The voice of history
Sigmund Freud / E.T.A. Hoffmann / G.H. Schubert

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Then again, sometimes philosophical discourse and the subject of the written work band together against the analyst, whenever the latter (and this is often the case) loses all consciousness of the historical context in which all these operations are taking place.

(Philippe Sollers, 1982: 334)

Summary

In "The uncanny", Freud's essay on E.T.A. Hoffmann's story "The sandman", an attempt is made to reconcile the disparate voices mediating the world of the text. The resultant analysis is not only a flattening of Hoffmann's complex narrative; it also demonstrates a problem in the psychoanalytic understanding of the way in which narrative mediates history. This problem arises from a belief in the ability of scientific discourse to understand historical phenomena while overlooking the forms of their mediation. This essay attempts to show that the difficulties arising out of Freud's interpretation of "The sandman" are prefigured in the story itself. Drawing upon current trends in Romantic psychology (most notably the work of G.H. Schubert) and popular conceptions of history, Hoffmann builds upon the assumption that narration mediates psychic and historical phenomena only by revealing its own inadequacy as a form of mediation. This assumption blurs the boundary which Freud sought to uphold between literary and scientific discourse. Consequently, a careful reading of Hoffmann and his sources reveals a fundamental doubt in the essentially Freudian project of a discourse of truth and a technique of its implementation.

Opsomming

In Freud se essay "The uncanny" oor E.T.A. Hoffmann se verhaal "The sandman", word 'n poging aangewend om die uiteenlopende bemiddelende stemme van die wêreld van die teks met mekaar te versoen. Die gevolglike analise lei nie net tot 'n afplatting van Hoffmann se komplekse verhaal nie, maar dit illustreer ook 'n probleem in die psigoanalitiese opvatting betreffende die manier waarop die geskiedenis deur die narratiewe bemiddel word. Hierdie probleem spruit voort uit 'n geloof in die vermoë van wetenskaplike diskoers om historiese verskynsels te verklaar sonder dat die vorme van historiese bemiddeling in ag geneem word. In hierdie opstel word probeer om aan te toon dat die probleme wat voortspruit uit Freud se analise van "The sandman" alreeds in die verhaal self voorspel word. Deur te put uit resente strominge in die Romantiese psigologie (in die besonder die werk van G.H. Schubert) en populêre opvattings van geskiedenis, steun Hoffmann op die veronderstelling dat die narratiewe slegs psigiese en historiese fenomene kan bemiddel deur die blootlegging van sy eie ontoereikendheid as vorm van bemiddeling. Hierdie aanname vertroebel die grens wat Freud tussen literêre en wetenskaplike diskoers probeer handhaaf. Gevolglik onthul 'n noukeurige lesing van Hoffmann en sy bronne 'n grondliggende twyfel in die essensieel Freudiaanse projek van 'n diskoers van waarheid en die implementeringstegnieke daarvan.

1 Introduction: Freud and the voice of literature

Freud's psychoanalysis grew up alongside a certain conception of literature. This relation is a difficult one to define, and has already generated a large

body of critical writing. A survey of this writing would reveal a number of possible ways in which the importance of literature for psychoanalysis and of psychoanalysis for literature may be described. In a historical overview of Freud's attitude to literature, Michael Rutschky isolates three general tendencies. In essays such as the "New introductory lectures on psychoanalysis" (1933), "The future of an illusion" (1927) and "Civilization and its discontents" (1930), Freud presents art and literature as "harmless illusions, which provide a substitute satisfaction for forbearance in the service of culture" (Rutschky, 1981: 22). In so doing, it should be noted, he pronounces art as an (albeit ineffectual) enemy of science. According to Starobinski (1973: 98) he never abandoned this view of art. In contrast, however, essays such as "Creative writers and day dreaming" (1908), "Dostoevsky and parricide" (1928) and the "Address delivered to the Goethe House at Frankfurt" (1930), bear witness to a certain underlying doubt in Freud's mind as to whether psychoanalytic method is indeed capable of understanding the essential elements of art and literature. This doubt finds its most extreme expression in the statement that "before the problem of the creative artist analysis must, alas, lay down its arms" (Freud, 1928: 399). As a result, these texts see literature as a pathway to the psyche of the author. Finally, Rutschky cites the essay "Delusion and dreams in Jensen's 'Gradiva'" (1907), in which Freud understands literature as presenting an initial exposition of psychoanalytic knowledge, an exposition which is only developed in a scientific register with the advent of psychoanalysis proper. Freud has been quoted as having declined the title "discoverer of the unconscious", since "the poets and philosophers before me discovered the unconscious .... What I discovered was the scientific method by which the unconscious can be studied" (Trilling, 1951: 34, source not given).

Given this wide range of possible "Freudian" approaches to literature, it should not surprise us to find an equally wide range of attempts to solve the riddle of Freud and literature. Following Rutschky again, we could point to Adorno's contention that, if psychoanalysis were to think its principles through to their logical conclusion, it would have to plead for the abolition of art (1970: 256, cit. Rutschky, 1981: 9). Similarly, Chasseguet-Smirgel points out the methodological difficulties in the psychoanalysis of art. These are so immense that "the permissibility of this technique may be placed in doubt" (1982: 172). Starobinski, on the other hand, understands metapsychology as an activity which is not essentially different from that of the poet (Starobinski, 1973: 99; see also Rutschky, 1981: 19–20). The issue at stake here is the conflict of two discursive modes – the scientific discourse to which Freud aspired, and which might be characterized as "rationalistic objectivism"; and the poetic discourse of his literary texts, which might be called "imaginary rhetoricism" (Starobinski, 1973: 102). But the issue is also the ambivalence which ensues from Freud's attempt to negotiate this conflict, and which is central to his writing.

A theory of literature which would claim to be "Freudian" must in the first instance come to terms with this ambivalence. For Freud's conception of literature seems to allow a development of textuality in both directions: a

critical development of the literary text in the name of science, as well as a literary appropriation of scientific discourse in the name of the unconscious (see Starobinski, 1973: 103). In the following I will attempt to show how the ambivalent approach of Freud's psychoanalysis to literature is prefigured in E.T.A. Hoffmann's tale, "The sandman" (1816) which Freud analysed in his essay "The uncanny" (1919).

My aim will be to show that one of the central problems of analysis was already formulated in Hoffmann's story. This is the problem of the recasting of psychic phenomena in literary and scientific discourse. Hoffmann rejects the proposition that it is a valuable undertaking to reformulate the psychic phenomena manifested in literary discourse as scientific knowledge – that is provided we understand scientific knowledge as an apprehension of sensory phenomena in a discourse based primarily on empirical description and causal explanation. The reasons for this rejection are to be found in his adoption of a specific model of the unconscious: that developed by the Romantic psychologist G.H. Schubert.

In his interpretation of "The sandman", Freud seems to prove that Hoffmann was right in his reservations about psychoanalytic interpretation. This is not because Freud's reading of "The sandman" distorts its contents. It is rather because his reading tends to omit all which problematizes his belief that literature can illustrate psychoanalytic theory. I will be attempting to prove in the following that it is possible for Freud to read the plot of "The sandman" as psychoanalytic evidence because of an act of logical framing which places literary discourses on a lower level than scientific knowledge. This framing is accomplished paradoxically by an exchange of voices: Freud speaks with the voice of Hoffmann's narrator. The act of framing which Freud intends is pre-empted in Hoffmann's "The sandman" by the narrator. He, like Freud, seeks a superordinate perspective from which Nathanael's madness might be related in different words. And not only different words, but words which do not succumb to the doubts which necessarily arise when madness constructs its own contingent narrative. And, like Freud, in the act of re-telling he becomes infected with the delusory words of the speaking subject.

However, whereas Freud disregards this framing and consequent "contamination", Hoffmann problematizes the perspective of the narrator. Here he follows Schubert's belief that madness may involve a higher knowledge than sanity (Busch, 1942: 337).

