

Monsters and Monstrosity in Jewish History

From the Middle Ages to Modernity

Edited by Iris Idelson-Shein & Christian Wiese



Monsters and Monstrosity in Jewish History

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Note on Transliterations

Hebrew and Yiddish terms have been transliterated according to the guidelines set forth in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* and the standard Yivo transcription system. The Anglicized form is used for terms or names already familiar in English.

Introduction: Writing a History of Horror, or What Happens When Monsters Stare Back

Iris Idelson-Shein

Among the many monsters of Jewish lore, one has attracted particular attention. Created of clay and animated through the power of letters, for centuries, the image of the Golem has captivated both Jewish and non-Jewish imagination. In one of the most widely read versions of the tale, the monster is brought to life by the inscription of the Hebrew letters *aleph*, *mem*, and *taph* on its forehead, forming the Hebrew word *emet*—truth. When, after a while, it becomes too strong to handle, the Golem’s creator removes the first letter of the inscription, thus changing the word *emet* to *met*—dead—and the Golem is at once vanquished.

In discussing the Golem’s facial inscription, scholars have often pointed to the mystical meanings of the term *emet*.¹ And yet, the notion of a truth inscribed into the flesh of a monster is a recurring theme in European imagination. The very word *monster* is derived from the Latin *monstrare*—to demonstrate, or from *monere*—to warn.² And indeed, from antiquity and into modern times, monsters have served as omens of impending doom, and as revealers of secrets, whether divine or familial, communal or individual. In the medieval and early modern periods, for instance, it was widely assumed that the birth of a monster was evidence of the sins, the impure thoughts, or the unclean desires of its parents, particularly its mother. The appearance of monsters was also perceived as an omen of divine wrath, and images of monsters played an important role in religious polemic within and in-between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

It is this unique revelatory power of the monster that is the main driving force behind the present volume. As the chapters collected in this volume demonstrate, monsters have the power to reveal specifically those things which the men and women who produce them desire most desperately to conceal. These ominous creatures, which lurk in the back alleys of history, expose the fragilities, insecurities, fears, and desires of the cultures they haunt.

In the particular context of European-Jewish history, from the medieval and into the modern period, monsters have served to define core issues in Jewish-Christian relations, and to debate Jewish existence in Europe more generally. Vampires, human-animal hybrids, conjoined twins, and other monsters often feature in Christian texts and art as symbols of the Jewish presence in Europe, and they are conjured with tantalizing frequency in religious polemic and political debates surrounding the Jews.³ The chapters collected in this volume reveal some of these uses, tracing the image of the

monstrous Jew from the grotesque figures appearing in the painting of Hieronymous Bosch⁴; through early modern debates surrounding the births of Jewish monsters⁵; to the Jewish-inspired monsters of twentieth-century German literature and film.⁶

Perceived throughout much of history as monsters, Jews did not shy away from using the monster in their own, somewhat sly, anti-Christian polemics. An amusing example is offered by the Metz-born physician Tuviah Ha-Cohen. In his 1708 Hebrew medical tract *Ma'ase Tuviah*, Tuviah discussed the genesis of monsters, arguing that they are most often born from the so-called filth of the menstrual blood. Picking up on an ancient trope, Tuviah reminded his readers that Jews are prohibited from engaging in sexual relations during menstruation, but the Gentiles, he made a point of remarking—are not, and so such creatures are more common among them. Tuviah went on to add for good measure that “the sages of science have observed that any strange creature is also strange in its actions and has bad qualities.”⁷

Monsters were conjured in Jewish religious polemics not only to combat Christians and other non-Jewish religions but also to target perceived heresy within Judaism itself. A poignant example is offered by the leading German rabbi Jacob Emden. In his vehement anti-Sabbatean tract *Sefer shimush* (1758), Emden combined a striking illustration of a hirsute demon, equipped with hoofs, two tails (the one shaped like a snake and the other like a lion's tail), and wings: “like the wings of the stork in the sky and those of Lilith.” The creature, Emden explained, was “full of holes [*nekavim*] and devoid of the spirit of life.” But perhaps most horrifying of all were the three heads that rested on its shoulders, their forked tongues protruding from between their grinning lips. Above each, the scribe had identified one of the three Abrahamic religions: “Jew,” “Christian,” “Ishmaelite” [Muslim]. In creating his monster, Emden, with his characteristic lack of subtlety, drew upon almost every imaginable form of hybridity (human-animal, male-female, one-many, life-death)—to convey the horror entailed in Sabbatean syncretism and the blurring of religious identities more generally.⁸

Monsters played not only a polemical role in Jewish literature and art; they also raised practical, indeed *halakhic* problems. Such problems receive startling expression in an early nineteenth-century responsum (a legal decision made by a rabbi to a question sent to him) written by the famous rabbi of Prague Eleazar Fleckeles. The responsum described the birth of a “monster” to a Jewish couple in a small village by the name of Tushka. The community was in turmoil, and a local rabbi was called in to determine the creature’s fate. The rabbi rushed to the couple’s home, but what he witnessed upon entering the birthing room was something more terrifying than he could ever have imagined. “My hair turned white,” he would later recall, “my heart dropped, and all my organs shuddered in terror.” The creature was adorned by a kind of large red wreath. Its eyes, which rested on its forehead, were huge, red, and blazing, and its mouth, which was located where its nose should have been, was crooked, twisted in a kind of infernal smirk. Perplexed and bewildered, the local rabbi immediately wrote Fleckeles to ask whether the creature should be put to death. The reply was unequivocal; any creature born to a human mother—the great rabbi retorted—bears the right to life, no matter how malformed.⁹ We know nothing more about the child born that fateful *erev Shabbat* in Tushka, whether it was a boy or a girl, whether it survived the night, whether it grew to be loved and cared for, whether indeed, it ever really existed. But

the child's fleeting appearance in an early nineteenth-century responsum bears witness to the tragic ramifications of the constant intertwining of monstrosity and disability in Jewish (and *non-Jewish*) history.

Alongside disability, hybridity features prominently in depictions of monstrosity throughout history. Combining both, conjoined twins were particular favorites of both Jewish and Christian teratology in the medieval and early modern periods. Their very existence challenging the boundaries between self and other, they served as a discursive tool to unpack anxieties surrounding such issues as sexuality and symbiosis, whether of a social, religious, romantic, or even familial nature. Already the sages of the Babylonian Talmud were confounded (and irked) by halakhic conundrums concerning conjoined twins, such as precisely on which head it is that a pair of conjoined twins should place their phylacteries (*tefillin*), or how many coins a father should pay for such a pair in the *pidyon ha-ben* ritual (redemption of the firstborn son). Other questions concerned issues of marriage, sexuality, and inheritance. A story which appeared in the medieval Tosafot (the commentaries on the Talmud produced in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in France and Germany), and which continued to fascinate Jewish readers for centuries to come, relates how Ashmedai, the king of demons, once brought forth from the underworld a man with two heads, and presented him before King Solomon.¹⁰ The man, so the story goes, had married and produced children, one of whom also had two heads. The question brought before the wise king was that of the father's estate. The two-headed son argued that his second head entitled him to a double portion of the estate. To settle the claim, Solomon covered one of the heads with a piece of cloth. He then proceeded to pour boiling water on the other, at which the covered head joined his twin in a shriek of pain, indicating that the two were in fact one, and should only receive a single portion of the inheritance.

While this particular monster was extracted from the underworld by Ashmedai, in many cases, as Julie Crawford has argued, monsters "do not just appear; they are made, and understood to be made, in women's bodies. It is *women* whose acts and behaviors produce monsters."¹¹ Indeed, for centuries, the female body has served as an important locus of monstrosity. From antiquity and into modern times it was widely believed, for instance, that the thoughts, visions, and feelings of a woman leave their mark on her fetus, and that any unrealized desires a woman experiences during her pregnancy could have disastrous effects on the child forming in her womb. An ancient tale, reiterated and adapted numerous times into the early modern period, tells of a fair-skinned royal couple who gave birth to a dark-skinned baby (or, in some versions, vice versa). Assuming that the child was the product of adultery, the king sentenced it to death. Luckily, a wise member of the court discovered that hanging just above the royal couple's bed was a picture of a Moor and he promptly explained to the king that such images, if viewed during coitus, tend to leave their mark on any child produced thereof.¹²

Belief in the monstrous imagination was shared not only by Jewish and Christian men but also by women themselves. A rare Yiddish account of the birth of a monster, directly from its mother, appears in the seventeenth-century memoirs of the German merchant-woman, Glikl bas Leib. Glikl begins her anecdote with a warning: "If young, pregnant women at anytime, anywhere see fruit or anything tasty which they fancy,

they should not go away but should first sample it . . . for it can, God forbid, be a matter of life and death to them, as well as to the unborn child, as I found to my cost.”¹³ She then goes on to relate how her son Joseph was born covered in brown marks, which had been imprinted on his skin following an unrealized desire during her pregnancy for a medlar. With sudden insight, Glikl ordered that the baby be given a medlar to suck on, and indeed almost immediately the spots disappeared.¹⁴

Glikl’s spotted baby is one of the milder forms of monstrosity encountered in early modern sources. Other reports of monstrous births tell of terrible human-animal hybrids, cannibalistic beasts, hirsute infants, and more. Some such troubling monsters appear in the 1692 edition of David Gans’s Hebrew historiography, *Tsemach David*. The editor added a third chapter to Gans’s original two, describing some important occurrences which had taken place since the publication of the original a century earlier. Among these, one finds the birth of a multitude of monsters, including a pair of conjoined twins, part human, part pig; a donkey born to a Jewish woman in Głogów; and a man-eating elephant born to a Jewish woman in Moravia.¹⁵ The occurrence of such monsters in a work devoted to universal history, alongside great plagues, wars, famines, or conquests—attests to their perceived political, social, and religious significance.

As this brief history of horror suggests, for centuries, monsters have served Jews to tackle the issues that plagued the communities of their time, as well as to push back against their characterization as monstrous or diabolical beings. Indeed, while predominantly marginalized by scholars of the Jewish past, monsters have played a crucial role in the ways in which European Jews have narrated their history from the medieval period and into the present day. The story of monsters is the story of the interreligious encounters, polemics and persecutions of the Middle Ages, of the political, confessional, and cultural unrest of the early modern period, of the vitality, diversity, and the catastrophe of European Jewry in the modern age. Monsters have been important, albeit direly overlooked, protagonists of Jewish history for centuries—it is time for their story to be told.

* * *

“The initial problem of any science”—Clifford Geertz once famously observed—“[is] defining its object of study in such a manner as to render it susceptible of analysis.”¹⁶ And yet, as Geertz was acutely aware, this problem is not always easily solved. In the context of the present study, the question of definition is particularly troubling. The problem resides, in part, in the very nature of the monster. As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen argues in a foundational essay, to which the contributors of this volume return several times, “The refusal to participate in the classificatory ‘order of things’ is true of monsters generally: they are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration.”¹⁷ The monster is that “Thing” under the bed, that unseen “It” that dwells in the darkness. It is particularly this elusiveness of the monster that is one of its most distinctive features. Not exactly human, not precisely animal—it combines both in a kind of uncanny mixture of same and other. It is precisely this utter amorphism that scares us most, this hair-raising

ambiguity that interrupts our slumber. Indeed, that moment in which we turn on the lights, is the moment when the monster disappears.

The problems entailed in defining the monster are multiplied when seeking an historically sensitive definition. The meanings and markers of monstrosity are in constant flux across periods, spaces, languages, classes, mediums, genres, or cultures. In the twelfth century, for instance, werewolves were all the rage, while the seventeenth century witnessed a morbid fascination with “monstrous births”—signifying anything from conjoined twins, through animal births, to mild neonatal skin conditions.¹⁸ In the nineteenth century the undead crept out of their coffins to haunt European imagination, while the second half of the twentieth century was pursued relentlessly by zombies.¹⁹ What is monstrous in one period or space can thus be mundane in another, and monsters morph from magical to medical, from fearsome to fascinating, from religious to racialized. What, if anything, do all these multifarious monsters share?

Scholars have offered a variety of answers to this question. Some view “aberrant corporeality” as the overarching characteristic of monstrosity.²⁰ Others have stressed the affront posed by monsters to nature; still others focus on their ugliness—moral or physical—or their hazardous or deadly nature.²¹ And yet, the sheer range of creatures which have, over the centuries, been deemed monstrous—zombies, conjoined twins, prodigies, spotted babies, Nazis—is simply too wide to succumb to any one definition. “The monster,” as Cohen reminds us, “always escapes.”²²

The elusiveness of monstrosity has prompted some scholars to suggest that rather than seeking a definition by focusing on the monster, we should focus on the epistemological effect it has on those who witness it.²³ Asa Simon Mittman, for instance, argues that “above all, the monstrous is that which creates [a] sense of vertigo, that which calls into question our (their, anyone’s) epistemological worldview . . . and thereby asks us . . . to acknowledge the failures of our systems of categorization.”²⁴ Focusing on the affective response of monstrosity allows Mittman to cast a much wider net, in which modern, moral monsters may sit comfortably with medieval omens, and early modern monstrous births. And yet, some monsters, it seems, escape even this broad definition. As Noël Carroll acknowledges, “In works of horror, the humans regard the monsters they meet as abnormal, as disturbances of the natural order. In fairy tales, on the other hand, monsters are part of the everyday furniture of the universe.”²⁵

To these general problems in characterizing the monster must be added the peculiarities of the specifically *Jewish* monster. Contrary to their Christian peers, for most of the period discussed in this volume, European Jews did not designate a specific term for monsters. Admittedly, the Hebrew term “*mifletset*”—nowadays taken to mean “monster”—dates back to the Bible; however, from antiquity and through the eighteenth century it denoted not monsters but rather idols.²⁶ The question arises then, is it not an anachronism to look for monsters under the early modern Jewish bed?

And yet, the refusal to acknowledge the existence of monstrosity *avant la lettre*, as a cultural category in Jewish history, runs the risk of separating the premodern from the modern, the Jewish from the Christian, in too tidy a way. It is precisely this historical tidiness that monsters challenge. Indeed, as the chapters by Epstein, Ruderman, Lembke, Shyovitz, and Kahana show, while premodern Jews may not

have had their own *Hebrew* term for monsters, they certainly had a zeal for them, importing their surrounding environments' fascination with monstrosity into the Jewish cultural sphere.

In addition, while Hebrew may have been the lingua franca of European Jews throughout the medieval and early modern periods, other languages played a no-less important role in the formation of Jewish imagination. Some Jewish authors, for instance, utilized the term *monstrum* in Latin or in its vernacular variations, transcribing it into Hebrew characters. The authors of Old Yiddish works, on the other hand, were equipped with an entire repertoire of terms derived primarily from German, such as the terms *ungehueuer* and *scheußlich*, which appeared in Yiddish as *אָנְגַּהֲעֵוֶר* and *צְלִינְשָׁאָן*.²⁷

Returning to the question of defining monsters, it seems that the monster is a compulsive border crosser, which defies all our attempts to define it, to contain it within a single definition, genre, culture, period, or space. So transgressive, so untamable, we encounter it in novels and broadsheets, in folktales and archival documents, in scientific texts and theological tracts. From the pages of these various texts, it reaches out to us, mocking our tales of secularization, modernization, or naturalization and offering us a different history—not one of unfolding narratives, but of shifting anxieties, of fears that are at once primordial and contemporary, shared and distinct, ancient and new.

In editing this volume we have chosen to follow the advice of Asa Simon Mittman and Peter Dendle, editors of the *Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, who encouraged their contributors “to find their own definitions [for monsters], rather than to ascribe to preconceived notions.”²⁸ The outcome is a hybrid creation, which aims to meet the Jewish monster wherever it appears (in Europe, more on this later), targeting it from a wide range of disciplinary, chronological, and spatial perspectives. It brings together the voices of scholars in such fields as European and Jewish history, literary studies, folklore, art history, and the history of science—to investigate, for the very first time, the remarkable utility offered by monsters to scholars of the Jewish past. The contributors of this collection of chapters do not shy away from the elusive nature of the monster, viewing it as a particularly productive way to read through the intricacies and peculiarities of European-Jewish history. Similar to the monsters to which they were often likened, for centuries Jews have occupied a liminal position within European society. Deeply immersed in European life, culture, and economy, Jews still remained somehow outsiders to this same culture—a group whose distinctiveness eludes definition, an Other that is uncannily similar, yet so very distinct. The history of European Jews was thus characterized at one and the same time by expulsion and conversion, persecution and protection, sectarianism and openness. In tending to such a history, the monster emerges as the perfect guide.

* * *

While a sustained scholarly interest in monsters can be traced as far back as John Block Friedman's *The Monstrous Races*, and Katharine Park and Lorraine J. Daston's “Unnatural Conceptions,” both published in 1981, the past two decades have witnessed a veritable explosion of works on monsters and the monstrous in such fields as history,

anthropology, folklore, literary studies, cultural studies, or media studies.²⁹ These works cover the history of monsters from ancient to modern times. They touch upon zombies and vampires, headless nations and monstrous births, and shed light upon some of the darkest creatures, which roamed some of the most liminal spaces of history.

And yet, somehow, up until very recently, this immense surge of interest left Jewish discussions and representations of monstrosity almost entirely untouched. This scholarly lacuna is particularly jarring when one considers the prominence of the image of “the monstrous Jew” within the heavily populated realms of Christian teratology. Indeed, some of the foundational works in the field of what is now known as “monster studies,” such as those by Debra Higgs Strickland, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, and Bettina Bildhauer—have focused on the ways in which Jews were marked as monstrous in Christian imagination. But only rarely have scholars addressed the question of how these same “Jewish monsters” stared back, or how they harnessed the same discourse of monstrosity which was applied to them, to construct monsters of their own. And yet, as Joela Jacobs aptly reminds us in her chapter, monstrosity is never a one-sided relationship. Rather a complex, mutually productive dialogue exists between monsters and those who create them.³⁰

The reasons for the one-dimensional portrayal of Jews primarily as objects of discourses of monstrosity are manifold. Among other considerations, they have to do with the traditional distinction between European history and Jewish history, and with what Shyovitz, in his chapter, characterizes as the widespread assumption among scholars of the Jewish past that “the monstrous creatures found in Jewish writings represent incursions of contemporaneous, theologically-neutral ‘folk culture.’”³¹ The tendency to play down Jewish representations of monstrosity may also be related to what is often, following Salo Baron, termed “the lachrymose conception of Jewish history,” that is, the conception of Jewish history as a history of persecution in Diaspora and subsequent liberation in the Land of Israel. While it makes sense, within the confines of this (now largely discredited) historiographic paradigm, to study Jews as *monsters*, the notion that Jews created monsters of their own implies an acknowledgment of the fact that European Jews have been active agents in discourses of marginalization, persecution, and racialization.³²

Thus, until recently, only a handful of studies touched upon the topic of monsters in Jewish literature—primarily in biblical or rabbinical texts, or in folkloristic contexts. These studies approached their monsters from a mostly descriptive or theological outlook, and did not use the monster as a means for cultural analysis.³³ A rare exception is offered by David Ruderman, who in a number of pioneering articles and book-chapters written in the late 1970s and 1980s (one of which is reproduced in the present volume) analyzed some early modern Jewish representations of conjoined twins, unicorns, and child prodigies.³⁴ In his discussion of these creatures, Ruderman shed light upon some pertinent issues concerning the use of monsters in early modern Jewish thought, such as the relationship between monsters and omens, teratology and anthropology, science and religion, magic and philosophy. He furthermore located his Jewish sources against the backdrop of contemporaneous non-Jewish discourse(s), thus revealing both the shared elements of the Jewish and Christian preoccupation with monsters, as well as some important Jewish idiosyncrasies.³⁵

The past few years have witnessed a gradual increase of interest among scholars of the Jewish past in monsters and monstrosity. This burgeoning scholarly trend may be understood as part of a wider historiographic shift within the field of Jewish studies, which seeks—unapologetically—to understand Jews as active agents in such historical phenomena as the construction of disability or race.³⁶ Historians, such as Marc Michael Epstein, Rebekka Voß, David Shyovitz, Alexandra Cuffel, Andrew Berns, or Robert Jütte have demonstrated the centrality of shared images and symbols of monstrosity in medieval and early modern Christian-Jewish (and Muslim) polemics.³⁷ At the same time, scholars of medieval and early modern literature in Hebrew and Yiddish, such as Astrid Lembke, David Rotman, and myself, have shown how Jewish authors incorporated monsters derived from their non-Jewish environments to discuss various tensions and conflicts *within* the Jewish community itself, such as issues pertaining to gender, generation, and class relations.³⁸

Scholars of modern Jewish history and literature have further investigated the lingering association of Jews with monstrosity in the modern era. Thus, Cathy Gelbin's *The Golem Returns: From German Romantic Literature to Global Jewish Culture, 1808–2008* (2011) explored both Jewish and non-Jewish popular culture, to reveal the ways in which the image of the Golem was lifted from the obscurity of medieval kabbalistic literature, to become one of the most familiar signifiers of Jews and Jewishness in the modern era.³⁹ More recently, in his *Bestiarium Judaicum: Unnatural Histories of the Jews* (2018), Jay Geller investigates the productive relationship between the centuries-long animalization of Jews in Christian works, and the depictions of animals which appeared in the works of such Jewish authors as Franz Kafka or Sigmund Freud.⁴⁰ The past few years have also witnessed an increased attention to the roles played by monsters in literature on the Holocaust, where horror is called upon to narrate the inexpressible experience of genocide.⁴¹

These works point to the emergence of a new research direction in the field of Jewish studies. One of the primary aims of this volume is to bring together the major voices in this nascent field. In so doing, we wish not only to import the increasing interest in monstrosity as a cultural category into the field of Jewish studies but also to foster a new discussion on monstrosity as a *core category* of European-Jewish history and culture.

For reasons of coherence, this volume focuses on monsters primarily in Jewish-Ashkenazi discourse, with some important exceptions.⁴² It is our hope that future studies in the field will provide insight into the place of monsters and monstrosity in the history and culture of other Jewish diasporas.

In terms of the timeframe of the volume, we begin this study in the medieval period rather than antiquity for a number of reasons. Of course, the monsters of antiquity—the mythological Minotaur and Medusa, the biblical Behemoth and Leviathan, or Pliny's dog-headed men and headless nations—continued to haunt European texts and art through the medieval and early modern periods and into the present. And yet, as John Block Freedman, Caroline Bynum, and others have noted, the Middle Ages saw a sharp increase in European interest in monsters and monstrosity.⁴³ This increased interest dovetailed with the rising tensions between Christian and Jews. The first crusades, which sparked interest in the wonders of the

East throughout Europe, also contributed to interest in monstrosity back home—and Jews in particular began to assume a diabolic and monstrous image in Christian eyes. As shown by Robert Chazan, Miri Rubin, Sara Lipton, Strickland, and others it was during the late Middle Ages that the ubiquitous tales of Jewish host desecration, well-poisoning, and ritual murder took on cultural significance, and the monstrous Jew became a widespread literary, theological, and artistic trope.⁴⁴ Of course, many of these libels and accusations have their roots in earlier discourses, and yet as Joshua Trachtenberg explained in his seminal *The Devil and the Jews*: “Anti-Jewish prejudice is older and more extensive than Christendom. . . . But its unique demonological character is of medieval origin.”⁴⁵

* * *

The volume is divided into two parts, reflecting the dominant uses of monstrosity in Jewish history. The first part explores the predominance of images of monsters in Jewish-Christian interreligious and intercultural encounter, both real and imagined.

In Chapter 1 Miriamne Ara Krummel and Asa Simon Mittman focus on a specific *locus* of monstrosity—the *enge unpathas uncuð gelad* (narrow path, unmarked way)—to demonstrate the kind of work that can be done with (and by) monsters. This narrow path is trodden twice in Old English verse, once by the Children of Israel, described in the Old English *Exodus* during their flight from Egypt, and another time (Krummel and Mittman suggest) by the “Children of Cain”—the monsters Grendel and Grendel’s mother, as they flee from the heroic *Beowulf*. Combining creativity and criticism, Krummel and Mittman take us on a journey to the unmarked path upon which these Jews and monsters (may have) met, “when a collision of cultures—polytheistic Germanic, Christian, and Jewish—lived together, perhaps amicably, perhaps uneasily, in a world encircled by conquest that was haunted by memories of a former world.” Krummel and Mittman’s readings—or as they term it, their “strategic *misreadings*”—of *Beowulf* alongside the Old English *Exodus* demonstrate how pursuing monsters and Jews along narrow paths and unmarked ways leads us to unexpected historical and cultural intersections and insights. And while we may find ourselves on less-than-stable ground, trying to make sense of “absences, silences, and incongruities,” at the same time, this pursuit opens up a range of new scholarly possibilities, exposing vignettes from a past that is always heavily shielded from our view, and always shaded by our expectations.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on a more familiar kind of Jewish-Christian encounter in the medieval and early modern periods, that is one of animosity and polemic. In Chapter 2, Debra Higgs Strickland exposes the surprisingly persistent (and hitherto, largely overlooked) presence of images of monstrous Jews in the oeuvre of the early Netherlandish painter Hieronymous Bosch (1450–1516). Through a comparative analysis of a wide range of works, Strickland reveals Bosch’s preoccupation with Jewishness, and the many ways in which it was represented across his art. In some paintings, figures were marked Jewish by employing stereotypical physical features, such as long noses, beards, or dark skin; in others, Jews were identified through color-coding (in particular, through the colors black and red), or by employing

animal-symbolism, that is, by reference to such animals as toads, owls, asses, pigs, or scorpions, which were particularly associated with Jews. Then there are those paintings, in which Jewish physicality converged with animality to create a certain kind of Jewish monster, whose grotesque features projected menacing meanings into the particular scenes in which it appeared. Strickland shows how these deceptively diminutive Jewish monsters were imbued with much larger theological and polemical significance, serving Bosch as a means to remind the viewer of the importance of Jews and Judaism within the Christian worldview and the economy of salvation.

Strickland's discussion of the appearance of Jewish monsters in Christian art is complemented by Marc Michael Epstein's discussion of Jewish art in Chapter 3. In this chapter, Epstein flips the gaze to uncover a group of monstrous figures that fester in the Duke of Sussex Pentateuch, a manuscript illuminated around 1300 in Southern Germany by Christian artisans for Jewish patrons. Epstein argues that while this illuminated Hebrew manuscript, like so many others of its time, was produced not by Jewish but rather by Christian scribes, it is the issue of patronage and audience, rather than authorship, that is key to its understanding.⁴⁶ The chapter demonstrates the importance of a pointedly contextualized reading of Jewish manuscript illuminations, which takes into account both their European and Jewish contexts. Epstein's analysis focuses on the four monstrous figures, which are depicted on the opening folio of the Pentateuch, each representing a different *ideal type* of Gentile. Fascinatingly, these monstrous Gentiles are juxtaposed with four counter images of idealized Jews, in what can only be a direct flinging-back of the kind of anti-Jewish visual tropes surveyed by Strickland.

Chapter 4 takes us from the realms of art and *belles lettres* to those of folklore and science. François Guesnet traces the gradual medicalization of the phenomenon of matted hair from the medieval period to the nineteenth century. Originally assumed to be the work of demons and other preternatural forces, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries matted hair, the so-called *Plica Polonica* (Polish plait), became the focus of intense scientific debate. An early seventeenth-century correspondence between medical professionals in Poland and Italy led to the identification of the *plica* with Eastern Europe, resulting in the explosion of medical treatises speculating upon the causes, nature, and meanings of the malady. It was not long before the *plica* became particularly associated with Jews, and designated in (German) popular parlance—the *Judenzopf* (Jewish braid). Building on the particular cultural significance of hair as a marker of contamination, borders, and transgressions, Guesnet reveals the close association between the *plica* and issues of race, gender, and religion, both in Christian discourse on Jews, as well as within European-Jewish discourse.

Chapter 5 further investigates the medicalization of monstrosity in the modern era, and its correspondence with the racialization of Jews. Joela Jacobs focuses on two stories, written by medically trained German authors in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, the *non-Jewish* Oskar Panizza and the Jewish Salomo Friedlaender. In *The Operated Jew* (1893), Panizza related the tale of a Jew who undergoes a series of medical procedures in order to assimilate into German society. In his literary response to Panizza's tale, *The Operated Goy* (1922), Friedlaender depicted

an anti-semite who, having fallen in love with a Jewish woman, undergoes complete mental and physical transformation so as to resemble an *Ostjude* (an East-European Jew). Jacobs's careful reading of the two tales reveals their indebtedness to the most widely read tale of medical monstrosity, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Drawing on Shelley's artificial anthropoid, the two authors used the image of the artificial Jew/Gentile, to grapple with the complex relationship between science and monstrosity. The two stories take on the question of science's culpability in creating monsters, as well as its ability to redeem them. Like Shelley before them, Panniza and Friedlaender revel in the slipperiness of monstrosity, prompting their readers to question the identity of the true monster: whether the German, the Jew, the forces trying to bring the two together, or those attempting to tear them apart.

In Chapter 6 Cathy Gelbin continues to explore the afterlife of the Jewish monster in modern Germany through an analysis of several landmarks of German cinematic expressionism. While the reliance on antisemitic tropes to generate horror in Weimar films has received some scholarly attention, Gelbin argues that in applying a shallow focus to the racial dimensions of these films, scholars have ignored the other vectors of difference that lurk in the background. In fact, she argues, whether they place their primary focus on race, gender, or sexuality, films such as Paul Wegener's *Der Golem* (1920), Friedrich Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), or Richard Oswald's *Anders als die Anderen* (Different from the Others, 1919) often combine "older, anti-Jewish iconographies of horror with the modern discourses of Jewish, women's and homosexual emancipation." Such films do not simply recycle old anti-Jewish stereotypes; rather, they employ these stereotypes in complex, often playful and contradictory ways, to grapple with the profound changes in notions of sexuality, gender, and race, which took place in Germany between the two world wars.⁴⁷

Jacobs and Gelbin both point to the ironic dimensions in early twentieth-century German filmmakers and authors' usage of antisemitic stereotypes. However, as Jacobs observes, "Today, the comedy of these narratives belongs to a bygone era, as their reception has been forever altered by the devastating deployment of the racial stereotypes they critique." The final chapter in this section approaches the intertwining of monstrosity and Jewishness from the other side of this historical chasm. Focusing on the recurrence of preternatural and particularly monstrous phenomena in the visual, written, and oral testimonies of Holocaust survivors, Kobi Kabalek reveals a final, wrenching expression of the dual role played by the monster as a representative of both Jews and their persecutors. Previous scholarship has often tended to dismiss fantastical representations of the Holocaust as a means to banish Nazism to the realm of the imaginary, thereby exonerating history from its atrocities. Kabalek, on the other hand, joins a growing number of scholars who view fantasy as a particularly productive way to approach the inexpressibility of the Holocaust.⁴⁸ Indeed, if Auschwitz was, as Jean-François Lyotard famously suggested, an earthquake which destroyed the very instruments used to measure it, then perhaps fantasy affords a new—perhaps *the only*—tool for bridging this great historical divide. The testimonies analyzed by Kabalek corroborate this interpretation; monsters haunt the Nazi death camps, both in the image of the Nazi officers, as well as in that of their victims, the so-called *Muselmänner*. Monstrosity and fantasy more generally also play a role in

descriptions of the camps themselves, and the horrifying encounter with death that occurred between their gates.

* * *

Part 2 of this volume shifts the focus from the intercultural prevalence of monsters, to the idiosyncrasies of the Jewish monster, and its specific uses within the European-Jewish community. While questions concerning Jewish-Christian relations continue to play into many of these discussions, the chapters in this section zoom in on the *intra-communal* meanings of monstrosity, its gendered dimensions, its religious, scientific, folkloristic, and literary uses, and rabbinical practices and attitudes toward monstrous and magical beings.

In Chapter 8 David I. Shyovitz reveals the lively debate, which took place in Hebrew sources during the early and high Middle Ages, surrounding the monstrous inhabitants of the subterranean realm of Tevel. In contrast to earlier scholars, such as Moritz Güdemann and Joshua Trachtenberg, who tended to view Jewish discussions of monsters, wherever they appeared, as passive importations of a non-Jewish “folk culture,” Shyovitz exposes the contours of a distinctly Jewish “menagerie of monstrosities,” which was, for the most part, “transmitted from within, and deliberately marshalled for lofty spiritual and exegetical ends.” He traces the genealogy of these Jewish monsters to the seventh- or eighth-century cosmological treatise *Seder rabbah de-Bereshit*, and follows their evolution over a *longue-durée* of Jewish theological and teratological thought. Originally envisioned as morally ambiguous creatures, occupying a liminal position between the human and the animal, over the course of the Middle Ages, the monsters of Tevel became the focus of a taxonomic conundrum, which divided Hebrew authors throughout the realms of medieval Jewry. Shyovitz shows that while this debate converged with parallel discussions within the Christian realm, Jews were never merely passive recipients of the dominant discourses of monstrosity which surrounded them. Rather, they “seized upon the monstrous creatures who populated their own traditions because they helped them to think through broad theological questions.”

The next chapter in this section places its focus precisely on those shared monsters, “superstitions,” and “folk beliefs” so derided by Güdemann and Trachtenberg. In his discussion of the trope of the marriage of a Jewish man and a she-demon, which was ubiquitous in medieval and early modern Jewish literature in Hebrew and Yiddish, David Rotman demonstrates the productive value of such tales to scholars of the Jewish past. While studies in the fields of literature, Yiddish and folklore have often tended to treat these tales as an expression of Jewish fears of exogamy, which remained virtually unchanged from the medieval into the early modern period, Rotman detects an important shift in the uses and meanings of the trope in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. This shift, he argues, is the result of the considerable cultural and demographic transformations which occurred within the Jewish community throughout the early modern period, and which brought to the fore concerns surrounding the stability and integrity of the community vis-à-vis neighboring Jewish (and *not* necessarily Christian) communities. In Rotman’s reading, the monster

emerges as a powerful reminder of the fact that European Jews were often much more preoccupied with tensions within and between their own different communities than with their status within the Christian realm.

Chapter 10 continues the focus on popular tales, shared by Christians and Jews, and their specifically *Jewish* uses. Astrid Lembke discusses a curious story, which appeared in the seventeenth-century Old Yiddish classic the *Mayse-bukh* (Story Book). Enjoying immense popularity among Jewish readers in the seventeenth century, the *Mayse-bukh* included tales which drew primarily on Talmudic and midrashic legends. The particular tale discussed by Lembke, however, while it appears at least once more in early modern Jewish literature, is based *not* on the canon of ancient and medieval Hebrew texts, but rather on a familiar non-Jewish trope, which received its most popular articulation in the twelfth-century poem *Bisclavret* by Marie de France. Through a comparative reading of the Jewish and non-Jewish versions of the tale, Lembke demonstrates how the Yiddish author's departure from the traditional narrative of the werewolf tale, as well as from classic European paradigms of monstrosity more generally, highlights the specifically Jewish dimensions of the tale. Contrary to its French and Latin predecessors, the Yiddish werewolf is an aggressive and violent creature, which revels in its feral existence. He is used, at one and the same time, as a paragon of Jewish power, and as a means to envision an ideal homosocial relationship between a Jewish religious leader and his disciples.

Chapter 11, which reproduces an essay by David B. Ruderman, shifts the focus from Ashkenaz to Italy. Originally published in 1988, this chapter is one of several pioneering studies produced by Ruderman in the late 1970s and 1980s, which were devoted to images of monsters in early modern Jewish magical and scientific works. It discusses two cases of child monsters appearing in the works of the sixteenth-century Jewish-Italian physician Abraham Yagel. In his discussion of these creatures, Ruderman explores the fertile (and still largely understudied) intertwining of monstrosity and childhood, and the complex relationship between monsters and wonders, teratology and anthropology, science and religion, philosophy and magic.⁴⁹ He furthermore locates Yagel's monsters against the backdrop of contemporaneous Jewish and non-Jewish discussions, thus revealing both the shared elements of the Jewish and Christian preoccupation with monsters, as well as some important Jewish idiosyncrasies. Ruderman's "monster studies" have inspired many of the contributors to this volume. The explosion of interest in monsters as objects of cultural analysis has prepared the ground for a reengagement with these early works, and a reassessment of their central theses. It is our hope that the republication of this essay here will serve as a first step in this direction.

Chapter 12 continues to investigate Jewish attitudes toward monstrosity, magic, and science, while shifting the attention to Ashkenaz and the nineteenth century. In this chapter, Maoz Kahana joins a growing number of scholars who challenge the conflation of modernity and secularism. The chapter reveals how the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed not disenchantment, but rather a tightening of the discursive knot between magic, science, and religious law (*halakhah*) in rabbinical literature. Kahana focuses primarily on the theoretical works, legal writings, and magical practice of Rabbi Moses Sofer (the Hatam Sofer, 1762–1839), one of the key figures of the Jewish

rabbinical elite through the modernization processes of nineteen-century Europe. Kahana shows how Sofer and other key rabbinical thinkers of the period combined in their works images of magical and demonic beings, which were derived from rabbinical sources, with reports of scientific oddities, and various wondrous creatures taken from German folklore. In so doing, these rabbinical thinkers engaged the new scientific methods and discoveries of their time, to create a complicated matrix of monstrosity, magic, and science. Imported into rabbinic literature from non-Jewish works, both past and present, these magical beings and scientific oddities became “key players in the self-understanding . . . of rabbinical authors,” and served to tackle the secularistic trends and challenges of modernity.

In the final chapter in this volume Jay Geller follows the Jewish monster from Central to Eastern Europe, confronting us once again with the image of the Jewish, indeed the *rabbinic* werewolf. Written in the wake of the pogroms that devastated Jewish communities across Eastern Europe, Yiddish author H. Leivick’s poetic chronicle “Der Volf” depicts a rabbi who, awaking from the aftermath of a pogrom which massacred his entire community, is transformed into a werewolf. The werewolf-rabbi begins to haunt the new community which is established upon the ruins of the old, until he is subsequently killed by its members. Leivick’s choice of his lupine protagonist, argues Geller, is inspired not (only?) by the age-old identification of Jews with wolves but by the shared experience which united the two in Europe—that of being thrust outside of the law. In Geller’s sensitive reading, Leivick’s poem narrates this “outlawed-ness” of the Jew through the lycanthropic metamorphosis, while at the same time using the figure of the werewolf as a means to reinstate the law, and to build a devastated community anew. Similar to the *Mayse-bukh*’s earlier depiction of rabbinic lycanthropy, Leivick’s poem envisions the wolf as a creature who is able to herd the community in the face of hostility and near-devastation. And yet, unlike the *Mayse-bukh*’s werewolf tale, which, as Lembke argues, is, in essence “a story of [Jewish] self-empowerment, agency, and pride,” Leivick’s poem is a heart-breaking attempt to grapple with the moral implications of survival and rehabilitation in the wake of catastrophe. Still, the poem concludes on a positive note, the rabbi’s dying words those of a promise:

“*ist mir gut, zeyer gut*”—utters the monster—“*veynt nisht, yidn*”—do not cry, Jews.

Notes

- 1 See, for example, Moshe Idel, *Golem: Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid* (Albany: State Univ. New York, 1990), 306–13; David I. Shyovitz, *A Remembrance of His Wonders: Nature and the Supernatural in Medieval Ashkenaz* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 99–100.
- 2 Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 6, 30; Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 4.
- 3 Monsters played an equally important role in religious polemic within Christianity itself, as well between Christians, Muslim, and Jews. See Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Alexandra

Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust in Medieval Religious Polemic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007); Julie Crawford, *Marvelous Protestantism: Monstrous Births in Post-Reformation England* (Baltimore, 2011).

- 4 See Strickland's contribution, Chapter 2.
- 5 See Ruderman's contribution, Chapter 11. See also Robert Jütte, "Die schwangere Jüdin von Binswangen. Ein Lehrstück christlich-jüdischer Beziehungen im Augsburger Umfeld des 16. Jahrhunderts," in *Kaftan, Kreuz und Kopftuch: Religiöse Koexistenz in urbanen Raum*, ed. Andreas Schmauder and Jan-Friedrich Mißfelder (Ostfildern, 2010), 65–85; "Im Wunder vereint: eine spektakuläre Missgeburt im Ghetto 1575," in *Interstizi: Culture ebraico-cristiane a Venezia e nei suoi domini dal medioevo all'età moderna*, ed. Uwe Israel, Robert Jütte, and Reinhold C. Mueller (Rome, 2010), 521, 536–37.
- 6 See Gelbin's essay (Chapter 6).
- 7 Tuviah Ha-Cohen, *Ma'aseh Tuviah* (Venice, 1707), 136b. See also Marc Michael Epstein's contribution, Chapter 3. On the role of menstruation in religious polemic between Jews, Christians and Muslims, see Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust*.
- 8 Jacob Emden, *Sefer shimush* (Amsterdam, 1758), 89a–b. For an interesting discussion of the illustration, see Paweł Maciejko, "Ha-sacanot ve-ha-ta'anugot she-be-sinkretizem dati," *Mechkare Yerushalayim machsevet Israel* 22 (2012): 249–77. Of course, monstrosity also played an important role in marking the colonial Other. See Surekha Davies, *Renaissance Ethnography and the Invention of the Human: New Worlds, Maps and Monsters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
- 9 Eleazar Fleckeles, *Responsa Teshuvah me-ahavah* (Prague, 1808), 1:30b, §53.
- 10 For a discussion of the tale, see Shyovitz's essay (Chapter 8). The story appears also in the sixteenth-century tale of Briyo ve-Zimro. On Briyo and Zimro, see Jeremy Dauber, *In the Demon's Bedroom: Yiddish Literature and the Early Modern* (New Haven, CT: Yale University of Press, 2010), 221–62; Erika Timm, "Beria und Simera: Eine jiddische Erzählung des 16. Jahrhunderts," *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* 14 (1973): 1–94.
- 11 Crawford, *Marvelous Protestantism*, 14.
- 12 The tale was repeated in a wide array of ancient, medieval and early modern texts, including in Hebrew and Yiddish. See, for example, Midrash Tanchuma, Naso 7; *Mayse-bukh* (1602; repr. Frankfurt, 1702), 55a–b, 161a–b; Abraham Yagel, *Gei chizzayon* (1578), ed. David Ruderman (Jerusalem, 1997), 122.
- 13 *Zikhronot Glikl, 1691–1719*, critical edition with Hebrew translation by Chava Turniansky (Jerusalem: Merkaz Shazar, 2006), 341.
- 14 Glikl, *Zikhronot*, 341–47.
- 15 David Gans, *Tsemach David ha-chadash* (Frankfurt and Amsterdam, 1692), 80a, 84a, 84b, 85a, 86a, 88a, 88b.
- 16 Clifford Geertz, "Person, Time and Conduct in Bali," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), 362.
- 17 Cohen, "Monster Culture," 6.
- 18 On the medieval fascination with werewolves, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2001). On the early modern monstrous births: Huet, *Monstrous Imagination*; Fissel, *Vernacular Bodies*. On werewolves and monstrous births in the Jewish context, see Astrid Lembke and Jay Geller's chapters (Chapters 10 and 13 respectively), as well as Iris Idelson-Shein, "Meditations on a Monkey-Face: Monsters, Transgressed Boundaries, and Contested Hierarchies in a Yiddish *Eulenspiegel*," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 108.1 (2018): 37–41; Shyovitz,

- "Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Werewolf Renaissance," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 75.4 (2014): 521–43; Andrew Berns, Abraham Portaleone and Alessandro Magno: Jewish and Christian Correspondents on a Monstrous Birth," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 5.1 (2011): 53–66.
- 19 On vampires, see Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); On zombies, see Peter Dendle's introduction to: *The Zombie Movie Encyclopedia* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2001), 1–15. On Jewish vampires and zombies see Cathy Gelbin's contribution (Chapter 6); Moriel Ram, "Ha-nekrografia ha-politit shel ha-met ha-chai," *Teoria u-vikoret* 43.2 (2014): 57–86.
- 20 See, for example, Margrit Schildrick, *Embodying the Monster: Encounters with the Vulnerable Self* (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 9; Dana Oswald, *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature* (Boydell and Brewer), 2–7.
- 21 See, for example, Stephan T. Asma, *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears* 283–84; Colin Yeo, "Doesn't Everyone Want Their Parents Dead?" Monstrous Children in the Films of Ridley Scott," in *Monstrous Children and Childish Monsters*, ed. Markus P. J. Bohlmann and Sean Moreland (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015), 98–99.
- 22 Cohen, "Monster Culture," 6.
- 23 Asa Simon Mittman, "Introduction: The Impact of Monsters and Monster Studies," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, ed. Asa Simon Mittman and Peter J. Dendle (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), 7.
- 24 Mittman, "Introduction," 8.
- 25 Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 16. See also Ibid., 221 n40.
- 26 For the biblical term, see 1 Kgs 15:13. For an early modern lexical discussion see, PLTS, in David Levi, *Lingua Sacra*, Vol. 3 of 3 (London, 1785). See also David Rotman's discussion of this problem in his: *Drakonim, shedim u-mechozot kesumim* (Chevel Modi'in: Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, Dvir and Heksherim Institute, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 2016), 101–03.
- 27 For examples in Hebrew, see, for example, Gedalia Ibn Yahya, *Shalshelet ha-kabbalah*, 93a; Abraham Zacuto, *Sefer yochasin ha-shalem* (~1500. Repr. Jerusalem, 1962/63), 249. See also Ruderman, "Three Contemporary Perceptions of a Polish Wunderkind of the Seventeenth Century," *AJS Review* 4 (1979): 157 n49. For a Yiddish example, see "ayn sheyn mayse fun kinig Artish hof," first printed (and heavily adapted) version by Joseph Witzenhausen, 1671. Repr. in: Johann Christoph Wagenseil, *Belehrung Der Jüdisch-Teutschen Red- und Schreib-Art* (Konigsberg: Paul Friedrich Rhode, 1699), 360.
- 28 Mittman, "The Impact of Monsters," 9.
- 29 John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University of Press, 1981); Katharine Park and Lorraine J. Daston, "Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France and England," *Past and Present* 92 (1981): 20–54. More recently, in addition to the works cited above, see, for example, Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1993); J. J. Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills (eds.), *The Monstrous Middle Ages* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2003); Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews; Davies, Renaissance Ethnography*.
- 30 See Jacob's essay, Chapter 5.
- 31 See Shyovitz's essay, Chapter 8.

- 32 I have treated these issues in more detail in a slightly different context in: Idelson-Shein, *Difference of a Different Kind: Jewish Constructions of Race During the Long Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 3–4.
- 33 See, for example, Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* (New York: Schocken, 1939); H. J. Zimmels, *Magicians, Theologians and Doctors: Studies in Folk-Medicine and Folk-lore as Reflected in the Rabbinical Responsa* (London: Edward Goldston and Son, 1952); Natan Slifkin, *Sacred Monsters: Mysterious and Mythical Creatures of Scripture, Talmud and Midrash* (self-published, 2007); Ariel Toaff, *Mostri giudei. L'immaginario ebraico dal Medioevo alla prima età moderna* (Bologna: Il Molino, 1996); Meir Bar-Ilan, “Miflatzot ve-yetzurim dimyoniim ba-'aggadah ha-yehudit ha-'atika,” *Machanayim* 7 (1993): 113–13.
- 34 See Ruderman, “Three Contemporary Perceptions of a Polish Wunderkind of the Seventeenth Century,” *AJS Review* 4 (1979): 143–63; “Unicorns, Great beasts and the Marvelous Variety of Things in Nature in the Thought of Abraham B. Hananiah Yagel,” in *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 343–64; *Kabbalah, Magic, and Science: The Cultural Universe of a Sixteenth-Century Jewish Physician* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).
- 35 Important work has also been done in the closely related fields of Jewish demonology, mythology, and magic. However, with few exceptions (such as the works of J. H. Chajes and Jeremy Dauber), the majority of these studies have not located their demons, golems, or wonders in the wider context of European interest in monsters and monstrosity.
- 36 See, for example, Julia Watts Belser, “Judaism and Disability,” in *Disability and World Religions: An Introduction*, ed. Darla Y. Schumm and Michael Stoltzfus (Waco, TX: Baylor University of Press, 2016), 93–113; Ephraim Shoham-Steiner, *On the Margins of a Minority: Leprosy, Madness, and Disability among the Jews of Medieval Europe* (2007. Trans. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2014); Martin Jacobs, *Reorienting the East: Jewish Travelers to the Medieval Muslim World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Limor Mintz-Manor, “Ha-siach al ha-'olam ha-chadash ba-tarbut ha-yehudit ba-'et ha-chadashah ha-mukdemet” (PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2011); Jonathan Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
- 37 Marc Michael Epstein, *Dreams of Subversion in Medieval Jewish Art and Literature* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1997); Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust*; Jütte, “Im Wunder vereint,” 530–39; Rebekka Voß, “Entangled Stories: The Red Jews in Premodern Yiddish and German Apocalyptic Lore,” *AJS Review* 36.2 (2012): 1–41; Berns, “A Monstrous Birth,” 53–66; Shyovitz, *A Remembrance of His Wonders*. On antiquity, see now: Rachel Neis, “Reproduction of Species: Humans, Animals, and Hybrids in Early Rabbinic Science,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 24 (2017): 1–29.
- 38 See Rotman, *Drakonim*; “Monsters, Metamorphosis, and Intra-Community Conflict in the Tales of Rabbi Judah the Pious,” in *Das kulturelle Profil der SchUM-Gemeinden – Literatur, Musik, Theater*, ed. Karl E. Grözinger (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014), 83–98; Astrid Lembke, “Ritter außer Gefecht. Konzepte passiver Bewährung im ‘Wigalois’ und im ‘Widuwilt’,” *Aschkenas* 25.1 (2015): 63–82; Idelson-Shein, “Meditations on a Monkey-Face,” 37–41.
- 39 Cathy Gelbin, *The Golem Returns. Social History, Popular Culture, and Politics in Germany* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2011). See also Maya Barzilai’s recent: *Golem: Modern Wars and Their Monsters* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

- 40 Jay Geller, *Bestiarium Judaicum: Unnatural Histories of the Jews* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018). See also Joel Jacobs, "und die ganze pfälzisch-jüdische Sündfluth kam dann heraus." Monstrosity and Multilingualism in Oskar Panizza's *Der operirte Jud*," *Zeitschrift für interkulturelle Germanistik* 3 (2012): 61–73.
- 41 See Kabalek's chapter (Chapter 7), and also Mia Spiro, "Uncanny survivors and the Nazi beast: Monstrous imagination in See under: Love," *Prooftexts* 35.1 (2016): 25–36.
- 42 See Shyovitz and Ruderman's chapters (Chapters 8 and 11).
- 43 See, for example, Friedman, *Monstrous Races*, 4 and *passim*; Bynum, "Metamorphosis," 991.
- 44 Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999); Robert Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987).
- 45 Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Anti-Semitism* (1943. Repr. 2011), 6.
- 46 For more on this issue, see Epstein, *Dreams of Subversion*, esp. 7.
- 47 For another compelling intersectional approach to the representation (and self-representation) of Jews in Weimar Germany, see Kerry Wallach's recent *Passing Illusions: Jewish Visibility in Weimar Germany* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2017).
- 48 See, for example, the essays collected in Judith B. Kerman and John Edgar Browning's edited volume: *The Fantastic in Holocaust Literature and Film: Critical Perspectives* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2014). See also: Spiro, "Uncanny survivors," 25–36.
- 49 For a recent discussion of the relationship between childhood and monstrosity, see the essays collected in: Markus P. J. Bohlmann and Sean Moreland (ed.), *Monstrous Children and Childish Monsters: Essays on Cinema's Holy Terrors* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015).

Part One

The Monster Without: Monsters in Jewish-Christian Intercultural Discourse

Enge unpathas uncuð gelad: The Long Walk to Freedom

Miriamne Ara Krummel and Asa Simon Mittman

*Entas wæron eac swylce ofer eorðan on ðam
dagum [Giants were over the earth in those days.]*

The people of Israel (the *Israhela cyn*)¹ lived in a Germanic land among gods and monsters. Giants roamed over the earth in those days (*Entas wæron eac swylce ofer eorðan on ðam dagum*).² Four of these giants (*entas*) traversing across the earth stood along the narrow path, the unmapped way (*enge unpaðas, uncuð gelad*)³ and blocked the way forward. The troop of brave soldiers (*werode wlance begnas*)⁴ hesitated. They wondered, *Should they retreat?* Behind them was Pharaoh's mighty army (*fyrd Faraonis*)⁵ that had chased them out of Egypt. In front of them was the unknown, wandering, exilic life, as well as monsters of all shapes and sizes: giants and elves and orcs, such giants, that struggled with God for a long time (*eotenas ond ylfe ond orcneas, / swylce gigantas, þa wið Gode wunnon / lange þrage*).⁶ The *Israhela cyn* believed they were following the same trail of “magically protected ogres from the race of Cain.”⁷ For this reason the *Israhela cyn* sensed that they were in the presence of the “supernatural”⁸ and moved forward cautiously.

Moyses, the leader of that band strong of hand (*handrofra*),⁹ looked up to Abraham’s god (*Abrahames god*)¹⁰ for guidance. Beside him stood his wife, Zipporah. She looked past him, past the *Israhela cyn*, to the other miserable ones treading the same paths of exile (*oðer earsceopen / on weres wæstmum wræclastas træd*).¹¹ They were like their leader, who was greater than any other man (*wæs mara þonne ænig man oðer*).¹²

Zipporah looked back and forth between her husband and the leader of the giants (*entas*), these half-human monsters.¹³ Both—giant and man—wore their woolen cloaks clasped at their left shoulders. Their tunics, trimmed with decorative golden bands, stretched to their knees, and owing to the great heat of the desert, they wore no hose. The giant’s soft black shoes were just like those of Moyses, though that much larger. Man and monster both wore their gray hair long and their gray beards forked. All raised their hands to pray—each in their own way.

Yes, the giants were larger than any man, with massive hands and heavy features, but beyond that, it was impossible to discern a difference. One group of exiled wanderers on the narrow path, uncharted way (*enge unpaðas, uncuð gelad*) was like another: both lost; both looking for guidance; both searching for a home.

* * *

The imagined narrative above does not, we realize, accurately describe the images on folios 12v–13r of the *Old English Illustrated Hexateuch*. These images below represent on the verso (*left*) “Noah and his wife with his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth” (Gen. 5:32), and (*right*) “men find women attractive and choose them for wives” (Gen. 6:2), and on the recto, “There were giants in the earth in those days.”¹⁴ The figures divided by the gutter cannot see one another, and are not involved in a single scene. They are not figures of Exodus, nor of the Grendel-kin, the two humanish monsters who attack the Danes’s mead-hall, Heorot, in *Beowulf*, as we’ve read them here (see Figure 1.1). To generate the collision between these subjects from the Old English poems, *Beowulf* and *Exodus*, we perform willful, strategic *misreadings* of texts and images to try to see old, familiar narratives—*Exodus* and *Beowulf*—from fresh perspectives and with new possibilities. In each of our imagined “vignettes,” we start with a medieval

(a)



(b)



Figure 1.1 Moses and Zipporah face the Grendel-kin [or Noah and his Family (Gen. 5–6) “there also were giants on the earth in those days” (Gen. 6)], Old English Hexateuch. London, British Library MS, Cotton Claudius B.iv, fol. Fol. 12v–13r. © The British Library Board.

illumination that we then treat as if that image captures a moment in a fantastical meeting of the Jewish tribe (*Iudisc feða*) of *Exodus* with the Grendel-kin of *Beowulf*. We are trying to capture a possible past that may have happened, but that has not been recorded, when a collision of cultures—Germanic, Christian, and Jewish—lived together, perhaps amicably, perhaps uneasily, in a world encircled by conquest that was haunted by memories of a former polytheistic world.¹⁵ After all, Jewish texts are replete with overlapping dreams of the Mediterranean, situated in Northern Europe.¹⁶ Perhaps, in one such tale, a Jewish wanderer in Ashkenaz collided with two giants, remnants of a polytheist tradition, while out wandering a narrow path. The possibility is in the making, and our chapter attends to and is watchful over “absences, silences, and incongruities.”¹⁷

Our search for a silenced and fast-fading past begins with a line shared by two Old English texts—the Old Testament narrative poem, *Exodus*, and the heroic-elegiac epic, *Beowulf*.¹⁸ This shared line is *enge unpaðas, uncuð gelad* (narrow path, unknown way).¹⁹ This narrow and unfamiliar route is from its very inception a place of wanderers, aliens, outcasts, a site of loneliness. In *Exodus*, this line appears early in the poem and figures as the route taken by the Jewish tribe departing from Egypt; in *Beowulf*, this same line appears fairly far into the poem and long after Grendel’s attack on the mead-hall, Heorot: it follows Grendel’s mother’s surprise raid of the hall and on the men therein who stole her son’s arm. The line surfaces moments before Beowulf travels to the underwater world where Grendel’s mother resides. In *Beowulf*, the line represents the path Beowulf will travel as he embarks on a battle with a female monster of unknown strength. Of course, characters such as the Grendel-kin, who are always already outsiders to the masculinist drama that dominates the heroic epic *Beowulf*, would be relegated to such a path that is “unknown” and “narrow.” But why would Danes and Geats—the ostensible heroes of the tale—travel along such a path? We imagine the powerful warriors of Heorot would only deign to travel on such a path in pursuit of the hunted and that Grendel and his mother traveled this path before Beowulf.

After having imagined the story that is “missing” from *Beowulf*, we return to what the Old English *Exodus* tells us: the *Iudisc feða*, like the Grendel-kin are, after all, also outsiders. As they flee *Faraones* (Pharaoh’s) pursuing army, *Exodus* reveals what could have happened in *Beowulf*: first traveled by the fleeing outsiders, the *enge unpaðas* later gets trod upon by the pursuers. Did Grendel, Grendel’s mother, and the *Iudisc feða* collide on the *enge unpaðas, uncuð gelad*? This is a question asked of the narratives absent from the manuscripts of *Beowulf* and *Exodus*.²⁰

Our goal is not merely to generate some sympathy for the Grendel-kin but also to (re)introduce the possibility of a Jewish presence in the Anglo-Saxon language and landscape. In so doing, this chapter reconsiders the ontological dimensionality of both the Grendel-kin in *Beowulf* and the *Iudisc feða* in *Exodus*. Others have imagined a different Grendel before, most notably by John Gardner in his 1971 novel *Grendel*; as well as in the 1981 Australian animated film *Grendel, Grendel, Grendel*; and the 2006 opera *Grendel*.²¹ These, though, all the while letting us imagine a subjectivity for Grendel, do not fundamentally undermine the Anglo-Saxon heroic ethos out of which Grendel and his mother were born. Our plan is somewhat more subversive.

We wish, through our staging of (im)possible encounters, to destabilize the accepted vision of Beowulf and the Geats, these violent enforcers of normativity, and, thus, to capture the men who represent normativity as persecutors of the “extraordinary bodies”²² of the Grendel-kin. In so doing, we explore the consequence of this moment of outcasting that forces the Grendel-kin outward—outside the *civitas* of Heorot that resonates as a site of formidable unions between Geats and Danes—to the Barbary of the marginalized mere.

Our move is inspired—and justified, in so far as justifying our move might be necessary—by a strange coincidence, a moment of overlap between the Old English poems *Exodus* and *Beowulf*, the single shared line of text that sets both marginalized and uncivilized beings in the same lonely, peripheral relationship to the warm heart of the power structures of their worlds, be they Pharaoh’s Egypt or Hrothgar’s hall. While everyone (the hunted and the hunters alike) in both poems may walk this path—definitely the noblemen (*æfelinga*) and possibly the Grendel-kin of *Beowulf*; certainly the *Iudisc feða* and maybe the Egyptians of *Exodus*—we are most concerned with capturing the moment when the Grendel-kin and the *Iudisc feða* each flee their oppressive power structures and try to make a grab for freedom along the route of this narrow path. We also imagine an encounter between the outcasts that runs counter to tradition. Our imaginary encounter between the Grendel-kin and the *Iudisc feða* involves the characters who are fleeing. Chased by the Geats and Danes and by the Egyptians, the Grendel-kin and the *Iudisc feða* meet in their exilic wandering and escape from a world that attempts to subjugate them. This imaginary encounter between two communities of outsiders personifies the cultural complexities at stake in both the acts of preserving traditions and the stories of postcolonial Otherness.

Enge unpaðas, uncuð gelad [Narrow path, unknown way]

Fleeing sword and spear, the *Iudisc feða* trod the *enge unpaðas, uncuð gelad* in the wilderness (*on þisum westene*).²³ For years upon years, the Jewish tribe wandered until, exhausted, they saw a land of great abundance (see Figure 1.2). Attracted by a golden vineyard at the land of the sun’s rising that bore berries a hundred feet long (*a gylden winegaard æt sunnan upgange se hafað bergean hunteontiges fot*), they stopped their flight for a short while.²⁴ They longed for the giant berries after their lifetime of wandering in the desert. So the Jewish tribe crept closer, stopping all movement as two giant figures rose before them:

hie gesawon	swylce twegen
micle mearcstapan	moras healdan,
ellorgæstas.	Daera oðer wæs,
þæs þe hie gewislicost	gewitan meahton,
idese onlicnes;	oðer earsmsceapen
on wereis wæstmum	wraeclastas træd. ²⁵

[They saw such two, large borderland-stompers, occupiers of the marshes, alien spirits. There was one—as they most likely might be discovered walking along the exile-path—like a woman; the other creature had the form of a man.]

The larger, shaped like a man, wore a tunic the color of a wound gone bad, and the smaller, the one in the form of a woman, wore lavender. They turned to flee, clearly accustomed to avoiding the company of men. One pointed the way toward their escape, but the Jewish tribe called out to them; the monstrous-ish man and woman walking the exile-path stopped. The mighty (*micle*) man grasped the hilt of his old-sword (*ealdsweord*) with a strong blade formed by giants (*eotenisc ecgum pyhtig*).²⁶ When the large man looked at the Jewish tribe, the group clustered together like the grapes over their heads. Standing tall and large, the giant that was also like a



Figure 1.2 The Wandering Israelites See the Grendel-kin [or The Spies of Israel See the Sons of Anak (Num. 13)], London, British Library MS Cotton Claudius B.iv, fol. 118. © The British Library Board.

man pointed back at them, or maybe at the delectable fruits, those vines full with berries and apples and food (*ðam winbogum mid berium mid ealle & æpplum & ofætum*).²⁷ Lured, as they were, by the bounty, the man/giant turned back and warily approached.

United as wanderers along the narrow and unknown path, these unlikely companions shared the bounty of the land and found a kinship in their new community of the misrepresented and scorned outcasts. These castaways from civilized society—these individuals of an old-sword and an old book—fled civilizations that repurposed them as slaves and rejected them as monsters who had descended from Cain.

* * *

Is there an unspoken text that surrounds this duplicated line: *enge anpaðas uncuð gelad*? And why, even more, is this line about travel along narrow and unknown paths duplicated? While we cannot locate a definitive answer to these two questions, introducing a consideration of these lines' possible meta-textual relationship allows us to interrogate some interesting possibilities that help us rethink these two poems and the cultural Others within them. The Old English shared line comprises four highly charged, deeply suggestive words that trouble a masculine economy of sword rattling and dragon slaying: a “path” that is “narrow,” and a “way” that is “unknown.” Such a route offers itself up as a site where the unusual is bound to occur. This possible mysterious adventure and magical journey brings us to wonder about the “missing” internal narrative:²⁸ the Grendel-kin’s likely walk along this path before the Geats and Danes followed them in hot pursuit. Attending to the (known) path taken by the *Iudisc feða* of *Exodus*, we try to watch for the surfacing of another, and, possibly, displaced story about Grendel’s path home to his mother.²⁹ We listen for the possibly denied and repressed backstory to the shared line. For a long time, perhaps an overlong time, *Exodus* and *Beowulf* have occupied a special place in Anglo-Saxon studies as legends that reproduce a deeply masculinized culture of tough warriors who carve their place into history through heroic acts of violence. For perhaps too long, scholars have reproduced a consideration of these Old English texts as embodying what is most readily visible in them—that is, a Christian ethos and hyper-masculinized culture.³⁰ But in these poems’ core—below their more visible stories and plots—there lie narratives that unsettle those more standard, safe, comfortable, and well-trod visions of *Exodus* and *Beowulf*.³¹

Exodus and *Beowulf* are also tales of exile, wandering, and flight from groups that dominate the civic sphere. In *Exodus*, the *Iudisc feða* voice their resistance to their servitude through their God’s plagues.³² After their expulsion from Egypt, the *Iudisc feða* then flee to unknown lands in search of freedom. *Beowulf* too has a countercultural narrative embedded in its masculine epic. The Other story is a tale of an alienated son and his sword-wielding mother who seem to be crossovers from another, more ancient, time: the son, a hall-wanting man (*wonsæli wer*); the mother, woman and female-warrior (*ides aglæcwif*).³³ Together, this mother-son team, both depicted as hybrids of humans and monsters and both marked by their oppressors as *Caines cynne*

(kin of Cain),³⁴ live as outcasts from the civilization, the *comitatus*, embodied by the mead-hall, Heorot, in a geography that figures as a lake or sea (*mere*).³⁵

We know that the textual path trod by the *Iudisc feða* and Moyses of the Old English *Exodus* is also walked upon by the warriors of *Beowulf*, led by their eponymous hero as he goes in search of the Grendel-kin. In 1972, Jack Vickrey pointed out that the Israelites “are described as beginning to move forward into the sea as if they were going into a battle. Not only the direction of this readiness to fight but the readiness itself seems incongruous: their enemies are behind them and not in front; in well-known fact the Israelites are fleeing from the Egyptians.”³⁶ Perhaps it is time to acknowledge a new possibility: that the *Iudisc feða*, who have no one in front of them to fight, are walking the same route trod by Grendel, who also has only his home in the *mere* and his mother in front of him. And while the path is, in *Beowulf*, currently walked by the warriors from the deeply masculinized economy, the thanes of Heorot do have a battle in front of them and, therefore, are likely trailing the fleeing Grendel in his *mere* just as the Egyptians are in hot pursuit of the *Iudisc feða* and Moyses. Vickrey unintentionally generates a loose parallel between the underwater battle that occurs with *Grendles modor* (Grendel’s mother) and Beowulf, and the battle of Exodus: “We must take the step, so to speak, of entering the sea ourselves, that is, of postulating what at first thought seems so improbable, namely that in some sense a battle between the Israelites and the Egyptians does occur and that it occurs in the Red Sea.”³⁷ In the *mere*, in the sea, Grendel’s mother stands her ground against those who have Othered her and her son.

With this encounter in the *mere* in mind, it is worth asking which poem came first. Some say *Exodus*, others *Beowulf*.³⁸ Of course, any final conclusion about the first appearance of the line circles back to unanswerable conversations about origins and dates, but if *Exodus* is written before *Beowulf*, the poet of *Beowulf* writes this line traveled by the *Iudisc feða* into *Beowulf*. In this case Grendel, fully occupying space in the role of *Caines cynne*, is doubly touched by Jewishness, being first marked as the kin of Cain and then walking along a path trod by Jews. The fraught possibilities of the displaced narrative heighten when the *enge unpaðas, uncuð gelad* serves as the path of Others fleeing abuse. In this sense, the Danes and Geats and the *Egypta folc*³⁹ are one and the same, occupying the same role and same position on that path in chasing after the Grendel-kin and the *Iudisc feða*. If *Exodus* precedes *Beowulf*, then so too does the relationship of their stories potentially unsettle the normative narrative. Moyses and the *Iudisc feða* could offer sanctuary to the Grendel-kin; and then the *druron deofolgyld* (fallen idols) of Egypt inform the reopening of the *hægtrafum* (pagan shrines) of Heorot.⁴⁰ The *Egypta folc* pursuing the *Iudisc feða* thus change our understanding of how the Danes and the Geats move along the “unknown way,” for the analogy extends itself to upset the ascendant position of the Danes and Geats, whose continued passions for Germanic mythology and *wyrd* (fate) suggest that the two sets of rulers alike share polytheistic dreams. If *Beowulf* is the first time that the line surfaces and *Exodus* is the second, then the moniker *Iudisc feða* becomes touched by monstrosity. Beyond this touch, though, the *Exodus* poem’s one use of *Iudisc feða* as opposed to the three versions of the moniker *Israhela cyn* suggest some familiarity with if not ontologically vibrant Jews, then maybe with Jewish texts, Jewish languages,

or even an Aramaic *Exodus*.⁴¹ If *Beowulf* was written first and *Exodus* later, *Exodus* borrows the reference to unknown paths and narrow ways of travel, and then part of the Jews' exilic journey involves a possible reunion with their ancestral monstrosity since the Grendel-kin reside in the mysterious watery depths. Perhaps, herein lies the unspoken reason for a monstrous and ever-enlarging horned Moses who can barely be contained in the vellum by the close of the Old English *Hexateuch*.⁴² This moment of overlapping lines and enlarging monstrosities in *Beowulf* and *Exodus*, even more certainly, challenges us to rethink the Grendel-kin who are sometimes human (depicted as man [*wer*] and woman [*mōdor*]) and at other times as an unholy creature (*wiht unhālo*) and yet also a mighty sea-woman (*merewif mīhig*).⁴³ The touch of the Jewish—through Cain and the alleged heroes of *Exodus*—may also humanize the Grendel-kin who hail from an earlier time and claim an ancestry that reaches farther back than the newly Christianized world. If the shared lines originate with *Beowulf*, there are linkages, after all, in the Grendel-kin's attack on the *civitas* of Heorot and the Jewish tribe's resistance to servitude and their embrace of the unknown (*uncuð*). After all, the word "Jewish" (*Iudisc*) resonates differently from "Israelites" (*Israhela*); in that the former is potentially a living people and a vibrant tribe whereas the latter is a one-dimensional biblical trope and a stand-in for Christians. In translating—even if only once—the *Israhela* as *Iudisc*, *Exodus* perhaps resists designing the *folk* of a biblical text as types for Christian readers.⁴⁴

*swa hwylcne man swa hy gelæccað ponne fretað hi
hyne*⁴⁵ [Certainly, any person they catch, they eat.]

Moyses led an army of many brave men through the marches (*fela meoringa, fyrdē gelædde*).⁴⁶ They were a people trudging (*folk ferende*),⁴⁷ taking with them all they had needed as they fled—food, livestock, books of prayer, hope. As they traversed alien lands, strange wonders were wrought around and even upon them. Utterly transfigured after his journey to the mountaintop, Moyses was later glorified and separated from his people (*folk*): Moyses was horned, and no one would dare come near him (*Moyses wæs gehyrned, & ne dorston him neah cuman*).⁴⁸ Even their sheep were transformed; they kept their bristly white sheep's wool (*sceapes wulle*), but their ears grew tall, like an ass's ears (*eoseles ea*), and their hooves were replaced by bird's feet (*fugeles fet*). But the *folk* herded them anyway, as they always had (see Figure 1.3).

Out on the *enge unpaðas, uncuð gelad*, they met a strange being wandering like a ghost from a foreign land, an alien spirit (*ellorgest*), in the general likeness of a woman or a goddess (*idese onlicnaes*).⁴⁹ Her body was covered in dark wool, a sort of wild person out on the misty moors (*mistige moras*).⁵⁰ In her heathen's sword-stick (*haepenes handsporu*), she bore a bloody slaughter-hand (*blodge beadufolme*).⁵¹

This lonely, great wanderer of the wastelands, the borderland-stomper (*mære mearcstapa*),⁵² reached out to one of the followers of Moyses, a shepherd with his strange sheep. That fierce woman (*wif unhyre*)⁵³ narrated her tale of sorrow. Her enemies had persecuted her and her kin for a generation, and in the end, at their hands death took



Figure 1.3 Moyses and his Troops Meet Grendel's Mother [or Hostes and Lertice, *Wonders of the East*], London, British Library MS Cotton Vitellius A.xv. © The British Library Board.

her son from her (*sunu deað fornām*).⁵⁴ As if to mock the suffering of a grieving mother (*modor*), the monsters hung her son's arm from the roof:

hond alegde	
earm ond eaxle	—þaer wæs eal geador
Grendles grape—	under geapne hrōf. ⁵⁵

[placed the hand,
arm and shoulder—there was all together
Grendel's grip—under the roof.]

This poor soul (*galgmod*),⁵⁶ grieving in her heart, avenged her boy, boldly killed a man in the hall of her enemies (*wif unhyre / hyre bearn gewræc, beorn acwealde / ellenlice*).⁵⁷

And she, the mother, reclaimed and carried off the corpse of that beloved man, her son (*leofne mannan; hio pæt lic ætbær*).⁵⁸

The shepherd told her tale to his tribe, just as the poet (*scop*) of Heorot had told his narrative about Grendel's origin myth to the massed tribes of Geats and Danes. The *Iudisc feða*, thinking of their own sons lost to the *Egypta folc*,⁵⁹ took in this solitary, dolorous (*sorhfull*)⁶⁰ wanderer, clutching to her breast the arm of her son; the Jewish tribe took her in as one of their own. Inside their Judenbury (*Iudenbyrig*),⁶¹ protected from the outside behind locked gates, the *Iudisc feða* embraced the brave-spirit (*ellorgast*)⁶²—an alien to the men of the *comitatus* from whom she stole back her son's arm. She was herself excoriated as a sea-wolf (*brimwylf*)⁶³ just as they, the *Iudisc feða*, had too been mocked as Christ killers by the new Christians who were increasingly populating the land and pushing them too into the margins of the territory they had once all occupied together.⁶⁴

* * *

Grendel's mother loves her son. Outcasts, both living alone, presumably, in the *mere*, they have each other. Until they don't.

In capturing this moment of Grendel's mother's loss, we want to bring you to be alongside, if not inside, her woe. And ask you to travel with Grendel and to listen in at the mead-hall while the warriors celebrate and sing in the warmth of their homosocial bonding. Grendel, in particular, features in the narrative of the *scop* as listening in at doors and troubling the daily practices of the warriors of Heorot.

Overall, however, the Grendel-kin haunt—and terrorize in this haunting—this Anglo-Saxon *comitatus*. Readers are simultaneously privy to the world of insiders and outsiders. One moment in the story of Grendel's problematic relationship with the warriors of Heorot is captured for us readers of *Beowulf* who listen outside the mead-hall as the *scop* regales the warrior community with the alleged story of Grendel's life. Does the presumably Anglo-Saxon writer intend to have us hear Grendel's backstory alongside the putative monster? The *scop* writes the episode in such a way to enable readers to experience *Heorot* liminally—both inside and outside the hall. But this moment, in turn, disturbs the linearity of the *scop*'s narration. This narrative shudder creates a space where, along with Grendel, readers witness the celebratory mood, the loud cheer in the hall (*hludne in healle*). Troubled by the poet's story about Grendel, this narrative is also enjoyable as it is accompanied by the pleasing sound of a harp, the poet's clear song (*Bær wæs hearpan sweg, / swutol sang scopes*).⁶⁵ But here, readers are also outside the hall, and there encounter Grendel, an alien to the loud, boisterous *comitatus*, in the nonplace of the community occupied by the borderland-stomper (*mearcstapa*) who lives in the mere with his mother. Grendel, thus, occupies a liminal space as an alien spirit (*ellengæst*), a brave-spirit, who doubles as a figure who embodies the definition of *mearcstapa*. Grendel, like so many other monsters, features as he who dwelled in darkness (*se þe in pystrum bad*).⁶⁶ In this case of the *scop*'s alleged backstory of Grendel's life, Grendel heard a dream, another's dream (*dream gehyrde*) in the hall, and he learns of his inevitable physical separation as the

mære mearcstapa, se þe moras heold,
 fen ond fæsten; fifelcynnes eard
 wonsæli wer weardode hwile,
 sibðan him Scyppend forscrifэн hæfde
 in Caines cynne— þone cwealm gewræc
 ece Drihten, þæs þe he Abel slog.⁶⁷

[famed borderland-stomper he who occupied the moors,
 marsh and stronghold; the dwelling place of the race of monsters
 hall-wanting man occupied (a)while,
 since *Scyppend* has proscribed him
 in the kin of Cain —until eternal *Drihten*⁶⁸ avenge the killing
 because he slew Abel.]

The *Beowulf*-poet gifts us a few such moments when readers encounter Anglo-Saxon traditions that figure in his multiplex society: the polytheistic, Jewish, and Christian elements overlap as the *scop* regales his audience with Grendel's (and Grendel's mother's) alleged origin myth. The touch brings the audience to the Christian version of the Jewish story of *Bereshit* (Genesis) through the biblical story of Cain's slaying Abel in Gen. 4:8 for a direct touch of epic Old English and Jewish monsters.⁶⁹ Here, *Bereshit* figures as a forceful touch of Jewishness in *Beowulf* and possibly a link to *Exodus*, as well as its tribe of *Iudisc feða* stepping from the vellum of the Old Testament narrative poetry onto the folios of the heroic epic. Grendel, Jews, and Old Testament narrative poetry are then thrown in with Cain, the slayer of his brother, as well as "giants and elves and orcs . . . that contended with God for a long time" (*eotenas ond ylfe ond orcneas, / . . . þa wið God wunnon / lange brage*).⁷⁰ In essence, Grendel is cast as the perpetual outsider to the mead-hall, exiled to the mere, the borderland between civilization and the wild, in a model that parallels Jewish narratives of exile; the echoes of expulsions from Eden that bring the Jews to the Diaspora. Grendel may even speak to audiences as a figure who links forceful Christian missionizing to lingering Germanic polytheism.⁷¹

Could the touch of the Grendel-kin's origin story give visible form to a memory of and possible anxiety about moving away from another, previous, polytheist-Germanic culture before moving toward a newfangled Christianity?⁷² In this psychic crossover, the shared line, *enge unpaðas uncuðe gelad*, could speak of a link between monstrosities and two groups escaping the civilizations that enslave them. The outcasts are running toward a borderland of their own design. The enslaved warriors of *Exodus* perform two simultaneous roles: most of the time, the heroes of *Exodus* figure as the *Israhela cyn* or biblical types lifted from Christian scripture, the embodiment of a good Christian; but at other times, these enslaved warriors appear as *Iudisc feða*, and in this latter role, they resonate as *contemporary* Jews, who also represent lingering dreams of a past time. Represented as a tribe rightly fleeing the contained world of *Egypta folc* and the rule of *Faraeo*, the *Iudisc feða* heroically opt for a period of living as exiles as they embrace a future in wilderness-contained border-dwellings (*mearchofu mor heald*).⁷³ The exilic life of the *Iudisc feða* touches Grendel's as the embodiment of the borderland-stomper

is born of a race of monsters (*fifelcynnes*) that slay their siblings and eternally (for a *lange prage*) fight with God. In the Grendel-kin's long fight with the *civitas* of Heorot, readers witness the complexities of a colonized people who, as the Anglo-Saxons may be doing, can deflect their own internal conflict over their Christianizing selves if they project onto the Grendel-kin the long period of fighting with God.

In this moment when Heorot's *scop* regales Heorot's warriors with a narrative of the Grendel-kin's putative ancestry, the Grendel-kin are rendered proximate to *Caines cynne* and touch the identity of the *ur*-monsters of an allegedly vengeful Old Testamental God. The *scop* translates the Grendel-kin's backstory into an Old Testamental origin myth, thus bringing familiar monsters and the Grendel-kin's ancestry to be more accessible to the Heorot warriors, who are slowly Christianizing and becoming familiar with new origin myths.⁷⁴ Or perhaps the Grendel-kin always already emerge out of the folios of Old Testament history like the *Iudisc feða* of *Exodus*? Not desirous of being conflated with the barbaric and monstrous ("pagan") Grendel with his *fifelcynnes* ancestry, Anglo-Saxons warriors would instead want to be associated with a more modern and recent religion that represents "civilization"—a *civitas*, though, that seeks "to soften and to humanize the character of the Germanic tribesman to bring him, however slowly and painfully, to a world of knowledge and culture."⁷⁵ Medieval Christianity needed to prove itself a rational discourse in opposition to the putatively irrational beliefs of the "pagans" and the Jews. For this reason the monsters of *Beowulf* are inscribed as *Caines cynne*. Cain is invoked to demonize Grendel, and Grendel's connection to Cain seems to act as a ploy to rally the warriors' hatred of this elsewhere-spirit (*ellorgast*), this Heorot-Other, who is not a part of the community.⁷⁶ The warriors of Heorot are, however, most likely, borderland-stompers themselves, caught in between a polytheist-Germanic world and a Christian one, as they are slowly but persistently being Christianized and continuously expected to relinquish their old faith systems.

Hrepon mearcweardas middum nihtum [The borderlands'
people cried out in the middle of the night]⁷⁷

The people of Israel (*populus Israel*) had gathered together in *Ramesse*, and left the land of Egypt after Passover (*terra egipci post pasca*).⁷⁸ The morning after Passover (*Iudisc pesach*), while setting out, they were chilled by the distant screams of the mandrake (*mandragora*), with its body like that of a man, that herb of marvelous virtue (*erba mirabiliter virtuosa*).⁷⁹ They were too far, they hoped, for the screams to drive them mad, though some wondered about this in later years, after having seen seas part and pillars of cloud and fire guide their way.

On that first day, they slipped past the Eale, with its giant, outstretched horns more than a cubit long (*cornua ultra cubitalem longa*), with its horse's body, elephant's tail, and black color (*equino corpore, cauda elephanti, nigro colore*).⁸⁰ They had seen other wonders and horrors in the distance. On the far side of the Nile, a *faunus*, possessing the body of a horse, cavorted. He wore a hat and danced lewdly with a snake.⁸¹ They saw a naked man, armed with an ax, riding a fearsome *cocadrilus*.⁸²



Figure 1.4 The Wandering Israelites in a Land of Monsters, Hereford World Map. © The Dean and Chapter of Hereford Cathedral and the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust.

The journey of the sons of Israel (*filiorum Israel*)⁸³ took them along *enge unpaðas*, *uncuð gelad*, through the Red Sea, past the giant phoenix (*phenix*)—a bird unique in the world (*unica avis in orbe*)⁸⁴—standing on a burning mound. They passed mountains, crossed rivers, and cowered as they crept behind the *marsok*, a shape-changing beast (*bestia transmutata*), which wavered in their sight, first human, then cow, then duck, then wolf, and back again in senseless and terrifying alternation.⁸⁵ And then, in the land of their old rivals, the Ammonites, they came across a different sort of marvel. It was a female figure, large and sorrowful, standing by the strange cold waters of the Asphalt River, where iron floats and a feather sinks (*ferrum natat et pluma mergitur*).⁸⁶ There, they saw

ides aglaewif yrmþe gemunde
se þe wætergesan wunian scolde
cealde streamas.⁸⁷

[a woman female warrior with misery in her mind
who inhabited fearsome waters, cold streams.]

The woman, a female-warrior, the one a story introduces as Grendel's mother (*Grendles modor*), stood like a rock, petrified (*mutata in petra*).⁸⁸ The Jews (*Iudei*) slipped past, marveling at a distance, eager to be gone from that strange place, eager to make it, at last, to a promised territory, the city of Jericho (*civitatem Ierico*), just visible across the river, in the distance and where the wandering *Iudisc feða* can celebrate a life away from enslavement.⁸⁹

* * *

The path shared by *Beowulf* and *Exodus*—*enge anpaðas uncuð gelad*—is double-edged, bringing characters liberation tainted by conflict. Resonating as an unfamiliar and precipitous path, the route involves disarray, chaos, and, therefore, danger. Pursued by characters who occupy positions of relative authority and seats of power (*Egypta folc*, Danes, and Geats), the pursued (*Iudisc feða*, *Grendel*, and especially *Grendles modor*) escape to exilic freedom along this “narrow way.” Monsters, Jews, Jewished monsters, monstrous Jews, all the pursued are the outsiders to and of the dominant group.

Reflecting on the line shared by *Beowulf* and *Exodus* involves (re)telling literal as well as spectral encounters. The literal encounter figures in the shared line. The other encounter haunts both Old English texts. Subjugated by a more powerful group and involved in nightly terrorist attacks, the Grendel-kin of *Beowulf* flee along paths of exile (*wraeclastas traed*)⁹⁰ to their waterland just as the *Iudisc feða* of *Exodus* travel through their own border-dwellings (*mearchofu mor heald*).⁹¹ The two groups of outsiders, escaping from a threat that means to destroy them, both “confirm and destabilize”⁹² the *civitas* of both Heorot and Egypt because efforts to colonize and control the uncontrollable *always* fail. Like Steven Kruger’s spectral Jew, the *Iudisc feða* of *Exodus* and Grendel-kin of *Beowulf* presumably serve the narratives as figures that underscore the need for the power structures to contain them. That is, as monsters who are invented to “confirm” the power structure’s authority, their representation is invariably always already “forked.”⁹³ In essence, these Othered beings, these worthy foes, simultaneously subvert and undermine the normative humanity of their pursuers.

