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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Freud's *Moses*: Memory Material and Immaterial

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

Eliza Farro Slavet

Committee in charge:

Professor Marcel Hénaff, Chair
Professor Geoffrey Bowker
Professor Page duBois
Professor Steven Fagin
Professor Lisa Lampert-Weissig
Professor William O'Brien

2007

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Chair

University of California, San Diego
2007

EPIGRAPH

‘Traduttore -- Traditore!’
Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and the Unconscious*

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When I first read Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's book, *Zachor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* in April 2001, I had no idea that the author and I were connected by a series of fateful coincidences. Forty-three years before I read this book, Yerushalmi was the rabbi at the synagogue which my mother's family attended in the suburbs of New York City. There, he became friends with my grandparents, Ruben and Elsa Farro, and he charmed a thirteen-year-old girl, named Susan Farro who would later name her child, Eliza, after her recently deceased mother. What she did not know was that I shared a birthday with Yerushalmi. On April 29, 2001, I called my mother from Berlin, Germany to tell her that I had just been reading a book that I thought she might find interesting. It was then that she told me that Yerushalmi had been her rabbi forty-odd years before. A week later, my mother had a massive stroke which severely damaged her brain and paralyzed the left side of her body for the rest of her life. While she retains many of her long-term memories, she sometimes "mis-remembers" or adds new materials to stories which could never have happened the way she now remembers them. I would like to thank my mother for sharing her memories both before and after her brain was transformed by what now goes by the names of biology, chemistry and even circuitry. More importantly, I would like to thank both my parents for their unfailing support of me in the latest of what must only seem like a series of bizarre pursuits.

In April 2006, I finally met Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi in person. Since this work began as a long letter to him, I would like to thank him for his warm hospitality and for his moving scholarship which drew me into this work.

In the early stages of writing, I enjoyed exchanging ideas with Shahrokh Yadegari whose own independent approach to writing his dissertation was inspiring. Sharokh also generously hosted me in my various sojourns back to San Diego during the writing period. I am continuously grateful for the friendship and sage advice of Ruth Mack. I would also like to thank Theo Davis, Kyla Schuller and Michael Simonson for editorial suggestions and encouragement along the way. My short-lived but enlightening dissertation writing group was an education in itself: I learned a lot from reading the work and comments of Libby Garland, Tamar Barzel, Margie Weinstein, Holly Dugan and Nick Syrett. I am grateful to Ronald Robboy for sending me *Jewish Wit* at a crucial moment in the the final month of writing. Ruth Liberman generously shared her “mother-tongue” with me and helped me correct my clunky translations of thorny passages in Freud’s texts and in a number of other German texts. Yvonne Shafir tirelessly read drafts, shared comments, posed difficult questions and always offered encouragement. Brigid Hains’ extensive and wise editorial advice and pointed questions got me back on track a number of times; her loyal missives travelled the farthest (from both Melbourne, Australia and London, England), but they consistently managed to reach me at the perfect moments.

Along the way, I learned from a number of scholars who graciously read portions of my work and/or shared some of their own unpublished manuscripts

and citational suggestions: Jan Assmann, Alan Bass, David Biale, Steven Cassedy, Jay Geller, Sander Gilman, Sander Gliboff, Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, Paul Lerner, and Paul Weindling were models of scholarly generosity.

In the all-important administrative, funding and library category, I would first like to thank Ana Minvielle and Thom Hill for their stellar coralling of professors, paperwork and timelines. Not only are they on top of *everything*, they are also warm and wonderful people, making administrative tasks the friendliest part of the process. I also would like to thank the UCSD Center for Humanities and the UCSD Literature Department for grants which allowed me to take time off from teaching and focus exclusively on writing. A grant from the Deutsche Akademische Austausch Dienst in 2000 allowed me to go to Berlin where the seeds of this dissertation were first planted. In addition, I would like to thank the staff of Interlibrary Loan staff at UCSD's Geisel Library and NYU's Bobst Library, as well as the staff at the NY Public Library for providing me with access to the Wertheim Study. The final stages of my dissertation were (indirectly) supported by George Schulman and Mary Witty whose efforts allowed me to retain access to NYU's libraries when I really needed it.

Michael Terry and the staff at the Dorot Jewish Division of the NY Public Library were extraordinary discoveries when I first arrived in New York City. I would also like to thank him for making my fantasy of an event to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Freud's *bris* a reality. The lecture which I presented at this event on May 10, 2006 led me to further develop my ideas about circumcision which now appear in my third chapter.

I am grateful to Gabriel Goldstein and the staff at the Yeshiva University Museum for hiring me to be the “greeter” at an historical exhibit on “Vienna: Jews and the City of Music, 1870-1938.” Not only was I encouraged to work on my dissertation in the hours between tours, I also had the good fortune to sit amongst a number of inspiring historical objects, including Wittgenstein’s clarinet, a number of photos of Gustav Mahler, and a copy of Schoenberg’s document of (re-)conversion (back to Judaism), signed by Marc Chagall. While these figures were incorporated into this exhibit on *Jews* in Vienna, they each posed difficult questions about the very definition of Jewishness, questions which somehow—perhaps mysteriously—shaped my dissertation.

Throughout this process, I have been grateful to have a supportive and generous committee: Page duBois, Lisa Lampert-Weissig, William O’Brien and Steve Fagin. I have also been blessed to have three wonderful mentors. Hillel Schwartz not only responded to countless emails in which I posed my most difficult and embarrassing questions about writing in general and about my project in particular, he has also been a collaborator and a model of independent scholarship. Geoffrey Bowker has generously answered my calls for scholarly advice and has encouraged me to pursue my work where it takes me. I met Professor Bowker when he invited me to join a reading group on the subject of memory with himself and Andy Lakoff in 2003. I learned a lot from both of them. Finally, Marcel Hénaff has been a most wonderful advisor: gracious and supportive to the end.

There is one person who has lived through the ups and downs of the writing of this dissertation almost as much as me. Anthony Burr has brilliantly played the role of editor, cheerleader, coach, cook, dog-walker, husband and much much more. If there is one person who I know will be happy about my completing this work, I know it will be him. There is no way to thank him enough for his support throughout this process, but as a beginning, I would like to say thank you.

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“Freud’s Theory of Jewishness: For Better and For Worse”
Invited essay in forthcoming book: *Freud and His Jewish World*, ed. Arnold Richards. New York: The Other Press/Norton, 2007.

“*Die Simpsons: Auf der Suche nach der Stimme Amerikas*”
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CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

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- “Mediating Memory: ‘Tradition’ in Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism*”
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- “Inherited Memory: An Examination of Freud’s Lamarckism”
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- “Creative Non-Fiction,” and “Introduction to Writing Poetry,” Writing / Literature Department
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Freud's *Moses*: Memory Material and Immaterial

by

Eliza Farro Slavet

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

University of California, San Diego, 2007

Professor Marcel Hénaff, Chair

Freud's final book, *Moses and Monotheism*, has long been regarded as an autobiographical curiosity which, while shedding light on his feelings about his own Jewishness, potentially compromises some of the more convincing aspects of psychoanalytic theory. I consider *Moses and Monotheism* as a serious work in which Freud proposes a theory of Jewishness—what it *is*, how it is transmitted, and how it continues to survive. Rather than being an aberration, this work is the culmination of a lifetime of work investigating the relationships between memory and its rivals: history, heredity and fantasy.

Throughout his career, Freud attempted to synthesize what he saw as the two possible sources of mental illness: the first, innate disposition, and the second, external trauma resulting in pathogenic memories. The tension between

these two realms—permanent inheritance and malleable experience—would become central to his theory of Jewishness. By proposing that certain events in the distant past were so traumatic that their memories were inherited by successive generations, Freud eventually integrated these previously mutually exclusive realms—the biological, permanent and racial on the one hand, and the psychic, experiential and cultural on the other. In *Moses and Monotheism* he theorized that Jewishness is constituted by the inheritance of a specific archaic memory which one is inexorably compelled to transmit to future generations, whether consciously or unconsciously. As such, I consider Freud's theory of Jewishness as a racial theory of memory.

Freud's interest in the inheritance of memory is contextualized alongside scientific and political debates of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A close reading of Freud's *Moses* shows that it retrospectively illuminates recurring questions and concepts in his earlier work and in current debates about race, memory, and psychoanalysis. I combine literary scholarship with research in the history of science in an attempt to understand what Freud thought he was doing in developing a racial theory of Jewishness at a time when race was being used to identify and exterminate the Jewish people. This study examines the permeable boundaries between history and literature, race and culture, and politics and science.

Introduction

A. Autobiographical Preface

On most Friday afternoons, a Chassidic man—wearing a top-hat and *tzitzit*¹—stands on a street corner in Manhattan, searching the crowd for people who look like they may be Jewish. As soon as he spots a potential Jew, he approaches and says, “Excuse me, are you Jewish?” If he gets a “yes,” he proceeds to tell the person that the Sabbath is about to begin. Does the person know how to light the candles? How to say the blessings? If there is any hesitancy, he tries to help the person, giving him or her a pair of sabbath candles and a brochure with directions and the blessings printed in Hebrew and English. By seeking out non-observant Jews and helping them “return” to a life of Jewish ritual and practice, the Chassidic man (and others in his particular sect of Judaism) believes that he is doing a *mitzvah*, a good deed. By doing such *mitzvot*, he believes that he will hasten the coming of the Messiah. Thus, he searches.... He sees a man whom he *knows* must be Jewish: curly black hair, dressed like a lawyer, he’s even wearing a Star of David around his neck. The Chassid confidently approaches, “Excuse me, sir, are you Jewish?” The man pauses, and looks at the Chassid with a grin, “No,” he says, “Why? Are you??”²

There is something unsettling about being stopped and asked about one’s Jewishness on a street corner. Move the scene to a different city and place, and the

¹ *Tzitzit* is a fringed garment worn by religious Jewish men to fulfill the commandment in *Deuteronomy* 22:12: “You shall make yourself twisted threads, on the four corners of your garment with which you cover yourself.”

² This anecdote was reported to me by an acquaintance who is, in fact, the Jewish lawyer in the story.

consequences of the question are entirely different; indeed the consequences became a matter of life and death for millions of people in the 1930s and 40s. Jews were “racialized” in new ways when, in the nineteenth century “biological” anti-semitism emerged, accompanied by an illogical logic of genealogy, heredity and race. Well before the 1930s, however, Jewishness was regarded as something uncomfortably in between the categories of race, religion, ethnicity and nationality. By the 1930s, these distinctions were used by Jewish and non-Jewish institutions as they began to catalogue, collect and store data about the members of their communities. Thus, when the Nazis came to power they called upon such archives in order to make the final decisions: who shall live and who shall die. The grotesqueness of this logic—the idea that governments could become god-like in their powers to decide individuals’ fates based on whether they are “counted” as citizens or as “alien guests”—continues to haunt the historiography of this time period, as well as debates about identity and difference in the present.

In the wake of the Holocaust, it has become almost impossible to speak of a “racial” definition of Jewishness without sounding obscene or anti-semitic. And yet, within Jewish communities and families—both observant and secular, both conservative and liberal—there is often an almost obsessive desire to know whether a person is Jewish. The definition of “Jewishness” in these cases is almost always purely “genealogical” in that the question is not whether a person feels, thinks, acts, or looks Jewish, but whether such suggestive signs are evidence of the “real thing”—the fact that the person has a Jewish parent (or even a grandparent), the fact that the person “really” is Jewish. Indeed, it is not uncommon to hear (Jewish and non-Jewish) people say that

someone is “half-Jewish”³ or a “quarter Jewish” or even a “mixed breed,” even as they are fully aware of the racial (and possibly racist) logic of such descriptions.

This dissertation began as a dim recognition that these racial definitions of Jewishness were part of one persistent and problematic phenomenon. I became conscious of this while I was living in Berlin, Germany in 2000-2001.⁴ Unlike many people who have written on the subject of Freud and Jewishness, prior to becoming deeply involved with this project, I had no long-standing (academic, artistic, conscious) interest in psychoanalysis, Freud or Jewish identity. My interest in this subject emerged from my work developing a sound-art installation for which I record the sounds of individuals’ breathing. “Breathing Traces” is designed as a sort of anti-archive which records only the sounds of a person’s life: the inhales, exhales, sighs, grunts and sniffs. Unlike numerous archives which various institutions developed with increasing speed and enormity in the late nineteenth century, my archive records none of the distinct attributes often used to define an individual—not gender, height, weight or age, and not sexuality, ethnicity, religion or nationality. None of these characteristics is perceivable—at least not immediately or dependably so—by listening to the recordings of my collected “specimens,” each one exhibited (heard) through a separate loudspeaker. The project began with a sort of universal aesthetic beyond the questions of identity; the sounds of breathing seemed to elicit uncanny feelings of absent presence and

³ Which half? Top or bottom? Right or left? Such questions are met with quizzical looks. Apparently, the only appropriate answers are “my mother” or “my father.”

⁴ It is no coincidence that I became interested in these questions while living in Germany, a country which in the last fifteen years has seen an enormous growth of Jewish museums, Jewish organizations, Jewish archives, and perhaps most interestingly, Jewish communities. No, it’s not that Jews are all of a sudden having more children in Germany, but something else. First, with the fall of Communism, former Soviets immigrating to Germany could receive state-assistance if they could prove that they were Jewish; and second, a number of Germans are discovering that one or more grandparents were Jewish, perhaps even just half-Jewish. It is not entirely mysterious why this might matter more in Germany than, say, in the United States. While I was living there, I went to synagogue for high holiday services. The security guard greeted me with the question “Are you Jewish?” And then, “what are you doing here?”

distant intimacy. Nonetheless, listening to the sounds of breathing evoked fantasies, memories and lurking questions about the histories of the individuals whose lives were being technologically re-played.

In 2001, when I had the opportunity to propose this project to the Jewish Museum in Berlin, I realized that I would need to make the project explicitly “Jewish.” Thus, I proposed that I would record and exhibit the sounds of Jews presently living (and breathing) in Berlin. Whereas many of the other materials exhibited in Liebeskind’s building had “obviously” Jewish content—kitschy Judaica or rescued dusty items from European ghettos or various art which somehow alludes to Jewish images (an abstract menorah or Star of David, for example)—the only thing I would exhibit would be the sounds of “real Jews,” living and breathing in Berlin. On the surface, the project would exhibit the continuity of Jewish *life*, the breathing would undulate, mixing the old with the young, the past with the future. While the only “qualification” for these particular individuals to be included in the exhibit was their Jewishness (and their aliveness), the matter of “proving” and “determining” their Jewishness became the heart of the proposed project. If a person wants to be “counted” as Jewish in Germany today (to get various state benefits or to join a synagogue), she or he must appeal to the rabbi in whichever city she or he lives. Each rabbi in each city has a different method for “counting” whether a person is Jewish: can the person read Hebrew? Is he circumcised? Can she chant the *Sh’mah*? Does she have evidence of a Jewish mother? What sort of evidence? What about the mother’s mother? Some rabbis are stricter than others, whether because of their “orthodoxy” or because of their experience dealing with many post-Soviet “Jews” whose Jewishness is apparently more “questionable” (having been suppressed during Communism). In addition to the exhibition of the “breathers,” I proposed an accompanying

presentation of information about each breathing Jew: a historical chart with various judges along the top row, and the individuals' names down the vertical column. For each individual, there would be at least one judge who would not count the person as Jewish, whose judgment would call into question the very notion of "real" Jews.⁵

It was in the course of developing the proposal for "Breathing Traces Berlin" that I came across Jacques Derrida's book, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1996). In an anticipation of the return of the repressed, my breathing project and *Archive Fever* held all the traces of this dissertation. Derrida's book explores the nature of "archive fever": the "compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement."⁶ Such "returns" are ultimately impossible: they make people sick or crazy in their desire to resuscitate a past which is gone forever but which continues to haunt the present in unspeakable ways. And yet, the desire rages, the compulsion to repeat repeats. "The archivist produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed. It opens out of the future."⁷ While *Archive Fever* retraces many "classic" Derridean themes (such as the questions of trace, presence and absence, and the (im)possibilities of interpretation), Derrida's "Freudian Impression" is focused on an interpretation of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's book, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (1991), which is itself a close reading of Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). Derrida reads Yerushalmi's

⁵ The irony, of course, is that the most "inclusive" definition of Jewishness was that which was established by the Nuremberg Laws. While I had a very positive first meeting with the curatorial committee, when I introduced this aspect of the exhibit (at the second meeting), I received an icy reaction. "Why do you want to complicate things?" the curator asked. "Why not choose *normal* Jews, *real* Jews, people we *know* are Jewish?!"

⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 91.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

book with an ear for his rhetorical flourishes and inconsistencies, traces which ultimately suggest cracks in the very project of being both an “objective” historian and a historian who deeply cares about his object of study. Throughout this dissertation, Derrida’s book is the source of an “anxiety of influence.” His very rhythms have sometimes threatened to crowd out the rationality required of a dissertation. *Archive Fever* has “tormented me like an unladen ghost.” Throughout the dissertation, then, there are traces of Derrida’s book, but there are very few explicit references to it.

This is not the case for Yerushalmi’s book. While Derrida’s meditations haunted me, Yerushalmi’s book compelled me to begin writing. Whereas other scholars had found ample evidence that Freud felt “ambivalently” or distant from the Jewish tradition, in *Freud’s Moses*, Yerushalmi meticulously and feverishly combs Freud’s archives and finds positive traces of Freud’s Jewish feelings. While Yerushalmi insists that he has no need to “claim” Freud for “an already crowded Jewish pantheon,”⁸ he spends much of the book demonstrating that Freud was not simply a “Psychological Jew.”⁹ Yerushalmi begins with the fact that, unlike many of his contemporaries, Freud never disavowed his Jewish identity; to the contrary, he insisted “on a Jewishness that resisted definition.”¹⁰ Despite his insistence that he is interested only in Freud’s “conscious intentionality,”¹¹ and that he has no interest in psychoanalyzing the original psychoanalyst, Yerushalmi shows that Freud’s private Jewish references overwhelm his public protestations to the contrary. As he notes, using a particularly Freudian logic of negation, “the very violence of Freud’s recoil against Jewish

⁸ Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 10ff.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, xvii.

religious belief and ritual must arouse our deepest suspicion. It displays an aggressive intensity that normally accompanies a rebellion against an equally intense former attachment, more typical of a former Yeshiva student in revolt against Judaism than of one who had received a minimal Jewish education.”¹² Ultimately, he demonstrates that it is not *only* Freud’s Jewish origins that matter, but his Jewish life, his transmission of a new kind of Judaism to the future. The question, which Yerushalmi asks in a Monologue addressed to Freud’s ghost in the last section of the book, is whether Freud finally saw psychoanalysis as a sort of godless Judaism, a “Jewish science” for the future.

This dissertation began, then, as a letter addressed to Yerushalmi. In addition to the more general “archive fever” at the heart of Yerushalmi’s historiography, it seemed to me that there was a particularly Jewish fever: a desire to ensure that Judaism and Jewishness will survive in the future, even as there is an explicit acknowledgement that the future is unknowable. “The future, in spite of the appearances, always remains open,” writes Yerushalmi. “The historian’s task, luckily, is to try to understand the past.”¹³ Nonetheless, Yerushalmi’s historiography is inextricably linked to his position as a son and a father, someone who has received a legacy and someone who hopes to leave a legacy, a Jewish legacy to the future.¹⁴ It is also, I think, somewhat secretly linked to the fact that before becoming one of the foremost historians of the Jewish people and Jewish tradition,

¹² Thus, where Freud ironically denied knowing what a *menorah* was and asserted that he knew no Hebrew (let alone Yiddish), Yerushalmi finds that Freud was far “more” Jewish than he let on: not only was his mother-tongue most probably Yiddish, he also knew a fair amount about particular Jewish holidays, rituals and historic figures. *Ibid.*, 68ff.

¹³ Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi and Frédéric Brenner, *Marranes* (Paris: Editions de la Différence, 1992), 44. Quoted in translation in Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, 70.

¹⁴ Thus, he dedicates his book, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* “To the memory of my father Yehuda Yerushalmi for the loving gift of a living past and to my son Ariel who brings joy to the present and past into future.” Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), v.

Yerushalmi was ordained as a rabbi.¹⁵ As an authority on “Jewish” liturgy and history, Yerushalmi can confidently “judge” the Jewishness of an anecdote or a slip of the tongue, illuminating not only the slip, but its resonance with classical Jewish texts. My response to Yerushalmi is structured by three gut reactions to his work. First, I bow before his rabbinic and scholarly authority: I am no judge of whether something or someone is “authentically” Jewish. Second, I perceive an unavoidable violence at the heart of a project—not limited to Yerushalmi—which endeavors to root out the Jewish traces, to show *how* Jewish a person “really” is. Third, I want to tell Yerushalmi not to worry: Judaism and Jewishness will survive for better or for worse, whether we (or they) like it or not. Though these were my initial responses, I was only able to articulate scholarly questions about these matters upon reading the book which elicited Yerushalmi’s book: Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism*. Here, I found that Freud had developed a complex theory of Jewishness which was both racial and cultural, both hereditary and historical. In Freud’s *Moses*, Jewishness emerges as both a matter of genealogical bodily inheritance and a matter of immaterial memory and its material representations. Finally, Freud suggests that regardless of any attempts to repress, suppress or repudiate Jewishness, it will survive, for better and for worse.

While the dissertation began as a response to Yerushalmi, it evolved into a much broader consideration of the history of psychoanalysis and its relationship to a racialized concept of Jewishness before such a concept became indelibly marked by the horrors of the Holocaust. *Moses and Monotheism* has long been regarded as an autobiographical

¹⁵ Interestingly, Yerushalmi does not mention his training or brief position as a rabbi in his books or in his “autobiographical study”: Contemporary Authors Online, *Yerushalmi, Yosef Hayim (1932-)*, 2002, The Gale Group, Available: <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC?locID=ucsandiego&srchtp=athr&c=1&ai=1061026&docNum=H1000108891&bConts=2191&ST=yerushalmi&vrsn=3&OP=contains&ca=1&ste=6&tab=1&tbst=arp&n=10>, October 2, 2003.

curiosity which, while shedding light on Freud's feelings about his own Jewishness, potentially compromises some of the more convincing aspects of psychoanalytic theory. Instead, I consider *Moses* as a serious work in which Freud proposes a theory of Jewishness—what it *is*, how it is transmitted, and how it continues to survive. Rather than being an aberration, Freud's last book emerges as the culmination of a lifetime spent investigating the relationships between memory and its rivals: heredity, history and fiction. Throughout his career, Freud attempted to synthesize what he saw as the two possible sources of mental illness: the first, innate disposition, and the second, external trauma resulting in pathogenic memories. The tension between these two realms—permanent inheritance and malleable experience—would become central to his theory of Jewishness. By proposing that certain events in the distant past were so traumatic that their memories were inherited by successive generations, Freud eventually integrated the two realms which had previously seemed mutually exclusive—the biological, permanent and racial on the one hand, and the psychic, experiential and cultural on the other. In *Moses and Monotheism* he theorized that Jewishness is constituted by the inheritance of a specific archaic memory which the Jewish people are inexorably compelled to transmit to future generations, whether consciously or unconsciously. As such, I consider Freud's theory of Jewishness as a racial theory of memory.

B. The Plot

But first, a joke: A precocious boy comes home from school and announces that he has learned all about Moses. His mother asks him, “So who was Moses?” The boy answers, “Moses was the son of an Egyptian princess.” The mother, obviously concerned, replies, “No, Moses was the son of a *Jewish* woman. The princess only took him out of the water.” To which the boy, answers “Says *she!*”¹⁶

The explicit narrative of *Moses and Monotheism* is a complicated re-reading of the Biblical account of Moses and the origins of the Jewish people. Freud outlined the plot of the new work in a letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé in January 1935. In its most simple formulation, he writes that his new work “started out from the question as to what has really created the particular character of the Jew, and came to the conclusion that the Jew is the creation of the man Moses. Who was this Moses and what did he bring about?” In other words, Freud began *Moses and Monotheism* as an attempt to answer the Jewish Question, to develop a “theory of Jewishness.” What follows is Freud’s more detailed account of Moses’ creation—the Jewish tradition of Mosaic monotheism—and its survival.¹⁷

¹⁶ Like most jokes, the origins of this joke are unknown. Freud is reported to have discussed it with Otto Rank sometime before 1908. Rank incorporated the question of Moses’ origins into his *Myth of the Birth of the Hero* which (though uncited by Freud) is an explicit forerunner of Freud’s theory of the Egyptian Moses. Freud later presents the joke in his *Introductory Lectures* (1915-1917), but he most fully explored its contours twenty years later in *Moses and Monotheism*. Finally (though who can say what “finally” will be), Yerushalmi presents this joke in the opening to his *Freud’s Moses*. In many respects, my work began as an attempt to understand this joke. See Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, S.E.*, vol. XV-XVI (1915-1917), 161; Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Assimilation and Racial Anti-Semitism: The Iberian and the German Models, Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture* (New York: Leo Baeck Institute, 1982), 1.

¹⁷ Jan. 6, 1935, Sigmund Freud and Andreas-Salomé, *Letters*, trans. William and Elaine Robson-Scott, ed. Ernst Pfeiffer (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1972 [1966]), 204-205.

According to Freud,¹⁸ Moses was not an Israelite but rather an Egyptian aristocrat who was a follower of the Pharaoh Akhenaten's monotheistic cult of the sun-god, Aton, around 1350 B.C. After the death of Akhenaten, the Egyptian people rejected his monotheistic religion. Since Moses continued to "zealously" follow this monotheism, he left his "fatherland" to look for a people upon whom to impose his new religion. Not God, but "the man Moses" chose a "rowdy band of Semites" as his people, upon whom he imposed a harsh and strict monotheism based on Akhenaten's invention. While Moses "borrowed" the monotheistic idea from Akhenaten, he took it much further, completely eradicating magic and mysticism from the new religion, and "as an expression of consecration as well as a means of setting them apart introduced circumcision, which was a native custom among the Egyptians and only among them... By this act of choice and the gift of the new religion *he created the Jew*.... These Jews were as little able to tolerate the exacting faith of the religion of Aton as the Egyptians before them." Freud explains that his version of the story is supported by the findings of "a non-Jewish scholar, Sellin" who had recently "shown that Moses was probably killed a few decades later in a popular uprising and his teachings abandoned," but not completely forgotten. "But the religion of Moses had not been extinguished. A dim memory of it and its founder had remained." This first band of Semites later united with other tribes in Midian who worshipped a "primitive" volcano god named "Jahve" on Mount Sinai, and it was this Jahve who became "the national god" of the Jewish people. Freud explains that "*tradition fused*" the two peoples, the two Moses, and the two gods. The exodus from Egypt, led by Moses,

¹⁸ This paragraph weaves together Freud's account in the letter to Andreas-Salomé with my own commentary and emphasis of certain points. Jan. 6, 1935, Ibid.

was “ascribed” to the god Jahve. “In reality,” notes Freud—as if this were a matter not of mythology or fantasy, but of *reality!*—the events narrated in the Bible never occurred: Moses had never even heard of “Jahve,” the Jews never went through the Red Sea, and they were never at Mount Sinai. Though the religion of Moses had been a “half-extinguished tradition,” it “finally triumphed.” Of course, we already know that this tradition survived, since this is Freud’s starting point.

Freud was well aware that he was not the first person to assert the Egyptian origins of either monotheism or of Moses.¹⁹ While he does not cite the well-known work of many modern and ancient writers who had long before proposed the Egyptian origins of Moses and monotheism, he cites extensive recent scholarship of Egyptologists, historians and Old Testament scholars.²⁰ Part of his attempt to demonstrate the historical truth of his narrative was no doubt motivated by the fact that he was also well aware that his reconstruction of the “true” origins of the Jewish people was bound to offend—not only scholars of ancient history, religion, ethnology and biology, but also religious and secular Jews, as well as both anti-semitic and philo-semitic non-Jews. Indeed, *Moses and Monotheism* compels readers to re-examine their own positions and to examine whether they are certain that they belong to only one of these opposing categories. As Freud exclaimed in a letter to Arnold Zweig in 1938, “Can one really believe that my arid

¹⁹ Indeed, as Jan Assmann has shown, a number of Enlightenment thinkers proposed that Moses was an Egyptian, long before the archaeological discoveries of the nineteenth century produced actual evidence of the Egyptian priority in establishing a form of monotheism. Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 145.

²⁰ By no means did Freud cite all of the sources for his theory. Indeed, he pointedly did not cite the most obvious source: Otto Rank’s *The Myth of a Birth of a Hero* (1909), about which I will say more later. Incidentally, the story of Akhenaten has been reconstructed in a more recent historical novel by an Egyptian author who tells quite a different story from Freud but who also explores how the attempt to establish clear lines between truth and falsehood was related to the attempt to establish monotheism (one true god, one truth) from polytheism (many true gods, many versions of the truth). See Naguib Mahfouz, *Akhenaten, Dweller in Truth*, trans. Tagreid Abu-Hassabo (New York: Random House, Inc., 1998).

treatise would destroy the belief of a single person brought up by heredity and training in the faith [*Heredität und Erziehung Gläubigen*], even if it were to come his way?”²¹ In proposing that Moses was an Egyptian, Freud did not necessarily *reject* the Jewishness of one of the greatest heroes of the Jewish people (as others have claimed), but rather questioned the self-evidentiality of this definition. Indeed, even in the Biblical story, Moses was Egyptian by cultural upbringing, raised by the Pharaoh’s daughter after she found him in the basket in the river; thus, Moses was only “Jewish” only by virtue of his genealogy.

This “genealogical” element is the key to Freud’s theory of Jewishness and his explanation of *how* this tradition survived. Though he uses texts, traditions and rituals as the basis of his reconstruction of the origins of the Jewish people, he ultimately concludes that such forms of “direct communication” are not enough to explain the deep power and persistence of the Mosaic tradition. Freud explains this conundrum in one particular paragraph whose elements will, at some point, be cited in every chapter of this dissertation. I quote it here (almost) in its entirety:

I must admit that I have behaved for a long time as though the inheritance of memory-traces of the experience of our ancestors, *independently of direct communication* and of the influence of education by the setting of an example, were established beyond question. When I spoke of the *survival of a tradition* among a people or of the formation of a people’s character, I had mostly in mind *an inherited tradition* of this kind and *not one transmitted by communication*. Or at least I made no distinction between the two and was not clearly aware of my audacity in neglecting to do so. My position, no doubt, is made more difficult by the present attitude of biological science, which refuses to hear of the inheritance of acquired characters by succeeding generations. I must, however, in all modesty confess that nevertheless I cannot do without *this factor in biological*

²¹ June 28, 1938, Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig, *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig*, trans. Elaine Robson-Scott and William Robson-Scott (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1970), 135.

evolution. The same thing is not in question, indeed, in the two cases: in the one it is a matter of acquired characters which are hard to grasp, in the other of memory-traces of external events—something tangible, as it were. But it may well be that at bottom we cannot imagine one without the other.²²

Here, then, Freud acknowledges that his theory of Jewishness is not only a literary-historical reconstruction of origins. Here it is clear that in developing his theory of Jewishness, he explicitly engages the debates about biological theories of evolution, heredity and race which were already being turned to disturbing effect in 1938.

C. What was Freud thinking? (The Biographical Context)

Despite widespread doubts about the “truth” or “scientific value” of psychoanalysis, most people admit that Freud’s oeuvre contains some of the most literary and rhetorically challenging writing of the twentieth century. The same is not necessarily true for *Moses and Monotheism*, a text which is burdened with hesitations, repetitions, gaps and oddly misleading rhetoric. Numerous scholars have speculated about the reasons for the apparent idiosyncrasies of Freud’s final book: from ambivalence about his Jewishness to anxieties about the historical foundations of his narrative, to the precarious political situation in which he wrote the work.²³ When he began to write it in 1934, he knew he was nearing the end. At 78, he was suffering from the jaw cancer which had been diagnosed twenty years before and which would eventually lead to his death five

²² Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, *S.E.*, vol. XXIII (1939), 99-100.

²³ Jan Assmann reads Freud’s hesitations as indicative of his “involvement in the discourse about Moses the Egyptian and its hidden agenda,” about which I will say more later. Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*, 147-148. De Certeau sees Freud’s *Moses* as a “discourse of fragments.” Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 311ff.

years later. The first page of the manuscript is dated “9.8.1934,” but it would be another four years before he completed the work. In addition to suffering from cancer, in 1934–38, Freud watched as his country fell into the darkness of anti-semitic “barbarism,” and was eventually annexed by Nazi Germany in March 1938. Finally, in June 1938, Freud and (most of) his family left Vienna for London where he published the final sections of *Moses and Monotheism* in 1939. As in many of his other works from the 1930s, in *Moses and Monotheism*, he takes a long and wide view of the most fundamental questions of psychoanalysis; thus the stylistic quirks of Freud’s final book suggest that it is a sort of case history of psychoanalysis.

Though he seems to have conceived of the book in three parts from the very beginning,²⁴ he published the first two parts of the work as separate essays in *Imago* in 1937. As a whole, the book is disjointed and reads as if it had been composed as three separate essays, each an attempt to improve and re-cast the findings of the previous one. The third essay—which is more than twice the length of the first two put together—is preceded by two prefatory notes, the first written in Vienna “before March 1938,” and the second written in London in June 1938. In the first preface, Freud explains that he has no intention of publishing this third essay. By contrast, in the second preface he evinces a new confidence deriving at least in part from the fact that he was now living in relative safety in London. Finally, in a “summary” half-way through the third essay, Freud stops again, to present a “summary” which reads like another preface again, with “extensive

²⁴ A meticulous description of the manuscripts is included in two works by Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, *Back to Freud's Texts: Making Silent Documents Speak*, trans. Phillip Slotkin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); *Early Freud and Late Freud: Reading Anew Studies on Hysteria and Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Philip Slotkin (New York: Routledge, 1997). When I revise the dissertation for book publication, I plan on examining the manuscripts myself at the Library of Congress. In particular, Freud apparently made changes to the paragraph (quoted above) in which he discusses “the inheritance of acquired characteristics.”

explanations and apologies” for the repetitive and “inartistic” nature of the work. He confesses that he “deplores it unreservedly.” However, he could not put the work aside, for it “tormented” him like an “unlaid ghost.”²⁵

In his correspondence with Arnold Zweig in the 1920s and early 1930s, Freud alluded to many of the explicit themes of *Moses and Monotheism*: questions confronting German Jewry, the tensions between various versions of realities and their relationship to fantasies, memories and narratives; the definition and narrative requirements of “historical novels,” and lastly the religious fanaticism emerging from the land of Palestine. Indeed, though Freud had meditated on the themes of *Moses* long before he began writing it in 1934, he directly responds to Zweig’s own work in the early 1930s. Not only had Zweig recently completed a book on the problems confronting German Jewry,²⁶ he was contemplating moving to Palestine (from where he wrote Freud many letters) and he was planning on writing a “historical novel” on Nietzsche (which he discussed with Freud).²⁷ Later that year, Freud announced that he had begun a new work: “Faced with the new persecutions, one asks oneself again how the Jews have come to be what they are and why they have attracted this undying hatred. I soon discovered the formula: Moses created the Jews. So I gave my work the title: *The Man Moses, a historical novel* (with more justification than your Nietzsche novel).”²⁸ Freud’s reconstruction of the Egyptian origins of the Jews’ election is explicitly couched in terms which hover between truth and fiction, history and memory. In this respect, his “historical

²⁵ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 103.

²⁶ Arnold Zweig, *Bilanz der Deutschen Judenheit: ein Versuch* (Leipzig: Reclam-Bibliothek, 1991).

²⁷ 1932-1934, Freud and Zweig, *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig*.

²⁸ Freud to Zweig, Sept. 30, 1934, *Ibid.*, 91.

novel” can be seen as a belated meditation on the very terms which had shaped his earliest psychoanalytic writings.

With Zweig, Freud candidly discussed his misgivings about Palestine and the violence hovering at the edges of racial and religious distinctions between peoples. In response to Zweig’s descriptions of Palestine, Freud writes,

Palestine has never produced anything but religions, sacred frenzies, presumptuous attempts to overcome the outer world of appearance by means of the inner world of wishful thinking. And we hail [*stammen*] from there (though one of us considers himself a German as well; the other does not); our forebears lived there for perhaps half or perhaps a whole millennium (*but this too is just a perhaps*) and it is impossible to say what heritage from this land we have taken over into our blood and nerves (as is mistakenly said).²⁹

Though he falls into the language of “blood and nerves,” he quickly points out the “perhaps” and the “mistakes” in this narrative. His letter alludes to irrational “non-scientific beliefs” which we all hold despite being fully aware of rational scientific proofs to the contrary. While Freud’s *Moses* can be seen as a large-scale attempt to understand the particular situation of the Jews in Europe in the 1930s, it is a much larger reflection of many of his long-held beliefs and questions. Indeed, while the political events of the 1930s were not “inevitable,” it is possible to see the rise in extremism and anti-semitism as an intensification of many of the tendencies which had long been present in European society. So too, Freud’s final book was neither a “natural outgrowth” of his earlier work nor an exception in the long series of works which preceded it. Rather, it was an intensified pursuit of many of the problems which had long accompanied his earlier explorations.

²⁹ Freud to Zweig, May 8, 1932, *Ibid.*, 41.

Before leaving the “biographical context,” it seems prudent to include the bare essentials of Freud’s Jewish identity. That is, how do we “know” he was Jewish? Since many other scholars have already explored the nuances of the Freud family’s Jewish life,³⁰ I include only the basics. His “Autobiographical Study” (1925) begins, “I was born on May 6th, 1856, at Freiberg in Moravia, a small town in what is now Czechoslovakia. My parents were Jews, and I have remained a Jew myself.”³¹ His parents, Kallamon Jacob Freud and Amalia Nathanson named him Sigismund Schlomo Freud, and they had him circumcised according to Jewish ritual law on May 13, by Samson Frankel from Mährisch-Ostrau.³² While Freud publicly maintained that he felt neither “religiously” nor “nationally” Jewish, in the very same works he also attempted to define how he *did* feel Jewish. For example, in a letter to the Jewish Press Centre in Zürich in 1925, he asserted that he stood “as far apart from the Jewish religion as from all other religions: that is to say, they are of great significance to me as a subject of scientific interest, but I have no part in them emotionally.” He continues, “On the other hand, I have always had a strong feeling of solidarity with my fellow-people and have always encouraged it in my children as well. We have all remained in the Jewish denomination.”³³ There is no shortage of

³⁰ The scholarship on this subject is immense. The key biographical works which focus on Freud’s Jewish identity include the following: Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Moshe Gresser, *Dual Allegiance: Freud as a Modern Jew* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); Emanuel Rice, *Freud and Moses: The Long Journey Home* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*. In addition, there are invaluable documentary sources included in Marianne Krüll, *Freud and his Father*, trans. Anrold Pomerans (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986).

³¹ Sigmund Freud, “Autobiographical Study,” *S.E.*, vol. XX (1925), 7.

³² Krüll, *Freud and his Father*, 240. Though Freud never explicitly refers to his own circumcision, a number of recent studies have meditated on the possibility that this “scar” was the original trauma or trace in the history of psychoanalysis. See Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*; Franz Maciejewski, *Psychoanalytisches Archiv und jüdisches Gedächtnis: Freud, Beschneidung und Monotheismus* (Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2002).

³³ Sigmund Freud, “Letter to the Editor of the *Jewish Press Centre in Zurich*,” *S.E.*, vol. XIX (1925), 291.

quotations from which to choose to demonstrate that throughout his life, Freud was engaged in an interminable quest to understand the vicissitudes of Jewishness. Two more statements will suffice. In his 1926 address to the B'nai B'rith Society, a Jewish social group to which Freud presented many of his early lectures, he said,

That you were Jews could only be agreeable to me; for I was myself a Jew, and it had always seemed to me not only unworthy but positively senseless to deny the fact. What bound me to Jewry was (I am ashamed to admit) neither faith nor national pride, for I have always been an unbeliever and was brought up without any religion though not without a respect for what are called the 'ethical' standards of human civilization. Whenever I felt an inclination to national enthusiasm I strove to suppress it as being harmful and wrong, alarmed by the warning examples of the peoples among whom we Jews live. But plenty of other things remained over to make the attraction of Jewry and Jews irresistible—many obscure emotional forces, which were *the more powerful the less they could be expressed in words*.³⁴

And finally, in the 1930 preface to the Hebrew translation of *Totem and Taboo*, Freud writes,

No reader of this book [in Hebrew] will find it easy to put himself in the emotional position of an author who is ignorant of the language of holy writ, who is completely estranged from the religion of his fathers—as well as from every other religion—and who cannot take a share in nationalist ideals, but who has yet never repudiated his people, who feels that he is in his essential nature a Jew and who has no desire to alter that nature. If the question were put to him: 'Since you have abandoned all these common characteristics of your countrymen, what is there left to you that is Jewish?' he would reply: 'A very great deal, and probably its very essence [*Wesentliche*].' He could not now express that essence clearly in words; but some day, no doubt, it will become accessible to the scientific mind.³⁵

Freud prepared this preface in 1930, but the Hebrew translation was not published until 1939, the same year in which he finally published *Moses and Monotheism* in its entirety. *Moses* can be read in part as Freud's attempt to interrogate the origins and survival of a

³⁴ Sigmund Freud, "Address to the Society of B'nai B'rith," *S.E.*, vol. XX (1926), 273-274.

³⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, *S.E.*, vol. XIII (1913), xv.

Jewish “essence,” to express the “obscure” powers of this tradition in words, and to make such paradoxes of Jewishness “accessible to the scientific mind.”

D. Why is this dissertation different from all other studies of Freud’s *Moses*?

In addition to the works by Yerushalmi and Derrida, I draw from and respond to a number of recent studies of Freud’s *Moses*, some of which are primarily historiographic and others of which are more philosophical in their approaches. Perhaps because Freud’s final book seems to go far beyond the field of psychoanalysis into a realm of speculative cultural and religious analysis, it has often been interpreted as an extended autobiographical statement, particularly as it reflects his vexed relationship to things Jewish. Where Yerushalmi recovers Freud’s positive sense of Jewishness, in *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (1997), Daniel Boyarin focuses on the ways in which *Moses* was Freud’s attempt to assimilate, to convert Jewishness into a form of masculine Teutonic Aryanism. As Boyarin puts it, “Rather than the conversion of the Jews, the total conversion of Judaism was the solution.”³⁶ Responding to the work of Sander Gilman, Boyarin shows that in response to the anti-semitic portrayals of the Jewish man as feminized, homosexual and overly “carnal,” Freud constructed an image of Judaism which was *more* masculine and more supremely spiritual [*geistig*]. Like Boyarin, Jay Geller finds that there is ample evidence throughout Freud’s oeuvre (not only in *Moses*) that he displaced ethno-religious

³⁶ Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

difference onto gender and sexual difference. Thus, for example, in Freud's brief allusions to circumcision, Geller shows that the "root" of anti-semitism is quickly transformed into an apologetic explanation for misogyny.³⁷ More generally, Gilman, Boyarin and Geller see Freud as both a symptom and an expression of the complex relationship between anti-semitism (as well as Jewish self-hatred), misogyny and homophobia in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe, particularly as human difference became a matter of secular scientific study.³⁸

Where these scholars see Freud's *Moses* as a sort of failed attempt at socio-cultural assimilation, Jan Assmann reads it as an attempt to heal the wounds at the heart of the Mosaic distinction. While he does not focus so much on Freud's attempt to "come to terms" with his Jewishness, Assmann admits that his study of *Moses the Egyptian* (1997) is homologous to Freud's work in that it was written at least in part as an attempt to "come to terms with" his position as a German Egyptologist writing two generations after the catastrophe which Freud would never know in its entirety.³⁹ Rather than seeing Freud's work as an ambivalent or vexed response to his Jewishness, however, Assmann shows that Freud's Egyptomania was part of a larger attempt to reexamine the Mosaic distinction and to overcome the violence perpetrated in its name. Not only Freud, but also Manetho, Strabo, Toland and John Spencer proposed that Moses was actually an

³⁷ I discuss this in more detail in my third chapter. See Daniel Boyarin, "What Does a Jew Want? or, The Political Meaning of the Phallus," *The Psychoanalysis of Race*, ed. Christopher Lane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Jay Geller, "The Godfather of Psychoanalysis: Circumcision, Antisemitism, Homosexuality, and Freud's 'Fighting Jew'." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67.2 (1999).

³⁸ In a number of recent essays which uncannily anticipate and shape my own reflections in this dissertation, Jay Geller has catalogued the history of intense interest in Freud and the Jewish Question. See, for example, Jay Geller, "Identifying 'Someone Who Is Himself One of Them': Recent Studies of Freud's Jewish Identity." *Religious Studies Review* 23.4 (1997); *Atheist Jew or Atheist Jew: Freud's Jewish Question and Ours.* *Modern Judaism* 26.1 (2006).

³⁹ Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*, 6.

Egyptian, even though “there are no traces of his earthly existence outside the tradition.”⁴⁰ With the institution of monotheism, Assmann explains, a new unbridgeable distinction emerged between “Israel in truth” and “Egypt in error.” Remembering Egypt became a part of the conversion process, “a liberation from one’s own past which is no longer one’s own.”⁴¹ Thus, the discovery of an “Egyptian truth” becomes a way of invalidating “the Mosaic distinction and deconstruct[ing] the space separated by this distinction.”⁴²

Assmann’s utopian interpretation of Freud’s deconstruction of the Mosaic distinction leaves an uncomfortable residue which he addresses in his more recent work.⁴³ While he does not explicitly equate the Mosaic distinction with Jewish difference in *Moses the Egyptian*, he suggests that the Egyptian Moses is a fantasy about overcoming such differences, as if doing away with the gap between true and false religion would also do away with religious antagonism and anti-semitism. This, it seems, is dangerously close to the idea (popular in Germany and elsewhere in the early twentieth century) that the Jews should completely assimilate so that they would no longer be so “foreign.”⁴⁴ In his more recent work, Assmann retracts his earlier portrayal of the Mosaic distinction as a

⁴⁰ Ibid., 2.

⁴¹ Ibid., 7.

⁴² Ibid., 8.

⁴³ Jan Assmann, “Der Fortschritt in der Geistigkeit. Sigmund Freuds Konstruktion des Judentums.” *Psyche* 2.56 (2002); *Die Mosaische Unterscheidung: oder der Preis des Monotheismus* (Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2003).

⁴⁴ While this idea was popular amongst both Jews and non-Jews, the non-Jewish version has often been interpreted as anti-semitic in that it seeks to “do away with” Jewishness (and hence, the Jews). An interesting example of this conflict is an essay by Ernest Jones (Freud’s biographer and disciple), in which he expresses support for the idea that the Jewish Question could be solved by assimilation. While Jones attempts to demonstrate that he is not anti-semitic, his essay has been read as “anti-Jewish bigotry.” See Ernest Jones, “The Psychology of the Jewish Question,” *Essays in Applied Psycho-Analysis*, vol. 1 (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1951); Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, 54-55.

trauma at the heart of Western civilization. Now, he explains, he sees that Freud portrays monotheism as a Jewish “achievement [*Errungenschaft*],” deriving most particularly from the law against physically or nominally representing G-d. Like Boyarin, Assmann sees Freud’s emphasis on the Jewish “Advance in Intellectuality [*Geistigkeit*]” as an inversion of the historical distinctions between Judaism and Christianity.⁴⁵ That is, since Paul, the Jewish people have been portrayed as “mired in the flesh” and the “letter of the law,” whereas Christianity had supposedly ascended to the heights of universal spirituality. Freud, however, argues that Judaism remained the most supremely “spiritual [*geistig*],” whereas Christianity had regressed to the primitive idolatry which had characterized Egyptian polytheism. Thus, Assmann sees Freud’s *Moses* (and psychoanalysis more generally) as an affirmation of the Jewish aspiration to free the soul from the captivity of compulsive idolatry of the material world.⁴⁶ While Assmann does not explicitly address the consequences of this “exit” from the physical realm, I extend his thesis in order to confront the question of how Jewishness can be “racial” without being defined by particular physical characteristics.

Like Assmann (in his earlier work), Ilse Grubrich-Simitis also sees Freud’s *Moses* as a utopian vision, an attempt to “relativize *one* of the causes of the millennia-old phenomenon of anti-semitism.”⁴⁷ Where Assmann reads Freud’s work in the context of Egyptology and comparative religion, Grubrich-Simitis reads it in the context of psychoanalytic history and theory. Specifically, she interprets *Moses* as a “daydream,” an attempt to

⁴⁵ Assmann, “Der Fortschritt in der Geistigkeit. Sigmund Freuds Konstruktion des Judentums,” 167-168.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: 169.

⁴⁷ Grubrich-Simitis, *Early Freud and Late Freud: Reading Anew Studies on Hysteria and Moses and Monotheism*, 77.

fulfill a wish in phantasy: to allay the grinding disquietude he felt about the future of his life-work.... Freud sought to sketch out a confidence-inspiring image of the future: by the example of the fate of the man Moses and of monotheism, he demonstrated to himself how an uncomfortable, demanding doctrine does not perish even when politically persecuted and suppressed, but, on the contrary, returns from repression after a long interval, and relies precisely on this diphasic character for the development of its full effectuality.⁴⁸

Rather than emphasizing the Egyptian origins of Freud's Moses, Grubrich-Simitis notes that Freud's more radical move was to make the "chosenness" of the Jews a matter of human selection. Not God the Father, but the *man* Moses was responsible for making the children of Israel "his" people, and for instituting the difference which would incite the murderous envy of all others. Grubrich-Simitis suggests that since Moses (not God) is to blame, Freud thought that it may be possible to overcome the "paranoid split" between Jews and non-Jews. In his most speculative moments, she suggests, Freud may have hoped that psychoanalysis could initiate a collective healing process.⁴⁹

In his *Psychotheology of Everyday Life* (2001), Eric Santner presents an extended response to the notion that the Mosaic distinction is responsible for differences which must be overcome. By reading Freud's works through the lens of Franz Rosenzweig's writings (and vice versa), Santner shows that both thinkers were engaged in projects which propose difference as constitutive of the human condition in general, but perhaps more particularly, of the spiritual burden of the Jewish people. Where Assmann and Grubrich-Simitis envision a global "cultural pluralism," Santner sees Freud attending to

⁴⁸ Ibid., 61-62.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 77-78.

the difference “opened by the ‘Mosaic distinction.’”⁵⁰ Thus, the focus is not so much on “external differences” which make a person or community feel “foreign,” but on the uncanny differences “internal to any and every space we call home.”⁵¹ Recalling Hegel’s famous phrase that the “enigmas of the ancient Egyptians were also enigmas for the Egyptians themselves,” Santner suggests that the strangeness of the “foreign Other” can only be understood when we understand how strange the Other is to himself.⁵² Thus, Santner sees the vision of “tolerance and multiculturalism” (promoted by Assmann and so many others inside and outside the Academy) as a defense against the strange and uncanny presence which characterizes human existence “not only in extreme situations but *every day*.”⁵³

Like Santner, I read Freud’s work as an attempt to confront the uncanny differences defining both the human condition and the Jewish condition more particularly. Where Santner uses philosophical terms to confront these questions, I approach Freud’s texts with a literary critic’s attention to their idiosyncrasies and a historian’s attention to their broader scientific and political contexts. Having written much of my dissertation, I came across a passage by Grubrich-Simitis which characterizes what I hope to have achieved through my own somewhat idiosyncratic methodology. She advocates a (non-Lacanian) “return to Freud’s texts—however out of keeping this may be with the times”:

⁵⁰ Edward Said develops a similar thesis about the “shared brokenness” defining all communities, though he poses his argument in political rather than philosophical terms. Edward Said, *Freud and the Non-European* (New York: Verso, in association with the Freud Museum, London, 2003).

⁵¹ Eric L. Santner, *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 5.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 6-7.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 7.

a radical reading anew of his writings, with a view to rediscovering them or indeed to discovering them for the first time... a particular reading attitude is recommended, made up of unobtrusiveness, careful alertness and respect even for the most seemingly insignificant detail—an oscillation between proximity and distance that will assure the texts of sufficient free space to reveal themselves in all their independence.... the reader must approach them [Freud's texts] *not* from a meta-level, *not* as it were looking down from above, and *not* from a vantage point of 'superior' knowledge—that is, *not* solely from the plane of present-day psychoanalytic theory and practice. The risk otherwise is of encountering nothing but his own conscious or unconscious expectations or, alternatively, the babel of later interpreters' voices drowning out everything else... The attitude recommended to the reader can perhaps best be likened to that of 'evenly suspended attention', which we assume in relation to the analysand's communications in the course of our analytic work.⁵⁴

While I feel an “elective” affinity with Grubrich-Simitis' approach, I am not part of the community which she addresses in the above statement. First, I have had no problem trying to read Freud's writings “anew,” since when I began this project, I was reading many of his texts for the first time. Second, since I am neither a psychoanalyst nor a psychoanalytic patient, I cannot draw on “our” analytic work. This outsider-status puts me both at an advantage and at a disadvantage in attempting to read Freud's work “radically anew.” Unlike many of the scholars from whose work I extensively draw, I have no need to emancipate myself from Freud's authoritative sway—I do not worship him and I have no need to take him down. Thus, my advantage is that I stand outside the “compact majority” of psychoanalysis. The disadvantage, of course, is that while I can read about the phenomenon of psychoanalysis, I am presumably not as sensitive to its

⁵⁴ Grubrich-Simitis, *Early Freud and Late Freud: Reading Anew Studies on Hysteria and Moses and Monotheism*, 4-5.

inner workings and the subtleties of psychoanalytic interaction which characterizes some of the scholarship I most admire.⁵⁵

In both psychoanalysis and Judaism, there is a homologous sense that individuals are either on the inside or the outside. Very often, when something is written or said about the Jewish people, the primary question in people's minds is whether the author is a Jew or a non-Jew, whether her statements point to a latent anti-semitism or to a familiar sense of ironic pride or "ambivalence." Discussions of psychoanalysis and of the Jewish people often turn around a central concern about their future existence. For protective insiders, the question is how to "protect" or "salvage" psychoanalysis, even as it is bombarded and bashed in the popular press and by "serious" scientists (MD's, neurobiologists, etc.). Unlike many other scientific theories which have fallen by the wayside—nearly forgotten except as blips in the forward progress of science—psychoanalysis continues to rankle, to make headlines and to elicit entire books, even if many of these are dedicated to proving it "wrong." Similarly, while there is probably no way to "measure" anti-semitism, since World War II, there is a sense that the Jewish people have attained a certain amount of presence and political power which would have been almost unthinkable only a century ago. Nonetheless, a quick search on the internet will reveal that anti-semitism is alive and well, that it is, in Freud's words, a form of "undying hatred."⁵⁶ In both the case of psychoanalysis and of Jewishness, opposition, denunciation, and anxiety seem to be some sort of discomfoting evidence—proof-positive—of their vitality.

⁵⁵ This includes the work of Grubrich-Simitis, Nicolas Abraham, Maria Torok and Nicholas Rand.

⁵⁶ The very use of the term "undying" to refer to anti-semitism gestures toward the more common usage of this adjective to describe both love (immortal love), and the Jewish people as an Eternal, undead, wandering people.

E. Definitions and Disclaimers

Throughout the dissertation, I refer to the term *Jewishness*, a word which is unfortunately awkward and uncommon in the English language. In German, there is the word *Judentum* which encompasses *Jewry* (the Jewish people), *Judaism* (the Jewish religion), and finally, *Jewishness* (the character, customs and experience of being Jewish). The inclusivity of the word *Judentum* also begs the question: if *Judentum* is not exactly a religion like Christianity, and not exactly a “race” (since Jews come in many different colors, shapes and sizes around the world), what is it? Is it an “ethnicity”? An ethical position? A set of rituals or a set of texts? A ritual or an intellectual tradition? A tradition of interpretation or a predisposition? Is it an identity which one chooses or one which is imposed?⁵⁷ Jay Geller has noted that “how one translates *Judentum* into English betrays one’s agenda.”⁵⁸ However, I am not so certain, for while the translation may betray one’s focus (sociological, religious or cultural), this should not be confused with one’s agenda. It is possible to focus on the sociological aspects of the religion, the religious aspects of the culture, or (as in my case), the ways in which these three terms endlessly invoke one another.

While *Jewishness* would seem most similar to the notion of “Jewish identity,” I choose not to use this phrase at least partially because of its association with the “identity

⁵⁷ I draw here from Jay Geller’s excellent summaries of these questions and of the immense (and quickly growing) literature on Freud and the Jewish Question in his two overlapping essays: Geller, “Identifying ‘Someone Who Is Himself One of Them’: Recent Studies of Freud’s Jewish Identity.”; *Atheist Jew or Atheist Jew: Freud’s Jewish Question and Ours.*”

⁵⁸ Geller, “*Atheist Jew or Atheist Jew: Freud’s Jewish Question and Ours,*” 1.

politics” of the 1980s and 90s which primarily focused on individuals’ personal feelings about their ethnic, cultural or racial backgrounds. While it is probably impossible to avoid engaging with the affective emotions which shape identity (including my own), throughout the dissertation I attempt to focus on the political, historical and scientific contexts which shape the very language which individuals use to discuss their identities. I see identity as something which is multi-faceted and as something which is too often facilely regarded as a matter of “choice” and “elective affinities.” I am not trying to re-establish a fixed notion of identity, but to investigate the ways in which identity is often discussed and experienced—sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously—as something which is quite difficult to change. Finally, my choice of the term *Jewishness* intentionally provokes the question of whether it is even possible to speak of such a “quality” or “character.”

Throughout my dissertation, I generally try to avoid the terms “ambivalence” and “identity” even as these words might be obvious ways to describe what Freud is talking about. Let me try to explain. Freud, of course, explored the concept of ambivalence in *Totem and Taboo* (1913) as well as other works. According to Freud, ambivalence is the condition of simultaneously feeling both love and hate towards a person or thing.⁵⁹ While he speaks of ambivalent feelings for the analyst (particularly through transference), for one’s parents, and for “the father,” Freud never uses the word “ambivalent” to speak

⁵⁹ Nonetheless, when speaking of Jewishness in the twentieth century, the term “ambivalence” has often been used to refer to the self-conscious wavering between self-hatred on the one hand, and “ethnic pride” on the other. Though the characters in say, Woody Allen’s films or Phillip Roth’s novels, have often been described as “ambivalent” about their Jewishness, such a description seems mis-applied. While a person might hate his body, he cannot entirely escape it. In such cases, then, “ambivalence” refers not to a simultaneous love-hate-feeling, but to a feeling of being trapped, a discomfort with one’s own body and the world in which one finds oneself.

about his feelings of Jewishness. I do not use the word “ambivalent” to describe Freud’s relationship to things Jewish because to me, the word (in its Anglo-American context) suggests that Jewishness can be something measured like sugar, salt and pepper or like the charge of a battery. Ambivalence is weak (someone who is ambivalent about her Jewishness is regarded as “less Jewish”), whereas ethnic pride is strong (a “proudly Jewish” person is regarded as “more Jewish”). Indeed, despite the very common usage of the term “ambivalence” to describe people’s feelings about their Jewishness, what is often being described is something more akin to *discomfort*. Since Jewishness is not a thing or a person, it cannot be the object of hatred or love. To suggest that it can be hated or loved (bought or sold?) is to reduce the enormous overwhelming complexity of the notion—Jewishness, Judentum, Judaism—into an alarmingly narrow object. Indeed, if I can be a little extreme for a moment, to reduce Judaism to this level is to suggest that it can be understood, that its existence can be grasped—and perhaps erased—by mere mortals. Thus, I see Jewishness and its “ambivalencies” along the lines of pregnancy: you can’t be a little bit pregnant, even if you’re feeling kind of miserable.

In describing his own Jewishness, Freud used the word “race” cautiously. In his published works, in fact, he is far more critical of the term than in his private letters. For example, in his “Autobiographical Study” he writes that when he entered the university he noticed that he “was expected to feel myself inferior and an alien because I was a Jew. I refused absolutely to do the first of these things. I have never been able to see why I should feel ashamed of my descent or, as people were beginning to say, of my ‘race.’”⁶⁰ The word is in quotation marks, as if to distance himself from the term, to question its

⁶⁰ Freud, “Autobiographical Study,” 9.

self-evidentiality. Meanwhile, in a letter to Jung, Freud admitted that Ernest Jones gave him “a feeling of, I was almost going to say racial strangeness [*Rassenfremdheit*],” intensified by Jones’ complete denial of the role of heredity.⁶¹ Here, Freud’s hesitancy in using the term “race” is compounded by the odd fact that he is writing to Jung, another non-Jew with whom he also felt a certain (though in this case unspoken) “racial strangeness.” Indeed, on the very same day on which he wrote the letter to Jung, Freud wrote another letter to his friend Karl Abraham. Here he famously declared that whereas with Jung, he was always on guard for expressions of anti-semitism, with his Jewish friend he felt a certain “racial kinship.”⁶² In his correspondence with his colleagues, there is a sense that there are certain things—“Jewish” things and “psychoanalytic” things—which could only be discussed “amongst ourselves.”⁶³ Though Freud insisted that there should be no difference between the “results” in Jewish and Aryan “science,” he acknowledged that “the presentation of them may vary.”⁶⁴ Despite his own protestations to the contrary, it is evident that the very language used to “present” the scientific “results” could shape the nature and terms of the science itself.

Though Freud only hesitantly used the word “race” to describe the Jewish people, there are a number of reasons why I choose to call his theory of Jewishness a “racial” theory. To begin with, there is an extensive scholarship on the “racialization” of the

⁶¹ May 3, 1908, Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, trans. R.F.C. Hull and Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 145.

⁶² May 3, 1908, Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham, *A Psychoanalytic Dialogue: Letters of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham, 1907-1926*, trans. Bernard Marsh and Hilda C. Abraham, eds. Hilda C. Abraham and Ernst L. Freud (New York: Basic Books / Hogarth Press, 1965), 34.

⁶³ Freud maintained a sort of protective secrecy not only about “Jewish” matters, but also about certain potentially dangerous aspects of psychoanalysis, particularly the occult and counter-transference. I discuss this in more detail in my fourth chapter.

⁶⁴ Letter #402, Freud to Ferenczi, June 8, 1913, Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi*, trans. Peter T. Hoffer, ed. André Haynal, vol. I-III (1993-2000).

Jewish people in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Europe and America. Jews were discussed as being different not only because of their “faith” or traditions, but because of supposedly *a priori* differences which were thought to reside somewhere in the body: in the blood, on the penis, in the very desires which raged inside each individual Jewish body. While this notion of Jewish difference emerged in Europe as early as the sixteenth century in the laws regarding *limpieza de sangre*,⁶⁵ in the nineteenth century such difference began to be discussed in terms of the newly developing fields of biology and evolutionary theory. Sander Gilman’s extensive work on Jewish racial discourse in the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries has laid much of the groundwork for my own scholarship on Freud and on questions of race and Jewishness.

While Gilman treats racial discourse on Jewishness mostly as an expression of anti-semitism and Jewish self-hatred, recent work by John Efron and Eric Goldstein, for example, has attended to the ways in which European and American Jews used racialized language to defend the Jewish people and to develop positive forms of self-definition in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁶⁶ What has gone less examined, however, is how these two forms of Jewish definition are not necessarily easily distinguished—the positive from the negative, the internal definitions from the reactionary defenses. Modern historians have made much of the fact that Germans defined their national identity by cordoning it off from the Other: to be German was to be not Jewish. However, the same could be said for Jewish self-identification with a twist: to be Jewish is to be not not-Jewish (gentile, *goy*, *nochri*). This model of Jewish definition

⁶⁵ Yerushalmi, *Assimilation and Racial Anti-Semitism: The Iberian and the German Models*.

⁶⁶ John M. Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Eric L. Goldstein, “Different Blood Flows in Our Veins!: Race and Jewish Self-Definition in Late Nineteenth Century America.” *American Jewish History* 85.1 (1997): 28-29.

can be traced back to at least the fourth century, when, partly in response to Paul's assertions of the universal brotherhood of Jesus Christ, the rabbis established genealogy as the primary definition of Jewishness. As Daniel Boyarin has suggested, Jews came to be defined by genealogy at least in part as a reaction against the emerging cult of Christianity. Thus, where "the Church needed 'Judaism' to be a religious 'Other,' and maintained and reified this term as the name of a religion," the Rabbis needed others to maintain a sense of their own community as an emerging "*ethnos*."⁶⁷ Thus, I see Freud's theorization of Jewishness as part of larger debates and *dialogues* about heredity, race and the evolution of human difference in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In referring to Freud's theory of Jewishness as a "racial theory of memory," I am explicitly engaging questions about the "proper" definition of the Jewish people. Indeed, it is no coincidence that a renewed interest in Freud's final book has emerged at a time in which Ethnic Studies has gained a prominent place in the Academy, even as Jewish Studies often remains firmly outside these departments and discussions.⁶⁸ The question of where to locate Jewishness and Judaism was also central to discussions at the turn of the twentieth century. As John Efron writes in the introduction to *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, racial scientists attempted to confront questions such as the following: "What are the Jews? ... Do the Jews constitute a single, stable racial type, or are they made up of many races? Are [their]... dispositions... hereditary or environmental?"⁶⁹ Throughout the dissertation, I show that the answers to

⁶⁷ Daniel Boyarin, "The Christian Invention of Judaism: The Theodosian Empire and the Rabbinic Refusal of Religion." *Representations* 85 (2004): 22.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*: 21-22; Geller, "Identifying 'Someone Who Is Himself One of Them': Recent Studies of Freud's Jewish Identity," 324.

⁶⁹ Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, 8.

these questions are not a matter of “either-or,” but rather of developing an understanding of how the terms and disciplines define and relate to one another.

It is no coincidence that secular racial definitions of Jewishness emerged at a time when the particularity of the Jews was becoming less obvious in an everyday kind of way, when, in Slavoj Žižek’s words, “in real life, with the explosion of capitalism, features attributed to the Jews were extended over the whole of society (since commodity exchange became hegemonic).” Žižek argues that it was “at the very moment when the Jews were deprived of their specific properties which made it easy to distinguish them from the rest of the population, that their ‘curse’ was inscribed into their very being.”⁷⁰ And yet, if Jewishness was newly inscribed into the Jew’s “very being,” it was not only in the form of “curses,” but also blessings and spiritual obligations. This new indeterminacy and invisibility affected both Jews and non-Jews in their attempt to distinguish themselves from Others, the inside from the outside, and the familiar from the strange. When Freud entered this scene, he used this same language of the “alien and strange” to show that humans are never “masters” in their own house: within each psyche, there are strange and “alien” elements, “foreign bodies” which can overwhelm a person (or a nation). Finally, in *Moses and Monotheism*, he attempted to make sense of the origins of this “foreignness,” the institution of a difference which has guaranteed the survival not only of the “undying hatred” of the Jews, but also of the eternal existence of the Jewish people and their tradition.