Finally, it will be argued that Hoffmann's sceptical approach to a psychoanalytic search for origins must be seen as a response to a specific model of history – the messianic history so central to Romanticism. This model of history informed Schubert's psychology and Freud's psychoanalysis alike. In both cases the question of individual psychic phenomena can only be posed within a mythology of origins and their loss. And in both psychologists, the personal dimension of this mythology can exist only in relation to a superpersonal dimension. It is only in Hoffmann that this model of history becomes expressly problematic, and with it the possibility of the cure (see Busch, 1942: 338–339).

2 Freud's reading of "The sandman"

Freud's essay on Hoffmann, *"Das Unheimliche"* appeared in *Imago* in 1919. It was written at an earlier stage, since Freud mentions (in a letter to Sandor Ferenczi of 6 May 1919) that he was rewriting this essay (see Jones, 1957: 426). At this time Freud was writing "Beyond the pleasure principle" (begun in March 1919), and was concerned mainly with the development of his bio-energetic and economic model. Indeed, Jones (1957: 42) suggests that Freud wrote "The uncanny" as a way of "killing time" between work on "Beyond the pleasure principle".

In the following, I will outline Freud's essay as briefly as possible. The essay "The uncanny" is divided into three sections. The first is devoted to the word *unheimlich.* Freud seeks, by etymological method, to demonstrate an ambivalence in this word which has developed out of its proximity to its antonym *heimlich,* which means "secret" as well as "familiar, convivial". In the second and major section, Freud produces a number of examples, including Hoffmann's "The sandman", in order to demonstrate that the relation between *heimlich* and *unheimlich* is one of repression. Finally, in the third section, Freud attempts to counter certain problems which his prior discussion has raised by introducing qualitative divisions into his concept of the uncanny.

To progress from a discussion of Freud's essay to a summary of his interpretation of Hoffmann's "The sandman" is itself an act of interpretation. This is due to the heuristic nature of Freud's essay. The threefold organization mentioned above is little more than a pretext for a multi-leveled excursus into such topics as doubt and self-doubt, fear and speaking about fear, experience and its sublation in writing. As such, the essay is "shot through with certainties and uncertainties *about* certainties and uncertainties" (Mahony, 1982: 120). Time and again the suspicion arises that Freud is working through a return of his own repressed. This is particularly evident in the autobiographical nature of the examples which form the climax of part two (Freud, 1919b: 237ff; see Mahony, 1982: 127–129). Hélène Cixous (1976) has described Freud's text as no less uncanny than Hoffmann's.

Different commentators suggest various approaches to Freud's essay. Mahony (1982: 121) begins with the (inconclusive) conclusions set out in section three, and uses them to draw up a table of the uncanny in real life and in fiction. Weber (1973) emphasizes the recurrent doubt which presides over the threefold structure of the essay. In one of the few sympathetic commentaries, Aichinger follows Freud's own discussion of Hoffmann's "The sandman", beginning with a re-telling of the contents in order then to read "the tragic story of Nathanael as a clinical report, as a 'case study'" (1976: 116). Hertz (1979) discusses it in terms of its proximity to "Beyond the pleasure principle", and the central importance of the death drive and the repetition compulsion.

Freud's discussion of Hoffmann's "The sandman" appears as a kind of crossroads in his essay, connecting two dimensions of investigation. It serves as one of the examples which Freud lists in his *Musterung* (see Weber, 1973: 1105ff) in part II. As such it is concatenated with various other examples.

However, Freud uses this particular example to move through various levels of reading, in what seems to be a search for the hermeneutic depths of the story. "The sandman" is presented alternately as an example of phenomena producing uncanny effects, a simple story of a neurotic (a case history), evidence of the theory of Oedipus, and finally, almost accidentally, in a footnote, as evidence of Hoffmann's difficult relation to his father.

Freud introduces the tale in the context of Jentsch's notion of intellectual doubt and the significance of the automaton. Hoffmann's "The sandman" is intended initially to show that the uncanny rests not with doubt, but with the fear of the sandman. This is a fear of the loss of eyes, which in turn is a fear of castration (Freud, 1919b: 230). Freud begins by retelling the story. Here he concentrates on the *fabula*, simply summarizing the contents. Anyone familiar with Hoffmann's tale will realize that this summary does violence to it. This violence might conceivably be permissible in the name of science (which, after all, does always require an initial act of violence to isolate its field). However, this particular act of violence has serious consequences for Freud's understanding of the story. I will be pursuing these consequences at a later stage, and wish now to discuss some of the omissions in Freud's reading. These will eventually bring us back to the question of history. Who tells his-story, and under what conditions is it possible to retell it? What sacrifices must be made in this retelling? What aspects of Nathanael's story must be overlooked and forgotten in order to transform his-story into a case history? And if the story is a case history, is it Nathanael's, Hoffmann's or Freud's?

Freud's essay has been criticized on a number of counts. The most widespread criticism concerns his disregard of Hoffmann's subtle literary form. The most acute is probably that given by Hertz (1979). Here Freud's reading is faulted on three grounds; the degree of condensation in recounting the story, the replacement of the narrator's voice with his own voice, and the simplification of the problematic narrative style (Hertz, 1979: 304). In other words, Freud thinks that the tale of Nathanael is his-story – that it is essentially the same whether he or Hoffmann's narrator tells it. The result is, as has been indicated above, that Freud's narrative becomes "contaminated" with the same delusions which Hoffmann's narrator had allowed himself to adopt from Nathanael. Allow me to clarify this point.

Hoffmann's narrative does not begin, as Freud suggests, with Nathanael's childhood recollections (Freud, 1919b: 227), but with a parapraxis: Nathanael addresses a letter to his friend Lothar but sends it to his fiancée, Lothar's sister, Claire. This is a minor point, which causes Nathanael some embarassment, but is not taken up further by the narrator. Nor does Freud take it up. More significant is the fact that the mode of narration changes between the beginning and the end of the story. Nathanael's childhood experiences of the lawyer Coppelius and the sandman are told in the first person in letter form, whereas the experiences with the automaton Olimpia, professor Spalanzani and (for the most part) the optician Guiseppe Coppola, are related by the narrator in the third person. The point at which the narrator enters the tale is decisive. Here, as we shall see later, the enthusiastic delusion which

characterizes narration in the tale is strongly in evidence. The narrative perspective which seeks to frame the story of Nathanael is itself plagued by that which plagues the latter. The tale of the over-enthusiastic poet's madness is itself threatened by the madness of enthusiasm.

And indeed, this threat will come to fruition in the course of the tale. The decisive point here is the traumatic scene in which Nathanael watches Spalanzani arguing with Coppola over Olimpia, with whom Nathanael had fallen in love. They subsequently tear her to pieces, triggering madness in Nathanael. The connection to Nathanael's childhood trauma is given here, as throughout the story, by his belief that Coppola is identical to the lawyer Coppelius, whom he had identified with the sandman ever since his childhood. A careful reading of the description which Hoffmann's narrator gives of this scene will reveal that not only Nathanael, but also the narrator suffers from this delusion of confused identities.

