

The Uncanny

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Introduction

“I got so scared,” so Clarice Lispector writes in *The Passion According to G.H.*, “when I realize I lost my human form for several hours. I don’t know if I’ll have another form to replace the one I lost” (Lispector 2012, 6). Losing our human form may not be an experience that many of us have had, but in the course of everyday life, there are moments in which we can feel ourselves slipping away from a sense of the world as a locus of familiarity. During such moments, we might feel alienated not only from our surroundings, as though the same surroundings were synthetic, but also from ourselves. For a brief moment, we might catch sight of ourselves as strangers, as though our identity were a flimsy construct deployed to ward off unfamiliarity. In such moments, it might be that we have had a feeling of the *uncanny*.

The concept of the uncanny has a rich history, indebted as much to psychoanalysis as philosophy. After a lengthy latency period, the concept has flourished in the last twenty years. This growth of interest in the uncanny is evident in a range of disciplines and thematic areas, including Heideggerian scholarship (Withy 2015), memory studies (Trigg 2009, 2012), medical humanities (Leder 1990; Svenaeus 2000, 2013; Zaner 1981), philosophy of mind (Burwood 2008; Zahavi and RoCHAT 2010), aesthetics (Trigg 2014), deconstructionism (Derrida 1994), architectural theory (Vidler 1992; Trigg 2006), gothic studies (Spadoni 2007), cultural studies (Collins and Jervis 2008), literature (Danielewski 2000), psychoanalysis (Masschelein 2011), and the humanities more broadly (Royle 2003).

This chapter will trace the conceptual and affective significance of the concept. The plan of action is as follows. We will begin this chapter by tracing the origins of the uncanny through a critical—indeed, decisive—essay by Freud. Following this origin, we will see how phenomenology receives the uncanny, both explicitly in the work of Heidegger, but also in a more diffused sense in Merleau-Ponty. With this foundation established, we will then plot some of the “applications” of the uncanny in contemporary phenomenology, especially in the field of the medical humanities where the concept of the “uncanny body” has proved pivotal.

Freud and the Uncanny

Although the modern notion of the uncanny formally begins with the work of German psychiatrist, Ernst Jentsch, the term itself is associated with an essay by Freud, and it is Freud who is largely responsible for the genesis of the uncanny in the 20th century (Freud 2003). Prior to Freud, there had been almost no conceptual reflection on the status of the uncanny, save for Jentsch and also Friedrich Schelling (cf. Masschelein 2011). Freud's essay is itself a response to Jentsch's 1906 paper "Über die Psychologie des Unheimlichen" ("On the Psychology of the Uncanny"), which Freud deems "rich in content [yet] not exhaustive" (Freud 2003, 123). In the year of Jentsch's death in 1919, Freud wrote a paper that would assume an unexpected significance not only within the corpus of his work, but also within the humanities more broadly. This significance is all the more striking given that Freud introduces the topic of the uncanny in an off-handed and ironic fashion, claiming that "the present writer must plead guilty to exceptional obtuseness in [the study of the uncanny], when great delicacy of feeling would be more appropriate" (124). Freud's dismissal is, of course, unmerited. Far from inept, his examination of the uncanny is both astute and incisive. In part, this gift for unmasking the structural and phenomenological aspects of the uncanny should come as no surprise. After all, the topic of the uncanny dovetails with several recurring motifs in Freud's works, not least anxiety, of which the uncanny is a special kind of variant. Indeed, the formulation of the uncanny within his essay gravitates around the idea of something long since repressed coming to the surface in another guise. This was an idea that Freud had already developed in his 1899 paper on the topic of screen memories, where screen memories perform the function of substituting one image for another. In "The Uncanny" the idea of an image being displaced from one source to an apparently unrelated other source will itself reappear in a series of different appearances, not least that of the home.

