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easy to be unpractical as the ignorant Philistine⁷ imagines. It were well for England if it were so. There is no country in the world so much in need of unpractical people as this country of ours. With us, Thought is degraded by its constant association with practice. Who that moves in the stress and turmoil of actual existence, noisy politician, or brawling social reformer, or poor, narrow-minded priest, blinded by the sufferings of that unimportant section of the community among whom he has cast his lot, can seriously claim to be able to form a disinterested intellectual judgment about any one thing? Each of the professions means a prejudice. The necessity for a career forces every one to take sides. We live in the age of the overworked, and the under-educated; the age in which people are so industrious that they become absolutely stupid. And, harsh though it may sound, I cannot help saying that such people deserve their doom. The sure way of knowing nothing about life is to try to make oneself useful.

Ernest. A charming doctrine, Gilbert.

Gilbert. I am not sure about that, but it has at least the minor merit of being true.

* * *

1890, 1891

7. A member of a biblical people who waged war against the Israelites. Matthew Arnold applies the name in *Culture and Anarchy* to the compla-

cent materialist middle classes, indifferent or antagonistic to artistic and cultural values.

SIGMUND FREUD

1856–1939

It is hard to imagine the twentieth century without Sigmund Freud. Along with Charles Darwin (1809–1882), KARL MARX (1818–1883), and Albert Einstein (1879–1955), he helped revolutionize the modern Western conception of human life and its place in the universe. For Freud, human reason was not master in its own house but a precarious defense mechanism struggling against, and often motivated by, unconscious desires and forces. His theory and practice of psychoanalysis have changed the way people think about themselves today, whether they are aware of it or not. At the same time, psychoanalysis has been controversial from the beginning because, unlike experimental science, it cannot be adequately tested, falsified, or objectified. It aims higher than—or falls short of—objective verifiability because it is a study of the very limits of objectivity itself. The impossibility of separating psychoanalysis from the biography of its founder has been used to discredit it, but in fact Freud's writings signal a significant change in the relation between autobiography and thought. They make visible in new ways the narrative challenges involved in telling the story of a life—one's own in particular. Freud's attention to language may help explain why his writings have grown in importance for literary scholars at the same time that they are increasingly criticized for diverging from the protocols of science. Yet perhaps it is also in large part because his writings exist at the limits of *both* literature and science that Freud continues to fascinate us.

Freud was born in Moravia (in what is now the Czech Republic), the first of seven children, to poor Jewish parents. His young mother, Amalia, was his father Jacob's third wife. The Freuds moved to Vienna in 1860, where Sigmund obtained all his education (with the exception of a few months in Paris). Although psychoanalysis today is associated with the "talking cure" and the theory of infantile sexuality, Freud began his career as a clinical neurologist, obtaining his medical degree in 1881. He entered the University of Vienna in 1873, at a time when Jews, who had moved to liberal Vienna in sizable numbers, were already being scapegoated for Austria's economic problems. Freud, in his *Autobiographical Study* (1925), attributed his independence of mind to his position just outside the "compact majority" (Henrik Ibsen's phrase) of German gentile culture, which he nevertheless also shared. When Nazi Germany annexed Austria in 1938, Freud left Vienna reluctantly and under duress. In his lifetime, social liberalism had given way to the most virulent anti-Semitism—a sad confirmation of his warning against taking any notion of the progress of civilization for granted.

While working to obtain his medical degree, Freud was distracted by his broad interests in research. Among other subjects, he became fascinated by the account given by the respected physician Josef Breuer of the treatment of a particularly intelligent hysterical patient. "Anna O." invented the term "talking cure"; she is often considered the first patient of psychoanalysis, although Freud himself never treated her. Fifteen years later, Freud and Breuer would write *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) about this and later cases. In the meantime Freud met Martha Bernays, the woman he hoped would become his wife, and went to Paris. Too poor to marry, he progressed in his profession by getting a small grant to work at the famous Salpêtrière mental hospital under the supervision of the medical showman and great specialist in hysteria Jean-Martin Charcot. In 1886 he returned to Vienna, opened his medical practice, and married Martha; they had six children (three girls and three boys). From 1891 onward, the Freuds lived at Berggasse 19, where Sigmund set up his famous consulting room.

In the years leading up to his groundbreaking *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud began a formative and intellectually wide-ranging correspondence with Wilhelm Fliess, an ear, nose, and throat specialist from Berlin. In his practice, Freud gradually abandoned the hypnotic treatments for hysteria recommended by Charcot, substituting instead a form of dialogue between patient and doctor. At first convinced that many of his patients had suffered sexual abuse (or "seduction") by their fathers in childhood, he later came to realize that some of his patients' tales of sexual events were fantasies. The death in 1896 of Freud's own father perhaps increased his unwillingness to believe in paternal guilt. What he called the "abandonment of the seduction theory" has become controversial in recent decades (largely because of Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson's 1984 book, *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory*), criticized as an abandonment of the realities of childhood sexual abuse. But the shift was not first and foremost a denial of the reality of incest; Freud saw in fantasies of incest a psychic reality, and an infantile sexuality, that had to be taken seriously in itself. In his move from realities of fact to realities of fantasy, however, Freud changed the sex of the representative subject: in his new theory of unconscious desire (the "Oedipus complex"), he substituted the desiring son for the abused daughter, the desirable mother for the guilty father. The father, in his account, was no longer a lawbreaker but a lawgiver: the enforcer of the law prohibiting incest between the son and the mother.

In order to gather evidence of the existence of unconscious forces at work in everyday life, Freud turned to psychological phenomena that were at once recognized and disregarded. His first three books—*The Interpretation of Dreams*, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (published in a journal in 1901 and as a book in 1904), and *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905)—lay out the analytical strategies that would inform the better-known *Three Essays in the Theory of*

Sexuality (1905). His theory would have been impossible without the meticulous study of the discredited forms of knowledge revealed by dreams, slips of the tongue, memory lapses, and jokes.

Freud continued seeing patients and published several extensive and now famous case studies—*Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (better known as “Dora,” 1905), “Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy” (“Little Hans,” 1909), “Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis” (“Rat Man,” 1909), “Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia” (“Schreber,” 1911), and *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis* (“Wolf Man,” written 1914 and published 1918). Each attempts to come to terms with a difficult psychoanalytic but also *narrative* challenge: for example, Dora left treatment before Freud was finished with her, and his later footnotes allude to oversights in his understanding; Wolf Man’s childhood neurosis could be analyzed only through the screen of adult constructions; and Schreber was analyzed not as Freud’s patient but as the author of an autobiography. Freud’s case histories offer a fascinating hybrid of certainty, doubt, and inner debate.

In addition to his research and his practice, Freud, at the suggestion of a disciple, founded the Psychological Wednesday Society (later transformed into the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society) in 1902. He traveled to the United States in 1909 to lecture and receive an honorary degree from Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, accompanied by his younger colleagues Carl G. Jung and Sandor Ferenczi (his lectures were subsequently published as *Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, 1910). The tensions—theoretical, personal, and institutional—between Freud and Jung were already growing; by the end of 1912, the two had essentially stopped speaking to each other. Freud took his revenge on his wayward disciples in his polemical “History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement” (1914). He also published a new series of lectures and a number of papers on psychoanalytic technique.

When World War I began Freud’s three sons volunteered for the army, but he grew more and more critical of war as a solution to human problems. (Later, at the request of the League of Nations, Freud would collaborate with Albert Einstein in writing *Why War?* [1933].) The war deeply affected his thought, already in a new phase with the publication of his celebrated essay on narcissism in 1914. Traumatic neuroses seemed to put in question the dominance in psychic life of the “pleasure principle” that he had posited as the motive force of dreams. Even children’s games sometimes seemed to give greater weight to the process of repetition itself than to the pleasurable thing repeated. It was at this time that Freud wrote his essay “The ‘Uncanny’” (1919) and the longer *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). A sense of strangeness, of genuinely enigmatic forces, pervades his theory of the “death instinct” and the “repetition compulsion.” But perhaps this strangeness was also a way of reconnecting with the strangeness of his original discoveries, which had grown quite familiar. The theoretical gains from this period are formulated in *The Ego and the Id* (1923). (The famous Latin names for the almost allegorical parts of the self—ego, id, superego—were bestowed by translators; Freud himself used German terms meaning “I,” “it,” and “over-I.”)

In the 1920s Freud wrote about larger cultural forces and structures (*Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 1921; *The Future of an Illusion*, 1927; and *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 1929), provided major reformulations of his theory, and turned his attention to the problem of sexual difference. His paper “Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes” (1925) began to explore the question of “castration” in a new way. When children observe that some people have penises and others do not, he asserted, they assume that everyone must at first have had one, and that in some people it had been cut off. This encounter with the fact of difference is more satisfying to the little boy than to the little girl. But the “psychic consequences” are far-reaching: the boy takes seriously the father’s threat of castration as the punishment for incest, thus experiencing

“castration anxiety,” while the girl tries to deal with her “inferiority,” thus feeling “penis envy.” In later essays—especially “Female Sexuality” (1931) and “Femininity” (1932)—Freud attempted to make sense of the desires his theory allotted to women. Feminists have treated his theories with ambivalence: on the one hand, he had the merit of describing human sexuality as a *question*, not a *given*; on the other hand, his phrase “anatomy is destiny” seems in the final analysis to uphold the sexual certainties he himself questioned.

