

THE INDISTINCT IMAGE OF THE
GOLEM:
AN ASPECT OF THE UNCANNY

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ABSTRACT

The Golem is a creature formed by a rabbi out of mud or clay (although it can be made of wood). It is an enduring and favourite subject in Jewish folklore, and it has proved invaluable in its power to reflect the vicissitudes of history. The Golem can take many forms, but is always powered by a magic or holy word. The tale usually ends with the destruction of the creature, but hints of its probable return usually haunt and disrupt any sense of finality. The most famous and enduring version of the story was set in the Prague Ghetto, and was a favourite subject for German Expressionist artists. This is because it reflected a time when the old and the new combined in uncanny and disturbing ways. The Golem story was popular with Romantic writers like E.T.A. Hoffmann, who were similarly reacting to a world that was changing under the influence of Enlightenment thinking and war. Sigmund Freud's famous essay, 'The Uncanny', (*Das Unheimliche*) of 1919, used Hoffmann's classic Golem tale, *The Sandman*, as its central focus, though Freud was never to acknowledge its Jewish origins.

The thesis looks at Freud and his German/Jewish identity, and analyses what the Golem tales can tell us about the uncanniness of identity in a broader sense. Here I consider subjects like Nationalism, anti-Semitism, and Zionism in the light of the Golem myth. The Golem has represented the concerns and ideas of those who have re-told this story, while maintaining the illusion that it is unchanged and unchanging, and in this way it can be seen to reinforce Roland Barthes' ideas about mythology. The thesis argues that the various versions of the Golem myth reflect and influence the ideology of the period in which they appear.

Furthermore, as the Golem can be female as well as male, my analysis of identity extends to gender, and in this context the thesis deals with feminist theory, and how it relates to the "uncanniness" of women according to Freud and others. The Golem tales reveal new insights into philosophy and its relationship to psychoanalysis, and I consider these. The thesis examines, from a metaphysical point of view, spectral and uncanny architectural space, notably that of the Prague Ghetto, which has been the focus of attention by Anthony Vidler. Here I consider Paul Wegener's film, *Der Golem* and Gustav Meyrink's novel on which it was based.

The uncanny is also something that is experienced through and with the body, and this insight provides the research with a bridge between the project's theoretical and practical elements. From my point of view, the Golem's most interesting quality lies in this process of becoming that never reaches resolution, so I came to the decision that my practice should be used to demonstrate and evoke uncanny irresolution directly, as an experience. The practical research takes the form of a DVD containing two films. The first film aims to show and explain how my practice developed into its final form and, in the process, reflected my theoretical findings. The other film develops a key theme from Meyrink's *The Golem*, and employs some of Wegener's ideas about "absolute film". I have aimed, through theory and praxis, to express ideas of the illusive and uncanny nature of identity which, as Martin

Heidegger noticed, is a continuous and fragile process of becoming that has, for its setting, the terrifying emptiness of an abyss of non-existence.

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DECLARATION

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed

Dated

INTRODUCTION

The Golem appears in ancient and modern Jewish folklore as a creature formed by a rabbi out of mud or clay, (although it can be made of wood). It is animated and powered by a holy Word, and its task is to carry out the rabbi's instructions. The tale usually ends with disaster closely averted, and the destruction of the creature. The most familiar version of the story is set in the Prague Ghetto, and was a favourite subject for German Expressionist artists. It was also popular with Romantic writers in the nineteenth century and Freud's famous essay, 'The Uncanny', (*Das Unheimliche*) of 1919¹, used E.T.A. Hoffmann's classic Golem tale, *The Sandman*, as its central focus, though Freud never acknowledged its Jewish origins. The Golem myth shifts shape as its historical context alters while, at the same time, it gives the impression of timelessness. According to Barthes, and I have looked very closely at his argument in my thesis, this sense of timelessness is an illusion. Barthes makes the point that what appears to be neutral and "natural" is really a memorialised past, and it is the ability of myth to appear to be beyond history, while being actually part of it, that enables it to pose as an eternal truth. It therefore acts as a cover and an alibi, whilst it surreptitiously smuggles in a viewpoint reflecting the culture and views of its propagators.

Yet, although this is clearly the case - and I take Barthes' point unreservedly - I would nevertheless argue that the instability inherent in the nature of myth - which makes it possible for it to reflect the vicissitudes of history - has, in a sense, an underlying quality of timelessness. It is because of the very fact that it makes use of an "empty" or ahistorical and symbolic context that it can reflect, mirror-like, human qualities and concerns that transcend time.

Although the images that pass before a mirror change, the ability of a mirror to reflect them remains unchanged. Similarly, the joker in a pack of cards - as I have discussed elsewhere - remains the same card, whilst standing in for any other card in the pack according to the changing circumstances of the game. Perhaps it might also be relevant here to point to Paul Wegener's concept of film as a blank surface that reflects - and in some ways contains and structures (through association) - the changing process of metamorphosis. I have discussed Wegener's ideas below and elsewhere, but here I would simply like to quote Lotte Eisner's remark that: 'Wegener ... imagined an empty surface on which phantom-like forms would come into being ... in continual evolution. This is the formulation of the 'absolute film' ...'². Wegener's idea is interesting because it sees film, not simply as synonymous with its content, but also as an empty surface similar to a painting support, like a canvas, which can be considered separately from the forms that appear upon it. Also, these "phantom-like forms" would emerge each time the film was watched, and the audience would participate in their creation and destruction so, in a way, the forms are not limited to a specific context or time but have their being in the "now", conjured up - like Golems - on a surface of light in a "continual evolution". I believe it is a concept that can be seen to be echoed in Lacan's idea, also discussed later, of the interaction of the mirror and the gaze in structuring the self.

Similarly myth, which - as Barthes points out - is “emptied” of a “real” historical context, makes it possible for each age to see its own concerns - partial though they may be - echoed back to it, unaware that both story-teller and audience also play a part in its continuing metamorphosis, and in this sense, it is timeless. It is significant that his idea occurred to Wegener – in the form of the Golem tale - in a period of intense instability and uncertainty and in a specific place. I have argued, however, that the anxious quest for a stable and “true” identity (personal, religious or national) in the context of constant change - which the Golem myth can be used to express - is an enduring human concern that cuts across time and history. This is why there is a tension in the thesis between a specific cultural context and a sense of the Golem acting as an ahistorical symbol of identity. It is the Golem myth’s protean ability to reflect on enduring issues - such as that which fundamentally haunts human identity, ‘Who or what am I?’ - that gives it a universal quality, and this has led to the temptation by some theorists to project an idea of timelessness onto the specific content of the Golem stories themselves. Some have even extended this sense of being beyond history to the Jewish people themselves, thus overlooking specific cultural context. This is no accident, as Jewish scripture and ritual emphasises, reiterates and acts out a promise and a covenant between a people and their God, which transcends time, and exists across the generations. This fact is reflected in another myth; that of the wandering Jew who exists outside history and country, which has been employed by both Zionist and anti-Semite. So, although Judaism has a timeless quality, (in the sense that continuity is emphasised over context), and individual Jews have not, the concept of timelessness has been extended to the latter.

This view of the Jew being beyond history and place, and therefore not belonging anywhere, nor subject to death or the passing of time, makes him/her appear to be inhuman and therefore *unheimlich*. The Jew is familiarly part of the culture that surrounds him/her, yet set apart from it, and so is *heimlich* and *unheimlich* at one and the same time. The Golem tales reflect on this uncertainty, and take it further still by depicting the Golem as a creature that is monstrous in the sense that it combines opposing aspects. It cannot be said to be human or inhuman, dead or alive, male or female. This liminal quality bestows upon it an uncanny indeterminacy. Also, like the Wandering Jew, it often has the ability to transcend time and mortality, and it can appear unpredictably at certain times and places. (This means, incidentally, that the Golem myth also has the ability to reflect on the unstable nature of mythology itself, thus adding another dimension to the thesis.) The blurring of boundaries disturbs a comforting sense of being grounded, and so triggers anxiety. It is an *unheimliche* sense of not fully belonging to this world, that uncanny uncertainty discloses, and to which Heidegger refers in his discussion of authenticity. It is this aspect of the uncanny, as evoked by the indeterminate, that I have considered in my thesis. The anxiety generated by the uncanny is a result of the reluctant realisation that existence is unavoidably adumbrated by the terrifying void of non-existence, just as sense is haunted by its opposite; non-sense. Language and its meanings can fail and that is why the Golem is often mute in spite of being powered by a Word. This muteness is a sign of his/her link to the animal,

sometimes to the female, and to death. I have developed this uncomfortable sonic quality in my final Golem film, where I reflect on the “speech” of the speechless.

The Golem, as a silent creature animated by a Name, embraces the relationship between the word, and the experience of naming. This is because Jewish thinking, in which the Golem is embedded, contains a view of language, (in this case Hebrew), as the primary material from which the universe was, and is, formed. (A view, incidentally, that can be seen to be echoed in Jacques Derrida’s approach to “the text” and Martin Heidegger’s “*Dasein*” that is grounded in language). Hebrew letters are numerical in system, and their shapes, ornamentation and markings contain meaning beyond straightforward semantics. This means they cannot contain a final fixed empirical truth because any ultimate meaning lies beyond their physical embodiment in the metaphysical. Because of this they are beyond signification, and belong in another mysterious dimension that, like Derrida’s view of “the origin”, is forever out of reach. Yet, unlike Derrida’s origin (which is simply the name of a misleading chimera), they gesture towards a non-conceptual holy origin that exists nonetheless, albeit in ways we cannot ever finally know.

The naming of a nameless God, an irresolvable paradox at the heart of an uncanny mystery, is the magical animating principle which launches the Golem into life. The Name, which is in reality no name, may (according to Jewish religious tradition) be written down in the holy language of Hebrew (with certain prescriptions), but it can never be spoken aloud. Here the separation of word and experience is absolute. In the Golem tales the animating “Word” or “Name” is written by the rabbi on a piece of paper, which is then placed within the mouth of the figure. In some versions it is written directly on the Golem’s forehead. In this way the verbal functions within the Golem in a similar way to a computer code. When it is removed the creature “dies”. The holy origin of this “Word” makes it totally Other, and its ontological status is undefined and undefinable. The creature and its animating principle are therefore entirely heterogeneous, yet simultaneously and mysteriously, vitally connected. It could be argued that the complexities of Jewish practice unite seamlessly and smoothly with its Divine text, the Torah, in just this way.³

It can also be said that there is a reflection here of the relationship between consciousness and the mysteries of the Unconscious. It has been argued by neuroscientist, Chris Frith, the idea that a “self” that is stable and persists through time, is an illusion created by the brain. (I look at his ideas in Chapter Four). Frith says that we endlessly conjure ourselves up by our actions - Golem-like - from the world and the minds of those around us. This concept reflects Wegener’s ideas discussed above, and as I pointed out there, also echo Jacques Lacan’s theories of the mirror and the gaze. I consider the latter - via Kaja Silverman - in Chapter Four. The coming together of the concept/thought/word and practice also appears in ideas of performativity, and the work of Judith Butler, Louis Althusser, Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Heidegger, which I address in Chapter Two.

Heidegger argues that an authentic life is born in the terror of anxiety, which reveals the abyss of nothingness that lies beneath the certainties of life. Gustav Meyrink's Golem tale speaks of the arrival of a terrifying ghost, that has been summoned up from the mysteries of formless thought; the equivalent of primal chaos before the arrival of the Word. The Golem was originally a product of meditation,⁴ and Meyrink - who was a practitioner of yogic techniques - understood this. Meyrink is an important source in both my practical and theoretical research. German culture, which contained both Jew and German, reflected this instability at the time that Meyrink wrote his Expressionist novel, and his version of the Golem tale reflected on an apocalyptic world.

Freud's essay, 'The Uncanny', also written in the context of German culture, can be seen to put the Golem story to use in a similar way, as it examines disturbances within the human psyche. Many writers, artists and film-makers have employed it to express similar themes, and I consider the work of some of these in the thesis. To put it briefly, my research task in writing, and in practice, has been to look at the ways that the Golem myth evinces uncanny uncertainty, and to examine how it reflects issues of identity, "the feminine", myth and philosophy. The uncanny was not invented by Freud and writers like Edgar Allen Poe, as has been suggested, but is in fact far older in origin. It is not only a concept, but is also something that is experienced through and with the body, and this insight has been very useful in providing me with a bridge between theoretical and practical research.

My theoretical research has sustained and deepened my practice, and it is important to emphasize that theory has provided a vital framework without which my research practice could not exist. Throughout the thesis I have found that the two aspects, theory and practice, have worked symbiotically and cannot be separated without doing violence to the other. My theoretical research has generated ideas and insights, which I have been able to explore through my practice. The results of the practical experimentation and research have then fed back into my theoretical work, developing new ways of understanding both the Golem story and its relationship to the uncanny. I believe that practice and theory present two complementary ways of considering the same topic.

My practical research is presented in a DVD that contains two films. The first of these films shows how my practice developed the way it did, and it thus provides a description and demonstration of the methodology of my approach. The second film distils my findings, and forms the climax of my practice. This film explores a key text from Meyrink's novel, *The Golem*, and I have aimed here to capture the spirit of this novel, as well as its brilliant evocation of the uncanny and phantasmic nature of identity. I began the thesis by exploring uncanny instability via the terrors of the unhomey domestic scene, as a way of considering Hoffmann's *The Sandman* and Freud's reaction to it. Here I have exploited texture and form in experimental books and animation.

My later experiments explored ideas about the uncanniness of Jewish identity, the female Golem, and the Ghetto. Through these I began to develop a visual language that transcended the two-dimensional, and exploited sound, lighting and movement. It is no coincidence that Meyrink's novel inspired Paul Wegener's evocative Expressionist film, *The Golem*, which I discuss in Chapter One and Chapter Five. Wegener's lecture of 1916 (quoted by Lotte H. Eisner) entitled, 'The artistic possibilities of cinema', sets out radical possibilities inspired by photographic techniques. I have earlier alluded to Wegener's concept of 'absolute film' which was mentioned in this lecture, but Wegener goes further than that and suggests an entirely new kind of cinema, (thus echoing ideas behind the Golem tale), which blurred the lines between the organic and the inorganic thus: '...you have all seen films, in which a line appears, then curves and changes. This line gives birth to faces then disappears ... I can imagine a kind of cinema which would use nothing but moving surfaces, against which there would impinge events that would still participate in the natural world but transcended the lines and volumes of the natural. ... It would be impossible to distinguish the natural elements from the artificial ones.'⁵ This restless Expressionist uncanniness (which is, however, also present in the work of Romantic artists like Hoffmann), is expressed by means of an unending and indeterminate metamorphosis. Accordingly, I have attempted to reflect on Wegener's ideas in my film experiments.

As my practice research progressed, I became aware that I was approaching the uncanny via narration and conceptual ideas - which I saw as a limitation. I felt that Paul Wegener's ideas for 'absolute film' - discovered through my theoretical researches - could help me here, so I began to undertake some experimental research along the lines he indicated. The discoveries I made helped me to understand that I should approach the destabilizing effects of uncanny indeterminacy in a much more direct way through film. A consequence of this was that I stopped my bookwork research, and began to use film and animation techniques exclusively. It was at this point that my practice helped me towards an insight (also reflected in my theoretical work) that metaphysics - via the concept of language as ultimate origin - can be smuggled into thinking (such as that of Heidegger and - to an extent - Derrida) that claims to exclude it. In this context I began to recognise the importance of the body and ritualistic gestures in structuring identity, and I was led to consider such concepts as performativity and interpellation (as mentioned above). I began to see the Golem and identity in terms of an uncanny haunting that never achieves clarity, and so chose to reflect this insight in the first part of my title - 'The Golem as Indistinct Image' - which is a paraphrase of a quotation from E.T.A. Hoffmann (discussed in Chapter Five). Hoffmann points to a failure of conceptual thought by saying: 'Inner phenomena are absorbed into the circle formed around us by external phenomena, and which our minds can only transcend in dark, mysterious intuitions that *never become distinct images.*' (my emphasis)⁶. This ties in closely with Wegener's ideas of a restless, unresolved and endless process of coming into being, which I have explored in my practical experiments.

A purely theoretical approach is, by its very nature, limited to the conceptual, and this makes it easy to overlook the fact that the uncanny is something that happens - that it can be felt and even suffered. I would argue that this

physical aspect is very important for a full understanding of the subject, and it is here that practice-based research comes into its own. Additionally, I would emphasize that it can only do so because it is a physical or phenomenological experience rather than verbal information. This means that practical research has the power to demonstrate something that words and conceptual thinking never can. Although the uncanny can be conceptualised, it is not a concrete “thing” that can be put under a microscope and examined in an “objective” or detached way. It is in reality intangible, inseparable from experience, and while it can be evoked by real circumstances and discussed, it is simply a reaction to a mood or “feeling”. The ghost that might make us jump in a film is not “real”, it is conjured up for us by sound or atmosphere and, before we can reason it away, we instantly and instinctively react. Yet it does have a kind of reality which can be experienced by those who are exposed to it. Linda Nochlin and Margaret Iversen have discussed the uncanny in art, and the reaction it evokes - as illustrated by the art of Edward Hopper and Rachel Whiteread - and I have looked at their arguments in Chapter Four and Chapter Five of the thesis. In my practice, however, I have explored directly the means that art can use to achieve this unsettling effect.

Heidegger noticed that the individual identity is not fixed, but is a continuous and fragile process that has - for its setting - a terrifying emptiness. I have, however, argued (in Chapter Four, Chapter Five and elsewhere) that Heidegger’s insistence (noticed by Derrida) that sensation must always be marked by theory, undermines his idea of a groundless abyss of nothingness disclosed by anxiety, which reminds an individual of his/her rootlessness. My objection is that, if we are always and already grounded in language, the sensation of groundlessness cannot be exempt. I believe that it is the very fact that certain sensations *cannot* be placed, that explains the anxiety that generates uncanny unease and an alienating destabilization of our sense of identity. The performative experience of the uncanny is prior to any conception one can have of it, because it has its roots in direct physiological effects felt in, and with, the body before consciousness registers them. This means that we become uneasily conscious of our vulnerability in the face of something we cannot immediately grasp or understand. For example, in dim lighting, the pupil of the eye has first to adjust to the darkness before the mind can deal with the elusive, disturbing and veiled information with which it is presented. If an image is unclear, the brain tries to make it clear, thus drawing our attention to a process that usually passes smoothly and unnoticed. While our brains try to clarify and understand the shifting forms, we have time to be confused, threatened and anxious, uncertain as to what possible dangers might confront us. This intense subjective reaction is a very different experience from that of discussing or thinking about a memory of a past event or an idea, which is always at a remove. I believe that it is this anxiety that Heidegger refers to when he postulates the abyss that confronts us with the realities and instabilities of our finite, embodied and vulnerable nature. I would argue, additionally, that it is this unsettling and uncanny *unheimlichkeit* that is so convincingly depicted by Wegener, Meyrink and Hoffmann. The threat implicit in uncanny indeterminacy confronts us with the void that exists beneath all dearly held certainties, and is to be found even beneath the clarity of language and speech itself. While my practical research

aims at a direct experience of uncanny instability, I concentrate on a conceptual understanding of the subject in my theoretical researches, the main themes of which are set out below:

In CHAPTER 1 - SIGMUND FREUD AND THE GOLEM, I focus on Freud and his essay, 'The Uncanny', and examine *The Sandman*, which underpins E.T.A. Hoffmann's version of the Golem myth. Thus I ask whether it is relevant that it is a Jewish folktale and I attempt to locate Freud in the context of the "Jewish Enlightenment", and more generally, in the Germanic culture of his own time. From this vantage point I then proceed to consider whether Freud's Jewish background had any effect on his thinking and theory, and if so, what this might be.

CHAPTER 2 - IDENTITY AND THE UNCANNY, develops the discussion of Freud's German/Jewish identity into an analysis of what the Golem myth can tell us about the uncanniness of identity in a broader sense. Here I discuss subjects like Nationalism, anti-Semitism, and Zionism, and examine the relationship of writing by Sander Gilman, Julia Kristeva, Kaja Silverman, Judith Butler and Louis Althusser, Heidegger and Derrida to the Golem myth.

CHAPTER 3 - THE GOLEM AS MYTHOLOGY, looks at the Golem as myth and history. As I have discussed above, the Golem has represented the concerns and ideas of those who have retold this story, while maintaining the illusion that it is unchanged and unchanging. In this way it can be seen to reinforce Roland Barthes' ideas about mythology since various versions of the Golem myth show how they reflect and influence the ideology of the period in which they appeared, and on this level I examine theories about myth proposed by Hillel J. Kieval, Eli Yassif, Jay Y. Gonen, Danusha Goska, Peter Gay, Jacqueline Rose and Edward Said, among others.

Furthermore, as the Golem can be female as well as male, my analysis of identity extends to gender. In CHAPTER 4 – THE FEMALE GOLEM, the thesis deals with feminist theory and how it relates to the uncanniness of women according to Freud, Julia Kristeva, Diane Jonte-Pace, and Judith Butler. In particular, I address how Cynthia Ozick's *The Puttermesser Papers*, a novel featuring a female Golem and set in New York in the twentieth century, locates the myth in yet another historical context, thereby raising a whole new set of questions and concerns. Freudian theory's relationship to the feminine is very controversial, and I will consider issues concerning "the other/Other", which I believe are very relevant to my discussion of identities and their relationship to the Golem myth and the uncanny. The subjects examined include the relationship of "Jewish" thinking to its "Greek" counterpart.

Finally, the Golem tales also reveals new insights into philosophy and its relationship to psychoanalysis, which I explore in CHAPTER 5 – DISLOCATION AND THE UNCANNY. I consider, for example, Derrida's work on language and religion, and his analysis of Levinas (taking further an earlier discussion in Chapter Four). I investigate how E.T.A Hoffmann's, and Gustav Meyrink's use of the Golem story relate to philosophical ideas of

the Enlightenment and Romanticism, and also look at Freud's 'The Uncanny' in this light. In this context I range over German philosophers like Kant, Fichte, Hegel and Heidegger as well as writers like Shakespeare and Goethe. I examine, from a metaphysical point of view, spectral and uncanny architectural space - notably that of the Prague Ghetto⁷ - which has been the focus of attention by Anthony Vidler. I also consider, in this context, Wegener, Meyrink and Hoffmann and their interpretations - via the Golem story - of spatial dislocations.

My investigation has afforded me the opportunity to explore the Golem's links to the uncanny and identity in both theory and practice. That is to say, the practical research could not be undertaken without the theoretical research, while they were also distinct intellectual and physical pursuits. However, I believe that, distinct though experience and practice may be from theoretical concepts, there can and must be, a fruitful cross-pollination of one to the other through praxis. As Derrida argued, we are neither Jews nor Greeks but inhabit a space between the two, and in the same deconstructive spirit I would like to suggest that my Ph.D research is an attempt to inhabit the open space between theory and practice, and thereby to illuminate what the Golem myth means in unexpected and creative ways.

CHAPTER 1 – SIGMUND FREUD AND THE GOLEM MYTH

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I shall be examining Freud's essay on the uncanny⁸ and, more specifically, his analysis of it in E.T.A. Hoffmann's story, *The Sandman* (1816). Freud's exposition of Hoffmann's Golem tale covered many of the themes that were central to his theories, and also sheds light on his psychoanalytic methodology. These themes include considerations of father/son relationships, castration, the superego, the id and the repressed, all of which were of great importance to Freudian theory. Freudians like Julia Kristeva were to develop these, via Melanie Klein⁹, into considerations of daughter/mother relationships. Furthermore, I would like to argue that it is significant that the Sandman story, which Freud chose for his first and most detailed textual analysis of the problem of the uncanny, was based on the Jewish folkloric tale of the Golem. This tale was made available to Romantic German writers working at the time of the Enlightenment, such as E.T.A. Hoffmann, by the Brothers Grimm's researches into Ghetto folktales. Additionally, I would suggest that consideration of the Golem myth supplies interesting insights into Freud's own German /Jewish identity, and also the relationship between Jew and German in general, and I shall be looking into this subject in much more detail in Chapter Two. I shall consider Freud's links with Zionism, in the light of the Golem as myth, in Chapter Three.

FREUD AND JEWISH THOUGHT.

When the Enlightenment came to eighteenth century Germany, and the countries over which it exerted its influence, it had a profound effect on Jewish communities. It was the beginning of the dissemination of Jewish culture to the outside world called the Haskalah, or the Jewish Enlightenment, which was a period that culminated in the lethal anti-Semitism of the Nazi era. Restrictions on the Jews began to be lifted (though never completely) and Jews began to move out of the ghettos. Freud was himself a product of this Enlightenment. Goethe was said to have been inspired to write his ballad, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, after a visit to the Altneu Schul in Prague, the "home" of the Golem¹⁰. The philosophies of Kant, Schelling and Hegel had an impact on Jewish thought at this time, and I shall be examining their ideas in Chapter Five.

The early twentieth century, when Freud wrote his essay on the uncanny, was a time of great reassessment of Jewish tradition by men like Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig. I believe that it can be revealing to examine the theme of the Golem, and its place in 'The Uncanny' in this context. This story had resonance with both Germans and Jews like Freud, who were re-examining their relationship to the law, German society, nationalism, their own history and thought. An influential illustrated book called *The Golem* (written in 1914), by Gustav Meyrink, was of widespread interest, and it inspired a very popular film of the same name, which was directed by Paul Wegener in 1920. I shall be considering Wegener's ideas about film in more detail in Chapter Five and elsewhere.

David Bakan¹¹ sets out to prove, via the concept of *heimlichkeit* from 'The Uncanny', that Freud (and his psychoanalytic theorising) was influenced by

Jewish ideas, most especially the mysticism of the Kabbalah. I would argue that Bakan's concentration on Freud's "Jewishness"¹² which he sees as largely mystical, leads him at times to oversimplify complex issues of Freud's identity, and to exaggerate its effect on his theories. Bakan links the concept of "*heimlich*" with Freud childhood as follows: 'We note ... that if Judaism is *heimlich*, then it has undergone repression ... it is probably that Freud had a number of characteristically Jewish experiences, or experiences he probably felt to be associated with Jewishness, as a child ... That the word *heimlich* with its meaning of "home"... should thus apply is completely understandable, for the old culture is the culture of the "home".'¹³

Bakan believes that Freud's ideas of death are associated in a similar way with Jewish mysticism, for example Freud's belief that the number 62 is significant, and that he will die at this age. Bakan, after establishing this point, goes on to say: '... *Unheimlichkeit* was associated with his sense of impending death. But if *Heimlichkeit* is associated with being Jewish and *Unheimlichkeit* with death, and these two are, as Freud tells us, to be identified, then Freud's Jewish feeling is related to his sense of impending death.'¹⁴ From this we may deduce that the uncanny relationship between *heimlichkeit* and *unheimlichkeit* is itself identified with Freud's "Jewishness". It must be said that Bakan is undoubtedly right to point to Jewish, as well as mystical influences, as being important in Freud's work. However, having acknowledged this, I believe that Bakan's argument represents a reduction of Freud's very complex and nuanced ideas about these terms set out in the discussion in 'The Uncanny'. This and similar arguments (such as the link in Freud's thinking of the Mother to the mystical concept of the Holy Shekinah¹⁵) lead Bakan to conclude: 'And it is largely in this (mystical Jewish tradition) that the significance of *Heimlichkeit* lies.'¹⁶

Another problem with the attempt to tie Freud's thinking to any mythical idea of a "pure" Jewish thinking is that, historically, there were close links between speculative Kabbalah and philosophy, for example in the form of neo-Platonism. In addition to this, as I have already posited, Jewish thinking whilst never insulated from other philosophy of the time was, in the period under discussion, interacting very closely with other ideas. I shall be investigating the link between Jewish and Greek thought in other chapters. It is also clear that Freud's "Jewishness" was only one of many influences, and arguably not even the most important one, on his work. Even so, I do believe that Freud's religious background sheds some light on his methods and thinking, which at times are closer to the hermeneutic and speculative work of a religious scholar, than the objectively experimental work of the scientist he was trained to be. I will be looking more closely at Freud's Jewish background and his relationship to German culture later, here I simply want to point out that Freud rejected religion although he believed that Monotheism was the highest form it could take. Freud believed in an enlightened and cultured internationalism, which rejected the limits and parochialism of ethnic and nationalistic definitions. However this did represent a conflict, as Bakan points out, because his childhood memories and the influence of his father (who was religious)¹⁷ must have influenced him profoundly, and subliminally, as his own theories acknowledge.

It is fair to say that many Jews at the time had ambivalent feelings about their identity. Rudolph Steiner-Prag, the Jewish illustrator of Meyrink's *The Golem* showed this in his drawings and studies (Figures 1 and 2). The Jewish faces in his sketch could be seen to be grotesques based on stereotypes used later by the Nazis. It is also worth noting that racial theories now regarded as abhorrent and fallacious were accepted at the time.



Fig. 1: Hugo Steiner-Prag. *The Golem*. 1915. Printed book with eight lithographs 25.3x19.9x2.6 cm. each. Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York. *Golem! Deliverance and Art*, E.D Bilski, (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1988) 58, Fig.33. Print.



Fig. 2: Hugo Steiner-Prag. One of two studies of the Golem's face. 1915. Charcoal and Chalk on paper. State Jewish Museum, Prague, *Golem! Deliverance and Art*, E.D Bilski, (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1988) 58. 33. Print.

The main jibe against Jews was that they were Oriental interlopers. The studies for, and final illustration of, the Golem clearly show that the demonic Jewish “Other” for Steiner-Prag was indeed Oriental in his features. It is true that the text describes the Golem thus, but there is no evidence that Steiner-Prag was uncomfortable with this. The Golem as Ghetto Jew might have represented to Steiner-Prag the exotic Oriental origin of Jewishness, and therefore an image from the past. Many Jews rejected traditional and confining Orthodoxy, which was especially prominent when traditionalist Russian Jews, fleeing the Pogroms, were migrating to Germany. The assimilating German Jews eagerly embraced the culture around them and, like Freud, often identified themselves with German culture. Although Freud rejected the constrictions of the Jewish Orthodox lifestyle, he valued his Jewish identity and believed that it gave him vitality. The stress Freud placed on the importance of acknowledging a Jewish past is entirely consistent. Memory, inheritance and culture were vital to his thinking and are articulated in his theories. I will expand on this point when I examine Freud's relationship to his Judaism in the next chapter, but suffice it to say here, that Freud saw no point in converting to Catholicism, as many Jews did at this time. As religion was loosening its hold on many secular-leaning Jews, there seemed to many to be no real reason to continue suffering the stigma of being a Jew without the religious faith that justified it. Many Jews however did not convert, because they felt that there was no conflict between being German and Jewish.¹⁸ Later I will examine this aspect in much more detail, as it relates to important issues of Jewish identity and memory, which are very relevant to my study of the Golem theme.

EXPRESSIONISM AND THE RELATIONSHIP OF JEW TO GERMAN

With the emergence of the new “Expressionism” in art and its rejection of the stultifying and reactionary values of the establishment led by King Wilhelm II, many people, both Jewish and Non-Jewish, saw the old order disintegrating around them and longed for change. There was almost a paradoxical sense of the past as claustrophobically overwhelming and powerful, yet simultaneously brittle and disintegrating. This dual sense is reflected in the work of artists like Hugo Steiner-Prag and Alfred Kubin, who both illustrated *The Sandman* and *The Golem*, and is mirrored in Gustav Meyrink's work which plays an important part in my study.

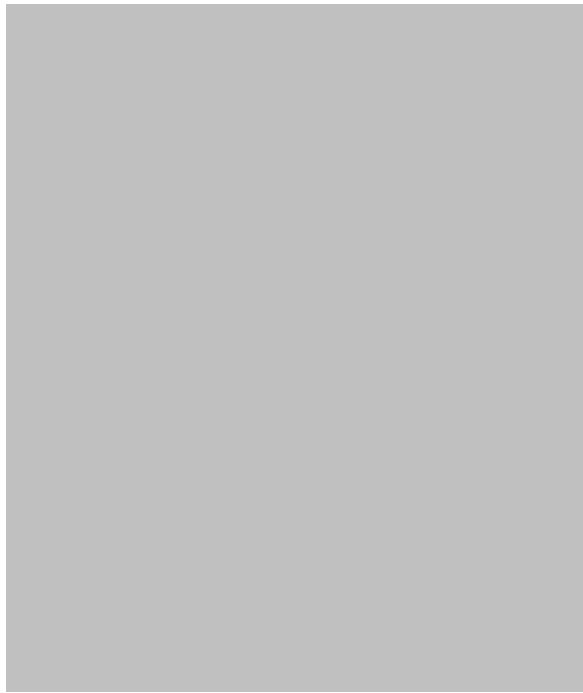


Fig. 3: Hugo Steiner-Prag. *The Golem*. 1915. Printed book with lithographs 25.3x19.9x2.6 cm. each. G. Meyrink, *The Golem* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1976). Print.

In Figure 3 the Golem hands over a book which gleams with strange power; the Golem is a creature of the Book or “the Word”. Traditional Jews live their entire existence by the Torah, which seems to be referred to in these pictures, and in Meyrink’s *The Golem* itself, as a source of both vision and blindness. The atmosphere summed up in this picture is of a kind of heightened feverish and hypnotically trancelike state, reflecting Meyrink’s preoccupation with meditation¹⁹. Freud’s interest in hypnotism and the Unconscious seems to be echoed in Steiner-Prag’s illustration. In Meyrink’s story the Golem is also, mysteriously, the protagonist’s double. The Golem appears as a living being conjured up out of memory and blind instinct. Hence Steiner-Prag shows us the spirit of ancient Judaism confronting its modern assimilated form.



Fig.4: Hugo Steiner-Prag. *The Golem*. 1915. Printed book with lithographs 25.3x19.9x2.6 cm. each. G. Meyrink, *The Golem* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1976). Print.

Steiner-Prag's illustration depicts old man, in an insalubrious ghetto setting, with the stereotypical Jewish features later used in anti-Semitic propaganda, but in this case drawn by a Jewish illustrator (Figure 4). Steiner-Prag also illustrated *The Sandman*, and it is interesting to compare two of his illustrations for each book. (Figures 5 and 6). The menorah or candelabra, a central Jewish symbol, is present in both of these illustrations. In his depiction of the creation of the Golem, Steiner-Prag shows "The Word" in the form of the open book (Figure 5). The memory or ghosts of the ancient rabbis act as witnesses in the darkness. There is an echo of these ghostly holy shapes, now demonic, in the background of the illustration from *The Sandman* (Figure 6).

