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# The Problem of the Ordinary: Liberating the Fantastic and the Uncanny

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**The Problem of the Ordinary: Liberating the Fantastic and the Uncanny**

An Honors Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English

Bates College

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Bachelor of Arts

By

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Lewiston, Maine

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## Abstract

Tzvetan Todorov's *The Fantastic* systematizes fantastic literature, binding it within a moment of hesitation. Todorov argues that when a seemingly supernatural event, object, or being enters a narrative, readers must decide whether this is to be explained by natural laws or not. Only before this decision is reached does the text sustain the fantastic; otherwise it falls into the categories of the marvelous or the uncanny. Yet the fantastic and the uncanny inherently contain tensions that play out best on a spectrum of ordinariness rather than separated by the strict boundaries in which Todorov places them. These tensions between uncertainty and closure break and reform boundaries between internal self and external self, between the fantastic mind of the reader and authorial words. The thesis, by examining the narratives of Kleist, Hoffmann, Gotthelf, Hauptmann, Hawthorne, Tieck, Chamisso, Márquez and Banville, challenges Todorov's restrictive terms to explain the fantastic and the uncanny and require it to conform to a genre. The critical writings of Freud, Adorno, Cavell, Jackson, Royle, Todorov, Frye, Chaouli, Kermode, and Foucault here are queried and analyzed. Narratological explanations concerning uncertainty, boundaries, textual and readerly perceptions, and distortions function to clarify how or why the fantastic or the uncanny should be assigned or to judge when either of the two terms transcends the ordinary without breaking from it or remains a mere projection of it.

## Introduction

To differentiate the fantastic from the uncanny may require framing both within a singular context from which they might originate. Imagine then an old man looking to buy a house in Florida. Strangely, he is shown a house identical to the one he grew up in sixty years ago in Maine. Within the fantastic, the possibility that this *is* the same house that has been magically moved to Florida appearing exactly as it did fifty years ago, remains feasible. The house would reach beyond mere resemblance, containing objects that could not be explained by normal happenstance, like a drawing that he drew for his mother at age five pinned to the refrigerator. External forces, like magic or the supernatural, might be involved. But in the realm of the uncanny, the man would not be able to tell if the houses were identical or not. Perhaps internal forces, such as an unreliable memory or stranger-than-life coincidences or fate would be called on to explain the eerie resemblance.

Whereas the fantastic can make the extraordinary and inexplicable visible and tangible, the uncanny must remain in the periphery. The uncanny remains ordinary, heightened more by the emotive response of the character or the reader than the actual visual presentation of the fantastic. Both the fantastic and the uncanny can originate in the same setting or event, but depending on narrative spin, how personal the response is, or whether it challenges the laws of the external world or reliability of the internal one, may differ in degree and is certainly capable of being evoked by either. Characters doubt the world or themselves because the uncanny is somehow much more wrapped up in an invasion of self, whereas the fantastic appears rather as an invasion into one's view of, or interaction with, the world.

The uncanny and the fantastic both come with histories, as neither could escape humanity's desire to define and confine things, necessitating a brief examination of their past. Starting with the word "uncanny" itself, one finds that it originates in Scotland, "from that 'auld country' that has so often been represented as 'beyond the borders', liminal, an English foreign body," which reveals the "uncertainties *at the origin* [of the word] concerning colonization and the foreign body" (Royle 12). Though the English word uncanny originated in Scotland, the German version of the word must surface as well, as Freud, an Austrian who brought the uncanny into higher prominence with his essay "The Uncanny" (1919), spoke German and "the German *unheimlich* is not simply synonymous with the English word 'uncanny'" (Royle 11). Freud details, "The German word *unheimlich* is obviously the opposite of *heimlich*, *heimisch*, meaning 'familiar,' 'native,' 'belonging to the home'" (Freud 2). This translation can be deceptive though, as Freud points out that "we are tempted to conclude that what is 'uncanny' is frightening precisely because it is *not* known and familiar---[yet] something has to be added to what is novel and unfamiliar to make it uncanny" (Freud 2).

The uncanny cannot be so simply defined, as it is not merely the unfamiliar that creates such a reaction but rather the juxtaposition of the familiar and the unfamiliar within a singular person, object, or event. Thus, "this uncanny is in reality nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old--established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process of repression" (Freud 13). The uncanny represents a clash between the intimately commonplace and the external unknown, and "It is a peculiar commingling of the familiar and the unfamiliar" (Royle 1). This "commingling" supplies the power of the uncanny, as "there has to be a grounding in the rational in order to experience its trembling and break-up" (Royle 25). Adorno echoed these words when he spoke to the way Art must move beyond the non-existing by means

of the existing to avoid the risk of achieving only a feeble projection of mundane reality (Adorno 173).

The word “fantastic” spawns myriad interpretations, yet to speak of “the fantastic” as a literary genre or theory seems to delve into the work of Tzvetan Todorov. Todorov cites the uncertainty integral in fantastical texts when he states, “‘I nearly reached the point of believing;’ that is the formula which sums up the spirit of the fantastic” as “either total faith or total incredulity would lead us beyond the fantastic: it is the hesitation which sustains its life” (Todorov 31). The magic in the fantastic lies, then, in suspended disbelief. The literature is fantastic because it remains in a state that cannot last in reality. Life demands closure, and thus tales that can lengthen the time one spends outside of limits allows a new fantastical realm to bloom. This gap between the closures of reality cannot last forever though, as Todorov reminds us,

The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous. The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event. (Todorov 25)

Thus the fantastic rests on the edge of two realms, residing in the pauses before conclusions.

Todorov finds the idea of a gap or break in Roger Caillois’s *Au Coeur du Fantastique*, “The fantastic is always a break in the acknowledged order, an interruption of the inadmissible within the changeless everyday legality” (Todorov 26). The fantastic wedges itself between the conformity of reality to open spaces for fantasies and dreams. As it occupies the time before a decision can be reached, it glimpses the infinite spectrum of possibilities conceivable by the human intellect. Yet, closure, always looming on the horizon, causes the fantastic always to be ephemeral.

To explore Todorov's theory, Chapter One probes death, the ultimate uncertainty, an idea that still causes hesitation even in modern times. The chapter investigates how much the fantastic or uncanny can emerge under differing circumstances set forth by writers in varied times and locales, beginning with romantic German and American texts from the nineteenth century, which figure death most tangibly as the devil, and moving into modern texts from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, which internalize the figuration of death. Todorov insists that a text "leaves" the fantastic when it shows the uncanny. Yet when one follows a line of texts from the most externalized form of death, ones that bristle with the fantastic most clearly, to those texts fully internalizing death, texts taunt with the uncanny, the flow from one to the other seems just that, fluid, rather than an abrupt crossing into a new genre. The two streams of uncertainty here share a common source, both brought to life within the disquieting darkness of death.

Todorov emphasizes the supernatural events necessary to provoke the fantastic. Although he does say the event must contrast "the laws of nature," he overlooks the great power of the ordinary to bring forth the fantastic and the uncanny in varying amounts. While the degree to which a supernatural event is externalized and extraordinary does impact the fantastical or uncanny, the degree to which the ordinary is employed heavily determines the effectiveness of both. For example, in Chamisso's *Peter Schlemihl*, although the devil himself interacts with Peter and performs marvelous deeds, something as small as having these magical items emerge from the pocket of an unremarkable grey suit suddenly releases the uncanny within the fantastic. From a drop of the ordinary into the fantastic to a mere drop of fantasy into the ordinary, the coloration of a text lies on a spectrum of ordinary and the fantastic intermingling much more than Todorov would allow.

In Chapter One, the degree to which the familiarity of death plays into the emergence of the uncanny comes under scrutiny. In texts that feature the devil, familiarity comes into play, as the devil represents both a known entity, rendered normative by the Bible, and yet appears as an inherently unstable character, as he is at his heart the deceiver who refuses to stay in one form. The devil is then an unsettling commingling of the understood and the deceptively novel. The biblical aspects of the devil can mask the effects of the uncanny somewhat, but one does not have to dig too deep to find the roots of it emerging. As the devil becomes more familiar, more ordinary, his fantastic deeds stand out more, and so does his uncanny resemblance to humanity.

Death internalizes in Gabriel García Márquez's short stories of magical realism, a genre with an inherent collision of the unknown (magical) and the known (realism) and so "condemned to an enclosure within the interminable" (Royle 161). This pool of "the interminable" allows for the uncanny and the fantastic to collide as well, because death and the emergence of the ghostly allow the fantastic to become almost like a projection of the uncanny. Magical realism, though usually separated from both the uncanny and the fantastic, in actuality contains the power to bring to life a hybrid of both, because "works of magical realism can be fictions in which anything can happen or un-happen," as they are not, as realist narratives are, governed "by the 'sense of an ending' (in Frank Kermode's phrase)" (Royle 161). This means they "need not conform to notions of 'ordinary' or 'familiar' plot development or characterization" (Royle 161). The nonconformist aspects of the genre allows for this intermingling of two known entities, the uncanny and the fantastic, to form an unknown hybrid that uses death as a means of emergence.

In Banville's *The Sea*, the uncanny, far from being some sort of failed attempt to maintain the fantastic that Todorov implies, finds finesse by riding the touch of death into the main character's mind and memories. As death leads the uncanny into the mind, the analysis of

Banville's narrative flows into Todorov's discussion of the timing of the fantastic and the uncanny. Todorov situates the uncanny in the past, and so makes clear Banville's uncanny use of memories and the return of the past to present the uncertainty of death. Todorov places the fantastic, in contrast to the uncanny, in the present, and like the present moment, the fantastic builds off past realities to postulate the possibilities of future ones. Todorov defines the fantastic by contrasting it with the marvelous and the uncanny, stating:

The marvelous corresponds to an unknown phenomenon, never seen as yet, still to come--hence to a future; in the uncanny, on the other hand, we refer the inexplicable to known facts, to a previous experience, and thereby to the past. As for the fantastic itself, the hesitation which characterizes it cannot be situated, by and large, except in the present. (Todorov 42)

Banville complicates this sense of timing though, as the novel leaps frantically between several past and present times without much warning. The uncanny then functions dynamically, moving between past and present rather than stagnating solely in the past as Todorov suggests. This dynamic motion, this power that allows text to transverse the laws of space and time, carries into the second chapter of this thesis, which explores and builds off Todorov's ideas of how the fantastic and the uncanny break and remake boundaries. Todorov believes that the fantastical, just as the present instant, resides in the almost indefinable moment before a decision, in the borderlands, since "the nature of the fantastic, [is to be] a frontier between two adjacent realms" (Todorov 44). Like a wedge, the fantastic pries apart walls to create this "frontier" of possibilities on which to play.

As the previous chapter moved from the more externalized forms of uncertainty to the internalized forms, the second chapter follows the breaking of boundaries within texts as the borders they cross creep closer towards those most internal and strongly held separations. Todorov emphasizes, "A fixed law, an established rule: that is what immobilizes narrative"

(Todorov 165). To free the narrative then, the fantastic and the uncanny poke holes in these “fixed laws” to allow fresh possibilities to enter. These boundaries and borders can be physically set in the text, such as the borders a foreigner crosses to invade a town or even the threshold of the home that separates the private life from the public. When such physical boundaries are questioned, it usually leads to the fantastic, as the questioning of such external boundaries holds off the clinging closeness on which the uncanny feeds. The fantastic then seeks to alter the laws of space, time, and physics rather than the stability of thoughts, memories, and the unity of the self as the uncanny does.

In Marquez’s stories, the breaking down of internal boundaries, leaning almost to madness, begins to seep outward into the appearance of shifts in the laws of the external world, projecting the inner uncanny into an outer fantastic. David Mikies adds:

Magical realism, like the uncanny, a mode with which it has strong affinities, projects a mesmerizing uncertainty suggesting that ordinary life may also be the scene of the extraordinary. Such dreamlike suspension on the border between the fantastic and the mundane offers a Utopian, if evanescent, promise of transfigured perception, the hypnotic renewing of everyday existence. Both the uncanny and magical realism narrate fantastic events not merely alongside real ones, but as if they were real. (Royle 160)

Mikies picks up on how the text “projects” uncertainty from the inner to the outer world, which contrasts with how a fantastic text allows the uncertainty of the external world to project uncertainty onto the inner world. The uncanny and the magically realistic can act “as if they were real” because they start from within the character, thus giving them more right to truth than the perceived events that occur outside of a character’s body.

Banville’s *The Sea*, with its churning motion, washes away boundaries and then washes back on shore re-formed. Schwall, describing Banville, adds that his writing “disrupts and dislocates the tradition” of certain genres, and “this implies that the subject is disrupted too, and

so are all other dimensions: time is not linear any more and bodies are not impermeable boundaries between inside and outside” (Schwall 127). Banville uses an endless merging of the past and present to keep a perpetual sense of the uncanny alive. The disruption of the main character’s memories and thoughts does not allow readers to re-form the separations they try to make between sections in the text and between times in his life. He will not let the text read linearly, and so readers have the uncanny sense that they have read sections before when similar memories and presents resurface throughout the text.

The second chapter ends in a study of closure, as these boundaries cannot remain broken for long without the reader’s desire for closure building new ones in their place. The texts must make sure to direct the reformation of these boundaries closely so as to incorporate what was gained through the fantastic or uncanny effect. Michel Chaouli finds that gaps in text produce fantasy, yet this fantastical production remains bounded by a reader’s natural propensity for closure. Chaouli relates, “reading—simply *is* the construction of closure—we can--- maintain areas of incomprehensible non-closure within our constructed closure—yet [they] would be--- bounded areas within the context of cognitive closure” (Chaouli 74). The uncanny and the fantastic cannot simply eliminate boundaries, and it becomes important what perspective they present while they hold the borders open so they can close in a productive way. Chapter Three, then, explores how perception changes the way in which the fantastic and the uncanny are received.

Chapter Three inquires into how distortions, reflections, and the use of the gaze vary the degree to which the uncanny and the fantastic successfully break both internal and external boundaries. Todorov, when describing the uncanny in relation to the fantastic, pictures it as merely an emotional response to the fantastic:

The uncanny realizes, as we see, only one of the conditions of the fantastic: the description of certain reactions, especially of fear. It is uniquely linked to the sentiments of the characters and not to a material event defying reason. (The marvelous, by way of contrast, may be characterized by the mere presence of supernatural events, without implicating the reaction they provoke in the characters). (Todorov 47)

The uncanny certainly involves an emotional reaction, yet it seems a much more active force than just an element of the fantastic. The fantastic itself evokes emotions other than the uncanny, and both involve more than mere responses; they also involve the action of perceiving, of gazing and processing the returned gaze. It seems logical that to have a reaction, there must be an action that causes it, and hence Chapter Three examines the active way in which characters navigate their way through the experience of the fantastic and the uncanny, not merely as passengers floating on a river of responses, but participants in the directional propulsion.

Chapter Three navigates through many situations involving perception, centering on where in the process of viewing a character perceives distortion to originate. When the gaze from the internal to the external encounters something distorted externally, like characters that refuse to keep their appearances stable but rather morph into several characters, the fantastic surfaces, as the characters are hesitant about the identity of what they encounter, yet can somewhat separate their own self from the distortion, as they have the power of the gaze. When the gaze reflects off another that is close to the character, such as a father, the distortion perceived digs up more of the uncanny, because the subject gazed at resembles the self, and hence a piece of distorted self gazes back eerily. When the gaze is returned by something that should not see, like an inanimate object, the fantastic comes forth if the object is actually looking back with consciousness, making it an external gaze. Yet if it is merely the *sense* of a gaze, it becomes uncanny as it is merely the reflection of one's own gaze refracting off the object's dead surface. When the gaze encounters a mirror and finds distortion, the ultimate uncanny appears, as the

returned gaze can be so intimately claimed and yet feels so external and cold. If the mirror shows distortion, it shows characters that the sources of the gaze, their selves, have internal distortion, which provokes extremely unsettling feelings.

An exploration into the nature of the uncanny and the fantastic necessitates the ability to find the sublime beauty of uncertainty and to release hold on the comforting boundaries of reality and allowing the self to intermingle with the Other. George MacDonald, the Scottish author of *Phantastes*, adds that the fantastic power of the imagination allows for just such a merging of the self and the exterior, noting: “For the world is---the human being turned inside out,” appearing as “an outward figuration of the condition of his mind”(MacDonald 9,5). Thus the literary experience of the fantastic and the uncanny mirrors the actual experience of a human encountering Nature. This raises the question of how to understand and characterize the fantastic and the uncanny when they seem so inherently expansive. One then needs a wide variety of diverse texts to begin to form an understanding of these concepts, which so hate the confines of boundaries, and how they refigure when brought up against the edges of differing locations, times, and literary techniques.

# Chapter One

## Death and the Devil

“These descriptions raise a pleasing kind of horror in the mind of the reader, and amuse his imagination with the strangeness and novelty of the persons who are represented in them. They bring up into our memory the stories we have heard in our childhood, and favor those secret terrors and apprehensions to which the mind of man is naturally subject.”<sup>1</sup>

---“The Fairy Way of Writing,” Joseph Addison (1712)

Although both the uncanny and the fantastic feature death as a means of delivery, each deathly employment within the narrative often functions differently. The German novellas of the mid-nineteenth century, where death appears as the devil or as monstrous, hellish creatures, still report and dramatize actual deaths, but their folkloric narrative quality represents an externalized view of death that usually involves readerly interaction with the Christian threat of being in league with the devil. A biblical code, because of the devil’s appearance, also figures into these texts, such as in Gotthelf’s *The Black Spider* (1842). Yet, in “Young Goodman Brown” (1835), the allegorical appears, but the devil provokes a sort of familiarity and ordinariness that begins to uncover the uncanny. Further, for narratives that show less attachment to religious and folkloric motifs, such as Chamisso’s *Peter Schlemihl’s Remarkable Story*<sup>2</sup> (1813), the devil appears in an even more banal, ordinary form, and the uncanny pushes into higher prominence still.

As the usage of death to produce the uncanny and the fantastic builds into the late-twentieth and early twenty-first century fiction, death becomes internalized, and the devilish turns of the mind spark the sense of the uncanny and the fantastic. In the tales included in Gabriel García Márquez’s *Innocent Eréndira, and Other Stories* (1978), the ethereal quality of

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<sup>1</sup> (Sandner 22)

<sup>2</sup> Hereafter referred to as *Peter Schlemihl* for brevity.

death, in its less human form, utilizes madness and the uncertainty of what has invaded the body (possibly death) to weave hesitancy into readers. Later, John Banville, in *The Sea* (2005), masters the subtleties of the uncanny by integrating death so banally into the mind and memories that one has the uncanny feeling that death and life are inseparable. Unlike one's wish for the devil to be defeated by God, one would not even wish to remove death because it is too familiar, like a tumor we would ironically die without.

No matter the century or country, texts that employ death to deliver the fantastic or the uncanny find commonality in their recognition of the unique property of death to be inexplicable no matter how much time passes. Nothing breeds fantasy and the uncanny like Death. For that uncertainty needed to produce both "comes above all, perhaps, in the uncertainties of silence, solitude and darkness" (Royle 2). Humans cannot help filling up the absence of death with the fantastic, as the "darkness" looms like a shadow that feels too familiar. Both God and the devil spring from this gap in human knowledge, and so many of the nineteenth-century fantastic novels, prominently feature such religious characters. As Freud began to call texts uncanny in the early twentieth century, a collection of texts emerged with less biblical force, yet death remained, unable to be explained away by science or burned off by the artificial glare of technology. Death turned inward though, as it became less devilish and more ghostly. Rosemary Jackson points to the subversive qualities of death and absence:

By attempting to make visible that which is culturally invisible and which is written out as negation and as death, the fantastic introduces absences. Hence the tendency of fantasy towards non-signification. There can be no adequate linguistic representation of this "other," for it has no place in life, and it is this contradiction which gives rise to the disjunction between signifier and signified which is at the centre of the fantastic---As a literature of absences, fantasy throws back on to the dominant culture a constant reminder of something "other." (Jackson 69)

Thus inserting the theme of death into a text can create an absence that permits the fantastic to emerge, since it has no “adequate linguistic representation.” In other words, it renders things ineffable, and thus allows for the emergence of fantastic explanations to fill the gaps. Just as the insertion of magic or ghosts can induce the fantastic, death itself acts as an “other” that subverts the banal reality. Death plays a special role though because no other mysterious or uncanny event looms in our reality more. Therefore, utilizing death to produce the uncanny or the fantastic allows texts masterfully to transcend the ordinary by using the most extraordinary commonality that exists.

