

THE EXPERT AS CHARACTER IN THE WORK OF LE FANU AND LOVECRAFT:

SPIRITUALITY, EMPIRICISM, AND RATIONALITY

By

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ABSTRACT

Title: **The Expert as Character in the Work of Le Fanu and Lovecraft: Spirituality, Empiricism, and Rationality**

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Sheridan Le Fanu, operating within the Gothic genre, was instrumental in the development of the weird tale. Much of the criticism surrounding his work centers on the social anxiety created during the decline of the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland during the 19th century. This thesis includes the historical context of Le Fanu's period, as well as a brief section containing an overview of the critical context this thesis seeks to add to. This work argues that Le Fanu's output, particularly "Green Tea" and *Uncle Silas*, can be understood when examined from the perspective of the expert as character. It includes a discussion of the interaction between spirituality, empiricism, and rationality in his work. It seeks to explain how the supernatural elements within the narratives can be better understood by inspecting the interchange between the three. It also includes an examination of Le Fanu's discrete impact on the weird tale genre by exploring the later representation of the expert in the descendent work of H.P. Lovecraft's *The Whisperer in Darkness*. The way that the expert functions in the narratives is then an indication of the gradual evolution of the Gothic genre and the emergence and continuation of the weird tale.

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, an often-overlooked contributor to the Irish Victorian Gothic literary genre, was instrumental in the genesis of the weird tale. Much of the criticism surrounding Le Fanu's work centers on the social anxiety created during the decline of the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland during the 19th century. This work argues that Le Fanu's output, particularly "Green Tea" and *Uncle Silas*, can be better understood by examining it from the perspective of the expert as character. By surveying the interaction between spirituality, empiricism, and rationality in his work, it seeks to explain how the impact of the supernatural elements within the narratives can be unraveled by inspecting the interchange among the three. It also includes an examination of the discrete impact Le Fanu had on the weird tale genre by exploring the later representation of the expert in H.P. Lovecraft's novella *The Whisperer in Darkness*.

J. S. Le Fanu was born 28 August 1814 and died 7 February 1873 (Merriman). In his comprehensive biography of Le Fanu, W. J. McCormack enumerates three incidents in Irish history, occurring during the late Georgian and early Victorian period, that had a seemingly profound impact on Le Fanu's literary output. These incidents include the Catholic Emancipation (1828), the Tithe War (1830-1838) and the Young Ireland Uprising (1849). The incidents McCormack speaks of could in fact be considered "crises" from Le Fanu's perspective, as they are all indicative of change on a transformational level, and they surely had a profound effect on Le Fanu's perception of the world: "[his] fiction is dominated by transitional stasis, a state of consciousness in which the inevitability of change is both acknowledged and resisted" (McCormack 260).

Le Fanu's work shouldn't be examined from a historical context without a basic understanding of his social, political, and religious affiliations. Descended from the Huguenots,

his father's family firmly established themselves as middle-class by operating within the Protestant establishment as merchants and bankers throughout the 1700's (McCormack 1). Quickly shedding their Huguenot identity, the Le Fanu's assimilated into the "privileged [Protestant] ascendancy" (McCormack 2) that had a stranglehold over the Catholic majority population of Ireland. The family patriarch, Thomas Philip Le Fanu, was a clergyman (Merriman), and had an outsized, influential role in his children's lives. Religious identity played a large role in dictating one's social position in Ireland at the time, and as Protestants, the Le Fanu family enjoyed an elite, although declining, social status.

Never a political radical, per se, J.S. Le Fanu had substantial political involvement in Irish affairs during his youth. While at Trinity College, he began to write political commentary for a new student-led newspaper: "In Trinity College radicalism had influential supporters, and a group of young Tories launched the *Dublin University Magazine* to combat the new doctrines" (McCormack 41). A conservative young Tory himself, Le Fanu recognized that great change was afoot, and philosophized on the issue in a letter to his father. Loaded with political terminology, the letter essentially said: "you cannot go back to the place that used to be; the place is changed, you are changed by what has intervened" (McCormack 43). The power of the Protestant Ascendancy was slowly being eroded as Irish Catholics received increased rights that had in the past strictly been reserved for the Protestant elite.

An example of rights reserved was contained in The Sacramental Test Act, which had ensured that only members of the Church of England would hold public office as it required those in office to profess their adherence to the Anglican religion. This essentially barred avowed Catholics from ascending to positions of authority. This changed with Catholic Emancipation in 1829, when an act removed the test while abolishing other legal disabilities imposed on

Catholics (Britannica). Although not a sudden, cataclysmic event, it was the beginning of a gradual upsurge in support that leaned increasingly toward a permanent, legal position of equality for Irish Catholics. Though gradually effective, the movement toward Catholic equality was not always peaceful: “There was an intentional element in Irish violence which directed it, as the century rolled on, increasingly towards the class of which the Le Fanus were representative” (McCormack 33).

As J.S. Le Fanu’s father was a clergyman, the Tithe War (1830-1836) hit the Le Fanu family especially hard. It affected them personally by taking away one of the family’s primary sources of income, but it also had larger ramifications: “The Tithe War threatened to shatter the holy alliance between church and state so revered by Irish Tories” (McCormack 40). The Tithe War began because the Catholic majority were tired of paying for the upkeep of the Protestant Church, so they simply began to withhold payment: “While there was always resistance to tithes, there was a more widespread campaign...against payment from 1830 onwards” (McCormack). The Tithe War finally ended in 1838, after the “government reorganized clerical finances to provide each rector with a fixed income” (McCormack 58), but by this time financial damage and psychological trauma had already been done.

During the time of the Tithe War, J.S. Le Fanu recognized his place in society as separate from those around him: “The essence of society as Le Fanu grew to know it...was the isolation of his people from ‘the people’” (McCormack 35). As a conservative young Tory, Le Fanu held on to a system of beliefs rapidly being eroded due to progressive social and political activism: “In the nexus of identification and separation we can recognize a schizoid tendency” (McCormack 68). In 1848, political activism came to a head as, at the height of the potato famine, the Young Ireland uprising took place. The uprising was led by young Nationalists hoping to throw off what

they deemed to be Protestant oppression and achieve a return to home rule: "As revolution, the rising was a pathetic farce; as revolutionary theatre, however, it was a gesture against death and despair, evictions and emigration. Its political effects were profound and far-reaching" (Ó Cathaoir).

The Young Ireland uprising, although not a success, was a direct, organized, and violent challenge to Protestant authority in Ireland, and its effects on Le Fanu were evident. For reasons unknown, he chose to withdraw from polemical argument surrounding the issue of home rule. Through the *Dublin University Magazine*, which he had become owner of, he still offered a platform for Tory ideals, but he himself was no longer a staunch vocal ally or opponent of either side's position. As he had acknowledged in the letter to his father years before, times were changing, and he recognized that his Protestant faith no longer inherently implied an elite social or political status within an evolving world. What had been before was slowly becoming no more, and it is through this lens that the some of the social, political, and religious anxieties of his work can be appreciated, if not definitively understood.

As Sheridan Le Fanu is known as a writer of Gothic fiction, much of the available criticism details how his fiction operates within the traditional Victorian Gothic framework. What is most prevalent, however, is criticism that directly implicates the social and political upheaval that Le Fanu experienced in Ireland as expressed through the metaphoric use of tropes conventional to the genre. Some of these tropes include the ruined castle (or as often is true in Le Fanu's case the ruined manor house), a helpless heroine who eventually acquires at least a small level of agency, an evil villain (or villains) intent on destroying said helpless heroine for sexual or economic gratification, as well as the traditional elements of death, decay, ghosts, vampires, and other folkloric supernatural components. What makes Le Fanu's gothic specifically

Victorian in nature is that he sets the tropes of the uncanny in a recognizable environment, making them even more disturbing. This technique is the basis for what many critics see as an expression of the social and political anxiety that Le Fanu and members of his social class experienced while living in Ireland in the middle part of the nineteenth century. As the status quo experienced bombardment from multiple facets of the unhappy majority, the future prosperity of the shrinking Anglo-Irish middle class became increasingly tenuous.