Freud's definition of the concept remains exemplary: "That species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (124). Whereas Jentsch thinks of the uncanny as involving a strong degree of intellectual uncertainty, Freud introduces a novel reading of the uncanny as entailing an *aesthetic* dimension, where aesthetics is employed as "relating to the quality of feeling" rather than an evaluative concern

with beauty, tragedy, sublimity, and so forth (123). If the uncanny were merely a case of intellectual uncertainty, as Jentsch has it, then the gain of intellectual certainty would domesticate the feeling, such that “the better oriented [one] was in the world around [one], the less likely [one] would be to find the objects and occurrences in it uncanny” (125). Manifestly this is not the case; the intellectual procurement of certainty does nothing to assuage the feeling of uncanniness that is largely resistant to rationality. It is for this reason that Freud frames access to the uncanny in terms of aesthetic sensibility, the understanding of which depends less on the presentation of deductive assertions and more on a sensitivity to the phenomena.

Freud comes to this thesis through a lengthy etymological analysis of the term “uncanny” itself. He begins by noting that “*Unheimlich* is clearly the opposite of *heimlich*” insofar as *heimlich* derives from *heim*, home (124–125). There are two problems with this distinction, however. The first is that the contrast between familiar and the unfamiliar does not capture the specificity of the uncanny in distinction to, say, horror or fear. This is the limit Freud thinks Jentsch reached in his analysis, whose accent is largely on unfamiliarity and that alone. The second problem is that *heimlich* has multiple meanings. The first sense of *heimlich* refers to home in a domestic and familiar sense. But in addition to this usage, the term also refers to that which is secretive and clandestine, as he writes: “Starting from the homely and the domestic, there is a further development towards the notion of something removed from the eyes of strangers, hidden, secret” (133). There is, then, an ambiguity between the *heimlich* and the *unheimlich*, or the homely and the unhomely, such that neither can be considered in isolation from the other; that which is the most familiar—the domesticity of the everyday—is precisely that which is the most strange,

At the end of this etymological foray, Freud makes recourse to a formulation of the uncanny posited by Schelling: “Uncanny is what one calls everything that has meant to remain secret and hidden and has come into the open” (132). Freud’s endorsement of Schelling’s formulation is perhaps due in no small part to its alignment with the model of repression and screen memory Freud had already developed in 1899. What is frightening is not the object, as such, but instead the fact that the presentation of the uncanny is stipulated on a return of what has hitherto been repressed. As evidence of this, Freud generates a taxonomy of uncanny

objects, inspired in part by Jentsch but also through a reading of E.T.A. Hoffman's story "The Sand-Man." For Freud, waxwork figures, dolls, automatons, the evil eye, dismembered limbs, being buried alive, encountering the same number time and again in any given day, getting lost in a small Italian town and finding oneself in the red-light district, and even epileptic fits—all of these inspire a feeling of the uncanny "because they arouse in the onlooker vague—mechanical—process that may be lie hidden behind the familiar image of a living person" (135).

What is important to Freud's analysis of such phenomena is that the surface presentation of a familiar thing—in the case of Hoffmann's story, the eye—belies another level, in which a more occult meaning resides. Where "The Sand-Man" is concerned, this hidden level of meaning derives from a logic of repression whereby one figure—a father, a scientist, a lover—assumes the place of another, in turn producing a series of doubles. As Freud interprets it, the surface presentation of a given narrative is shrouded in a mist of anxiety-laden ambivalence, such that the reader him or herself is never entirely clear where they stand in relation to the real or fictitious aspects of the narrative. For Freud, it is this ambivalence of meaning that supersedes and undercuts Jentsch's appeal to "intellectual uncertainty," which fails to capture the irrational—indeed, unconscious—genesis at the heart of the uncanny.

That Freud will end up situating the function of the eye in Hofmann's story within the scheme of his psychosexual framework is of less importance than the broader insights gleaned from the essay. Indeed, the fact that Freud situates the anxiety concerning the loss of eye in relation to his notion of the castration complex is only a contingent dimension in the structure of the uncanny. What matters is not the specificity of a given theoretical framework, with its conceptual and cultural inheritance. Rather, what is of critical importance in the logic of the uncanny is the notion of a thought that ought to be either consigned to the archive or otherwise domesticated by reason, but which through some elaborate procedure has managed to outlast these mechanisms.

