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Fiction and Its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's *Das Unheimliche* (The "uncanny")

Hélène Cixous

THESE PAGES ARE MEANT as a reading divided between literature and psychoanalysis, with special attention paid to what is produced and what escapes in the unfolding of a text, sometimes led by Freud and at other times by his double. Indeed, Freud's text¹ may strike us to be less a discourse than a strange theoretical novel. There is something "savage" in the *Unheimliche*, a breath or a provocative air which at times catches the novelist himself off guard, overtaking him and restraining him. Freud and the object of his desire (i.e., the truth about the *Unheimliche*) are fired by reciprocal inspiration. As a commentary on uncertainty, with its tightly drawn net mended by its plots and their resolutions, this long text of Freud employs a peculiarly disquieting method to track down the concept *das Unheimliche*, the Disquieting Strangeness, the Uncanny. Nothing turns out less reassuring for the reader than this niggling, cautious, yet wily and interminable pursuit (of "something"—be it a domain, an emotional movement, a concept, impossible to determine yet variable in its form, intensity, quality, and content). Nor does anything prove to be more fleeting than this search whose movement constitutes the labyrinth which instigates it; the sense of strangeness imposes its secret necessity everywhere. The ensuing unfolding whose operation is contradictory is accomplished by the author's double: Hesitation. We are faced, then, with a text and its hesitating shadow, and their double escapade. As for plots, what is brought together here is quickly undone, what asserts itself becomes suspect; each thread leads to its net or to some kind of disentanglement. In the labyrinthian space, many characters alluded to as witnesses and well-informed persons appear and are quickly relegated to the corner of some street or paragraph. What unfolds without fail before the reader's eyes is a kind of puppet theater in which real dolls or fake dolls, real and simulated life, are manipulated by a sovereign but capricious stage-setter. The net is tightly stretched, bowed, and tangled; the scenes are centered and dispersed; narratives are begun and left in suspension. Just as the reader thinks

he is following some demonstration, he senses that the surface is cracking: the text slides a few roots under the ground while it allows others to be lofted in the air. What in one instance appears a figure of science seems later to resemble some type of fiction. This text proceeds as its own metaphor, as Mallarmé recalls Hamlet, reading in a book about himself while noticing that memory, in retrospect, serves to prophesy. *Oh, my prophetic soul!*

A text dealing with the nature of incertitude is approached by the reader with a sense of distrust and fascination, for in the exchange which takes place between the text itself and its reading, in this enticing interplay where the text always emerges a step ahead, the doubtful elements of the text necessarily engender doubt in its reader. This phenomenon may account for the reader's sense of pleasure and boldness.

We shall examine the strange pleasure incurred in the reading of the Freudian text and of the inseparable and concomitant uneasiness which parallels Freud's own, describes it, and which can hardly be distinguished from it.

Freud leads his investigation of the frightening object which constitutes the nucleus of the *Unheimliche* in two different ways. We shall allow ourselves to be guided at times by and against Freud's design, by what is certain and by what is hypothetical, by science and fiction, by the object that is "symbolized" and by that which "symbolizes." We shall be guided by ambivalence and in conformity with the undecidable nature of all that touches the *Unheimliche*: life and fiction, life-as-fiction, the Oedipus myth, the castration complex, and literary creation. Undecided, the analyst, the psychologist, the reader, the writer, the multitude of named and anonymous subjects which are brought up and which disappear into the fabric of the text (they have, indeed, been thwarted by Freud himself) go along two routes which at least lead us back to our dissatisfaction. First of all, in allowing ourselves to be led, we are submissive to Freud's entreaty, and thus we share in his disillusionment: because the complexity of the analysis and its suffocation go hand-in-hand with the uncertainty of the analyst. Is this a play or a replay with hesitation? Doesn't the analysis which brings up the whole question of repressions imprint them at once upon the one who undertakes the analysis? Everything takes place as if the *Unheimliche* went back to Freud himself in a vicious interchange between pursued and pursuer; as if one of Freud's repressions acted as the motor re-presenting at each moment the analysis of the repression which Freud was analyzing: the *Unheimliche* is at the root of Freud's analysis. Our role as readers caught in the *Unheimliche* is a curious double of the role of the other reader, that of the Sand-Man. Accord-

ing to Freud, the dangerous eye-glass which passes from the narrator to the unfortunate protagonist leaps upon the eyes of the reader, and exposes him to the horrible peculiarity of the world of doubles. There can be no doubt concerning the doubtful identity of the menacing characters. However, what is perceived by the secondary eyes has no place either in reality or in verisimilitude, but only in the *Unheimliche*, in the unrecognized and unrecognizable spheres. If it is true that what is recounted to the eye always falls back on the idea of castration, it is not upon the simple narration of the Oedipus story. Through the unending series of substitutions, the eye becomes multiplied, and the familiar work of the eye, in turn, becomes the enigmatic production of its scattered doubles, sparks of fire, lorgnettes, eyeglasses, far- and near-sighted visions, the theatrical secret which the Freudian text brushes up against, mimics, and even escapes.

On three different occasions, Freud proceeds to a confrontation with the *Unheimliche* and attempts to describe it, from the starting point of doubt. The whole enterprise, from its inception, may be designated as an act of theoretical boldness and as the answer to a solicitation issued from a domain wishing to be explored. This is a subtle invitation to transgression on the part of the *Unheimliche*, and an answer or perhaps an anticipation on the part of Freud. Desire is no stranger to that which may be construed as an adventure: desire insures its coming and going. It links its detours and its interludes.

As prologue (in the first four paragraphs) Freud seeks to justify himself to the point of exoneration: how and why he takes a stand about an area which does not appear to fall under the jurisdiction of analysis. Psychoanalysis takes possession of an aesthetic domain neglected by aesthetics; but this does not constitute the first time this type of incursion has been made. For a long time, the work of art has been "beckoning" Freud and he has been casting a sidelong glance on its enticing effects: his excuse here is based on the question of emotion, on the necessity of someday studying its frustrating economy. Emotional movement does not, as such, comprise the objective of the psychoanalytical study; it only forms the network of effects submitted to aesthetics. Psychoanalysis is interested in "psychic life," in "profound" domains. There arise here the mystery of literary creation and the secret of this enviable power possessed by its creator who manages to seduce us. More precisely, this is what fascinates Freud: "The freedom of the author, the privilege accorded fiction in order to evoke and inhibit" the emotions or the phantasms of the reader, the power to lift or impose censorship. Therein resides the motivation behind these many attempts at initiating a theory of this power, under the term

of the *first seduction* or of *preliminary pleasure*: the theory of pleasure which is frequently derived from some adjacent development. Thus, in *der Dichter und das Phantasieren* (1907) in which the theoretical proposition emerges only as an afterthought in a text which deals primarily with the phantasms of its creator, one feels this mixture of distrust and attraction with which Freud invests this pleasure (which rises to the *principle of pleasure* and beyond²), and links two types of pleasure: from the first seduction (*Verlockungsprämie*) produced by formal success, which, in turns, permits "veritable" pleasure, and a convergence of several sources of pleasure. First of all, Freud calls upon the creator's technique by which he may overcome the repulsion which causes the phantasm of the other inasmuch as he is the other. The *ars poetica* would favor such a process of identification; it works "upon existing *limits* existing between each self and the other parts of the *self*." Formal pleasure—which is linked to *representation*—would hide and permit the liberation of another pleasure residing in more profound sources. It is perhaps possible that we, then, return to our own phantasms after having taken the detour by the other (self), for the "assuagement" of our "soul." Yet if the theory of the first seduction appears to rest primarily on a hedonist "thematism,"³ it overlooks—and this displaces the theory—what no theme can recover, and that is precisely the *Unheimliche*.

Freud considers the *Unheimliche* as, at the same time, a "domain" and a "concept," an elastic designation. The fact of the matter is that the "domain" remains indefinite; the concept is without any nucleus: the *Unheimliche* presents itself, first of all, only on the fringe of something else. Freud relates it to other concepts which resemble it (fright, fear, anguish): it is a unit in the "family" but it is not really a member of the family. Freud declares that it is certain that the use of the *Unheimliche* is uncertain. The indefiniteness is part and parcel of the "concept." The statement and its enunciation become rejoined or reunited. *The statement cannot be encircled*: yet Freud, arguing for the existence of the *Unheimliche*, wishes to retain the sense, the real, the reality of the sense of things. He thus seeks out "the *basic sense*." Thus the analysis is anchored, at once, in what is denoted. And it is a question of a concept whose entire denotation is a connotation.

In the third paragraph, Freud rigorously refocuses the relation between aesthetics and the medico-psychological disciplines. He underscores the repressive limits of aesthetics which convey ideological implications. Aesthetics deals with *positive* and casts aside contrary sentiments (ugliness as a positive value has scarcely a place in this tradition). Then, there appears the neuro-psychiatric study of E. Jentsch.⁴

Freud considers it both interesting and deceptive; as an insufficient yet respected precursor, Jentsch will represent, henceforth, the "layman's" attitude, which is "intellectual" and indeed antianalytical because of its phenomenological approach to strangeness. Freud offers, straightaway, a subjective explanation for Jentsch's failure: he has not sufficiently delved into literature; he concerns himself only with everyday experience. Thus he loses "all claim to priority." Literature is the objective of psychoanalytical inquiry. A hierarchy is created through the system of priorities.

