THE UNCANNY IN HELEN OYEYEMI'S *THE ICARUS GIRL* AND *WHITE IS FOR WITCHING*

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PLAGIARISM

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ABSTRACT

Freud in his prominent 1919 essay “The Uncanny” thoroughly explores the uncanny phenomenon and it’s manifestations in real life events as well as in works of fiction. This eerie experience is created by the commingling of the familiar and the unfamiliar and it can present itself in a variety of ways ranging from haunted houses, ghosts and dismembered limbs to in-betweenness and otherness. As a result of the occurence of an uncanny incident, the onlooker undergoes feelings of unease, fear and terror. This thesis aims to explore the uncanny events depicted in Helen Oyeyemi’s *the Icarus Girl* and *White is for Witching*, as they contain many components which are associated with the uncanny. The novels will be examined extensively through the lens of Freud and his predecessor Jentsch’s theories as well as Kristeva and Homi Bhabha’s postcolonial and cultural perspective. The thesis will focus on the otherworldly elements portrayed in the novel such as inanimate sentient characters, ghosts and doubles. Subsequently, the traces of post-colonialism and Oyeyemi’s critique of Birtish nationalism will be commented on in light of the uncanny theory. This large-scale research will inspect all examples of the uncanny in these two novels, without merely focusing on one aspect of the phenomenon along with linking real life events with the events of the novels.

Key words: the uncanny, Freud, post-colonialism, Helen Oyeyemi, nationalism

ÖZET

Freud, 1919 yılında kaleme aldığı ünlü "Tekinsizlik" makalesinde, tekinsizlik olgusunu ve bu olgunun gerçek hayatta ve edebi eserlerde nasıl ortaya çıktığını detaylı bir biçimde inceler. Bu tuhaf deneyim, bize tanıdık gelen ve yabancı olduğumuz olayların bir araya gelmesiyle oluşur ve kendini birçok farklı yolla belli edebilir. Perili evlerden, hayaletlere, vücuttan bağımsız uzuvlardan arafa ve ötekileşmeye kadar uzayabilir. Tekinsiz olayın ortaya çıkmasıyla birlikte, buna maruz kalan kişide tedirginlik, korku ve dehşet duyguları belirir. Bu tezin amacı, Helen Oyeyemi'nin *Ikarus Kız* ve *White is for Witching* romanlarında sıkça tasvir edilen tekinsiz olguları araştırmak. Romanlar, Freud'un ve ondan önce gelen Jentsch'in bakış açısından kapsamlı bir şekilde incelenirken aynı zamanda Kristeva ve Homi Bhabha'nın post-kolonyal ve kültürel perspektifinden de yararlanılacak. Tez, hisleri ve duyuları olan cansız nesneler, hayaletler ve görsel ikiz anlanıma gelen "doppelganger"lar gibi gerçeküstü öğelere odaklanacak. Sonrasında, tekinsizlik teorisi göz önünde bulundurularak post-kolonyalizm ve Oyeyemi'nin İngiliz milliyetçiliğine getirdiği eleştiri üzerine yorum yapılacak. Bu geniş çaplı araştırma, Oyeyemi'nin romanlarında, sadece bir tekinsiz olguya bağlı kalmadan, tekinsizlik olgusunun her bir örneğini inceleyecek. Bunların yanı sıra romanda geçen olayların gerçek olaylarla bağlantısını kuracak.

Anahtar kelimeler: tekinsizlik, Freud, post-kolonyalizm, Helen Oyeyemi, milliyetçilik

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study will explore the prominent concept of the uncanny in the books by the British author Helen Oyeyemi, who immigrated to the UK at the age of 4 from Nigeria. Oyeyemi was perceived as a prodigy by many critics when she wrote her first novel *the Icarus Girl* (2005) at the age of just eighteen while she was an undergraduate student at Cambridge University. Following her debut novel, she published other works such as *White is for Witching* (2009), *Mr. Fox* (2011) and most recently, *Peaces* (2020). Her novels often blend themes of racial conflict and immigration with supernatural elements. Moreover, Oyeyemi is greatly influenced by fairy tales and some of her works can be interpreted as fairy tale retellings. Her 2013 novel *Boy, Snow, Bird,* for instance, is inspired by Snow White while her 2019 novel *Gingerbread* is a retelling of Hansel and Gretel. This study, however, will solely focus on two of her novels; *White is for Witching* and *the Icarus Girl*. These texts delve into eerie phenomena such as dopplegangers, haunted houses, ghosts and the myth of vampires across different cultures to narrate strange events that have a hint of ambivalence regarding what is real and what isn't. Before a detailed discussion of these books, we will first look into the phrase "the uncanny." The term "uncanny" refers to a phenomenon in which something well-known and familiar appears in a strange and unfamiliar form. The distorted and alien appearance of this previously known object, person or event causes one to feel uneasy and frightened and, as a result, the feeling of the uncanny is produced. Therefore, the occurence of the uncanny stems from the disturbance of the familiar. One of the most important aspects of the uncanny is that the uncanny sensation does not simply arrive with the perception of something foreign, it appears when the familiar and the unfamiliar

coexist. As Nicholas Royle (2003) makes clear, "it is a peculiar commingling of the familiar and unfamiliar. It can take the form of something familiar unexpectedly arising in a strange and unfamiliar context, or of something strange and unfamiliar unexpectedly arising in familiar context." (p. 1) When we observe the etymology of the German word "unheimlich", we perceive that it derives from the word "heimlich", which translates to "homely, belonging to the house." "Unheimlich", on the other hand, negates heimlich and transforms it into "unfamiliar, eerie." Its English equivalent, "the uncanny," also derives from its antonym "the canny" which comes from the Anglo-Saxon root "ken". The word "ken" means "knowledge, understanding." (Dictionary.com, n.d.) As the uncanny is the opposite of the canny, it means "mysterious, uncomfortably strange." (Dictionary.com, n.d.) Having thus discussed the origins of the word "unheimlich" and uncanny, we can now focus on the examples of the uncanny phenomenon.

The uncanny experience can often be seen in works of fiction such as literature, films and TV shows as well as in real life events. There are a wide variety of different incidents that can cause a person to feel uncanniness. A haunted house could be shown as an example of the uncanny effect produced in literature. The house is a place which should be the most familiar and native territory for people. If this well-known space is haunted by a mysterious unknown source, however, the feeling of the uncanny may be observed. Another example of the uncanny is inanimate objects such as robots or mannequins which have the form of a human but are actually insentient beings, or the opposite, animate beings who are not actually alive. With regards to this particular aspect of the uncanny experience, there are opposing approaches by Freud and Jentsch. In his essay on the topic, Jentsch argues that the intellectual uncertainty about a person's or a object's state of being can produce uncanniness. On the other

hand, Freud disagrees with Jentsch's argument and plays down the uncanny effect produced by this singular phenomenon, which will be discussed further in detail. To continue, the dread of the evil eye or the belief that our thoughts can have an actual effect on the outer world are also considered to be uncanny. Other uncanny elements include odd coincidences, the belief that something was "meant to be" or was "fated" and the strange repetitions of an event, a person or a number. Additionally, the idea of the double or, in other words, "the doppelganger," cannibalism, the fear of being buried alive and telepathy could also be presented as sources of the uncanny. Observing in someone else the manifestations of madness, sleepwalking and epilepsy can also generate uncanniness in an observer because they reveal the mechanical workings of the human body. In-between spaces such as the limbo where one is neither dead or alive could likewise be presented as an example of the uncanny. More generally, then, the uncanny is concerned with limits and boundaries and "it disturbs any straightforward sense of what is inside and what is outside." (Royle, 2003, p. 2)

The uncanny effect always appears with a hint of the supernatural, however the supernatural is not the direct equivalent of the uncanny. Instead the uncanny is, "suggestive of - 'associated with', or 'seeming' to have a basis in - the supernatural." (Royle, 2003, p. 10) The uncanny is also closely related with an occurence which should have been kept a secret and hidden but has come to the surface. (Royle, 2003) The first usage of the word uncanny with supernatural implications can be seen in Robert Fergusson's *Poems* in 1773. (Royle, 2003) Fergusson (1773) wrote, "But he wou'd some auld warld name for't find/ As gart him keep it freshly in his mind/ For this some ca'd him an uncanny wight." (p. 95-6) The person is described as an "uncanny wight" for being able to find an old name for a star which can strangely

remain fresh and new. From this point forward, the uncanny as a word obtained unearthly connotations.

For numerous years, the topic of the uncanny has been vigorously researched and studied by many critics from a vast variety of fields. One of the most famous examples of research on this particular topic is Sigmund Freud's 1919 essay "the 'Uncanny.'" In his essay, Freud details the examples of the uncanny and analyzes the roots and the causes of it by using psychoanalysis as well as examining the meaning of the words "canny" and "uncanny" in different languages to explore this phenomenon. Moreover, he argues against his predecessor Ernst Jentsch, who also wrote on the topic of the uncanny and claimed that the experience of the uncanny is caused by the uncertainty of whether a living person is actually alive or whether an inanimate object is genuinely lifeless.

Furthermore, another critic who studies the uncanny is Homi Bhabha. Firstly, he explores the concepts of migration, the uncanny and otherness in relation to the formation of the modern nation state in his 1990 essay "Nation and Narration." He argues that the image of the modern nation is created by the essentialist narrative which disregards the true complexity and diversity of the people who inhabit the state. Henceforth, Bhabha further examines the uncanny in this context and uses the term "unhomely", which is the direct translation of the German word unheimlich, to refer to a sense of ambiguity regarding where the home begins and the world starts in his 1992 essay "the World and the Home." Bhabha argues that the feeling of unhomeliness and disorientation occurs when people see the reflections of the world in their homes or, the exact opposite, when they see their home in the outside world and claims that this in-between space is a post-colonial territory. Similarly to Bhabha,

Julia Kristeva also explores the concept of the uncanny. Kristeva claims in her book *Strangers to Ourselves,* which was published in 1988, that the development of national states shaped our modern understanding of the foreigner as a person who is not a citizen of a certain nation. Furthermore, she argues that this new notion of "the other" is discerned as a threat to the uniformity of a nation and that it unsettles the rigid and definitive distinctions between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Kristeva associates the prejudice against foreigners with the manifestation of the uncanny and suggests that we all have to learn to live with "the other" within ourselves in order to coexist peacefully with other people from different backgrounds.

In light of these different approaches to the uncanny, this thesis will examine the novels *White is for Witching* and *The Icarus Girl* by Oyeyemi, as we already mentioned previously. Both of these texts arguably deal with and employ the elements of the uncanny such as doppelgangers, haunted houses and inanimate objects given life. In *the Icarus Girl,* we encounter the 8 year old Jess Harrison, who is not only bullied for her otherness as the daughter of a Nigerian immigrant but also terrorized by the mysterious TillyTilly figure, who is her doppelganger. In *White is for Witching,* on the other hand, we meet Miranda Silver who suffers from an eating disorder named pica. The story involves elements of vampirism, cannibalism and Carribean folktales as well as xenophobia and post-colonialism in the UK. Oyeyemi's work and its connection to the uncanny has intrigued critics and has been an important subject of research for some time. For example, Aspasia Stephanou examines the myth of vampires in *White is for Witching,* and how the novel brings together the European vampires with the Carribean soucouyant in order to make a commentary on British nationalism. (Stephanou, 2014) Sarah Kent likewise explores the uncanny in the same novel and connects it with the post-colonial perspective. (Kent, 2016) By the same

token Jessica Porter analyzes the supernatural elements and hybridity in *White is for Witching*. (2012) In her article, Diana Adesola Mafe examines the uncanny in *the Icarus Girl* in terms of the mofit of the bush which can be observed in Yoruba Literature. (Mafe, 2012) Similarly, Kim Anderson Sasser (2014) examines the theme of belonging and how Oyeyemi uses magical realism "as a means of strategizing belonging, or constructing narrative arguments about how senses of belonging are (not) and should (not) be derived." (p. 181) Satkunananthan, on the other hand, looks into *White is for Witching* and *the Opposite House* by Oyeyemi in terms of doubles and liminal spaces. (2018) Another research project has been conducted by Brenda Cooper who examined Oyeyemi's *the Opposite House* with reference to themes such as in-betweenness and the uncertainty between the real and the mythical. She also finds a deep connection between Oyeyemi and the protagonist of the novel, Maja. She is described as "a young woman, who was taken from her birth country when she was very young and grew up in London. Like Oyeyemi, this distances Maja from her parents, whose formative years were in another place – Cuba." (Cooper, 2009, p. 111) Being a foreigner to one's own country is a theme that Oyeyemi regularly employs, as she herself experienced the same circumstances. As regards to her own ambivalent identity, Oyeyemi states,

> As a Nigerian brought up in Britain, I admit that when it comes to Africa, I just don't get it. I can examine modern Africa for hours, years, my whole life; *saw open my head and cram it* with rolls of statistics, death rates, birth rates, gross national products, and still don't know where it is that I come from, what my country's problems are and have been, and how they can be resolved. (Cooper, 2009, p. 109)

Due to Oyeyemi's background as a Nigerian woman who grew up in London, she masterfully discusses the uncanniness of the state of feeling like she belongs to neither one country nor another. Moreover, not only do Oyeyemi's novels explore uncanniness through the lens of the post-colonial perspective, but they also successfully blend this experience with a rich range of otherworldly elements. Oyeyemi's novels explore the uncanny phenomenon in all its multi-faceted actuality, which is why her works will be discussed in great detail in this thesis. Subsequently, this research differs from the previously mentioned articles in several ways. It investigates all manifestations of the uncanny in the two novels and does not solely focus on one uncanny aspect, which makes it more extensive. While the previous research into Oyeyemi's novels predominantly focuses on themes such as post-colonialism and British nationalism, this study will additionally explore supernatural uncanny elements that does not have a connection with the post-colonial perspective. For example, during the discussion on *White is for Witching,* the theme of being buried alive and the sentient inanimate objects will be analyzed in detail. Another aspect which makes this study unique is the way in which it presents real life events that mirror the events from the novel and form a connection between them. Additionally, these two particular novels has not been investigated with the four critics mentioned above in the same research, which is another feature that sets this thesis apart from the other investigations.

To elaborate more on Oyeyemi's background as the daughter of Nigerian immigrants, we can observe the direct parallels between her experiences of being part of a minority in London and those of her characters, especially Jess Harrison from *the Icarus Girl,* which the study will analyze thoroughly in the following paragraphs. Oyeyemi's upbringing is described as follows;

> A South London girl who had emigrated from Nigeria at the age of 4, she was inward-keeping, sometimes bullied, often desperately sad. As a teen, she endured bouts of clinical depression that she countered with books from the library, episodes of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and, eventually, writing. (Shaw, 2021, para.1)

Therefore it is possible to see striking similarities between Oyeyemi and Jess Harrison, just like Maja from *the Opposite House*. In fact, her own experiences are so similar to those of her character that Oyeyemi would not even let her parents read her novel until after it was published. (Shaw, 2021) We can also observe how Oyeyemi's own experiences as "the other" influenced her approach to the uncanny phenomenon. Shaw points out how Oyeyemi didn't feel like she belonged in London and that "She wanted to live in a city that wanted her back. So she moved and moved, all through her 20s." (Shaw, 2021, para. 10) Not only did Oyeyemi migrate to the UK when she was a child, but throughout her 20s, she lived in different countries until she moved to Prague where she still resides today. Consequently, Oyeyemi's perspective on the uncanny and immigration as well as the way she weaves otherness with fairy tales and supernatural elements makes her unique. However, before analyzing these novels in terms of the uncanny, the theoretical approaches to the topic by the previously mentioned critics will be discusssed in detail.

Firstly, in chapter 2, the different ways the previously mentioned critics interpret the phenomenon of the uncanny will be touched upon. Jentsch's theory of the uncanny will be explained first, followed by Freud's analysis of the same topic. Subsequently, Bhabha's and Kristeva's views of the uncanny will be reviewed.

Following this, in chapters 3 and 4, the analysis of the novels will take place and the ways in which the uncanny can be observed in them will be explored. Finally, in the conclusion chapter, the results of the study will be presented and the possibilities for future research will be considered.

