

HEIMAT'S SENTRY: IMAGES OF THE GOLEM IN 20TH CENTURY AUSTRIAN  
LITERATURE

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By

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# HEIMAT'S SENTRY: IMAGES OF THE GOLEM IN 20TH CENTURY AUSTRIAN LITERATURE

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## ABSTRACT

In his collection of essays titled *Unheimliche Heimat*, W.G. Sebald asserts that, "Es ist offenbar immer noch nicht leicht, sich in Österreich zu Hause zu fühlen, insbesondere wenn einem, wie in den letzten Jahren nicht selten, die Unheimlichkeit der Heimat durch das verschiedentliche Auftreten von Wiedergänger und Vergangenheitsgespenstern öfter als lieb ins Bewußtsein gerufen wird" (Sebald 15-16). Sebald's term "Gespenster" may have a quite literal application; it is *unheimlich* to note, after all, how often the Golem makes unsettling appearances in twentieth-century Austrian-Jewish literature, each time as a protector and guardian of specific communities under threat. These iterations and reinventions of the Golem tradition give credence to Sebald's description of *Heimat* as an ambivalent and often conflicted space, even in a relatively homogenous community, because these portrayals of *Heimat* juxtapose elements of innocence and guilt, safety and threat, logic and irrationality. In the face of the Holocaust's reign of death and annihilation, it seems fitting that Austrian-Jewish writers reanimated a long-standing symbol of strength rooted in religious tradition to counter destruction and find meaning in chaos and unexampled brutality.

Gustav Meyrink's novel *Der Golem* (1915); Leo Perutz's *Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke* (1953); Friedrich Torberg's short story *Golems Wiederkehr* (1968); Doron Rabinovici's collection of short stories *Papirnik* (1994); and his novel *Suche nach M* (1997) all draw on the Golem in distinctly individual ways, but always in the role of protector and deliverer. By drawing on the Golem in the twentieth century these authors create a shift in the meaning and

function of the Maharal and his clay creature. Their act of reinvention evinces the importance of the Golem as a protector, one that uses the cultural memory of the Jewish people to raise a defender who in turn operates as a vehicle of memory construction, a memory-preserving figure that protects a perspective on *Heimat*, which in its dialectic depiction is uniquely Austrian.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
The Golem from anti-Semitic Projections of Difference to 20th Century Austrian Iterations of Protection and Dichotomous Belonging	
Chapter I.....	36
The Golem's New Messianic Form: Gustav Meyrink's <i>Der Golem</i> (1915) and its ramifications for the 20th Century Austrian Golem	
Chapter 2.....	74
The "Protective" Austrian Golem in the Wake of the Holocaust: Austrian-Jewish notions of Belonging in Leo Perutz's <i>Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke</i> (1953) and Friedrich Torberg's <i>Golems Wiederkehr</i> (1968)	
Chapter 3.....	108
Questioning Retribution and Responsibility: Visions of the Austrian Golem in Doron Rabinovici's <i>Papirnik</i> (1994) and <i>Suche nach M</i> (1997)	
Conclusion.....	138
Bibliography.....	148

## **Introduction - The Golem from anti-Semitic Projections of Difference to 20th Century**

### **Austrian Iterations of Protection and Dichotomous Belonging**

The Golem in 20th century Austrian-Jewish literature is an ambiguous figure. On one hand it embodies familiar, traditional notions of identity while on the other hand it simultaneously represents concepts of the alien and foreign. In these depictions, the Golem occupies a place that is equally dichotomous, both idyllic and threatening. I argue that 20th century Austrian-Jewish representations of the Golem employ this figure to address a conflicted conception of identity that is intrinsically bound to notions of belonging and manifests through the reconstruction of memory. In these 20th century depictions, the Golem operates as a memory-laden sentry, acting non-violently to protect a community aware of its perpetually indeterminate state.

The threat imposed on Jewish communities in the first half of the 20th century was unparalleled, with deep-rooted European anti-Semitism reaching catastrophic levels during the Holocaust. In the face of such a raging torrent of death and destruction it seems fitting that Austrian-Jewish writers longed and grasped for an ancient symbol of strength and religious tradition to stem the tides of annihilation and to cope in the wake of destruction. In 20th century Austrian Jewish literature, the Golem makes numerous appearances, each time as a messianic protector and guardian of specific communities under threat. Gustav Meyrink's 1915 novel *Der Golem*, Leo Perutz's 1953 *Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke*, Friedrich Torberg's 1968 short story *Golems Wiederkehr*, Doron Rabinovici's 1994 collection of short stories *Papirnik* and his 1997 novel *Suche nach M* each draw upon the Golem in unique ways, but always in a protective and redemptive fashion. These texts not only demonstrate the persistent interest in the Golem in Austrian-Jewish literature, but were selected to articulate the consistent trend of Golem

representation over the course of the 20th century in Austrian-Jewish literature.<sup>1</sup> In the following, I will explore these portrayals and seek to elucidate the common thread connecting the Austrian-Jewish Golem tradition.

Recent scholarly investigations seek to provide overarching analyses of this literary figure across larger communities. Elizabeth Baer's 2012 *The Golem Redux: From Prague to Post-Holocaust Fiction* as well as Cathy Gelbin's 2011 study *The Golem Returns: From German Romantic Literature to Global Jewish Culture, 1808-2008*, both strive to trace the Golem in literature across broader networks of authors and communities. Baer's work provides insight into the tradition and gives context to works outside of the German language Golem representations especially Jewish-American iterations from the 1970s onward. Gelbin, on the other hand, limits her work to the German realm of Golem representations. Baer's investigation provides textual analyses of recent Jewish-American Golem representations, and grapples with the question of imaginative, fictional production after the Holocaust in the American literary landscape. Gelbin's broad focus on the other hand lacks in-depth textual analyses of individual works, instead emphasizing the larger context of Golem representations in a more global setting. Other scholarly investigations of the Golem tend to paint it in a scientific light, focusing on the automaton as it pertains to scientific strivings to create artificial intelligence as Harry Collins' and Trevor Pinch's 1993 study *The Golem: What You Should Know About Science* and Norbert

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<sup>1</sup> Hillel Keival argues that "the story *everyone* knows about the Maharal and the Golem (reproduced in film and in plays and even in contemporary Czech anthologies) is the newest of them all. [...] it was penned by a Polish Rabbi named Yudel Rosenberg [...] In Rosenberg's version, the Golem is created in order to defend the Jewish community against the antisemitism of the outside world" (Keival 15). Following Keival's argument, I contend that Rosenberg's 1907 depiction of the Golem heralds a change in Golem representation, with Gustav Meyrink's 1915 *Der Golem* standing as the most widely known literary usage of the Golem figure. For this reason, two Austrian-Jewish texts concerning the Golem were excluded from this study, Rudolf Lothar's 1901 short story "Der Golem" and Arthur Holitscher's 1908 drama *De r Golem*. Both texts tend to portray the Golem in a fashion consistent with 19th century representations, a clay creature that creates havoc on the creator and threatens the community. In both texts the Golem is destroyed in order to save the community, a feature that is quite inconsistent with the iterations following Rosenberg's, and ultimately Meyrink's, seminal text.

Wiener's *God and Golem Inc.: A Comment on a Certain Point Where Cybernetics Impinges on Religion*.

In an attempt to provide a critical framework for this dissertation, let us briefly look closer at Gelbin's recent publication, which focuses on German literature in the broadest sense. Gelbin's approach to the Golem figure and its numerous iterations is one informed by the work of sociologists and globalization theorists like Ulrich Beck, Roland Robertson, as well as the post-colonial work of Homi Bhabba. Her examination focuses on the Golem as a cultural text, encompassing film along with literature. This cultural text is one that plays an integral role in defining Jewish identity, both from within the Jewish community and from external, and at times anti-Semitic, versions of the legend. Her study begins with the folkloristic endeavors of Jakob Grimm concerning the Golem. In particular she notes his retelling of Christoph Arnold's tale in Achim von Arnim's *Zeitung für Einsiedler* (1808). Of particular interest to Gelbin are the writings of Herder, namely *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie* (1782) and *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* (1772), whose assertions regard both the language and culture of the ancient Jews to be the "paradigm of folk writing," although she acknowledges that Herder's contemporaries were much less tolerant of the Jewish community and culture (Gelbin *The Golem Returns* 28). The intersection of Jewish and German cultural production underscores the negotiation of the "contested notion of Jewish cultural authenticity" that drives her investigation. She argues that the Golem was at times used as evidence of not only the perceived diabolical nature of Jewish communities and individuals, but also their lack of genuine cultural production, given that the Golem is an imitation or mere replication of life rather than a true living creation (Gelbin *The Golem Returns* 1). Citing recent examples of the Golem as a "symbol of post-Shoah Jewish life," Gelbin maintains that this trend of Golem representation marks "the emergence of a

globalized realm of Jewish popular culture" (Gelbin 165, *The Golem Returns*). It is Gelbin's central argument that the Golem figure, although increasingly seen as a global signifier of Jewish identity, "mediates Jewish particularity in a globalized world" and presents a notion of identity more diverse than homogenous in light of current trends of globalization (Gelbin, *The Golem Returns* 142). Against this conclusion, I argue that there is a certain homogeneity that exists across 20th century Austrian-Jewish representations of the Golem, which demarcates the scope of this investigation. My focus on Austrian-Jewish iterations of the Golem fills in a gap in Gelbin's work, since the majority of the texts I investigate do not appear in her overarching study, with the exception of Meyrink's *Der Golem*. Her work serves as a reference on the myriad of German language Golem iterations across larger communities, with my work focusing on a much smaller community, namely Austrian-Jewish authors of the 20th century.

Other scholarship integral to my investigation is Hillel Kieval's 1997 article "Pursuing the Golem of Prague: Jewish Culture and the Invention of a Tradition." Kieval illustrates at the end of this article that a transition occurred within Golem representation at the beginning of the 20th century, found initially in the literary work of Yudel Rosenberg, one that permeates subsequent iterations of this legend. Namely, Kieval notes that the source of danger in Golem representations shifts from an internal danger to an external one, due largely to mounting anti-Semitism at the beginning of the 20th century. Kieval leaves this observation undeveloped in his work, however, I use this concluding observation as a starting point in this investigation (Kieval 15). It is my aim to characterize this shift and subsequent development within the context of Austrian-Jewish literature.

Within this overarching analysis of the Golem in 20th century Austrian-Jewish literature, I briefly delineate the importance of the modern notion of the Golem, which stands in opposition

to previous, and often-times anti-Semitic, iterations of this creation. I then demonstrate not only how the creation of this modern savior uses the cultural memory of the Jewish people to raise said defender, but also underscore how this defender operates as a vehicle of memory construction, a figure that on the textual level represents the reclamation of memory and on the intertextual level as a cultural product of modern Austrian-Jewish writers. Finally, I argue that this memory-preserving myth creates and protects a notion of *Heimat* that in its dialectic depiction is uniquely Austrian. In order to achieve this goal, I will point to the specifically Austrian features of this modern Golem, highlighting the similarities that abound in the central texts under consideration.

### **The Golem Tradition**

The Golem is a widely-used icon in Western culture. Most encounter this figure in comic books and folklore, video games and children's novels, or simply as statues depicting this legendary creature in cities like Prague. The Golem as we know it is a roughly-skewn humanoid figure of great size and apparent strength. We associate this figure with notions of protection and destruction, the size of this creation looming and indomitable. However, its origins and function are often lost within the figure we have come to know in popular culture. While I focus on the development of this tradition later in this chapter, let us turn initially to one of the most resonant portrayals of the Golem to date, namely, the iconic hulk of the early silver screen.

The most famous filmic depiction of the Golem is Paul Wegener's 1920 film, *Der Golem: Wie er in die Welt kam*. This film was shot three times, in 1914, 1917 and 1920, with only one copy, the latter version, surviving.<sup>2</sup> The premise of the story follows, at least in part, the

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<sup>2</sup> Wegener's film has received much scholarly attention, especially in recent years. For in depth treatments of this classic film from early German cinema, see: Praver, S.S. *Between Two Worlds: The Jewish Presence in German*

folkloristic tales of the mythical Jewish figure of clay and its creator, the 16th century mystic, Rabbi Löw. The film provides a glimpse at two intersecting strains of 20th century Golem representation, namely the notion of a sentry-like guardian of the Jewish people on the one hand and an abomination with unnatural strength and size bent on arbitrary destruction on the other hand. Perhaps the most memorable scene from this classic silent film occurs when Rabbi Löw attempts to remove the sacred incantation from the chest of the Golem, played by the 6 foot 5 inch tall Wegener himself, thus deactivating him and returning the Golem to its lifeless state. Starting with the aesthetic representation of the characters, the viewer notes Rabbi Löw's appearance as a perpetuation of stereotypical portrayals of Rabbinic figures.<sup>3</sup> Combined with the wide, staring eyes of an alchemist and a conjurer's hat, the depiction of this Jewish mystic is complete with magician's robe. The Golem on the other hand is a hulking creature, whose realistic face contrasts the both fantastic and massive, perhaps even comical, pageboy haircut and crude servant's attire, thus giving the Golem a brutish and goon-like appearance. These two characters interact in the main chamber of Rabbi Löw's home, with a central, winding staircase juxtaposed by the cave-like opening to the basement, the place where Rabbi Löw molded this creature out of clay at the outset of the film. This everyday setting connects the mysterious and

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*and Austrian Film, 1910-1933.*; Isenberg, Noah. "Weimar Cinema, the City, and the Jew: Paul Wegener's *Der Golem*." *Between Redemption and Doom: The Strains of German-Jewish Modernism*. pp. 77-104.; and Thomas, Alfred. "Deviant Monsters and Wayward Women: The Prague Ghetto and the Legend of the Golem." *Prague Palimpsest: Writing, Memory, and the City*. pp 43-76.

<sup>3</sup> Isenberg's comments concerning the depiction of Jewish figures in early German cinema at large, emphasize the anti-Semitic trends found in Wegener's film: "In the cinema [...] signs of Jewishness had to rely on cultural references to overt difference such as Eastern Jewish physiognomy, religious and ritualistic symbols, and ghetto markings, while also relying on the latent anxieties surrounding ostensibly Jewish trades and professions [...] the filmic portrayal of during this time widely partook of various historical, sociopolitical, and cultural discourses inflected with notable anti-Jewish strains (Isenberg 46-47)." Against the recent scholarly arguments underscoring the anti-Semitic features of the film, Praver argues however that there is "nothing intrinsically anti-Semitic in the narrative or staging," illustrating numerous examples of Jews in the film depicted positively (Praver 39). Although the film and its interpretation fall outside the frame of this investigation, the current debate surrounding this film further emphasizes the ambiguity that pervades 20th century depictions of the Golem, a trend we will further investigate in the following chapters. See: Isenberg, Noah. "Weimar Cinema, the City, and the Jew: Paul Wegener's *Der Golem*."

occult origins of the Golem with the most familiar of rooms in the house, where family gathers and leisure time is spent. This "living room" provides an important picture of the Golem in relation to belonging. The Golem exists as an intimate part of the Rabbi's household, a feature that earlier and later versions only intimate.

Let us turn now to the action in this pivotal moment of the film. It is this scene that portrays the removal of the incantation and the Golem's deactivation, at which point the otherwise placid face of the clay guardian turns into a grimacing vision of demonic influence. After battling briefly with the Golem, Rabbi Löw succeeds in removing the scroll, and renders the Golem once again lifeless, at least for the moment. Subsequently, Rabbi Löw realizes that the Golem has successfully performed its function, having indirectly saved the Jewish community by paradoxically preserving the life of Emperor Luhois, whose threats against the Jewish community set the chain of events depicted in the film in motion. The Golem must now be destroyed, although in a twist of fate he is brought once again to life and sets out on a rampage through the city. This rampage unfolds partly as a result of the Rabbi's attempt to deactivate the Golem but also because of the creation's own desire for Miriam, the beautiful daughter of Rabbi Löw. It is this scene where the Golem's role as protector reverts to traditional folkloristic conceptualizations of the Golem legend, a veritable Frankenstein's monster bent on destroying its creator and any that stand in its way. From this point, the Golem runs wild in the Ghetto, setting it ablaze and absconding with Miriam.

I highlight this scene to demonstrate the two extant strands of Golem iterations present in 20th century representations, underscoring the transformation in the Golem's role that is most evident in Austrian-Jewish retellings. We see a creature in Wegener's film that embodies discordant traits. He is both a protector and a destructor. He is both a menial servant and a free

thinking creation. He is brutish, while simultaneously cognizant of his own weakness. As we will investigate in the following section, Wegener's Golem, among others, stands on two opposing sides of Golem representations around the turn of the 20th century, a feature repeatedly brought to the fore in Austrian-Jewish iterations of the Golem.

As noted, this investigation does not offer an in-depth look at the full history of the Golem tradition. However, my focus on the pivotal transition in representations at the beginning of the 20th century from destructor to protector requires a brief consideration of the cultural phenomenon of the Golem leading up to this shift.

The Golem is an ancient figure in the Jewish faith, which in its most traditional iterations represents humanity in a state devoid of spirit, as a mere lump of clay bereft of the life-giving breath of the Almighty. Scholars, such as Gershom Scholem and Mosche Idel, trace the word *Golem* to Psalm 139: 16, understanding its meaning to be that of "the unformed, amorphous" (Scholem 161).<sup>4</sup> Regarding the origin of the very word "Golem" Scholem states, "'Golem' is a Hebrew word that occurs only once in the Bible" in a Psalm that "the Jewish tradition put into the mouth of Adam himself" (Scholem 161). Adam's reference to his own formation from clay underscores the link within the Golem tradition to the physical construction of life itself, one connected intimately with the creation story and man's own drive to create. Referencing the creation story in Genesis, Adam's Golem is his own body, not a separate, constructed anthropoid of later interpretations. The tradition concerning the Golem as a supernatural and magical creation, which becomes the norm in Golem representations, springs out of mystical thought

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<sup>4</sup> Mosche Idel's work on the Golem tradition builds upon Scholem's seminal work, and pursues the Golem tradition in greater detail in relation to Jewish mysticism and its magical leanings. For an example of this trend, see: Idel, Mosche. "The Golem in Jewish Magic and Mysticism." *Golem! Danger, Deliverance and Art*.

from the third and fourth centuries.<sup>5</sup> The Golem of this period warns of humanity's will to create and acquire knowledge. Mystic texts of this period investigate the process of creation and posit the possibility of bestowing life upon those learned enough to engage in Golem building. This mystic tradition catalyzes the medieval fascination with the Golem on the part of the German Hasidim and Kabbalists, out of which tradition the Golem finds its popular home.

The medieval tradition surrounding the Golem is ambiguous in nature. In regard to this ambiguous position of the Golem, Scholem identifies "contradictory motifs" of the Golem figure in the Middle Ages; on one hand [for the Hasidim] "the creation of the Golem confirmed man in his likeness to God," while on the other hand the "creation of a Golem would bring with it the 'death of God'" and lead to "polytheistic confusion" (Scholem 181). By creating a Golem, a mystic would thus be caught in a paradoxical position, striving toward union with the Almighty while simultaneously stealing from Him the very feature that makes one divine, the life-giving capacity. In the texts describing the creation of a Golem around the twelfth century, Scholem further notes that such a practice was "a ritual *representing* an act of creation by the adept and culminating in ecstasy. Here the legend was transformed into a mystical experience" (Scholem 184). It is important to note that the Golem as a figure is almost secondary to the actual act of creation in these mystical origins of the tradition. From this mystic ritual Scholem identifies two major trends in the Golem tradition. Firstly, the creation of a Golem "is without practical 'purpose,'" and secondly, that "Golem-making is dangerous," a danger that "lies in the tension which the creative process arouses in the creator himself" (Scholem 190). As Scholem's scholarship denotes, in predominantly Christian lands the Golem tradition is one that leads to the further demonization of the European Jewry through anti-Semitic renderings. It connects the

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<sup>5</sup> For a detailed description of the development of the Golem in Jewish tradition see: Scholem, Gerschom. "The Idea of the Golem. pp. 158-204.

Jewish community with sorcerers and magicians, who with their chicanery and otherworldly powers cannot be trusted in the eyes of European Christendom. With this perspective on the Golem tradition, coupled with other widely known elements of deep-rooted European anti-Semitism, it seems apparent why, at least until the 20th century, the Golem in German literary tradition remains more of a monster than a savior, often linked with the hubris of man's creative strivings.

In its literary appearances prior to the 20th century, the Golem in the German context was a figure often likened to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, an uncontrollable creature that ultimately turns on its creator, leading to destruction of both parties.<sup>6</sup> As the Golem's significance in the tradition grew, the specific details about its construction also take on a specific form, one that holds true even in modern retellings. The folkloristic Golem tradition maintains that the Golem is formed out of clay and is brought to life through prayers or inscriptions, often written on the forehead or placed behind the Golem's teeth. The Golem, most readily associated with Prague's Rabbi Löw, appears in folkloristic texts compiled by Jakob Grimm, Franz Klutschak, Wolf Pascheles<sup>7</sup>, and, the most renowned version, Leopold Weisels's tale of the Golem published in 1847 as a part of Wolf Pascheles' *Gallerie der Sippurim*. Although a Jew himself, Weisel's tale reiterates the dangers associated with the Golem and its construction. This tale ultimately plays into anti-Semitic portrayals of the Golem popular in the 19th century depictions of the clay

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<sup>6</sup> Scholar's trace the inspiration for Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Der Zauberlehrling*, highlighting the similarities between the Golem and Goethe's figure, with specific emphasis on the uncontrollability of the creation. See: Yair, Gad and Soyer, Michaela. *The Golem in German Social Theory.*; and Wilson, Eric G. "The Golem." *The Melancholy Android: On the Psychology of Sacred Machines*. pp. 63-93.

<sup>7</sup> Cathy Gelbin's 2011 work, *The Golem Returns: From German Romantic Literature to Global Jewish Culture, 1808-2008*, addresses the overarching significance that the Golem took in late 18th and early 19th century folklore: "As Christian writers recorded and rewrote German folk stories, they rediscovered the golem story as a potent reminder of the Jews' difference, which now becomes inscribed on the body" (Gelbin 19). See: Gelbin, Cathy S. *The Golem Returns: From German Romantic Literature to Global Jewish Culture, 1808-2008*.

creature. This tale is rather short, consisting of two pages of text, and scholars note that it quite possibly derives from other written versions of the legend.<sup>8</sup>

Although the reader may find the ironic opening to this story an attempt to undermine the pervasive negative connotations of the Golem during this period, the final paragraphs of this

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<sup>8</sup> I have included the entire text to provide the reader with the full account that served as the model for the anti-Semitic, folkloristic notions of the Golem. See: Kieval, Hillel J. "Pursuing the Golem of Prague: Jewish Culture and the Invention of a Tradition." *Modern Judaism*. pp. 1-23. The tale in its entirety reads as follows: Diese Volkssage ist oft schon von verschiedenen Schriftstellern benützt worden -- und es scheint mir überflüssig, eine so bekannte Sage nochmals zu bearbeiten; damit man aber nicht glaube, ich hätte sie gar nicht gekannt, will ich hier nur in der Kürze anführen.

Unter der Regierung Rudolph II. lebte unter den Prager Juden ein Mann, Namens Bezalel Löw, wegen seiner hohen Gestalt und großen Gelehrsamkeit der hohe Rabbi Löw genannt. Dieser Rabbi war in allen Künsten und Wissenschaften sehr bewandert, besonders in der Kabbala. Vermittelst dieser Kunst konnte er Figuren, von Thon geformt oder von Holz geschnitzt beleben, daß sie wie wirkliche Menschen alles verrichteten, was ihnen aufgetragen ward. -- Solche selbstgeschaffene Domestiken sind viel werth, sie essen nicht, sie trinken nicht und brauchen keinen Gehalt; sie arbeiten unverdrossen, man kann sie ausschelten, und sie geben keine Antwort. Der Rabbi Löw hatte sich einer solchen Diener aus Lehm gebildet, ihm den Schem (Zauberformel) in den Mund gelegt und ihn damit belebt. Dieser gemachte Knecht verrichtete alle groben Geschäfte im Hause durch die ganze Woche: Holz hacken, Wasser tragen, Gassen kehren u.s.w. Am Sabbath mußte er aber ruhen, deshalb nahm ihm der Herr den Schem aus dem Munde und machte ihn todt, ehe der Ruhetag eingegangen war. Doch geschah es einmal, daß der Rabbi dies zu thun vergaß und das Unglück war fertig. -- Der Zauberknecht ward wütend, riß die Häuser nieder, schleuderte Felsstücke umher, entwurzelte Bäume, und wirtschaftete fürchterlich in den Gassen. Man eilte, den Rabbi davon in Kenntnis zu setzen -- aber die Verlegenheit war groß. -- Schon war der Sabbath da, jede Arbeit, sie sei fertigend oder zerstörend, streng untersagt -- wie also den Zauber lösen? Es ging dem Rabbi mit seinem Golem, wie dem Zauberlehrling mit dem Besen in Göthe's Gedichte. Zum Glücke hatte man in der Altneu-Synagoge den Sabbath noch nicht eingeweiht, und da diese die älteste Synagoge in Prag ist, so richtet sich Alles nach ihr, und noch war's Zeit, dem tollen Burschen den Schem zu nehmen. Der Meister eilte, riß dem Golem die Zauberformel aus dem Munde -- der Lehmklöß stürzte und zerfiel in Trümmer. Von diesem Auftritte geschreckt, wollte sich der Rabbi keinen so gefährlichen Knecht mehr machen. Noch heute sollen Stücke des Golems auf dem Boden der Altneu-Synagoge zu sehen sein.

Von diesem wunderthätigen Rabbi werden auch folgende Sagen erzählt: -- Als Kaiser Rudolph und sein Astrolog Tycho de Brahe einst dem Rabbi in seinem schlichten Hause einen Besuch machten, ließ der Rabbi die ganze Burg vom Hradschin in die Judengasse herab zaubern. Der Kaiser wunderte sich sehr darüber und beschenkte den Magier mit Gold und Ehre. -- Einst kam dem Kaiser der sonderbare Einfall, er wolle die Patriarchen und die Söhne Jakobs sehen, und verlangte, R. Löw möchte sie aus ihren Gräbern zitiren. Eine harte Nuß für einen Kabbalisten; doch was thut man nicht alles einem so hohen Gönner zu Liebe? Rabbi Löw willigte ein und versprach dem Kaiser die Stammväter vorzuführen, mit der Bedingung jedoch, daß er nicht lache, er mag was immer sehen. Tag und Ort der Beschwörung ward bestimmt. In einem abgeschiedenen Saale der Burg wurde das Todten-beschwören vorgenommen. Die Väter, die Stammleitern kamen einer nach dem anderen in ihrer wahren Gestalt und der Kaiser staunte über die Größe und kraft dieser Männer der Vorzeiten; denn jeder Einzelne der Stammleitern produzierte sich mit seiner Eigenschaft. Als aber der schnellfüßige Naphtalie über stehende Kornähren und Flachstengel daherschwebte, konnte sich der Kaiser nicht länger halten, er mußte lachen. Die Erscheinung war verschwunden, und die Wölbung des Saales senkte sich herab. Sie würde auch den Kaiser verschüttet haben, wenn Rabbi Löw sie nicht mittelst der Kabbalakrafft fest gebannt hätte. Es soll noch heutigen Tages in einem Saale, der aber nie geöffnet wird, die herabgesunkene Wölbung zu sehen sein. Wenigstens ist dies die Sage unter dem jüdischen Volke. -- In unserer aufgeklärten Zeit, wo man alles Wunderbare läugnet oder natürlich aufzuklären sich bemühet, wurde auch die Sage vom Rabbi Löw natürlich erklärt: Der hohe Rabbi war nämlich ein geschickter Mechaniker, der sich einen Automaten verfertigte, das ist der Golem.

Man will ihm die Erfindung der Camera obscura zuschreiben, wodurch er den Kaiser täuschte; -- kurz der hohe Rabbi Löw war ein Tausendkünstler. (Weisel 51-52)

version underscore the anti-Semitic lens through which the Golem legend appears prior to 20th century iterations. Unlike other popular mythical creatures found in folklore from this period, the Golem has a specific race and ethnicity: he is overtly Jewish. The Golem is connected with the Jewish community and Rabbi Löw, who stands almost as a figurehead for the community at large. Evidencing this anti-Semitic perspective is the description of Rabbi Löw, here no longer an unparalleled mystic but rather a trickster. The medieval associations with magic and mysticism do not play a large role in this retelling, and the Rabbi comes off as a charlatan rather than a revered holy man. His display of the Jewish forefathers appears as a circus-like event, in which the emperor cannot withhold his laughter and incurs the wrath of the Rabbi, causing the ceiling to fall before being halted by further "magic." He appears a mere chicaner, albeit one with extremely advanced skills, whose powers possess a threat to the emperor and by extension the empire. Rabbi Löw is described as a "geschickter Mechaniker," who also invented the "Camera obscura" with which he simply tricks the emperor. The Golem on the other hand, described as a "gefährlichen Knecht," is an uncontrollable force, who destroys the Ghetto, and poses a further threat to the city itself. Weisel thus reiterates the extant trend of Golem representation, one that is more machine than man, a feature that further dehumanizes the Golem and trivializes the faith and tradition of his Jewish creators.

Unlike Wegener's version, this earlier retelling completely leaves the Golem out of the scene where Rabbi Löw saves the emperor's life, after the emperor laughs at the apparitions the Rabbi conjures. In Wegener's film, the Golem prevents the roof from crushing the Emperor and his servants, as opposed to Weisel's use of Rabbi Löw's "Kabbalakraft." Wegener's use of the Golem in this scene demonstrates its changing role, from a previously feared and loathed abomination, to a creature capable of protecting the community at large. As I have indicated

earlier, Wegener's Golem eventually reverts back to previous notions of the Golem as a threat after this scene of protection, however, the significance of this alteration in the retelling of the Golem tradition is quite noteworthy and illustrates the transition taking place within the larger trend of Golem representation.

As exemplified in Wegener's film, the Golem undergoes a substantial transition at the beginning of the 20th century. The end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century brought a new, heightened wave of anti-Semitism, a phenomenon the Golem appeared particularly suited to address. With new cases of blood-libel receiving international attention and state-sanctioned persecution in Russia and Poland, Jewish communities faced unparalleled levels of anti-Semitism around the turn of the century.<sup>9</sup> As Jews were driven out of Eastern Europe, Germany and Austria witnessed an unparalleled growth in their respective Jewish populations, especially in unassimilated groups of orthodox Jews, a development that in turn created even further anti-Semitic sentiments and demonstrations.<sup>10</sup> The persecution of Jews in this period is well documented, and I draw attention to this trend to reemphasize the environment in which 20th century literary representations of the Golem came into existence. Yudel Rosenberg's story of the Golem, *The Golem and the Wonderous Deeds of the Maharal of Prague*, presents the Golem in a protective role, and is exemplary for this change in representation. His narrative, published only two years after the widely distributed, forged *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*

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<sup>9</sup> Jews were not only blamed for the civil unrest in Russia, a sentiment leading to the Bolshevik revolution, but also castigated for their close-knit communities and traditional ways and customs. Dan Cohn-Sherbok argues that "alarm about such political agitation was intensified by the publication of *The Secret of Judaism* and the fraudulent *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which alleged that Jewish people conspire against society to attain world domination" (Cohn-Sherbok 214). These currents of anti-Semitism led to outright violence in many places throughout Eastern Europe and Russia, especially in the lethal, state-sanctioned pogroms of 1881, driving populations west. For further discussion of the widespread intolerance and persecution of the Jews in Eastern and Western Europe at the turn of the 20th century, see: Cohn-Sherbok, Dan. *Anti-Semitism*; and Schweitzer, Frederick M. and Perry, Marvin. *Anti-Semitism: Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present*.

<sup>10</sup> For further discussion of European anti-Semitism around the turn of the 20th century with specific focus on Austro-Hungarian Empire, see: Lorenz, Dagmar C.G., and Weinberger, Gabrielle. *Insiders and Outsiders: Jewish and Gentile Culture in Germany and Austria*; and Beller, Steven. *Vienna and the Jews, 1867-1938: A Cultural History*.

(1905), recasts the clay monster of Jewish tradition in a protective rather than destructive light. It is Rosenberg's 1909 Hebrew and Yiddish versions of Rabbi Löw's Golem legend that most readily influence the modern stories of the Golem.<sup>11</sup> In Rosenberg's tale, Rabbi Löw creates the Golem to protect the Jewish community of Prague against anti-Semitic attacks and bloody pogroms, a climate of anti-Semitism echoed in Rosenberg's own era and community. In contrast to the previous versions of the Golem legend, which as Hillel Kieval elucidates, "the source of danger had always been understood to reside within—within the confines of community; in the very process of the creation of artificial life," the danger in Rosenberg's version comes from external sources (Kieval 16). Here the Golem becomes an avenger and defender of the innocent, a role which repeatedly appears in the Austrian literature directly or indirectly referencing the Golem.

Dagmar Lorenz argues that "the literary and oral tradition of Prague's Rabbi Löw, the Maharal – the Exalted One – is as much a part of Habsburg culture as the popular legends about Christian emperors and Saints" (Lorenz, *Transcending the Boundaries* 287). In regard to such depictions in Austrian literature, the familiarity with Rosenberg's tale remains uncertain, however in reference to Rosenberg's work, Jay Jacoby argues, "Rosenberg probably intended his retelling of the Golem legend to boost the morale of oppressed European Jewry; it gave promise of God's miraculous intervention in the affairs of men. Rosenberg's Golem can be viewed as a prefiguration of the messiah [...]" (Jacoby 102). The fact that subsequent Austrian authors use the Golem in this protective fashion heightens the significance of this role reversal at the beginning of the 20th century, since it underscores the concerns of the Jewish community at this

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<sup>11</sup> This version of the Golem legend depicts Rabbi Löw's creation as a warrior of sorts, with unique abilities and strengths. See: Rosenberg, Yudl. *The Golem and the Wonderous Deeds of the Maharal of Prague*. Trans. Curt Leviant. For a detailed discussion of the specific development of the Prague Golem legend in literature up to and including Rosenberg's version, see: Kieval, Hillel J. "Pursuing the Golem of Prague: Jewish Culture and the Invention of a Tradition." *Modern Judaism*. pp. 1-23.

perilous time in history. In the climate of political and cultural Zionism around the turn of the 20th century, such attachments to popular myths and figures is not surprising, especially when it evinces a reclamation of a legend previously steeped in anti-Semitism.<sup>12</sup> The subversion of this older tradition of the Golem as a menial laborer and uncontrollable brute, however, allows modern references to the Golem to serve another function. Specifically, Jay Jacoby argues that "most modern versions of the Golem story conceive of the creature as having an extremely important function, namely the rescue of the Jewish people in times of great need" (Jacoby 102).<sup>13</sup> In the Austrian texts under examination this function is the protection of community and of *Heimat* in the face of mounting anti-Semitism at the beginning of the 20th century, as well as the recovery of cultural memory and restoration in the aftermath of the Holocaust in post World War II literature. Although Jacoby underscores a binding thread of many modern iterations of the Golem, the way in which this protection is offered, and the place it offers to protect, are in the texts by Meyrink, Perutz, Torberg and Rabinovici uniquely Austrian.

### **Does An Austrian Golem Speak Dialect?**

With the exception of the quite recent publications noted above, scholarship on literary representations of the Golem remains scant in respect to the prevalence of this figure throughout Western culture. Focus has primarily resided on the cultural origins of this figure, with Gerschom Scholem's seminal 1965 work "On the Idea of the Golem" standing as the central text in this field of research. To date, no study has addressed the specific context of Austrian-Jewish

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<sup>12</sup> Regarding the Zionistic climate in the German speaking world and the production of Zionistic literature in German see: Gelber, Mark H. *Melancholy Pride: Nation, Race, and Gender in the German Literature of Cultural Zionism*.

<sup>13</sup> Jay Jacoby's claim fails to note the numerous contemporary versions and retellings of the Golem story that continue to view this creature as a perversion of scientific endeavors. The most modern notion of the Golem pertains to man's pursuit for artificial intelligence and robotics. See: Yair, Gad and Soyer, Michaela. *The Golem in German Social Theory*.; and Wilson, Eric G. "The Golem." *The Melancholy Android: On the Psychology of Sacred Machines*. pp. 63-93.

representations. In order to highlight the similarities between the various texts chosen for this investigation, let us now turn to the specific features of the Austrian-Jewish Golem.

Intently looking at the figure of the Golem in 20th century Austrian-Jewish depictions brings several features of an "Austrian" Golem into stark relief. The texts chosen for this investigation clearly demonstrate how the 20th century Austrian-Jewish notion of the Golem consistently stretches across several generations and time periods. Certain questions come to mind when considering the unique characteristics of these Golem figures: Where does this Golem operate? What is this figure like? How does it ultimately function? In asking these questions, we are able to delineate how these Austrian-Jewish reiterations of the Golem stand apart from previous and contemporary depictions of the Golem. First, outside of the physical location of the Golem in the Habsburg and later Austrian landscape, the Golem exists within the framework of an overarching mystery narrative. Secondly, the Golem exists as a doppelgänger of sorts, rather than a mere clay anthropoid. And finally, the Golem attempts to protect those in harm without directly relying upon violence to achieve its aims. I will now briefly outline the specific qualities of these three characteristics, before demonstrating how they feed into the protection of an Austrian *Heimat*.

