

THE KLEKSOGRAPH

An International Review of Art and the Subconscious *Issue 3 September 2020*



Hoffmann's *The Sandman*

Article: *Beware the Sandman*

Poetry by: Lorcan Walshe, Phil Wood, Sam Smith,
Pauline Barbieri, Guido Gezelle, Gerard Manley
Hopkins, and Thomas Lovell Bedoes

Fiction by Paul Murgatroyd, Gustav Meyrink, Petrus
Borel, and Washington Irving

Artwork by Lorcan Walshe and Leon Spilliaert

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Editor: Peter Van Belle

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In the mid-nineteenth century, Julius Kerner, published his book of “Kleksographien”. Later psychologists used similar ink blots as a means of access the subconscious of their patients. The Klecksograph (Klecks is the official German spelling) is dedicated to exploring and celebrating the relationship between the subconscious and art.

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All stories and poems in this magazine are works of fiction. Any resemblance to actual persons and events is coincidental.

This magazine can be downloaded free from www.kleksograph.be

ABOUT THE MAGAZINE

This issue has been made with Word instead of Scribus. Texts are easier to insert and manipulate this way, as is inserting hyperlinks.

Perhaps it's the season, but there were far less submissions for issue 3 than for issue 2. So I decided to dedicate this issue to a particular story stuck in my mind since I read it decades ago: *Der Sandmann*, by Ernst Theodor Amadeus (he changed from Wilhelm in honour of Mozart) Hoffmann. This ostensibly Gothic story intrigued the psychoanalysts Ernst Jentsch and Sigmund Freud, the former's essay was the basis for the term "uncanny valley".

Translating the story from German proved a lot more difficult than I'd anticipated: the text was far longer than I remembered, and Hoffmann loves long, complicated sentences with trains of subordinate clauses. If I'd stayed true to the original style, the story would've been difficult to read. So I decided to stay truer to the spirit of the piece than to the letter.

I also came upon a story by Petrus Borel, which showed signs of being influenced by *The Sandman*. Borel was a typical example of what the French call *la romantisme frénétique*. I discovered, however, that the story was derived from one by Washington Irving, who himself admitted it may have been written earlier by an English author. So a story by a Frenchman, based on one by an American, based on one by an Englishman, and the story's about a German. So a truly international tale.



LORCAN WALSH – PAINTING HEAD ³11

LORCAN WALSH

troy

who reaches silence leaves the stage,
quells the longing, quiets the child,
ignores the peacock and the swan
accepts the voice he once reviled;
he carries flowers to your shrine
and enters through the narrow door,
as wisps of incense lace the air
he prays for those who went before

here broken men relive in dreams
the need your presence would unfold,
the hunger and abandonment
their cage of reason failed to hold;
they caught your beauty on the cusp
where morning light could still remain -
such helpless hearts have to believe
that mercy falls like summer rain

a tattooed heaven on your back
reveals the map of your escape
where butterflies and angels float
into a mythical landscape;
the haunted seek salvation here
and gamble on the holy dice

to synchronize each destiny
and free them in your paradise

few pilgrims glimpse within your face
the flawless structure of the mask
or know the symbols you select
to chart direction in your task
where burning towers in the night
cause famine winds which shape your day,
the madness that informs the world
has formed the root of your pathway

no saviour journeys on your feet
to crush the mistrust in your bones,
between two breaths the death of love
with each obsession being disowned,
then stillness holds your sombre form
in homage to the human mark –
a lonely furrow with its ridge
of balance between light and dark

LORCAN WALSHE

raven

who plots the pathways to this place
or hangs the raven overhead
with a sliver of the future in its beak
an alchemy of lust and grace
pumps its windpipe, constricts its throat
and caws the grim emotion its kin must seek

it shifts its shape to human form
where raven dreams find consciousness
in the symbols and alignments of desire,
as light portends the coming storm
and beauty wounds the cautious heart
in a pantomime where thieves and saints conspire

when twigs and feathers are entwined
it nests an egg of orphanhood
in a pouch of promises and cuckoo lies
to hatch a life where love is blind
and strung out on epiphanies
it views the bickering earth through wicked eyes



PAUL MURGATROYD

ANOTHER FINE MESS

HAPPY HOUR 2018 TO 2030

Under fleshy clouds

Perfect suburban lawns

Begin to undulate gently

Impeccable, indelible carnage of corporate horsemen

Grey gulfs of jagged chaos

DIES IRAE DIES ILLA SOLVET SAECLUM IN FAVILLA

We're all petrolheads now

STUPIDITY CUPIDITY

'Listen to this. It says here that half the Great Barrier Reef is dead and California wildfires are five times bigger than they were in the 1970s.'

'Oh stop it. I'm depressed enough as it is.'

'And in Bolivia Lakes Poopo and Chad have disappeared. That's clearly due to climate change.'

'Oh no, they don't have enough statistics, their records don't go back far enough to be sure of that.'

'The Antarctic temperature has risen above 20C for the first time in history.'

'Well, they should do something about that. But I'm not worried, it's not going to all kick off in my lifetime, so why should I care?'

'What are you? A stroke-victim or brain-dead?'

'Well! You must be the rudest person I've met today.'

'Why aren't you frightened? Why aren't you fucking furious?'

'Can't even have a bloody drink in peace. Some of us are spoiling it for others. I'm not putting up with any more of this. Goodbye!'

APATHY LUNACY RAPACITY

The great god Pan is dead,

The Nymphs also.

All nature mourns:

The glaciers are weeping

Hot winds are howling

And forests, arrayed in black Dear Sir, Are any other readers of this paper as upset as I am by the sudden appearance of wind turbines in the sea off Whitley Bay, spoiling the view of our beautiful lighthouse and bringing down property prices?

TODAYS SPECIAL STEAK STEAK STEAK OR STEAK. STARTER BEEF SOUP. FREE DESERT

‘Tackling climate change is one of this government’s top priorities.’ (Ministry of Truth 4/3/2020).

INDIFFERENCE SELF-INDULGENCE

Apocalyptic gunk

THE FENWICK SALE 20% OFF HUMANITY

Again Great Brazil Make

LIBERACE!

The barbarians are not at the gates;

they’re inside, and in charge.

‘The Lord has spoken to me. In His voice was the roar of a burning bush, the thunder that issues from the clouds, the crashing of seas dashing against rocks. He said: “This drought is all the fault of those filthy gays and lesbians.” Alleluia!’

‘Don’t be afraid, don’t be scared. It’s coal, it won’t six thousand buildings destroyed, half a billion animals incinerated, over thirty people killed hurt you.’

DEUCALION AND PYRRHA REGRET TO ANNOUNCE THAT THEY HAVE RUN OUT OF ROCKS

BEAUTIFUL BEACHFRONT HOMES FOR SALE AT UNBELIEVABLE PRICES

‘You’re pregnant. Congratulations! I’m so pleased for you. What’s it going to be – a vegetable or a mutant?’

Ah, FUCK the environment. Who gives a shit? I’m getting pissed.

The albatross,

King of the blue sky, prince of the clouds,

MUNDICIDAL MANIACS RULE OK

Has starved to death with a full stomach,

BIG BANKS FUNNELLING TRILLIONS INTO FOSSIL FUELS

A stomach full of plastic garbage.

Record heatwaves, melting permafrost, huge mudslides, acidification of oceans, killer smog, 500-year storms, 1000-year floods – ‘This is not a time for pessimism; this is a time for optimism.’

Avec moi le déluge. Send nudes abstract flans.

Did you hear? A seated bull was cooked alive in a firestorm in Australia. Wow!

BLINDNESS MINDLESSNESS INANITY INSANITY

Inverted shitty po on crow-black hair; waving antennae; eyes that probe and pounce; obdurate ears; haughty nostrils; pythonjaws with triplerows of smiling, grinding teeth – the unacceptable face of Capitalism (looming, looming)

MAKE MEGADEATH GREAT AGAIN

‘Climate change alarmism at its very core is a despicably anti-human ideology and we are told to look down at our achievements with guilt, with shame and disgust.’

Right! Let’s celebrate our achievements – like microplastics, fracking, Bhopal, Love Canal, tar sands, Chernobyl, the wettest February ever, the hottest decade on record etc etc.

DISCRIMINATION IN FIGHTING WILDFIRES Inmates of state prisons have been let out on day release to fight fires and some have even had their sentence reduced. But one category of prisoner has been cruelly denied this opportunity. Arsonists are excluded. SIGN THE PETITION.

MYOPIA INERTIA IDIOCY IMBECILITY INSATIABILITY

Avarice and Lucre are at large in the land. Wherever they tread, the earth groans and their footprints fill with blood.

A dust-cloud as big as Britain is ho un oscuro presentimento di dolore Ah the cows

‘It’s freezing in New York – where the hell is global warming?’ [Demonstrator’s placard: **BIG ORANGE TWAT**].

The moment of crisis has come **LET’S TALK ABOUT LEAKY BLADDERS** You have stolen my dreams and my childhood **GIVE YOUR MUM SOMETHING REALLY SPECIAL FOR MOTHER’S DAY – ONE OF OUR FABULOUS VIBRATORS** all the beautiful words and promises **LEVANTE THE MASERATI OF SUVs THIS SMELLS LIKE MY VAGINA CANDLE WITH A FUNNY GORGEOUS SEXY AND BEAUTIFULLY UNEXPECTED SCENT A TRULY BEAUTIFUL TAP. ELEGANT CHIC AND MYSTERIOUS CLIT SPRITZ STIMULATES LUBRICATES AND REJUVENATES YOUR LADY PARTS DESIGNED FOR WOMEN TO GIVE THEIR BITS A BIT OF A TREAT** one of the greatest failures of humankind **THIS SEASON’S MUST-HAVE EAU DE TOILETTE IN THIS FOUGERE-ORIENTAL COCKTAIL AN ICY INFUSION OF ZEBRINE INTENSITY WITH AN UNUSUAL FRUITY ACCORD AND AN UNFORGETTABLE SILLAGE – THE FRAGRANCE FOR THOSE GANSOS THAT DON’T JUST SETTLE FOR ONE FRIDAY A WEEK** beyond absurd **ALWAYS POD. DO YOU POD SAFELY?** we could face irreversible damage to the natural world and the collapse **DE LUXE CRUISES – POLLUTING THE WORLD IN COMFORT** of our **FLY US TO THE MALDIVES -**

OVER 4600 INFLIGHT ENTERTAINMENT CHANNELS – FIND YOUR EXTINCTION

And how about you, gentle reader (hypocrite lecteur?)? What are you doing about it all?

PATET ATRI IANUA DITIS NO MOLESTAR

There have been reports of a wolf with a man's hand in its mouth running into a shopping mall in Newcastle, a shower of blood on the Stock Exchange and a swarm of locusts settling on the face of the Minister of Culture; and in Grimsby this morning a baby was born with barking dog's heads on its chest, elbows and knees; it lived for six hours, six minutes and six seconds, and died intoning: 'Behold, the Lord cometh.' A government spokesman commenting on these prodigies said there was no cause for alarm.

GREEDIGNORANCECOMPLACENCYNAIVETYSOLIPSISMSMUGNESSV
ORACITYSTUPORSHALLOWNESSMADNESS

Have a nice death, dickheads! Self-destructing fucking dickheads.

BABY BORN WITH WOODEN LEG; WORLD WAR TWO BOMBER FOUND ON MOON; SATAN
ESCAPES FROM HELL; THE GOVERNMENT KEEPS A CLIMATE CHANGE PLEDGE.

This is the way the world ends – not with a bang with a wimp-out.

I am the Earth at the end of my decadence

Watching the passing of great barbarians

It will be

as if you

never existed

PHIL WOOD

TARKOVSKY DREAMS

The axe was blunt and the bird
fluttered vibrant with life.
Startled I awoke in a room
bathed in amber light.
Gran came and kissed my eyes
and I heard the rustle of leaves.

In the forest, beyond the gate,
aspens shivered in restless sleep.
I stumbled and fell, my hands
found roots. I smelt the earth, felt
crawling things on my tongue.
I awoke and whispered 'Wolf'.

Across the room I saw the bowl
on the pine chair. Mum unclothed
to the waist and Dad with jug
pouring water over raven hair.
Come morning fickle leaves
are clothed with April frost.

PHIL WOOD

Apple: An Acquired Taste

Smoothed grass and pinked roses,
a pearled fountain, a tall wall;
and like hot, peppered tomatoes
tipped upon the tip of her tongue,
a notion grew, and grew glowing;
she sucked her upper lip and bit
and blushed and swallowed
till a meandering tear tickled her nose;
the tread of footsteps, her naked lover,
tall as a wall, face flushed, around
his eyes a dozen river wrinkles spread.
Does it matter? she asked.
In that tease sparkled an eternity of night.

PHIL WOOD

Another Cyclist

The eager guy cycling in front, sweating
for life, I may overtake with some care.

I picture him fractured, bulging in lycra,
leaking out red. He's overweight, but gains

pace under aubergine clouds; past muddles
of potholes, puddles, spiteful cracks; fleeing
the grumble of towers that spike the sky.

We let him go, but the next one, face flushed

with hope, T-shirt proclaiming Jesus Saves,
arouses my backseat driver to bite the seat.

I check the mirror, find a praying mantis
with mandibles to part limb from soul from life.



E.T.A. HOFFMANN

THE SANDMAN

I

Nathanael to Lothar

You must all be worried because I haven't written in such a long, long time. Mom must be furious and Clara must think I'm living it up and have totally forgotten the dear angel who's so deeply ingrained in my heart and soul. Nothing is farther from the truth. Every day and hour I think of you all, and in sweet dreams the figure of my dear little Clara passes by and smiles with her brilliant eyes, as she used to when I visited.

Oh, how could I have written you before, in this disturbed state of mind that has torn apart my thoughts! Something terrible has come into my life! Dark premonitions of a horrible, menacing fate extend like cloud shadows over me, blotting out every friendly ray of sun. Now I shall relate what has happened to me. I have to, this I know. But thinking about it, it laughs like crazy out of me. My dear Lothar! How shall I begin? How can I make you experience that which happened to me a few days ago and which destroyed my life so fiendishly? If only you were here at the moment, you'd see for yourself. You must think me insane and seeing phantoms.

In a nutshell. The horrible event, whose deadly influence I've been trying to avoid, is just that, a few days ago, to be precise, on October 30, at 12 noon, a hawker of barometers entered my tavern and presented me with his wares. I didn't buy a thing off him, and told him I'd throw him down the stairs, whereupon he left of his own accord.

You must think that something deep within me could've added such a significance to this event that I had to reject the unfortunate hawker with such hostility. This is exactly the case. Now I must gather all my strength to relate you calmly and patiently of my childhood, so that everything will appear clearly to your clever mind in bright images. While I'm thinking of commencing, I can hear you laugh and tell Clara: "Now this is really childish." Go ahead, laugh at me! Good Heavens! My hair stands on end and I feel as if I'm begging you to laugh at me from some insane desperation, like Franz Moor in Schiller's [The Robbers](#). But to return to my story.

We rarely saw Father, except at dinner. He was likely too busy with work. After dinner, which in our house was served at seven, all of us, Mother included, went to Father's study to sit at the round table. Father would smoke and drink beer. Often he'd tell us wondrous stories, and often became so spirited his pipe would go out. I would light it again with a burning piece of paper, which was a supreme pleasure to me. Often he'd hand out picture books, sit silently in his comfortable chair and blow out dark clouds of smoke, so it was as if we floated on a mist. On such nights, Mom seemed sad, and hardly had the clock struck nine, she would say; "Now children, to bed, to bed. I see the Sandman's coming." And indeed, I would hear someone's slow, heavy footfalls clumping up the stairs. It had to be the Sandman.