Nowhere is this clearer than in Freud's analysis of the *doppelgänger*, a theme that Freud inherits from the work of Otto Rank. The figure of the *doppelgänger* is open to a multiplicity of interpretations, including a symbol of "insurance against the extinction of the self," a motif

of “boundless self-love,” and a “primordial narcissism that dominates the mental life of both the child and the primitive man” (142). Throughout this genesis of meanings, themes of uncanniness such as the doppelgänger are not left behind in a primitive phase of development but are instead reformed in a series of new guises, and it is precisely the re-encounter of material that ought to remain buried—either to a phylogenetic past or to infancy—that gives rise to a sense of the uncanny in adult life.

As Freud sees it, the primary affective tonality of the uncanny is one of an anxiety spurred by ambivalence. But why does such ambivalence lead to anxiety? One possible answer—and one that has proved influential within a generation of thinkers after Freud—hinges on the idea that the uncanny introduces us to a dimension of subjectivity that undermines the idea of the self as rational and sovereign. In and through the experience of the uncanny, something belonging to a different order of life and thought, hitherto assumed to be relegated to the past, comes to the foreground, not as a contingent accident, but as something belonging to the structure of subjectivity itself. Indeed, the motif of the uncanny within aesthetics tends to play precisely on how the uncanny, in a Nietzschean sense, renders us *strangers to ourselves*. “It appears,” so Freud writes, “that we have all...been through a phase corresponding to the animistic phase in the development of primitive peoples, that this phase did not pass without leaving behind in us residual traces that can still make themselves felt” (147).

Here, we might think of the films of David Lynch, David Cronenberg, and Stanley Kubrick, the literature of Edgar Allan Poe, W.G. Sebald, and H.P. Lovecraft, the music of Alfred Schnittke and Valentin Silvestrov, the paintings of Léon Spilliaert, and the installations of Gregor Schneider. What bridges diverse works of art such as these is the presentation of an ostensibly familiar everyday world that is offset and undercut by a subtle atmosphere of disquiet (cf. Trigg 2006, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018). It is because works of art of this variation begin from the point of departure of a habitual taken-for-granted world, in which the self is identifiable with the self, that the anxiety peculiar to the uncanny is rendered affectively compelling. It is on this point that phenomenology has a special relevance to the uncanny.

Heidegger and the Uncanny

Phenomenology's relation to the uncanny is evident on a number of levels, both thematically but also methodologically. Most obviously, the uncanny has a rich heritage in the work of Heidegger, especially in his venerated treatment of anxiety in §40 of *Being and Time* (Heidegger 2008). Whereas Freud identifies the uncanny with respect to specific discernible things—an eye, a body part, a place, etc.—one of Heidegger's main contributions to this research is to render the *unheimlich* a generalised and constitutive structure of our being-in-the-world. To understand this, it is necessary to say a brief word about his account of anxiety.

Alongside Freud and Kierkegaard, Heidegger privileges anxiety as a mood that has the potential to disrupt our habitual, everyday being-in-the-world. As Heidegger understands it, anxiety is a privileged mood for at least two reasons. First, anxiety plays a methodological role in terms of allowing us to gain an understanding of the “totality of the structural whole” that is Being (Heidegger 2008, 229). How is it, so Heidegger asks, that Being can become an issue for beings? How, furthermore, can we grasp Being as a whole and not just the being which takes up that existence as a series of parts? So long as we are tied up in the world, as though the world just existed in an unambiguous sense, then such questions are for the most part lost on us. It is anxiety, Heidegger suggests, that “might...perform some such function” of disclosing Being as a whole (230). Anxiety does this through fragmenting the relational meaning embedded in things, in turn obligating Dasein to call into question the grounds of being-in-the-world. The implication of this rupture of everyday being-in-the-world leads to the second reason why anxiety is privileged in Heidegger; namely, it generates the possibility for a renewed understanding of the everyday. One way it does this is through the very thematic orientation of anxiety itself, which is that of *uncanniness*.

