

The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens  
Faculty of English Studies

# AMERICAN LEGENDS

5th semester elective



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## AMERICAN LEGENDS

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**Myth** An anonymous story that presents supernatural episodes as a means of interpreting natural events. Myth makes concrete and particular a special perception of human beings or a cosmic view. *Myth* is the absence of anomaly—at least from one perspective. From another, staked out by Émile Durkheim's school of sociology, *myth* represents a projection of social patterns upward onto a superhuman level that sanctifies and stabilizes the secular ideology. *Myths* differ from legends by comprising less of historical background and more of the supernatural; they differ from the fable in that they are less concerned with moral didacticism and are the product of a racial group rather than the creation of an individual. Every literature has its mythology, the most familiar to English readers being the Greek, Roman, and Norse. But the mythology of all groups takes shape around certain common themes: they all attempt to explain creation, divinity, and religion; to probe the meaning of existence and death; to account for natural phenomena; and to chronicle the adventures of cultural heroes.

They also have a startlingly similar group of motifs, characters, and actions, as a number of students of *myth* and religion, particularly Sir James Frazer, Georges Dumézil, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Joseph Campbell, have pointed out. Although there was a time when *myth* was a virtual synonym for error, notably in the neoclassic period, the tendency today is to see *myths* as dramatic or narrative embodiments of a people's perception of the deepest truths. Various modern writers have insisted on the necessity of *myth* as a material with which the artist works, and in varying ways and degrees have appropriated the old *myths* or created new ones as necessary substances to give order and a frame of meaning to their personal perceptions and images; notable among such "myth-makers" have been Blake, Thackeray, Shaw, Hart Crane, and Gary Snyder.

Since the introduction of Jung's concept of the "racial unconscious" (see **ARCHETYPE**) and of Ernst Cassirer's theories of language and *myth*, critics have found in *myth* a useful device for examining literature. There is a type of imagination, Philip Wheelwright argues, that can properly be called "the Archetypal Imagination, which sees the particular object as embodying and adumbrating suggestions of universality." The possessors of such imagination arrange their works in archetypal patterns and present us with narratives that stir us as "something at once familiar and strange." They thus give concrete expression to something deep and primitive in us all. Thus, those critics—and they are many—who approach literature as *myth* see in it vestiges of primordial ritual and ceremony; the repository of racial memories; a structure of unconsciously held value systems; an expression of the general beliefs of a race, social class, or nation; or a unique embodiment of ideology. One significant difference should be noted, however; *myth* in its traditional sense is an anonymous, nonliterary, essentially religious formulation of the cosmic view of a people who approach its formulations not as representations of truth but as truth itself; *myth* in the sophisticated literary sense in which it is currently used is the intelligible and often self-conscious use of such primitive methods to express something deeply felt by the individual artist that will, it is hoped, prove to have universal responses. It has been suggested—by C. G. Jung among others—that sophisticated works of literary art, which may be shaped by a strong individual subjectivity, are of less use in the discovery of *myths* than rather vulgar, unsophisticated works such as popular novels and even comic strips. The mythopoeic writer attempts to return to the role of the prophet-seer, by creating a *myth* that strikes resonances in the minds of readers and speaks with something of the authority of the old *myths*.

[References: Albert Cook, *Myth and Language* (1980); Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (tr. 1963); Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957); William Rieger, *Myth and Literature* (1975); K. K. Ruthven, *Myth* (1976).]

**Mythical Method** A phrase used in 1923 by T. S. Eliot to describe the structure of Joyce's *Ulysses*, which sustains a "continuous parallel" between the ten-year verse epic of Homer's *Odyssey* and a one-day prose narrative (with much technical innovation) of contemporaneity. A method already used by Yeats (as in "No Second Troy" and elsewhere) and Shaw (as in *Pygmalion*) in different moods and with different effects. Eliot likened Joyce's work to a scientific discovery, which others could take advantage of (as he himself had taken advantage of Joyce's methods as early as 1919, when he borrowed a passage from *Ulysses* before the novel appeared in book form).

**Mythic Criticism** Criticism that explores the nature and significance of the **ARCHETYPES** and archetypal patterns in a work of art. See **MYTH**; **JUNGLIAN CRITICISM**; **ARCHETYPE**; **CRITICISM, TYPES OF**.

**Mythopoeia** Myth-making, construed as either an individual function of a single artist or a collective spirit.

**Mythopoeitics** A term applied to criticism that places an emphasis on **MYTH** and **ARCHETYPE**.

**Folk Ballad** An anonymous **BALLAD** transmitted orally and usually existing in many variants. In America *folk ballad* is often associated with the **FOLK SONGS** of the Appalachian mountains, of the western plains, and of mills and factories. See **BALLAD** and **FOLK SONG**.

**Folk Drama** In its stricter and older sense, as usually employed by folklorists, the term means dramatic activities of the folk—the unsophisticated treatment of folk themes by the folk themselves, particularly activities connected with popular festivals and religious rites. Medieval *folk drama* took such forms as the sword dance, the St. George play, and the mummers' play. The medieval religious drama, though based on scriptural materials and a religion with a fully developed theology, is by some regarded as a form of *folk drama*, and the "folk" character of such twentieth-century plays as Marc Connelly's *Green Pastures* is commonly recognized. The religious drama of the Middle Ages, however, is usually treated as a special form, not as *folk drama*.

Another sense in which *folk drama* is being employed, especially in America, includes plays that, even though written by sophisticated and consciously artistic playwrights, reflect the customs, language, attitudes, and environmental difficulties of the folk. These plays are commonly performed, not by the folk themselves, but by amateur or professional actors. They tend to be realistic, close to the soil, and sympathetically human. The plays of J. M. Synge, Lady Gregory, and other authors of the **CELTIC RENAISSANCE** and the American plays by Paul Green and others published in the several volumes of *Carolina Folk-Plays* are examples. Early in his career, Thomas Wolfe wrote such a play and acted in it.

**Folk Epic** An epic of unknown authorship, assumed to be the product of communal composition. See ART EPIC.

**Folklore** A term first used by W. J. Thoms in the middle of the nineteenth century as a substitute for "popular antiquities." The definition adopted by the Folklore Society of London about 1890 is: "The comparison and identification of the survivals of archaic beliefs, customs, and traditions in modern ages." Alexander H. Krappe, in *The Science of Folklore* (1930) affirms that *folklore* "limits itself to a study of the unrecorded traditions of the people as they appear in popular fiction, custom and belief, magic and ritual," and he regards it as the function of *folklore* to reconstruct the "spiritual history" of the human race. Some forms of *folklore* (for example, superstitions and proverbs) belong also to the life of modern peoples, literate as well as illiterate, and may therefore be transmitted by written record as well as by word of mouth. *Folklore* includes myths, legends, stories, riddles, proverbs, nursery rhymes, charms, spells, omens, beliefs of all sorts, popular ballads, cowboy songs, plant lore, animal lore, and customs dealing with birth, initiation, courtship, marriage, medicine, work, amusements, and death. A FOLK-TALE may be retold by an author writing for a highly cultivated audience and later in a changed form again be taken over by the folk.