The lectures Freud wrote that include “Femininity” were never meant to be delivered; a series of operations for mouth cancer (beginning in 1923) had left him unable to perform in public. The political situation was also worrisome: Adolf Hitler had been appointed chancellor of Germany, and the Nazi Party was in control. Freud’s books were among those burned in Berlin. His last book, *Moses and Monotheism*, was not completed until his own “exodus” to England in 1938. In London in 1939, his cancer worsening, Freud officially closed his practice; and, just after the Germans invaded Poland and after France and Britain declared war on Germany, Freud asked his physician to give him a lethal dose of morphine. He died in September of that year.

How did Freud practice interpretation, then, and how did his theory transform it? Although the details of each individual dream are particular to the dreamer, there are, says Freud, some dreams that occur widely and point to the existence of universal desires. Incest and its prohibition—the universal break between nature and culture, according to anthropologists—form the core of Freud’s theory of unconscious desire. In our first selection from *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he turns to the same literary text as ARISTOTLE for a version of the fundamental human plot: Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*. Warned by an oracle that he will kill his father and marry his mother, Oedipus leaves home in order to escape his fate, only to kill a man and marry a woman who turn out to be the very biological parents who had abandoned him as an infant in order to thwart the same oracle. Literature thus exists for Freud as a form of evidence: the play’s centuries-long hold over the attention of viewers must correspond to its depiction of something universally fascinating and repressed. The truth told by the oracle corresponds to unconscious desire, fulfilling itself despite—or perhaps because of—every conscious effort to escape it. The plot of Sophocles’ play also furnishes a parallel to the plot of an analysis: a patient’s resistance to unconscious knowledge is like Oedipus’s reluctance to learn his true identity. Freud goes on to discuss the relation between *Oedipus Rex* and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*—both in terms of the incest taboo. In answer to the question “Why does Hamlet delay his revenge for his father’s death?” Freud replies, “Because his uncle has only carried out a murder that he himself wanted to accomplish.” In a few short pages, Freud thus revolutionized the reading of two major canonical texts of Western culture and placed the world of the imagination at the center of human subjectivity.

Freud’s attention to new modes of meaning has been immensely suggestive for literary studies. While the relation between literature and dreams has often been noted, as in the ancient work of Macrobius (b. ca. 360 C.E.), Freud pursues the connection beyond the realm of general symbolism to lay out a kind of rhetoric of everyday dreams. In our second selection, on the dream-work, he writes that dreams are not nonsensical but meaningful. They are composites made out of the residues of individual lives chosen by the unconscious to represent the fulfilment of a wish: no simple “key” can decode them. Only the dreamer can provide a set of associations to illuminate the “dream-thoughts” behind the dream. Beneath the composite surface, which functions like a puzzle, lies the wish, the puzzle’s solution. The dream-thoughts function like a “latent content” behind the “manifest content” of the dream.

Distortion and disguise fill dreams—or literary texts—because the unconscious wish is in some way unacceptable and must evade censorship. Dreams have three main sources of unavoidable distortion, he argues: condensation, displacement, and

the needs of representation. These unconscious “primary processes” are also subject to “secondary revision,” the editing to which a dream is subject if the dreamer tries to remember it on awakening. Freud’s description of the four rhetorical operations (“distortions”) performed by dreams has been productively extended to literary texts: while the role of secondary revision there is stronger and more complex, literary texts may provide access to forces that are not directly accessible in other ways.

Freud often uses literary texts to illustrate or confirm his theory. His reading of a 1903 novella by Wilhelm Jensen (*Delusion and Dream in Wilhelm Jensen’s “Gradiva,”* 1907) aims to ratify his theory of dreams; “Creative Writers and Daydreaming” (1908) expands on his description of fantasy life; in “The Theme of the Three Caskets” (1913), he turns again to Shakespeare; and in numerous other short essays and notes Freud focuses directly on literature or art. But some of the most explicit literary demonstrations function as “secondary revisions” of the theory itself, eliding the role of literature in *forming* central concepts (the Oedipus complex, narcissism, etc.). For Freud, it is always as if a bourgeois drama is playing on the conscious stage of the psyche, while a Greek tragedy is going on somewhere else.

Freud’s celebrated essay “The ‘Uncanny,’” our second selection, offers both a literary application and a new theoretical direction. It contains an extensive analysis of E. T. A. Hoffmann’s short story “The Sandman” (1816), in which a young man, Nathaniel, traumatized by the mysterious death of his father, falls in love with a wooden doll, Olympia, in preference to his flesh-and-blood sweetheart. Freud argues that what is uncanny about the story is related not to intellectual uncertainty about whether the doll is alive (as an article by Ernst Jentsch had speculated), but to anxiety about the cause of Nathaniel’s father’s death. When Nathaniel encounters Coppola, an optician, he thinks he recognizes Coppelius, a lawyer, whom he believes to have caused his father’s death and who is conflated in his mind with the Sandman—a storybook figure who takes the eyes of little children who won’t go to bed. These threats to the eyes are connected in Freud’s mind to the castration complex (Oedipus had blinded himself on learning that he had fulfilled the prophecy). The uncanny return of these figures (the Sandman, Coppelius, Coppola) is also related to Freud’s new sense of the “repetition compulsion.” Dolls and inanimate objects, which for Freud are not uncanny in the story, nevertheless return to haunt the essay’s discussion of “the omnipotence of thoughts” and of the supposedly surmounted childhood belief in animism.

Freud begins his discussion with the characteristics of the word *uncanny*, extensively documented through citations from a dictionary. The German *unheimlich* (unhomelike, uncanny) turns out to share a meaning with its apparent opposite. *Heimlich* (homey, familiar) can also mean “concealed, secret,” and thus the opposite of the familiar and open. This process of estrangement of the familiar (of the “home”) is exactly the same as the process of repression. The fear of being buried alive, for example, is a distorted desire to return to the mother’s womb—the “home” of all humanity. The German term gives a clue to a process that psychoanalysis tries to understand more generally. Freud expresses astonishment that other languages lack the equivalent of what in German is such a handy word. But if all languages had the same process in the same place, that process would become a theme, a topic, and thus belong to conscious, rather than unconscious, knowledge.

The essay also addresses “aesthetics” more generally, as its first sentence announces. Indeed, it investigates what analyses of the “beautiful” and the “sublime” leave out: the disturbing, the unsettling, the uncomfortable. Freud’s essay itself is far from beautiful: it wanders from topic to topic, it quotes others at great length, it places major points in footnotes, and, in general, it seems sewn together from mismatched parts. Hence, we have edited an already poorly sutured text. Yet “The ‘Uncanny,’” offers the reader an opportunity to follow the *process*, and not just the *result*, of Freud’s thinking. Indeed, that the essay lacks “organic” form, so that readers tend to

get lost in it, contributes powerfully to its own uncanny effect. In recent years, partly as a result of Freud's essay, critics have devoted increasing attention to the Gothic in literature and to elements Freud associates with the uncanny—unexpected doubles, severed limbs, bodies buried alive, the return of the dead, magical thinking. Freud's reading of Hoffmann's story allows him to touch many theoretical bases that he, unlike many others, feels comfortable with—unacceptable authorial desires, castration anxieties, homosexual fantasies. But Freud's essay itself also makes readable the persistence of questions he dismisses, and it vividly reveals, in its wandering way, his fascination with what is escaping his grasp.

Freud's short essay titled "Fetishism" (1927), our final selection, builds on his analysis of the consequences of sexual difference. Certain men, he claims, cannot accept the evidence that the woman (the mother) doesn't have a penis. In order to fall in love with women and not become homosexual, they choose as a substitute some object that will continue to support the sexual interest they originally had in the missing maternal penis. The logic of fetishism thus involves both perceiving and denying the evidence of maternal "castration." In a very different way, the same logic of denial and displacement underlies Karl Marx's theory of "the fetishism of the commodity" (*Capital*, vol. 1, 1867; see above). There, the commodity itself appears to contain the value that is really produced by the processes of labor invisible behind it. Here, the substitute (foot, velvet, hair, etc.) appears to function like a sexual organ. In both cases there is a "gleam" around the fetish that attracts desire (sexual or commercial), as if the fetish actually contained the values that it represents.

Freud's analyses have had a fundamental impact on what we now understand as literary theory, influencing virtually every twentieth-century critic. On the one hand, Freud's radical new view of subjectivity has deeply affected the analysis of characters, authors, and readers, enabling a new understanding of split, hidden, or contradictory desires and intentions. On the other hand, for Freud literature is not just an illustration but also a source and authority for understanding those desires and intentions in the first place.