Freud calls upon what has, as yet, received no theoretical attention, notably upon "sensibility," and, more precisely, his own, because it is exemplary and different from the average sensibility, and "singularly insensitive" to the *Unheimliche*. Assuming the personality of "the author of this essay," Freud brings Jentsch into relief here and enters the scene in a double role: actor and "mechanician," analyst and subject of analysis. "It is long since he had experienced or heard of anything which had given him an uncanny impression." When the subject is so questioned by the author's undertaking, it gives rise to astonishment since what was familiar to him is now peculiar or strange to him. Things no longer *know* how to reach him. . . . He must, thus, go to them; it is in this way that the scholar pushes himself forward and comes to life again so that the *representation* which replaces the experience may emerge. This enables him to examine the states which he studies by experimenting upon himself. What had been lost returns first, and the procession of ghosts is clandestinely ushered in. Then, as if in reaction to a private desired return which rejects melancholy, Freud reverts to the universal, or nearly so; he calls out "to the majority of men," to a nearly impossible consensus, as if the *Unheimliche* were recognized in the same way by everyone. A rather paradoxical hope, one might think, since it is in the nature of the *Unheimliche* to remain strange. But hope should not be repelled. The pathetic feature of the risk that props the scientific upon the unscientific recalls the divergence in the makeup of the *Unheimliche*—the familiar and the strange—which Freud posits as the cornerstone for his research. Just as the still undetermined *Unheimliche* benefits from the status of concept, so too is the nonscientific clothed with the dignity of the scientific.

In this equivocal area, in which the author admits that he is the hesitant subject of his inquiry, the text bifurcates toward the choices in method, thus making indecision the occasion of some progress. Bifurcation: "Two courses are open to us at the start." Each produces in a different manner the same result, which starts the process over again; one (linguistic experience) or the other (everyday experience)

or the two. From one ambivalence to another, or else language as a general [phenomenon], or else the world as a series of individual cases; nevertheless, these two methods are proposed to us although the choice has been made by Freud and the method already followed. Freud assigns us an *inverted* order in relation to the one he has followed. After the event, the history of the inquiry presents itself by the other method, as if he had wanted to begin by the undecided element in the *Unheimliche* which is lodged in language.

The opposite direction [method]: a history of *Un*: Freud makes a lexical statement upon which he comments, beginning with Jentsch's suspension point. Does anything new exist beyond the unfamiliar domain? The psychological viewpoint presented by Jentsch (the *Unheimliche* as an intellectual uncertainty), the part concerning seeing, knowing occupies the first stage of the inquiry: the *Unheimliche* appears as coming unexpectedly from the world toward the subject. Once Jentsch's position has been displaced and set down, what does its language say?

The lexical continuation, a voyage of reference through foreign languages, constitutes a polylinguistic dictionary article. Through such a display of definitions, the world returns, a sampling of everyday experience, of home economics, of domestic problems. And yet . . . this lumber room, far from winning us over, this chain of quotations which *Heimliche* or *Unheimliche* threads together, appears to us an overlong, delirious discourse in which the world is seen as a deceptive reduction, not without a polymorphic perversity gleaned from a "child-dictionary" [*dictionnaire-enfant*]. The body of articles exhales a dream-like fog, for all lexical inventories necessarily play on the limit imposed by literal and figurative meanings. And it is Freud himself who extricates from the confusion the *added* thing; it is *in extremis* that the dictionary provides us with the sign: "*Unheimliche* is the name for everything that ought to have remained . . . hidden and secret and has become visible."⁵ Thus, from one point of view, the lexicographical undertaking is undermined by the article which also functions as the metaphor of its own setting. Moreover, Schelling, at the moment of arrival, draws a curtain: "All that which *should have* remained hidden." Schelling links the *Unheimliche* to a lack of modesty. It is only at the end that the sexual threat emerges. But it had always been there latently, in the coupling itself and in the proliferation of the *Heimliche* and of the *Unheimliche*; when one makes contact with the other, it closes again and closes the history of meaning upon itself, delineating through this gesture the figure of the androgyne. The word joins itself again, and *Heimliche* and *Unheimliche* pair off.

At the end of this strange crossing of languages, *Unheimliche* can consider itself a part of this myth: from *Heimliche* to *Unheimliche*. In this crossing, the meaning reproduces itself or it becomes extinguished or it is stirred up. Opposition has been blunted; the divergence opened just enough space for it to be reclosed. The phoenix reproduces itself. Elsewhere, Freud's commentary attempts to mitigate the disquieting character of the junction by contriving a sort of dislocation of contraries: a remarkable repugnance to acknowledge the absolute reclosing that takes place. The coincidence of contraries emanates, he claims, from the fact that the *Heimliche* belongs to two groups of representation which "are . . . very different." This indirectly brings up the question of hierarchy in the dual relationship of two terms: is there any inversion of the *Heimliche* and the *Unheimliche*, or else, starting from *Heimliche*, is there any emergence, through the *Unheimliche*, of a *new* concept? Therein, exactly, rests the stake of the pursuit; what, in effect, holds Freud's attention is precisely this *something absolutely new* spelled out by Schelling with respect to the content of the concept, which, nevertheless, cannot be "found" there, but which, by way of the baroque forest of the dictionary, slips into this disturbing domain.

We recall that, for the reader, Freud suggests an approach diametrically opposed to his own: what has *finally* emerged is the notion of sex, which was ignored at the beginning, since Freud began by the notion of sublimation. The threads have been pulled together; a first thread for ambivalent meanings, which goes as far as meeting with its opposite; a second thread, which links Schelling's remark: the statement of lexical ambivalence is thus sexually charged. Freud places his finger on the nodal point. He pulls on the threads and tightens them.

The choice of "a suitable example": we find ourselves back at the crossroads, and we take the one that goes through the world. Once again, we allude to Jentsch's opinion in order to outstrip it immediately. Instead of a dictionary, we now have a split scene of animated "objects"—Freud's summary of Jentsch's position as essentially a little raised stage or setting. The "author" introduces here the preoccupation of the theater, everything which the theater represents as an image of living and what life is able, as a canvas, to hide from theatrics. On the stage and the stage of the stage, the relationship between Freud's discovery concerning scientific truth and the mechanics of fiction may be brought out. Freud's own text, here, functions *like* a fiction: the long work on personal pulsations, the dramatic redistribution upon such and such an approach, the suspense and surprises and impasses; all

of that seems a part of the special work of fiction, and the "author" takes advantage of the narrator's privileges to which the analyst cannot consent. "Better than anyone else," says Freud, it is the writer who consents to give birth to the *Unheimliche*. The writer is also what Freud wants to be. Freud sees in himself the writer, the one whom the analyst must question concerning the literature which psychoanalysis must understand in order to know itself. He is, in his relationship to the writer, as the *Unheimliche* is in its relationship to the *Heimliche*. In his strangeness with respect to creation, he feels himself "a case." The enigma of the *Unheimliche* has a literary answer, claims Freud in the manner of Jentsch, and this is his most reliable answer.

Scarcely does he appropriate Jentsch's example (in the manner of children: this doll belonged to me) when he declares himself the true master of the method since his predecessor did not know how to make proper use of it. The way in which he misappropriates betrays a stinging boldness and the ploy of a fox! On the one hand, Freud quotes the Jentsch citation about the Sand-Man beginning with the character of the automaton, the doll Olympia. At the same time, he discards Jentsch's interpretation. The latter links the *Unheimliche* to the psychological manipulation of Hoffmann, which consists in producing and preserving uncertainty with respect to the true nature of Olympia. Is she animate or inanimate? Does Freud regret the psychological argument? So be it. He takes advantage of it to displace the *Unheimliche* of the doll with the Sand-Man. Thus, under the cover of analytical criticism and uncertainty, the doll which had been relegated to the background is already, in effect, in the trap. Its repression will be accomplished, moreover, with the approval or the complicity of the reader, of whom Freud, henceforth, is well aware. His real and persistent concern with the reader's point of view, his attention to and his demand for communicability, which proceed from his well-known need to share [with the reader], to guide, to teach, and to justify himself before him—this pedagogical procedure that we find throughout his discourse upon occasion may appear to be encouraging the obvious. "I hope that most readers will agree with me," says the orator who takes no risk whatsoever without making an alliance or returning to it. The dialogue entered upon with the reader is also a theatrical artifice in which the answer precedes and envelops the question. From then on, it is a matter, without further delay, of turning the episode involving Olympia into satire, thus managing to eclipse and obscure it. We get sand thrown in our eyes, no doubt about it.

Next comes Freud's narration of the Sand-Man and the account is faithful (or so it would seem); it is not a paraphrase. Freud delights

in having to rewrite the tale structurally, beginning with the *center* designated as such a priori. The whole story is recounted then by the Sand-Man who tears out children's eyes. Given the fact that Freud's approach is that of inverted repetition, one sees how he rewrites the tale for demonstrative purpose: a reading that is reclosed as that in the *Unheimliche* is now closed on the *Heimliche*. The reader gets the impression that Freud's narrative is not as *Unheimliche* as he claims: is that new element which should have remained hidden doubtless too exposed here? Or did Freud render uncanniness something too familiar? Was the letter stolen? The two versions of the Sand-Man have to be read in order to notice what has been slipped into one version from the other. As a condensed narrative, Freud's story is singularly altered in the direction of a linear, logical account of Nathaniel and strongly articulated as a kind of "case history," going from childhood remembrances to the delirium and the ultimate tragic end. All through the story, Freud intrudes in various ways: in one instance to bring the fantastic back to the rational (the *Unheimliche* to the *Heimliche*); in another instance, he intrudes to establish explicit liaisons which are not conveyed as such in the text. These interventions, in effect, constitute a redistribution of the story while they tend to attenuate, to the point of effacement, the characters who represent the *Heimliche*, like Clara and her brother. He minimizes the uncertainty revolving around Olympia, thus pushing Olympia toward the group of the *Heimliche* and clearly diminishing the texture of the story by trimming, in particular, the discontinuity of the exposition, the sequence, the succession of narrators, and points of view. These interventions organize a confrontation between the Sand-Man and Nathaniel which is much more sustained and obsessive but also less surprising than in the original version. If the reader's eye is applied to the satanic eyeglass of the optician (by Hoffmann,—Freud suggests—an action which betrays a number of intentions on the part of the "author"), the function of the eyeglass as it is replayed by Freud constitutes a disturbing complexity: it seems to eradicate the doubt concerning the author's intention. Does it, indeed, lead us toward real life or toward the fantastic? *No more doubt* (there is repetition and insistence on Freud's part concerning the rejection of doubt): by a series of abrupt thrusts, Freud jumps from one effect to the other (giving the appearance of going from cause to effect) until reaching "the point of certitude," of *reality*, which he wishes to establish as the cornerstone upon which he may found his analytical argument. We are obliged to accept this "conclusion" with its retroactive effects, or to get out of this venture without loss. Let us play: let's concede that

