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Regimes of Language and Light in J. S. Le Fanu's 'Green Tea'

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The idea of language and light as *regimes* which presides over the present study is derived in the first instance from Gilles Deleuze's conceptual reframing of aspects of the work of Michel Foucault.¹ For Foucault, "What is essential is that verbal signs and visual representations are never given at once. An order always hierarchises them, running from the figure to the discourse or from discourse to figure".² The distinction - which Deleuze describes as a "preliminary distribution operating at the heart of a pluralism" (*Foucault*, p. 83) - is adopted here as a way of approaching the interanimation of the *énonçable* and the visible in Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's 'Green Tea'. The second orientation in the essay is a response to the tendency of many commentators to read 'Green Tea' in allegorical terms. The consideration of the tale in the context of Paul de Man's work on allegory here provides a way to re-frame it as a work imbued with both the embedded self-analysis often regarded as inhering in the mode in traditional understandings of allegory, along with the further self-reflexive staging of an allegoresis no longer simply regarded as presenting an impasse (Haslam), but as its very manner of manifesting the text's complex articulation of the relationships of sign and referent, text and image, language and light which would later be played out in a variety of post-structuralist modelisations, including those of Foucault and Lyotard, in the twentieth century. In this way an alternative reading of the allegoresis which, according to Richard Haslam, characterises critical readings of 'Green Tea' is proposed.³

First published in serialised form in Charles Dickens' periodical, *All the Year Round*, in 1869, Le Fanu's supernatural tale 'Green Tea' was subsequently gathered, along with 'Carmilla' and three other stories, for publication in the collection *In a Glass Darkly*. The tale concerns the experiences of its central character, Reverend Jennings, who in the course of research into pagan religions, abetted by the stimulus of green tea, suffers the presence of a "spectral illusion" (p.25) in the form of a malevolent black monkey.

The five tales comprising *In a Glass Darkly* are collectively presented by means of a framing device which presents Martin Hesselius as a compiler of the "case studies" which furnish the raw material for the narratives. 'Green Tea', however, as it occupies the collection of tales, adds two further frames in so far as here Hesselius features both as a character⁴ and as a surrogate author. Unlike the other tales, which present Hesselius as having provided a verbal

account transcribed by the anonymous narrator (his former secretary), ‘Green Tea’ stages the notion of a more direct access to the words of the doctor. The account is still presented as assembled by the same narrator, but in this case from *letters* about the case of Reverend Jennings addressed by Hesselius to Van Loo of Leyden, a chemist. In a final framing gesture Le Fanu construes these letters as being translated by the secretary from three languages.

Aside from appreciation of its formal properties, the story has given rise to a wide array of readings distinguished as much by their variety as by their ingenuity. As an example of late Anglo-Irish gothic (a category disputed by W. J. McCormack), it has invited interpretation as an allegory of dispossession (with demonic standing in for political dispossession).⁵ For other commentators, ‘Green Tea’ suggests the fear of corporeality which is one of the features of Reformation religious discourse; more specifically, as a Victorian story, it has been interpreted as giving voice to the contemporary taboo of masturbation – the wan Jennings supposedly suggesting the conventional characteristics of one who indulges in the “solitary vice”.⁶ In addition to interpretations (that of Robert Tracy most notably) which construe Le Fanu as expressing the terror of his Anglo-Irish contemporaries, other readings consider the tale as emblematic of the repression of homosexuality and as a dialogue with the Darwinian challenge to normative values associated with the Victorian period. Despite the diversity captured in this brief and selective evocation of critical responses to ‘Green Tea’, they are at least united in entailing what may be described as an *allegorical* dimension. Even Terry Eagleton, in his assessment of what makes the tale “inferior” to others, lays the blame for this on its allegorical intentions, preferring those other tales “in which mystery and sensation are present *for their own sake*, rather than serving as complex metaphors for a social condition”.⁷

‘Green Tea’ and Ireland: allegorical readings

The politico-allegorical potential of the collection operates despite the removal from 1863 on, at the behest of Le Fanu’s London publisher, Bentley, of Irish elements. In addition to erased elements, *In a Glass Darkly* is in fact notable for several vestigial Irish socio-cultural traces. ‘The Familiar’, for example, charts a phantom (and virtual) Dublin topography: ‘Mr Justice Harbottle’ is, Tracy points out, a much revised (and relocated) version of the Dublin-set ‘An Account of Some Disturbances in Aungier Street’. In the specific case of ‘Green Tea’, Le Fanu had originally given the name Kenlis (derived from the Irish name, *Ceann Lis* [head fort], for the place now known as Kells) to Jennings and made him a minister of the Church of Ireland.⁸⁹ Yet despite the primarily commercial decision to relocate his settings, Le Fanu would continue to draw on his familiarity with Irish folklore concerning the supernatural, especially in ‘Carmilla’

which blends vampire lore and the Irish myth of the banshee (*bean sí*). In addition he was very aware of Irish history, most notably the effects, as these concerned territorial and political enfranchisement or its reverse, of the Cromwellian and Williamite wars, the tithe wars of the 1830s and the Fenian uprising of the 1860s. ‘Carmilla’, in the vampire tradition which for so many critics always allegorises questions of real estate, national territory and dispossession, has, by virtue of this association, a link to Ireland. Commentators have argued that the story shows Le Fanu reflecting on these events, which had a direct impact on his family and on his own social and financial position.¹⁰ In the same vein, it has frequently been noted by scholars that Le Fanu was himself a singularly – and emphatically – displaced figure.¹¹ Of Huguenot – and hence refugee – descent but excluded by recent historical events from membership of the land-owning Anglo-Irish ascendancy, he is presented by his biographer McCormack as living modestly, eventually renting his Merrion Square house in Dublin from his brother-in-law, existing on the fringes of the capital’s ascendancy society.¹²

Robert Tracy, however, goes considerably against the grain of the argument concerning the removal of Irish specificity, in considering the candidacy of ‘Green Tea’, in particular, for the status of political allegory. Tracy’s reading proposes that it is through his overindulgence in *green* (that is, Irish) tea, that the protagonist (Reverend Jennings standing in for the Anglo-Irish ascendancy) generates out of his fraught and contaminated imagination a simian intruder (the black monkey derived from contemporary representations of the Irish in *Punch*):

Written shortly after an abortive Fenian rising, and in the year when Gladstone abandoned the Church of Ireland [1868], and by implication the Anglo-Irish, to their fate, ‘Green Tea’ with its monkey may hint at Anglo-Ireland’s anxieties about the unhyphenated Irish, their violence and probable malevolence. (p. xiv)

Jean Lozes proposes an alternative reading, albeit one derived from some of the same evidence, suggesting that “[i]n the social, political and religious turmoil of the mid-century, [Le Fanu] embarked on an examination of conscience and a confession of sins on behalf of the Anglo-Irish class from which he sprung”.¹³ Such readings have been challenged by other commentators, and in particular by Richard Haslam. In his landmark study ‘Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu and the Fantastic Semantics of Ghost-Colonial Ireland’, Haslam singles out for criticism the ‘allegoresis’ – or ‘fantastic semantics’ – which seems to characterise so many accounts of Le Fanu’s tale.¹⁴ We shall return to his objections below in the concluding section of this essay.

