

“THE DEAD TRAVEL FAST”: THE GOTHIC POLITICS OF IRISH LITERATURE

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Thesis under the direction of Jefferson Holdridge, Ph.D., Professor of English

Although the Gothic was created by English authors it finds significant use in Irish literature. There has been debate over how this genre should be defined, but I would suggest that instead of trying to force the Gothic into the categories of mode/tradition or Catholic/Protestant, it should be allowed to enact its own mysterious nature, defying classification. The Gothic is instead a shadowy space that encompasses the Irish experience; enabling the expression of both the horrors of colonizer's guilt and the colonized's oppression. The first two chapters focus on *Carmilla* and *Dracula*, specifically how LeFanu and Stoker utilize the figure of the vampire not only to allegorize their struggles with Anglo-Irish identity, but also to show how that figure represents native Irish rebellion and its destruction and also how it emphasizes the importance of Catholicism in Ireland. My third chapter will consider the space opened by this reading of earlier works and discuss its implications on the study of the modern Irish Gothic, allowing us to trace its traditional status and its use by both Protestant and Catholic authors, thus discovering its ability to depict the issues of both groups as a result of its liminal qualities.

Introduction

“It is a wild adventure we are on...We seem to be drifting into unknown places and unknown ways; into a whole world of dark and dreadful things” (Stoker 443)

Although the Gothic genre was created and popularized by English authors, with the publication of Horace Walpole’s *Castle of Otranto* in 1764 and the wild success of Ann Radcliffe’s novels in the 1790s and early 1800s, it finds, its most significant use in Ireland. From Jonathan Swift’s *A Modest Proposal* (1729)¹ to the work of contemporary authors like Patrick McCabe, a Gothic quality pervades Irish literature. Most critical investigations of this trend seek to find some answer for why the Gothic has had and continues to have such a particular resonance for Irish authors. Why does it allow them to express themselves in ways other modes may not? Irish history is marked by horror, as many colonized nations’ stories are. However, few countries’ literature has so fully embraced the Gothic genre to tell the tales of its history. Is it random, or is there some particularly Gothic quality to Irish existence? It is a fascinating question that has enjoyed considerable critical attention and resulted in much debate regarding whether the Irish Gothic should be defined as a “tradition” or a “mode” and if it can be designated as a particularly Protestant Anglo-Irish phenomenon.

Charles Robert Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) is implicated as the technical beginning of “Irish Gothic” through its combination of traditional, i.e. British, Gothic conventions and Irish concerns, and is recognized for spawning a body of Gothic works that impacted not only literature in Ireland, but the genre as a whole. One of his

¹ Although not conventionally Gothic, Swift’s monstrous suggestion of the consumption of babies certainly could be read as such, and because the horror of this proposal is directly related to the social problems of Ireland, it can also be considered specifically Irish Gothic.

most evident successors is Joseph Sheridan LeFanu², famous for the prolific body of Gothic/Horror works he created, specifically his novels *The House by the Churchyard* (1863), *Wylder's Hand*, *Uncle Silas* (both 1864), and his collection of short stories *In a Glass Darkly* (1872). As R.F. Foster notes in *Paddy & Mr. Punch: Connections in Irish and English History*,

The condition of the embattled Irish Protestant from the early nineteenth century was epitomized by figures like Charles Maturin...[and] Sheridan Le Fanu...a non practising lawyer, conservative journalist and congenital depressive, who lived a reclusive life in Merrion Square, absorbed in Swedenborg and fears for the Protestant Ascendancy. And what he and Maturin had in common is striking: both, in their successive generations, pioneered the nineteenth-century tradition of Irish supernatural fiction. (219)

Building upon the foundation laid by Maturin and LeFanu, Bram Stoker helped the Gothic reach its zenith with the 1897 publication of his novel *Dracula*, perhaps the most popular of all the works in this genre. Though the Gothic style had lost some of its popularity by the twentieth century, as critics note, it was still in use in Ireland and can be found in the shadows of modern Irish writing from W.B. Yeats to Elizabeth Bowen, and even in the bleak and gloomy worlds created by Samuel Beckett.

Claiming this body of work as a “tradition,” however, has proved to be a contentious issue among scholars. In *Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction*, Jarlath

² The spelling of LeFanu's name varies from critical work to critical work. I have chose to spell it LeFanu, but in quotations will spell it as the individual author chooses to.

Killeen observes that the works of the Irish Gothic are “a gapped and discontinuous line [that] could be called a ‘tradition’ in only the most dubious sense”³. Yet Killeen also reasons that the repeated use of the Gothic style in such a span of Irish writing is significant and generates a need for critical exploration. Ultimately arguing for the validity of the Gothic as an Irish tradition because it is an observable family of works that build on each other and serve to capture something specific and important to the Irish experience. In response to Killeen’s overview of the Irish Gothic⁴, Richard Haslam wrote *Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach*, in which he argues that “tradition is too weighty (and weighted) a word to describe the irregular development and deployment of Gothic forms and themes in the work of Irish writers over the course of three centuries. Instead, we should adopt the more accurate and flexible ‘mode.’” He sees “tradition” in its modernist sense, as something rigid and institutional, and believes that the use of the Gothic form in Irish literature lacks the conventionality necessary for such a designation. His focus is on discontinuing the use of the term “tradition,” and solely seeing the Irish Gothic as a flexible “mode” which is significant but not as definite as a “tradition,” a “discontinuous disposition, a gradually evolving yet often intermittent suite of themes, motifs, devices, forms, and styles, selected in specific periods, locations, and rhetorical situations, by a succession of different writers.” In answer to Haslam, Killeen questions why the Irish Gothic can’t be seen as both a “tradition” and a “mode,” proposing that “the Irish Gothic mode subsists in the Irish Gothic tradition” (*Irish Gothic Revisited*). Though

³ Killeen’s article and the article by Richard Haslam are from an online journal and do not have page numbers.

⁴ I must note that even though these two scholars seem to almost be reaching a consensus, the articles were written in clear and slightly heated response to each other, which is why I present them as such. Killeen goes so far as to say he wrote his second article to “defend his honor” (*Irish Gothic Revisited*).

these scholars disagree about what the Irish Gothic should be called, what I would like to point out about this issue is that they both show that no matter how it is designated the Gothic in Ireland is significant, ubiquitous, and worthy of study. It becomes evident that even though attempts have been made to pigeonhole it, the Irish Gothic defies being catalogued and clings to the mystery that allows it to have a lasting relevance.

Another unsettled issue at the heart of the study of the Irish Gothic is the debate over whether the “tradition” can be claimed as a specific product of Protestant Anglo-Irish writers. It has been, for the most part, “a distinctly Protestant” (*Irish Gothic and After 837*) practice throughout the course of Irish literature. Many critics suggest it is a result of the Anglo-Irish attempting to deal with the repressed guilt of their position as colonizers. By depicting what they have destroyed as monstrous, they can justify their actions and control what they do not understand on yet another level, “indicat[ing] that the burden of colonial history is wider than we initially expect, and we should not be surprised to find that [it] is one of the main issues Irish gothic revolves around” (Killeen *Irish Gothic*). But as W.J. McCormack points out in *Irish Gothic and After*, there are more ways of analyzing the Irish Gothic than simply focusing on Anglo-Irish guilt (135-36). For example, it must be acknowledged that Irish Gothic works written by Catholic authors exist. Haslam argues for an early “emergence” of the Catholic Gothic, in works like John Banim’s *The Fetches* (1825), and, as Seamus Deane had previously pointed out, the presence of the mode in James Mangan’s *The Man in the Cloak* (1838), while Killeen asserts its growth as a result of “gaining...independence in 1921” (*Irish Gothic*). Killeen suggests that the “Gothic itself is a Protestant mode” based in the work

of non-Catholic English authors, the Catholic always having been the “monstrous other” in all Gothic works. He concludes that Catholic authors’ participation in the Irish Gothic is “a mode of writing back, a kind of reverse Gothic” in which they “attempt...to appropriate an alien form” (*Irish Gothic Revisited*). In this project, however, I would argue that this form is not “alien” to either group, but by its very nature taps into something that is a part of every human mind, no matter how a person has been influenced by religion. I believe that the Gothic fights categories and overcomes the limitations of being defined by these sectarian bounds.

I would like to suggest that instead of trying to force the Gothic into either of these sets of categories it should be allowed to enact its own mysterious nature, and defy the classification that previous criticism has sought to apply to it. I propose that the Gothic is instead a shadowy space that allows the unification of “tradition” and “mode,” and exists outside of a need to be claimed as either, enabling the expression of both the horrors of the colonizer’s guilt and the colonized’s oppression. The Gothic is a mode prevalent in the tradition of Irish literature because it is a form as marginalized as the Irish are: “Gothic texts have generally been marginalised, excluded from the sphere of accepted literature...Gothic not only signified popular fiction but remained a darker undercurrent to the literary tradition itself” (Botting 15). As its critical resurgence indicates⁵, however, its popularity and pervasiveness in world literature illustrates its

⁵ Killeen noting that “critics turned in ever-increasing numbers to laud the importance of this much-maligned genre, claiming for it victim status...the Gothic became paradigmatic as the ‘Other’ of classical realism and this led critics to eulogizing it as the battered child of modern literature” (15)

representation of some significant and universal quality that runs deeper than the superficial terror it is often assumed to depict.

