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*In A Glass Darkly* by Joseph  
Sheridan Le Fanu  
“Green Tea”, “The Familiar”, “Mr. Justice  
Harbottle”.

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## INDEX

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
<b>2. “GREEN TEA”</b> .....	7
2. 1. SPECTRAL ILLUSIONS .....	17
2. 2. ITS EYES WERE NEVER OFF ME.....	40
2. 3. A CHASM IN THE NARRATIVE.....	54
<b>3. “THE FAMILIAR”</b> .....	89
3. 1. PHANTOM STEPS .....	94
3. 2. THE CALLOUS SCEPTICISM OF A CONFIRMED INFIDEL.....	108
3. 3. I WILL SEE YOU AS OFTEN AS I PLEASE.....	124
<b>4. “MR. JUSTICE HARBOTTLE”</b> .....	138
4. 1. A GREVIOUS WRONG.....	143
4. 2. THE COPY OF AN ILLUSION .....	158
<b>5. CONCLUSIONS</b> .....	179
<b>6. BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	193

# In a Glass Darkly.

BY

J. SHERIDAN LE FANU,

AUTHOR OF "UNCLE SILAS," &C.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON :

R. BENTLEY & SON, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1872.

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*In a Glass Darkly,*  
London: Richard Bentley, 1872.  
First Edition

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*In A Glass Darkly* is a collection of three short-stories and two novellas by Anglo-Irish author Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814 - 1873) published in 1872. Defined as “essentially ghost fiction with a dash of pseudo-scientific thought”<sup>1</sup> these tales are presented as clinical case histories found among the papers of a German physician, Dr. Martin Hesselius. Written the year before Le Fanu’s death, *In A Glass Darkly* is the product of a subjectivity tormented by religious doubt and neurotic anxieties: it contains tales of individuals persecuted by retributive ghosts - "Green Tea ", "The Familiar ", "Mr. Justice Harbottle"; a mystery story of premature burial, "The Room in the Dragon Volant"; and the celebrated “Carmilla”, a novella featuring a female vampire preying upon a young lady.

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu was a rather prolific writer - publishing fourteen novels and even a greater number of ghost stories and tales of mystery - his career being driven mainly by economic adversities. He lived obscurely most of his life, his contribution to literature being recognized only a century after his death. He is nowadays renowned as a “a supreme specialist”<sup>2</sup> of supernatural and mystery fiction:

[...] best of all are his highly personal stories of tortuous psychologies, of remarkable guilt and their hypostatization, of strange states of consciousness and unconsciousness, where the boundaries of the fanciful and the real swirl away into a mist of pain and terror.<sup>3</sup>

He was born in Dublin in 1814. The Huguenot heritage of the Le Fanus and the Gaelic

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<sup>1</sup> Cook, Michael. *Detective Fiction and the Ghost Story: The Haunted Text*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Cox M., Gilbert R.A. *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991. p. xviii.

<sup>3</sup> Bleiler E.F. “Introduction” to *Ghost Stories and Mysteries*, New York: Dover Publication, 1975, p. iii.

ancestry of the Sheridans triggered in him “a particular sensitivity to the darker implications of a fractured society.”<sup>4</sup> His father was a Church of Ireland clergyman, who suddenly lost his source income after the Tithe War broke out. Le Fanu spent his childhood first in Dublin and then in the countryside of Abington, where he came in direct contact with the Irish Catholics prone to insurrections and the use of violence. He studied law at Trinity College and was called to the bar in 1839 but he never practiced the profession, working instead as a writer for various newspapers and periodicals and becoming owner and editor of the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1840. His first collection of stories, *Ghost Stories and Tales of Mystery*, was published in 1851. Le Fanu lived in a politically complex period of Irish history: the Union Movement in the 1830s, the Tithe War which broke out in 1831 and the Famine Years of 1845-47, as well as the rebellion of 1848 Young Irelanders. Despite being sympathetic to the struggles of the Catholics, Le Fanu opposed the Reform Bill in 1832 and became a more radical Protestant in the 1840s opposing the revolutionists and Daniel O’Connell leadership. As a short-story writer and a novelist, “Le Fanu comes to stand as the representative of an isolated Protestant minority, haunted by the past, and increasingly besieged in the present by the growing sway of the Catholic middle classes, part of a specifically Irish Protestant gothic tradition.”<sup>5</sup>

After the premature death of his wife, Susanna Bennet, in 1858 Le Fanu progressively isolated himself from the social sphere turning into a reclusive and dedicating himself to the study of the Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg. Defined by McCormack as “one of literature’s eccentrics,”<sup>6</sup> Le Fanu was known as Dublin’s “Invisible Prince”. As many

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<sup>4</sup> Sage, Victor. “Irish Gothic: Maturin and Le Fanu”, in *A Companion to the Gothic* edited by David Punter. Malden, MA : Blackwell, 2006. p. 81.

<sup>5</sup> Daly, Nicholas, *The Demographic Imagination and the Nineteenth-Century City*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. p. 85.

<sup>6</sup> McCormack, W.J., *Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian England*, Dublin: The Lilliput Press LTD, 1991, p. 5.

of his characters, Le Fanu had financial difficulties for most of his life and “spent the last ten years [...] rewriting his earlier stories and presenting them as full-dress sensation novels for a predominantly English audience.”<sup>7</sup> His last work, *In a Glass Darkly*, has been defined as “his greatest achievement”<sup>8</sup>: in conjunction with the novel *Uncle Silas* (1864), this collection is Le Fanu’s most mature work.

This dissertation will take into consideration the first three stories of the collection. The reasons for this choice are to be found in the similarities between the tales: in the recurring plots and motifs, “Green Tea”, “The Familiar” and “Mr. Justice Harbottle” must be considered a cohesive unity. As extremely grim tales of persecuted individuals and suicide, these stories depict a world of punished infractions and mystical correspondent which scientific and rational models prove unable to fully explain. The title of the collection is in itself enigmatic. From the onset, the attention is focused on an antithesis: the glass, symbolic of optical transparency and clarity is contrasted to obscurity which stands for the inscrutable, the cryptic, the undetected. The title is a partial quotation of a Bible passage. The first epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians reads: “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” Whereas on this earth human vision is limited and obfuscated by the screen of material possessions, the after-life will be a moment of revelation and luminous divine encounter: the incomplete quotation, then, reveals Le Fanu’s pessimistic world view. Moreover, the substitution of the preposition “through” with “in” is far from casual: it suggests an epistemological crisis and depicts a world of doubt, uncertainty and misrecognition, to “emphasize the limitations of our access to the world beyond the self

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<sup>7</sup> Sage, *cit.*, p. 90.

<sup>8</sup> Begnal, Michael H. *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1971. p. 38.

as befits a post-Kantian.”<sup>9</sup> The Bible passage posits the glass as a deceptive screen of earthly falsities that the believer must surpass in order to meet God; on the other hand, it instills the hope for future clarity, a moment of revelation and comprehension: instinctive faith, despite optical obscurity or blindness, is ultimately rewarded. On the contrary, the partial quotation transposes the subject in search for clarity within the isolating confines of an obscure glass, a constraining space which prevents any such leap or any possible face to face encounter with God. In religious contexts, then, “the aspirant Christian now finds his attention trapped, or obscured, or obstructed, *within* what might have been thought the medium of successful vision.”<sup>10</sup>

The spiritual anxiety, however, seems to be founded upon a broader cognitive failure involving the subject: “the Bible-misquoting title suggests a lack of confidence in self-recognition. The self is seen but only in a glass darkly.”<sup>11</sup> McCormack pauses on the meaning of “glass” as well:

Even a casual consideration of the topic brings the realization that window-glass did not exist in New Testament times, that the ‘glass’ referred to was a mirror or looking-glass, reflecting not transparent. The Authorised Version of the Bible takes a liberty even by using ‘glass’ (the New Testament Greek is ‘esoptron’), for the mirrors of St Paul’s days were polished surfaces, metal for the most part.<sup>12</sup>

The titular glass, then, assumes a twofold significance. On one hand, it indicates the window: mediating between outside and inside, it provides a way out at the same time as it constitutes a way in for the threatening external forces. On the other hand, the glass is also a mirror, a close and self-referential system: in order for self-recognition to take

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<sup>9</sup> Milbank, Alison. “Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu: Gothic Grotesque and the Huguenot Inheritance”, in *A Companion to Irish Literature*, Volume One & Two, edited by J.M. Wright, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. p. 366.

<sup>10</sup> McCormack, W.J. *Dissolute Characters: Irish Literary History Through Balzac, Sheridan Le Fanu, Yeats, and Bowen*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993, p. 141.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

place, the observer must be captured by the reflective surface, objectified in an image and trapped within the confines of the frame in ghastly isolation.

Only in increments, and only in compromising way, is perception allow to work at all. In the three tales references to windows, reflections, optical illusions, looking-glasses, and lights are so recurrent that to reduce them to the status of mere aesthetic details would seriously limit the hermeneutic endeavour. "Green Tea ", "The Familiar ", "Mr. Justice Harbottle" revolve around visuality and question the shifting relations between the world and its observers: Le Fanu manifests an interest in the mechanics of the human eye, its potentiality of deception, for spiritual as well as psychological misrecognition. The skewed visual perception is in keeping with the Gothic mode: "one of the essential figure of the Gothic is its habit of distortion, as if looking through a badly made window."<sup>13</sup> Distortion alters forms and bends shapes: the persecutory entities in these tales are, indeed, all affected by distortions in size. The haunting element, then, is not simply a matter of *what* the protagonists of these tales see, but rather *how* they see: the mode of perception is the central component of these three stories.

The demarcation line between transparent and reflecting surfaces, between the window glass and the looking glass, is also the line which separates the two main interpretative models for the ghost story genre: either the source of horror is collocated outside, in the supernatural and hostile cosmos; or the haunting forces come from within, from the psyche of the subjects. A psychological reading of the tales in *In A Glass Darkly* shifts the focus on the mind, on the process by which fear - possibly even neurotic and psychotic disorders - are generated: "Le Fanu is wedded to a theory of projection to account for the haunting of men who call forth spirits to bear the parts of their own psyche which they

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<sup>13</sup> Punter, David. *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions From 1765 To The Present Day*. London: Longman, 1980. p. 200.

find unacceptable.”<sup>14</sup> The character of opacity, then, pertains not the mirror but the observers, suggesting that “the unfortunate haunted subjects [...] are, in beholding what seems most alien to them, actually seeing a dim reflection of their inner selves.”<sup>15</sup> Inscrutability befits not only the fictional characters, but readers as well. The content of these tales is never transparent and hardly grants direct access to crystal clear meanings; it is not sufficient to simply look out the window; rather, the content is reflective in the sense that it necessitates a reflection.

The following dissertation will attempt such an interpretative endeavour. “Green Tea”, “The Familiar” and “Mr. Justice Harbottle” will be individually analysed in the following sections: their thematic nucleuses will be explored and placed within the literary and cultural frames of the Victorian period. The focus will then be widened to include the philosophical, psychoanalytic and medical tools of modernity. Particular attention will be paid to the parallelisms between the three tales in order to unveil the direction of Le Fanu’s creative project. The fundamental argument is that while ghost stories seek to unsettle readers, in most cases refusing to provide a satisfying closure, nonetheless a hermeneutic strategy needs to and can be found: beyond the shock of horror, lies the intent to engage readers, to interrogate them rather than to simply terrify them. Behind the alienating narrative effect, there seems to hide a genuine interest in the multiple ways in which the surrounding world is seen and interpreted.

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<sup>14</sup> Milbank, Alison. *Daughters of the House: Modes of the Gothic in Victorian Fiction*. Basingtoke: Macmillan, 1992. p. 163.

<sup>15</sup> Tingle, Catherine Mary. *Symptomatic Writings: Prefigurations of Freudian Theories and Models of the Mind in the Fiction of Sheridan Le Fanu, Wilkie Collins and George Eliot*. (Doctoral Dissertation) University of Leeds, September 2000. p. 38.

## 2. “GREEN TEA”

First published in Charles Dickens's magazine *All the Year Around* in 1869 and later included in the collection *In A Glass Darkly*, “Green Tea” is Le Fanu’s best known story after “Carmilla”. Defined as “one among the best half-dozen ghost stories in the English language,”<sup>1</sup> the tale tells the story of a clergyman, reverend Mr. Jennings, who is persecuted by a demonic monkey visible exclusively to him. With its fixed red eyes and hypnotic powers, the monkey torments the reverend by squatting over his bible, singing blasphemies and taking away his ability to pray and to work. These circumstances are revealed by Jennings exclusively to the narrator of the story, Dr. Martin Hesselius, a German physician. Gaining the reverend’s trust through his professed knowledge of metaphysics, Hesselius is first invited to Jennings’s study, where he discovers an annotated copy of *Arcana Coelestia* by Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg, and later becomes the reverend’s trusted confidant. In one of their encounters, the physician learns that Jennings had been in the habit of consuming great quantities of green tea late at night while conducting a secret research into paganism: the reverend believes this research to be the cause of his current condition and sees in the persecuting monkey a spirit from hell sent to punish him for his indiscretions. Declaring Jennings’s ailment dependent on material causes, Hesselius promises to cure and to readily restore to health the clergyman, who meanwhile has abandoned his parish and has retired to an isolated house in the countryside. Despite the physician’s reassurances, however, Jennings commits suicide one night after trying and failing to get a hold of the mysteriously absent Hesselius.

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<sup>1</sup> Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan. *In a Glass Darkly*. Introduction by V. S. Pritchett. London: John Lehmann, 1947, p. 8.

The tale explores the theme of wavering faith and dangerous curiosity. Although the content of the reverend's findings remains unclear, the nature of the research implies that Jennings has in some measure been doubting the veracity of the Christian teachings, or at least questioning his own convictions. By opening his mind to the possibility of the supernatural, the reverend seals his damnation: the appearance of the monkey, symbolic of his curiosity and religious anxieties, further weakens his spiritual and emotional stability and leads him to self-destruction. On a second level, "Green Tea" is a story of paranoia and hallucinatory delusions. The ever present and all-observing black monkey functions as an externalization of Jennings's tormented mind: his inexplicable and socially damaging behaviour, the state of seclusion in which he forces himself, the baffling circumstances of his death are all indicative of deep-seated dysfunctions connected to mental disorders. Moreover, the titular green tea transforms an apparent story of supernatural persecution into a tale of addiction: in what can be considered a somehow puzzling turn, the effects and properties of tea are indeed intensified beyond measure.

The inability to perfectly place the supernatural element under the wing of scientific explanations constitutes what Julia Briggs calls a gap: "most stories which make use of scientific machinery – potent drugs or strange operations – leave a gap, an area which cannot be explained in strictly scientific terms [...] a gap between what actually happened and its scientific cause."<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the scientific authority in the story - Dr. Hesselius – falls under suspicion: his competence as a physician remains debatable, and his final diagnosis of Jennings's ailment further confuses, rather than elucidating, the situation.

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<sup>2</sup> Briggs, Julia. *Night Visitors: The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story*. London: Faber, 1977, p. 54.

In blending the traditional theme of “the haunted individual”<sup>3</sup> with psychological and even neuropathological elements, Le Fanu manages to keep the mystery of the story intact: despite the many “unnerving revelations”<sup>4</sup> that make it such a compelling tale, “Green Tea” ultimately remains open-ended and can be classified among those ghost stories that manage to “preserve untainted the atmosphere of horror”<sup>5</sup> on second reading. By escaping easy clarifications, “Green Tea” displays the characteristics of an exceptionally modern tale: with its unreliable narrators and framing devices, the tale goes beyond the conventions of the ghost-story genre, anticipating some of the features of a Freudian case-study. Indeed, the conversations between Jennings and Hesselius seem to take place in a psychoanalytical setting and their relationship develops through the typical mechanisms of transference and counter-transference between patient and analyst. In writing what has been defined “the archetypal ghost-story,”<sup>6</sup> Le Fanu also displays a thoroughly modern sensibility, receptive of the implications of unconscious conflicts and troubled interiorities.

This section is divided into three chapters. Chapter one takes its cue from the predominance of visual references that informs the story and analyses the figures of Mr. Jennings and Doctor Hesselius through a close reading of the opening chapters. Chapter two attempts an assessment of the reverend’s situation by considering both possible explanations: that he is persecuted by a demonic spirit from hell and, alternatively, that he is suffering from hallucinatory delusions. Chapter three focuses instead on the interpretative keys that can be used to yield some of the meanings of the text, including the emblematic figure of the monkey

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<sup>3</sup> Langan, John "Conversations in a Shadowed Room: The Blank Spaces in ‘Green Tea’", in *Reflections in A Glass Darkly*, edited by Gary William Crawford, Jim Rockhill and Brian J. Showers, New York: Hippocampus Press, 2011. p. 314.

<sup>4</sup> Pritchett, V.S., "An Irish Ghost", in *Reflections in A Glass Darkly, cit.*, p. 128.

<sup>5</sup> Benson, E.F., "Sheridan Le Fanu", in *Reflections in A Glass Darkly, cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>6</sup> Sullivan, Jack, "'Green Tea': The Archetypal Ghost Story", in *Reflections in A Glass Darkly, cit.*, p. 269.

and the titular green tea. First, however, an analysis of the structural aspects of “Green Tea” will illustrate the way in which the framing device used by Le Fanu answers to Gothic conventions and informs the story from a thematic point of view.

For a relatively short short story, “Green Tea” presents a rather complex narrative structure of frames and narrators. The actual story concerning reverend Mr. Jennings is an embedded story preceded by a brief prologue. This frame situates the story's origin as one amongst many medical studies of Doctor Hesselius, the German physician, who died in 1819. His cases have been left to a man who spent twenty years acting as his medical secretary "to be arranged, indexed and bound."<sup>7</sup> This secretary - the unnamed narrator of the prologue - is a trained physician and a surgeon himself, but has never practiced the medical profession: he was forced to abandon his aspirations after the unfortunate loss of two fingers. He met Doctor Hesselius during one of his wanderings:

In Dr. Martin Hesselius, I found my master. His knowledge was immense, his grasp of a case was an intuition. He was the very man to inspire a young enthusiast, like me, with awe and delight. My admiration has stood the test of time and survived the separation of death. I am sure it was well-founded (GT, 3).

The unnamed medical secretary functions as an intermediary figure between the extradiegetic and diegetic level. James Walton maintains that he “acts in effect as the principal narrator’s literary executor” and “as a surrogate for the author.”<sup>8</sup> Reverend Jennings's medical case is a first-person narrative written in epistolary form by Hesselius and addressed to his friend

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<sup>7</sup> Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan. “Green Tea”, in *In a Glass Darkly*. Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1990. p. 3. Henceforth all quotations are from this edition and will refer to this text as GT.

<sup>8</sup> Walton, James. *Vision and Vacancy: The Fictions of J. S. Le Fanu* Dublin: University College Dublin, 2007. p. 47.

Professor Van Loo, a chemist and occasional play-writer. In the letters, Doctor Hesselius recounts how he became acquainted with Mr. Jennings and the circumstances which led the reverend to trust him with his secret. Jennings's own first-person narrative, the story of his persecution, is embedded within these letters. Hence, "Green Tea" is structured in a chain of three narrators: the unnamed narrator of the prologue, a physician turned medical secretary; Martin Hesselius, a physician who defines himself a metaphysical philosopher but who fails to cure his patient; Mr. Jennings, a man of God interested in paganism and consequently driven to suicide by a spectral monkey. From this brief overview it appears that these three male figures are connected by the shared inability to properly do their job – because of circumstances or incompetence - which force them to perform a role that deviates from their intended or professed one.

"Green Tea" itself is a narrative that deviates from its own formula. At first glance, it is a ghost story disguised as a professional case study; alternatively, it can be interpreted as a medical investigation that looks at the ghostly as symptomatic of mental illness. Considered as such, however, it fails to meet the requirements of scientific method: both in the choice of medium - the epistolary form is arguably not the ideal vessel for scientific investigation - and in his writing style Hesselius fails to adhere to the paradigms of objectivity. The narrator comments on the latter:

His treatment of some of these cases is curious. He writes in two distinct characters. He describes what he saw and heard as an intelligent layman might, and when in this style of narrative he had seen the patient either through his own hall-door, to the light of day, or through the gates of darkness to the caverns of the dead, he returns upon the narrative, and in the terms of his art, and with all the force and originality of genius, proceeds to the work of analysis, diagnosis and illustration (GT, 3).

The first is the style of the non-expert who includes superficial impressions and circumstantial evidence; the second is that of a specialist who instead collects objective data and carefully documents the history of his patients. To describe this two-fold style as curious is an understatement. "Hesselius's return to the narrative signals its transformation, charging his own 'creative' depth through treatment in what, before, had been for him a mere impression, a surface."<sup>9</sup> Hesselius's medical work of "analysis, diagnosis and illustration" (GT, 3) is, therefore, described in term of a return, a haunting of sorts. On this matter, Langan talks about "cross-pollination"<sup>10</sup> in which "the medical narrative [...] and the ghost story converge,"<sup>11</sup> thus crossing the boundaries between the medical and the sensational.

Of this contaminating effect, the prologue is certainly paradigmatic. The unnamed narrator opens his narrative with a concessive clause that immediately underlines a discrepancy: "Through carefully educated in medicine and surgery, I have never practiced either" (GT, 3). He is, however, quick to prevent any possible prejudices regarding his person by ascribing the reason not to "idless or caprice" but to a "very trifling scratch" (GT, 3) caused by a dissecting knife. This scratch consequently led to the necessary amputation of two fingers. From the onset, "Green Tea" lays out two peculiar elements that will characterize the embedded narrative. Firstly, the emphasis on how "something of little value, substance or importance"<sup>12</sup> - a trifle - can unexpectedly lead to drastic consequences. Secondly, the way in which the explanation leaps from cause to ultimate effect while neglecting to make explicit the central key passage: since it is unusual for a common scratch to lead to an amputation,

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<sup>9</sup> Stoddart, Helen. "'The Precautions of Nervous People are Infectious': Sheridan Le Fanu's Symptomatic Gothic", in *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 86, No. 1 (Jan., 1991). p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> Langan, John "Conversations in a Shadowed Room: The Blank Spaces in "Green Tea" ", in *Reflections in A Glass Darkly*, *cit.*, p. 316.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>12</sup> "trifle" *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster, 2015 Web. 8 July 2015.

readers are to infer that some sort of infection, probably caused by the knife itself, must have occurred. It is less a wild guess than it is a logical conclusion; yet it is somehow indicative that the narrator should choose to omit it.

What the editor does mention is that, as a consequence of his accident, he became a wanderer, having "seldom been twelve month together in the same place" (GT, 3). The figure of the wanderer is, of course, no stranger of the gothic mode, embodying that peculiar fascination of the genre with "the solitary eccentric, the misfit, the social outcast, or, to use the handy phrase, the guilt-haunted wanderer."<sup>13</sup> There is no textual evidence to indicate that the secretary is indeed "guilt-haunted"; nevertheless his physical disability, by precluding him access to the chosen profession, suggests in turn another type of dysfunction: the disabled body, unsuited for work, is excluded from a fully functioning society. That the amputation led to "the more painful loss" (GT, 3) of his health to the point that he has "never been quite well since" (GT, 3) signals the necessity of cutting off the infected element from the social body before it can spread and cause a whole system malfunction. The encounter with Hesselius, then, can be said to have cured the narrator from his forced wanderings and harmful inactivity by offering him a subaltern position in his medical profession. In spite of the "awe and delight" (GT, 3) Hesselius inspired in the narrator, their relationship is constructed along the axis of a clearly demarked healthy/not-healthy and power/disability binary that the term "master" so well illustrates.

The secretary is now left to sort through Hesselius's "immense collection of papers" (GT, 3) and must again change his profession - from physician to medical secretary to editor. His

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<sup>13</sup> Lowry Nelson, JR. "Night Thoughts on the Gothic Novel", in *Gothic: Eighteenth-Century Gothic: Radcliffe, Reader, Writer, Romancer*, edited by Fred Botting, Dale Townshed, London: Routledge, 2004, p. 39.

editing methods, however, are somewhat dubious. Readers are given access only to a restricted selection of sifted material: not those cases deemed the most valuable but those most likely "to amuse or horrify a lay reader" (GT, 4). By this elimination process the case of Mr. Jennings has been selected "among the voluminous notes of cases" (GT, 4) and is being copied from the letters which Van Loo has returned (yet another return) after the death of Hesselius:

They are written, some in English, some in French, but the greater part in German. I am a faithful, though I am conscious, by no means a graceful translator, and although here and there, I omit some passages, and shorten others and disguise names, I have interpolated nothing (GT, 4).

The fact that Mr. Jennings's case is a translation is - in and of itself - problematic, despite the editor's own reassurances as far as matters of faithfulness are concerned. Were readers willing to accept the fact that some things are inevitably always lost in translation, it is nonetheless unsettling that the narrator should admit so freely to tampering with Hesselius's notes: it leaves the readers wondering what it is that he might have omitted. Even more puzzling is the way he seems to assume that the interpolations would be somewhat more troubling than the omissions. It is as if his own experience as an amputee had conditioned him to regard the process of taking out - or cutting off - as a normalizing practice, the inevitable operation to preserve integrity. An interpolation, on the other hand, would imply inserting foreign material, thus exposing the text - or the body - to the risk of corruption and infection.

The editor's translation, therefore, implies also a revision of the material by a process of arbitrary exclusion and openly-admitted omissions. If the whole procedure of collecting, cataloguing and transcribing is compromised, then the secretary's role as preserver of Hesselius's medical knowledge is liable to be questioned as well. The restoration of the texts

can only ever be a restoration of transcribed *versions* among which the authentic original is lost. The editor's hand, physically incomplete, who extends to (mis)handle the texts is a subtle symbolic example of what Jan B. Gordon calls the "ontology of the interrupted."<sup>14</sup>

While attempting to set up a world of texts within texts which establish some order in a succession of literary priority and hence authority, what the Gothic mode actually achieves is a constant questioning of the respective legitimacies and status of competing texts [...] Even as it appears to enclose, to order textuality, the Gothic mode tends to make of the text itself a constituted narrative.<sup>15</sup>

Omissions and gaps, for example, seem to characterize Hesselius's narration as well. Regarding his examination of the reverend in their very first meeting, he states "I observed, of course, more than I here set down" (GT, 6) just as his "Essays on Metaphysical Medicine [...] suggest more than they actually say" (GT, 7). Hesselius's essays - mentioned but never cited, evoked in conversation but not physically materialized - are, nevertheless, the repository of his knowledge and medical science. Written originally in German and currently out of print, these essays stand for the occult nature of his knowledge. Similarly, the book on which Mr. Jennings is working at the time of the monkey's first appearance is no more clearly defined than its subject being "upon the religious metaphysics of the ancients" (GT, 19).

Gothic itself, we might say, consists of a series of texts which are always dependent on other texts, texts which they are not, texts which are ceaselessly invoked while no less ceaselessly misread, models of *méconnaissance* in the form of lost manuscripts.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Jan B. Gordon, "Narrative Enclosure as Textual Ruin", in *Gothic: Eighteenth-Century Gothic: Radcliffe, Reader, Writer, Romancer, cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 57.

<sup>16</sup> Punter, David, "Introduction: The Ghost of a History", in *A Companion to the Gothic*, edited by David Punter. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, pp. ix-x.

On a deeper level, then, the prologue thematically anticipates Jennings's medical case by laying the foundations of a pattern of infection and contamination, social inadequacy and anomalies, trifling matters leading to abnormal consequences, gaps and omissions in the causal contingency of events.

## 2. 1. SPECTRAL ILLUSIONS

"It is only that in your case, the 'paries,'  
the veil of the flesh, the screen, is a little out of repair" (GT, 29).

The central thematic axis of "Green Tea" revolves around notions of vision and visuality. Reverend Mr. Jennings is haunted by the *vision* of a small black monkey, visible exclusively to him; the most notable trait of the simian are his red *eyes* which seem to follow his victim at all times; in order to get rid of his persecutor, Jennings *sees* a physician, whose "corrective medical *gaze*"<sup>1</sup> seeks to regulate his patient. The story, then, "depicts a world obsessed with viewing and observing, with knowledge being gained primarily through visual means, and the making of value judgments based only on empirical evidence."<sup>2</sup>

But beyond this, the tale destabilizes fixed notions of "viewing" and "observing", shifting the emphasis on the unreliability of visual perception. If reality is assessed mainly through the eyes and if the eyes can be deceptive, then the line separating the real from the imaginary - between what is objectively real and what exists only in the mind - becomes extremely blurred. "Green Tea" first polarizes two degrees of visual perception - seeing more and seeing less - and then reverses the former into the latter. Hesselius, with his eye for detail and his power to pierce through appearances, eventually fails to understand his patient's illness in time to save him. Jennings, convinced of seeing a spirit from a world beyond his own, will take his life in the attempt to free himself from his persecutor. In both cases, seeing more - whether it comes from scientific materialism or religious mysticism - actually corresponds

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis, Daniel. "‘I saw him looking at me’: Male Bodies and the Corrective Medical Gaze in Sheridan Le Fanu’s ‘Green Tea’", in *Nineteenth-Century Gender Study*, Issue 5.3 (Winter, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p.1.

to seeing less, a form of blindness to the inner workings of reality.

In Hesselius's own words, the eye is conceived as the screen that mediates between the outside world and the inner space of the self. A screen "out of repair" can only ever transmit distorted images, incorporating misconstrued representations of reality into the mind of the subject. Jennings's hallucinations, then, become symbolic of the ghostly process by which knowledge is acquired: reality is not mirrored for what it is but rather deflected in a series of after images and illusory impressions. "Green Tea", therefore, can be interpreted as an investigation into the troubling nature of human knowledge which establishes the very character of the mind as extremely subjective and possibly at complete fault.

The following chapter will follow the pattern laid down by the story's visual clues and will attempt to reconstruct three interrelated thematic nucleuses. The first nucleus, identifiable with the first encounter between Hesselius and Jennings, will focus on the physician's eyes as they single out the sick man in the crowd, establishing from the onset a strict interrelation between the act of looking and the act of knowing. The second nucleus corresponds to the second encounter between the two men in Jennings's study, where an interesting interplay between books and mirrors take place, offering the possibility to focus on the very word "reflection" as productive of images and meanings. The third nucleus shifts the attention to Jennings's own story, examining the conditions that may have triggered the apparition of the monkey by analysing the shifting notion of visuality in nineteenth-century Britain.

“I penetrated his thoughts”

From the very beginning "Green Tea" firmly establishes a paramount interrelation between the act of looking and the act of knowing that will sustain the development of the whole story. Being this a first-person narrative, the character of Mr. Jennings is presented exclusively through the mediation of Hesselius's eyes and, consequently, through his point of view and perspective. Hesselius opens his letter to his friend Van Loo by minutely describing the Reverend after meeting him at a dinner party held by Lady Mary Heyduke. In a short amount of time, Hesselius describes the reverend's physical appearance – he is "tall and thin" (GT, 4) - specifying that he is middle-aged (GT, 4) and yet a bachelor (GT, 5); he even points out that Jennings dresses with “natty, old-fashioned, high church precision” (GT, 4). Hesselius plunges in what is, to all effects and purposes, a close reading of Jennings's personality that goes far beyond a description of his outward appearance. The physician is nothing if not methodical in his examination and writes down not only his own impressions but also the way Jennings seems to interact with the other dinner guests, noting that he "joined agreeably enough in conversation" (GT, 5) and that Lady Mary thinks Jennings is "the most happy and blessed person on earth" (GT, 5). He is charitable, kind, willing to work were it not for his poor health which prevents him to absolve his duties in his vicarage in Warwickshire.

Hesselius's accurate and dispassionate evaluation is in keeping with the professional mode of the medical case: he is examining his patient from afar - conducting a distanced scrutiny - and yet, paradoxically, he is able to see more closely. His is a reading through details, a study in exceptions. He is effectively "dissecting" Mr. Jennings's outward appearance and manners.

Mr. Jennings is a perfectly gentleman-like man. People, however, remark something odd. There is an impression a little ambiguous. One thing which certainly contributes to it, people I think don't remember; or, perhaps, distinctly remark. But I did, almost immediately (GT, 5).

Hesselius's eye, clinically trained, is quick to detect what is otherwise neglected by the common eye - not because it is utterly invisible but because it is only halfway apparent. People - Hesselius notices - seem to be able to perceive "something odd" in Jennings, yet this "impression a little ambiguous" is quickly forgotten or, if remembered, never articulated - a "thing" too vague to pinpoint or too indistinct to fully grasp. On the contrary, Hesselius claims to be able to identify, to *discern*, exactly what is that is wrong with the reverend, remarking that he "has a way of looking sidelong upon the carpet, as if his eye followed the movements of something there" (GT, 6). Hesselius's ability is a direct consequence of his training: a "medical philosopher" like himself "falls insensibly into habits of observation" (GT, 6) and is, therefore, accustomed to direct his gaze towards the in-between spaces, the interstices, usually overlooked by the common eye. It is as much an art of subtraction - of removing the regular and the ordinary so that what is out of the ordinary juts out - as it is of assembling/putting together puzzle pieces.

Hesselius's eye for detail aligns him to what will eventually become the practice of criminology and psychoanalysis. In her article "Clues and Intimations: Freud, Holmes, Foucault", Lisabeth During traces a connection between crime investigation – fictionalized by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle – and the emerging psychoanalysis at the end of the nineteenth century:

If crime and psyche are the 'new' objects of science in the late nineteenth century, it may be that they fascinate the scholar for precisely the same reasons they fascinate the avid consumer of the sensational. In the detection of

crime, in the questioning of the psyche's individual prehistory, reason is asked to abandon the sphere of the normal and the generalizable for that of the pathological, the extreme and the aberration. Holmes and Freud are specialists in the exception: their focus is sharpened and their facility increased by the discovery of 'abnormal' features, meaningless assertions, freaks of speech or manner, clues that appear to lead nowhere. These are what they 'see' when everyone else has 'looked' and come to the conclusion that there is nothing to be found.<sup>3</sup>

The physician, therefore, can be identified simultaneously as a proto-detective and a proto-analyst. He has also been defined as "the first of his kind" and "a few decades ahead of his time,"<sup>4</sup> anticipating the figure of the psychic detective popularized by fin-de-siècle literature: a "proactive figure"<sup>5</sup> focused on "problem-solving"<sup>6</sup> and on "the positive aspects of transcending boundaries."<sup>7</sup> Hesselius certainly fits the profile of such a boundary-crossing figure: not only is his profession hardly definable - positioned at the improbable intersection between materialism and metaphysics - but his ability to bridge the gap between exterior surfaces and the recesses of the mind remarkably transcends the limits of medical science. Hesselius's very notion of science, indeed, deviates from the norm, being "more comprehensive than its generally material treatment" (GT, 6):

I believe the entire natural world is but the ultimate expression of that spiritual world from which, and in which alone, it has its life. I believe that the essential man is a spirit, that the spirit is an organized substance, but as different in point of material from what we ordinarily understand by matter, as light or electricity is [...] (GT, 6)

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<sup>3</sup> During, Lisabeth, "Clues and Intimations: Freud, Holmes, Foucault", *Cultural Critique*, No. 36 (Spring, 1997), University of Minnesota Press, p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> Leslie McCarthy, Sage, *The Case of the Psychic Detective*, (Doctoral Dissertation), Griffith University, 2007, p. 199.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.35.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.34.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.35.

This view of the world - in which the natural and the spiritual intersect - seems to enhance Hesselius's natural intuition as he demonstrates in figuring out Mr. Jennings, who is suspected to be "leading a life whose transactions and alarms were carefully concealed" (GT, 7). The very definition of the reverend as a "perfectly gentleman-like man" (GT, 5) seems quite suspicious in its overstated tones as if the physician, in pointing to Jennings's utter respectability in such emphatic terms, were in fact saying the opposite. The "certain oddity" that characterizes Jennings is ascribable to the larger disability that affects him, that is his inability to work. Far from being a detail of little importance, Jennings's precarious health is seen as problematic in the social sphere in so far as it keeps him from performing his gender role adequately. "Construction of Victorian middle-class masculine identity were often founded upon men who are self-sufficient and economically independent"<sup>8</sup>: Mr. Jennings fails to meet Victorian ideals of manliness every time he falls silent during the religious service and, unable to carry out his clerical duties, is forced to retire "in the agitation of a strange shame and horror" (GT, 5). Not only is he inexplicably terrorized but he must also suffer through the humiliation of having his breakdowns be made a spectacle in front of his own congregation.

As Killeen remarks, Jennings is "no great epitome of masculine power, but is a figure of compromised, or at least ambivalent, masculinity."<sup>9</sup> When later on Lady Mary ascribes Jennings's condition to "nerves and fancy" (GT, 16), she is in fact downplaying the seriousness of the reverend's predicament. Jane Wood - in her study of nervous illness in Victorian fictions - dedicates a chapter to trace the social stigma surrounding nervous sensibilities in male subjects. To be affected by nervous disorders was a signal of weakness

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<sup>8</sup> Lewis, *cit.* p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Killeen, Jarlath. *Gothic Literature: 1825-1914*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009, p. 114.

which, in turn, could lead to "the taint of effeminacy."<sup>10</sup> The nervous male body was perceived as a "social, sexual and psychological anomaly in a culture of robust and resolute manliness."<sup>11</sup> Hesselius himself describes Jennings's embarrassment as "analogous to that which makes a young lady blush and look foolish" (GT, 8). The affinity of nervous disorders to female hysteria is all too evident. Jennings's hypersensitive disposition represents a detrimental transgression of social norms which must be amended. "There is nothing like a little hard work for that kind of weakness" (GT, 16), Lady Mary remarks, subscribing to the ethic of self-regulation through work and of work as ennobling. Lewis cites Carlyle's *Past and Present* as a fundamental text in "normalizing this notion of the working/physically active masculinity."<sup>12</sup> The paradox, however, is evident: in order to cure his nerves, Mr. Jennings needs to dedicate himself wholly to his work; but it is his nervous breakdown that prevents to do so in the first place.

The relationship between Mr. Jennings and Doctor Hesselius begins, therefore, on a health/pathology binary constructed through the polarization between the healthy observer on one hand and the unhealthy patient on the other.<sup>13</sup> This relationship is, once again, mediated by the eyes. Having observed Jennings at length, Hesselius finds the Reverend is reciprocating the attention, "cautiously observing" (GT, 7) him at first and then "more steadily" (GT, 7). The reason for this is that the reverend, against all odds, already knows Hesselius: in the very first conversation between the two men, Jennings admits he has read the physician's "Essays on Metaphysical Medicine" in the original German, ten years before.

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<sup>10</sup> Wood, Jane, *Passion and Pathology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 67.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>12</sup> Lewis, *cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Bienstock Anolik, Ruth, "Introduction: Diagnosing Demons: Creating and Disabling the Discourse of Difference in the Gothic Text" in *Demons of the Body and Mind: Essays on Disability in Gothic Literature*, edited by Ruth Bienstock Anolik, Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2010, p. 4.