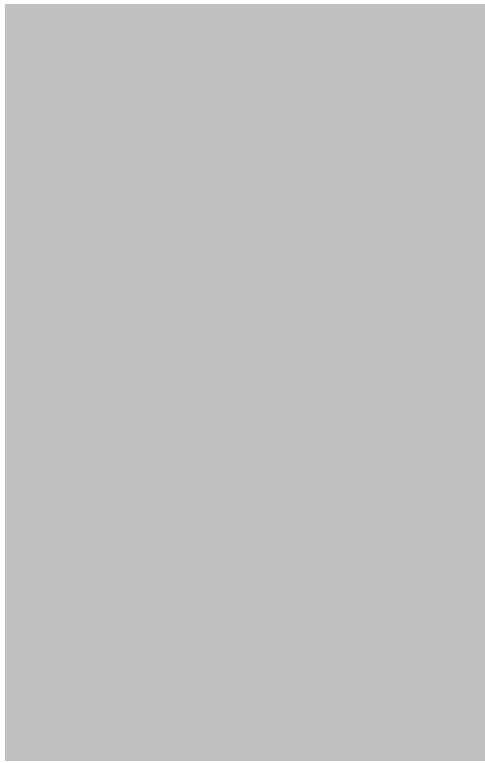


Fig.5: Hugo Steiner-Prag. *The Golem*. 1915. Printed book with lithographs 25.3x19.9x2.6 cm. each. G. Meyrink, *The Golem* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1976). Print.



Fig.6: Hugo Steiner-Prag. lithograph. E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Der unheimliche Gast – und andere Erzählungen*. (München: Winkler Verlag, 1976) 39. Print.

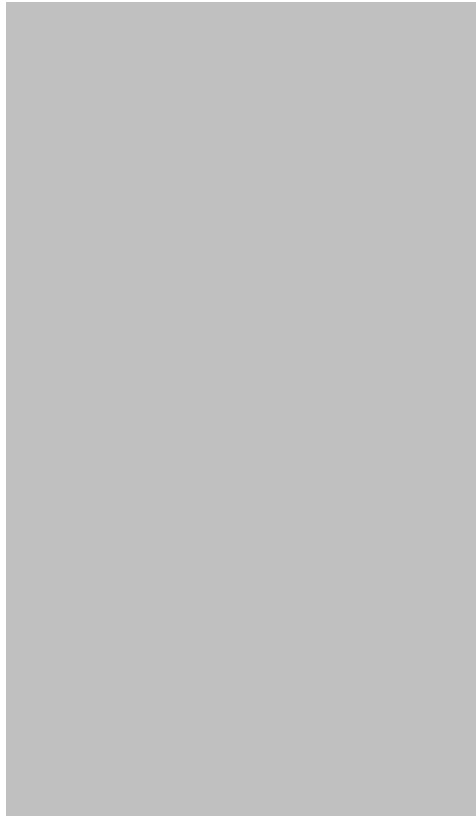


Fig.7: Alfred Kubin. Etching. E.T.A. Hoffmann.
Zwei Nachtstücke (Muchen: Deutscher
Taschenbuch Verlag GmbH & Co, 1980)
7. Print.

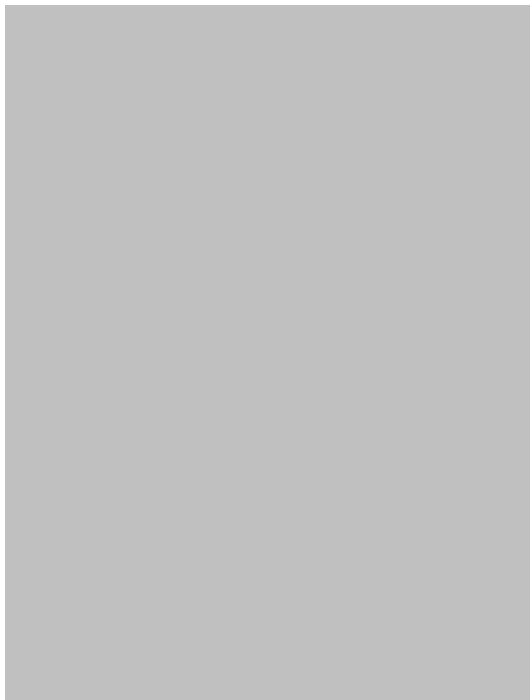


Fig.8: Alfred Kubin. Drawing. 1923. Gustav
Meyrink, *Der Golem* (New York: Dover
Publications Inc.) 1976. Print.

Kubin was not Jewish but his illustrations also deal with the oppressive, yet compelling, weight of memory and the past (Figures 7 and 8). The metaphor of the Golem was clearly one which resonated with both Jewish and non-Jewish Germans like Kubin, Meyrink and Wegener. Kubin's Sandman illustration was based on a traumatic childhood memory of his own, while the picture of the ghetto with its old man, visualises a timeless yet ancient place, transformed into a dreamlike world by imagination. His work, both written and drawn, demonstrates a concern with the end of an old era and an uncertain future. His settings are ancient, crumbling, but filled with a nightmarish and strangling vitality. The Jewish vision of a past that co-exists with the present, came together here with a more general sense of the decline of the German Empire after the First World War. The Jews were defined and encumbered by their history but at the same time, to them at least, it explained their survival. Jewish confidence and assimilation began to slow down as the First World War progressed, and was finally halted by the Nazis.

Many German artists who were, like Kubin, associated with Expressionism and under the influence of the ideas of Nietzsche, were questioning the authority of the past while welcoming, but at the same time fearing, the future. Thus Norbert Wolf writes about Kubin and other Expressionist artists:

Not only with regard to the ecstatically heightened self-consciousness of artists, but also with regard to their symbolic interpretation of the world, their search for metaphysical foundations or cosmological orders, utopian designs and elementary realms beyond history from which they hoped for a rebirth of unadulterated creativity the Expressionists developed many an idea that originated in German romanticism.²⁰

Here Jewish thinking coalesced with that of Expressionist artists, including Meyrink and the film-maker Wegener. This utopian search for a new world looked both to the past and to a future beyond history. Such a context explains the continuing power of the story of the Golem, which had so fascinated German Romantics like E.T.A. Hoffmann.

GERMAN/JEWISH MYSTICISM, *THE SANDMAN* AND 'THE UNCANNY'

As shown by the success of Meyrink's book, the belief in progress and science coexisted with an attraction for the esoteric, and there was a widespread fascination with the occult and spiritual. This interest included Kabbalistic ideas, as for example in the cultish Theosophy of Madame Blavatsky. Helena Blavatsky (1831-91) founded the Theosophical Society in 1875. This was an esoteric movement in which initiates strive for mystical understanding of God's nature. It was a blend of Hindu, Buddhist and Neo-Platonic elements, and was influenced by Kabbalistic Judaism which as, I have already pointed out, itself had strong Neo-Platonic elements. Memory and the past were evoked and contrasted with the rapidly industrialising and scientific milieu. The dilemma of the Jews was echoed by society as a whole. Freud believed that this mysticism was at least worthy of his attention and

delivered a lecture on the subject of ‘Dreams and Occultism’²¹. The story of the Golem fits very well into this context, hence its general appeal.

According to Gershom Scholem²², in the early references to the Golem legend rabbis, in their quest to know and understand God, created a man by meditation and by the holy magic generated by their contemplation of God’s Hebrew names. The “man” thus created was without concrete form, but was still dangerous enough to provoke an angel to appear to the rabbis to warn of the dangers of making God redundant by usurping his crucial role as creator. This act of creation is therefore both holy and unholy at the same time.

Popular folklore took this story further in later times and many versions of the Golem tale appeared. The Golem tales took many forms²³, and the setting was usually Prague, Poland or Germany itself. These stories, (overtly or covertly) reflected the confrontation between the Jews of the ghetto and the hostile Gentile communities that surrounded them, dealt with the mutual suspicion and hatred they felt for each other, and pondered the consequences. It may not be too fanciful to say that they foreshadowed the future by reflecting on the past. The most famous versions of these stories were based on real characters, Rabbi Ba’al Shem of Chelm (d 1583) and Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel, the Maharal of Prague (d. 1609). Later versions described the relationship between Rabbi Loew and the Emperor (this aspect was stressed in the Wegener film), and some even referred to the blood libel theme (the accusation that the Jews murder Christian children for ritualistic purposes). I shall be looking at this later.

In 1808 Jakob Grimm published an account in the romantic *Journal for Hermits* that described legends told by Polish Jews about the making of a man from clay or mud. These stories provided inspiration for many romantic writers starting with Ludwig Achim von Arnim in 1812. Earlier, sometime around 1625, Joseph Solomon Delmedigo quotes a story that bears a striking resemblance to aspects of the E.T.A. Hoffmann story of *The Sandman*:

... Solomon ibn Gabriol (the famous poet and philosopher of the eleventh century) ... created a woman who waited on him. When he was denounced to the government (evidently for magic), he proved that she was not ... real ... and reduced her to her original components. And there are many such legends that are told by all, especially in Germany.²⁴

Freud’s essay, ‘The Uncanny’, was published in 1919, although it had its source some years before. In Part II, which follows an etymological discussion of the word “*Heimlich*”, Freud discusses Jentsch’s definition of the uncanny. Freud summarises this as the uncertainty caused by whether a lifeless object might be in fact animate; or conversely the possibility of a thing, apparently living, being dead. This statement reminds Freud of E.T.A. Hoffmann’s *The Sandman* which he felt was unsurpassed in its evocation of the uncanny. In the story the terrifying Sandman/Coppelius (a childhood bogeyman), who takes on different forms and disguises, creates a life-like wooden puppet or automaton, called Olympia. The protagonist, Nathanael, falls in love with her, and the story ends with the destruction of both the automaton and Nathanael. The automaton is destroyed violently by its

creators, as in the Delmedigo version, while the mental disintegration of Nathanael ends with the physical shattering of his head after he leaps from a tower. Freud goes on from this to examine whether it is the automaton that produces the uncanny effect of this story on him. He freely acknowledges the element of subjectivity that is inevitably present in producing this feeling, and continues to analyse the text on this basis: 'But I cannot think - and I hope most readers of the story will agree with me - that the theme of the doll Olympia ... is by any means the only, or indeed the most important element that must be held responsible for the quite unparalleled atmosphere of uncanniness evoked by the story.'²⁵

For Freud the main source of the uncanny atmosphere lies in Nathanael's horrified fear of the threat to his eyes by the monstrous Coppelius/Sandman. Freud contends, from his clinical experience with dreams and other symbolism, that the eyes are equated in the Unconscious with the testicles, and therefore this terror is a recurrence of Nathanael's repressed fear of castration by his father. Freud believed that this castration was a real event in human prehistory, and circumcision is the reminder of it. The sons of the primeval horde feared castration by the father who wished to keep the females to himself. They then banded together and murdered him, and this event is recalled in a kind of inherited social memory. This memory was expressed in the story of Oedipus, who put out his own eyes (equated by Freud with testicles) as a horrific reaction to his incest with his mother and murder of his father. The memory of this traumatic event was, Freud believed, the most powerful of all of the "returns of the repressed", and therefore the most uncanny of all. It is this fear and memory of castration that marks the separation from the primeval, Narcissistic self, and begins the process that will lead eventually to the emergence of the sexually mature person. This terror, caused by the awakened memory of a childish trauma, occurs at the time when Nathanael is about to marry, and recalls his horror of castration, thus precipitating him into psychosis.

There is, however, another aspect to Freud's analysis. Nathanael separates his father into two parts; one good and one bad. Freud identifies the Sandman as "the bad father" who dominates Nathanael's "good father", and he supports his contention by pointing out in a footnote that this parallels events in Hoffmann's own life. The good and bad fathers join together in the creation of the doll, so good and evil are entwined. There is a parallel here with the holy Rabbis and their blasphemous creation. In some versions of the Golem stories, demons are summoned from hell to help the Rabbi in his creation, making this aspect even clearer. Thus the theme of doubling ties in with Freud's argument that: 'God and the Devil were originally one and the same, a single figure which was later split into two, bearing opposed characteristics ... The father is thus the individual prototype of both God and the Devil.'²⁶ It is this dual father/Coppelius pattern that appears in its many forms in 'The Uncanny'. Elsewhere in his writings Freud refers to circumcision as uncanny²⁷, and as the memory of castration by the bad father from ancient times. It is the physical reminder of a psychic and historical event inscribed on the body like a sign or letter. If the Golem represents uncontrollable forces of the libido, then circumcision is a mark that is a reminder of control as well as a prototype for castration anxiety.



Fig.9: Paul Klee. *Carnival²⁸ in the Mountains*. 1924. Watercolour. 26.5 x 33cm. Kunstmuseum, Paul Klee Foundation. Bern. C. Naubert-Riser, *Klee* (London: Studio Editions Ltd., 1988) 83. Print.

Paul Klee also was concerned with the Golem myth, via E.T.A. Hoffmann's story, and made several paintings using its themes. In Figure 9, *Carnival in the Mountains*, an eye powers the automaton after being removed from a child. The figure of Coppelius is not here accompanied by the father. It could be argued that the "head" of the automaton has a phallic structure, and so seems to symbolise - to some extent - Freud's castration theories. The title is vague, but Geelhaar, Glaesemer and Naubert-Riser all suggest that this is an illustration of the Sandman story²⁹.

The link between Nathanael's fear of losing his eyes in the story of *The Sandman* and the blinding of Oedipus is obvious, but I do not intend to discuss the complexities of Freud's Oedipal castration theories here - nor his use of Greek mythology - but rather to focus on the identification of the Sandman/Coppelius figure with a feared and hated father substitute which has become split from his "good father". Hoffmann's own illustration (Figure 10), seems to confirm Freud's description of the confrontation of the "fathers". One of these is passive and pleading, and the other, Coppelius, is aggressively pushing him away, and wielding a phallic-like stick. The monstrous Coppelius is dressed in the clothes of Hoffmann's youth and, therefore, I would argue, could confirm Freud's claim that the character was based on childhood memories.



Fig 10: E.T.A. Hoffmann. Drawing. E.F. Bleiler (ed.), E.T.A. Hoffmann, *The Best Tales of Hoffmann* (New York: Dover Productions, 1967) 187. Print.

The act of creating the Golem echoes the unholy and unnatural creation of an automaton by magical means in *The Sandman*. Freud further points out the “fathers” created the automaton as well as being responsible for the boy’s birth itself. This leads to the further point that the boy and the automaton are somehow equivalent and that the automaton is an aspect of Nathanael himself. Nathanael is the result of natural birth while the automaton is a product of unnatural blasphemous birth, but Nathanael is also closely related to the doll. Freud reinforces this by citing the scene where Nathanael’s arms and legs were screwed off by Coppelius as an experiment: ‘he had worked on him as a mechanician would on a doll ... and prepares us for the interpretation of Olympia.’³⁰ I will examine this scene in more detail in Chapter Five.

THE GOLEM AND THE ID

There is another link between Freud’s theories and the story of the Golem. Emily D. Bilski, after describing how the German Romantics used the Golem figure in their insights about the role of reason and unreason in the human condition, writes as follows: ‘With the advent of psychoanalysis, the golem, in turn, came to represent the Id’³¹ The word “*Golem*” means formless and chaotic in Hebrew, a kind of neutral “thing”, which can be seen to be mirrored by Freud’s concept of the Id. The Id is the mysterious, inhuman, amoral and amorphous repository of the instincts and drives in the Freudian account. In her analysis Bilski stresses the primitive and uncontrolled libido, but I believe there is an important element that must not be overlooked. This is the role of memory and a continuous vision of past and present, which though not present in Enlightenment ideas of reason and unreason, is often to be found in Romantic literature like Hoffmann’s and Goethe’s. This idea can also be argued as central to Jewish thinking. The special relationship that God has with the

founders of Judaism, such as Abraham and Moses, continues in perpetuity from generation to generation. Jews need only to remember God at all times, and stick to their part of the bargain by obeying the law. This has led to a curious but powerful sense of continuity with the past, reinforced by ritual and tradition.

Chief Rabbi Professor Jonathan Sacks referred to a conflict between the Greek tradition in philosophy with this aspect of Jewish thought in a lecture entitled ‘What is Faith?’ (2000)³² where he says:

... Freud's psycho-analysis is Greek not Jewish. You know the story of Oedipus ... It is a particular view of the universe in which father and son are antagonistic and they cannot both live together. And Freud saw this as the basis of religion, human civilisation, the works! The very essence of the Jewish vision is exactly the opposite! Of a father called God Who makes space for His children, i.e. us ... The world of ancient Greece, which Freud turned into psycho-analytical theory, is diametrically opposed to the fundamental premise of Bereishis 1 and Bereishis 2 in which Father and son, parents and children, make space for one another.

Of course Sacks, by saying this, overlooks the fact that the Old Testament begins its account of the history of the Jewish people with its founding father, Abraham, rebelling against his own father and smashing the idols of his youth. The interweaving, contrast and tension between Jewish and Greek thought, often overstated, will emerge as an important theme of my thesis.

It is true that Freud does see father and son relationships as a contest, but in fact the internalised Father and son *do* co-exist in the closest possible way, in fact in his account, they share the psyche between them. Here the model was not Sophocles but the Jewish tale of the Golem, as I shall try to demonstrate below. A little later in the same lecture Sacks says as much about Jewish Philosophy:

Hegel sees thesis succeeded by antithesis which supplants the past. We are never supplanting the past. We always keep it in mind and keep it in memory. We live with our past. We remember our ancestors. We are still at one with them. We are still at one with our grandchildren yet unborn. (You know what I mean?) Because we're handing on the tradition to them. That's a very different view of history in which we preserve the past and the future. That's dialogical. We keep talking to our past and to our future.

Sacks is making the point here that Jews see history as continuous, and not in Hegelian terms, as a synthesis of opposites. I would argue, however that Freud does see human history as a continuous process. According to Freud, the Id contains ideas and primitive urges inherited from the beginning of human development, the forgotten, the overcome and the repressed. It is described as a formless and chaotic world of memories and instinct which operates as a kind of powerhouse, from which the drives emerge with their charges of energy to influence the ego. Freud contends that in this place, the earliest and most primitive manifestation of the human psyche, time does not exist but the present mixes with the past without division. “The Word” or speech of the father imposes order on this chaos, and it is relevant here that Freud contended that the father and God are interchangeable in the human psyche.

In his discussion of the role that the Hebrew language plays in Judaism, Joseph Dan states: ‘The Hebrew bible, ... includes the word of God as actually uttered by him even before humanity was created. When God said, “*Yehi or*” he did not only convey the message “Let there be light”, he actually uttered these syllables, and as a result, there was light. God’s utterance was *not a semantic one ... The very utterance was the deed*³³, the cause of the emergence of light. Its semantic interpretation came later.’³⁴ (my emphasis). In just this way the Golem is animated by the Father, and without His holy word it is a lifeless thing made of mud. *Adama* means dirt in Hebrew, and Adam is also made from primeval mud and enlivened and humanised by a divine spark. The holy Word which is the equivalent of this divine spark dedicates the Golem to God, and it has to fulfil God’s plans. If it is used for man’s purposes (or in Freud’s terms, simply to please the ego), it becomes an unholy and uncontrollable monster.

FATHERS AND SONS

For Freud father and son relationships involve power and domination. The contest for life and domination, which takes place between the Golem and its maker, echoes this. In the most popular and recent versions of the tale the Golem refuses to be “put to death” by its maker by the removal of the holy words that animate it, and it goes on the rampage until it is brought under control. It does, however, remain a latent threat and the victory is never complete. The creating rabbi is mortal, while the Golem is not, and its time may yet come. In Paul Wegener’s film it is a little girl (associated in the film with a statue of the Virgin Mary), who defeats the Golem after it has burst out of the “patriarchal” ghetto. Female seduction rather than male domination prevails here.

In Freud’s analysis the superego, an equivalent of the divine spark, guides the ego, and controls it by the words of God/parents, alive or dead. The morality of the superego has its roots deep in past memories, because parents consistently pass this restraint on to their children. It can be argued that the Bible uses language in the same way to lay down its laws. This superego is thus the conscience which controls the individual, civilises and humanises him/her. It helps him/her to function and progress by suppressing and controlling these vital but primitive drives and memories, which can be so destructive if allowed free rein. If the superego fails in its task, the individual becomes unable to function socially, and becomes psychotic or criminal and, according to Freud, society uncontrolled by civilisation and the rule of law can similarly regress to a savage and inhuman state. Freud saw the barbarism of the rise of the Third Reich in these terms. He saw the uncanny as a frightening reminder to the individual of this state, which he believed, was always present as a “trace” of our origin. Freud makes this clear in the following passage:

It seems as if each one of us has been through a phase of individual development corresponding to this animistic stage in primitive men, that none of us has passed through it without preserving certain residues and traces of it which are still capable of manifesting themselves, and that everything which now strikes us as ‘uncanny’³⁵ fulfils the condition of touching those residues of animistic mental activity within us and bringing them to expression.³⁶

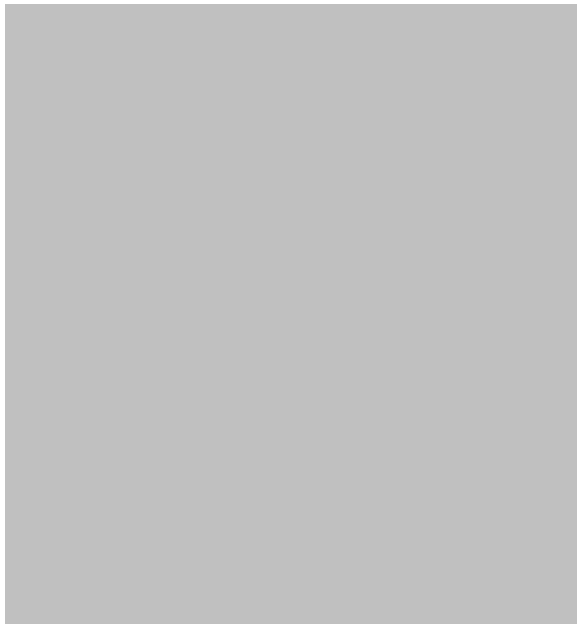


Fig.11. Still from *Der Golem*. Paul Wegener. 1920.
Eureka Video DVD version, 2003.

In a still from Wegener's film, 'The Golem' (Figure 11) we observe the Rabbi and his assistant, who seems to stand in for his son in the narrative of the film. The Golem is used in the film by the assistant, who is in love with the Rabbi's daughter, to destroy his rival, the King's Messenger. In this way, seen from the Freudian point of view of the double, the Golem becomes a projection of his destructive or evil side, carrying out his aggressive urges that have been prompted by his libidinal drives. The Golem also carries out this function for the Rabbi by personifying his wish for power when faced by his powerlessness in the face of persecution. The still shows the man-handling of the Golem by both assistant and Rabbi. It could be seen as visualising the Freudian struggle of father (superego) and son (ego), which continues across the generations, to control and manage the Id between them.

Freud always held to Lamarckian ideas of genetic transmission of what might be considered as cultural characteristics. When challenged by Joseph Wortis on this subject he replied; "But we can't bother with the biologists. We have our own science."³⁷ It is interesting to see that modern theorists are now adding subtleties to evolutionary theory which reinforce some of these ideas. Pete Lunn has said: 'Economic experiments, scenarios and field studies suggest that mutual cooperation, trust and generosity are instinctive – fundamental aspects of human nature, part evolved, part learned.'³⁸

The Golem, too is activated and controlled by the Word of the Father, placed either inside his body or engraved on his forehead. In most versions of the story these words are the names of God, and thus secret knowledge of His identity and nature, just as in the Freudian account, the name, the words and the memory of his father is inscribed in the mind and body of the individual. If the "word of the father/God" i.e. the superego, ceases to fulfil its task and is "removed", it can no longer control the Id and the organism either ceases to function, or goes on the rampage, just like the Golem in the story. The Freudian psychoanalyst takes the place of the good

father/God/rabbi/superego; he/she reads the symptoms like a text, and helps to restore “the Word” to the sufferer.

For Freud the progress of an international civilisation and science will extend the understanding and control of the Id. He believed that a messianic stage of ultimate scientific enlightenment will eventually be reached when all is known. Civilisation will then reach its climax, and even death itself might be conquered. Here Freud comes close to a Hegelian vision of history’s fulfilment in Truth, which can be seen as a secular version of Jewish/Christian messianic belief.

RAISING THE DEAD

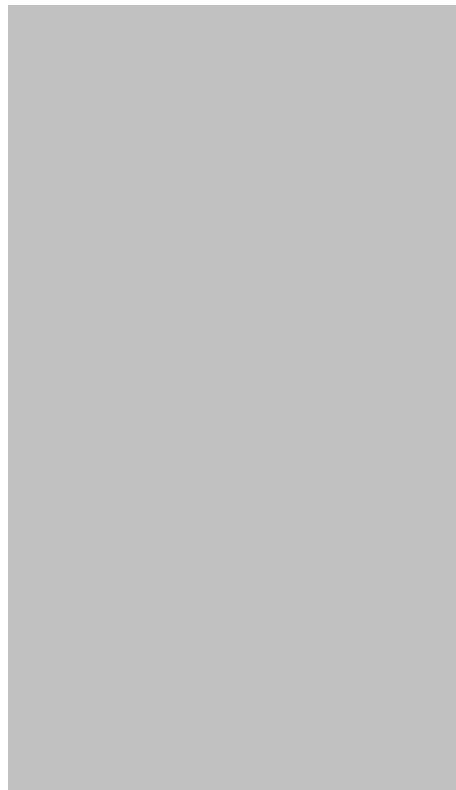


Fig 12: Hugo Steiner-Prag. *At the Master’s Grave*. Lithograph. 1916. *Der Golem. Prager Phantasien* (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff Verlag, 1916). Portfolio 33.7 x 24.2 cm. Collection Peter Tumarkin, New York. E. D. Bilski, *Golem! Danger, Deliverance and Art* (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1988) 57. Print.

In this context it is interesting to point out that the Golem story was historically connected with earlier tales of resurrection by healers. The dead

were brought back to life by the placing of the name of God in their mouths or on their arms. The removal of the parchment containing the name of God reversed this process, and caused them to become corpses once again. Like Freud's Id, these corpses could be argued to represent the dead but still potentially vital past. The word animates them and allows them to function in the reality of the present. In Figure 12 Steiner-Prag shows the Golem as a ghostly figure whose shape mirrors that of the grave behind him.

Although he does not look upon this as a major trigger for the sense of the uncanny, or find its source in Jentsch's suggestion, Freud does not completely dismiss the fear of the doll coming to life. His explanation is in line with his other thoughts.

Just as he has placed the source of the uncanny as a reminder of the childhood memories buried in the Id, Freud points out that children do not fear the idea of their dolls coming to life; in fact they desire it. This should logically, therefore, not be a source of fear or discomfort. His solution to this objection is characteristically ingenious. He suggests that the memory of a desire which, because it has been overcome by the rationalising process of growing up, has become uncanny because it is a reminder to an adult of the irrational thought processes of the child he once was. As what has been overcome is consigned with other memory traces to the Id, the discomfort of the uncanny is caused by the reminder of that wordless and timeless memory world of the Id, which Freud sees as dwelling within us all.

In the two diagrams one by Freud (Figure 13); and one illustrating the relationship between the Kabbalistic attributes/structure of the Godhead (Figure 14), which, in the Spanish version of Kabbalism, is the diagrammatic version of the Golem, we can see that Freud's thinking is closer in spirit to the Kabbalah than to a scientific system. This is reinforced by Freud himself:

I should like to portray the structural relations of the mental personality, as I have described them to you, in the unassuming sketch which I now present you with: (sketch follows ...). The id has intercourse with the external world only through the ego – at least, according to this diagram. It is certainly hard to say today how far the drawing is correct. In one respect it is undoubtedly not. The space occupied by the unconscious id ought to have been incomparably greater than that of the ego or the preconscious. I must ask you to correct it in your thoughts.³⁹

The vagueness of the drawing, shown below, is echoed by Freud's explanation. It is also interesting to note that he factors in the Kabbalistic messianic belief that time will bring new knowledge that will correct and complete the drawing.

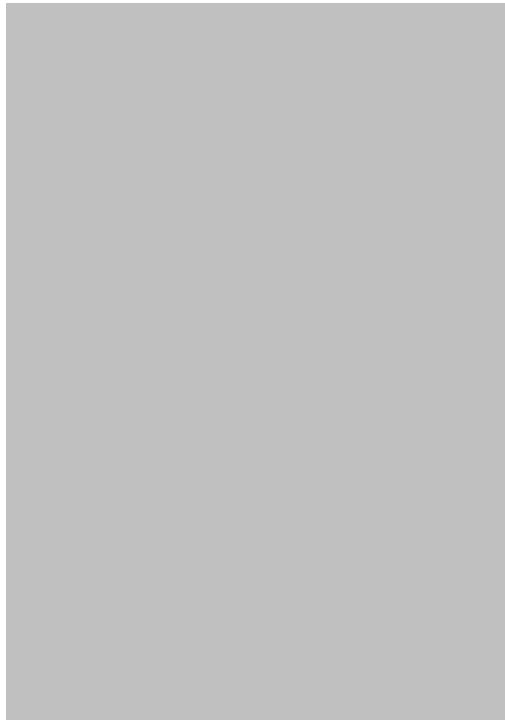


Fig.13: Sigmund Freud. Diagram. *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. J. Strachey (London: Penguin Books, 1991) 111. Print.

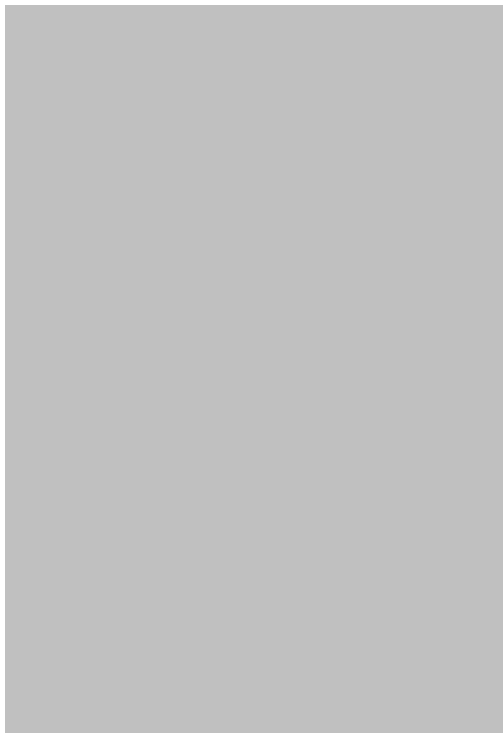


Fig.14: Diagram of Kabbalistic Attributes. G. Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah* (New York: Schocken Books, 1991) 44. Print.

It is possible to see the raw material out of which the Golem is created in terms of the unformed, powerful, and fertile chaos of the past, memory and

instinct, which Freud postulates exists before language and “the father” establishes order and control. When language and the civilising law of the father is removed psychosis and destruction follow. Kristeva sees this unformed space more positively as the pre-linguistic world of the mother and the child that is fused with her. She calls this semiotic receptacle the chora. I shall be dealing with Kristeva’s theories in more detail later.

Freud’s emphasis on the primal scene is echoed by Christian Boltanski’s interpretation of the Golem as secret and voyeuristic. He was himself conceived in secret when his Jewish father and Polish mother hid in a basement from the Nazis. His installation called *Golem*, can only be perceived through a window in a door (Figure 15). Other work inspired by the Golem theme reflects his concern with the mysteries of creation.



Fig.15: Christian Boltanski. *Golem*. 1988. Mixed media installation. Approx. 2.8 x 4 x 4.8m. Lent by the artist, Paris. E. D. Bilski, *Golem! Danger, Deliverance and Art* (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1988) 108. Print.

CONCLUSION

I would argue that the concepts in the story Golem, which has its roots deep in Jewish tradition, closely parallel Freud’s central theories which seem to be based on the enduring power of memory and history on the life of the individual. This story was also resonant because of the historical and national context for Freud’s own background, and served as a profound symbol for the prevailing concerns of that society. This is why I think it no accident that Freud used the story of *The Sandman* as his main illustration of the uncanny.

According to Freud, individual and collective memory have both destructive and constructive (libidinal) potential in the individual, and have to be controlled and interpreted by the process of symbolisation by language in the

“speaking cure”, i.e. psychoanalysis. This memory lies beyond the reach of the patient and so there is a need for the psychoanalyst to draw it out and impose order. For Freud, therefore, the psychoanalyst is a secular version of the “Golem-creating” rabbi because he or she shapes chaos into a functioning human being, and brings relief and civilisation by “The Word”.

CHAPTER 2 - IDENTITY AND THE UNCANNY

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I shall be looking at the enigma of identity and how the symbol of the Golem might relate to it. Judith Butler's concept of 'performativity' can be seen as reflecting the uncanny instability of identity, and I shall examine it in this light. *The Sandman* is full of shifting identities. Nathanael is child, friend, student, madman, lover and son all at the same time. The mysterious narrator's identity is quite unknown. Clara and Olympia shift identities, while the sinister Sandman, who drifts menacingly through the pages of the story, has so many identities that they cancel each other out and dissolve into the emptiness of the abyss.

I shall argue that the question of identity is closely linked to Freud's exposition of the uncanny, and I shall be looking at Freud's own German/Jewish identity, and considering what light, if any, it sheds on his work. In this context I shall be discussing anti-Semitism and will be looking at work on this subject by Sander Gilman and others. Julia Kristeva has also dealt with Freud's relationship to his Jewish lineage, and has closely linked it with uncanny themes such as repression and the Unconscious. Finally, with Freud and the Golem myth in mind, I shall touch on how Kaja Silverman's explorations of interpellation - via Louis Althusser -, add to our understanding of the uncanny. I shall also be referring here to Eli Gordon's discussion of Heidegger and Rosenzweig. Gordon states that Heidegger and Rosenzweig, in their concern for ways of existing, emphasise the importance of religious practice and other practicalities through lived engagement. This links closely to my use of practice to explore the experiential aspect of the Golem and the uncanny.

THE UNCANNINESS OF IDENTITY

Nicholas Royle, in his study of 'The Uncanny'⁴⁰, remarks on Freud's inability to come to grips with the nature of the subject that he is exploring. The more that Freud tries to pin down the subject, the more it seems to evade him. Freud claims that he has a very attenuated sense of the very subject he is so intensely exploring: 'The writer of the present contribution, indeed must himself plead guilty to a special obtuseness in the matter ... It is long since he has experienced or heard of anything which has given him an uncanny impression'.⁴¹ Despite this 'special obtuseness' he goes on to describe his own experience of the uncanny as provoked by the tale of *The Sandman* in which: '... (a) quite unparalleled atmosphere of uncanniness (is) evoked by the story.'⁴²

What seems to be to be even more striking is that Freud, for reasons he never discloses, seems to have been driven to examine this subject that is so remote from him personally. He says, 'It is only rarely that a psychoanalyst feels *impelled* to investigate the subject of aesthetics ... But it does occasionally happen that he *has to* interest himself in some particular province of that subject ...'⁴³ Later Freud says 'We have *drifted* into this field of research *half-involuntarily*...' (my emphasis).⁴⁴ Thus he seems to be driven by some necessity beyond his own inclination, and this necessity, never explained, resolved or put to rest, haunts the essay. The explanation may lie in the fact that, as I discuss later, Freud

was grappling at the time with the war-time traumas of his patients. These raised new issues that he had been forced to confront, and would later surface in 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', as well as in the concept of the death drive.