⁷⁰ Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 289-290.

F. What's Next? (The Chapter Outline)

Freud's theory of Jewishness is problematic: it is vexing in its similarities with racial theories which seem to limit the horizon of the individual, and it is potentially illuminating in its affinity with theories of memory which emphasize the creative relationship of the individual to her past. On the surface, it is comparable to any number of theories of the nineteenth and early twentieth century which combined the realms of heredity and memory for diverse reasons and with varied effects.⁷¹ Freud's notion of "inherited memory" is made more shocking by the fact that the memories which are supposedly inherited are traces of a bizarre, complicated and violent narrative. The weight and the challenge of Freud's theory of Jewishness resides in his insistence that a) these events really occurred, as far as any "history" really occurs, and b) that we literally and biologically inherit the traces of these events. Throughout the dissertation, I explore these two aspects of Freud's theory of Jewishness. What emerges is a narrative which uses Freud's final book as a point of departure in order to explore questions posed by psychoanalytic theory and history.

In the first chapter, "Freud's *Moses* and the Foundations of Psychoanalysis," I explore why Freud felt the need to insist on the literal reality of his narrative of Moses the Egyptian. I argue that the epistemological questions of *Moses and Monotheism* are "new editions" of some of the most fundamental conundrums of psychoanalytic theory. I trace his concerns about the "reality" of his narrative to two significant episodes in the history

⁷¹ Laura Otis' work on the phenomenon of "organic memory" paints a broad picture of the blending of heredity and memory, particularly at the turn of the twentieth century. However, rather than reading the enormous collection of texts closely for their internal complexity, she almost exclusively emphasizes the (obvious) racist rhetoric of this phenomenon. Laura Otis, *Organic Memory: History and the Body in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

of psychoanalysis: first, his initial establishment of psychoanalysis as a theory and practice in the 1890s, and second, his re-assessment of his theory in the wake of his relationship with Carl Gustav Jung between 1907 and 1914. In both cases, Freud's attempts to establish psychoanalysis as a hybrid kind of science—both historical and universal, both medical and theoretical—forced him to acknowledge the inexplicable remnants of analysis and the gaps in the foundations of his theory.

Rather than simply tracing his patients' problems to their "degenerate" family lines, in the 1890s Freud turned to their memories of childhood experiences in order to reconstruct the origins of their illnesses. However, in order to prove that they suffered from "reminiscences," he had to demonstrate that they were not dishonest degenerates and that their narratives could be trusted as truthful accounts of their childhoods. Though Freud initially resisted the idea that his patients' memories extended further back than their childhoods, in conversations with Jung in 1907-1914, he eventually incorporated the idea that individual dispositions were the result of ancestral experiences. Throughout this chapter, *Moses* emerges as a case history, of both Freud and Moses, but also of their creations, psychoanalysis and *Judentum*. The Jungian criticism of Freud's insistence on the reality of primal memories and sexuality is compared to the Pauline criticism of the Judaic preoccupation with sexuality and literality. By acknowledging that neither psychoanalysis nor Judaism would ever extend a *universal* reach, Freud suggests that such particularity may paradoxically be their most critical strength distinguishing them both from their "opposites"—Judaism from Christianity, and psychoanalysis from Jungian psychotherapy.

Freud's insistence on the "historical truth" of his version of the Moses story may seem strange, but his insistence on the idea that the memory of these events had been inherited by the Jewish people has been regarded as even more problematic, particularly in light of later developments in the scientific theorization of evolution and heredity. Since his interest in inherited memory seems similar to the outmoded "Lamarckian" idea that acquired characteristics can be inherited, many scholars have speculated as to why he continued to insist on such "pseudoscience" in the 1930s, when it seemed that he should have known better. Rather than seeing the question of Freud's Lamarckism in "purely" scientific terms, in the second chapter, "Freud's 'Lamarckism' and the Politics of Racial Science" I show that Freud became uneasy about insisting on the inheritance of acquired characters not because it was scientifically outmoded but because it was politically charged and suspiciously regarded by the Nazis as Bolshevik and Jewish. I argue that Freud's ideas about race, heredity and evolution need to be re-examined with an attention to the ways in which scientific debates were inextricably linked with politics. Where Freud seemed to use the idea of inherited memory as a way of universalizing his theory beyond the individual cultural milieu of his patients, such a notion of universal science itself became politically charged and identified as particularly Jewish. The vexed and speculative interpretations of Freud's Lamarckism are situated as part of a larger post-War cultural reaction against Communism on the one hand (particularly in the 1950s when Lamarckism was associated with the failures of Lysenko), and on the other hand, against any scientific concepts of race in the wake of the Holocaust.

In the third chapter, "Regeneration and Evolution: Race, Culture and the Circumcision Question," I shift from looking at the external politics accompanying

Freud's theorization of heredity and Jewishness, and move to a more internal exploration of his theoretical development. Freud was well aware that there was ample evidence to suggest that acquired characteristics were not inherited. Indeed, the most paradigmatic mark of Jewishness—circumcision—would seem to contradict this idea since it must be performed in every generation in order for its effects to be “transmitted.” In this chapter, I show that some of the key concepts of psychoanalytic theory were shaped by Freud's attempts to confront the questions raised by circumcision and its place in debates about race, heredity and evolution in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rather than Lamarck, it was the most vociferous anti-Lamarckian, August Weismann, whose theories shaped Freud's explorations of the blurry lines between the physical and psychical realms, the notions of race and culture, and the domains of heredity and experience. In applying Weismann's germ-plasm theory to his structure of the psyche, Freud developed a paradoxical theory of heredity and evolution which anticipates his later theory of Jewishness. By incorporating the idea that phylogenetic memory is inherited, Freud was able to maintain the tensions between these terms, both within his theory of Jewishness as well as psychoanalytic theory more broadly. More broadly, circumcision emerges as a key term in an exploration of the historical attempts to distinguish and to integrate concepts of race and culture.

Though Freud insisted on the biological inheritance of Jewishness (and memory more generally), his explanation for the actual medium of transmission was by no means straightforward. In the fourth chapter, “Secret Inclinations Beyond Direct Communication,” I show how Freud's explanations of intergenerational transmission [*Übertragung*] are shaped by his earlier discussions of the psychoanalytic concept of

transference [*Übertragung*] and of telepathic thought-transference [*Gedankübertragung*]. From 1910 to 1933, in published and unpublished essays and especially in his correspondence with Carl Gustav Jung and Sandor Ferenczi, Freud explored the anxieties and excitement about these diverse forms of transmissions which seem dangerous precisely because they are ungraspable, not easily definable as material or immaterial. Freud's discussions of intergenerational transmission in *Moses and Monotheism* retrospectively illuminate his earlier meditations on transference and telepathy. Particularly in his discussions of these mysterious transmissions, he flirts with the margins of "science," with the irrationality which haunts rationality. In this chapter, I explore the question of why the occult language of telepathy, ghosts and the uncanny is intertwined with the language used to describe the Jewish subject, both by Jews and non-Jews. Further, I consider the question of this mysterious transmission of Jewishness in terms of the classic literary debate between Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida about whether "the letter always arrives at its destination." Freud suggests that to be Jewish is to be caught up in an interminable process of transference which threatens the borders between past and present and between self and Other. Such phenomena, he suggests, may be "more powerful the less they are suspected."

Where Freud explored the mysterious modes of *ghostly* transmission throughout his career, in *Moses and Monotheism*, he insisted that *Geistigkeit* [intellectual-spirituality, but also *ghostliness*] was the defining feature of the Jewish tradition. In the fifth chapter, "Immaterial Materiality: The 'Special Case' of Jewish Tradition," I explore the tension between Freud's insistence on the supreme *Geistigkeit* of Jewish tradition and his emphasis on the transmission of Jewishness through biological genealogy, a medium

which seems utterly material. Freud suggests that the Jewish tradition has survived precisely because it is genealogically transmitted from generation to generation. However, in order to make sense of the apparent contradiction of the supreme *Geistigkeit* and the base materiality of biology, he needed to maintain biology in a realm “beyond sensory perception.” Thus, he knowingly and ironically inverts the “matrilineal principle” of Jewish genealogy, making the matter of biological inheritance a purely *geistig*—intellectual-spiritual—issue, based not on material evidence but on “hypotheses” and “inferences.” Like psychoanalysis more generally, Freud’s theory of Jewishness emerges as both a scientific theory which challenges the scientific standards of proof and evidence and a cultural theory which expands the boundaries of what defines “culture.”

In defining Jewishness through the inheritance of memory, Freud illuminates and integrates two seemingly contradictory aspects of Jewish definition: that is, in the most material sense, Jewishness is collectively and ineluctably determined by descent, while in a more non-material sense, Jewishness is individually and consciously determined by one’s beliefs, choices, and practices. While many Jewish leaders and scholars have understandably rejected the “racial” (biological, ineluctable) definitions of Jewishness, laypeople continue to attempt to define their own Jewishness (as well as others’) via lineage, genetics and “inherited” history. Though my dissertation is primarily a historical analysis of Freud’s work, it engages and is informed by contemporary debates regarding the cultural and scientific definitions of Jewishness and other racial, cultural and religious groups. My work addresses the question as to why appeals to racial heredity are so persistent even as the scientific establishment has roundly rejected biological definitions of “race.” A close examination of the relationship between Freud’s theory and his

historical situation may allow us to reconsider current uses of racial identifications without immediately turning away in horror. Indeed, while the word “race” may be used less often than a generation ago, its terms emerge as central points of controversy in disputes over Israeli citizenship, race-based benefits, and definitions of indigenous populations. My study of Freud’s theory of Jewishness suggests that while there are major dangers in appealing to the language of racial difference, there are even greater pitfalls in ignoring how such appeals continue to shape our lives every day.

Chapter 1

Freud's *Moses* and the Foundations of Psychoanalysis

A. A Case of Historical Fiction

If we could simply sweep aside the bizarre narrative of Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* as a myth or as a novel, it would be far easier to accept Freud's theory of Jewishness as a convincing (if problematic) interpretation of an age-old problem. In this chapter, I argue that to do this would be to overlook the critical questions which *Moses and Monotheism* poses, both for psychoanalysis and for discussions of Jewish identity. Though Freud originally conceived of this work as a "historical novel," he eventually rejected this genre-classification and referred to it as a "purely historical study."¹ In the first paragraph of the book, he insists that he is interested in clarifying "the facts" in order to establish "the truth." Nonetheless, he repeatedly expressed anxieties about the foundations of the work. In the conclusion of the first part of the book, he complains that he needs more "firm" facts "in order to defend the wealth of emerging possibilities against the criticism of their being a product of the imagination and too remote from reality."² And again, in the opening of the second essay, he notes that he feels hesitant about publicly proclaiming his hypotheses "since they were based only on psychological

¹ Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, *S.E.*, vol. XXIII (1939), 52.

² *Ibid.*, 16.

probabilities and lacked any *objective evidence*.”³ While he thought that his theory about Moses was of utmost importance, he felt “the need to beware of exposing it without a secure basis to the critical assaults of the world around one—like a bronze statue with feet of clay.”⁴ After composing these first two essays, in December 1934 he wrote to his friend Arnold Zweig to say that though his idea about Moses being an Egyptian was the starting point of the present work “it is not the essential point.” The problem was not “any inner uncertainty... but the fact that I was obliged to construct so imposing a statue upon feet of clay, so that any fool could topple it.”⁵ While the “statue” is simply a common figure of speech, Freud’s recurring use of this image to describe his *Moses* work “conjures” up an image of Michaelangelo’s *Moses*, about which Freud had written an essay twenty years before.⁶ Indeed, since the apparent subject of the new work was also Moses (and monotheism), it seems clear that the statue to which he refers in these passages must be Moses.⁷ However, I want to suggest that the statue is not (only) Moses, but psychoanalysis itself: if he worried about the “clay” feet supporting his work, he worried about the very foundation of psychoanalysis.

Moses and Monotheism is atypical of Freud’s works not least because the text is filled with anxious comments, repetitions and gaps. Many scholars interpret these as

³ Ibid., 17.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ December 16, 1934, Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig, *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig*, trans. Elaine Robson-Scott and William Robson-Scott (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1970), 98.

⁶ Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 22.

⁷ Jan Assmann reads the “feet of clay” as “the figure of history” and the “bronze statue” as “the figure of memory.” Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 148.

signs of Freud's conflicted feelings about his Jewish identity.⁸ In contrast, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi and Michel de Certeau both read these textual idiosyncracies as representative of a "dilemma" far more "intrinsic" to the book,⁹ a discomfort not with Jewishness but with exploring new territory on the "*foreign* ground in the field of history"¹⁰ and in the lands of Egypt.¹¹ "For the first time," Yerushalmi explains, Freud "must attempt to corroborate a psychoanalytically derived truth with historical facts quite beyond the purview of psychoanalysis."¹² In this chapter, I argue that Freud was confronted with the dilemma of what could count as "historical facts" from the conception of anything which might be called a "psychoanalytically derived truth." The "dilemma" is intrinsic not only to the story of Moses and the Jewish people, but to the founding narrative of psychoanalysis itself.

Freud's examinations of the origins of the Jewish people forced him to re-examine the scope of psychoanalysis. Ilse Grubrich-Simitis suggests that in his final book Freud explicitly looked back at his career and returned "to his early reflections on the traumatic genesis of psychic illness... to weave them into the context of his current

⁸ Marthe Robert is just one of many who read the odd style of Freud's last book as "symptomatic" of his life-long ambivalence regarding his Jewish identity. See Marthe Robert, *From Oedipus to Moses: Freud's Jewish Identity*, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1977). For a thorough treatment of historians (up to 1991) who read *Moses and Monotheism* as evidence of Freud's ultimate rejection of his Jewish identity, see Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, 115-116, n125.

⁹ Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, 21.

¹⁰ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 310. De Certeau emphasizes the novelistic aspects of Freud's last book, and suggests that the process of creative reconstruction may actually represent all historical writing, not only Freud's.

¹¹ Similarly, Assmann notes that Freud "began by writing a historical novel and ended up by using almost juridical forms of authentication to present his historical evidence." Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*, 148.

¹² Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, 21.

research.”¹³ Whereas Grubrich-Simitis sees *Moses* as a “daydream” in which Freud identified with the triumphs of the man, Moses,¹⁴ I argue that he ultimately realized that Moses was not quite as universally triumphant as he had first imagined. Freud’s *Moses* can be read as a “case history” not only of Freud and Moses, but also of their “creations,” respectively, Jewish tradition and psychoanalysis. And if it is a daydream, it is one which is disturbed by the threatening noises from the outside world. As Eric Santner has noted, at the moment when Freud’s “ego was most in danger, most in need of support, he subjects himself as well as his coreligionists to a sort of narcissistic injury.”¹⁵ Not only did Freud introduce “impurity and secondariness” into the heart of the narrative of the Jewish people,¹⁶ but by extension, he also suggests that the origins of psychoanalysis were impure and secondary. Where Grubrich-Simitis sees this work as an attempt to “fulfill a wish in fantasy,” I see it as a sobering examination of the most unsettling aspects of psychoanalysis, and by extension, Judaism. Psychoanalysis may function as a provocative model of understanding and interpretation, but its emphasis on historical narrativity averts the possibility of universalization. Finally, Freud’s history of the Jewish people suggests a theory of difference which resists universalism.

Freud’s anxieties about the foundations of his work can be traced to two significant episodes in the history of psychoanalysis: first, his initial establishment of psychoanalysis as a theory and practice in the 1890s, and second, his re-assessment of his

¹³ Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, *Early Freud and Late Freud: Reading Anew Studies on Hysteria and Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Philip Slotkin (New York: Routledge, 1997), 10. See also Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, *Back to Freud's Texts: Making Silent Documents Speak*, trans. Phillip Slotkin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

¹⁴ Grubrich-Simitis, *Early Freud and Late Freud: Reading Anew Studies on Hysteria and Moses and Monotheism*, 61.

¹⁵ Eric L. Santner, “Freud's *Moses* and the Ethics of Nomotropic Desire.” *October* 88 (1999).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

theory in the wake of his relationship with Carl Gustav Jung between 1909 and 1914. In both cases, Freud's attempts to establish psychoanalysis as a hybrid kind of science—both historical and universal, both medical and theoretical—forced him to acknowledge the gaps in the foundations of his theory. While other scientists began to explore the mysteries of heredity using experiments and microscopes, in the 1890s Freud developed a “psychoanalytic” method to explore the mysteries of the psyche using individuals' reports of their own memories. Unlike his mentor Jean-Martin Charcot who regarded mental illness as the result of inherited degeneracy, Freud argued that hysteria was a result of traumas experienced in early childhood. However, after only a few years of experimenting with the new “method” of psychoanalysis, he realized that he could not necessarily find evidence of actual traumatic events in all cases. Even as he abandoned the idea that individuals' recollections re-presented what had “actually” happened, he never gave up on the idea that psychic miseries somehow originated in real events in the past. Rather, he struggled to develop an interpretative code which could allow him to make sense of his patients' reports as evidence of a psychological reality undependably related to external reality.

By the time he met Jung in 1908,¹⁷ Freud had high hopes of extending psychoanalysis beyond the specific setting of Vienna. Inspired by Jung's own studies in mythology, in *Totem and Taboo* he began to incorporate the idea that individuals were burdened with memories not only of their own childhoods but also of their ancestors, including the events which were the basis of mythological narratives. If he had worried

¹⁷ While the correspondence began in 1906, the two men did not meet until 1908. Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, trans. R.F.C. Hull and Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), xviii-xix.

about proving the validity of individuals' earliest histories, now he realized that there was no way to establish the veracity of a narrative about the prehistory of human civilization. However, while Jung seemed to use mythology and phylogenetic memory as a way to avoid questions regarding the reality of the "primal past," Freud insistently maintained that the reality of this past was the foundation of psychoanalysis. Where Freud had previously noted that his patients' memories did not seem to accord with reality, now he filled the gaps in their narratives by appealing to the storehouse of phylogenetic memory. While he remained in the universal realm of human civilization, he did not worry so much about the epistemological problems of evidence or truth. However, by moving from a universal theory of the human condition (in *Totem*) to a theory of the Jewish people (in *Moses*), Freud was once again forced to re-examine the "historical" evidence supporting his theory.

In presenting the case history of a specific group of people, Freud returned from a long sojourn in the realm of universal theorization to his "roots" as a medical physician. As Carlo Ginzburg has demonstrated, history and medicine are united by the fact that they were both conceived as sciences outside the modern scientific paradigm of Galileian physics. While Galileian science "could have taken as its own Scholastic motto *Individuum est ineffabile* ('We cannot speak about what is individual')," history and medicine were rooted in the interpretation of particular traces and clues pertaining to the *individual case*. "The historian," writes Ginzburg, "is like the physician who uses nosographical tables to analyze the specific sickness of the patient. As with the physician,

historical knowledge is indirect, presumptive, conjectural.”¹⁸ In his earliest psychoanalytic work, Freud had attempted to use his patients’ particular symptoms and recollections to reconstruct their case *histories*. Unlike Ginzburg’s model physician, however, he did not simply consult the nosographical tables, but founded a new nosography with accompanying standards of evidence and proof. Somewhere between the fields of history and medicine, he developed a methodology which used admittedly meager evidence to construct historical narratives revealing the origins of his patients’ illnesses. Half-remembered scenes, impressions from dreams and finally psychoanalysis itself became the evidence upon which he founded his diagnoses. However, as early as 1897, Freud attempted to move beyond the individual case histories to develop a universal theory applicable to all of humanity. In *Moses and Monotheism*, he returned to the realm of the particular: using biblical texts, archaeological finds and a loose collection of “traditions,” he made presumptive conjectures about the specific history of the Jewish people.

In this final book, Freud belatedly attempted to make sense of the inexplicable remnants of analysis and the gaps in the foundations of psychoanalytic theory. While much of psychoanalysis is focused on the “mastering” of the past, it implicitly acknowledges that there are always leftovers, unassimilable elements which are at the heart of the story. Having discovered that the individual is not “master” of his own psyche, Freud later acknowledged that psychoanalysis cannot master all the enigmas of the world, let alone its own domain. As he writes in “Analysis Terminable and

¹⁸ Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 106.

Interminable” (1937), while the “first step towards attaining intellectual mastery of our environment is to discover generalizations, rules and laws which bring order into chaos,” this step necessarily “simplifies the world of phenomena” and unavoidably results in falsification. Indeed, he then quotes a notable satirist’s “shrewd” remark: “‘Every step forward is only half as big as it looks at first.’ It is tempting to attribute a quite general validity to this malicious dictum. There are nearly always residual phenomena; a partial hanging-back.”¹⁹ In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud took several steps back. Indeed, the sojourn to Egypt itself harkens back to the momentary euphoria (and the subsequent dismay) about his discoveries in the 1890s. Soon after presenting his work “On the Aetiology of Hysteria” to a panel of physicians, Freud wrote to Fliess to complain about Krafft-Ebing’s description of psychoanalysis as a “scientific fairy tale.” “And this,” Freud exclaims, “after one has demonstrated to them the solution of a more-than-thousand-year-old problem, a *caput Nili* [the source of the Nile].”²⁰ In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud returned to the land of the Nile.

B. The Founding of a Theory: Establishment of a *Machtbereich*

1. Moses as a Case Study

When Freud began his new work in August 1934, he gave it the title: *Der Mann Moses: Ein historisches Roman* [*The Man Moses: A Historical Novel*]. In an introduction which he eventually discarded, he describes his problems in composing the present work

¹⁹ Sigmund Freud, “Analysis Terminable and Interminable,” *S.E.*, vol. XXIII (1937), 228.

²⁰ April 26, 1896, Sigmund Freud and Wilhelm Fliess, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1877-1904*, ed. Jeffrey M. Masson (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1985).

as if they are entirely due to his choice of genre.²¹ Well aware that his *Moses* would not fit into any of the standard models of the “historical novel,” he first attempts to articulate the idiosyncracies of this “hybrid” genre—neither history nor fiction, but some mysterious fusion of the two types of writing. Some historical novelists, notes Freud, aim to faithfully depict “the special character” of a historical period, even as they admittedly invent both persons and events. Others realistically portray “historically familiar” persons, even if their main purpose is, like other novels, to “affect the emotions.”²² Freud explains that his own attempt to write a historical novel is shaped by the fact that for him, “fiction and invention are easily associated with the blemish of error.” Thus, he explains that what he is writing is really a “character study” which

requires reliable material as its basis, but nothing available concerning Moses can be called trustworthy. It is a tradition coming from one source, not confirmed by any other, fixed in writing only in a later period, in itself contradictory, revised several times and distorted [*entstellt*] under the influence of new tendencies, while closely interwoven with the religious and national myths of a people.²³

With the exception of the word “tradition,” Freud could very well be discussing his anxieties regarding his earliest case studies: there he based his narrative reconstructions

²¹ This introduction remained unpublished until 1979 when it was first printed in Italian: Pier Cesare Bori, “Una pagina inedita di Freud: la premessa al romanzo storico su Mosè.” *Rivista di storia contemporanea* 7 (1979). I quote from the English translation and the original German printed in Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, 17, 101-103.

²² Freud’s categorization of the two forms of historical novels do, in fact, align with two of the more common models of this genre, some of which aim to dutifully portray entire eras, such as Sir Walter Scott’s *Waverly*, others of which use the biography of particular persons as their jumping-off point, such as Scott’s *Napolean* or more recently, the various novels based on Freud’s life such as Nicholas Meyer’s *The Seven Per-Cent Solution* (1974), D.M. Thomas’ *The White Hotel* (1981), or Jed Rubenfeld’s *The Interpretation of Murder* (2006). Freud was also familiar with Thomas Mann’s recent historical novel, *The Tales of Jacob* (1933) (the first part of his Joseph-trilogy) which others have suggested may have served as a model for Freud’s own historical novel. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, “Freud on the 'Historical Novel': From the Manuscript Draft (1934) of *Moses and Monotheism*.” *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 70 (1989).

²³ Sigmund Freud, “Introduction to the Manuscript Draft (1934) of *Der Mann Moses*,” *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, ed. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

almost entirely on the patients' recollections ("one source"), which were not necessarily confirmed by any other "sources" and were often filled with contradictions, denials and equivocations. So too, while the Moses story was fixed in writing by any number of authors long after the events had occurred, the events in the case studies were first recalled by the patients long after they had occurred (if they had occurred at all), and only later analyzed, recorded and transcribed by Freud himself.

While Freud was more wont to point out the gaps and contradictions in his patients' narratives, he sometimes acknowledged these textual peculiarities in his own writing. Indeed, throughout his oeuvre, we find evidence that he revised his analyses and that his interpretations had been distorted "under the influence" of new theoretical "tendencies" (such as his understanding of the reality of his patients' stories). For example, in a 1924 footnote added to the case study of Katharina in *Studies in Hysteria* (1893-1895), he writes,

I venture after the lapse of so many years to lift the veil of discretion and reveal the fact that Katharina was not the niece but the daughter of the landlady... Distortions [*Entstellungen*] like the one which I introduced in the present instance should be altogether avoided in reporting a case history. From the point of view of understanding the case, a distortion [*Entstellung*] of this kind is not, of course, a matter of such indifference as would be shifting the scene from one mountain to another.²⁴

Well aware that authors distort texts for not insignificant reasons, Freud builds his case of *Moses and Monotheism* upon the "noticeable gaps, disturbing repetitions and obvious contradictions"²⁵ in the Biblical text. Indeed, he uses these textual idiosyncracies as evidence that the authors had distorted the real history and had shifted the scene from the

²⁴ Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria, S.E.*, vol. II (1893-1895), 134.

²⁵ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 43.

land of Egypt to Mount Sinai, a shift which is not, of course, “a matter of such indifference.” These textual remnants are, Freud notes, “indications which reveal things to us which it was not intended to communicate. In its implications the distortion [*Entstellung*] of a text resembles a murder: the difficulty is not in perpetrating the deed, but in getting rid of its traces.”²⁶ On one hand, Freud identifies with the authors of the biblical text—having spent a lifetime recording, analyzing and sometimes distorting the spoken accounts of his patients. On the other hand, he sees the authors of the biblical texts as patients who distort their reports about the past in an attempt to repress the real traumas—the disturbing realities whose traces are indelibly marked out in the gaps and repetitions of their narratives. Thus, the very form of *Moses and Monotheism* functions as a self-analysis with all the contradictions this implies: self-analysis does not work unless one sees one’s self as an Other.

2. Historical Fictions (1893-1897)

In order to develop a standard of psychoanalytic diagnosis, Freud had to demonstrate that his patients’ recollections could be used as reliable evidence, or at least as valuable clues to the mysteries of their psychic miseries. Well aware of the widespread perception that hysterics and neurotics were suspiciously regarded as deceitful malingerers, he struggled to show that his patients were not simply “inventing” their accounts of the past. In the nineteenth century, hysterics and neurotics were also

²⁶ Ibid. The German here is important, for as the editor to the *Standard Edition* notes, “‘*Stelle* means ‘a place’, and ‘*ent-*’ is a prefix indicating a change of condition.” In other words, a distortion [*Entstellung*] is a change of location, like moving a scene from one mountain to another.

presumed to be hereditarily “degenerate,” and like Jews and homosexuals, they were supposedly characterized by feminine qualities: deceit, dependence and moral inferiority.²⁷ To make matters worse, hysteria and neurosis were also seen as “national” conditions: while the Germans regarded the French as particularly prone to hysteria, both the Germans and French regarded Jews as excessively neurotic.²⁸ While Freud conceded that heredity could predispose a person to mental illness, he did not altogether reject heredity as an aetiological factor. Since many of his early patients were Jews, he needed to demonstrate that their conditions were not simply signs of degenerate familial heredity, but rather traces of particular familial histories. In its interiority, heredity seemed inaccessible to analysis—it “dazzled” physicians with its “unapproachable power”—whereas external events seemed to allow the physician a point of access.²⁹ By gathering evidence from the patients’ symptoms, as well as their recollections of when the symptoms began and what life was like before the illness, the physician could attempt to piece together a diagnostic narrative.

Freud not only had to prove that his patients were reliable sources of evidence, he also had to establish that *he* was a trustworthy “narrator,” unaffected by the Jewish predisposition to deceit and neurosis. While he criticized Charcot’s over-emphasis on heredity, Freud credited his mentor with restoring “dignity” to the very discussion of

²⁷ Sander Gilman has extensively documented the related stereotypes of Jews, mental illness and homosexuality (amongst other conditions) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, particularly in relationship to Freud’s work. See, for example, Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991); *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

²⁸ Hannah S. Decker, “The Medical Reception of Psychoanalysis in Germany, 1894-1907: Three Brief Studies.” *Bull. Hist. Med.* 45 (1971).

²⁹ Sigmund Freud, “Heredity and the Aetiology of the Neuroses,” *S.E.*, vol. III (1896), 145-146.

hysteria and neurosis. Before Charcot, Freud notes, people scorned and distrusted not only the patients, but the physicians who bothered to concern themselves with these individuals. “*No credence* was given to a hysteric about anything” until Charcot threw “the whole weight of his authority on the side of the *genuineness and objectivity* of hysterical phenomena.”³⁰ Thus, while he admits that his case studies read like “short stories [*Novellen*],” he insists that they are “case *histories* [*Krankengeschichten*].” Novels bear the traces of feminine *künstlichkeit*—artistry, artificiality and deceit—rather than “the stamp of serious science.”³¹ In an effort to distance his own susceptibility to such conditions, he notes that he can “console” himself “with the reflection that the nature of the subject is evidently responsible for this, rather than any preference of my own.”³² When it came time to consider the nature of his writing in *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud briefly considered embracing the form which he had earlier only hesitantly acknowledged. Now, however, he could not blame the “nature of the subject” for his *künstlichkeit*, for it was unclear whether his “subject” was Moses, the Jewish people, or even himself.

The oft-quoted acknowledgement of the novelistic nature of Freud’s early writing appears in the case study of Frau Elisabeth von R. in *Studies in Hysteria* (1893-1895), written with Josef Breuer. Throughout this work, Freud takes special care to note that neither his patients nor his evidence is hereditarily “tainted” and that it provides a reliable foundation for his theory. While Elisabeth’s character consists of many of the features of hysteria, Freud notes, her illness should not be regarded as a result of “degeneracy.”

³⁰ Sigmund Freud, “Charcot,” *S.E.*, vol. III (1893), 19, my italics.

³¹ Freud and Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria*, 160.

³² *Ibid.*

Indeed, “no appreciable hereditary taint, so my colleague told me, could be traced on either side of her family.” Here Freud distances the judgement of “taintedness” — not Elisabeth, and *not* Freud, but a *colleague* is the source of information about Elisabeth’s family. In his description of the girl, Freud remarks on those qualities which demonstrate that she is neither deceitful nor morally degenerate. Whereas the “feminine ideal” obliges a girl to be dependent, deceitful and possibly morally inferior, Freud notes Elisabeth’s “giftedness, her ambition, her moral sensibility... and the independence of her nature which went beyond the feminine ideal and found expression in a considerable amount of obstinacy, pugnacity and reserve.”³³ Thus, Elisabeth finds consolation not from her mother or sister, but from her father and her sister’s husband. Indeed, Freud draws from the father’s own observations that “her mental constitution” departed “from the ideal which people like to see realized in a girl.” The father “warned her against being too positive in her judgements and against her habit of regardlessly [*schonungslos*] telling people the truth, and he often said she would find it hard to get a husband. She was in fact greatly discontented with being a girl.”³⁴ It is not Elisabeth’s feminine nature that causes her misery, but rather the feminine “ideal” which creates the expectation of a particular kind of behavior. Elisabeth’s problem derives, at least in part, from her penchant for telling the truth.

Nonetheless, Freud’s interpretation of this case is a bit more complex. Based on Elisabeth’s recollections of the onset of her illness, he learns that she had been particularly fond of her sister’s husband and that she even “dreamt... of enjoying such

³³ Ibid., 161.

³⁴ Ibid., 140.

happiness as her sister's and of finding a husband who would capture her heart like this brother-in-law of hers."³⁵ Apparently, her symptoms emerged soon after her sister died, when Elisabeth was curiously beset by guilt for the death for which she was not responsible.³⁶ Having already established that his patient is a trustworthy source of evidence, Freud confidently concludes, "It was easy to *prove* to her that what she herself had told me admitted of no other interpretation." The ultimate proof that his evidence is infallible and that the girl is morally superior is that she resists his analysis. As he explains,

she made one last effort to reject the explanation: it was not true, I had talked her into it, it *could* not be true, she was incapable of such wickedness, she could never forgive herself for it. But it was a long time before my two pieces of consolation—that we are not responsible for our feelings, and that her behaviour, the fact that she had fallen ill in these circumstances, was sufficient *evidence* of her moral character—it was a long time before these consolations of mine made any impression on her.³⁷

Freud's presentation of his interpretation turns around on itself. If the reader resists his interpretation, she can join Elisabeth and recognize her own "moral superiority." The analysis itself and the eventual acceptance of it proves the moral superiority of all parties—the analyst, the patient and the reader—for we have already learned that Elisabeth's problem derives not from her degeneracy but from her habit of telling the truth "regardlessly [*schonungslos*]," even when it is not pretty. Indeed, Freud used similar terms to portray his own penchant for declaring "the truth" even when they were

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Indeed, this theme would re-emerge in both *Totem and Taboo* and in *Moses and Monotheism* when Freud attempted to discover the reasons why people regularly feel guilty for an act (a death, a murder) which they did not actually commit.

³⁷ Freud and Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria*, 157.

inconvenient and disturbing.³⁸ The very idea that a patient (or a reader) would be resistant to Freud's analysis becomes proof positive that not only the analysis is "correct" but that the evidence is worth analyzing.

The distinction between analysis and evidence becomes blurry as he proceeds to prove his theory "on the evidence of analysis."³⁹ Soon after completing the *Studies in Hysteria*, Freud published an essay on "Heredity and the Aetiology of the Neuroses" (1896) in which he explicitly criticizes Charcot's over-emphasis on heredity. This is also the essay in which Freud makes his first published reference to "psychoanalysis." Using "a new method of psycho-analysis," he writes, the physician can travel "backwards into the patient's past, step by step, and always guided by the organic train of symptoms and of memories and thoughts aroused."⁴⁰ While he describes the "method" as a natural process leading the physician on a trail of clues, he acknowledges that he can be easily led astray. Anticipating the reader's questions, he writes

How is it possible to remain convinced of the reality of these analytic confessions which claim to be memories preserved from the earliest childhood? and how is one to arm oneself against the tendency to lies and the facility of invention [*Erfindung*] which are attributed to hysterical subjects? I should accuse myself of blameworthy credulity if I did not possess more conclusive evidence.⁴¹

³⁸ While Freud often noted that his Jewishness allowed him to face the "compact majority" of German-speaking academia, in *Moses and Monotheism*, he went further and prepared to meet the resistance of his own people. Just as Elisabeth von R. would not refrain from telling the truth because of social niceties, so too, he acknowledges that he would not be induced [*bewegen lassen*] "to put the truth aside in favour of what are supposed to be national interests; and, moreover, the clarification of a set of facts may be expected to bring us a gain in knowledge." Despite the potentially ugly consequences of proclaiming these "facts" and "truths," Freud resolves that he must reveal the truth about Moses in order to bring "a gain in knowledge" about the Jews. Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 7.

³⁹ Freud and Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria*, 168.

⁴⁰ Freud, "Heredity and the Aetiology of the Neuroses," 151.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 153.

Freud was well aware that questions of evidence were inseparable from questions about the foundations of his new etiological theory. What he needed to prove was that Charcot and his followers had overlooked the most important evidence which if (appropriately) examined would offer no other explanation: “The precocious event has left an indelible imprint on the history of the case; it is represented in it by a host of symptoms and of special features which could be accounted for *in no other way*.”⁴² Quite obviously, Freud begins with the symptoms and follows them back, but in this sentence he reverses the causality, making it a historical sequence: the “precocious event” leads to the imprint which leads to the symptoms. Whereas Charcot regarded heredity as the cause and later sexual experiences as the “*agents provocateurs*,” Freud reverses the equation. “Analysis *demonstrates in an irrefutable fashion*,” that later sexual experiences have “a pathogenic influence for hysteria only owing to their faculty for awakening the unconscious psychological trace of the childhood event.”⁴³ In other words, analysis is both the method of inquiry and evidence of its efficacy.

Historians who are prone to a certain kind of positivism might criticize Freud for blending evidence and analysis, as if this were an example of biased or unscientific research. However, the notion that these two elements should be completely distinct reveals assumptions about what qualifies as “good” science. As Richard Lewontin has written, it is generally assumed that the best scientific experiments need no discussion of their analysis since what makes them “really good” is the self-evidentiality of the

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 155.

results.⁴⁴ This is, as Lewontin notes, a simplified version of how science really works, but it is one which many historians have accepted unreflectively. In their attempt to transform history into a “social science,” some historians “attempt to lay onto history a model of science claimed by scientists and their positivist allies.”⁴⁵ Thus, they overlook the fact that the very choice of evidence defines the methodology and standards of proof. As Lewontin notes, “the very method which we use is itself a form of evidence,” though often the connection between the method and the evidence remains unexamined.⁴⁶ For “natural” scientists, *nature* is the matter and language is usually presumed to be a transparent representation of the matter. For historians and literary critics, however, language is the “matter”—it composes the evidence and the analytic mode. In founding psychoanalysis, Freud struggled to establish a discipline modeled on the structure of a physical science. Instead of studying the “matter” of eels’ gonads, Freud focuses on the mercurial relationships between physical matters and their linguistic representations, or between psychological turmoil and its symptomatic representation in the patients’ physical ailments. Since different fields of study have different standards of proof, a new theory which challenges the assumptions and structures of established fields must institute new standards of proof.⁴⁷ This does not happen overnight and it does not

⁴⁴ Richard Lewontin, “Facts and the Factitious in Natural Sciences,” *Questions of Evidence: Proof, Practice, and Persuasion across the Disciplines*, eds. James Chandler, Arnold I. Davidson and Harry Harootunian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 479.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 480.

⁴⁶ Richard Lewontin, “A Rejoinder to William Wimsatt,” *Questions of Evidence: Proof, Practice, and Persuasion across the Disciplines*, eds. James Chandler, Arnold I. Davidson and Harry Harootunian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 504.

⁴⁷ In his study of the emergence of statistical thinking in the early twentieth century, Ian Hacking notes that “A new kind of ‘objective knowledge’ came into being, the product of new technologies for gaining information about natural and social processes. There emerged new criteria for what counted as evidence for knowledge of this kind.” While statistics emerged as a method for “taming chance,” Freud almost never

necessarily involve deliberate choices. In Freud's case, some of this *did* happen overnight: in the course of analyzing his own dreams and memories, he soon realized that it was not hysterics who were unreliable, but memory itself. However, rather than rejecting memory as irrelevant, he re-examined the very foundations of his theory.

3. Cracks in the Foundation: Historical Fantasy (1897)

From 1893 until 1897, Freud was so intent upon proving the reliability of his patients' accounts of their pasts, that he did not necessarily pay attention to the ways in which individuals might unintentionally distort their recollections. Thus, he took what could be termed a simple positivist perspective regarding his evidence. As Ginzburg has noted, "In a positivist perspective"—whether medical or historical—"the evidence is analyzed only in order to ascertain if, and when, it implies a distortion, either intentional or unintentional."⁴⁸ In these early years of psychoanalysis, Freud attempted to fill the gaps in his patients' narratives but he was less sensitive to the processes which could shape and even distort the clues to his patients' mysterious miseries. During this period, Freud feverishly corresponded with his friend Wilhelm Fliess, with whom he shared his dreams and discoveries.⁴⁹ On September 21, 1897, he wrote what would become one of

mentioned statistics; instead he developed a discipline to "tame" the narrative chances of heredity and history. See Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), vii.

⁴⁸ Carlo Ginzburg, "Checking the Evidence: The Judge and the Historian," *Questions of Evidence: Proof, Practice, and Persuasion Across the Disciplines*, eds. James Chandler, Arnold I. Davidson and Harry Harootunian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 294.

⁴⁹ Indeed, in the famous letter of September 21, 1897, Freud admits that "The expectation of eternal fame was so beautiful, as was that of certain wealth... Everything depended upon whether or not hysteria would come out right. Now I can once again remain quiet and modest, go on worrying and saving." Freud and Fliess, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1877-1904*, 266.

the most infamous letters in the history of psychoanalysis. Now he shared “the great secret that has been slowly dawning on me in the last few months. I no longer believe in my *neurotica*.”⁵⁰ Freud goes on to explain that he no longer believed that childhood seductions could be so universal as to fully account for all hysteria. While he recounts a number of other realizations, the most famous “insight”—and the most famous sentence in this letter—is his announcement that “there are no indications of reality *in the unconscious*, so that one cannot distinguish between truth and fiction that has been cathected [*besezt*, literally “possessed”] with affect.”⁵¹

While this sentence is often cited as proof that Freud abandoned all confidence in the reliability of his patients’ recollections, he was in fact more circumspect about the change. Nonetheless, this letter has been at the center of some of the most contentious debates about psychoanalysis. While some critics portray this change an outright rejection of scientific standards of truth and proof, others argue that such standards are out of place in what is otherwise a literary theory. When Jeffrey Masson published the complete letters of Freud and Wilhelm Fliess in 1985, he unleashed a virulent breed of Freud-criticism which focused on his “abandonment of the seduction theory.”⁵² According to this side of the “Freud Wars,” though Freud briefly recognized the fact that many children suffer from sexual abuse, he soon turned away in horror, abandoning not only the theory but also a belief in the reality of his patients’ reports.⁵³ In Masson’s

⁵⁰ Ibid., 264.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid. See also J. M. Masson, *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1992).

⁵³ The criticism is not limited to questions of “proof” and “truth.” Most notoriously, in the original version of the Freud-Fliess letters (edited by Freud’s most loyal followers, most significantly his daughter), important phrases were “left out” of the record. For example, in the following passage, he notes that if all

words, Freud committed an “assault on truth.”⁵⁴ However, in this letter, Freud does not completely abandon the reality of his patients’ reports but rather the idea that external definitions of reality can be maintained internally. By positing an “unconscious,” Freud creates a location—a holding-space, as it were—for the elements which cannot be completely parsed as either “fact or fiction.” In recognizing that his “patients’ reports of childhood seductions did not necessarily correspond to actual events,” he did not reject them as lies; rather, he accepted them as proof of the existence of an unconscious region of the mind where “fact and fiction” cannot necessarily be distinguished.

What is often overlooked in discussions of this famous letter is the following paragraph in which he admits to a range of other disappointments:

I was so far influenced [by this] that I was ready to give up two things: the complete resolution of a neurosis and the certain knowledge of its etiology in childhood. Now I have no idea of where I stand because I have not succeeded in gaining a theoretical understanding of repression [*Verdrängung*] and its interplay of forces. It seems once again arguable that only later experiences give the impetus to fantasies, which [then] hark back [*zurückgreifen*] to childhood, and with this the factor of a hereditary disposition regains [*gewinnt*] a sphere of influence [*Machtbereich*] from

hysteria resulted from sexual traumas, his own father would have to be accused of “perversity.” In the original edition the phrase, “not excluding my own” was omitted from the letter: “Then the surprise that in all cases, the *father*, not excluding my own, had to be accused of being perverse—the realization of the unexpected frequency of hysteria, with precisely the same conditions prevailing in each, whereas surely such widespread perversions against children are not very probable.” Compare the two editions: Sigmund Freud and Wilhelm Fliess, *The Origins of Psycho-Analysis*, eds. Marie Bonaparte, Anna Freud and Ernst Kris (New York: Basic Books, 1954), 215-216; Freud and Fliess, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1877-1904*, 264-265. Of course, by 1897, Freud was *also* a father—of six children ranging in age from two to ten. In other words, it is more than likely that Freud turned away in horror from the possibility that as a father, *he* would also be accused of being perverse like all the others.

⁵⁴ According to Masson’s interpretation, “what matters for Freud are the psychological effects, and these effects, Freud states, are no different where the event is a real one or imagined.” Masson, *The Assault on Truth: Freud’s Suppression of the Seduction Theory*, 133. Numerous scholars have corrected Masson’s extreme take on Freud’s “abandonment” of the seduction theory. See, for example, Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, “Trauma or Drive- Drive and Trauma: A Reading of Sigmund Freud’s Phylogenetic Fantasy of 1915,” Trans. Veronica Mächtlinger. *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 43 (1988): 12; Nicholas Rand and Maria Torok, *Questions for Freud: The Secret History of Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 228, n223.

which I had made it my task to dislodge [*verdrängen*] it—in the interest of the illumination of neurosis.⁵⁵

There are a number of remarkable aspects of this humble paragraph. Freud admits that he had (momentarily) felt confident that he could completely resolve neuroses and that he was in full possession of the mysteries of its etiology. He is left without a firm place to stand because he must re-evaluate the evidence upon which he had founded his theory. Repression is key: in the following years, Freud will explore the modes of censorship which the psyche uses to cover over, distort and transform the traces of events into new documents. Using the language of war, he concedes that the “hereditary disposition” may *win* back control of the territory [*Machtbereich*, a word usually used to refer to regions of military control] from which Freud had tried to drive it. In an odd repetition, Freud uses the word for *repression* [*verdrängen*] to describe his attempt to “dislodge” heredity from its position in the land of psychoanalysis.

C. Imperial Expansion (1897-1914)

Even as Freud explored the vicissitudes of the dark inner regions of the psyche—the internal fantasies, desires and drives which alone can cause a person to fall ill—he never completely abandoned the idea that external traumas were the “ultimate” cause of psychic turmoil. Though he later referred to his realization in 1897 as his “abandonment of the seduction theory” it was more of a subtle shift away from an etiological model

⁵⁵ September 21, 1897. Freud and Fliess, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1877-1904*, 265.

based entirely on external traumas, to “one which incorporated internal ‘drives.’”⁵⁶ Indeed, Freud exaggerated “the truly considerable difference between his two etiological conceptions into an either-or opposition.”⁵⁷ In so doing, “he created for himself an intellectual bulwark”⁵⁸ which made it difficult to admit to the gaps in his theory, namely the impossibility of ever *proving* that his patients’ miseries (and fantasies) originated in actual experiences in childhood. Freud most explicitly exaggerated his “early mistake” regarding the reality of his patients’ “seductions” in his conversations with Jung between 1909 and 1912. As he and Jung began to collaboratively explore the parallels between mythological symbols and neurotics’ fantasies, Freud began to consider going even further back beyond the individual’s past and into the realm of “archaic memory.” Nonetheless, he went on the defensive when he saw that Jung’s interest in phylogenetic memory and mythology allowed him to disregard the reality of infantile sexuality. As the friendship dissolved, Freud attempted to shore up the foundations of psychoanalysis, insisting on the reality not only of individuals’ memories but also of their “archaic heritage.” Before turning to an examination of Freud and Jung’s relationship, I discuss the more general changes in Freud’s theorization and position in the years after 1897.

1. Psychoanalysis Beyond Vienna (1897-1907)

Following the 1897 crisis, Freud began to move beyond medical diagnosis and toward a more general theory of the human psyche. As Grubrich-Simitis has noted,

⁵⁶ Grubrich-Simitis, “Trauma or Drive- Drive and Trauma: A Reading of Sigmund Freud's Phylogenetic Fantasy of 1915,” 11.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

“whereas the more conventional trauma model applied to the *pathogenesis* of the relatively small number of people who had been sexually violated in childhood, the revolutionary drive model” could apply to the *psychogenesis* of everyone.⁵⁹ In the following months, he attempted to emancipate himself from the particular events of individual childhoods and to develop psychoanalysis as a universal theory of humanity. Now he reported that he no longer needed to discover specific infantile traumas in his patients’ pasts for he had discovered the “universal” existence of infant sexuality and the Oedipal complex. In an essay on “Sexual Aetiology of the Neuroses” (1898), written a few months later, Freud argues that all neuroses could be traced back to everyday childhood experiences which were experienced *sexually*. As he was well aware, the idea that children have any sexual experiences whatsoever was quite disturbing, and if he had wanted to make his theory more palatable, he could have downplayed the shocking reality of these experiences. Instead of arguing about what did or did not happen in childhood, he also could have traced the individual’s illness back beyond her own “prehistory,” to her ancestor’s experiences, for there he would have found a “wealth of phylogenetically transferred material”⁶⁰ to fill in the gaps in evidence. Anticipating that this would be the obvious solution, he adds, “In tracing back the vicissitudes of an individual’s illness to the experiences of his ancestors, we have gone too far. We have forgotten that between his conception and his maturity there lies a long and important

⁵⁹ Grubrich-Simitis, *Early Freud and Late Freud: Reading Anew Studies on Hysteria and Moses and Monotheism*, 63.

⁶⁰ In 1916, Freud would excitedly write to Ferenczi that “the wealth of phylogenetically transferred material” could explain the origins of “artistic endowment” as well as the “transference neuroses” and castration anxiety. I discuss this in more detail in my third chapter. Freud to Ferenczi, January 6, 1916, Letter #589, Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi*, trans. Peter T. Hoffer, ed. André Haynal, vol. I-III (1993-2000), II:101.

period of life—his childhood—in which the seeds of later illness may be acquired.”⁶¹ For fifteen more years, Freud would continue to resist the idea that his patients’ conditions could be traced back to their ancestors’ experiences for this seemed to move too far away from the life history of the individual.⁶²

Between 1898 and 1905, Freud published a number of works whose theories applied not only to neurotics and hysterics, but to all of humanity. The next three large books were essentially collections of anecdotes, many of them gathered from his own life: *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901), and *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905). Even more importantly, in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), he established a firm position on the question of what it was that happened in early childhood. Whereas he had earlier proposed that sexual traumas came from adults—from the outside, as it were—now he proposes that the sexual experiences of early childhood were internal: even the youngest of children had sexual desires and feelings demonstrated in their orgasmic enjoyment of sucking, rocking and defecating. Thus, in later life, even the motion of a train could recall the sexual feelings of childhood and could be experienced as traumatic since the earlier sexual experiences would have been repressed. Again, Freud contrasts his own position with those other “writers who... have devoted much more attention to the primaeval period which is comprised in the life of the individual’s ancestors—have, that is, ascribed much more influence to heredity—than to the other primaeval period, which falls within the

⁶¹ Sigmund Freud, “Sexuality and the Aetiology of the Neuroses,” *S.E.*, vol. III (1898), 280.

⁶² Freud’s resistance and later acceptance of “archaic memory” could be compared to Elisabeth’s resistance of Freud’s analysis. Ultimately, his resistance to the idea “proves” its viability.

lifetime of the individual himself—that is, to childhood.”⁶³ Even as he suggestively concedes that the “primaeval period” of the individual’s life might be analogous to the primaeval period of humanity, he struggles to maintain focus on the primary realm of psychoanalytic investigation: the individual’s childhood.⁶⁴

2. Return of the Repressed: The Promised Land (1907-1914)

Sometime between 1905 and 1910, psychoanalysis was transformed from a relatively obscure “method” to an ever-expanding movement with followers around the world, including Switzerland, America, England and Budapest. As has been widely noted, since many of his friends, followers and patients were Jewish, Freud worried that psychoanalysis would be “stigmatized” as a “Jewish science”: not only “untrustworthy” but parochial and sectarian, lacking in universal import. When he was approached by Carl Gustav Jung in 1906, he rejoiced that he had found someone who could carry psychoanalysis beyond its Jewish ghetto. As he wrote to Karl Abraham in 1908, “You are closer to my intellectual constitution because of racial kinship, while he [Jung] as a Christian and a pastor's son finds his way to me only against great inner resistances. His association with us is then all the more valuable. I would almost have said that only his appearance has removed psychoanalysis from the danger of becoming a Jewish national

⁶³ Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, S.E., vol. VII (1905), 173.

⁶⁴ Here we can see that Freud embraced Haeckel’s recapitulation theory but resisted the related idea that individuals *inherit* the effects of phylogenetic development.

affair.”⁶⁵ Even as Freud and Jung developed an intense friendship, in retrospect we can see that there were fractures in the relationship long before it fully collapsed. Many scholars have meditated on whether their friendship was doomed because of their “national differences,” evident both in Freud’s suspicion that Jung was anti-semitic, and Jung’s suspicion that Freud’s being Jewish (detrimentally) shaped his theories.⁶⁶ Before the two men even met, Jung declared that “even a superficial glance at my work will show how much I am indebted to the brilliant discoveries of Freud.”⁶⁷ However, he also added that his acknowledgement of some aspects of Freud’s theory did not “mean that I attribute to the infantile sexual trauma the exclusive importance that Freud apparently does.”⁶⁸ From the very beginning of their relationship, then, Jung questioned that most important “sphere of influence [*Machtbereich*]”—childhood—that Freud had worked so hard to conquer.

Nonetheless, Freud delighted in the widening prospects which seemed to come with Jung’s arrival on the scene. While there were early signs of discord, Freud averted his eyes and rejoiced in the founding of his new “family,” with himself as the patriarch and his younger colleagues—most explicitly, Jung and Sandor Ferenczi—as his sons. In January 1909, he envisaged himself as a prophetic leader of a new people and Jung as the prophet who would carry the psychoanalytic doctrine into the future. “If I am Moses,” he

⁶⁵ May 3, 1908, Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham, *A Psychoanalytic Dialogue: Letters of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham, 1907-1926*, trans. Bernard Marsh and Hilda C. Abraham, eds. Hilda C. Abraham and Ernst L. Freud (New York: Basic Books / Hogarth Press, 1965), 34.

⁶⁶ See, for example, John Kerr, *A Most Dangerous Method: The Story of Jung, Freud, and Sabina Spielrein* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993); Aryeh Maidenbaum and Stephen A. Martin, *Lingering Shadows: Jungians, Freudians, and Anti-Semitism* (Boston: Random House, 1991); Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, 41ff.

⁶⁷ Carl Gustav Jung, *The Psychology of Dementia Praecox*, CW, vol. III (1906), 3f. Quoted in Freud and Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, xvii.

⁶⁸ Jung, *The Psychology of Dementia Praecox*, 3f. Quoted in Freud and Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, xviii.

explained to Jung, “then you are Joshua and will take possession of the promised land of psychiatry, which I shall only be able to glimpse from afar.”⁶⁹ A little over a year later, he chose a different set of father-son figures to represent the friendship. “Just rest easy, dear son Alexander,” Freud writes to Jung. “I will leave you more to conquer than I could manage myself, all of psychiatry and the approval of the civilized world, which is accustomed to regard me as a savage! That ought to lighten your heart.”⁷⁰ This is a remarkable letter for a number of reasons. First, while Freud identified with a number of military heroes,⁷¹ here he puts himself in the position of the forgettable father of one of the greatest military heroes. When King Philip of Macedonia was murdered, Alexander was suspected of complicity, for his father’s death meant that the son would now ascend to the kingship. Indeed, Alexander went on to conquer the entire territory from Egypt to India, effectively contributing to a “universalization” of Greek culture. Now instead of looking out over “the promised land” (of psychiatry/Palestine) which he would only see “from afar,” Freud envisions Jung conquering the entire world, distributing the gift of Greek culture (psychoanalysis) beyond its previously limited confines. Whereas psychoanalysis had been Jewish, now it was Greek (and it is no coincidence that the

⁶⁹ Letter #125F, Freud and Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, 196-197. Ten years before, Freud had referred to a vision of “the promised land” from afar in *Interpretation of Dreams*. There, however, he identified with Hannibal rather than Moses, and the “promised land” was *Rome* rather than Palestine. Timpanaro (and many others) discuss Freud’s life-long identification with various military figures (many of them “failed”) and his ambivalent feelings toward Rome. See Robert, *From Oedipus to Moses: Freud’s Jewish Identity*; Sebastiano Timpanaro, “Freud’s Roman Phobia.” *New Left Review* I.147 (1984); Silas L. Warner, “Freud the Mighty Warrior.” *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis* 19.2 (1991).

⁷⁰ Letter #182F, Freud and Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*.

⁷¹ On Freud’s image of himself as a great leader of a religion, movement and/or people, see Erich Fromm, *Sigmund Freud’s Mission* (New York: Harper, 1959); Robert, *From Oedipus to Moses: Freud’s Jewish Identity*.

Oedipus complex was derived from Greek mythology).⁷² And more: in this same letter, Freud moves from identifying with a displaced King to acknowledging his position as a “savage”—is this the primitive “savage” described in *Totem and Taboo*? Or perhaps this is a subtle acknowledgement that as a Jew, Freud would have been regarded as an outsider in both Hellenistic and Roman civilizations, as a “savage,” mired in an unhealthy literality and sexuality. I will return to this subject in the final section of this chapter.

Before writing even the first essay of *Totem and Taboo*, Freud imagined Jung as the son who would conquer the world by overtaking and possibly murdering the father. These feelings derived not from some paranoid fantasy, however, but from the very deep friendship and mutual interests which both excited and frightened Freud. Both men shared a fascination with mythology and the ideas that the ancient past shaped present individuals’ narratives. Their mutual interests are reflected most clearly in their writings from 1912-1913: Jung’s *Transformations and Symbols of the Libido* is in some respects his most Freudian work (in its explorations of the concept of the libido), while Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* is his most Jungian (in its emphasis on mythology rather than memory). Peter Hoffer has explored the ways in which the two men collaboratively explored “phylogenetic factors,” but there were signs that Freud was not as enthusiastic about the new territory as his younger colleague.⁷³ In retrospect, it is possible to see

⁷² On the tensions between “Hellenism” and “Hebraism” in Freud’s work see Jean-Joseph Goux, *Symbolic Economies: After Marx and Freud*, trans. Jennifer Curtiss Gage (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

⁷³ In 1909, both Jung and Freud spoke of their interests in mythology as preceding the other’s. For example, Jung wrote to Freud about his interests in mythology and symbolism on October 14, 1909 (if not earlier). A month later, however, after Jung writes another letter about his ongoing mythological studies, Freud suggests that he has been working on mythological questions (by himself) for longer than Jung. “I was delighted to learn that you are going into mythology. A little less loneliness. I can’t wait to hear of your discoveries. I hope you will soon come to agree with me that in all likelihood mythology centers on the same nuclear coimplex as the neuroses.” #157J, #159J, #160F, Freud and Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*.

Freud's and Jung's interests in mythology and phylogenetic memory as a "common thread" linking "their respective views on the human condition,"⁷⁴ but in 1911-1913, it was the province in which their differences were fully worked out.⁷⁵ As Jung became increasingly enthusiastic about his explorations in mythology and mysticism, he also began to more confidently criticize Freud's theory of the libido and his emphasis on childhood sexuality. Meanwhile, Freud followed Jung's explorations in mythology with a sort of distant curiosity, noting "In you the tempest rages; it comes to me as distant thunder."⁷⁶ On October 13, 1911, Freud wrote a letter to Jung in which he included a fairly long interpretation of Gilgamesh and other mythological figures of pairs and twins.⁷⁷ As if mourning the inevitable, he concludes the letter by noting that "If there is such a thing as a phylogenetic memory in the individual, which *unfortunately will soon be undeniable*, this is also the source of the *uncanny* aspect of the 'doppelgänger.'" ⁷⁸

While Freud began to acknowledge that phylogenetic memory could shape psychic dispositions,⁷⁹ he continued to worry that it might detract from his initial

⁷⁴ See Peter T. Hoffer, "The Concept of Phylogenetic Inheritance in Freud and Jung." *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Institution* 40.2 (1992): 520-521.

⁷⁵ Sulloway also shows how Jung's interest in the "archaic heritage" was a way for him to de-emphasize sexuality and childhood etiology. However, he does not comment on the differences in Freud's and Jung's views on the "reality" of the phylogenetic past. See Frank J. Sulloway, *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 434-435.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Freud and Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, xviii.

⁷⁷ Interestingly, Freud mentions Romulus and Remus whom he would later mention in *Moses and Monotheism* as analogous figures to his two Moseses. When I revise the dissertation for book publication, I plan on developing this section on Jung into its own chapter.

⁷⁸ Letter #274F, my emphasis of "unfortunately will soon be undeniable," Freud's emphasis of "uncanny," Freud and Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, 449. Interestingly, Hoffer quotes this same sentence, but he leaves out the phrase, "which will soon be undeniable" and replaces it with ellipses. Hoffer, "The Concept of Phylogenetic Inheritance in Freud and Jung," 520.

⁷⁹ See, for example, his letter in October 1911 written to Else Voigtländer in which he defended himself against the charge that he had overestimated the importance of "accidental influences on character formation." Explaining that she had unnecessarily polemicized the relationship between heredity and

discoveries. The following month, his suspicion about the encroaching force of phylogenetic memory re-surfaced at a meeting of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society where the subject of the evening was “On the Supposed Timelessness of the Unconscious.” The meeting began with a discussion of neurotics’ tendencies to “cancel out *current reality* and to fixate on a *historical reality*.”⁸⁰ The young analyst Sabine Spielrein then proposed a different understanding of the apparent differences in these “realities.” According to the recorded *Minutes*, she argued that “The reason why infantile experiences have such an influence and thus tend to stir up complexes lies in the fact that these experiences proceed along phylogenetic pathways.”⁸¹ Anticipating that her idea might meet with opposition from *Freud’s* school, she prefaced her discussion by noting that she “could only approach these matters from the standpoint of her school [Jung].”⁸² Indeed, sensing that she was getting at something crucial to the very structure of psychoanalysis, Freud cautiously replied, warning the group that they should not jump to phylogenetic conclusions too quickly. He responded with the following:

As for the possibility of memory contents that are phylogenetically acquired (Zurich school; Spielrein), and which could explain the similarities between formations of neurosis and ancient cultures, we first have to envisage, in keeping with the procedure of ‘successive stage,’

experience, he rhetorically asked, “Why should there be an antithesis, since constitution after all *is nothing but* the sediment of experiences from a long line of ancestors; and why should the *individual* experience not be granted a share alongside the experience of ancestors?” Sigmund Freud, *The Letters of Sigmund Freud*, trans. Tania and James Stern, ed. Ernst L. Freud (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1960), 284.

⁸⁰ Wilhelm Stekel, quoted in Herman Nunberg and Ernst Federn, *Minutes of the Vienna Psycho-Analytical Society, 1906-1915*, trans. M. Nunberg (New York: International Universities Press, 1962-1975), III: 302.

⁸¹ Wilhelm Stekel, quoted in *Ibid.*

⁸² Not only was Spielrein Jung’s budding pupil and analysand, she was also deeply in love with Jung, and maintained fantasies of producing a perfect synthesis of Freud’s Jewishness with Jung’s Aryaness by having her own Jewish egg fertilized by Jung’s Aryan seed. Aldo Carotenuto, *A Secret Symmetry: Sabina Spielrein Between Freud and Jung*, trans. Aldo Pomerans, John Shepley and Krishna Winston (New York: Pantheon, 1982); Kerr, *A Most Dangerous Method: The Story of Jung, Freud, and Sabina Spielrein*.

another possibility. It could be a matter of identical psychic conditions, which have led to identical results.⁸³

Freud wanted to be sure that Spielrein (and Jung) were not using phylogenetic memory as a way of skipping over that “long and important period” of the individual’s life “between conception and maturity.” Moreover, as Freud noted in a letter to Jung soon after this meeting, he was troubled by Spielrein’s apparent subordination of “psychological material to *biological* considerations.”⁸⁴

In much the same way as he had attempted to overcome Charcot’s over-emphasis on heredity, Freud now tried to curb the Society’s increasing (and increasingly alarming) interest in “phylogenetic” sources of psychic phenomena as opposed to ontogenetic sources in the individual’s childhood experience. Having replied to Spielrein, he went on to explain his own position: while neurotics and “savages” might both believe in a sort of “magic” (or in “the omnipotence of thoughts”), the reason for the similarity was not that they moved along the same phylogenetic pathways. “As long as it is possible for us to explain these things by an analysis of psychic phenomena, we are not justified in coming to the conclusion that a store of memories has been carried along phylogenetically.” He continues, “What remains unexplained, after this analysis of the psychic phenomena of regression, may then be regarded as phylogenetic memory.”⁸⁵ After attempting to piece together the evidence through psychoanalysis, there were always remnants, shards of evidence which did not fit the larger construction. While Freud had proposed the “unconscious” as a holding-location for these materials, Lacan would go even further,

⁸³ Nunberg and Federn, *Minutes of the Vienna Psycho-Analytical Society, 1906-1915*, III: 307.

⁸⁴ November 30, 1911, #286F, Freud and Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, 469.

⁸⁵ Nunberg and Federn, *Minutes of the Vienna Psycho-Analytical Society, 1906-1915*, III: 307.

ironically calling the unassimilable and inexplicable elements “the real,” as if they were more real than external reality.⁸⁶ Only after the knowable realm of “psychic phenomena” have been thoroughly psychoanalyzed, Freud allowed that heredity and phylogenetic memory could explain those “residues” which were otherwise “inexplicable” or “unapproachable.” As in the 1890s, again in 1911, he attempted to shore up the foundations of psychoanalysis by directing attention to the events in the individual’s own life rather than in the mythological history of her ancestors.

By the time Freud completed *Totem and Taboo* and Jung completed *Transformations and Symbols*, the friendship was on the verge of collapse, and in the final sections of these works, the two men marked out their differences. As Freud wrote the first three essays of *Totem and Taboo*, he and Jung were still on speaking terms, even as there was mounting tension. Drawing on Jung’s work, as well as other studies of mythology, ethnology, anthropology and natural history, he built up a large-scale comparative study of the origins of religious traditions, neurotics’ unconscious obsessions, the incest taboo and the Oedipal complex. In response to Freud’s ongoing work on the question of incest and the son’s sexual feelings for his mother, Jung remarked that he was also “absorbed in the incest problem,” but that he regarded it as “primarily as a fantasy problem.”⁸⁷ A few weeks later, Jung went even further, reminding Freud that he [Freud] had originally taken “the so-called sexual trauma” literally, mistaking fantasies for realities, and that incest, too, was more of a fantasy. “Just as *cum grano salis* it doesn’t matter whether a sexual trauma really occurred or not, or was a

⁸⁶ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, vol. XI (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 54ff.