On the basis of their brief conversation, Hesselius is able to deduce three things: firstly, that the reverend has been writing a book on an abstract subject; secondly, that he used to drink green tea; and finally, that his father saw a ghost. Lady Mary, confirming all three of his conjectures, calls Hesselius a "conjurer". (GT, 9). How was he able to draw these incredibly on point deductions - seemingly without the support of visible clues or details - Hesselius does not say. In *Spiritualism and A Mid Victorian Crisis of Evidence*, Peter Lamont notices how both "stage conjurors" and "scientists" were called upon by society when it came to expose the work of various Victorian mediums as trickery since "both had specific expertise relevant to the provision of a natural explanation for these ostensibly supernatural phenomena."<sup>14</sup> Paradoxically, in "Green Tea" Hesselius - the scientist - is labelled a "conjurer", a theatrical performer of tricks for his seemingly supernatural powers in sensing hidden truths in the way a *séance* would - again pointing to the multiplicity of figures he embodies. James Cook in *The Arts of Deception* traces the decline of the traditional idea of magic as a series of "practices that were once understood as supernatural acts" and the surfacing of post Enlightenment concepts of the "supernatural in the theatrical sense", which he terms "modern magic."<sup>15</sup> A polarity slowly started to form: on one hand stage conjurors - "in the business of disenchantment, antagonistic to any notion of real magic and presenting themselves as public defenders of natural law"<sup>16</sup> - and on the other, mediums who instead claimed they could truly communicate with spirits. Hesselius falls into the first category - formulating deductions under disguise of magical intuitions - and, as stage performers likely

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<sup>14</sup> Lamont, Peter, "Spiritualism and A Mid Victorian Crisis of Evidence", *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 47, No. 4, December 2004, Cambridge University Press, p. 900.

<sup>15</sup> Cook, James W. *The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001, p. 163.

<sup>16</sup> Lamont, *cit.*, p. 905.

are, is careful not to give his tricks away. When Lady Mary asks how exactly did he "find out", he only answers: "By the planets of course, as the gipsies do" (GT, 10), thus preserving an aura of mystery.

“Four eyes were reading the passage”

"This is not the slick detective work of a Sherlock Holmes [...] Instead, what has happened is the magical invasion of one man's thoughts by another, a shuddering Gothic exemplar."<sup>17</sup> On his part, the reverend seems to welcome Hesselius's "invasion": he explicitly seeks the physician's help by mentioning his Essays - which he has already read ten years ago - and expresses the desire to be provided with a copy. Upon returning to his lodgings that night, Hesselius discovers that Mr. Jennings has left a note for him asking to meet again; the next morning the physician makes a house call to visit Jennings. Finding him momentarily busy, Hesselius is led in Jennings's study and made to wait for a time. This room is "almost a library [...] stored with books on every side, from the floor to the ceiling" (GT, 11) with recessed windows and "two narrow looking-glasses" (GT, 11). While the study is described as large and luxurious, Hesselius perceives it as "gloomy" (GT, 11) and "almost oppressive" (GT, 11). While he stands in this silent and dark space, a "sombre feeling" (GT, 11) pervades him. The narrator in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" has a similar experience while approaching Usher's home: "with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit."<sup>18</sup> That of the house is undeniable one of the most recurrent tropes of Gothic fiction: where the house stands as a correlative for the mind, the

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<sup>17</sup> Stoddart, *cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>18</sup> Poe, Edgar Allan, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Short Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe*, edited by Stuart Levine, Susan Levine, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976, p. 88.

crossing of the threshold is the ultimate invasion of both physical and mental private spaces.

By entering Jennings's private study, Hesselius is given access to Jennings's mind. The influence between the two men, however, appears to be mutual. In describing the place as "oppressive", Hesselius is quick to clarify: "Perhaps, however, I ought to have allowed something for association. My mind had connected peculiar ideas with Mr. Jennings. I stepped into this perfectly silent room, of a very silent house, with a peculiar foreboding" (GT, 11). Hesselius - having already formed a series of opinions on Mr. Jennings, not to mention "a theory" (GT, 10) - admits he could be partially biased in his views. If that is the case, he is perceiving the space as gloomy because gloomy seems an adjective apt to describe Mr. Jennings's personality. The invasive action is, therefore, reciprocal: on one hand Hesselius has stepped into Jennings's private space and has been given free reign over the reverend's belongings; on the other hand - in what can be considered a case of counter-transference - Jennings seems to have cast a powerful spell over Hesselius, capturing his attention and conditioning his feelings. The use of the word "association", therefore, is here charged with meaning because, while it anticipates Swedenborg's theory of correspondence, it also recalls a typical psychoanalytical session in which the patient is invited to speak freely and to follow his train of thought for association of ideas.

In this significant room, the correspondence between physical and mental spaces is mediated through the act of looking. The first instance occurs when Hesselius finds a Latin edition of Swedenborg's *Arcana Coelestia* under the shelves of Jennings's bookcases and begins to read through the bookmarked passages. The second instance involves a mirror.

I was running the head of my pencil-case along the line as I read it, and something caused me to raise my eyes. Directly before me was one of the mirrors I have mentioned, in which I saw reflected the tall shape of my

friend Mr. Jennings leaning over my shoulder, and reading the page at which I was busy, and with a face so dark and wild that I should hardly have known him (GT, 13).

Significantly, the chapter is entitled "Four Eyes Were Reading The Passage" (GT, 13). Looming behind Hesselius's shoulders, Jennings's eyes scan the words as Hesselius runs his pencil over them. The two men are sharing the same space, that of the book. Their gazes are in this instance the *double* one of the other and simultaneously *one and the same*: they extend over the same surface at the same time and, therefore, they merge into one. Only by raising his eyes to look up in the mirror in front of him does Hesselius realize he is being observed. Jennings, in turn, does not seem to know that the physician is now aware of his presence and that his distressed face has become a reflected image. The relationship between watcher and watched, therefore, is drastically subverted quite literally in the blink of an eye.

The mutual exchange of gazes via objects - the mirror and the book - binds these two objects together while also reversing their respective functions. The mirror - the device used to reflect the external reality of physical objects - "returns an image of the inner man, of the turmoil afflicting the clergyman"<sup>19</sup> and reflects Jennings's inner feelings. On the other hand, the book - the site of knowledge - functions as mirrors do, reflecting and duplicating images of two into four. What Mr. Jennings is doing, after all, is mirroring Hesselius in the act of reading. This doubling is, theoretically, *ad infinitum*: as readers, we find ourselves in the same position as Jennings's, reading over someone's - the editor's - shoulders, just as he, the editor, is reading over Professor Van Loo's shoulders. At any given time, there are always more than "four eyes" reading the Swedenborgian quotations.

Doubling represents a division of the inner self but also a duplication of self-

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<sup>19</sup> Langan, *cit.* p. 319.

consciousness: it involves splitting and merging. Not only do Jennings and Hesselius share the same room, but they also share the spaces of the book and the mirror: again, the "invasion" is reciprocal and the borders between the two start to blur.

If, via Lacan, the mirror scene becomes the symbolic drama through which the individual subject first (mis)recognizes itself as a single, unified subjectivity, then this scene can be read as the representation of the performance of a similarly (imaginary) unity, a unifying *intersubjective* bond between the two men through their pursuit of philosophy.<sup>20</sup>

It is, then, a doubled *méconnaissance*. The complex interplay between recognition - "my friend Mr. Jennings" (GT, 13) - and alienation - "I should have hardly have known him" (GT, 13) - that is at the heart of Jacques Lacan's mirror theory, is here brought to the fore. If the individual subject is nothing but "a mistake, an illusory projection of autonomy and control"<sup>21</sup> that never truly exists as separate from the Other, the intersubjective bond between the two men is not only illusory but also dangerous as it "transgress respected boundaries of internal/external, public/private."<sup>22</sup>

The dialectic between looking and being looked at binds together Hesselius and Jennings and it reproduces, on a deeper level, the fundamental dynamic between the reverend and his "persecutor" (GT, 29). Hesselius's invasion of Jennings's private space replicates - albeit unknowingly - the pattern of persecution perpetrated by the monkey on the reverend's mind - a persecution whose distinctive mark is that of the gaze (the simian's red eyes) and whose origin can be traced back to books and knowledge (the reverend's interest in paganism). In this instance, it is possible to refer back to Lacan's concept of paranoiac knowledge and the

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<sup>20</sup> Stoddart, *cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>21</sup> Mills, Jon, *Psychoanalysis at the Limit: Epistemology, Mind, and the Question of Science*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2012, p. 96.

<sup>22</sup> Stoddart, *cit.*, p. 23.

conceptualization of the Other as persecutory: "paranoia is not simply that which is beyond the rational mind, but it is a generic process of *nosis* - 'I take thought, I perceive, I intellectually grasp, I apprehend' - hence have apprehension for what I encounter in consciousness."<sup>23</sup>

Mr. Jennings seems to have developed this type of apprehensive approach to knowledge. He refers to Swedenborg's book as "rather likely to make a solitary man nervous" (GT, 14), although the main reason for his anxiety has originated entirely elsewhere, being linked to his research into paganism. This he defines as "not good for the mind - the Christian mind" (GT, 19), having found that "the subject is a degrading fascination and the nemesis sure" (GT, 19). Simultaneously fascinated and threatened by this subject, the reverend might have felt the need to distance himself from it, unconsciously rejecting his desire to know - to *see* - as unhealthy. In attributing the reasons for his persecution to the nature of his intellectual interests, Jennings expresses a paranoid anxiety in relation to knowledge or at least that type of knowledge he deems dangerous. This mechanism - that of pushing outside what is bad, and then feeling threatened by it - constitutes "very source of paranoid thinking."<sup>24</sup> Jennings's demonic monkey, then, could be read as the materialization of the unhealthy nature of the reverend's knowledge - his desire to *know* - projected outside and manifesting itself as a persecutory agent. The foundational link between paranoia and persecution was provided by Sigmund Freud in 1911 in his famous analysis of judge Schreber's case based on Schreber's own autobiographical account of his illness:

The most striking characteristic of symptom-formation in  
paranoia is the process which deserves the name of

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<sup>23</sup> Mills, *cit.*, p. 93.

<sup>24</sup> Melman, Charles, "Paranoia", *The Letter: Lacanian Perspectives on Psychoanalysis*, edited by Helena Comiskey, Issue 1, Summer 1994, p. 137. Available at:  
< <http://whatispsychoanalysis.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/The-Letter-Issue-1.pdf>>

*projection.* An internal perception is suppressed, and instead, its content after undergoing a certain kind of distortion, enters consciousness in the form of an external perception.<sup>25</sup>

That Mr. Jennings feels constantly followed by the simian's gaze is indicative of an invasion that has breached the walls of his private identity leaving no space to hide, despite the reverend's best efforts. The ultimate effect of the monkey's eyes is that objectifying the reverend, transforming him from a subject who knows - who actively seeks knowledge - into a passive object to be looked at, in what seems the designated punishment for having dared to *look at*. The reverend's paranoid anxieties reverberate on a bigger scale. The "complete loss of spiritual and bodily privacy"<sup>26</sup> seems to instill in Jennings the irrational desire to evade other people's eyes - to stop being looked at - to seek invisibility, and drives him to retire from society as a way to regain a semblance of privacy. Although the reverend tries to resume his clerical duties, Hesselius is soon reached by a hurried note from a distressed Mr. Jennings who defines himself "too low" (GT, 16) to specify what exactly is troubling him: "Pray don't mention my name to my friends. I can see no one" (GT, 16). Only after five more weeks does Hesselius get word from Jennings again: in this other note he says he has retired to his country house in Richmond, begging the physician to visit him as soon as possible. Hesselius seems to be the only exception to the reverend's isolation.

“It thoroughly infected me”

Jennings's retirement to the countryside can be interpreted as another fail on his part to perform his gender roles and act accordingly to those conventions that would have him

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<sup>25</sup> Freud, Sigmund, *Three Case Histories*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008, p. 142.

<sup>26</sup> Stoddart, *cit.*, p. 25.

actively working, in the city, while sharing the companionship of the respectable members of society. His move "to a highly secluded, hard to find location symbolizes the reverend's increasingly un-masculine-like behavior as he has removed himself fully from the social realm and began to place himself increasingly in the domestic sphere."<sup>27</sup> Hesselius goes as far as to define it as "an invalid bachelor's house" (GT, 18). Jennings's country house is "a very old-fashioned brick house" (GT, 17) surrounded by "sombre elms" (GT, 17): upon reaching it that same evening - in the fading twilight - Hesselius notes that "nothing could be imagined more triste and silent" (GT, 17). The adjectives used to describe Jennings's urban and country dwellings bear undeniable similarities. Again, Hesselius is led to the drawing room and again is made to wait for the arrival of the reverend. His state of mind is once again influenced by the circumstances: "all was growing dim, and the glow was insensibly toning my mind, already prepare for what is sinister" (GT, 18), which resembles the "peculiar foreboding" he felt while standing Jennings's study in the city. "At the very least, the room seems the double of its urban counterpart, but in its accumulation of similarities, it is as much repetition, as if these two spaces overlap, are in some sense the same space."<sup>28</sup> The textual doubling is, therefore, sustained by an architectural one.

Moreover, Jennings's country home circumscribes a narrative space in its own right: the moment the reverend begins telling his story, readers are transposed *inside* the inside of Hesselius's clinical study. The narrative space is narrowed down and the focus is zoomed in on the centre of the frame, whereas both Hesselius's letters to Professor Van Loo and the editor's preface are displaced outside of its confines. This transposition re-locates the story's origin as a speech event, as a story originally told orally - one man to another, a face to face

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<sup>27</sup> Lewis, *cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> Langan, *cit.*, p. 320.

exchange, without further mediations. It is, of course, a pseudo-orality: Jennings's story as such, being part of a written account, can only ever be read; nevertheless, the conditions that have been set do mimic the characteristics of oral storytelling. The reverend, coming into the room, begins to talk out of an authentic need and without preambles: "he [Jennings] sat down beside me, and, placing his hand upon my arm, with scarcely a word of preface began his narrative" (GT, 18). The formalities required by written narratives are in this instance discarded. "The silence, too, was utter; not a distant wheel, or bark, or whistle from without; and within the depressing stillness of an invalid bachelor's house" (GT, 18).

This self-contained isolated space surrounded by silence and shielded from the outside world becomes the ideal setting for an oral narrative. The reverend seems to progressively lose his corporality (paradoxically, in a narrative involving a monkey of a particularly active physicality). Upon coming into the room, he is already just a silhouette, a "tall figure [...] faintly seen in the ruddy twilight" (GT, 18): Kel Ropp observes the special quality of twilight as a "more distinct" light than generally assumed, because "to gain life, it saps that of physical forms" to the point that "edges dissolve."<sup>29</sup> When Jennings sits down beside Hesselius, the focal point turns on his expression, his "fixed face of suffering [...] like a portrait of Schalken's before its background of darkness" (GT, 18). Ultimately, he is simply a voice that breaks the silence and, as the evening advances, fluctuates in the dark, almost disembodied. The haunting quality of Mr. Jennings's character is a peculiarity that Hesselius has already remarked after their conversation in the reverend's study. "One look of Mr. Jennings haunted me. It had seized my imagination with so dismal a power that I changed my plan for the evening, and went to the opera, feeling that I wanted a change of ideas" (GT, 16).

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<sup>29</sup> Ropp, Kel, "Making Light in the Shadow Box: The Artistry of Le Fanu", in *Reflections in a Glass Darkly*, *cit.*, p. 171.

It is significant that Hesselius, feeling haunted by his talk with Jennings, would opt for a distraction whereas Jennings, as he makes clear in his narrative, seems to have been opposed to such interruptions while working on his book. "I wrote a great deal. I wrote at night. I was always thinking on the subject, walking about, wherever I was, everywhere" (GT, 19). This obsessive behavior might have contributed to Jennings's ailment.

In her study of the phantasmagoric in the eighteenth-century *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny*, Terry Castle identifies the development of optics and the spectre-shows as a turning point in the perception of ghosts and spectral apparitions. Invented in the 1780s in France by the Belgian physicist Etienne-Gaspard Robertson, phantasmagoria was an illusionist spectacle which employed a modified version of the magic lantern in order to produce *fantome artificiels* by projecting images through a system of screens, lights and smoke.<sup>30</sup> This innovative type of entertainment soon arrived in England where it was enthusiastically received: the first spectre show is known to date back to late 1801 when Paul de Philipstal used Robertson's model at the Lyceum Theatre in London.<sup>31</sup>

Castle argues that spectre-shows played a fundamental role in mediating between the traditional belief in ghosts as spirits or demons and the rationalist argument that ghosts were instead nothing more than optical illusions, the mere product of sophisticated machines. The mediation was encouraged by a series of treaties which established physiological or psychological causes at the root of the ghost-seeing phenomenon, in the attempt to further eradicate popular superstitions. Castle cites in particular *An Essay Towards a Theory of*

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<sup>30</sup> Castle, Terry, *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 144.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

*Apparitions* (1813) by Manchester physician John Ferriar, *Sketches of the Philosophy of Apparitions* (1824) by geologist Samuel Hibbert and *Essay on Superstition* (1830) by general medical practitioner William Newnham.

Figuring the mind "as a kind of magic lantern,"<sup>32</sup> the shared argument of these anti-apparitions writers was the "spectral nature of contemplation:"<sup>33</sup> obsessive thoughts, vivid memories or even intense impressions were likely to escape the confines of the mind and to be projected outside into the natural world, materialising in concrete objects in the form of spectres. Being haunted by a ghost meant being haunted by a recurrent idea.

What such statements articulated, at bottom, was a new conception of the daemonic or irrational nature of thought. There was now a potential danger in the act of reflection - a danger in paying too much attention to mental images or in "thinking too hard". One's inmost thoughts might at any moment assume the strangely externalized shape of phantoms.<sup>34</sup>

In this new epistemology of apparitions, the mind - rather than the outside world - came to be identified as the true "phantom-scene"<sup>35</sup> and, therefore, it became necessary to closely guard one's own mental activity lest it generated ghostly thoughts.

To prevent thoughts from turning into ghosts, the act of thinking had to be regulated. [...] Too much study, brooding over obscure intellectual problems, reading into the night, excessive mourning, and, especially, overindulgence in poetic or erotic fantasies - all prompted the appearance of spectral forms. The anti-apparition writers warned of the dangers of reverie - the obsessional solipsistic replay of mental images in "the mind's eye". The inward process of ghost-seeing all too easily modulated into actual ghost-seeing, the eruption of the hallucinatory.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

Jennings's affliction can be examined through this lens. Firstly, the subject of his research - "the religious metaphysic of the ancients" (GT, 18) - can indeed be classified as an obscure intellectual problem. Secondly, the modality with which he researched this subject was, by his own admission, borderline compulsive. The act of "always thinking on the subject" resembles the aforementioned "obsessional solipsistic replay of mental images," that is to have the same thought on repeat over and over again in a maddening circularity that knows no end. It can be said that the reverend, having his mind utterly centered on a single object, ultimately lost control over it. "It thoroughly infected me" (GT, 19). The tea he starts to drink is the answer to a very particular need, that of grounding himself to reality in order to not "grow too abstract" (GT, 19). Absorbed in deep thought and prolonged mental work, Jennings feared that his mind would "pass out of the body" (GT, 19). In other words, he was under the impression that his thoughts would escape the confines of his body - run away from him - while he was lost in a reverie. "Reverie was a self-indulgent, repetitive activity resulting in a debilitating psychic "discharge": the discharge of hallucination."<sup>37</sup> Hesselius, the healthy man, knows he needs a night out to the opera to distract himself from the matter at hand which, he feels, might otherwise overwhelm his mind. Jennings, on the other hand, knows no self-restrain, overworks himself and resorts to consume tea in excessive amounts between eleven at night and three in the morning.

The reverend believes he is not alone in this habits: "every one who sets about writing in earnest does his work, as a friend of mine phrased it, on something- tea, or coffee, or tobacco" (GT, 19). The materialist doctors were, of course, well aware of the plethora of

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

physiological factors which could be used to explain the so-called apparitions: poor indigestion, nerves, irregular circulation, head injuries, fevers, stimulants, opium, alcohol, and other intoxicating substances all contributed to excite the imagination or upset the senses to the point of generating hallucinations. Many of these visions could be explained as easily a "retinal fatigue"<sup>38</sup>: by staring at images against a white background for too long, the eye could afterwards perceive those same images when looking away in a darkened room.

The development of optics was indeed the common ground on which both psychological and physiological arguments were based. In *The Trouble with Ghost-Seeing* - which uses the ghost story genre to trace the Victorians' changing understanding of visibility - Srdjan Smajic highlights how early nineteenth-century optical research contributed to the growing literary representation of ghosts as optical effects rather than proper apparitions<sup>39</sup> and how the very definition of the ghost as a simple optical illusion opened up, in turn, an epistemological debate over the reliability of the human eye. "Like a piece of faulty, unreliable equipment, in certain situations the organ of sight fails to function properly [...] and confuses the mind with misleading information."<sup>40</sup> In other words, if vision was faulty and could not be fully trusted, then any and all kind of knowledge constructed on empirical data - science itself - needed to be questioned too. A mind wholly dependent on the body's defects and malfunctioning was unacceptable.

While nineteenth-century physiological science could effectively rationalize the appearance of a specter as nothing more than a subjective optical effect [...] the unsettling question that inevitably arose from such arguments [...] was where precisely (if anywhere at all) to draw the line between objective and subjective

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>39</sup> Smajic, Srdjan, "The Trouble with Ghost-Seeing: Vision, Ideology, and Genre in the Victorian Ghost Story", *ELH*, Vol. 70, No. 4, Winter 2003, The Johns Hopkins University Press. p. 1113.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1116.

perception in general, between optical fact and optical illusion.<sup>41</sup>

When Jennings sees the monkey for the first time, it is on a dark omnibus on his way home after having visited "a man who had some old books, German editions in medieval Latin" (GT, 20). He says he was "ruminating pleasantly" (GT, 20) - presumably over the new information he had just acquired - again emphasizing how reading might prompt obsessive thoughts. While it is also possible to assume that his eyes were tired from staring too hard and for too long at Latin characters in old volumes, triggering the appearance of afterimages - as the "retinal fatigue" argument would have it - the experience seems nonetheless far more concrete than a simple optical deception, a trick of the eye. It is true that the reverend at first mistakes the "two small circular reflections" (GT, 20) that will turn out to be the red eyes of the monkey for "glass beads, buttons, toy decorations" (GT, 20) and tries to locate the source of the "deep red light" (GT, 20) that must be reflecting on them; but when he catches sight of "the outline of a small black monkey" (GT, 20-21) he does not think for a second that his eyes are deceiving him or that his vision is somehow compromised by fatigue. He has no doubts as far as the physical presence of the "ugly pet" (GT, 21) is concerned. That is, at least, until he pokes at the monkey with his umbrella and sees the object pass through the animal "without the slightest resistance" (GT, 21).

The line between optical fact and optical illusion, objective and subjective perception, is indeed blurred: what Jennings had perceived as a living-breathing being - as tangible as the omnibus itself - turns out to be instead a subjective projection, illusory and imaginary. Yet, he is far from convinced: "[...] the fictional ghost-seer is typically caught in a disconcerting double bind between instinctive faith in the evidence of one's sight and the troubling

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1110.

knowledge that vision is often deceptive and unreliable.<sup>42</sup>

Even after admitting that "the thing was an illusion" (GT, 21), Jennings cannot bring himself to fully dismiss as an optical deception what stands unquestionably in front of him. He is not oblivious to the rational explanation - "I had read of course, as every one has, something about 'spectral illusions', as you physicians term the phenomena of such cases" (GT, 22) - but he admits that turning to science is for him a comfort rather than a firm belief. His skeptical attitude towards the physiological argument emerges quite directly:

I tried to comfort myself by repeating again and again the assurance, 'the thing is purely disease, a well-known physical affection, as distinctly as small-pox or neuralgia. Doctors are all agreed on that, philosophy demonstrates it. I must not be a fool. I've been sitting up too late, and I daresay my digestion is quite wrong, and with God's help, I shall be all right, and this is but a symptom of nervous dyspepsia' (GT, 23).

As a man of the faith, he does not concede to science this easily or if does, he is driven by desperation:

Did I believe all this? Not one word of it, no more than any other miserable being ever did who is once seized and riveted in this satanic captivity. Against my convictions, I might say my knowledge, I was simply bullying myself into a false courage. (GT, 23).

Jennings even tries to get rid of the monkey by avoiding drinking green tea in the attempt to influence his "material system" (GT, 23). When that fails, he becomes more and more convinced that the simian is indeed a demonic being appeared to taunt and haunt him. Being visible in the daylight as it is at night, it is impossible for it to be a matter of simple "optical illusion", created by a play of lights and shadows. The reverend's belief that the monkey is neither a product of his eyes nor of his mind perfectly aligns him with the religious

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1109.

counterarguments which sought to defend the spirituality of sight against the gross oversimplifications of material science. Jennings praises Hesselius for giving the "spirit its proper rank" (GT, 25), exposing instead Dr. Harley - the physician who he had been seeing, unsuccessfully - as a "mere materialist" (GT, 15). "Optic nerves, he talked of. Ah! well—there are other nerves of communication" (GT, 25, 26): while aware of the physiological explanations, Jennings does not underestimate the power of the spiritual eye which - unlike the bodily eye - is subject to no malfunctions. This higher mode of perception, this "hidden, intuitive channel of communication"<sup>43</sup> is what, the reverend believes, accounts for his condition. He sees more, not less.

While the only acceptable model of vision for nineteenth-century materialist philosophy and science was of course the physiological one, vocal defenders of Christian doctrine such as Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin zealously argued for the primacy of spiritual vision and poignantly contrasted the limited capabilities of the bodily eye with the more valuable and permanent insights of spiritual and devotional spectatorship.<sup>44</sup>

Jennings's reaction and thought process is indicative of that characteristic sentiment of the eighteenth and nineteenth century regarding the progress of scientific knowledge: that science, despite offering brand new models for understanding reality, could not possibly possess all the answers, and that there were matters only faith could interpret. Increasingly, discourses on vision and visuality were grounded onto this very terrain of shifting epistemologies, both in the scientific and in the spiritual thought. "Green Tea", then, seems to join in this debate by having materialist and mystical elements connect, overlap and, in a way, infect one another.

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1120.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1110.

## 2. 2. ITS EYES WERE NEVER OFF ME

"If it is anything real, I say, it is prevailing, little by little, and drawing me more interiorly into hell" (GT, 25).

The emblematic figure of "Green Tea" - the red-eyed black monkey - carries with it a character of ambiguity that can never be dissipated: is it a spectre, a Swedenborgian spirit, that has associated with Mr. Jennings; or is it instead a delusion, an hallucination, the product of mental illness or of an altered state of mind?

Its eyes were never off me, I have never lost sight of it, except in my sleep, light or dark, day or night, since it came here (GT, 24).

This statement can be taken as the paramount expression of the uncertainty surrounding the presence of the simian. "Its eyes were never off me" points to the nature of the monkey as a demonic being, an infernal creature, persecuting the reverend with the persistence of its gaze. However, the fact that Jennings has "never lost sight of it" except while sleeping might indicate that the reason why the monkey occupies the field of Jennings's vision is because it is a product of his imagination, no longer active when the reverend is asleep. Were the monkey truly an infernal creature, would it not keep the reverend from sleeping altogether?

This chapter explores the possible alternatives regarding the presence of the monkey. It will focus firstly on the figure of Emanuel Swedenborg, the Swedish mystic, exploring the part of his theology most relevant to a discussion of Jennings's persecution. The chapter then will move on to consider the possibility that the reverend is mentally ill, thus exploring nineteenth-century conceptualization of madness and medical practices.

“When man’s interior eye is opened”

A scientist and philosopher for the great part of his life - his major scientific works, such as *Opera Philosophica et Mineralia* and *Principia Rerum Naturalium*, being published in the 1730s - in 1743-44 Emanuel Swedenborg<sup>1</sup> suffered a religious crisis which he documented in his *Journal of Dreams*. After having had his first vision of Christ on April 7<sup>th</sup> 1744,<sup>2</sup> Swedenborg felt called to abandon his career and dedicate himself instead to interpret the Bible according to his visions of spirits and angels.

Swedenborg asserted that his entry into the field of theological study was in response to a divine vision and call; that his spiritual senses were opened so that he might be in the spiritual world as consciously as in the material world; and that the long series of exegetical and theological works that he wrote constituted a revelation from God for a new age of truth and reason in religion.<sup>3</sup>

Swedenborg's theology influenced such writers as William Blake (1757-1827), Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861), Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), among others. His works became quite popular especially in nineteenth-century England in connection to the surge of spiritualism in the 1860s as the "pronounced arcane element in his teachings particularly appealed to the intellectual, philosophical, and religious proclivities of a well-educated elite."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Swedenborg, Emanuel (1688-1772), Swedish seer, primarily a scientist, an authority on metallurgy, a mining and military engineer, a learned astronomer, reputed physicist, zoologist, anatomist, financier and political economist, also a profound Biblical student. He was the son of a Bishop, graduated at Uppsala University and studied abroad under the most famous mathematicians and physicians-Sir Isaac Newton, Flamsteed, Halley and De Lahire. Fodor, Nandor, Swedenborg Emanuel, in *Encyclopaedia of Psychic Science*. 1934. Retrieved from <[http://www.spiritarchive.org/uploads/1/2/4/7/12470836/nandor\\_fodor\\_-\\_encyclopaedia\\_of\\_psychic\\_science-1966-856pp.pdf](http://www.spiritarchive.org/uploads/1/2/4/7/12470836/nandor_fodor_-_encyclopaedia_of_psychic_science-1966-856pp.pdf)> Accessed, August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, in *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 2015. Retrieved from <<http://www.britannica.com/biography/Emanuel-Swedenborg>>

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Owen, Alex, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 21.

Because of his otherworldly experiences, Swedenborg has often been regarded either as a spiritualist “medium” or as a mystic, but in his dry, matter-of-fact accounts of the spiritual world and in his acutely reasoned theology he actually retains his lifelong attitude of the scientific and philosophic investigator.<sup>5</sup>

The mystic’s scientific style in investigating metaphysical matters reflects his conviction that the life of the spirit can be documented with the same method applied to the study of the material world, so that "spiritual knowledge [...] might be reasonably learned, and naturally understood."<sup>6</sup> The reason why this is so is that "spiritual truths answer unto natural ones, inasmuch as these originate and flow from them, and serve as a foundation for the former."<sup>7</sup> In other words, the answer is to be found in Swedenborg's own "theory of correspondence" as formulated in *On Heaven and Its Wonders and on Hell* (1758), his best known theological work besides the eight volumes that compose *Arcana Coelestia* (1749–56).

The whole natural world corresponds to the spiritual world, and not merely the natural world in general, but also every particular of it; and as a consequence everything in the natural world that springs from the spiritual world is called a correspondent.<sup>8</sup>

Swedenborg's theory regarding the interrelation between the spiritual and the natural world corresponds in to Hesselius's belief that "the entire natural world is but the ultimate expression of that spiritual world from which, and in which alone, it has its life" (GT, 6) and that "the essential man is a spirit" (GT, 6). Swedenborg uses the human face - which Hesselius

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<sup>5</sup> Emanuel Swedenborg, in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 2015.

Retrieved from <<http://www.britannica.com/biography/Emanuel-Swedenborg>>

<sup>6</sup> Tafel, Johann Friedrich Immanuel, *Documents Concerning the Life and Character of Emanuel Swedenborg*, Joseph Hayward, Market-Place, 1841, p. 212.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>8</sup> Swedenborg, Emanuel. *Heaven and Its Wonders and Hell: From Things Heard and Seen*. Swedenborg Foundation, West Chester, Pennsylvania, 2009. p. 73. Henceforth all quotations will refer to this text as HH.

terms a "powerful organ of spirit" (GT, 15) - as an example of his theory of correspondences:

From the human face it can be seen what correspondence is [...] all the affections of the mind present themselves to view in a natural form, as in their type. This is why the face is called the index of the mind; that is, it is man's spiritual world presented in his natural world. [...] So whatever effects are produced in the body, whether in the face, in speech, or in bodily movements, are called correspondences (HH, 74).

That Jennings's face should be described as "stony" (GT, 18) and illuminated by a "dim, odd glow" (GT, 18) is indicative not only of the state of his mind - of his affliction - but also of his spiritual condition, suggesting an equally, correspondent, spiritual malady.

One of the marked passages in Jennings's copy of *Arcana Coelestia* refers to the spiritual eye. "When man's interior sight is opened, which is that of his spirit, then there appear the things of another life, which cannot possibly be made visible to the bodily sight" (GT, 12). By interior or internal sight, Swedenborg means that "of thought" (HH, 63); since he attributes a spiritual quality to thought - "it is not the body that thinks, but the soul, which is spiritual" (HH, 346) - it follows that the interior sight has a "like extension in the spiritual world" (HH, 150). As seen before, the dichotomy between the bodily eye and the spiritual or interior eye was one of great interest in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, grounded in the wider debate between faith and science. By opening his interior eye - that of thought, possibly by way of his obsessive research into paganism - Jennings has come to perceive things from beyond the material world and to associate with evil spirits.

Swedenborg defines the world of spirits as "an intermediate place between heaven and hell and also an intermediate state of the man after death" (HH, 340). Jennings's assertion that the monkey is drawing him "more interiorly into hell" (GT, 25) would refer, then, to his psychological state of mind more than to hell in the literary sense.

The state of heaven in man is the conjunction of good and truth in him; and the state of hell is the conjunction of evil and falsity in him. Whenever good in a man-spirit is conjoined to truth he comes into heaven, because that conjunction, as just said, is heaven in him; but whenever evil in a man-spirit is conjoined with falsity he comes into hell, because that conjunction is hell in him (HH, 340).

Jennings's association with an evil spirit in a bestial form, a "fera" (GT, 12), cannot therefore be attributed to any unfortunate turn of events. According to Swedenborgian philosophy, the conjunction with either good or evil spirits is entirely dependent upon a man's own good or evil inner quality. "May God compassionate me" (GT, 13) is the reverend's plea, in what could be taken as either a call for heavenly help or an admission of guilt. The monkey's menacing presence surely feels like retribution for some wrongdoing and its persecution proceeds in phases of increasing aggressiveness. For the first year, Mr. Jennings's "bestial companion" (GT, 23), as he defines it, looks "sullen and sick" (GT, 24) but, beneath this "surly languor" (GT, 24), the reverend is able to perceive a "character of malignity - unfathomable malignity" (GT, 24). After disappearing for a time, the simian returns, its malice "now active" (GT, 25). Jennings's loss of control over his life culminates one day when, during a church service, the monkey sits upon the reverend's lectionary preventing him from reading the pages. It is after this instance that Jennings turns to Doctor Harley whose cure seems to work at first, restoring the reverend's spirit to the point that he feels "delivered" (GT, 26) and ready to resume his work. However, the respite is only momentary: it is while travelling in a chaise, feeling "happy and grateful" (GT, 26), that Jennings spots the monkey in one the corners. This is the second time that the monkey has appeared to him on a means of transport - first the omnibus, now the chaise. One particular characteristic of the monkey which manifests after Doctor Harley's failed cure is that of

swinging back and forth while sitting on tables and chairs, hypnotizing him.

There is in its motion an indefinable power to dissipate thought, and to contract one's attention to that monotony, till the ideas shrink, as it were, to a point, and at last to nothing—and unless I had started up, and shook off the catalepsy I have felt as if my mind were on the point of losing itself (GT, 27).

In the third phase, the monkey starts to talk to the reverend "in words and consecutive sentences" (GT, 28); a talk perceived not through his hearing but in his head "like a singing" (GT, 28). Despite the fact that the demonic monkey never physically interacts with the reverend, it is nonetheless able to extend its destructive influence over him through the sense of sight and sound alone exercising its powers to the point of inducing in Jennings a trance-like state and conditioning his actions. The monkey, fully exercising this new kind of influence, begins to whisper any sort of blasphemies to the reverend's ears urging him to commit crimes, against others and against himself, until Jennings eventually takes his own life.

“A totally different malady”

Despite Jennings's own beliefs to the contrary, the alternative option - that the monkey is indeed a hallucination - cannot be wholly discarded. In this case Jennings, although unconsciously, would be the one in control: being a product of his imagination, the simian would directly respond to the reverend either physically or mentally. Subtle references point to this possibility. For example, one characteristic Jennings immediately notices about the monkey on the first night is that it perfectly mimics his actions. In order to closely monitor the actions of the animal, the reverend starts walking up and down the road near his house and notes that the simian walks at his pace and stops exactly when he does. Moreover, that

first night the monkey looks "dazed and languid" (GT, 23), which can be interpreted as direct consequence of Jennings drinking alcohol instead of green tea that evening. As a depressant, alcohol would have made the monkey "slow and unfocused,"<sup>9</sup> thus suggesting that the monkey is actually affected by a "bodily process."<sup>10</sup> That the monkey is "all visible" (GT, 24) even in the dark would indicate that the reason why Jennings can see it so clearly is because the monkey actually lives within the confines of his mind and is projected in the outside world only as a hallucination.

Hesselius, too, believes it to be no more than a physical malady: "I told him that he must regard his illness strictly as one dependent on physical, though subtle physical, causes" (GT, 30). In advising Jennings to regard his illness as an exclusively physical malady, Hesselius disregard both Swedenborgian philosophy – to which he claims to be indebted – and, especially, any psychological factor that might be at work. In this position, Hesselius largely anticipates the late nineteenth century tendency to reject "psychological approaches to mental disorder,"<sup>11</sup> a phenomenon analyzed by Michael J. Clarke. Whereas the healthy individual was believed to be characterized by a state of equilibrium between his mental and his physical activities so that the mind could function independently from the body,<sup>12</sup> mental illness corresponded to a loss of this autonomy: "thought and feeling were progressively removed from the sphere of volitional control [...] and eventually reduced to the level of mere epiphenomena of underlying morbid states [...] of the brain and nervous system."<sup>13</sup> Doctor

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<sup>9</sup> Psiropoulos, Brian. *Victorian Gothic Materialism: Realizing The Gothic in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. Dissertation, University of Oregon, 2013, p. 126.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.126.

<sup>11</sup> Clark, Michael J., "The Rejection of Psychological Approaches to Mental Disorder in Late Nineteenth-Century British Psychiatry", in *Madhouse, Mad-Doctors, and Madmen: The Social History of Psychiatry in the Victorian Era*, edited by Andrew Scull, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275.

Hesselius, too, refers to a loss of autonomy: "a poison [...] which paralyses the tissue that separates those cognate functions of the senses, the external and the internal" (GT, 34). Madness, therefore, is conceptualized as a bodily illness whose causes have a traceable physiological origin rather than a psychological one.

The somatic interpretation of madness is part of a larger cultural and socio-political shift that took place between 1700 and 1900 and which is directly connected to the rise of the asylum system, a phenomenon analysed by the sociologist Andrew Scull.<sup>14</sup> The opening of county and borough asylums in which the mentally ill could be hospitalized at public expense can be seen as a response to the changing understanding of madness:<sup>15</sup> the 1845 Lunacy Act, which established a network of supervised county asylums, threatened the occupational status of those physician who had been profiting from the trade of the mentally ill in the private, and largely unmonitored, madhouses. Their position as experts in the field begun to be challenged and their approach disputed: the most threatening claim was that madness did not, in fact, arise from brain dysfunctions but exclusively from a moral defect of the mind<sup>16</sup> and, therefore, that it needed exclusively a moral treatment. In the critical debate over the mental or somatic etiology of insanity, proponents of the strictly material approach found themselves in the position of having to continually assert medicine's jurisdiction over insanity: it was fundamental to prove that, despite the absence of physical evidence, madness was indeed caused by biophysical factors<sup>17</sup> and needed to be classified entirely as a somatic illness which

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<sup>14</sup> Scull, Andrew. *The Most Solitary of Afflictions: Madness and Society in Britain, 1700-1900*. London: Yale University Press, 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Whereas seventeenth and eighteenth century concepts of madness regarded the lunatic as a being who had lost his humanity and had reverted to more basic instincts, nineteenth century reformers claimed that the madman "remained in essence a man; a man lacking in self-restraint and order, but a man for all that. Scull, *cit.*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

"doctors alone were qualified to treat."<sup>18</sup>

In order to prove their argument, doctors focused their attention on the study of the brain,<sup>19</sup> attempting to delineate viable model that could validate their physiological explanation of insanity. Hesselius's depiction of the brain as the center of a circulatory nervous system carrying "a fluid" (GT, 35) indeed anticipates nineteenth century scientific conceptualizations: "the brain was increasingly pictured as 'secreting' thought, in an essentially glandular fashion, and its inflammation, brought about by hypothetical disorders of the vascular system, was seen as an especially likely cause of insanity."<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Hesselius claims that the equilibrium characterizing the cerebral fluid is at risk of being altered by "various abuses", among which "habitual use of such agents as green tea" (GT, 35). In attributing Jennings's illness to a nervous condition, Hesselius indirectly endorses Lady Mary's early reassurances that the reverend's condition was caused by nothing other than nerves (GT, 16). Even the metaphysical part of Hesselius's explanation turns to a largely somatic lexicon:

This fluid being that which we have in common with spirits, a congestion found upon the masses of brain or nerve, connected with the interior sense, forms a surface unduly exposed, on which disembodied spirits may operate: communication is thus more or less effectually established (GT, 36).

