



“The Uncanny in Language, Literature and Culture” International Conference

24-25 July 2026 – Mallorca (Spain) / Online

Programme & Abstracts

London Centre for Interdisciplinary Research
in collaboration with
University of the Balearic Islands

Programme

Friday, 24 July
(In-person Sessions)

9:00-10:15 Session 1: Mapping the Uncanny: Theory, Space and the Limits of Meaning

Chair: Charlie Jorge

Gabriele Biotti, London Centre for Interdisciplinary Research (UK)

Working with the Uncanny: Some Thoughts on Methods and Interdisciplinary Knowledge

Carlos Ceia, NOVA University of Lisbon (Portugal)

The Familiar Abyss: The Uncanny Nature of the Universe's Indifference and the Failure of Language in Samuel Beckett, Fernando Pessoa (Álvaro de Campos & Bernardo Soares) and Albert Camus

Gaetano Sabato, University of Palermo (Italy)

(Outer) Space, Boundaries and Observation: A Cultural Geography Perspective on the Uncanny

10:15-10:30 Tea/Coffee

10:30-11:45 Session 2: Ghosts and Haunted Histories

Chair: Lahcen Ait Idir

Saïde Harb-Ranero, University of the Balearic Islands (Spain)

Where is Graveyard Poetry Now and Where Was Your God?

Charlie Jorge, University of the Balearic Islands (Spain)

The Fetch and the Collapse of the Irish Nation in John and Michael Banim's *The Fetches* (1825)

Wenjun Ding, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou (China)

Ghost Narrative and the Politics of Recognition: The Intervention Writing of Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*

11:45-12:30 Lunch

12:30-13:45 Session 3: The Cinematic Uncanny: Horror, Possession and Spectatorship

Chair: Gabriele Biotti

Eduardo Urios-Aparisi, University of Connecticut (USA)

Cinema's Uncanny and Its Relation to the Immersive Viewing Experience in L. Martel's *la Ciénaga* (2001)

María Gil Poisa, University of Oviedo (Spain)

Smiling Demons and Broken Bodies: Possession and Corporeal Horror in American and European Horror Film

Jaela Dinsmore, Idaho State University (USA)

La Llorona (2019): Trauma, Testimony and the Feminine Voice in *The Formating*

13:45-14:00 Tea/Coffee

14:00-14:50 Session 4: AI, Education and the Uncanny Classroom

Chair: Sarah Hourie

Basma Mounjid, École Normale Supérieure in Rabat (Morocco)

Elhassane El Hilali, Hassan II University, Casablanca (Morocco)

The Uncanny Turn in Online Education: Teachers' Experiences of Presence and Disruption

**Kassim Boudjelal Safir, Abdelkrim Hacene Safir, Mustapha Stanbouli
University- Mascara (Algeria)**

The Uncanny Writer: AI, Authorship, and Pedagogical (In)security

14:50-15:40 Session 5: Ecologies of the Uncanny

Chair: Basma Mounjid

Patrycja Austin, University of Rzeszów (Poland)

The Uncanny Ecology of Time: Aristotelian Motion and Vegetal Time in *The Southern Reach* Tetralogy

Marie Widengård, University of Gothenburg (Sweden)

Mar Menor and *Vättern* as Aquatic Doppelgängers

15:40-15:50 Tea / Coffee

15:50-16:40 Session 6: Borders, Homes and Unhomely Landscapes

Chair: Wenjun Ding

Soukaina Aouaki, Lahcen Ait Idir, Hassan II University (Morocco)

Violence at the Margins of Mobility: The Uncanny Bordering of the 2025 Zenata Riots, Morocco

Eva Stenskar, Trinity College Dublin (Ireland)

“It Is a Heart, This Holocaust I Walk In”: The Rearticulation of the *Unheimliche* Home in the Works of Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes

16:45-18:00 Session 7: Haunted Geographies: Memory, Slavery and Indigenous Futures

Chair: Gaetano Sabato

Mabel Verstraaten-Bortier, Independent Scholar (The Netherlands)

Uncanny Geographies: The Case of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Castles in Ghana

Julia Mollenthiel, University of Florida (USA)

Candyman and the Uncanny Afterlives of Slavery

Sarah Hourie, University of Manitoba (Canada)

Revisiting Future Worlds in Place: Métis Encounters of the Uncanny

Saturday, 25 July

(Online Sessions)

9:00-10:15 Session 8: Digital Doppelgängers: AI, Gaming and Virtual Uncanniness

Chair: Annabel Kay Ruiz

Karen May, AI Education Innovation (Australia)

Algorithmic Doppelgängers: AI, Authorship, and the Digital Uncanny in Education

Wang Kun, Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University (China)

Re-enchantment in an Age of Disenchantment: The Uncanny as Cultural Construction in Chinese-Style Horror Digital Games

Silvia Vázquez-Lorenzo, Noelia López-Fernández, University of A Coruña (Spain)

Sympathy for The Devil: Uncanny Gameplays and Abject Allegiances in *Mouthwashing*

10:30-12:00 Session 9: The Gothic Home: Haunted Houses and Unhomely Selves

Chair: Elena Bollinger

Megersa Regassa, Inge Brinkman, Teshome Egere Mossissa, Ghent University (Belgium)

Bulguu (Ogres) in Oromo Oral Narratives from a Gender Perspective

Siobhan Davies-Wilson, Independent Researcher (UK)

Lost Hands and Twisted Voices: How the Female Gothic Is Never at Home

Daniel Ogden, Folkuniversitetet, Uppsala (Sweden)

Reassessing the Character of Eleanor Vance in Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959)

Juanmo Xu, University of Warwick (UK)

Unhomely Circulations: The Counterturning of the Homely in Ann Quin's Uncanny Psychogeographies

12:15-13:30 Session 10: Weird Fiction, Silence and Surreal Uncanniness

Chair: Ahmed Nabil Bensedik

Julie Minaříková, Masaryk University Brno (Czechia)

Literature Both Wonderful and Strange: The Uncanny and the Familiar in Finnish Weird

Elena Bollinger, University of Madeira / ULICES (Portugal)

Uncanny Voices Exploring Meaning through Silence in the Postmodern British Fiction

Oliwia Majchrowska, University of Wroclaw (Poland)

Interiorities in Crisis: Surrealist Dislocation and the Uncanny in Charlie Kaufman's *I'm Thinking of Ending Things*

13:45-15:00 Session 11: Dystopias, Moral Worlds and Unsettled Belonging

Chair: Sanskriti Chattopadhyay

Ahmed Nabil Bensedik, Hassiba Ben Bouali University (Algeria)

Between "the Disruptive" and "the Supportive" Uncanny: Exploring Dean Koontz's *The Eyes of Darkness* as a Critical Dystopia

Elonora Hodaj, University "Ismail Qemali" Vlore_Albania (Albania)

At Home in the Unhomely: Moral Geography and the Emergence of the Uncanny in Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown"

Tanja Cvetković, University of Niš (Serbia)

The Sense of Belonging and Cosmopolitan Values in *The Nightingale Won't Let You Sleep*

15:15-16:45 Session 12: Bodies, Monsters and Spectral Afterlives

Chair: Titian Butash

Liam Connerly, University of New Mexico (USA)

The Uncanny Host: Domestic Horror and Broken Ritual in Euripides' *Cyclops*

Maya Aguiluz-Ibargüen, Raúl Sergio Cuéllar Sánchez, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (México)

Ghostly Bodies, and Social Remembrance. Exploration of the Uncanny Imagination Between Life and Death

Yannis Mitsou, Hellenic Open University (Greece)

Corporeality in Two Recent Films by David Cronenberg: The Freudian Uncanny and Phenomenology in *Crimes of the Future* (2022) and *The Shrouds* (2024)

Laura Barrio-Vilar, University of Arkansas at Little Rock (USA)

Uncanny Monsters: Queer Black Horror in Rivers Solomon's *Model Home*

17:00-18:15 Session 13: Thresholds of the Uncanny: Modernity, Memory and Urban Spectres

Chair: Tanja Cvetković

Sanskriti Chattopadhyay, University of Gothenburg (Sweden)

The Uncanny at the Threshold: Epistemic Rupture and Indigenous Modernity

Titian Butash, Independent Scholar (USA)

Pink Cadillacs and an Old Malibu: In the Rearview Mirror of Classic Industrial Design, Cadillac Place and Detroit Wheels by the American Architect, Albert Kahn

Tabassum Zaman, BRAC University (Bangladesh)

Dhaka and Its Spectral Others

Friday, 24 July
(In-person Sessions)

9:00-10:15 Session 1: Mapping the Uncanny:
Theory, Space and the Limits of Meaning

Gabriele Biotti

London Centre for Interdisciplinary Research (UK)

**Working with the Uncanny: Some Thoughts on Methods
and Interdisciplinary Knowledge**

gabriele.biotti@lcir.co.uk
biottigabriele7@gmail.com

This proposal presents some reflections and proposes some topics based on my research experience on the uncanny. Since 2022, I have been researching widely on this concept, as the author of two books: as editor, *Uncanny Perspectives in Literature and Culture: Texts, Images, Experiences* (Palgrave Macmillan 2024) and as an author, *The Uncanny in Stanley Kubrick's Cinema* (Liverpool University Press, publication foreseen in 2026).