⁸⁷ April 27, 1912, Freud and Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, 502.

mere fantasy, it is psychologically quite immaterial whether an incest barrier really existed or not, since it is essentially a question of later development whether or not the so-called problem of incest will become of apparent importance.”⁸⁸ On May 23, 1912, Freud seemed to concede that Jung was right about his early mistake: “I value your letter for the warning it contains,” he writes, “and the reminder of my first big error, when I mistook fantasies for realities.”⁸⁹ However, Jung was going too far in abandoning the idea that what had “really occurred” could make all the difference. Freud noted that Jung’s reference to incest and sexual trauma as “merely a fantasy” suggested a “disastrous similarity” with the work of Alfred Adler, who (according to Freud’s viewpoint) had recently abandoned psychoanalysis, at least partly because of an “utter incomprehension of the unconscious.”⁹⁰ Indeed, Freud had good reason to worry that Jung would disregard the literal and historical reality of sexuality, for even before the two men met, Jung had already expressed his aversion to the entire concept of “infantile sexuality.”⁹¹ Finally, in the second part of *Transformations*, Jung gave full vent to his distaste for Freud’s emphasis on the “actuality” of sexual and incestuous feelings. “Just as the sexualism of neuroses is not to be taken literally,” he writes, “so is the sexualism of the early infantile phantasies, especially the incest problem, a regressive product of the revival of the

⁸⁸ May 17, 1912, *Ibid.*, 50.

⁸⁹ May 23, 1912, *Ibid.*, 507.

⁹⁰ As Michael Vannoy Adams writes, “Freud never, however, acknowledged that it was a mistake to take incest literally.” Michael Vannoy Adams, “‘It Was All a Mistake’: Jung’s Postcards to Ernest Jones and Kipling’s Short Story ‘The Phantom Rickshaw,’” (2006). Self-published, Available: www.jungnewyork.com.

⁹¹ Jung, *The Psychology of Dementia Praecox*, 3f. Quoted in Freud and Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, xviii.

archaic modes of function, *outweighing actuality*.”⁹² In other words, by following fantasies back through their “phylogenetic pathways,” Jung could take all of psychoanalysis “with a grain of salt.” Now he was no longer mired in the reality of childhood sexuality—he had moved beyond the literal “actuality” of Freudian psychoanalysis.⁹³

While Freud wrote the first three essays of *Totem* as a sort of temperate response to Jung’s own studies in mythology, in the fourth essay he went in a decidedly different direction. Whereas in the first three essays he builds up a series of comparisons of neurotics and “primitives,” in “The Return of Totemism in Childhood” he traces the origins of these similarities back to a particular series of events. Specifically, he claims that at some point, a “primal horde” of men had tired of submission to their authoritarian father. Thus, they banded together and killed him, putting an end to the “patriarchal horde.”⁹⁴ As a result, they felt ambivalently triumphant, for they felt guilty about having killed the father whom they had both feared and loved.⁹⁵ This is, of course, the original murder which is repeated in Freud’s version of the Moses-story. Where he worried about evidence to support the later version, in *Totem and Taboo*, he does not evince this same

⁹² Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious: A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido [Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido]*, trans. Beatrice M. Hinkle, *Collected Works*, ed. William McGuire, vol. Supplementary B (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1911-12), 396.

⁹³ Jung seems to have hoped that Freud would follow suit in giving up on the trauma-theory. Thus, for example, Ferenczi wrote to Freud about the imminent Fourth Psychoanalytic Congress (the last to be attended by Jung) that he would “discuss Jung’s false assumption that you *have given up* (and not just expanded _ the trauma theory.” August 5, 1913, #413, Freud and Ferenczi, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi*, I: 503. See also Grubrich-Simitis, *Early Freud and Late Freud: Reading Anew Studies on Hysteria and Moses and Monotheism*, 74.

⁹⁴ As others have noted, Freud had long joked about Jung’s wishful fantasies of killing the father (i.e. Freud). In narrating a story about the band of brothers who kill the primal father, Freud articulated his anxieties about his position as the father of psychoanalysis, always threatened by a band of brothers who want to destroy the authoritarian patriarchal power. See Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, “Metapsychology and Metabiology,” trans. Axel and Peter T. Hoffer, *A Phylogenetic Fantasy: Overview of the Transference Neuroses*, by Sigmund Freud (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 99, n37.

⁹⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, *S.E.*, vol. XIII (1913), 141ff.

anxiety. Part of the reason is that the events in *Totem and Taboo* occurred (if they occurred at all) in prehistoric time, and as such, they would not have produced the kinds of evidence which would be expected of events occurring in a textual age. While he bases his reconstruction of the primal murder on the hypotheses of Robertson Smith (as well as Darwin and others), the evidence itself was not in question; it was presumed that anthropologists and natural historians were “trustworthy” observers who simply “collected” their evidence.⁹⁶ Indeed, one of the many oddities about reading the work today is the way in which he uses the ethnological hypotheses as *evidence* upon which he constructs an historical narrative which both explains and is explained by some of the most fundamental findings of Psychoanalysis.⁹⁷

Freud did not worry so much about proving the “reality” of the primal murder also because—contrary to general perceptions of *Totem and Taboo*—the primal murder was not part of the original premise of the entire work. Having built up a series of large- and small-scale comparisons of religious and neurotic “rituals” in the first three essays, he reconstructed the historical narrative of their common origins almost as an after-

⁹⁶ Of course, the position of the anthropologist as a “trustworthy” and “objective” observer is no longer taken for granted. The radical questioning of the anthropologist’s position in relation to his subject can, in fact, be traced to the work of certain anthropologists, such as Michel Leiris, Bernard Malinowski and Claude Lévi-Strauss whose approaches were shaped by their (often critical) reading of Freud’s works. See Celia Brickman, *Aboriginal Populations in the Mind: Race and Primitivity in Psychoanalysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 10-11; James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 22. While Clifford suggests that the “breakup of ethnographic authority” is a result of the “redistribution of colonial power” after 1950, John Efron argues the anthropologist’s position was in question from at least the late nineteenth century when many Jews began to use the language of science as a way of resisting the dominant structures of power. These Jewish scientists were thus confronted with the fact that the observer’s position is never completely “objective.” John M. Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 2-3.

⁹⁷ This strangeness was not so unusual for the period, particularly when one compares Freud’s work to that of Francis Galton who in one work would cover horse breeding, photography, creativity, literature, immigration and racial science, to name just a few of the subjects in Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* (1893 [1907]).

thought, in the middle of the fourth essay. In proposing a series of events which had “left ineradicable traces in the history of humanity”⁹⁸—that is, both on individuals and on human civilization as a whole—he found himself embracing the very idea he had for so long resisted: the possibility that phylogenetically acquired memory contents “could explain the similarities between formations of neurosis and ancient cultures.”⁹⁹ Here Freud suggests that the phylogenetic memory of the primal murder is the originary source not only of neurosis (and other psychic miseries), but of human civilization itself—sociality, conscience and law.

After the crisis of 1897, Freud had continued to search for the “ultimate sources” of his patients’ conditions in their childhood experiences; by incorporating the idea of phylogenetic memory, he now discovered an eternal “source” in the prehistory of all individuals. For example, in the case history of the “Wolf-Man,” written in the year after the break with Jung (and simultaneously with his study of Michaelangelo’s statue of Moses), Freud reviews his patient’s history: his dreams, his memories of his childhood and his hereditary predisposition. In the third section, “The Seduction and its Immediate Consequences,” he traces his patient’s fantasies back through various recollections to their “ultimate sources.” Freud finds that the patient had been sexually seduced in early childhood by both his governess and his sister.¹⁰⁰ While he acknowledges his patient’s fantasies, he insists that the “seduction by his sister was certainly not a phantasy.” He goes on to establish the story’s “credibility” by some other “information which had never

⁹⁸ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 155.

⁹⁹ Nunberg and Federn, *Minutes of the Vienna Psycho-Analytical Society, 1906-1915*, III: 307.

¹⁰⁰ Sigmund Freud, “From a History of an Infantile Neurosis (Wolf-Man),” *S.E.*, vol. XVII (1918), 19ff.

been forgotten.”¹⁰¹ In his earlier case histories, Freud had been limited by whatever the patients happened to recollect in the course of analysis, supplemented by conversations with other family members (as in the case of Elisabeth or more extensively, in the case of “Little Hans”). Now he notes that he has found the solution in “Fresh Material from the Primal Period”¹⁰²: where significant experiences in the child’s own primal period cannot be discovered, now the primal period of the human race can fill in the gaps. “A child catches hold of this phylogenetic experience where his own experience fails him,” writes Freud. “He fills in the gaps in individual truth with prehistoric truth; he replaces occurrences in his own life by occurrences in the life of his ancestors.”¹⁰³

As Carlo Ginzburg has shown, because Freud did not share the same literary-cultural background as his Russian patient, he overlooked the fact that mythology itself provided the Wolf-man with a narrative which shaped his phobias and life experience.¹⁰⁴ A central part of childhood is the experience of hearing stories which create worlds—so sensually evocative that fictions are felt as more present than the present facts—and some of these narratives are not consciously remembered later in life. Thus, while these stories could be categorized as a special realm of childhood experience—even sexual in their intense sensory nature—Freud overlooked this possibility and instead proposed that real experiences are the basis for the phylogenetic memory which generates mythological narratives.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 21.

¹⁰² The title of the eighth section is “Fresh Material From the Primal Period—Solution.” See Ibid., 89ff.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 97.

¹⁰⁴ Carlo Ginzburg, “Freud, the Wolf-Man, and the Werewolves,” *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

While Freud concedes that this solution is in agreement with Jung's hypotheses about "the existence of this phylogenetic heritage," he actually develops a very different argument about this heritage. Whereas Jung saw the phylogenetic heritage and mythology as the source of the narratives of our life-experiences—both individual and collective—Freud insists that real experiences are the source of phylogenetic memory and mythology. Indeed, in his *Introductory Lectures* (1915-1917), Freud went even further and insisted that

primal phantasies, as I should like to call them... are a phylogenetic endowment. In them the individual reaches beyond his own experience into primaeval experience at points where his own experience has been too rudimentary. It seems to me quite possible that all the things that are told to us in analysis as phantasy—the seduction of children, the inflaming of sexual excitement by observing parental intercourse, the threat of castration (or rather castration itself)—were once *real occurrences* in the primaeval times of the human family, and that children in their phantasies are simply filling in the gaps in individual truth with prehistoric truth.¹⁰⁵

Now that he had completely split with Jung, Freud began to freely incorporate the concept of phylogenetic memory into the very foundations of psychoanalytic theory. However, he continued to insist upon the concerns that he had addressed as early as 1898, and again in 1911 at the meeting of the Psychoanalytic Society. It would be "a methodological error to seize on a phylogenetic explanation before the ontogenetic possibilities have been exhausted," he writes. "I cannot see any reason for obstinately disputing the importance of infantile prehistory while at the same time freely acknowledging the importance of ancestral prehistory."¹⁰⁶ Now that he no longer resisted the "undeniable" reality of the phylogenetic heritage, he realized that "phylogenetic

¹⁰⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, S.E., vol. XV-XVI (1915-1917), 370, my italics.

¹⁰⁶ Freud, "From a History of an Infantile Neurosis (Wolf-Man)," 97.

motives and productions themselves stand in need of elucidation, and that in quite a number of instances this is afforded by factors in the childhood of the individual.”¹⁰⁷ If the gaps in the individual’s narratives could be filled in by phylogenetic memories, now there was the problem of gaps in the phylogenetic narrative. Indeed, in *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud would find himself confronting this very problem: in his attempt to reconstruct the narrative of the Jewish people, he tried to fill in the gaps in the phylogenetic narrative with materials gathered from his work with individuals.

D. The Analogy: From the Race to the Individual and Back Again

Though Freud insists that his character study requires historical proofs, the applicability and validity of his reconstruction depends on the comparison of the origins of Jewishness with the origins of neurosis. Despite all the anxious comments about establishing the historical proof of his narrative, the real foundation of the work is in fact contained within this analogy. Though he had compared the origins of religion to the origins of neurosis in a number of works since *Totem and Taboo*,¹⁰⁸ in *Moses and Monotheism*, he introduces this comparison as if it were entirely new, even shocking.¹⁰⁹ “The only satisfying analogy to the remarkable course of events that we have found in the history of the Jewish religion,” he writes, “lies in an apparently remote field but it is very

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, S.E., vol. XXI (1927); *Civilization and its Discontents*, S.E., vol. XXI (1930).

¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless, as if the comparison would be a bit too obvious, he studiously avoided likening Judaism to neurosis. Even today, the idea that to be Jewish is to be neurotic may strike some (including myself) as overly emblematic of Woody Allen’s filmic interpretation (or anticipation) of Sander Gilman’s work on *Jewish Self-Hatred*.

complete, and approaches identity.” One might suppose that after reading through the truly surprising story of the “real” origins of the Jewish people, the reader would not find a comparison of neurosis and religion all that surprising, especially if this reader were at all familiar with Freud’s earlier works in which he had already presented this analogy.¹¹⁰ The terms had already been introduced, the scene had been set. And yet, whether for rhetorical flourish, or because something truly odd and discomfoting is about to be discussed, Freud presents “The Analogy” as if it is something quite new and unexpected.

Indeed, what follows *is* surprising in that it is a return to Freud’s trauma-theory which he had both established and supposedly abandoned in the late 1890s. “We shall see,” writes Freud, “that this analogy is not so surprising as might at first be thought—indeed that it is more like a postulate.” A “postulate” is not simply a hypothesis, but a “fundamental condition or principle, an unproved and necessary assumption” which supports an entire argument.¹¹¹ In other words, the analogy itself can be seen as the “clay feet” which support the “statue,” the evidence which supports the structure of Freud’s narrative of Moses the Egyptian. What follows this sentence is not so surprising as it is enigmatic—full of elusive references to gaps and dichotomies. However, Freud’s tone is tinged with bravado, as if all these gaps have been bridged long ago, as if all paradoxes have been solved and the dichotomies overcome. After introducing the comparison, he presents some of the most fundamental findings of psychoanalysis and acknowledges the

¹¹⁰ While Freud compared the rituals of neurotics and religions as early as 1907, it was not until 1912 that he made the explicit comparison between the origins of neurosis, religion and civilization. After that, however, this analogy became a commonplace in his writings. See Sigmund Freud, “Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices,” *S.E.*, vol. IX (1907); Freud, *Totem and Taboo; The Future of an Illusion; Civilization and its Discontents*.

¹¹¹ “postulate,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2002, Oxford University Press, Available: <http://dictionary.oed.com>.

questions which had plagued him throughout his career. However, he quickly puts these questions aside as “irrelevant.” This obviously suggests that there is something anxious and unresolved about these questions. While he explicitly worries about adequate “substantiation” for the historical novel, in this section he reveals the cracks in the foundations of psychoanalytic theory.

Like many of his contemporaries, from at least the 1890s, Freud accepted the idea that the development of individuals seemed to recapitulate the development of the human race, or as Ernst Haeckel succinctly put it, “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny.” Haeckel and many other “recapitulationists” were primarily interested in showing how the development of the individual could be used as a model to understand the development of the human race. Quite obviously, the former was knowable while the latter was always in the realm of speculation.¹¹² As Frank Sulloway suggests, when Freud began to develop a synthesis following the so-called “abandonment of the seduction theory” in 1897-1898, Haeckel’s theory structured his attempts to synthesize the “various organic, biogenetic, and psychological components of his previous year’s thinking.”¹¹³ However, Freud’s early use of the recapitulation theory was idiosyncratic in that, unlike his contemporaries, he proposed that the evolution of the human race could be used as a model to understand the *individual’s* “primal history [*Urgeschichte*]” (rather than the other way around). In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud turned his previous use of Haeckel’s law on its head: whereas previously he had used phylogenetic development as an explanatory model for

¹¹² Though Haeckel’s recapitulation theory is very often associated with the Lamarckian idea of the “inheritance of acquired characteristics,” they are not in fact corollaries of one another. Indeed, as I have noted, until 1912, Freud resisted the idea that individuals inherit phylogenetic memory, for this seemed to move too far away from the specific realities of the individual’s past.

¹¹³ Sulloway, *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend*, 200, see also 293-294, 199-204.

ontogenetic development, now he worked in the opposite direction, turning from his earlier theory of the individual to a theory of the (Jewish) race.

While he had long ago established that the individual's childhood was a sort of "primal" period akin to the primal period of human evolution, in *Moses and Monotheism*, he introduces his early trauma-theory as if it is an entirely new "postulate":

We give the name of *traumas* to those impressions, experienced early and later forgotten, to which we attach such great importance in the aetiology of the neuroses. The obvious objection to this is that it is not possible in every case to discover a manifest trauma in the neurotic subject's earliest history [*Urgeschichte*].¹¹⁴

Here Freud echoes the concerns which were supposedly particular to the "historical novel"—what is the analyst to do if there is not substantial evidence to support the historical reconstruction? How can he understand the effects of events which he cannot necessarily *prove* actually happened? How can he reconstruct a history without trustworthy corroborating evidence? Freud admits that "When we have nothing else at our disposal for explaining a neurosis but hereditary and constitutional dispositions, we are naturally tempted to say that it was not acquired but developed."¹¹⁵ Clearly, Freud has no interest in following this idea any further, since the entire book rests on the assumption that the Jews *acquired* their Jewishness from Moses—that is, from an external source. Thus, in the following paragraph, he re-states one of the founding principles of psychoanalysis. "Firstly," he notes, "the genesis of a neurosis invariably goes back to very early impressions in childhood." In other words, *something* must have happened in order to produce the effects in the present. Second, Freud notes that if these

¹¹⁴ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 72.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

early events “had not occurred the neurosis would not have come about.” “But the gap [*die Kluft*] between the two groups [of cases] appears not to be unbridgeable.”¹¹⁶

Here is the turn of the screw: in order to illuminate his theory of the race, Freud turns to a theory of individual development, but within this theory of individual development, he turns back to a theory of race. Twenty-odd pages after introducing this comparison, he presents his solution to the problem as if it is entirely surprising, as if it is a step in a new direction “When we study the reactions to early traumas,” he writes, “we are quite often *surprised* to find that they are not strictly limited to what the subject himself has really experienced but diverge from it in a way which fits in much better with the model of a phylogenetic event and, in general, can only be explained by such an influence.”¹¹⁷ On the one hand, this step is not new at all. As early as 1897, Freud had used the metaphor of “primal history” to explain his search for the “ultimate cause” of his patients’ problems in their own primal experiences in early childhood. And by 1912, he had gone back to the idea of the “primal history,” attempting to use his discoveries in individual psychology to develop a theory of human civilization. What is new in *Moses and Monotheism* is that he has come full circle, from the race to the individual and back to the individual race, yet at the center a gap remained.

E. From Mount Sinai to Egypt

Whereas Freud often remarked on his radical change regarding the reality of his

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 99.

patients' memories, he never commented on his change regarding phylogenetic memory even though it thoroughly reshaped the foundations of psychoanalysis. Indeed, in *Moses and Monotheism* (and in other late works), Freud suggests that all of psychoanalysis depends upon accepting the idea that phylogenetic memory is inherited. If we read his vision of Mosaic monotheism as a sort of parable of psychoanalysis, a strange twist emerges. Over and over again, he insists that monotheism was not original to the Jews—it was “imposed” upon them from the outside, it was “borrowed from Egypt.”¹¹⁸

However, there is a secondary stage of borrowing, for not only was the Jews' monotheism received from the Egyptian Moses, but Moses also derived his idea of monotheism from the Pharaoh Akhenaten's monotheistic sun-god cult. Nonetheless, Moses transformed Akhenaten's universalistic sun-god cult into a difficult and particularist monotheism, emptying the Egyptian religion of its most mystical elements. Akhenaten had proclaimed that the sun-god was a universal god whose powers ranged throughout the world, making this god the perfect deity for an imperialist ruler. By contrast, Moses proclaimed that the Jews' god was the *only* god, and that the Jews were this god's *only* chosen people, a transformation which was more appropriate for the loose collection of wandering tribes unattached to any particular land.¹¹⁹ Moses' monotheism left a “permanent imprint” on the “character” of the Jewish people precisely because it

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 85.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 85-88. In *Future of an Illusion*, Freud suggests that the belief in “chosenness” is another “illusion” which derives from the singularity of God. “Now that God was a single person, man's relations to him could recover the intimacy and intensity of the child's relation to his father. But if one had done so much for one's father, one wanted to have a reward, or at least to be his only beloved child, his Chosen People.” Similarly, in *Ancient Judaism*, Max Weber claims that while other monotheistic cults had existed before Jewish monotheism, by proclaiming their god as the *universal* god, the Jewish people became “chosen” for exclusivity and particularity. Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, trans. Hans Gerth and Don Martindale (New York: Free Press, 1952).

rejected the magical and mystical elements of the Egyptian religion. Indeed, “their melancholy destinies and their disappointments in reality served only to intensify” the survival of the Mosaic tradition.”

Most of the Moses-story seems on a par with Freud’s wishful dreams about psychoanalysis, except for the question of Akhenaten. If Freud is Moses, who is Akhenaten? If the Jewish people could not admit the “foreign” origins of their greatest “acquisition,” what was the foreign influence to which Freud could not admit? I want to suggest that Freud could not admit to the radical change in the foundations of psychoanalytic theory—the resistance and then acceptance of phylogenetic memory—because to do so would be to admit that he had “borrowed” one of his most foundational (albeit late) ideas from Jung. While there is ample evidence that Freud was intensely anxious about his various appropriations (some might call it “plagiarism”) of others’ work, there is one anecdote that is extraordinarily revealing in terms of the “identity” of Akhenaten. One of the major lacunae in *Moses* is any mention of the fact that Freud “borrowed” the very idea of the Egyptianness of Moses and the importance of Akhenaten from his younger colleague Karl Abraham.¹²⁰ In 1912, Freud and Jung engaged in a heated discussion about Abraham’s recent work on Akhenaten in which he claimed that the Egyptian pharaoh had invented the original monotheism. When Jung protested that Abraham had made too much of Akhenaten (in particular his death wishes against his

¹²⁰ Karl Abraham, “Amenhotep IV (Ichnaton): Psychoanalytische Beiträge zum Verständnis seiner Persönlichkeit und des monotheistischen Atonkultes.” *Imago: Zeitschrift für Anwendung der Psychoanalyse auf die Geisteswissenschaften* I (1912); Leonard Shengold, “A Parapraxis of Freud in Relation to Karl Abraham.” *American Imago* 29 (1972).

father), Freud apparently fell into one of his fainting spells.¹²¹

Like Moses, Freud may have “borrowed” the idea of phylogenetic memory from Jung’s explorations in mythology, but he took it in a distinctly different direction. Whereas Jung’s concept of the “collective unconscious” bordered on religious mysticism, Freud insisted that the psychoanalytic concept of phylogenetic memory remained firmly grounded in reality. Indeed, we might go even further: while Jung confidently saw himself as belonging to an Aryan tradition of mythology, Freud “borrowed” elements from a range of cultures and mythologies including the Greeks, the Romans and the Hebrew Bible. Thus, as Mosaic monotheism can be seen as an appropriate “invention” to unite the wandering Semitic tribes, Freud’s insistence on a grounded reality behind all mythology, phylogenetic memory and present conditions can be understood as an attempt to create a dogma which would be appropriate to the ungrounded and cosmopolitan “citizens of the world.” Jung’s symbolic concept of the collective unconscious is in many ways more “common sense” than Freud’s version of phylogenetic memory. However, the weight of Freud’s version is derived from the insistence on something *more* grounded—more outrageously real—than any of the various realities available to “cosmopolitan” citizens of the world.

Rather than reading *Moses and Monotheism* as a daydream, I read it as a case history, one which follows the illusions and dreams, identifications and fantasies of its subject, but which also attempts to acknowledge a “difficult” reality. Just as Mosaic monotheism had survived the murder of its founder and centuries of repression and

¹²¹ Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (New York: Basic Books, 1953-1957), II: 147; Carl Gustav Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston, ed. Aniela Jaffé (New York: Vintage Books, 1965); Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, 60.

apparent forgetting, so too, Freud hoped that psychoanalysis would survive and develop beyond the current dismal circumstances: a dying founder, rejection of its most important discoveries, and persecution of its followers.¹²² However, Freud seems to have recognized that like Mosaic monotheism, psychoanalysis would never be universally accepted because of its difficult doctrines and its rejection of “illusions.” This limitation, however, should not be understood as a defeat. The implicit acknowledgement that neither psychoanalysis nor Judaism would ever extend a *universal* reach may paradoxically be their most critical strength that distinguishes them both from their “opposites”—Judaism from Christianity, and psychoanalysis from Jungian psychotherapy. These distinctions are emphasized by Freud’s insistence on the *reality* of childhood memories and sexuality, and the *actual* inheritance of real archaic memories. Whereas Jung pursued the symbolic pathways and structures of the collective unconscious, Freud remained “mired” in the literal realm of memory and history.

Ironically, while later critics such as Masson condemn Freud’s “abandonment” of reality, Jung disparaged Freud’s insistence on material reality of the past.¹²³ Indeed, Jung made no secret of his disgust with the emphasis on infantile sexuality and with bodily

¹²² Grubrich-Simitis, *Early Freud and Late Freud: Reading Anew Studies on Hysteria and Moses and Monotheism*, 61-62.

¹²³ In November 1912, Jung excitedly reported on his recent trip to America where he had presented lectures at the University of Fordham, New York. “I found that my version of psychoanalysis won over many people who until now had been put off by the problem of sexuality in neurosis.” #323J, Nov. 11, 1912, Freud and Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, 515. This critical distinction between Freud’s and Jung’s concepts of phylogenetic memory has been extended by Jungians such as Lilian Frey-Rohn who writes, “When referring to inherited dispositions, Freud by no means had in mind systems of predetermined channels or pathways (Jung) but ‘memory-traces of the experience of earlier generations.’ By thinking *only in concrete terms*, Freud went so far as to ascribe such memory-traces to the after-effect of prehistoric events.” Frey-Rohn, *From Freud to Jung: A Comparative Study of the Psychology of the Unconscious*, trans. Fred. E. Engreen and Evelyn K. Engreen (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons for the C.G. Jung Foundation for Analytical Psychology, 1974), 127, my italics.

matters more generally.¹²⁴ This same critique is echoed by recent scholars who, in their attempt to save Freud from himself, suggest that while his grand narratives are provocative, they should not be taken *literally*. Thus, for example, the anthropologist-psychoanalyst Robert Paul argues that “if we read Freud’s cultural books replacing his search for historical origins with a focus on such fantasy schemas—individually experienced, but also collectively shared, communicated, and transmitted as symbolic representations and as phylogenetic templates—the main arguments take on persuasive force.”¹²⁵ In other words, Freud’s ideas are much more palatable if we simply read them (ala Jung and Krafft-Ebing) as myths or “fairy-tales.”

So too, Yerushalmi suggests that while Freud’s notion of inherited memory is subjectively convincing, it should not be taken *literally*. Specifically, he takes Freud to task for daring to “press” the analogy comparing individual and collective memory to the point of an “identity.” As he writes elsewhere, “as the ‘life of a people’ is a biological metaphor, so the ‘memory of a people’ is a psychological metaphor, useful, but not to be

¹²⁴ For example, during a stint as a physician on the war-front, Jung wrote a letter to Freud in which he noted that he was surrounded by “the constant spectacle of *odious corporeality*.” However, he notes “something can be gained even from its more indelicate aspect, to wit, from what is known as the ‘short-arm inspection’ [*sogenannte Schwanzvisite*].” Jung goes on to describe his examination of the penises of 500 conscripted men: “At this phallic parade of 500 soldiers 14% had phimosis. Here we have the biological incentive to circumcision. The commonest abnormality seems to be a tendency to hypospadias. It looks positively female.” This quotation obviously deserves more discussion! #271J, Oct. 4, 1911, Freud and Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, 444.

¹²⁵ Robert Paul, “Freud’s Anthropology: A Reading of the ‘Cultural Books,’” *The Cambridge Companion to Freud*, ed. Jerome Neu (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 268. Paul argues that we must “reject the literal historicity of the primal crime, as well as the idea of the history of civilization being like maturation from infancy on through stages comparable to those in an individual life.” However, he adds that “our rejection of these aspects of Freud’s cultural thought should not lead us to ignore the fact that the parallels he cites are highly persuasive, indicating that the fantasies, impulses, defenses, and symbolisms observed clinically in obsessional personalities, and culturally in the rites, symbols and traditions of our civilization are closely related if not identical.” In other words, an acceptance of the historicity of Freud’s primal crime is central to understanding the parallels. Paul, “Freud’s Anthropology: A Reading of the ‘Cultural Books,’” 284.

literalized.”¹²⁶ Nonetheless, as Yerushalmi is acutely aware, this metaphor is one which runs throughout the Hebrew Bible, burdening each individual—past, present and future—with the responsibility for the group’s memory. However, Yerushalmi worries that a literal reading of the scriptural metaphor will wrongly suggest that it is not necessary for the individual to actively remember.¹²⁷ The individual will feel relieved of the burden of memory if the metaphor is biologically literalized, since its inheritance would seem to suggest that there is no need for the individual to *do* anything in order to *be* Jewish; that is, there is no need for the Jewish individual to practice Jewish rituals, read Jewish texts, or to transmit the past to the future: she (and her progeny) will be Jewish whether she (or they) like it or not.¹²⁸

The critique of Freud’s over-literalism can be understood along the lines of the classic Pauline critique of Judaic hermeneutics. While others have argued that Freud’s reasoning was particularly Rabbinic, talmudic or kabbalistic,¹²⁹ I am suggesting that the *critique* of psychoanalysis can be illuminated by comparing it to the early Christian

¹²⁶ Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, 87-88. See also Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, “Reflections on Forgetting,” *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), 109.

¹²⁷ Incidentally, while Yerushalmi worries about the literalization of collective memory, he shuttles back to the collective realm in his warnings about collective forgetting: the individual’s failure to transmit what she knows out of her past to her posterity contributes to a process of collective forgetting. Yerushalmi, “Reflections on Forgetting,” 109.

¹²⁸ This problematically assumes that such individuals will “naturally” transmit the past to the future by biologically reproducing.

¹²⁹ For an interpretation of Freud’s logic as particularly Rabbinic, see Susan Handelman, *The Slayers of Moses* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982). For an interpretation which sets Freud’s work in the Jewish mystical tradition, see David Bakan, *Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1958). At various times, Freud both embraced and rejected the idea that psychoanalysts might be compared to Talmudists. For example, in *Moses and Monotheism*, he writes that “it did not seem attractive to find oneself classed with the schoolmen and Talmudists who delight in exhibiting their ingenuity without regard to how remote from reality their thesis may be.” Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 17. On the other hand, Freud happily accepted Abraham’s comment about the Talmudic structure and logic of the book on *Jokes* as a compliment. Freud and Abraham, *A Psychoanalytic Dialogue: Letters of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham, 1907-1926*, 36.

critique of Rabbinic Judaism. As Daniel Boyarin has noted, “when Augustine consigns the Jews to eternal carnality, he draws a direct connection between anthropology and hermeneutics. Because the Jews reject reading ‘in the spirit,’ therefore they are condemned to remain ‘Israel in the flesh.’” More generally, the “failure of the Jews” was described as “owing to a *literalist* hermeneutic, one which is unwilling to go beyond or behind the material language and discover its immaterial spirit.”¹³⁰ According to Freud, what ultimately distinguished Christianity from Mosaic Monotheism was the fact that Paul “abandoned the ‘chosen’ character of his people and its visible mark—circumcision—so that the new religion could be a universal one, embracing all men.”¹³¹

So too, Freud believed that Jung had abandoned the most important character of Freudian psychoanalysis, in particular, its grounding in real events experienced both physically and psychologically. In his retrospective account, “On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement” (1914), Freud insists that in order to make psycho-analysis more acceptable and perhaps even appealing to the “general public,” Jung replaced the most difficult elements of psycho-analysis with symbols. According to Freud, what was most troubling (for Jung and for the general public) was the notion that current conditions originate in actual sexual experiences in childhood and real events in the “primal” history of the human race. In contrast, Jung intended to “eliminate what is objectionable in the family-complexes, so as to find it again in religion and ethics. For sexual libido an *abstract concept* has been substituted... The Oedipus complex has a *merely* ‘symbolic’

¹³⁰ Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 8.

¹³¹ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 88.

meaning.”¹³²

In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud was momentarily liberated from the epistemological questions which plagued both his early case studies and his final book. In both the *Studies in Hysteria* and in *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud reconstructs *specific* narratives at least in part by questioning the reliability and transparency of the historical documents. By contrast, he did not worry about establishing the “historical truth” in *Totem and Taboo* since the primal murder occurred in a prehistoric “dreamtime,”¹³³ and as such, could never be “proven” inaccurate or wrong. It is just this aspect of “non-falsifiability” that Karl Popper uses as the prime example of the non-scientific status of psychoanalytic theory.¹³⁴ However, in “an ironic reversal of the Popperian claim,” Richard Lewontin has suggested that the more general and less specific the argument, the more it is protected against the claims of counter-evidence.¹³⁵ As in biology, so too in history, “there may be *general* statements, but there are no universals, and... actual events are the nexus of multiple causal pathways and chance perturbations.”¹³⁶ Following this paradigm, Freud’s thesis in *Totem and Taboo* and Jung’s concept of the collective unconscious are less open

¹³² Sigmund Freud, “On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement,” *S.E.*, vol. XIV (1914), 62. This is, of course, *Freud’s* view of things, and should not be misunderstood as an “objective” view of the differences between the two men’s theories. However, many Jungians and Freudians seem to agree on this distinction. See Adams, “It Was All a Mistake.”; Frey-Rohn, *From Freud to Jung: A Comparative Study of the Psychology of the Unconscious*, 127.

¹³³ Yerushalmi, *Freud’s Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, 21.

¹³⁴ In his 1953 Lecture on “Science, Conjectures and Refutations,” Karl Popper reviews his conclusions of 1919-1920 which were primarily focused on Marxist theories of history, Freudian psychoanalysis and Adler’s psychology of the individual. He writes, “A theory which is not refutable by any conceivable event is non-scientific. Irrefutability is not a virtue of a theory (as people often think) but a vice.” While Popper is often cited as the theorist who demonstrated the unscientific claims of psychoanalysis, he was actually more circumspect about what this *meant*, and notes that all theories “originate from myths,” and even those theories that are non-scientific are not “unimportant, insignificant, meaningless or nonsensical.” Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 1963), 4, 8. See also Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

¹³⁵ Lewontin, “Facts and the Factitious in Natural Sciences,” 482.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

to any challenges which might be presented by counter-evidence partly because the claims are so general and universal that they can never be disproven. By contrast, the historical claim of *Moses and Monotheism* is more open to falsifying counter-evidence precisely because it is more specific, neither universal nor generally applicable to humanity.

The difference between Freud's and Jung's work may not have been so much a matter of content as one of methodology. According to Freud, while Jung's work was overly based on theory (and only afterwards "confirmed" by observation), *Freudian* psychoanalytic theory was "obtained by the method of analysis, by pursuing the symptoms and peculiarities of neurotics back to their ultimate sources, the discovery of which then explains whatever is explicable in them and enables whatever is modifiable to be changed."¹³⁷ According to certain standards of science later popularized by Popper, Jung appears the more "scientific," since he begins with a hypothesis and then attempts to prove it (rather than "organically" pursuing a train of clues).¹³⁸ Instead of relegating all symptoms as the effect of universal mythologies, in his early case histories, Freud had insisted on the "particularities" of his patients' conditions and on the possibility of finding their "ultimate sources." In developing a theory of Jewishness, he returned to use the language of historical discovery, as if he could not quite give up on the idea that there was something *real*—more grounded and particular—that causes later phenomena such as mythology, religion and civilization itself. This is not simply recalcitrant positivism or racial determinism, but a belief in the work of history and medicine as fields which

¹³⁷ Freud, "On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement," 18-19.

¹³⁸ Freud, "Heredity and the Aetiology of the Neuroses," 151.

articulate the malleability of the world. In addition to sharing a certain methodology, both rest on the assumption that by discovering the “ultimate sources” of present conditions—whether mental illness, racism or fascism (for example)—it might be possible to change “whatever is modifiable” in the future. Freud refused to concede that the human condition was a product of a shared universal mythology, for this would seem to leave little room for the particularities of historical circumstances and the possibilities of future transformations.

Freud’s insistence on the “historical truth” of his version of the Moses story may seem less strange than his insistence on the idea that the memory of these events had been inherited by the Jewish people. Indeed, from our own perspective in the twenty-first century, the inheritance of memory may seem not only bizarrely unscientific but also regressively racist. When he incorporated the idea of the inheritance of memory, he seemed to return to the hereditarianism of his mentors which he had long ago rejected. Particularly since Charcot’s hereditarian focus was associated with a certain racial determinism (or racial anti-semitism), Freud’s re-consideration of phylogenetic memory may seem to similarly over-determine his subjects’ lives. In this chapter, I have explored why Freud felt that he needed to insist on the *factuality* of his subjects’ pasts—history over mythology, memory over fantasy—even as he began to incorporate the idea that these pasts included not only their own childhood experiences but also the experiences of their ancestors. In the next two chapters, I investigate the relationship of Freud’s interest in the inheritance of memory to the ongoing debates about whether acquired characteristics could be inherited. While this “Lamarckian” notion has since gone of favor, during Freud’s lifetime it was a matter of much debate, particularly as it explicitly

related to the questions of Jewishness and race. If a person was Jewish, did this condition ultimately determine her entire life? Was such a condition a matter of *a priori* difference, or was the difference more malleable, a matter of cultural environment or spiritual inclinations? If Jewishness was originally “acquired,” could it be de- or re-acquired? Why were some aspects of Jewishness heritable while others seemed more open to interpretation? In the following chapter, I examine such questions in the context of the political and scientific debates about heredity, evolution and race during Freud’s lifetime.

Chapter 2

Freud's 'Lamarckism' and the Politics of Racial Science

A. Freud Amongst the Evolutionary Theorists

For at least twenty years before writing *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud flirted with the idea that individuals inherit an “archaic heritage” from their ancestors. However, it was not until his final book that he explicitly insisted on the inheritance of phylogenetic memory despite the “present attitude of biological science which refuses to hear of the inheritance of acquired characters by successive generations.”¹ Freud’s late acknowledgement of the current state of biological science has often been interpreted as evidence that he knew that the inheritance of acquired characters had been scientifically disproven.² However, it is unclear whether the question of the inheritance of acquired characters was ever a purely scientific matter and whether such a theory can ever be definitively disproven.³ Indeed, it is often quite difficult to distinguish the borders

¹ Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, S.E., vol. XXIII (1939), 100.

² As I will discuss later in this chapter, part of this misunderstanding is due simply to the fact that Ernest Jones uses Katherine Jones’ translation of this passage which is slightly misleading. The original German reads, “biologischen Wissenschaft..., die von der Vererbung erworbener Eigenschaften auf die Nachkommen *nichts wissen will*.” In Jones’ translation, Freud acknowledges that biological science “*rejects* the idea of acquired qualities being transmitted to descendants.” The translation in the *Standard Edition* is closer to the German: “biological science *refuses to hear of* the inheritance of acquired characters by successive generations.”

³ Recent work in the field of “epigenetics” shows that “epimutations” in response to the environment may be hereditarily transmitted and suggests that Lamarck might have been a “little bit right.” See, for example, Michael Balter, “Genetics: Was Lamarck Just a Little Bit Right?” *Science* April 7 2000; Eva Jablonka and Marion Lamb, *Epigenetic Inheritance and Evolution: The Lamarckian Dimension* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Edward Steele, Robyn Lindley and Robert Blanden, *Lamarck's Signature: How Retrogenes are Changing Darwin's Natural Selection Paradigm* (Reading, MA: Perseus Books, 1998).

between scientific and political questions, and this was particularly true in regards to evolutionary and hereditary theories in Europe in the 1930s. Nonetheless, the complicated relationship between science and politics in the '30s extended its effects well into the 1950s (and later) when many of the foundational histories of evolutionary theory and of psychoanalysis were being written. For instance, in the 1950s, the belief in the inheritance of acquired characteristics was associated with the failures of politically motivated science in the Communist East, and as such, in the West, it was regarded as specious pseudo-science. In this chapter, I show that Freud was uneasy about insisting on the inheritance of acquired characters precisely because he was aware of the political implications of this idea.

While Freud's initial interest in phylogenetic memory was not necessarily politically motivated, his refusal to abandon this idea in the 1930s must be understood in terms of wider debates, especially regarding the position of the Jewish people in Germany and Austria. By suggesting that individuals inherited the effects of their ancestors' experiences, Freud seemed to align himself with other "Lamarckians" who opposed the determinism of the neo-Darwinians' hard heredity in favor of a "softer" and more malleable concept of heredity allowing for the inheritance of acquired characteristics. While Lamarckism went out of fashion in the West in the 1940s, it is often forgotten that it was a major subject of scientific and political debates well into the 1930s, if not later. In Germany, the Nazis referred to Lamarckism as the product of "liberal-Jewish-Bolshevist science"⁴ which superstitiously and foolishly supported an

⁴ Robert Proctor, "Nazi Medicine and the Politics of Knowledge," *The "Racial" Economy of Science*, ed. Sandra Harding (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 350.

outmoded theory of evolution. “Lamarckian” theories of Jewishness were suspiciously regarded not only by the Nazis. After World War II, *any* hereditarian theory of Jewishness appeared uncomfortably similar to racist theories which had undergirded the Nazis’ “final solution.” However, Freud was neither the first nor the last Jewish scientist to develop a hereditarian theory of Jewishness. In asserting that the Jews inherit the memories of their ancestors, Freud developed a racial theory of Jewishness which *opposed* racist definitions of the Jewish people and partially (if bizarrely) explained their persistent survival despite centuries of anti-semitism and oppression.

In his classic three-volume biography, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (1953), Ernest Jones explains that he could not understand Freud’s “obstinacy” in insisting upon the apparently “outmoded” scientific theory of “Lamarckism” in *Moses and Monotheism*. Since then, numerous other scholars have followed Jones’ lead and have remarked upon this aspect of Freud’s work with bemusement and wonder: why did he continue to insist upon the inheritance of acquired characters, particularly in the 1930s when this idea had (supposedly) so clearly been disproven?⁵ In many biographies and histories of psychoanalysis, Freud’s Lamarckism has been presented as a quandary and has been intensely scrutinized with wildly differing consequences.⁶ Scholars intent upon showing the fraudulence of Freud’s theories have emphasized his “Lamarckism” as one of many examples demonstrating the scientifically flawed foundations of

⁵ For example, Emmanuel Rice suggests that the “central weakness” in Freud’s theory is his “seemingly irrational dependence on Lamarck’s theory of inheritance of acquired characteristics.” Since Rice cannot make sense of why “Freud, the scientist, would accept this hypothesis without question, hesitation or doubt,” he argues, “We must look to Freud the man for an explanation.” Emanuel Rice, *Freud and Moses: The Long Journey Home* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 146, 152. See also Stephen Jay Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), 155ff.

⁶ The key source in all discussions of Freud’s use of biological theory is Frank J. Sulloway, *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend* (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

psychoanalysis.⁷ Other scholars — particularly historians of psychoanalysis, many of whom are psychoanalysts themselves and therefore protective of Freud’s legacy — have attempted to downplay Freud’s loyalty to Lamarckian-sounding ideas for fear that all of psychoanalysis might be tainted by his idiosyncratic obstinacy.⁸ In other words, they attempt to save Freud from himself. More recently, a number of historians of psychoanalysis have learned from their predecessors, and instead of downplaying Freud’s foibles, they meticulously document his flaws, including his misguided scientific claims (such as his Lamarckism). Thus, they attempt to beat the Freud-bashers at their own game and to demonstrate that psychoanalysis’s reputation can be salvaged even if Freud’s can not.⁹ While they maintain that it is possible to “emancipate” themselves from the authoritarian power of their leader, they overlook the fact that neither Freud nor any other thinker for that matter can emancipate himself from the historical circumstances which

⁷ As Richard Webster writes in a review of Frederick Crews’ *The Memory Wars* and John Forrester’s *Dispatches from the Freud Wars*, “the picture of Freud which has gradually emerged... is of a man so deeply ensnared in the fallacies of Lamarck, Haeckel and late nineteenth-century evolutionary biology, and so engulfed by the diagnostic darkness of turn-of-the-century European medicine, that he led an entire generation of gifted intellectuals deeper and deeper into a labyrinth of error from which our intellectual culture as a whole is still struggling to emerge.” Richard Webster, “The Bewildered Visionary,” *Times Literary Supplement* May 16, 1997. See also Richard Webster, *Why Freud Was Wrong: Sin, Science and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 236, 240.

⁸ The most explicit example of this argument is Lucille Ritvo who goes to extraordinary lengths to show that Freud’s belief in the inheritance of acquired characteristics was not Lamarckian but rather Darwinian. Lucille B. Ritvo, *Darwin's Influence on Freud: A Tale of Two Sciences* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). Similarly, Dennis Wrong has grouped Freud’s Lamarckism alongside other embarrassing elements such as the death instinct and the primal crime which many psychoanalysts have tried to keep from contaminating psychoanalysis proper.

⁹ Patricia Kitcher argues that Freud drastically misunderstood many scientific concepts because he attempted to be interdisciplinary. Thus, she remarks that when Lamarckism had become “highly controversial,” Freud was not able to “free himself from such dubious entanglements when he had the chance” (178). It seems, however, that Kitcher’s work lacks an interdisciplinarity which would have allowed her to see the larger context of the controversies regarding Lamarckism during Freud’s lifetime. See Patricia Kitcher, *Freud's Dream: A Complete Interdisciplinary Science of Mind* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 174ff; Peter L. Rudnytsky, *Reading Psycho-Analysis: Freud, Rank, Ferenczi, Groddeck* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002). D.H. Wrong, *The Problem of Order: What Unites and Divides Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 122. For a critique of Wrong, see Howard L. Kaye, “Was Freud a Medical Scientist or a Social Theorist? The Mysterious 'Development of the Hero'.” *Sociological Theory* 21.4 (2003): 379.

shape their ideas, hopes and fears.¹⁰ Finally, because Freud’s “Lamarckism” emerges most explicitly in *Moses and Monotheism*, many scholars have tried to understand this aspect of his work in terms of his Jewishness, a point which I will discuss in more detail.¹¹

Though Freud’s incorporation of the idea that memory could be inherited allowed him to develop an idiosyncratic theory of Jewishness, in this chapter, I show that his insistence on the inheritance of acquired characteristics was neither scientifically misguided nor unusual for the 1930s. I draw from recent scholarship in the history of science, particularly by Peter Bowler, Robert Proctor and Paul Weindling, which recasts the emergence of Darwinism as a long and uneven process which cannot be disentangled from the political debates of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As I try to convey throughout the dissertation, I am *not* attempting to show that Freud was correct or incorrect, brilliant or flawed—he was all of these. Rather, I am interested in exploring his logic and its relationship to historical circumstances and political debates which he did not necessarily explicitly articulate. By pursuing Freud’s references to hereditary and evolutionary theories, I show that his theories of Jewishness and of psychoanalysis must be understood as part of a larger conversation in which the dividing lines between various scientific positions—as well as between science and politics—were not so clearly

¹⁰ For example, after applauding Kitcher for justly “chastising” Freud for his misguided understandings of evolutionary science, Rudnytsky notes that the “emancipation from [Freud’s] oppressive influence is at the same time an expression of loyalty to what is noblest in his spirit... it is necessary to let go of Freud to preserve psychoanalysis.” Rudnytsky, *Reading Psycho-Analysis: Freud, Rank, Ferenczi, Groddeck*, 218.

¹¹ See footnote above: Rice, *Freud and Moses: The Long Journey Home*, 146. See also Richard J. Bernstein, *Freud and the Legacy of Moses* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); José Brunner, *Freud and the Politics of Psychoanalysis* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2001); Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud’s Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

established. Finally, this approach allows us to see Freud's late insistence on the inheritance of acquired characteristics as one amongst many attempts to "scientifically" approach the Jewish Question.

B. The Polemicization of Evolutionary Theory: 1890s-1930s

In the late nineteenth century, it was quite common for scientists to propose that the idiosyncracies of individuals and groups could be traced back to experiences of their ancestors. While Darwin's theory of Natural Selection provided an answer to the question of survival, scientists continued to grope for an answer to the question of how and why species changed even as they appeared to maintain constant identities over time. For example, how was it possible to refer to "humans" as a constant group if they had evolved from apes, changing physical and mental characteristics until they came to resemble present-day human beings? Such questions were also posed about racial and linguistic groups: how was it possible to identify both the constants of Aryans or Semites while taking into account the idea that the peoples and languages changed over time? One solution to these conundrums was the idea that in response to changes in the environment, groups *acquired* characteristics—both positive and negative, as well as physical and mental—which they then passed on to their progeny. Such reasoning is usually identified with the French naturalist, Jean Baptiste de Lamarck (1744-1829), but it was common to later evolutionary theorists including Darwin and many of Darwin's

followers,¹² as well as many theorists of race and heredity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On the one hand, the inheritance of acquired characteristics suggested that a group (such as the Jews) could lose its distinctive identity by taking on the characteristics of the surrounding peoples. This argument was used both by assimilationist Jewish leaders and by anti-semites. While Jewish leaders used this reasoning to support their fight for increased civil rights, anti-semitic authors reasoned that unlike other distinctive groups, the Jews were the most dangerous because they were such good chameleons—or parasites—who could survive undetected with their host-nations.

Well into the late 1920s, the developing evolutionary and hereditary theories were used to support a range of social and political positions, including both racist and anti-racist political movements, socialist eugenics programs and Bolshevik revolutionary activity. However, in the 1930s, particularly in Germany and Russia, neo-Darwinist Mendelian eugenic theories became “linked to conservative views of society” and Lamarckian theories became “linked to left-wing socialist views of society.”¹³ Indeed, the association of racist eugenics with Nazi Germany and Lamarckism with Communist Russia is so firmly engrained that it is often difficult to reconstruct the complexity of the relationships between science and politics as they emerged in the early twentieth century. As Loren Graham has noted, the polemicization of science during this time period raises the question as to whether it was an “entirely social and political phenomenon,

¹² Because the belief in the “inheritance of acquired characters” has been associated with anti-Darwinism since the end of the nineteenth century, and because such a belief has long gone out of favor, there has been much confusion about whether this idea was antithetical to Darwinian Natural Selection.

¹³ Loren R. Graham, “Science and Values: The Eugenics Movement in Germany and Russia in the 1920s.” *The American Historical Review* 82.5 (1977): 1134.

essentially distinct from the scientific theories under discussion,” or whether “there was something intellectually inherent in each of the competing theories of heredity which supported a particular political ideology.”¹⁴ If there were inherently political elements in these theories, the “allegedly value-free nature of science” would have to be radically questioned. So too, Freud’s own use of these theories raises questions about the political nature of his science and the position of psychoanalysis as a science—questions to which I will return at the end of this chapter.

One of the larger questions with which theorists of evolution and race grappled was about the rate of change: how much time was required for a species or a race to change—a couple of generations or thousands of generations? If changes in the environment resulted in organisms rapidly changing forms, then the typologies of groups were not stable. Since genetic mutations were not widely understood, it was unclear how Natural Selection and heredity alone could result in evolutionary change. While embryologists focused on the consistency from one generation to the next, the scientists who were most interested in Natural Selection focused on factors of change. Thus, it would take some time before the phenomena of constancy *and* change could be incorporated into one unified theory of evolution. Partly because evolutionary scientists and embryologists often worked separately, various discoveries about heredity and individual development were haphazardly and belatedly incorporated into evolutionary theories in different places at different times.

While it is not possible to establish exactly when one evolutionary or hereditary theory became definitively established, it is feasible to outline when certain theories

¹⁴ Ibid.

became subjects of heated debate in particular places. For example, while Gregor Mendel published his groundbreaking paper on plant breeding in 1866, it was rarely read until its rediscovery in 1900 by the Dutch plant physiologist, Hugo de Vries. Even after de Vries proposed that evolution could be caused by mutation (rather than by changes in the environment), scientists in America, England, Germany and the Soviet Union continued to use Mendel's theories to support a number of opposing ideas about heredity and evolution, including Lamarckian notions of inheritance. Because many early embryologists were explicitly opposed to integrating embryology and evolution, it took some time before the rediscovery of Mendel's theories could have a substantial effect upon evolutionary theory. Though Weismann proclaimed the "all-sufficiency of Natural Selection" in the 1880s, it was not until the late 1890s that his work became a major subject of debate. As Peter Bowler has shown, even then, Weismann's work did not so much disprove Lamarckian notions of evolution as it ignited a wave of anti-Darwinism, such that many scientists began to identify themselves as neo-Lamarckian in opposition to the Weismannians who identified themselves as neo-Darwinian (in support of a Darwinism "purged of the Lamarckian element that even Darwin himself had retained").¹⁵ Indeed, the most well-known biography of Mendel was written in 1924 by Hugo Iltis, a Czech-Viennese scientist who explicitly opposed Weismann's theories and supported the inheritance of acquired characteristics.¹⁶

Iltis was one of many scientists who maintained positions which were not clearly Darwinian or Lamarckian and who regarded heredity as an explicitly political and moral

¹⁵ Peter J. Bowler, *The Non-Darwinian Revolution: Reinterpreting a Historical Myth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 116-118.

¹⁶ Hugo Iltis, *Gregor Johann Mendel: Leben, Werk und Wirkung* (Berlin: J. Springer, 1924).

issue. Like Iltis, many of the most outspoken scientists to combine these positions worked at Hans Przibam's "Vivarium," a Viennese laboratory devoted to biological experimentation to study regeneration, embryogenesis, evolution, heredity and adaptation. Since many of the laboratory's experiments explored how changes in the environment could affect development and heredity, these scientists were by definition open to the "Lamarckian" idea that organisms could acquire new hereditary characteristics. While Iltis worked at Przibam's laboratory, he also wrote a number of articles for the socialist newspaper *Die Gesellschaft: Internationale Revue für Sozialismus und Politik* in which he argued that "Lamarckism" and Mendelism were not only compatible, but complementary. In his criticisms of "Race Science and Race Delusion" (the title of a 1927 article) and other "myths of race and blood,"¹⁷ Iltis argued that Mendelism and Lamarckism needed to be combined in order to avoid the hateful "delusions" supported by Weismannian logic.¹⁸

Almost all the scientists working at the Vivarium were Jewish or travelled in Jewish circles that overlapped with Freud's own social scene. For example, in "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman" (1920), Freud approvingly cites Eugen Steinach's attempts to surgically alter individuals' sexuality and gender-identification.¹⁹ An early endocrinologist who performed experiments demonstrating that sexuality and gender-identity were much more malleable than previously thought,

¹⁷ Hugo Iltis, "Rassenwissenschaft und Rassenwahn." *Die Gesellschaft: Internationale Revue für Sozialismus und Politik* (1927). Hugo Iltis, *Der Mythos von Blut und Rasse* (Vienna: R. Harand, 1936). See also Hugo Iltis, *Volkstümliche Rassenkunde* (Jena: Urania-Verlagsgesellschaft, 1930).

¹⁸ Graham suggests that Iltis "saw in Lamarckism a way of softening the hard facts of genetics, and in that way he helped forge the links between leftist politics and Lamarckism that were growing in the 1920s." See Graham, "Science and Values: The Eugenics Movement in Germany and Russia in the 1920s," 1142.

¹⁹ Sigmund Freud, "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman," *S.E.*, vol. XVIII (1920), 171-172.

Steinach was also famous for his “rejuvenation”-operations (similar to vasectomies), one of which he performed on Freud in the fall of 1923 (to alleviate his early suffering from the jaw-cancer that would eventually kill him).²⁰ While Lamarckians attempted to show that environment could control biological heredity, Steinach’s gender- and sexuality-reassignment surgeries and his explorations of hormones were even more radical. While racial scientists argued that biology dictates human experience and identity, Steinach’s work suggested that humans could assert control over biology.

Steinach’s operations became famous partly through the efforts and publications of Paul Kammerer, another Vivarium scientist.²¹ While Freud admiringly quoted from Kammerer’s work *Das Gesetz der Serie* in his 1919 essay on “The Uncanny,”²² Kammerer was famous (even infamous) for his experiments on midwife-toads allegedly proving that acquired characters could be inherited. Indeed, he is often mentioned in brief histories of evolutionary theory as *the* exemplary case showing that Lamarckism is “bad science.” Kammerer is portrayed as a “pseudoscientist,” at least in part because of a

²⁰ Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for our Time* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1988), 426; Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (New York: Basic Books, 1953-1957), III: 98. There is other evidence that Freud was quite friendly with Steinach. According to Joachim Riedl who has recently produced a major exhibit at the Vienna Jewish Museum, Freud and Steinach must have been at least friendly: a large portrait of Steinach still hangs in the *Berggasse* Freud residence (now a museum) in Vienna. Jewish Museum Vienna, *Vienna, City of the Jews*, 2004, Available: http://www.jmw.at/en/vienna_city_of_the_jews_-_walk.html, July 25 2006; Joachim Riedl, *Personal Communication (email)* (November 15, 2004). Also, in an interview on the occasion of his 100th birthday, the sexologist Harry Benjamin recalled that his mentor Steinach had arranged a meeting with Freud; this suggests that Steinach was close enough to Freud to arrange such things. See Erwin J. Haeberle, “The Transatlantic Commuter: An Interview with Harry Benjamin on the Occasion of his 100th Birthday.” *Sexualmedizin* 14.1 (1985).

²¹ Paul Kammerer, *Rejuvenation and the Prolongation of Human Efficiency: Experiences with the Steinach-Operation on Man and Animals* (New York: Boni and Liverlight, 1923).

²² Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny,” *S.E.*, vol. XVII (1919). Freud cites Kammerer’s work which argued that “uncanny” coincidences could be explained by the law of the series. However, the citation is itself uncanny, for it appears in the context of a discussion of coincidental numbers which may prophecy a person’s (Freud’s) date of death. Kammerer committed suicide on September 23, 1926; Freud died exactly 13 years later. Coincidence? Uncanny? Prophecy?

series of scandals involving the falsification of evidence, a state-sponsored jaunt in Communist Russia, publications on occultism and everlasting-youth, the rejection by his lover Alma Mahler (amongst other lovers), and finally his suicide in 1926. However, as Sander Gliboff has shown, Kammerer's case is far more complicated than is usually suggested by the off-handed comments in many histories of evolutionary theory.²³ In his frequent public lectures, Kammerer expounded on the political implications of various kinds of Darwinist eugenics, arguing that Weismannian approaches to eugenics "only tossed the unfit aside." Kammerer, on the other hand, "favored programs of human improvement through education, public health measures, and medical or even surgical intervention to make individuals *acquire* heritable physical and mental improvements. He claimed in his public lectures that these potential applications made his [Darwinism] the best form of Darwinism."²⁴ Kammerer was not convinced by Weismann's supposed "disproof" of Lamarckism;²⁵ rather, he claimed that Weismann's germ-plasm idea was a veiled form of teleological "creationism" from which Mendelism needed to be freed.²⁶

While neo-Darwinism and neo-Lamarckism are often discussed as if they were opposing scientific theories, the disputes amongst many of these scientists were often explicitly personal and political: that is, the rhetoric and logic of political and personal

²³ Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*, P. The reasons for Kammerer's downfall were not only that he apparently falsified his evidence. In addition to general anti-semitic accusations, Kammerer was also widely criticized for his general showman-style (which only added to the perception of him as a charlatan and confirmed anti-semitic accusations that he was deceitful). Sander Gliboff, "The Pebble and the Planet: Paul Kammerer, Ernst Haeckel, and the Meaning of Darwinism," PhD, Johns Hopkins University, 2001.

²⁴ Gliboff, "The Pebble and the Planet: Paul Kammerer, Ernst Haeckel, and the Meaning of Darwinism," 209, my italics.

²⁵ Most broad-brushed histories of evolutionary theory have pointed to Weismann's experiments in the 1880s and 1890s as the final nail in the coffin of Lamarckism. See, for example, Bowler, *The Non-Darwinian Revolution: Reinterpreting a Historical Myth*. Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*.

²⁶ Gliboff, "The Pebble and the Planet: Paul Kammerer, Ernst Haeckel, and the Meaning of Darwinism," 219-220. Then, as now, "creationism" was often used as a euphemism for anti-scientific religious positions which supported theological teleology and rejected Darwinian Natural Selection.

animosities often shaped the scientific arguments.²⁷ Kammerer did not oppose Darwinism per se; he specifically opposed Weismann's (and Weismannians') eugenics which were associated with Neo-Darwinism (as opposed to Neo-Lamarckism in the 1890s). As Gliboff explains, "During the First World War, Kammerer developed evolutionary arguments for international cooperation and pacifism and further reduced his estimation of the role of struggle and selection. This overt subordination of science to ideology raised hackles among his colleagues, the majority of whom supported the war, and caused his reputation to suffer further."²⁸ Likewise, Weismann's and others' anti-Lamarckianism was often expressed through personal denunciations of individual scientists, particularly Kammerer and his "Jewish" colleagues.²⁹ While it is unclear whether—or how—Kammerer was Jewish, many of his opponents pointed out his Jewishness in connection with his deceitful scientific practices, his Lamarckism and his

²⁷ As Paul Weindling notes, most critics of racism and racial hygiene were also "committed to biologicistic solutions for social problems." Paul Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics Between National Unification and Nazism, 1870-1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 331. This does not mean, however, that Darwinism or Mendelism led to the Nazi horrors. In an interesting turn of the historiographic screw, Richard Weikart has extensively (and sometimes convincingly) argued that Darwinian evolutionary theories made Nazis' loss of ethics, racism and eugenics possible (or thinkable). However, Weikart implicitly supports the idea that Darwinism and evolution without God are wrong and that "intelligent design" is right. Weikart received research funding for his 2004 book from the Center for Science and Culture (CSC) and he is listed as a fellow of the Discovery Institute, a Christian organization which promotes various religious agendas, most specifically the idea of "intelligent design." Richard Weikart, *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany* (New York: 2004).

²⁸ Gliboff, "The Pebble and the Planet: Paul Kammerer, Ernst Haeckel, and the Meaning of Darwinism," 209.

²⁹ There is some debate about whether Iltis and Kammerer should be considered "Jewish" scientists since there is no evidence that they identified themselves as Jewish. On the one hand, they travelled in Jewish circles and they were labelled as Jews by their political and scientific enemies. On the other hand, there is some sort of twisted logic at work in calling them Jews just because their (anti-semitic) enemies called them Jews. In her dissertation, Veronika Lipphardt takes the position that "Jewish racial scientists" include only those who identified themselves as Jewish—thus, she explicitly excludes Iltis and Kammerer since there is no reliable evidence which demonstrates that they self-identified as Jewish. Veronika Lipphardt, "Biowissenschaftler mit jüdischem Hintergrund und die Biologie der Juden: Debatten, Identitäten, Institutionen (1900-1935)," PhD, Humboldt Universität, 2006.

Bolshevism.³⁰ In developing his “germ-plasm theory,” Weismann was not necessarily motivated by anti-semitism or politics, but in later life, he was known to “give vent to a more than casual anti-semitism.”³¹ Indeed, in a notebook from 1910, Weismann wrote, “Kammerer (Vienna) is a little, miserable, sticky Jew, who has proven himself on earlier occasions to be a quite unreliable worker.”³²

Though Weismann’s germ-plasm theory was not immediately associated with anti-semitism or racism, it was soon used as fodder in the growing discussions of “racial hygiene.” The first issue of the *Archive for Race and Social Biology* [*Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie*] in 1904 was dedicated to Weismann and Ernst Haeckel, and both were named honorary chairmen when the Society for Racial Hygiene was formed the following year.³³ These institutions were not explicitly anti-semitic or right-wing in their early years, but by the end of the 1920s, they developed into robust organs of anti-semitic racism.³⁴ One of Weismann’s students, Fritz Lenz (1887-1976) was not only an early member of the society, he also wrote numerous articles for the *Archiv* and as well as a large textbook on heredity in which he clearly delineated the political and racial implications of Lamarckism. In a 1929 article on the recent film on Paul Kammerer

³⁰ Fritz Lenz, “Der Fall Kammerer und seine Umfilmung durch Lunatscharsky.” *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie* 21 (1929); Fritz Lenz, Erwin Baur and Eugen Fischer, *Human Heredity [Menschliche erblichkeit]* (1931[1921]), 674-675.

³¹ Nick Hopwood, “Book Review: August Weismann's *Ausgewählte Briefe und Dokumente*, ed. Frederick B. Churchill and Helmut Risler.” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 76.2 (2002).

³² Quoted in Gliboff, “The Pebble and the Planet: Paul Kammerer, Ernst Haeckel, and the Meaning of Darwinism,” 187, n314. “*Klebrig* [sticky]” was a common anti-semitic epithet at this time, suggesting that Jewishness was contagious and that Jews were parasites who would “stick” to other people and suck out the life-blood. I thank Veronika Lipphardt and Sander Gliboff for clarifying this phrase.

³³ Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 33.

³⁴ Indeed, in its early years, the *Archiv* published a wider range of articles, including some by scientists who self-identified as Jewish, Lamarckian and/or anti-racist. See Paul Weindling, “The Evolution of Jewish Identity: Ignaz Zollschan between Jewish and Aryan Race Theories, 1910-1945,” *Jewish Tradition and the Challenge of Darwinism*, eds. Geoffrey Cantor and Marc Swetlitz (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006).

(1880-1926) by the Soviet filmmaker Anatoli Lunatscharski, *Falschmünzler* (also known as *Salamandra*), Lenz explained that everyone involved with Kammerer was Jewish, Bolshevik and maliciously motivated by problematic politics. Moreover, Lamarckism was particularly representative of Jews' fantasy that "by living in the German environment and adapting to German culture, Jews could become true Germans." Small wonder, Lenz explained, that all of the notable Lamarckians happened to be Jews or "half-Jews."³⁵ Indeed, in his foundational book on heredity, *Grundriss der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehr und Rassenhygiene* (1927), he even went so far as to claim that Jews were hereditarily predisposed (!) to support Lamarckism for it was "obviously an expression of the wish that there should be no unbridgeable racial distinctions... Jews do not transform themselves into Germans by writing books on Goethe."³⁶

By the 1930s, when Freud was hard at work on *Moses and Monotheism*, it was clear that the "present attitude of biological science" towards Lamarckian notions of heredity was not simply a matter of scientific proof or disproof. In his 1931 article on "National Socialism's Position on Racial Hygiene" Lenz extensively and admiringly quoted from *Mein Kampf* and trumpeted Hitler's position as the "first politician with truly

³⁵ Lenz, "Der Fall Kammerer und seine Umfilmung durch Lunatscharsky," 316-317.

