

# FOAFTale News

Newsletter of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research

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## IN THIS ISSUE:

- From the Editor's Desk
- Gail de Vos, "The Hauntingly Enchanted Menger Hotel"
- 2015 Prizes Awarded
- An Interview with 2015 Brian McConnell Book Award Winner Joel Best
- Perspectives on Contemporary Legend 2015 Abstracts
- Yvonne Milspaw, "Murder Will Out: Der Alte Graimer wer Doot Gemacht Wawr"
- Back Matter

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

From Ebola scares to celebrating Muslims and from gun control conspiracies to eternal Putins, it has been another legendary year.

In this issue, you will find a number of stimulating columns. To begin, Gail de Vos offers an overview of the Menger Hotel, the society's haunted 2015 San Antonio conference accommodations. Next, the society awarded three prizes to five members this year. One awardee, Joel Best, sat down with *FOAFTale News* for a question-and-answer session. Then, for those who have not yet reviewed the program, the abstracts for the excellent slate of 2015 papers are now available. The issue ends with a short article by Yvonne Milspaw about a Pennsylvania German legend, variants of which you might be familiar.

*FOAFTale New* is, as always, accepting articles, interviews, reviews, and anything else of interest. For queries, discussions, and legend in the news, be sure to request to join, follow, and post to the International Society for Contemporary Legend's Facebook group.

## GAIL DE VOS, "THE HAUNTINGLY ENCHANTED MENGER HOTEL"

Built in 1859 by William Menger, the Menger Hotel has held a permanent position as a vital ingredient of San Antonio history, present and future. The original building was a two story, fifty-room structure but, because of its success, soon also had a three-story addition built directly behind it. A fourth story was added to one arm of the hotel in 1887 and another fifty-room addition was built in 1899. The hotel was frequently updated and added to in subsequent years until the extensive renovation and restoration project of the original 1859 building and retail spaces was under taken in 1992. Throughout all of the construction, reshaping, rebuilding, refurbishing and urban development of the hotel one element remained constant: the hotel was, and remains, haunted.

On my May stay at the hotel I unfortunately did not have any experiences with their famous and/or infamous ghosts. I did, however, purchase two books that discuss the ghosts at the Menger. These, by the way, are not the only resources that discuss the hauntings. There are literally dozens of YouTube videos about the ghosts, the hauntings and personal experiences of staff, guests and ghost hunters. A quick Google search on the Menger Hotel and Ghosts brings forth numerous hits—some much better than others I must admit.

Since I cannot deliver any of my own personal narratives on the spirit guests and visitors to the hotel, I am going to briefly recapitulate what was offered in the two books I purchased. According to Alan Brown in his book on Texas ghost stories, there have been at least thirty-two reported ghosts (Brown, 176). His concise report includes mention of spiritual revisits by Teddy Roosevelt in the very bar in which he recruited people for the Rough Riders in 1898; Captain Richard King, owner of the King Ranch, who had his own suite at the hotel. Upon learning about his rapidly approaching

impeding death, King moved into the hotel where he said goodbye to his friends, wrote his will and had his funeral. He, according to Brown, still visits the King Suite on occasion (Brown, 177). The most legendary ghost, according to many sources, is that of Sallie White, a chambermaid who was murdered by her husband either at the hotel or at home depending on the discretion of the storyteller. The Menger Hotel paid for her funeral and, ever so modestly, had the receipt from the funeral home on display in the hotel lobby (Brown, 177). A more contemporary spectre sits in the very same lobby, knitting diligently. She is elderly, wearing glasses, a blue dress, and a beret. Although she has been sighted numerous times, she remains an unidentified figure. "Only a small handful of the spirits who are said to haunt the Menger Hotel have been identified. Because of the hotel's close proximity to the Alamo, some of these ghosts are believed to be the spirits of men who died in the battle" (Brown, 178).

Docia Schultz Williams has long had an interest in the history and mystery of the hotel. She writes, with deep affection of the history of the hotel, its famous historical figures that played a part in that history and the numerous apparitions who continue to haunt the building. When conducting ghost tours of the hotel, Williams would state, "If you aren't good enough to get into Heaven, the Menger Hotel certainly isn't a bad second choice" (Williams, 236). Her reporting of the ghosts and hauntings are based on interviews with executive staff members, housekeeping and security staff members and various former guests. Williams includes an entire chapter on Sallie White's ghost including excerpts from several contemporary newspapers reporting on the 1876 murder and the text from the infamous invoice from the funeral home. "To cash paid for coffin for Sallie White, col'd chambermaid, deceased, murdered by her husband, shot March 28, died March 30, \$25 for coffin, and \$7 for grave, total \$32" (Williams, 244). Sallie has been seen in the section where she worked as a chambermaid and has been frequently spotted by housekeepers, chambermaids and guests as she continues to tidy the rooms (Williams, 245). Williams also discusses "the blue lady" who sits and knits in the hotel lobby. Her attire is reminiscent of clothes worn during the Second World War and her appearance is anything but ghostly. She has been approached and spoken to by several employees over the years and immediately disappears after reassuring them that she is fine, in response to their inquiries.

Numerous other ghosts are identified by Williams such as Captain King, the man in buckskin who

makes in-bedroom visits, the Confederate Officer, the Woman in White, along with various spectres in the bar. Unlike the report by Brown, Williams does not claim that Roosevelt haunts the bar but speculates that the figure of the man in the military uniform could indeed be him or, perhaps, one of the deceased visitors from the adjacent Alamo. There are numerous other sightings succinctly reported by Williams that are seemingly confined to specific rooms or areas of the hotel. These spirits can manipulate televisions, make telephone calls, open and slam doors and cause all sorts of discomfort (or comfort for those seeking these types of experiences) for the guests. Never, however, are these spiritual undertakings malevolent. As Williams explains:

The Menger management does not try to hide its ghosts from current guests. And most guests find the whole idea of the hotel having resident spirits most fascinating. Many people actually request "a haunted room." Therefore, the spirits seem to feel welcome. Their presence is not threatened, and so, at will, they return when they desire. No attempt at exorcism has ever been made. They are not the type of ghosts one would want to shoo away. They are totally friendly and benevolent, and they just make up a part of the personality of the hotel (Williams, 238).

The ISCLR conference this past May would have been a perfect time for sightings and ghostly experiences as there were many of us open to safe encounters during our stay. As I mentioned earlier, for me, personally, the haunting of the hotel was just something I could read about or listen to others talk about. Celia Lottridge and I listened at great length to the woman in the gift shop tell us of the many ghostly sightings she and her fellow workers had experienced. She had visitations from people from all the eras that the hotel had been in operation but could not identify any of them and certainly did not mention the woman knitting in the lobby just outside the door of the gift shop. Celia and I also heard about a very young female ghost who wandered through the dining area. Our waitress was a great storyteller and brought the several ghostly appearances that she had witnessed alive to us with her renditions. This child drifted through the dining room looking forlorn and lost. Several people approached her to try and help her but she would just disappear. This young ghost, conversely, does not seem to make her presence known in any of the written material about the Menger Hotel (so far).

We are hoping that anyone who did have a ghostly experience at the hotel will get in touch with us to share the experience.

*Gail de Vos*

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### 2015 PRIZES AWARDED

**Gillian Bennett** and **Paul Smith** won the inaugural Linda Dégh Lifetime Achievement Award.

**Joel Best** and **Kathleen A. Bogle** won the Brian McConnell Book Award for *Kids Gone Wild: From Rainbow Parties to Sexting, Understanding the Hyper over Teen Sex* (NYU Press, 2014).

**Mercedes Torrez** of Texas A&M-San Antonio won the David Buchan Student Essay Prize for her paper "Bridging the Past with the Present: Disability, Transgression, and Fetishized Fascination in Reimagining the Cultural Haunting of San Antonio's Legendary Donkey Lady."

### AN INTERVIEW WITH 2015 BRIAN MCCONNELL BOOK AWARD WINNER JOEL BEST

In a new feature, *FOAFTale News* sat down with Joel Best, the co-winner of the 2015 Brian McConnell Book Award. Best, a sociologist at the University of Delaware, has a long history in legend study, ranging from "The Razor Blade in the Apple: The Social Construction of Urban Legends" (co-author Gerald T. Horiuchi, 1985) to his most recent, prizewinning *Kids Gone Wild: From Rainbow Parties to Sexting, Understanding the Hype Over Teen Sex* (co-author Kathleen A. Bogle, 2014). Best agreed to discuss his legendary life, including how a sociology graduate student first became interested in legends and how legend scholars and sociologists might work in harmony.

**FN:** *How did you first become interested in contemporary legends?*

**JB:** I discovered folklore journals as a grad student browsing in the library's display of new periodicals. Folklorists were obviously studying such entertaining topics as urban legends and joke cycles, and I got in the habit of glancing at the tables of contents of new issues of the *Journal of American Folklore* and such. So I knew about contemporary legends before 1981, when *The Vanishing Hitchhiker* appeared.

I had long been skeptical of stories about poisoned Halloween candy, and when I decided to actually study Halloween press coverage, I realized that I could use legends as a conceptual hook.