Heidegger uses the term *unheimlich* to describe the state of being uncanny, though he stresses that uncanniness also means “not-being-at-home” (233). Phenomenologically, our taken-for-granted existence consists of several key dimensions that enable us to proceed through the world without having to reflect in abstraction on how things work and assume the meaning they do. Think here of any given moment. For the most part, we are at-home in the world insofar as the world presents itself to us as a nexus of familiar pathways and pregiven meanings. When I move through the world, then I do so with a tacit trust that the world will unfold to me in a familiar and constant sense. The world as a home-world is given to me as a

relational whole and is structured at all times in an intersubjective manner. Within this world, specific things have their place—the table lends itself to be sat at, the mug to be drunk from, and the body appears for me as a unified set of processes that enable me to get placed in the first instance. In a word, an atmosphere of familiarity envelops this world, seldom drawing attention to itself except for when it dissents from my expectations. Together, these structures of familiarity forge the homeliness of everyday existence.

Anxiety, Heidegger suggests, pierces through this veil of familiarity, disrupting our taken-for-granted attitude and in the process drawing attention to “the world as world” (232). In such moments, no matter how brief, the world no longer performs in the way we expect it to. “Everyday familiarity,” so Heidegger writes, “collapses” (233). What this means is not that the world suddenly dissolves, as though it were made of slime; but instead that the roles one assumes and the meaning, action, and purpose one finds in things appear now as contingent constructs. In the face of this loss of familiarity and intrinsic meaning, we flee back into the state of being “at-home” of established patterns within a public sphere, such that “complete assurance” can coexist alongside the “threat” of uncanniness that haunts Dasein from the outset (234).

Heidegger’s anxiety, then, is not marked by a paroxysm of panic (he even goes so far as to dismiss “physiological” anxiety as being the same as the rarer “real” anxiety [234]). Nor is this anxiety an object-directed anxiety about this or that. Rather, the anxiety concerns “Being-in-the-world itself,” and manifests itself thematically in a mode of being “not-at-home,” which “pursues Dasein constantly” (232–234). “Anxiety,” he goes on to say, “can arise in the most innocuous Situations. Nor does it have any need for darkness, in which it is commonly easier for one to feel uncanny” (234). The point being that while anxiety may be an exemplary figuration of the uncanny, the uncanny nonetheless forms a subtle atmosphere of disquiet in our everyday existence, from time to time flaring up as an ecstatic realization that leads to action and at other times paralysing us into inaction.

The vital lesson to be taken from this analysis is the idea that uncanniness is not a subjective state produced by intra-psychic conflict, as we would find in Freud. Such a reading would render the uncanny a contingent dimension of subjectivity reducible to a predefined theoretical construct (be it the castration complex, the Oedipus complex, or any other

Freudian conception). Heidegger's formulation of the uncanny is more pervasive in scope, forming a primordial and "always latent" undercurrent of everyday existence, which is the very condition of there being a sense of at-homeness in the first instance (234). Such a concept is, as we will see, pivotal in terms of providing an account of how being at-home is subject at all times to disintegration.

To what extent is there a relation between Heidegger and Freud on the uncanny? The question is an area of contested research (cf. Krell 1992, 1997; Withy 2015). David Farrell Krell maintains that, while it is unlikely that Heidegger would have read Freud, there is nonetheless a strong connection between the role Freud assigns to the motifs of return and repression to those of Heidegger's notions of concealment and unconcealment (Krell 1997). In this respect, Krell posits that "Heidegger's thought of self-concealing being as enigma, mystery, and secret *needs* the thought of repression" (Krell 1997, 116). Krell's interpretation is informed by a specific sort of reading of the relation between Heidegger and Freud, which is in large Derridean in spirit. Indeed, Derrida himself, with his influential concept of *hauntology*, insists on a close pairing of Freud and Heidegger, writing that "[t]hey do not know each other, but according to me they form a couple, and in fact just because of that, this singular anachrony. They are bound to each other without reading each other, and without corresponding..." (Derrida 1987, 191). For both Derrida and Krell, it is the *unheimlich* that draws Freud and Heidegger onto the same stage, assuming—to use language of emblematic of this sort of reading—a spectral trace that haunts each figure in turn (cf. Royle 2003).

