ERELLA BROWN

A Pompeiian Fancy under Jaffa's Sea: Agnon's *Betrothed* and Jensen's *Gradiva*

1

GIVEN THE STRIKING SIMILARITIES between S. Y. Agnon's psychological novella *Betrothed* (1943) and Wilhelm Jensen's *Gradiva: A Pompeiian Fancy* (1903),[1] it is likely that Agnon was familiar with Jensen's story, either directly or through Freud's detailed account of it in "Delusions and Dreams"(1907).[2] While there is ample external evidence of Agnon's familiarity with Freud's writings in general, his familiarity with the article on Jensen or with *Gradiva* can only be inferred through a comparison of the two stories.[3] Admittedly, uncertainties about influence always exist with such a master of irony and intertextual allusions as Agnon, whose claims to be familiar or unfamiliar with various authors can be deliberately misleading. While his denials of familiarity often indicate reservations about the work in question, acknowledgments usually imply his approval. Though critical consensus holds that Agnon's denials of familiarity with Freud's writings merely disguise a great indebtedness, Agnon's ambivalence itself calls for further inquiry: what is the source of his resentment of Freud? In this study of Jensen, Freud, and two of Agnon's stories, I will argue that Agnon's anxiety of influence protects a religious identity. My interpretation, based on a comparison of *Gradiva* and *Betrothed,* is further supported by Agnon's late discussion of *Betrothed* and Freud in his story "Lifnim min haḥoma" (Inside the wall).[4] The commentary in "Lifnim min haḥoma" supplements my comparison of Jensen's and Agnon's stories and also demonstrates the author's strategy of enlisting intertextuality for ideological ends.

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Agnon's investment in Freudian thought can be readily discerned in the posthumously published story "Lifnim min haḥoma," in which he criticizes the patient-analyst relationship, or transference love, described in both Freud's and Jung's writings. Agnon uses that critique for a rather circuitous commentary on *Betrothed*, which not only supports claims of Agnon's indebtedness to Freud, but implicitly offers a shrewd critique of Freud's reading of *Gradiva*. In light of the commentary on *Betrothed* in "Lifnim min haḥoma," Agnon's novella can be understood as a rich and suggestive expression of Jewish resistance to the persistent recourse to Hellenistic myths in Romantic literature and the subsequent use of those myths in psychoanalysis as keys to understanding psychic processes.

Agnon's practice of concealing foreign influences with intertextual manipulations constitutes a forceful investment in a cultural battle over origins as well as a personal claim for originality. While religious commitment motivates his rejection of Hellenistic influences, the romantic sentiment—which motivates his claim of artistic originality—paradoxically makes those foreign tropes indispensable. This double investment is betrayed in *Betrothed* by what Gershon Shaked describes as a contradiction between the story's Jewish/Greek polarities, between the novella's allegorical (religious) dimension and the psychological logic of its fictional reality, respectively.[5]

To resolve this disparity, Shaked, who favors a psychological reading of *Betrothed*, offers an interpretation that stresses the Neo-Romantic aspects of the work "similar to those common in Europe, especially in Scandinavia, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century." According to Shaked, Agnon's Ottoman Jaffa does not invoke primarily a Hellenistic setting, as Dov Sadan has suggested,[6] but rather the provincial settings of Hamsun's village (p. 41). Shaked links the Neo-Romantic setting of Agnon's Jaffa to such mythic figures as the mermaid or to Sleeping Beauty. "Both of those figures," Shaked correctly observes, "are symbols of the eternal virgin, pre- or posterotic. For Jung, the eternal virgin is a symbol of the anima; for others, it is the symbol of the unconscious itself, which is awaiting activation by conscious forces" (p. 47).

Shaked's insights into the Neo-Romantic Scandinavian setting are even more relevant to Jensen's *Gradiva* than to any of Hamsun's stories.[7] The mermaid figure and the Sleeping Beauty motif also appear in Jensen's story, establishing a resonance between *Betrothed* and *Gradiva*. Both stories use the motif of the sleeping curse to tell the story of a man's repression of his childhood love for a neighbor girl. In *Gradiva*, as in *Betrothed*, the meaning of these figures is tied to a larger figurative landscape. Both stories also construct an ancient terrain, Pompeii in *Gradiva* and Jaffa in *Betrothed*, which functions as both a metaphor for the unconscious and a

displaced Hellenistic site—a terrain of archaeological ruins on which a repressed past is reenacted in the present. Finally, in the present in both *Gradiva* and *Betrothed,* the association of Hellenistic themes with unconscious symbols of past memories helps to transform the protagonist's sentiment toward the forgotten past into professional fulfillment. But the symbolic landscape, which functions in both stories as a metaphor for the unconscious, on the psychological level, also works for Agnon as a figure for the Jewish/Greek polarities around which his moral fable revolves.

2

Jensen's *Gradiva* tells of a young archaeologist, Norbert Hanold, who, "on a visit to one of the great antique collections in Rome . . . discovered a bas-relief that was exceptionally attractive to him; so he was pleased, after his return to Germany, to be able to get a splendid plaster cast of it. This had now been hanging for some years on one of the walls in his workroom" (*Gradiva,* p. 147). The bas-relief depicts a young woman walking, whom Hanold gives the name Gradiva, Latin for "the girl splendid in walking." In his commentary on Jensen's story, Freud observes that the young scholar's preoccupation with the bas-relief, which has no scientific archaeological value, "is the basic psychological fact of our story" (*DD,* p. 29). According to Freud, as Hanold attempts to come to terms with his unexplained attraction, "a supposedly scholarly problem outbursts itself upon him and demands to be solved. It is a matter of his passing a critical judgment on whether the artist had reproduced Gradiva's manner of walking from life" (*DD,* p. 30). In turn, this question of origins is channeled into Hanold's delusive conviction: Hanold "[o]n his Italian journey . . . had spent several weeks in Pompeii studying the ruins," and upon his return to Germany, "the idea had suddenly come to him one day that the girl depicted by the relief was walking there, somewhere, on the peculiar stepping stones that have been excavated" (*Gradiva,* p. 149).[8] Returning to Pompeii, he meets Zoë, a forgotten friend of his childhood, who is visiting the city with a group of German tourists. Seeing the beautiful motion of Zoë's walk, Hanold passes into a state of delusion in which he is convinced that Zoë is Gradiva, that the living girl with the Greek name is a ghostly apparition. Zoë, who understands his psychological condition, helps him to realize who she is and how his mental state has deteriorated. At the end of the story, they marry. Freud identifies a Sleeping Beauty motif in the mental state of Hanold, who undergoes forgetfulness because of repression and is awakened from that condition, like the Sleeping Beauty, by a loving kiss. Here, however, the Prince Charming who saves Hanold is Zoë.

Agnon's *Betrothed* tells a similar story about the relation between reality and dreams, science and imagination. It is the story of another German scholar, Ya'akov Rechnitz, who, upon completing his doctorate in marine botany, "joined a group of travelers going up to the Holy Land" (p. 3). He saw the Land and fell in love with it: "Jaffa was his dearest love, for she lay at the lips of the sea, and Rechnitz had always devoted himself to all that grows in the sea" (p. 4). Rechnitz takes a post as a teacher of Latin and German and stays in Jaffa, where he divides his time between his teaching duties on shore and his love for the sea, for "[h]e belonged to the sea as a bay belongs to its shore. Each day he would go out to take what the sea offered him" (p. 8). He develops a friendship with six young women, who compete for his affection. When Shoshana Ehrlich and her father, Rechnitz's neighbors from his childhood, arrive from Vienna, a clear parallel between *Betrothed* and *Gradiva* becomes apparent. Both Shoshana and Zoë lost their mothers in childhood, and just as Shoshana arrives in Jaffa with her father in *Betrothed,* so does Zoë Bertgang arrive in Pompeii with her father in *Gradiva.* Further echoing Zoë's course of action, Shoshana's arrival reminds Rechnitz that in their childhood they had sworn an oath to marry each other. While Zoë's father remains indifferent to Hanold, Gothold Ehrlich acts as a father to Rechnitz, and even supports his academic studies. Thus, Hanold forgets his childhood relationship with the Bertgangs, while Rechnitz cannot forget but thinks that their betrothal oath is no longer valid, and he believes that she, too, thinks that it was only a childish game. Subsequently, Shoshana and her father, after touring Jerusalem and Africa and then returning to Jaffa, hope Rechnitz will propose marriage to Shoshana. On their trip to Africa, however, Shoshana contracts a peculiar sleeping disease that confines her to bed. Only when the other young women declare a competition, a footrace from Jaffa's beach to a Muslim cemetery with Rechnitz as the prize, does she join their activities. In the end, she wins the race, a crown of seaweed, and the marriage, but she apparently still remains ill. Or perhaps Rechnitz only imagines the race; this is not clear, as will be discussed below.

