# AMERICAN LEGENDS JOURNAL SELECTION—FALL 2014-15

**The Hopi Emergence**

**By Kalliopi Stavridaki (1563201200256)**

The myth of “The Hopi Emergence” can be easily related to today’s society as it gives us an insight on how our world is symbolically formed. Moreover, it can dictate life lessons that help us improve ourselves.

The myth proves that the world is created by the synthesis of antitheses. Taiwoa gave the first world harmony and unity but also wars broke out. Culture coexisted with greed and the desire to possess everything. Our society is also based on opposite forces. As Edmund Burke has mentioned, based on his theory of the sublime that comes in contrast with the beautiful, there is dark and light, pain and pleasure. There is good and evil. What is true though is that people can determine, thanks to our capacity of thinking, to what extent the “sublime” will be part of our society. The way we use the gifts that are given to us forms our living.

Also, the theme of feminism can be used to clarify the myth. Kokyang, the Spider Woman, was created by Sotuknang as his helper. The fact that the male deity gave life and name to the female one displays the notion that the woman had less power than the man. Actually, if there was no man, woman would not exist. What is more, Kokyang was his helper, not the chief. She worked following his instructions. This shows that men were thought to be more powerful and capable of being responsible of serious duties than women. However, if we look closer, we notice that even if woman was created in order to help man, she played a significant role in forming the world as she gave people the ability to talk and made the world a beautiful place to live in. Thus, woman’s cleverness and taste for beauty are implied in the myth. The irony that the woman is practically the leader although she is given little liberty can also be seen in some Cretan families where the men consider themselves as the chiefs of family but in reality women are those who take the final decisions in important issues, though they are thought to be weak.

Moreover, the song of creation underlines the pleasantness of human life. Amazing landscapes with flowers, the joy of life and the happiness of humans are sung. This song can be closely related to Walt Whitman’s poem “One’s Self I Sing” where he sings for the beauty of life and shows his enthusiasm, prefiguring Freud’s dictum that pleasure is non-negotiable (so Freud in his way sung for a long life of joy too).

What is more, we all have heard that we should think before we talk. In our myth, thought is given first to people and then the sound follows and, as a result, the ability to talk. This could suggest that it is wiser to think first and then talk as this is the natural order.

Finally, our myth has an anti-racist message as when the world is created we see that the differences of people are treated with respect. This reminds us that we have all been born as equals and regardless of our shape, color, ethnicity or gender, we all have the same rights to life.

Consequently, this myth helps us understand our society better and makes us think upon some vital issues of life.

**The Hopi Emergence**

**By Stefanos Despotis (1563201200049)**

Reading the Hopi myth of emergence, I couldn’t help but feel a very specific blend of astonishment and sadness. Regrettably, this was my first genuine contact with Native American culture. I say genuine, because, not at all surprisingly, the Western world has painted a pretty false picture of the Native Americans, one tinged by racism and obscured facts.

The first thing that struck me while reading this myth was how organic their existence was, in relation to the environment and the land they inhabited. Having grown up in a society so out of touch with nature, with its components withering away in blocks of cement and centering their lives around something as absurd as currency, I immediately found myself conflicted; between the subcutaneous cultural programming that every single person in the western world is subject to since they’re born and a kind of jealousy, nostalgia for something I haven’t even experienced or a deja-vu feeling of sorts, something that I can only explain as man’s inherent tendency to return to the One-ness with nature. I found myself recalling spontaneous bursts of joy of a day in a park or somewhere similar and the immediate comedown, the sudden and sullen realization that I would be returning to my little cell of a life in a while. In a world of GMO’s and international fast food chains, reading of the Corn Mother triggered an uneasy spout of laughter. In a world of skin cancer and ozone layer holes the size of Australia, reading about the “father Sun, solar god of the universe” made me cringe. Comparing this beautiful narrative to the Christian dogma, the peaceful Hopi to the colonists that massacred and marginalized the native inhabitants of these lands, even comparing the western notion of land property to its lack thereof in the mind of the “Indian”, reveals a heart-wrenching story of malice and wrong-doing that would fill the heart of even a moderately thoughtful human being with shame for being a part of the species that would perpetrate such a thing.

In spite of all that, I found it interesting that traces of the same thought patterns are present in Native American myths, such as the Iroquois creation story, and Christian religion. It seems that the concept of good vs. evil, light vs. dark, pure vs. grotesque is universal and consequently can be acknowledged as an integral part of the human psyche. It’s funny, however, and not in the humorous sense of the word, that the European populations turned out to be obsessed with power and control over others, while the Native Americans didn’t.

**The Hopi Emergence**

**By Panagiota-Konstantina Balta (1563201200164)**

 Creation myths are always worth studying. That's because they reflect the need and curiosity of every culture to explain the greatest mystery of existence. Who I am, why I am here and who made me are few of the main unanswerable questions trying to be answered through symbolic narratives. What is more interesting is not that every culture has a myth so as to explain how things began but the fact that the explanations provided let us know many things about their religious and cultural beliefs.

First of all, what surprised me the most is the existence of female figures in the myth and especially of the Spider Woman, a female Goddess, very important to creation. In Christian culture, the only existing God is a male and in Greek philosophy there are women as creators but men are the dominant ones. A common trait also found in Christianity is the beginning of the world with nothing but a God having good intentions and wanting to build a world that looks like him. On the contrary, in ancient Greek thought Gods are arrogant, selfish and have flaws, just like humans. Their power is only about physical superiority and not spiritual one, like in the Hopi and in biblical myth.

Whats' more, the Hopi emergence reminds me of religious christian elements. For example, Taiowa, Satuknang and the Spider Woman are like the Holy Trinity. Sotuknang is called the “nephew” and Taiowa is the “uncle”, while in Christianity there is a Father and a Son, so in both cases the relationship between these figures is put on family terms. I also think that Sotuknang is like God's speech which commands and creates. The phrase “it is very good” exists in both narratives showing that the world is made in goodness and resembles its creator.

The major differences of these cultures though is the nature of humanity and its relationship with creation and the divine. In the Hopi story, humans didn't alienate God and there is no reference to sin. On the contrary, they live according to His will and are equal to creation, which they respect. On the other hand, in Genesis, man who wanted to be independent, away from his creator, dominates and destroys nature. Another difference is the fact that the Hopi deify natural elements, like the sun, while in Christianity nature is the creation not the creator.

To conclude, every culture has a myth which shows the human need to explain. These myths have many common features, proving that as humans we have a common way of thinking but also they present a lot of differences setting the limits between cultures.

**The Iroquois Creation Story**

**By Joanna Proestaki (**1563201200225)

While I was reading the “Iroquois Creation Story” I couldn’t help but notice some of the similarities it bears with the Creation story given in the Genesis. There are certain parts though where they differ and I believe this is due to Native American’s beliefs in equality, their peaceful spirit and their deep respect for Mother Nature.

Some similarities that I wasn’t surprised to find is the existence of good and evil in the world and their typical association with the light and darkness; the evil entity that tries to sabotage people’s happiness and well-being and the good entity that first creates the universe, then humanity, then eliminates the wicked entity and saves the humans.

It is also important that the creator is not presented as being good all the time. The Iroquoian text calls The Good Twin deceitful, since he lies about how he can be killed, making his naïve Bad Twin confess the weapon that can put an end to his own temporal life. That deceitful “Good” Twin is also the one who buries the Bad Twin inside the earth, just as the merciful God in the Bible is the one who judges you when the time comes and punishes you if you are found sinful. So, both stories agree on the dark side hidden inside of humanity’s creator.

Now, I find the differences much more interesting. What I liked the most about this story, is the fact that it makes pretty clear some of the gender discriminations the Christian doctrine supports. In the book of Genesis, Adam is the first to be created and Eve is the one later made from one of Adam’s ribs, just to keep him company. Eva is also the one to commit the original sin and to doom mankind to misery. In the Native American’s story though there is a respect towards both sexes. The woman is not only the virgin who carries the humanity’s creator; she is the one who later becomes the sun, the moon, the stars. It is thanks to her that life can exist on earth and it is thanks to one of her sons that humans are created and animated.

Respect is given not only to women but to nature as well. In the Iroquois Creation story the Good Mind appoints tasks to the natural elements, so for example we see that it is the thunder that waters the earth with rains. Nature takes the credit it deserves and the story is not just about a great merciful God who does everything himself (yes, God is a guy in the Bible).

Another difference I find interesting is the fact that the Good Mind sets no restrictions to humans. He protects them from his evil brother and then leaves them alone to live their lives. There is no apple that he asks them not to taste, no rules on how to live. And since restrictions usually come with punishment, in the Iroquoian story there is no fear of punishment at all.

I read the story enough times, just to be sure that I’ve got most of its parts. And the truth is that even though I do get the story, or at least I think I do, I don’t get humans. No, actually I don’t get religious people, the ones who try to explain everything with religion, the ones that **fight** over religion. It just seems so stupid. We are all people, we all need to believe that there is both good and evil in this world ( just as these two coexist inside us) and we all need to believe there is someone powerful out there (or up there… whatever) that will have our back if we are loyal to him/her/it. Every religion on this planet is based on these two needs. But yet, instead of bring people closer, they bring them apart…and why? Because there are always people behind every religion that want to use this whole concept in order to gain power. And we are the stupid ones for letting them do so.

I mean, just think of how many things we could have accomplished if we didn’t actually pay that much attention to what Christianity says ( apart from the lives that would have been saved during the crusades and witch hunts and everything) . Feminism might have been developed many years ago. People could have made their lives so much better if they just read a fucking book instead of going to church every Sunday morning for so many hours. And the thing is, this is not just about Christianity. Just look at what happens with Muslims and their stupid Jihad thing…Sacred war? What the hell is sacred war? How on earth can these two words form a logical phrase together? ….

So anyway, to make a long story short, I am not saying that we should be against religion. We need religion, or at least some people do…. If only we realized how much we need the power of knowledge as well …

**The Iroquois Creation Story**

**By Eirini-Evangelia Mouzouraki (1563201200161)**

The Iroquois Creation Story is more or less a cosmogonic myth unwrapping the tale of the creation of the world and its contrary substances; Good and Evil. It is due to David Cusick that this myth can be studied and enjoyed while making it easy for the contemporary reader to come in contact with the Native American culture.

Generally speaking, each and every civilization throughout history, either individually or collectively has established its own creation story adding each time its own unique characteristics and special details. This cultural mosaic of the world and variation of how differently and surprisingly grand and infinite people perceive the universe in relation to the tales mankind had to come up with raises the question; how is it possible for the human mind to run miles ahead and create places they have never been to so as to just quench their thirst for spiritual adventures? The answer to that question is quite simple; men are in desperate need of faith to a superior existence. This superior existence would not have to engage in sexual intercourse so as to reproduce; it is all about “instant existence” like twins in the tale, Jesus in Christian religion or even Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu in the Zoroastrian Story of Creation.

Besides the “instant existence’’, the coexistence of Good and Evil and the battle of domination is also rather intriguing. In the Iroquois Story of Creation, the twins argue even before they are born while the Evil twin decides not to be born in the normal way leading to his mother’s death. In Kalymnian folktales, if women had an unusual pain in their sides before giving birth to their children, the older midwives used to believe that the baby to be born would be “evil-spirited” and do harm to the family. These women used to call those babies to be born “ennakhia”, meaning sinister children. The bad-minded twin Enigonhahetgea corresponds to another bad-minded twin, Angra Mainyu, of the Zoroasrian Story of Creation who also tried to boycott his brother’s work of creation by bringing to life reptiles and other noxious creatures. Engorio and Ahura Mazda respectively opted for life and light, that is why in the final battle between good and evil in both tales, good gains the victory whereas evil sinks down to eternal doom, ignorance and darkness and becomes the Evil Spirit.

The universal belief that the Evil Spirit inhabits obscurity underground is accompanied by the existence of a whirlwind, finding it quite noticeable in various Greek folktales, as “aeriko” meaning something evil that comes with the wind. My homeland, Kalymnos is full of folktales about the evil “aeriko” time at night when people and especially young ones shouldn’t walk alone. All cultures tend to make an attempt to explain even the unexplained. That is the main reason why tales, legends and myths are created, offering the pleasure to the thirsty explorer, folklore adorer to fill their need to find every part of the world. I do believe that we are still lucky to have old people craving to narrate a whole life, grand-parents to tell their stories about the past, about spirits, ghosts, nature, their adventures in the sea. If only we grew old and did the same.

**From The Winnebago Trickster Cycle**

**By Sophia Maria Nicolopoulou (1563201200181)**

Through myths and tales tricksters are known to be gods or spirits who play tricks on other people either for their pleasure or to obtain something of interest. Used vastly by authors, they could also stand as a satirical symbol of a whole nation or of certain human behaviors and stereotypes. We may refer to the protagonist “From the Winnebago Trickster Cycle” as a strong example of the last statement.

First of all, by gathering up some animals and staying together, the Trickster questions the standard family constitution. It turns more complicated when, after being turned into a woman, he sleeps with each one of his roommates and becomes pregnant. Apart from the dubious person-animal coitus, an important question rises: who is in charge of deciding and controlling the number of sex partners a person under consent might maintain?

Another question derives from Trickster's short gender reassignment surgery. He turns into an artificial woman by manufacturing breasts and a vagina from some elk's organs. One could suggest that the male or female sex is unique and cannot be reproduced-- otherwise, it leads to a monstrous result. Thus, he/she rejects the existence of more than two sexes and any possible transformation from a male to a female and vice versa. However, if we claim the artificial breasts and vulva as a sample of scatological humor, then the Trickster actually defies the limits between the male and the female sex. Therefore, everyone is free to choose their sex and sexual orientation during their lifespan. He is a male, but he turns into a female with ridiculous and quite disgusting processes. Then, he expects and bears three children from his fake vulva. As a result, he woos the Chief's son with virtual and fabricated female parts in order to get food supplements. If that's a metaphor for any shallow erotic relationship and the food stands for money, we also detect a mockery against any relationships based on financial reasons.

Finally, what first came to my mind, after reading the last scene was Aristotle's view on humans as “political animals” by nature: humans cannot possibly live without other human beings and if they do, they are either monsters or gods. Even if the Trickster has human needs and qualities, in the end, by not being able to conform to any social or biological norm and by giving in to his desires (for one, eating the bulbs from the bush despite the warnings and expelling gas as well as excrement) due to his naiveté and selfishness, he could never reside among other people; he is either a monster or a god, a mocking spirit who tends to avoid any development of human relationships. In the beginning he does have encounters, but he ends up escaping into the woods.

Consequently, while he satirizes many conventional patterns, he elaborates on taboos and unacceptable human behavior; only a spirit like him, after all, could stand as the people's mask for anything banned but sometimes desirable.

**The Trial of Martha Carrier**

**By Branislav Mišura (1563201400248)**

The Salem Witch trials is an example of how false testimony and lies, the lack of justice along with the belief in superstitions can bring about one of the most tragic events in history. A key moment of the Salem Witch trials can be found in the trial of Martha Carrier. The number of people that had served as witnesses against Carrier may seem astounding; however, it has to be taken into consideration that there are several reasons why so many people testified against an innocent person.