The uncanny, as revealed by Freud, seems to chime with his vision of the elusive and illusive world of the unconscious which, like quicksand, forever threatens to pull the traveller under. For Freud the Unconscious dwells intimately within but, at the same time, it is ultimately unknowable. Identity is also uncanny because it is both inside and outside the individual. It is hidden and private but, as Judith Butler argues, it is manifest in performativity through "speech and body acts"⁴⁵. Butler has stated that her views on what performativity is exactly have changed over time but, as she explains:

... The anticipation of an authoritative disclosure of meaning is the means by which that authority is attributed and installed: the anticipation conjures its object. I wondered whether we do not labor under a similar expectation concerning gender, that it operates as an interior essence that might be disclosed, an expectation that ends up producing the very phenomenon that it anticipates. In the first instance, then, the performativity of gender revolves around this metalepsis, the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself. Secondly performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration.⁴⁶

From this viewpoint identity is seen as something that its possessor wrestles with and embraces at the same time, such that no one can really own or fully understand it. Butler's use of the word 'conjures' gives it a ghostly, uncanny quality. Her emphasis on repetition and ritual underlines the nature of the process, which she sees as apparently natural, but actually strangely artificial. This creation of an object by an authoritative disclosure of meaning is very close to the story of the Golem, also conjured up out of nothingness by ritual, and by the repetition of a prescribed formula. Thus, in the creation of the Golem, prayer and thought, which are features of the internal life, are brought into the outside and made manifest. The Golem is produced as an external manifestation of the conjuror, and in the context of his or her culture and time. In Butler's terms the anticipation of what she calls 'a gendered essence' conjures its object through ritual and repetition in the same way as the creators of the Golem produce their own Golems. In her conception however, this act of creation is achieved, not through a singular act, but through repetitive and ritualistic naturalization in a body, (which, in terms of gender, is Golem-like in its unfinished state because, as Butler argues, performativity proffers only the illusion of an abiding self), understood as a cultural and temporal entity. The authority of society then sets the seal on this process, just as the authority of God's name brings animation and completion to the Golem. Butler seeks to undermine socially accepted categories, borders and thinking on gender identity, and depicts it primarily as an abysmal ambiguity and strangeness amidst that which we think we know best; our own selves.

FREUD AND HIS JEWISH HERITAGE

The suspicion that there is only emptiness behind the social and cultural mask is very uncomfortable, because it means that what is understood as intimate and fundamental to the nature of the individual is baseless illusion and deception. The uncanny emerges from Freud's essay as this sense of unreality and doubt, felt when the familiar and everyday reveal that they are not quite as we so confidently believe them to be. This feeling can be in itself insubstantial, a slight uneasiness that is gone even while you wonder if it was there at all. It is like receiving a postcard from an unknown place, sent by someone you don't recognise, who seems to know you better than you do yourself.

Royle quotes a conversation with Ernest Jones to prove that Freud was indeed deeply interested in the uncanny, occult and mysticism, and believed, as did Hamlet, that there were many things philosophy could not explain⁴⁷. Freud himself made clear, time and time again, that the Unconscious had its source in "primitive" childhood memories and beliefs of both individual and cultural history. Freud's individual and cultural history was Jewish, (and, as Bakan has pointed out, he had mystical influences). By his own admission and according to his own theories, therefore, many of his unconscious thoughts must have come from these roots, yet at the same time he was consciously German. Freud explained in 1926 to an interviewer: 'My language *is* German. My culture, my attainments *are* German. I *considered* myself German intellectually, until I *noticed* the growth of anti-Semitic prejudice in Germany and German Austria. Since that time, I prefer to call myself a Jew.'⁴⁸ (my emphasis)

Here we see Freud identifying his intellectual life with German culture. He uses the present tense to describe his language and culture as German, and the inference is that he believes that this state of affairs is not incompatible with his identity as a Jew. He states that he 'prefers' to be called a Jew. This implies that Freud saw his identification with Judaism as a conscious choice, not one forced upon him from the outside. *The Sandman*, a story by a German, and an acknowledged gem of German culture, is based on the Jewish tale of the Golem, and is a perfect model for him to use. Nevertheless, his identification with German culture and attainments necessarily *do* require the repression of - in his sense of overcoming - some aspects of Jewish belief and culture and, significantly, the source of *The Sandman* was not explored or acknowledged by Freud⁴⁹. Freud considered that religion had aspects of irrationality alien to the Enlightenment values that he was bound to uphold as a scientist. While he might discuss the irrational and occult with friends, and consider it in his work from the outside, he could not admit to believing in it.

To unravel his disavowal, I want to look at two accounts of identity, which have used Freud and his essay on the uncanny as reference points. I shall be examining here the work of Sander Gilman, and Julia Kristeva, as well as demonstrating how the Golem stories can add to our understanding of this issue. The points made by Gilman and Kristeva, and the contrasts between their ideas, seem to have something important to say about the elusive and contentious question of identity in general, and Freud's in particular.

SANDER GILMAN AND THE STEREOTYPING OF THE JEW



Fig. 16: Walter Hofmann ("Waldl"). *Was kann der Sigismund dafür, dass er so schön ist?...* Stripcartoon. From a series of stripcartoons published in *Lacht ihn tot! Ein tendenziöses Bilderbuch von Waldl.* (Dresden, Nationalsozialistischer Verlag für den Gau Sachsen, n.d. (Source: Private Collection, Ithaca) *The Jew's Body*. S. Gilman. (London: Routledge, Chapman and Hall Inc., 1991) 46. Plate 9. Print.

Sander Gilman states in his introduction to *The Jew's Body*⁵⁰ that he has put Freud at the centre of his book. I shall be looking closely at his ideas on Freud because Gilman has used Freud to discuss Jewish identity, and makes specific reference to his essay on the uncanny. Gilman centres his ideas on the anti-Semite's stereotype of the Jew, (identified by Gilman as western, and male). Gilman illustrates such stereotyping by way of a caricature from the 1930s: (Figure 16). In the drawing by Walter Hofmann, we witness an

ironical visualisation of the creation of the Jew, translated by Gilman as: 'What can Sigismund do about the fact that he is so pretty?...'

He describes the Jew, visualised here by the anti-Semite (in this case the Nazi caricaturist, Walter Hofmann, who drew under the name of "Waldl"), as: '(An) archetypal Jew ... (whose body is) ... literally constructed, like that of Adam or the golem, from wet clay.'⁵¹ The Jew here is literally a Golem created by the anti-Semite, deformed and made hideous by the fact he gets up before the sun (which turns out to be also a Nazi swastika⁵²), can bake him properly. Gilman makes the point that this turns the stereotype of the Jew into a visualisation of physical deformity and disease. Gilman goes on show how this stereotype pervades the unconscious ideas of both anti-Semite and the Jew himself.

In Gilman's reading, Freudian theory is used as authority that is usually straightforwardly presented, without acknowledgement or examination, but as simple fact. This is arguably what Derrida calls 'psychoanalytico-transcendental semantics'⁵³. According to Gilman, the Jewish individual is not controlled by the word of the father, as in Freud's superego, but rather by the word of the anti-Semite, which motivates him both from without and within. The anti-Semite provides potent stereotypes which are externalised and repressed into the Unconscious as a kind of vocabulary or text. In this nightmare scenario, which borders on paranoid fears and fantasies, those you hate and who hate you infiltrate, take over and control you from within. The idea of an unknown and literally hateful stranger taking up residence within your most secret self is uncanny and terrifying indeed. As if this was not bad enough, Gilman also believes that the anti-Semitic stereotype dwells in both Jew and Gentile always and, even when it is repressed and hidden, it is constant and always on the point of return. To this end he describes a reported exchange between the 'Anglo-Jewish' writer, Clive Sinclair and 'a leading Bulgarian liberal intellectual', Ivailo Ditchev. Ditchev asks: "Tell me, I've often wondered how you know ... how you recognise one another. I mean how did you know that Monty was a Jew? Did you give each other signals, or are there secret signs, or what? I mean, what do you do when you are introduced?" Gilman goes on to describe how Sinclair, after raising his trouser leg, went on to say: "That's what we do ... we show each other our cloven hooves."⁵⁴

Gilman comments that the cloven hoof, the sign of the secret meaning of the Jew's body belongs to a powerful myth of race which is current in 1990, when he wrote his book, just as it was in 1890 and even 1590. Gilman says: 'What startled Sinclair was the contrast between the "liberal", educated Eastern European' (coming from what Gilman describes rather strangely as 'the least anti-Semitic nation in the East – Bulgaria' and '*his evident belief* in the fantasy about Jewish Identity.'⁵⁵(my emphasis) I find it hard to understand how Gilman reaches this conclusion. It is Sinclair, and not Ditchev, who mentioned cloven hooves, and could the word "Jew" here not be replaced with any of the words "Englishman", "writer", "freemason"? Is it not the very point of this exchange that there is *no* way of physically telling who is Jewish and who is not? Sinclair is, after all, being ironic here. How does this

exchange reflect a deep-seated *belief* in the physical stereotyping of the Jew by a non-Jew?

DIFFERENCE AND PATHOLOGY AND THE STEREOTYPE

The question of physical stereotype is a fascinating one, and it is possible, and maybe even probable, that there is a subliminal idea of the Jew's body based on memories of old ideas that has power even today. The trouble is, that I do not believe that Gilman gives any convincing examples when he tries to extend his thesis beyond a Nazi context and into the present.

In his book *Difference and Pathology*, Gilman sets out his theories about stereotypes, which he applies more specifically in *The Jew's Body*:

The models we employ to shape the stereotype are themselves protean. As we seek to project the source of our anxiety onto objects in the world, we select models from the social world in which we function. These models are thus neither "random" or "archetypal"... Every social group has a set vocabulary of images for this externalized Other... (they are products) of history and of a culture that perpetuates them ... none is isolated from the historical context.⁵⁶

Gilman's thesis in *Difference and Pathology* is that 'protean' models generated by 'social groups' (which he does not define) create a 'vocabulary of images' and these 'shape' the stereotype in a 'historical context'. This idea of a flexible vocabulary of stereotypes offered in *Difference and Pathology* is an interesting and convincing one. However, I would like to argue that in *The Jew's Body* Gilman's approach to the stereotype is rather different. Here, I believe, Gilman does not take issues of individuality, history and culture sufficiently into account. The vocabulary of stereotyping he refers to in *The Jew's Body* is that of the anti-Semite, and the history of which he speaks seems to be, purely and selectively, that of anti-Semitism.

As I have said above, Gilman does not define precisely whom he includes, (and why), in the social groups referred to. And though he does give examples of what such 'set vocabulary' is, he does not explain how it operates differently between diverse 'social groups' and in various 'historical contexts'. He insists that the stereotype is not isolated from its historical context, identifies a 'set vocabulary' and then applies it generally to historical contexts as different as Nazi Germany, America and Britain. This means that Gilman does not acknowledge the vital fact that Sinclair's ironic and light-hearted banter with Ditchev would take on a profoundly different meaning in the Germany of the 1930s. Even if we limit our discussion to his references to a Germanic context, about the turn of the twentieth century and before 1933, there are still many questions left unanswered. I believe that the most important of these questions is the one that asks who this Jew is that he describes. Clearly Jews are not a single homogenous group, so I would argue that the vital missing element in Gilman's study of the Jew in *The Jew's Body* and *Jewish Self-Hatred*, is a definition of this Jew who is ever-present in his text. I believe that this erasure raises a legitimate worry that this Jew, whom Gilman evokes, may himself be a stereotype. Similar generalising takes place when referring to the negative, 'non-Jews' who are lumped together in an

undifferentiated mass, defined only by their lack of this unexplained “Jewishness”.

WHAT IS A JEW?

In his analysis of Hannah Arendt in *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question*, Richard J. Bernstein tries to define “Jewishness”. He is unable to do so conclusively, and settles for this description of Arendt who, like Freud, was non-religious,: ‘(Arendt was)... a Jew, who wove the strands of her Jewish genius into the general texture of European life,...’⁵⁷ I feel this fits Freud just as well. His own individual brand of “Jewishness”⁵⁸ was combined with a “European”, or specifically in his case, a “German” identity, and this complex combination was unique, its strands inseparable. Gilman does not entertain the possibility that “Jewishness” can be part of a complex identity, but believes that the anti-Semite’s stereotype of the Jew as diseased and deformed, mentally and physically, informs the context in which a ‘Western’ Jew like Freud finds himself. The Jew is inwardly constrained by it, because he has repressed this view of himself. To Gilman this means that the Jew either rebels against the stereotype (which is a positive reaction), or identifies with it, and in that case he is labelled by Gilman negatively as ‘a self-hating Jew’. This term is sometimes placed in inverted commas, and sometimes used descriptively in the text. In *Jewish Self-Hatred* Gilman explores this term in great detail, and here once again I believe he pays insufficient regard to historical context when he states that ‘Jewish self-hatred ... is valid as a specific mode of self-abnegation that has existed among Jews throughout their history.’⁵⁹

Gilman also sees the Jew as motivated from without, because he sees anti-Semitism as endemic and pervasive in what is vaguely described as the ‘Christian/Secular West’, although he does venture into Eastern Europe, in the case of Bulgaria, here described as ‘The East’. Gilman believes that the power, prejudice and influence of the anti-Semite is constant from the time of Christ to the present and arguably, into the future, and that the anti-Semite can, and does, lurk behind the disguise of the most apparently enlightened non-Jew. Gilman’s position is that Freud, as the Jewish healer, cannot escape anti-Semitic programming, although he rebels constructively against it, and that Heine, the diseased and brilliant Jewish writer, is his double: ‘Heine remains for Freud the sign of the double bind of being both the authoritative voice of the observer and the ever suspect voice of the patient, a voice which remains one of the signs and symptoms of the disease from which both Heine and Freud suffered, their Jewishness.’⁶⁰

The Jewish Other for Freud, here seen in the form of Heine, is thus the diseased Jewish Golem conjured up by the text of the anti-Semite. This thesis depends on Freud taking seriously (if only to react against it) the anti-Semite’s text of the Jew as unhealthy, mentally unstable and passively feminised. However, I don’t think that Gilman has proved this is the case.

There is no doubt, as I pointed out in the first chapter, that anti-Semitism was rife in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in which Freud lived. Gilman’s argument about the power of the physical stereotyping of the Jew, especially in the Nazi period, is convincing. It is true that a negative physical

stereotyping was used by the Nazis and other anti-Semites to make Jews appear to be alien, ridiculous and malign. Having granted all that, I believe however, that he takes his thesis too far, especially when he applies it to Freud. Professor Steven Schwarzschild, quoted by Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, says this about his childhood in Nazi Berlin: ‘Neither at that time nor at any other time has anti-Semitism ever played the slightest role in my life. Of course, the Nazis could tyrannise me ... but ... they could never reach me where I was or am.’⁶¹ Likewise I do not believe Gilman proves that it was otherwise for Freud.

FREUD - DEFIANCE AND IDENTITY

The impossibility and effrontery of ever fully defining that shifting, private and uncanny place described by Schwarzschild as ‘where I was or am’, undermines any attempt to pinpoint or vouchsafe our own identity, let alone another’s. Any discussion of this subject must be undertaken with trepidation. I am taking as my starting point, therefore, what Freud said he “identified” with and what seems to have been revealed in his work, because I believe that there is no other way of dealing with this subject. If identity is initially to be found in how you see and reveal yourself then, I believe, this approach is justified.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud tells us about his early role models, and they were all Jewish warriors and soldiers – above all, Hannibal the Semitic conqueror of Rome. Peter Gay speaks of ‘defiance and identity’ in *Freud - A life for our time* and quotes Freud relaying Breuer’s opinion to his (Freud’s) fiancée:

He had found out that there was hidden in me, beneath the cover of shyness, an immoderately bold and fearless person. I have always believed this ... I have often felt as though I had inherited all the obstinacy and all the passions of *our* ancestors, when they defended their temple, as though I could throw away my life with joy for a great moment. (my emphasis)⁶².

Here, as Gay points out, Jewish ancestry, proudly described as ‘ours’, is associated with heroism and defiance. This and other evidence points to the fact that Freud viewed his Jewishness in this way. He could easily have rejected his Judaism and converted, as many did at this time, but he never saw the point of it and gave advice to other Jews along those lines. Being Jewish, in his view, was a strength, not a weakness or a ‘disease’. That is not to say that Freud’s views on his Jewish identity were unambiguous, far from it, as I shall try to show later.

Freud struggled to put his identification with Judaism into words, and his work often reflected this struggle. In fact, when discussing his Jewish identity, Freud described it in much the same way as he did the uncanny. It was neither Jewish faith nor pure nationalism that made him feel Jewish: ‘but enough else remained to make the attraction of Judaism and of Jews so irresistible, many dark emotional powers, all the mightier the less they let themselves be grasped in words, as well as the clear consciousness of inner identity, the secrecy of the same mental construction.’⁶³ In other words, the secret and the hidden, half sensed and half acknowledged, mysteriously makes their presence felt. Obviously he must have been psychologically affected by anti-Semitism,

growing up in such a culture. But the question is whether this outweighed the more profound influences of parents, mentors and early family background, which psychoanalysts believe are key in the formation of personality. I believe, on the contrary, that it can be convincingly argued that Freud dealt with and dismissed it, much as Hannah Arendt did⁶⁴, as something that Enlightenment values would soon dispel, and nothing at all to do with his inner life. It has been argued that the rise of the Nazis, was by no means inevitable or even likely when viewed without the benefit of hindsight (this idea can be seen to link with Freud's theories on *nächtraglichkeit*). This is the point of view presented by Peter Eli Gordon in his book on Heidegger and Rosenzweig (the latter died in 1929).⁶⁵

FREUD AND "THE OVERCOMING" OF JEWISH TRADITION

Indeed in his *Interpretation of Dreams*, which reveals some of his most personal thoughts, Freud says he identifies with Joseph, the Biblical interpreter of dreams. This Joseph was not only a powerful man, second only to Pharaoh himself, but also very attractive to women as the story of Potiphar's wife records. Gilman does not prove that Freud was afflicted with a diseased double either, as I shall try to show below. Nor does he give any convincing evidence for his contention that Freud saw the circumcised penis as diseased and incomplete, and even if his point that some anti-Semites believed this is accepted, it still does not prove that Freud did. In fact Freud claimed quite different reasons for the circumcised penis to appear "uncanny" to the non-Jew. He believed that this was, among other reasons, because it was an unwelcome reminder of the guilt caused by the primeval murder of the father⁶⁶. This argument was consistent with other similar theories of Freud's, and has been mentioned in Chapter One and elsewhere.

When referring to 'The Uncanny', Gilman says this about Freud and his relationship to Heine: '... Heine's position... parallels that of Freud... And Freud sensed that doubling. He writes, calling upon Heine's "Gods in Exile" to describe the "uncanny" nature of the double, the sense of sameness in the concept of difference.'⁶⁷ However, it seems clear to me that in the text of 'The Uncanny' referred to here, Freud is not talking about sameness within difference when he refers to Heine, but about the sense of the uncanny caused by encountering something that was once believed, where belief has been overcome. In his reference to Heine's '*Die Götter im Exil*' Freud says:

But after having thus considered the manifest motivation of the figure of a 'double', we have to admit that none of this helps us to understand the extraordinarily strong feelings of something uncanny that pervades the conception; and our knowledge of pathological mental processes enables us to add that nothing in this more superficial material could account for the urge towards defence which has caused the ego to project that material outwards as something foreign to itself. *When all is said and done, the quality of uncanniness can only come from the fact of the 'double' being a creation dating back to a very early mental stage, long since surmounted – a stage, incidentally, at which it wore a more friendly aspect. The 'double' has become a thing of terror, just as, after the collapse of their religion, the gods turned into demons. (Heine, 'Die Götter im Exil'.)⁶⁸ (my emphasis).*

Here gods no longer believed in take on a demonic aspect. In *Civilization, Society and Religion*, Freud says that taboos operate: '... as a defence against a phase of development that has been surmounted ... This process is repeated on

another level when the gods of a superseded period of civilization turn into demons.’⁶⁹ This is in keeping with his argument that the reversion to, or reminder of, ideas overcome by adult or enlightened rationality causes a sense of the uncanny. The double is here the earlier self or stage that once believed in these ideas, in other words, the Golem (with the texts of rationality removed), that lives within us all, and whose return is viewed with dread. I believe it is possible that it was the irrationality of superstition, later taken up as an aspect of a more universal discussion of religion, that was here referred to by Freud. This point is important because this reaction of his was widely reflected within Judaism at that time, which was witnessing a growth of the Liberal Jewish faith. This split also, incidentally, reflects the general attitude to women within Judaism, and its social context of the time, as the Reformed Jewish religion considered women to be equal to men, and treated them accordingly. Unfortunately Gilman cannot include women at all in his analysis, which limits itself entirely to the body of the Jewish male. If he had considered them, he would have had to look at such figures as Klein and Arendt, who challenge his phallogocentric assumptions.

So, while Gilman does raise some very interesting and important points about the visual stereotype and its power, I believe that when he extends his argument he oversimplifies it. It is central to his thesis that ‘groups’ generate the model of the stereotype, but he never convincingly defines or explains them, nor why, if historical context is important as he says, these stereotypes can be timeless and international. I believe that Gilman also underestimates the ability of the individual, both Jewish and non-Jewish, to challenge, reason with and dismiss stereotypical thinking. Anti-Semitism, and its effect on the individual, is a complex phenomenon that cannot be understood without taking into account factors like disposition, environment, economics and politics, and it must be understood in the context of the individuals involved rather in generalised terms. I discuss this point further in Chapter Three in the context of Freud and Zionism.

In my analysis of Gilman’s thesis I have attempted to emphasise the tricky, double and uncanny nature of the stereotype. It is this elusiveness that the story of the Golem, with its many versions, reveals perhaps above all. The Golem is a blurring and a defiance of the stereotype, he is both Jew and Gentile, alien and familiar, and this symbol existed alongside the anti-Semitic stereotypes described by Gilman. Danusha Goska uses the Golem figure in her article, ‘Golem as gentile, Golem as sabra; an analysis of the manipulation of stereotypes of self and other in literary treatments of a legendary Jewish figure.’ Her aim is to show that the changing representations of the Golem over time reflect the dovetailing of stereotypes of Jews and Gentiles in Eastern Europe as well as the changing attitudes Jews came to take in response to attack.⁷⁰ I will look at this interpretation of the Golem in Chapter Three when I come to discuss in more detail the association of the Golem with Israel.

JULIA KRISTEVA AND THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY

Julia Kristeva’s approach to the question of identity, influenced not only by Freud but also Marx and Simmel, is much more nuanced and complex than

Gilman's. Her view of 'The Uncanny' - and what it reveals about Freud's identity as a Jew - is very different from his. However, although Kristeva's conclusions are different from Gilman's, they both see Freud as an outsider and a "stranger", and both consider him from the viewpoint of psychoanalytical theory. The concept of the "stranger", also a symptom of modern alienation, is seen as an aspect of the uncanny and unheimlich, which is inextricably and frighteningly lodged within what seems most familiar. Yet Kristeva takes this further by identifying herself, as both foreigner and woman, with the stranger. Beyond this, she argues that we all are foreign to our own Unconscious, and therefore harbour an unfamiliar stranger within our own intimate selves. It is this "foreignness" that she believes we all share with Freud and each other. In her book *Strangers to Ourselves* Kristeva says: 'Freud's personal life, a Jew wandering from Galicia to Vienna and London, with stopovers in Paris, Rome and New York (to mention only a few of the key stages of his encounters with political and cultural foreignness), conditions his concern to face the other's discontent as ill-ease in the continuous presence of the "other scene" within us.'⁷¹ (my emphasis)

Kristeva's proposition is that the disturbing emotions generated by the uncanny are caused by the recognition of this stranger within ourselves. She speaks of Nathanael's terror of the paternal figure and its substitutes, and she mentions Freud's references to the eyes which generate castration anxiety, at first repressed, but later resurfacing on the occasion of a state of love. In other words, like Freud, she sees the erotic instinct as unleashing the dark forces of the Unconscious, and its terror of castration, by neutralising the civilising powers of repression. Thus Kristeva locates the uncanny in the shudder caused by our recognition of the strange world of the Unconscious, which is familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. It is intimately located within, but at the same time alien and unknowable. It is the secret or the repressed, which threatens to come to light. The fear we feel when we sense this stranger within our own minds is caused by a disorientating sense of unreality generated by this sense of a familiar unknown. She argues that this unknowable yet intimate world within us is also a dangerous threat, as we sense that it can overwhelm us and plunge us into the abyss of madness and psychic disintegration. The Unconscious, according to Kristeva, which mirrors the Golem, is shadowy, threatening, composed of buried memories and unnamed drives. It is the terrifying world of instinct, as well as of the repressed and forgotten world of our earlier atavistic selves, that lurks just beneath our consciousness.

Repression is the psychic force by which we fearfully expel the threat of this ultimate destruction, but it is an imperfect instrument mainly because the destination for this expulsion is within our own psyches. Thus "that which is hidden" is always threatening to resurface as "the return of the repressed", and in the process, unleashing madness and violence on our helpless selves and others. Our only hope, Kristeva argues, is to recognise and accommodate these potentially destructive and psychotic forces, by the development of our self-knowledge, our understanding and acceptance of the other, and by the talking cure of psychoanalysis. The acceptance of the stranger within us, she argues, will lead to the benefit of the acceptance of the stranger without, because the fear we feel for this unknown has been transferred to the

unknown foreigner, and here Gilman and Kristeva converge. Kristeva differs, however, profoundly from Gilman in her belief that, in this world where identities jostle each other within mixed communities, such recognition and accommodation is possible and indeed vital, if we are to avoid destruction. For Kristeva ‘the group’ is truly protean, constantly mixing and reshaping, and to explain this point she uses the example of Ruth. In a chapter she calls ‘The Chosen People and the Choice of Foreignness’,⁷² she analyses Jewish texts to show how the Jews saw themselves and others. The Covenant with God made the Jews chosen and therefore different, but Kristeva finds examples of the acceptance of the foreigner in the very heart of Judaism. Ruth the Moabite is a foreigner, yet she is to be found in the very heart of Jewish scripture and identity. In a letter to Catherine Clemence in her book, *The Feminine and Sacred*, Kristeva returns to this theme which clearly absorbs her: ‘Ruth the Moabite, a stranger and nevertheless ancestor of Jewish sovereignty since she is the ancestor of David.’⁷³

Kristeva deals head on with identity in *Strangers to Ourselves*, but in *The Feminine and the Sacred*⁷⁴ in which a blurring takes place of her “psychoanalytical” and “fictional” approaches, identity is explored in a more personal and multi-layered way. This blurring of her own identities as “scientist”, “writer”, and “autobiographer”, could be seen to be uncanny in itself, and many, as Anne-Marie Smith notes in her biography *Julia Kristeva - Speaking the Unspeakable*,⁷⁵ find it disturbing. Unlike Gilman, Kristeva seems to acknowledge that any approach to the subject of identity must inevitably be subjective, as the commentator cannot extract him/herself from his/her own context into a metaphysical objectivity. Although brought up as a Christian, Kristeva identifies within herself Jewish elements. As Freud did, she writes with pride of Jewish ancestry. In *The Feminine and Sacred*, via her correspondence with the French Jewish Catherine Clement, Kristeva says: ‘... I have the advantage of a maternal grandmother who called herself Jacob; legend has it that her community was among the followers of Shabbetai (sic) Tzevi, a mystic who proclaimed himself Messiah in the Balkans.’⁷⁶

THE SABBATIAN MOVEMENT

The followers of Sabbatai Zevi were, as Kristeva points out later in this letter, a mystical sect. The Sabbatian movement led by Sabbatai Zevi and Nathan of Gaza in 1665 and 1666 was an explosive messianic movement which ended with Zevi’s forced conversion to Islam. It spread swiftly through the Diaspora and brought with it for many an intensely spiritual experience, which ended in disappointment and disillusion. Gershom Scholem sees this movement as vital to the development of later Jewish thinking: ‘Sabbatianism represents the first serious revolt in Judaism since the Middle Ages; it was the first case of mystical ideas leading directly to the disintegration of the orthodox Judaism of “the believers.”... (it) played a highly important part in creating a moral and intellectual atmosphere favorable to the reform movement of the nineteenth century.’⁷⁷

It is possible to argue that Scholem overstates the power of this movement, and understates the attractions of the Enlightenment. He also does not mention that this violent turning away from mysticism caused an even stronger adherence to the Mosaic law by some Jews. Also, it must be said,

that most mystics were faithfully observant Jews. Nevertheless he is correct to stress the importance of the movement, which he rightly notes was thoroughly rejected and repressed by the mainstream of Judaism, and largely ignored by other historians: ‘I could go on telling about my own difficulties in trying to penetrate into this vanished world ... most, if not all, the theological and historical documents which could throw some light upon it have undoubtedly been destroyed.’⁷⁸

Sabbatianism is still for many a perfect illustration of the dangers of “irrational” mysticism, and rigorously repressed. It is a demonstration of the complexity of the factors affecting Judaism from within, which must be taken into account. Alongside this messianic fervour, and the subsequent revulsion from mysticism, was the deep-seated fear of the dangers of dabbling in esoteric matters. The uncanny secret was brought into the open at the initiate’s great peril. Madness could be intimately connected with the Kabbalistic practices, and the altered states of consciousness involved in meditation, sometimes combined with the use of stimulants like alcohol, could, and did, lead the initiate into excess and loss of control. Also, as Arthur Green points out, Kabbalistic material like the Zohar⁷⁹ has a strong sexual content. The Kabbalistic Golem-maker was often said to be warned by God to have a companion in his studies to avoid madness. Likewise, Freud continually warned that plunging into the Unconscious without the guidance of a trained psychoanalyst was extremely dangerous.

Kristeva echoes this warning while at the same time she urges us for our own sakes, to get to know the uncanny stranger within. Like the Jewish mystics, she believes that we need a companion in this journey of enlightenment, but unlike them she casts a psychoanalyst in this role. Both religion and analysis can be seen to attempt to control and “civilise” “instinctive” behaviour (especially sexual), which both regard as destructive, so the “rationality” of religious law and accepted communal practices, or the speaking cure of psychotherapy can be presented as necessary to keep the destructive drives at bay. Here, I believe, we can see the close relationship of the non-religious and scientific psychology of Freud and Kristeva to religion and mysticism.

INTERPELLATION AND PRACTICE

It is interesting that the Jewish Friday evening service, which plays a part so vital to the plot of the Golem legends, includes this Biblical reading from Isaiah 59:21 (I have used a version of this, sung in German, from Reform Jewish liturgical music in my practical work)⁸⁰: ‘This is My covenant with *them*, saith the Lord. My spirit that is upon *you*, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, nor out of the mouths of your children, nor out of the mouth of your children’s children, said the Lord, henceforth and for ever.’ (my italics). This is interesting from the point of view of identity. The ‘them’ changes within the passage to ‘you’. It is thus an acknowledgement that identity is both outside and inside the individual.

Louis Althusser believed that identity could be created by this naming in a process he called ‘interpellation’. Kaja Silverman elucidates this when discussing Althusser in *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*:

...Althusser attempts to describe the process through which a subject is ideologically sutured, which he imagines “along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: ‘hey, you there!’” Successful interpellation means taking as the reality of the self what is in fact a discursive construction, or to state the case differently, claiming as ontology what is only a point of address.⁸¹

It is important to point out, however, that both the prayer and the hail are physical experiences. The prayer is a ritualised part of a religious service and, as Silverman points out, in Althusser’s example, the subject is created by a movement of the body in the setting of a street. Peter Eli Gordon points out that both Rosenzweig and Heidegger, whom he discusses in the context of the uncanny and the relationship of Jew to German, stressed the practical in their theories. He argues that Heidegger’s concept of ‘being’ is ‘*embedded in practice*’⁸², and says that: ‘Rosenzweig presents a rich interpretation of religious practice as an inherited but ever-renewed context of life. To participate in religious ritual is for Rosenzweig to live ... embedded in practical meaning. Rosenzweig therefore calls ritual “earthly repetition” ... *which makes “Jewish-being” .. he took care to emphasize that Jewish life is ... the totality of practices and lived relations.*’⁸³ In other words, according to Rosenzweig, ritualised repetition which fuses past with future renewal, creates the Jew in just the same way as ritual creates the Golem. I believe that here there are clear links with Butler’s ideas on performativity, discussed earlier in this chapter. Similarly, Gordon argues, Heidegger believes it is by means of practical engagement with embodied life that existence comes to be. In these two, German (and, as Heidegger argues, Greek) and Jewish thought fuse. For Heidegger, the emotion of anxiety, experienced in the body is the catalyst that propels the individual into “authenticity”. It is this emotion of anxiety - which Heidegger sees as a sensation of the unhomely - which propels the Golem into existence.

Derrida discusses Heidegger’s relationship to ritual, the vow and the promise, and speaks of the affirmation which must precede it. (He also discusses this with reference to Levinas and Heidegger, and I look at his ideas in Chapter Four). Derrida says of Heidegger’s ‘call of being’ that ‘... every question already responds to it. The promise has already taken place wherever language comes. Language always *before any question.*’⁸⁴ Derrida points out that for Heidegger: ‘The hymn exceeds the ontological, theoretical or constative utterance. It calls to praise, it sings beyond praise, beyond what is ...’⁸⁵. Derrida continues his interrogation of Heidegger by saying: ‘Before any question, then. It is precisely here that the “question of the question” which has been dogging us since the beginning of this journey, vacillates. It vacillates at this moment when it is no longer a question. Not that it withdraws from the infinite legitimacy of questioning, but it tips over into the memory of a language, of an experience of language “older” than it, always anterior and presupposed, old enough never to have been present in an “experience” or a “speech act”’.⁸⁶ Here Derrida indicates that Heidegger postulates a ‘before’ that exceeds the experience of a self. Yet, Derrida argues, this ‘before’ still takes place within language, albeit an ‘older’, ‘anterior’ and ‘presupposed’ one. Also this ‘anterior’ language is, at the same time, accessible to ‘memory’ and therefore to an already present self – it has to be, in order to be heard and understood. Derrida shows, therefore that, in spite of his aversion to metaphysics, Heidegger is subscribing to a metaphysical view of language, as he indicates a language that is - at the same time - a way out of language. This metaphysical language is therefore

paradoxical, like the one that motivates the Golem. Derrida, however, shares Heidegger's belief in the vital role that language has in 'being'. Derrida has argued that there is no "outside" to language, as everything, including that "outside", must be comprehended by language. However, it is possible to argue that this view does not take the body, its sensations and unconscious functioning sufficiently into account.

