

FOAFTale News

Newsletter of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research

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NEW EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

A recent dispatch:

A contemporary legend scholar was driving home one rainy night, after a long day of contemporary legend scholarship. In her headlights, up ahead, she saw standing by the side of the road a rather pasty large gentlemen, looking stranded. She pulled the car over and offered a lift. Grateful, he clambered in the back seat. He indicated that he needed a lift five miles up the road, and then said very little else. They drove on in silence. Five miles up the road was a library. "Okay: here you go! Have a good..." But when the contemporary

legend scholar turned around he had gone. She saw that he had left the latest issue of FOAFTale News on the backseat. She went in to the library to return it to the man, but when she got to the front desk the librarian told her that no such man had come in: but not only that, she told the contemporary legend scholar that there had been no issue of FOAFTale News for ONE WHOLE YEAR!!! How do I know? I WAS THAT MAN!!

I will skip the Life-Got-In-The-Ways and You-Don't-Understand-the-Pressures and simply apologise for the silence emanating from this desk: I hope to get back to a healthier publication schedule, along with a better integration of the Newsletter with the website (www.contemporarylegend.org), and welcome you to this, issue 79 of FOAFTale News.

A special thanks to Libby Tucker, former FTN editor, acting President, and all around immeasurably pleasant and patient human being, for her help with this issue.

**THE THIRTIETH PERSPECTIVES ON
CONTEMPORARY LEGEND CONFERENCE,
GÖTTINGEN, GERMANY, JUNE 5-9, 2012**

DEAR COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS,

As most of you already know, our upcoming meeting in Göttingen begins Tuesday 5 June at 9.00 a.m. in the conference room next to Paulinerkirche at the Old University Library, Papendiek 14.

However, those who have already arrived and would

FOAFTale News (FTN) is the newsletter of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research. We study "modern" and "urban" legends, and also any legend circulating actively. To join, send a cheque made out to "ISCLR" for US\$40.00 or UK£20 to Elissa R. Henken, Department of English, Park Hall, University of Georgia, Athens, GA, 30602, USA. Institutional rates available upon request. Members also receive *Contemporary Legend*, a refereed academic journal. Some back issues of FTN are available on-line at <http://www.folklore.ee/FOAFTale>. FOAFTale News is indexed in the MLA Bibliography.

This newsletter is called FOAFTale News for the jocular term current among legend scholars for over twenty years. The term "foaf" was introduced by Rodney Dale (in his 1978 book, *The Tumour in the Whale*) for an oft-attributed but anonymous source of contemporary legends: a "friend of a friend." Dale pointed out that contemporary legends always seemed to be about someone just two or three steps from the teller — a boyfriend's cousin, a co-worker's aunt, or a neighbor of the teller's mechanic. "Foaf" became a popular term at the Sheffield legend conferences in the 1980s. It was only a short step to the pun "foaftale," a step taken by a yet-anonymous wag.

The opinions expressed in FOAFTale News are those of the authors and do not in any necessary way represent those of the editor, the contributors, the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research, its Council, or its members.

CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME: Send to the editor, Ian Brodie, ian_brodie@cbu.ca, with the subject heading "FTN submission"

like to take part in some preliminary social activity on the evening of Monday 4 June are invited to rendezvous at 7 p.m. in the lobby of Leine Hotel, Groner Landstrasse 55, 37081 Göttingen. A little sightseeing tour in the streets surrounding the library building may at the same time help you to have no difficulties in finding the conference venue the next morning. After that, we may have some drinks or dinner together.

If not all of those who would like to participate in this tour of the streets adjacent to the university library are able to attend on Monday evening, an alternative second tour will be offered later on at another date.

I look forward to seeing you soon!

Kind regards,

Christine Shojaei Kawan

PROGRAMME

(See the last page for an at-a-glance view)

Tuesday, June 5

9.00 – 10.30	Registration
10.30 – 11.00	Coffee break
11.00 – 12.30	Session 1
<i>Elizabeth Tucker</i> : Legend Quests to Lily Dale	
<i>Theo Meder</i> : A Place of Miracles: The Artistic Representation of Lourdes by Two Contemporary Directors	
<i>Véronique Campion-Vincent</i> : Excursions to Wonderland. Great Changes due Dec. 21, 2012? France's 'Area 51'. New Spiritualities Today	
Chair: Christine Shojaei Kawan	
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch break
14.00 – 15.30	Session 2
<i>Linda Kinsey Spetter</i> : Zashikiwarashi, The Ghost That Is Saving Japan	
<i>J. J. Dias Marques</i> : The Most Watched Portuguese Movie Ever: The Vanishing Hitchhiker on YouTube	
<i>David Clarke</i> : Scared to Death: a Case Study in Fear	
Chair: Elissa R. Henken	
15.30 – 16.00	Coffee break
16.00 – 17.30	Session 3
<i>Licia Masoni</i> : "It all happened while I was asleep ...": Conceptualizing Anesthetization through Legend-making and -telling	

Margarita Zires: The Legend about the Kidnapping of Children in a Mexico in Conflict: An Analysis of Its Verisimilitude

Tjalling A. Beetstra: Snuff Films: From Crime Legend to Legendary Crime

Chair: Carl Lindahl

18.00 – 19.00 Tour of Town

19.00 Reception at the Academy of Sciences, Theaterstr. 7

Wednesday, June 6

9.00 – 10.30	Session 4
<i>Stephen Winick/David Samper</i> : The Stuck Couple and the Leering Crowd	
<i>Aurore Van de Winkel</i> : Contemporary Legends in Brussels	
<i>Petr Janáček</i> : The Black Volga Revisited: Child Abduction Legends and Rumours in Countries of the Eastern Bloc	
Chair: David Clarke	
10.30 – 11.00	Coffee break
11.00 – 12.30	Session 5
<i>Carl Lindahl</i> : The Child and the Snake and the Father of the Man	
<i>Linda Dégh</i> : Traditionalizing in Scotland	
<i>David Main</i> : The Once and Future Vanishing Hitchhiker	
Chair: Rolf Wilhelm Brednich	
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch break
14.00 – 15.30	Session 6
<i>Jeanmarie Rouhier-Willoughby</i> : Legends of Soviet Sainthood in Post-Socialist Russia	
<i>Mikhail Alekseevsky</i> : The Death of an Unknown Priest: Legends and Ritual Practices of the Supreme Soviet's Supporters after the Russian Constitutional Crisis of 1993	
<i>Peter Burger</i> : The Gay Jesus Movie Petition as Legend, News, and Cultural Drama	
Chair: Yvonne J. Milspaw	
15.30 – 16.00	Coffee break
16.00 – 17.30	Session 7
<i>Yvonne J. Milspaw</i> : Quilt Stories: Using Narrative to Invent Tradition	
<i>Jürgen Beyer</i> : Seventeenth-Century Reports about Church Furnishings as Contemporary Legends	

Marina Bayduzh: The Queen of Spades and Bloody Mary in Russian Urban Legends
 Chair: Joel Conn

19.00 Library Tour

Thursday

Excursion

Friday, June 8

9.00 – 10.30 Session 8

Maria Inés Palleiro: Little Red Riding Hood and the Elf: Fiction and Belief in Argentinian Folk Narrative

Ambrož Kvartič: Urban Legend as an Emic Category: Vernacular Conceptualizations of 'Urbana Legenda' in Slovenia

Filip Graliński: Not a Single Legend Will Pass Unnoticed: the Use of Computers in Legend Scholarship

Chair: Petr Janček

10.30 – 11.00 Coffee break

11.00 – 12.30 Session 9

David J. Puglia: Toying with Corporate Narratives: The Genesis of Mick(e)y Mouse

Gail de Vos: The Contemporary Sasquatch: Legend Meets Contemporary Sequential Art

Fumihiko Kobayashi: Dr. Fu Manchu: A Haunting Asian Mystique as a Contemporary Legend

Chair: Theo Meder

12.30 – 14.00 Lunch break

14.00 – 15.30 Session 10

Carolyn E. Ware: Strippers and Spillionaires: Post BP-Oil Spill Rumours and Legends in Coastal Louisiana

Spencer Green: Fear and Loathing in D.C.: Email Forwards and Political Legends

Chair: Peter Burger

15.30 – 16.00 Coffee break

16.00 – 17.30 General meeting

19.00 Conference Dinner

Saturday, June 9

9.00 – 10.30 Session 11

Joel Conn: "Please Help Me/Beloveth One": Folklore in and Regarding Advance Free Fraud or '419 Scams'

Eda Kalmre: Truth and Ethical Dilemmas in Contemporary Legends Told on Television

Mare Kalda: Does the Money Spell Work? Women's Conversation via an Estonian Online Forum

Chair: Maria Inés Palleiro

10.30 – 11.00 Coffee break

11.00 – 12.30 Session 12

Ian Brodie: Something about Bridges...

Elguja Dadunashvili: The Engineer's Suicide: A Legend and Its Revitalization in the Period of Communist Terror (1937–39)

Elissa R. Henken: Folklore of an Eccentric Genius

Chair: Elizabeth Tucker

ABSTRACTS

Mikhail Alekseevsky, Moscow

The Death of an Unknown Priest: Legends and Ritual Practices of the Supreme Soviet's Supporters after the Russian Constitutional Crisis of 1993

The Russian constitutional crisis of 1993 began in earnest on September 21, when President Boris Yeltsin tried to dissolve parliament (the Supreme Soviet of Russia and the Congress of People's Deputies of Russia). At the beginning of October street fighting between Supreme Soviet supporters and special police took place in Moscow. The army, on Yeltsin's orders, stormed the Supreme Soviet building in the early morning hours of October 4, and arrested the leaders of the resistance. According to government estimates, 187 people were killed during the conflict.

The place of street fighting of 1993 became sacred for the Supreme Soviet's supporters. After the crisis they organized an unofficial shrine with monuments, fragments of barricades, signs, flags and graffiti near the Supreme Soviet building. One of the most unusual parts of the shrine is the so-called 'Tomb of Father Viktor'. It is supposed that priest Viktor Zaika, one of the Supreme Soviet's supporters, was crushed by an army tank. However, Father Viktor was not killed in 1993 and lives in Ukraine to this day, but legends about his death as a martyr are still popular among the Supreme Soviet's

supporters. A Requiem Mass for Father Viktor takes place every anniversary of his 'death'. The paper is devoted to legends and ritual practices associated with Father Viktor and his 'tomb'.

Marina Bayduzh, Tyumen

The Queen of Spades and Bloody Mary in Russian Urban Legends

This presentation deals with images of the 'Queen of Spades' and 'Bloody Mary' as characters of contemporary urban superstition in Russia. It is based on interviews with informants in Russian cities as well as materials published by A.L. Toporkov (*The Queen of Spades in Children's Folklore/Russian School Folklore*. Moscow 1998, 15–36). This information refers to the years 1980–2000.

The 'Queen of Spades' has appeared in Russian children's folklore since the late 1970's. Her image is shaped by ideas about the card 'Queen of Spades' – a femme fatale, and a spell-producing witch – as well as influence of A.S. Pushkin's novel *Queen of Spades*. Besides, the mirror-world as otherworld also plays a role, reflected in the card's double inverted figures.

There is some correlation between the 'Queen of Spades' and 'Bloody Mary' – one of the traditional images of English and American urban folklore and which appears in Russian urban discourse of the 1990's, in the popular media, in literature and in films. Some changes in the ritual of the evocation of the 'Queen of Spades' occurred in the post-Soviet period, which approximates her to the image of 'Bloody Mary'. For example, a significant role in the séance is played by a mirror, and the 'Queen of Spades' card may not be needed. In addition, the 'Queen of Spades' has become an increasingly evil, revengeful spirit which condemns the summoner to death in similar ways as 'Bloody Mary'.

