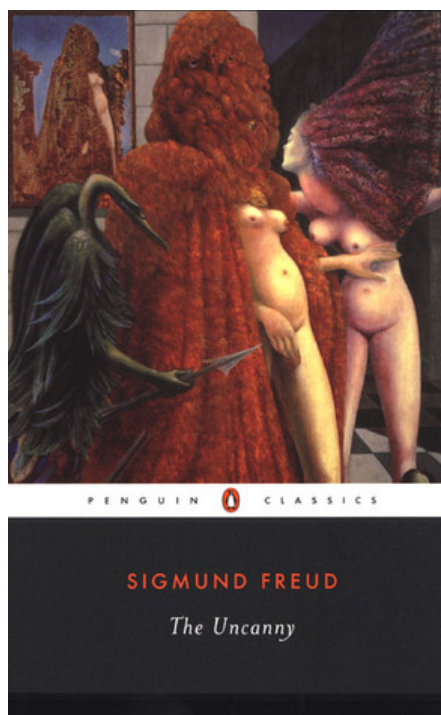




The Uncanny

Sigmund Freud , Adam Phillips (Editor) , David McLintock (Translator) , Hugh Haughton (Introduction)

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Freud was fascinated by the mysteries of creativity and the imagination. The groundbreaking works that comprise *The Uncanny* present some of his most influential explorations of the mind. In these pieces Freud investigates the vivid but seemingly trivial childhood memories that often "screen" deeply uncomfortable desires; the links between literature and daydreaming; and our intensely mixed feelings about things we experience as "uncanny." Also included is Freud's celebrated study of Leonardo Da Vinci-his first exercise in psychobiography.

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The Uncanny Details

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From Reader Review The Uncanny for online ebook

Keith says

Anyone with even the most basic understanding of logic will probably be bothered by the way Freud draws his conclusions here, particularly in the "celebrated" Da Vinci essay that makes up the bulk of this volume. Even the goddam translator can't help but point out some of Freud's more glaring mistakes, though he does so in the most laudatory way possible. I'd say that logically speaking, most of the book is about on par with the following conversation from the 1966 *Batman* movie:

Commissioner Gordon: It could be any one of them... But which one? Which ones?

Batman: Pretty *fishy* what happened to me on that ladder...

Commissioner Gordon: You mean where there's a fish there could be a penguin?

Robin: But wait! It happened at sea... Sea. C for Catwoman!

Batman: Yet, an exploding shark was pulling my leg...

Commissioner Gordon: The Joker!

Chief O'Hara: All adds up to a sinister riddle... Riddle-R. Riddler!

Commissioner Gordon: A thought strikes me... So dreadful I scarcely dare give it utterance...

Batman: The four of them... Their forces combined...

Robin: Holy nightmare!

But obvious fallacies aside, I really enjoyed *The Uncanny*. The titular final essay in particular was fun, and will of course be useful for thesis type stuff. Plus there's a sweet Max Ernst cover to look at when you're done reading.

Mateo R. says

Según Freud, lo ominoso es la variedad de lo terrorífico que se remonta a lo consabido de antiguo, a lo familiar desde hace largo tiempo.

Realiza un análisis etimológico de las palabras heimlich (familiar, pero también oculto) y unheimlich (no familiar, ominoso). Concluye que heimlich es una palabra que ha desarrollado su significado siguiendo una ambivalencia hasta coincidir al fin con su opuesto, unheimlich.

Luego analiza el cuento "El hombre de arena" de E. T. A. Hoffmann y el efecto ominoso que se construye en él. Disiente con Jentsch en que esta cualidad del relato tenga que ver con la incertidumbre intelectual de si se trata de un cuento realista o fantástico, pues cuando ya se ha revelado como lo segundo, la sensación de lo ominoso permanece.

Afirma que según el psicoanálisis, la angustia de quedar ciego (de perder los ojos o que sufran daño) es un sustituto de la angustia ante la castración. Fundamenta esto con la correspondencia que se da en sueños, fantasías y mitos entre ojo y pene. Lo relaciona también con los acontecimientos del cuento, en los que la intervención del Hombre de Arena (que equivale a la figura del padre temido, de quien se espera la castración) perjudica al protagonista en términos amorosos (como haría una castración).

Resalta la figura del doble en la novela Los elixires del diablo. La duplicación (especialmente del pene) puede ser un mecanismo defensivo ante el miedo a la castración durante el narcisismo infantil. Superada esta etapa, pasa a ser un símbolo ominoso del anuncio de la muerte. Pero la repetición de elemento servirá desde

entonces para introducir la sensación de lo ominoso en algunos contextos.