The final trip on the *enge anpaðas uncuð gelad* involves this shared line, a last battle, a stolen sword, and a postcolonial moment. These four things bring us to a heathenish encounter where the other member of *Caines cynne*—namely, *Grendles modor*—engages in a battle with Beowulf as she fights both for justice for her son and eventually for her own life. Characterized as a water wolf (*brimwylf*) as she struggles with Beowulf, the grieving *modor* fights her last armed conflict with a land wolf from far outside her sphere of influence.⁹⁴ Proving himself to be adept at translating the weapons of others as always already his own, Beowulf comes to the battle after having traversed *enge anpaðas uncuð gelad* with a borrowed sword, Hrunting, which then fails him.⁹⁵ When one borrowed sword fails, Beowulf grabs another, the old, entish, giant’s sword (*ealdswæord eotenisc*) of *Grendles modor*.⁹⁶ When Hrunting, whose edge was iron (*ecg wæs iren*) fails, Beowulf steals the mighty old-sword (*ealdswæord eacen*) of *Grendles modor*.⁹⁷ Perhaps, unsurprisingly, this weapon is both more enduring and more effective. The endurance is a moment of postcolonial mimicry and a tale

of repurposing: possession of the old-sword involves gestures of colonization and the *civitas* successfully penetrating the *mere* and completely eliminating the threat of the non-normative Other. In this act of deterritorialization, stories are told and retold.⁹⁸ The failure of newfangled masculinities—of wielding a weak sword like Hrunting—introduces repressed anxieties about ineffective acts of power that are better left forgotten.⁹⁹ Colonizing narratives are more sustaining.

Rending the sword from its heathenish traditions and its *ellorgæst* owner, Beowulf claims what was never his to possess: he adopts the *ealdsworð* of the woman female-warrior (*ideas alglaecwif*) and brings the weapon into his normative masculinist world. So too are the Jewish traditions pulled into the world map of the Danes and the Geats in the anxieties about and responses to conversionist energies. The *ellorgæst*—whether the Grendel-kin of *Beowulf* or the *Iudisc feða* of *Exodus*—all fall under the social and cultural category of the kin of Cain in the new dispensation that repurposes and depersonalizes old things, projecting monstrous identities onto Jewish characters. Stealing the warrior woman's sword—a warrior who has herself been translated into a sword-slayer like Cain (*Cain wearð / to ecgbanan*)—*Beowulf* familiarizes us with the modern methods of writing new stories without paying due homage to their heathenish (*hæpenra*) sources.¹⁰⁰ In the ultimate act of postcolonial appropriation, Cain, the unchecked and jealous brother of Abel in *Bereshit*, comes to embody (all) Jews, and all creatures who kill their brothers. In mapping the flight of the *Iudisc feða* against *Beowulf*, the latter is revealed as an anti-epic about intense alienation and Otherness, about times past and almost forgotten, about a civilization whose greatest night-danger (*nihtbealwa mæst*)¹⁰¹ is men, not monsters.

Notes

* We dedicate this piece to our little monsters—our daughters, Shoshana, Yetta, and Lela—who have their own unknown paths to tread in their hopefully expansive futures. Many thanks and debts of gratitude are owed to Patricia Clare Ingham and Jack Vickrey who first introduced Miriamne Ara Krummel to the wonders of the Old English language and the Anglo-Saxon world.

1 *Old English Hexateuch*, London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B.iv, folio 118r. For a full transcription, see *The Old English Heptateuch and Ælfric's "Libellus de veteri testament et novo,"* ed. R. Marsden, EETS, o.s., 330 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). See B. Withers, *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, Cotton Claudius B.iv: The Frontier of Seeing and Reading in Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), chap. 2, esp. 85, for discussion of the dating and provenance of the Hexateuch. Withers places the Cotton manuscript around 1020–40. The full manuscript is available in high resolution at "Cotton MS Claudius B IV," *Digitized Manuscripts* (no date) http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Claudius_B_IV&index=0 (accessed January 2018). Translations of the passages directly surround the Old English passages—either following upon or preceding the line—so as not to interrupt the narrative flow. Translations are our own unless otherwise noted.

2 *Hexateuch*, folio 12v.

- 3 *Old English Exodus*, line 58 [hereafter *Exodus*]; *Beowulf*, line 1410. All further references to these two texts will be taken from *Beowulf*, ed. Frederick Klaeber (Lexington: D. C. Heath, 1922); and *Exodus*, ed. Peter J. Lucas (Devon: University of Exeter Press, 1977). Translations of *Beowulf* are informed by George Jack, ed. *Beowulf: A Student Edition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994). Citations are in the notes. We edit out Klaeber's macrons and other diacritical markings.
- 4 *Exodus*, line 170.
- 5 *Exodus*, line 156.
- 6 *Beowulf*, lines 112–14a.
- 7 See Fred C. Robinson, *The Tomb of Beowulf and other essays on Old English* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993), 20.
- 8 See Robinson, *The Tomb of Beowulf*, 21–22. A “supernatural” *Beowulf* does not sit well with Robinson, and he seeks instead to prove that Beowulf’s powerful feats of strength are humanly possible (22–35). See also Jess Byock’s work, especially his introduction to *The Saga of Hrolf Kraki* (New York: Penguin, 1998), discussing the links between Anglo-Saxon and Icelandic sagas (xxv–xxviii) and the intersections between myths of pagan gods mixed in with Christianity (xxix–xxxii). We continue to discuss the possibilities of a Germanic polytheism and its pantheon below.
- 9 *Exodus*, line 247.
- 10 *Exodus*, line 273.
- 11 *Beowulf*, lines 1351b–52.
- 12 *Beowulf*, line 1353.
- 13 We are invoking beings like the “monsters of Tevel” that David I. Shyovitz discusses in Chapter 8 of this volume. Shyovitz remarks that there is a long tradition of depicting these “monsters of Tevel” as sometimes the embodiment of “physical monstrosity” while at other times the representation of human or “ostensibly animalistic creatures.”
- 14 Qtd. in C. R. Dodwell and P. Clemoes, *The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch* (London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B.iv.) EEMF 18 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1974), 20.
- 15 This point introduces the fraught temporality of a postcolonial world that these two monstrous Others live in. On the postcolonial nature of the Anglo-Saxon Middle Ages, see especially the comprehensive timeline in (x–xxvii, esp. xi–xvii) and the first chapter (1–20) of Lisa Lampert-Weissig’s *Medieval Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010); Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s *Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: On Difficult Middles* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); and Kathleen Davis’s *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). Robin R. Mundill, *The King’s Jews: Money, Massacre and Exodus in Medieval England* (New York: Continuum, 2010), points out that there were a small group of Jews in Roman Britain (1–4). Perhaps, members of that small group remained in *Ængle-lond* or England.
- 16 On the Jewish Mediterranean in Ashkenaz, see Fred Astren, “Jews,” *A Companion to Mediterranean History*, ed. Peregrine Horden and Sharon Kinoshita (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 392–408.
- 17 Elizabeth Scala’s *Absent Narratives: Manuscript Textuality, and Literary Structure in Late Medieval England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), at xv, informs our work throughout.

- 18 On genre distinctions see Stanley B. Greenfield and Daniel G. Calder's *A New Critical History of Old English Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 206–26, esp. 212–16; and 134–57, esp. 141.
- 19 *Exodus*, line 58 and *Beowulf*, line 1410. On the shared line, see Lucas, *Exodus*, 69–72.
- 20 Scala's *Absent Narratives* calls out acts of deconstruction that are also evident in the Old Testament narrative poem, *Exodus*, and the heroic-elegiac, *Beowulf*. The result: a deconstructive examination "of these narratives" as they "operate against themselves" (Scala, *Absent Narratives*, p. xv). See also Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Introduction: Midcolonial," *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 1–17.
- 21 John Gardner, *Grendel*, illus. Emil Antonucci (New York: Vintage Books, 1971); *Grendel*, *Grendel*, *Grendel*, dir. Alexander Stitt (1981); and *Grendel*, dir. Julie Taymor (2006).
- 22 Rosemarie Garland Thompson, "Introduction: From Wonder to Error—A Genealogy of Freak Discourse in Modernity," *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, ed. Garland Thompson (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 1.
- 23 *Hexateuch*, folio 118r.
- 24 *Wonders of the East*, line 52.
- 25 *Beowulf*, lines 1347–52.
- 26 *Beowulf*, line 1558.
- 27 OE Num. 13:24.
- 28 Scala, *Absent Narratives*, 9.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 12.
- 30 Sometimes these exegetical readings were too forceful about their assumptions and silenced alternative readings. D. W. Robertson Jr.'s work is a case in point; see his *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), esp. 286–309; and also Robertson Jr., *Essays in Medieval Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), esp. 3–20, where Robertson defines the critic of "historical criticism" as a scholar who seeks out the "artistic integrity" of a period and who recognizes, if nothing else, that "medieval literature was produced in a world dominated intellectually by the church" (4). In fact, to Robertson this intellectual domination was received well. Alongside Robertson's forceful claims, consider Lucas's observation that the *Exodus* poem does not closely follow the Vulgate in the note to lines 1–7 on page 75.
- 31 Robinson, *The Tomb of Beowulf*, 45–51, introduces this possibility of a polytheistic world circling around the *Beowulf* poem only to withdraw into the safety net of the standard argument that the old Germanic religions had largely disappeared from view through the efforts of Christian missionizers.
- 32 *Exodus*, line 312.
- 33 *Beowulf*, lines 105, 1259.
- 34 *Beowulf*, line 107a, 1261b.
- 35 *Beowulf*, line 1362b.
- 36 Jack Vickrey, "Exodus and the Battle in the Sea," *Traditio* 28 (1972), 119.
- 37 Vickrey, "Exodus and the Battle in the Sea," at 121, 121–25.
- 38 See Lucas, *Exodus*, 69–71.
- 39 *Exodus*, line 50b.
- 40 *Exodus*, line 47a; *Beowulf*, line 175b. This moment of *hæpenra hyht* (heathenish hope, *Beowulf*, line 179a) could be an expression of anxiety about the lack of power that prayer to a Christian God has offered; an introduction to "pagandom" within a

- Christian worldview (a form of Pelagian heresy); or an expression of cultural loss. On these notions see Larry D. Benson, “The Pagan Coloring of *Beowulf*,” *Old English Poetry: Fifteen Essays*, ed. Robert P. Creed (Providence: Brown University Press, 1967), at 207, 204–05.
- 41 For the possible contact between Anglo-Saxons and Jews, see also Damian Joseph Fleming, “‘The most exalted language,’ Anglo-Saxon Perceptions of Hebrew,” PhD thesis (University of Toronto, 2006); and Damian Fleming, “*Hebraeam scire linguam*: Bede’s Rhetoric of the Hebrew Truth,” *Imagining the Jew in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Culture*, ed. Samantha Zacher, 63–78. Miriamne Ara Krummel is deeply grateful to Carey Eckhardt for taking an interest in this article and for providing Krummel with these references to Fleming’s work. See also Paul G. Remley, *Old English Biblical Verse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Andrew Schiel, *The Footsteps of Israel: Understanding Jews in Anglo-Saxon England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004).
- 42 See Asa Simon Mittman, “In those days,’ Giants and the Giant Moses in the Old English Illustrated Hexateuch,” in *Imagining the Jew in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Culture*, ed. Samantha Zacher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 237–61, esp. 237–38, 243.
- 43 See *Beowulf*, especially lines 105–25, 1518–38.
- 44 Krummel has discussed the choice between selecting a word that has ethnic resonances versus one that offers up only hermeneutic links to a biblical type, where Jews figure as simulacra of themselves and awaiting Christians to help Jews realize their true dimensionality. On this point see her “Globalizing Jewish Communities: Mapping a Jewish Geography in Fragment VII of the *Canterbury Tales*,” *TSLL* 50 (2008), 132–36, where Krummel wonders whether the Jews in some of the Monk’s tragedies might be multi-dimensional rather than hermeneutical.
- 45 *Wonders of the East*, folio 5r. See Asa Simon Mittman and Susan M. Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts: The Wonders of the East in the Beowulf Manuscript* (Tempe: ACMRS/Brepols, 2013), 47. Who is doing the eating? And who is doing the capturing? With these questions in mind, we wonder whether this passage captures a moment of unspoken libel. Maybe in this moment the monsters touch the Jew? On this libel see Miri Rubin’s work in *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); on libel in general, see Hannah R. Johnson, *Blood Libel: The Ritual Murder Accusation at the Limit of Jewish History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2012).
- 46 *Exodus*, lines 62.
- 47 *Exodus*, line 45a.
- 48 *Old English Heptateuch*, Exodus 34:30.
- 49 *Beowulf*, lines 1349a and 1351a. See Joseph Bosworth, “*Ides*,” *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, (March 21, 2010) <http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz/02043> accessed December 13, 2017.
- 50 *Beowulf*, line 162a.
- 51 *Beowulf*, lines 986a, 990a.
- 52 *Beowulf*, line 103a.
- 53 *Beowulf*, line 2120b.
- 54 *Beowulf*, line 2119b.
- 55 *Beowulf*, lines 834b–36a.
- 56 *Beowulf*, line 1277a.
- 57 *Beowulf*, lines 2120b–22a.

- 58 *Beowulf*, line 2127.
- 59 *Exodus*, line 50b.
- 60 *Beowulf*, line 2119b.
- 61 A reference is made to a *Iudenbyrig* in the calendar year of 952 in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, rev. and ed. Dorothy Whitelock (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1961), 73.
- 62 *Beowulf*, line 1599a.
- 63 *Beowulf*, line 1599a.
- 64 As for the Jews being denounced as “Christ Killers,” see Jeremy Cohen’s *Christ Killers: The Jews and the Passion from the Bible to the Big Screen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. 55–70.
- 65 *Beowulf*, lines 89b–90a.
- 66 *Beowulf*, line 87b.
- 67 *Beowulf*, lines 103–08.
- 68 Krummel remains fascinated by a dramatic moment in *Beowulf* when the warriors (backslide) to their polytheistic-Germanic past by returning to the nearly forgotten altars as a way of appeasing the gods and putting a hoped-for end to Grendel’s attacks: see *Beowulf*, lines 175–88. Seeking to underscore the fraught tensions that might go unseen in this complicated moment when the *scop* narrates Grendel’s alleged backstory, Krummel opts to keep in rather than translate away the “the many older Germanic words for lord, ruler, or divinity”: see Seth Lerer’s *Inventing English: A Portable History of the English Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), at 15. Mittman is kindly willing to go along with Krummel’s decision, and so this chapter retains the Anglo-Saxon names for various functions of god and references to Metod, Demend, Drihten God, Helm, and Waldend rather than translating these words as *God* and at once, by doing so, translating away the Anglo-Saxon identity and suggesting that all of these names for god(s) always already refer to the Christian god. Important to this conversation about gods is that there is also mention of the G-o-d god in *Beowulf*. On the subject of a lingering polytheistic-Germanic tradition despite the encroaching borders of Christianity, see Rudolf Simek, “Germanic Religion and the Conversion to Christianity,” in *Early Germanic Literature and Culture*, ed. Brian Murdoch and Malcolm Read (Rochester and New York: Camden House, 2004), 73–101. Benson, “The Pagan Coloring of *Beowulf*,” 200–06, discusses the complexities of this world.
- 69 For another, and more nuanced, view of the influence of Jewish scriptures, see David Williams’s *Cain and Beowulf: A Study in Secular Allegory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982). Williams discusses a link to the Hebrew tradition of Cain, esp. on 20–26. On the relationship between Cain in the Jewish and Christian traditions, see Ruth Mellinkoff, *The Mark of Cain* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 14–21. For the Jewish tradition of this subject, see Shyovitz’s contribution in Chapter 8 of this volume. As Shyovitz explains, “medieval Jewish discussions of Tevel betray signs of familiarity with these geographical and teratological discourses, and attentiveness to Christian debates over the human identity (or lack thereof) of far-off monsters can help us make sense of the spectrum of views on the matter found in rabbinic and medieval Jewish sources.”
- 70 *Beowulf*, lines 112a, 113b–14a.
- 71 We have to remind ourselves, as Michael Alexander points out in regard to the manuscript tradition, that we are building all of our theories—whether those dramas resemble Mittman and Krummel’s or something closer to the standard fare—on the ground that the Anglo-Saxon past is “sketchy” (1). How were these texts changed and

altered? And by whom? After all, manuscripts “were copied at least once before they reached their present form” (3), and interpolations may have entered into the text. Alexander points out that “there are relics of their heathenism left at such cardinal points as place-names and the names of the days of the week” (6). On the possibility of a cathected past and embedding protected and cherished memories: see Alexander, *A History of Old English Literature* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2002), 1–9. On invasive interpolations, see Ruth Nisse, *Jacob's Shipwreck: Diaspora, Translation, and Jewish-Christian Relations in Medieval England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 19–26.

- 72 Krummel developed these ideas about the polytheist-Germanic pantheon and a pre-Christian mythology in conversation with the ideas about cultural translation in Mary Kate Hurley, Jonathan Hsy, and A. B. Kraebel’s “Thinking Across Tongues,” *postmedieval* 8 (2017): 270–76, esp. 272.
- 73 *Exodus*, line 61a.
- 74 On efforts to convert the Anglo-Saxon population by translating familiar Anglo-Saxon customs into a Christian world view, see Williams, *Cain and Beowulf*, 3–11. See also George K. Anderson, *The Literature of the Anglo-Saxons*, rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966) esp. 105–10; and Alexander, *A History of Old English Literature*, 22–34.
- 75 Anderson, *The Literature of the Anglo-Saxons*, 105.
- 76 *Beowulf*, line 807. Ruth Mellinkoff, “Cain’s Monstrous Progeny in *Beowulf*: Part I, Noachic Tradition,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 8 (1979), too cautiously claims that the connection to Hebrew scriptures is not, finally, absolutely provable, but her work suggests otherwise and certainly illustrates how the pseudoeigraphical I Enoch, and, in particular, the Noah fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls introduce giants who “having consumed the possessions of mankind, turn and devour some of mankind itself” (145); see also, 143–46.
- 77 *Exodus*, line 168.
- 78 Westrem, *The Hereford World Map*, 129.
- 79 Ibid., 179.
- 80 Ibid., 123.
- 81 Ibid., 133.
- 82 Ibid., 131.
- 83 Ibid., 125.
- 84 Ibid., 123.
- 85 Ibid., 115.
- 86 Ibid., 171.
- 87 *Beowulf*, lines 1259–61a.
- 88 Westrem, *The Hereford World Map*, 117.
- 89 Ibid., 123, 165.
- 90 *Beowulf*, line 1352b.
- 91 *Exodus*, line 61a.
- 92 Steven F. Kruger’s *The Spectral Jew: Conversion and Embodiment in Medieval Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), at 206; see also 1–72, 204–07.
- 93 On the postcolonial drama of producing two opposite results at one and the same time, see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 85–92.
- 94 *Beowulf*, line 1599a.
- 95 Hrunting is the Dane, Unferth’s, sword.

96 *Beowulf*, line 1558a.

97 *Beowulf*, lines 1459a, 1663a.

98 On the subject of how the structures of power, claim what was never its to take away, see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

99 Our ideas about the “colony” (the *mere*) and the “metropolis” (*civitas*) are informed by Bhaba, *The Location of Culture*, 212–29. About the need to translate masculine failure into a success narrative, see *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. Davis, 1131, and its anxious close, where a scribe wrote in the motto of the order of the Garter (“Hony soyt qui mal pence”) as a way of rewriting Gawain’s failure to prove his masculinities by standing up to the Green Knight.

100 *Beowulf*, lines 1261b–62a.

101 *Beowulf*, line 193b.

Monsters, Demons, and Jews in the Painting of Hieronymus Bosch

Debra Higgs Strickland

Artistic representations of Bible stories, the Passion of Jesus Christ, and the stories of the saints have always been arenas for much more than chronicling Christian salvation history. Pejorative figures of Jews are a principle feature of the violent Passion imagery that lay at the heart of late medieval Christian devotion,¹ but the fact that medieval artists typically garbed such figures in contemporary clothing suggests more immediate social and political agendas. Dubbed “Christ killers” from an early moment in Church history,² the world’s Jews—past, present, and future—were collectively implicated in Jesus’s persecution and death, and thus branded archenemies of Christendom. In both public and private works of art, images of the betrayal, arrest, mocking, flagellation, and crucifixion of Jesus featuring negatively stereotyped figures of Jews in all of the persecutory roles contributed to a climate in which associations between the sadistic, demonic, and “Jewish” were normalized in medieval and early modern Christian societies. Distorted renderings of Jewish figures range from the merely ugly to the fully grotesque, and as Christian-Jewish tensions accelerated across Western Europe, Jews were sometimes disassociated from humanity altogether and rendered as fully fledged monsters in an expanded range of Christian pictorial contexts.

This chapter will examine the complex visual matrix of Jewishness, monstrosity, and the demonic as manifest in three panel paintings by the early Netherlandish artist Hieronymus Bosch (1450–1516): the *Adoration of the Magi* central panel of the Prado *Epiphany* triptych (Madrid), *Saint John on Patmos* (Berlin), and *Death and the Miser* (Washington, D.C.), on the grounds that each incorporates a “Jewish monster” that expands the meanings of their respective Christian subjects. I will explore how the artist integrated medieval ideas about Jews into these three pictorial spaces to shift the viewer’s attention from contemplation of their conventional, devotional subjects to the “Jewish” significance of the eschatological moments in which they are situated. Following a brief overview of Bosch’s different pictorial methods of referencing Jews and Judaism, I will take as my point of departure the bespectacled, hybrid creature in the foreground of the *St John on Patmos* panel (see Figure 2.6), which I approach as an especially inventive embodiment of anti-Jewish ideology expanded and enriched by its apocalyptic context. My analysis of this figure’s hybrid form and multiple meanings

will be grounded in medieval artistic traditions, widely disseminated Christian texts, and the iconographical evidence of comparative works of art produced by Bosch and his contemporaries.

My broader purpose is to argue that across his oeuvre, Hieronymus Bosch used monstrosity as a visual strategy to refocus the viewer's attention on the place of Jews and Judaism in the economy of Christian salvation.³ Of the main questions the present volume seeks to address, this chapter will speak primarily to what is particularly *Jewish* about the "Jewish monster" as well as to observe some changes in representations of the monster in European cultures during the early modern period. By approaching the issue of Jewish monsters from Christian rather than Jewish perspectives, I hope to bring some of the ideas about Jewish self-representation explored in this volume's other chapters into implicit dialogue with the anti-Jewish stereotypes that persisted in works of Christian art produced for centuries all over Western Europe.

* * *

I began my study of the art of Hieronymus Bosch in relation to contemporary ideas about Jews and Judaism by exploring the iconographical and temporal complexities of the great Prado *Epiphany* triptych, whose central panel depicts the important Christian subject of the *Adoration of the Magi* (Figure 2.1).⁴ In this earlier study, I am primarily concerned with the signifying power of the scantily clad, exotic pale figure, looming in the background, which disrupts the conventional narrative of the three magi from the East offering their gifts to the infant Jesus (Figure 2.2). Whereas most critics have identified this figure in a singular way, for example, as Adam, Balaam, Herod, or Antichrist;⁵ I read him as a figure of *multiple* enmity, whose identity lies in the eye of the beholder and at the particular moment of viewing.⁶ However, I maintain that the figure's stereotyped, physiognomical features and sartorial eccentricities consistently activate Christian understanding of Jews as the enemies of Christendom. I did not arrive at this interpretation by attempting to reconstruct or second-guess Bosch's personal intentions, motivations, or attitudes toward Jews, which are in any case unknown; rather, I considered the reception of his iconography in relation to the devotional and political landscapes in which anti-Jewish ideas were nurtured before, during, and after the artist's lifetime. With reference to the Antichrist tradition, disease, ritual murder and host desecration accusations, and the ongoing expulsions of Jews from all over Western Europe, I now identify the pale figure, in which Jewish enmity is literally embodied, as an important visual strategy that expands the signifying power of the Epiphany. Of the figure's possible enemy identities, the most monstrous one is Antichrist. Widely attested in contemporary prophetic literature as a Jew to be born of the tribe of Dan, Antichrist in the Christian tradition is, without any doubt, the quintessential Jewish monster.⁷

In my concern with Jewish references in Bosch's works, I stand in relative isolation.⁸ This is because most Bosch scholars prefer to analyze the paintings and drawings in relation to what is known about the artist himself and his immediate Dutch social and Christian milieus, even though his patrons are known to have been well-educated and international.⁹ More to the point, his pictures are full of references to Jews and Judaism



Figure 2.1 Hieronymus Bosch, *Adoration of the Magi*, central panel, Prado Epiphany triptych. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. Photo: The Bridgeman Art Library.

that range from stereotyped human figures to animals and from monstrous hybrids to inanimate objects. A recently identified example of the latter in the *Saint Christopher* panel in Rotterdam is the eccentric, abstracted rendering of the instruments of the Passion or *arma Christi* (weapons of Christ) supposedly wielded against the body of Jesus by Jews.¹⁰ More ubiquitous are the ramped-up versions of stereotyped, medieval Jewish tormentors who populate the Passion panels, such as the *Christ Carrying the Cross* panel in Ghent, and *The Crowning with Thorns* in London (Figure 2.3).¹¹

Operating as negative intensifiers in some contexts and as principle bearers of meaning in others, other references to Jews and Judaism in Bosch's works are symbolic or emblematic. The *Christ Carrying the Cross* panel in Vienna combines both embodied and symbolic references in the turbaned figure bearing on his back a shield emblazoned with a toad, whose belly-up position simultaneously anticipates and mocks Jesus's fate.¹² The figure's identity as one of Jesus's Jewish enemies is intensified by the shield's toad blazon because toads, along with goats and pigs, rank high among the ignoble animals associated with Jews across medieval and early modern art.¹³ Bosch deployed such animals liberally across his paintings and drawings as actors or attributes of Jews and other types of sinners. He especially favored owls, whose multiple functions



Figure 2.2 Hieronymus Bosch, *Adoration of the Magi*, central panel (detail), Prado Epiphany triptych. Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado. Photo: The Bridgeman Art Library.

across his works include anti-Jewish ones that evoke medieval Christian bestiary comparisons of the owl's poor daytime eyesight to the "blind" Jews, who shunned the light of Christ to remain in spiritual darkness.¹⁴ An animal deployed on the *Adoration of the Magi* panel for expression of a similar idea is the ass, barely visible inside the darkened stable, which recalls medieval exegetical identification of this animal with the Jews, whose obstinance and stupidity caused them to deny that Jesus was their messiah (see Figure 2.1).¹⁵

Across his works, Bosch referenced Jews not only by means of human and animal forms, but also with an imaginative range of grotesque hybrids which emerge as a subgenre from his immense vocabulary of monsters. On the *Last Judgement* triptych in



Figure 2.3 Hieronymus Bosch, *Christ Mocked* (The Crowning with Thorns). Photo © The National Gallery, London.

Vienna, for example, standing on the flat roof of the gray building on the far left of the central panel is a strange, bodiless creature wearing a red turban (Figure 2.4).¹⁶ Close inspection reveals that his form is in fact a composite of a limited range of pictorial elements configured in various ways by Bosch across his representations of Jewish monsters. Like the pale figure on the *Adoration of the Magi* panel (see Figure 2.2), this grotesque gryllus exhibits a stereotyped Jewish face, with a beard and long nose; exotic headgear, metallic embellishments, including body piercings; and dominant black and red tonalities. Whereas these elements are organized into a figure of a man on the *Adoration* panel, they are reorganized into a monstrous idiom in the *Last Judgement* scene to produce what amounts to an armless, red-turbaned, Jewish head on toad legs with a reptilian tail.¹⁷ The special significance of Boschian monster tails will be addressed presently. For now, I observe that like the Prado pale figure, the Vienna hybrid, as a Jewish monster, imports extra meanings into the larger scene in which he is situated. In this case, that scene is a chaotic, hellish panorama unfolding at the time of the Last Judgement,¹⁸ which according to Christian doctrine offered hope of salvation for obedient Christians, but not for Jews, who were predestined for hell.

Bosch's conceptual Jewish-monster matrix takes center stage in the unlikely context of one of his hagiographical paintings. Composed of a similar range of pictorial elements as those observed in the *Adoration of the Magi* and Vienna *Last Judgement*



Figure 2.4 Hieronymus Bosch and workshop, gryllus, *The Last Judgment* triptych, central panel (detail), Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna. Photo: The Bridgeman Art Library.

monstrous figures, the desperately odd, bespectacled, dark-winged, diminutive man-insect depicted on the *St John on Patmos* panel in Berlin is something of a showstopper (Figures 2.5, 2.6).¹⁹ Dashing about in the right foreground, he interrupts an otherwise quiet, contemplative scene of Saint John receiving the apocalyptic vision of the Woman Clothed in the Sun (Apoc. 12:1-2). He is further emphasized by his proximity to the artist's signature, a rare gesture by Bosch, who signed only seven other paintings.²⁰ Meanwhile, Saint John is gazing calmly upward, "in the spirit," as he characterizes his own experience (Apoc. 1:10; 4:2). Above, a blue angel standing on a hill gestures to the vision in the sky and commands John to write down what he sees. What John is writing down, of course, is the Apocalypse text, which for Christians provided the authority for its own composition. The viewer is to understand that John is seeing with his *mind's* eye the vision described in the Apocalypse of the Woman Clothed with the Sun holding the Man-Child. The exegetical interpretation of these enigmatic personages as the Virgin Mary and the Christ Child is obvious from Bosch's adoption of the popular iconographical motif known as the Throne of Wisdom, which can be compared with the similar, albeit over-sized, rendering of Mary holding the infant Jesus on the *Adoration of the Magi* panel (see Figure 2.1).²¹

Even though readers of the Apocalypse knew that the island of Patmos was the location of multiple visions described in the text, the background of the *Saint John on Patmos* panel is devoid of any references to the familiar catastrophes: there are no charging horsemen, multiheaded dragons, falling stars, or hail mixed with blood to provide a wider context for the vision of the Woman Clothed with the Sun. These lacunae place Bosch's treatment of the subject at odds with the convention upheld by his contemporaries, such as Hans Memling (1430–94). On the right wing of the *Mystic Marriage of St Catherine* altarpiece in Bruges, Saint John is recording the same apocalyptic vision of the Woman Clothed with the Sun, but against a background



Figure 2.5 Hieronymus Bosch, *Saint John on Patmos*. Berlin. Photo: © bpk-Bildagentur / Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.



Figure 2.6 Hieronymus Bosch, hybrid monster, *Saint John on Patmos* (detail). © bpk-Bildagentur / Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

teeming with other miniature, visionary episodes (Figure 2.7).²² While Memling's panel encourages the viewer to follow Saint John's gaze upward to dramatic and dynamic scenes of the Four Horsemen, smoke, fire, death, and destruction; the static mood of Bosch's panel directs the viewer's attention to the out-of-place, agitated creature with raised hands, a smoldering head, and an arrow stuck in his armored belly. The only ominous background detail, barely visible to the left of the blue angel, is a single ship burning in the harbor, another favorite Boschian motif that in this context may be read as an enlarged and distant echo of the burning ember on the monstrous hybrid's head.²³

The creature gestures frantically beside a dropped or discarded metal tool, which separates him from the saint. To the far right of the tree that further divides monstrous from saintly space is a small, slender cross visible only from close range. Standing in right profile in the left foreground is a similarly sized, rigid, hyper-alert eagle, recognizable as Saint John's familiar attribute. However, a subversive focus on the bug-man is slyly facilitated by the painting's formal composition, which leads the eye directly to him by means of a strong diagonal that begins at the top left with the Woman Clothed with the Sun, downward to the blue angel, to Saint John, and finally to the hybrid, inviting the viewer to ponder his purpose on Patmos.

So far, there has not been as much pondering as there might be, likely owing to the false assurance among art historians that the curious carapace is simply an eccentric version of the demon stealing the inkpot, an iconographical motif popular in other



Figure 2.7 Hans Memling, *Saint John on Patmos*. Sint-Janshospitaal, Memlingmuseum, Bruges. Musea Brugge © www.lukasweb.be—Art in Flanders vzw, photo Hugo Maertens.

contemporary representations of Saint John writing his Gospel.²⁴ A panel by that title painted around 1480 by an artist from the circle of Dirk Bouts is representative (Figure 2.8).²⁵ Hovering above and behind Saint John, an ugly, dark brown, crested demon with bat wings and a pair of formidable fangs has stolen the inkpot, which he appears to be emptying. Oblivious to this mischief, the red-robed, bare-footed John concentrates on writing his Gospel, the opening words of which are painted on the folio before him.²⁶ However, the island setting points from the Gospel to Patmos, because in medieval tradition, Saint John the Evangelist, Saint John the Apostle, and Saint John of Patmos were different designations for the same person.²⁷

On Bosch's Patmos panel, the carefully rendered inkpot and pen case lying between the eagle and the bug-man allow the latter to pass as the inkpot thief (see Figure 2.5). Bosch has even supplied him with a metal tool for reaching it, the familiar *krauwell* or meat hook put to wicked use by devils in many a medieval Christian hell scene.²⁸



Figure 2.8 Circle of Dirk Bouts, *Saint John Writing his Gospel*. Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam. Photo: Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam / photographer: Studio Tromp, Rotterdam.

However, the alleged thief is not actually holding or even reaching for the tool (difficult tasks to perform without arms) nor is he otherwise trying to steal anything; rather, the human hands attached to the tops of his wings are raised in surprise or alarm. Perhaps his thievery has been thwarted by the eagle, or someone else has stopped him by shooting the arrow into his belly—or perhaps his presence in the picture transcends such petty crime.

Indeed, owing to his human face and the positioning of the artist's signature just below his right, seven-pronged, webbed foot; his early interpretation as a self-portrait of the artist has been recently ratified (see Figure 2.6)!²⁹ Even if I am skeptical of that reading, which attributes to Bosch an otherwise unattested degree of self-mockery, I agree that the bug-man's distinctive features compel a search for something more than the inkpot-stealing demon. This is because his face is not just human: it is stereotypically Jewish, rendered nearly in profile to highlight an elongated nose. Additional intensifying features include his black hood, his flaming head, and most importantly, his arachnid body and tail, to which I shall return. His low-positioned spectacles, as a period sign of stupidity, blindness, and deceit,³⁰ evoke the “spiritual blindness” commonly attributed to Jews in Christian exegetical, theological, sermon, and literary discourses;³¹ and in this context, constitute a new twist on the late medieval

trope of Jewish figures wearing eyeglasses in pejorative artistic contexts.³² Finally, the hybrid's small, semicircular yellow badge recalls the stigmatizing round badges actually worn by Jews during this period as well as by Jewish figures in contemporary anti-Jewish broadside illustrations.³³

An earlier, astute art historical reading of Bosch's suspicious, bespectacled creature provides a solid foundation on which to build: "The *scribe-demon-scorpion* with a black Fruit of Life on his head who is here losing his halberd and fleeing from the picture with his hands raised as a sign of submission, symbolizes the old law of fate that had become demonic."³⁴ In particular, I believe that the bug-man's scorpion aspect identified in this reading is central to an understanding of the figure's complex meanings. By attaching a bespectacled, Jewish face to an arachnid body and tail, I suggest that Bosch invented a new type of monster to express an old idea, of the scorpion as a symbol of Jewish perfidy, and of the Old Law that to Christians had indeed "become demonic."³⁵

For medieval Christians, the natural behaviors of scorpions were a perfect match for the story they wanted to tell about Jews. Based on the behavioral information about scorpions reported by the ancient naturalists, such as Pliny,³⁶ medieval authors assert that the scorpion is diabolical and deceptive because it strikes from behind and across; its poisonous attack belies its benign appearance.³⁷ On the Patmos panel, the creature's small size makes him a ridiculous, even comical, figure, but his scorpion tail is a reminder that he is not a harmless one: he is benign in the face but deadly from behind, a deceiver, as pithily summarized in the sixteenth-century Dutch expression *vooren salven ende achter wonden* (unction from front and injury behind).³⁸

For the early Church Fathers, the deceitful and treacherous nature of the scorpion rendered it an appropriate symbol of heresy, a metaphor developed most fully in Tertullian's *Scorpiace* (late 202–early 203 CE).³⁹ However, Jerome in his *Commentary on Ezekiel* compared scorpions to the "provoking house" of Israel,⁴⁰ and later medieval authors, such as Alan of Lille (d. 1202), identified the scorpion with both heresy and despair, also with reference to Israel.⁴¹ Such interpretative gestures provided the Christian foundations for a long tradition of associations between scorpions and Jews, considered equally deceitful and "hard-hearted."⁴²

Accordingly, the scorpion emerged in late medieval Christian art as a popular symbol of Jewish perfidy, especially in Passion contexts.⁴³ It often appears on a badge or banner, worn or held aloft by a stereotyped Jewish figure. A partial grisaille, stained glass panel produced in Cologne around 1460 which incorporates the sign of the scorpion into an anti-Jewish image of Jesus carrying the cross is a representative example (Figure 2.9).⁴⁴ Situated in a Northern landscape enriched by fifteenth-century architecture, a struggling Jesus is surrounded by stereotyped, Jewish tormentors, one of whom is steadyng himself against Jesus's body with his left foot while assaulting him with a club. The Jewish figures wear contemporary dress to further collapse the distance between the biblical past and the fifteenth-century present. In the left background, one of them raises an uncolored banner emblazoned with a black scorpion, which complements the adjacent red banner emblazoned with a black dragon held by the Jew dressed in a red tunic and a peaked cap who is aligned with Jesus. The atmosphere of Jewish violence is further intensified by the foreground rendering of the "spike block," an imaginary instrument of torture supposedly affixed by the Jews to Jesus's



Figure 2.9 *Christ Carrying the Cross*, stained glass panel. Cologne, late fifteenth century, Glasgow Museums, Burrell Collection. © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums and Libraries Collections.

robe in order to pierce his legs with nails as he walked,⁴⁵ and the scene's devotional anachronism is expanded by the inclusion in the left foreground of a grotesquely rendered, back-turned, turbaned Turk.⁴⁶

Among the paintings that have been attributed to Bosch is an *Ecce Homo* panel in Philadelphia, which depicts a downcast Jesus standing beside Pontius Pilate and surrounded by an angrily baying Jewish crowd, who according to the Gospels persuaded Pilate to sentence Jesus to death with their repeated cries of "Crucify him!" (Mk 15:12-15, Lk. 23:20-24).⁴⁷ To highlight "Jewish guilt," a yellow banner emblazoned with a black scorpion in the far left foreground is balanced on the far right by a stereotyped, Jewish figure standing in left profile and pointing to the yellow badge displaying a black scorpion affixed to his cape. In a conflation of (imaginary) past and present, by pointing to his own badge, he simultaneously identifies himself as an enemy of Jesus and as a European Jew required to wear the stigmatizing badge mentioned above, which in Northern Europe was usually yellow.⁴⁸

In works of Christian art, Jewish-scorpion pictorial associations were not limited to banners and badges; certain popular monsters promote similar ideas. For example, the bestiary manticore is described in the text as blood-red with the face of a man, a hissing voice, a taste for human flesh, and a pointed and stinging scorpion tail.⁴⁹ In the thirteenth-century Rochester Bestiary, as in numerous other bestiaries, the artist visually activated this description by rendering his manticore with a grotesque, bearded Jewish face, a peaked cap, and liberal use of the color red (Figure 2.10), and other bestiary artists sometimes added a small stinger at the end of the tail.⁵⁰ Always a popular color in negative representations of Jews,⁵¹ red in the Rochester Bestiary image evokes blood, cannibalism, and murder pertinent to manticores and parallel to the real-life accusations of blood libel and ritual murder made against Jews for several centuries in England, France, Germany, and beyond.⁵²



Figure 2.10 Manticore, Rochester Bestiary. England, thirteenth century. London, British Library, MS Royal 12.C XIX, fol. 29v (detail). Photo © British Library Board.

A still more detailed understanding of the Patmos hybrid may be gained by comparing him to other Boschian monsters. One to whom he bears a strong family resemblance gazes into the viewer's space from the foreground of the *Death and the Miser* panel in Washington (Figure 2.11),⁵³ and a similar creature appears somewhat less prominently in a closely related drawing.⁵⁴ Like the Patmos hybrid, the one on the *Death and the Miser* panel is black, winged, has a human face with an elongated nose, and wears a black hood (Figure 2.12). There is even a similar pronged grabbing tool / *krauwell* lying behind him. In the scene unfolding, which was informed by popular *ars moriendi* (Art of Dying) blockbook images representing the temptation of avarice,⁵⁵ a bed-ridden, dying man (identified in the blockbooks as *Moriens*) tries to decide whether to accept or reject a demon's offer of a moneybag, while a shrouded figure of Death holding an arrow enters the room. The winged hybrid at the foot of the bed is distinctive among four other more conventionally bestial demons, three gathered in and under the chest, and one peering down from the bed canopy (Figure 2.11). With his stereotyped Jewish physiognomy, the human-insect hybrid embodies the sin of avarice in the prequel narrative unfolding in the foreground, involving the now dying man hoarding his treasure in healthier days.⁵⁶ That the hybrid can readily function in this capacity is because avarice or "usury" was considered by Christians to be a specifically Jewish trait, fuelled by contemporary resentment of Jewish moneylenders to whom many non-Jews were indebted.⁵⁷ He can be read, therefore, as the monstrous, alter ego of the long-nosed, avaricious, turbaned figure dressed in green. However, because the man in green is holding a rosary consistent with his identification with the bed-ridden man above, he is more accurately identified as a "judaizer," the popular, condemnatory designation for avaricious *Christians* during this period.⁵⁸ Against this backdrop, even as the bug-man masquerades as one of the *ars moriendi* demons, his stereotyped physiognomy, contemplative pose, and outward-looking aspect embody long-standing relationships between demons, Jews, and usury to warn Christian viewers of the dangers of all three.⁵⁹

Returning to the *Saint John on Patmos* panel, an anti-Jewish reading of the bespectacled, winged creature is further enriched by his apocalyptic context, in which arachnid physicality, especially in the tail area, is highly significant (see Figures 2.5, 2.6). Scorpions are figures of power and persecution in the Apocalypse description of the locusts that emerge from the abyss of hell (Apoc. 9:1-11). According to the text, the locusts will be given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power; as well as the ability to persecute men with the sign of God on their foreheads for five months: "And their torment is the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man" (Apoc. 9:5). The text further indicates that they will have noisy wings, faces like men, breastplates like iron, and tails like scorpions, characteristics that viewers may readily map onto Bosch's hybrid.

Biblical scholars have suggested that the apocalyptic locusts were prefigured by the destructive locusts of Exodus that comprised the eighth plague sent by God upon Egypt to force Pharaoh into liberating the enslaved Hebrew people (Exod. 10:12-15).⁶⁰ In medieval Christian art, artists reinforced this thematic connection by rendering the Exodus locusts with stereotyped, Jewish faces,⁶¹ which in turn helps to explain why they often depicted the apocalyptic locusts as grotesque Jewish hybrids. Representative



Figure 2.11 Hieronymus Bosch, *Death and the Miser*. Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.



Figure 2.12 Hieronymus Bosch, hybrid monster, *Death and the Miser* (detail). Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.



Figure 2.13 Locusts, Blockbook Apocalypse. Netherlands or Germany, mid-1460s, impression c. 1466–70. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 249, fol. 35 / plate g2 (detail). Photo: The Bodleian Libraries, The University of Oxford.

examples of the latter are the profile-positioned, long-nosed, bearded, hat-wearing locusts led by their king, Abaddon, in a late fifteenth-century German or Netherlandish blockbook Apocalypse (Figure 2.13).⁶² Similar locusts, sometimes with scorpion tails, were depicted in the earlier thirteenth-century English Apocalypse manuscripts on which the blockbooks were modeled.⁶³ Although the Berengaudus commentary frequently included in the English Apocalypses is consistently anti-Jewish,⁶⁴ the locusts are identified therein not with Jews but with demons, and the scorpion tails with heresy.⁶⁵ This suggests that artists rather than exegetes cemented the link between

negative insect symbolism and Jews in late medieval and early modern apocalyptic imagery, to which the tiny, Jewish-headed locusts charging in the distant background on Memling's *Saint John on Patmos* panel also bear witness (see Figure 2.7).

Besides standing in for the apocalyptic locusts, the Patmos creature's small size and insect identity are significant in a still wider eschatological context (Figure 2.5). It has been observed that insects in the Christian eschaton, including the locusts, represent allegorically and anagogically the most extreme of human conditions, according to a tradition in which the smallest creatures express the grandest of schemes, almost by virtue of their minimal scale.⁶⁶ On Bosch's panel, the exile of an individual to the island of Patmos may function as a conceptual antithesis of the contemporary, mass exile of European Jews, mockingly emblematised as a diminutive, Jewish monster, whose agitation reminds viewers that Christian salvation history will not end well for everyone. That is, Christians believed that by the end of time, all Jews must be either annihilated or converted, a divine plan which justified stepped-up Christian conversion efforts,⁶⁷ but which the Augustinian theologian, Duns Scotus (c. 1266–1308), suggested could be fulfilled by keeping just a few Jews alive on an island!⁶⁸ Read against such eschatological fantasy, with his hands held up in alarm, Bosch's bug-man—as a monstrous embodiment of *all* Jews—performs an appropriately negative response to the visions that forecast a glorious Christian triumph at the End of Days.

From a christological perspective, the diminutive Jewish presence on Bosch's Patmos panel is conceptually enlarged, albeit on an even smaller visual scale, by the Passion imagery depicted on the panel's reverse (Figure 2.14). Organized as a series of tiny scenes that encircle a central image of a pelican piercing her breast, the ubiquitous bestiary symbol of Jesus's self-sacrifice,⁶⁹ the overall composition resembles a gigantic, all-seeing eye. Shadowy, barely visible, monsters swarming in the dark surrounds intensify the mood of violence generated by the individual scenes of torture and persecution inflicted on the body of Jesus by stereotypical, hat-wearing or turbaned Jewish figures.⁷⁰ The motif of the burning ember on the bug-man's head on the front of the panel is echoed multiple times here on the reverse, where tiny, red-orange flames beneath the sacrificial pelican and incorporated into the narratives of Jesus's arrest and betrayal constitute the only colored passages in an otherwise monochromatic painting. Like the insect on the other side, these Passion embers point in several directions at once: to Jewish iniquity, to the flames of hell, and even more ominously, to the "purifying" fire of the Inquisition, whose goal was to cleanse Christendom of all of its scorpions: heretics, women, and Jews.⁷¹

Observation of still other Boschian monsters can help build a wider picture of how such figures introduce anti-Jewish meanings into the larger scenes in which they appear. Among these is the armored, bird-reptile hybrid carrying an inkpot and pen case in her beak, one of the many monsters that populate the hell panel of the celebrated *Garden of Earthly Delights* triptych (Figure 2.15).⁷² Although she lacks a human face, she possesses a tail very similar to that of the Patmos hybrid, and also like the latter, she is situated in a scribal context. Here in hell, she appears to be offering her writing equipment to a pig wearing the headdress of a nun, an obviously misogynist image informed by anti-Jewish associations with pigs.⁷³ The pig-nun is embracing and imparting intimate advice to a naked man with a double-sealed, written document



Figure 2.14 Hieronymus Bosch, *Passion Scenes* (reverse of *Saint John on Patmos* panel). Photo: © bpk-Bildagentur / Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

draped over his right thigh, while the pink-robed figure standing behind the pig-nun and wearing a toad badge holds a small, sealed charter in his left hand while balancing a larger one on his head. With their combined scribal, scorpion, toad, porcine, and badge-wearing references, for period Christian viewers, this queer quartet evokes the “false scripture” of the Jews, supposedly unable to see past the letter to the spirit of the Law,⁷⁴ thereby introducing a supersessionist subplot into the larger scene of hell.

One of the many monsters on the central panel of the *Temptation of Saint Anthony* triptych in Lisbon, like the one on Patmos, has a bespectacled, stereotyped Jewish face (Figure 2.16). His boat—or buoyant body—is that of a belly-up, hollowed-out bird.⁷⁵ He has pushed his human hands through his body-boat in an outstretched manner



Figure 2.15 Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, central panel (detail). Museo Nacional de Prado, Madrid. Photo: The Bridgeman Art Library.



Figure 2.16 Hieronymus Bosch, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* triptych, central panel (detail). Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.

that resembles the hands and gesture of the Patmos bug-man. With closed eyes and an open mouth, he appears to be chanting or singing, perhaps from the inscribed, yet illegible, sheet before him. Attached to the “prow” of his avian boat-body is a mast in the form of a sting-ray—a scorpion stand-in—whose poisonous tail is perilously close to his outstretched hand. Most significantly, he is situated near the base of a tall column that exhibits three carved—or possibly animated—narrative scenes that reinforce his Jewish identity. In the top scene, Moses is receiving the tablets of the Law, while hatted and turbaned Jewish figures dance around the Golden Calf (Exod. 32). In the

scene immediately below, hat-wearing Jews dressed in fifteenth-century costume offer animal sacrifices to a demonic idol, and in the bottom scene, two figures representing the spies of Eschol (Num. 13) carry a cluster of grapes suspended from a pole. That this last episode was interpreted by medieval Christian exegetes as a typological forecast of the crucifixion of Jesus at the hands of the Jews explains the column's juxtaposition to a chapel containing an altar equipped with a single candle and an image of the crucified with a distracted Jesus praying before it.⁷⁶ It has been suggested that the chapel positioned inside the ruins of an ancient, probably Jewish, temple, is now threatened by reoccupation by demons and idolaters, including Islam, signified by the crescent flag in the left inner shutter.⁷⁷ More work is needed to examine the implied Jewish-Islamic-Christian relationships in this and other of Bosch's works, and also to analyze how monstrous scenes shape understanding of the larger subjects in which they are situated, but there is plenty to work with.⁷⁸

* * *

On the three Bosch panels discussed in this chapter, different types of embodied references to Jews and Judaism disrupt the pictorial spaces to shift the viewer's attention away from conventional to extra meanings. Reception of these meanings, however, is a matter of viewer choice, because in all three paintings, the monstrous figures can "pass" as a familiar iconographical element. The pale figure on the *Adoration of the Magi* panel may be read as Herod; the hybrid insect in *Death and the Miser* stands in for one of the *ars moriendi* demons; and the bug-man on *Saint John on Patmos* may be identified simply as the inkpot-stealing demon. But the detailed, visual characteristics of all three monsters point beyond their immediate, narrative contexts to a range of extra meanings. Bosch's visual strategy for constructing these meanings was to integrate elements of the late medieval, artistic anti-Jewish stereotype into new monstrous inventions that point away from the scenes in which they are situated to other Christian concerns.

I return finally to the questions posed at the outset of this chapter, beginning with the first one: what is "Jewish" about Jewish monsters? Elsewhere, I have argued that late medieval Christian artists constructed pejorative images of Jews by drawing upon a rich pictorial vocabulary first developed to represent demons and monsters.⁷⁹ While Hieronymus Bosch largely upheld this tradition in his representations of human, Jewish figures in his Passion images, he also created wholly monstrous Jews by skillfully conjoining human and animal body parts, and then equipping these with familiar, negatively charged attributes appropriate to their "Jewish" identities. I hope to have clarified, however, that such monsters gain their nefarious signifying power not as isolated representations, but rather through their relationships to the wider Christian iconographical, literary, and theological traditions relevant to the pictorial and narrative contexts in which they are situated.

The second question—concerning how monstrous representations changed over time—again requires consideration of Bosch's imagery in relation to what came before. As is well known, the premier monstrous spaces in late medieval art were the margins of illuminated manuscripts, where fantastic hybrids often either complement

or subvert the subjects of the main miniatures and/or the texts they accompany.⁸⁰ On Bosch's panels, by contrast, monsters have moved out of the margins to occupy the central spaces of canonical Christian narratives. Most importantly, in Bosch's hands, the ontological status of "Jewish monsters" has shifted from distorted shadows of human beings to embodiments of "Jewish" sins, such as idolatry and avarice, to suggest new avenues of Christian contemplation. While Bosch's monsters are justly celebrated as figments of his extraordinary imagination, I believe it is time to reexamine them in relation to the artist's larger, emphatically Christian poetics of monstrosity, in which Jews are a ubiquitous presence that haunts Christendom's past, disrupts its present, and threatens its future.

Notes

- 1 As examined by Anthony Bale, *Feeling Persecuted: Christians, Jews and Images of Violence in the Middle Ages* (London: Reaktion, 2010).
- 2 This epithet can be traced to Augustine of Hippo (354–450), who proclaimed, "Occidistis Christum in parentibus vestris" ("In your ancestors, you killed Christ") in *Tractatus adversus Judaeos 8* (*Patrologia cursus completus...series Latina*, 221 vols., ed. J.-P. Migne, [Paris, 1844–65] [hereafter PL] 42:60). See Jeremy Cohen, *Christ Killers: The Jews and the Passion from the Bible to the Big Screen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. 185–209 (on late medieval and early modern Passion imagery).
- 3 On hybridity as a cultural concept, see Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995). On the significance of hybridity in medieval culture, see Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Hybridity, Identity and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); and Sylvia Huot, *Outsiders: The Humanity and Inhumanity of Giants in Medieval French Prose Romance* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016).
- 4 Debra Higgs Strickland, *The Epiphany of Hieronymus Bosch: Imagining Antichrist and Others from the Middle Ages to the Reformation* (London: Harvey Miller, 2016). Hieronymus Bosch, *Adoration of the Magi*, oil on panel, 138 × 72 cm; central panel of Prado *Epiphany* triptych, Museo del Prado, Madrid. Few of Bosch's paintings are signed (see below and note 20), and none of them are dated. Most recently, the Prado *Epiphany* triptych has been dated to c. 1495, but previously its date has ranged from c. 1490 to c. 1510. See Matthijs IJssink et al., *Hieronymus Bosch: Painter and Draughtsman: Catalogue raisonné* (Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2016), 198–215 (cat. 9).
- 5 For bibliography, see Strickland, *Epiphany*, 12.
- 6 The concept of enmity in Bosch's art, including this triptych, has been fully developed by Joseph Koerner. See Joseph Leo Koerner, "Bosch's Enmity," in *Tributes in Honor of James H. Marrow: Studies in Painting and Manuscript Illumination of the Late Middle Ages and Northern Renaissance*, ed. Jeffrey Hamburger and Anne S. Korteweg (London: Harvey Miller, 2006), 285–300; and Joseph Leo Koerner, *Bosch & Bruegel: From Enemy Painting to Everyday Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), esp. 111–33 (on the Prado *Epiphany* triptych).
- 7 Debra Higgs Strickland, "Antichrist and the Jews in Medieval Christian Art and Protestant Propaganda," *Studies in Iconography* 32 (2011): 1–50; Strickland, *Epiphany*, 237–61.

- 8 Joseph Koerner and Larry Silver have both identified references to Jews in some of Bosch's works. See especially Larry Silver, *Hieronymus Bosch* (New York: Abbeville Press, 2006); Joseph Leo Koerner, "The Epiphany of the Black Magus Circa 1500," in *The Image of the Black in Western Art III: From the 'Age of Discovery' to the Age of Abolition, Part 1: Artists of the Renaissance and Baroque*, ed. David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates Jr. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 7–92; and Koerner, *Bosch & Bruegel*, 108–11, 113, 140. The only fully dedicated study of which I am aware is Edward Cohen, "Jheronimus Bosch and Victor van Carben: The Controversy between Church and Synagogue in Some of Bosch's Paintings," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 18 (1984): 1–11. A more recent study that identifies an important anti-Jewish motif in one of Bosch's paintings, as noted below, nevertheless does not analyze the painting from this perspective: Suzanne Verderber, "Arma christi as Landscape in Hieronymus Bosch's *Saint Christopher Carrying the Christ Child*," in *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture*, ed. Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 203–24.
- 9 On Bosch's patrons, see Stefan Fischer, *Hieronymus Bosch: Malerei als Vision, Lehrbild und Kunstwerk* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2009), 91–105; and Pilar Silva Maroto, "Bosch and His Work," in *Bosch: The 5th Centenary Exhibition*, ed. Pilar Silva Maroto (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, 2016), 17–71, at 34–43.
- 10 Hieronymus Bosch, *Saint Christopher Carrying the Christ Child*, oil on oak panel, 113.7 × 71.6 cm, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam. See Verderber, "Arma christi."
- 11 Hieronymus Bosch, *Christ Carrying the Cross*, oil on panel, 76.8 × 83.1 cm, Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Ghent; Hieronymus Bosch, *The Crowning with Thorns*, oil on oak panel, 73.8 × 59 cm, The National Gallery, London. Recently, the Ghent panel has been attributed to one of Bosch's followers and dated c. 1530–40 (Ilsink et al., *Hieronymus Bosch*, 442–49 [cat. 29]).
- 12 Hieronymus Bosch, *Christ Carrying the Cross*, oil on oak panel, 59.7 × 32 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Gemäldegalerie, Vienna.
- 13 On toads, see Renilde Vervoort, "The Pestilent Toad: The Significance of the Toad in the Works of Bosch," in *Hieronymus Bosch: New Insights into his Life and Work*, ed. Jos Koldewiej and Bernard Vermet (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2001), 145–52; and Sara Lipton, *Images of Intolerance: The Representation of Jews and Judaism in the Bible moralisée* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 44–45. On pigs, see Isaiah Shachar, *The Judensau: A Medieval Anti-Jewish Motif and Its History* (London: Warburg Institute, 1974); Claudine Fabre-Vassas, *The Singular Beast: Jews, Christians, & The Pig*, trans. Carol Volk (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); and Debra Higgs Strickland, "The Jews, Leviticus, and the Unclean in Medieval English Bestiaries," in *Beyond the Yellow Badge: Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture*, ed. Mitchell B. Merback (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 203–32, esp. 226–28.
- 14 Mariko Miyazaki, "Misericord Owls and Medieval Anti-Semitism," in *The Mark of the Beast: The Medieval Bestiary in Art, Life, and Literature*, ed. Debra Hassig (New York: Garland, 1999), 23–59; Paul Vandenbroeck, "Bubo significans: Die Eule als Sinnbild von Schlechtigkeit und Torheit, vor allem in der niederländischen und deutschen Bilddarstellung und bei Jheronimus Bosch: I," *Jaarboek van het koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten-Antwerpen* (1985), 19–135.
- 15 Ruth Mellinkoff, "One Is Good, Two Are Better: The Twice-Appearing Ass in a Thirteenth-Century English Nativity," in *New Offerings, Ancient Treasures: Studies in*

- Medieval Art for George Henderson*, ed. Paul Binski and William Noel (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2001), 325–42.
- 16 Hieronymus Bosch and workshop, *The Last Judgment*, oil on oak panels, left wing 163 × 60 cm, central panel 163 × 127 cm, right wing 163 × 60 cm, Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna. See Ilsink et al., *Hieronymus Bosch*, 290–307 (cat. 17).
 - 17 Bosch's fondness for creating monsters deprived of arms or legs has been noted by David Williams, *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Mediaeval Thought and Literature* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 158.
 - 18 For detailed analysis, see Larry Silver, "Crimes and Punishments: Bosch's Hells," in Silva Maroto, *Bosch*, 115–33, esp. 120–29.
 - 19 Hieronymus Bosch, *Saint John on Patmos*, oil on oak panel, 63 × 43.2 cm, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin. Ilsink et al. (*Hieronymus Bosch*, 161–79 [cat. 6]) argue that this panel was part of a lost altarpiece, but Stephan Kemperdick, among others, has disputed this on both formal and dendrochronological grounds. See Silva Maroto, *Bosch*, 263–66 (cat. 29), at 263. Like all of Bosch's works, this one is undated; the latest authoritative estimates are c. 1490–95 (Ilsink et al., *Hieronymus Bosch*, 161) and c. 1500 (Silva Maroto, *Bosch*, 262).
 - 20 Silver, *Hieronymus Bosch*, 127–28. See also Peter Gerlach, "Problemen rond Jeroen Bosch: de Signatuur," in *Jheronimus Bosch: Opstellen over leven en werk* (The Hague: SDU, 1988), 91–95.
 - 21 Ilene Forsyth, *Throne of Wisdom: Wood Sculptures of the Madonna in Romanesque France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972); Strickland, *Epiphany*, 53.
 - 22 Hans Memling, *Saint John on Patmos*, c. 1479, oil on panel, 176 × 79 cm, Sint-Janshospitaal, Memlingmuseum, Bruges.
 - 23 I owe this reading to Jay Geller.
 - 24 Silver, *Hieronymus Bosch*, 206–08; Stefan Fischer, *Jheronimus Bosch*, trans. Karen Williams (Cologne: Taschen, 2016), 31; Silva Maroto, *Bosch*, 262. On this motif, see J. G. van Gelder, "Der Teufel stiehlt das Tintenfaß," in *Kunsthistorische Forschungen: Otto Pächt zu seinem 70. Geburstag*, ed. Artur Rosenauer and Gerold Weber (Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 1972), 173–88, esp. 175–76 (on Bosch's Patmos panel).
 - 25 Circle of Dirk Bouts, *Saint John the Evangelist Writing the Gospel* (c. 1480), oil on panel, 70 × 65 cm, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam. See Silver, *Hieronymus Bosch*, 203–08.
 - 26 "In principio erat verbum et verbum erat apud Deum et Deus erat verbum" (Jn 1:1). Notably, these same words were recited in Dutch exorcisms (van Gelder, "Der Teufel," 178). This and subsequent biblical quotations are from the Latin vulgate edition; English translations are from the Douay-Rheims edition.
 - 27 John's tripartite identity is established in the thirteenth-century *Golden Legend*, which next to the Bible was the most important iconographical source for late medieval and early modern Christian art. See "Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist," in Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, 2 vols., trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), vol. 1, 50–55.
 - 28 Roger H. Marijnissen and Peter Ruyffelaere, *Hieronymus Bosch: The Complete Works* (Antwerp: Mercatorfonds, 1987), 287. Numerous representations of this tool and its uses may be observed in the second part of *Le livre de la vigne nostre Seigneur* (The Book of Our Lord's Vineyard) (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 134, southeastern France, early 1460s), which includes a lengthy pictorial series of souls in hell tormented by demons. See *The Apocalypse and the Shape of Things to Come*, ed. Francis Carey (London: British Museum, 1999), 93–94 (cat. 22) and the Bodleian Library

- LUNA website (accessed January 13, 2018): <http://bodley30.bodley.ox.ac.uk:8180/luna/servlet/view/search/what/MS.%20Douce%20134?q==> “Livre de la Vigne nostre Seigneur.”
- 29 IJlsink et al., *Hieronymus Bosch*, 171. Joseph Koerner modifies the identification of the bug-man to “alter ego” (*Bosch & Bruegel*, 78).
- 30 See Keith Moxey, “Pieter Bruegel and the Feast of Fools,” *Art Bulletin* 64 (1982): 640–46. Hence the dim-witted scholar wears glasses in the woodcut illustration attributed to the Haintz-Nar-Meister that appears at the opening of Chapter 1 (“Of Useless Books”) in Sebastian Brant’s *Ship of Fools* (*Narrenschiff*) (Basel: Johann Bergmann, 1498). See Sebastian Brant, *The Ship of Fools*, trans. Edwin H. Zeydel (1944; rpt. New York: Dover, 1962), 62.
- 31 Lisa Lampert, *Gender and Jewish Difference from Paul to Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 43–47.
- 32 Sara Lipton, *Dark Mirror: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014), 245.
- 33 For examples, see Heinz Schreckenberg, *The Jews in Christian Art: An Illustrated History* (London: SCM Press, 1996). Based on its close resemblance to the yellow badge worn by the cross-billed, skating messenger bird on the *Temptation of Saint Anthony* triptych in Lisbon, Larry Silver (*Hieronymus Bosch*, 206) interprets the Patmos panel bug-man’s badge as a sign of a demonic messenger, a reading that harmonizes with mine.
- 34 “Der Schreibteufel-Skorpion, mit einer schwarzen Lebensfrucht auf dem Kopf, der hier die Hellebarde (Zeichen der Gewalt) verliert und mit aufgehobenen Händen, also sich unterwerfend, aus dem Bilde flieht, symbolisiert das alte und dämonisierte Schicksalsgesetz” (emphasis author) (Clément Antoine Wertheim Aymès, *Hieronymus Bosch: Eine Einführung in seine geheime Symbolik* [Berlin: Karl H. Henssel, 1957], 35; trans. Marijnissen and Ruyffelaere, *Hieronymus Bosch*, 285).
- 35 The Hebrew word for scorpion, ‘aqrāb, appears in Deut. 8:15 and Ezek. 2:6, and the scorpion, although not explicitly named, is implicitly included among the unclean foods forbidden for consumption in Leviticus under the rubric of “swarming things” (Lev. 11: 41–42). In the Christian New Testament, the Greek word, *skorpios*, appears in Lk. 10:19; Lk. 11:12; and Apoc. 9:3, 9:5, and 9:10 (see below). For discussion, see Louise Pryke, *Scorpion* (London: Reaktion, 2016), 69–73.
- 36 Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 11.30. See Pliny, *Natural History*, 3 vols., 2d ed., trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), vol. 3, 485–89.
- 37 On the sources, see Luigi Aurigemma, *Le Signe Zodiacaal du Scorpion dans les traditions occidentales de l’Antiquité gréco-latine à la Renaissance* (Paris: Mouton & Co, 1976), 57–89.
- 38 Dirk Bax, *Hieronymus Bosch: His Picture-Writing Deciphered*, trans. M. A. Bax-Botha (Rotterdam: A. A. Balkema, 1979), 197, n. 13.
- 39 Timothy D. Barnes, “Tertullian’s *Scorpiae*,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 20/1 (1969): 105–32.
- 40 Jerome, *Commentarium in Ezekiem* 1.3 (PL 25:37B). For context, see Ezek. 2:6 and 3:8–9.
- 41 Alan of Lille, *Liber in distinctionibus dictionum theologicalium* (PL 210:937). Most of the medieval bestiary entries on the scorpion are based on the unmoralized description by Isidore of Seville (*Etymologiae* 12.5.4), who notes that the scorpion is armed with a sting and uses curving strokes to pour out its venom but does not sting the palm of the hand. See *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Barney,

- et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 258–59. However, the moralized text in the bestiaries, such as that in Bodley 764, identifies the scorpion with despair, the Devil, and the Devil's servants. See Willene Clark, *A Medieval Book of Beasts* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006), 204; and Christopher de Hamel, *Book of Beasts: A Facsimile of Ms. Bodley 764* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2008), fols. 102–102v.
- 42 See Marcel Bulard, *Le Scorpion: Symbole du peuple juif dans l'art religieux des XIV^e, XV^e siècles* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1935).
- 43 For many examples, see Bulard, *Scorpion*. See also Ruth Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), vol. 1: 46, 106, 122.
- 44 *Christ Carrying the Cross*, stained glass panel, Cologne, c. 1460, Glasgow Museums, Burrell Collection, Glasgow.
- 45 James H. Marrow, *Passion Iconography in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance: A Study of the Transformation of Sacred Metaphor into Descriptive Narrative* (Kortrijk: Van Ghemmert, 1979), 171–89, 238.
- 46 For discussion, see Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 176–77.
- 47 Attributed to Hieronymus Bosch, *Ecce Homo*, c. 1510, oil and gold on panel, 52.1 × 54 cm., Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia. A nearly identical panel of the same date in the Indianapolis Museum of Art (The Clowes Collection, 2014.88) is attributed to Bosch's workshop. Neither panel is included among other attributed and workshop paintings in the recent catalogue raisonné of Bosch's works (Ilsink et al., *Hieronymus Bosch*).
- 48 Guido Kisch, "The Yellow Badge in History," *Historia Judaica* 19 (1957): 89–146.
- 49 London, British Library, MS Royal 12.C XIX, fol. 29v. For the Latin and English translation of the same text from a different bestiary, see Clark, *Medieval Book of Beasts*, 141.
- 50 See for example MS Bodley 764, fol. 25; reproduced in De Hamel, *Book of Beasts*.
- 51 On associations between Jews and the color red in Christian art and literature, see Ruth Mellinkoff, "Judas's Red Hair and the Jews," *Journal of Jewish Art* 9 (1982): 31–46; Mellinkoff, *Outcasts*, vol. 1: 145–59; and Andrew Gow, *The Red Jews: Antisemitism in an Apocalypse Age, 1200–1600* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), esp. 66–69, 91–92.
- 52 See J. M. McCulloh, "Jewish Ritual Murder: William of Norwich, Thomas of Monmouth, and the Early Dissemination of the Myth," *Speculum* 72 (1997): 698–740.
- 53 Hieronymus Bosch, *Death and the Miser*, c. 1500×10, oil on oak panel, 94.3 × 32.4 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. This panel is thought to have originally formed part of a triptych; see Ilsink et al., *Hieronymus Bosch*, 316–35 (cat. 19); Silva Maroto, *Bosch*, 292–301 (cat. 36–39); and Pierre Vinken and Lucy Schlueter, "The Foreground of Bosch's 'Death and the Miser,'" *Oud Holland* 114 (2000): 69–78.
- 54 *Death and the Miser*, c. 1500–10, pen and brush and gray-brown ink, white highlights, on gray-green-brown prepared paper, 258 × 151 mm, Musée du Louvre, Département des arts graphiques, Paris. In the drawing, which has been attributed to Bosch's workshop, the creature is situated in the lower left corner of the picture plane and without the grabbing tool, whereas on the panel, he is elevated over a parapet, isolated, and closer to the center, with the tool pinned beneath the feet of a prone hybrid, winged mouse-monster. See Fritz Koreny, *Hieronymus Bosch: Die Zeichnung: Werkstatt und Nachfolge bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts: catalogue raisonné* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 242–44; and Ilsink et al., *Hieronymus Bosch*, 568–71 (cat. 57).
- 55 See Mary Catharine O'Connor. *The Art of Dying Well: The Development of the Ars moriendi* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 118.

- 56 Other critics have interpreted the man at the foot of the bed as a different man (Nils Büttner, *Hieronymus Bosch: Visions and Nightmares* [London: Reaktion, 2016], 111); or as a personification of avarice unconnected to Jews (Ilsink et al., *Hieronymus Bosch*, 328).
- 57 See Joseph Shatzmiller, *Shylock Reconsidered: Jews, Moneylending, and Medieval Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
- 58 See Shimon Markish, *Erasmus and the Jews*, trans. Anthony Olcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986) 7–26.
- 59 On this ideological intersection, see Sara Lipton, *Images of Intolerance*, 31–53.
- 60 Eric C. Brown, “The Allegory of Small Things: Insect Eschatology in Spenser’s ‘Muiopotmos,’ *Studies in Philology* 99 (2002): 247–67, at 254.
- 61 Examples include a mid-thirteenth-century image attributed to William de Brailes (Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W. 106, fol. 9). On this manuscript, which might have originally formed part of an English psalter, see the Digital Walters website (accessed January 13, 2018): <http://thedigitalwalters.org/Data/WaltersManuscripts/html/W106/description.html>.
- 62 *Apocalypse*, German or Netherlandish blockbook, 1466–1470, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 249, fol. 14 (plate g2), upper register.
- 63 For examples and discussion, see Suzanne Lewis, *Reading Images: Narrative Discourse and Reception in the Thirteenth-Century Illuminated Apocalypse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 97–100. See also Gertrud Bing, “The Apocalypse Block-Books and Their Manuscript Models,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942): 143–58.
- 64 Suzanne Lewis, “*Tractatus adversus Judaeos* in the Gulbenkian Apocalypse,” *Art Bulletin* 68 (1986): 543–66.
- 65 Berengaodus, *Expositio super septem visiones libri Apocalypsis* (PL 17: 855B–C). For an English translation, see the CD-ROM included in *The Trinity Apocalypse* (*Trinity College Cambridge, MS R.16.2*), ed. David McKitterick (London: British Library, 2005), 61.
- 66 Brown, “Allegory of Small Things,” 252.
- 67 The seminal study is Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).
- 68 See Nancy L. Turner, “Jewish Witness, Forced Conversion, and Island Living: John Duns Scotus on Jews and Judaism,” in *Jews and Christians in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, ed. Michael Frassetto (New York: Routledge, 2006), 183–209.
- 69 See Clark, *Medieval Book of Beasts*, 177–78.
- 70 On the background monsters, see Ilsink et al., *Hieronymus Bosch*, 174–77.
- 71 For overviews, see Norman Roth, *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002); Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); and Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), esp. 32–54. The *Malleus Maleficarum*, the most influential and misogynist of the witch-hunt manuals, was written by the Dominican inquisitors, Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger and published in Latin in 1486. See Christopher S. Mackay, *The Hammer of Witches: A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Although the *Malleus Maleficarum* does not target Jews explicitly, Mackay (p. 7) notes that the term of opprobrium, *malleus* (hammer), was adopted from the c. 1420 *Malleus Judeorum* (The Hammer of Jews) written by the inquisitor, John of Frankfurt.

- 72 Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1495–1505, oil on oak panels, central panel 190 × 175 cm, wings 187.5 × 76.5 cm. Museo Nacional de Prado, Madrid. See IJssink et al., *Hieronymus Bosch*, 356–79 (cat. 21), esp. 372–74. On the hell panel's monsters, See Silver, “Crimes and Punishments,” 118–20; on this particular group of figures, see also Hans Belting, *Hieronymus Bosch: Garden of Earthly Delights* (2002; rpt Munich: Prestel, 2016), 38–44.
- 73 See note 13.
- 74 See Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
- 75 *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, c. 1500–1510, oil on oak panels, left wing 144.8 × 66.5 cm, central panel 145.1 × 132.8 cm, right wing 144.8 × 66.7 cm, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon. See IJssink et al., *Hieronymus Bosch*, 140–57 (cat. 4).
- 76 Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, & Jews*, 148–49.
- 77 Joseph Koerner, “Bosch’s Contingency” in *Kontingenzen*, ed Gerhart v. Graevenitz and Odo Marquard (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1998), 245–83, at 276.
- 78 I am currently preparing a book-length study on Bosch’s monsters that will explore these and other questions.
- 79 Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews*, esp. Chapters 1 and 3.
- 80 The seminal study is Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion, 1992).

Bestial Bodies on the Jewish Margins: Race, Ethnicity, and Otherness in Medieval Manuscripts Illuminated for Jews

Marc Michael Epstein

Even nowadays, when all bets are off and every rule is proved by its exception, it is probably still safe to say that Jews constitute a very small minority among those engaging in hunting, whether for sport or for sustenance.¹ The fact that hunting has never become a popular Jewish pastime derives from long-standing conditioning to Jewish law that lingers as a quasi-taboo even in a post-*halakhic* age. The codifiers of Jewish law prohibited meat that had been hunted, and hunting for sport was strongly discouraged by Jewish legal authorities in the Middle Ages.²

This is not to say that medieval Jews never engaged in hunting. In fact, one might read in the halakhic proscriptions a hint of description: Halakhists are vociferous in denouncing hunting because some Jews did hunt, at least on occasion.³ Regardless, most depictions of the hunt in art made for medieval Jews do not seem to reflect real instances of this practice.⁴ Rather, in most cases, context testifies that hunting imagery is intended as symbolic, most commonly representing the pursuit of Israel by the nations of the world.

Because hunting was relatively rare among Jews, it may be tempting to assume that images of the hunt were necessarily “Christian motifs” that were “merely adopted” into Jewish art. This is only half-true: the word “merely” implies a directness that is belied by a careful examination of the images, which prove to be adapted even as they are adopted. As I demonstrated in some of my earliest writing on Jews and art, hunting imagery was allegorized to an important historical and emotional element in the Jewish thought-universe—the experience of persecution.⁵ Beyond this generality, there is nuance. It is interesting, for instance, that whether or not the hunter himself is included, hunting scenes in manuscripts made for medieval Jews nearly always contain—and often highlight—the role of dogs.

Now one could easily chalk down the inclusion of the dogs to what Pooh-Bah in *The Mikado* termed “corroborative detail intended to give artistic verisimilitude.”⁶ Hunters did, after all, employ dogs in the chase. But in order for the hunt scene to represent a persecution narrative, the bare minimum of what is really essential should

be the hunter and his weapons. It is by no means imperative to include dogs at all.⁷ So the inclusion of dogs necessarily comes to add something. Even if what it come to add is “mere” verisimilitude, one might also—without negating the role of the dogs in enhancing the “realism” of the scene—understand the dogs as themselves standing in—in some way—for the persecutors of Jews.

Is the role of the dogs distinct from that of the hunter? Let’s examine these two visual metaphors for persecution more closely: the hunter is the primary persecuting agent. Nobody’s “best friend,” his role is explicit and direct—to seek out and exterminate his prey. Dogs are secondary persecuting agents. They act at the command of the primary agent, the hunter. Their meaning, moreover, is much more ambiguous and unstable. They can be very loyal friends of humankind, or inveterate and merciless foes and predators.⁸ To some (hunters) dogs might seem like the best and most useful companions, to others (prey) they might seem like the ultimate enemy, capable of sniffing them out and chasing them down with more precision and power than the hunter himself—extensions, so to speak, of the hunter’s nose and arm.

The two aspects of the dog—loyal servitude and sharp-nosed bloodthirstiness—are well attested in bestiaries, hunting compendia, and many other types of lore and legend.⁹ But in the times and places in which illuminated manuscripts were being made for Jewish audiences, dogs could also serve as a more specific reference to the Dominicans, called *Domini canes*, the hounds of the Lord—the mendicant preachers who often sermonized against Jews, Judaism, and Judaizing.¹⁰ So we have a general truth universally acknowledged by both Jews and Christians, but obviously reacted to differently by each—dogs are hunters. This is overlaid with a more specific association in art made for Christians in the 1330s—spotted black and white dogs as mendicants hunting down heresy.¹¹

By the 1340s and 1350s this imagery finds an echo in art made for Jews. In this context, however, the valence of the dog is, predictably, reversed, from celebrated hunter of heresy to despised agent of persecution.¹² Yet a further layer of meaning is added when we consider that while the mendicant-specific association is relatively uncommon, most of the time that dogs appear in medieval art made for Christians they can represent a particular anti-Jewish trope, wherein Christ’s persecutors are dogs or are associated with dogs. This can occur in illustrations for Ps. 22:17, “*Circumdederunt me canes multi*”: “Dogs surround me, a pack of evil ones closes in on me,” a psalm which was understood—and illustrated—Christologically throughout the Middle Ages.¹³

Or it may occur (without any particular textual justification) in the case of dogs accompanying Pontius Pilate, or Jesus’s Jewish enemies—Caiaphas, or the scribes and Pharisees—in Christian art.¹⁴ Luke’s shepherds “abiding in the fields” are invariably accompanied by dogs in very central positions, which one could take for local color, were it not for those instances where the dog is so prominent and so disturbing that it cannot be read as a positive or even a neutral symbol.¹⁵

A black dog with a spiked collar baying at the angels in the Rohan Hours is a symbol of the Jewish dogs, who—like the blinded Jewish shepherdess, and the obese and oblivious Jewish shepherd—are witness to the message of Jesus’s birth, but clearly do not comprehend its implications as fully as the Gentile Magi do.¹⁶ The images in the hunt scenes in Jewish manuscripts reverse the trope of Jewish dogs as the persecutors

of Christ, instead representing Christians as dogs. The image of the armed hunter in manuscripts made for Jews says, in a general sense, “Christians are persecuting us.” The dogs are more personal, more specific. There is more emotion associated with them. They say, “You accuse us of being dogs. You yourselves are the real dogs.”

Dogs are shown accompanying Pharaoh, an old arch-enemy, remade as a Rey Católico in haggadot of the fourteenth century.¹⁷ In the plague of boils in the *Rylands Haggadah*, the lapdogs of the Egyptian courtiers lick their wounds. Perhaps you know—heavens, you may even be—a dog-owner who allows your dogs to lick their faces. But I’m sorry, regardless of how much you love your dogs, letting them lick your diseased, infected, festering pustules is a little much, even for the most dedicated pet owner. This extra measure of disgustingness pushes the image over the edge into the realm of intentionally amplified hostility. The object of this hostility is not ancient Egyptians, but contemporary Christians. Both the secondary agency of dogs and their ambiguous valence is apropos in this iconography, extending, as it does in both directions—Christian and Jewish. In troping Jews as dogs, a Christian authorship implies that in some cases (patriarchs and prophets) Jews can be loyal—that is, they uphold the Christian agenda.¹⁸

In others, however (Judas, the persecutors of some early saints and martyrs, contemporary medieval Jews), they are inveterate and bloodthirsty enemies of Christianity. In such cases, they do not act entirely independently, but are agents of the Devil himself.¹⁹ In appropriating the Christian trope and reversing it, Jews imply that their Christian persecutors (the dogs) are agents of the arch-hunter, Esau/Edom. This is a turn facilitated by the fact that rabbinic literature already implicates Esau as the biblical “ancestor” of Christianity. Esau is described as the progenitor of the people of Edom, who are understood to represent pagan, and eventually Christian Rome, and thus Christianity and Christendom writ large.²⁰

The dog as a Janus-faced symbol works here as well, because according to that same stratum of literature, Esau’s greatest positive characteristic is his dog-like loyalty to his father Isaac, but his general modus operandum is inveterate and bloodthirsty hatred of Jacob (the Jews). Thus the dog is Esau’s appropriate symbol. In the thirteenth-century hymn *Ma’oz tsur*, we find the description of Israel’s current—that is, Christian—enemy as *tsa’ar hamenabeakh* “the barking foe.”²¹ And in pseudo-Aramaic kabbalistic poetry of the sixteenth century, we see the Kingdom of Edom represented as *kalvin hazifin*—“dogs from ‘outside.’”²² Note that most of the explicit literary associations of Esau, Edomites, and Christians with dogs are later than the ones found in visual culture. One wonders, parenthetically, whether this might not be a case of art influencing literature, rather than—as is usually assumed—the other way around.

Thus, when the hunter appears with dogs in art made for medieval Jews, the scene is not a simple iconography of persecution, but a more nuanced one, referring both to the contemporary oppression of Jews and its *urquell* in the figure of Esau the Hunter. To put it another way, the hunter represents Christianity, the dogs represent Christians. This is a subtle but significant difference, which enables us to fine-tune our readings of the iconography: some hunt iconography privileges the dogs (in size or position) over the hunter, which implies persecution by Christians with an underlying denigration of Christianity.

But, interestingly, the iconography that is most common is that which reduces the theme to its bare bones by eliminating the hunter but retaining the dogs. This is a more direct indictment of individual Christian persecutors. It is less ideological, more political and pragmatic. Perhaps it arises from an impulse to personalize the persecution *topos*, uncoupling the larger idea of Christendom as a persecuting society, troped by the hunter and the dogs, from the dog as a reference to particular (and thus more personal) experiences of persecution. This sits well with the mandate that in each and every generation Jews should see themselves as if they had personally escaped the persecutions of their ancestors.²³

Now, bestial faces and bodies belong properly on beasts. But it is proverbial that dog owners end up looking like their dogs, thus, hunters too can themselves be given dog-like countenances. In Talmudic literature, when the rabbis want to describe someone whose inner self is in conflict with his external self-presentation, they describe him as someone whose “inside is unlike his outside.” This of course implies that one whose “inside is like his outside” is to be praised. In the case of the dog-like hunters, we see an evil person receiving the countenance he “deserves” one that accords with his inner self.

This has the effect of eliding the Esau *topos* with the anti-Jewish *topos* of Jews as dogs reversed to trope Gentile persecutors as dogs. There is an image of a dog-headed demonic hunter in the Worms *Mahzor*,²⁴ and a horde of dog-headed demonic hunters, their dogs as big as they are, and as big as the prey, are depicted in the Laud *Mahzor*.²⁵ These dog-headed Gentiles are reminiscent of the striking cynocephalic depiction of Christ’s (Jewish or Roman) persecutors in the illustration for Ps. 22 in several Byzantine Psalters.²⁶ Dogs representing Christians and Christianity also appear in Jewish versions of the *mundus inversus*: the reversal of a Christian trope depicting the world seen from the perspective of the end of history rather than the present age.²⁷ The Jewish version generates images predictive of a future in which Jews and Judaism—rather than Christians and Christianity—are triumphant. Several prime examples occur in the fourteenth-century *Barcelona Haggadah*. In one, a hare is being served a drink by a dog. The iconography in question appears as an upper marginal illustration. The *bas de page* depicts the Israelites slaving in Egypt. The text rubric reads, “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt.” The implication here seems to be, “We were slaves, but one day the Egyptian dogs will serve us!” This reading is strongly corroborated by the correlation between the bent-over position of laboring man ascending the ladder toward the taskmaster at the top of the tower, and the reversal of this iconography in the image of the laboring dog bowing down to hand a drink to the seated hare. This is but one example of very many from medieval manuscripts made for Jews in which a different perspective on history—a world seen from the end of time—allowed patrons to envision a future in which the pursued could triumph over their pursuers.²⁸

Hunting iconography is a rather direct and explicit place to look for imagery that appropriates anti-Jewish tropes and redirects them against Christians and Christianity. It is also symbolic and, in this sense conceptual rather than personal. There are other junctures in the visual manifestation of the Jewish-Christian encounter in which the elements of physical anti-Jewish caricature are reversed by Jews and applied by them to their own antagonists. A particularly clear example is the *topos* of the Wicked Child

discussed in the *Haggadah* as one of four different types of people, each requiring a different type of pedagogy.²⁹

This alienated figure, though explicitly a Jew, is nonetheless labeled a heretic, and is often depicted in ways that emphasize his distance from traditional Jewish values. He can be a bloodthirsty soldier or an overdressed dandy, but whether aggressive or foppish, he is always a disreputable non-Jewish type.³⁰ In this sense he represents an anti-Gentile caricature, in which Gentiles are parodied via exaggeration of characteristics that they themselves might view as positive. Just as anti-Jewish caricature parodies Jewish characteristics such as bookishness as obscurantism, gentleness as cowardice, or business acumen as shysterism, in the case of the Jewish vision of the Wicked Child as pseudo-Gentile, military prowess is mocked as bloodthirstiness, and fashionableness is denigrated as foppishness. Here, in other words, the “anti-Jewish” method—the exaggeration attenuation, and troping in the negative of characteristics that Jews themselves might understand as positive—is transposed to an anti-Gentile key by the Jewish authorship of the iconography of the Wicked Child, even if different characteristics are being caricatured in each case.