My first two chapters focus on *Carmilla* and *Dracula*, texts that not only furthered the genre in Irish literature, but have been vital to its continued popularity. I am specifically concerned with how LeFanu and Stoker utilize the figure of the vampire, not only to allegorize their struggles with Anglo-Irish identity, but also how that figure represents native Irish rebellion and how its destruction emphasizes the importance of Catholicism in Ireland. Although the Othered figure at the center of both works is a vampire, they could not be two more different revenants. *Carmilla* is a female monster preying on a young woman, engendering great suspense and lesbian undercurrents, while Stoker's undead creation is a foreign count, who incites xenophobia and upsets the repressed, capitalistic world of Victorian London. *Carmilla* was published in 1872, some twenty years before *Dracula* appeared, but Stoker's work is the tale that has been recreated for a century. *Carmilla* has all the right ingredients--blood, darkness, repressed sexuality--and yet, this story of a powerful female vampire is basically unknown, as many critics have suggested, seemingly because Le Fanu was open and expressive about female sexuality and lesbianism, while Stoker's novel offered a patriarchal story of female repression. The majority of scholarship on these texts has focused on the anxieties of sexuality and gender, but in their dark tensions there is also the buried story of the authors' Irishness and a reflection of the nation's contemporary struggles. By examining these works' interactions with the traditional English Gothic style and their authors' Anglo-Irishness, we can both recognize and surpass the categorizations that

typically define them and consider why Irish existence required such a dark depiction.

Through connecting these works not only to each other, but also locating them in relation to the past and present of the Irish Gothic, I want to look at how an Anglo-Irish precedent in this mode is both established and made dubious by the role Catholicism plays in restoring order to societies that have been disrupted by the revolutionary and unsettling figure of the vampire. Though the Catholic is othered in both works, it also takes a central place as a means of destroying the supernatural evil that is outside of what either religion would deem acceptable, proving that what is truly uncanny in these works is something other than either Protestantism or Catholicism.

In my third chapter, I will consider the space opened by this reading of earlier works and briefly discuss its implications on the study of the modern Irish Gothic, specifically in relation to Patrick McCabe's novel, *The Butcher Boy*. This will allow me to not only trace its traditional⁶ status but its use by both Protestant and Catholic authors, thus discovering its ability to depict the issues of both groups as a result of its liminal qualities. Gothic fiction is a vent for the horrors of reality, and so it seems logical that it makes a strong showing in a country with a legacy of violence and terror. As Killeen posits in *Gothic Ireland: Horror and the Irish Anglican Imagination in the Long Eighteenth Century*, "Perhaps it would not be going too far to suggest...that Gothic is the national form, as cultural hybridity lies at the centre...it refuses the kind of 'reconciliation of opposites' associated with the novel form...which is really just the celebration of the ideological hegemony of the powerful" (222). Irish history from the earliest rebellions to

⁶ I mean traditional here in the sense of the Irish Gothic's position as either a tradition or mode, rather than in the conventional sense of the word.

the strife of “the Troubles” has been a Gothic nightmare come to life. The Irish Gothic is neither an Anglo-Irish tradition nor a mode wrongly adopted by Irish Catholic authors, but a liquid form that in its spectral way speaks to something that defies social constructions and accesses primordial fear.⁷

In *Gaelic Gothic: Race, Colonization, and Irish Culture*, Luke Gibbons remarks that

as the arteries of modern racial discourse began to harden into notions of blood and belonging, the Gothic as a mode of sensibility took on board much of its cultural pathology, maintaining a series of deep-seated, troubled connections with wider systems of prejudice, paranoia, and bigotry. Though originally a literary genre with a distinctively popular or sensational appeal, the Gothic spread out into the recesses of everyday life, giving rise to a phantom public sphere haunted by fear, terror, and the dark side of civility. (Gibbons 10)

Ireland was riven by conflict, but the Irish were connected by suffering. The Gothic understood the Irish because it was a safe way to express all the uncertainty that those who write it and read it feel. Though the works that form the Irish Gothic seem too disparate to form any sort of cohesive theory or tradition, it is in the strangeness and instability of the genre that its unique and unifying power lies. It seems appropriate that a genre that lives in the hesitation between what terrifies and what can be rationalized has

⁷ This relates to one of the most common analyses of the Gothic, which is a Freudian reading in terms of his *The Uncanny*. This text has served to provide an important insight into the Gothic, by making readers aware of how the genre taps into the commonality of our fears. Freud defines the uncanny in several ways; as both what is completely unknown, and thus terrifying to us, and also as “everything that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come into the open” (132).

proven so hard for scholars to pin down. Maturin said the Gothic revealed the ““midnight darkness of the soul”” (Malet-Dagreu 157), and that is something that can be recognized and written about by anyone no matter their religious affiliation or ethnic origin. In looking at these texts, I would like to show that the Irish Gothic goes beyond anything that divides Ireland and taps into something that is deeper than sectarian struggles. The lasting and fairly universal popularity of the Gothic lies not in something divisive, but in our innately human fear of our potential for evil and our desire to express it through a controllable and containable artistic creation.

Chapter 1:

Enter the Vampire

“Throughout the shadowy world of ghosts and demons there is no figure so terrible, no figure so dreaded and abhorred, yet dight with such fearful fascination, as the vampire, who is himself neither ghost nor demon, but yet who partakes the dark natures and and possesses the mysterious and terrible qualities of both.” Montague Summers

Both *Carmilla* and *Dracula* conform to many of the Gothic conventions established by authors like Walpole and Radcliffe. Victor Sage has enumerated these characteristics as the “‘authenticating’ presence” of the author who is editing a “found manuscript,” the setting of “medieval and ‘superstitious’” Catholic Europe, “the expectation of the supernatural,” unification of the hero and his/her enemy, the “decay” of the social order of “primogeniture [and/or]...feudal rights,” emphasis on the persecuted but “often defiant” role of women, and the portrayal of “confined” or “labyrinthine” spaces (“Gothic Novel” 82). *Carmilla*, a story from LeFanu’s volume *In a Glass Darkly*, is presented as a collection of “investigations” by the “fictional esoterist-doctor” Hesselius (Williams 87), and Stoker’s novel is a collection of diary entries, telegrams, and newspaper articles that relate the harrowing tale of the Count. Both works are set in remote areas of Europe, the entirety of *Carmilla* taking place in Styria, now a part of Austria (Williams 87), while portions of *Dracula* are set in the now infamous Romanian region of Transylvania. In these strange lands the heroes find themselves surrounded by a number of “‘superstitious’” and/or Catholic characters, from figures like General Spielsdorf in LeFanu’s tale to characters like the worried “peasants” (Stoker 152) Jonathan Harker encounters and ignores as he blindly makes his way to Dracula’s castle.

The supernatural is certainly “expected,” and almost forced upon the reader through the blatant foreshadowing that characterizes the build up to the entrance of the monsters in both works. Early in *Carmilla*, for example, the main character, Laura, laments the mysterious death of a potential friend, to which her father comments “I feel as if some great misfortune were hanging over us” (94); we later learn the unfortunate young woman was killed by Carmilla, who shortly shows up on Laura’s doorstep. Jonathan Harker is to a much greater degree a fount of obvious and, at times, hilarious foreshadowing. For instance, as he begins his journey, he remarks, “I read that every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians...I must ask the Count all about them” (Stoker 152) . The “unification” of hero and enemy is also evident in these texts, appearing in the sexually charged and passionate bond between Carmilla and her victim and through the union of Mina and the Count. Great amounts of feminist criticism have been written on both works and the women in them, who are both fiercely independent and re/op-pressively victimized by the societies they live in. Finally, the castles and ruins that characterize the spaces of *Carmilla* and *Dracula* are not necessarily as “labyrinthine” as some of the structures of earlier Gothic works, but they are certainly dark and confining places for those who enter them.

The most significant of these conventions for the Irish Gothic is, however, the “decay” of aristocratic institutions. Many scholars argue that this issue is, in fact, at the heart of the Protestant production of these works. As W.J. McCormack remarks in “Irish Gothic and After,”

Even if the Irish tradition of gothic fiction turns out, on examination, to be a slender one, there are other ways in which such material is of literary significance. Where as the origins of English gothicism are diverse and obscure -- involving the sensibility of...Walpole, the larger development of romanticism, and the growth of aesthetics through the study of concepts such as 'the sublime'-- Irish gothic fiction is remarkably explicit in the way it demonstrates its attachment to history and to politics. (833)

Carmilla and *Dracula* are exemplary texts for arguing that the Irish Gothic is an Anglo, Protestant institution, because the anxieties they present are easily relatable to the contemporary fears of the colonizers of Ireland--uprising, contagious otherness, both ideologically and pathologically, and concern about the destruction of their own culture--and can essentially function as nothing more than an elaborate attempt to nullify their authors' guilt through the seemingly final destruction of a monstrous, foreign Other. As Killeen asserts, the "Gothic, in truth, may not belong to the dispossessed but to the paranoid possessors, the out-of-control controllers, the descending Ascendancy" who's "fear of marginalisation--rather than marginalisation itself--are central features of the Irish Gothic tradition" ("Irish Gothic: A Theoretical Introduction").The Anglo-Irish had been conditioned to feelings of dubiety about their position in Ireland because they were no longer accepted as British, but they had also alienated themselves from the country they now had to live in through the injustices committed in the name of the Empire.

On the other side, however, the native Irish had also been just as destabilized by the outsiders who told them that the land they had been born on did not belong to them

and that the practices and language of their culture were wrong. They had just as much “fear of marginalisation” and just as much right to the gothic, but their underprivileged position left them little access to the world of writing, and so the early Irish Gothic is dominated by Protestant authors. However, this does not mean that the struggles and confusion of the native Irish cannot be found in these works. I would suggest that both *Carmilla* and *Dracula* are symbols of Irish rebels and the power that the language and ideas of independence had over those who lost their lives fighting for a free Ireland. Though they are ultimately destroyed by the “rational” Protestants, the only way the crisis of the monstrous intrusion can be solved is through the rituals of Catholicism, what the native Irish were both defined by and ostracized for, reflecting their authors’ sympathy and interest in the native Irish and their causes.

Tzvetan Todorov wrote that the fantastic “occupies the duration of uncertainty” (25) created when we begin to doubt the parameters of our existence:

In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses...and the laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place [and] reality...is controlled by laws unknown to us. Either the devil is an illusion...or else he really exists (25)

The Irish existed in an unbounded place that they could not easily make sense of, and so Irish authors chose to address the liminal world that acknowledged the “devils, sylphides, [and] vampires” and attempted to somehow explain what they could not understand through a medium that was just as uncertain as they were. In the reality of their unsettling times, the confusion of identity was the real monster that terrorized the Irish countryside. The Gothic is thus a representation of the bewildered identity of all the inhabitants of Ireland.