One time, those heavy footfalls and clumping struck me as especially frightening. I asked Mom as she led us away: “Hey Mom, who is this wicked Sandman, who chases us away from Dad?” What does he look like?”

“There’s no Sandman, my dear child,” my mother said. “When I tell you the Sandman’s coming, it means you’re sleepy and you can’t keep your eyes open, as if someone has sprinkled sand in your eyes.” This answer wasn’t satisfactory. Yes, in my childish mind the thought grew that Mother denied the Sandman’s existence so that we wouldn’t be frightened. Besides, I always heard him come up the stairs.

Eager to know more about this Sandman and his relationship to children, I asked the old nursemaid who took care of my youngest sister what kind of a person he was.

“So, my little pinecone,” she replied, “you don’t know? He’s an evil person who comes after children who won’t go to bed. He throws a handful of sand in their eyes, so they pop out all bloody. He throws them in his bag and carries them to the half-moon to feed his little children. They sit in their nests and have curved beaks like owls which they use to peck at the eyes of naughty children.”

My mind’s eye drew this horrible picture of the terrifying Sandman. So much so, that when I heard him come clumping up the stairs that evening, I started shaking with fright and terror. I started crying and to Mom I could only stutter: “The Sandman! The Sandman!” I ran to my room and the whole night I was tormented by the frightful appearance of the Sandman, even though I was old enough to realize the story about the Sandman and his nest of children in the half-moon made no sense. Yet the Sandman remained a frightening ghost to me, and I was possessed by a horror and fear, not only when I heard him come up the stairs, but also when I heard him throw open the door to Father’s study and enter.

Sometimes he stayed away for long periods, other times he would turn up many times at short notice. This went on for years and I just couldn’t get used to this awful ghost. The image of this terrifying Sandman wouldn’t fade. His relationship to my father occupied my mind more and more, but an insurmountable wariness prevented me from asking Dad about it. But within me, over the years, the urge germinated to uncover the secret, to see the Sandman. He had put me on the road to the wonderful, the adventurous. It nestled itself in my consciousness. I grew fond of creepy stories about kobolds, witches, Tom Thumb, etc. But above it all towered the Sandman, whose hideous image I drew in chalk or charcoal on tables, closets, and walls.

When I turned ten, Mom removed me from the nursery and sent me to a little room not far from Father’s study. But still, at the stroke of nine, when the unknown person entered our house, we had to leave the room. From my own room, I listened as he entered my father’s study. Then, after a while, a strange mist would fill the house. With my growing curiosity, my courage grew. I had to acquaint myself with this Sandman. Often I snuck out of my room into the hall, when Mom had passed. But I could learn nothing new, because each time the Sandman had already entered the room. Finally, driven by an irresistible urge, I decided to hide in my father’s room and wait for the Sandman.

From my father's silence of, and the sad demeanour of my mother one night, I knew the Sandman would come. I feigned tiredness and left the room before nine, but hid away in a small hideout.

The front door creaked. They went through the floors, the heavy, thumping footfalls approaching the stairs. Mom ran past with my sisters. Slowly, slowly, I opened the door to my father's study. As always he sat silent and immobile with his back to the door. He didn't notice me. Swiftly I hid behind a curtain that hung before a cupboard where Dad kept his clothes. Nearer, nearer thumped the footsteps. Something strange coughed, scratched, and grumbled out there. My heart thumped with fear and confusion.

Close, close in front of the door, a hard footstep. A hard strike on the doorknob and the door clattered open! I forced myself to peek. The Sandman stands in the middle of the room. The bright beams of the lamps shine on his face. The Sandman, the terrifying Sandman, is the old lawyer Coppelius who would join us for lunch once in a while!

Yet the most terrible figure would not have filled me with such horror as this Coppelius. Imagine a tall, broad-shouldered man, with in his big, formless head, an ochre face, bristling grey eyebrows, under which two green piercing eyes glimmer, and a big nose that hangs over his upper lip. His crooked maw often twists itself in a vicious grin. Two deep red spots then appear on his cheeks, and a strange hissing sound comes through his clenched teeth



Hoffmann's sketch of the scene

Coppelius always appeared in an old-fashioned, laced, ash-grey coat, a vest and trousers in the same colour, and black stockings and shoes with tiny straps decorated with gems. His little wig hardly covered the dome of his skull, while his sideburns stuck out from his ears. A broad, closed hair basket extended from his neck, so you could see the silver strap that closed his collar.

His whole appearance was disgusting and repellent. We children especially hated his big, gnarled, hairy fists, so much so we could not handle anything he'd touched. He'd noticed

this and would amuse himself by making an excuse to touch any cookie or fruit that Mom would surreptitiously put on our saucers. With tears in our eyes, and horror and disgust in our hearts, we would be unable to enjoy these delicacies. On holidays, when Dad would allow us a small glass of wine, he would pass his fist over it, or even put it to his blue lips and laugh fiendishly. We would express our anger with quiet sobs. He always called us little beasts. We never spoke up, but cursed this ugly, fiendish man, who deliberately and intentionally ruined our simplest pleasures. Mom seemed, just like us, to hate the repulsive man. As soon as he appeared, her joyfulness, her sunny, free disposition would be replaced by sad, dark seriousness. Dad behaved as if the lawyer were a higher being, whose caprices had to be endured, and who had to be placated by all means necessary. At his suggestion, choice meals were prepared or precious wines brought.

When I saw this Coppelius, my soul was filled with the horrifying realization that no one else could have been the Sandman. He wasn't merely a bogeyman from an old maid's tale, bringing children's eyes to feed his owl's nest in the crescent moon. No! He was an ugly, ghastly demon, who brought misery – want – temporary, no, eternal ruin everywhere he entered.

I froze. At the risk of being discovered, and knowing I would be severely punished, I stood there with my head peeking around the curtain. Dad received Coppelius with much elation.

Come on – get to work, Coppelius shouted with a hoarse, creaking voice, throwing off his cloak. Dad silently and seriously took off his house coat and they both dressed in long black smocks. Where they got them from, I don't know. Dad opened a cupboard door. What I had held for a cupboard, turned out to be a dark alcove with a small fireplace. Coppelius approached it, and a little blue flame sparked. Strange devices surrounded the little fireplace. God – Dad looked completely changed as he stood there over the fire. A frightening, twisted pain changed his soft and honest features into a repellent, ugly, Devil's face. He looked like Coppelius. The latter would wave red-hot pliers about with which he would take bright shining objects from the thick smoke and hammer them eagerly.

It was as if faces appeared all around me, eyeless faces, with horrible black holes where their eyes should be.

“Eyes here, eyes here,” Coppelius called with a dull, droning voice.

I screamed from fright and dropped to the floor from my hiding place. Coppelius grabbed me.

“Little beast, little beast,” he bleated, baring his teeth.

He lifted me up and put me on the fire. The flames started to singe my hairs.

“Now we have eyes, a nice pair of children's eyes,” Coppelius whispered. With his fists he grabbed glowing coals from the fire to sprinkle them into my eyes.

My father raised his hands in supplication and shouted: “Master, master, please let my Nathanael keep his eyes. Please.”

Coppelius gave a shrill laugh and shouted: “So, let the boy keep his eyes and have his share of crying in the world. But let us now observe the mechanism of his hands and feet.”

With this he grabbed me so hard my joints snapped. He unscrewed my hands and feet and put them back in the wrong order.

“No, that won’t work. Better as it was before. The old one’s understood,” he hissed and lisped.

Everything around me became dark and a sudden spasm went through nerve and bone. Then I felt nothing.

I felt a soft, warm breath on my face. I woke from a death sleep. Mother stood over me.

“Is the Sandman still there?” I stammered.

“No, my dear child, he’s been gone for a while. He won’t hurt you anymore.”

This is what my mother said, and she kissed and cuddled her new-won darling.

Why should I trouble you with this, my dear Lothar! Why should I tell you all this in such detail, while there remains so much to say? Enough of that! I’d been caught eavesdropping and was abused by Coppelius. Fear and terror had given me a high fever, which left me in bed for weeks.

“Is the Sandman still there,” had been my first healthy words and the sigh of my recovery, my salvation. But now I have to tell you about the most horrifying event from my childhood. Then you will understand that I’m not being silly when I tell you that all of life is without colour to me, that truly a dark perdition has drawn a murky veil of cloud over me, which I will only be able to tear away at my time of death.

Coppelius didn’t show himself anymore. It was said he’d left town. After a year, however, when one evening we were sitting at the table. Dad was in a good mood and told us all kinds of things about the travels he’d made in his youth. But then, at the strike of nine, I suddenly heard the front door creak in its hinges and the slow, heavy footsteps on the stairs.

Mom grew pale and said: “That’s Coppelius.”

“Yes – that’s Coppelius,” said Dad with a dull, broken voice.

Tears streamed from Mother’s eyes.

“But Father, Father,” she cried. “Must it be?”

“The last time,” he replied, “this is the last time. I promise. Go now, take the children. Go! To bed! Good night!”

I felt as if crushed by a cold, heavy stone. I gasped! Mom grabbed me by the arm when I wouldn’t move.

“Come, Nathanael, come with me.”

I let her take me away and entered my room.

“Calm down, calm down. Lie down now. Sleep – sleep,” she called after me.

Tormented by an unspeakable terror and worry, I couldn't shut my eyes. The hateful, horrible Coppelius stood before me with glittering eyes, an evil grin on his face. In vain I tried to remove this image from my mind.

It must've been around midnight, when a tremendous concussion sounded, as if a cannon had been fired. The house shook. Something rattled and rushed past my door. The front door was slammed shut with a ringing.

“That's Coppelius,” I cried and sprang out of bed.

Shrieks of hopeless despair broke out. I rushed to Father's room. The door was open and a horrible vapour met me.

The servant girl cried: “Oh, the master, the master.”

In front of the fire lay my father, his face charred and horribly distorted, around him stood my sisters, crying. Mom had fainted.

“Coppelius, you godless devil, you've murdered Father!”

I lost consciousness.

When two days later they put my father in his coffin, the mild and soft features he'd possessed while alive had returned. I comforted myself that his pact with the diabolical Coppelius hadn't led to his perdition.

The explosion had woken the neighbours. The occurrence was well known, also among the authorities. They wanted to call Coppelius to account, but he'd disappeared without trace.

When I tell you, my dear friend, that the hawker of barometers was the damned Coppelius, I can hardly be blamed that I saw this fiendish appearance as a harbinger of doom. He wore different clothes, but Coppelius's figure and appearance are too deeply engraved in my mind for there to be any question of mistake. Besides, Coppelius hasn't even changed his name. I've heard that he now passes for a Piedmontese mechanic named Guiseppe Coppola.

I'm determined to face him and avenge my father's death, whatever the consequences.

Don't tell Mom anything about the appearance of this monster. Give my regards to dear sweet Clara. I'll write her once I've calmed down. Good luck, etc. etc.

Clara to Nathanael

It's true you haven't written in a long while. Yet I'm sure you've kept me in your mind and soul. Proof of that is the fact you accidentally sent the letter meant for Lothar to me. I eagerly opened the letter and only realized my mistake when I read “my dear Lothar.” Instead of reading the letter, I should've given it to Lothar. You've often, in childish teasing, chided with having a placid nature. Such a feminine placid nature, in fact, that if

the house were about to collapse, I would, in my flight, take the time to straighten a fold in a curtain. Rest assured though, the start of your letter shocked me deeply. I can hardly breathe because of it. Everything shimmered before my eyes.

My dear Nathanael, how could such a horrible thing have entered your life! To be removed from you, never to see you again, that though went through my heart like a red-hot dagger. I kept reading. Frightening, how you describe that disgusting Coppelius. And only now did I learn how your good old father died such a horrible violent death. My brother, Lothar, whom I handed the letter to, tried to reassure me, in vain. The deadly vendor of barometers Guiseppe Coppola pursues me by tread and step, and it shames me to admit he even disturbs my peaceful sleep with weird visions. Maar rapidly, the very next day, I'd recovered. Do forgive me, my dearest, when Lothar tells you that, despite your strange suspicions, I've found my usual happiness again.

To be honest, I have to tell you that, in my opinion, all the terrible things you've mentioned, are inside you, and have little to do with the outside world. The old Coppelius may have been disgusting, but his hatred of children caused you to be so repelled.

Naturally, your childish nature tied the terribly Sandman from the maid's story to the old Coppelius. Though you didn't believe in the Sandman, Coppelius was a dangerous monster to children. That weird nocturnal activity with your father was nothing more than alchemic experimentation. Your mother could hardly be happy about it, because of the wasted money. Besides, as with many of those experimenters, your father, in his vain hunger for higher wisdom, must've turned away from his family. Likely your father caused his own death through carelessness. Coppelius isn't to blame at all. Can you believe me? Yesterday, I asked the neighbour, an experienced chemist, if explosions causing instant death are possible with such experiments. Yes, absolutely, he said. He described how this could occur in detail, using such strange words that I've forgotten them.

I guess you're displeased with your Clara now. You must be saying: "Not a ray of the mysterious that often embraces people with invisible arms, pierces that cold nature of hers. She sees only the colourful surface of the world. She rejoices at shiny, golden fruit, though it contains a deadly poison.

Oh, my dear Nathanael! Do you really believe that in happy, carefree natures there cannot be the inkling of a darker power, one that works to our perdition through ourselves? But do forgive me, a simple girl, for daring to explain what I think of such an inner struggle. I can't find the right words. You will likely laugh at me, not because I'm stupid, but because I express myself so clumsily.

If there is really such a power that maliciously and treacherously lays a rope in our innermost being, which catches us with it, and drags us down a dangerous path to perdition. If such a power exists, it must be inside us, must make us, must become us. That's the only way we can believe in it, and accomplish its secret work.

If we possess a strong spirit fortified by a happy life, however, then we recognize this strange, hostile effect. Then we can follow the path our calling has guided us to. Then this ugly power goes under in a futile struggle for an embodiment of our mirror image. It is certain, Lothar adds, that this dark power can only draw strange figures from the

outside world if we let it. That it is only if we believe in this fantasy, will it speak to us through the spirit forms we ourselves create. Only a phantom from our inner selves, can, through its bond with us, cast us into hell or raise us to the heavens.

You'll notice, dear Nathanael, that my brother and I have talked a lot about these dark powers and forces. Having arduously written down the main points, I find it all rather profound. I couldn't understand Lothar's final words. I think I know what he means, and it rings true.

So I beg you, remove the ugly lawyer Coppelius, and the vendor of barometers Guiseppe Coppola, from your mind. Be assured that these weird figures can't hurt you. Only a belief in their hostile power can actually make them hostile. If your letter hadn't shown me how upset you are, I might've made light of the lawyer Coppelius and the hawker of barometers Coppola. Be cheerful, cheerful. I've taken it upon me to appear to you as a guardian angel, and if the nasty Coppelius ever bothers you in dreams, I will banish him with loud laughter. I don't fear him, or his nasty fists. He won't be ruining my sweets as lawyer, nor my eyes as Sandman.

Forever, my dearest Nathanael, etc. etc.