This is subtle because it speaks to method. But more explicit and more interesting in its bizarre ness is when the very same physical elements of caricature that are used to skewer Jews are simply transferred to the caricature of those Gentiles that Jews deem to be persecutors. To take an example from current ultra-Orthodox iconography, in a haggadah produced by the Malchus-Waxburger company a few years back, the Egyptians are effectively hook-nosed, effeminated cowards, with too much eye-shadow.³¹ Although the illustration is presented as a critique of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, this is obviously a comment by contemporary ultra-Orthodox Israeli Jews about the people they regard as their inveterate enemies, and who they see (somewhat bizarrely considering the actual political situation) as the inheritors of the mantle of Pharaoh and Egypt—contemporary “Arabs” as they would call them. But the stereotypes: effeminization, hooked noses, cowardice, of course, are simply the same stereotypes used by Gentiles against Jews, recycled and flung back at them.

I don’t know of many medieval instances of this sort of direct counter-volley of anti-Jewish visual tropes in art made for Christians as anti-Gentile imagery in art made for Jews. But one example in particular does stand out, perhaps because it is so unusual: the opening folio of the book of Numbers in a South German Pentateuch illuminated around 1300 (The Duke of Sussex Pentateuch, Germany, Lake Constance region, early fourteenth century. London, British Library, MS Add. 15282, fol. 75v.) Here, four knights hold banners with the symbols of the major tribes camped around each of the four sides of the word “And God Spoke” symbolizing the Tabernacle in the wilderness. That word is a very significant one, for it represents the Divine Word, the Logos, and is an exceedingly interesting incidence of the authorship of a manuscript’s choice to represent the primacy of the word in the tradition specifically via the image (see Figure 3.1).³²

Of course, the most bizarre images here are the grotesque hybrid monsters that threaten but cannot harm the Israelite knights. They are personifications of the trials and tribulations of the Israelites in the desert, specifically the nations of Canaan that are ultimately driven out by them.³³ They, interestingly, epitomize a number of ethnic



Figure 3.1 London, British Library. Add. MS. 15282, Lake Constance Region, c. 1300, fol. 179v. Photo © British Library Board.

types—fair blonde (English, Germanic, or Scandinavian), red-headed (Celtic), dark skinned with African features, and dark skinned with a sort of Phrygian cap associated with the East, perhaps an Arab³⁴ (see Figure 3.2).

The human heads that comprise this pocket ethnography are not *ab initio* negative depictions—in fact, they gesture more toward naturalism than toward caricature.



Figure 3.2 London, British Library. Add. MS. 15282, Lake Constance Region, c. 1300, fol. 179v. Photo © British Library Board. Details.

It is only in their expressions that they are grotesque and disorderly. But the fact that they are affixed to grotesque monstrous bodies makes these various non-Jewish types mirrors of the sort of monstrous anti-Jewish tropes one finds in art made for Christians.

However—and this is what is crucial for me in the present context—it is monstrosity that moves simultaneously in two directions: though it is wrested from the iconography denigrating Jewish otherness in art made for Christians, it is then harnessed to the service of iconography denigrating Christian, Muslim, and pagan otherness in art made for Jews.

Jews were often represented with animalistic faces in Christian iconography, their “evil” exaggerated features contrasting with the even and regular features of the “good” Christians.³⁵ But this iconography was so pervasive, that had it been simply adopted in Jewish iconography, there would have been confusion about who the animalistic faces were intended to represent, particularly since Jews themselves often appear in Jewish art with distorted and obscured faces for a variety of reasons.³⁶ So in order to make clear the non-Jewishness, as well as the particular ethnic variety of the Gentile adversaries in Jewish iconography, it was necessary to allow them fairly naturalistic facial features, limiting monstrosity to the facial expressions and the bizarre bodies of these figures.³⁷

What is particularly interesting here is that each of the Israelite tribal leaders depicted here manifest distinctive facial features. None is a caricature, although they do seem to exhibit specific emotions. What those emotions are is a matter of subjective evaluation, of course. Is Dan depressed, Reuven positive, Ephraim calm, and Judah angry? Or do we read some other array of emotions of one or all of these faces?

My contention is that they are not intended to represent the emotions of individuals, but, rather, they are to epitomize characteristic types, perhaps corresponding to the four humors or temperaments (see Figure 3.3).³⁸

This further heightens the contrast between the negatively caricatured and stereotyped Gentile types in this illumination, and the more noble and idealized characterizations of the Israelite/Jewish types. The images of the Gentiles are animalistic; the images of the Israelites are not only human, but exemplary types. The appropriation of anti-Jewish imagery and its reformulation as anti-Gentile caricature has come full circle in this illumination: the Gentiles have become the

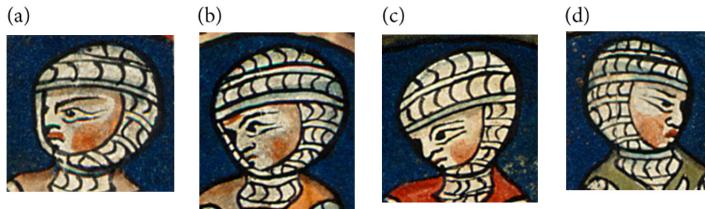


Figure 3.3 London, British Library. Add. MS. 15282, Lake Constance Region, c. 1300, fol. 179v. Photo © British Library Board. Details.

monsters here, while the Jews are visualized as ideal personifications of universal human archetypes.

Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, the illustration additionally embodies another form of hybridity—cultural hybridity. And, appropriately for an illustration that has the Logos as its center, that hybridity is manifest through two strategies of reading.

Directionally, the Israelite figures follow the necessary configuration around the Tabernacle as described in the first chapter of Numbers. The directionality of the Gentile monsters also has its own logic by the standards of fourteenth-century cartography. But each set of images has to be read from the perspective appropriate for the figures represented in order to make sense of the overall configuration.

What do I mean by this? The top of the diagram of the Tabernacle is East (Judah). This placement corresponds to fourteenth-century European common knowledge and cartographic conventions, where the top of the map was always East. Convention further dictated that the other compass points were ordered as North (Right), West (Bottom), and South (Left).³⁹

Since the images in the Duke of Sussex Ashkenazic Pentateuch are meant to be read in the manner of the Hebrew text we can surmise that these images of the tribal leaders are likewise meant to be read in that direction. Listing the compass points represented by the tribal leaders in the “Hebrew” direction, then, we have East (Judah, Top), North (Dan, Left), West (Ephraim, Bottom), and South (Reuven, Right).

But we run into trouble when we attempt to list the compass points represented by the Gentile monsters in same manner. Starting again from East (Arab/Persian, Top Right), we have, reading counterclockwise, South (African, Top Left), West (Western European, Bottom Left), North (Hibernian, Bottom Right). This is a mess: we have East, South, North, West, when we want East, North, West, South.

The solution here is to read the images of the Gentile monsters in the “Latin” (clockwise) direction, just as we read the images of the tribal leaders (who are Hebrews, after all), in the “Hebrew” (counterclockwise) direction. Reading the images of the Gentile monsters clockwise, we get East, North, West, South, just as we do when we read the images of the tribal leaders: East (Arab/Persian, Top Right), North (Hibernian, Bottom Right), West (Western European, Bottom Left), South (African, Top Left).

But why (aside from an obsessive compulsion for order and a fascination with correspondences), should we care? First, because it demonstrates, once again, that the Duke of Sussex Ashkenazic Pentateuch reflects an acute awareness of its patrons and

designers regarding the power of the Hebrew language. (After all, they accomplished the notoriously difficult—well, allegedly impossible—task of depicting God by using, of all things, the *image of a word*, using the word “And [God] spoke” to visually represent Divine Speech, and therefore, the Divine Presence.) But also because, among the many other brilliant things about the creators of this diagram, they left us some clues about the kind of people they were—people at ease with living in several worlds at once.

The very fact that they sought out Christian artisans, and, with them, planned an object that corresponds in a deeply and intelligently Jewish manner with the very best and brightest products of those illuminators’ workshops should have been enough to demonstrate this.⁴⁰

But they went a step further: this illumination is a tour de force of cross-cultural intersectionality in the truest sense. Space is the universal human patrimony. But while all humans inhabit the world, they may think about it in different ways. Consider: As I write this, I am simultaneously sitting in “my” home in Poughkeepsie, New York; a rental property owned by Vassar College at a specific address, a home that was built as a private residence in 1904 for a particular family; and the ancestral tribal home of the Lenape Indians, and so forth. (I am also, as it happens, writing in multiple times—on January 12, 2018 CE, which corresponds to 25 Tevet, 5788 AM on the Jewish, and 23 Rabi’ al-thani 1439 AH on the Muslim one.)

The Jews who planned, designed, and commissioned this manuscript from Christian artisans likewise lived in two worlds. They were simultaneously Jews, and early fourteenth-century inhabitants of the German lands. They experienced themselves as both of these things simultaneously, and so the diagram they created too responded to two sets of directionalities: Jewish and Germanic. But each can only be discerned if one is comfortable enough to be both a Jew and a fourteenth-century German. If we try to read these images from only one of these perspectives, we will always end up short; we will always get it wrong. Each mode—and with it each identity—is ineluctably, inextricably intertwined in the other. These medieval people who happened to be Jews—these Jews who happened to be medieval people—were one, intersectional thing.

Notes

1 See Tom. W. Smith, *Jewish Distinctiveness in America: A Statistical Portrait* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 2005), 24. Smith, director of the General Social Survey at the National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, concludes that “only 13 percent of Jewish households contain firearms (vs. 41 percent for non-Jews) and just 10 percent of Jews personally own a gun (vs. 26 percent for non-Jews).” The vast majority of firearms purchased and held by Jews was for the purpose of self-defense, not hunting. But see Andrew Berns, “Hunting For Deer—And Meaning” *Tablet Magazine* (Online: November 2, 2016 <http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/212861/hunting-for-deer-and-meaning>).

2 No commandment of the Torah explicitly prohibits hunting for sport, and rabbinic literature—with the exception of discussions of gladiatorial contests, (for which see

below)—is somewhat ambiguous on the question of hunting for sport. The rabbis interpreted Lev. 7:13 as referring to the hunting of an animal in order to subsequently kill it through kosher ritual slaughter. The emphasis here is on taking care to stay within the ambit of proper ritual slaughter, even in the case of hunting for food. On the other hand, the rabbis did advocate the responsible stewardship of, and compassion toward, the animal kingdom in general (see, for example, BT *Bava Metziah* 85a.) The prohibition of causing unnecessary suffering toward animals is based on Deut. 22:4, and is understood by most authorities to be biblical, rather than rabbinic (see BT *Bava Metziah* 32b). Among those who held that hunting for sport is prohibited, the question arose regarding whether this was because it falls under the rubric of the prohibition of cruelty to animals or because it falls under that of the prohibition not to waste resources (since having been hunted by a Jew by non-kosher means, the use of the animal would be prohibited). Often, both opinions were articulated. See Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, hilkhot rotze'ach ve-shmirat nefesh*, 13) and *Sefer ha-chinukh*, 451 and 186. Rashi on BT *Avodah zarah* 11a maintains that it is forbidden to fatally injure a kosher animal (making it *tereyfah*). *Tosafot* ad loc. argues with Rashi for complex reasons involving the particular case, not the general question. The rabbis describe the two figures whose hunting is mentioned in scripture, Nimrod (Gen. 10:9, see BT *Pessahim* 94b, *Hullin* 89a, and *Eruvin* 53a), and Esau (Gen. 25:27, see BT *Bava batra* 16a), as archetypes of evil, with the implication that one is not to duplicate their behavior. The most famous elaboration of this is the responsum of R. Ezekiel Landau (1713–93). Jews, he maintains, should avoid association with these nefarious characters who were (in their hunting as in all respects) counter-exempla of proper Jewish comportment. “However, I am surprised by the matter itself. We find no hunters [in Scripture] other than Nimrod and Esau, and this is not the way of the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. . . . Thus, this activity includes a repugnant character trait, that is, cruelty, as well as a prohibition, endangerment. . . . One who heeds me will therefore dwell safely, tranquilly, and contentedly at home and not waste his time with such things.” Landau, *Noda be-Yehudah mahadura tinyana, Yoreh de'ah* 10. Translation, see https://www.sefaria.org/Noda_BiYhudah_II,_Yoreh_Deah.10.1-27?lang=en&with=all&lang2=en. Nothing in this attitude indicates that it is a novel-lum. In fact, the rabbis (BT *Avodah zarah* 18b) understand Ps. 1:1's description of one who “stands in the way of sinners,” as one who does not participate in “*kunēgion*.” Participating in “*kunēgion*” is evidently a very bad thing: according to *Vayikra rabbah* (13:3) one who does so will not merit to see the Feast of the Leviathan—the ultimate eschatological banquet—in the World to Come. This is a gentler way of saying that such people will forfeit their place in the redeemed world after the coming of Messiah, making the definition of *kunēgion* a high-stakes prospect. RaShI (ad loc.) correctly understands the word as referring to “hunting animals, using dogs,” since in Greek, *kuōn* is dog and *kunēgion* means hunt or chase led by dogs. He goes on to make the value judgment that “the entire intent [of Gentiles who hunt thus] is for sport and fun,” although there is nothing that indicates that *kunēgion* means hunting for sport, rather than for food. Thus, too, the ReMA (R. Moshe Isserles) on R. Yossef Karo, *Shulchan arukh, Orach hayyim* 316:2: “One who sets a dog in pursuit of an animal on the Sabbath, this constitutes hunting, and some say that even on weekdays, it is forbidden to hunt with dogs, because this constitutes ‘the company of scorners’” (Ps. 1:1). On dogs (and cats!) in Jewish antiquity, see Joshua Schwartz, “Dogs And Cats In Jewish Society In The Second Temple, Mishnah And Talmud Periods,” in *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies Jerusalem, July 29–August*

5, 1997 *Division B: History of the Jewish People*, ed. Ron Margolin (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 2000), 25–34. My gratitude, also, to the ever-erudite Rachel Friedman for her help regarding the Greek (private correspondence, January 18, 2018). Halakhic literature addresses the seemingly far-fetched (an appropriate adjective) possibility of felling animals by proxy or with extremely sharp arrow or thrown knives in such a way as to render them kosher (cf. R. Yossef Karo, *Shulchan arukh*, *Yoreh de'ah* 3, 6, 7). For several nuanced studies with comprehensive bibliography, particularly addressing the issue of specifically as this was applied to falconry, see the oeuvre of Leor Jacobi, most recently, “The Rabbis on the Hunt: From Palestine to Poland,” in *Falconry: Its Influence on Biodiversity and Cultural Heritage*, ed. U. Szymak and P. Sianko (Bialystok: Podlaskie Museum, 2016), 169–186, and “Jewish Hawking in Medieval France: Falconry, Rabbenu Tam, and the Tosafists,” *Oqimta* 1 (2013): 421–504.

- 3 Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 120.
- 4 In a Festival prayer book (*machzor*) with miscellaneous works in the margins illuminated in North Italy (probably Reggio nell’Emilia), in 1466 (London, BL MS Oriental 5024, f. 27v.), there is a scene of a Jewish wedding procession. At center, directly above the head of the bride, we see a man shooting a bird in an elegant topiary. Conforming to the symbolic language of secular love and marriage poetry and art of the manuscript’s place and date, this green and flourishing tree can be understood to be a reference to the bride’s fertility, just as the hunted bird may symbolize the “capture of her virginity.” The marriage allegory is compounded and complicated by the fact that the whole scene seems meant to be allegorical. Since this image introduces the section discussing the laws of the Sabbath, the bride is intended to evoke the Sabbath Bride. Less ambiguous is the image of a dog bringing down a stag in *Isaiah of Trani the Younger. Piske Rabbi Yeshayah Aharon*. Italy, Central (Bologna or Rimini), 1374, London, BL MS Oriental 5024, f. 171. I believe that this image has a mnemonic function, rather than being a reflection of Jewish hunting practices. The topic is property damage, and on this folio are mentioned the principal categories of animal torts. Clearly selected from a model book, this image of a dog using its tooth to tear at a stag’s leg serves as a visual cue for two of these categories, *shen* (“[damage through an animal’s] tooth,” where the animal causes damage by eating something) and *regel* (“[damage through an animal’s] leg, where the animal causes damage by trampling something—not through malice, but simply through walking in its normal and characteristic way.)
- 5 See: Marc M. Epstein, “The Elusive Hare: Some observations on the relationship between midrash, socio-political reality and artistic symbolism in the medieval Jewish intellectual world,” *Orim* II:1 (Autumn 1986), 70–86; *Dreams of Subversion in Medieval Jewish Art and Literature* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1997), 16–38; *The Medieval Haggadah: Art, Narrative & Religious Imagination* (New York and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 153, 160, 248–52, 274 note 14, 305 note 9; *Skies of Parchment, Seas of Ink: Jewish Manuscript Illumination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 149, 187–88.
- 6 W. S. Gilbert, *The Mikado* (1887) Act II, Dialogue following Song 8.
- 7 Two important loci for hunting scenes are the illustrations in illuminated Ashkenazic festival prayer books of the liturgical poems *Ayelet ahuvim matanat Sinai* (“Beloved doe, the gift of Sinai,” recited at the morning service on the Second Day of Shavu’ot), and *Shoshan emek ayumah, Shabbat Shabbaton le-kaymah* (“The rose [or lily] of the valley trembled [in her zeal] to observe the Sabbath of Sabbaths [Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement],” recited at the additional service on the morning of Yom Kippur).

Some “hunterless” examples include the depiction in the Leipzig Mahzor (Worms, c. 1300), Leipzig, University Library, Ms. V. 1102, Vol. IIb, folio 129r and the volume of the Tripartite Mahzor (Germany, early fourteenth century) in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Mich. 619, fols. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Mich. 619, one of three volumes, Germany, early fourteenth century, 49r (*Ayelet ahuvim*) and 201r (*Shoshan emek*.)

- 8 In a magnificent fifteenth-century Ashkenazi siddur (Jerusalem, Israel Museum, MS 180/53) that was given as a gift to the Hasidic rebbe R. Israel Friedman of Ruzhin (1796–1850) fol. 190v contains the opening phrase of Tractate Avot (“The Chapters of the Fathers”): “Moses received the Torah [from God] at Sinai, and transmitted it to Joshua, Joshua [transmitted it] to the Elders and the Elders to the Men of the Great Assembly.” The word “Moshe” (Moses) is elaborately illuminated, and above it stands a black dog, relatively large given to the size of the page, thus hinting at some kind of a relationship to the text. The image of a dog as a symbol for Moses seems disrespectful at best and blasphemous at worse, given the somewhat negative valence of dogs in medieval Jewish culture. In both art and literature, dogs most commonly represent the pursuing, rapacious enemies of the Jews, per Ps. 22:17. (“Dogs surround me; a pack of evil ones closes in on me.”) Given its placement, this particular dog, however, seems to have been “read” according to the traditions of medieval animal lore and of common wisdom (for which, see the note following) as metaphor for the loyal transmission of the divine mandate from generation to generation than the loyal and obedient dog. As such, it serves as a perfect symbol for Moses himself, called by God “faithful throughout My household” (Num. 12:7).
- 9 The bestiary appeared in its present form in England in the twelfth century, as a compilation of many earlier sources. The Aberdeen Bestiary, produced in England, c. 1200, contains what is regarded as a prime example of an exemplary bestiary text of the so-called “Second” family, the branch which would have had the most influence on Ashkenazic Jewish sensibilities (Aberdeen University Library, Univ. Lib. MS 24). On fol. 18r, we read: “No creature is more intelligent than the dog, for dogs have more understanding than other animals; they alone recognize their names and love their masters. There are many kinds of dogs: some track down the wild beasts of the forests to catch them; others by their vigilance guard flocks of sheep from the attacks of wolves; others as watch-dogs in the home guard the property of their masters lest it be stolen by thieves at night and sacrifice their lives for their master; they willingly go after game with their master; they guard his body even when he is dead and do not leave it. Finally, their nature is that they cannot exist without man.” The following five folios, (constituting proportionally one of the longest sections of the bestiary) recount many examples of the supreme loyalty of dogs, and allegorize them to pure souls, giving only minimal attention to the negative characteristics of dogs, which are generally dismissed in favor of the positive ones. The examples are generally based on antecedents in Aesop, *The Complete Fables*, ed. Temple (London, 1998), 185; Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 8:61; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, 12:2:25–26; Gerald of Wales, *The Journey Through Wales*, 1:7; Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, Book 18. An essential antecedent of all the medieval bestiary texts is, of course, the *Physiologus*, a Greek work, composed probably in Alexandria, in about the fourth century. Interestingly, the dog does not feature in it, which leads scholars to conclude that it is a distinctively high-medieval addition. See: Michael J. Curley, (trans.) *Physiologus, a medieval book of nature lore* (Chicago, 2009). The premier high-medieval hunting compendium was that of Gaston III Phoebus, Count of Foix, 1331–91, *La Livre De*

La Chasse. See the ten extensive chapters on hunting dogs in the translation made for Edward of Norwich, 1373?–1415 in: Baillie-Grohman, William Adolph and Florence, *The Master of Game: the Oldest English Book on Hunting* (London : Chatto & Windus: 1909), 75–128.

- 10 St. Dominic's successor and first biographer, Jordan of Saxony recounts that when St. Dominic's mother was pregnant with him, she had a vision of a black and white dog with a torch in its mouth setting fire to the earth wherever its feet fell. (Jordan of Saxony, "Libellus di Principiis Ordines Praedicatorum," ed. H. C. Scheeben, in *Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica*, XVI (Rome: 1935) 25–88, fol. 3:5). This of course, was a presentiment of the eventual spread of the Gospel by the black-robed Dominicans. The dog as symbol plays on the canine qualities of both loyalty and bloodthirstiness, and is subject to a range of interpretations depending on one's relationship to the Order. Obviously, the avidness of dogs to pursue their prey could be taken by Christians as a metaphor for Dominican diligence in the pursuit of truth, while at the same time evoking for Jews the unflagging and indefatigable nature of Dominican persecution of Jews. See David Gordon White, *Myths of the Dog-Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 44; Kenneth Stowe, *Jewish Dogs, an Image, and Its Interpreters: Continuity in the Jewish-Catholic Encounter*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006.)
- 11 The most famous visual examples of this metaphor are, of course, the black and white spotted dogs in the convent Chapter Room of Sta. Maria Novella, Florence, decorated between 1367 and 1369 by Andrea di Bonaiuto. See: Jerrilyn D. Dodds, "Hunting in the Borderlands," *Medieval Encounters*, 14 (2008), 267–302, esp. 270. On the Dominicans in Spain, see Jane Gerber, *Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 103. But dogs, (sometimes, but not always, black and white spotted) often appear in Jewish art, often in pursuit of quarry representing Jews. See Sarajevo, National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Sarajevo Haggadah*, Aragon, c. 1320–1335, fol. 47v; London, BL MS Add. 14761, *Barcelona Haggadah*, fol. 30v; Budapest, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Kaufmann collection, MS A 422, *Kaufmann Haggadah*, Catalonia, second half of the fourteenth century, fol. 39r; John Rylands Library MS Heb. 6, *Rylands Haggadah*, Catalonia, second half of the fourteenth century, fol. 17r.
- 12 On reversals of Christian topoi in Jewish art, see Epstein, *Dreams of Subversion*, and my reconsideration and revision of my conclusions in Epstein, *Skies of Parchment*, particularly 145–58.
- 13 For the history of this motif and many examples, see James Marrow, "Circumdecerunt me canes multi: Christ's Tormentors in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance," *The Art Bulletin*, 59:2 (June 1977): 167–81. And see Christopher Walter, "Christological Themes in the Byzantine Marginal Psalters from the Ninth to the Eleventh Century," *Revue des études byzantines* (Année 1986, 44): 273, listing the motif in Theodore Interpretatio in psalmos, PG 80 (Clavis 6202), 1017) and noting pictorial presence in the Chludov Psalter (Moscow, State Historical Museum 129 D); and the Barberini Psalter (Vatican Barb, graec. 372).
- 14 For examples, see Epstein, *The Medieval Haggadah*, 252–55.
- 15 Paris, BN, MS nouv. acq. fr. 16251, *Life of Christ and the Saints*, N. France, 1268–98, fol. 22v.
- 16 Paris, BN, MS lat. 9471, *Rohan Hours*, France, 1419–27, fol. 85v.
- 17 John Rylands Library MS Heb. 6, *Rylands Haggadah*, Catalonia, second half of the fourteenth century, fol. 17r. See: Epstein, *The Medieval Haggadah*, 253.

- 18 Images of patriarchs and prophets exceptionalize Jews in premodern art made for Christians. The most cogent analysis to date is that of Sara Lipton, *Dark Mirror: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014), 1–54, and see the bibliography.
- 19 Images of evil and demonic Jews are pervasive in premodern art made for Christians. See Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Antisemitism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943); Bernard Blumenkrantz, *Le Juif Médiévale au Miroir de l'Art Chrétien au Moyen Age* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1966); Ruth Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993); Heinz Schreckenberg, *The Jews in Christian Art: An Illustrated History* (London and New York: Continuum, 1996); Mitchell Merback, ed. *Beyond the Yellow Badge: Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Anthony Bale, *Feeling Persecuted: Christians, Jews and Images of Violence in the Middle Ages* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010); and Lipton, *Dark Mirror*, passim. A thoughtful study of the ways in which some iconography walked the line between calumny and tolerance is Pamela Patton, *Art of Estrangement: Redefining Jews in Reconquest Spain* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012).
- 20 Gerson D. Cohen, “Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval Thought,” in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 19–48, reprinted in: *idem. Studies of the Variety of Rabbinic Cultures* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 243–69. Also see Carol Bakhos, “Figuring (out) Esau: The Rabbis and Their Others,” *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 58:2 (Autumn 2007): 250–62; Israel Jacob Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); and Joshua Holo, “Byzantine-Jewish Ethnography: A Consideration of the Sefer Yosippon in Light of Gerson Cohen’s ‘Esau as Symbol in Medieval Thought,’” in *Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures*, ed. Robert Bonfil, Oded Irshai, Guy G. Stroumsa, and Rina Talgam (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 923–49.
- 21 *Ma’oz Tsur* is ascribed to the thirteenth-century Crusade period by Zunz (Leopold Zunz, *Literaturgeschichte der synagogalen Poesie* [Berlin: Gerschel, 1865], 580) based, presumably, upon its overall theme of the perennial persecution of the Jews and the martyrial content of its final verse. The image of the enemies of Israel as “barking” foes is a particularly vivid one. Compare the contemporary polemic in Joseph Official, *Sefer Joseph ha-mekane*, ed. Judah Rosenthal (Jerusalem: Mekitze nirdamim, 1970) no. 174, page 184, and no. 212, page 207, respectively. On the use of dogs as symbols of Jews, see Kenneth Stow, *Jewish Dogs: An Image and Its Interpreters* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006.)
- 22 This from famous Sabbath hymn for the Third Meal, “Sons of the Palace,” based on Zohar III:25a. On a metaphysical, rather than a political level, the “brazen dogs” are none other than the Angels of Sabotage/Destruction. (*Tikunei Zohar* 16: 21). See: Yehudah Liebes, “Hymns for the Sabbath Meals Established by the Ari: Pointed, Translated, and Supplemented with an Introduction and Notes,” *Molad* Volume 4 (March, 1972): 540–55 (Hebrew).
- 23 *Mishnah pesachim* 10:5, discussing the obligation of Passover eve, commands that “in each and every generation, we must see ourselves as if we had come forth from Egypt.” Through the ritual recounting of the story of the Exodus at the Passover Seder, in

other words, we are to attempt to exercise our imagination to envision ourselves as if we had been involved—personally and actually—in the miracle of the redemption of Exodus. Maimonides presents a variant text that makes the idea of Seder as performance even clearer. “In each and every generation, we must [not only see oneself, but] present ourselves as if we, personally, had left Egypt.” (*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Hamez U’Mazzah*, 8).

- 24 Worms Mahzor, Jerusalem, Würzburg? 1272. Jerusalem: NLI, Ms. Heb. 4° 781/I, fol. 130r.
- 25 Laud Mahzor, South Germany 1240–60. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Laud Or. 321, fol. 38v.
- 26 See note 13, also, Emma Maayan Fanar, “Salvific imagery in the Barberini Psalter (Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. gr. 285),” *Zograf*, 38 (2014): 31–44. On dog-men more generally, see *passim*: John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); David Gordon White, *Myths of the Dog-Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); and Stephen T Asma, *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
- 27 On the history of *mundus inversus* iconography, see Babcock, Barbara Allen. *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978).
- 28 London, British Library Add. MS 14761 Catalonia, Spain, fourteenth century, fol. 30v. See also fols. 20v, and 26v. The typical *mundus inversus* trope of a hare who has gone dog-hunting is depicted in London, British Library Add. MS 11639 Northern France, 1277–86, fol. 327v.
- 29 See Mira Friedman, “The Four Sons of the Haggadah and the Ages of Man,” *Journal of Jewish Art*, 11 (1985): 16–40; Joshua Kulp and David Golinkin, *The Schechter Haggadah: Art, History and Commentary* (Jerusalem: The Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, 2015), 128–51; Eva Frojmovic, “Neighbouring and *mixta* in thirteenth-century Ashkenaz,” in *Postcolonising the Medieval Image*, ed. E. Frojmovic and C. Karkov (London: Routledge, 2017), 218–40.
- 30 Jane Barlow, “The Muslim warrior at the Seder meal: Dynamics between minorities in the Rylands Haggadah,” in *Postcolonising the Medieval Image*, 241–60.
- 31 *Haggadah of Pesach. With The Story of Going Out of Egypt* (Bnei Brak, Brooklyn: Malchus Waxberger Press, 2009).
- 32 The observation that the arrangement is that of the tribes around the Tabernacle was made by both Narkiss and Guttman. See Bezalel Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 104; Joseph Gutmann, *Hebrew Manuscript Painting* (New York: Braziller, 1978), 76–77. Neither, however, explored the implications of the fact that the central element here, representing the Tabernacle, is not an image but a word, and a very significant one, at that. The word *Va-yidaber*, “And [God] Spoke.” For this, see below, and Epstein, *The Medieval Haggadah*, 16.
- 33 Per Deut. 7:1 (“Seven nations greater and mightier than you”) these are the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, and the Girgashites. Four figures appear here, not intended to literally represent each of those tribes, but rather to gesture toward the idea of ethnic otherness.
- 34 On these particular types, see Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); On premodern ethnic epitomes, anthropology, racialisms and depictions of race, monstrous, hybrid, and

"naturalistic," generally see: Mary B. Campbell, *Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); David A. Williams, *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Mediaeval Thought and Literature* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999); John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000); Robert Bartlett, "Medieval and Modern Concepts of Race and Ethnicity," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 31:1 (2001): 39–56; Thomas Hahn, "The Difference the Middle Ages Make: Color and Race Before the Modern World," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 31:1 (2001): 1–37; Bettina Bildhauer, and Robert Mills, eds., *The Monstrous Middle Ages*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), particularly Bildhauer, "Bloods, Jews, and Monsters in Medieval Culture," 75–96; Asa Simon Mittman, "The Other Close at Hand: Gerald of Wales and the Marvels of the East," 97–112; and Sarah Salih, "Idols and Simulacra: Paganity, Hybridity, and Representation in Mandeville's Travels," 11–133; Cohen, *Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: On Difficult Middles* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Asma, *On Monsters*; and Francisco Bethencourt, *Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

35 See note 19.

36 For a comprehensive review of the literature through 2011, see Epstein, *The Medieval Haggadah*, 49–50 and notes. For an outlying theory, see Ruth Mellinkoff, *Antisemitic Hate Signs in Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts from Medieval Germany* (Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Art, 1999.) See my review of the foregoing, and my own counter-theory: Epstein, "Re-Presentations of the Jewish image: Three New Contributions," *AJS Review*, 26:2 (2002): 327–40; Epstein, *The Medieval Haggadah*, 45–63. For a list of the major Ashkenazic Jewish manuscripts that distort the human countenance in various ways (among them zocephalic and avicephalic distortion), see Mellinkoff, *Hate Signs*, 59.

37 Although it is not unusual to find hybrids with bestial bodies and perfectly naturalistic human faces in Christian medieval art as well, medieval Jewish art evinces particular hierarchies with examples of leering and distorted (human) faces in the case of the monsters in the Tripartite Mahzor, (Germany, Lake Konstanz Region, c. 1325: Vol. I. Budapest, Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Kaufmann Collection MS. A384; Vol. II. London, British Library MS. Add. 22413; Vol. III. Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Mich. 619) which is the subject of a chapter in my forthcoming book *People of the Image, Jews & Art*. There, we have several classes: animal headed humans with dignified, even pious, animal faces (eyes cast piously upward or modestly downward) and monstrous distorted hybrids with leering pop-eyed faces, much like the "Celtic" hybrid here.

38 Which humor or temperament each of the four each is intended to represent is ambiguous, due to the very subjectivity of interpreting the expression of each. The way I read them is:

Direction	Tribe	Banner	Humor	Temperament
East (top)	Judah	Lion	Choleric	Angry/Violent
South (right)	Reuven	Eagle	Sanguine	Positive/Proactive
North (left)	Dan	Serpent	Melancholic	Sad/Depressed
West (bottom)	Ephraim	Bull	Phlegmatic	Dreamy/Calm

The problem with this reading is that the principal *locus* for the extant thirteenth-century correspondences, R. Isaac of Acco's *Sefer me'irat eynayim parashat ba-midbar*, ed. Hayyim Aryeh Ehrlanger (Jerusalem, 1993), 240–41 has:

Direction	Tribe	Attribute	Divine		
			Chariot	Sefirah	Element
East (top)	Judah	Kingship	Human	Rachamim/Mercy	Air
South (right)	Reuven	Repentance	Lion	Chesed/Love	Water
North (left)	Dan	Darkness	Bull	Din/Stringency	Fire
West (bottom)	Ephraim	Heat/Cold	Eagle	Yesod/Foundation	Earth

You will note that this list contradicts not only my readings of the expressions on the figures, but more importantly, given the fact that my readings are necessarily subjective, it contradicts the evidence of the banners shown in the illumination. The solution currently eludes me, but certainly merits further consideration.

- 39 Danforth, Nicholas. "How the north ended up on top of the map: A cartographic history of what's up." *Al-Jazeera Online*, February 16, 2014, 12:45 p.m. ET <http://aljazeera.com/1bVA0ti>
- 40 Eva Frojmovic, "Neighbouring and mixta in thirteenth-century Ashkenaz," in *Postcolonising the Medieval Image*, ed. Eva Frojmovic, and Catherine E. Karkov, Taylor and Francis, 2017.

Demonic Entanglements: Matted Hair in Medieval and Early Modern, Western, and Eastern Ashkenaz

François Guesnet

In his teasing of Romeo's dreams of love in the first act of *Romeo and Juliet*, the most iconic of tragic love stories, Mercutio portrayed his friend as the victim of the nightly demon Queen Mab. In a few lines, Shakespeare summarized contemporary assumptions about *elflocks*—the English term for matted hair—of the late Middle Ages and the early modern period:

This is that very Mab
 That plats the manes of horses in the night,
 And bakes the elflocks in foul sluttish hairs,
 Which once untangled, much misfortune bodes:
 This is the hag, when maids lie on their backs,
 That presses them and learns them first to bear,
 Making them women of good carriage.¹

This phantasmagorical vision dramatizes the demonic involvement in the human body, evoking both female vulnerability as well as aggressiveness, through subjection of the virgin female body and its preparation through Queen Mab, the fairies' midwife, for "good carriage," that is, procreation.² Closely linked to the idea of the matting of hair and fertility is the notion of fate, which invokes a much wider horizon than the well-being of a single individual. The matting is the visible by-product and expression of Mab's conditioning of the virgin body for procreation, and it is essential not to undo it: "once untangled, much misfortune bodes." Thus, the matting becomes a symbol for this supernatural interference with the human body, and its seal.

Shakespeare's rendering of this interference resonates in surprising and complex ways with the main elements of popular and learned assumptions—including those of Jewish authors—about the nature of the matting of hair across Europe. As this chapter will show, over a long period of time the matting of hair evoked and expressed the boundaries between the magical and non-magical worlds, between virginity and

procreation, between life and death, and also between the sexes. The chapter starts out with a review of the nomenclature for matted hair, which invariably pointed to demonic or other preternatural interference. It then focuses on the implications of matted hair for ritual purification in the Ashkenazic halakhic discussion and emphasizes the gendered structure of this discourse, as well as its role in the delineation of boundaries between the Jewish and neighboring communities. In the second part of the chapter, the transition from the medieval to the early modern interpretation of matted hair will be investigated from two angles—the medicalization of the phenomenon, and its taxonomic identification as *Plica polonica* around 1600, and the growing role of matted hair in mobilizing stereotypes about Jews and Eastern Europe, strengthened by assumptions about the endemic and contagious nature of the matting of hair.

* * *

The spontaneous matting of hair often occurs while someone is asleep or bed-bound due to illness, or when long hair is not frequently washed and combed. The phenomenon was identified and named in many premodern human societies in Europe. As the matting often occurred in a period of reduced mental awareness (sleep or illness) it was considered a worrying sign, and became the subject of reflection and interpretation. Through centuries of engaging with matted hair, concerns about the integrity specifically of the female body were reflected in learned and theological assessments as well as in medical and bodily practices around matted hair.

Hair grows out of the skin, the major physical boundary between the body and the exterior world. Attached to the highly sensitive surface of the body, and often a symbol of potency and unrestrained vitality, hair itself is insensitive, and thus also marks a liminal zone between life and dead matter; it is “at once corporeal and a mere lifeless extension.”³ It is this uncanny in-betweenness which undoubtedly has contributed to assumptions that the matting of hair was the result of supernatural interference with the human (and animal) body. These narratives reflect the deep-seated anxieties and concerns around bodily phenomena in general, and around hair in particular. In contrast to naked skin, sensitive to touch and temperature, hair appears as dead matter, connecting the living body to its own mortality. Therefore, matted hair seemed to potentially raise issues of life, illness, and death. As a nineteenth-century author observed, “The process of cornification [the emergence of a compact bundle of matted hair] is visible expression of the myth of the Parcae weaving the thread of life, measuring in the strictest of meanings the length of our lives.”⁴ Most pronounced in Eastern European popular beliefs, and reflected in healing practices, matted hair was perceived as the exterior expression of processes occurring within the body and was intimately connected to these. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these popular medical and magical assumptions were superseded and complemented by an academic medical discourse which would preserve core elements of these traditional beliefs and practices.

Several European languages used (and still use) a designation for matted hair which combines a reference to a supernatural being or demon with a reference to hair. In Scandinavian languages, the term is *marlocke*—*mar* being a nightly demon. Following

the same pattern, the most frequent Germanic designations were *Wichtelzopf*, *Mahrzopf*, *Mahrenklatte*, and *Elfklatte*. Regional terms testify to the dynamic taxonomy of matted hair, such as Lower Saxonian *Sellentost* and the Thuringian *Saellocke*.⁵ Another frequent term was *Hollenzopf*, referring to a mythological female goddess, *Holle*, known to perform nightly raids on sleeping humans. Further east, the taxonomy shifted. The most common Slavonic term (Polish: *koltun*, Russian: *koltun*) goes probably back to the notion of swaying (Polish: *kiełtanie się*), as the compact plaits which often formed in consequence of the matting followed the movement of the head and body.⁶ The Lithuanian *koltunas* is clearly derived from the Slavonic term.⁷

The assumption of demonic interference also appears in Jewish-halakhic discussions among the *Haside Ashkenas* (or German Pietists), the eleventh- to thirteenth-century movement of esoteric and ethical authors aiming at strengthening Jewish orthopraxy among the Jews in German lands after the devastations of the crusades.⁸ In their writings, references to the matting of hair pertained to a discussion of *hatsitsa* (interposition). The first medieval Jewish author known to have written on the connection between interposition, demonic interference, and matted hair is Eliezer b. Joel ha-Levi of Bonn (Ravyah, 1140–1225, rabbi of Cologne c. 1200), author of the *Sefer Ravyah*, a collection of Talmudic and ethical commentaries. Isaac ben Moshe of Vienna (or Isaac Or Zarua, c. 1180–c. 1250), Eliezer's student and the author of *Or zaru'a* and an equally influential commentary on the Talmud, continued Ravyah's discussion. Their assessment would initiate the longest lasting discussion around matted hair in European history. They should be seen in context with the Pietists' belief that "the human body is a microcosm of the created order as a whole," and accordingly, that this supernatural interference was eminently meaningful.⁹ Both authors—who are cited in halakhic discussions to this very day—considered the consequences of demonic interference on a specific aspect of ritual purification, namely whether a body immersed in water with the purpose of purification was indeed fully immersed if the person had matted hair, and if the interference of a demon mattered.

The matted hair could potentially represent an interposition between the purifying water and the human body, thus preventing purification. In discussing the issue, Ravyah stated, "My opinion is that we should not require people to cut their hair when it is tangled and matted like felt, a condition called in German [שְׁקַלְשָׁה] (*vilk'sh*) and in French [פֵּלְטִירִיד] (*feltrid*) for this disarray is caused by a demon, and we consider it to be courting mortal danger to shear such hair."¹⁰ The French term refers to the physical appearance of felted or matted hair (Old French *feltrer*, modern French *feutrer*).¹¹ In contrast, the German *vilk'sh* is an obscure term. Later editions and authors spelled it as *valkert*, *valkaster*, or *valkasht*.¹² The term seems to have been obsolete already in the time of the *Or zaru'a*, who explained that "the *valkert* is what is commonly called a *hole loke*." Thus, already in the thirteenth century, Talmudic authorities would identify this *valkert* or *valkaster* with the Germanic goddess *Holle* or *Hulda*.¹³ Appearing in German mythology as a figure with a mane of matted hair herself, *Holle* would matt the hair of humans.¹⁴ Leopold Zunz opined that the term was connected to another protagonist of German mythology, the *Walküre*, which however seems unlikely from a point of view of the morphology of German.¹⁵ Much more likely is a reference to German *walken*,

the process of working and kneading fabric, particularly wool, originally meaning “to move back and forth.”¹⁶

In the context of the reference in *Or zaru'a* to the goddess Holle it should be noted that this mystical figure had been integrated into popular rituals of western Ashkenazic Jewish communities through the ritual known as *Hollekreisch*.¹⁷ The purpose of this ritual was to give a Jewish child a non-Jewish cognomen. The newborn baby (or the entire cradle with the baby) would be lifted into the air three times, and those present would ask, “Hollekreisch! What shall this child's name be?” The answer would be “Holle! Holle! This child's name shall be,” followed by a non-Jewish cognomen.¹⁸

In the context of our attempt to understand the boundaries between the Jewish and non-Jewish supernatural world it seems of considerable relevance that for the *Hollekreisch*—known in much of southern Germany, Austria, Holland, Switzerland, and parts of Poland and France—Jewish families would invoke a non-Jewish goddess to function as the guardian of the demarcation between the Jewish and non-Jewish world. Her role as patron of a name-giving ceremony reflects the marking of these boundaries through ritual and is comparable to other liminal female figures of the mythical world, such as La Llorona in Mexico or the Baba Yaga in Russian folklore. Like these other supernatural women, Holle controlled the boundaries between life and death as well as the human and chthonic worlds, and therefore seemed a highly appropriate gate-keeper of the boundary between the Jewish and the non-Jewish worlds.¹⁹

The sixteenth-century compilation of Jewish law *Shulchan arukh* would repeat the basic elements of the assessment in the *Sefer Ravyah* and the *Or zaru'a* concerning the impact of demonic interference on the matting of hair, and consequently, on interposition. In section 198/6 of the *Yore De'ah*, various types of hair and its matting were considered, and in most cases this authoritative source of Jewish law stipulated that it indeed constituted an unacceptable interposition. As in the case of the earlier authors, the *Shulchan arukh* stated however that in the case of a woman whose hair had been matted by a demon, there was no interposition:

Hair close to the heart [chest hair] and beard's hair which is glued together by the heat of sweat separates [i.e. constitutes an interposition]; hair on the head and in the armpits does not separate; hair in that same spot [i.e. pubic hair] of a man does not separate, of a married woman does separate, and of an unmarried woman does not separate. And those women who have strings of matted hair as the result of a demon's hands and there is danger in removing [these strings], these do not separate.²⁰

This carefully gendered nomenclature of the various types of matted hair and the variance of consequences is striking. Matted pubic hair was presented as not preventing the ritual purification of a man, while the *Shulchan arukh* differentiates between married and unmarried women. The matted pubic hair of a married woman, which is not the result of demonic interference, constituted an interposition—perhaps a reflection of the anxieties of male authors to establish and maintain discursive control over the female reproductive apparatus. The implications of the matting of pubic hair for the ritual purification of the vulva after the period of *niddah* (menstruation) are

obvious, but it seems still striking that the *Shulchan arukh* only worries about demons affecting women, rather than both men and women.²¹ Independently of marital status, women with matted hair would fulfill the precept of ritual purification despite an encounter with a demon (for whom no name is given, in contrast to the *Sefer Ravyah* and *Or zaru'a*).

This resonates with the reflection of Isaak ben Moshe, the author of the *Or zaru'a*, on the question whether “a man or a woman who had been seduced by a demon was to be regarded as an adulterer,” and if so, whether in case of a female victim to demonic involvement, this woman was “forbidden” to her husband. He came to the conclusion that “a person who had been seduced by a spirit was not to be held guilty of fornication.”²² This is a decision which was taken up and confirmed three centuries later by Meir ben Gedaliah, the Maharam of Lublin. As in the case of the demonic interference with hair, sexual intercourse between a demon and a human being would affect the human, but not exclude him or her from social life, thus leading to an uncanny presence of the demon inside the Jewish community.²³

The discussion in the *Shulchan arukh* lead to a long history of comments on the implications of the matting of hair, and the involvement of supernatural forces by later halakhic authorities. These would continue and repeat the arguments and terminology first introduced to the halakhic debate by the authors of the *Sefer Ravyah* and *Or zaru'a*. Thus, Shabtai ben Meir Ha-Cohen (1621–62), a Talmudic commentator from Lithuanian lands who also officiated in Kraków, explained in his influential halakhic treatise *Sifte Cohen* (first published in 1646) that the matting of hair “is what in our language is called ‘Mahrzöpf’ or ‘Mahrlocken,’” reflecting a considerable continuity in the vocabulary used to reflect the phenomenon.²⁴

The medieval and early modern halakhic assessment of the implications of the matting of hair firmly established supernatural involvement as a major factor for consideration. The descriptions explicitly revolved around women being targeted by the nocturnal activities of demonic creatures. Supernatural forces impacted on the central ritual of *niddah*, or purification after menstruation, representing a threat to the future well-being of a community. This demonic interference represents a variant to the better-known Jewish and non-Jewish folktales about humans engaging in illicit relations with demons. An important element of these folktales, as Jeremy Dauber, Iris Idelson-Shein, and Astrid Lembke have recently discussed, is the human-demonic encounter as the consequence of the victim leaving his or her community, as a sort of symbolic reflection of the risks the temptation of the “other” entails. In Jewish as well as non-Jewish folk culture, tales about demonic alliances were always problematizing the porousness of community boundaries.²⁵ The demons responsible for the matting of hair were of a different kind, however—they would be the agents of an intrusive transgression, mobilizing fears about the frail protections of the individual. His taking possession of a woman reflects the precariousness of communal integrity. And as the halakhic assessment on matted hair and interposition demonstrates, the interference assumed here was of a male demon and a human woman, similar but certainly not identical to the *dybbuk*, the male demon taking possession of humans.²⁶ Considering the possible outcome that a child born to a Jewish woman from intercourse with a demon would still be a Jewish child, and thus compromise the community as a whole,

this concern is understandable. Still, such concerns were not specifically Jewish—they received poignant expression in highly evocative paintings by the Suisse-British artist Johann Heinrich Fuessli (or Henri Fuseli, 1741–1825). These renowned paintings showed a young woman attacked by an incubus, either with the nightmare sitting on her body, with the nightmare's horse staring with fiery eyes at the viewer from the background, or depicting the nightmare on horseback, fleeing the scene of an earlier sexual abuse of the woman.²⁷ All versions of this motive share an emphasis on the defenselessness of the woman, the ruthlessness of the nightly demon, and an unveiled eroticism of the scene, reinforced in the most intriguing—and most successful—versions through the startling prominence of the horse.

Perhaps more importantly, the threat referred to in those halakhic commentaries was embodied by a demon which was not from among the range of biblical demons, evil spirits, or ill-intentioned angels—it was a creature which originated in the non-Jewish territories of the supernatural world, be it the unclear *Valkaster*, a *Mar*, or the goddess *Holle*. The hesitation to recommend a cutting or shearing of the matted hair was not in the least due to the unclear origin and powers of this demon. Suffice to say that the matting of hair constituted a substantial and continuous conundrum discussed throughout the medieval, early modern, and modern period.²⁸

These mythological and psychological dimensions, as well as the specificities of halakhic argumentation require further research. The dynamic of cultural appropriation of non-Jewish concepts of magic and the supernatural is reflected in the permutations of assumptions on matted hair in the context of the slow Ashkenazic migration to the Eastern regions of the continent in the early modern period. As mentioned above, the seventeenth-century Lithuanian-Jewish Talmudist Shabtai ben Meir would still quote the Germanic terminology in his discussion of interposition. In Jewish magical practice, however, a move to Slavonic terminology becomes apparent.

Let me illustrate this with an amulet of unclear origin which proposed to protect the owner from all sorts of evils (Figure 4.1).²⁹ The inscription begins by invoking protective angels and spirits: “I invoke you the holy and pure angels that guard the coming of the chariot: Shmuel, Metatron, Raphiel, Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Noriel, Ariel that you will guard from all sickness and from idols/images/likenesses, and from the evil eye, and *from the meshing of the hair by a demon called Kaltonos* and from all the power of impurity which is in the world.”³⁰ The author of this undated spell uses the term which already appeared in the halakhic discussions about the problematic matting of hair, *kli'ot ha-se'arot*, but introduces a new agent: *Kaltonos*, whom he considers to be a demon. This term resonates very closely with the designation for matted hair which we find across Eastern Europe—and *only* in Eastern Europe—be it *koltun* in Polish, *koltunas* in Lithuanian, or *koltun* in Russian.³¹ In these languages, the term however designates the phenomenon as such, the matted hair, and not a supernatural agent or being.³² The invocation of demons of various “denominations” in this amulet indicates a fascinating parallel to the halakhic discussions of western Ashkenas—the matting of the hair is defined as a danger which threatens from the outside, from non-Jewish supernatural territory. In contrast to the halakhic discussion in western Ashkenas, however, the amulet has replaced the non-Jewish agent originating from the world

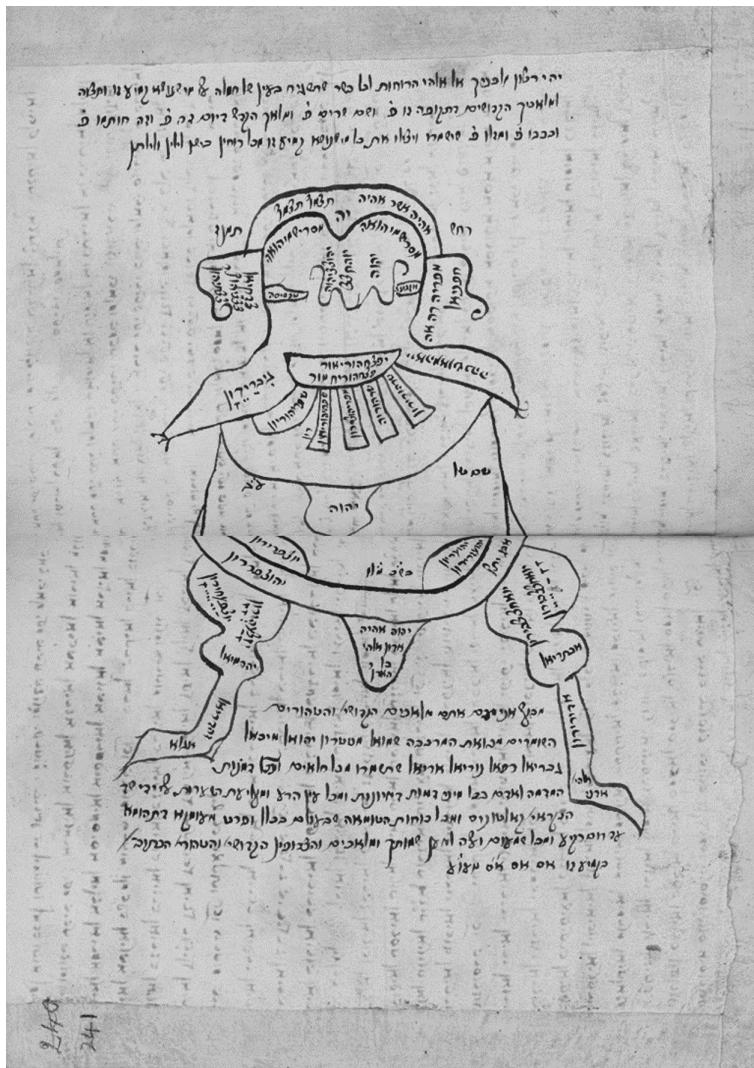


Figure 4.1 Undated and anonymous amulet, probably Eastern European, eighteenth century, from untitled treatise on practical kabbalah. Bodleian Library. See pos. 1965/1 Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew manuscripts in the Bodleian Library and in the college libraries of Oxford* (Oxford 1886).

of German mythology—a *mar* or *Holle*—by one which emerged from an Eastern European context, using the local term for matted hair to denote demonic agency.³³

* * *

A major shift in the understanding of the matting of hair, both among Jews and Christians, is closely connected to the dynamic development of academic medical

training in Europe. In the spirit of this new medical humanism, embracing ancient theorists Hippocrates, Galen, and Avicenna was paired with an ambition for “substantial new observations.”³⁴ This is a possible background for the earliest considerations of matted hair as a medical phenomenon. The earliest medical hypothesis on the matting of hair was proposed in a treatise written by the Polish court physician Wojciech Oczko (Ocellus) on healing waters, published in 1581. The author observed that “in Russian lands towards Hungary, hair entanglement emerged, a strange ailment torturing the head with strong pain, matting and braiding the hair in plaits.”³⁵ A few years later, in the autumn of 1599, Wawrzyniec Starnigel, the head of the academy in the recently founded Polish city of Zamość, wrote a short letter to the Medical Faculty of Padua requesting help in identifying the origin of a local, endemic disease: matted hair. His description combined an account of the matting of hair with a number of symptoms he viewed as inherently intertwined with the phenomenon. These symptoms were severe: the bones of those affected became fragile, their joints and vertebrae became loose, and they lost control of their extremities. These grave symptoms would worsen should one try to cut the entangled hair: great pain and shaking of the extremities would follow, fever would rattle the affected—among them many women—and put their lives in danger. Thus, already at this critical juncture, a medical scholar integrated a central element of earlier magical beliefs on the matting of hair in his diagnosis, namely that human interference with the phenomenon itself was to be avoided. Without assuming any connection between the two, it is still striking that Starnigel’s letter was written just two years after the first edition (1597) of *Romeo and Juliet*, which, as noted above, warned of “misfortune boding” once the matted hair “becomes untangled.”

Although we have yet to learn more about this correspondence, it seems reasonable to assume that Starnigel’s motivation for contacting the medical faculty considered to be the best in Europe was to elicit curiosity among colleagues at this prestigious center of medical excellence.³⁶ For a professor at a recently founded and small academic institution on the outskirts of the European academic landscape of the late renaissance, a correspondence with Padua was certainly desirable. The head of the Medical Faculty in Padua, Ercole Sassonia (1551–1607), took the bait, and in 1600 published a theoretical treatise of around 300 pages about the condition³⁷ (see Figures 4.2, 4.3).

In this work, Sassonia proposed to call this “new disease” *Plica polonica*, or Polish plait, based on Starnigel’s claims on the local and endemic character of the condition.³⁸ This treatise by a leading authority at a prominent academic institution marks the beginning of a medical debate which would last around three hundred years.

Sassonia’s assumptions were taken up and disseminated by his students, and medical treatises and dissertations theorizing about *Plica polonica* were written throughout Europe from the beginning of the seventeenth century well into the nineteenth century, indicating the assumed condition was part and parcel of medical training until this period.³⁹

From the very beginnings of the academic debate, authors accepted that matted hair was a ubiquitous phenomenon, and referred to the fact that most European traditions referred to a supernatural and demonic involvement in the matting of hair. Already in the early stages of this debate, most authors conceded that a demonic or magical origin of the disease was unlikely, while disagreeing on the real causes of the ailment. A causal link to syphilis was proposed already by Sassonia. This would remain the predominant

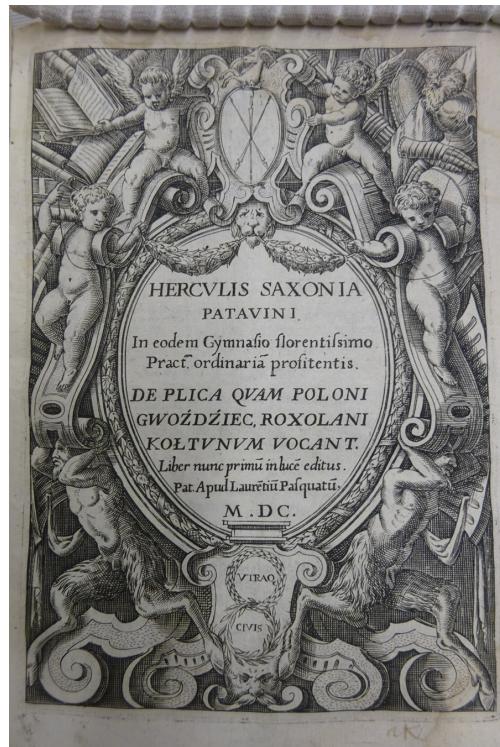


Figure 4.2 *Sassonia, De plica quam Poloni Gwozdziec, Roxolani Koltunum vocant* (Padua 1600). Wellcome Collection.

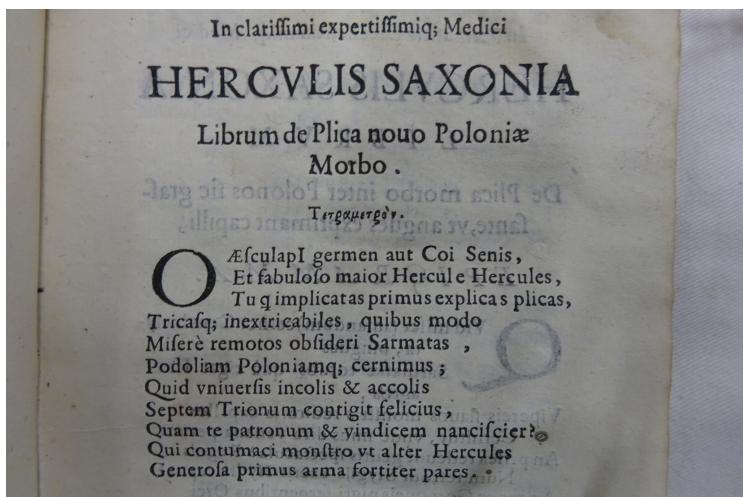


Figure 4.3 *Sassonia, De plica*. Epigram referring to a “new condition in Poland.” Wellcome Collection.

theory throughout the early modern period, and would be echoed in academic medical writing as late as the mid-nineteenth century, alongside assumptions about the endemic, Polish and Slavonic origin of the condition, with recurrent references in medical dissertations to matted hair as *morbus sarmatica* or *lues sarmatica*.⁴⁰ Another hypothesis, voiced from the seventeenth century onward and, among others, taken up in Diderot's and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*, was that Mongol invaders had infected Poles with the matting of hair during their medieval incursions, taking up a general assumption about the extraterritorial origin of this condition.⁴¹

Some authors also suggested infection through water. This explanation was rejected by the most important early modern Jewish commentator on the *Plica polonica*, Tuvia Ha-Cohen (1652–1729). In his *Ma'ase Tuvia*, first published in Venice in 1708, Tuviah argued that Polish waters originate in Hungary, where people were not affected by the disease.⁴² Other theories focused on diet, climate, vapors, and low-standard habitations. Most importantly, the taxonomy introduced by Sassonia was generally accepted in academic medical circles, and the close link between the matting of hair and its alleged "home" in Eastern Europe in general—and Poland in particular—became an essential element in the understanding and interpretation of the assumed condition. Thus, a phenomenon present across Europe and beyond became a regional disease, similar to, for example, the identification of syphilis as a disease from Naples or as the *French disease*.⁴³ In both cases, a condition was associated with the foreign, with the important difference that in case of syphilis, this allocation remained flexible, whereas in case of the *Plica polonica*, the association with Eastern Europe was fixed.

Two new designations which emerged in German-speaking territories probably in the first half of the seventeenth century were *Weichselzopf* and *Juden-Zopf*. These new designations bear witness not only to the consolidation of the association of the disease with the East, but also, at the same time, its extension to Jews, whose prominent presence was a distinguishing feature of the eastern parts of the continent, and especially of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The shift from "Wichtelzopf," a term frequently referred to in earliest references to the matting of hair, to "Weichselzopf" reflects a shift from demonic influence to locating the condition geographically, "Weichsel" being the German name for the Vistula River. On the other hand, the new designation "Juden-Zopf" shifts the emphasis from the supernatural Other to the dangers emanating from the ethnic or religious "Other," in this case—the Jew.

This allocation had decidedly monstrous qualities, as the first treatise explicitly referring to *Plica* as a Jewish disease demonstrates. The title in question was a miscellaneous essay by a certain Ambrosius Stegmann, published in the first volume of the *Miscellanea Curiosa*, the journal of the newly established Saxonian Academy of Sciences, the Leopoldina in 1669/70. As in the case of the Zamość Academy, a new academic institution thus considered a reflection about the matting of hair as an appropriate topic to include in its newly created flagship publication. In his treatise, Stegmann claimed to quote from a conversation with an old and learned rabbi about matted hair. He claimed that the rabbi explained that "this affliction is widespread among both sexes of our nation, with the matting occurring not only with the hair on the head, but also under the armpits and with pubic hair, forming very long and monstrous plaits [*in plicas longissimas & monstrosas*]." The Jews themselves, this—

clearly fictitious—rabbi explained, assumed that “God punished our nation because in breaching divine law, we avoided circumcision. Instead of cutting off the foreskin, which the adults feared because of the extreme pain caused, would cut off a few pubic hairs instead.”⁴⁴ Through this remarkable amalgamation of erroneous assumptions about Jewish religious practices and of fantasies concerning the Jewish body, the author tries to make a bigger argument concerning the eschatological failure of Judaism.

It was not long before the connection between matted hair and the Jews of Eastern Europe became a staple of academic treatises on the *Plica polonica*, as well as other forms of literature on Eastern Europe. A treatise about the *Plica polonica* from the late eighteenth century linked Jews, matted hair, and Eastern Europe. The author, Valerianus Brera, claimed that

the Jewish plait derives from the Jews living in most parts of Poland, where the *Plica* is very common. It is an old claim that this demon in Jewish disguise is contaminating the countryside, and that the Jews, having cut off the plaits, submerge these in wells and other waters, and thus spread this disease.⁴⁵

While Stegmann would discuss matted hair as a condition pertaining to the Jews as a form of divine punishment, and offer a kind of medico-theological argument, this author goes much further, identifying the Jews as spreading this dangerous condition. This association clearly resonates with the medieval accusations about a Jewish involvement in spreading the plague as well as with assumptions they were at the origin of the syphilis.⁴⁶ It should be noted that while neither Wojciech Oczko nor Ercole Sassonia, the earliest physicians writing about the matting of hair, established a link between this phenomenon and the Jews, the association became common during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In addition, assumptions about the matting of hair being a contagious disease endemic particularly to Poland became commonplace. Only a few skeptical voices doubted the validity of such an understanding of the *Plica*. Among the earliest skeptics one should mention the Scotsman William Davidson (c. 1593–c. 1669), who served as physician at French and Polish royal courts and claimed to have cut off thousands of plaits of matted hair without any negative consequences for those affected by it.⁴⁷

Further research needs to be undertaken in order to better understand the discursive trajectories and permutations surrounding matted hair. However, it seems clear that throughout this discourse, magical beliefs, popular medical practices, and medical discourse were closely linked with each other, and that institutional medical training at academic institutions significantly contributed to the tenacity of assumptions about the matting of hair such as its endemic occurrence in Eastern Europe, its contagious qualities, and above all, its quality as a medical condition.

As Tuviah Ha-Cohen’s aforementioned comments on the issue suggest, the medicalization of discourse surrounding matted hair would also seep into later Jewish reflections around the phenomenon, featuring also in halakhic discussions. Moshe Zeev Margoliot (1767–1829), a highly respected Lithuanian Talmudic commentator, for instance, wrote a long responsum about the issue of matted hair and *hatsitsa*. “The matting of hair called *koltuns*”—he wrote—“which according to the physicians one

should not cut because of danger to the woman, . . . is no interposition.”⁴⁸ Here, the demonic danger is replaced by the threat to the physical integrity of the human body by the matted hair as a medical condition. As the amulet discussed earlier demonstrates, the Slavonic term had become the *terminus technicus* for Jewish authors also beyond the realm of practical kabbalah. As had been the case when authors would still have assumed demonic interference, Margoliot warns of removing the matted hair, invoking dangers especially to the female body. While the reasoning had changed, referring now to medical considerations instead of magical ones, it upholds the same ambiguity in the status of a woman’s body and its ritual purity.⁴⁹

In the period preceding the academic medical discourse on the matting of hair, the ubiquitous phenomenon of the matting of hair mobilized concerns about demonic interference with the human body, especially with the female body. Undoubtedly, the narratives developed in this context expressed deep-seated anxieties about the boundaries between the human and the supernatural worlds, between the self and the other, and between men and women. They exemplify Mary Douglas’s observation that the “body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious.”⁵⁰ The discourses about these boundaries which evolved around the matting of hair also express male anxieties about the wondrous particularities of the female body, and of the hope of male authors to gain or maintain control of these bodies. Beyond the fear that the nocturnal matting of hair was the result of demonic intrusion in one’s community, it also reflected the negotiations of the boundaries between Jews and non-Jews. Already in medieval halakhic discourse, Jewish commentators would tend to exterritorialize the threat of outside contamination by locating its origin in non-Jewish territories of the supernatural world—a phenomenon which would be replicated in the context of the emerging Eastern Ashkenasi Jewish civilization. In a parallel move, early modern medical discourses would replicate these strategies of cultural containment by establishing the matting of hair as medical condition and locating the threat of contamination in Eastern Europe, with the *Plica polonica* emerging for many generations as a marker of essential otherness of this region.

Notes

* This chapter is based on preliminary research carried out in the context of a larger research project developed by Dr. Mechthild Fend and the author. It investigates the emergence of a medical concept around the matting of hair, known as *Plica polonica*, and its relationship to popular medical practices and magical beliefs surrounding the phenomenon. The author would like to thank Iris Idelson-Shein for her constructive reviews of earlier drafts of this chapter, as well as Mechthild Fend and Silke Roth for helpful suggestions. Joseph Davis, Tamara Morsel-Eisenberg, and Ada Rapoport-Albert offered valuable advice on the halakhic discussion on interposition in the early modern period.

1 William Shakespeare, “The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet,” in *The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett, and William Montgomery (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 385, v. 89–95.

- 2 The name of this being is of uncertain origin, but probably goes back to the name of a chief of fairies in Irish mythology; cf. J. Madison Davis, A. Daniel Frankforter, *The Shakespeare Name Dictionary* (New York and London: Garland, 1995), 294.
- 3 Angela Rosenthal, “Raising Hair,” *Eighteenth Century Studies* 38.1 (2004), 1–16, here 1; see also Claudia Benthien, *Skin: on the Cultural Border Between Self and the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), Robert Bartlett, “Symbolic Meanings of Hair in the Middle Ages,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th Series, 4 (1994): 43–60, and Avital Eshed, “Ben kli‘ah le-cl‘ah: al se‘ar uvetulin ba-tarbut ha-yehudit be-Ashkenaz bi-yeme ha-beynayim,” *Zmanim*, 118 (2012): 50–61, here 53–54.
- 4 Felix von Studzieniecki, *Die Cornification und die Lues Cornificativa (Plica Polonica)* (Vienna 1854), 36.
- 5 Jacob Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, vol. 1. (2nd ed., Göttingen: Dieterichsche Buchhandlung, 1844), 433, the latter terms derived from *Geselle* (fellow), a euphemism for a demonic creature.
- 6 Aleksander Brückner, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego* (Kraków: Krakowska Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1926), 248.
- 7 Other terms were the Polish *gwoździec* (from *gwoźdż*, Polish for nail) and *gość* or *gościc* (from Polish for guest), the former possibly referring to the pain caused through sustained matting and the damage done to the scalp, the latter emphasizing the odd feature of bulky, matted hair, attached to the body but foreign to it.
- 8 On the *Haside Ashkenas* see the pioneering works: Ivan Marcus, *Piety and Society: The Jewish Pietists of Medieval Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 1981) and Joseph Dan, *Hasidut Ashkenas be-toldot ha-machashavah ha-Yehudit* (Ramat Aviv: Universitah ha-ptuchah, 1990). More recently see David I. Shyovitz, *A Remembrance of His Wonders: Nature and the Supernatural in Medieval Ashkenas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).
- 9 Shyovitz, “Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Werewolf Renaissance,” *Journal for the History of Ideas* 75.4 (2014): 521–43, here 524.
- 10 Cited after Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition. A Study in Folk Religion* (Cleveland, New York: Meridian Books 1961 [1st ed. Philadelphia 1939]), 41. See also Hirsch Jacob Zimmels, *Magicians, Theologians, and Doctors. Studies in Folk-Medicine and Folk-lore as Reflected in the Rabbinical Responsa (12th–19th Centuries)* (London: Edward Goldston, 1952), 98–99.
- 11 Another leading medieval commentator on the Bible and Talmud, Solomon ben Isaac, better known as Rashi (1040–1105) in a commentary on BT Berahot 58b refers to the matting of hair and equally uses the old French term *feltdir*, see: <http://onthemainline.blogspot.co.uk/2012/01/luigi-chiarini-and-anti-talmud-authors.html> [accessed April 18, 2017], rendered in Hebrew letters.
- 12 Cited after: Wolf Derblich, *De Plica Polonica*. Diss. med. Vratislaviae (Breslau [Wrocław], 1848), 8–9.
- 13 Jacob Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, vol. 1. (2nd ed., Göttingen: Dieterichsche Buchhandlung, 1844), 244–61. Grimm compares and likens Holle to another mythological figure, Berchta. Both would equally qualify as fairy queens, similar to Queen Mab: “In their troupes we find the souls of small children, and they rule over elves and dwarfs, but also nightly witches and [female] sorcerers,” (*ibid.*, 261).
- 14 *Ibid.*, 433.
- 15 Zunz cited after Derblich, *De Plica Polonica*, 9, fn. 2 without reference to Zunz’s original work; for the etymology of Walküre see Jacob Grimm, Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, vol. 27, col. 1256, going back to the term *wal*, to select fallen heroes to join the gods.

- 16 This term thus offers a parallel to both the old French *feutrer*, as well as to the Slavonic *kielťanie się* (denoting a back and forth movement, as mentioned above), the term behind the dominant Slavonic designation for matted hair, with both the old French and Middle High German term identifying the matting of hair with processing fibers and fabric, see *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, vol. 27, col. 1244–51.
- 17 See a comprehensive discussion, with pertinent references to earlier scholarly literature, in Jill Hammer, “Holle’s Cry: Unearthing a Birth Goddess,” *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies and Gender Issues*, 9 (Spring 2005): 62–87. Trachtenberg (*Jewish Magic*, 38–40) offers evidence for a widespread integration of non-Jewish supernatural beings into the Jewish magical imagery in the Middle Ages.
- 18 Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic*, 52.
- 19 Hammer, “Holle’s Cry,” 64–67, 79, and Clarissa Pinkola Estes, *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Women Archetype* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992), 76, 302, 434. One may note in passing the similar relevance of hair in the iconography of Holle, the Baba Yaga, and La Llorona.
- 20 Translated after the Sefaria online edition of the Shulhan arukh: https://www.sefaria.org/Shulchan_Arukh,_Yoreh_De'ah.197-198?lang=bi (accessed April 15, 2017)
- 21 Rosenthal, “Raising Hair,” 8, relates Freud’s interpretation that weaving as “the only female contribution to civilisation” is an unconscious appreciation and reiteration of the growth of pubic hair, hiding the naked human body—which seems as adequate a reflection on the female body as the one proposed by medieval and early modern commentators on the Talmud related here. For an anthropological reflection of the multiple meanings of hair see Edmund R. Leach, “Magical Hair,” in *Myth and Cosmos. Readings in Mythology and Symbolism*, ed. John Middleton (Garden City, NY: The Natural History Press, 1967), 77–108.
- 22 Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic*, 52, and 283, fn. 20. On this see also Zimmels, *Magicians, Theologians, and Doctors*, 82.
- 23 For the genealogy of Jewish understanding of magic, including the role of demons, from antiquity to the medieval period see, most recently, Gideon Bohak, “Jewish Magic in the Middle Ages,” in *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West. From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. David J. Collins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 268–99. For the integration of magic in early modern thought in general see Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons. The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 233–50.
- 24 Shabtai Ben Meir Ha-Cohen, *Sifte Cohen: al shulchan arukh yore de'a*, cited after Derblach, *De Plica Polonica*, 9, fn. 2.
- 25 Jeremy Dauber: “Thinking with the Shedim: What Can We Learn from the ‘Mayse fun Vorms?’” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 15.1 (2008): 19–46; Astrid Lemke: *Dämonische Allianzen. Jüdische Mahrtenhenerzählungen der europäischen Vormoderne* (Tübingen: A. Francke, 2013), 13 f.; Iris Idelson-Shein, *Difference of a Different Kind. Jewish Constructions of Race during the Long 18th Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), Chapter 1.
- 26 For a discussion of the tradition of the dybbuk, see J. H. Chajes, *Between Worlds. Dybbuks, Exorcists, and Early Modern Judaism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).
- 27 Rachel Scharf, “Fuseli’s Nightmare - Psychological, Medical and Physiological Findings,” *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, 7.4 (2014): 449–61, with illustrations.

- 28 About this most recently Marek Tuszewicki, *Żaba pod językiem, Medycyna ludowa Żydów aszkenazyjskich przelomu XIX i XX wieku* (Kraków, Budapeszt: Wydawnictwo Austeria, 2015), 260.
- 29 The amulet is not dated, though the familiarity with the Slavonic terminology suggests that it was drafted not before the mid-seventeenth century, and probably in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century.
- 30 This amulet has been brought to my attention by Nimrod Zinger, who also provided his translation. The emphasis is mine. The item is referenced in A. Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew manuscripts in the Bodleian Library and in the college libraries of Oxford*. Oxford 1886, pos. 1965/1; and Zinger, “Unto Their Assembly,” 84.
- 31 For the integration of terms deriving from this Slavonic origin into Yiddish see Dov Sadan, “Koltn. Plica Polonica,” in *The Field of Yiddish. Studies in Language, Folklore, and Literature. Fourth Collection*, ed. Marvin I. Herzog, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Dan Miron, and Ruth Wisse (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1980), 317–28.
- 32 Lithuanian folktales do discuss an elf which meshes and mats the hair, but his name is *aitvaras*, a basilisk-like creature usually depicted as a rooster with a fiery tail, see Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, 261.
- 33 Further examples in Tuszewicki, *Żaba pod językiem*, 258–59.
- 34 Jerome J. Bylebyl, “The School of Padua: humanistic medicine in the sixteenth century,” in *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Charles Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 335–70, here 340–41.
- 35 Wojciech Oczko, *Przymiot i Cieplice, opatrzone Życiorysem i oceną stanowiska naukowego W. Oczki*, ed. Edward Klinka (Warszawa: Nakł. Towarzystwa Lekarskiego Warszawskiego 1881), first published in 1581, 8s. Oczko would already assume a connection between syphilis and the matting of hair, however not considering the latter a specific condition, a *morbus sui generis*.
- 36 While the whereabouts of the original letter are unknown, it was cited first by Sassonia, and throughout medical literature following him. About the medical school in Padua see, for example, Bylebyl, “The School of Padua,” *passim*, and Massimo Galtarossa, *Medicina repubblicana. Scelte politiche e benessere del corpo presso lo Studio di Padova fra Cinquecento e Settecento* (Rome: Aracne editrice, 2012).
- 37 Ercole Sassonia, *De plica quam Poloni Gwozdziec, Roxolani Koltunum vocant* (Padua 1600). The title page explains that the volume is a “book about a new condition Polish plait” (‘*Librum de Plica novo Poloniae Morbo*’). About Sassonia, who was known to integrate past and current cases of medical treatment into his teaching, see Bylebyl, “The School of Padua,” 345, 350–51, and Galtarossa, *Medicina repubblicana*, 40, 194.
- 38 The letter from Zamość is documented at the very beginning of Sassonia, *De plica*, 3–8.
- 39 Thus, a long discussion of *Plica polonica* by a German student of Sassonia reflects the immediate impact of Sassonia’s theoretical work; cf. Peter Uffenbach, *Panthemum medicinae selectum: sive medicinae practicae templum, omnibus omnium fere morborum insultibus commune, libris undecim distinctum...* (Frankfurt am Main: Palthenius, 1603), 784–876.
- 40 Rudolf Krause, *De plica polonica* (Berlin 1841), 19: “*Plica polonica est morbus Sarmaticus*; Ernst Ludwig Schwimmer, “*Plica polonica*,” in *Real-Encyclopädie der gesammten Heilkunde*, vol. 15, ed. Albert Eulenburg (2nd edition, Wien, Leipzig: Urban & Schwarzenberg, 1888), 624: “*Plica polonica*, s. *Trichoma s. Lues sarmatica*, der Weichsel- oder Wichtelzopf, welche in früheren Jahren, namentlich in Polen, and

den Ufern der Weichsel (Vistula) sowie in Russland als eine endemische Krankheitsform betrachtet wurde.” Cited after Robert Jütte, *Leib und Leben im Judentum* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag im Suhrkamp Verlag, 2016), 292.

- 41 An early seventeenth-century medical treatise by a mayor of Lwów on the healing qualities of mineral water springs identified Russia as the place of origin of the matting of hair: Erazm Sixtus, *O cieplicach we Skle Ksieq Troie* (1617). Cited after Brückner, *Słownik etymologiczny*, 246.
- 42 The most relevant recent discussions of Tuviah Ha-Cohen appear in David Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* (2nd ed., Detroit: Wayne State University Press 2001), 229–55; and Nimrod Zinger, “Unto Their Assembly, Mine Honor, Be Not Thou United”: Tuvya Cohen and the medical marketplace in the early modern period,” *Korot* 20 (2009): 67–95, especially 85–86 on Cohen’s ambivalent, though overall skeptical stance on the existence of demons and witchcraft.
- 43 Claude Quétel, *Le mal de Naples: histoire de la syphilis* (Paris: Seghers, 1986).
- 44 Ambrosius Stegmann, “De plica Judaeorum,” in *Miscellanea curiosa sive ephemeredum medico-physicarum Germanicarum Academiae Caesareo-Leopoldina Naturae Curiosorum* (dec.3. a 7. et 8. 1669 et 1670).
- 45 Valerianus Aloysius Brera, *Memorabilia de Plica Polonica omni aevo observata* (Ticini 1797), 29.
- 46 Kevin Siena, “The Venereal Disease, 1500–1800,” in *The Routledge History of Sex and the Body: 1500 to the Present*, ed. Sarah Toulalan and Kate Fisher (New York: Routledge, 2013), 465.
- 47 William Davidson, *Commentatorium Petri Severini ideam Medicinae Philosophicae prodromus* (Den Haag, 1660). Davidson was one of many Scots to have emigrated to Poland-Lithuania because of its religious tolerance. His skeptical observations about the nature of matted hair caused controversy. For a few biographical remarks about Davidson see Anna Biegańska, “The Learned Scots in Poland (From the Mid-Sixteenth to the Close of the Eighteenth Century,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 43.1 (2001): 1–27, here 13–14.
- 48 Moshe Zeev Margoliot, *Agudas esov* (Vilnius 1884–85), 27. Emphasis mine.
- 49 This would resonate with arguments used by the early nineteenth century by leading Talmudic authorities such as Akiva Eger (1786–1852). See Tuszewicki, *Żaba pod jezykiem*, 260.
- 50 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge, 2003, first ed. 1966), 116.

A Jewish Frankenstein: Making Monsters in Modernist German Grotesques

Joela Jacobs

On the 200th anniversary of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), one of the most persistent misconceptions about the novel is probably the assumption that "Frankenstein" is the name of the archetypal monster, when it really refers to the scientist who created it.¹ *Frankenstein* tells the story of the medical student Victor Frankenstein, who finds the secret of giving life to nonliving matter and creates a humanoid creature that turns out to be so hideous to others that it encounters nothing but fear and hate. After a futile attempt to befriend human beings, the intelligent and sensitive creature, which has learned to express itself quite elegantly, takes revenge on its master by killing his loved ones. It vows to stop only if Frankenstein were to create a female mate to quell its loneliness because it insists on every living being's right to happiness. Worried that he will precipitate the birth of an entire race of monsters, however, Frankenstein tears apart the beginnings of a female creature. In response to this decision, the monster strangles Frankenstein's own bride on their wedding night. Yet Victor Frankenstein's experiment with fashioning life is perhaps the more monstrous act of the story, and his downfall is presented as a result of not taking responsibility for his hubristic deeds. The story ends with Frankenstein's deathbed warning to avoid ambition and the creature's remorseful announcement of its impending suicide.

The notion that society creates its own monsters, which embody cultural fears and desires, has been put forward in Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's well-known Seven Theses about "Monster Culture," which propose "a method of reading cultures from the monsters they engender."² The following pages will lay out such a cultural reading of two modernist German texts that draw on the untenable distinction between the monster and its creator in the tradition of the contradictory label "Frankenstein." Through narrative elements, Oskar Panizza's *The Operated Jew* (1893) responds directly to Shelley's *Frankenstein*, while Salomo Friedlaender's *The Operated Goy* (1922) explicitly takes up Panizza's text thirty years later. Both narratives raise the question of the responsibility of those who create monsters, in this case focusing on the complicated relationship between anti-semites and Jews in Germany around 1900. In doing so, the two texts build on Shelley's critique of unchecked scientific ambition and its insidious

application in the context of the physiognomic pseudoscience of their time, drawing on *Frankenstein* as the urtext of monstrosity as a medico-scientific category in the modern European context. Panizza's and Friedlaender's texts mirror central tropes of the creature's struggle (such as its physical appearance, language learning process, and longing for a bride), while prominently playing with the identity-forming notion of naming that is foreclosed to the unnamed monster so often subsumed under the moniker of its creator, Frankenstein.