The texts discussed in this section proceed on a spectrum of the ordinary, ranging from the tangibility and power of the devil to the ineffability of a memory of the deceased. Death first is figured as the visible, then the invisible, and finally as the unspeakable. *The Black Spider* contains the most externalized and supernatural figuration of death, as the devil and the spiders embody death in a physical sense. In “Young Goodman Brown,” the devil still embodies the dramatic and sweeping power of the Devil externally, but the tale takes a while to unleash this force, choosing instead to let it build merely as a fear in Brown’s mind, then like a shadow of his self, before finally realizing its true form. *Peter Schlemihl*’s devil dresses in grey, and shrinks into the form of a man who pulls the supernatural out of something as ordinary as his pocket instead of making spiders crawl out of a woman’s face as in Gotthelf’s tale. Still, both tales present death physically, and thus make visible the invisible. In Márquez’s tales death still takes a bodily form, but now as an unseen corpse or a ghost. When death invades the mind, it merges with the character’s own bodies and becomes the uncanny sense that haunts the characters. In Banville’s *The Sea*, death has no physical form in the present: rather it only figures itself in memories. It becomes something that was once known, a half-remembered dream that irks

present day reality. That uncanny sense of darkness lurks in the forgotten recesses in the mind, and, though sunk in heavy waters, still able without warning to wash upon the shores of the mind as horrific skeletons transformed almost beyond recognition but terribly familiar. From the active and malicious devil who explicitly presents the supernatural qualities of death to death's powerful banality in memories of past events, all these texts utilize differing degrees of ordinariness to call forth the fantastic, the uncanny, or both.

Gotthelf's *The Black Spider* makes no attempt to conceal the supernatural power of death, as it employs arachnids and the devil to give death a physical form and fantasy a face. This embedded tale grows out of the mysterious black peg in the wall of a country family home, which turns out to contain the black spider itself. A woman asks the grandfather, ““why ever that ugly black window post is there, just by the first window; it detracts from the whole house”” (Gotthelf 24). It has been there for years, has become a part of the house, yet something unknowable and repressed lies within it, and so soon a larger narrative flashback in the form of the grandfather's tale emerges, telling of a dangerous time when the devil himself walked among them, wreaking havoc in the form of black spiders. The novella explains how the townsfolk, in order to build an extravagant road that their lord forced them to construct, made a deal with the devil. In return they had to deliver to him an un-baptized child<sup>3</sup> and one woman, Christine, agrees, but when she tries to hold out on the devil, a black spider begins to grow on her cheek and eventually emerges to savage the town. Confined at last, it remained within the post of the

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<sup>3</sup>In Lutz Röhrich's *German Devil Tales and Devil Legends*, he speaks to several German motifs concerning the devil. “First is the so-called “*Zeugungseihe*,” the assignment of a yet unborn child to the devil, of promising the devil a child not yet born--- we know about the promising of an unborn child to the devil from the oldest version of Rumpelstilzen Tom Tit Tot-type, from the French version of Madame d'Heritier. The child is promised to Ricdin Ricdon, who is undoubtedly the devil” (Röhrich 31). “The devil's pact is an opposite parallel or parody of Baptism as a pact with God” (Röhrich 25).

house for decades before a stranger loosed it once again. Again it was imprisoned, and now the grandfather finally reveals that it is still there, inside the post, waiting.

Not only does the black spider crawl throughout the time of the text as a physical manifestation of death, but also the devil himself, given the uncertainty of death, appears in several guises throughout the tale. He is seen first as a simple, lone, hunter but soon pulls the blackness of death around him to cloak himself in mystery: “Then the green huntsman<sup>4</sup> showed a cunning face; his little beard crackled, and his eyes gleamed at them like snakes’ eyes, and a hideous laugh came from the two corners of his mouth as he opened his lips” (Gotthelf 32). As the face and personality of the “huntsman” begins to pull apart and open up channels from which the fantastic can flow, the uncanny power of death propels the devilish transformation. The familiarity of a smile becomes demonic when the lightness of laughter splits and shatters, suddenly coming from “the two corners of his mouth” at the same time. Yet the fact that this strangeness emerges from a religious character inhibits the uncanny’s full manifestation, as the mysticism and power of a biblical theme envelops it.

The biblical aspects muffle the effects of the uncanny in *The Black Spider*, but one can still recognize the early emergence of the uncanny even under the weight of religious and

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<sup>4</sup> In Claude Luttrell’s *The Folk-Tale Element in “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,”* he explicates the significance of the green huntsman in the German tradition, as well as in Western Europe in general. “The challenger, we should note, wears the green coat of a huntsman, being described as *ein Jägersmann im grünen Rock*. Such a figure is a commonplace of German folklore, as a phantom huntsman, the huntsman of the Wild Hunt, or the devil. Dressed in green from head to foot, the devil is said to be *ei grüner Jäger* (a green huntsman), also *ein grüner Man* (a green man), and comes to be called *der Grüne* (the Green One), as well as being termed *Grünrock* (Greencoat). How widespread this representation of the devil once was in Western Europe may be judged from Chaucer’s *Friar’s Tale*, in which the green dress of the huntsman is worn by the fiend who assumes the guise of a forester and finally makes off with the summoner” (Luttrell 114-15).

folkloric motifs. Soon after the huntsman's face distorts, "The words [of the huntsman] flashed at the men like lightening, scales fell from their eyes, and like spray in a whirlwind they scattered in different directions" (Gotthelf 32). The lightening appears like an act of God to illuminate the religious implications of the phrase "scales fell from their eyes<sup>5</sup>." Instead of allowing the men to wonder at the fantastic or uncanny quality of the huntsman, the narrator transmogrifies into a biblical being, like a minister channeling the uncertainties of his flock to the certainty of God. The uncanny and the fantastic cannot survive when their effects find such a solid and purposeful explanation. Religion feeds off the fantastic and the uncanny, and so competes with them in texts<sup>6</sup>. They compete because they both share death as a soil from which to grow, for just as death elicits the uncanny or the fantastic, "the death drive [can be seen as] as the essential *mechanism* of religion" (Royle 98).

Nicholas Royle recognizes the way religion bites at the uncanny, but he also points out as well that the uncanny threatens the religious as well. The emergence of literature on the uncanny battled against social religious aspects that began to diminish in the Victorian era. The uncanny seems to have always been viewed as a "challenge or threat to religious belief," as "in the first half of the nineteenth century, texts dealing with the supernatural and superstition [came] to the

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<sup>5</sup> In the Acts 9:18 of the Bible, Paul, then the sinner Saul, while on the road to Damascus, encounters Ananias, a man who God has instructed to go to Saul and give him his sight and fill him with the Holy Ghost "and straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight; and he arose and was baptized" (Mathews 268).

<sup>6</sup> "Let us recall another suggestive, comparatively early use of the word 'uncanny', also Scottish, cited by the *OED*. This is in Sir Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering* (1815): 'I wish she binna uncanny! Her words dinna seem to come in God's name, or like other folk's'. What this usage makes clear is a sort of dehiscence within the uncanny as regards the religious. What is 'uncanny' is what does not 'seem to come in God's name'. Freud does not say so in as many words, in the text entitled *The Uncanny*; but the strangeness of the uncanny offers, demands or presupposes a new way of thinking about religion" (Royle 20).

same stumbling block [of religion]" (Royle 21). The publication of uncanny texts continued to beat at the crumbling pillars of belief until, in the latter half of the century, it began to flow secularly outward. Allan Lloyd Smith "sees the uncanny as arising out of the 'loss of faith' and increasing secularity of society in Britain," and adds "'The shadow at the edge of Victorian consciousness was the 'other' of social, sexual, or racial out-groups'" (Royle 36 n.76). Once the strange and the forbidden could no longer hide under the blanket terms like "miracle" or "sin" solely, uncertainty crept forward into the gaps left by religion and fostered the uncanny and fantastic texts that birthed from this time.

In *The Black Spider* though, religion still holds sway, yet it cannot completely contain all the uncertainty, as religion itself breeds a hesitation in its followers as to whether or not they will achieve salvation. One old woman, when the villagers decide whether to enter into a deal with the huntsman, ventures that "to act like that would be to forget God, to risk losing what was certain for the sake of something uncertain, and to play with one's eternal salvation" (Gotthelf 45). God implies a certain continuation of life, an "eternal salvation," but the devil leads downwards to the darkness of "something uncertain," and gaping. No believer can be certain of their salvation when the devil remains lurking, waiting to pounce and trick them into sin. The devil, as an entity that may appear in any form, holds open the gaping mouth of Hell to challenge the certainty of religious beliefs.

The uncertainty of the villagers' salvation, furthermore, manifests something of an uncanny feeling that passes over them as they near the church. After dealing with the devil and embarking on their work under his watch, their horses begin to shy away "as if there were something invisible appearing from the churchyard that stood in their way, and a hollow sounding of a bell, almost like the misplaced noise of a distant death knell, came from the

church, so that a peculiar sensation of horror seized even the strongest men” (Gotthelf 47). Aspects of the uncanny manifest themselves in this quotation beginning with its first words, “as if,” because “when the inner states of the focalized are left to be implied by external behaviour modal expressions” that suggest “the speculative status of such implication,” frequently occur (Rimmon-Kenan 82). This includes words like “‘apparently’, ‘evidently’, ‘as if’, [and] ‘it seemed,’” that Boris Uspensky calls “‘words of estrangement’” (Rimmon-Kenan 82). Readers cannot know what the focalized horses saw or felt, and so must infer a possible scenario from the “external behaviour” of the animals. These “words of estrangement” elicit uncertainty in readers because they must confront the unknown and invisible block without the security of a reliable witness. The narrator does not claim that there actually was something invisible there, but rather only implies that the appearance of such could have spooked the horses into reacting as they did. This removal from the text, though it creates uncertainty, does not necessarily imply the uncanny, as it also lessens the familiarity or closeness with the situation that heightens the uncanny. Hence this weakened sense of the *unheimlich* struggles to surface above the Gothic overtones that ring through the scene.

The ghostly churchyard accompanied by the “hollow sounding of a bell” cannot help but elicit the Gothic. Just as previously the religious language blocked the uncanny, here it battles against the strong sublime<sup>7</sup> and Gothic elements that prevent it from fully forming. Poe’s poem “The Bells,” is apropos of the Gothic power evoked by Gotthelf’s bells in these lines:

What tale of terror, now, their turbulency tells!  
In the startled ear of night  
How they scream of their affright!  
Too much horrified to speak,

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<sup>7</sup> The loud ringing of bells elicits the grandness and sublimity found in the Gothic, as Edmund Burke speaks to the sublime power of sound, saying, “Sounds have a great power in these [sublime passions]---Excessive loudness alone is sufficient to overpower the soul, to suspend its action, and to fill it with terror” (Burke 75).

They can only shriek, shriek,  
Out of tune (Poe 82)

Susan Bernstein's analysis of Poe's "The Bells," mirrors Gotthelf's language, in that they both speak of the power of bells to invoke a "death knell," as "the beating out of time through repetition signals the tolling of the death knell that time inevitably brings with it" (Bernstein 62). The Gothic, the fantastic, and the uncanny, all utilize similar sources in stories, centering on the supernatural, to effect their varied results. Consequentially, the deathly quality of bells can bring all three into competition. The sudden appearance of an invisible something that creates a hesitancy for the men calls up the fantastic, yet the ghostly invisibility, the estrangement, of the "misplaced noise," and the "peculiar sensation of horror," all speak to the uncanny, and the setting in a churchyard, the "hollow<sup>8</sup> sounding of a bell," the "distant death knell," and again the "horror," all reek of the Gothic. Notice that the less visible the devil himself actually appears the uneasier they become.

The word *unheimlich* appears only once in the German version of *Die schwarze Spinne*. It occurs when the physical presence of the devil is most hidden, invading the house space as an untraceable sound, a purring that originates from the imprisoned spider.

But it is said that all the three days long a strange humming could be heard in the whole house like the purring of a cat that is contented to have its fur stroked. But they could not find the cat from which the purring came, for all they searched everywhere; then many a one felt ill at ease.<sup>9</sup> (Gotthelf 92-3)

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<sup>8</sup> In Matthew Gregory Lewis's Gothic text, *The Monk: A Romance* (1795), hollow bells also evoke the Gothic. "The clock in a neighbouring steeple struck "one." As I listened to the mournful hollow sound, and heard it die away in the wind, I felt a sudden chillness spread itself over my body" (Lewis 125).

<sup>9</sup> From the original German: "Aber während allen dreien Tagen soll man im ganzen Hause ein seltsam Surren gehört haben wie das einer Katze, welcher es behaglich wird, weil man ihr den Balg streicht. Doch die Katze, von welcher es kam, konnte man trotz alles Suchens nicht finden; da ward manchem *unheimlich*, und trotz aller Herrlichkeit lief er mitten aus dem Feste" (Gotthelf 71) (Italics my own).

H.M Waidson, the translator for this edition, translated *unheimlich* to “felt ill at ease” rather than to as “uncanny” itself, but that sense certainly permeates the sentence. It seems when all religious and Gothic elements are stripped away, when all physical forms diminish, the uncanny emerges. The sound of something so familiar, a contented cat’s purr, separated from the body of a cat and occurring without explanation, turns hauntingly uncanny. Once the religious and physically formed devil leaves the scene and leaves behind only traces of the supernatural, once the other genres are confined within the pole with the black spider, the quiet uncanny slinks out from behind their brazen auras.

In “Young Goodman Brown,” the devil again figures as a physical and potent presence, yet his appearance is somehow familiar, more ordinary, and so the boundary between devil and man wanes to allow greater exposure of the uncanny. The tale centers on a young husband’s journey into the woods to witness a witch’s Sabbath that is led by the devil. There he finds all those “godly” townsfolk he thought he knew participating, even his lovely young wife, aptly named Faith. As Brown enters the woods he has the uncanny feeling that “[t]here may be a devilish Indian behind every tree,” and wonders “if the devil himself should be at [his] very elbow” (Hawthorne 1034). Having been Americanized by Hawthorne to implicate those Indian “devils” that haunted the New World, the devil thus appears first as the uncanny feeling that something is watching. Hawthorne’s puritanical<sup>10</sup> nature allows him to merge the “devilish Indians” with the actual devil, and “since Puritans perceived the devil and all behavior associated with him as the inversion of godliness, they perceived natural man--Indians as well as English

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<sup>10</sup> “Hawthorne’s literary reputation is inextricably linked with Puritanism and the Puritans,” and interestingly, W.C Brownell “called *The Scarlet Letter* “the Puritan *Faust*””(Mills 78). (*Faust* is later touched on in relation to the discussion on Chamisso’s *Peter Schlemihl*)

sinner--as an inverted expression of their cultural ideal” (Simmons 58). So the introduction of these “inverted” Indians readies the readers for the sinner Brown soon encounters and calls forth the uncanny by using inversion to make familiar disparate members of the American world.

The devil himself, seemingly summoned by Brown’s fear, appears as a familiar and ordinary man with an uncanny closeness to both Brown and Brown’s fellows. He emerges as “the figure of a man, in grave and decent attire, seated at the foot of an old tree” (Hawthorne 1034). Just “the figure of a man,” seemingly not yet a man, but merely the suggestion of one, recognizably so, and yet indistinguishable beyond normalcy causes Brown to realize he bears such “a considerable resemblance to him” that “they might have been taken for father and son” (Hawthorne 1034). The familiarity of a father intermingled with the ultimate otherness of the devil cannot help but produce the uncanny. Still, the undertones of devilry remain unspoken until “the traveler put forth his staff and touched” the neck of the woman who taught Brown his catechism. She screams out, “The devil!” and he replies “Then Goody Cloyse knows her old friend”(Hawthorne 1036). Even when the devil reveals his identity, the suggestion that the godly unknowingly enter into friendships with the devil heightens the sense that there is something too familiar about the devil for comfort.

As “Young Goodman Brown” places the ill-fitting suit of the ordinary around the devil, so *Peter Schlemihl*, dressing its devil in grey and focusing on the strangeness of conversation and the unwillingness to name something as extraordinary, also exhibits the supernatural with much less spectacle and in much more ordinary terms than *The Black Spider*. It is in essence the tale of a man who trades the devil his shadow for a purse that grants endless money, but overlaying this folkloric thread are layers of ordinary acts and appearances, each creating the conjunction between the supernatural and the natural that promotes the uncanny. Instead of the religious

figure of the devil inhibiting the expression of the uncanny, here the appearance of such a biblical figure deliberately muted and humanized actually heightens the uncanny sense<sup>11</sup>. Like “Derrida’s description of God in *The Gift of Death* as ‘at the same time other than me and more intimate with me than myself’” (Royle 297). Here a being, like God or the devil, that has the ability to know one’s inner soul, perhaps better than oneself does, yet themselves remains unknowable, stirs up the uncanny. So when in *Peter Schlemihl* the devil again appears, this time as the so-called “man in grey,” he acts as the carrier of the uncanny by placing the highly supernatural within the confines of the extremely ordinary, as in a nameless man dressed uniformly in grey.

Peter, the title character, surprises himself with an awareness of the man at a party, because nothing about him obviously attracts attention, thus the uniformity of the devil’s grey clothing makes the attention he attracts point to some unnamable knowledge Peter must have about the man, an uncanny sense of danger. Peter, in describing his first sight of the devil, details, “A quiet elderly man, tall and rather thin, whom I had not previously noticed, instantly put his hand into the close-fitting coat-tail pocket of his old-fashioned grey taffeta coat and produced a small wallet” (Chamisso 18). Nondescript would be another way to describe this man, or unassuming; he is only noticed because he reached into his pocket. The color grey itself, which soon becomes the man’s title feature, named as “the man in grey,” situates itself between

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<sup>11</sup>Chamisso was not the only German writer at that time to figure a devil as ordinary, as Goethe’s play *Faust* (Part I 1808, Part II 1832), about a man who sells his soul to the devil, Mephistopheles, for knowledge, features a humanized devil. Mephistopheles “presents himself in an almost unlimited variety of masks. Therefore we should call him a man without qualities--- often an average character, unremarkable and sober” (Janz 38). “If we compare Mephistopheles with the traditional picture of the devil, it is quite clear that he has become more complex-- and more ambivalent--[He] nourishes and provokes the evil that is part of Faust’s character. He demonstrates Faust’s own ambivalence” (Janz 32-3).

the shadowy darkness of black and the luminous light of white. The cloth is neither devilish and dark, nor heavenly white. A human grey that gives his clothing and his personality a uniform quality, a normalcy, yet defiance to definition.

The devil first appears as an unremarkable man pulling something ordinary from his pocket, yet this pocket soon begins to produce increasingly strange items, culminating in the chilling emergence of a man's condemned soul from the unexceptional greyness of his coat pocket. It proceeds thus:

Slowly he put his hand in his pocket and drew out by the hair the pale and ghastly form of Thomas John. "*Justo Judicio Dei judicatus sum.*"<sup>12</sup> The terrible words trembled on its blue and livid lips. "*Justo Judicio Dei condemnatus sum.*"<sup>13</sup> I was frozen with horror." (Chamisso 101)

Thomas John is the Mr. John from the beginning of the tale whom Peter visited. From something so normal, a pocket, this unassuming man pulls the soul of a man who has been transfigured into a "ghastly form." Peter can put a name to what he sees, but the man has been so changed that Peter's mind reacts with "horror" to the need to accept this unnatural monstrosity as intimately known and remembered. Peter, in the very beginning of the tale sees Mr. John put something in his own pocket, for when Peter delivers him a letter of introduction he "put it into his pocket" (Chamisso 17). So when John himself is pulled from a pocket it recalls the very normalcy of an act Peter associated with John earlier. As Peter's introduction was introduced to John's pocket, so the reader is introduced to the repetitious banality of using pockets to sets up the uncanny quality of a condemned soul being pulled from something so commonly figured.

Through this example, and most poignantly through the presence of the "man in grey" himself, one can trace the parallel between Peter's reaction to the uncanny and the readers'

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<sup>12</sup> "I am judged by the just judgement of God" (Lowenstein-Wertheim 125).

<sup>13</sup> "By the just judgement of God I am condemned" (Lowenstein-Wertheim 125).

reaction. Never named, the “man in grey” evokes the uncanny because “the uncanny involves feelings of uncertainty, in particular regarding the reality of who one is and what is being experienced” (Royle 1). Peter expresses his own feelings of unease when he declares that “behind this strange event stood the uncanny figure of the man in grey,” and that “to me all this was becoming increasingly uncanny, indeed quite horrifying”<sup>14</sup> (Chamisso 38, 22). He refers to the way in which the man pulls myriad over-large objects, such as three horses, from his pocket without any other guest posing a single question. Though this brings up strong feelings for Peter, the reader may have more trouble with the nameless man himself than his powers. It somehow seems easier to accept that a man in a text can do fantastic things than that a character has neither name nor identity, especially when the author hints consistently that the reader knows whom the man is supposed to represent.