Literature is full of elements taken over from *folklore*, and some knowledge of the conventions of *folklore* can aid the understanding of great literature. The acceptance of the rather childish love-test in *King Lear* may rest on the fact that the motif was an already familiar one in *folklore*. The effects of such works as Coleridge's *Christabel*, Keates's *Eve of St. Agnes*, or Hardy's *The Return of the Native* depend on the recognition of popular beliefs, and some familiarity with fairy lore is necessary if one is to appreciate fully the quality of James Stephen's *The Crock of Gold*. The MEDIEVAL ROMANCE *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, written for a cultivated audience, centers on the folk formula of the challenging of a mortal by a supernatural being to a beheading contest: the binding force of the covenant between Gawain and the Green Knight is explained by primitive attitudes rather than by rational rules of conduct. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a retelling of an old, popular tale of the "exile-and-return" formula and may have its origins, as Francis Fergusson has suggested, in a series of religious rituals.

[References: Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Story of American Folklore: An Introduction* (1968); Richard M. Dorson, ed., *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction* (1972), and *Handbook of American Folklore* (1983); A. H. Krappe, *Science of Folklore* (1930, reprinted 1974).]

**Folk Song** A song of unknown authorship preserved and transmitted orally. It is generally believed to be the expression of a whole community. *Folk songs* are very old and appear in all cultures, although they flourish best in illiterate or preliterate communities. See BALLAD and FOLK BALLAD.

**Folktale** A short narrative handed down through oral tradition, with various tellers and groups modifying it, so that it acquires cumulative authorship. Most *folktales* eventually move from oral tradition to written form. Noted collections of such *tales* from oral tradition have been made, among them Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm's collec-

retold stories handed down in their families over generations. *The Thousand and One Nights*, or *Arabian Nights' Entertainments* derives from Persian and Egyptian *folktales*. In America a famous example is Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus stories, a collection of transplanted African *folktales* told by plantation slaves. The frontier has been an active source for American *folktales* dealing with characters such as Paul Bunyan, John Henry, and Mike Fink. The range of *folktales* goes from myth through legends, fables, tall tales, ghost stories, and humorous anecdotes to fairy tales. On occasion a character or a story that had a clear literary origin becomes by various means folk property and functions as a *folktale*. Rip Van Winkle, created by Washington Irving, and Uncle Tom, from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, are examples.

[References: Richard M. Dorson, *America in Legend* (1974); Stith Thompson, *The Folktale* (1946).]

#### BLACK E L K S P E A K S

##### XXIV. *The Butchering at Wounded Knee*

That evening before it happened, I went in to Pine Ridge and heard these things, and while I was there, soldiers started for where the Big Foots<sup>1</sup> were. These made about five hundred soldiers that were there next morning. When I saw them starting I felt that something terrible was going to happen. That night I could hardly sleep at all. I walked around most of the night.

In the morning I went out after my horses, and while I was out I heard shooting off toward the east, and I knew from the sound that it must be wagon-guns (cannon) going off. The sounds went right through my body, and I felt that something terrible would happen.

When I reached camp with the horses, a man rode up to me and said: "Hey-hey-hey! The people that are coming are fired on! I know it!"

I saddled up my buckskin and put on my sacred shirt. It was one I had made to be worn by no one but myself. It had a spotted eagle outstretched on the back of it, and the daybreak star was on the left shoulder, because when facing south that shoulder is toward the east. Across the breast, from the left shoulder to the right hip, was the flaming rainbow, and there was another rainbow around the neck, like a necklace, with a star at the bottom. At each shoulder, elbow, and wrist was an eagle feather; and over the whole shirt were red streaks of lightning. You will see that this was from my great vision, and you will know how it protected me that day.

I painted my face all red, and in my hair I put one eagle feather for the One Above.

It did not take me long to get ready, for I could still hear the shooting over there.

I started out alone on the old road that ran across the hills to Wounded Knee. I had no gun. I carried only the sacred bow of the west that I had seen in my great vision. I had gone only a little way when a band of young men came galloping after me. The first two who came up were Loves War and Iron Wasichu. I asked what they were going to do, and they said they were just going to see where the shooting was. Then others were coming up, and some older men.

We rode fast, and there were about twenty of us now. The shooting was getting louder. A horseback from over there came galloping very fast toward us, and he said: "Hey-hey-hey! They have murdered them!" Then he whipped his horse and rode away faster toward Pine Ridge.

In a little while we had come to the top of the ridge where, looking to the east, you can see for the first time the monument and the burying ground on the little hill where the church is. That is where the terrible thing started. Just south of the burying ground on the little hill a deep dry gulch runs east and west, very crooked, and it rises westward to nearly the top of the ridge where we were. It had no name, but the Wasichus sometimes call it Battle Creek now. We stopped on the ridge not far from the head of the dry gulch. Wagon guns were still going off over there on the little hill, and they were going off again where they hit along the gulch. There was much shooting down yonder, and there were many cries, and we could see cavalymen scattered over the hills ahead of us. Cavalymen were riding along the gulch and shooting into it, where the women and children were running away and trying to hide in the gullies and the stunted pines.

A little way ahead of us, just below the head of the dry gulch, there were some women and children who were huddled under a clay bank, and some cavalymen were there pointing guns at them.

We stopped back behind the ridge, and I said to the others: "Take courage. These are our relatives. We will try to get them back." Then we all sang a song which went like this:

A thunder being nation I am, I have said.  
A thunder being nation I am, I have said.  
You shall live.  
You shall live.  
You shall live.  
You shall live.

Then I rode over the ridge and the others after me, and we were crying: "Take courage! It is time to fight!" The soldiers who were guarding our relatives shot at us and then ran away fast, and some more cavalymen on the other side of the gulch did too. We got our relatives and sent them across the ridge to the northwest where they would be safe.

I had no gun, and when we were charging, I just held the sacred bow out in front of me with my right hand. The bullets did not hit us at all.

We found a little baby lying all alone near the head of the gulch. I could not pick her up just then, but I got her later and some of my people adopted her. I just wrapped her up tighter in a shawl that was around her and left her there. It was a safe place, and I had other work to do.

The soldiers had run eastward over the hills where there were some more soldiers, and they were off their horses and lying down. I told the others to stay back, and I charged upon them holding the sacred bow out toward them with my right hand. They all shot at me, and I could hear bullets all around me, but I ran my horse right close to them, and then swung around. Some soldiers across the gulch began shooting at me too, but I got back to the others and was not hurt at all.

By now many other Lakotas, who had heard the shooting, were coming up from Pine Ridge, and we all charged on the soldiers. They ran eastward toward where the trouble began. We followed down along the dry gulch, and what we saw was terrible. Dead and wounded women and children and little babies were scattered all along there where they had been trying to run away. The

soldiers had followed along the gulch, as they ran, and murdered them in there. Sometimes they were in heaps because they had huddled together, and some were scattered all along. Sometimes bunches of them had been killed and torn to pieces where the wagon guns hit them. I saw a little baby trying to suck its mother, but she was bloody and dead.

