

‘[...] the cry of a woman keening. It came from the bog’: (Re)presentations of the Bog in Nineteenth-Century Irish Gothic Fiction

Marine Galiné*

University of Reims, France

* Address correspondence to Marine Galiné, CIRLEP – Bâtiment 13 recherche, Université de Reims Champagne Ardenne, 57 Rue Pierre Taittinger, 51096 Reims Cedex, France. Email: marine.galine@univ-reims.fr.

Abstract: In his 2016 monograph *Contentious Terrains*, Derek Gladwin pinpoints the intricate relations between the Irish bog and the Gothic, two cultural constructs which pertain, according to him, to the mysterious, the mesmerizing and the macabre. This paper addresses the literary representations of the bog in nineteenth-century Irish Gothic fiction, with specific emphasis on three works where the motif of the bog is given particular significance: Gerald Griffin’s ‘The Brown Man’ (1827), Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s *A Lost Name* (1868) and Somerville and Ross’s *An Irish Cousin* (1889). The bog in its organic properties allows writers of the Irish Gothic to manifest their anxieties about burying and/or excavating their past – as a protean space, it conjures up the contradicting motifs of stasis, collapse, decomposition and preservation of the dying body. It could also incarnate ‘the primitive past’ that the Anglo-Irish Protestant Gothic aims at expulsing. However, Gerald Griffin’s horrific portrait of a vampiric Celtic figure belies such reading, while Le Fanu’s or Somerville and Ross’s staging of the intrinsic relationship between the bog and female characters tends to query its gendered reading as a domestic space or traditional views of the Irish soil as feminine.

Keywords: Irish gothic, bog, femininity, heterotopia, domesticity