When Nathanael hears arguing voices inside Spalanzani's study, the narrator tells us:

> The voices belonged to Spalanzani and that hideous man, *Coppelius*. (SM: 108, my emphasis)

Nathanael runs inside, and again the narrator speaks, showing us this scene:

> The professor had seized a female figure by her shoulders, and *the Italian, Coppola,* held her feet ... (SM: 108, my emphasis)

In the ensuing description of the fight over Olimpia, the narrator continues to tell us that the other party is Coppola. However, when Spalanzani speaks to Nathanael, he says (or at least so the narrator tells us):

> "After him – after him, what are you waiting for? – *Coppelius – Coppelius,* he has stolen my best automaton – worked on it for twenty years – put body and soul into it – the gears – language – gait – mine – the eyes – he stole the eye from you." (SM: 109, my emphasis)

This is the reason why there is no answer in Hoffmann's tale as to the real identity or non-identity of Coppola and Coppelius. The voice of the narrator, which should be the voice of truth, is infected by the same delusion as the madman Nathanael. But, to make matters worse, Freud, too, suffers from this same delusion. When he retells this episode, he does so as follows:

> The student [Nathaniel] surprises the two masters quarrelling over their handiwork. The optician carries off the wooden eyeless doll; and the mechanician, Spalanzani, picks up Olympia's bleeding eyes from the ground and throws them at Nathaniel's breast, saying that *Coppola* had stolen them from the student. (Freud, 1919b: 229, my emphasis)

The point here is not the fact that Freud misreads Hoffmann; it is the reason why it is possible for him to do so. In framing the story of Nathanael within a scientific discourse Freud is forced to contain the voice of madness within another discourse. However, the indeterminacy of madness forces this other discourse initially to adopt the rhetoric of madness as somehow containing the

truth (this point is made by Hertz with reference to the *Nachträglichkeit* of psychoanalytic discourse, 1979: 306–7).

Interestingly enough, the rationalistic interpretation of Nathanael's delusion has already been spoken in Hoffmann's tale. The voice which psychoanalyses Nathanael is that of Claire, his clear-eyed fiancée who sees through his delusion with the clarity of Enlightenment rationalism:

> Of course in your childish nature the terrible sandman in your nurse's tale is connected to old Coppelius, who, even if you did not believe in the sandman, remained a lurid monster, and for children exceedingly perilous. (SM: 89–90)

Claire does not deny the existence of Nathanael's uncanny fear; she simply interprets it rationally as a universal human phenomenon:

> O, my dearly beloved Nathaniel, do you not believe that even in gay – unfettered – carefree natures there might dwell a sense of a dark force which maliciously seeks within our very selves to destroy us? (SM: 90)

The similarity to Freud's "Sandman" essay is evident. And, from Nathanael's point of view, Claire's argument shares the same problems as Freud's. There are only two ways to speak of fear and the uncanny: either with the voice of fear, which is subject to a delusion, and thus cannot speak the truth; or with the voice of reason, which itself can only experience this fear through the mediation of narration. Thus Freud's admission at the beginning of his essay that he no longer experiences the fear of the uncanny; and thus Nathanael's bitter reaction to Claire's psychoanalysis, in which he shows that the rational naming of the *Urszene* is not sufficient to effect a cure:

> She wrote me a most profound philosophical letter in which she proved at some length that Coppelius and Coppola exist only within me and are phantoms of my ego which would disintegrate immediately if only I were to recognize them as such ....
>
> By the way, it is certain that the optician Guiseppe Coppola is by no means the old lawyer Coppelius. (SM: 91 –2)

If Nathanael is to be cured, the course of the cure will evidently not follow the coherent pronunciation of this realization. It will have to proceed in his active relation to his own history.

3 Whose story? Narration between science and history

Virtually all major works on Hoffmann have noted his debt to Schubert.[1] It is not by chance that this interpretation, indeed, realization of Schubert by Hoffmann was possible. For Schubert, as for the German Romantics in general, art and poetry were regarded as the source of human knowledge of divinity (Busch, 1942: 324). Hoffmann, in recasting Schubert's ideas in poetic language, was doing little more than continuing Schubert's project as the latter comprehended it. But what is the status of Freud's recasting of Hoffmann's recasting?

There are a number of similarities between Schubert's and Freud's psychology. Schubert was an important impetus for Romantic conceptions of the psyche. He has been described as the originator of the Romantic doctrine of dream, clairvoyance and madness (Busch, 1942: 325; the dates of appearance of Schubert's books alone, however, indicate a summative rather than an initiating role – see e.g. Gerhard Sauder, postface to Schubert, 1814). Similarly, Freud's psychoanalysis has been described as a climax of Romantic writing (see Starobinski, 1973: 86; furthermore, possible links between the origins of Freud's project and Romantic medicine have been noted by Galdston, 1956).[2] Indeed, it does not seem too far-fetched to speak of an inherent Romanticism in Freud's work – that is, if we consider that the Romantics – from Mesmer's animal magnetism to Novalis's and Friedrich Schlegel's "symphilosophy" – were concerned with the synthesis of nature and thought in an expressive practice.

It would thus be possible to list an entire array of general similarities between the Romantic psychologist Schubert and the psychoanalyst Freud. Ellenberger in particular emphasizes the messianic dimension. He describes Schubert's psychology as "striking in its similarities with certain Freudian and Jungian concepts. According to Schubert, man in an original primordial state, lived in harmony with nature, then severed himself from it through his *Ich-Sucht* (self-love)" (Ellenberger, 1970: 205). For Schubert, this loss is placed firmly within the context of messianic history. Thus the antagonistic moments which Schubert saw as arising between self-love and self-reflection could only be ultimately resolved in the destruction and fulfilment of history. Here, a further similarity to Freud appears. The forces which Schubert opposed to the drives were the rationalism and reason he saw in eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought. Contrary to Freud, however, Schubert spoke firmly against this rationalism. For, in opposing the drives, rationalism opposed the urge of all life toward re-unification with the deity. Nevertheless, like Freud, Schubert saw the drives as generally ambivalent. As forces of life, they also contain the urge to their own self-destruction (see Schubert, 1806–1821: Bd I, 31). And, at their most aberrant and destructive, the drives seek not only their own obliteration, but also their fulfilment within a more perfect system. It is here that Schubert's idea of love and death are similar to Freud's. They testify to the drive to self-destruction inherent in matter (Busch, 1942: 319).

Furthermore, corresponding approximately to Freud's topography we have, according to Ellenberger, Schubert's threefold nature of human constitution – the body (id), soul (ego), and spirit (superego). Schubert also has expressions for Freud's death drive. It is, however, Schubert's work on dreams which Ellenberger compares most directly with Freud. Schubert anticipated Freud's notion of word and thing presentation in dreams, and of condensation in dream language. "Von Schubert declared that when man has fallen asleep, his mind starts thinking in a 'picture language,' in contrast to the verbal language of waking life. For a while both languages may flow parallel or mingle, but in dreams proper only the picture language *(Traumbild-*

sprache) remains. It is a hieroglyphic language in the sense that it can combine many images or concepts into one picture" (Ellenberger, 1970: 205).

Even more striking is perhaps Schubert's fundamental assumption that psychic phenomena could be studied as a "biology of the mind", if I may borrow this expression from Sulloway (1979). This is particularly evident in the attempt to uncover a direct biological foundation for the essential duality of human language – the duality between that higher faculty of language whereby the divine hieroglyphics become intelligible, and the common word-language of everyday life.[3] Like Freud, Schubert sees the possibility of founding unconscious activity in the biological constitution of human beings.

Nevertheless, care must be taken not to overestimate these similarities. The extent of similarities uncovered by Ellenberger is questionable in more than one place. Is the status of Schubert's *Leib, Körper, Seele* really comparable to Freud's topography? Is the intelligibility of dream symbols really similar in the two? The apparent similarities between Freud and Schubert become problematic when we consider the question of analysis. How did the scientist Schubert compare to the scientist Freud with regard to the appropriate treatment of the object? In order to answer this question, a brief elaboration on Schubert's psychological ideas is necessary.

One important aspect of Schubert's science of the soul has already been mentioned: its determined – and typically Romantic – contextualization within messianic history. This becomes evident when we examine the nature of the fundamental split between consciousness and unconscious phenomena. The mere existence of unconscious phenomena testifies to an essential duality in human constitution – a duality which these phenomena themselves temporarily bridge in a kind of fleeting synthesis. Of particular importance here is the dream. The dream functions as "remembering in the sense of Platonic anamnesis. It can partially cast aside the veil to the world beyond" (Busch, 1942: 325; see Schubert, 1814: 8). What is decisive here is the fact that a science of these phenomena can never be content with mere description. This is because the phenomena themselves contain a higher knowledge than can be manifested in descriptive language (Busch, 1942: 325). In this connection, Schubert suggests a specific language peculiar to dreams, which cannot be reduced without mediation to the language of words (Schubert, 1814: 6–17). This is the doctrine of the "Hidden poet", which had such a profound effect on Hoffmann.