there is a real sequence and not only a semblance of sequence in such a peremptory declaration.⁶ And let's rely on the logic of "consequently": we do not question, like Freud, that Coppola may be Coppelius, thus the Sand-Man in reality; and we believe Nathaniel not to be delirious but clairvoyant. Let us accept these effects (and also this fictional unity of the reader and the analyst), and this "art of interpretation," but not without keeping the secret desire to *unmask* what should not have remained hidden in such a selective reading. Freud pruned the story of its involved narrative structure, of the heterogeneity of its points of view, of all "superfluous" detail (the "operatic" aspect of the account with its choruses of students and villagers and the retinue of mediations which are more or less useful to the plot), pruned it of any meaning which did not seem to contribute to the thematic economy of the story. But should not this gesture of the cutting of such Hoffmannesque trees (Freud, moreover, complains of their thickness) be underscored? For it is indeed a question of *cutting* rather than one of summarizing, as if insisting that the presence of eyes contaminated the sight that reads the text. The role of pantomime, so striking in Hoffmann's story,⁷ is precisely the element that accounts for the charm of this creative work, this springing from the *Erinnerung* through the epistolary account up to the carnival scene, this extreme interiorization of subjects and reduplication of an ordinary reality by an extraordinary one (which *prohibits* reading the story exclusively in one or the other worlds). This pantomime that obliges the reader *in fact* to appreciate this superb creation from the real and imaginary axes is categorically expelled by Freud. Therein springs that debatable proceeding of intellectual uncertainty which leads him to dance between psychology and psychoanalysis. The rambling demonstrability turns back attentively to what is at stake, and reflects Freud's constraint: decreeing, for example, that uncertainty on such and such a point is not as uncertain as that: Coppola = Coppelius. But this is so by paronomasia. Rhetoric does not create the real. To perceive identities is reassuring, but perceiving "incomplete" identities is another matter. In his reduction of "intellectual uncertainty" to a rhetorical uncertainty, Freud appears to be playing on the velvet of lexicography. Because Jentsch's *vocabulary* is answerable to psychology, Freud allows himself the possibility of completely excluding this uncertainty insofar as it would be "intellectual." When the *Unheimliche* forces back the Jentschian motif, is there not, in fact, a *repression of the repression*? Does not Jentsch say more than what Freud wishes to read?

Eyes in one's pockets: It is up to us to read *in its ambiguity* Freud's phrase and what it censures: "This short summary leaves, I think, no

doubt. . . .” Do we understand by that, Hoffmann’s story or the story that is quickly recounted? But it is precisely the short summary that displaces and engenders doubt. Thinking about this method of telling as a deformation of the thought in the text in the manner in which we speak of thought in a dream, Freud “relates,” in fact, how he would have deciphered the puzzle of the dream. His elaboration *begins*, in reality, from a conclusion which returns the analysis to the still intra-analytical circle. This is a conclusion that cuts two ways. (1) The expulsion of “intellectual uncertainty” allows the prescription of an analytical interpretation; and the minimizing of Olympia leads to the focus on Nathaniel. (2) In this narrative of the Sand-Man, Freud plays up the fear of becoming blind and its substitute so that the Sand-Man is cut off from view by the reducing equation: Sand-Man = loss of eyes (yet it is not so simple as this). Thus, in one stroke, the two great and extraordinary figures are supplanted, and with them, Hoffmann’s theater: one half of the text is eliminated. Only the eyes remain: Freud’s terrain is now less mobile; we are on territory which is very much reinforced by observations and theoretical knowledge (“to learn,” “learned”). On the one hand, the fear of the loss of sight is a fact of daily experience which clichés underscore, and that is a *familiar* fear. Moreover, examination of three formations of the unconscious (dreams, phantasms, myths) shows that this fear hides another, that of castration. Oedipus, who is summoned briefly here, gives testimony that enucleation is an attenuation of castration. And castration, enucleation, and Oedipus assert themselves here without our being sure, however, of their position relative to the whole in which they are constituted. *If* one articulates the implication, the accent is placed on castration rather than on Oedipus; analysis of the *Unheimliche* can thus pass for analysis of the nuclear Oedipus-castration question. Freud, moreover, has not elaborated directly concerning the complex articulation of the Oedipus-castration: the boy is led to liquidate his Oedipus because of the castration complex that has the bearing of something forbidden.

Freud starts from the fear the boy experiences of seeing his penis removed. But we should thus examine this principle, for it is a fact that Freud never abandoned (or wanted to abandon) the sexual character of castration; we should likewise examine here the return to the father which the castration myth implies. In point of fact, the entire analysis of the *Unheimliche* is characterized (we shall see this more and more clearly) by Freud’s *resistance* to castration and its effectuality.

For Freud, castration must be the point of its own enigma: enucleation is nothing but an attenuation of castration; there is a “sub-

stitutive relation between the eye and the male member." How can we reinforce by a rational point of view this affirmation which Freud soon recognizes as a debatable one? Indeed, one might reverse the terms (castration as an attenuation . . .) or make them equivalent: enucleation or castration. Freud, then, leaves one nonproof for another, by affirming that the secret of castration does not refer to another secret more profound than that which is articulated by anguish: the fear of castration refers back to castration and, at the very least or most, to its process of substitution (the relationship of substitution, *Ersatzbeziehung* of the penis to the eye and to other organs⁸). *Kein tieferes Geheimnis*: "no secret anymore profound," says Freud: the "very obscure sentiment" of resistance to the threat of castration is the same for all of the presentations of the loss of an organ. Freud's theoretical work is concerned with the quality of the *fear* that is elicited. Attention is thus focused on this strong and obscure sentiment which is the uncanny element of anxiety.

What lies on the other side of castration? "No meaning" other than the fear (resistance) of castration. It is this *no-other-meaning* (*Keine andere Bedeutung*) which presents itself anew (despite our wish to underplay it) in the infinite game of substitutions, through which what constitutes the elusive moment of fear returns and eclipses itself again. It is this dodging from fear to fear, the unthinkable secret since it does not open on any *other* meaning: its "agitation" (Hoffmann would say "*Unruhe*") is its affirmation. Even here, isn't everything a repercussion, a discontinuous spreading of the echo, but of the echo as a displacement, and not in any way as a referent to some transcendental meaning? The effect of uncanniness reverberates (rather than emerges), for the word is a relational signifier. *Unheimliche* is in fact a composite that infiltrates the interstices of the narrative and points to gaps we need to explain. This is what Freud underscores with a kind of relentlessness in the guise of urgent questions which are in fact tantamount to emphatic propositions: yet the "question" *why* (a mask for *because*) obligates the theory to account for the "arbitrary" characteristics of the story. What then appears as a shadow in the Freudian argument is the "arbitrary" requirement concerning meaning: a relation of reciprocal guarantee sets up, here, its mirroring effect. The hypothesis aimed at filling the gaps (these "become filled with meaning") derives from a refusal to admit the insignificance of certain characteristics. Without this hypothesis, the narration would be castrated. The fear of castration comes to the rescue of the fear of castration.

As a result of the statement of propositions (the link with the death of the father; the link with the trammels of love; the assertion of the

arbitrary nature of propositions the reversal of his own) which refer to *infantile fears* that qualify the castration complex, the doll and its double are reintroduced. Olympia, "doll" adult, the object of Nathaniel's desire, and Olympia, doll, the toy of little girls, serve as a guarantee for the adjective *infantile*. Freud initiates a development here concerning childhood: any symptom, lapse, and dream has a forked branch which encounters a childhood experience or event. The subject, "one," cites the case of an eight-year-old girl (patient) who thought that her "concentrated" gaze would bring dolls to life. In this example, the three effects of desire intersect: the hysterico-magical attitude⁹ (the gaze can produce an effect of direct action); the "concentrated" eye, the eye-penis, and the doll that is secretly alive. This example brings up again the doll motif as well as the debate on the Jentsch-Freud split. Freud underscores the displacement of fear by the desire or belief within the child that the doll is alive. (But Nathaniel is not "afraid" of Olympia.) That is something that appears contradictory. Research on this chapter ends with a theoretical question in abeyance (we shall understand it "later on"). From the time the doll makes its appearance in the story, the narration moves in an oblique fashion and runs away with itself. The doll is not, however, relegated to some more profound place than that of a *note* [footnote], a typographical metaphor of repression which is always too near but nevertheless negligible.