For the witnesses not accused of witchcraft, yet still testifying against the accused, their motivation can be fear to the actual belief that the misfortunes that had happened to them were the devil’s doing. And since a witch was considered as an agent of the devil on Earth, it made sense to accuse a witch. But there is also other motivation, such as material gain or antipathy towards the other person.

 For example, a simple neighbour’s feud can be a nail in the coffin for the subject of prosecution, such as the testimony of Benjamin Abbot mentioned in “The Trial of Martha Carrier”, where Abbot said that “this Carrier was very angry with him, upon laying out some Land, near her Husband’s” (Mather & Mather, 155). In this case, the trail is an opportunity for the neighbours of Carrier to settle the land disputes, a brutal yet effective solution. In testimonies of Allin Toothaker, John Rogger and Samuel Preston, Carrier is taken responsible for the death and strange behaviour of cattle and missing cows. All of those people testified that they had some prior differences or an argument with Carrier.

The fear for your own life is also among the reasons of false testimony. Having a witch as a neighbour was dangerous, for the neighbours of a witch were often targeted as potential witches themselves. Since witchcraft was believed to spread among others quite easily, defending the person living next to you who is suspected of practising witchcraft may seem suspicious to the authorities.

The victims also testified against one another, and this can be attributed to the methods of interrogation, which often consisted of various forms of torture. Many times, the accused person would rather confess to their accusations, accuse others of witchcraft, or die than to experience more interrogation. Against such odds, the subject of the prosecution had almost zero chance of clearing himself of the charges, which in most cases ended in a death sentence.

 The testimonies of the witnesses show in what hopeless situations can an individual get to when faced with corrupt courts and an entire community driven by fear, greed and anger. These tragic and unforgivable trials played a part in shaping the legend of witches to the image we have of them today and we should never forget that in the beginning there was only just an innocent victim.

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**The Trial of Martha Carrier**

**By Argyro Koutantou (1563201200120)**

“The Trial of Martha Carrier” reveals many characteristics of the community in the 17th century that can be easily related to other similar events of different eras and today’s society as well.

Martha Carrier was indicted for the bewitching of certain persons. Pleading not guilty to her indictment, many witnesses appeared who not only made the court sensible of a horrid witchcraft committed upon them, but also testified that it was Martha Carrier or her shape that tormented them by biting, pricking, pinching and choking of them. Even, her eight year old daughter, Sarah, admitted to being a witch since she was six. Richard and Thomas Carrier also confessed to witchcraft and blamed their mother for making them witches. Numerous others confessed that she also made them witches.

The Salem witch trials were not a unique event. Most people in the early modern world believed in the existence of witches who gained supernatural power by signing a pact with Satan. In continental Europe where witch hunts were much more common than in America, thousands of people were executed, often isolated and impoverished older women who were regarded as a drain on community resources. While, different historians have advanced theories that Martha Carrier was caught up because of a fight between Andover ministers, or because she held some property or because of the selective smallpox effects in her family and community, most agree that she was an easy target because of her reputation as a “disagreeable” member of the community.

Hypatia, the Greek Neoplatonist philosopher in Egypt was also a woman who was murdered by a Christian mob as she was accused of witchcraft. Until the election of Cyril, bishop of Alexandria in 412, Hypatia had enjoyed the support of community leaders. It is said that the envious bishop, having seen the hordes waiting to greet her, ordered her death. Christians, at any rate, appear to have been responsible for a particularly vicious attack. Thus, we understand that in cases of Hypatia and Martha Carrier witchcraft was the cover in order for those two women to be eliminated. Both of them had some kind of power that was probably thought to be malicious and that’s why they were condemned to death.

What was unique about the Salem witch trials was the number of people who were accused and convicted. The special court set up in Salem allowed the use of “spectral evidence”: testimony from victims of a vision that they had of the person who was tormenting them. One could say that this kind of “kangaroo court” exists even in the 21st century, as there are cases of venal judges who have led many innocent people to jail.

**Bigfoot**

**By Stefanos Despotis (156320120049)**

Just what is it that monsters have that is so appealing to human communities; especially during the past, when society hadn’t yet transformed to the centralized, urban landscape that we know today, whole towns and villages seemed almost too eager to find an outside element, a menace, or a threat to believe in and sometimes obsess over? Without wanting to neglect urban legends, of which there are many, it seems to me that it is the rural communities, most of all, that are more likely to conjure up these kind of legends.

The legend of Bigfoot is engraved deep not only in the American mind, but also in the mind of people from all over the world. To me this can mean two things, without one necessarily crossing out the other. The first thing that came to mind after reading of the ‘universality’ of the Bigfoot (or Yeti, or almas etc.) is that it’s probably some sort of glitch in the evolutionary process, a scrapped schematic in nature’s grand teleological plan. However, that does not wholly explain the popular attitude towards such an alleged existence, which is conflicted, to say the least. People have spent their entire lifetimes in pursuit of this elusive being, and while sometimes the public is presented with -not entirely plausible, but certainly worth examining- findings, most or all of them are dismissed as irrational or even childish. However negative the reaction may be though, it remains a reaction and a very strong one at that, which can only mean that the public is deeply, almost metaphysically interested in these various legends. If we examine this behavior chronologically then, we will discover that legends such as the Bigfoot have always provided early rural communities (educational and cultural connotations included) with an outlet for the existential anxiety that they experienced. It could very well act as a manifestation of human curiosity for the unknown or for the origin of humanity itself and of the simple but vital belief that there might as well be some things that exist even though we can’t quite put our finger on them. Later on, in an awkward attempt to struggle with modernity, human communities started severing their ties with such beliefs, albeit not entirely and evidently half-heartedly. This claim can be supported by the numerous legends existing even today. The other day, I read an article online about this man called the North Pond Hermit. This person (who actually called Thoreau a ‘dilettante’--http://davidkanigan.com/2014/08/25/thoreau-a-dilettante) lived a life of seclusion for almost thirty years in the forest of Central Maine. What is interesting though, is the effect his existence had on the surrounding communities. He gradually became a man of legend, with his elusive figure haunting the people’s consciousness and winter pantries for three decades, without anybody seeing him, effectively allowing himself to join the American legend pantheon, until very recently when he was apprehended.

**Bigfoot**

**By Aikaterini-Danai Nika (1563201200177)**

Bigfoot as a creature and a legend, although at first seems to resemble childish, fear-stricking beings such as the bogeyman, on a more profound level could be interpreted as the innate human fear of the unconscious. Living among the dark trees of the forest, Bigfoot although never seen, is up until our very days mortally been feared.

In appearance, one could say that he looks like a gorilla or a very tall, humanoid, but nonetheless animalistic being— perhaps a primitive man, based solely on the basic instincts of survival. Some people thoughout the years claim to have caught a glimpse or two of this beast; others have found traces of it, but none could openly admit that he had confronted Bigfoot in the flesh and bone.

This, humanoid scary beast, therefore, could be seen as our own primitive self, our own unconscious living in the dark "forests" of our mind. We sometimes tend to wander and contemplate in our feelings and emotions or we tend to take short self-discovery trips throughout our lives— but when, rarely, we come face-to-face with our basic instincts, we become disgusted or scared, promising never to stroll through that part of the “forest” again.

Like another Dr. Jekyll, people condemn Mr. Hyde's - and in our case Bigfoot's - raw temperament and hope to banish him from their lives forever. But as unfortunate as it may seem to some, this separation could only be achieved through death— for we are bound to live with our unconscious, with our instincts. No matter how much effort we put into taming them, Bigfoot will never disappear. His presence is going to linger on, haunting unconsciously our being, leaving nothing behind but small “tracks” of its existence, like a foot print.

Many go out and venture to seek him in the wilderness, or others meet him by mere luck. Nonetheless, their reaction is always the same— they stumble back in fear, awed, unable to believe the self-realization they just experienced. This is perhaps why we perceive Bigfoot as something foreign but somehow also related to the human physique; it is this denial of identification with the creature, in spite of our spiritual revelation.

Bigfoot, consequently, may represent our mortal fears and our primitiveness also; those aspects of ourselves that we usually keep away from our everyday lives, as they disturb and annoy our peace of mind. We may try to exterminate him, but Bigfoot at the end of the day will never stop standing in the forest, hiding away in shame, behind the thickness of the trees.

**Bigfoot**

**By Angelos Spais (1563201200245)**

Bigfoot is a creature which has been described in different accounts throughout the world with different possible names, but almost the same characteristics. So, what is it about this specific creature, whose existence is highly doubted, that makes it so prevalent in many different cultures?

It would be meaningful to examine its nature, to understand whether it belongs to the realm of the imagination or to reality. Although there is no scientific evidence of its existence, there are many accounts that all speak of a similar creature. Scientific research was conducted as well to track this cryptid, but none of it has proved anything. Therefore, it seems that it is rather a mythical creature created by the collective imagination of humanity.

It is important to understand the possible reason for which it has been attributed some specific characteristics. It might a connection with people's primitive nature, with a past long forgotten, with which they come in contact the first ones who visited America. A savage creature that lives in the forests. People have abandoned this nature, because it is wild and dangerous. They are supposed to be civilized and are distanced from such monstrous creatures. They do not accept a part of what they really are. Thus, they might have thought of a monster with human traits in order to abominate and look with interest and fright at its nature and not theirs.

People are fascinated by the possibility of Bigfoot's existence and many have tried to track it down. It seems that in some way it inspires people. It is a story that is enjoyed both by children and adults. It is interesting to know about a creature that is a close relative to the human race/ a primitive ancestor. Also, the fact that there is still no physical proof of it feeds people's imagination. It makes a lot of them want to explore the area where it is supposed to live. However, there are many false accounts of Bigfoot. Many people misinterpret some evidence, because they want to prove its story true or because they cannot find rational explications for certain facts. Others have faked evidence on purpose, because they want to take advantage of it and show off, or even doing it to promote a movie.

It is apparent that there is a desire to track down Bigfoot. That might be for scientific or other reasons. Nevertheless, if people found Bigfoot, it would probably serve as an attraction. People want to see strange animals. They even enjoy seeing people with physical anomalies. It makes no difference to them. Freaks, monsters, animals, all will serve their amusement in a circus or anywhere else. It is like they do not have a soul and the can be exploited in any possible way for the good of humanity.

Finally, is Bigfoot an enemy or a friend? Many people think of it as a dangerous monster that lives in secret in the forest and will probably attack any human that comes in contact with it. It is a story used to scare children so that they behave well. However, this creature could be seen as a friend who would just try to get in contact with other creatures.

To conclude, Bigfoot is a legendary figure that has made lots of people interested. It is crucial to realize all the possible reasons for that interest and see how our own nature is interlinked with the legend.

**Bigfoot**

**By Chrisoula Stampolaki (1563201200250)**

Giants, ogres and humanlike beasts consistently recur in mythology, folklore and art. Vast, unexplored forests are normally their birthplace and habitat. Dwelling on questions whether they are real or fictitious one should remind oneself that humankind in its primitive form was also born in such environments, in the thickets of trees and bushes. However, humans have not grown into giants, albeit their sharing the same natural origins with them. So, should one suggest that there are other environments with special conditions to rear such monsters? This argument is reasonable enough to raise a suspicious mind.

I will not elaborate on the validity of such claims but rather on indirect representations of the bestial presence. In Freudian terms, these humanlike monsters could be interpreted as the “id”, the instinctive unconscious that cannot be ruled by logic but by the animalistic drives of pleasure and destructiveness. Bigfoot and its kind impersonate the primitive “id”, while the fact that they are dominantly identified by their footprints or their howls and never known for their speech could contribute to the Freudian analysis. Likewise, the forest, as their natural habitat, could be analyzed into a symbol for the place where hidden and suppressed desires thrive and where our concealed unknown self survives. It is, in additional terms, the source of the sublime where terrifying and mysterious parts of ourselves hidden deep could trigger feelings of awe when discovered.

Many explorers have made their life’s quest to find such abominable creatures such as the Bigfoot. Perhaps what has driven them in fantasizing its figure and existence is their need to trace the hideousness in themselves or their need to return to human basic instincts, governed by the laws of nature.

Another point of reference that stirs up questions is the singularity of the beast which is mostly found in isolation from its own kind. One is to wonder, when the female giant was recorded, where was the male present? In the text, no attempt is made to reason with such suspicious thoughts. The research stops in front of the findings and does not expand any further. A female beast sounds appropriate and right, leaving space for no additional discussion now that there is proof. It seems that, although the researcher is of the superior and dominant species, he still cannot escape the bars of the patriarchal prejudice.

The existence of an unknown presence in unexplored lands has been a very attractive theme over the centuries, having expanded even to extraterrestrial domains. However, a psychoanalytic or socioanalytic approach of the myth might offer far more valuable evidence than some trace of some doubtful footprint on the dirt.

**The Skeleton Hand**

**By Stefanos Klisiaris (1563201200097)**

The Skeleton Hand is the legend of Jacob Schutz, a hunter on a mission to find and kill four supernatural beasts in order to prove his worth as a hunter. The story follows a classical myth structure: a hero, armed with magical weapons, on a quest to hunt down a number of monsters. Joseph Campbell’s heroic quest cycle can easily be seen here; from the very beginning, Schutz has left society and embarked on his quest, living alone, along with his two companions: his dog and his horse. His weapons are a snaphaunce given to him by his father, a rifle, a long knife and, most importantly, a handful of magical, “homing” silver bullets. After he is done with the first three monsters (which could act as trials), he enters the “belly of the beast” when he encounters his ultimate prey, the White Hart; he is completely powerless, and even his never-missing silver bullets fail him. When the stag approaches, he gains the ultimate boon of realising that it “belongs to God” and that he should never have hunted it. His “final battle” is his endeavour to cross the ledge while he is being dragged into the abyss by the undead. He survives, but he is forever scarred, as it is sometimes the case with mythical heroes.

While the legend borrows from European folklore (Wild Hunt), it is also heavily influenced by Christianity. Jacob himself is a pious, God-fearing man who prays frequently. His silver bullets were made by elders who prayed over them, with the addition of being enchanted by a witch. However, isn’t witchcraft considered to be an unholy practice? Could this then mean that he is relying on unholy power? Furthermore, even though the preacher warns him (much like an oracle) that the White Hart is only meant for God, he continues in his quest to kill it; essentially, he is hunting a divine being because of his pride (hubris). The stag itself has a golden cross on its forehead, meaning that it could represent God and his divine power. So, in a sense, Jacob comes to contact with God when he looks upon the stag. Finally, it could be that the abyss is an entrance to hell, and the skeletons are trying to take him with them.