Tras evaluar otros ejemplo de lo ominoso en anécdotas de pacientes y relacionarlo con la concepción animista de otras épocas, llega a dos hipótesis:

Que de los sentimientos que se vuelven angustiosos por culpa de la represión hay un subgrupo en el cual aquello reprimido retorna y provoca el efecto de lo ominoso.

Que lo ominoso no es algo nuevo o ajeno sino lo familiar que retorna pero que no se identifica porque había permanecido reprimido, oculto.

En definitiva, los elementos que vuelven ominoso lo angustioso serían: el animismo, la magia, la omnipotencia de los pensamientos, el nexo con la muerte, la repetición no deliberada y el complejo de castración.

Lo ominoso del vivenciar se da cuando lo reprimido surge por culpa de una impresión, o del retorno de algo que se creía superado. Lo ominoso de la ficción pierde, en algunos casos, parte de su efecto (especialmente en los cuentos tradicionales maravillosos), pero no cuando se trata de algo reprimido que se creía superado.

Personalmente lo que he leído de psicoanálisis de Freud me parece muy arbitrario e inverificable, aunque bastante interesante en sus referencias literarias y mitológicas.

Intertextualidad:

Menciones directas:

- * *Zur Psychologie des Umheimlichen*, de Ernst Jentsch.
- * *Pequeño diccionario alemán-latino*, de K. E. Georges.
- * *Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache*, de Daniel Sanders.
- * *La Biblia*, anónimo.
- * *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, de Jacob y Wilhelm Grimm.
- * *Wilhelm Tell*, de Friedrich Schiller.
- * *El campamento de Wallenstein*, de Friedrich Schiller.
- * *Teatro*, de Friedrich Maximilian von Klingler.
- * "Der Sandmann" ("El hombre de arena"), de E.T.A. Hoffmann.
- * *Nachtstücke (Cuentos nocturnos)*, de E.T.A. Hoffmann.
- * *Hamlet*, de William Shakespeare.
- * *Macbeth*, de William Shakespeare.
- * *La tempestad*, de William Shakespeare.
- * *Sueño de una noche de verano*, de William Shakespeare.
- * *Los elixires del Diablo*, de E.T.A. Hoffmann.
- * *Der Doppelgänger: Eine psychoanalytische Studie*, de Otto Rank.
- * *Die Götter im Exil (Los dioses en el exilio)*, de Heinrich Heine.
- * *El anillo de Polícrates*, ópera en un acto con libreto de Leo Feld y música de Erich Korngold.
- * "Die Geschichte von der abgehauenen Hand" ("Historia de la mano cortada"), de Wilhelm Hauff.
- * "El tesoro de Rhampsenit", de Heródoto.
- * "Los tres deseos", cuento popular.
- * *La Divina Comedia*, de Dante Alighieri.
- * *Julio César*, de William Shakespeare.
- * "Die Weissagung" ("La profecía"), de Arthur Schnitzler.
- * "Der Zerrissene" ("El andrajoso"), de Johann Nestroy.
- * "El fantasma de Canterville", de Oscar Wilde.
- * Menciona la figura de Edipo, rey mítico de Tebas, cuya referencia más antigua aparece en *La Odisea* de Homero y que es conocido principalmente por la tragedia *Edipo Rey* de Sófocles.
- * Menciona la figura chipriota de Pigmalión, escultor cuya estatua Galatea cobró vida, conocido

principalmente por su aparición en *Las metamorfosis* de Publio Ovidio Nasón.

* Mención a los escritores Georg Rollenhagen, Adelbert von Chamisso, Karl Leberecht Immermann, Novalis, Friedrich Schlegel, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, Karl Gutzkow, Mark Twain y Hans Christian Andersen.

Indirecta:

?

