
Jewish Memory, Moral Vision, and Creative Imagination in *The Puttermessa Papers*

Ravinder Reddy Mandala

Lecturer in English,

Department of Technical Education, Telangana

Abstract: This paper examines the imaginative landscape of *The Puttermessa Papers* by Cynthia Ozick, a landscape rich in symbolic resonance yet consciously estranged from conventional representational demands. It argues that for Ozick, imagination is a form of liberty—but one intricately bound by ethical and theological consequence. Through the figure of the golem and the protagonist's creative impulses, the novel dramatizes the tension between literary invention and Jewish moral tradition. Drawing on the dual symbolic registers of *Xanthippe* and *Leah*, Ozick explores the divided yearning of the Jewish creative writer: the drive to construct new worlds and the simultaneous desire for return, redemption, and textual rootedness. Ultimately, the paper frames Ozick's fiction as a form of midrashic resistance, where imagination becomes both an act of ethical risk and a mode of reconnecting with exilic memory.

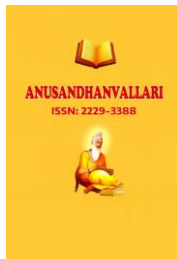
Keywords: Identity, Imagination, Judaism, Women, Jewish-American Fiction

Cynthia Ozick is a versatile writer. She is interested in concepts that much that it creates fables and stories which then create more ideas. Academic scholars - "Wait till you see him! one Ozick character crows. He has got this mind--may sometimes jump at the author in Cynthia Ozick butting in. *The Puttermessa Papers* is regarded as a wild delight, when compared to the work of Chris Burden *The Flying Steamroller*. Its author does not stand on the fence; she wanders. The title, papers, is used to reasonably indicate that these five already published pieces of the imagined life of Ruth Puttermessa have been put together in an amalgamation of loose associates. It may have been a fifteen; it may have been none. These are the five that are left--lacking any pretense to a faux-documentary style.

This paper holds that *The Puttermessa Papers* places the literary imagination as a healing power and a threat of the spirit, specifically in the context of Jewish ethics. Ozick uses the golem myth not just as fantasy, in that she is using the golem myth as a symbolic framework by which she questions the act of authorship itself. To Ozick, imagination is freedom,--but it is a freedom which provokes infraction of the law. The image of the golem in this way transforms into a dual paradox: of the creative urge of the Jewish author and of the ethical burden of the creation. Ozick performs the opposition of aspiration and restraint, invention and return through the two tropes of *Xanthippe* and *Leah*.

This treatise examines the way in which the novel restructures literary production as a midrashic project in which all creative acts are overcast by theological implication. Central to all these stories interwoven together is a more profound interest, nonetheless: Ozick is interested in imagination as not a playful fabrication, but as something that is morally charged. The golem, who was made with earth and desire, is the surrogate daughter not only of Puttermessa, but also her moral ordeal. Ozick employs this figure to dramatize the sense of writing literature in the aura of divine injunction as a revision of the Kabbalistic apprehensions of speech, power, and idolatry.

The title of the first of these five stories is Puttermessa: Her Work History, Her Ancestry, Her Afterlife and the main character of which is a 34-year-old New York Jewish woman who has in short ahead nowhere in her career in a blue-blood Wall Street law firm. She is now working in the Department of Receipts and Disbursements of



the City of New York where again she is going nowhere, only quicker. Puttermesser is attending Hebrew lessons with her Uncle Zindel twice a week, and the reader believes that the plot of the story is going to pick up. But there is a sudden interruption of voice: "Stop. Stop, stop! Stop, Puttermesser, biographer of mine? Disengage, please.... Puttermesser cannot be discussed as an object but as a spirit. Who made her? No one cares. Puttermesser is now to be delivered as it is. This metafictional act establishes the mood of the slow-paced narration, and it requires the reader to make a lot of inferences that are not mentioned. "Hey! Puttermesser's biographer!" the prelude ends. "What will you do with her now?"