What could be more familiar than a man in grey? Both readers and Peter sense the intrinsic banality of the character, yet his powers hint at an unknown force; one that seems uncannily familiar. Still, though Peter and the reader both detect this previously experienced quality of the man in grey, it acts differently on both, as Peter interacts directly with the devil and is the one to make familiar the term “the man in grey” through his repetitious voicing of it which in turn works on the reader more than on Peter himself. The repetitious nature of the man’s title disturbs readers, for the uncanny “may arise from the seemingly mechanical repetition of a word” (Royle 1). Indeed, the more times one reads “the man in grey,” the more one feels irritation of a title that reads both as known and nondescript or hollow. The story teases readers too by voicing another name that acts more as a title than a personal name, uncannily similar to

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<sup>14</sup> “Mir war schon lange *unheimlich*, ja graulich zumute, wie ward mir vollends, als beim nächst ausgesprochenen Wunsch ich ihn noch aus seiner Tasche drei Reitpferde” (Chamisso 26) (italics my own).

the way “the man in grey” masks the man under the grey. The man in grey declares, ““Can’t you see I’m a poor devil,”” and, ““The devil is not as black as they paint him”” (Chamisso 69, 95). Then, when the man in grey begins to speak of signing away souls and the afterlife, hearing Peter say, “I listened to the deceiver,” only enhances the man’s uncanny resemblance to Satan (Chamisso 99). In any normal conversation, references to the devil go unnoticed, as within the lightness of conversation. Saying, “I’m a poor devil” does not invoke the supernatural because the listener has no question of whether or not the speaker believes they are actually the devil. In this case, though, as the words are spoken by or to the actual devil, they turn ironic and taunt readers to find new significance in the ordinary phrases they speak daily.

The devil is familiar to readers, and somehow so is the “man in grey,” yet Chamisso refuses to voice their uncanny resemblance, but rather allows his readers to rely on that uncanny feeling that tells them that though unnamed, this man must be the devil himself. By making the devil just a man, it allows readers and Peter to find an unsettling connection between themselves and Satan. As Freud noted, “the ordinary person sees in [those called ‘mad’] the workings of forces hitherto unsuspected in his fellow-man but which at the same time he is dimly aware of in a remote corner of his own being” (Freud 14). Readers must then recognize that a man who acts like the devil might feel so familiar because they have themselves been at times been a “man in grey.”

The man in grey bears an uncanny resemblance both to the devil and to the common man simultaneously, and so this straddling of types acts like a tripwire to trap readers by allowing the ordinary to lull them into the web of the supernatural submissively. The “man in grey” is at times demure and gracious and at others impatient and cruel, yet his actual emotions and reactions

rarely range outside of the average range. At times the “man in grey” seems downright reasonable, for example when he notices Peter tires of his presence he replies:

So you cannot endure me. I can understand that and don't hold it against you. Obviously, we must part and I must admit, you are becoming very boring to me, too” (Chamisso 100).

That the words of the devil could so easily fill the mouths of readers, that this knowing and powerful other can act all too human recalls Derrida's description of the uncanny quality of god-like beings picked up by Royle. He points to

that ‘stranger who is already found within (*das Heimliche-Unheimliche*), more intimate with one than one is oneself--- the absolute proximity of a stranger whose power is singular *and* anonymous (*es spukt*), an unnamable and neutral power, that is, undecidable, neither active nor passive, an an-identity that, *without doing anything*, invisibly occupies places belonging finally neither to us nor to it.’ (Royle 297)

To speak of the devil within us all seems apropos Derrida's description, as the encounter of a definite physical other, the man in grey, who, both as a man and as a devil, relates to some only barely understood part of the self, cannot but summon the uncanny. The man in grey, with his nondescript name, perfectly embodies this “anonymous,” “unnamable,” “neutral,” and “undecidable” “stranger” that Derrida describes.

Yet, as human as his responses are, one cannot help but feel wary of a man with pockets full of shadows and souls. He is indeed the great deceiver. Or does that title lie with the author? For Freud examines how the author “deceives us into thinking that he is giving us the sober truth, and then after all oversteps the bounds of possibility” (Freud 18). Because the author has taken pains to gain readers' trust, it disturbs them all the more when that trusted author leads them beyond their normal bounds, for as Freud points out, readers' investment in the text means “We react to [the author's] inventions as we should have reacted to real experiences” (Freud 18). Thus readers react to Chamisso's invented world with the same discomfort that they would if

encountered with a “man in grey” in the real world. Perhaps the degree of the reaction changes, but one must admit to feeling a tingle at the image of a soul being pulled out a man’s pocket lamenting the condemnation of God.

It seems uncanny almost because it speaks so closely to our own deepest fears: of death and Hell. Rosemary Jackson agrees, “*Das Unheimlich* is at its purest here, where we dis-cover our latent deaths, our hidden lack of being, for ‘nothing is both better known and stranger to thought than mortality’” (Jackson 68). Death cannot be confronted consciously most of the time, as it brings up too many anxieties and fears, and so most people repress the thought of death, making it’s discussion in literature an uncanny reminder of the strange familiarity of death. Death may be the great unknown, but there always remains an uncanny feeling that, like Peter, we’ve all met some form of Death along the road; perhaps simply in the form of our own Shadow.

Gabriel García Márquez, writing much later than Chamisso on the other side of the world, still invokes death as a harbinger of the uncanny or the fantastic, yet death no longer confronts characters as the devil, but rather as ghostly projections of a mind touched by death. Death appears more ethereal, with a diminishing of the human form that was so important to Chamisso’s tale. There is no devil but death.<sup>15</sup> In “The Other Side of Death,” a short story about a man whose twin brother just died of a tumor, Márquez describes the protagonist’s encounter with the uncanny: “he’d given a start in bed and felt that his twin brother, his dead brother, was sitting on the edge of the bed” (Márquez 109). Notice that it is upon awakening that he feels his brother appears, not during the dream. The piece goes on to describe the fact that the corpse of

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<sup>15</sup> “In modern theology the nature of the devil has changed in that he is no longer a person with horns, pitchfork, tail and a horse’s foot, but rather the idea of evil (in German no longer *Der Böse*, but *Das Böse*)” (Röhrich 22).

the twin brother lies nearby, and the entire tale teases apart the line between ghostly visitations and dreams, thus opening room for the fantastic that leaves the protagonist with the uncanny feeling that something both familiar, his brother, and something unfamiliar, death, have merged into one unsettling being that appears before him.

In Márquez's other tales, death often invades the tale to question whether or not the characters occupy reality or some higher form of being. In "Eva Is Inside Her Cat," Eva reveals a fear of the young boy they buried recently returning to her bed. She explains, "She was afraid of feeling him beside her again after he had leaped over the wall of death" (Márquez 121). The fear then springs from something so familiar, sleeping with the boy, returning in a new and horrific form: Death. Márquez then continues the tale in a way that slowly pulls Eva's own mind closer to a state of death herself, almost as though thoughts of death have the power to transform one. Eva begins to float about her house as a spirit, or simply as a mad woman, Márquez refuses to tell, and so uses the uncanny feeling to lead to the hesitation necessary for the fantastic to flourish. For as Márquez says in "Dialogue with the Mirror," "the thick preoccupation of death" hangs about us all, and so nothing else can invoke both the uncanny and the fantastic with such ease (Márquez 131).

John Banville's *The Sea* although, again, situated in a drastically different place than Márquez's tale, still uses death to produce the uncanny, except the ghostly projections, that readers cannot quite attribute strictly to madness that surface in Márquez, appear here rather as an internal stream of consciousness that nags. *The Sea*, set in the moving mind of the main character, details a man's dealings with death, as the narrative rapidly shifts between memories and present experiences to mediate the death of the man's wife and two childhood friends who both died at different times in this same sea-side location he returns to. The story begins with the

uncanny sense of a past tragedy encroaching on the uneventful description of a seaside scene. The narrator-protagonist recalls a day when the sea became unfamiliar and godless and the birds “looked unnaturally white” (Banville 3). That day he declared, “I would not swim, no, not ever again” (Banville 3). Thus the uncanny emerges from a hauntingly tragic event that occurred on this day; a sense only magnified by the narrator’s declaration that “someone has just walked over my grave” (Banville 3). This recollection unfolds then like a shiver down his spine as the sight of the familiar sea sweeps in the horrific events of the past. As the actual tragedy does not occur before the readers eyes until much later in the text, Banville creates a sense of unease and expectation in readers who feel the ghostly presence swept in by the sea in the very first sentences of the novel.

Beyond simply fragmenting and distorting his own personality, Max implies that the personalities of others begin to infest his own, adding a further layer of unfamiliarity to his identity. He details, “Just now I caught myself at it again, that thin, wintry whistling---that I had begun to do recently--- my father used to whistle like that, am I turning into him?” (Banville 6). Again, the uncanny invades Max’s life as something so familiar as his father’s whistle turns eerie when it crawls out of the grave and into his own mouth. There is also the sense that Max “caught himself” doing something he did not consciously decide to do, implying that he may not be in control of his own body or impulses, the uncanny feeling that something unknown may act upon his being. Banville’s placement of fatherly traits into Max’s mouth allows for the suggestion that personality traits and habits attach themselves like burrs to people which travel on them unnoticed until a slight movement causes them to irritate the carefully constructed boundaries of skin.

Anna, Max's wife, dies during the novel, and so Max's perceptions of himself grow increasingly muddled and unfamiliar: he has lost the "fairground mirror" his wife provided to stabilize his distortions and discovered in its place only a ghostly image. Max details:

I had a sudden image of myself as a sort of large dark simian something slumped there at the table, or not a something but a nothing, rather, a hole in the room, a palpable absence, a darkness visible. It was very strange. I saw the scene as if from outside myself---I think I am becoming my own ghost. (Banville 143-4)

Max denies even his own humanity, degrading himself from a simian to a thing to a nothing to an absence. He declares it "very strange," which makes sense, because what could be more unsettling than to feel the absence of a self? Max calls himself "my own ghost," as his mind cannot conceive of such a nothingness being his true known self but instead projects it into a ghostly version of the self, separate and manageable. Just as much as Max can conceptualize the emptiness inside himself, he cannot fully reconcile the idea of it with his need for a unified personality, and so he can only express his experience as "becoming my own ghost."

Calling himself ghostly implicates a death of certain parts of himself, an experience that resonates with his descriptions of how his wife and he changed after death entered their lives. Max introduces death by announcing: "there is a name De'Ath, with that fancy medial capital and apotropaic apostrophe which fool no one" (Banville 10). Death, so known and yet so unfamiliar it ushers in an uncanny sense similar to opening a door that's been in full view forever, yet remained unopened. Max notes that humanity's familiarity with death allows them to identify the word despite attempts to package it in a more polite way. Confronted with a seemingly fancy last name the mind feels uneasy as it recognizes the morbidity hiding behind it. Max relates this sense to that of how doctors attempted to disguise his wife's death behind flowery words, yet the stench of death seeped past any perfumed politeness they attempted.

Death coats both Max and Anna in the uncanny sense that parts of themselves have turned strange and ghostly. After the doctor diagnoses Anna with death, Max describes, “we sat outside the house in the car for a long time, loath of venturing in upon the known, saying nothing, strangers to ourselves and each other as we suddenly were” (Banville 14). They fear entering a place that should be so familiar because it will only heighten their awareness of the unfamiliar that has entered their lives. This sense of the unknown only grew as De’Ath pulled Anna away from Max. He asserts, “She was no longer Anna, that she was no longer anyone” (Banville 176-7). Yet, even as he declares her anonymous, he can identify who she was to him, and he cannot deny that even this unfamiliar ghost of his wife evokes in him all the memories and feelings he attached to Anna. The fact that the body in front of him differs so greatly from his mental image of Anna is what his mind denies, refusing to accept that they could be the same being. He strips Anna of her identity so he can cradle it in his mind; pink-cheeked, smiling, and safe from Mr. De’Ath.

Max, after witnessing the drowning of his two twin playmates, Chloe and Myles, again separates his memory of them from the physical reality of their death. When he realized they had actually drowned, he says he felt “a sense of awe, awe of myself, that is, who had known two living creatures that now were suddenly, astoundingly, dead” (Banville 182). Thus the awe of the uncanny emerges through the contradiction of a known life transformed by the unknown blackness of death. Max questions whether he actually believes they died, saying, “In my mind they were held suspended in a vast bright space, upright, their arms linked and their eyes wide open, gazing gravely before them into illimitable depths of light” (Banville 182). Again he turns to ghostly images to try to bridge the disjunction between life and death, absence and tangibility. He has an uncanny sense that the children have not drowned but live on in some altered form,

one that can embody both his mental image of them and the reality of their absence. Thus the distortion of death can only find stability through a reflection in a distorted image created by the mourner. Max tries to find ownership over the unknown depths of death by distorting through the prism of his own known perceptions of the children when they lived.

Myles, the mute shadow of his twin Chloe, routinely appears impishly stalking Chloe's footsteps, leading him to unsettle even his parents. Max confides:

Deep down [Myles's parents] were both, I am sure, a little afraid of him. That is no wonder either. It must have been like living with an all too visible, all too tangible poltergeist." (Banville 62)

He also admits that he was "too a little afraid of him" (Banville 62). The unknown, the question of whether Myles chooses to remain mute or not, casts the distorted light of the uncanny over his silent presence. Undoubtedly, parents wish to know their own children, to feel their own blood manifest itself in them. But Myles, it would seem, has allowed some part of himself to die, and that absence hangs about him. So when Myles does present himself as alien to his talkative parents, he becomes a "tangible poltergeist" of the boy they hoped to have.

Banville, using the medium of childhood as he does with Myles to convey the uncanny, challenges the traditional sense of the word put forth by Freud and its quality of the return. Max questions, "How is it that in childhood everything new that caught my interest had an aura of the uncanny, since according to all the authorities the uncanny is not some new thing but a thing known returning in a different form, become a revenant" (Banville 8). As a young child with less chance to form stored memories, encountering the novel should not necessarily feel uncanny, at least according to Banville's understanding of Freud. It might be possible, though, that a child yearns to feel familiarity in novelty that adults do not because they have lived enough to find something familiar in what they encounter. The uncanny may stem from a child believing that

there must be something known in the unknown, yet strangely finding nothing which they can pin down or cling to. Children may wish they had ghostly memories to comfort them, to guide them through the sharpness of their new world.

Max seems to crave that sort of ghostly presence as well, as he pleads with Anna to hang about him, and perhaps this explains why he tortures himself with memories. He exclaims:

Why have you not come back to haunt me?---Why this silence day after day--- It is like a fog, this silence of yours---Send back your ghost. Torment me, if you like--- I would have a ghost.” (Banville 183)

Max would likely welcome the uncanny presence of his changed but familiar sensation of her being. Evocatively, he finds the absence of a ghost more discomfoting than confronting the form of his wife disarmingly altered by death. Perhaps, indeed, it is better to see that eerie light through fog than to gaze blindly into the haze. In her last moments Anna references the way her death prompts a wish for continuation. Her last words halt him in his ways as she says, ““they are stopping the clocks,’--- ‘I have stopped time”” (Banville 176-7). Anna does stop time for Max, as he finds himself drowning in memories and craving just one more moment with her.

Max’s masochistic plea brought on by the death of his wife sounds uncannily similar to another passionate plea made by Heathcliff in Emily Brönte’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847)<sup>16</sup>, and so it begs the question of how a modernist text employing the uncanny, invoking it repetitively, can also recondition the borrowed language of the Gothic for its own purposes. Instead of Max’s

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<sup>16</sup>J.Hillis Miller found that the repetitive nature of *Wuthering Heights* evokes the uncanny, as “the uncanny in *Wuthering Heights* is the constant bringing into the open of something which seems familiar and which one feels ought to have been kept secret, not least because it is impossible to tell whether there is any secret at all hidden in the depths, or whether the sense of familiarity and of the unveiling of a secret may not be an effect of the repetition in difference of one part of the text by another, on the surface” (Miller 69).

internalized monologue, Heathcliff's raging is externalized, spoken to another, and physically violent:

“And I pray one prayer--I repeat it til my tongue stiffens--Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest, as long as I am living! You said I killed you--haunt me, then! The murdered *do* haunt their murderers, I believe--I know that ghosts *have* wandered on earth. Be with me always--take any form--drive me mad! Only *do* not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! It is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!” He dashed his head against the knotted trunk; and, lifting up his eyes, howled, not like a man, but like a savage beast getting goaded to death with knives and spears. (Brönte 130)

Just as the devil and death fold inward to become only features of the mind, Heathcliff's bestial keening confines itself to a thought in Max's mind. The extraordinary and Gothic landscape of Heathcliff's reaction turns ordinary, and so compresses the same power into the mundane, producing a sense of discomfort for readers who sense the explosive power behind Max's single thought.

Not only does the essence of the plea itself recall a Gothic text, but the words Max uses attempt to figure the Gothic as well, though they cannot emerge fully when the only landscape they have to unfold on is his mind instead of the desolate vastness of a moor. Max's plea contains Gothic imagery, as he tells his wife to “Rattle your chains, drag your cerements across the floor, keen like a banshee, anything” (Banville 183). Yet there appears no ghost with rattling chains, no keening banshee, and so these images remain simply impressions of the Gothic, rather than embodiments of it, as with Heathcliff's almost demonic and “savage” actions. Heathcliff, like the tyrannical devil in *The Black Spider* who made spider spring from a woman's cheek in his rage, manifests his feelings grandly and palpably. Max's plea, utilizing the same violent imagery, yet itself remaining an insubstantial thought, strips the Gothic quality from the scene and instead leaves readers wondering why they feel something has been lost.

Although the landscape of his mind could not support the vastness of Gothic prose, he finds the internal area able to expand beyond ordinary bounds, a place where death can truly be dealt with on its own uncertain terms. The way in which death defies the laws of life weighs on Max and he finds within himself a state that mirrors the fantastic elements of death:

Strange as it was, however, this imagined place of pre-departure was not entirely unfamiliar to me-- I had felt myself break through the membrane of mere consciousness into another state, one which had no name, where ordinary laws did not operate, where time moved differently if it moved at all, where I was neither alive nor the other thing and yet more vividly present than ever I could be in what we call, because we must, the real world--- immured in the moment and yet hovering somehow on the point of departure. Perhaps all of life is no more than a long preparation for the leaving of it. (Banville 72)

His discourse, in fact, seems to occupy that limitless expanse of hesitation that the fantastic fills. He speaks of being outside normal space and time, as being neither alive nor dead. In fact he fails even to conclusively mention death, but rather calls it “the other thing,” as again death remains the ultimate Other, indefinable and infinitely fantastic. Because Max finds himself “vividly present,” “immured in the moment,” and “hovering somehow on the point of departure,” these temporal descriptions imply a state of hesitation, a state where the fantastic can intrude and work on his mind. Ultimately, Max even considers that all of life is this state of hesitation before death, preoccupied by the fantastic because of life’s refusal to declare where we’ve come from or where we will return.

As dealing with death allows Max to transcend the boundaries of time and place, death also allowed Márquez’s characters to break and reform these same boundaries, just as the devil in Chamisso, Gotthelf, and Hawthorne tore apart boundaries with his fatal claws. This trend found when examining the effects of death, and its uncertainty, leads one to wonder about the fantastic and the uncanny’s power to break and remake boundaries. A boundary can separate what is deemed “ordinary” from that which is called “extraordinary,” and his chapter has shown

how the fantastic and the uncanny slide along the spectrum of the ordinary to deal with the uncertain nature of death, be it externally or internally figured. The next chapter explores how this dynamic give-and-take between the ordinary and the supernatural allows boundaries to be crossed, altered, or broken down and reformed altogether.

## Chapter 2

### Breaking and Remaking Boundaries

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,  
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather  
He said it for himself  
-Robert Frost "Mending Wall"

#### I

The fantastic and the uncanny both rely on the breaking and remaking of boundaries to manifest their effects. The uncanny uses the ordinary to reveal the extraordinary while the fantastic relies on dreams, the imagination, and the supernatural to escape the bounds of normal life. The fantastic then, can be enjoyed more easily, as it allows readers to place their minds within unrestricted texts. The uncanny, which implicates the instability of the everyday and the discontinuity of the self, seems less like escapism and more like a bitter truth. As the fantastic generally fiddles with boundaries distanced somewhat from the internal self, it tends to situate itself in a removed realm. Rosemary Jackson situates the fantastic "alongside the axis of the real," pointing out that "many of the prepositional constructions which are used to introduce a fantastic realm emphasize its interstitial placing," such as " 'On the edge,' 'through', 'beyond', 'between', 'at the back of', 'underneath', or adjectives such as 'topsy-turvy', 'reversed', [and] 'inverted'"(Jackson 65). For the fantastic to maintain its quality of uncertainty it must push the boundaries of space and time, but it does so by keeping its workings on the edge of the self and the world. Todorov asserts that this is "The nature of the fantastic," to place itself as "a frontier between two adjacent realms" (Todorov 44). It belongs neither to our world or another one, but it acts almost as a mirror to our world: recognizable, but changed. The fantastic can also figure as

the “frontier” between the inner and outer worlds, threatening the inner sanctity through its creation of uncertainty in the outer world. Fantastic tales refuse to submit to normative rules or allow readers to disengage their own reality from the text, yet as much as they may disrupt the settled mind, they do so from the outside in, rather than beginning with inner instability as the uncanny does.