Note to Olympia; or the other story of the Sand-Man: In the form of a note, Freud, in fact, gives us a second narrative which would presumably be only the "reestablished," first and original version, closer to the interpretation of a case than to the displacement wrought by the creator's imagination beginning with these elements. It is no longer a question here of the Sand-Man, but rather of its analytical version. Coppélius is designated here as the redoubtable father. Freud makes the structure of a myth serve a function analogous to that undergone by neuroses. This Sand-Man is also a surreptitious rereading of the Wolf-Man¹⁰ (with a few elements borrowed from the Obsessed-Man): the function of Nathaniel's maid, and of Nania of the Wolf-Man; the father decomposed into new father, a God-pig and tender father; a reedition of the father by the Latin professor, Mr. Wolf (son of son-filius-daughter) and by Spalanzani. To be sure, the analogy has no scientific value but it is certainly the citations of this story which color the rest of this analysis (though Freud does not refer back to *Kleiner Schriften zur Neurosenlehre*). The filigreed presence of these cases allows Freud to accelerate his argument and justify the apparent

"imprudence." It follows that if in the ordering of this new text, a dismembered, tightened-up, and reassembled Olympia takes on a new importance, she is, at once, retrieved by the interpretation: "she can be nothing else than a personification of Nathaniel's feminine attitude toward his father in his infancy," says Freud. To be sure! Homosexuality returns in reality under this charming figure. But Olympia is more than just a detached complex of Nathaniel. If she is no more than that, why are not the dance, the song, the mechanisms, and the artificer brought back into the game or theorized upon by Freud? What are we expected to do with these puppets which have haunted the stages of German romanticism?¹¹

Again, the beautiful Olympia is effaced by what she represents, for Freud has no eyes for her. This woman appears obscene because she emerges there where "one" did not expect her to appear, and she thus causes Freud to take a detour. And what if the doll became a woman? What if she *were* alive? What if, in looking at her, we animated her?

Superannuated, isolated from the scene, the doll comes out . . . between two acts.

Rebirth and history of the double: Make way for another adventure: Freud tells us now a "surprising story," that of the birth and evolution of the double, the product and hiding-place of castration. This fantastic story takes place on several stages simultaneously, in a spatio-temporal emancipation worthy of fiction. "The author who enjoys much freedom also possesses the freedom to select at will the theater of his fictional action. The storyteller has this license 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," says Freud with respect to the envied creator. At this moment, Freud has this freedom at his disposal: the fact is that he keeps his text in these indistinct and libidinous regions where the light of law does not yet cast its logic and where description, plural hypotheses, and all the pretheoretical games are given free reign. This story of the double resembles the novel of "the unequalled master" of the *Unheimliche* which presents "a mass of themes to which one is tempted to ascribe the uncanny effect. . . ." The whole (novel, story) is "too intricate" and confused for us to attempt to take out an excerpt. What does the disconcerted reader do? He "selects" the most salient themes in order to seek out what he hopes to find. And what about the rest? One pulls a thread. The tapestry remains. Freud, then, satisfies his always controlled desire to achieve an economy of the

“confusion” and abundance: the *Unheimliche* displays its branches, its enigmas and apparitions on an historical-mythical foundation. First cluster: the network of the manifestations of the double; “telepathy,” identification made from one to the other, replacement of the strange self by the proper self, cleavage, substitution, redoubling of the self, and finally, the recurrent return of what is similar (this last trait is underscored as *farthermost* by Freud), repetition of the same traits, characteristics, and destinies, etc. Second cluster: researchers of the double: Otto Rank, Hoffmann, Freud, the psychoanalyst, the psychologist, the literary inventor, the poet Heine, a series of questions and inquiries which may be traced back to prehistorical times to a foundation of gods and demons. A mythic anthropology is outlined. Third cluster: a series of anecdotal examples which are literary, biographical, tales and remembrances and mini-stories within the story. These three clusters, which are made up of unusual and scattered elements, are recombined in a great disorder of meanings through points of intersection and attraction which appear frequently to be ordered by chance. Nevertheless, they are crystallized through contact with the fourth cluster, which lends intrigue to the entire story. The fourth cluster: each theme is the double of another theme; the primitive soul refers back to the figuration of dream language, to Egyptian art, to the child’s soul by a system of metaphor or representations which psychoanalysis links: the “algebraic sign” *Unheimliche* is that which masks “the unlimited ego” and primitive narcissism. But as a *changing* sign, it passes from the affirmation of survival to the announcement of death. As an “anticipatory sign” the uncanny alludes to the death pulse (just as this entire text is a forerunner of *Lustprinzipts*) within which pulse the reinforcement of life by the double is replaced by the pulsation of the discharge repeal. So too the text is reinforced, redoubled, discharged; it pivots and becomes a forerunner of itself.

As filigree of this analysis of the silent language of death, the theme of childhood, diversified in a primary sort of narcissism, initiates the historical development of the self: the history of the self is registered in the history of the theme as if it were facing it. Having pierced through the text the self appears through the coppice: as involved and intertwined as it is, it constantly points to other approaches and brings up other questions. A cortege of variegated problems accompanies it, such as the allusion to pathological delirium, the wink at Egypt, etc. The historicity of the self, which attracts Freud, corresponds to his differentiation in two instances; historically the double *feeds* on the offspring cast off by the self through critical solicitation; an *incorporation* whose phantasm gives rise, in its turn, to the metaphor of

a disquieting consummation: the double thus also absorbs the unrealized eventualities of our destiny which the imagination refuses to let go. If this self is considered from a theoretical point of view and presented descriptively it leads back to all that is lodged there, to the Lacanian "imaginaire." It produces, particularly in the reading, the ghostly figure of nonfulfillment and repression, and not the double as counterpart or reflection, but rather the doll that is neither dead nor alive. Expelled, but why?

Admission of failure; there is nothing in all that Freud says which explains the effort to defend the self and the double's exile. A hypothesis leads us back to phylogenetic positions, Freud studying psychoanalytical themes through the *collective* historical traversal, at the level of race. There is a winding around the double which seems to be "decorated" with a new kind of provocation: this time, it is the *extraordinary degree* of the *Unheimliche* which escapes us, an oversold uncanny. Still another zigzag, another disorder of the self, and once again it is Hoffmann who is linked, this time, to the *series* of anxious states of mind. Fiction resists and returns, Hoffmann more and more distinctly becomes Freud's double (through substitution or through cleavage). Everything occurs, then, as if Hoffmann, in coming back, incited Freud to produce a kind of fiction: two or three short tales punctuate the long development on the *division of that which is similar*, the crowning case of the *Unheimliche*. Repetition is regulated by the allusion "should not have repeated itself." In the first biographical tale, Freud shows himself in a typical movement of denial: he masks his language with the type of modesty which exposes him comically: the psychoanalyst psychoanalyzed in the very study he is seeking to develop.

The First Story: Freud begins: "Once . . . on a hot summer afternoon . . ." in a style that oscillates between realistic narration and analytic deviation; certainty quarrels with certainty. "I could not long remain in doubt" regarding the kind of neighborhood, says Freud. But for the reader, doubt emerges here and there where women made up with rouge gather (dolls?) and Freud wanders—in obsessive turns. One other winding, and instead of the distress which Freud claims to have experienced, we should be confronted with the irresistible comedy of Mark Twain. Question: how many repetitions are necessary before distress turns into comedy? The "degree" of repetition supposes the type of reflection that Freud scrupulously refrains from undertaking: he wants to remain sexually on this side of ridicule. . . . That's an opportunity at unsuccessful castration!

The Second Story: The return of number 62. "You" is the wretched hero of this serialized story. This banal evocation of the little mysteries of everyday experience shows how an inanimate number can become an evil spirit. The number 62 functions as an evil master of time. "You" will be tempted to ascribe some meaning to it: here, the function of strangeness becomes complicated by this mediation of the number. The world repeats (and not the self as in the preceding story). Freud adheres to chance inasmuch as chance would be a kind of analytical concretization. What meaning would *you* attribute to 62? If you are not "steeled" against superstition, you will understand the *allurement* of the meaning: "you." Especially if you have been born in 1856 and if you are writing in 1919 a text which the instinct (*trieb*) of death haunts, then you will be the reprieved author, who escapes the announcement of his end, masked by a *you* where the *I* becomes identifiable with the reader. Freud is palming off his own death on us, and the reader has become the substitute; and isn't the one who has lived a year beyond the age foreseen for his own disappearance in some way a *ghost*?

After which, you, Freud, you slip back once again under the analyst Freud, and while the threat of 62 moves away again, the primary process which it had replaced on the stage reappears. An exchange of subterranean journeys. The principle of pleasure and beyond enforce their disquieting reigns: a sudden projection before the stage's drawn curtain of the automatism of a deaf and blind repetition which dominates the most intimate of psychological springs (that is to say, the most archaic and secret doll). The devil, the playing child, and the neurotic, either sufficiently or insufficiently conscious, touch one another, as good transmitters of the *Unheimliche*. The text becomes knotty, and stops. A cut. A desire for the *indisputable*: Freud states that you must have something certain. And he cites, again, either out of remorse or compulsion, another even more doubtful, mythological, and veiled story: "The Ring of Polycrates" or "He who is too happy should fear the envy of the gods."

This is a beautiful example of a silent "dialogue" with death which claims its due; that is to say, it is always a question of an exchange with life itself and with the most alive.

At this moment Freud puts up the greatest resistance to his own discovery: he defers, backs up, regresses, or stalls for time in the research; takes another detour (recalls the history of the Obsessed-Man). Thus the strange underground empire is mapped by inter-

sections derived from mythological and clinical studies running the gamut from the most commonplace to the most theoretical through a bizarre fan of examples.

Let us return to the eye by way of the Evil Eye in a reading which is a cross between superstition and ophthalmology. Once again, the threads become knotted: the thread of superstition, the clinical one, and that of analytical explication. I project my desire to do harm on another and his eye returns it to me; it is thus that the "evil eye" of the text looks at us furtively in the deepest recesses of our story as we defend our omnipotence, our unlimitedness against the threat of reality, in the time when men were gods and in the time of "animism."