Joseph Sheridan LeFanu and Bram Stoker are paradigms of this confusion, both figures of the mixed identity of the Anglo-Irish. Although LeFanu was raised in a Protestant Anglo-Irish household, he was nevertheless “sympathetically interested in the struggles of the Catholic majority for freedom and was fascinated with Irish song and folklore...Despite his belief in the Union, LeFanu could not help admiring the courage and dedication of the revolutionary and the patriot, and he was able to see right on both sides of the question” (Begnal 15-16). Stoker’s relation to the issue of Irish independence was similarly tense and equivocal. As Arata observes, he published essays that promoted censorship and “a deeply conservative [and British] outlook” (633) but he also displayed an “anarchic streak” evident in his “adherence to ‘forms of restraint’...[and] The attraction of forbidden, outlawed, disruptive action” that is present in his fiction (634). These authors were seemingly respectable members of Anglo-Irish society, and yet they undeniably felt the confusion of everything it was to be a product of a culture that was at war with itself. As Margot Gayle Backus remarks in *The Gothic Family Romance: Heterosexuality, Child Sacrifice, and the Anglo-Irish Colonial Order* “The children of the

Anglo-Irish were epistemologically disempowered by virtue of their cultural displacement; the narrative that the logic of colonialism required--a prescriptive attachment to Irish property accompanied by an absolute alienation from Irish society--precluded their acquisition of a coherent cultural identity” (76). Many theorists have commented that neither Stoker nor LeFanu were the most skilled authors; their works did not necessarily challenge the conventions that came before them or revolutionize the idea of the Gothic, but they have spawned an immense body of critical study and are still being read because this very basic struggle is at the heart of what they wrote. Literature is in many ways a quest for identity, and these authors sent their characters on a dark journey to find themselves through one of the most ambiguous creatures of myth: the vampire.

The vampire has captivated mankind across centuries and cultures. What is fascinating about vampires is not what repulses us, but what is similar. The vampire has been human, but has become a monster; so in some ways, it is a projection of the fear of the evil that may exist inside of all of us. This fear has been a part of myth and literature from its beginnings. When we first began to recognize and discuss our capability for violence towards each other, and scared by this tendency and its chaotic nature, we created monsters that we could control and symbolically destroy. This fear will never die and so the vampire, and humanoid monsters like it, have been and will continue to be a part of the stories we create.

The creature has certainly changed over time; with the Byronic development it saw in the Romantic and Victorian periods, it gained glamour and charisma and lost the

reputation it secured in early legend as a ruddy and disease ridden corpse, becoming a relatable figure able to reveal and reflect our fears. It is evil and yet we understand the pain of its isolation, separated from our daylight world and normal relationships, overcome by the darkness we do not wish to see in ourselves. We find something familiar in the shared humanity of one of the darkest yet most approachable monsters of legend, and express fears, qualms, and changes in our society through the stories we tell about them. As Nina Auerbach notes in *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, vampires are an integral part of every generation's search for identity: "They may look marginal, feeding on human history from some limbo of their own, but for me, they have always been central: what vampires are in any given generation is a part of what I am and what my times have become" (1). In other words, the vampire is for every age a reflection and an expression of contemporary crises. Vampires are able to "blend into the changing cultures they inhabit [because] They inhere in our most intimate relationships; they are also hideous invaders of the normal...they can be everything we are, while at the same time, they are fearful reminders of the infinite things we are not" (Auerbach 6).

The vampire is thus the perfect figure for the Irish Gothic. At the hands of Irish authors they can be a symbol of both the colonizer and the colonized. Initially, the idea of one human-like figure consuming another is allegorically ideal to represent British consumption of the Irish, a culture that was close to them both physically and in terms of their ethnic roots. The Anglo-Irish, also, with their ambiguous identities were like the undead, who did not belong in the ground or above it: "As Anglo-Irish society felt itself to be transforming and becoming unlike itself within an increasingly unsympathetic

English gaze, it desperately groped for an acceptable...national identity through the mediating mechanism of gothic projection” (Backus 146-47). But the reader can also see the vampire as representative of the unstable native Irish. They were as liminal as their oppressors, displaced and hated in their home. With the Act of Union, “Ireland ceased to be a distinct if colonized geopolitical entity and assumed the unique and contradictory position of a domestic or ‘metropolitan’ colony, at once a prized if troublesome colonial possession and a despised but active constituent of the greatest metropole on earth” (Valente 3). Ireland became a place not inhabited by savages, but a modernizing country filled with both British, Anglo-Irish, and native Irish, and thus it became something harder to deal with or categorize. The Irish, both Anglo and native, were vampires at this time, in the most tragic sense of the creature, existing “between worlds, one dead and the other powerless to be born” (Veeder 210).

I would like to, however, read the vampiric figures in these texts not as “powerless,” but as an attempt by their authors to claim power to assert a specific identity or actively assuage the guilt of their history. Although there are less “Irish” readings of *Carmilla*, the eponymous vampire and the evident classism and Imperialism of the story lend themselves to such an analysis, and open up the brief tale to a deeper connection to LeFanu’s origins. At the other end of the spectrum, there are a broad range of Irish readings of *Dracula*, critics presenting the Count as everything from an Anglo-Irish landlord to representative of the Irish lower class who came into Britain and other countries as a result of the poor standard of living in their homeland and were feared to be infecting those they came in contact with not only with disease but with the

stereotypically negative qualities it was believed the Irish possessed (See Gibbons 78-79). Through these works LeFanu and Stoker “unsettle any equilibrium between a ‘forgotten past’ and a disillusioned present in Ireland” (Ogawa 22) and make clear that the shared history of the Anglo and native Irish could not be ignored or denied.

Carmilla is, as William Veeder notes, arguably the best of the stories featured in *In A Glass Darkly*, “convert[ing] the discovery of the ‘monster’ into a revelation of human nature itself” (197). He suggests the story accomplishes this through its dualistic depictions of masculine and feminine, good and evil, and lesbianism and heterosexuality, stating that “Beneath the dualisms...are levels which reveal civilizations’s discontents” (198). The manichaeian division between the upper and lower and classes and its “discontents,” however, are largely unaddressed by either LeFanu or his critics, but are significant and in many ways what makes an Irish reading of the text possible. Laura’s father’s position in Styria, which Laura describes as a “lonely and primitive place” (87), is an easily perceivable representation of how those Anglo-Irish who saw themselves as isolated in Ireland viewed the country. From the opening lines of the story, the reader is made aware of both Laura’s family’s connections and her nationality: “In Styria, we though by no means magnificent people, inhabit a castle, or schloss...My father is English, and I bear an English name, although I never saw England” (87). Her mother was a “Styrian lady,” (89) and so Laura is a hybrid product of the two cultures, just as LeFanu was. Her story and the story of her experiences with the confusing and charming vampire Carmilla, are not just a scary imaging, but are a depiction of their author’s own struggles with identity.

The upper class has an almost singular role in the novella, while those not of the aristocracy are largely ignored. Laura remarks, when describing those “who constitute the inhabitants of our castle,” that “I don’t include servants, or those dependants [sic] who occupy rooms in the buildings attached to the schloss” (89). We do learn about Laura’s “gouvernantes” (89), the women who have cared for her since her mother’s death, but they have been elevated from any position of subservience to honorary places in the family, unlike other domestics, who Laura does not view as members of the household. One of the other most explicit mentions of the servants in *Carmilla* is when one of Laura’s governesses remarks how “ill-looking” (99) those accompanying Carmilla and her mother were, to which Laura’s father agrees, saying that they were “ugly, hang-dog looking fellows, as ever I beheld in my life” (99). The lower class is marginalized and animalized, as the native Irish were by their colonizers, who saw the inhabitants of Ireland as “immersed in superstition, savagery, and the general credulousness associated with primitive cultures or ‘doomed races’”(Gibbons 13). In addition to the almost non-existent lower class, there are repeated mentions of Laura’s father’s strident nationalism. He speaks English “partly to prevent its becoming a lost language among us, and partly from patriotic motives” (89) and tea is served every day because “his usual patriotic leanings..insisted that the national beverage should make its appearance regularly” (98). The servants, who are not worth mentioning, are the disregarded native Irish and the mandated repetition of English behaviors mirrors the imposition of British culture on Irish life.

These issues are not surprising when the reader remembers that LeFanu was in some ways a staunch Unionist. He was publicly anti-Daniel O'Connell and believed that with his promotion in the government of Ireland, "Protestants had been sold out to a 'Popish leader'" (Bernal 19). This is reflected in his fiction through his personification of "the Irish Protestant cause as a woman who has been violated" (Bernal 19), evident in his portrayal of Laura. She is innocent and naive, having been one of those "happy children who are studiously kept in ignorance of ghost stories, fairy tales, and of all such lore as makes us cover up our head when the door creaks suddenly" (90). This shows the earlier Anglo-Irish generations' purposeful separation of their children from the folklore of the native Catholic Irish, "a reflection that recalls the constitutive role of ignorance in the Anglo-Irish child's identity formation and also stresses the family's role in isolating the child from the oral culture of the surrounding society"(Backus 128). It is, in the end, harmful to Laura, because she has no way of understanding the threat Carmilla presents or dealing with the danger of her influence.