If this legend was to be examined in a Native American point of view, the focus would not be in God and Jacob’s piety, but in his relationship with nature. Jacob lives off the land, hunting what he needs to survive, and having only the most necessary possessions, but is he truly close to nature? He is not. It is for selfish desire and pride that he seeks those four beasts which he actually does not need. And it is interesting that the closer he gets to his ultimate goal, the more he disrespects nature. He does use the catamount’s fur as a blanket, replacing the two wolf pelts he already had. However, he uses the Loup-Éclair’s skin as a decoration for his cabin. Worst of all, he takes two months transporting the docile Gormagunt to civilisation, where it ends up being paraded from town to town as an attraction. And he does not even get the recognition he wants; his name is not even mentioned by those who make a profit out of the Gormagunt. Finally, he wants the white stag’s antlers as trophies. But when he encounters it in his weakened state, he cannot do anything to hurt it, and he is stunned by awe when he sees it up close. It could be that the White Hart, which he cannot hurt, is the spirit of nature, which appears before him as an epiphany after all he has done.

In the end, whether it is about God or nature, Schutz’s tale is a classical legend through and through.

**The Skeleton Hand**

**By Foteini Kokkinopoulou (1563201200098)**

The story of “The Skeleton Hand” appears to be most interesting in terms of possibilities of analyses. In this journal I shall try to cover the aspects that had the most effect while the story of Jacob Schutz unfolded. Firstly, the description of Jacob’s lifestyle and physique seems to be the archetypal figure of the first settlers in America, and certainly a recurring motif in legends such as “The Loup-Garou”. His robustness is the tool to discover the vast and unknown land of the United States. Jacob’s entire life is dedicated to hunting legendary animals and, in the process, discover places no white man has ever been before. The first three legendary beasts were caught relatively easy compared with the fourth. All of them required special preparation and immense effort, but the White Hart was certainly the most difficult challenge. Perhaps this course through the “monsters” resembles the course of life. There are always hardships, “winters” and “monsters” but through strength of body and soul humans move on.

Another interesting, although typical, point was the role of Indians during the hunt of those beasts. While hunting the Gormagunt, the Indians seem to be afraid of Jacob’s powers, so they agree to help him. Needless to say, without their help Schutz might not have been able to capture the Gormagunt, but he is still described as superior to the Natives. The Indians have settled beyond the reach of any white man, but they are dealt with as inferior, as shown in the extract: “This is a sacred fool seized by madness […] His powers are great, his anger terrifying. We must humor him and do as he says”.

The fourth creature is by far the most intriguing and shocking. The forest where the White Hart lived was almost impossible to reach and nearly cost Jacob’s life. Of course there were plenty of warnings but Jacob decided to continue his journey, thereby committing a kind of hubris. This stag was never meant for humans, so he reached far beyond his mortal powers, as if he tried to reach God himself. Perhaps the stag stands for a form of God integrated in the body of Nature, hence the Hart. Its silky-white colour brings to mind angels, its antlers that resemble an oak tree Nature, and the cross Christianity’s God. Even one of the mightiest hunters in America cannot defeat the forces of Nature. He only bows to them, to God. The journey back was even more unsettling, with invisible forces that might represent the devil making their appearance. During this scene the fear of death prevails, but thanks to his mind and courage Jacob managed to find his way back. The skeleton hand truly poses a mystery as to why it was selected. It was most likely part of a whole skeleton, Death maybe, concealed in the total darkness to deceive his victims in the tiny ledge. The fact that he returned as an old man was also quite peculiar. Old age and loss of sanity might be the price he had to pay for being arrogant and trying to prove he was stronger than anything in the world. His death certainly does not fit theoretically a glorified hunter, but it is the retribution for his sinful actions. Jacob Schutz’s final phrase, “The stag is calling me”, demonstrates that he was changed by this event, which was also the messenger of his own death. In general, the myth evoked many different feelings and was deeply unsettling in most parts, although it strongly promotes the element of patriotism for American citizens.

**The Skeleton Hand**

**By Constantina Stasinou (1563201200254)**

The Skeleton Hand is a story about a white man, called Jacob, who came as a settler to the New Land. While reading it I was impressed with the intricate way in which legend, history and religion are combined.

To begin with, Jacob lives as a solitary man in a forest. I believe that there is a reason why a forest is chosen as the habitat of the man with the “eyes of a madman” and “the scarred body”. Nature is mysterious, incomprehensible, powerful, sublime and unbeatable. Any man able to co-exist harmonically with the most essential components of nature was thought to be mysterious, superior and in a way protected from all the evil that common white people were afraid of, while having a kind of sacred way of living. So, nature is necessary to motivate our imagination over a legendary figure like Jacob. From my point of view this character is a legend not because of an impossible accomplishment, but because his actions and his adventures offer a life lesson to the reader. In fact, at first he is portrayed as an indifferent madman, disorganized and fastidious only over his weapons. His diet is also mentioned which is consisted only of meat, something which seems to me like an attempt to make him look impure and spiritually contaminated.

Another impressive point in the story is when one of the citizens of the nearest town criticizes his behavior as non-Christian. At first I disagreed with this man, because anyone can practice their religion in the way they choose and unfortunately Christianity and many other religions have certain rules you have to follow in order to become accepted. However, while reading the story I realized that Jacob’s behavior was indeed non-Christian because his actions came in contrast with his initial aim. He came in America seeking freedom of religion and, even though America was a melting pot in which everyone could practice their own religion, he chose to live alone, isolated as if he was deported. His true aim was to prove his power and become known by killing or finding the mythical beasts of the forests with the ultimate goal to find the White Hart, a beast, the personification of God, a sacred entity for the Indians.

At this point we have the ancient Greek element of hubris. He goes against God, he is obsessed and overestimates his powers. Where is his religion now? He came for freedom and he seeks glory by depriving another living creature of its own freedom. Hubris is punished by death. The image of the stag drives him mad and haunts him until he dies. And this also makes me wonder if God finally wants us to learn from our mistakes or if only one mistake is allowed for us to be punished and condemned. I disagree with the essence of hubris. If God has all the virtues, if he wants us to be virtuous and if he is all forgiving and caring then we must have the chance to try to be like him. Of course perfection is not achievable, but why should anyone who tries to ameliorate himself or his experiences to the most perfect extend be punished? I believe that all legends like ‘The Skeleton Hand’ are created to prevent bad human spirits from discovering their powers and trying to cause harm.

I also recognized some trends of early modern literature that could be identified in this story, like Romanticism. The text is full of strong feelings and a variety of emotions of the main character: loneliness, fear, agony, eagerness, satisfaction, disappointment and mainly all the haunting and the nightmarish last days of Jacob. Signs of death are prevalent all over the text: the abyss, the darkness, the flash lightning the pale moon, the storm and finally the skeleton hand. And here comes the significant role of nature, while not only is it connected to a sublime experience, God reveals himself as a stag, but also ‘speaks’ to the protagonist through all the natural phenomena, causing awe, respect and proving its superiority. Such elements are connected with Animism, a belief having a powerful basis in Native American religion.

Last but not least, I’m quite persuaded that “The Skeleton Hand” aims to convey certain messages about the Native American way of life and thinking. An impressive point in the story is the reason why Jacob was left isolated. Even though both whites and Native Americans considered him mad, the natives thought he was sacred and the Whites dangerous. So the cultural difference arises: Indians respected what they could not understand and the Whites feared it and thus wanted to destroy it. A brief historical reference is also made when the protagonist, the White man, commands the Indians to help him transfer the monster and they do, due to fear of his madness or power. Everyone finally becomes rich because of the beast’s presence and no honor is attributed to the input of the Indians. This is exactly what happened in reality between the Whites and the Natives.

**“The Skeleton Hand”**

**By Sophia Spyrakou (**1563201200247)

The legend of the skeleton hand illustrating the life of Jacob Shutz, the fearless huntsman, could be interpreted in various ways.

First of all, Jacob being the son of a Dutchman who fled his country in search of religious freedom represents in a way all the white settlers that arrived in this New World seeking a better future. The fact that his speech is a mixture of English, German, French and Indian is probably an indirect implication of the coexistence of all these different races in the vast American continent. Also, his constant lust to discover every legendary creature mentioned in order to conquer them and satisfy his feeling of superiority corresponds to the white settlers’ wish to gradually devour the hidden secrets of the new land. The legendary creatures function here as symbols of the natural elements and obstacles European settlers had to face during their quest. The Indian tribes which he comes across during some of his journeys seem to fear Jacob’s power, wrath and abilities, and they always reveal to him the information he seeks, a fact that underlines the great power that white settlers had over the Natives.

It is worth mentioning that Jacob is described as a “pious” and “God-fearing” man, which could be a reference to the Puritans, whose primary goal was to establish the New Jerusalem in a “pure” America. His way of living as a hermit evokes public disapproval as people question his being a good Christian, though he does not hesitate to defend his own choices.

Furthermore, his adventures have certain elements of the heroic quest pattern as Jacob is always motivated by an inner call to adventure and a sole aim to capture or kill the legendary beasts. During his journeys he is confronted with obstacles but due to divine or human help he finally achieves the initial goal, returns back home as a winner and at that point the pattern repeats itself. However, his last journey to discover the Great Hart is the most characteristic example of the quest, considering that the protagonist goes against a force that is out of human reach, a divine force. Jacob’s decision to offend this power and in a way surpass the boundaries of human nature is a hubristic act on his behalf and that is why nemesis will follow. He may finally survive from the abyss that threatened his existence (Belly of the Beast) and repent but his punishment was to come out of it as a different man, old and unable to utter a word until the day of his death.

In conclusion, this particular legend could be read both as an allegory of the European settler and his adventures in the American continent and as a charter myth that teaches the destructive consequences of human greed. Elements of Christianity and the puritan ethic are also dominant here.

**The Skeleton Hand**

**By Kateřina Kováříková**

At the very beginning of *The Skeleton Hand* it is showed that Jacob Shultz was different from the other huntsmen. He was an ambitious man, who was not satisfied with ordinary – he wanted something special. In the story it is said that „ a small game was not for him. Only the fabulous and supernatural drew him on (18).“ In relation to these facts, this paper argues that Shultz’s chase for these supernatural beasts is in fact a reflection for a man chasing after a delusion that completely ruined his life.

Jacob Shultz’s chases of these supernatural creatures show his determination and willingness to sacrifice some things in order to fulfil his quest. This is demonstrated on the hunt for the Loup-Éclair. Shultz prepared a bait and then waited for three days for the Loup-Éclair to show. In addition he also searched for the beast’s tracks a whole summer long “living himself like a wild animal, sleeping under overhanging rocks or in caves (19).” This shows he was able to go through some time of suffering in order to kill the beast.

After that there is a change. When Shultz gets to his third target, the Gormagund, he decides not to kill it, but “take it alive and bring it back with him among people as proof of his prowess (20).” Suddenly, it seems like Shultz no longer hunts for himself, but now he wants to show and prove to the others. Thus, when he searches for the last beast, he refuses to give up. He wants to kill the White Heart so much that he turns deaf to the warning of the others and he is also determined to catch the creature at whichever cost. In one moment Shultz exclaims: “For the Great White Heart I would give my soul to the devil, dem Teufel (21)”, even though he takes is back immediately, this moment demonstrates how desperately he wants to kill this last creature. It also marks another change in the development of Jacob Shultz’s character. Here he becomes truly obsessed. This resulted to the state when “after months of wandering, man, horse, and dog had been reduced to skin and bones, worn out by their exertions (21).” Still, Shultz continues in his search for his last prey. Later on, as his search for the White Heart continues, it is stated that “Jacob was turning into specter, his eyes glowing with fever, his hands trembling (21)”. The fact that his condition was getting worse actually reflects the bad impact of his obsession with the White Heart.

Then, when he finally finds it, Shultz realizes it was never meant for him. This is the turning point when he realizes he was searching in vain. The only option for him is to go back, however, instead of returning home, he turns mad. This might reflect the fact that he went too far in his chase after the White Heart and his obsession reached the point when he couldn’t get back to his previous state, both physically and mentally. Thus, Jacob Shultz sets an example of a man who became obsessed with his dream in order to prove himself to the others. His story also shows how badly one can end, if he blindly goes on and does not listen to the reason. And the fact that he did not catch the White Heart also reflects the fact that he was chasing a delusion which, in the end, completely ruined his life.

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**A Loup-Garou, or a Windigo, or Maybe a Carcajou**

**By Evangelos Petsalis (1563 2010 00216)**

In “A Loup-Garou...” we follow the footsteps of Baptiste, a hunter, and his companions. Through the descriptions of their rugged persons, their lives and customs, extensive description of their belongings and weaponry, and of course the English-French hybrid language they use, we are easily immersed in their story.

At some point later, Baptiste gets lost after leaving on a whim to find food (interestingly using the foreshadowing sentence “I'm *wolfish* for meat”), and his friends eventually start tracking him. As they move, they notice his footprints gradually being replaced by something animalistic, to the extent of being monstrous, until they find him cornered by the Loup-Garou, a chimeric beast with a devil's face; a werewolf, as Antoine calls it.

The progression of the footprints is something I find very intriguing. As the hunters distance themselves from their tepees (human civilization), they plunge themselves into the wilderness and, as a result, what they encounter is more and more otherworldly to them, more distant from the human culture, to be precise. This is a symbolism of man's struggle against nature, both as a conqueror and a conquered person; as they leave humankind, they enter a realm not their own and are consumed by worries and fear. To further illustrate is, Baptiste's misfortune can be interpreted in the same way. He leaves to kill game for their meat (as a conqueror), but he is easily outmatched by the Loup-Garou.

What about the beast itself, though? The Loup-Garou's mere existence is shown to be really vague; the three hunters even have different names for it, one from each man's culture. This, I think, means that the creature's proper name does not matter at all, instead it transcends individual cultures. Given my previous point, I would go on to say that the Loup-Garou is an embodiment of nature itself, comprised of many different parts, different images of evil and fierceness, as if the narrator wanted to exaggerate these qualities and attribute them to nature. It only makes sense to do so; what drives our fear as human beings is the unknown, the Other. In order to identify ourselves, we need to use something else as a contrasting point to construct ourselves against. That is why, after being targeted by the Loup-Garou, Baptiste gradually starts to turn into one himself; he has distanced himself too much from human civilization, and is now being consumed by the force he brought himself face to face with.

Finally, I cannot help criticizing the way in which the Christian element is involved in the story as a deus ex machina. The Loup-Garou is warded off with the use of a cross and a Bible, and Baptiste's legs, which had turned to wolf legs, miraculously reverted to almost normal with just the prayers of the hunters. I understand that this happens partially because of the fact that parts of this story come from similar European stories, and were probably fused to create this legend.

But this inclusion, I believe, creates more questions than answers; if the story so far has painted the Loup-Garou as an evil entity, and the Christian Church is the good entity that banishes the evil one, in what position does that place the humans, and what is their role in connection to the Church? Drawing from the connections of symbols I have used so far, the humans, as agents of Christianity, want to prevail over nature and leave their own mark on the land. This notion I could connect to the first traces of Christian presence on America, namely, the Puritans, and their quest for the New Jerusalem on the virgin land. In their efforts to inhabit, and later conquer, the, at times hostile, terra incognita,their Christian faith was probably projected as their greatest guide, and savior in all their misfortunes.