The unconscious psychic activity appears to be derived from primitive animism. Associated with narcissism, animism reintroduces the double. Freud does not come out of the system of the *Unheimliche* because no one comes out of it: one sees with an uncanny eye the journey completed by a return-repetition to the lexicon in an exact representation of the first lexical circuit. The stranger is near, the *Heimliche* passes *imperceptibly* to the *Unheimliche*, which is the intimate of intimacy, the "true" intimacy. We take up the sequence, again checking on the strength of the knots: resemblance does not inspire fright if such resemblance does not proceed from itself in spite of itself. Thus, the double becomes exteriorized not only as anguish but as a *return* of anguish. Narcissus is accoutred in anguish. The *Unheimliche* transforms itself into *Unheimliche*. The repressed *Unheimliche* shows up again in the form of the *Unheimliche*.

Is this repetition? Yes, but displaced by Freud in the same circle grown tighter and tighter toward a decentered and receding target. Insistent: it is the *insistence* of the *Heimliche* which provokes the *Unheimliche* in the same manner. Insistence of the familiar gives rise to what is uncanny, in the long run. *Unheimliche*: the intensity of a vibration which passes over to (rather than causes) the same turn. What "made" this *Unheimliche* something else is nothing new or foreign, but simply the repressive process. The vibration changes the burden of the signs.

Are all men mortal?: "The primitive fear of the dead is still so strong within us and always ready to come to the surface at any opportunity." The direct figure of the uncanny is the Ghost. The Ghost is the fiction of our relationship to death, concretized by the specter in literature. The relationship to death reveals *the highest degree* of the *Unheimliche*. There is nothing more notorious and uncanny to our thought than mortality. There is a dazzling section on disputed death, on the failure

of death to serve as an instrument of moral order and public authority which is veiled by an ideological belief in the hereafter.

Why would death have this power? Because of its alliance with scientific uncertainty and primitive thought. "Death" does not have any form in life. Our unconscious makes no place for the representation of our mortality. As an impossible representation, death is that which mimes, by this very impossibility, the reality of death. It goes even further. That which signifies without that which is signified. What is an absolute secret, something absolutely new and which should remain hidden, because it has shown itself to me, is the fact that I am dead; only the dead know the secret of death. Death will recognize us, but we shall not recognize it.

At this juncture, the text only continues in starts; who is the one who could weave the texture of death? The theory, which is violently thrust aside by the irreducible character of the *Unheimliche*, turns as it hesitates and gives way in the face of the inexplicable body of the *Unheimliche*. Nothing is new, everything always returns except death. Why are we still very much afraid of the dead? questions Freud. It is because, he says, the dead man has become the enemy of his survivor. If he returns to earth, it is to carry us into his "new existence" (you, the credulous reader or the subtle thinker), into his abode (this *Heimliche*, this mortal country where no metaphor, meaning, or image enters). In order to *carry you off*, it is always a question of displacement, the insidious movement, through which opposites communicate. It is the *between* that is tainted with strangeness. Everything remains to be said on the subject of the Ghost and the ambiguity of the Return, for what renders it intolerable is not so much that it is an announcement of death nor even the proof that death exists, since this Ghost announces and proves nothing more than his return. What is intolerable is that the Ghost erases the limit which exists between two states, neither alive nor dead; passing through, the dead man returns in the manner of the Repressed. It is his coming back which makes the ghost what he is, just as it is the return of the Repressed that inscribes the repression. In the end, death is never anything more than the disturbance of the limits. The impossible is to die. If all which has been lost returns, as Freud illustrated it in the *Traumdeutung*, nothing is ever lost if everything is replaceable, nothing has even disappeared and nothing is ever sufficiently dead; the relationship of presence to absence is in itself an immense system of "death," a fabric riddled by the real and a phantomization of the present. Olympia is not inanimate. The strange power of death moves in the realm of life as the *Unheimliche* in the *Heimliche*, as the void fills up the lack.

Before death's invasion (which the analyst, "the man of science at the end of his own life," cannot master by theory but which he frustrates by a complex strategy with dodgings and spurts), Freud invokes a screen of traditional defense: men's "responses" to death are all tainted with the order of the Establishment, of ideological institutions (religion and politics). An evolution has taken place from primitive animism to the moral order.

Still another knot of examples: will the weaving or references never end? Freud proceeds with excuses and additions: a little more; this is not the last; another instance; that is not enough. A moving anguish emanates from these incessant additions. The text does not want to take off; the argument becomes troubled, hardens, and doubles with thickness. Thus, quickly, another knot: he who casts an evil eye, plus epilepsy, madness, middle age, and demonology, then the bedevilment of the person (Mephisto) and the difficult patient; and I am skipping; "dismembered limbs, a severed head . . . feet which dance by themselves." Still another example, and at the same time the metaphor of this great Gathering in which members form a unity, which is always dismembered since each preserves an independent activity. A heap. But in the end, the *form of a body of examples* emerges but without "revealing" itself, a form of forms, a body which returns to its *dismemberment*. It is this "body" which Freud "crowns" (by the crown, there is an appeal to a head that is not there) with the supremely disquieting idea: the phantasm of the man buried alive: his textual head, shoved back into the maternal body, a horrible pleasure.

Liebe ist Heimweh: Love is a yearning for a country, according to popular wisdom. *Heimweh*: a yearning for a country, is a formulation which is always interrupted by the interpretation which reads: regret and desire for "yearning." But this yearning is also the yearning which renders the country for you a point of destiny. Which country? The one from which we come, "the place where everyone dwelt once upon a time and in the beginning." The country from which we come is always the one to which we are returning. You are on the return road which passes through the country of children in the maternal body. You have already passed through here: you recognize the landscape. You have always been on the return road. Why it is that the maternal landscape, the *heimisch*, and the familiar become so disquieting? The answer is less buried than we might suspect. The obliteration of any separation, the realization of the desire which in itself obliterates a limit; all that which, in effecting the movement of life in reality, allows us to come closer to a goal, the short cuts, the crossing accomplished

especially at the end of our lives; all that which overcomes, shortens, economizes, and assures satisfaction appears to affirm the life forces. All of that has another face turned toward death which is the *detour* of life. The abbreviating effect which affirms life asserts death.

The phantasm of the man buried alive represents the confusion of life and death: death within life, life in death, nonlife in nondeath. And what about castration? It is the notch and also the other self of the man buried alive: a bit too much death in life; a bit too much life in death, at the merging intersection. There is no recourse to an inside/outside. You are there permanently. There is *no reversal* from one term to another. Hence, the horror: you could be dead while living, you can be in a dubious state. The attribute of the trouble of the limit is this threatening mobility, the arbitrariness of the displacement against which repression rises. "The prefix *Un* is the token of repression," says Freud. Let us add this: any analysis of the *Unheimliche* is in itself an *Un*, a mark of repression and the dangerous vibration of the *Heimliche*. *Unheimliche* is only the other side of the repetition of *Heimliche* and this repetition is two-faced: that which emerges and/is that which is repelled. The same is true for the text which pushes forth and repels until it reaches an arbitrary end. (The *Unheimliche* has no end, but it is necessary for the text to stop somewhere.) And this "conclusion" returns and passes as a recurrence and as a reserve.

Will there be a terminus for theoretical hesitation?

If the analysis has oscillated, because of its appeal to examples, between "life" and "books," it is because of the difference which exists between the *Unheimliche* we encounter and the one we *imagine*. The fact of the matter is that a doubling is represented at all times, an "important distinction" which is only clearly perceived through the articulation of life and literature: the doubling of the *repressed* and of the *surmounted*. The *Unheimliche* of the *Repressed* would be linked to the resurgence of infantile pulsations brought on by threats and danger. It is something contained in *representations* which is repressed, that is to say a *psychic* reality. Material reality has no hold on representations (the phantasms of the maternal body and the castration complex).

The other type of *Unheimliche*, the *Surmounted*, has the same primitive root as the *Repressed*, then bifurcates: it would seem that in ancient times we had an animistic thought which vanished when confronted by *material* reality. To surmount does not mean to expel: new convictions are sometimes overwhelmed by a return to the old beliefs which a real fact, such and such extraordinary coincidence, seems to confirm. But when it "returns," we see it reappear without the anguish

which the pulsation gives to the return, and the test of reality always uncaps it anew.

This distinction redoubles another distinction which manifests it, that between life and fiction, not separately considered, but as interchanged.

The *Surmounted* is going to be able to experience anguish in fiction. In return, fiction can cancel out the *Repression* of the psychic content. The uncanniness of the repressed and the uncanniness of the surmounted exchange their modes of operation and their effects in the exchange which takes place between life and fiction (to such a point that Freud calls to our attention the impossibility of distinguishing them "clearly" in real life). Their limits intermingle. Is not the distinction that is made itself a product of fiction?

This last development would nevertheless be clear enough, if Freud had not brought up again the notion of retroactive doubt, recalling it to the very points from which he seemed to have dislodged it. The entire body of examples is shaken by it. Doubt, too, is doubtful; we have never sufficiently gotten rid of it. It is never sufficiently certain. If the *Unheimliche* is battered, in reality, by the influence of facts, it may gain something in disquieting virtue, but it does so all the more rarely. In fiction, the *Unheimliche*, dispensing with the test of reality, disposes of supplementary resources.

Toward a Theory of Fiction: Fiction is connected to life's economy by a link as undeniable and ambiguous as that which passes from the *Unheimliche* to the *Heimliche*: it is not unreal; it is the "fictional reality" and the vibration of reality. The *Unheimliche* in fiction overflows and comprises the *Unheimliche* of real life. But if fiction is another form of reality, it is understood that the secret of the *Unheimliche* does not refer to a secret more profound than that of the *Unheimliche* which envelops the *Unheimliche*, just as death overflows into life.

