North American Monsters

A Contemporary Legend Casebook

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Introduction

Legendary North American Monsters

David J. Puglia

North Americans live among lurking legendary monsters who hide in thick forest groves, along dark country roads, beneath shimmering lakes—palpable but intangible, like wind rustling leaves. These monsters swim, slither, scamper, and soar across the continent, haunting peripheries, their legends preceding them. They bedevil a strange "New World," one where newcomers encountered unfamiliar inhabitants, peculiar flora, frightening fauna. In the Age of Discovery, explorers were primed to see monsters everywhere in the Americas. Christopher Columbus received reports of cannibals, Cyclopes, singled-breasted Amazon warriors, and dog-headed humanoids; Ferdinand Magellan found naked giants singing and dancing in Patagonia.[1] Indeed, some scholars argue that colonizers saw the native inhabitants as monsters themselves, or at the very least subhuman, a belief that permitted their subjugation and the conquest of their land.[2] Europeans also crossed paths with unfamiliar species, like opossums (which conquistador Vicente Yáñez Pinzón deemed a "strange Monster") and manatees (which Columbus mistook for mermaids "not so beautiful as they are painted, though to some extent they have the form of a human face").[3] As pioneers penetrated into still more distant lands, legends of monsters flourished: yeahohs in the Appalachians, thunderbirds along the Mississippi, sea serpents off the coasts. In later years, more reports emerged: the Jersey Devil gliding over the Pine Barrens, Champ knifing through Lake Champlain, Cropsey stalking the Catskill Mountains.

The study of monsters boasts a long history, dating at least as far back as Pliny the Elder (AD 23–79), who wrote in his *Natural History* of monsters populating faraway lands and the edges of civilization: monsters, it seems, as manifestations of ethnocentrism and xenophobia.[4] During the Enlightenment, scientists pursued "teratology," the study of monstrous births.[5] Throughout the twentieth century, scholars offered analyses of monsters embedded in literary and ethnographic case studies as part of larger inquiries into myth, folktale, and ritual.[6] In the late twentieth century,

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the thematic field of "monster theory" or, alternatively, "monster studies" was born, a multidisciplinary venture similar to other thematic fields like American studies, women's studies, or gender studies, equally broad in mandate but more lightly institutionalized. Often cited as the genesis for the field is the 1996 edited collection *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, a volume that editor Jeff Jerome Cohen himself later glossed as inquiry into "the cultural work that the monstrous accomplishes" (2013, 452).[7] While not the beginning of the study of monsters, it marked the dawn of an era of concerted and unified cross-disciplinary effort to understand monsters and the monstrous.

Monster studies' subject (that is, monsters) can be found almost everywhere—from ancient myth to science fiction—and almost anything could conceivably be viewed as a monster, from anarchists (Gabriel 2007) to failed subway systems (Cohen 2013, 464). Monsters are particularly prolific in world folklore. Folklorists' interest in monsters, in fact, predates the formal organization of monster studies and, for that matter, predates the formal organization of folkloristics, if we acknowledge the full body of narratives and motifs folklorists have traditionally monitored. Note, for example, how the *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (Thompson 1955–1958) elucidates with ease the traditionality of Yeti (or Abominable Snowman) lore by linking its core motifs to still older world lore. Bacil F. Kirtley, in his essay on the abominable snowman (1964), references several motifs from the *Motif-Index* that encompass the building blocks of that monster legend: F433.1, Spirit of snow; F436, Spirit of cold; F441.3, Wild man as wood spirit; F460, Mountain spirits; F521.1, Man covered with hair like an animal; F567 (type 502), Wild man; F567.1, Wild woman (77f). While not always rigorously analyzed, monsters have blipped on folklorists' metaphorical radar since the advent of their discipline.

These alluring legendary monsters, feared and beloved by the communities that host them, continue to attract the interest of folklorists, who see significance in such community-curated narrative belief traditions. Folkloristic studies of legendary American monsters based in ethnographic fieldwork, with the necessary attention to context, variants, and narrative performance, are still rare, but model studies do exist, and such case studies offer exemplary approaches to studying local legendary monsters. This casebook exhibits these methods by mining a dispersed vein of folklore journals and books and excavating a collection of essays that demonstrates notable legendary monster research and encourages future scholarly monster pursuits.[8] Avoiding North American ghosts and spirits, a more prolific subgenre, in favor of ostensibly living creatures strongly tied to particular

geographic areas, this volume offers nineteen such gems, folkloristic case studies from the last half century of specific monsters in their native habitats.[9]

Despite teetering on the "triviality barrier" (Sutton-Smith 1970), monster matters have proven popular with a broad segment of society, and thus, necessarily, this volume's chapters feature a wide variety of scholars from a diversity of backgrounds, ranging from cryptozoologist Loren Coleman to skeptic Benjamin Radford, all bound by commitment to a folkloristic approach. Most contributors, however, are dyed-in-the-wool folklorists, interested in neither promoting nor debunking but rather in investigating, listening to, and reflecting on community-sustained monster narrative and belief. Within this folkloristic subset, there are assorted approaches, from archival to ethnographic and from historical to digital. My hope is that this casebook will reignite scholarly interest in the study of local legendary monsters and fan the flames of folkloristic monster legend research, theory, and method throughout the classroom, the academy, and the general public.

MONSTER STUDIES AND FOLKLORE STUDIES

The legendary monster is frightening yet fascinating. Most are familiar with monsters through novels, short stories, comic books, television, and film, monsters in media that lurk on distant islands, creep out of lagoons, ascend from the bottom of the sea. But monsters didn't originate in mass media. Literary and motion picture monsters are secondary, deriving from a long history of legends found across the globe. It's these traditional monster legends that provide the source for endless literary and film depictions of this particular representation of horror. And far from a static tradition or a historic anomaly, legendary monsters continue today to be invented, modified, and reconstituted in communities across the United States through the endlessly creative folklore processes of repetition, variation, and re-creation.

These monsters menace; they threaten wayward travelers, amorous lovers, and cherubic campers alike. But monsters also amuse; their accounts delight listeners around wooded campfires, in campus dormitories, and on dark country roads. Of course, monsters exist not only in legend but in myth, fairytale, literature, and film as well: in myth live Hydra, Cerberus, sphinxes, and Cyclopes; in folktale, dragons and ogres and the Big Bad Wolf; in literature, Frankenstein's monster, Grendel, and Cthulu; and in film, King Kong, Godzilla, and the Creature from the Black Lagoon. Legends inspire media monsters, and media monsters influence legends. But in this casebook, the authors scrutinize only the legendary variety: vampires and

zombies, Slender Man and Bigfoot. And it's these monsters, folklorists argue, that are of the greatest importance because such legends require a committed community to sustain them, and for a group to expend such energy, its monsters must hold significant meaning. While legendary monsters are easily overlooked, folklorists contend that deciphering patterns of meaning in such folkloric texts offers a valuable window into raw, uncensored everyday life, into group values, and into contemporary worldviews.

One of the goals of this casebook, therefore, is to demonstrate how folkloristic and legendary monster studies approaches can benefit the larger umbrella discipline of monster studies, a field in which folklorists—and anthropologists, for that matter (Musharbash and Presterudstuen 2014, 2020)—feel underrepresented. At present, the bulk of academic scholarship devoted to monsters has tended to concentrate on literary and popular culture manifestations, offering scant attention to their folkloristic underpinnings. The present casebook is an attempt to redress that disparity. In response to this perceived imbalance, literary monsters such as Frankenstein's or Dracula will be mentioned only in passing; there are plenty of books and articles devoted to those novels alone. This collection of essays is specifically designed instead to treat traditional, not mass media, monsters, except in the few cases where authors examine how the media co-opt or spawn legendary monsters.[10]

In 2014, anthropologist Yasmine Musharbash detailed how anthropology and monster studies had yet to fully collaborate to one another's mutual benefit. In comparison to anthropological perspectives, she argued, much of monster studies appeared unnecessarily limited: its media-of-choice—novels, films, and television—and its subject matter preoccupied with zombies, vampires, and werewolves (2). Anthropologists, she promised, could offer monster studies examples from beyond the realm of popular media, from beyond the West, and from field sites where monsters are encountered in the "real world." In this ethnographic endeavor, folklorists can help.

While folklore and anthropology are separate fields with distinct missions, the two have shared an alliance from their inceptions, and folklorists can assist anthropologists in their mission to broaden the field of monster studies; monster studies, in return, will profit from a greater embrace of folkloristic inquiry. Folklorists offer to monster studies an intellectual heritage similar to anthropologists', that is, a concern with monsters as they are found in the field, in oral tradition, and as carried on and curated by communities. While anthropologists contribute by offering monsters beyond the West, folklorists offer the extreme opposite: not the unfamiliar but the familiar, not monsters from afar but monsters lurking in their

own backyards. The monsters folklorists encounter aren't exotic creatures; many are hyperlocals. As it happens, in this casebook, several authors are so familiar with their monsters that their chapters begin by reflecting on and recounting verbatim the monster lore of their childhood.[11]

Folkloristic methods offer monster studies the means to demonstrate the ubiquity and diversity of monster tradition and how the monsters and the monstrous are conceived and perceived at the local level. A folkloristic approach allows for a nuanced, flexible, and sensitive understanding of monster traditions, conceptions that permit the meaning of monsters to change over time and space. Folklorists can expand, improve, and invigorate the already thriving thematic discipline of monster studies by offering ethnographic attention to monster tradition, by capturing and appreciating local understandings of monsters and the monstrous, and by providing careful, detailed attention to continuity and change in monsters and their relation to eras and to landscapes.

Monster studies, in return, offers folklorists the opportunity to think more deeply about definitions of monsters and characteristics of the monstrous, about how such categories are constructed, and about their social and political implications. Some folklorists' most rigorously fieldworked essays remain light on interpretation; monster studies can assist field-weary folklorists by demonstrating best practices in analysis and interpretation of these same diligently researched monster legends. The mere label of "monster studies" encourages grander theories and cross-cultural comparison of phenomena that might not otherwise be intellectually linked, and the comparison of which could prove profitable for all parties involved. As an interdisciplinary endeavor, folklorists and their monster studies partners both benefit from mutual engagement, as the chapters in this casebook hope to demonstrate.