Erika says

Sul racconto di Hoffmann "Der Sandmann" si basa interamente il suo saggio sul perturbante Freud. Questo saggio di Freud è scritto nel 1919 ed è quindi tangente all'elaborazione, da parte di Freud, delle sue teorie psicanalitiche. È un saggio molto ampio, e Freud parte per capire e definire cosa sia il perturbante dal saggio di Jentsch e soprattutto da una questione linguistica, cioè Freud fa proprio una ricerca linguistica tra il dizionario della lingua tedesca e in altri dizionari delle lingue europee del termine "unheimlich". Parte da questo termine per tracciarne la storia all'interno della lingua tedesca e poi arriva anche a verificarne le eventuali traduzioni in altre lingue, mostrando come nelle altre lingue non vi sia un termine analogo, di tale ricchezza e profondità di significato. L'inizio di questo saggio di Freud è di fatti un saggio che si basa su un'analisi di tipo linguistico, la definizione del termine in lingua tedesca e la comparazione del significato in altre lingue. Freud va addirittura a cercare nel dizionario latino, in latino corrisponde al "locus suspectus", in un'ora "unheimlich" della notte, "intempesta nocte". Addirittura prova a dare della definizioni in latino, ma non sono uguali al tedesco. Prova anche in greco, in inglese "uneasy", "gloomy", "uncanny", è chiaro che tutte queste parole hanno tutte una sfumatura diversa, fantasmico, che non si dà immediatamente, strano e così via. Sono tutti termini che non sono sovrapponibili, anche nel francese "inquietante, sinistro e lugubre" che appartengono all'area semantica del perturbante ma non vogliono dir proprio la stessa cosa. Anche nello spagnolo, si avvicinano ma non sono. Prenderà anche in considerazione l'arabo e l'ebraico. E farà un lungo cammino di storia del significato dell'"unheimlich" e, in particolare, dimostra come all'interno della parola "heimlich" sia già compreso il suo opposto, il suo significato. Poi Freud passa a riconsiderare alcuni tratti del saggio di Jentsch, soprattutto quello dell'incertezza intellettuale dell'automa e lo collega in maniera esplicita a Hoffman. Quando Jentsch si riferisce alla questione dell'automa e poi cita Hoffman non lo dice esplicitamente ma è chiaro il riferimento alla bambola Olimpia. Freud riprende la frase di Jentsch relativa ad Hoffman, ed aggiunge "Questa osservazione, senza dubbio esatta, si riferisce soprattutto al racconto Il mago sabbiolino, che fa parte della raccolta dei Notturmi, dal quale la figura della bambola Olimpia è passato nel primo atto dell'opera di Offenbach I racconti di Hoffman" Secondo Freud questo motivo della bambola in Hoffman non è centrale, ve ne sono altri che per lui sono più centrali e che impiega per condurre la sua analisi e per farci capire cos'è questo perturbante, cioè questo familiare tenuto nascosto e celato e che, ad un certo punto, ritorna. Ci dà un'interpretazione psicanalitica del racconto di Hoffman, la questione centrale per lui è quella del mago sabbiolino che strappa gli occhi ai bambini. Ed effettivamente questo è un nucleo tematico che torna più volte nel racconto, quando nella lettera a Lotario/Clara Nathaniel racconta l'evento tragico che secondo lui si è svolto nella sua infanzia, cioè il momento in cui l'avvocato Coppelius e il padre scoprono la sua presenza nella stanza in cui si era introdotto per spiare e l'avvocato Coppelius tenta di strappargli gli occhi, così come nei racconti della madre e della governante faceva il mago sabbiolino. Poi questo discorso degli occhi lo ritroviamo collegato a Coppola, che vende occhiali, vende binocoli e strumenti ottici, lo troviamo collegato alla bambola Olimpia perché ad un certo punto viene contesa tra il professor Spallanzani e Coppola, le cadono a terra gli occhi che Spallanzani tira addosso a Nathaniel. Dunque si capisce bene che questo motivo degli occhi è centrale. C'è anche un riassunto, a modo suo, del racconto di Hoffman. In questo riassunto, mette in evidenza un punto centrale. Lui muove quest'analisi su due livelli: una più propriamente psicoanalitica, che utilizza anche il romanzo alla stregua di un esempio psicoanalitico e nella seconda parte si occupa un po' di più della finzione letteraria. "Questo breve riassunto non lascia certo