Rechnitz's overpowering attraction to Jaffa and its sea echoes Hanold's attraction to the Pompeiian ruins as the site at which their buried memories and their present occupations mysteriously come together in what Freud calls "endopsychic perception." At first, Hanold assumes that the relief represents a Roman virgin, since it does not "remind one of the numerous extant bas-reliefs of a Venus, a Diana, or other Olympian goddesses, and equally little of Psyche or nymph" (*Gradiva,* p. 147). As Freud observes, "his imagination transports her to Pompeii . . . because in his science there is found no other or better

analogy to the strange condition in which, through obscure imitation, he senses his memories of his childhood friendship to be. So he travels to Pompeii to search, not so much for the young woman depicted on the bas-relief, as for his forgotten past inscribed on the ancient terrain. Once he has equated his own childhood with the classical past . . . the interment of Pompeii, this disappearance plus preservation of the past, offers a striking resemblance to the *repression* of which he has knowledge by means of so-called endopsychic perception" (*DD*, p. 73). In her analysis of *Gradiva*, Sara Kofman describes this necessary linkage between the character's profession and the landscape as a metaphor for the unconscious mind: "The architectural metaphor finds its very model in the main activity of the hero, who is an archaeologist with fondness for the remains of the classical past, for its fragments."[9] Further, Hanold's search for the sculpture's "real model" corresponds to his own role as a model; just as he believes that the "real model" of the walking woman must be alive somewhere in Pompeii, so he himself must undergo a symbolic death and burial in Pompeii in order to be reunited with the repressed object of his love.[10]

In both stories, forgotten memories fill the unconscious mind just as the ruins of ancient civilizations often fill landscapes. Rechnitz is a marine botanist rather than an archaeologist like Hanold, but Agnon's Jaffa is nevertheless analogous to Jensen's Pompeii. Like Pompeii, Jaffa is an archaeological metaphor for the unconscious. And like Roman Pompeii, Mediterranean Jaffa is a displaced Hellenistic site. Just as Hanold is anxious to make Gradiva a Greek descendant exiled in Pompeii, Agnon appears to link ancient Jaffa with the Hellenistic world. In Jensen's story, the concept of the girl's Greek origin is crucial for the "endopsychic process," since it provides a link between Zoë's name, her father's profession as zoologist, and Hanold's own choice to become an archaeologist. Her Greek name means "life," which provides on the side of the signified a connection with zoology, and, on the side of the signifier (the word itself) a connection with Greece, Hellenism, and archaeology. By contrast, in Agnon's story the link between marine botany and ancient Hellenism does not necessarily follow from the hero's past, but seems to be the author's external ideological imposition. Indeed, there are clues within *Betrothed* that betray Agnon's intrusion upon his protagonist's psychic life. *Betrothed* opens with the phrase "*Yafo yefat yamim*" ("Jaffa is the darling of the water," p. 3), a phrase that also punctuates the beginnings of the Jaffa chapters in Agnon's novel of that period, *Temol shilshom* (Only yesterday, 1945). The phrase suggests the transfer of a foreign element into the story, for this alliteration participates in the etymological link that Agnon establishes between the city of Jaffa and Japheth, the son of Noah, the reputed ancestor of the Greek people.

As Dov Sadan demonstrates in his seminal essay on *Betrothed*, Jaffa's sea is "the symbol of Hellenistic culture" (p. 91). According to the legend that Rechnitz tells his childhood love Shoshana during her visit to Jaffa, the name of the city comes from the nine palm trees "planted by Japheth when he founded Jaffa: one for himself, one for his wife, and seven for his seven sons. When Nebuchadnezzar laid waste the country, he uprooted these trees, and planted them in his own garden; but when the Jews returned from their Babylonian exile, they brought them back and replanted them on the original site" (*Betrothed*, p. 55). As Sadan shows, Agnon establishes a triple analogy involving: (a) Rechnitz and the six young women who court him in Jaffa, (b) the seven planets, and (c) the nine palm trees that Japheth planted in Jaffa. The six women represent Rechnitz's betrayal of his long-ago oath of betrothal to Shoshana; the seven planets are the symbolic embodiment of idolatrous star-worship. Rechnitz, a scholar who teaches Latin and German in Jaffa, and who inflames Jaffa's Jewish women with Hellenistic mythological stories, came to Jaffa a worshiper of trees and planets like the Jews who brought Japheth's palm trees back from their exile in Babylon. Agnon not only creates a pagan origin for Jaffa, but he further stresses the stereotypical opposition between Hellenism and Judaism that is embodied in the contrast between Japheth, as the Hellenic ancestor, and Shem, Noah's other son, as the Judaic ancestor. On the one side of this opposition is the concept of Hellenism as admiration for beauty (*yefefiyuto shel Yefet*, or Japheth's beauty); on the other side is Judaism's rejection of artistic admiration in the name of ethos and law. The legend thus recounts Agnon's version of the Enlightenment slogan "*yefefiyuto shel Yefet be'oholei Shem*" ("Japheth's beauty in Shem's tents"), through which pioneering Jewish authors of the Enlightenment stressed the need for importing Western art and literature into Jewish culture.

The alliteration at the beginning of *Betrothed* imports the entire opposition between Jaffa and Jerusalem, a conscious-unconscious juxtaposition that also includes the opposition between sacred and profane, upper and lower territories, and Jewish and Hellenistic terrain. Rechnitz is fascinated with palm trees almost as much as he is infatuated by seaweed. Both plants bring back memories of the childhood "Garden of Eden" he found in the backyard of Shoshana's father's house in Vienna. The boundaries between Jaffa's sea world and its shores—which are metaphors for the relations between the unconscious and the conscious, imagination and reality—are gradually blurred and transformed by the fantastic atmosphere of the exotic faraway lands where Shoshana and her father traveled. Hanold's delusion in *Gradiva* is echoed in Agnon's description of Rechnitz's movements between watery mirrors and earthly boundaries as being like those of a pagan god in his haunted kingdom.

But whereas Hanold returns to Pompeii to find the real Zoë through the image of Gradiva and recover his sanity by bringing her back into his life, Rechnitz apparently inverts this goal. Though he is well aware of Shoshana's grip on him, as a secular modern rationalist he dismisses the validity of their childhood oath and rejects it. He eludes Shoshana by going to Jaffa only to recover her there under Jaffa's dreamy waters, as opposed to Hanold, who uncovers the real Zoë beneath the image of Gradiva by investing the city's realistic environment with an ever greater affective fantasy. Reviving in every object a mythical existence and legendary life, Rechnitz is also fascinated with the magic of dry seaweed, which eternally revives when it is soaked in water. Similarly, he strives to preserve his childhood memories by avoiding any marriage commitment in the present. But his fate exerts its claim upon him all the more powerfully when, succumbing to idolatry, he imagines that he has escaped the paternal authority of an archaic Jewish law.

Just as in *Gradiva*, the hero of *Betrothed* also finds in scholarship a solution that enables him to "have it both ways," to escape and to realize a repressed childhood love. In both stories, the development of the characters accords with Freud's theory: their career choices are clearly determined by their forgotten childhood memories, and this professional supplement turns into a fetish or an idol with which they fall in love instead. Rechnitz's preoccupation with the sea is first traced to his childhood reading of Homer, which he himself identifies as the cause for his choice of profession. Later, however, we discover that he had an earlier love for the neighbor's daughter, Shoshana, that is also linked to water and seaweed. His memory of Shoshana emerging from her father's pool like a mermaid adorned with seaweed, and of the betrothal oath that followed that erotic experience, constitute the real cause of his fascination with both Homer and marine botany. Indeed, the claim that Homer is the source of his infatuation with marine life functions as a screen memory of the forgotten, forbidden childhood games with Shoshana in her father's garden pool. Thus, Yaʿakov Rechnitz becomes a marine botanist whose loving addresses to the undersea plantation echo the lover's words to his beloved in the Song of Songs, "my orchard, my vineyard" (*Betrothed*, p. 8).