The fantastic makes readers aware of the bindings of their own world by questioning the way in which time, space, and normative laws, can be manipulated. Todorov explains that “the fantastic represents an experience of limits” (Todorov 93). A fantastic text will alter or question the bounds of space or time to make readers aware of the limits placed on reality. The subtler the alteration, the closer to reality, the more uncanny the text becomes, as the story begins to mirror the readers’ own shadows. Thus “the uncanny has to do with a strangeness of framing and borders, and experience of liminality” (Royle 2). Liminality implicates a threshold, and thus the uncanny threatens the crossing-over into something unknown, and so incites horror, yet liminal also implies a rite of passage, which suggests this threshold must be crossed, becoming known through its time spent as a hovering inevitability.

The fantastic plays with the border between inner and outer reality, between dreams and waking life, but the uncanny crosses that threshold to make uncertain the stability of mind or personality itself. Not only does one question whether the two spheres have lapsed, but one must wonder whether the self has become other, or whether other versions of the self have knowledge the present version cannot know. Todorov mentions moments when “the limit between the physical and the mental, between matter and spirit, between word and thing, ceases to be impervious” (Todorov 113). The fantastic renders these boundaries penetrable, yet this does not mean it allows things like the physical and the mental merge into one indistinguishable lump,

rather an uncertainty appears as to whether bits of one have contaminated the other. The very knowledge that a boundary “ceases to be impervious” ushers in the fantastic, regardless of whether the boundary is actually crossed or not.

The fantastic and the uncanny, as defined by Todorov, lie strictly on separate sides of a boundary. But his imposed separation seems less profitable or less workable than explaining both phenomena as related concepts that dislike being confined. Why would two modes of thought whose defining features challenge the idea of definitive separations permit a wall to be built between them? The two might better settle on a spectrum or a continuum, where the extreme edge of identity is determined by the familiarity of the boundary being penetrated. For example, when a narrative challenges the boundary between natural laws and those of a magical realm, it does not immediately cause a sense of the uncanny. Yet when another narrative collapses the boundary between automatons and real people, it causes two concepts that already maintain a “too close for comfort” relationship to be threatening. Todorov writes: “a collapse of the limits between matter and mind was considered, especially in the 19th century, as the first characteristic of madness” (Todorov 115). Because the mind, being so familiar, elicits the creation of strong protective boundaries around it, for one then to suggest that the mind can be penetrated, can merge itself with the external world, seems a mad notion. When literature functions to bridge the gap between the mind and the physicality of texts, it acts as a perfect medium, for “literature is itself paradoxical, constituted of words but signifying more than words, at once verbal and transverbal (Todorov 156). The physical words can act directly on the mind, creating the immaterial from the material, and crossing boundaries. The questions one does not want to confront when reading are: “Who actually formulated the thoughts in my mind?” “The author or myself?” “What has crossed over into my mind?” Both the fantastic and

the uncanny force the reader to question the meaning of separateness; yet the fantastic does not hit as close to home as the uncanny, since the uncanny, by definition, mingles with the known, while the fantastic manifests the unknown.

This chapter argues that while both the fantastic and the uncanny meddle with boundaries, both those that lie in the physical plane of the text and the mental constructs of the characters, the more internally embedded boundaries produce the greatest uncanny sensations when they come into question. Texts like *The Black Spider*, “Young Goodman Brown,” and *The Golden Pot*, situate the supernatural in places external to the body, and thus lean more towards the fantastic when they begin to cross borders and boundaries. “Flagman Thiel,” a text whose physical boundaries act as scaffolding for its mental walls, begins to dabble in the uncanny as the supernatural events begin to center on the mind. Gabriel García Márquez’s *Innocent Eréndira and Other Stories* and John Banville’s *The Sea*, plow even further into the enclosures of the mind and begin to break boundaries from the inside to the outside, starting with those tightly held separations between past and present, or memory and reality, and so find themselves flush with the uncanny. Both the uncanny and the fantastic though rely on the human need for closure, for if readers were too comfortable with uncertainty, their minds would not rifle through fantastic possible explanations or seek to mend the disparity between the known and the unknown. This chapter ends with a discussion of the process of closure and exemplifies, through “Flagman Thiel,” how the delay of such closure sweetens the senses to allow for the fantastic or the uncanny to become truly rich.

Gottehef’s *The Black Spider* (1842), keeping well away from the innermost boundaries, allows the fantastic to emerge through the crossing of external borders, starting with the geographical boundary of the village, as foreigners, those unwelcome others, break the protective

walls of their home. They enter the tale already having crossed a boundary between the familiarity of home and the foreignness of the outside world, allowing these characters, like Christine, the woman who makes the pact with the devil, to more easily traverse barriers. Instead of calling her by her name, the narrator writes, “then the woman from Lindau mocked and scolded them,” and then later, when the narrator wants to reveal her name, the fact that she is foreign is still emphasized, describing, “Christine, the woman from Lindau, was the only one who could not flee” (Gotthelf 37). She has invaded this town, crossed their borders, and infiltrated them with her malignancy. It is from her cheek that the spiders manifest, and so it seems once she crossed one border, she could easily jump the gap between the underworld and the mortal one. Again, later in the tale, after the spider has been captured behind a wooden peg, the man who allows it to cross back into the world by pulling out the peg is “a really strange fellow, and nobody knew where he came from” (Gotthelf 94). Uncertainty about location allows fantastic elements to enter, as they flourish in the borderlands and gaps.

*The Black Spider* also uses people’s notions about the unity of space and time to lead them into the fantastic by granting the spiders the ability to transcend location, giving the impression of an almost scriptural state-of-affairs where evil both surrounds and evades capture. The spider was “now here, now there, now nowhere, now down in the valley, now up on the hills,” and “no one could avoid it, for it was nowhere and everywhere” (Gotthelf 75). The villagers inability to fix a locale to the spider grants fantastic power, as the fear of its ability to overstep the bounds of physical laws outweighed the fear of its poison; “what was still more terrible than the death agony was the nameless fear of the spider which was everywhere and nowhere and which would suddenly be fixing its death-dealing stare on someone when he fancied that he was most secure” (Gotthelf 76). Yet not only the devilish spider holds fantastic

power, as the godly intercedes as well, appearing as a sweeping sound: “over the hills came a wonderful sound; no one knew where it came from, it sounded as if from all sides; it came from the churches in the far valleys beyond” (Gotthelf 4). Both God and the devil’s fantastic and unimaginable powers manifest as the ability to eclipse normative worldly laws, and so invoking their presence allows for the uncertainty necessary for the fantastic to flow.

The fantastic can also use Time, and the gap between the experience of an event and the mind’s reaction to it, to establish itself, as the suddenness of a supernatural event can displace the readers’ certainty enough to create gaps of hesitation. For example, in *The Black Spider*; “a long black hand came suddenly over the woman’s shoulder---[and] immediately terror drove the men away from the spot” (Gotthelf 37). Something unexpected and unusual, “a long black hand,” appears with a quickness that lends itself to the fantastic as it forces the men to form quick reactions to the event, removing the time necessary to truly assess the situation. They cannot truly dispel their uncertainty because they do not have the time to decide before they must react, as they “immediately” run away. Later, when confronted with the sudden appearance of the woman who was completing a deal with the devil, the men’s shock stops them from acting rationally:

Hesitation and horror seized the men as Christine came out with the stolen child. The anticipation of a terrible future was revealed to them, but nobody had the courage to stop the deed. (Gotthelf 66)

The men, in their state of “hesitation and horror,” begin to produce fantastic futures yet lack the ability to act on what they see, to give closure and certainty to the event. It seems ingrained in human nature to react this way to a sudden inexplicable event, to fight or flee. The mind quickly flips through all possible explanations and outcomes, allowing for the fantastic to fill in for reason and paint potential futures.

As *The Black Spider* manipulated the boundaries of geography and time to usher in the fantastic, Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" (1835), thins the boundaries between sinner and citizen, dream and reality, and public and private, to allow for the imaginative possibilities that can arise from their fantastic intermingling. The tale begins with the traversing of a threshold:

Young Goodman Brown came forth at sunset into the street at Salem village; but put his head back, after crossing the threshold, to exchange a parting kiss with his young wife. And Faith, as the wife was aptly named, thrust her own pretty head into the street, letting the wind play with the pink ribbons of her cap while she called to Goodman Brown. (Hawthorne 1033)

The doorway here acts as a barrier between Brown's private, real, and devout (Faith) life and the outer, wilder, and more nightmarish public sphere. The way Faith allows "the wind to play with the pink ribbons" suggests a kind of compliance to the wily ways of the sinful world to entice out her more loose or playful nature. These ribbons<sup>17</sup> symbolically reappear later in the text while Brown is in the forest with the devil. He hears displaced voices, one of whom he recognizes as Faith's, speaking with "uncertain sorrow," then:

Something fluttered lightly down through the air and caught on the branch of a tree. The young man seized it, and beheld a pink ribbon. 'My Faith is gone!' cried he, after one stupefied moment. 'there is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil; for to thee is this world given.'" (Hawthorne 1038)

As previously Faith's ribbons dared to cross the doorway, they now have crossed into the fantastic, as they appear out of nowhere to symbolize Faith's full surrender to the devil. The allegorical nature cannot be ignored, as the blatant symbolism in Faith's name epitomizes, yet

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<sup>17</sup> "The ribbons, with their suggestions of the frivolous and ornamental, represent the ritualistic trappings of religious observance. Goodman Brown, it seems, has placed his faith and his hopes of salvation in the formal observances of religious worship rather than in the purity of his own heart and soul---Goodman Brown accepts the metonymic ribbon, Faith's adornment, as reality-just as he has accepted the "skirts" of religion as a means of salvation" (Hurley 416).

the fantastic sustains, as it can feed off the shadowy realm between the saved and the sinful. The supernatural appearance of the ribbon symbolizes that both his wife and his belief have “fallen,” leaving him in the clutches of the devil. The most interesting phrase though has to be “sin is but a name,” which suggests that as Faith was “but a name” and proven not to be the essence of his wife, that Sin would be as fit a name to call her, and that the difference between the two ceases to be anything but two names for the same thing.

It is then, when the fantastic has blown away the supposed separation of faith and sin that other barriers begin to fall away as well. Brown encounters his fellow citizens at a Black Sabbath Mass, and so as the separation between the private lives of his neighbors and their public persona disappears in this fantastic ceremony led by the devil he finds his world view must change. The devil preaches to him and Faith:

‘There---are all whom ye have revered from youth, Ye deemed them holier than yourselves, and shrank from your own sin---Yet here are they all in my worshipping assembly. This night it shall be granted you to know their secret deeds.’ (Hawthorne 1040-41)

In the realm of the fantastic, where the boundary between public and private evaporates, Brown can gaze into the private souls of his companions. The fantastic, by altering the external environment Brown encounters, can bring together disparate aspects of humanity and hold them before the viewer as similar and necessarily linked. The text emphasizes Brown and his wife’s location as on the edge; “And there they stood, the only pair, as it seemed, who were yet hesitating on the verge of wickedness in this dark world” (Hawthorne 1041). The words “yet,” “hesitating,” and “verge” all implicate the fantastic’s locus as on the threshold, threatening to cross over into something decidedly unknown.

“Young Goodman Brown” not only dances around physical or spiritual thresholds, but also raises the question of whether the border between dreams and waking life can be crossed,

and if so, can it reveal that dreams, though mentally constructed, may impact one's life just as much as the socially constructed nature of reality. The tale leaves readers with a question: "Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting" (Hawthorne 1042). The real question that this implicates though is whether it matters if it was a dream or not:

Be it so if you will; but alas! It was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown. A stern, sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man did he become from the night of that fearful dream. (Hawthorne 1042)

The fantastic here uses readers' natural assumptions against them, as if they would typically think that whatever side of the boundary this tale fell on, be it dream or waking nightmare, figured greatly in the interpretation of the text. The fantastic suggests here though that dreams cannot be stripped of their significance by the light of day, as dreamers, when dreaming, people experience those events as though they were awake, and so perhaps dreams act more like a muddled memory than an easily dismissed fancy. The dream had real effect on Brown, turning him inward and making him question the constructed nature of his life. Even if it was a dream, the seed of doubt was planted, and Brown could not look at his neighbors the same again. The fantastic, and dreaming, can remove barriers while a suspended reality that makes no overt claims to the waking life, yet still have a real impact on the everyday.

Hoffmann's *The Golden Pot* also draws back the curtain between dreaming and waking, yet it most heavily explores the distinction between poetic imagination and tangible truth, as Anselmus wavers between his fantastical love for a snake-woman and the scholarly factuality of his life as a student. Though the tale centers on Anselmus and his pursuit of Serpentina, his dalliance with the boundaries of reality troubles the readers less than the narrator's own forceful use of the readers' poetic imagination. The narrator speaks directly to the readers, vigorously

pulling them into the text, declaring: “you are now, kind reader, in the fairy realm of glorious wonder,” and that “this magnificent realm is much nearer at hand than you had previously thought” (Hoffmann 20-21). Not only does the narrator break the boundary between text and reader by speaking directly to the audience, but he also challenges readers’ assumptions that their own external world has strong boundaries, showing that the command of a narrator can act as the impetus to propel readers across the shallow gap between ordinary life and that “magnificent realm.”

The narrator continually urges readers to engage with their fancy, which he grants the ability to create its own boundaries. For example, when Anselmus finds himself trapped in a glass bottle, the narrator pushes empathy to the limit by asking readers: “[let] your active imagination enclose you in the crystal for a few minutes” (Hoffmann 67). This implies that the fantastic abilities of the imagination can not only eliminate boundaries, but create new, more flexible “enclosures” in which the boundless nature of the fantastic can flourish. Anselmus, when in his bottle, notices others in similar bottles around him, yet they believe they are walking freely in various other locations. Anselmus enjoins them: ““But, my good sirs---can’t you feel that every one of you is sitting in a glass bottle” (Hoffmann 69). As the narrator placed the readers in glass bottles themselves at the beginning of the scene, it almost feels like Anselmus shouts to the readers, those close-minded fools who believe themselves to be walking freely, yet refuse to acknowledge or challenge the boundaries of their world. Hoffmann, then, reveals the power of the fantastic to open the minds of readers to the possibility that the bounds they believe to exist around reality may be self-constructed and suffocating. Only those who embrace the imagination, like Anselmus, can break out of their bottles and find a freer sort of truth.

The narrator, beyond simply situating the readers within the text, also plucks his voice from the pages and gives it form in the end of the tale. The narrator physically emerges in the story and begins to interact with the characters himself, breaking the boundary between the narrator and the narrated. Dorrit Cohn observes that in many cases, a third person narrator flattens the minds of its characters because it “jealously guards [its] prerogative as the sole thinking agent within the novel, sensing that [its] equipoise would be endangered by approaching another mind too closely and staying with it too long”(Cohn 25). The narrator in *The Golden Pot*, however, separates himself even further from Anselmus’s mind by figuring himself as a character. The narrator, then, exploiting the boundary-breaking realm of the fantastic, claims the knowledge of a narrator and, simultaneously, the solitary and enclosed mental nature of a fellow character. Cohn adds that third person narrators find their characters comparatively limited, “for this other mind, contrary to [its] own disincarnated mental existence, belongs to an incarnated and therefore distinctly limited being” (Cohn 25). In contrast, *The Golden Pot*’s narrator does not seem to feel “endangered by approaching” the mindset of Anselmus, or that “staying with it too long” would threaten to turn him into a “limited being.” In fact, the narrator yearns to follow Anselmus into the imaginative realm of Atlantis, and so seems to place himself in the text to show a desire for the unlimited nature of Anselmus’s encounter with the fantastic.

Encounters with the fantastic then seem to give characters a more limitless nature, and so *The Golden Pot* appears to posit the idea that instead of presenting a two-dimensional narrative world, narratives, especially fantastic ones, show that the imaginative world actually provides more dimensionality than the real one. The narrator in *The Golden Pot* elucidates his reasons for attempting to mimic Anselmus by explaining how he began to feel the limits of his world: “I felt entangled in the petty tedium of daily life; my tormenting dissatisfaction made me ill; I crept

around as though lost in dreams” (Hoffmann 79). The boundaries of his life then seem to be the very banality he encounters daily, and so he seeks the fantastic in dreams to escape the hold that society’s constructed regularities enclose him in. While the uncanny embraces the ordinary to reveal the extraordinary, the fantastic seeks dreams and imagination to find the same. When the uncanny uncovers the extraordinary in the mundane it does not allow for the escape that discovering the fantastic in imagination or the supernatural does, and so while many seek out the fantastic, the uncanny rather must creep up on its reluctant readers and slither under their very skin.

Kathryn Hume, in her book entitled *Fantasy and Mimesis*, picks up on this sense of escapism in the fantastic. In her discussion of, as she names it, “*Literature of illusion*,” which is “generally known as escape literature,” she says:

Whether such a narrative is mimetic or fantastic, its author assumes our agreement that everyday reality is boring, unromantic—even depressing. Furthermore, the author believes nothing can be done to change that reality, so he offers to disengage us from its grey unpleasantness and to enfold us in comforting illusions. (Hume 55)

Hoffmann, with his narrator’s reference to “the petty tedium of daily life,” certainly fits the mold of just such an author, although he does seem to suggest at the end of the story that the poetic imagination can “change that reality,” in the sense that the reality one takes as the given lot in life may be expanded through the imagination, which Hoffmann does not seem to imply is truly an “illusion.” When the narrator bemoans the fact that he has been left behind in the banality of Berlin while Anselmus gets to escape to the marvelous land of Atlantis, the father of Anselmus’s snake-woman lover, himself part salamander, part Archivist, tells him the “the vision in which [he] has seen Anselmus in bodily form on his estate in Atlantis” was more than a magical vision, but an actual transportation. He consoles:

‘Weren’t you in Atlantis yourself a moment ago, and haven’t you at least got a pretty farm there, as the poetic property of your mind? Indeed, is Anselmus’s happiness anything other than life in poetry, where the holy harmony of all things is revealed as the deepest secret of nature?’ (Hoffmann 83)

This implies that the imagination and dreams can act on the imaginer as vitally as ordinary life can, and that the space of imagination stands solidly enough to own and build “a pretty farm on.” *The Golden Pot* then, like “Young Goodman Brown,” allows dreams and imaginings to question reality’s boundaries and its lofty seclusion from the supposed delusions of the fantastic.

These boundaries do not simply exist in a metaphysical sense, but the very plotting of the texts can establish clear mental and spatial boundaries to examine. In Hauptmann’s “Flagman Thiel,” Thiel tries desperately to create boundaries in his mind and in his life to separate his two wives. Thiel, an industrial laborer, after the loss of his first wife, re-married, and attempted to keep his new wife from infringing on the holy ground he fixed in his mind for his first wife. For example, “he declared his hut and his beat<sup>18</sup> to be holy ground, dedicated exclusively to the shades of the dead---Thus by conscientiously dividing the time at his disposal between the living and the dead, Thiel actually succeeded in soothing his conscience” (Hauptmann 335). Creating enclosed spaces in which to pen up the thoughts he had about each wife held off the dreaded uncertainties he had about each. Both wives occupied different spheres of his life, as the narrator describes, “He who had been united to his first wife by a more spiritual love fell into his second wife’s grip through the power of crude impulses” (Hauptmann 335). The tale delves into the difficulties of trying to separate parts of one’s being and the impossibility of maintaining such

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<sup>18</sup>The *OED* cites: “Beat, n.3 The rough sod of moorland (with its heath, gorse, etc.), or the matted growth of fallow land, which is sliced or pared off, and burned (at once to get rid of it and to make manure), when the land is about to be ploughed. 1885 F. T. Elworthy (in letter) A field is described as ‘all to a beat’ when it has become matted with weeds, especially couch-grass or twitch” (“beat”).

distances within the self. The first wife, all spirit and no body, died of corporal weakness, and the second wife, all body and a mean spirit died as a result of her sins. To separate parts of the self can also separate one from one's senses, as it turned Flagman Thiel mad. Since Thiel so purposefully externalizes the boundaries of his inner struggle, he does not allow the uncanny to emerge fully, but as no actual external supernatural event occurs, the fantastic hides its face as well. Thiel then, in trying to suppress these forces, in trying to bury his hesitancy in his fields and trying to keep two unknown wives from becoming known to each other, chooses to sever all ties to the world rather than to allow either force to break down the rotting walls he built in his mind.

