

# Containing the Monster: The Golem in Expressionist Film and Theater

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The Jewish legend of the Golem – a mythic being created by rabbis and mystics versed in Kabbalah and the secrets of creation – has long held an intense fascination for writers and artists in Western culture. Jewish parables relating to the Golem date back to the fourth or fifth centuries; throughout the Middle Ages and into the Romantic era the legend continued to transform in power and scope. It was particularly in the years between the two world wars, however, that the Golem emerged as an especially salient figure, inspiring a variety of cultural adaptations by Jewish and non-Jewish artists alike. The popularity of the Golem legend in the interwar years reflects a more general interest in folklore, myth, and the occult in both high modernist and middlebrow cultures. But more importantly, cultural productions of Jewish legends highlight the way ideas of Jewishness and Jewish culture were constructed aesthetically, and how these ideas circulated in the discourse of the era. This is why I argue that the Golem’s potential service to scholars interested in investigating ideas of Jewish subjectivity and identity in the years leading up to World War II is unparalleled: through the Golem, we can evaluate the essential role experimental film and theater played in supporting or resisting ambivalent views of “the Jew”—whether he be malevolent outsider, hero, villain, victim, magician, or monster.<sup>1</sup>

## **The Golem Legend in the Modern Imagination**

As numerous scholars of fairy tales and folk culture observe, fantastic figures like monsters, ghosts, or giants can mirror the anxieties and fears of society, emerging more vigorously at points in time and history when cultural stresses are keenest. It should not be surprising, then, that the first half of the century saw numerous versions of the Golem legend re-invented and transformed in literature, art, drama, and film as anxieties about migration, persecution, and national belonging became paramount. Novels by Yudd Rosenberg, Chayim Bloch, and Gustav Meyrink, poetry by Hugo Salus, an opera by Eugene d’Albert, Paul Wegener’s silent horror film, the Yiddish

play by H. Leivick, and Julien Duvivier's Golem film all demonstrate how the mythic Jewish humanoid came to symbolize wider modern European political and social tensions. For modern Jewish intellectuals, as Cathy Gelbin has argued, folklore like the Golem tale could stand in as a counter-narrative that asserted a so-called authentic European folk culture to "substantiate the national essence [and thus creative potential] of the Jews" (13). The attempt to prove they had a significant and rich folk culture of their own was especially relevant at a time when Jews were accused of being cultural parasites. The Golem legend, however, was not only a reaction or resistance to negative constructions of Jewishness from outside forces. Folk art, for Jewish modernists, was essentially the art of the future, a means of using a subjective "Jewish" experience or traditional symbols to express universal dilemmas. In its various iterations, the Golem became a marker of Jewish identity that was particularly linked to aesthetic modernism. The Golem, to borrow Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's terminology for monsters, was "difference made flesh" (7), symbolic of the overwhelming experience of alterity, dislocation, and upheaval that is key to understanding the social and cultural context of Jewish experience in the interwar years.

Perhaps two of the most influential 1920s adaptations of the folk legend that articulate the Golem's political, cultural, and aesthetic potential are Paul Wegener's notorious German expressionist 1920 horror film *Der Golem: Wie er in die Welt kam* (*The Golem: How He Came into the World*) and H. Leivick's renowned Yiddish play *Der Goylem*, published in 1921 and first performed by Moscow's Habima theater in 1925. Although highly experimental in form and aesthetically innovative, both productions were extremely popular and financially successful as cultural commodities at the time they were produced. The manner in which these adaptations straddled the aesthetic expectations of "high" art while still appealing to a wider populace indicates more generally how fantasy, myth, and folk culture could be "elevated" through modernist techniques, yet still fulfill a democratic goal of reaching a broad audience through recognizable moral themes and symbols. Moreover, while "popular" is not necessarily synonymous with "middlebrow," the success of these Golem productions undeniably adds to the growing body of scholarship that contests the notion of a distinct divide between modernist experimentation and the desires of lower and middle-class supporters of popular culture.<sup>2</sup> The kind of messages and social critiques these two concurrent Golem stories convey, and their purposes in seeking out a wide audience, however, are poles apart. As Cohen emphasizes in his theory of monsters, figures such as the Golem serve as "an embodiment of a certain cultural moment—of time, a feeling and a place. The monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy... giving them life and an uncanny independence" (4). Since cultural moments of social groups vary depending on historical, political, and even

ethnic factors, however, the Golem as a monster takes on a complex set of signifiers for German middlebrow culture that in its interwar political turbulence is significantly disparate from an interwar Jewish culture that is confident yet anxious about its stability.

Common to its many folk and oral variations, the Golem is always an artificial humanoid, most often made of clay and brought to life through supernatural means. In most of these narratives a rabbi or mystic creates the Golem in order to serve the Jews or protect them from anti-Jewish violence, but sometimes the creature grows too strong and wreaks havoc or even kills its creator. Moreover, one of the Golem's most interesting characteristics is that it cannot speak, this being a trait particular to humans. The amorphous creature's simultaneous power and lack of agency allows it to occupy a number of subject positions that can be re-imagined as the storyteller sees fit. Depending on who is doing the telling, the nebulous monster has the capacity to express widespread anxieties about the power to create or destroy life by becoming a messianic superman or a terrifying figure of horror. Perhaps this explains why it is still popular today, crossing the boundaries of "the brows" by appearing in video games, science fiction stories, *Marvel* comics, TV episodes such as the *X-Files* and the *Simpsons*, as well as in contemporary abstract art, experimental films like Amos Gitai's *Golem Trilogy* (1991-93), and postmodern novels such as Michael Chabon's *The Great Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (2000).



Figure 1: Rabbi Leow consulting his books. Film still from Paul Wegener's *Der Golem: Wie er in die Welt kam*, 1920. Film stills from unrestored print, 1921 American release of Paul Wegener's *Der Golem: Wie er in die Welt kam*. Originally produced by UFA-Union Studios, 1920. Archival footage supplied by the Internet Moving Images Archive (at [archive.org](http://archive.org)).

