

Interview with Sarah Waller and Stuart Youngner

Questions on Boundary Crossing:

- 1) The boundaries you list on your first slide represent boundaries, viz. human/animal, species, male/female, human/machine and race all of which are rooted in biological distinctions. To answer the question of by what authority boundary lines are identified, why look anywhere but to our reluctance to cross *biological* boundaries for our uncanny feeling?

Reply: First, we have to ask the question, “Can biology clearly define a boundary?” The answer is, sometimes not. Second, we must ask, “Why are we reluctant to cross certain biological boundaries and not others?” For example, we might think it ok to have sex with humans and eat animals but not *vice versa*. In other words, even so called biological boundaries are socially constructed and evaluated.

- 2) After being confronted with boundary-crossing entities, at what point (if at all) do people transcend the uncanny feeling? What does it mean “to get used to” a boundary-crossing?

Reply: Good question. We often find it difficult to give up what we are used to and accept what’s new. So, it depends on the circumstance. Reluctance to cross may be cultural, psychological, political, religious or selected by evolution. We know that the brain adjusts exquisitely to its surroundings, such that we can make fine discriminations regarding facial features and moods of those we are with most frequently, but may have difficulty recognizing or interpreting facial features or expressions of out-group peoples, so it seems that the brain is to some extent hard-wired to make boundaries. The simple fact that we adjust to cope best with what we encounter most will make some things more familiar and easy for us, while other things will be less familiar and more *uneasy*.

- 3) Given our uncanny feeling in the face of boundary-crossing entities, how effective would entities whose appearance cause the uncanny feeling be as a military force? If an army was confronted by abominable looking creatures, would their feeling of uncanniness result in fear and surrender or hatred and a resolve to eradicate the source of their uncanny feeling?

Reply: Probably both. This is a worthwhile topic to explore and we hope to answer these and a few other questions about morality, creepy feelings, and boundaries as we continue the project!