The criticism arguing the manifestation of Anglo-Irish social and political anxiety in Le Fanu's work has taken many forms. In "Misalliance and Anglo-Irish Tradition in Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas*," Marjorie Howes asserts that this anxiety represents itself as a feminine anxiety and as the regulation of feminine sexuality (Howes 165). Howes examines the text of Le Fanu's most prominent novel, *Uncle Silas: A Tale of Bartram-Haugh* (1864), exploring how the narrative distills the apprehension of Ireland's social and political environment into the tale of a young, virginal heiress threatened by a cadre of evildoers. The premise of *Uncles Silas* is uncomplicated, and in many ways Gothically conventional. Maud, an aristocratic English heiress, must travel to Uncle Silas' dilapidated manor house upon the premature death of her father. There, she is to live as Silas' ward until she reaches the age of maturity, upon which she inherits the substantial fortune her father has left for her in trust. Silas, however, has diabolical intent. With a group of likeminded malefactors, he intends to claim her inheritance, going so far as to plot his niece's murder to orchestrate his own economic windfall. Maud discovers the plot and must figure out a way to undo it, but unaided, as Silas has effectively managed to isolate her from the outside world. In short, malevolent outside forces attempt to disrupt the socially and politically accepted order of Maud's civilized English society through moral corruption.

Howes considers metaphorical expression in *Uncle Silas* through the lens of Le Fanu's lived experience: "Because of their hybrid cultural status and tenuous political position, the Protestant Ascendancy imagined an Anglo-Irish tradition that was legitimating and empowering, but simultaneously broken, betrayed, and corrupt" (Howes 165). Howes speaks of Le Fanu's position as a member of the small but powerful Anglo-Irish middle class, and how his experience influenced his perspective:

These experiences—living close to a military presence that was more show than substance; being not merely isolated from but openly resented, howled at, and even stoned by the native Irish at Abington; and remaining dependent on his London publisher and the English literary marketplace for his living—all gave Le Fanu an acute sense of the tenuous political and cultural position of the Anglo-Irish. (Howes 166)

Howes coordinates Le Fanu's position to certain characters in *Uncle Silas*, and one must acknowledge that there are indeed similarities, especially when one correlates the relationship between the Protestant Ascendancy and English imperialist culture: "Anglo-Irish discourses about their uncertain political and cultural status were intimately bound up with representations of gender and sexuality as a result of the structure of contemporary British imperialism" (Howes 169). In reference to this, Howes invokes a characterization of the Celts as proposed by Matthews Arnold in *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867): "Arnold explicitly connected the Celt's disabilities and 'habitual want of success' ...to femininity, a femininity marked by nervousness, inconsistency, and lack of balance" (Howes 172). The English feminization of the Celts left members of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy in a state analogous to gender limbo.

In the novel, according to Howes, Uncles Silas and his descendants represent this gender limbo. Silas is the black sheep of the aristocratic Ruthyn family. The family designates him as

such because of his morally suspect behavior. He is a compulsive, failed gambler, and at one point was implicated in the questionable suicide of a man whom he owed money to. After his banishment from the Ruthyn estate, his brother Austin (Maud's father) sets him up at derelict Bartram-Haugh as an act of mercy. Silas then marries a woman, of low class, and she bears him two children. It is important to note that although the setting of the story is England, it is assumed that this is simply a necessary transference of locale from Ireland in order to appease Le Fanu's publisher, who wished to sell his books to an English audience (Howes 167). Howes' argument then becomes that Silas is a representation of the questionably masculine Anglo-Irish Ascendancy while Silas' low-class wife represents the feminine Irish native. The implication is that the comingling of the two cultures will lead to Silas' (and his progeny's) absolute corruption followed by the destruction of the Ruthyn family legacy, unless Maud can prevent it. In that context, Maud literally serves as the last hope of the Ruthyn family, and figuratively as the last hope the Anglo-Irish have in maintaining their positioned Protestant stability in a quickly evolving Catholic society.

An extensive amount of literary criticism favors the argument that Le Fanu portrays the social and political anxiety felt by the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy metaphorically in his fiction. Ann Gaylin argues that one can see this anxiety manifest in the complex, symbolic relationships between "being, ownership, and bodies" (Gaylin 87) in her article "Ghostly Disposessions: The Gothic Properties of *Uncle Silas*." Her focus begins on one of the final scenes in the novel. The evil governess Madame de la Rougierre, an accomplice of Maud's Uncle Silas, has fallen asleep in Maud's bed. Madame had placed a sleeping draught in Maud's drink, but clever Maud suspected something was amiss, and switched glasses. Suddenly, Maud detects movement outside her window. She relocates her body to a shadowy corner, becoming ghost-like. She then

watches as Silas' son, Dudley, enters her bedroom with an accomplice. Dudley stealthily moves to the bed, and believing her to be Maud, violently bludgeons Madame to death with a hammer. It is an incredibly gruesome and horrific scene that allows Maud to symbolically endure her own death: "The substitute body in her bed enables Maud to experience vicariously, spectrally, the terrors of violent sexuality, since the murderer is none other than Maud's would-be suitor Dudley. Watching in horror, Maud herself remains undetected, in part because, in contrast to the utter physical body being attacked, she herself has become ghostly" (Gaylin 87-88).

The scene is important because it demonstrates the connection between Maud's value and her physical body. It is her body that stands in the way of Silas and his children inheriting her money, and as heiress, her body comes to symbolize material wealth and its associated power. Maud's worth, in the eyes of Silas, lies in her corporality. He only decides to murder her after he realizes she won't marry his son. If she had married his son, Silas would be able to command her physically with Dudley serving as proxy. This would have given him absolute control of Maud's material wealth while usurping its coinciding authority: "*Uncle Silas*, like most gothic narratives, concerns possession and dispossession. It tells the story of property-usurped, wasted, stolen, regained" (Gaylin 89). For Le Fanu, the issue of inheritance, and its potential lack of stability as a social construct, was front and center in his mind as well as the minds of his contemporaries. No longer completely confident that the hegemony of the social system he was born into would continue, he faced the prospect that the descendants of his class would inherit a much more unsettled society, at least from the Anglo-Irish perspective: "In *Uncle Silas*, ghostly dispossessions and uncanny dislocations invite important questions about Anglo-Irish society, specifically its pressing problems of inheritance and ownership" (Gaylin 91).

As mentioned earlier, critics have recognized the Derbyshire location of *Uncle Silas* as supplanting Anglo-Irish apprehensions and: “its gothic form as representing the ‘political unconscious’ of Ascendancy Ireland” (Gaylin 92). Specifically, the gothic form allows for the identification of unsettling issues related to the nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish: “anxieties about the degeneration of the ruling class, its isolation in the big house, and charges of misuse or usurpation of Irish estates and wealth, especially by absentee landlords” (Gaylin 92). Silas, as evidenced by his consumptive behavior, seeks to enrich himself with Maud’s money so that he can satisfy his craving for expensive personal luxuries, like designer clothing, gourmet foods, and fine wines. He shows no interest in improving the physical condition of his dilapidated estate, Bartram-Haugh, or in improving the prospects of his own children. In that sense, Silas symbolizes imperial England, while his children, Dudley and Millie (as well as everyone else dependent upon him) are the floundering Irish Ascendancy: “Like an irresponsible absentee landlord, he disregards succeeding generations’ future claims on the land, as well as his children’s current needs, in order to sate his own, present-day cravings for expensive food, wine, and clothes” (Gaylin 93). The implication being that imperial England, in the same spirit as Silas, has abdicated its own responsibilities concerning the dependent and subjugated Anglo-Irish class in Ireland, leaving it exposed and vulnerable to decay.

