

TO REPENT OR NOT TO REPENT: THE UNCANNINESS OF ALBERT CAMUS' *THE FALL*

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses Albert Camus' *The Fall* through Sigmund Freud's views on "Uncanny". Described in Freud's essay titled "Das Unheimliche," published in 1919, the German word *Unheimliche*, the uncanny, means a sense of strangeness, horror, or ambivalence that arises out of a familiar situation, place, individual, or experience. The study explores that the strange ambivalence to repent or not to repent even after the confession of delinquency seems essentially uncanny. In Albert Camus' *The Fall*, the strangeness that Clamence feels by suffering from guilt and after confessing in front of a stranger heightens the uncanniness as he struggles to avoid repentance because it is that aspect of his personality that was supposed to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light. Freud's notion is that experiencing two contradictory or paradoxical feelings at once is also uncanny. The protagonist is torn between two personalities and is often held hostage by his alter ego. His alter ego is Freudian "unheimlich" which is familiar yet frightening. Clamence's narcissistic personality halts him from repenting as he pronounces himself as a judge-penitent giving no weakness to any soul to judge him but continues to feel uncanny and frightened due to the guilt.

Keywords: uncanny, repentance, confession, guilt, judgement, punishment

INTRODUCTION

The study explores the strange ambivalence of whether to repent or not to repent even after the confession, which seems essentially uncanny. Freud (1999) describes the uncanny "unheimlich" as a familiar situation, place, individual, or experience that evokes a sense of ambivalence, horror, unfamiliarity, or strangeness (p. 04). Clamence, the protagonist of Albert Camus' *the Fall*, struggles to come to terms with his fall from a dignified and familiar position in the personal, social and professional realms. Therefore, torn between two personalities, his other personality is Freudian "unheimlich" appearing familiar yet

frightening. Freud argues that "the uncanny brings onto the surface events where a familiar phenomenon or feeling appears in an alarming and disturbing context" (p. 03). Clamence's past delinquencies in his interpersonal relationships, moral obligations, and professional life increasingly haunt his new self, and he is horrified by his past self. Despite being terrified, he does not want to repent; rather, he believes in forgetting his excesses after making a confession.

The author of *The Fall*, Albert Camus, embodies the idea of absurdity and the concept of revolt. Camus considered the absurd to be a fundamental and even defining characteristic of the modern

human condition (Wolken, 2016, p. 66). The idea of the absurd implies meaninglessness, the nonexistence of cosmic order or God, and humans' inevitable doom to suffer and die. Because of this situation, Camus believes that humans are left with three choices in life: to commit suicide, to make a "leap of faith" and choose to believe in a divine entity or order, or to accept the Absurd and create one's own meaning in life. Camus advocates for a third choice: in the face of the absurd, the best human beings can do is to be resilient and find meaning in life. Camus' works provide philosophical and political insights. In the mid-forties, the core problem of intellectual life was the difficulty of reconciling human responsibility in moral terms. Western thought found itself in a vacuum of values after the overwhelming and traumatic experiences of the world. In this new paradigm, the question of what to do became an existential challenge: to repent or not to repent?

If the existential crisis of guilt is applied, the uncanny elucidates how no unclean act can remain silently suppressed in the subconscious and not be revealed to the conscious mind. They return as doubles, haunting memories, or an unidentifiable anxiety that forever alters the individual's reality.

However, in a conscious, shallow act of confession, the individual becomes accustomed to deflecting the focus of universal guilt from their personal experience to a collective one. This irresponsibility is an escape from the painful reality of the ego's moral transformation. It manages to turn a personal weakness into a universal means of psychological oppression and of ethical superiority. Therefore, turning down repentance is an incredible survival activity, building a fortress of universal accusation, to make sure 'it is not possible to be innocent'; there is anyway 'possibility to be superior', with a systematic evaluation of others, as Amit (2006) notes (p. 322).