Nathanael to Lothar

It displeases me that Clara opened and read the letter meant for you. True, it was because of my absent-mindedness. She wrote me a profound, philosophical letter, stating that Coppelius and Coppola only exist in my mind, that they're phantoms of my self, and if I were to admit this, they would be reduced to dust. Truly, one would scarcely believe a spirit that shines from such clear, smiling, child-like eyes, as if from a sweet dream, could express itself so cleverly, so masterly. She appeals to me. You've talked about me. Likely, you read her lectures on logic, to enable her to sort things out. Stop that!

Besides, it's clear that the hawker of barometers, Coppola, cannot be the old lawyer Coppelius. I've been sitting in on lectures by the newly-arrived professor of physics. Spalanzani, he's called - like the famous physicist - and he's Italian. He's known Coppola for years, and has recognized his dialect as being Piedmontese. Coppelius was German, but I suspect, not a true one. My mind has not been put to rest. You, you and Clara, may have always taken me for some sinister dreamer, but I cannot dispel the trauma that Coppelius's accursed face made on me. I'm glad he's gone from our town, as Spalanzani says. That professor is a strange owl. A small, rotund man, face with strong cheekbones, sharp nose, protruding lips, small, sharp eyes. Better than describe him, I can point you to an engraving of [Cagliostro](#) by a certain Chodovieski, which you can find in a Berlin pocket calendar. That's what Spalanzani looks like.

Recently, while going up a flight of stairs, I noticed an opening in a curtain that'd been drawn in front of a glass door. I can't explain why, but I took a peek. A large, very slender, harmoniously developed woman, beautifully dressed, sat by a small table. She rested her arms on it, and had folded her hands. She sat facing the door, so I could look straight into her angelic face. She seemed not to notice me. There was something frozen in her gaze, as if she couldn't see. It was as if she were sleeping with her eyes open. This disturbed me, so I snuck away to the nearby lecture hall.

Later I learned I had seen Olympia, Spalanzani's daughter. He locks her away in this strange and evil manner. No one's allowed near her. It has something to do with her state of being. Perhaps she is feeble-minded. Why am I writing you this? I can explain it better in person. I'll be seeing you in a fortnight. I want to see my sweet little angel, Clara, again. It will clear away my sombre mood, that has taken control of me after my last fatal letter. That's why I won't be writing her today.

A thousand greetings, etc. etc.

II

One can't imagine anything stranger or wondrous than that which occurred to my poor friend, young Nathanael, and which I'm trying to relate to you, dear reader. Have you ever, fond reader, experienced anything that so enveloped your heart, mind, and thoughts that it excluded everything else? It fermented and boiled inside you, infected with a seething glow, your blood rushed through your veins, painting your cheeks red. Your gaze was so strange as if it wanted to grasp from empty space figures invisible to all other eyes. Your words faded in dark sighs. Friends then ask you: "What's with you, my esteemed? What ails you, dear friend?" Then you want to express the inner composition in all its dazzling colours and shadows and lights, but can't even begin to. In your first word you want to compress all that is wondrous, lovely, terrible, funny, and horrible of the event, so it would strike anyone as an electric shock. Yet every word, everything language can do, seems colourless, cold, dead. You search and search, stutter and stammer, while your friends' level-headed questions strike the inner glow with icy gusts. But if, like a bold painter, you had first sketched in a few audacious strokes the outline of the picture you had in your soul, you would then easily have been able to deepen and intensify the colours one after the other, until the varied throng of living figures carried your friends away. They, like you, would have found themselves in the midst of the scene your mind had brought forth.

I must confess, dear reader, that no one asked me for the history of the young Nathanael. But you do know I'm the sort of author who will carry something in their minds that becomes so compulsive that it feels as if everybody who comes near them, and everybody in the world, is asking: "Oh! What is it? Oh! Do tell us, dearest?" So I'm powerfully impelled to tell you of Nathanael's tragic life. The marvel and strangeness of it fills my soul.

But to convey these elements - no small task - made me torment myself in my effort to start Nathanael's tale in a significant, original, and gripping manner. "Once upon a time," the most beautiful beginning for a story, seemed to me too tame; with "In the small country town S----lived," rather better, at any rate allowing plenty of room to work up to the climax; or to plunge at once, in medias res, "Go to hell!" cried the student Nathanael, his eyes blazing wildly with rage and fear, when the hawker of barometers, Giuseppe Coppola" - well, that's how I'd already started, when I thought I detected something of the ridiculous in Nathanael's wild glance. The story isn't meant to be amusing though.

No phrase came to me that would reflect in even the smallest degree the vividness of the colours of my mental vision. I decided not to begin at all. So I ask you, benevolent

reader, accept the three letters, which my friend Lothar has been so kind as to deliver to me, as the outline of the picture, into which I will try to introduce more and more colour. Perhaps, like a good portrait-painter, I may succeed in depicting many figures in such a way that you will see them right in front of you. Then, my dear reader, you will believe that nothing is more wonderful, nothing more fantastic than real life, and that all that a writer can do is to present it as a dark reflection in a frosted mirror.

In order to give you the necessary prior knowledge, I must add to the letters that, soon after the death of Nathanael's father, Clara and Lothar, the children of a distant relative, who had likewise died, leaving them orphans, were taken in by Nathanael's mother. Clara and Nathanael conceived a deep affection for each other, which no one could object to. When therefore Nathanael left home to continue his studies in G., they were betrothed. It is from there that his last letter is written, where he is attending the lectures of Spalanzani, the distinguished professor of physics.

I might now proceed comfortably with my narration, did not at this moment Clara's image rise up so vividly before my eyes. I cannot turn away from it, just as I never could when she looked upon me and smiled so sweetly. Nowhere would she have passed for beautiful; all those professionally engaged with beauty agreed upon it. However, architects praised the pure proportions of her figure and form, painters averred that her neck, shoulders, and bosom were almost too chastely modelled, and yet, on the other hand, one and all were in love with her glorious Magdalene hair, and prattled about its Battoni-like colour. One of them, a veritable dreamer, compared her eyes to a lake by Ruisdael, in which is reflected the pure azure of the cloudless sky, the beauty of woods and flowers, and all the bright and happy life of a living landscape. Poets and musicians went still further and said, "What's all this talk about seas and reflections? How can we look upon the girl without feeling that wonderful heavenly songs and melodies beam upon us from her eyes, penetrating deep down into our hearts, till all becomes awake and throbbing with emotion? And if we cannot sing anything at all passable then, why, we are not worth much; and this we can also plainly read in the rare smile which flits around her lips when we warble out something in her presence which we pretend to call singing, in spite of the fact that it is nothing more than a few single notes confusedly linked together."

And it really was so. Clara had the powerful fancy of a bright, innocent, unaffected child, a woman's deep and sympathetic heart, and an understanding clear, sharp, and discriminating. Nebulous and dreamy characters came a cropper with her; for without saying very much - she was not by nature of a talkative disposition - she plainly asked, by her calm steady look, and rare ironical smile: "How can you imagine, my dear friends, that I can take these fleeting shadowy images for true living and breathing forms?"

For this reason many called her cold, devoid of feeling, and prosaic; others, however, who had reached a clearer grip on life, were extremely fond of the intelligent, childlike, large-hearted girl. But none had such an affection for her as Nathanael, who was a zealous and cheerful mover in the fields of science and art. Clara clung to her lover with all her soul; the first clouds she encountered in life were when he went away. With what delight did she fly into his arms when, as he had promised in his last letter to Lothar, he really came back to his native town and entered his mother's room! As Nathanael had foreseen, the

moment he saw Clara again, he thought neither about the lawyer Coppelius or her sensible letter; all troubles disappeared.

Nevertheless Nathanael was right when he told his friend Lothar the repulsive vendor of barometers, Coppola, had a disturbing influence upon his life. Everyone felt that Nathanael had changed of late. He engaged in dark reveries, in a way that'd never been seen in him before. Everything, his entire life, had become dreams and presentiments. He kept saying that everyone who thought himself free was actually a pawn in a game of tenebrous powers; one had to submit to what fate had been given him. He went so far as to say it was foolish to believe that a man could achieve anything in art or science of his own accord; for the inspiration necessary to create did not proceed from within outwards, but was the result of the influence of something outside, some higher Principle.

To intelligent Clara all this mystical musing was hateful, yet it was pointless to try to refute it. But when Nathanael went on to prove that Coppelius was the evil principle which had entered into him and taken possession of him at the time he was listening behind the curtain, and that this hateful demon was disturbing the joy of their love, then Clara grew grave and said, "Yes, Nathanael. You are right; Coppelius is an evil, dangerous principle; he can do dreadful things, like a diabolical power which took visible form, but only, only if you do not banish him from your mind and thoughts. So long as you believe in him he exists and acts; your belief in him is his power."

Whereupon Nathanael, angry that Clara suggested the demon only existed in his own mind, began to dilate at large upon the whole mystic doctrine of devils and awful powers. Clara abruptly broke up his lecture by mentioning something irrelevant, to Nathanael's very great annoyance. Such deep mysteries are sealed books to cold, unsusceptible characters, he thought, without being clearly conscious to himself that he counted Clara amongst these inferior natures, and accordingly he did not give up his efforts to initiate her into these mysteries.

In the morning, when she was helping to prepare breakfast, he stood next to her, and recited from all sorts of mystic books to her, until she begged him: "But, my dear Nathanael, I shall have to scold you as the evil principle which exercises a harmful influence upon my coffee. For if I do as you wish, drop everything, and look into your eyes whilst you read, the coffee will boil over into the fire, and none of you will get any breakfast." Then Nathanael slammed the book shut and ran away in great displeasure to his own room.

Formerly he was good at writing pleasing, sparkling tales, which Clara took the greatest delight in listening to; now, however, his poems were gloomy, silly, and formless. Clara didn't want to show it, but he felt she took no interest in them. Clara hated the tedious. Faced with it she would display a spiritual torpor in glance and word. Nathanael's poems were, in truth, very tedious. His sadness at Clara's cold prosaic temperament continued to increase; Clara could not conceal her distaste of his dark, gloomy, boring mysticism. They became estranged from each other without realizing it.

The figure of ugly Coppelius had, as Nathanael himself had to admit, faded in his imagination. It took a lot of effort to present him in vivid colours, where he played the ghoul of Destiny. At length he began a poem in which Coppelius ruined his joy of love. He portrayed himself and Clara, united in true love, but then presented a black fist being thrust into their lives and plucking out their joy. Finally, as they were standing at the altar, the terrible Coppelius appeared and touched Clara's lovely eyes, which sprang into Nathanael's bosom, burning and hissing like bloody sparks. Then Coppelius grabs him, and hurled him into a blazing circle of fire, which spun round with the speed of a whirlwind, and, dashed away with him. A fearful noise resounds, like a hurricane lashing the foaming sea-waves until they rise up like black, white-headed giants in the midst of the raging struggle. But through this savage tempest he hears Clara's voice: "Can't you see me, dear? Coppelius has deceived you. They're not my eyes which burned so in your bosom; they are fiery drops of your own heart's blood. Look at me, I still have my own eyes." Nathanael thought, "Yes, that is Clara, and I am hers for ever." The thought laid such a powerful grasp upon the fiery circle so that it stood still, and the riotous turmoil died away rumbling down a dark abyss. Nathanael looked into Clara's eyes; but it was death that looked back at him through Clara's eyes.

Nathanael was very quiet and sober-minded while writing this work. He filed and polished every line, and as he had chosen to submit himself to the limitations of meter, he did not rest until all was pure and musical. When, however, he had at length finished it and read it aloud to himself, he was seized with horror and wild astonishment, and screamed, "Whose hideous voice is this?" But he soon came to see in it again nothing beyond an accomplished poem, and he believed it would light Clara's cold temperament. What this was supposed to lead to, tormenting her with dreadful pictures, which prophesied a ruinous end to their love, was not quite clear to him.

Nathanael and Clara sat in his mother's little garden. Clara was bright and cheerful, since for three days Nathanael, engaged in writing his poem, had not bothered her with his dreams or forebodings. Nathanael, too, spoke in joyful and vivacious way of pleasurable things, as he used to. Clara said, "Ah! Now I have you again. We have driven away that ugly Coppelius, you see." Then Nathanael suddenly remembered he had the poem in his pocket which he wanted to read to her. He at once took out the pages and began to read.

Clara, anticipating something tedious as usual, prepared to submit to it, and calmly started to knit. But as the dark clouds rose blacker and blacker, she dropped the stocking she was knitting and sat with her eyes fixed in a set stare into Nathanael's eyes. He was carried away by his own work, his cheeks became a deep red, and tears welled from his eyes. At last he concluded, groaning from exhaustion. He grabbed Clara's hand, and sighed as if dissolved by inconsolable grief, "Oh! Clara! Clara!" She drew him softly to her bosom and said softly, slowly, and earnestly, "Nathanael, my darling Nathanael, throw this crazy, senseless, insane tale into the fire." Nathanael sprang indignantly to his feet, crying, as he pushed Clara from him, "You damned lifeless automaton!" and ran off. Clara wept bitter tears. "Oh! He has never loved me, for he does not understand me," she sobbed loudly.

Lothar entered the arbour. Clara was obliged to tell him all that had taken place. He loved his sister with all his heart; every word of her complaint fell like a spark upon his heart. The displeasure which he had long held against his dreamy friend Nathanael now turned

to furious rage. He ran to Nathanael, and confronted him, upbraided him with harsh words for his ridiculous behaviour towards his beloved sister. The fiery Nathanael answered him in the same style. A fantastic, insane fool was retaliated with, a miserable, mean-spirited, commonplace sort of fellow.

A duel was inevitable. They agreed to meet on the following morning behind the garden, and fight, according to the custom of the students of the place, with sharp rapiers. They snuck about in silence and gloom. Clara had heard the violent quarrel, and seen the fencing-master bring the rapiers at dawn. She suspected what was to happen. They both appeared at the appointed place wrapped in the same gloomy silence, and threw off their coats. Bloodlust burned in their eyes as they commenced battle, but then Clara burst through the garden door. Sobbing, she screamed, "You savage, terrible men! Why don't you cut me down right now, before you attack each other? I can no longer live in a world where my lover has slain my brother, or my brother slain my lover?" Lothar dropped his weapon and stared in silence at the ground. Nathanael's heart was rent with sorrow, and all the affection which he had felt for his lovely Clara in the happiest days of her golden youth was reawakened within him. His murder weapon, too, fell from his hand; he threw himself at Clara's feet. "Oh! can you ever forgive me, my only, my beloved Clara? Can you, my dearest brother Lothar, forgive me?" Lothar was touched by his friend's deep pain; the three reconciled people embraced each other amidst endless tears, and swore never again to break their bond of love and fidelity.

Nathanael felt as if a heavy burden, which had pressed him to the ground, had been rolled off of him, as if he had saved his whole being, which threatened annihilation, by resisting the dark power that threatened him. Three blissful days he spent with his loved ones, then he returned to G., where he would stay for another year, with the intention of returning to his hometown forever.

Everything relating to Coppelius had been kept secret from the mother; for it was known that she could not think of him without horror because, like Nathanael, she blamed him for her husband's death.

III

When Nathanael came to the house where he lived he was greatly astonished to find it burnt down to the ground, so that nothing but the bare outer walls were left standing amidst a heap of ruins. Although the fire had broken out in the laboratory of the chemist who lived on the ground-floor, and had therefore spread upwards, some of Nathanael's brave, calm friends had succeeded in forcing a way into his room on the upper floor and saving his books, manuscripts and instruments. They had carried them all uninjured into another house, where they engaged a room for him. This he now moved into.