Merleau-Ponty and the Uncanny

As we have seen in Heidegger, subjective states such as anxiety render the world uncanny, transforming everyday experience into a site of estrangement. Viewed in this respect, Heidegger's employment of anxiety is methodological in orientation insofar as it seeks to bring the uncanniness of the world into relief. Yet thematizing the uncanniness of the world is not peculiar to moments of rupture; rather, it is tacit within the phenomenological methodology from the outset. Consider here one of the basic tenets of the phenomenological approach; namely, the epoché. In whatever variation it assumes, phenomenology proceeds from the broad point of departure that we put to one side our taken-for-granted

presuppositions concerning our perception of the world. From a phenomenological perspective, the world is not something I construct in abstraction in order for me to get situated within it; rather, the world emerges as a unitary field of meaning long before it has become an object of theoretical reflection. Moreover, the world is given to me in and through a level of affective intentionality that shapes how I experience and interpret the world in the first instance. Through habitual experience, a level of familiarity is founded that engenders an implicit trust in the world. While anxiety and other related affective states can undermine this tacit trust, thermalizing the uncanny structure of being-in-the-world need not be pathological in orientation. One such non-pathological rupture is the phenomenological method itself, which involves a gesture of attending to the natural world in an unnatural manner.

Nowhere is this attention to the uncanny singularity of things clearer than in the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty. From his early essays on Cézanne's aesthetics to his late work on the archaeology of the body, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is marked by a commitment to suspending "habits of thought" in order to "reveal the base of inhuman nature upon which man has installed himself" (cited in Johnson 1993, 66). It is for this reason, that he will conduct a phenomenological study of the world, "as if viewed by a creature of another species" (66). One consequence of this mode of phenomenology is that Merleau-Ponty's work is attuned to the ways in which meaning is fundamentally ambiguous, revealing and concealing itself in a plurality of ways, and always exceeding the horizon of human experience. Such a task is one that runs the risk of defamiliarizing the familiar patterns of thought and experience that all too often lead to a sedimented perception of the world. Thus, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty will ask that we consider objects in the world in separation from human perception. Under such conditions, the familiar way in which we apprehend objects gives way to a "non-human element which lies hidden" in things, and which is "unaware of us" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 336). Far from affectively neutral, this movement of defamiliarizing the everyday world carries with it a recognition of how things are no longer receptive to human habit, but instead "hostile and alien, no longer an interlocutor, but a resolutely silent Other" (336). Likewise, in the case of attending to the paintings of Cézanne, for whom Merleau-Ponty regards as embodying a "feeling of strangeness," we are presented with a world that is "unfamiliar [and] in which one is uncomfortable and which forbids all human effusiveness" (Merleau-Ponty 1993, 66). This

theme of estrangement from the familiar world is one that runs throughout Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. But it is especially, as we will see in the following section, in his elaborations on the body that this theme becomes most expressive, and, moreover, which has proved highly influential within contemporary research.

Uncanny Bodies

Whereas Freud gives much attention to how the dead body can produce the sensation of the uncanny, both he and Heidegger have very little to say on the relation between the living body and the uncanny. Perhaps the most fertile area of research where this oversight has been addressed is in applied phenomenology, especially in the area of research covered under the medical humanities framework (cf. Burwood 2008; Leder 1990; Svenaeus 2000; Trigg 2016; Zaner 1981). Much of the contemporary research on the phenomenology of the uncanny body takes its cue from Freud's account of the relation between repression and the uncanny, together with Heidegger's focus on uncanniness as a variant of anxiety, and, above all, Merleau-Ponty's rich elaborations of the ambiguity of the body in its order and disordered state.

Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the body takes as its point of departure the view that the body is not one thing among many, but instead a special sort of entity, which is both an irreducible site of subjective meaning but also a discernible object in the world. This ambiguous structure is not exhausted in the distinction between the subjective and objective dimensions of the body. More than this, Merleau-Ponty will also speak of the body in terms of a thing that transcends me, and to this extent, remains resistant to any such attempt at "personalizing" it. His language is telling, speaking of an "impersonal existence [that] appears around our personal existence," and likewise noting that if "I wanted to express perceptual experience with precision, I would have to say that *one* perceives in me, and not that I perceive" (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 86/223).