What type of concept is the uncanny? What was its role in redefining important aspects of the 20th century culture? How to read its presence in the arts? A true hinge concept, the Freudian uncanny has undergone a wide range of readings, interpretations and, consequently, transformations in its journey through modern and contemporary culture. Born in the psychoanalytic context to define one of the figures of the unconscious, the uncanny has progressively become the incisive and problematic sign of a restlessness in discourses, in expressive forms, in texts. Interdisciplinary research owes much to this migration of the unconscious to the new territories of a contemporary uncanny.

The uncanny is still relevant today since it allows research and scientific discourse to remain open, and to accept this openness as a rich opportunity to explore cultural dynamics in modernism and beyond. Based on some examples from my two books, I will articulate a reflection on the uncanny's reformulations in recent works or authors, for example in the post-Brexit literature or the post-colonial cultural landscape; or, again, its mobile presence and its crucial, meaningful reappearance in Kubrick's cinema.

Carlos Ceia

NOVA University of Lisbon (Portugal)

**The Familiar Abyss: The Uncanny Nature of the Universe's Indifference
and the Failure of Language in Samuel Beckett, Fernando Pessoa
(Álvaro de Campos & Bernardo Soares) and Albert Camus**

cfmceia@gmail.com

I examine the uncanny tension between the innate human drive for meaning and the universe's radical indifference, a dissonance that unites the works of Beckett, Pessoa, and Camus. Under the lens of the uncanny, the world is revealed not as a home, but as a familiar

abyss. Camus defines the Absurd through this estrangement, noting that the lucid admission of "nothing" in response to one's thoughts marks the intrusion of this terrifying silence into daily life. In Samuel Beckett, this encounter manifests as paralysis and a compulsive, repetitive speech: a linguistic defense mechanism attempting to ward off the void. Conversely, for Fernando Pessoa's Álvaro de Campos, it emerges as neurotic despair, where the self becomes a stranger to itself. Yet, Pessoa's resulting silence is not a failure but the foundation of a creative withdrawal that allows for the recording of a fragmented consciousness. Bernardo Soares pushes this estrangement further, arguing that "Absurdity is divine" and suggesting that to act in agreement with life, one must paradoxically disagree with oneself. These authors illustrate that the universe offers no built-in purpose; instead, they propose an uncomfortable intimacy with the devastating knowledge that one must continue without direction. Ultimately, I will demonstrate that they tried to prove that when linguistic structures fail to domesticate the unknown, the only authentic act is cessation (manifesting as self-erasure in Beckett or conscious withdrawal in Pessoa, for example) serving as a guide for navigating the uncanny silence of the modern void

Gaetano Sabato
University of Palermo (Italy)
**(Outer) Space, Boundaries and Observation: A Cultural
Geography Perspective on the Uncanny**
gaetano.sabato@unipa.it

From a cultural geography perspective, the polysemic concept of "Uncanny" can be interpreted in many ways, especially regarding the representation of space. Historically, maps have tracked areas of the known world bordering unknown zones, *terrae incognitae*, which had a dual status as mysterious lands (often inhabited by hostile peoples) and lands offering new opportunities. However, in a contemporary world where terrestrial exploration appears limited to a few still partially unknown environments (e.g., Antarctica and the Oceans), thanks to the widespread mapping by satellites, drones and digital cartography, what role can the "Uncanny" still play? Perhaps it is still possible to talk about it in relation to a dimension of total strangeness for humans, where they can reflect deeply on themselves, i.e. by looking at outer space. Given these premises, this contribution proposes a reflection from the perspective of cultural geography, using as a reference some autobiographical texts by the astronaut Luca Parmitano (who spent more than 366 days in space), initially published on an online blog during his experience on board the ISS, and some texts by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry on his experience as a pilot. Beyond the differences, both texts contain interesting references to a sense of the "Uncanny", often played out semiotically through the observation of a physical Otherness that in various ways reflects their image and agency as "explorers" of spaces far from the ordinary. The paper also focuses on the symbolic knot that emerges between spaces of otherness/identity, observation, boundary and positioning of the authors-observers.

10:30-11:45 Session 2: Ghosts and Haunted Histories

Saïde Harb-Ranero

University of the Balearic Islands (Spain)

Where is Graveyard Poetry Now and Where Was Your God?

Suehr81@gmail.com

No matter where we are from, our socioeconomic status, our sins or good deeds, or whether our lives were led with honor or disgrace, death will claim us all. Death culture and the uncanny coexist in poetry from the Gothic's origins. My fascination with Annabel Lee and Lenore by 19th-century poet Edgar Allan Poe would not have existed without the graveyard poets, which led me to trace the genius behind them to 18th-century Britain, with the shift and evolution of the horror and Gothic genres and their application to graveyard poetry and death poems over the centuries.

In this hybrid presentation, I want to focus on how Robert Blair's poem "The Grave" serves a larger purpose within the main trope of graveyard poetry: religious reconciliation at the end. He reconciles his poem by returning to God, offering faith in an afterlife and in resurrection. This progression moves from the era of Sylvia Plath in the mid-20th century, who is responsible for confessional poetry, moving away from the structured poem and from iambic pentameter, meters, and rhymes to modern 21st-century death poetry.

Following Joseph Fuliga's theory that the modern world is moving away from Godly religions and faith toward a more spiritual lifestyle, I will apply it to a modern twist on graveyard poetry. I chose to include in this presentation a poem I wrote, inspired by the Graveyard poets, but with Fulga's approach to the eighth trope, reconciliation, where there will be none.

Charlie Jorge

University of the Balearic Islands (Spain)

The Fetch and the Collapse of the Irish Nation in John and Michael Banim's *The Fetches* (1825)

macseoirse@gmail.com

Doppelgängers evoke the unsettling question of who—or what—constitutes the self and reality (Botting 1996, 6). This concern reverberates through the Gothic tradition of the double and its Irish folkloric analogue, the fetch, long regarded as an omen of death (Morin 2018, 60). As a figure, the fetch embodies a tension between identity and mortality, destabilizing the boundaries between self and other across both historical and contemporary contexts.

Composed in the aftermath of the Irish Act of Union (1800), during a period of political unrest and the lead-up to Catholic Emancipation, John and Michael Banim's *The Fetches* (1825) depicts the doppelgänger as a harbinger of destruction that haunts two lovers in Kilkenny. This paper contends that the Banims' representation of the fetch operates as an allegory for the disintegration of social cohesion in post-Union Ireland, reflecting Anglo-Irish anxieties surrounding the erosion of political and cultural authority. Through its

supernatural incursions, the novel articulates fears of displacement, moral degeneration, and existential instability—anxieties that continue to echo in contemporary Ireland.

Works Cited:

Botting, Fred. 1996. *Gothic*. The New Critical Idiom. Routledge.

Morin, Christina. 2018. *The Gothic Novel in Ireland, c. 1760–1829*. Manchester University Press.

