AMERICAN@ ISSN:1695-7814
Vol. I. Issue 2

Cynthia Ozick's Puttermesser and Bleilip: Dualism and Redemption

Dr. Miriam Sivan

Haifa University

Abstract
Resumen

Key words: Cynthia Ozick, “Bloodshed,” “Puttermesser and Xanthippe,” Holocaust survivors.
Palabras Clave: Cynthia Ozick, “Bloodshed”, “Puttermesser and Xanthippe”, supervivientes del holocausto.

Jules Bleilip and Ruth Puttermesser, the secular protagonists of Cynthia Ozick's stories, "Bloodshed" and "Puttermesser and Xanthippe" respectively, have, a "literal identity, an address, and a name, but in spirit [they are] Ishmael, still searching for a strayed, runaway or uncreated self" (Miller 14). Like many Americans, as James E. Miller points out, they are aliens even at home (14). Both Bleilip and Puttermesser are non-practicing lawyers and like many other Ozick characters, they do not openly seek the divine. Rather their form of contemplation, or seeking, is an incessant turning over and wrestling with history, an adulation of and co-option by memory, and a usually painful though wryly described struggle to place themselves and this weighty parcel within the context of America's cultural diversity. Instead of directly seeking God, Bleilip and Puttermesser are seen wrestling with notions of self, history, morality, and the ineffable.

While the themes of dualism, cultural bi-furcation, and redemption are evident in both stories, contrasts abound. Jules Bleilip is reluctant to admit that he is searching at all. He is shocked that Yussel, his cousin's husband, is able to discern that Bleilip is '"looking for something. He wants to find. He's not the first and he won't be the last"' (58). Bleilip finally admits to this posture though with caveats and footnotes. He tells the rebbe of the community that "he wanted only what he needed, a certain piece of truth, not too big to swallow. He was

afraid of choking on more" (67).

Puttermesser, on the other hand, is keenly aware of her status as a person searching through academic, namely Socratic, texts for insight. However, she does not see this casting about in a religious light. She perceives of herself as a philosophical person with "a mind superfetate with Idea" (90). For her the law is like Apollo's chariot. Through and on it she is hurled towards the heights in swift pursuit of clarity and some grasp of justice, or restitution. Puttermesser is eager to right the imbalances of the world around her and so regain a sure footing on the sidewalks and boulevards of her beloved hometown, New York.

What essentially distinguishes these two stories in the end, is the protagonists' stance. Bleilip is angry, combative, and condescending. "Bloodshed" is loud with his insecurity when confronted with the notion of faith. Puttermesser, on the other hand, is baffled and somewhat amused at what her unconscious has thrown up at her: the messianic impulse to clean up and set the world straight. Though his first name, Jules, resonates with the word Jew, Bleilip finds his 'people' anachronistic, provincial, naive. He sets himself apart from them and feels himself superior. Puttermesser, on the other hand, holds herself aloof not just from fellow Jews, but from everyone. Her behavior is not the expression of haughtiness. Rather, it is the result of her shy, bookish temperament. She prefers to dialogue with other minds via texts, Judaic and Greek, and not face to face. While this does not totally eclipse her expansive moral consciousness, it does reveal a disconnection from others. This ultimately leads her to not being able to fully see the non-conceptual, extremely real and alive being of the other (be it human or golem) which being face to face entails (Levinas "The *I*" 33).

It can be said that Bleilip and Puttermesser act out two strains of postmodernism identified by David Ray Griffin as "deconstructive or eliminative," and "constructive or revisionary." The former "deconstructs or eliminates the ingredients necessary for a worldview, such as God, self, purpose, meaning, a real world and truth as correspondence," and the latter "involves a new unity of scientific, ethical, aesthetic, and religious intuitions" (x-xi). Bleilip

angrily confronts observant Jews. Not only does he refuse to openly admit that he is searching for something as yet unidentified, but he is indignant when the rebbe criticizes Bleilip for expressing despair in the face of the world's chaos and suffering.