CHAPTER 2: THEORY

Freud's predecessor, Ernst Jentsch, is one of the critics who analyzed the phenomenon of the uncanny by publishing an essay on the topic in 1906. It is possible to see Freud referencing and addressing this text multiple times in his own study on the uncanny in the following years. Jentsch argues that the term uncanny is associated with not being well-adjusted and familiar with one's surroundings and with the feeling of uneasiness. (Jentsch, 1906) Something that is familiar and well-known to a person would not produce an uneasy effect however, something that is unfamiliar and new could cause a person to feel discomfort and even animosity. (Jentsch, 1906) Jentsch (1906) asserts, "the word suggests that a *lack of orientation* is bound up with the impression of the uncanniness of a thing or incident." (p. 2) Later on, Jentsch argues that it is difficult to detect the origin of the uncanny due to the fact that the effect produced by it is subjective and varies between different people. An uncanny incident may also not produce the same reaction from someone every time and these factors make it challenging to give an exhaustive definition of the concept. (Jentsch, 1906)

Instead of defining the uncanny, Jentsch (1906) argues that one should "investigate how the affective excitement of the uncanny arises in psychological terms, how the psychical conditions must be constituted so that the 'uncanny' sensation emerges." (p. 3) Jentsch (1906) continues with the argument that the animosity towards a previously unknown incident arises from the struggle to establish "the intellectual mastery of a new thing." (p. 4) Therefore, if there is more struggle to comprehend a thing or an event, there will be more hostility towards that new experience. (Jentsch, 1906) If an incident is familiar and well-known, such as the rising of the sun in the morning, we do not perceive it with uncertainty or

disorientation. When something is self-evident, no matter how extraordinary the situation is, we identify it as normal because it has always been an ordinary part of our lives. (Jentsch, 1906) However, if one were to look at this well-established incident from a different angle, such as noticing that this incident is caused by the motion of the earth and not the sun itself, one can feel confused and perplexed. (Jentsch, 1906) Thus, it is possible to feel uneasiness and disorientation about commonplace circumstances if we regard them from a new perspective.

In the second part of his essay, Jentsch gives a detailed list of all the psychical ambiguities that can generate the feeling of uncanniness. Jentsch (1906) demonstrates one which he thinks appears quite regularly and powerfully and describes it as the "doubt as to whether an apparently living being really is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate." (p. 8) He gives the example of seeing a motionless and solid tree trunk suddenly move and reveal itself to actually be a snake. (Jentsch, 1906) The trunk, at first sights appears to be lifeless however, the sudden movement of the snake causes the observer to feel frightened due to the initial bafflement that the person faced when confronted with this unforeseen movement. As a result, the observer experiences the uncanny feeling. Jentsch (1906) defines this phenomenon with the words,

> The mass that at first seemed completely lifeless suddenly reveals an inherent energy because of its movement. This energy can have a psychical or a mechanical origin. As long as the doubt as to the nature of the perceived movement lasts, and with it the obscurity of its cause, a feeling of terror persists in the person concerned. (p. 8)

Once a person has overcome the uncertainty, they start to feel concern for their lives and the intellectual mastery of the situation is complete. (Jentsch, 1906) Moreover, the same sensation of the uncanny can occur when an object only appears to be alive but is in fact a machine or an inanimate object. To describe this circumstance, Jentsch offers the example of a steamboat which, despite being a machine, can have self-governing movement and a noise similar to that of the human breath. The steamboat or any other object similar to it can give the false impression of being alive and the confusing nature of the situation can cause the uncanny effect to present itself. (Jentsch, 1906) According to Jentsch, when the first confusion evaporates, and the true nature of the situation is revealed to the observer, the feeling of fright and terror vanishes alongside the doubt. In consequence, the uncanny phenomenon can only exist as long as the ambiguity remains.

Jentsch (1906) continues by giving examples of specific objects and places which create disturbance and uneasiness such as "collections of wax figures, panopticons and panoramas." (p. 9) In dark or dimly lit environments, it is exceedingly difficult to differentiate between a human being and a life-size wax figure and what's more, even after ascertaining whether the enigmatic figure is a person or a wax figure, the feeling of uncanniness can still continue to persist, despite Jentsch's previous statement about how intellectual mastery results in the eradication of uncanniness. (Jentsch, 1906) Moreover, if the automaton or the wax figure strongly resembles the human body, it would be possible to see a prominent increase in the uncanny effect. (Jentsch, 1906) He claims that it is unnecessary for an artificial figure to mirror an animate being so precisely and that if it does, it creates an uneasiness which can intensify even further if the automaton is combined with physical and mental functions. (Jentsch, 1906) In this context, Jentsch (1906) claims that, "the finer the mechanism and truer to nature the

formal reproduction, the more strongly will the special effect also make its appearance." (p. 10) More research conducted in recents years also supports the effect of this uncanny phenomenon. One of the most prominent terms in relation to this topic is "the Uncanny Valley." The term was coined by Masahiro Mori in 1970, who noted that;

> as human-likeness of robots increased, familiarity ratings by observers also increased. However, this positive correlation inverted just when the robots reached a degree of realism that they gave an almost, but not perfectly, human-like appearance - familiarity was rated exceptionally negative by the observers. (Wong, 2017, p. 2)

Mori's research demonstrated an abrupt decline into negative emotions when the robots resembled human beings in an almost perfect way. (Wong, 2017) Consequently, this downturned trajectory in the graph was named the uncanny valley. The effect was not only seen in robots but also in zombies, prosthetic hands and corpses. (Wong, 2017) From this research, we can discern that the more an inanimate being resembles a human being, the less familiar they become to the observer.

In his original essay, Mori elaborates on the uncanny effect produced by the prosthetic hand further. He (2012) argues that while the realistic prosthetic hand has become familiar to us over the years, it's "limp and boneless grip together with it's texture and coldness" creates the uncanny effect. (para. 7) Additionally, the movements of a robot or a prosthetic body part also significantly increases it's the uncanny effect. Mori points out that motion is an essential part of being human and that the autonomous movements of a robot or a body part can heighten the negative effect in an observer. (Mori, 2012) He (2012) states, "when a prosthetic hand that is

near the bottom of the uncanny valley starts to move, our sensation of eeriness intensifies. (para. 10) Consequently, it is possible to see a strong parallel between Mori's uncanny valley and Jentsch's theory of the uncanny, as both of them claim that when an artificial being starts to resemble humans too strongly with it's appearance and movements, it causes terror and unease in a spectator.

Subsequently, Jentsch examines how the uncanny effect is produced in literature. A storyteller can produce uneasiness in the reader by leaving them in doubt about a character's true nature so that the reader cannot immediately understand whether the character is animate or not. In order for that impression to last, the reader must be perplexed and confused for as long as possible. This is due to the fact that once the reader understands the character's true nature, the feeling of uncanniness dissolves, even though there are evidently exceptions to this rule, which Jentsch hitherto made clear. (Jentsch, 1906) As an example of the usage of this literary device, he introduces E.T.A Hoffman's short story "the Sandman" in which the character named Olympia is revealed to the reader as an automaton. In addition, epilepsy is also described as a cause of the occurence of uncanniness. When an observer encounters an epileptic seizure, they can feel unease caused by seeing the mechanical workings of the human body, which they previously perceived as "meaningful, expedient and unitary, functioning according to the directions of his consciousness." (Jentsch, 1906, p. 14) Lastly, Jentsch explores the fear that comes with seeing a dead body, a skull or a skeleton. He argues that this anxiety and uncertainty derives from thinking that a lurking and hidden animate state is still present within the dead body or the skeleton. (Jentsch, 1906) We can likewise see traces of this in Kristeva's 1980 book *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, whose work will be discussed further in this study. Kristeva describes the abject as the response we give when we are confronted by a

sight in which all meaning dissipates. The boundaries between "I" and "the other" as well as the subject and the object becomes blurred upon this spectacle. (Kristeva, 1980) Kristeva further explains that the abject is not an object which we can define and name, nor it is entirely "the other." (Kristeva, 1980) She (1980) claims that "what is abject is not my correlative, which, providing me with someone or something else as support, would allow me to be more or less detached and autonomous." (p. 1) It is something that the supergo casts off however, while being excluded, the abject does not quit defying the superego. (Kristeva, 1980) As a result, " a massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either." (Kristeva, 1980, p. 2) As Kristeva makes clear by this statement, the reaction we give upon encountering the abject is usually a negative one, such as feeling nausea, vomiting or dread. Along the same lines, Creed (1986) defines the abject as "the place where I am not" and continues to argue that the abject "threatens life, it must be radically excluded from the place of the living subject, propelled away from the body and deposited on the other side of an imaginary border which separates the self from that which threatens the self." (p. 65) We can show bodily waste, filth, certain types of food (such as the thin layer on top of warm milk) as examples of the abject. (Kristeva, 1980) Strangely, we develop conflicting emotions of desire and repulsion from the abject as Pentony (1996) explains, "We are both drawn to and repelled by the abject; nausea is a biological recognition of it, and fear and adrenalin also acknowledge its presence." (para. 4) Significantly, Kristeva also lists corpses as an example of the abject. By observing this particular example, it is possible to draw parallels between the abject and Jentsch's discussion of the uncanniness of dead bodies. Kristeva explains that upon seeing a dead body, we are reminded of our own

mortality, a fact which we disregard on purpose to carry on with our lives. (Kristeva, 1980) Thereupon, we are confronted with our own limits as human beings. Moreover, consequent to death, "'I' is expelled" and the border ceases to exists. (Kristeva, 1980, p. 4) According to Kristeva (1980), perceiving one's self without borders and without any signification upon witnessing the sight of the dead body is "the utmost of abjection." (p. 4) It demonstrates that while we cast out death, we can never be separated from it completely. (Kristeva, 1980) Kristeva (1980) further states about the corpse, "Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us." (p. 4) Hence from both Kristeva's and Jentsch's theories, we can observe similar approaches to the uncanniness of the dead body.

To conclude, we can observe that Jentsch's theory revolves around the significance of intellectual uncertainty for the production of the uncanny effect. Having discussed the main arguments of Jentsch's essay, it is now possible to explore Freud's essay on the same topic.

Freud's study on the uncanny starts with his investigation of the boundaries between what is frightful and what can be classified as "the uncanny" within this type of frightful phenomenon. He is concerned with what makes the uncanny unique, setting it apart from other eerie events, people or objects, which can also have the potential to evoke fear in a person. He argues that the uncanny is "that class of terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar." (Freud, 1919, p. 1) Subsequently, as discussed further below, he starts to elaborate on this point by exploring the etymology of the concept in multiple different languages. He focuses on the German word "unheimlich" which translates to "the uncanny" in English and it's opposite "heimlich" which means "canny", "familiar" and "belonging

to the home." (Freud, 1919) As inviting as it is to deduce that the uncanny causes fear due to it's novelty and it's strangeness, Freud argues against this line of thinking by pointing out that not everything which is unknown to someone causes them to feel afraid. (Freud, 1919) Moreover, he indicates that "something has to be added to what is novel and unfamiliar to make it uncanny." (Freud, 1919, p. 1) On this point, he argues against Jentsch who, as discussed above, claims that the uncanny feeling derives from intellectual uncertainty, which is caused by a person's lack of orientation. (Freud, 1919)

He thus finds Jentsch's approach incomplete and, to expand on this topic, he starts his examination of the meanings of the uncanny in different languages such as Latin, Greek, French and Spanish. He observes that most of these languages do not have a specific word for the uncanny. (Freud, 1919) For example, in Greek "unheimlich" translates to "strange, foreign" whereas in French it translates to "worrying, sinister." (Freud, 1919) After this inquiry, Freud returns to the German language and lists the meanings of the word "heimlich." The first definition of heimlich that Freud (1919) presents is "belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, intimate, comfortable, homely." (p. 2) However, the meaning of heimlich suddenly changes into "concealed, kept from sight, so that others do not get to know about it, witheld from others." (Freud, 1919, p. 3) Following this observation, Freud continues to give the meanings of the contrasting word "unheimlich." Unheimlich is described as "uneasy, eerie, bloodcurdling" as well as "the name for everything that ought to have remained ... hidden and secret and has become visible." (Freud, 1919, p. 3)

From this, it is possible to observe that the meaning of the word "heimlich" becomes interchangeable with the word "unheimlich," which is it's complete opposite.

(Freud, 1919) As a result of this investigation, Freud (1919) deduces that unheimlich is "in some way or other a sub-species of *heimlich*." (p. 4) Consequently, it is perceptible that the integration of the uncanny and the canny is the prerequisite of the uncanny experience. In his lengthy study on the uncanny, Royle similarly examines the etymology of the term uncanny in the English language and comes to the same conclusion as Freud. He examines the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of "the canny" as an archaic Scots word and finds that it means "cunning, artful, wily" and "supernaturally wise, endowed with occult or magical power." (Royle, 2003, p. 10) Taking into account the fact that the uncanny is closely connected with supernatural occurences, it is possible to observe that the word "the canny" is identical with it's opposite "the uncanny" in the archaic past. Even today, when we look at the current definition of "the canny" according to *Chambers Dictionary*, we can see that it means, "gentle; innocent; good or nice" as well as "sly or pawky." (Royle, 2003, p. 11) So, the word "canny" has within itself contradictory meanings and the definition of "canny" still continues to overlap with the word "uncanny." As a result of this inquiry, Royle (2003) draws attention to the peculiar fact that "the similarities between English (or Scottish English) and German, regarding the ways in which 'uncanny' (*unheimlich)* haunts and is haunted by what is 'canny' (*heimlich),* are themselves perhaps uncanny." (p. 11)

In the second part of his essay, Freud describes in great detail the events, people, objects and situations which can conjure the feeling of uncanniness. He starts by briefly mentioning his predecessor Jentsch's theory of the uncanny and how he connects the uncanny with the uncertainty whether an animate being is alive or whether an inanimate object is lifeless. As we have discussed previously, Jentsch believes that "the impression made by wax-work figures, artificial dolls and

automatons" are capable of producing the uncanny effect. (Freud, 1919, p. 4) While not entirely agreeing with Jentsch, Freud starts his investigation by taking this approach into consideration and likewise analyzing Hoffman's story "The Sandman."

In the story, Olympia is a woman who has the appearance of a human being; however, it is later disclosed that she is actually a doll created by Professor Spalanzani and Coppola the optician, whom we will soon discuss in detail. (Hoffman, 1817) However, Freud (1919) argues against Jentsch's proposition and claims that Olympia is not "by any means the only element to be held responsible for the quite unparalleled atmosphere of uncaniness which the story evokes. (p. 5) It is his belief that the uncanniness of the story derives from the terrifying figure of the Sandman, who takes out children's eyes. Freud (1919) explains the uncanniness that comes with losing one's eyes with the words, "A study of dreams, phantasies and myths has taught us that a morbid anxiety connected with the eyes and with going blind is often enough a substitute for the dread of castration." (p. 7) It is his belief that the fear of losing one's eyes comes from childhood and that it is carried through to adulthood. (Freud, 1919) Freud claims that this childhood fear is caused by the castration complex and that the eyes and the male genitals have a substitutive relation. By the same token, the theme of losing one's eyes is prevalent throughout Hoffman's story.

The main character, Nathaniel, has been terrorized since his childhood by the mysterious figure of the Sandman, whom Nathaniel's mother use to scare her children into going to bed. Despite his mother telling him that the Sandman is not a real being but a fictitious one, his nurse gives him a detailed description of the Sandman and says, "he is a wicked man who comes when children won't go to bed, and throws handfuls of sand in their eyes so that they jump out of their heads all bleeding."

(Freud, 1919, p. 5) In the story, Nathaniel is convinced that the lawyer Coppelius, who visits Nathaniel's house frequently, is actually the Sandman. While eavesdropping on a conversation between his father and Coppelius, Nathaniel hears the lawyer proclaim, "Here with your eyes!" and screams out of fear. (Hoffman, 1816) Consequently, Coppelius catches him and attempts to drop hot coals from the flames into his eyes in order to tear out Nathaniel's eyes, however, he is stopped by the boy's father. In his adulthood, the figure of the Sandman reappears in his life as an optician named Coppola, who is also the creator of the doll Olympia's eyes. He is likewise responsible for Olympia's loss of her eyes, since he rips them out as the result of a fight with Professor Spalanzani.

After giving a detailed summary of the story, Freud argues that the source of the uncanniness comes from the Sandman and consequently, from the idea of losing one's eyes instead of from Olympia, as in Jentsch's theory of intellectual uncertainty. He explains that the story does not leave the reader in doubt about whether the Sandman is actually Coppelius and Coppola because it becomes apparent that the Sandman is both of these characters. (Freud, 1919) Therefore, we know for certain that the events which unfolded in the story are not the imagination of a madman but the actual truth.