sussistere alcun dubbio sul fatto che il senso del perturbante è legato direttamente alla figura del mago sabbiolino, ossia all'idea di vedersi sottratti gli occhi, e che un'incertezza intellettuale nel senso dichiarato da Jentsch non ha niente a che vedere con questo effetto." Jentsch che invece si concentrava sulla questione dell'automa. A Freud interessa la teoria psicanalitica e comincia a tirare le fila di quanto ha detto e osserva che l'esperienza psicanalitica ci avverte che siamo di fronte ad una tremenda angoscia infantile causata dalla prospettiva di danneggiare o perdere gli occhi. Nella vita di Nathaniel c'è un trauma infantile connesso a quest'idea di danneggiare o perdere gli occhi. Il mago sabbiolino, secondo l'analisi di Freud, si sostituisce al padre temuto dal quale ci si aspetta l'evirazione. Per Freud, il rapporto infantile tra padre e bambino, è caratterizzato anche da questo aspetto di competizione ed ostilità, e secondo Freud, questo è particolarmente evidente nel racconto, dove la figura del padre viene scissa in due: il padre buono che la sera gli racconta le favole ed episodi della sua vita, con cui il bambino vuole sempre trattenersi e, dall'altra Coppelius, che dà un'altra immagine della figura paterna, quella terribile, connessa alla paura dell'evirazione. Freud si concentra ed è anche un punto cardine da un punto di vista tematico del racconto fantastico: il sosia e la scissione dell'io. L'immagine del padre e l'immagine di Coppelius sono un doppio, entrambi rappresentano l'immagine paterna. Questo motivo del sosia e del doppio che percorre tutta la letteratura, dalla gotica alla fantastica, come Dottor Jekyll e Mister Hyde. Freud collega, in termini psicanalitici, la figura del doppio alla questione del narcisismo primario, che può avere una degenerazione psicologica nel narcisismo secondario. Freud parte sempre nella definizione di questi concetti dalla mitologia, dai miti greci, come Narciso che si specchia nell'acqua e si innamora del suo riflesso. Questa fase interessa un momento della crescita del bambino, in cui il bambino riconosce la sua immagine, in qualche modo come altro da sé, ed ha bisogno di questa fase del narcisismo come processo di riconoscimento della sua individualità e quindi crescita. Chiaramente, se questa fase di narcisismo primario, non viene superata e si trasforma in narcisismo secondario, allora diventa una patologia di tipo psicanalitico. Ma il complesso edipico e il narcisismo primario sono fasi della vita evolutiva. Secondo Freud, solo se non superati, portano a degenerazione di tipo psicologico. L'heimlich è qualcosa che è stato tenuto nascosto, celato e che, ad un certo punto, ritorna e diventa perturbante. Qua si tratta di un fatto vissuto come angosciante e terribile nell'infanzia di Nathaniel, che ad un certo punto, con la vista di Coppola, ritorna. È qualcosa che apparteneva alla sua infanzia che ritorna e che, quando ritorna, genera angoscia. Non è tanto il trauma in sé ad essere considerato perturbante, quanto il fatto che sia stato rimosso, quindi non affrontato, sepolto nella coscienza, quando poi ritorna prende delle forme strane, angosciose, perturbanti. "Può essere esatto che l'unheimliche sia lo Heimliche-Heimische che ha subito una rimozione e poi è ritornato, e che tutto il perturbante risponda a questa condizione" qualcosa di rimosso che poi ritorna, e quando ritorna si camuffa, torna in modo simbolico con uno spostamento.

Clara Yazbeck says

The way Sigmund Freud analyzes and dives inside Humans Brain and actions and reaction never failed to stuns me on many levels.
the five essays along with the uncanny are eye opening to many analytic process...
it was a pleasant read

Lydia Presley says

I'm going to start this review out by saying... I think Freud was a little bit of a whackadoodle. Just putting that out there.

That said, there are some things in this book that make sense - in an uncanny way (see what I did there?).

The first essay on Screen Memories had me scratching my head and questioning my childhood memories. The essay on Creative Writing and Dreams had me looking at all those creative sorts around me with a new insight.

Then there is the Uncanny essay.

First, let me say that for being such a "big" name, Freud defies the stereotype of boring essays by making these remarkably approachable and interesting. In a way, they almost read like fiction - what with all the "subjects" he casually throws into the conversation.

Now, the uncanny essay - I am studying it so much this summer and it is a treasure trove of delights. Stop for a moment and think about it. Can you define uncanny? If you can't - this essay is for you. (You might want to skip the first part, although if you read it I can talk to you and let you know just how the first part is uncanny in and of itself!).

Highly, highly recommend, especially if you are a fan of the horror or "uncanny" genre of book. Will give you fantastic insights into just what is making those hairs on the back of your neck raise.

C. Hollis Crossman says

Freud begins his essay "The Uncanny" by looking at the word itself as defined and exemplified in a number of multi-lingual dictionaries. The German word is *unheimlich*, which roughly translates to "un-homelike." From this, Freud gathers that what makes something uncanny is its resemblance to its familiar corollary. He extrapolates further, building on the idea of someone named Schelling, that a thing is made uncanny in virtue of being once familiar but having been forgotten or repressed in the interim. Schelling's idea is more basic—a familiar thing brought into the light when it should have remained hidden is uncanny.

The linguistic investigation is followed by a number of examples of the uncanny from literature, real life experience, and Freud's case files. Freud establishes early on that fantasy and fairy tales do not produce in us a sense of the uncanny, since they are consciously removed from reality. However, animistic beliefs or childhood neuroses thought to have been overcome, but brought back either in full force or as hideous reminders, do lead us to experience the uncanny.