In a world without transcendental support, conscience can simply turn into a hyper-punitive super-ego. The modern person caught up in this inner circle-the exam of the self-is a hall of mirrors. Every time the guilt mind tries to rationalize its plight, every time it desperately

wishes to think its own way out of it, it gets the exact opposite effect, and even the deepest expressions of guilt are motivated by vanity, pride, or the desire to control the way one sees their own story unfold. Historically, the purpose of the Sacrament of Confession was to bring about justification, exposure, and reconciliation; it is now an oratorical tool. According to Vanborre (2012), this is the game the speaker plays: he confesses to everything in general, and he is immune to criticism and to generating an illusion of control-the double that keeps its presence well hidden from the gaze (p. 38).

This study sets out to chart the vast ranges of the mind's big picture, plant the pillars of duplicitous grammar, the architecture of hidden guilt, and the philosophical impossibility of modern absolution. In Albert Camus' *The Fall*(1956), the strangeness that Clamence feels by suffering from guilt and finding himself confessing in front of strangers heightens the Freudian uncanniness as he struggles to avoid repentance because it is that aspect of his personality which "ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light" (p. 04). Clamence's behavioral patterns and monologist narration stir a sense of uncanniness and mystery through an absurd and fragmented description of events.

Research Question:

- How does the performative structure of confession in Albert Camus' *The Fall* destabilizes conventional notions of repentance and generates a Freudian Unheimlich trap?

Literature Review

Albert Camus' critical discourse on *The Fall* (La Chute, 1956) and Sigmund Freud's notion of the uncanny in terms of structure (das Unheimliche, 1919) have always existed in the wider academic context of post-war issues of existential fear, spatial estrangement, and structural disadhesion. This review brings together intersecting theoretical streams, offering a synthesis of the critical development of text itself. It shows how, in the face of systemic trauma revealed in the text, modern fiction continually dramatizes the positive dissolution of the conscious ego.

Additionally, the independent use of the uncanny in post-war and twentieth-century literature can be explored by studying the applications made by critics to understand texts that have been considered literature on urban isolation and psychological fragmentation. Freud characterizes the uncanny as secret and hidden. Written at the end of his productive life, Albert Camus' *The Fall* (1956) is a spectacular work about the fragility of human thought that overshadowed the familiar genres of post-war European fiction. Over the last few decades, such a thick discourse, that of the self-styled judge-penitent Jean-Baptiste Clamence, has been localized in the realms of moral philosophy, secular theology, disillusionment, and historical criticism. Crucially, the conceptual vacuum generated in this systematic examination not only constitutes a core tenet of the novel's narrative strategy but also forms a clean slate for a new scholarly intervention at the intersection of narrative.

In the most basic area of Camus' critique, where the critique of humans is based on analysis of the text, Robert C. Solomon (2004) leads off with a brilliant psychological dissection of the text's deceptive effect of self-reflection in his pioneering article on the internal dynamics of ego-preservation (p. 43). The protagonist's hyper-reflexive awareness redoubles personal guilt as a universal weapon, as pointed out by den Dulk (2023) (p. 20) because by positioning his listener as a fellow player of victimization, the impression of a shared trauma is created, making it possible for a systemic self-centeredness to thrive, in which subjectivity is disconnected from real humanity without losing its hold on it.

Furthermore, his monologue becomes a broader socio-political exploration by Matthew Sharpe (2002), who views it through the lens of mid-twentieth-century authoritarianism and ideology hunting down its own perpetrators. This research closely maps the presentation of individual innocence onto rhetoric. (p. 99). Defacing is to make the novel come alive by situating it within the vivid, ominous, and dramatic backdrop of the Cold War era, demonstrating the novel's vulnerability to abstract, philosophical statements, and in the wake of the erosion of objective truth.

Simpson D. (2024) discusses it be a moral fragmentation (p. 94).