**FN:** *You're a sociologist by training. From your perspective, how might legend scholars better collaborate with the traditional disciplines?*

**JB:** When I began reading folklore journals, I just assumed that folklorists were at bottom anthropologists, which is to say social scientists; it took me a while to realize that most folklorists thought of themselves as belonging to the humanities. For me, some particularly interesting questions involve legend dynamics—how and why do legends spread as they do? It's a question of emphasis, of being a little less interested in the specifics of a tale or its telling, and instead thinking a bit more about its larger context. There are both folklorists (e.g. Véronique Campion-Vincent, Bill Ellis, and Patricia Turner) and sociologists (e.g. Gary Alan Fine and Jeffrey Victor) who address those questions, and that's the work that particularly attracts me. The concept of contemporary legends has found its way into the literatures of a lot of disciplines, and I think legend scholars owe it to themselves to learn how the concept is being applied elsewhere in the academy.

**FN:** *In your opinion, why should people take contemporary legends seriously?*

**JB:** As someone who studies social problems, I see legends and joke cycles as repackaging public concerns. Both depend upon people caring enough to repeat a story or joke—the question is why they care?

**FN:** *Do you have a favorite contemporary legend?*

**JB:** Well, I have been giving press interviews about razor blades in apples for 31 years (it's seasonal work), so it would be churlish not to acknowledge that story.

**FN:** *Do you incorporate contemporary legends into your teaching?*

**JB:** Absolutely. I always work the topic into my courses on social problems (both undergraduate and graduate seminars).

**FN:** *You won the Brian McConnell Book Award for your most recent book, Kids Gone Wild: From Rainbow Parties to Sexting, Understanding the Hype Over Teen Sex (co-authored with Kathleen Bogle). How did you start working on that topic?*

**JB:** I got one of Brian Chapman's weekly "Legends and Rumors" messages, and there were some posts from British newspapers about sex bracelets. This was news to me, and I went into my social problems class all excited and said, "Guess what they're worried about in England?" My students were bored: "Oh, yeah, we had that in junior high." I had no idea, so when I got to my office, and I started poking around on the Internet.

**FN:** *For those who haven't read Kids Gone Wild yet, could you give us the CliffsNotes?*

**JB:** Basically, we look at three early twenty-first century concerns about sexual behavior about children and teens: sex bracelets, rainbow parties, and sexting. The first two are best understood as contemporary legends. Both stories took off beginning in 2003, when the Internet was fairly mature (Facebook had not yet begun). This seemed to offer an opportunity to track the diffusion of these stories across time and space, and to trace how they changed over time in both Internet discussions and television coverage. I think we learned some interesting things. For instance, we show that attention to a story occurs in concentrated bursts—for short periods of time in particular countries.

**FN:** *What's your next project?*

**JB:** I am starting work on a couple book projects about (a) critical thinking in sociology and (b) social problems theory. Nothing about legends right now...

## PERSPECTIVE ON CONTEMPORARY LEGEND 2015 ABSTRACTS

Joel Best, University of Delaware

R. J. Maratea, New Mexico State University

### **Knock, Knock—Who's Scared?: The Knockout Game and Other Tales of Networked Urban Youth**

*The Knockout Game* attracted national media attention in the fall of 2013. The basic story—early adolescents attacking a passerby at random in an effort knock the individual out with a single punch—resembled other, similar reports (*happy slapping* in London and elsewhere in Europe, beginning in around 2005; *flash mobs* in Philadelphia in 2010; *polar bear hunting* in Champaign, Illinois in 2010). Such concerns with disorderly urban youth have a long history, dating back at least to the Mohawks in early 18<sup>th</sup>-century London. The Knockout Game attracted considerable attention from conservatives (FOX News devoted far more attention to the topic than any other media outlet), and they often emphasized the problem's purported racial dynamics, in which black teens attacked whites (in some versions Jews). However, warnings about out-of-control youth often construct these threats in terms of some disadvantaged class or ethnicity. What sets these new tales apart is the way they feature technology. The attackers are described as making videos using cell phones or video cameras, and then posting these on the Internet. (The availability of these videos enhanced the story's suitability for television, even as they presumably taught the Knockout Game to a vast audience of viewers.) Like concerns about sexting and cyberbullying, these tales reveal considerable ambivalence about young people's increased access to and familiarity with technology.

Richard Burns, Arkansas State University

### **A Texas Convict-Guard: The Legend of Butch Ainsworth**

Prison stories I have received from Texas prisons suggest a dominance/subordination theme in interpersonal relationships among prisoners at a maximum security prison farm. This theme particularly illuminates a set of tales that I will discuss. Ed Harris, a white convict provided me with a set of four texts when he was enrolled in a cultural anthropology course I taught at his unit. Three of them are about Butch Ainsworth, whose story of self-mutilation moved a district judge to

cite the incident in his memorandum opinion of the 1980 *Ruiz vs. Estelle* trial case regarding TDC's violation of previous court orders for wardens to cease using prisoners as guards. Popularly known as building tenders, they appear the subject of numerous stories, such as those Harris and others reported.

Despite a judge's efforts to dismantle the building tender system, prison superintendents left wardens to run their units as they saw fit. Even though it was clear in court that building tenders were convict-guards, prison officials used different names for them in order to conceal their illegal practice. They were therefore called "porters" or "trustees." Moreover, wardens continued allowing these notorious individuals the same degree of authority over prisoners they had before the judge's ruling. Ainsworth was one of those porters, and stories of his self-mutilation have passed into the mainstream of prison oral traditions. Competing worldviews, or who controls whom, support the versions of Ainsworth tales I examine in this paper. Each narrator interprets the Ainsworth character according to the narrator's prison identity. The tales I examine come from a white convict, a white guard, a black inmate, and an Hispanic convict. As a set, they provide us with competing worldviews embodied in different versions of a prison legend.

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*William M. Clements, Arkansas State University*

### **Geronimo Goes to College**

According to an account that may have roots from as early as the 1910s, the skull of the Chiricahua Apache shaman known as Geronimo has been residing for almost a century in the "Tomb," the headquarters of Skull and Bones, one of the senior societies at Yale University. Prescott Bush, progenitor of two U.S. presidents, allegedly helped other Bonesmen, who were stationed at the military base at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, during the preparations for American involvement in World War I, to remove Geronimo's skull from his grave located a couple of miles from the base. Geronimo had died in 1909 after spending almost twenty-three years as a prisoner of war following his surrender to General Nelson A. Miles in 1886. The skull has supposedly been displayed in the Tomb, where it may function in the society's initiation and other rituals. This presentation examines the history of the account,

which seems to resurface whenever a Bush descendant figures on the national political scene. The idea that Geronimo's skull was removed after his death reflects Apache bodylore as well as the history of postmortem treatment of American Indians. It also responds to the highly secretive reputation of Skull and Bones as an elitist organization that figures into conspiracy theories involving the Illuminati, the Nazi Party, and other nefarious organizations. Its parallel with Bush family political fortunes suggests an attempt to connect the family with those organizations and with privileged insensitivity to the interests of American Indians. Though some documentary evidence seems to verify that the Tomb may contain Native American physical remains and artifacts—perhaps even material associated with Geronimo—the spread of the account, which has relied heavily on the electronic media since the turn of the millennium, indicates that folk processes of dissemination contribute significantly to its continuing existence.

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*Frank de Caro, Louisiana State University*

### **Slavery and New Orleans Ghost Legends**

In a forthcoming article I argue that the Lalaurie legends, the only widely known ghost legend complex in New Orleans in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, comment upon slavery. According to the Lalaurie story, Madame Delphine Lalaurie was grossly mistreating her slaves. This was found out when fire broke out in her mansion in 1834 and a crowd of people entered the house to assist and found tortured and starved slaves. Madame Lalaurie was forced to flee New Orleans once her transgressions were discovered. Ever since, a variety of sometimes threatening apparitions, ghosts of the mistreated slaves, have appeared at the house. The legends in part were perpetuated because they show that many whites were concerned with the correct treatment of slaves. However, the legends also remind us that New Orleans is, in effect, haunted by slavery and the mistreatment that institution brought about.

The present paper looks at three other New Orleans ghost legends that involve slaves and slavery, using materials drawn from Jean deLavigne's 1946 book *Ghost Stories of Old New Orleans*, a somewhat problematic source.

The other legends, taken together, provide a broader vision of slavery. In one, to be sure, the haunting evolves out of a system which kept slaves “in their place” and in another the haunting is partly the result of a slave’s being killed by his master because he oversteps a boundary in becoming the lover of his mistress. In the third, however, a mistress is warned by the ghost of a slave that her white neighbor and friend is actually a dangerous voodoo priestess, the haunting taking on positive aspects in terms of slave-slave owner relations. In the third instance the slave owner does refrain from beating a slave, possibly suggesting the correct behavior toward slaves that the community favored and that Madame Lalaurie disregarded.