MONSTER DEFINITIONS REAL AND IMAGINARY, BELIEVABLE AND UNBELIEVABLE

An introduction to a book on monsters should attempt to offer a definition of the term *monster*, but monsters are notoriously difficult to define. Many scholars are content to leave their monster definitions malleable; suggesting the exact nature of the monster is less important than the insights into culture that nightmarish, non-normative beings provide. I will attempt to offer my own tentative definition, but before I do so, I would like to divulge what's perhaps a monster studies dirty secret: most academic monster books skirt the issue, refusing to offer clear definitions or offering

admittedly flimsy ones. Stephen T. Asma, for example, in *On Monsters*, writes honestly in his epilogue, "One will search in vain through this book to find a single compelling definition of monster. That's not because I forgot to include one, but because I don't think there is one" (2009, 281–82). Peter Dendle sees the term *monster* as inherently unstable, "partially semantic" (2013, 439), and suggests that "by definition it remains at the boundary of epistemological comfort, even as science progresses and taxonomies continue to shift and evolve" (440). W. Scott Poole in his *Monsters in America* also refuses to give a straightforward monster definition, instead warning the reader to "not expect neat definitions when it comes to a messy subject like monsters" (2011, xiv). Michael Dylan Foster prefers to leave his definition "open-ended" (2008, 2). And Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock theorizes monsters form "a loose and flexible epistemological category that allows us a space to define that which complicates or seems to resist definition" (2020, 5). Further complicating definitions, "monsters" make useful metaphors; those researchers who include metaphorical monsters chance inviting almost any phenomenon or concept that is large, scary, frightening, grotesque, or non-normative.

To fulfill its elementary mission, I believe this casebook needs to risk, at the very least, a tentative working "monster" definition. The challenge, then, is to offer something serviceable while simultaneously avoiding ensnarement in unsatisfactory criteria. For my own definitional attempt, I plan to do a bit of skirting and a dash of equivocating, prefaced at the outset with some navel gazing and hairsplitting, as I review how critics have crafted "monster" definitions and quibble with the criteria and their minute implications.

At this point in any scholarly monster book, as we attempt to come to a definition, it's common convention to pause and relate the etymological history of the word *monster*. The term consistently notes those beings that are considered strange or unnatural; "monster" comes to us from the Latin *monstrum*, stemming from the root *monere*, "to warn." Of particular interest to legend scholars is that this root, incidentally, dovetails with one prime function of contemporary legend, on the topic of monsters or otherwise, to *warn*, with urgency and immediacy, of lurking dangers.[12] In English, what we call monsters can also be referred to as beasts, fabulous beings, or bogeymen, and nuanced variants can be labeled ogres, giants, goblins, demons, mutants, or freaks, each possessing subtle shades of specificity. The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers little to narrow down the subject. It tells us that a monster is "a large, ugly, and frightening imaginary creature," "a thing of extraordinary or daunting size," or "a congenitally malformed or

mutant animal or plant." It can also be used to refer to cruel adults or unruly children. Dictionary definitions are especially inapt for legendary monsters in North America. North American legendary monsters are plausible, not purely imaginary. They can be large, but needn't be. Some are scary, but many are comic. Some have religious roots, but most are secular, not sacred. And while they can be naughty, as Foster writes, monsters are "not necessarily defined by bad behavior" (2015, 136).

Indeed, one simple but effective dealing with monster definition is Foster's, who tentatively offers that a monster is a "weird or mysterious creature," but with the caveat that monsters are "more complicated and more interesting than these simple characteristics suggest" (2015, 5).[13] Anthropologist Marjorie M. Halpin was comfortable including "all beings or creatures which human beings have reported from their experience but which have not been catalogued as real by natural science" (1980, 5). Canadian folklorist Carole Carpenter, for one, preferred the term "extraordinary beings" to avoid the connotation of large and evil, features that many legendary monsters don't possess (1980, 107). Folklorist Richard M. Dorson constructed his own *American* legendary monster classification, which included six parts (1982, 12–14), briefly summarized:

1. They have a life in oral tradition (even if folklorists are left wanting for field-recorded texts).
2. They "inspire belief and conviction" but also "hilarity and tomfoolery."
3. They "endured for a considerable period of modern history."
4. They've become personalized, institutionalized, adopted by chambers of commerce, and have their own "charisma."
5. They are all mythical, fanciful, or "legendary"—they can't be captured, but possess their own "reality" by being part of community knowledge.
6. They have a comical side, which makes them "endearing."

Foster muses that perhaps the only way to define a monster is to list examples and to offer overviews of their general tendencies (2015, 8), and this approach has crossed the minds of many academics struggling with monster definitions. Dendle, for example, suggests researchers could attempt to study monsters by studying the word itself, and perhaps related words, searching over the centuries for the creatures those words have referred to (2013, 438–39). While such an endeavor may prove a Herculean task, one related practical approach would be to define monsters according to how authors use the term in one particular collection. That is, a

"monster" is the subject covered in a book on monsters. While such definitional equivocating is usually tongue-in-cheek, were it appropriate anywhere, a multi-authored casebook *might* be the venue. But even with this possibility of a strictly limited notion of monster in mind, I will continue to hold off on my definition for now while considering the criteria of real and imaginary and believed and not believed.

Real or Imaginary?

One concerning tendency is defining monsters as inherently fictional, imaginary, or nonexistent—impracticable criteria for *legendary* monsters, or "cryptids," who are presumed (but not proven) to exist.[14] Considering definitional features, Asa Simon Mittman, for example, writes in his introduction to *Monsters and the Monstrous*, "Monsters, of course, do not exist" (2013, 4) and that a monster is "that which is horrible, but *does not actually exist*" (5; his emphasis). Anthropologist David Gilmore in his *Monsters* study "confine[s] usage to supernatural, mythical, or magical products of the imagination," summarizing that "for our purposes the, monsters are *imaginary, not real*, embodiments of terror" (2003, 6; my emphasis). And developmental psychologist Jacqueline D. Woolley states directly, "Monsters, by definition, are not real" (1999, 440).[15] Similarly, but with more nuance, the preface to *Manlike Monsters on Trial* opens with the confirmation that "officially, scientifically, it [the manlike monster] does not exist" (Ames and Halpin 1980, xiii).

But is this something of a No True Monster fallacy? While "fictional," "imaginary," or "nonexistent" might be central to some definitions, many monster critics, especially those of a folkloric or anthropological persuasion, take issue with such ontological considerations as defining features (e.g., see Dendle 2013, 440; Hufford 1977, 234; Goldstein, Grider, and Thomas 2007, 14–17). Dendle asks us to consider a thought experiment: "Even if a colossal, hitherto unknown species suddenly rose from the oceans and began destroying coastal cities, it would only be called a 'monster'—it could only have the ineffable mystery of a monster—during the crisis and its immediate aftermath. Over time, once it was categorized, dissected, and integrated into contemporary taxonomies, it would simply be regarded as an animal. We would still tell our children monsters don't exist" (2013, 441). We can take Dendle's perceptive thought experiment further, using a more plausible scenario, to demonstrate how, in at least some instances, an unknown, frightening animal is phenomenologically the same as a legendary monster.

> You are stomping through the woods on a solo thru-hike. You will have no contact with the outside world for several days. You are charged by a ferocious creature you can't identify (in fact, a mangy, hairless bear), a beast you have never seen or encountered before. You escape, but for the next few days, out of contact with civilization, you feel the creature following you, you worry it's hot on your trail, and even though you cannot see it, you flee from it anyway. You offer dire warnings to passing hikers about your terrifying close encounter. And those wary hikers then pass along the warning to still more hikers.

For those hikers, what's the difference between a legendary monster and any other scary, unfamiliar animal?

If we are willing to accept a flexible definition of monsters that includes even the known (if rarely seen) animal world, there are plenty of fearsome-looking, possibly aggressive, potentially deadly "monsters" that, faced in the wild, would be little different than chancing upon a legendary monster. I use a mangy, hairless bear here (trust me—Google it), but I think a black mamba, a great white, or a man-of-war could all evoke a similar response. Dendle agrees that "probably nothing comes closer to a core notion of the 'monstrous' as an intimate and almost numinous sense of helplessness before the elemental and uncaring dangers of a savage world, such as unexpected animal attacks or instances of psychopathic violence. These are phenomenologically real" (Dendle 2013, 441). In this way, some monsters do exist; they are simply recategorized over time: monsters upon first contact, classified creatures thereafter. At the very least, monsters as an *experience* certainly exist.[16]

Elaborating on definitional slippage from an anthropological perspective, Musharbash writes that we can "capitalize on the elementary instability of the term monster which allows it to adjust to the ontology of it users" (2014, 5). In fact, contemporary usage of the term allows for both ontological and epistemological ground shifting. As Jeannie Banks Thomas reminds us, additional definitional difficulties lie in folklorists' distaste for universals, preferring instead to deal with emic understandings of those beings that particular groups choose to place in such cultural categories (2015, 18). A medievalist in addition to a monster specialist, Dendle observes how strange it is to include "fictional" as part of the definition of monsters, considering that such a designation isn't only questionable in our time, it also contradicts the term's usage in past eras (2013, 442). Dendle contends that one problem with attempting to define the monster is that the monster lives its life "at the boundary of epistemological comfort" (442) or, in other words, like monsters themselves, monster definitions elude us because they always creep just beyond our comfort zone.

Approaching monsters as experience rather than "real" or "imaginary" corresponds with the trajectory of folkloristics in the twenty-first century. Folklorists undertook a gradual journey over the twentieth century, resituating folkloristics from studying folklore as text to examining folklore as process, with an added emphasis on behavior and performance: from ballads to the singing of ballads, from superstition to invoking superstitions, from legends to telling legends. Monsters, too, are undergoing this theoretical shift, from monsters to "monsterizing" (Weinstock 2020, 39–44)— that is, in the phenomenological sense, monsters, too, are created in the telling. Monster studies has critiqued "monsters" as a taken for granted cultural category, one that demands more rigorous, analytic investigation. Critical approaches have resituated the monster from a natural, neutral, or static classification to one constructed of difference, from monster to monsterization. In this conception, monsters are not "found" but rather constructed through cultural processes of power relations and social differences, tools of resistance or domination, a politics of monsters. A creature, thereby, is not a monster in any eternal, essential, or universal sense. Rather, humans monsterize, casting some as monsters, some as not in perceptions shifting over time and space. Weinstock argues that the cornerstone of contemporary monster studies is this social construction of monsters to reflect anxiety and desire and "wittingly or not—to achieve particular sociopolitical objectives" (39). And here folklorists might take heed while also adding their disciplinary history and knowledge to this conversation.