Wenjun Ding

Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou (China)

**Ghost Narrative and the Politics of Recognition: The Intervention Writing
of Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter***

dingwenjun2008@sina.com

Amy Tan is a renowned contemporary Chinese American writer whose works explore the dilemma of identity from a transnational perspective. Ghosts are a common theme in Amy Tan's works, which are historically and philosophically significant. On one hand, the ghosts serve as witnesses, telling testimonies as sufferers; on the other hand, the ghosts act as spokespersons for the repressed memory and cultural tradition, thereby exerting a profound impact on contemporary life. Amy Tan's long novel *The Bonesetter's Daughter* transcends the interpretive framework of the debate between Frank Chin and Maxine Hong Kingston. The intervention of this work is to expose the hidden phenomenon of discrimination against the Chinese community in American society in the mid-to-late twentieth century, in which the dominant discourse places them in an inferior position in the civilization system by highlighting the differentiated characteristics of the Chinese American habitus. The native-born Chinese American community, represented by Ruth Young, is thus caught in an identity dilemma, and needs to further recognize the contributions and sacrifices of their forefathers by redeeming their ethnic memories and incorporating themselves into the genealogy of glorious traditions. As a result, the Chinese American community further acquires the ability to reconstruct historical narratives and to speak out on issues of modern civilization from multiple perspectives, questioning and critiquing dependent discriminatory relationships and their mechanisms of functioning, and thus, within a dialectical perspective between universality and ethnicity, seeking to achieve inter-subjective recognition for justice and equality in the social interaction

**12:30-13:45 Session 3: The Cinematic Uncanny:
Horror, Possession and Spectatorship**

Eduardo Urios-Aparisi

University of Connecticut (USA)

**Cinema's Uncanny and Its Relation to the Immersive Viewing Experience
in L. Martel's *la Ciénaga* (2001)**

Eduardo.urios-aparisi@uconn.edu

This presentation explores the relationship between film viewers' vague emotional states and the presence of waterscapes and other phenomena in a film's mise-en-scène. Cinema's uncanny moving images create blurry, unfamiliar and menacing realities and

emotions (Belton 2017, Mulvey 2006). The uncanny is closely connected to new trends in Affect film theory (Hven 2022). According to Berger (2020: 9) “affect spans a claim that films and film viewers spans a spectrum from nonconscious intensity and unconscious affectedness to more conscious and more definite emotional experience.”

In this presentation, I focus on how viewers engage with the world and characters of Martel’s *La ciénaga* (2001). This film is a combination of the unsettling soundscape, the hot and humid environment and the sense of dirtiness embodied by the dirty water of the swimming pool. In non-narrative films (Tarkovsky’s *Mirrors* 1977) or character focused and psychological films (Bergman’s *Persona* 1966) the uncanny dreamworld of the mise-en-scene represents their emotional states. *La ciénaga* exemplifies a recent trend of films that evoke in viewers the unsettling and helpless situation of being submerged in watery environments, especially in those cases where water phenomena fill the screen (see Mendes’ *Skyfall* 2012). Film is an art that creates an environment in which viewers immerse and engage their cognitive resources to follow the narrative and spectacular images and sounds to create affective worlds (Yacavone 2014).

María Gil Poisa

University of Oviedo (Spain)

**Smiling Demons and Broken Bodies: Possession and Corporeal Horror
in American and European Horror Film**

gilmaria@uniovi.es

This paper examines the representation of possessed bodies in American and European possession films, focusing on their dual construction as both uncanny and grotesque. Drawing on examples such as *Requiem* (2006), *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* (2005), *The Devil’s Doorway* (2019), and *El llanto* (2023), this analysis explores how these films destabilize the boundary between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the human and the monstrous. Possessed characters often appear disturbingly “almost human”; their facial expressions, unsettling gazes, and distorted gestures evoke Freud’s notion of the uncanny. At the same time, these bodies erupt into grotesque excess, violating social, natural, and corporeal norms through open wounds, uncontrolled use of bodily fluids, and violent contortions. By staging possession through the interplay of uncanny realism and grotesque exaggeration, these films transform the human body into a site of both unsettling and horror. This paper argues that the uncanny-grotesque dialectic not only intensifies the affective impact of possession cinema but also reflects broader cultural anxieties in Western imaginaries about embodiment, faith, and the limits of rational order.

Jaela Dinsmore

Idaho State University (USA)

**La Llorona (2019): Trauma, Testimony and the Feminine Voice
in The Formating**

jaeladinsmore@isu.edu

jaelardinz@gmail.com

In *La Llorona* (2019), Jayro Bustamante fuses legend, memory, and history to subvert the hegemonic frameworks of Guatemalan collective memory formation. Drawing

on Elizabeth Jelin's assertion that "[f]rom a psychoanalytic perspective, the past is present in multiple ways, in the dynamics of the unconscious," the film reimagines trauma as an uncanny specter whose presence disputes the official narrative, forcing a confrontation with what the state has systematically repressed. Building on Debra Castillo's critique of the male ideological frame — which renders inconvenient truths, particularly those rooted in feminine, indigenous, and lower class testimony, as fictional and lacking independent existence — the analysis argues that Bustamante exposes how the state destroys and represses the testimony of indigenous, feminine, and lower class victims, until La Llorona herself emerges as the uncanny force that compels the state to confront the atrocities it has repressed. Drawing on Freud's uncanny as the return of the repressed, the paper traces how silenced testimony resurfaces through an intergenerational chain of feminine voices that official channels cannot contain. Ultimately, the paper argues that in Bustamante's film the uncanny reversal is genuinely liberating — the haunting does not merely symptomize repression but actively breaks its cycle open.

14:00-14:50 Session 4: AI, Education and the Uncanny Classroom

Basma Mounjid

École Normale Supérieure in Rabat (Morocco)

Elhassane El Hilali

Hassan II University, Casablanca (Morocco)

The Uncanny Turn in Online Education: Teachers' Experiences of Presence and Disruption

basamounjids@gmail.com

prof.elhilali@gmail.com

This paper discusses online education as an "uncanny" space. The traditional classroom structure remains in form but becomes distorted in essence. Based on survey data from 914 Moroccan teachers during the rapid shift to remote learning, the study looks at how the main teaching components of presence, interaction, and assessment changed into unsettling versions of what they used to be. The findings show a clear disconnection: students were digitally "present" but intellectually absent, and communication happened without real connection. Additionally, the accuracy of assessment came into question, which weakened the perceived "reality" of the teaching experience. By viewing these changes through the lens of the uncanny, which is transforming the familiar into the strange; this paper argues that the confusion in digital teaching goes beyond technical or infrastructural issues. It reflects a deeper disturbance of established beliefs about authority and the immediacy of presence. Ultimately, the paper suggests that online teaching is not just a different way to deliver content but a unique space that fundamentally alters the nature of the educational experience.

Kassim Boudjelal Safir, Abdelkrim Hacene Safir
Mustapha Stanbouli University- Mascara (Algeria)
The Uncanny Writer: AI, Authorship, and Pedagogical (In)security
safireading@yahoo.com

The increasing presence of artificial intelligence in educational contexts has produced what may be described as a form of technological uncanniness, particularly within creative writing pedagogy. This unease does not affect all actors equally. Teachers often experience a sense of epistemological security within Traditional Creative Writing (TCW), where authorship, evaluation standards, and intellectual ownership remain clearly human-centered. Students, however, frequently report anxiety toward creative production, associating writing with error, judgment, and performance pressure. For them, AI-Assisted Creative Writing (AACW) offers psychological safety: generative tools reduce fear of mistakes, provide linguistic scaffolding, and enhance confidence. This divergence creates a pedagogical tension shaped by contrasting perceptions of control, legitimacy, and creativity. While instructors may view AI as destabilizing academic integrity, students may perceive it as empowering. This study proposes a third model, Hybrid Creative Writing (HCW), which integrates human-generated drafts with guided AI-assisted refinement. Rather than replacing authorship, HCW structures collaboration between student and machine, preserving originality while leveraging technological support. Through controlled classroom experiments comparing TCW, AACW, and HCW environments, this research measures perceived insecurity, creative risk-taking, engagement levels, and textual development. Preliminary findings suggest that TCW reinforces teacher authority but may heighten student anxiety, whereas AACW increases student confidence but may intensify instructor skepticism. HCW, by contrast, appears to reduce mutual unease by redistributing agency in a transparent and pedagogically structured manner. The study argues that hybridization may offer a balanced response to the uncanny dimensions of AI in creative education.