What this means is that a science of the unconscious, if it is to do justice to the unconscious, will have to be based upon the very forces characteristic of the unconscious. These are the creative forces of nature, and, in the human being, they approximate phantasy. Thus in his *Geschichte der Seele* (1830), Schubert takes as his basic hypothesis the "conviction of the potential creative power of phantasy, even in science; this phantasy is born and quickened from the certainty of salvation, and its singularity is not the product of an invention from out of nothingness, but can only be a discovery of that which was hitherto concealed" (Elschenbroich, 1971: 7). This is why, for Schubert, rationalism is inadequate for a science which would seek to comprehend the hidden forces of the psyche. Its denotative and referential qualities lend it

rather to a study of healthy individuals and the forms of everyday life (Elschenbroich, 1971: 58). Schubert's conception of science requires that it abandon rationalism to the power of phantasy. Phantasy intersects with the pursuit of science at that point where human consciousness is confronted by its own opposition to the necessary flow of history. True science is only possible if conscious thought is aware of its own anachronistic position within messianic history.

The problem here, as Schubert sees it, is that the cultural forms of everyday life necessarily repress those aspects of nature most conducive to the development and fulfilment of the species. This applies particularly to rational language as a privileged cultural form. The predicament of humanity in messianic history lies in the inability to attain an unmediated conscious understanding of the hieroglyphic language which nature speaks (Schubert, 1814: 46). The starting point of Schubert's study of dreams is the assumption that the "acronymic and hieroglyphic language [of dream] appears in many respects far more adequate to the nature of mind than common word language" (Schubert, 1814: 2). This predicament is also that of science. What Schubert calls the "common word language" is thus not the correct medium whereby nature's truth might be unveiled. Nature does not speak a rational language: it is rather to be compared with a *"Traumrednerin"* (Schubert, 1814: 24). This is the mistake which the positivist science of the Enlightenment (or as Schubert calls it "the common teleological point of view") makes – it reduces nature to a self-generating, self-sufficient machine, whose language can only serve to refer itself to itself (Schubert, 1814: 24). In order to speak the truth, science must allow itself to be drawn into the same hallucinatory world in which its object acquires meaning. This is the motivation for Schubert's, as Hoffmann's, interest in "the original language of human beings as we have been taught it by dream, poetic activity and revelation" (Schubert, 1814: 85).

This is where the difference to Freudian psychoanalysis must initially be sought. Psychoanalysis, like Schubert's psychology, grants the drives[4] a central importance in everyday life. Schubert, however, sees the drives as manifesting an inherent natural energy inaccessible to rational knowledge (Schubert, 1814: 24). In contrast, Freud's psychoanalysis seeks a compromise "between the clarity of rational language and the dangerous opacity of the energy which knowledge discovers at the foundation of things" (Starobinski, 1973: 87).[5] In other words, the Freudian compromise aims to suture the gap to which its meta-theory has devoted itself — the gap between "a lively urge to knowledge and the somber recognition of the power of the drives" (Starobinski, 1973: 87). As Starobinski observes, this compromise is constituted as a particular praxis. This has caused a great deal of confusion concerning the status and usefulness of psychoanalytic theory. Freudian psychoanalysis arose as a praxis aimed at the normalization of individual behaviour in a repressive society. Its metapsychological theory was a constant testing and modification of models of the human constitution with a view to their adequacy to the psychoanalytic context. The suspicion thus seems justified that the theoretical dualism which Freud inherited from Romantic

psychology has been adopted and modified solely in order to restore domination of a rational discourse over what Schubert had called the "night side" of the natural sciences: the very energy which founds scientific objects.[6] The irrationality of psychic phenomena is meaningful as a result of an act of framing and contextualization: it is framed within the scientific discourse of metapsychology, and contextualized within the practice of analysis. In Starobinski's words: "It is only within the clearly defined framework of analytic practice ... that Freud encourages the analysand to submit to the unconscious. All later endeavours are to consist in regaining something conscious out of the unconscious" (Starobinski, 1973: 95). To put it more crudely, as Deleuze and Guattari (1975: 56) indicate, if the analysand gets difficult, the analyst can always phone the police.

It is essential to the Freudian compromise that experience be constantly transformed into language. Freud's psychoanalysis was concerned not with opening the irrational sphere of the unconscious to human experience, but with the recasting of unconscious experience in scientific discourse. The operative concept here is clarity: "In short, the concern is to derive a clear scientific discourse from the confused murmurings of the unconscious and the id" (Starobinski, 1973: 92). There are two issues at stake here: perspective and language. Both are pre-empted by Hoffmann's "The sandman". This is not by chance. In accepting literature as a determined perspective whose language approximates the perspective of psychic phenomena, Freud "does nothing other than accept the poet (and especially the Romantic poet) as that which he claims to be" (Starobinski, 1973: 94). As a source of information about psychic phenomena, Freud's poet is the Romantic poet par excellence: the dreamer and the mediator between consciousness and the unconscious. It is not his experience which is decisive, but his perspective, and the language in which it can be narrated.

Once the poet has been granted this status, the analyst's task seems clear-cut. He must apply methods proper to his discipline capable of apprehending literature as an object of natural science. What this amounts to is a translation. "The concern is to proceed from one language to another, from the enigmatic language of symbols to the open language of interpretation" (Starobinski, 1973: 94). It is here that the indeterminacy of the analyst's "scientific" discourse becomes apparent. For the analyst, the adequacy of scientific language to nature must prove itself via the mediating language of the poet or the analysand. The problem here is that a language which speaks of its object through the mediation of another language is constantly in danger of reducing itself to the forms of its mediation. "His [Freud's] 'metalanguage', which seeks to be stringently scientific, is infected by the object it investigates" (Starobinski, 1973: 101). What does this actually mean? Let us turn to Freud's essay on Hoffmann's "The sandman" in order to clarify the indeterminacy of scientific perspective and the way in which its language is infected by its object.

Freud makes it clear from the outset of his essay that he is not concerned with the study of an emotional complex, nor of an aesthetic phenomenon per se, but with the exegesis of a single word. This remarkable starting point is so

easily overlooked that it is worth quoting the entire first two paragraphs of "The uncanny":

> It is only rarely that a psycho-analyst feels impelled to investigate the subject of aesthetics, even when aesthetics is understood to mean not merely the theory of beauty but the theory of the qualities of feeling. He works in other strata of mental life and has little to do with the subdued emotional impulses which, inhibited in their aims and dependent on a host of concurrent factors, usually furnish the material for the study of aesthetics. But it does occasionally happen that he has to interest himself in some particular province of that subject; and this province usually proves to be a rather remote one, and one which has been neglected in the specialist literature of aesthetics.
>
> The subject of "The uncanny" is a province of this kind. It is undoubtedly related to what is frightening – to what arouses dread and horror; equally certainly, too, the word is not always used in a clearly definable sense, so that it tends to coincide with what excites fear in general. Yet we may expect that a special core of feeling is present which justifies the use of a special conceptual term. One is curious to know what this common core is which allows us to distinguish as "uncanny" certain things which lie within the field of what is frightening. (Freud, 1919b: 219)

This word *unheimlich* appears suddenly and without the clinical contextualization which normally characterizes Freud's analyses. Nor is there any necessary connection between this word and the tales of Hoffmann. Freud is also not heuristically seeking the correct word to describe a psychic phenomenon. The direction of his study is not a positivist progression from observable phenomena to an adequate description. He begins instead with the word *unheimlich* and proceeds towards the affect phenomena appropriate to this word. This initial importance accorded the word is evident in Freud's etymological discussion, which occupies the first nine pages (a quarter) of the essay, and incorporates references to a number of philological sources. At the beginning of his interpretation of Hoffmann we thus find the same fascination for a word which characterizes Nathanael's fatal relation to the word "sandman".

