who begin to gather below there comes forward the figure of the lawyer Coppelius, suddenly returned. We may suppose it was his approach, seen through the telescope, that threw Nathaniel into his madness. People want to go up and overpower the madman, but Coppelius laughs and says, “Wait a bit; he’ll come down of himself.” Nathaniel suddenly stands still, catches sight of Coppelius, and with a wild shriek “Yes! Fine eyes-beautiful eyes,” flings himself down over the parapet. No sooner does he lie on the paving-stones with a shattered skull than the Sand-Man vanishes in the throng. This short summary leaves, I think, no doubt that the feeling of something uncanny is directly attached to the figure of the Sand-Man, that is, to the idea of being robbed of one’s eyes; and that Jentsch’s point of an intellectual uncertainty has nothing to do with this effect. Uncertainty whether an object is living or inanimate, which we must admit in regard to the doll Olympia, is quite irrelevant in connection with this other, more striking instance of uncanniness. It is true that the writer creates a kind of uncertainty in us in the beginning by not letting us know, no doubt purposely, whether he is taking us into the real world or into a purely fantastic one of his own creation. He has admitted the right to do either; and if he chooses to stage his action in a world peopled with spirits, demons and ghosts, as Shakespeare does in *Hamlet*, in *Macbeth* and, in a different sense, in *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer-Night’s Dream*, we must bow to his decision and treat his setting as though it were real for as long as we put ourselves into his hands. But this uncertainty disappears in the course of Hoffmann’s story, and we perceive that he means to make us, too, look through the fell Coppola’s glasses—perhaps, indeed, that he himself once gazed through such an instrument. For the conclusion of the story makes it quite clear that Coppola the optician really is the lawyer Coppelius and thus also the Sand-Man.

There is no question, therefore, of any “intellectual uncertainty”; we know now that we are not supposed to be looking on at the products of a madman’s imagination behind which we, with the superiority of rational minds, are able to detect the sober truth; and yet this knowledge does not lessen the impression of uncanniness in the least degree. The theory of “intellectual uncertainty” is thus incapable of explaining that impression.

We know from psychoanalytic experience, however, that this fear of damaging or losing one’s eyes is a terrible fear of childhood. Many adults still retain their apprehensiveness in this respect, and no bodily injury is so much dreaded by them as an injury to the eye. We are accustomed to say, too, that we will treasure a thing as the apple of our eye. A study of dreams, phantasies and myths has taught us that a morbid anxiety connected with the eyes and with going blind is often enough a substitute for the dread of castration. In blinding himself, Oedipus, that mythical law-breaker, was simply carrying out a mitigated form of the punishment of castration—the only punishment that according to the *lex talionis* was fitted for him. We may try to reject the derivation of fears about the eye from the fear of castration on rationalistic grounds, and say that it is very natural that so precious an organ as the eye should be guarded by a proportionate dread; indeed, we might go further and say that the fear of castration itself contains no other significance and no deeper secret than a justifiable dread of this kind. But this view does not account adequately for the substitutive relation between the eye and the male member which is seen to exist in dreams and myths and phantasies; nor can it dispel the impression one gains that it is the threat of being castrated in especial which excites a peculiarly violent and obscure emotion.

7 Frau Dr. Rank has pointed out the association of the name with “Coppella” = crucible, connecting it with the chemical operations that caused the father’s death; and also with “coppo” = eye-socket.
ter of which could not long remain in doubt. Nothing but painted women were to be seen at the windows of the small houses, and I hastened to leave the narrow street at the next turning. But after having wandered about for a while without being directed, I suddenly found myself back in the same street, where my presence was now beginning to excite attention. I hurried away once more, but only to arrive yet a third time by devious paths in the same place. Now, however, a feeling overcame me which I can only describe as uncanny, and I was glad enough to abandon my exploratory walk and get straight back to the piazza I had left a short while before. Of similar situations having in common with my own an involuntary return to the same situation and which differ radically from it in other respects, we result in the same feeling of helplessness and of something uncanny. As, for instance, when one is lost in a forest in high altitudes, caught, we will suppose, by the mountain mist, and when every endeavor to find the marked or familiar path ends again and again in a return to one and the same spot, recognizable by some particular landmark. Or when one wanders about in a dark, strange room, looking for the door or the electric switch, and collides for the hundredth time with the same piece of furniture—a situation which, indeed, has been made irresistibly comic by Mark Twain, through the wild extravagance of his narration.