Likewise, the following comparative studies look at the formal one-sided dialogue as a calculated choice by Camus. In this field, scholarship focuses on the significance of a self-critique, which is, above all, ungrounded and absolutist, as it only secures its subject from the authentic reality of belonging to a community (Wallace, 1999, p. 77). This line of thought may clarify that this form of intellectualism skillfully simulates moral sensibility but outright undermines it. According to Whistler (2018), the text dramatizes the acute spiritual suffering that occurs when traditional theological systems are stripped away, leaving human beings to face an indifferent universe without a transcendental baseline for justice (p. 27).

Subsequently, geocritical scholars have attempted to use a spatial perspective to establish the narrator's internal collapse in transitional urban topographies. Building on the ideas of spatial models created by Bertrand Westphal, J.G.S. Kahambing (2019) analyzes the intermingling of the bright and open spaces of Paris and the damp and heavy spaces of Amsterdam as haunted places with "spectrality" (p. 68). Clamence's reference to the past is also taken as an emblem of collective anxiety (Viggani, 1960, p. 68). As the character of Amsterdam's canals, this scholarship uncovers the role of the all-pervasive mist and grey waters as symbolic agents and the way that the setting becomes an active player in the drama of the fluidity of boundaries (Westphal, 2011, p. 112), both moral and historical, in the novel.

Another group of structural critics-psychological ones-reflects the classical Freudian models of analysis involved in breaking down the way in which Clamence's mind went on the break after he failed morally on the bridge in Paris. Ultimately, the experience of the uncanny occurs when the boundaries between the real and the imaginary are breached or when there are occasional repetitions that force the subject's intellectual sense into doubt (Freud, 1999 p. 234). In recent literary criticism, Nicholas Royle (2003) has extended the concept of the uncanny as a foundational narrative strategy that undermines the normal structures of everyday life, leading to a

view of the uncanny as a ghostly subterranean force in literary narratives when the familiar connections of human relationships and language are ruptured (p. 12).

Contemporary cultural critics have given a new level of aesthetics to the idea by situating this uncanny mechanism as the total opposite of the classical sublime. The sublime raises the human mind, and thus it is a way of producing what becomes very transcendent; however, the uncanny is about a sense of sudden contraction (Freeland, 2000, p. 81). This aspect of criticism reveals that the “uncanny” is not just a story about haunted castles and evil, supernatural strangers, but is an evolving narrative technique that follows the passing anxieties of each culture. Structural fragmentation, unreliable narrative voices, and linguistic repetitions (Blanco and Peeren, 2013, p. 9) serve as means to find the uncanny in modern life.

This disjunction often strikes selected categories of our senses, resulting in the evolution of the auditory uncanny as an emerging subfield of critical theory in literature. In this unique method, Stewart (2004) explores how embattled senses challenge authority in narratives and destabilize fictional worlds (p. 66). When a voice looks like normal talk but is based on a coldly calculated subtext, it becomes an acoustic entity outside of the human imagination: a presence that makes the reader’s imagination fail at each moment, treading a psychological path, and in a constant state of uneasy awareness (Mitchell et al. 2011, p. 425).

Therefore, combining these lines of reading shows the value of Camus’ traditional scholarship in elucidating the themes of guilt, pride, and solitude in *The Fall*. Earlier studies have examined the text and the theory through various lenses, but there remains a gap in the analysis of Camus’ *The Fall* from the Freudian perspective of ‘The Uncanny, which gets the protagonist to linger between the condition of repentance or not. He confesses, but this is done in the presence of a listener whose presence is not tangible, giving an echo to the Freudian concept of “the double” and “the alter-ego.” Even after confession, he does not repent because he considers it harsh, unbearable, and insulting; therefore, he simply dresses the dead

corpse by making confession and takes on the role of judge-patient to avoid any judgement on himself and rather extends it to the whole humanity.