By the 1920s some version of the Golem legend would have been recognizable to the average German and Yiddish speaking audience member. Tales of a Golem linked to the great Polish Rabbi Elijah of Chelm (1550-1583), also known as the “Baal Shem,” famously appeared in Jakob Grimm’s 1808 edition of *Zeitung für Einsiedler* (*Journal for Eremites*).<sup>3</sup> In the mid nineteenth century, the legend of a Golem created by the eminent scholar Rabbi Judah Loew, also known as the Maharal of Prague, began to emerge in popular German collections of folktales, including Leopold Wiesel’s *Sippurim* (Stories, 1847) geared toward the new Jewish German speaking intellectual, and Franz Klutschak’s widely read travel guides to Prague. Klutschak’s article “Der Golam [*sic*] und Rabbi Löw,” in the journal *Panorama des Universums* (1847), as well as his descriptions of the eerie and mysterious aspects of Jewish Prague in his guide (multiple editions of which were printed from 1838 until 1886) no doubt influenced avant garde German writers and dramatists such as young Rilke, Gustav Meyrink, Arthur Holitscher, Max Reinhardt, Henrik Galeen, and Paul Wegener.<sup>4</sup> The most familiar Golem story for middlebrow Yiddish-speakers, however, would be *The Golem and The Wondrous Deeds of the Maharal of Prague*, penned by Rabbi Yudl (Judah) Rosenberg in Warsaw in 1909. Initially written in an ancient style of Hebrew, Rosenberg self-translated the tale into Yiddish in order, as he writes on his title page, “to enable people of all classes to enjoy this illuminating work” (qtd. and trans. Leviant xxi).<sup>5</sup> Rosenberg’s version remarkably caught on in the modern Jewish imagination, proliferating throughout the Yiddish speaking world, making its way to North America, England, British Mandatory Palestine, and even to Jewish communities in Arab lands, where copies were translated into Judeo-Persian and Judeo-Arabic (Leviant xxii). It is perhaps the most enduring version of the tale today.

In many ways Rosenberg’s version is a pulp and somewhat simplistic tale filled with drama, crime, and intrigue. The story relates the wonders of the great luminary, the Maharal of Prague, as he creates a Golem in 1580 during the reign of Rudolph II to help protect the Prague Jews from blood libel, the centuries-old accusation based on the myth that Jews needed Christian blood to bake Passover matzos.<sup>6</sup> With the help of the Golem, whom the Maharal calls Yossele (Josef), the Rabbi outwits evildoers and undermines elaborate schemes that frame Jews for murder and lure Jewish maidens away from the straight and narrow. Finally the Maharal convinces the Emperor Rudolph that the blood accusations are false and the Jews are promised protection. The Golem-making process is then reversed, the Golem reverts back into clay, and its inert body is hidden in the attic of the Prague synagogue, the Altneuschul. There, many people believe, the Golem remains.

As a redemption fantasy, it is clear how this particular Golem story could become significant. It unmistakably mirrored the psychologi-

cal needs and desires of Jewish communities plagued by antisemitism and conspiracies no less fantastic than the Golem myth. Rosenberg's novella, after all, was published in Warsaw only a few years following three events that shook the modern Jewish world: the popular distribution of the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1903-1906), the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, and the Kiev pogrom in October 1905. If the modern era had ushered in hopes for emancipation, these events threatened to make a mockery of those hopes. Aside from the rise in antisemitic rhetoric in the media following the publication of the *Protocols*, during the Kishinev pogrom, over a span of forty-eight hours, forty-nine Jews were murdered, women were raped, and dozens of homes, businesses, and synagogues were looted. In the even more terrifying Kiev pogrom, one hundred Jews were killed and three hundred injured, followed by an even bloodier wave of violence; over the next six months no less than one hundred and sixty other towns and villages were attacked in riots, with an estimate of over three thousand Jews murdered and many thousands wounded. When the perpetrators were not brought to justice, Jewish communities despaired.<sup>7</sup> If the Golem legend was well suited to articulate anxieties about Jewish persecution, it was also more specifically related to dilemmas arising within Jewish communities as they grappled with theological and philosophical



Figure 2: The Golem (played by Paul Wegener) fetching water in the ghetto. Film stills from unrestored print, 1921 American release of Paul Wegener's *Der Golem: Wie er in die Welt kam*. Originally produced by UFA-Union Studios, 1920. Archival footage supplied by the Internet Moving Images Archive (at [archive.org](http://archive.org)).

questions regarding how to react to their subjugation. With patience to wait out the violent times? With faith or prayer for messianic redemption? Or perhaps with armed resistance in the re-imagining of the new “muscle Jew” and dream of a Zionist homeland?

At the same time, as hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees from Russia, Poland, Lithuania, and Galicia migrated to major European cities in the wake of these devastating events, for many Western artists and writers, the figure of “the Jew” came to reflect modern concerns more generally. Especially in Germany, as Anton Kaes notes, the migration of 70,000 Jews from Russia, Poland, Lithuania, and Galicia (45,000 of whom settled in Berlin), brought a new consciousness of self and the Other into the public sphere (110). The contrast between the assimilated, modern German-born Jews and the *Ostjuden*—those recent immigrants from Eastern Europe with different modes of dress and cultural habits—added to the discomfort or “uncanny” slippage between self and Other.<sup>8</sup> As Noah Isenberg contends, “the shift in the trappings of identity among German and Eastern Jews produced widespread confusion and personal strife among Jews and non-Jews alike” (*Between* 93). Reflected on the screen, a new image of the “celluloid Jew” encapsulated these tensions, suggesting that economic, political, and scientific prowess of the modern era masked an essential distortion that only thinly veiled the uncanny “swarthinness, exotic practices, and ghetto sensibilities” of the Other (Isenberg, *Between* 95). It was an image, moreover, that raised metaphysical questions about the nature of art, technology, mimesis, and an underlying essential “truth” to identity and belonging.

### **Jewish Monsters: Paul Wegener’s *Der Golem: Wie er in die Welt kam***

If any figure could portray that metaphorical sense of boundary breaking and overdetermination it would be the Golem of Paul Wegener’s silent film, *Der Golem: Wie er in die Welt kam*, and the expressionist mode of cinema. Produced only two years after Germany’s defeat in WWI, *Der Golem* was the third in a series of experimental films on the Jewish myth that Paul Wegener co-wrote with Henrik Galeen (who also wrote the screenplay for *Nosferatu* [1922]) and the only print that survived after World War II. The appeal of the Golem story to a wide audience was evident from its popularity as a product of consumer culture. Isenberg notes that Wegener’s film sold out the Berlin Premiere at Ufa-Palast am Zoo on October 29, 1920, and played to full theaters for two months straight before being distributed throughout Germany, and then internationally (“Of Monsters” 36). The plot is rather straightforward, typical of the middlebrow horror genre. The Rabbi creates a Golem as a symbol of his power and displays his “magic art” in a court spectacle. The Emperor is so impressed that he rescinds his

decree to expel the Jews. Even so, the Jews' troubles are not over when the Golem, overcome with desire for the Rabbi's daughter Miriam, goes on a rampage. He is finally destroyed by a cherubic-looking child playing outside the gates of the ghetto who fiddles with the life-giving Star of David amulet on the Golem's chest and removes it, thus killing the monster. If the story seems simplistic, the aesthetics of the film are nevertheless extraordinary, conveying a multitude of additional layers and meanings. Wegener uses explicitly modernist, experimental strategies in a way that fuses Jewishness with ideas of creative transformation and modern technology—or more specifically the medium of film—and the haunting magic of ancient cultures.