The way the author plays with her is revealed in the second story, Puttermesser and Xanthippe where we are informed that Puttermesser is a feminist at the age of 46. She never used the term mankind, but humankind. She never wrote simply he, she wrote he or she. A husband is of course what some of the mainstream feminists are secretly longing to have. Being neglected by her fiancé, underestimated and dismissed by her employer, Puttermesser gets more valuable. As she sleeps, she creates - using the soil of the many potted plants in her apartment - a girl golem who self-identifies as her daughter but is a super-wife and changes her name to that of Xanthippe, which means the weight and constraint of Socrates. The part is where she ensures that she becomes the mayor of New York, and therefore, she has a chance to implement her reforms. She fantasizes of a daughter, she instantly creates a golem who will be her instrument of civic change.

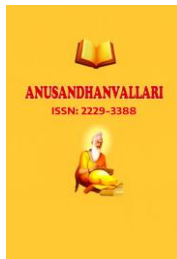
The *Puttermesser Papers*, the feminine golem in New York, makes it a plentiful source of interest as to why Ozick is fascinated with introducing Jewish heritage into American fiction (Kremer, "Post-alienation" 587). Kremer also says that the Puttermesser stories are the few examples of how Ozick organically incorporates the Jewish myth to add to a modern moral search (573). This is in accordance with Ozick who believes that literature is the moral life with some rapturous exceptions. She explains that [...] among the stories and novels that yearn to be literature, a kind of corona of moral purpose is to be hoped: not directly inherent in the fabric of fiction itself, but as a faintly incandescent envelope around it (Ozick, "Innovation" 245). To Ozick, there is no way to separate literature and ethical value. The Jewish folklore in the story emphasizes on the moral vision of the protagonist. The myth of golem is dramatized to highlight the process of conception and the cautions that come with it that it has become a symbol of Jewish creative literature.

Ozick is using this myth to discover the power and peril of literature. The characteristics of human fantasy and desire, which are explained in Genesis 6:5 and defined as yetzer ha-ra (the evil inclination) put the Jewish author of fanciful stories in the moral dilemma. It is at this point of the story that Ozick values being able to enter the fictional realm of imagination where we find a lot of symbolic wealth and can be free of strict representational concerns. The earliest golem was the one created in the 16th century by Rabbi Judah Loew Rabbi Judah Loew the Maharal of Prague--was said to have cleansed the city. On the contrary, the golem of Puttermesser must confront a contemporary challenge the wash of New York. Ozick is known for her portrayals such as:

"Ah, how this idea glowed for Puttermesser! . . . Mobs transmuted into troops of the blessed, citizens bursting into angelness, sidewalks of alabaster, buses filled with thrones. Old delicate Prague, swept and swept of sin, giving birth to the purified daylight, the lucent genius, of New York!"¹

There is something about S. J. Perelman in the prose of Cynthia Ozick she is fond of exaggeration and comic grandiose situations. The exceptional woman who was the backbone of all exceptional men is satirically portrayed as Xanthippe, who contributes to the rise of Puttermesser to the mayor. Xanthippe is the embodiment of an ideal Jewish daughter as well, despite Leah long having a name in mind that she wanted her daughter to be called: Puttermesser.

¹Ozick, *The Puttermesser Papers*. pp. 166-167.



At some point, Puttermesser questions, why was she made? The golem answers, "That my mother may be what she was meant to be. One of the stories is called The Golem cooks, cleans and shops. Similar to most golems in the legends, this one becomes stronger and stronger, and finally out of control. She becomes a seductress that charms the authority of Puttermesser. Eventually, Puttermesser has to undo her. In the next narrative, "Puttermesser Paired," the father, now aged about 50, is matched with an artist called Rupert Rabeeno, a young man who remakes- or as he calls it- re-enacts- original pieces of artwork. Puttermesser is now, more of a pensioned retired person than an active city official, and she shares with Rupert the imaginary letters of her favorite George Eliot, and makes herself Eliot and Rupert to be Eliot and her friend.