An avowed rationalist like Bleilip, Puttermesser's actions and unconscious desire for redemption belie her self-definition. Instead of responding with confusion and rageful passivity to the mundane and divine unknown, Puttermesser deals with the jungle of her interior life by creating a golem out of the soil of her houseplants. This transgression of rational and material boundaries demonstrates a constructive postmodernism which, in the name of the grasping some degree of meaning or semblance of purpose, allows for the emergence of a collage of intersecting disciplines and perspectives. It renews the idea of covenant, a transcendent intimation of Benjamin's mystical, unbounded *Jeitztzeit* (261).

Bleilip identifies himself as '"a secularist,"' though the subjective narration speaking from Bleilip's point of view says that even he "did not know what he meant by this" (69). While no one but himself prompted his excursion to what he demeans as a 'shtetl' outside of New York City, he is vocal and adamant about the differences between himself and the Jews who live there. He is "part of society-at-large" (58), while they seem to him set apart, ghetto-ized.

This short trip, ostensibly to see his cousin, expresses Bleilip's attraction, albeit an unconscious one, to a Jewish tradition he feels alienated from. "The search or struggle for a sense of ethnic identity," Michael Fischer writes, "is a re-invention and discovery of a vision, both ethical and future-oriented" (196). He hopes to catch a glimpse of the community's rabbi -- images of a wonder rebbe out of a Roman Vishniac photo who uses kabbalistic wisdom to fashion magic out of matter -- infiltrate his putatively super-rationalist stance. Bleilip wants inclusion in this community of faith while his ambivalence towards the notion of redemption torments him. He has lost confidence in the law -- both civil and Judaic. He has lost touch with his ethnic identity -- calling this community of Jews "you people." This accusatory arrow which he slings at them echoes that of the evil son who in the Passover Seder's text also asks what

significance the Exodus from Egypt has for *you*, "for you and not for him." This parallel language highlights how Bleilip separates himself from Jewish history, its peril and suffering. He both wants and abhors answers.

The story opens with the archetypal tension of free choice and fate endemic to Biblical religion: Bleilip has the opportunity to walk from the bus stop to his cousin's house, or to take a taxi. Seeing how Jewish laws are known as *Halacha*, which means 'walk,' it is clear that while he "had intended to walk," to go along the path of the righteous, to be in step with tradition, he could not for "his coat pockets were heavy" (55). And when later it becomes known that they are heavy because of the guns they are carrying, it is quite clear that all Bleilip's tentative intentions to seek something akin to transcendence are overshadowed by his attraction to violence and despair.

Bleilip has come to this small town of religious Jews, all but two of whom are Holocaust survivors, presumably looking for connection, looking for some signpost in the lanscape of angst. When Yussel comments that Bleilip "had come to see a town of dead men. It spoiled Bleilip's mood that Yussel understood this" (60). He "thought his purposes darkly hidden" (58). Struggling to place himself in a world which he experiences as unjust and ignorant, Bleilip expects victims of the Holocaust to naturally situate themselves by the altar of nihilistic resignation. When instead he is confronted with a new town full of new homes and schools under construction, and families looking forward in time, he is taken aback. He rejects what is before his eyes for it does not fit his thesis of a world transformed into an unfathomable hell. He does not believe in their optimism, their faith. Even children playing in the snow he insists to himself are not real. They are "made of no flesh, it [is] a crowd of ghosts coming down" (60) the hill. He sees everything as duplicitous. Excavation pits seem to him "meaty and scratched up as if by big animal claws" (55), reminiscent of the death pits, the mass graves, in Eastern Europe. And whereas in Judaism the issue of duality is often used to clarify distinctiveness, to reveal essential differences between, for example, people, night and day, the Sabbath and regular days,

with the intention of deepening understanding of each element of the pair, Bleilip's insistence on the existence of duplicitous doubles only leads to obfuscation.

