

From the Editor

The last twenty five years have witnessed an explosion of interest in the folk legend. Media reports and the popular books of Jan Harold Brunvand have brought an awareness of urban legends to the mainstream; more scholarly endeavors like the pace-setting legend research of *Indiana Folklore* (under the editorial direction of Linda Dégh), Wayland Hand's *American Folk Legend: A Symposium* (1971), Richard Dorson's *America in Legend* (1973), recent conferences and publications of the International Society of Contemporary Legend Research, and regional text collections such as Ronald Baker's *Hoosier Folk Legends* (1982) and Thomas Barden's *Virginia Folk Legends* (1991) all attest to the particular vitality of legend studies in folkloristics. This special issue of *Folklore Forum* is offered as a contribution to that vibrant scholarly tradition.

The first article, Jean-Bruno Renard's "LSD Tattoo Transfers: Rumor from North America to France," an English version of the essay that appeared earlier as "Les décalcomanies au LSD: Un cas limité de rumeur de contamination" in *Communications* [Paris] 52 (1990), examines reports in France of children's cartoon stamps (or tattoos) tainted with LSD. The study addresses the significant relationship between legend and rumor, and the role of print media in legend/rumor dissemination. Though Renard reviews the historical development of these reports, tracing the North American roots in the early 1980s and later diffusion through France, his study centers on the folkloric dynamics and sociological implications of the rumor. Jeannie Thomas provides a legend case study exploring stories of a haunted dormitory at Indiana State University. Thomas's texts, drawn from the ISU Folklore Archives, recount details of a "legendary barfing ghost" at the university's Burford Hall. Situating the dated texts from the archives within their social and historical frame, Thomas considers their political undertones. In addition, she ingeniously employs Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain* (1985) as an analytical model, connecting the legends of Burford Hall with elements of pleasure and pain. Stories about the women's dormitory, Thomas argues, "connote pain and the inarticulate irrational," while narrators experience "the pleasure of creating something knowable" with the legends. In the final article, psychiatrist Richard M. Gottlieb utilizes the legend complex of the European vampire as a tool for analyzing clinical material. Gottlieb posits, for example, that characteristic features of the legend complex such as corporeal preservation and certain vampiric compulsions interrelate symbolically with psychic reactions to object loss. Gottlieb relates a few clinical vignettes about one patient, and through

psychoanalysis he illustrates how the symbolism elucidates that case. An example of applied legend study, Gottlieb's work heralds new and promising territory in legend research. He amends the article with an annotated bibliography of psychoanalytic literature concerning vampire fantasies.

In this issue's installment of *Open Forum*, I am especially pleased to include an exchange between Bill Ellis and Linda Dégh. Ellis's piece, provocatively titled "Why 'The Hook' is *Not* a Contemporary Legend," addresses two issues currently of central concern among legend scholars: 1) the debate over what constitutes the generic boundaries of contemporary legends ("The Hook," Ellis explains, can be viewed as a legend *parody*, and thus it may be out of place in the "canon" of contemporary legends); and 2) the role of researchers' personal interpretation in legend study. In her response, directed primarily to the topic of interpretation, Linda Dégh elaborates on the motivating forces behind *Indiana Folklore*. The dialogue of these two noted scholars is, I think, an important contribution to the discourse on contemporary legend—exactly the kind of exchange that *Open Forum* was designed to accommodate.

Finally, with this issue I end my tenure as editor of *Folklore Forum*, leaving the editorial responsibilities in the very capable hands of Theresa Vaughan and Ross Veatch. My heartfelt thanks to Theresa and Ross, who, as assistant editors, kept the journal (and Trickster Press) running smoothly. Also, I am indebted to Clover Williams and Barbara Hummel for their patient and skillful handling of the book review operations.

Folklore Forum is planning a special issue on nationalism. Individuals interested in submitting articles for that issue are invited to send letters of inquiry to the editors.

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