To be sure, supernatural creatures and artificial beings like Golems and unreal atmospheres took on special significance more broadly in inter-war European art and literature and drama of the early twentieth century. Wegener's fascination with the Golem reflected the wider phenomenon of artists across Europe idealizing so-called "primitive" cultures such as African, Oceanic, or Roma and Sinti peoples. In her overview of German expressionism, Ashley Bassie emphasizes how exoticizing fantasies of non-Western cultures and a focus on medieval Gothic themes and the occult fused with "the wider primitivist project" of the era. For expressionist artists, "the search for what they imagined as 'pure', authentic, vital art" resonated with ideas of "human creativity" and an "intuitive tradition" (23). Wegener's keen interest in the mythic Jewish past in Prague could thereby conceivably be interpreted as philosemitic, idealizing Jewish culture as an untainted, more vital form of expression that affirmed the power of the Jewish artist/Golem-maker to both create and invigorate life or destroy it. Nevertheless, as Phyllis Lassner and Lara Trubowitz point out, the phenomenon of philosemitism is not only frequently related to anti-Jewish myths and typecasting but also "treat[s] Jewishness, wittingly or not, as if it were always and only a representation" (7-8). Moreover, as Christian Rogowski argues, the "curious mixture of banal fantastic subject matter and quasi-avant-garde visual stylization" in 1920s Weimar film was not only for art's sake—films like Wegener's were marketable commodities. They attracted audiences from a broad spectrum of social strata to seek out "artistic" films and thus become part of a privileged community of trendy cinema-goers (9-10). This aesthetic adventure would, in today's discourse on cultural production and consumption, revise traditional meanings assigned to middlebrow audiences and art.

The abstract and ephemeral nature of the expressionist aesthetic mode lent itself to these types of metaphysical, political, cultural, and economic needs. Recent studies of expressionist aesthetics emphasize that defining what makes a particular work of art or drama "expressionist" is easier said than done, especially since, as a movement, it had few formal self-defining initiatives or manifestos. What characterizes the aesthetic most

distinctly is the tendency for artists to focus on the level of the abstract by using overt and concrete symbols to convey emotional “truths.”<sup>9</sup> Sigfried Kracauer’s lengthy cultural analysis “On Expressionism: Nature and Meaning of a Contemporary Movement” (1918, published posthumously) identifies the aesthetic as “the outcry of those who felt enslaved by modernity’s instrumental reason. Realism, with its attention to detail, tacitly affirmed a stifling reality, while expressionism challenged the status quo by breaking with conventional practices of representation in the arts” (trans. and qtd. Kaes 186).<sup>10</sup> In other words, reason and instrumentality, which had brought about the rise of industrialism and war, had proved for many to be the most irrational elements of modern reality. The dilemmas, fears and sense of distress that plagued the postwar population in Germany and other northern European nations often took shape on the expressionist canvas, stage, or screen in haunted landscapes or fantastic forms. Who is the monster among us? these works appear to ask. And how do we regain control of the uncontrollable?

With close to nine million Germans dead on the battlefield, two million missing, and approximately twelve million disabled, this feeling of uncertainty and doubt of the “real” and the rational can well be understood.<sup>11</sup> Especially in Weimar cinema, as Isenberg points out, the rebellion against postwar reality’s irrationalism was concretized in the fantastic monsters, painted papier mâché backdrops, off-kilter camera angles and perspectives, and shadowy environments. Cinema, Isenberg asserts, “assumed the role that fairy tales had traditionally performed” in drawing on folktales, legends, and mass culture to externalize the insecurity of the time (“Falling” 5). On the other hand, as recent scholarship has revealed, Weimar Cinema did not only address political and national concerns. As Rogowski argues, expressionist film and innovative strategies had cultural cachet that “involved an appeal to familiar cultural, largely middle-brow, traditions, such as German myths and fairy tales ... what today we call product differentiation and niche marketing” (9). Weimar film of the 1920s was primarily a commercial venture. Film companies realized the potential of experimental camera and lighting techniques, innovative sets, stylized acting, and supernatural themes to enhance these films’ appeal to a mass market and advertised them accordingly (Rogowski 8).<sup>12</sup>

Significantly, popular stylistic and thematic conventions at the heart of many expressionist genre films—blurred boundaries, frightening monsters, infiltration, and mystery—were also projected onto ideas of Jewishness. The many horror films of the 1920s that contain mysterious foreigners or criminals from Eastern countries attest to the underlying concern with the perceived invasion and power of “inauthentic Germans” such as Jews (Isenberg, “Falling” 6). Even if not stated outright, as Lester Friedman notes, many of these sinister and monstrous characters were “clearly defined ethnic

characters” that employ familiar and easily recognizable stereotypes (50). If the monstrous nature of war could be condensed and attributed to a force outside of the nation, these films suggest, there could still be hope for a utopian future once that monster is vanquished.<sup>43</sup> Fear of the foreign Other, and especially of a stereotypical Jewish Other, appeared concomitantly in other mass culture products geared toward lower and middle-class readers. In and around 1920, the threatening danger of Jewish infiltration became the topic of antisemitic popular novels like Artur Dinter’s best-seller, *Die Sünde wider das Blut* (*The Sin Against Blood*, 1918); pamphlets such as Henry Ford’s *The International Jew* were translated into German and distributed widely; and the infamous *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* ran through five editions in 1920 alone. Even political treatises such as Adolf Hitler’s twenty-five point program for the German Workers’ party came out in the same year (Isenberg, *Between* 102-03).

The manner in which the Golem, Rabbi Loew, and the Jews are portrayed in Wegener’s film are key examples of how these social and political anxieties are negotiated within the expressionist genre. To give Wegener credit, his silent film does highlight the plight of Jews as victims of oppression. Yet, it also disturbingly casts the Golem, and by extension the



Figure 3: Ahasverus the Wandering Jew leading the People of Israel through the desert. Film stills from unrestored print, 1921 American release of Paul Wegener’s *Der Golem: Wie er in die Welt kam*. Originally produced by UFA-Union Studios, 1920. Archival footage supplied by the Internet Moving Images Archive (at [archive.org](http://archive.org)).

Jew, as an allegory for the negative and distressing aspects of modernity. The expressionist aesthetic of the film itself communicates this sense of unease and apprehension linked to Jewishness. As Isenberg observes, the “distorted shapes, dark cavities, and hunchbacked structures” of the sets that identify the expressionist aesthetic more generally, “all serve to invoke the visual characteristics of the figures who occupy their expressive space” (“Of Monsters” 48). That is, the style and lighting of the set, the cinematic temporal and spatial jumps, and the aesthetic gestures that link the Golem to feelings of eerie discomfort at the same time implicitly convey a hostile mindset toward real Jews as the source of these unsettling feelings. To refer to Anton Kaes’s analysis of Weimar expressionist cinema, the films “transform vague feelings of betrayal, sacrifice, and wounded pride” based in the defeat of WWI and concretize them into an identifiable external form (3). But it more precisely uncovers for the audience a very specific and concrete Jewish community that is distressing to the German populace and to society as a whole.