Moreover, according to Freud, the doubt whether Olympia is animate or inanimate is not relevant in terms of the uncanny. However, Royle believes that Freud's argument agaist Jentsch's theory of intellectual uncertainty is flawed. Royle (2003) elaborates that Freud's interpretation of The Sandman, "is a violent attempt to reduce or eliminate the significance of Jentsch's work on the uncanny, and in particular the importance of the figures of the doll and automaton for an understanding of the uncanny." (p. 41) Royle (2003) continues by pointing out that

figures such as automatons are amply capable of generating uncanniness and argues that the undermining of Olympia's significance for the story stems from Freud's "violent attempt to reduce or eliminate the place and importance of women." (p. 41) As Todd (1986) makes clear, Freud attempts to overlook Olympia's important role in the creation of the uncanny effect because he "failed to see that the question of woman is inextricably connected to Nathaniel's fear of castration." (p. 523) While Freud discusses the castration complex in great detail and it's connection to the uncanny fear of losing one's eye, he does not mention what this fear signifies for women. Whether the loss of eyes only generate uncanniness for men and what his argument means for women is left unexplored. However, in the following years after the publication of "the 'Uncanny,'" Freud (1927) writes on the topic of women and the uncanny in "Fetishism" by stating that, "Probably no male human being is spared the fright of castration at the sight of a female genital." (p. 154) He continues by deeming this vision as an uncanny and traumatic sight. (Freud, 1927)

If we go back and observe Freud's (1919) previous statement about the uncanny in which he declares it as "that class of terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" (p. 1) we can argue that the castration has already been experienced. As Silverman (1988) points out, "if the spectacle of female castration strikes the male viewer as 'uncanny', he himself must already have experienced castration; far from functioning merely as an 'innocent' (albeit horrified) onlooker, he too inhabits the frame of the unpleasurable image." (p. 17) Consequently, it is possible to argue that women are firmly related with the uncanny phenomenon and that "at the heart of woman's otherness there remains something strangely familiar, something which impinges dangerously upon male subjectivity." (Silverman, 1988, p. 17) As a result, it could be suggested that the uncanny has a strong bond with

not only automatons or dolls, but also with women and that it is due to Freud's failure to take these associations into account that he undermines the importance of Olympia and the uncanny impact she leaves on Hoffman's story.

Other uncanny elements that derive from the castration complex are "dismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist, feet which dance by themselves." (Freud, 1919, p. 14) In addition, an uncanny element which Freud (1919) describes as "the most uncanny thing of all" is being buried alive. (p. 14) He explains the source of this horrifying concept with a phantasy which has been transformed into something different with time. At the beginning, this phantasy was not eerie but a much desired one. Freud (1919) names this as an "intra-uterine existence", which is the desire to be reunited with the mother by going back to an inorganic state. (p. 14) According to him, this phantasy was transformed into the fear of accidentally being buried alive while only appearing to be dead. Therefore, we can deduct that there is a direct connection between the uncanny fear of being buried alive and the death drive, which is named by Freud as "thanatos".

In his text *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* Freud (1920) claims that people's aggressive and violent tendencies derive from the death instinct inherent in all humans and that this instinct "seem to do their work unobtrusively." (p. 338) This inconspicuous instinct wishes to lead people back to a lifeless state which is caused by the desire to go back to the mother's womb. (Freud, 1920) Therefore, it is possible to see a correlation between the womb and the grave. Both of them are enclosed spaces which we inhabit while being in an inorganic state. People are neither conscious preceding their birth nor after their death and for that reason we can argue that these two states of being correspond with each other. Accordingly, it is possible to discern

that the tomb acts as a counterpart of the mother's womb which in turn sustains the death drive and gives it motivation to seek reuniting with the mother.

In addition to being buried alive, the figure of "the double" or "the doppelganger" is likewise examined thoroughly as a cause of uncanniness. It is possible to see the echoes of the double with "reflections in mirrors, with shadows, guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and the fear of death." (Freud, 1919, p. 9) At first, the double represents immortality and an assurance of the eternal continuation of the ego. (Freud, 1919) Therefore, Freud (1919) elaborates that the idea of the double's first purpose is to be "a preservation against extinction." (p. 9) Furthermore, he explains that the origin of the doppelganger comes from the narcissistic phase of childhood in which the child has endless self-love for himself or herself. (Freud, 1919) However, when this phase is abandoned, the figure of the doppelganger acquires a completely different facet. Freud (1919) explains this as, "from having been the assurance of immortality, he becomes the ghastly harbinger of death." (p. 9) With the development of a conscience, the ego can be examined and judged like an object and as a result of this, the double can acquire a new meaning. (Freud, 1919) Correspondingly, Freud claims that these specific forms of uncanny elements are caused by the repressed infantile complexes.

Subsequently, he continues to list other factors which can produce the uncanny effect. The recurrence of an object, a situation, a person or a number, unintentionally ending up in the same place over and over again after wandering around an area, saying that an event was "meant to be" and strange coincidences are all counted as circumstances which can evoke the feeling of uncanny in a person. (Freud, 1919) Freud (1919) explains that these arise from "a repetition-compulsion in the

unconscious mind." (p. 11) Later on, Freud explores the uncanniness which arise from immediate wish-fulfillments, the belief that a person's thoughts have the power to influence reality, animism, the belief in the existence of spirits and ghosts and the return of the dead. (Freud, 1919)

In this context, he (1919) states that his analysis of the uncanny suggests "the old, animistic conception of the universe, which was characterized by the idea that the world was peopled with the spirits of human beings, and by the narcissistic overestimation of subjective mental processes." (p. 12) In addition, it is Freud's view that the fear of death has barely changed over the years and that this is due to the fact that we still do not have sufficient information about death. Freud (1919) claims that our archaic fear of death is at all times ready to come back to the surface and that "most likely our fear still contains the old belief that the deceased becomes the enemy of his survivor and wants to carry him off to share his new life with him." (p. 13)

Thus, for Freud, all the elements which we have counted as the root of the uncanny, from recurrences to the omnipotence of thoughts are induced by our old discarded beliefs. (Freud, 1919) Freud explains that our ancestors used to believe in the existence of all of the previously listed phenomena and that with time, we abandoned these obsolete beliefs and developed our own new set of ideas and beliefs. However, Freud draws attention to the fact that these abandoned beliefs are never abandoned completely and that they are perpetually ready to reappear. Freud (1919) states:

> as soon as something actually happens in our lives which seems to support the old, discarded beliefs, we get a feeling of the uncanny, and it is as

> though we were making a judgement something like this: "So after all, it is true that one can kill a person merely desiring his death!" (p. 16)

To conclude Freud's argument on the uncanny, it can be said that there are two sources of the feeling of uncanniness: one of them is the repressed infantile complexes, which generate the fear of harm coming to one's eyes or the fear of the double, and the other is the reappearance of old, seemingly surmounted beliefs, which lead to the belief in concepts such as spirits, ghosts and the omnipotence of thoughts.

Despite not having a clealy detectable presence in Freud's 1919 essay, cannibalism is an equally important concept in terms of the uncanny phenomenon. According to Freud, not sexuality but cannibalism lays at the very core of psychoanalysis. (Royle, 2003) "Psychoanalysis gets started, in so far as it can or must get started, only on the basis of a theory of cannibalism." (Royle, 2003, p. 206) In *the Future of an Illusion*, Freud (1927) states that, "Cannibalism alone [of the oldest instinctual wishes] seems to be universally proscribed and - to the non-psychoanalytic view - to have been completely surmounted." (p. 190) However, according to the psychoanalytic theory, cannibalism has never been completely overcome, and when we return to Freud's previous statement that the uncanny emerges when beliefs which we thought were surmounted come back, we can also deduce that cannibalism is intrinsically tied with the unheimlich. As Royle (2003) elaborates, "what may seem to have been surmounted can always come back, but to the psychoanalytic view cannibalism has in fact never been surmounted." (p. 207) In light of this, we can argue that the reappearance of cannibalism could create an uncanny impression. As has been noted, Freud places cannibalism at the root of psychoanalysis, which can be discerned from his book *Civilization and it's Discontents,* and he claims that civilization and the

history of humankind was created with the killing and devouring of the primal father. (Freud, 1930) Freud believes that the workload was unfairly distributed among the father and his sons since the sons had the take on all the heavy workload and not the father. Moreover, Freud reduces women's existence to mere sexual objects and argues that the mother was owned exclusively by the father and not by the sons. The primal father did not wish to share the women with his sons and kept the mother entirely to himself by chasing away his sons and denying them access to her. Freud (1930) claims that after the primal father formed a family,

> the male acquired a motive for keeping the female, or, speaking more generally, his sexual objects, near him; while the female, who did not want to be separated from her helpless young, was obliged, in their interests, to remain with the stronger male. (p. 23)

The father's refusal to share neither the workload nor the mother caused his sons to defy and rebel against him and resulted in the killing of the father, as the sons realized that they were stronger than the father once they were united. (Freud, 1930) In his *Totem and Taboo*, Freud likewise refers to this hypothetical event and "goes on to inscribe cannibalism at the origin of human history: 'cannibal savages' 'killed' then 'devoured' their father." (Royle, 2003, p. 207) Freud (1913) names this consuming of the father as "the totem meal" and argues that it is "perhaps mankind's earliest festival." (p. 203) This incident is perceived as the starting point of the history of humankind in psychoanalysis and, since cannibalism is a taboo and according to Freud anything that is a taboo is also uncanny, it is possible to see the relation between cannibalism and the unheimlich. (Freud, 1913)

Another important characteristic of cannibalism is it's association with love. As Royle makes clear, there is "no cannibalism without love, no love without cannibalism." (p. 208) Freud puts forward in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* in 1921 that cannibals only consume the people whom they have an affection and fondness for. To demonstrate his point, Freud (1921) states, "People commonly speak for instance, of an 'appetising' love-object, and describe persons they are fond of as 'sweet.'" (p. 348) Consequently, we can also observe that cannibalism is inherently connected with the language we use when refering to the people we love.

Lastly, it is noticable that Freud never openly discusses cannibalism in his essay on the uncanny despite it's immense significance for the topic. However, Royle (2003) argues that there is still a trace of cannibalism in "what is not said or left unsaid" in the essay. (p. 210) As we discussed previously, Freud gives a long and extensive summary of the Sandman and in his summary, the words of Nathaniel's nurse on the topic of Sandman is consequential in terms of cannibalism. She says that the Sandman preys on children who don't go to sleep and "throws handfuls of sand in their eyes, so that they jump out of their heads all bloody, and then he throws them into his sack and carries them to the crescent moon as food for his little children." (Hoffman, 1816, p. 87) Despite the Sandman being a mysterious and frightful figure, he is "still some sort of a man." (Royle, 2003, p. 211) By the same token, we can presume that his children are likewise actual children. The Sandman's children eating other children's eyes is a strong indicator of cannibalism, despite Freud's silence and his lack of straightforward acknowledgement on this point. As Royle (2003) says, "Doesn't the sandman evoke an uncanny trace or tang of cannibalism right from the start?" (p. 211)

Having studied Freud's essay on this topic, we can now move on to explore Homi Bhabha's approach to the topic of the uncanny. In order to examine this theory thoroughly, we should first study Bhabha's concept of the nation. Bhabha elaborates on the topic of "otherness" in western nations and it's influence on language in his 1990 essay "Nation and Narration." It is Bhabha's (1990) assertion that the modern western nation's history should be written "from the perspective of the nation's margin and the migrants' exile." (p. 191) Bhabha explains that since the mid-nineteenth century, the western nations have witnessed the migration of large groups of people as well as colonial growth in the east. (Bhabha, 1990) This led way to the formation of a heterogenous, hybrid "locality" of the western culture and according to Bhabha (1990), this diversity cannot be fully represented "in any hierarchial or binary structuring of social antagonism." (p. 192) The nation's discourse eliminates and undermines this vast diversity of people who reside in a nation and in turn a holistic narrative creates the idea of a homogeneous modern western society. (Bhabha, 1990) Consequently, Bhabha finds this holistic and linear narrative of the history of the nation problematic and inadequate to truly reflect the reality of it's past and it's people. He (1990) points out that "no single explanation sending one back immediately to a single origin is adequate," and that "we shall find that the space of the modern nation-people is never simply horizontal." (p. 193) According to Bhabha, in order to truly reflect the reality of the western nation, one must highlight its repetiton and doubleness. As Bhabha (1990) makes clear,

> It is the mark of the ambivalence of the nation as a narrative strategy - and an apparatus of power - that it produces a continual slippage into analogous, even metonymic, categories, like the people, minorities, or 'cultural difference' that continually overlap in the act of writing the nation. (p. 192)

Correspondingly, the act of writing the nation requires addressing "the ambivalent and chiasmatic intersections of time and space" which mirror the true, equivocal experience of the nation. (Bhabha, 1990, p. 193) Bhabha continues to question the narrative of the nation by pointing out how its ancestral sentiments contrast with the youth of the nation, as modern nations only started to emerge in the nineteenth-century. (Bhabha, 1990) Furthermore, he draws attention to another discrepancy in the national narrative, by quoting Partha Chatterjee (1986) who indicates that the nation, in order to "assert its sovereignty as the universal ideal, needs its Other; if it could ever actualise itself in the real world as the truly universal, it would in fact destroy itself." (p. 3) Even though the nation cannot exist without the foreigner, it continues to employ essentialist narratives which "treat gender, class, or race as radically 'expressive' social totalities." (Bhabha, 1990, p. 194) The national discourse not only relies on a homogenous unity of the people, it also depends on a linear understanding of time and history. (Bhabha, 1990) Bhabha clearly illustrates the problematic nature of this horizontal and sequential comprehension of time in a way which is parallel with Freud's approach to the Uncanny. As discussed previously, Freud argues that the old, surmounted beliefs of our ancestors uncannily come back and haunt us. Similarly, Bhabha draws our attention to Bakhtin's argument on the national narrative and its association with the uncanny. According to Bakhtin, the nation surmounts the uncanny in order to create the horizontal perception of time and history which coherently tie the present with the past. (Bhabha, 1990, p. 195) As Bhabha (1990) explains, "the ghostly (*Gespenstermassiges)*, the terrifying (*Unerfreuliches)*, and the unaccountable (*Unzuberechnendes)* are consistently 'surmounted' by the structural aspects of the visualization of time." (p. 195) While not entirely agreeing with Bakhtin, Bhabha (1990) points out that Freud's concept of the uncanny allow us to

"get a sense of the complex time of the national narrative." (p. 195) Bhabha continues his investigation by questioning this representation of the wholeness of the state and accentuates the double and fractured time of the discourse of nation. He argues that "the demand for a holistic, representative vision of society could only be represented in a discourse that was *at the same time* obsessively fixed upon, and uncertain of, the boundaries of society, the margins of the text." (Bhabha, 1990, p. 196) In order to explain this in depth, Bhabha gives the Harlem Renaissance as an example. (Bhabha, 1990, p. 196) He calls attention to the method used by them which employs hybridity, concealment, malformation and contradiction to draw a correlation with guerilla warfare. (Bhabha, 1990, p. 196) Consequently, upon reading texts written from the edges of society, we can observe the problematic aspects of the national discourse. Bhabha (1990) explains that "the people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin," while at the same time

> the 'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principle of the people as that continual process by which the national life is redeemed and signified as a repeating and reproductive process. (p. 197)

From this statement, we can observe that there is an immense tension between the pedagogical, which strongly relies on the cumulative, and the performative, which depends on the repetitious. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the uncertain grounds on which the modern state stands directly affects the discourse of the nation.