Laura's ignorance of Carmilla's true nature, not only shows the harmful effects of the repression of native Irish culture, but makes her vulnerable to the charms of something that is mysterious and unknown. When Laura encounters Carmilla's serpentine charisma, she cannot resist her, a tendency symptomatic of the confusion the Anglo-Irish felt:

Anglo-Irish children understandably craved a secure national identity, and this desire would have fueled a covert attraction to the unambiguous position of the native Irish. Moreover, owing to their own subtly exploited

position as the involuntary perpetrators of the colonial system, such children also ineffably identified with the subjugated native Irish, toward whom they still, as adults, expressed passionate fellow feeling, frequently in their writing and sometimes in their political allegiances. (Backus 76)

Laura's sympathy to Carmilla's struggles is revelatory of LeFanu's guilt; she says Carmilla is "Brutalized, not brutal...Laura...call[s] Carmilla's animality 'horrible,' but 'brutalized' indicates her initial deepest response. Any animality derives, not from Carmilla, but from what men do to her" (Veeder 207). This describes not only Carmilla but the treatment of Irish rebels, if not all native Irish, by British and Anglo-Irish opposition. Laura is not only a cautionary tale against the dangers of giving yourself completely to an outside force, be it the love of someone else or unyielding devotion to a cause, but how harmful purposeful Protestant ignorance of native Irish culture was.

Carmilla is in many ways representative of those who would speak out against tyranny and promote the often fatal idea of loyalty to Ireland, thus revealing the other side of LeFanu's Irishness, that in him which "admired" the native Irish patriots (Bernal 15-16). The language she uses when describing her feelings to Laura is the language of unyielding patriotism to the point of martyrdom: "I live in you; and you would die for me, I love you so" (112) and later, "love is always selfish, the more ardent the more selfish..you must come with me, loving me, to death; or else hate me, and still come with me, and hating me through death and after. There is no such word as indifference in my apathetic nature" (114). Here, then, the vampire becomes not an image of the stronger preying on the weak but of the charismatic and enticing voice of rebellion. Most readings

view LeFanu's (and Stoker's) depiction of rebellion as negative and a product of their Anglo-Irish fear of rebellion, and while it is rooted in that, it is also a more objective presentation of the reality of revolution by men who were not caught in it. We know from the introduction to *Carmilla* that Laura has "died in the interval" (87) between what happened and its recording, a casualty of a fight she did not choose to be a part of.⁸ LeFanu is thus not only presenting how injurious his culture's ignorance of the native Irish is, but also the collateral of violent rebellion. It was necessary that the native Irish made a stand for their independence and fair treatment, but the costs of their actions, both negative and positive must be considered.

LeFanu also considers the role of religion in the struggles between the Anglo and native Irish. In Anglo eyes, the native Irish and the hallmarks of their culture were monstrous. As Killeen observes, "If the Self [was] unitary, modern, rational, puritan, and in the centre, the Self [was] Protestant; if the Other [was] excessive, medieval, irrational, regional, and sexually perverse, the Other [was] Catholic" (19). But in the case of the vampire, Catholicism saves. It is a vital part of the destruction of what is monstrous in these novels, and reveals something deeper than the typical reading of Anglo Irish guilt. On some level, these authors are acknowledging the importance of this system of beliefs to achieving normalcy in their lives. If the vampire is representative of the extreme end of native Irishness as a personification of rebellion, then Catholicism is a belief which should be allowed to exist to be an expression of what native Irish culture was.

⁸ This role later reflected in *Dracula* by the ill fated character, Renfield.

Laura recalls the first time she saw Carmilla as a child, long before the appearance at the schloss that is recounted in the story. Laura remembers being “vexed” at having woken in the nursery alone, but before she can begin to cry, she sees “a solemn, but very pretty face looking at [her] from the side of the bed” and is “pleased” by her comfort, allowing herself to be “caressed” and cradled by the stranger (90). She falls asleep, but is again “wakened by a sensation as if two needles ran into [her] breast very deep at the same moment” (90). Laura is so disturbed by this uncomfortable sensation that she wakes the entire household, to whom she recounts what they assume to be a terrible nightmare. The reader can see some doubt, however, in the adults’ reassurances, because of their reactions to Laura’s disturbed mindset and health after the incident. A doctor is called, but what truly impacts and comforts Laura and her keepers is the priest who visits her:

I remember...a venerable old man, in a black cassock, coming into the room...and talking...very kindly to me...he told me they were going to pray, and joined my hands together, and desired me to say... ‘Lord, hear all good prayers for us, for Jesus’ sake.’ ...I remember so well the thoughtful sweet face of that white-haired old man, in his black cassock, as he stood in that rude...room, with the...scanty light entering its shadowy atmosphere... He kneeled, and the three women with him, and he prayed aloud...I forget all my life preceding that even, and for some time after it is all obscure also; but the scenes I have just described stand out vivid as the isolated pictures of the phantasmagoria surrounded by darkness. (91)

The importance of religion in this situation cannot be ignored, and although the religion that Laura and her father subscribe to is vaguely defined, given that the cassock is an primarily an Anglican garment⁹ and the family's Englishness, we can assume that this "old man" is a Protestant minister. While his prayers are comforting in that moment, they are ultimately not effective against the forces of darkness, because Carmilla returns to victimize Laura. In the end, only Catholicism can truly help Laura's protectors destroy the vampire. The priest summoned at the end of the story is a vital part of Carmilla's destruction. Without his "solemn rites" (144) the General could never achieve the "pious sacrilege" of necessary murder and thereby "relieve our earth of certain monsters, and enable honest people to sleep in their beds" (128). Catholicism restores order to their Protestant world, because without it, there would be no counteragent against the monstrous emergence of evil forces that threaten to destroy or corrupt all they come into contact with.

Reading Carmilla from a feminist point of view, Auerbach states she is "not the product of a single maker's potency, but the spirit of an elusive female community who may be her makers or merely her confederates, and whose power only women perceive" (40). But this logic can also be applied when reading the novel with Irish issues in mind. Carmilla is not just the product of LeFanu's imagination, but the result of the impact of his entire culture's uncertainty on his mindset. Hence, she is a representation of an Irish "community." In the story we see the fear of the other but also the fear of what is evil within ourselves. LeFanu presents anxiety about Irish revolution, but also a fear of

⁹ The Oxford English Dictionary defines it both as a general garment of the clergy, but also specifically designates its use by Anglican ministers ("cassock").

his own role in the repression and destruction of another group's way of life, and the uncertainty of watching that group destroy itself to be free. Carmilla is at times demonized and is ultimately destroyed in the last sections, but for the most part she is cherished and admired. Even in the last sentences of the story she is remembered first as "playful, languid, [and] beautiful" before Laura thinks of her as a "writhing fiend" (148). LeFanu "initially encourages us to see Carmilla in terms of traditional stereotypes; then he reveals the depths which indicate her humanity and our initial inhumanity" (Veeder 211), which reveals his own confusion about the native Irish he both defended and despised. For he and Stoker, and all Protestant Irish Gothic authors,

Irish Anglican identity...underwent this horrific...entry into language: the image of themselves as ideally liberal, balanced, rational and harmonious-- as unique versions of the 'English' in other words--was refused by the discourse of the world. Irish Catholics depicted them as cruel and rapacious, but, more importantly, English Protestants considered them as essentially the same as Irish Catholics. The 'double-vision' of ambivalent Irish Anglicanism is a function of the radical split in the ego that occurs when the subject enters into language, an expression of which is ' a pervasive sense of authorial doubt...' that characterizes Irish Anglican writing, and becomes the structuring frame of Gothic fiction. (Killeen 74)

The genre serves an almost carnivalesque function, allowing them to enact the ambiguity they felt and at times expressed politically, but ultimately destroy it, and attempt to somehow destroy and control the uncertainty that disquieted them.

Chapter 2:

“the dead travel fast”¹⁰

“What can account for the persistent power of Stoker’s vampire? The word monster is derived from a Latin word that means both to ‘to warn’ and ‘to reveal,’ ...What does *Dracula* warn us of?” (Williams 9)

For all its notoriety as a gothic text, *Dracula* is, on the surface, hard to see in an Irish Gothic light. Besides its author, it has few distinguishably Irish qualities. Its characters are British, its setting is for the most part England, and its sympathies seem to lie with the promotion of the Empire and its ideals. However, as popular authorial myth tells us, it has its origins in the Gothic qualities of Stoker’s own Irish childhood. Daniel Farson, Stoker’s grand nephew, recalls in *The Man who Wrote Dracula: A Biography of Bram Stoker*; that the author was told stories by his mother which recounted her experiences as a young woman living in Sligo during the cholera epidemic that overtook Western Europe in 1832. These were tales of very real horror, which described infected travelers “pushed...living” into pits and corpses being steadily removed from the houses around them (13-14). These stories seem to have had a deep impact on the young Stoker, and in response to the confusion of his ambivalent heritage--as mentioned, his mother was the product of a “native Irish family” and grew up in the rural west, while his father “could claim strictly Anglo-Saxon, or even British descent” (Valente 16)--he created a novel that allowed him to both display his concern for the state of his maternal home but also his support of the regimes of his father’s empire (See Valente 22-23). He was torn between the cultures he was a product of, and his most famous novel is an “objectification of [his] own eccentric (peculiar/decentered) Irishness, a form of identity

¹⁰ The author is quoting from Gottfried August Bürger’s ballad “Lenore” here (Stoker 159).

that both lacks and exceeds coherence or closure and so perpetually both desires and threatens itself” (Valente 18).

Just as the story behind this novel lies somewhere deeper in the author’s past, the Irish Gothicism of *Dracula* is hidden beneath its surface, its setting and characters loosely veiled allegories for the troubles of Ireland. Although Arata asserts the perfection of Transylvania as the setting for Stoker’s novel, the conditions he states are easily applicable to Ireland. He characterizes the then Austro-Hungarian province as marked by “political turbulence and racial strife,” “endemic cultural upheaval,” (627) and points out that “The cycle of empire--rise, decay, collapse, displacement--was there displayed in a particularly compressed and vivid manner” (627-28). Though choosing the well known and contemporarily tumultuous area of Transylvania as the setting does provide *Dracula* with “distinctly political overtones”¹¹ (627), Ireland is a place easily described in those same terms. Just as *Dracula* is allegorical for Stoker’s confused identity, the settings of the novel are easily seen as representations of Ireland. The most interesting, perhaps, is Seward’s asylum, which can be seen as a microcosm of Ascendancy Ireland.