Freud sees this initial philological exegesis as yielding the same results as the actual psychoanalytic study he intends. Thus he suggests as an alternative method – and this is the method he will employ in the major portion of the essay – the collation of "all those properties of persons, things, sense-impressions, experiences and situations which *arouse in us* the feeling of uncanniness, and then infer the unknown nature of the uncanny from *what all these examples have in common*" (Freud, 1919b: 220, my emphasis). But in whom is the arousal of this feeling to be sought, and what is the nature of the various "cases" which Freud tends to use as evidence? The question is especially justified, since Freud has just told his readers that he himself has difficulty recreating the feeling:

> The writer of the present contribution, indeed, must himself plead guilty to a special obtuseness in this matter, where extreme delicacy of perception would be more in place. It is long since he has experienced or heard of anything which has given him an uncanny impression, and he must start by translating himself into

> that state of feeling, by awakening in himself the possibility of experiencing it. (Freud, 1919b: 220)

Here, as above, we find a strange similarity between the predicament of Freud the scientist and Nathanael the poet. Both conduct their pursuit of the truth (for the former, the nature of the uncanny; for the latter, the root of his disease) under the shadow of a fundamental doubt regarding the validity of personal experience. The key to this similarity lies not (as Freud's study suggests) in the person of Nathanael, but in that of the narrator. Narration is the most apparent problem which aligns Freud, Hoffmann and Schubert. And yet, the problem of narration is itself a problem for scientific discourse. The initial difficulties of narration addressed by Freud (only to be elided for the remainder of the essay) concern the possibility of retelling a story about psychic phenomena in a form capable of neutralizing their uncanny power. One of these difficulties concerns the difference between a normative and a descriptive approach to words in analysis; another is the wandering significance of the most commonplace words (Freud's etymological investigation of *unheimlich,* the shifting meaning of words in Hoffmann's "The sandman", Schubert's attempt to find an underlying unity of human experience in the duality of contemporary referential language); and finally, analysis must confront the perspectival nature of affect phenomena (Freud's ambivalent status as both investigating subject and uninformed object of his study; the blurring distinction between Nathanael's and the narrator's perspectives on reality; Schubert's attempt to adopt the perspective of the individual dreaming consciousness – the "hidden poet" – which he identifies with that of deity). The above factors of interference all cast doubt upon the adequacy of a science of narration to its object. If scientific statements about the world are to be produced, it will be necessary to counter this interference in some way. This is where the infection with the object (of which Starobinski speaks and which is such a vital component in Schubert's psychology and Hoffmann's fiction) assumes a key role in Freud's essay. Samuel Weber speaks of "the peculiar merging of subject matter and discourse in Freud's essay. Yet this merging does not simply fulfil the exigencies of theoretical discourse, the *adequatio intellectus et rei,* since here the 'adequacy' of discourse and object tend as much to dislocate the discourse as to locate the object" (Weber, 1973: 1104). Freud's construction of theoretical adequacy lies in the anamnetic construction of a primal origin *(heimlich-unheimlich),* severed from us by a distant catastrophe and preserved in language: "linguistic usage has extended *das Heimliche* into its opposite, *das Unheimliche* . . .; for this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression" (Freud, 1919b: 241). And this construction also determines the structure of Freud's argument.

Freud begins his discussion of "The sandman" by describing Hoffmann as "a writer who has succeeded in producing uncanny effects better than anyone else" (Freud, 1919b: 227). There are two difficulties with this introductory claim. First, as has already been mentioned Freud has just told us that he has

difficulty recreating this feeling; and second, what Freud then proceeds to discuss is not Hoffmann's effect on the reader, but the effect of childhood experience on Hoffmann's protagonist. Freud expressly (and quite correctly) states that the uncanny effect of Hoffmann's "The sandman" is achieved not, as in Jentsch's conception of the uncanny, through intellectual uncertainty, i.e. through the reader's "uncertainty whether a particular figure in the story is a human being or an automaton" (cit. Freud, 1919b: 227). It is rather the result of "the theme of the 'Sand-Man' who tears out children's eyes" (Freud, 1919b: 227). Now if this is the cause of uncanny effect in Hoffmann's tale, it seems unlikely that it is the reader who is subject to this effect. If there is an uncanny effect in Hoffmann's "The sandman", it is rather to be found in Nathanael's intense reaction to the tale of the sandman, as told him by his mother and repeated in a somewhat more gruesome version by his sister's nurse. Thus when Freud speaks of an uncanny effect in "The sandman", he discusses Nathanael's reaction to the fable of the sandman as if it were his own – Freud's – reaction to Hoffmann's "The sandman". In other words, the discussion of effect rests upon this framing, whereby the sandman for Nathanael becomes "The sandman" for Freud. Freud's analysis of "The sandman" is possible only because of this initial and subsequently elided act of identification with the protagonist.

This elided identification should allow us to understand the fact that Freud omits to mention the vital function of the narrator, an omission for which he is so strongly criticized by Hertz (1979). It is, however, not sufficient to explain this as a lack of sensitivity to literature on Freud's part. Explanations should rather be sought in his basic assumption that the world of the text is coextensive with the world of praxis – of analysis. Freud does not need the mediating figure of the narrator, since he can enter this world simply by exchanging places with Nathanael – and as a result, the voice which speaks his scientific description of Nathanael's predicament becomes increasingly aligned with that of Hoffmann's narrator. Note, for example, the similarity between Freud's opening sentence and the voices of the narrator and Nathanael:

> *Nathanael:* "Nun soll ich dir sagen, was mir widerfuhr. Ich muß es, das sehe ich ein . . ." [I should now tell you what happened to me. I must, this much is clear to me . . .]. (SM: 81)
>
> *Narrator:* "So trieb es mich denn gar gewaltig, von Nathanael's verhängnisvollem Leben zu dir zu sprechen . . ." [And so I was driven by a powerful urge to speak to you of Nathanael's fateful life . . .]. (SM: 94)
>
> *Freud:* "Der Psychoanalytiker verspürt nur selten den Antrieb zu ästhetischen Untersuchungen . . ." [It is only rarely that the psychoanalyst feels the urge to undertake aesthetic investigations . . .]. (Freud, 1919a: 229, my translation)

And, like Hoffmann's narrator, Freud begins by presenting Nathanael's delusion, and progresses subtly to a presentation of his own delusion (Freud, 1919b: 237–240). The delusion which accompanies enthusiastic narration is constantly thematized in Hoffmann's "The sandman". Thus Nathanael's childhood experiences listening to the tales of his father: "Often he told us

many wondrous tales and would fall into such fervour that his pipe would always go out . . ." (SM: 82); or when he reads his poem to Klara: "His poetry swept him inexorably along, his cheeks glowed deep red with his inner fire, and tears poured forth from his eyes" (SM: 98). This latter enthusiasm is identical to that which the narrator tells us has driven him to address us:

> Have you, gentle reader, ever experienced something which completely and utterly filled your breast, your senses and thoughts, so that all else was banished? It seethed and churned within you; your blood, inflamed into a bubbling fire, leapt through your veins and coloured your cheeks (SM: 93).

The consequences of the enthusiasm of narration are just as fatal for Freud as for Nathanael. Nathanael's downfall comes when he cannot distinguish reality from his own delusion. The downfall of Hoffmann's narrator comes when he is unable to develop a discourse which would establish the truth of Nathanael's delusion. And this, too, is the ("scientific") weakness in Freud's essay: the inability to develop a discourse which might distinguish its object from an adequate description.