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*Gail de Vos, University of Alberta*

### **The Monster Within: Contemporary Legends and Legend Kernels about Breast Cancer**

Approximately one in eight women in North America is diagnosed with invasive breast cancer by the age of 85 making it one of the most feared cancers among women. According to numerous medical researchers, there are more contemporary legends about breast cancer than about any other malignancy and, even conceivably, about any other medical condition. This large number of legends seemingly corresponds with the intensity of fear about the disease. While there is a lot of breast cancer awareness among people in western society, there is not a great deal of knowledge about the disease itself and contemporary legends and the often negative personal experience stories that are ardently related are often the touchstones of the apprehensive layman’s belief system.

This paper will explore the myriad of contemporary legends in an attempt to discover why the breast cancer legends are so ubiquitous and ostensibly authoritative. It will also examine the distribution patterns and methods for these legends: email and social network postings, word of mouth and, most frequently, pseudo-medical Internet sites. Three broad categories of breast cancer legends have been identified: those centred on the cause of the disease such as underwire bras, antiperspirants, specific foods consumption; those that focus on the risk of getting breast cancer such as heredity, gender and life styles; and those involving diagnostics and treatments such as mammograms and including cancer cure conspiracy

theories regarding the medical discoveries that would eradicate the need for those types of treatments.

Let’s talk about breast cancer and, perhaps, calm a few fears.

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*Diane E. Goldstein, Indiana University*

### **Poison Emperors, Typhoid Marys and Patient Zeros: The Legend and the Anatomy of a Superspreader**

In 1990 Jan Brunvand referred to the antagonist in the “welcome to the World of AIDS” legend as “AIDS Mary” or, in the male version, “AIDS Harry”. The reference, Brunvand notes, came originally from writer, Dan Sheridan of the *Chicago Times* who recognized similarities between the narrative and the story of “Typhoid Mary”, the Irish American cook (Actually named Mary Mallon) who spread typhoid to some forty to fifty people in the early 1900s. Typhoid Mary supposedly knew of her “carrier” status and yet continued to spread the disease for eight years after her discovery of the risk. Sheridan’s name for the AIDS legend demonstrated his immediate recognition of the antagonist in the “Welcome” legend as recognizable from the typhoid narrative tradition. Discourses this past fall surrounding Thomas Eric Duncan, the patient with the first case of Ebola diagnosed in the United States, dredged up Typhoid Mary associations and linked Duncan to a phenomenon that epidemiologists and the contemporary media like to call, “superspreaders”. Priscilla Wald defines ‘Superspreader’ in her book *Contagious*, as “a term used ... for ‘hyper infective’ individuals who ostensibly fostered infection by ‘spewing germs out like teakettles’” (2008:5). According to epidemiologist Sara Paull at the University of Colorado, superspreaders share three major qualities. They shed large quantities of the pathogen. They transmit it to a large number of people. And they do so for a long period of time. According to Paull a combination of an individual’s physiology and behavior determines whether he or she will become a superspreader.

Each of these epidemiological factors create a space for legend. Like narratives of the AIDS “outlaw” (someone who is charged with public health crimes for transmitting HIV to multiple partners) depicted in the courts and in the media with reference to the length of their penises,

duration of their sexual act, their uncontrollable lust, their sexual duplicity and their calculated good looks, the epidemic superspreader becomes a disease shedding reckless legendary character. This paper will explore a group of superspreaders of a variety of diseases, demonstrating the legendary nature of their disease shedding exploits.

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*Gregory Hansen, Arkansas State University*

#### **The Origin Story of the 'Orange Blossom Special': Narrating Personal Experience into Legend**

"The Orange Blossom Special" is the most popular fiddle tune ever recorded. Rather than being a novel composition, the venerable bluegrass breakdown is actually rooted in an earlier tune called "The South Florida Blues." This blues tune has obscure origins, but Ervin and Gordon Rouse played it in their string band in the 1930s. They reworked the tune into the "Orange Blossom Special" to commemorate the opening of a luxury passenger train service that ran from Florida to New York City. The song quickly entered the repertoires of various bluegrass bands during the 1940s. It was also part of the repertoire of Robert "Chubby" Wise, a virtuoso fiddler who helped to lay the foundation for bluegrass music during his stint with Bill Monroe.

Since that time, Chubby Wise has long been associated with this bluegrass standard. For generations, he was even given credit for co-authoring the song with Ervin Rouse. However, the journalist Randy Noles discovered that this aspect of the song's origin story likely is closer to legend rather than verifiable history. Furthermore, Noles also documented that Wise, himself, played an important part in creating the story. Wise did contribute to the tune's development, and he helped to popularize it through Monroe's band. His own account of the writing of the song, however, reflects a certain

degree of unreliable narration. Rather than asserting outright prevarication, this paper explores how Wise's account of the tune's origin reflects a shift from earlier string band music into more commercially marketed country music. The shift provides ways to understand how the tropes of legend-telling became integral to the creation of star performers in country music. In this respect, Wise's telling of his own legend is understandable—if not fully excusable.

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#### *Christine Shojaei Kawan, Enzyklopaedie des Maerchens* **Chocolat - The Film and the Novel: Two Variations on a Common Theme**

It cannot escape our attention that segments of the entertainment industry satisfy exactly the same needs as traditional folktales did in former centuries: they share or transpose their underlying patterns of thought, they make ample use of supernatural elements, and their major aim is wishfulfillment. I will analyze the case of the film *Chocolat* by Lasse Hallström (2000) set in 1959 in rural France and the bestselling novel by the British-French author Joanne Harris which it is based on. Whereas the film bears some typical fairy tale features, the novel is very different in spirit and inspired by postmodern esotericism.

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*Andrea Kitta, East Carolina University*

#### **Patient Zero, Outbreak Narratives, and the 2015 Disneyland Measles Outbreak**

In the latest outbreak of the measles virus, several media organizations are reporting a specific "patient zero", even though one has not been officially identified. Some reports, which claim patient zero is a "young woman" or a "woman in her 20s" differ in vaccination status, with anti-vaccination groups reporting that she was vaccinated (using this incident to prove the ineffectiveness of the vaccine) to pro-vaccination groups stating that she was not vaccinated (as a way to show the consequences of vaccine refusal). Additionally, some reports state that patient zero traveled to another county, while others claim that patient zero is likely from "outside the Western Hemisphere". All of these reports indicate a growing fear of disease and a desire to blame individuals or groups for this epidemic. Outbreak narratives tend to have a formalized structure

which “begins with the identification of an emerging infection, includes discussion of the global networks throughout which it travels, and chronicles the epidemiological work that ends with containment” (Wald 2008: 2). By incasing the outbreak into a narrative, we are attempting to control the outbreak itself. If it fits the formula, it can be controlled, thus the importance of identifying a patient zero character to act as a scapegoat and object of control. If we can quarantine patient zero, then we can control both the narrative and the outbreak associated with it.

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*Shannon K. Larson, Indiana University*

### **Inside a Padded Cell: Living Mental Illness Through Legend and Ostonion**

In 1842 the North Wales Psychiatric Hospital – also referred to as “Denbigh” after the town in which it is located, or by its derogatory moniker, “the Mental” – was the first of four psychiatric health care facilities built in Wales as a solution to the maltreatment and neglect of Welsh patients in English asylums. Once the primary employer for citizens of the rural community and its environs, today Denbigh attracts a plethora of legend trippers and ghost hunters who perpetuate its image as a place of “mad doctors,” witches, demons, and tortured patients who haunt the site of their past torment as dangerous, murderous entities. Meanwhile, former staff members, patients, and their families take issue with this living version of history, which they feel stigmatizes the mentally ill in their community.

More than enforcing stereotypical images of mental illness, however, contemporary legends surrounding the North Wales Psychiatric Hospital also provide a medium for community debates regarding the lived experience of asylums, as well as the authority and effectiveness of past and present psychiatric medical traditions. Legend tellers are not only concerned with uncovering the “truth” about the asylum’s past, but also in embodying mental illness and experiencing what life was, or must have been like, at the Denbigh Asylum.

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*John Laudun, University of Louisiana*

### **The Shape of Legends: Further Explorations in the Algorithmic Analysis of Folk Narrative**

Two years ago, in my first presentation before the Society, I sketched out the ideational dimensions of a small collection of local treasure legends set in Louisiana and how that ideological network could be discerned using computational methods. In this presentation, I pursue further algorithmic analyses, using for example the same kind of topic modeling that I have previously used in an attempt to map the intellectual history of folklore studies (Laudun and Goodwin 2013), on an enlarged corpus in order to test possible automations of categorization of larger collections as well as to explore what the nature of something like “false positives” would be. While my previous work in this area focused on basic parameters of narrative, some of which were computationally-derived, the current work focuses on statistical analyses of a corpus to determine which algorithmic approaches are most useful to folklorists working on the smaller end of “big data.” The goal of such automation has the following dimensions: first, on the collection end, the automation of discovery of “like” materials both to see how tales might be similar but also, second, to see, when looking beyond defined folklore corpora, what “false positives” are returned. I.e., what tales look like treasure legends but aren’t? Third, to discover what relationships can be charted algorithmically in order to see what has potential use and what does not. Finally, do such statistical analyses bear any fruit for understanding the nature of the minds behind the treasure? There is some research in computational linguistics that suggests that the way some topic modeling algorithms acquire lexicons reasonably mimics the language acquisition of children and SLA learners. That is, are there any conceivable moments where computation, at the level of folk narrative, models cognition?

