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Necessary Monster: H. Leivck's Drama *The Golem*

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I. The Age of Golem: the Gestation and Formation of a Monster

Golem in rabbinic Hebrew denotes something raw and primordial, formless and incomplete. The word root *glm* as used in the Bible refers to "an unformed mass" for both things and humans, and a form of the word, *golmi*, can be found in *Psalms* (139:16).[1]

The golem is created through the sheer power of the word, based on the Talmudic belief that, with God's permission, life could be created through the permutation and alteration of the 22 Hebrew alphabets by Rabbinic incantations. In other words, the golem is literally inscribed into life. In the Medieval era, the legend goes that a rabbi can be authorized by God to create a humanoid through inscribing the Hebrew letters *emet* on the forehead of the golem or on a slip of paper to be inserted into the mouth. *Emet*, truth in Hebrew, literally means "God created to do," and it is left to man's responsibility to complete God's doing. However, what creates the golem can also destroy it: simply by removing the first letter *e* from *emet*, the clay creature will meet his doom since *met* in Hebrew means death. Life could thus be activated and de-activated with the change of formula, anticipating the push-button weapons in our time.

Over the centuries, the golem has made the quantum leap from being an obscure reference in Judaic esoterica to which only Kabbala savants had access to attaining almost "celebrity status" in pop culture such as film, television, and computer games,

[1] Byron L. Sherwin, *Golems Among Us: How a Jewish Legend Can Help Us Navigate the Biotech Century* (New York: Ivan R. Dee Publishers, 2004), p. 8. Contrary to numerous accounts, the exact word *golem* does not appear in the Bible, only the derivative *golmi*: "Your (God's) eyes saw my unformed mass (*golmi*), it was all recorded in your book" (quoted in Sherwin, p. 8). In Yiddish slang, someone big but clumsy or stupid could be called a golem.

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enjoyed by the young and old alike.[2]

The golem has cultivated a "rich tradition" as a trope,[3] from allegories of radical historical change to feminist appropriations,[4] yet the most enduring metaphor of the monster exists as a persistent parable of human creation: either in celebrating the creative genius of mankind or alerting us to the danger in trying to play God; the debate regarding whether the golem is "helpful or monstrous" remains unabated.[5] A

[2] Sherwin, p. 35. Adaptations of the golem legend are too numerous to list exhaustively: notable among them are fairy tale writer Jacob Grimm's story published in *Journal for Hermits* (*Zeitung für Einsiedler*, 1808). The year 1910 saw the publication of Chayim Bloch's German story *Der Prager Golem: Von seiner "Geburt" bis zu seinem "Tod"* (The Golem of Prague: From His "Birth" to His "Death"), followed by Gustave Meyrink's novel *Der Golem* (1915). Two Nobel laureates wrote on the legend for children in 1983: Isaac Bashevis Singer and Elie Wiesel. Jorge Luis Borge also writes a poem on the golem, *El Golem* (1958). Feminist re-readings on golem can be found in Marge Piercy's novel *He, She, and It* (1991), and Cynthia Ozick's short story *Xanthippe and Puttermesser* (in *The Puttermesser Papers*, 1997). Bruce Chatwin refers to the golem myth in his novel *Utz* (1988), and Michael Chabon's 2001 Pulitzer-winning novel *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (2000) invites parallels between the making of golem and artistic creation. In terms of cinema, a trilogy of Golem films was made by German director Paul Wegener, of which only *Der Golem* (1920) survives. French director Julien Duvivier made his version *Le Golem* (1936), and in Israeli director Amos Gitai made a modern day version, *Golem or the Spirit of Exile* in 1992. In drama, Arthur Holitscher wrote a German play *Der Golem: Ghettolegende in drei Aufzugen* (*The Golem, Ghetto Legend in Three Acts*) in 1908**,** followed by Leivick's verse drama in 1921. Eric Basso is famous for the trilogy *The Golem* (1983). In opera, Romanian composer Nicolae Bretan composed *The Golem* in 1924, Abraham Ellstein's eponymous opera came in 1962, and British composer John Casken had his *The Golem* performed in 1989 to rave reviews. A major arts exhibit called Golem 2002 Project was held in Prague in 2002. Regarding the various transformations the golem is subject to from 1909 to 1980, see Arnold L. Goldsmith.

[3] Cathy S. Gelbin, "Of Stories and Histories: Golem Figures in Post-1989 German and Austrian Culture," *German Memory Contests: The Quest for Identity in Literature, Film, and Discourse*, eds. Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove, and Georg Grote (New York: Cadmen House, 2006), p. 193.

[4] As a metaphor of social changes, see Cathy S. Gelbin's "Of Stories and Histories: Golem Figures in Post-1989 German and Austrian Culture." For feminist perspectives on golem, see Elizabeth Bronfen's "Granting Life: Impotence and Power of the Female Cyborg," A*rtificial Humans: Manic Machines, Controlled Bodies* (Berlin: Jovis, 2000), and Ruth Bienstock Anolke's "Reviving the Golem, Revisiting Frankenstein: Cultural Negotiations in Ozick's *The Puttermesser Papers* and Piercy's *He, She and It,*" *Connections and Collisions: Identities in Contemporary Jewish-American Women's Writing*, ed. Lois E. Rubin (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005).

[5] Joachim Neugroschel trans. and ed., "Introduction," *The Golem* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), p. ix.

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major exponent of the former can be found in Jewish philosopher Gershom Scholem who maintains that "the creation of the Golem is … an affirmation of the productive and creative power of Man."[6] In this sense, the golem stands for the spirit of modernity in cultivating science and technology. Citing the Yiddish proverb, "the world is a golem," Jewish philosopher Byron L. Sherwin even goes so far as to call our "biotech century" as "the age of the golem."[7]

However, ethical issues of human creation and theological concerns about divine procreation tend to dominate the golem discussions in recent years. In the recently published reader *What Should I Read Next?*,[8] which outlines an essential reading list for liberal college education, Dr. Clare R. Kinny, one of the 70 professors of University of Virginia Professors responding to the project, recommends Faust, Frankenstein, and Golem for the undergraduates, classifying them under "dangerous knowledge." The category represents a common perception of the golem as the embodiment of overweening human aspirations.[9]

A third view may be gleaned from Rollo May's formulation about the Greek concept of *daimon*, which can be constructive or destructive:

> The daimonic is any natural function which has the power to take over the whole person…. The daimonic could be either creative or destructive and is normally both. When this power goes awry, and one element usurps control over the total personality, we have "*daimon* possession."[10]

As David Armitage argues, the distinction of early modern and modern monstrosity has usually been drawn at the boundary "between superstition and science."[11] The golem popularly known today is exactly a figure born on the cusp of transition from superstition to science in the sixteenth century Prague. Though it has been argued that the perception of monsters over the eighteenth century underwent an enlightening process, rendering them "naturalized," "less threatening" and "more revealing"

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6 Gershom Scholem, "The Golem of Prague and the Golem of Rehuvot," *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken, 1971), p. 337.