One of the initially striking similarities in the selection of Golem representations chosen for this study is use of mystery and crime or detective fiction. Turning to the mystery novel as a backdrop of Austrian-Jewish Golem depictions, the notion of crime and punishment becomes integral to the function of the Golem as protector. The genre of mystery presupposes that there is a well-ordered and objective world in which a mystery or crime can be solved and compensated for in a clear and systematic fashion. This objective world of right and wrong where guilty parties can be justly identified and then punished develops out of the Western tradition, where

arbitrary placement of guilt and subsequent punishment are conducted under the auspices of appointed personnel. The genre therefore came into existence only with the gradual societal change away from hegemonic modes of government, toward the modern notion of justice which aims to be blind and account for individual rights.<sup>14</sup> Charles Rzepka argues that "the eighteenth-century shift in law-enforcement methods from public exhibitions of punishment to private surveillance and arrest" aided in the emergence of crime and detective fiction (Rzepka 17). The Western world, defined by a rational approach to problem solving that supports and embraces the mystery genre, presents a backdrop against which the presence of the irrational and inexplicable creates tension, in the same way that crime instigates tension in a world based upon a systematic order such as a set of laws. Thus, only within a law-abiding society can any objectivity be granted to the nature of mystery and crime. Prior to the advent of societies based upon civil justice, citizens of a realm were at the arbitrary mercy of their respective lords. Dorothy L. Sayers explains this phenomenon in the "Introduction" to the *Omnibus of Crime* which locates the rise of mystery and detective narratives in the early 18th century:

[. . .] the detective-story proper could not [flourish] until public sympathy had veered round to the side of law and order. It will be noticed that, on the whole, the tendency in early crime-literature is to admire the cunning and astuteness of the criminal. This must be so while the law is arbitrary, oppressive, and brutally administered. (Sayers 11)

Sayers argument outlines the need for society to be just and fair in crime literature, a feature of modern society found only after the displacement of hegemonic rulers with arbitrary modes of

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<sup>14</sup> Heta Pyrhönen traces criticism concerning crime fiction from Edgar Allen Poe up to the 1990s and early 21st century. Her findings indicate that the scholars in the 1970s and 1980s focused on the ideology behind crime fiction, noting that "these studies probed how ideology and detective fiction intersect. Defining ideology as specific strategies for legitimating the power of dominant social groups, critics maintained that the operations of ideology are seen in the formal elements and ideas that detective fiction chooses from the discourses circulating in culture" (Pyrhönen 47). She continues to state that recent scholarship views "notions of ideology as an arena of contestation [...] Current research holds that the genre meets head on bitter racial, ethnic, class, and gender conflicts without providing easy answers" (Pyrhönen 48). The works under consideration in this study certainly fit the bill of recent crime fiction scholarship, since the reader is faced with crime stories that don't easily resolve as a reader of traditional crime fiction would expect. For further discussion on recent scholarship on crime fiction see: Pyrhönen, Heta. "Criticism and Theory." *A Companion to Crime Fiction*. pp. 43-56.

punishment and law enforcement. In a well structured society of law and order, crime does occur, and at these times it becomes the role of a hero, or detective, to reestablish order and punish justly those in opposition of the law. Sayers demonstrates the role such a society plays in the mystery novel by adding:

In the nineteenth century the vast, unexplored limits of the world began to shrink at an amazing and unprecedented rate. The electric telegraph circled the globe; railways brought remote villages into touch with civilization; photographs made known to the stay-at-homes the marvels of foreign landscapes, customs, and animals; science reduced seeming miracles to mechanical marvels; popular education and improved policing made town and country safer for the common man than they had ever been. In place of the adventurer and the knight errant, popular imagination hailed the doctor, the scientist, and the policeman as saviors and protectors. But if one could no longer hunt the manticora, one could still hunt the murderer; if the armed escort had grown less necessary, yet one still needed the analyst to frustrate the wiles of the poisoner; from this point of view, the detective steps into his right place as the protector of the weak—the latest of the popular heroes, the true successor of Roland and Lancelot. (Sayers 13)

In 20th century Austrian-Jewish literature, the Golem becomes such a hero. However, as opposed to acting within the rational boundaries of a law-bound Western society, his protection embraces the dichotomy found in a rational society that permits overt and irrational hatred of groups, such as the state-sanctioned anti-Semitism of the Nazi regime. Recent scholarship on the crime fiction genre, such as Maurizio Ascari's 2007 investigation *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction: Supernatural, Gothic, Sensational* and Ilana Shiloh's 2011 study *The Double, the Labyrinth and the Locked Room: Metaphors of Paradox in Crime Fiction and Film*, indicates that definite resolution in early crime fiction was not in fact always given and at times relied upon the supernatural and mysterious in order to achieve resolution. Ascari's focus on the supernatural in crime fiction throughout the genre's tradition, gives precedence to a Golem figure that relies upon "divine detection" to identify guilty parties, thus using the inexplicable to achieve resolution, a paradox in itself (Ascari 17). In a similar vein, Shiloh argues that narrative devices and images like the double, the labyrinth and the locked room "encode[s] a paradox, or an insoluble contradiction" (Shiloh 5). Certainly the Golem in Austrian-Jewish literature of the 20th century epitomizes the double, however, motifs like the labyrinth and the locked room resurface in many

of the examples chosen for this investigation. Shiloh's identification of these elements in crime fiction over the past few centuries creates space for the Golem to act as a crime fiction hero, even if he is unable to achieve the type of resolution early scholars of the genre articulated. This use of the numinous and inexplicable causes a certain tension with the reader and with traditional notions of the genre, since "the 'rules' stipulating that in detective fiction the ordinary laws of the physical universe (as conceived by modern science) are assumed to apply" (Rzepka 18). As we will see in the following chapters, each of these authors imbricate their plotlines with stories of crime and punishment, with the Golem always at view within the overarching development of these "detective" narratives.

The Western world, governed by laws created in reason and logic, clearly allows crime fiction to exist in its conventional application by providing a social context that naturally seeks rational solutions to crime and mystery. Beyond the social context, however, is the religious and moral dimension of crime and punishment, of justice and communal atonement. In his essay titled "The Guilty Vicarage," W.H. Auden describes how society must interact with notions of innocence and guilt, within the context of detective and mystery narratives:

It must appear to be an innocent society in a state of grace, i.e., a society where there is no need of the law, no contradiction between the esthetic individual and the ethical universal, and where murder, therefore, is the unheard-of-act which precipitates a crisis (for it reveals that some member has fallen and is no longer in a state of grace). The law becomes a reality and for a time all must live in its shadow, till the fallen one is identified. With his arrest, innocence is restored, and the law retires forever. (Auden 150)

Society, in Auden's view, needs to ascertain the perpetrator of a crime in order to perform the atonement and purgation necessary for the restoration of societal innocence. His essay, written in the early 1960s, pertains to English and American crime fiction, and evidences the necessity for innocence to be restored within this genre of literature. It is his grasp of innocence's role in this genre that bears significance on this investigation of the Golem and its placement within the framework of crime fiction. The need to regain this innocence appeals to the religious and moral

expectations placed upon members of a society. Auden writes, "The *fantasy*, then, which the detective story addict indulges is the fantasy of being restored to the Garden of Eden, to a state of innocence" (Auden 158, emphasis added). Within the stories of crime and punishment presented by our Austrian authors, the Golem is unable to return society and the location of *Heimat* to a state of grace, which contributes to the creation of what can be understood as an Austrian notion of *Heimat*. As I investigate later in this chapter, notions of innocence play heavily into traditional conceptualizations of *Heimat*, a separate place devoid of crime and transgression often set in the pastoral landscape of a perceived innocence such as childhood. Austrian notions of *Heimat*, however, challenge the innocent and redemptive status of this idyllic location, and thus exist as places more dichotomous and conflicted than resolved or ordered. The backdrop of a crime and punishment narrative allows the authors to underscore this inability, embracing paradoxical notions of *Heimat* rather than seeking to resolve its contradictions.

Another feature of 20th century Austrian-Jewish depictions of the Golem is the figure's status as a doppelganger of sorts. Although the word "doppelganger" is often associated with monstrous entities or evil twins, the doppelgangers encountered in the Austrian-Jewish texts under consideration take on a much more benevolent role. The Golem in this context exists as what could be considered as an alter ego, awakened at times of peril by memories that stretch beyond personal experience and connect to the community at large. The two figures often confront one another, as we shall see is the case in Meyrink's *Der Golem* and in Rabinovici's *Suche nach M*, while other interactions appear as a transition from one state of awareness or consciousness to another, as in the case of Torberg's "Golems Wiederkehr." In each of these cases, the mysterious element of this encounter or transition heightens what Sigmund Freud understood as the "*Unheimliche*." In investigating the moments that cause an individual to feel

uneasy and frightened, Freud's study highlights the figure of the doppelgänger as a prime example of what is translated as "the uncanny." Freud argues that the very word *unheimlich* "ist ein Wort, das seine Bedeutung nach einer Ambivalenz hin entwickelt, bis es endlich mit seinem Gegensatz unheimlich zusammenfällt. Unheimlich ist irgendwie eine Art von heimlich" (Freud 237). In this sense, the feelings evoked through confrontation with a doppelgänger are both unsettling as well as reassuring, the doppelgänger embodying both the alien and the familiar. In analyzing E.T.A. Hoffmann's seminal work *Der Sandmann* for its "unheimliche" elements of "Ich-Verdoppelung, Ich-Teilung, Ich-Vertauschung," Freud identifies the central moments that incite such emotions in the reader:

Es sind dies das Doppelgängertum in allen seinen Abstufungen und Ausbildungen, also das Auftreten von Personen, die wegen ihrer gleichen Erscheinung für identisch gehalten werden müssen, die Steigerung dieses Verhältnisses durch Überspringen seelischer Vorgänge von einer dieser Personen auf die andere [...] so daß der eine das Wissen, Fühlen und Erleben des anderen mitbesitzt, die Identifizierung mit einer anderen Person, so daß man an seinem Ich irre wird oder das fremde Ich an die Stelle des eigenen versetzt. (Freud 246)

For Freud the doppelgänger represents one of the stages of ego development that have surfaced from the unconscious, and are treated as threats by the psyche, although "dies Unheimliche ist wirklich nichts Neues oder Fremdes, sondern etwas dem Seelenleben von alters her Vertrautes, das ihm nur durch den Prozeß der Verdrängung entfremdet worden ist [...] das Unheimliche [ist] etwas, was im Verborgenen hätte bleiben sollen und hervorgetreten ist" (Freud 254). As we shall see in the instances chosen for this investigation, the Golem's appearance as a doppelgänger heightens this notion of the familiar yet foreign, especially as the Golem exists in a memory-reclaiming fashion. These doppelgängers become a symbol for the reclamation of memory, underscoring the inability to repress the horrors of persecution. In the post-Holocaust texts, this figure also operates as an indictment of those Austrians who seek to avoid their complicity in the Holocaust's atrocities. As such, the Golem figures under investigation play out literally the inner

psychological struggles inherent in instances of ambivalence towards community and notions of *Heimat* in the 20th century Austrian context.

Let us turn from the role of the Golem as doppelgänger, and look at the specific function that the Golem performs, the act of protection. The perception of the Golem as a protector draws upon the physical strength and invulnerability of the clay creature, a creature that throughout much of its folkloristic and literary iterations has remained a monster. The popular notion of the Golem perpetuates as an unequivocal monster up until the 20th century, and one need only recall the title of Cathy Gelbin's 2008 article "The Monster Returns: Golem Figures in the Writings of Benjamin Stein, Esther Dischereit, and Doron Rabinovici" as evidence of the ongoing association, at least metaphorically, of the Golem with the monstrous. However, the transition from a monstrous hulk to an empathy-inspiring mirror image of guilt has important ramifications for the physical function of the Golem within 20th century iterations.

The physical attributes of this savior tie into discussions of the Jewish body in the context of fin-de-siècle writers and artists. Consistent with the strivings for Jewish sovereignty paramount in the Zionist movement, the figure of the "muscle-Jew," proposed by ardent Zionist Max Nordau around the turn of the 20th century, is a direct response to negative stereotypes of Jewish masculinity and the Jewish body in this historical period.<sup>15</sup> Hyper-masculine notions of the Golem, among other traditional Jewish figures of strength like Samson or the Maccabees, undoubtedly lurk behind this renaissance of Jewish corporeality, since the Golem's strength and physical prowess are at the heart of traditional telling of the legend. This focus on unflinching

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<sup>15</sup> Nordau's remarks at the II. Zionisten-Congress in 1898, underscore the significant role the physical body plays in notions of protection and liberation, especially in the face of mounting anti-Semitism, of which Nordau repeatedly refers to earlier in his address: "Der Zionismus erweckt das Judenthum zu neuem Leben. Das ist meine Zuversicht. Er bewirkt dies sittlich durch Auffrischung der Volksideale, körperlich durch die physische Erziehung des Nachwuchses, der uns wieder das verloren gegangen Muskel-Judenthum schaffen soll" (Nordau 24). See: Nordau, Max. *Protokoll der Verhandlungen des II. Zionisten-Kongresses: gehalten zu Basel vom 28. bis 31. August 1898*. Verlag des Vereins "Erez Israel." pp 14-27.

physicality spurs turn of the century messianic interpretations of the legend, as seen in Rosenberg's version, since this movement of "Muskel-Judentum" sought to create Jews capable of protecting the community through focus on physical prowess. In this light, it is significant that 20th century Austrian-Jewish authors chose to have their Golem figures remain passive, rather than become brutes capable of inflicting physical harm on would-be persecutors or threats.

In the discussion of the Golem, we must also look at the notion of "monster" in order to further identify the significance in the transition the Golem undergoes in 20th century Austrian-Jewish literature. Cathy Gelbin connects perceptions of the monster or outsider to the Golem, arguing that within anti-Semitic discourses around the turn of the 20th century, the Jew:

[...] became the symbol of the fin de siècle theme of decadence with its excessive focus on racial, gender, and sexual deviance. In keeping with Hans Mayer's [...] observation that monsters signify the racial, gender, and sexual outsiders of modernity, early twentieth-century golem texts negotiate the changing gender and sexual ascriptions within wider European discourse in relation to the Jew. (Gelbin *The Golem Returns*, 75)

Furthermore, Gelbin argues in the context of literary iterations of the Golem, that "the golem, a monstrous and silent nonhuman, becomes the perfect signifier for the new configuration of the Jews' absolute difference, the modern symbol of their spiritual and physical corruption, as well as their flawed mode of discourse" (Gelbin, *The Golem Returns* 23). Gelbin's assertions ring true for texts that continue to portray the Golem as a clay hulk, or an artificial anthropoid, yet the doppelganger motif of 20th century Austrian-Jewish authors requires a more nuanced interpretation.

The notion of monster ordinarily associated with the Golem prior to the 20th century, and again associated with this figure in some strains of popular culture today, is one that evokes a particular negative connotation. As an abomination and a uncontrollable hulk, the Golem falls into a category of corporeality that is monstrous. The common association of the Golem with the monstrous arises from the mysterious origin of this figure. In 19th century folkloristic

retellings, the Golem remains a seemingly diabolical creation raised by a community of people inveterately perceived as grotesque and monstrous, the Jews. Stephen Asma highlights the concept of the *monster*, and addresses its usage as a term in its current 21st century context, stating that members of a society "employ the term and concept to apply to *inhuman* creatures of every stripe, even if they come from our own species. The concept of the monster has evolved to become a moral term in addition to a biological and theological term" (Asma 7). However, the conveyance of the monstrous onto the Jewish community is a moral as well as a physical attempt to castigate and distance this community, whose presumed "inhumanity" derives from their rejection of the Christian messiah. An example of this association of the monstrous with the Jewish community is the Christian monster Ahasuerus, the wandering Jew.<sup>16</sup> As such, the concept of the Jew as monster coincides with the traditional understanding of the monstrous:

*Monster* derives from the Latin word *monstrum*, which in turn derives from the root *monere* (to warn). To be a monster is to be an omen. Sometimes the monster is a display of God's wrath, a portent of the future, a symbol of moral virtue or vice, or an accident of nature. The monster is more than an odious creature of imagination; it is a kind of *cultural category*, employed in domains as diverse as religion, biology, literature, and politics. (Asma 13)

The Jewish reclamation of the Golem in the 20th century, forces the monstrous qualities ascribed to the Jews, and by extension their abominations, such as the Golem, to subside. We see this transformation in these Austrian-Jewish iterations in the very form of the figure, granting humanity to the figure insofar as the Golem exists in the form of a doppelganger, rather than a hulking clay brute of the medieval and later romantic tradition. This is not to say that the Austrian-Jewish depictions of the Golem are no longer monstrous to a certain degree. The

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<sup>16</sup> Hans Mayer directs his attention to this monstrous figure stating, "The figure and mythology of Ahasuerus is of Christian contrivance. It has in mind and is aimed with particular mockery at the Jewish Parousia, which never took place. The Jewish Messiah appeared but was not recognized by the chosen people. Ahasuerus belongs to the imaginative world of the builders of the Gothic cathedrals, along with the foolish virgins and the blindfolded synagogue. Naturally he is the incarnation of his people, the diaspora, the wandering without rest, a grudging hospitality among alien peoples. But the Eternal Jew never signifies a particular Jew. He stands rather for a theological fatum, not for the particular life of any one, single Jew." (Mayer 271) For further discussion of the Ahasuerus figure, see: Mayer, Hans. *Outsiders; A Study in Life and Letters*.

Golem still possesses mysterious qualities, like uncanny crime detection skills and guilt perception as well as clay-like forms such as paper or gauze, that continue to strike fear and awe into those they encounter. However, through its monstrosity the Golem becomes a champion of communities under threat, standing as a symbol of Jewishness by embodying the collective spirit of entire communities. The Golem is only a monster in the sense that it remains what Hans Mayer considers an *Aussenseiter*:

They are those whose move into the margins and the outside was enjoined at birth through sex, origins, or psychic and corporeal makeup. A further characteristic of existential outsiderdom is that it is no longer a single individual who is envisaged, a rebel, one marked man or woman. Existential outsiders are "people who..." They have become a genus. The negative judgment stands. (Mayer xvii)

One area of specific focus for Mayer is the Jewish outsider in bourgeois literature, a role that repeatedly places the Jew in a default position outside of the grace of "normal" society. The opening subtitle, spurring Mayer's entire investigation, underscores the synonymic quality of the monster and the outsider, "The Monster as a Serious Issue for Humanity" (Mayer 1).

Asma sums up the ever-present notions surrounding monsters stating, "monsters cannot be reasoned with. Monsters are generally ugly and inspire horror. Monsters are unnatural. Monsters are overwhelmingly powerful. Monsters are evil. Monsters are misunderstood. Monsters cannot be understood" (Asma 283). However, in relation to our topic, the physical abilities ascribed to the Golem, size and strength, melt away in the face of the doppelgänger-Golem's abilities to inspire empathy and compassion, and perhaps limited acceptance. The negative connotations surrounding the Golem as "monster," become all the more ambiguous in relation to its function, due to its passive protection. Furthermore, in contrast to the monsters in folkloristic iterations of the Golem prior to the 20th century, these Golem figures no longer solely embody the foreign, but are instead intimately bound with the community and setting; a double of a specific individual instead of a towering clay brute.

This simultaneous connection to the foreign as well as the familiar elicits a specific focus on ambiguity, a feature which is integral to the doppelganger, and to monsters as well. Asma defines creatures such as Zombies, Gorgons, and the Minotaur as "liminal beings," since they exist "between categories" and are on the "threshold," thus citing the root of the very word liminal itself (Asma 40). Doppelgangers certainly embody the liminal since they are ambiguously familiar yet foreign, and since they engender a veritable bridge into the psyche, in Freud's estimation. Ambiguity is a primary feature of monsters, highlighted through Asma's primary example of the liminal being, the Hermaphrodite, since its nature is not immediately discernable, and thus occupies a monstrous position in ancient tradition (Asma 40). As doppelgangers in the Austrian context, the simultaneous familiarity and foreignness of these figures alludes to the changing perception of the Golem, from a pure monster both in Jewish and Christian texts, to an ambiguous figure that is both familiar and alien. This aspect of the monstrous remains within depictions of the Golem as doppelganger, and heightens the sense of ambiguity that Meyrink, Perutz, Torberg and Rabinovici use to address notions of belonging and alienation. The normative claims of monsters being evil and unnatural no longer apply to the doppelganger and these modern iterations of the Golem. These figures remain frightening, but for reasons beyond their outward appearance or physical domination.

As a doppelganger figure embodying the spirit of the Jewish community in the 20th century Austrian-Jewish texts from Meyrink, Perutz, Torberg, and Rabinovici, the Golem refrains from directly enacting physical harm on guilty parties in these respective works. The Golem is not a symbol of revenge in the traditional sense. Rather, this Golem figure has an "unheimliche" knowledge of guilt, which in turn brings justice through awareness of the crimes committed. In each textual example chosen for this study, the guilt utilized by the Golem derives

from crimes committed against the Jewish community, and at times society as a whole. Brought on by the unflagging momentum of memory, the reflection of this guilt embodied by the Golem serves to inspire empathy, a force capable of stopping perpetrators as they threaten the community at large. It is this uncomfortable acknowledgement of guilt and memory that remains frightening, culminating in the works of Rabinovici. The specific instances of this weaponized-guilt as a means of protection will be addressed in the context of each individual work.

### ***Heimat*: The Golem as the Protector of "Innocents"**

Peter Blickle describes the image of *Heimat* as a "subject's inner longing for identification with a supposedly originary nature or landscape" (Blickle 20). With that perspective in mind, this locale is a "good and innocent" place in which "emotional, irrational, subjective, social, political, and communal" notions of identity are manifest (Blickle 20, 8).

Blickle further defines his notion of *Heimat*:

*Heimat* constructs are counter-phobic conceptualizations expressed in regressive, imagistic terms. They are wish-fulfillments without a price; they provide a world where wars and destruction do not exist or are so far away that they do not matter; they provide a world where men and women know their roles so perfectly that they come together in due course without strains and crises; and they provide a world where the experiences of alienation are magically healed in this feminine and feminizing construct. We see *Heimat* – like concepts of nature, nation, or family – as an attempt at unity and centeredness in the face of disjunction and fragmentation. (Blickle 62)

Blickle's notion of *Heimat* provides a broad-sweeping characterization of German depictions of this seemingly idyllic location, which in regard to 20th century Austrian notions of *Heimat*, fails to articulate the conflicted nature of such locations. Johannes von Moltke presents a more nuanced reading of the notion of *Heimat* in his work on German film, *No Place Like Home: Locations of Heimat in German Cinema* (2005). Von Moltke envisions *Heimat* "as place, as a limited terrain that affords its inhabitants respite and protection from incursions originating in the more intangible and abstract spaces beyond its boundaries" (von Moltke 11). This understanding

of *Heimat* underscores the ultimate ambiguity and paradox at the heart of notions of *Heimat*. As von Moltke contends, "Homelessness provides a superior epistemological vantage point from which to gauge the meaning of home," thus further driving the conflicted notion of *Heimat* that pervades the idyllic landscapes so often conjured in *Heimatfilme*, a genre steeped in the restorative elements of innocence and pastoral splendor. In the opening chapter to his study, von Moltke's attention to *The Wizard of Oz* also intimates the inherently conflicted aspect of *Heimat*: "the doubling of Oz for home [...] suggests that home is ontologically unstable. 'Home' and 'away,' *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, can be more difficult to distinguish than we might have thought" (von Moltke 3). This instability at the core of what creates longing for pastoral images of idyll functions as a springboard for what we will investigate in the Austrian notion of *Heimat*.

Regarding a specifically Austrian notion of *Heimat*, W.G. Sebald argues that "die Beschäftigung mit der *Heimat* über alle historischen Einbrüche hinweg geradezu" identifies "eine der charakteristischen Konstanten der ansonsten schwer definierbaren österreichischen Literatur" (Sebald 11). A central feature of Austrian literature, Sebald underlines the inherent difficulties surrounding *Heimat* in this context, that:

[...] wie bei der Vielfalt der ethnischen und politischen Denominationen anders gar nicht sein kann, die Vorstellung von dem, was Heimat einmal war, ist oder sein könnte, bis auf den heutigen Tag in einer Weise schwankt, daß eine systematische Vermessung dieses Geländes auf erhebliche Schwierigkeiten stoßen würde. (Sebald 11)

Sebald's notion of *Heimat* stems from his belief that "die Erfahrung des Heimatverlusts nie wieder gutzumachen ist" (Sebald 12). In contrast to Blickle's conceptualization of idyllic "wish-fulfillments" projected "onto real geographical sites," portrayals of *Heimat* in Austrian literature are dialectic in nature, since they seek to depict a sound image of *Heimat* in a specific location but are perpetually aware of and overtly thematize an inability to achieve any such reconciliation (Blickle 130). In the context of this investigation, Sebald's remarks on the *Heimat*-literature of

Austrian Jews further underscore the conflicted nature of *Heimat* so apparent in Austria.<sup>17</sup> In light of their "Assimilation und Westwanderung," Sebald maintains that "Kritik und Treue halten einander in den Werken der jüdisch-österreichischen Autoren auf das genaueste die Waage [...]," thus demonstrating the dialectic notion of *Heimat* for this community (Sebald 14). Furthermore, Sebald's reflections on the Austrian notion of *Heimat* seemingly address the Jewish figure of the Golem itself, especially in regard to its function as an emissary of memory and trauma:

Es ist offenbar immer noch nicht leicht, sich in Österreich zu Hause zu fühlen, insbesondere wenn einem, wie in den letzten Jahren nicht selten, die Unheimlichkeit der Heimat durch das verschiedentliche Auftreten von Wiedergänger und Vergangenheitsgespenst öfter als lieb ins Bewußtsein gerufen wird. (Sebald 15-16)

The Golem becomes for Meyrink, Torbeg, and Rabinovici precisely that, a "Vergangenheitsgespenst," who represents the literal notion of "Heim-suchen" while simultaneously evoking the typical "unheimliche" responses. Sebald further highlights this paradoxical format in the *Heimat* literature at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, seen in specific textual examples from Karl Emil Franzos and Leopold Kompert, which in turn find resonance with authors spanning from Schnitzler and Altenberg to Broch and Roth.<sup>18</sup> He maintains that visions

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<sup>17</sup> The Habsburg Empire was the most accepting of its Jewish population, the largest in all of Western Europe until 1918. From 1848 Jews were able to exercise civil rights and in 1867 were welcomed as equal citizens under the law. Although equal rights were officially awarded to the Jews, many still resided in the Jewish quarters of cities like Prague and Vienna, although now free to reside throughout the empire, and faced open demonstrations of anti-Semitism. With continued orthodox populations entering the Empire, the Jewish population was both assimilated and traditional. Sebald characterizes the paradoxical position these Jews held in Jewish "Heimatliteratur" which was "geprägt von tiefgehenden Ambivalenzen. Die Sehnsucht nach dem neuen bürgerlichen Zuhause trägt in sich die Nachtrauer um die aufgegebenen alte Welt und ein gewisses Unbehagen darüber, daß mit der Öffnung des Ghettos, das so lange die einzige Wohnstatt hatte sein können, nun eine neue Zerstreuung sich anbietet" (Sebald 40). For further discussion of the unique place Austrian Jews occupied around the turn of the 20th century, see: McCagg, W. O. *A History of Habsburg Jews 1670–1918*; and Beller, Steven. *Vienna and the Jews, 1867-1938: A Cultural History*.

<sup>18</sup> Sebald also investigates this notion of *Heimat* more contemporary works from Gerhard Roth and Peter Handke to name a few. Sebald's argument holds that the Jewish authors from the turn of the 20th century, especially in "Ghettogeschichten" lay the groundwork for current authors and their respective treatment of *Heimat*. Whether or not we follow Sebald's argument that Austrian literature on the whole is defined by this troublesome interaction with *Heimat*, 20th century Austrian-Jewish literature does maintain the dichotomous relationship to *Heimat* that Sebald identifies in these early 20th century Austrian-Jewish depictions of Ghetto life. However, there are many further examples Sebald does not draw upon, such as Bachman's 1972 "Drei Wege zum See," Gert Jonke's 1969 *Geometrischer Heimatroman*, and Josef Haslinger's 1995 *Opernball*, which would support his claim. See: Sebald, W.G. *Unheimliche Heimat*.

of *Heimat* were a "komplexer Illusionismus, der sich der eigenen Unhaltbarkeit völlig bewußt gewesen ist und der, indem er noch an der Vorstellung eines Heimatlandes arbeitet, sich zugleich bereits als Einübung ins Exil verstand" (Sebald 13). Here he articulates the tragic vision found in turn of the century literature addressing an Austrian *Heimat*, a place that in his estimation embodies paradox, since such depictions are completely aware of their own illusions and create further instances of exile by trying to recreate a lost paradise of sorts. Connecting this previous literature with contemporary and future manifestations of *Heimat*, Sebald ruminates: "Lag die Restaurierung der gesellschaftlichen Heimat kraft des rechten Wortes immerhin noch im Bereich des Möglichen, so scheint es in zunehmendem Maße fraglich, ob solche Kunst hinreichen wird, das zu erretten, was wir, über alles, als unsere wahre Heimat begreifen müßten" (Sebald 16).

Sebald's skepticism at the function of *Heimat* in literature, or at least in the fashion that Blickle identifies, clearly attests to the type of *Heimat* envisioned by Austrian-Jewish writers like Meyrink, Perutz, Torberg and Rabinovici. It is not a place where innocence prevails, but rather one where innocence and guilt coexist. It is not a place that is intrinsically "good and innocent" but rather conflicted and dialectic. As such, it seems fitting that a creature such as the Golem, with its ambiguous past and purpose, should be the one to rise out of the Austrian-Jewish literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to protect as well as ad- or redress *Heimat*.

Although the nature of an Austrian *Heimat* is inherently conflicted for Austrian Jews, the Golem in 20<sup>th</sup> century Austrian-Jewish literature nonetheless seeks to avenge and protect, thus maintaining and restoring a certain innocence and purity to specific locations and communities. Blickle's argument that "the idea of *Heimat* is based on an imaginary space of innocence projected onto real geographical sites" aids us in considering how the Golem counters the real-world concerns of Jewish authors like Meyrink, Torberg, and Rabinovici, since it is the Golem

who seeks to protect the ghetto in Prague, the *Altneuschule*, as well as the communities from which he stems (Blickle 130).<sup>19</sup> Notions of *Heimat* within the Jewish faith also require a dialectic understanding. As a people in "Diaspora," the unique notion of a *Heimat* outside of Palestine, the "Galut," provides for Jews a conflicted understanding of belonging. The Jewish people find themselves, therefore, in a paradox in relation to *Heimat*. Sander L. Gilman and Jack Zipes note the inherent dialectic of *Heimat* for Jews:

The voluntary dispersion of the Jews (Galut or Golah) is understood as inherently different from the involuntary exile of the Jews (Diaspora). These two models *exist simultaneously* in Jewish history in the image of the uprooted and powerless Jews on the one hand, and the rooted and empowered Jews on the other. (Gilman and Zipes xix, emphasis added)

These two notions in fact often go hand in hand, since "the Galut [...] is often understood as the experienced reality of being in exile—a reality structured [...] by the internalization of the textual notion of the Diaspora tempered by the daily experience (good or bad) of life in the world" (Gilman and Zipes xix). *Heimat* is both present, as a current geographical location, and absent, as an idyllic Jewish homeland, in the paradoxical view of the Jew outside of Israel. The Golem tradition seemingly addresses this conflicted notion of belonging since the creature seeks to protect a *Heimat* that is geographically located "in exile." The paradoxical view of *Heimat* on the part of the Jews further intensifies the dialectic vision of *Heimat* presented by these Austrian-Jewish writers.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Although Meyrink was raised Protestant, Robert Irwin argues that he also has Jewish heritage, his mother being Jewish. Meyrink's intense interest in Jewish mysticism and the Kabbalah suggests his close connection to his ancestral faith, and he uses this influence throughout *Der Golem*, especially in connection with Pernath's rediscovery of his Jewish faith, a repressed and buried memory. Concerning the roots of Meyrink's personal connection to the Jewish faith, Robert Irwin notes that "anti-semitism and accusations of ritual murder were rife in Bohemia from the 1890s onwards. It is possible that Meyrink [...] suffered in some measure from the revival of this prejudice" (Irwin 17).

<sup>20</sup> Using the term Austrian-Jewish to describe these authors overtly implies their assimilated status. In relation to this paradoxical position of Jews in the Galut, Cathy Gelbin asserts that the Golem has also "embodied the ambivalent in- and outside perspectives on Jews in the German-speaking lands" since its appearance in German language Jewish literature (Gelbin, *Of Stories and Histories* 193). I shall explore the centrality of this ambivalence in depth in the literary analyses.

In the following sections I will investigate how, in the works chosen for this investigation, the Golem functions as a counterweight to right the imbalance surrounding these locations and in these communities, a force to counteract the horrors of institutional and interpersonal injustices through the auspices of memory. However, as witnessed in Sebald's observations on the literary notions of the Austrian *Heimat*, the places and people that the Golem seeks to defend and purify are inherently and irrevocably conflicted. It is thus important to highlight the Golem's status as a symbol of memory; a symbol which relies on cultural memory to engage diverging notions of *Heimat*.

### **Cultural Memory and *Heimat*: The Golem's Task**

Modern revitalizing portrayals of the Golem as protector reclaim this symbol and figure as a piece of cultural memory capable of [re]socializing members into the community and chronicling certain traumas of the community itself. Jan Assmann defines cultural memory in opposition to other types of collective memory thus: "Cultural memory, in contrast to communicative memory, encompasses the age-old, out-of-the-way, and discarded; and in contrast to collective, bonding memory, it includes the noninstrumentalizable, heretical, subversive, and disowned" (Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory* 27). These 20<sup>th</sup> century Austrian authors utilize and reinvent the literary and cultural trope of the Golem, an act which overtly and positively repurposes a figure previously cast in a negative and nefarious light within the context of literature in German.

By reinventing the figure of the Golem, Meyrink, Perutz, Torberg, and Rabinovici attest to this ancient symbol's perpetuating existence in the popular consciousness. Assmann articulates the significance of symbols such as the Golem in the creation and upkeep of cultural

memory, since "the interaction of symbol and memory is a continuous process being played out at every level" (Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory* 8). Jan Assmann thus elaborates on the "Metaphorik der Erinnerung" that Aleida Assmann articulates. It is her argument that: "Das Phänomen Erinnerung verschließt sich offensichtlich direkter Beschreibung und drängt in die Metaphorik. Bilder spielen dabei die Rolle von Denkfiguren, von Modellen, die die Begriffsfelder abstecken und die Theorien orientieren" (Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume* 150). In this sense, the use of the Golem in a literary work enables the reader to sift through the cultural memories stored within such an iconic figure. Regarding these symbols Jan Assmann states:

Such aides-memoires are also the lieux de memoire, memory sites in which the memory of entire national or religious communities is concentrated, monuments, rituals, feast days and customs [...] a *system of markers* that enables the individual who lives in this tradition to belong, that is, to realize his potential as the member of a society in the sense of a community where it is possible to learn, remember, and to share in a culture. (Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory* 8-9, emphasis added)

The Golem represents one of the many markers that enable cultural memory. As such, Rosenberg's, and later Austrian authors', reclamation of the Golem functions as a symbol of intimate connection to the divine, as well as geographical belonging, instead of diasporic displacement. Historically, the creation of the Golem allows its creator to intimately communicate with the divine. Since this creation echoes the biblical account of God's creation of Adam, it thereby directly connects the Jewish people with their creator. As Scholem points out, the "Golem has been interpreted as a symbol of the soul or of the Jewish people, and both theories can give rise, no doubt, to meaningful reflections" (Scholem 204). Meyrink, Perutz, Torberg, and Rabinovici's respective new "creations" of the Golem engage the cultural memory of the Jewish people by referencing this iconic cultural symbol or "cultural text." Jan Assmann relays the definition of cultural memory as follows:

By 'cultural texts' we understand all sign complexes, that is, not just texts, but also dances, rites, symbols, and the rest, that possess a particular normative and formative authority in the establishment of meaning and identity. Cultural texts lay claim to an authority that embraces society as a whole; they determine its identity and coherence. They structure the world of meaning in which society makes itself understood, and

also the sense of unity, belonging, and individuality that can be handed down through the generations, thus enabling a society to reproduce itself as a recognizable group. Cultural texts change with the changing context of a changing present, and it is precisely the cultural texts that are subject to the most radical editorial modifications. (Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory* 123-124)

As a cultural text, the Golem molds identity and gives meaning to the communities with which it has contact, both Jewish and non-Jewish. From either perspective, the Golem remains closely intertwined with the Jewish community, serving as a messianic figure on the one hand and as a diabolical monster on the other hand. As discussed earlier, the constantly-adapting nature of this 'cultural text' has not only served the religious fervor of Jewish mystics but has also allowed for the anti-Semitic designs of European Christians. The fact that these modern, and decidedly altered, versions of the tale have taken root in the popular consciousness further attests to the ever-changing nature of cultural memory, which in turn, affords for the shift in consciousness surrounding the Golem in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Regardless of its specific function, however, the Golem tradition helps create and define the cultural memory of Jews and Christians alike.

