the hair upon his head."⁴⁷ Of course, Scrooge does not believe Marley's ghost because there is no reason for him to believe. As far as he is concerned, he is in no need of a moral lesson. As opposed to Scrooge, Redlaw is immediately aware of the supernatural entity, especially because the ghost has "an awful likeness of himself"⁴⁸ and is "dressed in the gloomy shadow of his dress."⁴⁹ It is not only the appearance that the two men share, but also the awareness of the past because the ghost speaks Redlaw's thoughts: "I bear within me a Sorrow and a Wrong. Thus I prey upon myself. Thus, memory is my curse; and, if I could forget my sorrow and my wrong, I would!"⁵⁰ Here, the double embodies Redlaw's wish to forget, and the two engage in a conversation as if they knew each other for a very long time. The double says exactly what Redlaw wants to hear, which puts him into the position of a tempter. However, what Redlaw wants is not immoral or evil, but it will bear consequences that the spectral double already knows.

Crucially, then, Dickens's ghosts haunt the living because it is their ghostly obligation as well as a moral responsibility. In fact, Marley's ghost and Redlaw's double take the role of realists and show the protagonists that there exists a world beyond their knowledge, a world that is forgotten or overlooked. As it was observed by Hay above, Dickens's stories show that the world is haunted by the society's ghosts,⁵¹ and it is the ghosts and spirits who notice that. Of course, Hay's use of the collocation is metaphorical because the ghosts stand for the corruption of human race that needs to be readdressed.

Money, one of the means of human corruption, has been appearing in ghost fiction for quite some time, and it can be said that it is one of the most powerful tool for bringing the dead back to life. Indeed, many ghost stories are based on mishandling property or wrongfully assigned inheritance,⁵² which results into an arrival of the traditional restless ghosts. Such ghosts were once people who treasured their earthly possessions to such an extent that even death could not prevent them from leaving it,

⁴⁷ Dickens, "Christmas Carol," 19.

⁴⁸ Dickens, *Haunted Man*, 338.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 338–339.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 342.

⁵¹ Hay, *History of the Modern British Ghost Story*, 62 (see p. 15, n. 43).

⁵² For more stories concerning ghosts and inheritance, see Saki's "The Soul of Laploshka," M. R. James's "The Treasure of Abbot Thomas," and Margaret Oliphant's "Old Lady Mary."

and if they were avaricious while they were still alive, their treasure or inheritance gave them one more reason to return back. However, since greed has always been considered one of the seven deadly sins, money could also acquire qualities of a cursed object. Therefore, there are two types of ghosts who frequently appear in ghost stories that concern treasures and property: those who return to protect their possessions from their relatives or other intruders; and those who had too much and were unwilling to give it to the poor, which is why they are being punished in Purgatory. This is case of Marley's ghost, since he "is doomed to wander through the world ... and witness what [he] cannot share, but might have shared on earth."⁵³ Interestingly, however, Marley is not tied to his property, but his property is firmly attached to him. Wherever he goes, the chain and boxes go with him, reminding him of the superficial life he had led.

Certainly, "A Christmas Carol" revolves around money. For Smith, Dickens's preoccupation with property can be explained by his awareness of the dangers of capitalism. So, when Marley appears, he "makes visible what capitalism tries to render invisible,"⁵⁴ that is, the oppression of the 'unseen' lowest class. The ghosts and spirits who appear throughout the story facilitate the communication with the invisible, and force Scrooge to see what he ignored. Whereas Marley shows the consequences of capitalism on himself and Scrooge, the following spirits show its consequences on the society through Scrooge's past, present, and future.

The Three Spirits seem to move in a completely different realm from Marley's. Despite the fact that Dickens uses both terms 'ghosts' and 'spirits' in "A Christmas Carol," it is apparent that the three visitors are of the divine kind. They are far more powerful than Marley because they are able to travel through time and space without being noticed. Of course, this results from the fact that they are a part of Scrooge's consciousness. The first spirit is the Spirit of Christmas Past, which is why Dickens presents it as a hazy figure that cannot be defined or perhaps remembered. Old and young at the same time, the creature is as elusive as past itself: "... now a thing with one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs, now a pair of legs without a head, now a head without a body..."⁵⁵ The entity seems to keep changing its shape but also remains the same, just like Scrooge who sees himself grow from a small, alienated boy to an old, bitter man. By contrast, the Spirit of the Christmas Present grows old and weary, and so

⁵³ Dickens, "Christmas Carol," 22.

⁵⁴ Smith, *Ghost Story*, 36.

⁵⁵ Dickens, "Christmas Carol," 28.

does the festive mood. At first, he is a merry giant with a green robe, evoking the true Christmas spirit. However, he also bears within himself the other side of Christmas, Ignorance and Want. Hidden beneath his robe, they stay unnoticed by those who are too preoccupied with themselves to see them. By far the most terrifying of the spirits is the Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come because it presents itself as a silent figure in a black shroud, a presage of Scrooge's bleak future.

The spirits take Scrooge to see the corruption and poverty across England, which is ultimately related to the invisible power of capitalism. The poor are like a disease to be avoided, but it is the society that renders them so. Of course, the journey that Scrooge takes with the spirits is his personal moral lesson, but it is evident that the spirits' efforts are universal. Scrooge, who initially fears poverty and treats the poor as ghosts, learns that money does not determine one's 'humanness.' For instance, throughout his trip with the Spirit of Christmas Present, Scrooge visits several families that prove their humanness even without them knowing. The sailors, the miners, as well as the Cratchits show that people can live through their hardships and still retain their joy, and that is what makes them human. In fact, they seem more human than Scrooge who surrounds himself with darkness.

In essence, Dickens shows that even people can be ghostly while they are alive, and it is their indifference that makes them so. Money, the ultimate symbol of power, becomes the reason for Scrooge's living. It can be said that when Scrooge meets Marley, he also meets his future. The future might be closer than it looks because he has been unknowingly working towards it. He lives in recluse, both his house and his counting-house resemble a dark, cold hole, and since he treasures them so much, he might as well be tied to them like a ghost. As Scott Brewster goes on to explain, "Scrooge is already haunted long before Marley appears in spectral form,"⁵⁶ through "his endless commerce with his late partner."⁵⁷ This is also supported by the fact that Scrooge's business still operates under the name Scrooge and Marley like it did seven years before. It is evident that Scrooge's miserliness makes him a ghostly figure in the world of the living.

Like Scrooge, Redlaw is haunted from the very beginning. Not only does he look like a haunted man, with "his sunken brilliant eye; his black attired figure, ... his

⁵⁶ Scott Brewster, "The Genesis of the Victorian Ghost Story," in *The Cambridge History of the Gothic*, ed. Dale Townsend and Angela Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 225.

⁵⁷ Brewster, "Genesis of the Victorian Ghost Story," 225.

grizzled hair hanging, like tangled sea-weed,”⁵⁸ but he also thinks of himself that way. The spectral double arrives for Redlaw’s spiritual journey at whose end he must recognize that being a haunted man is of no use, and that he should be concerned with how the society could be improved. The double is indeed an unconventional spiritual leader since he drags Redlaw through the plan of his own invention, which will traumatize him even more than his past. He thus makes Redlaw see what it means to be truly haunted. Now, Redlaw is the perfect haunted man, since the gift he was given haunts other people as well:

I am infected! I am infectious! I am charged with poison for my own mind, and the minds of all mankind. Where I felt interest, compassion, sympathy, I am turning into stone... I am only so much less base than the wretches whom I make so, that in the moment of transformation I can hate them.⁵⁹

Redlaw’s transformation is complete. With his ghostly look and his newly acquired ‘gift,’ he walks around the city as a ghost he always considered himself to be. The chaos that he brings is just another projection of his chaotic mind. The spectral double was supposed to liberate him from his misery, but he becomes haunted by the thought of what he has lost. The destitute child, Redlaw’s elusive companion, represents the consequence of the society that lacks empathy. Treated like a stranger by Redlaw, the child remains distant and isolated until Redlaw becomes fully conscious of it.

The child creates a parallel to Redlaw because his transformation forces him to remain in recluse so that he will not infect others. Through his isolation he realizes what it feels to be invisible. Instead of turning to his friends who would have helped him overcome his fears, he chose the easiest path and made a deal with the supernatural forces. Like the ghosts and spirits in “A Christmas Carol,” the spectral double of Redlaw has a seemingly good intention. He is Redlaw’s helper, but also his saboteur. It is apparent that Dickens’s ghosts and spirits are not evil, but they do reveal their diabolical side every now and then, to reprimand the sinners. They want to warn against the shadows of the future, but since they know that Scrooge and Redlaw are not scared so easily, they must employ harsh measures. In a way, both Scrooge and Redlaw are the living dead who gave up on life a long time ago. The ghosts’ purpose, therefore, is to exorcize them back to life.

⁵⁸ Dickens, *Haunted Man*, 325.

⁵⁹ Dickens, *Haunted Man*, 370.

3.2 Their Spectral Tactics

For Harry Stone, Dickens's "A Christmas Carol" shows a journey "from the prison of self to the paradise of community."⁶⁰ This can be applied to both Scrooge and Redlaw, however, because they indeed acquire empathy for the people around them. Originally prisoners of their own fears, they become one with the community. Certainly, the apparitions guide the protagonists through a transformation at whose end they meet their better selves. The only truly traditional ghost is the ghost of Marley since he remains mainly passive. He does not control Scrooge's consciousness like the other Spirits, but rather functions as a bad omen. Redlaw's ghostly double is quite different from the three Spirits and Marley's ghost. He instigates the action of the story by imitating Redlaw's speech and his appearance, and for this reason Redlaw willingly undergoes his spiritual journey. Another way of thinking about Redlaw's double is to consider him as an alter-ego because he might as well be just an illusion that Redlaw himself created.

It can be said that both Scrooge and Redlaw estranged themselves. This estrangement can be considered both Freudian as well as literal. When it comes to Freud, estrangement lies in not recognizing the self (Freud uses his story with a looking-glass to prove that), and thus feeling displaced. Indeed, Redlaw and Scrooge have forgotten about their former selves, their past selves, which made them into what they are now. Pathetic, sad, and fearful of anything that does not bear fruits of profit. The last mentioned seemingly applies more to Scrooge, but since Redlaw no longer considers any human relationships profitable, it could be applied to him as well. Their estrangement is also literal in the sense that they voluntarily spend their days brooding in their dark abodes, contemplating the humanity and its burdens, poverty and death. In the eyes of Scrooge, these two concepts may as well be grouped together because his isolation, that is, his estrangement, symbolizes the fear of death. This is what he sees when he looks around. Therefore, his counting house is like a refuge from the outside world.

For Scrooge, the world outside is haunted, whereas the inside of his house is meant to be a safe space. What he does not realize, and what the ghosts make him realize later on, is that it can also be the other way round. The sanctity of his house is disrupted by Marley, the one who is able to see beyond Scrooge's established ways of

⁶⁰ Harry Stone, *Dickens and the Invisible World: Fairy Tales, Fantasy, and Novel-Making* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 125.

thinking, his own truth. Smith notes that “Scrooge ... comes to inhabit a rather different kind of present than hitherto,”⁶¹ suggesting that Scrooge has established his own reality. Still, his reality is an illusion, a wall built up in his childhood due to his traumas stemming from poverty.

Then, if Freud’s strict interpretation of ghosts is to be employed, Marley could be considered Scrooge’s spectral double. When he appears to Scrooge in his own house, Scrooge asks him: “Who are you?”⁶² Oddly enough, Scrooge remembers what Marley looks like because when he thought he saw somebody in his house prior to the supernatural encounter, he thought of Marley. The question, then, perhaps refers to the nature of the white figure in front of him. It could also refer to the estrangement from the self. Marley’s response to Scrooge’s question, “[a]sk me who I was,”⁶³ is suspicious. Of course, the ghost introduces himself, but at the same time, the whole scene is evocative of Marley asking Scrooge to ask himself who he was. Scrooge’s past self is radically different from the present one, which is a result of a long process of forgetting. When Scrooge and the first Spirit revisit Scrooge’s past, he sees his old friends and relatives. His former fiancée, Belle, is seen reproaching young Scrooge for his greed: “You fear the world too much, ... I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master-passion, Gain, engrosses you.”⁶⁴ Indeed, it was gain that built the imaginary walls around Scrooge and made him a haunted man without his knowledge, and only after the spirits show him his past does he finally recognize himself.

By his statement, Smith unknowingly points out the difference between Scrooge and Redlaw. While Scrooge lives in the present, be it a present that is different from that of his fellow humans, Redlaw lives in the past. However, this past must be equaled to his sorrows, because he cannot even imagine the time before his sister’s death. His trauma is still so vivid that nothing could possibly help him overcome it, except for an illusion of a new reality. This is given to him by the spectral double, the mysterious mediator between the conscious and the unconscious. His house is where the past resides, and also the place where the double takes its shape—out of the shadows of the past. Instead of tearing the imaginary haunted house down, as in Scrooge’s case, Redlaw’s double decides that the best way to stop Redlaw’s repetitive behavior is to exaggerate his condition to such an extent that he would be irritated by it. In a way,

⁶¹ Smith, *Ghost Story*, 40.