*Der Golem* opens with Rabbi Loew suffused in bright light, consulting stars to read the fate of the Jews only to discover that disaster awaits. Moments later, we see the Emperor in his sun-filled court as he decrees all the Jews expelled from the land. Wegener’s use of chiaroscuro, sharp contrasts of light and shadow, imbues Rabbi Loew with the mystical, supernatural qualities of a wizard. The light shining in from the stars and from the window emphasizes his ancient qualities and casts the rabbi as imposing, powerful, and in possession of hidden insights and occult knowledge (Figure 1). The illumination of the Rabbi and his books by way of the refracted light, however, also highlights the shadowy recesses of his home and mysterious, unknown depths of his cellar, where Loew creates the Golem creature. It is important to note that the Rabbi himself is not portrayed as particularly frightening, which has led some critics to praise Wegener for his sympathetic portrayal of Jews and to note how the film averts typical antisemitic iconography.<sup>14</sup> All the disturbing and uncanny elements are nevertheless projected onto Loew’s creation. Clearly a doppelgänger for the Rabbi, the Golem is given life not to save the Jews, but more specifically to serve his master. The fact that Loew’s servant is called *Famulus*, the same name as Mephisto’s servant in Goethe’s *Faust*, and that the devil “Asthart” appears as the Golem is brought to life reinforces the notion that Loew’s creation is based in the forces of alchemy and evil rather than good.<sup>15</sup> Like *Faust*, Rabbi Loew becomes a slave to his devilish creation, a clear allegory for the potential threat and irrationality of rabbinic authority figures and their perceived influence and political power in Europe.

Symbolic of the hidden primeval aspects of the human psyche, Loew’s movements are always descending—down the stairs from the outside world to his study, and then further into the depths of his workshop, a

shadowy, eerie underworld. The expressionist film set created by architect Hanz Poelzig conveys the morose, dark, threatening, and claustrophobic atmosphere of the Jewish ghetto, adding to the impression that Loew and the Golem are mired in shady malevolence. As Friedman aptly notes, the angled sets and lighting “combine to give the ghetto’s mise-en-scene a dark and dangerous look” (53). If in the expressionist aesthetic, desires, fears, and dilemmas take on concrete forms as “objective correlatives,” Loew and the Golem clearly reiterate the way Jewishness becomes an overarching metaphor for disturbing, uncanny outer elements in the real world. The Golem is Slavic looking, reflecting German discourse on Jewish difference that linked Jews to Oriental or Eastern superstition (Gelbin 117). Much like the vampire in *Nosferatu*, the Golem is non-Western and otherworldly, confirming the fear that embedded within the assimilated and civilized guise of modern German Jews lies an essential Otherness. Even the bodies of Rabbi Loew and his doppelganger Golem become connected metonymically with gritty urban excess and the dissolution of the pastoral.<sup>16</sup> Like the Rabbi’s beard, pointy hat, and esoteric knowledge, the roofs of the buildings draw upward at sharp angles, are old and decrepit, and contain dark corners and crevices that hide mysterious corridors and secret passages. The Golem, dressed as a large peasant, looks as if made of mortar and stone, the epitome of the unnatural world, the ready-made, and the mechanical. As a borderline figure, the Golem, like the stone walls of the ghetto itself, separates the inner de-natured urban space of the Jewish Other from the natural world on the other side of the ghetto walls (Figure 2).

Part of the Golem’s uncanny nature is also due to the automated and staccato way it moves and walks. Quite possibly this characteristic gestures toward the many soldiers who came back from war injured or fitted with artificial limbs. In line with Kaes’s analysis of the after effects of war, the Golem’s zombielike gait is suggestive of the thousands of men resembling soulless shells as they walked streets upon their return from the battlefield. But Loew’s construction of an artificial humanoid must have also struck a chord in the 1920s discourse on industrial production. The fear of modernity, for many, was the fear of a machine gone out of control. Even more so, the Golem—who looks real but moves mechanically—can be interpreted as a self-reflexive gesture toward the art and technology of filmmaking. Like the silent film medium, the Golem does not speak and, moreover, it is at the mercy of his creator and controller, the director. Even as *Der Golem* expands the possibilities of art and drama in the medium of film, it contains the apprehension that traditional German cultural institutions are corroding. As its Latin root indicates, a monster’s purpose is *monstrum*, to portend. The Golem as a symbol warns of the dangers of a modern, materialist, and monstrous miscegenation of foreign influence and runaway technology. This is underscored by the repeated juxtaposition

between nature and culture in the film.

The interrelatedness among golem-making, modern filmmaking, and the irksome quality of Jewish cultural influence as the antithesis of “nature” is underscored by the wonder that Rabbi Loew performs for the Emperor’s court. At a turning point in the film, the Rabbi is asked by the Emperor to display his “art.” What Loew shows is a film projected on the wall of the castle depicting Jewish masses in the exodus from Egypt led by Ahasverus, the Eternal or Wandering Jew. Rabbi Loew’s use of a “*laterna magica*” in the Emperor’s court is also an episode in Klutschak’s Golem story, wherein the narrator describes how Loew demonstrates his powers by creating a spectacular illusion of the Jewish patriarchs projected at the Emperor’s court (Demetz 299). The court audience grows distracted and laughs, bringing about the ire of the Powers that Be. In both story and film the palace begins to crumble, threatening to bury the courtiers alive until the Golem saves them by holding up the structure. The scene undoubtedly contains Wegener’s most powerful condemnation of European hostility toward the Jews at a time when “the Jewish question” was clearly a contentious topic. The court audience is callous to the image of the suffering Eternal Jew and the People of Israel forced to wander through the desert. The moving image of a bewildered wide-eyed Ahasverus can without a doubt be interpreted as a critique not only of the growing appeal of antisemitic ideologies, but as a challenge to the history of Christian anti-Jewish oppression as a whole (Figure 3).