7 Sherwin, p. 6.

8 Clare R. Kinny, "Dangerous Knowledge," *What Should I Read Next?: 70 University of Virginia Professors Recommend Readings in History, Politics, Literature, Math, Science, Technology, the Arts, and More*, eds. Jessica Feldman and Robert Stilling (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), pp. 183-186.

9 Discussions of the relative merits of science are beyond the scope of the paper, though any advocate of scientific Enlightenment would point out that the better part of modern technological advances depends on such "dangerous knowledge."

10 Stephen A. Daimond, *Anger, Madness, and the Daimonic: The Psychological Genesis of Violence, Evil and Creativity* (Buffalo: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 65.

11 David Armitage, "Frankenstein," *Monstrous bodies/political monstrosities in early modern Europe*, eds. Laura Lunger Knoppers and Joan B. Landes (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 200.

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as primitive creatures of the past, relics of the early stages of development,[12] it is questionable to apply such an Enlightenment genealogy to Jewish monsters such as the golem. The Jewish Enlightenment, known as *Haskalah*, developed from the tolerance of the humanist universality and evolved into cultural assimilation and rational secularity removed from religious mysticism. As a result, the continuous genealogy of the golem from the Middle Ages experienced a break during the eighteenth century, before rearing its ugly head again at the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth centuries, at the time of rising nationalism in Europe.

The playwright of *The Golem* (1921) under discussion was born in such an era.[13] H. Leivick (1888-1962), originally named Leivick Halpern, was born in what is now Minsk, Belarus in 1888, a period of intellectual fervor battling with feudal repression in Russia, with an intelligentsia class best characterized by what Gaev in Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* would call "men of the 80s."[14] Leivick launched himself into revolutionary activism after studying at Yeshiva, engaged in the Jewish socialist party the Bund and took part in the aborted 1905 Revolution. He was imprisoned for four years before being sent into exile for hard labor in Siberia. He managed to flee to the US in 1913 and resided in New York as a worker and writer ever since. As a representative of the so-called *Yunge* (Young Ones) generation who succeeded the Golden Age of Yiddish writers in America, Leivick has been regarded as the greatest Yiddish poet.[15]

Leivick wrote Yiddish plays at a time when New York City was already the capital of Yiddish theatre and he managed to transform the so-called Yiddish Broadway from being entertainment-oriented to an avenue for idea exchange and social change.[16] *The Golem* has been hailed as the greatest achievement in Yiddish drama,[17] matching Goethe's *Faust* almost both in length and scope. "A dramatic poem" in eight scenes that would take about six hours to perform, it was completed in 1920, published in 1921 in New York, but not performed until 1925 by the eminent Habimah Theatre in Moscow in Hebrew. Its premiere performance in the original Yiddish was presented finally in 1929 in Krakow, Poland.[18]

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12 *Ibid*., pp. 201-202.

13 H. Leivick, "The Golem: A Dramatic Poem in Eight Scenes," *The Great Jewish Plays*, trans. and ed. Joseph C. Landis (New York: Avon Books, 1980).

14 He changed his name so as not to be confused with another Yiddish writer Moshe-Leyb Halpern.

15 Joseph C. Landis, "Introduction," *The Great Jewish Plays*, trans. and ed. Joseph C. Landis (New York: Avon Books, 1966), p. 217.

16 He penned both verse and prose dramas, altogether 21 plays. Representative plays include *Shmates* (*Rags*, 1921), *Shap* (*Shop*, 1926), and *Keytn* (*Chains*, 1930).

17 Carl Schaffer, "Leivick's The Golem and the Golem Legend," *Staging the Impossible: The Fantastic Mode in Modern Drama*, ed. Patrick D. Murphy (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992), p. 137.

18 Nahma Sandrow trans. and ed., *God, Man, and Devil: Yiddish Plays in Translation* (Syracuse:

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II. From History to Legend: the Historicity of a Legendary Monster

What do you know about the Golem?...
Always they treat it as a legend,
Till something happens and it turns
Into reality once more.[19]

Before proceeding to outline Leivick's historical backdrop in composing *The Golem*, it is essential to trace the original historical context that gives birth to the monster. The golem has always been known as a legend, but what is less well known is that the legend is firmly grounded in history. The giant creature was invented by the Jews as a defensive response to an offensive invention: the trumped-up charges of the so-called blood libel in which the Gentiles accused the Jews of kidnapping and killing Christian children to provide ritual blood in making *matzoh* bread during Passover celebrations.[20]

The blood libel originated from the twelfth century and persisted into the early twentieth century throughout Europe, exploited almost as a *carte blanche* pretext for launching anti-Semitic atrocities, such as the *pogroms* in Tsarist Russia during Leivick's youth. As if an ordeal too traumatic to be realistically represented, the slaughter engendered by the blood libel receives only veiled references in the play, when Tankhum in Scene 3 "Through Darkness" recalls in a vision how his son is tortured to death on the eve of Passover:

In my fiery chariot
Lies my son,
Festive for the Passover.
His left eye, run through by a spear,
His right one—closed.
His right arm lopped off at the shoulder,

Syracuse University Press, 1999), p. 18. *The Golem* was translated by J. C. Augenlicht into English and published in *Poet Lore* in 1931. The English version premiered in 1931 in the form of an oratorio. It should be noted that *Poet Lore* is a poetry journal which boasts of being the oldest in America, first published in 1889, with 120 years of history in print. Besides poetry, it also introduced many European dramas, such as Chekhov, Ibsen, and Strindberg.

19 Gustav Meyrink, *The Golem*, trans. Heinz Norden (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co, 1964), p. 41.

20 *Matzoh*, also spelt *matzo* and *matzah*, is unleavened bread used during the Passover holiday commemorating the exodus from Egypt, in which the Jews left in such haste that they did not wait for the bread to rise.

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His left one—at the elbow.[21]

The macabre murderous amputation is recounted in a reverie of tormented memories, followed by a conjured vision of the victim's resurrection, practiced as a ritual by the bereaved father on each Passover vigil.

Thus the golem is created by what Warren Rosenberg calls "a legacy of rage," born out of frustrated Jewish masculinity, a passive scholarly tradition gone wild, best embodied in the rabbi Maharal. The monster was born "out of necessity and not from wantonness."[22] It arose as a counterplot to thwart the Christian plot, which in turn claims to thwart a Jewish plot. The Jewish plot is imaginary, so is the Jewish counterplot imagined. However, the alleged Christian blood is invented in order to shed real Jewish blood. It is real violence committed against others in the name of fantasized violence against oneself; fake victimhood is exploited as a justification for acting as a vindicator and a pretext for retaliating against true victims. As the historian of the blood libel of Simon of Trent, Professor Hsia points out, "Passover was indeed bloody, but it was the blood of the Jews that bore witness to a violent fantasy born out of intolerance."[23] Golem the monster is such a creature of imagination born out of a historical trauma, in response to the "fantasized reality" of the prejudiced Christians.