Much of the criticism surrounding Le Fanu’s work centers on the idea that his fiction reflects the contemporary social and political anxieties of the Anglo-Irish. In his review “Vision and Vacancy: The Fiction of J. S. Le Fanu” Raphael Ingelbien states: “The idea that Le Fanu’s work is haunted by an emptiness ‘from which authority has withdrawn’ is hardly new” (Ingelbien 126). He goes on to mention the socio-political decline of the Irish Ascendancy, but also alludes to the anxiety the Anglo-Irish experienced due to their status as a religious minority.

In the article “‘Strangers Within Our Gates’ in Le Fanu’s *Uncle Silas*,” Kimiyo Ogawa expands on this religious anxiety by exploring the symbolic role of the Catholic Irish in Le Fanu’s novella *Carmilla*. She posits that the story, about a female vampire who lives for ages but goes dormant for periods of time, is indicative of Le Fanu’s anxiety about the re-emergence of the Catholic Irish: “This political issue was a grave concern for Le Fanu as well as other nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish Protestants, as the Catholic Irish were beginning to assert themselves after a long period of oppression” (Ogawa 17). In many respects, Le Fanu’s world was going through a gradual, yet at times tumultuous, turnabout. What he was born into was being replaced by something resembling what had existed before the minority Anglo-Irish had taken control of Ireland, and he understood that the deterioration of his family’s decorated place in society was being impacted by multiple, unstoppable forces.

With that in mind, it is difficult to analyze Le Fanu’s work without considering the representations of fear and anxiety that imbue nearly every aspect of his fiction. It is possible, however, to divorce the fear and anxiety from the plight of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy and re-orient it within the structure of the narrative itself. In many of Le Fanu’s works, there is the specter of the “expert witness.” By examining the way that this character functions, it becomes obvious that he or she represents a mode of sanity in an environment that is on the verge of descending into a form of social decay or even chaos. The threat of the supernatural, whether the threat is actualized or not, is palpable in Le Fanu’s fiction. It is like a chained beast, waiting to envelope the narrative’s protagonist. The “expert witness,” such as Dr. Hesselius in “Green Tea” or Dr. Bryerly in *Uncle Silas*, serves as a foil to the supernatural element, and by examining the way the two contrary elements interact, it is possible to understand a dynamic that complements or gives new perspective to the external forces that governed Le Fanu’s everyday life. The

“expert witness” attempts to provide, sometimes successfully and sometimes not, the balance that the narrative’s protagonist desperately needs to remain sane and competent in a world where reality appears to be crumbling. In the fictional narrative where the environment is not conducive to mental or emotional stability, the “expert witness” struggles to maintain the perception of reality while at the same time combating both internal and external manifestations of terror.

An examination of how the “expert witness” functions in Le Fanu’s “Green Tea” and *Uncle Silas*, as well as H.P Lovecraft’s descendent work *The Whisperer in Darkness*, will reveal that the role of this character is not merely to act as foil to the supernatural horror contained in these works, but to allow for the expansion of the study of the interaction between spirituality, empiricism, rationality, and the unpredictability of terror in an unbalanced environment. An expert witness is: “A person regarded or consulted as an authority on account of special skill, training, or knowledge” (Expert) and proficiency in a specific field that is relevant to the case. In “Green Tea,” *Uncle Silas*, and *The Whisperer in Darkness*, the expert operates on multiple levels and in a manner unique to his or her respective narrative. In “Green Tea,” Dr. Martin Hesselius validates the accuracy of the description of the expertise Mr. Jennings has attributed to him:

A medical philosopher, as you are good enough to call me, elaborating theories by the aid of cases sought out by himself, and by him watched and scrutinized with more time at command, and consequently infinitely more minuteness than the ordinary practitioner can afford, falls insensibly into habits of observation, which accompany him everywhere, and are exercised, as some people would say, impertinently, upon every subject that presents itself with the least likelihood of rewarding inquiry. (Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 8).

Dr. Hesselius has designated himself as a metaphysical doctor. The term metaphysical in Hesselius’ circumstance fits most closely with the following definition: “Other senses relating

more generally to things which are immaterial, imaginary, preternatural, or supernatural” (Metaphysical), while the term doctor refers to his belief in the treatment of observable phenomena through a materialistic approach. Mr. Jennings seeks Dr. Hesselius’ input because he believes the metaphysical doctor’s spiritual approach combined with his materialistic knowledge of medicine will aid him in resolving his problem.

In *Uncle Silas*, there are two characters who operate as experts in their respective field. The first is Dr. Bryerly, a spiritual companion to Maud’s father Austin as well as executor to his will. His expertise comes in the form of legalese as well as in spiritual matters, matters that Maud does not quite comprehend and is perhaps hesitant to explore in any detail. The second is Lady Monica Knollys. As much of the terror in *Uncle Silas* centers around the degradation of social norms and the precarious situation Silas places Maud in as a result, Lady Knollys speaks as the character imbued with the necessary proficiency in understanding how society is supposed to operate when thriving in its functional state. She is not simply the epitome of the aristocratic hostess; she is the person who understands that social convention is about more than appearance. It is about maintaining stability in an environment that often contradicts and exploits human sensibilities. Social rules not only help to maintain the status quo, but they also bring security to those who agree to their terms and live their lives accordingly. As experts, both Dr. Bryerly and Lady Knollys intuit that something is wrong concerning the turn of events granting Silas guardianship over Maud, and they go out of their way to aid her while at the same time not quite understanding how the threat they assume she is under operates. Even experts have limitations, and the role of limitations is one of the interactions between spirituality, empiricism, and rationality in relation to terror that this work attempts to understand.

In “Green Tea” and *Uncle Silas* the role of the expert cannot be understood without examining the spiritual dimension of Dr. Hesselius and Dr. Bryerly. Both men are Swedenborgians, and their beliefs in the unearthly play a large role in their attributed situational expertise. As Swedenborgians, the men follow the teachings of Swedish Lutheran theologian Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). Although an established religion with an extensive and well-developed set of accompanying principles, Le Fanu focuses on only a few aspects of the Swedenborgian philosophy within the texts of “Green Tea” and *Uncle Silas*. Spirituality is of greater importance in the character of Dr. Hesselius, while Dr. Bryerly seems to gain clout from his association with Swedenborg, but his philosophy doesn’t necessarily orient the narrative in any specific fashion. Swedenborg combined the rational world of the physical sciences with a deep Christian faith: “He lived during the height of the Enlightenment, a period when intellectuals rejected dogmatic religious teachings in favor of science and reason, and his theology reflects a long struggle to understand the world of spirit through investigation of the physical world” (Swedenborg's Biography). In Le Fanu’s work, the expert’s position as a Swedenborgian suffuses aspects of his profession as well as his personality, and the vehicle of Swedenborg allows for the examination of the supernatural and natural terror from a spiritual and empirical standpoint.

An aspect of the Swedenborgian religion that Le Fanu uses to great effect in “Green Tea” is the religion’s dogma depicting how beings of the earthly realm interact with those of the spiritual realm. Much of the terror in “Green Tea” arises because of the conflict between what is discernable to the protagonist, Reverend Mr. Jennings, versus what is discernable to other members of society. The presence of a small black monkey, seemingly only visible to Jennings, menaces him in a way that leads to his complete and utter isolation from humanity and its sense

of material rationality. In turn, Jennings looks to the metaphysical Dr. Hesselius for a solution to the impression of isolating terror he is experiencing. The Reverend Mr. Jennings is aware of Dr. Hesselius' spiritual leanings, as Hesselius remarks: "It was not accident that brought him near me, and led him into conversation. He knew German, and had read my *Essays on Metaphysical Medicine* which suggest more than they actually say" (Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 9). Hesselius has published works depicting his role in achieving solutions to some of the most complicated cases involving the intercession of metaphysics and medicine, and Jennings has taken note. Jennings' suspicion then becomes that the situation he is experiencing needs a holistic approach in order to be resolved, and as a last resort seeks out the expert Hesselius in a hope that he can not only bring resolution, but also proffer an explanation as to the meaning and substance of the supernatural event. Jennings has discovered nothing in his own position as clergyman that offers succor to his constant state of mental anxiety and emotional disturbance inflicted by the monkey's presence.