There is much more to say here on how Merleau-Ponty's concept of the prepersonal or impersonal body raises questions over to what extent we "own" our bodies and whether this question of ownership reframes the integrity of identity, but for now let us simply note that with this anonymous level of bodily existence, we depart from the notion of the body as strictly "one's own." The body that forms a subtheme in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is

irreducible to one's own lived experience ("I never have an absolute possession of myself by myself" [250]) and also non-identical with myself ("He who sees and touches is not exactly myself" [224]). While Merleau-Ponty locates with precision the divergent structures of bodily existence, his philosophy is marked from the outset by an implicit confidence that these levels converge into a unified arc. The implication of this is that very little attention is given to our affective relationship to the impersonal dimensions of the body, a blindspot that I responded to elsewhere but which is necessary to raise presently (cf. Trigg 2014; 2016).

For the most part, our bodily existence unfolds in the world in a seamless fashion, affording us a continuity that is both spatial and temporal in structure. The same is also true of our intersubjective relations. Other people's bodies are not chunks of matter populating space in the way plant pots are; rather, in and through our own bodily existence, we enter into a tacit pact with other people stipulated on the expressivity of the body. Yet in certain moments, this pre-given arc of meaning is called into question. In episodes of illness, fatigue, pain, disease, injury, ageing, anxiety, the body can appear for us as something distant and "thinglike," betraying the identity we have constructed around the idea of the body as being irreducibly *mine*. Under such conditions, we can have an experience of the body as separated from our sense of self. Think here of how illness affords us the sense of a body that is running away from us, now assuming a course of life that is in some sense opposed to the "I" that is now left to make sense of a new world. For that matter, think also of heightened forms of anxiety, where the body generates the impression of acting of its own accord, displaying a series of symptoms that have no rational place within a given context. Think, finally, of how our relationship with other people is never neutral, but always laden with an affective structure, such that other people can render us "at home" with ourselves, or otherwise put us ill-at-ease through being subject to an objectifying gaze (cf. Trigg 2013). It is for this reason that in such moments we can speak of the body as an "it," which has its own nature and rhythms, each of which must be accommodated in turn. It is visible to others, in such a way that it can be treated as piece of flesh, animate or otherwise. It lives, and importantly, it does so in spite of me. It is impersonal, and may at times contest the life I give it through my own history, memories, and experiences. It is the bearer of a past—whether traumatic or nostalgic in scope—that is not immediately accessible to me even though that past may play a formative part in my identity. It remains the same for each of us, a set of discrete organs, which predates

personal existence and will proceed to outlive that existence. Other generations will be born into a body that belongs as much to a prehistory as it does the contingent circumstances of their personal existence.

To phrase the body as an “it” that is separate from the “I” seems to suggest a form of dualism that is contrary to the orientation of phenomenology. After all, if the body resists my possession, declaring its autonomy in moments of vulnerability, then to what extent am I truly identifiable with my body? Do the experiences described above attest to a form of substance dualism? The answer is clearly no. What is at stake is not the ontological separation of body and self, but instead the *experience* of division, as Merleau-Ponty remarks, “[in] the cases of disintegration, the soul and the body are apparently distinct; and this is the truth of dualism” (Merleau-Ponty 1965, 209). Indeed, it is precisely because we begin with the sense of the body as inextricably *mine*—ostensibly, the most homely of all things—that its departure from us leads to a feeling of uncanniness (cf. Burwood 2008; Trigg 2016). In a word, if we remain strangers to ourselves, then it is only because we are fused with a bodily existence that is non-possessable while also being the source of self-identification.

In the field of medical humanities, Merleau-Ponty’s account of the ambiguity of the body has been reconfigured under the term “body uncanny” (Burwood 2008; Leder 1990; Svenaeus 2000; Zaner 1981). Historically, the notion of the “body uncanny” has its roots in the work of Richard Zaner. Given the pivotal—and, arguably, overlooked—status Zaner assumes in this field, it is worth providing a brief overview of his contribution to current debates in the phenomenology of the body and medical humanities, especially in his *The Context of Self* (Zaner 1981). Zaner highlights a series of modalities structuring the body uncanny. The first dimension is that of the body’s inescapability (Zaner 1981, 50). As Merleau-Ponty posited, being a subject means being limited and delimited by our bodies. What does this mean? It means that our existence as subjects is always already given to the world in a corporeal form. To transcend the body would mean to divest ourselves of what it is to be human. Being a subject means being bodily, and, more specifically, rendering the impersonality of the body “one’s own” (51).