In *Gradiva*, Hanold falls in love with a bas-relief that has no particular archaeological merit, since it possesses "nothing noteworthy for his science" (p. 148). By contrast, Rechnitz in his infatuation discovers an unknown species of seaweed, and this contribution is acknowledged when the *Colorafa Rechnitzia* is named after him (p. 9). However, at the end of Agnon's *Betrothed*, we find that Rechnitz's fascination with the seaweed has less truth value than we were first led to assume. The Latin name *colorafa* echoes in Hebrew transcription the words *col* and *rafa*, whose meaning in Hebrew can include three allusive possibilities: the

voice of a phantom, or a voice that is weak (like a whisper of a sick person), or a voice that heals.[11] In Jensen's story, the transformation is from fantasy to reality, since Hanold rejects mythological nymphs and other Olympian creatures in favor of hunting for the true historical existence of Gradiva. In Rechnitz's case, however, the ostensible validity of his scientific discovery is offset by a nonscientific infatuation, a sort of "affective fallacy" toward his profession. Like Hanold among the archaeological ruins of Pompeii, Rechnitz under Jaffa's sea is depicted as a hunter among the "Mediterranean Cryptograms." His cryptograms are indeed symbolic crypts, sepulchers harboring fragments of delusive fascinations. In short, while Hanold is delivered from delusion when he recovers his lost childhood love, Rechnitz, who is apparently healthy, sinks deeper and deeper into a delusive state.

This point-by-point correspondence between the two stories demonstrates that the unresolved friction between Judaism and Hellenism in Agnon's story is not eliminated, but sharpened by the comparison with a Neo-Romantic Scandinavian example. In fact, the Neo-Romantic solution compels Shaked to relieve this tension by claiming that *Betrothed*'s allegorical meaning is a parody, that Ehrlich's assimilation into European culture is ridiculed by the symbolic meaning of his first name, Gothold (p. 51).[12] By contrast, I will argue that rather than as a synthesis of two layers of compatible meanings—the psychological and the religious meanings, respectively—the story is constructed as a dynamic, even violent, process of two incompatible readings. In this battle, the psychological reading is challenged and negated by the higher standard that Agnon sets for his own ideological ends. In the final analysis, fate is not governed by the limited psychological symbolism that motivates the subjective protagonist, but by a broader religious symbolism that determines the limits of subjectivity itself by the subjection of events to divine will.

3

Agnon also employs the Sleeping Beauty motif as a metaphor for the dormant unconscious in "Lifnim min haḥoma," a story that can be described as a retrospective autobiographical fantasy. The frame story is a fantastic journey that the narrator, an old man accompanied by Leah, a young and attractive maiden, takes inside the walls of old Jerusalem during the 1960s, when the city was under Jordanian control and thus out of reach for Israelis. When the narrator attempts to kiss Leah at the very end of the story, however, we find that she is but an apparition of the author's own soul. Here, the dormant unconscious is awakened, but not to a reality of the couple's happy reunion. Rather, the kiss dissolves the

spell of imagination, and Leah disappears. The story is further linked with *Betrothed* through the opposition between Jaffa and Jerusalem, between the past and the present, respectively.

Agnon's episodic narrative technique corresponds to the way in which the narrator relates to Leah in various anecdotes about his past journeys. Through arduous and endless twists of stories within stories, the dialogue between the narrator and his soulmate Leah winds into a two-page digression about a journey the narrator once took with a Russian girl named Alexandra who came to visit her relatives in Jaffa around 1910. Unfamiliar with the town, her relatives entrusted her to the narrator, since he held an important clerical post and could help her to arrange a shipment of oranges to her family back home. Rather than promptly fulfilling this task, however, the narrator led the girl all over Jaffa. Using different excuses each time, he took her into many rooms to which he held the key; in each—some half-dozen in all—he promises to fulfill one of her needs. Curiously, the last room they enter, in order to obtain an overcoat for her, belongs to the niece of a psychoanalyst friend of the narrator who has left for Vienna to study with Freud and Jung. At this point, Agnon, like his perverse narrator who detours both Alexandra and Leah into back alleys, now diverts the reader with a lengthy digression about that friend and psychoanalysis. During his commentary, however, Leah's glance betrays her anxiety about her own overcoat, and the narrator hastens to reassure her that it is still resting safely in his arms. Leah then asks how the Russian girl—whose Greek name, Alexandra, she repeatedly fails to remember—returned the borrowed overcoat to its owner. The narrator, launching himself in another direction, then begins to recount how the overcoat wandered from hand to hand between "three or four different girls" who were asked to return it to its owner (p. 18). Leah interrupts to ask whether there were six girls, rather than three. "Six? Why six, of all numbers?"—the narrator asks with feigned innocence. The following explanation by Leah not only reminds the reader of the six girls from *Betrothed*, but also explicitly relates the subject of the patient-doctor relationship in Freud's and Jung's theories to both "Lifnim min haḥoma" and *Betrothed:*

> "Well," said Leah, "since Shoshana does not count."
>
> "Shoshana, Shoshana? This Shoshana you've mentioned, who is she?"
>
> Leah replied, "Shoshana Ehrlich, the daughter of Gothold Ehrlich, of whom you spoke in relation to Ya'akov Rechnitz. Now let us leave this matter and return to the issue at hand. And your friend didn't ask about the overcoat?"
>
> "He was busy with his studies and did not have a chance to write to me. Only a few years later he sent me his book, which became a foundation to that profession. The title of the book tells about its content. It is called *Between Patient and Doctor.*"

> Leah asked: "Did you read it?"
> I told her I had read a part of it, but not all.
> "Why?"
> "It was hard for me to understand the author's idea: who is the patient and who is the healer, the doctor or the patient? The more I read in it, the better I saw that the doctor needs a doctor, and that the only sickness the patient has is that he expects to be healed by someone who is sicker than himself." (p. 19)

The critique of Freud and Jung in "Lifnim min haḥoma" becomes more pointed when the relationship between the narrator and his imaginary female companion Leah is considered. Like the patient in Jensen's *Gradiva* whom Freud analyzes, the narrator of "Lifnim min hahoma" maintains a transference love toward Leah. In his analysis of *Gradiva*, Freud advances the idea that transference affects not only the patient-doctor relationship, but also the structure of dreams, delusion, and the process of creative writing. Transference relationships are based on the uncanny repetition of imaginary identifications, similar to those displayed in the romantic dramas of both Jensen's and Agnon's fictions. Leah as an imaginative muse figures in accordance with Freud's claims that the process of creative writing is motivated by transference love, just as the hero's choice of a profession in *Gradiva* is determined by his relationship to his beloved.

In contrast to Freud's link of transference love with sexual repression, Agnon ties it with religious faith. By promoting symbols such as the overcoat and other garments—traditional metaphors for clothed figurative narratives about the Torah, Agnon undermines the Freudian talking-cure by contrasting patient-analyst communication with an alternative relationship to God. Agnon thus offers an alternative, Jewish reading of Freud's theories about transference, the human psyche, and artistic creativity. That Agnon would object to Freud's claims about the sexual origin of the human psyche and of artistic inspiration is not surprising, since he often attributes the creative process to a divine source and sees the soul figure Leah as a feminine mediator equivalent to that of the *Shekhinah* (divine presence).

The extent of his religious resentment to psychoanalysis is further illustrated in the story when Agnon refers to Freud and Jung as "those who wished to destroy [*leqa'aqea'*] our lives" (p. 17).[13] Moreover, he avoids naming psychoanalysis by referring to it as "that profession" ("*oto miqtsoa'*," p. 19), using the traditional Jewish code of the unnameable (like "*oto davar*" or "that thing") for referring to the untouchable and the profane. This reference, in turn, presents a key to interpreting *Betrothed* and "Lifnim min haḥoma."

4

As many critics have noted, the ending of *Betrothed* remains open. It is unclear whether Shoshana recovers from her sleeping sickness or draws her lover Rechnitz into a similar condition whereby he is engulfed gradually by fantasy and delusion. The cause of Shoshana's sleeping sickness is a mystery, since Agnon deliberately obscures whether it has its origin in external or internal, natural or supernatural sources. Nevertheless, the mystery can be lessened in part if we assume that the two protagonists' respective conditions are interdependent, and stem from the single origin of their unfulfilled betrothal oath. Their bond thus finds its fulfillment not in their conscious lives, but in esoteric realms of the unconscious through the parity between Shoshana's slumber and Rechnitz's fantasy.