Another point that Bhabha draws our attention to is the dubious signifying system of the nation. He (1990) argues that,

> the people are neither the beginning or the end of the national narrative; they represent the cutting edge between the totalizing powers of the social and the forces that signify the more specific address to contentious, unequal interests and identities within the population. (p. 197)

In relation to this, Bhabha explores the impossibility of going back to the origin of the signified due to the uncertainties and contradictions of the national ideology. The master reinforces its authority through fixed, linear and holistic concepts, and language disconnects itself from their origin in order to hide the discrepancies. (Bhabha, 1990) However, since authority is also represented by language, the ambiguity of the origin of the signified cannot stay hidden. Conflictingly, however, the national discourse simultaneously depends upon this beginning point in order to make social relations perceivable and it causes the nation to be defenseless by its lack of ability to "define this place without letting its contingency appear, without condemning itself to slide from one position to another, without hereby making apparent the instability of an order that is intended to raise to the status of essence." (Bhabha, 1990, p.198) Consequently, Bhabha deduces that the borders of the nation can only be signified in an ambiguous and uncertain way. (Bhabha, 1990)

Additionally, the nation uses this precarious signifying process to differentiate between "the self" and "the other." The nation and "the self" can only actualise itself by extricating "the other." (Bhabha, 1990, p. 199) This image of the self is created by the nation itself and is based on a sequence of historical events. (Bhabha, 1990) However, the performative makes the in-between space between the self and the other visible to us. As Bhabha (1990) points out, "the boundary that marks the nation's selfhood interrupts the self-generating time of the national production with a space of

representation that threatens binary division with its difference." (p. 199) This space of representation contains "the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities, and tense cultural locations." (Bhabha, 1990, p. 199) The antithetical narratives created from the margins of the society challenge the holistic narrative of the nation and "evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries - both actual and conceptual - disturb those ideological manoeuvres through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist narratives." (Bhabha, 1990, p. 200) Subsequently, Bhabha references Freud's argument on the conflicting feelings between communities. Freud (1930) claims that, "it is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left to receive the manifestation of their aggressiveness." (p. 114) In relation to this, Bhabha elaborates that these uncertain feelings of love and hate inhabit the same space as people project negativity and malevolence onto the outside which in turn come back to haunt the nation from within. (Bhabha, 1990) The ambiguity between the boundaries of the nation and the external world reveals the "narcissistic neuroses" of the national narrative. (Bhabha, 1990, p. 200) Bhabha (1990) states that, "the nation reveals, in its ambivalent and vacillating representation, the ethnography of its own historicity and opens up the possibility of other narratives of the people and their difference." (p. 200) As a result, the essentialist and linear approach to society is negated by these opposing narratives of different cultures.

By the same token, it is possible to perceive that the figure of the foreigner cannot be seamlessly included in the illusionary canniness of the western nation. In this regard Bhabha (1990) emphasizes the importance of "colonials, postcolonials, migrants, minorities - wandering peoples who will not be contained within the *Heim* of the national culture and it's unisonant disourse, but are themselves the marks of a

shifting boundary that alienates the frontiers of the modern nation." (p. 216) Furthermore, Bhabha makes it apparent that the essentialist narrative of the nation can only be achieved through the act of forgetting. (Bhabha, 1990) He argues that the citizens of a nation must willfully forget its sinister and corrupt past which makes tracing the beginning of the national narrative possible. (Bhabha, 1990) Thus, Bhabha (1990) points out that "it is this forgetting - a minus in the origin- that constitutes the beginning of the nation's narrative," and that "every French citizen has to have forgotten [is obliged to have forgotten] Saint Bartholomew's Night's Massacre, or the massacres that took place in the Midi in the thirteenth century." (p. 211) Bhabha further elaborates that English people are strangers to their own culture due to the country's widespread colonization that took place outside its borders. He gives examples from Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, in which Rushdie (1988) states, "The trouble with the English is that their history happened overseas, so they don't know what it means." (p. 337) About the character of Gibreel, who disguises himself as the English ex-colonial landowner Sir Henry Diamond, Bhabha observes,

> He is the history that happened elsewhere, overseas; his postcolonial, migrant presence does not evoke a harmonious patchwork of cultures, but articulates the narrative of cultural difference which can never let the national history look at itself narcissistically in the eye. (p. 219)

Having discussed Bhabha's notion of the nation and immigration, we can now examine his theory of the uncanny by examining his 1992 essay "The World and the Home." Bhabha (1992) chooses to use the term "unhomely" to express his approach to the uncanny due to the fact that it "captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world in an unhallowed place." (p. 141) The unhomely

does not mean the lack of a home and it cannot be comfortably placed in the private or the public domain. (Bhabha, 1992) It refers to a sense ambiguity of where the home begins and the world starts and that these blurry limits between the home and the world gives a person a sense of confusion and bafflement. (Bhabha, 1992) These unclear boundaries between the world and the home cause them to merge into each other and this new occurence can lead to disorientation. Bhabha (1992) argues that the unhomely makes a different world apparent and discernible and he associates this unhomeliness with "the uncanny literary and social effects of enforced social accommodation, historical migrations and cultural relocations." (p. 141)

He thus argues that the feeling of unhomeliness and disorientation occurs when people see the reflections of world in their homes or, the exact opposite, when they see their home in the outside world. (Bhabha, 1992) Homi Bhabha perceives this in-between space as a postcolonial area in which what's foreign and what's familiar coexist. (Bhabha, 1992) He comes to this conclusion while working on the novel *A House for Mr. Biswas* by V.S. Naipaul. Mr. Biswas's lack of success in finding himself a home leads Bhabha to conclude that the term "unhomely" is closely associated with a post-colonial experience. However, despite arguing that "the unhomely" is post-colonial territory, he furthermore points out that in all works of fiction where a discussion of cultural distinctions in certain historical circumstances is present, the unhomely can likewise be observed. (Bhabha, 1992) Bhabha explains that the unhomely "has a resonance that can be heard distinctly, if erratically, in fictions that negotiate the powers of cultural difference in a range of historical conditions and social contradictions." (p. 142)

Additionally, he points out that in a work of fiction a historical or social development must be transformed and go through an "aesthetic alienation" in which this development would be depicted in an obscure way in order to give it the element of unhomeliness. (Bhabha, 1992) He gives Toni Morrison's *Beloved* as an example of the unhomely in literature. He points out that Beloved, who was murdered by her mother Sethe when she was a baby, is a representation of the immensely high rates of black infant deaths during the slavery era in the South. (Bhabha, 1992) As Bhahba continues, "the discourse of 'the social' then finds its means of representation in a kind of *unconsciousness* that obscures the immediacy of meaning, darkens the public event with an 'unhomely' glow." (p. 143) He continues to clarify his approach by explaining what he suggests by the "aesthetic" process. According to Bhabha (1992), the present moment in history should be perceived as a period of transit and,

> a form of temporality that is open to disjunction and discontinuity and sees the process of history engaged, rather like art, in a negotiation of the framing and naming of social reality - not what lies inside or outside reality, but where to draw (or inscribe) the "meaningful" line between them. (p. 144)

Furthermore in his essay, Bhabha examines Goethe's approach to world literature and interprets and expands on it in terms of the unhomely. Goethe suggests that world literature can emerge from the cultural uncertainties that are brought by conflicts and wars. (Goethe, 1921) Goethe (1921) claims that after these conflicts, nations could not go back to their separate lives "without noticing that they had learned many foreign ideas and ways, which they had unconsciously adopted, and come to feel here and there previously unrecognized spiritual and intellectual needs." (p. 98-9) Bhabha points out that Goethe refers to the Napoleonic wars and his approach only reaches as

far as England and France but that his ideas could be construed in a different way. Goethe's argument could be used not only for European nations but also for post-colonial societies as well. (Bhabha, 1992) In this way, Bhabha (1992) argues that if the cultural lives of nations are experienced unconsciously as Goethe claims, than we can perceive world literature as a "category that is concerned with a form of cultural dissensus and alterity, where non-consensual terms of affiliation and articulation may be established on the ground of historical trauma." (p. 145-146)

For this reason, we can discern that world literature is the territory of migrants, refugees and the colonized; the people who have been forced to leave their homes or the people whose homes have been invaded by others. As he explains further on the previous essay which we discussed,

> Gatherings of exiles and emigres and refugees, gathering on the edge of 'foreign' cultures; gathering at the frontiers; gatherings in the ghettos or cafes of city centers; gathering in the half-life, half light of foreign tongues, or in the uncanny fluency of another's language. (Bhabha, 1990, p. 191)

Exposure to different cultures and the exchange of traditions between people from different backgrounds, then, could be the subject of world literature and it is possible to analyze world literature by examining the ways in which "cultures recognize themselves through their projections of 'otherness.'" (Bhabha, 1992, p. 146)

Bhabha continues by giving examples of prominent literary houses, and argues that houses such as Morrison's 124, have racial memory. According to him, these houses represent the historical traumas, the displacements and the cultural conflicts of a certain era. (Bhabha, 1992) To explore this in depth, Bhabha (1992) examines the houses that are depicted in Gordimer's *My Son's Story* as an example and claims that

"each house marks a deeper historical displacement." (p. 147) Subsequently, Bhabha (1992) states that,"private and public, past and present, the psyche and the social develop an interstial intimacy." (p. 148) As a result, this intimacy challenges the binary oppositions between these concepts, blurs the strict boundaries which set them apart and creates in-between hybridities. (Bhabha, 1992) Bhabha (1992) asserts that he showed the reader how the outside world entered the houses of literature to "invade, alarm, divide, disposses" as well as "how literature haunts history's more public face, forcing it to reflect on itself with the displacing, even distoring image of Art."(p. 152)

Similarly, Julia Kristeva explores the concept of the uncanny in her 1988 book *Strangers to Ourselves*. According to Kristeva, with the development of the Enlightenment and it's drastic effect on the world, modern nation states came come into existence and religious values started to dissipate. (Kristeva, 1988) With the development of this new world order, then, our modern understanding of the foreigner simultaneously began to take shape. The figure of the foreigner was now perceived as someone who is not a citizen of a certain nation and as a danger for the harmony of a community. (Kristeva, 1988) Kristeva (1988) describes the new understanding of the foreigner with the words, "With the establishment of nation-states we come to the only modern . . . definition of foreignness: the foreigner is the one who does not belong to the state in which we are, the one who does not have the same nationality." (p. 96) Moreover, she argues that the difference of the appearance of the foreigner was also regarded as a threat to the uniform appearance of the people of a certain nationality. (Kristeva, 1988) With this new perception of national states and foreigners, a rift has been created between a person, a citizen and a foreigner. (Kristeva, 1988)

Kristeva (1988) explains that "one can be more or less a man to the extent that one is more or less a citizen, that he who is not a citizen is not fully a man. Between the man and a citizen there is a scar: the foreigner" (p. 98) Therefore, in order to be recognized as a human being, one has to fulfill the condition of being a citizen of a nation. Accordingly, we can observe that the foreigner or, in other words, "the other" is an uncanny figure which disrupts the insubstantial unity and harmony of a nation. (Kristeva, 1988) It is her claim that this modern notion of "the other" transforms the clear-cut distinctions between what's familiar or unfamiliar into vagueness and makes them indistinct. (Kristeva, 1988) Furthermore, Kristeva (1988) points out that "the other" is a symbol of how we find it difficult to coexist with the other as well as coexisting with ourselves as the other with the words "in that sense, the foreigner is a 'symptom' . . . : psychologically he signifies the difficulty we have of living as an other and with others." (p. 103)

According to her argument, "the other," with whom all are obliged to coexist, is an inherent part of everyone. Moreover, it is the refusal to acknowledge "the other" within which leads to xenophobic sentiments. (Kristeva, 1988) Subsequently, she argues that the prejudice against people from other ethnicities and nationalities is associated with the concept of the uncanny. Her analysis of the association between the figure of the foreigner and the uncanny involves references to Freud's essay on the same topic, which we hitherto discussed. She claims that despite the fact that Freud does not talk about foreigners, this silence still insinuates that xenophobia and the feelings of the uncanny are related. (Kristeva, 1988) She (1988) states that "strangely enough, there is no mention of foreigners in the Unheimliche" however, it is her belief that this silence is within itself what's uncanny about Freud's essay. (p. 191) Kristeva (1988) asserts, "Are we nevertheless so sure that the 'political' feelings of xenophobia

do not include, often unconsciously, that agony of frightened joyfulness that has been called unheimlich..." (p. 191) In addition, Kristeva believes that Freud's essay can teach us how to distinguish the other within ourselves. She declares,

> With Freud indeed, foreignness, an uncanny one, creeps into the tranquility of reason itself, and, without being restricted to madness, beauty, or faith anymore than to ethnicity or race, irrigates our very speaking-being, estranged by other logics, including the heterogeneity of biology. (p. 170)

Later on, she argues that in order to put an end to violence towards foreigners and to xenophobia, we have to accept the other within ourselves. (Kristeva, 1988) She explains this with the following words; "henceforth, we know that we are foreigners to ourselves, and it is with the help of that sole support that we can attempt to live with others." (p. 170)

CHAPTER 3: THE ICARUS GIRL

Having explained the theoretical background of the uncanny, it is now possible to discuss the books in light of this approach. The first novel to be discussed is Helen Oyeyemi's 2005 debut novel *The Icarus Girl*. The novel follows the story of Jess Harrison, who is the daughter of a Nigerian mother and an English father. Jess is a lonely child without friends and she suffers from uncontrollable tantrums. The story starts with her visit to her mother's home-country Nigeria and the ensuing mysterious events. Upon her family's arrival at Jess's grandfather's property, a crumbling grey building attracts her attention. Her aunt Funke informs her that it used to be the Boys' Quarters in which her great-grandfather's servants lived in the past and that now it was completely deserted. Moreover, the building is presented as structurally unsound and unsuitable for human habitation. Despite the desolation of the house, Jess encounters an eerie manifestation behind it's walls. Almost as if she sensed that something was not right, a feeling of "heat on the skin at the base of Jess's neck perhaps, made her turn and look at the house." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 16) Upon her re-examination of the building, Jess alarmingly notices something that glitters in the darkness. She sees, "quite clearly, shadows dancing in the corner just beneath the windowpane, as shadows tend to do when light shifts around it's source. There was lantern light in the window of the Boys' Quarters." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 16) Here, Jess witnesses something which should not be there and sees something she should not have seen. This could be deemed as an uncanny vision, an incident "that should have remained secret and hidden but has come to life." (Royle, 2003, p. 2) This strange vision vexes and puzzles Jess thoroughly and she decides to enter the building to investigate the mystery. Upon her arrival, Jess notices a dust covered tabletop and continues to

explore the house without dwelling on it. However, when she walks back the way she came from, she sees the same tabletop which now, terrifyingly, reads: "HEllO JEssY." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 20) Horrified by this inexplicable event, Jess run aways from the house. Someone unknown to Jess knew her name and wrote the message unobserved by her. Here, we can observe Jess's disorientation and, in Jentsch's terms, "intellectual uncertainty" as she cannot find any way to explain or make sense of the event. She declares, "Someone was living in a place where no one lived, lighting things in the dark, had been watching her, had *seen* her, and knew her name." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 20) After this incident, we meet the mysterious figure who lives in the Boys' Quarters and is responsible for the tabletop message, though we never find out how she knew Jess's name and how she wrote the message without being noticed. She is a girl named Titiola, who is also the most significant element of the story in terms of its uncanniness. Titiola, who is referred to as TillyTilly by Jess, has an immense influence on the story and the uncanny impact left by her will be discussed further in the following paragraphs.