When Thiel's weak boundaries finally break, so does the flow of the text, as dashes begin to break apart his dialogues. For example, when Thiel finds out that Tobias died, his mind breaks under the strain of trying to maintain a good opinion of both of his wives. The narrator describes, "Everything was new and strange" and "he did not know what he was walking on, or what was about him"(Hauptmann 358). After Thiel has lost control of his tightly drawn boundaries, it seems that all the other rules and lines in his world fall to pieces. He calls out:

'Minna, listen. Give him back to me, I will---' He groped in the air as if to catch and hold some one fast. ' My little wife—yes, yes—and I'll--- and I'll beat her—so she's black and blue, too--- I'll beat her, too--- with the hatchet--- you see? --- with the kitchen hatchet--- I'll beat her with the kitchen hatchet. And that'll be the end of her. And then—yes, yes--- with the hatchet—yes, with the kitchen hatchet--- black blood.' (Hauptmann 357)

The text breaks and repeats, no longer able to contain any coherent thoughts. It seems as though once a couple of his boundaries break, his mind gives up and becomes fixated on the only way it can find to solve its issue: by eliminating his second wife, for it to "be the end of her," so he can find his own end. Resisting the power of the fantastic, pushing aside uncertainties and plowing through hesitancy, does not stop Thiel's boundaries from breaking, but rather they break in a

much more destructive form, without the flowing possibilities for closure that the fantastic provides the mind to fill its newly formed gaps with.

## II

With Gabriel García Márquez's works the focal point of the whirlpool of uncertainty which swallows separations creeps inwards, as his characters find that it is the altered perceptions of their internal environment which projects alterations onto their external environment, making both their setting and their selves uncannily unfamiliar, and creating an inverted fantastic world. In "The Other Side of Death," the narrator describes: "Outside, from the other side of the world, he could hear the cricket's song growing weaker until it disappeared from his senses, which had turned inward, submerging him in a new and uncomplicated notion of time and space" (Márquez 109). The narration sinks inward, into an inner realm where "time and space" no longer follow the rules of the "Outside." The phrasing of this sentence, with its placement of the sensory perceptions as slowly evaporating, shows that altering the laws of the outside world, like the fantastic does by introducing the supernatural, this story forgoes the external experience all together and inverts the fantastic so it manifests within the mind, a new "side of the world" to escape to.

The narrator again displays the main character's altered mental perceptions to outside sound later on, but emphasizes the higher perceptions found in the internal world. The narrator tells: "he listened to the drop, thick, heavy, exact, as it dripped in the other world, in the mistaken and absurd world of rational creatures" (Márquez 116). The narrator calls the external world of sensory perceptions "mistaken" and "absurd," as seemingly the external world becomes fantastic through the main character's rejection of it, by his escape into an internal and separate realm.

Irrationality appears to be a correction to the mistake, and so the irrational and internalized fantastic controls the text. Márquez simply takes Hoffmann's vision of imagined Atlantis a step further by restricting it to the mindscape rather than allowing its fantastic beings to interact with the external world, as when Anselmus encounters the products of Atlantis outside his body and in his daily life. Foucault speaks to this ability to construct an imaginary internal world when describing "the *analytic of imagination*," which he posits "as a positive power to transform the linear time of representation into a simultaneous space containing virtual elements" (Foucault 69-70). Both Márquez's and Hoffmann's characters utilize this "analytic" power to "transform" the flat laws of reality to include "virtual elements" that allow them to transcend the "mistaken and absurd world of rational creatures."

In Márquez's "Eva Is Inside Her Cat," Eva, a woman disturbed by her own terrible beauty and the recent deaths that surround her, discovers another state of being inside herself and so her external environment begins to seem unfamiliar, giving her the uncanny sense that something once permanent, ordinary, and known has been strangely changed and lost. Her inner confusion reverberates on to her environment, as "at every moment something was vibrating in her, a shudder that ran through her, overwhelming her, making her aware of that other physical universe that moved outside her world," and "in the heights of her superior world, she began to know that an environment of anguish surrounded her" (Márquez 126). The fantastic Other world settles itself uncomfortably within her body, causing it to revolt and "shudder" at this unknown entity invading her. Yet it is the external world that causes "anguish," so her mind chooses to cling to whatever inhabits her body. She would rather harbor the uncanny than try to eject something from herself that seems so "overwhelming[ly]" vital, and so "superior" by virtue of her ownership of it in contrast to her rejection of the external reality.

As Eva's mind accepts the new world emerging within her, she begins to detach from the external world and find it increasingly unknown and uncanny. She describes that "she was in the whole physical world there beyond--and yet she was nowhere" (Márquez 127). The external world no longer holds as a location anymore, and so she floats about the house, noticing that "the corners of the house were strange to her," that "the house was no longer the same as before" and that "everything was different" (Márquez 130). Although the difference truly lies within her psyche, Eva finds the house to be what has altered. Perhaps it is because humans need to believe in the stability of their inner world, and would sacrifice the familiarity of their own home to maintain a hold on their selves. Thus the inner turmoil evoked by the breaking down of boundaries, in this case through grief, turns the outer world uncanny to pretend the splitting of the self is really just a separation from the outer world rather than a chasm within.

Banville, in *The Sea*, rather than placing a fantastic world inside his character to churn out the uncanny, relies on the natural "otherness" of memories to construct a superbly ordinary yet uncannily unfamiliar realm for his protagonist to swim through. He topples time altogether and turns the future uncanny by claiming that the past infects both present and future events, forever recalling the repressed. In many of his books, "Banville's protagonists experience an 'untimely' time or a time 'out of joint'" (Schwall 128). In *The Sea*, Max, while watching Anna die, falls into a time loop where turning the corner to his future just leads him back to his imagined past:

I foresaw for the future was in fact---a picture of what could only be an imagined past. I was, one might say, not so much anticipating the future as nostalgic for it, since what in my imaginings was to come was in reality already gone. (Banville 71)

To figure the future as a nostalgia-inducing "imagined past" ripens the text for the uncanny, as Max seems to be on the lookout for ways in which his present can recall aspects of the past. He

further complicates the matter by questioning: “was it actually the future I was looking forward to, or something beyond the future?” (Banville 71). This sets up the uncanny sense that time runs backward, pulling him past all his happy memories to that time he began in, that time before any time, before birth. He anticipates death as the continuation of his life with Anna, as though the gap in his present left by her absence can merely be filled by a replay of the past until he finally begins to make new memories with her again in the world beyond.

Memories, a type of repetitious representation, recall Foucault’s words on how the closeness between things represented makes them seem to continually repeat. It is this uncanny recreation that spins a web of imaginative thought. He says: “representation, perpetually bound to contents so very close to one another, repeats itself, recalls itself, duplicates itself quite naturally, causes almost identical impressions to arise again and again, engenders imagination” (Foucault 70). Max’s representation of the sea shore repeats just so in his mind, as the “contents” figure so nearly identically each time he compares a past representation with a future one. Max feels more at home in his cyclical world of imagination and uncanny repetition, his “imagined past,” because it allows some representation of those he has lost to resurface. Foucault adds that representation possesses “the obscure power of making a past impression present once more,” which allows “two impressions to appear as quasi-likeness---when one of those impressions only is present, while the other has ceased, perhaps a long time ago, to exist” (Foucault 69). It makes sense then that Max revels in the uncanny, as he wishes to harness that “obscure power” to make his “past impressions” of Anna “present once more.” Foucault’s words imply that he could achieve a “quasi-likeness” of an impression that “ceased---to exist,” and so this ability to revive impressions of the past allow Max to break the boundary between past and present, dead and alive, to call forth some ghostly impression of Anna.

The the uncanny power of the past throbs throughout Banville's text, and Max continually finds himself questioning how something so insubstantial can hold him so tightly in its thrall. He says; "the past beats inside me like a second heart" (Banville 10). His observation describes the uncanny sense that the past self, something intimately known, yet decidedly other and lost, parasitically lives within Max, rhythmically and endlessly creating disruptions and uncertainties in his present. As disconcerting as having the past pulsating within the self sounds, Max seems to find comfort in its warmth. He calls it "a retreat" where he can shed "off the cold present and the colder future" (Banville 45). Max struggles with the spectral quality of this comfort though, wondering:

And yet, what existence, really, does it have, the past? After all, it is only what the present was, once, the present that is gone, no more than that. And yet. (Banville 45)

Here, Max picks up on the uncanny sense that the past is just a changed form of a lost present. The past feels comforting because it reassures one that those lost presents can be regained, yet it cannot be fully reclaimed or experienced, and so Max cannot help but question the shelter he seeks in it, wondering if it is not as futile as clutching a corpse for warmth.

Memories tease and turn the once known into the unknown, and so Banville explores the uncanny quality of these ephemeral wisps humans build their identity on. Max directly confronts the uncanny meeting of a memory with its present incarnation when he compares his remembrance of Mrs. Grace as the object of his boyhood fantasies with the reality of her present death:

Which is the more real, the woman reclining on the grassy bank of my recollections, or the strew of dust and dried marrow that is all the earth any longer retains of her? No doubt for others elsewhere she persists, a moving figure in the waxworks of memory, but their vision will be different from mine, and from each other's. Thus in the minds of the many does the one ramify and disperse. (Banville 87)

Max finds the uncanny both in the fleshy memory of Mrs. Grace and in the stark reality of her death, as both images lay claim to the truth of her being, yet their merging into one creates ripples of uncertainty as two known shades of her essence attempt to co-exist as some ghastly sexualized skeleton. Max also recognizes that the multiplicity of memories within many minds further renders Mrs. Grace unfamiliar, as her memory becomes obscured by the many layers of ill-fitting images draped across her. In the past, in that moment when she sat sprawled before him in all her glory, he knew his image of her to be known and cherished, as he gazed at its truth in all its breathing immediacy. Now, though, this certainty turns to uncertainty, as the gaze of his mind onto this memory must acknowledge several contradictory images, such as her as death or as her figuration by another mind, before it can attempt to recall that first stare again. He cannot help but find it uncanny that when he seeks something that once was so defining and solid he finds only dusty bones and muddled memories.

Max's internal gaze, seeking the familiar in suddenly unfamiliar memories, elicits a tendency towards the uncanny with his external gaze, as his memories contradict with his surroundings. Walter Benjamin, in *The Great Art of Making Things Seem Closer Together*, speaks to "the mysterious power of memory," and its "power to generate nearness":

This is what is homey about home. In nurseries we remember, the walls seem closer to each other than they really are, than they would be if we saw them today. The sight of them tears us apart because we have become attached to them. (Benjamin 248)

In a sense then, people become more familiar with their memories than with the actual places and people they remember. Benjamin astutely picks up on why the discrepancy between a fondly remembered place and its reality disturbs people so much, as they have carried with them for years that memory, carefully tending to its preservation, and so this beloved piece of art, made

by their own hands, hurts them much more when it shatters than the original, separate, and cold reality that it breaks upon.

Max struggles with the mismatch between his memories of the shore house and the changed reality of it, and he is unable to shake the uncanny feeling that the unknown and the known about the house can no longer be separated satisfactorily. Max finds “that the model of the house in [his] head, try as it would to accommodate itself to the original, kept coming up against a stubborn resistance,” as it was all “slightly out of scale, all angles slightly out of true,” and so he “experienced a sense almost of panic as the real, the crassly complacent real, took hold of the things [he] thought [he] remembered and shook them into its own shape,” giving the sense that “something precious was dissolving and pouring away between [his] fingers” (Banville 116-17). As Benjamin pointed out, it is the memory of a house, not the house itself, that lives within Max’s mind, and so the real house enters his mind like an invader, stealing from him something that might be false and constructed, and yet belongs intimately to Max in a way the physical house never can. The house then violently “shook” his memories “into its own shape,” and so reformed something “precious” and familiar into something raw, new, and unknown.

### III

The uncanny and the fantastic need the promise of closure to break safely and effectively the boundaries of texts, for without a way to reform or re-figure the boundaries broken, the force of them dissipates. The fantastic necessitates great skill to construct; it must expand reality without completely breaking terms with it. Theodor W. Adorno agrees, and speaks to *how* the author creates the fantastic rather than defining its effects, such as hesitation and the like. Adorno states that:

The growing primacy of construction necessarily reduced the substantiality of the particular inspiration. Just how much labor and fantasy are implicated in each other—their divergence is invariably an index of failure—is supported by the experience of artists that fantasy is subject to command. They sense that the freedom to the involuntary is what distinguishes them from the dilettantes. (Adorno 174)

That fantasy requires thought and work to produce, that it needs active construction, seems counter intuitive in the face of the popular conception of fantasy as being freely generated and propagating. In fact there can be no fantasy without a basis in fact, “Art transcends the nonexisting only by way of the existing; otherwise it becomes the helpless projection of what in any case already exists.”(Adorno 173). Art, and fantasy, need consciously to “transcend” the real, to use existing qualities with intention. Without active construction, the fantastical loses its power to transport readers beyond reality. Fantasy, although constructed from reality, employs a sort of controlled freedom that journeys within pauses and hesitations.

Adorno explains that as free and unformed as the fantastic and the uncanny may seem, they do not utterly reject conscious formation. Adorno adds:

Reflection is fully capable of the art of fantasy in the form of the determinate consciousness of what an artwork at a certain point needs. The idea that consciousness kills, for which art supposedly provides unimpeachable testimony, is a foolish cliché in this context as anywhere else. (Adorno 174)

Fantasy creates the space for reflection, the opportunity to hesitate and deliberate, to sort through many self-created fantastical scenarios and select one’s own reality. Consciousness does not kill fantasy just as it does not kill dreams. Dreams without a taste of consciousness remain as blank as fantasy without any conscious reflection, becoming flat and immobile.

Fantasy only maintains its unrestricted qualities by taking advantage of the restrictions of reality and setting them up firmly as its basis. Adorno details, “As the capacity to discover approaches and solutions in the artwork, fantasy may be defined as the differential of freedom in the midst of determinism” (Adorno 174). It resides in these gaps of determinism; in the process

of finding closure. This freedom, this process, this journey, cannot exist without the necessity to find closure. The creation of fancy thus necessitates the boundaries of reality. Without limits, there is no gap, no hesitation; there is merely endless chaos. So the fantastic remains, as Chaouli describes, “bounded areas within the context of cognitive closure”(Chaouli 74).

Since Adorno shows the necessity for a well-planned structural support for the fantastic, it makes sense that in Kleist’s *Die Marquise von O*, physicality creates a basis for the fantastic to act. Michel Chaouli, in *Irresistible Rape*, discusses this text, and grapples with the problem of balancing the human necessity to find closure and the deconstructionist view that closure cannot be found. Chaouli asserts that “When we read, we have ‘always already’ taken up one, and only one, side of the distinction, for reading is a ceaseless attempt to fill ellipses”(Chaouli 74). He believes that the gaps between words and the lack of authorial direction “engender a thought *we* have produced” (Chaouli 75). Yet Heinrich von Kleist, in *Die Marquise von O*, provokes the “construction of closure” not only through “the gaps and discontinuities in language,” but also through his “unusually exact blocking instructions” (Chaouli 69, 60). Kleist takes pains to pinpoint the physical rather than mental movements of his characters. Thus readers find solace and stability in the staging rather than in the psyche. As Adorno emphasizes the need actively to construct the fantasy in readers, Kleist exemplifies the fact that gaps and hesitations cannot be allowed too much freedom if they are to work for the author. Hence the “blocking instructions” of Kleist frame the fantasy creation in his tale.

In the most psychologically interesting scenes of *Die Marquise von O* the minds of the characters remain mute, yet the dramatic strokes of motion they paint across the pages give insight into their intentions. For example, when the commandant finds out his daughter is pregnant by an unknown man, the scene of her pleading and subsequent eviction forms a clear

picture. The Marquise makes her way to her father “with faltering steps,” and when she “found the door locked, she fell to the floor” and was “lying there for a few minutes” (Kleist 28). Then “sobbing uncontrollably “and “forcing her way into the room, [she] cried: ‘Beloved Father!’ and held out her arms towards him,” but he

turned his back on her and hurried to his bedroom. And when she followed him there, he shouted: ‘Get out!’ and tried to slam the door; but when she, moaning and pleading, prevented him from doing so, he suddenly relented and, letting the marquise into the room, crossed to the far wall. As he had turned his back on her, she flung herself at his feet and, trembling, clasped his knees, at which point the pistol he had seized went off, just as he was fetching it from the wall, and a bullet smashed into the ceiling. (Kleist 28)

Both characters clearly express serious emotional distress. Only through their exaggerated movements though, can their intentions be discerned. Kleist takes pains to detail exactly where and what each character does to allow readers some tools to carve away at the mysterious nature of his players.

The dialogue in this scene consists of two word exclamatory remarks and internal motives remain decipherable only through their manifestations in the character’s movements. Chaouli is right in saying that a reader feels the need to fill the silences left by the lack of speech or authorial direction into the psyche, yet some of this silence is already filled by the noises created by the characters physical actions. The manipulation of the door for instance provides a basis for analysis. The Marquise finds the door, which contains her father and subsequently all his emotions and thoughts, initially barred. She immediately falls to the floor, just as she “collapsed, completely unconscious” after the Count saved her; she apparently lies on the floor for “a few minutes” (Kleist 5). Thus the comparison of the Marquise’s action at different moments in the text allows the reader to find cohesion in a more solid place than their “own work of fantasy production” (Chouli 75).

The door again provides meaning for the father/daughter relationship in the later scene when the mother peers through a door at her husband ardently kissing her daughter. Just as the Marquise approached her father's door with "faltering steps," so her mother "crept back to the Marquise's room to listen" in (Kleist 44). The mother does not find the door locked, nor does she have to force her way in, and so instead of collapsing like her daughter, "her heart leapt with joy" when she saw her daughter in her husband's arms (Kleist 44). As readers cannot compare the internal thoughts of the two women, the differences in their physical actions and reactions to the entering of a room containing the father becomes significant. The door can act almost as Chouli finds the dash implicating the Count's rape to act: as "the textual sign of the novella's seminal event" (Chaouli 54). The door constantly acts as an indicator of the familial tensions within the text, and both of these instances involve the Marquise either "moaning" to enter her father's bedroom or the mother acting as voyeur to her daughter's molestation by her husband. Thus, the opening and closing of a door can act with as much power as a dash which opens up a sentence to the possibility of rape and a story to the possibility of closure.

The door in this novel functions as the threshold, or doorway, that Faith and Young Goodman Brown crossed; it signals normative social boundaries and the invasion of domestic privacy. The door allows for the boundary-breaking force of the fantastic to take physical form, and thus promote a certain type of closure to its imaginings. The manner in which characters in both texts approach and interact at the door determines how they relate to what lies on the other side. For example, the free breeze in Faith's ribbons allows the fantastic to build on the looseness and sinful nature of those who seem most innocent. In Kleist's text the doorway, turned into a sort of fantastic portal that alters the normative familial relations, determines what type of conclusions readers come to about the fantastical pregnancy of the Marquise.

Physicality opens the door to the psyche that Kleist refuses to open through internal monologue or authorial power, mimicking the power of the fantastic to bridge the gap between, as Todorov says, “matter and spirit.” The Marquise, after her father’s outburst, “snatched up her children, carried them into the coach and... drove off” (Kleist 28). Then, “With the self-knowledge gained through this beautiful exertion, she suddenly raised herself, as though by her own hands, from the depths into which fate had cast her” (Kleist 28). Thus the psychological changes within the Marquise sprung from this “beautiful exertion.” As this sentence was placed immediately after the description of all of the physical exertions of her departure, it implies a close relationship between the physical and mental aspects of her being. Indeed, as exertion can imply either mental or physical strain, the choice of words unites the two. Her own ‘hands’ raise her up in a very bodily manor, and so the physical carrying of her children deeply relates to the mental lifting of her plight.

In Chaouli’s attempt to fill in the silence of the Marquise’s ambiguous nature he turns to the physicality of her gestures for answers. As “we are not told what motivates the Marquise in this scene nor what she feels,” and as she “forgoes speech,” “the carefully recorded choreography” must serve as the scaffolding on which to structure conclusions (Chaouli 61-2). Chaouli points out that the Marquise was “tossing back her neck, shutting her eyes, and keeping still” (Chaouli 61). He thus fills in the silences not just with his own erotic fantasies but with the concrete motions that already tie the scene together. Unlike the dash scene, “the incest scene is so saturated with narrative attention that we are left with nothing to add,” and so perhaps “rather than cowering behind the dash, [the father-as-rapist is] perhaps hidden in full representational view” (Chaouli 60). Chaouli’s observations seem sound, yet they disappear from his final conclusions concerning the gaps in the text rather than the parts that overflow with

representation. He points out the dash “reveals by concealing,” but does the incest scene really conceal by revealing (Kleist 71)?