Panizza's and Friedlaender's unsettling texts both tell the story of a transformation from "monster" to "man." In *The Operated Jew*, non-Jewish author and neurologist Oskar Panizza (1853–1921) introduces a Jewish student whose appearance, demeanor, and speech are described as so monstrous that he has to undergo a series of gruesome Frankenstein-esque reassemblages of body parts in order to be accepted as human and assimilate to German society. In addition to his physical transformation, he learns to speak German like a new language in a way that points ahead to George Bernard Shaw's 1912 *Pygmalion*.³ Jewish philosopher and physician Salomo Friedlaender (1871–1946) turns this plot upside down by telling the story of an anti-semite and early Nazi supporter converting to Judaism in body and mind through processes similar to those in Panizza's text. Both narratives follow the generic conventions of the literary grotesque (*die Groteske*), which Friedlaender himself defined as a short prose piece that upsets bourgeois sensibilities by exaggerating the modus of the caricature into the grotesque.⁴ The satirical criticism of this genre is directed at the contemporary treatment of Jews in German society in this case: while Panizza's *Operated Jew* from the 1890s focuses on the context of Jewish assimilation in the Wilhelmine Empire, in which Jews were given near-equal citizenship standing for the first time in German history, Friedlaender's *Operated Goy* from the early 1920s draws attention to the surging antisemitism of the Weimar Republic.

Though the two stories follow parallel structures up until the transformed main character's endeavor to win a bride, they end quite differently: Panizza's protagonist is betrayed by his modified body on his wedding day and turns into a monstrous hybrid destined to remain alone like Frankenstein's creature, while Friedlaender's figure is successfully integrated into the Jewish community and starts a large family. The two endings cast a diverging light on scientific progress, which Friedlaender presents as a potential tool to overcoming antisemitism and racism in the future, while Panizza seems to heed Frankenstein's warning against ambition with his *monstrum* (which translates into a literal "warning sign"). As trained physicians, both authors were attuned to the medical and psychological developments of the time and therefore acutely aware of the involvement of scientific discourse in the normative regulation of human bodies, especially the ongoing racialization of science and scientification of race. Both of them considered literature and art responsible for making visible and criticizing these societal issues. As a consequence, Panizza was persecuted for his provocative writing about sexuality and disease, as well as his criticism of the Wilhelmine Empire and the Catholic Church. His calculated transgression of censorship laws led to his incarceration, dispossession, exile, and ultimately his institutionalization. The literary writings of Friedlaender package their provocation in witty word play, philosophical depth, and performative comedy (which made them popular in cabaret and radio

in the 1920s), while delivering a perceptive sociopolitical critique of the increasing militarism and nationalism of the Weimar Republic, until he went into exile in 1933. Panizza's and Friedlaender's narratives criticize physiognomic pseudoscience directly and also evoke a dense referential network of other literary texts and artworks that either do or do not participate in this critique. Panizza, for instance, protests the proliferation of physiognomic tropes in the contemporary artistic production by distilling his protagonist's physical attributes with the help of references to artists and paintings of his time that partake in the visual production of a pseudoscientific aesthetics of monstrosity. Friedlaender responds to this aspect of his forerunner's story by introducing the potential of modernist, expressionist art to achieve freedom from normative and stereotypical depictions of human bodies through the exaggerated caricatures that are central to the genre of the literary grotesque as he defined it. The following two sections about Panizza's and Friedlaender's texts will first detail the physical description and transformation of each protagonist with a focus on its references to pseudoscientific aesthetic tropes (and, in the case of Panizza, to *Frankenstein*), and then unpack the related naming strategies of the respective text. The conclusion will return to the question of the diverging endings of *The Operated Jew* and *The Operated Goy* in respect to the scientific discourse of their time and close with a note about the genre of the literary grotesque.

The Operated Jew

Panizza's story of the "operated Jew," Itzig Faitel Stern, is told by an unnamed narrator who introduces himself as Itzig Faitel's best friend in the first sentence, though it quickly becomes clear that the narrator actually considers the protagonist a monster:

There was certainly a great deal of what I would call medical or rather anthropological curiosity in this case. I was attracted to him in the same way I might be to a Negro whose goggle eyes, yellow connective optical membranes, crushed nose, mollusk lips and ivory teeth and smell one perceives altogether in wonderment.... Perhaps there was also some pity here, but not much. I observed with astonishment how *this monster* took terrible pains to adapt to our circumstances, our way of walking, thinking, our gesticulations, the expressions of our intellectual tradition, our manner of speech.⁵

Positioning himself with the large medical and scientific personnel of the story, who ask "whether it was certain that Itzig's parentage was human,"⁶ the narrator ventriloquizes the racist and antisemitic notions permeating the science of the time. He specifically refers to physiognomic pseudoscience, which had been introduced by Johann Caspar Lavater (1741–1801) in *Physiognomic Fragments for the Promotion of Human Understanding and Human Love* (1775–78), who correlated physical attributes with character traits.⁷ The latter had also publicly attempted to convert his contemporary Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86), the most famous philosopher of the Jewish Enlightenment, to Christianity. Lavater's physiognomic ideas were prominent

at the end of the nineteenth century, when Panizza was composing his narrative, and would be drawn on by the Nazis. The narrator attempts physiognomic descriptions of Faitel's face and body at length in the text:

Itzig Faitel's countenance was most interesting. It is a shame that Lavater had not laid eyes upon it. An antelope's eye with a subdued, cherry-like glow swam in wide apertures of the smooth velvet, lightly yellow skin of his temple and cheeks. It wasn't his fault that it kept dripping. Itzig's nose assumed a form which was similar to that of the high priest who was the most prominent and striking figure of Kaulbach's painting "The Destruction of Jerusalem" . . . His lips were fleshy and overly creased; his teeth sparkled like pure crystal. A violet fatty tongue often thrust itself between them at the wrong time.⁸

The mix of nonhuman descriptors (antelope, cherry), multiple allusions to bodily fluids (swim, dripping, tongue-thrusting)⁹, obesity (smooth, wide, fleshy, overly, fatty), "unhealthy" colors (cherry-like glow, lightly yellow skin, violet tongue), and antisemitic stereotypes (nose) is geared at producing a monstrous image. It does so in grotesque exaggeration rather than subtle allusion, referencing a painting by Bavarian court painter Wilhelm von Kaulbach, which depicts the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. The 1846 painting pictures the expulsion of the Jews on the left side of the painting, while Christians rejoice on the right. The visual contrast between the painting's stereotypical figures, such as "the eternal Jew," as Kaulbach put it himself in an accompanying brochure, sends a clear message about contemporary Christian views about Jews and suggests that the latter could expect expulsion rather than acceptance in Kaulbach's and Panizza's nineteenth-century Bavaria. Indeed, the Bavarian king Ludwig I bought the painting from the successful artist for a record price and had it displayed in the Neue Pinakothek in Munich, where Panizza lived for a large portion of his life.¹⁰ This reference is one of many critical comments about contemporary European art that Panizza includes in his narrative, and it critiques the societal acceptance of an aesthetics of physiognomic monstrosity, while highlighting the responsibility of both the arts and sciences in the perpetuation of racist discourses.¹¹

Yet Faitel's description is more than just an amalgamation of grotesque and antisemitic stereotypes that suggest a supposed fundamental difference between Christian and Jewish bodies. It also closely resembles that of Frankenstein's monster, which is described as follows:

His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.¹²

This inventory is in large parts identical to Faitel's: the yellow skin color and the black hair (which is described as curly in Faitel's case), teeth that are pearly white or sparkle like pure crystal (suggesting the contrast of dark skin that Panizza's narrator's

comparison to a “Negro” already introduced and thus highlighting the racialization of Shelley’s character), and dripping or watery eyes, dully glowing in their sockets. While the description represents Frankenstein’s monster’s final shape, Faitel’s operations are intended to change his appearance and thus invoke the beginnings of modern plastic surgery in the late nineteenth century, which were inextricably coupled with rhinoplasties for Jewish patients.¹³ Yet the operations Faitel is to undergo are much more comprehensive and brutal:

Night and day he hung in traction so that his scoliotic bones could be stretched by his own body weight. Or he was stuck in a cast built like a corset. The nape of his neck was shortened and tightened through a bloody operation to allow Faitel a view of the heavens. The bones which had been reassembled in a new harness had to be exercised and reformed week after week. . . . About that time a daring operation became known which was called *brisement forcé*. A crooked bone was intentionally broken and treated as an accidental breaking of the leg with the exception that the two pieces were healed in a straight direction. This method was employed in an operation on Faitel Stern’s bow legs.¹⁴

Such descriptions go on for pages, as Faitel is reassembled like the hybrid patchwork of body parts that make up Frankenstein’s monster. Once healed, his skin is bleached, his hair straightened and dyed a golden blond, and “finally, the dumb, awkward German lad was complete, a replica of the figure at times portrayed by Schwind in his paintings.”¹⁵ Moritz von Schwind (1804–71), another successful painter and art professor of Panizza’s Munich, created stereotypical Germanic figures in his late romantic works that further reinforce Panizza’s critique of the physiognomic aesthetics in the artworks of his time, this time with a German typology.¹⁶

Unlike Frankenstein’s monster, who had no choice in his creation, Faitel is eager to participate in his physical transformation despite extreme pain, high monetary cost, and the experimental nature of his treatments. Yet once Faitel’s body has been outwardly changed, the doctors wonder, “Did Faitel have a soul?”¹⁷ The narrative introduces the “chaste, undefined Germanic soul which shrouded the possessor like an aroma.”¹⁸ Cast as both a Christian notion that suggests religious conversion and a more general idea of a Germanic essence, the “soul” raises the question whether Faitel has been transformed inwardly as well. In order to attain this marker of authenticity, Faitel defies his doctors and insists that his blood be exchanged for that of “seven strong women from the Black Forest, who had come to mass.”¹⁹ In this context, it is briefly mentioned that Faitel also undergoes a formal conversion, but during the seemingly much more important blood exchange Faitel nearly dies, signifying the death of his old self and his rebirth as a Christian. After this infusion with “female blood,” Faitel successfully poses as “man with a soul [*Gemüths Mensch*, literally: a sentimental or man of feeling] through and through,”²⁰ which invokes sentimentality in contrast to stereotypes of Jewish effeminacy, and therefore satirizes the assumed stability of stereotypical concepts of masculinity.²¹

Now that Faitel has achieved his goal, he goes about changing his name to solidify the transformation. His original appellation, Itzig Faitel Stern, refers to an

antisemitic pseudonym that was most prominently distilled as a nineteenth-century stock figure in the role of Veitel Itzig in Gustav Freytag's novel *Debit and Credit* (1855).²² Panizza's specific rendering of the name brings together various notions of Jewish identity: "Itzig," a derogatory German version of Isaac/Yitzhak,²³ stands in for the ascribed German perception of Jewish identity, while the Yiddish-sounding "Faitel," by which his "friends" call him throughout the story, communicates a sense of Jewish authenticity found in the shtetl. The last name "Stern" alludes to the Star of David and was a popular choice among Ashkenazi Jews during the Haskalah.²⁴

In contrast to these elaborate signifiers that communicate Jewish identity threefold, the narrator of Faitel's story remains nameless and thereby seemingly reverses the naming strategy of Shelley's novel, given that Faitel, the monster, has a name, while the person who "brings him to life" by narrating his story and helping along his medical transformation does not. Yet, Faitel is a medical student himself,²⁵ just like Victor Frankenstein, and "Faitel" also resonates with the German name Veit, which is often traced to St. Vitus, from Latin *vita* = life.²⁶ This kinship with the maker of life aligns Faitel, the monster, simultaneously with both Frankenstein and his creature, rendering the distinction between the two untenable. Faitel's eagerness to transform his own body supports the idea that he "brings himself to life," which raises the question of responsibility. However, the story makes clear that the idea of Faitel's transformation originates with the narrator.²⁷ Faitel's wish to be accepted by him and German society writ large fuels his changes. As in the case of Frankenstein's creature, Faitel's actions are prompted by the hateful reactions of others and enabled by reckless experimental science.

For his new name, Faitel chooses Siegfried Freudenstern—by now Dr. Freudenstern. In the blurring of monster and creator, "Dr. Freudenstern" echoes the moniker "Dr. Frankenstein" in its syllabic patterns and consonant clusters, and Frankenstein's first name, Victor, translates into *Sieg* (victory). "Dr. Siegfried Freudenstern" also seems to recall "Dr. Siegmund Freud," who appears in Friedlaender's later text explicitly. Connoting both victory and peace (*Friede*), "Siegfried" is the hero of the Germanic folk tale of the Nibelungen. "Freudenstern" evokes the original "Stern," but adds joy (*Freude*) and thereby preserves its association with the Star of David, while making it sound vaguely like a German compound (such as the city Freudenstadt or the castle Freudenstein) and utterly positive (victory-peace joy-star). This web of references turns the transformed Faitel into a Germanic hero with vaguely Jewish roots, and it makes the connection to Shelley's *Frankenstein* perhaps most explicit. Panizza admired Gothic literature deeply, and his 10,000-book library, which accompanied him on every move, was intensively read and annotated. It contained volumes in many languages that he read fluently, predominantly French, Italian, and English, and a posthumous description of the highlights of his collection mentions editions of "Shelley."²⁸ The report does not specify whether this refers to Percy Bysshe or Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, nor which works are included, but since *Frankenstein* had been wildly successful in its English and French versions for over seventy years at the time of *The Operated Jew* in 1893, there can be no doubt that Panizza was familiar with the novel, even though it was translated into German only in 1912. Aside from the similarities in motifs, descriptions, and names, Panizza's *Operated Jew* also includes an explicit reference to

the myth of Prometheus who “had permission from God to make human beings”²⁹ and whose name graces Shelley’s subtitle. Many of Panizza’s contemporaries confirmed that his “stupendous erudition and his unusual memory seemed astounding. He was a great reference book that one never asked in vain for information. He peppered his conversations with numerous examples from the literature of all countries and times.”³⁰ Panizza’s writing showcases the wealth of intertextual references at his disposal, and motifs from *Frankenstein* appear already in earlier texts, such as *The Human Factory* (1890), but are developed more consistently in *The Operated Jew*.

Panizza was enmeshed in multiple *Franken* associations, which he deploys in the text to relate his “monster” both to the famous archetype and himself. This network of associations begins with Panizza’s Huguenot French (*Frankreich*) heritage. Similar to Panizza himself, Faitel is described to be “from a French family and was raised according to French tradition. . . . It was his misfortune to have moved at a young age to the nearby Palatinate where he sucked up the enunciated sounds of this region as though they were milk and honey.”³¹ The Palatinate region is wedged between France and German Franconia and contains a castle Frankenstein in a town of the same name. Panizza grew up across the border in Franconia (*Franken*), a region east of Frankfurt (home to the noble house of Frankenstein), which makes him a Franconian (*Franke*) fluent in the Franconian dialect (*Fränkisch*) as well as French (*Französisch*). French and Franconian are some of the many languages and dialects that appear in Faitel’s language learning process in the story. Because of his multilingual manner of speaking that mixes French, Yiddish, and German dialects, Faitel’s hybrid expression is considered as “monstrous”³² as his body. The linguists in *The Operated Jew* promote the importance of speaking standard German, or *Hochdeutsch*, and he therefore learns “High German like a totally new, foreign language.”³³ Just like Frankenstein’s monster, Faitel masters his new language quickly and eloquently by imitating others.³⁴ Yet as I have shown elsewhere,³⁵ a focus on the use of dialect and language in the text complicates the prevailing understanding of Panizza’s narrative as an antisemitic parable of assimilation³⁶ because the text exposes *Hochdeutsch* as a variation of different dialects that share the same roots with other languages and are infused with foreign words. With this discovery, the identity that is represented by *Hochdeutsch* in the assimilation process falls apart as equally hybrid and constructed. Panizza himself lived most of the multilingualism that his protagonist masters in the text, but in an act of self-censorship and as a last stance of defiance against Germany’s censorship (and other) politics, he ceased writing and speaking German for the remaining two decades of his life, in favor of French, and additionally renounced his German citizenship.³⁷ The moniker “Frankenstein,” then, resonates as much with Panizza’s self-perception as with the literary character he created.

The Operated Goy

Panizza’s satire of physiognomic pseudoscience and its repercussions for the Jewish population in Germany was taken up on the one-year anniversary of his death by Salomo Friedlaender, whose literary response shows the increased urgency of this

critical endeavor, though it does not continue the web of *Frankenstein* references explicitly. *The Operated Goy: A Counterpart to Panizza's Operated Jew*³⁸ was written one year before the failed *Hitlerputsch* took place in Munich, and not only calls itself a *Gegenstück* to Panizza's story in the subtitle, but also positions its characters as such counterparts: "As far as purity of race was concerned, the house of Gold-Isaac was the Jewish counterpart [*Gegenstück*] to the family of Count Rehsok: ditto, ever since the destruction of Jerusalem, and ever since the dispersion of the Jewish people in many different countries, the family had never become contaminated by alien blood."³⁹

The families of the two protagonists, Kreuzwendedich von Rehsok and Rebecca Gold-Isaac, take pride in the preservation of their racial purity since "the destruction of Jerusalem" that divided Jews and Christians so neatly in Kaulbach's painting of the same name (which served to compare Faitel's nose to the stereotype of the "eternal Jew"). Despite their shared interest in upholding their bloodline's spotless record, the two clans are described as counterparts to each other in physical terms. Friedlaender's satirically exaggerated descriptions evoke pervasive antisemitic and Aryan stereotypes:

Every Aryan child knows what a Jew looks like. Indeed, every domestic pet can scent out a Jew. If one carefully abstracted certain elements from each Jewish and each Oriental type, then one would be left with the type representative of the counts of Rehsok: they did not wear corkscrew locks, rather, their hair was soft and wavy, almost silvery blond. Their white foreheads dropped steeply like walls of granite instead of sinking and slanting toward the rear. They were suspicious of so-called eagle noses, for their noses were unbelievably straight. They all had thin lips, Prussian chins, proud necks, and fabulously slender builds, and their legs, which in their innocence did not know either X or O, stood simultaneously on aristocratic and pan-Germanic feet and took strides as though descending from Mount Olympus. Above all, they did not have narrow eyes with a dark brown glow but open, true blue ones which glistened like pure ice, and the power of their imperious look was enhanced exceedingly by the monocle.⁴⁰

Kreuzwendedich, the most recent specimen of this imposing Aryan lineage, is a new student who intends to stay true to his family's heritage and heed their warning: "Keep your blood pure! There are now enormously [literally: monstrously] rich Semitic daughters who are keen on our kind."⁴¹ The antisemitic stereotype of the monstrously rich and money-grubbing Jew is subverted by the fact that the von Rehsoks are themselves one of the richest families around. There also seems to be no need to worry about Kreuzwendedich's susceptibility to Jewish charms since he keeps his world—in now notorious Nazi terminology that is already present in the German original—*judenrein*, or "completely cleansed of Jewishness."⁴²

News of this ardent anti-semitic upsets passionate and strong-willed Rebecca Gold-Isaac, who decides to teach him a lesson. With "a bronze wig like something painted by Titian,"⁴³ she disguises herself as a stereotypical blond beauty from yet another painting (such as Titian's *Venus of Orbino*) and manages to confront Kreuzwendedich on the street. He is awestruck by her supposedly Germanic gorgeousness and falls in love with her, and she decides that the best revenge would be to marry him, thus fulfilling the

fears of “monstrously rich Semitic daughters” keen on Aryan men. Described without her Germanic disguise as “a languishing odalisque with eyes like almonds, ebony hair, ivory skin, etcetera, etcetera,”⁴⁴ Rebecca’s appearance corresponds to a well-known litany of Orientalist stereotypes, which the “etcetera, etcetera” underlines, while it simultaneously also prompts the German reader to complete the familiar formula that describes the German fairy tale princess Snow White: “white as snow, red as blood, and black as ebony.”⁴⁵ Notably leaving out the explicit mention of blood (the supposed carrier of racial difference) in Friedlaender’s version, the three colors nonetheless evoke the flag of the German Empire of 1871–1918, thus suggesting that Rebecca is simultaneously an Orientalist trope of colonial times and a German fairy tale princess, which blurs the supposedly stark distinctions between Jewish and German bodies.

Rebecca begins Kreuzwendedich’s transformation by arranging for him to meet Dr. Freud, who makes him aware of his subconscious love for a Jewish woman. When Kreuzwendedich subsequently tries to win Rebecca over, she demands: “First become a Jew, completely Jewish, a Jew to the point of excess, with caftan, phylactery, and long locks of hair. You don’t love me with all your heart [*literally: mit Haut und Haaren*] unless you become utterly Jewish deep in the marrow of your Aryan bones, a Jew and nothing but a Jew.”⁴⁶ Kreuzwendedich does not hesitate—he studies Hebrew, learns about laws, rituals, and prayers, and finally also submits to a circumcision. Just as in Faitel’s case, the complicated matter of religious conversion is negotiated matter-of-factly in no more than a few sentences. But his largely nominal, intellectual transformation into an assimilated Jew does not suffice. When he returns to Rebecca, she demands a turn to “more authentic” Eastern European Jewish roots that suggests an uneasy status for assimilated Western Jewry, which Rebecca herself represents:

“Your Jewish soul hasn’t really taken complete hold of the infernally Rehsok [*actually: roshe, meaning evil, also coming to mean Aryan*] body yet! This goyim posture is an insult to the memory of my forefathers. Is that love? Do you think I could stand with you like that under the *chuppah*? Do you think I want to be wed to [*literally: can be the kalle of*] such a bridegroom [*literally: choßn*] looking the way you still look? Until the former Rehsok really looks like a Jewish man, like in the paintings of Steinhardt, Segal, or Chagall, you can forget all about marrying me!” After saying this, she showed him a picture of two warped young men [*literally: bocher*].⁴⁷

Rebecca wants her future husband to be an Eastern European Jew like her father and thereby redeploys physiognomic stereotypes within the Jewish community. Her markedly increased use of Yiddish in this passage not only echoes her father’s demeanor in the text and reveals that she considers *Ostjuden* like him to be more authentically Jewish, but it also highlights her own mutability and hybrid heritage, which allows her to foreground her Yiddish-speaking self in this moment. Ironically, the three painters she mentions created expressionist figures that make anatomical modeling rather difficult, yet this humorous detail suggests that modernist art, such as expressionism and literary grotesques, holds potential for expressing one’s individual identity as one wants, which is highlighted by the wide array of stereotypical female characters

that Rebecca seamlessly slips into throughout the text—ranging from a blond Venus and Germanic Snow White to the beautiful Jewess of an assimilated Western and an Orientalized, Yiddish-speaking variant.

Kreuzwendedich obeys Rebecca's wishes for further transformation, and it is in the titular operations on the convert's body that the strongest similarities between the two texts can be found, as Kreuzwendedich is turned into the original Faitel:

The static principle of Rehsok's feudal body was to be convulsed into the Jewish one. So, first, the doctor used the most radical electrical instruments to eliminate the hair from the count's blond head, covered it with a wig of strict Galiziana coiffure, and dyed the eyebrows black. The doctor devoted special attention to the nose, which he endowed with an artificial hump and made the tip curl over. Thereafter, he performed one of his most famous spinal atrophies. The count's bones were broken at their joints and then carefully brought to heal in the shape of an egg. It was in this condition testifying to his change [*literally*: it was in this passably testamentary condition, *meaning that he now resembles the figures of the Pentateuch*] that Count Moishe had himself photographed and used the photograph to present himself to Rebecca and her *mishpocheh* in effigy for the time being. Then he disappeared, with brand new flat feet [*literally*: on his inborn flat feet], to Romania to learn Yiddish from the wonder rabbis there as well as all the gestures that go along with it. He talked with arms, legs, and tongue, a man after Jehovah's own heart. In a letter written in Hebrew he announced to his fiancée's parents that he would soon be making the bridegroom's official visit.⁴⁸

What took many pages of gruesome detail in Faitel's story is told quite quickly in Kreuzwendedich's case. Where Faitel was straightened, Kreuzwendedich is curled and twisted with medical help. Where Faitel's language and gestures had to be retrained, Kreuzwendedich learns Yiddish and a repertoire of gestures that serve to authenticate his prior intellectual, spiritual, and physical conversion into an assimilated Jewish stereotype. He is now accepted and can finally marry Rebecca, which will lead to the ultimate fulfillment of his assimilatory success through reproduction.

Before Kreuzwendedich's transformation can be complete, however, his name must be changed. His original first name—Kreuzwendedich (cross-turn-around)—had contained the entire story. Yet the *Kreuz* has multiple meanings: Kreuzwendedich is a rare, archaic name that was given to children whose older sibling had passed away. In this sense, it is an invocation or prayer: cross that we have to bear, make a turn for the better!⁴⁹ As a name, it is literally a cross to bear because it is the constant reminder of the child one replaced. Yet aside from the Christian symbol of the cross from which Kreuzwendedich turns away in his conversion, the *Kreuz* also connotes the *Hakenkreuz* (swastika), which the Nazi supporter Kreuzwendedich wears already in the early 1920s. After his transformation, he changes his name to Moses or Moishe Mogandovidwendedich (*Mogandovid*, the Star of David, replaces the cross in his name) and reverses his last name from Rehsok into Kosher (when visiting Freud, he momentarily already became Rekosh⁵⁰). Just like Faitel retains his old last name Stern in "Freudenstern," the roots of Kreuzwendedich Rehsok's old name in his new identity

of Moishe Mogandovidwendedich Kosher show that, for better or for worse, a trace of his former self remains.

When Rebecca first disguised herself as a blond Venus to confront Kreuzwendedich, she also gave herself a new name, the hyper-Germanic moniker Baroness Freia-Rotraut von Isagold, by which she is increasingly called throughout the story, as if undergoing her own transformation. Freia is, in fact, the Nordic equivalent of the dangerously seductive Venus, the goddess of beauty, sexuality, fertility, but also death. She is also the goddess of gold, so the name Freia-Rotraut von Isagold contains a distinct color scheme with two references to gold (symbolizing wealth, the blond hair color of the Aryan ideal, and also the color that would turn the previously mentioned flag of the German Empire into that of her contemporary Weimar Germany) and one mention of red (evoking blood) in Rotraut. The latter is an old Germanic name, meaning glory (*hruod = Ruhm*) and well-fortified/strong (*trud = wehrhaft*), which matches her character, but also Faitel's Germanic choice of Siegfried (victory-peace).⁵¹ In a typical Friedlaender word play, it also invites comparisons to the German dish *Rotkraut*, pickled red cabbage, which is one of the many cabbage-based dishes that give Germans the nickname "krauts." Yet instead of the Nibelungen's *Rhinegold* of Wagner's rendition that features Siegfried, it is *Isagold*, which replaces the Rhine with the Isar, the river running through Panizza's Munich. Isagold is also a reversal of Rebecca's Jewish family name Gold-Isaac into Isa(ac)-Gold, which recalls the strategy that turned Rehsok into Kosher and suggests that each is always already contained in the other as its counterpart. In the name Gold-Isaac, gold referred to Rebecca's family fortune and the antisemitic stereotype of the money-grubbing Jew, while Isaac—like her father Isak's and Faitel's first name Itzig—connotes an ancient Jewish bloodline begun by the biblical Rebekah, who bore her husband Isaac twin sons, one of whom became the father of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Hebrew names like these were purged from Kreuzwendedich's pre-conversion world, even his Bible, in which "the wise Solomon was called the wise Friedrich."⁵² Kreuzwendedich had always been suspicious of Christianity, which he considered a "Jewish offshoot of an Indian tribe."⁵³ He therefore turned to Nordic mythology when dreaming about his future family, which he wanted to be exactly like Odin's, down to the names: "His future wife was to be called Frigga; his children *in spe*, Balder, Braga, Hermod, Thor and Tyr."⁵⁴ After marrying Rebecca, his family looks quite different, however:

Now Mr. and Mrs. Moishe Kosher are living today as committed [literally: enraged] Zionists in a country villa near Jerusalem. To be sure their offspring are not called Balder, Braga, Hermond, T[h]or, and Tyr. Instead, they have more melodic and honest names: Shlaume, Shmul, Feigelche, Pressel, and Yankef.—The Rehsok clan has vainly sought to the present day to change its name and must consequently put up with the fact that, when something is not completely kosher, people in their circles say it is not completely "rehsok."⁵⁵

Instead of Odin's mythological offspring, the bourgeois-sounding Herr and Frau Kosher have five sons with Yiddish names. The family resides near Jerusalem, as

enraged (*enragierte*, specifically not just *engagierte*/engaged) Zionists, which suggests Friedlaender's criticism of the movement. This corresponds to the narrative's critique of racial identities, which it applies to both the German and Jewish national project as well as conflicts between Eastern and Western Jewry. Yet the name of the Rehsok clan stands out as the only one which cannot be changed, and instead, its meaning is altered. Inverting the expression "not completely kosher" into "not completely rehsok," the Aryan family becomes a synonym for a situation that is not quite right or trustworthy. With this commentary about the developments of the Weimar Republic, the text self-referentially confirms that "this grotesque affair [*die Groteske*] reached the highest echelons."⁵⁶

Monstrous Endings

Unlike Friedlaender's *Operated Goy*, the transformation of Faitel, Panizza's *Operated Jew*, does not succeed. On his wedding day, he drinks too much and suddenly all the changes to his body seem to come undone, rendering him a monstrous "counterfeit of human flesh,"⁵⁷ as the people around him had always suspected. His gruesome unraveling sends the wedding guests into a panic, and he remains stuck between his old and new self: "His arms and legs, which had been stretched and bent in numerous operations, could no longer perform the recently learned movements, nor the old ones."⁵⁸ Faitel becomes only truly monstrous *because* of his operations, which place the responsibility for his fate on the pervasiveness of physiognomic pseudoscience and the impossible demands of assimilation in late nineteenth-century Germany. Faitel's bleak finale corresponds to *Frankenstein*, whose protagonists both die as deeply lonely figures, after a lifelong chase for change. This links the characters once more to Panizza's life, who called himself "a poet who lived in vain"⁵⁹ in one of his final poems.

Friedlaender's *Operated Goy* ends more optimistically and seems to take the mutability of the identity of its characters as an example of humankind's ability to change. Societal and scientific discourses undergo a transformation in this vision of an emerging post-racial world:

Since then, anti-Semitism has noticeably slackened. Certain orthopedists are feared and resisted by people who are still proud of the purity of their race. . . . One no longer bases everything on racial differences. Racial blood has stopped being considered a special kind of vital juice. Meanwhile, Professor Friedlaender gathers it in bottles and continues to transfer it undauntedly from one vessel into another.⁶⁰

In a world in which one's skin color can be changed like one's hair color with the help of science, categories such as race seem to lose their power, as physiognomy becomes mutable and mobile. At the forefront of this development is Professor Friedlaender, who is Kreuzwendedich's orthopedic surgeon, but also the author's namesake and seemingly a counterpart to Dr. Frankenstein. Salomo Friedlaender, in fact, is inscribed in the text multiple times, as the namesake of the biblical Solomon/Salomo (which is also the name of Faitel's father in Panizza's text) and its Yiddish derivate Shlaume (one of

Kreuzwendedich's sons). The Rehsok/Kosher reversal moreover recalls Friedlaender's pen name Mynona, which is "anonym(ous)" spelled backward in German and identifies him as the author of *The Operated Goy*. The narrative shows that Friedlaender felt tasked to call attention to the increasing antisemitism and physiognomic racism of the unstable Weimar Republic in the early 1920s, but it also points out that contemporary conflicts between assimilated Western Jews and *Ostjuden* as well as debates about national projects like Zionism were relying on similar notions of perceived differences. In 1936, Friedlaender addressed these issues directly:

Reason is neither German nor Jewish, yet both the German and the Jewish people would do well, especially these days, to adapt their German- or Jewishness to reason; not to beat the dead horse that is "German" and "Jewish," but to mount the noble horse of humanity instead of those wretched creatures. . . . "German" state, "Jewish" state—what kind of subaltern jargon is that?! It is the *nationalist* jargon . . . immediately, it creates *the Jew*, as the mob loves to do. . . . This Jewish character is an empiristic product of the mob. I was not born to defend Jews. But I am defending the sublime, beautiful, good, pious, intelligent HUMAN BEING as much in the German as in the Negro and the Jew.⁶¹

For Friedlaender, human equality was a matter of reason—the same principle that should be underlying the sciences. In this sense, he rejects any (physiognomic, racial, national) typology, be it that of "*the Jew*" and "*the Goy*" as they appear in *The Operated Jew* and *The Operated Goy*, or "*the monster*" that "*Frankenstein*" has come to signify. The positive ending of Friedlaender's text corresponds to his hopes that both the sciences and the arts might one day help make the world a place of equality—without the exclusions and hierarchies perpetuated by racial pseudoscience and nationalism.

Even though Friedlaender's and Panizza's narratives sound some very different notes, they criticize the same propagation of racialized pseudoscience and aesthetics. Yet the reception of the two literary grotesques has been overshadowed by the Holocaust and its devastating deployment of the antisemitic stereotypes that these works challenge. In 1975, Gershom Scholem indicated that the reception of the genre of the literary grotesque had fundamentally changed:

Among the things I owe to Benjamin is my acquaintance with the grotesque tales (a literary form that became impossible after Hitler and is virtually inaccessible today) of Mynona [Friedlaender], particularly the volume entitled *Rosa die schöne Schutzmansfrau*, an unsurpassed work in this genre that almost knocked me off my chair with laughter at the time; unfortunately, I can read it today only with utter indifference.⁶²

The genre of the literary grotesque allowed the imagination to run wild in a way that is now confined to a distinct historical moment. What used to prompt visceral laughter can only be met with indifference or horror after the Holocaust. Today, the comedy of these narratives belongs to a bygone era, as their reception has been forever altered by the devastating deployment of the racial stereotypes they critique.

Notes

- 1 This common confusion was widespread enough already in 1908 to be included in an introduction to “the world’s greatest stories”: “It is strange to note how well-nigh universally the term ‘Frankenstein’ is misused, even by intelligent people, as describing some hideous monster.” Rossiter Johnson, ed., *Authors Digest: The World’s Great Stories in Brief: Volume XV* (The Authors Press, 1908), 238.
- 2 Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3–25, here 3.
- 3 In the play, a poor flower girl passes as a duchess by changing her manner of speech.
- 4 In Friedlaender’s own words, the creator of literary grotesques “angers and shocks the almost unexterrimable philistine in us—who, out of forgetfulness, naively feels good in the middle of the caricature of genuine life—by exaggerating the caricature to the point of being grotesque, until it succeeds in driving him [the philistine] out of the merely imagined paradise of his customs.” Mynona, “Grotesk,” in *Der Querschnitt durch 1921*, ed. Alfred Flechtheim (Düsseldorf: Propyläen, 1921), 54. Translation mine.
- 5 Oskar Panizza, “The Operated Jew,” in *The Operated Jew: Two Tales of Anti-Semitism*, trans. and ed. Jack Zipes (New York: Routledge, 1991), 47–74, here 52. Emphasis mine. In German, see: Panizza, “Der operirte Jud” 1893. Repr. in *Der Korsettenfritz: Gesammelte Erzählungen*, ed. Bernd Mattheus (Munich: Matthes & Seitz, 1981), 265–92.
- 6 Panizza, “Operated Jew,” 52.
- 7 See: Richard T. Gray, *About Face: German Physiognomic Thought from Lavater to Auschwitz* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004).
- 8 Panizza, “Operated Jew,” 48. The translation of this passage was amended to include a missing sentence from the original. See: Panizza, “Der operirte Jud,” 265–92.
- 9 Between the nose and mouth comes a description of Faitel’s eyebrows, which involves a bizarre discussion of drowning.
- 10 “Wilhelm von Kaulbach,” *Die Pinakotheken: Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen*, <https://www.pinakothek.de/en/node/2754>. “Die Zerstörung Jerusalems durch Titus,” *Die Pinakotheken: Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen*, <https://www.sammlung.pinakothek.de/en/artist/wilhelm-von-kaulbach/die-zerstoerung-jerusalems-durch-titus>.
- 11 The text opens with a biting satire of Panizza’s contemporary artistic production. For the web of intertextual references in his text, see also: Hans Peter Althaus, *Mauscheln: Ein Wort als Waffe* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 154.
- 12 Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (London: Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor & Jones, 1818), 48.
- 13 Sander Gilman, *Creating Beauty to Cure the Soul: Race and Psychology in the Shaping of Aesthetic Surgery* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).
- 14 Panizza, “Operated Jew,” 54.
- 15 Ibid., 58.
- 16 The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, “Mortiz von Schwind,” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Moritz-von-Schwind>.
- 17 Panizza, “Operated Jew,” 59.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid., 60.

- 20 Ibid., 62.
- 21 On these concepts, see: Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
- 22 Althaus, *Mauscheln*, 145–47.
- 23 Ibid., 257–58.
- 24 See: Gundhild Winkler, “Jüdische Familiennamen,” *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Namensforschung e.V.*, <http://www.onomastikblog.de/artikel/namen-spiegel/juedische-familiennamen-1/>.
- 25 See: Panizza, “Operated Jew,” 60.
- 26 Elke Gerr, *Das große Vornamenbuch* (Hannover: Humboldt, 2008), 147.
- 27 See: Panizza, “Operated Jew,” 53.
- 28 Günther Hildebrandt, “Oskar Panizza als Bibliophile,” in *Die Bücherstube: Blätter für Freunde des Buches und der zeichnenden Künste: Erster Jahrgang* (Munich: Horst Stobbe Verlag, 1920), 92–98.
- 29 Panizza, “Operated Jew,” 67. For the discussion of whether the golem served as a Jewish model of bringing nonliving matter to life for Frankenstein’s story, see: Cathy S. Gelbin, “Was Frankenstein’s Monster Jewish?” in *Publications of the English Goethe Society* (2013) 82:1, 16–25. See also: Maya Barzilai, *Golem: Modern Wars and Their Monsters* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).
- 30 Hannes Ruch, introduction to *Visionen der Dämmerung*, by Oskar Panizza, ed. Hannes Heinz Ewers (Munich: Georg Müller, 1914), IX. Translation mine.
- 31 Panizza, “Operated Jew,” 49.
- 32 Ibid., 50.
- 33 Ibid., 56.
- 34 See: Panizza, “Operated Jew,” 56 and 61 and Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 123, 127–28.
- 35 Joela Jacobs, “...und die ganze pfälzisch-jüdische Sündfluth kam dann heraus”: Monstrosity and Multilingualism in Oskar Panizza’s *Der operirte Jud*” in *Zeitschrift für interkulturelle Germanistik* 3 (2012): 61–74. See also: Jacobs, “Assimilating Aliens: Imagining National Identity in Oskar Panizza’s *Operated Jew* and Salomo Friedlaender’s *Operated Goy*,” in *Alien Imaginations: Science Fiction and Tales of Transnationalism*, ed. Ulrike Küchler, Silja Mähl, and Graeme Stout (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 57–71; Joela Zeller, “The Function of Monsters: Loci of Border Crossing and the In-Between,” in *Monstrosity in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and Philosophy*, ed. Gerhard Unterthurner and Erik M. Vogt (Wien: Turia + Kant, 2012), 71–90.
- 36 See: Gilman, *The Jew’s Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991); *The Case of Sigmund Freud: Medicine and Identity at the Fin de Siècle* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); *Freud, Race, and Gender*; Eric Santner, *My Own Private Germany: Daniel Paul Schreber’s Secret History of Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Jay Geller, *The Other Jewish Question: Identifying the Jew and Making Sense of Modernity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011). See also Nike Thurn’s recent contribution regarding the texts in: “*Falsche Juden*”: *Performative Identitäten in der deutschsprachigen Literatur von Lessing bis Walser* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015).
- 37 Michael Bauer, *Oskar Panizza: Ein literarisches Porträt* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1984).
- 38 Initially called *Seitenstück* (side-piece), Friedlaender changed the subtitle to *Gegenstück* in the manuscript later on. See: Salomo Friedlaender/Mynona, “Der operierte Goj: Ein Gegenstück zu Panizzas operiertem Jud” 1922. Repr. in *Grotesken: Teil I*, ed. Hartmut Geerken and Detlef Thiel (Herrsching: Whaitawhile, 2008), 598–606.
- 39 Friedlaender, “The Operated Goy,” in: Zipes, *Operated Jew*, 75–86, here 79.

- 40 Ibid., 75–76.
- 41 Ibid., 76.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid., 78.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen: Große Ausgabe: Band 1* (Berlin: Realschulbuchhandlung, 1812), 238.
- 46 Friedlaender, “Operated Goy,” 82.
- 47 Ibid., 82–83. The above insertions emphasize the amount of Yiddish used in the German original, though Friedlaender betrays his own assimilatory status when using the singular *bocher* for a plural context.
- 48 Ibid., 83–84.
- 49 Albert Heintze, *Die deutschen Familien-Namen: geschichtlich, geographisch, sprachlich* (Halle an der Saale: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1882), 51.
- 50 There are two instances of the changed name (§ 3 and 9 of the manuscript) that are “corrected” in the print version. It is unclear whether this transformation of the name was at any point intended or rather “just” a Freudian slip.
- 51 Elke Gerr, *Das große Vornamenbuch* (Hannover: Humboldt, 2008), 276.
- 52 Friedlaender, “Operated Goy,” 76–77. Friedrich der Weise (1463–1525) was the king of Saxony and received his nickname, the Wise, because of political decisions that avoided war and conflict. See: Friedrich Hermann Schubert, “Friedrich III. der Weise” in *Neue Deutsche Biographie: Band 5* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1961), 568–72. Yet this choice invokes Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s play *Nathan, der Weise* (1779), which advocates for religious tolerance through the figure of the wise Jew Nathan, who was modeled after Moses Mendelsohn. With this chain of associations (Solomon=Friedrich=Nathan=Moses), Kreuzwendedich’s endeavor is implicitly rendered unsuccessful.
- 53 Friedlaender, “Operated Goy,” 77. The original German *Stamm* means both tribe and trunk. The latter part reinforces the plant metaphor of the “offshoot,” which is grafted onto a tree trunk, meaning that it has foreign origins and results in a hybrid plant.
- 54 Friedlaender, “Operated Goy,” 77. Kreuzwendedich also gave his pet ravens Germanic names and has a servant named Odin.
- 55 Ibid., 85.
- 56 Ibid., 84.
- 57 Panizza, “Operated Jew,” 74.
- 58 Ibid., 73.
- 59 The manuscript from 1904 is quoted in Bauer, *Oskar Panizza*, 220.
- 60 Friedlaender, “Operated Goy,” 85–86. This scene also evokes Dr. Faustus. In Goethe’s *Faust*, Mephistopheles famously says, “blood is a very special juice,” which labels the kind of race-based distinctions the story alludes to as a satanic inheritance. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethes Werke*, vol. 3 of 14 (Hamburg: Wegner, 1948ff), 57.
- 61 Letter to Fritz Lemke, February 29, 1936; reprinted in: Salomo Friedlaender, *Briefe aus dem Exil, 1933–1946*, ed. Hartmut Geerken (Main: v. Hase & Koehler Verlag, 1982), 60–62. Translation mine.
- 62 Gershom Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship* (New York: The New York Review of Books, 2003), 58.

From Sexual Enlightenment to Racial Antisemitism: Gender, Sex, and Jewishness in Weimar Cinema's Monsters

Cathy S. Gelbin

The monstrous Jew of popular imagination found perhaps his most salient expression in Weimar cinema's love of the uncanny. These films' numerous allusions to the antisemitic imagination no doubt helped prepare the template for the filmic representation of Jews under National Socialism, and we therefore view their racialized uncanny with particular unease. Nonetheless, these images continue to exert a peculiar fascination, which this chapter will explore by interrogating their intersecting meanings of gender, race, and sexuality. Previous scholarship has frequently examined these aspects as separate strands of investigation, focusing either on these films' representations of masculinity and femininity, or on their portrayals of homosexuality or the Jews.¹ With its claims of gender and sexual corruption, the antisemitic discourse on the Jew in particular makes a compelling case for collapsing these early twentieth-century discourses on difference into that figure.

At the same time, conflating these films' constructions of gender and sexual decadence with the image of the Jew risks producing a limited reading of them in that it focuses solely on their anti-Jewish implications. Such a reading, while undoubtedly relevant, cannot account for the lasting fascination of these films, which might otherwise serve merely as historical documents for tracing the anti-Jewish imagination. What this piece will argue, in contrast, is that these films derive their lasting fascination from the often ironic interplay of their separate and yet related gendered, sexualized, and racialized portrayals. In other words, I want to think through the implications of both overlapping intersectional and linked meanings of gender, sexuality, and race, which are sometimes mapped simultaneously onto the same signifier but more often stand in for each other implicitly.

What will interest me in particular in this piece is the interaction in Weimar films of the older, anti-Jewish iconographies of horror with the modern discourses of Jewish, women's, and homosexual emancipation, and its potential to produce more than the sum of its parts. It is in these juxtapositions, I argue, as modernity's monsters claim center stage—if only for a moment—in all their vividness and monstrous glory, that

the discourse of prejudice arising from the essentialized categories of gender, sex, and race is revealed and staged, and where it comes apart, if only momentarily. What I want to explore in this piece, then, is how spectatorial pleasure can arise from the emerging gaps where the incoherence of these categories, presumed to be absolute in the biologized discourses of the time, is playfully made visible and ridiculed.

Weimar Film and the Monster

The body of films examined here is often subsumed under the heading of German cinematic “Expressionism.” Cinematic “Expressionism,” Thomas Elsaesser has argued, was a marketing label introduced by Germany’s film company, UFA, which had been founded during the First World War for the propagandistic purpose of supporting the German war effort.² The catastrophic end of that war would become German film’s commercial watershed. The styles and themes of a series of films that followed, with their distorted camera angles and highly emotive chiaroscuro lighting effects, spoke to the irrevocable sense of damage that the war had wreaked on both human bodies and minds, and on the fabric of German society in general. The films’ highly artistic sets, stylized acting, and wordless moving images expressed the modern subject’s alienation and exhilaration in the face of the rapid technological progress that blurred the distinction between humans and machines, and also held the utopian promise of social justice and change. These dichotomies were also captured in the films’ themes, which focused on the mythical and the bizarre, on madness and the monster, vampire or artificial anthropoid, through which they negotiated the ambivalent discourses on racialized, gendered, and sexualized difference during the Weimar era.

In doing so, these films drew on a long history of imagining the monster. Since the late eighteenth century, then, beginning with English and German Romanticism’s undead Jews, animated statues, and artificial creations, monsters have signified modernity’s disturbances to a world order previously conceived of as God-given and natural. In his seminal book *Outsiders*, Hans Mayer reads literary monster figures as a metaphor for “existential outsiders.”³ He employs this term for the Enlightenment’s gendered, racialized, and sexual others, whose configuration as monsters inadvertently acknowledged the failing of Enlightenment humanism. Whereas Mayer’s monster remains fixed in its essential outsider position, Julia Kristeva has turned her attention to the uncanny, in which she sees the fluid reimagination of social positions of power.⁴ In following Freud’s work on the uncanny, Kristeva contends that horror derives from the abject in that it transgresses the boundaries of in- and outside positions with their connoted meanings of subject and object status. Given that antisemitic lore imagined the Jew as a racially inferior yet at the same time all-too powerful figure intent on dominating the world, these ambivalent meanings of the modern uncanny chime well with Weimar representations of the artificial anthropoid with its sometimes explicit and more often implicit Jewish features. Drawing on Mayer’s and Kristeva’s readings of the monster and of horror, I will explore the privileged position of Jewish signifiers in their interaction with gender and sexual connotations in Weimar film’s uncanny.

Arguing for “the Family” as the “single unifying master figure of horror film,” Robin Wood has proposed the following “simple and obvious basic formula” for this genre: “normality,” by which he means dominant social norms, “is threatened by the Monster.”⁵ Although acknowledging the racialized dimension of a number of horror films, Wood has argued that normality primarily concerns the reinstatement of patriarchal heterosexuality.⁶ This, however, can certainly not be argued for Weimar cinema, including films such as Friedrich Murnau’s *Nosferatu* (1922) and Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927), which Wood also examines, where the racial metaphor is similarly pertinent to the sense of family. And indeed, these racial and heterosexual meanings overlap in the very history of the term race, which in its early modern origins referred to “lineage” predominantly in the sense of “origin, breed, or stock.”⁷ Race in its nineteenth-century redesignation, then, conveys the now biologized understanding of ethnicity. Wood’s observations on the crucial relationship in horror film between normality and the monster rests on Freud’s underlying thesis “that in a society built on monogamy and family there will be an enormous surplus of repressed sexual energy, and that what is repressed must always strive to return.”⁸

The intersecting discourses of racialized, gendered, and sexual difference in the image of the racialized other do not, however, mean that their images interact in seamless ways. These separate and yet twinned discourses also rub against, amplify and disturb each other. In the case of Weimar cinema, these disturbances do not merely anticipate the horrors of National Socialism as Siegfried Kracauer contended, although they undoubtedly do that as well.⁹ Rather, they convey the profound disturbance and ambivalence of German culture and society during that brief interlude between the two world wars when Jews felt themselves to be part of German culture as they never had before, and the women’s and homosexual rights movements were making important inroads. But there were also the specters of the lost world war and the incomplete November revolution of 1918, which failed to sweep the old elites away. The monsters of Weimar film convey the struggling impulses for emancipation and the budding agency of its liminal subjects that were already overshadowed by the rise of National Socialism.

Early German Film, Sexology, and the Jews

The importance of film in conveying these repressed and covert meanings arose in no small degree from its simultaneous emergence with the discourse of sexology, in which Jews—as indeed they did in film—played an exceptional role both as agents and image.¹⁰ There were, for example, the writings of the Jewish physician Wilhelm Fließ, who believed that the nose and the sexual organs were intricately linked in their functions. As Sigmund Freud’s early mentor, however, Fließ also profoundly influenced his thinking on bisexuality, which Freud established as the foundation of human sexual behavior in his “Three Essays on Sexuality” (1905).¹¹ In Berlin, the Jewish socialist physician Magnus Hirschfeld had already founded in 1897 the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee to fight for homosexual rights and against the discriminatory Paragraph 175, which criminalized male homosexuality.

In Vienna, the Jewish-born philosopher Otto Weininger argued in his *Sex and Character* (1903) that the Jews epitomized the effeminate nature of all non-European races.¹² Both Weininger and Freud exerted an extraordinary influence on their contemporaries and beyond. Whereas Weininger's writings would inform an abundance of negative conceptions of Jewishness and ultimately found their way into Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (1925), Freud's work, with its stress on the universality of human sexual development and arguments against the perception of homosexuality as a perversion, became the beacon of more liberal conceptions of human sexuality, which in turn were often conflated with the Jews. The extraordinary contribution of Jews to the study of sexuality suggests that these writers may have felt a special affinity with those perceived as sexual outsiders, perhaps not least due to the Jew's own sexual overdetermination in antisemitic discourse.

At the same time, Freud's work on the unconscious put a powerful weapon into the hands of filmmakers faced with the prohibitions of censorship. Their belief in film's ability to capture physical reality in a "scientific" manner, as Germaine Dulac claimed, and with "truth, subtlety, logic," indeed, "an eye wide open on life, an eye more open than our own and which sees things we cannot see," attests to the powerful tool that early filmmakers saw in film both to capture Freud's unconscious and to enlighten and educate.¹³ But the catastrophe of the First World War and the German revolution of 1918, which ended Germany's constitutional monarchy and ultimately saw the creation of its first parliamentary democracy, saw deep-seated changes in previously prudish attitudes toward sexuality. The war with its military brothels and battlefield atrocities had led to a shocking dehumanization and objectification of bodies and sexuality, and a flood of sexually explicit and often pornographic films subsequently arrived in German cinemas between 1918, when censorship was briefly suspended, and its reinstatement in 1920.¹⁴ These huge and fraught transformations in German society found their visual expression in Weimar cinema's covert evocations of sexual licentiousness and its monsters in particular.

Sexual Enlightenment: *Different from the Others* and *Girls in Uniform*

Implicit moments of race, sex, and the monstrous arise in many of the landmark films of the era, including its queer classics *Anders als die Anderen* (*Different from the Others*, 1919) and *Mädchen in Uniform* (*Girls in Uniform*, 1931). The Viennese Jewish director Richard Oswald's *Different from the Others* can be considered a watershed moment in the post-First World War debates around sexuality and race in German cinema. Beginning his work in early 1919, when the fires of the failed Spartacist revolution were barely extinguished, Oswald co-scripted the film with Magnus Hirschfeld, who also starred in the role of the sexologist. Conveying the deadly consequences of §175, the film presented a cosmopolitan vision of homosexuality as a fundamental human right and predicament. The film's critics in turn remarked on its perceived Jewish quality. The right-wing *Deutsche Zeitung* identified this in the main protagonist's young lover, Kurt Sivers (Fritz Schulz / Karl Giese), whom it considered "a true specimen of the Jewish

race," as well as in the antigay blackmailer Bollek, "a Jewish pimp," and the makers of the film themselves. The paper also reported that the screening then descended into mayhem as audience members expressed violent disagreement, shouting "Are we Germans to be infected by the Jews?" But recovering from their initial shock, a number of "Jew boys," the report continued, revealing the paper's own racial bias, soon rose to convince at least part of the audience of their enthusiasm for sexual enlightenment and science.¹⁵ In contrast, "The sole importance of this affair lies merely in its mind-boggling attempt to blame even homosexuality on the Jews," the *Film-Kurier*'s commentator concluded in his own report on that night, suspecting that "this rowdy clamor of antisemites intends only to propagate in yet another way the re-introduction of film censorship."¹⁶ And so it was. As a result of these heated debates and a deluge of further sexual education films, a genre that Oswald himself had pioneered with his series *Es werde Licht!* (Let There Be Light, 1916/17),¹⁷ censorship was reintroduced in 1920 and *Different from the Others* was subsequently banned.

Weimar cinema's heavy reliance on the gendered, sexualized, and racialized uncanny must be read in response to these scandals. The monster fulfilled both the public demand for titillation and the sublimated sexual portrayals demanded by the renewal of censorship. Such images are doubtlessly present in earlier German films, such as Paul Wegener's *Student von Prag* (*The Student of Prague*, 1913) and indeed in Oswald's *Different from the Others*, where Conrad Veidt sported an early version of the raccoon-eyed look that would make him famous in the *Cabinet of Dr Caligari*. But they now receive further salience. Throughout his career, Richard Dyer has argued, Veidt's androgynous figure and "cadaverous appearances" have embodied "the duality of the vampire . . . —attractive yet repulsive, sinister yet tragic."¹⁸ These allusions to the vampire, with their sexually transgressive as well as racial implications, then, reflect the implicitly racialized quality even in such performances that do not explicitly evoke race, from Veidt's gay violinist Körner in *Different from the Others* through to Dorothea Wieck's display of lesbian desire as von Bernburg, which comes to the fore in the staircase scene in Leontine Sagan's *Girls in Uniform*. With its passionate rejection, in cinematically refined form, of the discourse on homosexuality as a pathology, *Girls* represented both the climax and abrupt finale of sexual enlightenment film, as the genre fell into final disfavor in 1933.

Lighting plays a key role in the film's sublimated portrayals of homoerotic desire tinged with race. As Richard McCormick has argued, Sagan's film's dualistic lighting scheme conveys the juxtaposition of evil and innocence in contrasting the headmistress and teachers with Manuela, while also creating ambiguity through the effect of shadows.¹⁹ However, the more muted lighting of the dark-haired, dark-eyed von Bernburg contrasting with the brightly lit, blonde Manuela throughout the film also suggests intersecting racial and gender types. The latter emerge from the darker tones that early cinema often gave the male as the sexually active part, which here support von Bernburg's associations with the sexually active role indeed, as McCormick suggests, that of the "androgynous 'butch'."²⁰ As von Bernburg emerges from the shadows to approach the blonde Manuela (played by Hertha Thiele) with a lustful gaze and bold tone of voice, half-profile shots and the key light falling on the right side of her face accentuate the features of her nose (see Figures 6.1, 6.2).



Figure 6.1 *Nosferatu* directed by Friedrich Murnau © Universum Film 2014.



Figure 6.2 *Mädchen in Uniform* directed by Leontine Sagan © Kinowelt Home Entertainment 2008.

While lending von Bernburg's skin a luminous quality conveying the beauty of her budding erotic desire, the key light also emphasizes the contrasting darkness of her hair, heavy-lined eyes and lips, which are positioned level with the girl's throat until von Bernburg moves up the stairs. This portrayal brings together the gendered and racialized connotations that are neatly encapsulated in the linguistic split between the vamp and the vampire.

Race and Sexual Ambiguity: Fritz Lang's *M*

Weimar films frequently take the form of a racialized type of gender drama evincing the crisis of masculinity found in Weimar culture more generally. Paul Wegener's film *The Golem, How He Came into the World* (1920) provided a model for this theme

which would circulate through a series of Weimar and Hollywood monster films of the era, from Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) through to Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931) and Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack's *King Kong* (1933).²¹ Lang's twinning of racial, albeit implicit in *Metropolis*, with social harmony recalls the National Socialist concept of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Lang's cyborg, preaching to the workers, evokes Hitler's claim in *Mein Kampf* that the Jew "kowtowed to the worker, hypocritically pretended to feel pity for him and his lot . . . to gain the confidence of the working class" until his "Marxist troops stormed . . . the social order."²² By removing the "Jew of the Blood," a "vampire" seeking to "exterminate . . . the national intelligence" to fit "the peoples . . . for their fate as slaves."²³ National Socialism would strive to restore racial purity and once again create "a State which would not be a piece of mechanism alien to our people, constituted for economic purposes and interests, but an organism created from the soul of the people themselves."²⁴

Lang's filmic evocations of race and the German people throughout the 1920s, while National Socialism was on the rise, have consistently troubled critics. Lang, born to a Catholic father and a Jewish convert to Catholicism, was raised Catholic, and his attitudes toward racialized thought appear to have been ambivalent at best. *M* (1931) in particular is shot through with an ambivalent gauging of National Socialist ideology and antisemitic stereotype, which paradoxically intersect in the film's lead protagonist Beckert.

The child murderer, whose symbolic castration—a mainstay in antisemitic rhetoric against Jewish circumcision—and emasculation are suggested when his failed attempts to drive in a nail break off the nail's head, is a walking encyclopedia of antisemitic stereotypes. Beckert's corrupt sexuality and invasive physicality, complemented by his dark physiognomy and the emphasis of his nose through profile shots and chiaroscuro lighting, and his endless loitering in streets as he pursues his innocent blond children closely reflect Hitler's claim in *Mein Kampf* regarding the Jew's "systematic efforts to ruin girls and women": "The black-haired Jewish youth lies in wait for hours on end, satanically glaring at and spying on the unsuspecting girl whom he plans to seduce."²⁵ Beckert's disjointed whistling of the Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg's tune "In the Hall of the Mountain King," which accompanies his prowls, then, suggests the notion of the Jew's flawed cultural performance, which the German composer Richard Wagner's essay "Jews in Music" had made an antisemitic mainstay. At the same time, the Nordic connotations of this tune also point to the rising menace of National Socialism. Grieg's tune formed part of his *Peer Gynt* suite (1875), which he had written for Henrik Ibsen's play of the same title (1867). But Lang does not simply parody the influential Weimar reception of Ibsen's play, which saw in Peer Gynt the Nordic hero and in his nemesis, the Mountain King and his trolls, the Jewish type.²⁶ Rather, Grieg's tune itself begins to subtly undermine such meanings through its own exaggerated pathos. And indeed, Grieg himself had sought to satirize Norwegian nationalism through the mythological theme and musical bombast of his piece:

For the Hall of the Mountain King I have written something that so reeks of cowpats, ultra-Norwegianism, and "to-thyself-be-enough-ness" that literally I can't bear to hear it, though I hope that the irony will make itself felt.²⁷

A similar ambivalence is found in Beckert's nemesis, the petty criminal Schränker, played by the hyper-blond and blue-eyed Gustav Gründgens evoking the Aryan type. In one shot, we see Schränkner's larger-than-life shadow cast against a wall, suggesting his own monstrous and tyrannical characteristics. Whereas Siegfried Kracauer sees such figures in Weimar cinema generally as a foreshadowing of the National Socialist authoritarian regime, Tom Gunning has cautioned against a simplistic reading of *M* as an expression of National Socialist antisemitism.²⁸ And indeed, *M* must be considered largely ambivalent in its evocation of the Nazi and the Jew. For one thing, the film caricatures National Socialism in the sequence where Schränkner calls for Beckert's annihilation in a staccato voice and with dramatic fist-waving reminiscent of Hitler's frenetic speeches and his statements on the Jews: "An outsider is ruining our business and our reputation . . . But we must draw a firm line between ourselves and this man . . . We conduct our business to survive but this monster has no right to survive! He must be killed, eliminated, exterminated!"

Shown through an over-the-shoulder shot, with the camera positioned at medium-long distance and at a three-quarter front angle, casting shadows over part of Schränkner's face, the film suggests this ideology as the stuff of shady thugs. National Socialism is further subtly caricatured by the casting of Gustav Gründgens in this role, which the actor—known for his gay relationship with Klaus Mann and his lavender marriage with Erika Mann (Thomas Mann's son and daughter)—played with his usual flamboyance and flashes of camp. And yet, the film upholds the antisemitic binary between the Aryan's rationalism, conveyed through Schränkner's ideological rationale for destroying Beckert on the one hand, and the Jew's madness and his amphigenic gender on the other. Reflecting the discourse on the assimilated Jew, the essentialized difference of the Jew is not so much revealed in his external appearance, but rather lies obscured in his biological makeup. Anton Kaes has already pointed to "the nexus of sexual deviance and criminality" in Beckert with its "anti-Semitic [sic] undertones."²⁹ But this underlying discourse emerges more fully when we consider the ways in which these qualities are suggested as innate. For example, Beckert's reflection in the mirror does not reveal the signs of criminality.³⁰ Instead, the innate nature of Beckert's mental, sexual, and gender disturbance is represented metaphorically when we see him, shot from the inside, peering through a shop window (see Figure 6.3).



Figure 6.3 *M – Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder* by Fritz Lang © BMG Video 2002.

The reflection of its display casts a square pattern of elongated objects around his head and arcs of bullet shapes around his lower body, both with respective male and female connotations. As knives and spoons, that is, objects related to food intake, these items point to the origin of Beckert's disturbance in the body. Beckert's corruption is, therefore, portrayed as congenital and his plea for understanding during the court scene renders him a monster to be pitied, at least temporarily until his victims' mothers raise their voices at the end. The film's ambivalent evocation of "Jewish" and "Aryan" menace provides no moral compass to navigate through a modernity perceived as a Jewish ill on the one hand, and National Socialism's rising menace on the other.

Racializing Queerness: Friedrich Murnau's *Nosferatu* and *Tabu* versus Carl Theodor Dreyer's *Vampyr*

Although Friedrich Murnau's vampire film *Nosferatu* makes no explicit reference to Jewishness, its implicit evocation of the mythology and visual iconography of antisemitism ranks among the most problematic among the films of this period.³¹ This is the case in Murnau's frequent focus on the vampire's profile, which highlights this figure's large hooked nose as the unmistakable sign of the racialized Jewish body.³² The Jewish connotations of the monster had, of course, already been compounded into Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (1897), which served as the thinly disguised blueprint for Murnau's film.³³

At the same time Murnau, who himself was gay, used the vampire as a vehicle to reference the pursuit of queer desire. I use the term "queer" here in the sense deployed by Alex Doty, who identifies with this term an affirmation of the "erotically 'marginal' ... to express a less censored range of queer desire and pleasure than is possible in daily life," and which thereby destabilizes received gender and sexual norms.³⁴ Following Robin Wood's contention that *Nosferatu* implicitly staged through its monster "repressed homosexuality"³⁵ Richard Dyer has concluded more forcefully that the film is "eminently readable as gay,"³⁶ given that the contrasting figures of the vampire, Count Orlok (Max Schreck), and his object, Hutter (Gustav von Wangenheim), reflect the gendered roles in Germany's 1920s gay subculture. Janet Bergstrom, in turn, has argued for a more fluid representation of masculinity and desire in Murnau's films, one that "relax[es] rigid demarcations of gender identification and sexual orientation."³⁷ "For once in the Weimar cinema," Bergstrom concludes with regard to Hutter as well as Count Orlok at different stages of the film, the "loss of power" affecting "the masochistic male is seen sympathetically, not as an object of pity."³⁸ Bergstrom here sees a narrative strategy at work where "the emphasis is displaced from class and from sexual identity . . . to an erotics of looking."³⁹ Alice Kuzniar, then, has argued for the queer connotations of German silent cinema as a whole, given the camp implications of its exaggerated gestures and facial expressions, which hint at sexual transgression in both allegorical and ironic ways.⁴⁰

These constellations are read as far more complex once the monster's racialized implications are inserted, for the ambivalence of Murnau's monster emerges in no

small degree from its intersecting and conflicting meanings of sexual pleasure and anti-Jewish displeasure. Indeed, this film seems to highlight the allegorical function of intersecting Jewish and queer signifiers, to ambivalently signpost the other in modernity. These intersecting meanings are neatly contained within the phallic implications of the bleeding thumb, which arouses Count Orlok's vampiric desire and leads to his pursuit of Hutter. The bleeding thumb's suggestion of gay fellatio and ejaculation on the one hand, and of the Jewish ritual of circumcision on the other, are by no means mutually exclusive, but ultimately feed into the anti-Jewish imagination, which linked circumcision to the presumed castrated and effeminate nature of the Jew, an image with its own homosexual implications. This image found its most salient clue in the traditional form of Jewish circumcision, the *metsitsah ba-peh* (sucking by mouth), in which the circumciser briefly takes the baby's member into his mouth and sucks blood from it. The resulting conflation of sexuality and horror, of pleasure and displeasure in the image of the Jew has precisely come to mark the instability of antisemitic discourse, and the discourse of otherness more generally.

As a Jewish signifier, Count Orlok's black garments, which follow Stoker in evoking the Jewish caftan and the tall folding hat derived from the head covering of Hebrew high priests in antiquity, and worn by modern Jewish cantors, convey the Christian stereotype of Judaism as a dead, rule-bound religion. As the monster's headdress, this would suggest its meaning here is a prohibition or warning sign of both racial and sexual transgression, whose disgusting aspects are made manifest in Orlok's repulsive physicality, particularly his enormous nose, dark, piercing eyes, and the gnarled hands with which he tries to grip Hutter. At the same time, the camp aspects given in the film to these garments emerge in their intersection with homoerotic desire. These are particularly evident when Orlok, whose body language Dyer has described as "a grotesque exaggeration of the effeminated male look,"⁴¹ glides toward Hutter, showing his backside to the spectator while his coat briefly resembles a dress. Two shots later, the lighting of Orlok's upper body suggests the shape of small breasts under his coat as his kohl-lined eyes gaze intently into Hutter's (see Figure 6.1).

The gender subversion of Orlok's racially connoted garments renders this a moment of supreme drag, whereby the vampire is turned into a spectacle not merely signposting, but also mocking the normative prescriptions of gender and sexuality. In addition to and intersecting with gender drag, the function of Orlok's costume can be described as "ethnic drag," a term coined by Katrin Sieg to describe cultural masquerade in the post-1945 West German context.⁴² In contrast to Homi Bhabha's "colonial mimicry," which describes the parodic implications of the colonial subject's performance of colonial stereotypes of itself, Sieg's "ethnic drag" refers to the displacement that occurs in "the impersonation of ethnic others by a subject that stages and conceals its dominance."⁴³ Such concealed discursive power structures in signifying the Jew are precisely at work in *Nosferatu*, whose intersecting gender and ethnic drag undermines its suggestions of essentialized type.

While Orlok's costume can, at best, be described as a masquerade of Jewish dress, its feminized aspects more clearly produce the ironic effects that Susan Sontag has associated with gender drag.⁴⁴ The abject status of the Jew here implicitly functions to stage the abject status of queer desire, but these intersecting meanings now also posit

the Jew as the locus and spectacle of forbidden desire, as well as parodying his sinister image. At the same time, Orlok's dress signifies not merely a repressed homosexuality, but rather the more complex interaction between the socially inflicted prohibition of homosexuality on the one hand, which it performs and comically undermines through gender and ethnic drag, and the queer subject's self-restriction to the confines of the closet on the other. That gender and sexual subversion are aligned with the Jew of course reiterates the notion of the Jew's essential gender and sexual corruption, as well as concerns about his ability to pass. A comparison with Murnau's 1931 film *Tabu: A Story of the South Seas* makes this perfectly clear.

Whereas *Nosferatu* had mobilized the themes and aesthetics of German cinematic "Expressionism," *Tabu* mixed residues of this style with brightly lit outdoor scenes shot by the pioneering American documentary and ethnographic filmmaker Robert J. Flaherty in Bora Bora, in the reportage style of the New Sobriety. "Only native-born South Sea islanders appear in this picture with a few half-castes and Chinese," the film's opening credits proudly boast, emphasizing its claimed authenticity. In this film too, a queer sensitivity emerges in the phallic overdetermination of its young South Sea men, who offer themselves up as perfect objects of the male gaze, their spears raised as signs of their strapping masculinity while scanty loincloths barely conceal their cocked hips, protruding genitals, and taut buttocks. In this context, the film's title, *Tabu*, hints at the hidden queer meanings of these images that are buried in a story of a forbidden heterosexual romance. And indeed, these connotations passed the censors' eyes, whereas the scenes of female nudity did not (see Figure 6.4).

Tabu's images of brimming masculinity, its spectacle of the glistening, muscular bodies of South Pacific youth, convey a joyful homoeroticism that is yet again displaced onto a racial other, though here contrasting starkly with *Nosferatu*'s forbidding implications of the Jew. This, however, does not signify that *Tabu* is free from racial iconography; quite the contrary, it reveals the differing fixation of Europe's



Figure 6.4 *Tabu* by Friedrich Murnau © Universum Film 2002.

racialized others. In *Tabu*, this occurs through the colonial subject's alignment with nature and sexuality, an image rife with associations of the noble savage who has remained untrammeled by (Western) civilization. The colonial subject's exoticism in the film stems from its titillating unattainability to the Western subject, played out in beautiful natural settings, as it fluctuates between the thwarted longings for difference and sameness that comprise modern Western culture's taboos against race mixing and homosexual desire, respectively. These normative prescriptions did not prevent Murnau from engaging in such liaisons, although his dominant position was kept firmly in place until his life unraveled. One week before the premiere of *Tabu*, Murnau died in a road accident caused by his young Filipino housekeeper whom, Lotte Eisner suggests almost simultaneously with Murnau's "homosexual tendencies," Murnau had employed not least for his "handsome" looks. A previous housekeeper, a Malay man, was apparently also "very handsome."⁴⁵ In his private life too, then, Murnau seems to have followed the intersecting constellations of economic, racial, and erotic power that mark the colonial logic.

In contrast, the Jew, who in modernity has positioned himself at the heart of European culture and thereby threatens to tear its racial hierarchies apart, is seen as an internal rot connoting the decaying social and cultural fabric of old Europe. The disturbance perceived in the presence of the Jew emerges in Weimar film's staging of this figure as an outsider of truly monstrous proportions, whose appearance both signposts the putrid old order and heralds a world beyond its confines. The ambivalent gauging of this revolution can be seen in the gender and sexual difference that these films pin to their proto-Jewish figures and which signpost the parallel causes of Jewish, women's, and homosexual emancipation. Of course, by staging the Jew as a permissive site of gender and sexual fluidity, these films once again fixate the Jew in his otherness. And yet, their production of irony and camp, for example in Murnau's portrayal of Orlok, simultaneously undermines and parodies the horrible image of the Jew. And indeed, Orlok's signification of the "erotics of looking," which Bergstrom has detected in Murnau's male figures more generally, align the Jew with Freud's scopophilic drive and thus with the universal pleasure of looking that reflects on the film's spectators themselves. In that sense, Orlok's queer and Jewish properties speak to a universal predicament, as well addressing the queer spectator in particular as part of that audience.

Made as a French-German coproduction, the Danish director Carl Theodor Dreyer's film *Vampyr* (Vampire, 1932) most clearly reprised these images to warn of the rising danger of National Socialism. In this film, which has received little critical attention, a drifter named Allan Grey discovers during his ramblings a village where the nightly visitations of a vampire are slowly corrupting a diseased young girl. It emerges that this vampire is an elderly woman whose aristocratic demeanor and heavy gold chain reveal her as a member of the upper class. The vampire's minions, among them a doctor who seeks to kill the young girl in his care and a limping hunter who kills another man, seem to reflect the warped mentality of German society that both had precipitated the disaster of the First World War and was rearing its ugly head again. The vampire and her associates here evoke the unholy alliance of the reactionary *Junkers*—the landed German aristocracy—with deadly science and the wartime wounds that Prussian

militarism had inflicted on the body of the German people; an alliance that was frequently seen at the root of National Socialism.

While the film highlights the vampire's corruption through its lesbian connotations, which are signified through the old woman's bloodlust for the young girl, it reverses the traditional racial connotations of the monster as the racial other. Instead, the vampire here implicitly reflects the destructive nature of a self-constructed racial Aryan elite, whose nemesis—Allan Grey—in turn bears implicit Jewish and queer connotations. Played by the French-born actor Julian West, who was of Russian-Jewish and Brazilian extraction, Allan Grey's camp portrayal, paired with his dark features and somnambulic portrayal, evoke the image of the Jew and his alternative masculinity,⁴⁶ which is connoted positively here (see Figure 6.5).

The queer connotations of this type are once again suggested in Allan Grey's English name, which seems to recall Oscar Wilde and his hero Dorian Gray. But this type is now imagined as productive when at the end of the film Grey finds the vampire's grave in the village churchyard and drives a stake through her heart. In detecting the root of danger and staving it off for good, then, Grey is the sole agent to effectively counter the destructive forces of a society that has outlived itself.

Even in reversing the monstrous connotations of the non-Jew and the Jew, Dreyer's film of course upholds the notion of their essential difference, which had been driving the logic of early German film between 1914 and 1932. In 1933, this playful horror effectively ended with the advent of Nazi film. With Expressionism deemed a degenerate art arising from the Jews' claimed corruption of German culture, its styles and many of its proponents were banned and fled into exile, although some—including Paul Wegener—continued to enjoy thriving careers in Germany.

Today, both Richard Oswald's *Different from the Others* and Leontine Sagan's *Girls in Uniform* are rightfully recognized as having pioneered queer cinema, but the broken careers and destroyed lives of many involved in the making of these films stand as chilling testaments to the Jewish pioneers of early queer film. Leontine Sagan, the



Figure 6.5 *Vampyr* by Carl Theodor Dreyer © Eureka Entertainment 2002.

Jewish director of *Girls in Uniform*, survived in British and South African exile, where she continued her directing career but failed to achieve the critical acclaim of her early film. Christa Winsloe, her non-Jewish screenwriter on whose play the film was based, fled to France, where she and her female lover were killed by a local gang under obscure circumstances.⁴⁷ Magnus Hirschfeld died in French exile in 1935. Having emigrated to France in 1933, Richard Oswald went on to the United States, where he continued his film career in relative obscurity until he died while visiting West Germany in 1963. Together with his fellow émigré director Fritz Lang, Oswald had received postwar West Germany's highest decoration, the *Bundesverdienstkreuz*, in 1957. Fritz Schulz, also a Jew,⁴⁸ died all but forgotten in Swiss exile in 1972. Karl Giese, Hirschfeld's non-Jewish lover who also appeared in *Different from the Others*, committed suicide in Czech exile in 1938. His estate, which included parts of Hirschfeld's inheritance, fell to his Czech Jewish lawyer Karel Fein, who died in the Lodz ghetto in 1942. Much of Hirschfeld's estate has since been lost.⁴⁹

From their monsters through to more sublimated portrayals of the uncanny, Weimar films offer us a rare opportunity to uncover in all their ambivalence the destroyed legacy of Jewish participation in all aspects of pre-1933 German society, including their role as gender and sexual rights pioneers. Both Oswald and Sagan personify this moment by self-consciously refashioning the tainted image of the Jew as racial, gender, and sexual deviant into a cosmopolitan plea for sexual equality. In this piece, I have sought to trace this legacy, which National Socialism violently destroyed and which has almost been forgotten. It was the ending of an era, though its vivid images live on.

Notes

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- 2 Thomas Elsaesser, ed., *A Second Life: German Cinema's First Decades* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996).
- 3 Hans Mayer, *Outsiders: A Study in Life and Letters* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1984), 5.
- 4 Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).
- 5 Robin Wood, "The American Nightmare," in *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 83 and 79.
- 6 Wood, "The American Nightmare," 70–94. See also Harry M. Benshoff, *Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), here 4.
- 7 David Theo Goldberg, "The Semantics of Race," in *Racism*, ed. Martin Bulmer and John Solomos (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 362–77, here 364.
- 8 Wood, "The American Nightmare," 80.
- 9 Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

- 10 For the role of Jews in early film, see Irene Stratenwerth and Hermann Simon, eds., *Pioniere in Celluloid: Juden in der frühen Filmwelt* (Berlin: Henschelverlag, 2004).
- 11 Sigmund Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," in Sigmund Freud, *On Sexuality*, ed. Angela Richards (London: Penguin Paperback, 1991).
- 12 Otto Weininger, *Sex & Character* (London: William Heinemann, 1906).
- 13 Germaine Dulac, "The Essence of the Cinema: The Visual Idea," in *The Avant-Garde Film: A Reader of Theory and Criticism*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1987), 36–48. Here 39.
- 14 Klaus Kreimeier, "Aufklärung, Kommerzialismus und Demokratie oder: der Bankrott des deutschen Mannes," in *Richard Oswald: Regisseur und Produzent*, ed. Helga Belach and Wolfgang Jacobsen (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1990), 9–18.
- 15 "Aus Groß-Berlin. Ein Skandal!" *Deutsche Zeitung*, July 11, 1919. See also James D. Steakley, "Cinema and Censorship in the Weimar Republic: The Case of Anders als die Andern," *Film History* 11, no. 2, 81–203. My translation.
- 16 Walther Friedmann, "Homosexualität und Judentum," *Film-Kurier*, no. 33 (1919). Quoted in: Helga Belach and Wolfgang Jacobsen, eds., *Richard Oswald: Regisseur und Produzent* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1990), 33. My translation.
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Monsters in the Testimonies of Holocaust Survivors

Kobi Kabalek

In the epilogue to *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Hannah Arendt acknowledged the difficult task that confronted the judges in deciding Adolf Eichmann's fate:

A task they could least escape, the task of understanding the criminal whom they had come to judge. Clearly, it was not enough that they did not follow the prosecution in its obviously mistaken description of the accused as a "perverted sadist," nor would it have been enough if they had gone one step further and shown the inconsistency of the case for the prosecution, in which Mr. Hausner wanted to try the most abnormal monster the world has ever seen. . . . They knew, of course, that it would have been very comforting indeed to believe that Eichmann was a monster. . . . The problem with Eichmann was exactly that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal.¹

Arendt's statement constitutes a well-known formulation of an attitude that views the demonization of the Nazis as a hindrance to understanding the Holocaust. Understanding involves integrating a phenomenon into one's world of concepts, whereas portraying the Nazis as monsters means placing them outside of the normal and familiar, substituting explanation for a depiction of Nazis as essentially different from "us." Arendt acknowledges that such an act is comforting, since it helps maintain one's own sense of morality and normality. "We are horrified, after all, not when beasts and devils behave like beasts and devils but when human beings do."² Yet Arendt and others, such as Günther Anders and Zygmunt Bauman, argued that the Nazis and the Holocaust should not be viewed as external to modern Western civilization, but rather as a part of it.³

There is much to be said in support of Arendt's critique, both as an interpretive approach and as a message aimed at preventing similar atrocities from happening. Nevertheless, references to monsters in the context of the Holocaust do more than attempt to maintain a sense of normality. In his Seven Theses on monster culture,

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen points out that while monsters are used to mark difference and embody the outside, they are elusive, disturbing hybrids that express horror rather than contain it. They deny clear categorization and leave us with uncertainty, not a sense of security and relief: “And so the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions.”⁴ The inability to grasp the events subsumed under the Holocaust, and especially the death camps, arouses a similar unsettling effect based on a crisis of classification. In its more forceful form, this leads to what Michael Rothberg calls an antirealist approach, that is “both a claim that the Holocaust is not knowable or would be knowable only under radically new regimes of knowledge and that it cannot be captured in traditional representational schemata.”⁵ Saul Friedländer spoke in this context on the unease that historians feel when they try to account for the psychology of the perpetrators and to insert the Holocaust as an event into a global historical interpretation.⁶ For Friedländer, the Holocaust carries an *excess* that “cannot be defined except by some sort of general statement about something ‘which must be able to be put into phrases [but] cannot yet be.’”⁷ In his book *The Years of Extermination* Friedländer went further still. He attempted to recreate this excess or *disbelief* (as he later called it), a quasi-visceral reaction “that occurs before knowledge rushes to smother it,”⁸ by integrating long quotes from diaries written during the Holocaust.⁹

References to monsters in Holocaust testimonies seem to aim for a similar *revelatory effect*. The monster, because of its ontological liminality, “appears at times of crisis as a kind of third term that problematizes the clash of extremes,” questions binary thinking, and functions as revealer of hidden truths.¹⁰ In what follows, I argue that when Holocaust survivors refer to monsters in their testimonies, they often aim to expose and convey different kinds of truths. The first section (*Unmask*) examines survivors’ depictions of monsters as a way of pointing to the true nature of the Nazi regime. The second (*Unreal*) examines the use of monsters as a means for expressing the incredible features of survivors’ Holocaust experiences and communicating their disbelief to audiences. The third section (*Discovery*) discusses testimonies that depict the journeys to the death camps as travels to an alien reality, in which the deportees encountered monstrous figures and feared that they, too, might become like them.

Unmask

It was not always cruel (*grausam*), sometimes perfidiously friendly, even compassionate. But ordinarily the expression was brutal, despotic, criminal. The Biblical saying that man is godlike was mocked through the true face (*Das Bibelzitat, daß der Mensch gottähnlich sei, wurde durch das wahre Gesicht verhöhnt*).¹¹

This short text, entitled “The True Face” (*Das wahre Gesicht*), is taken from Simon Wiesenthal’s book *KZ Mauthausen*, published in Austria in 1946.¹² The book comprises twenty-three combinations of texts and illustrations, in which the author shared his impressions of the Austrian concentration camp from which he was liberated on May 5,

1945. The book aims to show the “true face” of this camp, and, with it, the Nazi regime as a whole, by exposing the Nazis for what they actually were—monsters.

Wiesenthal’s book formulates the Nazis’ monstrosity in different ways. First, as may be seen in the above citation, their behavior testifies to their moral deviance. They are far from the humanist ideal (articulated in relation to the image of God), because of their use of brutal violence. This kind of monstrosity corresponds with what Michel Foucault described in his lectures on the “abnormal” as the “moral monster,” which emerged in the late eighteenth century in France and elsewhere. Unlike earlier understandings of the term, this is the “monstrosity of conduct rather than the monstrosity of nature.”¹³ Foucault claims that whereas previously one focused on the human monster’s violation of the laws of nature, that is, on its body, and how it challenged or disrupted civil, canon, or religious law, by the nineteenth century criminality and immorality became the defining elements of monstrosity.

The gradual move from external to internal features of monstrosity did not lead to a complete disappearance of the body as a marker of the monster. Wiesenthal’s illustration of “The True Face” included a visual expression of bodily deviance and inhumanity. The illustration depicts an SS man whose physical appearance seems to imply that he is a criminal. He has a crooked, unattractive facial expression that is misshapen because he is aiming his pistol. The drawing reaffirms a belief, common in European writings of the time, that the face as a mirror of the soul.¹⁴ In the drawing, it is violence that causes the disfiguration of the face and marks the SS man as a monster. Indeed, violence is emphasized throughout the book as a central characteristic of the Nazis. All Nazi figures are either shown holding a weapon or using it against the inmates. Several images present a graphic composition of the camp, the instruments of violence, and the Nazi swastika, thus implying that the three are intrinsically connected.¹⁵

Significantly, in many of the book’s images, the Nazi figures’ faces are not visible, either because they are located outside of the frame of the picture or because they are viewed from the back. The faceless figures do not refer to individual human beings, but rather represent the violent nature of the regime. In the illustrations in which Wiesenthal did present the faces of Nazis, he stressed that they did not constitute specific persons, but a type. He wrote about the SS men, “[They are] all the same, as if carved from one material. United in the will to annihilate (*Vernichtungswillen*) as a block . . . but differ in their fantasy in the implementation of sadism.”

As in “The True Face,” the SS men’s monstrosity is evident not only because of their sadism and lack of (positive) individuality, as the text discloses, but also in their external features. Their faces show cold, disciplined expressions, rather than compassion, and slight disproportional lines around the eyes and mouth (not unlike the figure in “The True Face”) mark them as possibly deformed, hinting at their abnormality.

About half the images in the book depict the SS men as giants standing above the camp, as a hovering threat.¹⁶ Since Wiesenthal made these illustrations in Mauthausen itself, before and after liberation, they seem to reflect the terror and unbearable physical pain he felt during his stay in the camp, which appear to have formed a view of his tormentors as inhuman monsters. Indeed, the book’s opening words state: “This notebook is neither the history of a camp nor an attempt to analyze the regime. It is only an expression of the pain, the elementary suffering of a concentration camp inmate.”