Dr. Hesselius believes a specific aspect of Swedenborg's philosophy is applicable to the case involving Mr. Jennings, as quoted from Swedenborg's text *Arcana Caelestia* in "Green Tea", and Mr. Jennings seems to agree:

'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. 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 still more interior, and so on.'

(Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 14)

The *Arcana Caelestia* then goes on to describe that two evil spirits accompany every man, and if perchance one of these evil spirits comes to realize that the man they are attached to has recognized him as a being from the other life, as a thing outside of man's exterior sight (as a product of his interior sight), then said spirit would seek to destroy the man, for "they hate man with a deadly hatred" (Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 14). This is the theory that Jennings has come to Dr. Hesselius to validate. After confirming this supposition, he hopes Dr. Hesselius will be willing to use his vast expertise as a metaphysical doctor to eradicate the evil monkey from his life. As expert, Dr. Hesselius' role is to make sense of the supernatural event, and he does this by applying empirical standards set out in the *Arcana Caelestia*, a religious tome. Dr. Hesselius believes that the interior sight as described by Swedenborg can be found in an as-yet unidentifiable organ of the human body. It has physical substance, and in turn, this gives the specter of the monkey an explanation that is rooted in the rational world of the physical sciences. The evil monkey is not a hallucination, according to this theory, but an otherworldly spirit visible only to Jennings because his interior sight has been opened as a result of the consumption of unfermented green tea. The empirical evidence exists supporting this theory, according to Dr. Hesselius, but the technology necessary to visualize it from the human perspective does not yet exist.

Being aware of this theory, and perhaps even believing in it, has little effect on relieving Mr. Jennings anxieties, however. This is evidence of the limiting aspect of the expert in matters of the supernatural, especially in terms of the work of Le Fanu. Mr. Jennings is a man of process and method, as described by Hesselius at their first meeting: "This courteous man, gentle, shy, plainly a man of thought and reading, who moving and talking among us, was not altogether of us, and whom I already suspected of leading a life whose transactions and alarms were carefully

concealed, with an impenetrable reserve from, not only the world, but his best-beloved friends- was cautiously weighing in his own mind the idea of taking a certain step with regard to me” (Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 9). Jennings is set up as a character who is stable, intellectual, empathic, and driven to create a better world through his role as reverend and his corresponding interactions with his congregants. One could surmise that a man of his nature and abilities should be one of the most capable of competently dealing with the spectral appearance of a sinister monkey, but unfortunately, even a man in his position is incapable of functioning while under the influence of just such a supernatural adversary. That is one of the story’s more terrifying aspects. It is the story of the degeneration of the soul of a stolidly Christian man in a world that has fallen, at least in his own individuated experience, into irrationality and chaos. The horror is implicit in the idea that even though Dr. Hesselius’ expertise may allow him to confirm a spiritual or medical diagnosis, the abatement of the terror remains elusive.

An investigation of the comingling of spirituality and empiricism in the progression of the mental and emotional decline of the Reverend Mr. Jennings reveals that the expert Dr. Hesselius serves as an emblem of the final bastion Jennings places between himself and the irrationality of the supernatural element. When Jennings first encounters the spectral creature within his coach, he believes it to be corporeal in nature:

’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 tolerable distinctness the outline of a small black monkey, pushing its face forward in mimicry to meet mine; those were its eyes, and I now dimly saw its teeth grinning at me’. (Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 23)

This initial encounter, although unusual, is innocuous in nature. Mr. Jennings is simply sharing his ride with another creature. It is not until he begins his investigation of the physicality of the monkey that it becomes apparent that something is amiss: “I poked my umbrella softly towards it. It remained immovable-up to it-*through* it! For through it, and back and forward, it passed, without the slightest resistance” (Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 23-24). It is this moment that causes the horror of the situation to dawn on Jennings, and it is from this point that his torment begins. What makes the monkey so terrifying is that its presence (particularly its lack of materiality) causes Jennings to question everything he thought he knew about reality and his place in it: “When I had ascertained that the thing was an illusion, as I then supposed, there came a misgiving about myself and a terror that fascinated me in impotence to remove my gaze from the eyes of the brute for some moments” (Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 24). Initially, Jennings believes that the problem lies within himself. As he begins to get his bearings, however, he seems intent on believing that the monkey is not a self-induced hallucination. The monkey then takes on the form of a supernatural being filled with malintent. The reverend is a man of God, and he believes the entity a demon sent from hell.

Jennings seeks out a materialistic doctor, who happens to be a celebrity in his own field, before he settles conclusively upon this interpretation. The consultation does not go well, for any sense of the empirical reality of the monkey has already been called into question. Jennings relates his experience with Dr. Harley to Dr. Hesselius:

‘I think that man one of the very greatest fools I ever met in my life...I mean this...he seems to me, one half, blind-I mean one half of all he looks at is dark-preternaturally bright and vivid all the rest; and the worst of it is, it seems *wilful*. I can’t get him-I mean he won’t-I’ve had some experience of him as a physician, but I look on him as, in that

sense, no better than a paralytic mind, an intellect half dead.’ (Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 17)

Dr. Harley, as the limited expert, is insufficient to address Jennings problem because he is, as Dr. Hesselius observes, “A mere materialist” (Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 17). The implication being that there is obviously something unearthly about the problematic circumstance that needs a more nuanced hand to resolve. Jennings states that he believes Dr. Harley to have a mind that is either crippled or half dead, although Dr. Hesselius himself puts forth his own contradictory determination of Dr. Harley’s abilities: “The physician here named was one of the most eminent who had ever practised in England” (Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 16-17). At this point in the narrative, Jennings has rejected his own faith and its explanations for the existence of the monkey, as well as a materialistic approach based upon empirical evidence (or the lack thereof). It is into this void that Dr. Hesselius emerges as a man with the ability to combine these two often antithetical views on reality into one cohesive front upon which to battle the demon that plagues Jennings, if in fact it is a demon at all. Dr. Hesselius’ expertise is the only hope for bringing an end to Mr. Jennings’ terror. The monkey subsequently becomes defined as an entity that exists as an effect of both the spiritual and empirical realm. It can’t be physically studied, at least with any available scientific equipment. Its existence and power in creating an atmosphere of terror is not diminished by this fact but heightened.

The monkey’s ability to terrorize Jennings increases as time goes on. Not content to be a mere shadow of a specter trailing Jennings as the man goes about his daily activities, the monkey increases his phantom pursuit while at the same time resisting empirical observation. Mr. Jennings characterizes the monkey’s terror as being confined to three stages, the first exemplified above during the carriage ride. Jennings characterizes the second stage as an increase in

intensity: “Its power of action, I tell you, had increased. Its malice became, in a way aggressive” (Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 28). It is during the second stage that the monkey directly attacks Jennings’ spirituality. During a trip to his parish in Warwickshire, in which he hopes to find distraction in work from the evil spirit stalking him, Jennings notices a fluctuation in the behavior of the monkey. Before, its presence alone seemed to satisfy its decided proclivity toward creating an atmosphere of terror for the haunted man. However, during the attempted discharge of his duties as reverend at the vicarage, a change takes place: “The thing exhibited an atrocious determination to thwart me. It was with me in the church-in the reading-desk-in the pulpit-within the communion rails” (Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 29). The specter of the monkey begins to infiltrate the sanctum of Jennings’ religious identity. The tools Jennings’ believed to be at his disposal in fighting something he speculates is from hell have proven futile in his quest to diminish the power the monkey wields over his soul: “At last, it reached this extremity, that 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. This happened more than once” (Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 29).