⁶² Dickens, “Christmas Carol,” 19.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

Redlaw seeks death through his death instinct, and the double enables him to see what it feels like. He is not dead by any means, but rather, the double endows him with a truly ghostly state, the long-awaited illusion. If ghosts imply death, then Redlaw is the most unusual ghost of all. He is not a ghost that brings the past back to life, but rather, he is a ghost that has lost his past, which is a very cruel fate because he no longer knows what is ought to be lamented. His ‘infectious’ disease, the memory loss, is what makes him ‘dead’ inside.

Therefore, the ghosts and spirits that Dickens uses function as moralists who show the protagonists their full potential. Redlaw’s double, the ghost of Marley, and the Three Spirits bring memorable moral lessons. In essence, they reveal the part of the society that is forced to remain invisible, shunned and *haunted*. Throughout the stories, Scrooge and Redlaw realize that by renouncing the world and distancing themselves from the community they have become ghostly, and the only way to overcome this is to make themselves visible to those who need it the most. This ghostliness can also be related to the capitalism that permeates Dickens’s stories. In *The Haunted Man*, the supernatural entity helps Redlaw see that it is better to prevent more miseries than to keep reliving them. Scrooge, too, reevaluates the events of the past that shaped him. At the end of “A Christmas Carol,” he swears that he “will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future,”⁶⁵ which suggests that the spirits awaken his sense of humanity he had lost. The same can be said about Redlaw, who is now fully aware of the fact that memories are essential to one’s life. He is haunted no more, as the fears of the past transform into an energy that helps him live on.

4. Le Fanu’s Spectral Animals: “Green Tea” and “The White Cat of Drumgunniol”

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, an Anglo-Irish writer, greatly contributed to the success of the ghost story genre. He started as a lawyer, but his main interest was writing. His first ghost story, “The Ghost and the Bone-Setter,” was published in *Dublin University Magazine* in 1838. His writing career did not stop there, however. The following years he provided readers with more ghost stories and novels, which promoted the sensation fiction.⁶⁶ By far the most notable ghost story collection is *In a Glass Darkly* (1872)

⁶⁵ Dickens, “Christmas Carol,” 77.

⁶⁶ Andrew Maunder, ed., *The Facts on File Companion to the British Short Story* (New York: Facts on File, 2007), 237.

which consists of stories that are linked by a reappearing character, Dr Martin Hesselius. Together with Algernon Blackwood's John Silence and William H. Hodgson's Thomas Carnacki, Le Fanu's Dr Hesselius numbers among the best psychic detectives appearing in the British ghost story.

Le Fanu is, above all, author of several novels, such as *Uncle Silas* and *The House by the Churchyard*. These novels, as Peter Penzoldt points out, follow the Gothic literary tradition whose influence is also reflected in his ghost stories.⁶⁷ Furthermore, his stories are "stories of guilty conscience"⁶⁸ written with "psychological accuracy in the description of neurotic disease."⁶⁹ There is no question that Le Fanu takes the role of an occult detective himself because his stories, especially those with Dr Hesselius, move between a psychological and a supernatural investigation. Each story in *In a Glass Darkly* is framed by a narrative by the aforementioned detective who aspires to provide a logical key to the case, even if it means attributing the supernatural sightings to an opening of a supernatural portal.

Apart from Dr Hesselius' investigations, Le Fanu's stories tell of terrible crimes, unrectified injustices, warnings from the Great Beyond, Faustian bargains, and bad omens, all of which are associated with the supernatural and the folk tales. Guilt, as observed by Penzoldt above, is present in most of Le Fanu's stories. It can take a shape of an apparition and serve as a mirror in which the mind of the protagonist is reflected. As in the Gothic novels, the supernatural can reveal the beast within man, that is, his deepest desires and past crimes. Perhaps not surprisingly, Le Fanu used it quite literally because his stories are full of animal-beasts that reveal the condition of the human mind.

In general, the apparitions that haunt Le Fanu's stories are nowhere near good. They either seek revenge or are atoning for their past sins. Their malevolent nature creates suspense, and it is usually at the end of the story that the reader finds the reason behind their ghostly status. Thematically, Le Fanu's stories involve all kinds of hauntings, but for the most part, he embraces the image of an evil apparition. That is, his apparitions are evil even though they may have been morally good when they were alive. It is also undeniable that Le Fanu's supernatural world is incredibly dangerous, and one can never be certain about the intentions of the entities that reside that world.

⁶⁷ Penzoldt, *Supernatural in Fiction*, 82–83.

⁶⁸ Penzoldt, *Supernatural in Fiction*, 77.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

Anything that seems to display supernatural qualities must be treated with respect, and, more importantly, it must not be underestimated.

In view of Le Fanu's homeland and its richness of folklore, it is understandable that the local superstitions and beliefs become his starting point. Apart from the usual vampires and ghosts, his stories have animals which become the representatives of the supernatural world. The story "Borrhomeo the Astrologer," for instance, presents a corrupt monk who seeks the *elixir vitae* and makes a pact with Satan. The Satan himself, half-beast and half-man, is accompanied by a deformed dog resembling a fiend. This demonic helper then follows the monk while he fulfills the task the Satan had given him. A strange kind of a dog with a "terrible grin, and eyes that [glare] with the peculiar green of canine fury"⁷⁰ appears also in "Squire Toby's Will." The dog is supposed to be the embodiment of the soul of Toby, a cruel squire who tormented his own sons. Naturally, Le Fanu does not shy away from animals infrequently associated with the supernatural, and gives them the power to shock the protagonist in spite of their seemingly innocent appearance. In "The Watcher," which is another story from Dr Hesselius' casebook, Captain Barton is 'watched' by a spectral sailor who wants to take revenge on him. However, in the end, it is not the ghost who scares Barton to death, but rather, an owl that represents the power of the supernatural world.

"Green Tea," published in *In a Glass Darkly*, also takes the fullest advantage of a spectral animal. The story, based on one of the letters sent by Dr Hesselius to Professor Van Loo of Leyden, concerns a man who is followed by a spectral monkey. At the beginning of the story, Dr Hesselius meets Mr Jennings, a kind, but timid clergyman. He notices that Mr Jennings has the tendency to look at the ground "as if his eye followed the movements of something there."⁷¹ After some more encounters, Mr Jennings confides to Hesselius that he has been seeing a demonic creature for over three years. It first appeared when Jennings was reading about "the religious metaphysics of the ancients"⁷² while enjoying large quantities of green tea in the evenings. Initially, the creature kept its distance, but throughout the years it has become evil and manipulative. At the end of the story, Jennings slits his throat, and it is not clear whether he does it so that he would be finally released from the curse or because he is forced to do it by the creature that haunted him for such a long time.

⁷⁰ Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, "Squire Toby's Will," in *Green Tea and Other Ghost Stories* (New York: Dover Publications, 1993), 39.

⁷¹ Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, "Green Tea," in *Green Tea and Other Ghost Stories*, 3.

⁷² Le Fanu, "Green Tea," 15.

Le Fanu's story "The White Cat of Drumgunniol" (1870) also features a malevolent animal, but less exotic and more related to his homeland's folklore. At the beginning of the story, the unnamed narrator states that this is "a story of a white cat very different from the amiable and enchanted princess who took that disguise for a season,"⁷³ referring to the famous fairy tale in which a princess, transformed into a cat by a spell, helps a young prince fulfill his father's wishes. Indeed, the white cat represents the very opposite of a princess, since whenever it is seen, somebody dies. The narrator meets Dan Donovan, whose family has been plagued by this white cat for over eighty years because of his ancestor's own doing. Dan believes that this cat is a soul of a woman named Ellen Coleman who his grand-uncle once loved but chose not to marry. The cat has been following the members of the Donovan family ever since, and Dan knows that one day he will see it as well.

It can be said that it is helplessness that makes both Mr Jennings and Dan Donovan so terrified. Their persecutors, a black monkey and a white cat, are an encapsulated horror. Their maliciousness and unpredictability prove to be, quite literally, out this world. Still, they have a lot in common with humans, and the duality that these animals offer, perhaps, became an inspiration to Le Fanu. According to Aaron Worth, Le Fanu is drawing on the theories of René Descartes (1596–1650) who maintained that animals are like machines since they have no consciousness and therefore no soul.⁷⁴ Thus, Le Fanu's stories are in fact " 'machine stories,' ... in which consciousness, untethered, animates beast-machines and corpse-machines."⁷⁵ In other words, dead bodies and animals—considered empty—are given a soul and with it also a certain amount of power.

Of course, animation of corpses is nothing new, and the theme itself is the most frequent one in ghost stories where the protagonists are haunted by something that is supposed to be thoughtless, motionless, and more importantly, dead. Le Fanu's spectral animals, on the other hand, are by no means empty since they have become vessels for the souls of the dead or even Satan himself. Such animals, then, are able to acquire abilities that are both human and supernatural, which makes them more powerful than humans. They have a thinking of their own and manipulate, take revenge, and kill.

⁷³ Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, "The White Cat of Drumgunniol," in *Some Things Dark and Dangerous*, ed. Joan Kahn (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 12.

⁷⁴ Aaron Worth, ed., introduction to *Green Tea and Other Weird Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), xx.

⁷⁵ Worth, introduction to *Green Tea and Other Weird Stories*, xxi.

In connection with Le Fanu's apparitions, some mention should be made of the animals' appearance. The spectral monkey in "Green Tea" is somewhere between an illusion and an apparition, and when it reveals itself to Mr Jennings in the omnibus for the first time, only its red eyes are visible. Then, slowly, the rest of the black body appears. Nevertheless, its shape seems to change throughout the story and at night, the monkey has a "halo that resembles a glow of red embers, . . . which accompanies it in all its movements."⁷⁶ The embers definitely help to evoke the imagery of evil, and in combination with the demonic grin that the monkey has, it seems that Mr Jennings encountered a creature that wants to make his life a living hell. It even "interrupts [him] with dreadful blasphemies,"⁷⁷ and tempts him to commit suicide in front of his relatives. By far the most terrifying characteristic of this animal is its omnipresence since Mr Jennings continues to see it even with his eyes closed.

In comparison to the "Green Tea," the story of "The White Cat..." is a creation that seems to have more traditional roots. The story is based on the legend of a banshee, a spirit that brings the message of death. However, as Dan Donovan himself says, "the banshee seems to be animated with an affectionate sympathy with the bereaved family to whom it is hereditarily attached, whereas this thing has about it a suspicion of malice."⁷⁸ Certainly, the cat not only brings the message of chaos and death but seems to cause it as well. The white cat is by no means the ugliest creature of the array of animals that Le Fanu offers, but it still has that demonic quality that makes one feel anxious. It has "green eyes as big as halfpennies,"⁷⁹ growls like a beast, and its victims die "scared, silent, broken-spirited."⁸⁰ It is apparent that both the monkey and the cat share the skill of absorbing the life force of their victims.

Now, unlike the monkey, the white cat is tied to the family because of the history, and its actions are motivated by a personal revenge. The cat resembles a true Gothic ghost, that is, a ghost that embodies a family's past sins and forces its members address the hidden feelings of guilt. Their guilt stems from a death of a young lady who died of broken heart—a harm inflicted on her by Dan Donovan's grand-uncle, a brute. By choosing a richer bride, the grand-uncle gave preference to a strong and rich clan, which became his downfall since he was condemned to have no children at all. The soul

⁷⁶ Le Fanu, "Green Tea," 19.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁷⁸ Le Fanu, "White Cat of Drumgunniol," 26–27.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

of the lady, then, takes shape of a beast-machine that reminds the family of the grand-uncle's beastly actions. The repetitive disruption of the family circle, a curse that the Donovan family must bear, is the ultimate punishment for someone who preferred a strong family line over love. The cat, a she-devil, has the power to destroy a clan as well as its wealth, so now the once a prosperous farm of Drumgunniol lies in ruins, and the existing members of the Donovan family await their bitter end.

Admittedly, the monkey that Mr Jennings sees is supposed to be demonic, but the reason for its arrival is not at all typical. Le Fanu uses green tea as the mediator between the world of humans and the supernatural realm. The existence of a parallel world has been studied by Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) whose work inspired the Le Fanu's story. As Jim Rockhill explains, Swedenborg thought that "spirits could attach themselves to those among the living who share common vices or to those unfortunate enough to have merely opened a channel of communication with them."⁸¹ These spirits are called 'correspondents' because the spiritual world and the world of humans correspond to each other.⁸² So, Le Fanu's spectral animals offer a mirror through which the spiritual world can be experienced. The term 'mirror' is used especially because it captures the relation between the spirits and those who see them. Consequently, the spectral monkey is much more than just an accidental demonstration of the supernatural world because it seems to correspond to the beast within Mr Jennings. Swedenborgian theory also reveals the origin of the white cat. It follows the Donovan family because its members are related to the grand-uncle, meaning that they, too, could potentially share his beastly behavior—the common vice.

The spectral monkey in "Green Tea" as a symbol for the realization of lost faith and a sexual desire is universally accepted,⁸³ and one does not need to wonder why. Since it is purely subjective, that is, it presents itself only to Mr Jennings, it must be associated with him only. The more he tries to forget the animal, the more malignant it becomes, which is exactly what happens to repressed thoughts. The emphasis on the monkey's fiendish quality—it walks on all four, has a black fur and a long tail, speaks a strange language—creates an image of an animal possessed by a devil who knows Mr Jennings' thoughts. Despite the fact that Dr Hesselius is called, he seems to have no role

⁸¹ Jim Rockhill, "Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu," *The Green Book: Writings on Irish Gothic, Supernatural and Fantastic Literature*, no. 16 (2020): 31, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48582361>

⁸² Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heaven And Its Wonders And Hell*, trans. J. C. Ager (New York: The American Swedenborg Printing and Publishing Society, 1916), 65.