Reframing the ‘frame tale’ reading

The myriad allegorical readings listed above may be said to derive their impetus from the level of historical referents. However ‘Green Tea’ has also been just as often considered in terms of its formal experimentation. One of the striking aspects of most of the critical literature concerned with its formal properties is the consensus on the proleptic modernity of the text. Thus Maurice Lévy can argue that, in its creation of an open structure and in its placement of itself under the sign of indetermination, Le Fanu’s short story distinguishes itself from other fantastic tales.¹⁵ In a similar vein Patricia Coughlan argues that the supernatural tales are the author’s most significant achievement, with ‘Green Tea’ in particular being “among his most brilliant work”.¹⁶ More recent criticism has endorsed this opinion, with both William Walton (2005) and Gaïd Girard (2007) noting the sophistication of what Walton calls the “prismatic effect” created by the tale.¹⁷ In terms of their claims on innovation, Coughlan goes further than many, claiming Le Fanu’s supernatural tales to be “forerunners of the revolutionary hypotheses of twentieth century thought about human identity” (p. 39), a reading shared by Devin Zuber, for whom Le Fanu “uncannily anticipated post-structural work on linguistics and hybrid identity”.¹⁸ In the same vein, McCormack finds “fixed centrality, reliable identity and social stability” (*Sheridan Le Fanu*, p. 146) all rejected in the course of Le Fanu’s multiple displacements. The textual *mises-en-abyme* which pervade the tale have suggested to some critics the production *avant la lettre* of the self-reflexive strategies of postmodernist authors; the interrogation of identity at its core has led others to claim that it anticipates some of the concerns of psychoanalysis. Thus, for example, Helen Stoddart finds in the tale evidence of its belonging to a lineage (which she adapts from the work of Eve Sedgwick), modifying the ‘paranoid gothic’ specifically to a gendered ‘male paranoid gothic’.¹⁹ It is clear from this brief survey that the non-allegorical readings have been just as varied as the allegorical ones.

Regimes and genres

There is common ground in all of these critical responses of course, linked as they are by way of reference to the genre of the fantastic. In exegeses which might at least in part escape the charge of *allegoresis* levelled by Haslam, scholars have unearthed sources for the fantastic elements of ‘Green Tea’. We know of the author’s interest in mesmerism for example. Le Fanu was familiar with the article by Henry Ferris on ‘German Ghosts and Ghostseers’. Published in Le Fanu’s own *Dublin University Magazine* in 1841, the text mentions a physician whose consumption of green tea leads to visions (see Girard, p. 53). It is also possible that the

publication in English of Swedenborg's *The Book of Dreams* in 1859 fed into 'Green Tea' and its accompanying stories. Le Fanu turned to the volume – in which a Dr Hesselius is mentioned – for consolation following the death of his wife. Indeed the well-known influence of Swedenborg on Le Fanu is arguably more central to 'Green Tea' than it is to any other text, *Dr Silas* included.

Other genres of course play their part in 'Green Tea'. It has been widely noted that the character of Dr Hesselius reprises the detective figure inaugurated in Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin (in the 1840s) and anticipates the Holmes Of Conan Doyle (1887).²⁰ Cornwell, for example, calls him a combination of "questing Dr Frankenstein and analytical Auguste Dupin and the predatory Van Hesling".²¹ In a manner familiar from Poe's presentation of Dupin, the pretensions to exactitude and the positivist claims made by Le Fanu's expert (Hesselius) are undercut by irony.

The central genre coordinates remain, nonetheless, those of the fantastic. The fantastic genre, Todorov stated, is unique in its reliance on the convention of reading from beginning to end. If the end is read first the entire basis of the genre is undermined and the exemplar can no longer function, as far as the reader is concerned, as a fantastic tale (*The Fantastic*, p. 89). The fantastic is the genre defined by the prerequisite that:

Insofar as we are by definition concerned with a level of textual reflexivity in the fantastic genre, we are by extension also implicated in a meta-textual debate concerning literature 'itself' or the question of hermeneutics, interpretation and meaning. (p. 89)²²

'Green Tea' more than lives up to these genre expectations.

An examination of the representation of hermeneutics and interpretation in the tale reveals a sustained focus by Le Fanu on what Foucault thought of as archive comprising visibilities and utterances (*énoncés*).²³ These two – visibilities and *énoncés* – do not depend, for their distributions, on either subjective or objective syntheses. As Frédéric Gros glosses this, the one who speaks is not the 'I' as ultimate personological foundation, nor is it the signifier as organisational latency, as structuralism would have it; nor yet still is it the world, even if it is the world given in its newly born state, as a phenomenological account might put it.²⁴ In Foucault's conception, there is nothing prior to knowledge, that is to say nothing prior to combinations of the visible and *énoncable* "proper to each stratum, to each historical formation" (Gros 56, my translation). As Deleuze responds to this argument in his book on Foucault, *light*

and *language* then are two forms of exteriority and are moreover *exterior to one another* (Foucault, p. 67).

The two regimes of ‘Green Tea’ are on the one hand a composite regime of language which is foregrounded self-reflexively though a focus on writing, reading, speaking and listening and a scopic or visual regime. In the prologue the former secretary of Hesselius (who regards himself as the archivist of Hesselius’ papers following the death of their author) describes the sources for the tale, namely letters written by Hesselius and addressed to Professor Van Loo. Chapters I and II, which describe the meeting between Jennings and Hesselius, have a strong scopic emphasis, with Hesselius established as someone able to scrutinise with unusual perspicacity. Chapter III shifts the emphasis back to the realm of language, and specifically to a scene of textual hermeneutics in the shape of a volume of Swedenborg annotated by Jennings and read by Hesselius. Indeed the chapter largely comprises quotations from Swedenborg. Chapter IV’s library encounter between Hesselius and Jennings has a dual emphasis on both visual scrutiny and textual hermeneutics, as indicated in the chapter title: ‘Four eyes were reading the passage’. Chapter V is dominated by scopic metaphors as Hesselius’ audience with Jennings is saturated in an insistently crepuscular light. A visual emphasis is continued in chapter VI, which presents Jennings as if in a portrait by the Flemish portrait painter Schalken and then moves to Jennings’ account of his first meeting with the glowing monkey. Chapter VII compounds the visual emphasis in describing the first stage of Jennings’ malady with the monkey primarily characterised by its visibility (surrounded by a ‘halo’). In chapter VIII, describing the second stage of the affliction, Jennings begins to perceive the monkey through closed *eyes*.

In the third stage of the malady, as described in chapter IX, the interventions of the monkey become manifest in the realm of discourse, as written, spoken and heard. The tale comes to an end, in accordance with Gothic convention, at the *unheimlich* ‘Home’ – as the final chapter title has it – of Jennings, with death, closure and the postmortem judgement of Hesselius.

The inscription of vision: the scopic regime

Gothic and Victorian epistemic regimes have been widely characterised by commentators as metaphorically represented by vision. As far as ‘Green Tea’ is concerned, the tale recounts an act of ‘metaphysical’ investigation which is represented in the text by types of revealing, exposing, enlightening, displaying and rendering-visible. The emphasis on vision is indicated in the title given to the volume, *In a Glass Darkly*. McCormack offers an insightful reading of the

intention behind Le Fanu's decision to use the preposition 'in' rather than 'through' of Paul's words in Corinthians 13.12, noting that while 'through' signifies that the medium of relay is at least to some degree cooperative, in the Le Fanu version (which would in this regard follow the Tyndale rather than the Geneva or King James translations) "[t]he aspirant Christian now finds his attention trapped, or obscured, within what might have been thought the medium of successful vision" (*Dissolute*, p. 141). McCormack has also noted Le Fanu's interest in painting, Schalken in particular being especially influential.²⁵ In the context of his oeuvre in general, Victor Sage has identified Le Fanu's attachment to the word 'figures' as denoting both paintings and characters.²⁶ A related point may be made, not so much about the insistence of painting in 'Green Tea' (for it does not feature as a theme or plot device), as of a visual emphasis, not least in the idea of visual reproduction via mirrors or in the form of *doppelgänger* effects.