Hesselius distinguishes between two types of afflictions, the first is that of interior vision and the second is that of spectral illusions (GT, 35); he claims perfect knowledge of the respective

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>19</sup> The somatic interpretation of madness exposed medical men to accusation of materialism and, consequently, of atheism for "to argue that the mind was subject to disease, debility, or [...] even death, was to contradict the very foundation of Christianity, the belief in an immortal soul". A way to prove that madness was a disease of the brain/body without compromising the incorruptibility of the mind/soul was found by "postulating a Cartesian dualism between mind and body" which allowed doctors to treat the brain as a material counterpart of the immortal soul. Scull, *cit.*, p. 221.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 238.

cures – “fifty-seven such cases have I encountered, neither more nor less. And in how many of these have I failed? In no one single instance” (GT, 35) – attributing his failure in Mr. Jennings’s case to the fact that he “had not even commenced to treat” (GT, 35) the reverend. Far from clarifying the issue, Hesselius’s elaborate explanations and feeble justifications complicate the matter even further.

Cures and treatment were, of course, a major topic discussion in the nineteenth-century medical community. While agreeing that madness, as a physical pathology, required physical treatment, nevertheless medical doctors argued over which particular somatic procedures to employ: local bleeding with leeches, opium, purgatives,<sup>21</sup> and other such cures were alternatively praised or condemned. The low numbers of recoveries pointed to the remarkable little success of these procedures, yet doctors were adamant about defending their position:

The problem, it was concluded, must lie in the administration of the wrong remedies or of the right remedies in the wrong way, and not in the nature of the undertaking itself. In an almost haphazard fashion, a variable plethora of drugs and medical techniques was enlisted in the battle against insanity.<sup>22</sup>

Hesselius, too, seems reluctant to abandon his convictions as to the effectiveness of his remedies:

You remember how effectually I dissipated your pictures by the simple application of iced eau-de-cologne. Few cases, however, can be treated exactly alike with anything like rapid success. Cold acts powerfully as a repellant of the nervous fluid. Long enough continued it will even produce that permanent insensibility which we call numbness, and a little longer, muscular as well as sensational paralysis (GT, 36).

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

A number of critics have questioned Hesselius's professionalism. Jack Sullivan points to Hesselius's "ineptness in treating Jennings."<sup>23</sup> Langan remarks: "despite his confession of Swedenborg's influence on his work, Hesselius either has come up short in his understanding of the man's writing, or has chosen to disregard those portions of them that have most bearing on the case at hand."<sup>24</sup> And Barbara Gates goes as far as calling Hesselius "a careless empiricist, a derelict in duty, and a very materialistic spiritualist."<sup>25</sup>

The physician concludes his array of medical afflictions and "absolutely certain" (GT, 35) cures by claiming that Jennings's illness was "a totally different malady" (GT, 36), the final diagnosis being "hereditary suicidal mania" (GT, 36). That Mr. Jennings should end up killing himself is all the more tragic given that he is a man of faith and suicide is believed to be a crime against God. But, more than that, suicide was also a criminal offense according to civil law, the punishment for which consisted in "the denial of a Christian funeral and burial as well as forfeiture of goods and chattels."<sup>26</sup>

Starting from the seventeenth century, as part of Enlightenment's rationalizing project, a decriminalization of suicide was set in motion: suicide came to be seen as an act of temporary insanity and coroner's juries began to declare *non compos mentis* verdicts instead of *felo de se* verdicts. The fact that insanity was increasingly used as a legal category can be seen "as initiating a routine link between madness and suicide,"<sup>27</sup> a process termed by Michael

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<sup>23</sup> Sullivan, "'Green Tea': The Archetypical Ghost Story", *cit.*, p. 281.

<sup>24</sup> Langan, *cit.*, p. 330.

<sup>25</sup> Gates, Barbara. "Blue Devils and Green Tea: Sheridan Le Fanu's Haunted Suicides", *Studies in Short Fiction*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Winter 1987, p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> Laragy, Georgina. "'A Peculiar Species of Felony': Suicide, Medicine, and the Law in Victorian Britain and Ireland", *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 46 No. 3, 2013, Oxford University Press. p. 734.

<sup>27</sup> Houston, Robert R., "Explanations for death by suicide in northern Britain during the long eighteenth century", *History of Psychiatry*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2012, pp. 52-64.

Quotations follow the page numbers on pdf version: <[https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/bitstream/10023/3850/1/Houston\\_2012\\_HistPsychiatry\\_Death.pdf](https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/bitstream/10023/3850/1/Houston_2012_HistPsychiatry_Death.pdf)> p. 5.

Macdonald the "medicalization" of suicide.<sup>28</sup>

The temporary insanity verdict, however, inevitably triggered a large controversy since it was objectively difficult to establish the grounds for insanity in any definite way. The medical expertise of doctors was required and "physicians were increasingly called upon to define insanity in cases of suicide,"<sup>29</sup> which seemed to "shift the burden of judicial responsibility from legal to medical practitioners."<sup>30</sup> However, it has been remarked that the most significant medical contribution to coroner's inquests consisted in "opening the body, not unravelling the mind"<sup>31</sup>:

Medical practitioners [...] were more likely to look for a connection with physical pathology rather than psychogenic anomalies when explaining suicide. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century medical and other observers tried their best to link the acceptable lunacy of suicide to physical ailments rather than allowing the taint associated with mental illness.<sup>32</sup>

It would be difficult to imagine whether Hesselius, hypothetically called in front of a coroner's jury to testify in the case of Mr. Jennings, would opt for a psycho-pathological explanation over the more socially acceptable physiological one - especially considering that his diagnosis of "suicidal hereditary mania" seems to be a last-minute expedient. "Suicidal" was at the time a term used largely for different pathologies. Asa Jansson, tracing the particular history of the term "suicidal" as separate from "suicide", highlights how the adjective emerged from bureaucratic and legal practices rather than from medical authority.

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<sup>28</sup> MacDonal, Michael, "The Medicalization of Suicide in England: Laymen, Physicians, and Cultural Change, 1500-1870", *The Milbank Quarterly*, Vol. 67, Supplement 1, 1989, pp. 69-91.

<sup>29</sup> Gates, Barbara. *Victorian Suicide: Mad Crimes and Sad Histories*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014. pp. 12-13.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>31</sup> Houston, Robert R., *cit.* p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

The label suicidal was given indiscriminately "to people upon admission to the asylum"<sup>33</sup> based solely on the opinion of the spouse, relative or friend who filled out the required forms. The admission register, in turn, also influenced the medical diagnosis since doctors would assume to be treating suicidal patients. Hesselius defines Jennings suicidal for obvious reasons, but that still does not explain how he came to label this suicide a "mania" and even "hereditary". Despite the fact that Mr. Jennings's father saw a ghost- as confirmed by Lady Mary - no further details were given regarding his death.

Hesselius's diagnosis seems more the work of a layman drawing conclusions rather than the conscious work of a professional providing proof to support his claim. Laragy notices a similar inaccuracy involving legal inquests in suicide cases. In establishing *non compos mentis*, it was the testimony of family and friends regarding the state of mind of the suicide rather than the medical expertise of the doctor that had the authority to influence the verdict:

The translation of these non-medical testimonies into the medico-legal language of the juries' verdict lay in the extent to which the jury understood the perspective of the witness and accepted its premise [...] This demonstrate that the construction of the legal relationship between insanity and suicide was not confined to the professional jurisdiction of either legal or medical professionals.<sup>34</sup>

Connections between suicidal mania and hereditary dispositions can be found in Forbes Winslow's *The Anatomy of Suicide* (1840). The root cause of "maniacal suicide"<sup>35</sup> is to be found in an "undue excitement of the mind"<sup>36</sup> that produces an irritation of the brain. Save for the substitution of the term "irritation" with "congestion", the explanation is remarkably

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<sup>33</sup> Jansson, Asa. "From Statistics to Diagnosis: Medical Certificates, Melancholia and "Suicidal Propensities" in Victorian psychiatry", *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 46 No. 3, 2013, Oxford University Press. p. 719.

<sup>34</sup> Laragy, *cit.*, p. 736.

<sup>35</sup> Winslow, Forbes. *The Anatomy of Suicide*, London: Renshaw, 1840, p. 49.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

similar to the physiological one advanced by Hesselius: "when the fountain-head of the nervous system becomes deranged, it will react on the bodily functions, and produce serious disease"<sup>37</sup>. Moreover:

[...] independently of mental perturbation giving rise to maniacal suicide, there are certain conditions of mind, dependent upon acquired or hereditary disposition, or arising from a defective expansion of the intellectual faculties, which originate the desire for self-destruction.<sup>38</sup>

Winslow - despite his interest in identifying the medical causes to suicide - condemns the act as immoral and a sin against God.<sup>39</sup> This position proves that conservative religious views were still predominant, especially in the public opinion, despite the growing medicalization of the phenomenon.

Parliament abolished the religious penalties for suicide in 1823 by repealing the custom of profane burial, while the forfeiture of property was repealed in 1870 [...] but suicide continued to be regarded with fear and aversion.<sup>40</sup>

The social stigma attached to suicide is succinctly well expressed by Barbara Gates: "It became an aphorism to say that in England you must avoid suicide on pain of being regarded as a criminal if you failed and a lunatic if you succeeded."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>40</sup> Jalland, Patricia. *Death in the Victorian Family*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. p.70.

<sup>41</sup> Gates, Barbara. *Victorian Suicide. cit.*, p. 6.

### 2. 3. A CHASM IN THE NARRATIVE

"If I leave anywhere a chasm in my narrative tell me"  
(GT, 19).

Since its publication, "Green Tea" has caught the eye of critics and readers alike: the emblematic figure of the monkey, as well as the enigmatic green tea, have provided fertile ground for a wide range of interpretations varying from the psychoanalytical to the medical to the post-colonial field. This chapter summarizes some of the most engaging interpretations of the story in order to reveal the inner complexities that make "Green Tea" an exceptionally modern tale of psychological and neurological disturbances, possibly even a narrative of addiction. In tracing a conflicted relation between the state of intoxication and the search for knowledge, "Green Tea" follows the example set by Thomas De Quincey in *Confessions of an English opium-eater* (1821), while also anticipating Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). The pattern of similarities that can be drawn between Stevenson's novella and Le Fanu's short story is indeed useful to clarify some of the thematic and conceptual threads of "Green Tea" as a narrative which chooses a monkey as its haunting ghost. The significance of Jennings's persecutor must be investigated on the basis of both pre-Darwinian and post-Darwinian discourses: besides functioning as a marker of biological regression and atavist fears, the ape – as an impious imitator of human behaviour - is symbolic of a fallen and debased humanity. Moreover, as an exotic creature the monkey also comes to represent the cultural and geographical Other and brings to the fore political, racial and economic issues. This multiplicity of possible explanations concur to destabilize any fixed frame of reference, thus ensuring the preservation of the mystery that sustains the dynamic of the ghost story.

One of the earliest interpretation has been the psychoanalytical one, with Peter Penzoldt claiming that "the ghost monkey [...] is the symbol of a suppressed sex desire"<sup>1</sup> and reading "Green Tea" as the story of the "gradual decline of a man suffering from split personality."<sup>2</sup> Since then, the psychoanalytical interpretation has been expanded in order to factor in the influence of Swedenborg's work on Le Fanu.

In her doctoral dissertation *Beyond the Gates*, which applies a Freudian psycho-biographical methodology, Anne Ashman dedicates a chapter to explore Le Fanu's growing interest in Swedenborgian philosophy after the death of his wife Susanna in 1858. Le Fanu's recurrent anxiety and his "apparent inability to separate himself spiritually from his dead wife"<sup>3</sup> are seen as the factors which led him towards Swedenborg's theological system as he "sought to create a compensatory vision of Susanna's journey through death into the after-life."<sup>4</sup> In Swedenborg's theology, spirits are assessed by aligning their external outward characteristics to their internal hidden dispositions: only after this alignment is completed and the true nature of the spirits uncovered can judgment take place. Since Susanna had died in the midst of a crisis of faith, Le Fanu, as documented by his diary entries, feared she would be consigned to hell instead of heaven. Ashman reads in the "external" and "internal" conditions of spirits the Freudian notions of conscious and unconscious.<sup>5</sup> She states that "Swedenborg anticipates Freud in the sense that our heaven or hell is essentially decided by the combination of

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<sup>1</sup> Penzoldt, Peter, *cit.*, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>3</sup> Ashman, Anne, *Beyond the Gates: A Psychobiographical Study of Death, Mourning, and the Swedenborgian After-Life in the Later Works of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu*, (Doctoral Dissertation) University of Aberdeen, 2005. p. 174.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

conscious and unconscious characteristics,"<sup>6</sup> and concludes: "Heaven and hell are, therefore, not only places to which one goes after death, in the Swedenborgian sense but also the two opposing psychological states of the Freudian self."<sup>7</sup>The notion of the imbalance characterizing man's nature informs a great part of Le Fanu's fiction and especially his later works. Swedenborg would constitute the missing link between the psychological aspects of Le Fanu's ghost stories and psychoanalysis itself, especially by acknowledging Swedenborg "as one of the first great archaeologists of the subconscious mind, a forerunner to Freud and Jung."<sup>8</sup>

A recently published study comparing the works of Swedenborg, Jung and Freud by the occurrence of key words in their texts, shows that "the overlap is greater between Jung and Swedenborg than between Freud and the other two."<sup>9</sup> The Swedenborgian spirit world would correspond to Jung's collective unconscious,<sup>10</sup> a notion decidedly refuted by Freud who instead took a more materialistic position by claiming that the psychic world coincide completely with the mental world and is not in any way an immaterial entity. Moreover, Jung's concept of synchronicity between collective and individual consciousness<sup>11</sup> could be viewed as a modern reformulation of Swedenborg's theory of correspondence.

Jung stated that certain people that he called "mystics" have vivid experiences of the collective unconscious; hence, "mystical experience" is the clear awareness of archetypes. According to this definition, Jung and Swedenborg, unlike Freud, were "mystics" as well as scientists.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 193.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>9</sup> James, Leon, "A Comparison of Keywords in the Dynamic Psychology of Jung, Swedenborg and Freud", *Journal of Psychology and Clinical Psychiatry* Vol. 3 No. 3, 2015. p. 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Given the multitude of roles and professions he embodies, Hesselius would certainly fit into that category along with Jung and Swedenborg.

Sheryl R. Ginn praises Le Fanu for the insights he provides into the psychology of his characters but she also credits him for illustrating "the emerging medical specialty of neurology."<sup>13</sup> In creating a character who situates "metaphysics within a neuroscience framework,"<sup>14</sup> Le Fanu shows an interest in the scientific research of his time, particularly in the development of neurology from phrenology. The early nineteenth century had seen a growing interest in the study of the brain, adopting an exclusively materialistic approach, specifically in the attempt to localize determined mental functions in specific areas of the brain. For example, the "tract on The Cardinal Functions of the Brain" (GT, 35) mentioned by Hesselius might be a reference to the actual text known by a similar title, Gall's *Sur le fonctions du cerveau* (1822-55). Founder of phrenology, the German physiologist Frank Joseph Gall (1758-1826) was one of the first proponents of the theory of the "double brain", later imported to England by Sir Henry Holland (1788–1873) and Arthur Ladbroke Wigan (d. 1847).<sup>15</sup>

Nineteenth-century biological studies of the brain were propelled by the assumptions that, once the organic causes to insanity and criminal behaviors were finally found, cures and efficient treatments could be developed as well: "nineteenth century biology was dazzled by the paradigm of the physical sciences and consequently increasingly reductionist in its orientation."<sup>16</sup> Neurological discoveries produced widespread responses in the literary field

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<sup>13</sup> Ginn, Sheryl R., "Neurological and Psychological Constructs in Sheridan Le Fanu's *In a Glass Darkly*", *Literature, Neurology, and Neuroscience: Historical And Literary Connections*, edited by Anne Stiles, Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2013. p. 113.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>15</sup> Harrington, Anne, *Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Thought*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989, Chapter One, pp. 6-34.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

both in the late Victorian and Edwardian period, as illustrated in the volume *Neurology and Literature: 1860-1920* edited by Anne Stiles<sup>17</sup>: Le Fanu seems to anticipate this trend by questioning the epistemological model offered by the scientific determinism of the time in its attempt to ground mental insanity to organic, and therefore treatable, causes.

Indeed, it remains impossible to provide a definitive account of the type of pathology that afflicts Jennings. Were he a real person living in the contemporary world, it would be difficult to establish whether he should see a neurologist or a psychiatrist. In spite of psychiatry and neurology being today two different medical specialties - the former dealing with "those disorders of mood and thought associated with no, or minor, physical signs"<sup>18</sup> and the latter focusing on "those brain disorders with cognitive and behavioural abnormalities that also present with somatic signs"<sup>19</sup> - scientific literature has nevertheless come to recognize that psychiatric disorders can be induced by brain dysfunctions.<sup>20</sup> The overlapping of the two fields can even lead to documented cases of neurological syndromes mistakenly diagnosed as psychiatric illnesses,<sup>21</sup> proving that symptoms generally indicative of mental illness can have instead a more profound neurological cause. For example:

Complex hallucinations, in which the subject mistakes internally generated imagery for reality, are a fundamental feature of psychotic illness. However, hallucinations [...] can also occur in a number of "neurological" conditions.<sup>22</sup>

Because the psychopathological and neuropathological so oftentimes intersect, to ascribe

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<sup>17</sup> Stiles, Anne, *Neurology and Literature, 1860-1920*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Baker, Mary G., Kale Rajendra, Menken Matthew "The wall between neurology and psychiatry : Advances in neuroscience indicate it's time to tear it down". *BMJ : British Medical Journal*, Vol. 324, 2002 p. 1468.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1468.

<sup>20</sup> Lyketsos, Constantin G., Kozauer, Nicholas, Rabins, Peter V. "Psychiatric Manifestations of Neurologic Disease: Where Are We Headed? ", *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience*, Vol. 9, Issue 2, 2007. pp 111.

<sup>21</sup> Butler Christopher, Zeman Adam, "Neurological Syndromes which can be mistaken for Psychiatric Conditions", *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry*, Vol. 76, Issue 1. 2005. pp. 31-38.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

Jennings's condition to either one or the other would constitute a forced interpretation - especially considering that the reverend is in fact not a real person living in our contemporary world but a fictional construct which, at best, echoes the controversial mid-nineteenth century scientific debate.

From an exclusively psychological point of view, delusions and hallucinations can be symptomatic of those mental illnesses classified today in the schizophrenic spectrum, which include schizophrenia itself, schizotypal disorders and delusional disorders (ICD-International Classification of Diseases). The American Psychiatric Association defines delusions as "fixed beliefs that are not amenable to change in light of conflicting evidence,"<sup>23</sup> whereas hallucinations as:

[...] perception-like experiences that occur without an external stimulus. They are vivid and clear, with the full force and impact of normal perceptions, and not under voluntary control. They may occur in any sensory modality, but auditory hallucinations are the most common in schizophrenia and related disorders.<sup>24</sup>

That "the thing began to speak" (GT, 28) to Mr. Jennings could be classified as an auditory hallucination signaling a worsening of his conditions: the monkey's "dreadful blasphemies" (GT, 28) keep the reverend from praying and incite him instead to commit crimes against others and against himself. Moreover, Jennings's fixed belief that the monkey is a demonic spirit and his refusal to believe otherwise - that his hallucinations have a physiological cause - could be termed a delusion. He claims to "know better" (GT, 28) and he is ready to dismiss Doctor Harley's medical expertise. Included among delusional disorders is the persecutory type: "the central theme of the delusion involves the individual's belief of being conspired

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<sup>23</sup>American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.) Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013. p. 87.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

against, cheated, spied on, followed, poisoned, maliciously maligned, harassed, or obstructed in the pursuit of long-term goals."<sup>25</sup> Because of the monkey, Mr. Jennings is first made to abandon the research to which he had dedicated much time and effort and then - in the later stages of his persecution - he is kept from working as a clergyman and forced into a socially damaging isolation. He remarks on the simian's "malignity" (GT, 24) and "malice" (GT, 25) more than once, describing how this trait progressively intensified into full-blown aggressiveness. He calls the monkey "my persecutor" (GT, 29) and believes he is being constantly watched and followed everywhere he goes.

Another possible psychiatric explanation is to reconnect Jennings's condition to substance-related and addictive disorders, which include intoxication and withdrawal disorders. Caffeine is one amongst ten addictive substances that if "taken in excess have in common direct activation of the brain reward system [...] and produce feelings of pleasure."<sup>26</sup> By his own admission, Jennings "found the [green tea's] effect pleasanter" (GT, 19) than that of black tea, taking the habit of drinking too many cups late at night. Being the mildest amongst the ten substances, caffeine is nevertheless noted for inducing anxiety and sleep disorders. Restlessness, nervousness, excitement, insomnia are listed as symptoms of caffeine intoxication;<sup>27</sup> whereas caffeine withdrawal symptoms include headaches, fatigue and irritability.<sup>28</sup> When discussing Jennings's diagnosis, Hesselius uses the word "abuse" (GT, 35) in reference to the massive quantities of green tea consumed by Jennings, recognizing his habit as a serious form of addiction. That he considers it a secondary factor rather than a primary cause - contributing to, rather than originating, a lack of balance in

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 481.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 504.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 506.

Jennings's cerebral functions - is in keeping with current medical thought: although caffeine addiction and withdrawal can provoke "functional impairment in normal daily activities,"<sup>29</sup> they hardly produce hallucinations - surely not one as protracted in time as the one experienced by Mr. Jennings.

During the eighteenth-century, suspicions regarding the detrimental effects of tea were raised. Reverend John Wesley (1703-1791), founder of the Methodist Church, predicated complete abstinence from tea, suggesting fellow Methodists to follow his example.

In *A letter to a friend concerning tea*<sup>30</sup> written in 1748, Wesley recounts how he came to his decision. Twenty nine years before, while at Oxford and blessed with "an exceedingly good constitution,"<sup>31</sup> he began to experience the "symptoms of a paralytic disorder"<sup>32</sup> which intensified especially after breakfast and manifested in tremors in his hand. Soon he discovered tea drinking was responsible for his condition: "if I intermitted drinking tea for two or three days, it did not shake at all"<sup>33</sup>:

Upon inquiry, I found tea had the same effect upon others also of my acquaintance; and therefore saw that this was one of its natural effects, (as several physicians have often remarked,) especially when it is largely and frequently drank; and most of all on persons of weak nerves.<sup>34</sup>

Wesley continues his letter recounting how years later he noticed many Londoners suffering from the same paralytic disorders that afflicted him during his youth: "some of their nerves were quite unstrung; their bodily strength quite decayed, and they could not go through their

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 508.

<sup>30</sup> Wesley, John. *A Letter to a Friend, Concerning Tea*. London: A. Macintosh, 1749. Retrieved from *Internet Archive*.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

daily labour."<sup>35</sup> All these people admitted to being tea drinkers. Hence the recommendation to consume English herbs instead of tea which "impairs [people's] health, and thereby hurts their business also!"<sup>36</sup> Reverend Wesley goes as far as calling tea a "slow poison"<sup>37</sup> responsible for bringing its consumers "near the chambers of death."<sup>38</sup> In his work *Primitive Physic: Or, an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases* (1785), Wesley transcribes a series of "Rules" prescribed by the Scottish physician George Cheyne, one of these rules stating that "coffee and tea are extremely hurtful to persons who have weak nerves."<sup>39</sup>

Some years before, in 1725, an anonymous physician had published *An Essay on the Nature, Use, and Abuse, of Tea, In a Letter to a Lady: With an Account of its Mechanical Operation*:

Among many other novelties in our diet, there is one which seems particularly to be the cause of the *hypocondriack* disorders; and is generally known by the name of *Thea* or *Tea*. It is a drug, which has of late years very much insinuated itself, as well into our diet, as regales and entertainments, tho its operation is not less destructive to the animal economy than *opium*, or some other drugs [...]<sup>40</sup>

However, the most vocal detractor of tea was certainly Jonas Hanway (1712-1786), an English merchant and travel-writer whose definition of tea as "pernicious to health, obstructing industry and impoverishing the nation"<sup>41</sup> raised controversy and elicited a resentful answer from Dr. Samuel Johnson. Written in epistolary form to two noblewomen,

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> Wesley, John. *Primitive Physic: Or, an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases*. Edinburgh: Thornton & Collie. 1846 edition. Retrieved from *Internet Archive*. p. xiii.

<sup>40</sup> Anonymous. *An Essay on the Nature, Use, and Abuse, of Tea, In a Letter to a Lady: With an Account of its Mechanical Operation*. Dublin: Pressick Rider and Thomas Harein, 1725. pp. 14-5.

<sup>41</sup> Hanway, Jonas. "An essay on tea" in *A journal of eight days journey from Portsmouth to Kingston upon Thames*. London: H. Woodfall, 1756. p. ix.

Hanway's essay denigrates the very practice of tea-drinking as an "unnecessary and absurd expense"<sup>42</sup> offering "so low a gratification"<sup>43</sup> at an enormous health risk. As Wesley, he ascribes "paralytic disorders, and those called nervous"<sup>44</sup> specifically to the consumption of tea, similarly defined as a "slow poison."<sup>45</sup> His concerns target women in particular:

[...] how many sweet creatures, of your sex, languish with weak digestion, low spirits, lassitudes, melancholy, [...], which in spite of the faculty have yet no names, except the general one of nervous complaints? Tell them to change their diet, and among other articles to leave off drinking tea.<sup>46</sup>

The most serious allegation against tea, however, is that of ruining the nation by corrupting the lower classes. Hanway claims that the abuse of tea - especially the cheap, in many case adulterated tea consumed by the working class - impairs the health and, consequently, leads the poor to consume gin as a way to alleviate the pain produced by tea: "there are numbers of tea-drinkers who find gin more necessary to support their spirits than bread."<sup>47</sup>

The connection established by Hanway between tea and alcohol abuse is hinted in Hesselius's diagnosis. The physician compares the opening of the inner eye experienced by reverend Jennings to wine intoxication: "the same senses are opened in delirium tremens" (GT, 36), delirium tremens being the most acute manifestation of alcohol withdrawal that might cause agitation, confusion, disorientation, hallucinations.

On the subject, De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821) contains a brief mention to green tea. Reflecting on the intoxicating power of opium and discussing the

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 238.

very word "intoxication", the narrator remarks that people tend to use the word "with too great a latitude, [...] extending it generically to all modes of nervous excitement, instead of restricting it as the expression for a specific sort of excitement connected with certain diagnostics"<sup>48</sup>. Therefore, when he adds that "some people have maintained, in my hearing, that they had been drunk upon green tea,"<sup>49</sup> he means to say that the excitement produced by tea often resembles the stimulating effects of wine.

In stating that "every one who sets about writing in earnest does his work, as a friend of mine phrased it, on something—tea, or coffee, or tobacco" (GT, 19), reverend Jennings puts himself in the tradition of what Brenda Hammack calls "the chemical intellectual"<sup>50</sup>: he seems to fit right in with nineteenth-century illuminati known for the use of drugs for creative purpose. The opium consumed by De Quincey, as well as Coleridge, is celebrated for exciting the imagination, opening the mind and offering a privileged access to a higher plan of perception: "the primary effects of opium are always, and in the highest degree, to excite and stimulate the system."<sup>51</sup>

The concept is clearly connected to Romantic notions of the imagination as a sublime form of knowledge:

the opium-eater [...] feels that the diviner part of his nature is paramount; that is, the moral affections are in a state of cloudless serenity; and over all is the great light of the majestic intellect.<sup>52</sup>

De Quincey embodies a "Romantic-influenced model of *intoxication*, understood as

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<sup>48</sup> De Quincey, Thomas. *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. p. 43.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>50</sup> Hammack, Brenda M. "Phantastica: the chemically inspired intellectual in occult fiction", *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, Vol. 37, No. 1. 2004. Quotations following page numbers on pdf version <<http://www.docdroid.net/gjeJH6F/phantastica.pdf.html>>, p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> De Quincey, *cit.*, 44.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

unlimited psychic expansion"<sup>53</sup>: opium is celebrated as beneficial to the mind and, therefore, incommensurably precious to the scholar. De Quincey's persona indeed exalts his poetic and philosophic disposition from the onset of *Confessions*, and later defines himself "a lover of knowledge."<sup>54</sup> He is both an eater of opium and an eater of knowledge, and on no account is the consumption of opium perceived as an hindrance to learning:

[...] for I am 250 miles away from it [the school chapel-bell] and buried in the depth of mountains. And what am I doing amongst the mountains? Taking opium. Yet, but what else? Why, reader, in 1812 [...] I have been chiefly studying German metaphysics, in the writings of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, &c.<sup>55</sup>

Opium, as a depressant, mellows the mind and makes it more receptive to the convoluted intricacies of German metaphysics. The mutual interrelation between scholarly activity and intoxication on one hand exalts the chemically-acquired knowledge and on the other celebrates the intoxicating effect of knowledge in and of itself. Reflecting on De Quincey's "language of intoxication"<sup>56</sup> - the "gross and violent stimulants" denounced by William Wordsworth in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*<sup>57</sup> - Margaret Russett notices that addiction is "first a condition of reading and only secondarily a physiological fact; it begins when readers identify themselves with figures in books:"<sup>58</sup>

[...] a sense of intoxicating boundlessness may inhere in the experience of reading. For De Quincey, this suspension [...] translates into a limitless absorption of

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<sup>53</sup> Zieger, Susan M. *Inventing The Addict: Drugs, Race, and Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century British and American Literature*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008. p. 35.

<sup>54</sup> De Quincey, *cit.* p. 50.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>56</sup> Russett, Margaret. *De Quincey's Romanticism: Canonical Minority and The Forms of Transmission*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. p. 18.

<sup>57</sup> "Wordsworth characterizes his poetry as a milder form of stimulant, as compared not only to alcohol and opium, but also to the extravagances of eighteenth-century poetic diction, which he sees as locked into an addictive spiral of overstimulation". Budge Gavin, *Romanticism, Medicine and the Natural Supernatural: Transcendent Vision and Bodily Spectre, 1789-1852*. NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. p. 60.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

literary models. Addiction, in other words, is mimesis in reverse, life endlessly imitating art. [...] His confession carries a virulent strain of narcissism endemic to his reading habits [...]<sup>59</sup>

Jennings's infectious research - "It thoroughly infected me" (GT, 19) – combined with his confessed admiration of Hesselius's work - "I was very much interested by some papers of yours, Dr. Hesselius" (GT, 7) – can be inscribed in this rhetoric of contagious knowledge and virulent imitation. The state of intoxication envisions a phantasmagoric world of travels and knowledge. "De Quincey and his followers added the substances opium, hashish, and morphine as metaphors for the mental travel associated with consuming books"<sup>60</sup> since both "reading and opium-eating were techniques of bringing the exotic home."<sup>61</sup>

However, the mental travel always fails to be translated in the physical travel that would allow the real cultural encounter to take place. Psychoactive substances might expand the mind's horizons, but this knowledge ultimately has all the consistency of an hallucinated illusion:

In Britain since the mid-eighteenth century, opium and hashish had been bywords for a particularly acute, sensory version of what Gayatri Spivak has termed "worlding": ingesting them [...], the white subject could imaginatively create, enter, and roam Orientalized realms closed to the uninitiated. This was an imperial encounter intensely physiological but also epistemic, since the drug-induced illusion of travel produced illusory knowledge.<sup>62</sup>

Jenning's consumption of tea is intended to ground his thoughts and prevent his mind from wandering, from travelling too far, but it produces the opposite effect: "having consumed too

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

much tea and print, his mind wanders into a hallucinatory zone, leading his health to fail."<sup>63</sup> It might be no coincidence, then, that Jennings's monkey tends to appear while the reverend is travelling: the appearance scenes in the story are both set on a means of transport, first on an omnibus and then on a carriage. The physical travel may here function as a psychic referent to indicate another type of travel, a mental one, triggered by an unfortunate combination of too much tea and too much reading. His running after "odd old books, German editions in medieval Latin" (GT, 20) - not to mention after Hesselius's obscure and out of print essays – is indicative of how excessive research "though it affords the intoxicating sensation of mastering an empire of knowledge, can also become a compulsion, generating the false knowledge of hallucination."<sup>64</sup>

Swedenborgian mysticism is, after all, a rather unusual and foreign interest for a reverend to cultivate, an exotic deviation from orthodox religion. Moreover, Jennings implies that his studies were not limited to the religious aspects but extended to include customs and artistic products: "their religion involves their art, and both their manners, and the subject is a degrading fascination" (GT, 19). His addiction has all the characteristics of an irresistible attraction towards other cultures. As pointed out by Lagan, Jennings's library is the site where knowledge and a taste for the exotic meet:

It is the place where knowledge is catalogued and categorized, no doubt a fitting place for a physician and a clergyman to meet. Yet the mention of the "Turkey" carpet brings into the scene associations of the structures that support such libraries, both the economics of trade and colonialism that drive Victorian Britain's economy, and the intellectual endeavors that add new volumes to the collection.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>64</sup> Zieger, *cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>65</sup> Lagan, *cit.*, p. 318.

Every transgression is followed by punishment. In *Confessions* a Malay, the exotic opium-eater, happens to visit De Quincey's cottage: he is described as "ferocious-looking"<sup>66</sup> and with "small, fierce, restless eyes."<sup>67</sup> He is the antithesis of the English opium-eater, who consumes the substance with moderation and carefully monitors the dosage; the Malay, instead, ingests the piece of opium in one mouthful. He is the exotic Other, thoroughly demonized, who comes back to haunt De Quincey's dreams: "this Malay [...] fastened afterwards upon my dreams, and brought other Malays with him worse than himself, [...], and led me into a world of troubles."<sup>68</sup>

The narrator is referring to the terrible opium-induced nightmares of "Asiatic scenes" he experiences years later: the blame for his dreams is laid on his "fearful enemy", the Malay and on his association with Asia, the very source of "awful images and associations."<sup>69</sup> The Malay can thus be interpreted as a haunting presence even in his absence:

[...] the Malay's uninvited appearance performs the revenge of too much reading and opium eating. Although consuming both the media technology of print and opium induces delightful visions of the mysterious East or other mythic worlds, losing control of that consumption means that visions are unbidden.<sup>70</sup>

The exotic is simultaneously a source of delight and horror. This duality is implied in the structure of the novel itself which alternates an exaltation of "the pleasures of opium" to a denigration of "the pains of opium". Similarly, Jennings finds his research "delightfully interesting" (GT, 19) despite knowing it is "not good for the mind" (GT, 19). His ailment can be interpreted as the result of a mentally abusive lifestyle made of excessive consumption of

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<sup>66</sup> De Quincey, *cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>70</sup> Zieger, *cit.*, p. 41.

green tea and overwork: “in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, 'brain drain', or the depletion of nervous energy through excessive cerebration, was often viewed as a potential determinant of chemical dependency.”<sup>71</sup>

Hammack recounts some case studies cited by C.H.F. Routh in his 1886 study *On Overwork and Premature Mental Decay: Its Treatment*:

One case even bears a striking resemblance to Jennings's situation. In an excerpt from *The Lancet*, quoted by Routh, an intellectually gifted clergyman is described as having suffered from nervous symptoms, including distractibility, irritability, and insomnia, as the result of overwork. The article suggests that the clergyman had treated his symptoms with narcotics, stimulants, and tonics, which only exacerbated his symptoms and eventually led to his suicide.<sup>72</sup>

Moreover, Hammack highlights how influential nineteenth century proponents of degeneration theories - Benedict Augustin Morel and Cesare Lombroso included - all developed theories establishing a connection between chemical contamination and mental deviation. It was also believed that addictions had a hereditary nature and could be passed to offspring. Writers of occult literature - such as Robert Louis Stevenson, Arthur Machen, and Algernon Blackwood - often employed the character of the transgressive overworked intellectual whose mental capacities are heightened under the influence of psychoactive substances, at the prize of having to face degenerative and destructive consequences. Bénédict Morel pointed to addiction as the root cause of devolution, arguing that "maladaptive behaviors - including criminal activities, alcoholism, and opiate abuse - could

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<sup>71</sup> Hammack, *cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>72</sup> Routh, Charles Henry Felix. *On Overwork and Premature Mental Decay: Its Treatment*. London, UK: Bailliere, Tindall, and Cox, 1886. p. 63-64, cited in Hammack *cit.*, pp. 6-7.

lead to changes that would be passed down to subsequent generations."<sup>73</sup>

The threat of degeneration as a consequence of chemicals, opiates and alcohol abuse finds expression in Robert Louis Stevenson's most celebrated work, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). According to Daniel L. Wright, "Dr. Jekyll is not so much a man of conflicted personality as a man suffering from the ravages of addiction [...] Henry Jekyll, apart from whatever else he may be, is an addict."<sup>74</sup> Wright finds the interpretation of the novella as an allegoric fight between good and evil unconvincing:

The assumption [...] that one possesses a darker side that is *other* than what one *really* is not just an exercise in simplistic moralism; it is characteristic of the flawed appraisal and unnatural division of human personality that an addict indulges in the attempt to excuse his addiction or mistakenly regard himself as one who is not addicted.<sup>75</sup>

Using Patrick Carey's four steps addiction model - preoccupation, ritualization, compulsive behavior, and despair - Wright identifies the passages in Stevenson's novella that can be interpreted as indicative of Jekyll's addiction.

Jekyll's reassurances to Utterson that he can at any time cut his associations with Hyde - "the moment I choose, I can be rid of Mr. Hyde. I give you my hand upon that; [...]"<sup>76</sup> - can be read as an addict's typical belief that "he can regulate the use and effect of his intoxicant."<sup>77</sup>

His is a clear "illusion of self-control"<sup>78</sup>, a denial of addiction and a misrecognition of his

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<sup>73</sup> Padwa, H., Cunningham, J., *Addiction: A Reference Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2010. p. 124.

<sup>74</sup> Wright, Daniel L. "'The Prisonhouse Of My Disposition': A Study of the Psychology of Addiction in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*", in *Studies in the Novel*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Fall 1994). p 254.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

<sup>76</sup> Stevenson, Robert Louis. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Edited by Martin A. Danahay, Peterborough, Ont. : Broadview Press, 2005. p. 45. Henceforth all quotations from this text refer to this edition and will be referred to as JH.