There were two little boys at one place in this gulch. They had guns and they had been killing soldiers all by themselves. We could see the soldiers they had killed. The boys were all alone there, and they were not hurt. These were very brave little boys.

When we drove the soldiers back, they dug themselves in, and we were not enough people to drive them out from there. In the evening they marched off up Wounded Knee Creek, and then we saw all that they had done there.

Men and women and children were heaped and scattered all over the flat at the bottom of the little hill where the soldiers had their wagon-guns, and westward up the dry gulch all the way to the high ridge, the dead women and children and babies were scattered.

When I saw this I wished that I had died too, but I was not sorry for the women and children. It was better for them to be happy in the other world, and I wanted to be there too. But before I went there I wanted to have revenge. I thought there might be a day, and we should have revenge.

After the soldiers marched away, I heard from my friend, Dog Chief, how the trouble started, and he was right there by Yellow Bird when it happened. This is the way it was:

In the morning the soldiers began to take all the guns away from the Big Foots, who were camped in the flat below the little hill where the monument and burying ground are now. The people had stacked most of their guns, and even their knives, by the tepee where Big Foot was lying sick. Soldiers were on the little hill and all around, and there were soldiers across the dry gulch to the south and over east along Wounded Knee Creek too. The people were nearly surrounded, and the wagon-guns were pointing at them.

Some had not yet given up their guns, and so the soldiers were searching all the tepees, throwing things around and poking into everything. There was a man called Yellow Bird, and he and another man were standing in front of the tepee where Big Foot was lying sick. They had white sheets around and over them, with eyeholes to look through, and they had guns under these. An officer came to search them. He took the other man's gun, and then started to take Yellow Bird's. But Yellow Bird would not let go. He wrestled with the officer, and while they were wrestling, the gun went off and killed the officer. Wasichus and some others have said he meant to do this, but Dog Chief was standing right there, and he told me it was not so. As soon as the gun went off, Dog Chief told me, an officer shot and killed Big Foot who was lying sick inside the tepee.

Then suddenly nobody knew what was happening, except that the soldiers were all shooting and the wagon-guns began going off right in among the people.

Many were shot down right there. The women and children ran into the gulch and up west, dropping all the time, for the soldiers shot them as they ran. There were only about a hundred warriors and there were nearly five hundred soldiers. The warriors rushed to where they had piled their guns and

knives. They fought soldiers with only their hands until they got their guns. Dog Chief saw Yellow Bird run into a tepee with his gun, and from there he killed soldiers until the tepee caught fire. Then he died full of bullets. It was a good winter day when all this happened. The sun was shining. But after the soldiers marched away from their dirty work, a heavy snow began to fall. The wind came up in the night. There was a big blizzard, and it grew very cold. The snow drifted deep in the crooked gulch, and it was one long grave of butchered women and children and babies, who had never done any harm and were only trying to run away.

#### HOPÍ

### The Emergence

1932, 1961

questions central to this Hopi myth of emergence, and the answer expressed directly and also implied throughout is to live and be happy by respecting the love of the creator in wisdom and harmony. But the people continually forget this basic religious command, and the myth charts their journey from the beginning through failures to new hope.

Originally, there was only Taiowa and the first world of endless space existed in his mind. "Then he, the infinite, conceived the finite," and so creation began. De-lining a dependent and active force within himself, Taiowa created his "nephew" Sotuknang and had him arrange the nine-tiered world. Then Sotuknang formed Spider Woman who, with a mixture of earth, *saiiva* (raw material and a fertilizing agent), and creative wisdom (a forming principle) made twin gods to harden the earth, to animate it with vibration and sound, and finally to guard it at the two poles. After having formed plants, birds, and animals in the same manner, she made the four colors of people in three stages, and the dawn broke, and the sun (Taiowa's symbol) rose to greet its creatures. Only Sotuknang, however, could make people independently creative, and this he did by giving them speech, reproductive power, and the wisdom to use them well.

Physically complete, the people's spiritual development was just beginning. In stages appropriate to psychosexual development as well as to cultural and religious development, the people moved from one stage or world to another in a manner imitative of birth. (Just so do the Hopi initiate emerge from the roof of their *kivas* on the last night of the year when the fires have been extinguished and the new ones are about to be lit. Having listened to the Emergence Story, they climb up the ladder of the *kiva* into the new world of adulthood and membership into the group.)

From the first world of harmony and unity with its sins of attention to differences and consequent warring, to the second world of culture and commerce and its sins of greed and acquisitiveness, and finally through the third world of civilization and technology and its sins of hatred and warfare, the faithful finally emerge to journey northeastward across water (implying a southern Asian origin) to the new, present, fourth world of migrations and final settlement. It is a spiritual odyssey from the worldly back to the world, and signs of sacrality permeate it. The myth eloquently proclaims the holiness of all, the fundamental unity of spirit and matter and the relation of all things through endless correspondences. The four types of life-giving corn, the colors, sounds, plants, animals, minerals, and directions—all resonate with the same holy vibrations as the world itself. Microcosms within macrocosms, the individual's body is to the society what the society is to the

world, and all are ordered in the same fashion, dependent on the holy power of the creator.

The Hopi (or "peaceful ones") live in nine villages in a reservation on the mesas of northeastern Arizona. Although visited by the Spanish under Pedro de Tovar in 1540, their remote location saved them from major colonist influence. They repulsed the Franciscan attempt to establish Christian missions among them in the seventeenth century and have remained one of the least white-influenced of the American Indian peoples.

**TOKPELA: THE FIRST WORLD** The first world was Tokpela [Endless Space].

But first, they say, there was only the Creator, Taiowa. All else was endless space. There was no beginning and no end, no time, no shape, no life. Just an immeasurable void that had its beginning and end, time, shape, and life in the mind of Taiowa the Creator.

Then he, the infinite, conceived the finite. First he created Sotuknang to make it manifest, saying to him, "I have created you, the first power and instrument as a person, to carry out my plan for life in endless space. I am your Uncle. You are my Nephew. Go now and lay out these universes in proper order so they may work harmoniously with one another according to my plan."

Sotuknang did as he was commanded. From endless space he gathered that which was to be manifest as solid substance, molded it into forms, and arranged them into nine universal kingdoms: one for Taiowa the Creator, one for himself, and seven universes for the life to come. Finishing this, Sotuknang went to Taiowa and asked, "Is this according to your plan?"

"It is very good," said Taiowa. "Now I want you to do the same thing with the waters. Place them on the surfaces of these universes so they will be divided equally among all and each."

So Sotuknang gathered from endless space that which was to be manifest as the waters and placed them on the universes so that each would be half solid and half water. Going now to Taiowa, he said, "I want you to see the work I have done and if it pleases you."

"It is very good," said Taiowa. "The next thing now is to put the forces of air into peaceful movement about all."