As discussed previously, the figure of the double or the doppelganger is one of the most momentous features of the uncanny. In relation to this, the figure of the double plays a highly important role in Oyeyemi's work in the form of Jess's twin Fern, who died during birth, and that of TillyTilly, who is Jess' doppelganger, and in many other aspects of the novel. There are strikingly strong parallels between Jess and TillyTilly, one of which is the meaning of their names. Jess's Yoruba name is Wuraola, which means "gold", while Titiola's name in Yoruba means "endless wealth." Moreover, each name has seven letters and shares an identical last syllable, "ola". The way Jess calls her TillyTilly twice also alludes to the idea of doubles. Furthermore, the similarities between them does not end with their names. Upon

meeting her for the first time, TillyTilly keenly observes Jess's every move and gesture, as if she's preparing to imitate Jess with precision. When Jess asks her "Do you live in the Boys' Quarters?" Tilly repeats the question back at her "in an exact match of Jess's voice." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 22) When Jess laughs and brings her hand to her mouth, Tilly's "hand move slightly, as if she, too, wanted to put a hand to her mouth." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 23) Their resemblance starts to become more exact in time as Tilly starts to mimic Jess's enunciation thoroughly. Upon their first encounter, Jess observes Tilly's diction and remarks that her "voice was heavily accented." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 22) However, later on in the novel, Jess starts to notice that Tilly was developing an English accent. She says, "She actually said *and all that*, with the unconcerned tone of an English person. Jess's expression grew more incredulous when she remembered the first thing she had said, in that pure Nigerian accent: *Hello Jessy*." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 27) Throughout the novel, Tilly's echoing of Jess is highlighted in sentences such as, "TillyTilly mimicked Jess's voice uncannily" (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 113) Tilly continues to imitate everything Jess tells her or asks her and the friendship between the two girls starts to grow quickly. Tilly puts an end to Jess's loneliness and almost becomes a twin sister for her. After Tilly reveals the truth about Jess's dead twin Fern, she starts to refer to herself as Jess's new twin sister. She says, "We're twins to each other now," and "now I am Fern, I am your sister, and you are my twin." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 87) In addition, we find out that Tilly also had a twin who died when she says, "I know- I am the same. I have been just like you for such a long time!" (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 87) The fact that both of them had twins who passed away further amplifies the theme of the double. At the beginning, to Jess, who is a lonely, friendless child, a friendship with Tilly is an exceedingly happy prospect. They get along very well and Tilly is nice and friendly, however, soon she starts to

show a completely different and much more sinister facet of herself to Jess and becomes a serious threat to not only the people around her but also to Jess herself. As examined previously, Freud (1919) deems the concept of the double as "the ghastly harbinger of death" and it is possible to examine Tilly in line with his argument. (p. 9) Subsequently, Feldner (2019) points out that "Due to TillyTilly's menacing and sinister presence, the novel at times reads like a horror story or gothic tale." (p. 159) We can begin to discuss how she first starts to show an ominous side of herself when she asserts that they should "get" people. When Colleen, who is a bully in Jess's school, taunts Jess, Tilly suggests that they "should *get* her," which Jess finds alarming. (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 47) As Tilly is a supernatural entity, the girls end up going to Colleen's house invisible, getting her into trouble with her abusive parents, finding out that she urinates in her underwear and publicly shaming her about it in front of their classmates. However, "getting people" starts to get more and more malevolent. Jess is facing problems with Miss Patel, who is a teacher at Jess's school, which results in Tilly deciding to "get" her. When Jess asks her what she is going to do to her teacher, Tilly replies, "None of your business. She won't die or anything, though. Probably." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 99) This exceedingly ominous remark terrifies Jess and her fears about the situation become realised the next day, when Jess uncannily finds that Miss Patel will not return to school due to a family emergency. However, her friend Trish tells her that "sometimes when they say that it means the teacher's gone a bit mental." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 110) Subsequently, Tilly gets Jess's father Daniel after he hits Jess with extreme force. She causes him to constantly sleep and lose all sense of himself. Although the adults around Jess believe that her father is suffering from depression, Jess "knew what was the matter with him: it was TillyTilly." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 137) The book gives us further evidence that this was

in fact Tilly's doing as she says, "(*he'll never hit you again, Jessy*)." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 138) As a result of Tilly's attack, Daniel seems like an empty husk and Jess sadly broods that, "this wasn't her father at all, it was a thing, slurred of speech, emptied, inside out, outside in..." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 138) Jess thinks of Tilly's powers as "a special sharp knife that cut people on the inside so that they collapsed into themselves and couldn't ever get back out,". Significantly, Daniel's new state of being heavily resembles what Jentsch described as a being which is animate yet not actually alive. We observe that Jess's father is techincally alive but not actually himself, everything that makes him himself and human is completely absent. It is as if Tilly had "taken something from him that made him forget where and who he was and put him in some other place, alone." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 138) Therefore, we can say that this new state that Daniel is in also causes the uncanny feeling to arise in the characters as well as the reader. What is more, these three characters are not the only people that Tilly "gets." Later on in the novel, Tilly violently attacks Shiobhan, who is a new friend of Jess's, when she comes for a sleepover at Jess's house. At first, Tilly possesses Shiobhan and the scene is described thus,

> It was some fearsome, grotesque dance: Siobhan tiptoeing and then dragging across the floor, her red hair falling out of its loose knot and over her shoulders as she spun into the kitchen, while TillyTilly, partially elevated in the dim light, was somehow *operating* her. (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 151)

After this event, Tilly causes Shiobhan, who is also referred to as Shivs, to fall down the stairs and get seriously injured. Siobhan is said to have "broken the skin of her neck quite badly on the pointy end of the banister when it had inexplicably broken off," and is rushed to the hospital. (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 151) As the attacks gets worse

and worse, the last person Tilly decides to get is Jess herself, which truly makes TillyTilly, in Freud's terms, "the ghastly harbinger of death." After Daniel inexplicably recovers from Tilly's attack, the Harrison family goes back to Nigeria one more time. During their visit, the family makes preparations for Jess's ninth birthday and it is on that day that Jess reunites with Tilly, who had previously been absent from her life for a long period of time. Jess sees her kneeling behind the table and looking unreal. She observes, "there was something in the dimensions of her that made her look like one of those paper cutouts,..., creasable and thin at the edges." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 156) Tilly's strange, almost human appearance further amplifies her uncanniness. By the same token, her uncanniness reaches its peak when she begins to crawl from under the table towards Jess while staring at her wildly. "'Time to swap!' Tilly cried. 'I did my share, I *got* everyone you wanted me to! I want to be alive too!" (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 157) Tilly becomes overtly hostile as she starts to yell and attack her. Upon this attack, "Jess let out a piercing scream and struggled against the hands that seemed made of steel as she tumbled down step by step," and consequently, she "fell." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 157) Here, we can clearly see that Tilly has replaced Jess and taken possesion of her body and identity. Jess's double brought about her death and turned her into an incorporeal being. In line with Tilly's previous statement of "I want to be alive too!", we can distinctly note that Jess has died after being separated from her body. This process of Jess becoming an insubtantial being is described thus,

> TillyTilly landed safely somewhere, and Jess just kept on flying. She'd shed her body as if it was some shell that the sea roars through, and yes, she'd said she wanted to fly, but she hadn't meant it, not like this, not when she was soaring *through* things. (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 157)

As a result, we can deduce that, in a wide variety of ways, TillyTilly fits into the description of the uncanny doppelganger presented by Freud.

Tilly is also an enigmatic supernatural being of unknown origin and consequently, a thoroughly uncanny figure. She seems to have magical abilities which allow her to enter locked up spaces, such as Jess's grandfather's study and an amusement-park, turn invisible and the power to possess people. Moreover, Oyeyemi makes it evident that TillyTilly and her magical powers are real and are not the fruits of Jess's imagination. After they infiltrate her grandfather's locked up study, Tilly takes out a book which has the smell of "the black ink of her grandfather's red-barrelled ink pen" and presents it to Jess as a gift, which verifies that they did actually enter the study. (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 30) Likewise, as mentioned previously, after Jess and Tilly enter Colleen's house invisibly and confront her about it, Colleen becomes exceedingly agitated and embarrased, which confirms that what they were able to do was real. Jess thinks, "How had she and TillyTilly been able to do the things that they had done yesterday? Because now there was no question that it really happened." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 56) Moreover, this incident alongside with Tilly's inexplicable powers scare Jess who feels "sort of (*uneasy*) about it." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 56) In addition, we have previously mentioned Tilly's power of possesion; she not only possesed Siobhan but also Jess as well. Consequently, we can clearly see that TillyTilly is someone sinister with supernatural abilities, which are intrinsicly tied with the uncanny. While we are informed that Tilly's magical powers are real, it is unknown what is Tilly actually *is* and throughout the entire book her true nature remains a mystery. Oyeyemi never presents us with knowledge in terms of where Tilly and her powers comes from, what the true extent of her powers is, or where she goes after her meetings with Jess. In Nigeria, when Jess asks her whether she lives in

Boys' Quaters, Tilly replies, "I do. Sometimes." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 32) Where she goes when she is not in Boys' Quarters is a complete mystery. And when Tilly follows Jess to England, where she goes and stays is still unknown. The only explanation Tilly ever gives Jess is, "of course I'm really here, just not *really really* here, if you see what I mean... Most of the time I'm somewhere else." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 84) Her cryptic words do not clear up the mystery about her identity, and what she means by "somewhere else" is never disclosed. When we consider this in terms of Jentsch's theory of intellectual uncertainty, we can claim that Oyeyemi successfully maintains the ambiguity concerning Tilly's origins from the beginning of the novel until the end. As Jess remarks,

> Although she was used to Tilly's disappearing and reappearing, her apparent knowledge of everything, and her ability to do anything she wanted, even make Jess invisible, Jess now wanted to know exactly what it meant for TillyTilly to be not 'really really' there. And where her friend went to when she disappeared. (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 119)

As a result of this vagueness, Tilly's uncanniness never fades, and the reader never has complete intellectual mastery in this regard. In terms of Freud's theory of the uncanny, Tilly is also a thoroughly uncanny figure, which can be perceived from her saying "You can't tell anyone about me Jessy! Can't you tell I'm not supposed to be *there*?" (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 32) Here, we can observe that Jess has unravelled a secret and she brought someone hidden to light. As Freud (1919) makes clear, the uncanny is something "hidden and secret and has become visible," exactly like TillyTilly (p. 3)

To continue, the belief that ghosts come back to haunt the living is a prevailing uncanny notion. It is possible to see reflections of the same belief in Yoruba culture with the concept of "the abiku", which plays a significant role in Oyeyemi's story. Ouma (2014) describes the abiku as follows: "the concept of abiku originates from the phenomenon of spirit-children among the Yoruba community, referring to children who die and are believed to come back again, tormenting their mothers." (p. 188) These spirits occupy numerous realms such as the earth, the bush and the spirit world. (Ouma, 2014) The meaning of the word "abiku" is "born to die" and "predestined to die." (Adebowale, 2020, para. 1) Children are highly important in Nigerian culture as they bring contentment and a sense of accomplishment to a marriage; however abiku children only bring sorrow and suffering. (Adebowale, 2020) This is because they are fated to die before they reach adolescence. Furthermore, the abiku children were presumed to be the children of the demons in the woods who specifically resided in Iroko trees with the rest of the spirits of the abiku children, who were collectively called "Egbe." (Adebowale, 2020) Upon their death, the abiku children were thought to return to the group of other children in the spirit realm, only to repeat the process all over again. (Adebowale, 2020) The belief in abiku children started with the "traditional medicine men who named them thus because of the short life span the Àbíkú possess, and their ability to have recurrent earth lives, which torment their earthly hosts." (Adebowale, 2020, para. 3) When the abiku children die, their skin is cut and they are buried in deep, thick forests. (Adebowale, 2020) The reason for mutilating the bodies of the abiku children is because of the belief that they will one day come back and also "to instantly recognise them once they come visiting earth again." (Adebowale, 2020, para. 3) Consequently, it is discernable that the belief that the dead come back to haunt the living is prevalent in Yoruba culture and it is possible

to find traces of it in Oyeyemi's novel. Additionally, in line with Freud's concept of the uncanniness of the return of the dead, the abiku rouses fear and uneasiness in the surviving people. This fear is apparent in Jess's mother Sarah after Jess asks her about her dead twin Fern. "Sarah began rambling, her voice trembling. 'Three worlds! Jess lives in three worlds. She lives in this world, and she lives in the spirit world, and she lives in the bush. She's *abiku*..." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 90) She continues with the words, "we should've d-d-done *ibeji* carving for her!" (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 90)

The ibeji carving, on the other hand, further accentuates the theme of the double. In Yoruba culture, the birth of twins is perceived as a great gift and Nigeria has "one of the highest rates of twin births in the world. Due to the high mortality rate among twins, Yoruba mothers are frequently faced with the death of a cherished child." ("Ibeji Twin Children," n.d.) When one of the twins dies, a wooden carving is made to symbolize the deceased twin, as in Yoruba culture twins were believed to share the same soul. ("Ibeji (twin) Figures (Nigeria, Yoruba)," n.d.) Moreover, these carvings were treated almost as if they were real people. "Statues are ritually oiled and washed in special herbal baths. They are symbolically rubbed with food and occupy a special place in the household. At times of festivals, they are held by the mother and danced." ("Ibeji Twin Children," n.d., para. 1) As stated previously, twins were thought to share the same soul and it was perceived as impossible for the living twin to live with only half a soul. With the same logic, it was supposed that the carved wooden figure carried the other half of the soul, making the surviving twin complete. There is also another significant reason why taking good care of the ibeji statue and treating it like a family member is important. In Yoruba culture, the boundary between the living and the dead is insubstantial and ambiguous. ("Ibeji Twin Children," n.d.) Because of the belief that the spirits of the dead can come to back to the land of the living, it was

feared that the soul of the departed twin would return to the household. If neglected, "the deceased twin may cause the living to endure its wrath. Hence, an angry deceased twin may cause illness, sterility, still-births, and various misfortunes." ("Ibeji Twin Children," n.d., para. 2) It is possible to see many parallels between Freud's interpretation of the uncanny and these Yoruba cultural beliefs. The belief in the dead's return to earth, in Freud's terms, creates a feeling of uncanniness, as it confuses the clear-cut limits between life and death. In turn, this in-between space of neither being entirely alive nor dead becomes an uncanny domain. Consequently, we can perceive that there is an association between Freud's theory and the pratice of carving ibeji statues. These statues likewise play a major role in Oyeyemi's novel and increase the effect of the story's uncanniness. As we know, Tilly is said to have a deceased twin, like Jess, and there is an ibeji statue made for her. When Jess visits Tilly in the Boys' Quarters, she encounters an eerie demonstration, which is also referred to as "a shrine" by Jess. There is a picture drawn on a wooden board and it portrays "a sketch of a black woman with thick, glossy hair that had been coloured in with the charcoal in a scribblelike intensity." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 38) Moreover, this figure stands out with it's abnormally long arms. Jess proclaims, "her arms were grotesque. Surely nobody could have arms that long! They were completely out of proportion to her body..." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 38) In front of this drawing of a woman there is a wide variety of candles, all of which had been lighted before. The candles give the display the appearance of an altar and, as stated previously, the ibeji statues held a special place in the household. The impression that this picture of the woman on the wooden board is an ibeji statue becomes evident as the novel progresses. "She knew, now, that TillyTilly and the long-armed woman were somehow the same person, like the two sides of a thin coin." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 85) Here, we can not only see that the ibeji

carving is made for Tilly's late twin, but also the traces of the belief that twins share the same soul. Moreover, we can observe another ibeji statue, this time made for Jess's twin Fern, towards the end of the novel. When Tilly possesses Jess, the only person who understands what has actually happened to her is her grandfather. Upon his realization, he tries to bring Iya Adahunse, who is referred to as a witch doctor, to help Jess. This causes an enourmous confrontation between Jess's grandfather and her father, which results in Sarah leaving the house with Jess. While on the road, a serious accident occurs and Jess is hospitalized with severe injuries. Thereupon, Jess's grandfather, unbeknownst to everyone else, brings the newly made ibeji statue of Fern to her hospital room to protect Jess and to guide her soul back into her body. Even though the novel ends ambiguously, it is heavily implied that the ibeji statue of Fern is what ultimately saves Jess. Fern's soul is said to find Jess and carry her back to herself. "Jess had been getting lost and beginning to despair that she'd ever find her way out until *someone* came and bore her away on their back, away, but still not home." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 164) During this journey, Fern's soul take many shapes, sometimes that of Siobhan and sometimes that of Tilly but Jess knows it is actually her twin sister. When they reach the end, Jess "realised with a feeble, drowsy awe that she was looking at herself." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 165) Here, in accordance with the Yoruba beliefs which have been discussed previously, we can observe how an ibeji statue can be highly beneficial and benign if it is not neglected. Sarah hitherto pointed out that they did not initially order an ibeji statue to be made for Fern, which could be considered as neglect as, when Jess's grandfather bought the ibeji carving, Jess is said to have "needed the forgiveness it brought." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 164) It is as if Jess is pardoned only when the carving is made in Fern's honour. Moreover, with the carving of an ibeji statue for Fern, it can be argued that Jess's soul becomes complete and that

she is restored to her true self by overthrowing Tilly. Consequently, it is possible to see that the belief in life after death and in spirits has an immense importance for the Yoruba people and the reflections of this uncanny belief can be clearly observed in Oyeyemi's novel.

Having discussed the abiku and the ibeji statues of Yoruba culture, we can now also consider and interpret Jess's banishment from her body as being stuck in limbo, which is another uncanny notion. Being in an in-between state of not entirely being alive or dead is, according to Freud and Royle, an uncanny concept. When Tilly possesses Jess's body, Jess is transformed into a phantom. Jess loses her body but her consciousness does not perish. Her soul lingers in "a wilderness for the mind." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 164) The depiction of the limbo that Jess is caught up in paints a bleak picture. It is a "dry and arid" space with "dried out, crackling vegetation moving past her while she stood still." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 164) And when Jess tried to fight Tilly to get her body back, Tilly "would laugh and throw Jess off, cartwheeling away into the sandstorm that whipped Jess's lips and made her eyes small pools of hopeless, grainy yellow." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p.164) This desolate in-between place and the utter desperation of Jess's consciousness without a physical body creates a highly powerful uncanny effect in the novel.