What is fiction in reality? This is a question which haunts the accesses to the Freudian text, but without entering them. Freud writes, "Fiction presents more opportunities for creating uncanny sensations than are possible in real life." The analysis returns to another object, the one which it has come up against unceasingly without ever exhausting it: *fiction*. It is not merely a question here of examining the enigma of the *Unheimliche* but also of the enigma of fiction as such, and of fiction in its privileged relationship to the *Unheimliche*. Fiction (re)presents itself, first of all, as a Reserve or suspension of the *Unheimliche*: for example, in the world of fairy tales the unbelievable

is never disquieting because it has been canceled out by the convention of the genre. Fictional reality, then, is interrupted. Or fiction can also multiply the uncanny effect by the interruption in the contract between author and reader, a "revolting" procedure in the author's estimation, which allows us to wander until the end, without any defense against the *Unheimliche*. That is only possible provided the Surmounted One is never completely surmounted. The impossible could then represent itself as the possible (let us distinguish here between absence in reality through impossibility and absence through death). The impossible is not death, and death is not impossible. For Freud, the variations of the Surmounted only stem, in fact, from mystification. A false death. The *true* secret of fiction rests somewhere else. Fiction, through the invention of *new* forms of *Unheimliche*, is *the very strange thing*: if one considers the *Unheimliche* as a fork of which one branch points in the direction of the uncanny and the other in the direction of an anxiety, one sees, at the extreme end of the uncanny, fiction pointing toward the unknown: what is newest in the new, through which it is in part linked with death.

As a Reserve of the Repressed, fiction is finally that which resists analysis and, thus, it attracts it the most. Only the writer "knows" and has the *freedom* to evoke or inhibit the *Unheimliche*. In other words, only the writer has the freedom to raise or to repress the Repression. But this "freedom" defies all analysis; as another form of the *Unheimliche* it is like that which should have "remained . . . hidden." Still, this fiction does not escape the law of representation, and is mysterious to everything else but itself.

From our point of view, as unflaggingly disquieted readers, we cannot help but think that Freud has hardly anything to envy in Hoffmann for his "art or craftiness" in provoking the *Unheimliche* effect. If we experience uneasiness in reading Freud's essay, it is because the author is his double in a game that cannot be dissociated from his own text: it is such that he manages to escape at every turn of phrase. It is also and especially because the *Unheimliche* refers to no more profound secret than itself: every pursuit produces its own cancellation and every text dealing with death is a text which returns. The repression of death or of castration betrays death (or castration) everywhere. To speak of death is to die. To speak of castration is either to surmount it (thus to cancel it, to castrate it) or to effect it. "Basically" Freud's adventure in this text is consecrated to the very paradox of the writing which stretches its signs in order to "manifest" the secret that it "contains." As for solitude, silence, and darkness, which have always been there since childhood, "we can only say that they are actually elements in the

production of that infantile morbid anxiety from which the majority of human beings have never become quite free." So, of the *Unheimliche* (and its double, fiction) we can only say that it never completely disappears . . . that it "re-presents" that which in solitude, silence, and darkness will (never) be presented to you. Neither real nor fictitious, "fiction" is a secretion of death, an anticipation of nonrepresentation, a doll, a hybrid body composed of language and silence that, in the movement which turns it and which it turns, invents doubles, and death.

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(Translated Robert Dennomé)

NOTES

- 1 See Appendix for the full text of *The "Uncanny"*; subsequent page references are to the essay reprinted in this number.
- 2 *Das Unheimliche* appeared in *Imago*, 5 (1919). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* appeared in May 1920, but was written, according to Freud, in 1919. Note the relationship of composition-publication of these two texts. Together, they form a chiasma: they refer to each other.
- 3 Cf. Jacques Derrida, "La Double Séance," *La Dissemination* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), p. 249, and "Hars livre," *ibid.*, p. 66.
- 4 Cited by Freud (p. 619); the study appeared in 1906. Freud's connection with his predecessor is fascinating; it would seem likely, despite appearances to the contrary, that *Das Unheimliche* had something to do with "intellectual-ness."
- 5 Freud, p. 623. Freud's text is riddled with linguistic patterns, which are sometimes obvious and sometimes hidden.
- 6 Freud, pp. 627-28. "The conclusion of the story shows well that Coppola the optician is really Coppelius the lawyer and consequently also the Sand-Man.—It is no longer a question here of intellectual uncertainty. . . ."
- 7 And in all of Hoffmann's stories, always a double *scène* (see *The Princess Brambilla, An Evening with Don Juan*, etc.).
- 8 Cf. S. Ferenczi, *Sex in Psychoanalysis* (New York, 1956), Ch. 10—"Symbolism."
- 9 Freud, p. 629.
- 10 Freud, p. 643.
- 11 A heritage transmitted by Goethe (*Faust I, II*) from the Puppenspiel, as far as the very obliteration of the notion of the imaginary, or fictitious, by Kleist, between philosophy and delirium to the point of a joining of several languages: that of the eyes, that of memory, that of body, that of enigma, that of silence (*en voir* the echo engraved by Hans Bellmer).

APPENDIX

THE "UNCANNY"*

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'¹ 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). But I must confess that I have not made a very 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;² 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 orientated 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 foreign. Indeed, we get an impression that many languages are without a word for this particular shade of what is frightening.

I should like to express my indebtedness to Dr. Theodor Reik for the following excerpts:—

LATIN: (K. E. Georges, *Deutschlateinisches Wörterbuch*, 1898). An uncanny place: *locus suspectus*; at an uncanny time of night: *intempesta nocte*.

GREEK: (Rost's and Schenkl's Lexikons). *Xenos* (i.e. strange, foreign).

ENGLISH: (from the dictionaries of Lucas, Bellows, Flügel and Muret-Sanders). Uncomfortable, uneasy, gloomy, dismal, uncanny, ghastly; (of a house) haunted; (of a man) a repulsive fellow.

FRENCH: (Sachs-Villatte). *Inquiétant, sinistre, lugubre, mal à son aise*.

SPANISH: (Tollhausen, 1889). *Sospechoso, de mal aguëro, lúgubre, siniestro*.

The Italian and Portuguese languages seem to content themselves with words which we should describe as circumlocutions. In Arabic and Hebrew 'uncanny' means the same as 'daemonic,' 'gruesome.'

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.³

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.⁴ 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*.' 'In quiet *Heimlichkeit*, surrounded by close walls.' 'A careful housewife, who knows how to make a pleasing *Heimlichkeit* (*Häuslichkeit* [domesticity]) out of the smallest means.' 'The man who till recently had been so strange to him now seemed to him all the more *heimlich*.' 'The protestant land-owners do not feel . . . *heimlich* among their catholic

inferiors.' 'When it grows *heimlich* and still, and the evening quiet alone watches over your cell.' 'Quiet, lovely and *heimlich*, no place more fitted for their rest.' 'He did not feel at all *heimlich* about it.'—Also, [in compounds] 'The place was so peaceful, so lonely, so shadily-*heimlich*.' 'The in- and outflowing waves of the current, dreamy and lullaby-*heimlich*.' Cf. in especial *Unheimlich* [see below]. Among Swabian Swiss authors in especial, often as a trisyllable: 'How *heimlich* is seemed to Ivo again of an evening, when he was at home.' 'It was so *heimelig* in the house.' 'The warm room and the *heimelig* afternoon.' 'When a man feels in his heart that he is so small and the Lord so great—that is what is truly *heimelig*.' 'Little by little they grew at ease and *heimelig* among themselves.' 'Friendly *Heimeligkeit*.' 'I shall be nowhere more *heimlich* than I am here.' 'That which comes from afar . . . assuredly does not live quite *heimelig* (*heimatlich* [at home], *freundnachbarlich* [in a neighbourly way]) among the people.' 'The cottage where he had once sat so often among his own people, so *heimelig*, so happy.' 'The sentinel's horn sounds so *heimelig* from the tower, and his voice invites so hospitably.' '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).

(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 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). 'Where public ventilation has to stop, there *heimlich* machinations begin.' 'Freedom is the whispered watchword of *heimlich* conspirators and the loud battle-cry of professed revolutionaries.' 'A holy, *heimlich* effect.' 'I have roots that are most *heimlich*. I am grown in the deep earth.' 'My *heimlich* pranks.' 'If he is not given it openly and scrupulously he may seize it *heimlich* and unscrupulously.' 'He had

achromatic telescopes constructed *heimlich* and secretly.' 'Henceforth I desire that there should be nothing *heimlich* any longer between us.'—To discover, disclose, betray someone's *Heimlichkeiten*; 'to concoct *Heimlichkeiten* behind my back.' 'In my time we studied *Heimlichkeit*.' 'The hand of understanding can alone undo the powerless spell of the *Heimlichkeit* (of hidden gold).' 'Say, where is the place of concealment . . . in what place of hidden *Heimlichkeit*?' 'Bees, who make the lock of *Heimlichkeiten*' (i.e. sealing-wax). 'Learned in strange *Heimlichkeiten*' (magic arts).

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).—'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.⁵ '*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, Part 2, 873 ff.)

We read:

Heimlich; adj. and adv. *vernaculus, occultus*; MHG. heimelich, heimlich.

(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: B) 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 . . .

P. 876.) 'On the left bank of the lake there lies a meadow *heimlich* in the wood.' (Schiller, *Wilhelm Tell*, I. 4.) . . . Poetic licence, rarely so used in modern speech . . . *Heimlich* is used in conjunction with a verb expressing the act of concealing: 'In the secret of his tabernacle he shall hide me *heimlich*.' (Ps. xxvii. 5.) . . . *Heimlich* parts of the human body, *puerenda* . . . 'the men that died not were smitten on their *heimlich* parts.' (1 Samuel v. 12.) . . .