From this perspective it is quite understandable why Meyrink, Torberg, and Rabinovici tap into the Golem's connection with cultural memory in their modern depictions of this symbol of memory itself. They achieve this connection by overtly thematizing the Golem's affiliation with the process of remembrance. The Golem exists in these depictions as a walking chronicle of personal histories as well as a community archive of specific geographic communities. Aleida Assmann's arguments concerning a few modern authors grappling with portrayals of memory also apply to the texts in this investigation: "Künstlerische Erinnerung funktioniert dabei nicht als Speicher, sondern simuliert Speicher, indem sie die Prozesse von Erinnern und Vergessen thematisiert" (Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume* 22). The Golem thus becomes a figure that enables and spurs on cultural memory on the part of the reader through its blatant tie to memory *within* the narratives in question. In other words, by thematizing the need for characters to confront

their own histories, these 20<sup>th</sup> century Austrian depictions of the Golem allow for the reconstruction of cultural memory that "enables the individual who lives in this tradition to belong" (Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory* 8). The cultural text of the Golem requires an engagement with memory in order for the inhabitants of what Sebald considers the "unheimliche *Heimat*" of Austria, here the characters in the chosen narratives, to belong, an aspect I will now investigate in the works of Meyrink, Torberg, and Rabinovici.

My analysis of the following texts articulates the unique connection to the Golem tradition that each of these texts offer. I then demonstrate how these depictions of the Golem are inexorably bound with notions of memory, thus making his *Heimat*-protecting function one of memory re-construction. Finally, I argue that the *Heimat* being protected is overtly and consciously dialectic and conflicted.

## **Chapter 1 - The Golem's New Messianic Form: Gustav Meyrink's *Der Golem* (1915) and its ramifications for the 20th Century Austrian Golem**

*Einmal, in meinen Delirien, glaubte ich -- ein Zeichen auf Ihrer Brust zu sehen. --  
Mag sein, daß ich wach geträumt habe. (Meyrink 252)*

Gustav Meyrink's 1915 novel *Der Golem* is perhaps the most significant work concerning the Golem in the 20th century.<sup>21</sup> Versions of the Golem legend also appear in works by Yudi Rosenberg, Chayim Bloch, and Franz Kafka in the years surrounding Meyrink's publication of his Golem narrative in both serial and book forms. Although not the first work focused on the Golem and its surrounding legend in this time period, *Der Golem* remains the most critically analyzed literary work that employs this mythical Jewish figure.<sup>22</sup> Before we investigate the novel itself, however, we must first address the cultural milieu that allowed for such a novel to resonate with so many readers. This chapter briefly traces iterations of the Golem, from the aforementioned authors, that both preceded and followed Meyrink's work in the early 20th century, emphasizing the marked shift that appears in Golem representation, a shift that Meyrink embraced and articulates in *Der Golem*. In this vein, I first highlight the type of Golem figure that Rosenberg's seminal text portrays. I then turn to the contemporary representations of the Golem in Austrian literature by Kafka and Bloch before turning my gaze toward Meyrink's

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<sup>21</sup> Meyrink's work sold over 200,000 copies upon its release in novel form, attesting to its extreme popularity as a serial publication in *Die Weißen Blätter*. See: Irwin, Robert. "Gustav Meyrink and His Golem." pp. 15-20.

<sup>22</sup> Of the literary texts under investigation, *Der Golem* has received the most critical analysis. Psychological as well as religious approaches comprise the majority of extant literature on Meyrink's most popular novel, with perhaps the most renowned commentary of the novel coming from C.G. Jung, whose interest in *Der Golem* surrounds Meyrink's use of archetypal images and figures: Jung, C. G. "The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious." *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*. pp. 90-113. For further examples of the secondary literature surrounding *Der Golem*, see: Oehm, Heidemarie. "Gustav Meyrnik. *Der Golem*." *Spiegel im dunklen Wort: Analysen zur Prosa des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts.*; and Jennings, Lee B. "Meyrink's *Der Golem*: The Self as Other." *Aspects of Fantasy: Selected Essays from the Second International Conference on the Fantastic in Literature and Film*.

novel. It is Meyrink's version that finds resonance in the later Austrian-Jewish representations of the Golem that I investigate throughout the remainder of this study.

### **Yudl Rosenberg and The Golem**

Yudl Rosenberg (1859-1935) was a Polish Jew, whose career as a rabbi, both in Europe and in Canada, where he lived and worked after emigrating in 1913, played a secondary role to his ambitions in Hebrew literature. However, Rosenberg's literary impact as a Hebrew writer remains marginal, and, as Curt Leviant underscores, "although Rosenberg is briefly mentioned in an *Encyclopedia Judaica* article on 'golem,' he has no entry under his own name" (Leviant xix). In *The Golem and the Wondrous Deeds of the Maharal of Prague*, Rosenberg focuses primarily on the Golem in its popular mythical context, retelling the story of the 16th century Prague Jewry, with the central figure remaining the Maharal, Rabbi Löw. Rosenberg organizes the text as a litany of short narratives about the Golem and the Maharal. The book is passed off as a tome purportedly written by the nephew of the Maharal. The publisher's note in the first pages relates that he acquired the text from an antique bookseller, who had previously found it in the library of Metz, an entirely fictional locale imagined by Rosenberg, after it had sat unread for hundreds of years. Curt Leviant claims that there are those that still believe the fiction that this clever literary framing technique creates, which in turn might have led to its success and popularity, a popularity that led to a complete shift in representations of the Golem in subsequent 20th Century versions.<sup>23</sup> It was Rosenberg's revitalizing vision of the Golem, a Golem no longer bound with negative connotations of abomination or dangerous brute, that paved the way for the unique work of Meyrink, and still influences modern notions of the Golem legend itself.

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<sup>23</sup> Leviant claims that the text "took the European Jewish community by storm in 1909" a fact which led to not only a Yiddish version, but a "pirated bilingual version," as well as numerous translations, not to mention Chayim Bloch's plagiarized German version of 1917. For further information on the history of Rosenberg's text, see: Leviant, Curt. "Introduction." In: Rosenberg, Yudl. *The Golem and the Wondrous Deeds of the Maharal of Prague*. pp. xiii-xxxiv.

Rosenberg's Hebrew text from 1909, *Niflo'es Maharal*, in English *The Golem and the Wondrous Deeds of the Maharal of Prague*, is the first popular 20th century version of the Golem legend, found not only in German shortly after its publication but also reaching "as far as the Middle East via a Judeo-Persian translation and to North Africa in Judeo-Arabic" (Leviant xxii). Rosenberg's text transformed the folkloristic versions in significant ways, and opened the door for a resurgence of interest in the legend, evidenced by Paul Wegener's surviving Golem film and Meyrink's extremely popular novel, all surfacing in the years directly following Rosenberg's publication. It is his version of the tale that informs 20th century popular knowledge surrounding the Golem as a protector of the Jewish faith. As noted in the introduction, previous versions of the legend painted the Golem in an anti-Semitic light, focusing on the havoc that the Golem wreaked after its abominable creation at the hands of sacrilegious sorcerers. Rosenberg recasts this tradition and defines the cultural and literary climate that enabled Meyrink's work to find such resonance. Rosenberg's text articulates a shift in the nature of how the Golem was depicted at the turn of the century, and provides a springboard for the numerous changes that the Golem undergoes in the hands of Meyrink and those who follow.

In the years surrounding its publication, Rosenberg's work received much attention among the European Jewry, and was in fact plagiarized several times during the same period. Leviant underlines the significance of the text in the years surrounding its publication both in its original Hebrew and later Yiddish version:

Rosenberg's Hebrew narrative of the enduring golem legend took the European Jewish community by storm in 1909 [...] At the same time he created a Yiddish version. "We have translated this book into Yiddish," Rosenberg writes on the title page, "to enable people of all classes to enjoy this illuminating work." (Leviant xx)

The fact that Rosenberg produced a Yiddish version appears at first to be motivated by financial and audience-related reasons, Hebrew being a language not all Jews were capable of reading in

the large middle and lower class Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, it underscores the interest in and availability of this version of the Golem. With the resurgence of anti-Semitic pogroms and organized persecution in the years surrounding the First World War, the fascination with this defensive figure hints at a motivation more in keeping with the function of Rosenberg's reenvisioned Golem, rather than a financially driven motive. Namely, the text addressed the necessity for an interceptor and protector in the face of the mounting persecution of Jews in the first half of the 20th century.<sup>24</sup> What better, and more welcoming, audience for a guardian and avenger than those who would directly suffer the most at the hands of anti-Semitic persecutors as the century progresses?

The introduction to the first English translation of Rosenberg's text in 2008, edited and translated by Leviant, highlights, and in fact lists, the unique spin the Golem receives as a part of this seminal reenvisioning. Leviant's list of alterations Rosenberg made to the Golem in his iteration of the legend underscores the way in which Rosenberg's text influences the modern notion of the Golem as a sentry and defender. Leviant lists Rosenberg's innovations to the tradition, claiming that these narratives were the first to:

1. name the golem;
2. humanize him: he can get hurt, recover, request permission for revenge against his attackers;
3. assign the golem tasks other than domestic chores;
4. give the golem the ability to read and write;
5. have him follow complicated orders;
6. let the golem initiate actions
7. have the golem fight for and protect the Jewish people against the blood libel and other injustices
8. let the golem expire peacefully and not as a consequence of his unrestrained fury; and
9. make the golem a thoroughly beneficent creature. (Leviant xxviii-xxix)

Regarding the popularity of the Golem legend in the years surrounding the First World War, Cathy Gelbin points out that Chayim Bloch's pirated German stories "reached large audiences

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<sup>24</sup> One example of this persecution is the trial of Menahem Mendel Beilis in 1913, who was accused of the ritual murder of a Christian, and later acquitted, and whose story made international waves as an example of Russian anti-Semitism. Beilis published an account of his experiences in 1925 and the story of his trial and unjust imprisonment was the basis for the Bernard Malamud's 1966 Pulitzer Prize winning novel *The Fixer*.

through their book publication" in 1919, having been first published in 1917 in the *Österreichische Wochenschrift* (Gelbin, *The Golem Returns* 90). She also emphasizes that these works played a significant role in Gershom Scholem's work on the Golem, stating that "in one of his earliest scholarly works [...]" he "identified Yudl Rosenberg's Yiddish stories [...] as the barely altered original" of Bloch's successful compilation, which is still in print and has seen numerous editions and translations (Gelbin, *The Golem Returns* 90). Meyrink's novel is a part of this cultural atmosphere, and its popularity further illustrates the fascination this figure inspired in the first two decades of the 20th century. The level at which Meyrink was familiar with Rosenberg's text remains uncertain, but the resurgence of the Golem narrative in this period is remarkable, and it affirms the significance of this early publication in the subsequent iterations, since it attests to the general trend of invoking the Golem as a prominent literary figure. In this vein, some striking similarities between the texts do exist, particularly between Meyrink's *Der Golem* and Rosenberg's, the most significant of which is the positive light in which both authors paint the Golem, a feature which has significant ramifications given that previous representations of the Golem remained at least in part anti-Semitic. Most notably, Rosenberg paints the Golem as human in this version, as opposed to previous notions of the Golem as a mere clay creature with no imagination or independence. This shift in representation allows later retellings of the story to revolve more around this figure than the previously stressed figure of the Maharal. It also encourages the doppelganger phenomenon so prevalent in the Austrian-Jewish iterations. Perhaps one of the other striking elements of Rosenberg's tale is how he "changed the golem from a servant of one man, the Maharal, into a servant of the entire Jewish community" (Leviant xviii). Here, in Rosenberg's stories, the Golem is seen as a protector of innocents and an agent of justice, protecting the Jews of Prague from the slander and violence often directed at their

community in association with the blood-libel, i.e. the accusation prevalent in the Middle Ages and continuing even into the 20th century that Jews used the blood of Christians to sanctify their own religious practice.<sup>25</sup> The protective force exerted by the Golem, at least until Meyrink's version, remains at this historical point a physical one, and this hulking guardian, as seen in Rosenberg's text, uses his brute strength and physical prowess to achieve its aims, a feature that finds little resonance in later Austrian depictions of this sentry. However, the significant element of this transformation from a servant of one man to that of the entire community, regardless of technique or method, is the foregrounding of the Golem as a larger symbol of Jewish culture, one capable of defending the community against mounting anti-Semitic perspectives at the time of Rosenberg's publication. These features of persecution and protection are also evident in Meyrink's work, as I demonstrate later in this chapter.

### **Chayim Bloch's *Der Prager Golem von seiner "Geburt" bis zu seinem "Tod"* (1917)**

Of the several plagiarized versions of Rosenberg's seminal text, one stands out particular. Chayim Bloch's pirated version of Rosenberg's text, *Der Prager Golem von seiner „Geburt“ bis zu seinem „Tod,“* surfaced in Vienna in 1917, illustrating the availability of Rosenberg's tale in its original Hebrew and Yiddish in the years surrounding Meyrink's publication (Leviant xxii). Meyrink's *Der Golem* had already appeared as a serial publication between 1913/14 in the periodical *Die weißen Blätter*, a fact that further highlights the general prevalence of the legend in the years leading up to the first World War. Furthermore, although Bloch's text reveals little

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<sup>25</sup> The tradition of the "blood libel" stems from the medieval discourses surrounding the transubstantiation of the Eucharist. Combined with an intense focus on the consumption of blood, and the power held therein, the blood libel became a focal point of Christian persecution of the Jews. The official, although completely unfounded, allegations against Jews who performed ritual murder of Christian children for the creation of unleavened bread for Passover stems from a murder in Norwich, England in 1144, in which Jews were accused of murdering William of Norwich. For a detailed history of Jewish persecution in connection with the blood libel, see: Cohn-Sherbok, Dan. *Anti-Semitism: A History*. For a discussion of the blood libel as a symbol and metaphor, and its 20th century ramifications, see: Biale, David. "God's Blood: Medieval Jews and Christians Debate the Body" and "Power in the Blood: The Medieval and the Modern in Nazi Anti-Semitism." In: *Blood and Belief: The Circulation of a Symbol Between Jews and Christians*. pp. 81-161.

variation from Rosenberg's, his foreword paints a similar picture concerning the state of the Jewish community and the mounting threats at this pivotal period. Referring to the popularity of the Golem legend, Bloch states:

In den letzten Jahren ist er [der Golem] sozusagen zu europäischer Berühmtheit emporgewachsen, da sich die zeitgenössischen Schriftsteller und Künstler mit ihm befassen. Er hat die Ghettomauern mit trotziger Wucht durchstoßen und steht jetzt auf der Weltwacht. Man hört seine klagende Stimme über das Leid der Gegenwart, in dem sich auch das alte Judentum befindet. (Bloch 18)

Evoking the older tradition of Golem legends, where the Golem wreaks havoc and destroys the Ghetto and its inhabitants, Bloch alludes to the Golem as an indomitable force, one capable of physically breaking down the walls of the Ghetto. This allusion transitions immediately into a picture of the Golem very much in tune with 20th century Austrian-Jewish notions, one that is now on guard for the entire Jewish community, and one that raises attention through plaintive cries, directly concerning the current state of peril facing the Jews in Europe. Bloch further alludes to the current distress facing the Jewish community while rhetorically addressing the Golem's symbolic function, "Immer, in allen Sagen, wird der Golem zum Schutz der verfolgten Juden benützt, in solchen Fällen, da rein menschliche Kraft und Weisheit allein nichts mehr auszurichten vermag. Ist er ein Symbol der Hilfe Gottes, die immer rechtzeitig kommt, wenn auch oft (wie der Golem!) im letzten, verzweifelsten Augenblick?" (Bloch 16). As noted previously, the Golem was not in fact used "in allen Sagen" as a protector, however, Bloch's claims underscore the important shift occurring in the perception of the Golem during this period, thus further highlighting the reclamation of this figure in time of dire need. His rhetorical question hints at the Golem's redemptive and protective nature, and he further asserts that although "Blutbeschuldigungen tauchen von Zeit zu Zeit immer wieder auf," the Golem also appears "mit aller seiner Gewalt, mit gespenstischer Macht in verschiedenen Gestalten auf, um sich gegen die größte Lüge der Jahrhunderte zu erheben [...]" (Bloch 17). Bloch's contribution to

the changing notion of the Golem remains marginal, due in part to the notions of plagiarism associated with this work. However, his insistence on the universal function of this protector, in its many forms or "Gestalten," grants a perspective into the contemporary climate with regard to the Golem, at the time of Meyrink's extremely popular novel *Der Golem*.

### **Kafka and the Golem**

Before turning to Meyrink's novel, a brief look at Prague and perhaps its most well-known Jewish author, Franz Kafka (1883-1924)<sup>26</sup>, will prove fruitful in discussing the conflicted notion of *Heimat* at the heart of Meyrink's work. Scott Spector's introductory chapter, "Prague Circles," to his study surrounding the prolific literary and cultural production of Prague's German-speaking Jewish community in the years preceding and following the First World War, provides a perspective on the cultural, social, and political currents in Kafka's, as well as Meyrink's, Prague. His study underscores the conflicted notions of belonging that similarly drive this investigation. Spector briefly establishes Prague's unique cultural milieu at the turn of the 20th century, suggesting an ambivalent climate that in the writings of the "Prague Circle" come to the fore in depictions of paradox and dichotomy, stating:

Some sort of crisis of identity for this generation [...] is the critical element in the wide-ranging creative production of these writers [...] there appears to be a confusing tension among their positions by the turn of the century: a threatened Jewish minority, which at the same time constituted a majority of the traditionally dominant German population of Prague, a population whose position in turn was threatened by rising illiberal ideologies, but a language group privileged in the monarchy at large. (Spector 4)

In regard to their position, Spector further contends, that "the loss of ground experienced by the Prague Jews writing in German, whether by way of willful abandonment of territory or the force of circumstances, is linked to the critical power of their diverse texts" (Spector 5). The liminal

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<sup>26</sup> Kafka's interest in the Golem tradition is evident in two fragments dating from 1916, with explicit Golem references. There is conjecture surrounding these texts since they were stricken from several editions of published versions of Kafka's diaries, being exceptionally short text passages. It is significant for our purposes to merely demonstrate the interest Kafka had in this legendary figure, offering credence to the argument that the unpublished short story *Das Stadtwappen* contains a numinous Golem reference. For further discussion of these texts, see: Bruce, Iris. *Kafka and Cultural Zionism: Dates in Palestine*. pp. 100-115.

space occupied by the Jewish population catalyzes the numinous and other-worldly depictions of Prague. Spector notes:

This [...] was the projection of a certain reading of the city specific to a threatened generation; Czech intellectuals did not share, and even objected to, this "decadent" image, proceeding so transparently from a declining German bourgeois. But the writers absorbed with fantastic images of a mysterious city with an inner life of its own, out of control of its inhabitants, fickle and dangerous, erotic and unpredictable, seem to have been utterly unaware that these images were not of Prague as it existed for the masses who inhabited it [...]. (Spector 6)

In light of the Habsburg Empire's decline and burgeoning notions of Zionism, the Jewish Prague community found itself in a precarious position: "It belonged no longer to the past, and could find no place for itself in the future; [...] the Prague circle writers opened their eyes to see themselves precariously suspended between territories, with no firm ground beneath their feet, and grasped at the air" (Spector 20).

Kafka's unpublished short story *Das Stadtwappen* epitomizes Spector's notions of a community that faces an overwhelming ambivalence in regard to belonging, since this story in particular pertains to a city built on the promise of future reckoning. The story on a textual level narrates the tedious creation of the tower of Babel. The focus of Kafka's story remains the builders, and how they interact with one another as they struggle with the fact that the tower cannot be created in one generation. As the initial order and hierarchy of trades deteriorate with the stymied pace of building, crises develop between classes and nationalities of laborers, while the narrative becomes more hectic both in pace and theme. The passing of generations only proves to heighten the tensions between these groups, and the story leaves the reader with the impression that this trend will continue indefinitely. The end of the story comes abruptly and addresses the songs and art produced amid the chaos in the city, which longs for a prophesied day when the city will be destroyed by a giant fist.

Although the word "golem" does not appear in the text, Cathy Gelbin argues that the story "alluded to the Golem," most likely through the reference to a giant destructive fist, and evinces the "particularly Jewish and broader universal dimensions of catastrophic modernity," all the more fitting in light of Spector's observations concerning the peril facing the Jewish writers of Prague (Gelbin, *The Golem Returns* 89). She supports her argument by stressing that "Kafka's presentation of this tale through the medium of the short story is indicative of the vast majority of golem texts produced by Jewish writers during this period," which underscores this allusion to the Golem in light of Weisel's seminal folkloristic text from the 19th century, where the Golem grows to gigantic proportions and destroys the Ghetto and its inhabitants, (Gelbin, *The Golem Returns* 89). As noted above, Kafka sets the story, ostensibly at least since it applies as much to Prague as the biblical city in question, in the ancient city of Babylon, specifically around the construction of the infamous tower and its ultimate destruction as a means of punishment for the builders. The narrator addresses the overt religious fervor associated with this project, stating:

Das Wesentliche des ganzen Unternehmens ist der Gedanke, einen bis in den Himmel reichenden Turm zu bauen. Neben diesem Gedanke ist alles andere nebensächlich. Der Gedanke, einmal in seiner Größe gefaßt, kann nicht mehr verschwinden; solange es Menschen gibt, wird auch der starke Wunsch dasein, den Turm zu Ende zu bauen. (Kafka 22)

The similarity here between the traditional Golem legend and the construction of the Tower of Babel is unmistakable, since both creations by very nature aim to place the human creator alongside or on the same level as the almighty, albeit in both cases out of devotion and a longing to emulate. The intimation that there will always be continual interest in building a tower to heaven is similar to the Kabala scholars and rabbis, whose fascination also grasped them and fueled the mystical legends of the Golem, and as Peter Horst Neumann argues, "wie kaum ein anderes Motiv hat die Golem-Gestalt jahrhundertlang die Phantasie der Juden beschäftigt" (Neumann 44). In both legends the creators are doomed because of their lofty strivings, and both

stories serve as a reminder and a warning to those bent on achieving glory. The tower's construction falters not only because of the perpetual interest in achieving the goal of reaching heaven, but also through the lack of attention paid to the actual construction of the city surrounding the tower: "Jede Landsmannschaft wollte das schönste Quartier haben, dadurch ergaben sich Streitigkeiten, die sich bis zu blutigen Kämpfen steigerten" (Kafka 23). These difficulties among the different groups indeed echoes the changing political balances in Kafka's Prague, and the narration further underscores this bleak situation, "Dazu kam, daß schon die zweite oder dritte Generation die Sinnlosigkeit des Himmelsturmbaus erkannte, doch war man schon viel zu sehr miteinander verbunden, um die Stadt zu verlassen" (Kafka 23). Spector's argument that the Prague's Jewish minority were cut off not only from their Habsburg past but also a future in this increasingly intolerant and nationalistic setting rings out in Kafka's haunting description, and points to notions of ambivalence in regard to belonging and in turn *Heimat* itself. The Golem's role in this story appears vaguely at the end of the text: "Alles, was in dieser Stadt an Sagen und Liedern entstanden ist, ist erfüllt von der Sehnsucht nach einem prophezeiten Tag, an welchem die Stadt von einer Riesenfaust in fünf kurz aufeinanderfolgenden Schlägen zerschmettert werden wird. Deshalb hat auch die Stadt die Faust im Wappen" (Kafka 23). The giant fist that will destroy the city alludes to older legends of the Golem as a creation run amok, that destroys the city because of Rabbi Löw's kabalistic strivings. Here however, the reference to this fist takes on an extremely ambivalent tone since the very stories and legends arising from this city are products of a "Sehnsucht" for an impending reckoning. This day of destruction implies a judgment, which further drives notions of the Golem as an avenger, albeit in this instance against the very city itself and all its inhabitants. Fittingly, Prague's coat of arms also has a giant gauntleted hand holding a sword, which emphasizes the personal significance of this

short story to Kafka and the perspective he held in relation to a *Heimat* in peril and steeped in ambivalence.

### **Gustav Meyrink's *Der Golem* (1915)**

Gustav Meyrink (1868-1932) was born in Vienna, Gustav Meyer, the illegitimate son of a Baron and an aspiring actress, Maria Meyer, whose Jewish ancestry is often debated in biographies on Meyrink.<sup>27</sup> After spending part of his childhood in Munich, Meyrink came to Prague in 1883, a city that would play a significant role in his writing. His literary career began only after his livelihood as a banker failed due to scandal and fraud suspicions at the beginning of the 1900's, and subsequent imprisonment in Prague. Although raised Christian, Meyrink sought out numerous theological and mystical traditions, from Buddhism to Kabbalism, and pursued esoteric and mystical themes throughout his career as a writer. Even though his writings centered on the numinous, his politically satirical style caused some of his works to be banned as early as 1917. His strong association with Jewish intellectuals and writers, such as Max Brod, led to his works being later banned and destroyed by the Nazis. After Meyrink's unsuccessful banking career, and subsequent move away from Prague, his spiritual interests directed the majority of his intellectual pursuits. Spirituality imbues Meyrink's works and emphasizes his fascination with the occult, as seen in his most popular works, *Der Golem* and *Das grüne Gesicht*, both fecund with mystical references, especially to Judaism and the Kabbalah.<sup>28</sup> His focus on the supernatural and the occult around the turn of the 20th century finds resonance in

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<sup>27</sup> Cathy Gelbin notes that Meyrink's mother was often confused with another Jewish woman, whereas scholars like Robert Irwin and Mike Mitchell contend that his mother was Jewish, underscoring his connection to this faith. See: Gelbin, Cathy S. *The Golem Returns.*; and Irwin, Robert. "Gustav Meyrink and His Golem."; and Mitchell, Mike. *Vivo: The Life of Gustav Meyrink.*

<sup>28</sup> *Das grüne Gesicht* appeared in 1916 and deals in part with the figure of the Wandering Jew, a theme that surfaces repeatedly *Der Golem*, specifically in relation to the intervals at which the Golem appears. See: Gelbin, Cathy S. *The Golem Returns.*

his work on *Der Golem*, since although it appeared as a serial publication from 1913 to 1914, notes on the work can be traced back as early as 1907.<sup>29</sup>

Whatever Meyrink's familiarity with Rosenberg's version of the Golem legend may have been, the depiction of the Golem in a humanized, defensive, and beneficent light underscores the shift in the perception of this Jewish mythical creature around the turn of the 20th century. Furthermore, Meyrink's fascination with the mystical world echoes aspects of Rosenberg's work, since "Rosenberg's novel is replete with the spirit of the Kabala which allows for such unreal or even surreal events in the story like an amulet for invisibility, letters changing colors in the Siddur, questions asked and divinely answered in dreams, and other supernatural events [...]" (Leviant xxvi). Although Meyrink's novel also highlights the supernatural, in combination with Talmudic and Kabbalistic elements, it stretches beyond the framework established by Rosenberg in several distinct ways.

Meyrink's portrayal of the Golem thus ushers in several new aspects that remain, for the most part, consistent in the following depictions of the Golem that I investigate in this study. Firstly, the origin of the newly awakened Golem is mysterious and mystical. Secondly, Meyrink sets the Golem story in a modern context. Thirdly, the identity of the Golem itself is complicated through intimations of its doppelganger-like existence. With these aspects in mind, let us turn now to Meyrink's *Der Golem*.

In regard to Meyrink's *Der Golem*, and the subsequent primary works at the heart of this investigation, I will initially introduce the text, laying out the general structure of the novel before turning to the specific features of Meyrink's Golem. I will then turn my attention to the significance memory plays in the novel, especially in conjunction with the figure of the Golem.

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<sup>29</sup> Robert Irwin asserts that "the original title for the book [...] was *The Eternal Jew* and it seems that work on it may have been started as early as 1907" (Irwin 20). See: Meyrink, Gustav. *The Golem*. pp. 15-20.

This perspective on memory will then lead to the final section concerning notions of *Heimat* found in the novel, and the Golem's role in *Heimat's* protection.

Meyrink's esoteric and mysterious novel, *Der Golem*, relies on the title figure as a catalyzing force of plot and character development. The novel depicts the unnamed narrator, and his double Anathasius Pernath, as he undergoes a spiritual awakening of sorts. Like Rosenberg's text, Meyrink's novel also employs a similar frame story structure through which the central story surrounding the Golem is relayed to the reader. *Der Golem* opens and closes with an anonymous narrator, who, living generations after the events recounted in the novel, dreams himself into the very person of Pernath. The premise of this dream has banal roots, the narrator falls asleep reading about the life of the Buddha. The reader later learns that the narrator appears to merely have mistakenly exchanged hats with Anathasius Pernath, the latter apologizing at the end of the novel for any potential headaches the narrator may have experienced. Clearly, the subject matter of the novel jars with this comical explanation for the dream, and leads the reader to then question the true origins of such spiritual unrest and mystical soul-searching. The absurdity of the explanation intimates the actual import hiding within the framework, the narrator dreaming himself as Pernath, and ultimately the awakening of the Golem at a tumultuous period in the history of the Prague Ghetto. The narrator is thus transported back to the time when the ghetto was demolished in 1897 and re-appropriated in an era of urban gentrification which continued into the early years of the 20th century, an era Meyrink experienced firsthand. It is this time period Meyrink portrays throughout the novel, a time that concerns the loss of what

existed as a veritable Jewish *Heimat* since the tenth century, and one, as he jests in his short essay *Prag*, that has hidden paths to Jerusalem itself.<sup>30</sup>

The novel's plot is much like the very labyrinth that Pernath ultimately discovers under the city, with overt Jewish symbolism and metaphor. The novel's unnamed narrator recounts having read about the Buddha and a parable about those, "die Versucher," who leave ascetic practices to pursue pleasure and ultimately find nothing of worth (Meyrink 10). This parable concerns a crow that mistakes a stone as a lump of fat, only to be disappointed when he realizes its mistake. The narrator is lost in a dream state and considers his own life, his memories like stones that keep resurfacing in a riverbed, and from which he cannot divert his attention. Unlike the "tempters" who mistake the stone for a lump of fat in the parable, the narrator's inner voice of reason insists: "es sei das ganz anders, das sei gar nicht der Stein, der wie Fett aussehe" (Meyrink 10). As we will discuss, the stone which the narrator remembers is central to the fate of Pernath, whose attempts to gain access to a hidden room in his apartment building are thwarted as he loses his grip on a stone window ledge that is as smooth and slick as a lump of fat. The buried memory that the narrator uncovers is the narrative that unfolds around Pernath, the unknowingly Jewish gem-cutter and watch repairman.

Along the narrator's dreamed journey, Pernath is not only guided by the Golem, but by Hillel, a Jewish mystic alluding to Rabbi Löw who helps him understand the spiritual awakening he undergoes. Other characters that trigger Pernath's memory are his friend, the superstitious puppet maker Zwahk whose narratives about the Golem awaken forgotten connections to this central figure; Angelina, the former love interest of Pernath, whose adultery involves her in the Ghetto's unsavory elements; the tubercular medical student Innocence Charousek, whose own

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<sup>30</sup> I analyze this early text from Meyrink later in this chapter, in the section pertaining to *Heimat*, since it directly addresses Prague and notions of Jewish identity and belonging in this context. See: Meyrink, Gustav. "Prag: Eine optimistische Städteschilderung in vier Bildern von Gustav Meyrink

ties to the Ghetto bring him to seek out his estranged and dubious father, Aaron Wassertrum; and Hillel's daughter Marjam, whose pious and righteous nature inspires a true longing within Pernath and further drives his awakening. With the ambiguous, and at times apparently sinister help of these characters, Pernath encounters the evil junk dealer Aaron Wassertrum, whose menacing control over the Ghetto permeates all life therein, and whose lecherous existence connects the characters to one another, at times through blood relation. Wrapped in the guise of a mystery-suspense novel, where unsolved murders drive the plot elements, *Der Golem* chronicles Pernath's transformation into the Golem through the recurrence of memory. Although scholars like C.G. Jung, Hildemarie Oehm, and Lee Jennings have focused on the psychological themes found throughout Meyrink's novel such as repression and projection, I contend that as Pernath uncovers parts of his own repressed memory, he morphs more and more into a protective Golem, which in turn brings about a transformation in the Ghetto and its inhabitants. This aspect of the plot, arguably the most significant given the novel's title, will be the focus of this investigation, and will shed light on a psychologically complex novel that notoriously perplexes generations of scholars with its unexpected plot twists and mysterious resolutions.

### **The Golem Figure**

In the novel, the Golem initially appears as a doppelganger of the protagonist Athanasius Pernath. The doppelganger motif also plays a significant role in the understanding of Austria's "unheimliche" *Heimat*. As discussed in the introductory chapter, Sigmund Freud's "Das Unheimliche" articulates the familiarity and simultaneous disturbance created by doppelgangers and automatons. Given the fact that the Ghetto, the place that Pernath experiences as *Heimat*, is peopled by these *unheimliche* creatures and apparitions, the reader experiences the conflicted

nature of *Heimat* found in the novel, heightened all the more by the location of Pernath's first encounter with the Golem, his own dwelling. The figure that Pernath comes to acknowledge as the Golem delivers a book to be restored, the letter *I* on the cover foreshadowing Pernath's mysterious journey of self (re)discovery. The interaction is rather brief and Pernath is more interested in the book than the figure, that is until the Golem departs. After this initial meeting, Pernath tries to emulate the Golem:

Und ich versuchte den Unbekannten nachzuahmen in Gang und Mienen und konnte mich an sie gar nicht erinnern [...] Mein Haut, meine Muskeln, mein Körper erinnerten sich plötzlich, ohne es dem Gehirn zu verraten. Sie machten Bewegungen, die ich nicht wünschte und nicht beabsichtigte. Als ob meine Glieder nicht mehr mir gehörten! [...] Ich trug ein fremdes, bartloses Gesicht mit hervorstehenden Backenknochen und schaute aus schrägstehenden Augen. Ich fühlte es und konnte mich doch nicht sehen. (Meyrink 28)

Pernath's first attempts to remember seem rather thwarted, until a subconscious force overtakes his muscles, skin, and body, and he is capable of taking on the form of the Golem, a figure both simultaneously foreign and familiar to him. This first transformation of Pernath's into the Golem at the beginning of the novel establishes the intimate connection between him and the Golem, a connection intensified throughout the story. Meyrink depicts this close bond between Pernath and the Golem as one of remembrance, a remembrance that overrides his initial thought processes and allows him to tap into the specific characteristics of the Golem itself. Here memory exists as a physical phenomenon played out in Pernath's body. Shortly before this interaction, Pernath articulates that "immer tauchen alte Bilder in mir auf," pictures which in this instance manifest themselves in his appearance (Meyrink 17). The description of this scene of remembrance ends with Pernath ruminating about picking up the mysterious book he received:

Da war mir: als hätte ich es gar nicht angefaßt; ich griff die Kasette an: dasselbe Gefühl. Als müßte das Tastempfinden ein lange, lange Strecke voll tiefer Dunkelheit durchlaufen, ehe es in meinem Bewußtsein mündete, als seien die Dinge durch eine jahresgroße Zeitschicht von mir entfernt und gehörten einer Vergangenheit an, die längst an mir vorbeigezogen! (Meyrink 29)

The significance of this tunnel-like perception of the world indicates the memory-inducing effect the Golem causes, "als müßte das Tastempfinden ein lange, lange Strecke voll tiefer Dunkelheit

durchlaufen." The physical changes Pernath undergoes, articulated here through Meyrink's description of his sense of touch, connect him to this Jewish cultural figure, and evokes a sense of cultural memory, "als seien die Dinge durch eine jahresgroße Zeitschicht von mir entfernt." Intuitively transforming into the Golem connects Pernath with the cultural memory of the Ghetto's inhabitants, whose knowledge of the Golem is retold and remembered over many generations, and allows him to access a "Vergangenheit [...], die längst an mir vorübergezogen." The very fact that he taps into a figure that the community remembers through narrative and legend further underscores the interconnection between the Golem, Pernath, and the community at large.

The development of Pernath's simultaneous existence as the Golem continues throughout the novel, heightening the ambiguity surrounding his identity as his own doppelgänger. Pernath has no recollection of particular periods in his life, mainly his youth, making his identity simultaneously familiar and foreign. His connection to those around him, as well as to his own place come into question. As he starts to uncover aspects of this dynamic, he also unearths his relation to his surroundings, further evincing the *unheimliche* nature of the Ghetto. In one of the many plot twists of the novel, Pernath (re)discovers a mysterious trap door in the room adjacent to his own apartment. Pernath finds himself climbing through a series of tunnels and underground passageways, which ultimately lead him to a sealed-off room, whose only entrance is a second trap door. The portal to this room provides a significant clue as to its nature, since on the trap door, "genau die Form eines Sechsecks, wie man es auf den Synagogen findet, bildeten" (Meyrink 112). This door signifies an entrance into a sanctified space, which in light of traditional Golem legends points to its location as the attic of the synagogue where the Golem lies deactivated. Once inside this room Pernath realizes, "Ja: ich war in dem Haus, in dem der

gespenstische Golem jedesmal verschwand!" (Meyrink 116). Pernath's seemingly random ability to find and enter this otherwise inaccessible room suggests the close connection between himself and the Golem. Further developing this intimate tie to the Golem, Pernath dons the rags he finds in this room, ones that match the description of the Golem's "uraltmodischem, seltsamem" garb (Meyrink 115). Pernath's adornment of these clothes, and his entry through the most-recognized of all Jewish symbols, serves to demonstrate his transition into the Golem.