He attends the evening service at the synagogue and remains afterwards while the men study *Yoma*. This tractate of Mishna deals with, among other things, the ritual sacrifice of two goats on the Day of Atonement. Ozick details the rebbe's lesson not only to give context to Bleilip's reaction to the bloodletting, but to make the larger point about the similarities and differences in sacrifice and bloodshed in the ancient and contemporary worlds.

Lots are drawn on this holiest day of the year, the rebbe explains. One goat is selected to be sacrificed in the Temple and the other is driven into *azazel* to die. The rebbe comments that the real definition of *azazel* is not known. Certainly it translates as wilderness, hell, but he claims its true meaning is "instead of me" (66). And when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, and the holy ritual was thus rendered unperformable, he goes on, '"everyone on earth became a goat or a bullock [...] all our prayers are bleats and neighs on the way to a forsaken altar'" (67). When animal sacrifice was no longer commonplace, the world reverted back to its original devotion: human sacrifice.

Bleilip is so caught up with the literal image of a goat being sacrificed that he misses the link the rebbe is making between goats and the Temple service and Jews and the Third Reich. Bleilip does not accept that "scripture [is] one of the tools that men and women have used to apprehend a dimension that transcends their normal lives" (Armstrong 4). All Bleilip can think of is : "What kind of God would take the Temple rites seriously? What use does the King of the Universe have for goats?" (64). While he feels great compassion for the animals, he feels little enough empathy for the human beings before him who just managed to avoid succumbing to a slaughter which classified them as animals in the concentration camps of the Third Reich. He is not receptive to Levinas' definition of ethics as "responsibility for the Other" ("Ethics" 83), or at least not the human other. Instead he begrudges these men their optimism, their belief in the coming of the Messiah, their desire to procreate, study God's law, build homes; in short, to

celebrate being alive.

The rebbe senses this and accuses Bleilip of believing "the world is in vain" (67). This man, he says to his followers, "fills the studyhouse with a black light, as if he keeps a lump of radium in his belly" (68). Bleilip "regards the world as a graveyard" (68), he decries. In a prescient moment the rebbe orders Bleilip to empty his pockets. A plastic toy gun is revealed. The rabbi responds by telling how a "certain rebbe [...] believed every man should carry two slips of paper in his pockets. In one pocket should be written: 'I am but dust and ashes.' In the other: 'For my sake was the world created'" (69-70).[1] Bleilip, he points out, has filled just one pocket. He has chosen only ashes. Later, when the congregants have left, the rebbe asks him to disgorge his pockets again. At first Bleilip resists, but then he complies, producing another gun, only this one is real and it is loaded. The rebbe reflects that of the two guns "it is the toy we have to fear: the incapable" (71). Ozick explains this fear by reiterating in the preface to the collection of stories in *Bloodshed* that "Auschwitz was so devised that, thanks to Zyklon B, not a drop of blood was made to flow; Auschwitz, with its toy showerheads, out of which no drop [of water] fell" (7).

Jean Baudrillard also cites the "murderous capacity of images" and argues that "[s]imulation is infinitely more dangerous [...] since it always suggests, over and beyond the object, that *law and order themselves might really be nothing more than a simulation*" (197). The rebbe knows this, coming out of the tradition which has long prohibited the worship of graven images. Yet for him, a man of faith and passion, the law he lives by is not real. Rather, it is a concrete reflection of God's will, the cornerstone of the covenant with the Creator. Order, as well, seen most effectively in the ongoing narratives which he and his adherents study, is not unreal. These stories allow for the human interpretation which enables meaning to be ferreted out from a provocative world. They are not simulations; they are not to be feared. For Bleilip though, with his teetering psychological and psychic foundations, the simulation remains a simulation, and hence, it can manipulate fatally with its attractive but empty shell. Bleilip can

obliterate himself through a sleight of hand.

Yet while Bleilip seeks, he also protects himself. The rebbe senses this and tells him that "despair must be earned"(69), that truth is not bought piece-meal in a bargain basement bazaar. Bleilip is seeking connection but only so much; he is not willing to venture beyond what is basically quite a conservative and conventional comfort zone. Bleilip is angered when the rebbe claims that he, like the Hasids around him, seeks inclusion in the larger cosmic frame; that he too desires to be close to the sacred.