(c) Officials who give important advice which has to be kept secret in matters of state are called *heimlich* councillors; the adjective, according to modern usage, has been replaced by *geheim* [secret] . . . 'Pharaoh called Joseph's name "him to whom secrets are revealed"' (*heimlich* councillor). (Gen. xli. 45.)

P. 878.) 6. *Heimlich*, as used of knowledge—mystic, allegorical: a *heimlich* meaning, *mysticus, divinus, occultus, figuratus*.

(P. 878.) *Heimlich* in a different sense, as withdrawn from knowledge, unconscious . . . *Heimlich* also has the meaning of that which is obscure, inaccessible to knowledge . . . 'Do you not see? They do not trust us; they fear the *heimlich* face of the Duke of Friedland.' (Schiller, *Wallensteins Lager*, Scene 2.)

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, *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's⁶ 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. Hoffmann 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*,⁷ which contains the original of Olympia, the doll that appears in the first act of Offenbach's opera, *Tales of Hoffmann*. 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 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 mechanician, 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 Coppelius⁸ 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, was simply a mitigated form of the punishment of castration—the only punishment that was adequate for him by the *lex talionis*. 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 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.⁹

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 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.

Hoffmann is the unrivalled master of the uncanny in literature. His novel, *Die Elixire des Teufels* [*The Devil's Elixir*], contains a whole mass of themes to which one is tempted to ascribe the uncanny effect of the narrative;¹⁰ but it is too obscure and intricate a story for us to venture upon a summary of it. Towards the end of the book the reader is told the facts, hitherto concealed from him, from which the action springs; with the result, not that he is at last enlightened, but that he falls into a state of complete bewilderment. The author has piled up too much material of the same kind. In consequence one's grasp of the story as a whole suffers, though not the impression it makes. We must content ourselves with selecting those themes of uncanniness which are most prominent, and with seeing whether they too can fairly be traced back to infantile sources. These themes are all concerned with the phenomenon of the 'double,' which appears in every shape and in every degree of development. Thus we have characters who are to be considered identical because they look alike. This relation is accentuated by mental processes leaping from one of these characters to another—by what we should call telepathy—, so that the one possesses knowledge, feelings and experience in common with the other. Or it is marked by the fact that the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. In other words,

there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self. And finally there is the constant recurrence of the same thing¹¹—the repetition of the same features or character-traits or vicissitudes, of the same crimes, or even the same names through several consecutive generations.

The theme of the 'double' has been very thoroughly treated by Otto Rank (1914). He has gone into the connections which the 'double' has with reflections in mirrors, with shadows, with guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and with the fear of death; but he also lets in a flood of light on the surprising evolution of the idea. For the 'double' was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an 'energetic denial of the power of death,' as Rank says; and probably the 'immortal' soul was the first 'double' of the body. This invention of doubling as a preservation against extinction has its counterpart in the language of dreams, which is fond of representing castration by a doubling of multiplication of a genital symbol.¹² The same desire led the Ancient Egyptians to develop the art of making images of the dead in lasting materials. Such ideas, however, have sprung from the soil of unbounded self-love, from the primary narcissism which dominates the mind of the child and of primitive man. But when this stage has been surmounted, the 'double' reverses its aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death.

The idea of the 'double' does not necessarily disappear with the passing of primary narcissism, for it can receive fresh meaning from the later stages of the ego's development. A special agency is slowly formed there, which is able to stand over against the rest of the ego, which has the function of observing and criticizing the self and exercising a censorship within the mind, and which we become aware of as our 'conscience.' In the pathological case of delusions of being watched, this mental agency becomes isolated, dissociated from the ego, and discernible to the physician's eye. The fact that an agency of this kind exists, which is able to treat the rest of the ego like an object—the fact, that is, that man is capable of self-observation—renders it possible to invest the old idea of a 'double' with a new meaning and to ascribe a number of things to it—above all, those things which seem to self-criticism to belong to the old surmounted narcissism of earliest times.¹³

But it is not only this latter material, offensive as it is to the criticism of the ego, which may be incorporated in the idea of a double. There are also all the unfulfilled but possible futures to which we still like to cling in phantasy, all the strivings of the ego which adverse external circumstances have crushed, and all our suppressed acts of volition which nourish in us the illusion of Free Will.¹⁴ [Cf. Freud, 1901b, Chapter XII (B).]

But after having thus considered the *manifest* motivation of the figure of a 'double,' we have to admit that none of this helps us to understand the extraordinarily strong feeling of something uncanny that pervades

the conception; and our knowledge of pathological mental processes enables us to add that nothing in this more superficial material could account for the urge towards defence which has caused the ego to project that material outward as something foreign to itself. When all is said and done, the quality of uncanniness can only come from the fact of the 'double' being a creation dating back to a very early mental stage, long since surmounted—a stage, incidentally, at which it wore a more friendly aspect. The 'double' has become a thing of terror, just as, after the collapse of their religion, the gods turned into demons.¹⁵

The other forms of ego-disturbance exploited by Hoffmann can easily be estimated along the same lines as the theme of the 'double.' They are a harking-back to particular phases in the evolution of the self-regarding feeling, a regression to a time when the ego had not yet marked itself off sharply from the external world and from other people. I believe that these factors are partly responsible for the impression of uncanniness, although it is not easy to isolate and determine exactly their share of it.

The factor of the repetition of the same thing will perhaps not appeal to everyone as a source of uncanny feeling. From what I have observed, this phenomenon does undoubtedly, subject to certain conditions and combined with certain circumstances, arouse an uncanny feeling, which, furthermore, recalls the sense of helplessness experienced in some dream-states. As I was walking, one hot summer afternoon, through the deserted streets of a provincial town in Italy which was unknown to me, I found myself in a quarter of whose character I could not long remain in doubt. Nothing but painted women were to be seen at the windows of the small houses, and I hastened to leave the narrow street at the next turning. But after having wandered about for a time without enquiring my way, I suddenly found myself back in the same street, where my presence was now beginning to excite attention. I hurried away once more, only to arrive by another *détour* at the same place yet a third time. Now, however, a feeling overcame me which I can only describe as uncanny, and I was glad enough to find myself back at the piazza I had left a short while before, without any further voyages of discovery. Other situations which have in common with my adventure an unintended recurrence of the same situation, but which differ radically from it in other respects, also result in the same feeling of helplessness and of uncanniness. So, for instance, when, caught in a mist perhaps, one has lost one's way in a mountain forest, every attempt to find the marked or familiar path may bring one back again and again to one and the same spot, which one can identify by some particular landmark. Or one may wander about in a dark, strange room, looking for the door or the electric switch, and collide time after time with the same piece of furniture—though it is true that Mark Twain succeeded by wild exaggeration in turning this latter situation into something irresistibly comic.¹⁶

If we take another class of things, it is easy to see that there, too, it is only this factor of involuntary repetition which surrounds what would

otherwise be innocent enough with an uncanny atmosphere, and forces upon us the idea of something fateful and inescapable when otherwise we should have spoken only of 'chance.' For instance, we naturally attach no importance to the event when we hand in an overcoat and get a cloakroom ticket with the number, let us say, 62; or when we find that our cabin on a ship bears that number. But the impression is altered if two such events, each in itself indifferent, happen close together—if we come across the number 62 several times in a single day, or if we begin to notice everything which has a number—addresses, hotel rooms, compartments in railway trains—invariably has the same one, or at all events one which contains the same figures. We do feel this to be uncanny. And unless a man is utterly hardened and proof against the lure of superstition, he will be tempted to ascribe a secret meaning to this obstinate recurrence of a number; he will take it, perhaps, as an indication of the span of life allotted to him.¹⁷ Or suppose one is engaged in reading the works of the famous physiologist, Hering, and within the space of a few days receives two letters from two different countries, each from a person called Hering, though one has never before had any dealings with anyone of that name. Not long ago an ingenious scientist (Kammerer, 1919) attempted to reduce coincidences of this kind to certain laws, and so deprive them of their uncanny effect. I will not venture to decide whether he has succeeded or not.

How exactly we can trace back to infantile psychology the uncanny effect of such similar recurrences is a question I can only lightly touch on in these pages; and I must refer the reader instead to another work,¹⁸ already completed, in which this has been gone into in detail, but in a different connection. For it is possible to recognize the dominance in the unconscious mind of a 'compulsion to repeat' proceeding from the instinctual impulses and probably inherent in the very nature of the instincts—a compulsion powerful enough to overrule the pleasure principle, lending to certain aspects of the mind their daemonic character, and still very clearly expressed in the impulses of small children; a compulsion, too, which is responsible for a part of the course taken by the analyses of neurotic patients. All these considerations prepare us for the discovery that whatever reminds us of this inner 'compulsion to repeat' is perceived as uncanny.

Now, however, it is time to turn from these aspects of the matter, which are in any case difficult to judge, and look for some undeniable instances of the uncanny, in the hope that an analysis of them will decide whether our hypothesis is a valid one.