<sup>77</sup> Wright, *cit.*, p. 255.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

own captivity to his dependence. In the rare moments of clarity - when he comes to acknowledge his loss of control - Jekyll avoids society for extended periods of time experiencing the shame and degradation characteristic of the condition of the addict. The promise to Utterson that he will never see Hyde again and his resolution to lead a "life of [...] severity" (JH, 86) correspond to a phase of abstinence, a determination to amend his ways. Soon, however, Jekyll experiences withdrawal symptoms - "I began to be tortured with throes and longings" (JH, 86) - and his resolution falters. Jekyll is unable to 'abstain' from Hyde. To the very end the doctor "clings to an unrepentant fondness for his monstrous self"<sup>79</sup>: the pity he feels for Hyde and the admiration for "his love of life" (JH, 92) is the ultimate attempt to "protect and rationalize his addiction."<sup>80</sup>

Hence, *The Strange Case* may be interpreted as the story of an addiction. T.L. Reed identifies alcoholism as Jekyll's addiction: "if we want to understand the doctor and his addiction, the best and most accessible behavioral agency is alcoholism."<sup>81</sup> Indeed, the metaphor of wine is used by Jekyll himself: the feeling of freedom and wickedness that accompanies his first transformation into Hyde is compared to wine inebriation: "the thought, in that moment, braced and delighted me like wine (JH, 80). A close reading of the text reveals that many words and expressions can be taken as analogies for wine inebriation."<sup>82</sup>

In this interpretative frame, the troglodytic aspect of Hyde would be reflected in the belief

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<sup>79</sup> Wright, *cit.*, p. 256.

<sup>80</sup> Wright, *cit.*, p. 256.

<sup>81</sup> Reed, Thomas L. Jr, *The Transforming Draught: Jekyll and Hyde, Robert Louis Stevenson and the Victorian Alcohol Debate*. Jefferson: NY: McFarland, 2006. p. 13.

<sup>82</sup> Noticing how the narratological and linguistic strategies in nineteenth-century narratives of addiction and homosexuality echo each other, Susan Zieger states that *The Strange Case* is "amenable to both [...] queer and addicted interpretations [...] Stevenson's story consistently represents Jekyll's signature ritual as a combination of moral failing, compulsion, and illness - the same overlapping conceptual rubrics applied to the new "conditions" of homosexuality and addiction at fin de siècle. By these means, the metaphor of the diseased will come to regulate suspicious forms of desire and behavior. Zieger, *cit.*, p. 181.

that alcohol causes "the drinker to regress into a precivilized state of instinctual gratification, where the higher mental faculties of reason, restraint, and duty fall prey to the physicality of the baser drives of human existence."<sup>83</sup> In assessing the effects of opium as opposed to the effects of alcohol, the narrator in De Quincey's *Confessions* states that while a man under the influence of opium feels elevated, "a man who is inebriated, or tending to inebriation, is, and feels that he is, in a condition which calls up into supremacy the merely human, too often the brutal, part of his nature"<sup>84</sup> The rhetoric of concealment and public persona recurs as well: "it is most absurdly said, in popular language, of any man, that he is *disguised* in liquor: for, on the contrary, most men are disguised by sobriety."<sup>85</sup> The same association can be found in Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890): "drunkards had reeled by, cursing and chattering to themselves like monstrous apes."<sup>86</sup>

The phases of Jennings's persecution all too closely resemble the cyclical pattern of abstinence and relapses outlined by Wright in his analysis of Stevenson's novella. In describing the appearances and disappearances of the monkey, Jennings conveniently avoids mentioning tea at all: it could be inferred that during the "whole month [...] of liberty" (GT, 24) allowed to him by the disappearance of the monkey, the reverend felt secure enough to enjoy his green tea again. If this is the case, Jennings's relapse would be an all too foreseeable reaction, a response to the physiological needs inherent to addiction. As Wright emphasizes:

[...] the victim of addiction confronts and struggles with the unmanageability of more than his psyche. Particularly if he is a chemical abuser, like Jekyll, he faces the demands of an increasing physiological

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<sup>83</sup> Butler, Lisa. "'That Damned Old Business of the War in the Members': The Discourse of (In)Temperance in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*", *Romanticism on the Net*, No. 44 (November 2006). Available at < <http://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/2006/v/n44/014000ar.html>>

<sup>84</sup> De Quincey, *cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>86</sup> Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Oxford University Press, 2000. p. 65.

tolerance for his drug that reduces him to a state of artless puppetry, for the intoxicant that commands him requires that he consume every-increasing doses of his narcotic [...] <sup>87</sup>

In describing his drinking habits, Jennings outlines a slow but constant increase of tea intake. He recounts drinking at first "the ordinary black tea" in mild doses, "not too strong" and slowly intensifying the concentration of the brew: "[I] increased its strength as I went on". At some point, however, he switches variety and begins to drink "a little green tea", ending up taking it "frequently" and especially late at night (GT, 19). Both the escalation of dosages and the decision to switch from black tea to the more intense green tea could be interpreted as the result of the urgent craving characteristic of addiction.

The parallels between Stevenson's Jekyll and Le Fanu's Jennings extends beyond the pattern of addiction, since the two men share a respectable position in society, unorthodox opinions and, of course, a tragic end. The interests that their secure social and economic situation allows them to entertain diverge from the strict requirements of their chosen professions. The reverend's interest in paganism is a clear deviation from the Christian doctrine and could easily fall under the suspicion of heresy; similarly, Jekyll's work leads him to the very fringe of medical science.<sup>88</sup> Jekyll and Jennings pursue their interests in secrecy, conscious of the unorthodox element in them: Jekyll's studies are oriented "wholly towards the mystic and the transcendental" (JH, 78) just as Jennings's research into paganism "is not good for the mind—the Christian mind" (GT, 19). At the same time, both characters treat with scorn those who disagree with their views: the doctor reprimands his colleague Dr. Lanyon for being "bound to the most narrow and material views" (JH, 76); in a similar

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<sup>87</sup> Wright, *cit.*, p. 261.

<sup>88</sup> In Richard Mansfield's 1887 play *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Jekyll refers to his studies as "scientific heresies". See: "Appendix G: The Stage Version of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. cit.*, p. 145.

fashion, Jennings accuses Dr. Harley of being "a mere materialist" (GT, 15), expressing his dissatisfaction with the proposed and ineffective cure. Jekyll's and Jennings's respective work has destructing effects: barricaded within their houses, in the attempt to avoid the prying eyes of society and contain the monstrous effects of their research, both men end up committing suicide.

The similarities between Stevenson's *Strange Case* and Le Fanu's "Green Tea", however, are not confined to the thematic thread of addiction, nor to the Jekyll-Jennings pair. Firstly, both narratives are "cases" in the investigative and medical sense. The narrators - Mr. Utterson and Dr. Hesselius, respectively - take on the role of detectives determined to investigate and solve the legal/medical case. The gradual discovery of hidden crimes and pathologies sustains the progression of stories grounded in the professional authority of the narrators/investigators. The lawyer and the doctor approach their respective cases in a similar way, privileging close observation and gathering empirical evidence. The specific qualifications of their professions, however, determine different methods: Utterson recurs to legal techniques, reconstructing the events on the testimony of witnesses and consulting documents, letters and wills; Hesselius, as a medical philosopher, employs both his medical training and his analytic eye to read his patient. Whereas the lawyer's and doctor's perspectives are predominant - thus conveying a sense of reliability and verisimilitude - the revelations that actually move forward the case come instead from Jekyll's and Jennings's first-person, incredible, narratives. Ultimately, Utterson and Hesselius fall short in their attempt to successfully interpret the situation.

Secondly, both stories depict a world of professional middle-class bachelors. Jekyll/Hyde, Dr. Lanyon, Mr. Utterson and Mr. Enfield represent a "network of professional and personal

relationships that have arisen from their status as well-established bourgeois bachelors."<sup>89</sup> The same can be said for Dr. Hesselius and Reverend Jennings: despite the reverend's shyness, the two bond over a mutual interest in metaphysics. As expressed by Hesselius himself: "when two people, who like reading, and know books and places, having travelled, wish to converse, it is very strange if they can't find topics" (GT, 7). The close familiarity gives these man a unique understanding of each other:

Stevenson's characters appear to represent a microcosmic representation of the time's professional [...] middle class, who, in order to protect their pretense of respectability as society's elite, must seek refuge in the confidences of one another, so that their own or their companions' transgressions can be kept hidden and safe within the bounds of society's expectations.<sup>90</sup>

Similarly, in "Green Tea" Hesselius immediately identifies that element of oddity that characterizes Jennings - his "way of looking sidelong" (GT, 5); on his part, Jennings seems to feel at ease in the company of the German physician and, despite the recent acquaintance, he chooses Hesselius as his confidante. In both "Green Tea" and *The Strange Case*, therefore, the narrators represent the normalizing element to Jennings's and Jekyll's anomalous behaviour. Mr. Utterson, in particular, is the picture of temperance and moderation: his Sunday habit of reading "a volume of some dry divinity" (JH, 37) until midnight "when he would go soberly and gratefully to bed" (JH, 37) can be cross-compared to Jennings's unorthodox obsession that keeps him up at night.

Dr. Jekyll seems to share Jennings's habit of reading theological books late at night: in the doctor's laboratory, right on the table in front of the fireplace where one sits to read, Utterson

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<sup>89</sup> Prosser, Ashleigh "His Bachelor House": The Unhomely Home of The *Fin-De-Siècle's* Bourgeois Bachelor in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* " in *Journal of Stevenson Studies*, Vol. 11, 2013. p. 111.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

finds "a copy of a pious work, for which Jekyll had several times expressed a great esteem [...]" (JH, 68). Indeed all these men, when not occupied with their work, are depicted drinking in solitude or occasionally together, but always within the domestic space:

[...] the novella places the main characters in both solitary and exclusively homosocial domestic scenes within middle-class home spaces [...] When at home, Mr. Utterson, Dr. Lanyon and Dr. Jekyll can all be found alone, sitting close by the fire of a glowing hearth, possibly reading 'some dry divinity' with a glass of wine in hand.<sup>91</sup>

Utterson's puritanical ways of life are established from the onset of the novella. Presented as a man who "drank gin when he was alone, to mortify a taste for vintages" (JH, 31), the dry lawyer embodies an ideal model of abstinence who, in repressing all forms of enjoyment, constitutes a counterpoint to Jekyll's addiction. No space is left for a healthy balance between austerity and self-indulgence.

While Jennings thoroughly enjoys his tea, his drinking habits are not dissimilar from Utterson's: both men drink alone. By the end of the eighteenth century tea had already become the national beverage, "a crucial part of daily patterns of consumption and domesticity."<sup>92</sup> Analyzing the ritual of the tea-table in Victorian England and the representation of tea-drinking in the literature of the period, Julie E. Frome states that tea "epitomized the concept of middle-class moderation by occupying a position between necessity and luxury,"<sup>93</sup> contributing to forge "a unified English national identity out of disparate social groups, economic classes, and genders"<sup>94</sup>:

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<sup>91</sup> Prosser, *cit.*, p. 113

<sup>92</sup> Fromer, Julie E., *A Necessary Luxury: Tea in Victorian England*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2008. p. 1.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Victorian novels suggest that tea [...] enables, allows, and enhances connection between characters. The consumption of tea establishes expectations of connection and allows character to interact [...] Tea is expected to create connection, to signal hospitality, warmth, and friendship [...] <sup>95</sup>

Jennings, however, drinks in solitude and with no moderation. In the story, the consumption of tea is never associated with social interactions or human connections, but rather with the obsessive work of a reclusive bachelor. In fact, it can be argued that Jennings's solitary drinking habits, fueling his research, are ultimately detrimental to the community and the congregation, as the reverend is kept from his parish for extended periods of time. In *The Strange Case*, tea makes an appearance in the discovery of Hyde's body, when Mr. Utterson and Jekyll's servant, Poole, examine the doctor's laboratory. On one table the two men find "traces of chemical work, various measured heaps of some white salt being laid on glass saucers" (JH, 68); on the other table a tea-set is ready, "the kettle singing its thin strain" and "the very sugar in the cup" (JH, 68). In the novella, then, tea stands in symbolic opposition to the white salt used in Jekyll's draught: "both are magic elixirs: the first transforms a gentleman into a savage while the second performs the reverse operation."<sup>96</sup>

The most evident connection between Stevenson's and Le Fanu's work is to be found in the figures of Jekyll's troglodytic alter-ego and Jennings's bestial companion. There is clearly "something wrong" (JH, 35) in Hyde's appearance, although none of the characters is able to pinpoint what exactly besides a generalized and undefined sense of "deformity" (JH, 35). Mr. Hyde is "pale and dwarfish" (JH, 41), moves "with extraordinary quickness" (JH, 41) and inspires "disgust, loathing, and fear" (JH, 41). Utterson finds "something troglodytic"

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>96</sup> Arata, Stephen, *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle: Identity and Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. pp. 42-43.

(JH, 42) in him. Indeed the word ape is repeated many times in association with Hyde's behavior: "ape-like fury" (JH, 46), "ape-like spite" (JH, 92), and "ape-like tricks" (JH, 92). Hyde is associated with violence<sup>97</sup> and murder. His physical aspect and his brutally destructive nature are represented as intimately related: to the Victorian audience, Hyde is the embodiment of the atavistic born criminal outlined by Cesare Lombroso, in his conceptualization of crime as "a throwback to an earlier, more primitive and violent phase of human development."<sup>98</sup> Hyde, therefore, stands for the instinctual, animalistic and base force that threatens middle-class respectability: as Butler puts it, "Hyde also serves as the vehicle by which Jekyll loses all sense of instinctual control and rational judgment – those two characteristics that are seen as providing the line of distinction between human and animal."<sup>99</sup>

In "Green Tea", Jennings's behavior grows progressively erratic under the "murderous influence" (GT, 29) of his malevolent persecutor: "it is always urging me to crimes, to injure others, or myself" (GT, 29). The reverend is led to relinquish agency over his own actions and driven to the brink of insanity until, rationality forsaken, he performs the ultimate act of violence. In analyzing Le Fanu's story, many critics have offered Darwinian interpretations of Jennings's simian tormentor. Begnal states that "it is quite possible that Le Fanu has Darwin's *The Origin of the Species* (1859) in mind here"<sup>100</sup> and Lagan asserts that "the monkey cannot avoid Darwinian echoes."<sup>101</sup> According to Stoddart, the simian is to be read as "a nasty representation of man's primitive past and an unmistakable challenge to the legitimacy of Christian biblical faith", and the whole story can therefore be interpreted "as

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<sup>97</sup> Note also the idiomatic colloquial expression "to go ape" to indicate a burst of excitement or violence.

<sup>98</sup> Danahay, Martin.A. "Introduction" in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. *cit.* p. 21.

<sup>99</sup> Butler, *cit.*

<sup>100</sup> Begnal, Michael H. *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu*. Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1971. p. 40.

<sup>101</sup> Lagan, John "Conversations in a Shadowed Room: The Blank Spaces in 'Green Tea'", *cit.*, p. 326.

the reification of an intellectual or philosophical crisis which stems from the critical reverberations of Darwin's and Spencer's scientific pursuits."<sup>102</sup> It is no coincidence that the monkey first appears while Jennings is studying paganism: the ability to pray, then, is taken away from him as retribution. Sally Harris claims: "If this deadly ghost is a Darwinian monkey, Jennings is haunted by the ghosts of his ancestors; no matter how much scripture he reads, he cannot escape his heritage, his animalistic nature."<sup>103</sup> Indeed, one of the reasons why "evolutionary theory was unsettling to the Victorians" can be ascribed to the fact that "it dissolved the boundary between the human and the animal."<sup>104</sup>

However, the evident similarity between monkeys and human beings was a source of concern long before Darwin. In *Historia Animalium*<sup>105</sup>, for example, Aristotle analyses the physical similarities between monkeys and human beings; the Roman poet Quintus Ennius is reported to have been the creator of the Latin phrase: "*Simia quam similis turpissima bestia nobis!*", as cited in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*. In ancient Rome, monkeys accompanied the punishment of those who committed patricide.<sup>106</sup>

Exactly because it destabilizes clear cut divisions between human and animal categories, the monkey has enjoyed a rich iconographic and literary history. Commenting on Ennius's dictum, H.W. Janson writes: "the ape was *turpissima bestia* precisely because it was *quam similis nobis*. As an unworthy pretender to human status, a grotesque caricature of man, the

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<sup>102</sup> Stoddart, Helen. "The Precautions of Nervous People are Infectious", *cit.* p. 33.

<sup>103</sup> Harris, Sally. "Spiritual Warnings: The Ghost Stories of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu." *Victorians Institute Journal*, Vol. 31, 2003. 9-39.

<sup>104</sup> Danahay, *cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>105</sup> Aristotle, *The History of Animals*. Book II Retrieved from *The Internet Classics Archive*. <[http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/history\\_anim.html](http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/history_anim.html)>

<sup>106</sup> Morris, Desmond. *Monkey*, London: Reaktion Books, 2012. p. 45. The culprit was whipped, then sewn up in a sack with a monkey and various other animals and thrown in the Tiber or the sea to drown.[...] The monkey was included in this terrible punishment because, as an ugly caricature of man, it was a suitable companion for those who had murdered their own flesh and blood.

ape became the prototype of the trickster, the sycophant, the hypocrite, the coward."<sup>107</sup>

With the advent of Christianity, however, monkey symbolism was utterly radicalized:

In Christian contexts, these primates were seen as hideous, foolish, and obscene. Common Christian images were those of the monkey as *figura diaboli* - 'image of the devil' - and sinner, an image of man in a state of degeneracy. [...] The medieval association of monkeys with sin and the devil, with hideousness, frivolity, and, especially impulsivity and wantonness, persisted in modern times. "Monkey" is still a powerful category of verbal abuse.<sup>108</sup>

The monkey in "Green Tea" is strongly characterized as such a demonic force. Not only does it interrupt the reverend's prayers "with dreadful blasphemies" (GT, 28), but in a remarkable episode it also squats over his lectionary during a sermon, forcing him to leave the church. Ultimately, the simian drives Jennings to suicide, the utter denial of Christian teachings.

In *The Strange Case* Hyde does not escape similar associations. While predominantly defined by his ape-like attributes, nevertheless he is a *figura diaboli* as well, alternatively described as "an evil influence" (JH, 54), a "spirit of hell" (JH, 87) and a "foul soul" (JH, 42). A common element is that of the blasphemy. The pious book found by Utterson in Jekyll's laboratory is "annotated, in his own hand, with startling blasphemies" (JH, 68); in his own narrative, Jekyll recounts how one of Hyde's many tricks consisted exactly in "scrawling in my own hand blasphemies on the pages of my books" (JH, 92). The representation of monkeys as sacrilegious and impious animals is strongly influenced by Christian symbology in which the ape stands for fallen humanity:

Western theologians [...] used the monkeys and apes as living examples of what man would become if he turned away from God and gave way to his baser instincts.

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<sup>107</sup> Janson, Horst Woldemar. *Apes and Ape Lore*. London: Warburg Institute, 1952. pp. 14-5.

<sup>108</sup> Corbey, Raymond. *The Metaphysics of Apes: Negotiating the Animal-Human Boundary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. p. 8.

Monkeys and apes were no longer just devious sycophants - they now became creatures completely at the mercy of emotions, sadistic impulses, and lust.<sup>109</sup>

Hyde and the monstrous ape are figures replete with Satanic associations. Jennings tells Hesselius: "You had no idea, sir, that a living man could be made so abject a slave of Satan" (GT, 29). In *The Strange Case*, Mr. Enfield notices that Mr. Hyde has "a kind of black, sneering coolness [...] carrying it off, sir, really like Satan" (JH, 34). Unable to pinpoint the exact reason why he dislikes Mr. Hyde, Utterson resorts to associating him with the devil: "O my poor old Harry Jekyll, if ever I read Satan's signature upon a face, it is on that of your new friend" (JH, 92). The devil is indeed known as *simia Dei* or God's Monkey<sup>110</sup> for his fraudulent imitation of God: as Luther has it, *Diabolus semper et in omnibus simia Dei est*. In the antiquity, the word *simia* had become a synonym for imitator:

The metaphorical use of monkeys and apes as signs of corrupt humanity drew substantially on real simians' ability to act as skilled, but imperfect, imitators of human activities. As early as the sixth century, Isidor of Seville noted what he called a false etymology that derived *simia* from the ape's similarity (*similitudo*) to human behavior.<sup>111</sup>

Because of their associations with sin, monkeys have found wide representation in the visual arts since the Middle Ages appearing in Gothic marginalia - "manuscript marginalia endlessly depicted gluttonous, vain, and aggressive monkeys as imperfect parodies of all

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<sup>109</sup> Cheny, D.L., Seyfarth, R.M., *Baboon Metaphysics: The Evolution of a Social Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. p. 21.

<sup>110</sup> Morris, *cit.*, 47.

Imitation, in particular, appears in connection with the motif of the double, who can "be traced back at least as far as *Genesis*: the fall of Satan is frequently regarded as the story of an evil double. Dryden Linda. *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles: Stevenson, Wilde and Wells*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. p. 38.

<sup>111</sup>Normore, Christina. "Monkey in the Middle", in *The Anthropomorphic Lens: Anthropomorphism, Microcosmism and Analogy in Early Modern Thought and Visual Arts*, edited by Walter Melion, Bret Rothstein, Michel Weemans. Leiden, The Netherlands: BRILL, 2004. p. 45.

varieties of humanity"<sup>112</sup> - as well as in "woodcuts and sculptures of key biblical scenes"<sup>113</sup>, the Garden of Eden being a special favorite:

Early English bestiaries and Bibles show Adam and Eve in the garden, with monkeys hovering overhead on tree limbs, holding apples, or squatting near the snake at the feet of the sinning couple. [...] Ironically enough, the ape's association with the Fall of Man is not supported by scriptures at all, yet in iconography from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries in Europe the ape was generally accepted as a symbol of carnal lust.<sup>114</sup>

The most striking modern examples are Cornelis van Haarlem's *The Fall of Man* (1592) where the monkey is depicted hugging a cat in the proximity of Adam and Eve; and Peter Paul Rubens's *The Garden of Eden with the Fall of Man* (1617), where a small ape can be spotted in the far left corner holding the biblical forbidden fruit. Monkeys are thus depicted as animals particularly prone to "revel in their base and foolish love of carnal pleasure."<sup>115</sup>

In "Green Tea", Jennings's monkey is described with a sexually-charged language: its "languor" (GT, 24) and "malice" (GT, 25), in conjunction with its hypnotic powers and its enticing singing, are deeply suggestive.

The association between monkeys and sexual allusion is emblematically represented in Henry Fuseli's *The Nightmare* (1781) which caught the attention of Erasmus Darwin – Charles Darwin's grandfather – and inspired him to write a poem to accompany a print of the painting. In the poem the incubus squatting on the abdomen of the woman asleep in languid abandon, is referred to as a "demon ape":

On her fair bosom sits the Demon-Ape,  
Erect, and balances his bloated shape;

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>113</sup> Lee, Debbie. *Slavery and the Romantic Imagination*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004. p. 78.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>115</sup> Normore, *cit.*, p. 47.

Rolls in their marble orbs his Gorgon-eyes  
And drinks with leathern ears her tender cries.



Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare* (1781)

The incubus, materializing out of the sleeper's nightmare, has been interpreted as a phallic symbol<sup>116</sup> as well as the demonized and libidinous unconscious of female sexuality; on the other hand, he is also an undeniably threatening presence prying on the woman's vulnerable state. In Pre-Darwinian terms, then, the monkey is associated with unbounded curiosity, a desecrating imitation of human behavior, and sexual temptation, all of which are perceived to undermine Christian faith.

According to Jarlath Killeen, while it is true that the monkey "causes the reverend Jennings to suffer a crisis of faith [...]", the meanings implied by such an animal extend beyond religion: "the monkey is emblematic of a national and political problem"<sup>117</sup> connected to racial practices:

If the monkey kingdom was the place from which the

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<sup>116</sup> Wolstenholme Susan, *Gothic (Re)Visions: Writing Women as Readers*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1993. p. 43.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

human species had evolved, many thinkers and a great many of the public assumed that some races and ethnicities had not yet fully emerged from this kingdom [...] The tormenting monkey is, perhaps, a nagging reminder that there were a number of spaces on the British map which had yet to witness a complete decoupling of animal and human.<sup>118</sup>

Claire Nally further politicizes this interpretation by seeing in Jennings's monkey "a simianised native Irishman, pursuing and tormenting the Anglican Mr. Jennings, much in the same way as on a national scale, the Fenian movement and physical force nationalism, would present themselves as antagonists to the conservative Anglo-Irish section of the community."<sup>119</sup> Indeed, caricatures as popularized by magazine such as *Punch* - "simous nose, long upper lip, huge, projecting mouth, and jutting lower jaw as well as sloping forehead"<sup>120</sup> - had become unmistakably linked to the figure of the Irishman for the Victorian readership by the 1860s. The monkey, then, in all these interpretation is "associated with exploration (and commerce), literal and figural, geographic and scientific."<sup>121</sup>

As to Mr. Jennings's haunting, many critics remark that his persecution remains fully unjustified. According to Jack Sullivan, the reverend is an innocent victim in a hostile cosmic system,<sup>122</sup> having done "nothing but drink green tea."<sup>123</sup> In saying that the "strange power of the tale lies in the irony that something intrinsically ridiculous can drive a man to destroy himself,"<sup>124</sup> Sullivan remarks Le Fanu's bleak humor in depicting a "uniquely hostile

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113-114.

<sup>119</sup> Nally, Claire. "Protestant Suspicions of Catholic Duplicity: Religious and Racial Constructs in Le Fanu and Yeats", *No Country for Old Men: Fresh Perspectives on Irish Literature* edited by Peter Lyons, Alison O'Malley-Younger. Peter Lang, New York: Peter Lang, 2008. p. 221.

<sup>120</sup> Curtis, Perry. *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997. p. 29.

<sup>121</sup> Langan, *cit.*, p. 323.

<sup>122</sup> Sullivan, Jack. *Elegant Nightmares: The English Ghost Story from Le Fanu to Blackwood*. Athens: Ohio: Ohio University Press. 1978. pp. 67-68.

<sup>123</sup> Sullivan, Jack, "'Green Tea': The Archetypal Ghost Story", *cit.*, p. 275.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 271.

cosmos,"<sup>125</sup> a fundamentally adverse universe working seemingly at random. Barbara Gates also observes Jennings's innocence, defining him as "a good man with no apparent guilt or reason to kill himself"<sup>126</sup> and at the same time "the most relentlessly haunted of all the suicides."<sup>127</sup> Harold Orel, instead, reads "Green Tea" as portraying the Faustian compact: "the connection between Jennings's intellectual pride and his spiritual undoing is crucial,"<sup>128</sup> Jennings's obsessive search for knowledge, therefore, is to be seen as the true catalyst of his demise.

By stating that the reverend is "guilty, it seems, only of being a consumer,"<sup>129</sup> Psiropoulos privileges instead a colonial and economic interpretation of the story and defines Jennings's monkey as "Le Fanu's most economic creation."<sup>130</sup> The green tea Jennings drinks is an imported product - "picked, dried and packaged in a strange and foreign land"<sup>131</sup> - and therefore it represents "a division of labor on an immense scale."<sup>132</sup>

Seen through this lenses, the monkey is then "the returned manifestation of that outsourced labor performed on (Jennings's) behalf and which allows him to enjoy his own specialized labor."<sup>133</sup> Employing Adam Smith's theorization of the division of labour as a highly beneficial mechanism that produces specialization and increases efficiency, Psiropoulos claims that Jennings's work is instead *too* specialized and, therefore, lacks any type of social or economic benefit: only a handful of people would read Jennings's book, maybe not even

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

<sup>126</sup> Gates, Barbara. *Victorian Suicide. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>128</sup> Orel, Harold. "“Rigid Adherence to Facts”: Le Fanu's *In A Glass Darkly* 1872", *Eire-Ireland*, Vol. 20 No. 4, Winter 1985, p. 81.

<sup>129</sup> Psiropoulos, Brian, *Victorian Gothic Materialism, cit.* 122.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

a single person.<sup>134</sup> The simian persecuting the reverend would be then a manifestation of this division of labour which returns and haunts:

It represents the labor that supports Jennings, his lifestyle and his tea habit [...] reading Le Fanu through Freud and Smith, we find that outsourced labor always carries within it the threat of its return in the form of possession, or, to use the terminology of the consumable product: *contamination*.<sup>135</sup>

A product efficiently produced thanks to the division of labour is, of course, tea. Tea had been imported from China since the seventeenth century and had become "England's drug of choice."<sup>136</sup> According to Psiropoulos, the differentiation remarked by Jennings himself between "the ordinary black tea, made in the usual way, not too strong" (GT, 19) and the more intense green tea he eventually adopts, is charged with specific ideological meanings.

That the Chinese - a little understood racial and cultural other that most English knew only through sensational travel and barter narratives - provided the drink that effectively powered both the brutish and creative engines of the homeland was inimical to ideas of English ingenuity, superiority and purity.<sup>137</sup>

Suspicious regarding Chinese adulterated production practices - that the tea was cut with other herbs, or chemically colored, and even poisonous - started to circulate in England popularizing the idea that the tea "would, in turn, infect or adulterate its drinker."<sup>138</sup>

The tea scare and the discovery of tea in British India prompted a shift in product imports: by the 1870s Indian black tea - "pure tea, grown, picked and packaged by subjects of the British Empire"<sup>139</sup>- had become the most largely consumed variant in England. The

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<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

"demonization of Britain's largest trading partner"<sup>140</sup> was accompanied by racial representations of Chinese people: "A Lesson to John Chinaman" appeared in an 1875 issue of *Punch*, for examples, depicts a Chinese with simian features.<sup>141</sup>

Jennings's monkey would be a re-production of the, dehumanized, source of labor that allows the Reverend to enjoy his green tea. Simon Hay forwards a similar reading, by writing that:

[...] the monkey and the green tea of the story are connected in that the monkey literalizes the social structures that lie behind the London consumption of green tea [...] the monkey is a tropical creature from the world's tea-growing regions, so that to be haunted by a monkey - in England or Ireland is to be haunted by the tropics.<sup>142</sup>

In the wide net of the possible readings analyzed, Jack Sullivan adopts a demystifying position, claiming that "the problem with these theories is that they convert possibilities into solutions."<sup>143</sup> Readers are caught in what Soshana Felman refers to as the "madness of interpretation,"<sup>144</sup> a process - that of the "reader-trap"<sup>145</sup> - she underlines in relation to Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*. "Green Tea" engaged a variety of critics in a not too dissimilar - although comparatively smaller in proportions - attempt to arrive at the final, conclusive, reading of the text.

If "the invitation to undertake a reading of the text is perforce an invitation to *repeat* the text,"<sup>146</sup> then every interpretation is a *haunting* of the text itself, a return to it in the attempt to unearth new meanings and give the words new voice. "All forms of narrative are spectral

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<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>142</sup> Hay, Simon. *A History of the Modern British Ghost Story*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001. p. 82.

<sup>143</sup> Sullivan, Jack, "'Green Tea': The Archetypal Ghost Story", *cit.* p. 274.

<sup>144</sup> Felman, Soshana, *Writing and Madness: literature, philosophy, psychoanalysis*. Palo Alto, Ca: Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 30.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

<sup>146</sup> Felman, Shoshana, "Turning the Screw of Interpretation", *Yale French Studies*, No. 55/56, Literature and Psychoanalysis. The Question of Reading: Otherwise, Yale University Press, 1977, p. 190.

to some extent" because "to tell a story is always to invoke ghosts, to open a space through which something other returns."<sup>147</sup>

The spectral peculiarity of storytelling is something that the act of interpretation shares as well: in looking at what might or might not be there and in straining their ears to hear what is silenced, critical readers can be said to "see ghosts" more often than not. Being the ghost the figure indicating that "disruption that is other to the familiarity of particular structures,"<sup>148</sup> to interpret is to read between the lines and look at the blank spaces, filling the gaps with a meaning that was missing - often with uncanny effects.

Although "the consumption of "Green Tea" can induce in critics the intoxicated urge to gaze in a theory glass darkly and over-infer wildly"<sup>149</sup>- as Richard Haslam has it - the legitimacy of this operation must be safeguarded. Ghost stories, being "a kind of open-ended allegory"<sup>150</sup> are a medium that lends itself to re-readings and re-interpretations; but they persist "long after many of their commentators and writers thought they would or could do so [...] only by changing, adapting, and finding uses often startlingly new."<sup>151</sup>

This could be said not only for contemporary ghost stories but also for the old ones being re-interpreted. That Le Fanu's "Green Tea" still manages to this day to raise the attention and the interest of critics and readers alike is a remarkable indicator of the incredibly fascinating power of the story.

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<sup>147</sup> Wolfreys, Julian. *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001. pp. 2-3.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>149</sup> Haslam, Richard. "The Editor's Amputated Fingers: Le Fanu's 'Green Tea' and the 'Chasm' of Evidence", *Le Fanu's Studies*. Vol. 9. No. 2, November 2014, <<http://www.lefanustudies.com/haslam.html>> Accessed 27 August, 2015.

<sup>150</sup> Hay, *cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 231.

### 3. "THE FAMILIAR"

The second story included *In a Glass Darkly* is "The Familiar". The first version of the story was originally published in 1847 with the title "The Watcher" in *The Dublin University Magazine*. The story is set in 1794. Sir James Barton returns to Dublin after having served as a navy captain in the American Independence War. In his forties, Barton is still unmarried and described as a "generally reserved, and occasionally moody"<sup>1</sup> man whose face "bears an expression of gravity and melancholy" (TF, 41) despite his polished and refined manners. These character traits aligns him to reverend Jennings, the protagonist of "Green Tea": both are bachelors; both seem to highly value their privacy, both appear quite reticent to participate in social gatherings.

Barton was therefore pronounced a saving, prudent, unsocial sort of fellow, who bid fair to maintain his celibacy alike against stratagem and assault, and was likely to live to a good old age, die rich, and leave his money to a hospital (TF, 41).

The announcement of Barton's engagement with one Miss Montague, therefore, comes unexpectedly. The marriage, however, will never be celebrated. Captain Barton's life is abruptly and unexplainably taken away by a mysterious individual whose identity is unknown to everyone by the captain himself. In the months before his death, Barton endures a horrible and unnerving persecution: first, he is tormented by the sound of footsteps following him on the streets of Dublin; then, by the awareness of being constantly observed by this invisible persecutor who calls himself "The Watcher". When the watcher finally reveals his identity, appearing directly in front of the captain, Barton recognizes a man from

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<sup>1</sup> Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan. "The Familiar", in *In a Glass Darkly* Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1990. p. 41. Henceforth all quotations are from this edition and will refer to this text as TF.

his past whom he thought dead. The presence of this "visitor from the grave"<sup>2</sup> severely affects Barton's health and his whole demeanour, transforming him into a fearful person profoundly convinced in the existence of a "malignant, and implacable, and omnipotent" (TF, 57) spiritual system that leaves no escape. Despite the many similarities with Jennings's own persecution Barton's is remarkably different: other characters can distinctively see the mysterious watcher - identified as a little and odd-looking man - although none of them manages to catch him and bring him to justice. In order to avoid seeing his persecutor, Barton decides to seclude himself into his house: all the self-preservation measures, however, avail him nothing as the watcher finds a way to murder his designated victim. Only a long time after Barton's death, a circumstance connected to his past surfaces. Six years prior his return to Dublin, Barton had formed "a guilty attachment" (TF, 78) to the daughter of one of his crewman provoking the father's fury: the girl had been punished until "she had died heart-broken" (TF, 78). The captain had retaliated harshly by exercising "those terrible and arbitrary severities which the regulations of the navy placed at the command of those who are responsible for its discipline" (TF, 78). The man, managing to escape to Naples, had died "of the wounds inflicted in one of his recent and sanguinary punishments" (TF, 78).

"The Familiar" has been defined as "one of the most memorable depictions of a retributive haunting that the ghost story has ever seen."<sup>3</sup> Sullivan calls it "the closest thing to a simple revenge tale in the Le Fanu canon"<sup>4</sup> and "the most stodgily Victorian"<sup>5</sup> tale in the collection.

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<sup>2</sup> Orel, Harold. "'Rigid Adherence to Facts': Le Fanu's *In A Glass Darkly* 1872", *Eire-Ireland*, Vol.20 No. 4, Winter 1985, p. 74.

<sup>3</sup> Cook, Michael. *Detective Fiction and the Ghost Story: The Haunted Text*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. p. 57.

<sup>4</sup> Sullivan, Jack. *Elegant Nightmares: The English Ghost Story from Le Fanu to Blackwood*, Athens: Ohio, Ohio University Press, 1980. p. 56

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

Briggs sees "The Familiar" as a classical example of "the commonest pattern [...]"<sup>6</sup> that can be found in ghost stories: "the theme of guilt and retribution, which Le Fanu uses masterfully."<sup>7</sup> As a retribution narrative that employs a conversion motif, "The Familiar" inserts religious concerns, especially Protestant ethics, at the core of a ghost story. By doing so, Le Fanu seems to express his own anxieties regarding damnation and salvation, guilt and punishment: the result is a story that, despite some inconsistencies regarding its haunting entity, is successful in depicting a tension between traditional belief systems and the paradigms of modern society and in reconfiguring in psychological terms what might otherwise have been a simple tale of vengeance and retribution.

As with "Green Tea", the prologue and the beginning of the story are fundamental in establishing the thematic coordinates of the narrative. The prologue is written once again by the unnamed medical secretary who informs his readers that the narrator of Barton's case is not Hesselius himself but instead a "venerable Irish clergyman" (TF, 39). Compared to "Green Tea", the story adds another layer of narration: the first is that of the editor; the second, that of Hesselius himself who has made "his own remarks" (TF, 39); the third, that of the clergyman - Reverend Thomas Herbert - who relates Barton's story. The editor's comment is very brief and only perfunctory to introduce Hesselius's voice, who first comments on the clergyman's report, saying that although beyond reproach "on point of conscience" (TF, 39) it is nonetheless "medically imperfect" (TF, 39); and then he reassures the readers by stating that, had he been Barton's physician, he would have been able to detect the man's "probable hereditary disposition" (TF, 39) and to successfully identify the disease which afflicted him.

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<sup>6</sup> Briggs, Julia. *Night Visitors: The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story*. London: Faber, 1977, p. 46.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46

In making a distinction between subjective and objective ghost-seeing experiences, Hesselius classifies all such cases along an axis that goes from purely illusory to unmistakably real: at one end are situated the "visionaries" (TF, 39), those people who encounter the supernatural as a consequence of "diseased brain or nerves" (TF, 39); at the opposite end, stand instead those who are "unquestionably, infested by [...] spiritual agencies, exterior to themselves" (TF, 39). However, a third, more interesting, category is located in the middle point between these two poles and includes those people suffering from a "mixed condition" (TF, 39).

The interior sense, it is true, is opened; but it has been and continues open by the action of disease. This form of disease may, in one sense, be compared to the loss of the scarf-skin, and a consequent exposure of surfaces for whose excessive sensitiveness, nature has provided a muffling (TF, 39).

According to the German physician, there is a specific class of medical phenomenon which could trigger a widening of perception and allow the subject to perceive the presence of otherworldly creatures. The meeting between interior and exterior factors, subjective and objective modes of perception is what seems to characterize, at the very core, Barton's own experience. Followed by a man whom he knows to be dead, Barton is haunted, at all effects, by a ghost - endowed with supernatural abilities and seeking vengeance; and yet, a ghost which other people can distinctly see and perceive as a living breathing person, and which, therefore, cannot be brushed off simply as a projection of Barton's mind. The ambiguity surrounding the nature of Barton's persecutor, then, reflects meta-textually, making "The Familiar" an extremely puzzling story, a narrative which perplexes and confuses the readers' sense of the real by questioning the widespread tendency to explain all ghosts as ghosts of the mind.

This section is divided into three chapters. Chapter one explores the past as the real ghost

of “The Familiar”, a disruptive force that haunts the present, emphasizing the structural and thematic relevance of both tradition and modernity within the story. Chapter two focuses instead on the dynamic relationship between enlightened reason and superstitious fear that informs the narrative, characterizing in particular Captain Barton himself. Chapter three analyses the distinctive gaze of the watcher and the psychological dimension to Barton’s persecution in the context of guilty conscience and consequent punishment.