Perhaps more profoundly, Freud changed the nature of attentiveness itself. It was in listening to patients differently that Freud discovered the unconscious—a force of otherness as powerful as, but in no way equivalent to, a god. Inside every person, he said, there was *something* transmitting scrambled messages in a cryptic language, trying to break through the conscious surface of life. The "other" was in ourselves—indeed, it *was* ourselves. Despite the limitations of Freud's middle-class Viennese patriarchal assumptions, his conception of a human subjectivity fundamentally at odds with itself opened up possibilities he never dreamed of. Each person's life was documented in more than one way: official personal history (conscious remembrance and self-image) and unofficial personal history (the record of changes, traumas, desires, anxieties, and associations that might never have been conscious). Unconscious history contained impossible or forbidden wishes, repressed from the official record or simply outgrown—wishes that remained active in the unconscious and sought expression in dreams, mistakes, jokes, myths, and other discredited or discounted forms of communication. Psychoanalysis is the name for the theory and practice of their interpretation, and literary theory continues to derive inspiration from the psychoanalytic engagement with the most canonical as well as the most uncanonical of texts.

***The Interpretation of Dreams* Keywords:** Drama, Interpretation Theory, Narrative Theory, Poetry, Psychoanalysis, Rhetoric, Sexuality

"The 'Uncanny'" Keywords: Aesthetics, Language, Psychoanalysis, Representation

"Fetishism" Keywords: The Body, Gender, Identity, Psychoanalysis, Sexuality, Subjectivity

binning contraries into a unity or for representing them as one and the same thing. Dreams feel themselves at liberty, moreover, to represent any element by its wishful contrary; so that there is no way of deciding at a first glance whether any element that admits of a contrary is present in the dream-thoughts as a positive or as a negative.³

* * *

1900, 1929

From The "Uncanny"¹

I

It is only rarely that a psycho-analyst feels impelled to investigate the subject of aesthetics, even when aesthetics is understood to mean not merely the theory of beauty but the theory of the qualities of feeling. He works in other strata of mental life and has little to do with the subdued emotional impulses which, inhibited in their aims and dependent on a host of concurrent factors, usually furnish the material for the study of aesthetics. But it does occasionally happen that he has to interest himself in some particular province of that subject; and this province usually proves to be a rather remote one, and one which has been neglected in the specialist literature of aesthetics.

The subject of the 'uncanny'² is a province of this kind. It is undoubtedly related to what is frightening—to what arouses dread and horror; equally certainly, too, the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense, so that it tends to coincide with what excites fear in general. Yet we may expect that a special core of feeling is present which justifies the use of a special conceptual term. One is curious to know what this common core is which allows us to distinguish as 'uncanny' certain things which lie within the field of what is frightening.

As good as nothing is to be found upon this subject in comprehensive treatises on aesthetics, which in general prefer to concern themselves with what is beautiful, attractive and sublime—that is, with feelings of a positive nature—and with the circumstances and the objects that call them forth, rather than with the opposite feelings of repulsion and distress. I know of only one attempt in medico-psychological literature, a fertile but not exhaustive paper by Jentsch (1906).³ But I must confess that I have not made a very

3. [Footnote added 1911:] I was astonished to learn from a pamphlet by K. Abel, *The Antithetical Meaning of Primal Words* (1884) (cf. my review of it, 1910)—and the fact has been confirmed by other philologists—that the most ancient languages behave exactly like dreams in this respect. In the first instance they have only a single word to describe the two contraries at the extreme ends of a series of qualities or activities (e.g., "strong-weak," "old-young," "far-near," "bind-sever"); they only form distinct terms for the two contraries by a secondary process of making small modifications in the common word. Abel demonstrates this particularly from Ancient Egyptian; but he shows

that there are distinct traces of the same course of development in the Semitic and Indo-Germanic languages as well [Freud's note].

1. Translated by Alix Strachey, who sometimes adds a word or phrase in square brackets in the text for clarification.

2. The German word, translated throughout this paper by the English "uncanny," is *unheimlich*, literally "unhomely." The English term is not, of course, an exact equivalent of the German one [translator's note].

3. "On the Psychology of the Uncanny," by the German psychologist Ernst Jentsch (1867–1919).

thorough examination of the literature, especially the foreign literature, relating to this present modest contribution of mine, for reasons which, as may easily be guessed, lie in the times in which we live;⁴ so that my paper is presented to the reader without any claim to priority.

In his study of the 'uncanny' Jentsch quite rightly lays stress on the obstacle presented by the fact that people vary so very greatly in their sensitivity to this quality of feeling. The writer of the present contribution, indeed, must himself plead guilty to a special obtuseness in the matter, where extreme delicacy of perception would be more in place. It is long since he has experienced or heard of anything which has given him an uncanny impression, and he must start by translating himself into that state of feeling, by awakening in himself the possibility of experiencing it. Still, such difficulties make themselves powerfully felt in many other branches of aesthetics; we need not on that account despair of finding instances in which the quality in question will be unhesitatingly recognized by most people.

Two courses are open to us at the outset. Either we can find out what meaning has come to be attached to the word 'uncanny' in the course of its history; or we can collect all those properties of persons, things, sense-impressions, experiences and situations which arouse in us the feeling of uncanniness, and then infer the unknown nature of the uncanny from what all these examples have in common. I will say at once that both courses lead to the same result: the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar. How this is possible, in what circumstances the familiar can become uncanny and frightening, I shall show in what follows. Let me also add that my investigation was actually begun by collecting a number of individual cases, and was only later confirmed by an examination of linguistic usage. In this discussion, however, I shall follow the reverse course.

The German word '*unheimlich*' is obviously the opposite of '*heimlich*' [homely], '*heimisch*' ['native']—the opposite of what is familiar; and we are tempted to conclude that what is 'uncanny' is frightening precisely because it is *not* known and familiar. Naturally not everything that is new and unfamiliar is frightening, however; the relation is not capable of inversion. We can only say that what is novel can easily become frightening and uncanny; some new things are frightening but not by any means all. Something has to be added to what is novel and unfamiliar in order to make it uncanny.

On the whole, Jentsch did not get beyond this relation of the uncanny to the novel and unfamiliar. He ascribes the essential factor in the production of the feeling of uncanniness to intellectual uncertainty; so that the uncanny would always, as it were, be something one does not know one's way about in. The better oriented in his environment a person is, the less readily will he get the impression of something uncanny in regard to the objects and events in it.

It is not difficult to see that this definition is incomplete, and we will therefore try to proceed beyond the equation 'uncanny' = 'unfamiliar'. We will first turn to other languages. But the dictionaries that we consult tell us nothing new, perhaps only because we ourselves speak a language that is

4. An allusion to the First World War only just concluded [translator's note].

foreign. Indeed, we get an impression that many languages are without a word for this particular shade of what is frightening.

* * *

Let us therefore return to the German language. In Daniel Sanders's *Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* (1860, 1:729), the following entry, which I here reproduce in full, is to be found under the word '*heimlich*'. I have laid stress on one or two passages by italicizing them.

Heimlich, adj., subst. *Heimlichkeit* (pl. *Heimlichkeiten*): I. Also *heimelich*, *heimelig*, belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, intimate, friendly, etc.

(a) (Obsolete) belonging to the house or the family, or regarded as so belonging (cf. Latin *familiaris*, familiar): *Die Heimlichen*, the members of the household; *Der heimliche Rat* (Gen. xli, 45; 2 Sam. xxiii. 23; 1 Chron. xii. 25; Wisd. viii. 4), now more usually *Geheimer Rat* [Privy Councillor].

(b) Of animals: tame, companionable to man. As opposed to wild, e.g. 'Animals which are neither wild nor *heimlich*', etc. 'Wild animals . . . that are trained to be *heimlich* and accustomed to men.' 'If these young creatures are brought up from early days among men they become quite *heimlich*, friendly' etc.—So also: 'It (the lamb) is so *heimlich* and eats out of my hand.' 'Nevertheless, the stork is a beautiful, *heimelich* bird.'

(c) Intimate, friendly, comfortable; the enjoyment of quiet content, etc., arousing a sense of agreeable restfulness and security as in one within the four walls of his house. 'Is it still *heimlich* to you in your country where strangers are felling your woods?' 'She did not feel too *heimlich* with him.' 'Along a high, *heimlich*, shady path . . . , beside a purling, gushing and babbling woodland brook.' 'To destroy the *Heimlichkeit* of the home.' 'I could not readily find another spot so intimate and *heimlich* as this.' 'We pictured it so comfortable, so nice, so cosy and *heimlich*.' *** 'You go to sleep there so soft and warm, so wonderfully *heim'lig*.'—*This form of the word deserves to become general in order to protect this perfectly good sense of the word from becoming obsolete through an easy confusion with II* [see below]. Cf: "'The Zecks [a family name] are all '*heimlich*'." (in sense II) "'*Heimlich*? . . . What do you understand by '*heimlich*'?" "Well, . . . they are like a buried spring or a dried-up pond. One cannot walk over it without always having the feeling that water might come up there again." "Oh, we call it '*unheimlich*'; you call it '*heimlich*'. Well, what makes you think that there is something secret and untrustworthy about this family?"' (Gutzkow).⁵

(d) Especially in Silesia: gay, cheerful; also of the weather.