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*Kristin M. McAndrews, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa*  
**Cat Manapua: Culture, Cuisine and the Contemporary Legend in Hawai‘i**

In this presentation I focus on foodways, local Hawaiian culture and a popular contemporary legend in Hawai‘i—cat manapua. I discuss the complex and ambiguous nature of manapua, a large, popular dumpling traditionally filled with barbequed pork, in relationship to our ethnically diverse and multicultural community. While manapua sounds like a Hawaiian word, it is not. In Hawaiian, mana and pua are used separately to connote strength and



power but they are not used together. In some ways by linking the words, a sense of ambiguous super natural power emerges. Stories about manapua filled with cat meat circulate commonly throughout the local culture of Hawai'i. Many variations of the tale are focused in China Town in Honolulu. Like most urban legends, the story is detached from its original source and lacks accountability and reliability. Often an older storyteller cautions a younger listener about the contents of the dumpling, which evokes an enormous and fictitious power because of In this preliminary exploration, I shall consider the various types of legends, the interplay of its name. The legend contains a character, the manapua man, usually of Chinese or Filipino ethnicity. The manapua man has a lunch truck he drives around looking for cats to slaughter for the filling of the dumpling. No one ever sees him catching or killing the cats. The legend has also been incorporated into popular culture through song. In the 1980's Kawika Gapero recorded *The Manapua Man Can*. More recently, Mo Illa Pillaz and The Audio Lab Rats have record hip-hop variations of the story.

What interests me about the legend of cat manapua is that it reflects Hawai'i's unique and diverse community--a community of ethnic others whose number one industry is to cater to the visiting other--the tourist. In Hawai'i, otherness is an everyday fact of life. Sometimes ethnic difference and cultural distinctions have created conflict, but one site where the local others meet is through an appreciation for rich and diverse storytelling and culinary traditions. Cat manapua is a legend that creates a site for understanding how a community creates itself and performs its goals and fantasies as well as a place to look at consumption and the local tourist.

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*Theo Meder, Meertens Instituut*

### **Monkey Burger Tales: On the Origin of the Dutch Name for Contemporary Legends**

It is a well-known fact that the Swedish call their contemporary legends 'klingbergare' ('klingbergers'), after the renowned scholar who first published books about these tales: Bengt af Klingberg. In the Netherlands, contemporary legends are called 'broodjeaapverhalen' (current spelling, formerly Broodje Aap-verhalen). The name comes from the first Dutch book on urban legends published by Ethel Portnoy in 1978, entitled

'Broodje Aap', sometimes translated as Monkey Sandwich, but Monkey Burger would be a better translation (no pun intended).

However, is the Monkey Burger story a Dutch tale at all? Where did Portnoy hear this story? Has it ever been recorded from Dutch oral tradition? What is the story's content and meaning anyhow? In what context should this legend be understood?

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### *Yvonne J. Milspaw, Harrisburg Area Community College* **Indian Graveyards, Folk Etymologies and the Origin of the False Face Society: Legends about Native Americans in Pennsylvania.**

North American is haunted by forgotten burial grounds and Native names. Legends about Native Americans from archival collections attest to this reality. Student collected texts focus on the uncomfortable presence of the past in our lives, perhaps acknowledging guilt in the displacement, death and cultural destruction of so much of what was here before. These legends tend toward a European reading of the Native past. Stories cluster in broad categories, almost always connected to place. First, there are ghost stories about frightening anomalous events, usually attributed to angry ghosts and the desecration of sacred ground, usually burial sites. A second contrasting category of legends are comedic, improbable folk etymologies for the Native places whose names still surround us. The landscape is haunted by ghosts, actual or imagined. Only occasionally does an actual Native narrative surface in these almost exclusive Anglo repertoires. Some stories unexpectedly cross over boundaries of culture, style and interest. These narratives are not common. Using sets of characteristics and themes associated with both Anglo and Native American narrative, I propose. to analyze several legends in these collections, including one quite rare example of an origin story of the Iroquoian False Face Society told as campfire legend at a boy's summer camp.

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*Tom Mould, Elon University*

### **The Third Truth: The Generalizability of Contemporary Legends**

Many contemporary legends describe improbable but possible events where a single occurrence is questionable, multiple occurrences virtually impossible. However some contemporary

legends are shared as exemplars of a generalized experience, where the story is proposed as having happened not just once, but again and again. The question of truth raised by such stories extends beyond the particular, requiring additional leaps of faith to be believed. Such is the case with stories about welfare queens and welfare Cadillacs still shared in the U.S. today.

According to Elliott Oring, all legends make at least one truth claim, and some make two: the events as described, and the interpretive leap that connects two potentially unrelated events as meaningfully connected (2008:129). There is also a third: the claim of generalizability, what Carl Lindahl has referred to as the “this could happen to you” quality of the genre (2011:xi)— fundamental to the genre but often dismissed in analysis. For some contemporary legends, like those about welfare, the crucial question of truth is not whether or not the events occurred as described, but whether they describe events that are representative and generalizable. This line of inquiry raises the question of where doubt—a crucial dimension of the legend—emerges: in the performance by audience members, or by scholars familiar with multiple, competing versions. In the first, the legend is evoked emically, in the second, etically, the latter of which draws in a range of stories including personal experience narratives. Accordingly, although the concept of FOAF has dominated legend scholarship, I would argue we must also attend to ISIM: I Saw It Myself. Attending to the generalizability of these stories refocuses analysis on how narratives are employed in performance and how narrative distance may be far slipperier, and far more important, than we often assume.

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*Nikita V. Petrov, The Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, Russian State University for the Humanities*

### **The Petrified Girl ('Stone Zoya'): From Soviet Rumor to Contemporary Legend**

This is exactly what happened, according the rumors from Kuibyshev (nowadays Samara). At the 1956 an young atheist woman by name Zoya arranged a New Year's nigh party, her fiance Nicholas did not come, and she started dancing with the icon of St Nicholas. Friends tried to stop Zoya, but she said: “If there is a God, let him punish me.” Suddenly all men heard a thunder and lightning in the room and after that they sow Zoya standing in

the middle of the room, paralyzed – stone-like, with the icon still in her hands. For 128 days crowds of people came from other towns and small villages to witness this miracle. It is said that after a miraculous awakening by a St Nicholas she repented and became a believer. The end of this story has at least three variants: Zoya died after awakening, she left Kuibyshev and quietly died in old age or she lost her life in the dungeons of the KGB.

Did this story appear in the middle of 1950-s, in a period of a relatively unstable and controversial religious situation in Russia? Which similar texts support its spreading? Why did the girl get the name of Zoya?

The plot about a dancer-blasphemer, who was paralyzed – almost stone-like, is known in Russia from the end of XIX at least. It actualized in 1919. But “Zoya’s Standing” (1956) appears to be the most stable textualisation of this plot. It was supported by a popular narrative scheme about the punishment of sinners for profaning the sanctities, and was kept in folklore tradition from behind circulation in a written form in 1960-s-1990-s. It is probable that religious folklore narrations about the punishment of sinners for profaning the sanctities affect the text and the idea design, popularity and replication of the legend about Zoya in folklore tradition. These narrations appeared in the culture of peasants as a reaction on an anti-religious campaign of the soviet epoch. The sinner gets a particular name – Zoya. It possibly happened because of the wide popularity of the name of cultural soviet hero Zoya Kosmodemianskaya. “The Zoya’s Standing in Kuibyshev” is circulated in orthodox and media discourse in 1990s and 2000s, it gets the status of an orthodox legend (related to the miracles of St Nikolai) and becomes a “folklore brand” of Samara, which was based on “real historical events”.

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*Benjamin Radford, Center for Inquiry*

### **Phantom Clown Panics**

Clowns are staples of circuses and birthday parties, dispensing laughs and joy to children and adults alike. There are also evil clowns in pop culture, both fictional (such as Batman nemesis The Joker) and all too real (such as serial “killer clown” John Wayne Gacy). But between these extremes exists another category of bad clown, one that seems to lurk somewhere in the twilight between the cold, clear reality of daylight and the slumbered stuff of

nightmares. These stalking clowns are reported to roam streets and parks in the United States, England, and elsewhere looking for innocent children to lure and abduct—yet seem to vanish just before police can apprehend them. Some say they are real, while others claim they are figments of imagination. They are known as phantom clowns.

One of the first reports of phantom clowns occurred on May 6, 1981, when police in Massachusetts issued an All Points Bulletin asking officers to watch for a vehicle containing potential child abductors. The vehicle was distinctive: an older model van with a broken headlight, no hubcaps, and ladders on the side. It was also full of clowns. From there the sightings and panic spread in the media, eventually reaching Latin America and the United Kingdom. Drawing from research by Jan Brunvand, Sandy Hobbs and David Cornwell, Gillian Bennett and Paul Smith—as well as Veronique Champion-Vincent and material from my upcoming UNM Press book *Bad Clowns*—I trace the emergence of these phantom clowns in the media; describe their origins and variants in the context of contemporary legend; and demonstrate links to other phantom attackers (such as Spring-Heeled Jack and the Phantom Gasser of Mattoon).