This Sotuknang did. From endless space he gathered that which was to be manifest as the airs, made them into great forces, and arranged them into gentle ordered movements around each universe.

Taiowa was pleased. "You have done a great work according to my plan, Nephew. You have created the universes and made them manifest in solids, waters, and winds, and put them in their proper places. But your work is not yet finished. Now you must create life and its movement to complete the four parts, Tuwaquachi, of my universal plan."

**SPIDER WOMAN AND THE TWINS** Sotuknang went to the universe wherein was that to be Tokpela, the First World, and out of it he created her who

was to remain on that earth and be his helper. Her name was Kokyangwuti, Spider Woman.

When she awoke to life and received her name, she asked, "Why am I here?"

"Look about you," answered Sotuknang. "Here is this earth we have created. It has shape and substance, direction and time, a beginning and an end. But there is no life upon it. We see no joyful movement. We hear no joyful sound. What is life without sound and movement? So you have been given the power to help us create this life. You have been given the knowledge, wisdom, and love to bless all the beings you create. That is why you are here."

Following his instructions, Spider Woman took some earth, mixed with it some *tuchvata* [liquid from mouth: saliva], and molded it into two beings. Then she covered them with a cape made of white substance which was the creative wisdom itself, and sang the Creation Song over them. When she uncovered them the two beings, twins, sat up and asked, "Who are we? Why are we here?"

To the one on the right Spider Woman said, "You are Poqanghoya and you are to help keep this world in order when life is put upon it. Go now around all the world and put your hands upon the earth so that it will become fully solidified. This is your duty."

Spider Woman then said to the twin on the left, "You are Palongawhoya and you are to help keep this world in order when life is put upon it. This is your duty now: go about all the world and send out sound so that it may be heard throughout all the land. When this is heard you will also be known as 'Echo,' for all sound echoes the Creator."

Poqanghoya, traveling throughout the earth, solidified the higher reaches into great mountains. The lower reaches he made firm but still pliable enough to be used by those beings to be placed upon it and who would call it their mother.

Palongawhoya, traveling throughout the earth, sounded out his call as he was bidden. All the vibratory centers along the earth's axis from pole to pole resounded his call; the whole earth trembled; the universe quivered in tune. Thus he made the whole world an instrument of sound, and sound an instrument for carrying messages, resounding praise to the Creator of all.

"This is your voice, Uncle," Sotuknang said to Taiowa. "Everything is tuned to your sound."

"It is very good," said Taiowa.

When they had accomplished their duties, Poqanghoya was sent to the north pole of the world axis and Palongawhoya to the south pole, where they were jointly commanded to keep the world properly rotating. Poqanghoya was also given the power to keep the earth in a stable form of solidity. Palongawhoya was given the power to keep the air in gentle ordered movement, and instructed to send out his call for good or for warning through the vibratory centers of the earth.

"These will be your duties in time to come," said Spider Woman.

She then created from the earth trees, bushes, plants, flowers, all kinds of seed-bearers and nut-bearers to clothe the earth, giving to each a life and name.

In the same manner she created all kinds of birds and animals—molding them out of earth, covering them with her white-substance cape, and singing over them. Some she placed to her right, some to her left, others before and behind her, indicating how they should spread to all four corners of the earth to live.

Sotuknang was happy, seeing how beautiful it all was—the land, the plants, the birds and animals, and the power working through them all. Joyfully he said to Taiowa, "Come see what our world looks like now!"

"It is very good," said Taiowa. "It is ready now for human life, the final touch to complete my plan."

**CREATION OF MANKIND** So Spider Woman gathered earth, this time of four colors, yellow, red, white, and black; mixed with *tuchvata*, the liquid of her mouth; molded them; and covered them with her white-substance cape which was the creative wisdom itself. As before, she sang over them the Creation Song, and when she uncovered them these forms were human beings in the image of Sotuknang. Then she created four other beings after her own form. They were *wuti*, female partners, for the first four male beings.

When Spider Woman uncovered them the forms came to life. This was at the time of the dark purple light, Qoyangnuptu, the first phase of the dawn of Creation, which first reveals the mystery of man's creation.

They soon awakened and began to move, but there was still a dampness on their foreheads and a soft spot on their heads. This was at the time of the yellow light, Sikanguaqua, the second phase of the dawn of Creation, when the breath of life entered man.

In a short time the sun appeared above the horizon, drying the dampness on their foreheads and hardening the soft spot on their heads. This was the time of the red light, Talawva, the third phase of the dawn of Creation, when man, fully formed and firm, proudly faced his Creator.

"That is the Sun," said Spider Woman. "You are meeting your Father the Creator for the first time. You must always remember and observe these three phases of your Creation. The time of the three lights, the dark purple, the yellow, and the red reveal in turn the mystery, the breath of life, and warmth of love. These comprise the Creator's plan of life for you as sung over you in the Song of Creation:

#### SONG OF CREATION

The dark purple light rises in the north,

A yellow light rises in the east.

Then we of the flowers of the earth come forth

To receive a long life of joy.

We call ourselves the Butterfly Maidens.

Both male and female make their prayers to the east,

Make the respectful sign to the Sun our Creator.



The sounds of bells ring through the air,  
Making a joyful sound throughout the land,  
Their joyful echo resounding everywhere.

Humbly I ask my Father,  
The perfect one, Taiowa, our Father,  
The perfect one creating the beautiful life  
Shown to us by the yellow light,  
To give us perfect light at the time of the red light.

The perfect one laid out the perfect plan  
And gave to us a long span of life,  
Creating song to implant joy in life.  
On this path of happiness, we the Butterfly Maidens  
Carry out his wishes by greeting our Father Sun.

The song resounds back from our Creator with joy,  
And we of the earth repeat it to our Creator.  
At the appearing of the yellow light,  
Repeats and repeats again the joyful echo,  
Sounds and resounds for times to come.

The First People of the First World did not answer her; they could not speak. Something had to be done. Since Spider Woman received her power from Sotuknang, she had to call him and ask him what to do. So she called Palongahoyá and said, "Call your Uncle. We need him at once."

Palongahoyá, the echo twin, sent out his call along the world axis to the vibratory centers of the earth, which resounded his message throughout the universe. "Sotuknang, our Uncle, come at once! We need you!"

All at once, with the sound as of a mighty wind, Sotuknang appeared in front of them. "I am here. Why do you need me so urgently?"

Spider Woman explained. "As you commanded me, I have created these First People. They are fully and firmly formed; they are properly colored; they have life; they have movement. But they cannot talk. That is the proper thing they lack. So I want you to give them speech. Also the wisdom and the power to reproduce, so that they may enjoy their life and give thanks to the Creator."

So Sotuknang gave them speech, a different language to each color, with respect for each other's difference. He gave them the wisdom and the power to reproduce and multiply.

Then he said to them, "With all these I have given you this world to live on and to be happy. There is only one thing I ask of you. To respect the Creator at all times. Wisdom, harmony, and respect for the love of the Creator who made you. May it grow and never be forgotten among you as long as you live."