II. Concealed, kept from sight, so that others do not get to know of or about it, withheld from others. To do something *heimlich*, i.e. behind someone's back; to steal away *heimlich*; *heimlich* meetings and appointments; to look on with *heimlich* pleasure at someone's discomfiture; to sigh or weep *heimlich*; to behave *heimlich*, as though there was something to conceal; *heimlich* love-affair, love, sin; *heimlich* places (which good manners oblige us to conceal) (1 Sam. v. 6). 'The *heimlich* chamber' (privy) (2 Kings x. 27). Also, 'the *heimlich* chair'. 'To throw into pits or *Heimlichkeiten*'.—'Led the

5. Karl Gutzkow (1811–1878), German novelist and dramatist.

steeds *heimlich* before Laomedon.’—‘As secretive, *heimlich*, deceitful and malicious towards cruel masters . . . as frank, open, sympathetic and helpful towards a friend in misfortune.’ ‘You have still to learn what is *heimlich* holiest to me.’ ‘The *heimlich* art’ (magic). * * *

For compounds see above, Ic. Note especially the negative ‘un-’: eerie, weird, arousing gruesome fear: ‘Seeming quite *unheimlich* and ghostly to him.’ ‘The *unheimlich*, fearful hours of night.’ ‘I had already long since felt an *unheimlich*, even gruesome feeling.’ ‘Now I am beginning to have an *unheimlich* feeling.’ . . . ‘Feels an *unheimlich* horror.’ ‘*Unheimlich* and motionless like a stone image.’ ‘The *unheimlich* mist called hill-fog.’ ‘These pale youths are *unheimlich* and are brewing heaven knows what mischief.’ ‘“*Unheimlich*” is the name for everything that ought to have remained . . . secret and hidden but has come to light’ (Schelling).⁶—‘To veil the divine, to surround it with a certain *Unheimlichkeit*.’—*Unheimlich* is not often used as opposite to meaning II (above).

What interests us most in this long extract is to find that among its different shades of meaning the word ‘*heimlich*’ exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, ‘*unheimlich*’. What is *heimlich* thus comes to be *unheimlich*. (Cf. the quotation from Gutzkow: ‘We call it “*unheimlich*”; you call it “*heimlich*”.’) In general we are reminded that the word ‘*heimlich*’ is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which, without being contradictory, are yet very different: on the one hand it means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight.⁷ ‘*Unheimlich*’ is customarily used, we are told, as the contrary only of the first signification of ‘*heimlich*’, and not of the second. Sanders tells us nothing concerning a possible genetic connection between these two meanings of *heimlich*. On the other hand, we notice that Schelling says something which throws quite a new light on the concept of the *Unheimlich*, for which we were certainly not prepared. According to him, everything is *unheimlich* that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light.

Some of the doubts that have thus arisen are removed if we consult Grimm’s dictionary. (1877, 4.2:873ff.)

We read:

Heimlich; adj. and adv. *vernaculus, occultus*; MHG. *heimelîch, heimlîch*. (P. 874.) In a slightly different sense: ‘I feel *heimlich*, well, free from fear.’ . . .

[3] (b) *Heimlich* is also used of a place free from ghostly influences . . . familiar, friendly, intimate.

(P. 875: β) Familiar, amicable, unreserved.

4. From the idea of ‘homelike’, ‘belonging to the house’, the further idea is developed of something withdrawn from the eyes of strangers, something concealed, secret; and this idea is expanded in many ways . . .

* * *

6. Friedrich von Schelling (1775–1854), German philosopher; quoted from *Philosophy of Mythology* (published 1856).

7. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a

similar ambiguity attaches to the English “canny,” which may mean not only “cosy” but also “endowed with occult or magical powers” [translator’s note].

9. The notion of something hidden and dangerous, which is expressed in the last paragraph, is still further developed, so that 'heimlich' comes to have the meaning usually ascribed to 'unheimlich'. Thus: 'At times I feel like a man who walks in the night and believes in ghosts; every corner is heimlich and full of terrors for him'. (Klinger,⁸ Theater, 3:298.)

Thus *heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*. *Unheimlich* is in some way or other a sub-species of *heimlich*. Let us bear this discovery in mind, though we cannot yet rightly understand it, alongside of Schelling's definition of the *Unheimlich*. If we go on to examine individual instances of uncanniness, these hints will become intelligible to us.

II

When we proceed to review the things, persons, impressions, events and situations which are able to arouse in us a feeling of the uncanny in a particularly forcible and definite form, the first requirement is obviously to select a suitable example to start on. Jentsch has taken as a very good instance 'doubts whether an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might not be in fact animate'; and he refers in this connection to the impression made by waxwork figures, ingeniously constructed dolls and automata. To these he adds the uncanny effect of epileptic fits, and of manifestations of insanity, because these excite in the spectator the impression of automatic, mechanical processes at work behind the ordinary appearance of mental activity. Without entirely accepting this author's view, we will take it as a starting-point for our own investigation because in what follows he reminds us of a writer who has succeeded in producing uncanny effects better than anyone else.

Jentsch writes: 'In telling a story, one of the most successful devices for easily creating uncanny effects is to leave the reader in uncertainty whether a particular figure in the story is a human being or an automaton, and to do it in such a way that his attention is not focused directly upon his uncertainty, so that he may not be led to go into the matter and clear it up immediately. That, as we have said, would quickly dissipate the peculiar emotional effect of the thing. E. T. A. Hoffmann⁹ has repeatedly employed this psychological artifice with success in his fantastic narratives.'

This observation, undoubtedly a correct one, refers primarily to the story of 'The Sand-Man' in Hoffmann's *Nachtstücken*,¹ which contains the original of Olympia, the doll that appears in the first act of Offenbach's opera, *Tales of Hoffmann*.² But I cannot think—and I hope most readers of the story will agree with me—that the theme of the doll Olympia, who is to all appearances a living being, is by any means the only, or indeed the most important, element that must be held responsible for the quite unparalleled atmosphere of

8. Friedrich von Klinger (1752–1831), German dramatist and novelist.

9. German author of fantastic and often humorous tales (1776–1822).

1. *Night Pieces* (1816–17); "The Sandman" was

published in vol. 1 (1816).

2. An 1881 opera based on three tales by Hoffmann, by Jacques Offenbach (1819–1880), a German-born French composer of many light operas.

uncanniness evoked by the story. Nor is this atmosphere heightened by the fact that the author himself treats the episode of Olympia with a faint touch of satire and uses it to poke fun at the young man's idealization of his mistress. The main theme of the story is, on the contrary, something different, something which gives it its name, and which is always re-introduced at critical moments: it is the theme of the 'Sand-Man' who tears out children's eyes.

This fantastic tale opens with the childhood recollections of the student Nathaniel. In spite of his present happiness, he cannot banish the memories associated with the mysterious and terrifying death of his beloved father. On certain evenings his mother used to send the children to bed early, warning them that 'the Sand-Man was coming'; and, sure enough, Nathaniel would not fail to hear the heavy tread of a visitor, with whom his father would then be occupied for the evening. When questioned about the Sand-Man, his mother, it is true, denied that such a person existed except as a figure of speech; but his nurse could give him more definite information: 'He's a wicked man who comes when children won't go to bed, and throws handfuls of sand in their eyes so that they jump out of their heads all bleeding. Then he puts the eyes in a sack and carries them off to the half-moon to feed his children. They sit up there in their nest, and their beaks are hooked like owls' beaks, and they use them to peck up naughty boys' and girls' eyes with.'

Although little Nathaniel was sensible and old enough not to credit the figure of the Sand-Man with such gruesome attributes, yet the dread of him became fixed in his heart. He determined to find out what the Sand-Man looked like; and one evening, when the Sand-Man was expected again, he hid in his father's study. He recognized the visitor as the lawyer Coppelius, a repulsive person whom the children were frightened of when he occasionally came to a meal; and he now identified this Coppelius with the dreaded Sand-Man. As regards the rest of the scene, Hoffmann already leaves us in doubt whether what we are witnessing is the first delirium of the panic-stricken boy, or a succession of events which are to be regarded in the story as being real. His father and the guest are at work at a brazier with glowing flames. The little eavesdropper hears Coppelius call out: 'Eyes here! Eyes here!' and betrays himself by screaming aloud. Coppelius seizes him and is on the point of dropping bits of red-hot coal from the fire into his eyes, and then of throwing them into the brazier, but his father begs him off and saves his eyes. After this the boy falls into a deep swoon; and a long illness brings his experience to an end. Those who decide in favour of the rationalistic interpretation of the Sand-Man will not fail to recognize in the child's phantasy the persisting influence of his nurse's story. The bits of sand that are to be thrown into the child's eyes turn into bits of red-hot coal from the flames; and in both cases they are intended to make his eyes jump out. In the course of another visit of the Sand-Man's, a year later, his father is killed in his study by an explosion. The lawyer Coppelius disappears from the place without leaving a trace behind.