The 1960s and 1970s reconceptualized folklore from static text to behavior, performance, and context, from constant to emergent.[17] So too can folkloristic conceptions of monsters move from text to process, from monsters to monsterization, formed and re-formed daily through continual social negotiation. In this formulation, scholars do best to avoid taking monsters for granted, instead systematically examining their construction, invention, and re-creation and investigating their continuity and change, their preservation and transformation. Folklorists can overcome the unnecessary definitional criterion of "imaginary" by exploring the "monsterizing" concept while at the same time continuing to emphasize the monsterization of literal monsters over metaphorical ones, ostensibly real monsters over overtly fictitious ones, and vernacular monsters over popular ones.

In response to "Are monsters real?" the necessary follow-up question is "What does the questioner mean by 'monster'?" Explorers who had never seen an opossum before, for example, labeled it a monster (see Eastman 1915; Parrish 1997). Explorers *monsterized* opossums, and they were then referred to as such by others. Opossums, we know, are real. The same is

true for the *tanuki*, or the Japanese raccoon dog, which is both an animal (Nyctereutes procyonoides viverrinus) and a Japanese monster (see Foster 2015, 186–93). Tanukis, too, are real. Tanukis, too, are monsterized. Now if the questioner actually means "Do creatures that by definition don't really exist really exist?" then the answer is, of course, no. Monsters that are inherently imaginary can't exist. But if the question is "Do monsters exist?" then the answer is yes: monsters, at least some monsters, historically and circumstantially, do exist. I will attempt to avoid, therefore, any qualifications of real or imaginary in my impending legendary monster definition.

To Believe or Not to Believe?

A corollary to whether monsters exist is whether people *believe* in monsters. Indeed, one of the central and differentiating concepts for legendary monsters is belief. In attempts to define legend or superstition, for example, folklorist David Hufford emphasizes that, regardless of content, the overriding characteristic is that such materials are said to "be believed" (1977, 234). Such a definition, in regard to monsters at least, presents a conundrum. Mittman, for one, recognizes that "whether we believe or disbelieve the existence of a phenomenon is not what grants it social and cultural force" (2013, 6). Folklorists and legend scholars can be useful here by advancing more complex and nuanced perspectives to this aspect of the debate. Folklorists are the first to proclaim that the factuality of a monster legend isn't of greatest import; rather, possibility and plausibility are the key to *legendary* monsters. Possibility is what makes monsters *legendary*, as opposed to mere folktales. "Legendary monsters" are by definition possibly or plausibly real.

Older explanations were likely to be dismissive of belief, or what Hufford refers to as "What I know I *know*, what you know you only *believe*" (1982, 47–48). Folklorist Louis C. Jones, a respected and impressive collector of New York supernatural materials, for example, opens his preface to the new edition of *Things That Go Bump in the Night* assuring readers he is not a believer (1983, vi). French folklorist Michel Meurger attributes sightings to cultural reworkings of visionary experiences (1989). And Bacil F. Kirtley, in one of the earliest legendary monster articles published in *Western Folklore*, hypothesized informants do not deliberately lie, but rather "translated experiences which perhaps were baffling and disturbing, short-circuited from the empirically defined mental world of normative reality into the realm of myth" (1964, 87–88), concluding that even the most believable reports "are simply myths and emanate from persons who have made distorted

interpretations of their own experiences" (89). These explanations no longer satisfy folklorists, nor did they always in the past; famed British folklorist and anthropologist Andrew Lang complained that we are "bullied by common-sense into accepting feeble rationalizations" (Lang 1894, 173, cited in Bennett, 1999, 32).

Accordingly, a more nuanced understanding of "belief" is a contribution folklorists can proffer to monster studies. Where there is legend, there is always some element of belief, as legend operates as "potential fact" (Ellis 2003, 6). Musharbash (2014) notes how anthropologists (folklorists' closest allies in belief endeavors) are no strangers to investigating belief in culturally relative and emic terms. Or as another anthropologist, Michael M. Ames, writes, "Anthropologists are more at ease dealing with the realm of beliefs, with the cultural rather than the natural existence of anomalous creatures" (1980, 303). Purely metaphoric readings ring hollow to fieldworkers who see monsters "alive" in the field, stirring a community. Indeed, the exploration of the nature of reality is another of legend's prime functions, and folklorists take legendary monsters and all supernatural beliefs seriously, investigating them analytically as significant and plausible cultural texts. It's this understanding of a monster's reality that folklorists can offer to monster studies.

Legendary monsters differ from popular or literary monsters: legendary monsters must hold some possibility of existence and some vague communal agreement of physical description, topographic territory, and motive. Left implicit, however, and according to Hufford equally important, is *who* does the believing (e.g., see Hufford 1977). The scholars themselves who hunt out such legends, capture them, and analyze them often don't *believe* them. In truth, this stance is, at times, the fieldworker's default position. The collector finds such legends interesting *because* the stories feel personally unbelievable. Such preconceptions presume the collector is more in touch with reality than the informant, and thus a legendary monster becomes any reported creature that the informant "believes" exists that the collector "knows" does not. To counter this fallacy, Hufford encourages an "experience-centered" approached to studying such belief traditions (e.g., see Hufford 1982). Such a phenomenological approach avoids a default state of disbelief, focusing instead on the relationship between belief and experience. An overriding thesis in Hufford's oeuvre is that consistent features in narrative belief reports prove many folk beliefs to be accurate, rational, and reasonable accounts of actual experiences.[18]

But *nobody* believes in monsters anymore, right? *Wrong.* Scientific progress and technological advancement were supposed to kill off beliefs in

monsters, ghosts, and the supernatural, ushering in an era of rationality and enlightenment.[19] They didn't. British folklorist Karl Bell quips that such misconceptions have "proved almost as difficult to eradicate as those beliefs themselves" (2019, 1). Indeed, "alive and well" is the general consensus among folklorists studying the supernatural. Jeannie Banks Thomas (2015) contends that the supernatural now lives among technology and progress, and the two are fast friends and good allies. Diane Goldstein argues that, contrary to public perception, belief in the supernatural is so widespread it "might even be considered the norm" (2007, 66), and Barbara Walker sees the supernatural "comfortably incorporated into everyday life" (1995, 1). Gillian Bennett cautions that to think otherwise is to be "deceived by the official rationalist world view" (1999, 2). Dendle, reviewing the statistical literature, finds that "attempts to dismiss these [remaining] supernatural beliefs as eccentricities of the superstitious, the uneducated, or the provincial are not uniformly supported by data, and do not do justice to the scope and variety of beliefs in context" (2013, 441).

In fact, Dendle offers a compelling analysis of this quantitative data behind legendary monster belief. He unearths one surprising data collection from 2005; the Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University found that nearly *half* of respondents either agreed with or were "unsure" of whether "creatures such as Bigfoot and the Loch Ness monster will one day be discovered by science" (2013, 444). Nearly half! So while legendary monsters may be dismissed as comical, unbelievable, or preposterous publicly, a startling number of Americans seem less certain, especially when polled discreetly. While many scholars accept that monsters, at the very least, have *survived* the technological era, Dendle argues that monsters might thrive *because of* the technological era.[20] Others, too, raise techno-supernatural examples, such as Spiritualists embracing the telegraph (Luckhurst 2002b; Manning 2018) or paranormal hunters wielding electromagnetic field (EMF) meters and electronic voice phenomenon (EVP) recorders (Goldstein, Grider, and Thomas 2007, 3). Meurger suggests that stunning scientific discoveries over the last century probably make monsters and other supernatural possibilities *more plausible* to the human mind, not less (1989). And undergirding it all, digital communications technology, such as the Internet, smartphones, and social media, provide an ideal and novel forum for sharing experiences of monsters and the supernatural with like-minded people (McNeill and Tucker 2018, 28), in addition to the creation of new digital monsters (e.g., see Blank and McNeill 2018; Peck 2015, Tolbert 2013). Scientific and technological progress hasn't sounded the death knell for monsters; it has reared and nurtured them.

Alas, I promised I would attempt to offer a tentative, admittedly unsatisfactory but hopefully handy definition, while also doing plenty of evading and equivocating. Here I present my cautious attempt. I am fortunate, as I don't need (or mean) to attempt to define "monster," as some authors must, but only "legendary monster," a more limited subset. A legendary monster, for the purposes of this casebook and in my limited usage, is a strange, frightening, or unusual human or creature, real or imaginary, believed or not believed, that is, at the time of the telling, purported but not scientifically verified to exist in our world. In description, a legendary monster most often resembles a disfigured human, a gruesome beast, or some other uncanny hybrid of discrete cultural categories. Delineating common characteristics can be helpful in identifying those entities that humankind has referred to as "monsters," but we will never devise the perfect monster definition that encompasses all those extraordinary beings sometimes considered monsters while simultaneously excluding all those that don't pass muster. Indeed, because of the semantics at play, no two authors will entirely agree on what is and what is not a monster. As to its application in this casebook, it's important to acknowledge that in such a volume, especially one that highlights preexisting work, contributors will not necessarily agree on terms, nor should we expect them to. Rather, we can think of *monster* as a useful umbrella term to bring together a variety of ongoing and valuable thematic scholarship that may benefit from the joining.

LEGENDARY MONSTERS AND LOCAL MONSTER LEGENDS

As the focus of this casebook is legendary monsters, and my definition covers only legendary monsters, a necessary consideration is *when* a monster becomes *legendary*? Answering this question requires a definition of "legend." A contemporary legend is a plausible but unverifiable narrative that is repeatedly retold. The "contemporary" refers not to a requirement of novelty, but rather to a legend, in any era, speaking to contemporaneous needs and anxieties, as opposed to a historical legend set in the distant past covering the feats of extraordinary heroes and their role in world-changing events. In the performance of a contemporary legend, neither the teller nor the audience must necessarily "believe" the legend (belief being a slippery substance to nail down), but there must be *plausibility*; there must be a *possibility* of belief. But even this lone criterion can prove problematic. The monsters in H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulu Mythos are explicitly fiction, yet attract a community of belief (e.g., see Quinn 2010). On the other hand, animals found today in American zoos—gorillas, manatees, platypuses, Komodo

dragons—were once legendary creatures, their horrors chronicled in medieval bestiaries (e.g., see Hassig 1995). A story told purely as entertainment is fiction; purely as news, it becomes "fact" (Oring 1990). Legendary monsters haunt the gray area between fact and fiction: stories told as true, not so fantastical as to be impossible (even if they invert scientific rationalism), not so believed as to go unquestioned.[21] A successful legend teller, intentionally or not, will carefully "map the story onto the landscape or social relations of the reader/listener's everyday lifeworld" (Stewart 1982, 35). In the field, when folklorists hear a story of a friend of a friend's ghastly encounter with a dreadful creature not too far from here, they know they are in *legendary* monster territory.