Their union of mirroring mental states helps to clarify Agnon's remark about the doctor being sicker than his patient. In *Gradiva,* Freud maintains that the roles of doctor and patient are distinct. Jensen's Zoë is the psychoanalyst, and, like the prince of the Sleeping Beauty fairy tale, she is finally able to wake Norbert Hanold from his delusion into reality so that he may recognize her as his long-lost love. By contrast, in *Betrothed,* Agnon advances the argument that through transference love, patient and healer are engaged in a mirroring imaginary relationship, from which neither can recover. As a result, it is impossible to determine who is the patient and who is the healer in Shoshana and Rechnitz's relationship. Similarly, in "Lifnim min haḥoma," the kiss that the narrator gives Leah and that awakens him to reality has the opposite effect of the kiss in *Gradiva;* rather than reuniting the couple, the kiss disturbs the erotic spell and makes Leah disappear. In this way, Agnon draws a distinction between libidinal and spiritual cure. While as a divine presence, Leah serves as a reliable source of spiritual guidance for the narrator, she is also a source of delusion, insofar as the narrator can mistake her for a carnal woman.

Therefore, the enigmatic ending of *Betrothed* can be explained neither as a cure in terms of psychological transference, nor as the symbolic resolution of a cultural conflict. Arnold Band disputes Dina Stern's interpretation of *Betrothed*'s ending as the symbolic death of both Ya'akov and Shoshana, who represent Israel and divine inspiration (or the *Shekhinah*), respectively.[14] Rejecting Stern's Jewish symbolism, Band follows a folkloristic-erotic trajectory, observing that: "[f]ollowing the pattern of the Sleeping Beauty legend, Shoshana should awaken from her long sleep as soon as her Prince Charming discovers her, that is, as soon as Ya'akov accepts her on his own volition" (p. 380). Although he admits that the story is highly symbolic, "It would be foolhardy to assert that the

story itself does not suggest interpretation, or homiletics, involving the destiny of the Jewish people" (p. 381), Band ultimately insists on a psychological reading of *Betrothed*'s ending. Band recognizes that "[i]t is hard to conceive that the story ends on a realistic plane, that Shoshana really rose from her sickbed, where she has been confined for weeks, and had actually won the race" (p. 380). He maintains that in the end, "[d]ream and reality are merged as are the land, the sea, the sky. In this ambiance, Ya'akov closes his eyes again, sees what he sees, does what he does; it is in this ambiance that Shoshana appears at the head of the racing maidens, clad only in her nightgown. . . . The race, perhaps even the event of the entire last night . . . might well be a figment of Dr. Rechnitz's imagination. Agnon cleverly concealed the borderline between the real and the imaginary" (p. 380). Band limits his interpretation "to the specific situation of one Ya'akov Rechnitz, his struggle with himself to accept the postulates of his own childhood as opposed to the life of an academician free of responsible involvement with other people (the higher form of life)" (p. 381). As Band explains, he insists on a narrow psychological reading "*because the temptation to fall into the symbolic hall of mirrors is so great*" (p. 381, emphasis added). But how are we saved from "a symbolic hall of mirrors" by a psychological interpretation that ends with Rechnitz's hallucinations?

However, it is precisely the uncanny effect of "a symbolic hall of mirrors" that serves Agnon's critique of psychoanalytic theory. His fashioning of haunting, uncanny endings for his two novellas is a direct parry of Freud's mimetic and erotic biases. In analyzing *Gradiva,* Freud still maintained the dominance of the erotic drive as the sole determinant of human behavior. Later, with the 1920 publication of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* Freud realized that self-destructive behaviors, such as obsession or compulsive repetition, could not be explained in terms of the erotic principle alone. He therefore attributed these behaviors to the death drive, of which Eros itself became a derivative. Rechnitz's behavior can be partially understood in these terms. He avoids the tension and displeasure inherent in his erotic relationship with Shoshana by turning to his science as a substitute. His hallucinations at the end of the story thus signal the disintegration of his personality and his life force. But while for Freud, the recovery of the true erotic object is a cure for obsessive fixations, Agnon does not lead his protagonist along this route. For Agnon, all erotic objects are substitutive deviations from the ultimate veneration of the divine and necessarily lead to idolatrous reification, which is tantamount to death. Thus, Agnon's substitution of the protagonists' mirroring states of slumber in place of the libidinal cure that serves as *Gradiva*'s denouement may be understood as a pointed manipulation of Freud's concept of the death drive.

Agnon presents the hero's forgetfulness and denial of his betrothal commitment as originating, not in the sexual repression of childhood love, but rather in the hero's betrayal of the Jewish faith. For Agnon, the principles of life, Eros, and self-preservation are inherent in the Jewish law, rather than in biology. Imagination in Judaism is linked with *yetser*, as it is linked in Freud's theory with desire, and in both cases it is based on the principle of substitution. According to Jewish belief, however, man cannot distinguish between the good and the evil *yetser* without the spiritual guidance of divine law. In light of this understanding, Rechnitz's hallucinations are the result of misguided substitutions, which are based on his belief that science alone provides an understanding of reality. Rechnitz, like Freud, follows this assumption, and therefore ends up confusing science and myth, reality and dreams.

For all his critique of Freud and Rechnitz, however, Agnon himself hardly escapes the imaginative hall of mirrors he created. At the end of "Lifnim min haḥoma," Agnon adds a metapoetic remark, confessing that: "I did what I have never done before. I turned my dream into a symbol, [the symbol] that I hate more than anything else. Only the clear things I love, because they are clear, and I could not stand the symbols that open their mouths to receive rules without Law. But now in my troubled soul, I put on a fancy costume and I went to the symbols" (p. 49). Agnon here reveals his anxiety about his transformation of dreams into symbolism as he processes his writing materials. In seeking the guidance of Jewish beliefs to provide him with a meaning for his fiction, Agnon here finds himself drawn deeper into a lawless "hall of mirrors." He may have faced a similar dilemma in transforming the psychological and Hellenistic story *Gradiva* into his own *Betrothed*.

In *Betrothed*, Agnon similarly concludes with a metapoetic remark about his initial indecision between the titles "The Seven Girls" or "A Betrothal Oath" (*Shevu'at emunim*) for his story. While the Jewish theme is advanced by the latter title, Sadan observes that there is more than a hint of idolatry in the former, for Agnon links "the seven planets" to the forbidden worship of stars (*'avodat kokhavim umazalot*, p. 94). Indeed, Agnon's ambivalence is sustained within the story as a result of his naming the protagonist Ya'akov Rechnitz and his female suitors "the seven planets." Therefore, the tension within the story between idolatrous fancy and Jewish conformity is not resolved by his final choice of title. In fact, its failure to reinforce the story's religious concepts elicits the metapoetic remark in order to further offset pagan elements and to emphasize the Jewish themes and settings. Indeed, the cultural and ideological differences between Jensen and Agnon are implicit in their stories' titles: whereas Jensen presses toward legitimizing imagination and fancy, Agnon advances a religious cause.

Though the allusion to *Betrothed* in "Lifnim min haḥoma" invites a comparison of Leah and Shoshana, this analogy is sustained only at the level of religious symbolism, where Shoshana is the inspiring feminine figure behind Rechnitz's professional choice much as Leah is Agnon's muse. The combination of the lovers' names in *Betrothed, Shoshanat Yaʿakov* (literally, the Rose of Jacob)—a religious symbol of the amorous relationship between God and Israel—links the feminine figures of the two stories with the spiritual figure of the *Shekhinah.* The use of this figure in both stories suggests that Rechnitz's profession, like Agnon's own, may have symbolic religious meaning at the metapoetic level.[15]

While the two Agnon stories share the religious symbol of the *Shekhinah* in the figure of the beloved, in *Gradiva* professional choice has a psychological rather than religious meaning. Freud points out that Hanold transfers his repressed love for Zoë into a substitutive object of scientific inquiry, namely the bas-relief of Gradiva, which he fetishizes. In emphasizing the *Shekhinah* function of the two love objects, Agnon suggests the possibility of a sublime rather than sexual origin for transference love. For example, in "Lifnim min haḥoma," he depicts the narrator's sexual attraction to Leah as a perverse deviation from true divine love. Therefore, when the narrator confuses the spiritual soul with Leah's image as a young attractive woman and attempts to kiss her, she disappears. Freud would consider the very apparition of the soul the sublimation of an older erotic origin. In contrast, Agnon views the intervention of sexual desire as the deviation of the spirit from its divine origin. Though *Betrothed* promotes the same concerns, its denouement is less successful at renouncing the intervention of sexual desire in transference love. I believe it was the recognition of this failure that motivated Agnon's belated commentary on *Betrothed,* thus linking the two stories with an explicit critique of psychoanalytical transference. Indeed, without Agnon's reference to both *Betrothed* and to Freud's account of *Gradiva,* there is no justification for mentioning psychoanalysis in "Lifnim min haḥoma." By the same token, however, underscoring the religious link between *Betrothed* and "Lifnim min haḥoma" without addressing *Betrothed*'s incompatible religious and psychological symbolism, renders the story's ending opaque. Only by reading all three stories together does Agnon's attack on Freud's notion of psychological transference in "Lifnim min haḥoma" become a powerful reading of the events in *Betrothed.*