Yet, using the image of Ahasverus, rather than Moses, as the leader of the Jewish people in the desert also confirms Christian dominant discourse that distorts Jewish subjectivity by representing the “story” of the Jew only in terms of Christian sacrifice and redemption. The story of the “Wandering Jew” can be traced back to virtually the beginning of the Jewish Diaspora. Based on the thirteenth-century myth of the Jewish sinner who taunts Jesus walking with the cross and is thus doomed to wander the earth until the end of days, the figure became the subject of numerous poems, novels, works of art, plays, and films in Western culture. In the interwar period the image also became linked with that of the Jewish refugee. The icon of the Jew as forever “wandering,” however, also confirms his eternal, unchanging and somehow inevitable essence and asserts the impossibility of belonging. The migrating masses of Jews in the film-within-a-film likewise appear as an undifferentiated horde. Much like the Jews in the ghetto, they are separated from the members of the court by walls and screens that prevent them from mixing beyond those constructed boundaries. The courtiers, in contrast, are bathed in the light of the outside world and individualized in terms of dress and mannerisms. The circles on the ghetto Jews’ clothing and hats represented in the film allude to further separation, containment, and Otherness. Eerily anticipating the yellow Star of David that Jews were

forced to wear under the Nazi regime, the film reminds viewers of the ordinances created in Rome as well as in England, France, Germany, and Austria by the fourth Lateran Council of 1215 forcing Jews to wear a yellow hat or cloth (often called a *Rota* or Jewish ring) ostensibly to “prevent illicit intercourse between Jews and Christians.”<sup>17</sup> And it is this very doomed encounter between Jews and Christians that is the Golem’s undoing.

A subplot of Wegener’s film involves a love affair between Florian, the knight who delivers the decree, and the Rabbi’s daughter, Miriam. When Florian crosses into the ghetto from the outside to woo the seductive and desirous Jewish damsel, Famulus the servant is overcome with jealousy and orders the Golem to kill the knight, thus unleashing in the Golem a force of passion and violence. The creature runs amok, destroying the ghetto and snatching the Rabbi’s daughter. The Jewish female, linked to equally monstrous promiscuity and miscegenation by her association with Gentile gentry and the promise of upward mobility and power, is punished, put in her place, and contained within the community where she belongs. The monster, now awakened to female sexuality, clearly must die before the truly horrifying possibility of a sexual encounter between human and monster is actualized—a sin made worse by its connection with incest, since the Golem is Leow’s *doppelgänger*.

In the final scene of the film, the Golem finally releases Miriam to be re-united with Famulus, breaks down the gate to the ghetto, and exits to a bucolic scene of wholesome blond children frolicking in the sun. A final moment of joy, when the Golem encounters the innocence of a child bathed in sunlight, is undone by the simple act of the little girl playing with and removing his amulet. Unlike Rosenberg’s version, the Golem is not dismantled through Jewish agency, but rather through Christian salvation. The creature becomes a metaphor of urban entrapment and displacement, pitted against beauty, authenticity, purity, and a yearning for a utopian return to all that has been corroded by technology and urban industrialization. The Golem’s destruction, moreover, re-affirms boundaries that keep uncanny Others inside the ghetto walls. As Omer Bartov in *The Jew in Cinema* argues, the Golem in Wegener’s film underscores the Jew’s “magical and destructive capacities” but “it also represents the Jews’ ability to control the powers of nature ... and to cast over the world the dark shadow of their morbid rights” (3). The Golem, Rabbi Leow, and the Jews of the ghetto stay on the other side of the fourth wall, within the containable limits of the illusion on the film screen. At the same time, the viewing audience of the 1920s outside world sits and watches in the dark, silently accepting popular racialized stereotypes of Europe’s Jews while ignoring the implications of negative typecasting on the many men and women in their midst who have a Jewish heritage.

### H. Leivick's *Der Goylem* and the Habima Theater Troupe

One year after Wegener's film appeared in theaters, Leivick's play, or "dramatic poem in eight parts" as he referred to it, was first published in New York by Farlag Amerika under the auspices of David Ignatoff, the founder of *Shriften* (in 1912). The poem-play's association with *Shriften*, a prominent journal that publicized Yiddish avant garde poetry and art, guaranteed that it would be noticed by the Jewish intelligentsia.<sup>18</sup> Somewhat unexpectedly, when this dense and difficult work was translated into Hebrew, adapted for the stage, and performed in Moscow in 1925 by the Habima theater troupe it played to full houses. Since then it has run over four hundred performances internationally. Habima had already received high critical acclaim for their 1922 production of S. Ansky's *The Dybbuk*, an expressionist work that had also been translated from Yiddish into Hebrew.<sup>19</sup> Despite the fact that almost no Russians and very few Jews spoke Hebrew at the time as it was predominantly the language of prayer and study rather than conversation, *The Dybbuk* had captivated Russian and European audience through its avant garde set design, emotionally-charged acting methods, daring choreography, and rich visual effects. It should not be surprising that Habima chose *Der Goylem* as its next big production. Established in 1917 during the Russian Revolution and affiliated with Konstantin Stanislavsky's Moscow Art Theater, the troupe was ideologically committed to uplifting Jewish national pride through cultural revival. In addition, members of Habima strove to promote the Zionist dream of a homeland in Palestine by choosing plays of Jewish historical import that emphasized freedom, heroism, and revolution. Leivick's play presented a clear link to the politics of the day by grappling with questions relating to oppression and revolutionary violence. It also affirmed it in a Jewish language using a folktale that was familiar to Jewish audiences and thus appealed to a wide spectrum of the community. In stark contrast to Wegener's Golem production, Leivick's play is told from inside the ghetto walls. There is no "outside" to the fraught universe he creates on stage.

If the play's message is completely contrary to Wegener's, Leivick's dramatic poem nevertheless uses similar expressionist strategies in stage directions that call for the use of candles to emphasize stark contrasts between light and dark, sudden temporal and spatial shifts, and stage pieces laden with overt symbolic meaning. Elements of the fantastic, such as specters, wounded characters, axes, and vials of blood spontaneously appear and disappear. Moreover, the intense melodrama of the monologues and dialogues, typical of the expressionist mode, also highlight the extreme emotional impact of the political reality that left many Jewish revolutionaries in doubt as to whether a solution to mass violence could be found within the European continent. As Emily Bilski aptly observes, the irony of a superhero Golem figure bringing about a

utopian existence underscored the disappointment and sense of betrayal following the violence of the Russian Revolution and the October Revolution felt by many Jewish writers and artists who supported Marxist and Communist causes (61). Leivick, at only eighteen, had been sentenced to forced labor and permanent exile in Siberia in 1906 for revolutionary activities and had been smuggled into the United States by supporters. He wrote *Der Goylem* while living in Philadelphia.