Nathaniel, now a student, believes that he has recognized this phantom of horror from his childhood in an itinerant optician, an Italian called Giuseppe Coppola, who at his university town, offers him weather-glasses for sale. When Nathaniel refuses, the man goes on: 'Not weather-glasses? not weather-glasses? also got fine eyes, fine eyes!' The student's terror is allayed when he finds that the proffered eyes are only harmless spectacles, and he buys a

pocket spy-glass from Coppola. With its aid he looks across into Professor Spalanzani's house opposite and there spies Spalanzani's beautiful, but strangely silent and motionless daughter, Olympia. He soon falls in love with her so violently that, because of her, he quite forgets the clever and sensible girl to whom he is betrothed. But Olympia is an automaton whose clock-work has been made by Spalanzani, and whose eyes have been put in by Coppola, the Sand-Man. The student surprises the two Masters quarrelling over their handiwork. The optician carries off the wooden eyeless doll; and the mechanic, Spalanzani, picks up Olympia's bleeding eyes from the ground and throws them at Nathaniel's breast, saying that Coppola had stolen them from the student. Nathaniel succumbs to a fresh attack of madness, and in his delirium his recollection of his father's death is mingled with this new experience. 'Hurry up! hurry up! ring of fire!' he cries. 'Spin about, ring of fire—Hurrah! Hurry up, wooden doll! lovely wooden doll, spin about—.' He then falls upon the professor, Olympia's 'father', and tries to strangle him.

Rallying from a long and serious illness, Nathaniel seems at last to have recovered. He intends to marry his betrothed, with whom he has become reconciled. One day he and she are walking through the city market-place, over which the high tower of the Town Hall throws its huge shadow. On the girl's suggestion, they climb the tower, leaving her brother, who is walking with them, down below. From the top, Clara's attention is drawn to a curious object moving along the street. Nathaniel looks at this thing through Coppola's spy-glass, which he finds in his pocket, and falls into a new attack of madness. Shouting 'Spin about, wooden doll!' he tries to throw the girl into the gulf below. Her brother, brought to her side by her cries, rescues her and hastens down with her to safety. On the tower above, the madman rushes round, shrieking 'Ring of fire, spin about!'—and we know the origin of the words. Among the people who begin to gather below there comes forward the figure of the lawyer Coppelius, who has suddenly returned. We may suppose that it was his approach, seen through the spy-glass, which threw Nathaniel into his fit of madness. As the onlookers prepare to go up and overpower the madman, Coppelius laughs and says: 'Wait a bit; he'll come down of himself.' Nathaniel suddenly stands still, catches sight of Coppelius, and with a wild shriek 'Yes! "Fine eyes—fine eyes!"' flings himself over the parapet. While he lies on the paving-stones with a shattered skull the Sand-Man vanishes in the throng.

This short summary leaves no doubt, I think, that the feeling of something uncanny is directly attached to the figure of the Sand-Man, that is, to the idea of being robbed of one's eyes, and that Jentsch's point of an intellectual uncertainty has nothing to do with the effect. Uncertainty whether an object is living or inanimate, which admittedly applied to the doll Olympia, is quite irrelevant in connection with this other, more striking instance of uncanniness. It is true that the writer creates a kind of uncertainty in us in the beginning by not letting us know, no doubt purposely, whether he is taking us into the real world or into a purely fantastic one of his own creation. He has, of course, a right to do either; and if he chooses to stage his action in a world peopled with spirits, demons and ghosts, as Shakespeare does in *Hamlet*, in *Macbeth* and, in a different sense, in *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, we must bow to his decision and treat his setting as though it were real for as long as we put ourselves into his hands.

But this uncertainty disappears in the course of Hoffmann's story, and we perceive that he intends to make us, too, look through the demon optician's spectacles or spy-glass—perhaps, indeed, that the author in his very own person once peered through such an instrument. For the conclusion of the story makes it quite clear that Coppola the optician really *is* the lawyer Coppelius³ and also, therefore, the Sand-Man.

There is no question therefore, of any intellectual uncertainty here: we know now that we are not supposed to be looking on at the products of a madman's imagination, behind which we, with the superiority of rational minds, are able to detect the sober truth; and yet this knowledge does not lessen the impression of uncanniness in the least degree. The theory of intellectual uncertainty is thus incapable of explaining that impression.

We know from psycho-analytic experience, however, that the fear of damaging or losing one's eyes is a terrible one in children. Many adults retain their apprehensiveness in this respect, and no physical injury is so much dreaded by them as an injury to the eye. We are accustomed to say, too, that we will treasure a thing as the apple of our eye. A study of dreams, phantasies and myths has taught us that anxiety about one's eyes, the fear of going blind, is often enough a substitute for the dread of being castrated. The self-blinding of the mythical criminal, Oedipus,⁴ was simply a mitigated form of the punishment of castration—the only punishment that was adequate for him by the *lex talionis*.⁵ We may try on rationalistic grounds to deny that fears about the eye are derived from the fear of castration, and may argue that it is very natural that so precious an organ as the eye should be guarded by a proportionate dread. Indeed, we might go further and say that the fear of castration itself contains no other significance and no deeper secret than a justifiable dread of this rational kind. But this view does not account adequately for the substitutive relation between the eye and the male organ which is seen to exist in dreams and myths and phantasies; nor can it dispel the impression that the threat of being castrated in especial excites a peculiarly violent and obscure emotion, and that this emotion is what first gives the idea of losing other organs its intense colouring. All further doubts are removed when we learn the details of their 'castration complex' from the analysis of neurotic patients, and realize its immense importance in their mental life.

Moreover, I would not recommend any opponent of the psycho-analytic view to select this particular story of the Sand-Man with which to support his argument that anxiety about the eyes has nothing to do with the castration complex. For why does Hoffmann bring the anxiety about eyes into such intimate connection with the father's death? And why does the Sand-Man always appear as a disturber of love? He separates the unfortunate Nathaniel from his betrothed and from her brother, his best friend; he destroys the second object of his love, Olympia, the lovely doll; and he drives him into suicide at the moment when he has won back his Clara and is about to be happily

3. Frau Dr. Rank has pointed out the association of the name with *coppella* = crucible, connecting it with the chemical operations that caused the father's death; and also with *coppo* = eye-socket [Freud's note]. Tola Rank (1895–1967), Polish-born wife of Freud's longtime colleague Otto Rank; she also became a member of the Vienna

Psychoanalytical Society.

4. Oedipus, a favorite subject of Greek tragedy and vase painting, was king of Thebes; he blinded himself when he realized that he had killed his father and married his mother.

5. Law of retaliation in kind (Latin).

united to her. Elements in the story like these, and many others, seem arbitrary and meaningless so long as we deny all connection between fears about the eye and castration; but they become intelligible as soon as we replace the Sand-Man by the dreaded father at whose hands castration is expected.⁶

We shall venture, therefore, to refer the uncanny effect of the Sand-Man to the anxiety belonging to the castration complex of childhood. But having reached the idea that we can make an infantile factor such as this responsible for feelings of uncanniness, we are encouraged to see whether we can apply it to other instances of the uncanny. We find in the story of the Sand-Man the other theme on which Jentsch lays stress, of a doll which appears to be alive. Jentsch believes that a particularly favourable condition for awakening uncanny feelings is created when there is intellectual uncertainty whether an object is alive or not, and when an inanimate object becomes too much like an animate one. Now, dolls are of course rather closely connected with childhood life. We remember that in their early games children do not distinguish at all sharply between living and inanimate objects, and that they are especially fond of treating their dolls like live people. In fact, I have occasionally heard a woman patient declare that even at the age of eight she had still been convinced that her dolls would be certain to come to life if she were to look at them in a particular, extremely concentrated, way. So that here, too, it is not difficult to discover a factor from childhood. But, curiously enough, while the Sand-Man story deals with the arousing of an early childhood fear, the idea of a 'living doll' excites no fear at all; children have no fear of their dolls coming to life, they may even desire it. The source of