Folklore, a discipline with an affinity for meaningful repeated cultural practices, includes within its purview the study of *legendary* monsters. Legend forms one folklore genre, and the genre's devotees, known as legend scholars, research the legend gamut, from saints' legends to national legends. Over the last half century, there has been increased emphasis on studying "contemporary legends"—those living, emergent stories that warn, amuse, and speak to modern-day concerns and anxieties. The popular press sometimes calls these "urban myths"—a misnomer folklorists dislike—or "urban legends," the term used by renowned legend scholar Jan Brunvand (e.g., see 2003). Today's legend scholars prefer "contemporary legend," which includes traditional accounts of embarrassing missteps, comical accidents, and treacherous criminals. And monsters too. Legends abound: legends of gold mines, buried treasures, outlaws, saints, omens; legends that function as folk history; and legends that function as folk news. There are legends that reflect our hopes, our fears, our anxieties. There are grand legends that are performed in dramatic recountings, and there are covert legends that sneak into conversations barely noticed. The legend genre provides significant human insight because, in comparison to cautious, self-censoring official channels, legend reveals honest, graphic North American attitudes and convictions. Legend is perhaps best understood as the informal grapevine that supplements professional news reports. Rather than showing the world as always extraordinary, contemporary legends accentuate the extraordinary intruding on the ordinary or, as Bruvand writes, prove "that the prosaic contemporary scene is still capable of shocking occurrences" that happen to real, nearby people (2003, 12).

One paradoxical factor to ponder: legendary monsters are often *not* legendary in the secondary definitional sense of the word—that is, "legendary" as "remarkable enough to be famous" or "very well known." In reality, most legendary monsters know little fame beyond their local confines, nor

do they seek it. Folklorists writing on the topic of the supernatural, the paranormal, ghosts, and haunted houses note steady subtlety. As Thomas describes it, the supernatural in folklore does little more than "make itself known" (2007, 29). It's mundane, understated, muted (Goldstein, Grider, and Thomas 2007, 212), an eerie presence here, a scurry seen out of the corner of the eye there. American monsters don't *do* much, and thus their legends consist mostly of the radical idea that a particular monster exists, perhaps including an explanation of its habits, habitat, or appearance, sometimes constituting only the vaguest explanation of its physical existence. Dramatic or hyperbolic supernatural encounters are usually signs of cinematic or literary treatment. Indeed, to make monsters kinetic, it's often necessary for a legend performer to work intertextually, splicing the monster legend with another urban legend, such as "The Boyfriend's Death," enlivening the nearby monster with motive and deed.[22]

And the *nearby* aspect is particularly important. The local legend genre, of which the legendary monsters in this casebook are a part, offers a connection to local geography. This proximate link, however, hasn't always been the case. Historian Chet van Duzer, in his historical study of monsters and cartography, demonstrates that in the past local monsters were unusual. He observes that "implicit in most accounts of local monsters is the idea that the region near the teller is normal, and the knowledge from the experience of everyday life that monsters aren't commonly encountered there. That is, in familiar areas, monsters are known to be a small percentage of the overall population, whereas at the edges of the world, we hear of little except monsters" (2013, 431). This worldview has transformed in the modern era. In his study of American beasts, Dorson suggests that monsters seem to "live among their chosen folk, intermingle with them, and enter their personal experience narratives" (Dorson 1982, 1). The legendary monsters once "out there" are now "in here." They do not live on distant shores and in far-off places; modern legendary monsters live in our own liminal spaces, at our own social boundaries, on the edges of our own civilization.

In this casebook, legend scholars emphasize native monster habitats, examining *local* North American monster legends, the concept of *local* contrasted with *migratory*. Migratory legends are those legends dispersed widely across space in which the plot remains consistent but the characters and locations are updated to make local sense (see Christiansen 1958), whereas local legends circulate in one region but not necessarily another, as they are intrinsically bound to a particular geographic area. While each author's idiosyncratic conception of "monster" and "monstrosity" varies from chapter to chapter (and a few prefer other terms all together), all featured

monsters are grotesque or uncanny beings with devoted legend cycles and deep roots in particular locales. The scope of this casebook, therefore, and the primary criterion for inclusion is *local* legendary monster case studies, that is, attention to monsters with significant geographic attachment and minimal migratory inclination: the *Jersey* Devil, the *Maryland* Goatman, the *West Virginia* Mothman.

MONSTER MATTERS

Legendary monsters reflect attitudes toward the natural landscape—the awe of the vast untapped wilderness, the fear of what may lurk there, the ever-present (and scientifically verified) possibility that unknown creatures and beings are afoot, and the anxiety of humanity's own place amid it all. North American monsters are inevitably found in just those places most taxing to explore, most difficult to know, most challenging to conquer—deep lakes, thick groves, wooded stretches. The endless hunting expeditions for legendary monsters highlight the American discontent with a rigidly rational and positivist worldview, pointing to a romantic urge to believe there are unsolved mysteries, a world beyond scientific explanation. And while the depths of the sea and the expanse of the universe are undetermined and perhaps undeterminable, legendary monsters hint at the romantic and transcendent in a sanitized, rationalistic world, at an urge for adventure, and at a lust for the unknown.

Folklorists appreciate legends not just as amusing or titillating but as meaningful, stories overlooked by an academic world that sees such scuttlebutt and hearsay lurking safely on the other side of the "triviality barrier" (Sutton-Smith 1970). Monsters, in particular, face a steep jump over that barricade. Here's my own attempt to clear it: in a world where belief rules, whether due to information scarcity or information saturation, plausible possibilities—especially those that fit into preexisting worldviews—influence behavior as often as cold, hard fact. And these repeated, narrative, semi-structured plausible possibilities called contemporary legends explore the frightening characters of the world, such as terrorists (Fine and Khawaja 2005; Fine and Ellis 2013; Langlois 2005); murderers, serial killers, and spree shooters (e.g., Bronner 2014; Ellis 1989; Langlois 1978; Mitchell 1979); and rapists, molesters, and pedophiles (Carroll 1987; Wachs 1982; Winick 1992). (Dare I say "monsters" in the metaphorical sense of the word?) Whether or not sightings or stories are believed, the public perception—how legendary monsters are conceptualized, characterized, assigned territories and misdeeds—remains significant. The community-curated narrative tradition

that constitutes the monstrous fiends' repertoire offers insight into the human mind. Legendary monsters, often based on honest reports of encounters with natural phenomena, reveal the fears, anxieties, and cultural discontent of the community and particular historical moments. The legends these creatures spawn bring those dark anxieties into the light, providing a suitable target for the discussion of community unease (Cohen 1996a; e.g., Puglia 2019, 156–61).

If legends matter and monsters matter, the study of legendary monsters must matter as well. But to date, legendary monsters remain woefully understudied, their research and analysis left primarily to Forteans, cryptozoologists, and hobbyist hunters. It's my hope the assembled chapters in this casebook will spur folkloristic interest in the scholarly study of legendary monsters, particularly by demonstrating their continued significance in our modern world. One overarching theme found throughout the volume is that legendary monsters help us articulate, manage, and discuss underlying fears and anxieties by naming and giving shape to them. These anxieties often relate to sociocultural and environmental change and to encounters with otherness that challenge our sense of order and identity, that diagnose pressure points for cultural unease, that discern the boundaries of community break down, or that highlight contradictions in life that are difficult to understand or navigate. These legendary monsters offer an opportunity to enhance our understanding of North American landscapes, anxieties, and play, and most monster scholars agree, generally, that monsters provide windows into grander social and psychological concerns, to larger fields such as history, literature, and religion, and to contemporary concerns such as regional identity and ethnic culture.[23]

In fact, some argue that what most trivializes monsters, and the supernatural in general, is the hesitancy of scholars, including folklorists, to treat the subject solemnly (Goldstein, Grider, and Thomas 2007, 8). To summarize Gillian Bennett's vicious-cycle explanation (1987, 13) as to why the supernatural isn't taken seriously: because few are willing to commit to specializing in a disreputable subject, the knowledge produced in that area is limited, and much of what's produced comes from those less concerned with legitimacy, further increasing the illegitimacy of the subject and discouraging folklorists from associating their interlocutors with the subject matter, all of which further decreases the reputation of the field and encourages potential informants to hide their supernatural experiences and deny belief publicly. (Or, as Ames asks sympathetically but bluntly, "To what extent should a scholar risk his or her professional reputation by pursuing non-respectable topics?" [1980, 302].) What remains are books of literary

embellished tales, not believable—and never believed by anyone anyway. One glance between the covers, and the cycle continues. Folklorists can do better. The supernatural is both significant and ubiquitous, whether or not we are willing to acknowledge it.[24] The folklorist's task is to embrace, appreciate, and analyze, and while this may be even *more* challenging with legendary monsters than with other already difficult supernatural subjects, their pursuit remains vital for the same reasons as any other paranormal inquiry.

EXPLAINING MONSTERS

The idea that supernatural belief arises predominantly from error rather than reasoned and sober consideration is no longer in vogue. Today's folklorists tend to take their informants seriously, to hear monster accounts as rational sightings honestly reported, and to decipher the intellectual rationale built into the reports themselves. In that case, how do folklorists explain monsters springing to life? Cohen argues that such a question is inherent in the mere proposed existence of a monster (2013, 452). What is it doing here? What purpose does it serve? One possibility is naming, or what folklorist Bill Ellis calls the "Rumplestiltskin Principle," the proposition that monster legends (and other types of legends) are "convenient language for the experiences that lie, actually or potentially, at the very boundaries of existence" (2003, 63). That is, Ellis writes, "the legend as name allows narrators to identify with the otherwise monstrous experience" (64). Foster also muses on "naming" as an important function of monsters, or *yokai*, in Japan. Labeling subtle scary phenomena for which there otherwise is no language, he proposes, gives form to a thought and a feeling (2015, 93). Ellis agrees that legend allows a sense of control over "marginal situations" and permits participants to "comprehend, control, and share anxiety" (2003, 64). Naming monsters, in these cases, fulfills a comforting social and psychological function.