According to Atay Citron's overview of Habima's *Golem*, when the members read the dramatic poem they nevertheless were perplexed as to its theme and message. More to the point, they struggled with what the Golem represented: "A Prophet? An invisible presence?" (60). In order to adapt Leivick's play for the stage and reach the Jewish masses to promote their ideological and pedagogical goals they therefore had to cut and rework scenes and characters. What is more, the troupe was obliged to eliminate episodes deemed unacceptable by the Soviet Censorship Committee, one example being a key episode in which the Golem struggles with phantoms,



Figure 4: Drawing by Yehudah [Jennings] Tofel, accompanying H. Leivick's published play, *Der Goylem: a dramatishe poeme in akht bilder* (*The Golem: A Dramatic Poem in Eight Scenes*). New York: Farlag America, 1921. Library of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research collection, New York.

which the censors claimed was “not appropriate for an adult audience because it fostered superstition” (Citron 61). Surprisingly, as Citron points out, the Soviets did not ban the play outright since they deduced that the Golem was a symbol for the October Revolution, “created with good intentions but turning into a bloody disaster” (62). The play was a popular success mostly due to the emotional intensity of the performances and the impact of the minimalist expressionist set, designed by Ignaty Nivinsky. What is more, as Susan Tumarkin Goodman points out, for many of the Jewish audience members, hearing Hebrew and seeing Jewish themes presented on stage in a secular, modern environment was especially moving (6). The play, like the Golem itself, is read in various and often contrasting ways even today: as a pacifist manifesto containing a moral message about violence in general (notably one character pleads: “stop killing and halt civil wars”); or, alternately, as a tale of heroism, in which the historically persecuted Jew rises up to fight back.

Notably, Leivick’s reaction when he first saw the play was to claim that “Habima’s interpretation was the extreme opposite of his” (Citron 62). A close examination of Leivick’s dramatic work as it appeared in 1921 indeed discloses a more nuanced articulation of the grim choices facing the Jews and Rabbi Loew, here called Leyb, as a leader of a community in crisis. The play asks: what is the price of salvation? What is lost when the only alternative to Jewish persecution appears to be violent resistance?<sup>20</sup> Rather than an expression of either Loew’s or the Golem’s imposing power, then, Leivick’s Golem is more precisely the embodiment of the Rabbi’s deep desire to displace the anguish and heavy responsibility of responding to persecution onto his supernatural creation.

Like Yudel Rosenberg’s version of the legend, Leivick incorporates the threat of blood libel but includes the visceral, bloody consequences of the accusations. Members of the community suffer the loss of family members and experience feelings of paranoia and traumatic aftereffects of the pogroms. These two elements—blood and agony—are key and recurring tropes throughout the play. In contrast to Rosenberg’s tale, however, Leivick’s expressionist experiment calls attention to the realm of the subconscious, where dreams and fantasy lead to psychological transformation; a challenging format for a middlebrow audience, but a comprehensible social drama nonetheless. The Golem in the dramatic poem, moreover, is more individualized than in any other adaptation of the legend. As in the Rosenberg legend he has a name, Yosl, but Leivick also gives him a voice. Loudly and clearly, Yosl calls out the lament of the Jewish community—not of medieval Prague, but of 1920s Europe. Habima’s Golem, played by Aaron Meskin, had a loud, booming voice that reverberated throughout the theater, adding further emphasis to this Golem’s distinct trait. Rather than drawing in the audience to indulge in a fantasy of redemption, however, the defamiliarization result-

ing from the melodrama and fantastic elements of the script created a void and space for political critique on the part of the viewer. The Golem is thus not only a doppelganger of Rabbi Loew/Leyb, but a physical manifestation of the struggle with ideas of salvation, faith, despair, and desire for a solution to oppression that each member of the audience could presumably relate to their own lives.

Leivick's description of the Golem in his stage directions indicates how vastly different this creature is from Wegener's mechanical monster. The Golem's name, Yosl, a diminutive, affectionate version of the name Joseph, identifies the creature as a part of the Jewish community. It also links him to the biblical Joseph, son of Jacob, whose brothers place him in a pit and sell him into slavery. Here, too, the Golem is "sold out" by his brethren and placed in the position of a scapegoat. Significantly, Habima's production changed the Golem's name to Judah, a biblical character more closely associated with lionlike strength, military might, and the kingdom of Israel, thereby altering the emphasis of the play's theme to its own agenda of na-



Figure 5: Max Weber, *Nude with Upraised Arm* (1919-20), woodcut illustration in H. Leivick's published play, *Der Golem: a dramatishe poeme in akht bilder* (*The Golem: A Dramatic Poem in Eight Scenes*). New York: Farlag America, 1921. Library of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research collection, New York. Original woodcut images on paper are part of The Jewish Museum collection, New York.

tional revival (Citron 65). Leivick's depiction of the Golem, however, conveys a sense of innocence and vulnerability that identifies the creature as a sympathetic victim not only of outsiders, but of his own monstrous creators who use him, then betray and abandon him. As Leivick's text describes the Golem:

He is powerfully built—a giant. Large eyes. There is something heavy and dull about them and at the same time something childlike. Rather heavy lips with deep indentations at the corners. They are frozen into a smile that smiles at—nothing. And yet it seems a smile that is on the verge of tears. The hair of his head, mustache, and beard is black and curly. His eyes open wider as he stares at everything. (trans. Landis 132)

The accompanying illustration of this wide-eyed Golem by Jennings (Yehudah) Tofel portrays a typical “shtetl Jew” with a beard and peaked cap, clutching an axe close to his body (Figure 4). As Bilski indicates, Tofel's image, in which “thick bold strokes” are “defined against the white expanse of the page” quite clearly suggests the theme of the play: “man's suffering and longing for deliverance” (61-62). It is also characteristic of the expressionist style in visual arts that mixes dynamic, bold lines or “immature” antirealist artistic conventions to draw increased attention to the very complex nature of what cannot easily be perceived by the human eye. The play was additionally accompanied by eight of Max Weber's woodcuts, one for each act. The well-known image for the first act, *Nude with Upraised Arm*, depicts a primordial, mother earth figure in primitivist style with her eyes closed and one arm raised over her head. The illustration, boxed into a narrow, vertical frame, calls attention to the creature's lack of vision and mobility. The figure, with her eyes shut, could be interpreted as highlighting the possibility of the work of art to reach what is unseen and instinctual, or perhaps more expressly points to an avoidance or refusal to see the danger of what lies ahead (Figure 5).

The theme of vision is also emphasized in the first act of Leivick's work. Opening in medias res, in the Passover season, Rabbi Leyb stands over the formed Golem as dawn breaks. The Rabbi is about to breathe life into his clay figure so that he can help save the Jews from the doom of an imminent pogrom when the great mystic is suddenly plagued by doubt. Suspended between light and darkness, he looks for signs from the Almighty to tell him whether he is doing the right thing. He has prayed to God and feels justified in creating the Golem, but the fluctuations of his conscience draw phantoms that warn him about what he is about to unleash. “Don't create me,” the phantom of the Golem warns him. “Keep me in your abyss one moment more” (118). The reason for the warning is not because the

Golem itself is dangerous. Rather, the danger lies in the Rabbi's questionable motives for bringing the Golem to life. In creating the Golem he will cross a threshold that externalizes his fear and desire for revenge, releasing a Mr. Hyde-like creature that will contain not only Rabbi Leyb's but the entire Jewish community's misery and rage. Descriptions of Habima's staging too describe this scene as one where Rabbi Leyb was set back on a platform "deep into the stage, in half light, surrounded by shadows," signifying the murky realm of the shadowy unconscious to which the scene alludes (Citron 64).