³⁶ Lenz directly accuses Paul Kammerer of being a Jew, a Lamarckian and a Bolshevik, all of which he assumes are correlated: "For instance, it is extremely characteristic that Kammerer, who was himself both a Jew and a Lamarckian, should write that 'the denial of the racial importance of acquired characteristics favors race hatred.'" While Kammerer saw connections between the biological theory of the inheritance of acquired characters and his political stance against racial and social inequality, it seems dubious whether he ever actually said the words attributed to him by Lenz. Moreover, Kammerer did not necessarily see himself as *either* a Lamarckian *or* a Jew, but by the 1920s, both of these labels were used as much as accusatory epithets as descriptive classifications. Lenz's remarks from his *Grundriss der menschlichen Erblichkeitslehr und Rassenhygiene* (1927) are here quoted from Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis*, 55.

great influence who recognizes racial hygiene as a mission.”³⁷ Finally, in 1937, the Nazi Party’s *Handbook for Hitler Youth* (implicitly) cited Weismann’s experiments as proof that racial inheritance is “always victorious over environmental influences.”³⁸

Meanwhile, in the Soviet Union, Weismannism was denounced as bourgeoisie science, Kammerer was hailed as a hero and Lamarckian notions of heredity were eventually applied to the government-controlled agricultural projects of Trofim Denisovich Lysenko, with infamously disastrous results.³⁹

Though certainly not all Lamarckians or Bolsheviks were Jews (and not all Jews or Bolsheviks were Lamarckians), Lenz’s comments about this connection were not purely anti-Semitic lies. Indeed, Lamarckian notions of evolution did seem to support a more malleable idea of racial character which was attractive to many German Jews. As Lenz noted, “This enables us to understand why the Lamarckian doctrine should make so strong an appeal to the Jews.”⁴⁰ In his recent work on Jewish social scientists in the early twentieth century, Mitchell Hart suggests that many Jewish scientists relied heavily on Lamarckian environmentalism because “it allowed them to explain the particular physical or mental traits oftentimes identified as racially Jewish as historically or socially determined.”⁴¹ In the 1920s and ’30s, many Jewish scientists turned to Lamarckism to counter racist anti-Semitism, particularly as Weismannism was used more and more to

³⁷ Fritz Lenz, “Die Stellung des Nationalsozialismus zur Rassenhygiene.” *Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie* 25 (1931): 308.

³⁸ Quoted in Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis*, 37-38.

³⁹ See Richard Lewontin and Richard Levins, “The Problem of Lysenkoism,” *Dialectical Biologist* (Cambridge: 1985).

⁴⁰ Quoted in Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis*, 55. See also Gliboff, “The Pebble and the Planet: Paul Kammerer, Ernst Haeckel, and the Meaning of Darwinism.”

⁴¹ Mitchell Bryan Hart, *Social Science and the Politics of Modern Jewish Identity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 12.

support anti-semitic politics and policies. For Jews, Lamarckism seemed to support the idea that the negative characteristics and conditions associated with being Jewish were the result of malleable environmental conditions (specifically centuries of anti-semitism) rather than of an a priori difference perpetuated by hard-wired heredity.⁴² While Jews were often stereotypically associated with Bolshevism, they were often drawn to it partly because of a shared logic of Lamarckian environmentalism supporting the idea that the inequities of the present were determined by historical conditions that could and should be changed in the future.

C. Freud's Suspiciously Bolshevik Lamarckism

It is against this background that Freud's interest in the inheritance of phylogenetic memory must be understood. In 1912, he began to reconsider his earlier resistance to phylogenetic memory and began to argue that the Oedipal complex as well as individuals' predispositions could be (at least partially) explained by the inheritance of ancestral experiences. As I discuss in the third chapter, between 1912 and 1920, he explored the works of both Weismann and Lamarck, and eventually concluded that individuals inherited phylogenetic memories. Despite his obvious association with ideas which we might now term "Lamarckian," Freud never claimed to be a "Lamarckian,"

⁴² However, not all Jewish scientists were Lamarckian; many continued to integrate various positions which could be described as Mendelian, Weismannian, Darwinian *and* Lamarckian. As Veronika Lipphardt shows in her recent work, there was not a neat division between scientists who adhered to nature/neo-Darwinism/determinism and those who supported nurture/Lamarckism/anti-determinism. Moreover, there were many Jewish "race" scientists who gravitated toward the first "nature"-category. Lipphardt, "Biowissenschaftler mit jüdischem Hintergrund und die Biologie der Juden: Debatten, Identitäten, Institutionen (1900-1935)," 21.

even when he explored Lamarck's works. Whether he avoided describing his views as "Lamarckian" because of the political connotations cannot be clearly determined. While the political implications of Lamarckism may not have motivated Freud's initial interest in the inheritance of phylogenetic memory, he did not turn away from this idea when the political repercussions were readily apparent. As he noted, his "position, no doubt, is made more difficult by the present attitude of biological science, which refuses to hear of the inheritance of acquired characters by succeeding generations."

Before publishing *Totem and Taboo*, Freud sent a draft of the new work to his friend (and eventually his biographer), Ernest Jones. In response to Freud's proposal that the Oedipal complex could be understood as the result of phylogenetic experiences, Jones anxiously responded, "I feel that you have captured an important and far-reaching idea, in pointing to the inheritance of *Verdrängung* as the result of earlier racial experiences, but I am rather in the dark as to the relation of it to the Weismann principle of the non-transmissibility of acquired characters. I hope it can stand in harmony with this, and not in contradiction."⁴³ With the hindsight of later developments in evolutionary theory, Jones' remark sounds quite reasonable. Since later theorists and historians of evolutionary theory point to Weismann's germ-plasm theory as the anticipation of the later Evolutionary Synthesis (of Darwinian Natural Selection and Mendelian heredity),⁴⁴ it would seem that Freud should have heeded Jones' suggestion that the inheritance of

⁴³ Interestingly, though Jones regularly quoted from his correspondence with Freud in the biography, he did not include this letter in his discussion of Freud's "Lamarckism." Jones to Freud, August 7, 1912. Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones, *The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones*, ed. Andrew Paskauskas (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), #. In the following chapter, I return to this exchange (between Jones and Freud) and Freud's turn to Weismann's theories in 1914.

⁴⁴ Ernst Mayr, *The Growth of Biological Thought: Diversity, Evolution and Inheritance* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 706.

phylogenetic experiences would not be compatible with Weismann's anti-Lamarckian theory.

While Jones might have been convinced of the incompatibility of Weismann's principle with Freud's notion of "the inheritance of *Verdrängung*," Freud had ample reasons to ignore his comment. To begin with, Jones' confidence in Weismann's theory must be understood in terms of the differing developments of hereditary and evolutionary theories in England and in Germany. As Peter Bowler and Jonathan Harwood have suggested, the Mendelian and Weismannian "revolutions" developed differently amongst English- and German-speaking scientific communities. Thus, for example, in the English-speaking world, the emergence of genetics marked the end of the credibility of the inheritance of acquired characteristics, but the same was not true in the German-speaking world.⁴⁵ As English scientists such as T.H. Morgan attempted to distinguish the new field of genetics from evolutionary theory, they also distinguished between individual and phylogenetic development much more quickly than the German scientists. Meanwhile, German scientists "refused to accept this rigid distinction and allowed cytoplasmic inheritance" to continue to shape evolutionary theory "in ways that seemed outlandish to English-speaking geneticists."⁴⁶ Indeed, Freud already suspected Jones of over-zealously rejecting hereditary theories of evolution. Upon first meeting Jones in 1908, Freud wrote to Jung, saying that Jones "denies all heredity; to his mind even I am a reactionary."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Bowler, *The Non-Darwinian Revolution: Reinterpreting a Historical Myth*, 104.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 123-125.

⁴⁷ May 3, 1908. Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, trans. R.F.C. Hull and Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 145.

In the years following the publication of *Totem and Taboo*, Freud continued to explore both Weismann and Lamarck's works without mentioning any sense of contradiction between the two. In his essay "On Narcissism" (1914), Freud explicitly referred to Weismann's germ-plasm theory, and the following year he composed a "Phylogenetic Fantasy" in which he incorporated the Lamarckian idea of the inheritance of memory. Freud sent a draft of this work, tentatively entitled "Overview of the Transference Neuroses" to his friend Sandor Ferenczi, with whom he enthusiastically shared his emerging ideas about the parallels between individual and phylogenetic development. From 1916 to 1918, Freud and Ferenczi intermittently discussed the possibility of co-writing a work about Lamarck and psychoanalysis. In December 1916, Freud wrote to Ferenczi to tell him that he had ordered "the Lamarck" from the university library, and on January 1, 1917, he sent a "sketch of the Lamarck-work," a paper apparently not preserved, and reported that he had begun reading Lamarck's *Zoological Philosophy* (1809).⁴⁸

Despite his enthusiasm for the "Lamarck-work" in the summers of 1917 and 1918, Freud never actually followed through with his plans to fill in the details of the "sketch." The problem was not that he lacked interest but rather that the difficulties presented by the volatile political situation in Europe pulled his concerns in a decidedly more practical direction.⁴⁹ In March, Freud wrote to Ferenczi about the lack of progress

⁴⁸ Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, "Metapsychology and Metabiology," trans. Axel and Peter T. Hoffer, *A Phylogenetic Fantasy: Overview of the Transference Neuroses, by Sigmund Freud* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 94.

⁴⁹ In other words, Freud never explicitly repudiated or rejected Lamarckism; instead, he seems to have simply become less interested in pursuing Lamarck's works. Though he continued to insist on the inheritance of acquired characteristics, he would not necessarily have regarded this idea as specifically "Lamarckian."

on the Lamarck-work: “I have not progressed either,” he writes. “In the weeks of cold and darkness I stopped working in the evening—and have not got back to it since then.”⁵⁰ By May 1917, he wrote again, despondent with the difficulties presented by the war. “I am not at all disposed to doing the work on Lamarck in the summer and would prefer to relinquish the whole thing to you.”⁵¹ As World War I and its fallout drastically affected the European economy and life in general, Freud became less interested in studying Lamarck’s works than with maintaining a basic standard of living: he was far more concerned about the welfare of his sons (who were on the war-front), with acquiring basic provisions and maintaining psychoanalytic institutions and publications.⁵² While Freud seems to have begun to doubt whether Lamarck was the solution to his theoretical problems, the main issue was that “because of the war, there were difficulties in getting the literature.” As Grubrich-Simitis suggests, “Ultimately the external emergency situation, which was reaching crisis level, may also have had an inhibiting effect.”⁵³ By the end of 1918, Freud’s pursuit of Lamarck seems to have fallen by the wayside.

Because of objections from the victorious powers in the autumn of 1918, the Fifth International Psycho-Analytical Congress was moved from Breslau to Budapest, home of Ferenczi. In the wake of the successful congress, attended by representatives from the Austrian, German and Hungarian Governments,⁵⁴ there were two developments which are

⁵⁰ March 2, 1917, Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi*, trans. Peter T. Hoffer, ed. André Haynal, vol. I-III (1993-2000), II: 186.

⁵¹ May 29, 1917, *Ibid.*, II: 210.

⁵² January-February, 1918. May 29, 1917, *Ibid.*, II: 259-263.

⁵³ Grubrich-Simitis, “Metapsychology and Metabiology,” 94.

⁵⁴ While the politicians were explicitly Bolshevik, they seem to have been interested in psychoanalysis because of its therapy for the “war neuroses.” Freud’s, Ferenczi’s and Simmel’s recent work on the war neuroses suggested that soldiers suffering from the effects of war could, with the help of psychoanalysis, recover and return to the front. Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, II: 197-198.

significant because they suggest that Freud moved directly from his theoretical interests in Lamarck to practical concerns which were nonetheless shaped by his interest in Lamarckism and its ties to Bolshevism. At the congress, Freud delivered his paper on “Lines of Advance in Psycho-Analytic Therapy” (1919) which he had written the summer before while he was staying with his friend, Anton von Freund in a suburb of Budapest.⁵⁵ While the paper focused on “active” psychoanalytic methods (associated with Ferenczi), it also reflected the political context in which it was delivered. Freud fantasized about a “psychotherapy for the people” and proclaimed that

at some time or other the conscience of society will awake and remind it that the poor man should have just as much right to assistance for his mind as he now has to the life-saving help offered by surgery... It may be a long time before the State comes to see these duties as urgent... Probably these institutions will first be started by private charity.⁵⁶

While Freud imagined a time in which the State would assist the poor man, he recognized that such radical changes were not likely in the near future. As for a “private charity,” there were rumors that von Freund considered leaving his large fortune to found just such an institution. (This never transpired partly because of the war and the difficulties in transferring money, and also because von Freund died the following year before he could arrange all the specifics.) As Abraham reported to Freud in August 1919, “Things are good in our group...your appeal in Budapest fell on fertile ground. The polyclinic will be opened in the winter, and will grow into a psychoanalytic institute.”⁵⁷ While psychoanalysis had originally been the province of well-to-do families with ample money

⁵⁵ Sigmund Freud, “Lines of Advance in Psycho-Analytic Therapy,” *S.E.*, vol. XVII (1919), 158, editor’s note.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁵⁷ Abraham to Freud, August 3, 1919. Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham, *A Psychoanalytic Dialogue: Letters of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham, 1907-1926*, trans. Bernard Marsh and Hilda C. Abraham, eds. Hilda C. Abraham and Ernst L. Freud (New York: Basic Books / Hogarth Press, 1965), 402.

to support such involved methods of therapy, in 1919, Freud had high hopes that its methods could be used to improve the conditions of the “poor man,” and that institutions could be set up to accomplish these transformations. Like many scientists who explicitly supported Lamarckian notions of heredity, Freud believed that poverty and sickness were not permanent conditions but rather could be improved and transformed by providing therapy.

The second important development in the wake of the Fifth International Congress was the meteoric rise and subsequent fall of Ferenczi and psychoanalysis more generally in Budapest. During the brief time period in which the Bolsheviks ruled the Austro-Hungarian empire, Ferenczi became increasingly active in public life, both as a psychoanalyst and as a member of the Social Democratic Union of doctors. Writing to Freud in November 1918, Ferenczi announced that “Your prophecy about our imminent proletarianization has come true.”⁵⁸ During 1918-1919, hundreds of Hungarian students signed petitions requesting that psychoanalysis be taught at the Royal Medical School at the University of Budapest. By April 1919, Ferenczi was appointed as a professor and as director of the newly established psychoanalytic clinic sponsored by the new Bolshevik state.⁵⁹ However, Ferenczi’s Bolshevik honeymoon lasted only 120 days; by August 1919, the newly established Hungarian Soviet Republic was falling apart and the White Terror had begun. Jews, Leftists, Bolsheviks and all those suspected of such “crimes” were fired from their jobs, beaten and generally terrorized. Ferenczi was forced out of his

⁵⁸ Letter #770, November 7, 1918. Freud and Ferenczi, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi*, II: 308.

⁵⁹ Michelle Moreau-Ricaud, “The Founding of the Budapest School,” *Ferenczi’s Turn in Psychoanalysis*, eds. Peter L. Rudnytsky, Antal Bókay and Patrizia Giampieri-Deutsch (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 53-54. See also Freud and Ferenczi, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi*, II: xxix-xxx.

university position, expelled from the Medical Society and forced to abandon his projects, including the free clinic, and of course, the long-planned collaborative work on Lamarck. While it is likely that Ferenczi was fired as much for being Jewish as for being a Bolshevik, Freud evidently understood the situation in terms of politics. As he wrote to Karl Abraham in June 1920, “Ferenczi has now been excluded from the Budapest Medical Society as a penalty for his Bolshevik professorship. As a consequence of the still existing letter censorship I could only congratulate him on the honor.”⁶⁰

The dangerous connections between Jewishness, Bolshevism and questionable scientific theories (such as Lamarckism) were implicitly recognized by Ernest Jones. Jones was notoriously worried about maintaining the scientific reputation of Psychoanalysis and protecting it from Freud’s “non-scientific” concerns, though he never directly linked Freud’s Lamarckism with any accusations of Bolshevism. For example, in February 1926, Jones wrote to Freud asking him to publicly play down his (previously private) interest in telepathy because it seemed to detract from the scientific reputation of psychoanalysis, particularly in England. “In your private political opinions,” writes Jones, “you might be a Bolshevist, but you would not help the spread of psychoanalysis by announcing it.”⁶¹ In response, Freud avoided direct reference to the suggestion that he was privately a Bolshevist, and instead compared the situation to

the great experiment of my life: namely, to proclaim a conviction without taking into account any echo from the outer world... When anyone adduces my fall into sin, just answer him calmly that my acceptance of telepathy is my private affair like my Jewishness, my passion for smoking and many other things, and that the theme of telepathy is in

⁶⁰ June 21, 1920, Freud and Abraham, *A Psychoanalytic Dialogue: Letters of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham, 1907-1926*, 313.

⁶¹ Jones to Freud, Letter # 476, February 25, 1926, Freud and Jones, *The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones*, 592-593.

essence alien [*wesenfremd*] to psychoanalysis.⁶²

In addition to totally disregarding Jones' comment about Bolshevism, Freud's response is riddled with obvious contradictions. While he insists that he would not change his public (proclaimed) "convictions" because of "any echo from the outer world," he goes on to note that there are certain things—Jewishness, smoking and telepathy—which are "private affairs. Each of these "things" is wildly different: Jewishness was (arguably) something that Freud could not change even if he wanted to, and something which he often avoided publicly discussing. Smoking was a *habit* which numerous people do give up, though with much difficulty. And telepathy was a *phenomenon* whose supposedly dubious existence Freud considered plausible (which I discuss in more detail in my fourth chapter). While these things belong to totally different categories, there is a sense that they are related: there is a sense that there was no "choice" in these matters—it was not really possible to choose whether to "pursue" these matters—it was not possible to just stop being Jewish, and it was not so easy to give up smoking or a belief in telepathy,⁶³ or perhaps for that matter, Bolshevism or Lamarckism.⁶⁴ However, if pursued too publicly

⁶² Freud to Jones, Letter #478, March 7, 1926, *Ibid.*, 596-597. Peter Gay emphasizes that Freud's use of the word *wesenfremd* is proof that "Judaism was *inessential*, not to Freud, but to his creation, psychoanalysis." In focusing only on the religious, faith-based aspects of Judaism (rather than the broader condition of *being Jewish*), Gay overlooks the inescapable conditions which Freud *had* to confront in creating psychoanalysis—he had no choice but to be a Jewish scientist. Gay's statement that Freud "was a Jew but not a Jewish scientist" is both historically impossible (during Freud's lifetime), and retrospectively false. Peter Gay, *A Godless Jew: Freud, Atheism, and the Making of Psychoanalysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 148. Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, 98. I explore the question of the Jewishness of psychoanalysis in more depth at the end of this chapter.

⁶³ Or more to the point, if telepathy were a real phenomenon, it would not be possible to stop the flow of telepathic transmissions by refusing to believe in it.

⁶⁴ In the fourth chapter, I discuss the intimate connections between Freud's interest in telepathic transmission and his ideas about intergenerational transmission. Telepathy (also referred to as "thought-transference [*Gedankübertragung*]"), intergenerational transmission and transference were three forms of "mysterious" transmission which occurred in a realm beyond the normal functioning of sensual perception.

or persistently, Freud knew that they could endanger his life and/or work.⁶⁵

By the time Freud wrote *Moses and Monotheism*, he was excruciatingly aware of the accusation that psychoanalysis was regarded as one example of a “Jewish-Bolshevist science.” In particular, Freud worried about publishing the third part of the book in which he speculates about the role that the “inheritance of acquired characters” played in shaping the Jewish people, and he waited until he was safely stowed away in England to publish this part of the book. In a letter to Arnold Zweig (and in both of the prefaces to the third section of the book), Freud explained that he feared that the new material would further offend the Catholic Church whom he regarded as one of the few remaining sources of protection from the Nazis’ anti-semitic policies. Specifically, he worried about a certain Pater Wilhelm Schimdt who, he noted, was

a confidant of the Pope, and unfortunately he himself is an ethnologist and a student of comparative religion, whose books make no secret of his abhorrence of analysis and especially of my totem theory... any publication of mine will be sure to attract a certain amount of attention, which will not escape the notice of this inimical priest.⁶⁶

While Freud clearly knew a fair bit about Schmidt, here he only tells part of the story. Let me try to clarify the significance of Schmidt’s work and position at the time. Schmidt was an anthropologist of international reputation who founded the journal, *Anthropos* and the

⁶⁵ Freud was well aware of the dangers which both smoking and Jewishness posed to his life: three years earlier (in 1923) he had been diagnosed with jaw cancer, caused at least in part by his cigar-smoking habit. During World War I, as he was contemplating the Lamarck-work, he bitterly complained in letters to Ferenczi both of the difficulty of living without a constant cigar-supply and of coping with the rise of anti-semitic violence. See Freud and Ferenczi, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi*, II: xxxiii-xxxiv.

⁶⁶ Freud to Stefan Zweig, September 9, 1934, Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig, *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig*, trans. Elaine Robson-Scott and William Robson-Scott (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1970), 92. See also Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 55, 57.

Anthropos Institute, both of which still exist today.⁶⁷ Like many Catholics in the 1930s, Schmidt opposed the Nazis' *racial* anti-semitism, as well as their policies regarding "selective breeding" and eugenics.⁶⁸ While the Nazis emphasized the Jews' racial difference, Schmidt emphasized *cultural* difference or the "cultural concept of 'Volkstum,'"⁶⁹ based on a people's spiritual history. While this idea understandably found favor with American (Jewish) anthropologists such as Franz Boas and A.L. Kroeber,⁷⁰ it also allowed Schmidt to proclaim a more virulent form of anti-semitism. For example, in an article on the "Racial Principle of National Socialism," he rejected the "materialistic concept of race" and explains that "The Jews are not fundamentally racially distinct from the Aryan peoples." Instead, he argues their difference could be found in the "very structure of their souls." Because of their rejection of Christ, the Jewish people "are a nation which in the deepest depths of their soul are uprooted. Precisely because of that, their evil and dangerous characteristics emerged which can in no way be reduced to material biological racial-concepts."⁷¹ Thus, Schmidt would have criticized Freud's *racial* theory of Jewishness because it suggested that the Jews' difference was hereditarily derived rather than spiritually decided.

⁶⁷ My biographical information on Schmidt is drawn from the following sources: Thomas Hauschild, "Christians, Jews, and the Other in Germany Anthropology." *American Anthropologist* 99.4 (1997); Joseph Henninger, *P. Wilhelm Schmidt S. V. D., 1868-1954: Eine biographische Skizze* (Fribourg: Paulusdruckerei, 1956); Wilhelm Koppers, "Obituary of Pater Wilhelm Schmidt." *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 83 (1954); Wilhelm Schmidt, "Blut-Rasse-Volk," *Kirche im Kampf*, ed. Clemens Holzmeister (Vienna: Seelsorger Verlag, 1936).

⁶⁸ See Etienne Lepicard, "Eugenics and Roman Catholicism, An Encyclical Letter in Context: *Casti connubii*, December 31, 1930." *Science in Context* 11.3-4 (1998).

⁶⁹ Ritchie Robertson, "My True Enemy': Freud and the Catholic Church, 1927-39," *Austria in the Thirties: Culture and History*, eds. Kenneth Segar and John Warren (Riverside: Ariadne Press, 1990), 334.

⁷⁰ Both Franz Boas and A. L. Kroeber signed onto the list of 76 anthropologists honoring Schmidt on his sixtieth birthday in Wilhelm Koppers, ed., *Festschrift P. W. Schmidt: 76 sprachwissenschaftliche, ethnologische, religionswissenschaftliche, prähistorische und andere Studien* (Vienna: Mechitharisten-Congregations-Buchdruckerei, 1928).

⁷¹ Wilhelm Schmidt, "Das Rassenprinzip des Nationalsozialismus." *Schönere Zukunft* 7 (1931-32): 999.

Schmidt's general "abhorrence" of psychoanalysis was not unrelated to his critique of racism and Bolshevism, both of which he found overly mired in the materialism of the modern world.⁷² By the early 1930s, Schmidt was well-known not only for his anthropological studies of race and culture,⁷³ but also for his extensive and virulent attacks on psychoanalysis. The two topics came together in a 1928 lecture entitled, *Der Ödipus-Komplex der Freudschen Psychoanalyse und die Ehegestaltung des Bolschewismus* ["The Oedipus Complex of Freudian Psychoanalysis and the Marriage-Ideal of Bolshevism"]. Here, he transfers his vitriol against "Jewish Bolshevism" onto the materialism of psychoanalytic theory. Schmidt argues that Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex is not simply wrong according to other anthropological studies, but worse: like Bolshevism it destroyed the institutions of marriage and the family, institutions which were central to Christian civilization. Though in this lecture Schmidt does not directly link his attacks on Freud, psychoanalysis or Bolshevism with the "Jewishness" of these movements, the connections would have been readily made by Schmidt's readers and by anyone who was vaguely aware of his allegiances. In 1920, Schmidt had presented a lecture entitled "Free Vienna from Jewish Bolshevism!" which was published in the same Catholic newspaper which later published his essays critiquing psychoanalysis.⁷⁴ By the

⁷² Wilhelm Schmidt, *Rasse und Volk: eine Untersuchung zur Bestimmung ihrer Grenzen und zur Erfassung ihrer Beziehungen* (1927); "Eine wissenschaftliche Abrechnung mit der Psychoanalyse," *Das Neue Reich* 1928-29.

⁷³ Such as Wilhelm Schmidt, *The Origin and Growth of Religion: Facts and Theories*, trans. H.J. Rose (1935); Schmidt, "Blut-Rasse-Volk.,"; Wilhelm Schmidt, *The Culture Historical Method of Ethnology: The Scientific Approach to the Racial Question*, trans. S.A. Sieber (New York: Fortuny's, 1939).

⁷⁴ Wilhelm Schmidt, "Befreiung Wiens vom jüdischen Bolschewismus! Eine Katholikentagsrede von Professor Dr Wilhelm Schmidt S.V.D." *Das Neue Reich* 3 (1920). Though Schmidt published regularly in this explicitly Catholic-interest journal (later continued under the name, *Schönere Zukunft* [*Better Future*])—including essays on "The Jewish Question" (1933-1934) and "The Racial Principle of National Socialism" (1931-1932), he published the lecture on "The Oedipus Complex of Freudian Psychoanalysis and the Marriage" in a less specifically Catholic journal, *Nationalwirtschaft*.

time Freud moved to London, and published the third part of *Moses and Monotheism* he finally realized that the Catholic church could not protect the Jewish people. In the second preface to the third part, written in June 1938, he notes that with the Nazis' invasion "Catholicism proved, to use the words of the Bible, 'a broken reed'." Now Freud acknowledged "the certainty that I should now be persecuted not only for my line of thought but also for my 'race'"⁷⁵ and he resolved to publish the final portion of his work in which he explicitly explored the relationship between his "line of thought" and his "race."

D. Jones' Biography and Its Misguided Consequences

As one of the first and most vocal critics of Freud's so-called "Lamarckism," Jones must have been aware of the dangers of publicly supporting a Lamarckian-sounding theory of inheritance, both in the 1930s (when Freud wrote *Moses and Monotheism*), and later in the 1950s when Jones wrote his seminal biography of Freud. Indeed, in the biography, he acknowledges that Freud and Marx were often lumped together as (Jewish) thinkers whose thought was "not only compatible but mutually complementary."⁷⁶ While he lists a number of scholars such as Bernfeld and Simmel who are well-known for attempting to synthesize psychoanalysis with Marxism, he also includes within this list the name of Pater Schmidt, and even cites his work on "The

⁷⁵ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 57.

⁷⁶ Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, III: 344.

Oedipus Complex of Freudian Psychoanalysis and the Marriage-Ideal of Bolshevism.”⁷⁷

However, nowhere in the biography does Jones connect psychoanalysis’ associations with Bolshevism with the political connotations of Freud’s Lamarckism. Rather, like many scholars after him, Jones insists that the issue of Freud’s Lamarckism was purely scientific: the inheritance of acquired characters was simply “scientifically” disproven and Freud chose to disregard the evidence. Indeed, in all the secondary literature on the history of Psychoanalysis, I have seen no discussion of the political implications of Freud’s Lamarckism.⁷⁸

Part of this confusion derives, I believe, from Jones’ seminal 1953 biography in which he constructs a misleading and inaccurate picture of Freud’s use of biological theories. While there is ample evidence that Freud rejected the idea of inherited memory until around 1912, Jones claims that “Freud remained from the beginning to the end of his life what one must call an obstinate adherent of this discredited Lamarckism.”⁷⁹ As I have shown, in 1912, Jones directly confronted Freud about his developing ideas about the inheritance of repression and whether this could stand “in harmony” with Weismann’s “principle of the non-transmissability of inherited characteristics.” Second, in the biography Jones reports that he had little success in finding “allusions” to Darwinism in Freud’s work, adding however, that Freud does refer “of course, to the

⁷⁷ Ibid., III: 344, 518, n341.

⁷⁸ Neither of the two classic works on Freud’s use of biological theory mention any of the general associations between Lamarckism, Bolshevism and Jews. See Ritvo, *Darwin's Influence on Freud: A Tale of Two Sciences*; Sulloway, *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend*. Ilse Grubrich-Simitis alludes to the facts that neo-Lamarckism was used as the scientific basis for T.D. Lysenko in his Soviet Marxist agriculture program and that Freud would have been peripherally aware of the debates about Paul Kammerer’s work. However, she does not develop these connections any further. Grubrich-Simitis, “Metapsychology and Metabiology,” 98-99, n36 and n38.

⁷⁹ Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, III: 311.

doctrine of Natural Selection.”⁸⁰ In fact, throughout his career Freud cited Darwin as a prominent influence, especially in *Totem and Taboo*, the work in which he began to incorporate the idea that phylogenetic memory may be inherited.⁸¹ Indeed, in an attempt to defend Freud against specious claims that he was a “Lamarckian,” Lucille Ritvo has shown that Freud was overwhelmingly influenced by Darwin (rather than Lamarck) from his earliest days at the Vienna *Gymnasium* to his final work.⁸²

According to Jones, Freud’s continued insistence on Lamarckian principles is the “extraordinary part of the story, which provides us with a baffling problem in the study of the development of Freud’s ideas, and also in that of his personality.”⁸³ Not only is Jones’ perplexity slightly disingenuous, his internal logic is inconsistent. As proof that Lamarckism had been “completely discredited for more than half a century”⁸⁴ —that is, since 1903—Jones quotes a passage from Julian Huxley’s 1953 book, *Evolution in Action*:

‘All the theories lumped together under the heads of biogenesis and Lamarckism are invalidated... They are no longer consistent with the facts. Indeed, in the light of modern discoveries, they no longer deserve to be called scientific theories, but can be seen as speculations without due basis of reality, or old superstitions disguised in modern dress. They were natural enough in their time, when we were still ignorant of the mechanism of heredity; but they have now only an historical interest.’⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Ibid., 309-310. Jones also notes that Freud had certainly “read the neo-Darwinian books as Weismann, Haeckel and others,” as if Freud’s *reading* of either of these scientists would automatically result in his embracing their positions.

⁸¹ The *Concordance* lists thirty-four mentions of Darwin in the *Standard Edition* alone. Samuel A. Guttman, Stephen Maxfield Parrish, Randall L. Jones and Sigmund Freud, *The Concordance to the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 2nd ed. (New York: International Universities Press, 1984). See also Ritvo, *Darwin's Influence on Freud: A Tale of Two Sciences*.

⁸² Ritvo, *Darwin's Influence on Freud: A Tale of Two Sciences*.

⁸³ Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, 310.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 310-311.

As one of the founders of the Modern Synthesis of Darwinist Natural Selection in the 1940's, Huxley was deeply invested in propagating the idea of a single line of theoretical development from Darwin to the Modern Synthesis. Moreover, Huxley—and by extension, Jones—echoes the rhetoric of earlier neo-Darwinians (or Weismannians) who portrayed their “Lamarckian” opponents as foolishly stubborn and superstitious. Although the mechanisms of heredity were not well enough understood to seriously question the possibility of Lamarckian inheritance until the 1940s,⁸⁶ in 1918 Hermann Siemens complained that “educators, philosophers, and socialists clutch maliciously and persistently to the belief in the inheritance of acquired characters,” and claimed that anyone who maintained such beliefs could only be the product of “the crudest biological ignorance” and old-fashioned “superstition.”⁸⁷

By the time Freud was writing *Moses and Monotheism*, Jones must have seen Freud's “insistence” on the inheritance of acquired characteristics as a major liability for the reputation of Psychoanalysis.⁸⁸ As he recounts in the 1953 biography (with the wisdom of hindsight, of course), Jones “begged him to omit the passage” in *Moses and Monotheism* where he insisted on the the biological inheritance of acquired characters. He goes on to recount the conversation he had with Freud regarding this particular passage:

I told him he had *of course* the right to hold any opinion he liked in his own field of psychology, even if it ran counter to all biological principles, but *begged* him to omit the passage where he applied it to the whole field of biological evolution, since no responsible biologist regarded it as

⁸⁶ See Bowler, *The Non-Darwinian Revolution: Reinterpreting a Historical Myth*, 92ff., 129ff.

⁸⁷ Quoted in Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis*, 34.

⁸⁸ As far as I can tell, there has been no mention in the scholarly literature that Jones' worries about Freud's Lamarckism were intensified by the political and/or social connotations of this idea—whether in the 1930s or in the 1950s.

tenable any longer. *All he would say* was that they were all wrong and the passage must stay. And he documented this recalcitrance in the book with the following words: ‘This state of affairs is made more difficult, it is true, by the present attitude of biological science, which rejects the idea of acquired qualities being transmitted to descendants. I admit, in all modesty, that in spite of this I cannot picture biological development proceeding without taking this factor into account.’⁸⁹

In addition to the gross over-simplification of evolutionary history and the patronizing phrases (“I told him he had *of course* the right to hold any opinion he liked...”), Jones actually misquotes Freud! That is, in his bibliography, Jones cites Strachey’s *Standard Edition* as the source for all translations of Freud’s work from which he quotes. However, in this passage he actually quotes from (his wife) Katherine Jones’ translation of *Moses and Monotheism*.⁹⁰ This might be understandable if for some reason Strachey’s translation seemed linguistically inaccurate (as it is known to be in many instances). However, Jones’ misquotation (or rather, mis-translation) conceals the sentiment of Freud’s original German which is better retained in the *Standard Edition*’s translation. In actuality—in the German and also in the *Standard Edition*—Freud does not concede that biological science presently rejects the inheritance of acquired characteristics, but rather (as the *Standard Edition* translates it) that contemporary biological science “*refuses to hear of* the inheritance of acquired characters by successive generations [*biologischen Wissenschaft..., die von der Vererbung erworbener Eigenschaften auf die Nachkommen*

⁸⁹ Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, 313, my italics.

⁹⁰ Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Katherine Jones (New York: Vintage Books, 1939), 127-128. I have not found any other references to Jones’ method of selectively quoting from the translation which suited his purposes.

nichts wissen will],”⁹¹—or as a more literal translation of the German might read, “they want to hear nothing of it.”⁹²

If Jones was worried about the consequences of Freud’s “Lamarckism” in the 1930s, by the time he reconstructed the narrative in the 1953 biography, he could only have been more apprehensive about this aspect of psychoanalytic theory. In the 1950s, there were additional reasons why he depicted Freud’s “Lamarckism” as the irrational obstinacy of “genius” rather than as a legitimate scientific position with dangerous political consequences. If Lamarckism was seen as suspect in the 1930s—whether ideologically or scientifically—by the late 1940s, it had become even more untenable—ridiculed and disdained—particularly in the West.⁹³ As is well-known, from the 1930s to the 1960s, the Soviet agronomist Trofim Denisovich Lysenko attempted to apply the “Lamarckian” idea of the inheritance of acquired characters to Soviet agriculture with disastrous results. Until Richard Levins’ and Richard Lewontin’s work in the 1980s, most Western historians regarded the failures of Lysenkoism as yet another instance of the disasters which ensue when “pure” science is sullied by politics and ideology.⁹⁴ Not only was Lamarckism regarded as scientifically disproven, but it was also regarded as a prime example of “bad” (read ideologically motivated) science. Moreover, in the 1950s, scientists and historians were beginning to come to terms with how the Nazis had used

⁹¹ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 100.

⁹² [*Unsere Sachlage wird allerdings durch die gegenwärtige Einstellung der biologischen Wissenschaft erschwert, die von der Vererbung erworbener Eigenschaften auf die Nachkommen nichts wissen will.*] Ibid; Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke, chronologisch geordnet*, ed. Anna Freud, 17 vols. (London: Imago Publishing Company, 1940), XVI: 207.

⁹³ Graham, “Science and Values: The Eugenics Movement in Germany and Russia in the 1920s.” See also David Joravsky, “Soviet Marxism and Biology before Lysenko.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20.1 (1959).

⁹⁴ Lewontin and Levins, “The Problem of Lysenkoism.”

biological theories of heredity to support their horrific ideological “solution,” and as such, nothing could seem worse for a scientist’s reputation than to be associated with a scientific theory which seemed ideologically motivated. Jones must have been aware of the potential effects of allowing psychoanalysis to be associated with Lamarckism—a theory which was regarded not only as scientifically outmoded, but more importantly, suspiciously motivated by political rather than by purely scientific ideals.

At the end of his chapter on Freud’s use of biology, Jones seems to throw up his hands in exasperation, suggesting that maybe Freud’s Lamarckism can be understood as a side-effect of his Jewish background. “It is not easy to account for the fixity with which Freud held this opinion and the determination with which he ignored all the biological evidence to the contrary.”⁹⁵ Given Freud’s belief in the omnipotence of thoughts originating in early childhood emotional experiences, writes Jones, maybe Freud’s stubborn and superstitious insistence on Lamarckism can be understood as a result of his early childhood experiences with Judaism. As if such speculation were too wild to state explicitly, Jones ventures, “Was an ineffaceable mark left on his mind when he learned as a child that God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, to the third and fourth generation?”⁹⁶ The idea that Freud’s Lamarckism might be explained as an “ineffaceable mark” of Jewishness may sound preposterous, but it was not far off.

⁹⁵ Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, 313.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 313.

E. Was Lamarckism Jewish?

Freud's Lamarckism can be understood as particularly Jewish not only because it was regarded as such in the 1930s, but also because of the ways in which it seems to get at the sense—shared by Jews and Gentiles alike—of the “ineffaceability” of Jewishness. Before the discovery of genetic mutation, Lamarckism was seen as an answer to the question of how populations change over time. During the 1920s and '30s, however, the assertion of Lamarckism came to be seen as a claim that human groups were malleable, and in Germany (if not elsewhere), this suggested that Jews could lose their distinctive Jewish characteristics and become fully German, whether intentionally (through conversion or active attempts to assimilate) or unintentionally (through a gradual process of integration). While Lamarckian heredity was described as “soft” because of its emphasis on evolutionary *change*, Weismannian heredity was referred to as “hard” because it suggested that the materials of life were permanent and unchanging. Freud's use of these theories was idiosyncratic (as I discuss in the following chapter). On the one hand, he became interested in phylogenetic memory in order to better understand the “historically derived” origins of seemingly universal conflicts such as war and aggression. However, he specifically incorporated the Lamarckian inheritance of memory in order to make sense of the *permanence* and the persistent survival of these conflicts. Similarly, in his final book, Freud showed that the “special character of the Jewish people” was historically derived, but that it was this character which had ensured their persistent survival.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 123.

No less a scholar than Yerushalmi has followed Jones' suggestions that Freud's Lamarckism was both scientifically misguided but also peculiarly Jewish. In his book, *Freud's Moses*, Yerushalmi pays special attention to Freud's "stubborn" refusal to "expunge these embarrassing elements" of Lamarckism from his last book. Admitting that "the truly decisive revolutions in molecular biology and genetics were not to take place until after his death," Yerushalmi nonetheless seems perplexed that Freud insisted on Lamarckism despite the fact that he "was always aware that Lamarckism was under sharp *scientific* attack."⁹⁸ Like Jones, Yerushalmi responds to Freud's Lamarckism as if it were both surprising and surprisingly Jewish. "I find myself wondering," he writes, "whether... Freud's Jewishness... played a role in his Lamarckian predilections."⁹⁹ While Yerushalmi seems about to concede (ala Lenz) that Lamarckism might be particularly Jewish—he steps around this distasteful possibility and adds, "No, I am not implying that Lamarckism is 'Jewish.'"¹⁰⁰ Acutely aware of the problematic presumption that a scientific theory could be particularly "Jewish," he nonetheless goes on to concede that Freud's Lamarckism might be persuasively Jewish, at least in "subjective" terms:

Deconstructed into Jewish terms, what is Lamarckism if not the powerful feeling that, for better or worse, one cannot really cease being Jewish, and this not merely because of current anti-Semitism or discrimination... but because one's fate in being Jewish was determined long ago by the Fathers.¹⁰¹

Though Yerushalmi critiques Freud's overly-literal Lamarckism (a subject which I discuss in the first chapter), he notes that Freud's theory of Jewishness gets at "the sense that Jewishness is both inherited and indelible," a sense which is "shared equally by Jews

⁹⁸ Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, 31, my italics.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 31.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 31, my italics.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 31.

who... would discard their Jewish identity if they could, as well as by Jews who passionately affirm[] that identity.”¹⁰² Indeed, this “sense” of the indelibility of Jewishness is shared not only by both “proud” and “self-hating” Jews, but also by philo- and anti-semitic non-Jews.¹⁰³

While Yerushalmi articulates a positive sense of the inalienability of Jewishness, the idea that Jewishness is some sort of “ineffaceable mark” has uncomfortable similarities with anti-semitic racism. It is impossible to determine whether Freud’s sense that Jewishness was “ineffaceable” was the result of his Jewish education (as Jones suggests),¹⁰⁴ or whether it was the result of his “education” in anti-semitic racism. As I argue throughout this dissertation, Freud’s theory of Jewishness *is* racial (though not necessarily *racist*): Jewishness is experienced as something which is *inherited* rather than something which has been individually selected. The “racialization” of Jewishness by Jews and anti-semites alike suggests that “racialism” is not necessarily the problem. In an odd example of historical revision, the historian Richard Bernstein takes *Yerushalmi* to task for suggesting that Freud believed in Lamarckian inheritance and by extension, biological and racial Jewishness:

you seem to be accusing Freud of the type of racism that... was to become the backbone of Nazi anti-Semitism. If there are Jewish ‘character traits’ that are ‘transmitted phylogenetically and no longer require religion,’ then there is a biological basis for singling out Jews for extermination regardless of their professed religious convictions. This is why I find the claim that you keep reiterating so disturbing—that Freud believes Jewish

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁰³ On the ways in which philo-semitism and anti-semitism seem to “supply and comply with each other in strange and disconcerting ways,” see Steven Connor, “Some of My Best Friends are Philosemites,” Paper presented at a panel marking the publication of *The Jew in the Text: Modernity and the Construction of Identity*, ed. Tamar Garb and Linda Nochlin, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, UK, 1995.

¹⁰⁴ Yerushalmi amply demonstrates that Freud’s knowledge of Judaism was much broader than Freud liked to publicly proclaim. See Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*.

acquired character traits are phylogenetically transmitted by biological mechanisms.¹⁰⁵

While Bernstein's reproach may be historically inaccurate, more importantly it reveals an intense discomfort with any suggestion that Jewishness is "racial."¹⁰⁶ In fact, it is not only "biological" definitions which allow the "singling out of Jews [or any other group] for extermination": biology is just one amongst many methods of defining a group of people. *Any* definition of a group which is used to single individuals out for extermination—whether it is religious convictions or any other form of self-determined identifications, and whether it is skin color or any other hereditary condition—is equally pernicious and morally reprehensible. Thus, to shift the identification of Jews or any other ethnicity or race from "biology" to self-determination does not protect against the kinds of evils which were perpetrated by the Nazis. After all, there has been a long history of anti-semitism and other forms of oppression based not on biological typology but on religious, political and economic categories (as in the case of Pater Schmidt), and even on forms of religious education and ritual meant to transfer the faith from one generation to the next.¹⁰⁷ It would be a lot easier to combat racism and anti-semitism if they were simply matters of misguided scientific understandings of "race" from another era.

¹⁰⁵ Bernstein, *Freud and the Legacy of Moses*, 112-113.

¹⁰⁶ Whether the definition of "who's a Jew" is *racist* depends on how and why the definitions are being used. While it is obvious that Nazi (inclusive) definitions of Jewishness were racist, it is less clear whether Jewish (exclusive) definitions of Jewishness should also be considered racist. On the one hand, late twentieth century Jewish organizations have retrospectively made numerous individuals into Jews based on their genealogical Jewishness and on the fact that they were regarded as Jewish by the Nazis. However, when Jewish definitions are exclusive and are coupled with political and economic power, the resulting policies of exclusive "race-based" citizenship certainly seem to qualify as racist.

¹⁰⁷ This is not to suggest that these categories are completely distinct. The problems of (physical and/or anthropological definitions of) race and (economic, educational) class in America are, for example, difficult to separate.

F. Is Psychoanalysis a “Jewish Science”?

Throughout his life, Freud insisted that Psychoanalysis was not a “Jewish science.” From the 1890s until the end of his life, Freud worried that psychoanalysis would be regarded as a “Jewish national affair.”¹⁰⁸ As he wrote in a letter to his friend Ferenczi in 1913, “there should not be such a thing as Aryan or Jewish science. Results in science must be identical, though the presentation of them may vary.”¹⁰⁹ While Freud hints at the question of whether a science which is differently *presented* is still the same “science,” he also implicitly recognizes the ideological nature imputed to a science which is characterized as either “Aryan” or “Jewish.” Indeed, Freud’s incorporation of the inheritance of phylogenetic memory can be seen as an attempt to move beyond the ideological (religious and historical) distinctions which might separate Aryans from Jews, or Aryan and Jewish science. As Ilse Grubrich-Simitis has suggested, the inheritance of memory allowed Freud to claim a “universal validity” for psychoanalysis as a “transcultural statement on the human condition.”¹¹⁰ It was not until the *Moses and Monotheism* that Freud turned to phylogenetic memory as a way of understanding the persistent survival of Jewish difference.

While Freud insisted that Psychoanalysis was not a “Jewish science” in an attempt to protect it from ghettoization, in the end such claims of universality underscored the Jewishness of Psychoanalysis. By the 1930s in German-speaking countries, it was clear

¹⁰⁸ [eine jüdische nationale Angelegenheit] Freud to Abraham, May 3, 1908. Freud and Abraham, *A Psychoanalytic Dialogue: Letters of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham, 1907-1926*, 34.

¹⁰⁹ Freud to Ferenczi, June 8, 1913, Freud and Ferenczi, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi*, 491.

¹¹⁰ Grubrich-Simitis, “Metapsychology and Metabiology,” 99.

that Jewish and Aryan scientists did not necessarily share the same goals, even if they concurred on certain theoretical questions. According to the (by-no-means-rational) logic of the Nazis, the promotion of a scientific theory as universal—or in its more coded descriptions, “international” and “trans-historical”—was a form of anti-German conspiracy.¹¹¹ Despite the fact that the Nazis frankly promoted their own *volkisch* ideals of science, they maintained that *their* science was free from the taint of politics and religion (of which they accused “liberal-Jewish-Bolshevist science”¹¹²). In their attempts to unite Germany as a *Volksstaat* (rather than a *Parteistaat*), the Nazis attempted to “replace the divisive emphasis on class by a unifying emphasis on race,” and to replace the language of politics with that of science. While “politics” stank of class differences and “special interests,” science had been something of which Germans could be unabashedly proud. By 1933, Germany and Austria had been awarded more than one-third of all Nobel Prizes, even if many of these were awarded to scientists of Jewish descent.¹¹³ The Nazis proudly used Nietzsche’s phrase, “no science without suppositions” as a slogan supporting the idea that all science—and all parts of society—should nourish and nurture the German nation.¹¹⁴ As Gerhard Wagner, the head of the Nazi Physicians’ League noted, in 1934, “there is no longer any *German* science without the National Socialist *Weltanschauung* as its *first* presupposition.”¹¹⁵ Ironically, then, both scientists *and* politicians avoided the value-laden language of politics and appealed to the supposed

¹¹¹ These were the terms used by Gerhard Wagner, the head of the Nazi Physicians’ League, in a 1934 speech to the Gesellschaft Deutscher Naturforscher. Quoted in Robert Proctor, *Value-Free Science? Purity and Power in Modern Knowledge* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 171.

¹¹² Proctor, “Nazi Medicine and the Politics of Knowledge,” 350.

¹¹³ Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis*, 294.

¹¹⁴ Proctor, *Value-Free Science? Purity and Power in Modern Knowledge*, 171.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in *Ibid.*

authoritative neutrality of science. Nonetheless, while the language of science appeared “value-free,” as I have suggested, the debates themselves were burdened with the political exigencies of the time period.

In the wake of World War II, many scientists attempted to distance themselves from the racial science of the Nazis by reclaiming the realm of science as value-free. According to many historians, while the Nazis supported “pseudo-science,” *good* science was not tainted by ideology. As the historian of science Robert Proctor has written,

Value-neutrality allowed one to argue that *genuine science* could not have been implicated in the crimes of the period, despite substantial evidence to the contrary. For anti-Nazi critics, by contrast, the tragedy of German science was in having allowed itself to become politicized; German scientists had failed to remain value-neutral, and it was this failure that was responsible for the excesses of the period.¹¹⁶

Similarly, many historians of Psychoanalysis such as Jones and Peter Gay have attempted to protect the scientific legacy of Freud’s work from his “other” enthusiasms and from the various claims that Psychoanalysis may be a “Jewish science.” Particularly problematic in this context, then, is Freud’s enthusiastic defense of the inheritance of acquired characteristics, for it seems “non-scientific” both because the theory is no longer scientifically accepted,¹¹⁷ and because it seems at least in part motivated by Freud’s sense of his own Jewishness, if not also politics. During Freud’s lifetime, psychoanalysis was regarded as a “Jewish science” both because of anti-semitic accusations *and* because of Jewish ethnic pride. And in many ways, the situation has not changed: as Yerushalmi has

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 175, my italics.

¹¹⁷ Nonetheless, Lamarckian notions of inheritance continue to rear their heads in the field of “epigenetics” for example. See footnote 3 in this chapter.

noted, despite all attempts to the contrary, “history made psychoanalysis a ‘Jewish science.’”¹¹⁸

The question, then, is not whether Psychoanalysis should be considered as a Jewish science. Within the fields of Science Studies and the History of Science, it has become de rigueur to note that there is no science without values and that “all science is social.”¹¹⁹ Indeed. However, if we simply follow Foucault’s claims that all science is social, we risk overlooking the most important questions which attend all forms of knowledge, whether in the sciences or the humanities. The question is not whether Psychoanalysis is (or was) a Jewish science but rather what social goals it served then, and what it serves now. Indeed, what did Freud think he was doing in developing a “scientific” racial theory of Jewishness in the 1930s?

Even before Freud had published all of *Moses and Monotheism*, he was besieged by letters of protest, “calling him to account for the enormity he had committed.” As Peter Gay recounts, “anxious scholars visited him in London to talk him out of publishing the book.” Why, they wondered, had he published such a book “in a time of terrible travail, with the Nazi persecution of the Jews in Germany and Austria intensifying beyond the bounds of the most vicious czarist pogroms”?¹²⁰ Most of their protests were focused around Freud’s shocking proposal that Moses was an Egyptian rather than a Jew. As he noted in the opening sentence of *Moses and Monotheism*, “To deprive a people of the man whom they take pride in as the greatest of their sons is not a thing to be gladly or carelessly undertaken, least of all by someone who is himself one of them.” However, as

¹¹⁸ Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, 98.

¹¹⁹ Proctor, *Value-Free Science? Purity and Power in Modern Knowledge*, x-xi.

¹²⁰ Gay, *A Godless Jew: Freud, Atheism, and the Making of Psychoanalysis*, 149.

if totally disregarding his correspondents' protestations, he continues: "But we cannot allow any such reflection to induce us to put the truth aside in favour of what *are supposed to be* national interests."¹²¹ Here Freud intimates that he actually *does* have "national interests" in mind; they are simply different from what others think they "are supposed to be."

Perhaps because of Jan Assmann's stunning book on the mnemohistory of *Moses the Egyptian*,¹²² or perhaps because of Edward Said's passionate lecture about Freud's identification with a non-European Moses,¹²³ the proposal that Moses was an Egyptian no longer seems as shocking as his insistence on the idea that Jewishness is constituted by the inheritance of the memory of the murder of Moses. According to Freud, a person is Jewish *not* because she believes in a monotheistic god, keeps kosher, circumcises her sons, or any other number of supposedly singularly Jewish beliefs, practices or proclivities; a person is Jewish not because she has learned about Judaism from "direct communication" or from "the influence of education." Rather, a person is Jewish simply because she inherits the "memory-traces of the experience of our ancestors." This is shocking stuff, particularly at a time when we are supposed to have progressed beyond such essentialist definitions of individuals' identities. Freud's theory of Jewishness is a *racial* theory of cultural memory for it insists that culture derives from race rather than the other way around. It is only when a person has inherited Jewishness that her belief in a monotheistic God—or her circumcision of her sons, or her affection for Jewish authors

¹²¹ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 7.

¹²² Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

¹²³ Edward Said, *Freud and the Non-European* (New York: Verso, in association with the Freud Museum, London, 2003).

and filmmakers, or her support of Israel—constitutes “Jewish culture.”¹²⁴ Otherwise, it is simply an affection for things that historically (but not exclusively) have been associated with people who have inherited Jewishness. As Walter Benn Michaels writes, “all accounts of cultural identity require a racial component... For insofar as our culture remains nothing more than what we do and believe, it is impotently descriptive.”¹²⁵

While American ideals of freedom might suggest otherwise, cultural identity is not simply a set of activities and beliefs which is individually and voluntarily chosen like some brand of toothpaste at the Wal-Mart Superstore of Cultural Identity. “Cultural identity” often has as much to do with what a person does *not* do and believe, what she explicitly rejects and attempts to escape. Like race, cultural identity is often experienced as something from which one cannot escape, deriving from a number of clues which (creatively, problematically, imaginatively) refer to a person’s past or her genealogy. When such clues are unavailable or unclear, many people go searching for evidence through adoption agencies, genealogy-societies, and more recently, DNA-testing.¹²⁶ While DNA tests have revealed some surprising results, more often than not, people go searching for “proof” of what they already knew or believe—that is, they go to specific DNA-testing services which have access to specific gene pool groups.¹²⁷ In addition to

¹²⁴ On this point, Michael Kramer has argued that all definitions of Jewish literature proceed from a racial definition of Jewishness. His essay in *Prooftexts* elicited a heated debate in which the respondents seemed to protest a bit too much against Kramer’s argument. See Michael P. Kramer, “Race, Literary History, and the ‘Jewish Question’.” *Prooftexts* 21.3 (2001).

¹²⁵ Walter Benn Michaels, “Race into Culture: A Critical Genealogy of Identity.” *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1992): 682.

¹²⁶ Henry Louis Gates has made such searches “respectable” in his PBS show and associated publications documenting his own and others’ searches for “real” ancestral histories.

¹²⁷ See, for example, the recent *NY Times* article discussing various individuals’ search for “ethnicities” which would not only give them a sense of their heritage, but also access to benefits for particular minorities, including affirmative action and Israeli citizenship. Amy Harmon, “Seeking Ancestry in DNA Ties Uncovered By Tests,” *New York Times* April 12, 2006.

Benn Michaels’ “epistemological truism that our account of the past may be partially determined by our own identity,”¹²⁸ the opposite is also true: our identities are determined by our (always selective) accounts and knowledge of our pasts.

Like many other racial theories, Freud’s theory of Jewishness is in no way consistent or simple. Nowhere does he insist that both parents need to be Jewish for the child to inherit Jewish tradition; nowhere does he even specify that one grandparent needs to be Jewish. All individuals inherit “mixtures of blood”¹²⁹ and phylogenetic pasts: counting back ten generations, an individual has 1024 ancestors. It is more than likely that (at least) one of these was someone who would be identified as something other than Jewish, or more generally, something other than the identity of the present individual.¹³⁰ This means that at any particular time there are far more people who (retrospectively, strictly genealogically) “inherit” Jewishness than there are people who call themselves Jewish. As Marc Shell has suggested, the literal conceptualization of genealogical inheritance and kinship is founded upon a “key fiction, namely, that we can really know who are our consanguineous kin.”¹³¹ Freud’s theory of Jewishness suggests that at some point down the genealogical line—whether literal or figural, real or fictive—the repressed will return, the memory will be “awakened” and the person will return to this “archaic”

¹²⁸ Michaels, “Race into Culture: A Critical Genealogy of Identity,” 682.

¹²⁹ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 123. I discuss this phrase more extensively in my fifth chapter.

¹³⁰ Indeed, there are a number of stories of Holocaust survivors who (even after the Holocaust) continued to believe that they were arrested because of their Communist associations rather than their supposedly Jewish identity. Thus, even if their children or grandchildren identify as Jewish (having inherited the burden of memory from the survivor), the “survivors” may continue to consider themselves as something other than Jewish. I explore this conundrum in more philosophic detail in my fourth chapter.

¹³¹ Marc Shell, *Children of the Earth: Literature, Politics and Nationhood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 4.

past.¹³² This is not a one-drop rule of present identity, but a one-drop rule of future possibility.¹³³

While many Jewish leaders worry that the next generation will “forget” that they are Jewish, large numbers of people are “discovering” that they have inherited Jewish pasts.¹³⁴ The Nazis’ “one-drop rule” ironically made their attempt to wipe out the Jewish people practically impossible—somewhere at some point in time, there would be someone whose inheritance of Jewishness would be “awakened,” and who would “return” to make sense of this past. Indeed, in Germany today, there are widespread reports of many people who previously thought that all of their grandparents were Germans who were somehow guilty of either “standing by” or joining with the Nazis. Now, a number of these people have recently discovered that one grandparent was Jewish (or even “half-Jewish”), and this is radically changing their perspectives on what “counts” as “their” history. No longer are they only burdened with the guilt of the perpetrator, now they are also burdened with the guilt of the victim who survives all others.¹³⁵ So too, “Ba’alei Teshuvah” has emerged as a full-scale “movement” of individuals who, having grown up in secular homes, “return” to practice an Orthodox

¹³² “What is certainly of decisive importance, however, is the *awakening* of the forgotten memory-trace by a recent real repetition of the event.” Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 101.

¹³³ Erin Aubry Kaplan suggests that while the one-drop rule of racial identification in America was developed because of racism, its effects have allowed African-Americans to consolidate a sense of identity and community. She writes, “by forcing blacks of all complexions and blood percentages into the same boat, the law ironically laid a foundation of black unity that remains in place today.” Erin Aubry Kaplan, “Black Like I Thought I Was,” *L.A. Weekly* Oct. 7, 2003.

¹³⁴ See Emma Klein, *Lost Jews: The Struggle for Identity Today* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

¹³⁵ Along these lines, a recent article shows that there are a number of people (at least 300) who were children of Nazis (i.e. no known Jews in their genealogical pasts), and who as adults, have converted to Judaism and moved to Israel. Apparently, a sizable number of these individuals have prominent positions as academics in Jewish Studies. Most spectacularly, there are reports that this group includes descendents of Hitler, Himmler and Goering. Yitta Halberstam, “Choosing Judaism.” *Jewish Action* Summer 5766 (2006).

Judaism which they never before knew. Despite the dire predictions of various social science studies of Jewish population,¹³⁶ such “returns” to tradition continue to emerge and to expand the numbers of people who willingly define themselves through their Jewish past.¹³⁷ How and why does this happen? Why do people (creatively) turn to the past in order to define their lives in the present? These phenomena may not be *due* to Freud’s innovations, but psychoanalysis has provided a language in which to explore them.

In incorporating the idea of the inheritance of acquired characteristics, Freud explicitly entered into debates about race, heredity and evolution. While these debates appeared strictly scientific, they were—and continue to be—shaped by the scientists’ values and ideals. This is not to suggest that a person’s ideals cannot be changed or shaped by scientific discoveries. However, the very nature of the questions we ask and the answers we seek are shaped by the ongoing debates in the societies in which we live. This chapter has focused on the broader context of scientific discoveries and their relationship to various political positions (including Freud’s) regarding the Jewish Question. Having explored the external transformations (of politics and science) during Freud’s lifetime, in the next chapter I consider the internal transformations in his theorization of circumcision and the castration complex.

¹³⁶ Bernard Wasserstein, *Vanishing Diaspora: The Jews in Europe Since 1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

¹³⁷ There is an emerging body of scholarship on “new Jewish identities” in Europe and elsewhere. See, for example, Zvi Gitelman, Barry Kosmin and András Kovács, eds., *New Jewish Identities: Contemporary Europe and Beyond* (New York: Central European University Press, 2003); Jonathan Webber, *Jewish Identities in the New Europe* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1994).

Chapter 3

Regeneration and Evolution:

Race, Culture and the Circumcision Question

A. Circumcision as Counter-Evidence

To the disappointment of many of Freud's biographers and followers, as well as a number of scholars of Jewish Studies, when Freud insisted that individuals inherit archaic memory, he did not mean this "metaphorically." As I show in the preceding chapter, he insisted that he meant this quite literally: he explicitly supported the scientific theory that "acquired characteristics can be inherited," noting that he could not do without this "factor in biological evolution." However, Freud was well aware that there was ample evidence to suggest that acquired characteristics were not inherited. Indeed, the most paradigmatic mark of Jewishness—circumcision—would seem to contradict this idea since it must be performed in every generation in order for its effects to be "transmitted." In this chapter, I show that some of the key concepts of psychoanalytic theory were shaped by Freud's attempts to confront the questions raised by circumcision and its place in debates about race, heredity and evolution in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a physical artifact of a ritual practice, circumcision emerges as a key to understanding the subtle historical distinctions between the terms of "race" and "culture."

The subject of Jewish circumcision—and the Jewish Question more generally—often appeared in the footnotes of treatises on evolution and heredity in the second half of

the nineteenth century.¹ For instance, in a footnote to *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication* (1868)—a book which Freud had in his library—Charles Darwin explains that he had been assured by a number of Jewish doctors that circumcision had never produced an “inherited effect;” but he hedged his bets, noting that he had heard that Jewish boys were in fact sometimes diagnosed with a condition that was (appropriately) given the name of “born circumcised.”² While Darwin was agnostic about whether acquired characteristics (such as the lack of a foreskin) could be inherited, in the 1880s the German zoologist August Weismann attempted to disprove this idea once and for all. In a series of experiments which seem almost modelled on the history of the Jewish people, Weismann cut off the tails of 901 mice. Since all of the five succeeding generations of mice were born with their tails intact, Weismann proclaimed that he had finally refuted the “Lamarckian” idea that acquired characteristics could be inherited.³ In a footnote to his discussion of the mice, Weismann acknowledged the widespread belief that “among nations which practise circumcision as a ritual, children are sometimes born with a rudimentary prepuce,” but he insisted that “this does not occur

¹ In this chapter, I draw from the work of Sander Gilman who has uncovered a wide array of references to congenital circumcision in debates about the Jewish “race.” See Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 52-56. Though he does not explore this question in any detail, John Efron also alludes to the widespread reference to circumcision as evidence disproving Lamarckian inheritance in late nineteenth century discussions of race and heredity: John M. Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 43-44.

² Darwin, quoted in Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender*, 54. Indeed, there are long traditions both in Judaism and in Islam which hold that certain patriarchs—including Adam, Moses, Abraham and Muhammed—were “born circumcised.” See Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised: Gender and Covenant in Judaism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 23-24.

³ See August Weismann, *Essays upon Heredity and Kindred Biological Problems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1889 [1891-92]), 432ff. Though Weismann’s experiments with mice may sound ridiculous, they are often credited as having demonstrated the untenability of the “Lamarckian” idea of the inheritance of acquired characters. See, for example, Peter J. Bowler, *The Non-Darwinian Revolution: Reinterpreting a Historical Myth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).

more frequently than in other nations in which circumcision is not performed.”⁴

According to Weismann, all organic matter could be split up into two categories of existence: first, the permanent material of the immortal germ-plasm, and second, the malleable material of the mortal soma, or body.⁵ By the early twentieth century, Weismann’s “germ-plasm” theory was often cited by scientists and politicians who asserted that Jews could never become fully German, for the properties of the “immortal” germ-plasm were permanent even if the bodily material (such as the penis) could be altered.⁶

Freud was familiar with Weismann’s work and his attempts to disprove the “Lamarckian” idea of the inheritance of acquired characteristics. From his earliest psychoanalytic theories to his allusions to circumcision and his later more fully developed theory of Jewishness, Freud’s work was shaped by his confrontations with Weismann’s theories and their implications for debates about race, heredity and the Jewish Question.⁷ In many of these discussions, the distinctions between physical and psychological characteristics, and between racial and cultural phenomena, were blurred and

⁴ Weismann, *Essays upon Heredity and Kindred Biological Problems*, 447, n441.

⁵ August Weismann, *The Germ-Plasm: A Theory of Heredity*, trans. W. N. Parker and Harriet Rönnfeldt (London: W. Scott, 1893).

⁶ Most notably, in Fritz Brenneck, *The Nazi Primer: Official handbook for schooling the Hitler youth*, trans. Harwood L. Childs, ed. William E. Dodd (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938). See also Robert Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 54ff.

⁷ In order to set up his argument, Weismann presents a number of anecdotes supposedly demonstrating Lamarckian inheritance of acquired characters. Amongst these, many of the prime examples involve anecdotes of animals who had lost their tails and produced tailless babies. Along these lines, Jay Geller’s statement deserves to be quoted somewhere in this chapter: “The identity of Jewish males was composed of, if not puppy dog tails, then circumcised penises, for no signifier of Jewish difference was more important to the determination of turn-of-the-century male Jews like Sigmund Freud than circumcision.” Jay Geller, “Identifying ‘Someone Who Is Himself One of Them’: Recent Studies of Freud’s Jewish Identity.” *Religious Studies Review* 23.4 (1997): 327. Geller, Gilman and Boyarin have each explored the vicissitudes of circumcision in defining Jewish masculinity and the relationship between representations of gender, sexuality and Jewish identity.

inexact. In the developing field of psychology, however, many scientists attempted to maintain a strict separation between the psychical and the physical fields of research. By contrast, Freud established psychoanalysis as a method for exploring the interaction between these realms. In insisting that physical symptoms could be traced back to their origins in psychical traumas, he charted a territory between these realms, and developed the instinct as “a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic.”⁸ Like the psychoanalytic notion of the “instinct,” circumcision emerges as a “concept on the frontier” between the notions of culture and race. Circumcision is a cultural practice which physically defines the males of certain human groups, in this case the Jewish people. More significantly, perhaps, is the fact that the experience of one’s own neonatal circumcision is generally “forgotten” such that its artifactual incision may be *experienced* as an inherited characteristic, a birth-mark. Drawing from the work of Weismann as well as other scientists of race and heredity, Freud developed his theories of castration anxiety and the repetition compulsion and laid the groundwork for his later theory of Jewishness. Throughout these texts, the subject of circumcision compelled him to re-examine the distinctions between psychology and physiology, environment and heredity and most significantly, between culture and race.