The monkey literally places himself between the Reverend Mr. Jennings and the sacred text of God. The symbolism is obvious, and the monkey’s evil intent is no longer in question, even to the most skeptical. The monkey positions himself between Jennings’ vision and scripture, denying him the ability to read the word of God, and he also desecrates the great book by squatting over it, a term often associated with defecation. The second stage also has its own level of escalation. Content before to physically stand between the reverend and the material aspects of his spirituality, the monkey soon decides that more needs to be done to alarm Jennings’ spiritual sensibilities. The beast becomes even more aggressive and begins to infiltrate

Jennings' vision in a unique and even more horrifying manner: "'There are other ways,' he sighed heavily; 'thus, for instance, while I pray with my eyes closed, it comes closer and closer, and I see it. I know it is not accounted for physically, but I do actually see it, though my lids are closed, and so it rocks my mind, as it were, and overpowers me, and I am obliged to rise from my knees'" (Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 30). The monkey infiltrates the sanctity and isolation of prayer, making its visual presence known even when the ocular orbits of the eyes are physically closed off from empirical reality. This is a further example of how the monkey's substance diverges from empirical reality and wanders into the inner world of nonmaterial spirituality. Although Jennings cannot in any way use his sense of sight to appreciate the monkey's presence, he still perceives it. He closes off his vision, only to have the monkey make itself known by traversing the line between empiricism and spirituality to continue the disruption and dislocation of Jennings' relationship with God.

The third and final stage of the monkey's increasingly threatening reign of terror also involves the contradiction between empirical evidence and spiritual reality-the monkey begins to speak to Jennings, but internally. Essentially, he hears the monkey's voice in his brain, but not through any form of auditory stimulation. The monkey's voice then functions as a schizophrenic symptom, rather than a corporeal reality positioned in the physicality of the world. This is a further severing of the relationship between empiricism and spirituality that Jennings must have faith that the expert Dr. Hesselius can restore. Jennings claims the monkey speaks as a man does: "'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'" (Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 31). The words that the monkey speaks are affecting in themselves, and betray the disturbing pattern of abuse that the

creature has inflicted upon Jennings by putting what before were only silent actions into human patterns of speech: “This faculty, the power of speaking to me, will be my undoing. It won’t let me pray; it interrupts me with dreadful blasphemies. I dare not go on, I could not. Oh! Doctor, can the skill, and thought, and prayers of man avail me nothing!” (Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 31). The terror Jennings experiences is in a manner due to his own fractured sense of identity. Jennings is a man who strives to live within the age of empiricism, while still maintaining a strong foothold in a society where spirituality is also prominent. The escalation of the terror in these three stages helps to elucidate the importance of the spiritual element in Jennings’ life by demonstrating that what he fears most is losing his connection with God. In the narrative, Dr. Hesselius serves as the expert Jennings seeks to bridge the gap between empiricism and spirituality.

Unfortunately, Dr. Hesselius fails. Eventually, the monkey’s torment drives the Reverend Mr. Jennings to commit violent suicide: “He had cut his throat with his razor. It was a frightful gash” (Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 35). In his narrative, Dr. Hesselius makes the claim that he has treated many men suffering from the same disease as Jennings, and he is adamant that he would have been successful in Jennings’ case as well, if he had been given more time: “You are to remember that I had not even commenced to treat Mr. Jennings’ case. I have not any doubt that I should have cured him perfectly in eighteen months, or possibly it might have extended to two years. Some cases are very rapidly curable, others extremely tedious” (Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 38). This is mere speculation on Dr. Hesselius’ part. As the expert involved in the case, the importance lies not in what he conjectures may have happened under different circumstances, but in what did happen under the existing conditions and under his direct supervision. Jennings dies, succumbing to the terror that had infiltrated his life. He never achieves the satisfaction of

bearing witness to the expertise of the man that he relied upon to bring an end to his torment. The meaning then becomes clear: abject terror of the supernatural variety is impervious to both spiritual and empirical approaches, and even a combination of the two is not enough to fight off its unholy terror. It leaves one with the impression that terror, especially of the internalized variety, is an overpowering presence capable of annihilating the most placid of Christian souls: “Poor Mr. Jennings was very gentle, and very kind. All his people were fond of him” (Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* 37).

The expert’s role in “Green Tea” can then be placed in relation to the Anglo-Irish reading of contemporary criticism surrounding Le Fanu’s work. In “Green Tea,” Dr. Hesselius understands the Reverend Mr. Jennings problem. He has analyzed it and has even come to some sort of conclusion as to both its spiritual and empirical substance, yet he can do nothing about it. He is impotent against its greater power, and this lack of ability to functionally solve the crisis leads to Jennings’ spiritual and physical destruction. The expert serves as an effective analyst, but a profoundly dysfunctional problem solver. In the narrative, it is Dr. Hesselius’ responsibility to synthesize information with his vast acquired knowledge to come up with a solution, yet despite his expertise, that solution never materializes. “Green Tea” can then be understood as an allegory depicting the inevitable fall of the Protestant Ascendancy in Ireland. From Le Fanu’s perspective, even the most able of Protestant minds (as represented by Dr. Hesselius) are unable to fix the problem that has been firmly and unequivocally presented to them: their Protestant way of life is on decline because the Catholic resurgence (as represented by the monkey) is a force with the momentum and capability to eventually ensure their complete spiritual and physical destruction. There is a great deal of terror in this implication, at least from Le Fanu’s frame of reference. As Dr. Hesselius can understand the relationship between the spiritual and empirical,

the great minds of Ireland can inspect, analyze, and eventually come to some sort of conclusion concerning the composition of the relationship between the Protestants and the Catholics within the borders of their own country. Despite this expertise, a solution to the conflict created through the natural interaction between the two disparate realms remains elusive.

The terror in *Uncles Silas* plays out differently than the terror in “Green Tea,” the most obvious distinction being its origin, yet its allegorical connection to the declining Protestant Ascendancy is still relevant. The monkey in “Green Tea” is a contradictory element. It is not real in any material way (as it defies the sensory perception of everyone besides Mr. Jennings), yet its spectral impact is obvious and devastating to the man whose mind it haunts. The terror in *Uncle Silas* is of human origin. Co-villains attempt to swindle, then outright steal, the fortune of a young, innocent heiress. The impression of the supernatural element experienced by Maud is intentionally created by the people who wish to do her harm. She is gaslighted, which makes her question the reality of what is going on around her, to the benefit of the co-conspirators she is facing off against. As the story is told in first-person, directly from the lips of Maud, the reader doesn’t initially understand the mechanics of her unique situation. The reader experiences Maud’s terror along with her as events occur, which allows for the interpretation of unquestionably strange incidents from her point of view to cloud the reader’s judgment. In terms of the role of the “expert witness” this paper seeks to examine, there are two in *Uncle Silas*: Dr. Bryerly and Lady Monica Knollys. Although their characters serve disparate uses within the narrative, their general purpose is to tether Maud to reality. If they succeed, Maud will flourish, and the villains will be vanquished. If they fail, Maud’s death will inevitably ensue, and evil will triumph. Once the terror has moved from the supernatural realm and into the realm of rationality, Maud realizes her agency is all that is needed to overcome it. That, and a little bit of luck.