### 3. 1. PHANTOM STEPS

In the prologue of "The Familiar" readers are asked to refer to Hesselius's medical cases "A 17" and "A 19" (TF, 40) to get a sense of the distinction between "vibratory" (TF, 40) and "congestional" (TF, 40) disturbances which may have played a part in Barton's affliction. Such cases, needlessly to say, are not provided by the editor. Instead, the medical secretary cuts off, quite literally, Hesselius's remarks before a diagnosis is pronounced. "Thus writes Doctor Hesselius; and adds a great deal which is of interest only to a scientific physician" (TF, 40), he explains. This forced interruption breaks off an interpretative endeavour which, on its own, stands on shakeable grounds:

Had I seen Mr. Barton, and examined him upon the points, in his case, which need elucidation, I should have without difficulty referred those phenomena to their proper disease. My diagnosis is now, necessarily, conjectural (TF, 40).

The difficulties involved in such a retrospective interpretation - in performing a sort of postliminary exam on that which is dead and gone - marks the endeavour of retrieving past circumstances and interpreting them in the present moment as fundamentally problematic. The project of retrieval aligns Hesselius to Reverend Herbert himself who has only now committed himself to transcribe events which have taken place a considerable time ago.

I was a young man at the time, and intimately acquainted with some of the actors in this strange tale; the impression which its incidents made on me, therefore, were deep, and lasting. I shall now endeavor, with precision, to relate them all, combining, of course, in the narrative, whatever I have learned from various sources, tending, however imperfectly, to illuminate the darkness which involves its progress and termination (TF, 40).

Herbert's narrative revolves around events in which he played no main role. Although "intimately acquainted with some of the actors" (TF, 40), the brief appearance he makes in

the story implies that a great deal of details have been provided to him through other people. Moreover, his story is reconstructed on impressions which - however "deep and lasting" (TF, 40) - still pertain to the field of memory and subjectivity. His narrative has been stitched together from disparate threads running back in time which have to be followed backwards to their origins. Hesselius's and Herbert's use of the word "now" points to their shared effort to retrieve the past so that it might illuminate the present: both in the narrative context and the scientific field, this retrieval bears the marks of interpretation.

Irretrievable origins and questionable sources; interruptions, half explanations and conjectures: these are recurrent motifs within "The Familiar", depicting a world in which the interpretative efforts of modernity are continually frustrated. Rather, it is the past - illegible, untraceable - that intrudes with overwhelming force into the present, unsettling modern conceptions of control and order. This first chapter will attempt to analyse the dynamics between past and present that emerge in "The Familiar" delineating in particular the modalities of this peculiar persecution which, while springing from the past, resolutely unfolds in the context of the modern city and its spaces. The title of the first chapter - "Footsteps" (TF, 40) - appropriately represents the tension between past and present. On one hand, the sound of steps signals the presence of *something* walking behind, following, persecuting; on the other hand, the act of looking behind or of "retracing one's steps" in order to identify a source proves useless. The footsteps are the first sign of Barton's persecution: the aural, transient manifestation of a past that cannot be shaken and yet that can be perceived only in ephemeral and fleeting increments:

[...] something is not merely lagging behind, it is known to be so, it is known to be following our footsteps, we can hear its dragging tread [...] continually reminding us to look over our shoulder [...] the lessons of history do

indeed perpetually follow us; but also we are locked in a position where it is virtually impossible for us to turn our head and stare the deliverer of these lessons in the eye.<sup>8</sup>

There is a sense here that the past is that which necessarily stands behind one's shoulders and follows regardless; and in doing so it persecutes, it haunts and it refuses to be illuminated by the present. Shedding light into the past in order to elucidate it is a recognizable objective of the eighteenth century; similarly, Herbert aims to illuminate the "mysterious circumstances which darken" (TF, 42) the narrative of Mr. Barton. The idea that the present Age of Reason occupies a more progressed stance, whereas the past is that which is wrapped in darkness and superstition, sustains much of the development of the story. Barton himself is "a free thinker" (TF, 43), a sceptic and a disbeliever; once confronted with the impossible, he submits to a radical change of perspective.

The tension between modernity and tradition emerges from Barton's characterization but also the geography of spaces delineated. The "haunted and lonely metropolis"<sup>9</sup> presented by Le Fanu functions as a topographical mirror. Barton lives in "one of the *then* fashionable streets in the south side of town" (TF, 41): beyond establishing a temporal distance, the emphatic *then* underlines the ruinous urban decline associated with the passing of time. Deterioration affects not only places but people, too. The two figures of authority in the story are both introduced by an identical temporal mark: Barton consults first a medical doctor, introduced as "Dr R--, then in large and fashionable practice in Dublin" (TF, 50) and afterwards a "then celebrated preacher, Dr --" (TF, 56). The narrator goes out of his way to emphasize how the fashions of the present are destined to become the ruins of the future,

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<sup>8</sup> Punter, David. *Gothic Pathologies: The Text, the Body, and the Law*. London: Macmillan. 1998. p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> Orel, Harold. "'Rigid Adherence to Facts': Le Fanu's *In A Glass Darkly* 1872", *Eire-Ireland*, Vol. 20 No. 4, Winter 1985, p. 71.

dead or forgotten. From Lady L--'s "handsome mansion at the north side of Dublin" (TF, 42), Captain Barton is in the habit of walking home: "His shortest way in such nocturnal walks, lay, for a considerable space, through a line of street which had as yet merely been laid out, and little more than the foundations of the houses constructed" (TF, 42). This "wasteland of suburban construction"<sup>10</sup> is the site of Barton's first encounter with the supernatural. It is significant that his persecutor should manifest himself for the first time in such a place. Firstly, the setting is suggestive of a gothic aesthetic: the late hour, the utter silence, the moonlight that shines ominously evoke a haunting atmosphere. Moreover, the half-constructed walls and the exposed foundations can be taken to represent the equivalent of the gothic ruin:

He had now reached the lonely road, with its unfinished dwarf walls tracing the foundations of the projected row of houses on either side—the moon was shining mistily, and its imperfect light made the road he trod but additionally dreary—that utter silence which has in it something indefinably exciting, reigned there, and made the sound of his steps, which alone broke it, unnaturally loud and distinct (TF, 43).

Secondly, the setting acquires also a social connotation, being directly linked with eighteenth and nineteenth century suburban growth. Orel remarks "Le Fanu's striking view of Dublin as a ruined city"<sup>11</sup>: the street on which Barton walks can be intended metonymically to represent the whole city. As a site of construction, yet a construction left unfinished, the place can be perceived as an indicator of middle-class growth and, simultaneously, of its failure. The decayed suburban space exemplifies the failure of middle-class suburban ideal with its specific aesthetic standards and socio-cultural norms, such as "privacy, cleanliness,

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<sup>10</sup> Whelan, B. Lara, *Class, Culture and the Suburban Anxieties in the Victorian Era*. London: Routledge, 2010. p. 95.

<sup>11</sup> Orel, Harold *cit.*, p. 76.

greenery and respectability."<sup>12</sup> In *Class, Culture and Suburban Anxieties in the Victorian Era*, Whelan analyses "the moments when the idealized picturesque or beautiful representations of the suburb met and clashed with the lived experience of suburban space."<sup>13</sup> Physical impediments, overcrowding, and lack of social stability all contributed to destabilise the "idealized notion of suburban living"<sup>14</sup>; for example, during the great suburban growth characterizing the 1850-1880 period, "streets might remain unpaved [...] while speculative builders waited for the capital to finish a development or went bankrupt and abandoned it."<sup>15</sup> Robert Tracy identifies in Dublin's urban development during the 1790s<sup>16</sup> the background for "The Familiar". However, according to Nicholas Daly, "it is the pressure of the city of the present rather than the political past that is registered,"<sup>17</sup> in particular the railway excavations that transformed Dublin during the 1840s. This so-called railway mania would have supplied Le Fanu with the source material for the original version of "The Familiar" - "The Watcher", published in 1847.

Readers of the story in 1847 would have been well used to walking past excavated streets, limekilns, and the detritus of building. In the 1840s, the fabric of Dublin [...] was indeed being reshaped, as the Georgian planners who had swept away much of the medieval remnants had been replaced by the Victorian railway engineers, who were cutting swathes through the urban fabric to facilitate mass transport. [...] By the time Le Fanu had rewritten the story as "The Familiar", Dubliners had been treated to an extended debate over plans to join all of Dublin's railway termini, which would mean extensive reshaping of the streets in between.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Whelan. *cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> Tracy, Robert. "Introduction", *In A Glass Darkly*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. p. xvi.

<sup>17</sup> Daly, Nicholas. *The Demographic Imagination and the Nineteenth-Century City*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2015. p. 87.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

According to Daly, then, "Le Fanu's are stories of modern urban life, of building sites and the perils of commuting, and it is the psychic disturbances of the overcrowded present rather than the nightmares of history of political stasis that are registered."<sup>19</sup> Surely enough, Barton's persecutor haunts urban spaces. The street on which Barton walks at night is not the exclusive site of haunting: one night he hears footsteps while walking "to the House of Commons" (TF, 48); the first face-to-face encounter with the watcher takes place in the proximity of College Green (TF, 49), at the heart of Dublin; moreover, the watcher appears on the crowded dock at Calais (TF, 66) when Barton attempts to get away, and on the shore of Ireland (TF, 67) as soon as he returns. The city streets, then, are configured as a liminal space between a potential growth and its ruinous miscarriage. The classic gothic edifice is replaced with the cityscape; but this replacement coincides with a multiplication: terror does not originate in a single site, but rather from the city as a whole. In every street, even crowded place, lies the potential for terror. "The modern city, industrial, gloomy and labyrinthine, is the locus of horror, violence and corruption."<sup>20</sup>

The failure of the middle class to uphold its own ideological norms and behavioural codes within a fast-developing urban geography finds its literary portrayal in what Whelan calls the suburban ghost story. The function of the ghost in this type of stories can be seen to be double-fold. On one hand, it can assume the role of invader: "a threat to the middle-class conception of order, either as a criminal or as an unstable element"<sup>21</sup> that needs to be neutralised by the middle-class hero. On the other hand, the ghost can alternatively be

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* p. 85.

<sup>20</sup> Botting, Fred. *Gothic*. London: Routledge 1996, p. 114.

<sup>21</sup> Whelan, *cit.*, p. 78.

represented as the very figure exposing the criminal or the transgressive element within society, thus contributing to preserve middle-class respectability. Whelan sees the ghost in Le Fanu's "The Familiar" - as well as in "Green Tea" - as belonging to the second category:

In Le Fanu's stories, the importance of exposing middle-class guilt overrides the need to reassert boundaries within the suburban setting itself. Middle-class standards are upheld only with the triumph of the ghost and the death/suicide of the haunted men.<sup>22</sup>

In its regulative role, the watcher singles out Barton and forces him out of homogeneity: the relentless persecution produces in Barton a noticeable change "in his health and looks" (TF, 55) that becomes the talk in society. After receiving the letter in which the watcher makes a reference to the captain's "good conscience" (TF, 47), Barton is "observed to be unusually absent and out of spirits" (TF, 47). As the intensity of the persecution increases, Barton's condition worsens and cannot escape the attention of society: his physical appearance is said to reflect the "pressure of some urgent and absorbing anxiety" (TF, 48). The narrator witnesses Barton's first encounter with the watcher. While he himself is filled with "an undefined sense of danger" (TF, 49), it is Barton's exaggerated reaction that shocks him the most:

He recoiled a step or two as the stranger advanced, and clutched my arm in silence, with what seemed to be a spasm of agony and terror! and then, as the figure disappeared, shoving me roughly back, he followed it for a few paces, stopped in a great disorder, and sat down upon a form (TF, 49).

The narrator is astonished in seeing Barton's face turning "ghastly and haggard" (TF, 49); so is the common acquaintance of the two men, present at the scene. After the disappearance of the man Barton struggles to retrieve a semblance of self-control and, under

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

the probing questions of his alarmed companions, claims to be "fatigued - a little over-worked - and perhaps over anxious" (TF, 50). Refusing any assistance, Barton heads home alone leaving his friends to suspect "some lurking mystery in the matter" (TF, 50). Suspicion indeed follows Barton, as theories regarding his sudden and inexplicable change begin to circulate in social circles:

Some attributed the alteration to the pressure of secret pecuniary embarrassments; others to a repugnance to fulfill an engagement into which he was presumed to have too precipitately entered; and others, again, to the supposed incipiency of mental disease, which latter, indeed, was the most plausible as well as the most generally, received, of the hypotheses circulated in the gossip of the day (TF, 62).

The effects of the watcher's persecution are precisely that of calling attention to the fact that something is amiss and out of order, that "appearances of respectability can be deceptive."<sup>23</sup> The social demise of the esteemed sea captain is aggravated by the embarrassment of being suspected of bankruptcy or unwillingness to marry, as all proper gentlemen ought to; worse of all, he is suspected of being mentally ill. The former captain is, therefore, exiled: not from Ireland - the attempt to get away from Dublin is indeed desirable but proves, ultimately, useless - but from the urban space and the social sphere. His fear forces him in absolute seclusion in his house, refusing to see anyone but his closest acquaintances.

Barton's transgression, however, must be contextualized beyond the urban microcosm of social conventions and placed in a larger dimension: his is not a current misdeed, but rather a past violation, of which the captain is not entirely unaware. Long before the identity of the watcher is even revealed to him, Barton cannot shake the sense that the mysterious events

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<sup>23</sup> Mighall, Robert. *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History's Nightmares*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. p. 128

are somehow the consequences of his own actions: "the whole circumstance was, in his own mind, vaguely and instinctively connected with certain passages in his past life, which, of all others, he hated to remember" (TF, 47). Instinct tells him that the past has caught up with him, despite his best efforts to erase its memory. Having been more than willing to forget - to disconnect his present from what he has termed "his past life" (TF, 47) - Barton is now reluctant to find himself face to face with his own crime. In this sense, the watcher is also the embodiment of the captain's suppressed past trauma; but repressed memories are not enough to keep the past at bay. Barton's fearful attitude perfectly conforms to the gothic mode, characterized by an "anxiety over the past and its often terrifying eruption into the present."<sup>24</sup> What emerges is the sense that the past has its own life and will surface independently from personal memories.

On the other hand, what the watcher is really after is vengeance: his actions are driven by personal motives rather than by any sense of social regulation. He is no anonymous agent either. The advertisement Barton places in the Dublin newspaper reveals that the identity of the mysterious watcher is that of "Sylvester Yelland, formerly a foremast man on board His Majesty's frigate 'Dolphin'" (TF, 52). The temporal indicator used to introduce Yelland already marks the "former foremast" (TF, 52) as a figure of the past, but it is Barton's odd series of questions to the medical doctor that make him a figure of death. The captain enquires whether it is possible for a man affected by lockjaw to have been mistakenly pronounced dead or whether one could possibly ever recover. The doctor's answers are all in the negative. Sylvester Yelland seems to emerge out of the past and out of death: "'Still alive- still alive!'" (TF, 55) he whispers after attempting to take the captain's life with a gunshot.

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<sup>24</sup> Ridenhour Jamieson, *In Darkest London: The Gothic Cityscape in Victorian Literature*. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2013. p. 8

In his return, however, Yelland has suffered a physical transformation. Many characters cannot help but remark on his singular appearance: he is described as "a man short in stature" (TF, 49) by the narrator himself; as "a little man" (TF, 66) by General Montague; and as "a singularly ill-looking little man" (TF, 69) by the handmaiden who sees him in the garden. Moreover, he looks "like a foreigner" who moves very quickly, an "odd-looking person" whose face bears a "look of maniacal menace and fury" (TF, 49). Hence, Barton's persecutor is readily identifiable by those who lay eyes on him as a primitive-looking and therefore threatening being, a man who does not seem to be fully human: of smaller stature than average, as if underdeveloped, characterized by swift quick movements and a furious menacing expression, he does not escape simian associations. One of the questions Barton poses to the doctor makes it clear that Yelland's physical characteristics are not innate but rather the result of a profound alteration:

Is there any disease, in all the range of human maladies, which would have the effect of perceptibly contracting the stature, and the whole frame—causing the man to shrink in all his proportions, and yet to preserve his exact resemblance to himself in every particular—with the one exception, his height and bulk; any disease, mark—no matter how rare—how little believed in, generally—which could possibly result in producing such an effect?" (TF, 51).

Barton desperately hopes medical science will be able to account for this puzzling transformation, but the doctor denies the existence of such an illness. Yelland, then, appears to have been affected by a regressive movement to man's origins or, at least, to a primitive uncivilized past. In this portrayal of biological devolution, mid-nineteenth century fears of atavistic degeneration are clearly recognizable; more so, considering the fact that Yelland's outward appearance seems to mirror his personality. In the final explanation given by the

narrator, he is depicted as a violent father who punished his daughter's transgression "with extreme harshness, and even brutality" to the point that the girl "died heart-broken" (TF, 78). Le Fanu anticipates here the "anthropological focus of late-Victorian Gothic"<sup>25</sup> and the "somatic and physiological character"<sup>26</sup> of much fin-de-siècle literature in its fictional response to degeneration theories of the century. According to nineteenth-century criminal anthropology, the criminal is immediately identifiable from specific somatic traits he bears: a man who gives into the baser instincts of his natural "literally regresses or reverts to an earlier ancestral stage of development"<sup>27</sup> and his physical appearance reflect that. At the basis of this pseudo-scientific claims is the idea that "criminality belongs to the past"<sup>28</sup> and that the criminal is substantially an anachronistic individual in both his behaviour and physical aspect. A criminal anthropologist would not hesitate to state that the crewman's savagery and brutality are perfectly inscribed in the shrunk frame and in the maniacal expression on his face. "Physiology became the index to the ancestral or racial past, the place to locate anachronistic vestiges of a long buried antiquity"<sup>29</sup>: not only does the watcher comes out of the past, he is the very personification of it.

It can be said, then, that Captain Barton, in being haunted by the watcher, is being haunted by history: both his personal history - that is, his own troubled past - and the history of man's origins. Yelland stands for that which should have been long dead and buried, and yet has inexplicably returned:

The force of history is present but cannot be explained by material science. It has a supernatural presence, directing and informing events in the present without a scientific

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<sup>25</sup> Mighall, *cit.* p. 136.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* p. 138.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* p. 139.

explanation for its effects. [...] The past, like a ghost, is a haunting force which works supernaturally in this world; it cannot be explained by science or materialism. Although it has no physical properties, the presence of the past is keenly felt in the events of the present.<sup>30</sup>

The past invades the modern city and contaminates its public and private spaces. The weight of history slows down progress, unsettling and discomposing the present age with a force that cannot be contained. The dissonant element singled out in the community is not, after all, the real disruption; there looms a sense that modernity should fear a deeper and more disquieting terror whose source lies in the past.

[...] although various aspects of modernity (including industrial developments and demographic upheavals) may encourage writers to focus on the city and its problems, within the Gothic mode the emphasis is still on locating the source of disorder in the past. The Urban Gothic mode does not dispense with the displacements of the earlier tradition, nor is it a primitivistic rejection of modernity or industrialism. Rather, it adapts the 'historical' perspective found in the early novels when it implies that the terrors of criminality are anachronistic anomalies, vestigial stains on the city's modernity.<sup>31</sup>

The tension between past and present can be said to be at the very heart of the gothic as "the progressive present is haunted by the primitive past, whose presence threatens the stability of the modern situation."<sup>32</sup> In "The Familiar", this fundamental historical dynamic reverberates to establish a dialogue between nineteenth-century urban gothic and the great gothic novels of the late eighteenth century. The year in which the story is set is no coincidence, since the last decade of the eighteenth-century is particularly rich in

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<sup>30</sup> Harris, Sally. The Haunting Past in J.S. Le Fanu's short stories. *Le Fanu's Studies*, Vol. 1. No. 2, November 2006 < <http://www.lefanustudies.com/nov06.html> >

<sup>31</sup> Mighall, *cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>32</sup> Ridenhour, *cit.*, p. 4.

connections. On one hand, the 1790s are the decade in which the principles of the Enlightenment - the guiding lights that sparked the French Revolution of 1789 - conflagrated in their opposite, the Reign of Terror. On the other hand, the 1790s "can be called the decade of Gothic fiction [...] the period when the greatest number of Gothic works were produced and consumed."<sup>33</sup> The connection between the French Revolution and the Gothic has been thoroughly analysed: as the late eighteenth century was characterized by a "significant overlap in literary and political metaphors of fear and anxiety,"<sup>34</sup> terror assumed "an overwhelming political significance"<sup>35</sup> in Gothic romances, being a counter-response to the principles of rationality of the Enlightenment: "early Gothic fiction revealed the one-sidedness of the Age of Reason and tended to unsettle prevailing assumptions about civilized superiority, the march of progress, and the powers of the rational mind."<sup>36</sup> The urban Gothic form successfully gathers a set of anxieties characterizing mid-nineteenth century contemporaneity, but also ties those anxieties to the past. As McCormack has it:

Le Fanu's fiction shows the present as a repetition or indeed a higher confirmation of the past: the past, by producing the degenerate and self-extinguishing present, is condemned as the fount of corruption.<sup>37</sup>

The Gothic renaissance of the Victorian Age, after all, is nothing if not a "return of the repressed" itself. In inheriting some of the conventions of Gothic romances - a lurking secret, a tyrannical father, the threat of physical enclosure - the "Familiar" also depicts, as early Gothic narratives had done, a world in which enlightened ideas of modernity prove

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<sup>33</sup> Botting, *Gothic*, *cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>36</sup> Clemens Valdine, *The Return of the Repressed: Gothic Horror from The Castle of Otranto to Alien*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1999. p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> McCormack, W.J. *Ascendancy and Tradition in Anglo-Irish Literary History from 1789 to 1939*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985. p. 197.

counterproductive and ineffectual in dealing with the force of the past, which can neither be dispelled nor completely understood. The conclusion of the story is paradigmatic in underlying the frustrated interpretative effort:

But however the truth may be, as to the origin and motives of this mysterious persecution, there can be no doubt that, with respect to the agencies by which it was accomplished, absolute and impenetrable mystery is like to prevail until the day of doom (TF, 78-9).

### 3. 2. THE CALLOUS SCEPTICISM OF A CONFIRMED INFIDEL

The dynamics between past and present delineated in the previous chapter find extension in other, correspondent, dialectic pairs. Scepticism and superstition, rationality and traditional knowledge are the very extremes between which Barton moves: in this shift lies the cognitive displacement raised by eighteenth-century Enlightenment, a displacement that Hegel aptly emphasizes: "When all prejudice and superstition has been banished, the question arises: now what? What is the truth which the Enlightenment has disseminated in place of these prejudices and superstitions?"<sup>1</sup> Preoccupied by the same problem, the Gothic genre stages a return of the repressed: dislocated animistic beliefs come back in uncanny manifestations.

[Gothic is about] that transition from a 'traditional' to a 'modern' society, and traces the dangers and difficulties involved in such an epistemic transformation. In its repeated recurrence to the refusal of the past to go away, the Gothic demonstrates the kinds of neurotic replications that occur when a society or an individual attempts to deny the force of the traditional. In renouncing the traditional, the Gothic often compels its characters to deal with monstrous representations of traditional knowledge and traditional behaviours. The dead come back to life and terrorize the living.<sup>2</sup>

Briggs acknowledges that "the combination of modern skepticism with a nostalgia for an older, more supernatural system of beliefs provides the foundation of the ghost story."<sup>3</sup>

Because Barton moves from scepticism to belief, "The Familiar" has been analysed as a conversion narrative. The captain's conversion is a slow process, developed "in

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<sup>1</sup> Hegel, G.W.F. *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J.B. Baillie. New York: Harper Torchbooks 1967. p. 576.

<sup>2</sup> Killeen, Jarlath, *The Emergence of Irish Gothic Fiction: History, Origins, Theories*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014, pp. 22-23.

<sup>3</sup> Briggs, Julia. *cit.*, p. 19.

correspondence with the measured revelations of the haunting phenomena that bring about the conversion."<sup>4</sup> Hence, the phases of Barton's persecution can at the same time be read as the phases of his conversion, as one coincides with the other. The face-to-face encounter corresponds to the captain's complete conversion. Cooper notices that "conversion narratives about scoffers are also cautionary tales"<sup>5</sup> whose aim is that of illustrating "the 'falls' of educated skeptics"<sup>6</sup> and inciting to "rise above the mistake of incredulity."<sup>7</sup> Barton's fall has, according to Cooper, worked as a cautionary warning and in turn triggered another conversion, that of reverend Herbert himself:

[...] while the reader cannot know with certainty if the young man has become a Reverend because his acquaintances' story converted him, his reference to an 'impression' that was 'deep and lasting' hints strongly at a conversion. By basing the testimony on second-hand information, Le Fanu produces a warning to the skeptic in the fate of Barton and a model for the convert in the character of Herbert.<sup>8</sup>

This chapter will follow Barton's conversion from scepticism to belief, analysing the figure of the watcher as a direct materialization of repressed belief system that has come back to haunt Captain Barton. Despite his rationalizations, he was led by anger to commit a violent crime.

In his study of superstition in Europe from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment, Euan Cameron points to a shift in the conceptualization of superstition that took place during the eighteenth century. In the Middle Ages and in early modern Europe, the term superstition

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<sup>4</sup> Cooper, L. Andrew. *Gothic Realities: The Impact of Horror Fiction on Modern Culture*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co, 2010. p. 138.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

was used to encompass those practices which developed outside approved orthodox religion and which academic theologians fought to extirpate; during the eighteenth century, however, the term acquired a larger meaning and came to signify a generalized irrational attitude rooted in religious thought.

In the eighteenth century 'superstition' became a shorthand term used by disputants about the role of religion in society, and its relationship to philosophy and ethics. These transformations opened the way, ultimately, for sceptics to use 'superstition' as a pejorative term to denote any religious notion or belief.<sup>9</sup>

In other words, the *lumières* "broadened the critique of 'superstition' to include all claims to locate the divine in the arbitrary and irrational;"<sup>10</sup> for Voltaire specifically, "superstition was associated with fanaticism, with ignorance, with deceit; in short, it represented all the antitheses of the 'reason'.<sup>11</sup> Captain Barton is a firm proponent of the Enlightenment ideology. One night, he entertains Miss Montague and her aunt in a conversation which turns first on the topic of religion - specifically "the evidences of revelation" (TF, 42) - and then on the "supernatural and the marvellous" (TF, 43). On both accounts, Barton proves himself an "utter disbeliever" (TF, 43). He is not simply a rationalist, however: his disbelief goes as far as being defined as "the callous scepticism of a confirmed infidel". Not only is he ready to dispute but even to ridicule (TF, 43) that which stands beyond the domain of reason. The extremely critical attitude adopted by the captain aligns him with the "the French principles" - those principles promoted by the Enlightenment movement - which, as the reverend remarks, "had in those days found their way a good deal into fashionable society, especially that portion of it which professed allegiance to Whiggism" (TF, 43). But Barton's stance is

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<sup>9</sup> Cameron, Euan. *Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. p. 286.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 309.

no mere pose adopted to conform to the fashion of the times: his reliance on reason is described as a "fixed belief" (TF, 43), the product of the "deliberate conviction of years" (TF, 43). Moreover, he is a member of the Freemasonry, whose lodges celebrated "religious toleration, reason, and science, as well as discipline and order."<sup>12</sup>

Soon however - that very night, even - Barton will be forced to reconsider his position. The sound of footsteps he hears on the way home bring him to a halt in the middle of the street: what troubles the captain the most, however, is not the prospect of confronting a possible assailant but the manifest absence of one. The road is deserted, not a soul visible. Quick to assess the situation rationally, Barton excludes the more logical explanation: the sounds cannot be the effect of an echo because they appear to be out of synch with his own walk as they "sometimes slackened nearly to a halt, and sometimes hurried for six or eight strides to a run, and again abated to a walk" (TF, 44). He is more than willing to ascribe the sounds to his imagination and "treat them as an illusion" (TF, 44) as Mr. Jennings had done upon the monkey's first appearance on the omnibus (GT, 21). But this solution evidently does not seem to satisfy the captain, as he resumes his search for the source of the mysterious footsteps. Pacing back and forth up and down the road to try and catch his invisible pursuer proves futile: the footsteps cease when he stops to inspect the area but resume as soon as he starts to walk again, as if mocking his fruitless chase. Admittedly, Captain Barton paints quite a comic picture here: the despiser of superstition, the man who that very night had ascribed to rationality both religious beliefs and supernatural agencies, cannot restrain himself from shouting into the night a "who goes there?" (TF, 44), barely repressing the instinct to run away towards safety.

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<sup>12</sup> Jacob, Margaret. *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. p. 54.

"In spite of all his scepticism, he felt something like a superstitious fear stealing fast upon him" (TF, 44): once all the possible rational explanations have been excluded only the unimaginable remains, a possibility for which Barton is utterly unprepared and which instills in him "a degree of nervousness" (TF, 44) never felt before. The "unaccountable nature of the occurrence" (TF, 44) sets in motion a process of mystification which will shake the firm foundations upon which Barton had built his convictions. The narrator comments on this radical change by stating that "so little a matter, after all, is sufficient to upset the pride of scepticism and vindicate the old simple laws of nature within us" (TF, 44). The dialectic established here will prove crucial in the development of events: on one hand, a deep-rooted belief in the existence of uncontrollable age-old forces that have stood against the test of time; on the other, progressive principles set on dispelling such beliefs as superstitious fear and assert human reason as sole guidance. Whereas the former functions as a warning against the existence of primal and unknown agencies, the latter reassures men and glorify their ability to understand and control the world.

An example of these two contrasting approaches to reality can be found in the letter Barton receives the following morning and his reaction to its contents.

Mr. Barton, late captain of the 'Dolphin,' is warned of *danger*. He will do wisely to avoid —— street—[here the locality of his last night's adventure was named]—if he walks there as usual he will meet with something unlucky—let him take warning, once for all, for he has reason to dread "*The Watcher*" (TF, 45).

The brief message reads like a cautionary warning out of a folk tale; but because the sender of the letter remains unidentified Barton treats him as an unreliable source and gives him little to no credit at all. His first instinct is not that of taking caution, but rather that of

satisfying his curiosity: behaving exactly as a detective would, he attempts to infer the identity of the mysterious watcher by examining the letter - its paper, the hand-writing, even the seal. However, he does not find "the slightest mark, or clue of any kind, to lead him to even a guess as to its possible origin" (TF, 45). Since "the ghost story posits a world where the application of logic and the solving of puzzles is no antidote to the power of the supernatural,"<sup>13</sup> the letter resists interpretations beyond its stated message: lacking a traceable origin it can be compared to the footsteps which, similarly, manifested themselves in the absence of any visible source. Logic and reason are of little avail to Barton: indeed "the letter, its author, and its real purpose" (TF, 45) remain "an inexplicable puzzle" (TF, 45), which the captain dismisses as "a hoax" (TF, 46).

A feeling of "uneasy anticipation" (TF, 46) accompanies Barton as he ventures down the very road he has been admonished not to take; soon enough the dreaded sound of footsteps are heard once more. This "intangible and unseen pursuit" (TF, 47) which profoundly unnerves the captain is followed by a second letter. The threatening tone of the watcher removes any doubts as to his identity: the writer of the first cryptic message is indeed the persecutor himself. From this moment on, the persecutory episodes will progressively increase in number, unsettling the captain's deepest convictions and instilling in him the germ of doubt:

[...] although he affected to treat the whole affair as unworthy of a thought, it yet haunted him pertinaciously, tormenting him with perplexing doubts, and depressing him with undefined apprehensions (TF, 46).

The persecution escalates in an encounter face-to-face between Barton and the mysterious watcher, as the captain finds himself in front of a man from his past, a man he had presumed

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<sup>13</sup> Cook, *cit.*, p. 49.

to be dead. Barton's shock is undeniable; however his behaviour in the following weeks shows that he is not entirely convinced of the irrefutable existence of supernatural agencies either. Rather, he lives in a state of doubt for the entire time elapsing between this episode - the encounter with his persecutor - and the following one - the attempt on his life. Within this time window Barton continues to scorn his own apprehensions and to dismiss them as a form of "weakness"; nonetheless he cannot help but feel that the infamous street is "infested by some (as respected *him*) malignant being" (TF, 54). Barton's situation is characterized by a state of hesitation and ambivalence not dissimilar to the one described by Tzvetan Todorov in his analysis of the Fantastic:

[...] in a world which is indeed our world, the one we know [...] 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 sense, of a product of the imagination - and laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality - but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us.<sup>14</sup>

In venturing again down the infamous street, Barton intends "to force matters to a crisis of some kind, if there were any reality in the causes of his former suffering, and if not, satisfactorily to bring their delusiveness to the proof" (TF, 54). Barton prefers the situation to resolve itself in one of the two possible ways - either confirming or denying the existence of the supernatural in a revocable and definitive manner - rather than living in a state of indeterminacy. He is repaid in his dare by a bullet whistling close his head and only missing him by an inch. After the incident, Barton does not harbour any more doubts as far as the

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<sup>14</sup> Todorov, Tzvetan. *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to A Literary Genre*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975. p. 25.

physical presence of the watcher is concerned - more so because other people can distinctly see the man he describes.

Seeking advice, Barton chooses to consult a churchman, to whom he relates the details of his situation if not the causes. Barton's words show a newly acquired awareness excessive rationality's negative effects: "I am not a credulous - far from a superstitious man. I have been, perhaps, too much the reverse - too skeptical, too slow of belief" (TF, 58). The captain admits that the recent circumstances have driven him "to review the whole question in a more candid and teachable spirit" (TF, 57). The new belief system to which he now subscribes is rather a terrible one:

"The fact is," said Barton, "whatever may be my uncertainty as to the authenticity of what we are taught to call revelation, of one fact I am deeply and horribly convinced, that there does exist beyond this a spiritual world—a system whose workings are generally in mercy hidden from us—a system which may be, and which is sometimes, partially and terribly revealed. I am sure—I know," continued Barton, with increasing excitement, "that there is a God—a dreadful God—and that retribution follows guilt, in ways the most mysterious and stupendous—by agencies the most inexplicable and terrific;—there is a spiritual system—great God, how I have been convinced!—a system malignant, and implacable, and omnipotent, under whose persecutions I am, and have been, suffering the torments of the damned!—yes, sir—yes—the fires and frenzy of hell!" (TF, 57).

Barton's scepticism has given way to a deep and horrible conviction in the existence of a system in which "retribution follows guilt", a rigid mechanism of causes and effects in which sinners are mercilessly punished. The captain's tormented spirituality is undoubtedly the product of a typically Protestant heritage: according to the principle of justification by grace through faith, absolution from sin can only be granted to true believers. Barton, however, is

convinced there is no escape from the punishment that will befall him for the wrongs he has committed: his utter lack of faith in God's saving grace irrevocably seals his eternal damnation. Le Fanu's Huguenot heritage is here as easily discernible as his interest in Swedenborg's system. Although Swedenborg is never cited in the story, echoes of his theological works reverberates in Barton's "fearful theology"<sup>15</sup>: the spiritual system the captain has been forced to acknowledge finds direct correspondence to the mystical world of spirits of which Swedenborg, too, had been utterly convinced. Barton's persecutor, then, could be an evil spirit that - according to the theory of correspondence - has conjoined with the captain because of the crime he has committed: "whenever evil in a man-spirit is conjoined with falsity he comes into hell, because that conjunction is hell in him."<sup>16</sup> What seems to have prompted Barton's new views of the world is the knowledge that he is not the random object of an unexplainable and cruel persecution, but instead the designated target of a vengeful pursuit that proceeds from very specific causes.

It is also possible to read in Barton's theology an example of what Harris calls Le Fanu's "morbid folkloric metaphysics"<sup>17</sup>:

[...] in the folk imagination, supernatural manifestations are reactions to human actions; folk beliefs concerning spirits represent a continuum from the visible world of natural interactions into the invisible world of moral impressions. Human actions that violate social norms - such as murder - cause a moral disturbance that extends into the supernatural world. In response, a *revenant* [...] operates to restore the balance of the outraged ethical hue and cry of vengeance that resonates through the metaphysical universe.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Sullivan, *cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>16</sup> Swedenborg, Emanuel. *Heaven and Its Wonders and Hell: From Things Heard and Seen*. Swedenborg Foundation, West Chester, Pennsylvania, 2009. p. 340.

<sup>17</sup> Harris, Jason Marc. *Folklore and the Fantastic in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd. 2013. p. 200.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

Barton is convinced that his own actions - being a violation of social norms - have produced a reverberation in the supernatural world and triggered the appearance of a *revenant*, charged with restoring the universal balance. In folk belief, a *revenant* is defined as a deceased person who, in the form of a disembodied ghost or a corpse, returns and haunts the living. The watcher in the story is one such *revenant*; he is also the titular familiar, and as such he recalls a tradition of folk beliefs:

In European folklore and folk-belief of the Medieval and Early Modern periods, familiar spirits (sometimes referred to simply as 'familiar' or 'animal guides') were supernatural entities believed to assist witches and cunning folk in the practice of magic.<sup>19</sup>

Analysing early modern documents and accounts relating familiar encounters, Emma Wilby notices the existence of similarities between many traditional fairy stories and familiar-encounters narratives, suggesting that both come from "the same reservoir of folk belief."<sup>20</sup> In both cases the protagonists are visited in their moment of need by a supernatural being offering to help: "encounter-narratives which detail the initial meeting between a magical practitioner and a familiar spirit generally describe the spirit appearing to the cunning person or the witch when they are in some kind of need and offering them help."<sup>21</sup> Le Fanu's watcher is certainly no helper figure, but he does have some similarities with traditional familiars. First of all, its physical form:

The modern imagination is most likely to associate the visual form of a spirit with the smoky, undefined form of the stereotypical ghost; however, descriptions of a familiar spirits given by early modern magical

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>20</sup> Wilby, Emma. *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits: Shamanistic Visionary Traditions in Early Modern British Witchcraft and Magic*. Portland, Or.: Sussex Academic Press, 2005. p. 59.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

practitioners reveal that these men and women experiences spirits manifesting before them in clearly defined, three-dimensional human or animal forms, vivid with colour and animated by movement and sound.<sup>22</sup>

The fact that the watcher is seen by other characters beside Captain Barton himself is of course significant, as it excludes the possibility of a hallucinatory vision. The watcher's solid form could be a reference, an homage, to this tradition.

Secondly, familiars were known to shapeshift from human to animal form and therefore could appear in either one. In "The Familiar", the watcher seems to be endowed with the ability to shapeshift into an animal, specifically Miss Montague's pet owl. The owl is certainly no casual animal: whereas in ancient civilizations the owl had positive connotations - it was the familiar animal of the Greek goddess Athena - overtime it became known for its associations with death.

The Romans held on to many Greek beliefs and customs, and their goddess of wisdom, Minerva, was also associated with an owl. But overall they took an even darker view of owls than the Greeks did. A bird that could see in the dark could also, they believed, predict approaching deaths.<sup>23</sup>

In "The Familiar", Miss Montague is referenced as a "grim and ill-favoured bird" (TF, 74) by the narrator himself, but it is Captain Barton who manifests a deep hatred for it: he "regarded it from the first with an antipathy as violent as it was utterly unaccountable. Its very vicinity was unbearable to him. He seemed to hate and dread it with a vehemence absolutely laughable [...] (TF, 74). Barton is even visited in his dreams by this "accursed bird" (TF, 75), which will turn out to play a consistent part in the captain's demise. The animal form gives the watcher access to Barton's private chamber: after luring away the servant, the

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>23</sup> Berger, Cynthia. *Owls*. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2005. p. x

watcher can finally get to his designated victim. The owl - the bad omen par excellence, the very sign of impending death - is here, ironically, the direct responsible, that which materially brings death to Barton. In a story featuring a rationalist for protagonist, Le Fanu's subtle use of references to myths and superstitious beliefs seems to imply that an excess of rationality can only produce its opposite: in a world increasingly dominated by reason, old traditional systems represent which has been repressed but which may at any time threaten to return.

