

THE UNCANNY - A CINEMATIC AND PSYCHODYNAMIC EXPLORATION

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Introduction: The "Uncanny" (Das Unheimliche), a concept coined by Sigmund Freud (1919) and presented in art and psychotherapy. It is when an experience can be familiar, yet foreign at the same time, resulting in an uncomfortably strange or familiar feeling.

Objective: A theoretical investigation and comparison of the "Uncanny" concept in the cinematic and psycho-therapeutic setting.

Aims:

1. Exploring the cinematic Uncanny motifs in two films by screenwriter, Charlie Kaufman: "Being John Malkovich" and "Adaptation".
2. Exploring these motifs and understanding them in the context of a case study of prolonged psycho-dynamic psychotherapy.
3. Outlining practical implications for the use of this concept in psycho-dynamic psychotherapy.

Methods: Through cinematic analysis of the films we describe the development of the uncanny experience. Thereafter, , through narrative analysis of a case report, we refer to the obstacles created by the "Uncanny" experience in the psycho-therapeutic process.

Results: The cinematic motifs ("The Double" and "The Secret") involved in the creation of the "Uncanny" experience are present and have a major effect on the therapeutic process. Exemplifying and analyzing their presentation seem to clarify possible obstacles that challenge the therapist.

Conclusions: The "Uncanny" is a concept that describes the human experience of sudden familiarity in a novel and strange situation. In this study we describe this phenomenon through psychoanalytic literature and explore it via popular films. It seems that recognizing the Uncanny in the therapeutic process may assist in engaging a therapeutic relationship and improving therapy outcomes.