In this chapter, I argue that Freud reconsidered his position on phylogenetic memory at least partly as a result of his explorations of circumcision in his own theorization of castration anxiety and of his dawning awareness of ongoing debates about

⁸ Sigmund Freud, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes,” *S.E.*, vol. XIV (1915), 121.

race, culture and evolution.⁹ When he suggested that castration anxiety originated with phylogenetic experiences, he could not immediately explain how the effects of these experiences could have been transmitted: if the reproductive organs had been removed, hereditary transmission would be impossible. So too, in proposing that circumcision was a “milder substitute” for castration and the “root” of anti-semitism, Freud was left with seemingly insoluble questions: first, if individuals inherited the effects of their ancestors’ experiences, why weren’t the effects of circumcision (i.e. the lack of a foreskin) transmitted? That is, why was it necessary to perform circumcision generation after generation? Second, if circumcision was one of the origins of the “undying” hatred of Jews, why did the Jewish people feel compelled to repeat the performance of this rite? Finally, how did a cultural (religious) practice become the paradigmatic mark of a racially (genealogically) defined group? Eventually, Freud developed a theory of circumcision which explained both the origins and persistence of anti-semitism, as well as the survival of Jewishness in the face of “undying hatred [*unsterbliche Haß*].”¹⁰

B. Early Psychoanalysis and Evolutionary Debates in the 1890s

Many of the earliest dilemmas in psychoanalysis have direct parallels with questions addressed in the debates about evolution and heredity at the turn of the

⁹ I would not go quite as far as Franz Maciejewski who argues that Freud’s own circumcision may have been the “original trauma” of psychoanalysis, though it is a provocative line of reasoning. Franz Maciejewski, *Psychoanalytisches Archiv und jüdisches Gedächtnis: Freud, Beschneidung und Monotheismus* (Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2002).

¹⁰ Freud to Zweig, September 30, 1934, Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig, *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig*, trans. Elaine Robson-Scott and William Robson-Scott (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1970).

twentieth century. While Darwinian Natural Selection seemed to explain why certain traits and species disappeared, it could not explain why new variations emerged. One of the most convincing and long-standing solutions—espoused by Darwin and many of Darwin’s followers—was that changes in the environment caused individuals to acquire new traits which were then inherited by the next generations. Darwin himself was convinced that “variations of all kinds and degrees are directly or indirectly caused by the conditions of life to which each being, and more especially its ancestors, have been exposed.”¹¹ It was not until Weismann proclaimed the “all-sufficiency” of Natural Selection, that Darwinism became known as something which opposed (rather than extended) the environmentalism of Lamarck’s groundbreaking theory of evolution. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, Weismann’s work was so extreme that it ignited a wave of anti-Darwinism and led a number of scientists to proudly identify themselves as “neo-Lamarckians,” as opposed to the neo-Darwinists (or Weismannists) who were seen as extremists.¹² In 1893-94, the journal *Contemporary Review* featured a year-long debate between Weismann and Herbert Spencer regarding the causes of evolutionary change. Weismann argued that all changes could be explained via “natural selection,” while Spencer argued that there must be room for other explanations of evolutionary change, including the effects of changes in the environment and modifications which occurred in response to such changes.¹³

¹¹ Charles Darwin, *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*, vol. 2 (London: Murray, 1868), 240-241.

¹² Bowler, *The Non-Darwinian Revolution: Reinterpreting a Historical Myth*, 117.

¹³ Herbert Spencer, “The Inadequacy of 'Natural Selection'.” *Contemporary Review* 63 (1893); Professor Weismann's Theories.” *Contemporary Review* 63 (1893); A Rejoinder to Professor Weismann.” *Contemporary Review* 66 (1893); August Weismann, “The All-Sufficiency of Natural Selection: 1) A reply to Herbert Spencer, and 2) Conclusion.” *Contemporary Review* 64 (1893).

Similarly, in the 1890s, Freud attempted to understand what caused individuals to change from leading healthy lives to lives beset by seemingly inexplicable maladies and mental illness. While he readily conceded that “the hereditary disposition” was one of the determining factors of hysteria, he insisted that it was not sufficient to explain all mental illness. In much the same way that Spencer criticized Weismann for maintaining that Darwinian Natural Selection could completely explain evolutionary change, Freud disparaged Charcot and his followers for asserting that “heredity was to be regarded as the sole cause” of hysteria.¹⁴ “So greatly did Charcot overestimate heredity as a causative agent,” writes Freud in 1893, “that he left no room for the acquisition of nervous illness.”¹⁵ Charcot’s exclusive focus on heredity—and Weismann’s focus on Natural Selection—did not allow for malleability: whether in terms of the individual’s recovery or the evolution of the species. As Freud explains, because the “hereditary disposition” was “fixed in advance for the patient from his birth,” an exclusive focus on heredity would only bring the doctors’ “efforts to a halt with its unapproachable power.”¹⁶ By contrast, Freud asserted that the physician should explore the “other aetiological influences, of a less incomprehensible nature,” and that “hysterical symptoms” could be “traced back to their origin” in “the patient’s past.”¹⁷ Unlike heredity, the investigation of these other aetiological factors would “allow our therapeutic efforts to find a path of access.”¹⁸

¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, “Charcot,” *S.E.*, vol. III (1893), 21.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁶ Sigmund Freud, “Heredity and the Aetiology of the Neuroses,” *S.E.*, vol. III (1896), 146.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

Freud founded psychoanalysis on the idea that his patients suffered from “reminiscences”—or, the effects of experiences—but until 1912, he rejected the idea that these “effects” included those derived from their ancestors’ experiences. Even if the hereditary disposition was “derived from [her] progenitors,” he maintained that he (and by extension, psychoanalysis) was only interested in memories derived from the individual’s own childhood.¹⁹ In order to carve out a space for memory, Freud needed to keep it distinct from the realm of heredity and by extension, inherited memory. In separating the psyche’s inherited material from the material which was shaped in early childhood, Freud ironically echoes Weismann’s separation of the hereditary germ-plasm from the organism’s body (which could change in response to the environment). Indeed, Freud’s later diagrams of the psyche, particularly in *The Ego and the Id* (1923) reflect the language and imagery of Weismann’s germ-plasm theory and cellular biology: perceptions must “penetrate” a membrane before reaching the permanent “nucleus” of the psychical system.²⁰ According to Weismannian reasoning, the organism’s fate was entirely determined by the hereditary germ-plasmic material which could not be modified—it was “immortal,” fixed before birth, remaining unchanged even with bodily death. Such stability within the one organism set the stage for Natural Selection to be the sole mover in causing evolutionary change. Indeed, because Weismann was more interested in the evolution of populations, he was not necessarily interested in how these

¹⁹ Sigmund Freud, “Sexuality and the Aetiology of the Neuroses,” *S.E.*, vol. III (1898), 280.

²⁰ Mark Solms suggests that Freud’s later diagrams of the psyche are derived from his early neurological drawings. However, the drawing in *The Ego and the Id* (1923) is markedly different from his other diagrams and seems to mirror cellular imagery more than his other diagrams, for example in his letters to Fliess or the *Interpretation of Dreams*. Lynn Gamwell and Mark Solms, eds., *From Neurology to Psychoanalysis: Sigmund Freud’s Neurological Drawings and Diagrams of the Mind* (New York: State University of New York at Binghamton, 2006).

parts interacted within an individual organism. Freud, on the other hand, was interested in using Weismann's theories to understand the interaction of these parts and the "multiplication" of their effects within the individual's psyche. According to his "etiological equation," *both* heredity and experience determined a patient's mental condition. Though Freud insisted that heredity and experience were separate realms, around 1912, he began to reconsider this strict distinction and to explore the works of Weismann and only later, Lamarck.

C. Weismann, Eugenics and Racial Difference

From the beginning, then, Freud incorporated both a hereditarian and an environmentalist approach to the etiological questions of mental illness. While most scientists acknowledged that both heredity and the environment affected evolution and etiology, in the early decades of the twentieth century, three distinct approaches to these questions emerged. First, scientists such as Charcot and Weismann (as well as many scientists who regarded themselves as neo-Darwinians) argued that heredity completely determined whether an individual was "fit" to survive, or whether s/he would develop illnesses making her less fit. Environmental changes might make certain hereditary characteristics more or less useful, or might heighten the effects of certain characteristics, but according to this line of reasoning, the individual's fate was ultimately determined by her heredity. As Robert Proctor notes, Weismann's theories were "often used as a foil

against calls for socialism or social reform,”²¹ and it was generally thought that neither education nor healthcare would change the hereditary differences defining racial groups. While even Weismann himself allowed that there were environmental conditions which could shape the individual (particularly *in utero*), in its most extreme form, this position became associated with the Nazis’ racial program.

Second, a number of scientists argued that Natural Selection of the hereditarily fit was insufficient to explain evolutionary changes. These scientists argued that environmental conditions could directly affect an organism such that heredity was just one of many factors determining which organisms would survive. Racial groups were defined by their environments, including so-called natural conditions (climate, natural resources etc.) and social conditions (education, economic resources, healthcare, etc.). As such, their differences were malleable: change a person’s environment, and you can change her constitution. Particularly in the years after World War II, this position became associated with the work of anthropologists such as Franz Boas, and in the postwar years and it supported the backlash against the idea that groups were racially distinct as opposed to the less controversial idea that groups were *culturally* distinct. I will say more about this at the end of the chapter. Third, some scientists argued that if an individual could acquire new characteristics in response to changes in her environment, she could change not only her own condition, but the condition of race by hereditarily transmitting these acquired characteristics to her descendents. While many of these scientists were identified as neo-Lamarckians, they often supported Darwinian Natural Selection *and* an

²¹ Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis*, 31.

emphasis on cultural malleability. Moreover, the particularities of these positions were differently understood depending on the national context.

These three approaches also defined the various solutions to the questions of human difference: why and how had various groups maintained their differences over time? Did these groups share origins (and evolve differently), or had were they different “from the beginning”? The driving question was whether these differences were hereditary or environmental. Were they racial or cultural, and were these terms mutually exclusive? Not surprisingly, in Germany, these debates were often posed in terms of the “Jewish Question.” That is, were Jews constitutionally and permanently different, or were their differences a matter of social isolation, anti-semitism and generations of inequity? And if they were granted full civil rights, would their distinctive Jewish characteristics permanently remain or would they acquire German characteristics? Part of the problem, of course, was that it was nearly impossible to distinguish between the concepts of “race” and “culture.”

From 1907 onwards, Freud confronted these questions in a number of contexts. At a meeting of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society in December 1907, Weismann’s name was mentioned in a discussion of heredity and eugenics.²² Christian von Ehrenfels, a Viennese eugenicist of Jewish descent,²³ presented a discussion of “A Program for

²² As Loren Graham notes, while today, the term “eugenics” elicits negative gut reactions and is often “erroneously equated with National Socialist doctrines,... in Weimar Germany ‘eugenics’ was thought of by proto-National Socialist publications and organizations as a kind of leftist deviation... Whether one used the term ‘*Rassenhygiene*’ or ‘*Eugenik*’ became in the late 1920s a kind of political flag, often with the more right-wing members of the movement favoring the first term, the more left-wing members the latter.” Loren R. Graham, “Science and Values: The Eugenics Movement in Germany and Russia in the 1920s.” *The American Historical Review* 82.5 (1977): 1139.

²³ Ehrenfels published widely on eugenics in the *Archiv für Rassen und Gesellschaftsbiologie* and generally advocated polygamy as a panacea for the degeneration caused by modern industrial society. Geoffrey G.

Breeding Reform” in which he argued that monogamy was harmful for “both constitutional and cultural reasons” for it made it impossible for the individual to fulfill his sexual needs.²⁴ Ehrenfels noted that the contrast between “constitutional life” and “cultural life” had been previously emphasized by Freud, but that he would like to further define it:

We call constitutional those characteristics of an organism that are inborn and can be transmitted by physiological procreation. Everything else belongs to the cultural realm. This distinction was, in fact, first made by Darwin and was then defined more precisely by Weismann.²⁵

Though it is unclear whether Darwin and Weismann actually made these sorts of distinctions between “constitutional” and “cultural” traits, by the first decade of the twentieth century, Weismann’s name was often cited in discussions of breeding programs which assumed that individuals’ fates were absolutely determined by their heredity. Since the hereditary materials of certain groups of society could not be changed by modifying the environment (such as education or welfare), breeding programs attempted to manage reproduction in order to curb the reproduction of the “unfit” elements and encourage the reproduction of the more “fit” elements of society.²⁶ Social programs, on the other hand,

Field, “Nordic Racism.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 38.3 (1977): 527. Sander L. Gilman, *Reading Freud's Reading* (New York: New York University Press, 1994).

²⁴ While Ehrenfels’ emphasis was on the fulfillment of the male’s sexual needs, Freud evinces some concern for the satisfaction of the sexual needs of both males and females. See Sigmund Freud, “Civilized Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness,” *S.E.*, vol. IX (1908); Herman Nunberg and Ernst Federn, *Minutes of the Vienna Psycho-Analytical Society, 1906-1915*, trans. M. Nunberg (New York: International Universities Press, 1962-1975), 95, 100.

²⁵ See Nunberg and Federn, *Minutes of the Vienna Psycho-Analytical Society, 1906-1915*, II: 93.

²⁶ Of course, what was defined as “unfit” was controversial well into the 1930s. For example, Ehrenfels seems to have lumped “Jews” and “Germans” into one “Caucasian race” which was threatened by “Yellow Peril” (the “hoards of Mongols”). As such, he saw the rise of anti-Semitism as an anathema: “Among 100 whites there stand two Jews. The German peasant has been awakened and armed with the holy weapons of his ancestors—not to struggle against 80 million Mongols but to confront two Jews! Is this not the height of folly!” Quoted in Sander L. Gilman, “Freud and the Sexologists: A Second Reading,” *Reading Freud's Reading*, ed. Sander L. Gilman (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 64.

were founded on the assumption that the differences defining particular groups were at least partially determined by their environment; as such, they opposed the breeding programs and attempted to expand education and healthcare for the poor, and increased civil rights for minority groups such as the Jews. While Freud was not particularly dismayed by Ehrenfels suggestion of breeding programs, his support of psychoanalytic therapy—and his later support of free therapy for the poor—suggests that he was more in line with the social welfare programs than with the breeding programs.²⁷

Freud and Ehrenfels shared an interest in eugenics and the problem of the tension which arises from attempting to both satisfy individual sexual needs and maintain societal obligations. However, Freud took a decidedly different position on the distinction between constitutional and cultural characteristics of “a people.” Following Ehrenfels’ presentation in Vienna, Freud briefly discussed eugenics in his essay, “‘Civilized’ Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness” (1908) which he sent to Ehrenfels’ new periodical *Sexual Problems* (a continuation of *Mother Protection*, an explicitly eugenics-oriented journal) on Ehrenfels’ request. In the opening paragraphs, he approvingly cites Ehrenfels’ work on “modern nervous illness”²⁸ and notes the comparison of “the innate character of a people with their cultural attainments.”²⁹ As if anticipating his late meditations on the definition of Jewishness, Freud here acknowledges that “a people” (whether race, nation, or otherwise) is defined by an “innate character.” Instead of pursuing this idea any

²⁷ Thus, I would not categorize Freud as a self-hating Jew or his “racial” theory as proto-Nazi racial “pseudo-science.”

²⁸ Christian Freiherr von Ehrenfels, *Sexualethik (Grenzfragen des Nerven- und Seelenlebens)*, 56, ed. Leopold Löwenfeld (Wiesbaden: J. F. Bergmann, 1907). Discussed in Gilman, “Freud and the Sexologists: A Second Reading,” 60–65. See also Wilhelm Hemcker, “Ihr Brief war mir so wertvoll! Christian von Ehrenfels und Sigmund Freud—eine verschollene Korrespondenz,” *Wunderblock—eine Geschichte der modernen Seele*, eds. Jean Clair, Cathrin Pichler and Wolfgang Pircher (Vienna: Löcker, 1989).

²⁹ Freud, “‘Civilized’ Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness,” 181.

further, however, he refers the reader to Ehrenfels' work for "a more extensive consideration of this significant line of thought."³⁰

Nonetheless, Freud subtly argues against Ehrenfels' hereditarian emphasis. Whereas Ehrenfels argued that "nervous illness" is "innate" and transmitted only "by inheritance," Freud explains that "close inspection shows that it is really a question of the effect of powerful infantile impressions."³¹ The increase in "nervous illness" in modern times, argues Freud, can be better understood by investigating the ways in which "civilized" morality imposes intolerable restrictions on the satisfaction of individuals' sexual needs.³² While Freud suggests that the sexual restrictions of "civilized" morality are responsible for the spread of "nervous illness," he defends civilization's "achievements," such as the institutions of marriage and the family: "even if the damage done by civilized sexual morality is admitted, it may be argued... that the cultural gain derived from such an extensive restriction of sexuality probably more than balances these sufferings, which, after all, only affect a minority in any severe form."³³ This essay is the earliest of Freud's lengthy discussions of the tension between the preservation of the self and the preservation of society, or between instinctual life and civilization, a tension which he would more fully investigate with the help of Weismann's theories. I will return to this matter later in this chapter.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 202.

³² Ibid., 196.

³³ Ibid., 181.

D. External Influences: Defining Race and Culture (1909-1912)

During his 1909 trip to America, Freud had a number of opportunities to discuss the inheritance of acquired characteristics, Weismann's attempts to disprove the idea and the significance of these findings for understanding questions of race and culture. During his time in Worcester, Massachusetts, Freud stayed at the home of G. Stanley Hall, an eminent psychologist and the president of Clark University who had organized the event to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the school. Hall was famous for his work with adolescents and for comparing "primitive" cultures to the primitive stages of human development (in childhood). He was also committed to the ideas that individual development was a recapitulation of the development of the human race and that acquired characteristics could be inherited. For example, the year before Freud visited, Hall wrote that "only Lamarckianism in its most extreme form can explain the evolution of races, species and their every diversity, great and small," even as he acknowledged that "Weismann is essentially right that net results of individual life upon germ plasm are minimal or naught, the past determining everything."³⁴ Like many other scientists of the time-period, Hall did not necessarily see a contradiction between a Lamarckian understanding of racial difference and the Weismannian theory of the germ-plasm, for according to both, the past determines everything.³⁵

³⁴ Quoted in George W. Stocking, Jr., *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1968), 254-255.

³⁵ Indeed, Hall had also invited Weismann to the Clark University celebrations (though he declined due to old age and bad health). Saul Rosenzweig, *Freud, Jung, and Hall the King-maker: The Historic Expedition to America (1909), with G. Stanley Hall as Host and William James as Guest* (Seattle: Hogrefe & Huber, 1992), 46.

Also at Clark to deliver a celebratory lecture and to accept an honorary degree was Franz Boas,³⁶ who was then engaged in a series of investigations (1908-1910) for the United States Immigration Commission. While the Commission was quite sure that the “American type” was stable (a fixed racial—white, European—type), Boas attempted to demonstrate that the descendants of immigrants had been able to change their “type” within one or two generations. Through changing their environment (by moving to America), these immigrants had transformed themselves from their various national types (Italian, Jewish, German) to become “American.” By studying various measurements—both physical and mental—of 18,000 descendants of immigrants, Boas tried to show that the adaptations to the environment had been transmitted to the next generation and that as such, human types and abilities were not “permanent and stationary,” as the Commission had presumed.³⁷

³⁶ Boas and Freud shared some interesting similarities which certainly shaped their approach to definitions of “peoples”: Boas was a German-born immigrant, the grandson of observant Jews and decidedly private about his Jewish background. As Glick notes, like many people of his (German Jewish) generation, Boas did not convert to Christianity, “he turned instead to a personal philosophy compounded of rationalism, cultural relativism, and ethical humanism, and identified himself as an enlightened universalist who had transcended both ethnic provincialism and supernatural religion.” Leonard B. Glick, “Types Distinct from Our Own: Franz Boas on Jewish Identity and Assimilation.” *American Anthropologist* 84 (1982): 546. See also Mitchell Bryan Hart, “Franz Boas as German, American, Jew,” *German-Jewish Identities in America*, eds. Christof Mauch and Joe Salomon (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003). Ultimately, however, a comparison of Boas’s and Freud’s theorization of “types” (races, ethnicities) must take into account the fact the very different meaning of “race” in America and in Europe. Boas could become the *white* American (racial) “type” whereas the darker-skinned Americans continued to struggle for the right to join in the American polis. When I revise this for book-publication, I will extend this comparison, focusing on the terms of “race” and “ethnicity” as they were transmitted *back and forth* between America and Europe.

³⁷ On the details of Boas’ study, see Stocking’s account in Franz Boas, *A Franz Boas Reader: The Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883-1911*, ed. George Stocking (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 190. See also Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology*.

In his lecture at Clark University, Boas reported that he was currently working on “the laws of hereditary stability and of environmental variability of the human body.”³⁸ Specifically, Boas insisted that these “laws” could be derived from “the historical changes that the bodily appearance of man has undergone in the course of time, and in his displacement from one geographical or social environment to another.”³⁹ In his report to the Immigration Commission, Boas was intent upon proving that (certain) racial types could be transformed depending on the environment in which individuals lived. While Boas focuses on the bodily changes, he was, of course, most famous for his anthropological work exploring the cultures of the world. Indeed, Boas’ report to the Immigration Commission can be seen as an attempt to show that racial typologization was as malleable as cultural definition, heredity as variable as geography. It is significant that his report referred only to *white* European immigrants whose nationalities (according to Boas) were being erroneously discussed as if they were racial types. In his “Mind of Primitive Man” (1911), he would insist that “there is no close relation between race and

³⁸ I have not yet been able to determine whether Freud actually attended Boas’ lecture. He is reported to have skipped many of the lectures because he found them boring; instead he went on long walks in the woods with Jung and Ferenczi. Nonetheless, it can be presumed that in the course of the celebrations, Freud would have heard something of Boas’ current work on immigrants and racial types.

³⁹ Franz Boas, “Psychological Problems in Anthropology (Lecture delivered at the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the opening of Clark University, September, 1909).” *American Journal of Psychology* 21 (1910): 371. Boas was most famous for proclaiming that while there may be racial differences, there was not necessarily a fixed hierarchy of racial types. In other words, Jews and dark-skinned peoples might be permanently Jewish and dark-skinned, but this did not mean that the Jewishness or dark-skin of any individual person permanently doomed him to a particular place in the hierarchy of talents, abilities and possibilities. In fact, Jewishness or dark skin could doom a person to a particular place in the social spectrum- not because these characteristics implied particular abilities or talents (or the lack thereof), but because *by definition* Jewishness and darker skin can doom a person to a particular place in the social spectrum.

culture,”⁴⁰ an argument which has come to define many post-World War II debates about the relationship of these two terms.

In many discussions of race, both in Freud’s time and our own, there is a problematic assumption that race can be distinguished from culture, that the former is a permanent deterministic category while the latter is a malleable non-deterministic category. However, the two terms constitute each other in their very historical derivations. As Etienne Balibar has noted, anti-Judaism was always “*already* a ‘culturalist’ racism,” one based not on biological concepts of race but on cultural-religious concepts of irreducible spiritual difference.⁴¹ While “race” is often confidently (if erroneously) identified as a matter of physical difference (particularly in the United States), in the case of the Jewish people the relationship between physical and “spiritual” or cultural difference has always been unclear, at least from the first century. In rejecting circumcision of the body in favor of “circumcision of the heart,” Paul made the distinction between Jews and Christians a physical matter, but because of its location, it was one which usually remained hidden and thus, a matter of speculation.⁴² The inextricability of the modern concepts of “race” and “culture” is readily apparent in texts which attempt to define the Jewish people, particularly in the first decades of the twentieth century.⁴³ Increased civil rights and economic prosperity in Western Europe

⁴⁰ Franz Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man* (1911), 196.

⁴¹ Etienne Balibar, “Is There a ‘Neo-Racism’?” *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, eds. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (New York: Verso, 1991), 24.

⁴² Julia Reinhard Lupton, “*Ethnos* and Circumcision in the Pauline Tradition: A Psychoanalytic Exegesis,” *The Psychoanalysis of Race*, ed. Christopher Lane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 194.

⁴³ An entire dissertation could be written on this question. Indeed, Veronika Lipphardt’s recent work charts the publications on the Jewish race-question published by self-identified Jewish scientists from 1900 to 1933. See Veronika Lipphardt, “Biowissenschaftler mit jüdischem Hintergrund und die Biologie der Juden: Debatten, Identitäten, Institutionen (1900-1935),” PhD, Humboldt Universität, 2006.

meant that Jews were no longer immediately identifiable through sight (dress, hair-style) or sound (language, accent). Thus, there was an increased effort (by both Jews and non-Jews) to catalogue the characteristics of the Jew by which he could be recognized.⁴⁴

Moreover, with the increased secularization of Western European societies, non-religious intellectuals looked beyond the ecclesiastical courts to understand their place in the world.⁴⁵ By the end of the nineteenth century, the language of biology gave new substance to what were previously regarded as religious and “spiritual” distinctions.⁴⁶

In developing psychoanalysis, Freud developed a secular language for discussing matters which had previously been the province of religious discourse, including the question of whether Jews were defined by “religion” or by some other mechanism altogether. Soon after returning from his trip to America in 1909, Freud acquired and read at least part of a book entitled *Das Rassenproblem unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der theoretischen Grundlagen der jüdischen Rassenfrage* [*The Significance of the Racial Factor as a Basis in Cultural Development*], by the Jewish race scientist, Ignaz Zollschan.⁴⁷ While much of the book is a defense of the Jewish people—their cultural and

⁴⁴ As I discuss in the Introduction, Žižek argues that modern (racial) anti-semitism emerged “when the Jews were deprived of their specific properties which made it easy to distinguish them from the rest of the population... that their ‘curse’ was inscribed into their very being.” I am not sure that I entirely agree: it seems to me that their “curse” was re-invented as something which *had* to be inscribed into their very being, for there was no other “location” where it could be grasped, viewed or apprehended. Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 289-290.

⁴⁵ This is also relevant to the founding of psychoanalysis as a body of thought which seeks to explain the inexplicable through scientific (rather than religious) methodologies and terminologies. I discuss this in more detail in the following chapter. See also Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1.

⁴⁶ As I discuss in the preceding chapter, the Catholic Church continued to maintain that the Jews were “spiritually” different rather than “racially” distinct. Nonetheless, even as they attempted to distinguish between these terms, their discussion of “spiritual” difference suggested that Jews could not escape the spiritual history (i.e. their rejection of Christ etc.) that they had *inherited*. See Wilhelm Schmidt, “Das Rassenprinzip des Nationalsozialismus.” *Schönere Zukunft* 7 (1931-32).

⁴⁷ Sander Gilman notes that this book was “well-known” to Freud. Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender*, 108. I asked Gilman how he knew that Freud read the book, and he responded with the following: “the volume

economic worth—it is also a meditation on the definition of the Jewish people: “Is there a homogeneous Jewish Race and has it always been marked by the same particular characteristics—historically and for all eternity?”⁴⁸ For Zollschan, as for many of his contemporaries, the existence of a “Jewish race” was a separate question from whether it was and had always been defined by the same fixed characteristics. In the fourth chapter, “The Subject of Heredity as it is Important for the Racial Problem [*Die für das Rassenproblem wichtigen Gebiete der Vererbungslehre*]” Zollschan presented two opposing approaches to this question: “Regarding character-types in the organic world, the Weismannian school asserts *fixity*, while their opponents assert that there is *malleability*.”⁴⁹ In the remainder of the chapter, Zollschan critiques Weismannian heredity for its support of the idea that racial types are fixed, while he supports the Lamarckian idea that the Jewish “character” was at least in part the result of generations of inequity. Like many of his contemporaries, Zollschan used circumcision as his evidence. “It proves nothing that amputated arms and legs and mutilations like circumcision are, for the most part, not inherited, for in the idea of the species, the concepts are too base and palpable to expect their realization in the children.”⁵⁰ In other words, the non-inheritance of circumcision did not prove that Lamarckism was dead or that the Jewish race was a fixed entity. While circumcision might be a non-heritable

shows that it has been read throughout. It is my interpretation that Freud actually looked through it.” Personal communication, May 18, 2005. When I revise the dissertation for book publication, I plan on visiting Freud’s Library in London to examine the various books on race and the Jewish Question in order to examine Freud’s annotations (or lack thereof).

⁴⁸ [*Gibt es eine in sich homogene jüdische Rasse und hat dieselbe bestimmte Eigenschaften, die ihr ihren geschichtlichen Weg für alle Ewigkeit vorbestimmen?*] Ignaz Zollschan, *Das Rassenproblem unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der theoretischen Grundlagen der jüdischen Rassenfrage* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1911), 1. All translations of Zollschan are my own.

⁴⁹ [*Die Schule Weismanns behauptet die Starrheit, ihre Gegner die Modifikabilität sämtlicher Gattungscharaktere in der ganzen organischen Welt.*] *Ibid.*, 222.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 238.

acquired characteristic, *other* particularly Jewish characteristics (the impalpable ones) could still be understood as cultural acquisitions, malleable aspects of the Jewish racial character.⁵¹

E. Circumcision: The Unconscious Root of the Problem

Even before reading Zollschan's book, Freud confronted the question of circumcision and ventured his first hypothesis about the origins of anti-semitism. In his "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy" (1909) published soon after his return from America, Freud presented his first analysis of a young child which allowed him to confirm many of his theories about infantile sexuality. This case also contained his first extensive discussion of castration anxiety, as well as his first published reference to circumcision. In a remarkable footnote which has since become the basis of many psychoanalytic discussions of anti-semitism (and to which I will return at the end of the chapter),⁵² Freud notes that the "castration complex is the deepest unconscious root of anti-semitism; for even in the nursery little boys hear that a Jew has something cut off his

⁵¹ In the final weeks of writing the dissertation, Paul Weindling generously sent me his forthcoming work in which he contextualizes Zollschan as an example of a race scientist opposed Nazi racism and anti-semitism. Interestingly, Zollschan befriended Franz Boas and attempted to organize various international coalitions, including a petition—signed by Freud amongst other intellectuals—to oppose Nazi racial science. While I have not yet been able to view this petition, it seems clear that Freud's signature proves that he was well aware of the politics of scientific theories of race in the 1920s and 30s. The 1936 petition, entitled "Initiativcomité zur Veranstaltung einer Welt-Enquete über die Rassenfrage, An die Vertreter der Wissenschaft!," has never been published. Paul Weindling, "Central Europe Confronts German Racial Hygiene: Friedrich Hertz, Hugo Iltis, and Ignaz Zollschan as Critics of German Racial Hygiene," *Blood and Homeland: Eugenics in Central Europe, 1900-1940*, eds. Marius Turda and Paul Weindling (Budapest: Central University Press, 2006); "The Evolution of Jewish Identity: Ignaz Zollschan between Jewish and Aryan Race Theories, 1910-1945," *Jewish Tradition and the Challenge of Darwinism*, eds. Geoffrey Cantor and Marc Swetlitz (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006).

⁵² Jay Geller, "The Godfather of Psychoanalysis: Circumcision, Antisemitism, Homosexuality, and Freud's 'Fighting Jew'." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67.2 (1999).

penis—a piece of his penis, they think—and this gives them the right to despise Jews.”⁵³

Freud avoids mentioning two seemingly important pieces of information. First, Little Hans did not simply “hear” that Jews are circumcised, he was himself Jewish—though it is actually a matter of some debate whether he was circumcised.⁵⁴ Second, while Freud notes that Little Hans’ fears of castration can explain the origins of anti-semitism, he avoids the question of the origins of circumcision. That is, if anti-semitism derives from a horror of the Jew’s foreskinless penis, from what does the practice of Jewish circumcision derive?

In the case history of “Little Hans,” Freud suggests that castration is analogous to circumcision (though he does not mention the word), but just a couple of years later, he would push this analogy even further. In *Totem and Taboo* (1913), he extensively explored the questions of origins: What were the origins of religion, neurosis and obsession? What were the origins of “taboo”? Why, generation after generation, do sons feel that their sexuality is threatened by their father? While he spends much of the book exploring the origins of modern religious rituals and their relationship to the father-son relationship, he notably evades the question of the origins of circumcision (as well as Jewish rituals more generally). Drawing on Darwin’s theory of the primal horde and on his observations of Little Hans’ relationships with animals, Freud proposes that in primaeval times, a band of brothers rebelled and killed the primal father. As a result, the sons felt ambivalence, both guilty and happy that they had succeeded with their deed, and

⁵³ Sigmund Freud, “Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy (‘Little Hans’),” *S.E.*, vol. X (1909), 36n.

⁵⁴ Geller, “The Godfather of Psychoanalysis.” In his recent presentation and his forthcoming book, Geller revises his earlier argument about Little Hans, and considers the possibility that he was not circumcised. Jay Geller, “Little Hans: A Footnote in the History of Circumcision,” Paper presented at *Freud’s Foreskin: A Sesquicentennial Celebration of the Most Suggestive Circumcision in History*, New York Public Library, May 10, 2006.

they attempted to “replace” their father with animals and gods as surrogates. Towards the end of the fourth essay, Freud explains that various ancient myths demonstrated that when the sons attempted to take the father’s place, their lives were always cut short. In a footnote to a brief mention of Attis who “perished by castration,” Freud notes that “When our children come to hear of ritual circumcision, they equate it with castration.”⁵⁵ In the body of the text, Freud discusses the *prymaevial* family and mythic representations, but in the footnote he moves to a discussion of what contemporary children understand about circumcision.

It is particularly significant that in both the case of “Little Hans” and in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud notes that “little boys *hear*” about circumcision. Though there is ample evidence that Freud was himself circumcised, he discusses circumcision as if it is something which boys “hear” about—like a nasty rumor—rather than as something which they experience, see or recall. While Freud’s avoidance of the particularly *Jewish* character of circumcision could be interpreted as one of the signs of uneasiness regarding his own Jewish mark, it more interestingly anticipates the puzzling definition of the Jewish people which Freud later develops. Indeed, it is clear that most Jewish men do not (consciously) remember the (cultural) experience of their own circumcisions, so when they “hear” about the event, they may feel as if it is something “racial” which they have “inherited” rather than something which they individually experienced. In other words, like Jewishness more generally, circumcision may itself be felt as an “inherited memory.” I return to this conundrum at the end of this chapter.

⁵⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, *S.E.*, vol. XIII (1913), 153, n153.

F. Freud's Lamarckian Weismannism

While the idea of inherited memory is usually associated with Lamarckism, there is far more evidence to suggest that Freud was more interested in and aware of *Weismann's* theories rather than Lamarck's. Indeed, when Freud sent a description of the fourth essay of *Totem and Taboo* to Ernest Jones in 1912, Jones noticed that there was something new in the "important and far-reaching idea" that repression [*Verdrängung*] was an inheritance, a "result of earlier racial experiences." Jones hoped that this new idea could "stand in harmony" with "the Weismann principle of the non-transmissibility of acquired characters." In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud had not referred to either Weismann or Lamarck; nor had he used the word "racial experiences," but Jones' comment may have led Freud farther down the path of exploring the relationships between the "acquired characters" and "racial experiences."

By the time Freud published *Totem and Taboo* (1913), he had begun to incorporate the idea that individuals needed to contend with the effects not only of their own experiences, but also of their ancestors' experiences. Individuals seemed to be reacting to memories of events which they did not themselves experience: threats of castration, primal scenes, omnipotent fathers and sexy mothers. In his essay on the "Dynamics of the Transference Neuroses" (1912), Freud explains that these repeated behaviors can be understood as "stereotype plates" which are "constantly repeated—constantly reprinted afresh—in the course of a person's life." While he notes that these repeated behaviors are "certainly not entirely unsusceptible to change in the face of recent experiences," he begins to recognize that the individual is confronted with certain

inexorable conflicts. As if doubting whether these “stereotype plates” are at all malleable, Freud adds a long footnote in which he reconsiders his earlier insistence on the separation of the hereditary and experiential determinants of mental illness. With a blustery tone of over-protestation, he notes, “we refuse to posit any contrast in principle between the two sets of aetiological factors... one might venture to regard constitution itself as a precipitate from the accidental effects produced on the endlessly *long chain of our ancestors*.”⁵⁶ An irreconcilable tension emerges: the individual must contend not only with the effects of her own childhood, but also with the effects of being a link in an “endlessly long chain of our ancestors.” While Freud hoped that psychoanalysis might alleviate his patients’ symptoms, he began to recognize that there might be certain conflicts which are inexorable. The patients’ symptoms might be improved, but she would still have to contend with that “endlessly long chain of [her] ancestors,” a chain which could not so easily be broken or modified.

In his 1914 essay “On Narcissism,”⁵⁷ Freud returned to Weismann as he continued to explore the dynamics of the transference neuroses and the seemingly endless repetition of the past in the present. Freud notes that the individual carries “on a twofold existence: one to serve his own purposes and the other as a *link in a chain [als Glied in einer Kette]*.” In this passage (as in the passage in “Dynamics of Transference”), Freud

⁵⁶ Sigmund Freud, “The Dynamics of Transference,” *S.E.*, vol. XII (1912), 99, n92.

⁵⁷ Written simultaneously with his essay “On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement” and his case history of the “Wolf-Man,” this essay was Freud’s explicit defense of the libido theory from the criticisms of Jung. (Not insignificantly, Freud wrote these two essays immediately after completing his essay on “The Moses of Michaelangelo” which has been interpreted as a veiled self-portrait and as a direct anticipation of *Moses and Monotheism*.) On the circumstances leading to the composition of this essay and the surprising effects it had, see Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (New York: Basic Books, 1953-1957), II: 302-306. See also Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, *Michelangelos Moses und Freuds 'Wagstück': Eine Collage* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 2004).

quietly—perhaps even unconsciously—seems to allude to the Chain of Tradition [in German, *Traditionskette*] which is colloquially used to refer to the genealogical chain of Jewishness. Each Jew is a link in this Chain of Tradition, which stretches all the way back to Abraham. In Jewish literary history, the “Chain of Tradition” refers to the unbroken sequence of transmission of an acquired property: “Moses received Torah from Sinai and delivered it to Joshua, and Joshua to the Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets delivered it to the Men of the Great Synagogue.”⁵⁸ In the essay “On Narcissism,” Freud goes on to explain that each individual serves this chain “against his will, or at least involuntarily... He is the mortal vehicle of a (possibly) immortal [*unsterbliche*] substance—like the inheritor of an entailed property, who is only the temporary holder of an estate which survives him.”⁵⁹ It is not clear to what Freud is referring when he explains that every individual is a “mortal vehicle of an immortal substance”—is the “immortal” substance some sort of “human” disposition? Is it civilization as a whole, or is it a specific culture, religion or genealogical chain? Moreover, if each individual is a temporary carrier of some sort of “immortal substance” how did the individual *acquire* this material? How did this “stuff” become permanent property of the individual?⁶⁰

⁵⁸ These are the opening lines of the Mishnaic tractate *Avot*. Quoted in Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 29, 31. Yerushalmi explains that the “Chain of Tradition” is also the name that was used to describe a body of rabbinic literature of the Middle Ages which “surveyed chronologically the transmission of rabbinic law and doctrine by recording the sequence of luminaries who were its bearers through the ages. The purpose was to establish and demonstrate an unbroken succession of teaching and authority from the Bible, through the Talmud, and often up to the time of the author himself.”

⁵⁹ Sigmund Freud, “On Narcissism: An Introduction,” *S.E.*, vol. XIV (1914), 78.

⁶⁰ There is very little scholarship on Freud’s use of Weismann’s theories. However, one exception is Marcia Ian who compares Freud’s and Lacan’s use of Weismann’s germ-plasm theory and argues that “where Freud sees the species [or race] as parasitic upon the individual, Lacan sees the individual as dead vermin hiding in the entrails of species, the undead.” Marcia Ian, “Freud, Lacan, and Imaginary Secularity.”

In an attempt to answer these questions, Freud began to explore the vicissitudes of phylogenetic memory, mentioning it often in his correspondence with his friend, Sandor Ferenczi, most particularly between 1914 and 1918.⁶¹ For example, in his case history of the “Wolf Man,”⁶² Freud notes that the boy’s fear of castration derived not only from his own experience but from the fact that “he had to fit into a phylogenetic pattern.” Though in the boy’s own experience in childhood, the *mother* had threatened him with castration (as punishment for masturbating), Freud explains that “in this respect heredity triumphed over accidental experience; in man’s prehistory it was unquestionably the father who practised castration as a punishment and who later softened it down into circumcision.”⁶³ Where Freud earlier had only mentioned circumcision in the footnotes to his larger discussions of the castration anxiety (“Little Hans”) and of the ambivalent relationships between fathers and sons (*Totem and Taboo*), now he moves the discussion into the body of the text. As he begins to extensively explore the effects of archaic memory, circumcision and its relationship to castration emerge as key elements in the

American Imago 54.2 (1997): 136. When I revise this chapter for book publication, I plan on extending Ian’s analysis in order to more extensively explore the relationship between the (anti-semitic) notion of the Jews as “parasitic” guests in the host nation and the (internal) conceptualization of the individual Jew as a link in the (Jewish) “chain of tradition.”

⁶¹ As I discuss in my previous chapter, these were the years in which Freud wrote his draft of “An Overview of the Transference Neuroses” and contemplated co-writing (with Ferenczi) a psychoanalytic work on Lamarck.

⁶² Though this case was not published until 1918, it was written in 1914-15. “At that time,” writes Freud, “I was still freshly under the impression of the twisted re-interpretations which C. G. Jung and Alfred Adler were endeavouring to give to the findings of psychoanalysis.” Sigmund Freud, “From a History of an Infantile Neurosis (Wolf-Man),” *S.E.*, vol. XVII (1918), 7, n1.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 86. In a number of instances, Freud finds way to replace the mother with the father. In my fifth chapter, I discuss his “ironic inversion” of the Jewish law of matrilineage. However, there is far more to be said about this turning away from the mother, and when I revise the dissertation, I plan on more extensively addressing this aspect of Freud’s theorization of circumcision and the genealogical transmission of Jewishness. Jonte-Pace suggests that the association of “immortality” with the figure of the uncanny mother is a counter-thesis running throughout Freud’s oeuvre. See Diane Jonte-Pace, *Speaking the Unspeakable: Religion, Misogyny, and the Uncanny Mother in Freud's Cultural Texts* (University of California Press, 2001), 45ff.

“phylogenetic pattern” which suggest a cooperative (rather than oppositional) relationship between heredity and experience.

The following year, in July 1915, Freud sent Ferenczi a draft of his “Phylogenetic Fantasy” which he provisionally entitled “Overview of the Transference Neuroses.” Drawing together his meditations on both transference neuroses and the narcissistic neuroses, Freud tries to solve the question of how these patterns become permanently imprinted and are incessantly repeated, not only within an individual’s lifespan, but from one generation to the next. In this essay, Freud reconstructs the story of the primal murder which he had first explored in *Totem and Taboo*, but he adds far more details, particularly about what caused the father-son relationships to change. According to Freud, in response to particular climactic changes which threatened the survival of the human hordes, the primal father not only *threatened* the sons with castration, but he actually robbed “them of their manhood.” After millennia, the effects of these events were fixed as “dispositions” to these two types of neuroses. Since neurosis was acquired in response to changes in the environment, Freud explains that “it is therefore a *cultural* acquisition.”⁶⁴ Here the slippage of his terms suggests a larger slippage between the terms of “culture” and “race”: neurosis begins as a cultural acquisition, but as its effects and patterns become imprinted, they become seemingly permanent attributes of the genealogical chain. Thus, the inheritance of acquired characteristics is a way of understanding the ways in which “culture” becomes “race,” the ways in which seemingly

⁶⁴ Sigmund Freud, “Overview of the Transference Neuroses,” trans. Axel and Peter T. Hoffer, *A Phylogenetic Fantasy: Overview of the Transference Neuroses*, ed. Ilse Grubrich-Simitis (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 19.

fleeting impressions become undying [*unsterbliche*] characteristics of ourselves and of the societies in which we live.

As Ferenczi pointed out in a letter to Freud, there was one major problem with Freud's logic: if the sons were robbed of their manhood (through castration), they would have no way of hereditarily transmitting these dispositions. "The castrated ones cannot have reproduced and fixated their condition phylogenetically," notes Ferenczi, "therefore you must surely mean the fixation of castration *anxiety*."⁶⁵ In other words, Freud could solve the problem of phylogenetic inheritance by moving from actual *physical* castration to its psychological effects. Even so, notes Ferenczi, if the castration anxiety derived from a real castration, it could not be hereditarily transmitted. In response, Freud added a concluding section to the "Draft" in which he acknowledged "the difficulty" of "how the brutal father... reproduced himself."⁶⁶ Noting that neurosis is obviously "acquired under conditions that exclude heredity,"⁶⁷ Freud presents a couple of solutions which he ultimately finds unconvincing: perhaps there was a younger son who is "not castrated himself, but knows the fate of his older brothers and fears it for himself." Or perhaps "there may remain a chain of others, who... can propagate the [vicissitudes of the male sex] as dispositions."⁶⁸ Finally, Freud acknowledges that he cannot quite make sense of "how the dispositions produced by the father's oppression spread to women."⁶⁹ The "Phylogenetic Fantasy" concludes not with a solution to any of these problems but with

⁶⁵ Ferenczi to Freud, July 24, 1915, Letter #556, Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi*, trans. Peter T. Hoffer, ed. André Haynal, vol. I-III (1993-2000), II:70.

⁶⁶ Freud, "Overview of the Transference Neuroses," 20.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶⁸ This would raise the interesting question as to whether the father is propagating (only) the castration anxiety or (also) the drive to perpetrate such traumas/anxieties.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

plans for future work. “There remains room for new acquisition and for influences with which we are not acquainted,” Freud writes. “In sum, we are not at the end, but rather at the beginning, of an understanding of this phylogenetic factor.”⁷⁰

Left unpublished until 1987, this draft of an “Overview of the Transference Neuroses” has often been presented as proof that Freud was a “Lamarckian,”⁷¹ though he did not actually mention Lamarck in any (extant) correspondence until after he had written this essay and sent it off to Ferenczi. As he writes, the “Phylogenetic Fantasy” was not an “end” of his explorations of the “phylogenetic factor,” but rather “the beginning,” and it was *after* he finished the draft that he turned to Lamarck’s works. Six months later, in a letter to Ferenczi on January 6, 1916, Freud speculates about the “conditions of artistic endowment”: “First the wealth of phylogenetically transferred material, as with the neurotic; second, a good remnant of the old technique of modifying oneself instead of the outside world (see Lamarck, etc.).”⁷² This is the first mention of Lamarck’s name in all of Freud’s published works, drafts and correspondence. (Of course, it is impossible to know what correspondence or notes have not yet been found or what the sealed archives may hold.) Over the next two years, Freud and Ferenczi feverishly corresponded about the possibility of co-writing a work about Lamarck and psychoanalysis. In December 1916, Freud ordered “the Lamarck” from the university

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ See, for example, Celia Brickman, *Aboriginal Populations in the Mind: Race and Primitivity in Psychoanalysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 77; Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, 30.

⁷² Freud to Ferenczi, January 6, 1916, Letter #589, Freud and Ferenczi, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi*, II:101.

library.⁷³ On January 1, 1917, he reported to Ferenczi that he was beginning to read Lamarck's *Zoological Philosophy* (1809) and he enclosed a "sketch of the Lamarck-work" (a manuscript which was apparently not preserved or not yet discovered).⁷⁴ By November of that year, he was apparently so caught up in the burgeoning work that in a letter to his friend Karl Abraham, he asked, "Have I really not told you anything about the Lamarck idea?" He continues:

The idea is to put Lamarck entirely on our ground and to show that the 'necessity' that according to him *creates and transforms organs* is nothing but the power of unconscious ideas over one's own body, of which we see remnants in hysteria, in short the 'omnipotence of thoughts'. Purpose and usefulness would then be explained psychoanalytically; it would be the completion of psychoanalysis. Two great principles of change or progress would emerge: one through (autoplastic) adaptation of one's own body, and a later (heteroplastic) one through transmuting the outer world.⁷⁵

Whereas in the "Phylogenetic Fantasy" Freud could not explain how the neuroses would have been transferred (since the sons had been castrated, effectively making hereditary transmission impossible), in his letter to Abraham, he explains that he has found the solution—according to Lamarck, it was actually possible for humans to "adapt" their own bodies—to regenerate lost limbs and create new organs! Indeed, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud notes that "the power of regenerating a lost organ by growing afresh a precisely similar one extends far up into the animal kingdom."⁷⁶ Thus, tails,

⁷³ Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, "Metapsychology and Metabiology," trans. Axel and Peter T. Hoffer, *A Phylogenetic Fantasy: Overview of the Transference Neuroses, by Sigmund Freud* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 93ff.

⁷⁴ Freud to Ferenczi, January 1, 1917, Letter #636, Freud and Ferenczi, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi*, II:169.

⁷⁵ Freud to Abraham, November 11, 1917, Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham, *A Psychoanalytic Dialogue: Letters of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham, 1907-1926*, trans. Bernard Marsh and Hilda C. Abraham, eds. Hilda C. Abraham and Ernst L. Freud (New York: Basic Books / Hogarth Press, 1965), 261-262.

⁷⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle, S.E.*, vol. XVIII (1920), 36.

testicles, fingers and foreskins might all be cut off, but with the “power of unconscious ideas” they might actually be restored!

Freud’s comments about the potential regeneration of organs seem not only outrageous, but also outside the purview of psychoanalysis. Even as psychoanalysis pursued the ways in which “unconscious ideas” could express themselves in bodily symptoms, ultimately it was more interested in the nature of the human *psyche* rather than physiological form. After a short-lived exploration of Lamarck’s works—he never did complete the “Lamarck-work”—Freud returned to Weismann’s germ-plasm theory in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and to the questions of how the “immortal property” became fixed. How did transitory physical changes in the external world and in the human body result in fixed psychological dispositions, or “stereotype plates” which were transmitted from one generation to the next? In an extension of his metapsychological “far-fetched speculation,” Freud notes that certain “excitations coming from the external world” enter consciousness, and can “leave permanent traces behind... which form the foundation of memory.”⁷⁷ However, only “traumatic” excitations “are powerful enough to break through the protective shield” such that they will *permanently* imprint the psyche and result in the instinctual “compulsion to repeat.”

While Freud uses “the phenomena of heredity and the facts of embryology”⁷⁸ to explain the “organic” nature of the “compulsion to repeat,” he rejects the most mechanical and teleological elements of these theories. Despite the widespread concern about the effects of “degeneration,” Freud notes that most evolutionary theorists assumed

⁷⁷ Ibid., 24.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 37.

that the instincts pushed “forward towards progress and the production of new forms.” Freud, however, insists that the instincts are essentially “conservative.”⁷⁹ In response to changes in the environment, he explains, the instincts “seek to reach an ancient goal by paths alike old and new” so that they can “restore an earlier state.”⁸⁰ While there is an “organic striving” which produces the “compulsion to repeat,” Freud notes that such “behaviour is only to a very slight degree attributable to mechanical causes, and the historical explanation cannot accordingly be neglected.”⁸¹ Over and over again, he insists that the instincts are “historically determined,”⁸² and that even “the phenomenon of organic development must be attributed to *external* disturbing and diverting influences.”⁸³ While various scientists and eugenicists argued that evolution—whether by Natural Selection or Lamarckian inheritance—progressively worked toward weeding out the lower elements of the organic world, Freud explicitly opposed this line of reasoning. “There is unquestionably no universal instinct towards higher development observable in the animal or plant world,” he writes. And even if there is some “higher development and involution” it can be explained as “the consequences of adaptation to the pressure of external forces.”⁸⁴

Ultimately, Freud was less interested in “higher development” than in the development of those “stereotype plates” or the compulsion to repeat *unpleasurable* behaviors and patterns. In reaction to “disturbing” changes in the environment, the organism struggles to preserve itself and to preserve the species—that is, it struggles with

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 36.

⁸¹ Ibid., 37.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., 38.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

two conflicting instincts: the self-preservative *life* instinct and the species-preservative *sexual* instinct. In order to further explore this tension, Freud returned to Weismann's germ-plasm theory which as he saw it, proposed

a division of living substance into mortal and immortal parts. The mortal part is the body in the narrower sense—the 'soma'—which alone is subject to natural death. The germ-cells, on the other hand, are potentially immortal [*unsterbliche*], in so far as they are able, under certain favourable conditions, to develop into a new individual, or, in other words, to surround themselves with a new soma. (Weismann, 1884)⁸⁵

As in the essay "On Narcissism," here Freud speculates about the relationship of the individual to something eminently grander and more permanent than the individual's bodily life—the "immortal" and "endlessly long chain" which he "involuntarily" serves. Yet it is still not clear what he means by this "immortal" property: is it the species, "*Kultur*" [civilization, culture], a specific culture or race, a phylogenetic memory permanently inscribed upon the human psyche or something else entirely? And what are the "favourable conditions" under which this material becomes "immortal"? How is this "immortal part" perpetuated? How does it "surround" itself with a new body without losing its permanent characteristics?

Though he had briefly considered that phylogenetic experience might be sustained through the "regeneration" of organs and bodily parts, Freud eventually recognized that—unlike the scientists from whose work he drew—he did not have to remain tethered to the bodily realm. From the beginning, he had been interested in the relationship *between* the physical and the psychical realms, and in "Instincts and their Vicissitudes" (1915) he theorized that the instinct was "a concept on the frontier between the mental

⁸⁵ Ibid., 45-46.

and the somatic.”⁸⁶ Ultimately, Freud moved away from his short-lived interest in morphological questions of regenerated organs and bodily parts and focused instead on their representations in the psychical realm. As he notes in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Weismann regarded “living substance morphologically” and focused on the description of external shapes and forms, including the transmission of modifications of external body-parts (particularly excised tails and circumcised penises). “We, on the other hand,” Freud notes, “deal[] not with the living substance but with the *forces* operating *in it*.”⁸⁷ Thus, he shifts the emphasis from castration to castration *anxiety*: the question is not how castration and circumcision had permanently shaped the bodily form, but rather how their effects had become permanently imprinted on the *psyche*, creating *forces* which were perpetuated from one generation to the next.

G. Freud’s Final Cut

In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud returned to the question which he had first mentioned in the case of “Little Hans”: why had anti-semitism persisted over so many generations? If the root of anti-semitism was circumcision, what was the root of circumcision? If the effects of circumcision were not heritable, what compelled people to continue to practice this rite from one generation to the next?

Throughout my dissertation, I argue that Freud proposed that Jewishness is the result of phylogenetic experiences which are biologically transmitted. While I refer to

⁸⁶ Freud developed his theory of the instincts around 1915, that is, in the same time period as his composition of the essay “On Narcissism,” the “Phylogenetic Fantasy” and his case of the “Wolf-Man.” Freud, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes,” 121.

⁸⁷ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 46.

this idea as a “racial” theory of Jewishness, the figure of circumcision complicates our understanding of “race.” Freud’s theory does not only pertain to the Jews, but rather to the questions which Jewishness poses for others. What Freud focuses on is not *only* the question of why (or how) the Jews have survived as a sort of “immortal [*unsterbliche*]” people, but why (and how) they elicit such undying [*unsterbliche*] hatred?⁸⁸ Why do Jews continue to circumcise their sons, particularly if circumcision is the “deepest root” of anti-semitism, and as such may jeopardize their chances for survival? What is the relationship between the immortality [*Unsterblichkeit*] of this hatred and of the uncanny survival of the Jewish people?⁸⁹

In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud returned to the questions raised by Weismann’s theory of the immortal germ-plasm. After insisting that he could not do “without this factor in biological evolution,”⁹⁰ he acknowledges that he is still left with two important questions, both of which (I think) implicitly refer to circumcision and to the questions which have shaped this chapter. First, he asks, “under what conditions does a memory of this kind enter the archaic heritage? Secondly, in what circumstances can [the memory] become active—that is, can it advance to consciousness from its unconscious state in the id, even though in an altered and distorted shape?”⁹¹ The answer to the first question, Freud writes, is that “the memory enters the archaic heritage if the event was important

⁸⁸ As I have noted earlier, Freud began *Moses* with the question as to how “the Jews have come to be what they are and why they have attracted this *undying* [*unsterbliche*] hatred.” September 30, 1934. Freud and Zweig, *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig*, 91.

⁸⁹ Susan Shapiro explores the image of the “Uncanny Jew” (related and sometimes equivalent to the Eternal or Wandering Jew) and its illumination of the deep relationship between the longevity of anti-semitism and of the Jewish people. See Susan Shapiro, “The Uncanny Jew: A Brief History of an Image.” *Judaism* 46.1 (1997).

⁹⁰ Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, S.E., vol. XXIII (1939), 101.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

enough, or repeated often enough, or both.” In answer to the second question, he writes, “What is certainly of decisive importance, is the awakening of the forgotten memory-trace by a recent real repetition of the event.” I want to suggest that circumcision is the missing link in Freud’s “chain” of Jewish tradition: it fulfills the conditions that make a memory enter the archaic heritage in that it is both important and repeated in each generation, leaving such deep impressions that its effects might be felt for generations to come, regardless of whether these generations are themselves circumcised. And yet, even with the transmission of these effects, there must be something to “awaken” the memory, to remind the person that he is Jewish. Because circumcision is repeated in every generation, it could be said to “awaken” the phylogenetic past. If Jewish tradition is hereditarily transmitted, it is circumcision which “confers and confirms” this inheritance.

And yet, I am not entirely satisfied with these answers to Freud’s questions. If Jewishness is an “inherited tradition”—one which is transmitted beyond direct communication—it is not clear how the young Jew comes to know that he is Jewish. It’s also not clear how a Jewish boy comes to know that he was circumcised since he does not remember life before the bris or the bris itself.⁹² We are thus left with the question of how

⁹² The notion that one’s own *bris* is not fully remembered (as a narrative of events) is not contradicted by the idea that neo-natal traumas—or even the trauma of birth—can have a lasting effect on the adult. Even as anti-circumcision activists make this argument, they usually do not claim that a boy can actually recall the sequence of events, the cutting itself. It is significant, however, that the “birth-trauma” was an idea developed by Freud’s disciple, Otto Rank. Freud saw Rank’s book on *The Trauma of Birth* (1923) as a rejection of the central psychoanalytic “truth,” for it seemed to propose that there was a complex *prior* to the Oedipal complex. Nonetheless, in *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud drew extensively from Rank’s work on *The Birth of a Hero* (1909), in order to support his argument that the Bible had distorted the true (Egyptian) origins of Moses. A more extensive discussion of Rank’s work and its relationship to Freud’s theory of Jewishness could be incorporated into my discussion when I revise it for book publication. Key sources include: Otto Rank, “The Essence of Judaism,” *Jewish Origins of the Psycho-analytic Movement*, ed. Dennis B. Klein, 1985 ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1905); *The Trauma of Birth* (New York: Dover, 1993); *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero: A Psychological Exploration of Myth*, trans. Gregory Richter and E. James Liberman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Peter L.

the young boy realizes that his penis looked different when he was born. How does he come to know that a piece of his penis had been cut off? It seems fairly reasonable to assume that the circumcised boy does not *automatically* know that a part of his penis has been cut off; like the non-circumcised boys in the nursery, at some point, the Jewish boy must *also* “hear that a Jew has something cut off his penis.” In his 1910 case history of Little Hans, Freud explains that this realization “gives them a right to despise Jews,” for the circumcision seems to remind the little boys of the apparently very real possibility that their penises could be entirely cut off.⁹³ Thus, Freud suggests that such negative feelings about circumcision would equally apply to Jews, and could partially explain the feelings of “self-hatred” which Gilman has so extensively documented.⁹⁴ Most scholars (Gilman, Geller and to a lesser extent Boyarin) have read the odd footnote in the case of “Little Hans” as Freud’s attempt to occlude Jewish identity—both his own and his patient’s.⁹⁵ Indeed, common sense would suggest that only gentile non-circumcised boys would need to hear about the Jew’s circumcision whereas little Jewish circumcised boys

Rudnytsky, *Reading Psycho-Analysis: Freud, Rank, Ferenczi, Groddeck* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

⁹³ Freud, “Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy (‘Little Hans’),” 36, n31.

⁹⁴ Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

⁹⁵ Since Freud’s note about circumcision and castration appears in the midst of his discussion of Little Hans’ realization of gender difference, it clearly aligns male circumcised Jews with penis-less women (or castrated men), and anti-semitism with misogyny. In their analyses of this passage, Geller, Gilman and Boyarin focus on Freud’s displacement of his feelings about Jewish difference (self-hatred) onto his feelings about gender difference (misogyny). However, I have not seen any mention of the idea that like the Jewish boys who must “hear” about their own circumcision, girls must also “hear” (or at some point realize) that they are different from little boys. The point is that neither girls nor Jewish boys always already *know* about their differences. See Daniel Boyarin, “What Does a Jew Want? or, The Political Meaning of the Phallus,” *The Psychoanalysis of Race*, ed. Christopher Lane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Jay Geller, “A Paleontological View of Freud’s Study of Religion: Unearthing the *Leitfossil* Circumcision.” *Modern Judaism* 13 (1993); Geller, “The Godfather of Psychoanalysis.”; Sander L. Gilman, *The Jew’s Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender*.

would already know about it (since all they have to do is look down).⁹⁶ However, this interpretation overlooks the most curious aspect of Jewish circumcision, the fact that the Jewish boys do not necessarily “always already” know about his difference—his difference from others, and his difference from his (uncircumcised seven-day-old) self.

This reading of Freud’s footnote can be compared to Frantz Fanon’s memory of his initial recognition of racial difference which he describes in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967). Though Fanon does not explicitly refer to the case of Little Hans, he draws from psychoanalytic theory in his theorization of racialization and its effects on the subject. Fanon recounts hearing a child say to her mother, “Look, a Negro!”⁹⁷ Though the term “Negro” begins as an “external stimulus that flicked over me as I passed by,” it impresses itself upon his bodily ego. Fanon is forced to recognize that the child is speaking about *him*, and that through this “epidermalization” he was “responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors.”⁹⁸ Interestingly, Fanon evokes the terms of circumcision, but one which has gone terribly wrong: “What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood?”⁹⁹ The term “Negro” impresses itself *upon* the body even as it intrudes *into* the body; it is translated from signifier to signified, an inert physical feature to which meanings are assigned and internalized. While Fanon notes that the “anti-semite is

⁹⁶ This analysis of the famous footnote radically diverges from the analyses by Gilman, Geller and Boyarin who interpret the little boys in Freud’s nursery as *gentile* (uncircumcised) boys rather than Jewish (circumcised) boys. As such, they read Freud’s non-mention of Little Hans’ and Weininger’s Jewishness as an obvious case of disavowal.

⁹⁷ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 111.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* Homi Bhabha refers to this description as one of Fanon’s “primal scenes.” Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 108.

inevitably anti-negro,”¹⁰⁰ there are obvious differences between Jewish and “Negro” racialization. As Fanon notes (in a comment which has ironically been interpreted as anti-semitic) “the Jew can be unknown in his Jewishness. He is not wholly what he is... he can go unnoticed.”¹⁰¹

Fanon’s comments about the difference between Jewish and Negro racialization seem to get at the paradoxes at the heart racial definitions which I have been exploring through the figure of circumcision. While individuals have attempted to portray the Jew as physically different, his mark of difference is usually clothed and in some historical circumstances, the “mark” is not actually different. Just as the Negro surrounded by other Negroes does not recognize any problem, the Jewish boy surrounded by other circumcised boys (as in twentieth-century America or as in Muslim countries) may not know that his “mark” has anything to do with his Jewishness. More interestingly, perhaps, is the fact that in Freud’s Vienna, and in his own family, many boys were still regarded as Jewish—even physically so—without this mark of difference. Since Freud did not circumcise his own sons, we can assume that such boys might “hear” that the Jew has something cut off his penis without immediately understanding the significance. Thus, he may be left with unanswerable questions: would this mean that (as a Jew) he, too, would eventually have something cut off his penis? Or would it mean that since the Jew has something cut off his penis, he was not actually a Jew? Such questions would understandably “intrude” into the calm of a child’s psyche, compelling him to ask

¹⁰⁰ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 122.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 115.

questions about his own sexual and racial identity which were previously perceived as self-evident matters.

In all his works before *Moses and Monotheism*, there is a sense that Freud was himself a bit horrified by circumcision. His comparisons of circumcision to castration and his exploration of the “compulsion to repeat” have given ample fodder to anti-circumcision activists who are happy to have Freud on their side.¹⁰² While I would not go so far as to say that Freud would have joined the fight to abolish circumcision, for most of his life he showed no evidence of supporting the continued performance of the rite.¹⁰³ Moreover, he was mildly critical of the odd logic that was driving Anglo-Americans to practice circumcision regardless of their religious affiliation: namely, the idea that circumcision reduced boys’ desires to masturbate.¹⁰⁴ However, in his final book, Freud greatly expanded upon his earlier discussions of circumcision, such that a very different understanding of the messy relationship between psychoanalysis, circumcision, anti-semitism and Jewishness emerged.

If “the castration complex is the deepest unconscious root of anti-semitism,”¹⁰⁵ Freud suggests that circumcision is the deepest root of Jewishness, something which cannot be pulled out, cut off or erased (to mix three of Freud’s more persistent metaphors). In *Moses and Monotheism*, he explains that circumcision is a “fossil”

¹⁰² Eric Kline Silverman, “Psychoanalyzing Phallacies: Freud and Current Circumcision Controversies,” Paper presented at *Freud’s Foreskin: A Sesquicentennial Celebration of the Most Suggestive Circumcision in History*, New York Public Library, May 10, 2006. Eric Kline Silverman, *From Abraham to America: A History of Jewish Circumcision* (Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield, Inc., 2006), final two chapters.