It was George Henry Lewes she wants him to know. She goes on to explain:

"They read until they were dried up. They read until their eyes skittered and swelled. The strangeness in it did not elude them: where George Eliot and George Lewes in their nighttimcoziness had taken up Scott, Trollope, Balzac, Turgenev, Daudet, Sainte-Beuve, Madame d'Agoult . . . she and Rupert read only the two Georges."²

Gradually, Rupert becomes a separate character to his mentor and writes a captivating and acute essay about the late Eliot. It is made up of biographical insights and interpretive reflections that in another form would have been published by Ozick herself as a psycho-historical record. In this case, she bends it into an O. Henry love tale. Ozick fictions, which are the most successful, tend to be in the form of conversations. The fourth, Puttermesser and the Muscovite Cousin, is a story that struggles with the changing definition of the term of the Russian Jews, which can easily be interpreted to mean American Jews of Russian origin.

Ozick appeals to the symbols of art, intelligence, rationalist views, and political passion. The cousin Lidia, who represents vulgarity, greed, and fuss, is the first sign that Puttermesser no longer identifies with her identity and is confused by the phrase Russian Jew. The characters of this part, and their relations within the Upper West Side, are keenly delimited by the character of social visionary, Schuyler Hartstein, who is the creator of the Jewish journal *Shekhina*, which is the socialistic version of an industrialist magazine "Motherwit". As Ozick describes it, a *Shekhina* fundraiser attracts:

"Bert Waldroon, the playwright and activist, and Kirkwood Plethora, grown surprisingly elderly by now, her trademark single earring masking a hearing aid.... And there were, of course, the politically consecrated – atheists mainly, apparently unoffended by what they called Sky Hartstein's 'religious orientation'."³

Lidia, deemed by Hartstein to possess relevant insights as "one born into the Experiment, no matter how late," approaches her theme directly: "Foolish American peoples! In Soviet stupid peoples more smart!"⁴ When Lidia absconds with her black-market earnings to reunite with a former lover in Sakhalin, Puttermesser loses track of her – but the reason is already clear.

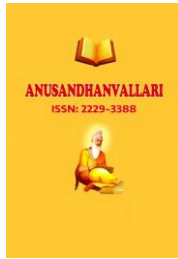
Puttermesser dies in her 60s, violently murdered by an assailant wearing a balaclava. The final story, "Puttermesser in Paradise," presents this horror as a kind of veiled dance performance. In the afterlife, Puttermesser's fantasies begin to materialize. She is reunited with Emil Hauchvogel, the man who departed fifty years earlier. She also bears the child she never had in life: "They circumcised him and planted the tiny gold foreskin under an olive tree, and every olive on every branch began to take on the color of gold."⁵ But husband and child quickly vanish – for just as past and future collapse into one, possession also implies loss: "The secret

²Ibid. pp. 173-174

³Ibid. pp.249

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.



meaning of Paradise is that it too is hell.”⁶ The work concludes with a melancholic poem, the final stanza of which is:

“Better never to have loved than loved at all.

Better never to have risen than had a fall.

Oh bitter, bitter, bitter

Butter knife.”⁷

The poem is the unresolved sorrow of a woman who was not able to reverse her own contradictions completely. According to Ozick, the translation of Puttermesser is a butter knife. She finds the comedy in this duality - her protagonist is a half-artist, a half-scholar, a fictional centaur, made by necessity, intelligence and the absurdity.

Ozick takes a sadistic pleasure in the lonely course of Puttermesser as a childless celibate, victimized by her own creations, and by the memory of high hopes - of love, of literature, of transcendence. Dear, could I be part of the choir invisible, like George Eliot tended to dream. As it has been already mentioned, *The Puttermesser Papers* is a collection of five stories that depict the life of Ruth Puttermesser. The main character, Ruth is a woman who is brought up by reading; she values knowledge more than anything. She is a civil service employee in New York City where she wishes to bring significant change. Her fantasies are usually becoming real, though with results.