Tjalling A. Beetstra, Apeldoorn

Snuff films: From Crime Legend to Legendary Crime

Rumours and stories about so-called snuff films started to circulate in the 1970s. These pornographic films allegedly show how (mostly) a girl or a woman is raped, tortured and murdered. Such rapes, tortures and murders are not staged. Snuff films are allegedly produced on order. According to some conspiracy theorists snuff films are so illegal that they are beyond the reach of interested customers. Only insiders would be able to get hold of that kind of material. Other

conspiracy theorists allege that in some countries snuff films that had been seized by the police are shown for entertainment purposes to the elite during private viewings.

In my lecture, I will discuss the phenomenon of snuff films as well as the ways in which societies have responded to the rumours and stories concerning such films; not only conservative religious groups, radical feminists, the media and legal practitioners, but also the film industry. Furthermore, I will elaborate on one specific criminal case that occurred in Germany. Approximately 270 km (160 miles) away from our conference center in Göttingen, the criminal legend of snuff films extended into real life and became a legendary crime. I will discuss that case in the context of ostension, legend tripping and media attention for crime legends.

Jürgen Beyer, Tartu

Seventeenth-Century Reports about Church Furnishings as Contemporary Legends

Folklorists have collected many legends explaining what had happened to the local church and its interiors in the olden days. My paper will be concerned with stories of a different kind. I intend to discuss three examples of seventeenth-century reports about how certain items had recently arrived (or returned) to Danish parish churches.

1) Onsbjerg church on the island of Samsø owns a gilt bronze crucifix dated c. 1200. A memorial tablet of 1596 informs spectators that the crucifix had been washed ashore together with a corpse and that four horses had not been able to draw the corpse to the first two churches but that two horses could easily transport it to Onsbjerg.

2) In 1663 the Danish king donated a truly huge brass chandelier to the German church of St Peter's in Copenhagen. A few years later the churchwardens noted in their records that the king had bought the chandelier from a Jew who in turn had bought it from the brewers' guild in Hamburg, which had removed its chandelier from St Catherine's church due to some dispute about seating rights. This story was plausible at the time but unfortunately not true, as the relevant Hamburg records show.

3) In 1680, the German church in Gothenburg was presented with a bell, but since the donator, a privateer, had taken it from the Danish island of Sejerø, the churchwardens had the bell shipped back to its rightful owners. In Denmark, however, the story about

the return of the bell was embellished with a miraculous motif: When rung at Gothenburg, the bell would not make a sound, but on other occasions it would ring of its own accord.

The backgrounds of these tales will be elucidated in order to better understand how 'true' stories circulated at a time when the notion of folklore did not yet exist.

Ian Brodie, Sydney, Nova Scotia

Something about Bridges...

Although an ancient technology, the bridge is a persistent presence in tales both ancient and modern. At the 2011 ISCLR meeting, no less than three papers (Goldstein, Preston, Puglia) were on subjects connected to bridges, and, while they are prominent motifs in Märchen (ATU 122E, 300A, 465), they are not mentioned at all in the Old or New Testaments. It is my contention that, much like legends about any new or emergent technology, narrative cycles develop that in part concern the integration of bridges into the conservative and somewhat reactionary worldview of ordinary living, and one can thus legitimately look at the bridge within the genre-lens of 'legends of new technology'. Within my current research project concerning the ritualistic painting of a railway trestle-bridge by the adolescents of post-industrial Cape Breton, the question of why, of all the features within the cultural landscape, a bridge, and this particular bridge, emerged as the appropriate place for decoration needs addressing. This presentation will provide a brief diachronic study of the bridge in (Western European) oral tradition and a survey of the bridge in contemporary legend/legend tripping, before moving on to discuss this particular bridge. It is hoped that the rush to romantic interpretations of the bridge as symbol will be tempered somewhat by the socio-economic and industrial realities of this (literally and figuratively) concrete urban geography.

Peter Burger, Leiden

The Gay Jesus Movie Petition as Legend, News, and Cultural Drama

From the very first beginning of movie history in the late nineteenth century, the gospels have been a popular and controversial subject matter. Among the numerous movies that rubbed believers the wrong way, one stands out as an urban legend classic: Danish film maker Jens Jørgen Thorsen's repeated attempts to create a movie about the love life of Jesus Christ

sparked a petition to put a halt to this act of blasphemy. Dating back to the mid-seventies, the petition still circulates, targeting various actual and non-existent Jesus movie projects. Snopes, Brunvand, and other authorities have canonized it as an urban legend, chiefly because it seeks to stop movies that were never meant to be made in the first place.

Tracing the history of these protests in Dutch Protestant newspapers and on Protestant bulletin boards, this paper argues that previous treatments of this legend have focussed too much on its falsity. A fuller reading should encompass protests against real Jesus movies (notably Scorsese's Last Temptation of Christ) and consider the role of the movie industry and secular claimsmakers in these controversies. Using the gay Jesus movie petition as an example, the paper critiques current conceptions of legend and ostension.

Véronique Campion-Vincent, Paris

Excursions to Wonderland: Great Changes due December 21, 2012? France's 'Area 51'. New Spiritualities Today

Located in the district of Aude, South West France (main city Carcassonne), the three neighbouring villages of Bugarach, Rennes-les-Bains and Rennes-le-Château delineate my country's 'Area 51' or 'Two Rennes and Bugarach Area'.

Since December 2010 the village of Bugarach has become world-famous when its mayor publicly complained that esoteric outsiders were more and more numerous: "They see Bugarach as one of perhaps several 'sacred mountains' sheltered from the cataclysm" they expect "on December 21, 2012, the end date of the ancient Maya calendar."

This paper will describe the surge, developments and debates surrounding these tales in the region, from December 2010 till April 2012. Data drawn from participant observation will supplement those obtained through the plethora of media productions on the subject. A genealogy of the contemporary mythologies (in the sense developed by Bill Ellis: meaningful cluster of legends) that have developed in the Two Rennes and Bugarach area will be presented. The early stages are in Rennes-le-Château (1953 onwards), which started as a 'simple' treasure story to culminate in the 'Secret History of Christ' and influenced that of Bugarach, centered on a sacred mountain. Other subjects that will be developed include:

- Origins and development of the belief in the End of the World on Dec. 21, 2012

- New spiritualities in a globalized world
- After Dec. 21, 2012

David Clarke, Sheffield

Scared to Death: a Case Study in Fear

In 1793 the Rev. E. Gillespy wrote that: “Nothing can affect the human mind with greater terror than the dread of an interview with the souls of deceased persons.” The expression ‘you look as if you have seen a ghost’ is occasionally used to describe people who appear pale or shocked. In folklore the traditional reaction to a ghostly encounter was to feel one’s hair stand on end, which has Biblical precedents. More recently, films and television programmes such as *Most Haunted* have played upon the popular desire to be both entertained and scared, but only up to a point. In eighteenth and nineteenth century England there are a number of press reports describing individuals who were alleged to have been literally ‘scared to death’ whilst participating in communal ghost hunts. Inquest juries occasionally recorded fright as either a contributor to or the actual cause of death, in an era before underlying medical conditions were fully understood as they are today. As recently as 2003 convictions for manslaughter have been based solely upon a person being literally ‘frightened to death’. This presentation will examine the motif of death through supernatural causes by reference to a case study of alleged ‘death from fright’ from Sheffield, Yorkshire, in 1855. The death of 48-year-old Hannah Rallison followed a ghost ‘experience’ at a séance in the city and was the subject of a widely reported coroner’s inquest. This paper will discuss this example in the context of wider supernatural belief and contemporary legend in Victorian England.

Joel Conn, Glasgow

“Please Help Me/Beloveth One”: Folklore in and Regarding Advance Free Fraud or ‘419 Scams’

The ubiquitous entreats that arrive daily in our email in-boxes, commonly known as ‘419 Scams’ or Advance Free Fraud, may be deleted with little thought. On further reading, however, the tales of untold riches allegedly lingering in distant bank accounts and from the exotic men and woman seeking companionship, love and an airfare, provide fruitful ground for examination for the folklorist.

In the first instance, the texts of the scam letters and emails – though varied – show several clear varieties.

Many propose themselves as pseudo-memorates of the purported senders. Further, the texts often contain folklore motifs that may add to their familiarity (and thus power to ensnare their victims). As a type, the scam itself is a variant of an older confidence trick (The Spanish Prisoner), and comparison will be drawn to scams repeated as folklore (such as The Double Theft or The Theatre Tickets).

The scam itself has become part of contemporary folklore both within the community of scammers and outside. Within the community, specific cant has developed, and popular music and films, both portraying scammers as Robin Hood figures and seeking to dissuade the young from becoming involved, have emerged in West Africa.

Beyond the scammers, references appear in popular writing, especially comedy. The paper shall also examine the growth of the ‘Scambaiter’ Internet communities where individuals create false identities in an attempt to ‘bait’ scammers into correspondence, often nonsensical and absurd. Such activity may even be seen as a form of ‘cyber-legend tripping’.

Finally, comment will be made in this paper as to why such scams have not generated email warnings passed through the internet whereas other less real threats have (such as organ thefts or gang initiation warnings).

Elguja Dadunashvili, Tbilisi/Jena

The Engineer’s Suicide: A Legend and Its Revitalization in the Period of Communist Terror (1937–39)

Stories about an engineer’s suicide, due to an apparent blunder he committed in the construction of a tunnel, have been recorded in the Alps as well as in Georgia. In both regions, the stories are similar: the tunnel is constructed from both sides and apparently the two bores fail to meet. The engineer commits suicide after which the two bores meet belatedly. The cause of the delay is explained: it turns out that the error has not occurred in the calculation of the axis but in measuring the distance between the tunnel portals.

The difference between the western and the eastern versions resides in the motivation for the suicide. In the western European version it is motivated by a violation of professional dignity; in contrast, in the Caucasian version the engineer commits suicide under the impression of Stalinist terror.

The years of Stalinist repression (1937–39) were an extraordinary historical period. Characteristically, during

such striking periods everything is determined by the principle of simple syllogism: if period X is characterized by element Y, then all facts involving element Y belong to events and actions in period X. In the Caucasus, the story about the engineer's suicide seems to have already been known in the nineteenth century; it has been revived in the period of Stalinist repression, giving rise to a change in the motivation.

Linda Dégh, Bloomington

Traditionalizing in Scotland

This presentation is based on the author's fieldwork among Scottish Travellers, a socially marginalized group of partial itinerants. Whereas in most parts of the world living storytelling traditions are a thing of the past, the travellers have retained their rich treasure of songs, tales and legends up to the present time.

Filip Graliński, Poznań

Not a Single Legend Will Pass Unnoticed: the Use of Computers in Legend Scholarship

Each day humanity produces gigabytes (if not terabytes) of new texts in hundreds of languages: news articles, web pages, blog entries, message board threads, Facebook posts, Twitter Tweets. All this mass of utterances grows not just into the future, but also into the past, with old books and newspapers scanned and put into a digitized format in digital libraries – even the Web itself has its archive, Wayback Machine, a graveyard for millions of defunct web pages.

The good news is that there must be thousands of legend texts in this ocean of bytes. The bad news is that it is beyond human ability to sift through the deluge of data. Obviously, computers should be trained to do it just as they are trained to separate spam from 'ham'. I will discuss what should be done to make this vision come true and what kind of collaborative effort between Humanities scholars and computer scientists is required. Special emphasis will be placed on the multilinguality of legends. I will show how the same legends expressed in different languages can be matched automatically using machine translation techniques.