**The Windigo**

**By Myrto Fontanillo-Martineou (1563201200277)**

The fear of the unknown and the different have always plagued the human mind and driven him to become even more beastly than the beast he fears. The windigo myth could very well be interpreted as an allegory of the relations between white settlers and natives at the time. The windigo, the savage beast that brought fear and death would (of course) symbolize the natives in the eyes of the settlers. Their proximity with nature upset the white "civilized" settlers that had learnt to fear anything natural, as did their pagan beliefs and rituals. The circle of life, the return of the spirit in a different form after death, much like reincarnation was unthinkable to those that believed death to be the end of their earthly lives. Even the appearance of the windigo, as a wolf with no body, and the legend of the wolf-man that came with it, could simply be natives that wore a wolf's skin.

The way the windigo is treated by the settlers, resembles the way the natives were treated. Due to their different characteristics and their non-Christian beliefs, as well as the fact that they indeed did threaten some of the white settlements and fought ferociously against those that tried to drive them away from their land (even if they didn't believe in ownership of the land they did have some sense of territory) natives were treated as savage monsters, that had to be exterminated. The same goes for the windigo, who supposedly deprived men of their senses and brought death by touch only-a detail that probably had to do with the various diseases that both the natives and the settlers carried and were lethal to one another. It had to be killed.

Religion played a big part in this misunderstanding between the natives and the settlers, viewing the natives as advocates of the devil and appointing the Christian settlers missionaries of God, destined to kill them. Although preaching about love and tolerance, in practice they encouraged segregation between themselves-the pious servants of God- and the natives, who did not believe in "God" and thus were devils. Even amongst the settlers there were several cases of segregation on a religious basis (at least it seemed to be on such a basis) like the famous witch hunts, to diffuse internal tensions. Being different even in appearance, the natives were an easy target since people have an innate fear of the "other".

So, instead of trying to coexist, religion promoted the extermination of the "other" as a success in the name of God. It fed stories like the windigo myth and gave them a religious background so that they would be easily accepted by people and then, proposed a solution. And it was a very brutal one. It proposed the extermination of the "devil" through a ritual, with chanting (prayers), spell books (page of bible) and a midnight confrontation with the beast that fall quite close to the same pagan, witchcraft rituals it so passionately tried to banish. But aside from the ritual itself, it would welcome the killer of the beast as a hero, rewarding him for his work. So religion essentially encouraged slaughter, as long as it was on the right "side".

The fear of the "other" with the help of religion, got blown out of proportion, poisoning the hearts of the people and turning them to savages. They became the same as the savages, the beasts (at least that's how they viewed the natives) they fought against. And the windigo myth, was created to instill that fear in the people's hearts without ever questioning it, and without realizing just how inhuman this fear made them act, despite proclaiming to be virtuous and tolerant.

**The Windigo**

**By Eirini Stamouli (1563201200249)**

The myth of the Windigo is not an unfamiliar one. It doesn’t only rest on the stories of the Native and European Americans, but can be found even nowadays in modern fiction, always as the evil spirit of the past that remains malignant and ready to kill. As a creature, the Windigo is not clearly described. It seems to be a combination of a ghost, a spirit and a creature in flesh that defies even the supernatural rules. Its presumed existence is full of contrasts. It appears at once existing and not existing. Some of its features seem to touch human logic, like its teeth, eyes and claws, but its shape as a whole remains somehow obscure.

The creature does not inflict fear only by its appearance. As an idea, the Windigo contemplates the taboo of cannibalism. On a psychoanalytic level, the creature goes against social rules and gives in to one of the instinctual urges which makes it both fearful and awe-inspiring. This explains in a way why humans can be curious about this society defying myth. It also creates the fear that humans are “consumable” and unimportant while society structures itself upon the presumed superiority of the species.

But the interesting point of the myth lies in the manner the creature can be killed. At this point we can observe how deeply religion has infiltrated even into myths. We see a step by step guide of how to actually kill an idea whose entity cannot be verified scientifically or otherwise but at the same time it can be destroyed by human means if those are somehow sanctified.

The mix of religion and mythology, of speculation and existence sets the precedent of new myths to come. The pattern is the same: silver bullets, the Bible, objects blessed by priests and only on special religious occasions are found in many myths, the most popular of which are the vampire tales. Also, we should keep in mind the way in which Christianity and its instruments have treated cases of the so called “possession” of humans by evil spirits and the tools used in exorcisms.

Finally, we should comment upon the fact that the way to kill the Windigo described in the myth is not optimistic at all. By the end, it seems almost impossible for a human being to destroy the creature, although he/she has the “right” instructions. It all depends upon details and even the slightest slip can ruin everything, something quite possible if we consider how fallible humans are.

The myth contains an air of futile attempt. It reminds that you can try but it is most likely you will stumble and fall. So, in a way, we could compare the Windigo to the Bogeyman and its effect on society and behavior. They both remind humans they’re confined by their nature and that it would be better not to carve new, unexplored paths as the fear of an unexplained fear lingers beforehand.

**The Windigo**

**By Agapi Charitaki (1563201200280)**

Canadian writer Margaret Atwood points out that, for those who believe in the Windigo creature, it is far from a laughing matter. No one can outrun it, or outwit it. In one of her lectures, “Eyes of Blood, Heart of Ice: The Wendigo”, delivered at Oxford University, Atwood described the Wendigo as a cannibal, with a heart of ice, eyes that roll in blood and lips blackened and eaten away. The Windigo Legend was prevalent in the Northern United States and Canada.

This fearful creature with thesharp teeth, terrible claws, and eyes which shootlightning is represented as a vampire, feeding on blood and human flesh, and also as Medusa, scaring people to death. The Windigo creature, which causes fear, terror, desperation and eventually death, introduces us to the condition of cannibalism. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Freud claims that Law begins from anthropophagia. For Freud, the Oedipus complex is the basis for civilization. He believes that civilization begins when the sons decide to kill their father. It is a kind of patrimony. On account of that, the law is needed, in order to protect us from eating each other, insinuating that the Windigo is a kind of Law which prevents us from cannibalism and forms what we call super-ego.

According to Louis Marano, in these places, when winter comes, people develop the culture-bound syndrome called ‘Windigo Psychosis’. That is basically when a human being, with a choice of regular food, craves human flesh. This interpretation points to the belief that white men want more than they actually need. They are always hungry, literally and metaphorically, no matter how much they consume. Moreover, this eternally starving condition leads to imperialism and exploitation which can be considered, metaphorically of course, as forms of cannibalism. Communities constantly want more and more, in political, territorial and economical terms and never consider themselves as having enough.

In my personal interpretation I see the Windigo as a synecdoche of Hell. In terms of Christianity as a religion, the Windigo creature is a punishment for all the sins that human beings have committed, (cannibalism, selfishness, gluttony) People, who have sinned are transformed into Windigoes and suffer for eternity. Most importantly, the Windigo figure was “used” as a bogeyman to scare people. This fear of the Windigo led to a balanced life with respect towards others.

Furthermore, the legend of the Windigo has been used in popular culture mainly as a comic villain, defeated by Wolverine and the Hulk and as an evil creature on the TV Shows “*Charmed”* and *“Supernatural”.* Lastly, the Windigo is known to be killed in only one way, involving a religious ritual and insinuating that religion is the only solution in order to outfight the temptation of Satan and avoid spending eternity in hell.

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**“He Ate All the Democrats of Hinsdale County”**

**By Irene Pappa (1563201200214)**

At first, the text “He Ate All the Democrats of Hinsdale County” appears as a story regarding the great lengths people are willing to go to in order to become rich. The legend is based on a real person, Alfred Packer, who was accused of cannibalism and, eventually, sentenced to forty years in prison. His “deep-set, shifty eyes” reveal an untrustworthy man with a hollow expression. Nothing will stop him in his search for gold.

Packer and his companions, who are not a bunch of “goddam red savages”, do not take into consideration the warning of the Indian chief against their dangerous venture. The Indian’s wife seems to be a kind of prophet, as she is “plagued by nightmares and premonitions”. The fact that she places a light on a pole to guide a “freezing and famished poor soul” to safety is ironic, since Packer is portrayed as neither famished nor poor, but rather as a murderer.

While reading further into the story, the implications cannot be ignored. It becomes clear that the text refers to the constant feud between the Democrats and the Republicans. The order in which Packer’s five Democrat companions die suggests strategies used to incapacitate the general public and render it easily manipulated. Through Packer, these policies are defined as Republican. Swan, who is killed first, is the eldest of the group and not physically able to “put up much resistance”. The next one, middle-class Miller, is “young, tender and fat”, suggesting that he is lazy, gluttonous and “liberal”, thus an excellent source of food. Humphreys and Noon do not manage to “stay awake” to save themselves. They were neither vigilant enough nor as “succulent” as Miller, implying that they were members of the laboring class. Bell is the last one fighting for his life, representing the people eager to protest for their rights in any way possible, the people who do not stand to be subdued and silenced. He becomes mad with hunger, no longer interested in gold. He is reduced to a famished animal, “baring his teeth like a wolf”, ready to pounce.

Nevertheless, Alfred Packer is the only one to return home. As he finds the light up on the pole, he comes “full circle”. This circle suggests a heroic quest, but is Packer a hero? Were his deeds actually heroic? Did he really slaughter and kill those men, or was he just a scapegoat in this story used as a propaganda mechanism against Republicans? Was his vow of silence in prison an indication of guilt? The text ends interestingly enough with the phrase “Democrats are now in the majority in Hinsdale County”, proclaiming the victory of the Democrats and the birth of a place free of Republican threat.

**La Llorona**

**By Zoe Bogea (1563201200171)**

Murderous female monsters are common in many mythologies. Ghosts like la Llorona and the Owl woman are encountered in Native American legends but we, also, find similar creatures in Greek mythology, such as Lamia and Medusa. An interesting point about these female figures is that they all hate men or all have been betrayed by them. A common characteristic is a thirst for revenge, symbol of female rage against patriarchal society and its oppression upon woman. The bloodthirsty monsters, either kill men or kill their children. Could this infanticide be women’s revenge against men, just like Medea killed Jason’s children because he abandoned her for another woman? Children are the basis of family and by extension, of society; murdering them, women hit the new generation, the future of society. Such an atrocious crime can disturb the balance but, it will show women’s strength and importance, too. From the other hand, the offspring are man’s road to eternity and immortality; they are man’s mark on time. Murdering men’s offspring, women, actually, steal man’s access to immortality and mock their selfish and arrogant nature.

According to other versions of myths, like la Llorona, Lamia and Owl woman, the loss of their children has lead them to the monstrous act of devouring others’ children and especially the wandering or misbehaving ones. These tragic female creatures symbolize the oppressive, over-protected mother who does not let her children grow up and be independent, because of selfishness and insecurity. They are, also, symbol of the authoritative mother, who castrates her son. Other symbolic function of these myths is the use of death from drowning in lakes or death from vampire-like creatures’ attack. At this point, we see the twisted image of motherhood and how pure and selfless maternal love can turn to be oppressive and destructive, just like water-a purifying and vital element- can have lethal properties, too. These myths outline the image and psychism of maternal figures, who have experienced a fate worse than death, and show how fragile balance between rationality and madness is.

**''Johnny Appleseed''**

**By Aikaterini Vlachaki (15 63 2012 00021)**

Johnny Appleseed is a legend that makes us reconsider the true meaning of being a hero. He is a pioneer precisely because he does not belong by any means to the machoman type. He is the caretaker; there is no need for him to show off his power and dominance. Instead, he promotes the idea that true heroism lies in self-sacrifice and modesty. Apparently, there was need of a peaceful hero who whould do more good than harm. America of that time had experienced enough of the bloodbath because of the conflict between the settlers and the natives. Consequently, Johnny Appleseed left an alternative legacy; instead of killing, he chose to plant and give life.

 In addition, the tale could be considered a metaphor of the way that the settlers dominated the American land, in the sense that they did so by ''planting seeds''. The myth of Johnny Appleseed provides the terraforming explanation. This suggests that the settlers had managed to leave their trace across the land, but still it propagandises that they did so in a peaceful and harmless way. From this perspective, it could be said that the myth projects the need of the settlers to deny the bloody past.

 There are also patriotic references, propagandasing the superiority of the white Americans by accusing the Indians and the British of atrocities and ruthless behaviour. Despite that fact that Johnny appears to have created friendly bonds with the Indians, they are often described as hostile and savage throughout the myth.

 Johnny manages to redefine the notion of Christianity. Religion is probably a major theme in Johnny's myth. Not only does Johnny worship God, but he seems to support the true meaning of being a Christian; Johnny is considered a hero and people want to treat him in such a way, but he rejects all the benefits of being a hero. He does not wish to be treated as special; he chooses to walk barefooted to support other families, he respects nature and animals as if they are equals, and he even considers it atrocity to kill animals in order to eat. Therefore, he creates a sharp contrast to the superficial kind of worshipping that people are used to. From this perspective, it could be suggested that the folktale is didactic, an unofficial kind of guide of how Christians should truly behave.

 This description of Johnny's behaviour could lead us to the fact that he even resembles Jesus, as he chose to refuse to give in to everyday pleasures. An interesting point could be that Johnny's sacred mission is to plant apple trees. Taking Catholicism into account, the apple has always been a symbol of sin. According to the Catholic dogma, people are born with an original sin, because Adam and Eve defied God and fed from the apple tree. Johnny's myth reverses this doctrine. Johnny purges Christians from sin and guilt and offers apples in abundance. Symbolically speaking, this may be an attempt to show that people are not born sinful. The true point of Christianity is not punishment, but forgiveness.

 It could be argued that the myth projects the need for American settlers to form their own religion and American identity. This new way of perceiving religion could be a mixture of different cultures, shaped to form the unique american identity. The worshipping of Nature and the good relations with animals which are derived from the Indian culture are integrated with the European religion, in order to form this new kind of doctrine.

 All in all, the legend of Johnny Appleseed manages to redefine the notions of heroism and Christianity. There seems to be a shift in tales; In contrast with Paul Bunyan, who travels the country to promote industrialism, Johnny is against capitalism and industialisation. Johnny is a pioneer because he manages to shift all these notions and provide an alternative way of thinking and perceiving the world.

**“Johnny Appleseed: A Pioneer Hero”**

**By Aphrodite Karakonstanti (1563201200318)**

The first thought that came to my mind after reading only the title of the story is how a man who just planted apple seeds can be a hero. In most people’s mind a hero is strongly associated with a brave, usually powerful character that fights beasts, or more generally the evil, for the greater good of humanity. But in this story there are no beasts and the personal appearance of the protagonist is totally anti-heroic. So where is the heroic quest?

After reading the story I realized that in this case the term hero is related with what in Christianity is characterized as a good and moral person. The way Johnny Appleseed lived reminds me to a great point the life that Christianity exhorts us to live, to be frugal, to help the fellow humans around us and to be loyal. Also I was surprised when I noticed how many elements our protagonist has in common with Jesus Christ: they both used to walk barefoot, they helped the poor and weak people and they lived a threadbare life.