However, beyond the articulation of the inmates' pain, the book's depictions of Nazis as monsters carries a broader objective, which is expressed most clearly in the book's final section, "Without a Mask." Having displayed the different aspects of the camp and its brutality, the section concludes: "The game is over! The mask falls (*Die Maske fällt*). 'Hitler' denotes death with all its horrors. 'Hitler' means dying, extermination and annihilation of all that is human, with inconceivable sadism that leads to death" (see Figure 7.1).

Nowadays, when Nazism symbolizes absolute evil, a depiction revealing that Hitler means death appears redundant, to say the least. Yet in 1945–46, when Wiesenthal published his book, this was not yet an established truth. After the fall of the Third Reich many non-Jewish Germans and Austrians still held on to antisemitism and other values of the Nazi state.¹⁷ Furthermore, even among the Western Allies, there was a tendency to doubt reports about the Nazi crimes and assume that they were exaggerated and a form of war propaganda.¹⁸ Wiesenthal's endeavor to expose the truth about Nazi brutality was therefore a pressing task in the immediate postwar period and corresponded with anti-fascist efforts to counter the lies of Nazi propaganda and "courageously look truth in the eye."¹⁹ The Allies did this at first by confronting the German population with shocking photographs of emaciated bodies found in the liberated camps.²⁰ In contrast, in his book, Wiesenthal, who focused on the perpetrators, did not use photographs to give a reliable representation of reality. For him, when it came to the moral monstrosity of the Nazis, photographs showed misleading exteriors, and only artistic, antirealist portrayals revealed the monsters under the mask.²¹

While the rhetoric of removing the masks that hide the real nature of "the Other" and uncovering its "true essence" is a common one,²² in the context in which



Figure 7.1 Simon Wiesenthal, "Ohne Maske," KZ. Mauthausen (1946). © Paulinka Kreisberg – Wiesenthal.

Wiesenthal was writing, this metaphor was a direct reaction to Nazi portrayals of Jews. Modern antisemitic propaganda contended that the Jewish emancipation assisted Jews to blend in society. Exposing Jews as inhuman evil beings was therefore the first step in fighting against them. The Nazi propaganda translated this idea of exposing the Jews' difference into images, which would enable Germans to see what is not immediately visible. One example is found in the propaganda film *The Eternal Jew (Der ewige Jude)*, dir. Fritz Hippler) from 1940, which, following the German occupation of Poland, presented grotesque pictures of poor Polish Jews as an illustration of the filthy and parasitic character of Jews in general. The film's opening remarks state that in contrast to the civilized Jews (*zivilisierte Juden*) of Germany, it will show the living conditions of the Jews in Poland, thereby revealing "the Jews as they look in reality, before they conceal themselves behind the mask of civilized Europeans." This very contrast between the civilized exterior and the monstrosity that lurks underneath appears in Wiesenthal's book in the sections titled "The Bath" and "The Symphony," which describe how the markers of civilization, hygiene and music, became instruments of torture in the camp, thereby exposing the SS as devils hiding behind a civilized mask.²³

It thus becomes apparent that Wiesenthal employed the same logic and concepts²⁴ of Nazi antisemitic propaganda, yet depicted the Nazis, instead of the Jews, as the immoral, destructive, inhuman outsiders. Wiesenthal was not alone in applying this moral inversion, which employed an explicitly emotional approach as a way to uncover the true nature of the Nazis. After the Second World War, many Jews (regardless of whether they experienced the Holocaust themselves) aimed at a shift of perspective, portraying the Nazis, or Germans as a whole, as the new pariahs, the absolute Others of humanity. In so doing, they incorporated the Jews, the long-established Others in the Christian world, into humanity, and realized an old aspiration of Zionist thought—to make the Jews a "normal" nation. For instance, in 1953, during Israel's parliamentary discussions concerning the Yad Vashem Law, Ben Zion Dinur, the minister of education and first head of the memorial, placed the Jews along with the rest of the world against the "Nazi beast"—as part of the message of connecting the Jews to the nations of the world.²⁵

Unreal

Wiesenthal opened his book's section dedicated to the transport to Mauthausen with an expression of doubt: "Would someone ever believe us, we asked ourselves. Would anyone be able to grasp it"? This doubt is followed by a description of the terrible conditions on the train and the small number of inmates who survived (see Figure 7.2). The illustration that accompanies the text shows freight trains, overcrowded with people, as they are hurled into the wide-open mouth of a skull-head, wearing an SS hat. One might ask why Wiesenthal didn't use a less fantastic illustration if he wanted to enhance believability and understanding of what the inmates underwent. The basic role of testimonies is, after all, to provide a reliable account of the events. While recent decades have witnessed a growing interest in survivors' subjective perceptions and



Figure 7.2 Simon Wiesenthal, “Transporte,” *KZ. Mauthausen* (1946). © Paulinka Kreisberg – Wiesenthal.

experiences, at the core of testimony still stands the assumption that it corresponds with reliable historical facts.²⁶ In light of the doubts that surrounded the accuracy of Holocaust accounts in the years immediately following the war, survivors often preferred to construct their testimonies as objective reports, including dates and details of the broader historical context, in order to make them more credible. Clearly, such a realist stance would diminish any fantastic references, or avoid them entirely. Indeed, a great number of the testimonies produced in the postwar years make no reference to monsters.

Nevertheless, other factors push in the opposite direction. This section will discuss those Holocaust testimonies that do include references to monsters as well as to other supernatural elements. I contend that in the instances in which survivors speak about monsters, they evoke the feeling of being overwhelmed at certain instances of their Holocaust experiences while simultaneously attempting to convey a sense of these overwhelming experiences to audiences. Unlike the previous section, which analyzed the depiction of Nazis as monsters in order to expose the true essence of the Nazi regime from a decidedly moral standpoint, this section examines references to monsters as ways to address the unreal nature of one’s Holocaust experiences.

Many survivors report of phenomena during the Holocaust that surpassed their understanding, that they could not believe were happening, and that therefore undermined their competence of knowing what to expect. In the ghettos, enclosed within fences and walls, Jews realized that they were no longer treated as human beings, that many of the social and moral rules they used to live by were no more applicable. The actions of the German authorities appeared contradictory, and it became impossible to decide on the path that would lead to one’s survival. The

attacks on the Jews' sense of normality increased significantly on the transports to the death camps and even more so in the camps themselves.²⁷ The break between one's previous life and the occurrences in the ghettos and camps led some victims to feel that they existed in a different world, an unfamiliar reality, with altered, often unknown rules.²⁸

In wartime diaries and postwar recollections, Holocaust victims and survivors frequently responded to the challenges to their familiar world by describing them as unreal, as hallucinations or dreams. Shortly after the war, Bruno Bettelheim recalled his 1938 transport to Dachau²⁹:

All the thoughts and emotions which I had during the transportation were extremely detached. It was as if I watched things happening in which I only vaguely participated. Later I learned that many prisoners had developed this same feeling of detachment, as if what happened really did not matter to oneself. It was strangely mixed with a conviction that "this cannot be true, such things just do not happen." Not only during the transportation, but all through the time spent in camp, the prisoners had to convince themselves that this was real, was really happening, and not just a nightmare. They were never wholly successful.³⁰

In her memoir, *Auschwitz and After*, Charlotte Delbo similarly recalls being in a constant state of delirium in Auschwitz, experiencing the crudest scenes as if she were dreaming.³¹

A few scholars have shown that the unreal reality in ghettos and camps, the challenge to the most basic, natural, laws of their existence, drove the prisoners to turn to the supernatural. Nahman Blumenthal found in testimonies numerous cases of "magical thinking"—a practice in which one avoids negative thoughts and words or utters positive phrases with the belief that they can influence physical reality.³² Likewise, Amos Goldberg has recently maintained that the rumor culture in the Warsaw ghetto tended toward overtly positive interpretations of the situation. These interpretations, which gave Jews hope by preventing them from facing unbearable truths on their impending fate, were based on delusion and fantasy and constituted a re-enchantment of their world.³³

Goldberg's observation corresponds with recent scholarly attention to the re-enchantment of the modern world or the continued (though altered) existence of magic after the Enlightenment.³⁴ Indeed, a close examination of survivors' postwar accounts often reveals a whole array of references to supernatural phenomena. These include instances in which survivors speak of premonitions and prophesies that defy rational thinking, but turn out to be true.³⁵ More often, one finds accounts in which Holocaust survivors tell of a wonder that happened to them, recalling occurrences in which they miraculously escaped death.

Since already during the Nazi persecution at least some of the persecuted alluded to supernatural phenomena, after the war it became a readily available interpretive framework. When the survivors turned to these phenomena they attempted, consciously or not, to articulate that "unreal reality" to readers who had not experienced

it firsthand. In this way, they hoped to convey a sense of their amazement, and of the incomprehensibility of life in the camps and ghettos. Ordinary language, many of them felt, could not suffice to describe these experiences:

The destruction of European Jewry is so terrible and terrifying (*mesamer se'ar*) that no flesh and blood can describe the events and illustrate them properly to those who did not experience them. He who is about to speak of the Shoah might dwarf the immense scales of our people's catastrophe (*shever*) and reduce the image of the infernal reality.³⁶

This quote appears in the foreword to the memoir of Pinhas Menahem Fibelovich, a Polish Jew (born in 1923), who went through several labor camps, before he was deported to Auschwitz, Gross-Rosen, Mauthausen, and Ebensee. Although he stated that "the tidal waves of horrors . . . go beyond any sick and insane imagination,"³⁷ Fibelovich nevertheless attempted to account for the Holocaust's "infernal reality" by stretching the boundaries of imagination, going beyond this world, through an incessant usage of supernatural, horrific images, including images of monsters. He speaks of the Nazis as "the cursed monsters," "despicable monsters," "Teutonic soldiers of the *Sitr'a Aḥra*" (Kabbalistic term denoting the side of evil), and "wild beasts." He furthermore refers to Hitler as "the damned Ashmedai" (the king of demons) and "the minister of hell" (*sar ha-gehemom*), and addresses Mengele as the "minister of the inferno" (*sar ha-tofet*), "demon in human form," and "the angel of vice [*ha-malakh ha-mashḥit*], slayer of thousands, the like of which has never existed."³⁸

Fibelovich, a religious Jew from a family of Gur Hasidim, followed the mythic-kabbalistic approach that depicted evil as an active force in the world, a metaphysical entity, associated primarily with the *Sitr'a Aḥra*.³⁹ It may be that he adopted a common religious interpretation of the Holocaust that portrayed it as a period in which God was absent (either due to the sins of secular Jews or for unknown reasons) and evil forces exploited his absence in order to harm the Jews.⁴⁰ But it would be misleading to see in his references to monsters a consistent theological message. Rather, the mixture of different demonic and fantastic figures seems to serve, beyond the expression of the Nazis' extreme immorality, as a way to articulate the fear and terror he felt and the cruelty he witnessed. This can be seen, for instance, when Fibelovich calls the SS guards "angels of destruction" (*mal'akhe habalah*). This concept has different meanings in Jewish tradition, often referring to frightening beings that punish Jews for wrongdoing, and are therefore meant to deter from sin. Yet the memoir itself does not support an interpretation of sin and deserved punishment. It appears that Fibelovich applied these figures because in his cultural-religious circle they were familiar as malicious, ruthless, and frightening creatures who torture Jews. They are figures of fantastic horror that allow Fibelovich to make sense of what he experienced and to communicate it to other Jews in a common language.⁴¹

In his *Philosophy of Horror*, Noël Carroll argues that monsters are a defining feature of the horror genre.⁴² He grants special importance to the association of monsters with impurity and filth, their ability to arouse disgust and revulsion.⁴³ In the camps and ghettos, however, it was the Jews, rather than the Nazis, who were kept in conditions

of filth and degradation aimed at robbing them of their human form to justify their inhumane treatment. Rather than invoking filth as a sign of monstrosity, Fibelovich (like Wiesenthal) sought to provoke aversion toward the Nazis by displaying their excessive brutality. In accordance with Carroll, who argues that in the horror genre “the emotions of the audience are supposed to mirror those of the positive human characters,”⁴⁴ Fibelovich documents scenes that both recount the dreadful details and remark on his own affective reaction. For instance, in describing the “infernal machine” that decapitated inmates at a forced labor camp near Poznan, he writes:

A horrendous screech of metal chains emerged instantly. The decapitated head of the condemned fell to the ground from the hatch, and from his neck gushed an outburst of steaming blood and flooded the floor. I was struck by terrible nausea at the sight of this atrocity and was about to faint, but one of the murderers kicked his boot in my buttocks and pushed me back to consciousness, screaming: “clean this room immediately, or else . . . ?” He did not finish [speaking], and instead pointed toward the decapitation machine. . . . Overwhelmed by indescribable disgust, I threw away the bread in my hand, and spat out the piece from between my teeth.⁴⁵

Fibelovich did not shy away from the most bloody and upsetting details. He did not give readers the possibility of being removed from what they read, but rather wished to arouse in them disgust, a bodily reaction that was to draw them into the scene and feel loathing toward the Nazis. By transgressing the boundaries of “refined” description, he attempted to convey a sense of the unbearable unreality of the camps.

The second main emotion that the horror genre aims to create among audiences is, of course, fear. In analyzing the literary testimonies of Ka-Tzetenik (Yehiel Dinur), Jeffrey Wallen has argued that the author portrayed exaggerated and perverse scenes of violence in graphic details as means to “visualize fear”:

The hallucinatory writing, mixing past and present, dream and reality, realistic and imagined fears, unsettles the reader, as we lose our points of orientation. But this technique also conveys a central aspect of the world being described, in which it is no longer possible to draw the usual lines between the realm of nightmarish fear and the “normal” world of ordinary risks and threats.⁴⁶

Indeed, the young public of Ka-Tzetenik’s novels tended to view the descriptions that do not spare the readers as providing “a direct interpretation of the Holocaust” that enabled them to *see* the reality of the camps, to imagine what it was like.⁴⁷

Monsters, too, provide an exaggerated depiction in the sense that they breach the common limits of “normal” life. But monsters not only make it possible to visualize fear but also embody it. Oftentimes survivors report on the names or nicknames of specific perpetrators, giving a short “biography” that focuses on the cruel and terrifying features they had or the methods they used. These persons, and the SS in general, were people one tried to avoid, like dark creatures lurking behind the corner. Fibelovich employed images of monsters to describe how the sudden arrival of the SS constituted immediate danger: “A group of uniformed *malakhe ḥabalah* burst into the prison and ordered

us to stand in line"; "Outside awaited us despicable *mal'akhe habalah* and ordered us to prepare for a march."⁴⁸ These encounters were always followed by violence, usually death.⁴⁹ Another memoirist, Alexander Donat, recalled such a terrifying encounter: "three men in SS uniform—with the skulls on their caps that gave them, in Ghetto slang, the name of 'corpses'—fell upon us."⁵⁰ Such depictions of the SS were not restricted to the inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto. The fact that the SS, especially the *Totenkopf* (literally "dead's head") units that ran the camps, wore skulls on their uniforms and hats must have contributed to associating them with fantastic images of horror.⁵¹ Walter Spitzer's 1945 drawing "Nightmares in Buchenwald" provides a powerful expression of the way the SS man embodied the fear of death in the camp, by fusing the SS man with his terrifying skull emblem (see Figure 7.3).

The inmates' references to monsters and the supernatural therefore also seem to be grounded in how the Nazis represented themselves. Rousing fear was not a by-product of the Nazi system of persecution and murder, but rather one of its central features. Especially in the camps, terror was an instrument of control, and fear a means for gaining absolute power over the persecuted.⁵² Fibelovich recalled how the SS sought new, unexpected ways to terrify the prisoners whenever they sensed that the horror had become too familiar.⁵³ One diarist reported on an SS man who introduced himself to the prisoners as the devil.⁵⁴ These were specific cases within a whole system of terror, which also made use of fantastical elements, thus contributing to the preternatural understanding of life in the camps. The Nazi party advanced its own "supernatural imaginary" that was expressed, for instance, in "the frequent references to the devil, monsters, vampires and other unsavory supernatural characters in *Mein Kampf*".⁵⁵



Figure 7.3 Walter Spitzer, "Nightmares in Buchenwald" (1945). Courtesy of the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum, Art Collection.

The specific repertoire of monsters, with whom Holocaust victims and survivors associated the Nazis and their collaborators, drew on a whole array of cultural images of horror. Just as Fibelovich employed scary figures from his Hasidic cultural circle, others spoke of their tormentors as resembling such evil creatures as the witch Baba Yaga from Slavic folktales.⁵⁶ Others employed monsters from the modern horror genre, as in the case of Treblinka's inmates who called the SS man Willi Mentz "Frankenstein" and those who designated the SS "vampires" either as a way to articulate their bloodthirstiness or to hint at the threat of sexual violence that Jewish women faced from the SS.⁵⁷ Although they differed in the focus and meaning that each of their authors intended to communicate, references to these and other monsters provided a way to account for one's terrifying experiences and to convey it to others, by connecting them to fearful moments of the horror genre in its broadest sense. It appears that the combination of the constant, unbearable horror and the unreal, other worldly quality of the events led some survivors of the Holocaust to turn to images of monsters. Unlike horror movies or novels, however, these stories really did transpire and as such did not enable audiences to enjoy a stir of emotions from the safe position of "this is not real."

Discovery

So far, we have looked at Holocaust survivors' accounts that depict the Nazis and their collaborators as monsters. This final section, in contrast, is concerned with figures that survivors did not explicitly call "monsters," yet described them as such. They encountered these figures in the death camps, which so many survivors portrayed as a different, unfamiliar, and even fantastic world. Ka-Tzetnik's "Other Planet," David Rousset's "Concentrationary Universe," Alexander Donat's "Kingdom of Death," and Otto Dov Kulka's "Metropolis of Death" are only some of the spatial designations used to conceive of the camps as separate and utterly different orders, systems, or societies.⁵⁸

Survivors' testimonies tend to give considerable attention to the encounter with the different world upon arrival to the camp. Simone Gigliotti shows that although not all camps and transports had the same conditions, when the deportees reached the camps, the opening of the train's doors exposed them to a multifaceted assault on their senses. The long seclusion during the train ride and the deprivation of basic physical needs anticipated the dreadful situation of captivity, but the camps introduced survivors to an unexpected new horror. Immediately upon arrival, they were confronted with shouts and violence intended to rush them in and prevent any resistance. All this happened very quickly while the deportees tried to make sense of the new place, overwhelmed by smoke or blinding lights at night, the smell of burning flesh, and terrifying sounds such as screams and the barking of dogs.⁵⁹ The first few days in the camp constituted a "shock phase," which was characterized by chaos and unpredictable situations that the deportees could not quite comprehend or influence. "Everything seems somehow unreal," wrote Leo Eitinger, "and the meaning of what is going on around them is somehow reduced."⁶⁰

In speaking of the death camps as different worlds and telling of their initial impressions there in terms of discovery, some survivors adopt the basic features of

travel writing. In its modern form, travel writing is commonly defined as first-person narratives, which claim to be true records of the author's subjective experiences during their journeys to places that are often distant and captivating.⁶¹ This genre, which has clear autobiographical elements, comes very close to testimony and can be used to discuss especially the journeys to the camps.⁶² Similar to many authors of travel books, survivors recall encountering phenomena that surpassed or overturned their previous expectations, threatened their inherited norms, and engulfed them with a mixture of amazement and fear. In their attempts to understand and communicate these experiences, European travelers have historically turned to fiction and fantasy, thereby registering their "sense of wonder and incomprehension, while simultaneously finding some sort of reference point . . . which can help audiences conceptualise the scenes being described."⁶³ I argue that when survivors use the familiar conventions of travel writing, they (at least implicitly) express the amazement and fear of the arrival to the camps while at the same time portraying these places, located in the heart of Europe, as far-removed from the civilized world they believed was theirs.

Travelers recount the foreign places they encountered, the spellbinding sights, and the bizarre looks and customs of the local population. Survivors' testimonies often do the same. Dolly Friedler was incarcerated with her parents in the Lodz ghetto until August 1944, when the family was deported. In her memoir, she recounts the moment of reaching Auschwitz:

The train stopped all of a sudden with the squealing of breaks. From outside we heard shouts, orders, the barking of dogs. The door opened with much strength and into the wagon climbed strange figures who ordered us, with endless screams, to leave the wagon quickly and dragged us out with no distinction.⁶⁴

Many survivors recall the first encounter with the camp's population as a surprising one. "Weird, strangely dressed people with such striped pajamas yelled at us in a foreign language."⁶⁵ Survivors commonly mention the unexpected appearances of the inmates assigned to clear the wagons and their language, which for many was unfamiliar or sounded threatening. Primo Levi recalled that he initially viewed these figures as curious and ridiculous:

Two groups of strange individuals emerged into the light of the lamps. They walked in squads, in rows of three, with an odd, embarrassed step, head dangling in front, arms rigid. On their heads they wore comic berets and were all dressed in long striped overcoats, which even by night and from a distance looked filthy and in rags.⁶⁶

Gigliotti observes that survivors describe "the camps in terms of foreignness, exotica, primitivism, and disassociation" as a way to distance themselves from the alien people and frightening phenomena they witnessed.⁶⁷ Such distancing allowed them, as in the case of other travelers, to maintain a sense of their previous self by expressing their difference from these people, and at times also superiority.⁶⁸ Yet very soon, the deportees' fascination with these "Others" turned into a horrific realization. Levi

continued: “We looked at each other without a word. It was all incomprehensible and mad, but one thing we had understood. This was the metamorphosis that awaited us. Tomorrow we would be like them.”⁶⁹

The fear of becoming “like them” is particularly evident when survivors speak about *Muselmänner*.⁷⁰ This designation, used primarily in Auschwitz, referred to starving inmates whose physical condition had deteriorated so much that they hardly perceived of the world around them and usually died after a short period.⁷¹ The signs of impending death were clearly visible on their bodies. These emaciated figures wore rags or walked naked, covered with filth and excrement, and exuded a strong stench even in relation to the other inmates. Their skin changed color, and their eyes sunk into their skulls and stared “bluntly at the emptiness.”⁷²

Even those inmates who reached the camps after a long period of suffering and loss report on the *Muselmann* as an exceptionally disturbing phenomenon. Lala Lubelska, who spent several years at the Lodz ghetto and a few months in a forced labor camp, was no stranger to difficult sights. Upon arrival at the Mauthausen concentration camp, in the chaotic final period of the camp’s existence, she saw piles of corpses. Yet already in the Lodz ghetto she was used to “climbing over dead bodies.”

The dead did not impress me anymore. But what I will never forget was the mark that these corpses, *living skeletons*, left. We saw living skeletons wandering through the camp. . . . It was terrible. They were actual skeletons with this awful skin, violet skin.⁷³

Lubelska’s description seems not to refer to familiar, civilized humans, but to a pack of exotic animals “wandering through the camp.” Indeed, survivors often report on *Muselmänner* as acting like animals.⁷⁴ Obsessed with the search for food, they had lost all human characteristics, ethical guidelines, and social capacity.

Yet Lubelska’s description also speaks of the terrifying discovery concerning the unsettling incongruity embodied by these living skeletons. The *Muselmann*, commonly called “a corpse standing on swollen legs,” “living dead,” “shadow,” and “ghost,” had a *haunting* presence in the camp.⁷⁵ They occupied an uncertain and vague position that disrupted the inmates’ most basic concepts.⁷⁶ These “living dead” appeared as the moving threshold between life and death and between the human and the inhuman.⁷⁷ In this liminal existence, the *Muselmann* echoes common views of monsters. It is a hybrid creature, whose gender was often impossible to ascertain and whose body exhibited a mixture of different realms: human and animal, life and death. In Foucault’s words, the “monster is the transgression of natural limits, the transgression of classifications.”⁷⁸ At the same time, it is the limit itself, “both the point at which law is overturned and the exception that is found only in extreme cases. The monster combines the impossible and the forbidden.”⁷⁹ Therefore, while the *Muselmann* was not explicitly called a monster, the speech about it conceptualizes it as such.

As a monstrous figure that embodies a forbidden and inconceivable category crisis, the *Muselmann* could hardly be tolerated. It was a terrifying creature that many inmates preferred to avoid, not because of what it could do, but because it stood for “the fatal threshold that all prisoners are constantly about to cross.”⁸⁰ The *Muselmann*

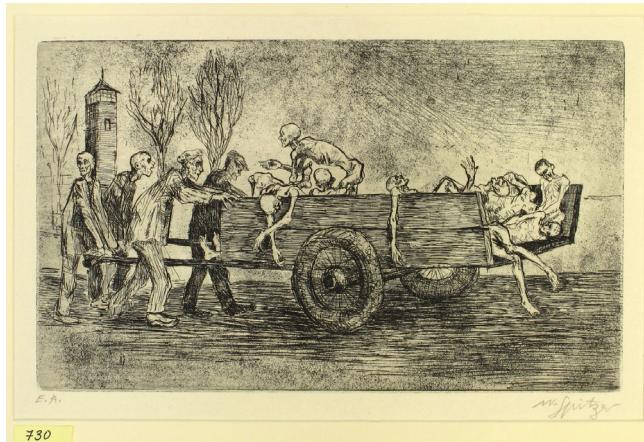


Figure 7.4 Walter Spitzer, “Hauling a Barrel of Corpses for Burial” (undated). Courtesy of the Ghetto Fighters’ House Museum, Art Collection.

was a walking illustration of inmates’ looming death, in the most appalling conditions and with no human dignity, and, as such, an embodiment of evil. Primo Levi wrote: “if I could enclose all the evil of our time in one image, I would choose this image which is familiar to me: an emaciated man, with head dropped and shoulders curved, on whose face and in whose eyes not a trace of a thought is to be seen.”⁸¹ Perhaps for this reason, survivors usually resist remembering themselves as “bodies-being-towards-death” and prefer “to represent the *Muselmann* as the ultimate ‘other’, a body unknown to them, an eternal stranger”⁸² (see Figure 7.4).

The encounter with the *Muselmann* provided those who survived and recounted their experiences with a privileged perspective, a hidden insight about humanity. The extremity of the Holocaust, and especially the reality of the camps, confronted them with monstrous phenomena that incorporated “the Outside, the Beyond” into the present and pushed them to “the limits of knowing.”⁸³ Those who returned from that “other world” told of unconceivable atrocities and contributed to the emergence of substantial doubts in the way we now view Western civilization and human societies in general. Not unlike the explorers of the “new world,” they, too, brought knowledge that challenged preexisting concepts and beliefs in the “old world,”⁸⁴ and like other travelers in the twentieth century, narrated the perils and doubts concerning modernity.⁸⁵

Conclusion

This chapter examined how through references to monsters, Holocaust survivors pointed to certain hidden truths. In the first section, we saw how by visually and textually portraying the Nazis as monsters, Wiesenthal wanted to show their “true face.” Exposing the excessive immorality of the Nazis in this way was meant not only to provoke aversion and alienation toward them, but also to repudiate the depiction of

Jews in Nazi propaganda as evil creatures and indirectly to renounce their persistent negative image in the world as well. The second section looked at those instances in which portraying Nazis as monsters aimed to reveal the alienation and horror that Jews felt during the Holocaust. In so doing, survivors that employed these images reproduced a central facet of their experiences and perceptions under Nazi persecution and attempted to convey a sense of them to those who were not “there.” The third section examined what survivors encountered in the “surrealistic landscapes” of ghettos and camps that constituted an alien, incomprehensible, and incommunicable reality.³⁶ What they discovered there were deep, unsettling truths not only about what awaited them, but also unbearable knowledge about humanity and human life.

The testimonies discussed in all three sections express doubts. Their truths are disturbing truths that challenge common conceptions and contradict expectations, as they fuse or conflate foundational phenomena that one believed were opposites: the civilized German who acts as a bloodthirsty savage, the hallucinations and nightmares that one realizes are real, and the living who is dead (or the other way around). Holocaust survivors thus use images of monsters to express a crisis, an impossibility of trusting one’s most basic and natural concepts, as they were known thus far. The monster articulates this doubt, but does not resolve it. As an expression of the in-between, it allows “us” to gain distance from the monstrosities, assigning them to another world or other people, but at the same time admits that they are not located outside, but within us and the world we create.

Notes

- * For their very helpful and inspiring comments on earlier drafts of this chapter, I would like to thank Polina Borodina, Zuzanna Dziuban, Hank Greenspan, Iris Idelson-Shein, and Nimrod Zinger.
- 1 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 253.
- 2 Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 254.
- 3 Konrad Paul Liessmann, *Günther Anders* (München: C.H. Beck, 2002), 103–17; Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).
- 4 Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3–25. Here 6.
- 5 Michael Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 4.
- 6 Saul Friedländer, “The ‘Final Solution’: On the Unease in Historical Interpretation,” *History and Memory* 1.2 (1989): 61–76.
- 7 Saul Friedländer, “Introduction,” in *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the “Final Solution,”* ed. Saul Friedländer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 1–21. Here 19–20.
- 8 Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939–1945* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007), xxii. For a discussion of this point see Alon Confino, “Narrative Form and Historical Sensation: On Saul Friedländer’s *The Years of Extermination*,” *History and Theory* 48.3 (October 2009): 199–219.

- 9 In 1992, he wrote, “The documentary material itself often carries the story of minute incidents which seem to escape the overwhelming dimension of the overall catastrophe but which nonetheless express the excess that cannot yet be put into phrases or, differently stated, that leaves an extraordinary uncertainty in the reader’s mind, notwithstanding the ultimate significance and total ‘concreteness’ of what is being reported.” Saul Friedländer, “Introduction,” in *Probing the Limits of Representation*, 20.
- 10 Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” 4, 6.
- 11 All translations are mine, unless otherwise stated.
- 12 Simon Wiesenthal, *KZ Mauthausen: Bild und Wort* (Linz-Wien: Ibis Verlag, 1946). The book has no page numbers, so I will only state the title of the specific section.
- 13 Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974–1975* (London: Verso, 2003), 73. I would like to thank Milinda Banerjee for recommending Foucault’s book to me.
- 14 For instance, in the poems of Stefan George and other texts from the first half of the twentieth century. See: George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 58.
- 15 For instance, the image in the section entitled “Appell” shows a mass of faceless inmates in the background, within the camp, and in the foreground two hands in uniform with a swastika pin, one holding a whip, the other a pistol. The accompanying text states: “Whip and pistol are the symbols of Nazi justice, which ruled not only in the camp, but everywhere.”
- 16 See especially the section “Constant Threat” (*Ständige Bedrohung*), which shows a giant headless uniformed SS man walking above endless rows of barracks, casting his shadow, holding a whip, and pointing his pistol.
- 17 A public opinion report of the American occupation authorities from October 1947 indicates that “the percentage of Germans describing National Socialism as a good idea badly carried out remained at a fairly high number—starting at 53 per cent in November 1945, dipping to a low of 42 per cent in July 1946, and rising again to 55 per cent by August 1947.” See: Anna J. Merritt and Richard L. Merritt, eds., *Public Opinion in Occupied Germany: The OMGUS Surveys, 1945–1949* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 171–72. On postwar antisemitism in Austria see: Heinz P. Wassermann, ed., *Antisemitismus in Österreich nach 1945: Ergebnisse, Positionen und Perspektiven der Forschung* (Innsbruck: Studien Verlag, 2002).
- 18 As one British observer wrote in early 1945: “Cruelty has obviously been one of the trade marks of Nazism ever since 1933. . . . It is hard to believe, however, that this mass cruelty has been perpetrated on so many thousands of victims.” Quoted in Joanne Reilly, *Belsen: The Liberation of a Concentration Camp* (London: Routledge, 1998), 66.
- 19 Bernhard Zeller, ed., “Als der Krieg zu Ende war”: *Literarisch-politische Publizistik 1945–1950* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1973), 53.
- 20 Cornelia Brink, *Ikonen der Vernichtung: Öffentlicher Gebrauch von Fotografien aus nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern nach 1945* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), 23–99; Habbo Knoch, *Die Tat als Bild: Fotografien des Holocaust in der deutschen Erinnerungskultur* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2001), 123–56.
- 21 A similar depiction of Hitler as a skull appears on the cover of a book that was published in Germany in the same year as Wiesenthal’s, which uncovers what Nazis *really* looked like. See: Paul Mahlberg and Kurt Weinhold, *Wie sahen sie aus? So sahen sie aus!* (Stuttgart: Hatje, 1946).

- 22 Metaphors such as “mask,” “veil,” and “disguise” play a significant role in reactionary rhetoric in a variety of contexts. See Albert O. Hirschman, *The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Futility, Jeopardy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 79–80.
- 23 The incongruity between German *Kultur* and Nazi brutality occupied many wartime and postwar references to Nazism. See Steven E. Aschheim, *Culture and Catastrophe: German and Jewish Confrontations with National Socialism and Other Crises* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 1–30.
- 24 The phrase “*Die Maske fällt*,” which Wiesenthal used, can be found in wartime Nazi propaganda. Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 165–70.
- 25 See: Kobi Kabalek, “The Commemoration before the Commemoration: Yad Vashem and the Righteous Among the Nations, 1945–1963,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 39.1 (2011): 169–211. Here 183–84.
- 26 For a critical review of the functions and uses of Holocaust testimonies, see: Donald Bloxham and Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust: Critical Historical Approaches* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 16–60.
- 27 Simone Gigliotti, *The Train Journey: Transit, Captivity, and Witnessing in the Holocaust* (New York: Berghahn, 2009). Giorgio Agamben and Boaz Neumann focus on the transformation from a lifeworld to a death-world that took place in the death camps, whereas Dan Diner examines the ghettos as the places where this transformation had already begun. See: Giorgio Agamben, *The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 1999); Boaz Neumann, “The National Socialist Politics of Life,” *New German Critique* 85 (2002): 107–30; Dan Diner, *Beyond the Conceivable: Studies on Germany, Nazism, and the Holocaust* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 117–37.
- 28 Edith Wyschogrod, “The Concentration Camps and the End of the Life-World,” in *Echoes from the Holocaust: Philosophical Reflections on a Dark Time*, ed. Alan Rosenberg and Gerald E. Myers (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 327–40.
- 29 Bettelheim was among the Austrian Jews taken to concentration camps shortly after the violent antisemitic outbursts that followed the *Anschluss*. He spent more than ten months in Dachau and Buchenwald and managed to emigrate to the United States in 1939.
- 30 Bruno Bettelheim (Testimony), in Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, vol. VII (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), 818–39. Here 824.
- 31 Charlotte Delbo, *Auschwitz and After* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 28–29, 168.
- 32 Nahman Blumenthal, “Ha-chashivah ha-magit etzel ha-yehudim bi-tekuفات ha-cibush ha-Natzi,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 5 (1963): 175–86.
- 33 Amos Goldberg, “Rumor Culture among Warsaw Jews under Nazi Occupation: A World of Catastrophe Reenchanted,” *Jewish Social Studies* 21.3 (2016): 91–25.
- 34 Michael Saler, “Modernity and Enchantment: A Historiographic Review,” *American Historical Review* 111.3 (2006): 692–716; Wouter J. Hanegraaff, “How Magic Survived the Disenchantment of the World,” *Religion* 33 (2003): 357–80; Alexander C. T. Geppert and Till Kössler, eds., *Wunder: Poetik und Politik des Staunens im 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011).
- 35 For example, Lena Küchler-Silberman, *Méah yeladim sheli* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1959), 1–2.
- 36 Pinhas Menahem Fibelovich, *Mi-pi ud mutzal: Pirke zikhronot min ha-tofet ha-natzi* (Haifa, 1970), 13.
- 37 Fibelovich, *Mi-pi ud mutzal*, 13.

- 38 The first few concepts appear in the foreword and throughout the book. The references to Mengele are found in Fibelovich, *Mi-pi ud mutzal*, 72–74.
- 39 See Warren Zev Harvey, “Two Jewish Approaches to Evil in History,” in *Wrestling with God: Jewish Theological Responses during and after the Holocaust*, ed. Steven T. Katz, Shlomo Biderman, and Gershon Greenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 327–31.
- 40 Moshe Shner, *Bereshit haitah ha-shoah: Hagut yehudit mitmodedet im mashma'ut ha-kiyum ha-yehudi le'achar ha-shoah* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2013), 67.
- 41 I am indebted to Nimrod Zinger for his expert knowledge on this issue.
- 42 Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990).
- 43 Carroll defines monsters in the same basic way we discussed so far, as those that “breach the norms of ontological propriety presumed by the positive human characters in the story.” Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*, 16.
- 44 Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*, 18.
- 45 Fibelovich, *Mi-pi 'ud mutzal*, 44.
- 46 Jeffrey Wallen, “Testimony and Taboo: The Perverse Writings of Ka-Tzetnik 135633,” *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* 28.1 (2014): 1–16. Here 11.
- 47 Galia Glasner-Heled, “Reader, Writer, and Holocaust Literature: The Case of Ka-Tzetnik,” *Israel Studies* 12.3 (2007): 109–33.
- 48 Fibelovich, *Mi-pi ud mutzal*, 66, 58.
- 49 See also: “Quickly appeared the monsters of the SS and with their clubs and the butts of their rifles they started to strike all around.” Beni Wirsberg, *Mi-gei ha-harigah le-sha'ar ha-gai* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2008 [1967]), 70.
- 50 Alexander Donat, *The Holocaust Kingdom. A Memoir* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 31.
- 51 The survivor and historian Israel Gutman commented on the terrifying impact of this emblem: “The S.S. stationed in Auschwitz were part of the infamous unit Totenkopf—meaning a dead man’s skull. Their emblem, a frightening skull, made of metal, was placed on the dash of their uniforms and hats.” Israel Gutman, *Anashim ve-efer: Sefer Auschwitz-Birkenau* (Merhavia: Sifriat Poalim, 1957), 18.
- 52 Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).
- 53 Fibelovich, *Mi-pi ud mutzal*, 59.
- 54 Renata Laqueur, *Schreiben im KZ: Tagebücher 1940-1945* (Bremen: Donat Verlag, 1992), 72.
- 55 Eric Kurlander, “Hitler’s Monsters: The Occult Roots of Nazism and the Emergence of the Nazi ‘Supernatural Imaginary,’” *German History* 30.4 (2012): 528–49. Here 535.
- 56 Krystyna Żywulska, *Przeżyłam Oświęcim* (Warszawa: Wiedza, 1946); Gail Ivy Berlin, “Once There was Elżunia’: Approaching Affect in Holocaust Literature,” *College English* 74.5 (2012): 395–416.
- 57 See, respectively: Yankel Wiernik, *A Year in Treblinka: An Inmate Who Escaped Tells the Day-To-Day Facts of One Year of His Torturous Experience* (New York: American Representation of the General Jewish Workers’ Union of Poland, 1945); Archiv der KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen (AMM), Mauthausen Survivors Documentation Project (MSDPP), DT/OH/ZP1/650, Interview with Nikolaj Kireev, interviewer: Alena Koslowa. The survivor used both the Hebrew and the non-Hebrew term for vampires: *ha-arpadim*, *ha-vampirim*. See Pesia Sharshavsky, *Karne or be-machshakhe ha-tofet* (Bnei Brak, 1968), 62.

- 58 Donat, *The Holocaust Kingdom*; Otto Dov Kulka, *Landscapes of the Metropolis of Death: Reflections on Memory and Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2013). For Ka-Tzetnik's use of the "other planet," see, for example, Wallen, "Testimony and Taboo." Rousset's *L'Univers concentrationnaire* (1946) was published in English as David Rousset, *The Other Kingdom* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1947).
- 59 Gigliotti, *The Train Journey*, 169–202.
- 60 Leo Eitinger, "Auschwitz—a Psychological Perspective," in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 469–82. Here 471.
- 61 For the various forms, modes, and definitions of travel writing see: E. J. Leed, *The Mind of the Traveller: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism* (New York: Basic Books, 1991); Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 2011).
- 62 Due to the lack of space, I cannot expand here on the fascinating relationship between testimony (particularly Holocaust testimony) and travel writing. This will be done in a separate essay.
- 63 Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 69.
- 64 Dolly Friedler, *Machol be-tzel ha-eimah* (Massuah, 1981), 66.
- 65 Oral History Department, Avraham Herman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Interview 34 (4) with Yehuda Bacon (1964). Interviewer: Gershon Ben David. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2tgEGOFsdy0>
- 66 Primo Levi, *If This Is a Man* (New York: The Orion Press, 1959), 12.
- 67 Gigliotti, *The Train Journey*, 179–80.
- 68 See, for instance, the classic work: Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1984).
- 69 Levi, *If This Is a Man*, 12–13.
- 70 On the *Muselmann*, see: Hermann Langbein, *People in Auschwitz* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2004), 89–105; Sofsky, *The Order of Terror*; Michael Becker and Dennis Bock, "Muselmänner und Häftlingsgesellschaften: Ein Beitrag zur Sozialgeschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 55 (2015): 133–75.
- 71 For some of the terms used to refer to them in different camps, see Sofsky, *The Order of Terror*, 329, footnote 5.
- 72 AMM, MSDP, DT/OH/ZP1/676, Interview with Pavle Milošević, interviewer: Predrag Marković (December 2, 2002).
- 73 Emphasis in the original. AMM, MSDP, DT/OH/ZP1/512, Interview with Lala Lubelska, interviewer: Doris Felsen (September 9, 2002).
- 74 For example, Langbein, *People in Auschwitz*, 94–96, 102.
- 75 See, respectively: Langbein, *People in Auschwitz*, 94; Sofsky, *The Order of Terror*, 205; Agamben, *The Witness and the Archive*, 55; AMM, MSDP, DT/OH/ZP1/316, Interview with Pierre Serge Choumoff, interviewer: Maryline Tranchant (November 14, 2002).
- 76 On haunting, see Judith Richardson, *Possessions: The History and Uses of Hauntings in the Hudson Valley* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Zuzanna Dziuban, "Haunting as Memory," *Hagar: Studies in Culture, Polity, and Identities* 12 (2014): 111–35.
- 77 Agamben, *The Witness and the Archive*, 41–86.
- 78 Foucault, *Abnormal*, 63.
- 79 *Ibid.*
- 80 Agamben, *The Witness and the Archive*, 51.

- 81 Levi, *If This Is a Man*, 103.
- 82 Manuela Consonni, “Primo Levi, Robert Antelme, and the Body of the Muselmann,” *Partial Answers* 7.2 (2009): 243–59. Here 256.
- 83 Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” 7, 12.
- 84 Joyce Appleby, *Shores of Knowledge: New World Discoveries and the Scientific Imagination* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013).
- 85 Stacey Burton, *Travel Narratives and the Ends of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
- 86 For survivors’ references to the surreal totality in which they found themselves, see: Henry Greenspan, “The Unsaid, the Incommunicable, the Unbearable, and the Irretrievable,” *Oral History Review* 41.2 (2014): 229–43. Here 235–37.

Part Two

The Monster Within: Monsters in Jewish Intracommunal Discourse

Unearthing the “Children of Cain”: Between Humans, Animals, and Demons in Medieval Jewish Culture

David I. Shyovitz

One of the most unfortunate scourges produced by mysticism and theosophy is belief in enchantment and superstition, whose dark traces are perceptible in all periods, like a shadow ever drifting behind the human spirit. But in the thirteenth century, that shadow grew and grew until it blotted out the landscape like the shadow of death. . . . Belief in enchantment and in witches and in all manner of superstition, which was spreading throughout the world, also spread among the Jews of the period.¹

It was with this withering pronouncement that Moritz Güdemann, an Austrian rabbi and historian, opened his discussion of medieval Jewish superstition (*Jüdischen Abergläuben*) in his seminal 1880 book *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der Abendländischen Juden während des Mittelalters*. The work traced the religious and cultural history of medieval Ashkenazic Jewry, and crafted a by-and-large triumphalist narrative of Jewish survival under decidedly hostile circumstances. Güdemann was particularly keen to highlight instances in which Jewish beliefs, practices, or values helped to shape those of the broader Christian culture—like many of his contemporaries in the *Wissenschaft des Judenthums* movement, he saw premodern Jewish contributions to European culture as presaging the civic value that newly emancipated Jews could add to their modern European setting. But toward the end of the book, having admiringly described “the cultural and intellectual achievements of the Jews of France and Germany in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries,”² Güdemann mournfully noted that intercultural influence could be bidirectional: medieval Jews proved vulnerable to some of the negative qualities of the very historical setting they were helping to positively shape. Thus, in the thirteenth century a rising tide of Christian superstition and credulity seeped into Jewish society from without, and rendered Ashkenazic Jews increasingly preoccupied by magical adjurations, the threat of witchcraft, and, especially, the looming presence of threatening, aberrant, monstrous creatures: “In a time when the entire world was stuck in delusion and foolish beliefs, it should come as

no surprise that . . . Christians and Jews alike naively believed in the existence of people with the heads of dogs, or with horns, or with beaks.”³

Several decades later, the American rabbi Joshua Trachtenberg would cite Güdemann extensively in his influential 1939 book *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, which was tellingly subtitled *A Study in Folk Religion*.⁴ While Trachtenberg’s treatment of medieval Jewish “superstitions” was less overtly judgmental than Güdemann’s, he too took for granted that many of the amulets, spells, and supernatural tales found in medieval Jewish sources derived from a broader, omnipresent non-Jewish “folk culture,” which gradually penetrated Jewish communities and left an ineluctable mark on their beliefs and practices. For Trachtenberg as for Güdemann, growing preoccupation with monstrous creatures was a perfect example of this dynamic. The threatening and physically aberrant creatures found in medieval Jewish sources were adopted unself-consciously from “the fantastic notions concerning the universe that were current in the ancient world,” and from “the wild and wonderful tales that swept medieval Europe.”⁵ Trachtenberg singles out some particular jarring examples of what he calls “the whole menagerie of monstrosities”: “Men . . . with the bodies or heads of lions, or serpents, or oxen; two- and three-headed men, [and] four-armed men. One authority vouches for the fact that there are 365 varieties of human monsters, though he makes no attempt to enumerate them.”⁶

Today, nearly eighty years later, Trachtenberg’s and Güdemann’s books remain the most comprehensive treatments of medieval Jewish “superstition,” and many scholars continue to take for granted that the monstrous creatures found in Jewish writings represent incursions of contemporaneous, theologically neutral “folk culture.”⁷ But utilizing an exclusively synchronic analytical lens risks obscuring the fact that many of the monsters that appear in medieval Jewish texts are deeply rooted in classical Jewish sources. The 365 varieties of hybrid and multiheaded creatures referred to by Trachtenberg are a fitting example of this dynamic. Trachtenberg learned of these monsters from the enigmatic *Sefer Raziel ha-malakh* (The Book of the Angel Raziel), a grimoire first published in Amsterdam in 1701.⁸ But the inclusion of these creatures in *Raziel* represented a rather late stage in an exegetical history whose roots traced back nearly a millennium.⁹ The monstrous hybrids were first described in *Seder rabah de-Bereshit* (The Greater Order of Creation), an early medieval cosmographic midrash, where they were said to populate a hidden subterranean realm called Tevel. These inhabitants of Tevel—who eventually came to be known as the “children of Cain”—piqued the interest of subsequent Jewish authors, who recurrently invoked them in a wide range of mystical, narrative, and even legal writings. Rather than being absorbed unthinkingly from without, the monsters of Tevel and other specimens in the medieval Jewish “menagerie of monstrosities” were transmitted from within, and deliberately marshaled for lofty spiritual and exegetical ends.

This chapter traces the textual origins and subsequent reception history of the monstrous inhabitants of Tevel, and argues that Jewish authors seized upon the motif of a populated, otherworldly subterranean region due to its cognitive utility—because it spoke to pressing questions about the borders of the physical world and the limits of human identity. In their attempts to probe these boundaries, medieval Jewish authors invested the monsters of Tevel with outsized spiritual significance, and recurrently

explored their genealogical pedigree, halakhic status, and eschatological destiny. But while the creatures of Tevel were subjects of consistent interest, the theological meaning attributed to them was far from static. To the contrary: some Jewish authors sought to erect sharp categorical boundaries between the monsters of Tevel and the human inhabitants of the surface world, and deemed physical monstrosity a sign of animalistic or even demonic identity; others tried mightily to “humanize,” and even “Judaize,” the ostensibly animalistic creatures they believed to be living beneath their feet. Significantly, this lack of consensus as to the taxonomic standing of monstrous creatures was not unique to medieval Jews. Beginning in late antiquity and continuing into the Middle Ages, Christian theologians, cartographers, and natural philosophers likewise wondered—and at times bitterly debated—how to conceptualize the exotic and aberrant creatures they believed to live on the uncharted margins of the physical world. Medieval Jewish discussions of Tevel betray signs of familiarity with these geographical and teratological discourses, and attentiveness to Christian debates over the human identity (or lack thereof) of far-off monsters can help us make sense of the spectrum of views on the matter found in rabbinic and medieval Jewish sources.

“Jewish Geography” in *Seder rabbah de-Bereshit*

For the rabbinic authors of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, cosmology was as much an exegetical discipline as an empirical one.¹⁰ Cosmological schemes had to, at the very least, be squared with the text of the Bible, but in some instances, they were entirely derived from creative readings of cryptic passages in the biblical text. For example, many rabbinic sources (and also visionary accounts from the late-antique Heikhalot corpus) adopted from apocalyptic literature the notion that there are seven concentric heavens, each home to a certain class of angels or meteorological phenomena.¹¹ The rabbis “discovered” the names of these seven strata by carefully scouring the biblical text for terms that mean “the heavens” or “the firmament.”¹² Committed as they were to a hermeneutics of biblical omnisignificance, the rabbis assumed that distinct words for the heavens must in reality refer to distinct celestial levels.¹³ Thus, diverse Hebrew terms that are used roughly synonymously in diverse biblical contexts were differentiated and rearranged by the rabbis into a hierarchically ordered, concentrically structured cosmos.

In several rabbinic collections, the same exegetical logic is extended from the heavenly realm to the terrestrial, and synonyms for “the land” or “the earth” are compiled and scrutinized. Thus some rabbinic texts identify seven biblical terms for earth, while others compile as many as ten.¹⁴ The majority of these texts, however, suffice with a brief listing of the varying terms, without delving into their significance or explaining their interrelationship. Indeed, several passages imply that there is only a single earth that the Bible describes almost arbitrarily using seven different names, unlike the multiplicity of heavens whose distinct names refer to discrete realms. On the whole, the rabbinic authors tend to keep their sights trained upward, and seem far less interested in exploring and expounding upon terrestrial geography than celestial cosmology.

The earliest text that does devote detailed attention to the structure of the earthly realms is *Seder rabah de-Bereshit* (henceforth SRdB), a midrashic compilation of indeterminate provenance that survives in several recensions, and likely dates to the early Geonic period (ca. seventh–eighth century).¹⁵ According to SRdB, the biblical terms *erets*, *adamah*, *charavah*, *yabashah*, *arka*, *tevel*, and *cheled* refer to seven concentrically ordered layers of earth. These terrestrial strata parallel the seven levels of heaven, and just as the heavens are stacked one on top of another, so too the levels of earth are hierarchically arranged and physically contiguous. The highest stratum is Cheled, which is the mundane surface world inhabited by humans and animals: “On Cheled are people and animals (*adam u-vehemah*) and beasts of the field and birds of the sky, and all manner of insects and reptiles; [and] Torah and good deeds and fear of Heaven, as it is written, ‘Hear this, all you peoples; give ear, all inhabitants of the world (*cheled*)’ (Ps. 49:1).”¹⁶ The remaining six regions exist underneath Cheled in the lower reaches of the earth, and several of them are described as the physical sites of theologically and eschatologically significant phenomena. For instance, Gehenna, the site of postmortem punishment, is located in the realm of Arka, two levels below the surface world. The choice of Arka in particular as the location of Gehenna is in keeping with the same hermeneutical logic described above: the verse in Jeremiah in which the term *arka* appears describes the sinful beings who should “perish from the earth and from under these heavens” (Jer. 10:11). Not surprising, given SRdB’s insistence on numerical symmetry, is the fact that Gehenna is *itself* comprised of seven distinct layers, the hellish natures of which SRdB describes in rather gruesome detail. Thus Arka is inhabited by the souls of the wicked dead, who experience physical torment administered by “destructive angels” (*mal’akhei chabalah*) and other terrifying creatures (monstrous scorpions, the Angel of Death, etc.). Of course, the notion that Gehenna exists spatially in a subterranean locale is a not-uncommon one in rabbinic literature: the Babylonian Talmud, for instance, contains numerous passages describing the location and size of the realm of postmortem punishment, and even maps the specific geographic coordinates of the “entranceways” (*petachim*) through which sinners descend from this world to the next.¹⁷ The well-attested genre of “tours of Hell” in late antique and early medieval Jewish sources was similarly predicated on the notion that the netherworld can be spatially apprehended, and traversed.¹⁸

But SRdB’s binary opposition between mundane, this-worldly Cheled and eschatologically otherworldly Arka is disrupted by Tevel, the sixth terrestrial stratum which lies directly beneath the surface of the earth. Jarringly, Tevel is inhabited by creatures who are neither, strictly speaking, the “people and animals” of Cheled, nor the angelic overseers of Arka’s Gehenna:

On Tevel, there are mountains and valleys, and all their inhabitants . . . and some say that there are 365 kinds of creatures (*minei beriyot*). There are people (*bnei adam*) whose heads appear human but whose bodies appear like lions, and there are others whose heads and bodies appear like oxen.¹⁹

Like the region they inhabit, the denizens of Tevel occupy a liminal ontological status. Alternately referred to as “creatures” and “people,” these hybrid beings dwell in a

recognizable geographic landscape (containing mountains and valleys), but are not themselves recognizably human. Indeed, another recension of *SRdB* offers an even more expansive list of monstrous beings:

Some say that there are kinds of creatures (*minei beriyot*) on Tevel: There are those whose heads appear human and whose bodies appear like lions, and others whose heads appear like lions and whose bodies appear human. There are those whose heads appear like oxen and whose bodies appear human, and also the opposite. And there are those [whose heads] appear like snakes and whose bodies appear human.²⁰

In this latter version, the taxonomic status of the inhabitants of *Tevel* is even more ambiguous: while they possess human limbs, they are never explicitly called “people” (*bnei adam*)—only “types of creatures” (*minei beriyot*).

A similar lack of clarity emerges from the continuation of this passage (which is identical across the different recensions of the *midrash*): “And some have two heads and four arms and a single body and trunk and two legs, and when they sit they appear to be two people, but when they walk they look like a single person.”²¹ These two-headed creatures, the *midrash* continues, suffer from certain logistical challenges in their daily lives: “When they eat and drink, they fight with one another, and say, ‘This one was fed more than me!’”²² As was the case with the human-animal hybrids, the different recensions of *SRdB* are split in terms of how they understand the two-headed creatures’ compound bodies. The same recension of the text that classified the human-animal hybrids of *Tevel* as “people” (*bnei adam*) clarifies that despite their fights over food, the two-headed men are spiritually elevated beings: “Lest you say they are wicked—God forbid! Rather, they are righteous.”²³ Yet another version of *SRdB* supports this presumption of righteousness by invoking a scriptural proof text: “They are all completely righteous, and regarding them the verse states, ‘How many are your works O Lord, You have fashioned them all in wisdom.’”²⁴ However, the recension of *SRdB* that identified the denizens of *Tevel* only as “creatures” makes no such effort to rehabilitate the two-headed beings’ reputations.

After reviewing the strange inhabitants of *Tevel*, *SRdB* abruptly shifts gears and returns to the topic of eschatology. Like Arka, the location of Gehenna, *Tevel*, too, will be a site of divine recompense in the future:

And it is on *Tevel* that the Holy One, blessed be He, will sit and resurrect from dust the dead corpses of those people who acted during their lifetimes as though they were covered in dust. He will bring them to life and stand them on their feet . . . so that all will recognize that the Holy One, blessed be He, resurrects the dead.²⁵

This assertion that God’s eventual resurrection and final judgment of the dead will take place in the realm of *Tevel* is explicable on both hermeneutical and practical grounds. Hermeneutically, the link between judgment and *Tevel* seems to draw implicitly upon Ps. 98:9: “He will judge the earth (*tevel*) with righteousness.” In the reading of *SRdB*, this verse does not merely mean that God will judge the earth with righteousness—

rather, he will judge the righteous, that is, those deserving of resurrection, in Tevel specifically. These righteous people are described as acting in their lifetimes “as though they were covered in dust”—a biblical euphemism for modesty coined by Abraham, who designated himself as “but dust and ashes” (Gen. 18:27). Of course, the notion that the righteous dead are “covered in dust” is also literally true—having been buried in the ground after their deaths, they are situated that much further from Cheled, the terrestrial realm of the living, and that much closer to Tevel, which lies beneath the feet of humanity one dusty level below.

Tevel is thus simultaneously an “otherworldly” locale possessed of eschatological significance, but also a mundane realm populated by creatures who live in a recognizable terrain, where they eat, drink, bicker, and so on; despite their ambiguous hybrid bodies, these creatures seem to lead prosaic, “this-worldly” lives. *SRdB* never bridges the gap between these two dimensions of Tevel. After discussing the physical resurrection that will take place on Tevel at the End of Days, the text proceeds to discuss the other concentric strata that comprise the physical world; the status and significance of the monsters of Tevel remain frustratingly obscure. But the human-animal hybrids and two-headed creatures said to inhabit Tevel would continue to appear, often covertly, in a wide array of subsequent sources. In these later contexts, medieval Jewish authors consciously sought to explore the questions left ambiguous in the *midrash*: Are the monstrous denizens of Tevel human or animal, righteous or wicked? And is the subterranean region that they inhabit accessible to the human beings who live in Cheled, or is the boundary between these “worlds” too sturdy to breach?

Demonizing Tevel

Jewish thinkers who learned of the inhabitants of Tevel from *SRdB* would have had ample reason to be skeptical of their human status. Prior rabbinic sources that made reference to human-animal hybrids frequently implied that humanity and hybridity were mutually exclusive. For instance, *Genesis rabbah* records the view of a certain Abba Kohen Bardala, who was asked why the final verses of Genesis 4 contain an abbreviated genealogy of Adam’s descendants, listing only Adam, his son Seth, and his grandson Enosh. “They asked Abba Kohen Bardala, ‘Why [does the text list] Adam, Seth, and Enosh, and then go silent?’ He answered them, ‘Until that point, [people] were created in [God’s] form and image (*demut ve-tselem*); thenceforth, they were centaurs (*kintorim*).’”²⁶ Abba Kohen’s reading of the verse is based on the dual meaning of “Enosh,” which is the name of Adam’s grandson, but also means “person” in Hebrew. The genealogy in Genesis 4 ends with Enosh, because he was the final descendant of Adam who was properly a “person”—created in the divine image. Subsequent generations, who did not possess divinity (presumably on account of their sinfulness), were effectively centaurs—human animals, whose hybrid form was incompatible with true personhood. The passage in the midrash continues by noting that “four things changed during the days of Enosh: The mountains became barren rocks, the dead began to feel [the pain of decomposition], people’s faces became like those of apes, and they became susceptible to demons (*mazikim*).” Once again, Enosh’s lifetime is

envisioned as a period of crisis, during which the terrestrial landscape and human body alike became degraded. As in the prior reference to centaurs, physical and spiritual corruption are both equated with animality, as humans become indistinguishable from apes, animals that commonly served as foils for humans in classical literature.²⁷ Animality is in turn linked with demonology, since the newly bestial bodies of these human-apes are assumed to be particularly susceptible to demonic infiltration.

The question of whether hybrid creatures manifested God’s “form and image” had legal implications as well. A Mishnah in tractate *Niddah*, for example, records a debate over whether a woman whose miscarried fetus has the appearance of an animal is considered ritually impure, as she would be if she had miscarried a “normal” fetus with a human appearance (following Leviticus 12). The majority position of the sages is that “any fetus lacking a human form (*tsurat adam*) is not considered a fetus”—and hence that an animalistic fetus is nonhuman, and does not render the mother impure.²⁸ In the elaboration of this Mishnah in the Babylonian Talmud, the rabbinic authority Rav asserts that “human form” follows the face: “All agree that if [a miscarried fetus] has the body of a goat but the face of a human, it is considered a human; if it has the body of a human but the face of a goat, it has no human status.”²⁹ The discussion of the Mishnah in the Palestinian Talmud, meanwhile, follows the sages’ position to its logical conclusion:

Rabbi Yasa said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: “[A fetus] that is fully human, but with the face of an animal, is not a [human] fetus; [a fetus] that is fully animal but with the face of a human is a [human] fetus.” [A creature] that is fully human, but with the face of an animal, who is reading from the Torah—they may call to him and say, “Come so we can slaughter you!” And [a creature] who is fully animal, but with the face of a human, that is pulling a plow in the field—they may call to him and say, “Come and annul or contract a levirate marriage!”³⁰

The implication of these Talmudic passages is that the inhabitants of Tevel, who have the heads of lions or oxen or snakes perched on human bodies, would be considered decidedly nonhuman. And significantly, the culmination of the passage in the Babylonian Talmud establishes an associative link between hybridity and demonology, by inquiring about the purity status of a woman whose miscarried fetus bears “a resemblance to Lilith” (*demut Lilit*), by virtue of having the appearance of “a [human] fetus, but one with wings.”³¹ Lilith was the archetypical female demon of rabbinic literature, with an established reputation for malice, animality, and sexual wantonness.³² By interrogating her human status in the context of a broader discussion of human-animal hybridity, the Talmud implicitly puts discourses of physical monstrosity and demonology into dialogue with one another.

By the early Middle Ages, the symbolic association found in *Genesis rabbah* and tractate *Niddah* between physical monstrosity, wickedness, and inhumanity featured in the burgeoning genre of Hebrew apocalyptic compositions. In the seventh century Byzantine *Sefer Zerubavel*, for instance, the messianic saviors Nehemiah b. Chushiel and Menachem b. Amiel do battle with Armilos, the eschatological adversary who functions as an Antichrist figure, and whose eventual defeat ushers in the final redemption.³³ *Sefer*

Zerubavel described Armilos's conception and birth in rather grotesque detail: he is the product of a sexual union between Satan and a marble statue (*tsalmonet*) carved in the image of a beautiful maiden. Armilos's hybridity—as descendant of a demonic father and an inanimate mother—manifests itself in his monstrous physical appearance:

This is the sign of Armilos: the hair of his head is the color of gold, and he is also green to the soles of his feet. The width of his face is a span. His eyes are deep. He has two heads. He will come up and rule the province with terror. Satan is the father of Belial, and all who see him will tremble.³⁴

That Armilos's bicephalism is meant to be a physical marker of his eschatological wickedness and is confirmed in the roughly contemporaneous *Perek Eliyahu*. There, the legions of Gog and Magog who will encircle Jerusalem in the End of Days are described as comprised of innumerable soldiers “each of whom has two heads.”³⁵

This entrenched association of hybridity with malevolence and demonology is echoed in the *Zohar*, the kabbalistic magnum opus that first began to circulate widely in thirteenth-century Spain. The *Zohar* contains numerous allusions to the sevenfold terrestrial strata, and frequently mentions the hybrid and two-headed creatures described in *SRdB*.³⁶ But significantly, each time the creatures make an appearance, they are consciously and consistently “demonized.” This tendency is most readily apparent in a lengthy and evocative passage that appears in the introduction to the *Zohar*:³⁷

Arka is one of the seven earths below, site of descendants of Cain. After he was banished from the face of the earth, he descended there, generating offspring. . . . It is a dual earth, dualized by darkness and light. Two officials rule there, one ruling darkness, the other light, inciting one another. When Cain descended there, they joined together—were completed as one—entirely befitting the offspring of Cain. So they have two heads, like two snakes. Those two officials are Afrira and Kastimon. . . . One resembles an ox, the other an eagle, but when they join they are transformed into the image of a human being. In darkness, they turn into the image of a two-headed serpent, moving like a serpent, then swooping into the abyss, bathing in the vast ocean. Reaching the chains of Uzza and Azael, they agitate and arouse them. . . . These two officials swim the vast ocean and fly through the night to Na'amah, mother of demons, after whom the primordial deities strayed. . . . These two officials fly and roam throughout the world, then return to their abode, arousing those descendants of Cain to generate offspring by the spirit of evil impulses.³⁸

The *Zohar*'s description of Afrira and Kastimon, the two “officials” who rule the subterranean realm, implicitly draws upon *SRdB*'s account of the monsters of Tevel. Like the latter, Afrira and Kastimon are human-animal hybrids, who dwell beneath the surface of the Earth, resemble snakes and oxen, and have two heads atop a single composite body. Moreover, the name Afrira hints intertextually to the righteous people whom *SRdB* claimed would be resurrected from the dust in Tevel because they “acted during their lifetime as though they were covered in dust” (*afar*). But despite

these direct allusions to the earlier text, the *Zohar* displays none of SRdB’s ambivalence as to the righteousness or humanity of the subterranean creatures. On the contrary, our passage consistently demonizes Afrira and Kastimon, emphasizing their sinfulness, licentiousness, and lack of humanity. Thus the two officials “agitate and arouse” Uzza and Azael, the “fallen angels” cum demons whom prior apocalyptic and midrashic sources had depicted as the primordial sources of wickedness and lust.³⁹ Similarly, they seek out Na’amah, the “mother of demons,” a well-known figure in Zoharic demonology sometimes described as the mother of Ashmedai, the king of demons.⁴⁰ Moreover, the emphasis in the passage on “arousal” and on “offspring [generated] by the spirit of evil impulses” alludes implicitly to a common Jewish demonological trope, according to which demons are generated via nocturnal sexual relations between men and female succubae.⁴¹

The demonic nature of these creatures is reinforced by two additional alterations introduced by the *Zohar*: (1) its placement of the hybrid creatures in the realm of Arka rather than Tevel; and (2) its association of them with the figure of Cain. As we have seen, SRdB located Gehenna in the level of Arka, and so the latter was already associated with sinfulness and assumed to be populated by the threatening beings who administer punishments to the wicked dead. Indeed, this linkage between hybridity, demonology, and Hell would have been strengthened by contemporaneous Christian visual culture, which tended to depict the demons who populated Hell in the guise of human-animal hybrids (see Figures 8.1 and 8.2).

The related notion that Arka was the home of Cain draws upon a creative rereading of Genesis 4, in which Cain was doomed by God to be “a fugitive and a wanderer,” who was “banished . . . from the face of the earth” (Gen. 4:12-14). In the telling of the *Zohar*, “[Cain] was banished ‘from the face of the earth’ but not below. Where did Earth admit



Figure 8.1 Hybrid Demon at the Mouth of Hell; Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 184, fol. 72.

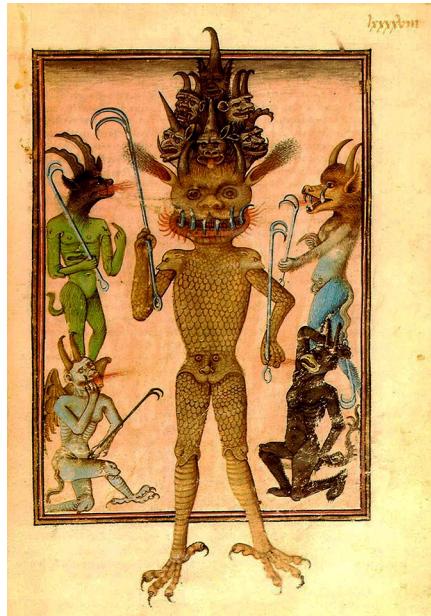


Figure 8.2 Lucifer Accompanied by Devils; Bodleian Library, MS Douce 134, f. 98r.

him? To Arka.”⁴² The notion that Cain eventually came to dwell in the realm ruled by Afreira and Katimon further deepens the nexus between monstrosity, hybridity, demonology, and sin—since the *Zohar* consistently understands Cain himself to have been a hybrid creature, simultaneously human and demonic. Cain inherited his humanity from his father Adam, but was also a descendant of the primordial serpent, whose “temptation” of Eve in the Garden of Eden the *Zohar* understands to have been a sexual one. Eve’s cohabitation with the serpent impregnated her with demonic “slime” or “filth” (*zuhama*), which she passed on to her son Cain, rendering him both a human (*bar nash*) and also a “son of slime” (*bera de-zuhama*).⁴³ As a result, “from the side of Cain emerge all the haunts of maleficent species, spirits, demons, and sorcerers . . . [and] all the insolent, wicked sinners of the world.”⁴⁴ In sum, then, the Zoharic passage’s “demonization” of physical monstrosity and human-animal hybridity is very much in keeping with *Genesis rabbah*’s broad linkage between “centaurs” and ape-faced humans on the one hand, and spiritually degenerate *mazikin* on the other.

Elsewhere in the *Zohar*, the link between Cain, demonology, and monstrosity is reiterated in a conversation between Rabbi Isaac and Rabbi Elazar, two members of the mystical fellowship whose perambulations in the Galilee structure the *Zohar*’s frame narrative. In the course of their journeying, the rabbis “saw a mountain, whose peak was being scaled by strange creatures (*beriyin mishniyin*).” Isaac is initially fearful, and worries that the creatures will attack them. But Eleazar provides a reassuring homily, and explains that the strange creatures were generated “when Cain was banished from the face of the earth. . . . Among his descendants were those inhabiting the side of spirits, whirlwinds, and demons. . . . They appear to human beings . . . roaming the

mountains.”⁴⁵ Such reassurances notwithstanding, the violent, threatening nature of the “strange creatures” who are Cain’s demonic offspring is a recurring motif elsewhere in the *Zohar*. Rabbi Yose and Rabbi Hiyya, for instance, at one point encounter a man in whose home “is lodged a millstone, from whose eye emerges a man with two heads and an unsheathed sword in his hand, and every day he torments us.”⁴⁶

Rabbi Yose and Rabbi Hiyya encounter another inhabitant of Arka during the course of their travels, when a heavenly voice urges them to detour from their route and “[climb] up into the mountains, between towering cliffs.” This rugged terrain recalls the mountain where Isaac and Elazar encountered the “strange creatures,” as well as the “mountains and valleys” that *SRdB* had described as the landscape in Tevel. The rabbis intuit that this divine navigational intervention will yield spiritual insight: “Since the Holy One favors this way, we will witness something or a miracle is about to happen.” And, indeed, they are not disappointed:

They walked on, then sat down by crevices in the rock. A man climbed out; they were astounded. R. Yose said, “Who are you?”

He replied, “I am one of the denizens of Arka.”

He asked, “Human beings live there?”

“Yes,” he replied. “They sow and harvest. Some of them look different, stranger than me.”

They were astonished, and said, “Surely by this the blessed Holy One wants to arouse us!”⁴⁷

With the descriptions of *SRdB* and of the other Zoharic passages in mind, we know full well what the denizen of Arka means when he tells the rabbis that some of his fellow inhabitants of the underworld “look different, stranger than me.” Moreover, the specification that the inhabitants of the underworld “sow and harvest” may be intended to recall Cain, “a tiller of the ground” (Gen. 4:2), whose act of fratricide was instigated by God’s rejection of his agricultural offerings. But significantly, there is nothing overtly demonic about the man who climbs out of the crevice in the rock; on the contrary, he is explicitly categorized as “a man” (*bar nash*), and he confirms to the amazed rabbis that “human beings live [in Arka]” (*taman it bnei nasha*). The continuation of his conversation with Rabbis Hiyya and Yose turns to spiritual matters, and the theological upshot of their conversation leads Rabbi Yose to proclaim that “it was precisely for this that the blessed Holy One aroused us!” The presumption of the previous Zoharic passages, and of texts like *Bereshit Rabbah*, that hybridity is irreconcilable with humanity, seems here to be dramatically attenuated.

But the reception history of these Zoharic passages in the works of subsequent kabbalists clearly confirms that it was the demonic interpretation of the residents of Arka that carried the day. Indeed, by the early modern period, Naftali Hertz Bachrach included a section titled “The Gate of the Seven Lands” at the conclusion of his work *Emek ha-melekh*, a comprehensive and influential digest of Lurianic Kabbalah published in 1648. The nature of the inhabitants of the six underground levels of Earth, he asserts, is “one of the great secrets of the Torah: all of them were created to [inflict] harsh punishments upon the wicked, via demons (*shedin*), spirits (*ruhin*),

and [the offspring of] Lilith.”⁴⁸ The monsters of the underworld, for Bachrach, are the descendants not of Cain, but rather of Adam, who generated them during a brief and ill-fated union with Lilith following his expulsion from Eden. Now, “these forces can fly from her to our Earth that we stand upon and become harmful demons (*mazikin*).” Bachrach follows the lead of the *Zohar* in asserting that these creatures “plant seeds in the ground” and engage in agricultural activity—but he specifies that “they have no wheat there, nor any of the other seven species that are listed in praise of the Land of Israel” (in Deut. 8:8).⁴⁹ Even the farming practices of these creatures, it would seem, are incompatible with the sanctity symbolized by produce of the Holy Land.

Humanizing Tevel

But although the medieval kabbalistic tradition firmly anchored the monstrous descendants of Cain in demonological discourse, sources composed and transmitted among medieval Ashkenazic communities manifest far less anxiety over the sinfulness and inhumanity of hybrid creatures. On the contrary: a number of texts that circulated in Franco-Germany during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries went to considerable lengths to humanize—and also to Judaize—the monsters of Tevel. One context in which these creatures were invoked was in exegesis of a brief but fascinating passage from the Babylonian Talmud:

Pelimo asked Rabbi [Judah *ha-Nasi*]: “If one has two heads, on which one must he wear his phylacteries (*tefillin*)?” He said to him, “Either go into exile, or accept excommunication upon yourself!” Just then, a certain man arrived and said, “A child was born to me that has two heads; how much must I give to the priest [for the redemption of the firstborn]? ”⁵⁰

Rabbi Judah apparently assumed that his interlocutor’s question about phylacteries was meant to be impertinent and mocking, and responds angrily to this affront.⁵¹ But the fortuitous arrival of the father of a two-headed newborn redirects the tale, and leads to an earnest discussion of the halakhic intricacies of the commandments of redemption of the firstborn (*pidyon ha-ben*) and the wearing of phylacteries. The passage concludes with the ruling that a two-headed child must indeed pay a priest double the usual price for the redemption of the firstborn, since the description of the procedure in Num. 3:47 specifies that the payment is calculated “per head” (*la-gulgolet*). The Talmud does not, however, specify whether this logic could be extended to the question of phylacteries.

Perhaps sensing that Pelimo’s question had been left unresolved, the Tosafists (the school of medieval French Talmudic exegetes) gloss this cryptic passage with a terse comment of their own: “In this world, there are no [two-headed children]; but the *midrash* contains [a story in which] Ashmedai produced for King Solomon a man from beneath the ground who had two heads.”⁵² The story to which this gloss refers does not appear in any late antique or medieval midrash collections extant today. But it must have been sufficiently well known that a brief reference would have

sufficed for the Tosafists’ readers. A similarly opaque reference to the tale appears in the fourteenth-century *Hilkhot Ketanot* of Samuel of Schlettstadt: “It is said in *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* that a certain man with two heads came before Solomon to adjudicate his father’s inheritance.”⁵³ Samuel’s reference to *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* is apparently spurious, since no such story appears in any of the known texts of this early medieval midrash. Indeed, the twelfth-century Spanish rabbinic scholar Judah b. Barzilai al-Bargeloni—the only other medieval author known to me who references this “midrash”—explicitly claims that the story is not found in the Talmud, and refers to it dismissively as “one of the homilies that the masses are accustomed to.”⁵⁴

A complete version of the story does survive, however, in *Sefer ha-ma’asim*, a collection of Hebrew tales preserved in a manuscript copied in northern France during the thirteenth century—precisely the geographic and temporal setting in which the Tosafists invoked the tale in their Talmudic gloss.⁵⁵ The tale turns on a long-running conflict between King Solomon and Ashmedai, the king of the demons, whose rivalry with Solomon was a well-known trope in rabbinic literature.⁵⁶ The Bible described Solomon as the wisest and most discerning person ever to live (1 Kgs 3:12), and in the tale in *Sefer ha-ma’asim*, Ashmedai sets out to one-up Solomon by showing him a wonder that he had never seen:

Once, during the days of Solomon, Ashmedai approached him and said, “Are you the one whom the Torah called the wisest of all men?”

Solomon replied, “So the Holy One, blessed be He, has assured me.”

Ashmedai said: “If you would like, I will show you something you have never seen.” He immediately reached his hands into the earth and pulled out a man (*ish*) with two heads and four eyes.⁵⁷

Solomon is indeed amazed (“he immediately began to tremble and was shocked”), and he sets about interrogating the man to learn more about him:

He said, “Whose son are you?”

[The man] said, “I am a son of Adam (*ben Adam*), a descendent of Cain.”

[Solomon] said, “Where do you live?”

[The man] said, “In the land of Tuval.”

[Solomon] said, “Do you have a sun and moon there?”

[The man] said, “Yes, and we plow and reap, and raise sheep and other beasts.”

[Solomon] said, “From where does the sun shine?”

[The man] said, “From the west, and it sets in the east. We also pray.”

[Solomon asked,] “And what is your prayer?”

He said, “How many are Your works, oh Lord! You have fashioned them all in wisdom”

(Ps. 104:24).⁵⁸

As in the *Zohar*, the genealogy of the two-headed man is traced back to Cain. But unlike in the *Zohar*, in our tale the monstrous creature has nothing overtly wicked or demonic in his character. On the contrary, he specifies that he is *mi-bnei adam*—a “son

of Adam,” that is, via descent from Cain, but also “a human being.” Significantly, while the man from Tevel engages in agriculture (“plows and reaps”) as Cain did, he also raises animals—mitigating his association with Cain’s sinfulness, and implicitly linking him with the shepherd Abel, Cain’s more righteous brother. Moreover, he reports that the monstrous inhabitants of the underworld engage in prayer—appropriately, he and his fellow monsters praise God for the multitude of creatures He has created, and specify God “[has] fashioned them *all* in wisdom.” This verse from Ps. 104, as we saw above, is the same one that one text of *SRdB* cited in arguing that the two-headed inhabitants of Tevel are “wholly righteous.”⁵⁹

A number of implicit contrasts emerge when we read this tale in light of the first Zoharic passage cited above. In the *Zohar*, the demonic status of Afrira and Kastimon leads them to consort with Na’amah, the queen of demons and mother of Ashmedai; in this tale, the monstrous man is implicitly *contrasted* with Ashmedai, who functions as the only demon in the story. This opposition is subtly reinforced via Hebrew wordplay: the two-headed man informs Solomon that he comes from the land of “Tuval.” Based on our reading of *SRdB*, it is clear that what is intended here is the region of Tevel.⁶⁰ But by substituting the name Tuval, the author of our tale manages to explain why the monstrous creature is linked to Cain without needing to resort to demonology. One of Cain’s descendants listed in Gen. 4:22 is Tuval-Cain, whom the Bible specifies had a sister named Na’amah. Our monster lives in Tuval/Tevel, and is thus linked to both Cain and Na’amah (as in the *Zohar*), but without any lingering demonic associations.

Having interrogated the man from Tevel/Tuval, Solomon asks Ashmedai to return him to his homeland. But Ashmedai refuses, thus setting into motion the challenge to Solomon’s wisdom that the king of the demons had obviously planned from the outset. For eventually the two-headed man marries, works hard, becomes wealthy, and fathers seven sons—six of whom are born with a single head, like their mother, and one of whom inherits the (apparently recessive) two-headed gene from his father. When the man from Tevel/Tuval dies, a question of inheritance arises—should the estate be divided into seven portions, with the two-headed child inheriting one seventh, or should it be divided into eight portions, with the two-headed child inheriting two shares? Given that, in the internal logic of the story, the two-headed man is human, it remains to be determined *how many* humans he is. The case is presented to Solomon, who, although he is renowned as the wisest of all kings, has a great deal of difficulty deciding the law. But after much reflection and prayer, Solomon develops a strategy for clarifying whether the two-headed creature is one man or two:

He said: “Behold—if this head knows what I am doing [to the other head], we can be certain he is one [person]. If not, they are two.”

He said, “Bring me hot water, and aged wine, and a linen garment.”

He placed the garment on the face [of one head], and threw the hot water and aged wine [into the face of the other]. Both heads screamed and said, “We are dying, for we are one and not two!”⁶¹

Solomon said, “But did you not ask to inherit a double portion?!” When the people of Israel saw the judgment of the king they were astonished and trembled in fear before him.⁶²

Thematically, both the challenge to Solomon and the solution he arrives at are variations on the famous test of Solomon’s wisdom described in 1 Kings 3, a story that appears immediately after God accedes to Solomon’s prayer for intelligence and discernment. There, two women come before the king, each claiming that an infant belongs to them; Solomon proposes to cut the baby in half in order to determine the child’s true mother. Here, inversely, Solomon concludes that the two halves of the man from the underworld are in fact constituent parts of a single entity. But this “riffing” on the biblical tale has more profound theological implications. For the narrator’s choice to situate a known monstrous creature in a narrative that turns on halakhic adjudication points to a conscious desire to include monstrous creatures within the category of humanity, and even of membership in the Jewish community. In the worldview of this narrative, two-headed children are subject to the same laws as their “normal” siblings, and work within the confines of the same judicial system.

The notion that two-headed children exist, and as such are bound by the same laws as the rest of the Jewish community, explains why Ashkenazic Talmudic exegetes felt compelled to reference this tale in their glosses to the passage in *Menachot*. The Tosafists, who not infrequently brought aggadic sources to bear on their interpretations of halakhic passages, invoke the tale of Solomon and Ashmedai as proof that two-headed children can indeed exist.⁶³ But lest this “fact” undermine R. Judah *ha-Nasi*’s sharp response to Pelimo’s question (“go into exile or accept excommunication!”), the Tosafists explain that such children live only below ground. While they are thus willing to stipulate that monstrous creatures exist, and that, by implication, they are both fully human and potentially bound by Jewish law, the fact that “in this world, there are no [two-headed children]” allows them to sidestep the Talmud’s case, and not to pursue the practical, this-worldly halakhic query that the Talmud had left tantalizingly unresolved.⁶⁴ Samuel of Schlettstadt’s comment navigates around the question in a similar manner, while also confirming the plausibility of the existence of two-headed men: “The man [in the story of Solomon and Ashmedai] came from the wilderness (*midbar*), but in civilization (*yishuv*) [such creatures] cannot live to the age at which they are required to put on phylacteries.”⁶⁵ Once again, monstrous creatures fall squarely with the jurisdiction of Jewish law, but are exempted from wearing phylacteries on a technicality (i.e., owing to their inability to survive to adulthood).

This Ashkenazic attempt to rehumanize the monsters of Tevel subtly manifests itself in the transmission and reception history of the text of SRdB. As noted above, the cosmographic midrash discussed two characteristics of the realm of Tevel: (1) Its resident population of hybrid and monstrous beings, whom the differing recensions had characterized either as “humans” (*bnei adam*) or as “creatures” (*minei beriyot*); and (2) its role as the future site of the resurrection of the dead. While SRdB listed these two features of Tevel sequentially, it made no effort to link them. But readers of the text in medieval Ashkenaz forged precisely such a linkage. Eleazar b. Judah of Worms,

for example, cites *SRdB*'s description of Tevel in his thirteenth-century *Sod ma'aseh bereshit* (a subsection of his five-part esoteric compilation *Sodei razzya*):

And in Tevel, there are mountains and hills . . . and 365 types of human creatures (*beriyot shel bnei adam*)—some with the heads of men and the bodies of lions, some with the heads of lions and the bodies of men, some with the heads of snakes and the bodies of oxen, some with two or three heads and four arms and one body, one trunk, and two legs. The Holy One, blessed be He, will judge all of them in the future, as it says, “He judges the earth (*tevel*) with righteousness” (Ps. 98:9), and He will resurrect these human beings . . . and apportion to them great reward.⁶⁶

In Eleazar's telling, it is precisely the monstrous creatures (“these human beings”) who will be judged and resurrected in Tevel at the End of Days. Given that the monsters of Tevel were imagined in medieval Ashkenaz to be subject to Jewish law, to engage in prayer, and to trace their descent back to Adam and Eve, it must have seemed only natural that they could look forward to the same eschatological salvation awaiting their one-headed, non-hybrid peers. Eleazar's high regard for these creatures also comes across in the etymology he provides for the name “Tevel” itself. He explains that the toponym derives from the fact that the angel who oversees the region (fittingly named Tavliel) “seasons it (*metaylin otah*) with good deeds.”⁶⁷ Other midrashic texts that circulated in medieval Ashkenaz incorporated passages from *SRdB*, and selected the recension of the text that was most explicit about the hybrid creatures' humanity, and that assured its readers that “lest you say they are wicked—God forbid! Rather, they are righteous.”⁶⁸

Tevel and the Antipodes

Thus, just as the varying recensions of *SRdB* manifested ambivalence as to the status of the inhabitants of Tevel, the Jewish authors of the High Middle Ages were divided on the issue as well. Mystical sources like the *Zohar* that circulated in Spain took for granted that the “children of Cain” were inherently demonic, and that their hybrid bodies reflected their essentially violent, lustful, and threatening natures. Authors in the Ashkenazic realm, in contrast, subordinated the creatures to Jewish law, promised them resurrection and redemption, and provided them with an alternative genealogy, which linked them to Adam via Cain, but without imputing any overt negative value judgments.