14:50-15:40 Session 5: Ecologies of the Uncanny

Patrycja Austin
University of Rzeszów (Poland)
**The Uncanny Ecology of Time: Aristotelian Motion and Vegetal Time
in The Southern Reach Tetralogy**
paustin@ur.edu.pl

Jeff VanderMeer's *Southern Reach* tetralogy (*Annihilation*, *Authority*, *Acceptance*, *Absolution*) stages the uncanny as a crisis of habitation: "home" becomes unrecognizable, borders destabilize, and the environment itself appears to watch back. This paper argues that the series' most persistent uncanny effect is temporal. Area X does not merely host strange events; it renders time recursive, retrocausal, and opaque so that dislocation occurs not only in space but in duration. To conceptualize this "uncanny temporality," I place Freud's logic of estranged familiarity in dialogue with Aristotle's fourfold model of change (generation/decay, growth/diminution, alteration, locomotion), reread through Michael Marder's philosophy of vegetal time.

I propose that VanderMeer's weirdness constitutes an ecological uncanny: Newtonian chronology and scientific mastery collapse as vegetal and fungal processes become the narrative's governing chronometers. The argument unfolds in four steps. First, the border and subterranean "tower" function as uncanny architectures where inside/outside and before/after lose coherence. Second, Area X emerges as an uncanny geography, an embracing, metabolizing milieu rather than a neutral container. Third, key scenes show human history absorbed into cycles of accretion, decay, and renewal, redistributing temporal authority from human locomotion to vegetal growth. Finally, the tetralogy's doppelgängers and replicas figure the uncanny double as a temporal structure: continuity without identity, futurity folding back into origin.

Reframing weird time as an ecology of motion, the paper argues that *Southern Reach* offers an uncanny Anthropocene chronotope - recursive, metabolic, and indifferent to human sovereignty.

Marie Widengård

University of Gothenburg (Sweden)

Mar Menor and Vättern as Aquatic Doppelgängers

marie.widengard@gu.se

Lake Vättern (Sweden) and Mar Menor (Spain) are different waters, yet each has come to be lived and governed in a doubled form: a familiar commons and an estranged counterpart. This paper develops "aquatic doppelgängers" to track how such splits are produced through civic, legal, and political practices that shape what counts as harm, who can speak, and what forms of repair become plausible. The concept shows how doubling turns crisis into a dispute over what the waterbody is, opening a struggle over protection and repair.

15:50-16:40 Session 6: Borders, Homes and Unhomely Landscapes

Soukaina Aouaki, Lahcen Ait Idir

Hassan II University (Morocco)

**Violence at the Margins of Mobility: The Uncanny Bordering
of the 2025 Zenata Riots, Morocco**

aouakis@gmail.com

This paper studies the 2025 Zenata riots in Mohammedia, a city near Casablanca in Morocco, as an instance of 'uncanny bordering,' where spaces of mobility become sites of violence, unease, and disorientation. Moving beyond conventional understandings of borders as fixed territorial lines, the study conceptualizes borders as diffuse, everyday practices of inclusion and exclusion that prevail urban spaces.

Drawing on Sub-Saharan migrants' accounts, the paper constructs a qualitative corpus of press videos in which eyewitnesses narrate what happened, why it unfolded, and how they experienced policing, fear, and vulnerability. These narratives are analyzed using thematic

and critical discourse approaches, with particular attention to recurring themes and framing strategies through which migrants construct meaning, negotiate visibility, and articulate claims to safety and recognition. The paper argues that Zenata constitutes an uncanny border space: an ostensibly ordinary urban setting that becomes unfamiliar and threatening. In this context, the familiar city is rendered ‘unhomely,’ as migrants encounter unpredictable forms of control and exposure. This produces a condition of affective instability, where visibility oscillates between recognition and danger, and where everyday life is marked by uncertainty.

Rather than an isolated event, the Zenata riots reveal the workings of everyday bordering as an ongoing and unsettling process embedded in ordinary spaces. By foregrounding the uncanny, the paper highlights how marginal zones of mobility generate not only insecurity but also profound experiences of estrangement.

Eva Stenskar

Trinity College Dublin (Ireland)

**“It Is a Heart, This Holocaust I Walk In”: The Rearticulation
of the *Unheimliche* Home in the Works of Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes**

stenskae@tcd.ie

The uncanny, Nicholas Royle writes in his 2003 *The Uncanny*, is “the revelation of something unhomely at the heart of hearth and home” (1), a concept explored by poet Sylvia Plath as and her husband Ted Hughes. While Plath compares their home to “the inside of a Valentine” (*Letters* 2706), Hughes likens it to “the crimson room of our cardiac days” (*Birthday Letters* 135). What she calls “the heart-room of the house” (*Letters* 643), he refers to as “the pit of red” (*Birthday* 198). Court Green is the house in Devon in which the couple resided, and where Plath composed the majority of her final, searing *Ariel* poems. Though it occupies a significant albeit elusive role in her work, it is largely ignored in Plath studies. My paper examines Court Green in the poetry of both Plath and Hughes, as well as in her letters and journals. It looks at how the discursive representations of the home evolve in their works, while considering their differing gazes: Plath writes from the immediacy of her lived experience; Hughes writes from hindsight. It further examines the heart imagery and viscera they both employ to depict their home, as though alternative metaphors were inadequate. The heart in their poetry is both a physical core, “[a] throbbing cell” (*Birthday* 197), from which radiate long “red plush” (*Ariel Restored* 25) blood carpets, and a hearth, “a shut casket for gems” (*Birthday* 197), representing the domestic uncanny center of their home.

**16:45-18:00 Session 7: Haunted Geographies:
Memory, Slavery and Indigenous Futures**

Mabel Verstraaten-Bortier

Independent Scholar (The Netherlands)

Uncanny Geographies: The Case of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Castles in Ghana

borteleby@hotmail.com

The Osu Slave Castle sits pretty in Accra, on the gulf coast of Ghana, images of which adorn the 50Cedis note. But step inside and walk through the windowless cave-like spaces where slaves were held till the arrival of the ships destined to carry them off the continent, and a whole different mood washes over you. One of disquiet, unease, a churning in the stomach as one listens to the tour guide's descriptions of the atrocities both the slaves, female and male, alike had to endure. Their anguish and voices still echo through the dark thick walls of the slave dungeons. Could this eerie, uncanny uneasiness be a way in which they that have gone ahead of us are trying to call our attention to what took place on the very grounds we are standing on?

For African Americans and other diaspora communities, visiting Ghana's slave castles constitutes pilgrimage—a journey to sites where ancestral history became their personal history. These visits often provoke profound emotional experiences as individuals confront the spaces their ancestors may have passed through and stayed for the last time on home soil.

The castle then becomes a place of connection with one's ancestors, a place of remembrance and reflection, a place of joining to that which was forcefully severed, a place to hopefully start the arduous journey of ancestral healing. This paper then highlights, gives voice to, and discusses some of the uncanniness a visitor might experience while visiting the various sections of a slave castle in Ghana.

Julia Mollenthien

University of Florida (USA)

Candyman and the Uncanny Afterlives of Slavery

j.mollenthien@ufl.edu

The near absence of the horror genre in Black Studies scholarship about the afterlives of slavery can be attributed to the fact that scholars are discussing the “afterlives” of slavery in a non-mystical way while the horror genre traditionally presents “afterlives” in supernatural forms. While these connotations of afterlives certainly mean different things, they converge in Candyman demonstrating the potential harmony between the two uses of the term. In this paper, I place both versions of Candyman in conversation with recent Black Studies scholarship as well as national discourses about racial inequality and white violence in order to argue for Candyman's relevance to contemporary debates about slavery and its uncanny afterlives as a conceptual framework. In addition, I zero in on the 2021 remake to demonstrate how Nia DaCosta's Candyman (2021) clarifies the legend's relationship to the afterlives of slavery and operates as a corrective to Bernard Rose's 1992 film. The intersection of the supernatural afterlife and the afterlives of slavery as understood by Black

Studies scholars comes forth in DaCosta's sequel that centralizes the operations of white supremacy and resulting Black trauma.