So the First People went their directions, were happy, and began to multiply.

**THE NATURE OF MAN** With the pristine wisdom granted them, they understood that the earth was a living entity like themselves. She was their mother; they were made from her flesh; they suckled at her breast. For her milk was the grass upon which all animals grazed and the corn which had been created specially to supply food for mankind. But the corn plant was also a living entity with a body similar to man's in many respects, and the people built its flesh into their own. Hence corn was also their mother. Thus they knew their mother in two aspects which were often synonymous—as Mother Earth and the Corn Mother.

In their wisdom they also knew their father in two aspects. He was the Sun, the solar god of their universe. Not until he first appeared to them at the time of the red light, Talawva, had they been fully formed and formed. Yet his was but the face through which looked Taiowa, their Creator.

These universal entities were their real parents, their human parents being but the instruments through which their power was made manifest. In modern times their descendants remembered this.

When a child was born his Corn Mother was placed beside him, where it was kept for twenty days, and during this period he was kept in darkness; for while his newborn body was of this world, he was still under the protection of his universal parents. If the child was born at night, four lines were painted with cornmeal on each of the four walls and ceiling early next morning. If he was born during the day, the lines were painted the following morning. The lines signified that a spiritual home, as well as a temporal home, had been prepared for him on earth.

On the first day the child was washed with water in which cedar had been brewed. Fine white cornmeal was then rubbed over his body and left all day. Next day the child was cleaned, and cedar ashes were rubbed over him to remove the hair and baby skin. This was repeated for three days. From the fifth day until the twentieth day, he was washed and rubbed with cornmeal for one day and covered with ashes for four days. Meanwhile the child's mother drank a little of the cedar water each day.

On the fifth day the hair of both child and mother was washed, and one cornmeal line was scraped off each wall and ceiling. The scrapings were then taken to the shrine where the umbilical cord had been deposited. Each fifth day thereafter another line of cornmeal was removed from walls and ceiling and taken to the shrine.

For nineteen days now the house had been kept in darkness so that the child had not seen any light. Early on the morning of the twentieth day, while it was still dark, all the aunts of the child arrived at the house, each carrying a Corn Mother in her right hand and each wishing to be the child's godmother. First the child was bathed. Then the mother, holding the child in her left arm, took up the Corn Mother that had lain beside the child and passed it over the child four times from the navel upward to the head. On the first pass she named the child; on the second she wished the child a long life; on the third, a healthy life. If the child was a boy, she wished him a productive life in his work on the fourth pass; if a girl, that she would become a good wife and mother.

the clan of either the mother or father of the aunt. The child was then given back to its mother. The yellow light by then was showing in the east. The mother, holding the child in her left arm and the Corn Mother in her right hand, and accompanied by her own mother—the child's grandmother—left the house and walked toward the east. Then they stopped, facing east, and prayed silently, casting pinches of cornmeal toward the rising sun.

When the sun cleared the horizon the mother stepped forward, held up the child to the sun, and said, "Father Sun, this is your child." Again she said this, passing the Corn Mother over the child's body as when she had named him, wishing for him to grow so old he would have lean on a crook for support, thus proving that he had obeyed the Creator's laws. The grandmother did the same thing when the mother had finished. Then both marked a cornmeal path toward the sun for this new life.

The child now belonged to his family and the earth. Mother and grandfather carried him back to the house, where his aunts were waiting. The village cried announced his birth, and a feast was held in his honor. For several years the child was called by the different names that were given him. The one that seemed most predominant became his name, and the aunt who gave it to him became his godmother. The Corn Mother remained his spiritual mother.

For seven or eight years he led the normal earthly life of a child. Then came his first initiation into a religious society, and he began to learn that, although he had human parents, his real parents were the universal entities who had created him through them—his Mother Earth, from whose flesh all are born, and his Father Sun, the solar god who gives life to all the universe. He began to learn, in brief, that he too had two aspects. He was a member of an earthly family and tribal clan, and he was a citizen of the great universe, to which he owed a growing allegiance as his understanding developed.

The First People, then, understood the mystery of their parenthood. In their pristine wisdom they also understood their own structure and functions—the nature of man himself.

The living body of man and the living body of the earth were constructed in the same way. Through each ran an axis, man's axis being the backbone, the vertebral column, which controlled the equilibrium of his movements and his functions. Along this axis were several vibratory centers which echoed the primordial sound of life throughout the universe or sounded a warning if anything went wrong.

The first of these in man lay at the top of the head. Here, when he was born, was the soft spot, *kopavi*, the "open door" through which he received his life and communicated with his Creator. For with every breath the soft spot moved up and down with a gentle vibration that was communicated to the Creator. At the time of the red light, Talawva, the last phase of his creation, the soft spot was hardened and the door was closed. It remained closed until his death, opening then for his life to depart as it had come.

Just below it lay the second center, the organ that man learned to think with by himself, the thinking organ called the brain. Its earthly function enabled

man to think about his actions and work on this earth. But the more he understood that his work and actions should conform to the plan of the Creator, the more clearly he understood that the real function of the thinking organ called the brain was carrying out the plan of all Creation.

The third center lay in the throat. It tied together those openings in his nose and mouth through which he received the breath of life and the vibratory organs that enabled him to give back his breath in sound. This primordial sound, as that coming from the vibratory centers of the body of earth, was attuned to the universal vibration of all Creation. New and diverse sounds were given forth by these vocal organs in the forms of speech and song, their secondary function for man on this earth. But as he came to understand its primary function, he used this center to speak and sing praises to the Creator.

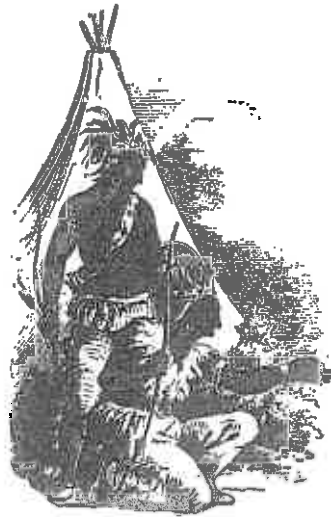
The fourth center was the heart. It too was a vibrating organ, pulsing with the vibration of life itself. In his heart man felt the good of life, its sincere purpose. He was of One Heart. But there were those who permitted evil feelings to enter. They were said to be of Two Hearts.

The last of man's important centers lay under his navel, the organ some people now call the solar plexus. As this name signifies, it was the throne in man of the Creator himself. From it he directed all the functions of man.