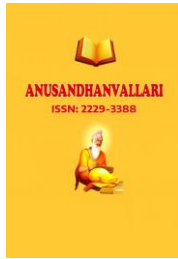
In case the creations of human imagination are perceived as spiritually dangerous, then literature is a dangerous activity. This threat is even heightened by the fact that the author is a Jew, because the creation of fictional worlds can be interpreted as encroaching upon the territory of Divinity. Similarly, Ozick and one of her critics, Harold Bloom, attest that imaginative literature is a creative process in itself. Some have argued that it is impossible that creation can take place existence without the presence of gods or God as an animating force or competent creators (Parrish 444).

According to critics, most of the characters in Ozick struggle with their creative desires as they strive to prevent the vice of idolatry (440). The moral dilemma applies the same to Ozick herself. Just like Bloom described himself once, she is also a fighter between Terach and Abraham (Ozick, "Literature" 195). Terach was an idol-maker and Abraham could see the uselessness of idols as human (191). Even the process of making a golem is the symbol of the work by a Jewish novelist. As already mentioned, fiction is potentially a dangerous form of writing on a Jewish part.

Correspondingly, the construction of a golem, according to Gershom Scholem, involves an extreme tension: neither that the golem, having become an independent entity, will acquire excessive powers, but the tension that the process of creation causes in the creator himself. The golem is not impaired by errors in executing the instructions, but rather ends its author. (Kabbalah 191). One of the main features of any idol, Ozick writes in one of her essays is that it is a selfsufficient system. It refers itself round itself only" ("Literature" 189). The perception of art as an end in itself and the perception of art as a religion make art into a monument and therefore change art into a worship at the expense of the Divine, as such, may even efface the existence of God. Scholem tells a variant of the myth about golem turned into a moralistic story. A golem in this story is a Kabbalistic manuscript of the early 13th century, of which the forehead is marked with emeth and YHWH Elohim Emeth as well as YHWH Elohim Emeth.

⁶Ibid.296

⁷Ibid.297



In the narrative, the monster picks up a knife and deletes the initial letter of emeth and changes the quote to: God is dead. This fable is interpreted by Scholem as a kind of a warning to the author that the process of designing a golem can result in the danger of the author as well as figuratively the death of God (Kabbalah 181). Finally, the most noticeable part of this golem story is the reflection that was made by the creator himself: “Indeed, you must study all these things only insofar as you wish to discover the power and omnipotence of the Creator of this world, but in no other way in order to put them into practice at all (180).

This passage echoes the conclusion of Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus*, where the epilogue declares:

“Faustus is gone, regard his hellish fall

Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise

Only to wonder at unlawful things:

Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits

To practice more than heavenly power permits. (Epilogue)”

This reflection draws the reader’s attention to Ruth Pattermessenger. The protagonist may be seen as Cynthia Ozick’s fictional intimate and trusted double—an alter ego nearly fused with the author herself. Both are Jewish-American, of Russian descent, and share a passionate devotion to George Eliot and Plato. Notably, Ozick has joked in an interview with Lewis Frumkes that she might not choose Plato over more carnal pleasures. (Frumkes 1)

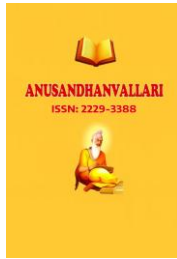
While Ozick describes herself as self-educated, Pattermessenger is portrayed as even more extreme, exhibiting a Faustian thirst for understanding. In the story “Pattermessenger and Xanthippe,” her biographer hints at her tragic trajectory: “she was intimate with every folly and every fall. (Ah, but she did not expect her own fall)” (Ozick 29). The character’s Faustian aspirations—to create life from inanimate matter—are framed as ethically precarious, resembling idol-making.

As Marlowe puts it, “The god thou servest is thine own appetite” (11). This charge, made against Faustus, is strikingly true for Pattermessenger, whose vision of *ganeydn* (the Garden of Eden) is both lofty and satirical.

“There, at any rate, Pattermessenger would sit, in Eden, under a middle-sized tree [...] There Pattermessenger would, as she imagined it, take in. Ready to her left hand, the box of fudge [...] ready to her right hand, a borrowed steeple of library books. But, alas for Pattermessenger, this paradise is not yet a reality.” (Ozick, *The Pattermessenger* 13).