¹⁰³ For instance, there is no official record of Freud’s sons’ circumcisions (though it is unlikely that we will ever definitively know whether they were circumcised by a doctor or mohel outside the official Viennese Jewish community).

¹⁰⁴ Sigmund Freud, “New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis,” *S.E.*, vol. XXII (1933), 87.

¹⁰⁵ Freud, “Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy (‘Little Hans’),” 36, n31.

attesting to the survival of the Jewish chain of tradition.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, it is *the* symbol of the Jews' sacred consecration, the sign of what he calls their "supreme" intellectual-spirituality [*Geistigkeit*].¹⁰⁷ As in his earlier works, Freud suggests that circumcision may make "a disagreeable, uncanny impression," because it recalls "the dreaded castration and along with it a portion of the primaeval past which is gladly forgotten."¹⁰⁸ And yet, as any good Freudian knows, there is nothing under the sun—or in our pasts—that can so simply be "forgotten." Even when Mosaic monotheism seemed to have been forgotten, its traces remained, albeit in a repressed and distorted form. Thus, while the people rejected the strict ideals of Mosaic monotheism, Freud explains, they "would not renounce this *mark* of their holiness;" they retained "at least the external mark of the religion of Moses—circumcision."¹⁰⁹ Over and over again, Freud notes that by imposing the "custom" of circumcision, Moses made his people "holy."

Even more bizarre is the fact that circumcision serves as Freud's key "evidence" for his theory about the Egyptian origins of Mosaic monotheism. Since circumcision was a "generally popular custom in Egypt,"¹¹⁰ Freud explains, the Jews must have acquired this custom from Moses, an Egyptian who "was himself circumcised."¹¹¹ In order to make the Jews into a "superior substitute"¹¹² for the Egyptians whom he was leaving behind, Moses introduced the custom of circumcision. The logic here is nothing if not

¹⁰⁶ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 39.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 27. Strachey translates this phrase, "*allgemeine Volkssitte in Ägypten geübt wurde*" as "universal popular custom," but "general folk-custom" would be a more accurate translation. Katherine Jones translates it as "general custom." I thank Jay Geller for pointing out the subtleties of this phrase.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

confusing and surprising, for Freud suggests that the mark of Jewish difference was in fact, originally a universal condition of the people amongst whom the Jews lived. In other words, this paradigmatic mark of Jewish difference is in fact a *residue* of sameness. Indeed, Freud seems to suggest that when the Jews began to practice circumcision, it was (perhaps) their first attempt to fit in with the people amongst whom they lived; circumcision thus recalls the unfulfillable desire to assimilate, to be like everyone else. It was only once the Jewish people left Egypt that circumcision became a sign of Jewish difference.¹¹³ From that time on, Freud explains, they were “isolated” by this “sign,” which kept them “apart from the foreign peoples among whom their wanderings would lead them, just as the Egyptians themselves had kept apart from all foreigners.”¹¹⁴ Thus, while circumcision began as a folk-custom of the Egyptians, it became the “visible mark” of the Jews’ “consecration,” which proved their particular *Geistigkeit* and their “submission” to a burden of memory.

It is not entirely clear how *Geistigkeit*—the incorporeal quality of the Jews’ intellectual-spirituality—could be represented by *any* sort of physical mark, let alone the mark of circumcision. As Freud acknowledges, it is also not clear why “an advance in intellectuality [or *Geistigkeit*]” and a rejection of so-called “sensuality” should be valued as something “sacred [or *heilig*]” and thereby “raise the self-regard both of an individual

¹¹³ Though Freud acknowledged that circumcision was becoming a general neo-natal practice in the United States (amongst both Jews and non-Jews), he does not make any reference to the fact that in many parts of the world (but perhaps, most significantly Africa and the Middle East), Jews are not the only ones who practice circumcision. Indeed, one of the big gaps in his discussions of circumcision and anti-semitism is any mention of the fact that anti-semitism also exists amongst people who practice circumcision. On the Muslim practice of circumcision (which can occur anytime between when the boy is seven days old to when he is thirteen years old), see Leonard B. Glick, *Marked in Your Flesh: Circumcision from Ancient Judea to Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 283-284.

¹¹⁴ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 30.

and of a people.”¹¹⁵ Freud addresses these conundrums by exploring the nature and etymology of “sacredness [or *Heiligkeit*].” There is a certain “incomprehensible ambivalence,” he writes, which is associated with “words which express the concept of sacredness [*Heiligkeit*]... for the Latin ‘*sacer*’ means not only ‘sacred’ [*heilig*], [and] ‘consecrated’ [*geweiht*], but also something that we can only translate as ‘infamous’ [*verrucht*, wicked], [or] ‘detestable’ [*verabscheuenswert*].”¹¹⁶ Thus, in submitting to a God which is unrepresentable—“untouchable” and unnameable—the Jews became supremely sacred, and the “visible mark” of their sacred-holiness is none other than circumcision. Though circumcision is the “symbolic substitute” for castration, it is “evidence” of the people’s submission and it has persisted as both evidence and insurance of Jewish survival.

Freud suggests that the problem of anti-semitism and philosemitism—or the parallel phenomena of self-hatred and ethnic pride—ultimately originate from the same source. As he explains, “Those who do not practise [circumcision] look on it as very strange and are a little horrified by it, but those who have adopted circumcision are proud of it. They feel exalted by it, ennobled, as it were, and look down with contempt on others, whom they regard as unclean.”¹¹⁷ Here Freud zeroes in on a more general paradox: people often feel most strongly about customs and characteristics over which they have no control. In other words, you can pick your friends and you can pick your clothes, but generally, you can’t pick your mother or your mother-tongue, and you also can’t choose whether you were circumcised as an infant. Anti-semitism is not so much “a

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 116. I discuss the concept of *Geistigkeit* more extensively in my fifth chapter.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 121.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 29.

disease of the uncircumcised” as Gilman suggests,¹¹⁸ but a curious expression of the conflicts and differences which precede our entrance into a world of memory. Indeed, as Stephen Connor has provocatively suggested, anti- and philo-semitism are not so much opposites, but part of a single phenomenon of identifying oneself as distinct from Others.¹¹⁹

One of the glaring omissions in Freud’s discussions of circumcision is any mention of the fact that, unlike many other peoples who practice circumcision, the Jewish people circumcise their sons when they are just eight days old. At this age, the boy can neither make any decisions for himself, nor prove his dedication to the group. In other cultures, such as the Ndembu in Africa, where the males are circumcised at the age of puberty,¹²⁰ circumcision functions as an obvious symbol of fertility and of the lineage which the boy will soon produce. In the Hebrew Bible, Abraham is commanded to circumcise himself and all his sons as a way to seal God’s promise of fertility. However, after Abraham, Jewish males are supposed to be circumcised long before they are fertile—the birth of the boy is proof of the father’s fertility. The circumcision “confirms and confers” that the genealogical “chain of tradition” has not been broken. The fact that a boy is circumcised at a time of his life which (almost certainly) will not be remembered—at least not consciously—means that the mark itself may be perceived as something with which he was born. In this respect then, circumcision may be experienced as an inherited memory: as an archaic experience which marks a Jewish male for his

¹¹⁸ Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender*, 81.

¹¹⁹ Steven Connor, “Some of My Best Friends are Philosemites,” Paper presented at a panel marking the publication of *The Jew in the Text: Modernity and the Construction of Identity*, ed. Tamar Garb and Linda Nochlin, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, UK, 1995.

¹²⁰ Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 144ff.

entire life, minus the first eight days, whether he likes it or not (de-circumcision operations aside).¹²¹

Freud did not simply “forget” to mention that Jewish circumcision is performed soon after the boy’s birth, but his apparent “forgetting” of this fact is emblematic of the tensions which the rite elicits. Circumcision is an artificial inscription *upon* the body, but it suggests the seeds of a past which the Jewish boy inherits *inside* the body. As the scholar Howard Eilberg-Schwartz has noted, circumcision functions as *the* symbol of intergenerational continuity and fertility; “a rite which simultaneously confer[s] and confirm[s] one’s” patrilineal descent.¹²² And in Freud’s “theory of Jewishness,” circumcision functions as *the* paradigmatic paradox: “physical yet not physiological, genealogical but not genetic.”¹²³ So too, the “fact” that Jews are often defined as Jewish by their genealogy is also an artificial inscription, historically devised both by individuals who wrote Jewish literature and by individuals who wrote anti-Jewish treatises, from the first to the twentieth centuries of the Common Era. Circumcision does not *make* people Jewish, but it reminds certain men that they were “born” Jewish. While many people are regarded as Jewish simply because they were born to a Jewish parent, the performance of circumcision reminds us that this so-called “racial” definition of Jewishness is neither biological nor permanent (nor even God-given).¹²⁴

¹²¹ See Sander L. Gilman, “Decircumcision: The First Aesthetic Surgery.” *Modern Judaism* 17.3 (1997).

¹²² Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism*, 176.

¹²³ Lupton, “*Ethnos* and Circumcision in the Pauline Tradition: A Psychoanalytic Exegesis,” 194.

¹²⁴ The fact is, the idea of “race” was invented and it has been sustained and transformed by individuals living in historical time. I discuss this in more detail in my fifth chapter. See Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 348.

Like other racial markings such as skin, hair, eyes, body shape and so on, circumcision is not (usually) something which individuals choose for themselves. However, unlike other racial markings, Jewish parents can choose whether to transmit this particular mark of Jewishness to their children. Oddly enough, this aspect of circumcision is often overlooked in discussions of Jewish identity and its racialization. For example, in a number of discussions of *Daniel Deronda*, literary critics have joked that for three quarters of the 800-page book, Deronda must have avoided “looking down,” since if he had looked down he would have seen the evidence revealing his “true” identity.¹²⁵ While Eliot repeatedly alludes to the “indelible mark” of circumcision, she never explicitly names it. Moreover, when Deronda finds his birth-mother, it becomes evident that she attempted to *not* transmit the marks of difference to her son, even going so far as to arrange that he be brought up by someone other than herself, and notably, someone not like herself (i.e. not Jewish).¹²⁶ Nonetheless, Daniel’s mother fails to stop the transmission of a Jewish past. While circumcision can function as a physical and cultural reminder of racial identity, ultimately it is still a human intervention, a material marker of a forgotten past, a “time immemorial” which can not be re-covered except by further human inventions.

In Freud’s theory of Jewishness, circumcision is the humble response to the power of God the Father; as a “cultural” inscription, it intrudes into what is otherwise portrayed as a “natural” (though problematic) process of biological transmission. How Jewishness is “imposed” upon the female body is unclear and ultimately mysterious,

¹²⁵ Lennar Davis quoted in Geller, “Identifying ‘Someone Who Is Himself One of Them’: Recent Studies of Freud’s Jewish Identity,” 329.

¹²⁶ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995).

especially since (according to matrilineal law) it is supposedly *her* body which “carries” Jewishness to future generations.¹²⁷ In this chapter, I have shown how circumcision disturbs the distinctions between race and culture, and between the body and the psyche. While I have discussed Freud’s theory of Jewishness as a scientific theory hovering between the realms of culture and race, in the following chapter, I show that his theories hovered at the margins of scientific rationality. Thus, his interest in the biological transmission of Jewishness is re-contextualized as a larger interest in the mysteries of transmission which occur in a realm beyond sensory perception. In his meditations on the “uncanny,” Freud repeatedly suggests that circumcision is an “uncanny” reminder of castration; “everything is *unheimlich* that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light.”¹²⁸ As a physical trace of a process which is otherwise “secret and hidden,” circumcision enacts a transference which is both mystical and violent, both powerful and scary in its implications. In the following chapter, I pursue the “secret” inclinations of Freud’s theories: the occulted aspects of psychoanalysis, the dangerous fantasies of the psychoanalyst, and the uncontrollable transmissions from the past to the present and vice versa.

¹²⁷ See, however, Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Why Aren’t Jewish Women Circumcised?” *Gender & History* 9.3 (1997); Cohen, *Why Aren’t Jewish Women Circumcised: Gender and Covenant in Judaism*.

¹²⁸ Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny,” *S.E.*, vol. XVII (1919), 225.

Chapter 4

Secret Inclinations Beyond Direct Communication

A. Mysterious Heredity

As the previous chapters have argued, Freud's insistence on the inheritance of memory was not exceptional, either in the context of his earlier work or in the context of his contemporaries' thoughts on questions of heredity and evolution. It should come as no surprise, then, that Freud ultimately turns to the medium of heredity to explain the uncanny survival of the Jewish tradition, even though he first considers the possibility that it could have been transmitted through oral and written communication. After exploring these other media of transmission, he finally concludes that these forms of "direct communication" are insufficient to explain the persistency of Jewish tradition. "When I spoke of the survival of a tradition," he writes, "I had mostly in mind an *inherited* tradition of this kind and *not one transmitted by communication.*"¹ Freud turns to the medium of heredity as if it were familiar, but he makes it enigmatic by insisting on its most obvious quality: the fact that it functions outside the realm of communication, outside representation, language, images or customs, in short, without the participation of sensory perception. In this chapter, I show that Freud's theory of Jewish tradition derives from his earlier explorations of other mysterious phenomena such as telepathy and transference which occur in an extra-linguistic realm beyond sensory perception. Jewish

¹ Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, *S.E.*, vol. XXIII (1939), 99-100.

tradition emerges as a persistent process of transference; to be Jewish is to be caught up in this process, interminably and sometimes unconsciously.

Freud makes what we believe we know under the name of heredity and Jewishness enigmatic. In his essay “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” Jacques Derrida argues that Freud “does not simply use” metaphors “for didactic ends.” While Derrida focuses on Freud’s employment of scriptural metaphors to illuminate the psychoanalytic concept of memory, his interpretation of these metaphors suggests a productive way of reading Freud’s discussions of hereditary transmission. “If to manipulate means to make of the known an allusion to the unknown,” Derrida writes, Freud does not manipulate metaphors; rather, “he makes what we believe we know under the name of writing enigmatic.” Freud’s metaphors are “indispensable” not because they illuminate memory but “because they illuminate, inversely the meaning of a trace in general.”² Likewise, his “metaphors” of heredity and Jewishness are indispensable because they illuminate “inversely” the nature of transmission, subjectivity and modernity. Though he founded psychoanalysis upon ideals of conversation and communication, he “interrupts” our confidence in these ideals. Instead, he suggests that pre- or extra-linguistic forms of transmission, such as heredity or telepathy, are always in the background, silently and subtly controlling the more palpable transmissions (such as writing and talking). Precisely because they are ungraspable, these phenomena may be more potent; unlike that which is sensorially apprehended or physically graspable, such phenomena “seize” the psyche, compelling the imagination to conjure mysteries beyond belief. If to “see is to

² Jacques Derrida, “Freud and the Scene of Writing,” trans. Alan Bass, *Writing and Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1978), 199.

believe,” invisible phenomena such as telepathy, transference and Jewishness (both the “character” and the belief in the Jewish God) stretch the boundaries of rational belief even as they define rationality itself.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, both culture and disease were imagined as newly transmissible as technologies of communication and travel made both national and individual bodies seem more both excitingly and dangerously permeable. As Friedrich Kittler and other scholars have shown, the Victorian and Modernist periods were marked by intense debates about “ghosts in the machine,” the occult haunting of rationality and modernity.³ Discussions about telepathy and ghostly communication were inextricably linked to the “wider reconceptualizations of the borders of individual consciousness and emerge together with new communication technologies such as the telephone and the telegraph.”⁴ Freud’s meditations on these matters implicitly and (sometimes explicitly) addressed the new permeability of geographical borders which allowed Jews (like Freud’s own family) to immigrate from the East and integrate with Christian Western European society. Freud’s theorization of transference and of the

³ There is an immense quantity of scholarship on this topic. Some of the key works which discuss the ways in which Modernist authors and artists incorporated (rather than simply rejected or embraced) the images, anxieties and aesthetics of new technologies and forms of capitalist production are the following: Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990); Friedrich Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900*, trans. Michael Metteer and Chris Cullens (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

⁴ Pamela Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2. See also, Friedrich Kittler, “Romanticism—Psychoanalysis—Film: A History of the Double,” trans. Stefanie Harris, *Literature, Media, Information Systems: Essays* (Amsterdam: Overseas Publishers Association, 1997); Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy, 1870-1901* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Avital Ronell, *The Telephone Book: Technology, Schizophrenia, Electric Speech* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989).

inheritance of memory was implicitly haunted by the imagery, logic and anxieties of the occult, and these were themselves haunted by the Jewish Question.

In Freud's oeuvre, telepathy and Jewishness emerge as processes of transmission whose potential failures are tied up with the "inevitability of communicative leakage."⁵ Both are figured as archaic remnants and as prophetic ghosts of a future past. These images play into two seemingly opposed concerns about the future of Jewishness in the early twentieth century. On the one hand, Jewish leaders worried about fulfilling God's covenant with Israel: how could they ensure the future of *Judentum*—the Jewish people, Jewish traditions and Judaism?⁶ They worried about transmission from one generation to the next; they worried that Judaism *would not arrive at its destination* in the future. On the other hand, the persistent image of the "uncanny Jew"—wandering and eternal—suggests that Jewishness cannot help but be transmitted to the future; if it is repressed (oppressed, forgotten), it will return. If it is expelled, it will flourish elsewhere. Of course, the Jews' "uncanniness" was not only a positive prophecy about the future. In the anti-semitic imaginary, the "uncanny Jew" had long been a part of the Christian anti-Judaic portrayal of the Jews as disembodied, spectrally wandering the earth as a result of their rejection of Christ. Anti-semitic portrayals depicted the Jews as disease-like, both

⁵ I borrow this formulation from Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920*, 129. Throughout this chapter, I have found my arguments uncannily influenced by many of Thurschwell's points, including the notion that "dangerous proximity" very nearly verges into an invasion of one's psyche, a loss of a sense of originality and a fear of plagiarism. She follows this anxiety through Ferenczi's work, re-iterates Helene Deutsch's remark on this matter ("I became interested at one time in the problems of plagiarism, only to learn much later that these had once weighed very heavily on Freud"), and makes this same point in relation to her own proximity with Eric Santner's work on Schreber's psychosis. See Eric L. Santner, *My Own Private Germany: Daniel Paul Schreber's Secret History of Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Pamela Thurschwell, "Ferenczi's Dangerous Proximities: Telepathy, Psychosis, and the Real Event." *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 11.1 (1999); Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920*, 132, 177, n162.

⁶ Mitchell Bryan Hart, *Social Science and the Politics of Modern Jewish Identity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 1-2.

cancerous and contagious, both internally developing and externally acquired. As Susan Shapiro writes in her study of the “Uncanny Jew,” “The success of the Jew in mimicking the German further threatened the German's ability to define himself as, precisely, not a Jew, ironically making ‘jewification’ (in a logic of ‘contagion’) both more pervasive and threatening because invisible, unlocatable and, thus, uncontainable.”⁷ In Freud’s work, these images play against each other. In attempting to describe the nature of the unconscious, telepathic transmissions and transference reactions, he turns to images which implicitly evoke the “uncanny” position of the Jews in Western Europe. So too, in his attempt to scientifically confront the Jewish Question, he invokes the very same images and logic which “haunted” his earlier explorations of transference, telepathy and the unconscious.

In this chapter, I attempt to parse these images, attentive to both the anti-semitic overtones and to Freud’s ultimate concern with why and how Jews and Jewishness have so persistently survived. That is, in analyzing these images I am concerned that we not jump to conclusions about their ultimate consequences—whether they are anti-semitic or positive representations of the Jewish people, their circumstances and their future. Ultimately, it is unclear whether anti-semitism and Judaism can ever be separated,⁸ or whether they are part of one “undying” problem of understanding the self in relation to an Other, as unstable as these distinctions may turn out to be. In what follows, I draw from Eric Santner’s suggestions of a theory of Jewish transference and its relationship to questions of modern subjectivity. While numerous scholars have explored the

⁷ Susan Shapiro, “The Uncanny Jew: A Brief History of an Image.” *Judaism* 46.1 (1997).

⁸ Maurice Blanchot, quoted in *Ibid.*

relationships between Freud's writings on telepathy and the occult with his more "properly" psychoanalytic works, there has been little discussion of how these matters are intertwined with his attempts to confront the Jewish Question.⁹ Where Freud worried that psychoanalysis would be regarded as a "Jewish science" and as such, less than purely scientific, his meditations on these other matters have similarly elicited anxieties about the scientific nature of psychoanalysis. Lamarckism, telepathy and transference have each raised questions about Freud's scientific "credentials," his authority and his ability to "objectively" observe his subject matter. Throughout the chapter, I examine the relationship between Freud's conceptualization of transmissions: transgenerational, transference, telepathic and unconscious.

Where Freud's earlier discussions of telepathy and transference anticipate and illuminate his late insistence on the hereditary transmission of Jewish tradition, the reverse is also true: his late theorization of Jewishness retrospectively illuminates his earlier texts on transmission. Indeed, this reversal of interpretation also applies more broadly to the concepts of transference, tradition and telepathy. Writing of Jacques Derrida's *Postcards*, Alan Bass has suggested that this "subversion of what is usually taken as a fixed sequence" is a central concern of Derrida's, but I want to suggest a further re-inversion: it is central to those aspects of Freud's work from which Derrida draws inspiration. As Bass writes, "What if the usual and seemingly fixed sequence were reversible? What if each term of the sequence contained within itself the principle that

⁹ See, for example, James P. Keeley, "The Coping Stone on Psycho-Analysis': Freud, Psychoanalysis, and The Society for Psychical Research," PhD, Columbia University, 2002; Roger Luckhurst, "'Something Tremendous, Something Elemental': On the Ghostly Origins of Psychoanalysis," *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History*, eds. Peter Buse and Andrew Stott (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); Thurschwell, "Ferenczi's Dangerous Proximities: Telepathy, Psychosis, and the Real Event."

subverts the usual progression? What could there be between each term and itself that would operate this subversion?”¹⁰ I want to suggest that the Freudian concept of transference is not so much a “sequence” but a constant process of transmission, unpredictably moving back and forth between individuals, generations and genera. There is a compression of time: the past overwhelms the present even as the present calls upon an absent past, present only as far as it can be imagined. This logic is at the heart both of Freud’s meditations on the “timelessness of the unconscious”¹¹ and of God’s covenant with the Jewish people: “Not with you alone do I make this covenant and this oath, but with him who stands here this day before the Lord, and also with him who is not here with us this day.”¹² Freud’s meditations on transference and telepathy ultimately suggest that the human subject and the Jewish Question are caught up in a present overflowing with the past.

Such concepts of compressed time and overwhelming influence resonate with Harold Bloom’s theory of the anxiety of influence which is itself a revision of Freud’s concept of the family romance. While Bloom’s theory of the anxiety of influence is meant to illuminate poetic history, it also, I think, illuminates the succession, revision and retrospective illumination of transference and tradition. Bloom uses Freud’s concept of the family romance as an analogue for “the revisionary ratios that govern intra-poetic relations,” but such revisions—transformations of sons into fathers and vice versa—also govern intra-generational relations in their re-inventions of tradition. Bloom argues that Freud (and Nietzsche as well) “over-idealized the imagination” such that too much power

¹⁰ Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), ix.

¹¹ Sigmund Freud, “The Unconscious,” *S.E.*, vol. XIV (1915), 187.

¹² *Deuteronomy* 29: 14-15.

was “yielded” to “phantasmagoria.” Instead, there is a sense that poets are never content with “second chances,” but continuously strive for a “vision of immortality.” What Bloom seems to be describing is not so much the successive influence of one generation (of poets or traditions) upon the next generation, but the sense that each generation feels as if they are almost immorally invaded by their predecessors. “Influence,” writes Bloom, ventriloquizing Oscar Wilde, is “a transference of personality, a mode of giving away what is most precious to one's self, and its exercise produces a sense, and, it may be, a reality of loss. Every disciple takes away something from his master.”¹³ The disciple masters and re-writes the master, the two individuals trade places, over and over, such that it is unclear who is the predecessor, who the successor.

B. A Theory of Jewish Transference

But first, a joke: In a zoology class at a large European university, the students are assigned to write a paper on elephants. The French student writes a treatise on “The Sexual Behavior of Elephants;” the German puts together “A Comprehensive Bibliography of Everything About The Elephant;” the Jewish student composes a study of “The Elephant and the Jewish Question.”

Eric Santner presents a version of this joke in the opening of his essay, “Freud, Žižek, and the Joys of Monotheism” as an example of the reflexivity of national

¹³ Oscar Wilde, quoted in Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 6.

typologization, in particular that which underlies anti-Semitism.¹⁴ The joke assumes that the listener knows and “believes” in national typologies, but the humor of the joke resides in the way that the Jew is defined by her very preoccupation with typology.¹⁵ Drawing from the work of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, Santner focuses on Slavoj Žižek’s analyses of anti-Semitism in the context of postmodern concerns with identity politics, sexuality and representation. Specifically, these theorists suggest that anti-Semitism derives not from a hatred of the Jewish type, but rather from the realization that there is no Jewish type. According to Alfred Rosenberg, Hitler’s chief ideologue, “all European nations possess a well-defined ‘spiritual shape’ [*Gestalt*] which gives expression to their ethnic character—and this ‘spiritual shape’ is precisely what is missing in Jews.”¹⁶ For Žižek, this “very ‘shapelessness’ is the constitutive feature of subjectivity” which undergirds “the Judaeo-democratic concept of ‘abstract universalism.’”¹⁷ Indeed, Žižek suggests that the non-typology of the Jewish people

¹⁴ Eric L. Santner, “Freud, Žižek, and the Joys of Monotheism.” *American Imago* 54.2 (1997).

¹⁵ In Santner’s version of this joke, there is also an American who presents a paper on “How to Breed Bigger and Better Elephants.” The inclusion of the American as a “national type” is itself a funny (though un-commented) addition to the joke, for the premise of the joke is the European nationalities’ confidence in typologies. Like the Jewish type, the American type has also been defined by a sort of postmodern instability which can incorporate just about anything into its (bigger and better) “melting pot.” However, it is this very instability which also allows the national leaders to proclaim a confidence in the universal ideals of American freedom and democracy. Indeed, the definition of who is American and who is a Jew are similarly all-incorporative as opposed to who is counted as a (true) German or Frenchman. Whoever is born a Jew is Jewish (regardless of language, feelings, practices or passports), and whoever is born in America can claim American citizenship—the same is not true of Germany or France where children and grandchildren of immigrants are not necessarily incorporated into the national body either legally or conceptually, though the differences in citizenship laws are far more complicated than I have suggested.

¹⁶ Slavoj Žižek, *Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality* (London: Verso, 1994). Quoted in Santner, “Freud, Žižek, and the Joys of Monotheism,” 198-199.

¹⁷ Žižek, *Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality*. Quoted in Santner, “Freud, Žižek, and the Joys of Monotheism,” 199.

allows them to claim a certain “abstract universality”; the Jewish claim to chosenness are ironically possible because of the shapelessness of its content (of “Jewishness”).¹⁸

In contrast, Santner argues that the Jewish people are instead defined by a “too-muchness,” a “*jew-essence*” which overflows all attempts to define the Jewish type.¹⁹ And yet, such “too-muchness” is not limited to the Jewish subject. In Santner’s words, the human psyche is psychoanalytically “defined by the fact that it includes more reality than it can contain, is the bearer of an excess, a too much of pressure that is not merely psychological.”²⁰ How, then, do we make sense of this description as the defining feature of the *Jewish* subject? What is this “essence” which overflows all attempts to define the subject? Is it particular to the Jews or is the Jewish “case” simply an intensified version of the conundrum which underlies all attempts to define and come to terms with modern subjectivity?

Santner interprets Freud’s story of *Moses and Monotheism* as a sort of “recovered memory syndrome,” an attempt to understand the enigma of his own “essential nature” as a Jew as the result of a previously unnamed trauma. The “essential nature” then, is a “compulsive hermeneutic drive” to decode, or what he calls “*Jewish transference*, i.e. the unconscious transmission of the cultural patterns and values—of *essence*—that make a Jew a Jew.”²¹ While Santner alludes to the unconsciousness of this process, he ultimately reads Jewishness as a conscious activity of interpretation and translation. Like a number

¹⁸ Freud extends this notion and suggests that America’s sense of itself as “God’s own country” is similarly supported by its shapelessness of its content (“Americanness”). Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, *S.E.*, vol. XXI (1927), 19.

¹⁹ Santner develops this thesis more clearly in Eric L. Santner, *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 31-32.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

²¹ Santner, “Freud, Žižek, and the Joys of Monotheism,” 201.

of other scholars who have meditated upon Freud's discussions of Jewishness and its transmission, Santner sees an occult logic haunting the margins. However, he argues that the "prospect of engaging in a kind of spiritism is in part what pushed Freud to his Lamarckian hypothesis: better controversial science than occultism."²² While Santner distinguishes between (controversial) science, interpretation and hermeneutic drives on the one hand, and occultism, telepathy and spiritualism on the other, Freud did not see these realms as mutually exclusive. Rather, Freud's science is controversial precisely because it attends to the occult nature of the unconscious, the uncontrollable forces which shape the question of subjectivity in general and of the Jewish subject in particular. His "Lamarckian hypothesis" about the hereditary transmission of Jewishness must be seen as an extension of his earlier meditations on telepathy and transference both of which were explicitly marked by the Jewish Question. Freud developed a theory of *Jewish transference* which was controversial precisely because it revealed the occult leanings of his science, and the telepathic nature of the hermeneutic drive.

This chapter is a version of the elephant joke in that I trace the Jewish Question through images, allusions and anxieties in Freud's texts on telepathy, transference and the unconscious, none of which explicitly address the Jewish Question. However, Freud not only uses images which implicitly refer to the position of the Jewish people in Europe, he employs a logic which drips with the anxieties of a Jewish person attempting to answer the Jewish Question. And yet, while this "anxiety" may be seen as a matter of one's Jewishness, I want to suggest that it is not limited to Jews, for to confront the Jewish Question is to be a part of the study, to be wrapped up in its distinctions, positions, and

²² Eric L. Santner, "Freud's *Moses* and the Ethics of Nomotropic Desire." *October* 88 (1999): part VI.

consequences, to take up a position of influence or of being influenced. Indeed, part of what emerges from reading Freud's theory of Jewishness as a theory of transference (and vice versa) is the idea that such positions—Jew and non-Jew, disciple and master, analyst and patient, father and son, self and Other—are not entirely stable or irreversible, and this is what imbues the relationships with a surplus of anxiety, an anticipation of the trauma of transference. As I discuss in the first chapter, Freud's early discussions of the aetiology of hysteria can be seen as attempts to maintain an authoritative scientific position, objectively distinct from the artistic [*künstliche*] tendencies of his patients. However, as he established transference as central to the psychoanalytic process, he implicitly recognized that he could not so easily separate himself from his subject matter or its tendencies.²³ Both the analyst and patient were subject to transference reactions, transmissions from their pasts which crowded and controlled the present. While he attempted to distinguish paranoid reasoning and spiritualist explorations from psychoanalytic investigations, he was well aware of the similarities.²⁴ Reading through his correspondence, we find him meditating on the possibility that the future might be prophesied by signs and letters in the present, and that these transmissions may be archaic traces of an archaic past. Like the telepathic and transference reactions of psychoanalysis proper, Jewish transference emerges as a process which can operate

²³ As Gilman and Efron have both noted, Jewish physicians and racial scientists were stuck in a similar double-bind as they were both the investigators and the objects of such investigation. See John M. Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 2-3; Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 3.

²⁴ Indeed, in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901), Freud remarks that psychoanalysis transformed the "construction of a supernatural reality" into a scientific "psychology of the unconscious," or "metaphysics into metapsychology." Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, S.E.*, vol. VI (1901), 259.

without individuals' participation or agreement, even as it is shaped by the creative forces of individuals' attempts to interpret and to interact.

C. Pseudoscientific Metaphors: Believing the Consequences

In reading heredity, telepathy, transference and Jewishness as metaphors, I do not mean to suggest that they should be read *only* as metaphors—like writing, they are *real* and their realities are nowhere more clear than in their consequences. While discussions of Freud's "position" on these matters have often focused on the question of his belief (in the reality of telepathy, in the existence of God) or his feelings (positive or negative, proud or ashamed to be Jewish), Freud was sensitive to the fact that it ultimately made no difference what he felt or believed. Thus, in the matter of "transference" he might have wished that he only needed to deal with the patient's feelings for the analyst, but he soon realized that the analyst's feelings could subtly, sexually and disastrously shape the patient's own transference. Freud avoided discussing the phenomenon of counter-transference for it suggested that the analyst was not in control of the situation: ghosts, transmissions, thoughts and feelings could escape one's body, enter another's body and cause chemical explosions. Thus, instead of confronting such possibilities, Freud toyed with his readers, tantalizing them with the paradoxes of being a rational investigator of irrational phenomena and of being a "godless Jew"—an unbeliever whose Jewishness was nevertheless never in doubt.

In confronting the vicissitudes of transference, the possibilities of telepathy, and the questions of Jewishness, Freud recognized that it was impossible to maintain a purely

“objective” view on these matters. While much has been made of Freud’s attempt to maintain a rational stance on these matters, James Keeley has suggested that the question of Freud’s belief or disbelief in occultism is irrelevant because “psychical research is not an occult practice like Spiritualist séances or mediumistic prophecies, requiring belief; nor is it a paranormal experience like forebodings or superstitions, again requiring belief; it is, rather, the *disinterested* investigation of occult practices and paranormal experiences.”²⁵ I want to suggest, however, that in these discussions there is no way to remain “disinterested.” In dealing with the “transference,” Freud recognized that he was himself caught up in the processes he was trying to describe. So too, he did not attempt to completely demystify the possibility of telepathy, but rather to imagine the possibilities, both fantastic and nightmarish which might ensue depending on whether such transmissions were controllable and if so, who might seize control, invisibly manipulating masses. Finally, in the matter of Jewishness, Freud was acutely aware that as a Jewish scientist, anything he said would be regarded as suspiciously unobjective. Thus, he often noted that it was not Jews who should speak against anti-semitism but non-Jews, as if non-Jews had a better chance of convincing other non-Jews that their positions were “objectively” true.

What emerges in each of these cases is a sense that Freud was explicitly toying with the margins of science, not so much with demystifying seemingly mystical experiences, but with integrating experiences of the unknown and unknowable into the very practice and theorization of psychoanalysis. Though Freud’s earliest and latest work

²⁵ Keeley, “The Coping Stone on Psycho-Analysis: Freud, Psychoanalysis, and The Society for Psychical Research,” 38, my italics.

suggests parallels between psychoanalysis, medicine and history (as I argued in my first chapter), in his discussions of transference and telepathy, Freud turns to comparisons with other questionable sciences, particularly chemistry and telecommunicative technologies. On the surface, chemistry might seem a more rational model of science than psychoanalysis, but it was itself historically associated with alchemy, with mystical practices of transformation and with “cunning spells.” As Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent has noted, chemistry was a “hybrid creation: half science, half technique.”²⁶ Thus, in his writings on psychoanalytic technique, Freud veers into territories of technique and technologies which yet again threaten the “scientific” veneer of his project.

Along these lines, Ernest Jones unsuccessfully tried to convince Freud to change his tune about the two matters on either side of “transference”: the “controversial science” of Lamarckism, and the “occultism” of telepathy. Freud’s meditations on intergenerational transmission, transference and telepathy are inextricably linked not only by Jones’ anxieties about these matters, but by a series of linguistic, historical and conceptual resonances. *Linguistic* because Freud uses the same root word—*Übertragung*—to refer to transference, telepathic thought-transference and intergenerational transmission. *Historical* because Freud’s meditations on these three forms of transmission were elicited by one another. We find him meditating on the possibilities of telepathy and prophecy in the very same letters in which he confronts the problems and questions of transference. *Conceptual* because the images and anxieties are interwoven, repeated and transformed: explosive chemical reactions, telephones, foreign

²⁶ Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent, “Lessons in the History of Science,” Trans. Matthew Tiews and Trina Marmarelli. *Configurations* 8 (2000): 204.

bodies and alien guests haunt Freud's writing not only on these three forms of transmission, but also on the unconscious and its symptoms.

D. *Übertragung*: Linguistic Traces in the Background

As I discuss in the previous chapters, Freud resisted incorporating the idea of phylogenetic memory into psychoanalytic theory until around 1912, when he was hard at work on *Totem and Taboo*. At the end of this work, he acknowledged that he was left with the question of how the memory of the primal murder could have survived over so many generations. Specifically, he asks, “what are the ways and means employed by one generation in order to *hand on* its mental states to the next one? [*welcher Mittel und Wegen sich die eine Generation bedient, um ihre psychischen Zustände auf die nächste zu übertragen*]”²⁷ While the *Standard Edition* translates the word, *übertragen*, as “hand on,” the German word is the verb-form of *Übertragung*, the word which Freud uses to refer to the psychoanalytic concept of *transference*. So too, in *Moses and Monotheism*, in the midst of a long discussion of the vicissitudes of the recording and transmission of the memory of Moses' murder, he writes that the “trustworthiness” of tradition “suffered from the fact that it was less stable and definite than the written account and exposed to numerous changes and alterations when it was handed on [*übertragen*] from one generation to another by oral communication.”²⁸ This term is repeated as he tries to understand how the tradition “had been transmitted [*übertragen*] from forefather to

²⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, *S.E.*, vol. XIII (1913), 158.

²⁸ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 68-69.

grandchild.”²⁹ Finally, in “Analysis Terminable and Interminable” (1937), Freud suggests that “the psychological peculiarities of families, races and nations... and even particular psychical contents, such as symbolism, have no other sources than hereditary transmission [*erbliche Übertragung*]” which have left their traces in “the archaic heritage.”³⁰ In retracing Freud’s earlier discussions—both private and public—of the ways in which memories, thoughts and ideas are “handed on [*übertragen*],” it becomes clear that his word-choice in these cases is not simply a matter of coincidence. In both works, Freud assumes that beyond all the distortions of “direct communication,” there are memory-traces which have been infallibly *transferred* through some other medium.

In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud presents two possible solutions to the question of intergenerational transmission. Asserting that “direct communication and tradition... are not enough to account for the process” of transmission between generations,³¹ he turns to the possibility that the memory-traces of the primal murder were biologically transmitted. “A part of the problem,” he writes, “seems to be met by the inheritance of psychical dispositions.”³² However, he goes on to attempt to solve the *other* part of the problem by further exploring the transmissive possibilities of traditions. Though people may have attempted to “ruthlessly suppress”³³ the violent memories, Freud explains that “an unconscious understanding... of all the customs, ceremonies and dogmas left behind by the original relation to the father may have made it possible for later generations to take

²⁹ Here I use Katherine Jones’ translation, with the exception of the words “forefather [*Ahn*]” and “grandchild [*Enkel*].” Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Katherine Jones (New York: Vintage Books, 1939), 119.

³⁰ Sigmund Freud, “Analysis Terminable and Interminable,” *S.E.*, vol. XXIII (1937), 240-241.

³¹ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 158.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ “Even the most ruthless suppression must leave room for distorted surrogate impulses and for reactions resulting from them.” *Ibid.*, 159.

over their heritage of emotion.”³⁴ When Freud was nearly finished writing *Totem and Taboo*, he sent it to his friend, Sandor Ferenczi. Ferenczi was aware that Freud had been trying to keep phylogenetic memory from forcing its way into the foreground of psychoanalysis. Thus, he wrote to Freud to say that his “idea of transmission by means of *unconscious understanding*... forces the phylogenetic theories into the background.”³⁵ However, the phylogenetic memories would not stay in the “background” for long. Indeed, Freud was on the verge of exploring the possibility the “phylogenetic theories” were not necessarily alternatives to theories of “unconscious understanding” but rather part of the same process of uncanny transmission.

In the following years, Freud came to see the inheritance of phylogenetic memory as an explanation for the “unconscious understanding” which seems to occur between generations and between individuals, beyond any forms of “direct communication.” When he attempted to describe the telepathic process, he used similar terms, noting that telepathy might have been an “archaic” form of communication which, even after the invention of language, had persisted “in the background.”³⁶ Eventually, in *Moses and Monotheism*, he would attend to the particular forces which had operated in the “background” of the Jewish people, defining them from some particular moment in time. As he explains, despite the Israelites’ murder of Moses and their subsequent repression of his memory, “this tradition of a great past... *continued to work in the background*,” and “gradually gained more and more power over men’s minds, and ... finally succeeded... in calling back to life the religion of Moses which had been established and then abandoned

³⁴ Ibid., 159, my italics.

³⁵ Letter #406, Ferenczi to Freud, June 23, 1913. Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi*, trans. Peter T. Hoffer, ed. André Haynal, vol. I-III (1993-2000).

³⁶ Sigmund Freud, “New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis,” *S.E.*, vol. XXII (1933), 55.

long centuries earlier.”³⁷ The idea of something that “works in the background” is of course akin to secret communications, conspiracy theories and occult ideas about communication with the dead.³⁸ Freud’s attention to these forces was not an exceptional excursion into a non-psychoanalytic realm, but rather of a piece with his earliest work in which he explored these “background forces”—the unconscious, memory-traces, childhood traumas—which shape the foreground, the present, mental illness.

E. Transferential Transformations

1. Psychoanalysis and the Chemistry of Love

Though Freud had explored the notion of “transference [*Übertragung*]” as early as 1905 in the postscript to the case of “Dora,” in 1909-1911 he saw that the situation was alarmingly repeating itself most significantly with his younger colleagues, Jung and Ferenczi. What was most worrisome about these repetitions was the fact that it was not only the patients who were falling into transferential patterns, but Freud’s star disciples. Where the patient (Dora) had fallen in love with the analyst (Breuer), now the analysts were falling for their patients. It is in the midst of intense exchanges with his two younger colleagues that Freud began to meditate on the possibility that the repetitive transferential patterns—“stereotype plates”—of human behavior may be the result of phylogenetic memories. Indeed, his first and most extensive attempts to incorporate phylogenetic

³⁷ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 124.

³⁸ In fact, Freud uses many images which allude to conspiracy theories, and in particular, theories which allude to the idea of Jewish world conspiracy. See L.J. Rather, “Disraeli, Freud, and Jewish Conspiracy Theories.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 47.1 (1986).

memory into psychoanalysis appear in his essays on transference.³⁹ Of course, the most extensive discussion of the concept of phylogenetic memory appears in his “Phylogenetic Fantasy”⁴⁰ which he sent to Ferenczi in 1915 (about which I will say more later).

Throughout all of these discussions, there is an uneasy sense that such phenomena are beyond the individual’s control: transmissions from the past—impulses, fantasies, desires—fill up the present to the point at which it almost overflows with pressure.

Following their trip to America, Freud anxiously corresponded with both men about the possibilities of transference [*Übertragung*] and telepathic thought-transference [*Gedankübertragung*]. Throughout this correspondence, he attempted to both maintain control of psychoanalysis and protect it from his colleagues’ questionable interests. Specifically, both Ferenczi and Jung increasingly explored phenomena which were regarded as occult—mythology, prophecies, communication with the dead and telepathy. While Freud advised Jung and Ferenczi to maintain secrecy about their inclinations for the occult, he was obviously far more concerned about their “secret inclinations”⁴¹ for certain young female patients. Indeed, neither Jung’s nor Ferenczi’s interests in the occult had ever been secret: Ferenczi’s first published paper in 1899 was on mediumship, and

³⁹ While he had privately considered phylogenetic memory in letters in the fall of 1911, he first (published) acknowledgement of the idea appears in Sigmund Freud, “The Dynamics of Transference,” *S.E.*, vol. XII (1912), 99.

⁴⁰ Sigmund Freud, “Overview of the Transference Neuroses,” trans. Axel and Peter T. Hoffer, *A Phylogenetic Fantasy: Overview of the Transference Neuroses*, ed. Ilse Grubrich-Simitis (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987).

⁴¹ Freud uses this phrase in a letter to Ferenczi in 1915. Ironically, he accuses *Ferenczi* of his “secret inclinations for the occult” as a preface to his own meditations on the possibility that he had had a telepathic and prophetic dream about his son. I will discuss this episode in more detail later in the chapter. Letter #555, July 21, 1915, Freud and Ferenczi, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi*, II: 69. There are numerous letters in which Freud tells Jung and Ferenczi to “keep quiet about” their explorations of the occult, and often these admonitions appear in the very same letters in which he expresses concern about their explorations of their feelings for their patients. See, for example, Letter # 74, October 6, 1909. Freud and Ferenczi, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi*, I: 79.

Jung's doctoral dissertation was "On the Psychology and Pathology of So-called Occult Phenomena" (1902).⁴²

While Freud's first extensive discussion of transference appears in his *Five Lectures*, many of his most revealing comments about the subject appear in his correspondence with Jung and Ferenczi. As Jung's affair with his patient Sabine Spielrein reached its climax, Freud knew that he needed to deal with the explosive situation. To Jung, he gave circumspect but pointed advice: these experiences "help us to develop the thick skin we need and to dominate 'counter-transference,' which is after all a permanent problem for us."⁴³ Obviously, Freud had ample reason to be worried about the "permanent" possibility that psychoanalysts would continue to fall into transference relationships with their patients, but in the *Five Lectures*, he makes almost no mention of the analyst's transference. While he almost exclusively addresses the patient's transference of feelings onto the analyst, his anxieties about transference and its counter-phenomenon bubble to the surface: borrowing an analogy from chemistry, he notes that "it is only in the raised temperature of [the patient's] experience of the transference that [his symptoms] can be resolved and reduced to other psychical products." Thus, the physician "plays the part of a catalytic ferment which temporarily attracts to itself the affects liberated in the process."⁴⁴ In this passage, Freud portrays the transference reaction not as a chemist's carefully controlled experiment in a testtube, but as a naturally occurring phenomenon, which occurs inside and outside of psychoanalysis. Here is where

⁴² Luckhurst, "Something Tremendous, Something Elemental," 55.

⁴³ June 7, 1909, 145F, Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, trans. R.F.C. Hull and Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 230-231.

⁴⁴ Sigmund Freud, "Five Lectures on Psycho-analysis," *S.E.*, vol. XI (1909), 51.

the analogy breaks down, for if “transference arises *spontaneously* in all human relationships just as it does between the patient and the physician,” there is no need for the physician to serve as a catalyst.⁴⁵

Ultimately, Freud maintained a more studied silence on the matter of counter-transference than he did on the matter of telepathy and the occult. As the complications of Jung’s affair with Spielrein became more clear, Freud advised his colleague, “We must never let our poor neurotics drive us crazy. I believe an article on ‘countertransference’ is sorely needed; of course we could not publish it, we should have to circulate copies among ourselves.”⁴⁶ Freud suggests that the matter of counter-transference—like the matter of telepathy—is a deep dark family secret, one that must be controlled from within. Indeed, the (secret) article on counter-transference was apparently never written, while “secret” articles on telepathy *were* written and were, in fact, circulated amongst the “secret” psychoanalytic committee.⁴⁷ Freud goes so far as to blame Jung’s behavior on the very project of psychoanalysis. Using one of his many analogies with chemistry, he tells Jung to “Remember Lassalle’s fine sentence about the chemist whose test tube had cracked: ‘With a slight frown over the resistance of matter, he gets on with his work.’ In view of the kind of matter we work with, it will never be possible to avoid little laboratory explosions. Maybe we didn’t slant the test tube enough, or we heated it too

⁴⁵ In a more speculative mode, I would suggest that Freud’s meditations on transference “inside and outside” psychoanalysis are homologous with certain aspects of “Jewish transference” inside and outside Jewish communities, or even communities with Jews. That is, there is no need to know “real Jews” for there to be a Jewish Question, a suspicion of Jews (as Others) within the midst, or even within oneself. The question is what serves as the “catalyst” in these situations: what is it that causes a person to “fall” into these patterns, of love, of repetition, of transference?

⁴⁶ Dec. 31, 1911, 290F, Freud and Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, 252-253.

⁴⁷ See Editor’s note in Sigmund Freud, “Psycho-Analysis and Telepathy,” *S.E.*, vol. XVIII (1941), 175-176.

quickly. In this way we learn what part of the danger lies in the matter and what part in our way of handling it.”⁴⁸ While he pictures the analyst as the chemist, it is not entirely clear what the “matter” is—is it the patient’s feelings for the physician, or is it the physician’s feelings for the patient? Is it her symptoms or is it psychoanalysis itself?

It is significant that Freud’s one published reference to “counter-transference” appears in an essay devoted to “The Future Prospects of Psycho-analysis” (1910), for what ultimately made him concerned about transference was the fact that now “a considerable number of people are practising psychoanalysis and exchanging their observations with one another.”⁴⁹ In other words, with clear prospects for both expansion and a “future,” Freud realized that he could not necessarily control how his ideas would be interpreted, applied and disseminated. In his one published reference to the problem of “counter-transference,” he only acknowledges that “counter-transference” arises in the psychoanalyst “as a result of the patient’s influence on his unconscious feelings, and we are almost inclined to insist that he shall recognize this counter-transference in himself and overcome it.”⁵⁰ Freud seems to almost blame the patient for influencing the analyst, but he avoids the obvious question: how could she *not* “influence” the analyst? Indeed, he

⁴⁸ June 18, 1909, 147F, Freud and Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, 235. Freud cites this same sentence in Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, S.E., vol. VIII (1905), 82. More could probably be said about Freud’s reference to Ferdinand Lassalle who was well-known not as a chemist, but as a German (Jewish) socialist. Indeed, Freud quotes from his text, “Die Wissenschaft und die Arbeiter” which was Lassalle’s argument of “defense before the Criminal Court of Berlin on the charge of having publicly incited the unpropertied classes to hatred and contempt of the propertied classes.” Freud quotes the penultimate sentence of this text; in the following (final) sentence Lassalle appeals to the court to acquit him. If pursued further, Freud’s citation of Lassalle could suggest that a) Freud was well-read in classic Marxist-Socialist texts, and b) that he felt as if he would need to defend psychoanalysis against the accusation that it shifted the structure of power and “incited” rebellion. Ferdinand Lassalle, *Science and the Working-Man*, trans. Thorstein Veblen (New York: International Library Publishing Co., 1900 [1863]).

⁴⁹ Sigmund Freud, “The Future Prospects of Psycho-Analytic Therapy,” S.E., vol. XI (1910), 145. On the “secret” committee, see Phyllis Grosskurth, *The Secret Ring: Freud’s Inner Circle and the Politics of Psychoanalysis* (Rerading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1991).

⁵⁰ Freud, “The Future Prospects of Psycho-Analytic Therapy,” 144-145.

avoids mentioning the obvious conundrum: it is the analyst's job to listen, to be influenced by the patient, but he also supposed to remain "neutral," like a surgeon who cannot let his feelings dictate the course of his knife,⁵¹ or like a chemist who merely frowns over his test tube. This could be an explosive situation if the patient acts as a catalyst for the analyst's transference and vice versa. Indeed, Freud was well aware that the analyst's unconscious reactions influence the patient's reactions, but to admit to this interactive form of transference would be far too dangerous. Whereas Ferenczi would later follow this strand of thought much further in his development of "mutual analysis," Freud treated the matter with utmost caution.⁵²

2. The Psychoanalyst as Prophetic Patient

The relationship between Freud and his disciples (particularly Jung and Ferenczi) was structured like an analysis: Freud was the father-analyst, and Jung and Ferenczi were his "sons." As in any analysis, however, there were times when this structure was inverted, suggesting a much more thorough anxiety about the dangerous intimacies of letter-writing, analysis and transference. Though Ferenczi confided in Freud about his various inclinations for his patients and for the occult, he also allowed Freud to confide in him about his own anxieties and fantasies about prophecies and telepathy. Particularly in 1914-1915, as World War I began, Freud sent Ferenczi letters in which he fretfully meditated on the possibility that he had received telepathic transmissions from the future,

⁵¹ Sigmund Freud, "Recommendations to Physicians Practising Psycho-Analysis," *S.E.*, vol. XII (1912), 115.

⁵² See Thurschwell, "Ferenczi's Dangerous Proximities: Telepathy, Psychosis, and the Real Event."

foretelling his own death and the death of his son. During World War I, Freud's sons Martin and Ernst were on the Russian war-front, and Freud waited for communications from them, hopefully only letters since anything else (such as a soldier on the front step, a telegram or a telephone call) could foretell the message of death. During this anxious time he worked on his "Phylogenetic Fantasy" and he sent Ferenczi letters almost daily, sometimes chiding him for not responding quickly or extensively enough. On July 10, 1915, Freud reported to Ferenczi that he had "a prophetic dream which very clearly" foretold the deaths of his sons. He then attempts to rationally explain away the dream as a "bold challenge to the occult powers," in response to a book (on the occult) which he had been reading earlier that day.⁵³ Of course, even as he "rationally" clarifies the dream, he does so self-consciously and ironically, boldly challenging the very powers in which he supposedly does not believe.

Freud's challenges and clarifications cannot cover over the fact that he could not stop thinking about this possibly prophetic dream in the following weeks. It was during this anxious period that he composed his "Phylogenetic Fantasy" in which, he explained to Ferenczi, he was "dealing with fantasies that disturb me and that will hardly be suitable for public expression."⁵⁴ Such admissions of secret thoughts gesture toward other secret fantasies, nightmares, meditations which were then disturbing Freud's sleep. When Ferenczi wrote back about his own phylogenetic speculations on the ice age, Freud quickly replied, evidently annoyed: "would like to have heard more critique about the phylogenetic fantasy." Two days later, on July 20, he writes, remarking on "coincidence"

⁵³ Letter #550, Freud to Ferenczi, July 10, 1915, Freud and Ferenczi, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi*, II: 64.

⁵⁴ Letter #551, Freud to Ferenczi, July 12, 1915, *Ibid.*, II: 65.

of Ferenczi's own thoughts on patterns of phylogenetic patterns.⁵⁵ He closes the letter, "I hope to hear from you soon, as well as how your private relations are taking shape."⁵⁶

Here we find Freud falling into a series of transference relationships with Ferenczi. Even as he plays the analyst ("how are your private relations?"), he also plays the role of the patient-son, desperate for his father-analyst's "letters" and critiques. Additionally, Freud compels Ferenczi to play the role of his absent sons whose letters he anxiously awaits. Before Ferenczi even had a chance to respond to Freud's note of July 20 ("I hope to hear from you soon..."), Freud writes again: "You will marvel that I am now bombarding you this way with letters."⁵⁷ Whereas Ferenczi had often sent Freud long letters full of speculative fantasies and dreams, now Freud was sending his younger colleague long and anxious letters, hopeful for some reassuring response to his "Phylogenetic Fantasy." In the July 21 letter, Freud continues, reminding Ferenczi that he knows about his younger friend's "secret inclination for the occult," but he goes on to speculate further about his own "inclinations," that is, his (possibly "prophetic") dream of July 8/9. Having just received a letter from his son Martin dated July 7, he concludes, "the prophecy has already failed. So, we are certainly not dealing with such crude things."⁵⁸ The letter reports that Martin's arm was grazed by a Russian bullet, and so Freud reasons that "since he himself is writing, it really can't have been something worse... He doesn't indicate a date [of the bullet grazing his arm]." Freud continues, speculating about the time of day and the nightly sensitivity to such prophetic transmissions at night. Nonetheless, he overlooks the (obvious) fact that Martin's letter of

⁵⁵ Letter #554, Freud to Ferenczi, July 20, 1915, *Ibid.*, II: 68.

⁵⁶ Letter #554, Freud to Ferenczi, July 20, 1915, *Ibid.*, II: 69.

⁵⁷ Letter #555, Freud to Ferenczi, July 21, 1915, *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Letter #555, Freud to Ferenczi, July 21, 1915, *Ibid.*

July 7 could not serve as evidence that the prophecy had failed (and that Martin was still alive) since the letter was written *before* Freud had his dream (July 8/9) about Martin's death.

Freud's own anxieties about the prophecy compelled him to consider the possibility that the dream was truly prophetic and telepathic, as if continuing to consider such possibilities would itself "boldly challenge" the occult powers and the angel of death. While this series of events could be interpreted as proof of Freud's "ambivalent" feelings toward the occult, I see it as a sort of negative prophetic logic. As he had explained in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, "prophetic" dreams and signs were by no means *meaningless* even when they did not "come true." Where the "superstitious person" projects his motivations onto the external world, Freud insisted that—as a psychoanalyst—*he* "looked within."⁵⁹ However, as both the analyst and the superstitious person, Freud is simultaneously engaged in both processes: he looks within *and* projects his wishes onto the external world, in a sort of self-replicating mirroring processes. By entertaining a certain openness to the prophetic potential of dreams and the uncanny prophecies of chance events, Freud hoped to keep such prophecies from actually coming true.

These concerns are of a piece with Freud's recognition of the presence of something mysterious and potentially dangerous at work "in the background." The question is not whether Freud believed in the reality of telepathic thought-transference or any other occult mysteries, or even whether such phenomena are true. Whereas he was concerned about the "truth" of his patients' accounts of their past, he never expressed any

⁵⁹ Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, 257.

doubt about the influence of the past in the present or about the phenomenon of transference. If transference occurs both inside and outside psychoanalysis,⁶⁰ as Freud argued, the challenge is how to take control of these transmissions and repetitions before they take control of you. As he writes, “These transmissions could potentially seize control of the psychoanalyst and the patient, and before you know it, the situation could explode: prophecies could come true, patients might analyze their patients, or worse marry them. However, if the analyst could recognize the phenomena before they spin out of control, he might be able to make the transference “the true vehicle of therapeutic influence.”

Throughout this section, I have attended to the metaphors Freud’s anxieties about the potential of transference. While I have not mentioned it at every turn, I want to suggest that these images allusively invoke questions at the heart of Jewishness and the Jewish Question. “Transference” happens not only in psychoanalysis and not only within Jewish communities, but *between* individuals every day. Thus, the Jewish Question is one which confronts not only “real” Jews,⁶¹ but everyone who has an image, sense, question or feeling about Jews, Jewishness or Judaism. There is a sense that “transference” is key to psychoanalysis, to the invocations of the past which overwhelm the present. The

⁶⁰ “It is not a fact that transference emerges with greater intensity and lack of restraint during psychoanalysis than outside it.” Freud, “The Dynamics of Transference,” 101.

⁶¹ Lyotard’s attempt to distinguish his “jewish” question from the question of “real” Jews seems to (inversely) demonstrate that such distinctions are impossible. As he writes in *Heidegger and the 'jews'*, “Lower-case to say that I am not thinking of a nation. Plural to signify that it is not a political figure or subject (Zionism), nor a religious one (Judaism), nor a philosophical one (Hebraic thought) that I am invoking with this name. Quotation marks to avoid confusion of these 'jews' with *the real jews*. What is most real about the real jews is that Europe, at least, does not know what to do with them: Christian Europe demands that they be converted, Monarchical Europe expels them, Republican Europe integrates them, Nazi Europe exterminates them. ‘The jews’ are the object of a *non-lieu* with which the jews, in particular, are really struck.” Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Heidegger and 'the jews'* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 13.

individual herself becomes a sort of testtube where present and the past, the living and the ghosts, are mixed together, creating potentially explosive reactions. If these mixtures are left to their own devices, they can drive a person crazy. Freud attempted to name these invisible forces: they were ghostly transmissions from the past who took up residence in the individual's psyche and found a home in the unconscious. As psychoanalysis heightens these effects, the recognition of a Jewish past (real or imagined) may create an extra "catalytic" ferment in the testtube. It is unclear what causes such bubbles in the testtube: are they gases? liquids? Is it chemical or historical? Genealogy is not one or the other, in fact, it may be more "technical"—a sort of shuttling between the past, present and future which condenses time (and gases) into the liquidity of the moment. If to be Jewish is to be caught in an interminable process of transference, it is highly likely that a person can be Jewish without being conscious of it. As Freud writes of the transference, "the less its presence is suspected, the more powerfully it operates."⁶² Similarly, in his "Address to the Society of B'nai B'rith" in 1926, Freud explains that what made "the attraction of Jewry and Jews irresistible" were the "many obscure emotional forces, which were *the more powerful the less they could be expressed in words.*"⁶³ The less one suspects that one is Jewish (the less one suspects "its" presence), the more powerfully the Jewish Question impresses its shapeless content, its "obscure forces." In a more speculative mode, it is possible that the most rabid anti-semites (certain of their own non-Jewishness) are those who can find no other way of "expressing" their suspicions about the presence of something "obscure," something uncanny and strange in themselves. The

⁶² Freud, "Five Lectures on Psycho-analysis," 51.

⁶³ Sigmund Freud, "Address to the Society of B'nai B'rith," *S.E.*, vol. XX (1926), 273-274, my italics.

border between Jewish self-hatred and anti-semitism becomes a matter of recognizing (or deciding) whether the hating person is Jewish or not.

F. Technologies of Transference and Telepathy

While Freud experimented with modelling psychoanalytic technique on chemistry, he recognized that the psychoanalyst could not exert complete control over the analytic relationship any more than an individual can control her phylogenetic inheritance. In his “Recommendations to Physicians Practicing Psychoanalysis” (1912), Freud paraphrases his oft-quoted advice that the patient should say whatever comes into her mind. Here, however, he gives advice not to the analysand, but to the physician who “must put himself in a position to make use of everything he is told for the purposes of interpretation and of recognizing the concealed unconscious material without substituting a censorship of his own for the selection that the patient has forgone.”⁶⁴ Whereas previously, Freud warned that the *transference* was “ordained to be the greatest obstacle,” now he worries that the analyst himself can impede the transference and the cure. He thus explains the matter in a succinct “formula”:

He must turn his own unconscious like a receptive organ [*empfangendes Organ*] towards the transmitting unconscious of the patient. He must adjust himself to the patient as a telephone receiver is adjusted to the transmitting microphone [*Teller*]. Just as the receiver converts back into soundwaves the electric oscillations in the telephone line which were set up by sound waves, so the doctor’s unconscious is able, from the derivatives of the unconscious which are communicated to him, to

⁶⁴ Freud, “Recommendations to Physicians Practising Psycho-Analysis,” 115-116.

reconstruct that unconscious, which has determined the patient's free associations.⁶⁵

Here Freud presents a “formula’ which transforms the unconscious into an inanimate (non-human) technology, an apparatus designed for receiving and sending. This is a strange model of the psychoanalytic conversation, for the analyst does not exactly receive the sounds of the patient’s voice. Rather, his unconscious receives the entire contents of the patient’s unconscious. In some respects, the psychoanalytic conversation seems *modelled* on a telephone conversation, for while the physician and his patient sit in the same room, the distance between the unconscious apparati of the two people is heightened by the fact that the patient does not look at her physician sitting behind her as she reclines. However, as in a telephone conversation, there are obstacles to complete communion; an actual telephone would not improve the situation for there would be static, missed connections, misunderstood words and delays in transmission. Freud imagines a virtual (imaginary, futuristic) telephone which might allow one unconscious to receive the vibrations—feelings, memories, thoughts—of the other. Mysterious transmissions via a virtual telephone might even lead to a new form of intimacy.⁶⁶

Such descriptions begin to sound like fairy tales, if not prophecies of new ways of thinking. Indeed, Freud was quite aware that the new *transmitting* teletechnologies—of railways, telegraphy, and telephony—had adjusted our “mutual relations,”⁶⁷ and changed the way we communicate and think. “With every tool,” he writes in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, “man is perfecting his own organs, whether motor or sensory, or is removing

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Thurschwell, “Ferenczi's Dangerous Proximities: Telepathy, Psychosis, and the Real Event.”

⁶⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, *S.E.*, vol. XXI (1930), 88.

the limits to their functioning.”⁶⁸ Along with extending our sensory apparatus, then, these new technologies made it possible for rational scientific minds to believe in realities which *sounded* like fairy tales, myths or ancient prophecies. “With the help of the telephone,” Freud writes, man can now “hear at distances which would be respected as unattainable even in a fairy tale.”⁶⁹ The new reality of hearing the *actual* voice of a person who was physically miles away made it not unreasonable to expect that one could at least sense the thoughts of a person who was only feet away. Indeed, in some respects, telepathy begins to sound almost more reasonable than telephony. This is not a completely technologically deterministic argument; people had imagined telephony and telepathy long before teletechnologies became reality and commonplace in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Indeed, the imagining and wishing of such supernatural possibilities—in science fiction, myths or dreams—is no doubt in some way a prerequisite for the development of the actual technologies.

Freud’s meditations on the technology of transference and telepathy suggest that these processes are separated only by a thread of rationalization. As Pamela Thurschwell and John Forrester have both suggested, “the interpretive claims of psychoanalysis make the analyst resemble the fortune teller.”⁷⁰ While Freud returns to the image of the telephone in his lecture on “Dreams and Occultism” (1933) to describe the “technology” of telepathic transmission, the telephone very quickly emerges as a fulfilment of an archaic fantasy or a return of an archaic form of communication. Freud first mentions the telephone in an attempt to *describe* an example of the telepathic process, but he fumbles

⁶⁸ Ibid., 90.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 91.

⁷⁰ Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920*.

with the technological comparisons: “it is as if she had been informed by telephone,” he explains, quickly adding, “though such was not the case; it is a kind of psychological counterpart to wireless telegraphy.”⁷¹ Freud fumbles with the technological metaphor, for the telephone is an obviously *material* form of communication, in some ways not so different from language itself: thought is transformed into sounds which is then translated back into meaning by the listener. With the telephone, this process is further abstracted: speech is transduced into electrical impulses along a wire and re-transduced into sound and sent to the receiver. By moving to telegraphy, Freud at once moves into a realm both more *and* less material than telegraphy: it travels along more mysterious “wireless” routes, but its transformation into another linguistic code of inscription means that the endgame is a series of *marks* which are set in place and time.

Lurking beneath the surface of Freud’s technological descriptions is an unspeakable violence. For example, as he moves from “the subject of dreams and telepathy,” to other “events” that may be described as “occult,” he makes an odd non-detour. As if he is about to introduce something *other* than dreams and telepathy, he introduces his next step: “There is, for instance, the phenomenon of thought-transference [*Gedankübertragung*], which is *so close* to telepathy and can indeed *without much violence* be regarded as the same thing.”⁷² Why does he point out that there is not “much violence” in this proximity of terms? He goes on to describe this telepathic thought-transference as something explicitly beyond language: “mental processes in one person—ideas, emotional states, conative impulses—can be transferred to another person through

⁷¹ Freud, “New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis,” 36.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 39.

empty space without employing the familiar methods of communication by means of words and signs. You will realize how remarkable, and perhaps even of what great practical importance, it would be if something of the kind really happened.”⁷³ There is a bubbling excitement in this passage, but one wonders, who would use this method for “practical” reasons? Psychoanalysts? Politicians? Religious leaders?