It is noteworthy that the violent atrocities incited by the blood libel are always directed against the Jewish community rather than the individual Jews charged with the murder, because blood murder has always been considered by the accusing Christians as a collective act practiced by the communal Jews *en masse*. In contrast, though the golem could be cast in a violent or even monstrous light, the creature has always been conceived and perceived by the Jews as a savior of the community to shield them against exterior harm. Even Jewish children who grow up listening to bedtime stories of Jewish legends regard the golem as a benevolent protector rather than a malevolent invader such as the *dybbuk*.[24]

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21 Leivick, p. 258.

22 Birgit Kahle-Hanusa, "The Golem: The Genesis of the Myth and Synopsis," *The Golem*, trans. Lionel Salter (Berlin: Capriccio, 1996), p. 13.

23 Blood libel persisted from the Middle Ages to modern times: starting from the first recorded case of William of Norwich in the twelfth century (1144) to the case of Simon of Trent in 1475, blood libel dispersed in similar scenarios from England to Italy, from Spain to Russia, all around the Christian world well into the nineteenth century. Though most historical, legal and scholarly documents have dismissed the blood libel as pure speculation and fabrication, there emerged recently a solitary dissenting voice which indicates that extremist Ashkenazi Jews might have practiced the ritual murder out of hatred of Christians, see Ariel Taoff's *Blood Passover: The Jews of Europe and Ritual Murder*, translated by Gian Marco Lucchese and Pietro Gianetti, 2007 (not in print in English but available online at http://www.bloodpassover.com/). Hsia's rejoinder, or riposte to the book can be found on the website: http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasen/spages/827035.html.

24 Sherwin, p. 4-5.

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For the Gentiles, the blood libel served as a rallying call around which the community could strengthen their anti-Semitic sentiment into a movement against the Jews. Both the fabrication of the blood libel and the invention of the golem can thus be regarded as the stuff that Benedict Anderson's "imagined community" is made on; a centrifugal force that propels communal identification by provoking communal defense against perceived external threat.

Growing up in such a close-knit traditional Jewish community in a village near Minsk, Leivick experienced first-hand the ghetto existence and the ghettoized sentiment of being displaced and isolated in a community sealed by a common destiny. As a child, he was deeply scarred by being hurled racial slurs such as "dirty Jew" and experienced racist physical battery.[25] The Russian Jews were forced to relocate on the margins of the Empire in what is called the Pale of Settlement, along the western Russian border from the Baltic to the Black Sea. The historical Jewish ghetto is spatialized allegorically into a symbolic locale in the play. The location where the downtrodden Jewish beggars congregate is called The Fifth Tower, which, according to its overlord Tankhum, is the ruins that stand outside the realm of the other four towers, which stand for the four directions, implying that the Tower Five is in fact a non-place, a dystopian space abjected by the non-Jews and where the expelled Jews squeeze out a bare existence in a cramped forsaken space. But even then, Christian priest Thaddeus designs to "drive the paupers out" from the Fifth Tower,[26] and won't rest content until he succeeds in expelling and exterminating the wretched Jewish beggars from the dismal tower in what virtually amounts to an act of genocide, as Maharal says, in a bid to "free the world of us."[27] Such has been the common lot befalling the persecuted Jews as throughout history they were forced to choose among the limited options of conversion, expulsion, and extermination.

III. Judah Lowe of Prague and the Golem: Master of Language and Monster of Language

Being marginalized and ghettoized is only a prelude to the unfolding saga of the Jewish Diaspora as the ensuing tragedy of persecution awaits them. If the gestation of the fantastic creature that is the golem is grounded in historical reality, the man who helped bring the golem into being is also a historical figure. The golem figure is usually associated with Faust and Frankenstein to the exclusion of its creator: the historical personage Judah Lowe of Prague, who deserves closer scrutiny and invites more parallels with Doctor Faust and Victor Frankenstein than his creation.

25 Landis, p. 218.

26 Leivick, p. 257.

27 Leivick, p. 253.

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Unlike the Romantic image of the mad scientist driven by overreaching ambitions to play God, as popularized by Mary Shelley's Victor Frankenstein, Maharal is portrayed in the legend as shouldered with overwhelming communal commitments. Far from being an individualist renegade secluded from society, the Rabbi is a leader of the Jewish community responsible for defusing the crisis of anti-Semitism. Instead of harboring the Faustian ambition of a Renaissance man, Maharal, true to his name Lowe, which means lion, is obliged to act like a Machiavellian prince: a lion with foxy cunning so as to see through the traps set by the "wolf:" the Christian blood libel.

But in order to discern the rationale behind the conflation of the historical and the legendary, one has to examine the historical reality first. Judah Lowe ben Bezalel, also known by his acronym as Maharal (1525-1609),[28] is a key figure in Prague during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, reputed to be "Prague's most famous Jew after Franz Kafka."[29] As the chief rabbi of Prague, he held the highly revered title *Baal Shem Tov* as a unique possessor of the Good Name which links humans to God. His byname Judah Leon accords with the verse from *Genesis*: "Judah is a lion's whelp; on prey, my son, have you grown" (49:9).[30] Well versed not only in Talmudic scholarship, he also advocates scientific spirit, acquainted with astronomer Johannes Kepler, and has been credited with "the flourishing of rationalism" in Prague in the late sixteenth century.[31] His importance can still be gauged by his statue that graces the entrance of the Prague new town hall today.

There are, however, no extant records pointing to his engagement with sorcery or the occult. On the contrary, he plays a vital role in the birth of modern science, known to have disentangled science from faith, succeeding in "sequestering study of nature from study of Torah."[32] Nevertheless, his name began to be inextricably linked with the legend of golem since the second half of the nineteenth century, as attested by the influential collection of Jewish folktales collected and compiled by writer Micha Joseph bin Gorion (1865-1921), an older contemporary of Leivick, where the golem legend is classified under "the rabbinical tales."[33]

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28 Maharal is a Hebrew acronym of Moreinu ha-Rav Loew, which means our teacher.

29 Hillel J. Kieval, "Pursuing the Golem of Prague: Jewish Culture and the Invention of A Tradition," *Modern Judaism* 17.1 (1997): 4.

30 Quoted in Micha Joseph Bin Gorion, *Mimekor Yisrael: Selected Classical Jewish Folktales* (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1990), p. 159.

31 Tirosch-Samuelson, "Book review of Joseph M. Davis. *Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller: Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Rabbi*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 58.3 (2005): 962.

32 Noah J. Efron, "Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe," *Journal of History of Ideas* 58.4 (1997): 725.