That he lived opposite Professor Spalanzani did not strike him as remarkable, nor did the fact that he could, as he observed, by looking out of his window, see straight into the room where Olympia often sat, alone. Her figure he could plainly distinguish, although her features were unclear. He did notice, however, that she remained the same position for hours on end. The same position he had first seen her through the glass door, sitting at a little table without any movement whatever, and it was evident that she was constantly

gazing in his direction. He had to admit he'd never seen a finer figure. However, with Clara in his heart, he remained unaffected by Olympia's stiffness and only occasionally would he furtively glance over his compendium across to her beautiful countenance.

He was writing to Clara, when a light tap sounded at the door. At his answer, it opened and Coppola's repulsive face peeped in. Nathanael felt his soul tremble, but keeping in mind what Spalanzani had said him about his countryman Coppola, and what he had sworn to his beloved about the Sandman Coppelius, he was ashamed for feeling this childish fear of ghosts. He controlled himself with effort, and said, as quietly and as calmly as he possibly could, "I'm not buying any barometers, my good friend. Now go."

But Coppola came right into the room, and, screwing up his wide maw into a hideous smile, whilst his little eyes flashed from beneath his long grey eyelashes, said in a hoarse voice: "Oy! No barometer? No barometer? Got fine eyes too, fine eyes!" Nathanael cried in shock, "You madman, how can you have eyes? Eyes? Eyes?" But at once Coppola, lay aside his barometers, thrust his hands into his big coat-pockets and brought out several lorgnettes and spectacles, and put them on the table. "Now! Now! Spectacles! Spectacles to put on nose! My eyes, fine eyes." And he continued to produce more and more spectacles from his pockets until the table began to gleam and flash all over. Thousands of eyes were looking and blinking spasmodically, staring up at Nathanael. He could not take his own from the table. And Coppola kept on heaping up more spectacles, and ever wilder and wilder burning flashes crossed through and through each other and shot their blood-red rays into Nathanael's breast. Overcome with mad fright, he shouted, "Stop it! Stop it! You terrible man!" He grabbed Coppola by the arm, which had again been thrust into his pocket in order to bring out still more spectacles, which already covered the table.

With a harsh repulsive laugh Coppola gently freed himself. With the words, "Oh! Nothing for you! But, here fine glass!" he swept all his spectacles together, and put them back into his coat, whilst from a side-pocket he produced a great number of larger and smaller telescopes. As soon as the spectacles were gone, Nathanael calmed down; and, thinking of Clara, he clearly discerned that the terrifying spectre had come from himself. Coppola was an honest mechanic and optician, in no way Coppelius's damned doppelganger and ghost. Besides, none of the glasses which Coppola now placed on the table had anything special about them, nothing so weird as the spectacles, that is. To make amends, Nathanael decided to buy something off Coppola. He took up a small, beautifully worked pocket telescope, and looked through the window to test it. Never in his life had he seen through an instrument that brought out things so clear, so sharply, as if it were right in front of his nose.

Involuntarily he looked into Spalanzani's room. Olympia sat at the little table as usual, with her arms upon it, hands folded. Now for the first time he saw her exquisite features. But her eyes remained rigid and lifeless. But as he looked closer and longer through the telescope, he fancied humid moonbeams coming from them. It seemed as if their power of vision was now being enkindled; they flamed ever more lively and lively. Nathanael remained as if glued to the window by a magic spell, contemplating the divinely beautiful Olympia ever harder and harder. A coughing and shuffling woke him, as if from a dream.

Coppola stood behind him, "Tree zechini - three ducats." Nathanael had quite forgotten the optician. He hastily paid the required sum. "Innit? Fine glass? Fine glass?" asked

Coppola in his unpleasant hoarse voice, smiling sardonically. "Yes, yes, yes," Nathanael replied impatiently; "farewell, my good friend." But Coppola did not leave the room without casting many peculiar side-glances at Nathanael. Nathanael heard him laughing loudly on the stairs. "Well yes," thought he, "he's laughing at me because I paid him too much for this little telescope, too much" As he softly murmured these words, it seemed the gasping sigh of a dying man passed horribly through the room. Nathanael stopped breathing with fear. Then he realized he'd been the one who'd sighed. "Clara was right," he said to himself, "to think of me as an incurable ghost-seer; and yet it's very stupid, more than stupid, that the silly thought of having paid Coppola too much for his telescope even now should cause me this strange fright. I can't tell why."

Now he sat down to finish his letter to Clara; but a glance through the window showed him Olympia still in the same pose. An irresistible impulse made him jump up and seize Coppola's telescope. He couldn't tear himself away from the hypnotic Olympia until his friend and brother Siegmund called for him to go to Professor Spalanzani's lecture.

The curtain before the door of the fateful room was closely drawn, so that he could not see Olympia. Nor could he even spot her from his own room during the two following days, yet he wouldn't leave his window, and kept watching the room through Coppola's telescope. On the third day the curtain were even drawn across the window. In despair and consumed by longing and desire, he ran out the town gate. Olympia's image hovered about in the sky and stepped forth out of the bushes, and peeped up at him with large, lustrous eyes from the surface of the brook. Clara's image had retreated from his mind. He complained loud and tearful: "Oh! my glorious, lovely love star, have you only appeared so as to vanish at once, and leave me in a dark and hopeless night?"

Returning home, he became aware of a noisy activity in Spalanzani's house. All the doors stood open; all kinds of gear was taken in; the windows of the first floor were all lifted out; busy maids with large hair-brooms were driving backwards and forwards, dusting and sweeping. Inside, carpenters and upholsterers were knocking and hammering away. Astonished, Nathanael remained out in the street. Siegmund approached him, laughing, and said, "Well, what do you say about our old Spalanzani?" Nathanael assured him that he could not say anything, since he hardly knew him. He could only say he was astonished at the activity in this quiet gloomy house. Then he learned from Siegmund that Spalanzani intended on giving a grand party, concert and ball, tomorrow, and that half the university was invited. It was told that Spalanzani was going to let his daughter Olympia, for so long carefully hidden from public view, make her first appearance.

Nathanael found an invitation. At the appointed hour, he headed with pounding heart to the professor, while carriages were rolling up and the lights were gleaming brightly in the decorated halls. The guests were many and brilliant. Olympia was richly and fashionably dressed. One could not help admiring her beautiful face and figure. The somewhat strange, inward curve of her back, the wasp-like slenderness of her waist, was likely the result of too-tight lacing. Her gait and pose had something measured and stiff about it, which made many uneasy. It was ascribed to the constraint imposed upon her by her company.

The concert began. Olympia played on the piano with great skill, and sang an *aria di bravura*, in an almost cutting voice, like that produced by glass bells. Nathanael was transported with delight. He stood in the background, and couldn't quite make out Olympia's features because of the blinding lights. So, without being observed, he took Coppola's telescope out of his pocket, and looked through it at the beautiful Olympia. Oh! Now he saw how she looked at him with so much yearning, how every note was coupled with a loving glance which burned into his heart. Her artful *roulades* were exultant cries towards heaven of the soul enlightened by love. And when finally, after the *cadenza*, the long trill rang shrill through the hall, he could no longer control himself, felt as if he were suddenly grabbed by burning arms. He had to shout in pain and delight, "Olympia!" All eyes turned to him; more than a few laughed. The cathedral organist looked even more gloomy than usual, all he said was: "Well, well."

The concert was over, so the ball began. To dance with her - with her! This was now the aim of all Nathanael's wishes and desires. But how could he have audacity to request her, the queen of the party, to ask her to dance? Yet, somehow, just as the dance began, he found himself standing close beside her. Nobody had invited her to dance. Stammering a few words, he took her hand. Olympia's hand was cold as ice. He felt a deathly cold seep into his body. He stared into Olympia's eyes, which beamed with love and longing, and at the same moment he felt a pulse began to beat in her cold hand, and the warm life-blood to glow in her veins. And passion burned more brightly in him too. He embraced the beautiful Olympia, and flew with her round the hall.



He had always thought that he kept accurate time in dancing, but Olympia perfect rhythm, revealed to him how faulty his own time was. Notwithstanding, he would not dance with any other ladyship, and could've murdered on the spot anyone who dared take his place. This happened only twice. He was astonished to see how Olympia remained seated after they danced. So he never failed on each occasion to take her out again. If Nathanael had been able to see anything else except the beautiful Olympia, there would've all kinds of serious quarrelling and strife, for she was the object of the hardly suppressed sniggers which were heard amongst the young people in the corners of the room. They followed her with curious looks, but nobody knew the reason why.

Nathanael, his mind heated by dancing and the quantity of wine he he'd consumed, had lost his habitual shyness. He sat next to Olympia, her hand in his, and declared his love enthusiastically and passionately in words which neither of them could make sense of. Yet perhaps she understood them. She sat looking into his eyes, sighing repeatedly, "Ach! Ach! Ach!" Nathanael would answer, "Oh, you glorious heavenly lady! You ray from the promised beyond of love! Such a profound mind, which mirrors my entire existence!" And more of the same. Olympia just continued to sigh: "Ach! Ach!"

Professor Spalanzani passed the two happy lovers once or twice, and smiled at them with a look of peculiar satisfaction. It seemed to Nathanael, thought he was far away in a different world, as if it were growing darker at Professor Spalanzani's. He looked around, and to his great alarm saw only two lights remained burning in the hall, and they were about to go out. The music and dancing had ceased long ago. "To part! To part!" he cried, wild and despairing. He kissed Olympia's hand, then he bent down to her mouth, but ice-cold lips met his burning ones. As he touched her cold hand, he felt a horror, and the legend of the dead bride passed through his mind. But Olympia pulled him closer, and with the kiss her lips seemed to come alive.

Professor Spalanzani walked slowly through the empty hall; his footsteps producing a hollow echo. His appearance, with the flickering shadows playing on it, became horrible and ghostly. "Do you love me? Do you love me, Olympia? Just one word! Do you love me?" Nathanael whispered. Standing up, all she sighed was: "Ach! Ach!" "Yes, you are my lovely, glorious love star," Nathanael said, "and you have risen for me and you will light, enlighten my soul for ever." "Ach! Ach!" replied Olympia, as she walked on. Nathanael followed her. They halted before the Professor. "You have had an extraordinarily animated conversation with my daughter," he said, smiling. "Well, well, my dear Mister Nathanael, if you find pleasure in talking to the silly girl, I shall be glad to welcome you again." Nathanael left, a bright shining sky opening in his heart.

Spalanzani's ball was the talk of the town for the next few days. Although the Professor had done everything to make the party a success, certain gay heads talked about many odd and irregular elements, especially about Olympia's silence and stiffness. Despite her beautiful form, she was said to be stupid, which was the reason why Spalanzani had so long kept her out of the public eye. Nathanael took this in with wrath, but held his tongue. What was the point in proving to these fellows that their own stupidity prevented them from appreciating Olympia's profound and brilliant nature?

"Allow me to ask," Siegmund said to him one day. "Allow me, brother, to ask how a sensible fellow such as you, came to fall for that wax-face, that wooden doll over there?" Nathanael was about to fly into a rage, but he collected himself and said: "You tell me,

Siegmund, how your otherwise so keen eye for the beautiful, managed to overlook Olympia's divine beauty? Not that I don't thank fate for it, because otherwise you would've been a rival, and one of us would have to die." Siegmund realized in what state his friend was. He said there was no arguing with one who was in love. He did add: "Strange though, that many of us have formed the exact same opinion of Olympia, that – and please don't take offence – she seems so stiff and soulless. She could pass as beautiful, if her eyes weren't so lifeless, without sight. Her steps are strangely measured, every movement seems that of wound-up clockwork. Her playing, her singing, had this unpleasant exact rhythm of a singing machine, the same with her dancing. She strikes the rest of us as weird. We want to have nothing to do with her. She seems to merely act like a living being, yet you seem to see her in a different light."

Nathanael repressed the bitter feelings which were grasping at him as he listened to Siegmund's words. He subdued his displeasure, and merely said, very earnestly: "To you, cold prosaic fellows that you are, she may appear uncanny. Only the poetically organized spirit unfolds to its like. Only on me did she cast her loving glances. And only through my mind and thoughts did they radiate. Only in her love can I find myself again. It might strike you as odd, that she doesn't engage in the stupid talk of shallow people. It is true, she speaks but few words, but these words appear as hieroglyphs of the inner world full of love and the consideration of eternal beyond. But it's pointless to talk of this to you, just a waste of words.

"May God watch over you, brother," Siegmund said, very gently, almost sadly, "but it seems to me that you are on the wrong path. You can count on me, when – no, I shouldn't say anything more!" Nathanael suddenly realized that his cold prosaic friend Siegmund sincerely wished him well, and so he warmly shook his hand.

Nathanael had clean forgotten that there existed a Clara in the world, whom he had once loved. His mother, Lothar, all had disappeared from his mind. He lived for Olympia alone. Every day he sat beside her for hours on end, and talked about his love, his aroused sympathies, and about the psychic [elective affinity](#) Goethe had written of in his eponymous novel. Olympia listened with great interest. From the depths of his writing-desk, he fished out everything he'd ever written: poems, fantasies, visions, romances, tales. The number was daily increased with all kinds of aimless sonnets, stanzas, canzonets. He read it all to Olympia, hour after hour, without growing tired.

But then he had never had such a wonderful listener. She neither embroidered, nor knitted, did not look out of the window, or feed a bird, or play with a little dog or a pet cat, neither did she twist a piece of paper or anything of that kind round her finger. Never did she convert a yawn into a low affected cough. In short, she sat hour after hour with her rigid gaze upon her lover's face, without moving, and her gaze grew more ardent and lively. Only when at last Nathanael rose to kiss her hand, or even her lips, did she say: "Ach! Ach!" and then "Goodnight, dear."

"Oh, you dear, profound mind," Nathanael shouted when he got home, "You, and only you can understand me." And his heart trembled with rapture when he reflected what wondrous harmony was daily revealed between his own and his Olympia's mind. He fancied that she expressed in reaction to his works and poetic genius the identical

sentiments which he cherished in his own heart. He even felt as if it were his own heart's voice speaking to him. This was indeed the case, because Olympia never uttered any other words than those already mentioned. When Nathanael, in moments of clarity, for example upon waking in the morning, remembered her total passivity and silence, he said to himself: "What are words, but words? The glance of her heavenly eyes says more than any speech. How could such a child of heaven bend to the demands of miserable everyday life anyway?"

Professor Spalanzani seemed pleased with the relationship between his daughter Olympia and Nathanael, and gave signs of his good feelings towards him. When Nathanael dared to propose a closer tie to Olympia, the Professor smiled with all his face, and said he would allow his daughter to make a free choice. Encouraged by these words, and with burning desire in his heart, Nathanael resolved to ask Olympia to reveal in clear words, what her sweet loving glances had told him, that she would be his for ever. He looked for the ring which his mother had given him in parting. He'd present it to Olympia as a symbol of devotion, and of the happy life that would flower between them. He found Clara's and Lothar's letters, but threw them aside in indifference, found the ring, put it in his pocket, and ran across to Olympia.

On the stairs, in the on the ground floor, he heard an extraordinary noise. It seemed to come from Spalanzani's study. Stamping – rattling – knocking – banging against the door, accompanied by swearing and curses. "Let go! – Let go! – You scoundrel – You crook! Dedicated life and limb to it? Ha! ha! ha! ha! That wasn't our wager - I, I made the eyes – I, the mechanism. You dumb imp with your mechanism. – You damned dog of a simple watch-maker. Clear off – you devil – stop, you pipe-fitter. You diabolical beast! Stop. Get out. Let me go."