According to Orel, Le Fanu shows his "anger the presumptions of the philosophes of the 1790s"<sup>24</sup>:

[...] one may deny, on the basis of reason, the existence of forms and presences that must, for what of a better term, be called "supernatural". [...] But the combined forces of law, medicine, and the military prove as helpless as Barton in the presence of a vengeful visitor from the grave; there is something beyond reason, something greater than the principles of Enlightenment.<sup>25</sup>

To post-Freudian readers, the term "familiar" might evoke Freud's own definition of the uncanny as "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar"; and certainly the watcher can be seen as the return of the repressed. What seems to be invoked here, however, is the historical interpretation of the uncanny, as a phenomenon "closely linked with the advent of modernity"<sup>26</sup>:

*There is a specific dimension of the uncanny that emerges with modernity. [...] In premodern societies the dimension of the uncanny was largely covered (and veiled) by the area of the sacred and untouchable. It was assined to a religiously and socially sanctioned place in the symbolic from which the structure of power,*

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<sup>24</sup> Orel, *cit.* p. 75.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>26</sup> Dolar, Mladen. "‘I shall be with you on your wedding night’ Lacan and the Uncanny", in *Gothic: Nineteenth-Century Gothic: At Home With The Vampire*, edited by Fred Botting, Dale Townshend. London: Routledge, 2004. p. 14.

sovereignty, and a hierarchy of values emanated. With the triumph of the Enlightenment, this privileged and excluded place [...] was no more. That is to say that the uncanny became unplaceable; it became uncanny in the strict sense. [...]

With the advent of the Age of Reason displaced traditions and superstitions find a new way to emerge, which is from the popular culture of Gothic fiction:

There was an irruption of the uncanny strictly parallel with bourgeois (and industrial) revolutions and the rise of scientific rationality [...] of which the uncanny presents the surprising counterpart. Ghosts, vampires, monsters, the undead dead, ect. flourish in an era when you might expect them to be dead and buried, without a place. They are something brought about by modernity itself.<sup>27</sup>

The uncanny in "The Familiar" does not coincide exclusively with the figure of the watcher; rather, it is identifiable with the return of superstitious beliefs and the supernatural in a world increasingly disenchanted and demystified, the "historical by-product of the Enlightenment"<sup>28</sup>:

[...] the "Age of Reason", in attempting to suppress formerly acceptable beliefs in superstition and the supernatural, created a charged space for those beliefs to emerge *as* "the uncanny". Thus produced by the Enlightenment, the uncanny itself represents the return of Western civilization's repressed roots in such "primitive" belief as superstition, the supernatural, and magic. In short, the uncanny signifies the dread return of excess and indeterminacy, remnants from the age of pre-Enlightenment.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Dolan, *cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> Park, Julie. *The Self and It: Novel Objects in Eighteenth-Century England*. Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2010. p. 191.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* p. 191.

As Barton's behaviour becomes erratic, the people around him seem to be affected by an excess of rationalism. For example, the churchman attributes Barton's predicament to "purely physical causes" (TF, 58), recommending a change of air and the aid of a few tonics. He adopts a materialist view, attributing Barton's state of mind to "the undue action or torpidity of one or other of our bodily organs" (TF, 58). Le Fanu's irony here does not go unnoticed, as Sullivan remarks: "with Barton, an ardent sceptic, desperately and unsuccessfully pleading with a pious clergyman to accept a supernatural occurrence."<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, General Montague readily takes on the role of the rational man just abandoned by Barton and decides to rescue the captain from the stain of superstitious fool that now seems to tarnish his reputation. The general's reaction to "the story of Barton's supernatural visitations" (TF, 62) is laughter and ridicule:

I am resolved to say what I have to say upon this magnificent mock mystery of yours. You must not be angry, but really it is too bad to see you at your time of life, absolutely frightened into good behaviour, like a naughty child by a bugaboo, and as far as I can learn, a very contemptible one. (TF, 63)

Barton, however, has turned to a different type of knowledge: he has been "constrained to believe"(TF, 58) in the existence of the supernatural with an "overwhelming certainty" (TF, 58) that will not yield to the reassurances of reason. "'If *you* knew what *I* knew' [...]" (TF, 63) he answers to General Montague, claiming that - despite all appearances that he has lost his reason - he knows more, not less. His approach to reality seems to have been severed from the faculties of rationality and to have come to rely on emotions and intuition. An example of this is the unconscious state in which Barton falls after seeing the watcher:

"It was not a dream," he said, after a time; "I was in a different state—I felt differently and strangely; and yet it

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<sup>30</sup> Sullivan, *cit.*, p. 57.

was all as real, as clear, and vivid, as what I now see and hear—it was a reality" (TF, 72).

In this state of unconsciousness, Barton seems to be able to access a higher, almost transcendental, plan of perception. He finds himself in a *locus amoenus* in the proximity of a lake surrounded by green hills, a setting that reminds of the Shropshire scene in “Green tea”: the captain's description reaches animistic touches as he feels in harmony with nature and a profound sense of peace. The landscape offers a glimpse into the enchanted world demythologized by the Enlightenment:

My head was leaning on the lap of a girl, and she was singing a song, that told, I know not how—whether by words or harmonies—of all my life—all that is past, and all that is still to come; and with the song the old feelings that I thought had perished within me came back, and tears flowed from my eyes (TF, 72).

General Montague attempts to restore the captain's common sense urging him to dismiss this "pack of dreams and nonsense" (TF, 71), to no avail. After his transcendental dream Barton sinks into "a profound and tranquil melancholy" (TF, 73), alternated to states of extreme excitement, a "frenzy of terror" (TF, 72). In evoking the mythological figure the bugaboo - an alternate version of "boogeyman"- General Montague had unknowingly foreshadowed the state of utter, seemingly irrational, terror that will possess Barton during his last days. The captain's "paroxysms of abject terror" (TF, 73), however, prove more than justified. In proceeding from rational to intuitional knowledge, Barton has been allowed to expect a last visitation by his enemy:

[...] the last encounter with that – that *demon*, who has drawn me thus to the verge of the chasm, and who is himself to plunge me down. I am to see him again—once more—but under circumstances unutterably more terrific than ever" (TF, 72).

The dream, from which the captain emerges carrying with himself this irremovable certainty, truly is Barton's real moment of enlightenment. The apparent irreconcilability between myth and enlightened reason, then, finds here a point of encounter. In analysing mythology and the Enlightenment as two symmetrically opposed systems, Horkheim and Adorno identify a common core between them: if on one hand "myth is already enlightenment,"<sup>31</sup> on the other hand there is a process by which "enlightenment reverts to mythology"<sup>32</sup> :

Enlightenment is mythical fear radicalized. The pure immanence of positivism, its ultimate product, is nothing other than a form of universal taboo. Nothing is allowed to remain outside, since the mere idea of the 'outside' is the real source of fear.<sup>33</sup>

In other words, "enlightened reason is progressively hollowed out until it reverts to the new mythology of a resurrected relationship to nature, to violence"<sup>34</sup>: Barton dies calling out to God in "a tone of stifled horror" (TF, 75) and one last "yell of agony" (TF, 76) as he is violently killed by the watcher, or alternatively, by his own superstitious fear.

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<sup>31</sup> Horkheimer M., Adorno, T.W., Noeri, G. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 2002. p. xviii.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> Noerr, Gunzelin Schmid. "Editor's Afternot", in *Dialectic of Enlightenment, cit.*, p. 218.

### 3. 3. I WILL SEE YOU AS OFTEN AS I PLEASE

"The Familiar" is also informed by a dialectic of exposure and concealment that unfolds through the gaze: this chapter will focus on the eyes of the persecutor as they seek to discipline and control the captain's every move, exercising a form of punishment that is primarily psychological. It is fear that provokes the progressive marginalization of Barton from the social sphere, eventually forcing the captain into a seclusion that is not dissimilar from Jennings's. The transition from open public spaces to enclosed private interiors also finds correlation in the interiority of the captain's mind as he refuses to disclose the details of the situation and becomes irremediably withdrawn. As it has been aptly stressed, "the change from 'The Watcher' to 'The Familiar' implies a narrowing of the gap between evil visitant and victim, from outside surveyor to intimate"<sup>1</sup>: considering the watcher as an exteriorization of a punitive super-ego, Barton's persecution can be read as an effect of repressed guilt and an unconscious need for punishment.

The second letter delivered to the captain unmistakably reveals the true nature of the pursuer, making it clear that the watcher's aim is in fact not a "friendly one" (TF, 45) as the Captain had initially thought.

"You may as well think, Captain Barton, to escape from your own shadow as from me; do what you may, I will see you as often as I please, and you shall see me, for I do not want to hide myself, as you fancy. Do not let it trouble your rest, Captain Barton; for, with a good conscience, what need you fear from the eye of "The Watcher" (TF, 47).

The term "watcher" indicates an invisible, non-identifiable but ever present entity whose most defining characteristic is identifiable in its gaze: the emphasis is not on the

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<sup>1</sup> Tingle, Catherine Mary. *Symptomatic Writings: Prefigurations of Freudian Theories and Models of the Mind in the Fiction of Sheridan Le Fanu, Wilkie Collins and George Eliot*. (Doctoral Dissertation) University of Leeds, September 2000. p. 38.

threat of physical violence, but rather on the eye of the watcher. By having Barton under close watch at all times, the persecutor establishes a power dynamic that relegates Barton to a subordinate position with respect to his enemy's will. It is somehow striking that a captain, whose very job consists in watching over his subordinates and overseeing their work, should be instead looked upon by another. The watcher is not following Barton for the sole sake of tracking the captain's every move; instead his "intangible and unseen pursuit" (TF, 47) is disciplinary in nature, being connected - as the captain acknowledges - to "certain passages in his past life, which, of all others, he hated to remember" (TF, 47). Barton, therefore, is not clueless as to the cause of these strange events; on his part, the watcher seems to enjoy tormenting the captain, as the ironic conclusion of the second letter demonstrates: the sarcastic italic *good conscience* suggests that Barton's conscience is not clear at all and that he has indeed reasons to fear. The connection established between the threat of visibility and a guilty conscience leaves no doubts as to the punitive nature of this close supervision. The watcher, while emerging right out of the past as the very embodiment of superstitious fears, surprisingly exercises a decisively modern form of punishment: the eye of the watcher can be identified as a panoptic gaze, which - according to Michel Foucault - is the mark of the modern disciplinary society.

In his work *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Foucault analyses the social and political mechanisms that allowed a massive shift to occur in the Western penal system during the 18th century: violent old-regime practices, involving the use of physical torture and public executions, gave way to modern disciplinary systems which instead value the ability to oversee and surveil. Foucault uses Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon as the architectural paradigm of modern disciplinary values: as a prison model consisting of a circular building divided into cells and of a central tower from which a guard surveils the inmates, the Panopticon operates through a principle of transparency:

The panoptic mechanism [...] reverses the principle of the dungeon; or rather of its three functions - to enclose, to deprive of light and to hide - it preserves only the first and eliminates the other two. Full lighting and the eye of a supervisor capture better than darkness, which ultimately protected. Visibility is a trap.<sup>2</sup>

Captain Barton - although free to come and go as he pleases - is nevertheless forced to endure the gaze of the watcher: like a convict in the panoptical prison he "is seen, but he does not see."<sup>3</sup> forced "in a state of conscious and permanent visibility"<sup>4</sup> and therefore in constant alertness. Hence, in the first phase of the persecution Barton can be said to be caught in the trap of visibility. He is vulnerable because he is exposed: firstly in the sense that is exposed to view, clear and visible to the eyes of the watcher; secondly he is exposed in the sense that his secret, his mysterious past, is at risk of being disclosed. These two facets are conjoined fears in Barton and both indicate his lack of control over the situation: the captain's powerlessness is directly dependent upon his visual impairment.

Foucault speaks of the Panopticon as "a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheral ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen"<sup>5</sup>. It is exactly on this dissociation that the relationship between the captain and the mysterious watcher is founded. Barton is a member of civilized society, a distinguished military man, living in *le siècle des lumières*; yet he is unable to shed light on the events and clarify the situation. On the other hand, the watcher - invisible, obscure and undetectable - is the one who oversees and controls. There is a direct link between empowerment and clear vision; Barton, who relies on the

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<sup>2</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1995. p. 200.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 201-2.

light of reason to illuminate and make sense of reality, is all too conscious of the optic ability for control.

Yet, he proves easily impressionable: as the persecutory episodes increase in number, occurring at night as well in day time, he becomes unable to distinguish between the actual sounds and "the mere suggestions of an excited imagination" (TF, 48). Barton knows he is not the victim of an unexplainable persecution, but rather the target of a vengeful pursuit proceeding from very specific causes: the captain's guilty conscience is an active participant, supplying his susceptible mind with triggering details and multiplying the persecutory episodes. It is this very repetition, originating from the blurring between the fictitious and the real, that haunts: the expression "phantom steps" (TF, 47) acquires here an additional meaning, being used not only to refer to the sounds produced by the invisible watcher, but also to sounds that might have been entirely fantasied by Barton himself. The churchman, for example, advises the captain not to "give way to those wild fancies" (TF, 60) and to "resist these impulses of the imagination" (TF, 60). The captain's guilt functions as an amplifier: his mind, like an echo chamber, reverberates the threatening suggestions made by the watcher and becomes "haunted with a thousand mysterious apprehensions" (TF, 54):

The mind thus turned in upon itself, and constantly occupied with a haunting anxiety [...] became daily more excited, and, of course, more vividly impressible, by a system of attack which operated through the nervous system [...] (TF, 56).

The mind itself is the scene of persecution, the site of haunting: because of this shift into the captain's subjective perception, it can be said that the surveillance exercised by the persecutor is internalized by the captain. The mechanism of internalization lies at the foundation of the panoptic principle, which aims is that of conditioning into autoregulation those who are observed: "he who is subjected to a field of visibility, and

who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power."<sup>6</sup> In other words, the suggestion of possibly being watched at any given time generates in the inmates an internalized self-control: this form of control acquires mainly a psychological dimension that allows the panoptic power to operate efficiently in perfect autonomy. Similarly, since he cannot know for certain whether or not the watcher is at any specific moment following him, Barton must presume he is being observed at all times.

"This has now become habitual—an accustomed thing. I do not mean the actual seeing him in the flesh—thank God, that at least is not permitted daily. Thank God, from the ineffable horrors of that visitation I have been mercifully allowed intervals of repose, though none of security; but from the consciousness that a malignant spirit is following and watching me wherever I go, I have never, for a single instant, a temporary respite [...]" (TF, 59-60).

In describing the mechanism of internalization of surveillance, Foucault uses a strikingly ghostly image: "the external power may throw off its physical weight; it tends to the non-corporal"<sup>7</sup>. Whelan - analysing the suburban ghost story as an answer to middle-class desire to identify and remove the deviant elements from society - remarks that "a ghost, invisible, watching, accomplishes this new form of regulation"<sup>8</sup>: watching without being watched, the ghost is the ultimate form of control, finding and disciplining the intruder. Persecuted by an invisible non-entity that might be watching at any moment without being seeing, the guilty subject effectively disciplines himself.

It cannot be entirely excluded, therefore, that the unrelenting persecution in "The Familiar" might be a product of Barton's conscience. Freud "postulates the existence of unconscious guilt, equating this with the unconscious need for punishment."<sup>9</sup> The

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<sup>6</sup> Foucault, *cit.*, p. 202.

<sup>7</sup> Foucault, *cit.*, p. 293.

<sup>8</sup> Whelan, *cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>9</sup> Carveth, Donald L., *The Still Small Voice: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Guilt and Conscience*, London: Karnac Books, 2013. p. 85.

churchman is not entirely wrong in claiming that Barton is his own tormentor (TF, 60): the captain's claim that he has "never a temporary respite" (TF, 60) suggests that he cannot think to escape from his own tormented interiority. To use Freudian terminology, one could say that the watcher is a projection of Barton's unconscious sense of guilt<sup>10</sup>: the crime he has tried unsuccessfully to repress has now re-emerged and materialized as a persecutory Other.

A disciplining conscience is metaphorically connected to the act of overlooking and surveilling: the Freudian superego, for example, stands for both conscience and self-observation. As Freud has it: "the sense of guilt, the harshness of the super-ego, is [...] the same thing as the severity of conscience. It is the perception which the ego has of *being watched over* [...]"<sup>11</sup> (my emphasis). The Freudian superego and the internal monitor described by Foucault find common ground:

Like the internalized watcher of Bentham's tower, the Freudian superego perpetually maintains an internal watch over the subject's ego [...] Just as modern discipline works its more stringent effects through the disciplinary subject's internalization of the gaze, so the Freudian superego, omniscient in scope and function, exacts of the subject's ego an increased subjection in the form of the conscience and guilt.<sup>12</sup>

Interpreting the watcher as a projection of Barton's mind is tempting; this hypothesis, however, does not account for the fact that other characters can distinctively see the persecutor whom the captain has identified as Sylvester Yelland. As Orel tentatively writes, "it may be that Barton was pursued by someone who had never died at all."<sup>13</sup> It might also be possible that all witnesses, in taking Barton's words at face value, misidentified perfect strangers: the "odd-looking person" (TF, 49) described by the narrator might be

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<sup>10</sup> Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1962. p. 82.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>12</sup> Townshend, Dale. *The Orders of Gothic: Foucault, Lacan, and the Subject of Gothic Writing, 1764-1820*. New York: AMS Press, 2007. p. 287.

<sup>13</sup> Orel, *cit.*, p. 77.

just a madman walking the streets of Dublin; the figure General Montague glimpses through - coincidentally - a window fits the description only "as well as his hurry would permit him to discern" (TF, 64); the little man speaking *patois* on the Calais deck might just be a local.

All these explanations are as flimsy as they sound: "The Familiar" can more easily be interpreted as a sign that "Le Fanu was growing dissatisfied with conventional explanations of what was happening, and why."<sup>14</sup> The nature of the watcher remains undefinable and as such it casts doubts on the legitimacy of Barton's behaviour, frustrating the attempt to pinpoint exactly the moment when a justifiable fear for one's life ends and irrational fear begins:

I am pursued with blasphemies, cries of despair and appalling hatred. I hear those dreadful sounds called after me as I turn the corners of the streets; they come in the night-time, while I sit in my chamber alone; they haunt me everywhere, charging me with hideous crimes, and—great God!—threatening me with coming vengeance and eternal misery (TF, 60).

The description - which bears striking similarities to the case of reverend Jennings in "Green Tea" - can either be read as the exaggerations of a paranoid mind or, alternatively, as the talk of a man who has legitimate reason to fear for his life. The line between protective and paranoid measures will progressively blur. During his seclusion, many precautions are said to be taken to ensure Barton's safety not only from the watcher himself but from "the casual appearance of any living form that his excited imagination might possibly confound with the spectre" (TF, 68). The captain, who has been living under constant expectation of being closely observed, now mistakes those figures bearing "even a distant or general resemblance" (TF, 68) to the watcher for Yelland himself. In Barton's imagination potentially anyone can acquire the features of the watcher.

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<sup>14</sup> Orel, *cit.*, p. 77.

The price of liberty, as the old saying tells us, is eternal vigilance; and in Gothic fiction we find this vigilance running beyond the sober assessment of dangers into a lurid form of fatalism for which paranoia is often not too strong a term.<sup>15</sup>

Whether the watcher is a supernatural agency or the result of a psychological projection, the effects that this appearance has on Barton are unmistakably real. Confronted with his persecutor, who has left the field of invisibility to materialize as his former crewman, Barton seeks the protection of secretiveness. Out of pride, the captain chooses not to disclose the recent events to his bride-to-be or to any of his acquaintances; nor does he turn to the legal authorities after the attempt made on his life. His attitude does not seem in keeping with that of a rational man who would instead seek counsel and protection.

The true source of his sufferings, and every circumstance connected with them, he guarded with a reserve so jealous, that it seemed dictated by at least a suspicion that the origin of his strange persecution was known to himself, and that it was of a nature which, upon his own account, he could not or dared not disclose (TF, 56).

When he does open up enough to reveal his situation he does without mentioning the causes. He remains as vague as possible: "There are circumstances connected with this - this *appearance* [...] which is needless to disclose" (TF, 61), he says to the churchman. The manifest reluctance to reveal the true reasons for this odd behaviour is directly proportional to the measure in which Barton is exposed to the eye of society: the more he refuses to explain, the more his behaviour generates speculations. The captain does not quite manage to endure the psychological pressure on his mind which produces a "corresponding alteration in his health and looks" (TF, 55) and inevitably draws the attention of society. Like Jennings in "Green Tea", Barton begins to "earn for himself the

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<sup>15</sup> Baldick Chris, "Introduction", *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. p. xxii.

character of a hypochondriac" (TF, 53) becoming the "gossip of the day" (TF, 62). After a while his preoccupation estrange him from companionable society (TF, 53) and every effort to blend in again - such as, participating at a grand dinner of the Freemasons - has only momentary success: under the effect of the wine, Barton becomes "talkative, and even noisy" (TF, 53) but soon "his artificial gaiety" (TF, 54) wanes off. He appears to be affected by a mixture of "depression, misery, and excitement" (TF, 65), which is interpreted as the sign of an incipient mental disease (TF, 62). By adopting such an elusive behaviour Barton manages to keep the past hidden; however he cannot avoid the prying eyes of society, ending up under the spotlight.

The attempt to contain Barton's progressive loss of control is made by imposing order to geographical spaces: the treatment to restore the good health of the captain is associated with specific spatial dimensions. The continental tour has the distinctive character of an escape but eventually fails to deliver Barton of his persecutor: overseeing open spaces proves impossible. The alternative therapeutic option is that of collocating Barton into a smaller, more easily controllable, space:

[...] it was resolved that he was to confine himself, strictly to the house, and to make use only of those apartments which commanded a view of an enclosed yard, the gates of which were to be kept jealously locked (TF, 68).

The state of isolation to which Barton voluntarily submits will be, according to his caretakers, highly beneficial: "a month or six weeks' absolute seclusion under these conditions" (TF, 68) is hoped to relieve the captain of his illness. The organization of a controlled environment is directly aimed at curing the "obstinate hypochondria of the patient" (TF, 68), to discipline into normative behaviour. The regulation of a subject is mediated by the regulation of the social and geographical space: to control is to enclose, to impose well-defined boundaries. This corrective effort can be seen as a disciplinary

strategy, whose intent can be aligned with the new order promoted by the Enlightenment: "the production of the new order becomes a vast cleansing, the creation of new modern space, clean space, rational space, over and against the dark, diseased, dirty space of the unenlightened past."<sup>16</sup> Barton does not quite hold the same hopes of recovery. His only wish is to be as hidden as possible from his persecutor: the therapeutic seclusion takes for him the form of a desired but hopeless withdrawal from society. Although voluntarily, he is effectively at house arrests.

Barton's house - while being a controlled space of close monitoring - is nevertheless a negation of the transparent space advocated by Bentham. The courtyard of Barton's house, for example, is "enclosed by a high wall" (TF, 70) which obstructs the view of the street outside. In order to shield the inside from outside influences, the wall needs to effectively block visibility and to function as a counter-measure to the panoptic gaze which advocates transparency in order to properly work. The transparent space of the Panopticon was associated to specific aims commonly shared by Enlightenment's thinkers. The safeguard of political and moral order was conceived as directly dependent upon the ordering of social spaces through those architectural and urban forms that reproduced positivist sciences: "transparency, it was thought, would eradicate the domain of myth, suspicion, tyranny, and above all the irrational."<sup>17</sup> Barton, instead, finds reassurance in his prison: the fact that the yard is obstructed from view gives enough confidence to take walks in the "narrow enclosure" (TF, 70):

Opening upon the public road, this yard was entered by a wooden gate, with a wicket in it, and was further defended by an iron gate upon the outside. Strict orders had been given to keep both carefully locked [...] (TF, 70).

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<sup>16</sup> Epstein, Dora, "Psychoanalytic Directions for an Insurgent Planning Historiography", in *Making the Invisible Visible: A Multicultural Planning History*, edited by Leonie Sandercock. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. p. 238.

<sup>17</sup> Vidler, Anthony. *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992. p. 168.

These gates and the wall are the antithesis of the architecture of modernity which, in keeping with Enlightenment transparency, would dispel the "fear of darkened spaces, of the pall of gloom which prevents the full visibility of things, men and truths"<sup>18</sup> that according to Foucault haunted the second half of the eighteenth century. Yelland is far from happy in being denied constant supervision of Barton's movements: surprising Lady L.'s handmaiden in the kitchen's garden, he delivers a message ordering the captain to "come abroad as usual, and show himself to his friends, out of doors [...]" (TF, 70). The message is not repeated to Barton, who however does not escape the eyes of the watcher for long: when one of the gates is left carelessly open one day, Barton cannot help but see "the boarded wicket ajar, and the face of his tormentor immovably looking at him through the iron bars" (TF, 70). Barton watches the watcher watching him. This reciprocity of gazes positively duplicates Barton's punishment: in addition to suffering the gaze of his enemy, the captain is also forced to perform the very act from which he would gladly shy away, that of laying eyes on his persecutor. Barton is a passive and reticent participant in this play of glances. The watcher's apparent desire to be watched as much as that of watching produces uncanny effects: the horrific persecutor which ought to have remained hidden, has instead brought himself into view, has made himself manifest.

Barton faints and relapses irreparably into the illness from which he had seemed to be recovering. From this moment on he takes the decision of "shutting himself up" (TF, 73) in his room, with "the window-blinds [...] kept jealously down" (TF, 73). The modern "trap of visibility" theorized by Foucault - which narratively corresponds to the panoptic gaze of the watcher persecuting Barton and threatening to expose his secret - is here what ultimately forces the captain to submit to a more antiquated form of punishment and live

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<sup>18</sup> Foucault, Michel. "The Eye of Power". *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, edited by Colin Gordon. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980. p. 154.

in a prison house, hidden from view: the bedroom to which he confines himself is - like the medieval dungeon - the "negative of the transparency and visibility."<sup>19</sup> This room is yet another space characterized by narrow passages and enclosures: the servant is sent into "a long passage" (TF, 75) to find the owl that so disturbs his master's sleep; while there the door swings close, shutting him out. Barton is trapped in his own bedroom, leaving the watcher free to break in: in a sense, the captain has dug his own grave. He is found dead clutching the bed clothes: a deep indenture near the foot of the bed signals the presence of a violent intruder. The intrusion of the owl-watcher in the very room in which Barton had sought privacy and security marks the violation of a familiar space, at the heart of the homely interior, by an external unfamiliar force: that this force should take the semblance of Miss Montague's familiar is all the more suggestive, as it indicates a continuum between the familiar and the unfamiliar, fully emphasising the uncanniness of the moment. The domestic environment turns into a death trap and the place of refuge turns hostile: in this reversal, the distinction between external and internal threats is no more.

Barton's dark bedroom also marks the space of interiority, the unconscious mind - defined in 1870 as "our Familiar"<sup>20</sup> by Frances Power Cobbe. The intrusive presence of the watcher, exposing that which has been concealed, can be interpreted as signifying that the captain's past, although buried in the deepest recesses of his mind, will nonetheless surface to the level of consciousness. Hesselius compares the type of illness from which Barton seems to have suffered to the loss of scarf-skin, the protective layer of epidermis whose absence leaves the body vulnerable to outside infections. Translated in

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<sup>19</sup> Foucault, Michel. "The Eye of Power", *cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>20</sup> Cobbe, Frances Power, "Unconscious Cerebration" in *Darwinism in Morals, and Other Essays*, London: Williams and Norgate, 1872. p. 312.

psychological terms, the comparison indicates the loss of that which shields consciousness and exposes the mind to the repressed memories or traumas.

[...] the loss of scarf-skin [...] makes us conscious of those things of which we should remain unconscious in order to avoid distress. Fundamentally arising from the common Victorian conceptions of conscious (knowing) and unconscious (unknowing), this etiology of symptoms yet prefigures Freud's apt phrase, 'they would not have become symptoms if they had not forced their way into consciousness'. In Barton's case what is slowly forced on him is the extent of his crime, and the depth of his guilt which he had always done his best to forget.<sup>21</sup>

As Freud explains in *The Ego and the Id*, "the super-ego is being influenced by processes that have remained unknown to the ego. It is possible to discover the repressed impulses which are really at the bottom of the sense of guilt. Thus in this case the super-ego knew more than the ego about the unconscious id."<sup>22</sup> In this sense, Barton's puzzling death could be interpreted as the result of a shock: the sudden consciousness of his crime, the moment in which he finally *sees clearly*, would have caused his death. The description of his lifeless body - his face "fixed, stern, and white" (TF, 77) and "the sightless eyes still open" (TF, 77) - seems to suggest that Barton has literally stared death in the eyes; or, alternatively, that he has been scared to death:

[...] it could be suggested that Barton has died from the 'strangling' effects of a hysterical attack, brought on by a steady increase of nervous excitation within his system, a fatal tension which he could not release in the outlets of emotional expression or confession.<sup>23</sup>

By tracing a dialectic between concealment and exposure, secrecy and revelation, "The Familiar" maps the terrain of tortured interiority. The final revelation that Barton might have reached fails to save him. The workings of a hostile incomprehensible world – that

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<sup>21</sup> Tingle, *cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>22</sup> Freud, Sigmund, *The Ego and the Id*, edited by James Strachey. New York: Norton, 1962. p. 51.

<sup>23</sup> Tingle, *cit.*, pp. 50-51.

“system whose workings are generally in mercy hidden from us” (TF, 57) - invade the psyche and suffocate its moments of clarity. Sullivan acknowledges how “the expiation theme fails to light up this tale.”<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Reverend Herbert’s final words attests to the existence of a darkness which snuffs out the occasional spark of recognition:

[...] it is scarcely to be expected that time can throw any new lights upon its dark and inexplicable outline. Until the secrets of the earth shall be no longer hidden, therefore, these transactions must remain shrouded in their original obscurity (TF, 78).

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<sup>24</sup> *Elegant Nightmares, cit.*, p. 60.

#### 4. “MR. JUSTICE HARBOTTLE”

The third short-story in the collection is the story of a corrupt eighteenth-century hanging judge.<sup>1</sup> Judge Harbottle enjoys sending petty criminals to the gallows and abuses his power to eliminate nuisances and men who have crossed him. When one night he receives a visit from a mysterious individual who warns him against sentencing to death a certain Lewis Pyneweck, the judge feigns ignorance of the case and suspects a conspiracy against him. A grocer from Shrewsbury, Pyneweck has been exposed for ill-treating his wife and incriminated with the forgery of a bill of exchange for which he is to stand trial. The judge has his reasons for wanting the mad dead: Pyneweck’s wife, disguised as Harbottle’s personal handmaid, has now become his mistress and is living in his Westminster mansion. Disregarding the warning, the judge has the forger executed. The relief in having eliminated a possible threat, however, is only momentary. Not long after the execution, Pyneweck appears in Harbottle’s courtroom, bearing the mark of hanging on his neck. The judge is delivered a letter of indictment which informs him he is to be tried for murder by “The High Court of Appeal” presided by Chief Justice Twofold. The trial is fixed for the night of the tenth: the night before Harbottle is seized by two men dressed as police officers, driven across the moors and led to a gigantic gallows. Conducted inside a decaying courthouse, the judge finds himself in a chaotic tribunal full of busy barristers and a jury made of shadows. Judge Twofold has Harbottle’s own features. The judge’s objections go unheard: he is pronounced guilty and sentenced to death. As he is being restrained with burning shackles, Harbottle

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<sup>1</sup> “Mr. Justice Harbottle” is sometimes seen as an extensive reworking of a previous story by Le Fanu, entitled “Some Strange Disturbances in an Old House in Aungier Street”. First published in the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1853, the story features the ghost of a hanging judge who terrifies two students residing in an old house in Augier Street, Dublin.

wakes up in the carriage in which he had fallen asleep and suddenly ill with gout. The ensuing month is spent in a state of nervous anticipation that compromises his health, affecting both his mood and his mind. The night before the date fixed for the execution, Harbottle's house is invaded by mysterious apparitions, fragments of his dream vision, witnessed by three different occupants. The morning after, the judge is found hanging from the banister of the staircase. The case is declared a suicide.

Harbottle's story is not narrated in chronological order, the narrative levels that frame it work instead backwards: the core events are recounted as a ghost story transmitted orally – a “theme for ‘winter tales’”<sup>2</sup> (MJH, 86) – fifty years after the judge's death and written down thirty years later as part of a memoir-letter only to end up as a medical case amongst Hesselius's papers. The story of Judge Harbottle's extraordinary death survives in memory and medical accounts, while the sign of his corrupted power dies away with his decaying mansion. Pyneweck's and Harbottle's ghosts can still be seen together within the house, victim and executioner haunting the same space. “Mr. Justice Harbottle” is thus presented through a more complex structure of frames than either “Green Tea” or “The Familiar”. The prologue, written by Hesselius's medical secretary, reports the physician's medical considerations and introduces the memorandum of the case. This file, which is entitled “Harman's Report” (MJH, 86) comes with a reference in Hesselius's handwriting redirecting the editor to one of the physician's essays for further information. The essay in question is entitled “The Interior Sense, and the Conditions of the Opening thereof” (MJH, 83). In Note Z<sup>a</sup>, Section 317, Vol. I (MJH, 83), Hesselius mentions a second report on Harbottle's case,

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<sup>2</sup> Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan. “Mr. Justice Harbottle”, in *In a Glass Darkly* Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1990. p. 86. Henceforth all quotations are from this edition and will refer to this text as MJH.

that of "Mrs. Trimmer, of Tunbridge Wells (June 1805)" (MJH, 83). Hesselius's note explains his preference for Mrs. Trimmer's account: not only it is "minute and detailed" (MJH, 83), but it also includes the valuable letters written by Harbottle's doctor, thus furnishing essential medical insights. Hesselius's medical secretary, however, claims that he has been "unable to discover" (MJH, 84) this second report and, after some inquiries, concludes that it has been lost. He downplays this loss by stating that, given the choice, he would have preferred Harman's account:

The late Dr. Hesselius, in another passage of the note that I have cited, says, "As to the facts (non-medical) of the case, the narrative of Mr. Harman exactly tallies with that furnished by Mrs. Trimmer." The strictly scientific view of the case would scarcely interest the popular reader; and, possibly, for the purposes of this selection, I should, even had I both papers to choose between, have preferred that of Mr. Harman, which is given, in full, in the following pages (MJH, 84).

Sullivan defines the opening of the story "a jumble of editorial insertions, paraphrased letters, and introduction to introductions."<sup>3</sup> This serpentine arrangement of references and citations redirecting to volumes and subsections within other texts, however, is remarkably similar to a legal system of citation. Moran defines the law "as a practice of repetition and citation [...] a living archive through which the present might be haunted by a specific past as a logic of evil acts, corruption, monstrosity, dread and terror."<sup>4</sup> Conceived as such, legal practice is profoundly rooted in the Gothic imagination; or rather, Gothic fiction itself seems to know very well "the problem of the thin line between justice and persecution."<sup>5</sup> In "Mr.

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<sup>3</sup> Sullivan, Jack. *Elegant Nightmares: The English Ghost Story from Le Fanu to Blackwood*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1978. p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> Moran, Leslie J. "Law and the Gothic Imagination" in *The Gothic* edited by Fred Botting. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001. p. 105.

<sup>5</sup> Punter, David. *Gothic Pathologies: The Text, The Body, and The Law*. London: Macmillan, 1998. p. 16.

Justice Harbottle” the ghost story is perfectly housed within the legal orchestration, finding itself, at it may be, at home: the judge’s mansion turns into a topical haunted house and Harbottle ends up the ghost of himself. In the mad circularity of a story that starts at the end and proceeds in a backward manner towards its beginning only to enfold on itself, lies the issue of continuity which is a concern of both fictional and legal narratives. On one hand, “the law and the law alone serves to validate memory”<sup>6</sup> as the legal practice depends on the transmission of codes and rules; on the other, memory is the central element that sustains the handing down of stories.

Mrs. Trimmer’s lost manuscript is a ghostly reminder that continuity might not always be possible, that some version of events might not survive, and that references might actually redirect to nothing but missing copies. Similarly, the solidity of the courtroom is weakened at its foundational level by the corrosive mismanagement of justice, of which Judge Harbottle is exemplary. Harbottle bends the law, makes it fit for the narrative he has concocted to accommodate his own schemes. The entanglements of legal and fictional narratives finds perfect equivalent in the mechanism at the core of the story, that of “poetic justice” in which the conflict finds final resolution in a stringent moral logic of cause and effect. As Sullivan has it: “[...] the plot gives us a beautifully worked out scheme of poetic justice in which the punishment exactly fits the crime.”<sup>7</sup> The entwined narrative patterns of crime and punishment constitute just one of the many dualities that can be identified in the story, the most evident one being Harbottle’s double. In this story, the figure of the double appears always in conjunction with disguises and impersonations, frauds and shams. The rhetoric of the counterfeits informs the cardinal passages of the story: Harbottle’s self-motivated and,

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Sullivan, *cit.*, p. 46.

therefore false, sentencing of the grocer; the very nature of Pyneweck's supposed crime, forgery; the "disguised" (MJH, 94) individual with his warning that the judge dismisses as "a trick" (MJH, 94); and especially, the trial scene with its diabolic "pretended court" (MJH, 107). Following the dynamic of crime and punishment within the story, this analysis is articulated in two chapters, the first dealing with Harbottle's infraction and the second with the consequences of his actions. The central concerns taken into consideration will be: the connections between law and literature, the structural and symbolic doubles, the recurring theme of imitation and counterfeit, and the haunted physical and psychological spaces.

#### 4. 1. A GREVIOUS WRONG

The chain of referentiality which sustains the prologue recurs in the report itself, which contains two separate records. The first is an oral narrative given by an elderly man who has witnessed the apparition of two ghosts in his own bedroom, and which Mr. Harman has set down in writing. The second is a letter from an old friend of Mr. Harman's, relating the story of Judge Harbottle fifty years after its conclusion. The common device of the story within the story acquires here the structural solidity of a legal case: in a courtroom, the elderly man would have been called to the stand to testify as an eyewitness; the letter would have constituted material worth admitting into evidence. The opening section of the report is a story in and of itself, which follows Mr. Harman as he gathers evidences and records statements, as in the preliminary phase in preparation for court. It is a testimonial form of narration in which "the canons of legal evidence come to govern the practice of fictional storytelling."<sup>1</sup>

The elderly man's narrative has all the characteristics of a proper ghost story. He is described as a "dry, sad, quiet man" (MJH, 84); Harman attests to the objectivity of the testimony and remarks that "no better authority could be imagined for a ghost story" (MJH, 84). The man is determined to change his lodgings because he is convinced that the old house "in a dark street in Westminster" (MJH, 84) in which he resides is haunted. He recounts how, at one o'clock one night, the closet-door had opened and two men had come out: "a slight dark man, particularly sinister" (MJH, 85) and "an elder man, stout, and blotched with scurvy,

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<sup>1</sup> Dolin, Kieran. *Fiction and the Law: Legal Discourse in Victorian and Modernist Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. p. 2.

and whose features, fixed as a corpse's, were stamped with dreadful force with a character of sensuality and villany" (MJH, 85). The first man was dressed in mourning, the second in silk and velvet and carried "a coil of rope" (MJH, 85). This narrative triggers in Herman a specific memory and prompts him to write to an old friend, whom he knows is acquainted with the rumors surrounding that specific house. The detailed answer he receives satisfy him. The content of the letter is transcribed:

Your letter (he wrote) tells me you desire some particulars about the closing years of the life of Mr. Justice Harbottle, one of the judges of the Court of Common Pleas. You refer, of course, to the extraordinary occurrences that made that period of his life long after a theme for 'winter tales' and metaphysical speculation. I happen to know perhaps more than any other man living of those mysterious particulars (MJH, 86).