In Freud's "Sandman" essay the enthusiasm for the object colours the discourse which mediates this object. This is a recurrent problem, not only in the "Sandman" essay; it seems to have accompanied Freud from the very outset. (In a letter to Fliess of May 1895 he states: "A man like me cannot live without a hobby-horse, a consuming passion – in Schiller's words a tyrant. I have found my tyrant, and in his service I know no limits . . ." Freud, 1954: 119.) It is thus all the more surprising that Freud neglects to take the consequences of this enthusiasm into consideration in his "Sandman" essay. Indeed, at the end of the essay, he introduces a distinction which should have prevented any confusion of this sort. It is the distinction between the direct experience of the uncanny, and the experience mediated in fiction:

> Nearly all the examples that contradict our hypothesis are taken from the realm of fiction, of imaginative writing. This suggests that we should differentiate between the uncanny that we actually experience and the uncanny that we merely picture or read about. (Freud, 1919b: 247)

Indeed, Freud is aware of the strategy which Hoffmann uses in order to set the very trap into which the former falls in his analysis:

> He deceives us by promising to give us the sober truth, and then after all overstepping it. We react to his inventions as we would have reacted to real experiences; by the time we have seen through his trick it is already too late. (Freud, 1919b: 251)

Why then, if Freud sees this trap, does he still fall into it?

4 History: Consciousness between the origin and the cure

I attempted to show above that Freud's reading of "The sandman" is struggling with the same problems as was Schubert in the *Symbolik des*

Traumes and Hoffmann in "The sandman". This applies particularly to the question of narrative. But here the question of narrative is also the question of messianic history: a mythology of origins, a catastrophe or break which reduces the primal unity to a multiplicity of individual (secular) experience, a doctrine of traces whereby both the primal state and the catastrophe are preserved in referential language for interpretation, and a theory of restoration, whereby the primal loss may be compensated, if not regained. Freud's essay assumes a primal state of unity which is virtually indistinguishable from that postulated by Schubert's messianic history. Ontogenetically, this is the state of original unity which Freud uncovers in his etymological introduction: the state in which the identical reference of the words "canny" and "uncanny" had not yet been fragmented by the dual modality of human experience. Phylogenetically, it is the mythic past mentioned later in the essay with reference to *Totem und Tabu* (1913). Here, as elsewhere, the two dimensions of primal unity are projected onto one another. "It seems as if each one of us has been through a phase of individual development corresponding to this animistic stage in primitive men, that none of us has passed through it without preserving certain residues and traces of it which are still capable of manifesting themselves, and that everything which now strikes us as 'uncanny' fulfils the condition of touching those residues of animistic mental activity within us and bringing them to expression" (Freud, 1919b: 240–241). Freud also makes it clear in the above statement that this primal state is sublated in referential language. This is why it is possible, on the basis of his etymological investigation, for Freud to make the following claim: "Thus *heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of an ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*" (Freud, 1919b: 226). This seems little removed from Schubert's belief that it is possible through etymology to uncover an essential unity of reference in words of apparently opposite meaning. The cause of this opposition, according to Schubert, lies not in the object of reference, but in the modality of human sensory perception which is preserved in sensory language. (Hence his reduction of the words *"kalt"* and *"warm"* to a common root [!] 1814: 78.) Thus one of the tasks of science would have to be to demonstrate the true significance (i.e. historical significance) of the confusion between the object of reference and the modality inherent in referential language. For if science is to seek truth, it must seek it neither in referential language nor in modality, but in the unmediated language of nature. And the language of nature is the hieroglyphic language of madness and dream, not the language of reason. However, the task of Schubert's scientist is confounded by the fact that rationalism has itself appropriated the language of nature for its own purposes.

> The original language of nature and emotion, whose contents were love of the divine, has lost its immediate meaning for man, and has indeed become dangerous to him, since he applies its expressions erroneously to his own degenerate whims and only accepts them in this inferior relation. Since that time, his spirit has been forced to travel a path which leads him by way of language and

> science ever farther from the region of emotion (which becomes merely sensual). (Schubert, 1814: 92)

The belief that "dream, phantasy and myth" somehow speak a truer language than rational discourse also enters Freud's argument:

> We may try on rationalistic grounds to deny that fears about the eye are derived from the fear of castration . . . But this view does not account adequately for the substitutive relation between the eye and the male organ which is seen to exist in dreams and myths and phantasies. (Freud, 1919b: 231)

The appropriation of the field of truth by rationalist discourse presented a problem for Schubert's science. After all, for him the pursuit of truth is only possible through the development of human faculties other than reason. But for Freud this problem becomes even more acute. If rationalist discourse is less adequate to the psychic object than "dream, phantasy and myth", how is Freud to justify his own commitment to a recasting of these phenomena? Especially since he himself regards this discourse as a key to the understanding of Hoffmann's tale (Freud, 1919b: 228).

It seems to me that the answer to this question is also the answer to the question posed above, why Freud falls into Hoffmann's narrative trap. And this answer is to be sought in the model of history which Freud employed. Like Schubert, he followed a general messianic schema. Both postulate a mythic state as the origin of individual and collective history; and a catastrophe out of which history was born in the loss of plenitude. For Freud, as for Schubert, the mythic past is inscribed in history after the catastrophe as a pure force of nature over which the will has no power. For Schubert, the catastrophe is thought in terms of natural developmental forces manifest phylogenetically, as the "Babylonian confusion of languages" (see chapter 5, *Symbolik*). Here, however, the force which reveals the catastrophe is also a natural force. Consciousness may attain truth by aligning its forces with the forces of nature, that is by awakening the "hidden poet" within us. And in so doing it is hastening the completion of history in the return of a mythic unity. As such, consciousness is able to hasten the downfall of rationalism. For Freud, the catastrophe is thought in terms of the developmental forces of nature manifest ontogenetically. In order to attain truth, consciousness must oppose the forms in which the forces of nature reveal themselves. This is the task of rationalist discourse.

Thus the difference between Schubert's psychology and Freud's psychoanalysis is ultimately reducible to the hermeneutic consequences drawn from their shared model of history. Where the natural forces presiding over Freudian history are ruled (at least in 1919) by the principle of entropy, those presiding over Schubert's history are ruled by divine plan. It follows that, for Freud, consciousness is required not to shed by reflectivity its own illusory perspective, but to oppose the entropic forces of history with a rationalist discourse – not to return to a lost truth, but to construct a fiction without which experience is unintelligible. Thus "Freud was able to see phylogenetic reductionism as a form of historical . . . explanation" (Sulloway, 1979: 425).

Psychoanalytic interpretation opposes history's inherent entropy not by re-creating the lost origin, but by re-telling it – by constructing an imaginary missing variable without which individual experience is meaningless.[7]

This is the function in Freud's theory of the continual projection of phylogenetic history onto the ontogenetic. For consciousness, history exists only where this projection is possible.[8] And, since phylogenetic history is structured according to a messianic schema, it can be described only by way of a mythology. The rationalist opposition to the forces of entropy in history requires a projection of the phylogenetic onto the ontogenetic, and an accompanying neutralization of its mythic nature. Freud accomplishes this in "Beyond the pleasure principle" by uncovering in individual experience, those traces which signify a radically external dimension of history. "Aber im letzten Grunde müßte es die Entwicklungsgeschichte unserer Erde und ihres Verhältnisses zur Sonne sein, die uns in der Entwicklung der Organismen ihren Abdruck hinterlassen hat" (Freud, 1920: 39–40).

This brings us back to the question of the uncanny. Regardless of whether it is understood as the repetition compulsion (Freud, 1919b: 236ff), or "whatever reminds us of this inner 'compulsion to repeat'" (Freud, 1919b: 238), the uncanny is the persistent breakdown of scientific discourse's adequacy to its pre-scientific object. Science may be able to uncover traces of history in individual behaviour. But it cannot be sure of the meaning of these traces. It can only construct what Sulloway so fittingly calls a "theoretical romance" (1979: 402). And what this amounts to is its failure to oppose the entropy of history. This is why, when discussing death as an example of the uncanny, Freud refers to the uncanniness of death for civilization as a *"Stillstand"* in historical progress (Freud, 1919a: 255). The two reasons he gives for this historical stasis are: "the strength of our original emotional reaction to death and the insufficiency of our scientific knowledge about it" (Freud, 1919b: 242). And later he speaks of "surmounted modes of thinking belonging to the prehistory of the individual and of the race" (Freud, 1919b: 245).

