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"Uncanny Waters"

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In this article, I argue for the notion of what I term "uncanny water" as a conceptual tool for reading contemporary oceanic fictions. The uncanny's affective capacity to destabilise epistemological and ontological certainties makes it a particularly potent literary tool for challenging the nature/culture binary. I argue that fictions which actively defamiliarise the ocean can be used to redress the anthropocentric privilege found in hitherto narratives of the oceanic that were predicated upon mastery and control, and that uncanny moments of displacement and uncertainty can illuminate human/oceanic interconnections and foster a sense of responsibility and compassion towards the oceans. I identify resonances between the uncanny's continuing referentiality and the notion that feminist transcorporeality interrelates the subject into networks of materiality which extend across time and space in unknowable ways. Both transcorporeality and the uncanny work against the conceit of the individual through the dissolution of boundaries, and, crucially, both require a suspension of assumptions of the self as whole, discrete and impermeable. To demonstrate this, I read the uncanny waters of contemporary fictions from the Northern Atlantic Littoral (Atlantic Canada and the westernmost parts of the UK). The littoral position of these spaces makes them ideally placed to negotiate the borders between habitable and unhabitable spaces, and the limitations of knowledge that run alongside this. I assert that iterations of uncanny water offer a transoceanic dialogue which shifts constructions of subjectivity away from national and terrestrial boundaries to one more akin to the fluid and relational dialectics of transcorporeality. (Abstract)

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