In-betweenness or in-between spaces are, as mentioned above, uncanny territories and we can also see reflections of this in Jess's identity. Her father is a white English man whereas her mother is a black Nigerian woman and Jess's identity is split between her two different backgrounds, neither of which she feels like she belongs to. When her grandfather refers to Jess with her Yoruba name Wuraola, Jess's first reaction is to ask "who?" to herself, only later to realise that it's her own name. She

contemplates that nobody addresses Jess as Wuraola and thinks, "her clothes clung to her like another skin, Wuraola sounded like another person. Not her at all. Should she answer to this name, and by doing so steal the identity of someone who belonged here? Should she ... *become* Wuraola?" (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 9) The rift in her identity is also accentuated by Tilly, who calls Jess "Jessy" on the tabletop message. Jess reflects, "This was the second time that someone had called her something that she had never been called by anyone before. First Wuraola, now Jessy. She'd always been *Jess* or *Jessamy*, never a halfway thing like Jessy." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 20) Despite her lack of sense of belonging in Nigeria, she does not entirely feel at home in England either. She is facing problems at school and struggles to fit in with her classmates. Her classmates perceive her as "the other" due to both her ethnicity and her mental health issues which causes them to brand her as "weird" or "mad." Sasser (2014) argues that there are parallels between Oyeyemi and Jess in the sense that " both are bicultural by virtue of their growing up in greater London and therefore struggle with the gaps this creates between themselves and Nigeria(nness)." (p. 180) Jess suffers from racially motivated verbal attacks by the bullies in her school due to her being mixed-race. As Colleen McLain says, "Maybe Jessamy has all these 'attacks' because she can't make up her mind whether she's black or white." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 43) These racist aggressions show that Jess is perceived as "the other" in England as well as in Nigeria. This rupture in her identity is reflected in her dreams, when she is visited by Tilly's deceased twin. She says to Jess, "'*We are the same,' said the long-armed woman, as she flew away. She wasn't speaking English, and it wasn't Yoruba either. 'Yes' said Jessamy.*" (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 52) From this vision, we can observe that Jess neither fully identifies as English nor Nigerian. Also as Feldner (2019) makes clear, "The unhomely, meaning a feeling of unbelonging, of not being at home,

is therefore another way of describing the outsider status of the hybrid which Jess experiences herself." (p. 159) There are strong parallels between Bhabha's concept of the nation and the unhomely and the portayal of Jess's character. Jess represents "the other", a disruptive figure to the wholeness of the English nation. She depicts the complex diversity of the people who occupy the modern nation with her identity as a half Nigerian, half English girl. We can also see echoes of Kristeva's concept of the uncanny and its association with the other. Jess's otherness causes the people around her to perceive her as uncanny, hence she is constantly bullied and attacked by her fellow classmates. As Kristeva made clear, when the citizens of a certain nation are confronted by "the other," they project their inner "otherness" onto them by reacting aggressively. This aggression, according to Kristeva, is where prejudice stems from in all nation states. By the same token, we can make sense of why Jess has been utterly ostracized as an outsider in her school by her white peers.

Furthermore, Bhabha hitherto argued that the nation creates the illusion of unity through an essentialist narrative and we can see Jess's maternal grandfather makes the same commentary. On the topic of English Literature, he remarks, "Words describing white people, white things, every single story spun out in some place where WE don't exist! It has no value; in my eyes." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 13) By the same token, however, Bhabha also pointed out that texts written from the margins of society simultaneously exist with the texts that reflect the ideology of the state. Accordingly, Bhabha showed that the texts written by marginalized people truly reflect the reality of the nation. Likewise, in Oyeyemi's novel, Jess' mother Sarah is also a writer. As a Nigerian immigrant woman living in the UK, Sarah represents "the other" in the eyes of British society and, writing from this standpoint, she mirrors the authenticity of the nation’s people while creating a rift in the fictitious unity of Britain. The idea of

whiteness as the default is critized further by Oyeyemi in the novel. This criticism manifests itself on the topic of Barbie dolls. When Jess sees the Barbies owned by Shivs, she says "My mum won't let me have Barbies. She thinks they're evil. She says they, um, can't be a role model for real women because they represent this white idea of beauty." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 63) When Shivs remarks that there are also black Barbies, Jess replies, "My mum says..they look just like the white ones, only with a different skin colour." (Oyeyemi, 2005, p. 64) It is possible to observe that the ideology of the nation presents itself in every area of life, including children's toys. The misconception of a harmonious, unified society in which only white citizens of a certain nation live is woven into the very fabric of the society. When Sarah says that Barbies don't represent "real women", she eloquently illustrates that women are a heterogenous group of people and that they cannot simply be represented by white women as there are women have a wide variety of different experiences and identities. From this discussion on Barbies, we can also observe the nation's efforts to assimilate and erase people who do not fit in with the accepted norms of the society. Even when producing black Barbies, they manufacture them so that they still have white facial features. People of color are distinctly marginalized by Western society and the Barbie doll is a miniature reflection of this widespread issue. To sum up, this chapter has explored the relations between *the Icarus Girl* and the phenomenon of the uncanny with a particular focus on the villainous doppelganger TillyTilly, as well as on the racial tensions depicted in the novel.

CHAPTER 4: WHITE IS FOR WITCHING

The other book by Oyeyemi which we will discuss is her 2009 book *White is for Witching.* The novel follows the story of Miranda Silver, who is struggling with an eating disorder named pica, which causes her to consume substances which have no nutritional value such as chalk, and the strange events which take place in the house which belonged to her family for generations. Miranda and her twin brother Eliot have recently lost their mother Lily, who was killed in Haiti where she was working as a photographer. After this calamitious event, the Silver twins are left with their father Luc, with whom they live in 29 Barton Road in Dover, England. One of the most significant uncanny elements of the story is the house itself, which not an ordinary house as we know of and are familiar with. Instead, it is an autonomous entity with not only consciousness but also the power carry out its malicious intentions. Additionally, the house speaks for itself and narrates its story from its own point of view. Firstly, it is possible to see that a house that is alive is in line with Freud's approach to animism, a material object having a life of its own. Freud considered animism as an uncanny occurence in his essay, so the house constitutes the first instance of uncanniness depicted in the novel. Moreover, by analyzing 29 Barton Road further, we can observe that, due to its ability to think, talk and act independently, it could easily be considered as a supernatural being. As Royle indicated, the uncanny always has an association with supernatural phenomena. Another important characteristic of the house is that it is extremely racially prejudiced and has hostile motives, based on which it can cause actual harm to its visitors as well as its inhabitants. The family uses the house not only as their home but also as a hotel, which means that many people from different backgrounds and ethnicities stay within

its walls. When the guests of the house are not white, the house starts to develop animosity towards them and displays its hostility by physically or mentally attacking them. Consequently, in line with Homi Bhabha's theory of the "unhomely", we can see the effects of the English colonial ideology in Oyeyemi's novel and it can thus be argued that the house 29 Barton Road represents the white supremacy and racism of colonial era England. As Kent (2016) states,

> The home, and the xenophobia that comes hand in hand with it, becomes the gothic villain that violently seeks nationalistic and racial homogeneity. Oyeyemi's haunted house magnifies the enduring legacy of British colonialism, the continuing colonial fears of contamination, and whiteness as the essence of Englishness within colonial ideology. (para. 1)

The location of the house is also highly revelant as Dover is situated on the very edge of England. Since the uncanny is closely associated with limits and borders, the site of 29 Barton Road becomes consequential as well. Dover is described by Sade, the housekeeper of 29 Barton Road, as follows, "'Didn't they call Dover the key to England?' she asked, slowly. 'Key to a locked gate, throughout both world wars, and even before. It's still fighting.'" (Oyeyemi, 2009, p.107) From this, we can presume that Dover serves as a barrier between England and the world, attempting and "fighting" to keep the world out of its borders.

The house's racist sentiments start to flourish when Anna Good, who is the great-great grandmother of the Silver women, loses her husband Andrew during the Second World War. Upon learning her husband's fate, Anna proclaims, "I hate them... Blackies, Germans, killers, dirty.... dirty killers. He should have stayed here with me." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 118) We can pinpoint this moment as the beginning of 29 Barton

Road's racism, when it internalized and absorbed the declarations uttered by Anna. The house claims that Anna's speech is what ties the Silver women to itself and says, "we are on the inside, and we have to stay together, and we absolutely cannot have anyone else" and "they shouldn't be allowed in though, those others, so eventually I make them leave." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 118) From these words, we can clearly observe the xenophobia of the house and its determination to keep foreigners outside its borders. Due to the fact that the house is simultaneously used as a hotel, foreigners from all over the world come to stay in it and this brings the outside world to the very heart of home, obscuring the rigid limits that set these two separate worlds apart. We can present the house's malicious treatment towards Ore, who is Miranda's girlfriend from Cambridge, as an example of how it attacks people with the intention to hurt them or make them flee. When Ore comes to 29 Barton Road to visit Miranda, the house instantly develops an extreme dislike towards her. Even before her arrival, the house forms a hateful opinion of her by describing her physical features as, "The squashed nose, the pillow lips, fist-sized breasts, the reek of fluids from the seam between her legs. The skin. The skin." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 194) Oyeyemi makes the racism of the house and its immense issue with Ore's blackness apparent in these last two exclamations. The overall discourse used by the house is also brimming with racial prejudice. Another issue of 29 Barton Road is the romantic tie between Miranda and Ore. When Miranda announces that she is in love with Ore, the house deems it as "disgusting" and makes a racist analogy between their relationship and the contamination of a fresh water stream with the words, "When clear water moves unseen a taint creeps into it - moss, or algea, salt, even. It becomes foul, undrinkable. It joins the sea." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 194) The house's obsession with whiteness and racial purity is palpable in this statement. As the novel progresses, the house directly

attacks Ore by making her see a illusion of herself in the mirror in which she scrapes her skin off while drying herself. Ore says, "I frowned and looked at my towel. Where it had touched me it was striped with black liquid, as dense as paint... there were shreds of hard skin in it." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 214) After showing her this false image, the house starts to verbally taunt her. "'The black's coming off,' someone outside the bathroom door commented. Then they whistled 'Rule Britannia' and laughed." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 214) From this, we can further observe the overt bigotry of the house and how it correlates Englishness with whiteness. Kent (2016) states, "Explicitly centered on race and British nationalism, the house attempts to strip Ore of her blackness." (para. 11) The house continues to relentlessly terrorize Ore to the extent that she eventually flees. By the same token, Ore is not the only person the house torments into leaving. At the beginning of the novel, the former housekeepers of the hotel, who are immigrants, leave the house in a hurry after an incident involving their daughter Deme, who got stuck in the elevator of the house in the middle of the night. Eerily, Deme was found the next morning standing on tiptoe and looking at the alarm button with her eyes wide open but not pressing it or calling for help as if "all night a stubborn thing in her had kept her on her feet." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 36) It is clearly implied that this incident was an attack conducted by the house itself, as upon leaving the house, Deme and her sister Suryaz leave a letter for Miranda, which reads, "We do not like this house, and we are glad to be going away." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 57) This is particularly baffling to Miranda because "while the house offers a hospitable space for the Silver family, it is dangerous for racial others." (Kent, 2016, para. 6) The house poses no fatal threat to Miranda or her family but it "operates as a dangerous space for those that it identifies as not British, not white, and not belonging." (Kent, 2016, para. 6) The house only becomes dangerous to the Silver

family members if they try to depart or do something the house does not approve of (such as Miranda's relationship with Ore) and it only does this because the house believes that it's protecting them. We can perceive this clearly when the house says, "I would save Miranda even if I had to break her." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 194) This stems from the house's will to put distinct and definitive limits between its white English inhabitants and the outsiders. We can observe the protective sentiments of the house when Miranda's mother Lily dies in Haiti and the house declares "Stupid, stupid; Lily had been warned not to go to Haiti. I warned her. Why do people go to these places, these places that are not for them?" (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 8) Not only can we observe the manifestation of Bhabha's notion of the unhomely, we can also see a direct correspondence with Kristeva's uncannny. According to Kristeva, all forms of racial prejudice are deeply rooted in the uncanniness of the other and seeing the reflection of this otherness within ourselves. Consequently, we project the internal otherness of ourselves to the outside world and direct our aggressive impulses onto anyone who we deem as different. In line with Kristeva's theory, we can perceive that the house shows aggression and prejudice towards people it perceives as an outsider and that this is closely related to the concept of the uncanny.

Another way the house attack its residents is by manupilating a mannequin like a puppet. This is an uncanny incident not only because the house is acting out of racial bias, but also because it contains an inanimate being with life. Miranda buys a mannequin for a coat she's sewing and the house uses this mannequin to carry out it's malignant plan, which is to attack Sade, who is an African immigrant employed by Miranda's father to govern the house. As she is a foreigner and a black woman, the house resents her and wishes to force her out. It attacks Sade by manipulating the mannequin, like operating a puppet, to deliver her an apple, which is described as

having two sides, one dangerous and the other ordinary. The mannequin "seized her chin, opened her mouth with its fingers and pressed the white side of the apple, the bad side, against her mouth." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p.139) Following this episode, the house regularly attacks Sade until it leads her to madness. To give an example of the hostile discourse the house uses, we can present the words, "Everything you have I will turn against you. I'll turn sugar bitter for you. I'll take your very shield and crack it on your head," and lastly, "Sade goodbye." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 175)

Subsequently, we can now analyze the other uncanny element of the incident with the mannequin, which can seemingly move by its own accord. The mannequin's animation is described by the house thus,

> A moment of utter silence throughout me, then the mannequin opened the door. It bent and picked the apple up. I very much enjoy the way the mannequin moves - it rejoices in its limbs, rearranging itself quickly and expertly, ending each sequence of movement with a flourish. (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 138)

Despite Freud's argument that a lifeless object having life or the opposite does not create an uncanny effect, we can observe how the mannequin's animation creates fear and uneasiness in line with Jentsch's approach, as when Sade sees the mannequin, "she was so afraid that she became stupid and babbled senselessly." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 138) The frightfulness of the mannequin is also commented on by Ore who says, "The moon-coloured mannequin halfway across the room had its arms out, as if it would smoothly and calmly murder me if I moved for the door." (Oyeyemi, 2019, p. 219) Parallel to Jentsch's essay, despite the fact that the reader knows the mannequin is controlled by the house, it still does not dimish the uncanny effect caused by the

figure. The mannequin consistently evokes fear and terror in the reader by the unnatural way it moves and functions. Its movements are described thus, "it was too fast for plastic, too slow fabric. It sort of rippled." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 138) Another reason why the mannequin still conjures fear despite the completion of intellectual mastery is due to the way the house talks about it. As stated before, it is known that the house operates the mannequin, however when talking about it's movements, the house uses words such as "I very much enjoy the way that mannequin moves," and, "the mannequin skipped downstairs." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 138) We can observe that the house is passive when describing the mannequin's actions, as if it moves independently from the house. This makes it difficult to distinguish between the agency of the house and this life sized dummy, as we do not know to which extent the house commands the mannequin. Did the house give it life and a purpose and then leave it to act by its own accord or did it control the mannequin the entire time? Since we do not have answers to this, the uncanny impression does not entirely dissipate. Moreover, the uncanny effect is created when the familiar and the unfamiliar merge into each other and the features of the mannequin provoke this effect in the reader as it has a head and a face but no facial features. Likewise, it has the form of a human but it is not human, and we can observe that, while the figure has a resemblance to a human being, there is something about it that is not quite right and all of these elements contribute to the uncanny effect created by the mannequin in the story.

After exploring the xenophobia and the supernatural aspects of 29 Barton Road, we can now focus on the xenophobia outside its walls, as the cultural conflict inside the house is not the only one that emerges in the novel. Outside the house, in Dover, xenophobia is extremely prevalent and is directed towards racial minorities. Throughout the story, Kosovan refugees are often subjected to violence. In the *Dover Post*, Miranda reads about "the stabbing of the

fourth Kosovan refugee in three weeks. Three had died in hospital." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 29-30) So, we can see that Kosovan refugees suffer from fatal physical violence which can be deemed as hate crimes. Futhermore, the Kosovan refugees aren't the only people who experience racism. Ore, who was adopted by a white English family, is originally from Nigeria and, as a black woman, she regularly faces racism from some of her white family members, such as her cousin, Sean. At Christmas dinner, Sean uses a racist leaflet devised by the local British National Party to agitate and upset Ore. He reads, "Do you know how many immigrants are living in the UK at present?" and "We don't know either. Neither does the UK government" several times from the leaflet throughout dinner. (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 201) The leaflet is said to feature a "clipart of a bulldog and a British flag on it. He was practically poking me in the eye with a corner of it." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 201) Another minority group in Dover who are subjected to xenophobic violence is Chinese immigrants. While listening to the news on the radio, Sade and Miranda find out that "Up at the port, fifty-eight people had been found dead in the back of a truck. Chinese. They had suffocated. Miranda was a heartbeat away from putting her hands over her ears. What is wrong with Dover, she thought." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 107)

This incident strongly and eerily foreshadows another real life event which took place in Essex in 2019, ten years after the episode in the novel. The incident, which is known as the Essex Lorry Deaths, involved 39 Vietnamese migrants who were found dead in the back of a lorry. Mirroring the episode from Oyeyemi’s novel, they suffocated on their way to the UK. (Essex lorry deaths: Men jailed for killing 39 migrants in trailer, 2021) Mr. Justice Sweeny claims that “I have no doubt that the conspiracy was a sophisticated, long-running and profitable one to smuggle mainly Vietnamese people across the channel." (Essex lorry deaths: Men jailed for killing 39 migrants in trailer, 2021) They were the victims of a smuggling gang which exploited migrants who only wished for a better life. While

xenophobia is not overtly visible in this incident, the underlying conditions that led to the deaths of these people are. The reason why the migrants chose such a dangerous and illegal means of transport is because they could not legally move to the UK. Britain's immigration policy which makes it exceedingly difficult for people to immigrate to the UK stems from an inherent fear of others and an unwillingness to accomodate foreigners in the country.