Seward is the Anglo-Irish landlord; like the British, he is in control of a group that has been deemed unfit in some way by an arbitrarily “better” one. His position solidly in the middle as neither gentry nor lower class, also reflects the Anglo-Irish’s position as

¹¹ Transylvania has been in a constant state of flux since its establishment, passing hands from the Hungary to the Ottoman Empire, before finally becoming a Romanian province in 1918. During Stoker’s lifetime the country was in turmoil because “the pressure of Roman Catholic and bureaucratic rule gradually undermined the distinctive character of Transylvania” and led to social division and revolution. There was strife between the upper and lower classes, and when, “The Romanian peasantry, which had been developing their own national consciousness and agitating for more extensive political and religious liberties, took a stand against the Magyars [Hungarians] and swore allegiance to the Habsburgs” the Habsburgs were able to take control and “Transylvania was separated from Hungary and transformed into a Habsburg crown land, subject to strict absolutist rule” but was “Subsequently it was reabsorbed into Hungary (1867)” (“Transylvania”). These were issues Stoker’s contemporaries would have been well aware of and thus would have understood these “overtones.”

members of neither British nor Irish society. He belongs to the in between, and like the Anglo-Irish left to control the “savage” natives of Ireland, he must deal with the problems of the riven country. For example, he faces with the insanity of rebellion and loyalty to the Irish cause which is illustrated through the inmates of the asylum. Figures representative of incarcerated Irish rebels, who are trapped in a system that doesn’t know how to treat them and that thrives on their misfortunes. This is especially evident in Seward’s relationship to Renfield, Dracula’s “zoophagous”¹² (246) lackey. Stewart goes so far as to suggest that “the anomalous character Renfield--whose insanity takes the form of manic loyalty to Dracula--can be seen as a counterpart of John Mandeville, the Land League leader imprisoned after the Michelstown Massacre of October 1887 who occupied his cell in utter nakedness and died within a year of his release in consequence” (247). Renfield has been indoctrinated with Dracula’s plans and afflicted with a madness that is both a product of the vampire’s hypnotic powers and his fear of what his fate will be.

Seward describes Renfield’s “religious mania” (234)--he has begun collecting animals and consuming them under the appropriated mantra that ““the blood is the life””¹³ (342)--and fears that the “madman” will soon see himself as a “god.” Seward seems to have embraced a rather godlike position of his own, though, treating the patients as experiments and considering himself better than the attendants. He comments that

Renfield’s attitude towards him

¹² He is described as such because of his obsession with catching animals and feeding them to each other, before consuming them. For example he feeds flies to spiders and spiders to birds and then eats the birds himself.

¹³ A reference to Deuteronomy 12:23, “Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh.”

was the same as that to the attendant; in his sublime self-feeling the difference between myself and the attendant seemed to him as nothing...These infinitesimal distinctions between man and man are too paltry for an Omnipotent Being...The real God taketh heed lest a sparrow fall; but the God created from human vanity sees no difference between an eagle and a sparrow. (234)

Ironically, he is unable to see this quality in himself. He only knows that he is better than both Renfield and the attendant, making little distinction between why he feels superior to both. He even seems to be pleased with Renfield's submission, saying, once he has been calmed down after an episode, "the suffused look had gone from his face, and his eyes had something of their old pleading--I might say, 'cringing'--softness. I was satisfied with his present condition" (239). Later in the novel when he is discussing Renfield's beliefs with him, and the "lunatic" has denied any presupposition that he thinks himself a god, but asserts he is "in the position which Enoch occupied spiritually" (371), Seward is confused because he cannot "recall Enoch's appositeness" and is ashamed to "ask a simple question" because by doing so he is "lowering [him]self in the eyes of the lunatic" (372). He is so ashamed that Renfield knows something more than him that he cannot even bring himself to ask a question. He must "[maintain] his own position of social, moral, and especially rational superiority in relation to Renfield; as far as he is concerned, there is nothing Renfield can tell him that he does not already know" (Clemens 161). Renfield feels this relationship to Enoch because he "walked with

God” (371), as he walks with Dracula. Seward cannot “see the analogy” (371) because he does not allow himself to feel secondary to anyone.

When Mina goes to see Renfield, Dr. Seward is struck by her impact on his behavior. He speaks rationally, politely, and intelligently. The doctor is shocked by this change and comments in his diary,

Here was my own pet lunatic--the most pronounced of this type that I had ever met with--talking elemental philosophy, and with the manner of a polished gentleman...I was...astonished, for he addressed himself to [her] question with the impartiality of the completest sanity; he even took himself as an example when he mentioned certain things. (342)

Dr. Seward has forgotten Renfield’s humanity. It is easy to do, given his animalistic actions, but it is also unfair because as his “doctor” returning him to his humanity seems should be his goal. Instead he is a “pet,” a creature that Seward can manipulate, observe, and control for his own scientific interests. Later in the novel, when Renfield’s connections to Dracula have begun to be realized and all of the men go to see him, he again speaks rationally and presents a side of himself Seward cannot believe. He points out that Seward has not introduced him to the party and the doctor is “so much astonished, that the oddness of introducing a madman in an asylum did not strike me at the moment” (350). Renfield then begins to attempt to convince Seward to release him, as Renfield is aware of Dracula’s hold on him and wishes to be able to escape his influence. Seward’s refusal, because Renfield will not express the reason behind his desire to be free, devolves into him begging for his freedom because he is “a sane man fighting for

his soul” (353) and yet Seward will still not release him. This cruelty reflecting and foreshadowing years of mistreatment of Irish prisoners from the massacre of the men who participated in the Rebellion of 1798 to the men who died in the 1981 hunger strikes.

Seward’s colonizing mindset can also be seen in his allusion to the British Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli. He quotes his statement, ““The unexpected always happens”” and remarks, “How well Disraeli knew life” (240). This is significant when Disraeli’s politics in relation to Ireland are considered. Disraeli fought adamantly against the repeal of the Corn Laws, primarily because it was advocated by Sir Robert Peel, his once mentor who did not give Disraeli a position in Parliament once he became Prime Minister (“Benjamin Disraeli”). He demonstrated little concern for the actuality of how this legislation would affect the Irish, but was focused on the promotion of his career, just as Seward’s most vested interest is in science, rather than the healing of his patients.

Van Helsing chastises his friend for this myopic inclination, and knows that if they are going to be able to deal with Dracula he must open his mind beyond the narrow parameters of his scientific existence.

You are a clever man, friend John; you reason well, and your wit is bold; but you are too prejudiced. You do not let your eyes see nor your ears hear, and that which is outside your daily life is not of account to you. Do you not think that there are things which you cannot understand, and yet which are; that some people see things that others cannot? But there are things old and new which must not be contemplate by men’s eyes, because they

know--or think they know--some things which other men have told them.

(307)

Though he is impacted by seeing the undead Lucy, and cannot doubt the existence of vampires, Seward still cannot wholly believe in the supernatural. Perhaps because “The English had long regarded the Irish culture of tall tales and mythologizing as an escape from reality--and possibly even a leap into delirium or insanity” (Potts 86), and he does not want to consider himself anything like his patients, i.e. the native Irish. Some part of him knows that Renfield’s madness has everything to do with the Count’s influence, but giving into that knowledge would be the admittance of a world he cannot control or quantify. To be marginal, like the “lunatics,” reflects the Anglo-Irish’s uncertainty about their nationality and beliefs. Eventually their borderline position in Ireland “manifested itself economically, politically and spiritually. Religiously, what is an Irish Protestant’s country” (Foster 218). Seward has no certainty about faith because giving into the mystical whole heartedly is becoming Catholic, but turning away from it completely is to abandon the Protestant faith that was supposedly superior.

Dracula, in many ways, symbolizes what Seward is not. His existence defies what science says is possible, and his tempting promises of freedom and eternal life present an existence independent of British control to Renfield and the other patients/native Irish. In contrast to Seward’s need for control and repression, Dracula offers revolution and release. When he purchases Carfax, an abandoned estate, he assumes the domain of the landlord and claims what is ostensibly a representation of the dying “Big House.” Dracula’s occupation of this abandoned bastion of Englishness--it has connections to

“mediaeval times” (170)--allows him to take over Seward’s position in relation to Renfield, and thus the native Irish, and pervert it. Renfield is no longer required to please his doctor because his “master” has arrived to guide and save him from the confinement of his hospitalization. The Count has been learning about the English by studying maps, laws, and even social directories. Dracula infiltrates British society and slowly sways the people Seward thought he could control to his influence by “gain[ing] power, [and becoming] ‘master,’ by striving ‘to know as much about the natives as the natives themselves.’ The crucial difference is that in this case the natives are English” (Arata 639). Dracula is rarely actually present in the novel, except for the beginning. He is most often an ethereal presence disappearing into shadows. In relation to the “seldom dormant fears of an Irish uprising” (Arata 633) that terrified the Anglo-Irish, his physical absence and easy enmeshment in British culture makes sense. Irish rebellion was something that the Anglo-Irish feared, but they knew little about, and could not necessarily control it.

At times, however, Dracula serves a purpose similar to Seward’s. In Transylvania, he can easily be seen as a landlord, in control of subservient others, both his “Brides” and the gypsies which do his bidding, and he occupies a large estate, which he owns as a result of years of war and conquering. This reveals Stoker’s political uncertainties, and a preoccupation similar to LeFanu’s with the danger of Irish rebellion. Dracula is at once salvation for the imprisoned Irish, but also illustrates a force that can entrap them. Dracula manipulates Renfield, as Seward does, and is responsible for his death, brutally attacking him in his cell. As we learned with Carmilla, there can be a great cost in rebellion and devotion to a dangerous cause. Home Rule and freedom from the

manipulation and mistreatment suffered under the hands of the British was necessary for the Irish, but it came at a price. Renfield will be granted the things Dracula promises, but only if he “fall[s] down and worship[s]” the Count (379). Revolution is depicted in vampiric form not just because it illustrates how great the horror the return of something thought dead can be, but also because it occupies the interstitial space between bringing the hope of independence and potentially destroying lives.