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*Jeanmarie Rouhier-Willoughby, University of Kentucky*

#### **Development of a Gulag Legend**

At the 2014 ISCLR conference, I presented a paper on the legend of 40 murdered religion figures on the site of a former Soviet-era prison camp in western Siberia. Locals believe that a holy spring on that site arose as a result of the martyrs' death. However, locals do not tell a story (i.e., legend in classic story form) about the events that took place there. I had always assumed that this gap was because the details were all too familiar to those aware of Gulag history. In essence, the priests and monks were arrested and executed by the guards, as untold numbers of people had been in the Gulag, for no reason other than that they were members of a religious order. In essence, the focus is not on the murders, but on the miraculous spring that emerged as a result.

In the summer of 2014 I was speaking to a group of nuns visiting the holy spring on this site. I asked one why she believed the spring was holy. Defying the pattern among the laity, she provided a complete story of the legend of the spring.

Interestingly, her version did not feature the deaths of the religious. This paper will consider the distinction between this variant of the legend and other, more typical versions in an effort to trace how and why a legend develops.

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*Linda Kinsey Spetter, Cisco College*

#### **Purification Narratives in Japan: Getting Rid of "Ghosts on my Back"**

In Japan, being in the wrong place at the wrong time can cause a ghost or evil spirit to attach itself to the back of a person. As long as the ghost is attached, the person will suffer bad luck, accidents, or other calamities. A variety of purification methods are used to dispel the ghost. These methods can involve a trip to the local shrine for a purification ceremony, or a trip to a local fortuneteller who will perform an exorcism or issue instructions for purification. While I was living in Japan, I noticed the ghost-on-my-back motif appearing in a number of stories I collected. For example, I was told of a construction worker who was digging a hole for a high school's swimming pool. As he opened the earth, he felt he had released some evil spirit from the ground, and afterwards he felt he had a "ghost on my back." This ghost caused him bad luck until the man went to a local Shinto shrine, where a purification ritual was performed. The man now wears three strands of holy beads on his wrist to protect against the ghost. Recently, at the 2014 AFS meeting in Santa Fe, I presented a paper on the purification rituals themselves. In this presentation, I would like to focus on the narratives. The narratives of "a ghost on my back" usually conclude with an account of a ritual exorcism / purification, a quasi-"happy ending" to the legend memorate. These back-riding-ghost stories fit into a complex web of purification rituals in Japan. My paper will analyze the "ghost on my back" legends in the context of Japan's emphasis on personal and ritual purity.

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*Mercedes Torrez, Texas A&M University – San Antonio*

#### **Bridging the Past with the Present: Disability, Transgression, and Fetishized Fascination in Reimagining the**

This essay examines how the legend of San Antonio, Texas' folkloric Donkey Lady moves beyond the distinction of mere urban legend by illustrating how

the Donkey Lady's non- normative, or queer, behavior leads to her violent and brutal disfigurement and how the dissemination of her folktale by San Antonians connects to greater sociopolitical issues concerning the perception and treatment of people with disabilities. Through analysis of cultural imaginaries such as the Donkey Lady within the scope of theories of the ghostly it is possible to understand the underlying sociopolitical implications that bring about the recurrence, or hauntings, of folk figures. This essay demonstrates how theories of the ghostly, queer theory, and disability theory intersect to provide an understanding of the continuous resurgence of the Donkey Lady narrative and the frequent desire to seek her out at what is known as Donkey Lady Bridge.

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*Elizabeth Tucker, Binghamton University*

#### **"There's an App for That": Ghost Hunting with Smartphones**

In this digital age, smartphone applications help us fulfill diverse needs. Advertisements assure us that the right app will bring us delicious food, comfortable hotels, smooth navigation, and other pleasing commodities. Apps such as Archangel Oracle Cards, Buddha Mantra, Wicca Spells, and Dialing God satisfy spiritual needs, and a broad range of ghost-hunting apps--Ghost Radar, Spirit Box, Ghost Hunter, and others—makes ghost hunting easier than ever for college students and others who want to take legend trips or quests to allegedly haunted places.

This paper will explore how smartphone apps have changed the pattern of college students' ghost hunts, making these hunts more open-ended, more expectant of exciting discoveries, and more reflective of the commodification of belief in ghosts that has been analyzed by Avery Gordon, Diane Goldstein, Sylvia Ann Grider, and Jeannie Banks Thomas. According to Gordon, some of the most "dominant and disturbing" aspects of American life are "television-structured reality, the commodification of everyday life, the absence of meaning and the omnipresence of endless information" and "the relentless fascination with catastrophes" (1997:14). Ghost-hunting apps, with their endless flow of potentially meaningful words and images, make it possible for anyone to find evidence of ghostly presences that may confirm familiar legends or generate new stories.

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*Kay Turner (chair), New York University*

*Pat Jasper, Houston Arts Alliance*

*Angel Quesada, Houston Arts Alliance*

*Kathy Vargas, University of the Incarnate Word*

*Cristina Balli, Texas Folklife*

*Natalia Treviño, San Antonio, TX*

#### **Leyendas Milagrosas: Miracle Legends of the Virgin in South Texas**

Adding some regional flavor to this year's meeting in San Antonio, a panel composed of Texas folklorists and Texas Mexican community artists explore miracle legends of the Virgin, with a focus on *La Virgen de San Juan de Los Lagos*, a locally venerated aspect of the Immaculate Conception, who owns a big piece of the territory of folk Catholic belief from Austin to Guadalajara.

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#### *Patricia A. Turner, University of California, Los Angeles* **Ebolacare**

Not long after the first American afflicted with the Ebola virus returned from Liberia to the United States, rumors and conspiracy theories about the dreaded disease began to proliferate. To students of contemporary legend study, many of the texts that adhere to predictable formulae discernible in other folk speculations about disease and contamination.

Within the cohort of texts that gained popularity were a cluster suggesting connections with the President of the United States, Barack Obama. While many of these texts, like the many earlier cycles related to the president, highlight aspects of the president's core identity, there are also many that are dependent upon understandings or misunderstandings of policies enacted during his term in office. A number of physical artifacts, for example

a bumper sticker with colors associated with the president's campaign and merely reading Ebolacare, the title of this paper, have also gained popularity.

This paper will document physical and verbal lore that connect the president with Ebola. It will reference the literature in the contemporary legend cannon that has addressed earlier outbreaks such as AIDS and SARS.

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*Aurore Van de Winkel, Catholic University of Louvain  
and University Saint-Louis*

### **Hostile Clowns in France: Rumors, Contemporary Legends and Ostension at Halloween 2014**

From *Joker* in Batman to Stephen King's *It*, through the paedophile and serial killer John Wayne Gacy, also known as *Pogo the Clown*, the character of the hostile clown has been constructed since the beginning of the last century to the point where now it has become an well-known figure of popular culture. A clown could actually be terrifying in his duality: a good-humored appearance accentuated by ridiculous clothing and make-up, however hiding a sinister black, cruel and sadistic soul.

Two weeks before Halloween 2014, in France, the United-States and in the South of England, alerts of armed hostile clowns – who would attack schools and downtowns - were proliferating. In France, rumors have been propagated on social medias, with warnings, photos of famous fictional clowns and the creation of the Clowns' accounts on Twitter and Facebook. However, the police did not receive any complaints giving credibility to these rumors.

Later, jokers disguised in clowns outfits simulated attacks were therefore arrested. These jokers explained that they dressed up and performed these simulated attacks to imitate the candid camera of DM Pranks Production. Similarly, in America, there were those who imitated the *Wasco Clown*, born of a photographic project by a couple in California. The copycat phenomenon continued to Switzerland, Italia, Belgium and Luxembourg.

Still later, real attacks occurred.

We will recount, in our paper, the resurgence, re-interpretation and ostension of this American contemporary legend of hostile clown attacks that we can find also in the eighties. The character of the hostile clown, its symbolism and its

use in popular culture, as well as the coulrophobia provoked will also be covered.

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*Azadeh Vatanpour  
Western Kentucky University*

### **The Legend of Bleeding Trees Among Iranian Shiites**

Every year with the arrival of Moharram, the first month of Islamic lunar year, and especially in Ashura or the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Moharram, we witness the occurrences of blood oozing out of trees in several areas of Iran. This month, which is of special importance among the Shiite Islam, is the historical anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, prophet Mohammad's grandson and the third Shi'ite Imam, in the hands of Shemr and by the order of the second Umayyad Caliphate, Yazid. During a period in which Shiites become the dominant religion in Iran, their rituals of grieving was influenced by ancient pre-Islamic beliefs and these traditions paved the way for ideas, legends and mythologies to intertwine with historical events.

Iranians linked the martyrdom of Hussein with ancient myths, which eventually and slowly lead to the adaption of the ancient rituals to modern Islamic rituals linked to the death of Hussein. Hence unknowingly they preserved and maintained their ancient beliefs.

Nowadays, these ceremonies have become so important for Shiites that all myths and legends associated with these memorials are considered factual. One of these is the bleeding of trees, which is perceived by Shiites to be Hussein's blood and there is the belief that the tree is mourning his death and crying blood.