6. In fact, Hoffmann's imaginative treatment of his material has not made such wild confusion of its elements that we cannot reconstruct their original arrangement. In the story of Nathaniel's childhood, the figures of his father and Coppelius represent the two opposites into which the father-imago is split by his ambivalence; whereas the one threatens to blind him—that is, to castrate him,—the other, the "good" father, intercedes for his sight. The part of the complex which is most strongly repressed, the death-wish against the "bad" father, finds expression in the death of the "good" father, and Coppelius is made answerable for it. This pair of fathers is represented later, in his student days, by Professor Spalanzani and Coppola the optician. The Professor is in himself a member of the father-series, and Coppola is recognized as identical with Coppelius the lawyer. Just as they used before to work together over the secret brazier, so now they have jointly created the doll Olympia; the Professor is even called the father of Olympia. This double occurrence of activity in common betrays them as divisions of the father-imago: both the mechanician and the optician were the father of Nathaniel (and of Olympia as well). In the frightening scene in childhood, Coppelius, after sparing Nathaniel's eyes, had screwed off his arms and legs as an experiment; that is, he had worked on him as a mechanician would on a doll. This singular feature, which seems quite outside the picture of the Sand-Man, introduces a new castration equivalent; but it also points to the inner identity of Coppelius with his later counterpart, Spalanzani the mechanician, and prepares us for the interpret-

ation of Olympia. This automatic doll can be nothing else than a materialization of Nathaniel's feminine attitude towards his father in his infancy. Her fathers, Spalanzani and Coppola, are, after all, nothing but new editions, reincarnations of Nathaniel's pair of fathers. Spalanzani's otherwise incomprehensible statement that the optician has stolen Nathaniel's eyes, so as to set them in the doll, now becomes significant as supplying evidence of the identity of Olympia and Nathaniel. Olympia is, as it were, a dissociated complex of Nathaniel's which confronts him as a person, and Nathaniel's enslavement to this complex is expressed in his senseless obsessive love for Olympia. We may with justice call love of this kind narcissistic, and we can understand why someone who has fallen victim to it should relinquish the real, external object of his love. The psychological truth of the situation in which the young man, fixated upon his father by his castration complex, becomes incapable of loving a woman, is amply proved by numerous analyses of patients whose story, though less fantastic, is hardly less tragic than that of the student Nathaniel.

Hoffmann was the child of an unhappy marriage. When he was three years old, his father left his small family, and was never united to them again. According to Grisebach, in his biographical introduction to Hoffmann's works, the writer's relation to his father was always a most sensitive subject with him [Freud's note]. Eduard Grisebach (1845–1906), German diplomat, editor, and literary historian; his edition of Hoffmann's *Complete Works* was published in 1905.

uncanny feelings would not, therefore, be an infantile fear in this case, but rather an infantile wish or even merely an infantile belief. There seems to be a contradiction here; but perhaps it is only a complication, which may be helpful to us later on.

* * *

At this point I will put forward two considerations which, I think, contain the gist of this short study. In the first place, if psycho-analytic theory is correct in maintaining that every affect belonging to an emotional impulse, whatever its kind, is transformed, if it is repressed, into anxiety, then among instances of frightening things there must be one class in which the frightening element can be shown to be something repressed which *recurs*. This class of frightening things would then constitute the uncanny; and it must be a matter of indifference whether what is uncanny was itself originally frightening or whether it carried some *other* affect. In the second place, if this is indeed the secret nature of the uncanny, we can understand why linguistic usage has extended *das Heimliche* ['homely'] into its opposite, *das Unheimliche*; for this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression. This reference to the factor of repression enables us, furthermore, to understand Schelling's definition of the uncanny as something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light.

It only remains for us to test our new hypothesis on one or two more examples of the uncanny.

Many people experience the feeling in the highest degree in relation to death and dead bodies, to the return of the dead, and to spirits and ghosts. As we have seen some languages in use to-day can only render the German expression 'an *unheimlich* house' by 'a *haunted* house'. We might indeed have begun our investigation with this example, perhaps the most striking of all, of something uncanny, but we refrained from doing so because the uncanny in it is too much intermixed with what is purely gruesome and is in part overlaid by it. There is scarcely any other matter, however, upon which our thoughts and feelings have changed so little since the very earliest times, and in which discarded forms have been so completely preserved under a thin disguise, as our relation to death. Two things account for our conservatism: the strength of our original emotional reaction to death and the insufficiency of our scientific knowledge about it. Biology has not yet been able to decide whether death is the inevitable fate of every living being or whether it is only a regular but yet perhaps avoidable event in life. It is true that the statement 'All men are mortal' is paraded in text-books of logic as an example of a general proposition; but no human being really grasps it, and our unconscious has as little use now as it ever had for the idea of its own mortality. Religions continue to dispute the importance of the undeniable fact of individual death and to postulate a life after death; civil governments still believe that they cannot maintain moral order among the living if they do not uphold the prospect of a better life hereafter as a recompense for mundane existence. In our great cities, placards announce lectures that undertake to tell us how to get into touch with the souls of the departed; and it cannot be denied that not a few of the most able and penetrating minds among our men of science have

come to the conclusion, especially towards the close of their own lives, that a contact of this kind is not impossible. Since almost all of us still think as savages do on this topic, it is no matter for surprise that the primitive fear of the dead is still so strong within us and always ready to come to the surface on any provocation. Most likely our fear still implies the old belief that the dead man becomes the enemy of his survivor and seeks to carry him off to share his new life with him. Considering our unchanged attitude towards death, we might rather enquire what has become of the repression, which is the necessary condition of a primitive feeling recurring in the shape of something uncanny. But repression is there, too. All supposedly educated people have ceased to believe officially that the dead can become visible as spirits, and have made any such appearances dependent on improbable and remote conditions; their emotional attitude towards their dead, moreover, once a highly ambiguous and ambivalent one, has been toned down in the higher strata of the mind into an unambiguous feeling of piety.

We have now only a few remarks to add—for animism, magic and sorcery, the omnipotence of thoughts, man's attitude to death, involuntary repetition and the castration complex comprise practically all the factors which turn something frightening into something uncanny.

We can also speak of a living person as uncanny, and we do so when we ascribe evil intentions to him. But that is not all; in addition to this we must feel that his intentions to harm us are going to be carried out with the help of special powers. A good instance of this is the '*Gettatore*,'⁷ that uncanny figure of Romanic superstition which Schaeffer,⁸ with intuitive poetic feeling and profound psycho-analytic understanding, has transformed into a sympathetic character in his *Josef Montfort*. But the question of these secret powers brings us back again to the realm of animism. It was the pious Gretchen's intuition that Mephistopheles possessed secret powers of this kind that made him so uncanny to her.

Sie fühlt dass ich ganz sicher ein Genie,
Vielleicht sogar der Teufel bin.⁹

The uncanny effect of epilepsy and of madness has the same origin. The layman sees in them the working of forces hitherto unsuspected in his fellow-men, but at the same time he is dimly aware of them in remote corners of his own being. The Middle Ages quite consistently ascribed all such maladies to the influence of demons, and in this their psychology was almost correct. Indeed, I should not be surprised to hear that psycho-analysis, which is concerned with laying bare these hidden forces, has itself become uncanny to many people for that very reason. In one case, after I had succeeded—though none too rapidly—in effecting a cure in a girl who had been an invalid for many years, I myself heard this view expressed by the patient's mother long after her recovery.

7. Literally "thrower" (of bad luck), or "one who casts" (the evil eye) [translator's note].

8. Albrecht Schaeffer (1885–1950), who published the novel *Josef Montfort* in 1918.

9. "She feels that surely I'm a genius now,—Perhaps the very Devil indeed!" Goethe, *Faust*, Part I [1808], scene 16; Bayard Taylor's transla-

tion [1870–71; translator's note]. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), German poet, playwright, and dramatist. Mephistopheles is the spirit to whom the old Faust promises his soul; Gretchen is the young girl whom Faust, made young again, falls in love with and seduces.

Dismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist, as in a fairy tale of Hauff's,¹ feet which dance by themselves, as in the book by Schaeffer which I mentioned above—all these have something peculiarly uncanny about them, especially when, as in the last instance, they prove capable of independent activity in addition. As we already know, this kind of uncanniness springs from its proximity to the castration complex. To some people the idea of being buried alive by mistake is the most uncanny thing of all. And yet psycho-analysis has taught us that this terrifying phantasy is only a transformation of another phantasy which had originally nothing terrifying about it at all, but was qualified by a certain lasciviousness—the phantasy, I mean, of intra-uterine existence.

There is one more point of general application which I should like to add, though, strictly speaking, it has been included in what has already been said about animism and modes of working of the mental apparatus that have been surmounted; for I think it deserves special emphasis. This is that an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes, and so on. It is this factor which contributes not a little to the uncanny effect attaching to magical practices. The infantile element in this, which also dominates the minds of neurotics, is the over-accentuation of psychical reality in comparison with material reality—a feature closely allied to the belief in the omnipotence of thoughts. In the middle of the isolation of war-time a number of the English *Strand Magazine* fell into my hands; and, among other somewhat redundant matter, I read a story about a young married couple who move into a furnished house in which there is a curiously shaped table with carvings of crocodiles on it. Towards evening an intolerable and very specific smell begins to pervade the house; they stumble over something in the dark; they seem to see a vague form gliding over the stairs—in short, we are given to understand that the presence of the table causes ghostly crocodiles to haunt the place, or that the wooden monsters come to life in the dark, or something of the sort. It was a naïve enough story, but the uncanny feeling it produced was quite remarkable.