Naming, though, is but one possible justification for the monster phenomenon. There are still many other potential explanations of where legendary monsters come from. Jan Brunvand suggests that whence legends arise is still one of folklore's great mysteries (2003, 4). Some euhemerize, crediting a "kernel of truth," or assume, as Belgian-French cryptozoologist Bernard Heuvelmans did, for example, that legends contain a residue of fact (1958). Others, like Gilmore, lean towards psychological explanations (2003), and some Fortean cryptozoologists take that further to include "psychic projections of a collective unconscious, literal thought forms that take on a solid state of existence" (Coleman 2007, 287–88). Remembering

the symposium that led to the book *Manlike Monsters on Trial*, Ames suggests that explanations for monsters fall into two broad (and interrelated) camps: psychological and structural (1980). The former sees humans constructing monsters onto which they can project their fears and anxieties; the latter understands monsters to embody interstices and contradictions in classification systems, monsters forming out of those beings that fall between the cracks.

Structuralists note that monsters account for gaps that defy classificatory systems, that they speak to cultural contradictions, and that they appear in liminal spaces. Cohen suggests that monsters "embody a relentless hybridity that resists assimilation into secure epistemologies" (2013, 452) and "resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration" (Cohen 1996a, 6).[25] In this way, the work of structural anthropologists like Mary Douglas and Victor Turner prove valuable in the study of monsters. For Douglas, monsters are those beings that transgress cultural categories, and they are both physically and cognitively frightening because their existence threatens the cosmic order of cognitive classification systems (1966). Or in other words, as Cohen writes, the monster exists "to call horrid attention to the borders that cannot—*must* not—be crossed" (1996a, 13). Joseph Campbell used similar reasoning in his definition of monster: "By a monster, I mean some horrendous presence or apparition that explodes all of your standards for harmony, order, and ethical conduct" (1991, 278). Victor Turner emphasized liminal moments, places, and beings to understand monsters. Such liminal moments are betwixt and between, and it's these moments that consistently become the setting for monsters (Turner 1969; cf. Stewart 1982, 40–43). This concept of liminality is oft referenced by folklorists, who note that legendary monsters are found in liminal places (borderlands, bridges, crossroads), appear at liminal times (full moon, twilight, midnight), and are evoked in ambiguous, liminal moments (adolescent slumber parties, summer camp nights, college dorm life). The monstrous body is itself liminal, hybrid, ambiguous, interstitial, haunting the cracks of classificatory systems. Legendary monsters, to cite a literary monster, have a Frankenstein quality to them; they are stitched together, often of human and animal parts, or, to use Foster's phrasing, "sutured together from pieces of animal" (2015, 87). In Lévi-Strauss's term, monsters are "bricolage" (1962, 11); in Gilmore's, scavenged "scraps of reality" (2003, 21). Monsters are fused composites, reshuffled mélanges, conflated agglutinations.

Another notable structural consideration is humans' love-hate relationship with monsters. Humans revile and revere monsters; monsters disgust and enthrall them. There seems to be scholarly consensus that the blending

of attraction and repulsion, love and hate, fear and desire is central to the cultural makeup of monsters. Cohen speculates that "this simultaneous repulsion and attraction at the core of the monster's composition accounts greatly for its continued cultural popularity" (1996a), Gilmore observes a "stark dualism, half horror, half reverence" (2003, ix), and Asma suggests a "simultaneous lure and repulsion of the abnormal or extraordinary" (2009, 6). Others have explored the cartoonish dimension of monsters as the "monstrous/cute" (Brzozowksa-Brywczyńska 2007), or what Susan Stewart referred to as "thematic inversion in which the familiar is transformed into its opposite" (1982, 42). The monster is the eternal frenemy— humans love to hate monsters, hate-love monsters or, at times, simply love monsters.

One universally agreed-upon principal in academic monster studies is that monsters are pregnant with meaning. Legendary monsters, especially if read carefully and in context, reveal deeply help cultural assumptions, concerns, and worldviews. Jeannie Banks Thomas lists the interpretive value more succinctly, writing that the supernatural reveals "cultural values" and "cultural stresses and conflicts" (2007, 31), or what Dendle refers to as a "barometer of cultural anxiety" (2007).[26] Anthropologist Rupert Stasch calls monsters "a walking anthropology" (2014, 196); Jack Halberstam labels them "meaning machines" (1995, 22); and Cohen names monsters "an embodiment of a certain cultural moment—of a time, a feeling, and a place" and one that exists "only to be read" (1996a, 4). While particular monsters are not universal, numerous monster critics see a universality in the monster impetus generally. Gilmore goes so far as to claim that the "mind needs monsters" where "fears can safely settle" (2003, 1). Asma, in addition to seeing monsters index the fears of specific eras, also argues that monsters "reflect more universal human anxieties and cognitive tendencies" (2009, 283). And Marjorie M. Halpin, channeling Durkheim, speculates that monster beliefs would not be so tenacious and widespread if they did not serve a special purpose (1980, 10–11), a point folklorists can agree upon.

Legendary monsters, at the very least, speak to four broad themes: socioenvironmental anxieties, otherness, commercial interests, and a sense of regional identity.

Socioenvironmental Anxieties

From these chapters comes forth, then, in their creeping, looming manner, monsters as means of speaking about fear of the unknown, whether it be the physical unknown—thick forests, vast reservoirs, cavernous sewers—or

the social unknown—fear of interbreeding, the disfigured, the disabled, the non-normative. Our authors return repeatedly to the theme of community issues and monsters commenting on local concerns: from local environmental consternation for James Leary's Boondock Monster to diminishing local control of land use for John Ashton's Webber; from local pollution for Elizabeth Tucker's Lieby to rising crime rates for David Puglia's Goatman; from community cultural distrust of single, childless women for Mercedes Torrez's Donkey Lady to issues of colonialism and imperialism for Benjamin Radford's chupacabra.

Legendary monsters, therefore, provide commentary on socioenvironmental anxieties and unease. Thomas, for one, has argued that this is a function of the supernatural in general, to "provide a discourse, which often relies on place, to comment on cultural and political issues" (2015, 14). Monster legends, we find, reveal cultural data about landscape, natural phenomena, historical events, rising conflicts, pressure points, and impending change. Ames observes that many of these creatures lurk in wilderness habitats or developing areas "threatened by the expansion of human settlements or resource industries" (1980, 301). The supernatural can assist in the contemplation of nature and place, and for this reason, monster environments and settings deserve special attention for the attitudes they reveal.[27] In cities and urban areas, Karl Bell finds the unease channeled through legendary monsters "frequently signifies a sense of disempowerment in the face of environmental anxieties" (2019, 18). By contrast, in rural landscapes as in much of Canada, Carpenter suggests, legendary monsters represent "the mixture of fear and fascination they [residents] possess towards the land" and "helplessness in the face of the natural world and an inability to control and capitalize upon its power" (1980, 106). Legendary monsters prove to be productive teachers on issues of fear and anxiety as they relate to place and local community.

Otherness

Scholars argue that monsters provide valuable insight into issues of social difference, race, class, gender, disability, non-normative behavior, and those considered "other," often providing a safe space for discussion of topics that would be difficult or uncomfortable to discuss more directly.[28] While frequently emblems of racial or ethnic prejudice, monsters are perhaps most incisive as indicators of ableism, where legend depicts monsters, especially the humanoid variety, as deformed, disfigured, or disturbed, their atypical corporeality conflated with moral deformity. Cohen argues that

monsters are "difference made flesh" and the "dialectical other," asking us to "reevaluate our assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, our perception of difference" (1996a, 20). Monsters, Musharbash agrees, are marked by their "monstrous bodies," ones that don't neatly fit into native classification schema. Understanding monsters is emic and contextual, and the way monsters resist cultural mores "make[s] sense only in particular societies" (2014, 11). And these understandings are themselves in flux, based on ever-evolving conceptions of what's human and what's not, what belongs and what doesn't, what's invited and what's intruding.

Indeed, it's difficult to talk about monsters without discussing some form of social or cultural difference. By studying legendary monsters, we discern what does not gel with the classificatory culture of a group, whether that be race, gender, ability, or another cultural category. Contemplating race and world monstrosity, Friedman observes that "everyday cultural difference in such things as diet, speech, clothes, weapons, customs, and social organization were what truly set alien people apart from their observers in the classical world, and the power of these cultural traits to mark a race as monstrous persisted in the Middle Ages and beyond" (2000, 26). These differences are culturally bounded, culturally marked, and make sense only within particular cultural contexts and logics. Folklorist Elizabeth Tucker encourages attending to the supernatural for its surprising, incisive commentary on persecuted minority groups (2007, 11), and folklorist Claudia Schwabe contends that, in an ideological shift, Americans have begun reimagining and rehabilitating once-infamous folkloric monsters as a means of embracing diversity and promoting tolerance toward otherness (2019). When folklorists encounter a monster legend, careful analysis of the construction of otherness is essential.

Commercial Interests

Legendary monsters can be lucrative, and scholars have noted their potential profit margin. Halpin calls monsters a "highly saleable image" and notes that, through commerce, we are "increasingly communicating to each other with symbols from the Goblin Universe" (1980, 22). "Monsters are commodity," Dendle writes, and legendary monsters can be "infantilized, commoditized, and incorporated into the kitsch icons of leisure and entertainment" (2013, 438). This appropriation can be perceived negatively because it tends to "corrupt the 'authenticity' and 'folkloric' value" of monsters, ripping them from their native context and morphing them into ownable commodities (Foster 2015, 79). Taken to the extreme, charlatans can even employ

legendary monsters and general belief in the supernatural to swindle the naïve, a trope that concludes most episodes of the *Scooby-Doo* franchise.