This problem may be expressed in more concrete terms. What is so uncanny for Freud is the way the irrationality of history (so manifest in Europe at the time of writing) persists in breaking through into personal life.[9] And Freud's "The uncanny" is the attempt to banish this history from personal experience by tracing the irrationality of phylogenetic history onto the ontogenetic, where it can be framed in the meta-discourse and tamed in the praxis which Freud had developed. The urgency of this project is to be found repeatedly in Freud's letters around this time.[10]

Freud's predicament here is also the predicament of individual consciousness in messianic history: that only the indeterminate past and the indeterminate future hold the promise of identity. The present is always a mid-point, plagued by the non-identity of thought and nature, of consciousness and experience. "The more distant it is from both, the more it [the soul] is 'clothed' in that which is earthly. But in the condition of everyday life it finds itself at the very mid-point of its journey" (Elschenbroich, 1971: 61).

It is this mid-point which is so fascinating and so problematic for Hoffmann.

It is here that he finds the conflict between hidden primal forces and the modes of organization and interpretation which would control them. For Hoffmann, the battle between the bourgeois individual and his psyche manifests an essential struggle central to history and to nature itself: that between spirit and matter (Busch, 1942: 327). And the mere manifestation of duality, according to Romantic philosophy, proves the necessity of a higher unity. This unity is the condition of primacy from which all human conditions must be thought. In historical terms it is the absolute past or the indeterminate future.

In the absolute past or indeterminate future, there can be no distinction between word and thing. This distinction is a result of the catastrophic loss of unity and the ensuing multiplicity of experience which it introduces into nature. Nature itself "bears the features of spiritual existence" (Busch, 1942: 327). For this reason, the psychic phenomena which Schubert studied and Hoffmann depicted are not only a bridge from waking to the unconscious; they are also a bridge from nature's essential duality to the site of its most intense conflict – the inner being of an individual.

In the works of E.T.A. Hoffmann, this conflict is thematized most effectively in the motif of the *Doppelgänger.* This figure, in Hoffmann as in Schubert, is a kind of *Traumleben in corpore* (Busch, 1942: 337). It can accompany the individual as a kind of menacing daemon (see Schubert, 1814: 80ff).[11] Or it can represent a kind of higher form of being.[12] But what is crucial here is the *Doppelgänger's* ambivalence. Because of its proximity to more essential natural forces, the words of the *Doppelgänger,* like those of the insane, or the images of the dream, speak the truth, are prophetic (see Schubert, 1814: 88).

This has certain consequences for any concept of the cure. If the unmediated language of the suppressed daemon is truer than the signifying language of the person it torments, then any attempt to exorcize the daemon through the medium of signifying language must be at the same time a suppression of truth. If the cure is understood as a banishment of madness by reason, it can be attained only at the price of truth. Madness and dream are the states in which truth comes closest to manifesting its presence to human consciousness. Consequently, the human condition itself is seen in Schubert's context of messianic history as a state of illness and at the same time a place of cure:

> Since, in his vanity, original man has caused the very faculty to be banished which was determined for obedience, in that it . . . was to be the organ through which the word of the higher region could reach mankind, it follows that the original relationship is most easily established in the services to which it has, through its own volition, debased itself. Matter and the dark region of the bodily world become a corrective institution out of which anyone who makes even partial use of the means at their disposal will certainly emerge cured. But these means are bitter fare to the remainders of vanity within us; they quite rightly sense in it their own death. And even the madman himself, who feels content in the feelings of his madness, uses the last traces of reason for the purpose of countering any attempts to heal him. (Schubert, 1814: 126)

It was here that Romantic theories of psychology ran into difficulties. And it was here that Hoffmann established his concept of the function of literature. Human experience is constantly threatening to slide into the tautologies of reason or the labyrinths of madness. And of these two forces, madness and reason, the former is the more powerful, because it is fuelled by truth. Thus the sensitive individual who seeks to escape the platitudes of everyday life takes the first step toward madness (for example Kreisler in Hoffmann's *Lebensansichten des Katers Murr,* 1820–22). It is only in art that this step may be sublated for a moment to re-emerge into everyday life. This is what Hoffmann calls the *Serapiontic principle*: the refusal of madness through the power of form. Art alone (and among the arts, perhaps only music) could retain the delicate synthesis of pleasant conscious illusion and dangerous unconscious truth in a form which was not destructive. And this synthesis is not characterized by an ability of reason to illuminate madness; that is the illusion which reason creates for itself, and which founds the rationality of Hoffmann's time. The cure lies in the ability of reason to reflect through the eyes of madness on its own aporia, and to preserve these in appropriate form. This is the function of literature, as Hoffmann understood it: to actualize messianic history at the point where the illusion of subjectivity breaks down, not into something less than the individual, but something more. This is the context in which the story of the mad monk Medardus is placed in the foreword to *Die Elixiere des Teufels* (1815):

> But should you decide to follow Medardus, as if you were his truest companion, through dark cloisters and cells – to roam through the bright, brightest world and to bear with him all that is hideous, horrible, crazy and farcical in his life, then perhaps you will find delight in the many pictures of the camera obscura you have found. It might also come about that what appeared shapeless at first soon gains definition and proportion when you fix it more sharply with your eye. You recognize the hidden seed which bore a dark fate and which shot up into a lush plant, proliferating on and on in a thousand tendrils, until a blossom, ripening into fruition, draws all vital juices unto itself and kills even the seed (EdT: 6).

5 Conclusion

What the Romantics – Hoffmann and Schubert included – attempted in their day was to rescue individual historical experience from the chaotic forces around it by recasting it within messianic history. As a result, history had two voices: that of individual experience, and that of the inner poet. This dialectic tension between two perspectives on history is precisely what makes Hoffmann such a controversial writer. Already in the case of Hoffmann, the recasting of individual experience within messianic history becomes problematic. The very need to rescue individual experience causes him time and again to satirize the society out of which such a need arose. (This is also the reason why he was praised by such an anti-Romantic as Heine.) In "The sandman", history, the hidden context, is constantly threatening to reveal itself. This appears in the unresolved conflict between the worldview of the Enlightenment and that of the Romantics. (It has been argued that this conflict

determines the constellation of figures which Hoffmann introduces in "The sandman" – Feldges & Stadler, 1986: 144–148.) In Hoffmann's later works, history will appear even more strongly. (The Knarrpanti episode in Meister Floh (1822), which involved him in lengthy court proceedings.) It is also worth noting that the "cure" itself, insofar as it appears possible in "The sandman" always consists of a return to that narrow bourgeois world which Hoffmann never tired in satirizing and for which he felt such strong longing (SM 99: 110–1).

Freud's day bears remarkable similarities to Hoffmann's as far as intellectual climate and revolutionary change are concerned (see Witte on Benjamin). And Freud's reaction to the political climate of his day may also be characterized as a recasting of individual historical experience within a messianic schema, or what might be called a messianism of individual life. Here, as in Romanticism, the historical dimension of everyday life is recast within a messianic schema. The difference between Freud and the Romantics is to be found in the problem of narration.

The question of history is never to be separated from the question: whose-story? Who speaks?[13] For Schubert, the question of history is sublated in the pursuit of science, since the voice which speaks the truth happens also to be the voice of the "hidden poet", the voice of dream, madness and *Poesie*: the voice of nature. Where the voice of truth is indistinguishable from the voice of nature, the truth of history can only be told in messianic terms. Science can never be anything but history.