Rabbi Leyb's dilemma in giving life to the creature on the one hand is a very human one, and not unlike the German Romantic doppelgänger narratives. In simple terms, his anger and desire for revenge is repressed, and it therefore becomes externalized in the form of a monster. But his struggle is also one that has Jewish theological considerations. Leyb, as a devout religious leader, is supposed to see the Jews' fate in terms of a theological model that is tied to the lesson of Passover, the holiday during which he creates the Golem. It is a model that repeats itself throughout Jewish history and is based on the cycle of slavery/ the giving of the Torah/ and redemption in the Homeland; or, persecution in the Diaspora/ prayer/ and messianic salvation. The hatred in Rabbi Leyb's eyes stems from the refutation of that very basic model. He creates a humanoid from his own desire for agency and thus produces the Golem with a heart, but a broken heart. As the rabbi tells God "You open my eyes, and I can see them/ Blood libels, blood and fire and... destruction. I know that with rescue comes misery... my heart's filled with turmoil" (139).

The metaphor of vision, common in many expressionist works that emphasize instinct over reason, is once again reintroduced by Tadeush, the phantom of the anti-Jewish priest who has instigated the blood libel. As he sums up the dangerous transgression that the Golem represents, "Throughout my life I've seen ...all kinds of Jewish eyes/ But I have never, ever chanced to see/ a pair of Jewish eyes imbued with slaughter,/ With truest hate as your eyes are now filled" (119-20). The play suggests that what the priest sees that he has never seen before is the seething fury at being persecuted. The eyes being the window to the soul, Tadeush appears surprised when he observes a reflection of the Rabbi's yearning for revenge. Nevertheless, at the same time the priest blames the Jews for remaining passive and for relying on the supernatural to save them instead of taking responsibility for their own retribution. As Tadeush himself demands later in the play: "Why don't you then strike us as we strike you/ ... You're always, always ready to go away" (172).

Each individual viewpoint that presents itself in Leivick's play—and in stark contrast to Wegener's portrayal of the Jewish plight—brings additional layers to this dilemma and crisis of whether to "go away" or "attack with axes." In this off-kilter world, where freedom from suffering appears

remote, the answer to persecution eludes most of the characters. Giving further impact to this multilayered dilemma, Nivinsky, much like Poelzig, designed the set to tilt at angles and constructed platforms on multiple levels, creating the illusion that the actors could appear from various locations and viewpoints (Figure 6). “They seemed tumbled upon the stage,” Citron notes, “but allowed the actors to play on all levels” (61). For example, the Madman Tankhem, whose son is murdered in a pogrom, presents a one common religious point of view: he is waiting for the chariot of the Messiah to bring redemption. “Tankhem isn’t scared of any axe” he tells Rabbi Leyb (147). With heart-wrenching detail, he outlines why:

My son lies  
 In the fiery chariot  
 [...]
 His left eye, it is pierced through by a spear  
 His right eye – closed.  
 His right arm is hacked off up to his shoulder,  
 His left arm, to his elbow.  
 Each first Passover night I tell my son:  
 Stand up and live.  
 [...]
 Until we hear those footsteps,  
 Hear them.  
 They pierce his left eye once again,  
 They chop his right arm once again [...]
 And I say: Until next year....  
 Because my heart is filled with mercy for the world.  
 (149-50)

The list of body parts detailed in this monologue, the violent actions that outline the damage done to the son’s flesh, and even the repetition of the cycle of violence of the pogroms that comes to life year after year, give visceral and chilling irony to the brutality that lies at the center of the play. The work portrays Tankhem as a man who is clearly insane. But the implication is that anyone who waits until next year for mercy and redemption is mad. Bassevi, an older member of the ghetto community, represents another, more philosophical approach to the community’s dilemma in the face of persecution: “What do they want of us?” he asks Rabbi Leyb. The rabbi puts the question in its place: “we merely breathed a breath,” he answers. Moreover, “Why must we ask ‘What do they want of us?’ If any cause is needed, let them look! ... We are both light and hard, both near and far. If we desire it, we face the world; if we desire it, we turn our backs.” (143-44). To even ask the question, then, is to give credence to the idea that there is a rationality behind the antisemitic attitudes that the Jews face. If one wants to look at the source of discrimina-

tion, one has to find it in the perpetrators, not the victims, he implies.

The hopelessness of Rabbi Leyb's quandary makes the Golem's task of saving the Jews even more confusing. Like Joseph son of Jacob, the Golem dreams of destruction and eerily portends devastation for the Jews. Visitations by false prophets and evil spirits confound and haunt the sensitive Golem creature. Completely opposite to Wegener's heartless, mechanical Golem, or Habima's giant and powerful Judah Golem, Yosl is clingy, needy, and afraid to be alone. The Golem ultimately loses his mind when he finally fulfills the task for which he was created: he descends into an underground cavern to find the vials of blood planted by Tadeush the priest to frame the Jews for ritual murder, but returns shattered by his encounter with the evil underworld. Madness, Leivick's play suggests, is perhaps the only normal response to the irrationality of the times. The tragedy of the Golem tale, then, is not that the Golem goes out of control,



Figure 6. Photograph of Habima theater's production of Leivick's *The Golem*, set designed by Ignaty Nivinsky, in *Moskauer Theater Habima (The Moscow Theater Habima)* 23. Printed souvenir program in German. Published by Tournee Europa-Amerika, Paris, circa 1928 (date not recorded). Reproduced from University of Toronto Robarts Library collection, Toronto, Canada.

but that the *situation* has run amok, thereby rendering the Golem's role as a savior unfeasible. Rabbi Leyb—and the Jewish community as a whole—want the Golem to be too much. They want to have a union between ideological values of community, faith, hope, and peace and a superhuman force that can protect these values from destruction by those who wish them ill. This is a task that Leivick exposes as doomed to fail.

At the end of the play, Leivick's Golem struggles for his life, resisting being turned back into clay. Until his very last breath, he cries out to Rabbi Leyb, "you will not leave me, will you?" (253). Habima's play likewise closed its curtain with the Golem crying out: "Who will save us?" Citron wryly mentions that according to records of the play's production, some of the Russian audience members called out "We will!" and began to sing "The International." Yet, it is not clear who this call is meant for: a plea to the outside world? to God? to humanity? Or to all of the above? After all, by 1926 the Habima theater fell out of favor with the Soviet authorities when Jewish ethnic nationalism and "bourgeois" cultural experiments were seen as a threat to the Stalinist regime. After touring Europe and America with the *Golem* and *Dybbuk* plays, Habima never returned to Moscow. Its members instead chose to settle in British Mandatory Palestine in 1928 and later became Israel's national theater.