Theoretical Framework

In 1919, Sigmund Freud published one of his remarkable essays, *Das Unheimliche*, which expresses the susceptibilities of human perception and is a shadowy reminder of the tendency of literature, language, and human minds to react to the often-frightening return of elusive fears. Freud’s theory is a psychological phenomenon that explains how the familiar gradually changes into something profoundly frightening and threatening. His analysis of the linguistic origins of the German words heimlich and unheimlich reveals that these seemingly antithetical concepts would, in fact, be indistinguishable, rather they come to merge even when they are not quite the same. The convergence of language is not a coincidence; it reflects how the human mind works when there is a secret or repressed desire. Freud(1999) was able to grasp this inherent semantic drift, saying: “The meaning of the word “heimlich”, of what is familiar and agreeable, drifts in this direction until it finally merges with its reversal, “unheimlich”, which is at the same time concealed and kept out of view, is in general(p. 17).”

Consequently, to understand how this disruption of psychological experience occurs in daily life and in the fictional experience, Freud lists multiple presumed causes for this disruption, such as the “doppelganger,” or the double. Using E.T.A. Hoffmann, Freud explains how characters in his stories are plagued by entities that are copies of themselves, destroying their sense of uniqueness and internal control. The psychoanalytic explanation for the establishment of a double starts with a defense mechanism from the childhood psyche, in which an effort is made to shield itself by creating an immortal outcast image, manifested as a double. However, as a person grows up and overcomes primary narcissism, the ego’s defenses are suppressed. A double that comes up later in life takes a new shade: one of eternity, becomes one of death, and one solid,

becomes a split mind, a physical fact (Freud, 1999, p. 234).

The second self is the independent, objective, and critical observation of the primary self from an external perspective. The ego allows all unfulfilled potential, evaluative self-analysis, and even suppressed guilt to settle and exist within the individual. Involuntary repetition is a major factor in the production of uncanny fear, in addition to the threat of the doppelgänger. If we observe a series of coincidences or patterns in the normal flow of life, our conscious mind rationally addresses them. However, once the same name, number, or picture is repeated without any apparent reason, the rational mind system fails to comprehend or rationalize it. This repetition is the most primitive fear of fate or supernatural control, which taps into the Freudian id's primal memory-compulsion to repeat the act of violence.

This uncanny effect occurs when the rigid borders between fantasy and material fact are blurred, that is, when what the subject is confronted with coincides with their own fears. The person becomes psychically effaced and thus loses their intellectual control of the situation. This indistinctness between imagination and reality presents a historical layer of uncanny experiences. Freud (1999) identified two main sources of uncanny

feelings: communities that have been repressed in childhood and those that have been conquered in early childhood. According to Freud, this fracture explains the uncanny:

This is what is called the "infantile element in the uncanny effect," the over-awareness of the psychical as opposed to the material reality with which he is heretofore singularly acquainted, which is closely allied with the belief in the 'omnipotence of thoughts'—a belief that also dominates the minds of neurotics (p. 244).

Some examples of primitive beliefs are the belief that thoughts are powerful, animism (the animated nature of objects), and the belief that thoughts possess secret and magical powers that control reality. As modern civilization has evolved, the human mind has moved away from these magical assumptions toward objective logic. However, this leverage has not yet been fully developed. If an outside occurrence proves that

one of these older beliefs, which has been rejected, is indeed correct, it cuts through rational barriers. Freud (1999) built on this legacy of psychology:

We-or our primitive forebears-once believed these things to be realities and knew they were true; the modern person has overcome these states of thought and feels safe in believing that these new judgements are infallible; the vestiges of these surmounted beliefs remain within us, and as soon as something happens in our lives which seems to confirm them, we are struck by the feeling of the uncanny (p. 247-48).