What results from Agnon's attempt to undermine psychological in favor of religious authority is an irreconcilable tension in *Betrothed,* the work's resistance to the imposition of a religious allegorical meaning. Shaked points out that the story does not end on a happy note of reunion between Shoshana and Yaʿakov Rechnitz: "[t]he connection . . . [is] far from being a source of rejoicing and joy. On the contrary, faithfulness is

paralytic, destructive, and inhibits the redeeming festival of fertility" (p. 51). Shaked takes this grim ending as a sign that Agnon does not endorse the couple's union, and therefore the allegorical dimension must be a parody.

To the extent that Agnon questions the value of the psychoanalytic cure, the story also raises doubts regarding Rechnitz's love for Shoshana, which, by the substitutive logic of the story, undermines the truth value of his scientific discovery of the *Colorafa Rechnitzia*. The Hebrew transcription suggests two contradictory meanings: either a healing voice of revelation or a ghostly voice of delusion. This ambiguity, in turn, opens a question about the value of scientific discovery without Torah learning. Which of the voices did Rechnitz really follow when he chose his vocation: the ghostly voice of idols or the healing voice of God? Rechnitz implies an answer to this question when he explains to Shoshana's father that his interest has moved from the higher forms of life to the lower ones.

This remark can be fully understood only when one takes into account that "higher" and "lower" forms refer, not merely to the biological universe, but also to the symbolic (both religious and psychological) meanings that lurk behind Shoshana's name, which in Hebrew can mean "rose." The "higher" value attached to the symbol of the rose in Jewish mysticism is contrasted with its status in science as a "lower" form of life. Similarly, the true value of Rechnitz's discovery is determined not by its scientific importance alone but also by the symbolic meanings attached to the Hebrew letters in the name *Colorafa Rechnitzia* (a healing voice or a ghostly voice). This disparity between scientific and religious truth-value, which is further promoted by the gap between literal and symbolic meanings, also grounds the psychological implications of "higher" and "lower" forms of life in the broader opposition of spirit and matter. The unresolved tension at the end of *Betrothed* thus derives from the incompatibility of Shoshana as religious symbol and Shoshana as carnal woman.

Agnon's view of erotic deviation from the spiritual realm stands in direct contrast to Freud's concepts of sublimation as upward displacement of lower drives. For example, Freud views Gradiva's step as significant because of its fetish value as substitution for the male organ. By contrast, in "Lifnim min haḥoma," Leah's unique walk and dress reflect her spiritual qualities. For Agnon, walking and conduct (*halikha* and *halikhot*) are etymologically linked with halakhah (Jewish law) and therefore are not contingent external traits that are played out in the endopsychic transformation. While Freud's psychology is based on sexuality (a "lower" form of life), Agnon suggests that mental health is linked with faith and governed by spiritual life, and that the care of the soul is in the hands of God rather than those of the physician.[16]

In Agnon's story, Shoshana's father is not a scientist like Zöe's father in *Gradiva*, but a diplomatic consul. His professional identity thus carries a significant oppositive weight. Freud claims that in *Gradiva* the substitution of one profession for another retains the same symbolic value: "If, for instance, Gradiva simply must be of Greek ancestry, the daughter of a respected man, perhaps of a priest of Ceres, this would agree rather well with an after-effect of the knowledge of her Greek name, Zoë, and of her membership in the family of a professor of zoology" (*DD*, p. 52). Rather than stressing the similarity between the two professions, the priest and the scientist, Agnon insists on their fundamental opposition. For Agnon, truth value is on the side of Shoshana's father, Gothold, whose name suggests a link with God. Shoshana's father thus resembles the priest father of Gradiva rather than the scientist father of Zöe. Likewise, Leah, the daughter of God in "Lifnim min haḥoma," is contrasted with Alexandra, the niece of the psychoanalyst.

Agnon turns the question of truth value against Freud's own scientific claims. The comparison of Freud's reading of *Gradiva* with Agnon's *Betrothed* suggests that in spite of Freud's view of psychoanalysis as the secularization of religion, his work (like Rechnitz's) is nevertheless open to a Jewish reproach for its Romantic use of Hellenistic myths. Although Freud devoted considerable attention to *Gradiva*, he also remarked that, as a story, it was not especially noteworthy. Kofman comments that "when Freud says of *Gradiva* that 'it has no particular merit in itself' . . . [t]his apparently inexplicable attraction to Jensen's novella is analogous to that of the hero of the story, Norbert Hanold, who is also captivated, fascinated by a statuette which has nothing remarkable about it from an archaeological standpoint" (Kofman, p. 176). Noticing that the fascination with an object not intrinsically valuable can be identified in Freud's own attitude toward Jensen's story, Kofman uses this similarity as a deconstructive edge to overturn the authoritative standpoint of one text over the other, of psychological speculation over literary invention. She thus questions Freud's authority by presenting his fascination with the story as psychologically motivated. In this light, Freud's appropriation of Jensen's fictive story for the illustration of his own "scientific truth" demonstrates the same confusion between model and representation, origin and influence, reality and fiction, that he claims operates within Jensen's story.

The appropriation of the unremarkable object, the frivolous detail, is linked to the supplemental mechanism of fetishism: in both cases, the "real" value of the object lies elsewhere. Gregory Ulmer explains that this is precisely the lesson Derrida learned from Freud.[17] Just as the apparati and machinery in dreams "stand for the genitals (and as a rule, male ones)," so framing and reframing in writing show a similar fetishist mechanism, in which "[w]riting acts as prosthesis not so much for the

mind as for the genitals " (Ulmer, p. 117). According to Freud, Hanold's trip to Pompeii is motivated not by a scientific curiosity as the hero believes, but rather by a curiosity awakened by the fetish-value of the bas-relief, which then motivates his urge to tread the barren mother earth of Pompeii in search for the living model that the relief represents.

As in Jensen's story, a suggestive opposition emerges in Agnon's novella between upper and lower parts of the body, between head and feet, between reasoning and walking. But as the combination of names Shoshanat Ya'akov suggests, Agnon clearly invests a religious, rather than psychological, meaning in the symbolic move from upper to lower forms, from roses to seaweed. Yet there remains a temptation to apply Ulmer's formulation of fetishism to Agnon's religious interpretation itself, to his reading of Freud's interpretation of *Gradiva* through *Betrothed.* Therefore, we must address the following question: In reframing psychoanalysis's use of Hellinistic myth with Jewish alternatives, does Agnon's work open itself to a critique based on Derrida's formulation of fetishism? Fending against the temptation to read sexual fetishism into his work, Agnon insists on the difference between fetish and idol. While a fetish substitutes for the absent phallus, the idol is distinguished as a substitution for God. Where Freud relies on Hellenistic myths, Agnon introduces alternative Jewish sources. Thus, even an apparently pagan symbol such as the seaweed draping Shoshana, which in Rechnitz's mind refers to her status as mermaid, is linked by Agnon to the spiritually significant crown that marks her as the figure of Israel, the bride of God. Agnon criticizes his protagonist's movement from higher to lower forms of life by implying the superiority of the rose symbol in Judaism over the seaweed symbol in pagan mythology. Freud, of course, would read the substitution of erotic attraction with a scientific interest in seaweed as fetishism.

The unresolved tension between the two symbolic orders, the psychological and the religious, does not completely eliminate our temptation to subject Agnon's work to a Freudian reading . This temptation is especially strong for Shoshana's victory in the footrace against six other young women at the end of the story, which echoes the gait of Gradiva's walk that inflames Hanold's delusive fascination with the bas-relief. Moreover, the abrupt interruption of the narrative by this final race is disturbing—the miraculous ending seems to be forced upon the story merely as a *deus ex machina.* This divine intervention can be justified in part by pointing out that, in contrast to *Gradiva,* the symbolic passage from Eros to Thanatos in *Betrothed* carries a religious and cultural, rather than a psychological value. Indeed, the attraction to Hellenistic culture threatens Judaism with death, much as the betrayal of the betrothal covenant between Ya'akov and Shoshana enwraps the couple in a forgetful slumber. The story thus promotes neither Aristotelian nor Freudian causality

but rather divine intervention, ironically linking the somnolent Ya'akov with the verse in Psalms: "Behold, He that keepth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (121:4).