Throughout the novel, Pernath wishes to aid others and protect those in immediate danger. His journey to fulfill the Golem's protective role begins when he collapses at a local inn, with his friends around him, directly after hearing story after story that echoes the inveterate persecution of the Jews in the city. Zwahk, Pernath's puppeteer friend, translates and relates one story in a song being performed in the inn by an old Jewish musician:

'Es ist das 'chomezigen Borchu' [...] Vor wohl hundert Jahren oder mehr noch hatten zwei Bäckergelesen, Rotbart und Grünbart, am Abend des 'Schabbes Hagodel' das Brot [...] vergiftet, um ein ausgiebiges Sterben in der Judenstadt hervorzurufen; aber der 'Meschores' [...] war in folge göttlicher Erleuchtung noch rechtzeitig darauf gekommen und konnte die beiden Verbrecher der Stadtpolizei überliefern. Zur Erinnerung an die wundersame Errettung aus Todesgefahr dichteten damals die 'Lamdonim' und 'Bocherlech' jenes seltsame Lied, das wir hierjetzt als Bordellquadrille hören.' (Meyrink 72)

The necessity to remember and to protect this persecuted community resounds in this passage, especially through Zwahk's observation about the song's use as a "Bordellquadrille." The bastardization of this song into a trivial piece of music used for entertainment in a brothel perpetuates the ever-mounting tension in Pernath that results in him fainting at the end of the hectic chapter. This fainting spell comes in response to Pernath's mysterious knowledge of a crime committed against a predatory pedophile in the Ghetto, an uncanny knowledge that further hints at his role as a protector of his community.

Towards the end of the chapter, a police commissar enters the inn with a group of policemen looking for suspects for a recent crime, an alleged disappearance, which Pernath seems to intrinsically know more about: "Mein Blick sucht voll Angst die Tür: Der Kommissär

steht dort, abgewendet, um nichts zu sehen, und flüstert hastig mit dem Kriminalschutzmann, der etwas einsteckt. Es klingt wie Handschellen" (Meyrink 81). As the policemen "spähen" through the crowd and ultimately focus their attention on an apparent suspect, Pernath relates, that "ein Bild zuckt in der Erinnerung vor mir auf und erlischt sofort: das Bild, wie Prokop lauscht, wie ich es vor einer Stunde gesehen -- über das Kanalgitter gebeugt --, und ein Todesschrei gellt aus der Erde empor" (Meyrink 82). This cryptic remembrance connects the first pages of the chapter where Pernath meets his friends on the way to the inn, and sees his puppeteer friend looking for his marionette where he had dropped it near a storm drain in the street. At that earlier point, Pernath narrates, for an "Augenblick -- kaum einen Herzschlag lang -- hatte es mir geschienen, als klopfte da unten eine Hand gegen eine Eisenplatte -- fast unhörbar. Wie ich eine Sekunde später darüber nachdachte, war alles vorbei; nur in meiner Brust hallte es wie ein Erinnerungsecho weiter und löste sich langsam in ein unbestimmtes Gefühl des Grauens auf" (Meyrink 69). The focus on memory in both of these passages concerning the uncanny feelings he spontaneously experiences, hints at the Golem's memory-awakening function, one that leads Pernath to mysteriously understand the apparent crime committed, even if the reader remains in the dark as to what has actually happened.

Later in the novel, the reader learns of the disappearance and ultimate murder of the assumed pedophile Karl Zottmann that Pernath "remembers" here in this chapter, which drives certain extraneous plot developments. The knowledge of this crime, and Pernath's subsequent silence about the incident engenders conflicting notions of protection. The crime committed is in fact one that ironically benefits the community insofar as the pedophile can no longer prey on the children of the Ghetto, and Pernath's silence aids in this ambivalent "protection" of the community. This notion of remembering third-party guilt and instinctual knowledge of

crimes committed becomes a unique ability of the Golem that echoes in later Austrian iterations of the figure, namely in Leo Perutz's *Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke* and Doron Rabinovici's *Suche nach M*. The significance of this knowledge resides in Pernath's inability to ultimately bring the murder to the attention of the police:

Ich will rufen und kann nicht. Kalte Finger greifen mir in den Mund und biegen mir die Zunge nach unten gegen die Vorderzähne, daß es wie ein Klumpen meinen Gaumen erfüllt und ich kein Wort hervorbringen kann. Ich kann die Finger nicht sehen, weiß, daß sie unsichtbar sind, und doch empfinde ich sie wie etwas Körperliches. (Meyrink 82)

The feelings that Pernath experiences here echo some of the traditional elements of the Golem, in particular the Maharal's activation of his creation by placing a scroll behind its teeth, although other versions have the words written on his forehead or chest. Pernath's inability to speak, alludes to the nature of the crime committed, one that ultimately protected the community rather than endangered it. As such, Pernath's own body culls him into silence, thus implicating him in the crime, but not as an actor, rather as a mysterious observer. In this sense, the Golem protects the community by remaining silent, and allowing justice to be served, even if in a vigilante fashion. The nonviolent connection of the Golem to this crime is yet another element that following Austrian-Jewish iterations of this figure revisit. Unable to finally control these memories and subsequent feelings, Pernath succumbs to exhaustion and faints, while his friends decide to bring him to Hillel, the mystical Jewish archivist, who "kennt sich gut aus in solchen Dingen" (Meyrink 82). Bringing Pernath to Hillel, the allegorical Maharal figure in the novel, continues to parallel the traditional Golem motif, since he holds the key to reanimate Pernath after his fainting spell.

The chapter following Pernath's fainting is aptly titled "Wach," and overtly directs the reader's attention to the change occurring within the main character, the further awakening of the Golem as doppelgänger and alter ego. The impetus spurring on this reflection is Pernath's

reception of an anonymous letter that requests his help, with no further details. At this point in the novel, Pernath's continued transformation into a protector pervades his thoughts:

Ich fühlte, wie mich eine lebendige Kraft durchrieselte, die bisher geschlafen hatte in mir – verborgen gewesen in den Tiefen meiner Seele, verschüttet von dem Geröll, das der Alltag häuft, wie eine Quelle losbricht aus dem Eis. Und ich wußte so gewiß [...] daß ich würde helfen können, um was es auch ginge. Der Jubel in meinem Herzen gab mir die Sicherheit. (Meyrink 93)

Pernath's purpose to help people and certainty that he will be able to perform no matter what the circumstances, "um was es auch ginge," show that he is awakening to the role of the Golem as a protector. As he here vows to help an endangered friend in any way possible, Pernath feels the joy in his own heart; a confirmation of his intrinsic drive to aid others. Throughout the novel Pernath's wish to protect and aid springs forth from his inner being, the imagery of a "Quelle" further driving home the deep nature of this urge. Once again Meyrink ascribes the ability of foresight to Pernath and in turn the Golem, seen here in his absolute certainty in his ability to help.

As the novel progresses, Pernath's desire to protect and avenge focuses primarily on the character of Wassertrum, whose concealed wealth and power perpetuate the squalid conditions in the Ghetto. As Wassertrum gains power and wealth, the Ghetto around him becomes more and more corrupt and dilapidated, and Pernath personally begins to suspect him of extortion and blackmail as the plot advances. The Golem's avenger-like nature sheds light on Pernath's violent thoughts towards Wassertrum after a heated interaction with him, thus demonstrating the spirit of vengeance and justice consistent with 20<sup>th</sup> century iterations of the Golem:

Dann sprach ein Gedanke eiskalt und gelassen die Lösung aus: 'Narr! Du hast es doch in der Hand! Brauchst ja nur die Feile dort auf dem Tisch zu nehmen, hinterzulaufen und sie dem Trödler durch die Gurgel zu jagen, daß die Spitze hinten zum Genick herauschaut.' Mein Herz jauchzte einen Dankeschrei zu Gott. (Meyrink 135)

The similarity between these thoughts and the fate of Wassertrum are startling, since it is with Pernath's very file that Wassertrum meets his end, albeit at the hands of another secondary

character in the novel (Meyrink 286). The lack of direct physical violence on the part of modern iterations of the Golem is a theme that runs throughout all of the texts we will consider, thus setting them apart from earlier notions, such as Rosenberg's, of a brutish guardian. This intimation of Wassertrum's demise further attests to the apparently supernatural power, that of pre-cognition and assessment of guilt, which Pernath as a Golem-figure possesses. The reader, and Pernath himself, learns at a later point in the novel, after Wassertrum is dead and his bastard son Charousek inherits the fortune of his evil father, that Pernath's hatred towards Wassertrum is rooted in past transgressions against Pernath's own family and the community at large.

Charousek thus informs Pernath, "schon lange wußte ich, daß Wassertrum vor Jahren Ihren Vater und seine Familie um alles gebracht hat -- erst jetzt bin ich in der Lage, es aktenmäßig nachweisen zu können" (Meyrink 255). It is significant that Pernath's hatred and protective stance as the Golem manifests itself predominantly onto Wassertrum, since he embodies both the personal and communal injustices that must be redressed. Once again, the lines between Pernath and the Golem blur, since Wassertrum stands as a villain for both halves of Pernath's identity.

Meyrink's portrayal of Wassertrum is stereotypical, and outright revolting, and has often been perceived as anti-Semitic. Wassertrum is described as a "Trödler" in whose shop walls are cluttered with "altem Eisengerümpel, zerbrochenen Werkzeugen, verrosteten Steigbügeln und Schlittschuhen und vielerlei anderen abgestorbenen Sachen," and thus painting him as a character that embodies the very notion of decay that runs rampant throughout the Ghetto.

(Meyrink 12). In regard to Wassertrum's physical appearance and demeanor, Pernath perceives him as:

[...] von jenem Stamm, dessen rothaariger Typus noch abstoßender ist als der der andern. Dessen Männer engbrüstig sind und lange Hühnerhälse haben mit vorstehendem Adamsapfel. Alles scheint an ihnen sommersprossig, und ihr ganzes Leben leiden sie unter brünstigen Qualen, diese Männer -- und kämpfen heimlich gegen ihre Gelüste einen ununterbrochenen, erfolglosen Kampf, von immerwährender widerlicher Angst um ihre Gesundheit gefoltert. (Meyrink 14)

Were it not for the privileged position that he awards the other Jews throughout the story, Meyrink's depictions of Wassertrum could be accurately described as anti-Semitic. Cathy Gelbin critiques Meyrink's work stating: "Antisemitic stereotypes are particularly evident in Meyrink's portrayals of the ghetto as the site of mental disease, decadence, and sexual corruption, with racial miscegenation and prostitution rife in the quarter" (Gelbin, *The Golem Returns* 101). Gelbin follows famed Golem-scholar Gershom Scholem's criticism of Meyrink's *Der Golem*, whose often-cited 1916 diary entry reacts strongly to the novel:

Er macht das Schöne häßlich / Und das Erhabne gräßlich, / weiß nichts vom Judentum. / Doch oft in den Kapiteln / Erfäßt den Leser Schütteln / Vor diesem Spuk und Wassertrum. / Das Buch is zu asthmatisch / Und wie ein Block erratisch, / Man ist am End' nicht klug. / Ich will von all dem Bösen / Woanders mich erlösen, / Von Meyrink hab ich nun genug! (Scholem, *Tagebücher* 366)<sup>31</sup>

The difficulty Scholem latches onto in the text is the dichotomous role that the Jewish figures play, leading Gelbin to further argue, "The Jew in the novel thus remains a Janus-faced figure, and Wassertrum and Hillel embody its diametrically opposed poles that are also symbolized in the *aleph* in the Tarock card: one arm points downward toward death and the other upward toward the higher spiritual realm" (Gelbin, *The Golem Returns* 113). Indeed, Pernath's friend the medical student Charousek precisely underscores the paradoxical depiction of Jews in the novel when he contrasts, for Pernath's sake, Wassertrum's unabatingly evil constitution with Hillel's otherworldly virtue: "Wenn's wahr ist, was eine uralte talmudische Legende behauptet: daß von den zwölf jüdischen Stämmen zehn verflucht sind und zwei heilig, so verkörpert er [Hillel] die zwei heiligen und Wassertrum alle zehn andern zusammen" (Meyrink 147). To reduce the dichotomous portrayal of Jewish figures in the novel to base arguments, such as Gelbin's contention that the "Jew in Meyrink is synonymous with a degenerate and catastrophic

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<sup>31</sup> See: Gershom Scholem, *Tagebücher nebst Aufsätzen und Entwürfen bis 1923*, p. 366; and Scholem, Gerschom. "The Idea of the Golem." *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*. pp. 158-204.

modernity," is too narrow of a view to encompass this multi-faceted novel that presents many sides of a conflicted struggle with belonging (Gelbin, *The Golem Returns* 100). Like the Ghetto itself, which is an *unheimliche Heimat* for Pernath and its other inhabitants, the Jew is also a paradox in *Der Golem*. Although oversimplifying Meyrink's occult interest in the modern condition of rootlessness, a phenomenon that plays heavily into the novel's portrayal of *Heimat*, Gelbin's argument that the novel "made fin de siecle Prague a lasting sign of the uncanny sexual, racial, and mental corruption in modernity" directly reaffirms Sebald's notions about the Austrian perspective on *Heimat* (Gelbin, *The Golem Returns* 100). The Prague that Gelbin describes plays an intergral role in Meyrink's depiction of *Heimat*, a place that undermines traditional ideas of belonging and replaces them with conflicted notions of religious, national, communal, and sexual belonging. The fact that the novel's primary antagonist, Wassertrum, is in fact also Jewish, speaks to the very ambiguity surrounding the fluid sense of belonging at play in the novel. Here an enemy, equally as dangerous as the external forces such as Christendom that have threatened the Jewish community throughout the ages, is present within the community itself. However, as I demonstrate below, so is the path to healing and redemption of sorts found within the very community that scholars like Gelbin and Scholem regard as sterotypically anti-Semitic. In a novel centering on the *unheimliche Heimat* of the Ghetto, seen here in the juxtaposition of Wassertrum and Hillel, Meyrink's narrative of a man transforming into a reclaimed Jewish figure of protection is not a clandestine attempt to further an anti-Semitic agenda, as Gelbin argues. Pernath's transformation is rather a testament to the paradoxical nature of a specific Jewish community, a community rife with ambiguous notions of belonging due to its unique status as a politically, as well as socially, dominant minority with an uncertain future in an increasingly inhospitable Prague of the early 20th century. The reclamation of memory

that occurs through Pernath's transformation emphasizes the uncertain path this community must take, one that requires tapping into cultural memory in order to find an elusive sense of belonging.

## Memory and the Golem

Pernath's repressed memories find an outlet through the Golem's defensive role, a redemptive feature of the Golem's function. In this sense, *Der Golem* positions the Golem as a harbinger of memory and a manifestation of the spirit, both personal and collective. The puppeteer Zwahk recounts his own thoughts surrounding the Golem after Pernath, as the Golem, begins a journey of remembrance:

Wie in schwülen Tagen die elektrische Spannung sich bis zur Unerträglichkeit steigert und endlich den Blitz gebiert, könnte es da nicht sein, daß auch auf die stetige Anhäufung jener niemals wechselnden Gedanken, die hier im Ghetto die Luft vergiften, eine plötzliche, ruckweise Entladung folgen muß? Eine seelische Explosion, die unser Traumbewußtsein ans Tageslicht peitscht, um – dort den Blitz der Natur – hier ein Gespenst zu schaffen, das in Mienen, Gang und Gehaben, in allem und jedem das Symbol der Massenseele unfehlbar offenbaren müßte [...] (Meyrink 56)

Meyrink's description of this outpouring of energy, a "Gespenst" called into existence through the collective memory of persecution and downtrodden spirit of the Ghetto's inhabitants, is the Golem itself, the "Symbol der Massenseele." The significance of this characterization of the Golem lies in the paradox surrounding the Ghetto itself. This location is both a place where the poisonous nature of humanity comes into direct and intimate contact with the divine and holy, and it is this place that the Golem is fated to protect. Meyrink's own jovial depiction of the city in his short text "Prag" alludes to this notion, both a place protected by divine channels linking it to Jerusalem, while simultaneously in constant and direct threat from the city's nationalistic inhabitants. It is in this ancient seat of Judaism in the West that alleged Kabbalah masters created life, who understood "die geheime Sprache der Formen nur richtig zu deuten," thus likening the Ghetto itself to a Garden of Eden, since it is also filled with the manifestations of the

life-giving words of the divine (Meyrink 56). However, Meyrink's descriptions of the homes in the Ghetto take on a sinister light, and he attributes these structures with being the "heimlichen, eigentlichen Herren der Gasse" (Meyrink 32). Pernath compares these houses to "verdrossene alte Tiere im Regen" who clump together and "ihres Lebens und Fühlens entäußern und es wieder an sich ziehen können - es tagsüber den Bewohnern, die hier hausen, borgen, um es in kommender Nacht mit Wucherzinsen wiederzurückzufordern" (Meyrink 32-33). Intensifying the darker side of the Ghetto, Pernath further remarks, "Wie unheimlich und verkommen sie alle aussehen" (Meyrink 32). In this city, and in the Ghetto in particular, the Golem becomes the symbol of collective spirit, a living artifact of cultural memory, one bound with the trauma that oppresses the people living here. Pernath's personal memory is bound with the Ghetto, as his feelings suggest about the "schwarzes Schulhaus" he sees in a dream and discovers upon leaving the sealed room of the Golem:

Ich [...] stand im Hausflur des schwarzen Schulhauses, das ich vorhin wie im Traum gesehen. Sofort stürzte eine Flutwelle von Erinnerungen auf mich ein: Bänke, bespritzt mit Tinte von oben bis unten, Rechenhefte, plärrender Gesang, ein Junge, der Maikäfer in der Klasse losläßt, Lesebücher mit zerquetschten Butterbrotten darin und Geruch nach Orangenschalen. Jetzt wußte ich mit Gewißheit: Ich war einst als Knabe hiergewesen. (Meyrink 119)

The significance of the black schoolhouse lies in its allusion to the *Altneuschule*, whose walls were stained black with the blood of Jews during a horrific pogrom in 1389, where thousands of Jews were slaughtered at the foot of their house of prayer. Pernath remembers scenes from his childhood, which address idyllic notions of *Heimat*, although taking place in a "Schulhaus" that also implies the most horrific scenes of anti-Semitism and persecution. The remembrance springing from within Pernath is intimately related to the Ghetto, his childhood *Heimat*, an intersection we will now investigate.

Meyrink's focus on the process of remembrance overtly overlaps with notions of *Heimat*, a connection upheld by Pernath's ruminations on his own loss of memory: "Ich war wahnsinnig

gewesen, und man hatte Hypnose angewandt, hatte das – ‘Zimmer’ verschlossen, das die Verbindung zu jenen Gemächern meines Gehirns bildete, und mich zum Heimatlosen inmitten des mich umgebenden Lebens gemacht" (Meyrink 63).<sup>32</sup> Meyrink suggests here that memory grants individuals *Heimat*, and a lack thereof makes them homeless. This homelessness appears only to be cured by the memory-catalyzing figure of the Golem, since only after Pernath's acquiescence to his role, and his re-entry into the sealed-off room, can Pernath find his fated place at the side of Hillel's daughter in an Eden-like garden at the conclusion of the novel. As such, the Golem enables Pernath, as well as the larger community, to remember and confront the past. In this sense, it is the Golem who will evoke the cultural memory of the inhabitants of the Ghetto, and thereby protect them from Pernath's own fate at the beginning of the novel, homelessness. As Pernath proceeds down the path of remembrance enabled by his transformation into the Golem, he relates his experience thus:

[...] die Erkenntnis: Die Reihe der Begebenheiten im Leben ist eine Sackgasse, so breit und gangbar sie auch zu sein scheint. Die schmalen, verborgenen Steige sind's, die in die verlorene Heimat zurückführen: Das, was mit feiner, kaum sichtbarer Schrift in unserem Körper eingraviert ist, und nicht die scheußliche Narbe, die die Rassel des äußeren Lebens hinterläßt – birgt die Lösung der letzten Geheimnisse. So, wie ich zurückfinden könnte in die Tage meiner Jugend, wenn ich in der Fibel das Alphabet in verkehrter Folge vornähme von Z bis A, um dort anzulangen, wo ich in der Schule zu lernen begonnen – so, begriff ich, müßte ich auch wandern können in die andere ferne Heimat, die jenseits alles Denkens liegt. (Meyrink 90)

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<sup>32</sup> Although beyond the scope of this investigation, it is important to note that Freud's research surrounding memory ties into Meyrink's novel in certain ways. His work "Erinnern, Wiederholen und Durcharbeiten" maps out the process of remembrance, especially in regard to memories that have been repressed and "forgotten." For Freud, traumatic memories are often repressed, and therapy allows the patient to remember. The patient will then repeat the trauma in a projected form onto external sources, at which point the therapist will engage their client to work through the trauma and come to terms with the painful memory. Scholars like Axel Dunker see traces of this type of psychoanalytic treatment taking place throughout Meyrink's novel, especially in light of the "sealed rooms" in Pernath's psyche that must be reopened for him to process the traumatic events of his childhood. For a detailed discussion of this process see: Freud, Sigmund. "Erinnern, Wiederholen, und Durcharbeiten." *Gesammelte Werke*. pp.126-136. For a discussion of aspects of this therapy as they pertain to *Der Golem* see: Dunker, Axel. "Das 'Gedächtnis des Körpers' gebiert Ungeheuer." In: *Gedächtnis und kultureller Wandel: Erinnerndes Schreiben, Perspektiven und Kontroversen*. pp. 217-228.

This passage documents Pernath's re-tracing of his own personal memory, but one that is, like the discovery of the black "Schulhaus," intimately connected to the community at large. The narrow, and hidden "Steige" referred to here, parallel the passageway that Pernath takes to find the sealed room of the Golem and his childhood place of learning. By deciphering the "kaum sichtbarer Schrift in unserem Körper," the revelation of the "letzten Geheimnisse" of Pernath's memory are found. These markings are ones that a culture imparts on its people through generations of collective experience, in this case Pernath's inexplicable ability to morph into the Golem and his intuition concerning injustices in the Ghetto. Meyrink differentiates these writings from the "scheussliche Narbe" that one's individual experience leaves, and focuses rather on the marks left from the experiences and memories of the community. As such, Meyrink's subtle references to Jewish faith through the writing on one's body, both from the Golem tradition and from Hasidic ritual, as well as his reading his childhood alphabet book backwards, intimates the type of homeland that the awakened Golem can guide Pernath to, "die andere ferne Heimat, die jenseits alles Denkens liegt." The memory the Golem enables is not merely Pernath's personal memories, but rather the cultural memory necessitated in the formation and perpetuation of community.

It is significant that at the end of the novel the narrator sees Marjam and Pernath in a garden, which surrounds a "tempelartiges, marmornes Haus," in the demolished and rebuilt Jewish quarter of the frame story (Meyrink 302). There is no access to the garden except through a magical or spiritual gate, thus paralleling the door with the Star of David that Pernath opens, complete with living hermaphroditic figures as decoration, reminiscent of the cherub and its flaming sword<sup>33</sup> at the gates of the Garden of Eden. Marjam also highlights the Golem's redemptive role during a conversation with Pernath earlier in the novel: "Erst wenn der leblose

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<sup>33</sup> See Genesis 3:24.

Stoff – die Erde – beseelt wird vom Geist und die Gesetze der Natur zerbrechen, dann ist das geschehen, wonach ich mich sehne, seit ich denken kann" (Meyrink 185). Her presence with Pernath at the end of the novel confirms the miracle for which she waits, a return of the Golem and its protection.

### ***Heimat and the Golem***

As we have seen however, the Ghetto represents a dichotomous view of *Heimat*, one that on the one hand offers a glimpse into Paradise while simultaneously suspending it just out of reach. This perspective, in light of the political and social context at the time of Meyrink's writing, is all the more fitting given the perilous position the German speaking Jewish community of Prague faced during this period. Although Pernath attains entry into this sanctuary at the end of the novel, the reader is left to wonder exactly how this has occurred, since the last image provided of Pernath is one of immediate peril. Pernath is fleeing a burning building when he gets tangled in the escape rope upside down, in the position of the *aleph*, peering into the room where he had previously found the Golem's clothing and the Tarock cards which he remembered using as a child. As noted previously, access to this room is granted via the Star of David, a room which at this point in the novel now contains Hillel and Mirjam, the only two inexorably virtuous characters of the novel, and which is also now "blendend erleuchtet" (Meyrink 291). He sees this image before he falls and loses consciousness, thus ending the dream sequence that the novel's narrator retells. In the midst of the chaos of the Ghetto's demolition and the house bursting into flames, Pernath receives a view of a shimmering paradise, with Mirjam and Hillel at the center. Pernath's inability to hold onto the window's ledge further underscores this dichotomous understanding of the Ghetto, since it simultaneously offers splendid vision of paradise, while suspending it just out of reach. The Ghetto is a locale

that juxtaposes persecution and salvation, safety and threat, and belonging with homelessness. The description of the stone he tries to latch onto, "glatt wie ein Stück Fett," ties the end of his narrative to the beginning of the novel in which the frame story narrator has recurring visions of a stone that uncannily resembles this one from Pernath's fall (Meyrink 10, 291). This connection suggests the type of journey the frame narrator makes as he dreams himself into Pernath's experiences, a journey of awakening that offers a glimpse of salvation while simultaneously remaining inaccessible.

Spending roughly twenty years living in Prague, Meyrink's relationship to the city remained at all times conflicted. An early text, the 1907 "Prag: Eine optimistische Städteschilderung in vier Bildern von Gustav Meyrink," written for the publication *März*, ironically underscores this strained relationship to the city, as well as intimates the mystical traditions at work within his writing. The "Bild" in question is titled "Aufzug" and pertains to the mounting notions of sovereignty and xenophobia at play in Czech nationalism that Spector highlights in his study. In particular it recounts the theatrical displays of nationalistic groups in front of the Deutsches Haus in Prague. In response to these nationalistic exhibitions in front of the Deutsches Haus, Meyrink writes:

Die Stadt steht nämlich bekanntermaßen auf einem Netz unterirdischer Gänge, und ein solcher geheimer Gang verbindet diesen Mittelpunkt Prager deutschen Lebens mit dem fernen aber stammverwandten Jerusalem. Wenn es nun wirklich einmal schief gehen oder die deutschen Burschenschaft Markomania, woran, Gott soll hüten, allerdings kaum gedacht werden darf -- versagen sollte, so genügt ein einfacher Druck auf ä elektrischen Knopp, und im Handumdrehen sind ein paar hundert frische Makkabäer zur Stelle. (Meyrink 354)

Although written in jest, the sketch's jocular style nevertheless underscores the conflicted notions of belonging affecting Austrian-Jewish Prague writers. The difficulty of belonging for the culturally German, and its controlling Jewish minority, in the face of swelling tides of Czech nationalism play out in his sketch. The reader can feel the tension derived out of this impending conflict between the Czech nationalist groups described and the German-speaking Jewish upper

class. Meyrink's reference to the underground passages to Jerusalem is significant in light of this study, since it not only references the inveterate Jewish character of Prague, but also alludes to Meyrink's own interest in a cadre of revolutionary Jews, whose renowned prowess on the battlefield resulted in their reclamation of lost Jewish territories in 166 BCE and the protection of the Jewish faith against Greek Hellenism. Calling on them to defend the seat of German culture in Prague at the turn of the century echoes notions of the Golem's protective role, found in contemporary literary works, and evident in *Der Golem*. The defense of German cultural life in Prague, with its inextricable connections to Jewish cultural life, becomes a feature that plays a central role in *Der Golem*, as we will investigate. It is, however, important to note the conflicted relationship Meyrink maintained with this city under threat.

Meyrink's descriptions of the Ghetto, and its surviving portions in particular, further suggests the ambiguous view of *Heimat* found in *Der Golem*. Before we turn to the post-demolition descriptions, however, perhaps the most telling aspect of this conflicted *Heimat* is Pernath's own thoughts about his dwelling place from the onset of the novel's dream sequence: "das Trübe, düstere Leben, das an diesem Hause hängt, läßt mein Gemüt nicht still werden, und immer tauchen alte Bilder in mir auf" (Meyrink 17). On the one hand, Pernath's own house confronts him with the dreary world of the Ghetto and its depressing atmosphere. On the other hand, the house enables the type of journey Pernath undertakes in becoming the Golem, one of memory reconstruction, emphasized by the trap door entry to underground passages leading to the inaccessible room. Even before his transformation, "alte Bilder" spring forth from within him, an apparently muffled type of remembrance brought about from his very place of residence (Meyrink 17). Coupled with Meyrink's description of rain "an den Gesichtern der Häuser [...] wie ein Tränenstrom," Pernath's *Heimat* clearly lacks the type of innocence and purity normally

accompanying idyllic scenes of pastoral splendor (Meyrink 31). Pernath's connection to this imperfect *Heimat* emanate from unconscious ties to the place itself, and when questioned about why he lives in the Ghetto, he contemplates, "Ich stutzte. [...] Warum lebte ich eigentlich hier? Ich konnte es mir nicht erklären. Was fesselt dich an das Haus, wiederholte ich mir geistesabwesend. Ich konnte keine Erklärung finden [...]" (Meyrink 152). Nonetheless, it remains Pernath's *Heimat*, one which he grows to protect and value as he ventures to regain his memory and protect his community. After Pernath's release from prison towards the conclusion of the novel, it is anything but coincidental that he returns to the only section of the Ghetto remaining after its demolition and reconstruction:

Ich hatte meine Edelsteine verkauft [...] und mir zwei kleine [...] Dachkammern in der Altschulgasse – die einzige Gasse, die von der Assanierung der Judenstadt verschont geblieben – gemietet. Sonderbarer Zufall: Es war dasselbe wohlbekanntes Haus, von dem die Sage ging, der Golem sei einst darin verschwunden. (Meyrink 288)

The survival of this house in the midst of the wide-sweeping demolition of the Ghetto highlights its significance as a sacrosanct location. Although the Golem does not enact the final execution of Wassertrum, it is his journey and awakening that sets in motion the chain of events that lead to the abolition of Wassertrum's stifling presence. In this context, the removal of Wassertrum's stranglehold on the Ghetto allows for its demolition, sparing only the most spiritually significant sections, the synagogues and the Jewish religious sites like the cemetery.<sup>34</sup> And like the Golem, who returns to his maker to be deactivated after his purpose is fulfilled, Pernath too returns to the very place where his journey begins, this most-sacred of homes in the Ghetto, and is, at least in part, at peace. It is therefore fitting that Pernath once again feels at home in this preserved place:

Es war ein beständiges glückliches Lächeln in mir, und wenn ich meine Hand auf etwas legte, kam mir's vor, als ginge ein Heilen von ihr aus. Die Zufriedenheit eines Menschen, der nach langer Wanderung

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<sup>34</sup> W.H. Auden's explanation of "the fantasy [...] which the detective story addict indulges is the fantasy of being restored to the Garden of Eden, to a state of innocence," gives further meaning, if only too literal, to Pernath's Eden-like residence at the end of the novel (Auden 150).

heimkehrt und die Türme seiner Vaterstadt von weitem blinken sieht, erfüllte mich auf ganze sonderbare Weise. (Meyrink 289)

The peace that Pernath finds close to the end of the narrative, however, is one with ambiguous undertones. The entire Ghetto, his friends, and his business are lost. The *Heimat* that the Golem salvages for Pernath is one that no longer exists, since all the memories connect directly to the Ghetto and its inhabitants. In spite of this isolation, Pernath finds redemption in the fact that the center of the Ghetto has been preserved, as well as his memory. It is an ambivalent presence that Jutta Müller-Tamm characterizes as a way, in which "[d]as sanierte Ghetto [...] damit aber auch auf das Verdrängen und Vergessen des Gewesenen [verweist] und [...]im Gegensatz zur idealen, gleichbleibenden Präsenz des Vergangenen in der ewigen Gegenwart im Haus zur letzten Latern auf dem Hradschin [steht]" (Müller-Tamm 571). The narrator, having experienced the transformation of Pernath into the Golem, becomes aware of the ambiguity inherent in this *Heimat*. As Müller-Tamm argues, the re-gentrified Ghetto presents a view of belonging that neglects the horrors of the past in favor of an ideal vision of homeland, whereas the "Haus zur letzten Latern," as its name would suggest, provides a continual reminder to the otherwise repressed and forgotten history, and horror, of the Ghetto itself. This legendary house, which can only be seen at certain times of day, becomes a significant concept in Meyrink's literary world, which eventually becomes the name of his villa in Starnberg, Germany. In his work concerning the modern gothic in German literature, Barry Murnane argues that this location in the novel, like the underground passages Pernath investigates, becomes a "mystical system telescoping the past into the present" which creates "the impression of an uncanny dual topography in the city" (Murnane 230). Murnane further highlights the ambiguity of this space at play in the novel: "[...] for the unnamed narrator this uncanny geography is reproduced both in the ghostly topography of his mind and in the 'Haus zur letzten Latern[e] [...] when he meets

Pernath in a geographically 'real' location within his present-day Prague" (Murnane 230).

Meyrink emphasizes the tension that exists between the geographically linked notion of memory and forgetting here in this depiction of *Heimat* by reminding the reader that this place, although familiar to the narrator, "mit geschlossenen Augen könnte ich mich hinauffinden in die kleine, kuriose Alchimistengasse, so vertraut ist mir plötzlich jeder Schritt," is one that is elusive to most that seek it, "aber wo heute Nacht das Holzgitter vor dem weiß schimmernden Haus gestanden hat, schließt jetzt ein prachtvolles, gebauchtes, vorgoldetes Gitter die Gasse ab [...] Mir wird, als träte eine fremde Welt vor mich" (Meyrink 301). Only after his experiences, and his remembrance of the Ghetto and the Golem through the night's dream, can the narrator access this otherwise unassuming street, which hides the history of the Ghetto and the city itself.

The frame story finally echoes these notions of *Heimat* yet again, since it is the narrator who also returns to the Ghetto in search of what happened to Pernath, a symbolic reconstruction of history and of memory. Demonstrating his wish to reconstruct history, the narrator asks about the Ghetto, and cites his interest by explaining that he is a writer, asking, "Ist hier niemand unter den Gästen, der sich noch erinnern kann, wie die alte Judenstadt von damals ausgesehen hat? Ich bin Schriftsteller und interessiere mich dafür" (Meyrink 294). As a writer, the narrator's task is to relay the cultural memory of the Ghetto, a notion that his justification, "ich bin Schriftsteller und interessiere mich dafür," impresses on the reader, who learns of this singular detail about the narrator here at the end of the novel.

The final pages of *Der Golem* indicate Meyrink's interest in and perspective on the significance of cultural memory and its preservation. The narrator in the frame story finds himself in the reconstructed Jewish quarter and seeks to find clues to the fate of his dream-doppelgänger, Pernath. Stumbling upon the café where Pernath loses consciousness and

awakens into the role of the Golem, Meyrink positions the narrator in the same location where Pernath's transformation becomes overtly apparent. As the narrator searches for traces of the former ghetto and its inhabitants, he encounters a nameless old man. The narrator describes the man thus: "niemand kennt weder ihn noch seinen Namen. Er selbst hat ihn vergessen. Er ist ganz allein auf der Welt" (Meyrink 297). The peril facing the man, forgotten and alone in the world, poses an obstacle that Meyrink's narrator overcomes through his interest in the past, the writer's interest in the past. In this vein, the man's responses to the question, "Haben Sie nicht vor etwa 33 Jahren einen Gemmenschneider namens Pernath gekannt?", demonstrate Meyrink's position in relation to the preservation of cultural memory (Meyrink 297). The old man answers the same question twice with two names, which Dunker points out as significant:

Der Alte spricht keine sinnlosen Laute aus, sondern mit den Namen von Meir Perles (Pereles) (1666-1739) und Wolf Pascheles (1814-1857) benennt er die Namen zweier Quellen, aus denen Meyrink sich für seine Golem-Geschichte bedient hat. Perles hat die Lebensgeschichte Rabbi Löws aufgezeichnet, Pascheles ist der Herausgeber einer Sammlung jüdischer Volkssagen, in denen auch die Geschichte von Rabbi Löw und der Erschaffung des Golems erzählt wird. (Dunker 227-8)

Meyrink disguises this important interaction in comical fashion, a stylistic trademark seen also in his short description of Prague and the demonstrations in front of the Deutsches Haus. Like others we have already seen in the novel, this passage in the cafe, concerning sad characters who struggle to remember anything about the Ghetto before its demolition, emphasizes Meyrink's awareness of the dangers of forgetting and the importance of memory. As Dunker illustrates, the man who mentions these authors connects the legend of the Golem across centuries, even if the narrator appears to miss the significance of his answers (Meyrink 297). Meyrink values the role that literature plays in the preservation of cultural memory, although he acknowledges through this witty encounter its ability to change and adapt. Dunker also addresses the notion of cultural memory at play here at the end of the novel and connects this passage intertextually:

Der Ich-Erzähler auf der Suche nach der Identität seines eigenen Ich wird verwiesen auf die Vorvergangenheit des heteronomen Stoffs und zugleich auf Narrativierungen, die der Autor des Romans

*Der Golem* intertextuell – und das heißt auch: kulturelles Gedächtnis stiftend – aktualisiert. [...] Die Literatur setzt sich selbst als (kulturelles) Gedächtnis schaffende Kraft. (Dunker 228)

Even the narrator's personal memory connects intimately with Pernath's, offering another aspect of cultural memory. The narrator relates: "Alles was dieser Athanasius Pernath erlebt hat, habe ich im Traum miterlebt, in einer Nacht mitgesehen, mitgehört, mitgeföhlt, als wäre ich er gewesen" (Meyrink 293). The reader too has accompanied the narrator along this journey, further developing the sense of cultural memory that has been imparted through the novel, and its intertextual connections.