For Freud, the question of history is also sublated in science, but because science can never speak with the voice of nature. To speak the truth, science must speak louder than the voice of nature. It must engulf it. And yet, if we look closely at science, we see everywhere the hidden theme of history. And, paradoxically enough, it is in this sublation that Freud finds the scientific adequacy to his object. The repetition compulsion, the death drive, regression, fixation: all of the explanatory models which Freud so magnificently expounded in "Beyond the pleasure principle" find their adequacy by repeating the same sublation of history which Freud found in the cases he was studying. In this respect, "Beyond the pleasure principle" is the successful double of "The uncanny". Its success is possible because only one voice speaks: that of the scientist.

It is only with Hoffmann that the voice of individual historical experience begins tentatively to emerge, between the lines as it were, at those places where neither science nor *Poesie* is able to speak. For example, in *Kater Murr* (1820–22), where the cat-poet-protagonist unwittingly presents the unpublished story of Johannes Kreisler by tearing the only existing copy apart, using it as blotting paper, and thereby causing it to be published in fragmentary form as part of his own autobiography. Or at the end of "The sandman" where the bourgeois alternative to madness appears equally bleak, and where we realize that the only synthesis possible in history – the only cure – lies in narration itself. Where the voice of nature speaks the despair of madness and the voice of science speaks its own self-delusion, the voice of history can be heard.

Notes

1. Indeed, Busch goes so far as to describe Hoffmann's work as an interpretation of Schubert: "E.Th.A. Hoffmann ist ohne Schubert nicht zu denken. Seine Dichtung kann eine künstlerische Interpretation zu Schuberts Philosophie genannt werden" (Busch, 1942: 310). Baudelaire, an ardent admirer of Hoffmann, also recognized the "scientific" aspirations in Hoffmann's works: "Man koennte glauben, dass es mit einem Physiologen oder einem ganz profunden Irrenarzt zu tun habe, der sich damit unterhaelt, diese tiefgrundige Wissenschaft mit dichterischen Formen zu bekleiden, wie ein Gelehrter, der in Lehrfabeln und Gleichnissen reden mag" (Baudelaire, 1976: 542. Cit. and trans. Feldges und Stadler, 1986: 22). Cramer (1966: 125–133) shows how Hoffmann virtually quoted passages from the *Symbolik des Traums* in his fictional works.
2. In this respect, one could even tentatively suggest that Lacan's bold reading of Freud is based at least to some extent upon repositioning the latter's thought within this Romantic tradition. This applies particularly to the Hegelian leanings which Lacan uncovered in Freud's psychoanalysis. See Ver Eecke, 1983.
3. This foundation is developed in the 6th chapter of the *Symbolik des Traums*, entitled "Die Echo". Here Schubert differentiates between the central nervous system and the ganglia. Schubert had developed this distinction in the *Ahndungen einer allgemeinen Geschichte des Lebens*. The central nervous system is subject to our will, and is responsible for the activities of everyday life. The ganglionic system, however, is not subject to the will (Schubert, 1814: 101). Its mode of mediation is thus radically different from that of the central nervous system. It is this radically different mode which takes over in sleep and facilitates dream activity: "All phenomena of sleep and those states related to it appear to proceed from the ganglionic system, which at such times predominates over the central nervous system. On the whole, the former reveals itself to us in all its functions as an emotional activity entrapped in material formations. As soon as this peculiar enterprise is disturbed or if it is deprived of its matter, it expresses in a spiritual manner its peculiar drive toward development in accordance with its original nature" (Schubert, 1914: 103). Ellenberger's (1970: 210–215) discussion of Romantic medicine reveals the growing tendency at the time to seek biological grounds for mental aberrations. In this connection, I would also query Sulloway's (1979: 169–70) sharp distinction between Romantic medicine and the "rigid determinism" which Fliess and Freud adopted from Haeckel and Darwin.
4. Both use the word *Trieb*.
5. It is this compromise which has provoked the sharpest criticism. See Deleuze and Guattari (1975).
6. This suspicion is fueled by the constant (and apparently tautological) attempts in Freud's letters to establish an almost deific universality of science over and above all factors which might disturb his own practical pursuits: "What concerns us here is the defence against the presumptuousness of a brutal personality and the banning of a petty personal ambition from the temple of science" (letter to Karl Kraus, 12 Jan. 1906. Freud, 1970: 260).
7. This is the thrust of Carroll's (1975) positive appraisal of the function of origins in Freudian interpretation. Carroll shows how, in 1918, Freud reworked his famous "Wolf-man" analysis, replacing his initial belief in the reality of the origin of neurosis with a complex concept of the mythic nature of the origin. The concept of the imaginary variable has also been developed by Lacanian psychoanalysis. See Green (1983).

8. This projection is evident not only in the general structure of arguments, but also in the use of metaphors of collective history in the discussion of individual history. Thus, for example, the motif of the *Doppelgänger,* which Freud describes as "a creation dating back to a very early mental stage, long since surmounted – a stage, incidentally, at which it wore a more friendly aspect" (Freud, 1919b: 236). In this connection, he also speaks of "a regression to a time when the ego had not yet marked itself off sharply from the external world and from other people" (Freud, 1919b: 236).
9. Early in his essay, Freud alludes to the difficulties which the First World War posed in his research on the uncanny in literature (Freud, 1919b: 219–220). See also his appraisal of the coming year, 1919: "The New Year can scarcely be as miserable and unpropitious as the old one" (letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé, 3.1.1919). Or: "The remark that you have to go to bed at six, because in Göttingen you have no light, has enabled us to endure our deprivations here much more patiently. (Incidentally, the cold which prevails in this room will not make my handwriting any more legible. Also I have long been seeking unsuccessfully for a decent fountain pen.)" (Letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé, 9.2.1919.) The typical structure in Freud's letters (but also his theories) of this time is a move from specific observations on personal hardship to general observations on psychic phenomena.
10. In this connection it is worth quoting at length from one of Freud's letters: "Poor Tausk, whom you for some time favoured with your friendship, committed suicide on 3.7. He returned worn out from the horrors of war, was faced with the necessity of building up under the most unfavourable circumstances the practice in Vienna which he had lost through being called up for military service, had intended to remarry only a week later – but decided otherwise. His farewell letters to his fiancée, his first wife and to me were all equally affectionate, insisted on his clarity of mind, blamed only his own inadequacy and his failure in life; they gave therefore no clue to his last act. In his letter to me he swore undying loyalty to psychoanalysis, thanked me, etc. But what was behind it all we cannot guess. After all he spent his days wrestling with the father ghost. I confess that I do not really miss him; I had long realized that he could be of no further service, indeed that he constituted a threat to the future. I had an opportunity of taking a glance or two at the foundations on which his high-flown sublimation rested; and I would have dropped him long ago if *you* hadn't raised him so in my estimation. Of course I was still ready to do anything for his advancement, only latterly I have been quite powerless myself owing to the general deterioration of conditions in Vienna. I never failed to recognize his notable gifts; but they were denied expression in achievements of corresponding value. "*For my old age I have chosen the theme of death*; I have stumbled on a remarkable notion based on my theory of the instincts, and now I must read all kinds of things relevant to it, e.g. Schopenhauer, for the first time. But I am not fond of reading" (letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé, 1.8.1919, italics are mine, except for the word "you").

    I would suggest that the repression of the force of history in Freud's appraisal of Tausk should be read in light of the following, whereby the word "strange" could be replaced by the word "uncanny". "Strange that one does not hasten to answer all the more quickly because one knows that the letter will take ten times as long as in normal times. On the contrary, one pushes to one side everything which reminds one of the hated change which has taken place. One is always influenced by emotional rather than practical considerations" (letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé, 9.3.1919).

11. For example, in the *Elixiere des Teufels,* Medardus is confronted with his *Doppelgänger* in the following scene: "... there suddenly appeared from out of the depths a person, naked to the hips, and staring at me ghoulishly while laughing horribly, grinning in madness. The full glow of the light fell upon his face – I recognized myself – my senses left me" (EdT: 190).
12. This is particularly applicable to Hoffmann's *Märchen*; for example *Prinzessin Branbilla.*
13. This question is also essential to Hoffmann's "The sandman" and Freud's interpretation (see Hertz, 1979: 317).

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