The first People knew no sickness. Not until evil entered the world did persons get sick in the body or head. It was then that a medicine man, knowing how man was constructed, could tell what was wrong with a person by examining these centers. First, he laid his hands on them: the top of the head, above the eyes, the throat, the chest, the belly. The hands of the medicine man were seer instruments; they could feel the vibrations from each center and tell him in which life ran strongest or weakest. Sometimes the trouble was just a bellyache from uncooked food or a cold in the head. But other times it came "from outside," drawn by the person's own evil thoughts, or from those of a Two Hearts. In this case the medicine man took out from his medicine pouch a small crystal about an inch and a half across, held it in the sun to get it in working order, and then looked through it at each of the centers. In this manner he could see what caused the trouble and often the very face of the Two Hearts person who had caused the illness. There was nothing magical about the crystal, medicine men always said. An ordinary person could see nothing when he looked through it; the crystal merely objectified the vision of the center which controlled his eyes and which the medicine man had developed for this very purpose. . . .

Thus the First People understood themselves. And this was the First World they lived upon. Its name was Tokpela, Endless Space. Its direction was west; its color *sikyangpu*, yellow; its mineral *sikyavvu*, gold. Significant upon it were *kato'ya*, the snake with a big head; *wisoko*, the fat-eating bird; and *muha*, the little four-leaved plant. On it the First People were pure and happy.

**TOKPA: THE SECOND WORLD** So the First People kept multiplying and spreading over the face of the land and were happy. Although they were of different colors and spoke different languages, they felt as one and understood one another without talking. It was the same with the birds and ani-



# HIAWATHA AND MUDJEKEEWIS

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Although Longfellow successfully used American themes in much of his longer verse, his sources were books rather than life. Thus his widely read Song of Hiawatha was based on the legends and tales collected by Henry R. Schoolcraft. Longfellow even preserved Schoolcraft's error of confusing the quasi-historical Iroquois chieftain Hiawatha with the Chippewa deity Manabozho. The exploits of Hiawatha take place in unhistoric time, before the advent of the white men, and show the Indian usually in conflict with birds, beasts, and external nature. Hiawatha is not concerned with tribal feuds but is a kind of culture hero who strives to improve the life of his people and who is not afraid to face such enemies as the king of the sturgeons and the great magician, the Pearl-Feather. In the fourth canto of the poem, Hiawatha, celebrated for his swiftness and the possessor of magic mittens and moccasins, faces his father Mudjekeewis. The fight lasts three days and results in black rock and bulrushes being strewn over the visible world; but, as Mudjekeewis is immortal, there can be no final victory. At the end of the poem, Hiawatha, who can suffer and grieve but who also possesses eternal life, leaves his people, like King Arthur, to a new dispensation and goes westward to his own particular Elysium.<sup>1</sup>

Out of childhood into manhood  
Now had grown my Hiawatha,  
Skilled in all the craft of hunters,  
Learned in all the lore of old men,  
In all youthful sports and pastimes,  
In all manly arts and labors.

Swift of foot was Hiawatha;  
He could shoot an arrow from him,  
And run forward with such fleetness,  
That the arrow fell behind him!  
Strong of arm was Hiawatha;  
He could shoot ten arrows upward,

• Canto IV of *The Song of Hiawatha*.

1. Cf. Rose M. Davis, "How Indian Is Hiawatha?" *Midwest Folklore* (Spring, 1957), 7: 5-25.

Shoot them with such strength and swift-  
ness,

That the tenth had left the bow-string  
Ere the first to earth had fallen!

He had mittens, Minjekahwun,  
Magic mittens made of deer-skin;  
When upon his hands he wore them,  
He could smite the rocks asunder,  
He could grind them into powder.  
He had moccasins enchanted,  
Magic moccasins of deerskin;  
When he bound them round his ankles,  
When upon his feet he tied them,  
At each stride a mile he measured!

Much he questioned old Nokomis  
Of his father Mudjekeewis;  
Learned from her the fatal secret  
Of the beauty of his mother,  
Of the falsehood of his father;  
And his heart was hot within him,  
Like a living coal his heart was.

Then he said to old Nokomis,  
"I will go to Mudjekeewis,  
See how fares it with my father,  
At the doorways of the West-Wind,  
At the portals of the Sunset!"

From his lodge went Hiawatha,  
Dressed for travel, armed for hunting;  
Dressed in deerskin shirt and leggins,  
Richly wrought with quills and wam-  
pum;

On his head his eagle-feathers,  
Round his waist his belt of wampum,  
In his hand his bow of ash-wood,  
Strung with sinews of the reindeer;  
In his quiver oaken arrows,  
Tipped with jasper, winged with feathers;  
With his mittens, Minjekahwun,  
With his moccasins enchanted.

Warning said the old Nokomis,  
"Go not forth, O Hiawatha!  
To the kingdom of the West-Wind,  
To the realms of Mudjekeewis,  
Lest he harm you with his magic,  
Lest he kill you with his cunning!"

But the fearless Hiawatha  
Heeded not her woman's warning;

Forth he strode into the forest,  
At each stride a mile he measured;  
Lurid seemed the sky above him,  
Lurid seemed the earth beneath him,  
Hot and close the air around him,  
Filled with smoke and fiery vapors,  
As of burning woods and prairies,  
For his heart was hot within him,  
Like a living coal his heart was.

So he journeyed westward, westward,  
Left the fleetest deer behind him,  
Left the antelope and bison;  
Crossed the rushing Esconaba,  
Crossed the mighty Mississippi,  
Passed the Mountains of the Prairie,  
Passed the land of Crows and Foxes,  
Passed the dwellings of the Blackfeet,  
Came unto the Rocky Mountains,  
To the kingdom of the West-Wind,  
Where upon the gusty summits  
Sat the ancient Mudjekeewis,  
Ruler of the winds of heaven.

Filled with awe was Hiawatha  
At the aspect of his father.  
On the air about him wildly  
Tossed and streamed his cloudy tresses,  
Gleamed like drifting snow his tresses,  
Glared like Ishkoodah, the comet,  
Like the star with fiery tresses.

Filled with joy was Mudjekeewis  
When he looked on Hiawatha,  
Saw his youth rise up before him  
In the face of Hiawatha,  
Saw the beauty of Wenonah  
From the grave rise up before him.

"Welcome!" said he, "Hiawatha,  
To the kingdom of the West-Wind!  
Long have I been waiting for you!  
Youth is lovely, age is lonely,  
Youth is fiery, age is frosty;  
You bring back the days departed,  
You bring back my youth of passion,  
And the beautiful Wenonah!"

Many days they talked together,  
Questioned, listened, waited, answered;  
Much the mighty Mudjekeewis  
Boasted of his ancient prowess.

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Of his perilous adventures,  
His indomitable courage,  
His invulnerable body.

Patently sat Hiawatha,  
Listening to his father's boasting;  
With a smile he sat and listened,  
Uttered neither threat nor menace,  
Neither word nor look betrayed him,  
But his heart was hot within him,  
Like a living coal his heart was.

Then he said, "O Mudjekeewis,  
Is there nothing that can harm you?  
Nothing that you are afraid of?"  
And the mighty Mudjekeewis,  
Grand and gracious in his boasting,  
Answered, saying, "There is nothing,  
Nothing but the black rock yonder,  
Nothing but the fatal Wawbeek!"