The attachment the narrator displays for the places seen only indirectly, further speaks to the function of cultural memory, since he taps into the "age-old, out-of-the-way, and discarded," images of the Ghetto that have otherwise been forgotten (Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory* 27). Cultural memory grants belonging to members of a community by connecting them to the places, people, and events that also belonged to the community, by re-examining the places and figures otherwise neglected, "disowned," or forgotten (Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory* 27). It is this perspective on cultural memory that plays such an integral role for our understanding of the Golem, and its reconstructive role. The Golem embodies all of these elements, the discarded, disowned and the age-old. In the experience that he relives through the eyes of Pernath, the narrator engages in the further construction of cultural memory, catalyzed by the Golem in his "dream." Although wishing to reconstruct history by asking the current inhabitants of the Ghetto, he is nevertheless confident in his own memory of the place, a memory conveyed through his bond with Pernath: "Plötzlich taucht das Haus in der Altschulgasse vor mir auf. Jedes Fenster erkenne ich wieder: die geschweifte Dachrinne, das Gitter, die fettig glänzenden Steinsimse - alles, alles!" (Meyrink 293). He relays the feeling of

this knowledge as a "traumhafte Erkenntnis, als lebte ich zuweilen an mehreren Orten zugleich" (Meyrink 300).

Finally, when confronted with Pernath, in their only interaction at the very close of the novel, the narrator's thoughts reiterate those of Pernath's when he first mimics and transforms into the Golem at the onset of his spiritual journey, stating, "Mir ist, als sähe ich mich im Spiegel, so ähnlich ist sein Gesicht dem meinigen" (Meyrink 302). A close connection with Pernath remains ultimately unfulfilled however, since Pernath denies him entry to the garden at the end of the narrative, thus leaving the narrator in an uncertain state, in which at his feet lies "die Stadt im ersten Licht wie eine Vision der Verheißung" but without complete access to this paradise (Meyrink 301). The cultural memory reconstructed by the Golem creates a sense of belonging across decades while failing ultimately at delivering those it protects into a state of childhood innocence. Instead, the narrator is forced to stay in an *unheimliche Heimat*, rather than an apparent Garden of Eden.

Meyrink's iteration of the Golem figure in *Der Golem* serves as a springboard for further Austrian-Jewish depictions of this reenvisioned protector. Meyrink's Golem figure presents a doppelgänger-motif that we will repeatedly see in later iterations. His non-violent Golem will also influence the Golem figures we will investigate from Perutz, Torberg and Rabinovici. Most significantly, however, is Meyrink's focus on the processes of memory construction that the Golem figure catalyzes, seen most clearly through the narrator and Pernath's reawakening to their Jewish heritage and identity as they transform into the Golem in this seminal novel. This memory-reconstructing quality of the Golem is a feature we will also see thematized in the following chapters.

**Chapter 2 - The "Protective" Austrian Golem in the Wake of the Holocaust: Austrian-Jewish notions of Belonging in Leo Perutz's *Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke* (1953) and Friedrich Torberg's *Golems Wiederkehr* (1968)**

*'Kodausch – Kodausch – Kodausch – adonaj zewoaus', sagt Knöpfelmacher ohne den Kopf zu heben, das schwerfällige Schulhebräisch kommt ihm nur mühsam von den Lippen, er hat noch nie so viele Worte pausenlos hervorgebracht und hat noch nie so laut und deutlich gesprochen [...] Doch, jetzt regt er sich. Mit dem rechten Handrücken fährt er über seine Stirn, langsam und klobig von links nach rechts, vielleicht war's ein plötzlicher Schweißausbruch, den er wegwischen will, vielleicht war's ein böser Traum, man kann das in der Dunkelheit so genau nicht sehen. Dann erst hebt er den Kopf und grinst. (Torberg 175)*

As demonstrated in Meyrink's *Der Golem*, the Golem transformed from an uncontrollable brute to an ambiguous figure in step with the protection of a community that, even at the beginning of the century, faced mounting anti-Semitism and required a messianic guardian. Whereas the Golem gained a protective function in the early 20th century, the post World War II iterations of the Golem here under investigation provide a glimpse into the survival, where possible, of a community that suffered a tremendous persecution and attempted extermination. In the wake of the Holocaust, the Golem continues to take on characteristics of a memory-constructing figure in the Austrian literary landscape, once again in the role of a protector. As we will see in the textual examples, the preservation and reclamation of cultural memory becomes a thematic focal point for the authors. In this sense, the Golem becomes an anchor for the Austrian Jewish writers Friedrich Torberg and Leo Perutz, as they reconstruct and preserve the cultural memory of a specific Jewry, namely the Prague Jewry. The specific image of Prague Jewry stands as a symbol for all Jews after the Holocaust, especially for these two exiled authors, since Prague exists as a cultural center for European Judaism, and represents a community in

need of further protection against the perils of denial and forgetting. Although the immediate threat of the Nazi final solution is over at the time of their creation, the new threat of cultural amnesia further darkens the Jewish community's bleak outlook in these two texts. It is at this critical juncture where the Golem provides cultural documentation of the unparalleled persecution witnessed by so many. These two Austrian-Jewish authors, characterized by their strong and sustained Austrian identities, thematize the conflicted notion of *Heimat* and belonging the Jewish community encountered in the post-Shoah era.

The urgency for protection and cultural remembrance stems from the climate facing Jewish writers in the post-war period. Dagmar Lorenz argues, that, "within societies that discouraged an open confrontation with the Nazi past, including information and discussions about the Holocaust and the destroyed Jewish culture, establishing a post-Shoah Jewish identity was a difficult proposition" (Lorenz, *Transcending the Boundaries* 4). The uncertain nature of Austrian-Jewish identity in the post-war years was made all the more complex by an Austrian "revival of a national identity" which "was largely inspired by the pragmatic need to emphasize Austria's difference to and non-complicity with Nazi Germany. Austria could thereby regain its sovereignty as a state without having to account fully for its role in the Jewish genocide" (Konzett 75). Indeed, Perutz's own ruminations, highlighted in Hans-Harald Müller's critical biography of the author, over the overt Jewish content of his novel *Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke* underscore the difficulty in establishing a post-Shoah Jewish identity, which he so accurately articulates in a letter to friends in Buenos Aires:

Ich habe das Maschinenscript vor einer Woche an Zsolnay geschickt, und wenn der - zum Teil - jüdische Inhalt des Romans für einen deutschen Verlag von heute nicht ein Handicap darstellt, so werde ich Ihnen vielleicht schon Ende des Jahres wieder ein neues Buch zuschicken können. Ich glaube, das Buch ist mir wirklich gelungen, schade nur, daß ich es nicht vor 20 Jahren geschrieben habe. Kisch und Werfel hätten es gewürdigt, aber wo sind die beiden! (Perutz, March 1951, qtd. in Müller 80)

The fear that Perutz intimates about sending his manuscript to Zsolnay, the premiere publication house in pre-World War II Austria, attests to the uncertain position Jews faced in the years after the Holocaust. His confidence in the book remains overshadowed by the fact that those that might have truly enjoyed it are now no longer present in the literary community; Kisch having died in 1948 and Werfel in 1945 after each enduring long periods of exile. Perutz's feeling of disappointment about not having written this book twenty years prior indicates an understanding on his part of the type of book he created. The book, with its conflicted depictions of *Heimat* was a product of Perutz's exile, further emphasizing why these other exiled authors would have praised his work. Perutz's comments also hint at Austria's reticence in acknowledging guilt in regard to the Holocaust and the Second World War in general, fearing that the book's Jewish content might be seen as a "Handicap." The obstacle confronting Perutz here in this passage points to the necessity of reestablishing conduits of cultural memory, which in both Perutz's and Torberg's texts becomes the Golem's function.

The setting of *Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke* and *Golems Wiederkehr* plays an integral role in the reestablishment of the Golem as a harbinger of cultural memory. Both of Torberg's and Perutz's Golem figures continue to exist in the backdrop of Prague's Jewish ghetto, a locale that had been demolished, rebuilt, occupied and made spectacle of by the Nazi's in their attempt to preserve this quarter as a museum for an extinct race of people. Against the Nazi's ultimately unsuccessful plans to make Prague an "exotisches Museum einer ausgestorbene Rasse," these post-war manifestations of the Golem strive to preserve and protect the little left of the Jewish quarter and the Jewish community, and to reconstruct the cultural memory of the inhabitants (Svoboda 27). Given the circumstances, both of these depictions continue to struggle with ambivalent notions of identity, memory, and *Heimat*. This struggle is the focus of this

chapter: I first examine Leo Perutz's novel *Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke* and then turn my attention to Friedrich Torberg's short story *Golems Wiederkehr* in order to shed light on these two iterations of the Golem legend in the post-war years and their role in an attempt to reconstruct cultural memory in the wake of the Holocaust.

### ***Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke* (1953)**

Leo Perutz was born into a secular Jewish family in Prague in the year 1882. The family benefited along with many assimilated Jewish families of the era from the Habsburg Empire's tolerance and prosperity around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with mounting trends of anti-Semitism being directed at recently immigrated Eastern Jews. Perutz's childhood was spent in Prague, before his family moved to Vienna in 1899. In regard to his political leanings, Perutz's deep-rooted loyalty to the monarchy is not only evident in his two tours of military service, the first as a volunteer in 1903 and the second during the First World War, which resulted in a serious chest wound in 1915. It is also evident through his own political leanings roughly fifteen years after the end of the First World War and the end of the Habsburg monarchy:

"Nationalstaaten in diesem Europa bedeuten immer den Krieg. Übernationale monarchische Staaten sind die einzige wirkliche Friedensgarantie" (Perutz September 1939, qtd. in Müller 62).

His notion of peace derived from international monarchies underscores the idyllic perspective Perutz maintained concerning the Habsburg monarchy, a sentiment that drives his most prolific work in exile, *Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke*.

Working for much of his life in actuary and insurance fields, Perutz's love for mathematics and the intricate synchronicity of events wound its way into his numerous literary endeavors, summed up best by well-known Viennese Feuilletonist Ludwig Ullmann, "Es liegt ein charakteristischer Zug darin, in diesem Bekenntnis zum Unwirklichen, das trotzdem die

Schulung des an der Technik und ihren Wundern gedrillten Gehirns nicht lassen will, in dieser Synthese von Mythos und Mathematik" (Ullmann, Spring 1916, qtd. in Müller 29). Although experiencing relative success as a novelist in the interwar period, Perutz's novels and plays, numbering around twenty in both pre- and posthumous publications, failed to maintain the staying power of his contemporaries and acquaintances, like Kafka, Werfel, Musil and Altenberg, though Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Daniel Kehlmann both celebrate Perutz as a master of magical realism and count him among their influences. Directly before the Nazi occupation of Austria in 1938, Leo Perutz fled to Palestine, at which point extensive work on *Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke* began. Müller notes, "im Juni 1943, als die Vernichtung der Juden durch die Deutschen in Europa einen Höhepunkt erreichte, vollendete Perutz die Novelle 'Die Sarabande', die die Rettung eines Christen durch den hohen Rabbi Loew schildert" (Müller 80). This story, like the others in this novel of short stories, takes the reader back to a Prague inhabited by Rabbi Löw, the Golem's traditional creator. The frame story, however, is aptly set during and intimately concerned with the demolition of the Jewish Ghetto in Prague around the turn of the 20th century, and focuses on the memorialization of the stories that define Prague Jewish culture. Concerning Perutz's conflicted relationship with Palestine, Müller describes Perutz's exile as such: "Leo Perutz war, wie die meisten Einwanderer aus dem deutschen Sprachgebiet, kein Zionist; für sie war Palästina vorerst eher ein Asyl als jene Heimat, die es für die Zionisten bedeutete" (Müller 69). With this biographical perspective, *Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke* exists, despite its later publication date, as a work of exile literature that preserves the stories and legends of a people whose fate, especially at the time of Perutz's writing, was uncertain at best. The novel thus takes on a specific function of memory construction, which we will discuss further in this chapter.

Regarding his lack of literary success in the post-war years, Perutz ruminates in 1949 as to the dearth of critical attention paid to his works:

Die wirklich maßgebenden Faktoren, die Zeitungen, die Kritik, die Verleger und die Literaturgeschichte, registrieren mich als nicht mehr vorhanden, wenn nicht gar als nie vorhanden gewesen. Um so sicher ist meine Auferstehung in 40 Jahren, wenn mich irgendein Literaturhistoriker wiederentdeckt und ein großes Geschrei darüber erhebt, daß meine Romane zu Unrecht vergessen sind. (Perutz 1949, qtd. in Müller 7)

Of his many works, *Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke* remains one of the most well-known works Perutz produced, although it still lacks any significant amount of scholarly discussion and analysis. However, this resurrection that Perutz foresees intimates the significance of this novel in particular, a work which principally deals with notions of memory and belonging.

*Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke* contains fourteen short novellas and an epilogue, each imbued with a numinous quality, from ghosts of children to somnambulists under spiritual control. Its structure is unique in that the narration of these shorter stories repeatedly end with the direct commentary of the narrator, relaying his own experiences around the turn of the 20th century, and concerning the demolition of the Ghetto. This voice appears predominantly at the end of the novellas, and relates the experiences of the narrator's childhood and his acquisition of these stories from his tutor, Jakob Meisl. Although the action of the numerous novellas centers on and revolves around Rabbi Löw as a legendary figure, the mythical fortune of Mordechai Meisl is equally significant throughout the entirety of Perutz's novel. Mordecai Meisl, according to tradition, was a famed resident of the Jewish quarter, whose purported wealth remains a part of the local folklore surrounding Prague. He is presented as a distant relative of the "Hauslehrer" Jakob Meisl, thereby intimately connecting the narrator to the stories that drive the overarching plot, and facilitating the novel's focus on cultural memory. Perutz's first-composed short story "Die Sarabande" is the story that I focus on in my analysis of Perutz's Golem. It must be noted, that although word Golem does not appear within the novel, I nonetheless argue that a Golem

figure of extreme significance occupies the pages of Perutz's central short story in *Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke*.

This portion of the chapter is again divided into three sections; the Golem figure, Memory and the Golem, and Notions of *Heimat* and the Golem. We will initially look at Perutz's Golem figure then move to how this figure catalyzes memory (re)construction and finally investigate how the Golem interacts with notions of *Heimat* in Perutz's novel. Let us first, however, turn briefly to the overlap between Perutz's Golem and Meyrink's early depiction.

### **The Golem Figure**

Turning now to the Golem's role within the text, we are confronted with two possible figures that possess Golem-like traits. I maintain that one such figure is a representation of humanity out of mortar on a wall in the Ghetto, created by Rabbi Löw to protect a Christian by inspiring empathy in his persecutors in the story "Die Sarabande." The second of which is the character Esther, whose somnambulism has been interpreted as a Golem-like function by Dagmar Lorenz. Lorenz argues that Esther, a prominent Jew in the Ghetto, functions as a Golem figure of sorts, since she acts on behalf of Rabbi Löw, and does so without consent or knowledge of her actions. In the novel, Emperor Rudolph calls upon Rabbi Löw to satiate his desire for Esther, the wife of the affluent Mordecai Meisl. Rabbi Löw uses her as a pawn to appease the emperor and smooth over tenuous relations between the Jews and the Christian population. Lorenz also argues that the Golem appears within the novella at the center of the entire work, "Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke," lending significance to this figure in the overarching narrative. Lorenz maintains that:

Perutz's romance must be read as a Golem story in disguise; in the absence of the actual Golem, Esther's function corresponds to that of the Maharal's creature. In the presence of powerful gothic motifs, including the plague and the dance of the dead children in the old cemetery, the sacrificial death of the virtuous Jewish woman creates a profound horror effect. Esther is instrumentalized against her will and without the knowledge of her husband in a variety of ways: The object of the emperor's desire, she is the Maharal's tool

to appease the Christian ruler, but later she is destroyed as atonement for the intrigues of the powerful as the Maharal makes her the scapegoat to save his community from divine wrath. The mind-body problem that is implied but contained in the traditional Golem stories unfolds fully in Perutz's novella. Esther and Rudolph are united in their dreams only, but since these dreams are sinful, they must be avenged. The emperor being outside the jurisdiction of the Jewish god, the Jewish woman bears the consequences of the Maharal's magic spell. Much like the supposedly soul-less Golem is deactivated once his presence poses a problem, Esther is also eliminated when it transpires that her soul wishes to join that of a Christian. (Lorenz, *Transcending the Boundaries* 291)

Lorenz's observation that the novel is a "Golem story in disguise" rings true, with one exception. Lorenz's argument pertains to her notion of the Golem as the sleep-walking Esther, but, I argue that a different and more accurate Golem figure populates the novel, the aforementioned depiction of "das Judentum" in its state of suffering, which prevents persecution by instilling notions of pity and remorse in those that see it (Perutz 64). Dagmar Lorenz's argument about the Golem in *Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke* provides a starting point for this investigation, however ultimately lacks specificity and scope with regard to the figure in general in its 20th century context. This creation of Rabbi Löw exists as a figure of protection and memory reconstruction, performing a messianic role of sorts, delivering the Jewish community from the loss of their cultural grounding in the face of the Ghetto's demolition and gentrification. In this vein, Perutz's Golem, like the Golem seen in the respective texts from Meyrink and Rosenberg, is anything but "a symbol of the socially, sexually, and spiritually disempowered" (Lorenz, *Transcending the Boundaries* 291). The Golem is empowered, especially with the ability to defend, albeit through seemingly dichotomous processes, as observed in Meyrink's text for example. The Golem in Perutz's novel embodies these characteristics also seen in previous non-violent, memory-constructing iterations of the Golem, and further develops a consistent 20th century Austrian notion of the Golem. Although Lorenz's argument evidences the use of Esther as a Golem-like figure, it jars with the overarching direction of Perutz's novel, which she also underscores as one of memory reconstruction:

Aside from adding new perspectives to the Maharal tradition, *Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke* is concerned with the memory of Bohemia's destroyed Jewish culture, which Perutz mourned until the end of his life. Focusing on the romances and mysteries of Prague allowed the author to remember and pay tribute to the famous Jewish quarter and its immortal characters, to celebrate this tradition, and to convey it to future generations. (Lorenz, *Transcending the Boundaries* 291)

The reconstruction of the destroyed Jewish culture Lorenz highlights occurs through the narration of Jakob Meisl, whose impact on the frame-story narrator mirrors the transmittance of cultural memory sought after through this novel. Perutz's novel is tinged with an irreconcilable melancholy also seen in *Der Golem*, especially in regard to Meyrink's frame-story narrator and his incomplete and ambiguous endeavor to ultimately connect with Pernath in his palace-like home surrounded by an inaccessible garden at the end of the novel. Perutz's narrator is similarly confronted with a pervasive melancholy as he grapples with a Ghetto that is currently lies in rubble, and thus creates an ambiguous sense of belonging with regard to the very places and characters populating the narratives of Jakob Meisl. This melancholy derives from the fear of forgetting, especially in the wake of the Holocaust.

The aforementioned Golem-creation of Rabbi Löw appears in the novella "Die Sarabande." The novella relates the story of a single night in Prague, concerning non-Jewish characters at a christening party for a nobleman's first grandchild. At the party, two figures, the Slovakian Baron Juranic and the local Count Collalto, challenge one another over the affections of a young beauty. Count Collalto insults the baron, whose dance and appetite for wine and revelry call attention to his rough ways and country customs. Being a man of honor, baron Juranic initially takes the ribbing in stride, until the aforementioned beauty is driven away after he is tripped by Collalto in the middle of a dance, at which point the Baron challenges the Count to a duel. The Baron's prowess as a swordsman is unmatched, and instead of ending the Count's life immediately, he strikes an agreement that will cost the Count his life in the long-run, after the Baron has exacted revenge for his injured pride. He demands that the Count dance a

saraband through the streets of Prague for the duration of the night, with the penalty of death looming over his head should he stop at any point. As the procession begins, however, the Baron's own servants, being devout men of faith, stop at every crucifix and statue to pray, thereby allotting the Count ample time to rest in the Christian part of the city with its many devotional statues and symbols. Seeing that the procession would halt every few steps, and never truly punish the Count, Baron Juranic conducts the procession into the Ghetto, where "in den Gassen der Judenstadt sollte der Collalto seine Sarabande tanzen, denn dort gab es keine Kruzifixe und keine Heiligenfiguren" (Perutz 62). Fortuitously, as the Count can no longer dance, the procession reaches Rabbi Löw's home, and the Rabbi hears the Count's cry for mercy, at which point he conjures an image on an adjacent wall that halts the procession indefinitely, inspiring compassion and mercy in the Baron, and saving the Count's life. Perutz describes this creation: "Auf dieser Mauer ließ er durch seine zauberische Kraft aus Mondlich und Moder, aus Ruß und Regen, aus Moos und Mörtel ein Bild entstehen" (Perutz 63). The description of the image the Rabbi creates, alludes directly to the creation of the Golem, reiterating its modern redemptive and protective function within this story of revenge. The elements of soot, moss, and mortar resemble the claylike substance of the traditional Golem, while the appearance and its ramifications allude to the characteristic responses of the modern Austrian-Jewish Golem under investigation. This Austrian-Jewish iteration inspires compassion and empathy, evidenced in the Baron's own guilt and subsequent empathy after seeing the image at the close of the narrative.

Although the reader is initially sympathetic with the Baron amid the ridicule directed towards him at the christening, Perutz describes him in a unique fashion, one in keeping with the biblical story of Cain and Abel. After being insulted by the Count, Perutz describes the Baron's face thus: "In dem Gesicht des Barons regte sich kein Muskel, doch eine Säbelnarbe, die vordem

kaum zu bemerken gewesen war, flammte jetzt an seiner Stirne auf, rot wie ein Feuermal" (Perutz 55). It is the cruelty of men to one another that Perutz criticizes here, alluding to the mark of Cain, and the senseless conflict that jealousy and revenge create between men who should be brothers rather than enemies (Gen. 4:15). Further intensifying the reader's distaste for both characters, Perutz has the Baron exhibit no mercy for the Count after defeating him in their duel, plotting his death only after torturing and humiliating him first. Such an allusion to the mark of Cain, however, is also ambiguous, since in Genesis, this mark, often interpreted as a facial scarring or marking, was to protect Cain against any who wished to kill him for his great sin of murdering his brother. This protective mark ensured God's curse on Cain, his inability to grow further crops, and guaranteed His divine retribution insofar as it doomed Cain to a long life as a reviled murderer. It is therefore quite significant that the Count's life is spared by the redemptive function of the Golem-like creation of Rabbi Löw, since it inspires compassion and mercy in the hearts of all men, even those marked as cruel and violent. The image created echoes notions of a redeemer or messiah, insofar as the image is Rabbi Löw's "Ecce homo," a designation ordinarily reserved for depictions of Jesus (Perutz 63). Describing this visage, Perutz writes:

Aber es war nicht der Heiland, nicht der Gottessohn, auch nicht der Sohn des Zimmermanns, der aus dem galiläischen Gebirge in die heilige Stadt gekommen war, um das Volk zu lehren und für seine Lehre den Tod zu erleiden, -- nein, es war ein "Ecce homo" von anderer Art. Doch solche Erhabenheit lag in seinen Zügen, so erschütternd war das Leiden, das aus seinem Antlitz sprach, daß der Baron mit seinem steinernem Herzen von einem Blitzschlag des Selbsterkennens getroffen wurde und als erster in die Knie sank. Und vor diesem "Ecce homo" klagte er sich an, daß er in dieser Nacht ohne Erbarmen und ohne die Furcht Gottes gewesen war. (Perutz 63-4)

The description of this particular "savior" is noteworthy given that the Baron recognizes himself in this very picture. It is in this moment, in which the doppelgänger quality of modern iterations of the Golem, such as Meyrink's depiction, comes to light. This moment "des Selbsterkennens" indicates the true nature of this picture, the Golem, since it both mirrors the Baron's own sense of

shame and maltreatment at the hands of the Count, while simultaneously reminding him of his own brutish actions and stone-like emotional state. Although harkening back to the mark of Cain, the scar on the Baron's forehead also recalls the magical words inscribed in and on the Golem to give him life. The timing of the appearance of the scar indicates the awakening of a protector of sorts. The Baron's scar is only visible after the Count unjustly and maliciously insults him, causing this would-be avenger to awaken and exact revenge upon the wicked. Rather than being purely a mark of the Baron's anger and jealousy, as the mark of Cain signifies, this scar's significance is thus complex.

Furthermore, the setting of the Baron's "Selbsterkennen" is also significant. The Baron, who we can regard as a Golem-doppelgänger, sees his own self in Rabbi Löw's creation, thus intimately linking the Baron with the Golem. As a Golem figure, the Baron's seemingly coincidental arrival in front of the Rabbi's home reverberates notions of traditional Golem narratives. In this sense, the Baron returns to his creator, conveniently returning to the Rabbi after performing its task, in this case after exacting punishment on the Count, to be once again returned to lifeless clay. Perutz's narrative plays with this motif by reversing the transformation often seen in folkloristic versions as well as in Rosenberg's seminal text. Unlike the traditional Golem, which deactivates at the Rabbi's command, the Baron reawakens to his human nature, and sense of compassion, and discards the hard and unrelenting exterior of the Golem. The Golem as a doppelgänger is a fluid notion in Perutz's novel, but one that echoes the awakening seen in Meyrink's *Der Golem*. In this vein, Perutz's explicit description of this image through the voice of the tutor Jakob Meisl further links it to notions of the Golem we have been exploring:

Der "Ecce homo" des hohen Rabbi Loew? Es war nicht Christus. Es war das Judentum, das durch die Jahrhunderte hindurch verfolgte und verhöhnte Judentum war es, das auf diesem Bild seine Leiden offenbart hat. Nein, geh nicht in die Judenstadt, du würdest es dort vergeblich suchen. Die Jahre, Wind und Wetter haben es zerstört, keine Spuren sind von ihm geblieben. Aber geh durch die Straßen, wo du willst, und wenn du einen alten jüdischen Hausierer siehst, der seinen Binkel von Haus zu Haus schleppt,

und die Straßensjungen laufen hinter ihm her und rufen: "Jud! Jud!" und werfen mit Steinen nach ihm, und er bleibt stehen und sieht sie mit einem Blick an, der nicht der seine ist, der von seinen Ahnen und Urahnen herkommt, die wie er die Dornenkrone der Verachtung getragen und die Geißelhiebe der Verfolgung erduldet haben, -- wenn du diesen Blick siehst, dann hast du vielleicht etwas, ein Kleines und Geringes, von dem "Ecce homo" des hohen Rabbi Loew gesehen. (Perutz 64)

The notion of a gesture or stare, "einem Blick [...] der nicht der seine ist, der von seinen Ahnen und Urahnen herkommt," that invokes compassion and thwarts assailants maintains the non-violent depictions of the Golem we see in 20th century iterations, to which we will find further resonance in Rabinovici's work. Here, this ability to nonviolently inspire pity aligns Perutz's narrative with the recurrent role of the Golem as a protector throughout 20th century Austrian iterations. Although not explicitly named as such, the notion of the Golem as a figure that is laden with the burden of others' hatred and guilt, "die Dornenkrone der Verachtung" and "die Geißelhiebe der Verfolgung," shines through in Perutz's description of this age-old Judaism, that protects through its consumption and demonstration of guilt and suffering. As such, this notion of the Golem returns to protect those under persecution, and like the traditional story, this image of the Golem is also lost to the ages and incapable of being found, "keine Spuren sind von ihm geblieben." The narrator's words, however, emblazon this image on the reader, and guarantee its further existence as a rediscovered cultural text. The Golem protects insofar as it inspires for the Jewish audience further identity construction as they bear witness to this transformation, even secondhand as the narrator does, as well as inspiring compassion in the would-be Jewish persecutors as they recognize the frailness and meekness of humanity portrayed by this figure.

### **Memory and the Golem**

The very setting of the novel thus plays with notions of memory so central in any understanding of *Heimat*. Memory drives notions of *Heimat* as an "imaginary space of innocence projected into real geographic sites" (Blickle 130). However, the process of remembering Jewish culture before the Holocaust, including the images of the Golem in the

novel, eludes a strictly redemptive or memorializing function, and points at the difficulty surrounding any such endeavor. This underscores the paradoxical view of *Heimat* found in the novel, since the very act of remembrance is in question in *Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke*. The Golem in this particular novella helps to protect against the perils of forgetting through its recurrence in the very individuals under attack. Müller emphasizes the timeframe that the novel establishes in order to assert that the novel explicitly thematizes notions of forgetting and remembrance:

Niedergeschrieben wurden diese Erzählungen aber erst, so erläutert der Verfasser zu Beginn des "Epilogs", in der nach der Vernichtung des Prager Judentums dessen Geschichte und Kultur insgesamt in Vergessenheit zu geraten drohten. Es ist ein Kennzeichen des modernen historischen Romans bei Perutz, daß in ihm nicht naiv historisch erzählt wird, sondern daß das Erinnern und Vergessen im Erzählvorgang selbst thematisch werden." (Müller 109)

The Hauslehrer Meisl's words about capturing a glimpse of Rabbi Löw's creation in the gesture of a Jew in persecution again emphasize the type of memory construction that the Golem offers: "er bleibt stehen und sieht sie mit einem Blick an, der nicht der seine ist, der von seinen Ahnen und Urahnern herkommt, die wie er die Dornenkrone der Verachtung getragen und die Geißelhiebe der Verfolgung erduldet haben" (Perutz 64). Like Meyrink's Golem figure, Perutz's Golem resurfaces in the cultural memory of the Ghetto's inhabitants. Perutz places the Golem's lasting protection in the cultural memory of those in the Ghetto, who in moments of persecution, when for example "die Straßenjungen laufen hinter ihm her und rufen: "Jud! Jud!" und werfen mit Steinen nach ihm," resembles the visage of the Golem (Perutz 64). The connection to the cultural memory of suffering enables the return of the Golem and guarantees the protective remembrance Perutz champions in the narrative: "wenn du diesen Blick siehst, dann hast du vielleicht etwas, ein Kleines und Geringes, von dem 'Ecce homo' des hohen Rabbi Loew gesehen" (Perutz 64). In the context of the medieval story as well as the Hauslehrer's later musings, the Golem also functions simultaneously as a reminder to the persecutors, inspiring

empathy "mit einem Blick[...], der nicht der seine ist, der von seinen Ahnen und Urahn  
herkommt" as they ridicule and maltreat their fellow man (Perutz 64). The Golem reminds them  
of their own failings and memory lapses in terms of compassion and humaneness, thus  
nonviolently protecting those in peril and inspiring guilt and compassion in their foes, what we  
already know to be a feature common in Austrian-Jewish iterations of this protector. This  
dormant figure of the Golem becomes a cultural symbol of protection brought to the fore in times  
of need, but one that is fleeting and transient. This transient nature further establishes the  
ambivalent success of any such salvation, and hints at the continued recurrence of persecution  
and peril, a perspective that lends itself also to the conflicted notion of *Heimat* at play in the  
novel.

### ***Heimat* and the Golem**

This brings us to the particular role this notion of the Golem plays in protecting an  
ambiguous understanding of *Heimat*. As indicated previously, the overarching setting of Perutz's  
*Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke* is that of the Prague Ghetto during its demolition and  
gentrification. Whereas Perutz's description of the elements of mortar and soot echo the  
traditional creation of the Golem, the mixture of rain, mustiness, and moonlight on the other  
hand allude to the dreary conditions of the Ghetto and the dim prospect of salvation or reprieve  
for the weary, an element repeatedly observed in Meyrink's *Der Golem*. It is therefore fitting  
that it is in the Ghetto where the Count finds little rest and compassion before the creation of the  
Golem. Rather than appearing as an idyllic landscape and an innocent population, Perutz's paints  
Prague in an ambiguous light. Paralleling Perutz's own experience of Prague and its demolition,  
the narrator's *Heimat*, and the characters populating it, are tinged with ambivalence. As Lorenz  
has also indicated, the entire novel revolves around a story which unjustly uses the character of

Esther, at the hands of Rabbi Löw, to appease the Emperor's sexual desires and protect the community at large. This depiction of Rabbi Löw, an esteemed religious leader forced to misuse his own community in order to keep the peace, hints at the ambiguity at the heart of Perutz's novel. Like Meyrink's depiction, the Ghetto is anything but idyllic, it is a place where this illicit love affair must take place and where *unheimliche* creatures come to life when called upon. The Ghetto, however, is also a holy place needing protection, a sanctified locale in which holy figures like Rabbi Löw can create life and work miracles. This inherent conflict pertains also to the liminal position these Jewish figures, like the narrator, Rabbi Löw and the Hauslehrer Jakob Meisl, find themselves, a position that Perutz, as an assimilated Austrian Jew, also encountered in Palestine during his exile. Furthermore, the very fact that the narrator relates the stories of his Hauslehrer in the midst of the rubble from the demolition of the Ghetto underscores the paradoxical view on *Heimat* that Perutz portrays. Müller argues that, "Schon die erzählerische Rahmenkonzeption mit ihrem doppelten Zeitabstand deutet den Zusammenhang zwischen Erinnerung und Vergessen an, der im Roman selbst auf vielfältige Weise zum Thema wird" (Müller 278). Opposed to traditional notions of *Heimat* as a place devoid of conflict, Perutz's vision of *Heimat* juxtaposes the destructive force of forgetting with the reconstructive, although subjective, force of remembrance. The dangers of forgetting, especially with regard to Austria's perceived post World War II victim status and consequent refusal to accept responsibility, play a significant role in Perutz's construal of his former home. Perutz's aforementioned letter concerning his own doubt about the acceptability of the overt Jewish content of *Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke*, indicate his position in regard to his homeland's post-war stance. Austria's amnesia concerning the fate of its Jewish community threatens the very reconstruction of a national identity, which formerly prided itself on the contributions of Jewish cultural centers like

Prague and Vienna. Perutz's own fear that the novel will not be published, due to its "Handicap" of Jewish content, illustrates the precarious depiction of *Heimat* that pervades the novel itself.

Perutz's depiction of the Ghetto, both in its medieval state, as depicted in the reported narration of Meisl, and its demolished state at the beginning of the 20th century, as seen through the narrator's youthful eyes, evoke conflicted notions of belonging. The narrator confronts this ambiguity in so far as he must contend with a demolished quarter as he attempts to reconstruct aspects of cultural memory, buried by rubble and time. Just as the narrator's Ghetto provides the conflicted backdrop where memory and forgetting coexist, in the novella "Die Sarabande" the medieval Ghetto here again plays the part of the location upon which both persecution and redemption occur. This redemption remains, however, fleeting at best. There is no perpetual image of the Golem to stand guard and protect because it fades in the elements and over time. The Hauslehrer Meisl intimates this notion as he warns his pupil, "du würdest es [das Bild] dort vergeblich suchen," a reminder of the notion of *Heimat* at play in the novel (Perutz 64). Instead of creating a pastoral idyll where time is put on hold, Meisl reminds his pupil of the transience of his childhood home, and the figures that once populated the now demolished Ghetto. In this sense, Perutz highlights play between cultural memory and collective forgetting that conjures and erases figures like the Golem in this ambivalent perspective on *Heimat*. Perutz further emphasizes this ambivalence as the narrator describes the discovery of a document, nonetheless in "böhmischer Sprache abgefaßt," that dictates the location of the famous treasure of Mordechai Meisl (Perutz 263). The so-called treasure turns out to be the "Siechenhaus" and the "Armenhaus," both of which are being demolished as the narrator looks on at the end of the novel (Perutz 266). Highlighting these two houses, which would never appear in traditional depictions of idyllic scenes of *Heimat* since they demonstrate concepts of illness and poverty

foreign to such idylls, illustrates the paradoxical relationship the narrator has with the Ghetto. The narrator laments the demolition of the Ghetto and the loss of its unique culture, and ruminates: "die Demolierung des Ghettos und das Auftauchen des legendären Testaments, schienen mir miteinander verknüpft zu sein und zusammen den Schlußpunkt der Geschichte zu bilden" (Perutz 263). The legends surrounding Meisl's treasure are what create the transmitted cultural memory of the Ghetto and its Jewish inhabitants. They are linked through the narratives told about this "treasure," including the Golem and Rabbi Löw, and the demolition and appearance of this document indicate not only the end of this particular novella but also hint at the dangers of forgetting. The narrator's retelling of these stories demonstrate Perutz's interest in preserving the cultural memory of this community, the success of such preservation, however, remaining unclear and ambivalent evidenced in his depiction of the Ghetto itself.