Derrida's focus on a hymn as a form of speech leaves out its role as an *act* of worship. It is interesting that the Prague version of the Golem tale is relevant here. The Golem has gone on the rampage because the "Name" was not taken out of it at the beginning of Sabbath as prescribed. By asking the congregation to repeat the Sabbath prayers that open the service, Rabbi Low turns the clock back to a time before the Sabbath began, and this action enables him to immobilize the Golem by removing the powerful Word. It was not only the language of the Sabbath hymn, through a call to praise (as Derrida puts it), that achieved this, but the *action* in time of singing it. That is why it could be *done* twice. As Rosenzweig has pointed out, ritual as 'earthly repetition', makes 'Jewish-being'. This is because the repetition of ritual is a physical action that can become habitual, and therefore automatic. In this way it becomes unconscious, an integral part of the individual and beyond language. There is more to ritual than an inherited form of words, and this why Sacks (see Chapter One) and Rosenzweig can postulate Judaism as a continuous creative process – or, to echo Butler, a kind of 'performativity' - that *actively* binds together the past and future within the now.

CONCLUSION

In terms of Freudian theory the conflict within the individual between the conscious and unconscious worlds can be seen to be symbolised by the legend of the Golem. The Golem was, like the Unconscious, known and unknown. It was knowable by its maker as it was the work of his own hands, and safely controlled by powers related to the eternal and all powerful God, but when it developed "a mind of its own", that mind was, as a product of meditation, no longer under conscious control. As such it was not divine, human nor even animal. It was in fact utterly alien, and thus an aspect of the uncanny.

In their historical overview of the Golem legend, Emily D. Bilski and Moshe Idel write: 'Even in the late nineteenth century, scholars of Jewish law continued to ponder the status of the golem, particularly whether or not a golem defiles when he is dead.'⁸⁷ (I have noted the connection between the Golem and death in Chapter One). This question about status of the Golem after the name of God is removed is highly pertinent to the question of identity. Rosenzweig, who was religious, believed that the Jew is created here and now by his ritualised existence in exile, which spanned past and future, and so he opposed Zionism. Like him, non-religious Jews like Arendt and Freud, who rejected the God of Jewish scriptures, identified with a form of "Jewishness" that was compatible with German culture. Gilman seems to say that Jews like these are defined by the anti-Semite's stereotype, and their reaction to it. They are thus a blank like the Golem but, instead of being animated by God's word, they are motivated by the discourse of his enemy. Kristeva, like

Rosenzweig embraces the idea of exile, and sees the Jew and Freud rather as a stranger among other strangers. As I have mentioned above, Kristeva believes that we are all strangers to ourselves and the other. She argues that our identities, which are elusive and uncanny, are hidden from us although they are always on the point of coming to light. Psychoanalytic theorists such as Freud and Kristeva urge that, as Golems, it is incumbent upon us to understand our history, desires and the promptings of our super-ego, and that the psychoanalyst is vital to this journey. They stress that this understanding is imperative if we are to find out what we really are. Yet there is a contradiction here because the Freudian Unconscious is ultimately unknowable, and I shall be considering this point later.

I believe that my analysis of Gilman's and Kristeva's work on Freud and the uncanny, together with the Golem legend, can throw light on how Jewish identity is viewed today in a global and international context, and I look at this in my next chapter. The private, personal and hidden can, and does, emerge uncannily into the open in the form of burning anger, violence and estrangement. Gilman's pessimism and Kristeva's hope stand in stark contrast to each other. Thus the Golem legend has many variations, but they all end in uncertainty.

CHAPTER 3 - THE GOLEM AS MYTHOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The Golem has long been used by scholars of Judaic history to demonstrate the interconnectedness of myth and history, Gentile and Jew. This myth has a curious ability to mirror the concerns and beliefs of the times in which it appears. Subjects like pogroms, anti-Semitism and Zionism appear in these Golem stories, reflecting the attitudes of their writers, as well as the opinions of those who interpret and comment upon them. Here I want to take the opportunity to explore how the Golem tales appear to be timeless while being nothing of the kind. As Roland Barthes has pointed out, a deceptive sense of being beyond history is a basic characteristic of myth. This timelessness is reassuring and seductive. It points to a secure and reliable foundation, but in reality no such security exists. In fact, it can be argued that myth not only changes with history, but can actively influence it. Kaja Silverman in her discussion of Lacan's 'screen' shows how myth can have this dual role of reflecting and shaping. I believe this is clearly apparent in the use of the Golem story in Zionist mythology.

Although the Golem stories commonly mirrored the insecurities of Jews facing anti-Semitism, Danusha Goska, by discussing Jewish prejudices against Gentiles, uses the myth to illustrate an aspect of the relationship that is seldom noticed. The Golem, whose nature is impossible to define, is a very useful theme to express the uncanny fact that identity, apparently so stable, is impossible to fix. Jewish identity, hesitating between religion and nationality is clearly marked by this uncertainty.

THE GOLEM MYTH AND JEWISH HISTORY

In his essay 'Pursuing the Golem of Prague', Hillel J. Kieval explores the genesis of the Golem legend and traces how it ended up becoming material for a forgery by a Polish rabbi named Yudel Rosenberg (who emigrated to Montreal in 1913), thus taking a turn very different to the old stories, which were concerned with spiritual purity, creation and the relationship of man with God. Kieval regrets that, in the versions of the tale after Rosenberg, the Golem has simply become the defender of Jews against blood-libel and anti-Semitism, and feels that this represents a loss. He seems to see Rosenberg's book as an interruption to memory and continuity, a didactic violation from the outside:

But the purpose of the new story (by Rosenberg) was not to instil hope and confidence in its readers. It was a cautionary tale of a type quite different from the original legend. At least as far back as the 17th century Polish rendition, the source of danger had always been understood to reside ... within the confines of community ... Throughout the 20th century, the tale has been remembered as a *distortion*, as if it had always been concerned with the danger posed by the outside world. Much has been lost, I think, in the translation; much can also be inferred with regard to the changing nature of the Jewish-Gentile relationship in East Central Europe.⁸⁸ (my emphasis)

He does not seem to see the intervention of scholarly writers like Jacob Grimm and Leopold Wiesel who also recorded and extended the Golem

legend, in this light. Kieval points out that the first literary records of the Golem of Prague come by way of 19th century ethnological studies and folklore by Jews and Gentiles, which were newly created fields of inquiry in the 1830s. He proves that the Maharal⁸⁹ version is of relatively late genesis.

... inspired by a mixture of Enlightenment criticism, Herderian anthropology and budding Romantic nationalism. ... Secular individuals in the throes of social and cultural change seek to save something of the traditional society that is fast slipping away forever ... The recovery of myth and legend in the 19th century provides evidence of a remarkable fact: that oral traditions can ... follow literary traditions – even invented ones. The stories of the Czech masters were avidly read - their renderings of the Jewish past “remembered” – and over the ensuing decades both assimilating Jews and educated Gentiles literally recounted the same legends. Thus when Czech sculptor Ladislav Saloun was commissioned to erect statues outside the newly constructed Town Hall in Prague Stare Mesto, or Altstadt, in 1912, he produced two figures, both drawn from the folklore of the city. One was a knight ... of Czech lore. And the other was the Maharal, Rabbi Judah Low ... in allusion to a well-known Czech – and Jewish – tale ...⁹⁰

One could also add to this that the combining of Jewish-Gentile elements was continued in Meyrink’s book about the Golem and Wegener’s films, which employ the subject of the Golem. Rosenberg was probably responding to contemporary events like the pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe, and continuing anti-Semitism, as exemplified by the Dreyfus⁹¹ and blood libel cases. But an additional reason for this new emphasis on persecution may also have been the association of the Golem with Zionism, an aspect not mentioned by Kieval. Kieval does, however, point out the strange fact that, despite the clear distortion of the myth by interpreters, the Golem legend is regarded as fundamentally unchanged: ‘as if it has always been’ like that.

Eli Yassif in his essay ‘From Ancient to Modern Jewish Mythologies’, makes clear his very different conclusion to Kieval:

The contribution of twentieth-century Jewish folklore to the long history of the Golem myth was the presentation of a fighting Golem whose *raison d’être* was the protection of the Jewish community and the defeat of its enemies. This aspect of the myth is the main characteristic of the best known Golem, the one created by R. Low the Maharal of Prague. ... (I)t was introduced by Judl Rosenberg in the first decade of the twentieth-century as a reaction to the wave of pogroms in Russia and Poland and to the new Jewish idea of active defence, which was one of the characteristics of the new Zionism. This new activism was one of the outstanding mental and physical elements that propelled the “creation” of the new movement, which in turn “created” the new Israel ... The ancient dispute over the legitimacy of the creation of a Golem became, in modern Jewish culture, the symbol of the dispute over the legitimacy of the creation of a man-made state.⁹²

Unlike Kieval, Yassif sees the Rosenberg variation as part of the natural development of the myth, in line with its eternal and ‘deep’ and ‘real’ meaning while Kieval sees it as deliberately grafted on and self-serving. I think this is a revealing insight into how the Golem legend can act as a mirror uncannily reflecting two conflicting emphases, while at the same time appearing to be part of an unchanging tradition.

Roland Barthes in *Myth Today*⁹³ examines this ability of myth to change history into nature. He points out myth's dual nature, its literal meaning and what he calls its 'concept'. Barthes says: '(The concept) appears in global fashion, it is a kind of nebula, the condensation, more or less hazy, of a certain knowledge. Its elements are linked by associative relations; it is supported not by an extension but by a depth ...: its mode of presence is memorial.'⁹⁴ Barthes sees the relationship of myth's meaning and concept as a kind of deformation, and argues that the meaning, distorted by the concept, has been drained of individuality and history. This alienated meaning, which has been silenced but not destroyed, is then 'put into service' by the concept. Barthes describes myth as an ideal servant who, after preparing all things for the master, lays them down and disappears, leaving behind it the impression that 'the beautiful object' comes from eternity. According to this argument, the Golem tales, actually contain political and historical messages, which are hidden from view under the cover of "tradition". The viewpoint therefore seems to arise naturally and ahistorically, and this masks the intention and presence of the creator of the story: 'myth is read as a factual system, whereas it is but a semiological system.'⁹⁵ In essence the Maharal version is a double falsehood because it seems to be based on a factual account, but is itself a distortion of the historical biography of Rabbi Low.

Yassif seems to accept that the Golem myth changes through history, but cannot bring himself to conclude that it actually alters with these changes: '... the folkloric aspect of the myth of the Golem serves not only as a proof that it has been accepted by society as a part of its collective memory, but that it reflects in every period it appeared, the inner tensions, the most hidden fears, and the unarticulated hopes of the generations.'⁹⁶ There is a contradiction here. Yassif concludes that the Golem myth reflects difference as it appears in historical periods, yet at the same time it does not change. Barthes might have concluded from this that the mythologist here is a victim of myth, or ambiguous signification. Kieval argues that: 'the deep meaning of the ancient myth is merged with the most crucial question of modern Jewish history. The man-as-creator dilemma which is the core of the ancient myth, ... gives the modern phenomena (the dispute over the creation of Israel) their real meaning.'⁹⁷ The 'deep', 'ancient' and 'real' meanings that Kieval interprets here may be subjective, but he seems to believe it is, at the same time, an eternal truth. This contradiction is clear in Yassif's discussion of how the Golem relates to defensive Zionism. It seems to demonstrate how the Golem myth can be used to reflect defensive Zionism's views by drawing on Jewish history to support its take on the creation and legitimacy of Israel. Jay Y. Gonen in his *Psychohistory of Zionism* takes this point further by linking the Golem story with that of the Holocaust. Gonen says this about a version of the Golem Tale by Abraham Rothberg called *The Sword of the Golem*:

In Rothberg's fantasy, the similarity between the need for the Golem and the need for Zionism is manifest ... Rothberg put these words in Rabbi Low's mouth "... you offered us only three bleak choices: annihilation, expulsion or conversion." The implication is clear. Holocaustal threats have been with the Jews for a long time.⁹⁸

Gonen argues from this that Zionism has proved more effective than the rabbis, like Rabbi Low, (in their traditional role as teachers of religion, custodians of the law, and community leaders), in defending the Jews.

THE MAHARAL VERSION OF THE GOLEM TALE

It is possible to see the Golem story as an opportunity to observe a myth in the process of shifting from one meaning to another, even while it pretends to be unchanged and unchanging. The Majaral Golem myth has additional elements because it uses the historical figure of the Maharal as a fictional character. This use of Judah Low, or Loew, as the hero of this tale is a revealing choice. Kieval tells us:

Judah Low's activity in Prague fell during the reigns of the Habsburg emperors Maximilian II (1564-1576) and Rudolph II (1576-1612) a period which often is referred to as the "Golden Age" of Czech Jewry. During this time imperial policy demonstrated remarkable tolerance towards Jews and Protestants, Jewish cultural life flourished and the Jewish population – particularly in Prague – grew significantly. The Maharal presided over one of Europe's great Talmudic academies; pioneered important reforms in Jewish education and produced a large literary oeuvre that bestowed pride of place to Judaism's homiletical tradition (*aggadah* or narrative).⁹⁹

It is true that Low was also associated with mysticism as he translated Kabbalistic ideas into more popular terminology. He was thus known both for his work on legal codes, and for his translations of mystical material. Alan Unterman states that Low evolved: '... a unique system of thought which exerted considerable influence on Jewish thinkers. In the minds of ordinary Jews, however, he was regarded as a Kabbalistic magician and alchemist.'¹⁰⁰ The fact that Low translated these "secret" ideas, (usually the preserve of the initiated), so that they could be generally read and understood, shows a certain demystifying tendency, and there is no evidence that he actually tried to make a Golem.

Low, as Kieval points out, lived at a time when Jews were not overtly oppressed. Of course, as Danusha Goska¹⁰¹ writes this 'remarkable tolerance' was only relative. There was still oppressive legislation in force; for example the Jews had to wear yellow patches thus singling them out and making them vulnerable and conspicuous. However, some of restrictive economic legislation, such as the forbidding of the Jews to make fur-trimmed coats and dresses was repealed, and it is undeniable that this was a very successful and productive period for Jewish society, culture and thought. Low was widely respected in both communities, and in fact had an audience with Rudolf II. There is no evidence of blood libel, nor was there any official persecution. It was, therefore, a period of relatively positive rapprochement between the Gentile and Jew. Goska states: '(Low was) exemplary for his modernity, learning and rationality'¹⁰², and this was reflected in the thinking of his times. It seems highly unlikely that such a man would have been attracted to mysticism, and there is no evidence at all that he ever made a Golem. The evidence in fact points in quite another direction. Indeed, in an uncanny way, Rothberg changes the story into its opposite. Instead of a successful and amicable audience with the Emperor, Low accuses and confronts a monk; the rationalist who openly rejected magical practices, creates a Golem through magic. Thus the message seems to be that any rapprochement of Jew and Gentile is impossible because it is only a temporary exception to the 'true' status quo, which is persecution and victimisation. I would argue this is

reminiscent of Gilman's view of the negative stereotype of the Jewish male and attendant anti-Semitism, which he also describes as constant and unrelenting since ancient times and always on the point of return.

THE GOLEM AND ANTI-SEMITISM

Peter Gay in *Freud, Jews and Other Germans* carefully analyses anti-Semitism in Germany, and points out that it only seems to be monolithic and one-dimensional. He argues that it is generally misleading to lump anti-Semitism into a single category: 'Here I want to note only that anti-Semitism is a cluster of behaviours with a single name. It ranges from social snobbery to a program for systematic extermination.'¹⁰³ Gay interestingly sees its main cause as anxiety, caused by the recognition of difference in sameness:

In recent years, psychoanalysts and ethnologists have adduced impressive evidence in behalf of the old observation, common among political theorists and diplomats, that one's closest neighbour is one's most dangerous enemy. Anxiety, and with anxiety hostility, arise most infallibly when the familiar appears in an unfamiliar shape: a beloved maternal figure in a new dress, a life-size or life-like doll, are far more menacing than a stranger or a little stick figure.¹⁰⁴

This closely echoes Freud's descriptions in 'The Uncanny' of the *heimliche* becoming *unheimlich*. Gay's example of the life-size or life-like doll is reminiscent of Olympia, the Golem/doll character in *The Sandman*. For writers like Gilman and Gonen however, anti-Semitism is monolithic, one-dimensional and forever present. It can take on an active or latent form, but can never completely disappear or be repressed. Instead it returns unchanged and unchangeable from one generation to the other. Jacqueline Rose, in her response to a lecture by Edward Said on Freud and the non-European, quoted Herzberg's explanation of Zionism as divided into two aspects, the 'messianic' and the 'defensive'. The first aspect proposes that Jews continue Enlightenment aims of progress and liberalism (which seems to have been Freud's view) and the second, the opposite: 'that Zionism was the only viable option for the Jews in the face of eternal anti-Semitism, a stain on the face of history which, giving the lie to any such dream of progress, endlessly repeats itself.'¹⁰⁵ Zionism saw the only cure for endless suffering to be that Jews become a nation among other nations. There were alternative views to this, as I point out later.

It is this belief in endless and relentless repetition in which for many, the uncanny nature of anti-Semitism lies, and this might explain the great power of defensive Zionism. The individual and group can never completely believe, despite what the present reality might be saying, that the cruelty of persecution and anti-Semitism can ever stop, because those fears are deeply rooted in the Unconscious. The Holocaust set the seal on this by being the traumatic and historical confirmation of these deep-rooted fears that no Jew can ever really be safe, the anti-Semite can and will, go to the ultimate, irrational and unthinkable point and wipe out the entire Jewish people. The Golem tale seems to demonstrate this in the versions that link pogrom and blood-libel with the Holocaust.

Rose believes that trauma lies at the heart of the fantasy of the state in general, and Israel in particular.¹⁰⁶ Freud in his meditation on the origin of the Jewish people, *Moses and Monotheism*, discusses the nature of trauma. He explains that the effects of trauma were of two kinds, positive and negative. Positive effects are: ‘attempts to bring the trauma into operation once again – that is, to remember the forgotten experience or, better still, to make it real, to experience a repetition of it anew’ Whereas: ‘The negative reactions follow the opposite aim: that nothing of the forgotten traumas shall be remembered and nothing repeated. We can summarise them as defensive reaction.’ He concludes:

The symptoms of neurosis in the narrower sense are compromises in which both the trends proceeding from traumas come together, so that they share now of one and now of the other tendency ... This opposition between the reactions sets up conflicts which in the ordinary course of events reach no conclusion ... All these phenomena ... have a compulsive quality: that is to say that they have great psychological intensity and at the same time exhibit a far-reaching independence of the organization of the other mental processes which are adjusted to the demands of the real external world and obey the laws of logical thinking. They (the pathological phenomena) are insufficiently or not at all influenced by external reality, pay no attention to it or to its psychological representatives, so that they may easily come into active opposition to both of them. They are, one might say, a State within a State.¹⁰⁷

The unresolved war that Freud describes between the traumatised urge to remember and the defensive attempt to forget, seems to be reflected in the use that the Golem myth is put to by writers and historians. The Golem, as a traditional Jewish tale, is believed to be a sign of the continuity of Jewish culture and experience but reality, which shows the vicissitudes of history, mirrored by the twists and turns of the different versions of the Golem myth, is denied. If the Golem is eternal, so must anti-Semitism be. If the future is knowable, even as an unending persecution, it can be understood, controlled and combated - hence the emergence of the idea of the fighting Golem state of Israel. When writing about what he calls: ‘The Great Israeli victory in the Six Day War’, Goren says that this battle ‘averted another holocaust’. He develops this statement more explicitly in the same paragraph by saying that Israelis had wished that: ‘(The) six million murdered Jews ... could see how well the Jews had fought and kept their vow of “Never again!”’.¹⁰⁸

In her paper Goska argues that: ‘The Golem is a blank screen on which to work out the contested and projected urge for a new response to assault, namely, “action without ideology.”’¹⁰⁹ Goska argues, taking Gonen’s metaphors further, that writers have used the Golem to actively work out the conflicts between what is seen as traditionally non-violent and spiritual Jewish thinking, and the new and unreflectingly violent responses of the state of Israel. Goska concludes the article with this remark: ‘The golem has no memory of suffering and the rich culture that grew out of persecution. He has no past of spirituality and righteousness to refer to. He gets hurt; he hurts back.’¹¹⁰ The Israeli Golem is thus the sign of something quite new, a reflection of a new mentality, and in this way Goska echoes Kieval. In Goska’s reading there is one version only of the Golem legend, a reaction to anti-Semitism. Other versions are edited out, so that it now appears as if the legend only ever had one “meaning”. Thus, interpretation masquerading as traditional truth is made acceptable and unquestionable. It appears as if the interpretation is not a partial one, but instead arose from the ancient legend itself. This is the essence of myth.

Even as they appear, new versions of the Golem tale pretend to reflect a single mythical and ancient version, and therefore succeed, as Kieval puts it, in appearing to 'have always taken that form'. In fact, the earlier versions, which were simply concerned with issues of religion and spirituality within the Jewish community, have been erased as if they never existed and forgotten. This is interesting, because it shows how ideas of an uncanny and eternal anti-Semitism perpetuate themselves, and remain unquestioningly accepted as 'always having been like that'. Anti-Semitism, by association, is itself not only seen as being constant, uninterrupted and inevitable, but in fact often "the whole story" of the Jewish people, Ashkenazi and Shephardi. Goska herself reinforces and echoes this by describing Jewish culture as growing out of persecution and suffering. This makes Jewish culture into simply the reactive product of this persecution, and confirms it as a response to the anti-Semitic other, rather than something positive in its own right.

THE GOLEM AND THE SCREEN

It is instructive that Goska refers at the outset to 'the blank screen', a concept connected to Lacan's theorising about the mirror stage¹¹¹ and the gaze. Kaja Silverman has this to say about Lacan's screen: 'by screen he (Lacan) in fact means the image or group of images through which identity is constituted.'¹¹² Silverman explains in detail how the screen, the subject and the gaze¹¹³ is described by Lacan.

... Lacan characterizes the screen in terms which are directly reminiscent of the mirror stage, as an "imaginary" mapping. At the same time, though, *Four Fundamental Concepts* makes clear that more is at issue here than the dyadic relation of the subject to its literal reflection ... The subject assumes the form of a representation, or – to state the case somewhat differently – becomes a picture, a process which involves three rather than two terms: subject, screen, and gaze.¹¹⁴

The Golem can be seen as such a representation. In the version of the legend that Goska uses as her example the Golem is visualised as powerful and mindless. It is not subject to human weakness, pity or any intelligent thought. In this way it can be seen as a single-minded and ruthless military might without the complication of empathy, intelligence or equivocation. However, what Silverman's reading of Lacan's screen stresses is that the screen affects the subject, and not merely in a passive way. She quotes Lacan thus: 'the human subject, the subject of desire that is the essence of man, (unlike animals who merely imitate)- is not entirely caught up in this imaginary capture. He maps himself in it. How? In so far as he isolates the function of the screen and plays with it. Man, in effect, knows how to play with the mask as that beyond which is the gaze. The screen is here the locus of mediation.'¹¹⁵ The Golem may be the blank and opaque screen, as Lacan describes but, as he also makes plain, its use is not merely unconscious. Although Goska may be right to argue that the Golem myth can be used as a way of working out reactions to the Holocaust and pogroms, she also shows signs of succumbing to myth herself when she says that Jewish culture is merely a product of persecution, thus reinforcing the stereotypic description of Jews as historically spiritual but passive.

Like Silverman and Goska, Oren Ben-Dor in an article (which deals with the subject of Israel and its wars), entitled 'Who are the real terrorists in the

Middle East?’ uses the image of the screen. Unlike Goska, however, Ben-Dor, who was born in Israel, refuses to use trauma and resistance as an explanation of the Golem Israel’s ferocious aggression. He argues that: ‘Whenever prospects of violence against it subside, Israel must do its utmost to regenerate them: the myth that it is a peace-seeking victim which has “no partner for peace” is a key panel in the screen with which Israel hides its primordial and continuing immorality.’¹¹⁶ Ben-Dor, like Goska sees Israel as belligerent and mindless, but unlike her, he does not see its aggression as a response to attack, assault and persecution. Instead Israel’s ‘screen’ is a barrier which hides its inexcusable violence and aggression from both its own citizens and the rest of the world. Ben-Dor insists:

Israel’s statehood is based on an unjust ideology which causes indignity and suffering for those who are classified as non-Jewish by either a religious or ethnic test. To hide this primordial immorality, Israel fosters an image of victimhood. Provoking violence, consciously or unconsciously, against which one must defend oneself, is a key feature of the victim mentality.¹¹⁷

According Ben-Dor’s reading, Israel may have come about amidst the traumas of Holocaust and spiritual longings, but in reality it is a state, born in terror and founded on an unjust ideology which caused, and continues to cause, suffering and indignity. Moreover, it is a state which continues to delude itself, and to justify its aggressive unilateralism by hiding behind a dangerous myth of victimhood. He argues: ‘Amidst the violence, and despite the conventional discourse which hides the root of this violence, actuality calls upon us to think. The more we silence its voice, the more violently actuality is sure to speak.’¹¹⁸ In other words, repression will not work.

Rose’s discussion of the relevance of trauma and its symptoms to Israel is also very apt in this regard, and it is certain that anti-Semitism and persecution played a major role in the history of the Jewish people, culminating in the horrific trauma of the Holocaust. The history of the Jewish people as Judah Low’s example proves, is however, more than just a catalogue of oppression, and I believe a reason for this typecasting of the Jew as eternal victim can arguably be seen to lie in the logic of defensive Zionism’s mythology. This often made Jews seem weak and feminised, so as to explain the need for their rescue by a rampant Jewish state. Ben-Dor argues that this myth is not just misleading, but is in fact lethal. He concludes grimly: ‘In Hebrew the word *elem* (a stunned silence resulting from oppression or shock) is etymologically linked to the word *almut* (violence). Silence about the immoral core of Israeli statehood makes us all complicit in breeding the terrorism that threatens a catastrophe which could tear the world apart.’¹¹⁹ Ben-Dor argues that the violence that Israel provokes in response to its violence perpetuates the myth of victimhood, and so a vicious cycle is enacted. The symbiosis of the myth of victimhood and Israel is pervasive, and I believe it extends beyond Israel to the myth of eternal anti-Semitism.

THE MYTHS OF DEFENSIVE ZIONISM

It is in this light that Jay Gonen graphically describes Jewish history from the viewpoint of the defensive Zionist master narrative:

Jewish history was perceived as beleaguered by inferiorities, defects, and fatal flaws. The flaws were there for anyone to see – anyone, that is who was willing to look rather than just pray to the Lord and wait another two thousand years of exile until such time as the Lord sees fit to redeem Israel ... The Jewish people were scattered, stateless, persecuted, passive, demoralized, assimilated, segregated, and sunk in an abnormal economic existence. They lacked a common language and were plagued by dark psychologies: by masochism, by love of suffering and by rationalizing some kind of a divine mission to explain their vulnerable existence and miserable way of life. Zionism was going to change all that. To the scattered it offered an ingathering; to the stateless, a state; to the helpless, mastery; to the passive, activity. Put more blatantly, to the inferior Jews it promised a new generation of freedom which eventually culminated in the sabra “superman”.¹²⁰

It is possible to suggest that the idea of the eternal inferiority, helplessness and suffering of the Jews was necessary so that the sabra ‘superman’, equated by Gonen in his book with the Golem, could rescue them. Gonen’s book is a fascinating and revealing blend of Freudian thought, history and personal anecdote. It is interesting that in his book he seems consistently to envision the Israeli as male (Goska also does this in the quotation above). The sabra, like the Golem, is definitely “superman”, not “superwoman”. Gonen argues that there are Jewish ‘psychological blocks’ and states:

Later in front of the gas chambers, the Jews would be stricken with paralysis because ... over hundreds of years they had “unlearned” the art of revolt ... (an this is the reason for) ... the vehement reaction on the part of sabras when they ask the agonizing question: “why didn’t the Jews fight?” After all Israelis are well aware of the instances of armed resistance to the Nazis and they do not think that the Jews were simply cowards, Sick perhaps, but not cowards. Otherwise, Israelis would have their simple answer and would have no need to ask the question. Apparently, a sense of bitterness over the kind of sickness that an unfair history imposed on the Jews has something to do with the asking of this question.¹²¹

The ideas cited above demonstrate how writers like Gonen express the concept of the unworthy and helpless victim who needed defensive Zionism to redeem him/her. The conclusion drawn is that the victims’ own blindness and conditioning prevented them from believing in, and responding effectively to, the eternal anti-Semitism that defensive Zionism recognised as the true reality, and this ultimately caused their downfall. It is striking that the ideas discussed by Gonen converge with Nazi propaganda about the economic abnormality, historic passiveness and “sickness” of the Jews that Gilman discusses. Here Gonen appears to be drawing on and reinforcing the rhetoric of the anti-Semite to strengthen his message, and so in an uncanny way, repeating and perpetuating the anti-Semitic falsehood. The “*unheimliche*” calumny of the anti-Semite is to be found in the midst of the comforting story of the return of the lost children of Israel to mother Zion.

FANTASY AND ZIONISM

The “unredeemed” Jew in the form of some Orthodox Jews, who contested and still contest, defensive Zionism, is feminised by Gonen. After comparing the Golem legend to the beauty and the beast story, Gonen asserts ironically:

Putting it somewhat differently, would beauty be spared by the beast and would traditional Judaism survive? A gut-level reaction to such fearful questions was probably “Why take any chances?” It seemed safer for the trembling Judaic beauty

not to fall into the clutches of the new Zionist beast to begin with. Judaism could probably survive without the Golem of Zionism, while the Lord could take care of anti-Semitism as he in his infinite wisdom deemed best.¹²²

Rose, in *States of Fantasy*, also uses Freudian theory alongside literary sources to examine Israel and Zionism. Like Gonen she sees ideas about fantasy as central to explaining their nature:

It is central to the argument of this book that there is no way of understanding political identities and destinies without letting fantasy into the frame. More, that fantasy – far from being the antagonist of public, social being – plays a central, constitutive role in the modern world of states and nations in which ... Israel has a special status because the fierce and traumatized intensity of longing that went into its creation seems so recalcitrant, so unable or unwilling – for those in power at least – to soften or modulate itself.¹²³

In her discussion about the state Rose stresses its phantasmic and unstable nature. She argues: ‘If a state has meaning only ‘partly as something existing’, if it rests on the belief of individuals that it ‘exists or should exist’, then it starts to look uncannily like what psychoanalysis would call an ‘as if’ phenomenon. You mould your acts and gestures to a persona that deep down you know isn’t really there. Something irrational – not as in unreasonable, but as in relying on a power no reason can fully account for – has entered the polity.’¹²⁴ The Golem serves in the mythology associated with Israel and Zionism that Rose refers to, and the examination of its interpretation and interpreters helps to demonstrate the truth of what she says about the “uncanniness” of the state in general and, in this context, of Israel in particular. By extension Gershom Scholem in his discussion on mysticism explains its conservative, yet at the same time revolutionary, nature:

In general, then, the mystic’s experience tends to confirm the religious authority under which he lives; its theology and symbols are projected into his mystical experience, but do not spring from it. But mysticism has another, contrasting aspect: precisely because a mystic is what he is, precisely because he stands in a direct, productive relationship to the object of his experience, he transforms the content of the tradition in which he lives. He contributes not only to the conservation of the tradition, but also to its development. Seen with new eyes, the old values acquire a new meaning, even where the mystic had no intention of doing anything new.¹²⁵

The mystic brings his own experiences into his religion and so transforms it while appearing to adhere to its traditions, and I believe this can be said about those writers who use the myth of the Golem. Consciously or unconsciously they draw on tradition and employ it in the service of their message. Their message thus draws on and uses the authority of the past, and powerful early memories and feelings of their readers. Barthes’ insights on myth, discussed earlier, are very relevant here. A similar uncanny authority is described by Rose in her discussion of fantasy in the service of a state, when she quotes Freud as follows: ‘(It) *returns* from oblivion (and) asserts itself with peculiar force, exercises an incomparably powerful influence on people in the mass and raises an irresistible claim to truth against which logical objections remain powerless.’¹²⁶ (my emphasis).

Yassif describes Isaac Bashevis Singer’s *The Golem* thus: ‘It would appear that Bashevis Singer, with his sensitive artistic intuition, has pointed correctly to the core

of the ancient myth ...'¹²⁷ In fact writers like Singer, in the much same way as the mystics Scholem describes, radically transform the myth while appearing to conserve it, and so change its meaning forever, or until a new interpreter comes along. Rose points out that fantasy can travel far from its playful, pleasant and light-hearted reputation. She quotes Freud's correspondence with Fliess, where he said that fantasies are: 'protective fictions, psychical facades which bar the way to memories ... trans-generational haunting, forms of remembrance – most often hidden and shameful family secrets – which hover in the space between social and psychic history, forcing and making it impossible for the one who unconsciously carries them to make the link.'¹²⁸ The Golem can certainly be seen as a transgenerational haunting. It resurfaces and changes, but with every incarnation gives the illusion of remaining the same. It disguises and represses, while simultaneously appearing to be eternal sacred myth, and therein lies its power and fascination. Perhaps this insight can be seen in Meyrink's depiction, which I discuss in Chapter Five, of the Golem as a kind of uncanny mirror in which each Jew of the Ghetto thinks he/she sees his/her own soul. I believe it is in this way that the Golem myth supports Rose's insight that the burden of trauma, myth and longing must be acknowledged in any discussion of Israel.