I will present MogUL, a prototype system for discovering and collecting urban legend texts published on the web and in digital libraries (so far, the system has been used for cataloguing Polish urban legends). In particular, I will discuss some interesting cases of legend

texts found in old newspapers scanned by Polish digital libraries.

Spencer Green, Harrisburg

Fear and Loathing in D.C.: Email Forwards and Political Legends

Barack Obama has excited just as much fear and anxiety as he has admiration and hope in his presidency. He has been a flashpoint of emergent folklore of all kinds. His memoirs have been adapted into a mythic story starring 'Strelka'; rumours, conspiracy theories, and legends are not only shared but receive national attention as issues of his nationality and religion overshadow issues of policy and governance. Striking in Obama's case, his legends seem to flourish particularly with his detractors. Legends about Obama include the laudatory, the ambivalent, and the disparaging. My paper will focus on the context, meaning, performance, and common features of the legends circulated by the far right primarily through email forwards. These legends are dispersed electronically rather than face-to-face, focused on a 'villain' rather than a hero, and their veracity is often outsourced to the website snopes.com. This reliance however is only a link deep because snopes.com often flatly denies or recontextualizes the forward in a way that blunts its emotional force. How, in such a climate, can such legends not only start but spread and flourish?

These forwards tell us about legendry in the digital age, about how legends function, and about how communities conceptualize and disseminate commonly held fears and anxieties while reaffirming core values and worldview. While they are certainly emergent in responding to current events and figures, I will trace the traditional elements in their motifs and structure. If legends are, as Bill Ellis maintains, fundamentally political acts, then studying politically motivated legends can reveal more about their potential to control and change society.

Elissa R. Henken, Athens, Georgia

Folklore of an Eccentric Genius

Frank Lloyd Wright (American architect, 1867–1959), with his architectural genius, colourful life, and strong personality, became a natural focus of folklore for his clients, apprentices, neighbours, and the general public. The narrative sets each reflect ambivalent attitudes towards Wright – the clients with their pride in a beautiful Wright building and their frustration at leaking

roofs and awkwardly shaped closets, the apprentices with their loving admiration for their eye-opening teacher and anger for the man and his wife who sometimes seemed to treat them as serfs and pawns in their own amusements, the local community in his Wisconsin home with their curious wonder at new aesthetics and high drama and their disgust at 'improper' behaviour, and the general public who have taken Wright on as the symbol par excellence of architectural genius. In this paper, I shall discuss the ways the legendary functions for each of these groups and what it says about their needs as well as Wright's image.

Petr Janáček, Prague

The Black Volga Revisited: Child Abduction Legends and Rumours in Countries of the Eastern Bloc

Mysterious black cars stealing children for nefarious purposes seem to be a stable motif in legends and rumours circulating in countries of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, formerly belonging to the Eastern bloc. First recorded in the 1930s, these narratives seem relatively often to suddenly appear in most of these countries, temporarily overshadowing other rumours and legends, and occasionally even rise to heights of local urban scares. From the Soviet Black Car of the 1930s, the Polish Black Volga of the 1970s and Czechoslovakian Black Ambulance of the late 1980s to contemporary Romanian rumours, stories featuring black cars seem to be among the most stable traditions of this geopolitical area.

The paper presented analyzes these narratives in light of their social, economical and especially political contexts, focusing mainly on their connection to local folk concepts of Communist state, state-owned healthcare, the Catholic church and traditional xenophobic stereotypes concerning Jews, Germans, and Arabs. All these aforementioned groups were found, in various times and geographical areas, responsible for black car kidnappings.

The paper also analyzes various official public reactions to these rumours and folk 'readings' of official media coverage of the supposed atrocities, which underwent dramatic change during the 1990s. Black car rumours, although not solely limited to the former Eastern bloc (similar cases of urban scares were found, for example, in Italy, Brasil or Nigeria), were and still are heavily influenced by specific local political conditions. Historically, these narratives usually circulated almost solely in oral tradition and emphasized conspiratorial

beliefs about the involvement of the Communist state. Since the 1990s, along with relatively frequent media coverage of these narratives, more traditionally xenophobic – antisemitic and racist – motives seem to appear more frequently.

Mare Kalda, Tartu

Does the Money Spell Work? Women's

Conversation via an Estonian Online Forum

The internet abounds with advice and instructions on how to improve one's financial conditions. Despite the availability of online 'financial assistance', people seem to need places of intimacy, corners of the virtual universe where, based on the submitters' personal experiences, the instructions given are validated or disapproved. Sometimes online discussion of that kind focuses on money magic. This can be exemplified by Estonian women's online discussions held through message boards in the information and entertainment portal www.delfi.ee.

The portal's openness allows the researcher to be there, to witness the ongoing debate. As expected, a limited amount of tales, rituals, traditional beliefs, or folklore-based statements were posted online, usually for the sake of example or, sometimes, of argument. Instead of traditional treasure tales, contemporary beliefs and opinions related to magical ways of acquiring money did emerge.

My paper is based mainly on observations regarding conversation on magical issues that lasted from autumn, 2010 until January, 2011 through Estonia's most visited online forum for women, consisting of about 50 threads. Forum users were searching for unique Estonian money spells which would be safe and simple yet functional.

The debate on how to attract money headed in different directions, and conflicting positions appeared. Interestingly, formulas, beliefs and practices from different cultures were brought into the conversation as well as local explanations according to which the new moon would grow money. Posts included elements of modern paganism, Hindu religion, and Russian folk belief, emphasizing the grandmothers' wisdom as a source of knowledge. A few users shared their personal experiences in forum threads as a warning or just to express themselves. After revealing a rather condemning attitude toward any possibility regarding the use of money spells, the discussion died down without reaching 'the truth'.

Eda Kalmre, Tartu

Truth and Ethical Dilemmas in Contemporary Legends Told on Television

The construction of national or personal identity is often channelled into the language and form of contemporary legends and rumours. A hero's noble descent is a very ancient motif present in myth and fairy tales. Estonians are an agrarian nation who have never had their own upper class and lack notable historical figures and heroes. Owing to historical reasons, the Estonians' personal and national iconography was associated with Baltic German culture. Current developments in the tradition suggest that relations with influential political figures, today increasingly also the proximity to famous athletes or pop idols, are still a measure of personal and national success. The narrative motif of a person's high descent has been cultivated in literary creation and works of modern popular culture; it is a popular subject of the news and on television. At the same time, part of the tradition may involve sensitive material and be addressed or made available only to a close-knit community.

My paper analyzes a fantastic story about a man who was reportedly related to a blue-blooded family. The story was originally only known and circulated in the man's small home community on the island of Saaremaa, before it came to be released to the Estonian media – television, newspapers, and the Internet. The new narrative context has given rise to questions about the story's veracity, its reception by the general public, and the balance of the public and the private in the presentation of the case.

Fumihiko Kobayashi, New York

Dr. Fu Manchu: A Haunting Asian Mystique as a Contemporary Legend

In the twenty-first century, we have many opportunities to encounter once unfamiliar cultures. However, do we understand them appropriately without any biased views? For example, consider Asia. Ever since adventurers and merchants started traveling from the West to the East, they have returned home with fanciful images. Many of these persist, even in today's global communities. So we sometimes still understand Asia through traditional biases.

This Asian mystique can be detected in the Chinese evildoer Dr. Fu Manchu, created by Sax Rohmer in 1913. He based his Fu Manchu novels on a Chinese mafia boss living in London in the early twentieth century and on perceptions of the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900. He

also drew from the concept of the Yellow Peril that permeated Western nations at that time.

Indeed, the Fu Manchu stories neither represent Asia in any real sense nor work as reliable historical accounts. However, the stories have enticed readers to fantasize about an Asian mystique. Though far from reality, the nefarious image of Fu Manchu persists among us as much as any other powerful contemporary legends do. Using the Fu Manchu image as representative of the Asian mystique, I will discuss the process by which we formulate mysterious legends and groundless rumours in order to understand the unknown. Even in today's globalized world, we perpetuate such false images in order to make sense of the unknown. In lieu of a conclusion, I would like to discuss with conference attendees how to avoid forming such biases when communicating with other cultures.

Ambrož Kvartič, Ljubljana

Urban Legend as an Emic Category: Vernacular Conceptualizations of 'Urbana Legenda' in Slovenia

In the second half of the twentieth century, important paradigmatic changes in anthropology, ethnology, and other disciplines occurred, shifting the focus of attention from rural to urban environments. Marking this shift in folkloristics, the urban legend was born – the only widely acknowledged etic genre category within the discipline using this particular adjective. Despite its early popularity among folklore scholars, evidence kept piling up that the narratives so termed are not necessarily bound to urban areas, as a result of which its analytical value, and consequently its use in scholarly debate, gradually declined. Nevertheless, following the commercial success of certain legend anthologies, the term was eagerly appropriated by the mass media and by popular culture, crossing language barriers and enabling its entrance into the world of vernacular. Once there, the term was embraced by the bearers of the legends themselves – becoming emic in the process – and was attributed a whole new set of conceptual and connotative meanings. When studying vernacular culture and communication in Slovenia, one can thus observe four different notions of this emic category: urban legend as a folk genre, urban legend as a frame of reference (especially within journalistic discourse), urban legend as a metonym, and urban legend as an identity. Except within the last one, the 'urban' dimension of the

concept has lost all its descriptive importance in vernacular use, and other questions, such as that of veracity of narratives, have become much more significant.

Carl Lindahl, Houston

The Child and the Snake and the Father of the Man

The two hundredth anniversary of the publication of part one of the first edition of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* invites students of legend to consider how the brothers presented legendary narratives and influenced subsequent understandings of legend. The brothers did not confine their publication of legends to the remarkable *Deutsche Sagen*; they also addressed the relationship between legend and magic tale through such KHM narratives as the first of three 'tales about toads' (*Märchen von der Unke*; KHM 105, ATU 285), known by the international title of *The Child and the Snake*. Historically and generically, the Grimm version lies at the intersection of fable, animal tale, magic tale, and legend. This paper will begin by examining elements of class style and generic style inscribed in the *Märchen von der Unke*, and then proceed to consider the tale with regard to earlier related texts as well as to versions collected in the United States in the twentieth century. Recent German and German-American versions tend to magnify the legendary (as opposed to fable, animal tale, and magic tale) elements of the tale type and to suggest that those elements of the Grimm text that appear the most märchenesque today were considered more legendary in nature at the time that KHM was first published.

David Main, Paisley

The Once and Future Vanishing Hitchhiker

The Vanishing Hitchhiker is probably the most collected and most discussed urban legend. However, that does not mean that it is fully understood. This paper discusses some recent evidence on the variant forms the legend takes and how the narrative devices within the story reflect the differing underlying motivations of the storyteller. The paper argues that the adoption of a more quantitative systematic comparison of texts provides valuable information for urban legend research. Suggestions for the direction of future research are made.

J. J. Dias Marques, Faro

The Most Watched Portuguese Movie Ever: The Vanishing Hitchhiker on YouTube

The Vanishing Hitchhiker is probably one the best-known legends everywhere, and also one of the most studied. My paper deals with a movie adaption of that legend which seems to have passed unnoticed in scholarly circles until now. It is a short movie by a virtually unknown Portuguese film-maker, which has never been screened in cinemas. Notwithstanding it had millions of viewers, thanks to having been posted on YouTube. In fact on that site we can find several posts with this movie, some of them with subtitles in foreign languages.

In my presentation I will show some extracts of this movie, I will compare its plot with that of several Portuguese oral versions of *The Vanishing Hitchhiker*, and I will give some information about the movie and its origin, thanks to an interview with its director. I will also mention the way this short movie was used in a Mexican TV show about the supernatural, and will make reflections on a few of the hundreds of comments left on YouTube by its viewers.