In this paper, I will attempt to show how the myth of blood flow has appeared at different moments throughout history and hence remained alive from ancient times to date, and it has infiltrated people's beliefs so much, that nowadays is accepted as an actual fact.

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*Carolyn E. Ware, Louisiana State University*  
**Tee Jack and Other Supernatural Legends in Louisiana's Deep Delta**

Legends about supernatural beings and encounters abound in Louisiana's lower delta. Regional stories of ghosts and monstrous creatures are prominent features of Depression-era folklore collections by

WPA writers, as well as journalist Harnett Kane's 1941 classic book *Deep Delta Country*, for example. Similar legends and beliefs remain part of local oral tradition, continuing to shape contemporary life and identity. Some, like stories of the *loup garou* (a shapeshifting creature) are common to French Louisiana and other French American communities. Others are particular to this area, including the legend of Tee (Little) Jack—the ghost of a murderer or a monster-like creature, depending on the teller—are specific to local communities and cultural groups (in this case, Creoles of Color and African Americans in the Plaquemines Parish village of Diamond/City Price.) Teenagers continue to visit a local cemetery late at night in efforts to summon Tee Jack's spirit, for example. After Hurricane Katrina, a local woman told a reporter that she knew hurricane damage would be severe when she saw a line of ghosts rising from their graves and departing. (Their appearance may have presaged the destruction of many above-ground tombs that were emptied or washed away by floodwaters.) This paper explores several of these local legends and beliefs, as well as legend-inspired ostention, as expressions of local identity in a rapidly disappearing place, where even the dead must leave.

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David Wilke, University of Kentucky

### Interrupted Journey: Internet Legends as Forms of Things Unknown

This paper consists of two parts. The first part suggests that some kind of relationship or other obtains between *some* of the phenomenological characteristics of dream-states and *some* of the content of reported Otherworldly occurrences. The second part suggests that, so far as their *form* is concerned, certain Internet legends mirror the contours of these very points of contact between the putatively Otherworldly and the oneiric. By considering the *form* of certain Internet legends to be consistent with both the *matter* and *manner* of at least some daimonic phenomena (and, here, we mean to restrict the definition of the daimonic to those places in which the oneiric and Otherworldly overlap), one's understanding of the Otherworldly and/or the Internet legend may appreciably broaden.

(Here I shall assume that at least some testimony to the Otherworldly is rational; not all folklorists share this assumption but at least two do so explicitly—David Hufford and Barre Toelken—while at least two other established researchers in

the social sciences, Bruce Greyson & Jim Tucker, both of the University of Virginia College of Medicine, would not be disposed to dismiss such testimony as irrational.)

In *Daimonic Reality* (1994), Irish author Patrick Harpur recounts an anecdote in which, on the night of 28 November 1980, in Todmorden, West Yorkshire, PC Alan Godfrey had undergone a series of Otherworldly experiences, one of which included holding a conversation with a friend who'd died several months before. In dreams, likewise, deceased but recognizable intimates sometimes appear and hold brief conversations with the dreamer—or, at least, with his or her dream-ego. In *Dancing Naked in the Mind Field* (1998), American author, biochemist, and Nobel laureate Kary Mullis recounts a Friday night in 1985 on his wooded property along the Navarro River in Mendocino County wherein he'd held a brief conversation with a glowing raccoon. In dreams, likewise, talking animals sometimes appear. (The author of this piece underwent just such a dream in the summer of 1992.) Now what, in the real-world realm of neurophysiology, may prevent the dream-ego from being puzzled, let alone startled, by such phenomena does not concern us here; our interest is solely in (1) the bare fact of parallel occurrences conducive to high strangeness in the realms of the oneiric and Otherworldly alike, (2) the fact that Otherworldly observations and the stuff of dreams possess a quality of occurring in a causal vacuum, and (3) the “unquestioned” character of the appearances common to both venues.

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Joshua Zeman (Director & Writer), *Gigantic Pictures*

### Film: *Killer Legends* (2014)

In this documentary, filmmaker Joshua Zeman, along with researcher Rachel Mills, investigate the origins of four contemporary legends: Candyman, The Babysitter and the Man Upstairs, The Hookman, and Phantom Clowns. The film features commentary from scholars Joel Best, Bill Ellis, and Stephen Winick.

**YVONNE MILSPA, “MURDER WILL OUT: DER ALTE GRAIMER WER DOOT GEMACHT WAWR”**

At the 2012 ISCLR conference in Goettingen, Germany, Carl Lindahl used one of the lesser known Grimm tales, usually called “The Bright Sun Brings it to

Light" (Grimm 115, ATU 960) as the armature for his presentation on the creation and selection of stories for the classic collection. The folktale opens with the robbery and murder of a Jew by an impoverished tailor's apprentice, who believed that the traveler must have a lot of money. The dying victim proclaims, "The bright sun will bring it to light." Years later, the apprentice is a married, successful businessman, and when drinking coffee near a window, he sees the light from the coffee reflecting on the ceiling and remembers the words of the dying man. He repeats them aloud, and his wife demands to know what they mean. After much nagging, the husband tells her the sordid tale, enjoining her to tell no one. But of course she cannot keep a secret, and soon enough the husband is accused and convicted of the murder.

This is a cautionary magic tale for the Grimms, but also is comfortable retelling of Plutarch's cautionary tale against talkativeness called "The Cranes of Ibycus" about the murder of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC Greek poet Ibycus, who prophesied to his murderers that the cranes flying by at that moment would avenge him. Indeed, a few months later, his murderers were at the theatre when some cranes flew over, and they were overheard talking about the prophecy and the murder. They were thus caught, like the hero of the Grimm tale, by their garrulity.

What struck me about Lindahl's opening story, however, was my memory of that same story told as a local legend here in the German settled region of Pennsylvania.

The eastern and south central part of the state of Pennsylvania in the United States was granted to a group of English Quakers, religious dissidents who opened the land to religious refugees from much of the rest of Europe. Starting in 1685, waves of German settlers—only some of them religious dissidents—began to arrive. The exodus of Germans to Pennsylvania did not abate until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the immigrants came from the western German states of the Rhineland, the Pfaltz and Hesse. They brought with them a dialect that is still spoken by the Amish (one of the most conservative dissident religious groups) and in some rural families. The influence of the people who came to be called the Pennsylvania Dutch (pronounced in dialect, *Daitch*) or Pennsylvania Germans, extended from eastern Pennsylvania south through the Shenandoah Valley through the states of Virginia, West Virginia and North Carolina, and westward into Ohio. They settled alongside another impoverished refugee group, Lowland Scots and Scots-Irish, the latter

Protestants who had been resettled in northern Ireland as a bastion against Roman Catholicism.

It should not have surprised me to find Grimm Marchen alive and well in the area, but in fact it did just that. I knew the story Lindahl told, but in a somewhat different form. I knew it as a legend about justice, expanding the idea that "murder will out," that justice will be served no matter how long it takes.

The two texts here come from a now defunct publication called *The Pennsylvania Dutchman*, published for about 20 years in the eastern Pennsylvania city of Allentown. These two texts were collected and translated by folklorist Alfred L Shoemaker. He published the texts as "Pennsylvania Dutch Folktales about the Mysterious" (January 1, 1953: 2).

#### *The Murderer*

*Es wawr n mann ass n annerer mann  
doot gemacht hot un sie hen net  
ausfinna kenna wer der mann wawr.  
Dann sin sie ganga un hen die ribba  
aus dem mann ass sie doot gemacht  
hen, un hen sie an n messer un n  
gavvel un hen's ans warthaus.  
Un der mann ass ien doot gemacht  
hot, wie er s messer un die gavvel  
uff-gapickt hot, iss s bluut raus-  
galoffa.*

---

A man was murdered and they couldn't find out who the murderer was.

Then they went and took a couple of ribs from the man who was murdered and fit them as handles for a knife and fork and put them at the inn.

And the man who committed the murder, when he took the knife and fork in his hand, the blood started dripping from the bone-handles.

Told by John Wolfe, age 71, Greenburr, Clinton County, Pennsylvania, October 18, 1952.