Freud seems to have thought that describing the telepathic process—making it “graspable [*habhaft*]”—might allow people to control it, and to harness its powers. Indeed, the issue of control is central to understanding the concomitant fantasy and anxiety, the dream and the nightmare which attended both telepathy and *Jewish transference*. As he continues his lecture, he begins a lengthy and spectacular series of metaphors by discussing the “transformations” which occur in the “telepathic process.” “The analogy with other transformations, such as occur in speaking and hearing by telephone, would then be unmistakable. And only think if one could get hold of this physical equivalent of the psychological act! [*Und denken Sie, wenn man dieses physikalischen Äquivalents des psychischen Akts habhaft werden könnte!*]⁷⁴ Freud fantasizes about the possibility that *describing* a phenomenon will allow a person to *control* it, to channel its powers for greater purposes. For example, though scientists had theorized about the existence of radio waves since at least 1873, it was not until 1895 that Marconi (and others) were able to get hold of the waves and use them for long-distance communication (through wireless telegraphy). By 1932 it had become quite common for journalists to remark that with the invention and expansion of telegraphy, telephony and

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 55.

television (in 1927), the next step was transmission of thoughts without the use of speech or writing.⁷⁵ Freud believed that psychoanalysis had special access to harnessing—if not also *producing*—telepathic communication, for “by inserting the unconscious between what is physical and what was previously called ‘psychical’,” it had “paved the way for the assumption of such processes as telepathy. If only one accustoms oneself to the idea of telepathy, one can accomplish a great deal with it—for the time being, it is true, only in imagination [*Phantasie*].”⁷⁶

Though he sounds quite hopeful—even wishful—about the possibilities of telepathy and thought-transference, he also reveals a not-so-subtle anxiety about such prospects. On the one hand, if telepathy were a reality, there would be no need for language, for travel, telephones, telegraphs and televisions. This is a dream of universal and timeless communication. Indeed, Freud continues as if spinning out the fantasy:

It is a familiar fact that we do not know how the common purpose comes about in the great insect communities: possibly it is done by means of a direct psychological transference of this kind. One is led to a suspicion that this is the original, archaic method of communication between individuals and that in the course of phylogenetic evolution it has been replaced by the better method of giving information with the help of signals which are picked up by the sense organs. But the older method might have persisted *in the background* and still be able to put itself into effect under certain conditions—for instance, in passionately excited mobs. All this is still uncertain and full of unsolved riddles; but there is no reason to be frightened by it.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ For example, a sampling of *New York Times* articles from 1927—the year the first images were seen televisually—shows that scientists, journalists and politicians widely and openly discussed such possibilities. See, for example, “British to Try to Broadcast Telepathic Messages Feb. 16,” *New York Times* Jan. 24, 1927; “Says Telepathy is Next: Professor Low Predicts Transmission of Thoughts Without Speech,” *New York Times* Jan. 16, 1927; “‘Thinkers-In’ Guess In Telepathy Test, Thousands of ‘Ideas’ Sent to British Psychical Society in Thousands of Letters, Two Seem to Have Hit It, One Correctly Describes the ‘Thought Broadcaster’s’ Attire, the Other a Box in the Room,” *New York Times* Feb. 18, 1927.

⁷⁶ Freud, “New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis,” 55.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Here the dream of perfect communication morphs into a nightmare of uncontrollable and dehumanized masses. Freud's protestation that "there is no reason to be frightened by" this image is a little bit too much. The image of an insect community recalls other swarming mobs—herds and masses moving as one, as if they were controlled by some invisible force beyond conscious understanding. Mobs, masses and insects recall the violence of pogroms and lynchings. As Marc Redfield suggests, "Crowd-consciousness infects identity with an exteriority that is at once social, historical, and—Freud's phylogenetic speculations suggest—potentially inhuman."⁷⁸

While Freud yearningly fantasizes the prospects of being able to *grasp* this other form of communication, there is a latent anxiety about what would (or *could*) happen if it were seized by the wrong person. The problem with fantastic modern medical and technological developments is that as much as they enable fantastic new wonders, they can also enable fantastically archaic horrors. Both are described as "unimaginable," but while horrific results are not always expected, new realities often begin as imagined fantasies. The human imagination is horrifyingly enormous and includes futures both wondrous and wondrously horrible. While the former are often called dreams and the latter nightmares, both can be prophetic. Indeed, Freud's descriptions of insect communities are oddly prophetic or reminiscent of two interconnected sets of images: on one screen, we see the Nazis, stepping in formation, controlled by some invisible force, moving with precision and decision, powered by anti-semitic fear and repressed rage; on the opposite screen, we see the Nazis' image of the Jews, swarming the *Heimat*, spreading like a cancerous tumor, contagion spreading throughout the *Deutsche*

⁷⁸ Marc Redfield, "The Fictions of Telepathy." *Surfaces* 2.27 (1992): 6.

countryside and cities. Though Jews were often pictured as swarms of rodents—as in the infamous propaganda film, *Der Ewige Jude* (1940)—more generally they were pictured as vermin which had to be “exterminated.”⁷⁹ Freud’s image of the “insect communities” who communicate through some archaic form of communication is *uncannily prophetic* in more ways than one. If one is inside or in control of such a community, this form of extra-sensory communication might be exciting, but there is never just one community; there is always an outside.

G. Psychoanalysis: Occulted Beyond Sensory Perception

Despite his protestations about maintaining the distinctions between psychoanalytic science and occult explorations, Freud was well aware of the inextricability of these pursuits. “What, after all,” asks Roger Luckhurst, “could be more occulted at the time than the Freudian unconscious, this dynamic, structural thing, founded on the mechanism of sexual repression and ‘outside’, in a way still inconceivable to his contemporaries, the consciousness?”⁸⁰ Just as Freud’s meditations on the Jewish Question extend far beyond the works in which he explicitly addressed it, so too, his meditations on the occult can be found far beyond the essays in which he explicitly confronted the questions of telepathy and the relationship of psychoanalysis to the

⁷⁹ Indeed, when *Der Stürmer* ran contests encouraging German children to send their thoughts on Jews, one little girl wrote, “People are so bothered by the way we’re treating the Jews. They can’t understand it, because they are God’s creatures. But cockroaches are also God’s creatures, and we destroy them.” Eliahu Ellis and Shmuel Silinsky, *The War Against the Jews*, 2005, Available: http://www.aish.com/holocaust/overview/The_War_Against_the_Jews.asp. More recently, these images have been revived in the media wars of the Middle East.

⁸⁰ Luckhurst, “‘Something Tremendous, Something Elemental,’” 59-60.

occult.⁸¹ Significantly, Freud published his essay on “The Unconscious” (1915) in the *Proceedings for the Society of Psychological Research* and it is this context which compelled him to distinguish *his* theory of the unconscious from the non-physiological theories of psychology which emerged from the Society’s researchers such as William James and Frederic Myers. Though many of the people interested in occultism were admittedly seeking confirmation of religious beliefs in life after death (for example),⁸² the Society’s researchers insisted that their work was “scientific.” In seeking rational and psychological explanations for occult phenomena, they not only conducted controlled experiments, they also investigated mediums who were known to be spurious in the hopes of learning what they could about human psychology and trickery.⁸³ Luckhurst suggests that Freud’s concern about the association of Psychoanalysis with the Society was not that it would detract from its scientific reputation, but that the theories of the Psychological Researchers were “more orthodox, more rigorously close, to the dominant psychology” which suspiciously regarded Freud’s thought.⁸⁴ In “The Unconscious” and throughout his career Freud showed a familiarity with the Society’s methods, procedures and definitions,

⁸¹ Freud explicitly addresses the question of how psychoanalysis incorporates telepathy and the occult in the following works: Sigmund Freud, “Dreams and Telepathy,” *S.E.*, vol. XVIII (1922); “Some Additional Notes upon Dream-Interpretation as a Whole,” *S.E.*, vol. XIX (1925); Freud, “New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis.”; “Psycho-Analysis and Telepathy.” A couple of notes about these texts: “Psychoanalysis and Telepathy” was prepared as a lecture for the “secret” committee in 1921, but it was not published until after Freud’s death. In “Some Additional Notes upon Dream Interpretation” Freud includes a section on “The Occult Significance of Dreams.” In his *New Introductory Lectures* (1933), he returned to many of the themes he had first explored in his earlier *Introductory Lectures* (1915-1916), but now he included a lecture on “Dreams and Occultism.”

⁸² Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychological Research in England, 1850-1914* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 62ff.

⁸³ Keeley, “‘The Coping Stone on Psycho-Analysis’: Freud, Psychoanalysis, and The Society for Psychological Research,” 39.

⁸⁴ Luckhurst, “‘Something Tremendous, Something Elemental,’” 57-58.

particularly regarding telepathy.⁸⁵ For example, when Frederic Myers' coined the term "telepathy" in 1882, he noted that it referred to "all cases of impression received at a distance without *the normal operation of the recognized sense organs.*"⁸⁶ Freud's descriptions of various mysterious phenomena such as telepathy and transmissions to and from the unconscious also focus on the impressions which operate without the "normal operation of recognized sense organs." There is a stretching of the human body, through new and future technologies. As Freud writes in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, "Man has become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent; but those organs have not grown on to him and they still give him much trouble at times."⁸⁷

Like the psychological researchers who went to lengths to prove the existence of telepathic transmissions imperceptible to "the recognized sense organs," Freud struggled to prove the existence of his concept of the unconscious which "in its innermost nature it is as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is as incompletely presented by the data of consciousness as is the external world by the communications of our sense organs."⁸⁸ The unconscious could only be proven by its *consequences*, "ideas and impulses which emerge one knows not whence."⁸⁹ So too, Freud explains that Moses could only prove the existence of his "abstract" deity by appealing to *consequences*. Indeed, Freud explains that this "triumph of intellectuality over sensuality" was the

⁸⁵ Keeley, "The Coping Stone on Psycho-Analysis': Freud, Psychoanalysis, and The Society for Psychological Research," 44ff.

⁸⁶ Frederic Myers, "First Report of the Literary Committee." *Proceedings of the Society for Psychological Research* (1883), my italics.

⁸⁷ Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, 91-92.

⁸⁸ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams, S.E.*, vol. IV-V (1900), 613.

⁸⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, S.E.*, vol. XV-XVI (1915-1917), 278.

defining feature of Mosaic monotheism. Echoing Myers' definition of telepathy, he writes, "The new realm of intellectuality was opened up, in which ideas, memories and inferences became decisive in contrast to the lower psychical activity which had *direct perceptions by the sense-organs* as its content."⁹⁰

Something odd happens when we compare Freud's proof of the "unconscious" to Moses' proof of the existence of God. Freud explains that the symptoms invade the individual, like the afore-mentioned foreign bodies, or "like all-powerful guests from an alien world, immortal beings intruding into the turmoil of mortal life."⁹¹ On the one hand, these "immortal beings" are simply another name for ghosts, ascending from the unconscious netherworld where they populate the archaic heritage, the burden of the past in the present.⁹² On the other hand, these same images gesture toward the position of the Jews as "alien guests" who not only "intrude" into "the turmoil of mortal life," but are also blamed for causing this turmoil. In the anti-semitic imaginary, Jews were figured as "all-powerful" guests invading the body politic of Western Europe. Indeed, in *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud links the various fantasies of omnipotence to the emergence of monotheism: the world-empire of the Pharaohs was transformed into a monotheistic idea, which in turn had sustained the Jewish people by giving them pride in being a "chosen" people. Where their "wishful phantasy" of "world dominion" had long ago been abandoned, their enemies had sustained the belief by creating the Elders of Zion.⁹³ This fantasy of omnipotence is sustained by the image of Jews as "spectral, disembodied spirits lacking a national home and, thus, as unwelcome guests and aliens wandering into

⁹⁰ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 113.

⁹¹ Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, 278.

⁹² Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, S.E., vol. XVIII (1921), 75, n71.

⁹³ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 85.

and within other people's homes, disrupting and haunting them, making them 'Unheimliche.'⁹⁴ However, it is not *only* the Jews who are uncanny, but the very existence of Jewishness which compels others to recognize the uncanniness of the human subject, the alien strangeness *within* each individual. As Santner notes, "What makes the Other *other* is not his or her spatial exteriority with respect to my being but the fact that he or she is *strange*, is a *stranger*, and not only to me but also to him- or herself, is the bearer of an internal alterity... against this background, the very opposition between 'neighbor' and 'stranger' begins to lose its force."⁹⁵

While avoiding explicitly referring to "Jews" in his discussions of the unconscious and the uncanny, Freud uses language which alludes to the Jewish Question. For example, in "The Unconscious," he attempts to explain the place of fantasies in the psychoanalytic structure of the psyche. While fantasies may derive from the unconscious, he notes that their ultimate place in the psyche is unclear: they "qualitatively belong" to the preconscious system, even as they "factually belong" to the unconscious. Unable to find a firm location for the fantasies, Freud ultimately turns the question around—now the question is not their "derivation" but their "fate": "Their origin is what decides their fate." Here, in the midst of a technical discussion of the systems of the psyche, he inserts a surprising analogy: "We may compare them [the fantasies] with individuals of mixed race who, taken all round, resemble white men, but who betray their coloured descent by some striking feature or other, and on that account are excluded from society and enjoy

⁹⁴ Shapiro, "The Uncanny Jew: A Brief History of an Image," 65.

⁹⁵ Santner, *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig*, 9.

none of the privileges of white people.”⁹⁶ The features of the mulatto are “striking” only because the person’s descent is supposedly “known” — otherwise it could not be “betrayed.” But what if this origin is itself a fantasy? How do we distinguish between the one drop of reality and the one drop of fantasy? Where do these fantasies originate, how and why are they sustained? If “origin is what decides the fate” of both fantasies and individuals, how can we distinguish between real and fantasized origins which decide an individual’s fate?

As Daniel Boyarin has noted, Freud’s comments on race—here and elsewhere—have elicited what appear to be two diametrically opposed interpretations: on the one hand, Freud is portrayed as the white man who secures his position of power in contrast to women and “dark” colonized peoples.⁹⁷ On the other hand, he uses “white” and “black” as “barely disguised ciphers for Aryan and Jew,” indeed as displacements for the tensions between these terms.⁹⁸ Like Boyarin, I read these two approaches to Freud’s racial discourse as reflections of one phenomenon. However, I want to suggest that this phenomenon is not only the “European Jew’s racial anomalousness” as “white/not quite,”⁹⁹ but rather the anomalousness of racial certitude. The Jew is “uncanny” precisely because he demonstrates that such definitions—of whiteness, of maleness, of Aryanness—are always “not quite.” While the “condition of doubled consciousness”

⁹⁶ Freud, “The Unconscious,” 191.

⁹⁷ Thus, for example, Freud (in)famously refers to the adult woman’s sexuality as the ‘dark continent.’ Sigmund Freud, “The Question of Lay Analysis: Conversations with an Impartial Person,” *S.E.*, vol. XX (1926), 212.

⁹⁸ Daniel Boyarin, “What Does a Jew Want? or, The Political Meaning of the Phallus,” *The Psychoanalysis of Race*, ed. Christopher Lane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 219.

⁹⁹ This is Homi Bhabha’s formulation of the doubled consciousness of the colonial subject in Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994). Quoted in Boyarin, “What Does a Jew Want? or, The Political Meaning of the Phallus,” 219.

marks particular subjects who “know” that they are Jews or “not quite whites,” Freud would suggest that all individuals are marked by such doubling. The psyche always contains more than it can bear.

G. Haunted by the Ghosts of Freud and Derrida

Freud’s meditations on the occult have been extensively explored and documented, particularly in the wake of Derrida’s essay on “Telepathy” (1987). While Derrida and other scholars have briefly attended to the ways in which transference, telepathy and intergenerational transmission are related within Freud’s oeuvre, they have oddly put aside the question of how these matters relate to his attempts to confront the Jewish Question.¹⁰⁰ While Derrida does not comment on the connection “Telepathy” and Jewishness, his curatorial choices suggest that he is aware (even if only unconsciously) of an ongoing relationship, a pattern of influence if not exchange. Before turning to Derrida, I want to outline the material from which he draws in “Telepathy,” namely, the chapter on “Occultism” in Ernest Jones’ biography. As I have noted in an earlier chapter, Jones was uncomfortable with Freud’s Lamarckism for it seemed to detract from the scientific reputation of psychoanalysis. Nonetheless, he suggests that Freud’s attraction to this “pseudoscientific” theory can be partially understood as a matter of his Jewishness. So too, in his chapter on Freud’s views on “Occultism,” Jones cites from his own letter to Freud (which I have previously quoted): “In your private political opinions, you might be

¹⁰⁰ See, for example, Keeley, “‘The Coping Stone on Psycho-Analysis’: Freud, Psychoanalysis, and The Society for Psychical Research.”; Luckhurst, “‘Something Tremendous, Something Elemental.’”; Thurschwell, *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking, 1880-1920*.

a Bolshevik, but you would not help the spread of psychoanalysis by announcing it.” Jones recalls that Freud’s response in which he apologized for his “apparent inconsistency” on the matter and reported that certain recent experiences with his daughter and with Ferenczi had presented “such a convincing force for me [that is, Freud] that the diplomatic considerations on the other side had to give way.”¹⁰¹ Freud’s famous reply, of course, weaves all these concerns together, practically demonstrating the concept of “negation”:

I was once more faced with a case where on a reduced scale I had to repeat the great experiment of my life: namely, to proclaim a conviction without taking into account any echo from the outer world. So then it was unavoidable. When anyone adduces my fall into sin, just answer him calmly that conversion to telepathy is my private affair like my Jewishness, my passion for smoking and many other things, and that the theme of telepathy is in essence alien to psychoanalysis.¹⁰²

Before even mentioning his Jewishness, Freud employs the very same rhetoric which he often used to describe his relationship to *Judentum*: it allowed him to face the compact majority, to be intellectually independent without worrying about the “echo from the outer world.” And yet, quite obviously, he doth protest a bit too much. Indeed, as Derrida remarks in response to this passage, “Who would be satisfied with such a declaration coming from him?”¹⁰³

While Jones obviously worried about the scientific reputation of psychoanalysis, he attempts to anticipate any damage by blaming Freud’s interests in Lamarckism and occultism on a mystical remnant of his Jewishness. I have already alluded to Jones’ interpretation of Freud’s Lamarckism. In an odd echo of that episode, in his chapter on

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (New York: Basic Books, 1953-1957), III: 395.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, III: 395-396.

¹⁰³ Jacques Derrida, “Telepathy,” Trans. Nicholas Royle. *Oxford Literary Review* 10 (1988): 35.

“Occultism,” Jones cagily suggests that Freud’s willingness to entertain the reality of occult phenomena is structurally similar to his position as a “godless Jew.” Evidently worried that Freud’s obstinate idiosyncrasies would detract from the reputation of the psychoanalytic institution, Jones blames both Freud’s Lamarckism and his interest in occultism on the quirks of genius. Even in describing Freud’s views on occultism as “an exquisite oscillation between scepticism and credulity,” Jones alludes to the relationship between this matter and Freud’s “religious” position. Finally, he recounts a late-night conversation he had had with Freud in which Jones asked him “where such beliefs” in the occult would end: “if one could believe in mental processes floating in the air, one could go on to a belief in angels... ‘Quite so,’” replied Freud, “even *der liebe Gott*.” Jones goes on to remark that though this was all said in a “jocular tone,” it suggested a “more serious undertone as well.” While Jones was explicitly bothered by the “flimsy evidence” supporting the reality of telepathy, he is obviously worried by the serious undertone threatening the very structure of psychoanalysis as a science.

In his essay on “Telepathy,” Derrida suggests that telepathy is itself a “foreign body,” haunting the borders of psychoanalysis, something which is “closely bound up with psychoanalysis, but with which psychoanalysis cannot come to terms.”¹⁰⁴ Weaving together his own postcard-like meditations with Freud’s letters to Jones, Derrida follows

¹⁰⁴ While Derrida focuses on Freud’s use of the term, “foreign body,” it is actually his translators and interpreters who have taken this term and used it to more generally describe telepathy’s position within psychoanalysis. See Nicholas Royle, *After Derrida* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 64. So too, Nicholas Abraham argues that “*telepathy* was probably the name Freud unwittingly gave to a *foreign body* within the corpus of psychoanalysis, a foreign body that retains its own individuality, walls, and partitions.” Like the unconscious, telepathy becomes the “name’ of that which cannot be fully assimilated, interpreted or incorporated within the rational structure of psychoanalysis. Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Wolf Man’s Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*, trans. Nicholas Rand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 86.

Freud's lead and uses a language which mimics, mirrors and contorts the language which was used to describe the position of Jews in Germany and other Western European nations in the twentieth century. "The theme of telepathy', he [Freud] will say in a letter to Jones, 'is in essence alien [*étranger*] to psychoanalysis.'" This is Derrida quoting Freud: telepathy is alien, there are "foreign bodies" bursting into discussions of the subject, and yet Derrida refuses to directly address the elephant in the corner. While he emphasizes the speciousness of Freud's rhetoric, noting that "this letter is contradictory from start to finish," he does not stop to note the coherence of the letter.¹⁰⁵ Quite obviously, none of these things are simply Freud's "own affairs": this is what is most frustrating about being a social being, and even more so, about being a spokesperson for your own creation. In his letter to Freud, Jones notes, "You also forget sometimes in what a special position you are personally. When many things pass under the name of psychoanalysis our answer to inquirers is 'psycho-analysis is Freud,' so now the statement that psa [psychoanalysis] leads logically to telepathy, etc., is more difficult to meet."¹⁰⁶ In other words, nothing you do—nothing you *are*—is simply a "private affair." Not even smoking was private, for (in addition to "second hand smoke), it was at least partially responsible for the jaw cancer which was making Freud dependent on his family, particularly Anna (whom he mentions in the letter to Jones).

¹⁰⁵ Similarly, in response to Freud's 1926 letter to Jones in which he explicitly links telepathy, smoking and Jewishness, Pamela Thurschwell writes, "I will leave aside the intriguing question of just how private Jewishness and smoking are in relation to psychoanalysis." Thurschwell, "Ferenczi's Dangerous Proximities: Telepathy, Psychosis, and the Real Event," 120.

¹⁰⁶ Letter #476, February 25, 1926. Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones, *The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones*, ed. Andrew Paskauskas (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 33-34.

Freud contends that telepathy is like his Jewishness—“private” and “foreign [fremde]” to the project of psychoanalysis, but this is an exemplary case of negation: Freud’s Jewishness had never been a completely “private affair,” irrelevant to psychoanalysis. It was constantly posing problems—but also opportunities, as he was fond of noting—for the position of psychoanalysis. If telepathy and Jewishness are “foreign bodies” within psychoanalysis, they are also foreign bodies which could not be easily integrated into the national bodies of Western Europe, but whose presence was vital to these (national) bodies’ life. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), for example, Freud notes that “the Jewish people, scattered everywhere, have rendered most useful services to the civilizations of the countries that have been their *hosts*”: as “alien guests” they have provided an outlet for their hosts’ aggressive tendencies.¹⁰⁷

If only in its literary imagery, this “haunted” theory of transmission seems far more Derridean than Freudian, since Freud gingerly danced around the possibilities of such uncanny transmissions, while Derrida could be said to have made a career out of such dancing.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, in Derrida’s very textual practice (as well as the various theorists who have extended and clarified his philosophical poetry)¹⁰⁹—he incorporates the ghost of Freud, most explicitly in “Telepathy” and in *The Post Card*. In these works, Derrida weaves a tapestry out of quotations from Freud’s letters and texts with his [Derrida’s] own speculations and letters to ghosts. Thus, in many sections, it is almost impossible to distinguish Derrida’s text from Freud’s, his thoughts from those of the spirits who he

¹⁰⁷ Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, 114.

¹⁰⁸ Nicholas Royle, *Telepathy and Literature: Essays on the Reading Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991); Royle, *After Derrida*; Nicholas Royle, “Phantom Review.” *Textual Practice* 11.2 (1997); *The Uncanny* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2003).

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Ronell, *The Telephone Book: Technology, Schizophrenia, Electric Speech*.

channels, presence from absence, text from erasure. Here is a telling example, reproduced with its typographical idiosyncrasies:

15 July 1979

a terrifying consolation. Sometimes I also approach Telepathy as if it were an assurance finally

Instead of muddling everything up, or complicating the parasitism, as I told you and as I believe, I hope for complete presence from it, fusional immediacy, parousia to keep you, at a distance, in order to keep myself within you, I play pantheism versus separation, so you are no longer leaving, you can no longer even confront me with your 'determination', nor I

Fort: Da, telepathy against telepathy, distance against menacing immediacy, but also the opposite...

This passage calls for an extensive interpretation, but I will only mention a few points (or questions, as it were). First, the identities of the "I" and the "you" are unclear: is this Derrida speaking to or through Freud? Will the "parousia" bring back Freud or Derrida (now that he, too, has entered the realm of ghosts)? Who is here and who is there? (Derrida's style is itself contagious, forcing a reader to engage in speculative cycles of playing with words whose linguistic chains threaten to self-replicate indefinitely.) Who is involved in the "parasitism": is Derrida the parasite to Freud's body of work, or has Freud been transformed into a parasite who lives through Derrida's playful interpretations? Or can we see the "parasitism" as part of a larger collection of allusions to the Jewish Question, to the question of how Jewishness is or is not "foreign" to psychoanalysis and to Europe?

These questions also echo the question of how to distinguish the "private" and *heimliche* from the "alien," strange [*fremde*] and *unheimliche*. Is it possible to distinguish between the diverse elements lurking within one body: the foreign from the self, that which we have acquired from that which we have developed, the genealogical strands

from the environmental influences? While these questions were being pursued in the realm of evolutionary theory, they were central to Freud's attempt to establish a theory of subjectivity. At the end of his Lecture on "Dreams and Occultism," Freud presents a story which he had heard from Dorothy Burlingame in which a "mother's childhood memory... *bursts* in on the following generation (her son, aged 10, brings her a gold coin for her to put by on the same day she had talked about it in analysis)."¹¹⁰ Derrida places this story within his own essay on "Telepathy," suggesting that the transmission between generations is telepathic. While Freud explains that "the action had forced its way that day into the child's life like a foreign body," the person who is most surprised by the interaction is the *mother*, for it is only the mother who is aware of the foreign body, whereas the child experiences the "memory" as if it is something entirely new. While many of Freud's stories about intergenerational transmission are between fathers and sons, the story which he quotes from Burlingame is about a mother and a son, or actually, more generally between *mothers and sons*. This seems fairly significant in that a child develops as a "foreign body" within a mother's body and in terms of the suggestiveness of mother-son relationships with the Freudian notion of the "family romance." It is only the expulsion of this foreign body (the fetus) that makes telepathy possible, that produces a "distance [*tele-*]" at which to experience the other's thoughts, feelings, memories [*-pathos*].¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Derrida, "Telepathy," 33-34; Freud, "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis," 56.

¹¹¹ One reason that telepathy began to seem threatening to psychoanalysis was not that it was *a priori* distinctly external to Freud's thought, but because psychoanalysis was no longer confined to Freud. Indeed, Freud began to get worried about the status of the occult (in relationship to psychoanalysis) precisely at the moment when it was becoming clear that psychoanalysis was no longer only identified with Freud. Thus, in the same year in which he published "Future Prospects for Psychoanalytic Therapy" (1910), Freud acknowledged that Ferenczi's reports "seem to me finally to shatter the doubts about the existence of

H. Phantom Letters

In many discussions of transmission and Jewishness, the question of what it is that is being transmitted is often left quite ambiguous. While Freud developed a theory of Jewishness, nowhere does he set out to explain what this “Jewishness” is—it is neither a physical nor a psychological characteristic or “essence,” nor is it really the memory of the murder of Moses. Indeed, Freud’s version of Jewishness would be better described as a *process* of responding and awakening the memory-traces of Moses: the tradition, the repressed memory and the return of the repressed. This seems to suggest that the condition of being Jewish may in fact be simply a state of “remembering” that one is Jewish, even if this “remembering” is unconscious, rejected or refused. This logical conundrum can be compared to Edgar Allan Poe’s story of the “Purloined Letter” in which an apparently very important letter changes hands a number of times. While the reader of Poe’s story knows that the letter is important—and that it may contain a secret—she never learns the contents of the letter.¹¹² As Barbara Johnson explains, “The letter, then, acts as a signifier *not* because its contents are lacking, but because its function is not dependent on the knowledge or non-knowledge of those contents.”¹¹³ In other words, the condition of being Jewish is not an empty condition, but rather one

thought transference. Now it is a matter of getting used to it in your thoughts and losing respect for its novelty, and also *preserving the secret long enough in the maternal womb*, but that is where the doubt ends.” Letter #163, Freud to Ferenczi, Aug. 20, 1910, Freud and Ferenczi, *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi*, 211, my italics.

¹¹² Thomas Ollive Mabbott, “Text of ‘The Purloined Letter’ by Edgar Allan Poe, with Notes,” *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida & Psychoanalytic Theory*, eds. John P. Muller and William J. Richardson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).

¹¹³ Barbara Johnson, “The Frame of Reference: Poe, Lacan, Derrida,” *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida & Psychoanalytic Reading*, eds. John P. Muller and William J. Richardson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988 [1977]), 242.

which is not dependent on the knowledge or non-knowledge of what it “means” to be Jewish.

Within the discipline of literary criticism, Poe’s story is well-known as the object of Jacques Lacan’s and Jacques Derrida’s opposing interpretations and their discussions of Freudian logic. In the final sentence of his “Seminar on the Purloined Letter,” Lacan states, “the letter always arrives at its destination.”¹¹⁴ As Johnson notes in her commentary on the Seminar, this sentence can be “simply pleonastic or variously paradoxical”: amongst other things, it can mean that “wherever the letter is, is its destination,” “the repressed always returns,” and “we all die.” Thus, the letter is meaning, or death, the death letter which we all someday receive. Derrida responds that Lacan errs in overlooking “the possibility of sheer accident, irreversible loss, unreappropriable residues, and infinite divisibility, which are necessary and inevitable in the system’s very elaboration.”¹¹⁵ Indeed, it is the possibility of such accidents resulting in forgetting, oblivion or worse, destruction, that drives people to write, send and save letters. This is what Derrida eventually calls “Archive Fever”: a drive to recall life from dead matter.¹¹⁶

According to the Derridean logic, there is no guarantee that a letter will arrive at its destination. Neither genealogical inheritance nor telepathic transmission (or any combination thereof) can guarantee that the “letter” will arrive where the letter-writer intended it to arrive. What would it mean if we *could* guarantee that the letter would be received by its intended addressee, that the traces in the archive would be “appropriately”

¹¹⁴ Jacques Lacan, “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter,’” *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida & Psychoanalytic Reading*, eds. John P. Muller and William J. Richardson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 53.

¹¹⁵ Johnson, “The Frame of Reference: Poe, Lacan, Derrida,” 225.

¹¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

interpreted, that Jewishness will survive to the next generation? There must be some sort of ethical hesitation, a refusal to enter into such fortune-telling. Only at the end of time—and possibly not even then—can any such “judgments” be made. “The ultimate naïvety,” writes Derrida, “would be to allow oneself to think that Telepathy guarantees a destination which ‘posts and telecommunications’ fail to provide.”¹¹⁷

In one of his many glosses of Lacan and Derrida’s impasse, Žižek gestures toward the circular logic at work in identifying genealogy as the source of one’s future:

The illusion proper to the process of interpellation consists in the overlooking of its *performative* dimension: when I recognize myself as the addressee of the call of the ideological big Other (Nation, Democracy, Party, God, and so forth), when this call 'arrives at its destination' in me, I automatically misrecognize that it is this very act of recognition which *makes me* what I have recognized myself as—I don't recognize myself in it because I'm its addressee, I become its addressee the moment I recognize myself in it. *This* is the reason why a letter always reaches its addressee: because one becomes its addressee when one is reached.¹¹⁸

Without much re-writing, Žižek’s description can be used to refer to the illusion proper to the process by which a person is identified as Jewish. What happens, however, when a person rejects the “call”? Is it possible to hear the call, to know that it is addressed to you, and to turn away from it? While “the letter always arrives at its destination” suggests that the letter’s predestination was fore-ordained, to argue that it is unknown whether the letter always arrives (Derrida) suggests a teleological desire to know the future: “it makes sense only insofar as I presuppose that I can be its addressee *before* the letter reaches me—in other words, it presupposes the traditional teleological trajectory with a

¹¹⁷ Derrida, “Telepathy,” 16.

¹¹⁸ Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 12.

preordained goal.”¹¹⁹ When Jewish leaders worry about whether the next generation will “receive” the “letter” (the fact of their Jewishness) and whether they will transmit it, they are working under a teleological assumption about the unidirectionality of this transmission which is not necessarily inherent in the covenant: “Not with you alone...”¹²⁰

Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok have developed an entire psychoanalytic theory of phantom cryptology based on their own psychoanalytic practice and on Freud’s concepts of transference, telepathy and intergenerational transmission. In Abraham and Torok’s work, the “concepts of crypt and incorporation denote the individual’s forcible creation of a psychic tomb, arising from his or her *inassimilable* life experiences, while the phantom concerns the unwitting reception of a secret which was someone else’s psychic burden.”¹²¹ Whether “crypt” or “tomb,” the individual is haunted by the secrets of an Other. Whereas Derrida holds the “phantom” as a sort of epistemological category—that which *cannot* be spoken, that which is *yet* to be spoken—Abraham and Torok suggest that the phantom can and *must* be apprehended, “to stage a word—whether metaphorically, as an alloseme, or as a cryptonym—constitutes an attempt at exorcism, an attempt, that is, to relieve the unconscious by placing the effects of the phantom in the social realm.”¹²² If the “crypt” is left unspoken its power will become so unbearable that action (repeating) will have to happen. Thus, while it might be “reasonable” to think that the “phantom effect” would progressively fade “during its transmission from one

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ *Deuteronomy* 29: 14-15.

¹²¹ Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Nicholas Rand (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 21.

¹²² Nicolas Abraham, “Notes on the Phantom: A Complement to Freud’s Metapsychology,” trans. Nicholas Rand, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 176.

generation to the next and that, finally,” it would disappear, Abraham and Torok not that “this is not at all the case when shared or complementary phantoms find a way of being established as social practices along the lines of *staged words*.”¹²³ What does this mean? Do they really believe that these “crypts” can be expelled by staging the words? Would this be a loss or a release? What would it mean to “cure” a person of such problems?

If only because my own logic has itself been invaded by all-powerful alien guests, I will put these questions in terms of Jewishness. While the language of “exorcism” and “incorporation” gestures toward the anti-semitic version of the Jewish Question (should these foreign bodies be expelled or assimilated?), it also gestures toward “burden” of the covenant, of the “logic of election” which drives the Jewish spiritual project, the sense that the Jews are an “eternal” people, as Franz Rosenzweig put it. This is the too-muchness which “calls” a person to fulfill his or her debt to a particular past, whether this is understood as the covenant with God to sustain the “chain of tradition” or the burden of guilt of having murdered Moses. What happens when a person only senses (“suspects”) this debt, but cannot quite express it? Does it become more powerful “the less it can be expressed in words”? What happens when, for example, a person who does not “know” that she “is” Jewish receives a letter (“out of the blue”) telling her that she is Jewish? Does she need to “stage” this secret socially, does she need to “come out” as Jewish, or can she just put the letter in a drawer and forget about it? Are these the only choices? Would a person be “cured” of his Jewish “problem” if he “staged” his (secret, unexpressed) Jewishness, “returned” to a life of Jewish ritual and “social practice”? Would such practices “expel” the tomb? Or would such a “staging” sustain the “phantom

¹²³ Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, 176.

effect,” and would this be for better (for the survival of the Jewish tradition), or for worse (for the survival of anti-semitism)? And can this be decided?

Abraham and Torok reject the idea that the “phantom” is an “archaic heritage,” but rather insist that it is “nothing but an invention of the living... in the sense that the phantom is meant to objectify, even if under the guise of individual or collective hallucinations, the gap produced in us by the concealment of some part of a love object’s life... what haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others.”¹²⁴ Abraham presents a prime example of the “phantom effect”: a secret about a patient’s genealogy—the fact that his father was a bastard. The example poses many questions about the relationship between the patient and his “phantoms.” For example, is the “fact” of his father’s “illegitimate” birth an *invention* of the living son? Does the patient *need* this gap in order to explain the gaps in his own life, the secrets which he cannot share with himself, let alone with his analyst? Does he create this “fiction” about his genealogy so as to cover over the greater fictions of his own life, repressed or unfulfillable desires, inadmissible secrets of an other order? Is this not part of the co-existence of the desperate wish to tell everyone about a crime and the anxiety that someone might find out about it? Abraham’s patient is an amateur geologist who spends his weekends “breaking rocks,” using them to catch butterflies which he then kills in a can of cyanide. It is revealed that he is in fact poetically re-enacting an inherited secret: his mother’s beloved (his father) had been denounced by the grandmother who sent him away. Where was he sent? To “break rocks,” [*casser les cailloux*—do forced labor] in the camps, after which he was sent to another camp where he died in the gas chambers. While Abraham reveals one

¹²⁴ Abraham, “Notes on the Phantom,” 171.

genealogical secret (that the client is a bastard), he avoids the connection between the genealogy and “the camps.”

Despite the fact that Abraham and Torok’s cryptological theory of transgenerational haunting implicitly refers to the inheritance of traumas and to the anxieties associated with unknown genealogies, as far as I can tell, they do not explicitly refer to “Jewishness” or even the Holocaust. This is only odd because their theories are incorporated in works on Jewish messianism, in the growing literature on “Holocaust” and “trauma” studies¹²⁵ and on Derrida’s own “theories of Jewishness.”¹²⁶ Indeed, their very language of “intergenerational haunting” is haunted by Freud’s theory of Jewishness in *Moses and Monotheism*: an inherited trauma which burdens generation after generation, precisely because it is “unsuspected,” unaddressed. Both Abraham and Torok are described as “Hungarian analysts” who left Hungary in the 1930s and 40s to settle in France. While it is certainly not necessary to know “which side” they would have been on during this time, such questions are difficult to avoid. I have not been able to determine whether either or both of these analysts were themselves Jewish (though their names alone would make some people presume this¹²⁷)—such a fact is never mentioned by them or by their translator-editor, Nicholas Rand, in the introductions to their two classic works, *The Wolf Man’s Magic Word* and *The Shell and the Kernel*. Is this not a phantom

¹²⁵ See, for example, Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 136, n122; Martin Kavka, *Jewish Messianism and the History of Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹²⁶ I have seen no mention of the non-mention of Abraham’s or Torok’s own relationship to the Jewish Question. See, for example, Maria Damon, “Hannah Weiner Beside Herself: Clairvoyance After Shock or The Nice Jewish Girl Who Knew Too Much.” *The East Village* (1999).

¹²⁷ Indeed, before Freud became friends with Karl Abraham, he slyly asked Jung in a postcard whether Abraham was “a descendant of his eponym.” Aug. 27, 1907, Freud and Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, 80.

in itself?¹²⁸ Nowhere do they tell us of their own involvement in this story: were they also in danger of being sent to the ‘camps’? Was Abraham’s interpretation of his patient’s story haunted by his own (first-hand? second-hand?) experience of haunting? Was he haunted by family traumas, untimely deaths which, though not witnessed, were experienced as inherited narratives, compulsions to repeat, patterns which must be “staged”?

It is significant that Freud’s meditations on the inheritance of memory and on the potential reality of telepathy have been taken most seriously—that is, not as an historical or psychoanalytic anomaly, and not as a literary flirtation with mysticism—by scholars whose primary work is not in the realm of cultural or literary theory but in the clinic, specifically with children of Holocaust survivors. These scholars have also recognized that the inheritance of memory is inextricable from a notion of telepathy which is not only “spectral” but also bodily experienced. In the classic psychoanalytic book, *Generations of the Holocaust*, the analyst James Herzog draws from Dorothy Burlingame’s writings on telepathy and simultaneous analyses of parents and their children. Unlike the psychoanalyst-historians who were uncomfortable about incorporating Freud’s meditations on telepathy, Burlingame explored how parents and children seemed to share unconscious material through an uncanny but almost bodily medium of transmission akin to telepathy.¹²⁹ So too, Grubrich-Simitis’ description of

¹²⁸ There are allusions, but no admissions. Thus, for instance, when a patient who is obsessed with genealogy confronts Abraham, he describes the accusations: “I was of low birth... Devoid of religious sentiment, I was a liberal conspiring against everything on which the nobility prides itself. I was indifferent to my origins; neither did I care that his be known and publicized.” Abraham, “Notes on the Phantom,” 172.

¹²⁹ James Herzog, “World Beyond Metaphor: Thoughts on the Transmission of Trauma,” *Generations of the Holocaust*, eds. Martin S. Bergmann and Milton E. Jucovy (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 104-105.

“contemporary attempts to understand transgenerational transmission of trauma” brings together many of the themes which I have discussed in this chapter:

When the primary object has been so severely traumatized that the trauma cannot be assimilated by the psychic metabolism, it is then unconsciously passed on to the next generation in order to be mastered—implanted, as it were, like a *foreign body*. The transmission seems to occur along primitive paths of communication that are as yet little understood, from unconscious to unconscious, through archaic transferences and countertransferences—scarcely on the level of mental ego but more on that of the *body ego*. This happens with such *oppressive inevitability and so close to the soma, that the idea of hereditary transmission of acquired characters easily comes to mind*.¹³⁰

Grubrich-Simitis does not explicitly mention telepathy, but her description echoes the language used by Freud and other scholars who have attempted to parse the unconscious transmissions between individuals as a sort of bodily feeling at a distance. What interests me, however, is not how Freud was “a little bit right” about telepathy and the inheritance of memory. Rather, I am interested in how he participated in a larger discussion in which the experience of Jewishness (both by Jews and non-Jews, however this distinction is made) is tied up with the language used to describe occult experiences: inherited memories, ghostly visitations and telepathic messages.¹³¹

See also Dorothy Burlingame, “Child Analysis and the Mother (An Excerpt),” *Psychoanalysis and the Occult*, ed. George Devereux (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1953).

¹³⁰ So too, in her study of Freud’s *Moses*, Grubrich-Simitis suggests that while the “objective disadvantage” of Freud’s Lamarckism is that it is “scientifically untenable,” it “does not dispose of the fundamental questions” which it raises. Namely, “how are we to understand and indeed explain the undeniable phenomenon of the return of the repressed in accordance with certain rhythms, or the *silent*—that is, not manifestly verbal—transmission of traumatizations from one generation to the next? These are questions of the greatest importance not only clinically but also collectively, and psychoanalysts are still searching for answers to them today.” Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, “Trauma or Drive- Drive and Trauma: A Reading of Sigmund Freud’s Phylogenetic Fantasy of 1915,” Trans. Veronica Mächtlinger. *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 43 (1988): 25, n29; *Early Freud and Late Freud: Reading Anew Studies on Hysteria and Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Philip Slotkin (New York: Routledge, 1997), 69.

¹³¹ Indeed, this same language—of bodily haunting and transgenerational telepathy—has been incorporated in a number of more recent films and novels on the Holocaust and its descendents as well as African-American slavery and its descendents. See, for example, David Grossman, *See Under: LOVE* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1989); D. M. Thomas, *The White Hotel* (New York: Viking Press, 1981). See also

It is somehow surprising when these phantasmagoric visitors don't just fade away even as they are re-figured as fantasies and science fictions. Indeed, Freud's haunted theory of Jewish transference seems to suggest that tradition (whatever it may be) does not simply get passed down from one generation to another, but goes backwards and forwards in time. Years after their deaths, Spinoza is re-inscribed as a Jew, Karl Marx is both admired and reviled for his Jewishness, and it is discovered that even Christopher Columbus may have been Jewish. What makes these historical individuals Jewish is a current revival of the idea that one's descent determines one's Jewishness (not that this idea had ever disappeared). Along these lines, it may not be surprising that in Germany today, many people have recently "discovered" that one or more grandparents were not (simply) German, but rather (more complexly) Jewish. This can make all the difference if these individuals attempt to make sense of what it is they have inherited: the guilt of the perpetrator or the guilt of the survivor. In America, it may be possible to insist that "the history we study is never our own; it is always the history of people who were in some respects like us and in other respects different."¹³² However, this line of reasoning only holds if we regard the present as absolutely distinct from the past. If we allow ourselves to fantasize about time travel, the argument falls apart: What if *I* had been there? What if now were then, and then were now? Would I have been able to simply *choose* my history, or would it have been imposed upon me—by my parents, by the judges, by some slip of the tongue? Is it possible to control the transmissions which issue from the past, haunt and invade the present, and in the very process re-define the past as we thought we knew

Octavia Butler, *Kindred* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1979); Toni Morrison, *Beloved: A Novel* (New York: Knopf, 1987).

¹³² Walter Benn Michaels, "Race into Culture: A Critical Genealogy of Identity." *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1992): 682.

it? It may be surprising to incorporate into this narrative the news story about a wave of conversion to Judaism by descendents of some of the most infamous Nazis, including the grandnephew of Hitler, and descendents of Himmler and Göring.¹³³ Whereas many Germans have “discovered” a Jewish grandparent in their past, these individuals are joining a community which is defined not only by its present and future, but most particularly by its past. Whether “real” or “imaginary,” this past is inscribed such that the present and future are defined by it and continually re-define it.

In this chapter, I have focused on Freud’s extensive meditations on mysterious transmissions which seem to occur in a realm beyond sensory perception. While such phenomena seem utterly immaterial, their consequences are palpably real. In the next and final chapter, I return to the starting point of this dissertation. Though Freud had wandered through ghostly territories since at least 1910, in his final work, he zeroed in on the *Geistigkeit* [ghostliness] associated with the Jewish people. In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud attempts to make sense of the coexistence of two seemingly opposed images of the Jews: on the one hand, as spectral and disembodied or as insufficiently embodied in their fixation on *geistige* [spiritual-intellectual] matters of the mind; and on the other hand, as overly carnal, genealogically defined as a race, eternally and physically defined, even if only in the imagination.

¹³³ Yitta Halberstam, “Choosing Judaism.” *Jewish Action* Summer 5766 (2006).

Chapter 5

Immaterial Materiality:

The 'Special Case' of Jewish Tradition

A. Material Memory and Diasporic Identity

In the last twenty years, an extensive discussion of the concept of memory has emerged across the disciplines. Historians, literary theorists and psychologists have demonstrated that memory is malleable, utterly open to creative reconstruction, never pure, never absolute.¹ While individuals and nations consistently call upon memory in their attempts to construct a stable sense of identity, it seems likely that the reason they turn to memory is that it is just as plastic as identity. And yet, across a diverse set of historical and geographical contexts, people seem to fantasize about memory as if it were something stable, something more concrete and indestructible than objects, archives and physical “sites of memory.” Indeed, this seems to be even more pronounced in our own era of global diaspora when it is clear that all identities are compound: built upon sundry

¹ A very small sampling of the enormous recent trans-disciplinary literature on this subject includes the following: Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer, eds., *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999); Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1992); Kerman Lee Klein, “On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse.” *Representations* 69 (2000); David Farrell Krell, *Of Memory, Reminiscence, and Writing: On the Verge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Matt Matsuda, *The Memory of the Modern* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, “Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices.” *American Review of Sociology* 24 (1998); Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); David G. Roskies, *The Jewish Search for a Usable Past* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); Michael Roth, *The Ironist's Cage: Memory, Trauma, and the Construction of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Edward Said, “Invention, Memory, Place.” *Critical Inquiry* 26 (2000); Daniel L. Schacter, ed., *Memory Distortion: How Minds, Brains, and Societies Reconstruct the Past* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

shards of histories, memories and traditions. Edward Said has suggested that by recognizing the shared brokenness of identity, historically antagonistic communities might be able to overcome their (supposed) differences and move toward a peaceful future. In one of his final lectures, “Freud and the Non-European,” Said recuperates *Moses and Monotheism* as just such a reconfiguration of the ruins of Jewish identity.² In reading Freud’s assertion that Moses was an Egyptian as an “opening out of Jewish identity towards its non-Jewish background,”³ Said emphasizes the openness not only of Jewish identity, but of all diasporic identity. Nonetheless, Said acknowledges that Freud’s narrative suggests something that does not necessarily accord with his hopeful thesis. According to Freud, the Israelites’ murder of Moses resulted in an indelible memory which has persistently and singularly defined the Jewish people. Contra Said, I argue that Freud’s last book is an attempt to unearth the reasons for the perplexing fixity of identity, perhaps most particularly that which is not firmly established upon a land of its own. While many historically antagonistic communities cling to the shattered pasts scattered throughout their lands, diasporic communities struggle to hold onto non-material memories scattered throughout the world. In the case of the Jewish people, this concept of memory has been transmitted not only through texts and rituals, but also through the medium of genealogy. For at least fifteen centuries, people have been defined as Jewish not because of the texts they read, the languages they speak, the rituals they practice, or the beliefs they hold, but because they have inherited Jewishness in their bodies. In this chapter, I explore the complex and indissoluble relationship between Freud’s insistence

² Edward Said, *Freud and the Non-European* (New York: Verso, in association with the Freud Museum, London, 2003), 35.

³ *Ibid.*, 50.

on the biological (material) transmission of Jewishness and his exploration of the psychical, immaterial forms of Jewish memory.

As I have discussed in the previous chapters, Freud's particular theorization of Jewishness depends upon the idea that Jewish individuals inherit a specific archaic memory. Though he had become interested in the idea that memory could be inherited two decades before writing *Moses and Monotheism*, in no other work did he explicitly connect this idea to a particular people, culture or religion. However, while the genealogical definition of Jewishness would seem to be its most prominent difference from other religious traditions (such as Christianity), Freud does not particularly emphasize this difference. Rather, he focuses on the "intellectual-spiritual" distinctions which make the Jewish tradition what it is. While "primitive" religions were defined by the performance of rituals and ceremonies, Freud suggests that Jewish tradition was defined by its supreme *Geistigkeit*—a highly specific word which (in the *Standard Edition*) is variably translated as "intellectuality" or "spirituality."⁴ Freud was well aware of the historic specificity of this term in German Idealist philosophy and the range of meaning which it could suggest—from "spirit" to "ghost" to "breath" which in Hebrew is the same word (*ruach*) as "soul"⁵—but, being Freud, he refashions the term to fit his definition of Jewish tradition.⁶ In a section entitled "Advance in *Geistigkeit* [*Fortschritt in der Geistigkeit*]," Freud laid out what he saw as the most important distinction of

⁴ In order to maintain consistency, I include the German wherever Freud uses the word *Geistigkeit* or *geistig(e)*.

⁵ See Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, S.E., vol. XXIII (1939), 99.

⁶ Michael Mack explores the relationship between Freud's thought and the German Idealist tradition in much more detail. Specifically, he suggests that Freud ironically inverted Kant's proposal that Christ was a revolutionary who inaugurates "an overthrow" of Jewish moral philosophy and thereby "turned the tables on Kant by shedding light on reason's irrationality." See Michael Mack, *German Idealism and the Jew: The Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and German Jewish Responses* (2003), 152, 154.

Mosaic monotheism. That Freud saw the “Advance in *Geistigkeit*” as the “quintessence” of his work is evidenced by the fact that he had his daughter Anna read this section as a ventriloquized lecture at the 1938 Psychoanalytic Congress in Paris. Indeed, even as he thought he might not publish the work in its entirety, he published this section separately in the winter of 1939.⁷ According to Freud, the Jewish tradition had reached the heights of “ideal abstraction” and had survived in a realm “beyond sensory perception.” As such, its survival could not be explained by the material media of culture—not “direct communication” nor “the influence of education by the setting of an example,”⁸ not rituals and not texts. The survival and transmission of Jewish tradition required a medium “beyond sensory perception” and ultimately, this medium was biological heredity. In this chapter, I examine the complex and indissoluble relationship between Freud’s insistence on the biological (material) transmission of Jewishness and his affirmation of the supreme (immaterial) *Geistigkeit* of the Jewish people.⁹

Since it has been some time since I presented the basic plot of *Moses and Monotheism*, let me re-iterate the basic outline as it pertains to this chapter. According to Freud, the Jewish tradition originated when an Egyptian named Moses chose a band of Semites upon whom he imposed a strict monotheism based on the abstract ideals of *Geistigkeit*. Though *Geistigkeit* refers to a range of philosophical and religious concepts, Freud uses it most specifically to indicate a realm opposed to the materiality of sensory perception. By rejecting the most material and magical elements of “primitive” religions,

⁷ See Jan Assmann, “Der Fortschritt in der Geistigkeit. Sigmund Freuds Konstruktion des Judentums.” *Psyche* 2.56 (2002): 157; Richard J. Bernstein, *Freud and the Legacy of Moses* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 82-89.

⁸ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 99.

⁹ The subtitle of this dissertation is thus “incidentally explained.” See Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 90.

Mosaic monotheism became supremely *geistig*: it condemned “magical ceremonies,” denied the existence of an afterlife and prohibited material representations of the deity.¹⁰ Whereas “primitive” religions proved their power through material evidence (magical ceremonies, material representations of the deity, etc.), the power of Mosaic monotheism was always a “hypothesis,” for it existed in a realm beyond sensory perception. Unable to tolerate “such a highly spiritualized [*Vergeistigte*] religion,”¹¹ the band of Semites killed Moses (repeating the prehistoric murder of the primal father described in *Totem and Taboo*). Through a complicated series of events, and over many years, the original band of Semites joined up with other groups from Midian and Kadesh who worshipped a volcano-god named Yahweh and whose leader was also named Moses. The multiplicities were covered over, the groups, gods and leaders were unified into one narrative: one people, one god, one leader. The reason these events were not recorded in the Bible, Freud explains, is that the people repressed the memory of the murder. Nonetheless, the memory-traces continued to exert their influence. Because the “traces” are genealogically transmitted, they eternally compel the people to sustain the Jewish tradition—to preserve the “ideals” of *Geistigkeit*.

In defining the Jewish tradition by both its supreme *Geistigkeit* and its genealogical transmission, Freud seems to construct an incommensurate paradox. On the one hand, he insists that the Jewish tradition is above all defined by its denial of materiality: its survival does not rely on the performance of ceremonies, rituals or other forms of “direct communication.” On the other hand, he insists that the Jewish tradition is

¹⁰ In his discussion of Freud’s *Moses*, Jan Assmann draws out the Mosaic opposition to Egyptian and “primitive” religions in more detail. See Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 151.

¹¹ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 47.

genealogically transmitted through the most material of media: the body. For Freud and for his contemporaries, genealogy was defined materially both in terms of archival practices documenting descent from a particular ancestor, and in terms of the idea that certain biological materials are transmitted from one generation to the next. Indeed, the idea of “biology” as a separate field of study only emerged in the early nineteenth century when it was coined by a German naturalist, Gottfried Reinhold in his 1802 work *Biologie* and, most significantly for this story, adopted in French in the same year by Lamarck in his *Hydrologie*.¹² The coexistence of claims to biological purity and spiritual superiority was also one of many ironic paradoxes common in Nazi racial theories.¹³ However, in Freud’s theory of Jewishness these two elements are inseparable: the *Geistigkeit* of the Jewish tradition requires biological transmission for its survival, while the biological transmission confirms the supreme *Geistigkeit* of the tradition. Freud suggests that the Jewish tradition has survived precisely because it is genealogically transmitted from generation to generation. Indeed, Freud’s final book can be seen as an attempt to address the “special case” of Jewish tradition, specifically why and how it is transmitted from generation to generation, even when parents attempt to “repress” their Jewishness by not practicing Jewish rituals or by converting and raising their children as non-Jews.¹⁴ Unlike

¹² See “biology,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2002, Oxford University Press, Available: <http://dictionary.oed.com>.

¹³ As David Biale notes in his forthcoming work, the Nazis’ “hyper-literal or physical understanding of blood contradicted [their] insistence that they represented the “spiritual” (*Geist*) over Jewish materialism.” David Biale, *Blood and Belief: The Circulation of a Symbol Between Jews and Christians* (University of California Press, 2007), chapter 5.

¹⁴ This was true for a number of Freud’s contemporaries, including his own sons, not to mention Disraeli who is generally regarded as the first Jewish prime minister of England though he was raised as a Christian. When Max Graf (the father of “Little Hans”) asked Freud whether he should raise his son as a Jew or have him baptised, Freud responded, “if you do not let your son grow up as a Jew, you will deprive him of those sources of energy which cannot be replaced by anything else. He will have to struggle as a Jew, and you ought to develop in him all the energy he will need for that struggle. Do not deprive him of that advantage.”

children of Christians or Muslims who may choose to no longer be “counted” as Christian or Muslim, children of Jewish parents are “counted” as Jewish by both Jews and non-Jews, regardless of individual experiences or choices. Since the formulation of rabbinic Judaism in the Babylonian Talmud Jewishness has been defined by the notion that “one cannot cease to be a Jew even via apostasy,”¹⁵ or as Theodor Reik put it in his book on *Jewish Wit*, “once a Jew always a Jew.”¹⁶ While the genealogical transmission of Jewishness may seem to suggest that it is a “race” rather than a “religious faith” or “cultural practice,” it functions as a link between these terms. For those who “return” to practice Judaism, it is much more than “race”—it is a body of spiritual-intellectual ideals which are grasped (if only partially) through texts, rituals and practices.

Most scholars who have addressed these aspects of Freud’s final book have focused on either his insistence on the biological transmission of memory or his emphasis on Jewish *Geistigkeit*. While their projects are very different, Jan Assmann and Daniel Boyarin both read Freud’s spiritualization [*Vergeisterung*] of Judaism as an ironic and defensive inversion of Christian anti-Jewish images of the Jewish people as mired in the

In other words, even if you do not raise him as a Jew, he will be regarded as such. Since he has inherited Jewishness, you should let him know what it means to “be” a Jew from an insider’s perspective. See Max Graf, “Reminiscences of Professor Sigmund Freud.” *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 11 (1942): 473. See also Jay Geller, “The Godfather of Psychoanalysis: Circumcision, Antisemitism, Homosexuality, and Freud’s ‘Fighting Jew’.” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 67.2 (1999).

¹⁵ Though the early Rabbis attempted to construct a Judaism based solely on practice and faith, Boyarin notes that in the Babylonian Talmud they rejected this option, “proposing instead the distinct ecclesiological principle: ‘An Israelite, even if he sins, remains an Israelite.’” Daniel Boyarin, “The Christian Invention of Judaism: The Theodosian Empire and the Rabbinic Refusal of Religion.” *Representations* 85 (2004): 22.

¹⁶ “The story is told in New York of the banker Otto Kahn and the humorist Marshall P Wilder who was a hunchback. Strolling along Fifth Avenue, Kahn pointed to a church and said: ‘Marshall, that’s the church I belong to. Did you know that I once was a Jew?’ Wilder answered: ‘Yes, Otto, and once I was a hunchback.’” Theodor Reik, *Jewish Wit* (New York: Gamut Press, 1962), 90.

materiality of text and flesh.¹⁷ By contrast, Yerushalmi and Gilman have each attended to Freud's peculiar insistence upon a Lamarckian notion of heredity, and hence, upon a racial definition of Jewishness—the idea that a person inherits Jewishness, for better and for worse, and regardless of her own feelings, beliefs or practices.¹⁸ In his seminal 1991 work, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, Yerushalmi interprets Freud's insistence on this idea as a dangerous separation of “Jewishness” (the ethnic-racial condition of being Jewish) and “Judaism” (the religion sometimes practiced by Jewish people). If Jewishness can be transmitted “independently of direct communication and education by example,” he writes (quoting Freud), “then that means that ‘Jewishness’ can be transmitted independently of ‘Judaism,’ that the former is interminable even if the latter is terminated.”¹⁹ For Yerushalmi, there is a sense that an emphasis on the (often discomfoting) bodily definitions of Jewishness detracts from the more “noble and precious” ideals of Judaism. Whereas Yerushalmi and Gilman concentrate on Freud's ethnic-racial definition of Jewishness, Assmann and Boyarin focus on his construction of the ideals of Judaism. I argue that in his final book, Freud attempts to make sense of the counter-intuitive connections between Jewishness and Judaism and suggests that the *geistig* ideals of Judaism are inseparable from the survival of the Jewish people. Freud insists on an idiosyncratic version of *Geistigkeit* not to deny

¹⁷ See Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*; Der Fortschritt in der Geistigkeit. Sigmund Freuds Konstruktion des Judentums.”; Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

¹⁸ See Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Larry Stewart, “Freud Before Oedipus: Race and Heredity in the Origins of Psychoanalysis.” *Journal of the History of Biology* 9 (1976); Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*.

¹⁹ Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, 90.

the body (as Boyarin claims), but to make sense of the “special case” of bodily definition within Judaism.

In the ongoing debate about Freud’s relationship to *Judentum*, one of the major questions has been whether he positively regarded it as a religion (Judaism) based on spiritual-intellectual ideals, or negatively as a racial-ethnic identity (Jewishness) based on internalized anti-semitism. Thus, while Richard Bernstein addresses both the biological and the *geistig* elements in Freud’s last book, he insists that they cannot coexist: “Freud explicitly denies the importance of biological transmission and *positively* asserts the importance of an ‘ideal factor’ in Jewish survival.”²⁰ Jacques LeRider goes so far as to suggest that a racial definition of Jewishness is a psychological problem that “Freud radically overcame,” forgoing the “temptation of falling back into ‘biological,’ ‘hereditary,’ and ‘racial’ representations of the Jewish identity.”²¹ If the racialization of *Judentum* is a sort of psychological problem, however, it is one that continuously returns, even after it has been seemingly “overcome.” In January 1935, Lou Andreas-Salomé wrote a letter to Freud, responding to his description his burgeoning work: “What particularly fascinated *me* is a specific characteristic of the ‘return of the repressed,’ namely, the way in which *noble and precious* elements return despite long intermixture with every conceivable kind of material.”²² While this sentence has been repeatedly quoted as evidence that Freud’s last book can be read as a *positive* evaluation of

²⁰ Bernstein, *Freud and the Legacy of Moses*, 113.

²¹ Jacques Le Rider, “Jewish Identity in *Moses and Monotheism*.” *The Psychohistory Review* 25 (1997): 247.

²² Lou Andreas-Salomé to Freud, January 1935, Sigmund Freud and Andreas-Salomé, *Letters*, trans. William and Elaine Robson-Scott, ed. Ernst Pfeiffer (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1972 [1966]), 206.

Judentum,²³ it seems instead to raise the question as to why an individual or a people would repress elements which were so “noble and precious.” The importance of Freud’s last book derives, I think, not from solving the problem of whether *Judentum* is a religion or an ethnic-racial identity (as if such a problem were solvable), but from exploring its most problematic and paradoxical aspects without knowing whether their return will be noble or otherwise.

B. The “Special Case” of Jewish Tradition

Central to the relationship of Jewish *Geistigkeit* and Jewish genealogy is the concept of “tradition” in the “special case of Jewish history.”²⁴ Though Freud had explored the nature of “primitive” traditions in *Totem and Taboo* (1913), in *Moses and Monotheism* he redefines “tradition” as something which is both supremely *geistig*—ideally immaterial, “beyond sensory perception”—and undeniably *material*—genealogically inherited, beyond individual experience. Freud’s insistence on the genealogical transmission of Jewish tradition can be better understood by comparing his use of the word “tradition” in *Moses and Monotheism* with his earlier use of the word in *Totem and Taboo*. Throughout the earlier work, he explores the nature of “traditions”—specific customs, rituals and ceremonies—which preserved the memory of the murder of the primal father and guaranteed its transmission to future generations. From the very first sentence of *Totem and Taboo*, he addresses the question of transmission and the role

²³ See Bernstein, *Freud and the Legacy of Moses*, 119; Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, 78.

²⁴ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 53.

of “tradition” in this process. “Prehistoric man,” he writes, “is known to us through the *inanimate monuments* and implements which he has left behind, through the information about his art, his religion and his attitude towards life which has come down to us either *directly* or by way of *tradition* handed down in legends, myths and fairy tales, and through the relics of his mode of thought which survive in our own *manners and customs*.”²⁵ Here, Freud refers to “tradition” as one amongst many “inanimate” media which transmitted the past into the present: from “monuments” to “myths” to “manners.” As he explores the nature of these media in the four essays of *Totem and Taboo*, he narrates a history of religion from the origins of primitive man’s totemic rituals to the development of Christian communion,²⁶ but he completely passes over the development of Mosaic monotheism. Though he briefly mentions the early sacrifices of the Semitic peoples, a discussion of Jewish tradition is nowhere to be found in *Totem and Taboo*.²⁷

Though Freud would begin to reconsider his initial resistance to the idea that “phylogenetic memory” could be inherited in the years following *Totem and Taboo*,²⁸ it was not until *Moses and Monotheism* that he explicitly insisted on the genealogical transmission of a religious tradition. So too, it was not until *Moses and Monotheism* that he addressed the question of the “special case of Jewish history.” Though he defensively

²⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, *S.E.*, vol. XIII (1913), 1, my italics.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 158.

²⁷ In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud mentions Robertson Smith’s study of the *Religion of the Semites*, but focuses on his treatment of the sacrificial meal rather than any *geistig* “prohibitions” and “renunciations” (which are a central focus of *Moses and Monotheism*).

²⁸ Most explicitly in Sigmund Freud, “Overview of the Transference Neuroses,” trans. Axel and Peter T. Hoffer, *A Phylogenetic Fantasy: Overview of the Transference Neuroses*, ed. Ilse Grubrich-Simitis (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987). See also Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, *S.E.*, vol. XV-XVI (1915-1917), 361; “From a History of an Infantile Neurosis (Wolf-Man),” *S.E.*, vol. XVII (1918), 97; *The Ego and the Id*, *S.E.*, vol. XIX (1923), 37-38, 55.

asserts that *Moses and Monotheism* contains no new arguments,²⁹ it obviously contains new materials and more specific arguments than those which had appeared in *Totem and Taboo*. Most particularly, in the later book, he revises the definitions of “tradition” and the solutions to the questions of its transmission. As in *Totem and Taboo*, in *Moses and Monotheism*, he notes that he intends to explore

what the real nature of a tradition resides in, and what its special power rests on... what sacrilege [*Frevel*] one commits against the splendid diversity of human life if one recognizes only those motives which arise from *material* needs [*aus materiellen Bedürfnissen*], from what sources some ideas (and particularly religious ones) derive their power to subject both men and peoples to their yoke [*unterjochen*]—to study all this in the *special case* [*Spezialfall*] of Jewish history would be an alluring task.³⁰

While Freud begins the passage by referring to “the real nature of tradition” as if it were something universal, he concludes that the present work was driven by his desire to explore the “special case of Jewish history”—how it was that Jewish tradition had “subjected” generations to its “yoke,” not through material needs but through something else as yet unmentioned. In the shift from the universal case of “tradition” to the particular case of Jewish tradition, Freud strangely distinguishes his study of tradition from that which “recognizes only those motives which arise from material needs”—the latter, he notes, commits a sacrilege “against the splendid diversity of human life.” Such a distinction could apply to much of Freud’s work, for, as opposed to the then-developing fields of anthropology, ethnology and sociology, psychoanalysis focuses not on how people satisfy their “material needs”—food, water, shelter—but on how and why they are driven to satisfy non-material needs, how they are “subjected” to powers which have no

²⁹ As he explains in the March 1938 Prefatory note to the third essay of *Moses and Monotheism*, “Not that I should have anything to say that would be new or that I did not say clearly a quarter of a century ago.” Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 55.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

political or legal currency, no ramifications in the material world.³¹ In the rest of the book, Freud explores how the Jewish tradition subjects the Jewish people to its yoke through such *geistig* powers and ideas. The transmission and power of Jewish tradition, Freud will suggest, rises beyond the realm of material needs, physical satisfactions and manifest powers.