Licia Masoni, Edinburgh/Modena

"It all happened while I was asleep ...":

Conceptualizing Anesthetization through Legend-making and -telling

How do we conceptualize what happens during times when we are unable to operate rationally by definition: that is when we are asleep, anesthetized, hypnotized, in a word, when we are not in control and likely to have no memory of what has happened to us during those breaks from rationality? What happens when we are asleep and surrounded by people who, on the contrary, are awake and to whom we have released total control over our bodies? What is the behaviour of those who are awake?

This paper analyses a number legends currently told as a sort of 'preparation to the operation' narrative package, by people who may or may not have undergone surgery themselves, to people who are about to face such an ordeal. Interestingly, the legends have been collected in a big town in a wealthy region of the North of Italy, with one of the best health systems in the entire country. These stories do not deal with episodes of negligence, but rather constitute an attempt to describe to the future sleeper the situation he will not be able to see or recall by himself. They do not deal with the details of the operation, but rather

with the behaviours of those in control: the surgeons, the nurses, and other hospital personnel.

In general the exchange of such legends appears as an attempt to bridge the gap between the known and the unknown (the world beyond the sleep threshold). But in the actual situation of a future patient three questions arise: Why would one want to know such things? Why would one need to know them? Why would one tell such stories at all? Far from being reassuring, they would appear pernicious and counterproductive. Nevertheless, it appears that they have some sort of empowering function for the future sleeper in that they constitute a 'rational', if brutal, glance into the unknown. Indeed most of the narrative material for these stories comes from doctors themselves, from their daily talks and from the tall tales they perform for friends. This paper also deals with the images of doctors that surface from such narratives: how are doctors portrayed by lay people? How are their stories used and re-contextualized, for what purposes and with what new meanings?

In the end, do these legends succeed in bridging the gap, or is the process of conceptualization one that creates an even wider gap between us and the 'doctors'? And if so, what is the self-preserving function of that distance?

Theo Meder, Amsterdam

A Place of Miracles: The Artistic Representation of Lourdes by Two Contemporary Directors

After the Holy Virgin had appeared eighteen times to Bernadette Soubirous in 1858, Lourdes in the south of France grew into the most popular and most visited place of pilgrimage in the western Christian world. Today millions of pilgrims come to Lourdes every year for various religious reasons. Quite a few of them suffer from a physical or mental illness. One of the reasons why they come to Lourdes is the possibility of a miraculous healing, for instance by drinking the healing water of Lourdes, or even bathing in it. Recently, two directors created works of art about and at the holy place of Lourdes, which reflect their convictions concerning miracles and healings. In 2009 the young female Austrian director Jessica Hausner shot her French movie *Lourdes*, in 2011 the renowned French male director Robert Hossein presented his production *Une femme nommée Marie*. Jessica Hausner was raised in a Catholic family, but lost her faith and became an atheist, whereas Robert Hossein grew up in an atheist family and converted to Catholicism later in life. Their

works offer rather opposite interpretations of (Christian) conceptions such as supernatural healings and salvation.

Yvonne J. Milspaw, Harrisburg

Quilt Stories: Using Narrative to Invent Tradition

Quilts are potent symbols of culture and important family possessions. It is women who produce and control these highly valued items, and fill them with intricate representational, symbolic and social meanings. Those meanings are encoded in both those objects and the narratives which accompany the quilts. Sometimes meanings are stated in the choices of designs, colours or symbolic associations; sometimes they are stated in the histories, genealogies, ancestor myths and origin stories that are attached to them. Quilts accrue value with the narratives which are attached to or encoded in them, and if they have no story, we feel compelled to supply one. These stories reveal a web of cultural assumptions about what quilts mean, especially about the foundation of America, a profound, powerful narrative of discovery and control that impacts the stories we tell about our past. A quilt is a miniature narrative of the taming of the land. Quilts also encode values about women's work and 'moral economies'. Mostly, however, quilt narratives mark the object as a site of nostalgia, that profound longing for another time and place called home, placing these objects in the golden age of the past. They cement the owner's genealogical relationship to a sometimes mythical pioneer ancestress, connecting generations, and establishing the maker as a woman of value. Without the narratives, a quilt's value is diminished and lost; with these narratives, they can become 'transcendent treasures'.

María Ines Palleiro, Buenos Aires

Little Red Riding Hood and the Elf: Fiction and Belief in Argentinean Folk Narrative

In this presentation, I deal with an Argentinean oral version collected in fieldwork, in which tale type ATU 333, Little Red Riding Hood, is combined with a local legend. This legend refers to the mysterious apparition of an elf called the Pombero, who makes a sexual attack on the young girl. I contextualize this synchronic analysis with a diachronic overview of this tale type, from French versions supposedly from the Ancient Régime as discussed by Darnton from a historic perspective, to others analyzed by Mary Douglas from

an anthropological point of view. I also deal with the intertextual intertwining of tale and legend in theatrical, filmic and choreographic versions, namely the films *The Company of Wolves* (1984) directed by Neil Jordan, and *Red Riding Hood* (2011), directed by Catherine Hardwicke; as well as the theatrical version *Caperucita* by Javier Daulte (2009) and the Argentinian choreographic version *Voraz* (2007) by Charles Trunsky. This analysis focuses on the rhetoric construction of belief in different folklore genres with regard to this tale type. It also deals with the fictionalization process of believing in the folk narrative text, in different contexts and channels of discourse. My main hypothesis is that believing has a strong influence in the constructive process of folk narrative, erasing generic boundaries, such as story, legend and myth. I will discuss to what extent belief narrative is a flexible expression which facilitates communication in contemporary folk narrative studies.

David J. Puglia, Harrisburg

Toying with Corporate Narratives: The Genesis of Mick(e)y Mouse

On a long train ride from New York to California in 1928, Walt Disney invented Mortimer, a loveable cartoon mouse. By his side his wife, Lillian Disney, warned him that children would not take to a 'Mortimer', and, thus, Mickey Mouse was born. At least, so says the official Disney mythology. But as with many famous invention legends, counternarratives thrive. One of these legends in particular survives to this day. In 1926, two years before Walt's mythic train ride, the Performo Toy Company, located in tiny Middletown, Pennsylvania, developed 'Micky', a black and white toy mouse that became popular in New York, the company's distribution center. Disney, it is said, barreling through New York one day before setting off for California, came upon a little wooden toy mouse that caught his fancy. That day, Walt 'invented' Mickey. The mouse would go on to be the symbol of one of the most prosperous corporations of the twentieth century, while the Performo Toy Company would be bankrupt within a decade. The similarity of name and appearance and existence of a patent has led to the survival of this legend, which includes purported legal action and other corporate malfeasance. I read this particular legend as a form of local resistance to official corporate mythologies. I argue the legend, while critical of big business, is largely about local esteem. The implications are larger than this one legend. In addition to several

other Mickey origin stories not mentioned here, legendry frequently surrounds the invention of new products in general. Antonio Meucci, Daniel Drawbaugh, and Robert Kearns are but a few of the better-known 'victims'. I conclude by attempting to generalize from lessons learned in the Performo-Disney case to narratives of local resistance to corporate mythologies generally.

Jeanmarie Rouhier-Willoughby, Lexington, Kentucky

Legends of Soviet Sainthood in Post-Socialist Russia

Saint Matrona Moskovskaia represents a peculiar post-Soviet Russian phenomenon. She is one of a new wave of unofficial and highly popular Soviet-era saints canonized by local believers, not by the church. Matrona reportedly miraculously protected the Soviet Union from the German army in World War II. In the legend Stalin asked her to carry the icon of the Kazan Mother of God in a flight over Soviet territory. These saints represent the conflict between Russian folk Orthodoxy as developed during the Soviet era and official church doctrine. The laity honoured miraculous icons, performed religious ceremonies, and even 'designated' saints.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian Orthodox Church has struggled to reclaim its position as rightful heir to religious practices within the country. The church has embraced the notion that victims of the Bolshevik Revolution and of the subsequent Soviet government are martyrs to the true faith, even going so far as to canonize the last Tsar and his family. Church authorities cannot easily reconcile the 'godless period' of the Soviet Union with the spiritual present of their flocks. However, their congregations balance nostalgia for the Soviet past with their current Orthodox faith. In the laity's conception of the past, even the most horrible tyrant of their history, Stalin, knew that belief in God was key to defeating the Nazis. This paper will study how folk Orthodoxy is lived in the context of the reframing of the Soviet era using the popular legends about Matrona Moskovskaia as a case study.

Linda Kinsey Spetter, Shimonoseki

Zashikiwarashi, The Ghost That Is Saving Japan

Since 2008 I have been reporting at American Folklore Society meetings about Zashikiwarashi, a friendly ghost in Japan, and the proliferation of mass media cultural items about this 'tatami mat ghost'. Stories of this spirit were first documented in Legends

of Tono by folklorist Kunio Yanagita in 1910, but recently Zashikiwarashi has appeared in plays, novels, manga, anime films, TV dramas, and movies. In April 2012, a new movie called *Itoshi no Zashiki Warashi*, directed by Seiji Izumi, was to be released, based on the 2008 novel by Hiroshi Ogiwara.

In oral legends, Zashikiwarashi is a mischievous ghost who brings good luck to good people. Zashikiwarashi has been associated with the spirit of unborn children, through abortion or *mabiki*, an old practice of killing babies after birth so there would be fewer mouths to feed. Recently, Zashikiwarashi in the mass media has dealt with Japan's most serious social problems: a low birth rate, bullying, suicide, and the phenomenon of '*hikkikomori*' (young men who withdraw from society). An example is a young people's novel *Yuta and His Strange Friends* (2006) by Tetsuro Miura, which was also made into a musical by the Shiki Theatre Company (2010). Five Zashikiwarashi ghosts help a young man who is being bullied by teaching him martial arts. As he fights his bullies, the Zashikiwarashi use magic to transform the fight into a dance. The young man learns he can be a positive force in society rather than becoming a victim. I have many more examples.

In the latest movie, Zashikiwarashi resides in a 100-year-old house that a troubled family moves into; the family begins to bond after meeting the lucky ghost. Zashikiwarashi is not well-known in the western world. I would like to discuss how this ghost is dealing with Japan's current social problems.

Elizabeth Tucker, Binghamton

Legend Quests to Lily Dale

At last year's ISCLR meeting in Harrisburg I delivered a paper on legends of Lily Dale, a small Spiritualist community in western New York. Since then I have talked with middle-aged professional women who have made Lily Dale a destination for summer visits. These women have all wanted to undergo supernatural experiences related to Lily Dale legends and have told stories about interesting occurrences there.

Folklorists have usually described such journeys as legend trips, but another term, 'legend quest', used by Linda Dégh, Carl Lindahl and myself, seems more appropriate for the kind of visit described above. In folkloristic studies of legend trips/quests, we find many analyses of young people's travels but fewer analyses of such journeys by middle-aged or elderly individuals. Some older individuals who tell stories about their visits

to Lily Dale find their quests to be deeply meaningful. Gillian Bennett's study *Traditions of Belief* (1987) offers valuable comparanda from female residents of the United Kingdom.

Some Lily Dale legend quests have a close connection to dreams: either those that take place in Lily Dale or those that occur earlier. *Dreams That Matter*, by Amira Mittermaier (2011), explores the significance of cultural patterns of dream interpretation. In my presentation I will consider some Lily Dale dreams, including one that I briefly described in my presentation at the meeting last year.