This inescapable dimension has an important implication: namely, as much as my sense of self is tied up with my body, there is a joint sense in which the body “implicates” me, as

Zaner writes, “If there is a sense in which my own-body is ‘intimately mine,’ there is, furthermore, an equally decisive sense in which *I belong to it*—in which I am at its disposal or mercy, if you will” (52). This double-sided structure of being inextricably bound to the body while at the same time being at the mercy of it generates an affective structure, which Zaner frames as “the chill” (52). By this, Zaner suggests an affective recognition centred on the dissonance between being unable to escape my body while simultaneously being implicated by its materiality, Zaner reflects, “Inescapable, my embodiment is as well dreadfully and chillingly implicative” (53).

Zaner’s reflections articulate the tensions within the uncanny. Far from becoming wholly alien or remote, the body that appears for us in the uncanny is such only insofar as it draws together a constellation of divergent elements—personal and impersonal, possessable and non-possessable, contemporary and immemorial—inhabiting a body that is both mine and not mine concurrently (cf. Trigg 2014, 2016, 2017). In this respect, my affective relationship to the body as uncanny is predicated on an ambiguous interplay, in which the body is both irreducibly familiar—an expressive centre of personal gestures, memories, habits, skills, etc.—while simultaneously being that which is the most unfamiliar to me, a nexus of anonymous processes and impersonal structures over which I have no control.

This joint sense of the body as familiar and unfamiliar, homely and unhomely generates an affective register that reinstates both Heidegger and Freud’s claim that anxiety is central to the uncanny. But what is at stake in this anxiety? As Freud noted, not every anxiety is uncanny. What is peculiar to uncanny anxiety—as opposed to, say, generalised anxiety—is a strange confluence of familiar and unfamiliar attributes converging in the same localised space; namely, the body. In well-being and health, this disquiet is largely absent. Integrated and unified, the everyday body not only puts us at-home in the world through allowing us to get directionally and existentially placed in the world, but also serves as a fulcrum of familiarity, such that, to paraphrase Bachelard, we carry home with us (Bachelard 2014). In turn, the fundamental role the body plays in generating a sense of well-being, familiarity, identity, and, above all, home is also why its dislocations and ruptures can just as easily render us not-at-home. To think in this respect of the articulations of bodily uncanniness—illness, anxiety, ageing—is to conceive of a body that returns to us reformed, or rather *de-formed*, from how we ostensibly take the body to be. It is for this reason that the

affective register of the uncanny is not horror or panic, but an eerie sense that the integrity of selfhood—insofar as selfhood is stipulated on the concept of the body as *one's own*—is vulnerable at all times to disintegration.

Conclusion

Contemporary research on the uncanny body has gone in several directions, informed not only by phenomenology but also by feminist theory (Kokoli 2016), critical theory (Macey 2001), and race theory (Ricatti 2013). While philosophers such as Drew Leder (Leder 1990) have drawn upon Merleau-Ponty and Zaner to develop an enriched understand of the body in its plenitude, other thinkers such as Fredrik Svenaeus, also influence by Merleau-Ponty and Zaner, have employed the notion of the uncanny to understand specific modes of bodily existence, not least illness (Svenaeus 2000) and anorexia (Svenaeus 2013). For my own part, the concept of the uncanny has been instrumental in developing a richer account of pathological states such as agoraphobia (Trigg 2016), but also aesthetic experiences (Trigg 2014), in addition to more ambiguous states such as nostalgia (Trigg 2012). In each case, the concept of the uncanny is helpful in delineating the fundamental ways in which our being-in-the-world is underpinned at all times by a homelessness that, far from contingent, provides the grounds upon which a sense of being at-home is founded, finding thematic expression, above all, in the lived and living body.

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