I'm no Freudian, and I am a confirmed believer in the supernatural, but his discussion is fascinating (and particularly helpful for those who enjoy and/or write horror fiction). It also seems to be highly relevant to proponents of today's *zeitgeist*, who eschew belief in spirits or the supernatural, yet seem wracked with genuine terror by any reminder of societal or personal religious history. A brief, fascinating read that I would recommend without qualification.

Zadignose says

Freud presents us with some rather interesting thoughts, reflections, and meditations on what is "uncanny" (actually language is pretty important in this, so "unheimlich" is more to the point). He's also rather guarded in his approach to the topic, which is a nice thing. My impression of Freud, as always, is that I love and hate him and his ideas. The thing is, his ideas are very fascinating, compelling, groundbreaking, appealing... and usually also overblown, not really fully convincing or supported, and... tend show what's good and bad about being analytical. (Of course analysis is what one generally expects from analysts.) The analytical mind--it

seems to me--when confronted by the nebulous, the emotional, the difficult-to-grapple-with concepts, is forced to one extreme or another: either it must throw up its hands (a mind with hands? how uncanny!) and say "I don't know"; or else it must rather bullishly insist "I know", even where knowing is not really possible. Spirits flee from the piercing gaze of the analyst. Anyway, Freud often seems to prefer the assertion "I know!" which sometimes leads him to extremes (e.g. in Interpretation of Dreams, it's not enough to have the amazing insight that dreams are *often* wish fulfillment even when they don't appear to be; no! Dreams must *always* be wish fulfillment, and if they ever are NOT wish-fulfillment, then they are second-level wish-fulfillment of a patient whose "wish" is to prove Freud wrong!). Happily, if you approach this book from the right angle, you can come away with some rather convincing arguments which you don't have to announce you are 100% in agreement with all the time. So, as I said to begin with (Deja vu, that's spooky!) he gives you something to think about.

By the way, if you want to cut to the chase, the uncanny is generally a renewed experience of something familiar and repressed, particularly if it relates to infantile complexes such as castration-complex, infantile-narcissism, obsessive repetition, etc.; or else it arises from the appearance that *in real life* we are confronting a juvenile belief which has since been surmounted, such as magical thinking, the omnipotence of thought, etc. And certain elements such as darkness and solitude which are often fear triggers in infancy also uncannily return and can be part of an uncanny experience. But Freud said it better and I probably made some gross error in my summary.

OH YEAH, WARNING RE: KINDLE VERSION. Don't buy it unless you know you're only getting the essay "The Uncanny." Even though it's linked, on Amazon, to the Penguin book of the same title which contains FIVE essays. You ain't gettin' those.

sahar mandour says

i love freud. i love the way he writes, the way he thinks, the tools he uses to decode the human interactions, with the self and with the others, with the society.
but what i loved most about this book is the his title, the concept itself.
it's very rich yet precise, clear yet confusing.
in french, it's called "l'inquietant familier", and freud built the presentation of his concept upon a short story by Hoffmann, "marchand de sable".. it is published with "the uncanny", i read it, IT IS UNCANNY. hehe.
one last thing: the introduction of the book, by Simone Korff-Sausse.. i didnt know her name before, she made a very interesting introduction, giving freud the praise he deserves, YET, being very very critical to how he analyzed women sexuality, in this precise context. she did a great job, by not using the usual old criticism freud gets for what is considered "his phallic fixation".. i liked what she wrote, because it's genuine, and directly related to this text, with clear intelligent points to reveal.
reading this tiny book was a pleasant experience, and a very enriching one :)

Zadignose says

I have previously reviewed the essay "The Uncanny," and the review is attached to another edition of the work. Now I address the complete collection of essays by the same title in the paperback Penguin edition.

To put it briefly, the collection is an assortment of fascinating, sometimes compelling, thoughts, observations, reflections, and *unscientific speculations*, that may challenge your ideas about the nature of memories, repression, and fear. For me, they also unfortunately forced me to confront new doubts about the

legitimacy of Freud's conclusions.

Here, he appears to have brushed upon the truth without necessarily revealing it, and perhaps also to have distorted the truth by forcing his evidence to conform to his absolute notions of what really goes on within the human psyche. He often acknowledges some of the limitations to his approach, but that also seems to be reluctant and half-hearted acknowledgment, compelled by the awareness of how critics are sure to view his most extreme assertions. But he never really retreats, he only notes that he has foreseen our objections, as though to suggest that by anticipating our thoughts he has kept one step ahead and thus overcome those objections.