In *Uncle Silas*, the “expert witness” as character has an official capacity that is sanctioned by both the legal and social establishments of England, giving him (and her, in this case) an element of refinement that carries the implication of even greater authority. It is perhaps because of this authority that their respective efforts to aid Maud are more effective. Dr. Bryerly consistently appears in Maud’s life at instances where she desperately needs help coping with traumatic events, and his expertise is invaluable to her in those moments. Little information is given about Dr. Bryerly in the beginning of the novel, which allows his personality as well as his motivation to remain somewhat ambiguous. In a novel where one questions the rationale behind every act a character instigates or endures, Dr. Bryerly remains an enigma well into the second half of the narrative. Maud first meets Dr. Bryerly shortly after her mother’s death, when she is nine years old. He is a religious figure central to Austin’s expression of his Swedenborgian faith, and Maud mentions her initial impressions when the two men sequester themselves in Austin’s study during her mother’s funeral: “In all that concerned his religion, from very early association, there was to me something of the unearthly and spectral” (Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* 20). Maud is not a Swedenborgian, but the mysticism of the religion as practiced by her father and his friends certainly influences her perception of the world. It is important to note that it is only on first meeting Dr. Bryerly that he demonstrates his position as expert in spiritual matters. In every other meeting between Maud and the doctor, the doctor serves as legal expert, discharging his duties as the executor of the vast Ruthyn estate, the estate Maud is set to inherit, and Silas is intent on plundering. Also, Dr. Bryerly is not a constant presence in Maud’s life. Often, he arrives and departs in times of crisis, although poor Maud generally doesn’t even realize she is amid a crisis at all.

Maud's first inclination of the depth of Dr. Bryerly's spiritual expertise occurs on the day after her mother's interment, when the two take a walk through the Dutch garden on the Ruthyn estate: "I remember feeling a sort of awe of this dark little man; but I was not afraid of him, for he was gentle, though sad-and seemed kind" (Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* 21). Dr. Bryerly guides Maud through the grounds, and the pair eventually find themselves at the grave of Maud's mother. Maud is horrified standing there, visualizing her mother's body in the tomb. It is here that Dr. Bryerly begins to indoctrinate her on certain aspects of the Swedenborgian faith. He tries to assure Maud that although her mother's body lies in the crypt, her soul has fled: "But Swedenborg sees beyond it, over, and *through* it, and has told me all that concerns us to know. He says your mamma is not there" (Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* 22). He continues: "Your mamma is alive, but too far away to see or hear us; but Swedenborg, standing here, can see and hear her, and tells me all he sees" (Le Fanu, *Uncles Silas* 23). Although Maud seems at peace discovering her mother's spirit still exists in some form, she is scared: "I was very much frightened, for I feared that when he had done his narrative we were to walk on through the wood into that place of wonders and of shadows where the dead were visible" (Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* 23). Maud realizes the comfort the doctor has provided her after the pair turn from the site and return to the manor house. The scene serves as a delineation between the rational world, which Maud seems to accept, and the spiritual world, which Maud seems to fear. Maud displays this fear of the spiritual realm later in the novel, leading her enemies to exploit it to their advantage.

This initial encounter establishes Dr. Bryerly as an authority in Maud's mind. After meeting with Dr. Bryerly, Maud begins to trust the man, and by the time her father dies, several years later, she has concluded that despite his religion, which she rejects, he is an honest and decent person: "Of these Swedenborgians...It is enough for me to know that their founder either

saw or fancied he saw amazing visions, which, so far from superseding, confirmed, and interpreted the language of the Bible; and as dear papa accepted their ideas, I am happy in thinking that they did not conflict with the supreme authority of holy write” (Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* 24). Maud doesn’t rely on the opinion of her father when judging Dr. Bryerly’s character but uses her own experience to justify placing her confidence in the man. Maud having conviction in Dr. Bryerly’s abilities and discernments in matters of her estate is vital because he serves as one of the two primary antagonists to Silas’ evil scheme. His power as antagonist is limited, however, because of the physical distance between the heiress and the executor as well as the structure of the social class system they are members of. Dr. Bryerly has her best interests at heart, but he is incapable of watching over her every second and is limited by the legal authority Silas holds as Maud’s guardian. This is perhaps one of the reasons he only appears in the narrative when situations become too difficult for Maud to navigate alone. As one of the aspects of Silas’ plan is reliant on his legal authority over Maud, Dr. Bryerly serves as the expert capable of extricating her out of the precarious position she finds herself in.

The absence of authority over certain decisions involving Maud’s welfare, especially her education, limit Dr. Bryerly’s role as protector. He can keep Silas from extravagantly wasting the resources of Maud’s estate, but he can’t dispel every questionable influence he inserts in Maud’s physical environment. Silas has complete control over Maud’s schooling, which means that neither Dr. Bryerly nor Maud’s other ally Lady Knollys can prevent Madame de la Rougierre from serving as her governess. In Madame, the conflict between Maud’s fear of the supernatural and her more rational nature collide to create a state of terror for the young ingenue. From the very beginning of their relationship, Madame’s presence instills dread in the heiress:

On a sudden, on the grass before me, stood an odd figure—a very tall woman in grey draperies, nearly white under the moon, courtesy extraordinarily low, and rather fantastically. I stared in something like a horror upon the large and rather hollow features which I did not know, smiling very unpleasantly on me; and the moment it was plain that I saw her, the grey woman began gobbling and cackling shrilly...and gesticulating oddly with her long hands and arms. As she drew near the window, I flew to the fireplace, and rang the bell frantically, and seeing her still there, and fearing that she might break into the room, I flew out of the door, very much frightened. (Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* 24-25)

What sets the mood for Madame's appearance is what was going through Maud's mind before she caught a glimpse of her new governess through the window. She was peering out into the darkness, contemplating the wood from her childhood she correlated with the land of the dead: "I was now looking upon that solemn wood, white and shadowy in the moonlight, where, for a long time after that ramble with the visionary [Dr. Bryerly], I fancied the gate of death, hidden only by a strange glamour, and the dazzling land of ghosts" (Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* 24). Breaking the contemplation of this vision, Madame appears, as if a visitor from the land of the dead, sent to entice Maud or perhaps seek out her company. After being informed that this apparition was in fact a real person, and after discovering the role she was to play in her life, Maud makes the following observation: "I already disliked, distrusted, and feared her" (Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* 26).

Maud understands that Madame is a real person. There is no doubt that she is a creation formed of flesh and bone, at least in terms of the narrative. But there is also a supernatural aspect to her presence that causes Maud a great deal of anxiety. The symbolism of Madame emerging from the shadows like a ghost from the underworld is important because Maud's view of Madame never evolves after events move on from this false introduction. Madame is also aware

of the fright she has given Maud, and once she understands how she can manipulate the young girl through fear, she uses it to her advantage. When Maud finally meets Madame face to face, she ascribes ghoulish characteristics to her physical features: “She was tall, masculine, a little ghastly perhaps, and draped in purple silk, with a lace cap, and great bands of black hair, too thick and black perhaps to correspond quite naturally with her bleached and sallow skin, her hollow jaws, and the fine but grim wrinkles traced about her brows and eye-lids” (Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* 27). Maud also refers to Madame in animalistic, dehumanizing terms, as she does when she observes Madame spying on a member of the household: “She was devouring all that was passing there. I drew back into the shadow with a kind of disgust and horror. She was transformed into a great gaping reptile” (Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* 32). Madame is also a substance abuser, partaking in the household brandy while self-administering large doses of laudanum. She is the archetypal Gothic villainess: there is the suggestion of supernatural powers and the palpable impression of evil about her. She also seeks to control Maud, as Maud herself states: “I think she had a wish to reduce me to a state of the most abject bondage” (Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* 31).

A point of comparison can be made between the characters of Dr. Bryerly and Madame that demonstrates how antithetical one is to the other. As previously mentioned, Dr. Bryerly escorts Maud to her mother’s grave shortly after her burial. Once there, he counsels the child against her fear that her mother’s memory has somehow been desecrated by her interment. He assures her that she remains, but in the realm of the dead, and her spirit can even be seen by those who possess the Swedenborgian gift of inner sight. Maud’s mother is not simply a heap of bones deposited in a tomb—she is transcendent. On a walk with Madame, several years later, the two travel to Church Scarsdale, where Madame implores Maud to step with her down into the

churchyard: “As we descended the slope which shut out the surrounding world, and the scene grew more sad and lonely, Madame’s spirits seemed to rise” (Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* 41). Madame is in love with the idea of being surrounded by corpses: “‘See ‘ow many grave-stones-one, *two* hundred. Don’t you love the dead, cheaile? I will teach you to love them. You shall see me die here to-day, for half an hour, and be among them. That is what I love’” (Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* 41). Madame cherishes the very thing that Maud is not only terrified of, but passionately despises. She ignores Maud’s hesitancy, further leading the child into the churchyard: “‘You will like them soon as I. You shall see five of them...I am Madame la Morgue-Mrs. Deadhouse! I will present you my friends, Monsieur Cadavre and Monsieur Squelette!’...and pushing her wig and bonnet back, so as to show her great, bald head. She was laughing and really looked quite mad” (Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* 42).