It is not merely coincidence that Ozick has Bleilip come to the synagogue on the very day when the laws of the Yom Kippur sacrifice are being studied. The root for the Hebrew word for sacrifice, *korban*, is the verb *k-r-v*, to bring closer. These sacrifices are traditionally seen as a way of bringing the people of Israel in closer proximity to the Divine. It is not God who demands the sacrifice of animal flesh, but humanity who needs to learn how to transform suffering into moral consciousness by recognizing, in the rebbe's words, "the goat instead of me" (66).

The fissure in Bleilip's consciousness between the desire to believe and belong, and the unverbalized, even unconscious, angry impulse towards severance, are representative of the unshakable dual strains of spiritual responses inherited by western cultures after WW II and the Holocaust. Bleilip carries two guns in order to prepare himself for the day when he might turn the real one against himself. The rebbe asks him: since "it is characteristic of believers sometimes not to believe. And it characteristic sometimes of non-believers to believe" (72) is it possible that Bleilip "now and then believe[s] in the Holy One, Blessed be He?" (72). And if this is true, if everyone is a believer or potential believer at some moment, then it might also be true that Bleilip is "as bloody as anyone" (72). This means that he is not alone when he seeks connection and a sense of transcendence. Being bloody means shedding the facade of safety and living with the knowledge of two goats, two guns, two slips of paper, and at least two responses to suffering: hope and despair. What John A. McClure calls "the stubborn endurance of the

spiritual imagination" (160) is evident, even against his will, in Jules Bleilip.

Ozick in her essay, "Toward a New Yiddish" has described another dualism which is applicable to Bleilip's journey: "A visitor passes through a place; the place passes through the pilgrim. A visitor comes either to teach or to learn, or perhaps simply and neutrally to observe; but a pilgrim comes on purpose to be taught renewal" (154). Bleilip embarked on his excursion a visitor but will have left this small new shtetl of survivors a reluctant pilgrim.

*

The episode of Puttermesser's life depicted in "Puttermesser and Xanthippe,"[2] opens with Ruth Puttermesser reading Plato's *Theatetus*. Postponing making love to the man lying beside her in bed, she is intent on finishing the chapter in which Socrates admonishes Theodorus for falling into a well while studying the stars. Of course this warning is a metonym for Puttermesser's own fate. That night, her lover, Rappaport, walks out of her bed and life, furious that Puttermesser prefers to gaze upon Plato's words on the page than attune her body and mind to the obvious and earthy act he anticipates. Keeping the company of lofty ideas, Puttermesser falls into the well of solitude. And though the route Puttermesser the seeker follows is primarily paved by the intellectual tradition of the West, namely that of the Greeks, in the end, these philosophical works prove insufficient for her. Puttermesser's search broadens to encompass the Judaism embedded within her, the Judaism she has also pursued. She first learns Hebrew, resurrecting a phantom uncle (one can say, her 'first' golem) to teach her the language. She seeks entry into Judaims's esoteric mysteries via its texts. When Puttermesser creates Xanthippe, her 'second' golem, she embarks on a return to a pursuit of justice embedded in action. She moves herself out of the realm of abstraction and into the world of deeds, inadvertently submerging herself in the mystical hold of obligations and redemption. This 'return' better enables her to deal with the inevitable paradoxes and pitfalls of an imperfect world.

Like Bleilip, though trained as a lawyer, Puttermesser does not work as one. Instead, she is employed as a civil servant in the bloated municipal bureaucracy in the Department of

Receipts and Disbursements. She loudly bemoans the nepotism and deal-making of city politics. The mayor, Malachy Mavett -- a play on the Hebrew, *Malach HaMavett*, which means the Angel of Death -- has replaced her competent boss with a political appointee who fills the managerial ranks of the department with his friends who know nothing about how city funds are funneled. Puttermesser describes them as "'administrators.' This mean[s] they [are] good at arrest; not only at making arrests [...] but for bringing everything to a standstill, like the spindle-prick in Sleeping Beauty" (82). Emboldened to unclog their asphyxiating methods, Xanthippe is the beauty Puttermesser awakens with her incantations and kiss of life. This female golem's program is to resurrect, rather than paralyze, the city.