To me, the most appealing and successful essays are the first and last, "Screen Memories," and "The Uncanny." "The Creative Writer and Daydreaming" has some interesting thoughts, though it is rather... light. "Family Romances" is more provocative but also more far-fetched. And finally, "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood" is simply insane. All of them are worth reading, but to various degrees one must maintain a healthy skepticism when doing so.

Adriana Scarpin says

You're a bloody puppet!

Katelis Viglas says

An excellent, not well-known work by Sigmund Freud. I refer exactly to the essay under the title, "The Uncanny" (Das Unheimliche). Many awful psychoanalytic interpretations are fortunately absent. Many older Freudian motifs return, but the way the writer proceeds from one matter to the next is so slight, imperceptible. It can be included among the Freudian works of literary criticism, especially as regards the genre of imaginative literature. As usually, many human beliefs are revealed to be illusions, or so considered. The neurotic symptoms are the revival of the child and the primitive. But exactly because the Subject is always guilty, the interpretations of the cultural phenomena are reduced exclusively to psychological causes in a mechanistic, of nineteenth century's positivistic interpretative schema. Instead of the Object, it is the Subject to which all the properties of the uncanny are attributed. Freud's views on magic and superstition are based mainly on James Frazer's, Golden Bough, and of course are so much old fashioned, as, for example, Ludwig Wittgenstein has observed; magic doesn't derive only from the belief of omnipotence of thoughts, but may reflect the social conditions of an era. Well, where is the uncanny? In many cases, as it is in the Max Ernst's painting of the cover, "The Clothing of the Bride".

Dennis says

Reading this originally German text in English has been an interesting experience, as Freud discusses the semantics of the word 'uncanny' (German: unheimlich). I don't know if it is fully comprehensible for people who don't speak German but I think the translator did a great job explaining what Freud is referring to. Other than that, Freud uses literary texts to support his arguments (especially the novella "The Sandman" by German romanticist writer E.T.A. Hoffmann) which I found really interesting.

Amanda says

3.5 stars

This is a series of 5 essays. The title one The Uncanny is the most interesting but there is also one on childhood memories which I found fascinating. I'm very intrigued by what we remember. If you can get past the fact that Freud thinks everything is about sex and all women are hysterical he had some pretty interesting ideas.

Alex says

Uncanny, Holmes! is the word's most familiar context, and there Watson means beyond natural explanation. In The Uncanny Freud digs deeper into the word. Explaining uncanny by its synonyms: supernatural, preternatural, weird, mysterious, isn't adequate. The word has its origins in the German word for hidden or concealed, heimlich, but a secondary meaning of heimlich is "familiar," and so the word contains its near opposite. Unheimlich (uncanny) then gives us something like the familiar/concealed unconcealed. This leads Freud to repressed sexual impulses (the familiar and concealed) that unconceal themselves symbolically through dreams and neurotic behavior. But then Freud makes a leap: "...the unconscious mechanisms familiar to us in 'dream-work' [psychoanalyzing dreams] also operate in the process of imaginative writing. The familiar/concealed unconceals itself in fiction. Uncanny as applied to aesthetics.

What would be an example of the "uncanny" in literature? Freud quotes E. Jentsch: "One of the surest devices for producing slightly uncanny effects through story-telling is to leave the reader wondering whether a particular figure is real person or an automaton." [tk]

According to Jentsch, E. T. A. Hoffmann frequently used a similar psychological maneuver in his fiction. One of Hoffmann's stories was called "The Sand Man," and concerns that familiar figure who puts children to sleep. In Hoffmann's story a nursemaid cloaks the boy's innocent (common) version of the sandman with a sinister version. She tells the little boy that the Sand Man is a bad man who throws sand in children's eye, which makes them pop out all bloody. The Sand Man scoops up the eyes and takes them to the moon to feed his children. The comforting familiar is transformed into mysterious horror, or something uncanny. Freud argues that the uncanny events in the story represent a boy child's fear of physical castration by his father. The little boy's emotional reaction in the story is not just to the evil sandman but to his psychological dread of what his father might be planning for him. For the story to be effective, the reader too must get what the boy gets (at some level). Was this Hoffmann's intent in writing the story or was Hoffmann himself unaware of exactly what he was doing?