As numerous folklorists have argued, when it comes to the supernatural, commercialism and media interest are an expected, if not integral, component of the paranormal process, and the prevailing sentiment has shifted toward "oppos[ing] the a priori notion that folk belief expressed in popular or commodified culture is any less serious, any less important, any less rational, or any less a belief than what is expressed more traditionally" (Goldstein, Grider, and Thomas 2007, 16).[29] In addition to international corporations profiting from local monsters—a legendary monster starring in a Hollywood summer blockbuster, for example—it's also possible for commercial interests in monsters to occur on a much smaller scale: a local town investing in a particular monster, like the Mothman in Point Pleasant or the Hodag in Rhinelander.

Consequently, we encounter legendary monster commerce, where local or tourist interest translates into revenue—the sale of tickets, trinkets, and trips. Legendary American monsters are commercialized and adapted into various forms: festivals, stuffed animals, souvenirs, pamphlets, guidebooks, tours, and signature cocktails. They become emblazoned on T-shirts, enshrined as statues, embodied as mascots of sports teams, paradoxically cursed and reviled while also feasted and fêted. Such commercial attention often feeds back into the legend tradition, birthing monstrous revivals or budding bastard media offshoots. For some monsters, the commercialism is at the heart of the legend, perhaps concerning to purists, but perfectly in line with the commercial motive rampant in the development of the United States. In truth, it would seem downright un-American if some ambitious entrepreneur did not try to boost a town and make a buck off the back of a notorious local demon. And so we see just that, benign in the case of the Hodag in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, or Sharlie in McCall, Idaho, perhaps less so with the Mormon Nessie in Bear Lake on the Idaho-Utah border or the White River Monster in Arkansas.

Along with commercialism and local pride comes regional press interest in local monster legends, which, intentionally or not, perpetuates monster legends, spreading them to the far reaches of the newspaper's circulation empire. Journalists investigate local monsters, transform and disseminate their legends, and often become a part of the legend complex themselves. Chicanery, another recurring theme in these chapters, is initiated by hucksters and schemers with commercial motives, ranging from ambitious local showmen drawing crowds into their sideshows to furtive backwoods moonshiners keeping spectators away from their distilleries. When the

Figure 0.1. Vintage postcard from Rhinelander, Wisconsin, featuring the Hodag statue superimposed over the "Hodag City." Collection of David J. Puglia.

local context evaporates but the commercial impulse remains, the theme, generally stated, of popular culture as a consequential monster progenitor reveals itself, and for that reason, many folklorists trace the lineage of their monster outward, from folk origins to feature films, television series, and comic books.

Sense of Regional Pride and Identity

Some legendary monsters—fangs bared, mouth foaming, tentacles dangling—prove horrifying. But critics note that others are downright amusing. Folklorist Alan Dundes suggests that Americans are not content to stand in wide-eyed terror before their awesome landscape, instead demanding to conquer it (1982, xvii). And while the monsters Americans recount may evoke a wondrous and sprawling landscape, the persistent, ever-present humor and exaggeration captures the American aesthetic style. The American braggart, blowhard, raconteur, or fabulist (chronicled by Dorson 1982, 77–169) is both a well-known American archetype *and* the natural originator and presenter of such sensational monster legends. Richard M. Dorson, it should be noted, developed his own American "comic" monster thesis: the United States, having formed too near modernity to develop a fearsome bestiary, created a comic one instead, a menagerie of critters Americans "yarn about, identify with, hunt for, depict, extol, and chuckle

over" (1982, 4). Dundes, a proponent of the "inferiority complex" (1985), discerns American pride in the development of a unique legendary monster menagerie, distinct from the fairies, werewolves, and ogres of Europe. Americans have a long history of comparing themselves to Europeans. Are there commensurate American arts, letters, and sciences? Are there commensurate bogeymen? Americans don't just fear their monsters—if they ever really did—they *celebrate* them. In fact, in contrast to the days of garlic necklaces and silver bullets, celebration of local legendary monsters becomes a central theme explored throughout the casebook—a community embrace of a state, region, or town monster. As local legends, while potentially arousing fear, these monsters also attract a sense of regional pride and distinction.

In that way, monsters feed a sense of regional identity. Legend scholars do see contemporary legend emerging from anxiety and uncertainty, but monsters serve another local function, one that transcends mere dread: the role of local mascot. Foster, for one, notes that in Japan today, monsters hold surprising connections to local conceptions of heritage, where yokai practice is characterized by a sense of tradition, history, and community. Local legends, even the grisly ones, suggest "continuity with the past," which promotes a sense of heritage, an inkling of pride, and the possibility of profit (2015, 78). Japan may be the extreme example; Foster deems monsters "central to Japan's identity as a modern nation-state" (2013, 141), folkloric markers that float about as reminders of "authentic" Japanese heritage. But likewise, on a different continent, Carpenter proposes that British Columbians hold onto their legendary monsters because they are something distinctive, something specific they can claim that others cannot (1980). Several of the monsters in this casebook serve a similar function, probably none more so than the Jersey Devil, which is not only New Jersey's state monster but now also the mascot for New Jersey's National Hockey League (NHL) team. As traditional and place-based lore, legendary monsters serve, perhaps in an underappreciated role, as one element of local tradition.

HERE BE LEGENDARY MONSTERS

North American monster legends exhibit remarkable variation. Each town or region that shares a monster has its own version of that creature, and individuals within the area will have their own idiosyncratic variations within the local tradition. North Americans familiar only with their own regional monsters may not fully appreciate the legendary bestiary present on the

continent. By bringing together case studies of local monsters, I hope to demonstrate both the consistent legendary North American impulse in imagining monsters across the continent and the dependable localization of these monsters to meet local needs, local fears, and even local pride.

As legends tend to migrate, it's a rare monster that is peculiar to a single location. The Jersey Devil has its doppelgänger the Snallygaster; the Goatman of Maryland, the Goatman of Kentucky; Lake Erie's Bessie, Lake Tahoe's Tessie. The dependable multiple existences of monsters do not reduce, but rather increase, the importance of studying them. Either monsters really do wander the North American landscape (a possibility folklorists remain open to), or there exists some broad human significance to monster legends, offering an intriguing window into North American culture. And whether or not a local monster is entirely unique—and most are not—only through comparison to other North American monsters can the folklorist determine how that particular legend reflects the locality in question, as opposed to shared cultural concerns.

Conversely, no monster is universal. The U.S. bestiary, for example, has little in the way of unicorns, fairies, or leprechauns. Bigfoot sightings occur frequently in the Appalachians and the Pacific Northwest, but rarely in cities and far fewer in the Southwest than in the Northwest. There may be New Jersey's Leeds Devil, West Virginia's Mothman, and Maryland's Snallygaster flying above, but that is not to say all states have winged monsters. Topographic features are critical to the formation of monster legends, but such environmental influences do not dictate uniformity. Lakes seem to attract lake monsters all over the world, for example, but Nessie, Chessie, Bessie, and Tessie are all locally distinct. Neither unique nor universal, legendary monsters lurk somewhere in between, reflective of local history, culture, and environment.

While monster legends are a global phenomenon, this casebook is restricted to those in North America.[30] To cover every monster in the world would be impossible, but the choice in scope was not due to space considerations alone. The "New World" is a different beast to study than the "Old World." Europe nurtures legendary monsters from antiquity, from myth, from a pagan past; the New World proves even more complex. It hosts Native American monster legends (varying by tribe), Old World monster legends preserved and passed along by migrating settlers, pioneers, and voyageurs, and novel monster legends arising anew from local needs, anxieties, and encounters. So while Europe was a mess of monsters, North American newcomers brought the menagerie with them *and* encountered other cultures' bestiaries *and* discovered or invented new legendary

monsters. The discovery, blending, and invention of monster traditions, therefore, are themes that arise throughout this casebook, setting it apart from valuable but fundamentally different Old World monster studies.

What, then, is the American monster, this New World legend? Which legendary monsters can survive in this hemisphere, and which cannot? Fairies, for example, seem to thrive in the British Isles, but not in North America.[31] Secretive, serpentine lake monsters and hairy, apelike wildmen live comfortably on both continents. The chupacabra threatens much of the Americas, but avoids Europe. The presence or absence of these monsters can be a defining aspect of North American landscapes (accounting for local pride in monsters) and relates to Dorson's and Dundes's notion of an inferiority complex or a "Why don't we have monsters like . . . ?" sentiment. Dorson, for example, attempting to account for the lack of Old World monsters in North America, cited the fear of vast oceans and a close connection to birthplaces:

> One question that has always intrigued me is what happens to demonic beings when immigrants move from their homelands. Irish-Americans remember the fairies, Norwegian-Americans the *nisser*, Greek-Americans the *vrykólakas*, but only in relation to events remembered in the Old Country. When I once asked why such demons are not seen in America, my informants giggled confusedly and said, "They're scared to pass the ocean, it's too far," pointing out that Christ and the Apostles never came to America. Apparently the ethnic supernatural figures are too closely associated with the culture and geography of the old Country to migrate.[32] (1971, 36)

Once beyond the tendency to form monsters out of geographic otherness—that is, when discussing the monsters *here*, not *there*—which kinds of monsters are *North American*? Folklorists such as Paul Manning have noted the challenges of establishing a supernatural tradition in a "newer" landscape, or, in Manning's words, "anxieties about the unhauntability of the landscapes of the New World" (2017, 63). Nathaniel Hawthorne, for example, complained of the difficulty of writing haunting literature (or supernatural romance) set "in a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong" (1961, iv).[33] Manning contrasts the "picturesque ruin" of the Old World with the "sublime wilderness" of the New World (2017, 64–65). Whereas in the Old World, the eerie atmosphere required for the supernatural emanates from the ruins, in the New World, it emanates from the wilderness itself (67) or, perhaps more precisely, monsters haunt the wild places, the places *between* nature and culture (71).

And if that's the case, let's pause and examine this theory in practice. How many monsters in the present casebook derive from the North American wilderness? Of the nineteen case studies, all but three have direct connections to nature and the edges of the wild. The exceptions are vampires, perhaps the monster examined here with the strongest Old World roots; zombies, though I might argue that mainlanders conjure up the Caribbean as a single, strange tropical wild; and Slender Man. While an argument could be made that Slendy developed in the digital wilds of the Internet, at the very least, I would remind readers that when two Wisconsin tweens enacted the Slender Man legend on a friend, the perpetrators first act was to lure their intended victim into the woods. Excluding those three leaves sixteen of nineteen case studies where monsters lurk at the edges of forests, hide in vast (or tiny) bodies of water, or flee to the woods after their traumatic origins.