Chaouli seems to use the incest scene to show that the story crawls with possible readings, yet he gives most of the credit of closure to the gaps and dashes in the tale. He claims, “By threading the story’s episodes through a dash, our reading lends coherence to what appears incoherent” (Chaouli 64-5). Yet one could thread the story through the physicality of the novella and still find coherence. By comparing and analyzing the patterns in the characters tangible motions readers can give the novella the sort of coherence gained from the viewing of a movie with the sound turned off. Of course the missing dialogue gaps will propagate fantastical thoughts, but without the outward motions of the characters, these thoughts would have no womb to spring from. Thus, though Chaouli is correct in stating that “interruptions in speech... set in motion the production of words and thoughts by...encouraging them to fill the silence,” he fails to stress the fact that though the speech may be interrupted, the bodily movement continues and allows a backdrop for the newly minted thoughts to play upon (Chaouli 69).

As Chaouli describes, the gaps in texts that allow for fantastic or uncanny imaginings only exist because they can rely on the human propensity for closure. Here, Barbara Herrnstein Smith’s examination of *Poetic Closure* lends keen insights into the nature of the fantastic. A writer keeps interest “by providing constant sources of instability,” yet “The sequence of events is confined according to predetermined principles,” and so these moments “create ‘enclosures’ within the ground of ordinary, more or less fortuitously determined, experience” (Herrnstein Smith 35, 262). The instability instilled by the author does not disturb the readers since they realize that each problematic event remains “enclosed” within a larger stable structure. Thus, the reassurance of closure allows for the uncertainty of the fantastic. Herrnstein Smith explains, “the

experience of tension is not necessarily unpleasant, but, on the contrary, may be itself a source of pleasure, especially if the promise of eventual resolution is secure” (Herrnstein Smith 3). The experience of the undetermined possibilities of the fantastic provides its own sort of thrill, yet if this were not tempered by the promise of closure, the journey into the fantastic would become less of a safe flight than a free fall.

The uncanny, in contrast, with its slow and creeping emergence from the past, eludes the kind of closure that the fantastic necessitates. For example, the uncanny sense that Max, (*The Sea*) experienced, did not seem to need to be tempered by the possibility of an end. In fact, Max almost seemed expectant that the uncanny sense that the future would contain an endless recurrence of an “imagined past.” The fantastic, in that it wants readers to feel the need to find an imaginative solution, must utilize their need for an ending as well. The uncanny, however, as it wants readers to feel that the future contains only versions of the past, does not promise such a variable end. The fantastic wants to expand the future and the uncanny wants to expand the past, and so in a sense the fantastic promises that boundaries will break only to reform in a new way, but the uncanny breaks the boundary between beginning and end itself, suggesting that already concluded events never truly remain closed.

Herrnstein Smith reveals that these “enclosures” of the fantastic do not solely determine their own success, as the strength of the texts conclusions affects the reader’s retroactive experience of the fantastic events. Even though “The simple fact that [a text’s] last line is followed by an expanse of blank paper will inform the reader that it is concluded,” “closure is a relative matter: it is more or less weak or strong” (Herrnstein Smith 211). Herrnstein Smith distinguishes between a surprise and a disappointing ending, detailing, “The surprise ending is one which forces and *rewards* a readjustment of the reader’s expectations; it justifies itself

retrospectively. A disappointing conclusion--- remains unjustified and the reader's expectations remain foiled" (Herrnstein Smith 213). Although a fantastic event generates value on its own, readers can retroactively evaluate that experience and cast it in a new light depending on the way the text decides to give closure to the uncertainty. A reader's interpretations of fantastical events cannot extend into infinity, and they will likely attempt to form their own sort of closure, for as Chaouli says, "reading simply is the construction of closure." Naturally, readers will compare their own ideas to the conclusions presented by the text, and this comparison helps them evaluate the success of the text. Essentially, "an experience is gratifying to the extent that those expectations that are aroused are also fulfilled" (Herrnstein Smith 3).

As opposed to the fantastic, which manifests in readers myriad expectations, closure ends expectations; a balm for the chaos of the fantastic. Herrnstein Smith tells, "Closure allows the reader to be satisfied by the failure of continuation or, put another way, it creates in the reader the expectation of nothing" (Herrnstein Smith 34). It seems almost the antithesis of the fantastic then, as closure, by definition, ends rather than produces a state of possibility. To readers, "a structure appears 'closed' when it is experienced as integral: coherent, complete, and stable" (Herrnstein Smith 2). Thus closure acts as a cushion for the flights of fancy to fall upon after their journey into the incoherent, incomplete, and the unstable.

Frank Kermode, in *The Sense of an Ending*, explores the ways in which closure and ends can actually unite fiction and reality to give meaning to ordinary life. Kermode deals heavily with the Apocalyptic, the final ending, thus ideas about closure in fiction take on a more grand and spiritual note than Herrnstein Smith's writings. He cites Wallace Stevens's belief that "the final belief must be in a fiction," and notes that Stevens attempts "To make of [the End] a fiction, an imaginary moment when 'at last' the world of fact and the *mundo* [poetic world] of

fiction shall be one” (Kermode 36-7). Kermode qualifies that “such a fiction of the end is like infinity plus one and imaginary numbers in mathematics, something we know does not exist, but which helps us to make sense of and to move in the world” (Kermode 37). This sort of uniting of fiction and reality can only occur within the fantastic, where the facts of reality merge with the poetic world of fiction in a way “we know does not exist” yet “helps us” manage life. Kermode and Stevens “End” likens itself to closure in the fantastic as fantastic closure must reconcile the unknown and extraordinary with the norms of daily life and common knowledge. The fantastic relates to the apocalyptic in the sense that it entails an event which threatens to change the entire face of reality, and one cannot know whether this event will lead to a change in natural laws or simply an uncanny rendering of the old laws.

Northrop Frye, like Kermode, relates the apocalyptic to closure, but in a way that mirrors a description of the union of the fantastic with the uncanny. Frye notes: “the symbolic presentation of the point at which the undisplaced apocalyptic world and the cyclical world of nature came into alignment, and which we propose to call the point of epiphany” (Frye 203). The fantastic, with its place in borderlands and its promise of an end, likens to this “undisplaced apocalyptic world,” while the uncanny, with its returns to the past and its adherence to the ordinary aspects of life, likens to the “cyclical world of nature.” Their union then becomes this “point of epiphany,” a sort of midpoint on the spectrum of the ordinary, a compromise between controlled chaos and spinning stillness. An example of such an epiphany shows up in *The Black Spider*, when that uncanny “nameless fear of the spider which was everywhere and nowhere,” caused the villagers to constantly fear the spider would return again and again, stuck in the cyclical uncanny. But, when the spider would actually appear, suddenly “fixing its death-dealing stare on someone when he fancied that he was most secure,” there the uncanny finds closure

within the fantastic (Gotthelf 76). The epiphany or the union of the two seems to occur when the uncanny lets the fantastic take over, allowing the fantastic's propensity for proliferating futures to break the uncanny's cycle of recalling.

Kermode, in his fashion of relating the creation and reception of literature to the very meaning of life, explicates that people need both change and the certainty of beginnings and ends to achieve success. Kermode explains, "the fictions must change, or if they are fixed, the interpretations must change. Since we continue to 'prescribe laws to nature' ---we shall continue to have a relation with the paradigm, but we shall change them to make them go on working" (Kermode 24). Humans hate chaos, and thus apply rules to nature and consequently to the texts they read, and yet find it uncomfortable to remain stagnant. These conflicting desires lead to the need for the fantastical, or in other words, the gaps of possibility amidst the solidity of the rules humanity clings too. People hold so strongly to defined lines of time because "men, like poets, rush 'into the midst,' *in medias res*, when they are born; they die *in mediis rebus*, and to make sense of their span they need fictive concords with origins and ends, such as to give meaning to lives and to poems" (Kermode 7). Humans must live physically in the present, yet they need the past and future to understand how they are situated, and so with literature, although the closure found may be as fictive as the fantastical events it explains, the End must exist to comfort the sensibilities of humanity.

The timing of closure though, remains essential, as the delay of such closure can allow the fantastic time to build force. Gerhart Hauptmann tries to expand the "bounded areas" within his novella by delaying the closure the naming of something brings. For example, the tale "Flagman Thiel" early on simply discloses, "On one of the preceding weekdays the bell had tolled for the dead," and it is not until a bit later that he allows the readers to know that "Thiel's

wife had died in childbirth” (Hauptmann 333). Still, even though he parcels out a bit more information about the death, he refuses to name her. Instead he simply describes her as “ a delicate, sickly looking woman”(Hauptmann 333). The withholding of her name grants her character narrative power, as it gives the readers a blank in which to fantasize. Only later, when her namelessness has saved up enough potency, Hauptmann releases it from the quivering lips of Thiel: “‘Minna,’ whispered the flagman, as if coming out of a dream” (Hauptmann 345). As Hauptmann has withheld her name until this moment, Thiel’s whispered identification has the quality of pulling her name from his unconscious, and makes readers feel as though they should know who he speaks of, even though she has not been named yet.

Hauptmann again employs the mysticism and potency of suspense and hesitation when he reveals any type of violence done. For example, at the end, Hauptmann describes, “They struck a match. The flare of it revealed awful havoc. ‘Murder, murder!’”(Hauptmann 362). As none of the victims are yet named, the description invokes that frantic uncertainty that any onlookers would have experienced of wondering who had been killed. This same wondering occurs when Thiel realizes the train has hit something. The reader only hears: “what was that? There—between the rails ---A dark mass had gone down under the train and was being tossed between the wheels like a rubber ball” (Hauptmann 353). The intentional blanks left in the naming of the “dark mass” allow the readers imagination to roil madly just as Thiel’s must have. With naming comes certainty, even if it brings pain, and certainty would kill the potency of fantastical hesitation. Only this hesitation, this maddening uncertainty, can truly mimic for the readers the experience of a parent’s fears, and the power of their confirmation, as when Hauptmann describes, “ From out of the dance of fireflies it came toward him, pale, limp, bloody—a forehead beaten black and blue, blue lips with dark blood trickling from them.

Tobias!” (Hauptmann 354). Thus the uttering of both Minna and Tobias’s names strike at the heart of readers, for these names were allowed to simmer in fantastical anticipation.

As Hauptmann’s tale elucidates, the perspective that the character views boundaries breaking from affects the way they choose to remake those boundaries, as Thiel, seeing a fantastic and distorted view of his dead son, finds closure in madness. In Ludwig Tieck’s “Fair Eckbert,” the tale that begins with Eckbert’s wife, Bertha, telling her fantastic life story to Eckbert’s friend Walther, Bertha. Like Thiel, Bertha finds the withholding of a name, and its subsequent voicing, to not only break boundaries, but to bring the forth the power of the gaze. Dorothea von Mücke adds: “But at the moment when Walther returns to her the repressed name of the dog, she becomes the object of the gaze of an unknown other; she loses the exclusive claim to represent external reality in the narrative rendering of her story” (Mücke 79). It matters then *where* closure comes from to the way a character receives it. The power of the gaze, the way in which it can distort and reflect the self, comes into play when boundaries are broken and remade, and so the next chapter explores the way in which distortions, reflections, and the gaze interact with the fantastic and the uncanny.

## Chapter 3

### Distortions, Reflections, and The Gaze

“...modern thought is advancing towards the region where man’s Other must become the Same as himself.”

-Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*<sup>19</sup>

Perception plays a key role in both the uncanny and the fantastic, for how things appear in comparison to how one wants or believes things should, generates a gap of a particular size that either effect can fill. Rosemary Jackson says to introduce the fantastic “is to introduce dark areas, of something completely other and unseen, the spaces outside the limiting frame of the ‘human’ and ‘real,’ outside the control of the ‘word’ and of the ‘look’” (Jackson 179). She picks up on the importance of sight in her definition of the fantastic as “unseen” and “outside the control” of “the look.” The look, or better yet, the gaze, figures powerfully in both the fantastic and the uncanny. The gaze of the main character on the distortions of others, or the self, differs from the gaze of others onto the main character. Sometimes, it is not the distorted appearance of others that disturbs but the fact that they gaze back at all, as in *The Sea*, when Max feels the uncanny gaze of his daughter’s toys on him: “I would find myself regarded from above the rim of her coverlet by half a dozen pairs of tiny gleaming eyes, wetly brown, motionless, uncannily alert” (Banville 45). An inexplicable gaze from an inanimate object renders the uncanny, but this originates in the gaze of the observer, since truly it is only a reflection of his own gaze. Both the fantastic and the uncanny utilize the strength of readers’ belief in the truth of the gaze to manifest: they can hold up strange and distorted images before the readers, who look through the

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<sup>19</sup> (Foucault 328)

eyes of the characters, without them completely dismissing what they see because they are unwilling to give up their trust in sight.

When characters observe other characters to appear suddenly distorted or to contain multiple layers of reflected images, they either attribute this to some fantastic occurrence, or, if the distortion is subtle enough, discover the uncanny feeling that they cannot truly see this character that they once knew so well. The uncanny only increases when those who become distorted are more closely related to the main character, such as the father in *The Sandman*. The ultimate uncanny, though, occurs when the characters' own reflections begin to distort, and they must confront face-on the image of the Other looking back at them, an image they both own and try to disown. Freud astutely says: "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 many thing to it" (Freud 10). When, in a mirror or some other reflective surface, the image of the self appears, not only does the self observe itself, but encounters a "double" that also gazes back in return. One's own reflection, like the "uncannily alert" eyes of toys, presents itself as almost an escaped part of the self which has taken on its own ability to stare back at the original self with uncanny familiarity.

Todorov spoke to this splitting of the self, asserting that when the boundary between mind and matter breaks, the fractured nature of the self can suddenly take physical form that the self can observe, implying that one begins to see the self outside the self. He states: "The multiplication of personality, taken literally, is an immediate consequence of the possible transition between matter and mind: we are several persons mentally, we become so physically" (Todorov 116). The fantastic and the uncanny, by breaking boundaries between the internal and external self, allow for character physically to embody multiple personalities. As the fantastic disturbs the separation between subject and object, people can "become the other and know what

the other is thinking” (Todorov 116-17). The idea that a character’s mind can intermingle with an unknown other’s mind suggests that perhaps readers should wonder if the character’s mind can intermingle with their own. Indeed, the readers allow the thoughts and words of the characters to use their own mental voice to speak and their own imagination to act. Through reading, one is invited to “become the other and know what the other is thinking.”

The way perception, and the distortion of this perception, acts with regards to the uncanny and the fantastic varies depending on how close the distortion-perceiving character feels to what they perceive and how close the reader feels to the perceiving character. In Hawthorne’s *Rappaccini’s Daughter* the gaze, and its reflection and distortion in others, comes into play, while in Hauptmann’s “Flagman Thiel” the way in which images of others refract off each other to muddle the mind leads to madness. In Tieck’s “Fair Eckbert” and Hoffmann’s *Golden Pot*, characters whose physical appearances distort and fluctuate come into play, showing how internal turmoil can project onto other characters and onto the structure of the text itself. Hoffmann’s *The Sandman*, takes the distorted character closer to heart, as well as beginning to meddle with personal reflections as producers of the uncanny. Gabriel García Márquez’s stories, delving into magical realism signal how an excess of the uncanny can condense into the fantastic and externalize the internal strangeness of the uncanny. The internal distortion, created by the uncanny, thus provides the appearance of external distortion to move the center of uncertainty further from the self. Finally, in Banville’s *The Sea*, the uncanny stands on its own to explore how daily life can turn strange when mirrors, twins, and reflections begin to combine the past with the present in complicated twists.

## I

Nathaniel Hawthorne, in *Rappaccini's Daughter*, shows how the gaze of a character on another can notice the other's personality and its strange reflection in other objects, in this case a poisonous plant. Giovanni, a young man who gazes out of his window down at a young woman, Beatrice, while she daily tends to her father's strange plants, begins to see an uncanny resemblance between the woman and the plant. Still, as the reflected aspects of her personality do not infringe on the stability of his own directly, the tale generates more of a sense of the fantastic than the uncanny. Hawthorne cultivates uncertainty about Beatrice through his mastery at stretching a metaphor until it breaks and allows for the fantastical to lap at its boundaries. Giovanni first describes Beatrice, "as if here were another flower, the human sister of those vegetable ones" (Hawthorne 1046). This comparison should not awaken much more than any normal metaphor would, simply implying that Beatrice resembled the flowers she tended. Yet the metaphor does not rest in the one instance, nor is its repetition merely used as a way to give Beatrice continuity, but rather Hawthorne rapidly increases the magnitude of the metaphor; teasing at the borders between literary likening and actual merging of woman and plant. As Todorov adds, "the fantastic realizes the literal sense of a *figurative* expression," and so the common saying that a girl resembles a beautiful flower distorts to become the reality that a girl actually is a plant (Todorov 79).

Using dreams as the means to question reality, Hawthorne again draws Beatrice into the metamorphous of metaphor. Giovanni in a dream describes, "Flower and maiden were different, and yet the same, and fraught with some strange peril" (Hawthorne 1047). Thus Giovanni's original observation heightens in his dreams, a place where uncertainty can flourish and gain the tinge of peril he could not sense in the light of day. Yet, even though "there is an influence in the light of morning that tends to rectify whatever errors of fancy, or even judgment, we may have

incurred--among the shadows of the night,” the continuing days do nothing to assuage the uncanny resemblance of Beatrice to her plants (Hawthorne 1047). Indeed, it was “a resemblance which Beatrice seemed to have indulged a fantastic humor in heightening, both by the arrangement of her dress and the selection of its hues” (Hawthorne 1049). Beatrice seems aware of the metaphor being applied to her, and thus breaking certain boundaries metaphors usually hold between themselves and their subjects.

As Giovanni’s sense of peril grows, so too does the similarity between his reaction to the flowers and Beatrice flourish. Giovanni begins to see the flowers as “the monstrous offspring of man’s depraved fancy, glowing with only the evil mockery of beauty” (Hawthorne 1054). Similarly the narrator explains his feelings towards Beatrice, detailing, “It was not love---nor horror--- but a wild offspring of both love and horror--- hope and dread kept a continual warfare in his breast, alternately vanquishing one another and starting up afresh to renew the contest”(Hawthorne 1051). Thus these two “offspring” of Rappaccini’s, already likened to sisters, stir up a similar tension between depravity/horror and beauty/love. Beatrice, more than just merging with a metaphor, continually evokes dualities in Giovanni. Beatrice embodies the ambiguity of the fantastical, as she will not allow Giovanni to find closure as to his feelings about her. His mind desperately fights for the closure humans always crave, and yet she holds apart both conclusions to create conflict.

Even as Giovanni struggles to collect the fractured pieces of Beatrice’s persona and deal with the conflict they spark in him, the discovery that there actually exists a unity between Beatrice and the poisonous plant, that its toxins have become a part of her body, puts his mind at ease because he finds it easier to look at the image of a united monstrosity than at a refracted and distorted resemblance. When he chooses to heighten the power of his gaze by getting closer to

Beatrice he finds comfort in his certainty that this closeness will allow his image of her to solidify, which would be a relief regardless of what her image focused into: “The instant that he was aware of the possibility of approaching Beatrice---It mattered not whether she were angel or demon” (Hawthorne 1053). The calming possibility of closure soothes Giovanni’s worries, and so he is able to move “towards a result which he did not attempt to foreshadow,” yet not without “a sudden doubt [that] this intense interest on his part were not delusory;” “whether it were not merely the fantasy of a young man’s brain” (Hawthorne 1053-4). Giovanni has a moment of introspection where he actually becomes conscious of the intense nature of his gaze and begins to question where the fascination derives, and if perhaps the similitude he finds between Beatrice and the plant may be the fantastic creating a captivating uncertainty in his mind.

Foucault, exploring the nature of similitude, picks up on the unstable nature of knowledge that Hoffmann’s exaggerated use of metaphors implicates using the fantastic.