33 Baal Shem Tov literally means Possessor or Master of the Good Name, implying "an extremely righteous rabbi, someone possessing such deep penetration that he knows the unutterable name of God and can use it to control nature." See David Porush, "Hacking the Brainstem: Postmodern Metaphysics and Stephenson's Snow Crash," *Configurations* 2.3 (1994): 568.

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Historically blood libel had long existed since the Medieval times and during Maharal's era the practice was not particularly prevalent. In fact, the late sixteenth century Prague is known as "the Golden Age of Jewry" in history due to relative religious tolerance under the Habsburg reign of Emperor Rudolf II.[34] Therefore, the question arises as to why the legend and the play are set in a relatively benign time for the Jews since, at first glance, it appears incongruous that the golem should be created in such an era.

However, it was during the second half of the nineteenth century that the *pogrom* perpetrated on the pretext of the blood libel began to run rampant and hence gave rise to the literary creation that anachronistically held Maharal accountable for combating the dark superstition of blood libel. The need for a Jewish leader to create the arms necessary to defend the community from external harm was so urgent that in 1909 Polish rabbi Yudl Rosenberg published the golem stories he claimed to be based on an authentic manuscript from Maharal's son-in-law who also participated in the creation of the golem. Though it was proved to be a mere fabrication, it has been argued that Rabbi Rosenberg's literary forgery could be justified as a political rallying call for the Jews to stand up and defend themselves against the virulent anti-Semitism sweeping across Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century.[35]

Though Maharal is not historically responsible for creating the golem as the legend would lead us to believe; the necessity of creating the golem from the earth corresponds to Maharal's own philosophy. He devotes a whole chapter of his *Netivot Olam*, a book on how to behave ethically according to Torah, to the study of *eme*t, or as previously mentioned, to truth. He believes that the truth sprouts from the earth: "Only in these dark-encrusted lower realms, can human beings truly begin the task of elevating truth, of becoming truthful persons."[36] The golem is the creature created from the earth that helped elevate the Jews from the "lower realms" to the height of truthfulness.

However, rational perception and religious insight alone do not make effective

According to Kieval, Maharal's name was first linked to the golem legend only in 1841. See Kieval, p.7. Maharal's books leave a lasting legacy on Judaism and Western philosophy, such as *Tiferet Yisrael* (The Glory of Israel), *Be'er ha-Golah* (The Well of Exile), and *Nezah Yisrael* (The Eternity of Israel), yet little evidence suggests his engagement with the so-called practical Kabalah or the use of magic. See Kieval, p.3-4. His ancestry can be traced back to King David and the heritage of scholarship runs in the family well into the twentieth century: the renowned Hungarian Jewish American physicist Dr. Theodor von Krman, who counts Dr. Qian Xuesen, the father of nuclear research in China, among his protégés, is a distinguished example.

34 Kieval, p. 5.

35 Amy Sonnheim, "Picture Books about the Golem: Acts of Creation Without and Within," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 27.3(2003): 378.

36 Vera Schwarcz, "Truthfulness at Dawn, Truthfulness at Night: Reflections on a Common Striving in Chinese and Jewish Traditions," *Journal of World History* 19.4 (2008): 413.

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defense, and Maharal is obliged to resort to external assistance, since as a man of peace, "murderous hate and rage" are essentially alien to him, and "murder in a rabbi's eyes" is simply a contradiction in terms.[37] Leivick's dramatic portrayal of the rabbi corresponds overall to the historic personage. As a theologian, Maharal tries to reconcile the unique spirituality of the Jews with universal unity of spirit and body, as his thinking evinces "a genuine engagement and struggle with the kabalistic presumption regarding the distinctive nature of the Jewish soul."[38] While not denying the universal divine image of man in general, Maharal does not shy from confirming the unique position the Jews stand in relation to divinity, saying at one point that "Israel is the complete human (*adam gamur*) to the exclusion that other nations are not complete human"[39] for the mere fact that the Jews are in sole possession of the divine image.

Whereas the "idolatrous nations" are more "physical," Israel is a nation whose "corporality is nullified in relation to the form, which is (the condition of) *adam*."[40] Even though only Israel is blessed with spiritual plenitude while the idolatrous nations are deprived of the divine endowment due to their spiritual "deficiencies and insufficiencies,"[41] the Jews easily fall prey to their physical inadequacy when confronted with external assault, a deficiency Maharal is only too painfully aware of. Ironically, it is precisely the divine distinction that "the Jew is connected to the internal core and the non-Jew to the external shell,"[42] which not only sets them apart from other nations, but also subjects them to external assault by physical force. In other words, the Jewish repudiation of corporeal body in favor of the spiritual form does not defend the Chosen People from the attack of the "idolatrous nations," especially the Christians.

Equipped with their own vulnerable "pure spirituality," the Jewish community is obliged to resort to physical force from outside, and the rabbi of Prague, as the leader of the community, is responsible for creating the golem as a corporeal double to supplement and complement the spiritual Jewry, an urgent task with the survival of the Jewry at stake.[43]

The corporeal monstrosity of the golem is an essential double for the purely

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37 Leivick, p. 229.

38 Elliot R. Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond: Law and Morality in Kabbalistic Mysticism* (London: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 116.

39 *Ibid*., p. 118.

40 *Ibid*., p. 118.

41 *Ibid*., p. 118.

42 *Ibid*., p. 119.

43 However, as Wolfson has argued, it must be pointed out that Maharal is found wavering between the "rationalist approach" of minimizing Jewish distinction while emphasizing human universality and the "mythic approach" of stressing Jews as unique as influenced by Kabbalistic anthropology. See Wolfon, p. 120.

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spiritual Jews, and the golem has been called a "monster of language"[44] since he is begot by the sheer power of divine language. Under Leivick's pen, he is endowed with the gift of speech, albeit limited, unlike most accounts of the legend. However, Maharal, the master of language, only needs the golem's endowments to destroy; when the monster answers the calling to employ language to communicate, as in the case with the rabbi's granddaughter, he is destroyed by the master's conjuring language, thus rendering ambiguous who the real monster of language is, the creator or the creature. The relations between the golem and the Jews are fraught with such ambivalence, leading to further inquiry into the complicated nature of doubleness in the golem.

IV. Golem as a Double Jewish *Doppelgänger*

As Marina Warner points out, "the Double is a complex, even riddling concept," which besides the commonplace of a look-alike, can be "someone who does not resemble oneself outwardly but embodies some inner truth,—while wholly dissimilar, unnervingly embodies a true self."[45] The golem can be seen exactly as such a dissimilar double that resembles its creator Maharal in nothing externally but internally they have something in common, as in Warner's words, "the metamorphic beings who issue from you, or whom you project or somehow generate, may be unruly, unbidden, disobedient selves inside you whom you do not know, do not own, and cannot keep in check."[46]

The golem embodies precisely such an "alien creature inside," a *Doppelgänger* of the Jews. The monster at one point in the play admits as such when he expresses his wish to "lie down at [Maharal's] feet and be his shadow."[47] The golem resembles the Maharal nothing in appearance but internally mirrors both the hope and fear embedded in the Jews, because he is engendered as a consequence of another much more undesirable *Doppelgänger* of the Jews: the invented existence of the blood libel, which takes on a life of itself and acts like a *memento mori*. The golem is a constant reminder of the lurking threat of the blood libel, which shadows the Jews almost everywhere they settle. Golem's violence doubles the Christian violence. The invincible "external shell" of the golem makes up for the inherent soft underbelly that is "the spiritual core" of Jewry.