As a fledgling field, North American legendary monster studies has yet to identify the definitive, unifying characteristics of North American monsters. In other words, we're still trying to figure out what makes an American monster *American*. Examining the phantasmagoria on display in this casebook, the reader will discern a few immediate North American monster patterns: these creatures are deeply connected to their environments, they're horrific yet comic, they're believed in at times but rarely sacred, they're authentic *and* commercial, oral *and* mass-mediated. They are often playful, sometimes parodic, and occasionally hoaxy. But these are no more than initial postulates, set forth to be tested and contested, refined and refuted over generations of sustained research. The contours of the American legendary monster remain vague, and questions linger about its fundamental essence.

And last, I'll offer a brief explanation for the distinct lack of Native American monsters found in this casebook. This choice is not meant as a slight to the continent's original inhabitants or their monsters—in fact, just the opposite. In his study, Bacil F. Kirtley made the same decision to exclude Native American monsters, albeit with a different justification. Kirtley thought information about Native American monsters too abundant and easily accessible in folklore indices to warrant additional consideration (1964, 77–78). While I applaud Kirtley's emphasis on overlooked materials and endeavor to promote the same in this casebook, there exist additional, compelling reasons to be especially careful when considering Indigenous "monsters." As art historian Matthew Looper recalls, explorers found many grotesque creatures in Mayan culture. The alien beings were cast as "monsters," but such problematic classification betrays a colonial,

ethnocentric, and racist rhetoric. To the outsider Spanish Christians, these images were monsters, but to the Mayans, they were sacred gods. Looper urges scholars "writing from a position of privilege and authority . . . to consider the legacy of racism and ethnocentrism that the term [monster] invokes when applied to Native Americans and their gods" (2013, 199). In this casebook, therefore, with the exception of the windigo, mention of Native American beliefs most often arrives in the form of non-Indigenous narrators offering "proof" of a monster's long existence through vague reference to Indigenous history and belief, rather than to description of a particular nation's pantheon.

A CONTEMPORARY LEGEND CASEBOOK

Monster books abound, so I expect some readers will demur when I declare this volume the first of its kind. While monster books are plentiful, a careful examination of the monster library shelf reveals distinct subgenres: cultural studies or "monster studies," cryptozoology, skeptical inquiry, monster hunting, encyclopedic approaches, and the history of science. None are legend studies proper, but legend studies can contribute to all six. "Monster studies" is the field that most involves academics from a wide range of disciplines. Cultural analysis of monsters in literature and film—that is, fictional monsters never part of an oral tradition—is valuable for the insights it provides into artistic conceptions of the monstrous, otherness, and concepts of disability, race, and non-normativity. Cryptozoology is the study of unverified animals purported to exist. Although it is often decried as a pseudo-science, supporters will point to nineteenth-century naturalist and twenty-first-century microbiologist findings as legitimate instances of the discovery of unknown creatures. At their best, cryptozoology books question the scientific establishment's hold over knowledge and represent the romantic impulse for exploration of the unknown. The skeptics—rigid, rigorous, and rationalistic researchers—question the methods, the evidence, and the conclusions of cryptozoologists and monster hunters, pointing out logical fallacies, sloppy methods, or shaky evidence, and their books offer prosaic explanations for purported extraordinary beings: mangy coyotes, disoriented bears, frolicking otters. What I refer to as "monster hunter" books are vast compendiums of ostensible monster lore and purported sightings, sometimes serving as do-it-yourself field guides for tracking particular monsters in specific geographic locales. The encyclopedic approach emphasizes taxonomies: collection, classification, and ordering of monster data. Such ordering and organization can improve our intellectual grasp of

monsters and assist us in taming an unruly subject but, as a trade-off, encyclopedic approaches extract monsters from their native contexts, thereby obscuring their critical social and psychological underpinnings (Dendle 2013, 438; Foster 2015, 91). Among proponents of monster studies are scholars of the history of science, particularly those studying the inquiries of naturalists during the Scientific Revolution. While scientists explain nature's regularities (e.g., sun rising, stone falling), pre-modern scientists also sought to explain irregularities (e.g., conjoined twins, hermaphrodites, egg-laying mammals like the duck-billed platypus). Monstrous phenomena were valuable cues, signaling deficiencies in theories of nature that did not yet account for all terrestrial beings.[34]

While it can contribute to all of these practices, legend scholarship is distinctly its own field of inquiry with its own approach to monster research. While not as credulous as monster hunters, legend scholars assume as their default position that informants are honestly reporting real sensory experiences to the best of their ability. While not as incredulous as skeptics, when debunking is possible, folklorists are not analytically satisfied with poking holes: legend scholars are primarily interested in why and how the monster legend took hold in the first place, rather than its basis in established fact. While not as scientific as cryptozoologists, who often see themselves as part of the life sciences, legend scholars do adhere to a rigorous set of disciplinary norms and methodologies, including proper data collection and rigorous peer review. While more interested in local context than exhaustive encyclopedic documentation, legend scholars do embrace reference tools, motif analyses, tale-type indices, and cross-cultural comparisons. And while their motives differ from the naturalists of the Scientific Revolution (and the historians of science who study them), folklorists too are intrigued by accounts of Earth's anomalies, legendary monsters being but one of those, and view such legend cycles as the folk's own attempt to reconcile official accounts of how the world works with their own personal and community experiences. So, in sum, while there have been many field guides of North American monsters and many debunkings of the same, there has never been a casebook that, through folkloristic concern with community narrative, belief, and performance, has focused on rigorously fieldworked and duly sourced legendary North American monsters. And that is why I claim this volume is the first of its kind.

What differentiates this casebook is its commitment to *legendary monsters* in their *native habitats* and the *folkloric approach* to studying them. For some, especially those not attuned to folk narrative and belief, I suspect the monsters presented here might initially feel underwhelming. Compared

to monsters in other media, folklore monsters tend to be muted, their narratives understated, their legends, at least originally, carried along without screenwriters, novelists, or illustrators who transform subtle legendary monsters into lurid media monsters. Nonetheless, or perhaps for this reason, legendary monsters are welcomed in a wide range of media, and they prove willing travelers, journeying by any means available, rarely ever reaching a final destination. These modes can interbreed, cross-pollinate, feint one way and bolt the other.[35] Monster legends can be passed on in oral form by word of mouth, transmitted visually or digitally, shared one-on-one, performed in front of a large studio audience, streamed across the airwaves to millions at once, or stored asynchronously on a video hosting platform to be stumbled upon years later.

Legendary monsters are particularly intriguing because of the many environments they successfully navigate. Bigfoot, for example, might be the antagonist of a short story, be portrayed in a blurry photograph circulated on the Web, be regaled in legend form around a campfire, or be the star of his own movie. "We cannot say any one of these is the true or original" monster, Foster writes, but "they are versions of each other—the same but different," and it's the "ability to thrive in diverse environments, to perform in multiple platforms" that makes monsters especial interesting (2015, 92). In fact, because a legendary monster can bounce around, though it may lose its local and contextual meaning, its analytic potential only increases as a "free agent" or a "mutable metaphor for all sorts of purposes" (Foster 2013, 139). By contrast, it's important to note that legendary monsters are not lone victims in this folk-media process. Legendary monsters themselves appropriate popular culture, where they "feed themes, motifs, and descriptive details back into the small-group intimate transmission" in an "effortless comingling" (Goldstein, Grider, and Thomas 2007, 5–6). Monsters are at home in many forms of media, and folklorists can and will follow legendary monster dissemination anywhere the monsters lead. Because cinematic, literary, and metaphorical monsters are comparatively well covered in other disciplines, steadfast and careful consideration of folkloric and legendary monsters, wherever they roam, is folklorists' prime contribution to the larger interdisciplinary monster studies endeavor.

LEGENDARY MONSTERS: YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW

And now, I present nineteen monster chapters covering the gamut of legend scholarship, spanning half a century and an entire continent. In the early chapters, readers will encounter standard folkloristic methods in

monster research, including fieldwork techniques, interviewing, transcription, participant-observation, motif and tale-type identification, and folklore archive research. They will also glimpse the importance of function, variants, performance, community re-creation, ecotypes, kernels of truth, diffusion, and issues of ethics, rapport, and respect for local cultural knowledge. As the chapters progress and inquiry expands, the questions folklorists pose become increasingly complex, pulling in concepts developing throughout the field in the second half of the twentieth century. Authors tackle ideas of ostension, legend tripping, legend climate, regionalism, cosmology, worldview, memorates, liminality, the experience-centered study of belief, and the invention of tradition. Readers will detect a concern with interrelationships: between legend, myth, and tall tale; between legend, journalism, and newsprint; between legend tourism, brochures, and guidebooks; between legend, film, and television; between legend and anti-legend; even between legend and legend scholars as inadvertent legend instigators. By the final chapters, legendary monster researchers broach the leading questions of the present era, including hybridity, intertextuality, creolization, colonialism, appropriation, artistic license, digital culture, conspiracy theory, fête and festival, celebration, and revival.

I can already hear the lamentations ringing in my ears. "But you left out *my* favorite monster!" My apologies! But I had sensible reasons, I promise. There was the ever-nagging word limit. Fitting in nineteen chapters, each on a different monster, and in a moderately sized, affordable book, was already a tight squeeze. But I agree, the New World has a wondrous menagerie of legendary monsters, and it's heartbreaking to leave out any, especially with such fabulous names as the Abominable Swamp Slob, the Ozark Howler, and the Whirling Whimpus. But North American legendary monsters are underresearched. There were more worthy essays than could fit into a single casebook, but not many more. Legendary monster studies conducted with the folklorist's dedication to fieldwork, oral tradition, variants, and contextualization are few and far between, lost in a sea of amateur monster hunters and midnight creature feature enthusiasts. That's a good thing. As scholars say, there's room here. We need you. Use these chapters as models, and don't allow your town, state, or region's monster to wither in obscurity.

Ideally, I would have included every monster in North America, but as the authors here show, tracking down interviewees, rifling through folklore archives, squinting through microfiche, and searching out monster ephemera requires prolonged toil (and honestly, monster research can be a tough sell to your fiancé's family at the Thanksgiving table). So while any author can crank out search engine results and throw together collected digital

tidbits combined with her own literary inspiration—the type of "fakelore" that would have folklore purist Richard M. Dorson not only spinning in his grave but contemplating his own monstrous return—outstanding monster research requires good old-fashioned hard work. Listen to what these monsters have to teach you, and then go out and find your own—and remember to bring your recorder.