JEWS AND "THE OTHER"

A further interesting point raised by Goska in her article is the light the Golem legend throws on relationships between Jews and Gentiles. She discusses the Jewish stereotype of the Gentile which makes its appearance in Jewish folklore and other literature as stupid, drunken, bestial and aggressive as opposed to the clever and intellectual Jew. Goska writes: '... The opposite of the cerebral, mercantile, spiritual Jew was the stereotypical Gentile. English author and Zionist Israel Zangwill (1864-1926) wrote: "Beware of the goyim ... drunkards and bullies, swift with the fist or the bludgeon, many in species, but all engendered of God for our sins".'¹²⁹ Goska quotes Gonen in the description of 'Jewish genius at home, with voluminous treasures of mind'¹³⁰ She points out that Gonen sees the roots of this attitude in the Bible as symbolised by Jacob, the Jew and Esau the Gentile: 'Jacob spends his time praising the Lord and devoting himself to his family, Esau spends his time drinking and beating his wife. Thus the superior Jew uses his head in a variety of worthwhile pursuits, both divine and mundane, while the inferior gentile uses his hands in degrading activities ... To Jewish children, intellectual, scholarly and spiritual pursuits became identified as Jewish values, whereas sensual, gross, and menial preoccupations became identified as gentile.'¹³¹ Here we see a version of "the clever Jew" myth, believed in by many Jews as well as non-Jews, which formed a stereotype for both anti-Semite and philo-Semite. This was the stereotype that Freud was to fit into. The Golem perfectly exemplified the stupid, brutish Gentile servant/peasant in the idea of the "*Shabbas Goy*". This was the gentile who performed menial tasks that the Jew could not, because of the Biblical injunction not to work on the Sabbath. Goska's thesis is that the Golem, as a liminal Jewish/Gentile figure, forms: 'a perfect medium through which Jews could express and debate anxiety about adopting the tactics of what can be seen as the inferior other, the gentile. These discussions can be compared to the reaction of many Jews when considering the native born Israeli, or sabra. Like golems, sabras were also seen as being more "gentile" than Jewish.'¹³² It is true that the Golem does hover between Jew and Gentile and takes on the role she describes, but it is fair to point out that the

fighting Jew is no stranger to Jews such as Freud who identified with warriors like the Maccabees long before the founding of Israel. What is interesting here is how the Golem can be seen to embody a Jewish stereotype of the non-Jew, an aspect seldom considered. The Golem is uncanny because it is the projection of the negative feelings felt for the Gentile as unknowable other, who may appear to be human but is in fact alien. He can be useful, but in reality is unpredictable, potentially violent and impossible to control. In *Freud and the Non-European* Edward Said comments on Freud's identification of Moses as Egyptian. Said believed that this identification of the other within the founder of Judaism shows Freud's insight into the unstable nature of identity itself¹³³. Kristeva makes the same point about Jewish identity, but Said goes further than this and says: '... identity cannot be thought or worked through itself alone; it cannot constitute or even imagine itself without that radical originary break or flaw which will not be repressed, because Moses was Egyptian and therefore always outside the identity inside which so many have stood, and suffered – and later, perhaps, even triumphed.'¹³⁴ In other words identity itself cannot be understood without acknowledging such an original flaw, because it will not be repressed. He calls for an attempt to find a new kind of history in which this flaw is acknowledged and accommodated, especially in: 'the land of Jews and Palestinians ... a bi-national state in which Israel and Palestine are parts rather than antagonists of each other's history and underlying reality.'¹³⁵ Freud here becomes for Said the champion of a new state of Israel which Jews and Palestinians, identifying with each other, can share between them. Like Kristeva, Said argues that a way to accommodate the stranger must be found if we are to survive. The ambivalence of the identity of the Golem mirrors this. As neither Jew nor Gentile he need not be repressed, but can inhabit the gap between these identities and reflect them both without contradiction. It is interesting how Freud managed to do this himself. He discusses Moses not only as an Egyptian, but also as a sculpture by Michelangelo in his beloved Rome. Said quotes Freud's remarks in *Moses and Monotheism* that the Jews were not fundamentally different from their hosts. He argues that: '(They) mostly consist of the remnants of Mediterranean peoples and inherit their culture.'¹³⁶ Said goes on to say: 'In the light of Freud's early harping on Moses' Egyptianness, the distinctions he makes here strike me as limp: both unsatisfactory and unconvincing.'¹³⁷ But this is to deny Freud's deep identification with Classical culture. He particularly revered the Renaissance, which Michelangelo could be seen to epitomise, as the beginning of the Enlightenment. The Jewish subject of Moses, (incidentally a theme that preoccupied him for years), as sculpted by Michelangelo, would have been a tempting subject, as it linked Jewish tradition with Classical culture. It is also interesting that the choice of *The Sandman* in 'The Uncanny' does the same thing, by linking Jewish tradition with that of the Romantic German culture that he admired.

FREUD AND ZIONISM

Freud was himself very sceptical about religion and was dismissive about what he saw as unrealistic, pointless and self-deluding attempts to reconstruct Utopias or relive the historical past in the present. He wrote in *Civilization and its Discontents* that he would not: 'Stand up before my fellow-man as a prophet.' Freud added defiantly that: 'I bow to their reproach that I cannot offer them any consolation: for fundamentally that is what they all demand – the wildest

revolutionaries no less passionately than the most virtuous pious believers.¹³⁸ Rose quotes him as saying: ‘It would have seemed more sensible to me to establish a Jewish homeland on a less historically burdened land ...’ And he continues in the same vein: ‘I can raise no sympathy at all for the misdirected piety which transforms a piece of an Herodian wall into a national relic, thus offending the feelings of the natives.’¹³⁹ Hence Freud could identify himself as a Jew without buying completely into the idea of settling in Palestine, though he might understand and even sympathise with it. In any case, Palestine as the site of a Jewish homeland was not a foregone conclusion from the beginning, and many shared Freud’s doubts. It must be remembered that even Theodore Herzl at one time considered, and tried to sell, the idea of establishing a Jewish state in Uganda. That is why I do not agree with Rose that Freud necessarily had a “self-denying” relationship to his own Jewishness,¹⁴⁰ because he was ‘torn between belonging and non-belonging.’ Rose claims¹⁴¹ (echoing Kristeva), that although he saw the Jew as the eternal foreigner, who could exemplify the universalising ideas of the European, Freud was also torn between this vision and a belief in the Jew, as ‘someone who wanted to enter the world of nations, who wanted – deluded or not – to go home.’¹⁴²

Peter Gay nails his colours bravely to the mast in the title of his book *Freud, Jews and Other Germans*. He shows Freud as both German and Jew, secure in his identification with German culture. He notes that Freud had moments of irritation and possibly self-pity and that he: ‘Played with ideas of his “Oriental derivations. But they are fleeting and unrepresentative.’¹⁴³ Gay proposed that Freud’s identification with German culture continued unabated, even though he came to feel rejected by a Germany that had rejected him. This pride and joy in his place in German culture, (he was delighted to receive the Goethe prize in 1930, as Peter Gay tells us), doesn’t mean that Freud could not also feel an emotional and *historic* link with Palestine at the same time, nor even that he might have come to recognise that the Jews desperately needed a refuge from Nazi persecution. It could mean that he simply feared that the idea of establishing a modern Jewish state in Palestine was a dangerous one, and it is quite possible to assert - in view of subsequent history - that events, despite his wish to the contrary, have not proved him wrong. In 1930 Freud wrote about his feelings on Zionism, and Peter Gay quotes him as follows : “Zionism,” he (Freud) wrote to J. Dwossis in Jerusalem ... “has awakened my strongest sympathies, which still attach me to it. From the beginning”, he noted, he had been concerned about it, “something the present-day situation seems to justify. I should like to be mistaken about this”.¹⁴⁴ This doesn’t seem to me to reveal any conflict, but on the contrary, a consistent position held ‘from the beginning’. Sympathy with the Zionist position on the return to Palestine, does not mean not having any misgivings about it. Indeed, in his discussion of Rosenzweig as a theorist of Jewish exile, Peter Eli Gordon points out that, although Zionism is for many ‘the only legitimate expression of Jewish modernity’, for Rosenzweig to be a Jew meant to be in exile.¹⁴⁵ Thus it must be taken into account that the Zionist viewpoint was not the only one current at the time.

Gay notes Freud’s ambivalence about living in Vienna, but points out that, although he had been free to leave and had repeated incentives to move elsewhere, he nevertheless stayed. Gay may well be right when he writes that

Freud, as intrepid explorer: ‘needed a place on which to stand. There may even be a bit of truth in Ellenberger’s aphorism “Those Viennese who really disliked Vienna emigrated; those who loved it pretended to hate it, but stayed.” Complaining about Vienna, we know, was a widespread, affectionate Viennese sport.’¹⁴⁶ I believe it is unlikely that Freud entertained, in any form, the sentimental notion of ‘going home’ as Rose puts it. ‘The Uncanny’ shows his vision of the “*heimliche*” home as forever shifting back and forth between its “*unheimliche*” double. Home is not simply a cosy haven, but for Freud it was also the site of never to be forgotten primal traumas and terrors, which he believed, violently kick-start the individual on the way to socialisation and culture. He saw an escapist return to primary Narcissism as impossible except as a pathological regression. Perhaps his ideas about home can be seen in his relationship with Vienna with which he had a love/hate relationship. It is likely that he saw his struggles with Vienna, in the same way as he saw his struggles as a Jew with anti-Semitism, as an exhilarating challenge and a source of strength. Vienna with its “*unheimliche*” anti-Semitism lurking behind its “*heimliche*” pleasures, which Gay lists and describes as: ‘the undramatic gratifications in Vienna: his walks, his card games, his friends, and the peculiar reward attached to unbroken habit.’¹⁴⁷, was nevertheless home, and can be seen as a version of that double vision.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of ‘Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence’, which was one of the last articles he wrote, Freud says: ‘I find myself for a moment in the interesting position of not knowing whether what I have to say should be regarded as something long familiar and obvious or as something entirely new and puzzling.’¹⁴⁸ It seems as if this idea, much earlier developed in ‘The Uncanny’, of the splitting of the Ego, that seemingly indivisible part of the individual’s identity, was even to occur and recur to Freud in an uncanny and ambivalent way. This theme of uncanny repetition and splitting is central to the story of *The Sandman*, as well as Rabbi Low’s confrontation with his creature. Each new version of this tale appears in the haunting guise of a return, even as its context in history changes. It is possible that it is in this sense of a return - which is both unsettling and reassuring - that the Golem’s continued power over the imagination lies, because identity (both national and personal) also has this quality. This is what Gay, Said and Kristeva refer to when they find the stranger, who is at the same time hauntingly familiar, as a “flaw” or fracture at the point where identity seems most stable, thus fatally undermining it. Goska’s comparison of the Golem to ‘a screen’ is particularly telling as the Golem was literally projected on the cinema screen by Paul Wegener, and Lacan’s diagrams and ideas about the screen have been deeply influenced by photography. Silverman explores these themes in her discussions of how the ‘screen’ and ‘gaze’ operate in film and society. The ‘screen’ is not only a projected image, and a shield against much that is unacknowledged and repressed, it also serves as a mirror uncannily reflecting back and influencing the self-image that its audience believes in and desires. It can additionally be used, as Silverman shows, to reconcile its audience with the cultural norms that their society affirms. Judith Butler takes this idea further in her idea of performativity, as I have discussed in Chapter Two. The Golem appears in books, plays, films in the German Empire at a time when the old certainties of identity were breaking up. Gay points out that it

is vital to acknowledge that the Jews did not live in isolation: ‘Jews lived in a world larger than themselves, and just as it is impossible to understand that larger world without its Jews, it is impossible to understand its Jews without their larger world. Masters and victims (and Jews were sometimes the first, normally the second) were locked into a single culture, German Modernist culture.’¹⁴⁹ Artists, writers and film-makers like Wegener, Kubin, Steiner-Prag and Meyrink, who interpreted the Golem legend, explored a world, eerily similar to E.T.A. Hoffman’s, where the reassuring and everyday was no more than a veneer; inadequate protection against horrors of an uncanny reality, which was always on the point of breaking through. With the defeat of World War I a sense of the apocalyptic destruction of an old order seemed to intensify, and for a while the Golem became a symbol for the shared unease and hope of both Jew and Gentile until their violent rending apart by the Nazis.

CHAPTER 4 – THE FEMALE GOLEM

INTRODUCTION

It can be argued that the Golem becomes doubly uncanny if it takes the form of a woman. One of the reasons for this is that women and death are often linked. Freud himself does this in his description of *heimlichkeit* where the female body becomes at once the place of life and death. Kristeva describes the mother as the ‘death-bearing woman’ and claims that: ‘Matricide is our vital necessity.’¹⁵⁰ Most versions of the Golem are by male writers, about male characters, and are often for a male audience. Even when the Golem is female, as in *The Sandman*, and *The Choosing of the Bride* (both by E.T.A. Hoffmann), and the tale of Ibn Gabriol¹⁵¹, the story is most usually told from a male point of view. These tales focus on men as creators, and women are absent or, at best, the creature of this male creation.

Cynthia Ozick, in her book, *The Puttermesser Papers*¹⁵², overturns this model by writing about a female protagonist who creates a female Golem. Ozick’s version, idiosyncratic, yet rooted in Orthodox Jewish thought, allows her to question creativity as a male preserve from a position within Jewish tradition. Her story of a female Golem also enables Ozick to raise issues of subjectivity, maternity and death.

In this chapter, by using Ozick’s story as a focus, I attempt to expand my examination of identity into the topics of the “uncanny mother”, and the *unheimliche* link between sex and death. By extension, I want to take into account Diane Jonte-Pace’s suggestion that Freud’s identity and major theories were undermined by his resistance to themes such as these. Ozick reflects on the differences between “Greek” and “Jewish” thinking and I look at this topic here. Finally - via the theories of Freud, Lacan and Kristeva - I shall analyse how subjectivity and “the Other” (themes which are closely related to my discussion) play a vital part in the individual’s sense of identity.

OZICK’S FEMALE GOLEM AND JEWISH TRADITION

Ozick consciously works within her understanding and interpretation of Jewish tradition. As a writer she is very aware of herself as female and Jewish. Timothy L Parrish writes: ‘Ozick’s work ... is concerned not only with what it means to be a Jew but with what both the fact and idea of creation mean to the Jew who would also write imaginative literature.’¹⁵³

Ozick’s work reflects on how a writer of fiction can challenge God’s monopoly on creation. She uses language as a kind of counterpart to the creation by bringing into being something that did not exist before, just as God’s name vitalises the unformed Golem. The work of art takes on an uncanny life of its own, separate from the author, as secret and subjective thoughts uncannily come to light. Ozick asks who it is who owns the work created by writer in the Jewish tradition. If this creation is claimed by the writer and not dedicated to God, could it be idolatrous and therefore demonic? Parrish also notes that Ozick clearly understands the mythic nature of the Golem tales and wishes to add her own “authentic” version. More than that, he suggests that she considers her work equal to the holy and God-inspired words of the Rabbis of the Talmud. This is doubly problematic

within Orthodox tradition, because it would be strictly forbidden, and even unthinkable, for a woman to do this:

Were it possible, Ozick would no doubt be delighted should an analysis of "Puttermesser and Xanthippe" somehow be inserted in Scholem's essay alongside his analyses of Eleazar of Worms and Rabbi Judah Lowe for this would give her fiction both the legendary status and historical authenticity it presumes to convey ... In the critical context Ozick provides for her work, exploring the possibilities of creation endows her fiction with the presumption of possibly achieving the sacred ... While Ozick is not actually a blasphemous or idolatrous writer even by her own strict definition, her fiction would lack its imposing power did it not risk this possibility.¹⁵⁴

Cynthia Ozick's *Puttermesser Papers* tells the story of a Jewish lawyer, named Ruth Puttermesser labouring in, and later dismissed from, a Kafkaesque civil service. Her situation uncannily echoes the real-life story of E.T.A. Hoffman, the creator of Olympia (another female Golem). The novel charts Puttermesser's life and afterlife. Puttermesser's relationships with family, friends, colleagues and lovers are drearily unsuccessful, and her life is empty and meaningless. Her lover finally leaves her after a fight over her preference for reading Plato to having sex with him, and she is left alone. In a trance, and using soil from her pot plants, she creates her female Golem, Xanthippe. The Golem thus created, is active and creative unlike her creator, who could be described as a "misty soul" and 'given over to untrammelled figments or romances'. Xanthippe's whirlwind energy and drive assist the passive Puttermesser to parallel the impressive Rabbi Low's civic achievements in Prague, by helping her to become the Mayor of New York. Ozick's version of the Prague Golem story refers to the "blood libel" variation: 'Real blood ran in the streets, and all on account of the rumour of blood: citizens of every class – not just the guttersnipes – were muttering that the Jews had kneaded the bodies of Christian children into their sacral Passover wafers ... So the great Rabbi Judah Loew, to defend the Jews of Prague against their depredators, undertook to fashion the golem'.¹⁵⁵ She makes the parallel between Low and Puttermesser clear in her description: '... the Great Rabbi Judah Loew, circa 1520-1609, maker of that renowned local creature, was scarcely one of those misty souls given over to untrammelled figments or romances. He was, instead a reasonable man of biting understanding, a solid scholar, a pragmatic leader – a learned quasi-mayor.'¹⁵⁶

Inevitably, however, Puttermesser's Golem gets out of control as her link with uncontrolled instinctual energies is clear. Xanthippe goes on a sexual spree and ruins everything, and so Puttermesser's hopeful quest to become the Mayor of New York comes to nothing. The 'misty' Puttermesser lives entirely in her own disconnected and narcissistic world, containing the shadowy reflections of those with whom she comes into contact, and the vivid forms and fantasies of writers like George Eliot whose dead lives she attempts to relive in an uncanny death wish repetition. The mention of Plato in the text recalls his idea of "the cave" which is peopled by shadows and illusions. (There are many allusions to Greek as opposed to Jewish thinking, and I consider this subject in detail later in this chapter.) Puttermesser inhabits this shadowy world, and she never escapes it. It is possible to argue that, in creating Xanthippe, Puttermesser has separated out her active self (that which is composed of living drives and their energies), and has left behind an empty and vacuous shell, incapable of living a real and authentic

life. It is very characteristic that she does not know how to react to Xanthippe before researching the subject of the Golem, and also typical that she refuses to listen to Xanthippe when she claims to be the first female Golem. She could never believe this to be true because this fact was not verified in her reference books, which in this case, probably refers to Gershom Scholem's essay called 'The Idea of the Golem'¹⁵⁷: "No you're not," Puttermesser said... Ibn Gabriol created a woman. This was in Spain, long ago, the eleventh century. The king gave him a dressing-down for necromancy, so he dismantled her. She was made of wood and had hinges – it was easy to take her apart." The creature wrote "That was not a true golem."¹⁵⁸ But Puttermesser could not accept this because, for her, reality does not truly exist outside books.

Ozick's narrative is set in New York, and in it we find echoes of the urban alienation that Linda Nochlin describes at play in the work of Edward Hopper. Nochlin says that in *'Room in New York'* Hopper depicts: 'Camus's image of the Absurd: a talking figure seen through the glass door of a telephone booth, so that the movements of his mouth and his gestures appear meaningless. Yet Hopper's figures can never even talk: they are enclosed in their own poses, spaces, and, presumably, inner reveries. Sex seems to lead not to closeness but to its opposite.'¹⁵⁹ Nochlin could almost be talking of Puttermesser's life here. Margaret Iversen also links Hopper with an uncanny alienating strangeness. She mentions a connection between Hopper and Freud's work on the death drive, referring to repression and 'the formless and the fugitive which resist symbolization.' Iversen draws attention to 'a temporal delay characteristic of trauma between the unassimilable experience and the possibility of its representation' and, I believe Iversen here points to a vital element of the uncanny. As I discuss elsewhere, it is in this 'temporal delay' that the anxiety which generates the uncanny lies, and which I would argue (against Derrida and Heidegger) takes it beyond 'symbolization'.

Iversen quotes Hopper describing one of Burchfield's paintings as: '... an attempt to reconstruct the intimate sensations of childhood, an effort to make concrete those intense, formless, inconsistent souvenirs of early youth whose memory has long since faded by the time the power to express them has arrived, so close to dreams that they disappear when the hand tries to fix their changing forms.'¹⁶⁰ A shifting sense of memory and the elusive self of the past are clearly described here, and echo Hoffmann's thoughts on the subject of creativity, which I examine in the next chapter. Perhaps the attempt at describing the indescribable can be seen to mirror the unstable nature of the Golem legend itself. This is never clearer than in Puttermesser's female Golem, Xanthippe.

Thus memories are not always innocuous, and Iversen also points to the failure of repression 'where a dreadful past erupts violently amidst the apparent banality of the present'¹⁶¹.

Puttermesser cannot really sustain her isolation, and the outside world violently forces itself on her in the form of a burglar who rapes and murders her. As she is so completely separated from her instinctual and reacting self, this violent rupture is insufficient to penetrate Puttermesser's empty solipsism and she goes to a hellish Paradise where, like everywhere else, she finds nothing but herself. There she could only act out the lost and wasted

possibilities her death had made impossible to ever fulfil. The “Outside” had finally, and in reality, become the “inside” of herself: ‘It was plain, then, ... that Paradise was the place ... where she could walk freely inside her imagination, and call up anything she desired. But anything she might call up would inevitably be from the past – what else had she brought with her, if not the record of her own life?’¹⁶² Ozick expands this in her final chapter into an oppressive view of Paradise as truly a place where the death drive resides. Here knowledge is completed and time is eternal and cyclical¹⁶³. In this nightmarish Paradise, cut off from an instinctual and vital existence, Puttermesser is forced to repeat uncannily events of a sterile life, now entirely and permanently robbed of any potential for change and growth. A Paradise without the truly Other is Hell. Love and happiness short-circuited by selfishness are sterile, and in the light of inevitable change, can only coldly and meaninglessly reflect the empty pleasures and pains of an individual life, bounded by death, and fatally cut off from “Life” itself.

Paradise is a dream bearing the inscription on Solomon’s seal: this too will pass. And that is the secret meaning of Paradise: Solomon’s truth. It is the other reason for the notorious cold-heartedness of Paradise; it is why everyone who is supernally happy in Paradise, happier than ever before, will soon become preternaturally unhappy, unhappier than ever before ... The secret meaning of Paradise is that it too is hell.¹⁶⁴

OZICK, DERRIDA AND LEVINAS - THE POSSIBILITY OF OTHERNESS

Like Ozick, Derrida ruminated about what “Jewishness” means in terms of speech, subjectivity and the Other, ‘Violence and Metaphysics – An essay on the thought of Emmanuel Levinas’¹⁶⁵, which appears in his book *Writing and Difference* carefully examines the themes. In this essay Derrida dissects and scrutinises theories of Levinas on the concept of the Other and its relation to the same, and uses Levinas’s ideas as a springboard for posing ideas, questions and concepts of his own. In doing this Derrida looks particularly closely at Levinas’s dialogue with Husserl and Heidegger’s phenomenology as well as Levinas’s interpretation and criticism of the ideas of Hegel (which he situates within “Greek” thought), but he also examines Levinas’s thoughts on Jewish philosophy, such as that represented by Buber and the writers of the Talmud. Ozick’s story of the Golem raises and dramatises similar concerns.

Derrida questions Levinas’s belief in the Other as having no place in the ego, which Levinas sees only as a sterile embodiment of the same. Levinas celebrates the movement towards the Other as a fruitful transcendence of the self, which he sees as a victory over the narcissism so forcefully described by Ozick. Levinas argues against Husserl’s contention that there is no vantage point possible outside the ego and the subjective. Heidegger restates this position by arguing that being takes place within the self and is prior to any awareness of the self. Thus self-awareness is vital before there is any awareness of, (or even the possibility of) any differentiation into “I” and “other”. Therefore, Derrida argues, the “Other” must originate in the self, and in the space created by the self’s recognition of the possibility of what is “notself”. Derrida argues that Levinas is placed in a false position by the

fact that he is compelled to argue both from and against Husserl's phenomenology¹⁶⁶. Derrida points out that by taking issue with Husserl, Levinas is paradoxically validating him because he is forced to use Husserl's concepts as a supplement to his own in his attempt to refute them. After demonstrating that phenomenology has its own existence both inside and outside Levinas's idea of it, Derrida points out that any relationship between Levinas and phenomenology must necessarily start from Levinas's viewpoint and his own understanding of the term. This means that the terms of Levinas's discussion of phenomenology exist inside, and not outside, himself. The concept of the Other as other must, like language itself (which Derrida believes is the prerequisite for all contact with what is not the proper self), begin within the self. Language must, by necessity, always have context, and this context is history, or time, in Heidegger's terms. Complete non-recognition of the Other and his speech is a mere blank and neutral; it is literally nothing without even the possibility of something and, as such, cancels itself out. It is, therefore, impossible, unutterable. Derrida denies that anything can exist outside the text which is self-produced and contains everything within it: 'This interweaving, this textile, is the *text* produced only by the transformation of the text. Nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and trace of traces.'¹⁶⁷ Derrida echoes Heidegger's argument that existence comes about in the space that Being opens up within itself by this necessary recognition of possibility, which then finds its expression in speech and desire. It is in the allowing of the other/Other "to be" that the possibility of his/her/His/Her recognition lies.

Derrida believes that the "other" or "Other" cannot exist for the individual before language exists to understand and name it. He argues along with phenomenology that existence¹⁶⁸ starts with this naming and differentiating from what is not the self through the naming and thinking of Being, not through Being itself which is the unnameable "nothing" in which it takes place:

There is no speech without the thought and statement *of* Being. But as Being is nothing outside the determined existent, it would not appear as such without the possibility of speech. Being *itself* can only be thought and stated. It is the contemporary of the Logos, which itself can only be as the Logos *of* Being *saying* Being. Without this double genitivity, speech, cut off from Being and enclosed in the determined existent, would only ... (be) the cry of need before desire¹⁶⁹, the gesture of the self in the realm of the homogenous ... It is only then that the relation to exteriority would no longer catch a breath.¹⁷⁰

In *God Death and Time*¹⁷¹, (echoing Jewish mystical thought), Levinas explains that he believes that the Other, which he sees as a demand and call to action, comes before the naming and thinking to disrupt the same in a kind of fission and a non-coincidence. This disruption comes from the unnameable that Derrida denies. He also argues that this penetration takes the form of continuous overflowing, and thus can never be contained in the self. Levinas points to the fact that, in any case, for Derrida's Logos that says Being to be understood at all, necessarily implies a prior receptiveness and awareness which is not yet self-awareness, (but is a willingness as well as an ability to hear the Other/other which must be prior to the self). It is however, in a self-

enclosed world beyond hope of any relationship to the other through speech and action, and now fully estranged from exteriority, that Puttermesser resides after death. Here speech is not speech because it can never be uttered to the other, and history is not history because its time cannot “outlive” the self.

Ozick’s finite Paradise is hermetic and sterile because it lacks the possibility of a transcendence of the Other that Levinas understands as the magnet that draws the individual out of the tyranny of the same that would enclose and trap him. As I have argued above, the violent shattering of the cycle of the same by the Other, in the form of the burglar coming in from outside to violate and kill Puttermesser, has no meaning in her universe, and therefore even that extreme and final violence is absorbed into the self, and has ultimately no power to disrupt the finitude of her ego’s subjectivity. Puttermesser after death has ‘escape(d)’ into a permanent and fully enclosed servitude to her enslaving ego seen in the same way as Levinas does, as a sterile prison. It is a heaven without the ultimate Other that is God, and His impersonal call for justice for and recognition of the other, and is therefore a hell. Just as the Golem without the sanction of God’s name is potentially demonic, so too is this Paradise without God or Justice in the face of the other. In this dead, determined and self-enclosed world, where the same is uncannily and eternally repeated, no new creativity is possible, and nothing new can ever be named because God as Ultimate other is unnamed and excluded along with the acknowledgement of other people as existing outside the self. The Others in Puttermesser’s death as, to a lesser extent in her life, are not really other, but only actors and objects in her blind narcissistic fantasies. She has no libido because her Golem contains her sexual desire. But it is her death that finally places her beyond any hope of the active life that her Golem double represents for her. Xanthippe, who was created by writing the name of God with Puttermesser’s saliva (and therefore carries a trace of the divine and unknowable Other), and who forms her active counterpart, is speechless until just before her (the Golem’s) death. As she is dying Xanthippe finally speaks - this marks her final separation from her maker, and she thereby condemns Puttermesser to her sterile Hell. Ozick, though she ostensibly determines her characters’ existences in her writing, seems to be ironically aware that she, as writer, is equally limited and bounded by her own subjectivity. However, instinct and inspiration, which have a source outside the ego consciousness, can point to a vantage point beyond the self’s finitude.

THE UNNAMEABLE

In the Golem legends the name of God is the crucial and magical spark which brings the Golem to life. As a possible sign of the influence of Greek thought, the word “Truth”, being one of God’s divine aspects, has the same effect. As He is nameless, He escapes Derrida’s prescription that all that can be known must be able to be understood through language. By the act of naming Him, God becomes finite to an extent, which is at the same time impossible, because He is infinite and unknowable - yet He is named. It is partly in this impossible paradox which fissures and overflows meaning (as Levinas seems to imply), that the power of the Word - which generates the

Golem - lies. This has particular bearing on Derrida's discussion of the transcendence of the Other, and the paradoxical nature of the language that names him. If God, as the ultimate Other is unknowable and unnameable, how can He be known and perceived or even discussed and so situated within language? The answer Derrida gives to this is that, as a "nonconcept", He cannot be. 'This logos of no one ... is anonymous only as the *possibility* of the name and of responsibility ... Did not the Kabbala also speak of the unnameable possibility of the Name?'¹⁷² Derrida develops the idea of the impossibility of naming the infinite and the infinitely "Other", even through negation which is a kind of positivity and confirmation. God is only to be invoked as possibility. What is absolutely outside the self cannot be truly named. He argues:

The positive Infinity (God) – if these words are meaningful – cannot be infinitely Other. If one thinks, as Levinas does, that positive Infinity tolerates, or ever requires infinite alterity, then one must renounce all language, and first of all the words infinite and other, Infinity cannot be understood as Other except in the form of the in-finite. As soon as one attempts to think Infinite as a positive plenitude (one pole of Levinas's nonnegative transcendence), the other becomes unthinkable, impossible, unutterable. Perhaps Levinas calls us towards this unthinkable-impossible-unutterable beyond (tradition's) Being and Logos. But it must not be possible either to think or state this call.¹⁷³

Yet by this admission Derrida acknowledges that Levinas's very questioning of what is unquestioned and accepted does take him outside its frame, (Even if God cannot be named, or known by naming, this - as Kant pointed out - does not equate to proof of non-existence). Derrida concedes that the presence of God, as prior to being, can be argued to conjure up the possibility of the "other" or "Other", but as he cannot be named, and He can never appear in history in either a positive or negative form. He can only appear as 'trace' and 'possibility'.

The status of this "unnameable possibility" is an interesting one. A 'trace' which contains within it an unimaginable future possibility, seems to remain an unstable unresolveable paradox, present and absent at the same time. Derrida might say it is impossible to think or state it, but it arguably remains nevertheless thought, stated and acted upon. A joker in a pack of cards could be a good example of this "double truth"¹⁷⁴. It remains itself and a card like any other in the pack, yet it also and *at the same time* contains the possibility of being every other card in the pack. One might argue here that the disruption this causes makes it impossible to ever assimilate it into any Logos which Derrida calls a 'system' of traces (consisting of a positive and a negative polarity as he discusses above), but instead it forever "overflows" it as Levinas has put it. Additionally, it can be realised through action as one plays the game, and here there are links with the body, sensation, ritual, interpellation and performativity, discussed earlier. It is, therefore, possible to concede that Levinas's point is not entirely answered. It can also be argued that the insistence on the priority of language and concepts smuggles a metaphysical viewpoint back into philosophy, as it overlooks the a priori nature of sensation, history/memory and unconscious thought processes, which must be part of the "self" Derrida and Heidegger posit.

A further problem with philosophical language's claim to a privileged primacy is further complicated, as Derrida points out, by the fact that it carries a trace of its own historical nonspeculative nature within it. Derrida insists that philosophy must accommodate the slippery and uncanny nature of this "equivocal" language, even at the expense of losing its 'purity', which in any case, is illusive. Language, our only tool for speculation and thought, is irrevocably flawed and fissured. Derrida argues thus:

A certain ineradicable naturality, a certain original naiveté of philosophical language could be verified for each speculative concept (except, of course, for the nonconcepts which are the name of *God* and the verb *to be*). Philosophical language belongs to a system of language(s). Thereby, its nonspeculative ancestry always brings a certain equivocality into speculation. Since this equivocality is original and irreducible perhaps philosophy must adopt it, think it and be thought thorough in it, must accommodate duplicity and difference within speculation, within the very purity of philosophical meaning.¹⁷⁵

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In taking this thought further Derrida quotes Hegel, and recalls Freud's fascination with the dual and uncanny meaning of words like *unheimlich*, that become their opposite. In this way Derrida finds this doubleness within the certainties of "Greek" philosophy itself. He quotes the following, while discussing Hegel's use of the word *aufheben*: '*Aufheben* has in the German language a double sense: that of preserving, maintaining, and that of leaving off, bringing to an end ... Lexicologically, these two determinations of the *Aufheben* may be considered as two *meanings* of the word. It is remarkable that a language comes to use one and the same word to express two opposite meanings.'¹⁷⁶ In this way Derrida points to an instability, noticed by Freud in 'The Uncanny', that fractures language from within.

"JEWISH" AND "GREEK" THOUGHT

Derrida's discussion of Levinas also deals with the opposition and duality of "Greek" and "Jewish" thought, and the close relationship that Levinas has with "Greek" thought in the midst of his denials¹⁷⁷. As Heidegger situates himself on the side of "Greek" thought, Derrida is questioning Levinas's claim that he stands in absolute opposition to Heideggerean thought. By this questioning, therefore, Derrida undermines the concept of a "Jewishness" that can be thought to be absolutely Other: 'But if one calls this experience of the infinitely other Judaism (which is only a hypothesis for us), one must reflect on the necessity in which this experience finds itself, the injunction in which it is ordered to occur as logos, and to awaken the Greek in the autistic syntax of his own dream.'¹⁷⁸ For Derrida, the radical value of Levinas's "Jewish" challenge to and questioning of "Greek" thought is that it takes place from the outside and inside at the same time and this paradox cracks and destabilises unquestioned and self-satisfied "Greek" "truth". It (as in Heidegger's thought) points to

possibilities and challenges which can take philosophy beyond the finite “Greek” horizon, thus confirming and refuting Hegel at the same time. Derrida insists that to attempt an absolute distinction between Jew and Greek is impossible, because we exist in the space between the two: ‘Are we Jews or are we Greeks? We live in the difference between the Jew and the Greek, which is the unity of what is called history’.¹⁷⁹

As I state above, Ozick combines the ideas of Jew and Greek very frequently in her Golem story. She, too, is concerned with this separation between Judaism and Greek philosophy. This is a vital issue, as it must be taken into account when considering Judaism, which is profoundly marked by a Greek Gnostic element, and other traces of Hellenization. It is the flaw that disturbs any concept of a “pure” Jewish thought, so Levinas’s discussion of Heidegger’s thoughts on this subject has deep resonances. By its very nature a metaphysical philosophy edits out the body. This is especially the case in Platonic idealism, with its stress on the primacy of reason (seen as male). This means that it can exclude the female along with natural birth. Athena springs fully formed out of her Father’s head, and in just this way Puttermesser does not give birth to a real child after sex with a lover, but instead creates a Golem partly as a product of her relationship with Plato. Hence the name Xanthippe, after Plato’s wife, who, as a woman, figures both inside and outside Greek philosophical tradition. As mayor, Puttermesser heads a political party called “Independents for Socratic and Prophetic Idealism”, a monstrous and uncanny combination of Judaism and Greek philosophy. The poster for this party is illustrated by a snake and the tree of knowledge, a reminder that this “Socratic” knowledge is achieved at the expense of a woman’s sin, prophetically proclaimed. Xanthippe’s name may be Greek but she is named after a woman, and so her creation links Puttermesser, not just to Greek rationalism, but also to “Prophetic” Judaism, mysticism, the feminine, the body and ultimately to thoughts of death.