Readers who resist the imposition of a religious thesis upon the story, preferring a more psychological interpretation, may be compensated by finding that the ending provides a critique of Freud's theory by enlisting the theory's implicit paradoxes about the relationship between death and life instincts. This possibility, which emerges from Kofman's critique of Freud's fascination with *Gradiva,* in turn, illuminates the significant difference between Agnon's and Jensen's characters and the value of their respective scientific discoveries. Kofman shows that Freud follows Plato's metaphysical bias when Plato claims that "the poet does not know what he is saying: he is inspired" (p. 197). But Freud substitutes the concept of "endopsychic perception for Plato's theological term," since for Freud, "inspiration is the fact of being subject to the play of primary processes" (p. 197). Agnon attempts to restore this theological term by linking delusive endopsychic substitutions with the Jewish understanding of imagination as *yetser,* which includes not only deviation from the straight path through sexual temptation, but also the temptation of idolatrous deviation.[18] This link, which can be made via Freud's own discussion of the death drive in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* eliminates the sexual fetishist value of Rechnitz's fascination with his discovery.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* Freud introduces the concept of the death instinct, which, opposed and prior to the life instinct, strives toward the reduction of tension to the zero point. In other words, "the instinctive goal of life is to bring the living back to the inorganic state."[19] Freud discusses the defense mechanism in protozoa as an example of an indetermined state of existence where death and life in "lower" organisms cannot be distinguished since "being immortal has not yet become separated in them from the mortal [state]."[20] These observations recall Rechnitz's attraction to the mortal-immortal state of seaweed, which he describes as an attraction to "lower forms" of life. The indeterminacy principle of the death drive may also explain Rechnitz's association of Shoshana with her dead mother, who is, as Shaked convincingly demonstrates, more attractive to him than her daughter. Relating the death drive to the principle of homeostasis in an organism, Freud suggests that the tendency to eliminate displeasure by avoiding excitation depends upon the energy level of that organism, whose regression to an earlier stage exemplifies such a quest. Similarly, Rechnitz's interest in marine botany represents a quest to reduce displeasure by avoiding marital engagements and thus may be motivated by the death instinct.

Freud further attributes "as a tendency toward death, a repetition compulsion whose major piece of supporting evidence is, however, the

psychoanalytic phenomenon par excellence: transference."[21] In his critique of Freud's notion of the death drive, Jean Laplanche points out that "within *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* the life drive or Eros, the force that maintains narcissistic unity and uniqueness, can be deduced as a *return to a prior state* only through an appeal to mythology: the fable of the androgyne, proposed by Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium.* So it will go as well for the death drive: here the priority of the reflexive phase . . . will begin proliferating or fissioning in relation to origins" (p. 112). In the final analysis, erotic substitutions such as Hanold's are fetishistic because they are motivated by fear of castration; therefore, the erotic fantasy always supplements the male organ. The fetish value of Gradiva's step in Jensen's story also can be understood in this way. However, if the sexual drive is derivative of the death drive, the return to an earlier stage eliminates the lack (i.e., the fear of castration) that motivates desire through the myth of wholeness in the androgyne state. Freud, like Aristophanes, conceives this earlier stage as a self-sufficient being whose autoeroticism and self-aggression are linked, respectively, with the sexual and death drives.

In "Lifnim min haḥoma," Agnon invokes the same Aristophanic myth to explain why Leah is wearing a long dress: "for we thought that the day in which there will be no difference between male and female is near, so most women began to shorten their dresses . . . but gentle Leah . . . still conducts herself and her clothing as if the world did not and will not change" (p. 7). The key to this enigmatic homily lies in Agnon's strange idea that wearing a short dress is acceptable conduct once the differences between the sexes are abolished. Following this thread of reasoning, once sexual attraction or *yetser* is eliminated, there is no need for feminine modesty. Why, then, does Leah insist on wearing a long dress, and why does she not believe that such a utopian state of affairs is nearing? Since we know that Leah is not a real woman but the figure of the divine inspiration, her insistence on sexual modesty is rather confusing. There are two possible explanations to her behavior. Agnon may be rejecting, through Leah's behavior, the Hellenistic myth of androgyny. But since this myth of androgyny is endorsed by the Rabbis in Bereshit Rabba as an explanation for the existence of two versions of the creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis, it is unlikely that Agnon discusses the origin and end of gender merely in order to reject the androgyny myth.[22] It is more likely that he intends to modify its meaning. Another explanation for Leah's conduct may be that her long dress itself is a symbol. Indeed, the same symbol is used at the end of the story (where Agnon reveals the true identity of Leah as the figure of the soul) in the phrase "I put on a costume," referring to his "clothed" or symbolic language. At the end of "Lifnim min haḥoma," where Agnon explains the religious symbolism of

the story, there emerges a possible explanation for Leah's conduct that also provides the clue to Agnon's interpretation of the myth of androgyny:

> There remains only to explain the meaning of the soul's companion. The companion of the soul is the body, which became the soul's sheath [*nartiq*], and I am the body and I am the sheath. Now I have fatigued my companion to no avail, since in my haste I imagined that she is I and I am her, and that I can do with her whatever I desire. I did to her that deed, and she left me, because the days in which there will be no difference between male and female have not yet arrived. (p. 50)

The "deed" of which Agnon speaks here is the kiss he gave Leah (whose Hebrew name means "the fatigued") when she was resting on a black stone bench. Agnon further explains that the bench is a symbol for the passage of time, and its heavy black stone means that "you are made to be mortgaged [*apotekai*] to time" (p. 50). The story, then, is a fable about the relations between sexual desire and mortality. Agnon thus argues that the difference between the sexes is eliminated only with the death of the body, whereby the soul is released from its sheath, from its carnal prison. This prison is also analogous to the walls of the captive Jerusalem in which the walled house of Leah's father is found: "Now that she left me, she returned to her father's house. And her father's house is closed against me, and in its walls . . . I cannot find an opening" (p. 50). In accordance with rabbinical interpretation of the androgyny myth, Agnon maintains that God initially created Adam as a spiritual, sexless human being, an androgynous creature. But once the separation between man and woman was made, it could only be bridged spiritually through the relationship between the soul and the body, which is analogous to the relationship between man and wife, God and Israel. Since the distinction between the soul and the body is therefore fragile rather than absolute, transference love must be guided by fidelity to Jewish law. Unlike Christianity and Hellenism, where the distinction between soul and body is radical, Judaism maintains an imperfect distinction between body and soul. This distinction is upheld only insofar as it allows an affirmative attitude toward marriage and life. This is why Leah rejects the idea that the abolition of gender difference is near: for her, one can reach an ideal spiritual unity only symbolically by wearing the long dress of veiled language. Agnon's criticism of Rechnitz's behavior as well as his critique of Freud emerge from this standpoint.

In *Betrothed*, Agnon addresses the issue of androgyny in mentioning Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character*, which Rechnitz imagines hearing discussed by two young, apparently homosexual, men (p. 69). In his book, Weininger explains homosexuality as originating in the hermaphrodite embryonic state, when the distinction between the sexes is

not yet determined. Weininger argues that the homosexual develops an attraction toward the same sex because certain elements of the opposite sex remain dominant in his or her personality.[23] Rechnitz's eavesdropping is juxtaposed with his hallucinations of Shoshana accompanying him to his bus, a subversion of traditional gender roles that worries him and prompts the hallucination about the homosexuals. Rechnitz imagines that time has stopped between ten and eleven that evening, without ever reaching midnight. This enigmatic scene can be best understood in the larger context of *Betrothed.* Rechnitz's hallucinations here are the culmination of several days of unexplained fatigue in the absence of Shoshana and her father during their visit in Jerusalem; upon their return, Shoshana's father, Gothold, intends to bring up with Rechnitz the discussion of marriage. Rechnitz's fatigue and hallucinations during their absence clearly foreshadow the emergence of Shoshana's sleeping illness. The juxtaposition of the couple's mirroring fatigues with Rechnitz's confusion about their sexual roles suggests another link between the myth of androgyny and the death drive. The symbolic meaning of these events is not fully disclosed in *Betrothed,* but it can be explained through reference to "Lifnim min haḥoma."