Sarah Hourie

University of Manitoba (Canada)

Revisiting Future Worlds in Place: Métis Encounters of the Uncanny

houries@myumanitoba.ca

Visiting, as a relational methodology, has been theorized extensively by Indigenous scholars in Turtle Island and beyond. This practice allows us to develop and sustain a collective memory of place that encourages expressions of our sovereignties as Indigenous Nations living through re-settlement (LaRocque 2011) and settler occupation (Recollet and Tuck 2017). Métis scholar Cindy Gaudet engages with visiting to disrupt these systems through the gifting of language that “inspires decoloniality” and considers “how we come to know, and [] re-know” (Gaudet 2018, 47). With the re-settlement of Indigenous Lands, Indigenous Nations are tirelessly confronting the unease of colonial legacies that appear as hauntings (Gordon 2006) and that manifest in the interstices when building future worlds. This proposed paper introduces a return to (un)familiarity by re-visiting places that evoke feelings of déjà-vu (Freud 1919) and fractured memories of our collective consciousness. Here, I speculate what lays beneath settler cities, alongside our decomposing bodies, whether we are constellated by parallel worlds above and below us and if these worlds contrive a form of doubling. In my re-visiting of other (future) worlds, I wish to un/recover the remnants of my Métis kins' materialities that manifest stories of their own telling. Conjuring these alternatives to colonial imaginaries operationalize “a framework for sustaining, renewing, and reimagining our cosmovision [...] toward a decolonial praxis of world-making” (Mendoza and Whitehead 2023, v). Thus, my engagements with visiting demand a re-animation of Métis familial stories that uphold and foster obligational and relational iterations of our always-already future worlds.

Saturday, 25 July

(Online Sessions)

9:00-10:15 Session 8: Digital Doppelgängers:

AI, Gaming and Virtual Uncanniness

Karen May

AI Education Innovation (Australia)

**Algorithmic Doppelgängers: AI, Authorship, and the Digital Uncanny
in Education**

knay2@parra.catholic.edu.au

Artificial Intelligence has become the most compelling contemporary manifestation of the uncanny: a thinking double that mirrors human cognition while lacking consciousness, embodiment, or lived experience. Drawing on Freud's concept of the

uncanny as the unsettling return of the familiar made strange, this paper argues that AI functions as a modern doppelgänger of the human mind—replicating language, reasoning, and creativity through statistical patterning rather than subjectivity.

In educational, professional, and cultural domains, AI now produces essays, lesson plans, research summaries, and creative artefacts that appear indistinguishable from human output. The result is not merely technological disruption but ontological disturbance. When machines simulate thought, the boundaries between cognition and computation blur. Authorship becomes unstable; voice becomes disembodied; expertise becomes algorithmically reproducible.

This paper explores three interrelated dimensions of the digital uncanny:

- the destabilisation of authorial identity in AI-mediated writing
- the psychological unease generated by cognition without consciousness
- the cultural implications of delegating intellectual labour to machines

Situated at the intersection of psychoanalysis, literary theory, and educational leadership, the paper contends that AI exposes a deeper contemporary anxiety: not that machines will replace humans, but that they already resemble us too closely. The “thinking double” refracts late-modern concerns about authenticity, agency, and the erosion of epistemic certainty. AI, therefore, is not only a technological innovation but a cultural event that unsettles what it means to think.

Wang Kun

Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University (China)

Re-enchantment in an Age of Disenchantment: The Uncanny as Cultural Construction in Chinese-Style Horror Digital Games

wk270101228@163.com

This paper examines “Chinese-style horror” (*zhongshi kongbu* 中式恐怖) digital games as a contemporary site where the uncanny is actively constructed as a cultural practice. Drawing on games such as *Paper Bride*, *Sanfu*, and *Chi Xiang*, I argue that these texts produce a distinctively Chinese mode of the uncanny—one that, while not incompatible with Freudian frameworks, is more fundamentally grounded in structural tensions within vernacular belief, kinship ethics, and intergenerational anxiety. Where the Freudian uncanny locates dread in the return of what has been suppressed, Chinese-style horror games locate it in what has never fully disappeared: spirit lore, ritual taboo, and folk cosmology persist as unresolved presences in modern everyday life.

Central to this paper is the concept of *dreamcore* aesthetics—a liminal visual and narrative mode suspending familiar domestic spaces between memory and menace. I argue that dreamcore functions as a formal correlate of the uncanny: both destabilize the boundary between the safe and the sinister, the inherited and the estranged. In mobilizing this aesthetic, Chinese-style horror games encode folklore as a medium through which young players negotiate modernity's unresolved tensions—secularization against residual belief, state discourses of “feudal superstition” against lived ritual practice, and social and political transformation against the persistence of traditional cosmologies.

This paper ultimately situates these games as a dynamic field of folkloric re-enchantment: a practice that, rather than nostalgically preserving tradition, actively regenerates it as a critical and affective resource for contemporary life.

Silvia Vázquez-Lorenzo, Noelia López-Fernández

University of A Coruña (Spain)

**Sympathy for The Devil: Uncanny Gameplays and Abject Allegiances
in *Mouthwashing***

s.vlorenzo@udc.es

noelia.lopezf1@udc.es

Video game protagonists are often portrayed by heroic or relatable characters that motivate player immersion and self-fulfillment. This is often achieved through the process of “becoming” which, according to Deleuze and Guattari, entails a psychological projection through which players project themselves on the characters, similarly to a process of symbiosis (237-238). Horror video games succeed in creating anxiety partially thanks to this engagement, featuring supernatural elements as well as an eerie atmosphere that provokes fear and disorientation. Specifically, *Mouthwashing* pushes boundaries as subjectivity, plot and audiovisual features are made uncanny to play with sympathies and moral values. Unknowingly, players get trapped in a story that is lived through the villain’s eyes. There, they follow Jim’s journey at the Tuplar, a space freighter kick-started by their captain. As the game continues, familiar sceneries become grotesque and the player becomes the perpetrator unwillingly, unveiling moral biases and allowing for a dialectical approach to the narrative. Consequently, in this presentation, we will explore how the uncanny permeates gameplay and, most specifically, immersion, breaking boundaries between real and virtual spaces and provoking an uncomfortable judgment of one’s own mind.

Bibliography:

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi, London [U.A.] Bloomsbury, 1987.

**10:30-12:00 Session 9: The Gothic Home:
Haunted Houses and Unhomely Selves**

Megersa Regassa, Inge Brinkman, Teshome Egere Mossissa

Ghent University (Belgium)

***Bulguu* (Ogres) in Oromo Oral Narratives from a Gender Perspective**

Megersa.regassa@ugent.be

Gender imagination has become a crucial site of cultural negotiation, yet its workings in ogre narratives remain largely overlooked. This paper argues that *bulguu* (the four-eyed man-ogre) narratives in Afaan Oromo (Jimma region, Ethiopia) are not merely repositories of myth but contested arenas where gender power is dramatized and reimagined. Drawing on extensive fieldwork and qualitative analysis, the study reveals that these stories simultaneously sustain and subvert patriarchal discourse. While some *bulguu* tales

reproduce gender hierarchy by casting women as vulnerable prey, others radically invert this dynamic, featuring women who outwit, confront, and even annihilate the monster. These acts of female defiance expose the *bulguu* not only as a symbol of masculine dominance but also as a site through which Oromo storytelling envisions alternative gender orders. In doing so, the narratives transform folklore into a medium of cultural critique and gendered resistance.

In view of this ambivalence, my paper will argue for unfixing ogre stories as an arena of cultural imagination where monstrosity becomes a tool either to reflect gender ideologies or to actively contest and reconfigure these through narrative performance.

Siobhan Davies-Wilson

Independent Researcher (UK)

Lost Hands and Twisted Voices: How the Female Gothic Is Never at Home

siobhan@sodabyte.co.uk

This paper examines the uncanny as a disturbance of voice within the Female Gothic, a mode in which the domestic interior is rendered estranging, haunted, and symbolically overdetermined. It focuses on the gendered uncanniness that emerges when the home — a space of containment and repression — is articulated through female narrators whose voices register discomfort, dissonance, and instability.

Drawing on texts by Brontë, Gilman, Woolf, and Jackson, the paper focuses on moments in which language appears to slip, thin, or contort — producing not only narratives of the strange, but a strangeness in narration. These effects are read as symptomatic of a tension between subjective expression and coherent representation, as authors and protagonists negotiate the limits of language in articulating experience.

Taking Freud's *Unheimlich* as a point of departure — itself marked by slippage and erasure — the paper argues that the return of the repressed within domestic space resonates not only in the Gothic trope of the home as hostile, but in the limits of what can be articulated within it. The resulting strain gives rise to contortions of voice that surface as a drift into a fundamental linguistic dissonance.