This is a critical moment. When Pattermessenger perceives paradise, she also engages herself in Hebrew language. The Kabbalah claims that speech, especially Hebrew speech, is a necessity of the creation. It has been termed as a design code of the world (Scholem 5). Her biographer is reminding us that she realizes this: what had polymathic Pattermessenger not read about the genus golem? (43). She is familiar with the essay by Gershom Scholem and even explains its structure, which is an indication of her profound academic interest. At this instance, Ozick swaps the line between the moralist and the fantasist.

The fact that Pattermessenger is good at Scholem also does not mean that she is safe, but rather that she is aware of the dangers, that is why her transgression is even more intentional. This brings out the main question put by Ozick: does a Jewish writer have the ability to be ethical without being overly ethicist? According to the text, even the sacred knowledge, once brought to bear by means of fiction, provides the space in which the ethical certitude is destabilized. The very process of making the golem in her situation becomes a bid at extending the correcting hand but she also creates and re-creates the savage upper lip with her own handiwork - a creating that amounts to the very idolatry of a molten calf. She gives her golem Leah, which in Hebrew means wild cow, and



thus she combines the golem character with the concept of the idol. This scene combines legal education of Puttermesser with her Jewish roots and pulls her into the process of creating the idols what the Jewish people have always been warned about. It is then implied that the line, I am made of earth but also I am made out of your mind, is only fully understandable after the work is finished, which proves that Puttermesser has created a golem (Ozick 135).

In this case, Ozick is skillful building up a narrative structure that allows Puttermesser to achieve her artistic goal and avoid accusing her of idolatry. The golem as a specifically Jewish mythic character confirms Puttermesser in her roots in a literary tradition which justifies imaginative production within a certain set of moral limitations. In this context, the writer is able to improvise without being at risk of committing spiritual transgression. It is possible to interpret "Puttermesser and Xanthippe" as the piece of the Kabbalistic fiction that serves as the subsequent text that adds a new interpretive gloss to the previous ones (Kremer, "Post-alienation" 585). It is also a representation of what is presented by Janet Burstein as a midrashic impulse: the interpretative attempt to find a connection back to textual sources (Burstein 175).

Conventionally, the biblical verses are analyzed by a Kabbalist sequentially to explain and to impart moral undertones to the text upon which the tradition anchors them in modern experience (175). Such a Kabbalistic tendency, applied, however, to scripture, is also applied in the case of Jewish American literature to the overall heritage of Jewish narrative. The Puttermesser stories by Ozick embrace this tradition and change it. She thus justifies the act of creating a golem by utilizing the Jewish historical background. The protagonist is aware that she has made a golem due to the very reason that Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague- the Maharal- has already done: to be a redemptive agent of civic change. The legend of Loew is revived by Puttermesser when it is transferred to the streets of Manhattan in the present-day society: that dilapidated dear Prague, swept and swept of sin, bringing forth the clear daylight, the shinning genius of New York (Ozick, The Puttermesser 64).

Basing on the legend of golem, Ozick encounters the extremes of human imagination. The golem, used by Ozick, can be found in Jewish mystical and moral traditions. Whether it is studied in the framework of Kabbalah or just as a symbol of the Jewish cultural memory it is the confirmation of ethical limits to the artistic creation. Jewish tradition, that forbids worshipping idols, reinvents artistic work as a way of not transcendence but of repairing the world, an earthly form of salvation. The interpretation redefines the role of the literature and focuses on the second aspect of the application of golem in Ozick: the way it is rooted in the moral desire of the protagonist concerning the civic justice. As her lover Morris Rappoport abandon his New York Times, the place where Puttermesser refers to it as the account of various disorder and city mishap (66) she is hit by some recollection of her own creation the golem she created out of the potting soil in her apartment. She understands that golem was created by civic riots and moral exasperation. She wanted to cleanse the city, to get rid of prejudice, to get rid of bitterness.