THE WOMAN AND THE PHILOSOPHER

In Derrida’s essay ‘At this very moment in this work, here am I’¹⁸⁰ the theme of the philosopher and the woman is handled in a way that curiously echoes Ozick’s Golem. In the essay a woman questions Levinas about the place of the feminine in his work. She asks him: ‘If feminine difference presealed, perhaps and nearly illegibly, his work, if she became in the depths of the same the other of his other, will I then have deformed his name, to him in writing, at this moment, in this work ...?’¹⁸¹ Unlike feminist questioners, like Luce Irigaray¹⁸² and Stella Sandford¹⁸³ who challenge and contest Levinas’s views on women as “Other to the Other”, this unknown woman blends her voice with his and they become one. Their faults and gestures merge, and the sentence structure breaks down as their work becomes a gift created between them:

_ I no longer know if you are saying what his work says. Perhaps that comes back to the same. I no longer know if you are saying the contrary, or if you have already written something wholly other. I no longer hear your voice, I have difficulty distinguishing it from mine, from any other, your fault suddenly becomes illegible to me. Interrupt me. – HERE AT THIS VERY MOMENT I ROLL UP THE BODY OF OUR INTERLACED VOICES CONSONANTS VOWELS ACCENTS FAULTY IN THIS MANUSCRIPT – I MUST PLACE IT IN THE EARTH FOR YOU - COME LEAN DOWN OUR GESTURES WILL HAVE HAD THE INCONSOLABLE SLOWNESS

THE GIFT REQUIRES AS IF IT WERE NECESSARY TO DELAY THE ENDLESS FALLING DUE OF A REPETITION – IT IS OUR MUTE INFANT A GIRL PERHAPS STILL BORN ... IN THE BOTTOMLESS CRYPT THE INDECIPHERABLE STILL GIVES READING FOR A LAPSE ABOVE HER BODY WHICH SLOWLY DECOMPOSES IN ANALYSIS.¹⁸⁴

Though faulty and imperfect, the manuscript still bears the name of God. Derrida here refers to an earlier passage where he discusses Levinas's quoting of a Talmudic proscription against the destruction of documents bearing God's name: '... it is forbidden to efface the names of God even in the case when a copyist would have altered the form. The whole manuscript has to be buried'. The infant girl Derrida refers to is speechless like Ozick's Xanthippe, and like her is created by philosophy, not biology. She too is marked on her body by the altered name of God, and buried in the ground. She is therefore semiotic rather than symbolic.

Puttermessa's Golem is not 'the wood and hinges variety', like Hoffmann's Olympia, but is made by a woman on the heroic and holy model of Rabbi Low. Xanthippe is created by Puttermessa from mud in the "traditional" mystic manner, the breath of life breathed into her nostrils. Her unfinished mouth remodelled, the ritual followed of walking around her seven times, and finally and most importantly, the name of God written in Puttermessa's own saliva, placed in her mouth and spoken aloud. The Golem here is an uncanny double of Puttermessa, and not a daughter. This is important as Puttermessa instead of creating a child creates Xanthippe, a product of the word of God, philosophy and art. Parrish comments:

... Ozick is revising traditional accounts of golem-making that all concern men who are not only testing their divine powers, but aspiring to do so as an instance of their faith rather than as a consequence of what women might be said to do naturally, biologically: create life ... (By) adding to the creator-golem relationship a mother-daughter dimension, ... Ozick depicts Puttermessa departing from the established ritual of golem creation ... (and) highlight(s) Puttermessa's maverick status as an independent creator. The depiction of Puttermessa may also highlight Ozick's status as a female author intervening in a tradition composed mostly of and by males.¹⁸⁵

Ozick challenges the inherited tradition composed 'mostly by and of males', but like the unknown woman who intermingles her voice with that of the philosopher in Derrida's essay, she works within and not outside this tradition, which 'decomposes' in her hands as she repeats it, while at the same time changing it. As Derrida puts it, she 'weaves (her) voice so as to be effaced'¹⁸⁶.

THE WOMAN AS VEHICLE OF SPEECHLESSNESS AND DEATH

Like the still-born infant in Derrida's essay, Xanthippe connects death with birth. It is typical of Puttermessa's literary obsession, that the discovery of the Golem in her bed takes place while she is absorbed in reading Goethe's *Erlkoning*¹⁸⁷. The death of the child in Goethe's poem saddens Puttermessa, and thoughts of its death occupy her as she returns to her bed, now empty of her lover, and carrying his old newspaper which: '... was heavy as if she carried a dead child'.¹⁸⁸ Puttermessa's bed, the place of sex, now becomes a place of death. Here she finds her unfinished Golem described as: 'A naked

girl...She looked dead, she was all white, bloodless.¹⁸⁹ Xanthippe's birth in Puttermesser's bed is, therefore, like a death.

It is significant also that Puttermesser's Golem was dumb until just before her death. Dumbness was a condition that Freud believed was associated with death in dreams. Freud's essay on 'The theme of the three Caskets', focuses on the theme of the selection of a bride from three women. Freud points out that the chosen third, or youngest woman, is often dumb or forced to be silent: 'If we decide to regard the peculiarity of our 'third one' (woman) as concentrated in her 'dumbness', then psychoanalysis will tell us that in dreams dumbness is a common representation of death'¹⁹⁰. The bride then is associated by Freud with death, a subject that is prominent in Hoffmann's Golem stories, *The Choosing of the Bride* and *The Sandman*.

The theme of the three caskets is described in E.T.A. Hoffmann's story, *The Choosing of the Bride*¹⁹¹ and here, as in *The Sandman*¹⁹², a Golem appears. These two stories link together closely, and share similar ideas and themes. *The Choosing of the Bride* refers more overtly than *The Sandman* to its Jewish origins as a version of the Golem legend. Hoffmann's treatment of the Golem theme is very different to Ozick's, but the link between the *heimliche* and *unheimliche*, women and death, is made just as clearly. Hoffmann's stories also blend the irrational and everyday as Ozick does, but arguably, achieves a much more disturbing and uncanny effect. I believe this is because Hoffmann's stories destabilise the reader's sense of boundary and self, while Ozick's does not. Hoffmann allows us a vertiginous glimpse into the abyss of psychosis and non-sense, as his text seems at times to take on a life of its own and separate itself from the writer and reality, while Ozick seems to be more self-conscious and deliberate in the use of her material. Hoffmann questions and undermines our idea of reality itself, but Ozick never really does, even when dealing with the fantastic and irrational. Hoffmann has the disconcerting skill of bringing us uncomfortably close to his protagonist and his irrational viewpoint, while Ozick in a style which can be seen as Magic Realism, keeps Puttermesser at an ironic distance. Hoffmann's humour and irony does distance, but paradoxically his distancing seems to intensify, and not lessen the uncanny atmosphere of his stories. The reader is disoriented in this confusion of emotions, and psychosis seems much too close for comfort.

The Choosing of the Bride is suffused with the psychotic relationship between reality and hallucination. It opens with Herr Tushman, the Chancellery private secretary seeing an apparition, which appears to be his future bride, in the window of the town hall at the stroke of midnight. He then comes across two mysterious figures, whom the story hints were responsible for its appearance. Both have Jewish characteristics, and seem to be magicians. One of these is evil and repellent, in a manner reminiscent of Coppelius from *The Sandman*, and the other is less sinister but still unsettling. The evil magician is described thus: 'The deep lines that furrowed his brow witnessed to his great age. His glance was sharp and piercing, and only the majestic beard betrayed the Jew still faithful to ancient custom and tradition.'¹⁹³ The second magician, more benign yet still unsettling, is a friendlier version of the

dreaded Coppelius who so terrified the young Nathaniel in *The Sandman*. The visits of this character, who, like Coppelius is a family friend, had nothing of the sense of horror that Coppelius brought with him, yet he too carried some trace of the uncanny. Edmund, who is the student mirroring Nathaniel, reminisces in *The Choosing of the Bride*:

I know I was very glad whenever you appeared at our house, because you always brought me all kinds of nice things and in general paid me a lot of attention, and at the same time I could not shake off a timid sense of awe, even a certain fear and oppression which often persisted after you had left. But, even more it is the tales my father told of you which have kept the memory of you quite lively within me ... (H)e spoke ... of how you had penetrated into the profound secret sciences, held sway over many hidden forces of nature, and sometimes – forgive me for saying so – he strongly hinted, that if the total truth be known, you were none other than Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew.¹⁹⁴

Echoing the plot of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, with its Jewish theme, the student Edmund competes with other lovers and wins the bride when he selects the last casket, which contains her picture. This story, although it has a disturbing undercurrent, is much more light-hearted than *The Sandman* which is its sinister counterpart. *The Choosing of the Bride* also more openly reveals its hidden Jewish origins. The Jew (assimilated and non-assimilated) here plays the part of the uncanny Other, who brings with him the terrors of another world that is hidden behind normal and everyday life.

The apparition in *The Choosing of the Bride* is possibly a projection, but probably not. This Golem may be a reassuring product of an enlightened rational science or a product of 'secret sciences', its uncanny and shadowy double. This pervasive uncertainty is characteristic of Hoffmann's ambivalent and unsettling style. The Golem, Olympia, in *The Sandman*, definitely the product of an infernal science, is a frightening incarnation of the theme of death and the woman. Woman as "other" with her links to the mysteries of death and life are often associated with 'hidden forces of nature' in the folk literature that Hoffmann drew upon¹⁹⁵. Throughout *The Sandman*, Hoffmann combines legends and folk tales¹⁹⁶ with the major theme of Golem to very good effect. Here the legend of the Golem unites with that of the dead bride: 'The music and dancing had long since ceased. 'Parting, parting!' He (Nathanael) cried in wild despair; he kissed Olympia's hand, bent down to her mouth and his passionate lips encountered lips that were icy cold! As he touched Olympia's cold hand, he was seized by an inner feeling of horror, and he suddenly recalled the legend of the dead bride, but Olympia had pressed him close to her; as they kissed her lips seemed to warm into life.'¹⁹⁷

Olympia's life and passion merely reflect that of her lover, and are an uncanny illusion. Nathanael's life and reason are consumed in her creators' attempts to give life to the doll. The attempt to conjure her to life is an infernal version of the magical Golem ritual with God entirely absent. Olympia, the Golem, is the deadly counterpart of the living Clara, and, horribly, they become indistinguishable as 'the dead bride'. Love and death, as in Freud's discussion of *heimlichkeit*, were uncannily linked¹⁹⁸:

... he heard Clara's voice: 'Do you not see me? Coppelius has deceived you: those were not my eyes which burned into your breast; they were glowing-hot drops of your own heart's blood – I still have my eyes; you have only to look at me!' Nathaniel thought: 'That is Clara, and I am hers for ever' – and the thought seemed to interpose itself into the circle of the fire, so that it came to a stop and the hubbub subsided into the depths; Nathaniel looked into Clara's eyes, but it was death which gazed at him mildly out of them.¹⁹⁹

Clara and Nathaniel's mother, described as living together, are linked in the story to the hearth fire of home, and that fire appears here as a magical and terrifying circle out of which death and destruction emerge instead of life. The fusion of Clara with the deadly Olympia bride takes place in an infernal ritual, where the magical ring of fire replicates the wedding ring. Ultimately all the women in *The Sandman*, come together under the banner of death, and the connection between the Mother and death is unmistakably, if subliminally, made.

MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS

As Parrish points out in the quotation above, Ozick's version of the Golem tale has a mother-daughter dimension, and I have argued that in Ozick's account this mother-daughter relationship is always accompanied by imagery of death. Ozick describes Puttermesser's first discovery of the unformed Xanthippe as taking place in her bed, which is literally covered with earth as if it is a grave, and it is in this bed that she brings the Golem to life. But the grave-like bed is also a place of death, because Puttermesser ends Xanthippe's life there, so the place of birth becomes deadly, and it is possible to see the bed, which is also a place of conception, as standing in for the maternal body. The relationship of the mother to death, becomes clearly apparent as Xanthippe pleads for her life: 'I fear the dark. The dark is where pre-existence abides. It is not possible to think of pre-existence, but one dreads its facsimile: post-existence. Do not erase, obliterate or annihilate me. Mother, my mother.'²⁰⁰ But Puttermesser goes on, literally, to do just that later on, by circling²⁰¹ her Golem in reverse and erasing the Hebrew letter, *Aleph*, from her brow. She, therefore, reverses the process of creation, and birth becomes death: 'Puttermesser, circling round the torpid Xanthippe in her shroud of white velvet, could not help glancing down into the golem's face. It was a child's face still. ... She looked with her terrible eyes – how they pulsed – up at Puttermesser "My Mother."' The golem can now speak, finally given a voice by the evocation of the real child that she never was. Just before dying she says to Puttermesser: 'It was you who created me, it is you who will destroy me!'²⁰² This chilling association of the mother with death unmistakably echoes the words of Job describing the cycle of life: 'Naked came I from my mother's womb And naked shall I return thither.'²⁰³ It is interesting that Ozick reverses Kristeva's prescription that 'matricide is our vital necessity'²⁰⁴ - the mother here murders the child. In some ways however, Xanthippe can be seen to be the mother not the child of Puttermesser, according to the Freudian account. In Ozick's story she helps to define Puttermesser, activates her, and even though she is really incapable of true desire, is a sexual rival. She has had sex with Puttermesser's lover, who would also be the father of the child, whose place she has taken.

Diane Jonte-Pace in her *Speaking the Unspeakable*²⁰⁵ looks closely at this association of the maternal and the feminine with death, and suggests that beneath what she calls Freud's 'masterplot' lies a 'counterthesis', which she associates with the mother, misogyny, and Freud's relationship to his Jewish identity and religion. Jonte-Pace describes this 'counterthesis' as uncanny in nature, a 'shadowy presence' beneath the familiarity of his work. In contrast to the overt 'master narrative' which is what she calls the Oedipal theory. Jonte-Pace states:

Noting occasionally the limitations of the Oedipal paradigm, Freud initiated a trajectory contradictory to his Oedipal analyses of the origins of religion, morality, and monotheism in primal parricides. Characterized by fears and fantasies focused on a dead or deadly mother, the counterthesis constructs a fragmentary theory of death, immortality, and the afterlife ...²⁰⁶

Jonte-Pace claims that this 'counterthesis' is only present in a ghostly and unresolved form in Freud's work:

Freud used psychoanalytic introspection as method fairly carefully, faithfully reporting the results of his excavations of the unconscious in his thinking and writing. While most of the unconscious contents he encountered fell into place as pieces of a coherent theory, some of the pieces simply did not fit the Oedipal puzzle. His attempts to locate these contents within the Oedipal framework were often unsuccessful ... This tension in the character of psychoanalysis is the context for the counterthesis. Evidence for the counterthesis exist in half-glimpsed images and half-formulated ideas he recorded in numerous text and documents.²⁰⁷

She explains this by suggesting that these themes were hidden from Freud by repression of his own experiences, for example his failure to mourn his mother, and because his 'revelatory sense of the significance of the Oedipal pattern cannot be separated from a personal sense of identification with the Sophoclean Oedipus Rex.'²⁰⁸ Jonte-Pace sees Freud's discussion of *heimlichkeit* in this light. She believes that his earlier discussion of this subject is not pursued in his analysis of *The Sandman*, and she draws attention to the fact that: 'Freud's interpretation emphasizes Oedipal and castrative themes.'²⁰⁹ She writes: 'The Sand-man has deadly maternal qualities: he tears out children's eyes, as food for his own little children, a hint that the story itself can be read as a fantasy concealing the fear of death at the hands of a dangerous mother. This is a story in which the mother's presence is so frightening that she is negated ... Mothers are excluded from this act of creation ... after his discussion of "The Sand-man" (Freud) repeats his ... pattern of presenting, recursively, an interpretation of death and immortality followed by a castrative text ...'²¹⁰ Jonte-Pace, quoting Sarah Kofman, goes on say: 'Freud's negation of the mother (is expressed) in his giving the father the role of dead mother ... through an image ... (of) bird beaks ...' I feel it is important to point out here that that this conflation of Hoffmann's and Freud's texts ignores the fact that *The Sandman* story was not written by Freud, who in fact is merely quoting it, and that Hoffmann himself was drawing on yet another set of tales for his story. The Golem myths all exclude maternal birth, and deal with artificial creation by the father/s, or in Puttermesser's case, by a woman. Its is true, as I mentioned earlier, that there are subtexts of death and the mother in Hoffmann's tale and that Freud does not discuss them here, but it is arguable that Freud could be justified in seeing the main thrust of Hoffmann's tale,

(following its Golem model) as the relationship of son and father rather than that of mother and son. Having said that, however, it is necessary to state here that Freud's discussion of "the feminine" is open to question and has certainly been challenged by many theorists and critics.

Jonte-Pace argues that Freud's rejection of Jentsch's view, (that the uncanniness of *The Sandman* lies in the doubt as to whether the Olympia doll is alive or not), is a result of Freud's denial of the counterthesis, and his insistence on his Oedipal theories. She reinforces this by pointing out that Freud comes back to Jentsch's idea later, and could not quite bring himself to reject it absolutely. Helene Cixous also refers to this doubt and hesitation. Cixous describes Freud as pursued by an uncanny double who haunts and undermines the text by his doubt and hesitation: 'The ensuing unfolding whose unfolding is contradictory is accomplished by the author's double: Hesitation. We are faced then by the text and its hesitating shadow.'²¹¹ There is no doubt that there is an air of uncertainty and hesitation in this essay. It can be argued, however that, in 'The Uncanny', Freud was trying out ideas which were to come to open fruition later. In fact it can be argued that Freud consciously explored these issues, which Jonte-Pace calls the 'counterthesis', when he came to formulate his theories on the death drive.

FREUD, THE MOTHER AND THE DEATH DRIVE

The death drive, earlier discussed with reference to Iversen's analysis of Hopper's work, clearly opposed Thanatos to Eros, and acknowledged and elaborated the presence of the death drive in the human psyche, and the close relationship between sex (closely linked by Freud to themes of the mother) and death. Freud openly dealt with his discovery of the death drive and its implications, hesitantly in 'The Uncanny', and much more confidently in 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', 'The Ego and the Id' and 'Negation'. It is true that he seemed to come to these realisations belatedly and reluctantly, but he definitely did attempt to follow them to their conclusions, which revealed to Freud powerful and primitive instincts closely linked to death. The recurrent traumatic nightmares of returning soldiers who nightly relived their experiences in the trenches, forced Freud to acknowledge and confront the fact that the pleasure principle was not all-encompassing, and that there had to be a new structure to accommodate all the cases it left out:

... the most painful experiences ... can yet be felt ... as highly enjoyable. This is convincing proof that, even under the dominance of the pleasure principle, there are ways ... of making what is in itself unpleasurable into a subject to be recollected and worked over in the mind. The consideration of these cases and situations, which have a yield of pleasure as their final outcome should be undertaken ... (however) ... (t)hey are of no use for our purposes, since they presuppose the existence and dominance of tendencies beyond the pleasure principle, that is, of tendencies more primitive than it and independent of it.²¹² (my emphasis).

In 'The Uncanny', although the deathly nature of repetition was discussed, there was no allusion to the 'death instincts'. In 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', however, as well as in the 'Ego and the Id', and much of his later work such as 'Negation', Freud elaborates on these ideas. The Editor's Note introducing 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' explains that 'The Uncanny' :

‘contains a paragraph setting out the gist of this work’ and goes on to say: ‘The paper on *The Uncanny* containing this summary was published in the autumn of 1919. But Freud held back *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* for another year. In the early part of 1920 he was once more at work on it; he was still revising the work in May and June and it was finally completed by the middle of July 1920.’²¹³ This suggests that he was taking his time, and working out ideas more fully, before resolving them to his satisfaction. This can go some way to explaining the ‘text and its hesitant shadow’ apparent in ‘The Uncanny’. Possibly this ‘hesitant shadow’ might have been cast by the yet incomplete shape of the ideas discussed later in ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’, which must have been preoccupying him at the time.

It must be remembered that here, as elsewhere, Freud was venturing on this new ground against opposition and contradiction, honestly changing his mind about long-held theories, and gradually elaborating techniques and ideas that were to dominate his later writings. In his writings some of themes linking libido and death, far from being ‘half-glimpsed’ and ‘half-formulated’, were fully acknowledged and constantly being worked out. Freud’s theory of the dual nature of instincts, as life and death, sees them permanently, and closely locked in eternal war from the very first. Freud says in a footnote in ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’:

... these two instincts (life and death) were struggling with each other *from the very first* ... The opposition between the ego-instincts and the sexual instincts was transformed into one between the ego-instincts and the object instincts ... Our speculations have transformed this opposition into one between the life instincts (Eros) and the death instincts.²¹⁴ (my emphasis)

Freud was feeling his way here, and he clearly calls these ideas ‘speculations’, but nonetheless his linking of Eros and death clearly speaks of the association of death and libido (the latter always closely linked by Freud with the mother). She is the final as well as the first link in the chain that binds the individual to Eros. Thus the “homesickness” for the womb mentioned in ‘The Uncanny’, is also a dream of death. It can additionally be pointed out that the motivating force behind the Oedipal conflict, which is a deadly struggle for psychic survival, was the desire for the mother, which brings patricide and castration in its wake. So the deadly and uncanny mother/lover precipitates, and is contained within, the narrative of the Oedipal conflict itself.

Jonte-Pace is right to point to the importance and relevance of these themes. However, I feel that she goes too far in creating, in opposition to the main current of Freud’s thinking, a concrete, repressed and separate ‘counterthesis’, which she believes combines ideas of the uncanny mother and woman and, which at the same time (as I have quoted earlier): ‘constructs a fragmentary theory of death, immortality, and the afterlife, a tentative analysis of the canniness of Jewish identity to the Jew and the uncanniness of the Jew to the anti-Semite, and a hesitant analysis of the loss of religion and the absence of God.’ I believe that Freud did look at all these issues overtly in his work; some I have discussed in earlier chapters. Although it is undeniable, as Cixous points out, that his analyses could show hesitation, reluctance and uncertainty, Freud nonetheless

did attempt to openly tackle these ideas as part of his major theorising, and to deal with the issues they raised.²¹⁵

It is true, however that Freud centres his theories on the Oedipal Conflict and its repressions (which contain the idea of the deathly and uncanny mother). He does not concern himself with the reasons for, and the state of, incestuous desire for the mother. It is this prior existence which ends with primary repression, and is said to take place before the Oedipal conflicts, that Lacan and Kristeva examine within the context of Freudian thought.

LACAN, KRISTEVA AND THE MATERNAL

Lacan poses “The Real” as a state of nature characterised by primal need, which must be overcome so that signification within the Symbolic is possible. He sees it as a stage of fullness, and a completeness which cannot envisage separation from the world or the Other. As quoted earlier, Derrida refers to this as a time before being, and as: ‘the cry of need before desire ... where exteriority would no longer catch a breath’. According to Lacan, “The Real” is never quite overcome, and continues to exert its influence throughout adult life. Kristeva develops the thesis, however, that there is an early form of recognition of what is *not* the subject. This ‘maternal entity’, as she calls it is opposed to the self, and becomes an uncanny ‘abject’ rather than an ‘object’ within the “primitive” psyche. The abject is not an object, because the latter is an object of desire separate from the drives, while the former is still linked with them. Abjection exists on the borderline of a state where desire makes meaning possible:

The abject has only one quality of the object – that of being opposed to *I*. If the object, however, through its opposition, settles me within the fragile texture of a desire for meaning, which, as a matter of fact makes me ceaselessly and infinitely homologous to it, what is abject, on the contrary, the jettisoned object, is radically excluded and draws me towards the place where meaning collapses²¹⁶

Kristeva explains that: “The “abject” is the sublimation of an object inseparable from the drives. The abject is that pseudo-object that is made up before but appears only within the gaps of secondary repression. The abject would thus be the “object” of primal repression.”²¹⁷

The abject which inhabits a space which is not Symbolic but semiotic, is thus linked with the body’s boundaries and fluids ‘the place where I am not and which permits me to be ...’ The sacred is the means by which edges are placed around this ‘place where meaning collapses.’ Puttermesser writes the name of God with her saliva to animate her Golem, a fluid associated with speech, unlike the blood that is associated with biological birth. The Golem tale, by focusing on male or artificial birth as creation, excludes the maternal entirely from the realm of the sacred. In the abject, Kristeva describes a separation that is never complete. This appears to be a description of the subjective world that Puttermesser is trapped in after death, as she cannot objectify and separate the Other through her desires. These others are merely characters in an artificial world scripted by her. This world, of course, is not without words as Puttermesser, both alive and dead, is overburdened with words. These words are, however, just empty gestures within a void. Puttermesser

could only really talk to herself, but does this mean that her words are not language or discourse?

Echoing Derrida, who insists that there is no “outside” to language, Judith Butler argues: ‘... how do we know that the instinctual object of Kristeva’s discourse is not a construction of the discourse itself? And what grounds do we have for positing this object, this multiplicitous field, as prior to signification? ... if Kristeva’s own theoretical texts are emblematic of the Symbolic, then where are we to find a convincing “outside” to this domain?’²¹⁸ Butler objects that we cannot know that Kristeva’s ‘instinctual object’ is outside signification, but perhaps it could be argued that if a discourse is without the possibility of communication (by virtue of being prior to it) it is, by its very nature, beyond any signification. Butler questions the status of Kristeva’s texts, but Chris Frith, working in the field of neuropsychology, believes that Freudian theory is always problematic because of its reflexive nature. Referring to a Freudian paper he was asked to evaluate he says: ‘(The references used to support the argument) were not about evidence. They were about ideas. Using these references you could trace the development of the ideas through the various followers of Freud back to the original words of the master himself. No evidence was presented as to whether the ideas of the master were right ... I study psychology scientifically.’²¹⁹ An example of this use of authority is where Kristeva tells us that the abject is a precondition to Narcissism, though at the same time is co-existent with it, but does not explain how this seeming contradiction can be possible. It can also lead to circularities such as Jonte-Pace’s use of Freudian theory against Freud’s own theories. This is reminiscent of Derrida’s objection to Levinas’s use of phenomenology mentioned earlier. Also, following Frith, the Freudian concept of “Narcissism” is presented by Kristeva as unquestioned and unsubstantiated fact, resting for its authority on “the master” without being linked to him. Frith might state that “Narcissism” is an ‘idea’ rather than what he would call, ‘scientific’ evidence, which he sees as resting on an objective empirical base. Frith is right to object to such use of Freud’s authority, but theorists like Derrida might point out here that Frith’s pure “objective” ground is arguably metaphysical, an impossibly privileged viewpoint that the scientist cannot claim, but is just another illusory quest for an ordinary truth. It must be said that Frith’s findings on subjectivity, which I quote below, seem to substantiate this objection.

For me, however, what is most problematic is the unquestioning assumptions that lie behind the undefined and ahistorical subject “I” whose concrete presence Kristeva presupposes and everywhere takes for granted. Even if one accepts Kristeva’s idea of a separate stage of development of the self based on the drives, when and how does the individual know itself as “I” and what does this “I” mean? I would argue that this idea of an a priori and stable “I” that changes, while remaining the same “I”, is hard to support and, at the very least, needs some clarification.

CONCLUSION

The Golem’s identity is never resolved but, like the abject/subject relationship remains liminal and unstable, and I would argue that perhaps this idea reflects something of the nature of the self rather than its history. Frith,

who relies on evidence he gathers from using brain scans, patient studies and psychological experiments, comes close to postulating this when he argues that: 'We are embedded in the mental world of others just as we are embedded in the physical world. What we are currently doing and thinking is moulded by whomever we are interacting with. But this is not how we experience ourselves. We experience ourselves as agents with minds of our own. This is the final illusion created by our brains.'²²⁰ In other words, he like Butler and for different reasons, believes that the idea of a stable, persistent and essential "self" is an illusion. Interestingly, he mentions a Golem as part of his argument: 'When we think about how our brain works, we often fall into the trap of creating another smaller brain inside the brain we are trying to explain ... This little me is often referred to as the homunculus.'²²¹ Perhaps it is from this gap between how we sense we really are, and how we experience ourselves, that uncanny unease emerges.

Butler also argues that Kristeva is reproducing Lacan's association of speech and signification with the father, a supposition which arguably posits the maternal, by contrast, as dumb and instinctual. She says: 'Although (Kristeva) effectively exposes the limits of Lacan's efforts to universalize the paternal law in language, she nevertheless concedes that the semiotic is invariably subordinate to the Symbolic, ... (and) the paternal law.'²²² Even if the concept of "semiotic" is uncritically accepted, it can be contended that there is no reason why feminine/female state of being must be "semiotic", or that a male child is barred from this condition by virtue of his sex.

For Kristeva the death of the mother is vital to individuation. As quoted above, she states starkly that: 'for man and for woman the loss of the mother is a biological and psychic necessity, the first step on the way to becoming autonomous.'²²³ Kristeva here seems to echo Klein's theories of primary aggression when she speaks of the necessity to eroticise, transpose or sublimate this 'matricidal drive'. She argues additionally that if this drive is hindered, it is inverted on the self. Here Kristeva seems to imply that this death is 'the first step' of the 'biological and psychic' journey towards individuation which is when the self becomes fully established as 'autonomous', yet this self has, as I discuss above, seemingly existed from the beginning, and its 'biological and psychic' status is far from clear.

the maternal object having been introjected, the depressive or melancholic putting to death of the self is what follows, instead of matricide ... Thus the feminine as image of death is not only a screen for my fear of castration, but also an imaginary safety catch for the matricidal drive that without such a representation, would pulverize me into melancholia if it did not drive me to crime. No, it is She, who is death-bearing, therefore I do not kill myself in order to kill her but I attack her, harass her, represent her ...²²⁴

Kristeva, contrary to Jonte-Pace's separation and following Freud, clearly links the "feminine" as an image of death, to castration (and therefore to the Oedipal 'masterplot'). She extends the image beyond this into suggesting a safe outlet of the 'matricidal drive' through "representation". This theory of the 'matricidal drive' is open to question, and it may be significant that Freudian theory developed at a time when the theme of death and the mother was frequently used in art and so was "in the air" at the time. The deadly

woman was a very important symbol in Lang's film, *Metropolis*. "Expressionists" like Egon Schiele and Alfred Kubin, artist and illustrator of *The Sandman* and Meyrink's *The Golem*, (mentioned in Chapter One), and "Symbolists" like Klimt, also pictured the theme of the uncanny mother.

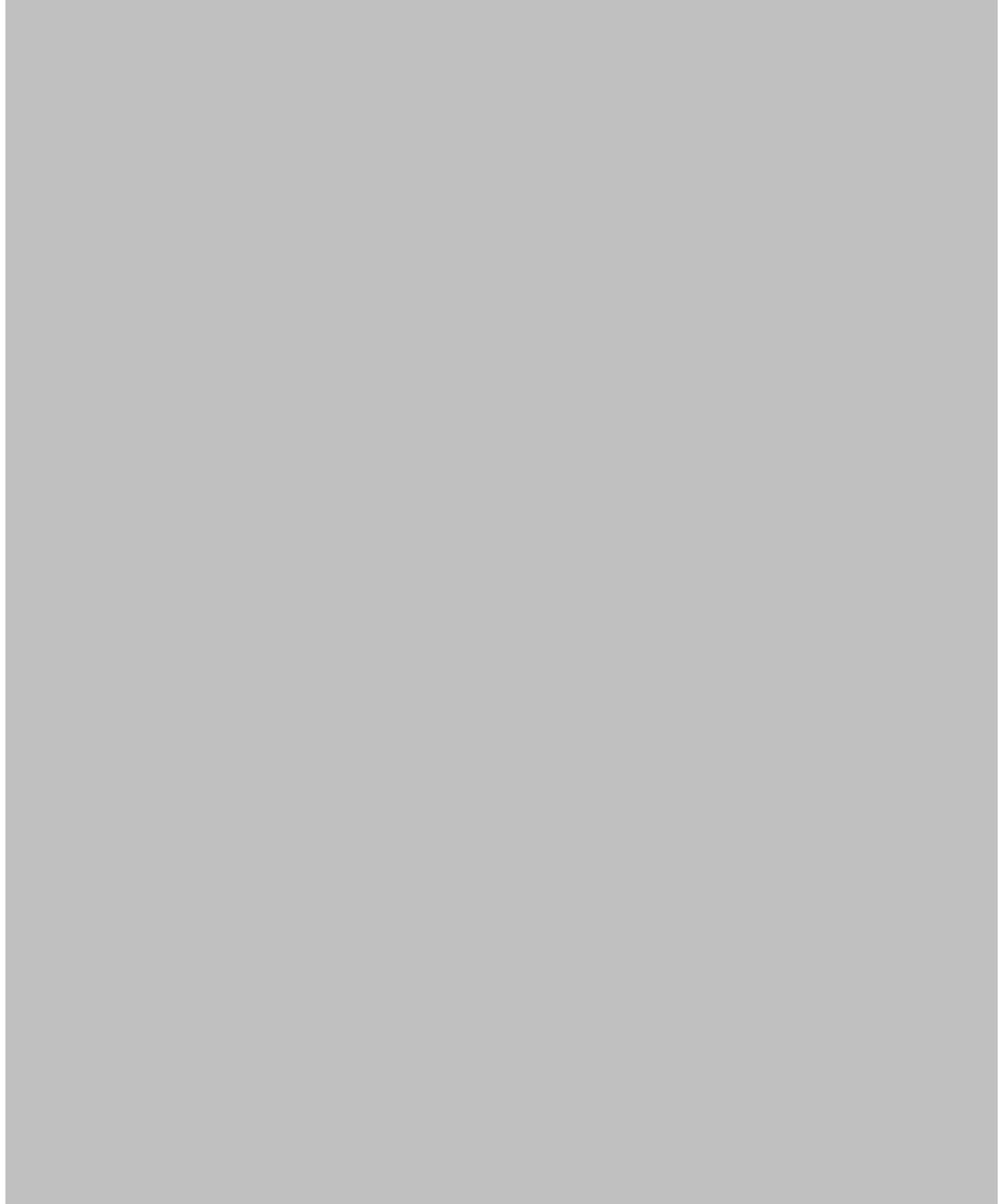


Fig. 17: Egon Schiele. *Dead Mother*. Oil on board. 1910. 32.4 x 25.8cm. Private Collection. Photo Fischer Fine Art Ltd, London. F. Whitford, *Egon Schiele* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1981)105. Fig. 76. Print.



Fig. 18: Gustav Klimt. *Hope I*. 1903. Oil on canvas. 189 x 67 cm.
National Gallery Ottawa, *Klimt*. (Rochester, Kent: Grange Books, 2004)
114. Print.



Fig. 19: Alfred Kubin. *L'Oeuf*. 1901/2. Plume et encre de Chine, lavis, crachis sur papier cadastre
15.8 x 23.8cm. Graphische Sammlung Albertina Vienne
Alfred Kubin 1877-1959. Musee d'Ixelles, Snoek-Ducaju & Zoon, Pandora, Catalogue
Exposition Musee d'Ixelles 21.11.1996 – 26.01.1997. Print.