Spalanzani and the horrible Coppelius were carrying on like this. Nathanael broke in, impelled by some nameless dread. The Professor was grabbing a female figure by the shoulders, the Italian Coppola held her feet, and they were pulling and dragging each other backwards and forwards, fighting furiously to get possession of her. Nathanael recoiled in horror on seeing the figure was Olympia. Inflamed by rage, he wanted to tear his beloved from the grasp of the madmen. Just then Coppola twisted the figure out of the Professor's hands with immense force and gave the professor such a terrible blow with her, he reeled backwards and fell across the table amongst the phials and retorts, the bottles and glass cylinders. Everything broke in a thousand pieces. Coppola now threw the figure over his shoulder, and, laughing shrilly and horribly, ran down the stairs, the figure's feet hanging down grotesquely and banging and rattling like wood against the steps.

Nathanael was petrified. He had clearly seen Olympia's pale, waxen face had no eyes, instead just black holes. She was a lifeless doll. Spalanzani was rolling on the floor. The shards had cut his head, breast, and arms. The blood was oozing out of him like water from a spring. But he gathered his strength.

"After him - after him! What are you waiting for? Coppelius – Coppelius - he's stolen my best automaton. Twenty year I worked on it. Dedicated life and limb to it. The clock-work. Speech. Locomotion. Mine. The eyes. He stole the eyes from you. That damned accursed man. After him. Return Olympia to me. You've got the eyes."

Now Nathanael saw how on the floor a pair of bloody eyes were staring up at him. Spalanzani seized them with his uninjured hand and threw them; they hit Nathanael's chest. Madness dug her glowing talons into him, tore through his mind and thoughts. "Ha! Ha! Ha! Fire-wheel! Fire-wheel! Spin, fire-wheel! Merrily, merrily! Wooden doll! Ha! Spin, pretty wooden doll!"

With that he pounced on the Professor, and started to strangle him. He would've killed him, but the noise attracted a crowd, who tore the madman from the professor, whose wounds were immediately dressed. Siegmund, though strong, was unable to hold down the lunatic, who kept screaming in a terrible voice: "Spin round, wooden doll!" and lashing out with his fists. Finally, the united strength of several men succeeded in pinning him to the floor and binding him. His words turned to an animal roar, awful to hear. So, as he raged away, they took him to the madhouse.

IV

Before, my dear reader, continuing my tale of the unfortunate Nathanael, I will tell you, in case you take any interest in that skilful mechanic and producer of automata, Spalanzani, that he recovered completely from his wounds. He had to leave the university though, for Nathanael's story had created quite a stir, and his deception was deemed unacceptable, especially for having smuggled a wooden puppet instead of a living person into intelligent tea-circles, which Olympia had visited with success. Lawyers called it a fine piece of deception, and all the harder to punish since it was directed against the public, and so cunningly contrived that none, except the cleverest students, had noticed it. Everybody was smarter now, and remembered noticing many suspicious facts. Yet the latter never revealed anything, and could not succeed in making out any sort of a consistent tale. Was it, for example, suspicious that, according a frequenter of tea-parties, Olympia, contrary to all good manners, sneezed more often than yawned? The first was, in the opinion of this elegant gentleman, the winding up of the concealed clock-work, as it had been accompanied by an observable creaking, and so on.

The Professor of Poetry and Rhetoric took a pinch of snuff, snapped the box shut, cleared his throat, and declared: "My most honoured ladies and gentlemen, don't you see then where the rub is? The whole thing is an allegory, a continuous metaphor. You understand me? *Sapienti sat!*" But several most honourable gentlemen weren't satisfied with this explanation. The story of this automaton had grabbed them by the roots of their souls.

Indeed, a terrible mistrust of human figures crept in. To make sure one wasn't dealing with a wooden puppet, girlfriends were required to sing and dance a little out of time, should, when read to knit or embroider, or play music or knit or toy with her little Mopsy, &c. Above all, she shouldn't just listen, but speak to show she was thinking and experiencing. Relationships became firmer, though in some cases people grew slowly apart. "I cannot really be made responsible for it," was said by many. At the tea-gatherings there was a lot of yawning, but never sneezing, to avoid any suspicion.

As mentioned, Spalanzani had fled to escape a criminal investigation of having deceptively imposed an automaton on human society. Coppola had also disappeared.

Nathanael woke as if from a heavy, terrible dream. Opening his eyes, he experienced an indescribable feeling of joy flowing through him with soft heavenly warmth. He lay in bed in his own room in his father's house. Clara was bending over him, and nearby stood his mother and Lothar.

"At last, at last, my darling Nathanael; you are cured of your terrible illness, now you are mine." And Clara's words came from the depths of her soul; she took him in her arms. Bright, glowing tears streamed from his eyes from sorrow and delight. He groaned: "My Clara, my Clara!" Siegmund, who'd loyally stood by his friend in his hour of need, entered. Nathanael extended his hand. "My faithful brother, you have not deserted me." No trace of insanity was left in him. Soon, in the tender care of his mother, his beloved, and friends, he recovered his strength again.

Happiness meanwhile returned to the house. An old, stingy uncle, from whom they had never hoped to inherit anything, had died, and left Nathanael's mother, apart from a considerable fortune, a small estate, pleasantly situated not far from the town. They wanted to move there, Nathanael, his mother, and Clara, whom he was now to marry, and Lothar. Nathanael had become gentler, more childlike than he'd ever been, and now began really to see Clara's supremely pure and lovely character. None of them ever reminded him, even in the remotest degree, of the past. Only when Siegmund took leave of him, he said, "By God, brother! I was on a bad track, but an angel came just in time and led me back upon the path of light. Yes, it was Clara." Siegmund wouldn't let him speak further, worried that painful memories might inflame in his mind.

It was time for the four happy people to move to their little estate. At noon they went through the streets, having made many purchases. The lofty tower of the town-house was throwing a giant shadows across the main square. "Hey," said Clara, "let us go up there and look at the distant mountains." No sooner said than done. Both Nathanael and Clara went up the tower. Their mother left for home with the servant-girl. Lothar, not wanting to climb all those steps, waited below. There the two lovers stood arm-in-arm on the tower's topmost gallery of the tower, and gazed down into the sweet-scented woods, beyond which the blue mountains rose like a giant city.

"Look at that strange little grey bush, which actually looks as if it's walking towards us," said Clara. Mechanically Nathanael put his hand into his sidepocket; he found Coppola's telescope and looked to the side. Clara stood in front of the lens. A convulsive thrill shot through his pulse and veins; pale as a corpse, he stared at Clara. Soon his eyes began to roll, and a fiery current glowed and sparkled in them. He yelled frightfully, like a hunted animal. Leaping up high in the air and laughing horribly at the same time, he cried in a piercing voice: "Spin, my little wooden doll! Spin, my little wooden doll!"

With an unbelievable strength he grabbed Clara and tried to hurl her down. Clara clawed at the railing in desperation. Lothar heard the madman raging and Clara's scream of terror: a fearful presentiment flashed across his mind. He ran up the steps; the door of the second flight was locked. Clara's scream for help rang out louder. Mad with rage and fear,

he threw himself against the door, which finally gave way. Clara's cries became fainter and fainter: "Help! Save me! Save me!" and her voice died away in the air. "She's gone - murdered by that madman," Lothar cried. The door to the gallery was also locked. Despair gave him strength; he burst the door off its hinges. God in heaven! Clara was still in the grasp of the madman Nathanael, hanging over the gallery in the air. She only held to the iron railing with one hand. Quick as lightning, Lothar grabbed his sister and pulled her in, and at the same time dealt the maniac a blow in the face with his doubled fist, so he staggered back and let go of his victim.

Lothair ran down, carrying his unconscious sister. She was saved. Now Nathanael ran round, leaping and shouting, "Spin, fire-wheel! Spin, fire-wheel!" The people gathered at the wild shouting. Among them the lawyer Coppelius towered like a giant. He had just arrived in the town, and had gone straight to the main square. Some meant to go and overpower the madman, but Coppelius laughed and said, "Ha! ha! Wait. he'll be down of his own accord in a minute." He stood gazing upwards like with the rest. Suddenly Nathanael stood still as if frozen. He bent down over the railing, and perceived Coppelius. With a piercing scream, "Ha! Fine eyes! Fine eyes!" he jumped over the railing.

While Nathanael lay with crushed head on the flagstones, Coppelius disappeared into the crowd.

Many years afterwards it was said that Clara had been seen outside the door of a pretty country house somewhere far away, sitting hand in hand with a pleasant gentleman, whilst two bright boys played in front of her. We must conclude from this that she found the peaceful domestic bliss which her cheerful character required, and which Nathanael, with his torn soul, could never have given her.

translated and adapted by Peter Van Belle



illustration from a French edition

PETER VAN BELLE

BEWARE THE SANDMAN

Der Sandmann was published in 1817 in E.T.A. Hoffmann's anthology *Nachtstücke* (Night Pieces). The vogue for Gothic stories was well under way at the time, but what set Hoffmann's apart was their setting: instead of medieval castles, oriental palaces, and other exotic locations, *The Sandman* was about a student whose experiences, caused by the Sandman, led to insanity and suicide. This, and the other stories from the anthology, became famous and laid the foundation for the genres of the supernatural and the psychological story. Especially the element of the Sandman – a bogeyman who persecutes his victims even into adulthood – became a staple of horror stories. This element can be found in many Stephen King stories, for example.

Yet the Sandman isn't simple scary tale. It is implausible, but not impossible, and at first one is left in doubt whether the Sandman really exists, until at the very end when it becomes clear this bogeyman, sometimes in a different guise, keeps on intruding in the main character's life to throw him off kilter.

Sigmund Freud, following an essay by his colleague Ernst Jentsch, drew on the story for an extensive essay on the uncanny. He sought to find out what the uncanny was, and what made *The Sandman* an example of it.

But first let's look at the word itself.

The Merry-go-round of Words

The OED defines the word uncanny as a strange, mysterious, and unsettling quality. It originated in late 16th century Scots, where it also had the meaning of occult (that is, hidden), and malicious. A word with a similar meaning is eerie, meaning strange and frightening, which originated in Middle English, and derives from the German *arg* and the Dutch *erg*, which both mean terrible.

Freud points out how difficult it is to find corresponding terms for the concept in different languages. As a German speaker, he uses the word *unheimlich*, which has at its core the word *heim*, meaning home in the broadest sense (so also one's home town or place of birth, etc.) So the German word suggests something disorienting or alien. Latin has the words *suspectus*, *intempesta*, *inscritus*. Greek has *xenos*, French, *inquiétant* (disturbing) and *sinistre*.

An Arena of Ideas

To look at all the ideas the story elicited, we must first look at the soil from which it grew. In my article on fairy-tales in issue 2 of *The Klecksograph*, I pointed out the origins of a renewed interest in folk tales among artists during the latter part of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century.

From the start, the artists of the Romantic Movement had an interest in ostensibly unpleasant emotions, such as horror or the uncanny. One of the first to investigate this phenomenon was the activist and literary critic, Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743-1825). In her *Inquiry into those Kinds of Distress that Excite Agreeable Sensations*, she criticised the detailing of distress and misery, and felt it had to be combined with agreeable traits in the characters. She also warned that the accumulation of misfortunes in art would make us so familiar with it, that we would no longer have pity to spare for the common miseries of life.

The Romantic Movement was a revolt against the boredom caused by the Age of Reason. Then, as now, an emphasis on Reason can lead to the repression of atavistic energies, which will return with a vengeance. Carl Jung, for instance, felt that the repression of the nineteenth century led to the period of violence during the twentieth century.

Burke and Immanuel Kant studied the sublime, the representation of vast empty spaces and ruins - a favourite concept among Romantics. But many stories of the Romantic Movement sought to induce more unpleasant emotions, like fear or unease, transgressing against the rules regarding beauty, as espoused by the Enlightenment. The best example of the sublime mixed with horror is the novella *Vathek*, by William Beckford (1786). The spirit of Shakespeare, with his ghosts and witches, inspired the many works of British Romanticism which have become such classics over time. Shakespeare, however, never sought to concentrate on one emotion in his plays, in part because he always sought to be popular both among the crowd (which would've been attracted by the lurid fare) as well as the more learned gentry.

As I mentioned in my article in issue 2, many German writers of the time sought to distance themselves from French ideas. Hoffmann was rather more ambiguous though: he admired many of the ideas spread by the French Revolution and Napoleon, and his persecution by the Prussian authorities wouldn't have warmed him to German nationalism either. Yet Napoleon's actions in Poland lost him his job there.

It's against this background that *The Sandman* was written. Many of its elements are derived from earlier stories: the legend of Pygmalion, Schiller's *The Robbers*, Goethe's *Triumph der Empfindlichkeit* (were a young man falls in love with a doll), and Jean Paul's *Selections from the Devil's Notebook*.

But *The Sandman* had peculiar elements that piqued the interest of the early psycho-analysts. This interest hovered around the idea of the uncanny, which they called *Unheimlichkeit*.

The main point that the German Ernst Jentsch (1867-1919) makes in his essay was that a sense of the uncanny was caused by an intellectual unease. He wrote that anything which diverges from the usual and traditional was often regarded with unease and even hostility. This was caused by a difficulty of attaining intellectual mastery to the new, which is why more intelligent people are often better at coping with changes. The familiar is also seen as self-evident, so any questioning of it would be seen as undermining the world view of the individual or the group. Because intellectual certainty is crucial for survival, any loss of it would be seen as an existential threat.

Jentsch's other points are that the doubt whether a seemingly lifeless object is truly animate is a special source for the uncanny. This led to the concept of the "Uncanny Valley" used when referring to lifelike dolls and robots. He also pointed out one of the reasons why the Romantic Movement was so popular: strong emotions and excitement in art arouse in us a strong sense of life, without the hazardous consequences. The uncanny can also be caused by the reinterpreting of one's surroundings in such a way that inanimate objects become animate, like the branches of a tree becoming grasping hands.

Freud more or less agreed with Jentsch's points, but concentrated on the unique elements of the story. First, what happens to the main character as a child. Though the story is superficially a satire of a young man's infatuation with his love interest (which is in reality a doll), to Freud the main salient element was that of the Sandman, who tears out children's eyes. Eyes are constantly referred to throughout the story, and always in connection with both guises of the Sandman, the lawyer Coppelius and the mechanic Guiseppe Coppola. The telescope the latter sells to the main character Nathanael seals his fate.

To Freud this constant mentioning of eyes in the story had to do with our lifelong fear of damage to or loss of eyes. Freud concluded that this fear was actually a displaced fear of castration. Oedipus, in blinding himself, for example, performs a displaced punishment (as one of his crimes was sexual). Further evidence Freud found in the fact that the Sandman always interferes in the main character's love life. To Freud, the Sandman was in actual fact the father-figure as castrator, set against the loving father, who's killed by the Sandman in the story. Freud points out that Hoffmann's father abandoned his family when Ernst was three, and that their relation remained a touchy subject to him all his life.

As to the uncanny in real life, Freud had the following to say: here the uncanny stems from a belief in the "omnipotence of thought" – that is, believing the mind can change reality. This led, again, according to Freud, to an animistic concept of the universe, one peopled with human (or human-like) spirits, and a narcissistic overestimation of subjective mental processes, leading to a belief in magic.

To return to the matter of art, Freud points out something which I feel is of great importance. Fairy tales and fantasy aren't seen as uncanny, because the real world has been set aside from the start. But when a story with fantastic elements is set in a contemporary and familiar setting, a conflict of judgement sets in as to whether the story is true or not, and this intellectual uncertainty is the uncanny.