Against this moral panic, she comes up with the PLAN: "She was now thumbing it, it was in her hands: PLAN. In the Resuscitation, Reformation, Reinvigoration and Redemption of the City of New York" (67). It is this desire, ethical, creative, which calls the golem into being. Puttermesser wants to know, have justice, peace, and even a daughter: an inheritance. The golem therefore represents a point of crossbreeding of creative aspiration and reproduction desire. These two desires are shown in the names of Xanthippe and Leah that have profound symbolic echoes. In the last story, Puttermesser in Paradise, the narration explores the psyche of the main character in her last nanosecond of life that is yet to end (214). She is thinking of Paradise, yet of names and their fates: she was thinking also how the name has its fate, how it leads whoever has or sees it (214). The symbolic role of the golem is in this case captured by the names of Xanthippe and Leah. The desire to have insight and transcendence of the intellect is represented by Xanthippe, the wife of Socrates, the only one who could gain Say of Socrates (49). Leah, the Cow of the Wild, triggers the phantom of idolatry as well as the Lurianic initiation of Leah.

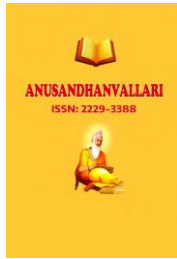
In her essay, *Golem: A Messianic Double*, Ozick refers to the interpretation by Miriam Sivan of the character of Leah who echoes the Lurianic ritual of Leah, as it is identified with redemption promise by Scholem. Sivan goes on to state that Leah is messianic in that she symbolizes the repatriation of exile, which, however, is a cosmic rather than a historical process of Jewish tradition. The golem is the intent of Puttermesser, Leah, in other words (53). Even the golem herself realizes it: "My name is Leah, yet I would rather be Xanthippe (42). She is not stupid; she realizes her nature. She is Leah, who is symbolic as the daughter of the protagonist. Like Puttermesser, she as Xanthippe is in need of the intellectual mastery--of Faustian knowledge. She says: I would rather be Xanthippe [...] I know everything you know. I am composed of earth, but I am also composed out of your mind" (42). The golem is therefore a composite being: material and mental, both hereditary and fancied.

By bringing Leah and Xanthippe together, Ozick renders the strife between the confinement and desire that drives Jewish ethical imagination literary. Both Xanthippe and Leah confirm the fact that golem is the daughter of the main character and a product of her mind. Ozick emphasizes this by the use of language. When the protagonist questions the golem on the source of the plan to redeem New York, the golem responds: two urges planted you. This (the plan) is my other, and I am one. An idea must possession take. You conceived your urge, and at the same time you conceived me" (67). The fact that Ozick uses the word conceive, indicates that Puttermesser is figuratively pregnant with the thought of transforming New York. In order to make this vision come true, she makes a golem. The heroine Xanthippe/Leah becomes the symbol of that aspiration -she becomes the one who will bring about the rebirth of the city. The reader gets directed to the revelation that Ozick uses the golem as a mythical representation and a metaphor of the Jewish literary production.

Ozick shows the redemptive power of the imaginative literature through the dual identity of Xanthippe and Leah and through her respective events. The role played by golem in the story can be likened to the role played by literature as a moral tool in the Jews tradition. Ozick appears to mean by this that the redemptive figure is especially significant to Jewish creative writing, which is, in a way, a request of connection or a reinstatement of exile. These words indicate a desire to be part of and to survive that comes out of the historical and ethical structures of the Jews. The two yearning which is articulated by Xanthippe and Leah, is indicative of the split in the Jewish creative writer: one aspect wishes to create -a compulsion that also has the potential to cause theological frictions- and the other wishes to reconnect, redeem, and turn back.