To give an example of this bias, we can look at the evolution of the immigration laws in the UK. Starting from the period between 1905 and 1970, with the exeption of the British Nationality Act in 1948, all the laws implemented were designed to restrict immigration to the UK. (Experiences of immigrants in the Modern era, 1990 – present, n.d.) During this period, the laws were fueled by the changes the two World Wars brought about. In the course of the first World War, "32,000 Germans and Austrians, seen as 'enemy aliens', were interned in camps and had their wealth seized by the government." (Experiences of immigrants in the Modern era, 1990- present, n.d., para. 1) This is due to the fact that after the World War II, Britain needed foreign workers in order to rebuilt it's economy. (Experiences of immigrants in the Modern era, 1990- present, n.d.) New labour force was a necessity, particularly in the areas of transportation and National Health service. (Commonwealth immigrants in the Modern Era, 1948- present, n.d.) The UK also needed workers due to the damage caused by the war to its cities. (Commonwealth immigrants in the Modern Era, 1948- present, n.d.) This, in turn, led to a wave of mass immigration to the UK from all over the world. During this time period, the British Nationality Act allowed all commonwealth citizens to have British passports and work in Britain. (Commonwealth immigrants in the Modern Era, 1948- present, n.d.) Moreover, "many of the earliest arrivals were from the West Indies, South Asia and Cyprus. The most famous arrival was of people from the Caribbean - mainly Jamaica and Trinidad

> – on the ship *Empire Windrush* in 1948." (Commonwealth immigrants in the Modern Era, 1948- present, n.d., para. 1) The mass immigration was also caused by the problems that these immigrants faced in their own countries, which ultimately led them to search for a better life somewhere else. For example, in Caribbean islands, there were very high rates of unemployment, while in Cyprus there was a civil war. (Commonwealth immigrants in the Modern Era, 1948- present, n.d.) All of these factors contributed to the mass immigration to the UK in the 40's. Consequently, the immigrants who moved to the UK "experienced frequent racial discrimination and violence; landlords would refuse to let rooms to black and Irish tenants; and 'color bans' operated in some workplaces." (Commonwealth immigrants in the Modern Era, 1948- present, n.d., para. 2)

The immigration laws changed after the 70's due to the fact that, " immigration from the EU member states had to be allowed by European law, so most legislation was aimed at refugees and asylum seekers." Experiences of immigrants in the Modern era, 1990- present, n.d., para. 3) From this period onwards, some laws protecting immigrants from hate crimes were implemented by the British government, such as the Crime and Disorder Act in 1998, which enforced severe punishments to those commiting hate crimes based on religion and race. (Experiences of immigrants in the Modern era, 1990- present, n.d.) However, despite these new laws aimed at protecting immigrants, xenophobia still remained prevalent and widespread across the country. Some British politicians also fed the anti-immigration attitudes of the British public. We can show the speech Margaret Thatcher gave in 1978 as an example. She proclaimed,

If we went on as we are then, by the end of the century, there would be four million people of the new Commonwealth or Pakistan here. Now, that is an awful lot and I think it means that

people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture and you know... people are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in. (Jeffries, 2014, para. 7)

Here, we can clearly observe that Thatcher used people's fear against foreigners to win the General election, which worked as she became Prime Minister in the following year. (Jeffries, 2014) Moreover, it can also be argued that she normalized violence against immigrants with her remarks. We can still see the same rhetoric used even in recent years with the British politician Michael Fallon, who said in 2014, for instance, that "British Towns are being 'swamped' by immigrants" (Jeffries, 2014, para. 1) It is clear that Fallon echoes the same dehumanizing language used by Thatcher decades ago. Likewise, UKIP, which is a right-wing populist party in the UK, used similar anti-migrant discourse to influence the Bretix referendum in 2016. The party advocated for Britain to leave the European Union in order to restrict immigration to the UK by using discriminatory language designed to evoke fear and hatred towards immigrants. We can present Nigel Farage's poster as an example of this. Farage, who was the leader of UKIP at the time, issued a poster which read: "Breaking Point: the EU failed us all." (Stewart & Mason, 2016, para. 1) The poster shows "a queue of mostly non-white migrants and refugees," alongside the words, "We must break free of the EU and take back control." (Stewart & Mason, 2016, para. 1) Moreover, people compared the poster to a clip of immigrants used by the Nazis as propaganda material. (Stewart & Mason, 2016) The similarity between the poster and the footage of the immigrants is so striking that it clearly demostrates how UKIP, much like the Nazis, uses fearmongering to create anti-immigration sentiments in British citizens.

We can also show “the streaming algorithm” which has been used by the British government until recently, and which was abandoned as a result of protests from migrants’ rights campaigners, as an instance of the same bias. “The ‘streaming algorithm’, which campaigners have described as racist, has been used since 2015 to process visa applications to the UK.” (McDonald, 2020) The system processed the data presented by the visa applicants and gave each candidate a color code: red, amber or green. (Home Office drops ‘racist’ algorithm from visa decisions, 2020) “One metric used was nationality - and FoxGlove alleged that the Home Office kept a "secret list of suspect nationalities" which would automatically be given a red rating.” (Home Office drops ‘racist algorithm from visa decisions, 2020) As a result, people from the countries listed by the Home Office as dangerous would likely be denied a visa on the grounds of their nationality.These inherently biased immigration laws in turn lead desperate people who are fleeing from the dangers of their country to seek unsafe ways to escape to the UK. As Mr Justice Sweeney points out about the victims of the previously discussed incident: “ The willingness of the victims to try and enter the country illegally provides no excuse for what happened to them." (Essex lorry deaths: Men jailed for killing 39 migrants in trailer, 2021) As this event heavily resembles the event from Oyeyemi’s novel, it is possible to argue that the Chinese immigrants who suffocated in the novel were also victims of a xenophobic system which denied them safe passage to their country. Additionally, there are hints about the state of the Immigration Removal Centres and the frictions which take place there. When Miranda and Sade sees protests outside the center and ask what's happened, they hear that "another inmate hung themselves." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 114) This incident affects Sade deeply, who later voices the novel's criticism of the brutality and the cruelty of the xenophobic English government with the words,

> I'm thinking of the shame. To make a man hang himself. That place is a prison. You come without papers because you have been unable to prove that you are useful to anyone, and then when you arrive they put you in prison, and if you are unable to prove that you have suffered, they send you back. (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 119)

As a result, we can see that the racism of 29 Barton Road is a symbol of the racism of not just Dover, but also of the English colonial ideology. On the topic of 29 Barton Road and how it reflects the society outside its walls, Stephanou observes, "Connecting past and present, the individual hauntings and estranging experiences of immigrants within the house are repetitions of the violent history of British imperialism and reminders of the current political climate of immigration and xenophobia in Britain" (p. 124) As Homi Bhabha makes clear, the unhomely is a post-colonial domain and due to Oyeyemi's criticism of British colonialism, the novel is deemed as post-colonial by many critics. As Cousins (2012) states, "*White is for Witching* combines elements of the nineteenth-century gothic with a postmodern sensibility, and an attention to race which moves it into territory occupied by the postcolonial gothic." (p. 57) Consequently, we can observe the traces of the unhomely in this postcolonial novel. As Bhabha pointed out, the unhomely effect derives from the ambiguous limits between the world and the home and here in Dover, we can see a wide variety of people from different backgrounds coexisting alongside citizens of Britain. In modern states, it is not possible to draw clear cut boundaries between the outside and the inside as well as between the foreigners and the citizens and the novel illustrates this reality openly. This vagueness is precisely one of the elements that give the novel its unhomely impression. Furthermore, the circumstances of Britain depicted by Oyeyemi also complements Bhabha's concept of the nation. Oyeyemi accurately

portrays the complex reality of the British nation by drawing our attention to the experiences of the people who live in the margins of the society. It would likewise be relevant to draw our attention to Kristeva's concept of the uncanny and how she associates uncanniness with the new form of xenophobia created by the emergence of modern nations. As has been touched on above, the novel details violence against ethnic groups, minorities, immigrants and refugees in all its reality, which is one of the most important aspects that amplifies the uncanniness of the text. We have formerly alluded to the murders of Kosovan refugees as well as Chinese immigrants, we can now recount a dialogue between Miranda, Eliot and her Kosovan classmates. They mistake Miranda for somebody else who is linked to the murders of their cousins and confront her about it. They threaten Miranda with a knife but she manages to escape without getting harmed. Consequently, Elliot finds out that his sister was attacked and talks to one of the girls who did it, Tijana. Elliot tells Tijana, "Did you think it was clever to come after my sister with knives? Say you cut her, do you think you would have gotten away with that?" In turn, Tijana's cousin responds, "No, they would not have gotten away with it... It's only the other way around that nothing is done." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 112) This exchange suggests the overt xenophobia of the justice system in the UK. White, British citizen's lives are more valued and protected than the lives of immigrants, refugees and people of color. To sum up, Oyeyemi's depiction of life in the nation has parallels with both Bhabha's and Kristeva's interpretation of the uncanny phenomenon and its correlation with modern states.

Furthermore, another consequential uncanny element present in the story is the concept of being buried alive. The house has an infatuation with the female members of the Silver family and, for generations, it did not allow them to leave its borders and

trapped some of them who tried to do so. Jennifer Silver, who is Miranda's grandmother, could be presented as an example. Miranda's mother Lily believed her whole life that her mother abandoned her when she was a baby, whlie Jennifer was actually trapped inside the house. Jennifer decided to abandon her daughter and leave 29 Barton Road to run off with her Italian boyfriend, which the house did not approve of both because her lover was a foreigner and because of her decision to move to Milan, a foreign city to which Jennifer did not belong in the house's eyes. Consequently, it finds a way to imprison her within its walls by conjuring a new door that did not exist before. Jennifer, upon seeing this strange new door appear out of nowhere in her bedroom, goes inside to explore what lies behind it. The events which take place after are described by the house as follows,

> When she was safely down the new passageway, I closed the door behind her. It was the best sort of winter morning, cold but bright. That was the only sort of light Jennifer saw after that - it came through great windows and she couldn't find her way away from them and out of me. (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 84)

The house informs us that Jennifer spend her entire life trapped inside the house in a dazed and stunned mental state until the day she died. Therefore, it is possible to interpret Jennifer's captivity behind these walls as being buried alive, as the house served as a tomb for her. Moreover, Jennifer Silver is not the only woman that the house held captive, it is implied that Miranda is likewise trapped behind its walls. From the very beginning of the novel, the reader is told that Miranda has disappeared, even before the events which gradually led to her disappearance are portrayed. The story starts with the question "where is miranda?" to which Ore answers, "Miranda Silver is in Dover, in the ground beneath her mother's house...her ears are filled with

earth...her eyes are closed, but her heart thrums hard like hummingbird wings." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 1) To the same question, 29 Barton Road answers, "she is stretched out inside a wall she is feasting on plaster." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 2) Consequently, we can argue that there is a strong indication that Miranda is buried alive, as Ore says that despite her being under earth, she still retains a heartbeat. This theme could also be observed in relation to an incident involving two black guests of the hotel. As stated earlier, the house attacks anyone who is not white or British and we can see another example of an attack which is uncanny in it's nature because it involves this motif of being buried alive. The house says, "the couple on the second floor who I had kept in their bed the past last three days, curved around the bed like fitted sheets with their faces crusting over." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 139) The phrase "their faces crusting over" has strong connotations of the uncanny. The words “crusting over” bring to one’s mind the image of dried up mud that is cracked and parched. The implication here is that the couple’s faces have been covered and withered with mud. Since people are buried under the earth upon their death, it could be implied that they have been buried alive by the house. The sheets under which they have been trapped are described in the same way that mud is described therefore it is possible to form a connection between these two images. Another significant aspect which should be discussed in this paragraph is the connection between the house and the womb of the mother in terms of Freud's theory of the uncanny. As Freud stated, the fear of being buried alive derives from the wish to reunite with the mother by going back to an inorganic state through the means of death. People are in an inorganic state only when they are in their mother's womb or when they are dead inside a coffin. Subsequently, the correlation between the womb and the tomb is palpable in Freud's theory of the uncanny. Therefore, this uncanny fear of being buried alive plays an important role in

generating uncanniness in the novel. Moreover, the house plays the part of a coffin and simultaneously a womb for the inhabitants which it trapped.

Cannibalism, which is another important element of the uncanny, plays a prevalent role in Oyeyemi's novel. In order to analyze the cannibalism depicted in the story in depth, we will first examine the roots of the history of disordered eating in the Silver family. Miranda suffers from an eating disorder named pica, which causes her to eat substances such as chalk and plastic. Additionally, she is not the only Silver women to have struggled with an eating disorder. Her great grandmother Anna Good also had the same affliction. The house informs us that the eating disorder "runs in the family" and that Anna Good "ruined her work stockings and skirt with crouching in the mud searching for acorn husks that would splinter down her throat." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 23) Furthermore, a woman who is related to Anna Good is described as "an animal" and said to "slash at her flesh with the blind, frenzied concentration that a starved person might use," and to "drink off her blood, then bite and suck at the bobbled stubs of her meat." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 24) By the same token, the house informs Miranda that "It is useful, instructive, comforting to know that you are not alone in your history." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 24) In consequence, the book tells us that there is a "long line of women with disorderly eating and a history of vampirism, self-consumption and the uncontrollable desire for consumption of others." (Porter, 2012, p. 3) On the topic of Miranda's eating disorder, Oyeyemi herself reveals that Miranda's condition actually conceals an appetite of a different nature: that of consuming human flesh and blood. (Porter, 2012) Subtle allusions to this are dispersed throughout the novel. For instance, Miranda says that she is exceedingly hungry and that this hunger is "not for chalk, not for plastic" but for something else. (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 96) Likewise, it is said about her that "plastic is not satisfying this

night. As for beef, as for his Frenchie beef..." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 79-80) This sentence is in relation to the food Miranda's father Luc prepares for her, in hopes of curing Miranda's eating disorder. Since Luc is a chef from France, the expression "his Frenchie beef" could signify the meal with beef and potatoes which Luc made for her. However, preceding this sentence, Miranda eats this meal with extreme reluctance. She ponders, "there is no way that taking this stuff into my body is doing me any good. Sauce ran across her nose and cheeks and there were tears in her plate." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 78) From the way she cries while eating, the way the food spills from her mouth and comes out of her nose, we can argue that it took her an immense amount of effort to gulp down her food and that she clearly forced herself to eat it. Miranda's extreme dislike for this meal distinctly implies that she did not find it satisfying. Therefore, "his Frenchie beef" could indicate her father's flesh, thus Miranda's wish to consume her father. Similarly, Miranda's consuming of not only chalk but also of Ore is distinctly visible in the story. Her overwhelming wish to eat Ore presents itself when she is said to turn "the beginning of a bite into a kiss whenever Ore stirred" and that "Miranda had needed Ore open. Her head had spun with the desire to taste." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 191) As the novel progresses, it is strongly implied that Miranda is slowly consuming Ore. We first start to notice this when Ore's appearence begins to change. Despite a lack of drastic difference in her eating habits, Ore mysteriously starts to lose weight since arriving at Cambridge and starting a relationship with Miranda. She is baffled by this, as she says, "I had never eaten so much, I had never wanted to eat so much. But my clothes kept getting looser." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 185) Traces of this can also be seen when Miranda writes on her notebook, "*Manage your consumption*" and continues, "*Ore is not food. I think*

I am a monster." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 191-92) We can evidently see more manifestations of how Miranda consumes Ore. Ore reveals,

> As we kissed I became aware of something leaving me. It left me in a solid stream, heavy as a rope. It left from a hurt in my side, and it went into Miranda, in went into the same place in her. (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 213)