The theme of visuality may now be traced in more detail. Hesselius presents the encounter with Jennings in visual terms in which the act of looking is central. He finds himself surprised in his act of scrutinising Jennings: "In pursuance of my habit, I was covertly observing Mr Jennings, with all my caution – I think he perceived it – and I saw plainly that he was as cautiously observing me" (p. 9).²⁷ This discomfort is dissipated, however, when Jennings follows up another projective gaze by speaking to Lady Mary in a way which makes it quite plain to Hesselius that he is "the subject of a distant inquiry and answer" (p. 9). Hesselius is now on his guard, having been taken aback by his initial exposure by means of the intersection of his and Jennings' respective gazes. Nonetheless, he recovers his ability to penetrate the thoughts of his object of scrutiny without being detected or "betraying his sensitive vigilance" (p. 9). The projective geometry associated with Hesselius, then, is more powerful than that of the object of his scrutiny. However an interesting, as well as unsettling, turning of the tables takes place as Jennings moves the conversation on from "indifferent subjects" towards papers *written* by Dr Hesselius and known to his interlocutor (the textual dimension will be explored later).

Chapter V recounts the period in which Hesselius hears nothing from Jennings for five weeks during the latter's period of recovery at Richmond, but concludes with a description of how he finds Jennings and his refuge when he is summoned by an urgent message. In accordance with gothic convention his arrival occurs at dusk: "the red reflected light of the western sky illuminated the scene with the peculiar effect with which we are all familiar" (p. 20). Hesselius progresses through the interior gloom only to find himself in the drawing room "in the same dusky light" (p. 20). As the chapter moves towards its end – and the end of the second published instalment in *All the Year Round* – the references to illumination or its diminution intensify: "landscape that glowed"; "melancholy light"; "fading", "dark"; "growing

dim”; “gloom”; “faintly seen”; “ruddy twilight”; “still light enough” (p. 20).

Hesseliuss, in the words rendered by the secretary, provides the inattentive reader with instructions, should they not yet already find themselves bathed in the premonition occasioned by the crepuscular ambience: “the gloom was insensibly toning my mind, prepared for what was sinister” (p. 20). The device owes much to the fact of publication by instalments, but it serves also to consolidate the chapter’s scopic emphasis. Chapter VI, with which the next instalment in *All the Year Round* commences, announces the “faint glow of the west”, the “darkening room” and presents Jennings as immersed in his own adhesive dusk: on his “stony face” “rested that dim, odd glow which seems to descend and produce, where it touches, lights, sudden though faint, which are lost, almost without gradation, in darkness” (p. 21). Jennings’ countenance is almost entirely withdrawn from view at this point. Yet the reduced visibility still yields enough for the gifted scrutiniser to extract knowledge, and a telling cultural referent:

I guessed well the nature, though not even vaguely the particulars of the revelations I was about to receive, from the fixed face of suffering that so oddly flushed stood out, like a portrait of Schalken’s, before its background of darkness. (p. 21).

Following the verbal recounting of how he undertook his research, Jennings’ recollection of the first appearance of the monkey reinforces the visual emphasis: “The interior of the omnibus was nearly dark [...] two small circular reflections, as it seemed to me of a reddish light [...] deep red light [...] two luminous points [...] two dull lamps [...] tiny discs of red” (p. 23).

The countenance of the monkey holds itself back from scrutiny in a manner which echoes the recession of Jennings’ face from the observance of Hesseliuss during his urgent evening summons to Richmond. Eventually, however, it yields to decipherment:

There was very little light in the ‘bus. It was nearly dark. I leaned forward to aid my endeavour to discover what these little circles really were. They shifted their position a little as I did so. I began now to perceive an outline of something black, and I soon saw with terrible distinctness the outline of a small black monkey, pushing its face forward in mimicry to greet mine; those were its eyes, and now I dimly saw its teeth grinning at me. (p. 22)

Chapter VII recounts the monkey’s tracking of Jennings back to his home on Blank Street:

There was not light enough to see it much more than in outline, nor was it dark enough to bring the peculiar light of its eyes into strong relief. I still saw, however, that red foggy light plainly enough. It did not show its teeth, nor exhibit any sign of irritation, but seemed jaded and sulky, and was observing me steadily. (p. 25).

The emphasis, then, remains on two figures observing one another. As the narrative continues, Jennings recounts how the monkey's surveillance of him intensifies: "Its eyes were half-closed, but I could see them glow. It was looking steadily at me. In all situations, at all hours, it is awake and looking at me. That never changes." (p. 26);

During all that time it acted as if on a plan of giving me as little trouble as was consistent with watching me. Its eyes were never off me. I never lost sight of it, except in my sleep, light or dark, day or night, since it came here, excepting when it withdraws for some weeks at a time, unaccountably. (p. 27).

In presenting Jennings as always thus exposed, the monkey's gaze comes increasingly to be identified, during the account of the "first stage", with visibility and illumination themselves: "In total dark it is visible as in daylight. I do not mean merely its eyes. It is all visible distinctly in a halo that resembles a glow of red embers, and which accompanies it in all its movements" (p. 27). The scene thus set, Hesselius' account of Jennings' revelation is presented.

The *mise-en-scène* of writing: textual hermeneutics

In order to give a full account of the staging of the act of writing and in particular the manner in which it is linked by Le Fanu to the Swedenborgian ideas of correspondences and the maintenance of boundaries between the human and demonic realms, it is necessary to return to the beginning of the tale. In his prologue to the story, the secretary describes the circumstances whereby he came to be the protégé of "the German physician" Dr Martin Hesselius:

For nearly twenty years I acted as his medical secretary. His immense collection of papers he has left in my care, to be arranged, indexed and bound. 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 the style of narrative he had seen the patient either through his own hall-door, or to the light of day, 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. (pp. 5-6)

The secretary is presented as the keeper of the papers but also as the translator, editor and publisher of a small selection of these. In terms of the account he gives of those studies he finds worthy of note, however, the secretary mentions those tales characterised by the two distinct styles of their compiler. The letters come into his possession following the death of the professor. The absence or presence of the letters from Van Loo to Hesselius is not referred to by the secretary. By his own account, he “interpolate[s] nothing”, but does omit detail germane to the archaeology of the genesis of the tale. In this way the narrator fails to participate in the conventions of construction of the reader’s confidence in his editorial and other shaping interventions. He identifies two distinct styles, one descriptive of the evidence of his senses, the other narrative and discursive.

Here and there a case strikes me as of a kind to amuse or horrify a lay reader with an interest quite different from the peculiar one which it may possess for an expert. With slight modifications, chiefly of language, and of course a change of names, I copy the following. (p. 6)²⁸

The source comprises letters written in three languages to Van Loo which the secretary claims to have *modified* in nothing less than a *faithful* manner. The emphasis on the fact that nothing has been interpolated is part of Le Fanu’s elaborate fabrication of irony. The secretary withholds any statement regarding what he has omitted until those moments in his assembly and presentation of the letters where the elisions themselves occur. The following is the most significant example of this:

There occurs here a careful note of Dr Hesselius’ opinion upon the case and of the habits, dietary, and medicines which he prescribed. It is curious – some persons would say mystical. But on the whole I doubt whether it would sufficiently interest a reader of the kind I am likely to meet with, to warrant here being reprinted. (p. 34)

In place of the elided passages, the secretary introduces a parenthetical account of the reasons for these elisions. Consolidating the irony, he can only fill the space created by these elisions by means of interpolation, an act he professes to have forbidden himself.

Early in the tale however the secretary's own editorial stance toward his readers is endorsed by Hesselius himself in his approach to his addressee. Hesselius informs Van Loo that he is producing a supplement – consisting of “technical details” – which will be reserved for documentation (for writing) in a “strictly scientific paper” (p. 8). This paper, which will remain withheld from Van Loo – he not being a specialist – is but one of the many other texts present in fragment, quotation, plagiarism and palimpsest that proliferate in the tale.