The dream of reforming New York that Puttermesser had is motivated by her idea of gliyan--Paradise, which was presented in the very beginning of the text. The hope appears to fall after the golem Xanthippe is ruined. New York starts to become retrogressive: the City is choking" (100). But, the career of Puttermesser is not lost in vain. Her narrative finally has a redemptive ending. The reader gets to know more about this redemptive vision in the last part, Puttermesser in Paradise. As it was mentioned before, according to Ezra Cappel, modern Jewish American writers tend to find secular ways to be redeemed, and Jewish creative writing can be one of the ways to be redeemed. Cappel even calls this literature a sort of American Talmud - a contemporary interpretative system of Jewish heritage. In an attempt to examine such writing, Cappel suggests a Talmudic mode that is based on the rabbinic tradition: PARDES. It is an acronym that denotes 4 textual interpretation modes. Ozick interprets these four levels of meaning as the framework of the last section of the novel, which enables the main character to address the meaning of the concept of Paradise in all of its aspects. Peshat is the first level which means the literal meaning: it is paradise in its plain meaning: the place you will be as you die (Ozick, *The Puttermesser* 221).

The second, Remez, is the allegorical or allusive sense: "the allusive sense: one can find hints in Paradise of the way your life should be evaluated. Even there are indications of indifference to everything that" (221). The third, Drosh, is the meaning of interpretation or homiletic. Having imagined the life, where she will be satisfied, active, has a child, content with everything, Puttermesser sees the realization that the place where she could walk freely in her fantasy and summon whatever she wants was the paradise (222). The last level of



interpretation of Paradise is the Sod the hidden or the esoteric meaning of Paradise. Paradise is a dream, and it has the inscription on the seal of Solomon: this too shall pass. [...] A dream that flowers to be destroyed will cause more misery than a dream that has never occurred at all. The hidden message of the Paradise is that even there is hell (234). This is the conclusion of the experience of the main character, the realization that heaven and hell are not the opposites, but two sides of the same coin.

As a matter of fact, this awareness starts earlier in the story, when she annihilates her golem and cries out, "too much Paradise is greed. Too much Eden tears Eden in pieces. Eden sinks of excess unto himself! (99). Finally, imagination is limited and that is what the protagonist discovers at the end. Ozick indicates that imagination is a kind of freedom--but of a moral and emotional cost. The libertarianism Puttermesser experiences is not ideal but interpretive: in the process of plunging herself into Jewish culture and literary heritage, she learns to perceive Paradise in all of its intricacies. In this last accounting, she is able to understand the meaning of Paradise, not as an undarkened bliss, but as a stratified, and much of the time painful, discovery of morality. However, this is an understanding that gives her clarity even though it may not bring her comfort.

Puttermesser Papers by Ozick eventually enacts a collision between the desire of the writer to think creatively and the moral reproaches of Jewish culture. Ozick symbolically depicts the predicament of the Jewish author creating worlds without falling into idolatry through the creation and destruction of the golem using Puttermesser, and her creation; a story about creating and remembering. Imagination is not a refuge here, but an ordeal--a garden which withers by overabundance, a Paradise which becomes Hell by being clung to too closely. It is in this sense that the fiction of Ozick turns into a midrashic performance: the interpretation, reweaving and ethical re-animalization of the strains of exile, language and longing. The tensions are not resolved in the stories, they are maintained. And so they are asserting that to imagine is not to create, but to bear the burden of creating, its dangers, its loveliness and its unmaking that is inevitable.

Works Cited:

- [1] Burstein, Janet. *Telling the Little Secrets: American Jewish Writing Since the 1980s*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2006.
- [2] Marlowe, Christopher. "The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus." *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, edited by M. H. Abrams, 7th ed., vol. 1, W. W. Norton & Company, 2000.
- [3] Ozick, Cynthia. "Innovation and Redemption: What Literature Means." *Art and Ardor*, Dutton, 1984.
- [4] ---. "Literature as Idol: Harold Bloom." *Art and Ardor*, Knopf, 1983.
- [5] ---. *The Puttermesser Papers*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.
- [6] Parrish, Timothy L. "Creation's Covenant: The Art of Cynthia Ozick." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2001.
- [7] Scholem, Gershom. *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*. Translated by Ralph Manheim, Schocken Books, 1969.