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44 Ruth Bienstock Anolk, "Appropriating the Golem, Possessing the Dybbuk: Female Retelling of Jewish Tales," *He Said, She Says: An RSVP to the Male Text*, eds. Mica Howe and Sarah Appleton Aguiar (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2001), p. 24.

45 Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self,* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 163.

46 *Ibid*., p. 164.

47 Leivick, p. 302.

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The golem is therefore recalled as a necessity but repelled as a monster. Maharal, confronted with his conflicting roles of the rabbi being a peacemaker and a policy maker, which could mean being a war maker, sees his repressed dilemma released in the golem's confused dream in Scene 3:

Your face I saw in double image:
One half was large—as large as mine,
The other—smaller still than yours;
Your eyes were four—and all were dead.
In one alone a speck of red,
And from it burning blood was dripping.
Then suddenly I saw your head
Begin to bob and toss about,
To beat itself against my own,
And with the eye that dripped hot blood,
It burnt itself into my brow,
And bit by bit into my brain
…
I threw my hands around your throat,
And fiercely I began to choke you.[48]

The seemingly troubled vision actually crystallizes the rabbi's suppressed desire to command his soulless creation to act out his repressed fear and anxiety: to take on the role of a warrior at the cost of mass bloodshed, and in order for the role of the warrior golem to emerge triumphant, the part of the rabbi has to be submerged or strangled, as seen in the final image of being choked.

Uncertain of the veracity of the vision as a divine intention revealed, Maharal discloses his own misgivings by immediately dismissing the blatant violence demonstrated in the dream: "Let words your hatred dissipate." Ironically the command he resorts to for dissolving hatred replicates exactly the one he has used to dissolve hatred against the Jews: by invoking the divine words. The rabbi is convinced of the truthfulness of the envisioned "speck of blood" only on hearing the golem's account of seeing "a face entirely made of light, a body huge, like mine, he flutters over me,"[49] a sign of wonder taken as the embodiment of holy ordinance. Only then does "the double image" the golem has witnessed in the dream reconcile the opposites of peace and force, passivity and action, conflating the contraries into a unified wholeness, setting the golem in motion to march to the Fifth Tower to protect the Jews.

With Maharal's conviction concerning the use of violence fortified by the sanctified dream, he comes to terms with violence as a necessary means and recognizes the golem as his *Doppelgänger*, a physically forceful benevolent *daimon* doubling his divine spirituality.

[48] Leivick, p. 262.
[49] Leivick, pp. 263-4.

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However, even if the recourse to violence is justified by divine ordinance as an extreme measure in times of necessity, two different troubling aspects of the golem as *Doppelgänger* persist: one resides in the dual nature of violence wielded as a double-edged sword: when the seemingly benign *daimon* turns demonic and unleashes the physical force against its own kind; the other is the ethical issue of how to grapple with the humanity of a created monster: when the fear-provoking monster himself falls prey to human fear of being abandoned and longing for reciprocated human affection. Just as the beggars could double as messiahs in disguise in the play, the monstrous redeemer paradoxically longs for redemption, blurring the demarcation between redeemer and the redeemed, merging them into doubles.

V. Necessary Monster and Monstrous Necessity: An Ethical Critique of Violence

I came to free you,
And yet you are afraid.[50]

The golem offers a ready remedy to Maharal's dilemma. Coming to accept the golem as a necessary evil to ward off the greater evil of blood libel, Maharal realizes that before the advent of the ultimate messianic redemption, and faced with the less than "human" (*adam*) "idolatrous nations," the Jews must resort to fighting back with the aid of the less than human monster that is the golem. Just as his argument about accepting the Torah, Maharal's invocation of the monster "is a harmonious blend of freedom and necessity."[51] As a servant and stranger, the golem serves the necessary function in fending off hostile strangers while being a stranger himself, he is barred from the Jewish community as one of "the unadmitted," a recurrent motif in Gothic literature.[52]

The "unadmitted" golem is emblematic of the Jewry at large, denied admission to settle in their Diaspora. It is with ample reason that the golem legend gained wide popularity at the historic juncture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when ethnic nationalism was on the rise in Europe. Modern nationalism, according to Michael Hechter, can be classified into two main types drawn from images of folk tale: that of "sleeping beauty" and "Frankenstein's monster:" the former denotes the "liberal" and "inclusive" cultural nationalism which tries to attract and accommodate;

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50 Leivick, p. 299.

51 Lawrence Kaplan, "Israel under the Mountain: Emmanuel Levinas on Freedom and Constraint in the Revelation of the Torah," *Modern Judaism.* 18.1 (1998): 39.

52 David Punter, *Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fiction from 1765 to the Present Day,* vol. 1 (New York: Longman Publishing Group, 1996), p. 18.

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the latter signifies the "illiberal" and "exclusive" militant nationalism which tries to reject and repulse.[53] At first glance the golem belongs to the second category, being categorized as next of kin of Frankenstein's monster. However, on closer scrutiny one could discern in the golem a closer affinity with the former "sleeping beauty" type of nationalism, when the humanoid monster's violence lies dormant and his humanity begins to assert itself, especially in his tentative interplay with the Jewish community to which he grows increasingly attached.

The golem first attracts the attention of the common folks, especially women, who venture out from the dark to secure his friendship. Like the sleeping beauty, while under the spell of the rabbi, the golem himself casts a spell over others with his sedate quietus, a meditative passivity affirmed by the Jewish scholastic tradition. The spell of attraction is broken only when the golem is called upon to act out violence, a characteristic not intrinsic but instructed, learned, and acquired. Maharal repeatedly invokes the magic word "blood" like an ideological appellation to brainwash the monster into violent acts. He has to repeat chanting the word to the golem like a litany, in a bid that under the spellbinding mantra the monster can enact the instructions involuntarily.