The role of Catholicism is much more prominent in Stoker’s novel. There is no ambiguity of religion in the text, as there is in LeFanu’s. Like so many aspects of vampire fiction, the novel, in fact, solidified many of the implements of Catholicism associated with destroying the undead. From the use of the crucifix to the viability of the holy wafer, Stoker’s presentation of dealing with the destruction of vampires cemented how it is still depicted in popular fiction and film. The tension between Protestantism and Catholicism is evident from the beginning, nevertheless, as can be seen in Jonathan Harker’s uneasy reaction to the Transylvanian “peasants” religious responses when they learn he is traveling to Castle Dracula. He breaks his journey at an inn, and when the innkeeper and his wife discover where he is headed, they both cross themselves and beg him not to go. When the wife presents him with a crucifix for protection, he does not know what to do, “for as an English Churchman, [he had] been taught to regard such things as in some measure idolatrous” (154).

Later, when he is about to disembark the stage coach he is on to board the carriage Dracula has sent to retrieve him, his fellow passengers offer him “gifts, which they pressed upon [him] with an earnestness which would take no denial; these were certainly

of an odd and varied kind, but each was given in simple good faith, with a kindly word, and a blessing and that strange mixture of fear-meaning movements...the sign of the cross and the guard against the evil eye” (158). His inclination to believe these things “idolatrous” however blinds him to the fact that they are trying to protect him from something quite dangerous. His obliviousness is clear in his statement, “It was evident that something exciting was either happening or expected, but though I asked each passenger, no one would give me the slightest explanation” (158). He has no idea of the danger he is actually in until he is aboard Dracula’s carriage, careening through the darkness of the Transylvanian countryside. Presented with the threat of packs of wolves and the mysterious dangers that fill the woods around him, he admits “It is only when a man feels himself face to face with such horrors that he can understand their true import” (161). Just as Laura cannot understand the dangers that exist in the world because of her sheltered existence, the barrier of Jonathan’s Protestant beliefs separate him from a world that acknowledges and understands the supernatural and can thus create safeguards against it. As he spends more time trapped in Dracula’s castle, however, and the paradigm of everything he thought true shifts, he comes to have more faith in the tokens he has been given, even though he does not necessarily understand them.

What meant the giving of the crucifix, of the garlic, of the wild rose, of the mountain ash? Bless that good, good woman who hung the crucifix around my neck! for it is a comfort and a strength to me whenever I touch it. It is odd that a thing which I have been taught to disregard with disfavour and as idolatrous should in a time of loneliness and trouble be of help. Is it that

there is something in the essence of the thing itself, or that it is a medium, a tangible help, in conveying memories of sympathy and comfort? (173)

Harker finally takes comfort in the mystic and foreign religion when he is forced to accept the strange and extramundane world of the Count. And when this world arrived on English shores, the other Protestant characters must learn to appreciate and believe in the “essence” of Catholic appurtenances.

The importance of Catholicism’s acceptance of the preternatural in the “real world” is vital when Dracula has penetrated the Empire and invaded their lives. Without Van Helsing’s familiarity with the religion’s practices and its power against the undead, the Englishmen would never be able to defeat Dracula and restore order to their home. Despite their trust in Van Helsing’s abilities, their Protestantism still leads them to be doubtful of his use of the trappings of the unknown religion. When he and the other men go to “save” Lucy from the fate Dracula’s bite has consigned her to, the Englishmen are already doubtful of his ideas, but when he brings Catholicism into the mix, they become even more uncertain.

Van Helsing...was employed in a definite way...he took from his bag a mass of what looked like thin, wafer-like biscuit...next he took out a double-handful of some whitish stuff, like dough or putty. He crumbled the wafer up fine and worked it into the mass...rolling it into thin strips, [which he] began to lay...into the crevices between the door and the setting in the tomb...

“I am closing the tomb, so that the Un-Dead may not enter.”

“What is that which you are using?” This time the question was by Arthur. Van Helsing reverently lifted his hat as he answered: --

“The Host. I brought it from Amsterdam. I have an Indulgence.” It was an answer that appalled the most sceptical of us, (323)

They trust the professor, and so they accept what he is doing, even though it goes against the beliefs they were raised with. Again, Catholicism proves to be a necessary part of balancing the line between restricting and warning of what is dangerous in regard to the native Irish and revealing what is a valuable part of the culture of the nation.

The Gothic is not a genre that allows the closing of bounds between groups but that problematizes and opens them. The vampires are destroyed at the end of these works, “LeFanu and Stoker ultimately sid[ing] with the heteronormative forces that violently reorder the pandemonium their demonic protagonists unleash” (Backus 112), but the tradition that spawned them still thrives and still has some deep resonance with those who read it. These works are not just about Anglo-Irish or Catholic problems but about the dangers of extremes. Fanaticism in either direction is dangerous and finding balance in the space between them is necessary. These works, while interpretable as expressions of Anglo-Irish guilt, can also be proven to demonstrate another side of Irish struggles by illustrating not only the dangers of rebellion but the importance of Catholicism. The Gothic was born not just of the guilt of colonizing, but reflects its unsettling impact on all who were affected by it. Irish Gothic does not divide but helps to show how Imperialism affected all Irish citizens and impacted their ability to claim an identity. As Backus asserts, “Irish and Anglo-Irish identities in various ways symptomatically blur and

collapse so that both Irish and Anglo-Irish...are depicted as appropriate unconscious bodies spoken by a demonic god of colonial history that, over time, consumes colonizer and colonized alike” (108). By addressing the views that saw the Anglo-Irish as nothing more than heartless landlords and the native Irish as savage monsters, LeFanu and Stoker make their readers aware of the problems of Irish identity and the stereotypes that were being perpetuated. Through tapping into the universal fear that this confusion of self caused, they made obvious not what is different but what is similar between the Irish.

Throughout *Dracula*, characters take comfort in the act of recording their thoughts, be it through journals or literally recording them on the phonograph. Mina, for instance, writes “I am anxious, and it soothes me to express myself here; it is like whispering to one’s self and listening at the same time” (210). Their personal records allow them to express the things they could not in everyday speech and come to terms with the troubles they face, both natural and supernatural. In this way, this aspect of these novels is the most direct mirror of their authors. LeFanu and Stoker were trying to access what troubled their existence and find some manageable way to address it, as Jonathan Harker confesses, “As I must do something or go mad, I write this diary” (387). Todorov observes that “language is not a stockpile of words but a mechanism” (19), and for the authors of the Irish Gothic it serves the important and almost carnivalesque purpose of release and relief from not only the guilt of simply being Anglo-Irish but also the mixed feelings of being sympathetic to a group they are supposed to see as something less than human. “For LeFanu [and Stoker], the strangeness of vampirism is its kinship to the commonplace” (Auerbach 44) of their own liminal existence. It was no stretch for

them to imagine a being who existed between two worlds and struggled to survive in cultures that rejected and felt threatened by them, because that was the very condition of being Anglo-Irish.

Chapter 3:

Rewriting the Irish Gothic

“Who the fuck did he think he was--Count Dracula?” (McCabe 105)

As we move towards a more modern Irish Gothic, we can see the abandonment of most of the trappings of conventional Gothicism. After the layered and ornate texts of the early Gothic, the modern is sparse by comparison. What is eerie about the Irish Gothic works of the twentieth century is, in fact, their stark, inescapable, and unsettling depictions of how the anxiety that LeFanu and Stoker attempted to destroy, rises and in turn destroys Ireland’s future: “In this version of Gothic, the sins of the past become part of the underside of modernity itself as it weighs upon the minds of the living” (Gibbons 24). While Le Fanu and Stoker present us with an ending that sees the Gothic force suppressed, modern authors present a more desperate depiction of the Anglo-Irish state and their relationship to Ireland’s history of colonization. When the Gothic moves into the modern, we see it shift from the fantastic darkness of LeFanu and Stoker to a sparse imagining of the Irish landscape that is psychological as much as physical. This is especially evident in the startling creations of the new Catholic order of Irish authors.

In *Irish Gothic Revisited*, as I mentioned earlier, Killeen concludes that Catholic authors’ participation in the Irish Gothic is “a mode of writing back, a kind of reverse Gothic” in which they “attempt...to appropriate an alien form,” but I will again disagree with him to assert that Catholic authors have just as much right to the genre as their Protestant counterparts. Instead of simply creating Gothic fiction to work through their confused emotions and identities, the native Catholic Irish have embodied a Gothic existence and hence “subversively recycle[d] gothic tropes” (Backus 1) to claim for their

own a genre that expresses their misfortunes as easily as it demonstrated the issues of the Anglo-Irish who pioneered it. They still present the “decay” and the debasement of institutions, like social hierarchies and organized religion, but they revolutionize how readers of the Gothic understand those things and how we decide what is monstrous. Catholic authors are not “writing back,” but are rewriting the Irish Gothic.

One of the most notable Catholic authors to emerge as a part of the modern Irish Gothic is Patrick McCabe. Born in Clones, County Monaghan, the author is the self-proclaimed leader of his own subgenre, the “Bog Gothic” (“King of Bog Gothic”), so called because of his mostly realistic depictions of the darker side of life in rural Ireland. As Kate Walls argues in her study of McCabe, “[his] novels don’t deal with the successes of the Irish experience...[but]...with the botched operations--those who are pummeled by the suppressed gothic currents that exist in Ireland and are mentally unable to emerge productive human beings” (6). What is terrifying in McCabe’s work is not a supernatural creature to be defeated but human depravity, reflecting not only a postmodern sensibility but a universal and uncanny fear of our own potential for evil. In *The Butcher Boy*, the burden of monstrosity is shared by all Irish and ultimately all people. Indeed,

there exists gothic elements of the Irish condition on a much more daily and immediate level. Poverty, rampant alcoholism, depression, domestic violence, and child abuse...are concrete social problems that the Irish are only beginning to explore after decades of masking the realities of these crimes. (Walls 2-3)

McCabe's fiction embodies and makes stark these truths, forcing them from the shadows of the Gothic past into the light of the postmodern world.