Foucault adds:

Resemblance never remains stable within itself; it can be fixed only if it refers back to another similitude, which then, in turn refers to others; each resemblance, therefore, has value only from the accumulation of all others, and the whole world must be explored if even the slightest of analogies is to be justified and finally take on the appearance of certainty. It is therefore a knowledge that can, and must, proceed by the infinite accumulation of confirmations all dependent on one another. And for this reason, from its very foundations, this knowledge will be a thing of sand.” (Foucault 30)

Foucault astutely points out that as soon as one begins to pull at a single thread in the web of knowledge, one finds how quickly it can all unravel, as each new connection rests on the reliability of others. So when, as Hoffmann does, an author points makes strange the resemblance between two things, it calls into question those ordinary resemblances one accepts without any doubt. It begs the question of how much humans can rely on their perception of the natural world. If, as Foucault says, all resemblances bring knowledge that is “a thing of sand,”

then perhaps Giovanni's perception of a strong resemblance between Beatrice and the plant is not irrational or fantastic, but rather just subject to that same unstable quality that underlies all associations.

When Giovanni's gaze is finally returned, when Beatrice gazes back, he suddenly realizes that the unknown in her brought forth his own questions about himself that he had not known lay unsettled inside him until he saw them reflected in her gaze. He snatches "from her full gaze the mystery which he deemed he riddle of his own existence" (Hawthorne 1054). This "riddle" of whether or not his self can be found reflected in something other than him, comes to light with the "mystery" of whether or not some part of Beatrice was projected or reflected onto the plant. Love itself, as it springs between Giovanni and Beatrice, seems but an agreement to allow the self to reflect onto another and to allow them to reflect themselves off the self. It becomes like a shared invasion, a shared gaze, and a finding of comfort in having a part of one's self belong to someone else.

Love does not work out so well in "Flagman Thiel" though, as the dual gaze of his dead and living wife begin to refract off each other and masks Thiel's ability to see his own self clearly, and so he dissolves into a madness that begins as the uncanny sense that something uncontrollable inhabits his spirit. Thiel has trouble distinguishing reality and naming things within himself, and this experience of observing the world through the eyes of a main character that questions his own internal reality gives readers a sense of unease. Thiel constantly describes a growing unnamed force within him, as he "had to restrain forcibly a something dreadful rising within him" (Hauptmann 342). This unnamed force remains anonymous until the very end, when it manifests brutally as those cries of "Murder!" Before this murder, though, this "something

dreadful” begins to seem like the uncanny, but because this unfamiliar force manifests as violent, immediate, and eventually reveals itself as madness, the uncanny retreats before the horrific.

The actual culmination of this dreaded force inside Thiel begins with a description that seems fantastic, which, unlike the uncanny, can be born in an instant without the need for a past provocation, but as soon as this uncertain force is named as madness, the fantastic recedes into the psychologically determined. Thiel describes, “A red mist enveloped his senses,” as he began to strangle his baby, but “Then something fell upon his brain like hot drops of sealing wax, and his spirit was cleared as from a cataleptic trance” (Hauptmann 359). Thiel seems trapped in “mist” and “cataleptic trances;” regions of uncertainty. Increasingly, he finds it harder to see the boundaries of his uncertainty, yet, near the end, “a ray of illumination fell upon his brain,” and he finally identifies his “red mist”: ““Good heavens! That’s madness””(Hauptmann 358). Suddenly this mystical force, which seems to have consumed him, relinquishes its fantastical power, as it has been named, and can no longer claim uniqueness. Yet finding closure in madness seems to beg the question of whether the conclusions humans try to draw to order their lives can truly be relied on, or if closure itself is a mere fantasy.

## II

The distorting of a figure in a text elicits the uncanny effect of being unable to separate the familiar bits of a character from the strange, ever-changing parts. Perhaps achieving full separation from the fantastical and the uncanny seems so difficult because they link themselves so closely to the irrational subconscious, the shadow self. Hoffmann recognizes in his work that the uncanny must come as close as possible to duplicating the self to evoke the strongest

reaction. Nothing disturbs the psyche more than learning one's own self is unfamiliar. *The Sandman* explicates, "if there is such a power, then it must take the same form as we do, it must become our very self; for only in this way can we believe in it and give it the scope it requires to accomplish its secret task" (Hoffmann 95). The uncanny claims great power then, as the people are inclined to cling to the familiar, and so the closer the uncanny comes to the self, the harder it is to remove the unfamiliar bits integral to its make-up. Like a virus, the uncanny presents bits of a body's own material to sneak its way into one's cells and wreck havoc.

Distortion of the self and distortion of characters plays a large role in evoking a sense of the uncanny. Jackson says that uncanny stories, "strangeness is an effect produced by the distorted and the distorting mind of the protagonist" (Jackson 24). An example of such a distortion occurs in "Fair Eckbert," by Ludwig Tieck; a tale which merges repetition, isolation, Freudian dilemmas, distortion, doubling, and a refusal to uphold the firmness of reality to produce the fantastic. The tale crawls with distorted figures, such as the old woman, who masquerades as both of Eckbert's friends. Nameless, and dressed "almost entirely in black," this old woman sets herself as a shapeless backdrop (Jarrell 100). Without her own distinguishing features, she is free to act out any part she wishes. It feels as though she simply reflects the light of her fellow character's flaws and distorts it back to create an individualized foil.

From the beginning of the tale, the sense of the distorted and the uncanny prevails, as the uncanny seems to always have been there, repressed, and waiting. Royle explains that

The uncanny entails another thinking of beginning: the beginning is already haunted. The uncanny is ghostly. It is concerned with the strange, weird, and mysterious, with a flickering sense (but not conviction) of something supernatural." (Royle 1)

Thus the characters in Tieck's tale appear to subconsciously realize the old woman's illusory qualities, as Bertha remarks on how "at every step she distorted her face," and that "her face was

constantly twitching and her head shaking” (Jarrell 100-1). Bertha observes that “it was impossible to tell how she really looked,” and this confusion prompts her to “not to do anything to make her angry” (Jarrell 101-2). Eckbert as well begins to question the Walther persona, and is “unable to get the notion entirely out of his mind” that Walther would “dissemble his nature” (Jarrell 109). The word “dissemble” becomes significant as it implies Walther disguises or conceals his true nature. The problem of truth and difficulty of discovering reality continually pepper the tale.

The story enhances the instability of the gaze and the refraction of personalities by refusing to follow a linear trajectory, and instead unfolding like a Russian nesting doll, revealing new stories buried inside the old. This recycling through stories lends itself to “the return of the repressed, the constant or eternal recurrence of the same thing, a compulsion to return to an inorganic state, a desire (perhaps unconscious) to die, a death drive (Royle 2). And indeed the story does end in death. But the tale begins with Eckbert allowing his wife to tell her life story to his friend Walther, and so his wife’s tale opens from within the original tale. Inside his wife’s tale, which she reminds should not be “regard[ed] ... as a fairy-tale,” her imagination again creates another world within the story (Jarrell 96). Bertha’s insistence that her story not be disregarded as a mere tale implies that reality can be as fantastical as fantasy and those who scorn fairy-tales cannot rest as solidly as they may like within the confines of their own life stories. In Bertha’s own telling, she describes how she read stories and then from these stories expanded, saying, “From the little reading that I did I formed quite wonderful impressions of the world and of mankind” (Jarrell 103). Thus stories propagate more stories, each becoming increasing fantastical. Yet, as all stories essentially reside in the mind, the reliability of all narratives becomes shaky. If all tales blossom from others and intersect in such haphazard ways,

the controlled linear life humans attest to living seems improbable. Thus the uncanny sense that each tale speaks to another repressed tale, or an altered reality, continues.

Soon enough, the story abruptly returns to the present and a new story, or perhaps more aptly, the old story fully revealed, emerges to the call of a name: Strohmi. Walther's voicing of the unspoken name calls forth the past as though waking the couple from a dream. The moment this loose thread appears, Eckbert's life begins to unravel, as Bertha swiftly dies and Eckbert murders Walther in a paranoid outpouring. Suddenly the life the tale began with, Eckbert's present, becomes "more like a strange fairy-tale" and the terror of reality creeps in upon him. Soon enough, the Old Woman reveals herself to Eckbert as having played both Walther and his new friend Hugo (Jerrell 111). She also declares that Bertha was none other than his half-sister. Thus the final layer of the tale emerges, and Eckbert finds that it was all simply one story playing out on different levels of consciousness. For it does seem that the characters somehow guess at the falsehood in the story they have constructed about their own lives. Thus it begs the question of whether anyone can truly even tell his or her own story.

The tale not only refutes reality, but also explores the intertwining of adult reasoning and child-like innocence within humans, showing how the past and present selves intermingle and one can uncannily find the eyes of a younger self gazing out of an older self. Bertha bemoans, "It is indeed misfortunate that human beings acquire reason, only to lose, in doing so, the innocence of their souls" (Jarrell 104-5). Written during a time when reason and romanticism were creating a clashing cacophony, the problems caused by rational thinking were ripe for exposure. In the story, Bertha's struggle between her naïve innocence and her rational conscious can be characterized by her relationship with the dog and her bird. The dog seems to represent a faithful and guileless joy for life, the innocence of a child. The bird, which would stare at Bertha with

reproach and cause her guilt, seems most like an adult conscious of morality. Significantly, Bertha decides to tie- up and abandon the dog and strangle her “conscious.” Still, Eckbert describes her post-strangling self not to be devoid of innocence, he praises “her youth, her innocence, her beauty--and what incomprehensible charm her solitary breeding had given her” (Jarrell 108). In actuality, this praise must be tainted by the fact that he has sexual feelings for his sister. His appraisal of her virtue itself sullies her innocence, as she attracts the affection of her own brother.

The tale, dealing subtly with the dilemmas of consciousness, also encapsulates the process of human growth into a fully conscious adult. Bertha describes:

A strange conflict took place in my soul- it was as if two contentious spirits were struggling within me. One moment the quiet solitude would seem so beautiful to me, and then again I would be charmed by the vision of a new world with its manifold wonders. (Jarrell 105)

Bertha voices that uncanny feeling every person encounters when they feel some parts of themselves growing into a newer, older, person while some parts remain unchanged and younger. This pull between sections of the self which age at different rate causes the uncanny sense within Bertha that something “strange” toils in her breast as she watches known bits of herself become restless and seek to change her very essence. This uneven growth inside her also affects her view of others, and so perhaps the way in which the old woman who cares for her distorts might be an illusion created by her mind to project the uncanny on another instead of herself, as it is always easier to imagine another distorts than one’s own personality.

In *The Golden Pot*, distortion appears again in the form of an old lady. In Hoffmann’s text the old lady shifts roles easily: first playing the wronged crone, then the crazy cursing prophetess, then the Archivist calls her “an abominable creature who has played all sorts of tricks on me,” then she becomes a witch who can change shape into doorknobs and snakes, and then

suddenly she becomes a pitiable old nurse of Veronica's (Hoffmann 25). Veronica tells, "for though the old woman's appearance was distorted by her great age---she was recognizably the old nurse who had vanished---[but she] looked quite different now---wearing---a flowered jacket instead of the black rags" (Hoffmann 34). So just as Tieck's old woman shifted from helpful to hurtful through Bertha's betrayal, Hoffmann's old woman shifts between crafty crone and pitiable nursemaid through the mindset of Veronica.

Both Bertha and Veronica cast these distorted old women as both a mother figure and a sort of witch, begging the question of whether these women represent merely the projection of Bertha and Veronica's uncertainties about growing up and the interaction between memories of a nostalgic childhood and the fear of the unknown world of adults. These texts both stretch this uncertainty past a mere impression, as the characters are described as actually physically distorting and morphing, and so the characters become most like figures in a dream who can contain multiple personalities in one form. Yet as the tales take place in an assumed reality, the dreamlike nature of these distorted figures feel uncanny; like seeing a figment of one's imagination walking down the street.

These distorted old women both took the form of a person close to observer, as the more familiar the distorted character is to the main character observing the distortion, the uncannier the transformation seems. In *The Sandman*, Coppélius (the sandman) acts as the source of distortion, as he himself slides between several identities and even seems to morph the characters he interacts with. Nathanael describes when his father met with Coppélius in a manner that exemplifies his contagious uncanny quality. He says, "As my old father bent down to the fire, he looked quite different. A horrible, agonizing convulsion seemed to have contorted his gentle, honest face into the hideous, repulsive mask of a fiend. He looked like Coppélius" (Hoffmann

90). Thus the man he most fears appears on the face of the man he most loves, and so Nathanael flounders from the force of the uncanny. People see reflections of themselves in those closest to them, especially in the similar features of those they are related to by blood, and so the distortion of these most-familiar relatives comes close enough to a distortion of the self to provoke the uncanny. Nathanaels' father, like a muddled mirror image of himself, begins to deform, and so Nathanaels cannot help but feel that something in himself might be deforming as well, the in some way, he himself might be becoming the Sandman.

### III

In *The Sandman*, Hoffmann brings to light the power of the reflection, as nothing else shows such an immediate yet removed and flat image of the self, or is at once as internal and external. The narrator finds that all the malignant effects of the uncanny rely on the strength of their ability to replicate the self without being completely dismissed at other: "If our minds, strengthened by a cheerful life, are resolute enough to recognize alien and malevolent influences for what they are--- the uncanny power must surely perish in a vain struggle to assume the form which is our own reflection" (Hoffmann 95). This shows recognition of the fact that the "alien" "uncanny power" attempts to manifest as "our own reflection," and that a firm mind can quell the uncanny by denying its similarities to their self, making it totally "alien." Closure or deciding whether something is truly "alien" or not, kills the uncanny's power, but only if the decision is "resolute," for any hesitation allows the uncanny, the fantastical, back inside.

In "The Other Side of Death" by Gabriel García Márquez depicts a man who can no longer tell who gazes out of his body, him, or his dead twin brother. The inverted and refracted

quality of his questioning appears in his dream where “his brother, dressed as a woman, in front of a mirror, trying to extract his left eye with a pair of scissors” (Márquez 108). A man in the garb of a woman signals inversion, the placement in “front of a mirror” shows reflection, and the violence done to one eyes seems to show the main character’s desire to remove that part of his brother that looks out through his eyes. As they were “Two identical brothers, disquietingly repeated,” “he realizes that his double was a corpse,” and “it was then, as he observed how intimately joined those two natures were, that it occurred to him that something extraordinary, something unexpected, was going to happen” (Márquez 114-5). Here the uncanny resemblance to a corpse actually elicits the anticipation of the fantastic, as these two forces are inextricably linked in their use of the unknown. He anticipates a fantastic sort of invasion: “Wasn’t it just as possible that the buried brother would remain incorruptible while rotteness would invade the living one with all its blue octopuses” (Márquez 115). His uncanny sensations build into fantastic projections of “blue octopuses” that would suck the life from him.

Once the main character builds enough uncanny feeling, it manifests as a fantastic and horrific sort of tumor that begins to act with its own agency, yet which he cannot fully separate from his own self. He describes:

The moment in which *he* saw it twisting like a badly wounded dog under the sheets, howling, biting out that last shout that filled his throat with salt, using his nails to try to break the pain that was climbing up *him*, along his back, to the roots of the tumor. He couldn’t forget *his* thrashing like a dying animal, rebellious at the truth that had stopped in front of *him*, that had clasped *his* body with tenacity, with imperturbable constancy, something definitive, like death itself.” (Márquez 110)

The italicized use of the make pronoun emphasizes the speaker’s confusion between his own body and that of his brother’s, and the “he” could refer to either twin. The accumulation of fear provoked by his uncanny thoughts bursts forth as a “hundred feet of a fantastic animal,” and this

“terrible reality, was climbing up along his back like an invertebrate animal” (Márquez 111, 113). Through the uncanny connection with his brother, the main character finds this fantastic beast gains hold on his health and sanity. It was “another body, rather, that was coming from beyond his,” and “sustaining with its weight, with its mysterious presence, the whole universal balance” (Márquez 113). Because the man places so much “weight” on this “mysterious presence,” it figures as strongly visceral and tangible, as it the “weight” of so much uncanny feeling compacts to form something that breaks its mental bounds.

In Márquez’s other short story “Eva Is Inside Her Cat,” the uncanny again builds into a fantastic creature, but this time as tiny creatures that make Eva look uncannily similar to her relatives. These creatures “in the channels of her blood, kept on martyring her, pitilessly beautifying her,” and “in vain she struggled to chase those terrible creatures away,” but “they were part of her own organism” (Márquez 118). The creatures, full of too much uncanny familiarity, gain full fantastic control over her appearance. Eva also has the sense that these creatures carry in them blueprints from her ancestors, calling it an “eternal transmission of that artificial beauty” by “creatures [that] did their slow, effective, ceaseless work with a constancy of centuries,---as if the same head, a single head, had been continuously transmitted, with the same ears, the same nose” (Márquez 119). The artificial quality, that sense that she has been constructed instead of born, allows her to detach from her body, as it almost becomes an inanimate shell animated by those small busy creatures. The repetition too, that feeling that her body is too similar to that of others, carries the uncanny as well, but being pushed beyond the banality and subtle quality of the uncanny, it turns into these fantastic insects.

The repetition Eva feels surfaces in “The Other Side of Death” too, but it is more the sort of repetition one encounters when surrounded by mirrors which reflect off each other to display

endless retreating images of the self. The man sees his brother as himself doubled, and felt “that the corpse there was not *a thing* that was alien to him but was made from his same earthy substance, that it was his own repetition---[so] he had the strange feeling that his kin had extracted his image from the mirror---[and] had gained independence” (Márquez 114). This independent reflection of his self that he finds in the mirror unnerves him, as “he was witnessing the dramatic experience of another man’s taking the beard off the image in his mirror, his own physical presence unneeded” (Márquez 114). Here the uncanny feeling that his reflection contains something other takes full fantastic form and peels itself off the mirror to take over the actions of his physical body. Again, Márquez’s magical realism, a name that itself transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary, uses the uncanny to create a new breed of fantastic uncanny. For, as Rosemary Jackson says: “To introduce the fantastic is to replace familiarity, comfort, *das Heimlich*, with estrangement, unease, the uncanny” (Jackson 179). The uncanny then can create the gaps for the fantastic to form, as it can create the uncertainty and hesitation integral to the fantastic.

The fantastic element of magical realism washes away in *The Sea*, as the uncanny remains within the mind and the reflections never leap off the mirrors, but rather cause internal havoc instead. The idea of the uncanny exists in myriad ways, especially in the protagonist-narrator’s trouble with recognizing his own personality, memory, and visage. Hedwig Schwall states that many of Banville’s protagonists thrive on “‘*das Heimliche*,’” which exists as “a paradoxical word in German, as Freud points out, since it conveys both the meaning ‘homely’ and secretive, which means both splitting and hiding the decision in the (id)entity of the protagonist”(Schwall 116). Max, the narrator exemplifies such a split personality, as when he

confronts his image in a mirror he finds merely an uncanny resemblance to himself rather than a familiar face. Max describes:

Now I am startled, and more than startled, by the visage that so abruptly appears there, never and not at all the one that I expect. I have been elbowed aside by a parody of myself, a sadly dishevelled figure in a Hallowe'en mask made of sagging, pinkish-grey rubber that bears no more than a passing resemblance to the image of what I look like that I stubbornly retain in my head. (Banville 94)

Max narrates the human experience of confronting the disjunction between one's mental world and identity and the identity that the outer world views daily. One's own face, in the mirror, photos, video, and reflections, always carries a slight shiver of the uncanny; as people tend to believe that their own face should be the one they know best, yet it remains the face most hidden. Confronting proof, in the form of a reflection that other people can access and identify one's face better than oneself cannot rest easily with most.

Max's encounter with his own "Halloween mask" recalls Francis Bacon's 1976 painting, the "Portrait of Michel Leiris," which embodies the uncanny sense of distortion Max describes. Bacon's painting stares down its viewers with one unblinking eye, challenging them to search for that human connection in his jumbled features. In this direct gaze, his steady ear, the wholeness of a nostril, the fullness of a lip, viewers find familiar features that force them to reconcile their notions of what a face must be with the jarring shapes this man's face consists of. One feels almost that if they strained their eyes they would find the face of someone intimately known. It is this strain of trying to blanket familiarity over something unknown that calls forth the uncanny. It is like being approached in the daylight by a dream, wherein people can be composites. Just as Max could not escape the fact that this was indeed himself, the viewer of Bacon's work must come to terms with the fact that their mind tells them this is a fellow man that gazes out at them. As Max encounters the fragility of his mental beliefs viewers confront the chaos of their dreams

in a form which forces them to consider that their perceptions in the day might not really be as clearly distinct from those they have in dreams as they may wish to believe.