Gail de Vos, Seba Beach, Alberta

The Contemporary Sasquatch: Legend Meets Contemporary Sequential Art

Cryptozoology, a favourite buzz word in popular culture, relies on folklore, anecdotal evidence and alleged sightings, and involves searching for animals whose existence has not yet been physically proven but who appear in myths and legends of indigenous people. The legendary Sasquatch, or Bigfoot as it is often known, has never had so much presence outside of the world of folklore as evidenced in numerous television programs, websites, organizations, and in visual images. Outside North America, the lens has also focused on a 'relative', the Yeti. Sequential art refers to the use of images in sequence to convey information or stories. An early example of sequential art is cave paintings while the best-known current example is comic books.

This presentation first looks at the descriptors of Sasquatch sightings by the First Nations people of Canada and the legions of seekers in British Columbia and Alberta as well as further afield. Various cultural and ceremonial artifacts containing images of the Sasquatch, including the Painted Rock pictography of the Yokut people in California, will be discussed before focusing on the recent transformation of these descriptors and stylized images into contemporary sequential art, both in the world of comic books and picture books published in North America and Europe.

An examination of the prevalent physical characteristics, ascribed behaviours, and metaphysical attributes of Sasquatch, Bigfoot and Yeti in the folkloric material and the artistic renderings demonstrate the changing attitudes towards them by the general public. Most early portrayals in comic books were as bloodthirsty enemies of superheroes and ordinary people alike but with current titles as diverse as *Tintin in Tibet*, *Alpha Flight* by Pak and Van Lente, *Proof by*

Grecian and Rossmo, and Pascal's Bigfoot, among others, the legendary character has, for the most part, undergone a curious metamorphosis to become a heroic, if enigmatic, leading actor.

Carolyn E. Ware, Baton Rouge

Strippers and Spillionaires: Post BP-Oil Spill

Rumours and Legends in Coastal Louisiana

On April 20th, 2010, an explosion tore apart the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig, leased by oil giant British Petroleum, in mile-deep waters off the coast of Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana. The disaster killed eleven workers on the rig, and a gusher of crude oil began spewing from the wellhead into the Gulf of Mexico. Over the next four months, more than 200 million gallons of oil spilled into coastal waters before BP, after several unsuccessful attempts, succeeded in plugging the well. By that time, incalculable damage had occurred to local wildlife, commercial fishing grounds, and fragile marshes. Louisiana's Gulf Coast economy, still struggling to recover from 2005's Hurricane Katrina was hard hit, and anti-BP sentiment was widespread in the region. Commercial fishermen and other residents lamented that they were losing not only their livelihoods, but an entire way of life tied to the water and land.

As BP began hiring fishermen and their boats to assist in the clean-up effort, rumours of inequities were rampant. Many of those hired by BP, according to local commercial fishermen, were outsiders who had suffered no loss of income, yet they became 'spillionaires' while fishermen struggled to feed their families. Over time, much of the resentment shifted to BP's unwieldy claims process and its administrator, Kenneth Feinberg, perceived as biased in favour of BP and tone-deaf to local concerns. Most commercial fishermen had their claims for loss of income denied because of inadequate paperwork. At the same time, stories of New Orleans restaurant workers and Bourbon Street strippers receiving generous settlements (because their income from tips might be affected if tourism dropped) circulated, exacerbating residents' frustration.

This paper examines post-oil spill rumors and legends as expressions of coastal residents' anxieties, beliefs, and feelings of marginalization. It also links these narratives to legends that emerged, or were recycled, after Hurricane Katrina devastated the region.

*Stephen Winick, Washington
David Samper, Merced, California*

The Stuck Couple and the Leering Crowd

Our presentation focuses on the urban legend of the stuck couple, a story in which a couple has inappropriate sex and gets stuck together during the act by divine, magical, mechanical, or medical agency. In most versions, a crowd forms to witness their embarrassment and humiliation.

This legend has been told since ancient times; there is an early analogue in Homer's *Odyssey*, in which a bard describes how Ares and Aphrodite make love in Hephaestus' bed and are bound together through a trap left by Hephaestus. Other gods come to see the couple in their embarrassment and humiliation. The stuck couple also makes appearances in medieval Europe in exempla. In the versions we present, they become fastened to their lovers and are seen and humiliated by a crowd of jeering or fascinated onlookers. We follow the stuck couple legend to modern sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Europe, and the United States.

After tracing the history of this legend across time and space, we illuminate how the legend maps boundaries of sexual propriety in the communities in which it is told. We show that the couple is generally violating a sacred vow (such as a marriage vow), a sacred space (such as a church altar or the cuckolded husband's car), or the culture's sexual mores. We also show that the punishment often comes about by divine retribution, magical revenge from the husband, or both, and explore the implications of this.

Furthermore, we focus our analysis on the crowd. We delve into the crowd's significance, function, and meaning by using ideas about the 'absent crowd' from rumor theory.

One way an urban legend persists over time is by provoking a strong emotional response in the listener (or reader), which stimulates a desire to share the experience by passing it along to others. Fear and loathing work especially well in this regard. No wonder so much of urban folklore explores the darker side of human life – we are fascinated by what horrifies and repels us.

Aurore Van de Winkel, Louvain-la-Neuve

Contemporary Legends in Brussels

This paper will present a collection of urban legends told in Brussels which reflect an urban imagination crossed with local characteristics. Presented as news items although their truthfulness is questionable, these

narratives mentioning precisely Brussels tell of attacks or harm committed against an anonymous person or the friend of a friend. They feature confrontation with others, machines or nature, and present Brussels as a dangerous place where security is everybody's business. These legends serve as warnings and allow people to reassert their identity by designating scapegoats.

The following legends will be presented: The Perfume; The Organ Theft, the Angel Smile and the Abduction of Women in the Subway; The AIDS Infected Syringes in the Cinema; The Hairy-Handed Hitchhiker; The Spider in the Hairdo (Skin); Semen in the Fastfood; The Student's New Source of Funding ... These narratives which take place in Brussels may come from elsewhere and may be told around the world but the Belgian narrators have their own scapegoats, add specific details and do not place the narratives in historical or cultural sites but in places familiar to the subjects/tellers, such as small shops or their workplace where the inhabitants must coexist. The places mentioned are lures intended to increase a feeling of proximity and identification with the characters. Brussels is featured as having the same characteristics as every big city in industrialized western countries. However, contrary to New York or other big American cities, narratives with a fantastic or mysterious dimension such as Bloody Mary or Candyman do not exist in Brussels. A sifting of narratives has therefore taken place, and only those which are compatible with the city are told, leaving the supernatural to novels, tales and traditional Brussels legends.

Margarita Zires, Xochimilco

The Legend about the Kidnapping of Children in a Mexico in Conflict: An Analysis of Its Verisimilitude

In this paper I present some of the results of research about a rumour that circulated in Veracruz (on the Gulf of Mexico) in August, 2011, and according to which members of crime organizations were going to attack schools and kidnap children. This rumour circulated in particular through Twitter and Facebook, generating enormous chaos in the city. Parents rushed to pick up their children at primary and secondary schools. Local universities and colleges closed their buildings. Several of the Twitter and Facebook users who spread versions of the rumour were imprisoned for 27 days as 'cyber-terrorists' and a local law was rapidly passed to punish the 'disturbance of public order'. Both

government actions were strongly criticized by national and international human rights organizations.

The aim of this study is not to analyze whether the rumour is true or false, but to examine its verisimilitude. I am not working with the opposition of terms: rumour or legend versus history, false versus true. I am interested instead in examining the different discourses (oral, written, mass media and online multimedia messages) that lent verisimilitude both to the rumour in general and to its various local versions. These discourses are linked with the context of violence and insecurity that at present characterizes life in places like Veracruz and the northern regions of Mexico, places suffering the impact of drug trafficking, state corruption and insufficient information. Importantly, they are also linked with a timeless and universal legend about kidnapped children that likewise expresses the ubiquitous fears and anxiety related to the most vulnerable part of society: children.

THE HISTORY BEHIND SOME LONG ISLAND URBAN LEGENDS: EVERY LEGEND STARTS FOR A REASON

Heather Rivera

Stony Brook University Undergraduate Student

Urban Legends, we all know the stories, we have heard them growing up. Watch out near the harbor or Mary Hatchet will come! Stay out of the trails or the Mothmen of Mount Misery will find you. The lady in white roams the roads of Huntington. These stories are just that, stories. They have no basis in reality, yet we all believed them as children, as if they were being told to us by the Pope himself. As a kid growing up on suburban Long Island, I heard these tales many times, from my mother, my older brothers and the kids I was friends with. Parents used to scare us on Halloween with these stories, and after a while, they gained some sort of truth to them. Teenagers especially told these stories over and over again to try and scare each other while in the woods late at night. Now at the ripe old age of 34, I decided to investigate these legends and I will show you how they are not entirely false.

To achieve this, I must examine how these legends begin; there must be some truth to them. How else would people have come up with the tales? All urban legends share the same format, very few details, no real witness (always a friend of a friend, sister's friend, cousin, other distant relation) a quick story, a known area, and usually some sort of moral to the story.

Bloody Mary: Wells, danger and ax murder

One of our major legends here on Long Island is the Legend of Mary Hatchet. She is so well known on Long Island that I can safely say that, I have never personally met a person that grew up here in my generation, whom was not familiar with one version of her story or another. There seems to be some confusion on her story to start with. There are several different variations of the story that have been in circulation for decades. Today we will examine the most famous and notable version, where Mary is raped by her father. Her mother dies during childbirth and as Mary has grown older, her father who is still grieving over the loss of wife, starts to see his wife in Mary. Mary spends much of her time in the spring house, which can actually be seen in Head of the Harbor to this day, a stone building that would remain slightly warm in the winter and cool in the summer due to the natural spring that ran under it. One day while she was in the spring house, Mary's father molests and rapes her for the first time, she is disgusted by him but remains loyal since she has no other parent. After that afternoon, she is to sleep with him in his bed each night, as if they are husband and wife. Eventually Mary becomes pregnant from her own father. There are conflicting stories saying Mary has two children or three children by her father. Mary never runs away or tells anyone because her father is a well respected man in the community. A hard working farmer and she feels that nobody would ever believe her. In a fit of rage one day Mary who has an ability to make local woodland animals approach her without fear (we assume this is due to the time she spends in the woods and spring house, they seem to know her) begins to chop the animals up with the ax that is left in the spring house. The area will be known as "Mary's Playground." She then takes the ax and moves up to the main house. That night she climbs in bed with her father and splits his head open with the ax, she swings repeatedly at his skull. She then kills the children that she had with him. Once the whole family is dispatched with her ax, she crawls under the covers and sleeps next to her father's dead body. She does this every night until one day the townspeople start to wonder where her father is and a few of them rode out to pay him a visit. It was still early, and as there was no answer at the door, they went inside. They could smell the thick odor of death, something that during those times would have been familiar to most people. The townsfolk went up the stairs after pushing open the bedroom door they found Mary, sleeping peacefully next to her father's blood-soaked and bloated corpse.

The townspeople, horrified and outraged by what she had done; and Mary far too mad now to defend herself against their accusations, dragged Mary from the house and down the hill to the tree, which still stands alongside the road. There they hung her and put an end to her sad and tragic life.

The story goes on to let us know that if you drive by the house at night you will see a light and a girl looking out the window of the upstairs bedroom at the tree. She can also be seen by the tree, at the gates to the main house, and of course in the spring house, where the water runs still to this day.