Jennings' verbal account of the “three years and eleven weeks [...] and two days” of his torment begins in the language of authorship: “If I leave anywhere a chasm in my narrative tell me”, he informs his interlocutor. He continues: “About four years ago I began a work, which had cost me very much thought and reading”. The research undertaken by Jennings, which he avows “a degrading fascination”, involves him in much writing: “I wrote a great deal; I wrote late at night” (p. 21) on the subject.

However there is another parasitical economy in which Jennings is implicated. The clergyman confides early in the tale how he finds it necessary, when writing, to lose himself to the effects of stimulants, of which his preferred exemplar is the titular infusion:

I believe that everyone who sets about writing in earnest does his work, as a friend of mine phrased it, *on* something – tea, or coffee, or tobacco. I suppose there is a material waste that must be hourly supplied in such occupations, or that we should grow too abstracted, and the mind, as it were, pass out of the body, unless it were reminded often of the connection by actual sensation. (p. 22)

Le Fanu's account of addiction invokes the body alternately screened and unscreened (the mind, somewhat perversely as far as orthodoxy is concerned, is protected by sensation); the foundation however remains in some sense a body which can be described as the site of an ‘allergic’ reaction. Of course there is a paradox here, one to which the addicted Jennings is indeed alert: the need to introduce something *other* to maintain the closure of the *self*, with the resultant wasting of, parasitism on, and consumption of the body by the introduced substance.

It is in the recounting of the second stage that the next contaminating incursion is revealed. The monkey begins to thwart Jennings in his reading: “while I was reading to the congregation, it would spring upon the open book and squat there, so that I was unable to see the page” (p. 29). “The *paries* is out of repair”. This breach of the boundary between Jennings and the demonic world of the monkey is taken further in the third stage of the malady whereby, in addition to imposing itself physically, it progresses to penetrate into the auditory imagination

in the shape of alien, unwelcome and supernatural sounds and words:

The thing began to *speak* to me.

“*Speak!* How do you mean - *speak* as a man does, do you mean?”

“Yes; *speak* in words and consecutive sentences, with a perfect coherence and articulation; but there is a peculiarity. It is *not like the tone of a human voice*. It is not by my ears it reaches me - it comes *like a singing* through my head.

“*This faculty, the power of speaking to me, will be my undoing. It won't let me pray, it interrupts me with dreadful blasphemies.*” (p. 31, emphasis added)

In the second and third phases the modes of access both to knowledge and to channels of communication with the divine are compromised. The body of the afflicted Jennings has its gestures and verbal expressions of piety undone by a presence which usurps and denies the possibility of devotion. Boundaries between the physical and the spiritual, the material and immaterial, the real and the imaginary, the neurological and the spiritual, the proper and the improper, the devotional and the profane, the visual and the discursive and diagnostic language, “metaphysical” malady and the voice of reason are compromised. In the course of his attempts to commune with the divine, through prayer and in particular through *writing* devotional prose, Jennings is thwarted by the interventions of the monkey.²⁹

“Four eyes were reading the passage”: seeing reading

Appropriately the most significant instance of the combined hermeneutic portals of the page and the gaze, entailing a coalition of the regimes of language and of light, is reserved by Le Fanu for the library in chapter IV. While the scene may be set by means of the emphasis placed in Le Fanu’s framing on the recesses and mirrors of the silent interior, it is also staged in terms which remind us that the encounter we are about to read is facilitated as much by the act of reading as it is by that of observing. It is significant that the secretary has at this point stepped into the role of translator, not just transcriber, of the letters of the deceased Hesselius. The written account is thus subject to re-writing³⁰

Jennings having withdrawn from the room at this point, Hesselius reads passages marked “in sharp pencil” by the owner from Jennings’ complete edition of the *Arcana Coelestia* of Swedenborg. In one further element of the dizzying embedding of texts within texts, in the margin of its pages Hesselius takes note of, and copies from memory to his addressee a note

made by Jennings: “May God compassionate me” (p. 15). In a further ironic detail, Le Fanu has Hesselius declare that his reason for closing the book at this point is his realization that he has overstepped the limits of his role, and that the annotations are of a confessional and private nature. Closing the book, Hesselius picks up another volume which, by chance, serves to gloss the passages already read and transcribed from Swedenborg-Jennings (for the question of authorship needs to be re-thought here, since the Swedenborg presented by Hesselius is a Swedenborg ‘edited’ by means of Jennings’ pencil). The additional words from Swedenborg, this time incorporated by happenstance rather than through the quasi-authorship of Jennings state that, in its modality as representative or correspondent, spirits may assume the shape of the animal “which *represents* their particular lust and life, in aspect dire and atrocious” (p. 15 my emphasis). Swedenborg thus provides a model for allegorical hermeneutics which, while he may be referring to metaphysical medicine, also comments, in this textual crypt, on modes of interpretation itself – writing, reading and commentary.

It is necessary to act in the manner of Hesselius and seek amplification for this reading by starting out from Jennings’ library and exploring further the library of Le Fanu from which it borrows its central volume (one might add from which it borrows its entire *volume*).

Swedenborg, spectral hermeneutics and the conflicting regimes of ‘Green Tea’

Although the at once interpenetrating and conflicting relations of the regimes of language and light in ‘Green Tea’ are a concern of Le Fanu’s which may be discerned in the writing itself – both thematically and as a consequence of the frame-tale construction – they are also played out and exemplified within the embedded Swedenborg intertext. That this contributes to the dismantling of the allegorical reading is an irony which sees the tale, once more, function in an irresistibly proleptic manner with regard to the late twentieth-century challenge, associated with post-structuralism, to foundationalist textual hermeneutics..

At the heart of the diagnosis carried out by Hesselius in an unofficial capacity – for Jennings never formally becomes his patient – lies a commitment to the idea central to Swedenborg’s own claims to the status of a visionary: that of the interior eye which is able to see the spiritual kingdom. In his study of Le Fanu in the context of the sensation genre about which Le Fanu expressed such ambivalence, Zuber argues that Le Fanu shows himself more comprehensive than other sensationalist novelists in his treatment of the ideas of the eighteenth century theosophist, mystic and scientist. Moreover, to an extent far greater than other nineteenth century authors (such as Dickens, Balzac, Coleridge and Blake), his work displays an occasionally detailed attention. Enabling Le Fanu to create characters whose identities are

bound up with a failure of language, Swedenborg, for Zuber, becomes intrinsic to the evocation of the “crises of identity that Le Fanu’s Anglo-Irish class increasingly faced in the latter half of the nineteenth century” (p. 75).³¹

Swedenborg occupies a key place in the tale, with words (presented as transcribed by Hesselius) from his *Arcana Coelestia* occupying most of Chapter III. Indeed the passage in which Swedenborg describes his visionary powers is marked with pencil by Jennings and transcribed later by Hesselius in his letter to Van Loo: “By the internal sight it has been granted me to see things that are in the other life, more clearly than I see those that are in the world. From these considerations, it is evident that external vision exists from interior vision, and this from a vision more interior, and so on” (p. 14). Swedenborg made claims for his own status as a visionary exegete of Scripture. In the work central to ‘Green Tea’, *Arcana Coelestia*, the author describes how angels rolled back the covering of the left eye, in order to enable it to perceive at first a “shadowy something the colour of the sky, with a tiny star in it”, followed by a “brilliant light with a beautiful golden tinge”.³² It is through such metaphorical optometric surgery that Swedenborg is enabled to assert the hermeneutic right he so vigorously exercised in his exegetical labours over the books of *Genesis* and *Exodus* in particular and then in the name of the New Church of which he was the founder.