In the story of 'The Ring of Polycrates,'¹⁹ the King of Egypt turns away in horror from his host, Polycrates, because he sees that his friend's every wish is at once fulfilled, his every care promptly removed by kindly fate. Jentsch citation about the Sand-Man beginning with the character His host has become 'uncanny' to him. His own explanation, that the

too fortunate man has to fear the envy of the gods, seems obscure to us; its meaning is veiled in mythological language. We will therefore turn to another example in a less grandiose setting. In the case history of an obsessional neurotic,²⁰ I have described how the patient once stayed in a hydropathic establishment and benefited greatly by it. He had the good sense, however, to attribute his improvement not to the therapeutic properties of the water, but to the situation of his room, which immediately adjoined that of a very accommodating nurse. So on his second visit to the establishment he asked for the same room, but was told that it was already occupied by an old gentleman, whereupon he gave vent to his annoyance in the words: 'I wish he may be struck dead for it.' A fortnight later the old gentleman really did have a stroke. My patient thought this an 'uncanny' experience. The impression of uncanniness would have been stronger still if less time had elapsed between his words and the untoward event, or if he had been able to report innumerable similar coincidences. As a matter of fact, he had no difficulty in producing coincidences of this sort; but then not only he but every obsessional neurotic I have observed has been able to relate analogous experiences. They are never surprised at their invariably running up against someone they have just been thinking of, perhaps for the first time for a long while. If they say one day 'I haven't had any news of so-and-so for a long time,' they will be sure to get a letter from him the next morning, and an accident or a death will rarely take place without having passed through their mind a little while before. They are in the habit of referring to this state of affairs in the most modest manner, saying that they have 'presentiments' which 'usually' come true.

One of the most uncanny and wide-spread forms of superstition is the dread of the evil eye, which has been exhaustively studied by the Hamburg oculist Seligmann (1910-11). There never seems to have been any doubt about the source of this dread. Whoever possesses something that is at once valuable and fragile is afraid of other people's envy, in so far as he projects on to them the envy he would have felt in their place. A feeling like this betrays itself by a look²¹ even though it is not put into words; and when a man is prominent owing to noticeable, and particularly owing to unattractive, attributes, other people are ready to believe that his envy is rising to a more than usual degree of intensity and that this intensity will convert it into effective action. What is feared is thus a secret intention of doing harm, and certain signs are taken to mean that that intention has the necessary power at its command.

These last examples of the uncanny are to be referred to the principle which I have called 'omnipotence of thoughts,' taking the name from an expression used by one of my patients.²² And now we find ourselves on familiar ground. Our analysis of instances of the uncanny has led us back to the old, animistic conception of the universe. This was characterized by the idea that the world was peopled with the spirits of human beings; by the subject's narcissistic overvaluation of his own mental pro-

cesses; by the belief in the omnipotence of thoughts and the technique of magic based on that belief; by the attribution to various outside persons and things of carefully graded magical powers, or 'mana'; as well as by all the other creations with the help of which man, in the unrestricted narcissism of that stage of development, strove to fend off the manifest prohibitions of reality. It seems as if each one of us has been through a phase of individual development corresponding to this animistic stage in primitive men, that none of us has passed through it without preserving certain residues and traces of it which are still capable of manifesting themselves, and that everything which now strikes us as 'uncanny' fulfils the condition of touching those residues of animistic mental activity within us and bringing them to expression.²³

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* (p. 625); 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 [p. 623] 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 [p. 621] 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.²⁴ 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.²⁵ 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.²⁶

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*,'²⁷ that uncanny figure of Romanic superstition which Schaeffer, 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.²⁸

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.

Dismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist, as in a fairy tale of Hauff's,²⁹ 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.³⁰

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 wartime 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.³¹ In this case too, then, the *unheimlich* is what was once *heimisch*, familiar; the prefix 'un' ['un-'] is the token of repression.³²

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 prehistory 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 [p. 638] 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, 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 Polycrates [p. 635] 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's 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.

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? 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 and quite different purposes in another class of cases. We have already come across one example [p. 633] in which it is employed to call up a feeling of the comic; 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 [p. 637]?

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 differ-

entiation 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 'a fear of something uncanny.' The whole thing is purely an affair of 'reality-testing,' a question of the material reality of the phenomena.³³

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 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 judgment 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. 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*] and similar stories 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 [see p. 645]. 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 [p. 640] 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*], 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 *Canterville Ghost*, 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 [pp. 640-641], 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.³⁴

NOTES

* *The "Uncanny"* (1919), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, tr., ed., rev. James Strachey (1955; London, 1971), XVII; reprinted by permission of The Hogarth Press Ltd. Notes in brackets are by the translator. *The "Uncanny"* also appears as Ch. 22, *The Collected Papers of Sigmund Freud*, ed. Ernest Jones, M.D. (New York, 1925). This paper was originally published by Sigmund Freud in *Imago*, 5, in autumn of 1919.

1 [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.]

2 [An allusion to the first World War only just concluded.]

3 [In the translation which follows in the text above, a few details, mainly giving the sources of the quotations, have been omitted.]

4 [It may be remarked that the English 'canny,' in addition to its more usual meaning of 'shrewd,' can mean 'pleasant,' 'cosy.']

5 [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.']

6 [In the original version of the paper (1919) only, the name 'Schleiermacher' was printed here, evidently in error.]

7 Hoffmann's *Sämtliche Werke*, Grisebach Edition, 3. [A translation of 'The Sand-Man' is included in *Eight Tales of Hoffmann*, translated by J. M. Cohen, London, Pan Books, 1952.]

8 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. [Except in the first (1919) edition this footnote was attached, it seems erroneously, to the first occurrence of the name Coppelius on this page.]

9 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 interpretation 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 (see above, 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.

10 [Under the rubric 'Varia' in one of the issues of the *Internationale Zeitschrift*

für *Psychoanalyse* for 1919 (5, 308), the year in which the present paper was first published, there appears over the initials 'S.F.' a short note which it is not unreasonable to attribute to Freud. Its insertion here, though strictly speaking irrelevant, may perhaps be excused. The note is headed: 'E. T. A. Hoffmann on the Function of Consciousness' and it proceeds: 'In *Die Elixire des Teufels* (Part II, p. 210, in Hesse's edition)—a novel rich in masterly descriptions of pathological mental states—Schönfeld comforts the hero, whose consciousness is temporarily disturbed, with the following words: "And what do you get out of it? I mean out of the particular mental function which we call consciousness, and which is nothing but the confounded activity of a damned toll-collector—excise-man—deputy-chief customs officer, who has set up his infamous bureau in our top storey and who exclaims, whenever any goods try to get out: 'Hi! hi! exports are prohibited . . . they must stay here . . . here, in this country. . . .'"']

11 [This phrase seems to be an echo from Nietzsche (e.g. from the last part of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*). In Chapter III of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920g), *Standard Ed.*, 18, 22, Freud puts a similar phrase 'the perpetual recurrence of the same thing' into inverted commas.]

12 [Cf. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *Standard Ed.*, 5, 357.]

13 I believe that when poets complain that two souls dwell in the human breast, and when popular psychologists talk of the splitting of people's egos, what they are thinking of is this division (in the sphere of ego-psychology) between the critical agency and the rest of the ego, and not the antithesis discovered by psycho-analysis between the ego and what is unconscious and repressed. It is true that the distinction between these two antitheses is to some extent effaced by the circumstance that foremost among the things that are rejected by the criticism of the ego are derivatives of the repressed.—[Freud had already discussed this critical agency at length in Section III of his paper on narcissism (1914c), and it was soon to be further expanded into the 'ego-ideal' and 'super-ego' in Chapter XI of his *Group Psychology* (1921c) and Chapter III of *The Ego and the Id* (1923b) respectively.]

14 In Ewers's *Der Student von Prag*, which serves as the starting-point of Rank's study on the 'double,' the hero has promised his beloved not to kill his antagonist in a duel. But on his way to the duelling-ground he meets his 'double,' who has already killed his rival.

15 Heine, *Die Götter im Exil*.

16 [Mark Twain, *A Tramp Abroad*, London, 1880, 1, 107.]

17 [Freud had himself reached the age of 62 a year earlier, in 1918.]

18 [This was published a year later as *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920g). The various manifestations of the 'compulsion to repeat' enumerated here are enlarged upon in Chapters II and III of that work. The 'compulsion to repeat' had already been described by Freud as a clinical phenomenon, in a technical paper published five years earlier (1914g).]

19 [Schiller's poem based on Herodotus.]

20 'Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis' (1909d) [*Standard Ed.*, 10, 234].

21 ['The evil eye' in German is '*der böse Blick*,' literally 'the evil look'.]

22 [The obsessional patient referred to just above—the 'Rat Man' (1909d), *Standard Ed.*, 10, 233f.]

23 Cf. my book *Totem and Taboo* (1912-13), Essay III, 'Animism, Magic and the Omnipotence of Thoughts,' where the following footnote will be found: 'We appear to attribute an "uncanny" quality to impressions that seek to confirm the omnipotence of thoughts and the animistic mode of thinking in general, after we have reached a stage at which, in our judgment, we have abandoned such beliefs.' [*Standard Ed.*, 13, 86.]

24 [This problem figures prominently in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920g),

on which Freud was engaged while writing the present paper. See *Standard Ed.*, 18, 44 ff.]

25 [Freud had discussed the individual's attitude to death at greater length in the second part of his paper 'Thoughts for the Times on War and Death' (1915b).]

26 Cf. *Totem and Taboo* [*Standard Ed.*, 13, 66].

27 [Literally 'thrower' (of bad luck), or 'one who casts' (the evil eye).—Schaeffer's novel was published in 1918.]

28 [She feels that surely I'm a genius now,—
Perhaps the very Devil indeed!

Goethe, *Faust*, Part I (Scene 16),
(Bayard Taylor's translation).]

29 [*Die Geschichte von der abgehauenen Hand* ('The Story of the Severed Hand').]

30 [See Section VIII of Freud's analysis of the 'Wolf Man' (1918b), above p. 101 ff.]

31 [Cf. *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900a), *Standard Ed.*, 5, 399.]

32 [See Freud's paper on 'Negation' (1925h).]

33 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, 3). 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 unfavourable opinion about the supposed stranger who 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 compartment 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 dislike our dislike of them was a vestigial trace of the archaic reaction which feels liked 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, the 'double' to be something uncanny?

34 [See the discussion of children's fear of the dark in Section V of the third of Freud's *Three Essays* (1905d), *Standard Ed.*, 7, 224 n.]