The second tale is this one:

#### *The Old Peddler*

*Doe war mull n alter graimer, der iss  
im land rumgatraveled un hot so*

*schofft ferkawft wie die alta graimer  
evva doona.*

*Un ainer hot ausfunna ass der alt  
graimer blendi geld hot. Un er iss  
alfart darrich n busch fer grawd  
tsuu.*

*Ai dawg hot n mann ien ferwisht am  
busch-eck un hot ien getaggeld.  
Sawgt der alt graimer, "Wenn du  
mich doot machscht un nemmscht  
mei geld, sella die feggek in da luft  
dich ferrooda."*

*Twansich yawr nooch sem, iss sell  
tsumma schwamm kumma. Doe  
warwa fimf mann a, maia adrin.  
Kummt n grabb un losst n grocha  
falla tsum airscha wuu am wetza  
wawr. Der pickt n uff un beguckt n.  
Sawgt er, "Ha, des guckt funny,"  
tsum annera mann. Der beguckt n.  
Nemmt der naigscht n in die hand.  
Un der naigscht beguckt n. Der fimft  
hot n avver net wella. Hen gsawt,  
"Yoo, nemm n, beguck n."*

*Wie er in die hand nemmt, iss sei  
hand all ivver-schossa mit bluut.  
Sawga die annera all, "Ei, was hot's  
doe gevva?"*

*"Ya," sawgt der, "ich bin weg-gevva.  
Wisst ier fum alda graimer wuu als  
doe darrich der busch ganga iss, eb's  
n schwamm wawr?"*

*Hen sie all, "Ya" gsawt.*

*Sawgt er, "Heit iss a tswansich yawr,  
ass der alt graimer doot gemacht  
hab. Er hot gsawt die feggek in da  
luft setta mich ferrooda wann ich ien  
doot mach un sie hen." Sawgt er,  
"Drovva im fence-eck havvich n  
begrawva."*

*Sie sin hie und hen uffgemacht wuu  
er gsawt hot un hen die gnocha  
gfunna fum graimer.*

*(Die mann wuu mier fersailt hot,  
wawr in da gang am maia in seim  
sechtsait yawr.*

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There was an old peddler who  
traveled all over the countryside  
selling the sorts of things peddlers

sell. And there was a chap who found  
out that the peddler had a lot of  
money. The peddler always went  
through the woods to save time.

One day this chap came upon the old  
peddler at the edge of the woods and  
laid hold of him. Said the peddler, "If  
you kill me and rob me, the birds in  
the air will inform on you."

Twenty years after that, the woods  
was [sic] cleared and became a  
swamp. Five men were in it mowing  
grass. A crow flew by and dropped a  
bone in front of one of the men who  
was sharpening his scythe. He picked  
it up and looked it over. Said he,  
"this is mighty strange." The next  
took it and looked at it. Then he gave  
it to the next one; he took it and  
examined it. Finally it came to the  
fifth man, but he did not want to take  
it. They said, "Oh, come on, take it  
and have a look at it."

When he took it in his hand his hand  
became all covered with blood. The  
others said, "Why, what has  
happened?"

"The secret is out," he said. "Do you  
remember about the old peddler who  
used to pass by here before this was  
turned into a swamp?"

They all said, "Yes."

Said he, "Today it's twenty years  
since I murdered the old peddler. He  
predicted at the time I killed him that  
the birds would reveal my evil  
deed." Said he, "I buried him up at  
the fence corner."

They went there and dug where he  
said and there they found the bones  
of the old peddler.

(The man who told me this tale was  
in the gang mowing that day, and he  
was sixteen years old when it  
happened).

Told by Charles Weyand, Berks  
County, Pennsylvania, November 8,  
1952. Collected and translated by



Alfred L Shoemaker, who elicited this story from Weyand by telling him Wolfe's (the previous) story.

The second story collected from Weyand (a prolific storyteller), has so much in common with the Grimm's tale that it would not be amiss to classify it as a variant of ATU 960. The peddler is not identified as Jewish, but the motivation of greed for money the peddler is the same. Likewise, the prophecy of the intervention of birds or sunlight suggests that God, or just the natural harmonies of the universe, require that justice be served. The Pennsylvania versions differ from the European versions, however, with the addition of an unusual motif, the bleeding bones.

An incredibly similar tale is recorded by Sir Walter Scott in his extensive notes to the ballad "Earl Richard" (*Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* Vol. 3, p. 240-45). The following story is paraphrased by Richard M. Dorson, who drew a great many stories from Scott's notes.

"Another Scottish instance concerned two youths who quarreled while fishing in the river Yarrow; one killed the other and buried him deep in the sands Fifty years later a smith uncovered a curious bone, which he showed to a group in the smithy, among them a white-headed man, who no sooner touched it than the bone streamed with purple blood. He confessed to the crime but died before he could be executed." (Dorson, *American Folklore* p. 32)

Oddly enough, this is also a story I heard as a child. I don't remember who told it to me, or when it was told, or where it was set (though my memory of it has it set along a nearly creek here in Pennsylvania), but I remember it clearly as a cautionary tale.

Two brothers were playing along a river. They became angry with each other, and in the fighting that followed, one of the brothers was killed. The other brother buried him along the riverbank and went home. When the other boy didn't return after several days, it was assumed that he had run away.

Many years later, a flood along the river uncovered a skeleton along the

bank. The important men of the town were called out to examine it. When the mayor leaned over to touch the skeleton, it began to bleed. The mayor then confessed that this was his brother whom he had murdered and buried so many years before.

The story I heard has no bleeding bones (a motif that as a child I would have remembered very vividly), but rather depends on pricking the guilty conscience of the now powerful and respected man who was also a murderer. Like the other narratives, however, it is a story about justice, reflecting the profound conviction that "murder will out," that blood and bone can give voice to victims, and that avarice, greed, wrath and jealousy will be avenged.

I began this paper in graduate school. Linda Degh had not yet even begun her monumental work on legend. I had never read the Grimm tale (it does not appear in any English editions of the tales), and I was years away from reading Plutarch, so I know the story of Ibycus. I knew this tale only as well told legend. Indeed, given Weyand's claims about the truth, his verification of its transmission from a friend of a friend, the very real setting and characters, I thought these were almost a perfect example of a belief tales.

This is the shape of the stories:

- Someone, usually a traveler or peddler, and always an outsider, is murdered for his money. As we will see, in the medieval romance versions, the murder is usually motivated by lust for power; if the murderer is a woman, the motivation is sexual jealousy.
- As the victim dies, he may announce that the murder will be brought to light in some unexpected way.
- The murderer is safe for many years.
- But an unusual, though apparently "natural" event (wounds or bones bleed, bones or plants above the buried bones speak, bloodstains liquefy, apples change color, birds fly by, a wife overhears a confession, or maybe just a body is discovered) forces the murderer to confess.
- The murderer is brought to justice.

The most spectacular motif in the Pennsylvania German stories is bones bleeding when touched by the murderer. If we expand the belief to its most common form, that wounds of a murdered person bleed in the

presence of the murderer, we have tapped into one of the most prevalent beliefs in both Europe and America. There are huge clusters of this motif in literature, the earlier dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and appearing again in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The motif of bones bleeding (in the Pennsylvania and Scot's versions) is very unusual; it is an extension of the extremely common belief that the corpses of murdered persons bleed when the murderer touches it. It is a venerable and extremely widespread motif (D1318.5.2 "Corpse bleeds when murderer touches it," and somewhat tangentially to E621.1, "Speaking bones of murdered person reveal murder"), in Europe and the Americas, that until the 19<sup>th</sup> century apparently had legal status as a test of guilt. It is a claim for justice in a world that disenfranchised people must still experience as unjust and arbitrary. Its appearance in medieval tales of romance and intrigue serve as a literary marker of motivation and guilt of great persons.

The motif is central to the tragic conclusions of the great 13<sup>th</sup> German epic, *The Nibelungenlied*, where the villain Hagen is found guilty of Siegfried's murder by this method:

They vigorously denied their guilt on oath, but Kriemhild cut them short. "Let the man who says he is innocent prove it, let him go up to the bier in sight of all the people and we shall very soon see the truth of it!"

Now it is a great marvel and frequently happens today that whenever a blood-guilty murderer is seen beside the corpse, the wounds begin to bleed. That is what happened now, and Hagen stood accused of the deed; for the wounds flowed anew as at the time of Siegfried's murder, so that those who were loudly wailing redoubled their cries of woe. (Hatto 137)

Political motivation for power is implied in the legend attached to the death of the English king Henry II Plantagenet in 1189, where his son Richard (soon to be Richard I, the "Lion-hearted") was widely believed to have orchestrated his father's death. The incident is reported by Henry's 20<sup>th</sup> century biographer, Alfred Duggan in his book, *Devil's Brood* (1957).

The venomous Giraldus alone mentions one terrible circumstance. When Duke Richard entered the

church the corpse began to bleed from the nostrils. Giraldus writes no more than the bare fact, and no more was needed; every one of his readers would know that the corpse of a murdered man bleeds in the presence of the murderer. Duke Richard knew it also. (Duggan 283-84)

A similar event is included in Shakespeare's *Richard III* (1,2), underscoring the evil nature of that monarch. The motif is also repeated in the medieval romance *Yvain* by Chretien de Troyes, and in its German version *Iwein*, by Hartmann (1355-1364).

The motif's popularity as proof that murder will out also appears in the Child ballad "Young Hunting" (Child 68), the story of a young man murdered by his jealous girlfriend, collected in Scotland, in this verse:

White, white waur his wounds  
washen,  
As white as ony lawn;  
But sune's the traitor stude afore,  
Then oot the red blude sprang"  
(Verse 23, Harris ms, fol 8 from Mrs Harris, Perthshire. Child, Vol II: 148)

In the seventeenth century, the prolific British essayist-physician, Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682), wrote thoughtfully about the belief, not as one might expect in his 1646 essay on superstitions called *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (usually translated as "Vulgar Errors"), but rather in his long meditation on religion called *Christian Morals*, published posthumously in 1716.