The paper concludes that the dissonant voicings of the Female Gothic are not just twisted fictions revolting against historical conditions, but linguistic residues of difficulty in sustaining autonomous narration. Read in this way, the voices we encounter carry an additional strangeness — the contorted traces of subversive articulation.

Daniel Ogden

Folkuniversitetet, Uppsala (Sweden)

**Reassessing the Character of Eleanor Vance in Shirley Jackson's
The Haunting of Hill House (1959)**

daniel@ogden.se

In this paper I would like to offer a slightly different reading of Eleanor Vance, the troubled protagonist of Shirley Jackson's classic tale of the '*unheimlich*'. Rather than see Eleanor Vance as a passive victim of powers beyond her control; represented here by

patriarchy in 1950s America, which Jackson was intimately familiar with, and Eleanor's own stunted upbringing. Instead I see Eleanor, once her mother has died, as embarking on a rebellious journey to create a life of her own. This journey ends tragically, not because she has let "the bastards grind her down" to borrow a phrase from *The Handmaids Tale*, but because the people she has relied on during her stay in Hill House have all, each in their own way, let her down. Ironically the one person who comes closest to saving Eleanor is Luke who, as a man, can be said to represent patriarchy, and additionally has no interest in being in Hill House except to secure his inheritance. Eleanor's journey ends tragically but it did not have to. With "a little help from her friends" she might have been able to turn her life around. In actively opposing patriarchy, Eleanor joins other imprisoned women struggling to escape patriarchy in such works as Ann Radcliffe's groundbreaking, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892), Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938), and Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* (2020).

Juanmo Xu

University of Warwick (UK)

**Unhomely Circulations: The Counterturning of the Homely
in Ann Quin's Uncanny Psychogeographies**

Juanmo.Xu@warwick.ac.uk

This paper examines the uncanny as a spatial and embodied phenomenon in Ann Quin's experimental fiction, arguing that her writing constructs uncanny psychogeographies in which the familiar becomes estranged through claustrophobic households, fractured mobilities, and stuttering narrative forms. While Sigmund Freud defines the uncanny as the moment when the familiar becomes strange — the *Unheimlich* as a "sub-species" of the *heimlich* — Quin radicalises this formulation by staging a continuous counterturning between the homely and the unhomely. In her work, movement beyond domestic space does not produce liberation but reconfigures early domestic trauma: exterior mobility reproduces interior impasse, and the exotic becomes merely another layer of domesticity.

Focusing primarily on *Berg* and *Passages*, this paper demonstrates how Quin's fragmented prose, shifting pronouns, and disrupted temporalities enact uncanny displacements at both narrative and bodily levels. Houses, coastlines, and transitional landscapes become heterotopic traumascapes where subjectivity circulates without anchorage, producing spaces that are simultaneously homely and hostile. Quin's stuttering protagonists thus inhabit what Martin Heidegger describes as the "counterturning of homeliness," where movement intensifies rather than resolves estrangement.

By situating Quin within feminist avant-garde modernism, this paper argues that her uncanny spaces resist both domestic containment and clinical pathologisation. Rather than representing psychological disturbance as either symbolic or biological, Quin constructs spatialised traumascapes that materialise psychic instability while encoding its representational logic. In doing so, her work expands the uncanny beyond Freud's domestic framework into a mobile, gendered, and psychogeographical condition that captures the fractured subjectivities of postwar modernity.

12:15-13:30 Session 10: Weird Fiction, Silence and Surreal Uncanniness

Julie Minaříková

Masaryk University Brno (Czechia)

Literature Both Wonderful and Strange: The Uncanny and the Familiar in Finnish Weird

julie.minarikova@phil.muni.cz

Finnish Weird (*suomikumma*) has emerged as one of the most distinctive contemporary currents in Finnish literature, marked by its persistent unsettling of the boundary between the familiar and the strange. Although often compared to magical realism, Finnish Weird operates through a specifically uncanny logic: it distorts everyday reality just enough to destabilize readers' perceptual habits, producing a lingering sense of estrangement rather than outright fantasy. In the paper *Literature both wonderful and strange: the uncanny and the familiar in the Finnish Weird*, I examine this literary movement not as a coherent genre but as a literary mode whose uncanniness arises from its manipulation of realism, its strategic use of ambiguity, and its refusal to resolve the tension between the real and the "other". I will focus on various means these narratives create "uncanniness" through distorting worlds, spaces, characters, and time, and how they are used to toy with the reader. For demonstration and analysis purposes, examples by present prominent authors of the movement, such as Pasi Ilmari Jääskeläinen or Johanna Sinisalo will be used, taking into account various approaches and theories of literary postmodernism.

Elena Bollinger

University of Madeira / ULICES (Portugal)

Uncanny Voices Exploring Meaning through Silence in the Postmodern British Fiction

elena.bollinger@staff.uma.pt

This paper aims to examine critically a variety of implicit discourses - eerie voices - in the Postmodern British Fiction. This examination will analyse the dialectical relationship between the explicit discursive stability revolving around the narrative expectations of visible structures of meaning and the uncanny presence of the implicit, unsettled, disembodied voices in the selected literary texts. Drawing on A. Erll's theorisation of strict semantical connection between implicit and explicit levels of discourse in cultural memory, the two-dimensional analysis of Doris Lessing's *The Sun between their Feet* (1973), Ian McEwan's *First Love, Last Rites* (1975) and M. Amis's *Einstein's Monsters* (1987), fosters a new theoretical approach to the role of implicit discourses in the narrative construction of the texts' explicit thematic dimensions. The paper argues that the invisible, silenced voices and unsettling echoes ultimately come to supplement, criticise, transform and oppose the legitimacy of the visible, dominant discourses, thus revising the narrative construction of the selected texts from within. Moreover, considering Erll's theory as a theoretical background for the analysis of uncanny voices in Postmodern British Fiction allows for the transcultural confrontation of multiple cultural, temporal and historical contexts, thus

evidencing the widening range of narrative strategies, disclosed in many postmodern and contemporary British fiction that aim at disruption, difference, discontinuity and playfulness with the consensual structures of meaning.

Oliwia Majchrowska

University of Wroclaw (Poland)

**Interiorities in Crisis: Surrealist Dislocation and the Uncanny
in Charlie Kaufman's *I'm Thinking of Ending Things***

oliwia.majchrowska@uwr.edu.pl

A recent study of Charlie Kaufman's body of work reveals a tendency to recognize the 'strategic blending of the serious and the comic' as a guiding force in his films' narrative logic. The dichotomy rightly places Kaufman within the context of filmmakers who, at the turn of the twentieth century, mock human efforts to adjust to the shape and pace of capitalist culture. The frequent conflict between the serious and the comic coexists with another pair of opposites, namely, the uncanny and the ordinary, emerging from the exploration of the characters' interiority: their minds, vulnerabilities, and irrational drives. Kaufman's interest in both the aura of uncanniness and intricacies of the human psyche makes his films an intriguing example of how contemporary cinema takes up and reworks surrealist techniques. This paper uses Charlie Kaufman's film *I'm Thinking of Ending Things* as a case study for analyzing the presence of the surrealist techniques in contemporary American cinema. The essay analyses the presence of juxtaposition and dislocation in Kaufman's depiction of the female character's inner tensions and explores how the two key surrealist techniques allow the director to reinforce the portrayal of existential angst in the film. It argues that these methods exteriorize the dynamics of a fraught inner state to the extent that a series of irrational events of the plot appeals as a visual representation of subconscious dynamics, thus significantly propelling the image of the main protagonist's crisis.

13:45-15:00 Session 11: Dystopias, Moral Worlds and Unsettled Belonging

Ahmed Nabil Bensedik

Hassiba Ben Bouali University (Algeria)

**Between "the Disruptive" and "the Supportive" Uncanny:
Exploring Dean Koontz's *The Eyes of Darkness* as a Critical Dystopia**

ahmednabilbensedik@gmail.com

Often read as an anticipation of the pandemic, Dean Koontz's *The Eyes of Darkness* can be approached differently. Unlike the relatively recent and limited scholarship, which largely draws parallels between COVID-19 and the novel's omnipresent "Wuhan-400," the paper under consideration attempts to examine the book as a critical dystopia.