It is easy to note the contradiction between the two arenas. Dr. Bryerly manipulates the first scene to engender a sense of peace for a child grieving her dead mother, while Madame manipulates the second scene to facilitate terror in the heart of her charge, a young girl she is ostensibly nurturing into adulthood. Madame has moved from inculcating generalized anxiety in Maud to enacting a demoralizing cycle of psychological abuse, which Maud, even though perhaps a bit naïve in other areas, comprehends. She responds to Madame in the churchyard: “‘No, Madame, I will not go with you...I’ll stay here,’ I said a little angrily-for I *was* angry as well as nervous; and through my fear was that indignation at her extravagances which mimicked lunacy so unpleasantly, and were, I knew, designed to frighten me” (Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* 42). After this event, Maud is clever enough to manipulate Austin (by brandishing the rational truth) into discharging Madame. It is only later, once Maud is ensconced at Bartram-Haugh, that she learns Madame has returned and has been operating as an accomplice to her Uncle Silas: “She

looked a thought more withered. Her wig shoved back disclosed her bald wrinkled forehead and enhanced the ugly effect of her exaggerated features and the gaunt hollows of her face. With a sense of incredulity and terror I gazed, freezing, at this evil phantom, who returned my stare for a few seconds with a shrinking scowl, dismal and grim, as of an evil spirit detected” (Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* 368). This time, Madame’s presence is even more threatening because Maud is alone. Madame has the full support of Silas, giving her the freedom to inflict physical and psychological abuse with impunity.

It is true that Maud cannot escape the grotesque governess, but the anxiety-inducing nature of the narrative does not lie merely in the unpleasantness of Madame de la Rougierre. It lies in the idea that the scent of terror emanating from Madame becomes tangible for Maud once she enters Uncle Silas’ manor house. It is present in the hearts and minds of the other residents of Bartram-Haugh. Everyone, Madame included, has a role to play in the plot to murder Maud. This means that Maud has no internal allies and must rely on the external Dr. Bryerly and Lady Knollys as confederates to preserve not only her inheritance, but her life. Even before Austin dies, Lady Knollys proves to be intuitive in matters concerning the social elite, telling her cousin: ““Yes; sharks sailing round you, with keen eyes and large throats; and you have come to the age precisely when men are swallowed up alive like Jonah”” (Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* 71). It is during this conversation that she tries to dissuade Austin from declaring his brother Silas as Maud’s guardian upon his death, but to no avail. Austin does not respect Lady Knollys’ expertise on human behavior and social custom, an attitude that nearly brings about the destruction of his daughter. There is a great deal of resistance to many of Lady Knollys’ opinions, as she is a woman, and it is not until Maud recognizes how astute her cousin is that she realizes she has been right all along. Until that point, however, the reader must be content with Lady Knollys’

own observation: “I’ve a great respect for instinct. I believe, Austin, it is truer than reason, and yours and Maud’s are both against me, though I know I have reason on my side” (Le Fanu, *Uncle Silas* 72).

Dr. Bryerly and Lady Knollys demonstrate the power rationality plays in overcoming the pseudo-threat of the supernatural throughout the narrative. From the moment Austin passes away, the two work in tandem to find a way to overturn the will of Maud’s father. Dr. Bryerly takes a legal approach, while Lady Knollys uses the power of social convention to affect a change in Maud’s circumstance. They don’t understand, however, that Maud’s original problem is one of psychological torment. They misinterpret how the influences of aspects of unearthliness are determining Maud’s physical and psychological comfort or discomfort while resident at Bartram-Haugh. Towards the end of the narrative, it becomes increasingly apparent that the only one who can truly save Maud is herself. She must first recognize that she is in mortal jeopardy, not supernatural, and second recognize that the people who have been consistently warning her about impending doom, the experts, have been right all along. Once this is accomplished, the terror present in *Uncle Silas* transforms. No longer a narrative about psychological fear and its many abstract manifestations, it becomes a story about a young girl in mortal danger from people who want to steal her money. The terror becomes far less complex, it becomes fixed, and to alleviate it, the solution simple: Maud must escape the physical prison of Bartram-Haugh and reach either Dr. Bryerly or Lady Knollys, her saviors. Maud’s allies, amid their many “visits” to Bartram-Haugh, represent the intrusion of rationality in an environment intentionally engineered to be anything but coherent. They serve as reminders that a world mostly dictated by logic exists outside the manor house gates, and once Maud realizes this, she yearns for the security that comes with it.

When juxtaposing the expert Dr. Hesselius in “Green Tea” to the experts Dr. Bryerly and Lady Knollys in *Uncle Silas*, it should be noted that the conceptions of their forms of expertise vary considerably. Dr. Hesselius maneuvers in the area of the amalgamation of spirituality and empiricism. He is a man who seeks to combine the mechanics of the soul with the theory that all knowledge is derived from sensory experience. To do this, he must first establish that there is a connection between the two. He does this by espousing faith in the teachings of Swedenborg. Dr. Bryerly, also a Swedenborgian, moves away from empiricism and, although trusted by Maud in spiritual affairs, operates primarily in terms of the rational. He and Lady Knollys inculcate Maud with the belief that spiritual matters are important, but human activity is the motivating force in the formation of terror. By applying a sense of rationality to events involved in the creation of fear, that fear can be understood from an objective viewpoint and then conquered. There is a sense of hope that reason can vanquish dread in *Uncle Silas* that is definitively lacking in “Green Tea.” This sense of hope may arise from the fact that the terror in the novel is not of spiritual origin, but rather organic in nature. It is a mental and physical construct exclusive to the human condition, operating well within the acknowledged parameters of humanity. Le Fanu, as an expert in the weird tale, is innovative in many ways. His work explores the Gothic in terms of horror and mystery, and the odd combination of the two, as seen in “Green Tea” and many of his other tales of the strictly supernatural bent. *Uncle Silas* is at first presented as a supernatural tale, but then veers off from the marvelous and into the uncanny as logic begins to determine the narrative’s structure. The characters inhabiting these works dwell in the shadowy corners and derelict society that compose the essence of the Irish Victorian Gothic.

It is now time to turn from Le Fanu and toward H.P. Lovecraft to demonstrate the continuing viability and ensuing importance of the expert as character as experienced within the

established structure of Le Fanu's weird tale. Lovecraft's novella *The Whisperer in Darkness* is a descendant work of both "Green Tea" and *Uncle Silas* and understanding the definition of the expert in the weird tales of Le Fanu helps to better position the role of the expert in Lovecraft's issue. It also helps to establish Le Fanu's continued influence on the genre. Specifically, the expert in Lovecraft demonstrates through interaction how elements of the supernatural can be utilized to showcase the insignificance of the human condition when thrust against an adversary that represents the much wider universe. In *The Whisperer in Darkness*, the expert is Albert N Wilmarth, an instructor of literature at Miskatonic University in Arkham Massachusetts, making him an expert in the field of academics. He also has the distinction of being an expert, although not in the official academic sense, of local folklore: "I was...an enthusiastic amateur student of New England folklore" (Lovecraft 100-101). It is his role as folklorist that allows for his unique positioning as both witness to and actor involved in the bizarre series of events that take place in the story. Another important way that Lovecraft's expert differs from the experts in Le Fanu is that Wilmarth is the story's protagonist. As the principal character, he is integrally involved in the events as they unfold. He is not relegated to the sidelines, serving as observer and advisor, but rather the narrative's main player. In that sense, Lovecraft elevates the position of the expert in *The Whisperer in Darkness*, a technique he also uses to great effect in many of his other narratives. The expert acts as an integral character exerting his own agency. He has figuratively come out of the shadows to take center stage.