NOTES

1. European explorers were primed to encounter monsters and monstrous races, and their subsequent discoveries are frequently discussed in histories of the Age of Exploration and in discussions of monsters and the New World. See, for example, Surekha Davies's (2013) chapter section "Monstrous People at the Ends of the Earth" for a discussion of some of the monster hearsay Columbus encountered (63–71). Magellan's shipmate and voyage chronicler Antonio Pigafetta documents their meeting giants (*giganti*) in his *Magellan's Voyage around the Word* (Pigafetta 1906, 49–61).

2. For more on the idea of native inhabitants *as* monsters, see Friedman 2000; Looper 2013.

3. Pinzón's "strange Monster" and other New World sightings and depictions are reported and discussed in van Duzer (2013), 423–29; Columbus's "mermaid" report can be found in the *Journal of the First Voyage of Columbus* under his entry for "Wednesday, 9th of January" (see Markham 2010, 154).

4. A comprehensive and thoroughly useful overview of this history is Thomas Friedman's *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (2000).

5. For a quick introductory overview of monstrous births, see Weinstock 2020, 6–12.

6. For a compelling example of monster analysis embedded in a much larger ethnographic study, see Pritchard's *The Nuer* (1940).

7. The most frequently cited is Cohen's own chapter from that collection, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)."

8. Similarly, in his monster studies collection, one that emphasizes theory, Weinstock (2020) observes, "One difficulty confronting monster theory researchers . . . has been the dispersed nature of the scholarship—a difficulty exacerbated by the transnational and transdisciplinary nature of the investigation" (1).

9. The folkloristic study of legendary ghosts boasts a more prolific literature than legendary monsters. For a sampling of how folklorists approach ghosts, see Bennett 1999; Bronner 2012, 277–342; Browne 1976; Ellis 2003, 117–41; Goldstein, Grider, and Thomas 2007; Harris 2015; Hufford 1995; Iwasaka and Toelken 1994; Jones 1944; McNeil 1985; Montell 1975; Tucker 2007. In addition, metaphorical ghost spectrality literature (what Roger Lockhurst recognizes as meta-gothic haunted modernity literature) mingles with literal ghosts and invokes haunting metaphors but fails to investigate folklorists' core concerns. For commentary on metaphorical ghost spectrality, see Fisher 2017; Luckhurst 2002a; Stevens and Tolbert 2018.

10. For example, in the introduction to a monster anthology published just before this casebook went to press, Weinstock (2020) breaks monster studies into three parts: teratology, mythology (folklorists would much prefer "folklore"), and psychology. He further breaks mythology into monstrous races, monsters from myth and fantasy, and cryptids.

While contemporary folklorists can contribute to the latter two categories, it's the study of cryptids, broadly conceived, where folklorists can be of greatest service to the monster studies movement.

11. As ethnographers, folklorists no longer bother with the charade of detached and ostensibly objective indifference—the folklorists in this casebook, for the most part, are indelibly entangled with their monsters.

12. Or, as Susan Stewart describes the legend's distinctive impending and threatening temporal characteristics, "the listener's welfare becomes increasingly implicated as the narrative sequence proceeds" because "audience time and narrative time collapse into each other as the story-teller proceeds" (1982, 33–34).

13. Foster's research specifically addresses "yokai," which are indeed Japanese legendary monsters, but can encompass an even larger spectrum of beings, including ghosts and animals. As Foster is one of the premier folklorists working in this subfield, almost all of his thinking applies equally to Western monsters. Therefore, I use the words *yokai* and *monster* synonymously in this chapter, but I acknowledge they are not necessarily always a one-to-one comparison.

14. In his establishing essay (1996a), Cohen highlights "Do monsters really exist?" as the question that will come up in any serious monster discussion.

15. Woolley's work was first brought to my attention by Dendle (2013).

16. Carpenter wrote in a similar vein that "the actual existence of these extraordinary beings does not concern me here at all," only the "cultural phenomenon" that cannot be denied (1980, 98).

17. For a sample of the pivotal works resituating the field of folklore from text to social interaction, see Abrahams 1968; Bauman 1975; Ben-Amos 1971; Georges 1969; Hymes 1968.

18. For the full list of Hufford's scholarship applicable to monster studies, see "Recommended Reading List" in this casebook.

19. Or, as Goldstein, Grider, and Thomas write, there is a common "academic belief that supernatural tradition is antithetical to modern thought and therefore destined for imminent demise as technology and education increase" (2007, 19).

20. Dendle notes how technology feeds belief in UFOs and aliens, which he calls "the signature folklore of the technological age" (2013, 446; see also Clarke and Roberts 2007).

21. Susan Stewart referred to the legend in oral form as existing in the "peculiar place between the real and the fictive" (1982, 35).

22. See Puglia's Goatman essay (chapter 12) in this casebook for an example in action.

23. Cohen, in his third of seven monster theses, writes that the monster is a "messenger" or "harbinger of category crisis" that embodies "a relentless hybridity that resists assimilation into secure epistemologies" (2013, 452). Similarly, Mittman sees monsters as "theatrical constructs by which we might gain greater understanding of the cultures by which they are produced" (2013, 9). And Gilmore argues that the universality of monsters alone proves they "must reveal something about the human mind" (2003, ix). Dendle sees importance not in monsters' fictitious nature but rather in their brilliant and constant navigation of the boundaries between real and imaginary (2013, 448). Goldstein, Grider, and Thomas write of how the supernatural has the intriguing power to both "reflect cultural values and simultaneously shape and maintain those values" (2007, 16). In her explanation, Barbara Walker focuses less on the importance of the monster and more on the groups that maintain that supernatural belief. She writes, "The events and phenomena reported or described within a

group give us evidence of a particular way of perceiving the world. It provides insight into cultural identity and a greater awareness of the breadth and quality of human experiences and expressions. How groups regard the supernatural contributes to thought and behavior, and by attending to those patterns, we gather a fuller understanding of what's meaningful to the group, what gives it cohesion and animation, and thus we develop a rounder perspective of cultural nuance, both within the group and cross-culturally" (1995, 4). Canadian folklorist Carpenter similarly argues, "Extraordinary beings are a surprisingly profitable area of investigation since they are a part of the people's own culture—the un-official or folk level of culture—which persists not through official or institutional support, but because it's of particular and peculiar importance to the people themselves" (1980, 106). Likewise, writing about the folkloric treatment of American animals, Gillespie and Mechling argue that "American symbolic discourse about an animal is, simultaneously, American symbolic discourse about human relations" (1987, 1). It follows then, I would argue, that North American symbolic discourse about monsters is North American symbolic discourse about human relations, too.

24. Nonetheless, Barbara Walker notes how little this skepticism really matters to the supernatural beliefs that actually do pervade our daily lives. Regardless of the scientific consensus, people wake up, put on their lucky socks, walk to work while avoiding ladders and black cats, zip past the nonexistent thirteenth floor on the elevator, rub their lucky crystal before meeting with the boss, come home, make a quick call to the psychic hotline, and then feel the presence of their great-uncle before praying and going to sleep beneath their dream catcher. As Walker puts it, "Whether I'm skeptical or not really doesn't matter because these things are a part of my immediate world regardless" (1995, 4).

25. In his *Monster Theory Reader*, Weinstock gives the concept of monster hybridity a generous section of his introduction (2020, 12–15).

26. Dendle was referring specifically to zombies.

27. Put briefly, "aspects of the environment" or "attitudes towards the environment" (Thomas 2015, 44).

28. For further commentary on monsters, otherness, and alterity, see Camille 2004; Friedman 2000; Stewart 2014; Vernant 1991; Vernant and Doueihi 1986; Vidal-Naquet 1998. Weinstock has a brief but intriguing section on the theme of monster otherness, subtitled "Monster Politics," where he considers how monsterizing promotes imperialist political agendas, a common theme of contemporary monster theory essays (2020, 38–39).

29. For a sampling of this line of contemporary folkloristic thought on the supernatural, see Foster 2015; Goldstein, Grider, and Thomas 2007; Thomas 2015.

30. Perhaps it was overly restrictive to title this casebook *"North American" Monsters*, as what's American is also global, a thriving media industry having encouraged transnational proliferation. Monsters travel easily, encouraged by commerce, bouncing from country to country through different media outlets. But there does seem to be some minor difference by continent, and I will attempt to comment based on the general scholarly consensus. Breaking it down by continent, it might be fair to say that Asia has a closer and more playful relationship with its teeming monsters (the yokai in Japan, the dragon in China); Europe's monsters primarily existed on the fringes of civilization and later "elsewhere," such as in Africa and the Americas; Latin American and Caribbean monsters are a commentary on colonial and imperialist relations; and the United States, because of its late development, has a pantheon of "comic" creatures that nonetheless seem to comment on sociopolitical and environmental anxieties.

31. Except, of course, in Newfoundland, an island that seems to exist to be the exception to North American rules. For examples of the fairylore in Newfoundland, see Butler 1997; Narváez 1997; Rieti 1997. For other exceptions to the North American "No Fairy Zone" rule, see Wells 1997; Woodyard and Young 2019.

32. Dorson's passage has received international attention after best-selling fantasy author Neil Gaiman opened his novel *American Gods* (2001) with it. Folklorists noticed (see Evans 2018; Manning 2017).

33. For generations, folklorists have noted how ballads and legends lose some of their supernatural characteristics as they transplant into the New World. Drawing attention to the logic in Dorson's informants' explanation, Manning writes, "Creatures [that] embody and animate landscape features of uncanny alterity can scarcely be more portable than those landscape features themselves" (2017, 69).

34. While admittedly given scant attention in this casebook, science and technology studies and the history of science do not think monsters trivial. In fact, those disciplines share with folklore and anthropology a disinterest in debunking ghosts, monsters, or the supernatural. While the scholarship is oriented toward the ghost/technology interface, there is also a small literature on monsters (e.g., see Bynum 1997; Daston and Park 2001; Park and Daston 1981).

35. Folklorists Angus Gillespie and Jay Mechling identify legends of American creatures carried on, at the very least, in conversational genres, oral narrative, children's literature and film, popular, mass, commercial culture, performances (like tour guides), elite culture, and science (1987, 4–8). Foster calls this "media mix," the idea that "the same character can perform on many different platforms" (2015, 92–93).

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