When artists pretend to move through common reality, they can deceive us into thinking they're giving us the sober truth, but then they start overstepping the bounds of possibility. By the time we see through the trick we're already in the story.

This effect can be seen in two films that came out in the same period. In *The Exorcist* (1973), directed by William Friedkin, from a novel by William Peter Blatty, the setting is a humdrum northern US town. The fantastic elements here are particularly effective, not just because they intrude on a banal setting, but because they play on religious impulses. Even many atheists how saw it would've been affected by it, as many would've retained some religious vestiges in their subconscious from childhood.

An earlier film also plays on the juxtaposition between the ordinary and the fantastic, *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), by Roman Polanski. Here the characters are so banal, the main character and victim accepts the absurdity of her fate, and becomes equally absurd.

What particularly caught my attention in *The Sandman* was the theme of the eternal bogeyman. The persecution of the main character into adulthood is like the continuation of a child's vulnerability. The Sandman is what every child dreads: a hostile and disturbing adult your parents can't protect you from. He's like the figure of *Grampus* in German mythology, a bogeyman who flogs and carries off naughty children. The Sandman in the story is even worse. He's able to manipulate the main character's life without him even knowing it. He controls the main character's madness. The ending shows this most of all, when the main character keeps repeating the phrases "Spin, little doll," and "Fine eyes," like a parrot repeating a phrase; and when Coppelius – the Sandman – says to the crowd: "He'll be down in a minute." Moments later, the main character jumps from a tower.

Coppelius then leaves the scene, and one suspects the main character was not his only victim. One wonders what story the Sandman himself has to tell.

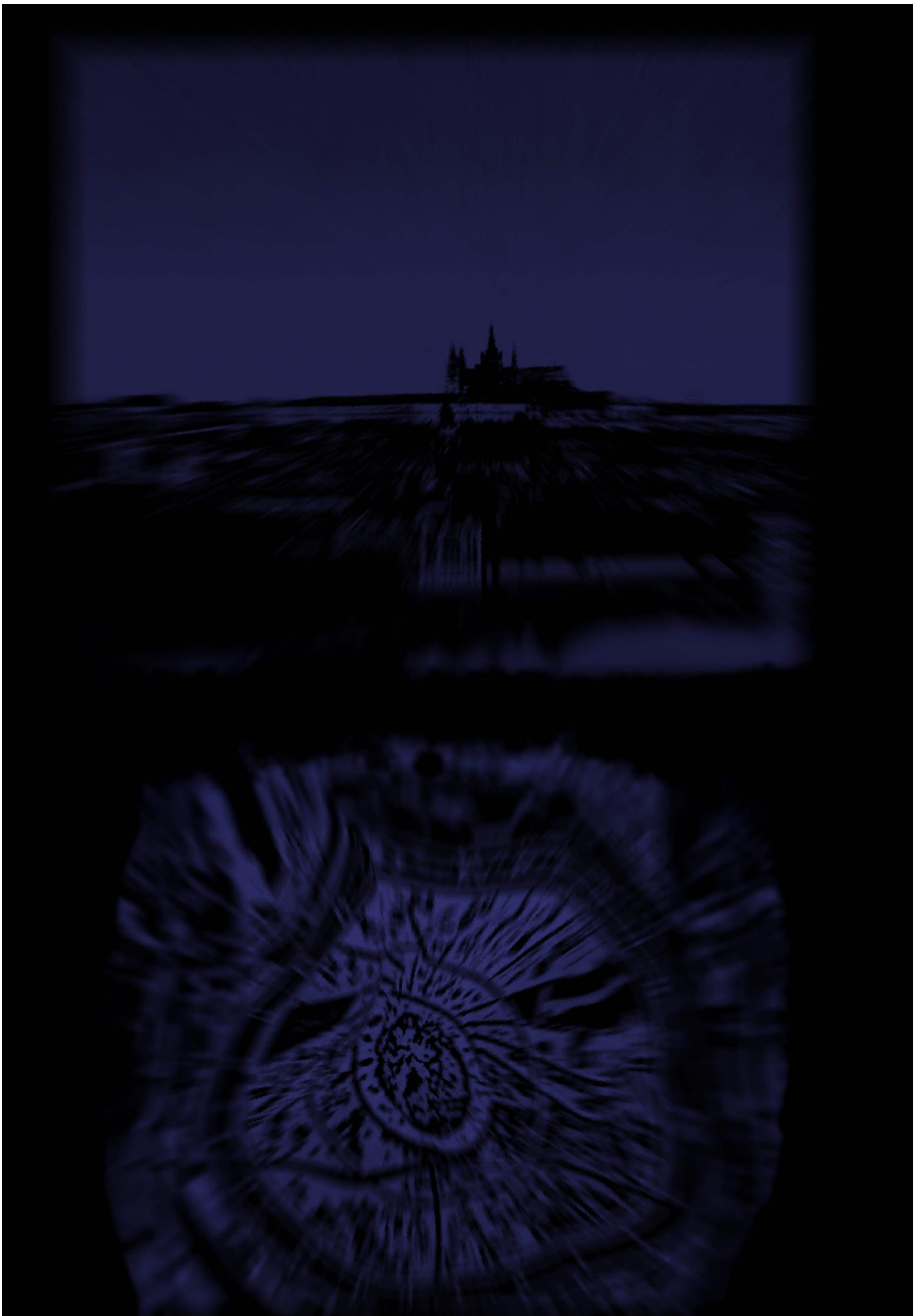


Grampus (anonymous postcard, Vienna)

The Sandman's Shadow

The Sandman casts a long shadow on literature. Edgar Allan Poe was influenced by it, and many of his protagonists have a similar madness to that of Nathanael in Hoffmann's story. French authors, among them Victor Hugo and Balzac, also used Hoffmannesque elements in their stories. The Ukrainian author Gogol owes a lot to Hoffmann. The list goes on.

I'd also like to mention the novel *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffmann* (1972) by Angela Carter. Doctor Hoffmann is a sadistic scientist who, like the Sandman, distorts reality through his desire machines that manipulate thoughts and emotions. A good metaphor of mass media.



GUSTAVE MEYRINK

Carl Jung was particularly interested in Gustave Meyrink, the Prague-based author of The Golem, The Green Face, and Walpurgisnacht. Most writers of fantastic fiction are non-believers, but Meyrink took a keen interest in the occult, especially Asian esoterica, and used them in his fiction. The story below has a Sandman-like character in the Iranian anatomist Daresh-Koh. What he does with his victim is reminiscent of what Coppelius does with the young Nathanael, but Meyrink can't resist ending with a rude joke.

THE PRESERVATION

Two friends sat conspiring by a corner window at the cafe Radetsky.

“He’s off to Berlin – this afternoon with his servant – the house is completely deserted. I’ve just come from there and I’m sure of it – the two Persians are the only ones who live there.”

“So he fell for the telegram?”

“No doubt. There’s no stopping him when the name Fabio Marini’s mentioned.”

“I wonder though. They lived together for years. Whatever news would he hope to find in Berlin?”

“Still – Professor Marini kept a lot from him. He mentioned this once in passing. About six months ago, when dear Axel was still alive.”

“You think there’s something to this secret method of preservation that Fabio Marini invented? You really believe in it, Sinclair?”

“It’s not a question of believing. With my own eyes I saw a child’s body he’d preserved. I tell you, everyone who saw it would’ve sworn it seemed to be just asleep. There was no stiffness, no wrinkling of the skin, no cold, the skin was still pink.”

“Hm, so you think the Persian could’ve murdered Axel and ...”

“I don’t know Ottokar, but it’s our duty to find out what happened to him. What if he put Axel into some sort of rigor mortis through poison? Christ, how I pestered the doctors at the Anatomical Institute. I begged them to try and reanimate him. ‘What do you want?’ they said. ‘The man’s obviously dead. Any interference with the corpse without permission of Doctor Darashekoh is unacceptable.’ And they showed me the contract which stated categorically that Axel had sold his body to be used after his death by the bearer of the document, and that he’d received at such and such a date the sum of 500 florins, of which receipt had been given.

“No, it’s terrible, that such a thing is still legal in this century. I get so furious when I think about it. Poor Axel. If only he’d realized, that this Persian, his worst enemy, would come into possession of this contract! He always expected the Anatomical Institute itself ...”

“Couldn’t the lawyer do anything?”

“Useless. They wouldn’t even consider the statement of the old milk maid who’d seen Darashekoh in his garden one sundown, cursing Axel’s name for so long, he started foaming at the mouth in a paroxysm. Yes, if only he weren’t a European doctor of medicine. But enough talk. Are you with me or not, Ottokar? You have to decide, now.”

“Of course I’m with you. But think about it? If they catch us, as burglars? The Persian has a spotless record as a scientist! Just a suspicion is no excuse. So forgive me for asking, but couldn’t you’ve been mistaken when you heard Axel’s voice? Don’t get mad at me, Sinclair, please. Tell me once again what happened. Weren’t you already excited at the time?”

“Absolutely not! Half an hour before, I’d been on the [Hradchin](#), visited the Menzel chapel, and the St-Vitus Cathedral again, those old, strange buildings with their statues that look as if they’re made of congealed blood. They always make a deep unbelievable impression on our souls. Then the Hunger Tower and the [Alchemist’s Alley](#). Then I went down the stairs of Prague Castle, and without meaning to, I stopped, because the little door leading into Darashekoh’s house was open. At that moment I clearly heard a voice upstairs – and I swear to everything I hold sacred, it was Axel’s – crying ‘One – two – three – four.’

God, if only I’d forced my way into the house then. But before I could come to my sense, the Turkish servant had slammed the door shut. I tell you, we have to get into that house. What if Axel’s still alive? Look, we won’t get caught. No one goes down those steps at night. And you’d be amazed to see how well I can use a lock-pick nowadays.”

The two friends wandered the streets until darkness fell. Then they executed their plan. They climbed the wall and stood before the ancient house of the Persian.

The building, alone on the hill of the Fürstenberg Park, leaned like a dead guardsman against the wall that skirted the steps of the overgrown castle steps.

“This garden, those old elms down there, have something creepy about them,” Ottokar said. “Just look at how menacing the Hradschin is, outlined against the sky like that. And the few lit bay windows in the Castle. Really, a strange air wafts around her on the Kleinseite. As if everything has withdrawn into the soil, afraid of lurking death. And don’t you get the impression that one day this shadowy image will fade away – like a vision – a fata morgana – that this dormant, bottled-up life must – like some ghostly beast – awake to something terrible?

And look at those white gravel paths down there – like veins.”

“Stop it, will you,” Sinclair said, “my knees are trembling with excitement as it is. Now hold up the city plan.”

The door was opened swiftly and they clumped up the stairs which were only lit by the dark starry sky coming through the round window.

“No lights. They’d spot is down there – from the garden house. Is that clear, Ottokar? Stay close. Careful, a broken step here. The hall door is open – here, over here – on the left.”

They found themselves inside a room.

“Don’t make so much noise.”

“I couldn’t help it. The door slammed shut by itself.”

“We’ll have to make light. I feel I’m about to knock something over at any moment. There’s only chairs in my way.”

At that moment a blue spark flashed from the wall. They heard a sound: like a sigh and an intake of breath.

A soft creaking seemed to come from the floor, from all corners.

For a second a deathly silence – then a groaning voice started counting.

“One – two – three.”

Ottokar screamed, frantically scratching at his matchbox – his hands swift with terror – at last, light – light! The friends were face to chalk-white face.

“Axel!”

“Foour – five – sssix – seeeven.”

The counting came from a niche in a corner of the room.

“Light the candle. Now! Now!”

“Eight – nine – teen – eleven”

A copper rod protruded from the ceiling of the niche, and from it hung a human head with blond hair, the rod piercing the top of the skull. The throat under the chin was wrapped in a silk scarf, underneath it were the windpipe and bronchia, connected to the two red lungs, between them the heart pumped rhythmically. It was wrapped in a gold wire which led to a small electrical device on the floor. Veins drew blood from two thin-necked bottles.

Ottokar put the candle in a small candlestick and held on to his friends arm, for fear of collapsing.

It really was Axel’s head. The lips were red, face, flushed as if alive. The eyes, wide open, stared with a horrifying expression at a concave mirror on the opposite wall, which was covered in Turkmen and Kirghiz arms and tapestries. Wild and strange fabrics were everywhere.

The room was full of stuffed animals, monkeys and snakes lay in grotesque contortions under scattered books.

In a glass bowl on a side table a human belly floated in a blue liquid.

The plaster bust of Fabio Marini sternly watched the room from his pedestal.

The two friends were dumbfounded, stared mesmerized at the heart of this terrible human timepiece, still trembling and beating as if alive.

“For chrissakes, we have to get out of here. I’m about to faint. That damn Persian monster.”

They rushed to the door.

There! Again that eerie creaking sound that seemed to come from the mouth of the preserved head.

Two sparks flashed. The concave mirror reflected them right into the eyes of the dead man.

The lips parted, tortuously the tongue stuck out, then curved behind the front teeth, and the voice groaned: “Quarr-ter.”

The mouth closed and face stared ahead.

“Horrible, his brain’s still functioning – it lives. Go-go-out of here-outside. The candle, take the candle, Sinclair!”

“Open it, for chrissake. Why won’t you open the door?”

“I can’t. Look-look.”

The doorknob on the inside was a hand – with rings – the hand of the dead man – its fingers grasping thin air.

“Here-here, take this cloth. What are you scared of? It’s our friend Axel’s hand.”

They were out in the hall, watched as the door slowly closed itself. On it was an obsidian plaque which said:

Doctor Mohammed Darasche-Koh

Anatomist

The candle flickered in the draught that rose in the tiled stairwell.

Ottokar collapsed against the wall, sank to his knees and groaned: “There-that ...”

He pointed at the bell-pull.

Sinclair drew near with the candle.

He sprang back screaming and dropped the candle. The little tin candlestick clattered on the tiles.

Like madmen, their hair standing on end and with rasping breaths, they ran down the dark stairwell.

“The Persian Devil – the Persian Devil!”