Xanthippe is both the daughter Ruth Puttermesser has been longing for and the larger-than-life creature molded to impose a sense of order and safety on the havoc of urban life. In the Talmud, *golem* was the word used for an imperfect being, the autochthonous figure who embodies both origins and limitations. And so, from the outset, both Puttermesser, the childless creator, and Xanthippe, the created, who later yearns to become a mother herself, "are imperfect beings, each in her own way" (Cohen *Comic* 94).

Like Theodorus, Puttermesser falls into another dark well: that of hubris, of wanting too much, of simulating the Creator and ultimately, of loss. Emblematic of the unconscious, the well is also an allusion to the birth canal. With Xanthippe's formation, Puttermesser fulfills her longing for motherhood. Simultaneously, Puttermesser "dream[s] of an ideal Civil Service: devotion to polity, the citizen's sweet love of citizenry, the light rule of reason and common sense, the City as a miniature country crowded with patriots" (85). She births a new vision of paradise and so becomes mother to them all.

And in response to the rife corruption surrounding her, Puttermesser fashions a savior and in doing so clinches her own metamorphosis from demure civil servant to that of redeemer. A kind of Super-Woman, Super-Mom, Madonna. Simultaneously, she rejects any notion that she or her narrative are merely creatures of an irrational fantasy. She sees herself, her idealism,

her desire for unity and restoration, as part of the chain of "scientific realists [...] serious scholars and intellectuals" (103-4) who did not act on any irrational impulse, but on the reasoned and measured and informed desire to restore harmony to a fractured world. Being well versed in Gershom Scholem's essay, "The Idea of the Golem," Puttermesser has imbibed all there is to know about the Maharal, Rabbi Judah Loewe of Prague, who, legend has it, in 1580 created a golem to protect the Jewish community from the infamous bloodlibel. Rabbi Loewe was also renowned for being "a reasonable man, a man of biting understanding, a solid scholar, a pragmatic leader -- a learned quasi-mayor" (100) and Puttermesser, with her devotion to the Greek texts as well, likens herself to him. It may be from him that she conjures the idea of becoming Mayor of the unruly metropolis of New York to save it from itself.

Yet once created, Puttermesser is reluctant to use Xanthippe. She is awed by the reality of her golem, by the mystical powers she exemplifies, by the transformation of text into physical, animate matter. It is Xanthippe who insists on acting and who slowly gains Puttermesser's confidence. Xanthippe types out their manifesto, "the PLAN for the Resuscitation, Reformation, Reinvigoration & Redemption of the City of New York" (123), and canvases the city, obtaining more than the mandatory number of signatures necessary to put Puttermesser's name on the ballot. For the elections, Xanthippe names their new party "Independents for Socratic and Prophetic Idealism -- ISPI for short" (128). Their posters depict "an apple tree with a serpent in it" (128). As predictable as the clean-up is with Mayor Puttermesser installed in Gracie Mansion, so too is the fall. "[I]nto the chaos of the void (defeat, deception, demoralization, loss) she has cast a divinely clarifying light" (139) which is eventually overwhelmed by the tree in which the snake lurks.

Xanthippe, Puttermesser's golem/daughter, names herself after rejecting her mother's choice of Leah, for only her namesake "had the courage to gainsay Socrates" (105). And she reserves for herself the role of "critic, even of the highest philosophers" (105). Clearly she is thinking here of Puttermesser and her lofty ambitions to redeem Babylon on the Hudson. But

rather than remain vigilant to this crucial perspective, Xanthippe rejects, along with her Hebrew name, a guiding moral code.