Finally, Freud investigated how these psychological phenomena work when transferring real-life experiences into fiction. He states that the writer has a special ability to alter the readers' sense of reality, and it may never be uncanny because the line between reality and fantasy is never crossed. To be uncanny in literature, the author is faced with the task of establishing a world that is realistic, familiar, believable, and recognizable, and then systematically violating it in subtle and inexplicable ways. The need for the reader to know if the threat is psychological or supernatural and to doubt or not doubt, as he writes:

We are the most susceptible to the narrative because it can lead us through a world of making where we feel the same as we would in a true reality; it can lead us where we were trained as a child, albeit deformed, and conquer the tendencies we have that we are unaware of-it is precisely when it works on those itches within us that the reader feels the most at ease with the story and is most receptive to its message(Freud, 1999, p. 250-51).

Hence, Freud's ideas about the uncanny offer an approach to studying narrative and text ambiguity and fragmentation. It shows that the worst of all horrors can exist not only outside of us but also within us; only with first-time exposure does horror grip us. The uncanny reveals the power of the unconscious, turning the familiar against itself, always echoing the subject's suppressed history. In literary texts, this schema goes beyond the most superficial reading of plot and character, revealing how the turning of an author (repetitions, the blocking of certain ambiguities, the disorientations of viewpoint) simulates the

defensive lapses of the human psyche, forcing the reader to confront the same cognitive decentrations that paralyze the narrative voice.

Research Findings

Drawing upon the Freudian lens of the uncanny, this research uses the paradox of penance in the narrative structure of Albert Camus's *The Fall* to find the double necessity and impossibility of moral absolution in Camus's work. This investigation argues that the novel is a structural inversion of the idea of confession, which methodologically constructs a speech of guilt to escape from moral responsibility. He is merely mimicking personal failure on the bridge of Paris, and by doing so, he acknowledges that he is not alone in experiencing such failure; it is part of the human condition. The conversion of the act to repent as a cynical tactic to not rely on the moral authority of anyone else is indicative of the text's root existential crisis: that the narrator is able to have the illusion of intellectual superiority but finds himself in a state of complete moral paralysis.

Discussion

Clamence's confession to an unknown and unrevealed addressee is uncanny, as his listener's presence is intangible and non-existent. Freud (1999) asserts that an "uncanny effect is produced by effacing the distinction between imagination and reality" (p. 10). The confessional setting and monologist utterances fail to prove the existence of a real listener. Vaguely, the narratee's existence remains under question throughout the novel, giving the impression that Clamence is talking to his alter ego as Freud asserts, "the connections the 'double' has with reflections in mirrors, with shadows, guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and the fear of death" (p. 09). Clamence is deeply narcissistic and misanthropic, calling himself a judge-penitent," and his ego would never allow him to admit his mistakes in front of any other soul who could judge him. The narratee remains silent throughout the novel, which gives the uncanny effect of being an "inanimate object playing the role of an animate" (Freud, 1999, p. 06). Clamence's confession to an unknown and unrevealed addressee is uncanny, as his listener's presence is intangible and non-existent.

As Ralph Waldo Emerson (1842) argues, people do not seem to realize that their opinion of the world is also a confession of their character, which synchronizes well with Camus' protagonist's judgmental nature. Moreover, Clamence's narcissistic nature halts him from repenting as he pronounces himself a 'judge-penitent,' giving no weakness to any soul to judge him even after confession, but continues to feel uncanny and get frightened due to the guilt. He believes in forgetting mistakes rather than repenting them. Here, he seems like Dorian in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde (2003), who looks at the mirror and tries to convince himself to repent but quickly realizes his desire to change due to his ego and wish for safety (p. 220).

It is uncanny that Clamence believes he is escaping the confession by doing so. He is obsessed with confessions. He declares, "I have ceased to like anything but confessions, and authors of confessions write specially to avoid confessing. When they confess, they are about to dress the corpse" (Camus, 1956, p. 36). For Clamence, confessing mistakes is like dressing a corpse. For him, there is no use of repentance over mistakes, but it is uncanny that his guilt ultimately makes him confess to all his crimes. He is in a state of uncanny ambivalence.