⁸³ Penzoldt, *Supernatural in Fiction*, 77.

in Mr Jennings' troubles, and he can only watch his patient's slow descent into madness. In comparison to other Le Fanu's stories, Mr Jennings has to tackle the supernatural creature all alone. At the end of *Carmilla*, Laura is finally freed from the vampire when her father and his companion attack Carmilla in her grave. In "The Watcher," too, the ghost-sailor is seen by everybody and not just Captain Barton. Nevertheless, the fact that the apparitions are visible to the community and not just the protagonists seldom offers any consolation.

To return to the idea of the Cartesian machines. Le Fanu makes it apparent that the animals were swallowed by "the enormous machinery of hell,"⁸⁴ which suggests their partaking in some collective mischief. Now that the spectral animals have the ability to see into their victims' conscience, they use it to their advantage. They play with their victims like with their prey, but their nature is far more diabolical because they play for their souls. It is their victims who are losing the game, since they are harmed physically as well as mentally. For instance, Dan Donovan already seems to be a broken man despite never having seen the cat. Just the thought of it makes him miserable, and thus the cat remains triumphant. The ultimate trophy, however, is still Dan Donovan's grand-uncle whose funeral became the symbol of the cat's victory. During the wake, his body is placed on a bed in an empty room, and yet, the white cat finds its way to it. Perhaps out of malice and pride, it sits on the dead man's chest just where his poisoned heart is, as if to indicate that his machinations have finally come to an end.

This repetitive ritual makes the cat look like a demonic wind-up toy. Again, this can be considered quite literally, as the animals themselves are machines operated by Hell. Notwithstanding this point, the animals that the reader sees in the stories have their own consciousness, and one might only wonder whether it comes from a soul of dead person or a devil. Either way, the animals seem to be the result of a process called the transmigration of souls, in which a soul is transferred to a body, in this case a body of an animal. With a newly acquired purpose and a 'soul,' they are prepared to inflict harm because that is all they can do. In addition, Le Fanu deliberately chooses animals that are known to have a more diabolical side. Apes, though playful, resemble humans in shape as well as in intelligence, and cats are as cunning as they are sociable. It is their appearance that reveals their true origin, however. Le Fanu makes his spectral animals

⁸⁴ Le Fanu, "Green Tea," 23.

misshapen and terrifying in accordance to physiognomy. They are literal beasts, but only because humans made them so.

The monkey, too, resembles an evil automaton. Like a human child it demands attention, and when the attention is not given, it is ready to perform its demonic tricks. Such image of a sinister, but playful monkey reminds readers of the famous monkey-toy with cymbals. The toy, a relatively new invention, was not known to Le Fanu, but he nevertheless managed to capture the unease that monkeys are able to arouse. As observed, the monkey perhaps reflects the beast within Mr Jennings because it appears everywhere he goes. For this reason, Victor S. Pritchett calls Le Fanu's apparitions "blobs of the unconscious that have floated up to the surface of the mind."⁸⁵ The term 'blobs' perfectly describes the ambiguity of Le Fanu's spectral animals. The monkey and the cat both seem to be the spirits of the spiritual realm that have returned to earth with the help of Hell, but they also resemble hallucinations brought to life through guilt or collective guilt.

To conclude, the stories of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu show an interesting combination of folklore and pseudoscience. Like Blackwood and Hodgson, Le Fanu has created a character of an occult detective Dr Hesselius who investigates the supernatural phenomena. The physician is, however, quite helpless against the demonic monkey in "Green Tea." Still, the case of the 'green tea' becomes Dr Hesselius' personal investigation of anything that is able to transcend the world of humans and the supernatural world. In "The White Cat..." it is the inexhaustible possibilities folklore that are explored rather than pseudoscience. In many respects, the story is an example of how an animal can become the means by which humans can finish their earthly business, such as a revenge. In both of the stories, Le Fanu sees spectral animals as machines powered by Hell. They correspond to the beast in man, and thus take the shape of beasts. Simply put, Le Fanu makes his spectral cats, dogs, and birds malevolent because they are a mirror to the soul of those who see them.

⁸⁵ Victor S. Pritchett, *The Living Novel* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1946), 96.

5. Mary Braddon's and Marjorie Bowen's Spectral Women: "The Cold Embrace," "Her Last Appearance," and "The Housekeeper"

Marjorie Bowen, one of the major female writers of the turn of the 20th century, is remembered especially for her historical novels and biographies. She was, however, also very productive in the field of supernatural.⁸⁶ Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Bowen's older contemporary, was most famous for her novel *Lady Audley's Secret*, and her ghost stories published in the magazine *Belgravia*.⁸⁷ Like Charlotte Riddell, Margaret Oliphant, Amelia B. Edwards, and scores of other women writers of ghost story, Braddon and Bowen also combined the supernatural with domestic realism. Before dealing with their stories, it is necessary to take a look at women's ghost story tradition. There is no question that women's ghost stories are frequently scrutinized for their hidden clues about the condition of women in Victorian and Edwardian England, and it is rightfully so.

Women's ghost stories are frequently haunted by the "phantom Angel,"⁸⁸ as Lynette Carpenter and Wendy K. Kolmar note in their introduction to *Ghost Stories by British and American Women*. Of course, they refer to Virginia Woolf and her critical take on the poem "Angel in the House."⁸⁹ In fact, the poem itself very much defines the frequent tropes in ghost stories. Dead woman becomes either an 'angel' or a demon, depending on what the cause of her death was. If the death was caused by a husband or a fiancé, the image of an angel disappears completely. Instead of finding an angel in the house, the husband finds an evil spirit. Instead of heaven, he finds hell. This is not to insinuate that every ghost story concerns such a ghostly relationship, but many of them do.

Women ghost story writers were also writing about money. Margaret Oliphant's "Old Lady Mary" follows the ghost of Lady Mary who realizes that keeping money and not giving it to those who need it proves unrewarding. Riddell's "Old Mrs Jones," on the other hand, shows how a woman's inheritance can turn the husband into a murderer. Besides ghosts and money, women also employed vampires, revenants, and other beasts. Still, some of the women's ghost stories are predisposed to symptomatic reading, and so the aesthetic value and the entertainment are suppressed. But even so, such

⁸⁶ Robert Hadji, "Bowen, Marjorie," in *Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural*, 50.

⁸⁷ Everett F. Bleiler, "Braddon, Mary," in *Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural*, 51–52.

⁸⁸ Lynette Carpenter and Wendy Colmar, eds., introduction to *Ghost Stories by British and American Women: A Selected, Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), xxv.

⁸⁹ Carpenter and Colmar, introduction to *Ghost Stories by British and American Women*, xxv.

reading between the lines has brought many interesting theories. For instance, Emma Liggins focuses on the haunted houses in women's ghost stories. She differentiates them from those of Le Fanu and M. R. James, since they have a better ability to reflect women's unique position in the household. Such theory ultimately refers to the fact that "middle class woman ... might well have felt herself to be apparitional."⁹⁰ This female apparition, an invisible creature that is either literal or figurative, frequently accompanies men in women's ghost stories.

Naturally, Bowen and Braddon wrote about manipulative women as well, so to say that their stories involve only wronged women ghosts would be misleading. However, there is just something about a death of a young, beautiful, naïve woman and her vengeance-seeking ghost that is satisfactory, especially because her invisibility—a curse forced upon her by men—now finally proves to be useful when haunting those who hurt her. As Scarborough points out: "Nowadays even the spectral women are setting up to be feminists and have privileges that would have caused the Gothic wraiths to swoon with horror."⁹¹ What Scarborough emphasizes is the fact that modern spectral women are as free in their movement as their male counterparts. They are unafraid of their former husbands and actively participate in their destruction.

Bowen's ability to see ghosts as humans is definitely one of her characteristics. The ghosts appearing in her stories usually confuse the living and make them think that they are alive. The difference is completely gone in the story "The Crown Derby Plate" in which a woman visits an old mansion in order to acquire an antique plate. She meets the inhabitant of the house, a shadowy figure of a creepy, eccentric woman who seems to be on the verge of dying. The 'main' ghost of the story, however, is supposed to be the man buried in the woman's garden. For this reason, Tibbetts uses the collocation "living ghost"⁹² to describe the characters that haunt Bowen's fiction. This can be said about her ghosts as well because they look surprisingly life-like.

Tibbetts observes that Bowen herself did not enjoy "the gliding lady, who floats, always with tapping of high heels, and rustling of silk, through so many well-worn old legends of so many well-worn old houses."⁹³ She does employ old decadent mansions, but their state usually reflects the mental state of its members. Another interesting

⁹⁰ Carpenter and Colmar, introduction to *Ghost Stories by British and American Women*, xxv.

⁹¹ Scarborough, *Supernatural in Modern English Fiction*, 104.

⁹² John C. Tibbetts, "Marjorie Bowen and the Third Fury," in *Horror Literature from Gothic to Post-Modern: Critical Essays*, ed. Michele Brittany and Nicholas Diak (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2020), 62.

⁹³ Tibbetts, "Marjorie Bowen and the Third Fury," 63.

characteristic of Bowen's ghost stories is the historical accuracy. Considering her career as a writer of historical novels, one must not be surprised. Her ghosts do not wear white dresses, but rather, they appear in the dress of the period. Braddon, too, employs various ghosts in her stories. Still, the most frequent ghost is the ghost revealing a crime. Whether it is a murder, suicide, or a plain death, her ghosts are certain to appear in front of the people they loved. This does not necessarily mean that these people loved them back, for Braddon has also some vengeance-seeking ghosts who want justice. As opposed to Bowen's ghosts, Braddon's spectral women are extravagant and wear exactly the type of garment Bowen held in contempt. Both Bowen and Braddon, however, preoccupy themselves with women's death. Troubles with money, emotional abuse, and the man's infidelity is what precedes it.

5.1 When Ophelia Awakens

In relation to women's death in ghost stories, Victoria Margree fittingly quotes Poe: "the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world."⁹⁴ However, she uses it only to debunk the frequent trope. Both Dickens and Le Fanu wrote about female ghosts and illusions, but since these authors have already been explored here, it is fitting to consider such themes in women's fiction as well. Oddly enough, death by drowning is one of the most popular ways of creating a woman ghost or a spectral revenant, and it is present also in Bowen's "A Persistent Woman" (1927). But it is Braddon's "The Cold Embrace" that takes the advantage of the drowned female revenant the most.

Braddon's "The Cold Embrace" (1860) concerns a ghost of a woman named Gertrude who haunts her fiancé. The man, a flirtatious German artist, leaves for Italy only a few months after the engagement and stops responding to Gertrude's letters. Meanwhile, Gertrude is to be wed to another, but instead she drowns herself in a river. Upon returning from Italy, the artist learns of this, and flees again to eliminate his feelings of guilt. The ghost of Gertrude, however, is still with him, obeying the words he told her on the day of their engagement: "The cold earth would not hold you from me; if you loved me, you would return, and again these fair arms would be clasped

⁹⁴ Victoria Margree, *British Women's Short Supernatural Fiction, 1860–1930: Our Own Ghostliness* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 71.

round my neck as they are now.”⁹⁵ Ultimately, his wish is fulfilled, and spectral Gertrude keeps her arms around the artist’s body when nobody is around. The embrace eventually kills him, although it is also possible that her constant presence made him paranoid and weary and he was thus exhausted to death by her.

According to Margree, “the Victorians believed drowning to be a non-violent form of death that would preserve an attractive woman’s looks.”⁹⁶ Such statement holds true especially when one considers the painting *Ophelia* by John Everett Millais. Margree uses the painting to criticize the idea of a beautiful suicide, and suggests that Braddon’s story reflects the uneasiness about this obsession.⁹⁷ While it is true that Braddon’s story can be read as a cry against the romanticizing woman’s death, it does not mean that was her sole intention. For Braddon, it was about what comes after this supposedly ‘beautiful’ death, not how death was perceived by others.

In this story, water is used as a symbol for rebirth, but it is a rebirth that defies the definition of what it means to be alive. Gertrude is by no means alive; however, her ghost lives on to haunt the artist. Of course, the bond between water and death or rebirth has been a strong one, and, moreover, it is not restricted to British literature only. In Slavic folklore, Rusalki were said to be spirits of women who drowned because of an unhappy marriage.⁹⁸ La Llorona, a spirit from the Latin-American folklore, supposedly appears by rivers and ponds because she drowned her children and then herself.⁹⁹ The reason for mentioning these spirits is to show that water was behind the creation of many supernatural entities, which is exactly why Braddon uses it as a basis for her story.

Crucially, then, water seems to be a portal to a supernatural world. Jean Pierrot, who concerns himself primarily with French decadent literature, elaborates on the idea of the world below the surface of water, and combines the images of water and mirrors: “Like water, mirrors conceal mysterious depths behind their smooth reflecting surfaces. The space perceived in mirrors creates a universe that is the twin of the real universe,

⁹⁵ Mary Braddon, “The Cold Embrace,” in *Anthology of Fear* (London: Marshall Cavendish Partworks, 1988), 2.