Max, though, finds the unfamiliar in more than just his face, as he holds a mirror to his very personality and finds it just as distorted. He confesses, “I never had a personality, not in the way that others have, or think they have” (Banville 160). Max seems to allude to the fact that most people “have a personality” in such a solid and comfortingly known way, yet his own personality escaped the grip of his mind. He explains, “I was always a distinct no-one, whose fiercest wish was to be an indistinct someone--- Anna---would be the medium of my transmutation. She was the fairground mirror in which all my distortions would be made straight” ( Banville 160). Max refers to the fact that he comes from a working class family but his marriage to a richer Anna allowed him to retreat into his mind comfortably. Max sees his own self as full of “distortions” and suggests that only the sight of these reflected in the distortions of his wife could produce a stable image. This implies that even if one’s personality remains distorted and unfathomable, one can attain peace and familiarity through the shared distortions in others. In a sense, the feeling of the uncanny itself can become familiar as a shared experience between humans.

Schwall picks up on this desire in Banville’s novels to find a partner to share the uncanny with and adds that Banville continually seeks to shatter misconceptions about the stability of personality. Schwall finds, “This desire, this positively hurling oneself into an ‘adventure of unknowing’ with a partner, are something Banville spells out only for the first time in *The Sea*”(Schwall 128). It is this novel that snatches readers by their throats and forces them to spiral down Max’s slide of slippery memories with him. Just as Max sought out Anna to comfort his distorted personality, Banville seeks to connect with the repressed feelings of “unknowing” in his

readers by denying both Max and the readers cozy places to rest in his text. Indeed, the novel careens dangerously between past, present, and future at a speed that necessitates an ever-changing reconstruction of Max's personality. Schwall adds that "the whole of Banville's oeuvre is one big enterprise to deconstruct the illusion of (id)entity-- he tries to split the subject suggesting a possible massive explosion of the concept of the subject" (Schwall 120). Max's identity remains fragmented by the prying fingers of time and his own refusal to claim any one personality or memory as entirely veritable.

Max also attempts to isolate his own self from his body, which results in the uncanny sense that he has the ability to examine his own flesh in cold experimental tones. After Anna died, Max began to fragment and attempt to escape his own body, and thus at one point he attempts to send his body back to the ocean. In this state of mind, he recalls a memory of standing in the ocean and seeing his "own feet, pallid and alien, like specimens displayed under glass" (Banville 194). He declares the feet his "own," yet he recognizes them as "alien" and "specimens" at the same time. This observation, at the time, may have been a careless observation, yet it is the recollection of it in Max's current state of mind that adds its true significance. The sea that washed over his feet then and transformed them into blurred pale fish-like distortions of his own body would later drown two of his childhood playmates, as Anna's death was unfortunately not the first Max encountered. The sea soaked that memory of his foreign feet with death, and so in remembering Anna's death, it is this memory that surfaces.

One of the drowned children, Myles, oozed with eeriness even while he was alive, as he was mute, possibly by choice, and a twin. Twins themselves seem to conjure up the uncanny, as they recall the possibility of one's own image stepping out of the mirror and living alongside one. Even though Myles was a fraternal and not an identical twin to Chloe, Max still felt a

twinge of strangeness by thinking: “Imagine somehow knowing intimately, from the inside, as it were, what another’s body is like, its different parts, different smells, different urges” (Banville 59). The intrigue of knowing the Other, of actually knowing the unknown inside of another body, of having in a sense two bodies with one mind; these are the impulses that propel Max’s curious. Schwall relates that Banville’s characters’ names “can also indicate ambiguity by implication, like Myles in *The Sea*, who recalls the strange children of Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw*” (Schwall 116). Thus Myles twins not only his sister Chloe but the Myles character in James’s novel, thus adding further layers of uncanny familiarity to his presence.

Taking the idea of the double into the mind, Foucault speaks to the “unthought,” and his description of its workings itself shadows a depiction of the uncanny. He explains the “unthought” as:

the inexhaustible double that presents itself to reflection as the blurred projection of what man is in his truth, but that also plays the role of a preliminary ground upon which man must collect himself in order to attain his truth. For though this double may be close, it is alien, and the role, the true undertaking, of thought will be to bring it as close to itself as possible; the whole of modern thought is imbued with the necessity of thinking the unthought--of reflecting the contents of the *In-itself* in the form of the *For-itself*, of ending man’s alienation by reconciling him with his own essence, of making explicit the horizon that provides experience with its background of immediate and disarmed proof, of lifting the veil of the Unconscious, of becoming absorbed in its silence, or of its straining to catch its endless murmur.” (Foucault 327)

This desire to think the “unthought” likens to a need to embrace the uncanny. Instead of running from the ghostly double that haunts one, one should instead discover its meaning in an attempt to lift “the veil of the Unconscious.” The “unthought” could well *be* the uncanny, being a “double,” a “reflection,” a “blurred projection,” “alien,” silent, “unconscious,” and an “endless murmur.” In *The Sea*, Max’s “unthought” thoughts simmer below the surface, waiting to uncannily emerge, as if out of nowhere, on to the sunny place of his conscious mind. Anna herself, hidden by death and repressed by grief, becomes “unthought,” and so Max’s memories become a way to end his

“alienation by reconciling him with his own essence.” Anna, his essence, that “fairground mirror in which all [his] distortions” straightened, emerges from the “unthought” into the thought through the uncanny “endless murmur” of Max’s memories. Foucault, by taking the perspective of the “unthought,” presents a new way to perceive the way the uncanny distorts and mirrors the known, or the previously “thought.”

## Conclusion

How can one define what always seeks to challenge or undermine set guidelines? The uncanny and the fantastic, acting within a text, within the mind, and in a dynamic exchange between the two, seem to find the cracks in genres and so after the strict distinctions propped up by Todorov began to thin, other theorists started to play with the idea of allowing the two terms to redefine their own boundaries. Nicholas Royle agrees, pointing out that “Todorov’s study demonstrates, in some respects quite cannily, the folly of attempting to provide structuralist ‘explanation’ of the topic” (Royle 18). He adds:

the uncanny is not a literary genre. But nor is it a non-literary genre. It overflows the very institution of literature. It inhabits, haunts, parasitizes the allegedly non-literary. It makes ‘genre’ blink.” (Royle 19)

As the uncanny refuses to remain chained to the texts, it seems clear that the normative rules of genre and structuralism find only the merest footholds to cling to. The uncanny, carried beyond the pages into the day-to-day world, expands beyond a genre like the Gothic which has clear literary indicators, yet this expansion comes with an increased ephemeral quality that allows more solid genres to overpower its detection. With the uncanny, the indicators are internal, as it is up to the mind of the character or reader as to what induces the uncanny. The dark, crumbling, haunted castle, sitting on the edge of a mountain, with ravens circling it, at midnight, as the bells toll, cannot help but fall into the Gothic, yet the uncanny comes from the internal landscape rather than the external, and so refuses to lay out landmarks for its definition. This helps explain why in Chapter One the Gothic in *The Black Spider* covered the uncanny, because the Gothic, with its firm grounding in the visual, overwhelms the uncanny’s ghost of a genre.

The fantastic also eludes strict genre definitions, as it lies on a spectrum with the uncanny, and so shares in the slippery power of changeable boundaries. Cavell's relation of both the fantastic and the uncanny to the same author, Hoffmann, shows how the fantastic and the uncanny share texts rather than claiming disparate ones for their own. Cavell says "the fantastic in literature" is "exemplified by the tales of E.T.A Hoffmann," the man who wrote *The Sandman*, which dominates "Freud's study of a major instance of the literature of the fantastic in his essay 'The Uncanny'" (Cavell 183, 186). The fantastic and the uncanny become almost interchangeable in his vocabulary, as he calls Freud's essay on the uncanny a study of fantastic literature. Todorov speaks to both as well, but he keeps the uncanny as a cushion for those fantastic texts that fail to walk the demanding tightrope of hesitation, and so fails to understand the way the two remain continually connected. What must be remembered is "the character of genres is that they change," and so "only variations or modifications of convention have literary significance"(Fowler 18). Todorov's attempt to stagnate the fantastic in a genre with such stringent structures doubly encounters problems then, for not only does the inherent construction of the fantastic itself deny boundaries, but genres themselves need room built in for change to remain relevant. One cannot simply push the fantastic into a neighboring genre every time its fails follow exact guidelines.

David Sandner notes that Todorov, for all the criticism he has received about the limited scope of his definitions, apparently noted some of the "variations or modifications" that Fowler spoke to, such as the trend of the ordinary person becoming fantastic. He prefaces an excerpt of Todorov's work by noting "that Todorov *himself* begins [widening his scope when]---he discusses a "new fantastic"---that defines a later, wider genre combining the uncanny and the marvelous" (Sandner 135). Todorov, in this except, relays that "according to Sartre, Blanchot

and Kafka---the “normal” man is precisely the fantastic being; the fantastic becomes the rule, not the exception” (Sandner 142). He attempts to grapple with this change in definition, that the fantastic could relate to the ordinary, that, as this thesis suggests, the fantastic cannot shed itself of the ordinary, as its relationship to the ordinary is what determines the impact of its effects. He fears:

This metamorphosis will have consequences for the technique of the genre. If previously the hero with whom the reader identifies was a perfectly normal being (so that the identification could be easy and so that we could be astonished with him by the uncanny nature of events), here it is the same central character who becomes ‘fantastic.’ (Sandner 142)

Todorov here seems to think that when the fantastic enters the internal body of the character, if, for example, a character had tiny creatures running through her veins, like in “Eva is Inside Her Cat,” then the reader could not identify enough with the character to find “astonishment” in the uncanny. Yet, as proven in “Eva is Inside Her Cat,” this just allows for more of a merging of the fantastic with the uncanny, it does not prevent the fantastic from manifesting, it just alters its form. Todorov, seemingly uncomfortable with such ephemeral and active boundaries for the fantastic, finds this change somewhat daunting.

The fantastic, as it appeared in early nineteenth century texts, and as Todorov wished to figure it, has expanded and changed with time to branch into the psychoanalytic, science-fiction, fantasy, magical realism, or simply as a device in many fiction novels, but the uncanny, as it has never historically truly been confined to a genre, sustains its elusive quality, remaining fathomless and ever-churning like the sea. Frederic James further adds: “Genres are essentially literary *institutions*, or social contracts between writer and a specific public” (Sandner 327). The fact that the fantastic has historically been pushed into a solid genre much more often than the uncanny becomes important then, as it explains why the fantastic keeps hitting the limits of

relevance to one generation's genre definition and suddenly splitting into newer and fresher genres that speak to the younger generation. Yet if one frees the fantastic of its generational genre and allows it the freedom the uncanny enjoys by placing them both on a variable spectrum of the ordinary, it can sway with the tides of time without drowning.

The fantastic though, if seen simply for its ability to present readers with the extraordinary in an ordinary context that allows for the sublime beauty of uncertainty, can transcend time. No matter what passes for fantastic at the time, the effect of confronting the strange, as perceived by a character or reader, remains relevant. Jane Yolen points out: "Fantasy tales are as much *of* their time as *beyond* it" (Sandner 328). As Chapter Two spoke to the fantastic's great propensity for crossing "beyond" borders, Yolen's quotation makes sense in suggesting that the fantastic attempts to stand outside the boundaries of time by inserting extraordinary things or experiences that could not exist at any time. Yolen continues: "Surely one of the great things about fantasy literature is that we can be transported to world we do not know---wear skins that are not ours---[and] look at landscapes through someone else's eyes" (Sandner 332). As Chapter Three spoke to the importance of the gaze in relation to the fantastic, it reverberates here with Yolen's reference to seeing "through someone else's eyes." As the fantastic makes readers aware of the fact that they must change their "eyes" for the author's or the character's eyes, the fantastic more easily transcends generations because readers do not expect the text to replicate the normative laws of their time and they expect the unknown to pervade the text.

Rosemary Jackson points out that fantastic texts tend to surface in times of stability, suggesting that these texts contain the products of repression. She explains that the fantastic flourished in "periods of relative 'stability' ( the mid-eighteenth century, late nineteenth century,

mid-twentieth century),” which “points to a direct relation between cultural repression and its generation of oppositional energies which are *expressed* through various forms of fantasy in art” (Jackson 179). The fantastic then allows for a release of “oppositional energies,” which gives it relevance in society. The fantastic’s great power of crossing boundaries, of allowing two “oppositional” things to merge and settle in a different, perhaps freer, fashion, grants it the ability to aide in the release of the repressed. The uncanny, with its unparalleled ability to refigure the repressed, also helps release tension, as it did for Max in Banville’s *The Sea*.

To realize the full scope of the effects that occur within and because of the fantastic and the uncanny, it helps to step outside of genre and examine how readers interact with the texts themselves. The fantastic and the uncanny, with their dynamic motion between internal and external, their active crossing of the boundary between mind and matter, and their fluctuation between the edges of the spectrum of ordinary, necessitate the inclusion of the readers’ world into their characterization. Foucault, speaking to the active processing of thought, says, “What is essential is that thought, both for itself and in the density of its workings, should be both knowledge and a modification of what it knows, reflection and a transformation of the mode of being of that on which it reflects” (Foucault 327). Thought then should reflect and transform that which it ponders, a productive interchange between past thoughts and new ones to transcend the known and find freshness. The fantastic and the uncanny help bring to light the sort of transformation of thought and knowledge that occurs when an external text and an internal mind meet in the borderlands because their inherent use of reflection and transformations makes readers more aware of the naturally fantastic and uncanny process of reading.

Reading about a fantastic world, as opposed to a realistic one, heightens readers’ awareness of the fact that every text they read necessitates the creation of an uncertain mental

landscape on which the words of an external author dictate the internal images of the readers. Todorov emphasizes the process of reading as integral to the creation of the fantastic. He explains, “the narrative of the fantastic, which strongly emphasizes the process of uttering, simultaneously emphasizes this time of the reading itself” (Todorov 89). As Todorov insists that the fantastic rests in the present, in the moment of hesitation, he finds that it also rests in the “uttering” of words; as each sentence creates a new fantastic word which exists only in the moment of reading. The fantastic “permits the description of a fantastic universe, one that has no reality outside of language; the description and what is described are not of a different nature” (Todorov 92). Reading a realist novel provides the sense that places or people described could, or do, exist, but when readers encounter some new fantastic creation, some transformed amalgamation of the real, like a fairy, they come up against the truth that the text has birthed in their mind something which can never take physical form. This then recalls how reading itself allows the invasion of another mind, that of the author and his or her characters, and thus continually creates the fantastic, even when in the midst of a realist text.

Brian Attebery describes how the fantastic and the realistic continually create each other by showing the internal relationship between fantasy and mimesis and how it is used to construct a text that interacts effectively with readers. He says: “even in the pursuit of realism, storytellers have repeatedly introduced the fantastic” and in turn “fantasy depends on mimesis for its effectiveness,” but “both modes [fantasy and mimesis] are deeply rooted in ordinary, nonliterary experience” (Sandner 296). Again, the ordinariness of a text pushes into prominence when determining how the fantastic works. The words “supernatural” and “extraordinary,” both integral to the fantastic, use “natural” and “ordinary” as their basis in an acknowledgement of the need for the stability of the known to lift the text into a realm of “super” or “extra” effects.

Attebery adds: “A writer makes use of these modes, as he makes use of language, to construct an organism, a story, of which words, sentences, imitations, and imaginings are respectively the atoms, tissues, and organs” (Sandner 296). The physical realness of the text supports the words and sentences, which in turn act as mediators to the “imitations” of the natural, and this mimesis then surrounds and highlights the “imaginings” of the fantastic “organs.” The fantastic builds itself upwards into the minds of the reader, while the uncanny tends to descend from the minds on to the text where it finds reflections of itself distorted across the pages.

While reading the fantastic can demonstrate by example how the external can interact with the internal, reading the uncanny shows how the internal can seep into the external, and then possibly reflect back to the reader in distorted form. Characters that experience the uncanny find parts of themselves reflected or distorted in the external world, and so readers of the uncanny entertain a creeping doubt about the containment of their own self. Readers, when relating to the uncanny, like in Banville’s *The Sea*, cannot help but remember their own experiences with that strange sense of the remembered returning uncomfortably changed in reality, as in an encounter with an old home or haunt. Readers’ strong connection to characters experiencing the uncanny, because unlike the fantastic it occurs frequently in reality as well as in literature, allows them to uncover aspects of their own distortions within the text. As the fantastic delights in creating thoughts inside readers, the uncanny shows them that thoughts they have already had have been written down by another for them to read. The reader may begin to feel that their discomforts and closely held suspicions have been read by the author and turned into a fantastic other world that must then be reflected back into the mind of the reader. Readers must accept the intrusion now of their own old thoughts in a distorted form, uncannily finding them undeniably part of their self, yet invading by means of an external and unknown text. Reading then, forms an active

interchange between text and reader that invokes both the fantastic and the uncanny, and so this process rises to the front of the consciousness while reading texts that show the fantastic and uncanny in action.

Stanley Cavell, working with Thoreau's works, takes this interaction further by showing how the readers themselves become fantastic and uncanny. Cavell adds that Thoreau finds "that the reader of the book, not the exceptional figures within it, is (the other that inhabits the realm of) the fantastic" (Cavell 184). When reading, the world figured remains contained inside the readers' mind, peopled by the figments of their imagination, and thus the characters and landscapes they picture comprises pieces of themselves. So, as readers naturally figure themselves within the mental landscape of the text, they turn themselves into fantastic others within their own mind. Reading then becomes almost like directed dreaming, for as in dreams every person dreamed projects from the self, reading occurs as a projection of the self-mediated by the text, and so allows the figurations of the self to become Other and fantastic.

Cavell continues on to explain that when a reader is figured as fantastic they gain the extraordinary power to exchange their gaze with that of the author. Cavell explicates:

The inflection of the idea of the reader as fantastic---is thus an idea of the reader's willingness to subject himself or herself to taking the eyes of the writer, which is in effect yielding his or her own, an exchange interpretable as a sacrifice of one another, of what we think we know of one another, which may present itself as mutual castration, in service either of our mutual victimization or else our liberation. (Cavell 187)

Just as Chapter Three discussed the importance of the gaze to encountering the fantastic and the uncanny, Cavell here demonstrates how reading itself involves a gaze and a sort of assented willingness to experience the uncanny sense of looking through another's eyes. This image, as ghastly as it may sound at first, actually shows the sublime nature of reading, and "that to take one another's eyes is an image whose terror has to be faced in seizing its beauty; call this the

sublimity of otherness---warns us not to sentimentalize our interventions” (Cavell 187). This quotation helps elucidate the importance of the uncanny in literature, as the uncanny revels in the “sublimity of otherness.” The uncanny does not merely evoke a strange discomfort, it allows readers to appreciate the sharp beauty of otherness, to finally see the invisible boundaries of the self and those of others; watching in fascinated horror as those walls merge and collapse. The uncanny then, as it imparts powerful impressions, remains relevant even today as a literary and real-life effect.

The relevance and expansiveness of the fantastic clarifies when one begins to seek its effects outside of the confines of genre or even literature itself. Brian Attebery says:

Yet the fantastic mode always seems larger than any theory that tries to encompass it. If we say fantasy is a function of language, what about unspoken or unwritten fantasies, as when a caveman draws a stag pierced by his spear or when René Magritte paints a locomotive emerging from the back wall of a fireplace?---These examples indicate that fantasy is to some extent independent of language and may even predate it. (Sandner 297)

One can discover here reasons why the fantastic resists confinement in a literary genre, as it has the ability to shed the literary itself. Just as the uncanny appears in the everyday, the fantastic can also pervade the daily life, or even the nightly life, as in dreams. There can be fantastic art, fantastic theatre, fantastic movies, fantastic songs, or just occurrences of the fantastic in day-to-day life, such as that strange light in the sky that just does not seem to be a plane. The fantastic, though its name seems to resist the banal, lives in the ordinary, able to bridge the gap between real life and fiction by proposing an alternate in-between world where the real and the imaginary merge into merely the external and internal sides of the same self.

Just as the fantastic and the uncanny use the internal and external gaze to work in texts, critics of the two types must look into the texts with the eyes of an external reader and then immerse themselves into the text to gaze back at their external selves from the inside of the

pages. They might even take it further and stand outside both their reading selves and the parts of themselves in the story and watch themselves reading from afar to ascertain how the interchange between internal and external self looks from the perspective of the Other. Essentially, the fantastic and the uncanny necessitate the ability to accept that too much ordinariness becomes uncanny and not enough becomes fantastic, and so the banality of daily life actually sits on a seesaw, never quite as stable as one always hopes. Becoming aware of the shaky balance of life helps one adjust to it though, as before one wobbled unknowingly, eyes covered by blind faith in the stillness of reality. As the fantastic and the uncanny give readers new and unsettling ways of perceiving life, they retain a freshness that allows them to persist into modern times. Still, this is only if they are allowed to escape the enclosures of set genres and instead remain changelings that readers can delight in, gleefully admiring “How wild the unguarded fancy runs” (Banville 149).

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