He wrote in the section titled "Ways of Dying":

The Aegyptians were merciful contrivers, who destroyed their malefactors by Aspes, charming their senses into an irrecoverable sleep, and killing as it were with Hermes his rod. The Turkish Emperor odious for other crueltie was herein a remarkable master of mercy; killing his favorite in his sleep, and sending him from the shade into the house of darknesse. He that had been thus destroyed, would hardly have bled at the presence of his destroyer, where men are already dead by metaphor,

and passe but from one sleep unto another; wanting herein the eminent part of severity to be made to feel themselves die: and escaping the sharpest attendant of death, the lively apprehension thereof. (Browne, *Christian Morals* II:13, 399-400).

Occurrences of the motif of bleeding wounds as a device of revealing a murder are widespread in the new world as well. Richard M. Dorson, reports numerous cases drawn from both folk narrative, legal reports (*American Folklore*, pp. 31-33), and especially from the Puritan preacher Cotton Mather (*America in Legend*, pp. 22-23). *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore* lists parallels in North American beliefs in a list of superstitions.

3694. If a murderer touches the corpse of a murdered man, it will purge; therefore have a suspect touch the corpse.

3695. Wounds of a murdered man bleed in the presence of the murderer.

The Brown Collection also includes an account of an 1875 murder trial in Wilmington, North Carolina, where the suspect was made to touch the corpse of the victim in order to establish his guilt or innocence. The outcome of the trial is not recorded.

Earnest Baughman's 1966 *Type and Motif Index of the Folktales of England and North America* includes several British occurrences of the motif D1318.5, "Blood indicates guilt or innocence" but does not mention the numerous American versions since published.

There is, additionally, a widespread corpus of ghost narratives that examine the phenomenon of bloodstains liquefying, or reappearing on the anniversary date of an unavenged death. Vance Randolph, in *Ozark Magic and Folklore* (1964) reports liquefying blood from murder scenes as a weather sign.

There are farmers in Arkansas who insist that the blood of a murdered man—bloodstains on a floor or garments—will liquefy even on dry, sunshiny days, as a sign that a big rain is coming. Burton Roscoe, who once lived in Seminole County, Oklahoma, told me that this notion is common in many parts of the south, and that the field hands [presumably

African-Americans] on his father's farm used to go to a cabin where a Negro had been shot and examine the bloodstains on the planks to see whether rain was about due. (Randolph 1964:18)

This is an unusual version of the belief that is much more frequently reported as bloodstains that reappear on floors on the anniversary of a murder.

Richard M. Dorson wrote about an etiological legend of the murdered peddler from 17<sup>th</sup> century Connecticut that traces the origin of an unusual golden apple with red streaks. Called "The Micah Rood Apple" (*Jonathan Draws the Long Bow*, pp. 171-172), the legend tells of the murder of a wealthy peddler beneath an apple tree belonging to a poor, simple farmer named Micah Rood. The following season, the tree's golden apples suddenly appeared with blood red streaks (or spots or globules). Micah Rood, the murderer, died of fright (or committed suicide) when the blood-streaked apples brought the murder to light. Dorson traces the story to a local history, *History of Franklin, Conn.*, published in 1869, but also notes there were literary versions from 1860 on, including one published in *Harper's Magazine* in 1860. There is also a somewhat sentimental short story by the American writer Elia Peattie called "The Crime of Micah Rood" and published in *Cosmopolitan Magazine* (January 1888, p. 4).

Shoemaker's Pennsylvania Dutch texts, however, involved bleeding bones, not corpses, to reveal the murder long after the fact. Speaking and singing bones revealing murders are somewhat more frequent in Marchen, though they also appear in ballads.

The motif of revelatory bones is central in the Grimm tales "The Singing Bone (Grimm 28, ATU 780) and "My Mother Slew me, My Father Ate Me. The Juniper Tree" (Grimm 47, ATU 720). It is echoed in the Child Ballad "The Twa Sisters" (Child 10) where a musical instrument fashioned from the murdered girl's bones or hair, sings aloud, accusing her guilty sister of her murder.

The use of the speaking bones motif seems to be especially prominent in collections from African-American storytellers. Dorson reported one version called "Talking Bones" in *American Negro Folktales* (p. 147), and postulated it as a direct import from West Africa (*American Folklore*, p. 188), though the motif's widespread appearance in European storytelling as well argues for a more universal background. There is no

doubt, however, that enslaved people with almost no recourse to real justice from a system stacked against them, must have found this motif of justice served enormously important.

Alcee Fortier (*Louisiana Folktales* 1895) and Charles Skinner (*American Myths and Legends* 1903) both reported a story, possibly the same one (“a Louisiana Negro legend”), called “The Singing Bones,” a version of the Grimm’s tale “The Juniper Tree.” The story is that of a man with very large family who has difficulty feeding them all. When his wife begins serving meat regularly and his children begin to disappear, he begins to worry. Finally he hears the singing of small voices from beneath the doorstep, and upon digging it up, he finds the bones of his missing children. Ruth Ann Musick recorded a similar tale called “The Telltale Lilac Bush” from an Anglo storyteller in West Virginia (*The Telltale Lilac Bush*, p. 12).

Ghosts that report on their murders are a staple of American legend, and peddlers as victims were “particularly common in an earlier day” (Richard M. Dorson, personal communication, March 24, 1969). An unusually gruesome series of murders, starting with the murder of a peddler by a greedy woman, is recorded in H. W. Thompson, *Body, Boots and Britches* (pp. 433-35) from a broadside collected in Chataqua County, New York, called “A Most Tragical Account of a Woman’s Murdering a Peddler and Then Burning to death her own Child.” Thompson reports that a cautious footnote on the broadside states “It is a Report, and that not accurately copied; whether true, or not, I cannot say” (p. 432). Thompson adds, “I fear that essentially it is true; I know of a similar case in Oneida County” (p. 432). In the ballad a woman murders a peddler, with the collusion, or at least the knowledge of her husband, and they hide the body. But as the ballad reports:

But Providence would them detect,  
Therefore it was in Vain;  
And in a way you’d not expect  
The secret was made plain.

The small daughter of the family started wearing beautiful clothes taken from the murdered peddler’s store. Her teacher asked where she had gotten them, and the child replied that her mother had lots more. The parents, knowing that now the neighbors were aware of their fortune, decided to kill the child, first by burying her alive, and when that failed, by burning her alive.

She to her husband then did say,  
The child will bring us out;

Therefore her life we’ll take away,  
And this will end the doubt.

But a neighbor stops by, not in time to save the child,  
but in time to uncover the crime.

But soon a neighbor chanc’d to  
come,  
The scent did fill the house; [the  
scent of the roasting child]  
He Kindly ask’d what had been done,  
Or what might be the case.

The woman answered so abrupt,  
He did some crime suspect;  
And in the oven then he looked,  
Which did the crime detect.

The constellation of motifs—a murdered peddler (a character who appears and disappears regularly, not a member of the community who would be quickly missed), a murder usually for greed or personal gain, sometimes a prophecy of future revelation of the crime, blood or bones or garrulity, which eventually reveal the deed, justice prevailing—combine to make up this widespread story.

This story is not much known nor told any longer. We no longer believe in the bleeding corpse or bleeding bones as signs. Modern mortuary practices have made the former impossible. However, our faith that murder will out, that justice will be served is with us in perhaps an even stronger form. The function of such folk cautionary tales has been supplanted by popular media. Now we have detective fiction, especially in television, where the discovery of murderers is the subject of some of the most popular television shows. Because this relentless discovery and punishment of evil is so central to our ideas about ourselves as moral beings, such fiction is enormously popular. “Detective fiction follows rather than parallels social reality...the genre’s inherent conservatism upholds power and privilege in the name of law and justice as it validates the reader’s visions of a safe and ordered world” (Klein p. 1).

One popular form of detective fiction involves heroic police and medical examiners who ferret out tiny details from the blood and bones of the dead, who make marvelous discoveries about guilt and innocence. They work closely with lab nerds and computer geeks to process tiny bits of evidence and uncover the story of the murdered. If and when we are inclined to distrust the system, there are hosts of fictional detectives who

work tirelessly outside the legal system to insure that justice is done. Because “detective fiction is a means of exploring ideas about power and morality...about making and breaking moral codes, apportionment of guilt and blame and processes of judgment and punishment, [fictional detectives] can operate outside the legal system” (Shaw and Vanacker pp. 95-96). Today, most people have a grudging trust in the legal system, and we are genuinely horrified when it fails—when bad guys get away with their crimes, or when the innocent are punished for things they never did. It feeds our appetite for stories of justice, for detectives who won't give up whether they are operating inside or outside the system. This fiction has supplanted our need for magical revelations, replacing it with forensics and clues in the DNA of blood and bone. We no longer need bleeding bones or birds in the air revealing long forgotten murders, but we do need the magic of science.

Yvonne Milspaw

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**BACK MATTER**

*FOAFTale News* accepts short articles, reports, queries, reviews, and collectanea pertaining to contemporary legend. To submit, contact the Editor, David J. Puglia ([david.puglia@bcc.cuny.edu](mailto:david.puglia@bcc.cuny.edu)).

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