Significantly, this split within the Jewish textual corpus did not develop in a vacuum. Instead, the varying approaches to the creatures of Tevel map onto a much broader, long-running debate concerning the existence and nature of the creatures living beyond the margins of the known world—a debate whose origins trace back to the classical authors of Greek and Rome, and which exercised a decisive impact upon the Christian theology of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. A brief survey of this intellectual backdrop will help us to situate the varying Jewish perceptions of Tevel within the longue durée of European teratology, a “science” which at times

sharply distinguished between monstrous and mundane beings, and at times sought assiduously to “humanize” hybrid and anomalous creatures.

Classical authors, who by and large took for granted that the earth was a spherical body, devoted sustained attention to the Antipodes, the geographic region on the far side of the globe which was beneath, or “opposite the feet of” (*antipodes*) human civilization as they knew it.⁶⁹ The term “Antipodes” is first, briefly, attested in the writings of Plato,⁷⁰ but subsequent authors delved more deeply into the geographic implications of a distant terrestrial region that was inverted relative to their own. Particularly consequential for classical geographers was the integration of the Antipodes into the theory of climatic zones attributed to the pre-Socratic philosopher Parmenides. According to this geographic model, the earth had two habitable “temperate zones,” which were irrevocably cut off from one another, separated by a vast, impassible ocean and an uninhabitable, intolerably hot equatorial region (Figure 8.3). As Pliny the Elder put it in his *Historia naturalis*,

The middle portion of the lands, where the sun’s orbit is, is scorched by its flames and burnt up by the proximity of its heat; this is the torrid zone. There are only two temperate zones between the torrid one and the frozen ones, and these have no communication with each other because of the fiery heat of the heavenly bodies.⁷¹

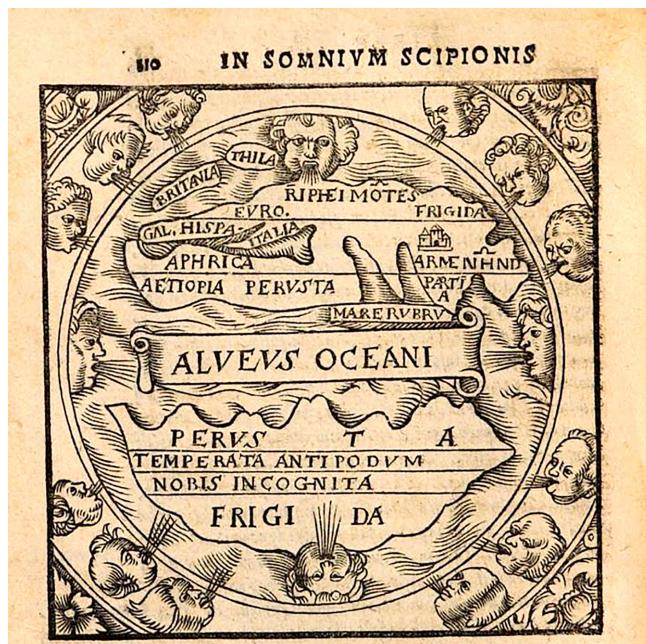


Figure 8.3 World Map; Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius, *Consularis in Somnium Scipionis: libri II*, (Cologne, 1527), p. 110.

One of these temperate zones was the site of human civilization; the other, on the opposite side of the globe, was by definition unreachable.

Classical authors were uncertain as to whether human beings did, or even could, live in the Antipodes; Pliny, for one, leaned toward answering in the affirmative. But in late antiquity, the notion that the Antipodes might be populated (if indeed the region existed in the first place) came under fire from a diverse array of Christian authors on scriptural rather than scientific grounds.⁷² Augustine of Hippo, for instance, found the argument for the existence of a second terrestrial landmass unpersuasive—but insisted that even if the Antipodes existed, they were necessarily devoid of human inhabitants. After all,

There is absolutely no falsehood in Scripture . . . and the idea is too absurd to mention that some men might have sailed from our part of the earth to the other and have arrived there by crossing the boundless tracts of ocean, so that the human race might be established there also by descent from the one first man.⁷³

Augustine's categorical denial that human beings lived on the far side of the globe was rooted in his reading of Scripture: since the entire human race descended from Adam and Eve, and since those descendants could have never crossed the equator and settled in the Antipodes, any habitable landmass in the antipodean temperate zone must by definition be unpopulated. Subsequent authors, such as Isidore of Seville and the Venerable Bede, followed Augustine's approach in lockstep.⁷⁴ Indeed, by 748, Pope Zachary I went so far as to strip Virgil, a certain German cleric, of his position due to his teaching that the Antipodes contained “another world and other men underneath the earth, and another sun and moon.”⁷⁵

But even as they worked to rhetorically depopulate the landmass “beneath their feet,” early Christian authors were heirs to another sense of “Antipodes,” also inherited from classical sources: the Antipodes not as a distant region but as a monstrous race. Classical authors such as Herodotus, Ctesias, and Megasthenes had written extensively about the sundry “monstrous races” who lived on the margins of the inhabited world: Cynocephali, who had human bodies but the heads of dogs; Blemmyae, who lacked heads altogether, and whose facial features protruded from their chests; and assorted other creatures who manifested physical abnormality or blurring of categories, including Pygmies, Cyclopes, and so on.⁷⁶ Pliny extensively catalogued these “races” in the seventh book of his *Historia naturalis*; in the works of subsequent authors, the number and nature of these races expanded further, in a process one scholar has likened to “cellular division and mutation.”⁷⁷ Eventually, the Cynocephali and Blemmyae were joined by “Antipodes,” creatures who supposedly possessed feet that pointed backward rather than forward; as Isidore put it, “the Antipodes in Libya have their feet facing backwards from their legs, and eight toes on each foot”⁷⁸

These Antipodes, like the “monstrous races” more generally, were treated by Christian theologians with ambivalence. Unlike the notion of a populated antipodean region, which was dismissed out of hand, late antique and medieval authors took for granted that the monstrous races existed (usually in Libya, or India, or Ethiopia). Monstrous creatures adorned the margins of world maps (*mappae mundi*), featured

prominently in travel accounts, and played supporting roles in widely circulating texts like the *Alexander Romance* and the *Wonders of the East*. The omnipresence of these aberrant creatures sparked the interest of Christian theologians, who sought to clarify whether Cynocephali, Blemyyae, Antipodes, and so on could properly be considered “human.” This question had potentially profound theological implications: Did members of the monstrous races possess the divine image (*imago dei*)? Were they eligible for salvation, and hence in need of conversion? One of the most comprehensive discussions of the issue appeared in Augustine’s *De civitate dei*. After citing an array of descriptions of grotesque and hybridized creatures, Augustine equivocated, and eventually left the question of the human status of the monstrous races unsettled. But he saw no reason in principle that a monster could not embody the divine image. Hybrid creatures might plausibly exist, Augustine reasons, and if they do, it is simply a question of fact as to whether or not they are descendants of Adam, and hence created in God’s likeness.⁷⁹ Subsequent sources took Augustine’s approach to its logical conclusion, and claimed that members of the monstrous races were not merely eligible for salvation, but could even aspire to sainthood: in medieval Byzantine visual culture, for instance, St. Christopher was depicted as a Cynocephalus, whose human-animal hybridity was in no way incompatible with his sanctity (see Figure 8.5).

But by the High Middle Ages, Augustine’s ecumenical attitude toward the monstrous races was competing in Europe with far less tolerant views. Beginning in the eleventh

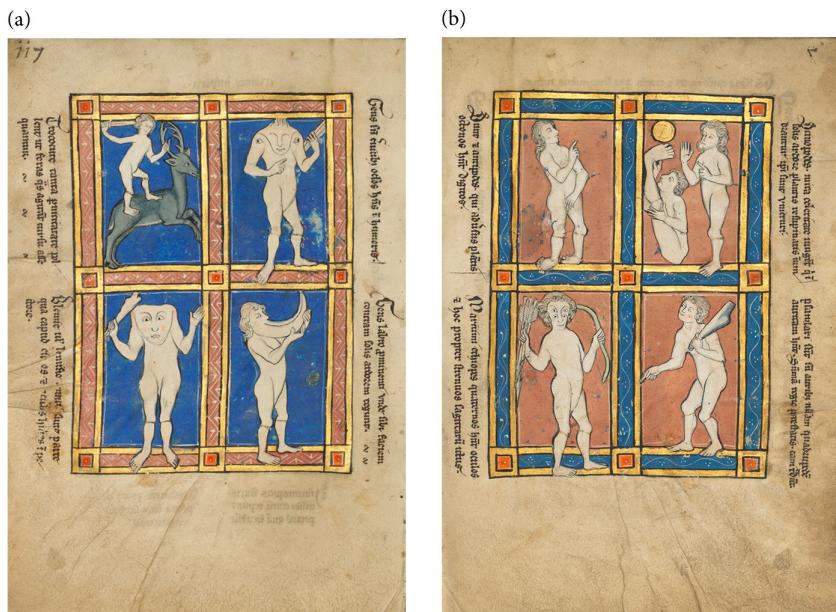


Figure 8.4 Monstrous Races, including an Antipode (right folio, top left corner); Hugo of Fouilloy and William of Conches, Bestiary, Franco-Flemish, after 1277; Getty Museum, Ms. Ludwig XV 4, fols. 117v–118.



Figure 8.5 Byzantine Icon St. Christopher, ca. 1685; Byzantine and Christian Museum of Athens.

century, northern European sources increasingly argued that monsters' degraded appearances were a consequence of their sinful origins—specifically, their descent from Cain. Thus, high medieval vernacular (Middle High German) texts like the *Vienna Genesis* and the anonymously authored romance *Reinfrid von Braunschweig* describes how Cain's disobedience resulted in the physical deterioration of his appearance, and that of his descendants. Other traditions suggested that the “sign” God placed on Cain after his murder of his brother Abel (Gen. 4:15) was in fact a horn, which gave him a monstrous visage that served to frighten away anyone who might have wished to do him harm.⁸⁰ The monumental thirteenth-century Hereford map nicely encapsulates this developing trope: there, along the map’s outer margins, a caption describes the “exceedingly savage people who eat human flesh and drink blood, the accursed sons of Cain.”⁸¹ Unlike Augustine, who was ready in theory to sever the link between bodily appearance and spiritual standing, these subsequent tropes took for granted that physical abnormality rendered monsters’ humanity at best suspect. The continued debate over the taxonomic status of monstrous creatures played itself out in varied genres, including scholastic Quodlibets and collections of canon law. Peter of Auvergne, Albert the Great, and others European scholastics devoted entire tracts to proving that monsters are not to be categorized as men (e.g., *Utrum pygmei sint*



Figure 8.6 “Nascuntur et ibi homines...duas in una habentes capite facies”; MS Bodleian Library Bodl. 614, fol. 40r.

homines?).⁸² Other thinkers debated whether monsters would be resurrected at the End of Days.⁸³ And a number of high-medieval texts considered whether sacraments could be administered to monstrous creatures. Thirteenth-century canonists, for example, were divided on whether “monsters” born with two heads require one or two baptisms—or whether, due to their lack of a human soul, they ought not to be baptized at all (see Figure 8.6).⁸⁴

Recent scholarship has extensively mined the medieval preoccupation with monstrosity, and has demonstrated the pervasiveness of monstrous creatures across a broad range of classical and medieval Christian texts.⁸⁵ But even the cursory overview provided here is sufficient to put our Jewish sources into new and illuminating perspective. The midrashic depiction of Tevel in SRdB accords precisely with the late antique descriptions of the Antipodes—both in the sense of the subterranean landmass and the race of monstrous creatures. Like the antipodean region, Tevel is an area “beneath the feet” of the surface world, where the seasons, progression of the planetary bodies, and so on function in reverse. It is wholly cut off from human contact, and separated from Cheled, the surface world, by a non-traversable distance (which explains why it takes a supernatural entity like Ashmedai to transport the two-headed man to Solomon in the narrative in *Sefer ha-ma'asim*). Like the antipodean creatures, the residents of Tevel are physically monstrous, and their theological status consequently ambiguous. Just as Christian thinkers struggled to isolate the biblical ancestry of the monstrous races, so too Jewish mystics, halakhists, and storytellers

anchored the hybrid creatures of Tevel in the biblical narrative—for both Christians and Jews, the key link in this hermeneutical chain was the figure of Cain. Some Jews and Christians concluded that humanity was incompatible with physical monstrosity, and assumed that physical abnormality was the result of moral or spiritual corruption. Others were eager to embrace the physically aberrant, and to define “humanity” capacious enough so as to encompass all beings descended from the first man. Indeed, even the midrashic notion that Tevel was in some sense associated with eschatology (as the future site of the resurrection of the dead) had parallels in contemporaneous descriptions of the Antipodes. Some medieval Christian geographers asserted that the Garden of Eden might be located in the Antipodes, a “fact” that explained why human beings could not locate, much less travel to, the earthly paradise. Others identified the “flaming sword” that God placed at the eastern entrance to the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:24) with the equatorial torrid zone, which functioned to block access to the Antipodes, and hence to Eden.⁸⁶

Textual evidence confirms that medieval Jewish authors were indeed aware of both the racial and regional senses of the Antipodes. For example, in the course of a rather opaque passage in his psychological treatise *Chokmat ha-nefesh*, Eleazar of Worms refers cryptically to “those creatures whose toes are behind their feet, with the heel in front.”⁸⁷ It would appear that Eleazar is referring to the race of Antipodes, though the overall sense of the passage is obscure.⁸⁸ The *Zohar*, meanwhile, contains a number of passages that invoke geographic factors in accounting for the hybridity of the subterranean creatures. One such passage asserts that the diverse creatures (“some with two faces, some with four, some with one, and the appearance of these is unlike those”) owe their existence to the spherical nature of the earth:

All the inhabited world revolves like a ball, some below and some above. All those creatures differ in their appearance, due to the difference of the atmosphere in every place. . . . Consequently, there is a place in the inhabited world where day shines for some, while for others it is dark—for these it is day, while for those it is night.⁸⁹

Global “biodiversity,” in this telling, is due to the differing environmental factors that shape life in the diametrically opposed regions that exist on opposite ends of the globe.

The passage in the *Zohar* concludes by narrating the adventure of a certain Rabbi Nehorai Sava, whose ship capsized during a storm that struck while he was sailing on the “Great Sea”:

The sea grew stormy and all those aboard the ship perished. A miracle happened to him and he descended through certain pathways in the heart of the sea and emerged beneath the seas into an inhabited land. He saw some of those creatures. . . . A miracle happened to him and he ascended. He said, “Happy are the righteous who engage in Torah and know concealed mysteries above and below!”⁹⁰

The veiled reference to the Antipodes is here most readily apparent. Nehorai encounters monstrous creatures not in the mountains, as in previous Zoharic passages, but while on an overseas voyage on the “Great Sea”—the same impassable body of water that separates the two temperate zones and makes contact with the Antipodes impossible to achieve. But by virtue of a miracle, he travels through a pathway that passes through “the heart of the sea” and takes him to the other side of the globe. The creatures he encounters there are nonhuman—the text describes them as “small” (possibly Pygmies?) and as speaking in an incomprehensible language. Here and in the passage as a whole, the repeated references to the unreachable far side of the earth and its inhuman inhabitants indicates that medieval geographic “conventional wisdom” was not lost upon the author of this section of the *Zohar*.

It is impossible to state with certainty the means by which medieval Jews learned of Christian views about the Antipodes.⁹¹ Did Jewish authors have access to works of Christian geography (which circulated predominantly in Greek and Latin)? Would they have had occasion to view *mappae mundi*, or the manuscript illustrations that provided detailed depictions of the monstrous races? Such avenues of transmission are not implausible; indeed, for some Christian authors, discussions of physical monstrosity and geographic marginality were directly linked to anti-Jewish polemic, a conduit that frequently conveyed Christian doctrines to a receptive Jewish audience. Jews’ position on the margins of medieval Christian society rendered them exotic and potentially threatening; like monsters, their very humanity was subject to scrutiny and doubt.⁹² Thus, on several medieval world maps, the monstrous races, “the sons of cursed Cain,” were spatially and aesthetically linked to the threatening “red Jews,” who lived just beyond the boundaries of the charted world, and played a role in Christian eschatological expectations due to their linkage with the Antichrist.⁹³ And for patristic authors like Augustine, the “sign of Cain” served as a typological symbol of contemporaneous Jews: Cain’s cursedness and perpetual wandering prefigured post-Crucifixion Jews’ supersession, exile, and exemplary suffering.⁹⁴ These and other points of contact between geographic and teratological discourse on the one hand, and polemical rhetoric on the other, suggest that the parallels that this chapter has highlighted may have been shaped by direct, polemically inflected exchanges between members of the two rival, but neighboring religious communities.

In at least one case, it is possible to pinpoint a figure who could have served as a point of interreligious contact. The thirteenth-century cleric and statesman (and possible cartographer!) Gervase of Tilbury composed the encyclopedic *Otia imperialia* for his patron Otto IV, who ruled as Holy Roman emperor and king of Germany early in the thirteenth century.⁹⁵ The book devotes considerable attention to “marvels” (*mirabilia*), wondrous, and exceptional phenomena in the natural world, and includes a story of a certain Englishman who (like Nehorai Sava) traveled through a tunnel that transmitted him to the opposite end of the globe.⁹⁶ Careful reading of *Otia imperialia* reveals that Gervase’s interest in the structure and workings of the universe at times led him into conversations with local Jews. In the context of a discussion of cosmology, Gervase describes the sevenfold structure of the heavens that he has learned of from “the Hebrews,” and lists (in slightly corrupted form) the names of each level: *samaym*, *sahachim*, *zeuul*, *maon*, *machon*, *arauhot*, and *rachia*. These are the same names (in

almost exactly the same order) as those listed in SRdB. Next, Gervase proceeds to describe Jewish views of terrestrial geography:

The Hebrews in addition distinguish seven earths, that is, seven different regions of the earth. One region is cultivated, another uncultivated; and while the Hebrews do not have separate names for all of the different regions of the earth, they do call the cultivated earth *teuel*, and the uncultivated *mithbar*. And so in the twenty-fourth psalm we read *Adonay haareth umeloa teuel*, that is, “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein,” *uiosue bazam*.⁹⁷

Clearly, Gervase was mistaken in his belief that “the Hebrews do not have separate names for all of the different regions of the earth.” But significantly, it is the name Tevel (*teuel*) that he singles out for particular attention. The fact that he was engaged in such interreligious dialogue with Jews, complete with technical, cosmological, and geographical terminology, raises the tantalizing, albeit necessarily speculative possibility that Gervase’s interest in travel to the Antipodes could have been fodder for conversation as well.⁹⁸

* * *

Though they lived far beneath the surface of the earth, the “children of Cain” stubbornly refused to stay buried over the course of Jewish history. During the early and high Middle Ages in particular, Jewish authors grappled with the theological implications of the distant region of Tevel and its population of monstrous inhabitants. Their assumption that these creatures truly existed, and their earnest attempts to “unearth” their meaning, were not reflections of a benighted “folk culture,” much less of unthinking credulity. Indeed, many of the mystical, narrative, exegetical, and legal sources treated in this chapter manifest theological nuance, interpretive precision, and deeply learned references and allusions. Instead, discussions of the subterranean *beriyin mishniyin* served as means of exploring central questions about the boundaries between humans and animals, men and demons, and the known and unknown worlds. Jewish debates over the meaning of monstrosity owed a debt to their broader Christian surroundings, but not solely on account of a shared repertoire of “wild and wonderful” popular tales. Rather, both Jews and Christians seized upon the monstrous creatures who populated their own traditions because they helped them to think through broad theological questions that were jointly—and perhaps adversarially—troubling to each religious community.⁹⁹

Notes

1 M. Güdemann, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der Abendländischen Juden während des Mittelalters* (Vienna, 1880), 199. I have modified my translation slightly based on Güdemann’s revised Hebrew edition, which contains minor differences from the German original; see idem, *Sefer ha-torah veva-chayyim be-artsot ha-ma’arav bi-yeme ha-benayim* (Warsaw, 1897), 157.

- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid., 171.
- 4 Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* (New York: Schocken, 1939).
- 5 Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 181–82.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 See the historiographic treatment in David I. Shyovitz, *A Remembrance of His Wonders: Nature and the Supernatural in Medieval Ashkenaz* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 132–33. The latter book contains a brief and fragmentary survey of some of the material treated below (*Ibid.*, 136–37).
- 8 *Sefer Razi'el ha-malakh* (Amsterdam, 1701), 15a.
- 9 Yehudah L. Zlotnick has attempted to reconstruct this history in two overlapping articles: Zlotnick, “Anashim ba'alei shnei roshim,” *Sinai* 19 (1946): 17–25, and *idem*, “Sheva ha-aratsot u-vene Kayin,” *Edot* 1 (1946): 23–28. Zlotnick surveys some of the sources discussed below, but from an ahistorical, folkloric vantage point (pointing out parallels with, for example, Persian, Indian, Turkish, and even Malaysian literary motifs).
- 10 For a historiographic overview of rabbinic cosmology, and a review of the relevant primary sources, see Reimund Leicht, “Major Trends in Rabbinic Cosmology,” in *Hekhalot Literature in Context: Between Byzantium and Babylonia*, ed. Raanan Boustan, Martha Himmelfarb, and Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck: 2013), 245–78.
- 11 Peter Schäfer, “From Cosmology to Theology: The Rabbinic Appropriation of Apocalyptic Cosmology,” in *Creation and Re-Creation in Jewish Thought: Festschrift in Honor of Joseph Dan on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Rachel Elior and Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 39–58.
- 12 The most frequently referenced terms are *shamayim*, *shmei ha-shamayim*, *raki'a*, *shechakim*, *zervul*, *ma'on*, and *aravot*; see *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* 23, *Leviticus Rabah* 29:11, *Deuteronomy Rabah* 2:32, and cf. BT *Chagigah* 12b, *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* (A) 37.
- 13 James Kugel, *The Bible as It Was* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 21.
- 14 Seven levels: *Lev. Rab.* 29:11, *Pirkei de-Rav Kahana* 23; 10 levels: *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* (B) 43; *Midrash Mishlej*.
- 15 The best overview of the manuscripts, structure, and contents of *Seder rabbah di-Bereshit* is Peter Schäfer, “In Heaven as It Is in Hell: The Cosmology of *Seder Rabbah di-Bereshit*,” in *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions*, ed. Raanan S. Boustan and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 233–74.
- 16 MS Oxford, Bodleian Library 1531, MS Munich 22 [Peter Schäfer, ed., *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981), §453, 766].
- 17 In BT *Eruvin* 19a, these entranceways are located in the desert, in the ocean, and in Jerusalem; BT *Shabbat* 39a adds another at the hot springs of Tiberius. BT *Pesachim* 94a calculates the spatial volume of Gehenna.
- 18 Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell: The Development and Transmission of an Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).
- 19 MS Oxford, Bodleian Library 1531, MS Munich 22 (Schäfer, ed., *Synopse*, §452, 765).
- 20 MS Jerusalem NLI Heb. 8°381 (published in Solomon Wertheimer, ed., *Batei midrashot*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1989), 38.

- 21 Schäfer, ed., *Synopse*, §452, 765; Wertheimer, ed., *Batei Midrashot*, vol. 1, 38.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Schäfer, ed., *Synopse*, §452, 765.
- 24 MS Vatican 288 fol. 151a (this manuscript is not included in Schäfer's *Synopse*). The verse in question is Ps. 104:24.
- 25 Schäfer, ed., *Synopse*, §452, 765, and Wertheimer, ed., *Batei midrashot*, vol. 1, 38 (with minor variants).
- 26 *Genesis rabbah* §23.
- 27 For the common pseudo-etymology that derives the Latin *simia* (ape) from the animal's "similarity" to humans, see Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, Book 12, 2:30. This theme is treated encyclopedically in H. W. Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London: Warburg Institute, 1952); for some early modern Jewish appropriations of this linkage, see Iris Idelson-Shein, "Meditations on a Monkey-Face: Monsters, Transgressed Boundaries, and Contested Hierarchies in a Yiddish Eulenspiegel," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 108 (2018): 28–59.
- 28 M *Niddah* 3:2. For an analysis of this and other tannaitic discussions of species non-conformity in "rabbinic reproductive biology," see Rachel Neis, "The Reproduction of Species: Humans, Animals, and Hybrids in Early Rabbinic Science," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 24 (2017): 289–317.
- 29 BT *Niddah* 23b. This dichotomous rule of thumb appears in the midst of an intricate and nuanced *sugya*, which I cannot do justice to here. I plan to analyze the Talmudic *sugya* and its reception in medieval rabbinic literature in a future study. For a recent analysis of the conceptual and theological boundaries between humans and animals in the Babylonian Talmud more broadly, see Mira Wasserman, *Jews, Gentiles, and Other Animals: The Talmud After the Humanities* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).
- 30 PT *Niddah* 3:2. The textual relationship between the position attributed to Rabbi Yochanan, and its subsequent application to hybrids who are reading from the Torah or plowing, has been the subject of interpretive debate. In its Talmudic context, the latter seems to be raised as an incredulous response to the former (*be-temihah*), as though to ask, "How can Rabbi Yochanan's position be correct if it leads to the following absurd conclusion?" See *Pnei Moshe* ad loc. But subsequent Talmudic exegesis and halakhists interpreted the two statements as in concord with one another (*be-nichutah*); see, for example, *Teshuvat ha-Ge'onim im Teshuvot u-Fesakim mi-Hakhmei Provintsiyah*, ed. Eleazar Horvitz (New York, 1995), §775, Menachem ha-Meiri, *Beit ha-Bechirah* to BT *Niddah* 22b, s.v. *ha-Mishnah he-Sheniyah*, *Tosafot ha-Rosh* to BT *Niddah* 23a, s.v. *Lo Anrah R. Meir*. Isaac b. Moses of Vienna (*Or zaru'a*, vol. 1 [Jerusalem: Makhon Yerushalayim, 2010], 2) notes the counter-intuitiveness of the Palestinian Talmud's position, but accepts that "there are wondrous things in the Torah." (However, cf. n. 64.)
- 31 BT *Niddah* 24b.
- 32 See, for example, Isaiah 34:14, BT *Shabbat* 151b, *Eruvin* 18b and 100b.
- 33 The classic study of the origins and apocalyptic function of Armilos is David Berger, "Three Typological Themes in Early Jewish Messianism: Messiah Son of Joseph, Rabbinic Calculations, and the Figure of Armilus," *AJS Review* 10 (1985): 141–64.
- 34 Martha Himmelfarb, *Jewish Messiahs in a Christian Empire: A History of the Book of Zerubbabel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 157.
- 35 Yehudah Even Shmuel, *Midrashei ge'ulah* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1943), 53.
- 36 In addition to the sources that will be discussed below, see *Zohar* II.30b.

- 37 All translations from the *Zohar* follow Daniel Matt, Nathan Wolski, and Joel Hecker, eds. and trans., *The Zohar*, 12 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003–2017).
- 38 *Zohar* I, 9b (Matt et al., vol. 1, 63).
- 39 Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- 40 *Zohar* 1:19b, 55a; 3:76b–77a; *Zohar chadash* 19d.
- 41 See for example *Zohar* I:54b.
- 42 *Ibid.* (Matt et al., vol. 1, 306.)
- 43 *Zohar* I.36b. For an earlier midrashic precedents for this view, see for example *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* 21.
- 44 *Zohar* I.36b. (Matt et al., vol. 1, 230.) Cf. *Zohar* III.76b.
- 45 *Zohar* I.178a–b (Matt et al., vol. 3, 78–80).
- 46 *Zohar* II:80a (Matt et al., vol. 4, 435.)
- 47 *Zohar* I.157a (Matt et al., vol. 2, 374.)
- 48 Naftali Hertz Bachrach, *Emek ha-melehk* (Amsterdam, 1648), 179b.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 180a.
- 50 BT *Menachot* 37a–b.
- 51 In a letter printed in *Kerem Chemed*, vol. 6 (Prague, 1841), 132–33, Solomon Judah Loeb Rapoport (Shir) argued that the passage in *Menahot* suggested that the rabbis were aware of contemporary reports found in the writings of Roman authors of two-headed “monstrous births” (i.e., conjoined twins). See also Rapoport, *Erekh milin*, vol. 1 (Prague, 1852), 242, and Daniel Sperber, *Magic and Folklore in Rabbinic Literature* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1994), 13–14, and the bibliography cited there. On Jewish teratology in the early modern period, see David B. Ruderman, *Kabbalah, Magic, and Science: The Cultural Universe of a Sixteenth Century Jewish Physician* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 74–88; Matt Goldish, *Jewish Questions: Responsa on Sephardic Life in the Early Modern Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 106–08; Andrew Berns, “Abraham Portaleone and Alessandro Magno: Jewish and Christian Correspondents on a Monstrous Birth,” *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 5 (2011): 53–66; and Idelson-Shein, “Meditations on a Monkey-Face.”
- 52 Tos. to BT *Menachot* 37a, s.v. *o kum gali*.
- 53 Samuel’s *Hilkhot ketanot* was appended to the widely influential halakhic compilation of Mordechai b. Hillel and today appears in the standard Vilna edition of the Babylonian Talmud; see *Mordekhai* to BT *Menachot*, *Hilkhot ketanot*, *Hilkhot tefillin* 13b. *Hilkhot ketanot* concludes its brief treatment of the issue by noting that “the Tosafists have discussed this at length, so there is no need to do so here”—suggesting that the very terse gloss of the Tosafists printed in the margins of the Talmud may be an abridgment of an originally lengthier discussion. This impression is confirmed by the expanded text cited in the *Shitah mekubetset*, a digest of Talmudic exegesis, *ad loc.*
- 54 Judah b. Barzilai al-Bargeloni, *Perush sefer yetzirah*, ed. Shlomo Zalman Hayyim Halberstam (Berlin, 1845), 173.
- 55 MS Oxford Bodleian Library Or. 135. For an initial description and analysis of this collection, see Eli Yassif, “Sefer ha-ma’asim: le-ofav, mekorotav, ve-hashpa’ato shel kovets sipurim mi-zmanam shel Ba’alei ha-Tosafot,” *Tarbiz* 53 (1984): 409–29. (Unfortunately, at the time of this chapter’s completion I was not yet able to consult the forthcoming annotated edition of Rella Kushelevsky, *Tales in Context: Sefer ha-ma’asim in Medieval Northern France* [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017].) Abridged versions of the story were included in at least two subsequent

- manuscripts, whose paleographic characteristics suggest that they were copied in an eastern (Persian?) milieu: MS Jerusalem NLI Heb. 8°1970, and MS Manchester Gaster 82 [subsequently printed in Moses Gaster, *The Exempla of the Rabbis*, 2nd ed. (New York: Ktav, 1968), 79]. A version of the story (albeit missing the character of Solomon) appears in Yiddish in a 1585 manuscript (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. Hebr. 100); see Jerold C. Frakes, *Early Yiddish Epic* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 421. The story was apparently first published in *Hibur ha-ma'asidot ve-ha-midrashot ve-ha-hagadot* (Venice, 1599), 11a–12a; see Eli Yassif, “Meshalim shel Shlomo ha-melekh,” *Mehkerei Yerushalayim be-sifrut Ivrit* 9 (1986): 357–73. On the subsequent publication history of the tale during the early modern and modern periods, see Zlotnick, “Anashim ba'alei shnei roshim.”
- 56 For example BT *Gittin* 68b; see the comprehensive treatment in Rella Kushelevsky, “Shlomo ve-Ashmedai,” in Yoav Elstein, Avidov Lipsker, and Rella Kushelevsky, eds., *Entsiklopediyah shel ha-sipur ha-Yehudi*, vol. 2 (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2009), 85–111.
- 57 MS Oxford Bodleian Library Or. 135 fol. 302a.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 See at n. 24.
- 60 Indeed, every subsequent version of this tale known to me emends “Tuval” to “Tevel.”
- 61 An alternate version of the story preserved in a later collection records that, in addition to testing the effects of the boiling water, Solomon gave one of the heads wine to drink, and then observed that both heads showed signs of drunkenness. See the comments of Zlotnick, “Anashim ba'alei shnei roshim,” 22–23.
- 62 MS Oxford Bodleian Library Or. 135 fol. 302b.
- 63 Ephraim E. Urbach, *Ba'alei ha-tosafot: toldoteihem, hibureihem, shitatam*, 5th ed., vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1986), 713–15; on the methodological limits of deriving Tosafist theology from their Talmudic glosses, see the comments of Ephraim Kanarfogel, “Varieties of Belief in Medieval Ashkenaz: The Case of Anthropomorphism,” in *Rabbinic Culture and Its Critics: Jewish Authority, Dissent, and Heresy in Medieval and Modern Times*, ed. Daniel Frank and Matt Goldish (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), 118.
- 64 Of course, it is not clear how the Tosafists would reconcile this presumption with the passage's decidedly this-worldly discussion of the laws of *pidyon ha-ben*. The same tension animates the interpretation of this passage in Isaac b. Moses of Vienna, *Or zarua'*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Makhon Yerushalayim, 2010), 498, where both two-headed children and human-animal hybrids are cited as examples of Talmudic hypotheticals which have no correspondence to any extratextual reality. Cf. n. 30.
- 65 Mordekhai to BT *Menachot*, *Hilkhot ketanot*, *Hilkhot tefillin* 13b.
- 66 Eleazar of Worms, *Sodei razzya* (Tel Aviv: Barzani, 2004), 34.
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 See at n. 23. I refer here to *Midrash konen*, a text first printed in Venice in 1601, but whose original provenance is difficult to reconstruct. *Midrash konen* borrows rather freely from late antique and early medieval sources, but as Micha Perry has recently shown, it contains reworkings of some of the passages it cites, which are edited so as to accord with trends in medieval Ashkenazic culture; see Perry, *Masoret ve-shinui: mesirat yeda' be-kerev yehude ma'arav Eropa bi-yeme ha-benayim* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibuts ha-Me'uhad, 2011). Manuscripts of *Midrash konen* which circulated in medieval Ashkenaz contain the same positive valuation of the creatures of Tevel as the Oxford and Munich manuscripts of SRdB; see for example MS Warszaw - Zydowski Instytut

- Historyczny 240, copied in an Ashkenazic hand during the thirteenth or fourteenth century; the description of the monsters of Tevel is on fol. 36.
- 69 Scholarship on late antique and medieval geography and teratology is vast. For more detailed explication of many of the issues treated in this section, see for example Matthew Boyd Goldie, *The Idea of the Antipodes: Place, People, and Voices* (London: Routledge, 2010).
- 70 Plato, *Timaeus*, 63a.
- 71 Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, 2:68.
- 72 Gabriella Moretti, “The Other World and the ‘Antipodes’: The Myth of the Unknown Countries between Antiquity and the Renaissance,” in *The Classical Tradition and the Americas*, ed. Wolfgang Haase and Meyer Reinhold (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 241–84.
- 73 Augustine, *De civitate dei* 16:9; trans in E. M. Sanford and W. M. Green, eds., *Saint Augustine: The City of God Against the Pagans*, vol. 5 (London, 1965), 49–51.
- 74 See the discussion in Valerie Flint, “Monsters and the Antipodes in the Early Middle Ages and Enlightenment,” *Viator* 15 (1984): 65–80.
- 75 *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Epp. 3.360, no. 80; trans. in Flint, “Monsters and the Antipodes,” 65.
- 76 Classic studies of the “monstrous races” include Rudolph Wittkower, “Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942): 159–97; John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000). For a synthetic survey of more recent bibliography, see Asa Simon Mittman and Peter J. Dendle, eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012). I use the label “monstrous races” here and below for reasons of convention, but am mindful of the terminological caution persuasively urged by Asa Simon Mittman in “Are the ‘Monstrous Races’ Races?” *postmedieval* 6 (2015): 36–51.
- 77 Friedman, *Monstrous Races*, 22.
- 78 Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, 11.3.24; trans. in Flint, “Monsters and the Antipodes,” 70.
- 79 *De civitate dei* 16.8.
- 80 See the discussion in Friedman, *Monstrous Races*, 83–103; Ruth Mellinkoff, *The Mark of Cain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); Debra Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), passim.
- 81 Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews*, 49.
- 82 See the discussion in Henryk Anzulewicz, “Peter of Auvergne and Albert the Great as Interpreters of Aristotle’s ‘De caelo,’” in *Peter of Auvergne: University Master of the 13th Century*, ed. Christoph Flueler et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), 112.
- 83 Alastair Minnis, *From Eden to Eternity: Creations of Paradise in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 154.
- 84 Friedman, *Monstrous Races*, 176–79.
- 85 In addition to the studies cited above, attention should be called to the work of Jeffrey J. Cohen, especially his programmatic “Monster Theory: Seven Theses,” in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey J. Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
- 86 Moretti, “The Other World,” 269.
- 87 Eleazar of Worms, *Sodei razzya*, 431.
- 88 Significantly, the wider context of this passage in *Chokhmat ha-nefesh* refers to various orders of demonic creatures (*shedim*, *mazikin*, *lillin*, etc.). Since Eleazar assumes

elsewhere in his corpus that the inhabitants of Tevel are human, it would seem that he did not directly identify the race of the Antipodes with the inhabitants of Tevel. But that he knew of the former altogether reinforces the claim that medieval Jewish authors were aware of and had access to geographic data circulating in Christian circles.

89 *Zohar* 3:10a (Matt et al., vol. 7, 49, 51).

90 *Ibid.*, 52.

91 A comprehensive study of Jewish knowledge of classical and medieval geography remains a significant desideratum. On climatic theory in particular, see the classic work of Alexander Altman, “*Torat ha-aklimim le-R. Yehudah ha-Levi*,” *Melilah* 1 (1944): 1–17; Nehemya Allony, “The Reaction of Moses Ibn Ezra to Arabiyya,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Jewish Studies* 3 (1975): 19–40; and Abraham Melamed, *The Image of the Black in Jewish Culture: A History of the Other* (London: Routledge, 2002): 52–78. For the resonance of these theories in early modernity, see now Iris Idelson-Shein, *Difference of a Different Kind: Jewish Constructions of Race during the Long Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

92 Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews*; Bettina Bildhauer, “Blood, Jews, and Monsters in Medieval Culture,” in *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, ed. Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 75–96.

93 See at n. 81, and cf. Asa Simon Mittman, “Gates, Hats, and Naked Jews: Sorting out the Nubian Guards on the Ebstorf Map,” *FKW: Zeitschrift für Geschlechterforschung und visuelle Kultur*, 54 (2013): 89–101. On Jewish awareness and internalization of the “Red Jews” motif, see Rebekka Voss, “Entangled Stories: The Red Jews in Premodern Yiddish and German Apocalyptic Lore,” *AJS Review* 36 (2012): 1–41.

94 Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

95 On Gervase and his work, see the Introduction to S. E. Banks and J. W. Binns, eds. *Gervase of Tilbury: Otia Imperialia: Entertainment for an Emperor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). For the possibility that Gervase was responsible for one of the most extensive surviving medieval world maps (which contains vividly depicted monstrous races), see Armin Wolf, “The Ebstorf Mappamundi and Gervase of Tilbury: The Controversy Revisited,” *Imago Mundi* 64 (2012): 1–27.

96 Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia* III.45.

97 Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia*, 828–31.

98 For another instance of apparent theological interchange between Gervase and northern European Jews, see Shyovitz, *A Remembrance of His Wonders*, 151–52.

99 My sincere thanks to Iris Idelson-Shein and to Sarah Wolf for reading and commenting upon an earlier draft of this chapter. Preliminary versions of the argument were presented at gatherings at the Goethe-Universität in Frankfurt am Main, at Creighton University in Omaha, NE, and at the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies in New York. I am grateful to the organizers and audiences of those gatherings for their helpful feedback and suggestions.

Sexuality and Communal Space in Stories about the Marriage of Men and She-Demons

David Rotman

To anyone familiar with even a small fraction of the literature on medieval and early modern Jewish narratives, it may seem that Jewish men tend to marry deeply observant Jewish she-demons. In fact, marriage between men and she-demons is probably the most extensively studied literary theme in Jewish folk literature in general, and that of the early modern era in particular. Folklorists, historians, and literary scholars, such as Joseph Dan, Tamar Alexander, Eli Yassif, Chanita Goodblatt, and Jeremy Dauber, have devoted important publications to the theme, offering comparative readings of its Christian literary parallels, in addition to analyzing its functions from feminist and Marxist perspectives and more.¹ Sarah Zfatman wrote a monograph discussing manifestations of the theme in early modern Yiddish literature while, about forty years earlier, Jehuda L. Zlotnik, Nehemya Alloni, and Raphael Patai published a monograph on the Eastern branch of this same theme.² My interest in it was sparked by my study of the marvelous in medieval Jewish literature, in the framework of which I encountered literary descriptions of demonic encounters, including long-term erotic relationships.³

This chapter shifts the focus from the Middle Ages to a later era. The literary theme of marriage between a man and a she-demon was continuously retold from the High Middle Ages deep into early modernity and beyond. Thus this literary theme provides a highly pertinent platform to examine issues of continuity and innovation in early modern Jewish prose-narratives. The chapter is specifically concerned with how the upheavals experienced by Jewish communities between the mid-fifteenth and mid-eighteenth centuries manifested in the stories they told during this period, and with examining the undercurrents which characterize their narrating communities.⁴

Jewish Versions of the Theme

Although rivers of ink have been spilled over this literary motif, it appears quite rarely in extant medieval Jewish sources. In fact, only a single surviving Ashkenazi manuscript, dated to before the invention of the printing press, includes a version of the tale known as the “Story of the Jerusalemite”: Ms. Ox Bodl. 135, penned in Champagne during the

second half of the thirteenth century, a manuscript which includes dozens of Hebrew folktales that circulated in Ashkenaz (the Jewish communities of Medieval Germany and northern and central France).⁵ After breaking the oath he made to his father on the latter's deathbed not to travel to far off lands, the protagonist of this story finds himself in a land of Jewish demons where he is forced to marry the daughter of the demon king in order to save his life. The first printed Hebrew anthology of folktales, published in Constantinople in 1516, includes another version of this story, which probably has an Eastern origin.⁶ There is no documentation of this version in earlier sources; however, it became the most popular version of the story and is widely known to this day, unlike the Ashkenazi tale, which has been published only within the framework of scholarly study.⁷ There are several interesting differences between the Ashkenazi and Eastern versions,⁸ although the main plot is quite similar.

Extensive searches for other possible medieval appearances of this theme have located additional, later manuscripts, such as Ms. Jerusalem oct. 3182, which features a third, incomplete Ashkenazi version of "The Story of the Jerusalemite." Eli Yassif has recently argued that the sources of this sixteenth-century manuscript date back to the beginning of the fourteenth century. As far as we can tell there is no reason to disagree with his assumption, at least with regard to this story.⁹

Another tale concerning the marriage of a Jewish man and a she-demon appears in a seventeenth-century manuscript—Ox. 1567. The hero of this story, a professional amulet writer, is punished by a demon. The latter abducts him and forces him into a marriage with his daughter if he wishes to remain alive. However, the children born to the couple all die in infancy, a result of the sorrow suffered by the man's human family. Thus his demon father-in-law agrees that the couple will reside in the protagonist's home, together with his human wife and children. The entire family continues to live under the same roof until the she-demon is on her deathbed.¹⁰ This story has been attributed to Judah b. Shmuel "the Pious," leader of the Hasidei Ashkenaz—a Jewish mystic circle that was active in Germany around the beginning of the thirteenth century. If this identification is accurate, it constitutes the earliest appearance of this theme in a Jewish source identified to date. However, as Table 9.1 demonstrates, as far as we can tell, only two stories (i.e., "folktale types") about the marriage of a man and a she-demon were related in medieval Jewish communities, and of these, "The Story of the Jerusalemite," was told in three versions.

The findings in Table 9.1 cover the entire period of the "Jewish Middle Ages" (i.e., from the mid-seventh century to the end of fifteenth century). As noted, in the first two centuries of early modernity the theme begins to appear with higher frequency. Indeed, "Story of the Jerusalemite" was first printed in Constantinople in the second decade of the sixteenth century and Hebrew versions of it appeared in print, as Table 9.2 indicates, at least five more times in Venice, Verona, and Altdorf before the end of the seventeenth century (the last two editions were bilingual—Hebrew and Latin). In addition, at least one further version of the story was recorded in manuscript form during this period. Thus, long, stylized medieval versions of the theme were evidently in existence in the early modern period.

The appearance of these particular versions in contemporaneous Jewish communities in Europe and the Middle East appears to indicate that the theme was utilized in this

Table 9.1 (Possible) Appearances of the theme prior to the onset of Hebrew printing

Title	Source	Assumed Time and Location
“Story of the Jerusalemite” (Early Ashkenazi version)	Ms. Ox. Or. 135 (dated to the thirteenth century)	Second half of thirteenth century
[“Story of an Amulet Writer”]	Ms. Ox. 1567 (dated 1639)	Judah the Pious (?), d. Regensburg (Germany) 1217
“Story of the Jerusalemite” (Later Ashkenazi version)	Ms. Jerusalem, October 3182 (dated sixteenth century)	A partial copy of a fourteenth-century Ashkenazi source (?)
“Story of the Jerusalemite” (Eastern printed version)	Constantinople 1516	A copy of an unknown earlier Eastern source

Table 9.2 Early Modern Appearances of the “Story of the Jerusalemite” (before 1700)

Version (Eastern/Late Ashkenazi)	Time and Location	Anthology/Book	Printing Press
Eastern	Constantinople 1516	<i>Divrei ha-yamim shel Moshe rabbenu [The History of Moses]</i>	Ibn Na'amias
Late Ashkenazi	Ashkenazi Community (?) sixteenth century	Ms. Jerusalem Oct. 3182	-
Eastern	Venice 1544	<i>Divre ha-yamim shel Moshe rabbenu [The History of Moses]</i>	De Farri Brothers
Eastern	Venice 1605	<i>Divre ha-yamim shel Moshe rabbenu</i>	J. De Gara
Eastern	Verona 1647	<i>Chibur ha-ma'asiyot ve-ha-midrashot ve-ha-hagadot</i>	Francesco de' Rossi
Eastern	Altdorf 1687	Johann Christoph Wagenseil's <i>Exercitationes sex variis argumenti</i> (bilingual edition)	Jodocus Wilhelmus Kolesius
Eastern	Altdorf 1697	Wagenseil's <i>Exercitationes sex variis argumenti</i>	Jodocus Wilhelmus Kolesius

Table 9.3 Other Early Modern Literary Manifestations of Marriage between Jewish Men and She-Demons

Title	Source	(Assumed) Time and Location
“Mayse fun Vorms” [A Story of an Amulet Writer]	Ms. Camb. Trin. f. 12.45 Ms. Ox. 1567 (dated 1639)	Northern Italy, 1520s by Judah the Pious (?), d. Regensburg (Germany), 1217
“Mock Marriage in Safed”	Joseph Sambari’s <i>Sefer divrei Yosef</i>	(Egypt? 1670s?)
“Mayse malke Shva”	Yossesf Juspa Schammes’ <i>Sefer Mayse nisim</i>	Amsterdam, 1696
“Mayse Poznan”	Zvi Hirsch Koidonover’s <i>Kav ha-yashar</i>	Frankfurt am Main, 1705

period no less intensively than during the Middle Ages, providing a good example of how these narrating communities continued medieval trends and traditions. However, once one of the medieval versions of the “Story of the Jerusalemite” was printed, it was caught up in a kind of Darwinian trajectory, leading to the extinction of most other versions. This is highly instructive regarding the influence which the invention of the printing press exerted on the content of folk literature, although it is less indicative concerning the thematic innovations of early modernity. In order to probe this issue, it is necessary to examine other stories depicting the marriage of men and she-demons which occurred in other narrative-circumstances besides that of the “Story of the Jerusalemite.”

As Table 9.3 reveals, besides the six printed editions of the “Story of the Jerusalemite” (and at least one manuscript edition), in the same period at least five other stories of this kind were circulating in European and Middle Eastern Jewish communities. This does not refer to different versions of the same story, but rather to completely different narratives (or folktale types), despite some similarities.

Early Modern Old-Yiddish Narratives

This chapter focuses on two Hebrew stories from the latter group. However, before doing so I will briefly discuss the two Old-Yiddish tales. The first, “Mayse fun Vorms,” appears in a Northern Italian Yiddish manuscript dating from the 1520s.¹¹ Scholars of Yiddish literature such as Sara Zfatman, Chanita Goodblat, Astrid Lembke, and Jeremey Dauber have studied this story extensively.¹² The tale relates how, during a game of hide and seek in the local *Havel Park* on the Jewish holiday of Lag ba-Omer, a rabbi’s son places his ring on a finger protruding from a tree, mistakenly believing that it belongs to one of his friends. Furthermore, he pronounces the ceremonial words which sanctify a marriage, following which the finger immediately disappears together with the ring. Several years later, after his first and second wife, both from his community and of a high social class, have been found dead, it emerges that the rabbi’s

son is already married as a result of this youthful prank. His demon wife reveals herself to each bride in turn, ordering her to leave the nuptial bed; when the first two brides refuse, the she-demon takes her from the land of the living. The third woman who agrees to marry the rabbi's son, a poor orphan, is the only one who succeeds in making a deal with the she-demon: they agree to share their husband, living under the same roof. After some time, the human wife can no longer contain her curiosity and sneaks into the she-demon's private room while her husband is sleeping there. She sees the beautiful long golden hair of the she-demon on the floor, lifts it up, and gently puts it on a chair. This forces the she-demon to free the couple, after which she dies.¹³

Another, rather similar tale was also told in Worms during the final decades of the seventeenth century by the famous Joseph Juspa Schammes, the folk-historian of the Jewish community there.¹⁴ The story, entitled "A Tale of the Queen of Sheba of the House towards the Sun," was included in his collection of local legends, *Mayse nisim*, which was printed in Amsterdam in 1696 by Juspa's son. In this story, the demonic love affair begins when the she-demon, *Malke Shva* ("Queen of Sheba") offers a poor man a vast fortune if he agrees to make love to her every day in utter secrecy. Here too, the she-demon is described as a beautiful woman with long blond hair. One day, his suspicious human wife follows the man to his shop, which serves as their love nest, and discovers the secret. The she-demon reacts with anger and abandons the man, taking away the entire fortune she had given him.

There are several similarities between these two Yiddish stories: in both the she-demon is portrayed as a beautiful and tempting non-Jew. In both cases she manipulates the Jewish man into sexual or marital relationships but the men's "official" human wives succeed in ending these relationships. However, the most striking similarity is the setting of both stories: a concrete and specific community. In this respect these stories are very different from the medieval tales, namely the "Story of the Jerusalemit" and that of Rabbi Judah the Pious, yet they are certainly closely related to the two Hebrew tales from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which are also clearly rooted in time and place.

Concretizations of Time and Place and their Meanings

Joseph Sambari's story about the "Mock Marriage in Safed" (Egypt, second half of seventeenth century/first decade of eighteenth century) concerning Rabbi Isaac Luria was written about a century after the death of this charismatic Kabbalist and included in a collection entitled *Toldot ha-ARI* (Biography of Luria).¹⁵ The narrative takes place somewhere between 1571 and 1573, the two years which Luria spent in Safed. That city and a nearby field provide the backdrop for the story: while playing with his friends in the field, a boy is amused to see a finger peeking in and out of the earth and decides to sanctify it with his ring. The finger immediately disappears (reappearing later at a highly inconvenient moment). The story afterward mentions Luria's home and the street on which he lived.

The other story, set in Poznan, appears in Zvi Hirsch Koidonover's Moral-book *Kav ha-yashar* (the honest measure), first published in Frankfurt am Main in 1705.¹⁶

The narrative is concretely located in a “stone house on the main street of the Jewish neighborhood of Poznan.”¹⁷ Koidonover notes specific dates within the story: it begins with the death of a boy in the doorway to the cellar of this house “in the year 1681 or 1682,” and continues with a trial over an inheritance that took place two years later, when the demons responsible for the boy’s death lay claim to the house. During the trial, a third date is mentioned: the wars that tore Poland apart in the decade following 1648. During these wars the absent hero of the story—the original owner of the house, the father of the demons and their demonic mother’s husband—was killed.

Folkloristic analysis of legends, fabulats, and memorats¹⁸ tend to explain the times and places that characterize texts of these genres as part of their historical setting. The impact of these stories relies on the narrating society’s belief that the story indeed occurred. This is even more pertinent to the stories discussed here: Worms, Poznan, and Safed are not merely the historical, geographic, or cultural background but rather constitute the rationale for telling the stories. They provide the context and causes of the storytelling, or its delivery, forming components of pseudo-historiographical frames. In the Yiddish stories this emerges clearly from the textual contexts: “Mayse fun Vorms” is part of a cycle of three stories, the title of each refers to the Ashkenazi city in which the narrative was situated.¹⁹ “Mayse malke Shva” is presented as an etiology of one of the houses in the Jewish quarter which was traditionally referred to as “Toyfekopf” (Devil’s Head).²⁰

In Joseph Sambari’s tale, the location of Safed seems to be even more important than the figure of Isaac Luria. The Kabbalist is not mentioned by name and possesses almost no supernatural powers. Yet a seemingly unnecessary scene is included in the story, describing the she-demon walking through the streets of the city after her wedding night, “draped in sheets as was the custom of the daughters of Safed.”²¹

The key moments in the narrative set in Poznan integrate dramatic events that occurred in the city in the mid-seventeenth century. This story even offers a micro-historical prism on traumatic historical events such as the Swedish and later Brandenburgian occupations, as well as the pogrom led by the students of the local Jesuit College in 1659, which remained imprinted on the people’s consciousness and affected the private lives of members of the Jewish community even a quarter of a century afterward.

Human and Demonic Figures

This historical context provides an alternative prism on these early modern narratives, their main characters and their motives, which can serve as points of comparison with earlier medieval stories. In the various versions of the medieval “Story of the Jerusalemit” and Judah the Pious’s narrative, the hero is forced to choose between death and marrying a she-demon. These stories all describe the male protagonists’ extreme passivity, the relative passivity of the she-demons and the ways in which the male-demons manipulate their daughters’ sexual and marital relationships. The she-demons in these stories are merely victims of circumstance or, to be more specific, of

males, both human and demonic. In all these stories the she-demons are described as beings forced to live out their lives, at least until their husbands' deaths, with men who do not love them, even bearing children who suffer from their parents' twisted relationships.²² It seems that the focus of these stories is not these female-figures in and of themselves; they are merely agents of cosmic justice. Their function is to punish the male hero for his behavior (breaking an oath to his father, going far away from his family, or dealing in demonic spells). Their suffering thus appears unjust and the reader can empathize with their situation.

This is not the case in the stories that were recorded in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (even if these tales have earlier origins, they were retold, adapted, and printed during this era and thus reflect the folk-consciousness of their narrating communities). In "Mayse fun Vorms" and in "Mock Marriage in Safed" the hero begins his relationship with the she-demon by sanctifying her while he is still a foolish young man, or even a child. In fact, he does not know that the finger belongs to a demon, but the reckless act of putting his ring on any finger, in particular a very suspicious erect finger, and sanctifying it, makes him responsible for the events which follow. In both stories, the use of words of sanctification becomes the basis for the she-demons' claims and their insistence that the marriage be consummated.²³ In Juspa Schammess's story, as well as the tale from Poznan, the men consciously enter into demonic love affairs. They are interested in what the she-demon can offer them—economically (in the story told by Juspa) or physically (the story from Poznan).

Whereas there is only a slight change in the heroes' nature in the transition from the medieval to early modern stories, the depiction of the she-demons is inverted. In the medieval stories the reader can perhaps identify with the she-demons' lust for revenge on the habitual liars who constitute the heroes of these tales (in the "Story of the Jerusalemite," for example, the protagonist breaks his word no less than five times) and pity them as victims of circumstance. By contrast, in the early modern tales the she-demons are strong and manipulative characters. The she-demons who are sanctified with rings penetrate human space with their fingers before the young men's eyes; the finger then immediately disappears but later returns, together with the entire she-demon, to demand that promises be kept. In the two other cases—the "Story from Poznan" and "Mayse malke Shva"—it is clear that the she-demon seeks a relationship with the protagonists. Thus, apparently, all the early modern stories endeavored to emphasize the exclusive or almost-exclusive responsibility of the she-demons in causing the situation, downplaying any possible empathy toward them.

Sexual Descriptions and Halakhic Discourse

Stories of marriage between men and she-demons tend to include erotic, sometimes even semi-pornographic descriptions of the she-demon's body or her sexual intercourse with the hero. Sometimes the reader becomes a voyeur: in the Eastern version of the "Story of the Jerusalemite" the hero and the reader watch the daughter of Asmadeus dancing with her maids.²⁴ Before removing her wedding dress, she informs the hero: "Do not worry, you will find me a full and perfect woman, I lack nothing that other

women have," and the reader is invited to imagine her perfect body.²⁵ From a similar voyeuristic perspective, together with the goldsmith's wife from Poznan, we watch the husband's sexual intercourse with his demonic mistress in their love nest located in the family toilet.²⁶ Sexual intercourse is likewise described in detail in the Ashkenazi versions of the "Story of the Jerusalemite."²⁷ In all these stories, the sexual relationship results in the birth of semi-demonic children whose fate is an acute problem, dealt with only at the conclusion of the tales.²⁸

These conclusions exhibit a number of similarities and differences with regard to Jewish traditional laws (*halakhah*) and norms, as well as the function of Jewish identity. Previous studies have examined extensively the role of *halakhah* in these stories: the demon characters all observe the religious law. In the various versions of the "Story of the Jerusalemite" the she-demon appeals to her husband's community institutions, asking them to force him to return home with her.²⁹ In the Eastern version of the tale, the local *beth-din* (Jewish religious court) listens to her halakhic claims, before determining in her favor: her husband must either accompany her or give her a *Get*, together with the amount of money she was promised in her *ketubah* (the marriage agreement according to which the groom promises a sum of money to his bride in the event that he leave her without an acceptable excuse).³⁰ However, in the Ashkenazi version the head of the yeshiva rules that the she-demon has no case, and in both versions the hero eventually dies, at which point the she-demon returns to the land of demons alone.³¹

The story about Poznan concludes with the ruling of the local community's *beth-din*, while in the story about Safed, Luria functions as a kind of ad hoc judge. In both cases the she-demons demand that they be allowed to stay and play a role in the local community. This helps account for the supposedly unnecessary scene in which the just-married she-demon walks down the city streets wearing sheets as was customary among "the daughters of Safed." When that same she-demon interrupted the wedding a day earlier, all the members of the community saw how beautiful she was: "a kind of beauty that no one in the world had ever seen before."³² Indeed, travelers to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Palestine, such as Israel of Perugia (in 1517), recorded how pious married women in the land of Israel customarily covered their body in public with long sheets so that "even their husbands could not identify them."³³ There is a clear contrast between the woman who, just a few lines previously was no more than a single finger poking its way out of the dirt, and what she became—not just a complete woman, but one who looks exactly like all the other women in her human-husband's community. She is covered with these same sheets when she brazenly responds to each halakhic argument which Luria raises, until he dispenses with *halakhah* and angrily shouts, "Go to your own place and find a demon husband like yourself, because this man is not for you," threatening to excommunicate her and her family.³⁴

The trial in Poznan is yet more complicated. Here those who demand to play a role and claim their inheritance in the community are not demons, or at least not entirely demons: they are semi-demons, yet also the sons of a community member. Their argument focuses on their father's love for their mother and his promises to her.³⁵ Their human respondents, on the other hand, try to deny this, although their winning argument is as follow: "you are the *chitsonim* [outsiders, but also one of the

Hebrew names for demonic entities] who cannot be called seed of man.”³⁶ The *beth-din* accepts this argument and rules that the *chitsonim* are indeed outsiders who do not belong there.

Demonic Marriage and Communal Identities

Although later stories contain some of the earlier motifs, a number of issues noticeably differentiate the early modern stories depicting marriage between Jewish men and she-demons from those dating to the Middle Ages. There are several possible reasons for these differences and their significance, as will be outlined below.

I have previously discussed the key intra-literary and extraliterary functions of stories concerning demonic encounters, arguing that they are connected to my proposed definition for the category of the marvelous in Jewish literature. I claim that the term “marvelous” refers to a series of phenomena and events that are, first and foremost, exceptional or strange in the context of the narrating society’s familiar reality. At the same time, they are deemed possible according to that same society’s perceptions and beliefs. However, a third element can be seen as bridging the gap between these two and strengthening each one: tangibility. A marvelous phenomenon is described as sensual, in other words, as something that is perceived by the senses, underscoring its strangeness in comparison to everyday reality but also the possibility of its occurrence.³⁷

This definition can improve our understanding of various categories of marvelous creatures. One way of examining what makes certain creatures marvelous is the extent to which they are alien to the reality of the narrating society, and how their descriptions emphasize their tangibility (assuming that these creatures were viewed as part of the narrating society’s extraliterary reality). However, demons, who are the most common marvelous creatures in Jewish literature, are also the most difficult to define: who are these demons? How are they characterized in stories? One can try, as other scholars have done, to examine the features attributed to them in rabbinic or kabbalistic literature, but most of these features simply do not suit the characters in medieval stories.³⁸ For example, in moral terms, are they good or bad? In a great deal of European non-Jewish folklore, it is quite clear that the term “demonic” is applied negatively. This is also the case in some Jewish corpora such as kabbalistic or magical materials (e.g., Hebrew incantations and amulets). However, as early as the stories which appear in the Talmud, we find instances of helpful demons who aid the Jews in their negotiations with the Roman rulers.³⁹ Even when the demons cause havoc in certain stories, they tend to do so as emissaries of God, or justice.⁴⁰ Another issue is their physical appearance: are they corporeal? There is no consensus among the rabbis, the Zohar, and their commentators on this matter.⁴¹ The stories discussed here, of course, contain no suggestion that the demons lack a physical body. Where do they live: within or outside inhabited places? And what happens when demons enter human abodes or vice versa? It is not rare to find contradictions between some of the responses to these questions given by rabbis and thinkers and between with respect to the plots of these stories.

In order to provide some kind of satisfactory response we can begin by examining aspects regarding which widespread agreement exists, namely, what demons are not: they are neither human nor animal, but rather exist in a special category of their own. In addition, the sources highlight another characteristic of demons: they often encounter human beings. In fact, most debates about demons, and all the stories regarding them, concern human encounters with them. Thus, even when stories do not offer much information about demons, they do teach us a great deal about the narrating community's perceptions. As early as rabbinic sources it is evident that time and space do not exclusively belong to "us" but rather are shared with demons: we must consider their existence and accept it.⁴² A question that arises frequently with regard to the stories discussed herein is that of location: who exists where and who is the invader? Who crosses the boundaries and what are the outcomes of such breaches? In medieval stories, the demons, Jewish or not, are perceived as living distant from the narrating Jewish society. Encounters take place when human beings, the heroes, violate their spatial boundaries and invade the demonic sphere, or force the demons to enter the human sphere.⁴³ The outcomes are fatal and usually tragic (for both parties). Thus, there is a psycho-social function at work in these kinds of stories: they clearly express the fear that members of the community might depart, leave the boundaries of their community, encounter foreign elements and may not be able (or maybe will not want) to come back. This anxiety is typical of minority groups, for whom the constant contact with "others," that is, non-Jews, poses a continuous threat to the very foundations of their identity.⁴⁴

In early modern stories, the anxiety of violating the limits and crossing thresholds is even more evident. These stories do not feature men who travel far afield or consort with demons from afar. Rather, the encounters take place within the communities' geographic borders, with those nearby *chitsonim* who want to enter the community and become part of it, not temporarily but in the long term. The ancient devices that defended the community from invasions of this kind—such as consciously avoiding any contact with outsiders, as is implied for example, in the conclusion to Judah the Pious's tale "Story of an Amulet Writer," or maintaining Jewish law and the heritage of the forefathers, as is implied in the "Story of Jerusalemit"—apparently no longer function. Instead, the early modern she-demons are not only bound by *halakhah* but are very familiar with it, using this knowledge to sneak into the community. These she-demons do not avoid contact with human beings and are even attracted to them. Likewise, some members of the community are drawn to these kinds of relationships and express no regrets for their actions. The fear and confusion expressed in these early modern stories differ from the medieval concerns voiced by minority communities surrounded by foreigners: in the latter case it was very easy to discern differences and therefore keep one's distance and avoid "the other."

In the study of early modern Jewish culture we encounter new types of Jewish communities, namely, Diaspora communities that had recently experienced historic trauma and collapse (i.e., deportations or pogroms), necessitating their reconstruction in new locations. These include sixteenth-century Italian cities where, at least according to earlier speculations, "Mayse fun Worms" was composed and related, seventeenth-century Polish and German cities, where "Mayse fun Worms" and "Mayse

malke Shva" were told, and locations all over the Ottoman Empire: "Mock Marriage in Safed" was related in its southeastern regions (i.e., Egypt and Syria/Palestine). The Diaspora communities in all these locations encountered not only local majority populations but also other Jewish groups.⁴⁵ Members of these communities may well have felt that it had taken them a long time to become accustomed to troubles caused by interactions with non-Jewish "others" and now they were faced with a new problem: What to do with these new "other" Jews? How should they deal with the "brothers and sisters" alongside them, apparently permanently: Did they constitute part of the community? Were they "us" or "them?" What should they do when one of them stretches out a finger and someone from the community puts a ring on it? Luria provides a straightforward answer: "Go to your place, find a demon husband like yourself, because that man is not for you," or in the words of the members of the Beth-Din in Poznan, "their place is in the wild, not in inhabited places!" These stories depict the community leadership as defenders of the community. They offer an answer to a situation not covered by *halakhah*, and draw new lines of communal identity which distinguish their communities from those who are, or are not, human, or from those who are not, or are, Jews like them.

Notes

- 1 Joseph Dan, "Five versions of the story of the Jerusalemite," *PAAJR*, XXXV (1967): 99–111; Tamar Alexander-Frizer, "Theme and Genre: Relationships between Man and She-demon in Jewish Folklore," *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review* 14.1–2 (1992): 56–61; Eli Yassif, *Agadat Tsfat* (Haifa: Haifa University Press, 2011), 147–52; Chanita Goodblatt, "Women, Demons, and the Rabbi's Son: Narratology and 'A Story from Worms,'" *Exemplaria* 12 (2000): 231–53; Dauber, *In the Demon's Bedroom: Yiddish Literature and the Early Modern* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 140–71.
- 2 Jehuda L. Zlotnik, Nehemya Alloni, and Raphael Patai, *Ma'ase Yerushalmi* (Jerusalem: The Palestine Institute of Folklore and Ethnology, 1946); Sara Zfatman, *Nisu'eh adam ve-shedah* (Jerusalem: Akademon Press, 1987).
- 3 David Rotman, *Drakonim, shedim u-mechozot kesumim* (Hevel Modi'in: Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, Dvir and Heksherim Institute, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 2016), 201–09.
- 4 See, for example, David Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).
- 5 Eli Yassif situated the manuscript in his work: Eli Yassif, *Ke-margalit ba-mishbetset: kovetz ha-sippurim ha-'ivri be-yeme ha-benayim* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz ha-meuchad, 2004), 136–65. Malachi Beit-Arie reinforced this claim using codicological analysis: Malachi Beit-Arie, "Manuscript Oxford Bodleian Library Or. 135," *Tarbits* 54 (1984): 631–43 [Hebrew].
- 6 *Divre ha-yamim shel Moshe Rabbenu* (Constantinople: Ibn Na'amias Printing Press, 1516), (no pagination).
- 7 See: Eli Yassif, "'Leisure' and 'Generosity': Theory and Practice in the Creation of Hebrew Narratives in the Late Middle Ages," *Kiryat Sefer* 62 (1990): 887–905 (the story appears on p. 904).

- 8 The most important difference is in the conclusion. Although in both versions the male protagonist is killed by his demonic wife, in the early Ashkenazi tale, she does not harm his human wife or sons, who live happily ever after, whereas in the Eastern version, the demonic wife and her son remain in the hero's city and rule over his community.
- 9 Eli Yassif, *Me'ah sippurim chaser echad* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2013), 15–22. The story can be found on pp.178–82.
- 10 The story was first published in Hebrew by Joseph Dan, *Iyunim be-sifrut chasidei Ashkenaz*, (Ramat Gan: Masada, 1975), 19–20 and recently in a more accurate edition: Rotman, *Drakonim*, 201–03. An English translation was published earlier by Dan, “Five versions,” 102–04.
- 11 Zfatman, *Nisu'ei adam ve-shedah*, 20.
- 12 Ibid., 19–65; Goodblatt, “Women, Demons”; Dauber, *Demon's Bedroom*, 140–71; Astrid Lembke, *Dämonische Allianzen: Jüdische Mahrtenhenerzählungen der europäischen Vormoderne* (A. Francke Verlag: Tübingen und Basel 2013), 151–206. All these analyses include translations or abstracts of the story in Hebrew, English, or German.
- 13 This abstract is based on the original story that was published by Zfatman, *Nisu'ei adam ve-shedah*, 119–27.
- 14 The story is integrated into Joseph Juspa Schammes, *Mayse nisim* (Amsterdam: Hazan and Baer, 1596), 30b–31b; English translations can be found in: Shlomo Eidelberg (trans. and ed.), *R. Juspa, Shammash of Warmaisa (Worms): Jewish Life in 17th Century Worms* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991), 87–88.
- 15 This collection of stories was integrated into Joseph Sambari's major work: *Sefer divrei Yosef*(1673?): “A history of the events and miracles our fathers experienced from the year 380 from the Creation (620 AC) until the current year of 432 from the Creation (1672 AC) here, Egypt,” see: Shimon Shtober (ed.), *Sefer divrei Yosef by Yosef ben Yitzhak Sambari* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1994), 328–60; the story appears on pp. 347–48.
- 16 The first edition of this *musar* book (over one hundred chapters in length) was published in Hebrew in Frankfurt am Main in 1705. The second edition (1706), and those following were bilingual—Yiddish and Hebrew. See: Zvi Hirsch Koidanover, *Sefer Kav ha-yashar* (Frankfurt am Main: Y. Vaust Press, 1705), 265b–68a; for more about this work see: Jean Baumgarten, “Between Translation and Commentary: The Bilingual Editions of the *Kav Yasher* by Tsvi Hirsh Koidanover,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 3.3 (2004): 269–87; Jacob Elbaum, “*Sefer Kav ha-Yashar*: Some remarks on Its Structure, Content, and Literary Sources,” in *A Touch of Grace: Studies in Ashkenazi Culture, Women's History, and the Languages of the Jews Presented to Chava Turniansky*, ed. Israel Bartal et al. (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2013), 15–64.
- 17 According to Adam Teller, at the time there were about twenty stone houses on that street, see: Adam Teller, *Living Together: The Jewish Quarter of Poznan in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2003), 106–07.
- 18 These terms were suggested by Carl von Sydov to characterize the different stages of a legend's development. The first stage, “Memorat,” is usually an unnatural experience told by the person who experienced it or witnessed it. A “Fabulat” is the narrative of an experience of this kind, told by people who did not experience it or witness it as something that occurred in the near-remembered past. Based on this reasoning, “The Story of Poznan” can be defined as a fabulat. See: Laurits Bodker and Carl Wilhelm

- von Sydow (eds.), *Selected Papers on Folklore: Published on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1948), 60–88.
- 19 The other two are entitled: “A Story of Mainz” and “A Story of Danzig” see: Zfatman, *The Marriage*, 19–20.
 - 20 Schammes, *Mayse nisim*, 30b.
 - 21 Shtober, *Sefer divrei Yosef*, 347.
 - 22 In the Eastern version of “The Story of the Jerusalemite” the human father abandons the son which the she-demon bore him and then ignores the son’s pleas that he keep his promise and return to his demonic family. In the story of the amulet writer, the she-demon, on her deathbed, tells the protagonist, the father of her three children with whom she has lived all her life, that she is aware of the hatred he feels toward her and is happy that she is going to die. See: Zlotnik, *Ma’ase Yerushalmi*, 63–65; Rotman, *Drakonim*, 202.
 - 23 In “Mock Marriage in Safed” the she-demon appears during the young man’s Seven-Blessings ceremony, shows his ring to the crowd, and demands to know what the bridegroom deemed so wrong with her that he would marry someone else. In “Mayse fun Worms” the she-demon appears in each bride’s bed in turn, demanding that the new bride leave her husband. See: Shtober, *Sefer divrei Yosef*, 347; Zfatman, *Nisu’ei adam ve-shedah*, 121–22.
 - 24 Zlotnik, *Ma’ase Yerushalmi*, 55.
 - 25 Ibid., 57.
 - 26 Koidonover, *Sefer kav ha-yashar*, 267b.
 - 27 Yassif, *Mea’h sipurim*, 181.
 - 28 The story about Luria is exceptional, although it is included in an anthology in which there is no lack of pornographic descriptions. Apparently it was highly important for the anonymous storyteller not to answer clearly the question of whether the demonic marital relationship was fully consummated.
 - 29 According to some versions she does so using the medieval Jewish custom of “Stopping the Service.” See: Abraham Grossman, “The Origins and Essence of the Custom of ‘Stopping the Service,’” *Milet: The Open University Studies in Jewish History and Culture* 1 (1983): 199–219 [Hebrew].
 - 30 Zlotnik, *Ma’ase Yerushalmi*, 66–67.
 - 31 Yassif, “‘Leisure’ and ‘Generosity,’” 904.
 - 32 Shtober, *Sefer divre Yosef*, 347.
 - 33 Avraham Yaari, ed., *Letters from the Land of Israel* (Giva’ataim: Massada, 1971), 172–73 [Hebrew].
 - 34 In Hebrew this sentence is rhymed: “לְכִי לַיְךְ לָאָרֶץ / וְקַחֵי לְךָ בָּעֵל שֶׁ כְּמוֹתֶךָ / כִּי זֶה הָאִישׁ לְאַךְ(!)” see: Shtober, *Sefer divrei Yosef*.
 - 35 Koidonover, *Sefer kav ha-yashar*, 266a–66b.
 - 36 Koidonover, *Sefer kav ha-yashar*, 267b.
 - 37 Rotman, *Drakonim*, 21–41.
 - 38 See, for example, the entry in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* concerning demons in the ancient near east, the Hebrew Bible, Apocryphal literature, Rabbinic literature, and Kabbalistic literature which fails to mention their appearances in medieval Jewish narratives: Delbert Roy Hillers, Louis Isaac Rabinowitz, and Gershom Scholem, “Demons, Demonology” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 5 (2nd ed.) eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA in association with the Keter Pub. House, 2007), 572–78; for more recent attempts to deal with the problem of defining demons see: Dan Ben Amos “On Demons,” in *Creation and Re-Creation*

in Jewish Thought, Festschrift in Honor of Joseph Dan on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday, ed. Rachel Elior and Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 27–37; Yuval Harari, *Jewish Magic Before the Rise of the Kabbalah* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017), 386–407 and compare: Rotman, *Drakonim*, 190–195.

- 39 BT Mei'lah 17b.
- 40 As in the case of the demon who possesses the Byzantine emperor's daughter in the southern Italian *Chronicle of Ahima'az* (1054). See: Roberto Bonfil, trans. and ed., *History and Folklore in a Medieval Jewish Chronicle: The Family Chronicle of Ahima'az ben Paltiel* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), 267–72.
- 41 For example: BT Berahot 6a.
- 42 A close reading of two stories provides details on the encounters and negotiations, on two separate occasions, between the Talmudic she-demon Agrat bat Machlat and two rabbis, Chanina ben Dosa and Abaye. According to these stories, the rabbis actually allowed the she-demon to act and harm human beings in designated, and limited, times and spaces. See: BT Pesachim 112b–13a.
- 43 In “The Story of Jerusalemit” the protagonist breaks his word to his dying father and tries to cross the sea. See: Zlotnik, *Ma'ase Yerushalmi*, 44. In “Rabbi Judah the Pious” “A Story of an Amulet Writer” the protagonist is punished for forcing the demon to come to his home. See: Rotman, *Drakonim*, 201.
- 44 Rotman, *Drakonim*, 201–09.
- 45 Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, 23–55; Yassif, *Agadat Tsfat*, 19–39.

The Raging Rabbi: Aggression and Agency in an Early Modern Yiddish Werewolf Tale (*Mayse-bukh* 1602)

Astrid Lembke

The 1602 *editio princeps* of the *Mayse-bukh*, a collection of tales in Old Yiddish, includes the tale of a pious rabbi transformed into a werewolf by his evil wife. The rabbi-werewolf is depicted as being at once extremely violent and highly rational:

[We] want to continue writing about how the good rabbi, the poor man, was wandering in the woods as a werewolf. Nobody knew about it. He did great harm, eating people and other animals, because among all animals none is stronger than the werewolf. They sent for the charcoal burner[s] and asked whether they could deal with the werewolf. They said: “No, because he is much stronger than a lion and also very clever, just like a man.”¹

It is precisely due to such ambivalences that shape-shifters such as werewolves constitute a controversial and precarious, yet also exceedingly fascinating topic in premodern discourse: they challenge the fundamental difference between savage animals and rational human beings. So too they allow for, and indeed provoke, questions concerning the nature of man and how human society functions. The werewolf is a poignant example of the monster, which, according to Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, evades simple categorization. Monsters, as Cohen explains, “are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration. And so the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions.”² The hybrid, non-classifiable man-wolf or wolf-man can be used as a cipher for different kinds of transgressions, disorders, and desires. Viewed from this perspective, it truly “exists only to be read: the *monstrum* is etymologically ‘that which reveals,’ ‘that which warns,’ a glyph that seeks a hierophant. Like a letter on the page, the monster signifies something other than itself.”³

What, then, can a werewolf signify? This chapter seeks to demonstrate how an Old Yiddish tale employs the narrative pattern of the “involuntary werewolf” in order to express two seemingly contradictory emotions: fear and desire.⁴ A person

who radically changes his or her physical appearance evokes deep mistrust and even dread. The transformation raises questions concerning the person's identity: does the transformed body still incorporate the person's memories, thoughts, and emotions? Moreover, is it possible that this person possessed hidden and potentially threatening or frightening characteristics even before the transformation, yet had somehow managed to conceal them? Can we ever truly know whom to trust? Perhaps most urgently, if the body is proven to be so unstable—how can our own bodies be trusted? As troubling as this last question may be, it generates not merely alarm but also hope and even desire. If it were indeed possible to change the body so fundamentally, to assume another body as easily as a person changes clothes, such a transformation could open up a world of otherwise inaccessible possibilities. What weaknesses could one divest oneself of, what capabilities could one obtain? Such a transformation would enable the effortless transgression of restricting borders, with immense consequences for interpersonal relationships between the genders (or even within the same gender), between sovereigns and their subjects, as well as members of different religious communities.

The Old Yiddish werewolf tale in the *Mayse-bukh* is a good example of how the narrative pattern of the involuntary werewolf can be used as a prism to discuss different kinds of social interaction and social conflict. It explores the tenuous relationships between individuals of various ranks in a given social hierarchy which result from differences in gender, class, religion, physical prowess, and erudition. This tale portrays the encounter between fear and desire, the wish to control the conditions in which one lives, and the possibility of self-empowerment. It is a story of trust in God rather than reliance on other people, of self-determination, and of fundamental personal autonomy.

Medieval Werewolf Tales

This story in the early modern *Mayse-bukh* is not the first example of a tale portraying the radical physical transformation by which a human being becomes a wolf. European literature contains numerous examples of werewolf stories, although many ancient and Medieval Jewish and Christian scholars considered the concept of such a transformation theologically problematic, viewing it as offensive and a challenge to the presupposition that God created man in the divine image and likeness. Moreover, they considered metamorphosis as a fundamental contradiction of the belief that God made all creatures just as they should be.⁵ Nevertheless, Jewish as well as Christian communities discussed this phenomenon, especially in the High Middle Ages, during what Caroline Walker Bynum has termed “the werewolf renaissance of the twelfth century.”⁶ David Shyovitz has demonstrated that the German Pietists (*Hasidei Ashkenaz*, members of a mystical, moralistic, and ascetic movement which flourished in the Rhineland during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries), for example, believed that metamorphosis was indeed possible, but the transformations were never absolute or complete. They assumed that there always remained some measure of “permanence and even stability in the midst of change”;⁷ thus, a man who turned into a wolf

had always possessed some wolfish feature even before the transformation and the shape-shifting revealed an inherent, yet dormant, quality.

Christian scholars, similarly to their Jewish colleagues, necessarily tackled the ubiquity of popular belief in werewolves. Clerics writing in Latin, on the one hand, sometimes devised rather creative ways of talking about shape-shifters, characterizing them as retaining some part of their humanity all of the time. This allowed clerical authors to discuss the nature of these creatures while at the same time maintaining the fundamental immutability and stability of all species and without questioning the distinction between human and animal. Those writers in Northern France and England, on the other hand, who penned texts in the French vernacular intended for a courtly audience were apparently not overly concerned by the theological implications of physical transformation. One of the results of their relative equanimity was the appearance of a new narrative pattern in French literature: that of the involuntary werewolf. We know of four medieval werewolf stories in French, which share a similar narrative structure: Marie de France's *Bisclavret*, dating from the second half of the twelfth century; *Guillaume de Palerne*, written at the end of the twelfth century; *Melion*, also dating from the late twelfth century; and *Biclarel*, penned during the first half of the fourteenth century. Likewise, there also exists an Old Norse reworking of *Bisclavret* entitled *Bisclaretz ljóð*, dating from the thirteenth century, as well as the Latin tale *Arturus et Gorlagon*, written in the early fourteenth century.⁸ All these narratives describe how a woman forces her husband or lover, a member of the court (i.e., a knight or even a king), to live in the form of a wolf. The werewolf becomes some ruler's companion. When his wife's evil machinations are discovered, the transformed knight is returned to his original form and the woman is punished. All these narrative elements found in medieval courtly texts later recur in the Old Yiddish tale which was published in the *Mayse-bukh* at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

The Christian narratives employ both the protagonist's monstrosity and a clearly negative characterization of his wife in order to reflect upon a type of interpersonal relationship that poses an alternative to marriage and passionate love: homosocial bonding between men.⁹ They also tackle the tenuous relationship between men of different ranks within the feudal system's social order (i.e., between the knight and his king), as well as portraying the characteristics of an ideal knight. The existence as a wolf-man is especially fitting for a knight because this creature can display two different natures: a wolfish nature toward his and his liege lord's enemies and a dog-like, obedient manner toward that liege lord. This also means that although the mistreated knight is a "sympathetic werewolf," he always retains some measure of inherent ferocity—exactly as a knightly member of the feudal system was expected to behave.¹⁰ Thus the wife's abhorrence of the potentially savage and bloodthirsty werewolf and the king's affection for the beast are two sides of the same coin.

The authors of medieval courtly werewolf tales simultaneously recoil from the idea that it might be difficult to control the wolf-man hybrid and rejoice in it. Eventually, they utilize the ambivalent emotions evoked by the idea of the werewolf in order to mold and refine the image of courtly knighthood. In this regard, they, too, display mixed feelings: they respect and even fear a savage creature that can only be controlled

if it submits itself to another's command. Yet, at the same time, they also express a kind of desire, encapsulated in the idea that a man can change into a being of immeasurable strength and that he can and will exercise this strength at will, with the utmost vehemence and even brutality.