The golem is called to abandon the mild, liberal sleeping beauty nationalism and advocate the virulent monstrous nationalism only in Scene 4 "The Beggars" which centers on the Fifth Tower, the lowest stratum of the society where the under-privileged such as the paupers, "the sick," "the blind man," and "the hunchback" congregate, as they are faced with the unsubstantiated accusations of murder and threat of expulsion. It is a symbolic locus emblematic not only of the impoverished pockets of an unjust society that Leivick the socialist is concerned with, but also the ghetto where the Jews are forced to settle after being expelled and exiled. Even the temporary shelter proves precarious as the threat of further expulsion looms:

> Expel us? From this place? From this ruin?
> And all of Prague is envious of us.
> Wherever you pass by these days, they ask:
> Is there not room for more in Tower Five?
> You see it now? The whole of Tower Five
> Will be packed tight with Jews
> Expelled from all the houses.
> You see, you can be driven from a house,
> But who can drive you from a ruin?[54]

Maharal makes it perfectly clear that the golem is sent to the ghetto not to engage in active combat but simply to "stay" and "sleep" until he is called to his mission.[55] Such marked passivity, however, is not equal to the passivity formerly attributed to

[53] Michael Hechter, *Containing Nationalism* (London: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 15.

[54] Leivick, p. 271.

[55] Leivick, p. 264.

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weakened Jewish masculinity, as mocked by Thaddeus; instead, it signifies a defensive preparedness, poised for counter-attack should any offense arise.

The golem's time may be a time for blood and violence, but they will not be invoked unless provoked, a state of passive preparedness rather than active aggressiveness. Consequently the Christian priest Thaddeus resorts to the "blame the victim" tactic, accusing the Jews of concealing their wealth by pretending to be paupers, in order to "smash our dreams of peace," and "stoke in us the fires of hate" for Christians. Slapped with such a string of charges, the Jews are threatened with the prospect of imminent expulsion from the ruins of the Fifth Tower. Only when his master community is faced with impending external menace can the servant golem be unleashed from his bonds of passivity and jump-start his defense against the offenders.

To reinforce the existence of the golem as an absolute indispensable arising out of sheer necessity, the playwright adds in Scene 5 "The Unbidden" the episode of the prophet Elijah and Messiah disguised as Old and Young Beggars coming as "stranger [s] in these lands"[56] in search of refuge in the ruins of the tower. Strangely enough, both divine beings flee at the sight of the golem without giving any explanation, which is instead proffered by Maharal, clarifying on behalf of the gods to the golem that "their time have not yet come. This is your time."[57] What he is suggesting is that the era of violence is not yet ready for a messiah like Elijah, a forerunner of the true Messiah for a time of peace, when, according to Landis, it is still in the throes of violence during the era of "Joseph, the Messiah of the First."[58] Joseph happens to be the name bestowed on the golem by his master, though hardly addressed as such throughout the play; the name denotes the monstrous figure as a messianic figure of redemption.

The revolutionary in Leivick here also condemns the inefficacy of gods in salvaging people in distress: as when the sick man in the Tower laments, "The one I loudly called upon, was not the one who came. The one I did not call upon, he was the one who came."[59] The golem, in contrast, may not come for time eternal, but comes at the right time, when the Jews are in dire need of a powerful champion. Here Leivick's materialist socialism rears its head again, launching a thinly veiled critique of the purely metaphysical Judaic messianism.

Messianic redemption persists as a recurrent motif of Jewish religion and literature, including Leivick's plays.[60] The socialist Leivick, however, downplays its Judaic mysticism and exposes the futility of endless expectation that blunts the urgency of taking immediate actions. Virtually as Leivick's mouthpiece, Maharal challenges

56 Leivick, p. 283.

57 Leivick, p. 278.

58 Landis, p. 221.

59 Leivick, pp. 272-273.

60 Leivick already concerns himself with issues of messianic timeliness or belatedness in his first play, written in solitary prison confinement in 1908, *The Chains of Messiah*, in which God orders an angel to chain up a Messiah until the world is ready for him.

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that a Messiah for the time of peace such as Elijah cannot avail himself of any useful service to the humanity in the age of extremes: "can his fingers coil into fists of iron, and murderously smash in skulls?"[61] Instead, what is needed to address the pressing crisis facing the Jews is a god of violence and vengeance, the unforgiving, punitive, "dark" divinity found in the scriptural Judaism of the *Old Testament*:

> There is another one to do my bidding.
> The only one permitted to be dark,
> Permitted to spill blood for blood.
> The world deserves no other to chastise it,
> And we, as yet, no better to defend us.[62]

Maharal not only acknowledges the legitimacy of the golem as the messenger of salvation sanctioned by God, but takes one step further in pleading with him to salvage the Jews from imminent doom, in a dream sequence that forebodes reality.

The penultimate Scene 7 occurs in "the subterranean caverns of Tower Five," a typical Gothic cave of darkness that conceals the darkest recesses of human soul, where Thaddeus and his monk prepare flasks of blood extracted from a real child for the coming Passover in order to frame the Jews for murdering Christian children. The genuine horror of the scene that surpasses even the venom of malicious slander is the affection and conviction with which Thaddeus and his cohort carry out the murder and calumny as if it were an act of sanctity, perpetuated not out of hatred, but out of "love alone." Thaddeus appoints himself as the savior of the Christian community, fulfilling "the mission" as "ordained for us by God and Jesus" to save the Christians from the Jews in the name of Christ, whose crucifixion is commemorated by the aide's killing a real child, a murder exonerated by the monk's with the reassurance that "blood is love," invoking the Christian image of God as love.[63]

Thaddeus's perverted logic of deeming blood as love is worth considering. Blood of the others promotes love for one's own kind with kindred blood, a motif that can be applied to the golem in a diametrically different way. As golem's appetite for blood and violence is actively whetted by his master, so is his thirst for human passion awakened at the same time, ironically answering in an unexpected fashion the call of the blood. Golem's passion is aroused by his impulsive public embrace of Maharal's granddaughter Devorale, as he fondly recollects in the simplest terms his romantic feelings, "I felt so good every time she looked at me."[64] His passion is obviously unrequited, since only his "dark passion" rather than erotic passion, and his "cold anger" rather than warm affection are required and even fueled to incite his taste for blood in serving and saving the Jewish community.

Such an entirely utilitarian and opportunistic manner of using and abusing

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61 Leivick, p. 288.
62 Leivick, p. 302.
63 Leivick, p. 313.
64 Leivick, p. 240.

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ethical values to meet private ends, however justifiable it may seem, comes under severe critique in Leivick's moral vision. The critique is best articulated by the golem himself in the play, which unlike most other golem literature, gives clear utterance to the otherwise inarticulate monster with all brawn but no brains. From the inception, the golem is depicted as not blessed with the existence of full humanity, merely rendered as a "figure," and a shady "dark presence" as "a shadow's shadow."[65] Surprisingly yet prophetically, the golem's first wish and premier act of will is an urgent request of "create me not,"[66] as if intuitively knowing and refuting the existence without a soul in store for him.