The spectral elements of ‘Green Tea’ derive in part from Swedenborg’s concept of *correspondences*, which the text itself describes as a “technical term” in his thought. According to Swedenborg’s theory, the human sensorium is accessed via a vision which takes on haptic qualities and opens the portals to an interior in which the corporeal and the spiritual become parts of a paradoxical hybrid being (arising from the mutual breaching of boundaries). Within this system of relay and reflection, the spiritual and material worlds are mirror images of each other: each ‘screens’ the other; each re-presents the other.³³ Considered as one-way traffic from the vantage point of the earthly domain, the veil (of the eye, opened in the visionary individual) is the ephemeral threshold across which the spirit is projected on to the screen of flesh.

It is thus clear that Le Fanu intends that the diagnosis arrived at by Hesselius be associated in the mind of the reader with Swedenborgian belief. For Hesselius, as for Swedenborg, the inner eye can be assaulted if its screen (*paries*) is out of repair. The dividing membrane can lose both its corrective and directive – its *screening* – function. The membrane can begin wrongly to relay, and to allow the projection of heresy and blasphemy; it can incite to crime and the pleasures of the flesh. The screen, then, is a non-site of conversion and/or

perversion; it can go either way – as Augustine exemplifies in his account of his own dealings with the five estuaries of our material bodies.³⁴

It is the possibility of such catastrophic reversal that fascinates Le Fanu in the writings of Swedenborg. As McCormack points out, as far his fiction was concerned, Le Fanu was interested in the dark side only of the Swedenborgian apparatus (*Dissolute*, p. 28) and was far from being an apologist.³⁵

Of the two diagnoses offered by Hesselius it is the first, overwritten by a later contradictory diagnosis, which resonates with the play of regimes of language and light established by Le Fanu in ‘Green Tea’. It is this diagnosis which enters the story via the intertextual portal to Swedenborg opened by Jennings and Hesselius in the library. Jennings has suffered a destabilisation of the arrangement of the senses. Auditory, tactile and visual perceptions are subject to synaesthetic scrambling: “It is not by the ears it reaches me – it comes like a singing through my head” (p. 31); “I do actually see it, though my eyes are closed, and so it rocks my mind, as it were, and overpowers me” (p. 30). Hesselius explains these transgressions – this “access to your senses” – by stating that “the *paries*, the veil of the flesh, the screen, is a little out of repair, and sights and sounds are transmitted” (p. 32). Zuber has noted that Le Fanu is unique in the detail of his references and argues that “Swedenborg is intimately part of Le Fanu’s creation of complex characters whose identities are bound to the slippages and failures of language” (p. 75). In his further reflections on the case, having taken his leave of Jennings, Hesselius receives a letter in which the afflicted man writes that at the moment of writing (of describing, once again, his symptoms) the monkey is (a) *speaking*, (b) *knows everything* and (c) *knows everything* which Jennings has *written*. The simian interloper has become a counteractualising force undoing the very *present* of the cleric who describes himself as “so interrupted”. It possesses an all-seeing eye which usurps the workings of what Plato identified as *dianoia*, the terrain of the discursive and the rational. In the absence of Hesselius, Jennings’ servant, Jones, keeps vigil. He later reports to Hesselius: “I concluded, sir, from your words, and looks, sir, as left last night, that you thought my master seriously ill” (p. 36). Meanwhile, all that is heard is Jennings talking a great deal to himself, while the monkey appears to remain taciturn. When Hesselius witnesses the fate of Jennings at the hand of his own scalpel his response is to reject the evidence of his eyes: “While I write to you I feel like a man who has but half waked from a frightful and monotonous dream. My memory *rejects the picture* with incredulity and horror” (p. 37, my emphasis). This does not prevent the doctor from claiming victory over both the visions of Jennings and that which he has seen with his own eyes. He thus delivers his verdict on “the story of the process of a poison, a poison which excites the

reciprocal action of spirit and nerve, and paralyses the tissue that separates those cognate functions of the sense, the external and the interior” (p. 37).

The case of Jennings, then, according to the Swedenborgian assessment of Hesselius, is an example of the breaching of the proper boundary between the interior and the exterior. We do find “strange bedfellows”, as Hesselius admits, but, once encountered, they are not so easily expelled. The conclusion, in which Hesselius explains to Van Loo, his diagnosis, is that Jennings died of “hereditary suicidal mania,” rather than of the advanced state of the disease from which he also suffered: the degradation of a substance by abuse of green tea which generates an adhesive surface for disembodied spirits.³⁶ The potential of the latter is not thereby eradicated in Hesselius’ final verdict but is superseded.

In a final ironic qualification, Hesselius concludes his postmortem considerations of Jennings’ case by claiming to Van Loo that Jennings was not in fact a genuine patient of his, since he (Jennings) had not begun to give him “his full and unreserved confidence”. Jennings has withheld himself, then, just as Hesselius has *vis-à-vis* Van Loo (the technical papers which will form a supplement), just as the secretary has from the readers he imagines (selecting only certain cases and making elisions within the papers describing the cases).

Allegory, modernity and the untimely

As Haslam points out, ‘Green Tea’ foregrounds the “interpretative imbroglios involved in such theories of representation and correspondence” as outlined in Swedenborg’s doctrines (p. 280). Indeed he goes further in order to argue that the hermeneutical challenge which ‘Green Tea’ throws up is one wherein two interpretative ideologies contend. Haslam draws an analogy with Todorov’s description of the hesitation between natural and supernatural explanations, suggesting that “the reader is forced to hesitate between a more formalist critique (which minimises the impact of historical context) and a more historicist critique (which minimises the aesthetic autonomy of the text)” (p. 281).³⁷ Referring to the limitations of a reading which reads the monkey as a return of the colonial past he states:

The deficiency of an unequivocal motive for Jennings’ persecution and an unambiguous moral correspondence for his persecutor recapitulates the lack of conclusive circuitry between the elements of Le Fanu’s text and his biography, society and political culture. The quasi-Swedenborgian allegoresis of story into history runs into an exegetical impasse. (p. 325, fn. 3)

Is this the final word in respect of the workings of allegory in ‘Green Tea’? . For Coughlan, for example, by contrast to Le Fanu’s models – she cites Richter, Chamisso and Hoffman – where it is evident that allegory is intended, in ‘Green Tea’ the “security” of allegorical distance is both maintained *and* compromised by Le Fanu’s doubles and complex and multi-dimensional framings, re-framings and de-framings.

The standard account of the vicissitudes of allegory as a mode is that it was displaced in art and literature by the preference for symbol embodied in romanticism. Allegory, in its classical conception, according to Paul de Man in his 1969 essay, ‘The Rhetoric of Temporality’, entailed a circumscribed and static relation between sign and referent such that “a sign that refers to one specific meaning and this exhausts its suggestive potentialities once it has been deciphered”.³⁸ The famed emptiness of the sign or indeed the work in an allegorical mode or genre is at the heart of its disavowal by Hegel and it is a commonplace – or certainly was until de Man – that the plenitude of the symbolic mode was valorised – notwithstanding the leakage of each constituency into the other even as the privilege of the latter was being proclaimed.³⁹ In Coleridge (who was also interested in Swedenborg), according to the reading proposed by de Man, symbol is “the product of the organic growth of form” (p. 191). Symbol in romanticism is a centripetal and synthesising force analogous in its functioning to the *sensus communis* in Kant’s *Critique of Judgement*, which performs the role of unifying the would-be disjunction (in free play) of the faculties.⁴⁰ In de Man’s summary of the privilege accorded symbol in Coleridge, which he articulates in distinctly Kantian language, the symbolic and allegorical imaginations are to be differentiated thus:

In the symbolic imagination, no disjunction of the constitutive faculties takes place, since the material perception and the symbolical imagination are continuous, as the part is continuous with the whole. In contrast, the allegorical form appears purely mechanical, an abstraction whose original meaning is even more devoid of substance than its ‘phantom proxy’, the allegorical representative; it is an immaterial shape that represents a sheer phantom devoid of shape or substance. (pp. 91-2)

On one level, in the specific terms of de Man’s presentation of the romantic disparagement of allegory in favour of symbol, ‘Green Tea’ strikingly exemplifies (one is tempted to say ‘allegorises’) the disjunction between the material perception (that of Jennings in its aberrant modality) and that which comes to occupy its place (the spectral intrusion of the monkey). In the tale, the faculty of perception and the faculty of the imagination are presented as separated

out in disjunctive relation, the one countermanding the other. The discursive-textual domain and the scopic regime (which are the primary zones of infiltration and contamination as these concern Jennings) are each deprived of anchorage in the domain of material perception, and no moderation by the *sensus communis* is possible. On another level, however, one might assert that the very manner in which the tale explores this disjuncture is in itself a playing out of the operation of allegory. In this reading the tale would itself be, following de Man's phrasing, the very immaterial shape that represents a phantom. That the allegorical nexus is itself the phantom monkey serves all the more to support this reading of a viral allegoresis already inscribed in the tale, since the relation of immaterial shape and phantom proxy is repeated *en abîme*.