The Golem, as we see in these two remarkable dramatic works, intensifies an awareness of the power of experimental, modernist "created beings" to highlight difference, sway political ideologies, and influence public opinion by reaching a far more extensive and varied audience than one might assume. And while no one could yet imagine the fate of the Jews in Europe to come only two decades later, popular and accepted antisemitic images such as those portrayed in Wegener's film contributed to the overall impression that Jews were indeed powerful and threatening to the body politic. These Golem creations on screen and stage nevertheless assert that modernist art might have the potential to challenge domination if, and only if, they insist on self-critique within that expression. As Isaac Bashevis Singer writes, "I am sure that none of the worldly writers like Leivick, Gustav Meyrink... and others believed that a golem did exist and worked all the miracles ascribed to him. But I am convinced that these writers felt in the legend of the golem a profound kinship to artistic creativity . . . . The golem-maker was, essentially, an artist" (7). As creative mediator of responses to Jews in Europe, and as a double for the dark, mysterious depths of human nature, therefore, the Golem demands that we not only look at how monsters are created in the supernatural realm, but how they are formed, crafted, and let loose when the real world becomes monstrous.

### Notes

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ties Research Council of Canada. I would also like to thank the Friends of Yiddish, Toronto, for their generosity in helping to fund my research at the Vilnius Yiddish Institute, University of Vilnius, Lithuania.

2. See, for example, the collection of essays in Erica Brown and Mary Grover, eds., *Middlebrow Literary Cultures: The Battle of the Brows, 1920-1960*, Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture*, and Lawrence Napper, *British Cinema and the Middlebrow in the Interwar Years*, among many others.

3. For a more detailed history of the Golem in German narratives see Peter Demetz, "Rabbi Loew and His Golem in German Literature," 294-96; and Cathy Gelbin, *The Golem Returns*.

4. Rilke's three-part poem, "Rabbi Loew" (1896), for example, contains details and allusions to both Klutschak's version of the legend and *Sippurim*. See Demetz 297. Commenting on the many adaptations of the Golem in German culture, in *Between Redemption and Doom* Noah Isenberg emphasizes "what was most significant was not the familiarity with past adaptations of the them, but rather how the legend now fit into ... the broader understanding and widely shared perceptions of Jews" (81).

5. Yiddish, a hybrid language containing vocabulary from German, Hebrew, Aramaic, Slavic languages and Old French and Italian, was spoken by Jews in Europe from the tenth century until the time of the Holocaust (when close to 13 million Jews spoke the language). Hebrew, often considered "too holy" for everyday speech, was only revived as a spoken language at the beginning of Jewish Enlightenment and with the birth of national Zionist ideology in the late nineteenth century. Jewish communities in the Diaspora also developed languages such as Aramaic, Ladino (Judeo-Spanish), Judeo-Arabic, and Bukharian to communicate among themselves.

6. The story's focus on the blood libel was an even greater issue for nineteenth-century Jewry than in the 1600s. The Kishinev pogrom was sparked by a blood libel case, and in the 1899 Hilsner trial a Jewish young man in Czechoslovakia was accused of killing a Christian woman to use her blood for ritual purposes. A number of other cases in Romania, Bohemia, and Prussia similarly linked Jews with the killing of Christians to make matzos. See Richard Gottheil et. al, "Blood Accusations."

7. For more information on these pogroms see Klier and Lambroza 228, 231.

8. Numerous recent studies on "the Jew" in Western culture show how Jewish characters came to signify a multitude of diffuse concepts in key works that make up the modernist canon. See, for example, Brian Cheyette and Laura Marcus, eds., *Modernity, Culture, and 'the Jew'*; Boyarin and Boyarin, eds., *Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Cultural Studies*; Nochlin and Garb, eds., *The Jew in the Text: Modernity and the Construction of Identity*; Lassner and Trubowitz eds., *Antisemitism and Philosemitism in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries* and the myriad

of texts and articles on Jewish representation that have been published in the past two decades.

9. In their introduction to *Expressionism Reassessed*, Shulamith Behr, David Fanning, and Douglas Jarman draw important attention to the various aspects that we identify with Expressionism but also point to the key paradoxes of “expressionist culture” and lack of cohesiveness in categorizing it as an aesthetic movement. See especially 3-5.

10. This essay is reprinted *Werke. Frühe Schriften aus dem Nachlass*, ed. Inka Mülder Bach, 9.2:9.

11. For more on the influence of war on expressionist film aesthetics see Noah Isenberg’s introduction to *Weimar Cinema*; Anton Kaes’s chapter on “The Return of the Dead” in 1920s Weimar films such as *Nosferatu*, 87-89; and Werner Sudendorf, “Expressionism and Film: The Testament of Dr Caligari.”

12. See, for example, the essays in Christian Rogowski, ed., *The Many Faces of Weimar Cinema: Rediscovering Germany’s Filmic Legacy*, which indicate that Weimar film often employed modernist, experimental strategies to appeal to the mass market and a broad audience of lower and middle-class viewers in Germany and abroad who existed and desired the types of innovation that distinguished German film from Hollywood.

13. I would especially like to thank Phyllis Lassner for her insights and productive conversations in developing these abundant associations between the monster and Jewish representation.

14. See Gelbin 115-16, 118.

15. Astharot was a goddess of an ancient fertility cult, but more importantly in the time of the Inquisition it was considered a devil of first degree, a seducer of young women often linked with mathematics, alchemy, and black arts.

16. For a further expansion on the correlations between the coding of modern Jews and their link to the urban (especially in Wegener’s film) see Noah Isenberg, *Between Redemption and Doom*, Chapter 3, “Weimar Cinema, the City, and the Jew,” especially 94-104.

17. See “Jewish Badge” in *The Jewish Encyclopedia* 2: 425.

18. *Shriften* is best known for publishing the literary works of the Yiddish modernist movement known as “Di Yunge” (“The Young Ones”). See Bilski 61 for more on the historical background of Leivick and the production of *Der Goylem*.

19. *The Dybbuk* was originally titled *Between Two Worlds*, published by Ansky in 1914 in Russian to be performed by Stanislavsky’s Moscow Art Theater. Stanislavsky convinced him to translate it into Yiddish and it was in this language that it was first performed by the acclaimed Vilna Yiddish theater group. Hebrew poet Chaim Nachman Bialik translated it into Hebrew for the Habima performance. In 1937 the play was adapted into a Yiddish film, directed by Michal Waszrinski in Warsaw and also shot in the style of

German expressionism. See Susan Tamarkin Goodman, ed., *Chagall and the Artists of the Russian Jewish Theater* 92.

20. The following citations follow Joachim Neugroschel's translation of *Der Golem*.

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