The story begins with a historic flood devastating portions of Vermont. Local newspapers report that the corpses of strange beings have been found floating in the nearby rivers, and as expert, Wilmarth wades into the dialogue by publicly stating his skepticism. He declares the "beings" to be the product of imagination and traces their folkloric history back through the

centuries, specifically focusing on legends that transverse disparate Old World and New World cultures. According to myth, these beings are monsters living in the surrounding hills that abduct people who threaten their territory. Wilmarth receives a letter from Henry Akeley, a man living in an isolated Vermont farmhouse, advising Wilmarth to stop questioning the local reports. He claims to have proof of the creatures' existence and offers to share it with Wilmarth. A written correspondence between the two men ensues, leading to Wilmarth's gradual acceptance that Akeley is telling the truth. Akeley is not mentally ill; he has in fact amassed a great deal of evidence supporting his conclusion. During the sequence of the men's correspondence, it becomes incontrovertible that Akeley's knowledge puts him in danger. He begins to experience bizarre incidents on his farm, including the murder of his guard dogs and the severing of his lines of communication. Eventually, Wilmarth travels to meet Akeley. He discovers that Akeley has become allied with the creatures, agreeing to journey to their home planet as tourist. He has allowed the beings, an extraterrestrial race of fungoid known as the Mi-go, to extricate his brain from his body and place it in a glass jar, enabling transport. Wilmarth is horrified. He flees the farmhouse, seeking help from the local authorities. When they return to the house, it is empty. The jar containing Akeley's articulate brain has disappeared.

As expert, Wilmarth relies on the combination of empiricism and rationality in his interactions with Akeley, and by extension the Mi-go, in coming to conclude first, that the creatures do exist, and second, what that existence means in terms of his own delicate position in the universe. This is important because in the first line of the narrative, Wilmarth states: "Bear in mind closely that I did not see any actual visual horror at the end" (Lovecraft 100). The horror evolves from a superstitious standpoint but quickly moves beyond that. It begins as legend, continues as said legend is proven to be true through the gathering of empirical evidence, and

advances to the stage where logic clearly dictates that the terror of the situation is firmly rooted in rationality. In Lovecraft's world, aliens exist as distinctly as humans, and they have an equal capacity to induce horror. Wilmarth takes a rational approach to a situation that he at first doubts to be anything but: "All the myths were of a well-known pattern common to most of mankind and determined by early phases of imaginative experience which always produced the same type of delusion" (Lovecraft 106). Wilmarth defines superstitious belief in terms suited to the trust he places in the operation of a rational universe, and it should be noted that this perception never actually changes. As expert, Wilmarth eventually fits the Mi-go's existence into the functional template he has already constructed about the way that the universe should and usually does work- based on logic. The horror then doesn't lie in the fact that conventional rules have been broken, instead it lies in the disorientation of the human perception of its own existence. Humanity's perceived role and hierarchal position in the universe has changed, and that is unsettling, to say the least.

The anxiety suffusing *The Whisperer in Darkness* shares many features with the anxiety found in "Green Tea" and *Uncle Silas*. Lovecraft bends elements of the Gothic instrumental to Le Fanu to develop his own unique sensation of the uncanny. One of these elements is the sense of approaching dread. The monkey in "Green Tea" and the antagonists in *Uncle Silas* instill fear in their narrative's respective protagonists because their motivations lie below the surface. If the protagonist does not know what the expectations are, anything is possible, including the prospect of impending destruction and subsequent death. Humans generally focus on the worst-case scenario when confronted with a questionable circumstance, and the Gothic genre is efficient at exploiting this human foible. In *The Whisperer in Darkness*, Wilmarth experiences Akeley's anxiety by means of his increasingly disturbing written communications. Like the monkey does

in “Green Tea” and Madame does in *Uncle Silas*, the Mi-go observe and interact with Akeley in a way that confuses and sets him mentally adrift: “I think they mean to get rid of me because of what I have discovered. There is a great black stone with unknown hieroglyphics half worn away which I found in the woods on Round Hill...and after I took it home everything became different” (Lovecraft 111). This is an interesting fear because Akeley doesn’t even know what he has discovered, and throughout the narrative, the relevance of the black stone is never addressed. It is a mysterious object whose value remains aloof, but its questioned state has the tangible effect of inducing terror. The black stone motivates the Mi-go to act, but the reason why is unclear. The effect of this upon Akeley can be observed, as he states: “*It is true-terribly true-that there are non-human creatures watching us all the time; with spies among us gathering information*” (Lovecraft 111).

While Le Fanu uses elements of the Gothic to induce individualized anxiety as a method of examining how a character reacts and copes with increasing levels of supernatural stress, Lovecraft moves beyond the individual and introduces elements of the Gothic to induce anxiety on a cosmic scale. His villains are not demons from Hell, a location ostensibly situated beneath Reverend Jennings feet, or a group of conspirators scheming in the adjoining room to victimize Maud, but an alien race that resides light years from any semblance of humanity. The purported voice of Akeley describes his upcoming journey to Wilmarth: “The first trip will be to Yuggoth, the nearest world fully peopled by the beings. It is a strange dark orb at the very rim of our solar system-unknown to earthly astronomers as yet” (Lovecraft 155). The Mi-go exist in a realm devoid of light, on a planet that is beyond the comprehension of the most advanced astronomical expert. By transferring the Gothic element of the intrusive other from the supernatural to the alien, Lovecraft has managed to transform individualized anxiety affecting one character into a

collective apprehension about the fate of greater humanity. The monkey is after the Reverend, but the Mi-go are after the entire human species. In his role as expert Wilmarth begins to operate as an everyman within the text. In the greater context of the work, his role as expert then appears to be two-fold: he functions as a provenly capable representative of humanity that also has at his core an inquisitive nature. This inquisitive nature is observed by Akeley in his first letter to Wilmarth: “Now my object in writing you is not to start an argument, but to give you information which I think a man of your tastes will find deeply interesting” (Lovecraft 110). The taste Akeley speaks of is intellectual curiosity, an attribute that drives Wilmarth to pursue the truth behind the legend of the Mi-go.

The development of the “expert witness” in the works of Le Fanu and Lovecraft is an indication of the gradual evolution of the Gothic genre amid the emergence and continuation of the weird tale. A unifying aspect of the expert as character is the theory that the expert exists to investigate the motivation and ensuing meaning behind the supernatural element that is threatening the narrative’s protagonist. In general, the supernatural element is a symbolic representation of traditional human anxiety. Le Fanu expressed the anxiety of a social class in decline, while indications exist that Lovecraft himself suffered from bouts of social anxiety. The expert as character serves as an interventionist attempting to bring disorientation into focus, a sense of stability to a chaotic state. In all three narratives, the expert falls short of solving the problem placed before him. It is in the attempt, however, that generates meaning. The interplay between technique, whether it be the employment of spirituality, empiricism, rationality, or a combination of any and all, reveals the positive and negative aspects of each approach. Terror thrives in an unpredictable environment, and the expert serves as a foil to the element that flourishes under dubious circumstance. Terror, to be understood and conquered, must be

confronted. It can also be examined on an intellectual level. It is not merely an intangible, base emotion revealing humanity's animalistic nature, but something that can be understood from a uniquely human perspective. A little bit of insight goes a long way in allaying humanity's darkest fears, and that insight is what the expert attempts to provide. The expert serves as a mechanism depicting mankind's effort to understand the unpredictability of terror while endeavoring to determine a way to triumph over it.

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