One reason for the paradoxical relationship between the *heimliche* and the *unheimliche* is the association between pre- and post-existence, birth and burial (reflected in the ancient Biblical text of Job), and brought out by Ozick in her Golem tale. Art, religion and myth, with their equivocal meanings can be tools for extending signification within language. Although Firth might deny this, 'The Uncanny' could be seen therefore, as Freud's first attempt to map out, within a "scientific Symbolic", the world of the death drive.

CHAPTER 5 – DISLOCATION AND THE UNCANNY

INTRODUCTION

I have argued that the Golem can symbolise a sense of dislocation or crisis of identity, something that is simultaneously "I" and "other". The uncanny in Freud's account can also be experienced as a confused hesitation between "real" and imagined space, the known and the unknowable. This split between external or "real" empirical space outside the body, (perceived by the senses in what Freud called "reality testing"), and internal, personal and

psychological space inside the individual perceiver has, long before Freud, been under scrutiny and is the central theme I want to explore in this chapter. I want, therefore, to focus on the relationship between the uncanny and philosophy, with particular reference to space. Hence I examine spatial and architectural imagery used by E.T.A. Hoffmann and Meyrink, both of whom mobilised the Golem myth to reflect the turbulence of their times. For Meyrink the Ghetto, in which the Golem appears, is a nightmarish place - at once familiar and unfamiliar - that exemplifies Expressionist ideas of uncanny disintegration and dislocation. The Ghetto appears in his novel as a "Jewish space" which seems to exist within as well as without. Its ancient strangeness and foreignness is lodged in the heart of an interwar Germany moving towards catastrophe. This atmosphere is wonderfully captured in the Wegener film it inspired, which I have discussed earlier, and which I look at once again in this chapter.

Hoffmann was born in 1776 and died in 1822. He was knowledgeable about psychology and this interest was reflected in his stories. He was also very interested in the philosophy of the day and, with great wit, challenged some of the Enlightenment's more naive assumptions, especially the belief in the metaphysical nature of reason. Like Meyrink he reflected the uncertainties and dislocations of a period of change and war. It may be no accident that both of them wrote ironically about the pomposities and militarism of their age, and paid a high price for their irreverence. Hoffmann, in fact, died before the authorities could prosecute and ruin him. Hoffmann's tales, again like Meyrink's, utilise the Jew as a metaphor for the uncanny yet familiar stranger. Simultaneously insiders and outsiders, as Gay has pointed out, they were reminders of the instability, strangeness and terror lurking beneath the familiar and the homely.

THE ABYSS

Freud points to an unknowable psychic space in 'The Uncanny' when he describes himself as follows: '(I was lost in a) ... provincial town in Italy ... in a quarter unknown to me ... Nothing but painted women were to be seen at the windows of the small houses.'²²⁵ In his haste to get away Freud loses his way and returns, no less than three times, to the same place. He draws attention to similar disturbing experiences, when one is: 'caught in a mist ... lost in a mountain forest, every attempt to find the marked or familiar path may bring one back again to one and the same spot, which one can identify by some particular landmark. Or one may wander about in a dark, strange room, looking for the door or electric switch and collide time after time with the same piece of furniture.'²²⁶ Here an oppressive sense of the uncanniness of unfamiliar and threatening space is exacerbated by endless and mechanical compulsion. This alienation forces a confrontation with the terrifying possibility of death and annihilation.

In the previous chapter I mentioned Nochlin's and Iversen's discussions of Hopper and the uncanny. Particularly apposite to this spatial aspect of the uncanny under discussion is Iversen's description of Rachel Whiteread's sculpture, *Ghost*: '... its monumental mausoleum-like whiteness and simplicity contribute to this sense of an irrecoverable past ... it ... (induces) viewers to vacillate between comforting and sinister thoughts ... by rendering voids solid, the sculpture creates a sense of suffocating over-presence ... The work relates to

familiar domestic spaces, especially those inhabited by children.²²⁷ I believe that there is a parallel here to the sense of fright evoked by Freud's description of a familiar room made unfamiliar and dangerous by darkness. As Iversen points out, these are often fears remembered from childhood where the sense of vulnerability is heightened. When empty space becomes solid, as in Whitehead's sculpture, the inhabitants of this space can no longer be understood as substantial. Instead they evaporate into the nothingness of death.

Rudiger Safranski, in his description of Heidegger's concept of "Nothingness", evokes, in spatial terms, the uncanny sense of alienation conjured up by dread in the face of the individual's possible death. Death as reality can never be envisaged, except perhaps in a place where we have no meaning: 'The individual for whom reality slips away in anxiety thereby experiences the drama of distance. The worrying distance proves that we are not entirely of this world, that we are being driven beyond it, not into another world, but into a void.'²²⁸ This dread is ultimately generated, in Heidegger's account, by the individual's confrontation with death. In "being-towards-death", the individual sees his life as finite, and is aware that he is "held out" over an abyss of non-existence. Peter Eli Gordon mentions that Heidegger uses the word "*unheimlichkeit*" in this sense of 'not being at home' and in 'being grounded in the un-ground of nothingness'. He quotes Heidegger as follows: 'through the event of homelessness (*Unheimlichkeit*) the whole of the being is disclosed.'²²⁹ Heidegger says :

What we *first* hear is *never* noises or complexes of sounds, but the creaking waggon and the motor-cycle ... *it requires a very artificial and complicated frame of mind to 'hear' a 'pure noise'*. The fact that motor-cycles and waggons are what we proximally hear is the phenomenal evidence that in every case Dasein as being-in-the-world, already dwells alongside what is ready-to-hand-within-the-world; it certainly does not dwell proximally alongside 'sensations'; nor would it first have to give shape to the swirl of sensations to provide the springboard from which the subject leaps of and finally arrives at a 'world'. *Dasein as essentially understanding, is proximally alongside what is understood.*²³⁰ (my emphasis)

In Chapter Two I have discussed Derrida's analysis of Heidegger and the possibility of the question; here I want to point to another aspect raised by Heidegger's concept of a subject grounded in questioning and understanding. It is possible to argue that by posing an 'essentially understanding' subject²³¹, Heidegger denies that an unground of uncanny nothingness can exist at all. If sensations were always and already marked by concept, there could not be a sensation of groundlessness, as we would always experience ourselves as grounded by language (and understanding), and therefore even this sensation of groundlessness would be experienced as so grounded. I would argue that anxiety comes from a *bodily* sensation that cannot be conceptualized and "placed", and therefore that there is sometimes a gap between what we feel/experience and what we know (as I indicate below in my analysis of *Hamlet*, and in my discussion in Chapter Three of the 'temporal delay of trauma' noticed by Iversen). It is in this sensation of uncertainty and terror that the uncanny lies. It is the suspicion that there lies behind the everyday, something that cannot be completely grasped and controlled. These anxiety-generated episodes are disquieting and haunting because, in spite of being

based on lived experience, they seem to be simultaneously both internal and external. Freud's examples reflect scenarios in nightmares, where one's goal or destination can never be reached, and the dreamer seems doomed to fear and frustration.

GERMAN PHILOSOPHY AND THE UNKNOWABLE

German Enlightenment and Idealist philosophers like Kant, Fichte and Schelling went further than Freud, and drew on much older thinking to pose questions about the limits of empiricism and subjectivity. In this way, echoing Plato, they posed the possibility of an ultimate reality beyond sensory verification that can be reached by mental processes. These philosophers concerned themselves with aesthetic questions as well, and both Hoffmann and Meyrink were conscious of - and influenced by - the philosophical ideas of their day. The German Enlightenment, with which Jewish thinkers like Moses Mendelssohn²³² engaged directly, is the background against which Freud operated²³³ and I believe that some awareness of this can add to our understanding of his ideas on the uncanny. Mendelssohn developed a friendship with Kant in the 1750s, and Kant quoted him in his work. Thus German and Jewish thinkers contributed to the philosophy of the Enlightenment, although, as Peter Eli Gordon points out: 'Their partnership ... was almost always marked by ambivalence'²³⁴. Jewish thinking was also integral because of philosophers like Schelling's awareness of, and interest in, the ideas of Baruch Spinoza on "substance". Obviously, because of the complexity and scope of these philosophical ideas, my account must be circumscribed by my interest in the nexus of the Golem and the uncanny, but I feel it will demonstrate how the relationship between them operates. With this aim in mind, I am going to look closely at passages from the tales of E.T.A. Hoffmann in the context of both Freudian theory and Enlightenment ideas concerning the unknowable. I shall also be examining some examples from *The Golem* by Meyrink as part of my argument.

Anthony Vidler links philosophical concerns with those of the uncanny, and draws attention to the close relationship between the uncanny and architectural space: 'Architecture has been intimately linked to the notion of the uncanny since the end of the eighteenth century ... architecture reveals the deep structure of the uncanny in a more than analogical way'²³⁵. Vidler sees the uncanny as '*finding its first home* in the short stories of E.T.A. Hoffmann and Edgar Allan Poe ... on a psychological level, its play was one of doubling'.²³⁶ (my emphasis). It is true that doubling and specularity are important themes of the uncanny, and are a vital aspect of Hoffmann's and Meyrink's tales. It is undeniable, also, that modern manifestations of the uncanny were affected, as Vidler states, by the historical changes, brought about by the nineteenth and early twentieth century. I believe, however, that the uncanny goes back much further than Hoffmann and Poe, and is much wider and more universal than this analysis implies. The uncanny is present whenever anxiety glimpses the abyss revealed by the breaching of the space between what is known and unknown, possible and impossible, alive and dead.

I feel that this statement by Vidler demonstrates a modern temptation to overlook the fact that Freud's essay on the uncanny was an explorative

attempt to pin down an already existent idea from a single point of view, and in a single point in time, within his new discipline of psychoanalysis. I would argue that this is an oversight partly caused by viewing psychoanalytic ideas as radically distinct from philosophical ones, whereas many of their concerns and context within German culture, are remarkably similar. (Although for Freud the idea of the uncanny was manifest in “primitive” cultures as well). This means that some ideas, long considered by philosophy, can appear to have been “discovered” by Freud, and are then seen only in terms of his inquiries and examples. Thus discussions of the uncanny can slip unnoticed back and forth between analysis of Freud’s insights on the uncanny and the use of them as authority, overlooking a wider and earlier context. I feel that this is demonstrated by Vidler’s belief that the uncanny sprung fully formed from Freud’s examples. I would argue that, far from providing the uncanny with ‘its first home’, writers like Hoffmann drew on existing ideas, and that the uncanny was expressed in literature and philosophy long before they wrote their stories. Incidentally, Vidler tacitly concedes this, as he comments on Freud’s references to Schelling, which I shall discuss later in more detail. It is undeniable that Hoffmann, Meyrink and Freud were men of their times. It is indisputable that their work would necessarily reflect the thinking of Enlightenment Germany, and the development of its thought through the nineteenth and twentieth century via Nietzsche. However, I believe it is important to stress the fact that the ideas with which they and philosophers such as Kant and his successors were dealing, did not begin with them but that, on the contrary, they drew on thinking that went back as far as Plato. Heidegger in his existential philosophy, developed after Nietzsche, was to ground his ideas in the finite and limited being of *Dasein*, who is bounded by death, and constrained by his world. However even here, there is a beyond implied by the spatial metaphors of ‘not-being-at home’ in this world, and the threat of an abyss of meaninglessness below its edge.

UNCANNY ALIENATION

Many of Shakespeare’s plays explore the uncanny, and *Hamlet* is a pre-eminent example. Hoffmann, like many writers of the time²³⁷ (for instance Goethe), were very much aware of Shakespeare’s plays. It could be suggested that Shakespeare, as they did, lived in a turbulent and uncertain political climate, and so echoed some of their concerns. It is possible that his work, written as the Elizabethan era was ending with no settled succession, the threat of religious war and foreign invasion ever present, may have struck a chord because it reflected something of the unstable political atmosphere in which people lived. I will discuss *The Choosing of the Bride*, and its echoing of *The Merchant of Venice* later. This knowledge of Shakespeare’s work by German authors, was due to some excellent translations which became widely read and appreciated. *Hamlet* starts with a stunning example of the familiar becoming uncanny and doubling, as Hamlet and his friend and fellow student, Horatio, are confronted with inexplicable horror of Hamlet’s father, the dead King of Denmark, returning as a ghost to haunt the margins of his home.

When Prince Hamlet returns to his family castle at Elsinore, the officers responsible for the guarding of the castle, Bernardo and Marcellus, confront him and Horatio with a terrifying apparition which has been haunting the

battlements. Bernardo stresses the familiarity of the figure, as if to underline its strangeness. Both Hamlet and Horatio as 'scholars' are expected to understand things both natural and unnatural:

Ber. In the same figure, like the king that's dead.

Mar. Thou art a scholar; speak to it,

Ber. Looks it not like the king? Mark it and wonder Horatio.

Hor. Most like: - it harrows me with fear²³⁸

The king is familiarly himself, but as a ghost he is deeply alien. This sense of strangeness and fear is underlined by Horatio's comment that: 'Before my God, I might not this believe without the sensible and true avouch of mine own eyes.' The senses are stressed here by the words 'sensible' and 'true'. The senses should reveal only what is rational in an empirical world, but instead sight shows here a vision which is believed and indeed *known* to be impossible. Reality has been radically breached by unreality, and life by death. This scene confronts us with the major theme of this, and many other of Shakespeare's plays; the world and time itself as being "out of joint" with an alienated present. The uncanny feeds on this disturbance in the "rightness" of the world, where the familiar has become unfamiliar and threatening. This dislocation is so profound it destabilizes the experience of reality itself, and the resulting disorientation evokes horror and fear. The sufferer stands on the very edge of Heidegger's "void".

The ghost appears on the battlements forming the outer edge and borders of Hamlet's "unhomely" home, which has been contaminated by his father's unnatural killing. Hamlet's precarious balancing act between action and inaction, sanity and madness, life and death, mirrors that of Nathanael in *The Sandman*. Hamlet, like Nathanael, uses art in such a way as to echo the medium in which they appear. Nathanael writes a letter, which duplicates the action of the story, while Hamlet commissions "a play within a play", mirroring the situation within the castle. This use of *mise en abyme* adds to the surreal confusion between reality and its opposite, and madness, violence and death follow behind, closely and inevitably.

Both Nathanael and Hamlet are destroyed because love, compassion and friendship, which might have been their salvation, can have no purchase in their disjointed and dislocated worlds, where internal psychology and mental instability echo the dreadful events taking place out of their control outside. In *Hamlet*, as in *The Sandman*, the close link between philosophy, art and the uncanny is revealed. Hamlet and Nathanael are both haunted, hobbled and ultimately destroyed, by their own shadow-like double; the lover, friend and son they might have been had things been different. In *Hamlet* this is instigated by the father's armed ghost, doubling and reminding of the familiar and loved father he once was. Hamlet also becomes dead to his world and armed against it, and so life is consumed by death. Ophelia and his mother become hateful to Hamlet and both die; Ophelia, because of his rejection and his mother because of poison meant for him. Love has become mechanical lust and related to death. Nathanael, likewise, can see only death in the eyes of his lover, Clara. She is later doubled by the inhuman bride, Olympia, who brings the destruction thus foreshadowed, and the murderous Coppélius, who

destroys Nathanael's father, mirrors Hamlet's uncle, the unnatural killer of his own brother.

THE SANDMAN AND THE SHATTERING OF REALITY

It is interesting that this metaphorical concept of "being out of joint",²³⁹ which is found in *Hamlet*, is described as literal reality in *The Sandman*. After Nathanael is found and threatened by Coppelius, Nathanael's father pleads to allow his son to keep his eyes. Coppelius seems to agree and then cries out: '... 'let's examine the mechanism of his hands and feet.' And with these words he seized me so hard that my joints made a cracking noise, dislocated my hands and feet, and put them back in various sockets. 'They don't fit properly! It was all right as it was! The Old Man knew what he was doing.'²⁴⁰

This brilliant and chilling passage with its horrible evocation of the sounds of dislocation, straightforwardly and factually represented in the story, illustrates a literal displacement simultaneously physical and psychological, fantastic but horribly real. Hoffman forcefully shows how a soulless mechanical inquiry with its cold and aggressive dissection of the secrets of nature and the spirit, destroys for ever Nathanael's mental and physical integrity. That which should be hidden is cruelly revealed by this curiosity, and the results are terrible and permanent. The promise to leave Nathanael his eyes was only provisional, and this threat haunts and maddens him. The use of the mechanical lens of the binoculars fatally takes away his natural sight and finally destroys him. Hoffmann could be seen here to reflect Kant's and later philosophers' insights into the nature of the mechanical, and its inferiority to nature. I shall develop this point later.

It is possible, also, that this episode can be seen to reveal, on one level, the psychological feelings of dislocation that Hoffmann felt in the split between his unsatisfying legal career which opposed itself to the spiritual sense of harmony and "rightness" he experienced in his love of music as well as in his writing. As Freud notes in 'The Uncanny', it paralleled events in his personal life. His father deserted his family, and he was replaced by a hated uncle. In *The Sandman* there is apparent an agonising sense of not being able to fit the world in which the individual finds himself. We too are forced to feel, almost physically, what it is like to be a Golem made by society's pressures, as opposed to the natural creativity of the God, called disrespectfully by Coppelius, "The Old Man". God is seen here in terms of a mere technician, devoid of love and creativity. Hoffmann contrasts this cold, mechanical curiosity with the natural love, compassion and tenderness of his mother. 'A warm, gentle breath passed over my face, and I woke from a death-like sleep; my mother was bending over me (she kissed and cuddled) her darling boy who was thus restored to life.'²⁴¹ The mother breathes life into him again and he is reborn from death, but he can never recover from this violation; his life and his very being are now permanently "out of joint". It is as if Nathanael, after the assault by Coppelius, and his revival by his mother, becomes split into two people, one of which is a Golem that belongs to, and is ultimately reclaimed by, Coppelius. The unnatural Golem-like puppet that Coppelius created by his disjointing seems to have taken on a phantasmic life of its own, an existence that is separate from the living Nathanael, that his mother lovingly revived. In a sense his mother, by breathing life into Nathanael,

gives birth to him a second time only now, because of his divided nature, he could only ever be spectral and ineffectual, and never whole. These two aspects are shadowed by the two brides, one living and one dead. Clara, Nathanael's human sweetheart outlives him and goes on to a cosy Beidermeier marriage²⁴² with children, while his mechanical bride, like him, is ultimately doomed. In death Nathanael's shattered head mirrors his shattered mind, soul and body. Coppelius's violation can never be overcome or repressed.

PHILOSOPHY AND THE UNCANNY

Both Hoffmann and Meyrink were very aware of psychology²⁴³, and were also influenced by the Enlightenment philosophical ideas of time and space of Kant, and his successors like Fichte and Schelling. Vidler points out that it is Schelling who originates the idea of the uncanny as that which should be hidden, but which nevertheless comes to light. Vidler says: 'His (Freud's) long analysis of Hoffmann's tale, "The Sandman" persuaded him that on one level Schelling had been correct in ascribing the feeling of the uncanny to the return of "a hidden familiar thing that has undergone repression and emerged from it ..."²⁴⁴ It is worth noting that these ideas were themselves built on a foundation of much older theorising on these subjects.²⁴⁵ Many of Freud's major ideas, such as repression and the Unconscious, were also discussed by Schopenhauer²⁴⁶ who was working in a directly Kantian tradition.

Kant, a pillar of the Enlightenment, whose thinking was at first Newtonian and scientific, was changed forever by an insight of David Hume's. Hume pointed out that causal connection, previously thought of as structuring and explaining the world, cannot be proved to exist by experience. Kant suggested that our own faculties provide the key to any investigations into the limits of knowledge. He denied the possibility of knowledge outside our perceptions, but did not conclude from this that nothing exists outside them. In other words, what cannot be perceived cannot be known. Therefore subjects like God, the soul or immortality can be neither proved nor disproved.

If the only world we can know is created for us as a result of processing by the senses, what remains is outside the possibility of human knowledge and must remain for ever unknown, or as Derrida has put it, a 'non-concept'. So even within Enlightenment structuring of reality, the possibility of a dimension lay which was ultimately mysterious, and forever beyond possible validation by empirical experience. This dimension, beyond experience, was not subject to human time and space which is individual, even personal (though it has been argued by Freud and others, that the Unconscious is not subject to it either).²⁴⁷ This insight has been strikingly echoed by modern physics²⁴⁸. It can be argued that the involuntary and fearful acknowledgement of the alien otherness which is sensed beneath the "real" and conscious life of the everyday, is an important source of the uncanny. In spite of Kant's many unflattering descriptions of Judaism, this concept is close to the ancient Jewish idea of God, reinforced by thinkers like Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, who linked German and Jewish philosophy together. God is seen as being the unknowable and unnameable, who is

mysteriously both inside and outside this world. Kant tried to find where the limit of possible proof was, and how intimations of the empirically unknowable metaphysical world can be shown up by reason, but he firmly refused to bring the metaphysical closer than this. It was this void that Kant's idealist successors, with the exception of Schopenhauer, tried to fill with, for example, aesthetics.²⁴⁹

Creativity, artistic, natural and mechanical - linked to ideas of cause and effect - prominent in many of the Golem tales, was an important concern of Kant and his successors. Kant argues as follows in *The Critique of Judgement*:

In a watch one part is the instrument by which the movement of the others is effected, but one wheel is not the efficient cause of the production of the other ... For this reason also the producing cause of the watch and its form is not contained in the nature of this material but lies outside the watch in a being that can act according to ideas of a whole which its causality makes possible.²⁵⁰

He goes on to discuss nature and artistic creation, but he does not see the latter as part of nature, but as the product of a rational being – working from without. Nature ‘*organizes itself*, and does so in each species of its organized products – following a single pattern, certainly as to general features, but nevertheless admitting deviations calculated to secure self-preservation under particular circumstances.’²⁵¹ (my emphasis). Therefore the idea of a Creator of nature, whose methods could be understood or commented upon by us, must be discounted. He concludes that;

... the organization of nature has nothing analogous to any causality known to us ... Natural beauty may justly be termed the analogue of art, for it is only ascribed to the objects in respect of reflection upon the *external* intuition of them and, therefore, only on account of their superficial form. But *intrinsic natural perfection*, as possessed by things that are only possible as *physical ends*, and that are therefore called organisms, is unthinkable and inexplicable on any analogy to any known physical or natural, agency, not even excepting – since we ourselves are part of nature in the widest sense – the suggestion of any strictly apt analogy to human art.²⁵²

A human can therefore never be created in a mechanical and Golem-like fashion, but only as part of nature, in a way unknown to us. This idea is reflected in Hoffmann's description of the disjuncting of the young Nathanael. Here Kant does not say that there is no God - he was, in fact, a Christian - but that if He did exist (and this is beyond proof or disproof), both He and his methods of creation would be “beyond understanding”.

Kant goes on to discuss the role of poetry which is a product of “*genius*”:

It invigorates the mind by letting it feel its faculty – free spontaneous, and independent of determination by nature ... It plays with semblance (*schein*) which it produces at will, but not as an instrument of deception; for its avowed pursuit is merely one of play (*Spiel*), which however, understanding may turn to good account and employ for its own purpose.²⁵³

It is in this disinterested ‘play’ that separates us from the inscrutable determinism that we are locked into as part of nature. This freedom, as well

as pure reason or understanding, (which for Kant is a priori and demonstrated, for example, in the science of Mathematics), takes us outside our place both within nature and our own empirical world, and intimates the metaphysical. Additionally, Kant argues reason or understanding must always temper the irrational flights of inspiration or the poet and artist becomes a madman.²⁵⁴

TWO WORLDS

In a series of letters in 1794, Fichte discusses the role of the artist as creator (later Schelling was to take the idea of poetry even further). He, like Kant, sees the interpretation and communication of the aesthetic by “genius” as noteworthy. This creativity is not just necessary for individual development but, like Hegel, he takes the idea of the aesthetic much further than Kant. For Schelling the aesthetic is not just a means for escaping our limitations but creates worlds, and through it we can reach our ultimate destination within the unity of “the Spirit” which, like the Hebraic God, is “one”²⁵⁵: There is a parallel here to Ozick’s reflections on the relationship of creativity to God.

It is the capacity (*Sinn*) for the aesthetic which gives us our first firm viewpoint for introspection. Genius resides there and reveals its hidden depths for the rest of us through art, its companion. It is the same sense (*Sinn*) which gives living expression to the well-known and well-formed self within us. Spirit seeks the development of the inner life in man; the development of drive, and indeed of a particular drive which raises him as an intelligent being over the whole sensible world, and removes him from its influence. The sensible world is diverse ... The Spirit is one.²⁵⁶

Fichte denigrates the work of a technician, who like Coppelius examines and constructs without love; ‘... the mere technician will never with his highest skill produce anything but a mechanical work, which at the very most might induce one to marvel at its structure.’²⁵⁷ Love is necessary in the linking of man with the ideal. But nature is not enough; the intervention of the supernatural is necessary. Against Rousseau he argues: ‘The natural man cannot by his own strength raise himself to the supernatural; he must be raised thereto by the force of the supernatural. This self-forming and self-supporting life of the idea in man manifests itself as love.’ It is interesting that Fichte uses the word drive (*Trieb*) in his work, in much the same sense as Freud, i.e. as a response beyond the senses to desire (which can be unconscious), although, unlike Freud’s reasoning, it is metaphysical rather than a force of nature. Fichte goes further than Kant and Hoffmann in his discussion of two worlds; that of the spirit (or in Kant’s case more strictly defined as a world outside the empirical), and that of the “real” world of experience.

Hoffmann echoed the Kantian/Idealist dualistic separation of the empirical world from its metaphysical counterpart. Hoffmann’s connection with philosophy has already been noted. Neil Cornwell writes: ‘His (Hoffmann’s) earlier inspiration seemed to come from Schelling.’²⁵⁸ Hoffmann attended the University of Königsberg while Kant was teaching there and E.F. Bleiler believes that: ‘While Hoffmann did not formally take courses from Kant, it still seems certain that he attended occasional lectures.’²⁵⁹ In any case Kant was massively influential and his ideas must have been constantly discussed by interested students. I believe evidence of this is that Hoffmann developed

what he called the ‘Serapiontic Principle’ which postulated a very particular relationship between reality and the imagination.

Hoffmann belonged to an informal circle in Berlin called the Serapion Brethren, which was founded on 14th November 1818, the feast-day of St Serapion. In 1819-21 he published four series of stories called *The Serapion Brethren*, which relate a fictitious meeting between this group and the saint in a wood near Bamberg. During this fantastic meeting, St Serapion told them that the mind was absolutely superior to the senses and, when these differed, the mind must always be right. However, the Brethren disagreed. Ritchie Robertson says: ‘The Brethren conclude that ‘Serapion’ possessed a true poetic imagination, but went astray in assigning absolute authority to the visions of his inner world’ Robertson then quotes Hoffmann directly:

Poor Serapion, your madness consisted only in the fact that some hostile star deprived you of the awareness of the duality by which our entire earthly existence is governed. There does exist an inner world, and so does the spiritual power of beholding it in full clarity, in the supreme brilliance of active life; but it is our earthly birthright that the external world in which we are lodged serves as the lever that sets that power in motion. Inner phenomena are absorbed into the circle formed around us by external phenomena, and which our minds can only transcend in dark, mysterious intuitions that *never become distinct images*. (my emphasis)²⁶⁰

As Hoffmann puts it, the world in which we live can act as a lever to power the imagination, but it can only ever allow us to faintly perceive the metaphysical space which awakens our longings. The spiritual power of the imagination can help us to perceive an external reality with a full clarity during our ‘earthly existence’, but this still is only ‘our’ faint version of fully transcendent reality. Therefore ‘in the supreme brilliance of active earthly life’, we can only ever apprehend this transcendent reality indirectly, though clearly, through visions produced by our own inner world. The images that the imagination supply can only, therefore, be mere approximations, impressions or reflections, perhaps rather like Platonic forms. This is one reason why Serapion’s belief that his inner visions, supplied by his poetic imagination, can provide absolute authority ‘is mad’. Also, reason is vital to temper the subjectivity of inner revelations. Here, as Kant did, Hoffmann seems to be arguing for a balance between rationality and empiricism.

Hoffmann echoes Schopenhauer’s belief that music has the very special ability to put us in touch with this ‘unknown realm’. Hoffmann, who was a famous music critic, makes his ideas clearest in his discussion of music, most notably, instrumental music. (He also seemed to believe that poetry could reveal the transcendent realm, though not as successfully as music). Nathanael, as a poet, longs to reach this world through his poetry, but as he is irreparably damaged, it eludes and ultimately destroys him:

When we speak of the independence of music, are we not really referring to instrumental music which ... expresses the pure essence of this particular art alone? This is the most romantic of the arts – one might say, the only pure romantic art – for its sole subject is the infinite ... Music discloses an unknown realm to man as a world that has nothing in common with the outer material world in which he lives and for which he abandons all concrete feelings to surrender himself to an inexpressible longing.²⁶¹

Music, because of its abstraction from the material world, can according to Hoffmann, best evoke this longing which draws us towards the unknown and unknowable infinity. Hoffmann even repeats his image of the lever here and says: ‘Beethoven’s music moves the lever of fear, of horror, of terror, of pain, and awakens just that infinite longing which is the essence of Romanticism.’²⁶² Here the unknown realm is clearly linked with fear, and therefore the uncanny²⁶³. Hoffmann makes his thoughts even clearer in his discussion of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, where he speaks in terms similar to the passage on Serapion:

Through the cunning of man’s hereditary enemy, the thought was planted in Don Juan’s soul, the pleasure of the flesh, could actually achieve here on earth that which exists in our hearts as a heavenly promise only, that longing for infinity which weds us to heaven. Fleeing restlessly from one beautiful woman to another enjoying their charms with the most burning ardour to the point of drunken and exhausted satiety ... Juan is finally doomed to find all earthly life insipid and shallow. Moreover ... he revolted against the delusion which, seeming to be the best life could offer, had ensnared him so bitterly.²⁶⁴

Here it possible to see the uncanny as a void situated beneath obtainable earthly life, and the unobtainable heavenly promise. There is an interesting parallel with Nathanael who thought he found the “Eternal” in the mechanical charms of Olympia (whose charms were also musical), and the living love of Clara. Both attractions were delusional. The best that can be achieved ‘here on earth’ is a promise and a hint of that other reality which, once glimpsed, forever beguiles. However, in dread and fear this beguiling reality can appear as a terrifying abyss, as Heidegger pointed out. Anxiety can, in Hoffmann’s terms, not only reveal the beauties of ‘heavenly promise’ it can also move ‘the lever’ and reveal the uncanny emptiness of the void beneath human existence. Safranski argues that for Heidegger the image of the bridge traces the space between two worlds and two kinds of experience:

Heidegger says that by the passage of the “mortals,” the bridge, links the earth with the sky. On ancient bridges, the venture of bridging this perilous delight at standing and walking in to the open between heaven and earth, is specifically represented and celebrated – in bridge sculptures, in the statues of saints on the bridges, which encourage confidence and reflect gratitude for the gift of life, for this sojourn in the open expanse between heaven and earth, for safe conduct during passage.²⁶⁵

A fearful look into the abyss beneath the bridge could cause dizziness and a fatal fall, but so, also, could one trip up and fall over while staring at the sky. Hoffmann’s work shows that there is a tension between the optimistic exaltation caused by contemplation of the place of ‘heavenly promise’, and the pessimism of the fearful abyss of nothingness, which is generated, as Heidegger says, by ‘fear, of horror, of terror, of pain ...’. Thus uncanny doubt exists even within the Idealist’s optimistic vision of unity with ‘the Heavenly realm’. I believe that it is into this void beneath heaven and earth that both Nathanael and Hamlet plunge. Significantly Nathanael falls from a church tower; religion has no power to raise him to the Infinite heavens.

ROMANTIC LONGING

The Sandman story also bears a striking resemblance to Goethe’s *The*

Sufferings of Young Werther (Die Leiden des Jungen Werthers), which also echoes Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. This short novel was originally published in 1774. Werther is an artist who falls in love with a woman called Lotte, even though she is already engaged. Although Lotte returns his love, she will not abandon her fiancée. As Lotte can therefore never return his love, Werther decides to commit suicide. However, Morse argues that this love of Lotte is not the only, or even the main, reason for Werther's decision to take his own life:

Werther is, in some sense an author – if only the author of his letters ... His torments are not purely and simply those of an unhappy love and a man at odds with society; they also express the predicament of anyone who would (suffer from) the uncertainty and difficulty of tapping the sources of inner creativity; the near insuperable task of formulating the mystery of subjectivity and giving focus to a consciousness that fissures under the impact of introspection ... Werther perishes from the very impenetrability of the subjectivity he exults in ...²⁶⁶

In support of this argument Morse quotes directly from Goethe's text: 'O my friend! Then when twilight invests my eyes, and the world about me and the heaven above me rests wholly in my soul like the image of a woman one loves – then often I am all longing and I think: ah could you express all that again, could you breathe onto paper that which lives in you so fully, so warmly, so that it would become the reflection of your soul as your soul is the mirror of the infinite God!'²⁶⁷

The reference to the eyesight, and the doomed attempt to reach the infinite via love, parallels Nathanael's story, which also uses letters to relate events. The hesitation and paralysis evoked here recalls Hamlet. Morse, however states his case simply in terms of subjectivity. I believe that this means that he misses the point, that in Romantic terms, Werther doesn't only perish from the 'the difficulty of tapping the sources of inner creativity', the 'impenetrability of the subjectivity he exults in' and a 'consciousness that fissures under the impact of impenetrability' but his destruction, (which is seen as a form of transfiguration), is also caused by a fatal longing brought on by his knowledge that this world is worthless compared to that of the other heavenly infinite one that it mirrors. Thus, fatally divided against himself, his will and, therefore, his ability to live in the everyday, are destroyed. This idea is closer to Freud's account of the uncanny blandishments of the death instincts winning over the will to life, than an inability to formulate subjectivity. The tension here between life and death is demonstrated by Freud's description of the dual *unheimlich/heimlich* maternal body.

Freud's theories that deal with the longing to return to a timeless, unindividuated non-existence are echoed in Romantic ideas. Werther's inspired vision, like Nathanael's, is seen with eyes which are transformed by 'twilight', a time on the border between night and day and belonging to neither, and therefore a hint at eternity, death and non-existence. His senses, turned towards another reality, (which can only be longed for and never experienced), are no longer attuned to the needs of survival in the empirical world, so he is fatally incapacitated. Nathanael's mind and body are shattered in much the same way at the end of *The Sandman*. Hoffmann finishes his tale thus: 'It is reported that several years later, in a distant part of the country, Clara was seen sitting hand in hand with an affectionate husband outside

the door of a handsome country dwelling, with two merry boys playing in front of her ... This would seem to suggest that Clara succeeded in finding the quiet domestic happiness which suited her cheerful, sunny disposition, and which she could never have enjoyed with the tormented, self-divided Nathanael.²⁶⁸ It isn't a simple happy ending, however. Hoffmann's tale owes some of its disturbing power to its own Romantic ambivalence towards to the pleasures of the everyday. The 'sunny' Clara's domestic happiness with an affectionate husband is merely adumbrated by another unthinkable reality.

