

Gelbin, Cathy S. *The Golem Returns: From German Romantic Literature to Global Jewish Culture, 1808–2008*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2011. 212 pp. \$65.00 hardcover.

Cathy Gelbin's broad-reaching study of the Golem legend, the hulking clay creature of myth imbued with life through mystical rituals and traditionally intended as a servant of its creator, spans further than her title indicates. Rich with context that succinctly enables the reader to glean the origins of this creature, Gelbin's investigation approaches the Golem and its numerous iterations from a unique perspective, namely one informed by the work of sociologists and globalization theorists like Ulrich Beck, Roland Robertson, as well as the post-colonial work of Homi Bhabba. The focus of this investigation is the notion of the Golem as a cultural text, encompassing film along with literature, that plays an integral role in defining Jewish identity, both from within the Jewish community and from external, and at times anti-Semitic, versions of the legend. Gelbin argues that the Golem figure, although increasingly seen as a global signifier of Jewish identity, "mediates Jewish particularity in a globalized world" and presents a notion of identity more varied than homogenous (142). Gelbin traces this development across the past two hundred years, identifying the Golem's inveterate role as a mediator between the Jewish community and the world.

The critical gaze of this investigation initially comes to rest in the first chapter on the German *Romantik*, where notions of folklore and culture play a significant role in the resurgence of interest in the Golem tradition at the beginning of the 19th century. Gelbin's study begins with the folkloristic endeavors of Jakob Grimm concerning the Golem, specifically his retelling of Christoph Arnold's tale in Achim von Arnim's *Zeitung für Einsiedler* (1808). Of particular interest to Gelbin are the writings of Herder, namely *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie* (1782) and *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* (1772), whose assertions regarding both language and culture of the ancient Jews to be the "paradigm of folk writing" she highlights, although she acknowledges the fact that Herder's contemporaries were much less tolerant of the Jewish community and its cultural production (28). This intersection underscores the negotiation of "the contested notion of Jewish cultural authenticity" that drives her investigation, since she argues that the Golem was at times used as evidence of not only the perceived diabolical nature of Jewish culture but also their lack of genuine cultural production, given that the Golem is an imitation or mere replication of life (1).

The subsequent chapters proceed chronologically and focus on key texts and films from both Jewish and non-Jewish authors. In Chapter 4, for example, Gelbin explicitly highlights and briefly examines texts from Rudolf Lothar and Arthur Holitscher around the turn of the 20th century, that envision the Golem in the context of Zionist discourses surrounding Jewish identity and belonging articulated by thinkers like Martin Buber and Max Nordau. In chapter 5, she discusses Gustav Meyrink's 1915 novel *Der Golem* and Paul Wegener's film *Der Golem, wie er in die Welt kam* (1920), arguing that their depictions of the Jew and the Golem are ambivalent due to the modernist aesthetic. In Chapter 6, she turns her attention to post-war poets like Paul Celan, Esther Discherheit, and Thomas Brasch, who, informed by Golem and Kabbalah scholar Gerschom Scholem's work, re-envision the Golem as a figure of identity construction bound up with the destructive history of the Holocaust. Given the breadth of her investigation,

Gelbin's specific literary analyses are necessarily brief, and scholars looking for in-depth treatments of specific texts will only have their appetites wetted by her compelling observations. In light of the title of this comprehensive work, however, this reviewer was rather disappointed that Friedrich Torberg's short story, *Golems Wiederkehr* (1968), receives scant attention, being only mentioned once in the text. One can easily excuse this missed opportunity given the ample number of texts under investigation in this ambitious work.

The Golem Returns will be of particular interest to scholars of Jewish culture and identity construction, including those who look for ways of integrating issues of globalization into their work. In light of earlier studies on the Golem from Gerschom Scholem (1976) and Mosche Idel (1990), whose work primarily centers on Kabbalistic origins of the Golem, Gelbin's study offers a perspective on literary texts that allows for the consideration of both Jewish and non-Jewish depictions of the Golem over the past two centuries, and in turn provides a study informed by Bhabha's post-colonial theory, that focuses on the "constant resignification of received images—in this case the golem's signification of the Jew's human semblance" (6). Scholars searching for detailed analyses of specific literary texts will have to be content with a sound jumping-off point for further investigation and deeper analysis.

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High, Jeffrey L., Nicholas Martin, and Norbert Oellers, eds. *Who Is This Schiller Now? Essays on His Reception and Significance*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011. 494 pp. \$95.00 hardcover.

For Schiller scholars and enthusiasts, it has been a productive coincidence in recent years that the 200th anniversary of his death in 2005 was followed four years later by the 250th anniversary of his birth. Among the conferences and publications occasioned by the former was *Friedrich Schiller: Playwright, Poet, Philosopher, and Historian* (Peter Lang, 2007), a collection of essays directed toward—as the title suggests—the representation of a multi-faceted Schiller. This representation was in turn developed and further nuanced by an international gathering of scholars in 2009 at California State University Long Beach, where the "Who is this Schiller [now]?" conference celebrated not only Schiller's birth but also his emergence from several generations of scholarly pigeonholing. *Who Is This Schiller Now?*, the volume under review here, captures this celebratory tone in nearly thirty revised and expanded papers from this gathering.

In their Foreword, the editors articulate a mission statement of sorts for the essays that follow: "In accordance with important Schiller scholarship of the second half of the twentieth century and in particular in the most recent decade..., little or no trace is left of Schiller the lopsidedly abstract idealist who turned his back on politics" (xi). Accordingly, the collection positions itself—rightly—over and against the mid-century creation of a politically naive, if not dangerous, Schiller, who cartoonishly embodied the backlash within Anglo-American circles against German politics and German Idealism.