There are several Mary stories on Long Island, along with Mary Hatchet, there is Mary's grave (there are two locations for this story one is in Head of the Harbor and the other is at the Melville Cemetery which is nowhere near the Head of the Harbor location). There is a "woman in white" who jumps out at your car and causes you to crash, said to be seen on Sweet Hollow Road near the Melville area, this area is also known as "Mount Misery." There is also one more case of the "woman in white" where she gets a ride from you and you realize she is a ghost when you drop her off at the Melville Cemetery only to see that she has disappeared from the car. This legend goes hand in hand with the "Vanishing hitchhiker" outlined in the 1981 publication by Dr. Jan Harold Brunvand titled *The vanishing hitchhiker: American urban legends and their meanings*.

The question must be raised now, why so many different Mary's? If we look at popular names of the early settlers Mary tends to come up a lot. There is not one single cemetery without a Mary buried there. Since we never learn the last name of Mary then it is possible that one of these Mary's is indeed **the** Mary. Many of the graves have tombstones that merely read "Mary" on them, but one only has to look a few feet over to find the family history on a large stone with all names and dates or a memorial oblique. The name Mary even comes over with the legends of European settlers. In England there is a well called "Black Mary's Hole." Mary is also associated with the Virgin Mary or if you prefer the darker side, Mary Magdalene.

There may or may not have been a Mary that suffered a tragic death in the area. I have found no evidence of this. There are no town records of a gruesome murder via ax happening, no a woman named Mary being hanged. The only Mary's I can find in local graves are not more than 7 years old and died of childhood illnesses. Some were infants that died during or shortly after birth. Some were as I stated, young

children that had succumb to cholera, tuberculous, or even scarlet fever.

The settlers used stories that contained a moral or frightening idea as a way to keep to people safe. This practice had been going on since history can be recorded. If you tell children don't go near the water, you could drown; they will be curious and go there anyway. Now, tell them that a crazy woman will snatch them up and butcher them, or a monster will eat them, and they will more than likely stay away. Hence the birth of legends and folklore surrounding wells, lakes, rivers, ponds, springs etc.. Think of a classic story we all know in the form of a Fairytale "Hansel and Gretel" two children go into the forest, get lost and a witch whom lives in a candy house, threatens to cook them for dinner. Luckily the children escape. The moral of that story is simply put, don't go in the woods. It's a dangerous place for children, due to animals, rivers, springs, and wells, that all pose a threat to human life. The fact that Head of the Harbor is located along the Nissequogue River is a good clue as to how a legend like this may have started to frighten children away from the water. We can look at a map of Head of the Harbor and easily see how close the water this town is.

When I look at the locations of the areas on Long Island that tend to have the Legends of Mary surrounding them, they are areas with wells, rivers, springs, and the Long Island Sound. All are dangerous places for children to be exploring. When looking for a way to trace Mary to these watery areas I notices that there were also tales in England about wells, springs and lakes in an effort to scare children away. I found in addition that towns on Long Island that are father inland, do not have the legends of Mary attached to them. Mary also is a north shore legend only. There is not a single account of a Mary legend on the south shore of the island. They have their own legends, stories of Indian princesses, and haunted houses (the most famous being The Amityville Horror House or to people of Long Island simply: 112 Ocean Avenue, Amityville).

The Melville cemetery Mary is also associated with a few legends that all seem to be intertwined, these are: the legends of Sweet Hollow Road, and Mount Misery. As I stated earlier Mary is sometimes seen near Melville cemetery or has asked for ride, she is known in this area as "Mary" or "the lady in white." Again there are no town records in this area of a woman named Mary in the area that was hung, died tragically in an accident, or executed in anyway. No records of ax murder or even news mention of such an event. One would think this would be a news worthy event during this time as it

would be today. Murder was big news, then as it is now, the news covered extensively the murders in Whitechapele England, by the famous Jack the Ripper. If you prefer to bring the news coverage of murder closer to home, we can look at how the papers covered, and in some cases exploited, the murder of a prostitute in New York, named Helen Jewett in the 19th century. If a murdered public woman, received so much media attention why not Mary? There are absolutely no records of this ax murder whatsoever.

According to Kerriann Flanagan Broskey, a Long Island Historian and Ghost Story expert, the tales of Mary have become intertwined and popped up into Legend in the 1960's. After a conversation with her, she told me that oddly the tales were not being told until that time. She could not trace it back any further in time. I am wondering now if the Legends were born out of pure entertainment in an era of war and protests. Civil rights and unrest throughout not only the Island, but the Nation and the world. Looking at this new found information of when the Mary Legends began, it is a case of a good story to tell around the camp fire, in the face of adversity all around the world. War, is an ugly thing and people need an escape even if it is just a scary ghost story for a bit of distraction.

There are many legends surrounding this area some of them include the legend of the cop who pulls over cars. Everything seems normal like a routine traffic stop and he will let you off with a warning, until the cop turns to walk back to his car, and you see the back of his head is blown apart by a large gunshot wound. Again, there is no record of a police officer dying in this area from a gunshot to the head. I have heard this story retold from many people, however, I must note that none of them have seen it firsthand. The story always happened to a friend of a friend, or a cousin or brother, sister etc.. This legend was developed to keep people from speeding down the narrow, winding, country road at night. Again, designed to keep people safe. It is also worth note that this legend is located in the same area as the Lady in White/Mary legend.

Mount Misery: Indians, creatures and insane asylums

Mount misery is located in the area of West Hills, Long Island which is close to Melville. The roads near are Sweet Hollow Road, and Route 110 (also known as Broadhollow Road). The actual road that takes you there is called Mount Misery Road which is also known as Manetto Hills Road. This is said to be is the highest point on Long Island. The area was settled in the 1600's and was mainly a farming community, crops and farm

animals were produced here. It is home to some real history including having played host to George Washington and Benjamin Franklin back in their time during the Revolutionary War, and the birthplace of the poet Walt Whitman. The area also claims to be a hot spot for some very impressive unexplained occurrences and sightings or what some like to refer to as "paranormal history" as well. The nickname of the mount or hill if you will, is not what you might think, there was no misery in the form of tragic suffering. In fact it was the early settlers whom nick-named the point mount misery because it was a treacherous area consisting of steep hills and extremely rocky terrain which in turn made it difficult for wagons to pass over.

When Long Island was purchased from the local Indians (for a few dollars in today's currency), the settlers were told to stay far away from this area. They claimed that there were evil spirits, and menacing forces at work on top of the old hill. At the time, this hill was not known as Mount Misery. There were rumors about a "man-beast" that roamed the hills. The beast was said to have large red glowing eyes and swooped down silently to attack. Then, in 1840, a hospital was built on top of the mount for the insane or so we are told. It was the custom at the time to lock the mentally ill away in homes, but we must also note this was done with the sickly as well. TB Homes were all over Suffolk County. The Legend states that, not long after the hospital was built, there was a fire and it was burned down to the foundation. Many patients were killed in the fire, oh and guess who started the fire? That is right a woman named Mary. About 15 years later the hospital was rebuilt. It was said that the smell of the burning building and the screams of the victims could be heard at night. Strangely, the new hospital burned down only a mere 5 months after being built. They say the hospital was used after World War II to treat physically wounded and psychologically wounded soldiers. The problem you may ask? There was no hospital there. There are absolutely no town records of a hospital in this area, there are no filed site plans and if this building was built in the 1800's which are its claims, there would be a record, or map of the facility on file. Aerial photos of the area do not even show a clearing in that time period, never mind a hospital. The area is about 5 miles around and there are not many places for this hospital to hide. A soldier that has of course never been named claims to have been treated there before being returned to Fort Bragg, NC. The story of this soldier states that upon his return he asked his superior officer what the sign outside the hospital meant when

he saw it read "Area 5." The officer told him "Area 5" is for psychological warfare and not to ask any more questions.

So where did this soldier get treated if in fact he existed at all? My theory is simple; he was at Edgewood hospital located on the property of what is now called Pilgrim State Psychiatric Center. Edgewood was used as a military hospital during that time and although it no longer stands, it was not located that far from Mount Misery. This hospital was located in Deer Park. There was another "insane asylum" located to the north known to this day still as King's Park Psych Center. However, this was much farther away from the area in question than Edgewood. Edgewood Hospital has a lot of stories surrounding it and there is hardly any information to be found. My search began with local newspapers, town and county records, and eventually contacting the Office of Mental Health (OMH), the Office of General Services (OGS), National Archives (NARA), New York Archives, and The Museum of New York. The information that I have been able to gather via various telephone calls to the above referenced departments is like a puzzle, which yearns to put back together. The hospital was used as POW camp, a mental asylum, tuberculosis sanatorium, and eventually hospital for shell shocked veterans of World War II to help them return to a more "normal life." My conclusion to this legend is that, a soldier not from here, would not know the difference if he was located at Mount Misery or Edgewood Hospital. The only way that he would truly know is if the hospital was called "Mount Misery hospital." Edgewood was used as a medical hospital on the grounds; Pilgrim Psychiatric center stood to the rear of the property and is still there today for the mentally ill patients. At the time Edgewood which was called Mason General Hospital, was broken up into sections or "areas" hence him seeing a sign that read "Area 5." There are even video files of treatments that took place Mason General Hospital with soldiers (links to video are located at the end of this text) So it certainly seems that this legend may have a grain of truth behind it, no matter how small that grain may be.

Now let us delve into the maps and ask ourselves why there are two Mount Misery's on Long Island? One is Mount Misery Point which is located off the shore of Port Jefferson in what is called the Village of Belle Terre, and today is home to McAllister County Park. The other is the one called by nick-name only and not labeled on any map of Long Island, this one is located near Sweet Hollow Road or West Hills Park. So is this another case

of confusion? Did early settlers not acquainted with the area very well, misname a point on the map? It honestly makes more sense for the Belle Terre Mount Misery to have this name since there is a large sandy mountain there and it is a coastal spot, where ships may have landed to port to export goods and deliver supplies. There are no buildings on this area in Port Jefferson but it is worth a mention that there are docks located there. There are trails that offer access to nearby homes in Belle Terre. Although many people visit there for camping and never even know it, they are headed out in boats to camp along Pirates Cove which is part of Mount Misery Point, which goes to show that this area is not as isolated as one may think.

As I examine the stories around Mount Misery in Melville, I see not only are there stories of an insane asylum/hospital of some sort, but also a beast in the woods. This creature is called the Mothman (a 1975 book *The Mothman Prophecies* by John Keel also refers to this area). It is said that when you walk down the trails into the woods of Mount Misery, you may hear strange noises, and even be chased out by a large winged man-beast with glowing red eyes! Is the Mothman a guardian of the area? A supernatural entity that watches over the land, keeping nature safe from humans? Probably not. This phenomenon is explained easily enough when I look at the facts. The first stories did not start to circulate until after the John Keel book in the 70's, so where was this creature before that? There are no recorded sightings of the winged creature until after the novel was published. The people that seem to spot the creature or have had some sort of sighting, all are typically teenage kids out in the woods at night, looking for a thrill. The reports time and time again, are young people who are not avid woodmen, but rather kids who were dared to go into the wooded areas of Mount Misery by their peers. So what is this beast? After some research on what types of animals live in that area I came upon one that stood out beyond all others. My findings show what they are seeing is a Great Horned Owl or other large bird of prey. These birds can be enormous with wing spans of up to 60 inches across. They are quiet when they swoop down as not to startle prey and to a novice hiker this can be quite frightening when you are scared in the dark to begin with. Owls also have reflective eyes, where a glowing effect seen if a light is shined at them. The red part, well that just adds to a good scary story to tell!