Before turning to our next depiction of the Golem, let us briefly position Perutz's iteration of the Golem with Meyrink's earlier iteration. Beyond the basic setting of the tales, there are several, further noteworthy intersections with Meyrink's *Der Golem*, on textual, structural and thematic levels not articulated above. Firstly, the hidden mass of wealth attributed to Meisl also plays a role in Meyrink's *Der Golem*, although in an entirely negative nature, under the control of the malicious Wassertrum. In Meyrink's novel, Wassertrum, and his amassed wealth perpetuate the squalid conditions of the Ghetto, whereas Perutz's reclamation of the legends surrounding Meisl's purported wealth are central to the retelling of stories that reestablish cultural memory. Secondly, the general description of the Ghetto maintains the dreary depiction so evident in Meyrink's text. The Ghetto remains in Perutz's novel a place that weighs heavily on its inhabitants and fosters the type of mysterious associations and notions of dread that Meyrink emphasizes. Lastly, Perutz's novel shares the use of a frame structure with Meyrink's. Both

investigate the time surrounding the demolition and reconstruction of the Ghetto, emphasizing this event as a traumatic moment in both the city's and the Jewish community's histories.

Perhaps the most significant intersection in light of this investigation is the fourth commonality between these texts; the search for a link to a time before the destruction of the Ghetto through a narrator and his memory. They reiterate the necessity for the recovery of both personal and cultural memory that is so intimately bound with the Ghetto, its buildings and location. These similarities underscore the cultural milieu surrounding the Jewish stories of Prague and its famous inhabitants, and provide a glimpse into the rich culture that these authors sought to preserve and cultivate.

### ***Golems Wiederkehr (1968)***

Within the cultural milieu surrounding German language representations of the Golem, it is certain that Friedrich Torberg was quite familiar with Perutz's, Meyrink's, and Bloch's iterations of the Golem figure. Concerning Perutz's prolific career, Torberg asserted, "daß er [Perutz] zu den Meistern des phantastischen Romans gehört" (Torberg 141). Considering the fantastic elements at play in "Golems Wiederkehr," not to mention its subject matter, it seems rather evident that Torberg saw Perutz as a forebear in the recreation of the Golem tradition in the story, and continued to build upon the various features at play within the numerous Austrian interpretations of the Golem. As we will see, there are clear intersections with Perutz's novella, and the portrayal of the Golem as well as the city of Prague and its Jewish Ghetto.

Friedrich Torberg, originally Friedrich Kantor, was born in Vienna into a liberal Viennese Jewish family in 1908. His early life was defined by his involvement in the Jewish *Sportverein*, inspiring his lifelong interest in athletics. His career as a journalist, initially at the *Prager Tagblatt* as a sport correspondent, and later as a novelist afforded him a prestigious circle

of friends and acquaintances, like Alfred Polgar, Egon Kisch, Robert Musil, Joseph Roth, and Hermann Broch, many of whom met regularly at the famed Cafe Herrenhof. In 1933 his works were banned in Nazi Germany, and in 1938 he fled Austria for France, ultimately settling in the United States for the duration of the war, returning to Vienna in 1951. In post World War II Austria, he founded in 1954, and edited for eleven years, the publication *FORVM*, which, through its connection to the CCF (Congress for Cultural Freedom), often embroiled Torberg in conjecture that he was a covert CIA operative. This suspicion was heightened by his strong anti-Communist leanings, not to mention his anti-Nazi stance in a country that sought to construct its national identity under the guise of victimhood. In court, he repeatedly defended himself against such accusations of association with the CIA. Like Perutz, loyalty to Austria was a prime concern for Torberg, and Frank Tichy notes that "Torberg war ein österreichischer Patriot, ein Wahrer und Verteidiger des Österreichmythos, ein typischer Repräsentant Kakaniens" (Tichy 27). Torberg's interest in language also played a role in the pro-Austrian perspective he voiced surrounding the famous debate surrounding Austrian identity and Austrian German.<sup>35</sup> Not only was this loyalty and wish for belonging directed toward the political climate after the fall of the monarchy as Tichy maintains, but this search for identity also extended to Torberg's notion of

*Heimat:*

Wo immer Torberg auf seinem Fluchtweg aus Wien und zurück lebte [...] das Maß aller Dinge läßt sich kondensieren auf Begriffe wie das "Cafe Herrenhof", die Rapidviertelstunde, Altaussee, die jüdische Sportvereine Hakoah (Wien) und Hagibor (Prag), und alles, was mit dem Judentum zu tun hatte, und alles was mit der guten alten Zeit zu tun hatte. Für Torberg was es ein goldenes Zeitalter. Ein Trugschluß, dem Torberg sich gerne hingab. Für ihn endete die Monarchie nicht 1918. Erst mit dem Einmarsch Hitlers 1938 sah er sie äußerlich unwiederbringlich zerstört. Innerlich jedoch endete diese Zeit mit seinem Tod, denn mit der äußerlichen Zerstörung hatte er sich eigentlich nie abgefunden. (Tichy 35)

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<sup>35</sup> Ulrich Ammon sees Torberg's provocative question "Wie verpreußt sind wir?" as a purism that derives from questions surrounding national identity. See: Ammon, Ulrich. *Die deutsche Sprache in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz: Das Problem der nationalen Varietäten*. pp. 187-189.

Tichy maintains that Torberg's measuring stick against all other things in life remained his close emotional connection to Jewish life in pre-war Vienna and Prague. Tichy's claim emphasizes the strong connection Torberg felt to these specific geographical locales, and the people that populated them. The "Trugschluß" Tichy speaks of, echoes notions of *Heimat* rhetoric, such as notions of "irrational wish-fulfillment" that Blickle articulates in his work on *Heimat* (Blickle 20). Tichy's observations demonstrate the role that *Heimat*, even if not named specifically in his remarks, played for Torberg, a notion we will investigate in his short story "Golems Wiederkehr."

Friedrich Torberg's 1968 collection of short stories, *Golems Wiederkehr und andere Erzählungen*, has received scarce analysis.<sup>36</sup> The title story focuses on the Nazi occupation of Prague and the attempt to catalog Jewish religious and cultural artifacts prevalent in this ancient center of Judaism. The story's plot allows the characters to interact with ancient legends and tales of the Ghetto, while simultaneously confronting them with the present reality of the Holocaust's horrors, the arbitrary deportation of Jewish figures to concentration camps and execution. The story pits two Nazi officials, professors of antiquity and Jewish studies in their own right, and their respective detachments against one another from the outset of the story. Vorderegger and Kaczorski, the officials tasked with cataloging the Jewish quarter for the planned Nazi museum on the Jewish race, oversee a group of Jews, who aid them in the cataloging process. The treatment of these Jews vis-à-vis their respective officials is different, but crass in both regards. Vorderegger finds the Jews under his command a helpful lot, and treats them fairly, although the reader learns that he has previously executed Jews with his own pistol, in the hopes of proving his authority and bravado when stationed at a concentration camp.

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<sup>36</sup> The extant research on *Golems Wiederkehr* focuses primarily on other stories out of this collection. For an exemplary piece of research on this collection, see: Moore, Erna. "Friedrich Torberg's *Mein ist die Rache* as a Literary Work of Art." *Protest - Form - Tradition: Essays on German Exile Literature*. pp.111-121.

The overtly racist Kaczorski, on the other hand, intentionally ships integral members of this Jewish group off to concentration camps, as soon as Vorderegger appears to take a liking to them. Whereas Vorderegger blatantly uses the Jews under his command as veritable slaves, Kaczorski's racial hatred permeates his interactions with them. One of the particularly mistreated Jewish aids is the hulking Knöpfelmacher, who, at the climax of this short story, transforms into what I regard as a veritable Golem bent on the protection of the Ghetto and its Jewish population. This Golem-figure is never officially named as such in the story, however, we shall investigate the indication Torberg gives to his true, although slumbering, nature. The volatile relationship between Vorderegger and Kaczorski comes to a head as the Golem facilitates a violent confrontation between these two characters, in which they murder one another in the ancient Jewish cemetery in the heart of the Ghetto, while the Golem races off to save the Altneuschule from burning down.

### **The Golem Figure**

Let us first turn to the nature of the Golem in "Golems Wiederkehr." Like Meyrink's depiction, Torberg's Golem stirs within one of the Jewish figures in his text, Josef Knöpfelmacher. Again, this 20th century recasting of the Golem adapts aspects of the traditional story to present another unique perspective on the Golem and its role as avenger and protector, one lying latent in the cultural memory of one of the story's central characters. The reader is quite aware of Knöpfelmacher's similarities with the Golem from the initial depiction of him, a "geistig nicht ganz auf der Höhe befindlicher Bursche" whose "Körperkräfte und Ausdauer" is used by the other figures in the text as a "Botengänger, Handlanger, Lastenträger und überhaupt für alles verwendet, wofür sich niemand anderer gerne verwenden ließ" (Torberg 144). This depiction overtly reminds readers of the 19th century portrayals of the Golem by Weisel and

others, in which the Golem is a mere brute, good for manual labor and lacking intellect as well as rationality. Here Knöpfelmacher appears as a giant of a man, one consistent with modern, pop culture Golem counterparts as Cathy Gelbin would argue, like Superman or the Incredible Hulk (Gelbin, *The Golem Returns* 1).

Torberg further connects Knöpfelmacher with the Golem as the narrator recounts the numerous stories of "Mythen und Legenden" that were from the "Judenpersonal mit wachsender Vorliebe aufgetischt," finding particular resonance with the child-like Knöpfelmacher (Torberg 149). Knöpfelmacher's intense fascination with these legends foreshadows the awakening he later undergoes, highlighting the intimate connection he has to these tales and myths. The stories of the Golem exist here as the "Mittelpunkt" of the Knöpfelmacher's interest, which Kaczorski initially regards "noch für komisch," in turn foreshadowing the significant reawakening of the Golem as the story progresses (Torberg 149). However, the comical or lighthearted appreciation for these stories changes abruptly for Kaczorski when others begin to openly enjoy and recount these stories, at which point he argues: "Es handle sich vielmehr um eine der gefährlichsten, weil besonders gut getarnten Wurzeln jüdischen Beharrungsvermögens und jüdischer Widerstandskraft" (Torberg 150). Kaczorski identifies the "danger" in these Jewish stories, which represent a connection to Jewish history and cultural memory. Like Meyrink's Golem, however, these "gut getarnte[n] Wurzel[n]" must also be rediscovered through memory. The notion that these stories have the power to support Jewish resistance, or "Widerstandskraft," underscores the redemptive role that the Golem performs in the post-Holocaust iterations under investigation, rekindling cultural memory and solidifying the will to endure. The reconstruction of cultural memory is paramount in the retelling of these potentially dangerous Jewish stories, and remains in the forefront of Torberg's narrative. The Golem's protective function here is

equally as important, however, Torberg textually reminds the reader repeatedly of the cultural import of remembrance. As one of the post-Holocaust iterations of the Golem under investigation, the significance attributed to these stories and legends adds a self-reflexive element to Torberg's text, since it triumphs the role of such stories in the aftermath of the Holocaust and its unfathomable destruction in the contemporary Austrian climate of victimhood and cultural amnesia. In this unequivocal story of resistance and endurance, Torberg directly engages the Austrian-Jewish community, which, in the post-war years, struggled to redefine itself in a country unwilling to accept its own collective guilt.

### **Memory and the Golem**

Torberg's reinvention of the Golem in this text serves as an example of the need to reconnect with and reestablish notions of cultural memory so threatened in the devastation of the Holocaust. As such, the story participates in a discourse that, as Dagmar Lorenz argues, "tried to establish links with the Jewish tradition that had emerged in the late nineteenth century or in the fight against anti-Semitism and National Socialism to articulate the specifically Jewish positions and forms of expression" (Lorenz, *Transcending the Boundaries* 4). Certainly Torberg's invocation of the Golem tradition connects to the early twentieth century depictions of the Golem, perhaps most directly to Rosenberg's version in its protective function, as well as Chaim Bloch's pirated German language version of the same legend. This connection to previous versions is evident through the protective role that the Golem also provides in the text. Let us now turn to the memory-catalysing and avenger-like depiction of the Golem in *Golems Wiederkehr*.

Torberg highlights Knöpfelmacher's link to the protective role of the Golem by depicting Knöpfelmacher's intimate relationship to the stories about the indestructibility of the

*Altneuschule*. Upon seeing two doves on the roof of the synagogue, reminding the Jewish inhabitants of the old legend of redemption and deliverance:

Alle wußten es, aber niemand sagte es ihm [Kaczorski]. Alle wußten, daß während der großen Feuersbrunst des Jahres 1558, die in der Judenstadt gewaltige Verheerung anrichtete, auf dem Dach der Altneuschule zwei weiße Tauben saßen und so lange sitzen blieben, bis das Feuer gänzlich erloschen war. Erst dann erhoben sie sich in die Lüfte und verschwanden. (Torberg 157)

The reference of this legend paints a parallel between the destruction of the fire in 1558 and the situation facing the Jews in the story, that of cremation of Jews after torture at the hands of the Nazis. Linking this current notion of impending destruction to previous fires in the Jewish quarter the narrator relates:

Gerade als die Gruppe wieder ins Gehen geraten wollte, setzte sich Knöpfelmacher, der bis dahin schweigsam hinterhergezottelt war, mit ein paar grotesk unbeholfenen Sprüngen an ihre Spitze, reckte beide Arme hoch und fuchelte zum Synagogendach hinauf: "Dort!" rief er (atemlos wie immer, wenn die Erregung ihn überkam, und nur zu kurzen, rasch hervorgestoßenen Worten fähig). "Oben! Dort, bitte!" (Torberg 156)

Knöpfelmacher sees two doves fly away from the roof of the synagogue at this juncture, spurring on this reaction. Describing these doves as they take flight from the Synagogue roof the narrator states: "flatterten in diesem Augenblick zwei Tauben davon, als hätte Knöpfelmachers Geschrei sie aufgeschreckt" (Torberg 156). Here Knöpfelmacher's connection to these legends erupts in his inarticulate pointing and gesturing, since he alludes to his own protective function as the Golem which will specifically defend the Synagogue at the close of the story. The fact that the doves seem to react and take flight at the same moment of his outburst indicates his integral role in the divine protection of this location. The Jewish workers present for this episode, with the exception of Knöpfelmacher, are the next two to be deported to "Theresienstadt oder in eines der polnischen Vernichtungslager" (Torberg 157). The fires that these Jewish characters are reminded of in this instance are intimated in the fate that waits for them in the concentration camps. Directly following the interaction between Kaczorski and these Jews, the narrator states, "der Vorfall hatte keine unmittelbaren Folgen, oder sie wurden nicht als solche kenntlich"

(Torberg 157). The order to include these names on the deportation list "wurden an anderer Stelle und unter anderer Autorität zusammengestellt" rather than the usual office responsible for this decision, thus further indicating that their deportation is a result of their witnessing Knöpfelmacher's outburst and seeing the doves (Torberg 157). The deportation of these specific Jewish characters nullifies their knowledge of this event, since they face a permanent silencing in the fires and crematoriums in Theresienstadt or one of the nameless Polish camps. The death sentences given these witnesses echoes the very arson attempts that threatened the Altneuschule, which serves as the backdrop for Knöpfelmacher's timely observation, the fires of the concentration camps attempting to reduce all physical traces to ash and eradicate entirely, as had been attempted with the Altneuschule. In this fashion, Torberg further links Knöpfelmacher with the protective function of 20th century Golem iterations, since it is he, this awakening Golem, which sees and understands the symbol of protection that the two doves represent.

The depiction of Knöpfelmacher in this episode is also quite significant in further connecting him to the Golem, since the narrator specifically describes his words at seeing the doves on the roof as "atemlos," harkening back to the Golem's lack of God's life-giving breath as a creation of man. Unlike Adam, whose clay form was brought to life by God's breath, the Golem comes to life through written signs or markings, often related in legend and the Hebrew word "Emeth," or truth. Such intrinsic awareness of the sign indicates Knöpfelmacher's understanding of the power in these stories, in their ability to extend the bridge of cultural memory to the present. As a Golem figure, it is fitting that he is the first to observe and react to such cues rather than any of the other figures in the narrative. In this context, he comes to life after previously merely tagging along, performing the mundane task of bearing a heavy load. It

is Knöpfelmacher's observation of this sign that rouses Kaczorski's suspicion, and spurs on Kaczorski's attempts at the end of the story to once again set the synagogue ablaze.

Knöpfelmacher's further transformation towards the end of the text overtly connects him with 20th century notions of a nonviolent Golem, a transformation that begins with Vorderegger chastising him at the local tavern. The conversation between Vorderegger and Knöpfelmacher is a repetition of Knöpfelmacher's mechanical insistence that he is a "Jud," while Vorderegger slowly coerces him to sit, and under the "Befehl des Führers," have a fifteen minute reprieve from his Jewishness in order to share a drink (Torberg 168). Upon Vorderegger's later insistence that Knöpfelmacher escort him home, he claims that Knöpfelmacher is "wieder ein Jud [...] *meiner!*" and commands him to "Erfülle deine Pflicht," at which point Knöpfelmacher's final transformation begins (Torberg 169). The following scenes lead Vorderegger closer to the old Jewish cemetery as Knöpfelmacher becomes ever more intimidating, and the facetious question whether Knöpfelmacher, "wenn's dunkel wird, auf den Judenfriedhof begleiten? Zum Rabbi Löw?" brings the situation to a climax (Torberg 169). Torberg describes Knöpfelmacher's physical appearance after hearing Vorderegger's mocking question thus:

Jetzt schien Knöpfelmacher zu verstehen [...] Dann reckte er sich auf, mit gewölbtem Brustkorb, die Finger der zur Ellenbogenhöhe gehobenen Hände gepreizt – es war fast die gleiche Gebärde wie zuvor im Biergarten, nur wirkte sie diesmal viel drohender, so als wollte er nicht wegstürzen, sondern auf Vorderegger los, der auch wirklich einen Schritt zurückwich und seine Hand nach hinten auszucken ließ, an die Revolvertasche. (Torberg 171)

The name of Rabbi Löw awakens the golem-like aspects within Knöpfelmacher, aspects consistent with notions of the Golem as avenger, his frightening gestures and visage.

Knöpfelmacher's transformation not entirely complete, he returns to his normal state, and continues to lead Vorderegger towards the cemetery and passes a crucifix with "der dreifachen Heiligung in hebräischen Lettern, errichtet als Buße von einem Juden, welcher den Heiland geschmähet, Opfermal aus lang vergangenen Zeiten der Finsternis und Willkür" (Torberg 174).

The depiction of the crucifix, erected for penance by a Jew, in times not unlike the Nazi occupation, full of darkness and arbitrariness, invites the reader, as well as Knöpfelmacher himself, to remember the horrific past the Jews have had to endure at the hands of oppressors and anti-Semites. Vorderegger's provocation as to whether or not Knöpfelmacher can read this Hebraic inscription results in Knöpfelmacher's most overt metamorphosis into the Golem ensuing from his incantation:

'Kodausch – Kodausch – Kodausch – adonaj zewoaus', sagt Knöpfelmacher ohne den Kopf zu heben, das schwerfällige Schulhebräisch kommt ihm nur mühsam von den Lippen, er hat noch nie so viele Worte pausenlos hervorgebracht und hat noch nie so laut und deutlich gesprochen [...] Doch, jetzt regt er sich. Mit dem rechten Handrücken fährt er über seine Stirn, langsam und klobig von links nach rechts, vielleicht war's ein plötzlicher Schweißausbruch, den er wegwischen will, vielleicht war's ein böser Traum, man kann das in der Dunkelheit so genau nicht sehen. Dann erst hebt er den Kopf und grinst. (Torberg 175)

Here Torberg indirectly references the traditional depictions of the Golem with an inscription on the forehead. The inscription Knöpfelmacher reads is one that perpetuates anti-Semitic beliefs, like that of the Christian legend of the Wandering Jew, "errichtet als Buße von einem Juden, welcher den Heiland geschmähet." The significance of this passage Knöpfelmacher recites remains in the portrayal of memory, the awakening of the Golem through the remembrance of the evils enacted on the Jewish people over the centuries. His act of speaking is one of remembrance, not merely since "das schwerfällige Schulhebräisch kommt ihm nur mühsam von den Lippen," but also since "er hat noch nie so viele Worte pausenlos hervorgebracht und hat noch nie so laut und deutlich gesprochen" (Torberg 175). The Golem awakens through this act of remembrance, which parallels the portrayals of the process of memory found in these modern iterations of the Golem tradition. In this sense, Torberg maintains the memory-bound depiction of the Golem found in Meyrink's and Perutz's depictions, and highlights the Golem's role in the preservation of cultural memory.

Although Knöpfelmacher's size and strength provide him with the ability to physically protect the innocent and persecuted, Torberg, like the other author's in this investigation, refrains

from depicting a mere vengeful bloodbath. Instead, Knöpfelmacher leads Vorderegger to the cemetery where he and Kaczorski vindictively shoot one another, playing out the final throes of their rivalry (Torberg 183). The reader can infer from this interaction, that Knöpfelmacher, in his role as the Golem, delivers justice by allowing these evil individuals to meet at the precise time and location and eliminate one another. Throughout this scene the narrator repeatedly emphasizes Knöpfelmacher's speed and directness, and states, "nur Knöpfelmachers Schritte sind sicher" (Torberg 176). His insistence on leading Vorderegger to the Altneuschule, by repeatedly stating only "Altneuschul," trumps all commands issued to him by Vorderegger, and he abandons Vorderegger when he is unwilling to follow at the precise moment that Kaczorski appears (Torberg 178). The narrator insinuates Knöpfelmacher's protective function once again, even towards his enemies: "Wäre alles gewesen wie sonst, dann hätte Vorderegger jetzt ein 'Himmelsakra' hören lassen und dazu die Frage, wer denn hier zu befehlen habe" (Torberg 178). Were Vorderegger to realize Knöpfelmacher's transformation, his fate could easily have been averted. Like Perutz's saving image of the Golem, here Torberg's Golem-figure also intends to protect those in danger, even if they are persecutors. Since, however, Vorderegger fails to notice Knöpfelmacher's protective role and transformation, he consequently meets Kaczorski in the old Jewish graveyard, each falling victim to the other.

### ***Heimat and the Golem***

The setting of Torberg's story, like the narratives of Meyrink and Perutz, is one that embraces paradox, especially with regard to the Jewish quarter and the central locale of the story, the Altneuschule. The history of violence and persecution remain with this sanctuary, which acts as a symbol of the paradox inherent within Ghetto. On the one hand, the synagogue stands as a reminder to the community of the long tradition of Jewish life in Prague, while on the other

hand, the blood-blackened walls emphasize the dangers that repeatedly face the community.

Torberg highlights this notion with a narration about the history of the synagogue. After

Kaczorski's pernicious observations about the "Dreck" that mars the appearance of the

Altneuschule, one of his Jewish subordinates states:

'Es gibt eine allgemein akzeptierte Erklärung, warum die Wände dieses Gotteshauses tatsächlich nicht gesäubert werden dürfen. Weil sie das Blut der Märtyrer tragen, die hier den Tod gefunden haben. Im Lauf der Jahrhunderte, müssen Sie wissen, wurde die Judenschaft ja nicht nur von Feuersbrünsten heimgesucht, wie sie damals häufig ausbrachen, sondern auch von Pogromen und Massakern. Und viele Menschen, die sich in die Altneuschule flüchteten, wurden hier unten umgebracht. Und ihr Blut, so heißt es, spritzte an die Wände. Und es soll nicht weggewaschen werden.' (Torberg 153)

The synagogue's religious status as a place of refuge and God's dwelling closely connects it to traditional notions of *Heimat*, however, the visible state of the building, the blood which was "splattered on the walls," constantly reminds the inhabitants of the Ghetto that this home is one constantly under assault. As opposed to an idyllic place where pastoral landscapes assure the inhabitants of their place in the world, the Altneuschule attests to the inescapable trauma of this specific location. Its perpetual survival and resistance to the destruction around it serves on the other hand to embody protective notions of *Heimat*. Another story accounts a different reason as to why the Altneuschule looks the way it does:

[...] daß man im Jahre 929, als die Prager Judengemeinde den Bau einer neuen Synagoge beschlossen hatte, bei den Grabungsarbeiten auf Mauerreste eines schon früher an der gleichen Stelle erbauten Bethauses stieß, darunter auf unversehrte weiße Quadersteine, von denen man an Hand weiterer Funde, vor allem der Inschrift einer uralten Pergamentrolle, alsbald habe feststellen können, daß es sich um Steine der Tempelmauer von Jerusalem handelte; [...] man solle die alten Steine für den neuen Bau verwenden und dessen Mauern zum Zeichen der Trauer um den zerstörten Tempel Schwarz übertünchen, dann würde der Allmächtige seine schützende Hand über das altneue Bethaus halten und es vor Zerstörung durch Feuer und Wasser bewahren. (Torberg 154)

As such, these stories evoke the much-needed remembrance of the survival of this community,

and provides a material connection to the past. The Altneuschule exists as a "Zeichen der

Trauer," a symbol that embraces the tortured history of a people under perpetual persecution.

The paradox is inherent in the description of its construction, since only through the usage of

these ruins and reminders of destruction in building the Altneuschule will the "Allmächtige seine

schützende Hand über das altneue Bethaus halten und es vor Zerstörung durch Feuer und Wasser bewahren." Within the text, these legends and stories tap into the cultural memory of the Jews in the community, thus enabling the awakening of the Golem and the protection of the community's most prized connection to its past, the *Altneuschule*.

Torberg's portrayal of the Jewish Ghetto therefore remains consistent with the notion of *Heimat* prevalent in Austrian literature, namely a conflicted and dialectic location, both welcoming and alienating. Dagmar Lorenz argues that "*Golems Wiederkehr* is driven by a utopian perspective," however, judging by the dialectic portrayal of the *Altneuschule* this assertion is far too one-sided (Lorenz, *Transcending the Boundaries* 293). Torberg's "refusal to repudiate the German-Jewish symbiosis" does not align him with a utopian depiction of *Heimat* in *Golems Wiederkehr* but rather articulates the dialectic give and take inherent in any such constellation (Lorenz, *Transcending the Boundaries* 293). In this sense, the aforementioned stories unearthed by the Jewish catalogers and concerning the *Altneuschule* create a sense of *Heimat* consistent with the Austrian notion laid out by Sebald:

Es ist offenbar immer noch nicht leicht, sich in Österreich zu Hause zu fühlen, insbesondere wenn einem, wie in den letzten Jahren nicht selten, die Unheimlichkeit der Heimat durch das verschiedentliche Auftreten von Wiedergängern und Vergangenheitsgespenstern öfter als lieb ins Bewußtsein gerufen wird. (Sebald 15-16)

The synagogue itself presents its community with a janus-faced vision of *Heimat*, since it both attests to the survival of the Jewish people in this geographical location and overtly references the horrors committed against them there, by reiterating the stories of persecution that stain the synagogues walls black with the blood of Jewish martyrs. Unlike idyllic notions of *Heimat* that sweep away the horrific past by presenting a present devoid of conflict, the *Altneuschule* is a perpetual reminder of the persecution endured by the Prague Jewry throughout the centuries. The stories surrounding its precarious survival develop this dichotomous sense of belonging by

forcing the reader to observe the synagogue while the characters engage in the endearing mystical past of this location, as Torberg simultaneously depicts the all-too real actions of the cold Nazi leaders in their administrative roles as "curators" of Prague Jewry. As such, the Altneuschule can be considered as a traumatic place in the way that Aleida Assmann describes it: "Der traumatische Ort hält die Virulenz eines Ereignisses als Vergangenheit fest, die nicht vergeht, die nicht in die Distanz zurückzutreten vermag" (Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume* 329).

The Golem's protection of this famous synagogue in Prague, in both Meyrink's and Torberg's Golem adaptations, underscores Aleida Assmann's arguments concerning the function of memory in physical locations:

Die Ereignisse und Taten einer großen aber dunklen Vergangenheit bedürfen der Beglaubigung durch Orte und Gegenstände. Relikte, die diese Beglaubigungsfunktion erfüllen, gewinnen den Status von 'Monumenten' [...] Die Relikte-Monumente haben die Aufgabe, die Ereignisse der wunderbaren Vorzeit mit der realen Gegenwart zu verbinden. Sie sind Brücken über den Abgrund des Vergessens hinweg, den sie ebenfalls manifestieren. (Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume* 55)

The function of this location as a traumatic place as well as a monument-like site is to perpetually remind the inhabitants of this paradoxically conflicted *Heimat*. The most recent protection of the synagogue depicted in *Golems Wiederkehr* allows this connection with the older traditions to come full circle, and the memory of the Golem to awaken.

The closing of the story points once again to the Golem as the ultimate protector of the synagogue:

Als die Deutschen [...] die Stadt Prag besetzt hielten, hätte nach einem vorgefaßten Plan die Altneuschule in Brand gesteckt werden sollen, damit die siebenhundertjährige Legende ihrer Unzerstörbarkeit den Juden nicht länger zum Trost gereiche und nicht zur Widerstandskraft [...] In einer warmen Sommernacht erhielt eine SA-Streife den Befehl, ihren Weg an der Synagoge vorbei zu nehmen und durch die ebenerdigen Dachluken [...] Brandfackeln in den mit allerlei Stoff- und Holzgerümpel gefüllten Bodenraum zu werfen [...] Infolge anderer und unvorhergesehener Ereignisse, die sich in derselben Nacht zutrug, konnte man erst am nächsten Morgen Nachschau halten und fand die Brandfackeln ausgetreten. Die deutlich sichtbaren Fußspuren aber waren so ungewöhnlich groß, daß sich alsbald das Gerücht verbreitete: der Golem, der unter alten Gebetmänteln und zerschlissenen Büchern im Dachgestühl der Altneuschule liegt, sei aufgestanden und habe seine Füße auf die brennenden Fackeln gesetzt. (Torberg 185)

The reader must infer out of this report at the end of the story, that Kaczorski and his detachment were underway to torch the synagogue, hence Knöpfelmacher's dire need to return there, where his "ungewöhnlich groß[e]" footprints appear to have put out the arson attempt. Here the connection is once again drawn between Knöpfelmacher and the Golem, and for the community his transformation is complete, delivering the sacred *Altneuschule* from destruction. Although the Golem allegedly rescues the geographical *Heimat* of the Prague Jewry, Knöpfelmacher's fate further indicates the ambiguity surrounding such a *Heimat*. After the interrogation and the subsequent murder of Knöpfelmacher in this *Heimat*-esque and refuge-like synagogue itself, his laughter "widerhallte von den Wänden der Altneuschul, welche nicht gesäubert werden dürfen, weil sie das Blut der Märtyrer tragen aus vielen Jahrhunderten" (Torberg 185). Although Knöpfelmacher joins the many martyrs who have died defending the synagogue, his connection with the Golem remains evident in the laughter that echoes throughout the blood-stained walls. The Golem, whose clay body allegedly resides in the *Altneuschule*, appears to have returned home, to its proper resting place. As such, the image of *Heimat* depicted by Torberg remains dialectic, since it does not hide the atrocities of its defense behind idyllic landscapes but rather inexorably confronts inhabitant and reader alike. Unlike the German notion of *Heimat* that Blickle describes, as a space "where wars and destruction do not exist or are so far away that they do not matter [...] an attempt at unity and centeredness in the face of disjunction and fragmentation," the depiction of the *Altneuschule* embraces the tragedy that paints its very walls (Blickle 62). The very structure that should offer peace and rest, as well as attest to the continuance of the Prague Jewry, here is a constant reminder of the horrors faced within this would-be *Heimat*, thus presenting a conflicted and dichotomous center of the community. In this sense, Lorenz's argument that Torberg was "deeply committed to the traditions of European

Jewry and the *galut*" resonates in *Golems Wiederkehr* (Lorenz, *Transcending the Boundaries* 295). However, Torberg was also aware of this *Heimat*'s status as a paradoxical and dichotomous location.

It is significant that both Perutz's and Torberg's depictions of Prague portray the city in the recent past. The Golem then becomes all the more important as a figure that attempts to preserve a place and a culture that faced annihilation, but is still not safe even in the present. The looming fear of these authors are the danger of forgetting and repressing these atrocities, and they therefore call upon the Golem to stand as a sentry, to ensure that the doors and windows into the past are not closed and boarded shut, but rather are kept open, even if only at the hands of a mythical cultural figure.

Like Meyrink, Perutz and Torberg present depictions of the Golem that protect the Jewish community at large. The individual pursuit of memory that Meyrink's characters undergo, transforms into a distinctively more communal form of memory construction and protection. Both exile authors further develop the non-violent figure of the Golem as a protector and memory catalyst, both depicting the Golem in a sacrificial light, a feature we will see repeated in Doron Rabinovici's *Papirnik* and *Suche nach M* but also further developed upon in the lives of second generation Holocaust survivors.

### Chapter 3 - Questioning Retribution and Responsibility: Visions of the Austrian

#### Golem in Doron Rabinovici's *Papirnik* (1994) and *Suche nach M* (1997)

*Vielleicht bin ich, ist Mullemann, kein Mensch aus Fleisch und Blut, vielleicht bin ich bloß von Verbänden und Kompressen durchdrungen, bin ich gänzlich in mich verschlungen. Zuweilen scheint mir, als wäre Mullemann ein Schmerzpaket zahlloser Tode; nichts als ein Erinnerungsbündel aus verschiedenen, zufällig verwobenen Mullrollen. (Rabinovici, *Suche nach M* 114)*

In the context of contemporary Austrian literature, Doron Rabinovici's 1994 collection of short stories *Papirnik*, and his 1997 novel *Suche nach M*, evoke the Golem in the depictions of the mysterious characters alluded to in their respective titles. Like the previous Austrian iterations of the Golem, Rabinovici's characters are wrought with the paradoxes of memory and belonging. These themes of memory and belonging play out within the framework of mystery and suspense works of fiction, and likens these works to Meyrink's *Der Golem*, Perutz's *Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke*, and Torberg's "Golems Wiederkehr," all of which use the backdrop of crime and punishment to address notions of identity and *Heimat*. In this chapter we will investigate Rabinovici's works with regard to their unique depictions of the Golem, which offer a perspective on second generation Holocaust survivors and their struggle with belonging in Austria.

Doron Rabinovici was born in Tel Aviv in 1961, but has resided in Vienna since 1964. Rabinovici, like Torberg, is an essayist and political activist along with being an author, and as Marieke Krajenbrink states, "is perhaps best known as a vocal campaigner in the movement against Jörg Haider's FPÖ" (Krajenbrink 255). The political climate of Austria plays an integral role in the writings of Rabinovici, not only in reaction to figures like the right-wing populist Jörg Haider, but the Waldheim affair as well, which "destroyed once and for all the myth of Austrian

innocence by exposing the distortions of post-war historiography" and propelled Austrians "to reexamine and revise long standing notions of national and personal identity" (Thomas 403). The national identity at play in Austria in the post-war years was, as Matthias Konzett articulates, "largely inspired by the pragmatic need to emphasize Austria's difference to and non-complicity with Nazi Germany" which read in the context of the political scandal of the 1990s surrounding xenophobic leaders like Jörg Haider and their political success, "appeared to younger writers and intellectuals as an insidious ideological device covering up its problematic past rather than a positive set of national and constitutional tenets presumably shared by its citizens" (Konzett 75).<sup>37</sup> With regard to Austrian-Jewish identity, Konzett further argues, that "in the early 1990s, a more explicit preoccupation with Austria's Jewish history and its community of survivors and their descendants commanded the attention of media and public sphere" (Konzett 77). Seeking to further expose the myth of Austrian disassociation with its Nazi past and resulting non-culpability, Dirk Niefanger maintains that Rabinovici's "Romane und Erzählungen stellen [...] weniger die Shoah selbst als vielmehr ihre (meist unbefriedigende) Erinnerung in der Gegenwart, ihr historiographisches Fortleben gewissermaßen, dar" (Niefanger 209). Rabinovici's stories, as we shall investigate, grapple with the very notions of identity in the wake of trauma, notions of identity that are intimately coupled with the forces of forgetting and remembrance. The political backdrop against which Rabinovici's works are set is an integral

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<sup>37</sup> Konzett's article, "The Politics of Recognition in Contemporary Austrian Jewish Literature," uses Rabinovici's short story "Noemi," from his collection of short stories *Papirnik*, as a primary example of the immensely complex struggle with Jewish identity. In this story, two male friends, "while challenging Austria's nationalism with their transnational Zionist beliefs, Amos and Georg succumb [...] to an obsession with their own origin projected onto the presumably Jewish Noemi" (Konzett 84). Although Konzett's interests lie in the politics of depicting identity and its (re-)construction in Austria, his observations that "the protagonists ultimately learn that identities cannot be innocently acquired nor revived. During their stay in Israel, they find out that they are after all Viennese Jews with a particular tradition that does not fully coincide with the tradition of Israel," help elucidate the complicated field of identity construction also at play in Rabinovici's other stories from this collection, as well as *Suche nach M* (Konzett 85). For further discussion see: Konzett, Matthias. "The Politics of Recognition in Contemporary Austrian Jewish Literature." pp. 71-88.

component in understanding the further reclamation of a cultural symbol like the Golem, a symbol that, as we have seen in the Austrian iterations of this figure, acts as a harbinger of memory and a catalyst for painful memory reconstruction required in a society complacent in acknowledging past transgressions against its Jewish community.