Allegory fragments, ruptures and arrests: for Walter Benjamin it confronts one with a death-mask.⁴¹ As many commentators have pointed out, Benjaminian allegory is melancholic. In this respect de Manian allegory is quite the contrary (even if, as many have pointed out, to comprehensively oppose Benjamin and de Man is too facile⁴²). As he argues in 'The Rhetoric of Temporality,' "allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference" (p. 207). Allegory serves to underline non-coincidence and non-simultaneity. Unlike symbol, which sustains a relationship of image (visual or textual) and substance in simultaneity, and is spatial in kind, "in the world of allegory, time is the originary constitutive category" (p. 207). De Man goes further: "it remains necessary, if there is to be allegory, that the allegorical sign refer to another sign that precedes it" (207).⁴³ In a manner fundamentally akin to Derridean *différance*, allegory is, effectively, the mode of writing and reading. All writing thus becomes allegorical and takes place within a temporality of deferral and a spatiality of palimpsest. Allegoresis, rather than being the act of imposing an interpretation regardless of authorial intention, is in effect what defines the acts of reading, writing and textual hermeneutics themselves.⁴⁴

The ceaseless multiplication of frames and the operation of irony throughout the tale facilitated by the framing and de-framing, coupled with the disjunction of faculties or regimes not governed by good form, leaving only, in de Man's terms, a shapeless form countenancing a phantom proxy is made manifest one final time in the withdrawal in Hesselius' diagnosis of the spiritual world (in the shape of green tea creating the conditions of appearance of disembodied spirits), in the very moment that Hesselius advances his theory: at that moment the flesh (hereditary mania) intervenes. The entire flesh, in its lineage as well as in its present living manifestation, supersedes the partial membrane (of the body in its fragments) as it does the

correspondences of Swedenborg.⁴⁵ The foregrounding of vision and its subjection to the parasitical interpenetrations, and countermining exchanges, within and between the auditory and lexical/textual realms, all made possible by the opening of the Swedenborgian inner eye, mark ‘Green Tea’ out as modern in a particular sense. Discourse and figure are both subject to the de-formative workings of what Jean-François Lyotard termed the *figural*.⁴⁶ By virtue of its highly self-reflexive gestures, which present *reading* and *writing* as the aperture through which the supernatural or the uncanny might enter,⁴⁷ Le Fanu constructs a radical and pre-emptory (as far as twentieth century literature and literary theory are concerned) indeterminacy. Through its foregrounding of the act of writing, and the materiality of writing on the one hand, and the manner in which this latter falls prey to an inherent *hauntology*, the tale has much to show and tell us regarding the collision (or disjunctive inclusion) of scopic and discursive (as embodied in auditory and textual mediation) regimes as these arose in what is here suggested (following the memorable formulation of Julien Wolfreys in his study of spectrality in the Gothic) is Le Fanu’s ‘phantom optics’.

In summary, the responses of many critical commentators to ‘Green Tea’ have a tendency toward either one or the other of the poles identified by de Man’s essay on allegory – traditional emptiness of the sign or allegory underlined and performed as a condition. It is this latter, adapted meaning of allegory, which serves as an alternative manner to Haslam’s understanding of the story’s invocation of and resistance to allegorical readings of the first type. An engagement with the theosophical intertexts of Le Fanu’s tale, in conjunction with the indisputable historical referents and a consideration of its regimes of language and of light, reveal a tale which systematically exceeds the frames which successive readings seem intent to place on it. If it is an allegory, it is allegory at its limits; allegory performing as an allegory of allegory; allegory as generative and constitutive of an allegorical remainder unassimilable within the allegorical. Thus, if ‘Green Tea’ features the monkey as the allegorical *revenance* often thought to pervade Le Fanu’s oeuvre, and if allegoresis names the open-ended task of hermeneutic contrivance faced with the tale, the untimeliness and the uncanny nature of the return and of the task of interpretation suggest that ‘Green Tea’ may belong to the particular endurance of romantic irony as defined by de Man. For de Man, a common structure is shared by irony and untimely allegory: “the relationship between sign and meaning is discontinuous, involving an extraneous principle that determines the point and the manner in which the relationship is articulated” (p. 209).

As Peter Zima remarks, the use to which de Man in fact ends up putting the term allegory is “almost the opposite” of the standard understanding.⁴⁸ Allegory comes to name the irreconcilability of the discursive and the figural. In this way on one level de Manian allegory – as symptom of the unbridgeable gap – finds itself exemplified through the very allegorical tendencies of many critical readings of *Le Fanu*. These latter perform, then, Halsam’s specific understanding of allegoresis but may also be reconsidered in the expanded context which emerges in the augmented theorisation of the term in de Man.⁴⁹ On another level, however, within its discursive-textual hermeneutic layers and frames, the tale displays the insistent haunting, and infiltration, by the figural of the textual-discursive.⁵⁰ The locus for the conversion of the former to the latter comprises a zone in which one would have to place Hesselius and Swedenborg, as hermeneutic templates configured in a dynamic *mise-en-abyme*.

Regardless of the status of the monkey as an intended allegorical device, the tale provides its own internal reading of the monkey as sign and does so via three main devices: the reading of symptoms by Hesselius (in which the medical gaze is operative), the Swedenborg passages in the library scene and the Swedenborgian reading in Hesselius’ final diagnosis. Hesselius arrests the proliferation of hermeneutic decipherment by depriving the allegorical device of any referent other than a phantom proxy. Yet in so doing within the tale, the potentiality of allegoresis is not so easily halted or exhausted. This is because the multiple frames and the at once recursive and anamorphic play of language and light retain a complex set of relations that keep the tale in a state of proliferating allegoresis.

¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Seán Hand (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1988).

² The essay makes no attempt systematically or doctrinally to apply Foucault’s distinction (or indeed Deleuze’s framing thereof), nor to examine the interaction of the discursive and the figural in line with Martin Jay’s work or the various responses to the latter. Even less does it purport to explore possible points of contiguity between Foucault’s two regimes and Jean-François Lyotard’s *Discours, figure* (albeit both Jay and Lyotard remain obliquely influential in this essay). It does, however, adopt the basic idea, as expressed by Foucault in his essay on Magritte, of the disjunctive relation coupled with the intermination of the two regimes, *This is not a pipe*, trans. James Harkness (Berkeley: U of California P, 1983) pp.32-33).