I will focus on his novel, *The Butcher Boy*, which earned the designator of Gothic, not only because of its nightmarish plot, but “[because] of its social ramifications...[and confrontation of] the repressed fears of the society it represents” (Potts 83). *The Butcher Boy* is the blackly funny and deeply disturbing account of the unstable Francie Brady. He is a neglected and traumatized young man who has been institutionalized because he ultimately commits a violent crime as a result of his years of mistreatment. Francie Brady is by turns comically endearing and unsettlingly unreadable. He grows up badly, mostly on the streets of the town he lives in. His father is an alcoholic and his mother is sent to a mental hospital after she attempts suicide; here we experience some of McCabe's grim and poignant humor because when Francie hears one of the women say his mother has had a “breakdown,” his friend Joe assures him that “it's when you're took off to the garage...when the truck comes and tows you away. that was a good one I thought, ma towed away off up the street with the coat on” (9). The insertion of humor, albeit blackly, in addition to his use of stream of consciousness and fragmented language, are McCabe's most basic transformations of the Irish Gothic. He takes the precedent set by LeFanu, Stoker, and other Gothic authors of presenting a novel that is a recording of past events-- Francie writing his story at the prompting of doctors in the mental institution where he is being held--but moves away from the staid, formal, and highly organized language that is used in works like *Dracula* and *Carmilla*. McCabe gives his deranged narrator free reign and thus more authentically represents the chaos of Gothic confusion.

Francie is jealous of another local family, the Nugents, who are “rather like an Irish version of the Cleaver[s]” (Potts 84). They are “refined,” adopting English manners and mindsets, clean, and seemingly perfect. Mrs. Nugent, on the other hand, sees the Bradys as repugnant, and representative of every bad misconception of the native, “wild,” Catholic Irish. After Francie steals Philip’s comic books, Mrs. Nugent comes to speak with his mother, and berates the whole family--

She said she knew the kind of us long before she went to England and she might have known not to let her son anywhere near the likes of me what else would you expect from a house where the father’s never in, lying about the pubs from morning to night, he’s no better than a pig. You needn’t think we don’t know what goes on in this house oh we know all right! Small wonder the boy is the way he is what chance has he got [...]

(5)

Potts discusses in detail the history of the use of the word “pig” as a derogatory term for the native Irish throughout history, from its basis in ancient Ireland’s “epithet...Muck Inis, or ‘Pig Island,’ probably [due to] the large pig population encountered by early visitors to the island,” to its repeated use in political cartoons of the nineteenth century, which use the pig to associate the Irish with stupidity and uncleanness (86-91). By invoking this stereotype of the Irish, McCabe is accessing the generational wounds still raw after centuries of conflict between the Anglo and native Irish and using this degradation to revolutionize the Irish Gothic. Francie Brady is human, which problematizes the typical Gothic scheme because he is not a supernatural creature that can be destroyed like a rabid

animal, but a young man abused and confused by the system in which he was raised. McCabe is also transforming how the Gothic functions because modern readers would not see Francie as a monster, as the readers of *Carmilla* and *Dracula* would have seen the vampires, but understand that those on the fringes of our society are most often misunderstood and confused by either mental illness or the detriment of false generalizations. McCabe is making clear how grotesque people's treatment of those "others" can be, rather than using the figure who commits acts of monstrosity to blame another group for social ills. In *The Butcher Boy*, we do not have to search beneath the surface for what LeFanu and Stoker may actually be saying about Irish struggles, but must be blind to not see that what has been considered monstrous in the past may simply be misunderstood and horribly mistreated. Francie is not a demon, but a little boy who acts out because he has been told he is nothing more than a pig.

Walls argues that because of the "neo-gothic" circumstances of their childhoods McCabe's characters can never "grow" or mature, but are caught in a perpetual traumatized, and childlike mindset (35). Francie's corrupted innocence lead him to play these increasingly violent games and eventually go to "murderous lengths" to become the thing Mrs. Nugent has convinced him he is. These "lengths" start with his breaking into the Nugents' house and defecating in their living room because, as Francie explains, "pigs are forever doing poo all over the farmyard, they have the poor farmer's heart broken. They'll tell you that pigs are the cleanest animals going. Don't believe a word of it" (61). Even though he is committing this seemingly unimaginable act, in his mind he projects it onto Philip, attempting to turn him into a pig, degrading his disparagers if they will not

accept him for who he really is. Again McCabe is suggesting that the problems of Irish society were not the marginal figures, but those who made them feel as if they had no place in their communities. Francie is only bad because people have convinced him he is. Like the native Irish, he is a victim of social stereotypes that are out of his control. He wants to see those who have put him down demeaned because they are much fouler than any of his original intentions.

After committing this act, Francie is immediately driven to a religiously run “school for bad boys” (66). Instead of helping Francie, however, it only disturbs his mind more, because he continues to be abused and neglected by the adults around him. He is sexually abused by a priest, Father Sullivan, and is ignored by the others, just as the town looked down on his state of neglect rather than trying to help him. When the abuse is discovered, Father Sullivan goes “to Dublin to visit his sister” (94), but nothing is done to help Francie deal with the abuse. After he leaves, Francie is summoned by the headmaster, who he refers to as “Bubble,” not to be comforted or apologized to, but to be fed a story about the priest who abused him and locked into an unspoken agreement not to tell why the man had to leave. As he says, “That was what Bubble was afraid of. That everybody would hear” (95). Again, McCabe is manipulating one of the basic tropes of the Gothic novel, the secret/secret pact. Instead of serving as the mysterious heart of this novel, however, this secret is empty and meaningless, because once again modern readers know of the abuses of Catholic priests¹⁴ and are sadly less surprised by this unsettling

¹⁴ Research into the abuse of children by Catholic priests began in the 1990s and is still being conducted. Walls observes that “the recent 2,600-page report that resulted from a nine-year inquiry into the extent of the abuse perpetrated at the hands of the Irish Catholic clergy has been a huge step forward in exposing the scope of this horrific past” (51).

detail than readers of the past would have been. The frightful secrets that were slowly and teasingly unfolded in the course of the Gothic works of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to lead to the thrilling culmination of the novel, are not the secrets seen here. They are ironic, revealing our postmodern knowledge of the atrocities of the world and McCabe's refusal to hide them: "What Patrick McCabe has done is to throw these elements of the Irish mundane into stark relief through the employment of a neo-Gothic style--we are shocked into seeing how truly unnatural these social problems are" (Walls 3).

When he is done at the "school," Francie returns to the town only to find that his mother has died, and that his father is in a near catatonic state. He tries to take care of him, vowing that he isn't "going to let ma and da or anyone down ever again" (121). But he's just a disturbed child who cannot see that the world has let him down and the tragedy of his life deepens. He gets a job at the butcher's when his ability to quickly and easily kill piglets is discovered, but his efforts to care for his family are not enough. His father dies, his body sitting in the house for an unnatural period of time. Francie lives with his father's corpse, in a haze of dreams of what his life should be. When the situation is discovered, he is again sent away, institutionalized at the school he had been sent to before, where he exists in a haze of delirium and confinement. When he first wakes up there, he imagines music, and has a rare feeling of hope:

Then I heard music. It was a song I knew...I couldn't make it out right but I knew it was something to do with the snowdrop and the cries of children playing in the lane. It kind of said: You might be wrong about all that

Francie. Maybe all these things are beautiful and worth having. Listen to the music and you'll see what I mean. It surged, it was music with wings...and what it said was nothing bad would ever happen again. (144)

The hallucinations that are a product of his overwhelming mental illness, are both liberating and confining. He finds the joy of escape in visions like that one, but he can also not run away from the agonizing events that have led him to be placed in the asylum, often dreaming of being ridiculed by the people of his town. Francie is “rehabilitated” through electro shock therapy and pills that seem to remove some of his hallucinatory tendencies, but nothing is actually done to help him deal with what has really damaged him. In this instance his connection to his Gothic predecessors is clear, as his position mirrors that of the beleaguered Renfield, misunderstood and victimized by a system that does not attempt to understand him but simply tries to repress that in him which opposes what has been deemed “normal.”

When he is released and finally able to return home, Francie resumes his job at the abattoir and slowly descends further into madness, despite his renewed goal of being “Francie Brady Not a Bad Bastard anymore,” (76), and his promises to Leddy, who owns the business, that he will “work twice as hard now” (161). He cannot keep these promises, though, because of the feelings of ostracism and abandonment the town evokes in him. The downward spiral he has been on from the beginning of the novel, only begins to move faster, and Francie becomes further victim to the delusions of his tormented mind. In the end, he brutally murders Mrs. Nugent in her kitchen, taking his ultimate revenge by shooting her with the gun used at the abattoir to stun pigs, and

writing “PIGS” on the walls in her blood (195). The murder he commits is not the relatively gore-less depiction of vampirism the earlier novels offered, but a violent and disturbing crime that presents the truth of what the consequences of Irish conflict are, hiding none of the perversion of humanity behind the figure of a monster.

The shockingly dark course of events in this relatively brief novel is almost unbearable, but McCabe has a deep and important purpose in creating this horrendous tale, as any Irish Gothic author does in creating a work that strives to somehow depict the actual horror of their history. This novel presents the otherness of the Catholic Irish, as its predecessors have, but McCabe allows us to see this difference from the “monster’s” point of view, letting the reader see the heartbreak and damage that result from being ostracized because of your faith or cultural background: “We wonder what kind of twisted individual could do something like that, and then by taking a closer look at their backgrounds, we see their behaviour is the embodiment of a culture with significant problems that need to be brought to light” (Walls 96). What is seemingly more monstrous than Francie’s crimes, is the willful ignorance of his suffering that characterizes how he is treated by his family, neighbors, and those religious and medical professionals who should be taking care of him.