Regarding the focus of this investigation, extant research on Rabinovici's works is scant. Cathy Gelbin alone has identified the Golem figure in Rabinovici's *Suche nach M* in her 2006 article "Das Monster kehrt zurück: Golemfiguren bei Autoren der jüdischen Nachkriegsgeneration." Her argument throughout this article is that the Golem, as represented by Jewish Second Generation authors, no longer stands as a figure of "gespensterischer Erinnerung" but rather a "Wiederbelebung jüdischer Kulturen im Kontext des sich seit 1989 neu erordnenden Europa" (Gelbin, *Das Monster kehrt zurück* 145). Her approach to Rabinovici's work clearly differs from the argument articulated throughout this dissertation, however, her identification of one of his characters as a Golem aids our discussion of his works in this context. Rabinovici and his works, it should be noted, do not appear in her 2011 *The Golem Returns: From German Romantic Literature to Global Jewish Culture, 1808-2008*. Although Gelbin has identified the Golem in *Suche nach M*, this investigation is the first to identify the Golem in Rabinovici's 1994 collection of short stories *Papirnik*. Other secondary literature concerning Rabinovici's works focus frequently on the struggle for identity, such as Matthias Konzett's 1998 article "The Politics of Recognition in Contemporary Austrian Jewish Literature" and Doerte Bischoff's 2004 article "Herkunft und Schuld: Identitätsverhandlungen in Doron Rabinovicis *Suche nach M*." As the titles indicate, and my following analysis will demonstrate, the issues of

identity construction also play a significant role in the depictions of the Golem in both *Papirnik* and *Suche nach M.*<sup>38</sup>

### ***Papirnik* (1994)**

Doron Rabinovici's collection of short stories, *Papirnik*, depicts yet another unique slant on the Golem legend.<sup>39</sup> The collection of stories begins with "Papirnik – ein Prolog" and ends with "Lola – ein Epilog." Together, these frame stories create an iteration of the Golem that harkens to the Golem previously described in earlier Austrian imaginings of the figure, a peaceful protector and a harbinger of memory. The stories depict the often tumultuous and suspenseful relationship between sculptor and writer Lola Varga and Papirnik, a Golem-figure comprised entirely of books and papers. Not called a Golem explicitly, it is my argument that Papirnik is indeed such a figure, with overt Golem features that I will elucidate below. Together, they create and destroy: Papirnik, a Golem that Lola destroys and creates anew in an effort to remind her audience about the "Gesetzmäßigkeiten der Untat" and the "Schuld der Untätigen" (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 125). The principles of crime, which dictate paths of justice, and the guilt

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<sup>38</sup> Scholarship on literature produced by second generation Holocaust survivors places Rabinovici's work alongside other Austrian-Jewish writers like Ruth Beckermann, Matti Bunzl, Peter Henisch, Elfriede Jelinek, Robert Menasse, Robert Schindel, and Nadja Seelich. Thomas Nolden characterizes the literature created by second generation writers thus: "Die aus einem Mangel an rezipierbaren Modellen und Formen jüdischen Lebens entstandene junge jüdische Literatur hat einen ästhetischen Raum geschaffen, in dem die jungen Autoren Wege erproben, die über den Riß im band der Generationen zurückweisen in die Vergangenheit jüdischer Traditionen. In den Romanen, Erzählungen und Gedichten werden Antworten auf die schwierige Frage entworfen, wie sich die jungen Generationen als Erben einer Kultur verstehen können, wenn diese Kultur nur noch rudimentär und höchst mittelbar vorhanden ist" (Nolden 27). Regarding contemporary Austrian-Jewish authors, Dagmar Lorenz maintains that they "use the concept of Vienna and the corresponding associations of a complex central European culture and a rich Jewish past as a communicative device and an arsenal of images, names, characters, topoi, attitudes, and, of course, language" (Lorenz xiv). Rabinovici's use of the Golem and his central focus on Vienna in the two works under investigation underscores the link to tradition and to *Heimat* in the overt identity construction that plays out in *Suche nach M* and *Papirnik*. For further discussion of second generation Holocaust literature see: Nolden, Thomas. *Junge jüdische Literatur*; Lorenz, Dagmar C.G. "Introduction: Disruption and Continuity: The Situation of Jewish Writing in Contemporary Austria;" and McGlothlin, Erin. *Second-Generation Holocaust Literature*.

<sup>39</sup> Rabinovici's *Papirnik* has yet to attract much critical attention. What secondary literature does exist, pertains to some of the other stories found in this volume, but none directly concerning the prologue or epilogue. See: Silverman, Lisa: "'Der richtige Riecher': The Reconfiguration of Jewish and Austrian Identities in the Work of Doron Rabinovici." pp. 252-64; and, Konzett, Matthias. "The Politics of Recognition in Contemporary Austrian Jewish Literature."

of the idle that Lola writes about are a biting social commentary directed at the complacent Austrian populace, whose own reticence and reluctance to claim responsibility for the atrocities of the Holocaust make them perpetrators and perpetuators of the crimes of the past.

"Papirnik -- ein Prolog" focuses on the initial interactions, and seeming love-story of Lola and Papirnik. The reader learns of a tryst between Lola and Papirnik and witnesses what appears to be her former lover, Joseph, leaving her home. The story is entirely set in her apartment, and grapples with Lola's intense search and discovery of the "Städte und Staaten, die Straßen und Gassen, die Plätze des Daseins und die Stätten des Todes, die Orte des Mordes und die Nischen des Überlebens" in the pages of Papirnik's very body (Rabinovici 125). Described partly through sexual imagery, the action of the story is the very reading and discovery of texts within Papirnik, and Lola and Papirnik's respective reactions to this process. Lola's delving results in Papirnik's seeming demise, ultimately ending in what can be best described as a flaming effigy of memory, "Die Flammen schlugen hoch. Sie prasselten aus seinem Inneren hervor, und das Feuer durchfraß ihn" (Rabinovici 14). The Epilogue on the other hand revolves around Lola as she writes a crime story. The narrative takes place years later when she is a renowned author. Again set primarily in her study, with a few brief scenes taking place at various press conferences and literary award receptions, the mysterious fate of Papirnik, and ultimately Rabinovici's collection of stories, comes to a head here in the epilogue, where a stalker, and would-be murderer, is thwarted at Lola's window as he observes her writing process. This process is what she, and ultimately the reader, understands as the recreation of Papirnik.

### **The Golem Figure**

Although Rabinovici refrains from calling the character Papirnik a Golem, several characteristics of the Golem are nevertheless present, with Lola's character alluding to a figure of

the Maharal. Rather than a creature created out of clay, Papirnik's body appears to be comprised of books and paper: "Sie erschrak: Kein Herzschlag war zu hören, doch deutlich vernahm sie ein Flattern und Rascheln unter dem Rippenkasten des Mannes: 'Ich bin kein Mann aus Fleisch und Blut', hauchte Papirnik [...] Er zog sich aus. Lola konnte es nicht fassen. Seine Brust füllten Bündel aus Buchseiten" (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 10). Like the Golem, here Papirnik's molded and formed nature resounds in his paper body. Both artistic materials, the similarity between paper and clay is one that the reader draws from Rabinovici's overt reference. Not unlike the ancient building material that comprises the Golem's physical form, his paper construction alludes to a building material, one bound up with cultural production and documentation. His body is made out of texts, demonstrating Rabinovici's self-reflexive privileging of writing as a life-enabling medium here within the story. Whereas the biblical understanding of the Golem is one of a man made of clay, a concept consistent with the creation story found in Genesis, Rabinovici's Papirnik offers a new understanding of the basic building material of life, text. Rabinovici underscores this "life" by overtly describing the fluttering of paper and pages under his ribcage as an allusion to a heartbeat. The writing on his body also suggests the writing found on the Golem, since "da und dort war nicht Feder über das alte Material gefahren, hier war der Text sogar eingeritzt. Manchmal noch tätowiert, war er andernorts bloß in die Haut geschnitten" (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 13). The text is not merely written on Papirnik, but is engraved and tattooed, emphasizing the permanence of the text and its role in Papirnik's very existence. Reminiscent of the Golem, whose life-giving inscription appeared on his forehead in several iterations of the tradition, Rabinovici describes Lola's thoughts on the later re-creation of Papirnik thus:

Vielleicht, wenn sie das Wort sagte, mit welchem Papirnik in Flammen aufging, wenn sie es ausspräche, dann wirbelten mit einem Stoß die Schriften, alle Bücher, der ganze Textkörper, in dem Papirnik enthalten

ist, ineinander, Papirnik, er stünde mit einem Mal wieder da. In seinem Antlitz auf seiner Stirn das unaussprechliche" (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 132).

Papirnik's connection to the Golem echoes once again in this passage, since it is the power of words that will bring him back to life, with the "unaussprechliche" written on his forehead. Here the unspeakable is not merely the magic words of the Kabbalists, but rather hints at the atrocities of the Holocaust that remain unspoken. Lola thus aptly parallels the figure of Rabbi Löw, since Papirnik appears to be a tool or even creation of hers during the prologue and the epilogue, one she uses to remember: "Sie stieß unentwegt auf neue Bände, die sich aus seinem Inneren fransten. Die alten Werke suchte sie trotzdem immer wieder auf. Schlug nach, wenn sie sich ihrer entsann; voller Angst vorm Vergessen" (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 11). Lola's connection to Papirnik is both personal and cultural. She encounters "neue Bände," delving into texts "unentwegt," and confronting the most hidden of texts "aus seinem Innern." This personal interaction with Papirnik is intimate and fragile, a relationship that ultimately goes up in flames.

### **Memory and the Golem**

However, these texts also uncover a cultural memory of loss and trauma for "Überlebende" like Lola, a feature played out more fully in Rabinovici's "Epilogue" to *Papirnik*. As a fragile memorial made of paper, Papirnik's text is one that Lola has "Angst vorm Vergessen." The "Angst vorm Vergessen" she exhibits hints at the cultural importance of his very existence, since this type of memory is inextricably bound with symbols and narratives that must be relayed to future generations in order to perpetuate belonging, a notion we will revisit in Rabinovici's novel *Suche nach M*. The texts she attempts to recreate, as described in the epilogue, serve not only to resurrect the physical person of Papirnik anew, but also to stave off a cultural forgetting of the Holocaust and the atrocities inflicted upon the Jewish community.

Rabinovici's irony is not lost on the reader, since as a writer, Lola is responsible not only for the destruction of *Papirnik* but also his continued recreation.

Rabinovici further alludes to the parallel between Lola and Rabbi Löw: "Varga hat bereits als bildende Künstlerin eine gewisse Bekanntheit erlangt, hatte Plastiken modelliert, Skulpturen bearbeitet und Konfigurationen zusammengesetzt, ehe sie sich spät erst der Literatur zuwandte" (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 132). This small detail aids the reader in ascertaining the allusion to Rabbi Löw, since his "sculpture" too came to life and was laid to rest through his study of ancient texts and scripture. As the implied creator of *Papirnik*, her words also bring about his end at the conclusion of the prologue:

Sie hauchte der unsichtbaren Geheimtinte Wärme ein [...] Sie kaute einen Namen ohne Ton. Kein menschliches Wort ließ sich hier finden [...] Das Wort, das sie gefunden hatte, das aber seither wieder für ewig verloren sein wird, senkte sich in ihn. Es versengte die Schrift. Das Pergament began zu glosen, es glühte auf in Rauch. (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 13-14).

Here Lola's "unentwegt" delving appears to reach a point that, like older traditions concerning Rabbi Löw, is potentially destructive. Older traditions often depict the Golem destroying the ghetto and its creator at the end of the tale, warning the reader of the dangers associated with the divine power of creation. Immediately following this occurrence in the narrative Rabinovici writes: "Da raste ein Grollen hoch, und eine schnittige Stimme erklang. Über Mikrophone wurde lauthin verkündet: 'Hiermit übergebe ich die Schriften Sigmund Freuds den Flammen', und ein großer Jubel brandete auf" (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 14). Lola's searching explicitly runs up against a trauma buried within the pages of *Papirnik*, namely the Nazi book burnings, and implicitly the Holocaust itself, as the very word "holocaust" implies. As a living text, *Papirnik*'s demise overtly references the horrors of the Holocaust, an atrocity whose flames attempted to irradicate the very evidence of the existence of so many. Here the destruction of *Papirnik*, this Golem-like creature, seems to initiate and instigate through the Nazi book burning an intentional

forgetting of the significant role Jews played in the development of German and Austrian culture, an atrocity that the Golem would ordinarily prevent. The disappearance of Papirnik and the things he chronicles by his very existence, the Jewish traditions allusive to the Golem, refers to the horrors of what the Austrian people both permitted and committed during the Nazi reign. This parallel informs the reader of the necessity of a figure such as Papirnik, one who can ensure that memories will be preserved as cultural texts. At the conclusion of the prologue, the reader must question Lola and her role, since she appears to be the cause of Papirnik's destruction. The epilogue, however, concretizes Lola's role as a protector and true allusion to Rabbi Löw, since it is her re-creation of Papirnik in her stories that brings the horrors of the Holocaust to light. Her documentation of the crimes that not only pertained to Papirnik and his connection to the Holocaust, but that "weisen jetzt bereits weit über ihn [Papirnik] hinaus," ultimately prevents her own death. Like the guilt-ridden Mullemann in Rabinovici's *Suche nach M*, her knowledge of criminal transgressions protects her:

Der Mann erstarrte, als er auf Lolas Block las, daß einer aus der Nacht und aus dem Regen im Fenster erschienen sei, ein Messer gegen die Schreiberin erhebe, um zuzustechen, daß er aber nun innehielte, um sich seiner zu vergewissern. Der Mann, der sich nun noch weiter vorzulehnen wagte, um den Text besser sehen zu können, entzifferte voller Entsetzen, daß der Eindringling auf den Schriftzug der Frau blicke, daß er sich nicht mehr fortreißen könne und daß der fiktive Einbrecher lese, daß sein voraussichtliches, aber voraussehendes Opfer seinen Mordversuch festhielte, und auch, daß er erschrecken würde, das las der Mann [...] (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 133).

At the end of this scene, the would-be murderer, like the text he reads over Lola's shoulder, falls to his death outside her window (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 133). Like the other versions of the Golem investigated here, it is again the knowledge of guilt, here reflected in Lola's very writing, and its ramifications that lead to the "non-violent" protection of others.

### ***Heimat and the Golem***

Rabinovici intimates in these frame stories a dialectic notion of *Heimat*, one that is not forsaken but is in need of salvation and protection, through the workings of memory. As Lola

chronicles her relationship with Papirnik, she remembers her initial interaction with him, which occurs in her "Stammlokal," a minute detail that links the recurrence of memory within the setting of pastoral notions of *Heimat* (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 126). In a location, most-readily associated with healthy strapping lads, "der bläßliche, fahrige Typ war ihr sofort aufgefallen" (Rabinovici 126). It is within the seemingly idyllic landscape of a "stadtbekanntes Lokal" after a day of work that her need to salvage memory, in the face of obliteration from the flames of book burnings, awakens within her and consumes her entire existence (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 9). Rabinovici's accusation of his own country resounds in the fact that it is the Austrian Jew, Sigmund Freud, whose books are also being burnt along with Papirnik at the end of the prologue, and that the beginning of the epilogue begins with the statement, "Lola Varga lehrt uns die Gesetzmäßigkeiten der Untat und schreibt von der Schuld der Untätigen" (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 125). Lola, as an author, charges herself with the task of restoring memory and resurrecting Papirnik, a feat which requires a confrontation with specific locations themselves, locations too easily forgotten in the Austrian strivings for national identity following the Second World War and the Holocaust. The overtly guilty and the complicit members of society are indicted in her writings. Thus, Lola tears down the façade of traditional notions of *Heimat* as places of stark contrast between wrong and right, guilty and innocent (Blickle 130). Rabinovici writes:

In ihren Büchern spricht Lola Varga von der Rückbezüglichkeit aller Beziehungen. Varga treibt die Namen in uns auf, die Städte und Staaten, die Straßen und Gassen, die Plätze des Daseins und die Stätten des Todes, die Orte des Mordes und die Nischen des Überlebens. Sie ruft die Namen in uns auf, sie ruft sie ab und belegt sie mit Worten, mit denen sie die Bilder dämmern läßt. (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 125)

Rabinovici's, and presumably Lola's, Austrian audience learns about the *Heimat* they currently inhabit, since it is inextricably connected with a history of collusion and persecution that, in Sebald's terms, still "haunts" the Austrian conscience with such "Vergangenheitsgespenster" as Papirnik (Sebald 15-16). Lola's attempts to reconstruct the Golem-like Papirnik, this lost text of

cultural memory, is a "Puzzlespiel der Erinnerung" (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 125). Rabinovici describes the cultural work Lola aims to accomplish, "sie will uns glauben machen, daß es einen Tod vor dem Leben gibt, will uns sehen lassen, daß ein Morden uns voranging, dem bisher nichts nahekommt" (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 125). Lola's texts speak to a country that has, as Konzett terms it, "a persistent mood of historical amnesia" (Konzett 77). The reader is immediately cognizant of the death and murdering that is so unprecedented, namely the horrors of the Holocaust. The "Morden" and "Tod" she speaks of however, does not merely indict the Austrian populace, it also refers to the death of Papirnik at her own doing, a crime she seeks continuously to set right by reconstructing him in text. This ambiguous reference to a previous death, intensifies notions of guilt and accountability at play in the text, while simultaneously indicating Rabinovici's ironic take on writing about the Holocaust. Lola's self-accusation plays a vital role in Rabinovici's perspective on memory construction, one which we will see thematized and brought to a head in *Suche nach M*, since it is the character of Mullemann in this later novel that accuses the guilty and brings them to justice by professing their guilt as his own. The narrator states that "Lola Varga ist eine Überlebende," although the reader must guess at what exactly Lola has survived, either the Holocaust or Papirnik's holocaust, her struggle remains the reconstruction of memories lost to the flames of persecution (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 127). In relation to the flames she either survived or created, she calls herself "die Feuerwehr" (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 10). Not only is her character at odds with her occupation as a writer, but also the ultimate success of her writing comes in to question, evident when she is questioned at an award ceremony, "wieso waren Sie in so vielen Konzentrationslagern," to which her reply is the humorous "aus Langeweile" (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 130). Her flippant response to the question hints at the potential failure of her work to convey a sense of identity, her own or a

collective identity, since this individual, a "Diplomat," needs to ask her why she was in the concentration camps. This conflicted notion of identity, on the one hand being Papirnik's destructor and on the other hand his redeemer, certainly strikes at the reader since we are aware of her role in igniting Papirnik and her efforts to recreate him through text at the end of the epilogue. Rabinovici's likening of Lola to Rabbi Löw however places renewed emphasis on the necessity of literature, since it is "mit ihrem Gedächtnis [...] und mit ihren Bücher schaffe sie Papirnik neu" (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 128). An allusion to Rabbi Löw, the protection of the community falls upon Lola and her reconstruction of the Golem, whose role of protector can be realized through remembrance.

However, Rabinovici's critical stance towards his Austrian *Heimat* rings out in the closing sentences of the epilogue:

Lola varga sagt: "Ich restauriere bloß." Ihr Lächeln wirft die gegerbte Pergamenthaut in Falten. Solange das Wort nicht gefragt ist, hat es für Lola Varga keinen Sinn zu reden. Sobald aber, darüber besteht kein Zweifel, irgend jemand sich danach erkundigt, wird sie es nicht länger zurückhalten können. Aussagen wird sie, wird es ausrufen, wird uns die Losung ausgeben, falls wir sie ihr abverlangen. So schreibt sie ihre Bücher. So präsentiert sie ihre Arbeit. So sitzt sie in der Pressekonferenz. Aber niemand fragt Lola. (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 134)

The complacency of Lola's audience is seen in this passage, since she waits for someone to inquire after the "Wort" that could bring Papirnik back to life: "wenn Lola Varga das Wort ausspräche, sodann stünde mit einem Mal Papirnik wieder da" (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 134). Her audience needs to interact with this narrative of trauma and identify with the guilt associated with it in order for her to truly return life to Papirnik. Dagmar Lorenz argues that second generation Austrian-Jewish Holocaust survivors "configured their Jewishness as the remnant of an irretrievably lost past," and element Rabinovici intimates through the silence Lola encounters (Lorenz, *Disruption and Continuity* xxvii). Sebald's reflections about the ambiguous way Austrians must come to view their *Heimat* resounds here, since the question about guilt and complicity must simply be asked in order for Lola to speak the word and allow the Golem to

arise and redress the crimes enacted upon the innocent: "Lag die Restaurierung der gesellschaftlichen Heimat kraft des rechten Wortes immerhin noch im Bereich des Möglichen, so scheint es in zunehmendem Maße fraglich, ob solche Kunst hinreichen wird, das zu erretten, was wir, über alles, als unsere wahre Heimat begreifen müßten" (Sebald 16). Rabinovici brings the reader to the point where such a question must be asked, but allows the audience in the text to remain silent. In this sense, Sebald's reflections about *Heimat* require first the question to be asked, before any work of restoration can be attempted. Rabinovici also seems doubtful whether literature can achieve the type of memory reconstruction and protection of *Heimat* necessary, seen in his use of the subjunctive voice in the passage, "wenn Lola Varga das Wort ausspräche, sodann stünde mit einem Mal Papirnik wieder da" (Rabinovici, *Papirnik* 134). However, Rabinovici nonetheless instigates a conversation that will hopefully bring about the recreation of Papirnik and the restoration of intentionally forgotten occurrences. The lack of question at the end of the epilogue points at a society struggling with their own culpability, since on the one hand Lola's writing grants her the public forum of press conferences and interviews, while on the other hand her audience remains reticent to acknowledge the complicity and communal guilt. In this sense, the innocence of *Heimat* remains ever elusive since these issues have not been addressed and need to be confronted, a task accomplished by the Golem, Papirnik, should he ever be fully recreated.

### ***Suche nach M (1997)***

The notions of memory and trauma conjured in the few pages of the prologue and epilogue of *Papirnik* find resonance in Rabinovici's 1997 novel *Suche nach M*. The Golem again plays a central role in the depiction of remembrance and *Heimat*. *Suche nach M* primarily depicts the lives of two men, whose status as second generation Holocaust survivors affects them

in different ways. These childhood friends, Dani and Ariele, both develop unique abilities to tap into the guilt of others, which stems directly from Dani and Ariele's lack of intimate knowledge about their own familial and cultural history, particularly the painful Holocaust memories their parents keep from them. Ariele, a spy by profession, can mirror the appearance and behavior of his target thus enabling teams of assassins to better know their mark, while Dani's psyche becomes an emotionally tangled web of guilt, who voices the guilt of others by expressing it as his own. Ariele, a child deprived of any sense of identity due to his father's need to repeatedly change names and rebuild his life, discovers early on his talents as he stalks and ultimately murders a neo-Nazi leader terrorizing Vienna, while Dani's familial sense of survivor's guilt, embodied by his father's repeated attempts to prove to skeptical government officials that his current medical ailments are a result of his time spent hiding from the Nazis in cramped confines, turns him into a child obsessed with shouldering the crimes and transgressions of others. Both struggle overtly with their Jewish and Austrian-Jewish identities, in a country known for its reluctance to acknowledge collective guilt associated with the Holocaust. Their paths of self-discovery continually cross one another throughout the novel, which plays out in the style of a detective novel, in which both Dani and Ariele attempt to bring others to justice. Marieke Krajenbrink hints at the intricacy of this mystery-based plotline and emphasizes that, "here, the search for the murderer, the attempt at resolving crimes from the past, coincides with a search for identity" (Krajenbrink 255).<sup>40</sup> Of these two characters, Dani becomes what can be considered a Golem, the aptly named Mullemann, whose mummy-like outward appearance

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<sup>40</sup> Krajenbrink, as well as other scholars, highlights the overt reference to the 1931 Fritz Lang film "M - Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder" in order to further demonstrate the significance of the novel's crime-fiction approach to identity construction. "The most overt allusion to Lang's film in the novel occurs where Mullemann is confronted with old police files from the archives: 'Er bekannte alles, auch einen Kindesmord, jammerte dabei: "Ich kann doch nichts dafür!" Das Verbrechen hatte im Berlin der dreißiger stattgefunden - lange bevor Mullemann geboren worden war.'" (Krajenbrink 255).

harkens back to Rabinovici's character Papirnik. This figure referenced in the very title of the novel, *Suche nach M*, becomes both cherished and feared by the community at large as the novel progresses, finally evolving into a national symbol of justice, with both positive and negative associations. Both Arieh and Dani face the challenge of rediscovering and reclaiming their respective identities toward the end of the novel, and the reader is left to interpret whether or not this feat is truly accomplished or not.

As mentioned above, the extant scholarship on *Suche nach M*, pertains most directly to a search for identity, that scholars like Doerte Bischoff and Marieke Krajenbrink highlight with focus on the particular character of Mullemann. Cathy Gelbin alone identifies Mullemann's resemblance to the Golem in Rabinovici's novel, in her shorter articles from 2005 and 2006, "Das Monster kehrt zurück: Golemfiguren bei Autoren der jüdischen Nachkriegsgeneration."<sup>41</sup> As mentioned above, her focus on Rabinovici's figure Mullemann, paints the character not only as a Golem, but one with specific characteristics. Gelbin maintains that this Golem is one that signifies a post-1989 Jewish cultural revitalization. She argues that Rabinovici's use of the Golem-figure found in *Suche nach M* "konstruiert den Körper der jüdischen Nachkriegsgeneration als ein die Erinnerung konservierendes Relikt, das gleichwohl den Tod tranzendiert" (Gelbin, *Das Monster kehrt zurück* 157). I draw upon her work as a point of departure, but offer a more in-depth look at this figure through substantial textual analysis not found in her work. I also demonstrate below how this Golem is not merely a product of this post-1989 Jewish cultural revival, but rather has roots that link back to previous Austrian-Jewish iterations of this legend.

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<sup>41</sup> Gelbin's 2006 article is a German reprint of her 2005 article, "The Monster Returns: Golem Figures in the Writings of Benjamin Stein, Esther Dischereit and Doron Rabinovici." In: *Jewish Writing in Austria and Germany Today*. Ed. Hilary Herzog, Todd Herzog, and Benjamin Lapp. New York: Berghahn, 2005. I use the later German version of her article here, as some slight changes were made. It is important to note that Rabinovici was completely left out of her most recent work on this topic in 2011, see: Gelbin: *The Monster Returns*.

## The Golem Figure

In this iteration of the Golem, Mullemann, Dani's alter-ego, becomes an avenger through the projection of guilt onto himself, and driving the guilty individuals to confess their wrongdoings. A dormant ability only hinted at in youthful anecdotes, his intimate knowledge of guilt arises when he is called as a juror, and is immediately aware of the truly guilty party. The awareness eats at Dani's conscience and manifests itself on his body as a mere rash during the trial proceedings, a rash which progressively turns Dani's body into a mass of sores. These sores are bandaged in gauze that cover his entire body, so much so that "bald wußte Mullemann nicht mehr, wo sein Verband endete, wo seine Haut begann" (Rabinovici, *Suche* 111). Like Papirnik, Mullemann's existence as a man of flesh and blood comes into direct question, since it is unclear what actually comprises his body, bandages or flesh:

Vielleicht bin ich, ist Mullemann, kein Mensch aus Fleisch und Blut, vielleicht bin ich bloß von Verbänden und Kompressen durchdrungen, bin ich gänzlich in mich verschlungen. Zuweilen scheint mir, als wäre Mullemann ein Schmerzpaket zahlloser Tode; nichts als ein Erinnerungsbündel aus verschiedenen, zufällig verwobenen Mullrollen. (Rabinovici, *Suche* 114)

As in the case of Papirnik, whose own body was indistinguishable from the texts written on and in him, so too is Mullemann's body no longer mere flesh and blood. This questioning illustrates the Golem-like quality of Mullemann, a creature of an ordinarily lifeless material, imbued here with life not by words as in the traditional Golem legend but rather by the unspoken and unclaimed guilt of others. As an intimated "Schmerzpaket zahlloser Tode," the guilt Mullemann feels comes from a culturally imprinted injury, an unspoken cultural memory that, in the previously discussed Freudian sense of "wiederholen," erupts in Dani's psyche and body. Dealing with notions of identity at play within the novel, Doerte Bischoff articulates the significance of his bodily suffering: "Wie Dani ist Mullemann von Gewalt gezeichnet, die sein

Bewußtsein und seine Erinnerung überschreitet und die ihn -- als Erbe und Träger traumatischer Verletzungen -- in Körpersymptomen heimsucht" (Bischoff 268).

Here the depiction of Mullemann echoes notions of the Golem as a spirit of the Jewish community, one that rises out of their suffering in order to protect and to avenge, seen in the works of Rosenberg and Meyrink among others. Even before his transformation into Mullemann, Dani's very existence was understood by his parents in terms of restoration and justification:

Alle Pläne zur Vernichtung, jeglicher Satz von der Minderwertigkeit der Juden und ihres Lebens, die Verstümmelungen, die Sterilisierungen, die Morde, die Ausrottung waren, so fühlten sie insgeheim, an Dani gescheitert [...] Dani Morgenthau sollte die Wiederaufstehung der Juden, ihres Glaubens, Denkens und ihrer Würde sein. (Rabinovici, *Suche* 71)

Dani not only embodies this connection for his parents as they see their own murdered relatives in him, he also attempts to reconnect to tradition by honoring the customs and practices of his ancestors, such as abstaining from eating pork and intently studying the scripture. This search for identity transforms into a task of serving justice with Mullemann's awakening. Mullemann performs the task of repudiation and resurrection through voicing the guilt that has been repressed, not only on the part of perpetrators, and those secretly complicit in the crimes but on the part of survivors as well. Mullemann's self-condemnation presents a new aspect of Golem representations, a feature hinted at in *Papirnik*, and here brought to the fore. Rabinovici's ironic use of a bandaged figure, whose suffering grows as time passes, illustrates the notion of survivor guilt at work in the novel. In Mullemann's case, Mosche Morgenthau's guilt of survival was etched into his son Dani's consciousness at a young age, serving as the foothold for guilt that would later consume him:

Er [Mosche] hatte überlebt -- seine Eltern, die kurz nach der Anzeige ermordet worden waren, damals jünger als er heute; seine Geschwister Samuel und Ruth; alle Kinder der gemeinsamen Religionsstunde; auch den Lehrer [...] Die Vergangenheit des Vaters lag im Dunkel seines Schweigens. Es war, als verberge er sich noch in jenem Versteck am Warschauer Stadtrand, als verbliebe er in seiner Reglosigkeit, und er sagte nichts, klagte nicht [...]" (Rabinovici, *Suche* 29)

As the son of two survivors, Dani's existence carries with it a certain amount of guilt. This guilt-laden existence resounds here through Mosche's inability to relate any experiences of this time to his son, even upon request.<sup>42</sup> Dani begins voicing the guilt of others at a young age, before the onset of the transformative rash he receives later, to self-reflexively compensate for the injustices visited upon his parents, about which they cannot even speak. The guilt Mullemann voices is thus conflicted and dichotomous in nature, it addresses the crimes of those truly guilty while echoing notions of guilt that haunt those that survived the Holocaust.

By understanding Mullemann as a Golem we must also investigate the other mythical character alluded to throughout the novel, Ahasver. At one point in the novel, Dani's future love interest, the art critic and scholar Sina Mohn, comes into contact with a painting titled *Ahasver*, a depiction modeled after Mullemann, the phantom that haunts Vienna admitting the crimes of others (Rabinovici, *Suche* 206). Dirk Niefanger argues that the image of Mullemann in the novel alludes to the Christian tradition's the Wandering Jew, a figure "Täter und Opfer zugleich" (Niefanger 193). However, Niefanger's focus on this allusion to the Wandering Jew also underscores notions of the Golem as well, both as a victim and a perpetrator, further emphasizing that:

immer wieder nimmt sich die Literatur dieser volktümlich überlieferten Mythe an [...] nicht selten, um Juden generell das Jüdische als unstet und gnadenlos herabzuwürdigen. Irgendwann erscheint Ahasver dann aber auch als Chiffre der ambivalenten Selbstbeschreibung in Dichtungen deutsch-jüdischer Autoren. (Niefanger 193)

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<sup>42</sup> For a better understanding of the transmission of what has been termed "survivor guilt" to second generation Holocaust survivors, see: Hass, Aaron. *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation.*; and Prince, Robert M. *The Legacy of the Holocaust: Psychohistorical Themes in the Second Generation.* Hass argues that the children of survivors may in some cases "vindicate their suffering. Survivors' children may also have provided the justification for their survival, thereby expiating survivor guilt. The direct or indirect communication of these overwhelming expectations created a need in many children of survivors to achieve a great deal in order to compensate for their parent's deprivations" (Hass 28). In light of Dani Morgenthau's case, Hass' argument that "children of survivors may feel guilt at having been excluded from the Holocaust that consumed their relatives," has particular significance, since Dani is repeatedly compared in his youth to deceased relatives by his parents and grandmother (Hass 131).

Although significantly different than the Golem tradition, a Jewish figure of biblical tradition as opposed to a Christian myth of guilt imposed upon the Jewish people, the Wandering Jew nonetheless also becomes a symbol of Jewish identity, and its conflicted nature. However, Rabinovici's novel plays with this ambiguous character, blurring the lines between the Golem and the Wandering Jew, and in turn sets up a confrontation between these two figures. Like the Golem, the use of the Ahasver legend is ambivalent in nature, and Rabinovici's two main characters embody this ambivalence. Drawing the comparison between Mullemann and Ahasver, Robert Lawson argues, "In *Suche nach M* Rabinovici reverses the Christian stereotype of the Wandering Jew. The son of the Holocaust survivor Mosche Morgenthau, Dani, develops a supernatural ability to detect guilt" (Lawson 42). As a figure that detects guilt, albeit by admitting it as his own, Mullemann goes beyond the static figure of the Wandering Jew, a mere symbol of perceived Jewish guilt. In the novel, Mullemann's physical form likens him to depictions of the Golem rather than the Wandering Jew, as we shall further investigate.

On the one hand, Mullemann is an instrument of vengeance and justice, while simultaneously enacting this revenge in the most humble and self-deprecating fashion. He becomes more fittingly, then, a Golem figure, awakened yet again to protect the Jewish community, in this case from the dangers of forgetting and repressing. Niefanger relies on Rabinovici's own arguments from an unpublished lecture titled "Wie es war und wie es gewesen sein wird: Eine Fortschreibung von Geschichte und Literatur nach der Shoah" to emphasize art's role in identity construction, connected to the figure of Ahasver:

Mit der Kunst kann das Opfer, der Einzelne, der Vereinzelte zur Sprache kommen. In ihr darf sein Recht auf Stimme und Gehör leben. Sie ermöglichte und ermöglicht noch eine Rebellion des Individuums gegen die Auslöschung. Sie erlaubt dem Subjekt sich der Tyrannei der Kultur und der Kultur der Tyrannei zu entziehen. Sie vermag die Stimme gegen die Kriege zu sein, die im Namen der Kulturen geführt werden, um so mehr, da die Kunst heute mehr denn je aus der Kultur und ihrem Betrieb verwiesen und vertrieben wird. *Sie lebt in ständiger Flucht.* (Rabinovici as quoted in Niefanger 199; emphasis added)

The notion of art being continuously in flight intimates notions of both Ahasver *and* the Golem however, both figures perpetually *heimatlos*. Niefanger terms Rabinovici's comments "eine Ästhetik der Opfer," a concept we see mirrored in *Suche nach M*, primarily through the figure of Mullemann (Niefanger 198). Furthermore, unlike Ahasver whose victim-status is "eine christliche Erfindung die gegen die Juden verwendet wurde," the reclamation of the Golem as a guilt-proclaiming sacrifice makes it possible for "das Opfer, der Einzelne, der Vereinzelte zur Sprache kommen" (Rabinovici, *Suche* 207). In this figure, Rabinovici "ermöglicht noch eine Rebellion des Individuums gegen die Auslöschung," a figure that reverses guilt and makes it a weapon of remembrance. The tradition of the Golem places the creature on eternal guard, waiting for revival and further service, a position that has more in common with Rabinovici's arguments about art's role in redressing crimes and inequities than the figure of Ahasver.