Like the digression in "Lifnim min haḥoma" where the references to *Betrothed* and to the psychoanalyst are found, Agnon's androgynous vision in that story also brings us back to the theme of the seven girls, for Leah's sexually marked dress is contrasted there with the conduct of those girls. This allusion to *Betrothed* promotes the contrast between Leah's modest dress and the wanton conduct of the six or seven girls, who in "Lifnim min haḥoma," hold in turn the coat of the psychoanalyst's niece. Just as each of the gallant women of *Betrothed* temporarily hold Rechnitz's heart before Shoshana reenters the picture and claims it as her own, so each of the six girls holds on to the overcoat but fails to return it to its owner. Leah's remark that Shoshana does not belong to the group of the girls who lost the overcoat of the psychoanalyst's niece first implies a distinction between Alexandra's borrowed overcoat and Leah's own overcoat. Leah then attempts to make a similar distinction of conduct and value between Alexandra and Shoshana, between the girl with the Greek name and *Shoshanat Yaʿakov,* between the girl who borrows clothes that do not belong to her and the one who truly owns the drape of seaweed. The comparison of Alexandra's overcoat with Shoshana's seaweed attire alludes to deceptive substitutions for the garments and the crown of the Torah. However, it is precisely this latter distinction that Agnon renders ambivalent in *Betrothed* and that he turns to clarify in "Lifnim min haḥoma."

Drawing on the Zohar's "myth of the Torah," Agnon often uses the garment symbol in a mystical sense to refer to language narrative. The

medieval myth expresses the idea that "the world could not endure the Torah if she had not garbed herself in garments of this world. Thus, the tales related in the Torah are simply her outer garments, and woe to the man who regards that outer garb as the Torah itself. . . . People without understanding see only the narrations, the garments; those somewhat more penetrating see also the body. But the truly wise . . . pierce all the way through the soul, to the true Torah."[24]

Thus, the myth of the Torah justifies the multiple analogies implicit in Agnon's image of the overcoat: the arduous narratives within narratives in "Lifnim min haḥoma," the narrator wandering through various rooms to which he holds keys, and the passing of the coat between the six girls. The walk with Alexandra through Jaffa in the past is contrasted with the narrator wandering through Jerusalem in the present, much as the psychoanalyst is contrasted with Leah's and Shoshana's fathers, who are both figures of the exiled God. Rechnitz, whom some critics identify with the young secular Agnon of Jaffa, is then contrasted with the mature and ever more pious Agnon of Jerusalem. The psychoanalyst friend who went to Vienna to study the human psyche with Freud and Jung can be compared with the scientist Rechnitz, who also came to Jaffa from Vienna, and from traditional Judaism to a Homeric undersea garden. Both Rechnitz and the psychoanalyst, by turning away from higher to lower forms of life, from spirit to matter, are doomed to seek remedy from someone who is sicker than they are themselves.

The metapoetic lesson can be illustrated by applying to Agnon's circuitous narratives Michael Fishbane's explanation of the meaning of the Zohar homily of the "myth of the Torah":

> Hebrew Scripture is an ontologically unique literature: not because of its aesthetic style or topics of concern—which are judged weak in comparison with contemporary medieval romances and epics—but precisely because such externalities are merely the first of several garment-like layers concealing deeper and less-refracted aspects of divine truth whose core, the root of roots, is God Himself. Thus as indicated in the myth of scriptural origin, the divine Reality exteriorizes and condenses itself, at many removes from its animating soul-root, into a verbal text with several layers of meaning. The true hermeneut—who is a seeker after God and not simply a purveyor of aesthetic tropes or normative rules—will be drawn to this garmented bride . . . and will strip away the garments of the Torah until he and his beloved one (God as discovered in the depths of Scripture) are one. . . ."Such a man," says another Zoharic text, "is the bridegroom of the Torah in the strictest sense . . . to whom she (divinity as beckoning Bride) discloses all her secrets, concealing nothing." (p. 35)

At this level, the religious symbolism that is conveyed by the Hebrew title *Shevuʿat emunim* (Oath of allegiance) no longer applies to one Yaʿakov

Rechnitz, but to the people of Israel and to their relationship with God. At the metapoetic level, however, the story speaks of its own pursuit: it is the author as creator, rather than his protagonist, who stands behind the title's dual symbolism. As a result, the two readings remain incompatible when they are treated as causal explanations of Rechnitz's case. The common denominator of the two levels of reading is in their parallel, yet chiasmic movements; at each reading level, there is a different subject and a different object of pursuit. Hence, the duality of the subject shifts ground from reconciling the relationship of Rechnitz-Shoshana with Israel-God, to rectifying Agnon's and his writing with Israel-God, as the mediation of the soul, Leah, in "Lifnim min haḥoma" suggests. The well-being of the soul is affected by the duality of *yetser* (desire, imagination) in Judaism; on the one hand, evil inclination, or *yetser hara'*, guides the deviation from the straight path of the halakhah to idolatrous imaginative substitutions; on the other hand, the *yetser* is linked with *yetsira* (creation) if guided by good inclination. Agnon's hesitation between the two titles, between the seven girls and the betrothal commitment, suggests that true artistic creativity is always the result of an unresolved battle against the temptations of imagination.

Department of Comparative Literature
Pennsylvania State University

NOTES

1. Wilhelm Jensen, *Gradiva: A Pompeiian Fancy,* trans. Helen M. Downey, in *"Delusions and Dreams" and Other Essays,* ed. Philip Rieff (Boston, 1956), pp. 147–235. S. Y. Agnon, *Betrothed,* in *Two Tales by S. Y. Agnon,* trans. Walter Lever (London, 1967), pp. 3–139.

2. Sigmund Freud, "Delusions and Dreams," trans. Harry Zohn, in *"Delusions and Dreams" and Other Essays* (hereafter, referred to as *DD*), pp. 25–121.

3. Unfortunately, little is known of Agnon's reading during his eleven-year sojourn in Germany (1913–24), when he substantially expanded his knowledge of Scandinavian and European literature. According to Arnold Band, Agnon certainly became familiar with Freud's work in 1933 when Jewish emigrants from Germany and Austria arrived in Palestine. Arnold Band, "Agnon Discovers Freud" [Hebrew], *Moznayim* 11 (1989): 18. Apparently, the psychoanalyst Agnon mentions in "Lifnim min haḥoma" is Max Eitingon. The story of their lifelong relationship therefore provides interesting insights into Agnon's intertexual method, as well as his peculiar way of mixing reality and fiction. Band also quotes Emuna Yaron's claim that her mother read Freud's work in front of Agnon, but she does not report when Agnon became familiar with Freud's writing (p. 18). In a 1925 letter to his wife, Agnon explains a slip of pen with reference to "Freud's method." S. Y. Agnon, *Esterlein yakirati: Mikhtavim 1924–1931* (Tel Aviv, 1983), p. 61.

4. S. Y. Agnon, "Lifnim min haḥoma," in *Lifnim min haḥoma* (Tel Aviv, 1976), pp. 17–19. All translations from this story are mine.