But although Johnny Appleseed seemed to be a moral and modest person who didn’t hurt anyone and his mission in life was associated with the greater good of humanity, we could not leave unnoticed the fact that he was cultivating apples. Why apples? Why not another fruit? It is obvious that the apple is not chosen incidentally. Apples appear to play a very significant role in religion, mythology and folktales. The apple tree used to be the tree of knowledge, a divine tree, so we could assume that the new settlers could be the messengers of God that came to the new land to accomplish a divine mission. On the other hand, most of the times, apples are associated with evil. There are quite a few examples where the apple is the symbol of sin: the Trojan War started because Paris awarded the golden apple to Aphrodite and Snow White fell asleep because of a poisonous apple but the most characteristic example is the apple in the Garden of Eden, which is presented as the symbol of sin. In a reading of the story of Johnny Appleseed, he could represent the new settlers in America, who spread the fruit of sin in the new land. This could be an analogical metaphor for the way the new settlers behaved towards the Native Americans and the land. As the apple in the Garden of Eden became a symbol for temptation, sin and the fall of the man, in this case it could symbolize the fall of the new settlers who used every means in order to occupy the new land.

Another connotation of the apple could be that the new land was the apple of discord for the new settlers, and their overwhelming will to occupy it led to many bloody battles between the whites and the Indians, exactly as it happens in the Greek mythology where the Golden Apple of Discord was the casus belli for the Trojan War to begin.

In conclusion, on a surface reading this story presents the new settlers as being kind, hard-working and friendly with the natives. On the other side, the Indians are characterized as wild and bloody savages. But on a deeper reading this is merely the image that the whites want to create for themselves although in fact they occupy the new land through sinful actions. The new land appears to the Europeans as challenging as the apple for Adam & Eve and in both cases their voraciousness leads to the devastation of the “heavenly” land.

**Johnny Appleseed Stories**

**By Alexander Niemann (Erasmus 1563201400249)**

The Story of Johnny Appleseed is densely laden with allusions to the Holy Bible, eventually legitimating the religious narrative of America being the materialization of paradise. This conception aims at reminding the audience of their status as the descendants of the glorious pioneers, implicitly criticizing the leasure and careless lifestyle of modern civilization that condenses itself in contemporary American cities. Furthermore, it personifies the identity-constituting narrative of the frontier by constructing a morally noble and yet strange 'prototype' of the pioneer generation.

Appleseed is the incarnation of a lifestyle completely opposing all attributes of modern citizenship. By wandering around like a nomad, being strongly connected to nature in its purest and wildest forms and also refusing material wealth or signifiers of social status, the literary figure bears the clear mark of romanticism and alludes to the notion of the noble savage. He is a voluntary outsider and yet so admirable, mirroring the carelessness of people who left the 'pioneer spirit' behind (which inevitably leads to alienation). John Appleseed is the human version of the *sublime* that is expressed in 17th and 18th century American landscape painting, an entity directly referring to the Almighty.

Dispositional characteristics such as hardihood, perseverance, health and modesty are displayed as key elements to a life in accordance with God's creation. The descriptions of untouched nature and remote places with dangerous animals and animal-like creatures (the savage) to which Appleseed feels attracted underline his 'pureness'. His obsession with young girls -who were contemporarily regarded as the epitome of innocence- supports that thesis. The fact that he walks barefooted and wears the simplest clothes in all weather conditions is stressed several times, referring to the innocent nudity of Adam. The literary figure of Appleseed as a new American Adam materializes Christian belief on Earth (and at the same time modifies the self-referential Puritan concept): restlessly exploring and caring for the paradise on earth, he acts in accordance with the whole interrelatedness of creation and plants fruits for future generations. By inversing the motif of the apple signifying sin, Appleseed provides the people that follow him and find his appletrees in the wilderness with a source of life. His trees are the birthplaces of settlements which grow and eventually become metropolitan centers.

The dangerous (rattle-)snake is another key feature of the narrative, obviously alluding to the Original Sin. John Appleseed is not afraid of snakes plus the said bite did not even harm him seriously. Other settlers furthermore killed several hundreds of them while clearing land as indicated in the text. The Devil cannot harm these pure and gentle pioneers who are 'enlightened' in the face of the glory of pure nature. The New Land promises relief as it provides the perfect conditions for a moral life.

More allusions to the Bible can be found: providing a suffering family with shoes and donating money to people in need while drastically rejecting material wealth himself, John Appleseed incarnates the compassionate Samaritan. His habit of traveling the villages of pioneers and get simple food plus a rather uncomfortable place to stay for the night reminds me of Maria and Joseph seeking shelter on their way to Bethlehem.

Concluding, a religious quality is added to the opening up of the country that serves as a final legitimation for the *exceptional* American identity. Deep spirituality is presented as an intrinsic element of the pioneer spirit which is to be admired and sought after by the following generations of settlers who slowly but inevitably alienated from nature (as an equivalent to God) by the means of modern lifestyle.

**Johnny Appleseed**

**By Kalliopi Stavridaki (1563201200256)**

Reading “A pioneer hero”, from Johnny Appleseed’s stories, I couldn’t help but have an intense feeling of admiration for his perspective for the nature and the people that used to surround him. Having these in mind, I also felt sadness and grief for the disrespect that modern people show to the environment because of the materialistic spirit that rules our society.

From the beginning of the story, we can understand the antithesis of past and present concerning people’s attitude towards nature. As, in our story, the romance and the pure nature are fading, so in the real world, the beauty of nature is becoming lost because of our need to be “civilized”. In today’s society, money and material objects play the dominant role. A successful human is one who possesses a big house, an expensive car and a huge amount of money. People don’t care about the environment that surrounds them. Animals, flowers and trees aren’t valuable for us. Ideological State Apparatuses have made us believe that “Time is money”. We work so many hours and end up eating hastily junk food in order to survive. The most ironic thing is that we feel trapped in this routine and we believe that this is the only way to live. We can’t realize that nature is our mother. Nature can give us enough food, calm and a life full of happiness, if we treat it respectfully. A glaring example is our hero, Johny Appleseed. He valued nature as sacred and was a very simple man. He protected animals and didn’t harm even the smallest insect. Waste of food was a sin for him and he used to wear what was strictly needed for his survival. Also, the beauty of nature thrilled him. In this way, he used to live a simple and independent life without any worries. He was calm and full of joy. understandably, he is an example to the modern world. Although he possessed really few things, he was a free and glad human. Contrary to Johnny Appleseed, a significant amount of people, nowadays, deal with depression. Thus, it can be understood that we should change the way we set values in our lives and appreciate nature and simplicity more.

One more lesson that Johnny Appleseed dictates to us is that benevolence and other values are crucial in our life. Our hero used to help people that were in need. Although he had only one pair of shoes that was given to him, he donated it to a poor family. Moreover, he used to give presents to children as he loved them. The fact that he helped mostly children and had a very close relationship with them proves that he felt a child at heart. He was very innocent, sensitive and never hated anyone. These virtues made him receive much love from people and live a peaceful life. Today, there are people like our protagonist that lend a hand to others and teach us love. «Ο άλλος άνθρωπος», is an organization created by a homeless man and offers food to everyone that needs it. More and more people are interested to join this organization and save others from hunger.

Even John Appleseed’s death was a moment of calmness and gave people the hope that as the seeds that he planted had blossomed, so the virtues that he cultivated in people’s hearts during his life would nourish them. Nowadays, when people die, we make a wish that they rest in peace. But if we want it to happen, we have to live our life with love for other people and nature.

Consequently, this story teaches us to appreciate the beauty of nature, how to set our values in life and to love people. However, it is true that we haven’t achieved it yet. But humans should not give up and blame societies. We have to hope and imagine all the people living life in peace without possession and greed. We may ‘imagine all the people sharing all the world’, as John Lennon, in his song “Imagine” beautifully mentions. Because only if we imagine it, we will fight for it and make it happen.

**Johnny Appleseed stories**

**By Regina Dotsi (1563201200183)**

The stories concerning the life and legend of Johnny Appleseed could be interpreted in three different ways. A proud American could see him as a Pioneer hero, a more suspicious person as a mere madman and the skeptics would see him as the personification of evil.

In a first, superficial reading of the stories, Johnny Appleseed seems to represent the model of the Pioneer hero: the person who is not afraid to leave the safety of the community and explore the wild America in order to open the way for more people to settle throughout this vast land and create civilization. He represents the rugged individualist that does not really care for material goods, but finds satisfaction in helping people in need. He is an altruist and cares to posses only what is necessary for his survival. He, also, carries his “portable faith”, the Bible, a manifestation of his beliefs and a guide and protector into savage America.

Assuming an interpretation that discards romantic and idealized views we could view Johnny Appleseed as a mentally disturbed person: a man whose sanity was disrupted after the death of his fiancé which had a traumatic effect on his mental condition. Such an approach could be aetiological and explain the way he behaved and dressed in more rational terms.

Another interpretation would be to approach his legend symbolically and connect it to the Bible and more specifically to the myth of Adam and Eve. Johnny Appleseed could be the devil that plants all over America the forbidden fruit, the apple, and prompts innocent people to taste it. He is the snake—an idea which could explain his amiable attitude towards serpents—that goes through Paradise, in the present case, the pure America and plants the temptation. In this manner he turns the uncorrupted land into a sinful country. In his journeys across America he regularly stops and plants apple seeds in order for the settlers to be able to build sinful cities where there was before him a pure land. Therefore, Johnny Appleseed does not seem anymore to be the altruist that helps everyone but rather appears as a representative of Satan that was sent to contaminate the new land and introduce people to sin by persuading them to taste the fruit that was responsible for humankind’s fall from Grace.

**Johnny Appleseed: A Pioneer Hero**

**By Vasiliki Papadopoulou (1563201200200)**

While reading Johnny Appleseed’s story, I can admit I had many mixed feelings. On the one hand, I admired him whereas some of his actions found me opposed or made me feel rather sorry for him.

In my mind, Appleseed perfectly represents this admirable and wondrous hippie I once dreamt of being. This was before I was “corrupted” by our impersonal, capitalistic society. Firstly, I was very moved by his unselfishness. He was smart enough to realize that life was something bigger than him. It wasn’t “his” life but he was a part of it and he shared it with others. That’s why he devoted so much time and so much labor for many other people. He would travel barefoot to sow apple seeds in the best possible places or he would care enough to warn innocent people about certain attacks and invasions. Such decency and dignity are one of a kind.

I also found his appearance unique—I would say interesting but it is such a small word for such a great person. He literally didn’t give a single damn about what the others thought. I wish more people would think like that, including me. It’s weird how people tend to respect you more when they know they don’t mean that much to you. But the thing is, Appleseed’s appearance made me jealous (except for the bare, sore-filled feet). I wish my mind was slightly more open so I could stop being so self-conscious and uptight and just become a little more like him.

Another attribute of his I liked was his connection with nature. He intended to do no harm and no extravagant acts. He was a part of nature the same way he was a part of life. He should have been more well-known. He would be a prime example of a pacifist, a philanthropist and a dreamer. An everlasting role model.

On the other hand, I don’t quite support the part concerning the religion. I believe religions trigger more problems than the solutions or the consolation they offer. In this case, however, his belief led him to become an exceptional man. I would prefer it, though, if he lived like this by his own choice and not because of some “special mission” he felt obliged to carry out.

Also, sometimes our minds play twisted tricks on us. It’s really sad to know that it was the grief for his dead wife that unbalanced his mind and turned him into this peculiar man. If this is valid, I feel deeply sorry for Johnny Appleseed and I can only imagine his life as a mourning journey that had to be made in order to avoid the unbearable pain of loss. But still, it needs courage to become such a magnificent person when you’re only left with bitterness and loneliness.

**Johnny Appleseed**

**By Stefanos Despotis (1563201200049)**

Reading about Johnny Appleseed after becoming familiar with the legend of Paul Bunyan, it became clear to me that both of them represent two polar opposites, two antithetical modes of behavior that are engaged in a constant struggle, thus shaping the identity of the American, and arguably the identity of the human race as well. Johnny Appleseed is described in the image of a saint, or a prophet. Truly, his physique matches that of a hermit, and his spirituality that of a person who in a different culture would be a shaman, a druid, or a medicine man. The dedication with which he carried out his mission is almost monastic, and the mission itself is one inherently altruistic. While planting apple trees is something that helped the pioneers in a very practical manner, it seems to me that it could also act as a metaphor; the enlightened man, humble, modest and with very little material needs, plants the “seed”, whether this would be a religious idea, for the text is rich with Christian references, or the broader spreading of civilization. At the same time, we could claim that his character and actions hardly resemble the male pioneer archetype and, in extension, his gender role. He is in fact kind, thoughtful, nurturing and loving of nature, namely the exact opposite of Paul Bunyan, who represents masculinity in its hyperbole and everything that comes along with it, whether it be machismo, restlessness and a deep-seated, almost primal urge to dominate. Indeed, I think we could go as far as saying that the two legends encompass two major tendencies in human behavior; Johnny Appleseed represents cooperation, mutual aid and self-sacrifice as a factor of evolution, paired with an honest respect for nature as a whole and indivisible being, while Paul Bunyan represents a sort of arbitrary and self-indulgent superiority towards nature, that of course leads to dominating behavior, whether it be towards nature or humanity itself, assuming the face of capitalism. However, without wanting to ignore the cultural, historical and social circumstances of America at that time, ascribing spiritual or Christian connotations to the perfectly logical and morally sound practices of Johnny Appleseed seems sort of redundant. Furthermore, it saddens me that in the stories of Johnny Appleseed, and to this day even, a man with such an immense capacity for love is abjectly characterized as irrational, eccentric or even worse, insane.

**Johnny Appleseed**

**By Evangelos Petsalis (1563 2010 00216)**

Reading Johnny Appleseed's story, I felt like the subject was a entity of both the earthly and ethereal realm, despite his rather detailed biographical account. Preposterous as it may sound, this was my first thought. Traces of what constitutes both those aspects of Appleseed's persona are sure to be found in both older, contemporary and later fiction, and he can be interpreted in numerous ways, so I will try to present some of these that first come to mind.

 The first impression we have of Appleseed is a rag-clad (to say the least) wanderer with a leather bag who roams the American land on foot, planting, well, apple seeds in every remote corner of the continent. He seems to be in balance with nature, as he strives to preserve the well-being of every animal in his presence, and, on several occasions, they have stayed out of his way too. This mystical, but also rather comical, image brings to mind several mythological entities present in various folk lores; one example is the trickster of the Native Americans, the benevolent and foolish deity that wanders the land to help humans. Another possible connection could be with the Greek goddess of agriculture and fertility Demeter (or her Roman equivalent Ceres).

 In addition, what has occupied my mind ever since is the striking similarities Johnny Appleseed bears to a character found in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and other of his works, named Tom Bombadil. He is an old person who lives in a forest and seems to act as its protector and ruler, despite not harming any animal or plant in any way; instead, they obey him. A gentle and merry man, he is also shown to live in an absolute balance within an unbalanced world, in the same way Johnny remains independent among the Native Americans and the settlers, and between civilization and nature. It is also dubious in the story whether he is a human or some kind of deity, which the same kind of impression I get from Johnny. He may not have been the original inspiration for that character, of course, but this is solid evidence that figures that date back to times of old can still effectively influence modern fiction.