And he looked at Hiawatha  
With a wise look and benignant,  
With a countenance paternal,  
Looked with pride upon the beauty  
Of his tall and graceful figure,  
Saying, "O my Hiawatha!  
Is there anything can harm you?  
Anything you are afraid of?"

But the wary Hiawatha  
Paused awhile, as if uncertain,  
Held his peace, as if resolving,  
And then answered, "There is nothing,  
Nothing but the bulrush yonder,  
Nothing but the great Apukwa!"

And as Mudjekeewis, rising,  
Stretched his hand to pluck the bulrush,  
Hiawatha cried in terror,  
Cried in well-dissembled terror,  
"Kago! kago! do not touch it!"  
"Ah, kaween!" said Mudjekeewis,  
"No indeed, I will not touch it!"

Then they talked of other matters;  
First of Hiawatha's brothers,  
First of Wabun, of the East-Wind,  
Of the South-Wind, Shawondasee,  
Of the North, Kabibonokka;  
Then of Hiawatha's mother,  
Of the beautiful Wenonah,  
Of her birth upon the meadow,

Of her death, as old Nokomis  
Had remembered and related.

And he cried, "O Mudjekeewis,  
It was you who killed Wenonah,  
Took her young life and her beauty,  
Broke the Lily of the Prairie,  
Trampled it beneath your footsteps;  
You confess it! you confess it!"  
And the mighty Mudjekeewis  
Tossed upon the wind his tresses,  
Bowed his hoary head in anguish,  
With a silent nod assented.

Then up started Hiawatha,  
And with threatening look and gesture  
Laid his hand upon the black rock,  
On the fatal Wawbeek laid it,  
With his mittens, Minjekahwun,  
Rent the jutting crag asunder,  
Smote and crushed it into fragments,  
Hurled them madly at his father,  
The remorseful Mudjekeewis,  
For his heart was hot within him,  
Like a living coal his heart was.

But the ruler of the West-Wind  
Blew the fragments backward from him,  
With the breathing of his nostrils,  
With the tempest of his anger,  
Blew them back at his assailant;  
Seized the bulrush, the Apukwa,  
Dragged it with its roots and fibres  
From the margin of the meadow,  
From its ooze the giant bulrush;  
Long and loud laughed Hiawatha!

Then began the deadly conflict,  
Hand to hand among the mountains;  
From his eyry screamed the eagle,  
The Keneu, the great war-eagle,  
Sat upon the crags around them,  
Wheeling flapped his wings above them.

Like a tall tree in the tempest  
Bent and lashed the giant bulrush;  
And in masses huge and heavy  
Crashing fell the fatal Wawbeek;  
Till the earth shook with the tumult  
And confusion of the battle,  
And the air was full of shoutings,  
And the thunder of the mountains,

Starting, answered, "Baim-wawa!"

Back retreated Mudjekeewis,  
Rushing westward o'er the mountains,  
Stumbling westward down the mountains,  
Three whole days retreated fighting,  
Still pursued by Hiawatha  
To the doorways of the West-Wind,  
To the portals of the Sunset,  
To the earth's remotest border,  
Where into the empty spaces  
Sinks the sun, as a flamingo  
Drops into her nest at nightfall  
In the melancholy marshes.

"Hold!" at length cried Mudjekeewis,  
'Hold, my son, my Hiawatha!  
'Tis impossible to kill me,  
For you cannot kill the immortal.  
I have put you to this trial,  
But to know and prove your courage;  
Now receive the prize of valor!

"Go back to your home and people,  
Live among them, toil among them,  
Cleanse the earth from all that harms it,  
Clear the fishing-grounds and rivers,  
Slay all monsters and magicians,  
All the Wendigoes, the giants,  
All the serpents, the Kenabeeks,  
As I slew the Mishe-Mokwa,  
Slew the Great Bear of the mountains.

"And at last when Death draws near  
you,

When the awful eyes of Pauguk  
Glare upon you in the darkness,  
I will share my kingdom with you,  
Ruler shall you be thenceforward  
Of the Northwest-Wind, Keewaydin,  
Of the home-wind, the Keewaydin."

Thus was fought that famous battle  
In the dreadful days of Shah-shah,  
In the days long since departed,  
In the kingdom of the West-Wind.  
Still the hunter sees its traces  
Scattered far o'er hill and valley;  
Sees the giant bulrush growing  
By the ponds and water-courses,  
Sees the masses of the Wawbeek  
Lying still in every valley.

Homeward now went Hiawatha;  
Pleasant was the landscape round him,  
Pleasant was the air above him,  
For the bitterness of anger  
Had departed wholly from him,  
From his brain the thought of vengeance,  
From his heart the burning fever.

Only once his pace he slackened,  
Only once he paused or halted,  
Paused to purchase heads of arrows  
Of the ancient Arrow-maker,  
In the land of the Dacotahs,  
Where the Falls of Minnehaha  
Flash and gleam among the oak-trees,  
Laugh and leap into the valley.

There the ancient Arrow-maker  
Made his arrow-heads of sandstone,  
Arrow-heads of chalcedony,  
Arrow-heads of flint and jasper,  
Smoothed and sharpened at the edges,  
Hard and polished, keen and costly.

With him dwelt his dark-eyed daughter,  
Wayward as the Minnehaha,  
With her moods of shade and sunshine,  
Eyes that smiled and frowned alternate,  
Feet as rapid as the river,  
Tresses flowing like the water,  
And as musical a laughter:  
And he named her from the river,  
From the water-fall he named her,  
Minnehaha, Laughing Water.

Was it then for heads of arrows,  
Arrow-heads of chalcedony,  
Arrow-heads of flint and jasper,  
That my Hiawatha halted  
In the land of the Dacotahs?

Was it not to see the maiden,  
See the face of Laughing Water  
Peeping from behind the curtain,  
Hear the rustling of her garments  
From behind the waving curtain,  
As one sees the Minnehaha  
Gleaming, glancing through the branches,  
As one hears the Laughing Water  
From behind its screen of branches?

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Fill the fiery brains of young men?  
 Who shall say what dreams of beauty  
 Filled the heart of Hiawatha?  
 All he told to old Nokomis,  
 When he reached the lodge at sunset.

Was the meeting with his father,  
 Was his fight with Mudjekeewis;  
 Not a word he said of arrows,  
 Not a word of Laughing Water.

#### The Ojibwa Corn Hero

*Schoolcraft's work on "Hiawatha" includes this Ojibwa hero myth of the boy Wunzh, who wrestles with a corn spirit, Mondawmin, much as Jacob wrestles with the angel in the biblical tale. The result of Wunzh's test is the gift of corn for his people.*

When the youth Wunzh reached the proper age, his father built him a lodge in a remote place where he could fast undisturbed and find his guardian in life. It was spring of the year and, in the first days of his fast, Wunzh walked the woods each morning, musing on the first shoots of plants and flowers, coming alive in the warming earth.