Taking another class of things, it is easy to see that here, too, it is only this factor of involuntary repetition which surrounds with an uncanny atmosphere what would otherwise be innocent enough, and forces upon us the idea of something fateful and unescapable where otherwise we should have spoken of “chance” only. For instance, we of course attach no importance to the event when we give up a coat and get a cloakroom ticket with the number, say, 62; or when we find that our cabin on board ship is numbered 62. But the impression is altered if two such events, each in itself indifferent, happen close together, if we come across the number 62 several times in a single day, or if we begin to notice that everything which has a number—addresses, hotel-rooms, compartments in railway-trains—always has the same one, or one which at least contains the same figures. We do feel this to be “uncanny,” and unless a man is utterly hardened and proof against the lure of superstition he will be tempted to ascribe a secret meaning to this obstinate recurrence of a number, taking it, perhaps, as an indication of the span of life allotted to him. Or take the case that one is engaged at the time in reading the works of Hering, the famous physiologist, and then receives within the space of a few days two letters from two different countries, each from a person called Hering; whereas one has never before had any dealings with anyone of that name. Not long ago an ingenious scientist attempted to reduce coincidences of this kind to certain laws, and so deprive them of their uncanny effect. I will not venture to decide whether he has succeeded or not.

How exactly we can trace back the uncanny effect of such recurrent similarities to infantile psychology is a question I can only lightly touch upon in these pages; and I must refer the reader instead to another pamphlet, now ready for publication, in which this has been gone into in detail, but in a different connection. It must be explained that we are able to postulate the principle of a repetition-compulsion in the unconscious mind, based upon instinctual activity and probably inherent in the very nature of the instincts—a principle powerful enough to overrule the pleasure-principle, lending to certain aspects of the mind their daemonic character, and still very clearly expressed in the tendencies of small children; a principle, too, which is responsible for a part of the course taken by the analyses of neurotic patients. Taken in all, the foregoing prepares us

13 P. Kammerer, Das Gesetz der Serie (Vienna, 1919).
14 [Beyond the Pleasure-Principle.—Trans.]
logically significant differentiation in our material, best illustrated by turning to suitable examples.

Let us take the uncanny in connection with the omnipotence of thoughts, instantaneous wish-fulfillments, secret power to do harm and the return of the dead. The condition under which the feeling of uncanniness arises here is unmistakable. We—or our primitive forefathers—once believed in the possibility of these things and were convinced that they really happened. Nowadays we no longer believe in them, we have surmounted such ways of thought. We do not feel quite sure of our new set of beliefs, and the old ones still exist within us ready to seize upon any confirmation. As soon as anything actually happens in our lives which seems to support the old, discredited beliefs, we get a feeling of the uncanny; for we, as though we were making a judgment something like this: “So, after all, it is true that one can kill a person by merely desiring his death!” or, “Then the dead do continue to live and appear before our eyes on the scene of their former activities!” and so on. And conversely, he who has completely and finally dispelled animistic beliefs in himself, will be insensible to this type of the uncanny. The most remarkable coincidences of desire and fulfillment, the most mysterious recurrence of similar experiences in a particular place or on a particular date, the most deceptive sights and suspicious noises—none of these things will take him in or raise that kind of fear which can be described as “a fear of something uncanny.” For the whole matter is one of “testing reality,” pure and simple, a question of the material reality of the phenomena.

The state of affairs is somewhat different when the uncanny proceeds from repressed infantile complexes, from the castration-complex, womb-phantasies, etc.; but experiences which arouse this kind of uncanny feeling are not of very frequent occurrence in real life. Actual occurrences of the uncanny belong for the most part to the first group; nevertheless the distinction between the two is theoretically very important. Where the uncanny comes from infantile complexes the question of external reality is quite irrelevant; its place is taken by psychical reality. What is concerned is an actual repression of some definite material and a return of this repressed material, not a removal of the belief in its objective reality. We might say that in the one case what had been repressed was a particular ideational content and in the other the belief in its physical existence. But this last way of putting it no doubt strains the term “repression” beyond its legitimate meaning. It would be more correct to respect a perceptible psychological difference here, and to say that the animistic beliefs of civilized people have been surmounted—more or less. Our conclusion could then be stated thus: An uncanny experience occurs either when repressed infantile complexes have been revived by some impression, or when the primitive beliefs we have surmounted seem once more to be confirmed. Fin-

23 Since the uncanny effect of a “double” also belongs to this class, it is interesting to observe what the effect is of suddenly and unexpectedly meeting one’s own image. E. Mach has related two such observations in his Analyse der Em findungen (1900, p. 3). On the first occasion he started violently as soon as he realized that the face before him was his own. The second time he formed a very unfavorable opinion about the supposed stranger who got into the omnibus, and thought “What a shabby-looking school-master that is getting in now.”—I can supply a similar experience. I was sitting alone in my wagon-lit compartment when a more than usually violent jerk of the train swung back the door of the adjoining washing-cabinet, and an elderly gentleman in a dressing-gown and a traveling cap came in. I assumed that he had been about to leave the washing-cabinet which divides the two compartments, and had taken the wrong direction and come into my compartment by mistake. Jumping up with the intention of putting him right, I at once realized to my dismay that the intruder was nothing but my own reflection in the looking-glass of the open door. I can still recollect that I thoroughly disliked his appearance. Instead, therefore, of being terrified by our doubles, both Mach and I simply failed to recognize them as such. Is it not possible, though, that our dislike of them was a vestigial trace of that older reaction which feels the double to be something uncanny?