⁹⁶ Margree, *British Women’s Short Supernatural Fiction*, 83.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 80–84.

⁹⁸ Kerry Sullivan, “Rusalka: The Mythical Slavic Mermaid,” *Ancient Origins*, last modified September 30, 2016, <https://www.ancient-origins.net/myths-legends/rusalka-mythical-slavic-mermaid-006738>.

⁹⁹ Robert Lopez, “La Llorona: The Terrible Truth About Mexico’s Weeping Woman,” *Ancient Origins*, last modified May 25, 2019, <https://www.ancient-origins.net/myths-legends-americas/la-llorona-0011960>.

but also a different and strange one.”¹⁰⁰ Pierrot’s description epitomizes the strange world which can be accessed only through water. Of course, his theory relates more to the universal fascination with water reflections rather than to the water’s supernatural potential. Still, he presents the idea of an alternative universe found in water, one might say a spectral one. The supernatural potential of water is also noticed by Gaston Bachelard who says that “water gives beauty to all shadows, it gives new life to all memories.”¹⁰¹ It is perhaps for this reason that women, including Gertrude, throw themselves into the water. They remember their loved ones, and want their spirit to be with them forever despite all the woes they have suffered.

The river, which was supposed to be Gertrude’s grave, becomes a matter out of which her spectral self is born. It is associated with the feminine element,¹⁰² and it thus can be said that Braddon’s dead woman returns to the element where she can reach her true potential. This is not to say that Braddon celebrates the death of a woman, but rather criticizes the fact that only after her death Gertrude finally became visible. The term is used metaphorically, for of course she is a ghost and her time on earth is limited. Nevertheless, she is finally able to express herself and therefore force her fiancé to acknowledge her. The artist ignored Gertrude when he was abroad, he refused to read her letters and even had an affair with an Italian woman. When he returns from Italy, Gertrude ascertains him about her presence by putting her cold arms on him, and through this she finally obtains what she deserves—his attention.

5.2 Abuse, Poison, and Freedom

Braddon’s “Her Last Appearance” (1876), also shows a death of a beautiful woman, but the death is caused by her husband. Jack Stowell, an actor and a “cold-hearted rascal with a fine person,”¹⁰³ advantageously marries Barbara so that he could acquire a better position in the acting business. There is also Philip, Barbara’s admirer, who kills Jack so that Barbara could survive. However, her health is already deteriorating, and at the end she dies of consumption. She gives Philip her last goodbye after ‘her last appearance’ at

¹⁰⁰ Jean Pierrot, *The Decadent Imagination, 1880–1900*, trans. Derek Coltman (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), 212.

¹⁰¹ Gaston Bachelard, *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, trans. Edith R. Farrell (Dallas: The Pegasus Foundation, 1983), 66.

¹⁰² Hans Biederman, *Dictionary of Symbolism*, trans. James Hulbert (New York: Facts on File, 1992), 375.

¹⁰³ Mary Braddon, “Her Last Appearance,” *Belgravia Annual*, December 1876, 62.

the theater, wearing a “shroud-like drapery, which had so painfully reminded [Philip] of death.”¹⁰⁴ Thus, the title of the story also refers to Barbara’s condition. She appears to be wearing a ghostly garment emblematic of her mental state, a garment in which she is seen for the last time.

The story is ultimately tragic as it captures a woman’s slow death. A death that was unjustified and unnecessary. Barbara’s destiny relates to a bigger issue, a domestic abuse. Like Gertrude, she was used by a man dear to her heart. Throughout the story, Braddon again utilizes the theme of invisibility. To Jack Stowell, Barbara was just a key to his success. Her ‘ghostliness’ reflects who she has become, a woman broken by the cruelty of her husband. Although Barbara’s ghost is the only supernatural entity in the story, Braddon made it apparent that Jack behaves like a devil in human form. At first, he seems to be the perfect gentleman, but his soul is corrupt. The evil that resides him becomes the center of the story, just as Braddon intended, and the ghost of Barbara is not to be feared but to be understood. Indeed, it is the suffering he causes that evokes fear. Perhaps not surprisingly, Braddon makes Jack a common man in order to show that one’s appearance does not always reflect the evil inside.

As Eve M. Lynch notes, “the supernatural spirits in [Braddon’s] ghost stories remind us of what is being suppressed socially and repressed psychologically in Victorian society.”¹⁰⁵ The latter very much captures Barbara’s case. She is an apparition in her own household, but every time she appears at the theater, her acting skills are superior to those of her husband. Perhaps for her compassion, her ghost never sought revenge. Of course, her brutish husband is already dead when she dies, but it is evident that she has always sought peace rather than conflict. The ghost of Barbara thus forms an exception to the female revenant trope since her ghost is not spiteful. She is, nevertheless, a sad image of a society that does not acknowledge those who stand in the shadows of their husbands. Barbara, being “the innocent, helpless victim of hard and bloody men,”¹⁰⁶ is seen as a supernatural martyr. In many respects, “Her Last Appearance” is similar to Bowen’s story “The Avenging of Ann Leete” (1923). There, a woman named Ann Leete is killed by one of her suitors. Although in her ghostly form, she accompanies the one who avenged her, and at the end they are united in death. Like

¹⁰⁴ Braddon, “Her Last Appearance,” 72.

¹⁰⁵ Eve M. Lynch, “The Spectral Politics: The Victorian Ghost Story and the Domestic Servant,” in *The Victorian Supernatural*, ed. Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett, and Pamela Thurschwell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 74.

¹⁰⁶ Braddon, “Her Last Appearance,” 71.

Barbara, Ann is a compassionate ghost. She is not malevolent, because the revenge has already been exacted.

Interestingly, Braddon's and Bowen's spectral women who seek to punish those who hurt them do it in a way characteristic of the tormentors themselves. They use their own words against them and make them question the decisions they have made in the past. For instance, in "The Cold Embrace," it is the artist's engagement vow that is appropriated by Gertrude and used as an asset. He wanted Gertrude to return back to him after her death, and she eventually did. Such despicable, cunning revenge is perhaps more apparent in Bowen's ghost story "The Housekeeper" (1919). The spectral woman appearing in the story, however, does not die of drowning but of poisoning. She returns to clean her house once again, but this time, it is to make her former husband, Mr Sekforde, confess her murder. By placing things in certain way, she makes him recognize her old habits and acknowledge her presence. She thus takes revenge on him by utilizing the assets he ignored while she was alive. His house becomes an uncanny place where the past and the present merge, and where something hauntingly familiar looms.

Jane Sekforde, the murdered wife, "was a Scotswoman, a shrew, thrifty, honest, plain, and a good housekeeper."¹⁰⁷ These characteristics are contrasted to Mr Sekforde's second wife who he married a few months after the death of Jane. The current Mrs Sekforde is even worse than his first wife, which makes Mr Sekforde appreciate what he has lost. To Mr Sekforde, Jane was invisible while she was alive. Her efforts to keep the house in order went unnoticed because he made her an invisible 'housekeeper.' The ghost appears "dressed in a grey tabinet fashioned like the dress of an upper servant,"¹⁰⁸ which suggests her association with the family but also her inferiority. Her ghost is, above all, a reminder of an unappreciated and underestimated woman. In many respects, Jane forces Mr Sekforde to embark on a journey to the past. In fact, the whole house returns back to the state when Jane was alive, making it a spectral haunted house. Only Mr Sekforde who realizes its hauntedness, because he has lived through it already.

For Lynch, there is a connection between ghosts and servants, because "like the spectral spirit, servants were outsiders in the home secretly looking in on the forbidden

¹⁰⁷ Marjorie Bowen, "The Housekeeper," in *The Bishop of Hell and Other Stories* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2006), 50.

¹⁰⁸ Bowen, "Housekeeper," 55.

world of respectability.”¹⁰⁹ Although Jane is Mr Sekforde’s wife, she is treated like a servant. While it is true that her position as a wife enables her to control the household to an extent, the respect her husband had for her is gone. As it was already mentioned, she uses her supernatural powers to return her house to a former state. This feeling of *déjà vu* causes Mr Sekforde to question his sanity, as he knows very well that all the servants all gone because of the family’s poverty. Naturally, the desolate state of the house reflects the decaying relationship of the current Mrs Sekforde and her husband. They hate each other for a reason emblematic of their social standing: money. The house is therefore a shadow of its former glory, which is definitely the consequence of Mr Sekforde’s second matrimony.

The strong emphasis on Jane’s invisibility is the center of the story. Only after her death she becomes visible, that is, her actions are finally noticed by her husband. Despite the fact that Mr Sekforde lives on, he becomes the apparition of the household. Like the German painter in Braddon’s “The Cold Embrace,” Mr Sekforde becomes tormented by his own mind, which is exactly what the ghost of Jane wants. It is evident that the supernatural world in which Braddon’s and Bowen’s spectral women found themselves put them into an advantageous position. They were not allowed to rule the natural world, so they appropriated the supernatural one. Nonetheless, they are still able to affect the lives of those who were once related to them. Perhaps the greatest paradox that accompanies Braddon’s and Bowen’s spectral women is the fact that men wanted to hurt their wives and lovers one way or another, but after the women die, they seem to be far more comfortable with their spectral selves.

In conclusion, Braddon’s “The Cold Embrace” and Bowen’s “The Housekeeper” show how women are able to use their ‘invisibility’ to their advantage and follow those who hurt them emotionally. They are spectral revenants who come to punish their loved ones through a *hauntingly familiar* experience. In “The Cold Embrace,” Braddon employs the symbol of water as a means of a supernatural rebirth. The ghost of Gertrude returns upon earth stronger than ever before, and with her newly acquired sense of herself she makes her impudent fiancé miserable. In “The Housekeeper,” too, the supernatural world gives Jane the power to express her wrath. For Bowen and Braddon, a life destroyed is a life acquired, meaning that woman’s death seems more harmful to the man than to the woman. This is, perhaps, too cruel to say, but ghost

¹⁰⁹ Lynch, “Spectral Politics,” 67–68.

stories of these two writers prove exactly that. “Her Last Appearance” is perhaps the least hopeful because the abused Barbara can find peace only in death. In these three ghost stories, women are either poisoned, abused, or commit suicide by drowning. However, it is the cruel, ignorant men who suffer.

6. Oscar Wilde and the Displaced Ghost of Dorian Gray

Oscar Wilde, an Irish-born author, had a good eye for the weird and the decadent. In his works, beauty and ugliness go hand in hand, following the decadent theory of seeing and celebrating that which must remain unnoticed. His works are one of the reasons why “in the popular imagination the Victorian is in many ways *the* Gothic period.”¹¹⁰ Wilde’s preoccupation with death and decay that is so typical of the Gothic writers, is used to provoke existential questions. His *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), especially, is a display of Gothic elements as seen through the 19th-century’s point of view.

The Gothic influences are also present in “The Canterville Ghost” (1887) which brings together humor and the ghost story tradition. The story starts when an American family moves into a mansion in the English countryside. The place is haunted by Sir Simon de Canterville who was imprisoned in the mansion because he killed his wife. Sir Simon is the classic Gothic ghost—he is there to haunt. This Gothic stereotype is met with the Americans who are mostly oblivious to his mischiefs, which results into Sir Simon having existential crisis: “I must rattle my chains, and groan through keyholes, and walk about at night, It is my only reason for existing.”¹¹¹ Certainly, Wilde’s story puts a comic spin on the haunted house theme, since it is about a ghost who is haunted by a family and not the other way around. Wilde employs a ghost who is tired of being a ghost and thus challenges the idea of how a ghost should think and behave.

For Tamás Bényei, “The Canterville Ghost” becomes “a mock repository of all the clichés connected to haunting.”¹¹² Indeed, Sir Simon is the haunted man of the story despite his initial role of a ‘court’ ghost. Through him, Wilde destroys the idea that a ghost’s appearance must be appropriate to his supernatural nature. For instance, Sir

¹¹⁰ Alexandra Warwick, “Victorian Gothic,” in *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*, ed. Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy (London: Routledge, 2007), 29.

¹¹¹ Oscar Wilde, “The Canterville Ghost,” in *The Canterville Ghost, The Happy Prince and Other Stories* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 211.

¹¹² Tamás Bényei, “Ghosts in the Age of Spectrality: The Irrelevance of Ghosts and Late Victorian Ghost Stories,” in *Fantastic of the Fin de Siècle*, ed. Irena Grubica and Zdeněk Beran (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 22.

Simon has many elaborate costumes for his ghostly performances, but the American family remains indifferent. It is evident that for the inhabitants of the late 19th century, a medieval ghost is not enough. The ghost, then, is losing his own purpose in a modern society in which one's sins, sins that used to make the perfect Gothic ghost, no longer produce an interesting ghost. This is not to say that all ghosts are affected by their past and look evil, but rather, it is their spectrality that speaks for itself. Ghosts reveal the secrets of the past, and that makes them who they are: white masses, more or less immaterial, that are in need of listeners. The secret that they must reveal defines them, and at the same time, binds them. Wilde obviously ridicules the kind of apparition that is bound by some supernatural contract.