Freud offers several other examples of the uncanny in literature: evil eyes, doubles, dead bodies, revenants, etc. and examines how they function in the stories. Unfortunately Freud doesn't spend as much time with writers as I would have hoped, but moves on to Leonardo da Vinci. Most of the book is Freud's psychohistory of the artist. He attempts to explain the uncanny elements in Leonardo's art (unfinished paintings) from Leonardo's childhood traumatic experiences and repressed sexual drives. It's easy to get impatient with Freud when he makes connections that are little more than guesswork. I'd argue that Freud knows he's creating something of a fiction. "Should my exposition prompt the judgment even among friends of psychoanalysis ... that I have done no more than write a psychoanalytical novel, I would certainly not overrate the reliability of my findings. I have yielded, like others, to the fascination of this great and

enigmatic figure, in whose nature one senses powerful instinctual passions, which can nevertheless express themselves only a strangely subdued fashion.”

So if you're interested in how a vulture inspired Mona Lisa, The Uncanny provides the answer. Well, a possible answer.

Mr. says

This is a remarkable contribution from Freud that is almost entirely ignored by psychology on account of its lack of applicability. But that is a tragedy, because this is a work of first-rate thinking. Freud explores the 'Uncanny,' the no longer being at home, and traces its dimensions through literature, dreams, and childhood memories. He also contributes a brilliant speculation into Leonardo Da Vinci, later coined as an exercise in 'psychobiography', in which he magnificently uses a single memory to investigate the conflicts and dilemmas of Leonardo's childhood and subsequent artistry and genius. This is a crucial text in Freud's vast body of work, I urge you to read it.

H.A. Leuschel says

This is a short but intricate essay where Freud looks closely at what could be called the uncanny feeling, the spooked out sensation that something is not quite how it should be. He describes it at times as a shift from the familiar to the eerie or estranged, a space where doubt, fear and danger unsettle the individual. At other times he suggests that the experience of loneliness, darkness and the lack of noise are the basis of childhood fears, able to rear its head during one's lifetime. It's thought-provoking!

g says

It may be that the uncanny [unhomely] is something familiar [homely, homey] that has been repressed and then reappears, and that everything uncanny satisfies this condition.....We once regarded such things as real possibilities; we were convinced that they really happened. Today we no longer believe in them, having surmounted such modes of thought. Yet we do not feel entirely secure in these new convictions; the old ones live on in us, on the look out for confirmation. Now, as soon as something happens in our lives that seems to confirm these old discarded beliefs, we experience a sense of uncanny, and this may be reinforced by judgments like the following: So it's true, then, that you can kill another man just by wishing him dead, that the dead really go on living and manifest themselves at the scene of their former activities, and so on.....The uncanny element we know from experience arises either when repressed childhood complexes are revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs that have been surmounted appear to be once again confirmed.

Jimmy says

The essays that comprise this edition are basically Freud's answer to literary/art criticism. Included here is an introduction that doesn't exactly encourage reading the book, and which is actually half the size of the five essays contained in it. Haughton describes Freud's theories on creative motivation as poorly researched,

vague, and inconclusive. He certainly finds it to be a minor contribution to the Freud canon. So, my question still is, is it?

As far as psychoanalytic theory goes, yes, because this is an example of Freud merely applying psychoanalytic ideas to an interpretation of art.

The first essay, *Screen Memories*, generally states that the artist creates works of fantasized scenarios in order to replace unpleasant memories from the past, or to imagine more pleasant situations that the future may possess.

The *Creative Writer and Daydreaming* tells us much of the same. However, Freud does make an interesting distinction between the writer's creation (fantasy) and the dream. People are usually ashamed of the latter, the writer on the other hand is more than willing to share their innermost desires and longings in the form of a fictional narrative, or even (and this is slightly anachronistic) a film.

Family Romances applies the Oedipal complex to the erotic content of these fictional fantasies. Freud explains that the child's knowledge of the sexual roles of mother and father, leads young boys to imagine different sexual fantasies or acts of Oedipal infidelity with the mother.

So it's all here; repression, neuroses, the Oedipal complex, etc. The problem is that Freud rarely uses examples from literature, or art until the last two essays. The first essay fails from a certain theoretical weakness. There are just too many examples of works of art that are entirely unpleasant. These works function in order to reveal certain tragedies and social atrocities. Not all art emanates from the perspective of an imagination that wants to experience nothing but pleasure.

His biographical sketch on Leonardo da Vinci seemed much more thought out. Freud explains that Leonardo replaced his passion for art with that of scientific study as the result of as an attempt to remove himself from sexual passion. He also psychoanalyzes a dream that da Vinci once had about a vulture swooping down into his cradle and brushing its tail against his open mouth. Of course the tail is representative of the male sex organ which has thus replaced the act of da Vinci's early memory of sucking at his mother's breast. Da Vinci thus develops a passive homosexual fantasy, and these were the motivations behind his homosexual leanings. Also, the enigmatic smile of Mona Lisa is Leonardo's most sublime representation of motherhood.