It is uncanny that Clamence does not forgive others and wants to avoid others' judgement of his crimes and escape the burden of asking for forgiveness for himself. He declares, "I deny the good intention. The respectable mistake, the indiscretion, the extending circumstances. With me, there is no absolution or blessing" (Camus, 1956, p. 39). Clamence does not believe in salvation. He seeks freedom unnaturally. By confessing, Clamence seeks freedom and declares, "At the end of all, freedom is a court sentence" (p. 39). Clamence has uncanny worldviews on crime, punishment, forgiveness, guilt, and repentance. Representing modern man, Clamence is all alone, with no friends or relatives around. He did not mention any women except for a few with whom he fulfilled his sexual desires. Clamence says: "I have no more friends; I have nothing but accomplices" (Camus, 1956, p. 38). Loneliness and having no one around made Clamence feel

unheimlich, the uncanny, in his own skin. The absence of friends affected them by closing them in a shell without any connection to the outside world. He had no one around him who could listen to his fears and warm him with the touch of connection and understanding, as Chua (2021) presents that Camus' fiction expresses nihilism by promoting ethical resistance and human solidarity (p. 116-119).

Clamence is a victim of a double personality and is often held hostage by his alter ego. His alter ego is uncanny, and he is always trying to figure it out. He never realizes that he is not what he pretends to be or what he believes himself to be. The protagonist is a victim of a double personality, and his other personality is that of an alter-ego. His alter ego is his other personality, Freudian "unheimlich" which is familiar yet frightening. This can be linked to Raskolnikov's psychological collapse in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (2002), which highlights the psychological impossibility of establishing moral arrogance against a split conscience (p. 550).

Clamence's double is evident when he says, "My reflection was smiling in the mirror, but it seemed to me that my smile was double" (Camus, 1956, p. 24). It is familiar because it is just the mirror image of his personality, which is not before his eyes or even the inner neurons of his cerebral thoughts but is present just behind the curtain of his consciousness. This smile on his face is beyond explanation, except for the assumption that his alter ego forces him to smile for no reason. Freud explains this double personality by saying that "the connections the 'double' has with reflections in mirrors, with shadows, guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and the fear of death" (p. 06). This self-consciousness exposes hypocrisy, guilt, and the instability of identity as Gerung puts it (p. 7-10).

Clamence believes in spirits and souls, and he believes in the liveliness of the city. He also feels fear of death, and when Clamence has an intense fear of death and love for life, he says, "besides, let us not beat about the bush; I love life. This is a significant weakness. I love it so much that I am incapable of imagining what is not life" (Camus, p. 30). Clamence's love for life pushes him into a

confused and indecisive position regarding his repentance for committing immoral crimes. His double personality prevents him from being the positive and humane half of his inner self. Thus, Clamence tries to find peace in speaking out his heart instead of speaking for repentance.

Albert Camus' *The Fall* represents gothic and mysterious elements throughout the novel connected to the psychology of a modern man. The double smile, the laughter of a dead woman, and the abnormal behavior of the narrator all show the uncanny factors that surround the novel's narrative. Freudian uncanny elements are abundant in this novel. The author unveils how human fear has resulted in immoral and misanthropic actions in the past. The philosophies of life are indirectly connected to the fears and wrongdoings of man that are present in the collective unconscious of mankind.

Clamence's confessions belittle others' confessions. He has lived a scandalous life and now wants to scandalize others as well. Through his confessions, he holds a mirror to himself (Camus, 1956, p. 41). It is not his effort to seek salvation; rather, he wants others to share his guilt so that he can escape from having to repent. It is uncanny that Clamence is judgmental, and through his confessions, he wants others to judge themselves. He forces his narrative, "I provoke you into judging yourself and this relieves me of that much of the burden" (Camus, 1956, p. 41). He believes that we are the first to condemn ourselves. Therefore, it is essential to begin by extending the condemnation to all, without distinction, to thin it out at the start (p. 39). It is uncanny that Clamence is afraid of judgement but not of punishment. He says, "punishment without judgment is bearable" (p. 32). The uncanniness elevates with the reality that Clamence is judgmental and afraid of judgement. Clamence wants to escape guilt and repentance; rather, he tries to entangle others by judging themselves and indulging in their guilt. Cruickshank (2019) calls it a search for meaning to save one's own self (p. 10).