She is devoted to her 'mother's' mission until she has had a taste of the erotic in life. It is a fruit doubly forbidden to her, for a golem, traditionally lacks two essential components of a human being: speech and a sex drive. Once Xanthippe roamed the city's boroughs looking for poverty, joblessness, desolation in need of correction. But after Rapoport's auspicious visit, when once again Puttermesser rejected him, favoring her devotion to the polity over attention to his body, he falls into bed with a willing Xanthippe. That night "Eros [...] entered Gracie Mansion" (138) and Xanthippe is transformed from a figure heralding redemption to a vortex of malignant forces. She ravishes the city's upper echelon of men with her unsatiable appetite for sex, for power, and unravels the carefully planned tapestry of harmony, faith, and good will she helped weave.

Like many doubles, Xanthippe is free to act out Puttermesser's repressed, or simply unexpressed, characteristics: her sexual passion, hunger, a will to power. She is "Puttermesser's id, the irrational, sensual half, the unruly secret sharer which she can no longer control" (Cohen "Yiddish" 109). In the midst of her devolving Eden, Puttermesser has no choice but to cast out her offspring, and therefore must distance herself again from this unclaimed part of herself. She de-constructs Xanthippe according to the steps outlined in the *Sefer Yetzirah*, the Kabbalistic Book of Creation. The most dramatic moment of this dismantling is the removal from the golem's forehead of the letter *Aleph*.[3] Thus is the word written there changed from Truth to Death. The Midrash says that this act, the removal of the letter which represents the sacred, shows that "God alone is truth and [that ultimately the golem] ha[s] to die" (Scholem, *Kabbalah* 173).

"The golem, spawned from Hebrew," Ellen Serlen Uffen writes, "is thus a particularly Jewish creation" (62). And while I agree with this assessment, it is also important to note that there is no mention of God, monotheistic or otherwise, nor any attention given to Jews in the

story. Puttermesser desires order, connection, beauty, harmony; hers is a Platonic rationalist vision of the world. But her point of view, and thus Xanthippe as her creation, reflects the flaws in her knowledge of texts and more importantly of her self. As Adam and Eve learned in Eden, knowledge is composed of moral choices, appetites and law. Puttermesser, who has likened herself to the Creator, must be brought to task. She is then not only more like Adam, the original golem, but she is also now a fool, or *golem* in Yiddish. She finally sees that she is "the golem's golem" (136) and that "[t]oo much Paradise is greed. Eden disintegrates from too much Eden. Eden sinks from a surfeit of itself" (156).

"Puttermesser and Xanthippe" is a Frankenstein tale in which the creature cries out for compassion and mercy; it is a traditional Judaic golem variation on the theme of justice pursued; it is a cautionary tale which shows the corrupting powers of a creator daring to emulate God. Above all, it traces the evolution in thinking of one Ruth Puttermesser as she contemplates the grave injustices in New York City's meteoric and metaphoric bureaucracy and unconsciously calls on sacred kabbalistic forces to usher in an Edenic age in a city ravished by decay. Puttermesser is humbled by her failed venture in messianism. She has fallen into the well of her own making. But unlike Theodorus who is criticized by Socrates, Puttermesser has utilized the tenets of her native Judaism to transform herself into a seeker and to climb outside the well to mourn, record, and move forward.

Gillian Rose writes that "Judaism is being rediscovered *at the end of the end of philosophy*" (13). She is referring to "the Greek quest for the beginning, principles, causes" (43). It is "the missing middle, the *tertium quid*, ethics, which finds itself always within the imperative, the commandment, and hence always already begun" (43) which is the Judaic vision Puttermesser must embrace. Though she is cast down, and though she laments the loss of her daughter and redeemed city, Puttermesser is not despondent. She has failed but for her the world is not without hope. Puttermesser's adventures fit the paradigm of Jewish messianism: frustration and a sense of deferral (Scholem *Messianic* 35). This paradigm is also the signature of Ozick's

fiction (Krupnick 365).