³ Richard Haslam, ‘Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu and the Fantastic Semantics of Ghost-Colonial Ireland’, in Bruce Stewart (ed.), *That Other World, The Supernatural and the Fantastic in Irish*

Literature and its Contexts, Vol 2. The Princess Grace Library 12 (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1998), pp. 267-286. Haslam's controversial essay and many of its themes are revisited in his later 'Irish Gothic: A Rhetorical Hermeneutics Approach' *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies* 2 (2007), pp. 3-26 and his chapter contribution 'Irish Gothic' in Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy (eds) *The Routledge Companion to Gothic* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 83-94. The response of Killeen is among the most significant. See Jarlath Killeen, *The Emergence of Irish Gothic Fiction: History, Origins, Theories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP 2014), p. 89

⁴ For Victor Sage, nested narrative and frame-breaking are quintessentially gothic techniques, 'Irish Gothic: C.R. Maturin and J.S. Le Fanu', in David Punter (ed.), *A Companion to the Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 81-93 (p. 87). Sage goes further in asserting a link between the "Chinese box effect" of these devices and the "Protestant rationalism" which they at once flatter and undermine (p. 88).

⁵ This reading is lean authority if, as Ruth Parkin-Gounelas reminds us, the spectre in Gothic fiction is always "the agent, either as protector or claimant, of property under threat", 'Anachrony and Anotopia: Spectres of Marx, Derrida and Gothic Fiction', in Peter Buse and Andrew Stott (eds), *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History* (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 127-143 (p. 132).

⁶ Cyndy Hendershot, *The Animal Within: Masculinity and the Gothic* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P., 1998), p. 103. Gaïd Girard echoes this interpretation in *Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu: Une écriture fantastique* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005), p. 7. Daniel Lewis has made the related (and somewhat expanded) assertion that Jennings' dysfunctional sociality is presented by the author in the context of what amounts to a sermon by Le Fanu on the risks of a man succumbing to a catalogue of deviant behaviours including making himself unable to hold his place in the world of work, moving outside the city (as public sphere) and, especially, breaching the enclosure characteristic of the paradigm of Victorian masculinity. "I saw him looking at me": Male Bodies in the Corrective Medical Gaze in Sheridan Le Fanu's "Green Tea", *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 5:3, 2009 (<http://www.ncgsjournal.com/issue53/lewis.html>, accessed 20/10/16).

⁷ *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1995), p. 195. Richard Haslam suggests that the real reason it is dismissed is because it does not fit Eagleton's thesis that we have in vampire tales an allegory of the collapse of the gentry ('Fantastic Semantics', p. 276).

⁸ It was such cosmetic surgery to which a later Anglo-Irish author Elizabeth Bowen would refer in her 1947 introduction to a new edition of Le Fanu's novel *Uncle Silas* (1864). This key point of reference for scholars of Le Fanu in relation to the Anglo-Irish literary tradition, is noted by Sage ('Irish Gothic', p. 90).

⁹ Alison Milbank, 'Powers Old and New': Stoker's Alliances with the Anglo-Irish Gothic', in William Hughes and Andrew Smith (eds), *Bram Stoker: History, Psychoanalysis, and the Gothic* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 12-28 (p. 20)

¹⁰ See Tracy's 'Introduction' for a particularly useful survey of the (allegorically mediated) Irish context of 'Green Tea' and 'Carmilla', in Sheridan Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* (Oxford: Oxford Worlds Classics, 1993), pp. vii-xxviii.

¹¹ Girard has written of 'Green Tea' that it "appartient à une culture et une littérature marquées par le décentrement et la disjunction"/"belongs to a culture and literature marked by decentering and disjunction". Gaïd Girard, 'Entre Swedenborg et Henry James: "Green Tea" de Sheridan Le Fanu, ou l'échec du détective', *Études Irlandaises* 31.1: 2006, pp. 51-68 (p. 65).

¹² William J. McCormack, *Sheridan Le Fanu and Victorian Ireland* (2nd rev. ed. Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1991).

¹³ Jean Lozes, 'In the Other World of Some Irish Vampires', in Bruce Stewart (ed.) *That Other World, The Supernatural and the Fantastic in Irish Literature and its Contexts*, Vol 2. The Princess Grace Library 12 (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1998), pp. 221-230 (p. 227).

¹⁴ Haslam has since set his sights on other Le Fanu fiction and its commentators in a similar vein in his 'Theory, Empiricism, and "Providential Hermeneutics": Reading and Misreading Sheridan Le Fanu's "Carmilla" and "Schalken the Painter"', *Papers on Language and Literature* 47.4 (Fall 2011), pp. 339-62. His insistence on what he views as exegetical impasse and allegoresis is restated in his more general contribution to *The Routledge Companion to Gothic* and in his paper, specifically on 'Green Tea', to the bicentenary conference on Le Fanu held at Trinity College Dublin in 2014.

¹⁵ Maurice Lévy, 'Préface' in Girard, *Le Fanu*, p. 10-11.

¹⁶ Patricia Coughlan, 'Doubles, Shadows, Sedan-Chairs and the Past: The Ghost Stories of J.S. Le Fanu', *Critical Approaches to Anglo-Irish Literature*, Michael Allen and Angela Wilcox (eds) (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1999), pp. 17-39 (p. 32). William Hughes, 'The Origins and Implications of J.S. Le Fanu's "Green Tea"', *Irish Studies Review*, 13.1 (2005), pp. 45-54.

¹⁷ James Walton, *Vision and Vacancy: The Fictions of J.S. Le Fanu* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2007), p. 47.

¹⁸ Devin P. Zuber, 'Swedenborg and the Disintegration of Language in Sheridan Le Fanu's Sensation Fiction', in Kimberly Harrison and Richard Fantina (eds), *Victorian Sensations: Essays on a Scandalous Genre* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2006), pp. 74-84 (p. 75).

¹⁹ Helen Stoddart, "'The Precautions of Nervous People are Infectious": Sheridan Le Fanu's Symptomatic Gothic', *The Modern Language Review* 86.1: 1991, pp. 9-34. She concludes "The two men's claims to such exclusive knowledge, signified metonymically by this exchanged book, which is also their claim to power and entitlement (over Lady Mary for a start), is simultaneously that which brings them together in an uncannily close bond which transgresses respected boundaries of internal/external, public/private and therefore, true to Gothic form, surely promises to be a source of some traumatic violence" (p. 23).

²⁰ Both Doyle and Poe shared Le Fanu's interest in Swedenborg. Doyle wrote an essay on him while Poe, according to Lachman, is also influenced, with Dupin as seer. See Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Story of Swedenborg' and Gary Lachman, 'The Spiritual Detective: How Baudelaire Invented Symbolism by way of Swedenborg', E. T. A. Hoffman and Edgar Allan Poe', in *Between Method and Madness: Essays on Swedenborg and Literature*, vol. 4 of *The Journal of the Swedenborg Society*, Stephen McNeilly (ed.) (London: The Swedenborg Society, 2005), pp. 31-44 and pp. 95-108. Tomas Loe has argued that Le Fanu prefigures modernist literary technique in 'The Strange Modernism of Le Fanu's "Green Tea"', in Bruce Stewart (ed.) *That Other World, The Supernatural and the Fantastic in Irish Literature and its Contexts*, Vol 2. The Princess Grace Library 12 (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1998), pp. 293-306.

²¹ Neil Cornwell, *The Literary Fantastic: From Gothic to Postmodernism* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1990), p. 91. Sage also attributes to Le Fanu the invention of the locked room plot device, to be found for the first time in his story 'A Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Countess' (which appeared in the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1838, but elements of which are taken up by *Uncle Silas*) ('Introduction', p. ix).

²² Todorov has however been criticised by Christopher Morash for taking a rather reductive approach to the question of reader's interaction with the undead, say, noting that textual vampires were likely to have been encountered by readers coming to the evocation of a vampire (p. 129), its preparation in advance and the effect of confirmation as the narrative progresses playing a rather secondary role to the effects of generic recognition. Todorov's construction of the reader as renewing each time their encounter with the fantastic is the bone of contention here. See Chris Morash, 'The time is out of joint (O cursèd spite): Towards a definition of

supernatural narrative' in Bruce Stewart (ed.), *That Other World: The Supernatural and the Fantastic in Irish Literature and its Contexts*, Vol 2. The Princess Grace Library 12 (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1998), pp. 123-142.

