

mor are: in particular, female sex workers suspected of being the source of infection have been violently victimized. According to Wilson, fear of *mphutsi* reflects and exaggerates the salient social aspects of the AIDS epidemic.

The final chapter reveals a further aspect of rumor-based fear and violence: informal and media-sourced reports of *mgoneko*, a form of magical rape in which the victims (sometimes individually, sometimes *en masse*) are sexually violated while in a state of hypnogogic sleep paralysis. As Wilson points out, these cases share intriguing characteristics with cross-cultural narratives of supernatural night attack, such as the Old Hag phenomenon investigated by David Hufford, and the demonic attacks of succubi and incubi in classical and medieval literature. Wilson suggests that the pattern in Malawi expresses a profound anxiety among women concerning an almost inevitable initiation into an adulthood fraught with the peril of violated sexuality.

No matter what the future of AIDS and its victims in sub-Saharan Africa, Anika Wilson has assembled an impressive presentation of the power of informal discourse, often fed by media, in a time of catastrophic threat to women. *Folklore, Gender, and AIDS in Malawi* is an important contribution to the literature of women's studies, as well as a valuable cautionary reminder to healthcare activists, that women's voices in time of crisis deeply matter—they are trivialized at great risk.

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An Epidemic of Rumors: How Stories Shape Our Perceptions of Disease. By Jon D. Lee. (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2014. Pp. xi + 219, acknowledgments, introduction, epilogue, index, references. \$26.95 paper, \$21.00 e-book.)

It turns out that epidemics are a laughing matter—and also a matter of conspiracy theory and rumor. In *An Epidemic of Rumors:*

How Stories Shape our Perceptions of Disease folklorist Jon D. Lee sets out to show how perceptions of diseases were formed through the circulation of narratives during the SARS epidemic of 2003, and how these stories affected behavior. More broadly this book describes patterned ways communities tend to respond to the news of emerging diseases. Central to Lee's project is a desire to foster better communication between lay audiences and the expert knowledge disseminators of public health, media, and academic institutions. While such experts may scoff at or dismiss popular narratives about diseases, Lee examines lay beliefs with the "experience-centered approach" (as exemplified by David Hufford) that takes seriously the observations and reasoning skills of ordinary people. Many of the narratives shared among lay observers of epidemics manifest xenophobic fears, and Lee shows that though experts may deride popular rumors they are often partially responsible for propelling problematic messages that exacerbate fear and suspicion.

An Epidemic of Rumors begins with a meticulous timeline of the public health sector's, the media's, and (to a lesser extent) the medical research community's responses to SARS as they unfolded between April and July of 2003. Lee relies heavily on media sources to construct the timeline, a strategy that illuminates some processes more than others. The mass media's extraordinary ability to distill information from the scientific community for lay audiences makes them an important go-between. At the same time the media's tendencies to oversimplify, distort information, and inundate the public with sensationalist headlines created the context for public panic and the temporary collapse of the tourist industry in SARS hotspots in Asia and Canada. Thus public health reports are the building blocks of rumor and conspiracy theory spread via news media, internet, and word of mouth.

The chapters that follow plunge the reader into the scholarship on and content of folk discourses of disease. Primarily the focus is on rumors and conspiracy theories about the origins and spread of diseases. Lee ranges himself among scholars of folklore and cultural studies (including Diane Goldstein, Patricia Turner, Charles Briggs, and Gary Alan Fine) and shows how SARS rumors

borrow heavily from the template of other epidemic rumor cycles. The usual suspects of animal origins or “outsiders” are blamed for spreading the disease. Rumors and jokes about diseases have the power to naturalize the connection between racial categories and particular diseases. Although Lee states, “SARS was never present on the global scene long enough to be directly linked to one group of people” (73), several chapters demonstrate the extent to which people of East Asian descent in general and Chinese descent specifically were stigmatized as potential SARS carriers. The very real consequences of this connection and others were the avoidance of public gathering places and certain groups. Lee presents testimony of individuals who felt themselves to be subjects of categorical stigma during the SARS outbreak. The insights of Erving Goffman’s configuration of disease stigma are expanded by Lee to include not only those who are afflicted by the disease but those perceived to be in categories of high risk.

There are some lines of inquiry the author should have developed further by connecting his observations to additional theoretical schools of thought. For instance, it is not clear that an expanded version of the stigma definition for disease was needed in light of extant theories about race-related stigma that take account of perceptions of negative characteristics based on perceived racial identity. Lee draws attention to the racialization of SARS discourse as a central theme without providing much information to the reader about the history of race relations in Toronto, the city where most of his interviews occurred. Have Canadian cities experienced panics over fears of “Asian invasion” or developed notions of certain groups as “perpetual foreigners,” as is the case in the United States? If so, how might this impact SARS rumors? Furthermore, the oral testimony of those who lived in the North American SARS hotspot Toronto is disproportionately meager compared to the space given to analyzing mass media and public health output. This is striking because one major aim of *An Epidemic of Rumors* is to focus on perceptions of people through an experience-centered approach.

In the end, *An Epidemic of Rumors* debunks certain popular notions about SARS and provides practical recommendations for

how public health and the media can forestall the promotion of misinformation and racial and ethnic prejudice during epidemic crises (Don't, for example, call a disease "Mexican swine flu"). This book also evokes further inquiry into how multiple streams of information intersect, feed upon, and/or contradict each other, and by what methods researchers may be able to reconstruct and intervene in these processes in a time-sensitive manner. Otherwise, as Lee demonstrates, disease narratives both accurate and inaccurate seem destined to be replicated and multiply time and again.

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World Flutlore. Folktales, Myths, and Other Stories of Magical Flute Power. By Dale A. Olsen. (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2013. Pp. 238 + xx, prelude, 23 photographs, conclusion, notes, bibliography, subject index. \$85.00 cloth. \$28.00 paper.)

In his prelude (like an introduction, but more lyrical) to *World Flutlore*, Dale Olsen prepares the reader for a study of the flute that is unlike any other. Rather than writing a detailed history of the instrument, Olsen has chosen the path of a seasoned ethnomusicologist, focusing on "*process* rather than *product*, that is, how flutes are a part of human and non-human behavior, rather than how they exist as material objects"; his belief that flutes have power to bond "people, animals, and spirits throughout the world" unifies *World Flutlore* (xvi). With compelling examples of folktales, myths, and legends from many diverse cultures to support his thesis, he promotes a deeper understanding of the flute as a magical force.

Flutlore (a term coined by Olsen) refers to the larger cultural significance of flutes, flute players, and flute playing throughout the world. As Olsen points out, the flute is one of the world's most ubiquitous instruments. More importantly, flutes are magical and powerful because their sounds are produced "directly and solely by the player's breath" (xvii). Their tones, especially the