Clamence feels disgusted by his immoral self, and to avoid repentance, he commits blasphemy. Uncannily, after his confessions, he declares himself bound by God to proclaim the innocence

of criminals. He declares, “God’s sole usefulness would be to guarantee innocence, and I am inclined to see religion rather as a huge laundering venture” (Camus, 1956 p. 33). He is so disappointed by his overbearing guilt that he pronounces the uselessness of the need for God. He says, “Hence one must choose a master, God is being out of style. Besides, this word has lost its meaning” (p. 39). Clamence escapes repentance at every cost, even if it involves blaming and rejecting God.

Clamence’s desire to feel superior is uncanny because he listens to his alter ego instead of becoming a moral man. Clamence confesses: “Everyone needs slaves as he needs fresh air. Breathing is a command, and you agree with me, right? Even the most destitute manage to live. The lowest man on the social scale still has a wife or child. If he is unmarried, a dog” (Camus, 1956, p. 76). Clamence’s appreciation for slavery and mastery reveals that he has not yet escaped the grasp of his uncanny alter ego. His confessions are merely a source of vent for his inner pain, and he still adored the superiority and misanthropist tendencies over repentance.

Freud (1999) describes that ‘the uncanny brings onto surface events where a familiar phenomenon or feeling appears in alarming and disturbing context’ (p. 03). Clamence feels disturbed by his inclination towards the guilty and criminals (Camus, 1956, p. 72). Moreover, he calls the pleading widows as “the vicious widows” and the helpless orphans as “the malicious orphans” (p. 16). Clamence’s guilt haunts him, and he feels uncanny, so he confesses but shows no sign of repentance. He feels pity for himself. He says, “My feelings of pity concern me” (p. 17). Instead of repenting, Clamence indulges in self-pity. Clamence avoids repentance because he declares that “it hurts me to confess” (p. 18). He believes in forgetting mistakes, and therefore, he is susceptible to committing them again, making the situation uncanny.

The memory of a woman dying in the water produces uncanny feelings in Clamence. He remains under the spell of the mistakes he made that evening. As Freud connects the repetition of events with the term *déjà vu*, the voice that the narrator hears days after the drowning incident is

the *déjà vu* of his criminal negligence in not saving a woman. This creepy and uncanny feeling, a certain kind of unexplainable strangeness, after the

girl’s fall into the water, grabs Clamence under its spell: Freud’s (1999) “the uncanny propagates the connection between the animate and inanimate objects which produces a creepy effect (p. 14). Clamence hears a splash of water and a girl’s laughter repeatedly, which haunts him.

These sounds of a guilty conscience and not of repentance are audible and sensuous, producing an uncanny effect on the audience. In *The Fall*, the uncanny effect is directly linked to the laughter that the narrator hears on the bridge, as he associates it with a dead woman. Freud (1999) further states that “the uncanny is that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar” (p. 04). Clamence’s whole confession takes him back to his past, which is known to him, and it keeps on pinching him time and again. Clamence confesses his fears to an unknown and mysterious narrator. As Freud argues that “Heimlich” takes a person to “an ambivalence” (p. 07) gradually, Clamence’s confession tears him between repentance and guilt. The shift from this “domestic comfort” to unsettling ground-uncanny-is made possible by the language and psychological ambiguity of the term Heimlich, as analyzed by Lewis (p. 22,23).