²³ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 130-131. Coughlan has also suggested this link in connection with Foucault's notion of the 'unthought' and (citing Foucault) of the "blind stain by which it is possible to know" man (p. 39).

²⁴ Frédéric Gros : "Ce qui parle...ce n'est pas le 'Je' comme fondement ultime (personnologie), ni le 'signifiant' comme latence organisatrice (structuralisme), ni le 'Monde' encore, même donné dans sa fraîcheur native (phénoménologie)" (Gros, 'Le Foucault de Deleuze : une fiction métaphysique', in *Philosophie* 47, 1995, *Gilles Deleuze*, pp. 53-63, p.56).

²⁵ In this *Le Fanu* can also be linked with Balzac as well as with later painting-literature conjunctions such as occur for example in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). See McCormack, *Dissolute Characters* (pp. 109-136) and Walton (pp. 98-148).

²⁶ Victor Sage, 'Introduction', *Uncle Silas* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000), pp. xxii.

²⁷ Recalling the observational techniques of Charcot, Freud recounts: "He was...a 'visuel', a man who sees ... He used to look again and again at the things he did not understand, to deepen his impression of them day by day, till suddenly an understanding of them dawned on him". Cited in Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought* (Berkeley: California U P, 1994), p. 331. The moment in 'Green Tea' wherein the act of looking is reflected back to the observer is repeated in Jennings' later encounter with the monkey.

²⁸ This act of copying is echoed later when Hesselius copies from Swedenborg.

²⁹ As Lévy comments, "Si le motif du vampire avait depuis Nodier, Polidori et Prest acquis droit de cité en littérature, jamais il n'avait été traité avec autant d'explicités références au plaisir féminine"/ "If since Nodier, Polidori and Prest the vampire has taken its rightful place in literature, it has never has it been subject to such explicit references to female pleasure" (Lévy in Girard, *Le Fanu*, p. 10).

³⁰ It is notable that McCormack asserts that "plagiarism is the veritable theme of *Le Fanu's* late work" (*Dissolute*, p. 144).

³¹ Zuber emphasises the story's openness to being read in the light of poststructuralism. Stoddart's emphasis is on the psychoanalytical elements. She claims that it is a "symptomatic text(s), very much of ...[its]...time" (p. 33). Stoddart has argued that "not only that these stories are deeply imbued with Gothic themes, characterizations, and conventions but that this literary association is inextricable from the stories' 'tell-tale' symmetry with certain aspects of Freud's case-study work, a symmetry which is symptomatic of the exposure of both to precautionary fears of the late nineteenth century" (p. 19).

³² Emanuel Swedenborg, *Secrets of Heaven*, trans. Lisa Hyatt Cooper (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2008), p. 221; originally published as *Arcana Coelestia*, 1749-1756.

³³ Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Interaction of the Soul and the Body*, trans. George F. Dole (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2000), p. 134

³⁴ As Lyotard puts it (referring to conversion in Augustine) "rules of discourse and sensorial bearings were missing at the moment of its (trance) visitation", Jean-François Lyotard, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, trans. Richard Beardsworth (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000), p. 54.

³⁵ The philosopher Immanuel Kant, in his pre-Critical phase, for his part, had been drawn to Swedenborg for quite the opposite reason. What interests Kant in his strangest book is, as David-Mesnard has put it "The structure of paradoxical beings which would be spirits or the processes whereby humans can – or cannot – differentiate their interior world from that which they perceive upon being awakened", M. David-Mesnard, *La Folie dans la raison pure: Kant lecteur*

de Swedenborg (Paris: Vrin, 1999), pp. 90-1 (my trans.). See in particular the passage on three types of apparition in *Kant on Swedenborg: Dreams of a Spirit-Seer and Other Writings*, Gregory R. Johnson (ed.), trans. Gregory R. Johnson and Glenn Alexander Magee (Swedenborg Foundation Publishers, 2002), pp. 50-51. Although Kant is quick to dismiss the majority of the *Arcana* as nonsense (*Kant*, p. 49), and clearly finds the central claims regarding the equivalence of the spirit and material worlds to be at once scandalous and fanciful, he nonetheless considers Swedenborg's works as worthy of publication and study. McCormack's point concerns Le Fanu's *writing*. In his life, however, he found that Swedenborg provided consolation following the death of his wife.

³⁶ Walter Benjamin quotes Augustine: "demons are so-called because of their knowledge", *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 230; "The purely material and this absolute spiritual are the poles of the satanic realm; and the consciousness, which clings to the object-world of emblems, ultimately, in its remoteness from life, discovers the knowledge of the demons ... In the form of knowledge instinct leads down into the empty abyss of evil in order to make sure of infinity" (pp. 230-1).

³⁷ A further *mise-en-abyme* of critical commentary is suggested in the analogy pursued by Girard, for whom the hesitation is between the fantastic and detective genres.

³⁸ Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1983), p. 188.

³⁹ G. W. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts*, trans. T.M. Knox, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) I: 399

⁴⁰ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1952), pp. 150-154.

⁴¹ Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1985), p. 166.

⁴² See, for example, Andrea Mirabile 'Allegory, Pathos and irony: The Resistance to Benjamin in Paul de Man', *German Studies Review* 35.2 (2012), pp. 319-333.

⁴³ Morash develops the idea, deriving his distinction from Genette, of an anachrony which makes the vampire tale, but the Irish Gothic more generally, a writing which renders the present absent.

⁴⁴ Peter Berek's definition of allegoresis stresses the exceeding of authorial intent in the act of interpretation. See his 'Interpretation, Allegory, and Allegoresis', *College English* 40.2 (1978), pp. 117-132: p.118.

⁴⁵ For Hendershot, in the shape of the monkey the animal within is revealed and "reveals to him that he is not a divinely created individual but just another link in the evolutionary chain" (p. 104).

⁴⁶ "I did not try in *Discours, figure* to oppose language and image. I was suggesting that a (discursive) principle of readability and a (figural) principle of unreadability shared one in the other" , 'Interview, *Diacritics* 14,3 (Fall, 1984), p. 17. In *Discours, figure* "Language is not a homogeneous realm but is *scindant* (splitting) because it exteriorises the sensible in a face-to-face, and *scindé* (split) because it interiorises the figural in the articulated" (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971) p. 13.

⁴⁷ It would thus seem to represent an especially rich example of what Julian Wolfreys has identified as the hauntedness of all writing, *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

⁴⁸ P.W. Zima, *Modern/Postmodern: Society, Philosophy, Literature* (London: Continuum, 2010).

⁴⁹ Haslam has been criticised for fetishising authorial intention. See Jarlath Killeen, *The Emergence of Irish Gothic Fiction: History, Origins, Theories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2014), p. 89.

⁵⁰ Albeit (arguably) an instance of late Anglo-Irish Gothic, 'Green Tea' is an especially significant example of an aspect of Gothic literary heritage *per se* singled out by Wolfreys. In it one witnesses "an indirection in the very idea of *revenance* which forestalls the desire for mimetic, anthropomorphic or logocentric relapse" (p. 141). The deconstructionist tenor of de Man's deconstructionist theory of allegory is compatible with elements of Foucault, for as D. N. Rodowick argues, "Despite their clear differences, Derrida's grammatology and Foucault's archaeology both dislodged writing from discourse, cracking it from within to reveal a spacing whose opacity opens on to the field of the visible". Rodowick, *Reading the Figural, or, Philosophy after the New Media* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 2001), p. 32.