Lyman Tower Sargent defines a critical dystopia as "a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a

contemporaneous reader to view as worse than contemporary society,” and he adds that it “normally includes at least one eutopian enclave or holds out hope that the dystopia can be overcome and replaced with a eutopia” (9). The non-realistic setting, together with the novel’s ultimately optimistic conclusion, renders Koontz’s work a critical dystopia.

The paradigm shift in the figure of the “uncanny”—from disruptive to supportive—helps transform the narrative from dystopia toward utopia, reinforcing the classification of the novel as a critical dystopia. There is, therefore, a case to be made for Sigmund Freud’s well-established notion. Danny Evans—the child who is believed to be dead and who gains new powers after undergoing several virus tests—eventually aids Tina Evans and Elliot Stryker (his mother and her boyfriend) in subverting the system. His transition from an uncanny force that disrupts others’ lives to a supportive catalyst for change not only helps the couple navigate military research installations but also enables them to defy the authority of the chief, George Alexander.

Elonora Hodaj

University “Ismail Qemali” Vlore_Albania (Albania)

**At Home in the Unhomely: Moral Geography and the Emergence
of the Uncanny in Hawthorne’s “Young Goodman Brown”**

elonorahodaj1617@gmail.com

elonora.hodaj@univlora.edu.al

Rather than being read solely as allegory or moral fable, Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “Young Goodman Brown” can also be approached as an anticipation of the articulation of the uncanny in a landscape where space, morality, and subjectivity collapse, leaving the protagonist paradoxically “at home” in the unhomely.

Drawing on Freud’s emphasis on repression, return, and the collapse of the homely, the paper approaches this story as the narrative of an experience in which the familiar becomes disturbingly estranged, a narrative of psychic disturbance that anticipates Sigmund Freud’s formulation of the uncanny (das Unheimliche).

By reading “Young Goodman Brown” through a Freudian lens, this paper demonstrates how the uncanny, in terms of geographical relations in which the boundaries between safety and threat dissolve, failed rational explanations, and repressed material, emerges and functions as a mechanism of psychological destabilization impacting home, belief, and identity.

Through the setting up of a dichotomous narrative structure straddling the symbolic opposites of dream and reality, safety and danger, evil and goodness, innocence and guilt, forgiveness and unforgiveness, Hawthorne reminds us of human limitations and how pride and isolation frustrate people’s capacity for love and sympathy and expose the uncanny within the familiar world, producing not momentary fear but lasting psychic damage.

Tanja Cvetković
University of Niš (Serbia)
The Sense of Belonging and Cosmopolitan Values
in *The Nightingale Won't Let You Sleep*
tcvet99@yahoo.com

The paper explores the meaning of borders, home, belonging, cosmopolitanism, and understanding of the self in Steven Heighon's 2011 novel *The Nightingale Won't Let You Sleep*. The author explains how fences and borders can influence the change of personality in the thirty- year-old refugee Elias, a Canadian of Greek descent, who settles down in a secretive town of Varosha behind the "Green line" and the Turkish border in Cyprus. The nightingale, the central metaphor in the novel, induces awakening and a growing sense of belonging and home in Elias, which gives rise to different intertexts to be explored in the paper as well to the change of the self of the main protagonists.

By relying on Clifford's and Said's ideas of life in the new environment which usually occurs against the memory of life in another environment, the author explores simultaneous perspectives of life in exile and across the border as well as the issues of defining an identity which exists in contrapuntal reality. I prove that within a cultural diversity in a conflict zone one can practice empathy and brotherhood and a sense of home and belonging by participating in "an unspoken collaboration". This gives rise to a drifting, cosmopolitan identity, and enables exploring who we are and what we can become when put under pressure.

15:15-16:45 Session 12: Bodies, Monsters and Spectral Afterlives

Liam Connerly
University of New Mexico (USA)
The Uncanny Host: Domestic Horror and Broken Ritual in Euripides' Cyclops
lconnerly@unm.edu
liamconnerly@gmail.com

This paper argues that Euripides restages Homer's Cyclopean cave as a Greek household in order to produce the uncanny: what is homely returns estranged. Bringing Freud's *unheimlich* into dialogue with Cohen's monster theory, Bakker's account of meat and ritual, and Bray's analysis of Homeric edge-terms (*eschatiā*, *peîrar*), I read *Cyclops* as an "edge-home" where familiar forms of sociability persist without their ethical mediation. Four nodes structure the analysis. First, space: Euripides furnishes the cave like an *oikos* while preserving Homer's thresholds, so recognition and danger inhabit the same doorway. Second, ritual: Polyphemus' "belly theology," his perverse "guest-gifts" of fire and bronze, and the promise to eat Odysseus last mimic sacrificial sequence without reciprocity to gods or men. Third, vision and naming: the blinding of the single eye concentrates the Freudian charge around seeing and being seen; the *Outis* ruse unbinds name from body, while the shipboard self-naming restores it and reenters a world where names oblige and prayer is heard. Fourth, culture: in Cohen's terms, the monster's body reads Greek, inventorying, bargaining, toasting, and arguing, so that dread adheres to

laughter rather than dissolving in it. The satyr play thus operates as an edge-machine that domesticates Homer's border space without neutralizing its danger. *Cyclops* becomes an exercise in Greek self-reading, where laughter can handle fear, not cure it; the household can become a cave; the host can become a devourer.

Selected Works Cited

- Bakker, Egbert J. *The Meaning of Meat and the Structure of the Odyssey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Bray, Chloe. "Limits of Dread, ἐσχατιά, πείρα, and Dangerous Edgespace in Homeric Formulae." In *Landscapes of Dread in Classical Antiquity: Negative Emotion in Natural and Constructed Spaces*, ed. Debbie Felton, 38–57. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2018.
- Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)." In *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, 3–25. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Euripides. *Cyclops. Alceste. Medea*. Ed. and trans. David Kovacs. Loeb Classical Library 12. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994.
- Freud, Sigmund. "The 'Uncanny'." In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 17, 217–256. London: The Hogarth Press, 1955.
- Homer. *Odyssey*. Trans. A. T. Murray, rev. George E. Dimock. 2 vols. Loeb Classical Library 104–105. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919; rev. 1995.

Maya Aguiluz-Ibargüen, Raúl Sergio Cuéllar Sánchez
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (México)
**Ghostly Bodies, and Social Remembrance. Exploration
of the Uncanny Imagination Between Life and Death**
aguiluz.maya@hotmail.com
raul.cuellar@fa.unam.mx

As a set of issues related with sociological imagination, and other fields of studies (cultural studies; memory studies, studies of body; comparative literature, etc ...), this presentation explores the ghost, corpses, and spectral bodies that arise from the contexts of violence and loss in Mexico. One key theme that interconnects how these figures have been converted into struggles around the concept of memory, and how the body becomes a bystander of the past and a spectral construction. By taking some contributions from the so-called field of hauntology, we will connect notions of absent bodies and current visualization of corpses as a key to remembrance, and to recollect social remnants.

By leaving behind the fixed identities, it is possible for strangers to reconstruct themselves into alterity (assimilated to a question of differences between themselves with exotic gaze) out of the level of the predicative being of individuals or collectives. The recognition of strangeness has an uncanny effectuation; it increased its powerful meanings to signal a complex transformation in the society that is overdue to pass from cultural boundaries to imaginations of fields for living without the stability of margins.

It is imperative to interrogate not just the foundational narratives of strangeness as a mode of reject others, but the very intricate meaning of this concept that has postponed closure and, by the contrary, expressed itself such a singular force that transgressed the disciplinary boundaries of ethnographic outlook, from diverse sociologies, and on the anthropological ground that gave an epistemological frame to understand how the strangers have been embodied beyond, and along with. This links with semantic distinctions for alienation as economic, psychological and existential condition, as well as for reification.

Strangeness not only interplays with social phenomena of estrangement and cultural atmosphere, but concepts also that operate through sustained distances of proximity and

farness, along with the dialectical affectivity they entail. It also emerges as a term through which diverse past and present experiences can be made sense of: not only personal but embodied, not only cultural but emotionally codified, and not only immediate and material but also unconscious and eerie. This concept haunts ontological, technological, and political domains through the production of socially acquired life–death tensional overtones and bio-necro-social forms. Focusing on strangeness has implied a shift away from our own sociological and architectural analytical resources to embrace alternative ways of examining the effects of past territorializing processes of the modern control state over social space—processes that persist in the traumatic (hi)stories of the present. In this sense, the primary motivation for introducing our research on strangeness was to explore cultural constructions and incarnated figures of the so-called *the faraway nearby* (Aguiluz-Ibarguen, 2009), and to interrogate different uncanny contexts: social landscapes, canvases with dark shadows, empty places, urgent environments, and archetypal scenes in contemporary Mexico.