HOFFMANN AND THE SPLIT SELF

Hoffmann used what would be known now as a form of "free association" in writing his stories. It can be argued that his method might have given Hoffmann some access to unconscious thought processes, and is this that can justify a psychological interpretation. Hoffmann explains and comments on his technique as follows: '... the idea of permitting the fabulous to enter boldly into ordinary life is daring, and, as far as I know, has not been used to this extent by any German author.'²⁶⁹ He makes clear the personal nature of his tales and techniques: '... I freely follow the flight of my fantasy as it is fired by the postulates of the tale, by the situations and the characters occurring in it ... It is ... the product of a humorous author's images of real life, as if *caught in a mirror*, in the abstractions of humour.' (my emphasis).

However, as Hoffmann says elsewhere, he believes that these inspired flights need to be tempered by reason. McGlathery, using Hoffmann's '*Seltsame Leiden eines Theater-Direktors*' ('Curious Sufferings of a Theatre Director', 1818), an essay in dialogue form as his source, quotes Hoffmann on this balance between inspiration and reason: "the inspired individual" or "hidden poet", as Hoffmann calls them must be "enticed out from within" ... (by conscious understanding, which must be responsible for) ... endowing it with the power to enter life rounded out with flesh and bone.' McGlathery goes on to quote Hoffmann directly and here, I believe, are clear links with Kant: 'Thus while inspiration is the key, it must be "ruled and reined in by the power of understanding" to create a classic work of art. A kind of double activity (*duplizitat*) is required of which only a few people are capable.'" The distancing and doubling role that Hoffmann describes, which shows situations and characters 'as caught in a mirror', is further revealed by McGlathery who, in this context, quotes Hoffmann again: 'True comedy ... involves a further kind of doubleness. Deep in human nature lies an irony, "which indeed, determines that nature in its innermost being and out of which jest, wit roguishness beam forth with the most profound seriousness." Convulsions of pain and despairing lament "empty into a river of laughter expressing marvellous delight".'²⁷⁰

It is this ambiguity and uncertainty that give Hoffmann's tales their haunting quality. The tragic doubleness of existence forces us like Hamlet, Werther and Nathanael to observe our own struggles and joys in the midst of life, and find them inadequate and ultimately futile. Conscious understanding and irony do not really have the ability to overcome, rein and rule, as repression is never complete. This means that their ghostly reflections, irrationality, meaningless and death are turned loose to uncannily haunt the stories. Contrary to what Hoffmann says, it is the technique of free association, rather than rationality, that is really responsible for 'enticing ideas from within', and this means that situations and characters can escape the frame that the often

helpless author has tried to set, and truly take on an independent life of their own. I believe it is this sense of material controlling the author, rather than the other way around, as well as the feeling that, ultimately, meaning and life can fail altogether, that gives Hoffmann's stories their uncanny power. There is always another viewpoint which is sensed, very far away, one that can never be reached or even apprehended, from which story, author and reader appear meaningless. This is a Schopenhauerian rather than an Idealistic view. It is as if Hoffmann's writings are themselves a kind of Golem, emerging to bring partially to light that of which the author can never be fully aware.

WEGENER, MEYRINK AND HOFFMANN - LOCATING THE GOLEM

German Expressionists like Meyrink echoed Romantic thinking on the dual nature of the world and, like Hoffmann, Meyrink used the idea of the Golem to reflect this. Mike Mitchell makes this clear in his introduction to Meyrink's *The Angel of the West Window*, (a book which also features Rabbi Low and the Ghetto) in which he quotes Marianne Wunsch: '(E)verything is different from outward appearances, but only the outward appearances are accessible.' Mitchell goes on to point out that: 'It is a comment that is frequently made of the world of Franz Kafka.'²⁷¹ thus highlighting the parallels between Meyrink's ideas and those of Kafka who, despite being assimilated, is said to have been influenced by Jewish philosophical ideas, such as those in the Kabbalah. These ideas could therefore be seen to be part of both German and Jewish philosophy.

Meyrink's *The Golem*, as I have mentioned in Chapter One, was the subject of an extremely influential film by the writer, actor and film-maker, Paul Wegener, who was born in 1874 and died in 1948. *Der Golem* (1920), in which he himself took the part of the Golem, was his third Golem film and the most accomplished. Wegener sets out his approach to experimental film-making in a lecture of 1916, 'The Artistic Possibilities of Cinema'. In this lecture Wegener introduces the idea of '*Kinetische Lyrick*' or 'Cinematic Lyricism'. Lotte Eisner quotes him as follows: 'You have all seen films ... in which a line appears, then curves and changes. This line gives birth to faces, then disappears. Nobody has ever thought of attempting an experiment of this order in a full-length film. I can imagine a kind of cinema which would use nothing but moving surfaces against which there would impinge events that would still participate in the natural world but transcend the lines and volumes of the natural.'²⁷² Wegener explains in the same lecture that: 'I got the idea for my Golem from the mysterious clay figure brought to life by the Rabbi Loew, according to a legend of the Prague ghetto and with this film I went further into the domain of pure cinema. Everything depends on the image, on a certain vagueness of outline where the fantastic world of the past meets the world of today.'²⁷³ The faces, described by Wegener, that come into being only to dissolve again, are strangely reminiscent of the mobile expressions of E.T.A. Hoffmann, as well as Meyrink's haunting and indeterminate Golem (as described below). Wegener's description also reflects the anthropomorphic spaces conjured up by Meyrink in his descriptions of the Ghetto. These ideas play an important part in my practical work, where I have developed similar experiments.

In his Golem film of 1920, Wegener used Hans Poelzig, a famous Expressionist architect, to design the sets. Wegener describes Poelzig's

accomplishment thus: 'It is not Prague, that my friend, the architect Poelzig, has erected. Rather it is a poem of a city (Stad-Dechtung), a dream, an architectural paraphrase of the golem theme. These alleys and squares should not call to mind anything real; they should create the atmosphere in which the golem breathes.'²⁷⁴

Wegener says in the opening credits to his film that it was based on Meyrink's *The Golem*. Although Wegener states that the idea of a clay figure was the inspiration - and thus not Meyrink's Golem which was created from Loew's scattered thoughts - I believe that his film captures the spirit of the novel. Meyrink's book brilliantly evokes a sense of an unnatural space where the inside and outside, organic and inorganic, past and present meet in hopeless confusion (reminiscent of Freud's Id), and this is the atmosphere that Wegener has created in his film.



Fig. 20: Hans Poelzig. film set for, *Der Golem* 1920. Three photographs of sets for 1920 film *Der Golem* 23 x 16.5 cm. each. Staatliche Museum Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Kunstbibliothek, Berlin.
E. D. Bilski, *Golem! Danger, Deliverance and Art* (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1988) 55. Fig.56. Print.

Anthony Vidler's remarks about the ability of architecture to conjure the uncanny seem to be strikingly illustrated by Meyrink's description:

I ... gazed at the discoloured buildings... How uncanny and depraved they all seemed. Erected without plan, from the look of them ... Two of them were huddled up together against an old yellow stone wall ... There they had stood for two centuries now, or it might be three, detached from the buildings around them; one of them slanting obliquely, with a roof like a retreating forehead; the one next to it jutting out like an eye-tooth. Beneath this dreary sky they seemed to be standing in their sleep without a trace revealed of that something hostile, something malicious, that at times seemed to permeate the very bricks of which they were composed ...²⁷⁵

Much later, in *The Angel of the West Window*, that Meyrink was to write not long before his death, a tooth is to feature in the description of Rabbi Low. Here the features of a face take on mysterious qualities of the inanimate and geometric, thus reversing the description of the yellow buildings of the Prague Ghetto where the inorganic takes on human qualities: 'Surrounded by the wild tangle of hair that dances up and down on the Rabbi's bird-like head the tiny yellow face contracts until it is a star formed of myriad lines radiating from a round black hole that is laughing, laughing laughing: one long yellow tooth wobbles grotesquely in the black cavern ...'²⁷⁶ The mad laughter reminds one of the painful laughter described by Hoffmann, and the apparently meaningless pattern of the lines of Low's face form a yellow star, physical and symbolic reminder of his origin. Its centre is the black abyss of the unknown. Freud was similarly to describe dreams as having "a navel" that was to lead into complete inscrutability, beyond all possible analysis²⁷⁷. (It is worth mentioning here that Franz Rosenzweig used the Star of David as the basis for the structure and content of his famous book of philosophy on Jewish themes that he called *The Star of Redemption*.)

The uncanny impression of the Ghetto buildings that Meyrink describes is enhanced by the fact that they were erected 'without a plan', and therefore without a rational order that would help one to navigate their spaces without getting lost. This echoes Wegener's description of the sets of his film, and the maze-like horror of Freud's Italian town. Hoffmann's story, *Rath Krepzel* contains a description of the building of such an uncanny dwelling²⁷⁸. In this tale the building of a house echoes the ritualistic creation of a Golem by magic, and can be seen as a Golem creation that parallels Hoffmann's own method of creating his stories. Rath Krepzel, described by the story's narrator as: 'one of the strangest, oddest men I ever met with in my life', builds a house, and Hoffmann describes its construction thus: '... (Krepzel) insisted that the house should be built in his garden which was situated in a very beautiful neighbourhood outside the town wall ... Then he might have been seen day after day, attired in his curious garments (which he had made himself according to certain fixed rules of his own), slaking the lime, sifting the sand, piling up the bricks and stones in regular heaps, and so on. All this he did without once consulting an architect or thinking about a plan.' Krepzel then goes to a builder, and orders him to build up the walls on 'an exact square'. The walls are built up until Krepzel orders them to stop and then: 'Krepzel walked thoughtfully backward and forward across the space within, the bricklayers behind him with hammers and picks, and wherever he cried, "make a window here, six feet high by four feet broad!" "There a little window, three feet by two!" a hole was made in a trice. The result was a completely finished house, its outside, indeed, presenting a most extraordinary appearance, no two windows etc., being alike; but on the other hand the interior arrangements suggested a peculiar feeling of comfort.'²⁷⁹

This house contained and protected the doomed singer, Antonia, his daughter. Music, the geometric harmony of the square, and the natural beauty of the garden, therefore could be seen to summon up this construction from the soul of its maker, who crafted it according to rules of his own. Its form therefore reflected its maker; *unheimlich* in appearance, yet *heimlich* at its heart.

Bleiler in his introduction to Hoffmann's tales reveals Hoffmann as a man who enjoyed playing many parts:

... a literary supper was being held in one of the best restaurants in Berlin ... also present was a small wiry man ... He was introduced to the company as a Doctor Scholz of Rathenau ... The mobile features of his deeply lined face were in perpetual motion, so that he gave the illusion of being a succession of men rather than one individual. His hands and feet, too, shared this activity, and the simile may have occurred to the others at the banquet that he was like a stick puppet in his movements. Equally restless was his conversations: bon mots, witticisms, flights of fantasy emerged in a tumble as the wine began to flow. (There was music and then the host rose and said) "Friends, Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler is here among us!" He signalled to "Doctor Scholtz" who was then revealed as the foremost Romantic music critic Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann ... It soon became known that Kapellmeister Kreisler was the creation and in some ways the reflection of one E.T.A. Hoffmann ...²⁸⁰

This Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler also closely resembles the similarly named Councillor Krepsel whose appearance is described by Hoffmann as follows:

He was so stiff and awkward in his movements that he looked at every moment as if he would run up against something or do damage ... he talked a good deal and vehemently; at one time his thoughts kept leaping, as it were, from one subject to another (this was most conspicuous during dinner); at another, he was unable to have done with an idea; seizing upon it again and again, he gave it all sorts of wonderful twists and turns, and couldn't get back into the ordinary track until something else took hold of his fancy ... Music was the subject of conversation.²⁸¹

Krepsel's house which can serve as an analogy for Hoffmann's story; chaotic yet built 'by its own rules' on a harmonious base of geometry, music and natural beauty. It therefore, in Hoffmann's words: 'discloses an unknown realm to man as a world that has nothing in common with the outer material world in which he lives.' The dualism of existence is made concrete and, in a sense, unified. In the Golem myths, the Golem's rough exterior is likewise centred around the holy and perfect word which emerges from an unknown and sacred world, and is the secret of its life. The harmonious spirit of the house is doomed with Antonia's death, because such perfection cannot live in this world. The Golem also meets his end in destruction, man's creations are only faint echoes of God's. This description of Hoffmann as a man of many roles, echoes the themes he and Meyrink used of doubling and the uniting of opposites into a mystical or an uneasy combination which sometimes breaks down into the point where a self, devoid of identity and context, ceases to have any coherence or meaning at all. Meyrink's *The Golem* describes this terrifying, abysmal and uncanny point where identity disappears altogether: 'I only know that my body lies sleeping in its bed, while my mind, no longer part of it, goes forth on its wanderings. "Who is this 'I'?" That is the question I am suddenly beset with a desire to ask; but at the same instant do I become conscious of the fact

that I no longer possess any organ to whom this query might be addressed ...²⁸²
It is at this point of complete psychic disintegration that *The Golem* begins.

Meyrink's Golem is a kind of incarnation of the massed souls who inhabit the doomed Ghetto. They form a kind of alien and uncanny totality which fills those who see it with terror. This irrational entity contrasts absolutely with the Romantic idea of an ultimate communal world spirit of reason and enlightenment, imagined by philosophers like Fichte and Hegel. This incarnation cuts across time and space, and irrational psychic experience becomes frightening reality. It also contrasts absolutely with the optimistic Kabbalistic notion of the collective Jewish soul beautifully united into the form of a thirteen petalled rose and recalls what Elisabeth Weber calls 'Hegel's judgement on the Jews'. This judgement was quoted by Derrida in *Glas*. Hegel, who was very influential in the years before 1933²⁸³, says of the Jews that: 'Their own nature remains foreign to them, their secret secret, separated, cut off, infinitely distanced, terrifying'²⁸⁴. This description recalls Schelling's remark about the secret thing which should be hidden, yet nevertheless comes horrifyingly to light. In this view the Jews can never (because of their religion, which Hegel saw as irremediably primitive) join the community of "World Spirit". They remain unassimilated, irrational and uncanny - their secret impenetrable to the light of reason.

MEYRINK AND THE OCCULT

Meyrink's use of imagery reveals his research into Kabbalistic thought. Knowledge of the Kabbalah was commonplace among those interested in the occult, such as Madam Blavatsky's theosophists - mentioned in Chapter One - whom Meyrink knew and despised. Many occult ideas, for example Kabbalistic imagery and symbols used in alchemy, were to be incorporated into Jungian theory, and arguably into Freud's dark concept of the unreachable individual Unconscious of inherited and ancient instinct and memory. As Meyrink puts it:

Think of the crystal, resolving itself, it knows not how, but in accordance with its own immutable laws, from the formless, to a definite ordered shape. May it not be even so in the world of the spirit? ... Who shall say? ... (M)ay it not be that the whole mass of stagnant thought infecting the air of the Ghetto needs clearing from time to time by some kind of mysterious explosion ... Something forces the dreams of the subconscious up into the light of day ... giving rise to an object that, could we but read its riddle, symbolises, both in ways and appearance, the mass-soul ... (C)ertain forbidding signs portend the arrival of this phantom within our world of fact ... Just now, when I heard Pernath tell how he had met a man clean shaven, with slanting eyes, there stood the Golem ... (and) I was filled with that dumb familiar fear ... that I had felt then, in my boyhood when the Golem had thrown its dread, ominous shadow across my path.²⁸⁵

What is worse is that this dread figure is not strange at all to those who live in the Ghetto but is, in reality, their intimate and familiar selves now combined and, as described by Hegel, made unfamiliar and terrifyingly uncanny. In this the Golem is very like Hoffmann's Coppelius, who haunts Nathanael from his childhood onwards. Thus Meyrink states: 'Hillel's wife, in her lifetime, had also seen the Golem face to face ... She said ... she was quite positive that what she had seen was her own soul divested of its body; that for a moment it had stood opposite to her, and gazed into her face with the features of a strange being. In

spite of the terrible fear that had got her in its grip, the conviction had never left her that this thing confronting her was only a part of her innermost self.²⁸⁶

Jewish identity had long been a group affair binding Jews in the German empire into a religious and cultural unit. Here Meyrink (who associated closely with the Jewish community, although he was not himself Jewish), shows how this identity can be seen, in its disintegration, to confront its owners with a terrifying alienation. In his use of the Golem symbol, Jewish identity, long so familiar and *heimlich* to the Jews has now become *unheimlich* in this apocalyptic world where war, pogrom and assimilation have thrown all the familiar certainties into turmoil. The Golem, the familiar stranger, is clean-shaven and modern. He has no beard or side-locks, but he does have “slanting eyes”, a reminder of his ancient and oriental origin (as I pointed out in Chapter One). In *The Golem*, and other novels by Meyrink, the Jews are not the only ones who suffer from alienation. Meyrink, in his description of post-war chaos, reveals an entire continent in ferment. In his images of the crystal and the star resolving themselves, by a mysterious process, from psychic images to concrete forms, thus mirroring an impersonal Unconscious, Meyrink recalls Kant’s discussion of the unknowable processes of nature, and the ultimate inability of science and positivism to provide final and conclusive explanations of the world. In stark contrast to Freud’s optimistic view of the possibilities of scientific knowledge, Meyrink sees a dual world, one aspect of which lies eternally beyond the reach of all possible knowledge.

For Meyrink, altered states of consciousness were familiar through his meditation practice and Buddhist ideas. Nonetheless, his thinking, idiosyncratic as it is, shows that he is deeply rooted in German Enlightenment philosophy: ‘The active ones of the earth ... think they are awake, but in reality their life is just a dream, a dream that is predetermined to the last iota, and that they cannot influence at all. There were – and still are – a few among men who knew very well they were dreaming, pioneers who reached the ramparts, behind which the eternally wakeful spirit is hidden: visionaries such as Goethe, Schopenhauer and Kant.’²⁸⁷ In another example, Meyrink disconnects the relationship between cause and effect, the knowledge of which Hume had revealed as a priori. In a conversation that closely echoes Kant’s example of the watch, Meyrink makes one of his characters say:

The question of cause and effect, ... is an illusion. We can never perceive causes, all we see is an effect ... Every event that precedes another is its symptom. The cause is quite different ... One effect cannot produce another; at most ... it can be a first sign in a chain of events, but nothing more.²⁸⁸ The world we live in is a world of effects; the realm of true causes is hidden.²⁸⁹

CONCLUSION

Meyrink’s Schopenhauerian description of a world of illusive appearance masking a true but hidden world of reality, parallels Hoffmann’s, who similarly lived in a time of great political upheaval. I have already pointed to the connection between Hoffmann and Schelling, and Peter Eli Gordon mentions that there was a revival of interest in Schelling at the time of the Weimar Republic.²⁹⁰ Meyrink’s vision, like that of Idealists like Schelling,

Fichte and Hegel, has echoes of Platonic thinking, which describes the world as revealed to the senses as a cave, in opposition to the sunlit world of reason and true reality beyond. Meyrink refers to this in *The Angel of the West Window* as a hidden world of “first causes”. Plato’s optimistic posing of an eternal transcendent reality lit by the light of reason can, as I have already pointed out, be opposed by Heidegger’s vision of the finite and subjective individual, making his anxious way towards death, over the void of “nothingness” and annihilation. Traces of both these ideas are to be found in the work of Meyrink and Hoffmann. The link between philosophy and the uncanny is seen very clearly here.

Meyrink’s novel, *The Green Face* has a similarly apocalyptic vision: ‘...the tall factory chimneys towering over the south-west part of the docks were snapped off at the roots and transformed into thin spears of white dust which the hurricane carried off at lightening speed. They were followed by one church tower after another: for a second they would appear as black shapes, whirled up in a vortex, the next they were lines on the horizons, then dots then – nothing.’²⁹¹

Foreshadowing and mirroring this chaos, which is to end in nothingness, is a spectral Jew who, like the Golem, resolves himself into an uncanny symbol of spiritual and physical disintegration. Sight, here as in *Hamlet*, reveals what is alien to the unbelieving viewer. In *Hamlet* where the familiar dead return, it is time that is ‘out of joint’ and here, as in *The Sandman*, a body becomes disjointed. The familiar is no longer *heimlich*, but has become part of nature’s uncanny and secret processes. This ‘old Jew’ is seen as a man, and something very different, at one and the same time:

At that distance he could not make out its features, but the dress, posture and outline of the head with the long side locks immediately told him that it was an old Jew who was approaching. The nearer the man came, the less real he seemed to become. He was at least seven feet tall and did not move his feet at all as he walked; there was something slack and hazy about his shape. (O)ne or other of his limbs – the arm or the shoulder – separate(d) from the body, to rejoin it immediately. A few minutes later the Jew had become transparent, as if his body were not a solid mass, but a sparse collection of black dots. Immediately after that, the figure glided silently past him and Hauberrisser saw that it was a cloud of flying ants which, remarkably, had taken on the shape of a human body and maintained it, an incomprehensible freak of nature ... it sped faster and faster ... until it disappeared like a puff of smoke on the horizon.²⁹²

A vision of strangeness, the ‘old Jew’ dissolves into nothing as the world around him is transformed into dust. Meyrink’s imagery reflects back on the horror of one World War, and points towards the coming of another. Meyrink and Hoffmann both use the Golem to explore the uncanny space, unveiled by anxiety, where subjective and objective reality meet in confusion. A space that Safranski describes in his discussion of Heidegger as: ‘(T)he drama of distance ... (t)he worrying distance (which) proves that we are not entirely of this world, that we are being driven beyond it, not into another world but into a void.’ In this drama of ‘worrying distance’ our senses are of no use, as helplessly we draw close to the edge of an abyss.

CONCLUSION

The creation of the Golem is a joint project undertaken by two totally dissimilar partners, man and God. The resulting uneasiness and instability that characterise the creature and its actions, echo this monstrous birth. The emergence of identity can likewise be seen as a conjuring up from the depths of a mystery. Freud's choice of E.T.A. Hoffmann's Sandman/Golem tale as his pre-eminent example of the uncanny was, as I have argued, very significant. In the German context, and in the period I have been discussing, the Jew was the uncanny stranger in the heart of the German homeland, and it is no accident that Freud used Hoffmann's classical German tale to erase any trace of the Golem's Hebrew pedigree. Freud, for whom the Jewish religion itself held no attraction, nevertheless valued his Jewish background and history, whilst at the same time (as did many other Jews of this period) identifying profoundly with German culture. The music used in one of my films is a recording of a hymn from the Reform Jewish Friday Night Service. Although this hymn is a traditional one, it is translated into German from Hebrew, and sung to the music of Ludwig van Beethoven (incidentally, there is a link here with E.T.A. Hoffmann who was, as a music critic, one of his earliest admirers²⁹³). However, for some, "Jewishness" is an identity which can be considered as radically separate from any another, although I would assert - with Peter Gay - that Jewish identity cannot be meaningfully considered as totally distinct from the context of the larger culture within which the individual is placed. "Jewishness" can also be considered to be independent of any religious faith, and therefore writers like Gilman can - with justice - discuss it without considering its religious aspect. I have argued, however, that some consideration of the religious aspect of Judaism is necessary to get a fully balanced view as, even where religion appears to be absent, it nevertheless forms a hidden part of the picture, and cannot be completely ignored. Freud himself illustrates this by the many references to the Bible and religion in his thought.

The Jew, set aside by religion and origin, was a stranger who was never completely at home. Anti-Semitic stereotypes depicted the Jew as drifting rootlessly through time and space, an uncanny wanderer who belonged nowhere, yet was everywhere to be seen. This was particularly the case in Weimar when Jews were reassessing their identity, and considering the merits or demerits of assimilation. Rosenzweig fully embraced Judaism, and turned the unhomey into a positive quality by portraying the Jews as a people who, through their freedom from time and space, showed the way of redemption. The subject of uncanny rootlessness was, however, not confined to Jewish thinkers, and Gordon tells us that for both Rosenzweig and Heidegger it was vital to live out the finitude of existence through '... a condition of homelessness, which both philosophers describe as "uncanny" or *unheimlich*.'²⁹⁴

The Prague Ghetto forms the backdrop for some of the most prominent versions of the ubiquitous Golem myth, perhaps because it is a space that mirrored the flux of the dispersal that was underway. These versions of the Golem tales reflect a context where Jews were defining themselves against an ambivalent outside world, hostile in its anti-Semitism, but at the same time

offering an inviting image of an Enlightenment within which secular Jews like Freud could find their place. It can be argued that the new containment “fence” in Israel reverses this opening-out by building a new ghetto to keep out the dangerous stranger. However, this uncanny and terrifying stranger cannot be excluded in reality, as he is within as well as without. Kristeva, Rose and Said have written very eloquently on this subject, and I have looked at their work in the thesis. The question of “Jewishness” is now also a burning political issue in the devastating setting of war, violence and political instability. It emerges in the form of issues like Zionism, Nationalism and anti-Semitism, each of which the Golem has reflected in its many forms, and I have argued that the ancient and elusive nature of Jewish identity indicates something more universal, by illuminating the uncanny uncertainties embedded in the question of identity in general.

Freud laid great stress upon the power of heritage and memory, and that is why he did not believe in conversion from Judaism, in spite of the fact that he accepted a scientific “Enlightenment” point of view and rejected religious beliefs. For him the individual was embedded in the past through the Id, (which has been linked to the Golem), where historical and present time mixes, and I have looked at this in Chapter One. The emergence of the Golem myth from an anonymous and ancient source seems to reflect a similar process. Its many versions all gesture towards a memorialised past, even as they mirror the present. Roland Barthes, whose insights are discussed in Chapter Three and elsewhere, points to the deceptive nature of myth which reflects history while appearing to be beyond it. He argues that myth poses as an eternal truth, but is in fact something very different. The Golem (as I have discussed in Chapter Three) by employing this “memorial presence”²⁹⁵ has been used in the service of Zionist myths about Israel and anti-Semitism, and these versions reveal deep-seated attitudes and prejudices, as well as much fear and distrust.

It is telling that Freud employed myths, of which Hoffmann’s Golem tale was only one, as the means by which he illustrated the development of the psyche through association and memory. Also it is relevant to point out here that Hoffmann, like Freud, reflected on the question of identity in his work. As I have discussed, Hoffmann was interested in psychology, and he used a technique which employed the association of ideas (reminiscent of Freud’s free association method) to aid his creativity. Here ideas are conjured up mysteriously and creatively from the Unconscious as inspiration for Hoffmann’s writing, rather as the mysterious holy Word vitalizes the Golem. As I have stated in Chapter One, this magical Word that activates the Golem is most usually written in Hebrew. Joseph Dan explains that this language: ‘did not only convey the message “Let there be light”, he actually uttered these syllables (in Hebrew), and as a result, there was light. God’s utterance was not a semantic one ... The very utterance was the deed, the cause of the emergence of light.’²⁹⁶ The Golem myth can be seen in the context of this concept of “word/deed” - a creative rather than a defining language.

In Chapter One I touched on the idea of the “Word” as the equivalent of the divine spark, and linked it with Freud’s theories about the father and God. In

this context too the “Word” collapses into, and becomes one with, the “Deed” as neither makes sense without the other. In other words, the idea of language as a structure with a metaphysical base of stable “meaning” has been radically breached, and this closely echoes Derrida’s arguments. However, as I have argued, the idea of the Word/Deed can take the “text” further than Derrida was prepared to go because, although its meaning cannot be understood and assimilated, it nevertheless points a route out of language via the body and ritual - through acting out and performance. Although the mysterious “Name” of God that motivates the Golem, names - and at the same time cancels itself out as unnameable - it can, through repetition of prayers and ritualistic movements like swaying and bowing, structure an individual into what Franz Rosenzweig called “Jewish-being”. Also, the mysterious Word can become an object and be used to ward off the evil eye and in amulets. In this way, through magical practices, it can pass beyond the verbal into the concrete.

These ideas are pertinent to the arguments of writers like Judith Butler and Louis Althusser who have concerned themselves with identity and action, and I have looked at this in Chapter Two. I would argue that the performance of the “deed” or ritualistic observance, together with the strict requirement to reach a clear interpretation of the words, (as far as is humanly possible), in a legalistic sense, can be seen to come together to create Jewish religious experience. Rosenzweig, in particular, stressed the importance of ritual and the embodied existence to the question of identity. Although Heidegger’s approach was grounded in the conceptual, he also argued that existence is not metaphysical and timeless but that, on the contrary, it is lived in the world, in a body and under the shadow of death. Both Rosenzweig and Heidegger stressed that the threat of the emptiness that awaits - and which brings anxiety and the uncanny in its wake - is the force that directs us towards the future. We, ourselves, create this future with the help of our history, and it is completely our own. Derrida also sees the future and “possibility” as abysmal and creative but (and here is like Heidegger), as he grounds the individual primarily in conceptual thought and Logos, he necessarily discounts any role that the body and unconscious processes might play in structuring identity.

Unlike Derrida and Heidegger, Meyrink - as a practitioner of yogic meditation - sets before us the nothingness out of which conceptual thinking emerges. In this “space” thoughts take form independently of any idea of a thinker. (This is interesting because by so doing, Meyrink takes the Golem back to much earlier versions where it appeared as a product of meditation and prayer). Here identity is meaningless, and it is to this void that Meyrink alludes when he describes his Golem as emerging from the thoughts of the old Rabbi before these could take on a distinct shape. Hoffmann also alludes to this inability to “become a distinct image”. His vision of an essentially unstable identity echoes Meyrink’s, and his method of associating ideas has echoes of the latter’s meditation practice. The self-divided Nathanael could never resolve his contradictions and, as a result, suffered a mental and physical shattering. It is this endless and futile attempt to take form that is the subject of my final film on the subject of the Golem. Both my theoretical

and practical researches have aimed to express the threatening, shifting and elusive nature of a process of painful materialisation, which because it cannot reach resolution, necessarily has the dark void of non-existence and non-sense as its setting. This instability, which I have pointed to throughout my thesis, (and which Edward Said sees as a flaw or fissure in the innermost core of identity, including Freud's), lies at the heart of the attempt to reify identity into a permanent and a priori self. Chris Frith has argued (as I point out in Chapter Four), that this sense of self is an illusion created by our own brains. It may well be that the suspicion that this is indeed so explains why a sense of uncanniness seems to cling to the idea of identity.

The argument about the shifting nature of identity extends to the subject of gender, and writers like Butler have questioned complacent assumptions about gendered characteristics. The Golem is usually considered male, and his creation is by males - the female is conspicuously absent in most of these tales. When female Golems have appeared, they are doll-like toys, created by men for their own diversion and convenience. Cynthia Ozick has challenged this tradition in her book, *The Puttermesser Papers*. Her version of the tale features a female Golem, and is set in modern day New York. Ozick reflects on the absence of the Jewish woman at the heart of the Orthodox interpretation. She notes the limited and supporting role that women play, and ponders whether this can be changed in a modern age and in the "New World". A deadly mother/daughter relationship is one aspect touched upon by Ozick in the context of her complex use of the Golem myth, and Kristeva and Jonte-Pace have explored the linking of the mother to death in the Freudian account. I have also looked at Kristeva and Lacan in the context of the maternal and symbolization, as well as Butler's objection that the female is silenced by her link to the semiotic.

Derrida points to another silencing - that of the female voice by philosophy - and I have examined his poetic description in Chapter Four, (in the context of a discussion of Levinas' relationship to Heidegger), of how a mysterious Golem-like text unites two anonymous philosophers, a man and woman, who merge so closely that the voice of one is indistinguishable from the other. Philosophical ideas overlap with psychological ones, and I have discussed (in Chapter Five), the dual nature of reality as expressed by Idealist and other philosophers such as Kant, Fichte and Schelling, in relation to the theme of the Golem. I have also considered the Golem's role in Romantic and Expressionist literature in this context.

Like Meyrink, Hoffmann refused to take his own identity seriously but, underneath his playful humour, his Golem story shows an awareness of the terrifying mystery that lies beyond any conception the individual might have of himself/herself, or of those he/she believes they know best. Freud's essay on the uncanny uses this story, and his work has inspired an enormous body of theory which yet continues to multiply, proving its lasting significance. In Freud's time, as in Hoffmann's, fixed ideas of identity were unravelling and the Golem myth, as they used it, reflects on the uncanny and troubled relationship between Jew and Gentile, human and non-human, the lover and his/her object, parent and child. As a meditation on the uncanny question of

identity, the Golem myth is a means by which we can look afresh at an ancient enigma.

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APPENDIX

INFORMATION ON THE DVD SUBMITTED WITH THIS THESIS.

Sources used in the making of the DVDs

H. Hoffmann. Two illustrations from a set of 15. 1845.

Lustige Geschichten und drollige Bilder mit 15 schön kolorirten Tafeln für Kinder von 3-6 Jahren. Kinderlieb. (Frankfurt a. M: Literarische Anstalt, Rütten, 1845) H. Hoffmann, *Struwwelpeter*, (New York: Dover Books, 1995) 4, 8. Print.

A. Kubin. Drawing from. A. Kubin, *Die Andere Seite*, (Munich Georg Müller, 1923) This illustration was originally drawn for Meyrink's *Der Golem*, but never used. G. Meyrink, *The Golem*, trans. Madge Pemberton (New York: Dover Productions, 1967)

The music for this film was from a song sung by Joseph Schmidt entitled *Khohanecha Vilbeshu Tzedek* (Track 1) and it was taken from:

A Song goes round the World

Joseph Schmidt – a Tribute by Mose Stern

Produced by Israel Music, P.O.B. 2294 Neve-Monoson 60190 Israel.

The photographs used in the Prague Ghetto film were of the Altneu Synagogue, Prague (n.d.) and a typical alleyway in the Ghetto, Prague 1898. G. Meyrink, *The Golem*, trans. Madge Pemberton (New York: Dover Productions, 1967)

The music for this film was from the Friday night service, which was an important element in the Golem tales. The music was composed by Ludwig van Beethoven and sung by Paula Lindberg.

It was taken from:

The Musical Tradition of the Jewish Reform Congregation in Berlin

It was remastered and recorded from music recorded at the Lindstron Studio, Berlin 1928-1930 by Beth Hatefutsoth Records – Musical Heritage, The Nahum-Goldman Museum of the Jewish Diaspora.

All other recordings, drawings and photographs were by the writer of this thesis.

Technical Production of the DVDs

The films used Adobe After Effects 6.5.

Format: Video for Windows - width 720 x height 576

Compressor: Ligos Indeo Video 5.11 – compression quality 85%

The films are supplied on a DVD-R format DVD. They can be viewed on any compatible DVD player, including standalone DVD players.