Harbottle's "old family mansion" (MJH, 86) is described by Herman's friend in detail as it appeared during the judge's lifetime, in the 1740s: a luxurious redbrick house made of spacious rooms, wide staircases and a large fireplace (MJH, 87). The house - which returns as a motif in both "Green Tea" and "The Familiar" - is not the far removed place to which the tormented protagonist retires: here it is a site of power, not of powerlessness. However, by the time Harman's friend visits the house as a boy in 1808 in the company of his father, the place has already acquired "the gloomy reputation [...] of a haunted house" (MJH, 87): dusty and full of cobwebs, a place of stained windows and dark spaces likely to scare susceptible minds:

I was about twelve years old, and my imagination impressible, as it always is at that age. I looked about me with great awe. I was here in the very centre and scene of those occurrences which I had heard recounted at the fire-side at home, with so delightful a horror (MJH, 87).

Harbottle's mansion, therefore, seems to have been subjected to a process of doubling in which the haunted house comes to overlap the luxurious mansion, and is therefore configured as two sites at once. On one hand, it is the grand residence of a hanging judge empowered with the authority to effect human lives; on the other hand, the site of imagination, the residence of ghosts haunting its very rooms. The process of reversal put into motion - from richness to ruin, from empowerment to invasion, from material to disembodied presence - seems to suggest a socio-economic reading of the story.

The figure of the haunted house is [...] clearly linked to class privilege, in order to be haunted, one must be leisured. Property marks an individual as a member of landed wealth, and living in an old manor house conspicuously displays class position, implying that the owner belongs to an aristocratic tradition of inheritance. However, when ghosts inhabit houses, the current resident's status as owner is threatened and property fails to signify power.<sup>2</sup>

According to this reading, the popularity of the ghost story in the late nineteenth century must be read against "the backdrop of aristocratic decline"<sup>3</sup> and as a critique of "the practice of landlording property."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the old man rents the two rooms in the house "on account of their extraordinary cheapness" (MJH, 85) and, as reported in the letter, Harbottle's house is "not likely to improve its letting value" (MJH, 86). As Smith observes, "the nineteenth century was subject to moments of acute economic crisis and it is noteworthy that images of spectrality take on a peculiarly economic dimension during such periods."<sup>5</sup> An owner losing control over his own property is the disquieting scenario on which haunted houses stories

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<sup>2</sup> Vala, Madeline, A. "Re-reading the Haunted House: Victorian Quests for Property", in *Space, Haunting, Discourse* edited by Maria Holmgren Troy, Elisabeth Wennö. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009. p. 26-27.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, Andrew. *The Ghost Story 1840-1920: A Cultural History*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012. p. 5.

rely to achieve their effect: "the very sign of wealth and social stature"<sup>6</sup> comes to be invaded and "inhabited by another force."<sup>7</sup>

Harbottle's house, however, is not haunted by any external, other force, but rather by its very owner. If compared to the protagonists of "Green Tea" and "The Familiar", Harbottle is unique in his condition: neither Barton nor Jennings turn into ghosts and no reversal in their condition takes place. Harbottle, however, suffers a transformation: from wicked persecutor he is turned into a harmless, only mildly scary, haunting presence. He is, quite literally, a ghost of himself, forced to inhabit a space deprived of any market value. This type of socio-economic reversal finds historical correspondent in the nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish Ascendancy:

Catholic Ireland found itself completely disenfranchised, but the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, once identified as the colonizers found themselves shut up in their own estates, incapable of running the affairs of their supposed homeland, and, in some strange way, converted into a simulacrum of the colonized.<sup>8</sup>

Harbottle could be inscribed in a narrative of colonizers turned colonized. According to Psiropoulos:

Judge Harbottle can easily become a figure of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy itself, assuming its eventual fate. Similarly guilty of administering (in)justice in another's name over people who resented them, they also had to live among those same Irish whose lands they now owned.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Vala, *cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> Hansen, Jim, *Terror and Irish Modernism: The Gothic Tradition from Burke to Beckett*. Albany: SUNY PRESS, 2010. p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> Psiropoulos, Brian. *Victorian Gothic Materialism: Realizing The Gothic in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. Dissertation, University of Oregon, 2013. p. 113.

The choice of an English setting despite the underlying Anglo-Irish concerns aligns “Mr. Justice Harbottle” to Le Fanu’s 1864 novel *Uncle Silas* which has been defined as “an exploration of the beleaguered, isolated, and culpable position occupied by the Anglo Irish Protestant”<sup>10</sup>.

The temporal distance established contributes to transform Harbottle's life into a narrative, a source of delightful horror. The judge appears in the story as a ghost long before being presented as a living breathing character, and even in that case his reputation as “a dangerous and unscrupulous judge” (MJH, 88) precedes him so that he is perpetually enshrouded within the folds of a narrative. The only character in the story to have lived during Harbottle's time is Herman's friend's father: having seen the judge work in court, he stands as a counterpart to the elderly man who instead witnesses Harbottle's ghostly appearance. The prologue, and Harman's report with it, seem to insist on a structure of doublings, a continuous bifurcation of ones into twos. In this process every material objects has its own immaterial correspondent: Harman's narrative which “exactly tallies” Mrs. Trimmer's, at least as far as the non-medical facts are concerned; the elderly man's oral narrative and its written counterpart; the original letter and the transposition of “its substance” (MJH, 86). For each physical presence there is an equivalent ghostly absence. Similarly, there are two Harbottles: the living one, the protagonist of the narrative which occupies the larger section of the short story, and his ghost who lingers as an after-effect of the very events which are being recounted.

When alive, Justice Harbottle was a figure of excess, as signaled by his physical aspect. He is described as having “a great mulberry-coloured face, a big, carbuncled nose, fierce

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<sup>10</sup> Kreilkamp, Vera. *The Anglo-Irish Novel and The Big House*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998. p. 104.

eyes, and a grim and brutal mouth" (MJH, 88); his voice is "loud and harsh" (MJH, 88), amplified by the sarcastic tone he employs in the courtroom. In his habits, he stands in stark contrast to both Reverend Jennings and Captain Barton: whereas both the reverend and the captain are described as moderate and prudent men, Harbottle is not limited by any such restrictions. He is said to enjoy "dubious jollifications" (MJH, 90) and to be prone to "scandalous hilarities" (MJH, 90). He is fully a man of pleasures, governed by loose morals and leading a life of vices which he does not care to hide, "the roaring king, and in some sort the tyrant also" (MJH, 90) of the extravagant dissipations he is said to entertain at his house. His overindulgent celebrations are described as "Circean enchantment" (MJH, 90). Harbottle shows no sign of moderation in private matters, nor in public life:

This old gentleman had the reputation of being about the wickedest man in England. Even on the bench he now and then showed his scorn of opinion. He had carried cases his own way, it was said, in spite of counsel, authorities, and even of juries, by a sort of cajolery, violence, and bamboozling, that somehow confused and overpowered resistance (MJH, 88).

The description of Harbottle on the bench reaches the saturated visual touches of a caricature. A "sarcastic and ferocious administrator" (MJH, 94), the judge is depicted as being often "*in furore*" (MJH, 96): his body seems to swell under his ardent animation, "the lines of his mouth" looking "brutal" and "his eyes ready to leap from their sockets" (MJH, 96). The judge's behavior, therefore, is portrayed in an extremely physical way, his lack of inhibition being externalized into a grotesque body of excess, signified especially by the mouth: Harbottle is a "foulmouthed advocate" (MJH, 102) accustomed to cursing and prone to

insults, eating and drinking abundantly<sup>11</sup>. The judge represents the grotesque body and a monstrous morality. He stands for a hegemonic power, administering the law through violence, trickery and persuasions; his unbridled determination to pronounce guilty verdicts makes him a "shrewd and dangerous functionary" (MJH, 89).

In presenting Harbottle in sharp contrast with both Barton and Jennings, Le Fanu seems to suggest that the juridical system itself is at fault. The eighteenth-century English criminal code is termed in the story as "a rather pharisaical, bloody and heinous system of justice" (MJH, 94). The use of the adjective "pharisaical" is rather telling, being more peculiar than the generic "bloody and heinous". Pharisees are traditionally associated with hypocrisy and self-righteousness: the corresponding adjective combines the two meanings, signifying a strict observance of ritual ceremonies to mask an absence of sincere devotion. The criminal code of England, then, is defined as cruel not because it enforces justice in a violent way but because it is a system of façades, preoccupied more with appearances than with content. As a labyrinthine super-structure of bureaucratic procedures and pedantic formalities, the English code is depicted as a gross imitation of justice, a travesty.

Justice Harbottle is a product of this system. He has cunningly fashioned for himself an identity, that of a strict enforcer of the law bent on punishing the guilty and eradicating crime from the city - "old Judge Harbottle was the man to make the evil-disposed quiver" (MJH, 95) - whereas corruption and self-interest are hidden underneath his façade. Punter notices that "there is little to distinguish the lawyer from the criminal in much eighteenth-century fiction,"<sup>12</sup> especially in the works of Defoe and Fielding. Fixing the penal code as a system

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<sup>11</sup> In Mikhail Bakhtin's conceptualization of the grotesque, the mouth is the most grotesque aspect of the human face for its association with eating and with language. Bakhtin, Mikhail, *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. by Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984. p. 26.

<sup>12</sup> Punter, *cit.*, p. 38.

that "*at that time*" (MJH, 94, my emphasis) was corrupt, Le Fanu seems to mimic exactly eighteenth-century literary representations of law and legality. The thematic trope of the law as a regime of regulation turning into its opposite runs through the Gothic imagination:

Lawyers, solicitors, barristers and judges, appear as characters in Gothic texts embodying a certain ambivalence between good and evil, between the law as order and right reason and law as corruption.<sup>13</sup>

As a matter of fact, "the problem of how the criminal can be distinguished from the wielder of unjust but legalized power absorbed the Gothic writers."<sup>14</sup> One of the reasons Harbottle is able to abuse his power so easily depends on a loose system which allows such corruption: the judge will be punished, therefore, "not for breaking rules, but for *enforcing* them, within systems which authorize and even encourage subjective interpretation and self-serving implementation of policy and penalty."<sup>15</sup>

In "Mr. Justice Harbottle", moral and legal deceit find their counterpart in disguises and camouflages. One night, Harbottle receives a visit. He is approached by a "very singular-looking old gentleman" (MJH, 89) in a white wig asking audience with him. This old man appears very sick: he stoops, he needs "a crutch-handled cane" (MJH, 89) to walk and he is afflicted by long fits of coughing and gasping. He claims that his name is Hugh Peters and that he has come to inform the judge of a matter of the utmost importance: "a secret tribunal" (MJH, 91) called the High Court of Appeal (MJH, 92) is being assembled for the sole purpose of overseeing the conduct of judges and adopt disciplinary measures against corruption. Mr. Peters mentions one Lewis Pyneweck, detained in Shrewsbury jail for the forgery of a bill of

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<sup>13</sup> Moran, *cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>14</sup> Punter, *cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>15</sup> Psiropoulos, *cit.*, p. 120.

exchange and advices Harbottle not to try him (MJH, 92). The judge, on his part, denies any personal connection with the man and suspects instead that "a Jacobite plot" (MJH, 92) is at play. Mr. Peters and Judge Harbottle are caught playing pretend. Harbottle does, in fact, know Lewis Pyneweck, being himself responsible for incriminating the man. Mr. Peters, in turn, is not who he says he is and Harbottle suspects as much. Dwelling on the odd appearance of the gentleman - "he has either painted his face, or he is consumedly sick" (MJH, 93) - the judge has him followed home by a footman. His suspicions are confirmed: Mr. Peters, tricking the footman into looking for a coin he has supposedly dropped, strikes him "a violent blow" (MJH, 94) on the back of the head, well beyond the strength "feeble gentleman" (MJH, 93). Harbottle is satisfied in being proven right: "It was a disguised "affidavit man," or footpad, no doubt, who had been employed to frighten him. The trick had fallen through." (MJH, 94) According to the judge, "the false Hugh Peters" (MJH, 94) has staged a performance under false pretenses, as an actor would, trying to frighten Harbottle by invoking the ghost of a disciplinary tribunal. Harbottle is more than relieved in being able to ascribe the night's events to "an audacious trick" (MJH, 94).

The rhetoric of sham and counterfeit matches, coincidentally, Lewis Pyneweck's crime. Forgery was a widespread fraud at the time, closely tied to the eighteenth-century credit crisis: "the explosion of paper money led to a hike in banknote forgery which in turn sent increasing numbers of lower-class handlers to the gallows."<sup>16</sup> Inflamed debate surrounded the credit crisis:

[...] it was not the credit crisis alone but another controversy which pushed the paper-money 'trick' to the forefront of public debate: the spectacular increase in the number of executions for forgery. It was the severity of Britain's 'bloody' penal code that heightened and

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<sup>16</sup> Haywood, Ian. *Romanticism and Caricature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2013. p. 33

inflamed public opinion about the invidious connections between 'financial impostures' and 'the modern rulers of England'. For opponents of paper money, the public execution of hundreds of lower-class victims of petty forgery crimes (the handling of fake £1 banknotes) was a spectacular display of the evils of an unreformed state which relied on a credit economy to pursue its goals.<sup>17</sup>

The fact that the institution entrusted with the enforcement of legality resorted to self-serving stratagems and schemes triggered a boom of satirical responses intended to expose the impostures of the state:

For the majority of Romantic and radical writers, this catastrophe exposed what Shelley called 'the financial impostures of the modern rules of England --- at the bottom it is all trick'. Caricature was ideally placed to both interrogate and exploit this 'trick': like phoney banknotes, the satirical prints made up a 'shadow' economy of seductive malevolence and stolen identity.<sup>18</sup>

The phoney banknote, then, becomes the symbol of a larger economic and legal system of corruption that, in turn, is criticized especially in those forms of art - satire, caricature, parody - which themselves function upon a mechanism of distortion and simulation. The game of imposture and deceit thus multiplies into a self-replicating system of counterfeits in which the original - the original story or version - is lost amongst its own copies. "Mr. Justice Harbottle" situates a story about falsified narratives paradoxically in the arena of the law, the very site in which the truth is, or should be, discovered.

While it might not appear so, the act of narrating is nonetheless central to legal proceedings. In his foundational text *Nomos and Narrative*, Robert Cover has analyzed the

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

interplay between narratives and law, underlining how legal prescriptions are firmly imbedded in the cultural narratives that frames them:

We inhabit a *nomos*, a normative universe. We constantly create and maintain a world of right and wrong, of lawful and unlawful, of valid and void. [...] No set of legal institutions or prescriptions exists apart from the narratives that locate it and give it meaning [...] In this normative world, law and narrative are inseparably related.<sup>19</sup>

More recently, Peter Brooks has taken into consideration the "role of storytelling"<sup>20</sup> within the legal practice highlighting how "the law appears to be [...] predicated on a narrative construction of reality"<sup>21</sup> :

Here is a social practice which adjudicates narratives of reality, and sends people to prison, even to execution, because of the well-formedness and force of the winning story. "Conviction" - in the legal sense - results from the conviction created in those who judge the story.<sup>22</sup>

In a narratological approach to legal discourse, the judge is envisioned as the presiding narrator, the jury as critical readers and the courtroom as a dramatic setting. Harbottle displays a strong inclination to manufacture stories, creating self-made narratives of events. Lewis Pyneweck's story is not given in a linear narrative but, on the contrary, in a manner that necessitates a reconstruction: only by reading between the lines can readers glimpse at Pyneweck's background story and the judge's machinations to have the man incriminated. The judge's self-justifications are framed within an interior monologue, through which he

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<sup>19</sup> Cover, Robert. *Narrative, Violence, and the Law: The Essays of Robert Cover*, edited by Robert M. Cover, Martha Minow, Michael Ryan, Austin Sarat. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992. pp. 95-96.

<sup>20</sup> Brooks, Peter. "Narrative in and of the Law" in *A Companion to Narrative Theory*. Edited by James Phelan and Peter J. Raninowitz. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2005, p. 416.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 415.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 416.

attempts to assess the extent of his implication in Pyneweck's case from an outsider's point of view:

[...] did he not remember a certain thin man, dressed in mourning, in whose house, in Shrewsbury, the Judge's lodgings used to be, until a scandal of his ill-treating his wife came suddenly to light? Had not that scoundrel an account to settle with the Judge? had he not been troublesome lately? and was not his name Lewis Pyneweck, some time grocer in Shrewsbury, and now prisoner in the jail of that town? (MJH, 94-95).

As an actor on a theatre stage, Harbottle envisions himself under the spotlight and tries to place his situation in context, interpreting it as a member of the audience would: "of Lewis Pyneweck of course, so far as the outer world could see, he knew nothing. He would try him after his fashion, without fear, favour, or affection" (MJH, 94). The truth - that Harbottle has "done this grocer, forger, what you will, some five or six years before, a grievous wrong" (MJH, 95) - is a narrative that can be manipulated far too easily. The judge does not hesitate to exploit prejudices and assumptions, which themselves constitute another wonderfully crafted narrative. The judge relies on Pyneweck's physical traits - his "lean face as dark as mahogany" (MJH, 94) and his "faint unpleasant smile" (MJH, 95) - to function as self-evident grounds for incrimination:

In hanging that fellow he could not be wrong. The eye of a man accustomed to look upon the dock could not fail to read "villain" written sharp and clear in his plotting face. Of course he would try him, and no one else should (MJH, 95).

If "the law is [...] all about competing stories,"<sup>23</sup> then Harbottle has the best most convincing one. The judge's resolution - "Try him he would" (MJH, 95) - marks the point in which the narrative instance turns into action. If "the uttering of the sentence is [...] the doing of an

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 416.

action"<sup>24</sup>, then the legal *sentence* is far more than a simple syntactic unit, since its impacts extend upon the physical world.

The law is the performative taken to the highest degree, that version of the word which has immediate physical effects, of incarceration, for example, of pain, of death. Thus the law forms a frame or grid through which all bodies must pass [...]<sup>25</sup>

According to Punter, performatives are also essential to the Gothic since Gothic fiction is intimately interested in issues of "vestment" or rather it "questions how we are 'clothed' in the human"<sup>26</sup> :

Such putative enrobings are of the very stuff of Gothic, for at heart it is also true to claim that Gothic is ceremonial. This is immediately to put it on a collision course with the law, for the law claims that all ceremonial is its own [...] Everything is soiled: the judge's wig, as Gothic has known from the late eighteenth century on, is already a body of corruption; it is, again, impossible for 'the case' to be heard.<sup>27</sup>

The laws of narrative and the narratives of the law fashion bodies and identities, forging masks and disguised personas. The courtroom is, ultimately, the site of both performances and performatives.

Hugh Peter's disguised identity leads to questions concerning his very existence. Harbottle fosters a suspicion:

His shrewd eye told him that allowing for change of tints and such disguises as the playhouse affords every night, the features of this false old man, who had turned out too hard for his tall footman, were identical with those of Lewis Pyneweck (MJH, 97).

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<sup>24</sup> Austin, John. *How To Do Things With Words*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975. p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Punter, *cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Lewis Pyneweck - the grocer turned forger - seems to have forged into existence an entirely different individual by employing those tints and wings used by actors in a playhouse or alternatively by people participating to a masquerade. In *Masquerade and Civilization*, Terry Castle explores the eighteenth-century masquerade in England as a "ritual of disorder."<sup>28</sup> As a subversive form of entertainment and reversal of the social order, the masquerade came under denunciation as a site of corruption where vices were let free to fester and spread moral infection: "disguise, when unveiled, is perceived as profoundly anti-social; witness the persistent association between the mask and criminality, travesty and treachery."<sup>29</sup> The "wonderful resemblance" (MJH, 97) between Mr. Peters and Lewis Pyneweck prompts the judge into making inquiries: he considers the possibility that someone is "personating Pyneweck in prison" (MJH, 97) or, alternately, that the grocer has made his escape. He is assured, however, that the prisoner is safe and there are "no question as to his identity" (MJH, 97). Either Harbottle has mistaken Peters for Pyneweck or he has been visited by an apparition: he is either the target of a conspiracy or the designed object of a supernatural persecution. The uncertainty of the situation suggests that appearances and reality, deceit and authenticity, might be interchangeable categories:

For the eighteenth-century satirist the real world, in all its chicanery and bad faith, was ultimately indistinguishable from the masquerade; both resolved, pathologically, into a *mundus inversus*, where all pretended to be what they were not.<sup>30</sup>

Harbottle's position is being threatened. The hierarchy of the social order, as in a carnivalesque reversal, is overturned while a process by which the powerful becomes

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<sup>28</sup> Castle, Terry. *Masquerade and Civilization*. London: Methuen, 1986. p. 85.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

powerless, where the judge has to be judged, is set in motion. Castle describes the masquerade as a "metaphysical shock wave"<sup>31</sup> because, with its incongruities and paradoxes, represented "a dialectical fluidity between opposites."<sup>32</sup> Similarly, in Le Fanu's fiction the limits between the natural and supernatural order break down and reality itself becomes a sort of metaphysical *mundus inversus*.

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

#### 4. 2. THE COPY OF AN ILLUSION

Harbottle's punishment is articulated in a jarring vision of his victim followed by a particularly vivid dream where the judge is confronted by his double. As opposed to "The Familiar", where the presence of captain Barton's persecutor is witnessed by other characters, both Pyneweck's appearance in court and Harbottle's trial remains confined in the judge's mind. Since actual and metaphorical hauntings blend together, the distinction between symptoms and symbols collapses.

Not long after trying Pyneweck, Harbottle is called to try criminal cases at the Old Bailey. Having begun with a case of forgery, "thundering dead against the prisoner, with many a hard aggravation and cynical gibe" (MJH, 100), the judge suddenly stops dead as his attention focuses on a figure in the courtroom:

Among the persons of small importance who stand and listen at the sides was one tall enough to show with a little prominence; a slight mean figure, dressed in seedy black, lean and dark of visage. He had just handed a letter to the crier, before he caught the Judge's eye (MJH, 100).

Judge Harbottle recognizes the feature of Lewis Pyneweck. The man is "stretching his low cravat with his crooked fingers" and displays "a stripe of swollen blue" (MJH, 100) around his neck, the mark of the rope. This presence, needlessly to say, upset the judge: with a gasp, he orders the tipstaff to arrest the man as Pyneweck turns to leave.

Attorneys, counsellors, idle spectators, gazed in the direction in which Mr. Justice Harbottle had shaken his gnarled old hand. They compared notes. Not one had seen any one making a disturbance. They asked one another if the Judge was losing his head (MJH, 100).

Once home, Harbottle reads a forgotten letter in his pocket. The letter is from a certain Caleb Searcher - "Officer of the Crown Solicitor in 'Kingdom of Life and Death' " (MJH, 102) - representing the High Court of Appeal: accused of admitting false evidence in court as well as of pressuring the jury, the judge is to stand trial "for the murder of one Lewis Pyneweck of Shrewsbury, citizen, wrongfully executed for the forgery of a bill of exchange" (MJH, 101). The trial is to take place on the 10th of the following month. While still suspecting "at conspiracy at foot" (MJH, 102) and claiming he will not be "bamboozled by their buffoonery" (MJH, 102), nevertheless the judge's steel resolution is put to the test. In the matter of his personal involvement in Pyneweck's case, Harbottle feels he is living "in a house of glass" (MJH, 103), knowing all too well how easy it would be for the people of Shrewsbury to identify Flora Carwell as Mrs. Pyneweck. These worries take their toll on him, as he grows "a little morose and less enjoying" (MJH, 103) than usual. The mood change in the judge's disposition is indicative of the psychological pressure he suffers and, possibly, of a troubled mind. In the absence of verifiable proofs of a concrete threat, the judge's anxiety is wholly unjustified and, in a sense, can be considered as the sign of incipient paranoia. Caleb Searcher's letter has been lost: of it only a copy survives, apparently a copy manufactured by Harbottle himself:

[What of the paper, I have cited? No one saw it during his life; no one, after his death. He spoke of it to Dr. Hedstone; and what purported to be "a copy," in the old Judge's hand-writing, was found. The original was nowhere. Was it a copy of an illusion, incident to brain disease? Such is my belief.] (MJH, 103).

In the absence of an original, the letter that has been found appears as nothing more than a product of Harbottle's imagination.

Copies and illusions are cardinal key ingredients of the story's central sequence: Harbottle's dream. Hallucinations and dreams can be easily mistaken for reality: indeed, the reality conjured up by dreams is not questioned as suspicious while the subject is asleep; only upon waking up, does the sleeper recognize the difference between dream and reality. After a night spent, coincidentally at the theatre – the place where reality and illusion are bound together - Harbottle arranges for two counsellors to come to dinner at his house. As he waits for them in his carriage, he begins to feel drowsy enough to lean back and close his eyes:

He heard their voices now. Those rake-hell counsellors were laughing, and bantering, and sparring after their wont. The carriage swayed and jerked, as one got in, and then again as the other followed. The door clapped, and the coach was now jogging and rumbling over the pavement. The Judge was a little bit sulky. He did not care to sit up and open his eyes. Let them suppose he was asleep. He heard them laugh with more malice than good-humour, he thought, as they observed it. He would give them a d——d hard knock or two when they got to his door, and till then he would counterfeit his nap (MJH, 104).

Harbottle tells himself he will feign sleep as payback for the wait. However, he does not take into consideration that he might at any point actually fall asleep. The narrative mode employed here by Le Fanu disguises Harbottle's dream as reality so that neither the judge nor the readers can pinpoint the exact moment in which the simulation of sleep turns into actual sleep. The unperceived transition from wake to sleep is instead hidden beneath the interrupted flow of narration, mimicking the act of falling asleep in and of itself. Suddenly Harbottle feels himself "roughly seized and thrust from the corner into the middle of the seat" (MJH, 104): opening his eyes, he realizes he is in the company of two strangers, two "evil-looking fellows" (MJH, 105) carrying pistols and dressed like police officers". The carriage is being led through a desolate black moor of "rotting trees" (MJH, 105); Harbottle catches sight of

one of the footmen and recognizes in him another of his victims, a man whom he had unjustly indicted and who had died of jail fever. Startled, Harbottle thinks he is either mad - "He thought he must be raving [...] – or asleep, "but if he was dreaming, he was unable to awake himself" (MJH, 106). When the coach arrests its course, Harbottle finds himself in front of an "ominous sight" (MJH, 105):

It was a gigantic gallows beside the road; it stood three-sided, and from each of its three broad beams at top depended in chains some eight or ten bodies, from several of which the cere-clothes had dropped away, leaving the skeletons swinging lightly by their chains. A tall ladder reached to the summit of the structure, and on the peat beneath lay bones (MJH, 105).

The hangman sits upon the beam of the gallows, a pipe in his mouth - "much as we see him in the famous print of the 'Idle Apprentice'" (MJH, 105) - throwing bones at the hanging skeletons. The reference is to Hogarth's *Industry and Idleness* (Plate, XI) in which Tom Idle is escorted to the gallows as punishment for his irrepressible idleness.



*Industry and Idleness*  
Plate 11: The Idle 'Prentice Executed at Tyburn

The reasons for this reference are not to be found in terms of content: if anything Harbottle is guilty of overzealousness, certainly not idleness; rather, Hogarth's pictorial style is functional to heighten the visual richness of the description: "Hogarth enriches his work with detail, and not the static detail of the old Dutch masters, but detail of vigorous movement, seething with action and life. In a typical Hogarth canvas nothing ever stands still."<sup>1</sup> Le Fanu paints an equally vibrant and chaotic picture, "for in a sense chaos is the very essence of the pictures"<sup>2</sup>:

An execution at Tyburn, fitting end for Thomas Idle's wicked life, becomes a grand meeting place for some of the most riotous characters in Hogarth, each engaged in some absurd action revealing the artist's irrepressible satirical imagination.<sup>3</sup>

Here too, the scene is alive with action and movement. The hangman is minutely described: "his nose, his lips, his chin were pendulous and loose, and drawn into a monstrous grotesque" (MJH, 106). Upon seeing the judge's carriage approaching, he stands up preparing a rope for Harbottle and shouting "'A rope for Judge Harbottle!'" (MJH, 106), with a voice ominously resembling the caw of a raven. Harbottle is first led along a corridor resembling "a passage in a prison" (MJH, 106) while "bony and gigantic soldiers" (MJH, 106) pass him by; then, through "a narrow doorway" (MJH, 106) to a dock and inside a court-house in front of a Judge Twofold himself. The vivid descriptions reproduce all the turmoil of a Hogarth plate: Harbottle's 'trial', [...], becomes a species of pictorial-transposed-into-narrative art, a

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<sup>1</sup> Moore, Robert Etheridge, *Hogarth's Literary Relationships*. New York: Octagon Books, 1969. p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

phantasmagorical adaptation."<sup>4</sup> The description of the courtroom has all the chaotic disarray of Hogarth's plate:

There were some dozen barristers, some fiddling with pen and ink, others buried in briefs, some beckoning, with the plumes of their pens, to their attorneys, of whom there were no lack; there were clerks to-ing and fro-ing, and the officers of the court, and the registrar, who was handing up a paper to the judge; and the tipstaff, who was presenting a note at the end of his wand to a king's counsel over the heads of the crowd between. If this was the High Court of Appeal, which never rose day or night, it might account for the pale and jaded aspect of everybody in it. An air of indescribable gloom hung upon the pallid features of all the people here; no one ever smiled; all looked more or less secretly suffering (MJH, 107).

This noisy ensemble reproduces in larger scale the everyday mayhem of courtroom procedure, standing as a parodic exaggeration of legal bureaucracy. Indeed, Harbottle's consideration is rather telling: "There was nothing to elevate Temple of Themis above its vulgar kind elsewhere" (JH, 106-7). Themis - the Greek Titaness - stands for divine law and cosmic order. Classical scholar Moses Finley remarks that in the Homeric world Themis is the "mark of right custom, proper procedure, social order."<sup>5</sup> Twofold's courtroom, however, has all the appearance of a wrathful nemesis. The trial begins, featuring Lewis Pyneweck as the appellant and Harbottle as the accused. In being called in front of Chief-Justice Twofold, Harbottle at last voices his objections: he expresses his offence in being brought in front of what looks a mock-trial staged by a "pretended court" and he dismisses it as "being a sham,

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<sup>4</sup> Walton, James. *Vision and Vacancy: The Fictions of J. S. Le Fanu*. Dublin: University College Dublin P, 2007. pp. 185-6.

<sup>5</sup> Finley, Moses Israel., *The World of Odysseus*, New York Review Books, 1954. p. 78. Cited in *The Odyssey* edited by Stephen Mitchel. New York: Simon and Schuster. 2014. p. 351.

and non-existent in point of law" (MJH, 107); were it real, he adds, it would not have any jurisdiction over a judge. The reaction of the court has all the flavour of a cosmic derision:

[...] the chief-justice laughed suddenly, and every one in court, turning round upon the prisoner, laughed also, till the laugh grew and roared all round like a deafening acclamation; he saw nothing but glittering eyes and teeth, a universal stare and grin; but though all the voices laughed, not a single face of all those that concentrated their gaze upon him looked like a laughing face. The mirth subsided as suddenly as it began (MJH, 107).

Harbottle appears to have fallen into a nightmarish carnivalesque reversal in which he is transformed from judge to judged, from villain to victim. The trial continues - the initial indictment followed by Harbottle's plead of innocence followed by the jurors' oath - an unrelenting mechanism: "nothing the prisoner could argue, cite, or state, was permitted to retard for a moment the march of the case towards its catastrophe" (MJH, 108). The justice system is here depicted as a machine, always in motion and never permitted to stop, operating on a utilitarian logic that exclude any humane considerations.

Just as human legal procedures find a hellish supernatural counterpart, so Harbottle is forced to face his double in the figure of Chief Justice Twofold. Twofold looks like him and he behaves like him, mimicking Harbottle's manners on the bench. In this uncanny replication, every trait is expanded. In Justice Twofold, Harbottle sees "a dilated effigy of himself [...] at least double his size, and with all his fierce colouring, and his ferocity of eye and visage, enhanced awfully" (MJH, 108). Just as physical features grow larger, so Harbottle's usual "sneer and gibe" (MJH, 108), his roaring voice, the illicit complicity with the jurors, are similarly inflated. The effect of grotesque distortion is a recurrent element in dreams:

We can see how caricature sums up one aspect of the world of satire - its relation to dream and nightmare. A fundamental characteristic of dream or nightmare is the mock-heroic and its opposite, travesty: one is always suffering from one or the other forms of paranoia, delusions of grandeur or persecution mania.<sup>6</sup>

The dynamic tension between identity and its distortion is foregrounded by the device of the identical double. In *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, John Herdman calls attention to physical likeness between two characters as a device particularly apt to represent "the duplication [...] of the individual,"<sup>7</sup> an important thematic thread in the wider literature of the double. The most direct examples of nineteenth-century identical doubles are Poe's "William Wilson" (1839) and Dostoevsky's *The Double* (1866), although variations on the theme recur in the works of Hoffmann,<sup>8</sup> the German master of the *Doppelgänger*, and in James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824)

In Poe's short-story, the titular character tells how he met his double during his schooldays. The other boy has the same name and imitates the narrator in all aspects, behaving and dressing like him: the two are almost identical in appearance and even share the same birthdate. The first Wilson grows progressively irritated by the other boy, who - despite being unable to rise his voice beyond a whisper - begins to imitate the speech intonation and manner of the narrator. Herdman compares Wilson's "mimetic trick"<sup>9</sup> to the "chameleon art" of Gil-Martin's in Hogg's *Justified Sinner*, that of transforming his appearance at will.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the first time Gil-Martin appears in the novel is with the protagonist's - Robert Wringhim -

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<sup>6</sup> Paulson, Ronald. "Pictorial Satire: Emblem to Expression" in *A Companion to Satire: Ancient and Modern*. Edited by Ruben Quintero. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2008. p. 316.

<sup>7</sup> Herdman, John. *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Literature*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990. p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Especially in the pair Medardus/Count Victor in "The Devil's Elixirs"(1815).

<sup>9</sup> Herdman, *cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

features. In his characteristic low whisper, Wilson's double - who is endowed with a higher moral sense than the narrator's - continually conveys words of advice and warnings to behave. He represents the proverbial voice of conscience. Years later Wilson leads a depraved life of vice and frauds; yet his rival appears times and times again, to expose his infractions and to obstruct all his schemes. Again, Herdman draws a parallel with Hogg's work, in which Wrighim is persecuted by the evil Gil-Martin (97): both stories elaborate on the motif of the "usurping shadow" of German romanticism, exemplified by the works of Chamisso<sup>11</sup> and Andersen.

The identical double and the shadow-self, therefore, are generally connected with an identity usurpation: the protagonist is suddenly confronted with a rival double who, thanks to his physical likeness or imitative behavior, slowly but surely intrudes into the protagonist's life and psyche. Dostoevsky's *The Double* tells of a similar identity usurpation. Not only is the protagonist's double - the second Mr. Golyadkin - "absolutely similar in every respect to the first" but he "does what the first wants to do but cannot do."<sup>12</sup> The second Mr. Golyadkin intrudes himself into the life of the first, progressively stealing his aspirations. The mimetic aspect in these stories can be reconnected to the physical likeness between Twofold and Harbottle, as well as to the imitation in point of behavior. Twofold is a supernatural manifestation of those forces that threaten a secure sense of identity. The use of the world "effigy" is emblematic: portraiture is, at its core, a device of substitution functioning as a replacement, a surrogate for the self. There lies a dangerous scenario: in copying the original,

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<sup>11</sup> Herdman remarks that *Peter Schlemihl* is "a tale of privation rather than of duplication or division", but just as Andersen's *The Shadow* it is interested in "the ambiguities of shadow and substance, with the insight that the psyche is incomplete without its shadow-side", *cit.*, pp. 44-6.

<sup>12</sup> Herdman, *cit.*, p. 104.

the copy might steal the original's status. The forgery - of documents, banknotes, identities - re-connects with the notion of sham-court, the travesty of justice, and that of farce.

Indeed, that of the farce is an element that characterizes *The Double* as well: with his story, Dostoevsky "introduces to the literature of the double the element of humour" (101) including episodes close to "the mock-heroic, the absurd, sometimes almost grotesque."<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Harbottle cannot believe "this ominous farce" (MJH, 108).

There are, however, fundamental differences. First of all, the encounter between Harbottle and Twofold does not developed into a full-fledged conflict, such as those represented in Poe's and Dostoevsky's narratives. The appearance of the double remains confined within Harbottle's dream and it does not reach a dramatic climax. Secondly, the double in Le Fanu's story does not seem to be symptomatic of a moral issue nor of a division of will. Whereas Poe's "William Wilson" deals with "the idea of the other self externalised as accusing or reproachful conscience"<sup>14</sup> - a theme that recurs also in "The Black Cat" (1843) and "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843) - "Mr. Justice Harbottle" appears to resist such a reading: indeed, interpreting Twofold as an externalization of Harbottle's conscience, as the judge's principled self, would mean endowing him with a moral goodness that he does not seem to possess.

Indeed, the whole jury looks like a diabolic Inquisition. In contrast with the enhanced physicality of Twofold, the jurors are "mere shadows" (MJH, 108): Harbottle can only see their white eyes as they shine out of the darkness of the jury-box, in a manner that resembles the shining red eyes of the monkey in "Green Tea". A guilty verdict is pronounced and Twofold condemns Harbottle to death by hanging, fixing the date for the execution on the 10th of the following month:

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<sup>13</sup> Herdman, *cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

The place seemed to the eyes of the prisoner to grow gradually darker and darker, till he could discern nothing distinctly but the lumen of the eyes that were turned upon him from every bench and side and corner and gallery of the building (MJH, 108).

Whereas James Walton calls the story "a moral fable"<sup>15</sup>, Sullivan remarks that "there is still something profoundly out of joint in this visionary trial scene [...]"<sup>16</sup> He notices that for the scene to acquire a moral flavour, the jurors would have to be the picture of innocence: instead, they are "brought to life with the language Le Fanu reserves for demons" and "they pass their sentence not with a sense of moral outrage or solemn justice, but with sadistic glee."<sup>17</sup> He concludes that "the only principle of consistency seems to be a self-referential system of cruelty, capable of constantly regenerating itself."<sup>18</sup>

The notion of the double needs to be situated within the element of self-referentiality highlighted by Sullivan. The demonic judge and the demonic jurors ultimately imitate - and are imitated by - their human counterparts: the copy and the original, as two symmetrical images, are indistinguishable one from the other. Ultimately, there is no distinction between cosmic order and cosmic horror. Psiropoulos makes similar observations:

if this world and its conjoining planes are governed by unseen and powerful forces, these forces are essentially malicious, satanic, no better than the corrupted administrators they punish [...] if system of justice exist to dole out punishment, then individuals *exist to be punished* [...] persecuted and persecutor alike are, eventually, doomed.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Walton, *cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>16</sup> Sullivan, *cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>19</sup> Psiropoulos, *cit.*, p. 109.

The symmetrical pattern recalls the central tenant of Swedenborg's philosophy. According to the theory of correspondence, "the whole natural world corresponds to the spiritual world, and not merely the natural world in general, but also every particular of it"<sup>20</sup>. The human legal system and the human legal actor – both wicked and corrupt – come to be associated with wicked geni.