This somewhat ambivalent attitude underwent an acute change at the beginning of the early modern period. From the late Middle Ages onward, an increasing number of men and women were tried and often executed for intentionally transforming into wolves and harming their neighbors. This occurred at the same time as the witch hunts, when people accused of entering a pact with the devil were thought to be able to transform themselves into various kinds of animals.¹¹ In fact, at the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth century, scholars often referred to "actual cases" of witchcraft and lycanthropy in order to underline their arguments in discussions of these subjects. In particular, the case of Peter Stump or Stubbe Peeter of Epprath, near Bedburg in the Rhineland, received significant attention in German-speaking lands and beyond. In 1589, Peter Stump was accused of making a pact with the devil. The latter had allegedly presented him with a magic girdle that endowed him with the ability to transform into a wolf, enabling him to kill and devour men, in addition to breaking numerous other social taboos. The accused was executed in that same year.¹²

The Werewolf Tale in the *Mayse-bukh*

Intriguingly, only thirteen years after Peter Stump's execution, at a time when the accusation of lycanthropy often had dire consequences for the accused, the "involuntary werewolf" appears once again—this time in a popular Yiddish collection of stories. The "Story of a Renowned Scholar Who Lived in the Land of Ouz" (*mayse* no. 227) was included in the first edition of the *Mayse-bukh*, printed in Basel in 1602.¹³ Of particular interest is the historical context in which this tale was printed in the *Mayse-bukh* for the first time and thereby reached a relatively large audience: that of the werewolf trials, as well as the generally precarious situation of the Ashkenazi Jews, which led to forced migration and numerous expulsions of Jewish residents from German cities.¹⁴

The werewolf *mayse* appears in the third section of the *Mayse-bukh*. This section draws not (or not solely) on Talmudic, Midrashic, or other canonical Jewish texts, but also on a variety of other sources, some of which at least were available to Christians and Jews alike.¹⁵ While it is impossible to determine exactly upon which source the Jewish tale is based, the similarity to the medieval courtly werewolf tales is striking. The *mayse* is structured according to its protagonist's movements: on two occasions he leaves home and returns; twice he confronts a problematic situation, the second of which results from the failure to find a suitable solution to the first problem. This protagonist is an erudite, pious, and charitable Jewish scholar, the head of a yeshiva with many students. He is married to a miserly and ill-tempered wife, who frowns on his generosity and piety. At the beginning of this relatively long and complex

narrative, the rabbi gives away all of his wealth to the poor and thereby, eventually, sinks into dire poverty himself. Consequently, he decides to leave his hometown in secret, accompanied by his students, searching for a way to retrieve some of his former wealth. In the course of his journey, he finds a magical ring which grants all his wishes. Miraculously saved from poverty, the rabbi returns home with his students, who remain oblivious to the existence of the ring. Surprised at his return, the rabbi's wife urges him to reveal his secret and he finally divulges to her the ring's magical properties. The wife then cunningly uses the ring to transform her husband into a werewolf in order to dispose of him:

As soon as she was wearing the ring, she put her head under the blanket and wished: "God may grant that my husband becomes a werewolf and runs to the forest to be with the other wild animals." She had barely finished speaking when the good rabbi jumped out of the window and ran into a big forest that is called the Forest of Bohemia and began devouring those people who entered the forest and did great harm, so that no man could walk through the forest by himself, because they all feared the werewolf.¹⁶

When the king of the country sends one of his counselors, a strong warrior, into the woods to kill the wolf, the counselor is immediately attacked and almost killed. However, he prays to God and promises not to attack the wolf again, leading the wolf to spare the man's life and follow him like a loyal pet. The counselor returns to the palace in order to present the wolf to the king. Later, he marries the king's daughter and inherits the throne. One day, when it is snowing outside, the werewolf is finally able to communicate his true nature by writing a message in the snow in Hebrew, urging the ruler to help the werewolf retrieve the magical ring which he lost to his treacherous wife. Once the message has been translated, the king fetches the ring and the werewolf is returned to human form. The rabbi politely declines the king's invitation to remain at his court and departs for his home, gathering new students en route. He also transforms his wife into an ass, builds a new synagogue in his hometown—forcing the she-ass to help him—and lives happily ever after.

The beginning of the seventeenth century was certainly not a good time to be suspected of being a werewolf—especially one transformed by means of a magical device—who kills and eats people. A Christian audience, aware of the trial of Peter Stump or similar cases, could easily ascribe demonic aspects to the character of the rabbi. Did the compiler and printer not fear the Christian majority's reaction to a book which included a story like this amid tales that were clearly intended to offer edification and instruction to a Jewish audience? Yet, the werewolf tale was included in the first edition of the *Mayse-bukh* as well as subsequent editions. A Christian censor such as Johannes Buxtorf, on the one hand, would not have found the tale problematic, since it does not portray Christian characters negatively.¹⁷ The book's Jewish audience, on the other hand, might actually have been especially interested in a story that depicts a Jewish protagonist as a powerful and even menacing character, one able to manipulate a Christian king and his courtiers in order to achieve his goals.

Misogyny and Male Bonding

Conspicuously, the Yiddish *mayse* displays highly misogynist tendencies, similarly to other medieval courtly werewolf tales. The rabbi's wife is cunning in a very displeasing way. The narrator even refers to her as a female sleuth or tracker dog,¹⁸ suggesting that her intelligence is animalistic, driven by base instincts. In contrast to the rabbi, who excels in giving alms to the poor, his wife is obsessed with material wealth. A number of other premodern Jewish (i.e., Hebrew and Yiddish) stories tackle the practical and religious dilemma to which this *mayse* clearly alludes even more explicitly, as it is an often discussed problem: a man is obliged to give alms and engage in religious studies but must also care for his wife's and family's material well-being. It is indeed difficult to balance these obligations and they are often presented as almost or even completely incompatible.¹⁹ However, the werewolf *mayse* clearly does not recommend that a woman turn her husband into a werewolf as a solution to this problem. The rabbi's wife in this tale is not merely concerned about the needs of daily food and shelter; rather, she is outright mean and greedy. Furthermore, her exuberance is not limited to money and property. At the end of the tale, after she has been transformed into a she-ass, the narrator relates that she eats and mates excessively, without restraint: "The she-ass had fattened herself and become very plump. She also fornicated in front of everyone, like a beast with no shame."²⁰

In the course of the tale, both the rabbi and his wife are turned into animals, yet their transformations are very different. The rabbi's human character is not eliminated by the transformation at all; he retains his rationality even as he inhabits the body of an animal. His wife, in contrast, immediately and completely succumbs to the animalism that is imposed upon her, suggesting that this may always have constituted an important part of her character, even before she was transformed into an ass.²¹ Indeed, the transformation simply serves to reveal her true, beastly nature, which until then had remained hidden under a human cover. This implies that she was in reality a hybrid monster even before her transformation. That transformation in fact restores the natural order of things insofar as her beastly character now corresponds with her outward appearance.

The narrator continuously criticizes the moral flaws and damnable actions of the story's female protagonist. Moreover, he comments on the woman's behavior in a way which deprecates women in general. After the rabbi has decided to tell his wife about the magical ring, the narrator states:

By doing this, he made a mistake. For King Salomon said: "You shall not trust your wife with any secret because she will reveal it." This truly happened to the good rabbi as well, as you will hear. Had he not trusted his wife with this [secret], he would have saved himself many troubles, in fact everything which he was forced to suffer.²²

The message is clear: men should never erroneously place too much trust in their wives. Yet, what does the tale have to say about the alternative to heterosocial bonding between spouses? Does it idealize faithful and trusting relationships between men,

just as the courtly tales romanticize the relationship between a king and his knights? In fact, this *mayse*, too, favors a homosocial model, although a very different one to that which appears in the courtly tales. However, this does not glorify the relationship between the protagonist and his king, even though the monarch explicitly suggests such an option, inviting the rabbi, once he has returned to human form, to remain at his court. The rabbi declines and instead journeys home, even refusing to accept the king's gifts.²³ True—the relationship between the rabbi-werewolf and the king is rather symmetrical, much more so than the relationships between the knight-werewolves and their monarchs in the older, non-Jewish stories. To name but one example: even after the counselor becomes king, he continues to care for the wolf because he feels obliged to do so: "He did not want to leave him [the wolf] as long as he lived, since he had spared his life and also enabled him to obtain the kingdom. In return for this, it would only be fair to look after him well, as long as he lived."²⁴

In this way, the king acknowledges his debt to the wolf. Nevertheless, their alliance does not last indefinitely. The werewolf *mayse* clearly differs from its medieval counterparts in that it does not depict a linear movement from A to B, that is, from a marriage between a man and a woman toward a friendship (albeit a hierarchical one) between two men. Instead, it begins with an antagonistic coexistence of A (marriage) and B (the homosocial relationship between a rabbi and his students), from which the superfluous and troubling element of the marriage is eventually removed. At the end of the story, the rabbi is reunited with his students and his ill-tempered wife is no longer able to cause trouble. The relationship with the counselor or king is merely a helpful intermission on the way to this desirable state. The story emphasizes that for a pious Jewish rabbi, it is not feasible (or desirable) to become part of the courtly elite. Building a community consisting entirely of men connected by tight, religious bonds is characterized as infinitely more attractive.

Autonomy and Violence

Yet the question remains—why does this tale exhibit so much mistrust, from the very beginning until its conclusion? The narrator informs the readers that no man should ever trust his wife; this is indeed the lesson which the rabbi learns over the course of the plot. In addition, he does not trust his companionship with the king, nor should he—indeed, the narrator states that had he been aware of its true powers, the king might have been unwilling to return the magic ring.²⁵ Even more extraordinary is the pious rabbi's lack of honesty toward his community: when he falls into poverty, he leaves town secretly so that no one will learn of his misfortune, instead of asking for charity himself. He reasons that there are always people who rejoice in the misfortune of others, apparently suspecting that such malicious people are even to be found among his neighbors.²⁶ The rabbi later continues lying to his community even after his return, for a long time pretending not to know what has become of his wife.²⁷ Finally, and most seriously, he also exhibits a distinct lack of trust toward his, allegedly, highly esteemed students. Although he refers to them as loyal and faithful, he deliberately refrains from revealing to them the origin of his sudden riches and instead chooses to lie about the

entire matter. He explicitly presumes that his students might take the ring from him or betray the secret to someone else who would steal the magic device.²⁸ In the rabbi's eyes, one must doubt everyone—be he king or student, Christian or fellow Jew, and, ultimately, man or woman.

The rabbi's deep mistrust ultimately enables him to flourish. Only once throughout the tale does he trust someone else, namely, his wife: a grave mistake. Thus, while Christian werewolf tales propagate homosocial relationships built on mutual trust, the Yiddish *mayse* emphasizes the importance of never really trusting anyone, not even other men, not even beloved students or fellow scholars. Instead, the readers are told, one must trust solely in God, keep one's own council, and ultimately maintain independence.

How does this affect the relationship between the rabbi and the king as subject and ruler? In this regard, it is worthwhile examining the werewolf's potential for violence. The courtly, non-Jewish tales stress repeatedly that the wolf never harms his lord. Whenever he rages or kills, he directs his violent deeds against people who have harmed him in the past; otherwise, he first leaves his liege lord's country so that any acts of violence will be committed elsewhere. The courtly texts thus tend to negate, diminish, or deflect the werewolf's potential for violence against his ruler and his ruler's other subjects.

In contrast, the Yiddish *mayse* portrays a very different phenomenon, although the early modern werewolf-rabbi is likewise compared to a loyal dog upon deciding to follow his future savior: "He started wagging his tail in order to charm the counselor, similarly to a person who wants someone else to like him. He did not want to leave him and walked by the counselor's side constantly, like a dog running in front of his master."²⁹ The comparison to a dog does not bear any explicitly negative connotations in this context. The rabbi's wife, in the narrator's words, *is* a dog (*brekin*) and acts accordingly. Moreover, she is explicitly described as a hunting dog—an animal that frequently represents the Christian agents of anti-Jewish violence in premodern Jewish manuscript illuminations, thereby enhancing her characterization as hostile and evil.³⁰ By contrast, the rabbi merely *acts like* a dog in order to achieve his goal (his eventual return to human form). The tale thus employs the image of the dog in two very different ways: regarding the wife, it illustrates the cunning yet less-than-human disposition of her character; when describing the rabbi, however, it stresses his inherent humanity, that is, his rationality and intelligence in pretending to be something that he is not.

Yet the rabbi is, at least temporarily, a wild and savage wolf. Accordingly, he does not always behave like a tame and loyal pet. On three occasions the text relates that the werewolf is very dangerous: first, when the transformed rabbi runs into the forest and starts devouring people; second, when he attacks the counselor three times, almost killing him; third, and most important, when he writes his message in the snow, concluding it with the words: "This is why I want you to remember the great loyalty I have shown to you. Go to this town and bring me back the ring that my wife has in her possession, as a sign of friendship. Or else I will kill you."³¹ In his message, the rabbi demands proof of the king's friendship and even threatens him. This aspect of the sixteenth-century Yiddish reworking of the medieval narrative pattern of the "involuntary werewolf" could be a result of a concept of sovereignty particular to

the early modern period. During the Middle Ages, sovereignty was founded upon mutually beneficial personal relationships between a ruler and as many of his subjects as possible. In contrast, the Yiddish werewolf *mayse* may reflect the idea that an important subject might choose to withdraw from the center of power in order to retain a measure of autonomy.

In this case, the man who declines to remain at court is a rabbi. He is distinguished from other subjects by his religious affiliation. Moreover, he himself stresses this distinction. Indeed, when the wolf writes in the snow, readers are reminded for the first time in a long time of the fundamental religious difference between the courtiers and the wolfish outcast: "Nobody could read what was written. They sent for all the doctors, but nobody could read it. There was one counselor who understood the holy tongue. He said: 'My lord and majesty, this writing is the writing of the Jews.'³² And he started reading it."

In this episode, alphabet, language, and writing are used in order to communicate, that is, in order to create a community between the wolfish sender and the human receivers, one which had been unimaginable before the alleged animal began writing. At the same time, these cultural techniques emphasize the difference between the writer and his readers once again, this time distinguishing between the Jew and the Christians. Remarkably, the distinction is not absolute; otherwise, communication would not be possible. Rather, one character can mediate between the two groups. The scene thus emphasizes communalities as well as differences between the protagonist and the other members of the king's court. Eventually, they differ in even more than just religious affiliation: The werewolf is a scholar who can inform the court of his true nature not by performing a specifically brutal or knightly deed but by writing an elaborate text. In this way, the author distances himself from his Christian sources and their ideal of courtly knighthood. Moreover, the Jewish protagonist also refuses to become a member of courtly society even in the role of the learned, wealthy, and thereby "useful" Jew. Although (by means of his magic ring) he could potentially provide the king with infinite riches, he rejects the offer of joining the court. In contrast to historical figures such as the wealthy and influential advocates, financiers, and communal leaders Joseph ben Gershon of Rosheim (1478–1554) or Mordecai Meisel (1528–1601),³³ the fictional werewolf-rabbi deliberately refuses to become a court Jew, preferring to remove himself from the sovereign and his surroundings. From this perspective, the *mayse* can be read as implicitly advising Jews to maintain some distance from the high and mighty Christian ruling class.

In the context of a collection of stories that was compiled, at least partially, for an often underprivileged and persecuted minority, the author or compiler notably made no efforts to deny the Jewish protagonist's potential for obstinacy and even aggression. On the contrary, those features are even highlighted. If the rabbi's magical transformation brings to the surface something that was previously hidden beneath his human skin, this might insinuate that the Jewish scholar always possessed at least the potential for violent action. In his influential 2006 study *Reckless Rites*, Elliott Horowitz demonstrates that in various eras, Jews used certain rituals during the Purim holiday in order to voice and act out fantasies of violence against Christians.³⁴ Viewed in connection with the repeated and deprecating Christian equation of Jews with dogs,

the seemingly tame pet, which wags its tail at its master, yet might at any time bite or even kill that master, becomes a powerful symbol of the appropriation of an insulting image and resistance under dire circumstances.³⁵ The protagonist's "true" nature, when brought to light, is not that of a servile dog but of a self-confident and redoubtable wolf. Reading the werewolf *mayse* from this perspective, we understand that Jewish authors, adaptors, or compilers around 1600, as well as their readers, did not necessarily react to the Jews' tenuous position within a mainly Christian society with narratives about fear, submission, or the hope for mercy. Instead, they could also take possible ascriptions, appropriate them, invert them, and thus produce a tale in which a Christian ruler depends on the mercy of a Jewish scholar. In this reading, the story of the monstrous werewolf-rabbi is a story of self-empowerment, agency, and pride.

Notes

- 1 All translations from the English are my own unless otherwise stated. The quotations from the *Mayse-bukh* are from the facsimile edition: *Un beau livre d'histoires. Eyn shön Mayse-bukh. Fac-similé de l'editio princeps de Bâle* (1602), Traduction du yiddish, introduction et note par Astrid Starck (Basel: Schwabe, 2004). Here: 716–39 (fol. 177v).
- 2 Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis, MN.: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3–25, esp. 6.
- 3 Cohen, "Monster Culture," 4.
- 4 For other premodern and modern werewolf stories see Jay Geller's contribution to this volume.
- 5 On premodern European literary werewolves see, for example, Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2005); Leslie A. Scuduto, *Metamorphoses of the Werewolf. A Literary Study from Antiquity through the Renaissance* (Jefferson, NC: Mc Farland, 2008); Dennis M. Kratz, "Fictus Lupus. The Werewolf in Christian Thought," *Classical Folia* 30.1 (1976): 57–78; David I. Shyovitz, "Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Werewolf Renaissance," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 75.4 (2014): 521–43.
- 6 Bynum establishes a connection between a renewed interest in notions of bodily resurrection and phenomena of physical instability. The result is an ongoing discussion: "What we find is writers returning again and again to worry, as one might a sore tooth, the possibility of species-crossing, body-hopping, metamorphosis." See Bynum, *Metamorphosis*, 110.
- 7 Shyovitz, "Christians and Jews," 528.
- 8 See, for example, Gaël Milin, *Les chiens de Dieu. La représentation du loup-garou en Occident (XIe–XXe siècles)* (Brest: Centre de Recherche Bretonne et Celtique, 1993).
- 9 See Françoise Le Saux, "'Gloser la lettre'. Identity and Power in the Poetry of Marie de France," in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II. Twelve Essays*, ed. Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 205–19, esp. 210. Regarding the terms *homosociality* vs. *heterosociality* see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men – English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

- 10 David B. Leshock, “The Knight of the Werewolf: Bisclavret and the Shape-Shifting Metaphor,” *Romance Quarterly* 46.3 (1999): 155–65, esp. 163.
- 11 In 1486, the Dominican Heinrich Kramer (Henricus Institoris) published, perhaps in cooperation with Jakob Sprenger, the notorious *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hammer of Witches), a treatise on the nature of witchcraft and remedies against it, as well as the efficient questioning, conviction, sentencing, and punishment of alleged witches. The book was reprinted many times during the following decades and became hugely influential.
- 12 Only a short while later, in 1590, one of several German pamphlets on the case was translated into English. The source for the London pamphlet is unknown (although Theophil Laube mentions a “Gerichts-Buch zu Bebburg” in Theophilus Laube, *Dialogi und Gespräch / Von der Lycanthrophia, Oder Der Menschen In Wölff-Verwandlung* [Frankfurt, 1686, 22]). The pamphlet is available online at the British Library: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-damnable-life-and-death-of-stubbe-peeter-a-werewolf-1590> (accessed May 25, 2017). Peter Stump was not the only person who was tried and executed for the crime of lycanthropy in German-speaking lands. For other examples, see the popular scientific work by Elmar M. Lorey, *Henrich der Werwolf. Eine Geschichte aus der Zeit der Hexenprozesse mit Dokumenten und Analysen* (Frankfurt: Anabas-Verlag, 1998).
- 13 A slightly different version of the tale appears in a contemporary manuscript, Ms. Bodl. Opp. 714 (Neubauer 2213). Regarding this manuscript and its version of the werewolf tale see Jakob Meitlis, *Das Maäsebuch. Seine Entstehung und Quellen-geschichte* (Hildesheim, New York: Olms, 1987 [a reprint of Berlin: Mass, 1933]), 91–101; Jakob Meitlis, “Some extant folktales in Yiddish MSS,” *Fabula* XII (1971): 212–17.
- 14 On the target audience of Old Yiddish literature in general and the *Mayse-bukh* in particular see, for example, Astrid Starck’s introduction in *Mayse-bukh*, xix–cii; see also Jean Baumgarten, *Introduction to Old Yiddish Literature*, ed. and trans. Jerold C. Frakes (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- 15 See Erika Timm, “Zur Frühgeschichte der jiddischen Erzählprosa. Eine neuau-gefunden Maiše-Handschrift,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 117 (1995): 243–80. Curiously, the Yiddish tale eventually finds its way back into the Christian tradition: Around 1670 Gottfried Händel translated it into German and included it in his collection of stories entitled *Viridarium Historicum das ist Historischer Lustgarten . . .* under the title *Der rare Wünschelring*. See Gottfried Händel, *Viridarium Historicum das ist Historischer Lustgarten . . .* (Nürnberg, ca. 1670), Nr. 6 (no foliation or pagination).
- 16 *Mayse-bukh*, 177r.
- 17 Concerning possible censorship of the *Mayse-bukh* by Buxtorf see Erika Timm, “Abraham ibn Ezra und das Maišebuch,” in *Yidishe shtudies haynt / Jiddistik heute / Yiddish Studies Today*, ed. Marion Aptroot, Efrat Gal-Ed, Roland Gruschka, and Simon Neuberg (Düsseldorf: Düsseldorf University Press, 2012), 281–308, esp. 303–05.
- 18 Fol. 177v. The German equivalent would be *Bräckin*, derived from *Bracke*.
- 19 See, for example, Astrid Lembke, *Dämonische Allianzen. Jüdische Mahrtenhener-zählungen der europäischen Vormoderne* (Tübingen and Basel: A. Francke Verlag, 2013); “Predicaments of Piousness. The Trouble of Being a Learned Jewish Family Man in Pre-Modern Europe,” in *Beyond Heteronormativity: New Directions in Medieval Gender Studies. A Volume of Essays*, ed. Ann Marie Rasmussen and Christian Straubhaar (forthcoming).

- 20 *Mayse-bukh*, 180v.
- 21 Astrid Starck, “Mayse-Bukh’ and Metamorphosis,” *Bulletin du Centre de recherche français à Jérusalem* 8 (2001), uploaded in 2008: <http://bcrfj.revues.org/2092> (last accessed March 13, 2017).
- 22 *Mayse-bukh*, fol. 177r.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 179v–80r.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 178v.
- 25 *Ibid.*, fol. 179v.
- 26 “*There will be people who think that one deserves it.*” *Ibid.*, fol. 175r.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 180v.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 176r.
- 29 *Ibid.*, fol. 178r.
- 30 See: Marc Michael Epstein, *Dreams of Subversion in Medieval Jewish Art and Literature* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 16–38.
- 31 *Mayse-bukh*, 179r.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 178v–79r.
- 33 See Jacob Rothschild, “Joseph (Joselmann) ben Gershon of Rosheim,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed., vol. 11 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 420–21; Lamed, Meir, “Meisel (Meisl, Meysl, Miška, Akhbar, Maušel, Konír), Mordecai (Marcus, Marx) ben Samuel,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 2nd ed., vol. 13 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 789.
- 34 See, for example, medieval and early modern illuminations depicting the hanging of Haman and his sons, the enemies of the Jews in the book of Esther. See Elliott S. Horowitz, *Reckless Rites. Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 93–99. For early modern Jewish fantasies of using physical violence against Christians see also Rebekka Voss’s discussion of the contemporary *Ma‘ase akdamut* (c. 1580–1600): Rebekka Voss, “Eschatological Avengers or Messianic Saviors? Violence and Physical Strength in the Vernacular Legend of the Red Jews,” in *Jewish and Violence in the Early Modern Period. Early Modern Workshop: Resources in Jewish History* 10 (2013): <http://fordham.bepress.com/emw/emw2013/emw2013/4/> (accessed April 23, 2017). See also Rebekka Voss, “Entangled Stories. The Red Jews in Pre-Modern Yiddish and German Apocalyptic Lore,” *AJS Review* 36.1 (2012): 1–41.
- 35 See: Kenneth Stow, *Jewish Dogs. An Image and its Interpreters. Continuity in the Catholic-Jewish Encounter* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

Out of the Mouths of Babes and Sucklings

David B. Ruderman*

Our incident . . . had not happened in Venice for a thousand years . . . We came to all the city's inhabitants to tell them that the thing came from God . . . to teach . . . that good things are brought about by good people.

—Gei hizzayon, pt. 1, p. 23b

He [the child from Grodek] is accurate in what he says and is consistently wise and knowledgeable . . . he answers correctly as if he were a mature person who had acquired knowledge and possessed heavenly sapience to foretell the future.

—Bat rabim, no. 68, fols. 109b–110a

The Ghetto of Venice was in a state of great commotion. It was the late afternoon of May 26, 1575, and the daughter of Gabriel Tsarfati, the wife of a Jew named Petachiah, had just given birth to a creature with two heads and four hands but conjoined from the waist down.¹ The news of these conjoined twins quickly spread throughout the ghetto and beyond. The infants, apparently healthy at birth, became an instant sensation to Jews and non-Jews alike. A stream of visitors inundated the family's residence. Under constant pressure and exposure, the infants succumbed some eight days later.²

The story of this bizarre spectacle did not end, however, with the death of the twins. In fact it took an even more grisly and macabre twist. Instead of immediately burying the deceased children, the father handed them over to the local *gemilut hasadim* (benevolent) society "as a present."³ The members of the society preserved them in a solution, carried them from place to place, and displayed the corpse to anyone who would pay a price to view it, until they collected "a handsome sum." It is not clear who was ultimately responsible for this profitable but unconscionable capitalist venture—the parents, the heads of the confraternity, or both parties.⁴ Whatever the case, the perpetrators had sought to legitimate their actions by appeal to Jewish religious custom and apparently had obtained approval from some questionable legal

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authorities.⁵ Nevertheless, there were those among the Venetian rabbinate who could not countenance such an act, notably Rabbis Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen and Raphael Joseph Treves, who composed *responsa* disapproving of the sodality's activity and calling for the immediate burial of the corpse in accordance with the dictates of Jewish law.

Largely as a result of the notoriety gained by the confraternity's hawking of the unfortunate children, news of the monstrous birth quickly spread beyond Venice to other parts of Italy and to Germany. To both a popular audience and a learned community of scholars fascinated by the new "science" of teratology, the data on the Jewish twins were of considerable interest.⁶ Full descriptions of the twins are found in the monster handbooks of Ulisse Aldrovandi and Johann Schenck.⁷ The twins were even memorialized in contemporary German and Italian poems and portrayed alongside the narratives.⁸ The coincidence of the twins' birth with the outbreak of a devastating plague in the environs of Venice led many observers to consider their birth as a manifestation of divine displeasure with Venice and its inhabitants.⁹

The most important vehicle of dissemination about the monstrous birth was undoubtedly an anonymous fourteen-page pamphlet in Italian, first published by Giuseppe Gregorio of Cremona in Venice only two days after the twins' death, and reissued the next year in Bologna. The treatise, which includes a picture of the twins and two horoscopes summarizing the pertinent astrological data of the day of birth and the day of impregnation, is titled *Discorso sopra gli accidenti del parto monstruoso nato di una Hebreia in Venetia nell'anno 1575 a di xxvi di Maggio*. The second edition emphasizes the Jewish provenance of the birth by providing the additional title *Dove si ragiona altamente del futuro destino de gli Hebrei*.¹⁰

After describing the "monster," the author offers a detailed explanation of this phenomenon according to a conventional division of reality into three parts: material, heavenly, and divine. He first considers the immediate cause of the birth as understood by naturalists and physicians: either an excessive or insufficient amount of semen or unclean spermatozoa. Next he considers the astrological factors, concluding with the explanation of the ancient seers (*aruspici*) that such prodigies are omens of heavenly displeasure. He describes other recorded incidents of monstrous births both in ancient times and in the more recent past. He concludes with an offensive vilification of the "perverse and obstinate *sinagoga*," the false Jewish interpretations of the prophecies of the book of Daniel, and the usurious practices of contemporary Jews. After predicting their final doom, he calls for the conversion of the Jews to Christianity. That this oddity of nature had occurred within a Jewish household of the ghetto was an opportunity not to be missed by this Christian author. The ultimate "lessons" of this tragedy were clearly theological.

* * *

Three years later, the Jewish physician Abraham Yagel composed his imaginary heavenly journey, the *Gei hizzayon*.¹¹ Sitting in a cell in the municipal prison of Mantua, so he informs his readers, he was awakened by the soul of his departed father, who accompanied him on his spiritual odyssey to the supernal heights of the universe.

Throughout his ascent he encountered individuals from all walks of life, each with his own story to relate, each a personification of an idea or religious message. In a manner transparently reminiscent of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, Yagel's journey to the uppermost heavens was meant to chastise, to enlighten, to reform its narrator as he ascended from the depravity of his material existence in the Mantuan dungeon to the exhilarating freedom and illumination of the secrets of the divine mysteries of the Kabbalah.

Among the characters who engage Yagel in dialogue during his celestial wanderings are the notorious twins of the Venetian ghetto.¹² Having learned of their strange appearance from the sensational Italian pamphlet, Yagel recovers the infants from their miserable lot as pitiful oddities of nature, recasts them as majestic prophetic characters in his mysterious romance, and thus affords them a place in the annals of Hebrew literature. Relying primarily on the *Discorso* for his information about the twins, he uses the incident to impart a religious message radically different from that of the Italian pamphleteer.

The twins make their entrance in a highly dramatic fashion. Although attached to each other, they fly toward Yagel and his father, whispering quietly to each other, "their voices sounding like a ghost out of the ground." Their initial pronouncements are prophetic. One predicts "that there will be a war or famine in the land or one of the remaining calamities threatening to come to the world." The prognostication is imprecise, but surely Yagel has in mind the disastrous plague of Venice, which immediately followed the death of the twins. The same child counsels immediate flight from the city as the only solution to the impending disaster. Yet he simultaneously contradicts himself by quoting the rabbinic statement: "If there is a plague in the city, remain where you are."¹³

The opening prophecy of doom is followed by a long discussion between Yagel and his father on the essence of the soul, how it comes into the world, and related issues, all triggered by the strange appearance of these infant souls who had expired three years earlier.¹⁴ Finally, father and son approach the twins and ask them the reason for their being attached. The first responds impatiently that mere mortals have no right to understand such hidden divine secrets. His brother, however, is more forthcoming. Though recognizing the finitude of human knowledge, he considers the quest for greater understanding implicit in their question to be both appropriate and desirable. His answer constitutes the longest part of Yagel's narrative of the encounter.¹⁵

Following the structure of the *Discorso*'s argument, the infant divides his explanation into three parts corresponding to the order of three worlds. He opens, however, with a strong religious emphasis. Since God is always just, any calamity is caused by human and not by divine failing. Thus, "if He [God] brings about evil, let us search and try our ways, and return to the Lord." He is even more explicit in viewing this birth primarily as a portent of divine wrath:

For it is taught that the only evil that descends from above is that which our sins caused and that from which our iniquities prevented the good. If the thing which happens in the state is a miracle, transcending the boundaries of nature and accepted practice, as was the case with our incident, which, in our eyes, had not

happened in Venice for a thousand years, nor in any of the states adjacent to it. . . . It is fitting that we attribute this matter to a general cause. We came to all the city's inhabitants to tell them that this thing came from God, not only to teach specific things but rather to teach the overall general cause that good things are brought about by good people.¹⁶

The same religious message is emphasized again by a parallel drawn between the biblical incident of the slain body of a beheaded heifer (*Deuteronomy* 21) and the corpse of the Venetian twins. In both cases, those responsible for ruling the state were ultimately responsible for the welfare of their communities. Although the father's household bears partial responsibility for this disaster, the city's inhabitants and their leadership also are culpable. The fact that the plague took the lives of so many citizens is tangible evidence of their punishment:

With respect to the city in which we were born, she is also guilty for her sins to have nature distort its ways and actions. . . . For the Lord's hand was upon her. Afterwards, many in her midst died from plagues and bitter illnesses accompanying them. . . . And if out of the mouths of babes and sucklings [Ps. 8:3], they would have learned, as the people of Ninevah did in returning to the Lord, leaving the iniquity on their hands, who knows if God might not have regretted and turned his anger away from them? For God is merciful and forgiving and has no desire for the death of the wicked, but only in the reversal of his ways so that he may live.¹⁷

Up to this point Yagel has virtually ignored the *Discorso* and has instead underscored the religious message of the monstrous birth and the prophetic function of the twins. However, he now relies increasingly on his Italian source. From the *Discorso* he includes a description of some monstrous births earlier in the century; he also copies verbatim the testimony of the medieval Arab scholar Ibn Abi 1-Ridjal (Aben Ragel) and of Xenophon regarding other monstrous children.¹⁸ As we shall see, Yagel valued these testimonies highly and referred to them again and again many years after the incident of the Venetian infants.

When the twin turns to consider the heavenly cause of the birth, Yagel's dependence on the Italian pamphlet is even more evident: he lifts almost the entire first half of the *Discorso*'s astrological calculations.¹⁹ Apparently, Yagel felt that it was sufficient to relate the astrological circumstances surrounding the birth day and not those of the day of impregnation; thus he ignores the entire second half of the *Discorso*'s tedious discussion.

The concluding explication of the natural, material causes of the incident follows generally the outline of the *Discorso*.²⁰ The infant repeats the primary reasons for this abnormality—the excess, scarcity, or filthiness of the sperm—but he also includes a wealth of additional information drawn primarily from rabbinic sources and from Yagel's own medical experience.²¹ The account closes with the children asking Yagel and his father for their prayers. In place of the *Discorso*'s defamatory comments about Jews and Judaism, Yagel offers a powerful moral exhortation to his readers. In

Yagel's treatment, the conjoined twins are no longer passive, lamentable objects of pity. Instead they are empowered to offer their own comprehensive explanation of the tragedy of their birth. They are not only competent naturalists and astrologers; they are also divine seers enlisted by God to speak his truth. Thus "out of the mouths of babes" the higher purpose of this divinely ordained malfunction is revealed.

* * *

Yagel's fascination with the prophetic abilities of young children proved to be lifelong. Some forty-two years later he again reflected on the birth of a child, and in a manner strikingly reminiscent of his ruminations in *Gei hizzayon*.

In 1620, Abraham ben Naphtali Hirsch Schor, the head of the rabbinic court of Satanov, Poland, wrote to Rabbi Mordecai ben David Katz, of the neighboring community of Lvov (Lemberg), about a "great and terrible act of God that I heard and saw with my own eyes here in the holy congregation of Satanov."²² Rabbi Abraham related the following story:

Here in the holy congregation of Grodek [Gorodok], three parasangs from Satanov, there lives a man named Rabbi Gedaliah with a small four-and-a-half-year-old son. The youth is a mere boy having no superiority in his studies over the rest of the children of his age. But when his father began to study the Hebrew alphabet and the prayer book with him, he subsequently brought the boy before me to the holy congregation of Satanov to test him. And I tested him several times and more—myself along with my colleagues who were with me—and we saw the work of the Lord and His wonders, for He is exceedingly great. I asked him: "Please tell me the beginning of the *halakhah* learned today." He immediately related the *halakhah*, answering: "Rabbi Ashi said that our *mishnah* states: I can likewise prove, etc."

Rabbi Abraham then questioned the boy about various passages in the *Zohar*, asking the father to have his son quote from specific pages. The child answered correctly even when the rabbi failed to mention a specific page but only placed his finger on a particular passage in the book hidden from the child but apparently not from his father. The boy was even able to read the rabbi's mind, quoting precisely biblical passages that Rabbi Abraham had been contemplating, again through the mediation of the father. In light of such an incredible demonstration, the rabbi could only conclude that "the boy knows what is in the heart of man and this can only be a spirit of prophecy." He was especially impressed by the child's ability because the boy still had not learned to read fluently but occasionally mispronounced words and was generally very shy.

The news of the extraordinary child of Grodek quickly spread to several other Jewish communities in Poland. Quoting Rabbi Abraham's testimony, a Rabbi Joshua of Brest Litovsk wrote to the head of the rabbinic tribunal of Vilna, which then ordered that the story not be told to women and children and especially not to Gentiles.²³ The bearer of Joshua's letter, a Jew from Lublin, also carried to the tribunal a second letter from Schor, in which the Satanov rabbi related that he had asked the boy about the

redemption of Israel and the boy said: “I do not know,” and when asked who had placed such things in his mouth he answered: “God the Lord, the God of Israel.”²⁴

The source of all this correspondence was Joseph Solomon Delmedigo, the Italian Jewish physician, scientist, and philosopher and younger contemporary of Yagel. In his Hebrew work *Sefer Elim*, first published in 1629, Delmedigo quoted Rabbi Abraham’s letter in full, explained how its contents reached Lvov and Vilna, and also reproduced another letter from his own disciple, Moses Metz, addressed to a Karaite, Zerach ben Nissim, describing Delmedigo’s role in the affairs.²⁵

Metz’s letter told how he and Delmedigo had traveled to the town of Grodек to observe firsthand the spectacle of the precocious child, who by that time had become a cause célèbre, so that “all the Polish rabbis and with them several thousand Jews feared to see him.” But the shrewd Delmedigo proved capable of exposing the deception of the Grodек child prodigy:

For immediately when my teacher [Delmedigo] saw that he needed his father, he detected a trick whereby he [the father] would give him clues in code. For example, for the letter “aleph,” he would say “yes” to him in Yiddish; for “bet,” “good”; for “gimel,” “right”; and so on. And the questioner had to ask the question through his father, and his father would elicit an answer from him [the boy], placing in his mouth the letters with these pseudonyms so that he would recite the letters without vowels or vocalization and his father would interpret and vocalize them.

Delmedigo confirmed his initial suspicion by testing the child without the assistance of his father, and immediately “the trick was made known to all the congregation.” Metz went on to say that the father had made a handsome profit from his guile and that the rabbis excommunicated the father when they learned of his deceitful behavior. The boy died soon afterward; Metz could not ascertain the cause. Metz also acknowledged that even after Delmedigo had publicly exposed the impostor, some ardent followers continued to believe in him, and he strongly admonished those who uncritically accepted such popular superstitions, “for they are the affairs of women and the masses.”²⁶

Elsewhere in *Sefer Elim* Delmedigo himself recounted the affair, underscoring the chicanery of the father.²⁷ In another work, *Matsref la-chokhmah*, he once more proclaimed: “But as regards the affair of the Polish child from Grodек, it was a trick, as I have shown to all the world when I came to see it.”²⁸

According to the accounts of Delmedigo and Metz, the matter ended with the excommunication of the father and the premature death of his son, even though they acknowledged that a small number of enthusiastic supporters stubbornly persisted in believing in the boy, “because of their own embarrassment in revealing how ignorant they had been.” But both Delmedigo and Metz apparently had underestimated the magnetic appeal of the Polish wonder child. For despite Delmedigo’s insistence that he had shown the world the trick of the boy’s father, there remained those who either ignored Delmedigo’s demonstration or else remained impervious to Delmedigo’s claim that he had ever exposed the father in the first place. In fact, Delmedigo’s assumption

that his disclosure had convincingly closed the case of the Grodek boy was perhaps more wishful thinking than an accurate reading of the responses of the boy's following.

Besides the material collected in Delmedigo's writings, there exists an additional letter about the Polish child, written by Mordecai ben David Katz of Lvov to Hayyim Vital, the major disciple of Isaac Luria and the great kabbalistic authority in Safed. Katz, after having received Abraham Schor's first letter regarding the boy from Grodek, recopied Schor's entire letter as quoted in Delmedigo's work and then added the following story:

A female servant had worked for a certain Jew in the holy congregation of Potylicz. When two years had passed, she ran away from the Jew without telling him that she was running away. But immediately after her escape, some hostile gentiles from the same place of Potylicz arose to slander this Jew by saying: "Where is this woman servant who had worked for you?" But the Jew did not know where she had fled. In short, this confusion continued to increase because of our many sins until God gave them the inspiration to say: "Let us go to visit and inquire of this same boy." And behold, when they came to the boy, before they said anything to him, the boy began to speak [of how] these men had come to investigate the whereabouts of the maid-servant, and he mentioned her by name, that she was alive, and that they should be relieved of their confusion.²⁹

The boy had intended to reveal the woman's whereabouts but was suddenly interrupted by "one wicked man" (a reference to Delmedigo?) who began to argue with the boy's father, causing him to flee from the place. Subsequently the boy would say nothing more. Rabbi Katz asked Vital to examine the entire matter in order to advise him what action to take. He turned to Vital because he had heard that shortly before Isaac Luria had died, he had told his disciple Vital that during the latter's lifetime "one boy would appear in the land of Edom [Christian lands] who would relate wondrous and terrible things of God."³⁰

We come finally to Yagel's testimony. Yagel first heard the news of the Polish child in the fall of 1620, while he was residing in Modena. He mentions the boy's impressive knowledge of Jewish law, his ability to answer any question posed to him, and his successful deterrence of "the many who rose up against him to kill him." He also states that the boy heard the sweet songs of angels in his ears but that beyond this it is impossible for him to recount all of the boy's numerous accomplishments. He does, however, emphasize the miraculous dimension of the boy's achievements.³¹ Some months later Yagel added the following details:

Ten Jewish authorities of considerable stature from those regions [of Poland] went and found the boy, met with him in a certain place, and asked him to tell them about the redemption and the transformation and the secret of when the wondrous end will come. But the boy refused to answer until they adjured him in the name of God that he tell what he knew. Then he replied: "Know that you will not be set at peace by my words." But their hearts were most troubled concerning this and the men pleaded with him. But when he began to answer them that on the

next [Hebrew month of] Nisan birth pangs will begin and a period of trouble will come to Jacob, he could not manage to say that they would be saved and how the salvation would transpire, for a fire fell from heaven and he departed in a storm and was no longer visible to them.³²

Upon witnessing this miraculous sight, the entire community mourned and fasted in trepidation. Yagel relates that after some forty days the boy finally returned, to the delight and relief of the community. But this time, the rabbis zealously guarded the child and refrained from asking him any more provocative questions.³³

* * *

The most interesting aspect of Yagel's report of the Polish child is its striking contrast to that of Joseph Delmedigo. Delmedigo apparently derided such wonder-workers as the boy of Grodek because of his own scientific proclivities and rational attitudes. But his contemporary Yagel, an erudite physician and scientific enthusiast in his own right, chose to treat such wonders seriously and credulously.

From both of Yagel's letters on the wonder child, it is evident that he was well aware of the great importance of the motif of the child prodigy in earlier Jewish literature.³⁴ An exceedingly rich source for this motif was the literature of the Jewish mystics. The stories about young children with wondrous abilities appearing before wise men and other adults with startling revelations of mystical knowledge were especially favorite subjects of the author of the *Zohar*.³⁵ Yagel himself mentions the parallel between these stories and his Polish marvel.³⁶

Of special significance in this regard is the fascinating story of the character of Rabbi Gaddiel, made famous most recently in the writing of S. Y. Agnon and particularly well known in Jewish kabbalistic literature of the seventeenth century. The story concerns a wonder child who possessed divine knowledge and was killed at the age of seven by his enemies but ascended to the Garden of Eden to learn the divine mysteries from God himself. As Gershom Scholem has demonstrated, the midrashic work *The Testament of R. Eliezer the Great* is the original source of this story. Later it was copied by Hayyim Vital and incorporated into the writings attributed to Isaac Luria and into later midrashic collections of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³⁷

The stories of Rabbi Gaddiel and of the Grodek boy are parallel in several respects, particularly in Yagel's version. Like Rabbi Gaddiel, the Polish child possesses divine knowledge, as the singing of angels in his ears suggests. Both encounter enemies who desire to kill them. Even the background of Gentile hostility to Jews, more obvious in the martyrdom of Gaddiel, is intimated in the Grodek boy's involvement in the episode of the Jew and his missing Christian maid.

But Yagel apparently had more than a literary motif in mind when reflecting on the meaning of the Polish child. He also recalls a similar boy prophet appearing in the Spanish Jewish community at the end of the thirteenth century. He had read the well-known *responsum* of Rabbi Solomon ben Adret, describing an unusual child in Avila who, though ignorant and untutored, had experienced angelic visions that inspired him to write a book of biblical commentaries.³⁸ In suggesting an analogy between the

two boys,³⁹ Yagel could not have failed to note the common eschatological background of their prophetic statements. The visions of the Spanish child were directly related to an inspired Joachimite apocalyptic literature appearing at the end of the thirteenth century. In fact Avila itself had emerged as a conjectured place of origin of the Messiah, who was to appear in 1295. The aura of messianic anticipation was also manifest in the Grodek child, who, according to the testimonies of both Schor and Yagel, was pressed by his contemporaries to foretell when the messianic redemption would come.

The messianic theme was even more prominent in the tale of another illustrious Jewish child prodigy named Nahman, upon which Yagel had already commented.⁴⁰ The story of this youthful prophet was traditionally ascribed to David ben Abraham Maimuni (1222–1300), the head of the Egyptian Jewish community who is thought to have written a commentary for the rabbis of Barcelona on the apocalypse prophesied by Nahman. In fact these prophecies were most likely written close to the time of David Maimuni, sometime during the thirteenth century.⁴¹ In 1517 the prophecies of Nahman enjoyed a renewed popularity as a result of the commentary of Rabbi Abraham ben Eliezer ha-Levi, a Spanish émigré and Kabbalist, completed in Jerusalem in the same year. Primarily because of Rabbi Abraham's treatment of Nahman, the prophecies were widely circulated among the Spanish Jewish immigrants who had settled in Italy, Turkey, and Palestine. At the end of the sixteenth century, Gedaliah ibn Yahya included the story of Nahman in his historical narrative, and, like the Gaddiel narrative, it was also incorporated into a famous seventeenth-century collection.⁴²

In 1598 Yagel responded to two different queries about the prophecies of Nahman from the well-known Italian kabbalist Menaham Azariah da Fano, with whom he had corresponded on several other occasions. Fano asked Yagel to explain first the astrological circumstances of Nahman's birth and then the prophecies themselves. In answer to the first question, Yagel concluded that Nahman's astrological data suggested a premature and unnatural death for the boy. In his response to the second, Yagel copied the boy's biography as told to him by Fano—the circumstances of his parents, his prophecy at birth, his long silence for twelve years, his final blessing to his parents, and his premature death—and then offered a learned interpretation.

Obviously, in the mind of Yagel, the phenomena of Nahman and the Grodek youth were distinctly connected. Having reflected on both children over a span of some twenty years, he could not have failed to notice the obvious similarities between the two youths—their precocity, their premature deaths, and, most significantly, the messianic theme that infused both their stories. Nahman, it seems, had an opportunity to utter his messianic prophecies, whereas the Grodek boy was interrupted by a heavenly fire before speaking of the redemption. But both stories were the result of the same collective mood of messianic expectation agitating the Jewish community of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Yagel's obvious sense of personal involvement in both stories indicates that he, too, had been affected by that mood.

One other detail of Yagel's explanation of Nahman is worth noting. When Fano asked him whether Nahman was an authentic prophet, Yagel answered negatively. Instead, he placed him in the category of a monster, a species that, he explained, was well known in nature and previously documented by ancients such as Xenophon and by medieval Arabic scholars such as Aben Ragel. Yagel's references in his narrative on

the conjoined twins of Venice and in this letter on Nahman are identical.⁴³ Although twenty years had passed between the writing of the two accounts, he clearly had not forgotten his thoughts on the monstrous birth of Venice when reflecting on Nahman and his prodigious accomplishments. The connection established in his own mind between the Grodek child and Nahman was similar to the one between the Venetian children and Nahman. And in one obvious way all the children were related, he believed: they were all monsters.⁴⁴

* * *

Yagel's comparison of the Grodek child with Rabbi Gaddiel, the child from Avila, and Nahman reveals only one side of his fascination with the phenomenon of child prodigies in Jewish culture. There remains the "scientific" side to consider. The tale of the Polish boy, for Yagel, was not a theme unique to the Jewish experience. It was also symptomatic of a condition shared by all human beings, subject to the same universal processes inherent in nature.⁴⁵

In considering the Grodek lad, Yagel is especially struck by the boy's visionary faculties: "according to what has been heard, he is accurate in what he says and is consistently wise and knowledgeable; one asks and he responds; one asks about a given subject and he answers correctly as if he were a mature person who had acquired knowledge and possessed heavenly sapience to foretell the future."⁴⁶ Such ability, Yagel concludes, is a universal attribute of certain individuals, both Jews and non-Jews, who are prepared to receive divine inspiration either "according to a natural disposition or a disposition achieved by [their own] effort."⁴⁷ After defining this kind of prophetic aptitude, Yagel presents several historical examples. First he recalls Balaam and his prophetic abilities.⁴⁸ Then he mentions two child prophets who appeared in medieval Christian society, both of whom were uneducated and simple folk:

Observe what happened to the seventeen-year-old girl who was a shepherdess during the time of Charles VII, the king of France, who was surrounded by the armies of the English king, which almost took from him [Charles] his entire kingdom. But this young maiden arose, aroused herself from her slumber, gathered her strength, left her flock in the field, went to King Charles, and told him what she told him; the essence of her words was that she desired to lead his armies and to be victorious over his enemies. And the king trusted her word and placed her in charge of his army; and she girded her weaponry and fought the king's enemies and was victorious over them with great honor. And chroniclers of that time sang her praises as if she were skilled in war from her youth and knew her enemy's strategy in war.⁴⁹

And who would believe the account of the child born in England named Merlin, who revealed future events and secret things and who transcribed in a document before the kings and nobles all that would happen to them in the end of days, in addition to all the incredible feats he accomplished in the days of his youth, which were recorded in the chronicles of that kingdom?⁵⁰

Yagel concludes his short history of divine seers by mentioning two Jewish visionaries, the child prophet of Avila and the more recent messianic figure, Solomon Molcho.⁵¹ The prophetic gifts of all these individuals, he explains, were transitory, and in some cases, such as those of Joan of Arc and Solomon Molcho, the prophets died an unnatural and premature death. These historical precedents, he considered, were sufficient to lend credibility to the fantastic tale of the child from Grodek.

Yagel's natural explanation of the prophetic gift is similar to the approaches of some learned Christians. Agostino Nifo and Pietro Pomponazzi had presented parallel expositions of prophetic endowment almost a century earlier.⁵² More recently, Girolamo Cardano had explained that certain human beings exceeded others in their inborn powers of clairvoyance and divination.⁵³ In his massive scientific encyclopedia, *De Rerum Varietate*, Cardano claimed that he himself possessed the power to go into a trance whenever he pleased, to see anything he wished by the force of his own imagination, and to foresee his own future in dreams or in his fingernails. Immediately following the description of his own endowments, Cardano presented a catalogue of other unnatural and miraculous phenomena, including descriptions of both Joan of Arc and Merlin.⁵⁴ Yagel knew of Cardano's work, quoted him directly on other occasions, and appears to have been profoundly influenced by this erudite but eccentric Christian scholar.⁵⁵ In all likelihood, Yagel, in reflecting on the authenticity of the Grodek child, consulted Cardano's work and used the descriptions of the French and English children that he found there.

Yagel's explanation of the prophetic abilities of Nahman is somewhat different, however. He places Nahman in the category of monsters, a category he had already utilized in describing the Venetian infants and a category that would also fit quite well his portrait of the Grodek child. By referring to this category Yagel revealed strikingly his knowledge of the popular and scientific literature of his day directly related to the subject of wonder children. By the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, books on the bizarre extravagances of nature had appeared throughout Europe. As Jean Céard and others have demonstrated, the prevailing fascination with monsters and prodigies stemmed from the desire to record and measure every abnormality so as to penetrate the order and regularity of the universe.⁵⁶ Monsters testified to the fecundity and multiformity of nature; they also functioned as portents of things to come. A knowledge of these signs permitted humans to acquire greater wisdom about the universe, but at the same time they dramatically indicated the finitude of human experience. For nature still chose to hide its face, to deceive mankind. Thus, accompanying the effort to explain monsters in a natural context was a chilling fear that not all had yet been explained. The monster might also represent a sign, an omen, a celestial notice of the potential terror and instability of the yet unknowable future. In the sixteenth century, the "natural sciences" of divination and teratology remained intertwined.⁵⁷

Girolamo Cardano was especially preoccupied with numerous tales of monsters and monstrous births and their relation to divination. That Yagel, his Jewish admirer, was clearly of like mind is demonstrated not only by Yagel's preoccupation with Nahman and the conjoined twins but also by his fascination with psychic phenomena in his medical correspondence and by his systematic treatment of dreams and divination in *Beit ya'ar ha-Levanon*.

In the cases of the Grodek child, Nahman, and the Venetian twins, Yagel encountered a subject familiar to him from his previous reading on divination and teratology and from his own medical experience. Instead of rejecting such children out of hand, Yagel treated them as matters worthy of psychological explanation. Contemporary science as understood by Yagel, Cardano, and others could not distinguish clearly between the universe as a religious subject and as a scientific one. The conjoined twins of Venice could be explained by material and astrological causes, but they were also prominent manifestations of divine wrath. And in the literary setting of Yagel's *Gei hizzayon* they became remarkable mouthpieces of the divine truth. Similarly for Yagel, Nahman and the Grodek child were concurrently objects of scientific inquiry and omens of messianic redemption, curious prodigies of the natural world who ironically also offered reassurance to a society in anxious search of miracles.

Because prophecy, magic, and the miraculous occupied an ill-defined area often indistinguishable from scientific experimentation in the cultural world of Abraham Yagel, this Italian Jewish doctor came to share a common universe of discourse with the Polish rabbis and with the kabbalistic sages of Safed and Italy such as Vital and Fano. Despite the medical and scientific background he shared with Delmedigo, Yagel would have been uneasy with his colleague's categorical rejection of wonder children. Like his coreligionists, he treated them with the utmost seriousness, responding to their extraordinary behavior with credulity and curious amazement.

Notes

- * Slight changes have been introduced to this chapter to update some of the notes.
- 1 The Hebrew sources describing this incident include Y. Boksenboim, *She'elot u-teshuvot mattanot ba-adam* (Tel Aviv, 1983), 28, 95–96; Ms. Jer-usalem Jewish National and University Library Heb. 3428, no. 153 (my sincere thanks to Professor Reuven Bonfil, who provided me with a copy of the manuscript); Ms. Strasbourg Heb. 4085, fol. 291 (a *responsum* of R. Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogan), which, on the basis of Boksenboim's quotations (*Mattanot ba-Adam*, 28), seems identical with *Zerah anashim* (Husiatyn, 1902), *responsum* 34: 50–54. The precise date of the birth is supplied by Yagel himself in *Gei hizzayon*, pt. 1, ed. A. B. Mani (Alexandria, Egypt, 1880), 25a.
- 2 The time of the death is reported by Katzenellenbogan, Ms. Strasbourg Heb. 4085; the twins are reported to have died at slightly different times.
- 3 As reported in Ms. Jerusalem Heb. 3428 (Boksenboim, *Mattanot ba-adam*, 28).
- 4 Ms. Jerusalem Heb. 3428 reports that the father handed over the corpse to the confraternity. Katzenellenbogan, Ms. Strasbourg Heb. 4085, appears to suggest that the father may have been unaware of the society's intentions (Boksenboim, *Mattanot ba-adam*, 28): "and perhaps without the knowledge of their father." For a similar example of displaying a monstrous corpse for profit, see Katharine Park and Lorraine J. Daston, "Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France and England," *Past and Present* 92 (1981): 20, 34–35.
- 5 See Katzenellenbogan, Ms. Strasbourg Heb. 4085, and the *responsum* in *Mattanot ba-adam*, written by R. Raphael Joseph Treves, according to Boksenboim.

- 6 On the study of monsters in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Natural Science*, 8 vols. (New York, 1929–41), VI, 286–87, 488–91; Jean Céard, *La nature et les prodiges: L'insolite au XVI^e siècle en France* (Geneva, 1977); Rudolf Wittkower, “Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 5 (1942): 159–97; Park and Daston, “Unnatural Conceptions,” 20–54; Anne J. Schutte, “Such Monstrous Births,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 38 (1985): 85–106.
- 7 Ulisse Aldrovandi, *Monstrorum Historia* (Boulogne, 1642), 647–48; Johann Schenck, *Monstrorum Historia Memorabilis* (Frankfurt am Main, 1609), 70.
- 8 Albert Sonderegger, *Missgeburen und Wundergestalten in Einblattdrucken und Handzeichnungen des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1927), 22–23, who draws on a collection by J. J. Wick (1522–88) for the years 1560–87 in the Zentralbibliothek of Zürich. I quote from an Italian poem on p. 23:
- Questo e it vero ritratto d'un
maraviglioso e stupendo mostro
qu'al ha partorito una Hebrea nel
Ghetto della inclita citta de
Venetia a di XXVI. Maggio 1575.
Il qual Mostro vacua per il bonigolo, que non ha altro esito
et latta da ame due le teste.
- 9 On the Venetian plague of 1575–77, see Ernst Rodenwalt, *Pest in Venedig 1575–77. Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Infektionskette bei dem Pestepidemien West-Europas* (Heidelberg, 1953); P. Preto, *Peste e società Venezia, 1576* (Vicenza, 1978), esp. 60; Giovanni B. Galliccioli, *Delle memorie Venete antiche, profane ed ecclesiastiche*, 3 vols. in 1 (Venice, 1795), II: 214, who describes the appearance of the twins (some of his details contradict the information available in the sources mentioned above); Brian Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice* (Cambridge, MA, 1971), 314–26.
- 10 Edgardo Morpurgo, “Bibliografia della storia degli ebrei nel Veneto,” *Rivista israelitica* 9 (1912): 226–27, lists the work as no. 662 in his bibliography and indicates that it was published first in Venice in 1575. Albert Sapadin, “On a Monstrous Birth Occurring in the Ghetto of Venice,” *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* 6 (1964): 153–58, discusses the second edition. I have consulted a copy of this edition in the Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion Library in Cincinnati. Morpurgo lists another pamphlet on the same incident (no. 663 in his list), titled *Nova et ridicolosa esposizione del mostro nato in Ghetto con il lamento del suo padre per la morte di quello ecc.* (Venice, 1575), which I was unable to locate. Morpurgo adds that, according to this work, the father castigated himself for having failed to circumcise the twins.
- 11 See: Yagel, *A Valley of Vision: The Heavenly Journey of Abraham ben Hananiah Yagel* edited and translated by David B. Ruderman (Philadelphia, 1990). And the Hebrew edition: *Sefer Gei chizzayon*, edited by David Ruderman (Jerusalem, 1997). See also Giulio Busi, “Sulla Ge Hizzayon (La Valle della Visione) di Abraham Yagel,” *Annali della facoltà di lingua e letterature straniere de ca' Foscari*, 23 (1984): 17–34.
- 12 *Gei hizzayon*, pt. 1, 21a–28a.
- 13 Ibid., 21a. See BT Babba Kama 60b.
- 14 *Gei hizzayon*, pt. 1, 21a–22b.
- 15 Ibid., 23a–27a.
- 16 Ibid., 23b.
- 17 Ibid., 24b. On the phrase “out of the mouths,” see Ps. 8:3.
- 18 *Gei hizzayon*, pt. 1, 24b; *Discorso* (Bologna, 1576), 10 (my pagination).

- 19 *Gei hizzayon*, pt. 1, 25a–b; *Discorso*, Chapter 2.
- 20 *Gei hizzayon*, pt. 1, 25b–27a; *Discorso*, Chapter 1.
- 21 Yagel refers to the idea that the womb has seven sacs, three at each side and one in the middle. If the sperm enters at the right, the infant will be male; if it enters at the left, it will be female; and in the middle, it will be androgynous. For earlier Jewish sources for this idea, see Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* (1939; reprint, New York, 1970), 188, 303, n. 13; and Mani's note in *Gei hizzayon*, 276. On Yagel's idea regarding the role of imagination during the act of intercourse, cf. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 187.
- 22 The Schor letter is undated, but Joseph Solomon Delmedigo, the first to publish it, had arrived in Poland by the beginning of 1620; see Isaac Barzilay, *Yoseph Shlomo Delmedigo, Yashar of Candia: His Life, Works and Times* (Leiden, 1974), 59. Yagel had already received an extensive report on the Grodek child by late 1620. The letter is found in Delmedigo, *Sefer elim* (Amsterdam, 1629), 65. See also Israel Zinberg, *History of Jewish Literature*, ed. and trans. B. Martin, 12 vols. (New York, 1972–78), IV, 169. On Schor see Jecheskiel Caro, *Geschichte der juden in Lemberg* (Krakow, 1894), 139; Zvi Horowitz, *Le-toledot ha-kehilot be-Polin* (Jerusalem, 1978), 399; *Evreiskaâ entsiklopedia* (St. Petersburg, 1912–14), s.v. "Shor, Avraam." On Katz see R. Margaliot, "Rabbis and Heads of Yeshivot" (in Hebrew," in *Entsiklopediyah shel galuyot*, 11 vols. (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1953–73), IV, cols. 395–96; Caro, *Geschichte der Juden in Lemberg*, 144; Shlomo Buber, *Anshei shem* (Krakow, 1895), 144. Much of what follows in this chapter is based on my article "Three Contemporary Perceptions of a Polish Wunderkind of the Seventeenth Century," *Association for Jewish Studies Review*, 4 (1979): 143–63.
- 23 Delmedigo, *Sefer elim*, 65.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid., 50; see also p. 15.
- 26 Ibid., 50.
- 27 Ibid., 15.
- 28 Quoted in Barzilay, *Yoseph Shlomo Delmedigo*, 259.
- 29 Ms. New York, Jewish Theological Seminary of America 3541 (ENA 74), fols. 181a–b (Jerusalem microfilm 29346). My thanks to Dr. Abraham David of the Institute, who first told me of this letter, and to the late Dr. Lawrence Marwick, former head of the Hebraic Section of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., who identified for me the town of Potylicz in the Belzsk region as well as a number of other Polish towns mentioned in this chapter.
- 30 Ibid., fol. 181b. The latter part of the letter was transcribed by Saul b. David of Kostelec in the name of the shammash of the Jewish community of Lvov.
- 31 Bat rabim, Ms. Moscow Günzburg 129, no. 68, fols. 108b–09b.
- 32 Ibid., fols. 111b.
- 33 Ibid., fols. 111b–12a.
- 34 For a more extensive discussion of this motif in earlier Jewish literature, see Ruderman, "A Polish Wunderkind," 149–53.
- 35 Zohar, 3, 186a–92a, translated into Hebrew in Isaiah Tishby and Fischel Lachower, *Mishnat ha-Zohar*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1957–61), II, 66–89.
- 36 Bat rabim, no. 68, fol. 111a.
- 37 Gershom Scholem, "The Sources of the Tale of R. Gaddiel the Infant in the Literature of the Kabbalah" (in Hebrew), in Le-Agnon Shai (Jerusalem, 1966), 289–305.

- 38 On the wonder child of Avila, see R. Solomon b. Adret, *She'elot u- teshuvot*, 3 pts. (Bnai Berak, 1958–), pt. 1, 208–09, no. 548; J. L. Teicher, “The Medieval Mind,” *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 6 (1955): 1–13; Yizhak Baer, *A History of the Jews of Christian Spain*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1961–66), I, 277–78.
- 39 See Bat Rabim, no. 68, fol. 110b.
- 40 Ibid., no. 39, fols. 72b–73b. On the prophecies of Nahman, see Scholem, “The Kabbalist R. Abraham ben Eliezer ha-Levi” (in Hebrew), *Kiryat Sefer*, 2 (1925–26), 101–38, 269–73; idem, “New Researches on R. Abraham ben Eliezer ha-Levi” (in Hebrew), *Kiryat Sefer*, 7 (1930–31), 149–65, 440–56; and the revised edition of Scholem’s essays by Malachi Beit-Arie, *Ha-mekubbal R. Avraham ben Eliezer ha-Levi. Mavo le- hotsa’at tatsum shel chibburo Ma’amar meshare kitrin* (Jerusalem, 1978); also Joseph Dan, “Notes on the Matter of the Prophecy of the Boy” (in Hebrew), *Shalem*, 1 (1974): 229–34; Elijah Strauss (Ashtor), *Toledot ha-Yehudim be- Mizrayim ve-Suryah tachat shilton ha-Mamlukim*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1944), I, 129; Judah D. Eisenstein, *Otzar midrashim*, 2 vols. (New York, 1915), II, 396–97.
- 41 Scholem, “The Kabbalist,” 117–18.
- 42 Gedaliah ibn Yahya, *Shalshelet ha-Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1962), 105. See also Abraham David, “Mif’alo ha-historiyografi shel Gedaliah ibn Yahya, ba’al Shalshelet ha-Kabbalah” (PhD diss., Hebrew University, 1976), 177–78, 365; Jacob b. Hayyim Zemah, *Sefer Nagid u-mezavveh* (Zolkiew, 1793), 75–79.
- 43 Gei Hizzayon, pt. 1, 24b; Discorso, 10 (my pagination). In “A Polish Wunderkind,” 157, n. 48–50, I indicated that I could not locate Yagel’s precise reference to either Xenophon or Aben Ragel in his comments on Nahman’s prophecies. I now realize that he did not have to quote the original sources, since he had already found them in the Discorso. For additional references to Aben Ragel, see *ibid.*, 157 n. 49. Yagel also refers to Aben Ragel’s works in Be’er Sheva, Bodleian Ms. Reggio 11, pt. 2, chaps. 4 and 15. But see now Busi “Sulla Ge Ḥizzayon,” 25, who identifies the passage from Albohazen *Haly Filii Abenragel Libri de Judiciis Astrorum* (Basel, 1551), 145b.
- 44 Although Yagel made no explicit reference to messianism in the case of the conjoined children, the year of their birth (1575) was one of considerable messianic expectation. Among the messianic calculations for this year were those of Mordecai Dato, which Yagel may have known. See David Tamar, “The Anticipation in Italy of the Year of Redemption of 5335 [1575]” (in Hebrew), in *Mechkarim be-toledot ha-Yehudim be-Erez Yisra’el u-ve-Italiyah* (Jerusalem, 1973), 11–38.
- 45 This point is developed further in Ruderman, “A Polish Wunderkind,” 160–63.
- 46 Bat rabim, no. 68, fols. 109b–10a.
- 47 Ibid., fol. 110a. This view parallels that of Maimonides in the *Guide to the Perplexed* 2.32, 36. See also Alvin Reines, *Maimonides and Abravanel on Prophecy* (Cincinnati, 1970), xxxv.
- 48 Bat rabim, no. 68, fol. 110a. On Balaam’s exalted position in rabbinic literature, see Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols. (Philadelphia, 1909–38), III, 354–82, 410–11; VI, 123–75; cf. also Philo, *De vita Moysis* 1.48; Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.6.2.
- 49 Bat rabim, no. 68, fol. 110b. The literature on Joan of Arc is extensive. See, for example, Charles W. Lighthody, *The Judgements of Joan* (London, 1962); Daniel Rankin and Claire Quintal, *The First Biography of Joan of Arc* (Pittsburgh, 1964); Walter S. Scott, *The Trial of Joan of Arc* (London, 1956); Jules Quicherat, *Procès de condamnation et de réhabilitation de Jeanne d’Arc*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1841–49).
- 50 Bat rabim, no. 68, fol. 110b. On Merlin, see Edward Anwyl, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. J. Hastings, 12 vols. (Edinburgh, 1908–22), s.v. “Merlin”; Keith Thomas,

- Religion and the Decline of Magic (London, 1971), 394–410. On ancient Near Eastern parallels to the Merlin legend, see Moses Gaster, “The Legend of Merlin,” in *Studies and Texts in Folklore, Magic, Medieval Romance, Hebrew Apocrypha, and Samaritan Archeology*, 2 vols. (New York, 1971), II, 965–84.
- 51 Bat rabim, no. 68, fol. 110b. Yagel apparently referred to Molcho’s collection of sermons, originally published in Salonika in 1529. On Molcho see Moshe Idel, “Solomon Molcho as Magician” (in Hebrew), *Sefunot*, n.s., 3 (1985): 193–219.
- 52 On Nifo’s view of prophecy, see Thorndike, *History of Magic*, VI, 484–87; on Pomponazzi’s view, see *ibid.*, V, 98–110, and Andrew H. Douglas, *The Philosophy and Psychology of Pietro Pomponazzi* (Cambridge, 1910), 287–91.
- 53 On Cardano’s view of prophecy, see Thorndike, *History of Magic*, V, 574–75; William G. Waters, *Jerome Cardan: A Biographical Study* (London, 1893), 104–17, 249; Giuseppe Saitta, *Il pensiero italiano nell’umanesimo e nel Rinascimento*, 2 vols. (Bologna, 1950), II, 202–226. For additional references, see Ruderman, *Kabbalah, Magic, Science*, 180 n. 15.
- 54 Girolamo Cardano, *Opera Omnia*, 10 vols. (Lyons, 1662; reprint, New York and London, 1967), III, *De Rerum Varietate*, chap. 43, entitled “Hominis mirabilia,” 160–61, 163.
- 55 On Cardano’s further influence on Yagel, see Ruderman, *Kabbalah, Magic, Science*, 89–101.
- 56 See note 6.
- 57 This is a summary of the theme of Céard’s *La nature et les prodiges*. See esp. vii–xiv, 485–93. Cf. the reconstruction by Park and Daston, “Unnatural Conceptions.” Céard’s explanation of the sixteenth-century fascination with monsters is reinforced by anthropologists Mary Douglas and Edmund Leach in their discussions of cultural anomalies and taboos. According to their view, each person attempts to perceive the world as a stable entity in which all objects have recognizable shape, location, and permanence. An anomaly constitutes an uncomfortable fact that refuses to fit into any established system of classification, seemingly defying cherished assumptions. Such anomalies attract maximum interest and often elicit intense feelings of taboo. See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London, 1966), esp. 48–53; Edmund Leach, “Anthropological Aspects of Language: Animal Categories and Verbal Abuse,” in *Mythology*, ed. P. Maranda (London, 1972), 39–67. My thanks to Professor Ronald Weissman of the University of Maryland for these references.

Rabbinic Monsters: The World of Wonder and Rabbinic Culture at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century

Maoz Kahana

There is none else besides Him. R. Hanina said: Even by sorcery

—Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin 67a

In 1651 the Rabbi-politician-philosopher and ex-converso Menashe ben Israel (1604–57) published *Nishmat chaim*—a polemic treatise, proving the immorality of the soul from almost every possible aspect. The course of the discussion led the author to look into the possibility of the existence of “mixed” human-demonic hybrids: “And indeed, if, as investigation shows, it is possible for women to have sex with demons, we must ask whether they [the demons] have reproductive organs.”¹ To investigate the issue, Ben Israel reviewed the opinions of “the great Christian sage Augustine,” alongside the words of R. Simon bar Yochai, and referring also to his own lived reality:

Now, all of Germany, Alsace, and France . . . know of the craft of witches . . . who are women who have made covenants with demons. . . . They assemble in groups in a designated place where they dance and hop in the night, and they have intercourse with satyrs, that is, with spirits.”²

As the discussion continues, Menashe embarks on a scientific description of such creatures, and questions the necessity of judicial actions against the human participants of such strange interactions, namely, the witches.

Nishmat chaim was part of an early modern process which saw an increased scholarly interest among Hebrew writers in novel intellectual regions and domains. As such, its use of intertwining scientific, demonological, and kabbalistic language closely corresponded with the literature of its age, such as Rabbi Aron Modena’s *Ma’avar Jabok* (1626), or the more homiletic-theoretical works of Kabbalists like Rabbi Isaia Horowitz’s *Shney luchot ha-brit* (1648), as well as the later, and more scientific-medical

approach taken by Tuvia Ha-Cohen in his *Ma'ase Tuvia* (1707), which was devoted to enriching Jewish knowledge with detailed scientific descriptions.

The fascinating nature of such mixed or magical creatures as dragons, centaurs, sirens, and the aforementioned human-demonic hybrids was a common focus of such early modern Jewish works. Science, Kabbalah, and Jewish Talmudic and medieval demonological traditions were merged together, creating a vibrant and widespread discussion. In this manner, these seventeenth-century works contributed to the growing place of wondrous creatures in Jewish imagination and literature. In this specific realm, Jewish interest can be seen as closely corresponding with the growing European concern with similar wondrous creatures. This interest is evident, for instance, in Francis Bacon's influential plan for cataloguing the wondrous phenomena of the natural world, and its subsequent materializations such as Joseph Glanvill's works on magic and witchcraft. These and similar works played no small role in what might be termed the "new science" of the seventeenth century.

Could these general European and specific Jewish interests gain influence also on the core of the Jewish traditional culture, namely, the world of rabbinical writings: Talmudic scholasticism and legal halakhic jurisdiction? A short answer to this question might be found in an unexpected halakhic inquiry, written by the notable halakhic scholar, Rabbi Zvi Aschenazi (1656–1718) known as the Chacham Zvi, and published in his book of responsa (rabbinical replies on halakhic matters) in 1712. The inquiry dealt directly with the potential halakhic quandaries arising from the creation of a Golem:

I am uncertain about a person who was created through Sefer Yetsira—such as the one mentioned in Sanhedrin, "Rava created a man," and as they testified about my grandfather, the eminent Rabbi Elijah, the head of the rabbinical court of Chelm [Chelm—Poland]. Might the Golem be counted [toward a quorum] for matters that require ten, such as kaddish and kedusha?³

The discussion, as expressed in these opening sentences, was inspired by the Talmudic magical traditions about the sages' power to produce a Golem, namely, a humanoid creature. It furthermore draws on one specific tale of the creation of such a creature in the sixteenth century, by one of Chacham Zvi's ancestors. And yet, while the discussion draws on past traditions and debates, its combination of scientific and legal discourses is quite novel: can a human-divine mechanism function as a valid legal participant in Jewish rituals and ceremonies?

The answer to the intriguing halakhic question raised by the responsum cannot be dealt with here. What interests me here is the striking penetration of miraculous creatures into rabbinic literature in all its branches in the last decades of the seventeenth century. I argue that this phenomenon marks a long-term historical process, in which magical beings were domesticated into rabbinical literature, subsequently becoming key players in the self-understanding and identification of rabbinical authors, precisely in an era which saw the so-called disenchantment of European society. In order to examine this cultural turning point, I will focus on sections of the works of rabbinical writers at the end of the eighteenth century. At the center of the discussion will stand

the writing of the Hatam Sofer (1762–1839), who was one the major religious leaders of central European Jewry around the turn of the century. Following this discussion, parallel points of view will be offered through two other “traditionalists” of this age: Pinchas Horowitz (1765–1821), a distributor of scientific knowledge for traditional society, and Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav (1772–1811)—an extraordinary eastern European Chassidic leader. What roles did wonder, science, and demons play in their writing? Our discussion begins with the Chatam Sofer and the scientific interpretation of one wonder in his writings, namely, the salamander.

* * *

The book of Leviticus⁴ presents a list of animals which are forbidden for consumption. One of these is the turtle, which is accompanied by the phrase “in all its variations.” What is implied by this addition? Which other animals are similar to the turtle, and how? The sages of the Talmud phrase their answer in the following words: “Our Rabbis taught: ‘The turtle in all its variations’—this includes the *arod*, the *nephilim* and the salamander. And when R. Akiva arrived at this verse he used to say: ‘How manifold are Thy works, O Lord!’”⁵ Tannaim (sages of the period surrounding the destruction of the Second Temple) such as R. Akiva were filled with amazement and wonder at the greatness of the Creator when they recalled the existence of such animals. Of this short list of wondrous creatures, the salamander, at least, is mentioned in other places in the Talmud. Thus, for instance, in Tractate Hagiga:

R. Abbahu said in the name of R. Eleazar: The fire of Hell (*Gehinom*) has no power over the Torah Scholars, it is an *ad majus* conclusion [to be drawn] from the salamander: If now [in the case of] the salamander, which is [only] an offspring of fire, he who anoints himself with its blood is not affected by fire, how much more so the Torah Scholars, whose entire body is fire, for it is written: “Is not My word like as a fire? saith the Lord.”⁶

The wondrous salamander serves as a model for the sages of the Talmud, through which they can explain a future additional wonder, namely the question: How will the sages not be incinerated by the fires of Hell? Because he who anoints himself with the blood of the salamander, the Talmud claims, will not be burnt by fire, the sages—who are themselves saturated with a kind of fire—will not burn in the fires of Hell. Rashi, the classical Talmudic exegete of the eleventh century, explained that the wondrous salamander is created by a special spell, which forges it out of a lengthy burning of myrtle trees. The fire from which the salamander is born turns its blood into the protective substance mentioned above, which is resistant to any other fire.⁷

As one can derive already from its name, the notion of the salamander’s special connection to fire, predates the traditions encapsulated in the Talmud. The salamander appears already in the works of Aristotle (fourth century BCE) and Pliny the Elder (first century CE), as well as in Greek and Roman mythologies.⁸ The Talmudic passages make secondary use of such existing myths, assimilating the creation of this fantastic creature into rabbinic literature.

Let us now skip forward in time, from the days of the Talmud to the modern era and to Rabbi Moses Sofer (Frankfurt 1762—Pressburg 1839) also known as the Hatam Sofer. An influential halakhist and a great communal leader during turbulent times in the history of the Jews, the Hatam Sofer attempted, in his exegesis on one of the aforementioned Talmudic passages, to question Rashi's explanation of the salamander's origin. Writing with a certain level of humility, the Hatam Sofer found challenging the notion that the salamander was created through magic, rather than naturally. He phrased his exegetical solution as follows:

Therefore, in my humble opinion, it appears that [the salamander] is surely a creature that [is created out of] the source of fire. And it grows in the famous fire-spouting hills. And . . . when [the salamanders] emerge into the air they immediately die, therefore the sorcerers must prepare for them a hot location, similar to the source of fire in which they live . . . [therefore] the sorcerers prepare a furnace that has been heated for seven years with myrtle trees, whose heat is thus close to [the heat of the] source of fire, and they attach the salamander to this [fire] in order to bring it here, and they are fruitful and multiply there, and men are anointed with their blood and [become] impervious to fire.⁹

The enigmatic description of the salamander encountered in rabbinic literature becomes a thicker scientific description in the Hatam Sofer's words. The various "data points" are not new: they were gathered and tied together by the Hatam Sofer from the vast body of medieval and early modern Jewish literature.¹⁰ The innovation in the Hatam Sofer's reorganization of the material is in his solution for the tension between the forces of sorcery and those of nature. The solution is exegetical and cautious; the sorcerers do not really *create* the salamanders, as Rashi explained, but rather extract them from their natural habitat in the volcanoes, and miraculously transport them to the civilized world. According to the Hatam Sofer, therefore, the verses in Leviticus that allude to the salamander cannot indicate a creature that is not part of the natural order, even if all the details of its existence are wondrous and magical.

As we shall presently seem, the Hatam Sofer exhibited a similar naturalistic tendency when dealing with other strange creatures, demons, and monsters. The question arises, why was it important to this author to come up with a naturalistic solution to the salamander's existence—a solution which stood in direct opposition to earlier thinkers such as Rashi? To answer this question, we must turn to the Hatam Sofer's varied, and at times surprising, personal life as a halakhist, Talmudic exegete and leader of traditional European Jewish society, who at the same time acted also as an exorcist and as a reader of scientific literature in various fields. Over the following pages, I will offer a rough sketch of the Hatam Sofer's rabbinic, magical, and scientific views and activities, which, I will argue, shed light on his treatment of miraculous creatures.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, in Pressburg, a capital of the Hapsburg Empire, the following story was told regarding a child, Lieb, son of Sarah, who was possessed by an evil spirit:¹¹

A young boy lived in Pressburg, named Lieb, son of Sarah. And she was a righteous woman, and she lived in the great house on the Jewish street, called *Nesterhaus* . . . and one day the child was possessed by an evil spirit, God protect us, and he came . . . and tore the *mezuzot* [a doorpost comprising a piece of parchment inscribed with Hebrew verses from the Torah] and all the *chumashim* [volumes of the Pentateuch] and *siddurim* [prayer books], God protect us . . . and he jumped up high and made strange gestures,¹² and his face turned different shades [of color]. And when he found a book in gentile languages he would kiss and hug it and kneel [before it]. And he uttered the names of idols,¹³ God protect us, and there was a great noise and the whole city buzzed with excitement. And many came from far away to see this, even priests, and they marveled at his ability to call the names of different and ancient idols.¹⁴

The spirit that possessed Lieb was, according to this description, a strong and alarming spirit. It turned the Jewish boy into a sort of reincarnation of an ancient Christian, and enabled him not only to use the “Gentile language” that he did not know, but also the names of various ancient Christian saints who were strange even to expert priests of the nineteenth century. The boy was brought to the city rabbi—Rabbi Moses Sofer. Initially, the Hatam Sofer attempted to solve the problem using moderate, conventional methods:

He commanded that the boy be brought before him, he stood him up between his knees and commanded him to read the *chumash* and pray from the *siddur*. And he did as he was commanded. But when [the boy] went from his home to the courtyard, where the study house of the *yeshiva* stood, and heard the *kedusha* or the *kaddish*, the spirit, God protect us, came to him again and he returned to his actions and his bad ways.¹⁵

The Hatam Sofer sought to wear down the force of the impure spirit that had possessed the boy using routine ritual actions, such as reading in the *chumash* and reciting prayers from the *siddur*. This simple solution appeared to achieve its aim, but it was promptly discovered that it was insufficient as a cure, since, while the reading from the *chumash* or praying from the *siddur* supposedly banished the spirit, a similar or stronger ritual action—hearing sanctified parts of the prayer¹⁶ from within the *yeshiva* space—reawakened it, and the boy remained troubled and afflicted. It was only after the stubborn persistence of the affliction that the Hatam Sofer, responding to repeated communal requests, consented to do what he had originally been asked:

He called his student, Fischel Sofer,¹⁷ and gave him an amulet to tie around the boy’s neck, and [told him to] command that the spirit leave the boy’s body through his little finger, and that he should open the window. And [he told him] to

place several brave men beneath the window, with a black dog,¹⁸ and to command the spirit to absorb this dog. And these people should then put the dog in a sack and throw it into a river. And the aforementioned rabbi [Fischel Sofer] did this by his rabbi's commandment . . . and the boy fell to the ground and screamed "my hand, my hand!" like a crane and his finger opened, and the people who were standing there outside with the dog . . . threw the dog into the Danube river, and after a few days the boy healed and he [returned to] study in the *yeshiva*.¹⁹

* * *

The Hatam Sofer's proficiency in the writing and use of amulets is not unexpected. He was closely trained by his greatest teacher, the rabbi, kabbalist and magician Rabbi Nathan Adler (1742–1800), who trained him from the time he was eleven. This personal guidance aimed to create in Sofer a brilliant Torah scholar in the Talmudic sense, but, at the same time, Rabbi Nathan trained his student in the use of the amulets.²⁰ Some of the content of these amulets can be recreated from the writings of Fischel Sofer, the Hatam Sofer's scribe and student mentioned in the story above, who copied in his own hand formulas of kabbalistic names, which he learned from the Hatam Sofer for memorization.²¹ In addition, over the past few years, pages copied from an amulet booklet bequeathed by Rabbi Moses Sofer to his heirs have begun to be published, bit by bit. The magical practices collected therein were intended for a variety of purposes: "an incantation against the Evil Eye," "an amulet for protection," "an amulet for finding favor [*chen*]," and so on. An examination of the origins of these magical formulas confirms that many of the Hatam Sofer's exorcism techniques were the heritage of his childhood in the Rhineland. Alongside the magical practices learned from Rabbi Nathan Adler, one can find additional formulas inherited from lesser known Kabbalists, such as Rabbi Berish of Hanover or Rabbi Levi Ba'al Shem (the miracle worker) of Frankfurt.²² Formulas for protective amulets are described in detail in other places in the Hatam Sofer's writings as well.²³

The Hatam Sofer's collection of magical practices, like those of other miracle workers,²⁴ was rich, varied, and hybrid in nature. Alongside amulets inspired by Lurianic kabbalah one also finds simpler magical formulas, as well as ones that are accompanied by ritual recitations of biblical verses. Some of these magical instructions and formulas appeared already in earlier works. Among these are the talismans found in *Amtachat Binyamin* and *Shem tov katan*, printed in the first few decades of the eighteenth century by Rabbi Beinush ha-Cohen (d. 1725), one of the most fruitful collectors in the field of Jewish magic of his time.²⁵

* * *

Information regarding two slightly hazy years in the Hatam Sofer's childhood biography has the potential to add some further complexity to our exploration of this interesting figure. The Hatam Sofer's teenage years, which he spent with Rabbi Nathan Adler in Frankfurt am Main, were interrupted during the years 1775–77, a period that he spent in Mainz. This sojourn in Mainz may have been motivated by the Hatam

Sofer's desire to distance himself from the tension that arose between himself and his teacher, Rabbi Nathan Adler, on the one side, and his family on the other (the Hatam Sofer left his parent's home at a young age, supposedly due to some sort of tension, according to a familial tradition, recorded by his grandson).²⁶ It is also indisputable that the young and talented scholar continued his Torah studies during these years. But in the perspective lent by the passage of time, these years were recollected primarily as time spent by the fourteen-year-old in the study of various natural sciences—geography, mathematics, history, astronomy—under the patronage of a wealthy Jew in whose house he resided during this period.²⁷ In the romantic language of one of his students: "He said to the wisdom of nature and creation: 'you are my sister' (Prov. 7:4). And she, too, reached out her arms to him as one who leans upon her beloved (Song of Songs 8:5)."²⁸

Should we view the Hatam Sofer's clear interest in the study of sciences, in the original German, and perhaps also French sources,²⁹ which continued from this date onward, as standing in uneasy tension with his kabbalistic and magical training? Do these transitions—from Frankfurt to Mainz and, two years later, back to Frankfurt, reflect the inner turmoil of a young student caught between the lure of the scientific writings of Euclid³⁰ and the power of Lurianic kabbalah, between magic and science, between old and new? The simple answer to this question is unequivocally negative. For a talented Ashkenazi scholar of the mid-eighteenth century, the study of secular fields of wisdoms was part of a wider interest in Natural Philosophy, and from this perspective there was actually much affinity between the Hatam Sofer's curiosity regarding these branches of knowledge—particularly physics and astronomy—and kabbalistic and magical lore. A look at the varied genres of writing produced by the Hatam Sofer in his adulthood reflects a continued theoretical and conceptual preoccupation with a wide range of topics from the world of nature. Astronomy, astrology and alchemy, chemistry and physiology are present in his exegetical and homiletic writings, and closely intertwine with his religious interests and methods in what appears to be an almost purposeful confusion.³¹

The terminology which ties these various components into the consistent, coherent language of rabbinic composition is, naturally, kabbalistic on the whole. Kabbalistic language lends general direction, and religious and exegetical meaning to the scientific endeavor. Even heretical thought patterns, as I demonstrate in a forthcoming study, invade the Hatam Sofer's halakhic writings, where they function as scientific analyses of traditional halakhic categories.³²

Of course, the Hatam Sofer was not a scientist, but a rabbinic writer, and his use of his scientific knowledge is eclectic—it contains no independent scientific knowledge or observation, using scientific facts in order to base or demonstrate a halakhic or moral claim. This eclecticism closely corresponds with the scientific perceptions of the time: like many of his contemporaries, both Jewish and non-Jewish, as well as earlier thinkers, the Hatam Sofer viewed chemistry, alchemy, astronomy, and astrology as fields of study that are closely intertwined. All of these fields—like the attraction of iron to a magnet—were viewed as an integral part of the combined structure of the examination of the qualities of substances and the operating mechanisms of the natural world.³³

The Hatam Sofer's youthful sojourn in Mainz was eventually well integrated into his adult writings. His study of the elective parallel fields of Kabbalah, magic, and science characterizes a wide stratum of traditional Jewish European scholars of the early modern era.³⁴ In this sense, the preoccupation with scientific study in the Jewish society of this time had clear positivistic ties to the study of Kabbalah, and at times, magic. These fields of knowledge lent each other support on the conceptual level, and partially overlapped in their fields of exploration.³⁵

* * *

The Hatam Sofer's scientific education was also expressed in a somewhat more systematic way, in a Hebrew composition on *techuna* (astronomy) and cosmology written sometime toward the end of the eighteenth century. This short, largely forgotten treatise, which was first printed a century after its composition,³⁶ includes an elementary description—systematic, cosmologic, and astrologic—of the material world. It ends abruptly in the middle of the fourth chapter. Details on the essay's composition, and on its abrupt ending, are found in an internal family tradition:

He himself [the Hatam Sofer] was knowledgeable in the wisdoms of measurements and algebra . . . and likewise was proficient in the wisdom of astronomy and physics. And he began to write a special book [devoted] to these fields, so that his students would have it and could learn from it . . . and after *Sefer ha-Brit* (the Book of Covenant) was published he reviewed it start to finish and showed it to his students, and said: Buy such a one as this, any of you who wish to fill your hands with various wisdoms. And you and I will be grateful to the author [of *Sefer ha-Brit*], who saved me from much wasted time, since I do not need to compose such a [book] for you.³⁷

The Hatam Sofer's unfinished astronomy treatise can be seen, indeed, as somewhat reminiscent of Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz of Vilna's *Sefer ha-brit*, the first edition of which was published in Brünn in 1797. Rabbi Pinchas's tremendous, encyclopedic magnum opus was devoted to a detailed exposition of his systematic study of the various scientific fields of his time, incorporating them into a comprehensive, kabbalistic worldview, as the statement printed in the title page of the book declares: “[The book] speaks of matters of . . . logic . . . and experiments and truths of the wisdom of nature . . . [and] from the worlds of *atsilut*, *beri'ah*, *yetsirah* and *asiyah* . . . and the attainment of the Holy Spirit [*ruach ha-kodesh*]”.³⁸

An examination of the *Sefer ha-brit*'s reception informs us that this particular combination of traditional kabbalistic thought patterns with old and new scientific knowledge appealed to many. The book immediately became a best-seller, and was reprinted in dozens of editions in the following decades—in Hebrew, Yiddish, and even Ladino. Interestingly, however, this unequivocally positive reception was not shared by the intellectual elite of the Berlin Jewish Enlightenment movement (the *maskilim*), despite the fact that the dissemination of scientific knowledge in Jewish society was, ostensibly, one of their greatest declarations—the clear realization of the

project of Enlightenment with which they were occupied. A review of the book in the maskilic journal *Ha-me'asef* argued:

This book is full to its brim with many studies and wisdoms . . . and heavenly intellects [*sechelim nifradim*] regarding the knowledge of the world . . . which, by knowing, a person will achieve the peak of wholeness. . . . [He, the author] launched in a slight opening to the science of logic through Aristotle's ten categories, and afterwards he raised his eyes heavenward and talked of the seven firmaments . . . according to the statements of the Zohar on this matter . . . and he continued on to speak of the heavenly spheres [galgalim] and the stars and constellations . . . and he concealed himself in the hidden pathways of the kabbalah.³⁹

Another reviewer phrased his frustration differently: “Truly, why would the author conceal the true purpose that of his book . . . to transmit the treasures of wisdoms from the gentile languages to Hebrew.”⁴⁰ The true purpose and benefit of this encyclopedic enterprise, according to the polemic, yet substantively positive reviewers of the *Me'asef*, was the translation of scientific knowledge into the Hebrew language, in order to improve Jewish society. The kabbalistic conceptual framework into which this knowledge was placed was nothing but a deception, a mistake, and a concealment of the author’s true intentions.