Indicating Rabinovici's position on the ambiguous figure of Ahasver, Arieh's wife, Navah, voices the concerns of the usage of the figure of Ahasver in connection with Mullemann. She encounters a painting inspired by Mullemann entitled "Ahasver" in the company of Sina Mohn, the aforementioned art critic and theoretician. Their interaction highlights the ambivalent place that this figure holds:

'Ahasver,' wiederholte Sina. 'Vielleicht, weil er uns mit der Schuld konfrontieren wollte. Mit dieser jüdischen Gestalt der Reue,' doch Navah fuhr dazwischen, und gegen ihren Willen brach der ganz persönliche Groll aus ihr hervor. 'Wie bitte? Ahasver ist doch keine jüdische Gestalt der Reue! Die Mär vom Ewigen Juden ist der Fluch vom vaterlandlosen Gesellen, der auf unentwegter Flucht vor seiner Untat ist [...] Ahasver ist keine jüdische Gestalt, werte Frau Mohn, sondern eine christliche Erfindung die gegen die Juden verwendet wurde. Eine antisemitische Fabel' [...] 'Das wußte ich nicht,' flüsterte sie [Mohn], worauf Navah meinte: 'Sicher. Auch der Künstler wird es nicht gewußt haben. Ein ganzes Land wird nichts gewußt haben wollen. Das Bild Ahasvers ist Teil der Tradition, und es wird übernommen, und es wird weitergereicht [...]' (Rabinovici, *Suche* 206-7)

Here it is made explicit that the figure of Ahasver in this artwork bears the markings of an imposed guilt, one that perpetuates anti-Semitic stereotypes and prejudices. Mullemann rather inverts this tradition and projects such guilt outwards, by first internalizing the guilt of others and

becoming, I argue, a figure of justice born out of the Jewish persecution, the Golem.

Mullemann's overt Jewishness concretizes the juxtaposition of these two figures, standing apart from the Christian legend of the Wandering Jew. In this context, Doerte Bischoff's assertion that: "Nicht mehr wird er, der Jude, für die Verkörperung allen Übels gehalten und als eine mit aller Schuld beladene Figur ausgegrenzt und verfolgt," underscores the reversal of an Ahasver figure in the function of Mullemann, a veritable Golem, a connection that Bischoff fails to make (Bischoff 257-8). Mullemann addresses the lapse in memory or knowledge that this "ganze[s] Land" claims to have, and confronts those guilty of forgetting, both intentionally and otherwise, thus becoming an active figure of retribution instead of the merely passive figure of guilt and transgression, the Wandering Jew. This Jewish avenger is as close to Rosenberg's version of the legend as any of these 20<sup>th</sup> century authors come; the Golem transforming the guilt of others into a protective weapon, which paradoxically must be pointed at oneself: "Er sprach die allgemeinen Gefühle der Scham an, fand jene Worte, die anderen fehlten, verzauberte die verschwiegen Befangenen in redlich Betroffene, richtete niemanden außer sich selbst" (Rabinovici, *Suche* 252). Like the Golem figures in Torberg and Meyrink's works, this Golem also refrains from relegating *physical* punishments to those who endanger the community. Rather, Mullemann relies upon his ability to conjure up guilt and remorse from the guilty parties, similar to the Golem-image in Perutz's iteration in *Nachts unter der steinernen Brücke*.

### **Memory and the Golem**

In Rabinovici's novel, the depiction of the Golem functions under the auspices of memory, one that is most haunting in nature. Cathy Gelbin emphasizes the type of Golem figure found in the novel: "*Suche nach M.* bedient sich der heterogenen Tradition literarischer Arbeiten über den Golem als Doppelgänger-Figur der unheimlichen Erinnerung und als Symbol der

Wiederkehr" (Gelbin, *Das Monster kehrt zurück* 156). Referred to by other characters throughout the novel as the "Stadtgespenst" and "dieses Schuldphantom," Mullemann's retributive actions appear divinely inspired, since he "wippte mit dem Oberkörper und las in den Ordnern über weitere Verbrechen und murmelte Geständnisse, als leierte er Gebete" (Rabinovici, *Suche* 173, 234). This depiction of his confessions echoes the type of canting heard in the synagogue, binding this specter through his movements and speech with the Jewish faith. Mullemann's ritualistic behavior links his self-incriminations with the type of cultural memory that members of specific groups take part in, such as communal prayer and observance. In connection with this religious perspective, Arieh's character also echoes aspects of Rabbi Löw, since only after saying the Kaddisch over some of Mullemann's used bandages does Mullemann set out on his mission of protection and remembrance (Rabinovici *Suche* 79). Ironically this prayer for the dead awakens the full potential of Mullemann's abilities and overtly marks the beginning of his criminal "investigations." Furthermore, in order to find out who the man behind the bandages was, Arieh likens Mullemann's dressings to his own previous experience of wearing the "*Tefillin*, die Gebetsriemen, [...] jenes Leder, das Orthodoxe sich am Morgen in ihrer religiösen Andacht und Versenkung um den Kopf und den linken Arm banden" (Rabinovici *Suche* 214). In this pivotal scene in the novel where Arieh again comes into contact with Mullemann through mysteriously mimicking his appearance and behavior, the narrator relates:

Sein Körper, so fühlte Arieh, war [...] gezeichnet worden, gebrandmarkt. Beide *Tefillin* waren von je einer Lederkapsel geziert, in die Pergamentrollen eingenäht sind; hierauf geschrieben sind vier Verse aus dem Buche Mose. Ariehs Leib trug die Schrift [...] In der Tat waren die Ledergurte zu jenen drei Buchstaben verknotet gewesen, die das hebräische Wort Allmächtiger bildeten, und als er die Riemen abgestreift hatte, waren Striche und Linien auf seiner Haut verblieben [...] mit Gewißheit, so meinte Arieh, bildeten Mullemann, seine Geständnisse und sein Auftreten, seine Maskerade, ein Ganzes. Er sah in den Spiegel. Der Verband schien dem israelischen Spion eine Fessel, ja eine Zwangsjacke, aber ebenso eine Stütze, wies auf eine Verletzung hin, doch auf deren Heilung. (Rabinovici, *Suche* 215-216)

As Arieh's reflections indicate, the bandages Mullemann wears are allusive to the prayer straps of the orthodox Jews, but also to the life-giving script that appears on the body of the Golem, an

aspect that Papirnik also personifies. These overt references to Jewish tradition and practice underscores Mullemann's role as a harbinger of memory, one that not only conjures the particular memories of individuals, but also one that evokes the cultural memory of the Jewish people. Once again the narration evokes the Golem, since his bodily markings and scarring "gezeichnet worden, gebrandmarkt," here connected with the word that is most sacred in the Jewish faith, the letters "die das hebräische Wort Allmächtiger bildeten." However, as Arie's reaction to his own imitation of Mullemann attests, this evocation of memory demands simultaneous pain and healing since it "wies auf eine Verletzung hin, doch [ebenso] auf deren Heilung," a notion only fitting for the inhabitants of an *unheimliche Heimat*, since the dichotomy of injury and healing play out openly in a space that remains simultaneously foreign and familiar. We will investigate the ambiguity of this *Heimat* later in this chapter. The ambivalence in this scene stems from the very search for identity that pervades the entire novel. Doerte Bischoff highlights this inherent dichotomy thus: "Indem sie [Dani und Arie] ihr eigenes Dasein dem Überleben ihrer Eltern verdanken, dies aber wiederum unauflöslich an die radikale Negation von deren Identität geknüpft ist, wird das Unartikulierte, Unaussprechbare zum Fluchtpunkt ihrer eigenen Identitätssuche" (Bischoff 253). Bischoff's interest lies primarily with this ambiguous notion of identity construction, where the unarticulated and unspoken pasts of their parents' become the "Fluchtpunkt[e]" in Dani and Arie's paradoxical search for identity. This description of the ambivalent position that the main characters occupy emphasizes their attempts to tap into a cultural memory, that Dani on the one hand is oppressed with, through his family's likening him to dead relatives, and which Arie on the other hand is deprived of, evidenced in never knowing his own father's true name or identity.

Arieh's role in relation to Mullemann also resembles Rabbi Löw at the conclusion of the novel where Mullemann, after presumably having read letters from Arieh, vanishes. One such letter, which Arieh burns rather than sends, parallels the deactivation of the Golem after his purpose is fulfilled:

'Nicht in den Banden der Zeit eingelegt zu sein wie eine Mumie, alle Techniken der Konservierung eine Absage erteilen, die Schichten abstreifen, die Knoten aufdröseln, ihrer Verknüpfung nachgehen, die Knubbel ertasten, die Riemen umschnüren und ablösen, das ist Erinnerung. Und dann werfen die Mullemänner die Binden ab, rollen sie wieder auf, folgen ihren Bahnen, gehen die Pfade zurück, die sie mit Mull abgesteckt haben und finden aus dem Labyrinth.' (Rabinovici, *Suche* 259)

The significance of this unsent letter rests on the fact that it is written from Arieh, whose relationship to Mullemann remains that of a Rabbi Löw figure. Shortly after reading this unsent letter, the reader learns that Mullemann does indeed disappear, presumably to return to the life of Dani, and to throw off and unwind the bandages. It is only after this and other letters, partly read and partly discarded, that Mullemann manages to leave the role of protector and avenger behind, as if Arieh's words have somehow deactivated this bandage-Golem. It occurs only after Mullemann has first remembered, however, that such return and deactivation seems possible. In this sense, his entire task of accepting guilt and revealing the true crimes and criminals responsible demonstrates the memory-reconstructing function that the Golem performs in the novel. This cultural remembrance then enables the individual discovery and creation of identity, which both Dani and Arieh lack, but is hinted at through Arieh's final letter to Mullemann.

Turning to the role Mullemann plays in the overarching social and cultural milieu of the novel, Rebecca Thomas identifies Mullemann as the "key character binding all of the seemingly disparate threads of the story together" and that "it is Mullemann as a herald for claiming identity and history with his mantra 'it was me, I did it!' who brings the sacrifice and cure for the society at large" (Thomas 416). Rabinovici describes the concerns of the Austrian people in regard to this Golem of memory:

[...] wenn all das nun aufgerollt werden sollte, würde Schrecklichstes geschehen, würde sich bei solch einer Abwicklung der Gesamtverband der Gemeinschaft auflösen [...] Wie viele Delikte, Streitigkeiten und Feindschaften seien doch bloß mit Mühe unter den Teppich gekehrt, wie viele Leichen unter der Erde verscharrt worden? [...] Hatten sie nicht alle Spuren im Wiederaufbau verwischt, all Erinnerungen mit verbissenem Schweigen ausgelöscht? Wer wisse, so die Alten, welche Gespenster der Vergangenheit unter den Stofflagen dieses Mannes steckten [...] (Rabinovici, *Suche* 182-183)

As a protector and avenger, Mullemann's only "weapon" is therefore one derived from memory, again identifying another of these 20<sup>th</sup> century Golems with the process of remembrance.

Rabinovici uses the words "erinnern" and "Erinnerung" repeatedly to express how Mullemann initially becomes aware of these crimes to which he confesses (Rabinovici *Suche* 106, 108, 111).

In light of this emphasis on forgetting and remembrance throughout the novel, Thomas argues further, that "Rabinovici reveals the mechanism and consequences of forgetting for Jews and non-Jews alike in the postwar era [...] The recovery of memory becomes a potential locus of healing, as well as the vehicle for creating and restoring meaningful personal and national narratives" (Thomas 404). Ariele also becomes aware of the need to uncover the forgotten and silenced memories when his father's friend states, "der einzige Weg aus der Vergangenheit in die eigene Zukunft führt über die Erinnerung" (Rabinovici, *Suche* 188). It is this concept which he relays to Mullemann at the end of the novel, urging him to now move on after having truly relived the memories of the community at large (Rabinovici, *Suche* 260). In this vein, Gelbin insists:

In Mullemann's larvenhaften Körper wird die verstummte Subjektivität der Zweiten Generation angesichts des Schmerzens der Eltern als vorübergehender Zustand postuliert, soll die Zweite Generation die historischen Wunden des jüdischen Kollektivs transzendieren können. Im Roman kann sich dies nur ereignen, nachdem Mullemann die Schuldigen zu Gericht gebracht hat. (Gelbin, *Das Monster kehrt zurück* 157)

Gelbin's arguments speak here to the creation of identity among second generation Jewish survivors, whose own plight for identity is entangled with the "Schmerzen der Eltern" and is mirrored in the cocoon-like appearance of Mullemann's very body. Mullemann enables through his memory-restoring function the much-needed healing of injuries that fester on the bodies of

characters like Dani and Arieh, second generation Holocaust survivors. The road to individual memory and to healing must therefore travel the same avenue as Mullemann, achieved by acknowledging the guilt left unspoken and hidden in society and bearing these wounds publicly.

### ***Heimat and the Golem***

Cathy Gelbin maintains that Rabinovici's Golem, in contrast to other contemporary Golem figures in the writings of Benjamin Stein and Esther Discherheit, finds a certain healing in *Suche nach M*. She argues that, "Rabinovici besteht [...] auf der utopischen Heilung dieser Wunden innerhalb der ehemaligen Dichotomien von Juden und den der Dominanzgesellschaft zugehörigen Nichtjuden, eine Lösung, die sowohl Stein als auch Discherheit verwerfen" (Gelbin, *Das Monster kehrt zurück* 158). Gelbin's argument separates Rabinovici from these contemporary authors by highlighting the potential for healing within the former dichotomies between Jews and non-Jews in Austria. Taking Gelbin's conclusions one step further, I argue that this notion of healing found in ambiguity and dichotomy, reflects Rabinovici's own sentiments about an *unheimliche Heimat*.

Rabinovici presents the reader with this paradoxical vision of Austria from the outset of the novel; the first scene in a café, a place often revisited throughout the novel, depicts two windows which face opposing directions, one towards "die Prachtstraße der ehemaligen Residenzstadt" and the other toward "einen Platz und das Monument eines Antisemiten von Weltrang" (Rabinovici, *Suche* 7). These two views juxtapose two disparate notions of Austria. On the one hand, the splendor of the one-time monarchal city where Jews were a fixture of cultural significance intimates a belonging that Rabinovici's Jewish characters strive for. On the other hand, the view of a square dedicated to a renowned anti-Semite, which remains unidentified in the novel although one could easily infer the (in)famous Dr. Karl Lueger Platz

located on Vienna's famous "Ringstraße" also named for Lueger, reminds the reader and the characters of the persecution witnessed by the Austrian Jewish community. Together these views create an ambiguous depiction of Austria, establishing a dichotomy in regard to the very place that Rabinovici's characters inhabit. The narrative maintains this dialectic throughout the novel, and Mullemann addresses the country and the people who occupy this awkward position:

Zu Hause wurde er mit Orden, Titeln und Ehrungen ausgezeichnet, seine Dankesreden wühlten das Publikum auf, rührten die Damen zu Tränen und entlockten ihren Lippen Seufzer. Die Herren nickten verlegen, schluckten leise, und ihr Blick wurde stumpf [...] Manche verschmähten seine Selbstbezeichnungen, hetzten in den Glossen der Boulevardblätter, in Leserbriefen. Er maße sich an, 'die alten Geschichten' aufzuwärmen. Aber seine Äußerungen [...] hatten so viele erweicht, waren so vielen nahegegangen, daß ihm weitere Preise verliehen wurden. (Rabinovici, *Suche* 251-252)

The unique nature of the Austrian *Heimat* allows Mullemann to simultaneously accuse and redeem. At the same time as he is awarded with "Titeln und Ehrungen," his confessions are mocked. The ambivalence surrounding this national figure of remembrance is made all the more explicit since although Mullemann "maße sich an" to merely rehash "'die alten Geschichten,'" the populace is moved to such a degree to warrant additional honors. Furthermore, Mullemann's "home" during these periods indicates the type *Heimat* that such a figure occupies, a prison cell of sorts. The narrator describes his dwellings:

Jener abgelegene Trakt innerhalb der Kaserne, in dem Mullemann bisher gehaust hatte, wurde umgebaut. Der Maskierte sollte über Wohnräume, ein Bad und Arbeitszimmer verfügen. Hier konnte er unbehelligt in vollkommener Abschiedenheit leben und mit Karl Siebert arbeiten. Siebert sorgte dafür, daß allein Mosche und Gitta Morgenthau Mullemann besuchen durften. (Rabinovici, *Suche* 246)

The word "Heimat" does not appear in the descriptions of this dwelling, however several aspects hint at the implied importance of this inhabited space. Like traditional notions of *Heimat*, this modified interrogation room is sheltered and protected, in what could be considered a womb-like locale, where Mullemann can work and live "unbehelligt." The point is driven home in the fact that only Dani's parents visit him in these rooms, underscoring idyllic familial vision of *Heimat*. This absurd and perverted vision of an attempted home emphasizes the place that this Golem,

Mullemann, inhabits. It is a place overtly conflicted, a homey cell inside of an apparent prison. The ambiguity at play in the description of this intended residence and refuge persists, however, in the very work that Mullemann performs.

As "eine Autorität der Kriminologie," Mullemann aids in the capture of numerous criminals while also pointing a repudiating finger at the very society he protects (Rabinovici, *Suche* 250). In contrast to Torberg's Golem who acts on behalf of the specific Jewish community of Prague, Mullemann, in this sense, protects the community at large, not just the Jewish one, from the crimes committed by perpetrators he captures through his guilt. Mullemann is much more like the Golem found in Perutz's novella "Die Sarabande," a Golem that originally protected one Christian from another Christian. He protects a community, a *Heimat*, that is thus simultaneously guilty and innocent. The people Mullemann both indicts and sincerely inspires are the inhabitants of the Austrian *Heimat*. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of carnivalism, Robert Lawson contends that "elements of carnivalism - including masquerade, role reversal, and grotesque realism" play a significant role in *Suche nach M* and that carnivalism "has become an important aesthetic model in post-Shoah German- and Austrian-Jewish literature" (Lawson 37). He further contends that the Austria found in Rabinovici's *Suche nach M* is a "topsy-turvy world in which authority has lost all claim to moral legitimacy" (Lawson 39). Lawson's use of carnivalism thus further aids the understanding *Heimat* in the Austrian context, a place in which ambiguity prevails in contrast to idyllic notions of *Heimat*. It is this sense of ambiguity that Sebald evidences in pre-Holocaust Austrian-Jewish literature. Rabinovici's work, in this sense, follows a longer tradition of literary works concerned with articulating notions of belonging in the Austrian context, joining works like Karl Emil Franzos' "Das Christusbild" in which Sebald argues, "die Rückkunft in die Heimat ist aber [...] eine Metapher des Todes. Die Heimat ist der

gute Ort. Und der gute Ort ist der Friedhof der Juden [...]" (Sebald 54).<sup>43</sup> The feelings of guilt Dani initially internalizes and then later, in the role of Mullemann, externalizes, indicates the imprecise and ambiguous dissonance that Jews are faced with in a country unwilling to accept guilt for past transgressions. Referring to Dani's obsession with guilt and the developing illness behind Mullemann's gauze, the narrator poses the question:

Wenn er in einem anderen Staat gelebt hätte – wer weiß – vielleicht wäre er dann diesem Kurzschluß seines Denkens entgangen, doch er lebte in diesem Land. Niemand hatte hier die Vertriebenen zurückgerufen, keine Partei für eine Entschädigung der Beraubten, keine Regierung für die Verurteilung der Mörder gefochten. Er spiegelte – durch seine bloße Anwesenheit – Vergangenheit wider. (Rabinovici, *Suche* 84)

This central passage regarding Austria speaks volumes about Rabinovici's perspective on the lack of acknowledgment of guilt and cooperation in the Holocaust, and accusing those who further perpetuate Austria's "victim" status. The break or short-circuit referred to hints at the problematic nature of denying complicity and transgression, and accuses all those who never called for the return of those driven out or justice for those responsible for the horrors of the Holocaust. In this sense, Austria is on one hand responsible for the reservoir of guilt that Mullemann taps into, since the history and memory of the place and its inhabitants have been hidden and silenced. On the other hand, the silence of his parents, Holocaust survivors whose pains are too difficult to relate, play an equally important role in Mullemann's development. Unlike in Perutz's and Torberg's respective works, the threat facing the Jewish community is not directly apparent, but rather it is the inherited guilt of survival, and the threat of forgetting that drives Rabinovici's Golem to reconstruct memory by ironically assuming the guilt of the truly guilty. Once again, the Austrian *Heimat* found in our most recent Golem iteration remains as

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<sup>43</sup> Sebald's interpretations of the Austrian-Jewish notion of *Heimat* concern the works of several 19th century Jewish authors, Leopold Kompert, Karl Emil Franzos, and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, each of whom present *Heimat*, in the Jewish Ghettos, in an overwhelmingly ambiguous light. For further discussion see: Sebald, W.G. "Westwärts -- Ostwärts: Aporien deutschsprachiger Ghattogeschichten." In: *Unheimliche Heimat: Essays zur österreichischen Literatur*.

conflicted and *unheimlich* as the others we have seen in this investigation. Rabinovici places this view of *Heimat*, however, into the context of second generation Holocaust survivors, and articulates the continued need for the Golem, if only to redress the crimes of the past which have been intentionally forgotten and repressed by the Austrian populace.

## Conclusion

*Lola Varga sagt: "Ich restauriere bloß." Ihr Lächeln wirft die gegebte Pergamenthaut in Falten. Solange das Wort nicht gefragt ist, hat es für Lola Varga keinen Sinn zu reden. Sobald aber, darüber besteht kein Zweifel, irgend jemand sich danach erkundigt, wird sie es nicht länger zurückhalten können. Aussagen wird sie, wird es ausrufen, wird uns die Lösung ausgeben, falls wir sie ihr abverlangen. (Rabinovici, Papirnik 134)*

The cited conclusion of Rabinovici's 1994 collection of short stories, *Papirnik*, hints at the central focus of this investigation. What would Lola Varga tell her audience about *Papirnik* if they were to ask? What have we learned about this Austrian Golem? We can imagine that Lola would remind us of *Papirnik*'s physicality, one that echoes notions of the Golem, this doppelgänger of sorts that protects not by violent means but rather by inspiring compassion through the acknowledgement of guilt and culpability found in the very pages that comprise his body. Lola Varga would perhaps also tell us of the unique quality of this Golem, *Papirnik*, illustrating the ambiguous role he plays in her own attempts to reconstruct cultural memory, standing as both her victim and her model. Perhaps she would reiterate that *Papirnik* protects the paradoxical space that exists within the Austrian notion of *Heimat*.

Popular culture in general has seen a revival of interest in the Golem as of late. Late 20th and early 21st century depictions of the Golem tend to arise in the form of popular entertainment. Golems are found throughout the children's fantasy genre, in comic books, videogames, and referred to as the potential danger associated with ever-advancing forms of artificial intelligence. In these depictions, little is left of the Jewish tradition's Golem, except for the hulking brute at the heart of the earliest iterations of this creation in literature. Many contemporary video games like the popular *Dragon Age* series and the *Elder Scrolls* series feature Golems, that are considered "tanks," generally slow-moving characters capable of enduring great amounts of damage due to their stone exteriors. Marvel Comics has also used the figure repeatedly since

1974, faithfully referencing its Jewish origins, with the character initially appearing in volume 1 of the *Strange Tales* collection, and featuring its superhuman strength and large, stone physique.<sup>44</sup> Later iterations depict the Golem as both a hero and a villain, and continue to highlight the monstrous strength of this clay or stone figure. The Golem is also used in contemporary scientific circles when referring to artificial intelligence, especially in regard to computers and their uncanny ability to simulate intelligence.

There are however a few exceptions to this Golem revival of sorts. One such exception is the American, Pulitzer Prize winning, young-adult novel *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*. In this novel, two young Jewish boys, one American and one from Prague by the name of "Klayman," create figures in comic books during the Second World War that act as veritable Golems, one character being an actual Golem as well. Their mutual artistic, and fantastic, endeavor enables them to escape from the harsh reality surrounding them during the war.<sup>45</sup> Another children's novel is *The Golem*, by Isaac Bashevis Singer, which depicts the Golem tradition in the same vein as Yudl Rosenberg's seminal text. Here the Maharal creates the Golem to protect the Jewish community.<sup>46</sup>

As indicated throughout this dissertation, the use of the Golem as a literary figure is quite prevalent in 20th century Austrian-Jewish literature. From early revivals by Meyrink and Bloch in the early part of the century, this literary figure remains prominent through the post-Holocaust era as seen in examples from Perutz and Torberg, and sees a revitalization in Rabinovici's reenvisionings. This investigation shows striking similarities in 20th century Austrian depictions of the Golem and uncovers an overarching trend surrounding notions intrinsic to that figure and

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<sup>44</sup> See: Marvel Comics, *Strange Tales* vol. 1, June 1974.

<sup>45</sup> See: Chabon, Michael. *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*.

<sup>46</sup> Singer's novel was originally published in Yiddish in 1969 by *The Jewish Daily Forward*. The first English edition appeared in 1982, and was translated by Singer himself. See: Singer, Isaac Bashevis. *The Golem*.

to the community at large. In addition to analyzing overt references to the Golem, I also identified two previously unrecognized Golem figures in 20th century Austrian-Jewish literature, namely in Perutz's novella "Die Sarabande" and Rabinovici's prologue and epilogue to *Parpirnik*. Austrian representations of the Golem throughout the 20th century create a newly-imaged motif modifying the essence of the legend itself, reshaping traditional notions of memory reconstruction, and reconfiguring *Heimat* as "*unheimlich*" in the double meaning given that term by W.G. Sebald. To conclude, I will briefly reiterate my argument addressing all five works in regard to the Golem's form, its memory-reconstructing function, and the particular notion of *Heimat* that the Golem protects in these respective works.

Before we turn to the similarities between these texts, however, it should be noted that there are certain changes that the Golem figure undergoes throughout the century. Meyrink's Golem provides a definite break from previous representations of the traditional figure. Not only is the doppelganger motif a new feature of his work, the non-violent nature of this Golem breaks from traditional notions of the brutish Golem that destroys the Ghetto and its creator. For Meyrink, the Golem occupies a liminal space, and thereby offers the narrator and Pernath the possibility of using this mysterious figure to reclaim repressed and forgotten memories, in particular their Jewish heritage.

In contrast to Meyrink's novel, Perutz's collection of narratives focuses on the late 16th century, although the narrator often sets the framework for the reader using the current historical period. Perutz's Golem incorporates Meyrink's positioning of this figure as the very spirit of the Ghetto and its inhabitants, and takes this notion one step further. Perutz draws upon the concept of persecution to make this connection, a feature not as heavily pursued in Meyrink's *Der Golem*. Here the Golem that the Maharal creates to stop a specific crime in the late-medieval period

returns in the visage of those being currently persecuted, and uses guilt and compassion to thwart further attacks. This utilization of guilt, not the mere knowledge thereof marks another change in Perutz's Golem.

By comparison, Torberg's iteration uses the backdrop of the Nazi occupation of Prague, a unique feature in his short story "Golems Wiederkehr." Like Meyrink's Golem, the Torberg's version also awakens to its role, again as a doppelganger of one narrative's of the main characters. However, unlike the two previous iterations, this Golem figure sacrifices its life for the protection of the community and the Altneuschule in particular. Of all the chosen texts, Torberg's version offers the clearest depiction of persecution; his characters are slowly deported to concentration camps. Like the previous texts, Torberg also grapples with notions of remembrance. In contrast to Perutz and Meyrink, whose overarching narratives concern the demolition of the Ghetto, Torberg's narrative focuses on the continued protection of the central Jewish temple in Prague, a veritable symbol of Jewish life in the city.

Rabinovici continues the trend of sacrifice and suffering in his Golem representations. Papirnik goes up in flames as the memories that mark his body are read, and Mullemann is a mass of sores resulting from the hidden nature of these traumatic memories and the guilt associated with these traumas. Like Meyrink, who is also critical of the Jewish community in the Ghetto, Rabinovici is unique in his use of self-indictment as a plot device in both *Papirnik* and *Suche nach M*. Both texts struggle with notions of survival guilt, but use this phenomenon as a textual device as well, seen predominantly in the ironic tone of both narratives. This use of irony reveals his stance on those writing about the Holocaust, and the troublesome position in which second generation Holocaust survivors find themselves in. Moreover, these survivors reside in a country often known for its lack of acknowledgment regarding culpability and guilt and the

Holocaust. Unlike the other authors, Rabinovici uses humor to articulate this struggle. The changing depictions of the Golem over the course of the 20th century reflects the different periods of production, however, the overwhelming similarities between these historically distanced depictions allow this figure to be repeatedly identified as uniquely Austrian.

As we have seen, the Golem's transition from a hulking brute, whose only function was to perform menial labor, to a divinely inspired tool of nonviolent retribution rings true in each of the depictions of the Golem under investigation. Rabinovici's Mullemann embodies the extreme idea of protection, in which violence is not manifested outwardly but rather channeled back onto himself. Mullemann becomes a walking mass of sores covered in gauze, a physical manifestation of the guilt he bears. His physical appearance echoes Papirnik's body, a collection of books and tomes, an image that links him quite intimately to the secrets kept on his very body. Papirnik, in allowing himself to be completely vulnerable - the very antithesis of violent - enables Lola to delve into the unspeakable texts buried within him, resulting in his own demise. Knöpfelmacher also suffers for the protection of the community, after reciting the Hebrew inscription placed on a statue erected by a Jew "guilty" of killing a Christian as part of a blood libel. His death at the end of "Golems Wiederkehr" appears as a self-sacrifice that saves the Altneuschule, the ancient symbol of Judaism in Prague. As seen in Perutz's short story "Die Sarabande," in which the very image of suffering inspires compassion and thus protects those being persecuted, the Golem shoulders the brunt of the persecution. This ability to embrace the maltreatment shown to the community and to tap into the conscience of the guilty parties is the norm in 20th century Austrian-Jewish depictions of the Golem. Mullemann's assertions of guilt echo the feeling of compassion that Perutz's "ecce homo" inspires, each of these figures burdening themselves with the guilt and suffering of their persecutors' in order to stop the truly

guilty. Meyrink's Golem, too, acts as a spiritual vessel of reawakening rather than an uncontrollable brute bent on destruction. His premonition of Wassertrum's murder, and in turn the deliverance of the Ghetto, also indicates the burden of guilt that the Golem directs inwardly.

In each of these iterations, the Golem exists as a doppelganger of a central character, rather than a mere clay creation. Mullemann is really the second generation Holocaust survivor Dani, who struggles with generational survivor guilt. Lola's attempted recreation of Papirnik in the epilogue paints him as a doppelganger of sorts. This image is one that in contrast to the prologue, transcends the individual memory of Papirnik, the individual man, and becomes more of a symbol of cultural memory. Torberg's Knöpfelmacher awakens to his role of the Golem as does Meyrink's Pernath, each after apparent incantations breathe life into them. Perutz's Golem is a doppelganger of the Jewish people, an incarnation of their suffering drawn on a wall in the Ghetto but witnessed from time to time in the countenance of a Jew being persecuted. These features lend humanity, inspiring a sense of empathy and compassion previously absent in traditional depictions, to the Golem.

In these novels and short stories, the Golem not only protects the communities in physical danger, but acts on behalf of a community whose only defense is the preservation of cultural memory. Perutz's Golem emphasizes this notion, since it is from the rubble of the Ghetto that the narrator conveys the stories shared by his tutor. Without the conveyance of the narratives, the cultural memory of the Prague Jewry stands to be erased like the Ghetto itself, a fact intimated through the pivotal setting of the novel, namely during its demolition. Perutz's own history as an exile author parallels this notion, the Jewish content of his novel leading him to doubt the book's publication in post-War Austria, while nonetheless attempting to reconstruct this cultural memory. The Golem serves as a symbol of Jewish culture, one whose role as

harbinger of repressed and ignored memory remains constant in these 20th century depictions.

In Meyrink's novel *Der Golem*, the Golem truly awakens the narrator to his forgotten Jewish identity, seen through his rediscovery of the "schoolhouse" of Pernath's youth as well as the self-portraits on the homemade Tarock cards in the Golem's sealed-off room. Meyrink also describes the Golem as the spiritual outpouring of the Ghetto, one burdened with years of persecution and hatred. This re-awakening is an element echoed in Torberg's work where the seeming simpleton Knöpfelmacher transforms into a veritable Golem with divine inspiration at the recitation of a Hebrew inscription on a statue, ironically erected by a Jew to atone for an alleged blood-libel. I mention this incantation again, because it speaks to the overarching notion of persecution of which an exile author such as Torberg was well aware. This incantation and subsequent transformation impresses upon the reader the necessity to reconstruct this cultural memory, a memory that Knöpfelmacher embraces as he awakens to his role as the Golem. In Rabinovici's works, both Papirnik and Mullemann uncover hidden narratives of guilt, thus reconstructing a cultural memory that, at least one generation removed from the Holocaust, needs to be reiterated. Papirnik holds these texts within him, buried and hidden, like many of the Jewish narratives in post-war Austria. Mullemann, a character explicitly described as a second generation Holocaust survivor, uncovers the intentionally forgotten complicity and collusion of the Austrian populace, through his uncanny admissions of guilt, admissions that resonate as personal memories of the guilty.

The Golem appears then as a symbol of cultural memory for these authors, since they turn to "the age-old, out-of-the-way, and discarded; [...] the noninstrumentalizable, heretical, subversive, and disowned" in order to engage their audiences in the reconstruction of notions of community and belonging (Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory* 27). The Golem is both

"age-old" and "disowned," because it often served as an anti-Semitic symbol in the 19th century. Requisitioning this figure in a new generation provides a symbol that transcends one particular generation and usage and provides a foothold for belonging to those that identify with it. Although there are certain differences between the representations, the similarity of this memory-constructing Golem is striking.

In the works considered, the Austrian dichotomy of *Heimat* remains a focal point for Meyrink, Perutz, Torberg and Rabinovici. Their depictions of *Heimat*, embraces the paradox of a place that is *unheimlich*. Sebald's argument concerning Jewish literature of the 19th century echoes in the notion of *Heimat* these aforementioned authors create: "Kritik und Treue halten einander in den Werken der jüdisch-österreichischen Autoren auf das genaueste die Waage" (Sebald 14). The critical stance these authors maintain creates the sense of ambivalence so prevalent in their depictions of the Golem. Rabinovici's *Suche Nach M* overtly positions the text to serve as a critique of a country that has yet to address notions of guilt and retribution, with its central figure being a humorous overcompensation of the dearth of guilt acknowledgment among the perpetrators of the Holocaust as well as the general populace. The setting of the central cafe in the story, illustrates this perspective, one side facing a street that is synonymous with the splendor of the Habsburg empire and the other side facing a monument erected to one of the city's well-known anti-Semites, the aforementioned Dr. Karl Lueger. In *Parpirnik*, the same tension exists, explicitly addressed in the closing of the epilogue, cited above. Lola's writings call to mind the unrecognized sites where the crimes occurred and the guilty parties connected to them, yet no one will ask the proper question to truly acknowledge the atrocities. Torberg's setting of "Golems Wiederkehr" is integral to the paradox that arises through the protection of the Altneuschule in Prague, a holy place of belonging that simultaneously attests to and requires

the continued suffering of a people in persecution. It is this locale that offers hope for future generations of Jews, while becoming Knöpfelmacher's tomb when he saves it by stomping out the torches of the would-be Nazi arsonists. For Meyrink, the Ghetto itself embodies a place both inviting and familiar as well as foreign and daunting. His descriptions of this place underscore this notion of ambivalence, a place that provides Pernath respite and spiritual awakening, while simultaneously oppressing his thoughts and mood.

From the medieval Cabbalists to the 19th century folklorists, the Golem's repeated molding and remolding correspond to the interests of those breathing life into the creature. The Golem in 20th century Austrian literature provides a vehicle for the tenuous act of memory reconstruction in an environment that is fraught with ambivalence. It is perhaps for this reason that the Golem resonates with the Austrian-Jewish writers we have investigated. This study, in comparison to other recent works concerning the Golem, such as Cathy Gelbin's 2011 work, contributes to the field by tracking the Golem across a specific time frame and a specific literary community. Gelbin's work, for example, includes all German language iterations of the Golem for the 19th and 20th centuries, and aims at characterizing the Golem as a broader cultural phenomenon and signifier of Jewishness in the face of current modes of globalization. This dissertation, in comparison, focuses the critical glance on a particular community and the overwhelming similarities found with its specific Golem tradition, offering in depth textual analyses of the works chosen. It will indeed prove fascinating to discover whether the current constellation of attributes will be once again adapted to fit the needs of future Jewish communities, or whether the Golem has undergone a concretizing transformation in the 20th century, thus becoming a harbinger of memory and a guardian of an ambiguous *Heimat*. Further research in this vein might focus on future Austrian iterations of the Golem, using this work as a

model for the treatment of the Golem across a specific time frame and populace. Using this framework, it would be very interesting to study the Golem in depictions by American-Jewish authors, or specifically German-Jewish authors. What characteristics or features would stand out in these versions? How would the treatment of the Holocaust vary in the post-Holocaust and second generation manifestations? Iterations from Elie Wiesel, Benjamin Stein, Cynthia Ozick, and Edward Einhorn could offer a new perspective on the role the Golem plays in different communities of writers over the same time frame.

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