Bényei further notes that “the idea ... of a content-less or non-referential ghost, is structurally not unlike the decadent idea of art for art's sake,”¹¹³ suggesting that ghosts do not need to have a purpose. They may appear as a decoration that does not need to be understood. Sir Simon is nowhere near reflecting the unconscious of the American family. He is simply there, fulfilling his mission to haunt. His ghostly appearance is not enough to scare the family away. The reason for mentioning Sir Simon's hardships is to point out the dullness that the traditional ghost may bring. It is perhaps for this reason that Wilde chose a less obvious apparition in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890).

The Picture of Dorian Gray rightfully belongs to Wilde's most treasured works. It revolves around a young man, Dorian Gray, who falls in love with his own portrait. The portrait reflects his beauty and youth, two qualities that are related to one another in the minds of the Victorians. Basil Hallward, the author of the painting, and Lord Henry both reflect this ideology, influencing Dorian to such an extent that he wishes that the portrait would age instead of him. This wish is a result of him being caught between the two men's vices, idolatry and pessimism, according to which his life is to be conducted. Although Basil's and Harry's personalities may represent two different poles in that one is seemingly an angel and the other is a fiend, they are both equally diabolical and manipulative. Unbeknownst to them, Dorian begins to change, though it is a change that is not perfectly visible. Suicide of Sibyl Vane, Basil's murder, and other crimes add wrinkles and deformities to the painting so that it becomes the only evidence of Dorian's corrupt soul. Through Dorian's unchanging appearance, the novel comments

¹¹³ Bényei, “Ghosts in the Age of Spectrality,” 31–32.

on the myth of one's appearance, especially the one purporting that "wicked people were always very old and very ugly."¹¹⁴ Dorian's body is neither old nor ugly, but he himself is wicked, which makes him the ideal villain.

The painting, however, changes into the most grotesque version of Dorian. It has a "face of a satyr,"¹¹⁵ and the rest would become equally repulsive: "There would be the wrinkled throat, the cold, blue-veined hands, the twisted body."¹¹⁶ The man *inside* the portrait resembles a fiend, locked away from the world. The purple coverlet with which Dorian covers the painting is also symbolic. It is suggested that it "served ... as a pall for the dead,"¹¹⁷ but contrary to its use, Dorian's double underneath "would still live on."¹¹⁸ It is forced to bear the consequences of Dorian's actions, which makes it different from other evil doubles, such as Hyde from *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Hyde*. Here, the double is an inanimate object that comes to life through a wish. Still, its life is restricted to an old schoolroom in Dorian's house, a kind of a vault where Dorian's past resides. It is therefore the most suitable place for the things that must be lost and forgotten.

While it is true that both Dorian and his double are not literal ghosts, they are nevertheless gifted with supernatural abilities. One does not age at all, the other ages too quickly. Dorian, the haunted man, is not visibly ghostly, but his soul is. This raises a question of whether a man who has a ghostly soul can be called a human. It is no longer found within his body but in the painting, his physical body. He is as elusive as a ghost. He walks the earth as if the natural laws did not apply to him, but in contrast to a traditional ghost, he does not cause a commotion. He does, however, haunt others with his beauty which is admired as much as it is hated. Another difference between Dorian and other ghosts appearing in British literature is that he is beautiful. Of course, it is his painting that is ugly and ridiculous, but it is Dorian the world sees. Except for his beauty, there is nothing remarkable about him, that is, appearance-wise. He has no horns, no demonic eyes, and he is not clad in white sheets. The reason for mentioning these qualities is that they frequently appear in ghost stories and supernatural stories of all kind, and thus the reader has an idea of what a ghost looks like. Indeed, Dorian

¹¹⁴ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ed. Robert Mighall (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 209.

¹¹⁵ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, 150.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

is far different from Sir Simon, but they do have something in common—the fact that their supernatural significance stays unnoticed by the mortals.

Despite the fact that Wilde's Dorian is not visibly affected by the supernatural, it is evident that he stands somewhere between the natural and the supernatural world because of his elusiveness. As it was observed in the paragraphs above, Wilde never specifies what Dorian is and how the painting came to bear the demonic features. He may be compared to a devil, but by his appearance he is an angel. His identity becomes a mystery to those around him, especially since some know him only by 'Prince Charming,' a nickname that is associated with good rather than evil. His actions are also misleading because he enjoys visiting his friends' parties by day and opium dens by night. The contrasts between day and night, the night being the time when the supernatural and all that is corrupt and depraved thrives, are made distinct. London's underworld, a place where phantoms and shadows reside, provides a platform for Dorian's dark deeds. He compares London's gloomy streets to "the black web of some sprawling spider,"¹¹⁹ which evokes the imagery of a dark labyrinth. There, he seeks the "harmony of soul and body,"¹²⁰ although he is becoming aware that he would never reach such state because his soul and body have been cut in two by his wish.

London's underworld creates a parallel to *the* underworld, that is, the place for the souls of the dead. Initially, it was Dorian's haven, but it turned into a place where even he—the haunted man—feels ostracized. Now, he has two nicknames that reflect his dual nature, 'Prince Charming' and "the devil's bargain."¹²¹ The latter is only a reference to his mysterious, never-changing appearance. In fact, a devil's bargain is the only possible explanation for Dorian's supernatural transformation. At some point, his portrait reveals what Dorian would never be able to reveal and proves to be more real than Dorian himself. The inanimate thing acquires a life, while Dorian's starts to deteriorate. This is not to say that he is wasting away, but rather, that he is losing the ability to feel compassion, sympathy, and any other emotion that differentiates a man from a monster. Paradoxically, visiting London's underworld is Dorian's only way of feeling human again.

Considering Bényei's theory, Dorian is far from a content-less ghost, although he may look like so. In spite of his human appearance, Dorian becomes a ghost of his

¹¹⁹ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, 177.

¹²⁰ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, 13.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 180.

former self. His portrait, originally a creation of art for art's sake, acquires a meaning. It absorbs Dorian's past sins, while he stays without a trace. In essence, the painting will come to refer to their spectral relationship. By 'spectral' is meant the invisible bond that the two share, a bond that throughout the story remains a secret and is revealed only at the end. Basil, the first person allowed to see the altered version of the painting, is murdered by Dorian with the intention of keeping the spectral relationship alive.

The story focuses on Dorian's "visible presence,"¹²² which suggests that only the visible matters. Dorian's crimes are indeed real and its consequences visible, but his connection to them is debatable. He did contribute to Sibyl's suicide and stabbed Basil to death, but then again, these crimes remain unseen in a sense that they are never brought to light. In his *Labyrinths of Deceit*, Richard J. Walker concerns himself with duality, and in relation to Dorian Gray he states that "the private self, the portrait, is the buried self, whereas the public self, the dandy, is clearly visible."¹²³ The surface, that which is seen, is Dorian's greatest advantage because his public appearance does not change. At the same time, it does not refer to any of his heinous crimes. He still looks as pure as he looked when he met Lord Henry and Basil.

Mirrors and reflections are essential to Wilde's story. Dorian, like Narcissus, is enamored of his own reflection. For Wilde, Dorian's portrait captures the diabolical nature of mirrors. A mirror serves as a practical tool for seeing one's appearance, but it can also reveal a magical world. Dorian calls his portrait "the most magical of mirrors,"¹²⁴ because of its abilities to show what he would look like if sins affected his appearance. Through the demonic bargain, the painting has transformed from a passive object of art into an active organism. It is needless to say that mirrors are supposed to show accurate reflection of their viewers. Considering that Wilde's fictional 19th-century society believes that appearance and personality correspond to one another, it can be said that Dorian's portrait is fairly accurate because it offers an impeccable reflection of reality. Although both Dorian and the portrait are supernatural, it is Dorian who is the greater oddity here. This is supported by the fact that normal mirrors are no longer satisfactory to him. For instance, he breaks the mirror given to him by Lord Henry, proclaiming that "his beauty had been to him but a mask, his youth but a

¹²² Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, 13.

¹²³ Richard J. Walker, *Labyrinths of Deceit: Culture, Modernity and Identity in the Nineteenth Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 107.

¹²⁴ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, 103.

mockery.”¹²⁵ Real mirrors show only his mask whereas his portrait shows his true self, which makes it more accurate than any other mirror.

Wilde clearly states at the beginning of the novel: “All art is at once surface and symbol. Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril. Those who read the symbol do so at their peril.”¹²⁶ These warnings foreshadow the plot of the novel as well as instruct the future readers about the futility of art. Despite these warnings, characters in the novel find themselves interpreting art and giving it a meaning. Thus, the art acquires a life of its own. For Dorian, the painting shows his own life, and the man inside it is a symbol of his depravity. Dorian is like a blank sheet of paper, however, because his life leaves no marks on the surface of his body. His appearance refers to nothing, while his painting refers to everything. In a way, it speaks for his actions. As Bényei observes, “ghosts are traditionally associated with truth and authenticity,”¹²⁷ which is why they are so frequently used. Dorian, however, is not truthful or authentic. It is the painting itself that tells the truth about Dorian’s life. Again, the painting is not a literal ghost, but it bears spectral qualities, such as being a symbol for a secret.

Isobel Armstrong, the author of *Victorian Glassworlds*, points out the paradox of mirrors and glass by stating that “glass ... holds contrary states within itself as barrier and medium.”¹²⁸ The ‘barrier’ and ‘medium’ very much correspond to Wilde’s ‘surface’ and ‘symbol.’ These contradictions are present throughout *Dorian Gray*, and Wilde is thus right in choosing a mirror to communicate these contradictions. Ordinary mirrors reflect Dorian’s mask, while his supernatural mirror, the one hidden in the schoolroom, shows a contradictory state. The painting is a medium that is able to transmit information, while at the same time it serves as a barrier. It does not allow Dorian to alter it, as if Dorian stood on the one side of the glass and the double in the painting on the other side of it. While it is true that the painting does change, the changes cannot be reversed. For instance, after he parts with Hetty, an innocent girl, he hopes that he will be able to return the painting to its original, pure state. This parting is a result of Dorian’s self-reflection, meaning that he is well aware of the fact that the girl is naïve and he does not want to use her. However, when he goes to see the painting, it exhibits “no change, save that in the eyes there was a look of cunning, and in the mouth the

¹²⁵ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, 210.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹²⁷ Bényei, “Ghosts in the Age of Spectrality,” 17.

¹²⁸ Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and the Imagination, 1830–1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 11.

curved wrinkle of the hypocrite.”¹²⁹ There is no question that his fate is sealed in the painting, the seal being the demonic pact as well as the barrier of the painting.

Upon seeing the painting, Basil Hallward does not recognize his own creation because it is not his own creation anymore. This feeling of estrangement, then, is mutual because the author feels estranged from its painting, and the painting from its author. It watches Dorian kill Basil, the only witness to the spectral bond, and then it sees Campbell getting rid of the body. They become partners in crime, the painting practicing power over Dorian rather than Dorian over it. His stabbing the painting at the end of the novel symbolizes a rebellion, an overthrowing of a cruel authority as well as breaching the demonic contract. However, the contract entails much more than Dorian expected. Through the pact, he became immortal, but this immortality is valid only as long as his painted image exists. It can be only debated to what age Dorian would live to be, or what would happen if Sibyl’s brother really managed to kill him.

It is this mysterious immortality that contributes to Dorian’s ghostliness because he would be able to survive all his friends and family, and his youth would haunt the future generations. According to Paul Oppenheimer, Dorian’s ghostliness also lies in his repetitive behavior, which is “the confirmation of his earthly permanence, of his release from human limitations.”¹³⁰ Indeed, in terms of temporality, Dorian stands above earthly limitations. He transcends time, and in comparison to Lord Henry who is already “wrinkled, worn, and yellow,”¹³¹ he stays youthful despite his history of drug use. Moreover, Dorian is aware of the presence of the demonic in the world, a secret knowledge that could make him powerful. He knows of the portrait’s powers, but there is only limited understanding of it. He takes the fullest advantage of breaking the rules, which makes him immune to recognizing the difference between right and wrong. In combination with his vanity it becomes a problem since his existence depends on it. He is used to having no limitations, and the painting is the only residue of an authority. When he stabs the painting, the barrier breaks and the imaginary glass shatters. This results into a union of the mind and the body, and Dorian can haunt no more.

As can be seen, *Picture of Dorian Gray* offers an insight into a man’s corrupted soul through a painting. Dorian Gray’s transformation from an innocent boy to a vain, depraved man is presumably, one of the most interesting transformations in literature.

¹²⁹ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, 211.

¹³⁰ Paul Oppenheimer, *Evil and the Demonic: A New Theory of Monstrous Behavior* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 18.

¹³¹ Wilde, *Dorian Gray*, 205.

Of course, ‘boy’ and ‘man’ are used only figuratively here, because Dorian never grows old. There is nothing visibly supernatural about him, which is the novel’s point. In many ways, *Dorian Gray* explores the ways supernatural can thrive. It revolves around two supernatural entities, if you will, and their relation to one another. As contradictory as it may sound, Dorian and his portrait are two but at the same time one. He lives his life through the painting, and the painting lives through him. This spectral bond is a result of Dorian’s wish to remain youthful, but its origin is still more or less mysterious. For Dorian, the painting becomes a mirror in which he can see himself as an old, grotesque man, while his own appearance remains unchanged. Mirrors in general fulfill an important role in Wilde’s novel because they show different stages of Dorian’s life. At first, they are his obsession, but they quickly turn into an object of hatred. Dorian’s elusive and ghostly identity, located somewhere between an ordinary mirror and his supernatural mirror, haunts him but becomes him.