And yet it was exactly this interweaving of scientific knowledge into kabbalistic conceptualization, criticized by the maskilim, which so appealed to the Hatam Sofer, whose religious-scientific paradigm was indeed similar to the one developed by the author of *Sefer ha-brit*.⁴¹ The conflicting knowledge paradigms we are dealing with here are not necessarily those of “open” versus “closed” or “reform” versus “orthodox.” Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz and the Hatam Sofer, like many of their contemporaries, developed internal Jewish adaptations within the tradition of European, post-Renaissance Natural Philosophy, in which the study of nature and divine powers combine empirical exploration with astronomic and alchemic science, new scientific discoveries with ancient astrological and hermetical literature.⁴² The vociferous objection glimpsed on the pages of the *Ha-me'asef* was motivated by an alternative, inverted coding of scientific knowledge and the process of its dissemination, located at the heart of the paradigm of political action embraced by certain strands in the eighteen-century Enlightenment, which sought to regulate individual and social lives according to the rules of rational reason.⁴³ This political mold establishes itself, among other ways, through the systemic division between “scientific”\“rational” and the “spiritual”\“divine.”

* * *

The Hatam Sofer’s interrupted *techuna* pamphlet is a short, condensed example of the astrologic-hermetic worldview within which he operated. The world described within this pamphlet is surrounded by the seven wheels—the planets. These planets (“*ziben planeten*” in his words, echoing the German source of his cosmological education) “were given the power and leadership over certain things, and each of them controls one hour of the day.”⁴⁴ This paradigm expresses an astrological perception, according

to which the astral force of the different planets affect each person's fate, according to the time of his birth, and the quality of any given moment.⁴⁵ But even these forces are subject to higher spiritual hierarchies: ministering angels, who also have supervisors in the form of kabbalistic emanations whose source is identified in the three divine worlds that exist above the angelic world (the worlds of *yetsirah*, *beri'ah*, and *atsilut*).⁴⁶ The sequential description of the natural world with the mysteries of the divine places the detailed kabbalistic descriptions of the heavenly worlds in a scientific, cosmological-astronomical framework. This cosmology was naturally integrated also into the rabbinic concept of the world of angels. The placing of the astronomical and astrological worlds on the same relational plane as the kabbalistic worlds also requires an accompanying synchronization of concepts between seemingly independent semantic and conceptual fields. Such a process of synchronization is described by the Hatam Sofer during the course of the systemic, methodical writing of the *techuna* pamphlet:

And you, know that, until now, we have spoken [on the matter of the planets] from the perspective of this mundane world, and have not come to the border of the worlds of the planets, which the astrologers call the Middle World, for above it is yet another, upper world, in which the celestial beings reside.⁴⁷ Indeed, according to the kabbalists the planets too are considered part of the lower world, and the world of the angels is the next world, and the world of the [Divine] Seat is the third world, and high upon high, is the highest world, which they call *atsilut*.⁴⁸

The astronomical division into three worlds (a lower, median, and upper), and the accepted kabbalistic division into four worlds, argues the Hatam Sofer, describe the same reality using different names. This overlap reaches up to a certain point, at which the description of the reality known to the astronomers ends, while the kabbalistic description continues upward. This unified picture is the one described throughout the astronomical *techuna* pamphlet, and it is this picture that enables the multifaceted scientific endeavor, which is, at the same time, also kabbalistic, astrological, or magical. This worldview accompanies the Hatam Sofer's *techuna* pamphlet even while he discusses the "sponge-like nature" of the air, the type of movement of the "obersten luftkreyen" (i.e., "the upper wheel of the air," in the Hatam Sofer's explanation of the German term he used for his discussion), the nature of volcanoes or the attempt to organize the cosmological hierarchies and location relations between the four classical elements in accordance with their qualitative attributes.⁴⁹

* * *

From the examination of this last topic (the cosmological hierarchy of the four elements), the cosmogenic discussion in the *techuna* pamphlet turned to an explanation of the nature of demons and *mezikim*—harmful beings, in whose expulsion, as the reader will recall, the Hatam Sofer was also involved in practice:

Thus were created in the water things that are derived of only three elements: water, air and fire; these are the harmful beings that are called *Wassermenschen*

in German, i.e. the water men. And in the air there are those [composed of] two elements: air and fire, and they are the demons mentioned by the Talmudic sages,⁵⁰ who can see but cannot themselves be seen, due to their thinness, [which is] like the air, and there is also at the source of fire a creature [that is made] only of fire,⁵¹ it is unknown whether it is a demon or an angel or something else.⁵²

All of the standard organisms of creation are, according to the accepted tradition, created out of the four Aristotelian elements. But there are, the Hatam Sofer argues, three exceptions to the rule: the mysterious fire creature, the salamander, whose identity—angel or demon—is unclear; the rabbinic demons, who are constructed of only air and fire, who see and cannot be seen and reside in “the element of air”; and the “water people,” who are constructed of three elements. These last creatures, while they can be seen, usually reside in the depths of the water, from which they received their name.

In his description of demons as creatures of two elements, the Hatam Sofer continues a medieval tradition that persisted well into the modern period.⁵³ The depiction of the *Wassermenschen*, on the other hand, draws on a new, distinctly early modern European tradition, which was imported into rabbinic literature.⁵⁴ Then there is the salamander, whose genealogy is more complex. Its ancient antecedents in Greek mythology were, as mentioned above, assimilated into rabbinic literature and exegetical traditions already in antiquity, and at the same time persisted in Western culture throughout the Middle Ages. Interest in the salamander was expanded in some fields of scientific research of the early modern era, such as in the highly influential medical and philosophical works of Philippus Aurelius Paracelsus (1493–1541), who integrated a host of pagan creatures into his scientific descriptions.⁵⁵ The wondrous salamander was one of the most important of these—Paracelsus identified it as a symbol for—as well as the foundation of—the independent existence of the element of fire.⁵⁶ It appears, then, that the Hatam Sofer’s description of the salamander closely resonates the scientific-European decoding of a creature, of whose existence and importance he knew from within his rabbinic-particularistic culture as well.⁵⁷ Clearly, the factual-scientific analysis of the foundation of fire according to the Paracelsian approach is insufficient grounds for a Jewish ethical determination concerning the question of the creature’s demonic or angelic status. The Hatam Sofer thus left this important issue open to further examination. In this rare instance there appears, for a moment, a fissure between the Hatam Sofer’s scientific education and its coherent assimilation into the conceptual language of Jewish tradition, the language to which he is accustomed and in which he is fluent. Scientific analysis places angels and demons on one plane—as creatures that deviate from the rule of the four elements. The salamander, therefore, might be either negative or positive. Science, in its very nature, cannot supply the answer and, in this particular case, neither can the rabbinic tradition.

A similar uncertainty does not accompany the *Wassermenschen*, who are described as “harmful spirits,” despite the fact that there is no parallel being identified in the rabbinic world of demons. These beings constitute one of the most well-known and widespread creations of German folklore. The Hatam Sofer’s use of the German phrase (in the singular as “watery man”) in describing this being also points to this cultural

arena as its field of origin. German mythology in the Rhineland (where Hatam Sofer was born and educated) is replete with stories of various water monsters, of whom Heine's famous Loreley is but one late literary derivation.

One folkloristic German tradition, documented in the nineteenth century, describes the *Wassermenschen* in the following colorful fashion:

Demonic beings, ugly to behold, live in the depths [of the ocean]. They rise out of there infrequently, through special rivers of entrance and exit, which give these creatures their name, “water people.” They come into our world particularly to steal the most beautiful babies away from their mothers while they sleep. They clothe themselves in the appearance of children [Wasserkinder] and replace these babies with themselves, casting a spell on the sleeping mother so that she will not notice the change. To this day there is a special talisman that the parents tie to their doors in order to protect their homes from these water people.⁵⁸

The German “Wasserman” in descriptions of this sort is indubitably worthy of the Talmudic appellation, *mezik* (“harmful being”), with which the Hatam Sofer ascribes it. In addition, practices similar to the use of the talisman described in the German source were widely employed by Jews of the same cultural region to protect parturient women from demons and other harmful beings, such as Lilith.⁵⁹ The negative moral judgment, in this case, is assimilated from German folk traditions to the rabbinic decoding of the phenomenon but, at the same time, the water man, like his predecessors in the Hatam Sofer’s list of creatures, was described not as a mythical or folkloric being, but scientifically—as a creature composed of three elements, of which water is the most dominant. The source of this analysis is not necessarily an independent one, and it is likely that it, too, was borrowed from scientific, post-Paracelsian alchemic literature, in which even folkloristic creatures often served as objects of scientific research.⁶⁰ Thus, a contemporary devil like the *Wassermenschen*, a traditional *mezik* from the rabbinic era, and the immortal salamander—are all scientifically located into the ordered natural world. This understanding uses the unifying language of the elements in order to integrate modern, eighteenth-century demons with the demons of ancient rabbinic literature.

For the Hatam Sofer, the topic of demons is not an abstract, theoretical topic—these are, after all, the same creatures that were the subject of the very practical exorcism efforts made by the protagonist of our story, as described above. But how do the water people, salamanders, or plain old demons participate in creating the mental disorder that brings about the need for such an exorcism? The answer to this important question can be gleaned from another place in the Hatam Sofer’s writings:

For demons and spirits do not master human form [*tsurat adam*] [unless] there is a lack in his form—i.e. in his thinking or his mind . . . for it is his mental malaise that forms the chariot for the demon or the *mezik* . . . then, when his mind has been completely compromised by his illness, the *mezik* comes to the place that has been prepared for it. [In times] when the disease departs, the *mezik* also departs, and with its departure he [the *mezik*] returns to his place [in the patient’s mind and body].⁶¹

Insanity, therefore, is the result of a cognitive weakness whose causes are varied—physical or psychological. This weakness is what enables the demons or the harmful spirits to take the place of healthy consciousness and thus control the patient. The *dybbuk*, in which a demon descends upon a person, is described here as a complex, hybrid phenomenon in which the body, the soul, and the demonic presence maintain reciprocal relations with each other.⁶² This hybridity also has therapeutic ramifications; the healing process, as is intimated here, can often be attained through medicinal-natural treatment, since the healing and strengthening of the patient's body will also banish the *mezik*. But occasionally there is no choice but to use the healing force of the amulets and the holy names they contain. Hybrid notions of the nature of illness, such as the understanding described here, are very characteristic of the Hatam Sofer's contemporaries—central European thinkers and practitioners of the eighteenth century, and it is central to their understanding of the reciprocal relationships between body and soul, corporeality and spirituality.

The distinction between natural reasons and essential or preternatural ones is also a dominant theme in the literature of Jewish healers and exorcists.⁶³ In this analysis of demonology, illness, and insanity one must, of course, explain the process of healing through magical intervention—how does the amulet exercise its curative effect on the patient?

The Hatam Sofer explains the process of magical healing in the course of a long halakhic discussion regarding the ethics of amuletic-astral activity.⁶⁴ The topic was addressed in the context of one of his communications with Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum (1768–1841), a Polish immigrant who became the head of the Jewish court of Sátoraljaújhely, in northeastern Hungary. Rabbi Moshe became known, during this period, as a rising Hassidic leader, whose authority in his new region spread considerably due to his wholesale distribution of large quantities of amulets to those who turned to him for aid.⁶⁵ It was exactly with relation to this matter that the Hatam Sofer wished to demonstrate the close affinity between himself—the student of Rabbi Nathan Adler, who had witnessed the healing power of magical names first hand—and Rabbi Moshe—the Seer of Lublin's student, trained in Galician Hassidism. “And I will speak for another moment,” the Hatam Sofer wrote, “for the holy names are real actions, from what I have witnessed with my own eyes from a miracle worker, my teacher, the Righteous Cohen [*Cohen tsedek*], may his memory be for a blessing.”⁶⁶ The ensuing discussion dealt with the boundaries of the legitimacy of using the holy names which, as the Hatam Sofer mentioned, are real actions, that is to say—are effective in bringing about the desired magical result. According to the Hatam Sofer's views, as they emerge from this letter, the amulets and the names work in parallel and apparently identical ways to the “swearing-in” of demons and angels. The shared goal of all these practices is to influence the divine abundance directed at the mundane world and change the courses through which it flows thence. Is such scientific-religious activity really legitimate, asked the Hatam Sofer? What is the difference between a “negative” action undertaken with the help of demons or angels, and a legitimate one undertaken in the amulets with the help of the holy names?⁶⁷

The Hatam Sofer's answer stemmed from a schematic distinction between different stops on the routes through which the divine abundance flows between the heavenly

world and the mundane one. The undesirable swearing-in (of demons and angels, “black magic”),⁶⁸ although it is possible and even effective, is the one directed at “the lower forces,” which are located in “the world of action,” namely—the physical world. These forces are commanded by upper ministers, whose power one should not harm.⁶⁹ The desired and fitting action uses “holy names” in order to turn to “the Uppermost Power,” “the High upon High,” “He who is Before the Abundance.”⁷⁰ This type of action is not only possible but also desirable, and in fact, this is the very action that God himself desires: “These [the upper powers] are conducted over by the power that is above them, through the holy names.” It is this regarding which the sages said: “Sing praises to Him who rejoices when they conduct [lit. conquer] Him.”⁷¹ The holy names are tuned so as to conduct (!) upper forces in the natural and divine worlds, and to direct them to man’s needs and desires. Unlike the world of the angels and ministers, which might react adversely to the disruption of powers entrusted to it—the order of the natural world—and harm people, the king himself, God, is pleased with the activity of the holy names which conquers/conducts and changes the routes through which the abundance flows before its descent into the natural world. This action is not witchcraft—it is the holy names through which the world was created, after all—and it is this upon which the logic of the ancient *Sefer yetzirah* is predicated, and upon which the contemporary use of amulets rests.⁷²

* * *

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Francis Bacon formulated his plan for a reform in the study of the natural world. This plan famously included a call for a clear and comprehensive documentation and cataloguing of wondrous and magical phenomena in the world, with the intent of creating from them, through a process of rational induction, valid knowledge of the world and its rules that would be more encompassing than anything previously known.⁷³ Over the next few centuries, many responded to Bacon’s challenge, which placed the fringe phenomena of wondrous events and fantastic beings at the center of scientific exploration, as a tool for the dismantling of unreliable knowledge, and simultaneously as a window into the hidden reasons for strange occurrences in a large and varied world. Detailed stories of miracles were published by the annals of the scientific societies of London and Paris, and treasure rooms (*Wunderkammer*) of magical stones and curious mechanisms became objects of both elite and popular fascination.

Bacon’s plan, however, was not, as we know, ultimately realized. Beginning at the end of the seventeenth century, mechanical philosophy replaced Bacon’s approach, accompanied by a worldview which posited predictable, “normative” facts as the object of all scientific exploration, and ultimately as forming its exclusive boundaries. All these were, finally, joined by the cultural and political agenda, whose rational framework identified the dangers of magic—vulgarity and unchecked religious fervor, threatening the political order. In this context, the miracle changed from a cultural, valued treasure, to a social and conceptual burden and even a threat.⁷⁴

Yet what constituted a threat for European “modernists” might, at the same time, constitute a valuable possession for European enthusiasts and Pietists, as well as for

some Jewish “traditionalists.” From this perspective, the tension between the patterns of knowledge adopted by the Hatam Sofer and by *Sefer ha-brit*, and the scientific perception of the *Me'asael* as described above, becomes a wide and important chasm, whose significance spreads much further than the Jewish society in which it took place. For *Sefer ha-brit*, scientific knowledge in all its forms—whether rational or strange, natural or wondrous—formed a moral ladder upon which one could ascend to a more comprehensive religious understanding of the world, and finally embracing this scientific data—reaching even the Holy Spirit, a program which clearly gave expression to exactly the kind of *Schwärmerei* and enthusiasm which thinkers of the Enlightenment, Jews and Gentiles alike, so feared.⁷⁵

The Hatam Sofer shared this sanctified view of knowledge, although he himself was not a methodical author of scientific or magical literature. His main interest lay in the practical and literary work of a rabbi, preacher, and exegete, who was also occasionally called upon to perform the odd exorcism. His sharp emphasis on the normative deciphering of unusual creatures like the salamander and the *Wassermenschen* expressed his devotion to an “old” scientific coherence which, through his activity and over time, became more and more identified with the world of traditional society and that began to play an unexpected role in the self-perception of “old,” orthodox religion. In this way, old guests such as the salamanders, and new ones, such as the German *Wassermenschen* became welcome and beloved visitors in the Jewish living room, presenting and symbolizing the wonders and wideness of natural and preternatural creation, far more than the traditional category of “miracles.” Their existence and deciphering became essential to the traditional society of the day.

This point becomes even clearer when one compares *Sefer ha-brit* and the Hatam Sofer’s works to those of their Jewish contemporaries. In the same years in which the Hatam Sofer exorcised spirits and demons in urban Pressburg, a yet relatively unknown Hassidic leader resided in a small village in Podolia, from where he told his followers stories of ancient-new wonders. In the legends told by Rabbi Nahman of Breslov (1772–1810), a variety of fantastic creatures appear: a prince made exclusively of precious stones, a demonic horse which jumps into a small water pumps, enchanted forests in which golden trees grow, phoenixes, dragons, bewitched princesses, and more.⁷⁶ In one of these legends, the parallel stories of two childhood friends who grew up together in a small village are told. The “wise son,” the story tells, left the little village in which he was born for distant capital cities, where he became a talented doctor and a great philosopher. During his travels, he was exposed to so many different and sophisticated fields of knowledge. His enlightenment caused him to cease believing in the existence of the king. Despite the great professional success of this philosopher, he never married. His wisdom led him to an essential lack of understanding of the human world until, finally, he ceased to find meaning in life. When he returned, in despair, to his childhood village, he discovered that his parental home had been neglected and destroyed, and that he therefore had no place to come home to. His childhood friend, the “simple son,” on the other hand, stayed in the village his entire life. This man, who worked at simple, menial tasks and was happy in his lot, hosted the despairing “wise son” upon his return home. The next part of the story reverses the roles of the two protagonists, with the simplicity and fidelity of the simple son

eventually, and surprisingly, leading him to a senior position in the king's court, and the wise son's eternal questioning of the king's existence leading him to unrelenting doubt, which alienates his fellow villagers. At the end of a long series of events, the wise son—the philosopher—finds himself sinking in quicksand and attacked by the devil himself—a monstrous, swamp-dwelling demon, whose existence the philosopher also continues to deny, even as he is being beaten by him directly. Only the simple son and the *ba'al shem* can rescue the philosopher from the swamp and the blows of the devil. But this, explains the storyteller, cannot happen before the wise philosopher admits the existence of the demon in whose swamp he is stuck; as well the extraordinary power of the miracle worker to rescue him from his clutches.⁷⁷

The relationship between the Enlightenment, wondrous creatures, and the world of amulets and miracle workers is described in this story as a clear schematic: the rationalistic Enlightenment is, in fact, a type of quicksand. The enlightened man will not find his fulfillment, nor will he be able to come to terms with the existence of the king (God), before he again accepts the existence of demons and other harmful creatures, and the authority of the miracle workers.⁷⁸ The path of healing through which the modern “wise son” returns to the normative, humane, and traditional world, according to the story, necessarily passes through the acknowledgment of—and actual encounter with—the demonic forces and wondrous creatures of folk stories: demons, dragons, and a prince made of precious stones. This miraculous world is the one that will refute the Enlightenment and shake the foundations of the illusion of knowledge and control it seeks to enforce upon the world.

Notes

1 Menashe ben Israel, *Nishmat chaim* (Jerusalem 1967), 123a–b.

2 Israel, *Nishmat chaim*.

3 Hacham Tzvi, *Shut Hacham Tzvi*, §93.

4 Lev. 11:29.

5 BT *Hullin* 127a. On the biblical classifications of impure animals, see, for example, Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966. Repr. London: Routledge, 2003), 42–58.

6 BT *Hagigah* 27a.

7 See and compare Rashi, BT *Sanhedrin* 63a, BT *Hullin* 127a, BT *Hagiga* 27a.

8 On the Hebrew sources and their relationship to the classical sources, see Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews: From the Creation to the Exodus*, vol. 5 (1925. Repr. New York: Cosimo Classics, 2006), 52; Nosson Slifkin, *Sacred Monsters: Mysterious and Mythical Creatures of Scripture, Talmud and Midrash*, (New York: Yashar Books, 2007), 283–304. It is interesting to note the proximity between the rabbinic tradition and that of Augustine, who also uses the salamander as an example from which one can derive information regarding the nature of the fire of hell. See Saint Augustine, *City of God* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 475–46, 968.

9 *Chiddushe Hatam Sofer* (Jerusalem, 1972), Tractate *Hullin* 127a.

10 The central scientific source for the Hatam Sofer's discussion of the salamander was the thirteenth-century Jewish scientific work, *Sha'ar ha-shamayim*, as well as Rashi's commentary on the two Talmudic passages mentioned above, and Rabbeinu Bahya's

- commentary on Lev. 11:2. See Rabbi Gershon b. Shlomo, *Sha'ar ha-shamayim* 4:16 (Warsaw 1876) 16a.
- 11 The story was published by Rabbi Shimon Sofer, the Hatam Sofer's grandson, who redacted the various traditions regarding his grandfather before they were published in the second edition of *Chut ha-meshulash* (published in Munkatch, 1893). For a discussion of the genre conventions regarding the documentation of cases of *dybbuk* (possession), see: Sara Zfatman, *Tse tamé: gerush ruchot be-yahadut Ashkenaz be-reshit ha-'et ha-chadashah* (Jerusalem: Magness Press, 2015). And see idem., "Girrush Ruchot be-Prag ba-me'ah ha yud-zain: le-she'elat mehemanuto ha-historit shel ganer amami," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* 3 (1982): 7–33. For a broader discussion see: Jeremy Asher Dauber, *In the Demon's Bedroom: Yiddish Literature and the Early Modern* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010); J. H. Chajes, *Between Worlds: Dybbuks, Exorcists, and Early Modern Judaism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).
 - 12 On leaps and spasms during such attacks see the material collected by Gdalya Nigal, *Sippure dybbuk be-sifrut Yisrael* (Jerusalem: Reuven Mass, 1983), 17–18.
 - 13 The motif of crossing boundaries between religions in the course of possession is a very common one, and it is also linked to the common identification of the rival religion with the devil. See, for instance, Nigal, *Dibbuk Stories*, 106; 37–38. On the participation of priests in the exorcism of demons that possessed Jews, see, for example, the case described by Zvi Hirsch Kaidanover, *Kav ha-yashar* (Frankfurt am Main, 1705), Chapter 69.
 - 14 *Chut ha-meshulash ha-chadash* (Drohobych, 1909), 38a. The story is also mentioned in Nigal, *Dybbuk*, 144–45. Knowledge of foreign languages and unfamiliar subjects while possessed are widely documented motifs in descriptions of possession beginning in antiquity—see, for example, the many parallels in Nigal, *Dybbuk*, 21–22; Zfatman, *tse tamé*, 144n.157.
 - 15 *Chut ha-meshulash*, 38a.
 - 16 The *kaddish* and *kedusha* have a special status as sanctified prayers, whose recital requires a quorum of Jews, and it is this special halakhic status that effected the spiritual, and perhaps magical, efficacy that is described here.
 - 17 On Rabbi Mordechai Ephraim Fischel Sofer (1786–1853), who served as the *Hatam Sofer*'s scribe on other matters as well, see: Alexander Zusha Kinstlicher, *ha-Hatam Sofer ve-talmidav* (Bnei Brak: Machon zikaron, 2005), 337–40.
 - 18 On the transfiguration of the souls of sinners into black dogs, see *Sha'ar ha-gulgulim*, 35; *Sha'ar ruach ha-kodesh*, 40. See also the discussion in: Meir Benayahu, *Toledoth ha-Ari: gilguley nosch'aotav ve-erco mi-vchinah historit* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi, 1967), 101–03. And see Nigal, *Dybbuk*, 20.
 - 19 *Cut ha-meshulash*, 38a–38b. The story is quoted without comment in Nigal, *Dybbuk*, 144.
 - 20 On Rabbi Nathan Adler see, for example: Marcus Horowitz, *Rabbane Frankfurt* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1972), 151–58; Nigal, "Kabbalah ma'asit be-Frankfurt ba-me'ah ha-shemoneh esreh" *Sinai* 118 (1996): 88–95. On his magical capabilities see: Horowitz, *Frankfurt*, 311. On his direct influence on the *Hatam Sofer* in the realm of magic see *Responsa Hatam Sofer* [Hebrew], *Orach Haim* 197 and below.
 - 21 A photocopy of a page with such formulas in Rabbi Fischel Sofer's hand is found in Kinstlicher, *ha-Hatam Sofer ve-talmidav*, 338.
 - 22 See the photos in *Minhage Hatam Sofer* (Jerusalem, 2011), 500–03.
 - 23 *Iggrot sofrim* (Vienna, 1928): Kitve Rabbi Shimon Sofer, 30. See also *Knессет sofrim* (Pressburg (New York, 2008), 191, 194 (respectively).

- 24 On Jewish miracle workers in the eighteenth century, see, for example: Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, "The Master of an Evil Name: Hillel Ba'al Shem and His Sefer ha-Heshek," *Association of Jewish Studies Review* 28.2 (2004): 217–48; Immanuel Etkes, *The Besht: magician, mystic, and leader*; translated by Saadya Sternberg (Waltham: Brandeis University Press), 2005, 7–45; Nimrod Zinger, "Ba'al ha-shem ve-ha-rofe: refuah ve-magiah be-kerev yehudey Germaniya be-reshit ha-'et ha-chadashah," (PhD diss., Ben Gurion Univ., Be'er Shava, 2010); Hagit Matras, "Sifre segulot u-refuot be-ivrit" (PhD diss., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1997). Varied material of differing levels of credibility were collected in the work of Rabbi Moshe Hallel: Rabbi Moshe Hallel, *Ba'ale shem: Sipuram ha-muflah shel Rabbi Eliyahu Ba'al Shem me-Vormaiza, Rabbi Yoel Ba'al Shem me-Zamashtash, Rabbi Adam Ba'al Shem me-Rufshitz* (Jerusalem, 1993). A relatively comprehensive discussion of the Jewish "Magus" and its European parallel can be found in: Moshe Idel and Anthony Grafton (ed.), *Der Magus: seine Ursprünge und seine Geschichte in verschiedenen Kulturen* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2001).
- 25 "Segulat ha-mayim ha-shtukim" (*Minhage Rabboteinu*, Hatam Sofer, 300). Printed in Rabbi Binyamin Beinish ha-Cohen, *Amtachat Binyamin* (Wilhermsdorf, 1716), 71–72. The talisman found in the manuscript copied from the *Hatam Sofer* was intended "for one whose son or relative has deviated from the righteous path to an evil one." See *Knesset sofrim*, 192. This version was printed in *Sefer shem tov katan* (Chernivtsi, 1855), 15a.
- 26 See *Chut ha-meshulash* 5b–6a.
- 27 Ibid., 6b. One tale of the *Hatam Sofer's* study of French and sciences as a result of a close personal relationship with an officer in the French army is incidentally documented there (22b), and see the following footnote. See also Meir Hildesheimer, "The German Language and Secular Studies: Attitudes towards Them in the Thought of the Hatam Sofer and his Disciples," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 62 (1996): 129–63.
- 28 Rabbi Yehuda Lieb Landsberg, "Ele toledot," in *Zichronot u-masorot al ha-Hatam Sofer me-mishpachto, talmidav ve-haholchim be-'oro*, ed. Rabbi Binyamin Shlomo Hamburger (Bnei Brak: Machon moreshet Ashkenaz, 2014), 102.
- 29 On this intellectual interest, see Marc B. Shapiro, "Aspects of Rabbi Moses Sofer's intellectual profile," in *Be'erot Yitzhak: Studies in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, ed. Jay M. Harris (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 285–310; Aaron M. Schreiber, "The Hatam Sofer's nuanced attitude towards secular learning, 'Maskilim,' and reformers," *Torah u-Madda Journal* 11 (2002–03): 123–73.
- 30 The Hatam Sofer's study of Euclid in German, which continued into his adulthood, when he served as a rabbi, is documented in Hamburger, *Zikhronot u-masorot*, 305.
- 31 See, for example, the collection of sources amassed in the pamphlet *chochmat sofrim*, Beit Sofrim Collection, 3 (London, 2008), 99–127.
- 32 For now, see *Shut Hatam Sofer*, Orach chaim 158; *Even ha-ezer* 1:98; *Kochavei Yitzchak* (periodical) (Vienna, 1847), Part I, 40. For a preliminary analysis see Maoz Kahana, *Me-ha-Noda be-Yehuda la-Hatam Sofer: Halakha ve-hagut mul etgarey ha-zman* (Jerusalem: Shazar, 2015), 267–69, especially pp. 398–400 n146–49; "Stability and Change in the Responsa of Rabbi Moshe Sofer" (MA thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2004), 58–81.
- 33 See some examples in: Kahana, "Scientific Demons: The Hatam Sofer as an Exorcist," *AJS Review* 38:2 (2014): 1–23.

- 34 See, for instance, David B. Ruderman, *Kabbalah, Magic, and Science: The Cultural Universe of a Sixteenth-Century Jewish Physician* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University of Press, 1988); Moshe Idel, “Italy in Safed, Safed in Italy: Toward an Interactive History of Sixteenth-Century Kabbalah,” in *Cultural Intermediaries: Jewish Intellectuals in Early Modern Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman and Giuseppe Veltri (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 239–69; Idel, “Prisca Theologia in Marsilio Ficino and in Some Jewish Treatments,” in *Marsilio Ficino, his Theology, his Philosophy, his Legacy*, ed. Michael Allen, Valery Rees and David Martin (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2002), 137–58. See also Dov Schwartz, “Astral Magic and Specific Properties (Segullot) in Medieval Jewish Thought: Non-Aristotelian Science and Theology,” in *Science in Medieval Jewish Cultures*, ed. Gad Freudenthal (New York, 2011), 301–19. To this wide cultural background one must add many eighteenth-century figures, such as Rabbi Jonathan Eibeschutz and his adversary, Rabbi Jacob Emden, who had much more in common than in conflict with each other, or Rabbi Baruch Schick of Shkloū, and others. On these authors, see: Azriel Shohet, *Im chilufe ha-tekuft: reshit ha-Haskalah be-Yahadut Germaniya* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1961), 210–20, 220–35; David Eliot Fishman, “A Polish Rabbi Meets the Berlin Haskalah: The Case of R. Barukh Schick,” *AJS Review* 12.1 (1987): 95–121. See also David B. Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University of Press, 1995) Chapters 1–2, 4, 7.
- 35 See, for example, Kahana, “Noda bi-Yehudah,” 169.
- 36 The treatise was first printed in the final pages of Eliezer Zussman Sofer’s book, *Et Sofer*, part IV (Paks 1899). It has since been integrated into editions of the *Hatam Sofer’s responsa*.
- 37 *Chut ha-meshulash* 29a, n. a.
- 38 *Sefer ha-Brit* (Brin, 1797), Title Page. *Sefer ha-Brit* and its author’s unique worldview are the topic of David Ruderman’s stimulating book: *A Best-Selling Hebrew Book of the Modern Era: The Book of the Covenant of Pinhas Hurwitz and Its Remarkable Legacy* (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 2015). I thank the author for our discussion of the topic. On *Sefer ha-Brit* see also: Noah Rosenblum, “ha-entsiklopedia ha-ivrit ha-rishona, mechabra ve-hishtalsheluta,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 55 (1988): 15–65.
- 39 *Ha-Me’asef*, Kislev 5569 (1808): 75. On the great importance of the differentiations magic/scientific, kabbalistic/rational in the identity discourse of Enlightenment Jews vis-à-vis their surroundings, see: Chajes, “Entzauberung and Jewish Modernity—On ‘Magic,’ Enlightenment, and Faith,” *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts: Simon Dubnow Institute yearbook* 6 (2007): 191–200.
- 40 *Ha-Me’asef*, Shevat 5569 (1809): 140.
- 41 Regarding the Hatam Sofer’s enthusiasm for *Sefer ha-brit* see: Ruderman, *A Best-Selling Hebrew Book*, 29–30, 96–101, 109.
- 42 The literature on this topic is vast. Standard examples are: Frances Amelia Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); Charles Webster, *From Paracelsus to Newton: Magic and the Making of Modern Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University of Press, 1982). For a different view: Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: the Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997). The critiques of Yates’s thesis do not detract from the great significance of the phenomenon she shed light on. For some of these criticisms, see, for example, Brian P. Copenhaver, “Natural magic, hermetism, and occultism in early modern science,” in *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution*, ed. David C. Lindberg and Robert S. Westman (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University of Press, 1990), 261–301.

- 43 For other strands and themes in the complex phenomenon named, generally, the European Enlightenment see, for example: Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), Paul Kléber Monod, *Solomon's Secret Arts: The Occult in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013). For seemingly parallel aspects in the Jewish Enlightenment, see, for example, David J. Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews, and Catholics from London to Vienna* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).
- 44 *Shut Hatam Sofer*, Kovets tshuvot, §26.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Ibid., and *Hatam Sofer, Chiddushim al Shulkhan arukh* (London, 1956), 18–19.
- 47 The *Hatam Sofer* used the phrase “celestial beings” in a similar way also in his Responsa, *Orakh chayim* 197. The source of the phrase is apparently Maimonidean: in his *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides refers to “the form which is named *Ishim*.” See Maimonides, *Yad ha-chazaka*, Hilchot yesode ha-Torah 4:6.
- 48 *Shut Hatam Sofer*, Kovets tshuvot, §26. And similarly, in other compositions—in his *Chidushim on Shulkhan arukh*, 18–19. And cf. Rabbi Jonahtan Eibeschutz, *Ye'arot devash*, (Jerusalem, 1988), Part I, homily 4, 88–89. It is possible that this particular source (which was first printed in 1779) not only parallels, but indicates a relationship of influence on the aforementioned statement of the Hatam Sofer.
- 49 *Shut Hatam Sofer*, Kovets tshuvot, §26.
- 50 On the demons who are composed exclusively of fire and air, see Rabbi Yechiel of Pisa, *Minchat kena'ot* (Berlin, 1898), 48–49; Menashe ben Israel, *Nishmat chaim*, part III, 12–17; Z. Gottlieb, *Perush seforo al ha-Tora* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 2007), 38.
- 51 On the essence of the salamander, see the *Hatam Sofer*'s words at the beginning of this chapter: “it is surely a creature that [is created out of] the source of fire.” *Hatam Sofer, Chiddushim on Hullin*, 127a.
- 52 *Shut Hatam Sofer*, Kovets tshuvot, §26.
- 53 On the nature of demons, see the sources cited above and cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Idol Worship (*Avodah Zarah*), Chapter 11; Vilna Gaon on the *Shulchan arukh*, *Yoreh deah* 179, 13.
- 54 For an earlier, somewhat enigmatic reference to the *Wassermenschen* in Jewish literature see: Tuvia Ha-Cohen, *Ma'aseh Tuyiya* (1707. Repr. Jesnitz, 1721), 58b.
- 55 On Paracelsus and his wide influence see, for instance, Pagel's classic work: Walter Pagel, *Paracelsus: An Introduction to Philosophical Medicine in the Era of the Renaissance* (Basel: Karger, 1958). For a more recent discussion see Peter Grell, *Paracelsus: the man and his reputation, his ideas and their transformation* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).
- 56 Paracelsus, *Salamander* (“Liber de nymphis, sylphis, pygmaeis et salamandris et de caeteris spiritibus”) and in its English translation: Henry Sigerist (ed.), *Four Treatises of Theophrastus Von Hohenheim Called Paracelsus* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 213–34, and see there, 82.
- 57 For more on the salamander in Jewish sources see n. 7. See also *Sefer hasidim* (Jerusalem, 1956), [Margaliyot edition], paragraph 907. For eighteenth-century literature, see: Cohen, *Ma'aseh Tuyiyah*, 72b; Horowitz, *Sefer ha-brit*, 28. On the religious enchantment of the Paracelsian method and the tendency of this continuing tradition to assimilate and reinterpret popular and folkloric traditions, see for example G. Debus, *The Chemical Philosophy: Paracelsian Science and Medicine in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications 2002), 116–26, 540.
- 58 Casper Danz and Caspar Friedrich Fuchs, *Physisch-medizinische Topographie des Kreises Schmalkalden* (Marburg, 1848), 70–71.

- 59 See, for example, *Shut Hatam Sofer*, Yoreh de'ah, §18.
- 60 See, for example, Georg von Welling's discussion of the topic, which deals with the unique qualities of the water man in his encyclopedic opus: Georg von Welling, *Opus Mago-Cabalisticum et Theosophicum* (Franckfurth, 1735), 367–68. Von Welling (1652–1727) was an alchemist who worked in the mining industry, and this book, which was first printed in 1719 under a pseudonym (Gregorium Anglus Sallwigt) presented the various alchemic knowledge held by ancient thinker, such as Plato and Pythagoras, as knowledge that they gained through continuous interaction with such wondrous creatures. The philosophers, Von Welling argued, learned of the air from the *Luftmenschen* (air people), and were educated in the nature of water and wisdom by the *Wassermenschen*. Despite the central importance von Welling placed on the *Wassermenschen* in the process of scientific exploration, I have found nothing in his writing that describes them according to the doctrine of the four elements.
- 61 *Shut Hatam Sofer*, Yoreh de'ah, §7.
- 62 On the nature of this illness, see: Mary Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2010), 111–49. For a discussion on early modern Jewish conceptions see Zinger, "Ba'al ha-shem," 119–25.
- 63 Ibid. See also: Zvi Hirsch Chotsch, *Derekh yeshara* (Fürth, 1697), 4a.
- 64 *Shut Hatam Sofer*, Orach chaim, §197.
- 65 See David Friesenhausen, *Mosedot tevel* (Vienna, 1820), 78a–79a. Rabbi David Friesenhausen served as a judge on Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum's *beit din* in Sátoraljaújhely.
- 66 *Shut Hatam Sofer*, Orach chaim, §197.
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 On the long history of this distinction see, for instance: Paola Zambelli, *White Magic, Black Magic in the European Renaissance* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007). A good bibliographic source for the parallel discussion in Jewish history, that is, the wealth of halakhic traditions on the legitimacy of the use of witchcraft and its boundaries, can be found in Rabbi Itamar ben Aharon Machpud, *Kedushat Yisrael* (Yavneh, 2005), Chapter 7. The source of the degree of ambiguity, and even vagueness, surrounding this topic (which is perhaps in contrast to the more decisive negative opinion accepted by most people today) can be clearly identified in Rabbi Yosef Karo and the Rema's canonical and complex discussion of the topic as well. See: *Beit Yosef* and *Shulkhan Arukh*, *Yoreh de'ah* 179, and see the following notes.
- 69 "One who denies the power of the upper attendants [pamalya]" (*Shut Hatam Sofer*, Orach chaim 197). The language of the prohibition here is ambiguous.
- 70 *Shut Hatam Sofer*, Orach chaim 197.
- 71 The source of this statement is the Babylonian Talmud: "What is meant by, 'For the leader [lit. conductor], a Psalm of David? (Ps. 13:1). Sing praises to Him who rejoices when they conquer Him . . . The character of mortal man is such that when he is conquered he is unhappy, but when the Holy One is conquered He rejoices"—BT, *Pesachim* 119a.
- 72 See Moses Sofer, *Commentary on the Pentateuch* [Hebrew] (Tirana, 1928), 6. For more on the swearing-in of celestial ministers using holy names, on the one hand, and by sorcerers, on the other, see *Hatam Sofer*, *Derashot* (Cluj-Napoc, 1929) part II, 321a; *Kovets tshuvot*, response 18. For *Sefer Yetzira* see: Yehuda Liebes, *Sefer Yetzira and its creation conception* (Jerusalem & Tel Aviv: Shoken 2001) and the literature therein.
- 73 On Bacon's plan and its implementations see, for example, Lorraine J. Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (1998. Repr. New York: Zone Books, 2001), 215–40.

74 See ibid., 240–360.

75 See Michael Heyd, *Be Sober and Reasonable: The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

76 See Zvi Mark, *The Complete Stories of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2014) and its excellent introduction.

77 Ibid., 275–84 (“the Story of the Wise and Simple Men”). See also Shmuel Feiner, *Shorshey ha-chilum: materanut ve-safkanut be-yahadut ha-me’ah ha-shmone-esre* (Jerusalem: Shazar, 2010), 403–04.

78 Cf. Kahana, “Ketsad bikesh ha-Hatam Sofer le-natseach et Spinoza? Text, lamdanut ve-romantika bi-khtivat ha-Hatam Sofer,” *Tarbitz* 79 3–4 (2010): 557–85.

“Der Volf” or The Jew as Out(side of the)law

Jay Geller

Identifying nonhuman predators as Jews and Jews as nonhuman predators has a long history: from the medieval monsters described by Debra Strickland and Marc Epstein in their work¹ through eighteenth-century vilifications of Joseph Süss Oppenheimer² and the descriptions of Dracula (and his nose)³ in Bram Stoker’s 1897 novel to the recent surfacing of the Jewish vampire squid.⁴ Within the millennia-long history of the *Bestiarium Judaicum*, that vast menagerie of verbal and visual images of nonhuman animals, real and imagined, that have been disseminated to debase, dehumanize, or justify persecution of Jews, the representation of *Judentum* has frequently crossed that of one particular species of nonhuman predators, *Canis lupis* or the wolf.

The assumed behavior of wolves led to their use as figures for several traits that were either desired or repudiated by a human community as well as for what (and whom) was to be included within or excluded from its bounds.⁵ While the fierceness ascribed to the wolf (and the wolf-pack) was a quality that might serve well for the warrior, who extended the boundaries of the *polis* outward, for those within the *polis*, who might be subjected to the wolves’ (or the warriors’) predations, that attribute was translated as rapaciousness and cruelty. Though never identified with the positive, martial quality of wolfness, Jews, as outsiders within the *polis*, were identified with those negative lupine characteristics. Within Christian discourse the Jew has been associated with the lupine since at least St. John Chrysostom, for whom Jews were “more dangerous than any wolves.”⁶ More than a third of early modern anti-Jewish tractates examined by Nicoline Hörtzitz analogized Jews with or identified them as wolves. For example, in the 1606 *Juden Spiegel* (Mirror of Jews) Vespasianus Rechtanus asserted, “Well what are Jews other than raging wolves.”⁷ Included among the many disparaging Jewish epithets from which Lessing’s title character was acquitted during the course of *Nathan the Wise* was that of a “Jewish wolf in philosophical sheep-skin.”⁸ Perhaps echoing Lessing’s Templar, one of the leading Germanists of the first half of the nineteenth century, University of Berlin Professor Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen, characterized Ludwig Börne as “like a Jewish wolf” in an 1832 pseudonymous denunciation of the influx of Jewish-identified authors.⁹

Yet, though many beliefs, legends, and literary works about werewolves have circulated throughout Europe since before the Common Era, there is no Christian folk¹⁰ or literary¹¹ tradition of Jewish werewolves. Nevertheless, diverse werewolves,

who prowled the wilderness of the Christian imagination, did make incursions into Jewish mental territory. One tale in the *Mayse-bukh* appropriated the literary configuration of noble werewolf, vicious wife, sovereign patron, and secret shape-shifting apparatus initiated in the twelfth century by Marie de France in her Anglo-Norman lay *Le Bisclavret* (The Werewolf).¹² Moreover, as David Shyovitz has documented, Judah the Pious and other twelfth- and thirteenth-century German Pietists drew upon European discourse on the werewolf and engaged in “lycanthropic theologizing”¹³ in order to think through how Enoch and Elijah could ascend to heaven without first dying and to exegete the relation between the lupine characterization of Benjamin in Genesis and other references to him and his tribal descendants in the Torah. Perhaps these Jewish contributions to the so-called twelfth-century werewolf renaissance partnered with the widespread European belief in the existence of werewolves to generate several legends told about the founder of Hasidism, the Baal Shem Tov (BeShT; 1698–1760).

Another human-lupine hybrid drives H. Leivick’s long 1920 Yiddish poetic response to Eastern European pogroms, “Der Wolf” (The Wolf). His narrative chronicles the last days of a rabbi, the sole survivor of his pogrom-decimated shtetl, who feels himself transformed into the eponymous “Wolf.” This chapter undertakes a close reading of Leivick’s poem and follows its possibly lycanthropic protagonist across a terrain shaped by the interrelationships of (human) agency, community, *Judentum*, the Law, deadly violence, and redemption. The relationship between a Jewish community and the Law in the wake of a murderous pogrom was also central to the most famous “Poem of Wrath”¹⁴—one also depicting human-animal hybrids, although in this case the monsters are the pogromists—Hayyim Nahman Bialik’s (second) poetic response to the 1903 Kishinev pogrom, “In the City of Slaughter” (*Be-‘ir ha-harigah*). This chapter will conclude by considering Leivick’s chronicle as possibly reworking certain aspects of Bialik’s poem and “Der Wolf’s” denouement as a possible supplement to his predecessor’s denunciation of the Jewish community’s seemingly¹⁵ ever-present cowardice and self-pity before the world and their passive dependence upon presumed (eventual) divine intervention.

Jewish Werewolves and Other Outlaws

Martin Buber’s 1908 collection, *The Legend of the Baal-Shem* (Die Legende des Baalschem), opens with a tale entitled “The Werewolf” (*Der Werwolf*). At the age of twelve (i.e., not yet *bar mitzvah*, not yet an adult member of the community) the BeShT encounters a Jewish charcoal burner.¹⁶ He was already despondent over periodically turning into a werewolf, but now is utterly desperate because his heart has been replaced with a piece of Satan’s own and he has begun to attack humans. The collier *cum* werewolf still fights the Adversary’s attempt to use him as a weapon against one particular human, the future BeShT, who could lead the community in the project of *Tikkun*, redeeming the divine sparks from their exile. Ultimately, the youth removes the satanic implant from the collier, thereby allowing him to change back to human form and die at peace.¹⁷

Where Buber’s “Werewolf” testifies to *Judentum*’s role in cosmic redemption, Leivick’s “Wolf” bears a different witness: it implicates a *Judentum* both vulnerable to being thrust outside the Law and yet possibly possessing resources beyond violent mediation to (re)create a homeland for itself. This chapter will substantiate this claim by analyzing how Leivick’s poem was shaped by the association of the wolf or the werewolf with the outlaw, with the one who is outside the law.

The conjunction of (were)wolf and outlaw has recently achieved critical theoretical prominence courtesy of Jacques Derrida’s final seminar *The Beast and the Sovereign*¹⁸ and Giorgio Agamben’s *Homo Sacer*, where the association is traced back to medieval Germanic law and its frequent identification of the outlaw with the *Warg*, *Wargus*, or *Vagr* (wolf-man). The ecological context of this linkage was human-wolf interaction. The wolf was the dominant predator of the forests of northern and central Europe, but unlike other large creatures dwelling in the territory outside human habitation, such as deer and boar, the hunting of which was the prerogative of the nobility, the wolf could be hunted by anyone. Of particular concern to town dwellers was the omega wolf; since it was, for whatever reason, at the bottom of the wolf feeding hierarchy, it frequently left its pack to roam alone at the border of human settlements in search of food and preyed upon human property and person.¹⁹ Correlatively, he who acted the (omega) wolf among the inhabitants of a town or *polis* was adjudged the outlaw, the *Friedlos*; outside the general peace (*Volksfrieden*), he was banned from the *polis*, could be killed without legal consequences for the perpetrator, and came to be branded a *Warg*.²⁰ The constellation of community, Law, *Judentum*, and wolf-man will be seen to converge upon the question of how to categorize the killing of the eponymous protagonist at the end of Leivick’s poem.

Leivick’s *yidishe agodes*

Leivick, perhaps best known for his dramatic poem *The Golem*, was born Leivick Halpern in a Belarusian shtetl in 1888. Having been sentenced to Siberian exile for his revolutionary activities in 1906, Leivick was eventually smuggled out of Siberia and wound up in the United States in 1913. While living in New York he learned of the deadly pogroms that were devastating Jewish communities across (the territories of present-day) Poland, Belarus, and the Ukraine during the First World War and the Russian Civil War and that would occasion “Der Volf.” Though the mass murder of Jews by Gentiles frames Leivick’s poem, his protagonist is not directly confronting a ban by the law of the Gentile *polis*—he is not identified as a wolf by Gentiles—rather, he has been cast out from the Law through which observant Jews constitute community.

“Der Volf” opens on the third day after a pogrom in which an unnamed shtetl has been reduced to ash and rubble; amid the ruins its sole survivor, the village’s rabbi, regains consciousness. This is no joyful resurrection or new dispensation.²¹ As he becomes aware of his situation the rabbi searches for the remains of his murdered neighbors so that he can bury them according to Jewish tradition.²² None can be found, and he is unable to fulfill his *halakhik* duty to the dead. He then tries in their absence

to recite *Lamentations*, by which Jews recall the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple that marks the beginning of *galut* (exile), yet by which (when read on *Tisha be-Av*) exile is situated within Jewish sacred history and its promise of redemption—but he has forgotten the words. He turns westward (i.e., away from Jerusalem toward which Jews traditionally pray) and follows the road out of the devastated village as night falls. Having come to a stop and preparing to fall asleep, he realizes he has not yet performed the daily afternoon (*minchah*) and evening (*ma'ariv*) prayers, let alone the nightly *shema*, but his attempts fail as he has forgotten their melodies.²³ He cannot even fulfill the mitsvah of crying upon the death of the righteous as his tears become “stuck in the middle of his throat.”²⁴

In utter despair, as if he had abandoned and had been abandoned by the Law (and by *ha-Shem*), “he ran deeper into the forest, / And the moment he crossed the border, / He felt his legs being grabbed / And entangled by dense barbed wires.”²⁵ The rabbi is ensnared by nets like those employed to entrap wolves before they enter areas of human habitation. Over the course of the following seven stanzas Leivick depicts, step by step, the rabbi's apparent transformation into a wolf.

If this metamorphosis is provisionally seen in relation to the rabbi being outside the Law, was it his inability to fulfill *halakhah* that set him outside? Or did his earlier (in) actions indicate that he was already beyond the pale? If the latter, how did that state come about? Since in *galut* the community anchors the covenant with Gd, does the community's annihilation indicate the termination of the bond? Does the rabbi's guilt for his survival—over he alone surviving? over his failure to save his community?—signify the breach? No explanation is provided.

The second canto of “Der Volk” describes how “Jews driven out from other areas / Began arriving in the town / And started rebuilding the ruined houses, / And before anything else,” though they have no rabbi, “the great synagogue.”²⁶ The synagogue is rebuilt in time for *Erev Rosh ha-Shana*, the beginning of both the New Year and of the *Yamim Nora'im*, the ten days of awe and repentance, at the end of which is *Yom Kippur* and the sealing of the Book of Life. That evening their prayers are disturbed by “the drawn out howling of a beast” that shifts from sounding like the roar of a creature being eviscerated to the lament of a dog baying to the moon and then to “a sobbing that sounded like human weeping.”²⁷ As the howling stops and they make their way through the streets to their homes—ever fearful of what may be lurking in wait—they come to realize that “the ruins were not theirs, / And that they, these Jews, were strangers here.”²⁸ Instead of peace, terror reigns in their hearts and hearths. They too fear that they are outside the Law.

The third canto opens upon the first day of *Rosh ha-Shana* and the echoes of the blasts from the shofar, the ram's horn, instead of the howls of the wolf. The congregation prepares to leave the sanctuary when into their midst a stranger enters, wearing a “silk coat and rabbinical fur hat.”²⁹ As they look closer they notice the bedraggled condition of the outfit of this shoeless, silent, and very hairy stranger, who seats himself in the place of honor by the eastern wall, next to the Holy Ark (*aron kodesh*).

By sensing his grief they come to recall their own grief. As they approach him, he first tells them to “Go away,” but then grievously asks: “Who told you to rebuild

the ruins? / Whatever is ruined should remain ruined. / And who told you to become my heirs?”³⁰ He questions their right either to form a community where his had stood—such rebuilding would erase his destroyed community from memory—or to claim any relation to it. They too are trespassers, transgressors of the Law. He then beseeches them:

Go get an axe or a knife and give me [my due {mayn rekht}]—
[My due {mayn rekht}], Jews, I beg you.

....
[G]ive me [what is coming to me {vos es kumt mir}]—
I deserve death, death from a stranger;
... chop off my hands and throw them to the dogs.³¹

In mid plea for a death due for one who is outside the community of moral and legal obligation—that is, a killing that is discharged by one outside his own (destroyed) community of moral and legal obligation and that results in the corpse being dismembered and not returned to the ground from which all humans come (and thereby denying his possible redemption and resurrection)—he collapses. The Jews gather about him, but when they try to move him, he sinks his teeth into the hand of one of his would-be helpers—and they flee.

In their absence, he goes down on all fours and advances toward the *bimah* and the Holy Ark. He embraces the ark and then repeatedly rams his head into its doors until they burst, revealing the Torah scroll (*ets ha-chayim*; lit. tree of life). Upon seeing “the internal darkness beyond the Torah [scroll],”³² however, he is compelled to withdraw and, bellowing, he bounds out of the synagogue and back to the forest.

The next two cantos recount how the refugee congregation, from their return to the damaged synagogue that afternoon until the advent of Yom Kippur, repeats, as if ritually, the same scenario each day: praying, reciting psalms, and weeping during daylight hours, then returning home after evening prayers to await the midnight visit of the beast to the middle of the market. There, during the course of the night, the creature’s howling would shift from roar to bellow to bay to weeping-prayer-like to a rattling lament. When dawn arrives he turns silent and leaves the town. Though the townsfolk deploy the traditional defenses against invading wolves such as setting fires³³ and (blindly) firing rifles, the wolf, unnaturally, would leap into the fire and, more unnaturally, neither pounce upon his attackers nor approach the homes where their families were hiding.

The baying of the wolf undermines “their new hopes and dreams”;³⁴ replacing them are stories of the wolf that spread throughout the land and “prevent the growth of the new congregation.”³⁵ “And the Jews understood better than before / That something was wrong. Their fear of the wolf / Had changed into a fear of themselves.”³⁶ They begin to embody their fear: that this mixed multitude of refugees, who had converged upon these ruins, could not—did not have the right to—form a community.

The sixth canto seems to promise them that their acts of penance have been received. It describes their relief when at midnight, having remained in the synagogue

after *Kol Nidre*, they are met with silence rather than the howling of the beast. Perhaps, the recitation of the thrice-repeated stanza from this holiest of Jewish prayers,

And may the entire congregation of the children of Israel, as well as the proselyte who dwells among them—be forgiven, for all the people acted unwittingly,

was heard on high. Alternatively, with their recitation of *Kol Nidre*, the performative releasing of the speaker from all vows made between this Yom Kippur and the next, the congregation had commuted the punishment that *Pirke Avot* (The Sayings of the Fathers, 5:9) states is incurred by false oaths and the desecration of Gd's name: that is, carnage by wild animals.

Yet the Book of Life is not signed and sealed until the final blast of the shofar hurls the *Tekiah ha-gadol* toward heaven and throughout the land at the conclusion of the *Ne'ilah* prayers. That blast, in Canto 7, is met, not by the congregation's shout of "*Le-shana ha-ba'ah bi-Yerushalayim*" (next year in Jerusalem), but by the wolf.

Having clawed at the doors of the synagogue throughout *Ne'ilah*, he bursts through them, springs over the congregants, and leaps upon the prayer leader's throat.

And the terrified crowd made a dash for the door
 And nearly abandoned the prayer leader
 To a certain death inflicted by the wolf—
 But then one grabbed a lectern [*shtender*]
 And with its sharp edge he smashed it into the wolf's head
 And split his brain apart . . .
 And the entire congregation, in turmoil and torment,
 . . .
 . . . beat the wolf's neck and his back
 And kicked him in his belly and his knees.³⁷

When a great "shout" (*oy*) then arises from beneath the earth, they halt their assault. As their victim turns over, "two human eyes shone through the darkness/And enveloped all the Jews, calmly and brightly." This sudden recognition that the eyes of the monstrous intruder are human may indicate not only the rabbi's transformation back into human form but also a tacit explanation of why they had initially taken him for human on Rosh ha-Shanah: as it was written in the twelfth-century Book of the Pious, "Know that those who know how to change the form of a man into a wolf, or cat, or donkey—the eyeball does not change"—whereby it retains its *tselem elohim*, divine form.³⁸ They realize that their victim "was a Jew in a rabbinical fur hat, / And they all recognized the guest, the stranger."³⁹ And with his last bit of strength, he comforts the congregation: "I'm fine now, very fine—don't cry Jews."⁴⁰

*Oy: From Killing (*retsakh*) to Slaughter (*shekhita*)*

So what restored the rabbi's human form and allowed him both to find consolation in his dying as well as to extend consolation to the Jews who had facilitated his imminent

death? Is it by an act of forgiveness that both the rabbi and the refugees have been restored to communities of moral and legal obligation or has something else transpired? Elided above from Leivick's depiction of the attack on the wolf is the line “*gekhapt alts, vos es hot zikh gemakht unter der hant*” that can be translated as “Grasped anything that came to hand.”⁴¹ Joachim Neugroschel draws upon an idiomatic usage of “*unter der hant*”—underhanded or in secret—in his translation: “Grasped everything that had occurred in secret.”⁴² This reading may suggest that the rabbi had somehow passed on his secret, his knowledge of his destroyed community, and they have become his heirs.

Yet the orgy of violence that follows the receipt of the secret—aided by what was available for the Jews to grasp “at hand”—would seem to render such an interpretation problematic. A Girardian reading, however, would argue that the implied secret was the realization that the formation of community and the restoration of order required the violent sacrifice of a scapegoat that willingly accepts its own victimhood.⁴³

Several works that Leivick was writing in 1920, *The Golem* and the narrative poem “The Stable,”⁴⁴ explored the relationship of redemption to, on the one hand, violence and, on the other, suffering. Though, during this period, Leivick often undertook these explorations in the context of Jewish messianic traditions, a better interpretation of this final scene would turn from Girard's Christocentric theory of sacrifice that focuses upon a collective act of violence that defuses responsibility. Instead, attention should be directed at the individual who, rather than fleeing with the “terrified crowd” and being expelled from yet another area, picked up a lectern—that is, the stand upon which the Law, whether in the form of *chumash* or Talmudic tractate or *siddur*, lies and is read—and strikes down the mortal threat to both the leader of congregational prayer and any possible creation of a community. This is the singular action that brings the remaining refugees to assume responsibility for themselves and to constitute themselves as a community of moral obligation to one another: that is, it was not simply, as one critic concluded, a matter of clearing the deck, of severing the connection with the “murdered generation [in order to be able to] resume the construction of a new community.”⁴⁵ In this state of emergency when both the juridical and the religious orders are suspended and at this moment, the end of *Ne'ilah* when life and death are on the threshold, this lectern-swinging individual may be seen as making a sovereign decision. That is, his act of violence is neither the Law nor is it instituting violence as paradigmatic action under the Law, rather it (re)institutes the Law.

Unlike the rabbi's presumed passivity as his community was annihilated, this individual, by his action, recognized that assuming responsibility for the (formation and) survival of a community may require violence as it had in *Judentum*'s preexilic past. This may be the secret that the refugees came to realize—and the rabbi too, who could now find consolation. This was trumpeted by that “*oy from beneath the earth*” as it, instead of the traditional “Next year in Jerusalem,” announced the end of the fast and the beginning of a new year of life. While being placed outside the Law of the (Gentile) *polis*—making “the Jew” killable—may lead to the abandonment of the Law by which *Judentum* had sustained itself through the centuries (e.g., through conversion), “*Der Wolf*”s conclusion indicates that *Judentum* has the resources to restore itself and thereby transform a lawless killing, which denies dignity to the *tselem elohim* (image of Gd) of the victim and desanctifies the land, into a death, analogous to ritual slaughter, that both enacts and affirms the Law.

From Slaughter (*shechitah*) to Killing (*retsakh*)

An earlier cycle of pogromic violence had ravaged the Pale of Settlement while Leivick was still living there. In response, the Poems of Wrath penned by Hayyim Nahman Bialik, in particular “In the City of Slaughter [or: of killing; *be-'ir ha-harigah*],” “redefined the pogrom poem for all time to come”⁴⁶ and hence became part of the context for subsequent literary confrontation with the attempted destruction of Jewish communities.⁴⁷ Beginning Easter Sunday—and the last day of Passover—April 19, 1903, the Gentiles of the Bessarabian city of Kishinev and the surrounding region assaulted, raped, and murdered their Jewish neighbors as well as looted and vandalized their homes and businesses. The two-day-long pogrom resulted in more than 500 Jewish casualties (including about 47 dead) and thousands more left destitute. The Jewish Historical Commission of Odessa directed the then-thirty-one-year-old Bialik to go to Kishinev and gather documentation (photographs, eyewitness accounts) in order to prepare a report that would bear witness to the massacre to the world. On the way to the site, Bialik composed “Upon the Slaughter”⁴⁸ (*Al ha-shechitah*) that, framed by its title’s evocation of the divine sanction of ritual slaughter in the blessing uttered by the *shochet*, depicts a distorted scene of blasphemous butchery. The first-person narrator calls upon his intended killer to perform a (ritual) slaughter (*shechitah*). The narrator then self-identifies as an animal. This animal (“cur” [*kelev*]), however, is always already *treyf* and the act of killing is referred to as “murder” (*retsach*—as in the Decalogue’s prohibition: “*lo tirtsach*”). Bialik has his victim exclaim, “my blood is outlaw”; unfortunately, the English misses the melancholic irony of the Hebrew *dami mutar*. *Mutar* literally means “unbound”; and once the victim is decapitated his blood will be unleashed and flow freely. More significant, *mutar* refers to what is permissible over and against what is prohibited, and here Bialik is rendering this bloodletting “permissible” from the Gentile perspective, because Jewish lives can be taken without penalty; that is, like animals, Jews are killable. And once the pogromists complete their slaughter no subsequent divine intercession or punishment of the murderers can render it “Right” (*tsedek*). This ritual slaughter that is no ritual slaughter signifies that the profane murder of the Jews of Kishinev should not be reinterpreted as a sanctified martyrdom.

After his visit to Kishinev, Bialik composes “In the City of Slaughter.”⁴⁹ The narrator is no longer the victim, but the deity, who in Jer. 7:32 had proclaimed that the time would come when, because the people in their ways and deeds had turned away from the divine order of the world, their sanctuary would become the valley of killing (*gey ha-harigah*), in which the dead will lie unburied and become carrion (cf. vv. 128–68). The addressees are no longer the killer, the heavens, or the earth, but the witnesses: a poet, a spider, and Jewish male survivors. The poet, directed by the deity to bear witness to the aftermath, first espies not the decapitated body of a Jew, who had been viewed by his intended killer as a dog in “Upon the Slaughter” but the decapitated bodies of both a Jew and a dog. The spider from its natural perch bears tales of the murder of man, woman, and child; and those Jewish men, secreted in “that dark corner, and behind that cask, / . . . peering from the cracks” (vv. 91–92), watched mothers together with their daughters being ravaged and raped.

Several scenes in Bialik's poem seem to be echoed in “Der Wolf.” During the pogrom, “a dagger halved an infant's word,/Its *ma* was heard, its *mama* never heard” (vv. 65–66). With the child's failure to complete his cry of “Mama” before dying, Bialik alludes to Rabbi Akiva's being unable to utter the *Shema* before his martyrdom;⁵⁰ the rabbi's inability to recite the *Shema* after his community's martyrdom may be refracting both scenes. Just as the rabbi's attempting to recite the Book of Lamentations but forgetting the words and his subsequent transformation into “der wolf” bears witness to the implications of his survival, so too does Bialik's biting depiction of its proposed recitation as the survivors of Kishinev gather in synagogue: “Shall it be also read,/The Book of Lamentations?/It is a preacher mounts the pulpit now./He opens his mouth, he stutters, stammers. Hark/the empty verses from his speaking flow” (vv. 292–96). With his use of “empty verses” Bialik appears to be alluding to the opening of chapter eleven of Tractate Sanhedrin and its discussion of those who will have no portion in the world-to-come.⁵¹ Both Bialik and Leivick invoke Yom Kippur as a threshold. Bialik characterizes the condition of the Jewish community after the pogrom as abounding in cries and tears, self-flagellation, and fists against one's chest as in the Yom Kippur confessional. “Thus groans a people that is lost” (v. 226). He has the deity and his prophet-poet call for turning those fists toward the heavens and the heavenly throne (vv. 244–50)—without success.

Bialik's poem is also populated by monstrous hybrids—not from among the Jewish victims but their killers and rapists. Bialik decries how the cowering “husbands, bridegrooms, brothers” witnessed their wives, brides, sisters being raped by forest-pigs (*chazirey ya'ar*; that is, a conjoining of domesticated and wild) and man-horses (*susei adam*; v. 88). Then the surviving men “crawled forth from their holes” (v. 107) once the pogromists had departed and ran to the synagogue. Rather than questioning their fundamental relationship to the Law in the wake of the communal devastation, they ask instead about laws; the *Kohanim* among them ask the rabbi whether they are permitted to resume conjugal relations with their raped wives, so that matters may return to as they were before the pogrom. Then the poem immediately returns to the site of their debasement (“privies, jakes, and pigpens” [v. 115]; “abattoir” [v. 130]), where these Jewish men are characterized as having acted not as the “scions of the lions” but as “mice [and] roaches” (vv. 121–22). They “died like dogs” (v. 123) or lay like “slaughtered calves” (v. 187). As to the survivors: “Thus does the beast of burden [*sus*], / Broken and old, still bear his yoke” (vv. 285–86).

Bialik's pogrom survivors take to the road and seek only to “conjure up the pity of the nations, / And so their sympathy implore. / For you are now as you have been of yore” (vv. 342–44); they remain shameful simulacra of those of whom they claim to be “heirs . . . sons . . . seed . . . scions” (vv. 115–18).⁵² By contrast, Leivick's refugees ultimately draw upon the Law, themselves, and their tradition, to recreate community and restore human dignity. Bialik's prophet-poet can only flee from the polis into the desert where his bitter, impotent cry will be drowned out by the whirlwind (*se'arah*), while, with his last breath, Leivick's protagonist, surrounded by the townsfolk, calls forth and confirms community: “Jews” (*yidn*). Though deadly pogroms had returned to the Ukraine since Bialik's Poems of Wrath, Leivick wrought a chronicle that responds with promise.

Notes

- * An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the “Monsters, Demons and Wonders in European-Jewish History and Thought” Conference held at the Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt, May 24–26, 2016. I would like to thank the conveners, Christian Wiese and Iris Idelson-Shein, for their kind invitation, the conference participants for their helpful discussion of my presentation, and Allison Schachter, Samuel Spinner, and Bettina Warnke for their comments and suggestions on drafts as well as much needed guidance on Yiddish translation and transliteration. Some material from this chapter also appears in my *Bestiarium Judaicum. Unnatural Histories of the Jews* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018).
- 1 In addition to their chapters in this collection, see: Debra Higgs Strickland, “The Jews, Leviticus, and the Unclean in Medieval English Bestiaries,” in *Beyond the Yellow Badge: Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture*, ed. Mitchell B. Merback (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 203–32; Marc Michael Epstein, “Review Essay. Re-Presentations of the Jewish Image: Three New Contributions,” *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 26 (2002): 327–40.
- 2 Stefan Rohrbacher and Michael Schmidt, *Judenbilder: Kulturgeschichte antijüdischer Mythen und antisemitischer Vorurteile* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1991), 131–35; also see Rainer Erb and Werner Bergmann, *Die Nachtseite der Judenemanzipation. Der Widerstand gegen die Integration der Juden in Deutschland 1780–1860* (Berlin: Metropol, 1989), 200 (including Kant’s identification of the Jews as “die Vampyre der Gesellschaft” [the vampires of society]).
- 3 Dracula’s nose according to Jonathan Harker was “high aquiline”; to the zookeeper it was an “[h]ook nose,” and to Mina “a beaky” one; Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (New York: Signet, 1965) 27, 146, 179.
- 4 Beginning in 2011, the blogger Video Rebel—picking up on the reference, from the opening lines of Matt Taibbi’s provocative 2009 article about the investment banking firm Goldman Sachs, a company bearing the surnames of its Jewish founders, as “a great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity, relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells of money” (“The Great American Bubble Machine,” *Rolling Stone* 1082–83 [July 9, 2009]: 52)—published a series of blogs, including the “The Vampire Squid Talmud,” “The Vampire Squid Protocols” (paraphrasing portions of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*), and “The Vampire Squid Anti-Defamation League Parts I and II,” in which “vampire squid” serves as the poisonous placeholder for “Jew”; see Horse 237, “Dedicated to the Vampire Squid Essays of Vidrebel,” accessed May 16, 2015, vampiresquids.wordpress.com.
- 5 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 104–11.
- 6 St. John Chrysostom, *Eight Homilies Against the Jews*, 4.1.2, in *Discourses against Judaizing Christians*, trans. Paul W. Harkins (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1979), 72.
- 7 *Juden Spiegel*, 69; cited in Nicoline Hörtzitz, *Die Sprache der Judenfeindschaft in der frühen Neuzeit (1450–1700)* (Heidelberg: Winter Universitätsverlag, 2005), 201; other tractates included are by Hans Folz (1491), Johann Pfefferkorn (1511), Georg Nigrinus (Georg Schwarz; 1570), Samuel Friedrich Brentz (1614), Jakob Martini (1636), as well as Johann Andreas Eisenmenger’s 1711 *Entdecktes Judenthum* that

would remain a primary source of and authority for anti-Jewish and antisemitic claims into the twentieth century; also see Hortzitz, “Die Sprache der Judenfeindschaft,” in *Bilder der Judenfeindschaft. Antisemitismus, Vorurteile und Mythen*, ed. Julius H. Schoeps and Joachim Schlör (Augsburg: Bechtermünz, 1999), 22–23. On Nigrinus’s identification of the Jewish wolf, also see Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, “Religion and Race. Protestant and Catholic Discourses on Jewish Conversion in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in *The Origins of Racism in the West*, ed. Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 271.

- 8 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Nathan the Wise*, in *Two Jewish Plays*, trans. Noel Clark (London: Oberon Books, 2002), 149 (Act 4, Scene 4).
- 9 Cruciger (Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen), *Neueste Wanderungen: Umtriebe und Abenteuer des Ewigen Juden unter den Namen Börne, Heine, Saphir, u.a.* (Friedrich-Wilhelmstadt/Berlin: n.p., 1832), 3.
- 10 As such—although it was revealed in December 2014 that Argentina’s then president Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner had adopted the Jewish adult male Yair Tawil as her godson because of the custom that, although originated in Czarist Russia, had become enshrined in Argentine law since the 1970s and then extended to include non-Catholics in 2009; that the head of state adopt a family’s seventh son (if no daughters had been born in between) in order to avert his possible transformation into a werewolf; Diego Melamed, “Werewolf’ Adoption Story Was 100% Kosher—Really!” accessed January 5, 2015, <http://blogs.forward.com/the-shmooze/212114/werewolf-adoption-story-was-kosher-really>.
- 11 For example, aside from a brief mention of Heine’s invocation of werewolves in “Jehuda ben Halevy,” no *Judentum*-associated werewolves appear in Christian Stiegler, *Vergessene Bestie. Der Werwolf in der deutschen Literatur* (Vienna: Braumüller, 2007).
- 12 I discuss “The Rabbi Who Was Turned into a Werewolf” in *Bestiarium Judaicum. Unnatural Histories of the Jews* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018). Also see the contribution of Astrid Lembke in this collection.
- 13 David Shyovitz, “Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Werewolf Renaissance,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 75, 4 (2014): 526.
- 14 During the string of pogroms that victimized Jewish communities in the Pale of Settlement from 1903 through 1906, Bialik composed a series of Poems or Songs of Wrath (*Mi-shirei ha-za’ām*); cf. David G. Roskies, *The Literature of Destruction. Jewish Responses to Catastrophe* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988), 146–47.
- 15 Though “In the City of Slaughter” was initially taken as an accurate representation of Jewish passivity in the face of the violent onslaught by their Gentile neighbors, other testimony, including that gathered by Bialik on site, bore witness to a number of efforts at self-defense by members of Kishinev’s Jewish community; see Michael Gluzman, “Pogrom and Gender: On Bialik’s *Unheimlich*,” *Prooftexts* 25, 1/2 (Winter 2005): 42–44; see also, Iris Milner, “‘In the City of Slaughter’: The Hidden Voice of the Pogrom Victims,” *Prooftexts* 25, 1/2 (Winter 2005): 60–72.
- 16 In European feudal societies charcoal burners were usually the only persons, aside from the local nobility and their agents, allowed to reside in the often-wolf-inhabited forests; isolated, living outside of the community, they were often accused of engaging in nefarious practices.
- 17 Martin Buber, *The Legend of the Baal-Shem*, trans. Maurice Friedman (New York: Harper & Row, 1955), 51–55.

- 18 Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign, Volume I*, ed. Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet, and Ginette Michaud, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 92–95 (specifically on Agamben's *Homo Sacer*); discussions of other associations of the figure of wolf bzw. werewolf with the law, such as by Hobbes, Machiavelli, and Rousseau, pervade the seminar, especially its first third (1–11, 58–105).
- 19 Sarah L. Higley, “Finding the Man Under the Skin: Identity, Monstrosity, Expulsion, and the Werewolf,” in *The Shadow-Walkers. Jacob Grimm's Mythology of the Monstrous*, ed. Tom Shippey (Turnhout, BE: Brepols, 2005), 337.
- 20 In his 1842 *Das Strafrecht der Germanen* Wilhelm Eduard Wilda elaborated the notion of *Friedlosigkeit* (the status of being outside the general peace) in early Germanic law and drew an essential link between the legal determination of the *Friedlos* and the figure of the *Wargus* that appeared in numerous medieval German and Anglo-Saxon sources. Agamben (*Homo Sacer*, 104–05) annexes Wilda's work for his own determination of the *homo sacer*. Also see Noam Pines, “Life in the Valley: Figures of Dehumanization in Heinrich Heine's ‘Prinzessin Sabbat,’” *Prooftexts* 33 (2013): 35. Higley, “Finding the Man,” surveys a number of medieval Germanic languages (including Old English, Old Icelandic, Old Norse) and concludes that the relationship between the werewolf and the outlaw was more likely a convergence than an aboriginal identification: “The term ‘werewolf’ is not used of an outlaw in early writings. And *warg* is not, except in late medieval Icelandic, used to mean a werewolf. . . . The late tradition of the *warg*, then, is related to the tradition of the werewolf only in that it is the evil wolf, the omega, that has become its context; the *warg*, critically speaking, is a wolf in the wrong circumstances (in the sanctuary), a berserk who has turned against his own people, an anomaly, a monster, unrecognizable and without identity” (356, 369).
- 21 Is the rabbi's revivification on the third day after being left for dead an ironic allusion to the Kishinev pogrom having begun on Easter Sunday?
- 22 H. Leivick, “The Wolf,” in *Radiant Days, Haunted Nights*, ed. and trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Overlook Duckworth, 2005), 126; all subsequent page references are to this edition.
- 23 Leivick, “The Wolf,” 128. Given that the poem concludes after *ne'ilah*, the concluding prayer service of Yom Kippur, Leivick appears to be alluding to another well-known Hassidic tale about the BeShT and a villager's son who does not know the words of the *ne'ilah* service but feels compelled to blow his whistle. As the rest of the congregation angrily endeavors to silence him, the BeShT commands them to leave the child alone and explains that thanks to the sincerity of the child's prayer “The judgment is suspended, and wrath is dispelled from the face of the earth”; Buber, *Legend*, 30–31.
- 24 Leivick, “The Wolf,” 128.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid., 131.
- 27 Ibid., 132.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid., 134.
- 30 Ibid., 135.
- 31 Ibid., 135–36.
- 32 Ibid., 138.

- 33 Drawing upon French traditions about the *loup-garou* or werewolf, the thirteenth-century Tosaphist Rabbeinu Ephraim ben Shimshon notes in his commentary to Gen. 1:27 that “The solution for [dealing with] this wolf is that when it enters a house, and a person is frightened by it, he should take a firebrand and thrust it around, and he will not be harmed”; cited in Nosson Slifkin, *Sacred Monsters: Mysterious and Mythical Creatures of Scripture, Talmud and Midrash* (Brooklyn: Zoo Torah, 2007) 220; also see Shyovitz, “Twelfth-Century Werewolf Renaissance,” 530.
- 34 Leivick, “The Wolf” 141.
- 35 Ibid., 142.
- 36 Ibid., 141.
- 37 Ibid., 145.
- 38 Shyovitz, “Twelfth-Century Werewolf Renaissance,” 526 (citing §166), 533.
- 39 Leivick, “The Wolf,” 145.
- 40 Ibid., 146.
- 41 H. Leyvik, “The Wolf,” in *Sing, Stranger. A Century of American Yiddish Poetry. An Historical Anthology*, ed. Benjamin Harshav, trans. Benjamin Harshav and Barbara Harshav (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 233.
- 42 Leivick, “The Wolf,” 145.
- 43 See, for example, René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).
- 44 The eponymous stable of Leivick’s Yiddish poem is a synagogue that had been desecrated by German soldiers during the First World War and turned into a horse barn after the community that it had served had been destroyed in a pogrom. The second epigraph of this work is the Hebrew inscription from *Pirkei Avot* (5:23), “Be swift as a deer, strong as a lion, bold as a leopard, and light as an eagle,” that adorned, with accompanying depiction of the four animals, the ceilings of many Eastern European synagogues. At one point, one of the town’s surviving refugees, choosing to return to the synagogue in hope of redemption, looks to the heavens and offers in a lament *cum* prayer to “stare the joy in grief.” These four animals—refugees and survivors as well—come to rest at his feet bearing the revelation of a cosmic harmony that includes suffering: “life is beauty and life is horror.” His older brother seeks solace in violence that turns from the *Shochet*’s ritualized slaughter that provides meat for the community to “Victory and blade and song of slaughtering knives”; see the discussion in David G. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse. Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 102–04. The wolf, unlike these animal indices of possible redemption in “The Stable,” is not sanctioned by the Oral Law, whether found in the opening tractate of the Mishna or the Laws of Kashrut.
- 45 Sol Liptzin, *A History of Yiddish Literature* (New York: Jonathan David, 1985), 302.
- 46 Roskies, *Literature of Destruction*, 146.
- 47 First published in *Hazman* [The Times], St. Petersburg, July–September 1904, it was “quickly translated into Russian, by Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky, and then Yiddish, by Y.L. Peretz. Subsequently, Bialik himself published a revised Yiddish translation of the poem. . . . In Hebrew and through these translations, the poem had a huge impact on a wide audience of contemporary Jewish readers”; Na’ama Rokem, *Prosaic Conditions. Heinrich Heine and the Spaces of Zionist Literature* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2013), 102.
- 48 In Roskies, *Literature of Destruction*, 159–60 (trans. A. M. Klein).

- 49 In Roskies, *Literature of Destruction*, 160–68 (trans. A. M. Klein).
- 50 Roskies, *Literature of Destruction*, 161–62; Roskies lists A. Avital, *Shirat Bialik vehatanakh* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1952), as the source of his annotations.
- 51 Roskies, *Literature of Destruction*, 166.
- 52 See Alan Mintz, *Hurban. Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 149–50.

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