The golem's untamed passion is a form of thwarted humanity, an unnatural violence that breeds monsters of its own: a repression that eventually forces the golem to take to the streets in the ending scene to unleash his suppressed passion and humanity in the form of inhumanity. The golem's awakened humanity is best seen in his articulation in Scene 6, and his pleas for the master's company in Scene 7. In Scene 6, appropriately titled "revelations," the golem reveals himself as the liberator with the power of light to combat forces of darkness, and expresses his pained puzzlement as to "why do you shriek in terror when I come to liberate, to save, to lead you out?"[67] Not comprehending that loneliness derives from his monstrosity which human society inevitably shuns, the golem is fated to "remain alone,"[68] bearing the consequences of exerting violence upon himself. Yet his feeling of loneliness, a painful awareness of his inadequate existence, is also an unmistakable sign of his growing humanity. Loneliness is the beginning of fear, a feeling that is alien to him and deliberately kept at bay lest it perturb his pristine invincibility. As Maharal says when admonishing the Jews before the golem embarks on his eagerly awaited campaign of revenge, "do not contaminate his heart with our dread."[69] Impervious to fear of bloodshed, the golem nevertheless learns fear through human loneliness and love call from the blood. Like the Teutonic legend Siegfried who learns fear through love, the golem sheds his invincible shell not through bloodbath but through tender call of the blood for love from within.[70]

However, from the perspective of the Jewry, his sole *raison d'être* is to execute an executioner's duty of drawing the enemy's blood to make it "a night

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65 Leivick, pp. 225-226.

66 Leivick, p. 226.

67 Leivick, p. 299.

68 Leivick, p. 316

69 Leivick, p. 287.

70 Siegfried is a legendary naïve lad born from the incestuous union of twins Siegmund and Siegliend in the great German saga *Niebelungenlied*. The emphasis on the fearless young Siegfried acquiring the taste of fear only through kissing the slumbering Brünhilde protected in the ring of flames is seen in Wagner's rendition of the Nordic legend in his opera *Siegfried*, the third installment of the tetralogy *The Ring Cycle* (1876).

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of blood."[71] Blood is therefore defined by the Jewish community as well as their Christian counterpart strictly as violent vendetta directed against the others, rather than appellation of the blood in oneself for union with another. It becomes a dividing, instead of merging force, as desired by the golem. As a result, the rupturing force of blood is finally applied to the very people who have invoked it.

The concluding Scene 8 soft-pedals the climactic violence wreaked by the golem on the slandering Christians, which supposedly occurs between scenes 7 and 8. Instead, it focuses on the ethical predicament facing the Maharal as he is confronted by a monster with almost full-blown humanity. If passion is defined not in its sentimental sense but in the sense of *passio* or suffering, the golem is then obliged to bear the brunt of suffering as an interim messiah if the Jews, as he puts it understandingly, "I am condemned to suffer here."[72] As his violent passion comes to breed compassion for his Jewish masters, his sentiment goes unreciprocated by the community, generating only more personal suffering. Thus it can be argued that in the case of the golem's unrequited compassion, human passion could ironically create more suffering than monstrous passion; or to be more precise, lack of human compassion delivers monsters of its own.

In stark contrast to the absence of volition with which the golem carries out violence against the Jews' foes, almost as if mesmerized, strictly in accordance with his master's will, the golem is acutely aware of turning his violent passion on the Jewish community by answering distinctly that he is aware of shedding "Jewish blood." It constitutes a conscious act of revenge for having been exploited for his capability to shed blood but not share blood. Shedding blood of the others is provoked, yet sharing blood with their own kind is prohibited. The simultaneous consent and dissent on blood leads to the final tragedy.

VI. Conclusion: Passion to Compassion

The golem is given the name Joseph by Maharal, and consequently endowed with seminal humanity at least nominally: "you are a man," says the master.[73] But even though he is granted a name to identify and a heart to live, he lacks the essential soul to make a complete man, something the prefigured golem has already asked for in the opening scene, even before really coming into being as a human.[74] The urgent request goes unanswered and persists as a vexed question throughout the play: how can a human survive without attaining a soul?

71 Leivick, p. 288.
72 Leivick, p. 295.
73 Leivick, p. 235.
74 Leivick, p. 227.

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The question looms large particularly in Jewish thinking, of which ethics constitutes a central position. Being human is more than having a calling name and a pumping heart; it requires exalted qualities of what in Yiddish is called *mentshlekhkayt*, or moral values of being a man grounded in belief in man's "original innocence" and an innate "inclination to good."[75] These qualities are based on ethical human interplay with and responsibility towards the others. Only righteous men, putting into practice such acts of obligations towards their fellow beings with "kindliness and modesty," are endowed with *yidish harts* or Jewish hearts: an inner propensity to compassion.[76]

By such a lofty standard, the golem comes close to attaining a *yidish hart*, yet ironically the Jewish community fails to open their Jewish hearts through denying the golem the compassion he craves. The further dramatic irony that the golem as a human creation eventually brings destruction to the human creator finds ready parallels from Gothic tales of modern scientific creations such as *Frankenstein*. Yet what distinguishes Leivick's drama from the others is that not only is the golem's creation divinely mediated through a human mastermind, but also that his destructive passion is borne out of his destroyed compassion.

The golem is not reciprocated with Jewish compassion because, designated as a servant and stranger, he "does not seem a Jew,"[77] yet is bound to serve the Jews at a safe distance as an outsider. Such a mercenary and subordinate relationship serving only the end of the master hardly qualifies as an ethical relationship of *mentshlekhkayt*, and the frustrated compassion consequently sets the stage for the golem's ultimate passionate venting of violence. The violence the golem employs against his Jewish masters, occurring offstage in the concluding scene, is already foreshadowed in the opening scene, when Isaac, one of Maharal's symbolically named disciples, recalls the visionary dream he has experienced upon seeing the alien creature freshly conceived by his master:

> The synagogue was filled with Jews in panic,
> Who threw themselves in every corner, fell
> And, breathless, crawled to hide beneath the tables.
> And as they lay in silence, a man rushed in.
> His face was strange, his head was large, his body
> Tall, arms long, and eyes of piercing green.
> He held a sword, and thrust it everywhere.
> Up and down he slashed, and right and left.
> And soon they all lay, gashed and slaughtered;
> The darkness covering their bloody dying.[78]

Though the described butcher is invoked by the sight of the golem, the graphic

[75] Landis, pp. 2-4.
[76] Landis, p. 3.
[77] Leivick, p. 239.
[78] Leivick, p. 232.

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depiction could lend Isaac's violent vision to both anticipating the golem's final outburst against the Jews as well as recalling the slaughter of innocent Jews in blood libel vengeance. Maharal's two disciples in the scene, Isaac and Jacob, are evidently named after two of the three Jewish patriarchs, implying their master Maharal as the third and most senior patriarch, Abraham. Abraham is known for his special covenant with God, just as Maharal is duty-bound by God's injunction to create golem for Jewish salvation. Isaac's initial foreboding of violence goes unheeded because Maharal is obliged to resort to golem's violence to counter the more palpably urgent violence from the Gentiles. Such is his ethical double bind, a condition that has also been argued as characteristic of the Jewish "intense ambivalence" about the use of violence in general: "the Jews want to embrace and bury violence at the same time."[79]

Upon learning the golem's violence against the Jews, Maharal deplores that, "the blood that I desired to save — I shed," and "he came to save, yet he shed our blood."[80] His self-reproach alerts one not only to the inherent danger of playing with monstrosity, but also to the equally monstrous refusal to acknowledge the golem's incontestable humanity and the withholding of ethical compassion by the Jews.