7. M. R. James and Ghosts of Religion: “Oh, Whistle, and I’ll Come to You, My Lad,” “Count Magnus,” and “A View from a Hill”

Although Montague Rhodes James devoted his life to the study of theology and medieval literature, he is now remembered for the work he himself regarded as the result of a spare-time activity. James’s greatest influence was Le Fanu whose ghost stories he studied and republished, which helped him to establish himself as an expert in the field.¹³² Considering his academic background, it becomes apparent that James was more interested in the process of creating a chilling ghost story than in spiritualism. Nevertheless, in the preface to *Ghost Stories*, James states that he is “prepared to consider evidence and accept it if it satisfies [him].”¹³³ This open-minded approach to life is a complete opposite to what is presented in his work.

His stories feature men who are preoccupied with logic and dismiss ghost stories as nonsense. On the other hand, there are also fanatics who believe in the superiority of the supernatural and want to use it to their own advantage. Through such narratives, James himself wants to draw attention to the fact that both preoccupation with logic and the Faustian obsession with the supernatural can prove dangerous in the end.

¹³²Julia Briggs, “James, Montague Rhodes,” in *Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural*, 233.

¹³³ Montague R. James, preface to *Ghost Stories* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 6.

In addition to the themes mentioned above, James's tales manifest such a wide range of Gothic features that one finds a pattern. The stories are set in old mansions, libraries, and mysterious cathedrals. The protagonists are antiquarians, archaeologists and scholars who are fascinated by old architecture and gems that will bring their misery about. Such objects are usually guarded by ghosts, and their sole purpose is to destroy whoever tries to steal their treasure. But it is not just the inanimate objects that cause the chaos. Vampires, frogs, and octopus-like monsters also seem to be very popular with James. The stories show that "the old forms of supernatural are still respectable, still viable,"¹³⁴ as James deliberately chooses demonic creatures that seem to remember the creation of the world.

Nevertheless, the spine-chilling atmosphere is not caused by the ghost's presence but by its absence. Strange noises, shrieks in the distance, and scratch marks on the door are characteristic of James's supernatural visits. These "nameless horrors"¹³⁵ then produce greater fear because the victims are left to question their preconceptions about the supernatural. Moreover, James's ghosts never talk and thus remain surrounded by the air of mystery. It also is important to say that the term 'ghost' is used loosely here, because the protagonists are haunted by something they cannot see. As opposed to other authors of ghost stories, James's undead are indefinable because he masterfully blurs the lines between vampires and ghosts, as well as between ghosts and shapeless entities. However, it should be mentioned that most of the entities that haunt the protagonists are the embodiment of a devil. There are not lost souls that are waiting for someone to understand them and pity them. Not surprisingly, such maliciousness is also present in the stories of Le Fanu.

In his stories, James utilizes ghosts and apparitions that appear as hazy figures reflected in windows, as black masses, shadows, and hallucinations. In addition to sight, James uses other senses with which the presence of supernatural entities can be perceived. For instance, Somerton, an antiquary appearing in the story "The Treasure of Abbot Thomas," perceives a "hideous smell of mould"¹³⁶ in the air, when 'something' undead stands behind his door. Indeed, he is persecuted by the ghost of the abbot Thomas—a parsimonious clergyman whose treasure Somerton has stolen—and his demonic, ugly companion with tentacles who is supposed to protect the treasure. In

¹³⁴ Jack Sullivan, *Elegant Nightmares: The English Ghost Story from Le Fanu to Blackwood* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978), 78.

¹³⁵ Sullivan, *Elegant Nightmares*, 71.

¹³⁶ Montague R. James, "The Treasure of Abbot Thomas," in *Ghost Stories*, 106.

general, James's supernatural creatures that seem to be corporeal evoke creatures one finds in weird fiction. They are somewhere between a demon and a strange animal that is hideous and deformed.

7.1 Ghosts and Losing Religion

According to James himself, "the stories themselves do not make any very exalted claim,"¹³⁷ suggesting they were created to entertain. Oddly enough, the protagonists appearing in these stories have received attention from quite a few literary critics. Julia Briggs, interested mainly in Freudian analysis, claims that James's protagonists "qualify as flats because of their total predictability."¹³⁸ David Punter calls them "cardboard,"¹³⁹ and Andrew Smith points out their simplicity as well.¹⁴⁰ There is, however, one significant disposition that makes them memorable, and that is their radical skepticism. They are desirous of finding evidence about the previous generations but never think about whether the objects should be found. At some point, they dismiss the locals who believe in superstitions and the mysterious tales that surround such objects. The folklore, then, is a veil that blinds the protagonists because they are unable to raise above their skepticism and admit there are, in fact, supernatural forces they cannot explain. After all, James's stories are not set in the cities where much of the tradition was lost, but rather in the countryside, which only accentuates the protagonists' disharmony and estrangement from its inhabitants.

When James was writing his stories, spiritualism was at its height, and the need to explain the inexplicable was stronger than ever before. James's protagonists also seek to answer questions that have not been answered. However, they do not do it deliberately by sitting at a round table and invoking the spirits, but rather by collecting artefacts. Ghosts have never been the main focus of the protagonists' endeavors, but they do come as a by-product of their curiosity. Indeed, it is always their hunger for knowledge that initiates the arrival of a ghost. And whether it is an innocent interest in antiquities or a fascination with dark powers, James's stories show that curiosity can kill.

¹³⁷ Montague R. James, preface to *Ghost-Stories of an Antiquary* (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1964), viii.

¹³⁸ Briggs, *Night Visitors*, 135.

¹³⁹ Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*, vol. 2, *The Modern Gothic* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 86.

¹⁴⁰ Smith, *Ghost Story*, 181.

Nowhere is it more obvious than in “A View from a Hill” (1925). The story concerns Fanshawe who acquires strange binoculars through which dead people can be seen. He thus becomes interested in the local Gallows Hill where he sees a scaffold with a dead body. When Fanshawe decides to explore the hill on his own, he is “convinced that there [is] someone looking down on [him] from above—and not with any pleasant intent.”¹⁴¹ It is later revealed that the binoculars used to be in possession of an eccentric man named Baxter who was fascinated by the dark powers and craved “to look through a dead man’s eyes.”¹⁴² He boiled the bones of the dead men from the Gallows Hill and filled the binoculars with the liquid. The ghosts then possessed Baxter’s body and broke his neck. All of this happened long before Fanshawe’s arrival, and so when he visits the Gallows Hill, he has no idea about how dangerous the binoculars are. The ghosts, then, lurk above him to see whether he has the same intentions as Baxter once did, that is, the desecrating of the Gallows Hill graveyard.

With this in mind, it seems sensible to consider the story’s moral side, as does Zoë L. Imfeld. The author, who looks at James’s stories from a strict perspective of theology, states that “a ghost story is seen to be haunted not by an unknown demon, but by man as fallen.”¹⁴³ Not only does this agree with the Christian myth of the Fall, but it can also be related to Freud and the uncanny. Baxter is the ‘fallen man’ of the story because he wanted to possess qualities that are not human. In essence, his inquisitiveness did become the source of his fleeting success but also the cause of his downfall. It is also undeniable that Baxter is, in many respects, the image of a former Christian man who followed the wrong path.

Like other James’s stories, this one also presents two extremes: a scholar who renounced his faith a long time ago, and a man for whom the existence of supernatural is everything. As for the theories about the connection between the myth of the Fall and the uncanny, one must admit that even though these two men differ in their beliefs, they are related through their desire for knowledge. However, Baxter also embodies Fanshawe’s fear of being seen as uneducated. This description provides a key to the universal theme found in James’s stories. His scholars distance themselves from the ways of the past and no longer believe in ghosts because they would never degrade themselves to the level of the villagers. And as Imfeld observes, James makes use of the

¹⁴¹ Montague R. James, “A View from a Hill,” in *Ghost Stories*, 308.

¹⁴² James, “View from the Hill,” 311.

¹⁴³ Zoë L. Imfeld, *The Victorian Ghost Story and Theology: From Le Fanu to James* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 93.

‘Doppelgänger tradition,’¹⁴⁴ which further supports the idea that the spooks in James’s fiction make the protagonist readdress the guilt about leaving such ancestral beliefs behind. In fact, these spooks may not be supernatural at all. They may be the ‘fallen men,’ like Baxter.

In “Oh, Whistle, and I’ll Come to You, My Lad” (1904), the reader meets Parkins, an old professor, who finds a whistle hidden in old Templar ruins. In spite of the mysterious warning on it, he blows the whistle and invokes a demon that travels with the wind. However, as “a convinced disbeliever in what is called the ‘supernatural,’”¹⁴⁵ he does not give the strange occurrences much thought. His profession only endorses the unyielding attitude on the subject: “I hold that any semblance, any appearance of concession to the view that such things might exist is equivalent to a renunciation of all that I hold most sacred.”¹⁴⁶ Certainly, Parkins is excessively confident about his beliefs, which accounts for his skepticism. Logic is all he has and, like many of James’s protagonists, he is also eager to make momentous discoveries in the name of science. After all, he would have never found the whistle had it not been for his curiosity about the history of the ruins. Perhaps unsurprisingly, at the end of the story he is almost smothered by his own bed sheets which have become possessed by the demon he himself unknowingly summoned.

The title of the story refers to the folk song written by the Scottish poet Robert Burns. In the folk song, a woman swears that if her lover whistles at her, she will follow him anywhere despite all the obstacles.¹⁴⁷ James’s story can be considered an alternative consequence of such whistling. Parkins whistles, but what he receives is nowhere near a ‘human lover.’ The demon easily overcomes all the obstacles since he belongs to the supernatural realm, that is, he is everywhere but at the same time nowhere. As Carol Potter in her *Knock on Wood* notes, people in the past associated the whistling sound of the wind with evil because no scientific explanation could be found. Whistling as such was then considered a dangerous act since it would summon the devil himself.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, Mr Parkins acquires a truly demonic companion through whistling. His educational background, however, makes him immune to folklore and superstitions, and there is no question that he sees them as backward and not worthy of his attention.

¹⁴⁴ Imfeld, *Victorian Ghost Story and Theology*, 100.

¹⁴⁵ Montague R. James, “Oh, Whistle, and I’ll Come to You, My Lad,” in *Ghost Stories*, 85.

¹⁴⁶ James, “Oh, Whistle, and I’ll Come to You, My Lad,” 77.

¹⁴⁷ Robert Burns, “O, Whistle, an’ I’ll Come to Ye, My Lad,” in *Poems and Songs*, ed. Stanley Appelbaum (1793; New York: Dover Publications, 1991), 56–57.

¹⁴⁸ Carole Potter, *Knock on Wood* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1984), 222.

As already observed, James alludes to the fact that what is meant to be hidden should not be searched for. His protagonists as well as apparitions seek the tree of knowledge with the intention to eat its fruits, which usually proves fatal. In “Wailing Well,” for instance, a small boy is strangled and turned into a vampire by supernatural creatures inhabiting an old well, a place he was strictly forbidden to visit. “Count Magnus” (1904) is also typical of James’s view on curiosity. Mr Wraxall, zealously interested in the coffin of Count Magnus, is followed and killed by the Count, now a vampire, and his devilish companion. The story also concerns the Count’s life and his unearthly endeavors as Wraxall uncovers fragments of his suspicious past. Here, the theme of curiosity and greed repeats. It is suggested many times throughout the story that Count had made a deal with the devil:

‘If any man desires to obtain a long life, ... it is necessary that he should first go into the city of Chorazin, and there salute the prince...’ Here there was an erasure of one word, not very thoroughly done, so that Mr Wraxall felt pretty sure that he was right in reading it as *aëris* (‘of the air’).¹⁴⁹

The Count has undergone what is referred to as a ‘black pilgrimage’ and gained life everlasting. Undoubtedly, the ‘prince of the air’ refers to the devil, as he has always been associated with this element.¹⁵⁰ In the countryside where Wraxall conducts his research, the tale of the Count is respected so that even the deacon who takes care of the Count’s mausoleum is hesitant to talk about him. It is obvious that the dead are a sensitive topic, especially when they have a suspicious history. Although Wraxall’s aspirations are nowhere near as high as those of the Count, he is also too inquisitive about the world around him. The story, then, becomes an exploration of human desire for power and knowledge. The Count was led astray by his curiosity about the supernatural, which transformed him into a living dead.

James’s supernatural entities are cruel. Those who manage to escape their supernatural persecutors are traumatized forever. Those who do not escape experience a very gruesome death. In some cases, the victims are mutilated beyond recognition. In “Count Magnus,” Wraxall learns of two men who, after the alleged death of the Count, went to hunt in his woods and were found dead, and “the flesh of [their faces] was sucked away off the bones.”¹⁵¹ At the end of the story, Wraxall is found mutilated as

¹⁴⁹ Montague R. James, “Count Magnus,” in *Ghost Stories*, 68.

¹⁵⁰ Peter Dendle, *Satan Unbound: The Devil in Old English Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 72.