Yannis Mitsou

Hellenic Open University (Greece)

**Corporeality in Two Recent Films by David Cronenberg: The Freudian
Uncanny and Phenomenology in Crimes of the Future (2022)
and The Shrouds (2024)**

Giannismitsou@gmail.com

The uncanny is always difficult to approach in art. The fact that, by definition, the term is to be found in the balance between familiarity and insecurity makes it beyond representation. This blurring of certainties alludes not only to dream iconography, as defined and described by Freud, but also to phenomenology in its emphasis on perception, fluidity of experience and a poetic emphasis on corporeality, on a priority on the human flesh as a way to communicate with the world and actively have an impact on it. This essay explores the conception of corporeality, as expressed in two films by David Cronenberg, *Crimes of the Future* (2022) and his more recent *The shrouds* (2024) a reflection on death.

Cronenberg's work focuses repeatedly on the experience of the human body, treating it visually both as a material entity, that is flesh as a physical extension of the locations and urban environments that surround the individual and as a poetic factor, both liberating and expressive, an object of desire to be sought in everyday life. Cronenberg's understanding of everyday existence, on the other hand, is not perceived in terms of a conventional narrative realism but rather in a unique, highly idiosyncratic way.

The same balance can be found both in the lonely pursuits of Saul the performance artist (Viggo Mortensen) as he explores the secrets of a suspiciously familiar deserted city of the future in *Crimes of the Future* (actually shot in Athens, in the aftermath of the great pandemic) and the desperate research that takes place in *The Shrouds*, rooted not only in highly unconventional science but also in what can be described, in aesthetic terms, as a highly idiosyncratic visual artistic production that carefully mirrors Cronenberg's own explorations.

Laura Barrio-Vila

University of Arkansas at Little Rock (USA)

Uncanny Monsters: Queer Black Horror in Rivers Solomon's *Model Home*

Lxbarrio@ualr.edu

In *Model Home* (2024), Rivers Solomon narrates the story of three Black siblings forced to revisit their childhood home after their parents' unexpected death. As the first Black family in a White suburban gated community in Texas, they not only have to learn to negotiate the strange dynamics of a community not designed with them in mind, but also the uncanny events taking place inside their eerie home. I argue that *Model Home* redefines horror and the trope of the haunted house found in Gothic stories to unveil the unsettling nature of racial segregation in present-day American society. More importantly, the trauma experienced by the characters inside the house, symbol of White mainstream society, mirrors the uneasiness of the protagonist Ezri's queerness, whose gender fluid body is a site of unease for them. Ultimately, Solomon exposes the unexpected interconnections between race, gender, sexuality, and class, and their psychological consequences at individual and societal levels, adding a nuanced and multilayered take on the four types of human monsters that Jerry Rafiki Jenkins identifies as part of African American horror fiction: "the monsters of White rage, respectability, not-ness, and serial killing" (*Anti-Blackness and Human Monstrosity in Black American Horror Fiction*, p. 13).

17:00-18:15 Session 13: Thresholds of the Uncanny:
Modernity, Memory and Urban Spectres

Sanskriti Chattopadhyay

University of Gothenburg (Sweden)

The Uncanny at the Threshold: Epistemic Rupture and Indigenous Modernity

chattopadhyay.sanskriti@gmail.com;

chattopadhyay.sanskriti@gu.se

The paper argues that the uncanny is not a universal psychological constant but a historically and culturally situated experience. It emerges when reality cannot be assimilated into an existing symbolic or rational framework, particularly in moments when modernity confronts other epistemologies. In this paper, the Pardhan worldview functions as such an inassimilable "real," resisting translation into dominant modern categories and producing a productive dissonance.

The argument is grounded in the Pardhan art practice of central India. Traditionally, musicians and mural-makers, Pardhan artists shifted to painting in the 1980s, entering the circuits of galleries, institutions, and the urban art market. This transition required the community to negotiate modern systems of visibility, authorship, and exchange, producing not only economic and social transformation but an encounter between distinct epistemic orders. The death of Jangarh Singh Shyam in 2001, the primary force behind this movement, intensified this rupture. His passing compelled a reorganisation of artistic, familial, and communal life, opening a space in which inherited cosmologies and urban modernity coexisted without full translation.

Through a close reading of a painting by Jangarh's son, Mayank Singh Shyam, the paper proposes that the uncanny emerges as a condition of living between worlds. The painting, inspired by his mother's move to the city after his father's passing, is structured around a sheltering tortoise-body containing a sustaining tree, stages a perceptual instability in which categories blur. Here, the uncanny names the sustained negotiation between parallel realities, revealing the epistemic violence and generative potential embedded in historical transition.

Titian Butash

Independent Scholar (USA)

**Pink Cadillacs and an Old Malibu: In the Rearview Mirror
of Classic Industrial Design, Cadillac Place and Detroit Wheels
by the American Architect, Albert Kahn**

titian.butash@gmail.com

The precursor to modern architecture and design in America of the 1930s to 1940s was, curiously, the design of the automobile, and, subsequently, the design of the modern automobile factory beginning about the early 1900s.

The German-born American architect Albert Kahn established his own namesake architecture and engineering firm, Albert Kahn, Architect (1902), practicing architecture, mostly, in Michigan. Khan created the first modern automobile factory in America earning celebrity-status as the "Architect of Detroit" for his designs of Highland Park Ford Plant (1910), Packard Automotive Plant (1911) and Cadillac Place (1918).

Known as a symbol of luxury, Cadillac, the Cadillac Motor Company (founded 1902), was named after Antoine sieur de la Mothe Cadillac (1658–1730) whose coat of arms provided the eponymous automobile's crest. The French explorer founded Detroit, Michigan which popularly became known as Motor City and as "Motown" (Motown Records) beginning about the 1960s.

In Popular Culture, the iconic Pink Cadillac, preferably with plush velvet seats, figuratively cruises along freeways as a hybrid symbol of glamour and independence, success and loss. And, as the Industrial embodiment of Americana, which is also inherent in the, uncannily, classic automobile designs of the Chevy Malibu, PT Cruiser, Chevy HHR, and Buick. American designers and engineers Harley Earl, Bryan Nesbitt, and Henry Leland might have, strangely, foreseen Bruce Springsteen, Natalie Cole, Elvis Presley, and Doug Stone crooning about their lives within the context of a car. But, the traditional Neoclassicism of Albert Kahn's modern Cadillac Place, was what really drove the Detroit Wheels.

Tabassum Zaman

BRAC University (Bangladesh)

Dhaka and Its Spectral Others

tabassum.zaman@bracu.ac.bd

Dhaka is often called a *jadur shohor*, a magical city—an attribution that the formal discourse resists in its effort to align with a scientific worldview inherited from the

Enlightenment and Western modernity. This rational discourse claims to have freed humanity from its habitual reliance on the intuitive, the irrational, and thus the non-modern and non-scientific ways of understanding the world. Using empirical data from three social groups of Dhaka residents—the indigenes, long-term residents and migrants—the paper demonstrates how the psycho-social reality of Dhaka challenges this hegemony of the rational/modern, displaying a contrary yet steady drift towards the oneiric and the fantastical, not as a relapse but as a vital way to make urban experience meaningful. Dhaka is conditioned by two spectral cities—the temporal other, or the remembered city, and the spatial other, or the ruralised city. These invisible cities from “elsewhere” remains retrievable and accessible to the dwellers in the present, forming an integral part of the social reality of Dhaka. These quotidian imaginative practices activate all the dormant channels of cognition, offering a magical release of all forms of knowing and being—seen and unseen, rational and irrational. Residents evoke these spectral cities to make sense of their environment, to ameliorate negative experiences, to adapt, to compensate for absences and to recreate and reconstruct the most nondescript into its best workable form. In doing so, they unapologetically reclaim the city’s imaginary and oneiric realms as legitimate ways to see, tell and inhabit it.