To conclude this collection of examples, which is certainly not complete, I will relate an instance taken from psycho-analytic experience; if it does not rest upon mere coincidence, it furnishes a beautiful confirmation of our theory of the uncanny. It often happens that neurotic men declare that they feel there is something uncanny about the female genital organs. This *unheimlich* place, however, is the entrance to the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning. There is a joking saying that 'Love is home-sickness'; and whenever a man dreams of a place or a country and says to himself, while he is still dreaming: 'this place is familiar to me, I've been here before', we may interpret the place as being his mother's genitals or her body. In this case too, then, the *unheimlich* is what was once *heimisch*, familiar; the prefix 'un' ['un-'] is the token of repression.

1. *Die Geschichte von der abgehauenen Hand* (The Story of the Severed Hand) [translator's note]. Wilhelm Hauff (1802–1827), German novelist.

III

In the course of this discussion the reader will have felt certain doubts arising in his mind; and he must now have an opportunity of collecting them and bringing them forward.

It may be true that the uncanny [*unheimlich*] is something which is secretly familiar [*heimlich-heimisch*], which has undergone repression and then returned from it, and that everything that is uncanny fulfils this condition. But the selection of material on this basis does not enable us to solve the problem of the uncanny. For our proposition is clearly not convertible. Not everything that fulfils this condition—not everything that recalls repressed desires and surmounted modes of thinking belonging to the pre-history of the individual and of the race—is on that account uncanny.

Nor shall we conceal the fact that for almost every example adduced in support of our hypothesis one may be found which rebuts it. The story of the severed hand in Hauff's fairy tale certainly has an uncanny effect, and we have traced that effect back to the castration complex; but most readers will probably agree with me in judging that no trace of uncanniness is provoked by Herodotus's story of the treasure of Rhampsinitus,² in which the master-thief, whom the princess tries to hold fast by the hand, leaves his brother's severed hand behind with her instead. Again, the prompt fulfilment of the wishes of Polycrates³ undoubtedly affects us in the same uncanny way as it did the king of Egypt; yet our own fairy stories are crammed with instantaneous wish-fulfilments which produce no uncanny effect whatever. In the story of 'The Three Wishes', the woman is tempted by the savoury smell of a sausage to wish that she might have one too, and in an instant it lies on a plate before her. In his annoyance at her hastiness her husband wishes it may hang on her nose. And there it is, dangling from her nose. All this is very striking but not in the least uncanny. Fairy tales quite frankly adopt the animistic standpoint of the omnipotence of thoughts and wishes, and yet I cannot think of any genuine fairy story which has anything uncanny about it. We have heard that it is in the highest degree uncanny when an inanimate object—a picture or a doll—comes to life; nevertheless in Hans Andersen's⁴ stories the household utensils, furniture and tin soldiers are alive, yet nothing could well be more remote from the uncanny. And we should hardly call it uncanny when Pygmalion's beautiful statue comes to life.⁵

Apparent death and the re-animation of the dead have been represented as most uncanny themes. But things of this sort too are very common in fairy stories. Who would be so bold as to call it uncanny, for instance, when Snow-White opens her eyes once more?⁶ And the resuscitation of the dead in accounts of miracles, as in the New Testament, elicits feelings quite unrelated to the uncanny. Then, too, the theme that achieves such an indubitably uncanny effect, the unintended recurrence of the same thing, serves other

2. See Herodotus (Greek historian, ca. 484–ca. 425 B.C.E.) 2.121. Rhampsinitus was the king of Egypt.

3. Freud discussed the story (told in Herodotus 3.40–43) of the uncannily lucky Polycrates, king of Samos, in a passage omitted from our selection.

4. Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875), Danish

writer best known for his fairy tales.

5. In *Metamorphoses* (ca. 10 C.E.), 10.243–97, the Roman poet Ovid tells the story of the sculptor Pygmalion, who fell in love with his own creation.

6. Snow White, believed dead, comes back to life when the poisoned apple is dislodged from her throat.

and quite different purposes in another class of cases. We have already come across one example in which it is employed to call up a feeling of the comic;⁷ and we could multiply instances of this kind. Or again, it works as a means of emphasis, and so on. And once more: what is the origin of the uncanny effect of silence, darkness and solitude? Do not these factors point to the part played by danger in the genesis of what is uncanny, notwithstanding that in children these same factors are the most frequent determinants of the expression of fear [rather than of the uncanny]? And are we after all justified in entirely ignoring intellectual uncertainty as a factor, seeing that we have admitted its importance in relation to death?

It is evident therefore, that we must be prepared to admit that there are other elements besides those which we have so far laid down as determining the production of uncanny feelings. We might say that these preliminary results have satisfied *psycho-analytic* interest in the problem of the uncanny, and that what remains probably calls for an *aesthetic* enquiry. But that would be to open the door to doubts about what exactly is the value of our general contention that the uncanny proceeds from something familiar which has been repressed.

We have noticed one point which may help us to resolve these uncertainties: nearly all the instances that contradict our hypothesis are taken from the realm of fiction, of imaginative writing. This suggests that we should differentiate between the uncanny that we actually experience and the uncanny that we merely picture or read about.

What is *experienced* as uncanny is much more simply conditioned but comprises far fewer instances. We shall find, I think, that it fits in perfectly with our attempt at a solution, and can be traced back without exception to something familiar that has been repressed. But here, too, we must make a certain important and psychologically significant differentiation in our material, which is best illustrated by turning to suitable examples.

Let us take the uncanny associated with the omnipotence of thoughts, with the prompt fulfilment of wishes, with secret injurious powers and with the return of the dead. The condition under which the feeling of uncanniness arises here is unmistakable. We—or our primitive forefathers—once believed that these possibilities were realities, and were convinced that they actually happened. Nowadays we no longer believe in them, we have *surmounted* these modes of thought; but we do not feel quite sure of our new beliefs, and the old ones still exist within us ready to seize upon any confirmation. As soon as something *actually happens* in our lives which seems to confirm the old, discarded beliefs we get a feeling of the uncanny; it is as though we were making a judgement something like this: 'So, after all, it is *true* that one can kill a person by the mere wish!' or, 'So the dead *do* live on and appear on the scene of their former activities!' and so on. Conversely, anyone who has completely and finally rid himself of animistic beliefs will be insensible to this type of the uncanny. The most remarkable coincidences of wish and fulfilment, the most mysterious repetition of similar experiences in a particular place or on a particular date, the most deceptive sights and suspicious noises—none of these things will disconcert him or raise the kind of fear which can be described as

7. That is, in Mark Twain's *A Tramp Abroad* (1880), mentioned in a passage omitted from our selection.

'a fear of something uncanny'. The whole thing is purely an affair of 'reality-testing', a question of the material reality of the phenomena.⁸

The state of affairs is different when the uncanny proceeds from repressed infantile complexes, from the castration complex, womb-phantasies, etc.; but experiences which arouse this kind of uncanny feeling are not of very frequent occurrence in real life. The uncanny which proceeds from actual experience belongs for the most part to the first group [the group dealt with in the previous paragraph]. Nevertheless the distinction between the two is theoretically very important. Where the uncanny comes from infantile complexes the question of material reality does not arise; its place is taken by psychical reality. What is involved is an actual repression of some content of thought and a return of this repressed content, not a cessation of *belief in the reality* of such a content. We might say that in the one case what had been repressed is a particular ideational content, and in the other the belief in its (material) reality. But this last phrase no doubt extends the term 'repression' beyond its legitimate meaning. It would be more correct to take into account a psychological distinction which can be detected here, and to say that the animistic beliefs of civilized people are in a state of having been (to a greater or lesser extent) *surmounted* [rather than repressed]. Our conclusion could then be stated thus: an uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed. Finally, we must not let our predilection for smooth solutions and lucid exposition blind us to the fact that these two classes of uncanny experience are not always sharply distinguishable. When we consider that primitive beliefs are most intimately connected with infantile complexes, and are, in fact, based on them, we shall not be greatly astonished to find that the distinction is often a hazy one.