In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud explicitly distinguishes Jewish tradition from “primitive” traditions such as those he had discussed twenty years earlier, as well as from the Egyptian religions and Christianity. To begin with, Moses established a “tradition” of *geistig* monotheism, distinguished by its explicit rejection of the “magical and ceremonial acts, charms and amulets”³² which had shaped “primitive” religions such as the Egyptian polytheistic one, and which would return with the development of Christianity.³³ Thus, by “Jewish tradition,” Freud means not only “traditions”—“customs, ceremonies and dogmas”—but something beyond these activities, something far more encompassing and complex. Unlike the “primitive” religions which, in *Totem and Taboo*, existed in a prehistoric and hence pre-textual age, Mosaic monotheism could be transmitted through a number of textual, oral and other documentary media. Freud repeatedly refers to “tradition” as a sort of synonym for various documentary sources and media of

³¹ Of course, by being identified as Jewish, people have been regularly subjected to political powers with real material ramifications, both negative (as in most of Europe for most of recorded history) and positive (as in present-day Germany and Israel). In Freud’s Vienna, however, a Jewish person was less likely to receive material benefits from submitting to the “yoke” of being Jewish. The question that Freud seems to be posing, then, was how and why individuals have been regularly convinced that they are Jewish and that they should practice Jewish traditions even as the “Jewish tradition” does not satisfy any “material needs.”

³² Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 19.

³³ Freud explains that Christianity “did not maintain the high level in things of the mind [*hielt die Höhe der Vergeistigung nicht ein*] to which Judaism had soared. It was no longer strictly monotheist, it took over numerous symbolic rituals from surrounding peoples... Above all, it did not, like the Mosaic [religion]... exclude the entry of superstitious, magical and mystical elements, which were to prove a severe inhibition upon the intellectual [*geistige*] development of the next two thousand years.” *Ibid.*, 88.

transmission which could account for the survival of both the “truth” of what “really” happened to Moses and the tradition of Mosaic monotheism. There is the “Biblical tradition,”³⁴ but also “traditions other than the Biblical one.”³⁵ Tradition is not only a medium of transmission, it is the kernel of truth which has been infallibly transmitted despite tendentious purposes: “The Jews possess a copious literature apart from the Bible,” he writes, including “legends and myths” which might contain “fragments of a trustworthy tradition [*Stücke guter Tradition*] for which no room was found in the Pentateuch.”³⁶

“Tradition” emerges as a key term which both resists and surpasses definition but which holds the contradictions of Freud’s theory of Jewishness within it. While he is obviously aware of the “standard” definitions of “tradition”—broadly referring to “oral” traditions, but also more generally to pre- or extra-literary lore³⁷—in *Moses and Monotheism*, he uses the term so insistently and repeatedly that it becomes saturated almost to the point of nonsense. Throughout his career, Freud imbued everyday words with complex psychoanalytic meanings—*das Es*, [translated as “the id,” but literally “The It”] or *Besetzung* [translated as “cathexis,” but literally “occupation”] such that the words themselves became the “conceptual equipment” of psychoanalysis, the “tools” that contain and reveal contradictory aspects of human nature.³⁸ In his final work, Freud employs the word “tradition” as a specialized term requiring constant re-definition and

³⁴ Ibid., 9, 7, 29.

³⁵ Ibid., 29.

³⁶ Ibid., 32.

³⁷ On the concept of “tradition” as a “religious category,” see Gershom Scholem, “Revelation and Tradition as Religious Categories in Judaism,” trans. Michael Meyer, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995 [1962]).

³⁸ See J. LaPlanche and J.-B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1973), xi-xiii.

qualification. In one of the more dizzying passages of *Moses and Monotheism*, he suggests that the “tradition” of Moses has been orally transmitted such that it emerged as a more faithful remainder of the past than any cultural or religious materials such as texts, customs or rituals. As he explains,

...a discrepancy [*Gegensatz*] was able to grow up between the written record [*schriftlichen Fixierung*] and the oral transmission [*mündlichen Überlieferung*] of the same material [*desselben Stoffes*]*—tradition*. What had been omitted or changed in the written record might very well have been preserved intact [*unversehrt erhalten geblieben*] in tradition. Tradition was a supplement [*Ergänzung* (completion, fulfillment)] but at the same time a contradiction [*Widerspruch*] to historical writing. It was less subjected to the influence of distorting purposes and perhaps at some points [*in manchen Stücken* (in some *pieces*)] quite exempt from them, and it might therefore be more truthful than the account that had been recorded in writing [*der Schriftlich fixierte Bericht*]. Its trustworthiness, however, suffered from the fact that it was less stable and definite than the written account and exposed to numerous changes and alterations when it was handed on from one generation to another by oral communication. A tradition of such a kind might meet with various sorts of fate. What we should most expect would be that it would be *crushed* [*erschlagen*] by the written account, would be unable to stand up against it, would become more and more shadowy [*schattenhafter*] and would finally pass into oblivion. But it might meet with other fates: one of these would be that the tradition itself would end in a written record, and we shall have to deal with yet others as we proceed.³⁹

Freud begins by posing “tradition” as the oral complement to “historical writing,” but in the course of the passage, it becomes clear that “tradition” is more than just a synonym for oral transmission. Tradition is not equivalent to “oral tradition,” for as he explains, “it was handed on from one generation to another *by* oral communication.” Tradition emerges as that which is (mysteriously) transmitted; it is the medium and the message. Freud uses exceedingly physical imagery to describe the processes of transmission: it is “fixed” in writing, it is something which can be “delivered” orally, it is material *stuff*

³⁹ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 68-69.

[*Stoffes*] which can be “preserved intact” [*unversehrt erhalten*]; it can be separated into *pieces* [*Stücken*], such that we should probably expect it to be *crushed* or at least for it to disappear into the shadows. Indeed, tradition seems as if it, too, is something almost palpable. However, precisely because it is not only physical, it cannot be crushed [*erschlagen*]. It is both the complement [*Ergänzung*] to and the contradiction [*Widerspruch*] of “historical writing.” By the end of the passage, it seems that tradition is no longer simply an oral medium of transmission, for while it might result in another “written record,” there are other possibilities.

The counter-intuitive density of Freud’s concept of “tradition” emerges most clearly in a section entitled “Difficulties.” Though he seems to have already thoroughly explained the survival of tradition through its oral transmission, he admits that he is still left with the question of “what form the operative tradition in the life of peoples is present.”⁴⁰ Here again he turns to the possibility that the tradition was “based on conscious memories of oral communications [*mündliche Mitteilungen*].” However, now he explicitly acknowledges that he is not satisfied with this explanation, for as the generations got further away from the “eye-witnesses” who had observed the events, it would no longer be possible to say “who the people were who preserved this knowledge and handed it on by word of mouth.” With the accumulation of centuries, it was no longer possible to be confident that the tradition was still based on “a knowledge *communicated* in a normal way [*auf normale Weise mitgeteiltes Wissen zur Grundlage hatte*], which had been transmitted [*übertragen*] from forefather to grandchild.”⁴¹ If the tradition were

⁴⁰ Ibid., 93.

⁴¹ Here I use Katherine Jones’ translation, with the exception of the words “forefather [*Ahn*]” and “grandchild [*Enkel*]” which she translates (less biblically and less literally, I think) as “forebear” and

possessed by only “a few people” (rather than being “public property” [*Volksgut*]), explains Freud, this wouldn’t “explain its effect,” its “lasting emotion in the masses,”⁴² its “power to deeply *seize* them. “Is it possible to attribute to knowledge held like this by a few people the power to produce such a lasting emotion in the masses when it came to their notice? [*Kann man einem solchen Wissen von Wenigen die Macht zuschreiben, die Massen so nachhaltig zu ergreifen, wenn es zu ihrer Kenntnis kommt?*]” Here is where it becomes clear that by “tradition,” Freud does not simply mean “oral tradition,” the “opposite” of historical writing, but something else beyond all forms of “direct communication.” Freud concludes that “there must have been something present in the ignorant masses, too, which was in some way akin [*verwandt*] to the knowledge of the few and went half way to meet it when it was uttered.”⁴³ What was this “something”? How did the tradition survive, not only in the elite individuals who respectfully transmitted it through “normal” means of oral and written communications, but also in all those people who could not read the texts or cared not to listen to their grandparents’ stories?

This, then, is the problem that drives Freud to insist on some other form of transmission for Jewish tradition, something beyond the “normal” forms of “direct communication [*direkter Mitteilung*]” whether oral, written or ritual. Whereas “primitive” religions could be transmitted through an “unconscious understanding” of “customs, ceremonies and dogmas,”⁴⁴ Mosaic monotheism could not be transmitted in

“descendent.” Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Katherine Jones (New York: Vintage Books, 1939), 118.

⁴² Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 94.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 159.

this way since what defined it was an explicit rejection of “magical ceremonies.” With Mosaic monotheism, a “new realm of intellectuality [*Geistigkeit*] was opened up, in which ideas, memories and inferences became decisive in contrast to the lower psychical activity which had direct perceptions by the sense-organs as its content.”⁴⁵ Thus, the Jewish “tradition” could not be handed on through the usual forms of material culture, whether customs and ceremonies, or texts, oral communications or education, for

A tradition that was based only on communication [*Mitteilung*] could not lead to the compulsive character [*Zwang*] that attaches to religious phenomena. It would be listened to, judged, and perhaps dismissed, like any other piece of information *from outside*; it would never attain the privilege of being liberated from the constraint [*Zwang*] of logical thought.⁴⁶

While Freud first figures “compulsion [*Zwang*]” as the power of tradition (or religion) to subject a people to its yoke, he then uses the same word—*Zwang*—to refer to the compulsion [*Zwang*, the second time Strachey translates it as “constraint”] of “logical thought.” It is almost as if Freud is trying to understand how the compulsion of tradition can override his own compulsion to explain everything through the logic of scientific rationality. Because biological transmission is not from the “outside,” it cannot be logically rationalized, documented or observed, and as such it “attains the privilege of being liberated” into a realm beyond such solid matters. When the Semites killed Moses, they acquired memories which could never be completely repressed or repudiated but which would be eternally transmitted to each successive generation. Thus, Freud insisted that he could not “do without this factor in biological evolution.”⁴⁷ “Jewish history” was a “special case” precisely because it had survived (at least in part) through biological

⁴⁵ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 113.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 101, my italics.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

transmission, persistently compelling its people to *be* Jewish, beyond all logical thinking. Thus, it is not so much that Freud needed the biological “factor” itself, but that he needed to *deal* with its special place in the case of Jewish history.

C. *Geistigkeit* and Its Inversions

Like many Jewish scholars before and since, Freud re-interprets what has often been regarded as a problematic particularity of the Jewish people:⁴⁸ the fact that Jews are Jewish not because of religious beliefs, cultural practices, linguistic abilities or citizenship in a particular land, but because they have apparently inherited Jewishness in their bodies. While the bodily definition of Jewishness has been a source of racist anti-semitism since at least the fifteenth century,⁴⁹ it can be traced to Jewish and Christian texts from the first century C.E.. Since Paul, Christian anti-Judaism has centered around the idea that while Christianity has apparently ascended to the heights of abstract spirituality [*Geistigkeit*], the Jewish people remain mired in the materiality of the flesh and of the text.⁵⁰ As Jan Assmann writes,

⁴⁸ Susan Shapiro suggests that like Franz Rosenzweig, Freud positively re-valued certain *lacks* of the Jewish people. In this chapter and throughout the dissertation, I attempt to withhold judgment about whether Freud’s re-interpretations of such lacks are positive or negative. The question as to whether Freud felt “proud” or “ashamed” of his Jewishness has been a long-standing focus of the literature on *Moses and Monotheism*. However, it is impossible to determine (once and for all) how Freud felt about his Jewishness for, not surprisingly, his feelings changed over time and in different contexts. In contrast, I argue that the strength and importance of Freud’s theory of Jewishness—and Rosenzweig’s for that matter—is that it does not shy away from some of the most problematic and paradoxical aspects of Jewish definition. See Susan Shapiro, “The Uncanny Jew: A Brief History of an Image.” *Judaism* 46.1 (1997): 72.

⁴⁹ On the similarities between “racial” anti-Semitism in twentieth century Germany and in fifteenth century Spain, see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Assimilation and Racial Anti-Semitism: The Iberian and the German Models, Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture* (New York: Leo Baeck Institute, 1982).

⁵⁰ See Jan Assmann, *Die Mosaische Unterscheidung: oder der Preis des Monotheismus* (Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2003), 166-167.

this Christian idea of an “Advance in Intellectuality [*Geistigkeit*] is the foundation for a key element of Christian anti-Judaism. It is precisely through this that the Christian repudiation of the Law is justified. The Pauline critique of the Law argues from within a conceptualization of spirit and flesh: the letter kills, the spirit animates. This occurs throughout the entire Christian tradition. *Halakha* is dismissed as “*Werkgerechtigkeit*” and as such, as external and material. The Law is juxtaposed against “belief,” which directs itself toward the realm of God, a realm attainable neither through the senses nor through rationality... According to Christian belief, the Jews remain mired in the flesh: *Israel carnalis*. It is only the exodus from the world of the Law which allows the [Christian] access to the spiritual realm.⁵¹

Here, Assmann attends to the ways in which Freud foregrounds the Mosaic distinction by inverting one of the standard tropes of Christian anti-Judaism. This is a revision of his earlier thesis, advanced in *Moses the Egyptian* (1997), where he argued that Freud participated in an Enlightenment discourse attempting to supercede the age-old Mosaic distinction between true and false religion (as well as between such dichotomies as Israel and Egypt, Jew and Gentile and nature and nurture). Similarly, Grubrich-Simitis argues that in *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud envisioned a utopian dream of overcoming the boundaries between Jew and Gentile, and that “perhaps...[he] had even imagined, in the register of a daydream, that his own theory of culture might help to facilitate this collective process of self-healing.”⁵² While I am not ready to completely reject these utopian readings of Freud’s final book, I want to suggest that his appropriation of the

⁵¹ [Denn diese christliche Vorstellung eines Fortschritts in der Geistigkeit bildet darüber hinaus ein Kernstück des christlichen Antijudaismus. Genau damit nämlich wird die christliche Verwerfung des Gesetzes begründet. Die paulinische Gesetzeskritik argumentiert in der Begrifflichkeit von Geist und Fleisch. Der Buchstabe tötet, der Geist macht lebendig. Das zieht sich durch die gesamte christliche Tradition. Die Halakha wird als >>Werkgerechtigkeit<< und damit als äußerlich und materiell verworfen. Dem Gesetz wird der >>Glaube<< gegenübergestellt, der sich auf das weder den Sinnen noch der Vernunft erreichbare Reich Gottes richtet... Nach christlicher Ansicht bleiben die Juden im Fleischlichen stecken: *Israel carnalis*. Erst der Auszug aus der Welt der Gesetz eröffnet den Zugang zum Reich des Geistes.] Assmann, “Der Fortschritt in der Geistigkeit. Sigmund Freuds Konstruktion des Judentums,” 166-167.

⁵² Ilse Grubrich-Simitis, *Early Freud and Late Freud: Reading Anew Studies on Hysteria and Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Philip Slotkin (New York: Routledge, 1997), 77-78.

Christian trope of *Geistigkeit* is an attempt to make sense of and to justify the most material and bodily—and the most problematic—aspects of Jewish definition. While the materiality of genealogy may seem to weigh down the supreme *Geistigkeit* of Jewish tradition, Freud suggests that the bodily transmission of Jewishness confirms its *Geistigkeit*. The supreme *Geistigkeit* of Jewish tradition requires a medium of transmission which functions beyond the realm of sensory perception, beyond individual judgments, choices or experiences. Less *geistig* religions and traditions could be transmitted through material media such as texts, objects, rituals or lands, but according to Freud, Jewish tradition is different. Jewish tradition has survived through a material medium—genealogy—which is nonetheless *geistig*, for it requires no “direct perceptions by the sense organs.”⁵³

In insisting upon both the non-material idealism of *Geistigkeit* and the materiality of biological inheritance, Freud addresses long-standing questions of Jewish embodiment. As Howard Eilberg-Schwartz has suggested, throughout history, “Jewish bodies” have been “doubly damned.” On the one hand, Jews were “inadequately embodied”—pictured as weak feminine men with small or foreshortened penises,⁵⁴ excessively interested in “feminine” concerns such as books, study and the family.⁵⁵ On the other hand, they were considered overly embodied—pictured as grotesque, hairy, smelly women—and too mired in the flesh—clinging to bodily rituals such as circumcision, *mikvah* (ritual immersion) and genealogical (rather than spiritual)

⁵³ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 113.

⁵⁴ Sander Gilman has thoroughly explored the ways in which Jewish bodies and bodily parts have been portrayed, specifically in terms of penises, feet, noses, smells and hair. See Sander L. Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991); *Creating Beauty to Cure the Soul: Race and Psychology in the Shaping of Aesthetic Surgery* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

⁵⁵ See Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*, 244ff.

definitions of the group. Over time, two general “strategies” for countering these charges emerged. The first was to “pursue embodiment,”⁵⁶ exemplified most clearly by certain Zionists such as Max Nordau in his fantasy of the “Muscle Jew” but anticipated by the Maccabees’ pursuit of Greek ideals of fitness and bodily perfection. The second strategy was to “flee embodiment through the spiritualization of the tradition,” which has been exemplified by various Jewish scholars’ attempts to redefine Judaism as the most *geistig* of religions along Kantian lines.⁵⁷ So too, the popular designation of the Jewish people as the “People of the Book” has, until quite recently, privileged certain disembodied “dimensions of Jewish experience at the expense of others.”⁵⁸ While Freud’s emphasis on the Jews’ “Advance in Spirituality [*Fortschritt in der Geistigkeit*]” seems to similarly privilege the textual and intellectual [*geistig*] aspects of Judaism, it is complicated by his insistence on the genealogical transmission of Jewishness. On the one hand, by refiguring the materiality of Jewish genealogy as proof of the particularity of Jewish *Geistigkeit*, Freud seems more like those Jewish scholars who would insist that Judaism is a spiritual tradition of ideals rather than a race, or as one Holocaust-museum website puts it,

⁵⁶ Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 5. See also Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*, 246-248. More recent revivals of the “Tough Jew” can be found in the revival of the Maccabees’ “heroic” story, the delight in Alan Dershowitz’s “tough” *chutzpah*, and the romanticization of Jewish gangsters in two books titled, *Tough Jews*. See Paul Breines, *Tough Jews: Political Fantasies and the Moral Dilemma of American Jewry* (Harper Collins, 1990); Rich Cohen, *Tough Jews: Fathers, Sons and Gangster Dreams* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998).

⁵⁷ See for example, Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*, 246ff; Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason: Out of the Sources of Judaism*, trans. Simon Kaplan (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1972).

⁵⁸ Eilberg-Schwartz, *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective*, 1. For the recent return to matters of the (Jewish) body, see the recent essay by Kirshenblatt-Gimblet which documents the emerging split in Jewish Studies between the new “Berkeley (or California) school” of studies of the “People of the Body” and the older (east coast-based) school of studies of the “People of the Book.” Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblet, “The Corporeal Turn.” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95.3 (2005).

“Among all the things that Judaism is, the one thing it is not is a race.”⁵⁹ On the other hand, his insistence on the genealogical transmission of Jewishness seems more similar to the attempts of Jewish scientists—both in Freud’s time and our own—to prove that the Jews are the most pure race rather than a parasitic mongrel group.⁶⁰ However, Freud refuses to make a choice between the two possibilities; he neither rejects the “racial” aspects of Jewish definition nor the “religious” ideals of Judaism. Instead, he develops a theory of Jewishness which incorporates both the racial materiality and the ideal spirituality [*Geistigkeit*] of the Jewish people.

While Freud insists that the Jewish tradition has been genealogically transmitted, he attends to the image of the Jews as the “People of the Book” and to the ways in which the texts transmit certain (if fallible) traces from the past. As he notes, the “pre-eminence given to intellectual labours [*geistigen Bestrebungen*] throughout some two thousand years in the life of the Jewish people has, of course, had its effect.”⁶¹ While this “effect” has been used to portray the Jews as pathetically feeble and overly bookish—that is, as “insufficiently embodied”—Freud inverts this portrayal. While Boyarin proposes that Freud “spiritualizes” Judaism as part of a larger attempt to Aryanize and masculinize the

⁵⁹ Florida Holocaust Museum, *What is Judaism?* 2003, Available: http://www.flholocaustmuseum.org/history_wing/antisemitism/related_topics/judaism.cfm, September 26, 2005.

⁶⁰ To counter William Z. Ripley’s claims that the Jews were not a race, Joseph Jacobs argued that they were the most pure race. Joseph Jacobs, “Are Jews Jews?” *Popular Science Monthly* 55 (1899); *The Jewish Race: A Study in National Character* (London: Privately printed, 1899); William Z. Ripley, “The Racial Geography of Europe: A Sociological Study. Supplement: The Jews.” *Popular Science Monthly* 54 (1899). By contrast, Maurice Fishberg went to anthropological lengths to demonstrate that the Jews were not a distinct racial group. Maurice Fishberg, *The Jews: A Study of Race and Environment* (New York: The Walter Scott Publishing Company, 1911). See also Nadia Abu El-Haj, “Bearing the Mark of Israel? Genetics and the Quest for Jewish Origins,” Unpublished draft [personal communication] (2004); John M. Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Raphael Falk, “Zionism and the Biology of the Jews.” *Science in Context* 11.3-4 (1998); Eric L. Goldstein, “Different Blood Flows in Our Veins’: Race and Jewish Self-Definition in Late Nineteenth Century America.” *American Jewish History* 85.1 (1997).

⁶¹ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 115.

Jewish man, it is precisely in the realm of the body that Freud inverts the entire structure. Rather than “masculinizing” the Jewish man into an image of virile physical power, Freud presents a more complex and dischordant image. As he explains, the “Holy Writ and the intellectual concern with it” has not only “held the scattered people together,” it has also “helped to check the brutality and the tendency to violence which are apt to appear where the development of muscular strength is the popular ideal. Harmony in the cultivation of intellectual [*geistiger*] and physical [*körperlicher*] activity, such as was achieved by the Greek people, was denied to the Jews. In this dichotomy their decision was at least in favour of the worthier alternative [*Höherwertige*].”⁶² Freud explicitly contrasts the physical “brutality” and violence of other peoples against the *Geistigkeit* of the Jews. Interestingly, in October 1938 in a letter to the British Jewish scholar, Charles Singer, Freud defended his *Moses* in terms which integrate the image of the People of the Book with the image of courageous endurance. Reiterating one of his standard autobiographical formulations, he writes, “I have spent my whole life standing up for what I have considered to be the scientific truth, even when it was uncomfortable and unpleasant for my fellow men.” Finally, he concludes, “Well, we Jews have been reproached for growing cowardly in the course of the centuries. (Once upon a time we were a valiant nation.) In this transformation I had no share. So I must risk it.”⁶³ In other words, Freud suggests that the act of *writing* could in the future contribute to a harmony of intellectuality [*Geistigkeit*] and materiality.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Sigmund Freud, *The Letters of Sigmund Freud*, trans. Tania and James Stern, ed. Ernst L. Freud (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1960), 453-454.

If Moses' "dematerialization of God" was the initial advance in *Geistigkeit*, how have "the Jews *retained* their inclination to intellectual interests"? How have they preserved their "ideal factor"? The answer is that in killing Moses, the originator of the "ideal factor," the Jews acquired a memory which could never be completely repressed or erased and which would be inexorably transmitted from generation to generation. In *Totem and Taboo* and *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud had explained that the sociality of (all) civilization was initiated by an originary act of violence.⁶⁴ As Jacqueline Rose writes, "monotheism, together with the 'advance in intellectuality' that is said to accompany it, takes hold only because of the bloody deed which presided over its birth." The "underlying thesis" is that "there is no sociality without violence, that people are most powerfully and effectively united by what they agree to hate. What binds the people to each other and to their God is that they killed him."⁶⁵ Indeed, it is this act of violence which ultimately makes the Jews Jewish, for it is the memory of this act which causes the Jewish people both to repress *and* to return to the Mosaic religion. After killing Moses, Freud explains,

The Jewish people had abandoned the Aten religion brought to them by Moses and had turned to the worship of another god who differed little from the Baalim [local gods] of the neighboring peoples. All the tendentious efforts of later times failed to disguise this shameful fact. *But the Mosaic religion had not vanished without leaving a trace; some sort of memory of it had kept alive—a possibly obscured and distorted tradition.* And it was this tradition of a great past which continued to operate (from

⁶⁴ In *Civilization and its Discontents* Freud re-iterates that he had come to this conclusion by analyzing *Christianity* specifically. "From the manner in which, in Christianity, this redemption is achieved—by the sacrificial death of a single person, who in this manner takes upon himself a guilt that is common to everyone—we have been able to infer what the first occasion may have been on which this primal guilt, which was also the beginning of civilization, was acquired." Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, S.E., vol. XXI (1930), 136. See also Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 153-155.

⁶⁵ Jacqueline Rose, "Response to Edward Said," *Freud and the Non-European* (New York: Verso, 2003), 75.

the background, as it were), which gradually acquired more and more power over people's minds and which in the end succeeded in changing the god Yahweh into the Mosaic god and in re-awakening into life the religion of Moses that had been introduced and then abandoned long centuries before.⁶⁶

Indeed, it is only through the complicated processes of the repression of the memory of murder and its re-awakening that the Jewish tradition ultimately ascends to the "heights of abstraction," initiated by Moses' aniconic prohibitions. While the Jewish people have not "harmonized" their *Geistigkeit* with physical activity (like the Greeks), their *Geistigkeit* originates from the transcending of a brutal and physical act of violence, and the eventual acceptance of the transcendent monotheism which drove them to commit the act of violence.

Oddly, while Freud builds his narrative around this originary murder, in "The Advance in Intellectuality [*Geistigkeit*]," he does not directly refer to this violent act or its memory. Instead, he refers to the violence of *other people*, and explains that the Jews "retained their inclination to *geistig* interests" at least in part *because* of this violence. "The nation's political misfortune taught it to value at its true worth the one possession that remained to it—its literature."⁶⁷ Here Freud seems to argue that the *text* defines the Jewish people, though he has spent pages and pages speculating about how the Jewish tradition—the memory-traces of the murder of Moses—has survived over innumerable generations, *despite* and *beyond* the tendentious textual distortions, through some means *other than direct communication*. Has Freud momentarily repressed the originary brutal act of murder and replaced it with the brutal and violent tendencies of *others* who cause

⁶⁶ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 69-70, my italics.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 115.

the Jews their “political misfortunes”? Though the *text* may have remained the most valuable “possession” of the Jewish people, this should not be confused with that which compelled them to preserve their *tradition*, what induced them to continue to be Jewish. It is not the texts that make the Jews Jewish, but rather the “permanent imprint” of the Mosaic tradition: distorted, repressed and returned such that Jews continue to feel compelled to *turn* to these texts, to “awaken” the memory-traces which have been transmitted “beyond sensory perception.”

D. Genealogy and its Apparent Incongruities

In what follows, I attend to three incongruities which emerge in Freud’s theorization of Jewishness as both genealogically defined and as supremely *geistig*. First, if Moses was an Egyptian, the question arises as to how and why Mosaic monotheism became Jewish. When and with whom did the genealogical chain of Jewish tradition begin? Second, Freud’s “racial” theory is complicated by the fact that he openly acknowledges that there have always been “mixtures of blood.” How do we make sense of this apparent contradiction in his “racial” “reasoning”? Third, and perhaps most importantly, how does he make sense of the base materiality of genealogy and biology without giving up on the “ideal” *Geistigkeit* of Jewish tradition?

First, if Moses was an Egyptian, how did the Mosaic monotheism become Jewish? Freud provides a partial explanation for this apparent inconsistency. While Moses and his monotheism were originally Egyptian, Freud explains that “there arose

from among the midst of the people an unending succession of men who were *not linked* to Moses in their origin [*Herkunft*] but were enthralled [*erfaßt*] by the great and mighty *tradition* which had grown up little by little in obscurity: and it was these men, the Prophets, who tirelessly preached the old Mosaic doctrine.”⁶⁸ As in a number of other instances, Strachey’s translation stumbles over the weird physicality of Freud’s construction. Looking more carefully at the German text, it becomes evident that once these [Jewish] men *arose*, they could not tear themselves away [*nicht mehr abreißende*] from the chain of tradition which gripped [*erfaßt*] them. Moreover, while *abreißen* suggests a spatial relation, *nicht mehr* suggests a temporal one; Freud’s construction of the “unending succession” is *both* physical and temporal, and as such, eternally physical and physically eternal.⁶⁹ Thus, as Freud explains, while the “seed of monotheism may have been Egyptian,” it “failed to ripen in Egypt.”⁷⁰

Freud’s claim that Moses and his monotheism were originally Egyptian has given rise to a number of anxious responses which represent a more general discomfort with certain aspects of Jewish definition. Indeed, Freud knew that denying the Jewish people “the man whom they take pride in as the greatest of their sons”⁷¹ would be interpreted as an insensitive defamation, particularly considering the political situation in which he wrote the book. Though the idea that Moses was an Egyptian was not original to Freud,⁷² a number of scholars have suggested that his interest in this notion suggests a discomfort

⁶⁸ Ibid., 51.

⁶⁹ I thank Ruth Liberman for her insightful illumination of this passage.

⁷⁰ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 111.

⁷¹ Ibid., 7.

⁷² See Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*.

with—if not an outright renunciation of—his own Jewishness.⁷³ To counter such interpretations, a number of scholars emphasize the abundance of moments—both in *Moses and Monotheism* and in his private correspondence—in which Freud evinces “ethnic pride” in his Jewishness.⁷⁴ While he may have made Moses into an Egyptian, they argue, he insists that it was the *Jews* who sustained this “great and mighty tradition.”⁷⁵ As Yerushalmi writes, “Would an Egyptian Moses make Freud any less a Jew? Does the assertion as Marthe Robert insists, ‘declare a whole people illegitimate?’ The Jews have never claimed descent from Moses, and Abraham, from whom they do claim it, was originally a Chaldean. Whether God or Moses made the Jews, they have been Jews ever since.”⁷⁶ And yet, the idea that the Jews “have been Jews ever since” leads one to ask, ever since *when*? In a letter to his friend Lou Andreas-Salomé, Freud noted that his last book began with “the question as to what has really created the particular character of the Jew, and come to the conclusion that the Jew is the creation of the man Moses. Who was this Moses and what did he bring about?”⁷⁷ While Freud reconstructed a story of the “creation” of the Jewish character, he was less clear about

⁷³ Eliot Oring seems to present one of the more extreme versions of this argument: “If Moses was not a Jew then neither was Freud.” Eliot Oring, *The Jokes of Sigmund Freud: A Study in Humor and Jewish Identity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 101; Marthe Robert, *From Oedipus to Moses: Freud's Jewish Identity*, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1977), 278.

⁷⁴ Bernstein repeatedly interprets various passages as evidence that Freud *took pride* in his Jewishness. For example, he writes, “Freud... is... taking pride in the spiritual and intellectual power of his *own* tradition” (35); “in a passage where Freud’s *pride* in his Jewish heritage shines through...” (51); “a legacy with which Freud proudly identifies” (84); and “Freud’s *pride* in identifying himself with this tradition” (85). See Bernstein, *Freud and the Legacy of Moses*. I am not suggesting that Freud had *no* pride in his Jewish heritage, or that his presentation was completely disinterested. Rather, I am interested in the ways in which his book compels us to examine the complexities of Jewishness which often give rise to *both* pride and embarrassment, if not simultaneously.

⁷⁵ Freud and Andreas-Salomé, *Letters*, 206-207. See Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, 78. Bernstein, *Freud and the Legacy of Moses*, 32.

⁷⁶ Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, “The Moses of Freud and the Moses of Schoenberg: On Words, Idolatry, and Psychoanalysis.” *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child* 47 (1992): 7.

⁷⁷ January 6, 1935. Freud and Andreas-Salomé, *Letters*, 204.

how and *at what moment* the “band of Semites” become *Jews*, such that they would be Jewish *eternally*.

Rather than reading Freud’s insistence on the Egyptianness of Moses as *either* a condemnation *or* a commendation of the Jewish people, I want to suggest that it can be read as an insistence on the complicated and paradoxical nature of Jewishness. If Moses was Egyptian *and* the Jews were those who sustained his monotheistic tradition, it would seem (*ipso facto*) that if one followed Moses’ monotheistic tradition, one would be defined as a Jew. This definition of Jewishness *seems* to be a “culturally” determined one, for in practicing the traditions and customs of the Jews, one would be defined as a Jew. However, even if the “old Mosaic doctrine” was preached by an unending succession of prophets, Freud ultimately insists that the Jewish tradition was transmitted through inheritance, not by direct communication.⁷⁸ Like most rabbinical authorities since the end of the fourth century C.E.,⁷⁹ he maintains that regardless of whether individuals consciously remember that old Mosaic doctrine, regardless of whether they practice Jewish traditions and customs, they remain eternally Jewish. The Egyptianness of Freud’s Moses does not make the Jews any less Jewish but it *does* point to the complexity of the relationship between Jewishness and Judaism. While Judaism refers to a body of texts, histories, customs and rituals, it cannot exist without the Jewish *people* who continue to interpret this “body” of knowledge and practices, one of which is the genealogical definition of Jewishness.

⁷⁸ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 100.

⁷⁹ See Boyarin, “The Christian Invention of Judaism: The Theodosian Empire and the Rabbinic Refusal of Religion,” 22.

The continuing discomfort with this aspect of Judaism is evident in the scholarly displeasure with Freud's insistence on the heritability of Jewishness.⁸⁰ While Yerushalmi grants that it (supposedly) makes no difference if Moses were "originally" Egyptian, he nonetheless tries to argue against Freud's idea. "What's in a name?" he asks. "*An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds*, which simply means that in speech, dress, and manner, he *appeared* to them to be an Egyptian."⁸¹ In other words, even if Moses "appeared" *culturally* Egyptian, he could still be "genetically" Jewish. What worries Yerushalmi is the idea that "'Jewishness' can be transmitted independently of 'Judaism,' that the former is interminable even if the latter be terminated."⁸² Like many Jewish leaders and scholars, Yerushalmi worries that Jewishness will be *only* an ethnic-racial identity—based on loosely understood cultural stereotypes—rather than a vital living *practice* of reading texts and observing traditions handed down from generation to generation.⁸³ While he is willing to grant that Moses and his "monotheism [were] genetically Egyptian," he insists that monotheism "has been *historically* Jewish."⁸⁴ However, I want to suggest that Freud's insistence on *both the genetic and historical*

⁸⁰ Similarly, Le Rider argues that by making Moses into an Egyptian, "Freud uprooted the temptation of falling back into 'biological,' 'hereditary,' and 'racial' representations of the Jewish identity. In denying the Jewish birth of Moses, Freud denied his own descent." Le Rider, "Jewish Identity in *Moses and Monotheism*," 247.

⁸¹ Yerushalmi, "The Moses of Freud and the Moses of Schoenberg: On Words, Idolatry, and Psychoanalysis," 85.

⁸² *Ibid.*: 90.

⁸³ While Yerushalmi implicitly seems to worry that Jewishness (ethnicity "freed" of its religious content) will not be able to survive on its own, Moshe Gresser expresses this concern more explicitly: "In that sense, Freud's view simply reflects the prejudice of his age and its anti-Jewish culture (one that dispensed with 'the Law' in order to free 'the Spirit'), and is therefore thoroughly inadequate to sustain Jewish life. Though Freud's own children married Jews (at least in their first marriages), the next generation married out and effectively left the Jewish community. Freud's family is in fact another casualty of assimilation, and his psychological Judaism bears some responsibility. The loss bears witness to the risk of dual allegiance in the absence of Jewish content." Moshe Gresser, *Dual Allegiance: Freud as a Modern Jew* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 249.

⁸⁴ Yerushalmi, "The Moses of Freud and the Moses of Schoenberg: On Words, Idolatry, and Psychoanalysis," 53.

Egyptianness of Moses and his monotheism points to the particular connection between “genetics”⁸⁵ and “history” for the Jewish people. The blurry distinctions between “cultural” and “genetic” Jewishness—and why such distinctions matter—is what’s at stake in Freud’s reconstruction of the origins of Jewish monotheism.

Second, how can we make sense of Freud’s emphasis on the pure *Geistigkeit* of the Jewish tradition, alongside his acknowledgment of “mixtures of blood” in Jewish genealogical history? If the Jewish tradition has been sustained by an unending genealogical chain of Jewishness, how has it remained *Jewish*, and supremely *geistig* even as it has incorporated the offspring of intermarriage and intermixing? Freud notes that the Jews

survived by keeping apart from others. *Mixtures of blood* interfered little with this, since what held them together was an ideal factor, the possession in common of certain intellectual and emotional wealth. The religion of Moses led to this result because (1) it allowed the people to take a share in the grandeur of a new idea of God, (2) it asserted that this people had been chosen by this great God and were destined to receive evidences of his special favour and (3) it forced upon the people an advance in intellectuality which, important enough in itself, opened up the way, in addition, to the appreciation of intellectual work and to further renunciations of instinct.⁸⁶

The mere articulation of the phrase “mixtures of blood” might be enough for some readers to hastily proclaim that Freud was simply reciting proto-Nazi notions of race and

⁸⁵ Though recent work has tried to prove the unity of Jews’ “genetics,” I use this term in a more etymological sense to refer to common genealogical origins (whether real or imagined). An individual’s inheritance of Jewishness does not necessarily suggest that s/he would share genetic commonalities with all (or any) other Jews other than known family members. Nonetheless, there have been a number of scientific studies (and studies of these studies) in the twentieth century which have tried to prove *either* common genetic origins or the fallacy of such unity. See Nadia Abu El-Haj is presently at work on a lengthy study of some of the more recent work of this type. Abu El-Haj, “‘Bearing the Mark of Israel?’ Genetics and the Quest for Jewish Origins.” See also Raphael Patai and Jennifer P. Wing, *The Myth of the Jewish Race* (New York: Scribner's, 1975).

⁸⁶ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 123, my italics.

peoplehood. And yet, Richard Bernstein has cited this passage as proof that “Freud explicitly denies the importance of biological transmission and positively asserts the importance of an ‘ideal factor’ in Jewish survival.”⁸⁷ In his attempt to show that Freud’s theory of Jewishness was not racial—that it had no use for the “disproven” Lamarckian theory of evolution and that it had nothing to do with anti-semitic racial theories—Bernstein cites Freud’s “*explicit claim*”⁸⁸ that “mixtures of blood interfered little with” the definition of the Jewish people. According to Bernstein, this passage cannot be reconciled with an interpretation (such as my own) that Freud insists on biological transmission. I read the above passage differently: Freud acknowledges that “mixtures of blood” did not interfere with the transmission of Jewish tradition only because he also insists that Jewishness is genealogically transmitted. There would be no need to note that “mixtures of blood” did not “interfere” with the survival of the Jewish people *unless* this survival depended (at least in part) upon hereditary transmission.

Freud was one of many Jewish scientists (anthropologists, biologists, doctors) who concerned themselves with the definition of the Jewish people. As John Efron writes in the introduction to *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, these scientists concerned themselves with the anthropological question of “What are the Jews?” This question in turn led to a number of other questions: “Do the Jews constitute a single, stable racial type, or are they made up of many races? Are [their]... dispositions... hereditary or environmental?”⁸⁹ Freud straddles both sides of these either-or questions. First, according to Freud, the Jews came from (at least) “two

⁸⁷ Bernstein, *Freud and the Legacy of Moses*, 113.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 113, italics in original.

⁸⁹ Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, 8.

groups of people who came together to form the nation.”⁹⁰ He notes that the “Jewish type was finally fixed” by the reforms which “took seriously the regulations that aimed at making the entire people holy; their separation from their neighbours was made effective by the prohibition of mixed marriages.”⁹¹ While he is open to the idea that the Jews were originally made up of many different peoples, he insists that the many generations’ of “separation” from other peoples resulted in a *fixed* Jewish (racial) type which is nonetheless defined by its *ideal* factor of intellectual-spirituality [*Geistigkeit*]. According to Freud’s reasoning, then, the Jewish people can be a single stable racial type but nonetheless remain unaffected by “mixtures of blood.”

Third, and most importantly, how do we make sense of the supreme intellectual-spirituality [*Geistigkeit*] of the Jewish tradition alongside the base materiality of genealogy biologically conceived? In order to account for this apparent contradiction, Freud refigures Jewish genealogy as a medium which requires no sensory perception. While he refers to the *Geistigkeit* of Jewish tradition throughout *Moses and Monotheism*, he most extensively defines what he means by this term in an oft-discussed section entitled “The Advance in Intellectuality [*Fortschritt in der Geistigkeit*].” In addition to the specific Mosaic prohibitions and renunciations (discussed earlier), he repeatedly notes that the “new realm of intellectuality [*Geistigkeit*]” was defined by the fact that “ideas, memories and inferences [*Schlußprozesse*] became decisive in contrast to the lower

⁹⁰ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 52. In itself, this is not so unusual, since most accounts of ancient Jewish history refer to the twelve tribes of Israel. When I revise this discussion for book publication, I will provide a clearer account of how the idea of the “twelve tribes” relates to the racial inflections of Jewish self-definition.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

psychical activity [*niedrigeren psychischen Tätigkeit*] which had direct perceptions by the sense-organs [*unmittelbare Wahrnehmungen der Sinnesorgane*] as its content.”⁹² Part of the “advance in *geistigkeit*,” he explains, was the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy:

this turning from the mother to the father points in addition to a victory of intellectuality [*Geistigkeit*] over sensuality [*Sinnlichkeit*]*—*that is, an advance in civilization [*Kulturfortschritt*] since maternity [*Mutterschaft*] is proved by the evidence of the senses while paternity [*Vaterschaft*] is a hypothesis [*Annahme*], based on an inference [*Schluss*] and a premiss. Taking sides in this way with a thought-process in preference to a sense [*sinnliche*] perception has proved to be a momentous step.⁹³

Whereas Jan Assmann argues that Freud “knowingly and ironically” inverts the Christian concept of *Geistigkeit* to identify what is most remarkable about the Jews, I see this inversion extending even further.⁹⁴ Freud also knowingly and ironically inverts the “matrilineal principle” of Jewish definition to establish a “masculinist *Geistigkeit*”⁹⁵ which *incorporates* the body. According to the “matrilineal principle,” if the mother is Jewish, the child is also Jewish, whereas if she is non-Jewish (even if the *father* is Jewish), the child is regarded as non-Jewish.⁹⁶ Though rabbinic family law is almost

⁹² Ibid., 113.

⁹³ Freud does not just mention this transition in passing, but rather re-iterates it a second time: “An advance in intellectuality [*Geistigkeit*] consists in deciding against direct sense-perception [*direkte Sinneswahrnehmung*] in favour of what are known as the higher intellectual processes—that is, memories, reflections and inferences. It consists, for instance, in deciding that paternity is more important than maternity, although it cannot, like the latter, be established by the evidence of the senses [*Zeugnis der Sinne erweisbar*], and that for that reason the child should bear his father’s name and be his heir [*nach ihm erben*].” Ibid., 114, 117-118.

⁹⁴ See Assmann, *Die Mosaische Unterscheidung: oder der Preis des Monotheismus*, 166-167.

⁹⁵ Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*, 260.

⁹⁶ It is possible, though unlikely, that Freud did not know (or care) that according to rabbinic definitions, Jewishness is transmitted through the mother’s rather than the father’s genealogy. Indeed, there is some evidence that suggests that even if he knew about the “matrilineal” definition, such particularities were not important in determining one’s Jewishness in everyday life. In *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Freud tells an anecdote about a colleague who converts in order to marry a Christian fiancée—he has two sons who are also baptised, but who apparently know about their “Jewish background.” When they were staying at an inn, the host made some anti-semitic comments. The father worried that his sons “would betray the momentous truth” of the “fact that we were Jews,” so he told the sons to “go into the garden, Juden,” after which he quickly corrected it to “Jungen.” Thus, concludes Freud, he learned the lesson “that

entirely patrilineal, in determining the status of the offspring of mixed marriages it is *matrilineal*.⁹⁷ There are many explanations for this particular legal aspect of Jewish definition,⁹⁸ but the most common—and the most common sense—explanation is that the mother’s identity can be “proved by the evidence of the senses” while the father’s identity is always “a hypothesis, based on an inference and a premiss.”⁹⁹ Thus, Freud “masculinizes”¹⁰⁰ the most “feminine” aspect of Jewish bodily definition. However, he does this not to “rewrite” Jewishness as Aryan (as Assmann suggests) or to reject carnality (as Daniel Boyarin argues),¹⁰¹ but to make sense of the specificity of the bodily definition of Jewishness. Thus, while Freud insists that Jewish tradition is biologically transmitted, he masculinizes the materiality of biology so that it can remain in a realm “beyond sensory perception.”

By inverting the “matrilineal principle” of Jewish genealogy, Freud also transforms his theory of Jewishness into a realm beyond the criteria of scientific evidence and proof which were becoming standard in the 1930s. Throughout his career, Freud drew on developing biological and evolutionary theories,¹⁰² and he regularly expressed an

the ‘faith of our fathers’ cannot be disavowed with impunity if one is a son and has sons of one’s own.” Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, S.E.*, vol. VI (1901), 93. Nonetheless, it seems that Freud would not bother making such a big point of the “preference for paternity” if he did not know that he was inverting the “matrilineal principle.”

⁹⁷ Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 264.

⁹⁸ See *Ibid.*, 263ff.

⁹⁹ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 114.

¹⁰⁰ Boyarin argues that Freud “masculinizes” and “Aryanizes” Jewish tradition in a number of ways. However, he overlooks Freud’s particular inversion of the matrilineal principle. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*.

¹⁰¹ More explicitly, Boyarin argues that by rejecting the carnality of the Jews, Freud masculinizes them: “Where the Jews have been accused of carnality and, therefore, of being like women, Freud... would demonstrate that they are more spiritual, and more rational, than the Others, and therefore more masculine than the accusers themselves.... Freud set out to counter antisemitic charges that Jews are not spiritual but carnal, female and not male.” *Ibid.*, 246, 253.

¹⁰² I discuss Freud’s use of Weismann’s germ-plasm theory in detail in my third chapter.

aspiration that psychoanalysis would be regarded as a “science,” based on “actual” observations.¹⁰³ However, with the development of new technologies for documenting observations and for controlling experimental conditions, scientific standards began to be defined by the quality of material evidence and controlled experimentation.¹⁰⁴ If psychoanalysis was a “science,” it was one which had almost no access to *material* evidence and whose theories could not be “proved by the evidence of the senses.” Psychoanalytic theory was always “a hypothesis, based on an inference and a premiss.” Nonetheless, Freud could see—or at least was convinced he could see—that psychoanalysis “subjected” people to its power by presenting its hypotheses to its patients rather than by working with physical materials or by fulfilling “material needs.” So too, Freud observed that Jewish tradition is defined first and foremost by the fact that it does not require material “evidence” in order to “subject” the people to its “yoke.” Rather, what “subjects” them is the “inference” that they have inherited *something*—Jewishness—defined not by “sensory perceptions” but by “abstract ideas,” “memories and inferences.”¹⁰⁵ While Freud’s theory of Jewishness could be considered “scientific” in the sense that it is a “hypothesis” based on observations of the “special case” of Jewish

¹⁰³ Sigmund Freud, “Recommendations to Physicians Practising Psycho-Analysis,” *S.E.*, vol. XII (1912); “Lines of Advance in Psycho-Analytic Therapy,” *S.E.*, vol. XVII (1919); *The Future of an Illusion*, *S.E.*, vol. XXI (1927).

¹⁰⁴ Sander Gliboff suggests that the plight of Paul Kammerer was similarly determined by shifting scientific standards of documentation. While nineteenth century scientists regularly provided drawings of their evidence, by the 1920s, the scientific establishment began to expect untouched photographs documenting all scientific experiments and observations. See Sander Gliboff, “The Case of Paul Kammerer: Evolution and Experimentation in the Early Twentieth Century,” Unpublished draft [personal communication] (2005). See also James Chandler, Arnold I. Davidson and Harry Harootunian, eds., *Questions of Evidence: Proof, Practice, and Persuasion Across the Disciplines* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Léon Chertok and Isabelle Stengers, *A Critique of Psychoanalytic Reason: Hypnosis as a Scientific Problem from Lavoisier to Lacan*, trans. Martha Noel Evans, in collaboration with the authors (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992).

¹⁰⁵ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 113.

history, it is beyond the realm of scientific tests and proofs which were becoming standard in the first decades of the twentieth century. Thus, Freud's theory of Jewishness is in a different—more *geistig*—realm than those “scientific” attempts to “prove” the genetic unity of all Jews (or at least all priestly males) using material evidence which, though microscopic, depends upon “sensory perception.”¹⁰⁶ According to Freud's theory, the biological inheritance of Jewishness does not detract from its abstract ideals as long as it remains a “hypothesis.” Thus, Freud refigures the materiality of Jewish genealogy as a purely intellectual [*geistig*] matter.

E. The Future of Fixity

Freud's approach to the problem of Jewish “embodiment” has parallels with certain statements of his contemporary, Franz Rosenzweig.¹⁰⁷ Though they were working within different disciplines (Freud within science and history, Rosenzweig within philosophy and Jewish studies), both “spiritualize” [*vergeistern*] the Jewish religion and insist on a bodily—if not *racial*—definition of the Jewish people. While Freud insists that the Jewish tradition is *biologically* transmitted, Rosenzweig notes that the Jewish people are a “community of blood.”¹⁰⁸ Both suggest that this somewhat racial definition of the

¹⁰⁶ See Abu El-Haj, “‘Bearing the Mark of Israel?’ Genetics and the Quest for Jewish Origins.”; Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*; Falk, “Zionism and the Biology of the Jews.”

¹⁰⁷ In comparing Freud and Rosenzweig, I draw from brilliant comparative analyses by Eric Santner and Susan Shapiro. See Eric L. Santner, “Freud's *Moses* and the Ethics of Nomotropic Desire.” *October* 88 (1999); *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Shapiro, “The Uncanny Jew: A Brief History of an Image.”

¹⁰⁸ Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. William W. Hallo (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1985), 300.

Jewish people is what allows the Jewish tradition to maintain its *geistig* ideals and to survive in a realm beyond “sensory perception,” or as Rosenzweig put it, “beyond the external life.”¹⁰⁹ According to both, the Jews became a people precisely when they departed from the material-social world (of national politics rooted in land, language and history). As Freud explains, “after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by Titus, the Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai asked permission to open the first Torah school in Jabneh. From that time on, the Holy Writ and the intellectual concern [*geistige Bemühung*] with it were what held the scattered [*versprengte*] people together.”¹¹⁰ Though the destruction of the Second Temple and the subsequent loss of the Land of Israel are usually identified as the source of the originary “brokenness” of the Jewish people, there is a sense that this “brokenness” has persisted with the homelessness of diasporic Judaism. Thus, Jewishness has survived by establishing and maintaining a “home” beyond the grounded materiality afforded by physical land.

The fact that both Freud and Rosenzweig identify this brokenness as endemic to the modern Jewish condition has something to do with the historical situation in which they both found themselves—that is, a moment when German-speaking Jews were once again threatened with the loss of their *Heimat*, albeit this time the homeland was not the Land of Israel, but Germany (or Austria). With the diffusion of the Jewish people throughout the world and with the possibilities for assimilation afforded by political emancipation in the nineteenth century, there was a sense (if only briefly) that Jews could establish their homes within the various nations in which they resided. However, Freud

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 302.

¹¹⁰ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 115.

and Rosenzweig both recognized (in their own ways) that the Jews are a “radically deterritorialized” people.¹¹¹ As Pierre Nora has suggested, with the breakdown of stable *milieu de memoire* (environments of memory), people search and usually find other *lieux de memoire*, places where memory can stably reside.¹¹² In the case of the Jewish people, since at least the fourth century C.E., the most enduring *lieu de memoire* has been the body. For better *and* for worse, Freud insists that the Jewish people originated and were defined by a decisive brokenness—the incorporation of a foreign religion (Egyptian monotheism), and a violent trauma (the murder of Moses, the memory-traces of which have been persistently transmitted from generation to generation). Since the originary trauma, Freud explains that Jewish tradition has survived in a realm beyond sensory perception: *within* each Jewish body in each new generation.

Like Rosenzweig, Freud suggests that the Jews are a uniquely eternal people. “As we know,” he writes, “of all the peoples who lived round the basin of the Mediterranean in antiquity, the Jewish people is almost the only one which still exists in name and also in substance.”¹¹³ It is not clear why Freud qualifies the extraordinary exclusivity of this

¹¹¹ Drawing from *Moses and Monotheism*, Žižek sees this radical deterritorialization as a fundamental characteristic of the modern subject, always unsure of his proper place in the social fabric. See Eric L. Santner, “Freud, Žižek, and the Joys of Monotheism.” *American Imago* 54.2 (1997); Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989).

¹¹² In his introduction to the massive collaborative history of France, Nora uses the term, *lieux de memoire*, to refer to “sites of memory” whose significance have intensified “because there are no longer *milieux de memoire*, real environments of memory.” Nora correlates this renewed interest in such sites as part of a “particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn—but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the *embodiment* of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists.” Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire.” *Representations* Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory. 26 (1989): 7, my italics. While this “particular historical moment” may be felt as various post-colonial nation states begin to recognize their fractiousness and multiple identities, it is, I think, emblematic of both Freud’s and Rosenzweig’s definitions of Jewish tradition. On European Jewishness in the early twentieth century as a colonial encounter, see Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*, 271ff.

¹¹³ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 105.

statement with the word “almost.” Perhaps he hesitates in the face of the extraordinariness of the Jewish claim to exclusive uniqueness. Derrida, I think, rightly problematizes this “logic of election;” the idea that the experience of the “the promise (the future) and the injunction of memory (the past)” is unique to the Jewish people is traumatic in itself.¹¹⁴ This singular “name” (Jewish?) and this particular “substance” (Judaism? Jewishness?) insistently refer to one another, compelling the Jewish people to return to Judaism such that Judaism (the religion and its traditions) is defined by the Jewish people. The fact of (genealogical) Jewishness *compels* a person to define and re-define the nature of Judaism; Judaism exists only as a religion of the people. Or as Rosenzweig put it, the “longing” for the eternal holy land “compels” the Jewish people to “concentrate the full force of its will on a thing which, for other peoples, is only one among others yet which to it is essential and vital [*eigentlichen und reinen Lebenspunkt*]: the community of blood [*der Blutsgemeinsschaft*]... the will to be a people dares not cling to any mechanical [*totes*, literally *dead*] means; the will can realize its end only through the people itself. *Das Volk ist Volk nur durch das Volk*. [the people is a people only through the people].”¹¹⁵ Thus, reading Freud through Rosenzweig, it is this eternal longing for what is lost, for an untouchable holiness, that constitutes Jewishness *and* ensures its survival.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 76-77.

¹¹⁵ Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 300. Oddly enough, the standard English translation of Rosenzweig’s text does not include this final concluding line of his paragraph on “The Holy Land”: “the people is a people only through the people.” Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Universitätsbibliothek, 2002), 345.

¹¹⁶ It is unclear whether (for Freud or for Rosenzweig) the Zionist return to the land of Israel would amount to an end of such eternal holiness.

According to Freud, it is not education or texts or rituals that makes the Jews Jewish and compel them to practice Jewish traditions. Rather, it is the biologically inherited memory of events (multiple, violent, messy, as well as peculiarly ideal) that constitutes Jewish tradition and that compels Jews to be Jewish. On a lighter note, this sort of backward logic could be compared to that of the tobacco companies' argument that smoking does not cause lung cancer. Rather, the tobacco companies argue that it is the genetic predisposition to lung cancer which causes people to smoke. In other words, it is not an individual's feelings which cause him or her to feel Jewish and to turn to Judaism. Rather, it is the inheritance of Jewishness (and the subsequent identification of the person as Jewish) which compels a person to *be* Jewish and to do, practice and have an affinity for particular things which are understood as Jewish.¹¹⁷ As Žižek repeats after Lacan, "there is no repression prior to the return of the repressed."¹¹⁸

While there are converts to Judaism—people who join the “community of blood”—for the majority of Jews, it is the genealogical inheritance of Jewishness which compels them to practice or to repress, recant and repudiate this tradition. While the possibility of conversion to Judaism might seem to disprove the purely genealogical injunction to “be” Jewish, in fact, the process of conversion emphasizes this logic: the “convert is adopted into the [Jewish] family and assigned a new ‘genealogical’ identity,” by receiving a new Jewish name whose ending is “ben Avraham” or “bas Avraham” (son/daughter of Abraham).¹¹⁹ Thus s/he is regarded as a descendent of Abraham, the

¹¹⁷ I thank Geoffrey Bowker for suggesting this comparison.

¹¹⁸ Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 14.

¹¹⁹ Here I draw from Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 240-241.

first “convert” to Judaism. So too, when a person (who was previously “non-” or “not so” observant) begins to intensely practice Judaism, s/he is referred to as a *hozer bi'teshuvah*, not simply someone who has “repented” [*B'al Teshuvah*], but someone who has “returned” as if s/he has returned to her “origins,” her past (even, or most particularly, one which s/he did not know).¹²⁰ According to Freud, repressions, recantations and repudiations are all evidence of transmission, acknowledgements that there is a presence, that the “tradition” has been inherited. Why else “repudiate” Jewishness if it is not present?¹²¹

At least since the Holocaust, there has been a strong desire from within Jewish communities to repudiate and repress the racial definition of Jewishness for it seems too close to externally imposed anti-Semitic definitions. For this reason, a number of scholars have attempted to reduce or remove these aspects both from Freud’s definition and from Jewish communities’ self-definitions.¹²² Scholars and community leaders have understandably shied away from any discussions hinting of “race,” and have applauded the rejection of “race” as a useful category by the scientific community. Indeed, it seems as if certain notions of “race” may become part of the past.¹²³ In particular contexts and for particular communities, it is quite possible to argue that “genealogy” is *not* the same

¹²⁰ See Walter Benn Michaels, “The No-Drop Rule.” *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1994).

¹²¹ Following Jan Assmann’s argument about the mnemohistory of Egypt, we might take this further. For a person to “successfully” convert (away from Judaism, in this case), she must continue to remember her past. Assmann writes, “Conversion defines itself as the result of an overcoming and a liberation from one’s own past which is no longer one’s own. Remembering their disowned past is obligatory for converts in order not to relapse.” Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*, 7.

¹²² Similarly, numerous scholars have attempted to remove all taint of “race” from Rosenzweig’s concept of the “community of blood.” See, for example, Leora Batnitsky, *Idolatry and Representation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig Reconsidered* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 75; Peter Eli Gordon, “Rosenzweig Redux: The Reception of German-Jewish Thought.” *Jewish Social Studies* 8.1 (2002): 94-95.

¹²³ Obviously, in America and elsewhere, “race” is not a thing of the past and it is not only “genealogical”: skin color is a useful category, for example, for determining whether a person has experienced racism.

as “race” or “ethnicity,” let alone culture, religion or community. These terms are historically determined and are different for different groups in different times. It may well be true that we are moving toward a non-genealogical, non-racial definition of Jewishness, for as Shaye Cohen has convincingly noted, “the nexus of religion, ethnicity, and nationality [and I would include “race” in this list] was not revealed to the people of Israel by Moses at Mount Sinai but were created by historical Jews living in historical time.”¹²⁴ It may just be possible that the racial definition of Jewishness is something which is better forgotten and will some day slip away into the mists of oblivion.

While some might wish for the historical invention (or resuscitation) of a non-genealogical, non-racial definition of Jewishness, we should, however, be careful what we wish for. When a portion of the painful past “returns from oblivion,” explains Freud, it “asserts itself with peculiar force, exercises an incomparably powerful influence on people in the mass, and raises an irresistible claim to truth against which logical objections remain powerless.”¹²⁵ Throughout his life, Freud argued that the return of the repressed is inevitable. In his final book, he extended this theory to suggest that the Jewish people will survive, despite all reforms, recantations, repudiations and repressions. However, as shocking as this may sound, such a future is not necessarily hopeful, for it also suggests that the “fixity of identity”—and the violence which is so often legitimated by it—is inescapable.

The discomfort—and strength—of Freud’s theory of Jewishness is the notion that the repressed *returns* and that this return is not necessarily comfortable, welcome or

¹²⁴ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*, 348.

¹²⁵ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 85.

hopeful. Rather than repressing the “racial” elements of Jewish definition, Freud suggests that a vigilant scrutiny of these elements is crucial if there is to be any hope of controlling these “peculiar” forces rather than being controlled by them. Historically antagonistic communities such as the Jewish and Arab peoples in the Middle East may not ever be able to overcome their differences. However, the continued analysis of their differences—and this includes the “racial” definitions of the Jewish people—may reduce the likelihood that these differences will be used in the service of violence or oppression.

Conclusion

Belated Speculations: Excuse me, are you Jewish?

Perhaps what I have been exploring is not so much a “theory of Jewishness” as a recognition of the way that Jewishness acts upon people as an ideology, a logic which “hails” a person regardless of her beliefs or sense of belonging. Thus, for example, anyone who has ever considered the Jewish Question is called upon and brought into an interminable process of transference. According to Louis Althusser,

ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: ‘Hey, you there!’¹

Common-sensically, it would be the Jewish person who would feel “hailed” by the “call” from behind, from her past, as it were. I want to suggest, however, that *anyone* who hears the call—and recognizes it as something that matters or that *might* matter—has been “recruited” into the system. In some ways, the Jewish person (the person who unquestioningly recognizes herself as Jewish) has it easiest, because for her the answer is obvious. For anyone else the answer and its potential social and/or psychological consequences are less obvious. “No, I’m not Jewish...” but what if I were? Generations compress, time expands: what if I had been there? What if it happens again? Where will I

¹ Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation),” trans. Ben Brewster, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 174.

have been when the repressed returns? This ideological “calling” resonates with the “calling” to God which some people hear, certainly more than Althusser lets on. The distinction is that it is fairly easy to assert that one does not believe in God, but it is nearly impossible to maintain that one does not believe in Jews, in the existence of Jews (or of religion more generally).

Psychoanalysis similarly hails all of us who have ever used the words, “unconscious” or “ego” or the phrase, “Freudian slip.” It’s easy to assert that you don’t believe in the efficacy of a treatment which calls itself psychoanalytic, or that you don’t believe that what Freud (or any other psychoanalyst) writes is *true*, but it is nearly impossible to assert that you don’t believe *in* psychoanalysis. One of the major questions haunting the history and practice of psychoanalysis is whether Freud discovered the phenomena of “transference” and the “unconscious” and so on, or whether psychoanalysis in some ways creates these phenomena. Like the God of Genesis who calls the Heaven and Earth into being, like the writers of the Bible who call God into being, did Freud call these phenomena into existence, or did he discover them? In developing a racial theory of Jewishness, did Freud reveal a process already at work, or was he complicit in sustaining this illusion?

One of the clearest examples of this conundrum within psychoanalysis is the question of transference which I discussed in my fourth chapter. On the one hand, Freud notes that “the less its presence is suspected, the more powerfully it operates.”² However, in a case of protesting too much, he also insists that “psychoanalysis does not create [transference], but merely reveals it to consciousness and gains control of it in order to

² Sigmund Freud, “Five Lectures on Psycho-analysis,” *S.E.*, vol. XI (1909), 51.

guide psychological processes towards the desired goal.”³ Certainly, the *word* transference [*Übertragung*] existed prior to the founding of psychoanalysis—indeed, it existed at least in part as a description of telepathic transferences, of overly intimate and immoral “influences.” Freud acknowledges a larger danger, however: revealing a phenomenon is not necessarily enough, the psychoanalyst must “gain control” of it. The question remains—unacknowledged and unanswered—how the processes of revealing and controlling are related. It is not clear that revealing the transference necessarily allows you to control it—it may actually unleash its powers so that precautions will be necessary—for example, you might want to see a psychoanalyst who *can* “gain control” of it.

The question which I am pursuing is one of *complicity*. Psychoanalysis reveals how we are all already trapped in various structures—of family, language, society, culture, race and tradition. However, the question remains as to whether (or rather, *how*) psychoanalysis is *complicit* with the perpetuation of these structures.⁴ What happens if the question of belief is shifted from religion to “race”? Indeed, what would it mean to insist that you don’t believe in race? On the one hand, a refusal to believe “*in* race” can be seen as a willfully naïve disregard of the reality that “race” constitutes and shapes the experience of all people (whether black or white, Jewish or non-Jewish, etc.). Indeed, to believe and recognize “race” may be a necessary step in the process of eradicating

³ Ibid.

⁴ Similarly, Boyarin criticizes Lacan for his complicity with perpetuating the “dominant fiction” by positing the phallus. Boyarin argues that “the very terms ‘phallus’ and ‘castration,’ if they are not interrogated historically, lose the symptomatic power they might possess to explain misogyny, homophobia, and anti-Semitism/racism and become, willy-nilly, complicit with those discussions.” Daniel Boyarin, “What Does a Jew Want? or, The Political Meaning of the Phallus,” *The Psychoanalysis of Race*, ed. Christopher Lane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 231-232, n210.

racism. However, to insist that one does not believe in race is also an attempt to evacuate the concept of its power and to put an end to the oppressive use of racial categories.

Unfortunately, simply insisting that one does not believe in God or race does not make these phenomena go away. The question then, is how, *and whether*, one can talk about these phenomena without being complicit in their perpetuation.

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