 To bolster this image of Johnny, we have numerous incidents recorded during his lifetime where his character is being displayed, and looks to be nothing short of saintly. Generosity, mercy to other beings, frugality, kindness, gentleness, devotion, persistence and patience are shown to be his main characteristics. Given that Johnny was believed to have lived towards the end of the 18th century, he seems to embody all the qualities of the ideal American that Benjamin Franklin had advocated in his famous *Poor Richard's Almanac* series some decades earlier, making him, in a way, a representative specimen of that kind of person.

 To go even further, I would dare to link a certain behavior of Appleseed to the Enlightenment movement that also occurred around that time period in Europe. In particular, I find the way he shares his odd religious beliefs very symbolic. As he wanders the land, he visits many lodgings, in which he leaves small parts of his books, so that he can distribute the whole book, part by part, to as many people as possible. When he eventually returns, he leaves another chapter to build upon the previous part. Essentially, he *plants* his books in the houses of men, just like his seeds in the fertile land, and just like the Enlightenment endorsed the spread of education. Religious books may not be strictly considered a beneficial medium of education, but in those times, when illiteracy was still widespread in poorer families and distribution of books was scarce, even this was a great progress.

 Finally, it is worth taking into consideration that Johnny lived in the verge between two ages. He represents the older generation of the 18th century, which was built around the hard-working individual of the still expanding, still relatively pristine and pastoral land. Entering the 19th century, as the industrial era's shadow grew larger over the newly found United States, he, too, would eventually wither and perish. He is both a symbol and a remnant of that time when the possibility of the American thinking of himself as innocent and pure could still exist. He was a person in aid of all, on the threshold of the era of individualism and beyond. This is, I believe, what constitutes his status as a “hero” (as mentioned in the title of one of the texts) and a legend.

**Jim Bowie and his Big Knife**

**By Stefanos Klisiaris (1563201200097)**

People could say that Jim Bowie was a legendary figure, knife-fighting against multiple opponents, being outnumbered by Native Americans fifteen-to-one and driving them back, making poultices that heal broken legs, killing attackers on his deathbed, with his last breath. He truly was an admirable man. Whoa! Wait! He actually was a scumbag who caused fights and gutted people because he got angry, and made money by robbing mule trains and selling slaves. How could a man like that be glorified by such tales of grandeur and heroism?

First off, I would not find it strange if he himself had fabricated these stories, or, at least, part of them. The Bowie Mine would have been a very useful cover for the money he got by robbing mule trains. However, the most probable reason for him to spread such stories is pretty obvious: fame and glory. In these stories, he is made out to be a sort of superhuman, who can coordinate a handful of men against more than a hundred and lose only one man, and who can make miracle-healing poultices. Clearly, people would perceive him as a person of great deeds and respect him, but also fear him for his ferocity and bloodthirst, which could make it easier for him to get whatever he might want from anyone.

It is interesting that there are many different variations for certain events: Where was he born? Did he invent the Bowie knife? Did his brother make it? Did his brother order it made? How was he killed? It appears that a lot of things that were considered facts people were actually just rumors, which could not be proven, but neither disproven. So, one could believe the words of a stranger, that Bowie and his boys killed fifty Indians, while the other hundred fled, that he found a mine of untold riches, that the Mexican soldiers stabbed him a hundred times to kill him, or that they cut off his tongue. He could have been a model to some, precisely because they could believe anything they heard about him, if they wanted to believe it. Even when he wrongly kills people, he shows strength and skill that seems to be unmatched. However, he is not a gigantic beast the likes of Paul Bunyan, but slim and not too tall. People could essentially feel closer to him, some could have even tried to imitate him; everyone had a chance to be like Bowie.

However, I believe that there is one thing about Bowie that contributed the most to the spreading of rumors about him and to his glorification: his freedom. He is not bound by anything; he does whatever he wants, goes wherever he wants, kills whomever he wants. Certainly, there would have been plenty of people who would like that kind of freedom, and would admire a man like that, even though he is immoral.

Finally, Bowie is definitely a good example of a rampant individualist. He kills people for no good reason, robs mule trains and sells slaves. However, he does appear to have feelings, since he drinks heavily in grief after his family dies. This definitely does not make him any less accountable for his actions, but it’s something to ponder.

**Davy Crockett on the Stump”**

**By Vasiliki Kolokoura (1563201200101)**

“Davy Crockett on the Stump” is a deeply political story revealing significant political analogies with modern societies of the 21st century and unmasking timeless truths about politics.

To begin with, the idea of “master race” has its own position into this short speech. Davy Crockett upholds a discrimination against black people by saying “duties…belong to free white folks” (34). What is implied by this statement is the right of vote belongs only to white people who are supposed to be free exactly because of their colour skin; as if “white people” automatically means “free people”. The white people presented as being the superior tribe (white power) reminds me of the Nazis’ Aryan ideal as well as of the rise of the “Golden Dawn” party in Greece. Hitler turned against Jews killing them in the same way the Greek party “Golden Dawn” turns against the country’s immigrants in order to gain political power. Politicians usually attack a group of people causing disorientation or demonstrating political mastery. The politicians’ ultimate aim is creating in citizens the feeling or illusion of having to fight against an enemy even though the enemy is unreal. This illusion provokes intensive feelings of zealotry and as a consequence the target of gaining people’s favour is reached. Of course, this propagandistic kind of policy just betrays the weakness of the different political systems which make use of anti-democratic tools to cope with the political situations.

Another politician’s strategy for approaching voters is the use of cordial and sociable discourse like in “Friends, fellow-citizens, brothers and sisters” (34). Davy Crockett tries to give a sense of a mock equality between himself and citizens as contemporary politicians do. The phrase “duties that belong to free white folks” also implies the citizens-voters are responsible for taking part in politics and making decisions as well. In a way, Crockett indirectly deposits responsibility on citizens who should not only blame him for the certain impending political destruction but also themselves. This transference of responsibility is also prevalent in “…in times of great political commotion…I feel no hesitation…to represent such a high-minded and magnanimous white set” (34). Crockett, creating again a delusion of superiority, encourages people to make the “right” decision because such a superior tribe should not and could not be governed by a less capable person than Crockett himself. Typically, politicians present themselves as the ones who will be sacrificed for people’s sake. In this way, they do not present themselves as dutiful and conscientious candidates who are going to act in favour of the people but rather as Messiah, the one who will save them. This savior-like kind of symbol is traced in the utter use of language as well “I never ran away with any man’s wife”, “it’s a d \_ n eternal lie” (34). What these words imply is that Crockett’s opponents desire to destroy him even though he is the one and only suitable for saving the land. This characteristic absoluteness of politicians’ statements reveal not only their arrogance and conceit but also the nonexistence of any truth in them. All these political analogies indicate politics function in a highly indirect and implicit manner containing a lot of discriminations, prejudices and injustice inside it.

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**David Crockett stories**

**Panagiota-Konstantina Balta (1653201200164)**

David Crockett is an ambivalent character that really fascinated me and got me thinking about why someone could have become such a likeable and popular politician. Was it because he was a wily and strong inhabitant of the frontier that fought for his country, for his beliefs and finally for his life, or because uneducated masses of the era tended to support unconventional figures and identify with wilderness?

 While reading the text, I questioned myself about whether I would've liked the guy if I were living in his times. Firstly, I tended to dislike him because I could not explain to myself how he could have become such a likeable and popular politician while being poorly educated and kind of rοugh. How could the man from the woods also be the man in Congress? To me, wilderness and civility cannot be combined.

 However, studying the historical events of the era provides a complete understanding of Crockett's popularity. He as a frontiersman and other patriots questioned the dichotomy between wilderness and civilization and were the expression of a renewal, of a new ideology about social behavior which answered to the hypocricy of well-educated gentlemen with manners but no morality in the name of success. Frontriersmen were ignorant and uncouth but also honest and hard working. So, a semi-illiterate character gambling and drinking became successful not because voters were uneducated and without any critical ability but because they had had enough of these other gentlemen and identified with the simplicity of someone that resembled them and could probably represent them better in Congress.

 Today, the political image is more or less the same. Everyday, we deal with politicians wearing costums who try to persuade us about their capabilities and are only interested in profit. Crockett admitted his flaws with a disarming sincerity that left me speechless and I believe that even today, we need such originality and truth more than supposedly civility. Nevertheless, at this point we have to be careful to distinguish between the popular and the populist, the manipulator who appeals to the emotions and fears of masses. Pretending to be real and being real are totally different, so we need to develop acute senses in order not to be tricked.

**John Henry stories**

**By Marianna Morfopoulou (1563201200160)**

John Henry is one of the few figures that have successfully transcended the barrier which separates myth from reality. He was a common steel driver for the American railway system, until he managed a feat that no man had; he defeated a machine. And that was when he became immortal in the hearts of people.

Throughout history and literature, one can find many an example of humans striving to achieve the impossible. It is perhaps in human nature to challenge what seems superior, either physically or mentally. John Henry did not simply try but managed to defeat the superiority of the machine. However, it is not clear what his motive was. In my opinion, he wanted to show people that courage and the strength that comes from the soul can achieve the impossible. It is not a coincidence that the folk tale about his birth speaks of a very strong newborn; his real strength came with his soul in the world, when his body did.

Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that John Henry was an African American, and African Americans needed the traits that the personality of John Henry represented in order to survive in a world full of hatred, particularly towards them. Therefore, he is not just the idol of “steel-drivers”, but of a whole culture.

There is also another view on his story. Since the machine is presented as superior,it could symbolise the divine. It is known from mythology that Gods are not to be challenged, only obeyed, otherwise the hubris will be punished. But John Henry did challenge a “God” and thus he met his doom. His death was the consequence of the victory against the humanly impossible. He reached where no other man could, so he had to return to his mortal nature, regain the trait that unites humanity; death.

It could also be said that John Henry is a Christ figure in folk culture. Based on the words of the people, John Henry foresaw his death, as did Christ. According to the folk song, he even had a wife, amongst many, that was named Mary Magdalene. Christ's most faithful female student was Mary Magdalene. Finally, they were both martyrs, sacrificing themselves for the greater good. And they were both resurrected. Christ did because of his holy nature but John Henry was resurrected through the people's admiration. Thus, both Christ and John Henry never actually died, but only their bodies did.

In general, John Henry was attributed the divine nature that he stripped from the machine he defeated. People embraced his larger-than-life strength and idolised it. This way they could have a role-model that rose from amongst them and survived through eternity. The fact that he came from ordinary people is that which most simply proves that anyone can be him. “What if God was one of us?”

**Henry David Thoreau – From *Walden***

By Alexander Niemann (Erasmus Student—1563201400249)

Thoreau's work *Walden* has become iconic for an American school of thought that seeks to re-organize man's relation to nature in the face of a pre-dominant quest for technological development. It leads to contemporary approaches such as the Deep Ecology movement and is strongly interrelated with the emergence and expansion of capitalism on the American continent.

 The general tone of Thoreau's work is characterized by a strong belief in nature having transcendental qualities, thereby whitewashing elements of Native American spirituality that obviously influenced him.

In the typical vein of transcendentalism, the author personifies the inanimate phenomenon he observes. It is the steam locomotive (the iron horse), an archetypal symbol of technology progressing and moving forward, furthermore an essential vehicle allowing settlers to tame the wild and civilize remote places. Opposing the notion of the sublime that would be embodied in his descriptions of landscape both animate and inanimate, that steam locomotive is depicted as an alien element disturbing the author's *pure* experience of nature. Consequently, Thoreau is “awakened by his tramp and defiant snort“ (50) but at the same time inevitably fascinated by the sheer monstrosity and power of the locomotive “mak(ing) the hills echo with his snort like thunder, shaking the earth with his feet, and breathing fire and smoke from his nostrils“ (Thoreau 49).

Thoreau faces a technological system created by human beings that 'challenges' the aesthetic monstrosity of untamed nature -as captured in classic American landscape painting for example- with his overwhelming, fascinating and at the same time threatening appearance. Furthermore, this technological system was contemporarily perceived as the epitome of progress and synonymous to the superiority of a technology-based civilization. Therefore, it adds to the core of American identity and marks technology as an element inherent to the American spirit. Technology itself is presented as a driving force that never stops, a mechanism of constant progress that itself hold transcendental qualities.

Taking a closer look at the way he perceives technology, it reminds me of the essay “Technology: The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept” by Leo Marx. As we see in Thoreau's descriptions, technology tends to *overwhelm* the non-professional observer. In other words: people that don't have specialized knowledge on technological systems which would enable them to rationalize what they see tend to perceive these systems as signifiers of an inevitable force in itself (that is to some extend as sublime as the wilderness). Consequently, this non-professional approach is not looking beyond technology, it is not acknowledging that there are people behind these technologies who may have arranged them in a specific way to serve certain interests. Therefore, these inventions always hold a sort of political quality that is overseen -more drastically: ignored- by Thoreau's way of putting it. His approach is eventually neglecting moral and political standards in favor of technological standards.

The above described culminates in the way we are taught history: it is presented as a stringent progression of technology, the driving force of civilization that materializes in a constant flow of innovations improving and enriching our life. The above mentioned tradition of thought can be defined as a socio-determinist approach that eventually *sacralizes* technology.

**Calamity Jane**

**By Olga Pitsa (1563201200222)**

The legend of Calamity Jane should be analysed as one of unique value, not only because it refers to a woman, as only a small minority of legends and myths does so, but mainly due to the fact that it presents an alternative image of womanhood. Calamity Jane follows a lifestyle deviating to a high degree from that of the typical woman, both in appearance and in behaviour οr habits. The fact that she does not resemble the original, traditional stereotype of femininity allows us to consider her as a typical model of queer performativity.

 Firstly, as Judith Butler states, gender, which is to be distinguished from sex (the latter refers to the physical construction of the human body) is socially and culturally constructed. Therefore, gender roles are performative, that is according to the sex, the society assigns different roles to each gender, which we are obliged to follow, in order to be accepted as normal individuals. Calamity Jane does definitely not belong to this group of people. Furthermore, it is true that, in practice , most of us are not 100% masculine or feminine, but possess characteristics of both genders. Calamity Jane does not belong exactly to this category either.

 Actually, what she does is that she takes this a step further by representing a woman having "borrowed" most of her characteristics from the opposite gender. Despite the fact that she is defined by nature as female (because of her sex), her external appearance and her habits are man-like. Instead of being concerned with fashion, clothes and hair, like most ordinary women do, she dresses like a man, wearing dirty and coarse pants and carries her rifle and knife with her. Also, she smokes, drinks a lot, constantly changes sexual partners and speaks like a typical man. In addition, she is brave and appears as a quite capable fighter, very often even more capable than males. Consequently, it is evident that Calamity Jane plays with the stereotypical gender roles by imitating femininity in a more masculine version.

 What is remarkable, though, is that, despite the unfamiliar elements of her personality, she is generally admired and highly esteemed and accepted as honourable by the people she encounters in her way. This is a result of the fact that she has, in several occasions, used her skills to rescue men who have been attacked by Indians and taken care of their injuries. These actions indicate real affection towards her fellows and sensitivity to human pain and they can be attributed to the feminine aspect of her personality. This way, she proves that although she seems queer, she should not be treated as a burden to her community, but as a supportive and self-sacrificial member of it.