A tale to tell:

Urban Legends and folklore are a way to tell a good story. This has been shown all throughout history. Our most famous cases can be retold all over the world, case and point - Jesus walking on water. We tell the story still to this day, yet there is no proof this ever happened. Only the apostles were present and there were no outside witnesses. At the risk of offending many people, it is not impossible that account was made up for publicity for Jesus. We all love a good tale, and in the end there may just be a reason why the story started in the first place. I hope all of you who may be reading this that are familiar with Long Island's legends, will look at the tales in a new light. In conclusion some of the tales may have been told to keep people safe, some may have been a warning of bad moral behavior. The imagination is a wonderful thing and we should embrace these legends no matter what the reason for them was.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Thomas Gottin. *Le phénomène Bugarach. un mythe émergent [The Bugarach phenomenon. A myth in Emergence]*. Paris: Œil du Sphinx [Serpent Rouge n°23], 2011, price 16€ Preface by Yves Lignon, Postface by Philippe Marlin. English edition to be published in 2012

Bugarach (189 inhabitants) is a small village of the "département" [or district] of Aude (South-West France) endowed with a majestic mountain the Peak of Bugarach (1230 meters). Since December 2010 the media have disseminated the mayor's worried public statements, thus making this village close to Rennes-le-Château (France's Area 51) famous in the whole world. Bugarach was to be soon invaded by visionaries believing the world was to end in December 2012, as it was one of the rare locations to be spared in the predicted cataclysm.

What I fear most are these people who believe in the end of the world. According to... How to call them? Prophets? Diviners? I don't know... Well,

according to them our village is amongst the land sites that will be spared by the final cataclysm of December 12, 2012! "Bugarach: 'la folie' du 12-12-12" [Bugarach, the Craziness of 12-12-12]" *L'Indépendant* 7 décembre 2010

Or

Several characters, in France and abroad, have rented houses in the village in anticipation of the end of the world predicted in 2012 by cults. Now, according to some "prophets," Bugarach is one of the places that will escape the great final cataclysm (sic!). In brief, the village shall be saved. It even appears that Americans (how many? I do not know) would have reserved tickets to come here... [...] I do not know if this is true. But if so, I'll have to call in the army to seal off the place. I'm not joking. At least since some time, people already come to settle here and they all know each other. Rather strange, no? "Bugarach, seul rescapé de la fin du monde! [Bugarach, sole survivor of the end of the world!]" *L'Indépendant* 11 novembre 2010]

The post face written by Philippe Marlin¹, very good connoisseur of the abundant esoteric production of the area, brings light on the origins of this belief. (:111-20)

Thomas Gottin² has studied the New Age groups that prosper around the Peak of Bugarach. He has centered on the courses and workshops "of mystic-esoteric therapy" (:17) trying to understand the motivations of the participants through the study of their beliefs and expectations (cure of ill-being by interior transformation) and of the relationship experience/beliefs. In these groups the needs of collective validation around an exemplary model on the one hand, of individual religious self-building on the other hand are complementary. The natural environment (here the Peak of Bugarach) is made sacred and plays simultaneously an individuating role, with individual appropriation, and a socializing role, with sharing of experience between the participants. (:18).

Discussing the theories presented on the New Religious Movements, Gottin emphasizes the notion of lived religion³, centered on the pre-eminence of the

¹ The book's publisher. Has founded Œil du Sphinx, club of fans of the "imaginaires" created in 1989 (later developed into publishing, bookselling and cultural organization), and mainly set up in the region of Rennes-le-Château.

² Within the framework of a Master Thesis "Historical and Social Anthropology" September 2010, University of Toulouse Le Mirail (professor Marlène Albert Llorca).

³ McGuire, Meredith. *Lived Religion, Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008

body and of personal development through shared experience in contemporary religious practice. (:27-30).

Mythologies about the Peak are reviewed: re-inventions of the Cathars in the 19th century and their contemporary prolongations; influence of the mythology⁴ about Rennes-le Château and the character of Bérenger Saunière since the 1950s. (:35-55)

The beliefs spread during the workshops are syncretic and eclectic, mixing: shamanism, tantric, yoga, qi-gong but also neo-pagan rituals or reinterpretations of Catharism. Extra-terrestrial mythologies (begetters of the human species living under the Peak or in other close sacred places) occupy an important space. (:56)

The workshops' audience is homogeneous: 80% of women aged 40 to 60. Their prices, rather steep, partially explain this⁵. Some diversification is noted for the lectures and rituals around sacred objects, of shorter duration: 10% aged 20 to 30, 70% of women aged 40 to 60. (:56-8)

Gottin's participant observations have covered two years and he describes in detail his participation to a Winter solstice night in 2008 (on the Fairies trail close to the Peak) in quest of elves and astral vision. (:64-8). His analysis takes the detour of four "typical profiles": two women⁶, two men⁷, bachelors, described and later compared according to 5 criteria: supernatural experiences, spiritual convictions, knowledge and representation of the Peak of Bugarach, expectations towards the workshop. (:71-81) The importance of experience, the contribution of exotic beliefs, the trauma causing a "need for restructuration" (:85) are recalled and complete the analysis of the typical profiles (:82-5) Then Gottin comes back to all the workshops' participants to present his interpretations: they are in quest of meaning, develop from multiple contributions their own personal religious worlds centered on love, harmony, peace. They access them thanks to the rituals suggested by the organizers and the collective experiences lived. The places where the workshops are situated (the Peak of Bugarach being the most important) are sacred and ensure the personal change longed for. (:86-100)

The participants have been able to live, or at least to try to grasp their interior divineness through

the bias of a relationship to nature perceived as sacred. [...]

The relationship to nature is one of the vectors of the concretization of these workshops and of the esoteric beliefs situated in the landscape of Aude. This "département" [or district] becomes, because of its myths (Rennes-le-Château) and its historical past (the imprint of the Cathars), a land adapted to the set-up of the mythology of a sacred mountain. (:101 and 102)

One of the great qualities of this book is the active empathy of the author towards his study's characters. This is not the book of a believer but that of an analyst aiming to understand the individual and collective dimensions of the workshops participants' quest but also of the organizers' activities.

In an additional interview, Gottin specifies that the groups he has studied in the 21st Century belong more to the Next Age than to the New Age:

For me, the Bugarach and especially the mystic-esoteric workshops offered there contain all the elements that constitute the notion of Next Age. The New Age was a protest movement, a collective approach, with a strong hippie and environmental component, the Next Age belongs to a more important syncretism that associates shamanism, paganism, Eastern philosophies, judeo-Christianity, but also science and the paranormal. It is a new paradigm which also asserts the primacy of the individual around the theme of personal development. One talks of transformative experience. Participants are drawn into the creation of their own beliefs around the notion of spiritual adventure. *Nexus*
72 janvier-février 2011

Illustrations, numerous, are of a good quality for a book of limited price. They are not only ornamental, but permit to grasp the importance of the natural milieu in the beliefs and rites surrounding the Peak of Bugarach.

Contrasting with these qualities the frequency of unfortunate expressions, sometimes obscure or yet faulty that impede too frequently the clarity of the complex ideas developed by Gottin. Let us hope that the forthcoming English edition will correct these obscurities and improprieties.

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Paul Screeton. *I Fort the Lore: An Anthology of Fortean Writings*. (Fortean Words: 2011. £12.50

⁴ First centered around a treasure, material of mythical, later all-encompassing

⁵ About 500€ (686\$) per week

⁶ 45 and 47-years-old. One employee in a factory, one clinical psychologist organizing spiritual travels in Egypt

⁷ 44 and 55years-old. One organizer of tantric workshops, one trainer in biodynamic agriculture

The title of this anthology commemorates the fact that, in his own words, Paul Screeton has been “a lifelong folklorist and an avowed fortean of many years’ standing.” He is creator and editor of *Folklore Frontiers*, prior to which (as long ago as 1969) he reactivated and edited *The Ley Hunter*. Since then there have been ten books besides this one. By his own reckoning he has published on folklore both traditional and contemporary, earth mysteries, ufology and a lot of other stuff that only fits into the convenient portmanteau term, “forteana.” A tally of the articles within these categories appears in *IFTL*; I made it about 286.

On several levels, it is a personal half-century record of one writer’s adventures and explorations amid a world peppered with reports of ambiguous events. For, although not a memoir *per se*, *IFTL* is heavily, unrepentantly and inescapably autobiographical, each chapter reflecting the author’s personal interests, preoccupations and opinions. Yet it could stand as a partial record of Fortean’s Progress, recording in brief how some of us have responded to the less predictable manifestations of this world, where the contemplation of Fortean took us and what the very word “Fortean” has come to mean for us.

Retrospective anthologies, be they labelled ‘Best of...’ or something else, are open to the criticism of self-indulgence not to mention randomness; they can appear episodic, disconnected, idiosyncratically chosen and put together and (just as bad) probably very dated. A certain amount of meandering is inevitable, perhaps, but Screeton offsets it by grouping his selection of past pieces under eight headings: Cryptozoology & Evolutionism (7 articles), Shamanism and Esoteric Christianity (6), Alternative History (8), Speculative Archaeology (9), UFOs, Rock ‘n’ Roll and More Leys (4), Folklife (7) and Urban Myths and Media Monitoring (8). Additionally, there are three ‘Interludes’ of a more or less personal nature whose contents bear on the material placed elsewhere in the book. None of the divisions just listed can be considered exclusive or hermetically sealed off from one another. Many of the pieces would fit as well in several categories as the ones to which the author has decided to allocate them for, as he points out, “Pigeon-holing is anathema to any Fortean.” Paradoxically, it is this elastic kind of arrangement, this refusal to insist that something is *this* but not *that*, which helps the contents hang together. And yes, it is a thoroughly Fortean approach.

The articles come more or less as originally published with few amendments but our author has

introduced a measure of updating through his bold-type commentaries. These (mostly but not exclusively located at the end of the piece in question) may give previous publishing histories, observations on how or why the piece came to be written, or offer some afterthoughts, corrections and the occasional self-criticism. Screeton is not afraid to accuse himself of “flaky thinking and woolly terminology” in a piece dating from 1973, for instance: “I now totally dissociate myself from the New Age content I introduced to my article here,” he says, adding: “See how my tone had changed ten years later with the next article ...” That his thinking and expression have been subject to evolutionary change is very important to Screeton. It also works against any criticism that reprinting articles 20, 30 or 40 years old is a pointless exercise.

Controversy and crackpottery – outrageous hypotheses and vicious pro-con argumentation: it is questionable whether you could find more virulent examples of these processes among earth mysteries people or ufologists. (I’d bet on the latter but I could be wrong.) You had better avoid these topics – and forteana in general - if you prefer a quiet life. On the plus side, you could get a pretty good book out of the quarrels and character clashes that have enlivened the arenas of Fortean debate c.1965-2010.

There are speculative archaeologists and eccentric antiquarians, alternative historians and a few jokers, not to mention people who manage to combine all these roles. Some we have heard of – John Michell, for example, whose “mixture of crankery, curmudgeon and common-sense” is remembered here in a series of anecdotes omitted from Screeton’s previous homage, *John Michell: From Atlantis to Avalon*. Others, I fear, will be known only to those who specialize in the more outré corners of Fortean. File here William Rigby and his Wyrley Stones – shall we call them fossils, fabrications or fakes?; Dr C.T. Trechmann, “one of the greatest unsung geologists who challenged the current orthodoxy” with his ‘Forbidden Theory of Mountain Uplift’ (the latter said to be due to lunar attraction, if you were wondering); John Foster Forbes who employed psychometrists in his archaeological researches – “an antiquarian screwball by all comparisons” who nonetheless deserves respect for drawing attention to the mystical nature of prehistoric sites. Ditto for Brigadier-General William Sitwell who took the application of mystical apparatus even further during a weekend at Carnac, amidst whose prehistoric stones he saw “huge walking lizards ... black four-footed

things as agile as antelopes..." and "a vast white city that might have been the New Jerusalem."