5. Gershon Shaked, "Portrait of the Immigrant As a Young Neurotic," *Prooftexts* 7 (1987): 43–44.

6. Dov Sadan, "The Legend of Seven and Seven" [Hebrew], in *'Al Sh. Y. Agnon* (Tel Aviv, 1978), pp. 88–102.

7. A revealing commentary by Agnon on Scandinavian literature provides an insight into his own strategic use of intertextuality. In his 1961 memoir of Brenner, Agnon recalls a discussion about the talent of the Danish author Johanes Vilhelm Jensen (1873–1950), who is not to be confused with the author of *Gradiva*, the obscure north German writer of Danish origin whose name is Wilhelm Jensen (1837–1911). The discussion took place in 1910 when Brenner was still working on his translation of Jensen's story "Icebergs." Brenner then told Agnon that "had he possessed even a small portion of Jensen's knowledge in science, he [Brenner] could have written a better story." *Me'atsmi el 'atsmi* (Tel Aviv, 1976), p. 121. Agnon comments that when he read Jensen's "Icebergs" he found what he considered a gross misunderstanding on Brenner's part: in translating Jensen, Agnon points out, Brenner had "exchanged the names [of places] with biblical names, but it is well known that the author's intention was to show that the origin of Creation was in Scandinavia" (p. 121). Agnon's remark reveals his concern for origins, names, places, exchanges, and relations among literary traditions. Though it is directed at another Jensen, it nevertheless clarifies his own investment in *Betrothed*, where he replants the heritage of European literature in Jewish soil. Indeed, both Jensens, the relatively famous and the relatively obscure, could be considered the subject of this remark, for their literary treatment of nature and culture is similar: in their stories, both employ a knowledge of the physical sciences as well as of anthropology, archaeology, ethnography, and evolutionary ideas. Among the numerous confusions between the two Jensens, Ernst Jones's error is the most remarkable: Jones, who is Freud's biographer, assumed that the author of *Gradiva* was the acclaimed Jensen. *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 2 (New York, 1955), p. 341. The difficulties in finding external evidence of Agnon's familiarity with *Gradiva* can be interpreted in light of Band's remark that "while usually reluctant to reveal his knowledge of European literature, [Agnon] admits that as a boy in Buczacz he read Björnson, Ibsen, and especially Hamsun." Arnold Band, "Agnon Discovers Freud," p. 10. In this light, one can place *Gradiva* on both sides of the cultural fence that divides Agnon's cultural bias toward Scandinavian authors and his reluctant attitude to Freud: if confusion between the two Jensens occurred, then an admission of familiarity exists; if it did not occur, then a rejection of Freud may also be extended to Jensen's *Gradiva*. Either way, the comparison of *Betrothed* with *Gradiva* complements Agnon's ideas about Jensen's reconstructive strategy.

8. Freud observes that "This girl [i.e., Zoë] was surely even as a child characterized by the beautiful walk with her foot almost perpendicular, as she stepped out, and through the portrayal of this very gait an antique bas-relief later acquired great significance for Norbert Hanold. Incidentally, let us add immediately that the author of 'Gradiva' is in complete agreement with science in regard to the derivation of the peculiar phenomenon of fetishism. Since the investigations by Binet we have really attempted to trace fetishism back to erotic impressions of childhood" (p. 68).

9. Sara Kofman, "Freud's 'Delusions and Dreams' in Wilhelm Jensen's *Gradiva*," in *The Childhood of Art: An Interpretation of Freud's Aesthetics*, trans. Winifred Woodhull (New York:, 1988), p. 180.

10. This question about the relationship between model and representation should sound familiar to readers of Agnon's last novel, *Shira*, (1970), in which German scholar Manfred Herbst is preoccupied with this very question. Herbst wonders whether "Böcklin [is] paint[ed] from a model or from his imagination." S. Y. Agnon, *Shira*, trans. Zeva Shapiro (New York, 1989), p. 29. See also the afterword by Robert Alter for further elaboration on the issue of "painting eros and painting thanatos from the imagination rather than from a

model" (p. 581). In *Shira,* as in Jensen's story, the search for the model's "real existence" produces the uncanny hallucinatory effect typical of fetishist fascination. On fetishism in *Shira,* see Anne Golomb Hoffman, *Between Exile and Return: S. Y. Agnon and the Drama of Writing* (New York, 1991), p. 173. For further elaboration about models, as well as about the connection between Böcklin's painting of the skull and the hat-fetish in Shira's dream, see Nitza ben Dov, "Let Them Taste Their Poetry on Their Own Body" [Hebrew], *Alpayim* 6 (1992): 181. Curiously, Böcklin is also mentioned in "Lifnim min haḥoma" (p. 20). Unfortunately, the limited scope of this paper does not permit a detailed elaboration on this allusion, since it is linked to a network of intertextual references.

11. Israel As'ael, in his article "Midrash atsot: mikra bi'Shevu'at emunim'," *Keshet* 33 (fall 1967): 10, points out that the link between death and voice (*qol* in Hebrew) is a motif that translates into a significant motivation behind Rechnitz's professional choice. Asael quotes the following paragraph in support of his interpretation: "One night he was reading Homer. He *heard a voice of the waves,* though he had never yet set eyes in the sea. He shut his book and raised his ears to listen. And the *voice* exploded, leaping like the sound of many waters. . . . Again he *heard the same voice.* He put down his book and lay on his bed. The *voices* died away, but that sea whose *call he had heard* spread itself out before him. . . . Next day Rechnitz felt as a lost man whom the waves have cast up on desolate island" (emphasis added). Asael, who links this motif with the allusion to the epidermist Arzaf in the story, develops this theme into an opposition between the "dead" immortality of the body of secular science and the living voice of the Torah (p. 22). In other words, the opposition is between voice and sight, word and image, Judaism and Hellenism. Hence, the ambiguous meaning of the *qol-rafa* cuts both ways as a healing voice or a voice of a deadly ghost. Indeed, Asael claims that there are two motives that bring Rechnitz to the sea—voice and medicine (*refu'ah,* from the root *r-f-'*). Rechnitz's mental inability to deal with operating on corpses (the reason Agnon gives for his rejection of medicine, and also the reason for mentioning Arzaf), leads to his substitution of marine botany for medicine.

12. For another interpretation that dismisses the allegorical dimension, see Nomi Tamir, "S. Y. Agnon's *Betrothed*" [Hebrew], *Hasifrut* 3 (1972): 497–506. Shulamit Levo's response to Tamir's article is well taken, since by claiming four levels of interpretations, Tamir promotes an allegorical reading. See "Remarks on Nomi Tamir's Article 'S. Y. Agnon's *Betrothed*'" [Hebrew], *Hasifrut* 4 (1973): 546–48.

13. The strange word *leqa'aqea'* (figuratively, meaning to destroy or to undermine, but literally, to tattoo) is a suggestive clue about Agnon's stakes here. The word is further linked in "Lifnim min haḥoma" with the metaphor of the overcoat and other garments through Leah's repetitive expression "*or harakia' mitkmet*" (the skin of the firmament wrinkles (pp. 8, 9, and 44), the wrinkles on Leah's overcoat (p. 45) and forehead (p. 44), as well as with discussions about defective parchments on which the Torah is inscribed (p. 10). Imperfections of skin and garments are thus asssociated with blemishes as profanations inflicted upon the sacred Wor(l)d of God. Hence, Freud, like the Jewish craftsmen who sell idols and fetishes to Gentiles in "Lifnim min haḥoma," is acused of proselytizing by inscribing tattoos on our holy God-given souls.

14. Arnold Band, *Nostalgia and Nightmare* (Los Angeles, 1968), pp. 367–82.

15. Israel Asael claims that the symbolic meaning behind Agnon's disapproval of Rechnitz's scientific engagement is a critique against modern Bible scholarship. Although this interpretation complements my own conclusions about Agnon's garment allegory, it seems somewhat strained. The analogy between Rechnitz's profession and Agnon's own vocation merely suggests that there is no true knowledge without Torah learning.

16. In *Sippur pashut* [A simple story] Agnon offers an alternative method of psychological "talking cure" whereby it is not the patient who speaks and the analyst who listens; instead, it is Dr. Langsam who tells Hirshl hasidic stories and sings him songs in order to

cure him of his madness. *'Al kapot haman'ul* (Tel Aviv, 1952). For an analysis of Dr. Langsam's method, see Nitza ben Dov, *Agnon's Art of Indirection: Uncovering Latent Content in the Fiction of S. Y. Agnon* (New York, 1993), pp. 98–99.

17. Gregory Ulmer, *Applied Grammatology* (Baltimore, 1985), p. 117.

18. Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (New York, 1961), pp. 244–50. For further analysis of *yetser* as imagination threatening deviation from the straight path, see the chapter "The Hebraic Imagination," in Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination* (Minneapolis, 1984). The following observation neatly summarizes Agnon's artistic predicament: "The freedom to choose between good and evil, and to construct one's story accordingly, is intimately related to the *yetser* as a passion for the possible: the human impulse transcends what exists in the direction of what might exist" (p. 42). See also Geoffrey Hartman, "On the Jewish Imagination," *Prooftexts* 5 (1985): 201–20.

19. J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis,* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York, 1973), p. 97.

20. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* trans. James Strachey (New York, 1961), p. 43.

21. Jean Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis,* trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Baltimore, 1976), p. 122.

22. For an elaborate discussion of the myth of androgyny in Hellenistic and rabbinical thought, see Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley, 1993), pp. 31–60.

23. Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character* (New York, 1903), p. 45.

24. Michael Fishbane, *The Garments of the Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics* (Bloomington, 1989), p. 34.