In the system envisioned by Swedenborg, every material element has its own spiritual counterpart: this dual composition implies hybridity, and hybridity – as a form of combination - has close connections to the grotesque and the incongruous. According to Milbank, Swedenborg's system is inherently grotesque and so is Le Fanu's fiction: in both the supernatural is represented as a "sensory experience"<sup>21</sup> and in both "the world of daily life is drained of meaning by the stronger reality of the supernatural."<sup>22</sup> Milbank draws a connection between Le Fanu's interest in Swedenborgian philosophy - with its focus on duplicity- and his identity as an Anglo-Irish Huguenot which stands for a "double hybridity [...]."<sup>23</sup>

It is here that the Huguenot Calvinist tradition comes into play. According to the Reformation theologians, the doctrine of justification by means of faith or grace opens up a duality in the self. For Luther, the self is divided into the man of flesh and the justified self. The anxiety engendered by the awareness of one's self-alienation could be positive, however, in leading one to acknowledge the need for redemption. Calvin, however, taught a double predestination, whereby one was bound from the beginning to either salvation or damnation. His

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<sup>20</sup> Swedenborg, Emanuel. *Heaven and Its Wonders and Hell: From Things Heard and Seen*. Swedenborg Foundation, West Chester, Pennsylvania, 2009. p. 73.

<sup>21</sup> Milbank, Alison. "Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu: Gothic Grotesque and the Huguenot Inheritance", in *A Companion to Irish Literature*, Volume One & Two, edited by J. M. Wright, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. p. 377.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 367.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 363.

[Le Fanu's] fiction [...] is deeply interested in the alienated self-haunted, like Mr. Justice Harbottle, by his [...] The characters who are destroyed by the supernatural are those for whom the grotesque duality gives way, and their difference and specific individual character is lost: they lack 'perseverance'.<sup>24</sup>

The sense of duplicity is, according for McCormack, rife with pathological obsessions:

It is clear that the symmetrical structure of the Swedenborgian metaphysic could be schizophrenic in origin. The psycho-pathological element in the Doctrines resembles schizophrenia not in its hallucinatory visions and voices and irresistible commands, but also in its elaboration of the 'split mind' into a mystical system. Everything happens twice; there is a correspondence of every particular thing, a dual existence for each perception.<sup>25</sup>

The duality of perception is made manifest in the scene of Harbottle's torture, as the physical pain experienced in the dream-state seems to reverberate upon the physical world. Harbottle is led in front of "a vaulted smith" (MJH, 109), where two men - "with heads like bulls, round shoulders, and the arms of giants" (MJH, 109) - are forging and hammering on chains and shackles. A pair of these shackles, still hot from the furnace, is destined for Judge Harbottle. The two smiths are charged with securing the condemned man: the incandescent glowing bar burns the judge's skin and forces a terrible yell that seems to "chill the very stones" (MJH, 109).

Chains, vaults, smiths, and smithy all vanished in a moment; but the pain continued. Mr. Justice Harbottle was suffering torture all round the ankle on which the infernal smiths had just been operating (MJH, 109).

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p., 367.

<sup>25</sup> McCormack, W.J. *Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland*. Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1991. p. 185.

The very word pain derives from Latin *poena*, punishment. In his career as a hanging judge, Harbottle has been desensitized to pain. The scene, therefore, is all the more evocative since it represents the point in which Harbottle's disengagement with violence - his determination to have people executed without a second thought- turns into a direct, first-person sensorial experience. The binary between disengagement and empathy, distance and identification was, according to Steven Bruhm, a problematic tension on which the eighteenth-century legal reform hinged. The passionate denouncement of torture as inhuman and ineffective channeled policy-making in the direction of "privileging sensitivity over rationality"<sup>26</sup>; in turn, the opposite concerns raised the question whether too much "sympathetic identification"<sup>27</sup> might ultimately be detrimental to the judicial reform.

Legal discipline and punishment following from the age of sensibility evidences a crisis in the subjective response: if imagining the ontological space of another always ensures that we are outside that space [...], then how are we to determine the complex world of *motivation* so necessary to an accurate and human jurisprudence? On the other hand, if imagining the ontological space of another threatens us with an emotional infection by that other [...] then what hope can we have for a rational, utilitarian legal system that is not swayed by the rhetoric of sensibility?<sup>28</sup>

Harbottle, the ruthlessly insensitive administrator, is not given any space for negotiating the transition from distance to identification. The torture he is made to endure is also, on an extreme level, the experience of empathy made flesh as the pain of his many innocent victims seem to be inflicted on him all at once.

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<sup>26</sup> Bruhm, Steven. *Gothic Bodies: The Politics of Pain in Romantic Fiction*. Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press. 2011. p. 96.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xix.

The scene also questions the relation between pain and imagination. Harbottle's pain is a phantom pain, as his body is marked exclusively within the confines of the dream. However, whereas the dreamt world disappears when Harbottle wakes up, the pain lingers on: "my foot's blazing. Who was he that hurt my foot?" (MJH, 109) he asks. Analyzing the experience of pain in *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry underscores the exceptionality of the state of pain: "physical pain - unlike any other state of consciousness - has no referential content. It is not *of* or *for* anything."<sup>29</sup> The abnormality of pain as a state, that of having no object, can only be related to the imagination:

[...] physical pain is exceptional in the whole fabric of psychic, somatic, and perceptual states for being the only one that has no object [...] The only state that is as anomalous as pain is the imagination. While pain is a state remarkable for being wholly without objects, the imagination is remarkable for being the only state that is wholly its objects. There is in imagining no activity, no "state", no experienceable condition or felt-occurrence separate from the objects: the only evidence that one is 'imagining' is that imaginary objects appear in the mind.<sup>30</sup>

The question is not whether or not Harbottle really experienced pain. The emphasis has to be shifted instead on the extent to which Harbottle's imagination worked to produce the suggestion of pain. The repercussion of this suggested or imagined pain are, in fact, real enough: the attack of gout and fever that overbears him following the dream and that forces him to bed for an entire fortnight has all the appearance of a somatic illness. Once he recovers, he still has troubles to get his dreams "out of his head" (MJH, 110) and loses his "iron energy and banter" (MJH, 100). The physical pain the judge experiences, or imagines to have

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<sup>29</sup> Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 161-2.

experienced, affects his state of mind, betraying his guilty conscience. The loss of psychic and somatic boundaries has always been central to the experience of torture: "throughout medieval jurisprudence, the tortured body was considered to offer direct access to guilt, and consequently to truth: *tormentum* (to torture) is even etymologically linked to *torquens mentum* - the 'twisting of the mind' to wring out the truth."<sup>31</sup> The days leading to the date fixed for his execution are spent in a state of constant nervous anticipation.

The copy of the parchment and letter which had announced his trial with many a snort and sneer he would read over and over again, and the scenery and people of his dream would rise about him in places the most unlikely, and steal him in a moment from all that surrounded him into a world of shadows. (MJH, 110).

Emblematically, Harbottle is suspected of being an hypochondriac: as a phantom illness, hypochondria is the exemplary ground of encounter between pain and imagination. Having sunk in a "nervous dejection" (MJH, 111), Harbottle's doctor suggests he go to Buxton for a period of time in order to properly cure his gout. The judge agrees and makes the preparation for his trip on March 9th, the night before the announced death sentence.

The description of Harbottle on that evening forebodes his doom:

A wood fire blazed cheerily on the hearth. And Judge Harbottle, in what was then called a brigadier-wig, with his red roquelaure on, helped the glowing effect of the darkened chamber, which looked red all over like a room on fire. The Judge had his feet on a stool, and his huge grim purple face confronted the fire and seemed to pant and swell, as the blaze alternately spread upward and collapsed. He had fallen again among his blue devils, and was thinking of retiring from the Bench, and of fifty other gloomy things (MJH, 113).

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<sup>31</sup> Bruhm, *cit.*, p. 95.

An example of Le Fanu's pictorial style<sup>32</sup>, the scene depicts the judge trapped in a darkened background, as in a painting by Schalken, his face illuminated by the fire. Surrounded by the red glow, Judge Harbottle looks as if he is already suffering the torments of hell: he is weighed down by the proverbial ticking of the clock, as the fated day is only mere hours away. Coincidentally, fatality features prominently in the literature of the double, indeed "no concept is more central to the theme of the double."<sup>33</sup> As in the case of the fetch and the wraith, the doubles of folklore, omens of imminent death, Harbottle's preannounced fate prefigures the appearance of his executors:

The folkloric belief that the encounter with one's double presages death is linked to that in the 'wraith', or visible (though not tangible) counterpart of a person seen approximately at the time of death.<sup>34</sup>

During that fatal night, three different people in the house witness three different apparitions. First, Flora Carwell/Mrs. Pyneweck's daughter peeps underneath one of the blinds surrounding the main hall and finds a stranger sitting in Harbottle's sedan chair (MJH, 112):

To her surprise, the child saw in the shadow a thin man dressed in black seated in it; he had sharp dark features; his nose, she fancied, a little awry, and his brown eyes were looking straight before him; his hand was on his thigh, and he stirred no more than the waxen figure she had seen at Southwark fair (MJH, 113).

On finding the room empty, Mrs. Carwell admonishes the child and her overacting imagination. Two hours later, however, Mrs. Carwell herself catches sight of "an odd-looking individual, slim and long" (MJH, 114) leaning over the top of the staircase with a pipe in one hand and a coil of rope in the other. Following him upstairs into one of the rooms

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<sup>32</sup> Ropp, Kel, "Making Light in the Shadow Box: The Artistry of Le Fanu", in *Reflections in a Glass Darkly*, *cit.*

<sup>33</sup> Herdman, *cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

she is amazed in finding it completely empty. The apparition scares her and makes her hysterical, to the scorn of a scullery-maid, an intrepid skeptic. At twelve o'clock, the maid hears "a sound like heavy strokes" (MJH, 115) coming from the back kitchen: venturing towards the "dusky gloom" (MJH, 115) emanating from the room and she finds "a monstrous figure, over a furnace, beating with a mighty hammer the rings and rivets of a chain" (MJH, 115). The sleep of every occupant of the house is interrupted by "a hideous scream" (MJH, 116) as the maid sees Harbottle's dead body lying on the floor. The judge, however, is perfectly safe in his bedroom and visibly upset to be disturbed. The supernatural world has found a way to penetrate the mansion's safe walls and to invade its interiors. Flora, her daughter and the maid have all been turned into reluctant spectators: forced to peep into Harbottle's hellish dream world, as if through portal-windows, they have caught glimpses of the fiendish characters. Alternatively, the mansion stands for Harbottle's mind: "[...] the concept of the interior has a domestic but also a psychic referent. Within is within the conscience, the mind, the consciousness, as well as within the cupboard, the chest, the bed."<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Orel redefines the judge's affliction in psychological terms: "Le Fanu is telling us that Harbottle has done all this to himself, and has, consequently, defined the parameters of his hell."<sup>36</sup>

In the footnote to his essay, Hesselius attempts to give a rational account of the coinciding visions. Considering "the contagious character of this sort of intrusion of the

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<sup>35</sup> Coughlan, Patricia. "Doubles, Shadows, Sedan-Chairs, and the Past: "The Ghost Stories of J.S. Le Fanu" in *Reflections in a Glass Darkly*, *cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>36</sup> Orel, Harold. "'Rigid Adherence to Facts': Le Fanu's *In A Glass Darkly* 1872", *Eire-Ireland*, Vol. 20 No. 4, Winter 1985, pp. 78-9.

spirit-world upon the proper domain of matter" (MJH, 83), he terms the event a case of collective opening of the interior vision. He concludes:

"[...] We see the operation of this principle perfectly displayed, in certain cases of lunacy, of epilepsy, of catalepsy, and of mania, of a peculiar and painful character, though unattended by incapacity of business" (MJH, 83).

In *Somatic Fictions: Imagining Illness in Victorian Culture*, Athena Vrettos explores the "mimetic diseases" conceptualized by the Victorians in response to the dangers of emotional engagement. In the last decades of the nineteenth-century, "concerns about excessive emotional engagement, novel reading, and questions of sensibility and sympathy in general"<sup>37</sup> became popular especially in "medical and legal debates about insanity, hypnosis, and newly emerging theories of crowd psychology."<sup>38</sup> Examples of such mimetic diseases were Alexander Bain's concept of affective transference (1850) which actors employed to captivate their audiences; and the 'nervous mimicry' identified in 1872 by Sir James Paget as "the natural urge to imitate or participate in what we see."<sup>39</sup> What these conceptualizations revealed was "a fundamental permeability not only between body and mind but also between self and other"<sup>40</sup>:

This dissolution of ontological boundaries suggested the possibility of a kind of mental or neurological contagion comparable to epidemics of organic disease. Described as a kind of mass hypnosis, or free-floating transmission of emotions, nervous contagion could sap the moral strength and force of will, allow people to be influenced by or to identify themselves with the actions or directions of others.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Vrettos, Athena. *Somatic Fictions: Imagining Illness in Victorian Culture*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995. p. 83.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

The notion of infective madness as a consequence of overly empathic identifications is remarkably similar to Hesselius's own explanation. Moreover, the conceptualization of neurological states as spreading like organic diseases echoes the pattern of symmetric duality articulated in "Mr. Justice Harbottle": for every psychological referent there exists a material counterpart, as the phantasms of the mind invade the physical space.

The next morning, Judge Harbottle is "found hanging by the neck from the banister at the top of the great staircase, and quite dead" (MJH, 116). In the absence of signs of struggle, a jury proclaims the case a suicide, a matter which brings "mortal scandal" (MJH, 116) to the house. Thus the story ends with a trial, which however fails to explain the "startling coincidence" (MJH, 116) in the matter of the date. It is possible, however, to see this interpretative failure as already inscribed in the prologue of the story:

In its failure to codify and explain, the prologue reveals the irrelevance of anticipated arguments for and against "natural" or "supernatural" interpretations of the story. The difference between psychological ghosts and real ghosts is eliminated because the story forces us to glimpse a world in which such nice distinctions do not have any relevance.<sup>42</sup>

As Captain Barton's heart attack, Harbottle's suicide might be interpreted as a consequence of a guilty conscience. However, whereas Barton's last days are accompanied by a conversion, by which he comes to accept the existence of higher system of justice, Harbottle is not affected by any such change of heart. Not only does he not convert, but he dies unrepentant. The story ends citing the "Parable of the Rich Man and the Lazarus": "the rich man died, and was buried" (MJH, 116). Harbottle is here depicted in the shoes of the rich

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<sup>42</sup> Sullivan, *cit.*, p. 50.

man who goes to hell as opposed to Lazarus, the beggar, who is destined to heaven. Since Harbottle and Pyneweck are both shown haunting the judge's old mansion, the ending is quite enigmatic. The poetics of biblical justice are, ultimately, invalidated. Just as the story fails to establish "whether the judge was insane or driven by external forces to commit suicide,"<sup>43</sup> the final trial too is unable to account for the matter of Harbottle's pre-announced death. Possibly confronted with supernatural models of interpretation of reality, the legal system collapses. Le Fanu, as a lawyer who never practiced law and became instead a ghost stories writer, depicts the law as a ghost-narrative which, instead of uncovering the truth, proves to be "a regime of self-supporting falsities."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Senf, Carol A. "Three ghosts stories: 'The Judge's House', 'Some Strange Disturbances in an Old House on Aungier Street', and 'Mr. Justice Harbottle'", in *Reflections in A Glass Darkly*, *cit.*, p. 304.

<sup>44</sup> Punter, *cit.*, p. 5.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The stories included *In A Glass Darkly* are the outcome of the profound personal struggle suffered by Le Fanu in the later period in his life which, however, had also its origin in a conflicted political and cultural identity. As explained by Orel, “Le Fanu was depressed by the potentialities for evil within man’s being, and Ireland [...] provided ample material for him to work on.”<sup>1</sup> Le Fanu’s poetic formula fuses Irish folklore with the Romantic tradition, interlacing both with Gothic conventions and the thrills of sensationalist fiction. On top of it, Swedenborg’s exegesis of Revelation – to which Le Fanu must have felt particularly attuned – furnished a viable composite model to represent the threat of supernatural and demoniac energies. The result is stories that “much in the manner of Poe’s [...] oscillate between the poles of supernatural horror and suspenseful detection,”<sup>2</sup> articulating the experience of self-division that will be characteristic of Robert Louis Stevenson and anticipating the psychological nuances of Henry James. Drawing on the pattern of similarities between the three stories analysed in this dissertation, the conclusive section will attempt to map the creative drive at the heart of Le Fanu’s fiction.

"Green Tea", "The Familiar", "Mr. Justice Harbottle" present remarkable similarities in point of narrative structure, characters, plots and motifs. Reverend Jennings, Captain Barton and Judge Harbottle are all unmarried men who have, to some extent, committed an infraction. The nature of this violations is connected to a professional misconduct: a reverend who fosters an illicit interest in paganism; a sea captain who abuses his military position for personal motives; a judge who disregards his duties to pronounce unjust

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<sup>1</sup> Orel, Harold. "“Rigid Adherence to Facts”: Le Fanu’s *In A Glass Darkly* 1872", *Eire-Ireland*, Vol.20 No. 4, Winter 1985. p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> Begnal, Michael H. *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1971. p. 28.

sentences. The gravity of the transgression progressively increases from one story to the next: from the seemingly innocuous research conducted by Jennings to Barton's violent revenge to Harbottle's open corruption. No matter the extent of their crimes, all three men must suffer equally destructive consequences: as Barton himself acknowledges, "retribution follows guilt" (TF, 57). The men are haunted, or imagine they are haunted, by a supernatural entity enacting a persecution in stages of growing intensity. Inch by inch, the health of each man deteriorates, forcing them to retire from the eyes of society: physicians and religious authorities alike are unable to identify the causes of their patients' physical decay. There is talk of hypochondria, weak nerves, a disruption in the equilibrium between mental and physical faculties but no effective cure: their symptoms are 'ghostly', their conditions elusive, their fates sealed. All die in mysterious and unexplainable circumstances, all within the domestic space. Dr. Hesselius's final diagnoses are inconclusive at best and, ultimately, the phenomena experienced by the characters remains surrounded by an aura of ambiguity.

From a structural viewpoint, these tales of persecution are imbedded within distancing frames of growing complexity, from the one-layered "Green Tea" to the multiplicity of narrative levels that characterizes "Mr. Justice Harbottle". The framing and backdating technique must be understood as an attempt to situate the experiences of the haunted men within the field of the empirically explicable and the scientifically provable. The rationalizing intent is, however, undermined by the work of editorial manipulations: the translation and arrangement of Hesselius's papers are far from allowing a faithful transposition of events; moreover, the several mentions of the existence of alternative versions of events and lost accounts further foreground the problem of reliability. The fact that the narration is in the hands of those characters who have not directly experienced the facts puts further distance between readers and characters and, consequently, places

the experience of Jennings, Barton and Harbottle in the dark area of the unexplainable and the supernatural. Not only does the intricate narrative fabric, inherent to editorial fiction, question authority and testimony but it also denies a final clarification.

The most compelling use of the framing device made by Le Fanu consists in presenting these tales as clinical cases, in what can be considered a prefiguration of Freud's early case histories. Freud himself acknowledged the fictional vestment of his own work as early as in 1895. As he wrote in his seminal work *Studies on Hysteria*: "[...] it still strikes me as strange that the case histories I write should read like short stories and that, as one might say, they lack the serious stamp of science."<sup>3</sup> Freud's conviction that hysteria could be cured by making "a detailed description of mental processes such as we are accustomed to find in the works of imaginative writers"<sup>4</sup> propelled him to move from the neurological field to the psychoanalytic phase of his career. Critics have convincingly shown many similarities between the narratological strategies of psychoanalysis and the motifs of Gothic fiction, concluding that "rather than being a tool for explaining the gothic [...] psychoanalysis is a late gothic story."<sup>5</sup> In sharing the space of subjectivity - latent desires and memories, fantasies and dreams - Gothic fiction and the psychoanalytical science manifest an undeniable interconnection: "if psychoanalytical terms are useful in discussing the gothic [...] psychoanalysis is itself a gothic, necromantic form, that resurrects our psychic pasts."<sup>6</sup>

Doctor Martin Hesselius can be considered a sort of proto-analyst whose methods find expression especially in "Green Tea". The interactions between Jennings and Hesselius are typical of the relationship between a patient and his therapist, their conversations resembling psychoanalytic sessions in which the patient is invited to talk and to arrive at

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<sup>3</sup> Freud, S., Breuer, J. *Studies on Hysteria*. London: Penguin Classics, 2004. p. 160.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>5</sup> Kilgour, Maggie. *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*. New York: Routledge. 1995. p. 221.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.

his own insights by way of free associations of ideas. A prerequisite of the psychoanalytic cure is that the patient should demonstrate a desire to be treated: indeed, Jennings spontaneously turns to Dr. Hesselius, a man whom he greatly admires and respects. The interest in metaphysics cultivated by the German physician constitutes for the reverend the foundation on which he builds his trust, coming to progressively rely on Hesselius for understanding and sympathy. If the process by which Jennings's admiration for Swedenborg is transferred to Hesselius can be identified as a clear case of psychological transference, on the other hand the doctor, too, is deeply involved in such a process. Recognizing that he has "allowed something for association" and that he has "connected peculiar ideas with Mr. Jennings" (GT, 11), Hesselius acknowledges a reciprocal projection on his part. The emotional and intellectual entanglements between Jennings and Hesselius are the result of mechanisms of transference and countertransference which, in equal measure, represent a dangerous effacement of personal boundaries. It could be argued that the psychoanalytic cure shows no positive result - and produces instead tragic consequences - because Hesselius fails to distance himself from his patient and to maintain an objective grasp on the situation.

The close bond between the characters of "Green Tea" is counteracted by the other two tales: in both "The Familiar" and "Mr. Justice Harbottle", the temporal distance prevents any sort of direct interaction. Despite the fact that Barton and Harbottle never were his patients, the doctor still attempts to arrive at a coherent diagnosis. In the absence of direct speech, the conversation-mode of the psychoanalytic session cannot take place and, therefore, articulation - just as it becomes more complex in the convolution of narrative frames - collapses on itself. The textual dynamics prevents the achievement of true insights or, in Swedenborgian terms, deny inner vision: as the field of visibility is restricted and limited at the exterior level, the attempt to break the surface and arrive at

the bottom of the matter fails. The shortcomings of Hesselius's diagnoses in the three stories are indicative of a lack of equilibrium, as the doctor is either too close or too distant for a coherent assessment.

While Hesselius can certainly be interpreted as a forerunner of psychoanalytic therapy, he nonetheless remains an extremely enigmatic figure. What is especially puzzling is the instability of categories he crosses: that a medical doctor should define himself a "metaphysical philosopher" is unique in and of itself; but that on top of it, that he should claim the centrality of the spirit only to pronounce very materialist diagnoses is all the more perplexing. The incorporation of materialist science and mystical religion undeniably aligns Hesselius with Swedenborg: it could be argued that the former is precisely modelled on the latter, as the Swedish mystic himself was originally a scientist who only later in his life became a theologian. Despite the fact that Swedenborg is only directly mentioned in "Green Tea", the allusions to his theology are present in both "The Familiar" and in "Mr. Justice Harbottle". Moreover, Swedenborgianism connects the Hesselius tales to Le Fanu's 1864 novel *Uncle Silas: A Tale of Bertram-Haugh*, a Gothic tale of mystery and a psychological thriller. While McCormack states that "the tales of *In A Glass Darkly* possess the same concern for complex organization and symbolic consistency"<sup>7</sup> in *Uncle Silas* Swedenborgian theology is given a larger scope than in the short-stories and it comes to sustain the overall symmetry in structure and action of the novel.

Similarities aside (both Silas and Austyn Ruthyn have unorthodox religious affiliations and both live in social and political isolation), it can be said that *Uncle Silas* displays a more clearly identifiable symbolic pattern than the short-stories. In the final words of Maud, the protagonist of the novel: "This world is a parable—the habitation of symbols—

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<sup>7</sup> McCormack, W.J. *Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland*. Dublin: Lilliput Press. 1991. pp. 188-89.

the phantoms of spiritual things immortal shown in material shape"<sup>8</sup>. The world is here conceived allegorically as a network of allusions and interacting symbols, a parable delivering its moral teaching through covert linguistic signifiers. Given the mutability of symbolic meanings through ages and places, it is striking that Maud should choose to equate Swedenborg's theory of correspondence to the mechanism of substitution inherent to symbols. The threat of lost linguistic referents and empty symbolic shells looms in the background: the interpretative key to unlock the secrets of this world might lose its value because, while it may open the door, it gives no reassurances that the contents to which it has granted access will be understood.

If the elements of the material world are meaningful only in so far as they relate to their spiritual correspondents, then every human experience is always partial and incomplete without a spiritual insight; and if everything develops on a double binary, the pattern of referentiality is virtually never-ending,<sup>9</sup> leading only to a cognitive blindness. Le Fanu's reconfiguration of Swedenborg's doctrine results in a claustrophobic sense of enclosure, a solipsistic system that allows no way out. As the material world cannot sustain itself without its spiritual counterpart, so the microcosm of the individual comes to be overdetermined by the macrocosm of the universe. Captain Barton knows this all too well: "[...] a system malignant, and implacable, and omnipotent, under whose persecutions I am, and have been, suffering the torments of the damned!" (TF, 57). Barton's newly acquired theology counterbalances Maud's positive conceptualization at the end of the novel: in the metaphor of the world as a parable lies the confidence that, no matter how hard the lesson may be, there is indeed a lesson to be learned. She concludes:

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<sup>8</sup> Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan. *Uncle Silas*. New York: Dover Publication Inc. 1981. p. 356.

<sup>9</sup> "The Swedenborgian system leads towards solipsism and implosion [...] If herbs and grasses signify scientific truths, what do scientific truths signify? If heaven appears like earth, how can we tell the difference? If angels can appear to men, can talk and dress and eat like men, how can we distinguish between them to call them separately angels and men?", McCormack, *Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland, cit.*, p. 186.

"May the blessed second-sight be mine - to recognized under these beautiful forms of earth the angels who wear them; for I am sure we may walk with them if we will, and hear them speak."<sup>10</sup> The sense of direction and purpose envisioned in a parable is utterly denied in the later tales: the second sight which Maud defines as "blessed" is ultimately what pushes the male protagonists to suicide. Moreover, whereas Maud wishes for the angels to talk to her Jennings would have given anything to *not* hear the spectral monkey speak and sing to him.

Vision and language are, then, intrinsically dependent upon each other. According to Swedenborg's own formulations, spirits who are in conjunction with men actively condition their memories and language: "When these spirits come to a man they enter into his entire memory, and thus into his entire thought."<sup>11</sup> The letter sent by the reverend to Hesselius after the re-appearance of the monkey is paradigmatic: written in a state of panic it points, in its incoherent syntax, to the formal collapse of language at the same time that it announces a loss of control over linguistic expression. Jennings states that his spectral persecutor "reviles" and that "it knows every word I have written" (GT, 31). Language itself has fallen under possession, turned into an abusive, impious, tool. The other world communicates through speech and letters - the watcher, for examples, writes to Captain Barton- even through official court documents as in Harbottle's case. The underlying idea is that the written output might be articulated by an alien, psychic entity - after all, Swedenborg's own mystical works were inspired by hearing voices from the world of spirits. The loss of agency over speech is envisioned as equally threatening as the loss of agency over action, both representing a radical attack to self-identity: in the

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<sup>10</sup> Le Fanu, Uncle Silas, *cit.*, p. 436.

<sup>11</sup> Swedenborg, Emanuel. *Heaven and Its Wonders and Hell: From Things Heard and Seen..* Swedenborg Foundation, West Chester, Pennsylvania, 2009. p. 222.

effacement of boundaries between the inside and outside, the individual is deprived of the possibility for self-determination and autonomy.

It is exactly through this dynamic that the dramatic tension of the tales of *In A Glass Darky* finds expression. Under the threat of invasion, the individual looks for isolation from the outside world. It is no case that all three protagonists retire into their homes: while initially perceived as a protective barrier from the outward violence, the house progressively shows itself as a dark prison that obstructs any contact and, ultimately, a tomb. Symbolically, the house might stand to indicate the isolated condition of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy as a besieged and disintegrating class; psychologically, however, the house comes to signify the space of interiority and of psychic decomposition, invaded by hallucinatory forces. Patricia MacCormack defines hallucinations as the meeting point of the immaterial and the material:

The incarnation of so-called hallucinations as capable of effectuating action and physical transformation enacts a verisimilitudinous conflation which is that of the material and the perspectival, of thought as real and reality as always and already a version of thought - the sensible is material.<sup>12</sup>

In a supernatural model, Le Fanu's haunted protagonists find themselves face to face with evil agents from the world beyond the grave. The alternative interpretation, however, is equally valid. These persecutors can be conceptualized as manifestations of tormented interiorities: invasions of the unconscious into the conscious, neurotically heightened illusions unleashing a series of latent neurosis and paranoid fears. Projected outwardly, psychoses take the shape of ghosts: Jennings's monkey and Barton's watcher have small shrunken frames whereas Twofold is unnaturally dilated. As such, they resemble

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<sup>12</sup> MacCormack, Patricia. "Baroque Intensity: Lovecraft, Le Fanu and the Fold", in *The Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies*. Issue 2. March 2007, Available at: <<http://irishgothicjournal.homestead.com/lefanulovecraftgothicbaroque.html>>

imperfect human figures as seen through an opaque window-pane or a curved mirror. The ghosts in the tales, therefore, are ultimately images of an imperfect humanity - dim, distorted, reflections of the self – and it can be said that each haunted man "creates his persecutor out of himself [...] unfulfilled desires, incomplete aspirations, all contribute to the moral and spiritual decay."<sup>13</sup> The supernatural and psychological interpretations are kept in perfect balance, since there are not enough definite proofs to lean one way or the other: the darkness "wells up from within their psyches" at the same time as it "has its counterpart in the actual world."<sup>14</sup>

Hallucinations also problematize the act of looking. In a time in which the relation between the world and its observers was being continually reshaped and redefined by scientific discoveries in the field of optics, visual perception became of primary importance for the Victorians. Parallel to the development of mechanical instruments and tools to bring the invisible into view (the microscope, for example) there emerged a growing awareness of the limitations and faults of the human eye. Even in its mundane forms of entertainment - magic lanterns, dioramas and panoramas, kaleidoscopes - the act of watching became inextricably interlocked to specific ideological constructs. Late eighteenth and early nineteenth century spectre-shows, for example, were used by anti-apparitions writers as a means to demystify traditional beliefs in ghosts: spectres were no more than optical illusions, the simple result of technological projections. The eye, too, was to be conceived as yet another one of these imperfect machines.

Just as it made a spectacle out of the spectral, phantasmagoria also fostered a dangerous interplay between materiality and spectrality, resorting to technical equipment to bring the world of imagination on the stage. The interests in the mechanics of the eye coincided,

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<sup>13</sup> Begnal, *cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>14</sup> Sullivan, Jack. *Elegant Nightmares: The English Ghost Story from Le Fanu to Blackwood*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1978. p. 68.

then, with a curiosity in the workings of the mind: as the intangible and invisible source of images, the mind could be conceptualized as a spectral correspondent of the material world and the thoughts it produced as a series of phantom forms. It was therefore postulated that excessive reverie itself, obsessive thoughts and recurring mental images could cross psychic boundaries and materialize in the physical world. In other words, visuality became totally dependent upon physiological and cerebral processes.

These critical points find expression in the tales of *In A Glass Darkly*: the ghost is the figure through which the relations between proof and belief, surface and depth, appearance and substance are explored. Jennings's, Barton's and Harbottle's persecutory experiences are explained by Hesselius as being connected to the opening of their inner eye which, as a communicative channel to the world of spirits, has allowed a psychic disturbance to take place. By means of the adjective "inner", however, vision is connected not only to spirituality but also to the interior world of subjectivity and imagination: after all, the creative drive behind Jennings's research could be defined as a sort of interior sense, an insight. The most heavily freighted question, then, is where the line between spiritual or creative (in)sight and shortsightedness lies. The inner world of dreams and nightmares, fears and traumatic memories obfuscates human experience, functioning as the lens through which the surrounding world comes into focus. Harbottle's eye might be "shrewd" (MJH, 97), yet it fails to sort through cases of mistaken identity and deceitful disguises; Barton dies with "the sightless eyes still open" (TF, 77) without reaching any spark of self-revelation. The fact that these men's tormented interiorities should lead to such a final act as that of suicide reveals the inadequacies and limitations of scientific observation and indicate that reality is fundamentally shaped by individual point of views, not matter how skewed the perspective might be.

The importance given to visuality acquires a larger aesthetic drive in Le Fanu's own style which relies on pictorial effects to fully convey the horror of his scenes. The final effect of his red and black color palette, of his attention to lights, his depiction of fixed facial expressions is an imagery that "suggests the shifting, dissolving colors of a nightmare."<sup>15</sup> Ropp compares Le Fanu's artistry to the candlelit *chiaroscuro* used by Godfried Schalken in his portraits: "he [Le Fanu] leaves only the smallest opening of perception in his layered narrations, yet through his aperture he, the reader, and the characters see and plummet into scenes molded by flickering candlelight."<sup>16</sup> When Jennings appears "like a portrait of Schalken before its background of darkness" (GT, 18) he is already overpowered by obscure powers; similarly, Harbottle's face illuminated by the firelight foreshadows his imminent death. The gloomy interiors are sometimes contrasted by bucolic landscapes, for example the Shropshire scene in "Green Tea", or Barton's dream in "The Familiar"- a short-lived respite before the final climax of the action. Even more than on style, Le Fanu relies on a "quite, cumulative method leading up to intolerable terror."<sup>17</sup> In many cases, the tragic development of the action is already prefigured in the beginning. In introducing Barton as an unrecoverable skeptic and disbeliever, for example, Le Fanu builds from the onset of "The Familiar" specific expectations as to the fate that will befall the captain, alluding to his eventual conversion.

The foreboding sense of doom that pervades these tales from beginning to end aligns Le Fanu to the Gothic tradition: the attention to language, simultaneously precise and allusive, the "poetic sharpness and discipline"<sup>18</sup> make Le Fanu a master of the ghost story. The captivating style of these tales is to be identified in a "descriptive method in which

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<sup>15</sup> Sullivan, Jack, "'Green Tea': The Archetypal Ghost Story", in *Reflections in A Glass Darkly, cit.*, p. 280.

<sup>16</sup> Ropp, Kel, "Making Light in the Shadow Box: The Artistry of Le Fanu", in *Reflections in a Glass Darkly, cit.*, p. 164.

<sup>17</sup> Benson, E.F., "Sheridan Le Fanu", in *Reflections in A Glass Darkly, cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>18</sup> Pritchett, V. S., "An Irish Ghost", in *Reflections in A Glass Darkly, cit.*, p. 131.

precision and ambivalence are held in balance by the voice of a detached narrator" resulting in "a potent blend of objective reportage and careful manipulation of the reader's responses."<sup>19</sup>

The ghost stories here analyzed are fundamentally open-ended tales to which a multiplicity of equally valid interpretative models can be applied. The haunting ghosts persecuting Jennings, Barton and Harbottle can either be explained along a metaphysical line or a materialistic one, and certainly along a psychological one. The frustrated hermeneutic effort is a typical element of the ghost-story genre:

[ghost stories] sabotage the relationship between cause and effect. The part are self-consistent, but they relate to an explicable, irrational whole. Instead of lighting up, the stories darken into shadowy ambiguity; instead of depending on logic, they depend on suggestion and connotation.<sup>20</sup>

As Sage has it, the rhetoric of darkness "afflicts his characters, but it is also a readerly condition."<sup>21</sup>

Yet, in *Le Fanu* the formal concerns are far from being an end in and of themselves:

*Le Fanu* was not a mere 'sensationalist' writing only for effect. His fascination – or even obsession – with the supernatural and the macabre coincided with embedded psychological characteristics, with dimensions of his nature that were linked to emotional disturbance and guilt.<sup>22</sup>

Placed within this conceptual frame, the interest in Swedenborg's theology might find justification: beside providing a "tightly structured representations of supernatural evil,"<sup>23</sup> Swedenborg also offered a rich imaginative world to sustain a creative process deeply

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<sup>19</sup> Cox M., Gilbert R.A. *The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford. 1991.

<sup>20</sup> Sullivan, *Elegant Nightmares, cit.*, p. 134.

<sup>21</sup> Sage, Victor. *Le Fanu's Gothic: The Rhetoric of Darkness*, Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Cox, Michael, "Introduction" in *The Illustrated J.S. Le Fanu : Ghost Stories and Mysteries by a Master Victorian Storyteller*. Wellingborough: Equation, 1988. p. 16.

<sup>23</sup> Roop, *cit.*, p. 167.

concerned with interiority. Consider *Uncle Silas's* Maud's conceptualization of human troubles and how closely it resembles the Freudian psychic apparatus:

How marvellously lie our anxieties, in filmy layers, one over the other! Take away that which has lain on the upper surface for so long—the care of cares—the only one, as it seemed to you, between your soul and the radiance of Heaven—and straight you find a new stratum there. As physical science tells us no fluid is without its skin, so does it seem with this fine medium of the soul, and these successive films of care that form upon its surface on mere contact with the upper air and light.<sup>24</sup>

The Swedenborgian doctrines seem to have provided Le Fanu with a psychoanalytical model *ante litteram*, the indispensable tool to map out the tormented interiorities of his characters, as well as his own. A personality such as Le Fanu's might have been attracted especially to the rumors, never fully confirmed or denied, concerning the mental health of the Swedish mystic. According to Henry Maudsley, for example, Swedenborg suffered from an hallucinatory psychiatric disorder and messianic delusions: in his pathography, Maudsley proposed that Swedenborg's "religious mystical experience were psychotic in origin"<sup>25</sup> and that he suffered from either schizophrenia or epilepsy.<sup>26</sup> Le Fanu's growing interest in Swedenborgianism after the premature death of his wife in 1858 in mysterious circumstances can be interpreted as a way to deal with trauma as well as a search for viable answers. The causes of Susanna's death remains unknown to this day, although McCormarck has speculated "a recurring ailment probably of psychosomatic origin."<sup>27</sup> In the diary Le Fanu kept in the year following Susanna's death, there are repetitive references to his wife's religious breakdown, probably triggered by a staggering number of deaths in her family, her father included: "My darling's mind was harassed with

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<sup>24</sup> Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas, cit.*, p. 348.

<sup>25</sup> Johnson, John. "Henry Maudsley on Swedenborg's Messianic Psychosis", in *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 165:5 (1994), p. 690.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 691.

<sup>27</sup> McCormarck, *Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland, cit.*, p. 122.

incessant doubts about the truth of revealed religion"<sup>28</sup> In her last days, however, she had also shown "an indifference to the world, a positive distaste to amusement, & an ardent & most unremitting devotion to her bible & to fervent prayer."<sup>29</sup> Le Fanu's preoccupation with the state of his wife's soul might as well be a preoccupation with the state of her mind. The mystery of Susanna's death fed Le Fanu's fiction. The biographical reflections in his work are undeniable: the experiences of self-division and conflicted faith, isolation and seclusion left a profound mark in his life. As reported by his son Brinsely, Le Fanu wrote late at night in the candle light while drinking tea<sup>30</sup> exactly like reverend Jennings. He suffered from a recurring nightmare of a falling mansion crushing him. The striking repetition of the same motifs and patterns in his tales has been read as a symptomatic compulsion to repeat, the direct manifestation of a psychological death-drive.<sup>31</sup>

Le Fanu's inner life, then, seem to have been disturbed by deep-seated anxieties and apprehensions which simultaneously supplied the creative force and material behind his works: the source of supernatural horror, wherever else it might come from, is located first and foremost in human interiority. If the deep recesses of interior life cannot be fully revealed – only emerging in cries of terror - the same dynamic of unknowability sustains the occult symbolism of the ghost story: in this blank spot, in the gap which the blend of phantasy and reality leaves open, the dark fascination of Le Fanu's tales can be found.

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.

<sup>30</sup> Sullivan, *Elegant Nightmares*, cit., p. 36.

<sup>31</sup> Ashman, Anne, *Beyond the Gates: A Psychobiographical Study of Death, Mourning, and the Swedenborgian After-Life in the Later Works of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu*, (Doctoral Dissertation) University of Aberdeen, 2005. p. 123.

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