¹⁵¹ James, “Count Magnus,” 70.

well. In “Oh, Whistle, ...” Parkins almost gets strangled, and Fanshawe in “A View from a Hill” unknowingly escapes his brutal punishment when he decides not to explore Gallows Hill any further. Baxter, Fanshawe’s predecessor, is not as lucky. The ghosts possess him like he once wanted to possess them through their powers, and force him to go to Gallows Hill where they break his neck. It is evident that James makes use of body horror as well. Frequently, the vivid descriptions of the victims are more disturbing than the supernatural creatures themselves.

Most of James’s undead bear a striking resemblance to the devil or some of his minions, which again supports the theory that the protagonists are haunted by the idea of religion. For instance, Parkins has the feeling that he is being followed by some strange figure even before he blows the whistle. In that moment, he remembers a story from his childhood and recites a part of it: “Now I saw in my dream that Christian had gone but a very little way when he saw a foul fiend coming over the field to meet him.”¹⁵² Unfortunately for Parkins, the hazy figure in the distance turns out to be the demon of the whistle, and in the following days the haunting intensifies. Like the Christian in the story, he has met a fiend without his knowledge. It is apparent that Parkins’ constant skepticism is bringing him more harm than good because the reader already knows that the figure is not human. When the demon appears at the end of the story and takes shape of Parkins’ bed sheets, Parkins sees the embodiment of his biggest fear: the possibility that there is evil out there, evil that is beyond his scope of science.

In relation to James’s fiction, David Punter claims that “behind all curiosity, according to Freud, lies the displaced sexual urge, and James’s characters do move in an entirely bachelor world.”¹⁵³ With that being said, one must admit that the similarity between James’s protagonists is more than just a coincidence. They are men (or former men) of the academia, young, unmarried. Their friends are also men who are interested in archaeology and like to collect antiquities. With the exception of small boys like in “Wailing Well,” they are all adults. These protagonists live in world influenced by their academic pursuits and therefore interpret it through the academic lens. The ghosts that haunt them reveal holes in their interpretation and make them feel desperate.

It is now entirely fitting to consider the idea of homosexuality in James’s fiction. According to Penny Fielding in her “Reading Rooms: M. R. James and the Library of Modernity,” some of the protagonists, Parkins included, are haunted by “the threat of

¹⁵² James, “Oh, Whistle, and I’ll Come to You, My Lad,” 80.

¹⁵³ Punter, *Literature of Terror*, 2:86.

homosexuality.”¹⁵⁴ While it is true that the protagonists act like celibates and may as well pretend that women never existed, the fear that the ghosts invoke is not based on the possibility of homosexuality, so much as on the religious understanding of it. They believe that they stand outside the religious world until the final supernatural revelation. The curiosity that Punter talks about can refer to any sexual encounters that the protagonists wish to experience, and the fact that they come from the modern world that has lost touch with the traditional religious values only supports this view. The outdated concept of sin is not worthy of their attention since they tend to focus only on the result of their academic research. For instance, Fanshawe simply sees churches as pieces of history to be studied. He feels no spiritual connection whatsoever, and the reasons why he visits them can thus be considered quite superficial.

According to Imfeld, “the Fall manifests itself in man as a forgetfulness of God.”¹⁵⁵ Indeed, the protagonists are oblivious to the signs of the supernatural around them because the academic world strives for perfection. So, when a supernatural entity reveals itself to the protagonists, they are reminded of the supreme authority, God. It is now important to note that James’s fictional world is based on the existence of the supernatural. The demons that appear there are not revealed to be a fraud or a random illusion, and the revelation of Jesus and the existence of Heaven and Hell are accepted. Consequently, reconnection with God is the ultimate destination that the protagonist must reach, and the sense of religion is to be acquired, not to be removed. The protagonists are guilty from the very beginning, and it is only the haunting that reminds them of that. Devoid of a sense of religion, they are the consequence of disappearing morals. Interested primarily in themselves, their need to see what should not be seen and touch what should not be touched is stronger than the respect for the object. So, to return to Imfeld’s view, James’s stories are haunted by the fallen men,¹⁵⁶ that is, by both the protagonists and the supernatural entities who fell from grace a long time ago.

From the fear of the cursed number of a hotel room in “Number 13” to “The Residence at Whitminster” where a small boy is mauled by demonic dogs, it is apparent that James’s fiction makes use of tales, legends, and superstitions. James thus presents the values of the countryside which have disappeared from the modern society, and through the traditional mode of storytelling, he criticizes the disconnection with the

¹⁵⁴ Penny Fielding, “Reading Rooms: M. R. James and the Library of Modernity,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 46, no. 3 (2000): 765, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26286073>.

¹⁵⁵ Imfeld, *Victorian Ghost Story and Theology*, 93.

¹⁵⁶ Imfeld, *Victorian Ghost Story and Theology*, 93 (see p. 50, n. 143).

halcyon days. The country people and their relation to past are compared to the academics who, contrary to their vocation, do not share the country people's respect for it. James admits that he "tried to make [his] ghosts act in ways not inconsistent with the rules of folklore,"¹⁵⁷ and such statement holds true for all of his stories because they are very much traditional, that is, they involve hauntings that the reader expects. Naturally, it is usually the academics who are either harmed or killed, which makes the people of the country people with their superstitions seem far more sensible than the scholars who know about such beliefs only from their books. For instance, in "Count Magnus," Wraxall keeps visiting the Count's coffin and eventually finds out that the coffin's engravings capture "a fiend pursuing a hunted soul."¹⁵⁸ Therefore, he sees his own future without the realizing that it is the eerie foreshadowing of the Count's arrival. In the end, Wraxall himself falls victim to the Count who he called a "picturesque figure,"¹⁵⁹ and becomes a part of the folktale he dismissed.

In many ways, the reader of James's stories experiences a clash of two worlds: the ancient world where superstitions and supernatural still affect people's beliefs, and the world of science where everything has a logical foundation. James's protagonists, non-believers, are the modern men who completely disregard the existence of the supernatural. Superstition, vastly related to religion, is reminiscent of the traditional world that is so distant to them. For Imfeld, as it is seen in this chapter, Christianity forms a base of James's fictional world. The protagonists are haunted by the ghost of the religion they lost a long time ago, and in the end, they are left to struggle with their own skepticism. And it does not matter whether it is caused by a curiosity about a certain artefact, or by obsession with the black magic, humans are guilty creatures from nature, and there is nothing that can be done.

It is for this reason that Imfeld at some point decided to use the term 'parable' in connection to James.¹⁶⁰ The strong emphasis on faith as a byword for morality is what invokes fear, and the protagonists who experience it change their views. When it comes to the moral lesson, it is appropriate to think about the result of the encounter between the undead and the protagonists. Indeed, they go through a spiritual journey at whose end they come to regret their skepticism and repent. Parkins, one of the few survivors of such supernatural encounter, does become a changed man. The reader is ascertained by

¹⁵⁷ James, preface to *Ghost Stories*, 5.

¹⁵⁸ James, "Count Magnus," 71.

¹⁵⁹ James, "Count Magnus," 68.

¹⁶⁰ Imfeld, *Victorian Ghost Story and Theology*, 95.

the narrator that “the Professor’s views on certain points are less clear cut than they used to be.”¹⁶¹ The demon of the whistle thus succeeded in making Parkins less dependent on logic and more sensitive to the supernatural. At the end of “A View from a Hill,” Fanshawe and his companion grow aware of the sanctity of the liquid inside the binoculars and decide to bury them.

To conclude, James’s ghost stories are stories of men who have accepted, or at least become aware of the existence of the supernatural. This acceptance is equaled to the acceptance of the divine, which is the ultimate destination that the protagonists must reach. It can be said that the stories show two kinds of fallen men: those who believe in the supernatural but turn away from God by using supernatural to their own advantage, like Count Magnus and Baxter, and those who have yet to reconnect with their faith. If the stories are meant to be parables, as Imfeld suggests, it is appropriate to look at them from the Christian perspective, as it is done here. The protagonists see religion as a barbarian tradition that needs to be forgotten, but the supernatural revelations make them feel guilty. That is not to say that the country people who the protagonists meet are always innocent because some of them are Christians gone astray. Summoning demons either killed them or, as in the case of Count Magnus, transformed them into creatures that would roam the world forever. They haunt the protagonists, and at the same time, serve as a deterrent example. It is evident that these apparitions can be appeased, but the protagonist’s survival is nearly always a matter of luck. James’s supernatural entities, then, help to awaken the idea of faith in the world.

¹⁶¹ James, “Oh, Whistle, and I’ll Come to You, My Lad,” 91.

8. Comparison

Works mentioned in this thesis prove that British literature is a haven for ghosts and all kinds of monsters. However, it would be unreasonable to suppose that each writer was dedicated to only one kind of a ghost because ghosts are universal. They all carry a secret one way or another, depending on the interpretation. Still, this universality, which can be considered both an asset as well as a curse, is what may be valuable. Ghosts appear in the 16th century to show their descendants that the past is not dead yet, and they appear in the 19th and early 20th century to show that it is not the past but present that is the greatest threat. There are also comic ghosts who are the opposite of the Gothic ghosts because they question their ghostly purpose. Because of this fluidity and resistance to be classified, it may be more appropriate to consider them through the following terms.

8.1 Tradition and Modernity

There is seemingly much uniqueness when the origin of the ghosts is considered. For instance, Braddon makes her spectral women come out of water and Le Fanu relies on the mysterious connection between the natural and the supernatural world. Despite the versatility, many of the ghosts mentioned here lead back to the traditional dichotomy of good and evil and of Heaven and Hell. The ghosts clearly manifest one of these traits or at least try to manifest them, which is the result of their long-lived association with death. To begin with, literary ghosts rarely represent good, because as it has been said, they remind people of death. They stand for the unwanted stage of the cycle of life, an anomaly.

The most frequent ghost in British fiction is the ghost of vengeance. Such ghosts follow in Gothic predecessors' spectral footsteps, meaning that the writers frequently reused the features of Gothic ghosts to evoke the right atmosphere. This also means that the Gothic ghost and the modern ghost are not polar opposites but rather concepts that can exist in harmony. There are thousands of fictional ghosts in British literature, and some of them are more traditional and some of them bring something new. Still, there is some truth in that the further back the ghosts go, the more they behave in accordance to folklore. Shackles, treasures, haunted houses have been used so much that they culminate in James's and formulaic use. Vengeance, a concept frequently appearing in Gothic fiction, permeates the genre of British ghost story. Thus, the Gothic core stays,

but the periphery—their appearance and powers—change. It can be said that there was some development in their supernatural nature, but it is not systematic. James still uses castles, ruins, and woods, but he also focuses on the effect of the ghost on the protagonist. His ghosts look nothing like the ghosts of Dickens, perhaps because he sought to capture something hideous and terrible, something beyond people's imagination.

Imagination in general plays a great role in James's stories because the protagonists can only imagine what it is that haunts them. At the same time, they do not have the capacity to even imagine anything. This skepticism they share with the protagonists of Le Fanu. He, too, explores the theme of religion in his work, and how an individual is affected by the realization that the supernatural exists. In fact, Le Fanu's and James's ghost stories can be best summarized by a quote from Le Fanu's "The Watcher": "I know ... that there is a God—a dreadful God—and that retribution follows guilt. ... [T]here is a spiritual system ... a system malignant, and inexorable, and omnipotent, under whose persecutions I am, and have been, suffering the torments of the damned!"¹⁶² Their ghosts are so powerful that they are able to subject their victims to the eternal damnation. However, as opposed to Le Fanu, James uses strange kinds of supernatural animals as if to suggest that it does not matter what creature it is as long as it is able to haunt.

Dickens's Marley and Wilde's Sir Simon, ghosts appearing in "A Christmas Carol" and *The Canterville Ghost*, are the most traditionally-looking ghosts here. The latter is the parody of the former, which suggests the late 19th-century writers attempted to break away from the Gothic stereotype. Nevertheless, as much as the authors tried to make ghosts original, the ghosts still remained 'message-bearers,' and thus their existence is either knowingly or unknowingly based on folklore. For instance, James's ghost stories tend to incorporate biblical motives, but they also criticize people's follies and a lack of common sense—a fairly traditional purpose. Crucially, then, all ghosts are moral teachers one way or another. They may not know about it, since some of them are sinners themselves, but they do influence the human beings in such a traumatic way that they must readdress their doubts or crimes.

This can be applied to nearly all the supernatural entities explored in this thesis. The demonic monkey in "Green Tea" is not an exception. The monkey is mischievous

¹⁶² Le Fanu, "Watcher," 28–29.

as much as it is mysterious, and it can hardly be said that Le Fanu is advising his readers not to drink green tea in the evening. What can be said, however, is that after the monkey appears, Jennings starts to question his own consciousness because he knows that the monkey represents a part of it. This means that he recognizes the monkey's purpose although he can never really understand its true nature.

Thus, it becomes apparent that the messages of the literary ghosts may have changed, but their function stayed the same. They scare characters into readdressing their guilt, while at the same time they can lament their own spectral existence. They can be compared to walking riddles that the protagonist must solve in order to survive. This especially applies to James and Le Fanu because they make their spooks killing machines. Equally brutal are Braddon's ghost of Gertrude and Bowen's ghost of Jane, so brutality is not restricted only to the inexplicably demonic beings. The bringing together of violence and ghosts signifies a shift towards the films with ghosts we can see today. They are by no means tolerant towards the living.