The uncanny as it is depicted in *literature*, in stories and imaginative productions, merits in truth a separate discussion. Above all, it is a much more fertile province than the uncanny in real life, for it contains the whole of the latter and something more besides, something that cannot be found in real life. The contrast between what has been repressed and what has been surmounted cannot be transposed on to the uncanny in fiction without profound modification; for the realm of phantasy depends for its effect on the fact that its content is not submitted to reality-testing. The somewhat paradoxical

8. Since the uncanny effect of a "double" also belongs to this same group it is interesting to observe what the effect is of meeting one's own image unbidden and unexpected. Ernst Mach has related two such observations in his *Analyse der Empfindungen* (1900 [*Analysis of Sensations*]). On the first occasion he was not a little startled when he realized that the face before him was his own. The second time he formed a very unfavorable opinion about the supposed stranger who had entered the omnibus, and thought "What a shabby-looking school-master that man is who is getting in!"—I can report a similar adventure. I was sitting alone in my *wagon-lit* compartment when a more than usually violent jolt of the train swung back the door of the adjoining washing-cabinet, and an elderly gentleman in a dressing-

gown and a travelling cap came in. I assumed that in leaving the washing-cabinet, which lay between the two compartments, he had taken the wrong direction and come into my cabinet by mistake. Jumping up with the intention of putting him right, I at once realized to my dismay that the intruder was nothing but my own reflection in the looking-glass on the open door. I can still recollect that I thoroughly disliked his appearance. Instead, therefore, of being *frightened* by our doubles, both Mach and I simply failed to recognize them as such. Is it not possible, though, that our dislike of them was a vestigial trace of the archaic reaction which feels the "double" to be something uncanny? [Freud's note]. Mach (1838–1916), Austrian physicist and philosopher. *Wagon-lit*: sleeping car (French).

result is that *in the first place a great deal that is not uncanny in fiction would be so if it happened in real life; and in the second place that there are many more means of creating uncanny effects in fiction than there are in real life.*

The imaginative writer has this licence among many others, that he can select his world of representation so that it either coincides with the realities we are familiar with or departs from them in what particulars he pleases. We accept his ruling in every case. In fairy tales, for instance, the world of reality is left behind from the very start, and the animistic system of beliefs is frankly adopted. Wish-fulfilments, secret powers, omnipotence of thoughts, animation of inanimate objects, all the elements so common in fairy stories, can exert no uncanny influence here; for, as we have learnt, that feeling cannot arise unless there is a conflict of judgement as to whether things which have been 'surmounted' and are regarded as incredible may not, after all, be possible; and this problem is eliminated from the outset by the postulates of the world of fairy tales. Thus we see that fairy stories, which have furnished us with most of the contradictions to our hypothesis of the uncanny, confirm the first part of our proposition—that in the realm of fiction many things are not uncanny which would be so if they happened in real life. In the case of these stories there are other contributory factors, which we shall briefly touch upon later.

The creative writer can also choose a setting which though less imaginary than the world of fairy tales, does yet differ from the real world by admitting superior spiritual beings such as daemonic spirits or ghosts of the dead. So long as they remain within their setting of poetic reality, such figures lose any uncanniness which they might possess. The souls in Dante's *Inferno*, or the supernatural apparitions in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* or *Julius Caesar*, may be gloomy and terrible enough, but they are no more really uncanny than Homer's jovial world of gods.⁹ We adapt our judgement to the imaginary reality imposed on us by the writer, and regard souls, spirits and ghosts as though their existence had the same validity as our own has in material reality. In this case too we avoid all trace of the uncanny.

The situation is altered as soon as the writer pretends to move in the world of common reality. In this case he accepts as well all the conditions operating to produce uncanny feelings in real life; and everything that would have an uncanny effect in reality has it in his story. But in this case he can even increase his effect and multiply it far beyond what could happen in reality, by bringing about events which never or very rarely happen in fact. In doing this he is in a sense betraying us to the superstitiousness which we have ostensibly surmounted; he deceives us by promising to give us the sober truth, and then after all overstepping it. We react to his inventions as we would have reacted to real experiences; by the time we have seen through his trick it is already too late and the author has achieved his object. But it must be added that his success is not unalloyed. We retain a feeling of dissatisfaction, a kind of grudge against the attempted deceit. I have noticed this particularly after reading Schnitzler's *Die Weissagung* [*The Prophecy*]¹ and similar sto-

9. Freud names writers from a range of cultures and times: DANTE ALIGHIERI (1265–1321) visits the dead in hell in *Inferno*, the first volume of his *Divine Comedy*; in the tragedies of William Shakespeare (1564–1616) named here, ghosts

appear; and in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (ca. 8th c. B.C.E.), the gods play active roles.

1. A short story (1905) by the Austrian playwright and novelist Arthur Schnitzler (1862–1931).

ries which flirt with the supernatural. However, the writer has one more means which he can use in order to avoid our recalcitrance and at the same time to improve his chances of success. He can keep us in the dark for a long time about the precise nature of the presuppositions on which the world he writes about is based, or he can cunningly and ingeniously avoid any definite information on the point to the last. Speaking generally, however, we find a confirmation of the second part of our proposition—that fiction presents more opportunities for creating uncanny feelings than are possible in real life.

Strictly speaking, all these complications relate only to that class of the uncanny which proceeds from forms of thought that have been surmounted. The class which proceeds from repressed complexes is more resistant and remains as powerful in fiction as in real experience, subject to one exception. The uncanny belonging to the first class—that proceeding from forms of thought that have been surmounted—retains its character not only in experience but in fiction as well, so long as the setting is one of material reality; but where it is given an arbitrary and artificial setting in fiction, it is apt to lose that character.

We have clearly not exhausted the possibilities of poetic licence and the privileges enjoyed by story-writers in evoking or in excluding an uncanny feeling. In the main we adopt an unvarying passive attitude towards real experience and are subject to the influence of our physical environment. But the story-teller has a *peculiarly* directive power over us; by means of the moods he can put us into, he is able to guide the current of our emotions, to dam it up in one direction and make it flow in another, and he often obtains a great variety of effects from the same material. All this is nothing new, and has doubtless long since been fully taken into account by students of aesthetics. We have drifted into this field of research half involuntarily, through the temptation to explain certain instances which contradicted our theory of the causes of the uncanny. Accordingly we will now return to the examination of a few of those instances.

We have already asked why it is that the severed hand in the story of the treasure of Rhampsinitus has no uncanny effect in the way that the severed hand has in Hauff's story. The question seems to have gained in importance now that we have recognized that the class of the uncanny which proceeds from repressed complexes is the more resistant of the two. The answer is easy. In the Herodotus story our thoughts are concentrated much more on the superior cunning of the master-thief than on the feelings of the princess. The princess may very well have had an uncanny feeling, indeed she very probably fell into a swoon; but *we* have no such sensations, for we put ourselves in the thief's place, not in hers. In Nestroy's farce, *Der Zerrissene* [*The Torn Man*],² another means is used to avoid any impression of the uncanny in the scene in which the fleeing man, convinced that he is a murderer, lifts up one trapdoor after another and each time sees what he takes to be the ghost of his victim rising up out of it. He calls out in despair, 'But I've only killed *one* man. Why this ghastly multiplication?' We know what went before this scene and do not share his error, so what must be uncanny to him has an irresistibly comic effect on us. Even a 'real' ghost, as in Oscar Wilde's

2. An 1845 production by the Austrian playwright Johann Nestroy (1801–1862).

Canterville Ghost,³ loses all power of at least arousing *gruesome* feelings in us as soon as the author begins to amuse himself by being ironical about it and allows liberties to be taken with it. Thus we see how independent emotional effects can be of the actual subject-matter in the world of fiction. In fairy stories feelings of fear—including therefore uncanny feelings—are ruled out altogether. We understand this, and that is why we ignore any opportunities we find in them for developing such feelings.

Concerning the factors of silence, solitude and darkness, we can only say that they are actually elements in the production of the infantile anxiety from which the majority of human beings have never become quite free. This problem has been discussed from a psycho-analytic point of view elsewhere.

1919

Fetishism¹

In the last few years I have had an opportunity of studying analytically a number of men whose object-choice was dominated by a fetish. There is no need to expect that these people came to analysis on account of their fetish. For though no doubt a fetish is recognized by its adherents as an abnormality, it is seldom felt by them as the symptom of an ailment accompanied by suffering. Usually they are quite satisfied with it, or even praise the way in which it eases their erotic life. As a rule, therefore, the fetish made its appearance in analysis as a subsidiary finding.

For obvious reasons the details of these cases must be withheld from publication; I cannot, therefore, show in what way accidental circumstances have contributed to the choice of a fetish. The most extraordinary case seemed to me to be one in which a young man had exalted a certain sort of 'shine on the nose' into a fetishistic precondition. The surprising explanation of this was that the patient had been brought up in an English nursery but had later come to Germany, where he forgot his mother-tongue almost completely. The fetish, which originated from his earliest childhood, had to be understood in English, not German. The 'shine on the nose' [in German '*Glanz auf der Nase*']—was in reality a '*glance* at the nose'. The nose was thus the fetish, which, incidentally, he endowed at will with the luminous shine which was not perceptible to others.

In every instance, the meaning and the purpose of the fetish turned out, in analysis, to be the same. It revealed itself so naturally and seemed to me so compelling that I am prepared to expect the same solution in all cases of fetishism. When now I announce that the fetish is a substitute for the penis, I shall certainly create disappointment; so I hasten to add that it is not a substitute for any chance penis, but for a particular and quite special penis that had been extremely important in early childhood but had later been lost. That is to say, it should normally have been given up, but the fetish is precisely designed to preserve it from extinction. To put it more

3. A short story (1887) by the Irish-born writer WILDE (1854–1900).

1. Translated by Joan Rivière, who sometimes

adds a word or phrase in square brackets in the text for clarification.