Clamence does not recognize shortcomings that are readily apparent to him; he refuses to “repent” in favor of making them disappear for his own sake. By hiding his true or shadow self completely out of view, history can return to his consciousness only as a profound haunting that unwinds from his carefully constructed reality. The event that triggers psychological collapse for Clamence is brought on by an ‘acute acoustic crisis, a crisis that is acute enough to illustrate Freud’s notion of the ‘return of the repressed.’ The bungles of this mind-sealing mental trip are catastrophic, and years later, after his memory was well under control, Clamence witnesses this traumatic Molotov cocktail exploding as he stands on the now vacant Pont des Arts. The breakthrough of suppressed trauma is not a visual ghost appearing in front of him but a “doppelgänger,” the reflection of his

traumatic past that forces its way into his narcissistic tranquility, as the writer states:

But I had gone up to the Pont des Arts where everything was deserted at that hour; facing the Vert-Galant statue, I exercised my power over the island; and I had a feeling I cannot explain, of satisfaction-that cheered my heart; a feeling of completion; I was about to put a cigarette in my mouth-the cigarette of satisfaction-when what burst out behind me was a laugh (Camus, 1956, p. 29).

By opting to “not have to repent” on the night of the suicide, Clamence has brought about a moral burden in his cowardice: haunting the people around him. Freud suggested that the uncanny effect is influenced by the surroundings, particularly those that reflect the physical space of repetition, dead ends, and traps of a wounded psyche. Amsterdam is no accident of his: low-lying and underground, it is constructed directly over a watery bottom that perhaps he knows, and upon which the fog and dampness thrive perpetually as a cover over God and man. It is a structural mapping that the reader is told by Clamence himself that in this Dantesque arrangement of space, the home-like comfort of the environment is missing, giving the clean, bourgeois Dutch canal an inescapable sense of concentricity (Camus, 1956, p. 11).

This material hiding betrays the ultimate failure of his “not to repent” attempt. This is a localized focus of Clamence’s terrible fears, having the painting kept only for himself. It is in the possession of his father, who has touched it with his own fingers, although he is still capable of destroying it. Absolute righteousness, which he has actively taken and hidden from the world, is embedded in his room, and he has an active conscience that constantly accompanies it. He cannot even look at the panel and not think of the void it created in the altar painting - a void from which innocents in the post-war world simply cannot escape. The fetishized fragment does not lull him to sleep or impart tranquility to him; rather, it contains him psychologically in the strictest of molds, and he has to maintain a constant alertness of mind in a locked room, with the curtains drawn shut, constantly on guard

against the hidden presence of what is always outside the light.

CONCLUSION

Clamence’s inclination towards guilty and criminals, appreciation for slavery, womanizing, debauchery, hedonism, and superficial moral acts haunt him, and he feels an uncanny sense of self that is not his own. The study explored that the strange ambivalence to repent or not to repent even after the confession of delinquency seems essentially uncanny. In Albert Camus’ *The Fall*, the strangeness that Clamence feels by suffering from guilt and after confessing in front of a stranger heightens the uncanniness as he struggles to avoid repentance because it is that aspect of his personality that should have remained secret and hidden but has been revealed. The protagonist is torn between two personalities and is often held hostage by his alter-ego. His alter ego is Freudian “unheimlich” which is familiar yet frightening. Clamence’s narcissistic personality halts him from repenting as he pronounces himself a ‘judge-penitent’ giving no weakness to any soul to judge him but continues to feel uncanny and frightened due to the guilt. He believes in forgetting mistakes; therefore, he is susceptible to making them. Consequently, he is ambivalent about repenting even after his confessions, which are uncanny and unsettling. This clearly shows that this existential question-whether to repent or not-cannot be answered by performative confessions or intellectual operations. In Clamence’s creation of the “judge-penitent,” his pardon is not being found guilty but rather the psychological treadmill-a necessary, repetitive ritual in which he is required to repeat his sins to all those strangers that pass to appease his demons. His language is a terrific stage setting, a way to deceive the listener into the idea that he is not afraid, a set-up, and a kind of mask which he can wear on himself, but the tortuous mental bridges of his own memory are forever stuck with him.

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