 To conclude with, as it was mentioned before, Calamity Jane succeeds in producing a parody of her pre-determined (by culture) gender, by blending the female sex with both feminine and (mainly) masculine performative acts. The hidden message of this legend, though, is that the members of every society should become more open-minded and embracing to new models of gender performativity and accept every "queer" individual without any kind of discrimination or prejudice. Finally, it is important to remember that the norm is simply what we are already familiar with, but it is not the one and only way of acting or living.

**Calamity Jane**

**By Sophia Maria Nicolopoulou (1563201200181)**

The androgynous “Beautiful White Devil” of the Western US states and the “Joan of Arc of the Indian Wards”, the almighty Calamity Jane left her imprint as a woman in a man's attire and his habits. But how could she have survived in a male-centered society without permitting their inscriptions on her external appearance as another *tabula rasa*, yet distorted by patriarchy's kaleidoscope?

To begin with, we encounter from the very first lines a woman of rampant habits; not only did she smoke or drink, but she was also “sexually promiscuous”, a “part-time prostitute” who “was so colorful, climbing the very heights of imagination” in the erotic process. Thus, her sensuality and sexuality are equated with that of a whore's, firstly by adopting male morals and then, by sacrificing herself entirely on lust's altar. Interestingly, we notice that the word “horse” used to describe her facial characteristics is a homophone to “whores” or “whore's”, stressing the fact that male sexual fantasies were conveniently imprinted on her sex and gender. Bearing in mind that she indulged in the worst male fixations—drinking, smoking, swearing and brawling as well as her prostitution—we reach a significant conclusion: only by deconstructing her gender and reformulating it under masculine standards could she be viewed as equal and worthy of an average male.

In addition to this, some of the nicknames attributed to her concentrated on the socially constructed femininity that she ought to have had, but she did not (“undeodorized lass”), while titillating ancient male anxieties of the uncanniness and duplicity of women (“Beautiful White Devil”), clearly suggesting that Calamity Jane was a white trickster, thus, unreliable and able to exploit men in lustful ways. Moreover, she was depicted as a “self-promoting tourist attraction” metaphor drawing from the domain of merchandise and finance; that is, she was ironically portrayed as a passive recipient but with an active engagement on collecting money (the pronoun “self” as an active subject).

We have already examined how Calamity Jane's legend was almost reduced to that of a “whore's” through language devices and descriptions. However, if we consider her nurturing and motherly instincts through the love she bore for children and wounded soldiers, as well as her first appearance as Jane Cannary, with an emphasis on the “breast of alabaster purity” mildly reminding us of Jean Fouquet's Madonna's portrayal, reveal the concept on which Calamity's legend was based. In other words, for the popular madonna/whore complex, Calamity stands as the ultimate proof. She was seen either as the holy and Virgin Mary, or as a prostitute arousing male sexual fantasies; the obvious reason we are provided with controversial versions of her myth.

A great American warrior while a great American whore, Calamity Jane is considered to be one of the most popular legends throughout the world. Despite her bravery and unanimous acceptance by the dominant group, her stories offer appropriate material for questioning and evaluating gender differences and societal stereotypes imposed on each person, which remain unaltered even today.

**Calamity Jane**

**By Stefanos Despotis (1563201200049)**

When I read about Calamity Jane, at first I welcomed her as a much needed change of pace, after all the excess masculinity oozing out of legends such as those of Paul Bunyan’s or Mike Fink’s. However, I stumbled upon –or better yet- had my eyes opened to something that up until now had been but a vague suspicion. The Calamity Jane legend appears as an excellent specimen of gender role reversal; a woman, situated in the hostile and unforgiving landscape of the Wild West, assumes all those characteristics that allow a man not only to survive, but to thrive as well. As far as gender goes though, it seems to me that the legends of not only the Wild West, but also the frontier legends in general, are caught up in a very dichotomized perception of the female; namely, women’s fates are torn between either dehumanizing abjection and objectification, or the ascription of qualities that were then expected from males, with examples like Calamity Jane herself, with all her excessive whisky consumption, shooting and indulgence in unrestrained carnal pleasures, or even the Warrior Woman, with her expert pathfinding and prowess in combat. This binary/ultimatum exposes the inability of a newly-found nation to treat the members of its society with the amount of respect and understanding they deserve, a nation that has unfortunately failed to differentiate itself from the hierarchical and patriarchal power structures of the “Old World”, structures that share a common denominator; that is domination. This, in my opinion, provides an adequate explanation, but also opens the ground for discussion on the subjects of sexism, homophobia and transphobia and –one might add- the tyranny of heteronormativity brought on by society’s quasi-religious need for adherence to gender roles. For it is through the internalization of basic axioms or modes of behavior taught and passed on through legends and folklore, that a society molds its individuals, institutionally or otherwise. The issue of “tradition vs modernity” that obviously arises from this argument, however, can be treated with effectively in my opinion; this means that the opportunity arises to tackle these legends from both a socially and an ethically responsible standpoint, as well as treat them with the amount of respect that cultural heritage demands. The rise of fascist parties throughout Europe, followed by an increase of violence towards women and the LGBTQIA communities make this matter, I believe, all the more pressing.

**Calamity Jane**

**By Aikaterini Vlachaki (15 63 2012 00021)**

Calamity Jane was born in 1852, at a time when feminism would arise, not only as a theory but as a completely new way of perceiving the world. Feminists, especially in America, were fighting for fundamental rights such as the vote. As myths reflect reality, there was need of a female hero who would promote these liberal ideas and spread them throughout the nation; a female hero who would demostrate how society views women in order to show how urgent it is that we change that.

At that time there was a controversial matter concerning ''gender roles''. Specifically, it was assumed that there were specific roles assigned for each sex, something like a list that consisted of appropriate characteristics or ways of behaving, that were decided according to one's sex. However, the trick was that these roles were considered to have been assigned not by society, but by nature instead, which made it impossible for people of that time to defy them.

Calamity Jane presents these roles that are assigned by society reversed. She defies all norms and acts as a male would act; She would drink, smoke and be sexually liberal, which was considered absurd behaviour for a woman. She manages to acquire all the characteristics that were considered ''for males only'' through and through. She also manages to combine characteristics no matter under which list they are assigned; she would be ''generous'' or she would ''buy candy for kids'', showing that she could also be the caretaker, which was usually a 'feminine' quality; So in a way, she makes us wonder: Why do we have to place ourselves under a list, either male or female? Is it impossible to combine the characteristics, no matter whom they are assigned for?

Calamity Jane could also be considered a liminal hero. Her liminality lies on the fact that she is the mixture of femininity and masculinity; She is liminal between the two sexes. But this liminality of hers was considered ''repulsive''. She was also described as ''considerably less admired'' because she was the only one to question the norm and distinguish between appearance and essense. It was a shock for people of that time to realise that she was not a male. She ends up being described as almost monstrous. Her liminality makes her the ''other'' to the point of mostrosity, and this because she refuses to conform to the social rules.

Calamity Jane also addresses the problem of gender-based injustice and prejudice against women, as she shows that they do not have the same opportunities as men. Her military career ''ended abruptly'' when men realised she was a female. But the fact that she had already had a career before her elimination implies that she was good enough for the job; she was indeed capable of doing what the males did. The only problem that caused her elimination was superficial (''two things too much and one thing too little''). Additionally, according to another myth, the same man who was saved by her would state : ''were you a man, I am sure you would have risen to be a general''.

This particular myth according to which Calamity Jane saves the lost lover demonstrates that not only she does not need a man to save her, but she becomes a saviour herself. Men are presented as weak and vulnerable. Roles are obviously reversed. But at the same time, the act of saving someone (saviour – male characteristic) isn't it also a way of showing that you care (caretaker – female characteristic)? Calamity Jane plays around with gender roles like a drag queen in an attempt to show that we could combine them all, that there is no difference in essense after all. She takes advantage of the sexist ideology and reverses it in this way to show how nonsensical it is.

Another main point that is worth mentioning is that there is a distinction between sex and gender, and this probably occurs for the very first time. Calamity Jane replies to the lost lover: ''I am (woman) in flesh, but not in spirit...'' . Here, she differentiates sex from gender and distinguishes between the biological factor and the person one chooses to be as part of the community.

To conclude, Calamity Jane strikes to fight against sexism while feminism is born. Many fundamental questions arise because of this myth, while stereotypes are questioned. What makes one a male or a female? What is the true meaning of these words, and how can we say who is ''masculine'' or ''feminine'' enough? After all, ''calamity'' might suggest the suffering one has to go through if they refuse to place themselves under one of the two lists available.

**Calamity Jane**

**Anastasia Papazoglou (1563201200204)**

Martha Jane Cannary was a woman with a strange, for the time, duality in personality, in the sense that she is given both feminine and masculine characteristics. On the one hand, she is described as beautiful, nurturing, pale. On the other, she was a drunk, an excellent rider and shot, she cursed, she dressed like a man, looked like a man (she herself said she should have been born a man). She even sneaked in the Army.

One might be reminded of the legend of Hua Mulan in China, who joined the army to serve her nation (as according to versions of the legend, her father was unable and variably her brother or cousin was a coward). This legend, at the time, was not, as might today be considered, a feminist story to empower women, but instead a call out to all men that if a mere woman could have such prowess and success, so should they. The legend of Calamity Jane is said to be fairly exaggerated, and it might be safe to contemplate that, although based on facts, at least in the beginning, it occured for the same reason that caused the existence of the legend of Mulan: it would be shameful and not becoming of a man to be less than a woman fighting Indians and making her living in the wild, causing awe and admiration.

It is evident though, that the major cause of this awe and admiration is that Calamity Jane acted mainly like a man. She lived in an era when women were plainly and constantly objectified. The only ways to make good of themselves was to be married or be prostitutes. Or be men. Captain “Pat” Egan told her that if she were a man she could have been a general in the army. Calamity Jane did just that. She became a man to have 'authority' . She got free of the bonds of society by breaking her marriages and having, if indeed, children out of wedlock. She thus became abject. However, she still kept parts of her femininity; she had her lovers and she occasionally cared for the sick. The combination of her abjectivity with her fiery and profane femininity presented a terrifying figure to the men around her. She assumed the role of the female wilderness that men could not understand or control, and much like the female bigfoot or Sal Fink, she became a legend for it.

**Calamity Jane**

**By Vasiliki Kolokoura (1563201200101)**

“Born before her time” presents a rather manly-kind of woman mainly defined by masculine characteristics. Through this type of woman, numerous associations regarding the woman of the 20th and 21st century and her position in society arise.

Calamity Jane acts as if she is a man, as her habits seem to fit better a man’s daily life rather than a woman’s one. Jane’s words “Never go to bed sober, or alone, or with a red cent left in your pocket” (299) could be spoken by a man. Drinking, gambling and sexual promiscuity are masculine habits coming in contrast to a woman’s activities in 19th century. Even promiscuity by woman is not “incriminated” in this legend (“She doubles as a part-time prostitute and could drink most men under the table”). Of course, Calamity Jane is given not only masculine attributes (“Pony Express rider, Indian fighter, army scout”) but also feminine ones (“nurse, angel of mercy, West’s foremost femme fatale”). This mixture of both womanly and manly elements provides the image of an androgynous person resembling the contemporary woman who is expected to succeed in the different areas of life; women have to be not only successful wives and mothers but also accomplished businesswomen or scientists.

What is more, Jane is presented stronger than a man not resembling the merciful image of a woman; she is the one who wants to protect her beloved Billy Hickock and take revenge for his murder showing once more a masculine kind of behavior. This behavior could refer to the contemporary woman who seems to be more independent, diligent and clever than men. The “knife”, the “rifle in hand” and the “cigar” are all symbols of the phallic and of a power which is now transferred to women; the emasculation of man signals the dominance of woman. Jane’s words to the clergyman “Shucks, you can kiss my butt, yer holiness, I don’t take preaching from an old billygoat I’ve slept under the same blanket with for more ’n a dozen times” (301) show she does not conform to a man or authorities; she chooses to incapacitate men by revealing the truth according to which Jane is part of debauchery and immorality as much as church is (prostitute and church go hand in hand). So, it is obvious we have a reversal of genders here; woman is presented more masculine and man more feminine. This kind of reversal reminds me of the roles of sexes in modern societies. In a period of time characterized as “the age of image” and with woman to be considered the “beautiful sex”, it is as if everything has to be womanized in order to be beautiful. On the one hand, men tend to have more feminine outlook and behavior and on the other hand women struggle to be more dynamic in order to survive in a male-dominated world.

Jane’s image “in a slouch hat, coarse pants, and a stained, fringed buckskin jacket, rifle in hand, a bowie knife stuck in her belt, chomping on a big cigar” brings two things in my mind. Firstly, it reminds me of the 19th century woman whose upcoming independence was connected with her image wearing pants and smoking. Secondly, this image of independent woman reminds me of Rosie the Riveter, the icon behind which an American woman working in factories stands. Rosie the Riveter was a symbol of feminism and women’s economic power in the same way Calamity Jane symbolizes strength, dynamism and confidence. But we could say it is about a mock power possession. Women like Rosie the Riveter were expected to return to their everyday housework once men returned from the war. When the victory of the United States seemed to be assured, government campaigns and propaganda motivated by them urged women back to working in the home. This fact could affirm a theory according to which woman was never truly independent; the power given to them are unreal and fake. This illusion of power possession was created by patriarchal society in order to control women and subdue them. A proof of this could be the fact that women try to acquire masculine characteristics in order to prevail in society just like Calamity Jane. It is as if this delusion of supremacy is raised by society in order to show women’s emancipation and success is totally depended on men.

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**Pecos Bill**

**By Christina-Styliani Pollali (1563201200223)**

Pecos Bill can be considered as the American Tarzan. He is a feral child who gets lost near the Pecos River and is reared by a family of coyotes as one of them. He finally forgets that he is human and he fully adjusts to the environment. We observe that he masters the animal language as he can communicate with the lion and the snake. Both Tarzan and Pecos Bill get to experience in a way the civilized life again. Unlike Tarzan, who fully rejects the city and goes back to the wild, Bill forces himself to join the human kind and follows the man’s typical way of life; he builds a house and gets married with a girl. We also see that Pecos Bill behaves as half-coyote and half-man. Even when he believed he was a coyote he did have human characteristics; he walked on two feet and had no fur. Whereas when he joined the human society, he didn’t completely abandon his coyote nature as he howled whenever there was a full moon.

Homosociality is also quite obvious. Pecos Bill interacts more with people of the same sex rather than of the opposite and they have a great effect on him. Granddaddy Methuselah saves him from the river and teaches him how to be a real coyote. Also a cowboy called Slim is the person who changes Bill’s fate completely as he makes him realize his human nature. Hellfire Jack, the minor and the trapper are part of his life, too.