8.2 Duality and Spectrality

The theme of duality appears throughout the 19th-century fiction frequently. There is Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Hogg's *The Private Memoirs of and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, but also Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Stoker's *Dracula*. They all involve monsters of some kind, but the monsters always lead back to the protagonists themselves. Ghosts are not so different from those monsters. Dickens's "A Christmas Carol" and *Haunted Man*, Wilde's *Dorian Gray*, and even Le Fanu's and James's ghosts prove that duality and spectrality are interrelated concepts. Ghosts are able to represent the alter-ego perhaps even better than the corporeal monsters because they have a certain human 'element' to them. Duality brings about another complication related to reading literary ghosts. They may not have any identity of their own since they are associated only with those who see them.

In a way, ghosts can be considered doubles or doppelgänger. The ghost's fluidity and elusiveness serve well for the representation of the protagonist's haunted mind, a conflict so internal that only something truly haunted could represent it externally. Such ghosts can be considered *uncanny* because they resemble the protagonists in such a way that the gap between the supernatural and the natural world is diminished. When these two worlds merge, the protagonists become haunted and their actions make them

ghostly. This is perhaps most obvious in Dickens's stories. He uses ghosts to show how ghostly human beings can be, and through this, he seeks reformation of the society. Wilde's *Dorian Gray* too, reveals how a man can become haunted through an experience. In essence, ghosts are employed to reveal the dual nature of protagonists, their spectral selves, while also being a reminder of their own past.

Not surprisingly, many authors frequently use mirrors to capture the duality. Mirrors are already dual in a sense that they show our reflection that is strange but very familiar. There may have existed an assumption that mirror holds a supernatural world within, and for this reason it was used by Le Fanu, Wilde, and even Braddon. In a way, mirrors create our spectral doubles because they have only one ability, and that is recreating the image that stands in front of it. Seeing a ghostly double, then, is like looking into a mirror. The mirror can also be seen as an entrance to some supernatural universe where spectral doubles and other spooks come from. James's "A View from a Hill," in a way, also employs glass as a source of the supernatural. Of course, the power of the binoculars lies in that there are dissolved human remains inside it, but it is the final effect that fascinates both Baxter and Fanshawe. The dead can see the dead, which is in Baxter's eyes an asset. This contrasts with the ghost of Marley whose newly acquired sense of seeing brings him only misery.

8.3 Invisibility

Invisibility, or nearly-invisibility, is the most advantageous characteristic that the ghosts share. They are able to haunt their victims without being seen, which makes them more powerful than any other supernatural entity. The theme of invisibility is frequently employed by many authors, but it is not always related to the ghosts themselves. Rather, invisibility becomes a means through which human nature is explored. The seen and the not seen create a parallel to the conscious and the unconscious. The ghost's position is in between those two. Bowen's story "The Housekeeper" is an example of a woman being unappreciated in her lifetime, and only after her death she becomes visible again. Jane is indeed dead, but the process of disappearing does not apply to her. That is, the dead are supposed to stay dead, they are supposed to disappear. She disappears from her husband's consciousness while she is alive and reappears when the husband starts to compare her to his present wife.

When using the theme of invisibility, the authors rely on the general assumption that is epitomized by the German painter in “Cold Embrace”: “[I]t cannot be real, for it is invisible.”¹⁶³ Again, there is no way of knowing what is real and what is unreal. He is naturally proved wrong because being invisible does not entail being nonexistent. Such assumptions usually lead to death. This can also be said about Dorian Gray and his supernatural painting. Dorian ages, but it is the painting that changes, which makes Dorian’s ageing process invisible. The painting, however, is still there in the old schoolroom despite his attempts to hide it and forget about it. It is a secret ghost locked up in a dungeon and, to draw a parallel to the ghost of Alfonso (perhaps to Wilde’s dismay), one day it may grow too big for it. The supernatural painting can never truly disappear because of the psychological weight it carries. Not only does it relate to Dorian’s guilt, but it is also an offence against nature, and such anomalies can never leave without a trace.

In similar vein, Le Fanu drew on the theories of Swedenborg who believed that there are two worlds, one of them invisible, and when they connect the spirits are able to visit us. Invisibility is thus a matter of perspective. Undisputedly, the saddest ghost here is the ghost of Barbara from Braddon’s “Her Last Appearance.” Barbara is clearly abused by her husband who cares none about her. On the other hand, her admirer Philip is able to see what the woman does not want to talk about. The abuse and her husband’s attitude towards her make her feel that there is no other choice for her. She gave up on life a long time ago, and death is her only salvation. Invisibility is also used by Dickens. Poverty in his ghost stories is very real, and so are Scrooge and Redlaw who have through years built invisible walls around themselves. Scrooge projects his own ghostliness on others, and Redlaw claims to be haunted by his past. They focus on themselves only, which means that the rest of the world is invisible for them.

¹⁶³ Braddon, “Cold Embrace,” 7.

9. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to analyze British literary ghosts and their psychological and social significance. Each chapter examined a different author or authors, their work, and their ghosts. The stories and novellas explored here were selected in consideration to their relevance to the ghost story genre as well as the authors' own uniqueness.

The first chapter focused on ghosts and their impact on the society. It was especially the Victorians who were famous for their interest in death and the unknown. Another important factor in the popularity of ghosts was the rise of spiritualism. They started to appear in literature more frequently, and despite the skepticism that surrounded them, ghosts managed to become one of the most established figures in literature. Freud also commented on ghosts, especially in his essay "The Uncanny." Ghosts, then, also became a way of studying human consciousness.

The second chapter provided an introduction to two main types of ghosts reappearing in literature from the Middle Ages to the Victorian era. The Gothic ghosts, frequent in the early Gothic fiction and Elizabethan and Jacobean plays, were the predecessors of the modern ghosts. Initially, they were only associated with death, but throughout the centuries they have become more adaptable. They can now haunt houses as well as old castles, and they can be more malevolent, more troublesome. It is apparent that Ghosts were as sensational in fiction as they were in real life, which is the reason why the Victorian era and the following years were called the 'Golden Age' of the ghost story.

The third chapter discussed two of Charles Dickens's Christmas stories. Both stories involve ghosts, perhaps too many to Dickens's liking. There are two haunted men, Scrooge and Redlaw, and the ghosts employ their supernatural tactics to explore their past and to return them back to the present. At the same time, Dickens's ghosts stand for the society's problems, namely poverty and indifference towards it. Le Fanu's spectral animals in the fourth chapter are of a different nature. They are malevolent because they reflect the characters' thoughts and the feelings of guilt.

The fifth chapter proved that ghosts can establish themselves very well in the world of the living. Braddon's and Bowen's ghosts, respectively, show how women can express themselves through their spectral state. Suicide, a desperate act, turns into a way of gaining one's freedom as well. The sixth chapter presented an unexpected supernatural phenomenon. Wilde's *Dorian Gray* is an example of how ghost fiction

may involve only a spectral bond rather than a ghost in a literal sense. In a way, Dorian is a supernatural entity because his soul is not within his body but in the painting. This spectral relationship slowly becomes a burden and then his downfall.

The seventh chapter was concerned with M. R. James. His ghost stories are stories of heretics practicing black magic and unbelievers who have to face the consequences of their skepticism. Their walls of logic crumble, and they are left with a perfect supernatural revelation. The eighth chapter revisited the authors and their stories once again to explore the themes of invisibility, duality, spectrality, and how the authors relied on the Gothic tradition and at the same time modified ghosts to their own needs.

Above all, this thesis attempted to introduce the reader into the world of the British ghost story and its main representatives. In their early stages ghosts were used to undermine the mind of the characters. This Gothic function has not changed considerably, and ghosts like these can be seen even in modern literature. What did change was the spooks' appearance, powers, and the ideas they can represent. Furthermore, British writers even kept reimagining ghosts so that nowadays there are plenty of them, and the difference between a ghost and a shadowy figure is almost gone.

Resumé

Tato práce se zabývá analýzou nadpřirozena z psychologického a společenského hlediska. Každá kapitola se věnuje jednomu či dvou britským autorům a duchům, kteří se v jejich dílech vyskytují. Všechny povídky a novely byly vybrány vzhledem k jejich originalitě a výjimečnému postavení v žánru duchařských příběhů.

První kapitola uvádí čtenáře do tematiky duchů. Přestože jsou duchové diskutabilním tématem, objevují se v mnoha literárních dílech. Za doby královny Viktorie se zájem o duchy zvýšil zejména díky spiritualismu. Duchařské povídky byly populární natolik, že se viktoriánské a eduardovské období dnes považují za jejich ‚zlatý věk.‘ Můžeme tedy říci, že duchové byli senzací nejen v realitě, ale také v literatuře. Freud později využil duchy ke studiím lidského vědomí v eseji „Něco tísnivého,“¹⁶⁴ čímž se duchové stali součástí oboru psychologie.

Druhá kapitola se zabývá hlavními typy duchů objevujících se v britské literatuře od dob středověku až do viktoriánského období. Gotický duch, který byl hojně využíván zejména v gotických románech a v divadelních hrách alžbětinské a jakobínské doby, je předchůdcem ducha moderního. Původně byli duchové považováni za zlé znamení, ale postupně se jejich možnosti rozšířily. Nyní už nemusí strašit jenom v hradech, a navíc jsou i více zlomyslní a škodolibí.

Třetí kapitola se soustředí na dva vánoční příběhy Charlese Dickense. Dickens umožňuje duchům komentovat okolní svět, čímž se stávají důležitými prostředky k nápravě společnosti. V obou příbězích také vystupují postavy sužované svou minulostí, a cílem duchů je navrátit tyto postavy zpět do přítomnosti. Oba příběhy mají morální podtón, takže duchové zároveň představují vše, co se podle Dickense musí ve společnosti změnit. Čtvrtá kapitola nabízí pohled na duchy, kteří jsou pravým opakem těch, co se nachází v Dickensově tvorbě. Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu s oblibou psal o přízračných zvířatech jako o zlých, pomstychtivých tvorech. Jejich zlost však vychází z toho, že jsou ztělesněním myšlenek a pocitů viny postav.

Pátá kapitola se zabývá tvorbou Braddonové a Bowenové. Ve svých duchařských povídkách tyto autorky často využívají tematiku neviditelnosti. Ženy, které v jejich příbězích vystupují jsou nedocenené a opomíjené, a teprve po jejich smrti se konečně mohou vyjádřit. Sebevražda spáchaná v beznaději se tedy stává nově nabytou svobodou. Šestá kapitola je příkladem toho, že duchařské příběhy nemusí být jen o

¹⁶⁴ Tento název vychází z českého překladu z roku 2003. Autory jsou Miloš Kopal a Oto Friedman.

duších v pravém slova smyslu. Stěžejní dílo Oscara Wildea, *Obraz Doriana Graye*, pojednává o nadpřirozeném poutu mezi člověkem a jeho portrétem. Dorian se během příběhu pohybuje na hranici mezi životem a smrtí, čímž se sám promění v nadpřirozenou bytost. Jeho duše se otiskne do portrétu a on přestává stárnout. Právě tato ďábelská smlouva se nakonec stane i jeho zkárou.

Sedmá kapitola se věnuje duchařským příběhům M. R. Jamese. James se zabýval tematikou náboženství, a tím pádem jsou jeho povídky plné nevěřících učenců a hříšníků praktikujících černou magii. Jsou to zejména skeptici, kteří se musí vypořádat s nadpřirozenými bytostmi, což výrazně změní jejich pohled na svět. Cílem osmé kapitoly je navštívit motivy jako jsou neviditelnost, dualita, přízračnost, a zkoumat jakým způsobem je autoři využívali.

Cílem práce je také přiblížit čtenářům autory britských duchařských příběhů a jejich tvorbu. Duchové měli v první řadě zpochybnit sebejistotu postav. Tato funkce se původně vyskytovala především v gotickém románu, ale nyní je využívána i v moderní literatuře. I přesto se vyobrazení ducha v literatuře alespoň trochu změnilo, zejména tedy jejich vzhled, síly, a myšlenky, které mohou reprezentovat. Dokonce je jich dnes už taková spousta, že rozdíl mezi duchem a záhadnou postavou téměř vymizel.

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Annotation

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Abstract

This master's thesis is concerned with the representation of ghosts in British literature. The primary focus is on the Golden Age of ghost story when the society's interest in the supernatural phenomena was at its peak. The aim is to analyze supernatural fiction of several writers and discuss how their ghosts and apparitions may have reflected the protagonists' consciousness as well as the society and its issues.

Key words: British literature, ghost story, ghosts, Charles Dickens, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Marjorie Bowen, Oscar Wilde, M. R. James

Anotace

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Abstrakt

Tato magisterská práce se zabývá vyobrazením duchů v britské literatuře. Středem pozornosti této práce je zlatý věk duchařských příběhů, což bylo období charakteristické svým zájmem o nadpřirozeno. Hlavním cílem práce je analýza duchařských příběhů vybraných autorů a způsob jakým tito autoři používali duchy jakožto symbol svědomí postav a zároveň jimi komentovali problémy společnosti.

Klíčová slova: britská literatura, duchařské příběhy, duchové, Charles Dickens, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Marjorie Bowen, Oscar Wilde, M. R. James