In fact, a religious predicament also drives Maharal to stem the golem's budding humanity. Even as he inquires after God by appealing to his authority and authorization, "did you not grant approval?" he must be aware that the golem needs to be a monster before the mission and remains one afterwards. Not only is the golem indispensable as a monster to provide the physical force necessary to combat against outward invasion; he is also needed as a monster in the sense of having to remain less than human, so that his creator and master, Maharal, a servant of God as a rabbi, would not risk the hubris of creating humans.

However, the religious edict collides with the ethical imperative. The golem, as "a monster of language" invented by Maharal's verbal incantation, ironically exercises his gift of language to denounce the abuse of ethics in the Jewish community, who has created him only to exploit his monstrosity for their own purpose, while blocking his growth into a full *adam gamur*: "For every house would look at me in fear/ And every house would drive me off in terror."[81]

What saves the people can also abhor them. Leivick here spells out his ethical critique of violence used as a means to save humanity without considering the possible consequences of the violence it might bring to the humanity *per se*. The very people seeking salvation by means of violence are thus ironically condemned to moral damnation. Though he can reassure himself that the golem is a messenger from God, a mere instrument employed to ward off hostile foes, Maharal could never resolve the contradiction that the Messiah of the Jews happens to be a subhuman monster. He

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79 Warren Rosenberg, *Legacy of Rage: Jewish Masculinity, Violence, and Culture* (Amherst: Massachusetts University Press, 2001), p. 80.

80 Leivick, p. 350.

81 Leivick, p. 303.

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tries to focus only on the sheer instrumentality of the monster and distance himself from the golem's budding humanity by dismissing that "a golem is not mourned" like common folks and therefore could be conveniently consigned to the dustbin of oblivion when his functionality expires.[82] As he succinctly sums up, "Your entire life is but an expectation/ Of those moments when I need you."[83] The golem exists insofar as he serves the necessity of the masters, in a strictly hierarchical power relations stripped of ethical buttressing.

It could thus be concluded that it is more of a historical necessity than accident that Maharal and the golem were belatedly linked only in the second half of the nineteenth century, because it coincides with the worsening of the Jewish persecution in Europe. The golem legend arose as a response to the prevalence of anti-Semitic pogrom in Europe, which was gaining momentum especially in Slavic Europe, and in Leivick's Russian Empire it took the most virulent form. The golem is a necessary monster to salvage the Jews from the even more monstrous blood libel violence; yet he is not necessarily monstrous when it comes to the Jewish community, which nevertheless desires only his shedding the enemy blood rather than sharing him their bloodline, and regards his monstrosity as an unvarying constant and its shedding an aberration. With his growing compassion for the Jews kept in check, the golem channels his compassion into a passion tender in formation but violent in deformation, unleashed against the very people that endow him with a body without a soul, which constitutes a critique that Leivick directs against the Jewish use and abuse of violence disregarding its ethical imperatives.

82 Leivick, p. 310.

83 Leivick, p. 317.

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不得已之惡獸：來維克之泥偶怪客

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泥偶怪高林(golem)的傳奇衍生繁多的文學與藝術改編，其中俄裔猶太作家來維克(Leivick)的意底緒劇作影響尤其深遠。此傳奇須置於反猶太主義的歷史脈絡來觀之，由傳奇起源十六世紀末馬哈拉拉比的布拉格，到來維克二十世紀初共產革命的俄羅斯，在捏造的血誣控訴陰影下，猶太人遂創造出高林傳奇以求自保，但高林是救世主，亦是怪獸，此雙重性造成它們一方面利用高林作爲集結反沙皇壓迫的革命動力，另一方面卻又視其爲免死狗烹的暴力工具。高林渾然天成的肢體暴力彌補了猶太人向來引以爲傲的純粹精神性，然而猶太人僅專注於其可用之獸性，使得怪獸日增的人性得不到善意回應，受挫的人性因而又惡化爲獸性，反將暴力轉化爲對付他原本應該保護的猶太主子，釀成悲劇。

來維克刻意將高林形塑爲通曉言語，透過其抗議非自願的暴力，藉以突顯猶太人使用暴力的雙面刃僵局：一方面不得不使用暴力已自救，另方面又粗暴地對待巨獸萌發的人性。來維克以社會主義的角度批判猶太人過度唯心的彌賽亞救世論，並以猶太傳統的道德批判強調猶太心的仁者哲學，不應以他者爲器，避免造成暴力反噬的悲劇。

關鍵字：猶太戲劇　反猶太主義　來維克　高林泥偶　暴力道德

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Necessary Monster: H. Leivck's Drama *The Golem*

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As one of the earliest precursors of modern android creations, the golem has inspired a plethora of literary creations from Mary Shelley to Michael Chabon. The paper focuses on Jewish poet H. Leivick's Yiddish "dramatic poem" *The Golem* (1921), an unstageable 8-scene extended interpretation on the legend.

The golem legend is historicized in its seminal gestation in the late sixteenth century Prague and its dramatic representation in early twentieth century Russia against the background of anti-Semitism. The predicament that the messiah is also a monster are explored historically from Leivick's own conflicting Russian and American periods, when he perceives the golem as an agent of progressive revolutionary violence and a consequence of the revolutionary horrors respectively; as well as the fictionalized yet historical creator Rabbi Mahral in late sixteenth century Prague. Caught between necessity and contingency, the golem is on the one hand a necessary instrument of self-defense against the slandering blood libel, popular in Leivick's tsarist Russia as part of the virulent anti-Semitic pogrom, and on the other hand an expendable tool of defensive violence revealing the dark side of instrumental rationality.

Supplementing the purely spiritual Jews, the golem is designated as a purely physical force of violence to combat external assault. Yet his growing humanity is repressed and passion for the Jews unrequited; leading to the tragic end of his unleashing his frustrated passion on his master by turning his violence against the Jews. Leivick renders the monster articulate and through his complaint of unreturned compassion highlights the dilemma facing the Jews in their use of violence. He also offers a socialist critique of the purely metaphysical Judaic messianic redemption, as well as an ethical critique of violence by accentuating the centrality "Jewish heart" (yidish harts) in traditional Jewish thinking. Violent passion used against destruction not only could turn destructive itself, but lack of compassion for monstrous passion could also breed violent monsters of its own.

Keywords: Jewish drama anti-Semitism H. Leivick the golem ethics of violence

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