SAM SMITH

SNORES

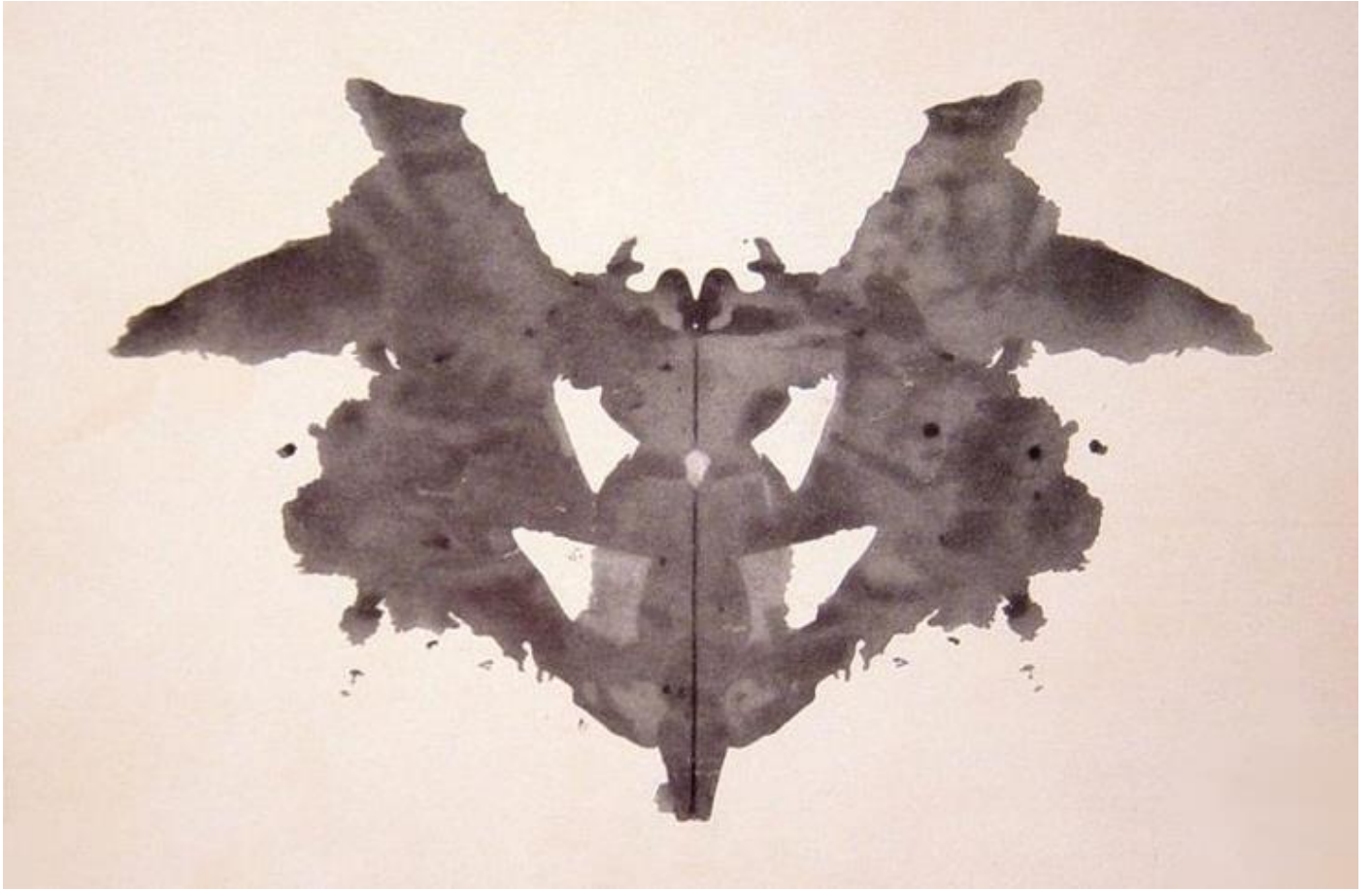
Snores saw through the still air
of a closed house.

Dreaming the brain is unembarrassed, clefts and runnels unloosed, thoughts unprisoned, is when infinity becomes too narrow a consideration. Here be images – a piece of rough ground, cindered gravel, frayed shirt cuff, chipped fingernail... These small scenes, unremarked during the everyday when thoughts were elsewhere, here in dream's seeming narrative they take on a worrisome significance. Now a single pine tree on a rocky outcrop. Ego happy to call it quintessentially Japanese. Before being confronted by a man with a certain knowledge of everything. Mushy organ music within a church's thick grey walls, graveyard gates of death without number; stumble upon a low circular wall, look down to

well's silver disc:

keyhole shadow

of own self



one of the original Rorschach cards

SAM SMITH

Mutatis Mutandis

If my nose hadn't started to grow at the same time as the first black feathers appeared on my forearms I might have thought I was becoming an angel, a dark angel, about to master flight. Now alone, not alone (only my remembered antecedents mark me different), despite my now owning the life-and-death wisdom of ravens - what alive is to be avoided, what meat to be landed upon - still I quarter the skies calling out in a voice not mine, low and plaintive, for another become-like-me to respond. I did find one, but long fallen. Had reverted to the golden curls and clear white skin of an expressionless angel; yet so rancid as to be, even for a hunger as needful as mine, unapproachable.



A TALE OF TWO STORIES

I came upon this story Wolfgang Gottfried by Petrus Borel in a French anthology called *Contes de la Mort – Le Cadavre Romantique*. While translating it into English, I was struck by certain oddities. The story is about the author discovering a story written by an Englishman who committed suicide, about a German student who went insane.

One oddity was a reference to “La Révolution française”. I’d think a French author would refer to it as “la Revolution”. I did further research and French Wikipedia said the story was based on *The Adventure of a German Student*, by Washington Irving. I looked up Irving’s story and it is indeed very similar. So much so that I felt “based on” was being generous to Borel. Yet I’d also read in *The Literature of the United States*, by Marcus Cunliffe, that Irving took his plots from European folklore. His *Rip van Winkle*, for instance, is based on a German folk tale. The story that follows is similar to the legend of the dead bride, as referred to in *The Sandman* by Hoffmann.

Irving himself writes the following in his introduction to *Tales of the Traveller*: *“As the public is apt to be curious about the sources from whence an author draws his stories, doubtless that I may know how far to put faith in them, I would observe, that the Adventure of the German Student, or rather the latter part of it, is founded on an anecdote related to me as existing somewhere in French; and, indeed, I have been told, since writing it, that an ingenious tale has been founded on it by an English writer; but I have never met with either the former or the latter in print.”*

To be clear, this is not meant to condemn either Irving or Borel. Taking existing stories as sources for new has only recently become so objectionable. Odd though, that Irving’s explanation brings us back to Borel’s introduction to the story. So we’re left with the mysterious English author who may or may not have written the original story which follows.

The career of Washington Irving stands in sharp contrast to that of Borel. Irving was a very successful writer, the first US author to gain a literary reputation in Europe.

Petrus Borel, his contemporary (they both died in 1859), called himself “le lycanthrope” (the wolfman), in part because of his bohemian lifestyle, but also because his extreme poverty often brought him close to starvation. He gave up a literary career and took a job in the French colonial administration of Algeria. Having been sacked, he tried his hand at farming, and died of a sunstroke in Mostaganem.

Now to the story itself. First comes my translation of Borel’s introduction to his story, then comes the story itself, as written by Irving. As in *The Sandman* there are both Romantic elements (passion – love beyond the grave – necrophilia) and a mocking of the Romantic.

Gottfried Wolfgang

By Petrus Borel

I

I'd been staying at Boulogne for some time, when, one morning, as the day of my departure neared, I was accosted by the innkeeper, who presented me with a large roll of papers.

“Permit me, sir, to offer you this. You will undoubtedly have better use of it than me. A young Englishman, very quiet and strange, stayed here: it must've been two years ago. He left one evening and was seen heading for the jetty. Since then I've had no news or trace of him. His papers remained in my possession, together with all his baggage, which was little, very little indeed. Alas! He spent his days pondering and writing. Poor lad.”

The thought of this stranger meeting such a cruel end moved me. No doubt, like so many others, he'd dreamt of a sweet death after a career full of glory and happiness...such an isolated and obscure suffering, only known and removed by the sea current. It saddened me. I locked myself in my room and took to avidly exploring this soul that'd been filled with disappointment. These papers, confided to me, were the last, sad vestiges of a mind that'd been defeated in the struggle! – lost beyond return, destroyed! I told myself that if I could at least save some of these pages from obscurity. It would serve as consolation to the shade of this unfortunate young man, a shade that was undoubtedly haunting me, finding me impertinent for putting my hands on his heritage!

Amidst this pile of barely sketched-out poems, amidst all sorts of disordered and unfinished fragments, yet which bore the marks of a character imbued with grandeur and fastidiousness, I quickly discovered a small notebook bearing date nor title, in which was written – in barely legible handwriting – the strange tale that follows.

Was this bizarre composition the work of the unfortunate unknown? Or was it just an imitation or translation he had made of some piece of phantasmagoria encased in the vaporous skull of some German, arrived in France, which had seduced his sick spirit? I don't know. Chance put it in my hands, and as chance has given it to me, I give it to you. Let the madman who could have written this tale come forward! He'll be given satisfaction on the spot.

II

It was during the French Revolution. A stormy night, at an hour commonly considered improper, a young man was quietly making his way through the old part of Paris to his lodgings. Thunderclaps resounded and echoed through the winding streets of the decrepit town... But allow me first to tell you more about my young Saxon.

translated from French by Peter Van Belle

***from* STRANGE STORIES OF A NERVOUS GENTLEMAN**

by Washington Irving

There was a little pause after this rigmarole Irish romance, when the old gentleman with the haunted head observed, that the stories hitherto related had rather a burlesque tendency. "I recollect an adventure, however," added he, "which I heard of during a residence at Paris, for the truth of which I can undertake to vouch and which is of a very grave and singular nature."

The Adventure of the German Student

On a stormy night, in the tempestuous times of the French Revolution, a young German was returning to his lodgings at a late hour, across the old part of Paris. The lightning gleamed and the loud claps of thunder rattled through the lofty, narrow streets-but I should first tell you something about this young German.

Gottfried Wolfgang was a young man of good family. He had studied for some time at Göttingen, but being of a visionary and enthusiastic character, he had wandered into those wild and speculative doctrines which have so often bewildered German students. His secluded life, his intense application, and the singular nature of his studies, had an effect on both mind and body. His health was impaired; his imagination diseased. He had been indulging in fanciful speculations on spiritual essences until, like Swedenborg, he had an ideal world of his own around him. He took up a notion, I do not know from what cause, that there was an evil influence hanging over him; an evil genius or spirit seeking to ensnare him and ensure his perdition. Such an idea working on his melancholy temperament produced the most gloomy effects. He became haggard and desponding. His friends discovered the mental malady preying upon him, and determined that the best cure was a change of scene; he was sent, therefore, to finish his studies amidst the splendors and gaieties of Paris.

Wolfgang arrived at Paris at the breaking out of the revolution. The popular delirium at first caught his enthusiastic mind, and he was captivated by the political and philosophical theories of the day: but the scenes of blood which followed shocked his sensitive nature; disgusted him with society and the world, and made him more than ever a recluse. He shut himself up in a solitary apartment in the Pays Latin, the quarter of students. There in a gloomy street not far from the monastic walls of the Sorbonne, he pursued his favorite speculations. Sometimes he spent hours together in the great libraries of Paris, those catacombs of departed authors, rummaging among their hoards of dusty and obsolete works in quest of food for his unhealthy appetite. He was, in a manner, a literary ghoul, feeding in the charnel house of decayed literature.

Wolfgang, though solitary and recluse, was of an ardent temperament, but for a time it operated merely upon his imagination. He was too shy and ignorant of the world to make any advances to the fair, but he was a passionate admirer of female beauty, and in his lonely chamber would often lose himself in reveries on forms and faces which he had seen, and his fancy would deck out images of loveliness far surpassing the reality.

While his mind was in this excited and sublimated state, a dream produced an extraordinary effect upon him. It was of a female face of transcendent beauty. So strong

was the impression made, that he dreamt of it again and again. It haunted his thoughts by day, his slumbers by night; in fine, he became passionately enamored of this shadow of a dream. This lasted so long, that it became one of those fixed ideas which haunt the minds of melancholy men, and are at times mistaken for madness.

Such was Gottfried Wolfgang, and such his situation at the time I mentioned. He was returning home late one stormy night, through some of the old and gloomy streets of the Marais, the ancient part of Paris. The loud claps of thunder rattled among the high houses of the narrow streets. He came to the Place de Grève, the square where public executions are performed. The lightning quivered about the pinnacles of the ancient Hôtel de Ville, and shed flickering gleams over the open space in front. As Wolfgang was crossing the square, he shrank back with horror at finding himself close by the guillotine. It was the height of the Reign of Terror, when this dreadful instrument of death stood ever ready, and its scaffold was continually running with the blood of the virtuous and the brave. It had that very day been actively employed in the work of carnage, and there it stood in grim array amidst a silent and sleeping city, waiting for fresh victims.

Wolfgang's heart sickened within him, and he was turning shuddering from the horrible engine, when he beheld a shadowy form cowering as it were at the foot of the steps which led up to the scaffold. A succession of vivid flashes of lightning revealed it more distinctly. It was a female figure, dressed in black. She was seated on one of the lower steps of the scaffold, leaning forward, her face hid in her lap, and her long disheveled tresses hanging to the ground, streaming with the rain which fell in torrents. Wolfgang paused. There was something awful in this solitary monument of woe. The female had the appearance of being above the common order. He knew the times to be full of vicissitude, and that many a fair head, which had once been pillowed on down, now wandered houseless. Perhaps this was some poor mourner whom the dreadful axe had rendered desolate, and who sat here heartbroken on the strand of existence, from which all that was dear to her had been launched into eternity.

He approached, and addressed her in the accents of sympathy. She raised her head and gazed wildly at him. What was his astonishment at beholding, by the bright glare of the lightning, the very face which had haunted him in his dreams. It was pale and disconsolate, but ravishingly beautiful. Trembling with violent and conflicting emotions, Wolfgang again accosted her. He spoke something of her being exposed at such an hour of the night, and to the fury of such a storm, and offered to conduct her to her friends. She pointed to the guillotine with a gesture of dreadful signification.

"I have no friend on earth!" said she.

"But you have a home," said Wolfgang.

"Yes— in the grave!"

The heart of the student melted at the words.

"If a stranger dare make an offer," said he, "without danger of being misunderstood, I would offer my humble dwelling as a shelter; myself as a devoted friend. I am friendless myself in Paris, and a stranger in the land; but if my life could be of service, it is at your disposal, and should be sacrificed before harm or indignity should come to you."

There was an honest earnestness in the young man's manner that had its effect. His foreign accent, too, was in his favor; it showed him not to be a hackneyed inhabitant of Paris. Indeed there is an eloquence in true enthusiasm that is not to be doubted. The homeless stranger confided herself implicitly to the protection of the student. He supported her faltering steps across the Pont Neuf, and by the place where the statue of Henry the Fourth had been overthrown by the populace. The storm had abated, and the thunder rumbled at a distance. All Paris was quiet; that great volcano of human passion slumbered for a while, to gather fresh strength for the next day's eruption. The student conducted his charge through the ancient streets of the Pays Latin, and by the dusky walls of the Sorbonne to the great, dingy hotel which he inhabited.

The old portress who admitted them stared with surprise at the unusual sight of the melancholy Wolfgang with a female companion. On entering his apartment, the student, for the first time, blushed at the scantiness and indifference of his dwelling. He had but one chamber—an old fashioned saloon—heavily carved and fantastically furnished with the remains of former magnificence, for it was one of those hotels in the quarter of the Luxembourg palace which had once belonged to nobility. It was lumbered with books and papers, and all the usual apparatus of a student, and his bed stood in a recess at one end.

When lights were brought, and Wolfgang had a better opportunity of contemplating the stranger, he was more than ever intoxicated by her beauty. Her face was pale, but of a dazzling fairness, set off by a profusion of raven hair that hung clustering about it. Her eyes were large and brilliant, with a singular expression approaching almost to wildness. As far as her black dress permitted her shape to be seen, it was of perfect symmetry. Her whole appearance was highly striking, though she was dressed in the simplest style. The only thing approaching to an ornament which she wore was a broad, black band round her neck, clasped by diamonds.

The perplexity now commenced with the student how to dispose of the helpless being thus thrown upon his protection. He thought of abandoning his chamber to her, and seeking shelter for himself elsewhere. Still he was so fascinated by her charms, there seemed to be such a spell upon his thoughts and senses, that he could not tear himself from her presence. Her manner, too, was singular and unaccountable. She spoke no more of the guillotine. Her grief had abated. The attentions of the student had first won her confidence, and then, apparently, her heart. She was evidently an enthusiast like himself, and enthusiasts soon understand each other.