Arguably, though, through writing about these horrors McCabe and those who read his works are facing and acknowledging the problems that ruined Francie, and helping himself and others to grow in a way his characters cannot. In this way, Gothic fiction is a catharsis for Gothic realities. These texts cannot make up for the actuality of atrocity, but they can address it and give the author and the reader control and a safe

space to consider what has happened to them or those they know. As Walls notes, “It is not the responsibility of a novelist to be ‘more sensitive,’ and, if anything, it takes more courage to directly approach such horrifying material, rather than make the reader or society at large feel safer or less disgusted by disguising the details which might condemn them” (5).

Ironically, another way McCabe rewrites the Irish Gothic, is by turning away from the Anglo-Irish authors’ depiction of the power and benefit of Catholicism. Potts points out that “the traditional refuge of Ireland, Catholicism proves equally unsatisfying for Francie” (92). In one regard, it is because by the time of McCabe’s writing and in the years that follow the novel’s publication, information and prosecution of priests who molested children began. Hence, he could not ignore the issue in his highly socially conscious novel, and places Francie in the heinous situation, removing any trust he might have had in the Catholic church. In addition, Francie’s participation in the tradition of being visited by Saints, another manifestation of his mental instability, only draws the attention of Father Sullivan, the priest who violates him. When he begins to have these visions, it is at first the Virgin Mary, who is then followed by a host of others. Francie describes “talking to a few more, St. Joseph and the Angel Gabriel and a few others I don’t know the name of. The more the merrier. I went through Father Sullivan’s books and found out dozens of the fuckers. St. Barnabas, St. Philomena. We could have had six matches going on at once in the low field there was that many” (78). Not only do these visions lead to the priest’s fascination with Francie, but they do little to guide him. Mary, for example, is comforting to Francie, but she does little more than encourage him to “be

good” (77) in the same vague way the actual adults around him do. Not the stronghold of saving mysticism that LeFanu and Stoker relied on in their novels¹⁵, Gothic Catholicism has been emptied of its magic and revealed for something perpetuated and misused by men. Those in the novel who do faithfully believe are the very townspeople who never helped Francie, and who are too distracted by their preparations for the supposedly impending appearance of the Virgin to realize that he has murdered Mrs. Nugent in the midst of their celebrations. Anglo-Irish authors had to annex Catholicism to bring the arcane quality their religion could not provide; McCabe was raised in it, and so he can see past its mystery to the people and the evil that can be contained within it.

The Butcher Boy and McCabe’s other works show that as the Gothic tradition continues in Ireland it becomes much more realistically dark and directly faces that which LeFanu and Stoker hid beneath the unrealistic surfaces of the monsters they created, the evil of humanity. What terrifies the minds of authors like McCabe is their own culture’s culpability in the suffering of others and of future generations because they have not dealt with their own harrowing experiences. In an interview with Maurice Fitzpatrick, McCabe discusses the social problems that plagued (and to some extent still plague) Ireland, recalling that during his time as teacher, he saw many children come in starving because of neglect: “I wasn’t one of those people who it made [their] blood boil; I wanted coldly to do something about it. And it has been done now, so that’s far more important than anything. Perhaps more important than art in a way--that people do not suffer. It was kind

¹⁵ “For a Catholic, religious authority provided the arbitrary; an Irish Protestant had to look elsewhere” (Foster 222).

of unbearable” (57). He cannot turn away from what Walls terms the Irish mundane¹⁶ but faces it head on, so that what happened to Francie will not happen to the children of Ireland. His work does not come to the neatly tied up ending that *Carmilla* and *Dracula* do, but leaves us with the knowledge that throughout Ireland people damaged by the lasting impacts of colonialism exist, some dealing with the issues through discussing them, but others permanently injured by them and lost like Francie.

It seems likely that LeFanu and Stoker would be shocked not only by the style of McCabe’s novel, but also by the vulgarity of it. However, it also seems likely that in it they would be able to see the seed of their own novels, because all three of the works discussed here are at their core utterances of discontent with the confusion of their societies. Matthew Schultz states in his article, “‘Give it Welcome’: Gothic Inheritance and the Troubles in Contemporary Irish Fiction,” that

Recognizing Gothic tropes in contemporary Irish historical fiction can, at the minimum, sharpen one’s reading of these works. The gothic provides us with both the theoretical framework and precise language for discussing Ireland’s historical ghosts, and for placing 21st century Ireland in conversation with the traumatic events of its historical past. Moreover, the Gothic points us to sites of imaginative reinvention of Ireland’s historical narrative and cultural myths, giving iconic historical events new social meaning in the present. Such reinvention offers us insight into the

¹⁶ “What I have coined the Irish mundane refers to the very gothic horrors of the Irish condition that have often not been discussed fully or go unexpected out of shame” (51).

psychology of contemporary Ireland more than it answers longstanding questions about complex historical events.¹⁷

We must read these works as literary and historical tradition because they are a conversation among generations of both Anglo and native Irish that allow commonalities between two groups who have been warring for so long to be found, and these relationships can perhaps serve to unify not only Ireland's literature but her people.

The threads that run between these Irish Gothic works prove they form a tradition. Looking to Killeen again, I would like to emphasize and agree with his opinion that "the Irish Gothic mode subsists in the Irish Gothic tradition" (*Irish Gothic Revisited*). As I have suggested, this body of texts cannot be seen as belonging solely to Protestants or Catholics, nor can it be claimed as simply a disparate body that does not form a tradition, or just a common mode that recurs in Irish literature. The Irish Gothic is a tradition that encompasses a mode of expression that allows men and women scarred by a colonial existence to find some peace and control through writing. Either through the destruction of the other that shames them and complicates their existence, or the unflinching acknowledgment of that mistreated figure, both Protestant and Catholic authors embrace this lasting tradition to search for forgiveness for the sins of their history and perhaps try to lead future generations to make some change. Each side of the Irish struggle has perpetuated violence against the other, but the Gothic allows it to be seen that each side's suffering is based in the same desire--a need to be able to live freely and to be true to the beliefs that define them. The texts that comprise the Irish Gothic are not just scary stories

¹⁷ This article is from the same online journal as Killeen and Haslam's, and also has no page numbers.

created to frighten and entertain their readers, but deeply allegorical works meant to reveal the discontents of Irish culture and open spaces in which they can be discussed.

Conclusion

“I sometimes think we must be all mad and that we shall wake to sanity in strait-waistcoats” (Stoker 375).

In speaking of the currency of the Gothic mode, Ann B. Tracy notes that the “Gothic’s supernatural effects depend upon a foil of normalcy, some sane world that can be disrupted” and remarks that if this is true, “the genre may have fallen on hard times” (39). Her statement is questionable, however, because the world that produced the earliest gothic works, seemed “sane” but was in fact no saner than today; everything seems out of control while you are in it and easier once it is done. If the modern world was so insane the Gothic would not be growing and flourishing as it currently is. The Gothic is everywhere in contemporary books, film, and television, dominating popular culture. While some may believe the Gothic has lost some of the weight that was behind the politically inspired Gothic of the past, we must remember that when those works were published they were the popular, and deeper meaning has been gradually assigned to them through years of study. Many current Gothic works, from hallmarks of the new Irish Gothic like McCabe, to some of the most popular modern Gothic works, like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *True Blood*, and even the *Twilight* series, are already being studied and perceived as something more than scary stories.

The Gothic is more than a reflection of guilt or oppression but a universal place where shared fears allow us to access something that is disturbingly strange but also eerily familiar. Like every other system of myth or superstition, the Gothic seeks to address our fears and somehow explain the world in which we exist. Even with changes in society, fear is a universal language. It is an instinctual and primal reaction shared by all creatures. The sound of a step in an empty house, a ghastly face in the window, the

mystery of what we cannot see in the darkness, all make our hair stand on end even if we don't like to admit it. Fear can be as binding as it is divisive, and through it we can learn not only about our own issues but the problems of humanity. Human fear will never end, and though this sounds bleak, it is also true and the gothic is a necessary repercussion.

The Gothic does not unsettle because it is unfamiliar but because of the familiarity we find in its pages, and these authors knew that. In *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick observes that "To wake from a dream and find it true--that is the particular terror at which these episodes aim" (Sedgwick 28). The authors of the Irish Gothic awoke and found themselves living in a nightmare. They created works which did the same to express the terror of that feeling and relate to those who existed in the same disturbing world. This is still happening in the works that have followed them both in Ireland and all over the world. The "Gothic is disturbing because it challenges the way we think, questions the way we divide up reality and threatens to discard our grades of meaning" (*Gothic Ireland* 16). It makes us face our fears but also provides a space where those fears end when we close a book or turn off the T.V. For Irish authors, creating Gothic works was a way to both escape the horrors of reality through the world of fiction, but also to use that fiction to bring themselves and their readers to a realization about their society.

So, even if some critics believe that the Gothic "has fallen on hard times," I would assert that it has simply evolved with each generation and that it will always be a viable mode of expression because we will always have fears. I think the truth of this is well expressed in an episode of one of the most popular modern Gothic creations, *Buffy the*

Vampire Slayer, which depicts the life of Buffy Summers, a teenage girl who also happens to be the “slayer,” supernaturally chosen to protect the world from vampires and other assorted “forces of darkness.” It has a scholarly body of criticism that reaches a volume almost as great as that of the literature discussed and has inspired just as much controversy. In the episode “Buffy vs. Dracula,” the Count makes his appearance in the town where Buffy lives, enjoying the eternal life he gained after Hollywood revived him from the final pages of Stoker’s novel. And even though Buffy stakes him, he is not destroyed but rises in the form of a fog. Buffy is still there however, with a pithy comment, “I’ve seen your movies. You always come back,” but she doesn’t stake him again. Instead, the chastised mist floats away, and the critical watcher of Buffy must wonder if the show’s creators are suggesting that Dracula and the gothic genre cannot be killed, and that society doesn’t want to kill it. Be it comic or darkly realistic, unlike the original Dracula, this revenant genre cannot be destroyed.

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