Staring at one another from opposite ends of the spiritual spectrum, Puttermesser and Bleilip are both seeking a sense of meaning, of history, of order -- past, present and future. What distinguishes Puttermesser most from Bleilip is that she experiences loss, not existential despair. Bleilip hoping to pull back the wizard's curtain to reveal a charlatan, is himself exposed as a malignant dealer in simulacra. He journeys to see others engage in religious matters and is informed that what he is seeing is a reflection of himself. He is the goat, the sacrifice. He too is a survivor who vacillates between feeling the world is one of ashes and simultaneously is his alone. Puttermesser trespasses the boundaries of time and matter. She flirts with the mystical mysteries of the world -- the origins of life, the role of death -- and inadvertently exposes herself and her city to paradise and the agony of a predictable fall. The messianic impulse though is not undermined here by apostasy; rather, a response is generated which is an anguished cry at the concomittment loss of connection and innocence. Bleilip, with his two guns, and Puttermesser, with her doppelganger, strive to redeem their suffering. The mostly undeclared, dispossessed search for meaning is made apparent through their actions, much more than through their sifted and carefully couched intentions. And this despite despair and regardless of the surfeit of beguiling questions.

Notes

[1] This line appears originally in the Talmud, Tractate *Sanhedrin 37A.*

[2] Originally published as a story in *Levitation: Five Fictions* in 1982, this narrative is actually part of a novel about Ruth Puttermesser's life. It appears as such in *The Puttermesser Papers* published in 1997.

[3] According to the instructions in the *Sefer Yetzirah*, the letters *Aleph - Mem - Tet* should be written on the golem's forehead. They spell out *EMeT* or Truth. They also represent the entire Hebrew alphabet, *Aleph* being the first letter, *Mem* being the middle letter and *Tet* being the last. Implied is that the truth of the world is both contained within and created by the Hebrew alphabet. "Torah preceded the world" (Tractate *Shabbat*) the rabbis write. By erasing the *Aleph*, the remaining letters, *Mem-Tet*, spell *MeT*, or Dead.

Bibliography:

Armstrong, Karen. *A History of God*. New York: Knopf, 1994.

Baudrillard, "The Evil Demon of Images and the Precession of Simulacra," *Simulations*. New York: Semiotext(e), 1983.

Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken, 1969.

Cohen, Sarah Blacher. *Cynthia Ozick's Comic Art: From Levity to* Liturgy. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994.

___. "Cynthia Ozick and Her New Yiddish Golem." *Studies in American Jewish Literature* 6 (1987): 105-110.

Fischer, Michael. "Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory," *Writing Culture*. Ed. James Clifford & George E. Marcus. Berkeley: U of California P, 1986.

Griffin, David Ray. Ed. *Sacred Interconnections, Postmodern Spirituality, Political Economy, and Art*. Albany: State U of New York P, 1990.

Krupnick, Mark. "Cynthia Ozick as the Jewish T.S. Eliot." *Soundings* 74, 3-4 (1991): 351-368.

Levinas, Emmanuel. "Ethics as First Philosophy." *The Levinas Reader*. Ed. Sean Hand. Trans. Sean Hand and Michael Temple. Oxford and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1989.

___. "The *I* and the Totality," *Entre Nous: Thinking of the Other*. Trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav. 1991. New York: Columbia UP, 1998.

McClure, John A. "Postmodern, Post-Secular: Contemporary Fiction and Spirituality."

Modern Fiction Studies 41, 1 (Spring 1995): 141-163.

Miller, James E., Jr. *Quests Surd and Absurd: Essays in American Literature*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1967.

Ozick, Cynthia. *Bloodshed and Three Novellas*. New York: Knopf, 1976.

___. *The Puttermesser Papers.* New York: Knopf, 1997.

___. "Toward a New Yiddish." *Art and Ardor*. New York: Knopf, 1983.

Rose, Gillian. *Judaism and Modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1993.

Scholem, Gershom G. *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*. New York: Schocken, 1971.

___. *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*. New York: New American Library, 1978.

Uffen, Ellen Serlen. "The Levity of Cynthia Ozick." *Studies in American Jewish Literature* 6 (1987): 53-63.