In the infatuation of the moment Wolfgang avowed his passion for her. He told her the story of his mysterious dream, and how she had possessed his heart before he had even seen her. She was strangely affected by his recital, and acknowledged to have felt an impulse towards him equally unaccountable. It was the time for wild theory and wild actions. Old prejudices and superstitions were done away; everything was under the sway of the "Goddess of Reason." Among other rubbish of the old times, the forms and ceremonies of marriage began to be considered superfluous bonds for honorable minds. Social compacts were the vogue. Wolfgang was too much of a theorist not to be tainted by the liberal doctrines of the day.

"Why should we separate?" said he: "our hearts are united; in the eye of reason and honor we are as one. What need is there of sordid forms to bind high souls together?"

The stranger listened with emotion: she had evidently received illumination at the same school.

“You have no home nor family,” continued he; “let me be everything to you, or rather let us be everything to one another. If form is necessary, form shall be observed— there is my hand. I pledge myself to you forever.”

“Forever?” said the stranger, solemnly.

“Forever!” repeated Wolfgang.

The stranger clasped the hand extended to her: “Then I am yours,” murmured she, and sank upon his bosom.

The next morning the student left his bride sleeping, and sallied forth at an early hour to seek more spacious apartments, suitable to the change in his situation. When he returned, he found the stranger lying with her head hanging over the bed, and one arm thrown over it. He spoke to her, but received no reply. He advanced to awaken her from her uneasy posture. On taking her hand, it was cold— there was no pulsation— her face was pallid and ghastly.— In a word— she was a corpse.

Horrified and frantic, he alarmed the house. A scene of confusion ensued. The police was summoned. As the officer of police entered the room, he started back on beholding the corpse.

“Great heaven!” cried he, “how did this woman come here?”

“Do you know anything about her?” said Wolfgang, eagerly.

“Do I?” exclaimed the police officer: “she was guillotined yesterday!”

He stepped forward; undid the black collar round the neck of the corpse, and the head rolled on the floor!

The student burst into a frenzy. “The fiend! the fiend has gained possession of me!” shrieked he: “I am lost forever!”

They tried to soothe him, but in vain. He was possessed with the frightful belief that an evil spirit had reanimated the dead body to ensnare him. He went distracted, and died in a madhouse.

Here the old gentleman with the haunted head finished his narrative.

“And is this really a fact?” said the inquisitive gentleman.

“A fact not to be doubted,” replied the other. “I had it from the best authority. The student told it me himself. I saw him in a madhouse at Paris.”

Petrus Borel's ending;

This unbelievable tale, some details of which, will have shaken the rigorous spirits of some readers, is easily explained. Wolfgang Gottfried died in an insane asylum, some time after this vision, which he often recounted with eagerness.

GUIDO GEZELLE & GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

If you were to ask a Fleming to name a poet, he or she would likely give you the name Guido Gezelle. He rose to prominence at about the same time as the Flemish Movement, which sought equal rights to the Flemish-speaking majority of Belgium. At the time French was the only official language. While most Flemish writers wanted to accentuate the similarities between Flemish dialects and Dutch, Gezelle promoted a single Flemish dialect to become the official language of Flanders.

I've put Gezelle and Gerard Manley Hopkins side by side. Why? Because they were contemporaries, Gezelle's life could be said to frame that of Hopkins. They were both Catholic priests. Their poems share certain characteristics as well, both in mood and technique. They both use compound adjectives and neologisms, for example.

Both poems are about a landscape reflecting the mood of sadness. Yet Hopkins ends with a celebration of a wilderness.

TRANEN

Guido Gezelle

Tranen

't is nevelkoud

En, 's halfvoornoens, nog

Duister in de lanen;

De bomen, die 'k

Nog nauwelijks zien kan,

Weenen dikke tranen

't En regent niet,

Maar 't zeevert ... van die

Fijngezichte, natte

Schiervatbaarheid

Die stof gelijkt, en

Wolke en wulle en watte.

't Is asgrauw al,

Beneên, omhoog, in

't veld and langs de lanen;

De bomen, die 'k

Nog nauwelijks zien kan,

Wenen dikke tranen.

Tears

It's mistcold

And halfmorning, still

Dark in the lanes

Trees, I can

Hardly see

Shed thick tears.

And it's not raining,

But drizzling ... that

Fine-faced, wet

Near-tangibility

That seems like dust, and

Cloud and wool and cotton

It's ashgrey everywhere

Down, up, in

The field and along the lanes

Trees I can

Hardly see

Shed thick tears

translated from Flemish by Peter Van Belle

INVERNAID

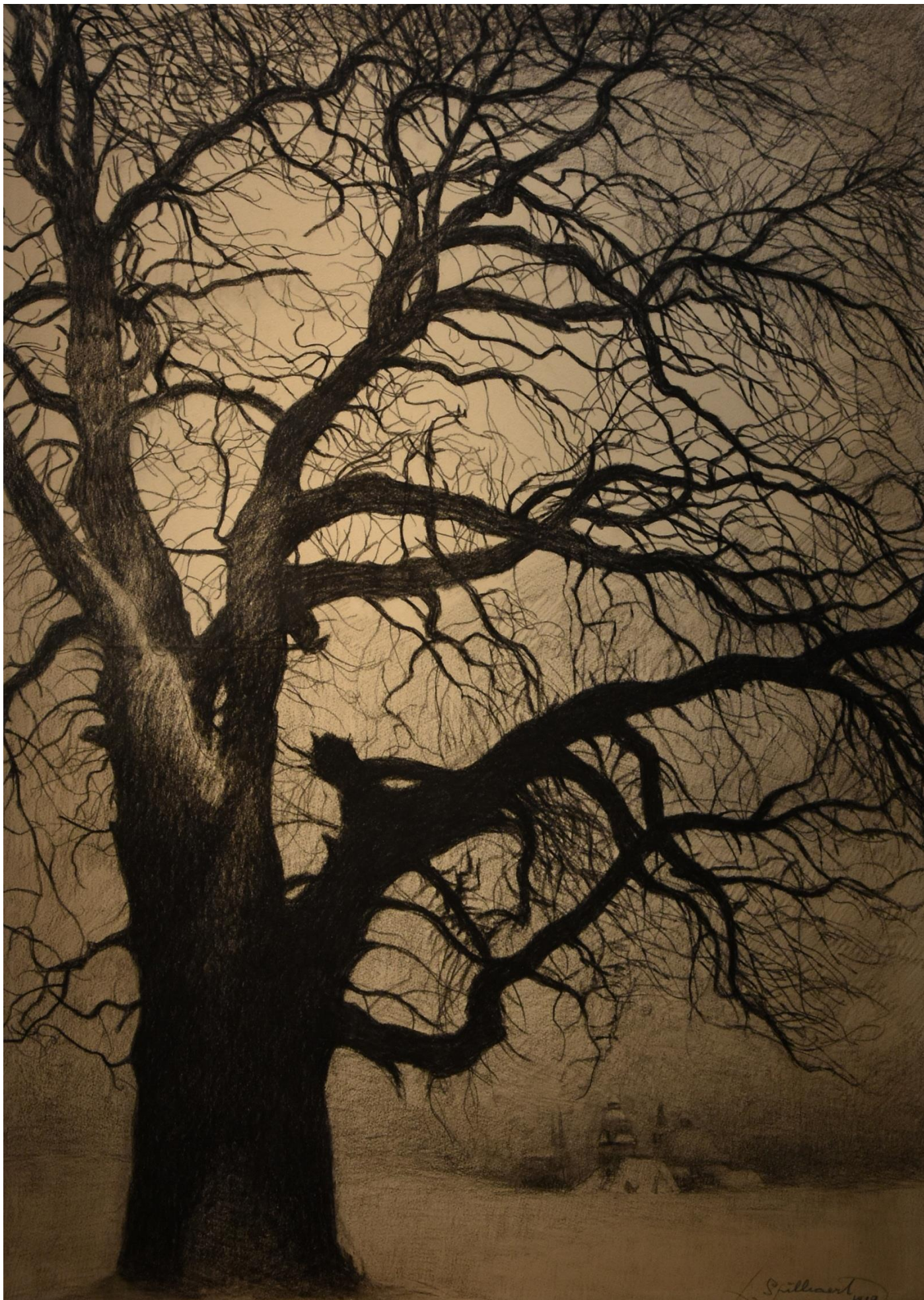
Gerard Manley Hopkins

This darksome burn, horseback brown,
His rollrock highroad roaring down,
In coop and in comb the fleece of his foam
Flutes and low to the lake falls home.

A windpuff-bonnet of fawn-froth
Turns and twindles over the broth
Of a pool so pitchblack, fell-frowning
It rounds and rounds Despair to drowning.

Degged with dew, dappled with dew
Are the grains of the braes that the brook threads through,
Wiry heathpacks flitches of gern,
And the headbonny ash that sits over the burn.

What would the world be once bereft
Of wild and of wildness? Let them be left,
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wildness yet.



Leon Spilliaert – Tree in Winter

PAULINE BARBIERI

The Quiet of [Agnes Martin](#)

(North American painter 1912-2004)

A Luminous doyenne, framed
in a blank canvas, cut with graphite
reveals the blood of a pioneer
the sparkling waters of Saskatchewan.

Millet's postcard christens her teenage wall,
His "Angelus" sending her on her way.
Krishnamurti offers her blossom,
D.T. Suzuki, an emptiness of mind.

The light of Taos, New Mexico
tapers her vision; twilight, snow,
the darkness creeping over her canvas
and the lonely pueblo of D.H.Lawrence.

This skeleton landscape stretches
canvas in her sailmaker's loft above
the bank-rolled vaults
of a steel-hearted Manhattan.

Newman, Reinhardt and Rothko sit watching
paint dry as she pulls away
from the crumbling kerb, leaving
everything behind, including the light.

Back in Taos, she starts to gesso
the mud bricked walls of her mind.
Washing white on white every morning
while the sun irons and starches her soul.

In the afternoons, she lounges around
with Agatha Christie and Poirot asking
what it's like to complicate. No television,
eight o'clock, it's off to bed.

Her life-sized canvas waits for dawn,
disciplined, holding a grid to realign the stars.
The newspaper on the mat, unopened,
in fifty years.



alexandre Bresson del., 1834

sculp.

Lib. Bertrand & Barthelemy, r. St. Anne 50, Toulouse.

COMÉDIE DE LA MORT.

Rudolph Bresdin – Comedy of death

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

An English example of romantisme frénétique, and like many of his French counterparts, he died by his own hand. Like other Romantics, he also had to mention a German name. His most famous work is Death's Jest Book, a revenge tragedy.

The hell in the poem isn't fiery, no wailing or gnashing of teeth, but rather a melancholy place of wind and rain, where two crows, whose names show they represent humanity, sit in their nest made of Cleopatra's battered skull.

Perhaps Beddoes didn't realize the nest also represents fecundity, and though crows are seen as birds of ill-omen in the West, in ancient Greece they also symbolized prophets.

The Song that Wolfram Heard in Hell

Old Adam, the carrion crow,
The old crow of Cairo;
He sat in the shower, and let it flow
Under his tail and over his crest;
And through every feather
Leaked the wet weather;
And the bough swung under his nest;
For his beak it was heavy with marrow.
Is that the wind dying? O no;
It's only two devils, that blow
Through a murderer's bones, to and fro,
In the ghosts' moonshine.
Ho! Eve, my grey carrion wife,
When we have supped on king's marrow,
Where shall we drink and make merry our life?
Our nest it is queen Cleopatra's skull,
T'is cloven and cracked,
And battered and hacked,
But with tears of blue eyes it is full;
Let us drink then, my raven of Cairo,
Is that the wind dying? O no;
It's only two devils, that blow
Through a murderer's bones, to and fro,
In the ghosts' moonshine.

CONTRIBUTERS

Lorcan Walshe is a professional artist and I live and work in Dublin Ireland. His website is www.lorcanwalshe.com. After a long career as a painter he is currently dividing his time between painting and writing. He has finished my first novel (not yet published) and is currently working on an illustrated book on the Major Arcana images in Tarot cards. He has had articles on art published and also a few poems.

After a long career as a professor of Classics (specialising in Latin literature) **Paul Murgatroyd** retired four years ago and started writing novels and short stories. Seventeen of the latter have been published or accepted for publication, along with three poems in English and over fifty of his Latin poems.

Phil Wood studied English Literature at Aberystwyth University. He has worked in statistics, shipping, and a biscuit factory. His writing can be found in various publications, including: Streetcake Magazine, Sein und Werden, DM du Jour, and Fly On The Wall Magazine (issue 6).

Ernest Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann (1776-1822) Born in Königsberg (now Kaliningrad), studied at the university there, where he attended Immanuel Kant's lectures. While working as a clerk in Prussia he tried his hand at composing and writing. For caricaturing military officers he was sent to Poland, but lost his job there when Napoleon captured Warsaw. Worked in the theatre where he enjoyed some success. Died of syphilis in Berlin.

Peter Van Belle is the editor of The Klecksograph and has published poems and short stories in Great Britain, Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, the US, and Belgium. As a child he lived in the US, but now he lives in Belgium.

Gustav Meyrink (1868-1932), lived as a child in Munich, but moved to Prague. Started a banking company, but was charged with fraud. Became a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in London. Started writing stories, and his 1915 novel The Golem was very successful. Died in Bavaria. His books were banned in the Third Reich..

Sam Smith is editor of The Journal (once 'of Contemporary Anglo-Scandinavian Poetry'), and publisher of Original Plus books. He has been a psychiatric nurse, residential social worker, milkman, plumber, laboratory analyst, groundsman, sailor, computer operator, scaffolder, gardener, painter & decorator..... working at anything, in fact, which paid the rent, enabled him to raise his three daughters and which hasn't got too much in the way of his writing. He has several poetry collections and novels to his name, has won prizes and awards, organised festivals and readings. Now in his 70s he has ended up living in South Wales. <https://sites.google.com/site/samsmiththejournal/>

Petrus Borel (1809-1859) Born in Lyon. Tried his hand at architecture, drawing, journalism and editing, with limited success. Joined the French colonial administration of Algeria, where he often clashed with his superiors. Tried to start a farm, but died of sun stroke in Mostaganem.

Washington Irving (1783-1859) Born in New York. Studied in Europe where he started writing. Became a successful writer and diplomat in London. Died of a heart attack in the US and was buried at Sleepy Hollow, the setting of his most famous story.

Guido Gezelle (1830-1899) Born in Bruges, became a Roman Catholic priest and settled in the English convent there. Translator of English poetry and prose, among them Longfellow's Song of Hiawatha.

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) Born in Essex, studied at Oxford, became a Jesuit priest and professor of Greek and Latin in Dublin. Decided never to publish his poems. Died in Dublin of typhoid fever.

Pauline Barbieri was shortlisted for the Bridport Poetry Prize by the poet laureate, Sir Andrew Motion and twice for the Exeter Poetry Prize by Jo Shapcott and Lawrence Sail, respectively. She has had six collections of poetry published and was shortlisted for the Cinnamon Press Novel Awards for her book, 'Smoke and Gold'.

Thomas Lovell Beddoes (1803-1849) Born in Bristol, published a few works in Britain, before moving to Göttingen to study medicine, travelled around Germany and Switzerland as a doctor. Returned to Britain for a short while, before returning to Switzerland. Committed suicide by poison. His collected poems were published posthumously.

END OF ISSUE 3 OF THE KLECKSOGRAPH



The Sleeping Warrior, County Sligo, Ireland – photograph by Peter Van Belle