The titular essay was very interesting. Using a somewhat convoluted example from E.T.A Hoffman's, *Tales of Hoffman*, Freud presents the uncanny (unheimlich) as the discomfort of intellectual certainty, at times this merges with the comfortable or easily understandable phenomena (heimlich). This results in people attributing certain occurrences to mythology or an animistic mode of thinking. Through the repetition of an uncanny occurrence, the line becomes blurred between art and reality.

Psychoanalysis has obviously held a widespread influence upon twentieth century art, which is why it seems strange that Freud is somewhat inept at applying his theory while interpreting art. It's possible that he just couldn't devote enough time to these works. I must say that the last two essays were the finest accomplishments in this edition, and maybe if Freud would've kept at it, then he could have written more well executed opinions on art. However, these essays make psychoanalysis seem as effective a method of analyzing artistic motivation as sociobiology does human behavior.

Bookdragon Sean says

I love exploring elements of the uncanny in gothic literature. It is directly linked with the transgressive

nature of such writing. This has been epitomised in many novels and short stories of the nineteenth century. The Gothic and uncanny reinforce each other; they stand side by side in the dark shadows of such writing. To show this I'm going to give the example of two of my favourite gothic novels: *Dracula* and *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

To transgress is to break a limit or a boundary; both works contain characters, Dracula and Jekyll/Hyde, which have undergone a transgressive transformation; they have gone from a normal state of being to something paranormal: they have broken a boundary. This transgression has resulted in an uncanny existence for them both, which arouses more fear towards them. The uncanny, according to Freud, evokes fear and dread. The gothic novel creates a heightened level of fear because the uncanny creates something strangely familiar at the heart of the unfamiliar.

Firstly, this can be seen with Dracula. The Count's death like sleep is eerily familiar. Harker finds the Count at rest in a coffin "he was either dead or asleep, I could not say which."

This sense of unfamiliarity with the familiar, someone who is seemingly dead when they should be alive, evokes dread within Harker "I fled from the place." The vampire's uncanny nature is created by his transgressive undead state, which makes him evocative of more fear. Dracula's uncanny existence is unexplainable with what governs normal life; he has no reflection in the mirror; he "sleeps" in a coffin and scales walls. Harker is disturbed by this strange nature of the familiar. Dracula has undergone an extensive transformation, which breaks the boundaries of mortality and sets him in the realm of the paranormal as a member of the undead. This can be seen when the Count attests to his immortality "My revenge has just begun! I spread it over centuries and time is on my side" This signifies that he is now an undying creature and can span his goals over the ages; he has transgressed the rules of mortality with his uncanny existence. The same is true for Jekyll/Hyde.

Indeed, the development of a doppelganger, a counter part for a person, can be seen as fear inducing, and resides in the uncanny transgression of Jekyll. This is because Jekyll was "radically both." With Jekyll/Hyde the uncanniness of the doppelganger is increased because both of the doppelgangers are one person, and the familiarity evoked in the unfamiliar character (Hyde) is stronger. The repetition is key; it causes a strange feeling, of fear and dread, in the face of such an abnormality.

Doctor Jekyll has transgressed the role he has in society and the one his personality has created for him. This is because the potion that results in Hyde allows Jekyll to break free of his restrictions; he becomes something paranormal through the use of a doppelganger that is both him and not him. He is now free to act in a reckless way that will not directly be associated with his original persona; he now has according to Jekyll "a greater boldness, a contempt of danger, a solution of the bonds of obligation." He has transgressed his original role and, like Dracula, has become something paranormal and uncanny, which is something to be greatly feared.

Freud's ideas on the uncanny are perceptive and far reaching. They can be applied to literature so easily. There are many wonderful essays out there linking the ideas to *Jane Eyre* and *Great Expectations*, amongst others too. There is much more to this work than its applications on gothic literature, but for me, as an English student, and lover of the gothic, that's the main piece of knowledge I take from this work. This is compelling stuff.

Tocotin says

Why so short? For some reason, I thought it would be longer... but it was quite educational. I thought it interesting that “uncanny” was, in fact, the translation of the German word *unheimlich* – I don’t know German, but I know *heimlich*, which is “cosy, familiar, homely”, and it explains a lot of things.

“... doubts whether an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might not be in fact animate” – this is the main starting point for this analysis of achieving the effect of the uncanny in writing, and the one I remember the best.

(I did ignore all the “fear of castration” stuff, sorry.)