It is also noteworthy to point out that Miranda is consuming her girlfriend, who is someone she loves. As stated earlier, love and cannibalism have a strong correlation in the sense that cannibals only consumes the people they love. In addition to this theme of cannibalism, Oyeyemi presents us with another substantial figure related to our topic, which is the soucouyant. In Caribbean Folklore, the figure of the soucouyant is a "wicked old woman who flies from her body and at night consumes her food, the souls of others." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 147) She carries out this deed by leaving her body behind and turning into a ball of flame. (Johnson, 2019) Furthermore, Johnson (2019) defines this eerie figure as a woman who "seeks for people who have done evil by entering their homes to suck their blood." (para. 6) From this, we can gather that there are distinct parallels between the European concept of vampires and the Caribbean soucouyant. Very similarly to a vampire, she "sucks blood from the soft parts of the body of her victims while they are in a trance or asleep and leaves blue marks on their body." (Johnson, 2019, para. 7) However, the soucouyant can be defeated with salt and pepper. The soucouyant was vanquished by a girl who "reached right inside the old woman skin and rubbed salt and pepper all along it." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 166) When the fireball came back home and entered her own skin she "screamed and fell deflated." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 166) Therefore, it is possible to argue that a correlation between Miranda and the soucouyant is drawn in

the story. As examples, we can show how Miranda labels herself "a monster" in her notebook while the soucouyant is likewise defined by Ore as, "She is a monster. She dies," and that "All monsters deserve to die." (Oyeyemi, 2019, p. 166) Furthermore, the soucouyant "sucks the life out of people" in the same way that Miranda devours and consumes Ore. (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 167) By the same token, there are clear allusions to Miranda as a vampire. Subtle hints to this could be observed when Miranda says to Ore that "she was thristy. She kissed me and said again that she was thristy." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 216) These words could be interpreted as Miranda's thrist for Ore's blood. Furthermore, Ore feels the urge to check Miranda's teeth. She says, "I fought the impulse to part her lips with my fingers, to check her teeth." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 219) Furthermore, the novel tells us that chalk and plastic made "Miranda hungier for what was not there, so hungry that she released her mother's hand and held her own throat and gagged. Her hunger hardened her stomach, grew new teeth inside her." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 127) Miranda is alluded to as a vampire several times in the story and it is made more evident from these phrases involving her teeth. This interconnection is even more defined when Ore is confronted with Miranda's shadow in the dark kitchen of 29 Barton Road, which she mistakes as the soucouyant. In the same way that one might fight with the soucouyant, Ore went "to the counter, spilled salt all over it and ran the flat of a knife through the salt, on both sides," and proclaimed, "Kill the soucouyant." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 217) In addition, "The looking people" also play a significant part in the novel in terms of the theme of vampirism. We learn about the looking people from the letter that Suryaz and Deme wrote for Miranda. The letter reads, "There are extra floors, with lots of people on them. They are looking people. They look at you and they never move." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 57) We encounter these strange people again when Ore confronts them too. She describes

them as "people who stared and said nothing." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 229) Consequently, she implies that these people are malignant beings. "They looked at me, crowded so close, murder in their eyes." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 229) It is consequently revealed that they are the soucouyant as Ore says "Kill the soucouyant, salt and pepper" and rubs salt in their eyes, which blinds them. Moreover, they are described as "alabaster-white," which is the trademark physical characteristic of the skin of vampires. Therefore, we can observe that Oyeyemi blends together European and Carribean folklore which further accentuates her representation of the cultural diversity of Britain, where there are no clear cut distinctions between the home and the outside. Another important point we can add is to this discussion is the relation between the vampires and the fear of the other. Oyeyemi reveals, "I started thinking that vampire stories were a lot to do with the fear of the outsider, because you've got this foreign count with this unnatural appetite." (Machell, 2009) To sum up, we can argue that vampires and the soucouyant produce the uncanny effect not only through the means of their cannibalism and their consumption of human flesh and blood, but also due to their cultural connotations of signifying the other.

Having discussed the cannibalism depicted in the story in terms of the uncanny, we can now examine another uncanny element of the story, which is witchcraft. Freud (1919) deems "magic and witchcraft, omnipotence of thoughts" as examples of uncanny phenomenon. (p. 14) In relation to this, witchcraft plays a prominent role in the novel. One example of witchcraft portrayed in the novel is Juju. Juju is a form a witchcraft which is practiced in many West African countries, including Nigeria. (Cbanga, 2016) The word "Juju" is thought to derive from two different languages, one of them is the French word "joujou" which translates to English as "plaything." (Cbanga, 2016) The other possible language the word could have originated from is

Hausa language, which is spoken by an ethnic group in West Africa, meaning "evil spirit" and "fetish." (Cbanga, 2016) Cbanga explains that Juju is the name of an object which is believed to have been ingrained by magic. These objects could be amulets or charms and their function is described thus,

> Usually worn for protective purposes, those objects have been infused with a particular type of energy, and wearing them is expected to create paths and possibilities for the wearer, as well as guard them against ill fortunes and evil spirits. (Cbanga, 2016, para. 3)

According to Freud, all magical practices are examples of the uncanny because they erase the limits between the reality and the imaginary. Since the practice of Juju is considered to be witchcraft, we can argue that it could be presented as an uncanny subject. If we return to the novel, we first encounter Juju when Eliot sees Sade making one and, because he cannot make any sense of it, calls it "arts and crafts." Later, when Miranda asks her what she's making, Sade answers "Juju" and calls it "Company." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 97) Juju is described thus, "The figure Sade was making looked like two hanged men holding fast to each other." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 97) As the novel progresses, we learn why Sade made this figure, which was to protect herself from the house. Sade sensed that the house was an evil entity and that it meant her harm and consequently made this figure, believing in it's power to shield her from the danger 29 Barton Road posed. Therefore, we can interpret Sade as a witch. Simultaneously, she is not the only witch in the story. 29 Barton Road implies that Anna Good and her "mad" ancestor, which we have described in the previous chapter on cannibalism, are also witches. The house says, "Anna Good, it was not your pica that made you into a witch." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 24) Later, it suggests that it was "another woman, long

before you, but related" that made Anna Good a witch. We have hitherto mentioned that this woman ate her own flesh and drank her own blood and it is the house's insinuation that this woman passed her witchcraft onto her ancestors. Consequently, it is possible to argue that being a witch is something all Silver women inherited from this woman. It also seems to be implied that disordered eating is somehow related to witchcraft. We can distinctly see that only Miranda has pica and not Eliot. Withal, the house is a supernatural entity and the Silver women who reside in it are implied to be witches, which might help us understand the bond between them. The house considers Anna Good to be it's mother and proclaims, "you are a mother of mine, you gave me a kind of life, mine, the kind of alive that I am." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 24) By examining these words, it is possible to argue that Anna Good gave the house its life through her witchcraft. This interpretation would also explain the house's infatuation with only the female members of the Silver family. The house is entirely against Jennifer going to Milan or Lily going to Haiti and yet, it does not have a problem with Eliot moving to South Africa, which he does for an internship. Therefore we can observe that there is a special bond between 29 Barton Road and the Silver women, who could be perceived as witches.

Freud also argued that the belief in the omnipotence of thoughts is an uncanny event. At the start of the novel, we see Eliot considering the fact that Lily forgot her watch before she went to Haiti as a bad omen. He stays in Miranda's room and entreats her to stay awake because he believes that if they fall asleep and forget about their mother, she will die. He says, "Miri...Lily's slipping away. We have to remember her or she'll be gone," and, "Stay awake or Lily will die." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 6) As hard as they try, eventually both of the Silver twins fall asleep and the next morning they find out that their mother has been killed. After this event, they blame each other for

the death of their mother, and when Ore asks Miranda what has happened to her mother, she replies, "It's Eliot's fault." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 4) The twins believe that their thoughts had the power to influence external reality and that it was within their control and power to prevent their mother's death, if only they stayed awake all night. This example of the belief in the omnipotence of thoughts could be shown as an uncanny effect produced by the novel.

Another highly significant element of the uncanny experience are ghosts. Being the spirits of the dead, ghosts are neither entirely alive nor dead, which makes them uncanny. Oyeyemi likewise uses ghosts to heighten the uncanny effect produced by the novel. It is suggested that Miranda's late maternal ancestors speak to her and appear to her in the house. For example, they entreat her to eat and prepare a table for the four of them. However, it is ambiguous whether Miranda actually saw the ghosts of her relatives because this incident takes place right after Miranda's rest on an hammock. It is also possible to interpret this episode simply as a dream she saw while she unknowingly fell asleep. Simultaneously, however, it is also hinted that the Silver women still occupy the house and that 29 Barton Road can resurrect them. The house clearly says, "Anna Good you are long gone now, except when I resurrect you to play in my puppet show." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 24) At several points in the novel, Miranda's dead relatives speak to her or appear to her in a physical form and yet we cannot entirely discern whether these manifestations are real or just the products of Miranda's imagination. This ambiguity between reality and imagination creates a strong uncanny effect in the story. In line with Jentsch's theory, intellectual mastery is never complete as the novel does not reveal it's secrets to the reader. Even the house itself speaks to the reader and asks, "who do you believe? Well? Is it the black girl? Or Eliot? Or me? Our talk depends upon the fact that you weren't there and you don't know what

happened." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 226) To continue with the theme of ghosts and spirits, the house also contains a room under a trapdoor which Miranda names as "the psychomantium." A psychomanteum is a room in which people can contact spirits of dead people with the use of a mirror. ("Psychomanteum," 2020) The room also needs to be completely dark and the mirror should be placed in a way in which it would only reflect darkness. We can likewise see a psychomanteum in the novel with an "enourmous mirror, like a lake on the wall." (Oyeyemi, 2009, 70) The room operates as an uncanny space in which the world of the living and the dead collide and the distinctions between them erased.

Lastly, we can examine a theme which was discussed in the chapter on *the Icarus Girl*, that of doubles. The theme of doubles and doppelgangers was prevalent in that story, and we can observe similar motifs in this novel as well. One of the most important examples of this is the Silver twins. As we know, Miranda has a twin brother Eliot who could be considered as her double. Another double of Miranda likewise makes an appearance in the story. This strange girl is said to have no bones, eyelids, eyelashes or joints. Miranda sees a drawing of this girl and ponders, "The perfect person was a girl. Bobbed dark hair, black dress, pearls she was too young for, mouth, nose, chin familiar...Miranda's, almost." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 48) She also names her double "me but perfect." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 48) This eerie double of Miranda appears again when she is trying to eat the meal Luc cooked for her. She first confuses her double as a reflection of herself in the mirror but her double's pointed teeth give her away. Her double is "not quite three-dimensional, this girl. And so white. There couldn't be any blood in her. She was perfect. Miranda but perfect." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 79) We also know that she is not conjured by Miranda's imagination as the vegetables in her plate appear to have been eaten by someone else.

Here, we can not only notice the sinister doppelganger of Miranda but also another allusion to Miranda as a vampire with her spiked teeth and pale skin. Lastly, at the end of the novel we are introduced to the real Miranda, who has been trapped inside another Miranda. Ore discovers the true Miranda when she opens her up. This episode is described thus, "She spilt, and cleanly, from head to toe. There was another girl inside her, the girl from the photograph, all long straight hair and pretty pearlescence." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 230) Here, Ore refers to an old photograph of Miranda in which she is unrecognizable from the Miranda that she met at Cambridge. Ore thinks, "the girl in the picture was not the girl who stood in the room with me; I can unequivocally say that it wasn't her." (Oyeyemi, 2009, p. 162) Consequently, we can see that there are two different Mirandas. The reader is thus shown that the actual Miranda is trapped inside another version of Miranda who suffers from pica as well as the harmful influence of the house. Having thus discussed the wide variety of the uncanny components of *White is for Witching*, we can now analyze the results of this study and the conclusions we can draw from it.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Throughout the study, various critical approaches to the notion of the uncanny have been explored and related to the novels of Helen Oyeyemi. The thesis has argued that the novels *the Icarus Girls* and *White is for Witching* each contain a multitude of the components of the uncanny phenomenon. Firstly, we studied Jentsch's approach to the topic and his arguments involving intellectual uncertainty. According to Jentsch, doubts about whether an inanimate being is actually alive or the opposite is one of the most significant elements of uncanniness. Later, we examined Freud's approach, who objected to Jentsch's assumptions. Freud argued that the most significant element of the uncanny is the loss of one's eyes, which is directly related to the castration complex. He later lists doubles, the fear of being buried alive, the return of the dead, the dread of the evil eye, strange repetitions, magic, animism and cannibalism as different types of phenomenon that generates the uncanny effect. His psychoanalytic research has found two reasons as the root cause of the uncanny, which are infantile complexes and the reappearance of the surmounted beliefs. Subsequently, we explored Homi Bhabha's notion of the nation and how the image of the modern Western nation is created by an essentialist narrative which assimilates the different backgrounds and cultures that inhabit its borders into that of the nation's majority. This assimilation in turn fails to reflect the actual diversity of these nation states. In light of this, Bhabha argued further that the unhomely feeling derives from the uncertainties as to where the home begins and the world starts and that it's strongly connected with the post-colonial. In nation states where there are increasing amounts of migration from all around the world, the unhomely feeling appears as a result of the ambiguity between the borders of the outside and the inside. Further on in the study,

Kristeva's concept of the uncanny was also examined. Her main argument was that the uncanny appeared as a result of the formation of nation states. In this context, she links xenophobia with the fear of facing the other within ourselves. We find it difficult to accept our intristic otherness and consequently we deal with our unwelcome emotions by projecting it onto the outsider. Kristeva presented this xenophobia as the true source of the uncanny experience.

Taking these different approaches into account, the first novel to be examined was Oyeyemi's *the Icarus Girl,* in which the most prevalent theme was the double. We examined Jess's nefarious doppelganger TillyTilly, a supernatural being of unknown origin who is a grave danger for Jess and everyone around her. Furthermore, we saw reflections of the return of the dead with the abiku children, who in Yoruba culture come back to haunt the living. Significantly, we discussed Jess's in-betweenness, which is another uncanny phenomenon, as the child of a Nigerian mother and an English father residing in the UK. She neither entirely feels as if she belongs in England nor in Nigeria, almost as if she is stuck in a limbo, not able to call anywhere home. We likewise explored hints of cultural conflict between the dominant culture of Britain and its marginal(ised) people.

Later on, we continued with another novel of Oyeyemi's, *White is for Witching,* which features a racist haunted house that attacks its inhabitants. Traces of Bhabha's unhomely were explored in the story, with not only racial conflict taking place inside the house but outside of it too. Many visitors from around the world came to stay in the house, bringing the world inside the home. Likewise immigrants and refugees came to inhabit Dover and are subsequently victimized due to xenophobia. We noted that the conflict in the house symbolizes the British colonial ideology and that this

post-colonial interpretation of the novel gives it an unhomely impression. Other uncanny features observed in the novel include cannibalism, vampirism, the commingling of the myth of European vampires and the Carribean soucouyant, witchcraft (such as Juju), doubles, being buried alive, inanimate objects with life and the omnipotence of thoughts.

In conclusion, it can be deduced that both of these novels contain significant aspects of the uncanny. Notably, doubles, the return of the dead and some form of witchcraft appear in both of the texts that we have analyzed. Furthermore, Oyeyemi's novels could also be considered as post-colonial, and they make an important commentary on racial conflict.

Finally, the study is an original one because these particular texts have not been studied in light of the four critics discussed in the thesis, so it arguably makes a contribution to the field in this way. In the future, Oyeyemi's other works could likewise be analyzed in terms of the uncanny, as her other novels have similar themes to the books which have been discussed here. Furthermore, Oyeyemi's novels are heavily influenced by fairy tales which simultaneously contribute to the uncanny effect. In contrast to this, Freud believes that fairy tales are not capable of producing the uncanny effect and that we cannot turn to them to understand the phenomenon. If we accept Freud's ideas on fairy tales and the uncanny, Oyeyemi's novels shouldn't be able to create the uncanny effect, which they evidently can. Analyzing the uncanny effect produced by fairy tales alongside Oyeyemi's other novels that are influenced by fairy tales in comparison to Freud's essay could further be explored as another research topic. There is already some research conducted in this area about the uncanny effect in fairy tales. To give an example, Jack Zipes (1982) argues that "the

very act of reading a fairy tale is an *uncanny* experience in that it separates the reader from the restrictions of reality from the outset and makes the repressed unfamiliar familiar once again." (p. 309) By the same token, Oyeyemi's works could be investigated further in terms of their connection to fairy tales and the uncanny.

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