Bill is married to Slue-foot Sue who has both feminine and masculine characteristics. She’s physically a woman, of course, and she takes care of her appearance in order to be desired by other men but she’s simultaneously very stubborn, bossy and she loves horse-riding (sexual pun), which are mainly manly traits. In addition, he has a male horse called Widow Maker and a relation of interdependence is traced between them. It might consider Bill more than just a companion. Before Slue-foot Sue appears, it had kind of acquired the place of the female partner in their relationship. The horse is probably envious of the couple’s bond and it doesn’t want to lose its friend over a woman. Maybe this is the reason why it behaves so obnoxiously and Sue ends up either bouncing up and down to the moon for days or being killed due to its wild ride. We could say that WidowMaker, unlike Bill who adores his wife, has a misogynistic set of ideologies since it gets rid of the “other” that parts them. The female “otherness” is threatening for the man’s society and thus it must be annihilated.

Finally, Jacques Lacan’s ideas on the Mirror Stage are detected. Pecos Bill considers himself a coyote and acts like one. But when he is dared to look himself in the river, he grasps the truth. He thinks that his real life ought to be totally different and he decides to alter it. As he says, he has *no* *choice* but to join the human race and be civilized again. Not only does he attempt to adhere to the rules of the society but he also adapts perfectly in it. But does Bill find his self in depth in any of these environments? In both societies, the human and the animal one, his “I” is socially constructed. The milieu compels him to adopt the “proper” behavior. He simply duplicates the way of life of the beings that surround him and he doesn’t follow his instincts to determine his real ego.

**Calamity Jane**

**By Eleni Baltzaki (1563201000171)**

Myths have traditionally illustrated romanticized and intriguing stories, regarding a culture’s origins, featuring extraordinary people living ordinary lives or ordinary people living extraordinary lives; in any case, explaining and perhaps justifying that particular culture’s sense of identity. However, the majority of frontier myths usually focus on men; cowboys, outlaws etc., while women can only take second place in a male-dominant mythology. They’re generally marginalized, often portrayed either as “Damsels in Distress” or as “saloon girls”. That’s kind of limiting, to say the least, is it not?

While reading the stories of Calamity Jane, I couldn’t help but think that Jane is definitely NOT your classic “D.I.D.” character. (No, sir. Not at all!) In fact, it appears to have gained her reputation as a tough woman who drank alcohol, dressed, cursed and even fought like a man. (Rumor has it that she dared fight better than a man. Shhh…mum’s the word!) Definitely a non-conformist, she was the tomboy and the “fallen woman”, the sinner and the saint. She was a woman who demonstrated great physical strength and sense of morality in order to survive the frontier experience, following the footsteps of male pioneers; thus, she represents a different type of western womanhood: the type who is capable of extraordinary feats under the most challenging circumstances. Such is the case when she saves Captain Egan, the gallant cavalier who was riding for his life, killing a bunch of “Satan’s red disciples” in the process. I call it an extraordinary feat because who would’ve thought that a man would stoop to such a disgraceful situation (a captain no less) as to need the help of a woman. So, in this particular case, “Cap” becomes the “damsel in distress” while Jane displays all the features of a fearless cowboy, and in doing so she unwillingly “steals” the position of authority and image, that of a hero, traditionally belonging to men.

Moreover, the fact that she proved to be so accomplished with a gun in her hand, enough so that she could outshoot men, can be read subversively in terms of gender politics, clearly filled with sexual connotations, therefore threatening men on a literal and symbolic level. In other words, she adopts masculine practices in order to question masculine authority and superiority. She symbolizes, in a way, a soldier like power of a woman armed with a weapon which by definition subverts all conventional domestic models that dictated women to be fragile and weak, restricted only to being mothers and wives; forever bearing and raising children, always seeing the world though male eyes.

To conclude, I believe Calamity Jane is a living proof that women too can in fact rise to the occasion if need be. She may have exposed herself to the dangers of the frontier with acts of derring-do, by starring in the frontier and in the battlefield which have traditionally been thought of as exclusive male places (no girls allowed in a boy’s space); thus, depicting, in the long run, the narrow-mindedness of a male governed society and culture, ironically using their own “masculine” weapons to strike a blow at its decaying and biased center; essentially emasculating men by taking advantage of her own “masculine” skills. Further, she demonstrated that women, like men, exhibited the same physical vitality, virtue and superiority, which provided a kind of sense of equality, therefore defusing the tension created between the two sexes by a male governed community. Above all, she was able to show that women too can have it both ways; they can have many different identities, that of a wife/mother and that of a heroine, without having to play a single, boring role which was scripted for them long ago.

**Pecos Bill**

**By Irene Pappa (1563201200214)**

As another figure of the American folklore, Pecos Bill is presented as a Jack-of-all-trades, “an idea, a vision, a cowboy demigod.” His first years of life, however, are plagued by abandonment and a continuous desire to belong to a kind of family. His father is described as a potent male with many children, “among them a set of quintuplets.” His mother is submissive, always abiding by the decisions of her husband. When Bill is unknowingly left behind by his family, his parents forsake him as he is “old ‘nuff to fend for hisself.” Being the youngest of his many siblings, Bill is deemed insignificant and he is not missed. In different versions of his story, he is found by either a “grandpappy” coyote, or a “grandmother” coyote. Both of them are wise and teach him everything they know to welcome him as part of their pack. These father and mother figures replace the parents he once had and compensate for the lack of parental love. His coyote family accepts him and he becomes the best at everything, the “champion.”

Bill’s beginnings reinforce the fact that the decline of family values and the separation from it lead to monsterization. He lives among the coyotes behaving like an animal, an unnatural creature feared by humans. When he encounters a human, he is at loss. His looking in the water resembles a mirror stage, where he forms the first human impressions of himself and looks to the human, the Other, to ratify his image and existence. He rejoins civilization and transforms into a hero. He invents “most of the things connected with the cow business” and fights with massive and dangerous animals. By taming them, he controls them to his wishes. His confrontation with the leader of a cowboy crew, a colossal man, symbolizes his longing to replace his stern father as head of the family. Despite being still “a mite frothy over his parents not havin’ gone lookin’ for him,” he goes back to his human home. This act indicates his desperation in seeking his parents’ approval and praise. His father accepts him back into the family, but only when knowing that he is successful and a great contributor to the community and human evolution.

Another notable part in Bill’s life is his horse companion, Widow-Maker. As a phallic symbol, his horse is a great stallion that signifies strength, virility and leadership. There were two things Bill was afraid of: “a decent woman and to be seen afoot.” Thus, his horse represents his manhood, and being without it emphasizes his fear of castration. His other fear of a “decent woman” implies that he would never let a woman manipulate him and, consequently, castrate him. There was nothing that Bill “couldn’t ride”, while his wife Sue was a “famous rider herself.” These statements insinuate that he did not want a wife who could overpower him. There is also a sexual connotation which suggests that both of them where sexually experienced. This kind of woman posed a threat to Bill’s masculinity. In one incident, he decides to “tame” her with his “big rope,” a failed attempt to regain control. Sue’s “mistake” of riding his horse is her final demise and Bill’s ultimate victory.

**Pecos Bill**

**By Aikaterini-Danai Nika (1563201200177)**

Pecos Bill, the demigod of 19th century America, could be characterised as somewhat peculiar, even from the very first day of his life; it was said that he was born with hair on his head and torso, but also with a big erection and huge appetite for alcoholic liquors. Apart from putting a half-grin on our mouths, this description seems to hide a darker interpretation- could it be that this newborn baby was actually forced to grow up?

 It is well-known that the Wild West was quite a dangerous place to live-- besides the plagues and the creatures lurking in the still existed forests and deserts, people had also to cope with various social problems. Bill's large family, consisting of his parents and a dozen brothers and sisters, did not even attempt to look for him when he went missing; with the scarcity of food and the lack of welfare it is possible that he was not even missed.

 Abandoned and all alone, Bill, as another Moses, fell into the Pecos river and got carried by the current into a riverbed where he was adopted by a pack of coyotes; soon, he forgot his human identity and recognized himself as being a part of the coyote society. This identification with the creatures could of course imply the equality between men and animals; the coyotes were, after all, the ones that gave Bill a second chance in this life without making any discrimination. However, could this regression to a primordial state of life metaphorically stand for Bill's return to the unconscious part of his? Is it possible that his vulgar separation from his family and the inadequacy of human love in his life resulted into the loss of his “humanity”?

 When finally Pecos Bill returned to the human society, he did not hold a grudge against his parents; instead, he granted them forgiveness and contributed to their overall happiness by building for them a house on his own. These actions hint of course notions of didacticism, but it may also be the case that they attempt to show an ideological conversion in the American mind. The idolized rampant individual is, therefore, replaced by a rugged one- the bloodthirsty and often cruel hero gives his place to a character who could be characterized as being both tough and compassionate.

 Interestingly, nature is depicted antithetically in the story. While on the one hand we have the ominous existence of hazardous creatures and imposing natural phenomena, on the other there is the benevolent and merciful presence of the savior-like coyotes; clearly these antitheses provide a truthful illustration of modern life, reminding us that nature can be perceived as being both vicious and generous simultaneously. Bill, however, seems to commit an act of hubris in the story; feeling overly sure of himself he tries to “tame” nature by attempting forcibly to “lasso” a tornado. This behavior consequently leads him to his nemesis-- the cyclone shiftily turns into rain, causing Bill to fall violently on his back area, while scarring him for life. Ironically, nowadays modern people greedily tend to exploit nature by any means; wars are still being made in the name of natural resources and subsequently, profit. Maybe now it is the time, after all, to realize that our sudden fall is rapidly approaching and that unfortunately, as not being demigods like Bill, we might not be able to survive the fall.

**Pecos Bill**

**By Myrto Fontanillo-Martineou (1563201200277)**

Myths and legends always contain a speck of truth. But in some of the stories of the Wild West, that's all there is, just a speck. Such is the case of the Pecos Bill stories that involve several highly improbable and impossible features to accentuate his strength. Some of them include being raised by coyotes, just like Mowgli from *The Jungle Book* was raised by wolves, drinking only the strongest liquor which often included different types of venom, nitroglycerin and barb wire, digging the Rio Grande in a year to transport water, and battling giant monsters with his bare hands like our very own Hercules. His horsemanship and mark were also highly praised, to the extent that it was thought he could fire simultaneously at two men approaching from opposite directions. Moreover, he was supposedly the inventor of a number of practices like lassoing, the branding of animals to mark property, and the word "cowboy" itself.

What we truly learn through these impossible legends and tales, is what kind of heroes the people of the West needed. Heroes always gave us strength, an ideal to admire, towards which we should strive as people. And the people of the Wild West, which was still of harsh conditions and full of terrifying beasts, needed a hero with a human story-because child abandonment just like Pecos Bill's was an everyday occurrence in those days- and superhuman abilities. The ability to match the savagery of beasts and survive, the strength to mold the landscape to one's own advantage, and to both be quicker and smarter than one's enemies (which often resulted in their death) were obviously very valuable assets. So was the resistance to poisons and liquor, which could be an allegory for the healthy body.

Another valued quality of Pecos Bill is his resourcefulness. No matter whether he truly invented lassoing or "cowboys", this element shows that America was rapidly progressing at least technologically, and inventors (just like Paul Bunyan before him)were regarded very highly by others. And that, is because they invented solutions to everyday problems, and made the people's lives easier. For example, the branding technique was developed so that owners wouldn't confuse their cattle any more, and cattle thefts wouldn't go by unnoticed. Furthermore, it is interesting that unlike previous legends, the Pecos Bill stories do not mention faith or the church in any way, which had been a great influence in the formation of previous heroes. If faith stops being mentioned in folktales, then it has probably stopped having a significant influence in people's lives.

All in all, I strongly believe that the tales of the Wild West were just as wild as it was, creating new role models that would encourage common people to try even harder, and convince them they actually stood a chance at surviving there. That is why "bad boys" were the new heroes, thieves, robbers and killers alike, because a)the West was so wild, everyone could become one of them at any given moment and b)they were the only ones that survived the hardships and made something of themselves, whether good or bad.

**Pecos Bill**

**By Soshana-Rafaelia Kavouni (1563201200071)**

The three versions of the Pecos Bill saga present the latter to be a respectable cow-boy. This wild man was not denounced or chased by sheriffs perhaps because he was not a psychopath killer like, for example, Billy the Kid. Pecos Bill was born an extraordinary child and he grew up into an extraordinary man. Since his infancy, he had fought and killed many dangerous animals and men. He was a kind of American Hercules, with physical super powers, but also mental abilities to solve problems and get his job done efficiently. However, of all the events in the Pecos Bill stories, I want to focus on three instances.

First of all, there are three different endings for Pecos Bill and his wife. In the first version, his decent wife died and Bill, failing to accept the loss of his love took up drinking. However, it was not alcoholism that killed him but, rather, the glass of nitroglycerine he had. In the “taming of the shrew” version, Bill tried to tame his disobedient wife by letting her bounce to the moon and back until she promised to be a ‘good girl’. Nevertheless, I think that no reader is persuaded that Slue-Foot Sue would keep her promise. In the last version, kind Bill was made to kill his wife because she wouldn’t abandon her bad habit of bouncing. After that he had several women in his life and he died due to his bad drinking habits. Consequently, we get three completely different images of Pecos Bill. Was he an affectionate, romantic husband? Was he an egoist who wanted to relegate his wife to an obedient animal (he usually called her a heifer or a coyote, yet a coyote needing taming)? Or, was he an indifferent husband, who wanted to get rid of a boring wife and move on to the next lover?

The second point of interest, in my opinion, is the association of the Pecos Bill stories with a novel. First, Pecos Bill was convinced that he was human, when he saw his reflection in the water. Similarly, Gulliver, in Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels,* realized his resemblance to the Yahoos when he looked in the water. For Bill, the realization was a happy moment, because he could join human beings in all the pleasures and crimes, whereas for Gulliver it was a traumatic experience, since he detested the Yahoos and he had associated them with irrationality, passion and vice (292-294). One thing is certainly common in the two stories, that human beings are not celebrated for their virtues. Second, the fact that he attracted a female Yahoo, made Gulliver suspicious of a distant kinship between him and the Yahoos (294-295), whereas the female coyote’s desire did not alert Pecos Bill, who found it perfectly natural to mate with a member of the species he thought it was his own.

The last point on which I want to focus is the explicit references in the third version on American Expansionism. The anxiety to occupy even the last square centimeter of the American land is obvious in the decisions of Pecos Bill and his father. Firstly, Pecos Bill’s father decided that the place where he and his family lived, was becoming too crowded and, therefore, he decided to move to the west. Secondly, Bill himself decided to move westward when he had already exhausted all the sources of entertainment, by killing all the bad men, massacring all the Indians and eating all the buffaloes in a young age.

Finally, I believe Pecos Bill was satisfied by his life and the choices he made. Therefore, he never gave up life, despite the difficulties he faced. On the contrary, he always tried to find solutions to the problems of his private and business affairs and adapt to reality. So, for one thing, Pecos Bill was an optimist.

Work Cited:

Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver’s Travels.* Penguin Popular Classics. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994. Print.