Yet there are people who believe they are quite capable of seeing things like that more or less whenever they like – believe they are capable of invoking things like that even of enabling us, less talented folk to see them. These unusual ones we sometimes call shamans. *IFTL* has its due quota – modern shamans or as Screeton calls them, 'suburban shamans'. He once planned a book of that title and here you have a few of the personalities who would have furnished chapters for it.

IFTL captures the flavour of the late 60s – early 70s, which was the era in which our fortean interests really began to assert themselves, and the years which followed. It isn't too much to say that it reproduces a few real Fortean classics including some which failed to transfix Fleet Street. The Curse of the Hexham Heads, described here in Screeton's summary for *The Unexplained* of 1982 from his own longer account of personally conducted researches is a classic by any standard. Remaining with curses or 'jinxes' and closer to the present day, you have the spectacularly unlucky locomotive 47299 and the Hollinwell mass hysteria (or not) case from 1980 – still puzzling, still arousing contention. My personal favourite, though I cannot say why, is the article on the apparent UFO beaming anomalously down on the Baptism of Christ in an early C18 painting by Aert de Gelder.

But at some time in the 1980s a new bias – a new way of looking at the anomalies that Fortean presented – began to catch on. Perhaps and without completely ruling out the idea that these things literally and truly happened – sometimes, at least – there was the suggestion that people only *thought* they happened or even pretended to believe that they had happened. This invited a dichotomy most plainly seen in ufology where the 'nuts and bolts' view of extraterrestrial phenomena was challenged by the 'psychosocial' hypothesis wherein the UFO experience occurred. However debatably, on a non-physical and psychological level. Elsewhere, the words 'phenomena' or 'accounts' might be replaced by 'narrative'. The Fortean event was viewed here as a kind of fiction attested to by spurious second- or third-person evidence. It was, arguably, a kind of modern or recently-distinguished folklore: And so we picked up a new terminology: contemporary legend, urban legend, urban belief tale and (much later and not very accurately) urban myth.

Initially, the vast majority of these contemporary legends did not feature such blatantly supernatural phenomena as ghosts, lake monsters or any of the

other anomalous events which Forteans recognized as belonging within their field. They dealt comic mishaps, misunderstandings, sexual irregularities, frantic coincidences and so forth, but within a short space of time they were looking askance at and even ridiculing UFO contacts, cryptozoological animals, mystery attackers. Nor were they fixated on the purely oral – formerly one of the chief qualifications for defining valid folklore; they were as keen to borrow from the mass media since it was quite obvious that much of the material was emanating from that super-active source. Thus almost any event that posed as being a little outside the normal limits of credibility might be a modern legend. The more often you came across a particular type of story, told and then retold with only minor variations of detail, which usually were outside your power to verify, the more likely was it that you were confronted not by fact but by contemporary legend.

Paul Screeton had been collecting the folklore of Hartlepool and district for some years. A lot of it would have been recognized and approved of by the more conservative among the Folklore Society. His 'Mock Mayors of Middleton' - "one of folklore's lesser-known and least explored outposts" - was an original and valuable study of a satirical local custom, albeit one that had recently fallen into abeyance. I fancy it would not have been out of place in one of that learned society's publications; his 'Virgin On The Ridiculous' or 'The Man Who Ate a Domino' (both included in the 'Folklife' section of *IFTL*) likewise, maybe. But he was also drawn to the more contemporaneous aspects of the subject with which traditionally-orientated folklorists have always had problems: the media's power to create and disseminate stories, the validity and credibility of non-oral material, the topicality of much of the material within this matrix, not least the focus on rock music, movies and other forms of popular culture. All this and an aside from forteana was a real challenge to anyone for whom Folklore meant Merrie Gestes of Robin Hood and hot cross bun customs.

And of course he was also in the paranormalist camp; as we've heard, he defined himself as both a lifelong folklorist *and* an avowed Fortean. Problems there, too: Folklorists and Forteans seemed incompatible even when they made concessions to one another. It became known and admitted that not a few of the narratives which appeared in *Fortean Times* were contemporary legends while folklorists were prepared to speculate that sometimes legends can come to life, more or less as per the legendary script; that,

consciously or not, imperfectly or not, people might act out the plot of an urban belief tale. The question of whether or not Folklorists and Forteans should regard one another as Friend of Foe was still very much alive in November 2008 when Screeton lectured on that topic at the Fortean UnConvention.

IFTL contemplates 'Urban Myths & Media Monitoring' in its last formal section. A very early piece, 'Elephants, Penguins and a Cosmic Chameleon?' from *The Ley Hunter* 79 of 1978 expressed the writer's concern about "a new breed of tale designed perhaps to confuse our reactions to folklore." At this time EM books were prone to include folktales in ways that tended to suggest that legends might have explanatory value as sort of unofficial historical data. Stories like the elephant that destroyed a VW (or some other small car) by sitting on it or the notorious stolen corpse yarn appeared to satirize the idea that folklore had any value. Interestingly, Screeton chose to reprint the article here "as it not only shows my naiveté in 1978 ... but because although I was making tentative steps towards a full-blown, over-arching focus upon contemporary legend to the almost complete exclusion of earth mysteries and traditional folklore, the academic study of urban belief tales was itself only in its infancy."

True enough, and quite a few folklorists were feeling very uneasy about the validity of this contemporary or urban legend genre. Did it really have any? Was it really folklore? After all and allowing for a due amount of unlikely-sounding things genuinely occurred from time to time and some of them got into the news; people's teeth might indeed pick up taxi-cab or police car signals ... perhaps. And if they did, it was not permissible to claim they were folk-fiction of any kind. For as Screeton wrote in a 1993 piece on 'Dubious Transmissions' it might be that "every 'new' motif which surfaces in the media, however bizarre or unlikely, will eventually be played out in reality." Then there were difficulties in the flimsiness of some types of the new folklore. They were brief – too brief to pass for sustained narratives and so rumour-like as to encourage some to call them 'rumour legends.' They were frequently media-driven, fixated upon celebrity and pop culture. All this left the more academically minded folklorists disinclined to involve themselves in contemporary legend.

As a journalist and accustomed to interviewing the transiently famous – as a fan of popular music and aware of its occasional propensity to lean towards the esoteric and the occult – Screeton had no problems with seeing folklore tendencies in the media's handling of pop culture. He could see, for example, how sleeping

or undead culture heroes like King Arthur and Charlemagne might transmute into James Dean or Jimi Hendrix who, contrary to reports in the world's press, had not perished in terrible car crashes or from the aftermath of a druggie binge, but were living on in covert hideaways free from the pressures of megastardom (albeit hideously disfigured in Dean's case (see *Resurrection Shuffle ... Rock 'N' Roll Olympus*). He noticed too that rock performers seemed peculiarly drawn towards UFOs, alluding to them directly in their song lyrics and/or claiming to have seen them. See also the article following which suggests an odd correlation between country rock star Gram Parsons and UFO contactee George Van Tassel who built a giant rejuvenating dome on the Space People's instructions. Then there were still more who were interested in ley lines.

Through short pieces like these, Screeton covered the world of rocklore which itself was basically an annex of what could be called Celebrity Lore. The media's unrelenting pursuit of personalities already in or about to impinge upon the public's consciousness and the way in which they or their agents were disposed to increase that level of awareness by manipulating it through dramatic, outrageous, comic or maudlin revelations, created a particularly febrile type of rumour-like, legend-like narrative genre. How should folklorists respond – if at all?

"For folklorists, repetition equals falsity," said Screeton in his 'Friends or Foes?' lecture to the 2008 UnCon. (reproduced here complete with asides to the audience). "For Forteans, repetition equals veracity" – though he noted this could not be taken as a hard-and-fast rule when there were folklorists like Dr Thomas Bullard, who admitted that the lack of variation in aspects of UFO abductee narratives "suggests an underlying core of real experience" while repetition in stories recurring in *Fortean Times* (the man who visits a brothel and finds his wife/daughter is the star performer in it, for instance) justified doubts about their strict credibility.

It will be interesting to see where Folklorists and Forteans go over the next few years. It will be interesting to see where Paul Screeton goes, too. As he writes towards the end of *IFTL's* near-on 300 pages, the last six years have proved for him "something of a renaissance, so a retrospective such as this seems timely. If nothing else, it proves I've been active for a long time and been around a few blocks – history, archaeology, natural history, geography, traditional folklore, earth mysteries, flying saucers, cryptozoology,

ferroequinology, tavernology, breastology, contemporary legend..." As I hope to have shown already, there is a lot to be said for this type of retrospective.

[This review has been condensed by the FTN editor from a longer review essay.]

Michael Goss

ISCLR ONLINE

For those unaware, ISCLR has a new website, at www.contemporarylegend.org. We are trying to make this a more dynamic place, and are interested in your input. Any suggestions, contributions, or complaints can be directed to Ian Brodie at ian_brodie@cbu.ca.

Our email list is a going concern: subscribe at isclr@folklore.ee.

We are also on Twitter: follow us [@ISCLR](https://twitter.com/ISCLR)

We also have a very active Facebook presence, having recently switched over from a "page" to a "group." Visit www.facebook.com/groups/ISCLR to join.

PLUGS, SHAMELESS AND OTHERWISE

Andrea Kitta, *Vaccinations and Public Concern in History: Legend, Rumor, and Risk Perception* (New York and London: Routledge, 2011) is available from all fine retailers. David Hufford says "Andrea Kitta's book on public concerns about vaccination is timely and profoundly important. Her account of the nature and sources of public concerns over vaccination is remarkably fair and well informed."

Aurore Van De Winkel, *Gérer les rumeurs, ragots et autres bruits* (Liege: Edipro, 2012) is available from amazon.fr. Christophe Roux-Dufort says "Despite the apparent disorder and the supposed irrationality of the objects she studies, Aurore Van de Winkel employs a scientific rigour to chart a course that combines to create a rare book that addresses both analytical and educational concerns, giving the work both a freshness and an undeniable accessibility."

Gail de Vos, *What Happens Next? Contemporary Urban Legends and Popular Culture* (Santa Barbara: Libraries Unlimited/ ABC-CLIO, 2012) will be a welcome follow-up to the author's *Tales, Rumours and Gossip*.

GÖTTINGEN PROGRAMME AT A GLANCE

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
9.00 – 10.30		Registration	Session 4 Winick/Samper Van de Winkel Janáček Clarke (Chair)	EXCURSION	Session 8 Palleiro Kvartič Graliński Janáček (Chair)	Session 11 Conn Kalmre Kalda Palleiro (Chair)
10.30 – 11.00		Coffee break			Coffee break	
11.00 – 12.30		Session 1 Tucker Meder Campion-Vincent Shojaei Kawan (Chair)	Session 5 Lindah Dégh Main Brednich (Chair)		Session 9 Puglia de Vos Kobayashi Meder (Chair)	Session 12 Brodie Dadunashvili Henken Tucker (Chair)
12.30 – 14.00		Lunch break			Lunch break	
14.00 – 15.30		Session 2 Spetter Marques Clarke Henken (Chair)	Session 6 Rouhier-Willoughby Aleksievsky Burger Milspaw (Chair)		Session 10 Ware Green Burger (Chair)	
15.30 – 16.00		Coffee break			Coffee break	
16.00 – 17.30		Session 3 Masoni Zires Beetstra Lindah (Chair)	Session 7 Milspaw Beyer Bayduzh Conn (Chair)		General meeting	
18.00 – 19.00		Tour of Town				
19.00	Tour of Streets. (A second tour might be arranged.)	Reception at the Academy of Sciences Theaterstr. 7	Library Tour		Conference Dinner	