He hoped this would store his mind with pleasant thoughts for his dreams each night. Often, on these strolls, he found himself wondering how these plants grew, some of them sweet like berries, others poisonous, yet others full of medicine. Perhaps, if he knew more about such things, he could help his people. Perhaps they might not have to rely on the luck of the hunt or the occasional fish caught from opaque waters.

As the days went by, Wunzh grew too weak for such wanderings and instead lay in his lodge, praying that he would dream of something that would help his people. In his increasing dizziness, he permitted himself the thought that while the Great Spirit had made all things, including the people, he could have made things a bit easier for them.

On the third day of his fast, as he lay in his lodge, he saw a figure descend from the sky—a figure richly dressed in yellow and green garments of many shades, with a great plume of golden feathers waving on its head. With dreamlike grace, it arrived in Wunzh's lodge.

"The Great Spirit sent me to you, my friend," said the figure. "He takes note that your prayers are unusual. You don't seem to want the glory of the warrior, but instead merely something for the good of your people." The visitor went on to explain that this was possible. The condition was that Wunzh wrestle with his visitor.

As first Wunzh's heart sank. He was already weak from fasting.

What hope did he have . . . ? But gathering his courage, he engaged the figure, and they wrestled until Wunzh felt utterly exhausted. Abruptly, the figure stopped, smiled, and said, "That's enough for now. You did well, I will come again to try you." He disappeared, ascending into the light of the sun.

The following day he came again, and once again challenged Wunzh who by now was even weaker. But it seemed that the weaker his body was, the greater his courage and determination. Again they wrestled, long and hard, and again the visitor broke it off, promising to come again for the final trial. Wunzh collapsed in an exhaustion near death.

The next day, after the third and final trial had begun, the heavenly visitor stopped and declared himself beater. He sat down next to the youth and told him the Great Spirit was pleased with his courage. Now he would receive the instructions he had prayed for.

"Tomorrow," the visitor said, "is your seventh day of fasting. Your father will come with some food for strength and I will come again and you will win. Afterward, you must strip my clothes from me, put me on the ground, and take away all the weeds. Then you must bury me there. Do not let weeds grow there, but come from time to time and see if I have returned. And then you will have your wish and be able to teach your people what you want them to know."

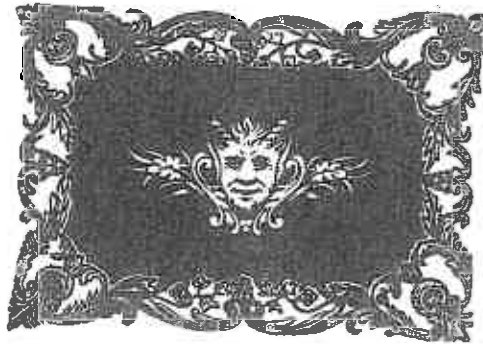
In the morning, Wunzh's father came with food, and the youth said he would wait until sundown to eat it. And when the visitor came again, Wunzh seized him with strength that amazed the youth, threw him down on the ground and stripped away his rich yellow and green clothes. Seeing that the figure was dead, he buried him as he had been told to, and returned to his father's lodge to eat.

In the days that followed, Wunzh would go off unannounced to the spot where he had buried his friend and kept the weeds away. Toward the end of summer, he came to the spot and found that his old lodge had disappeared. In its stead was a tall, graceful plant, with clusters of yellow on its side, long green leaves, and a graceful plume of gold nodding from the top.

"It is my friend," Wunzh said to himself, and suddenly knew his friend's name: Mondawmin. He ran to fetch his father and told him that this was what he had dreamed for in his fast. If the people cared for his friend the way Wunzh had been instructed, they would no longer have to rely only on the hunt or the waters. With that, he showed his father how to tear off the yellow clusters, as he had torn off the garments before, and he showed how to hold the ears to the fire to turn them brown. The whole family then gathered for a feast upon this newly

grown presence in their lives, and expressed their lasting thanks to the spirit, the beautiful visitor, who had given it to them.

And so corn came into this world.



## The Devil and Daniel Webster

by Stephen Vincent Benét

*Few American short stories of the twentieth century are better known than "The Devil and Daniel Webster." Partly because it deals with one of the most celebrated figures in American history, partly because it is written with wit and brilliance, it has won wide acclaim. Although the story supposedly concerns a New Hampshire farmer who has entered into a seven-year compact with Satan, the two real antagonists are Daniel Webster and the devil. Benét has given his villain modern dress but has deftly retained many traditional bits. Thus Scratch is supposed to have pointed ears and filed teeth; he imprisons human souls in his pocketbook like moths; and at his midnight appearance the lights burn blue. Moreover, although his true nature is unremarked by most adults, he cannot impose on a dog. Webster himself enjoys heroic dimensions as fisherman, farmer, and orator. One of the most original touches is the jury assembled to try the unrecorded case of the devil vs. Jabez Stone, a jury which disappears when a cock's cry announces the dawn. The climax to this most unusual suit is a tribute to American democracy and the sterling qualities of its advocate.*

It's a story they tell in the border country, where Massachusetts joins Vermont and New Hampshire.

Yes, Dan'l Webster's dead—or, at least, they buried him. But every time there's a thunderstorm around Marshfield, they say you can hear his rolling voice in the hollows of the sky. And they say that if you go to his grave and speak loud and clear, "Dan'l Webster—Dan'l Webster!" the ground'll begin to shiver and the trees be-

gin to shake. And after a while you'll hear a deep voice saying, "Neighbor, how stands the Union?" Then you better answer the Union stands as she stood, rock-bottomed and copper-sheathed, one and indivisible, or he's liable to rear right out of the ground. At least, that's what I was told when I was a youngster.

You see, for a while, he was the biggest man in the country. He never got to be President, but he was the biggest man.

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There were thousands that trusted in him right next to God Almighty, and they told stories about him and all the things that belonged to him that were like the stories of patriarchs and such. They said, when he stood up to speak, stars and stripes came right out in the sky, and once he spoke against a river and made it sink into the ground. They said, when he walked the woods with his fishing rod, Killall, the trout would jump out of the streams right into his pockets, for they knew it was no use putting up a fight against him; and when he argued a case, he could turn on the harps of the blessed and the shaking of the earth underground. That was the kind of man he was, and his big farm up at Marshfield was suitable to him. The chickens he raised were all white meat down through the drumsticks, the cows were tended like children, and the big ram he called Goliath had horns with a curl like a morning-glory vine and could butt through an iron door. But Dan'l wasn't one of your gentlemen farmers; he knew all the ways of the land, and he'd be up by candlelight to see that the chores got done. A man with a mouth like a mastiff, a brow like a mountain, and eyes like burning anthracite—that was Dan'l Webster in his prime. And the biggest case he argued never got written down in the books, for he argued it against the devil, nip and tuck and no holds barred. And this is the way I used to hear it told.

There was a man named Jabez Stone, lived at Cross Corners, New Hampshire. He wasn't a bad man to start with, but he was an unlucky man. If he planted corn, he got borers; if he planted potatoes, he got blight. He had good-enough land, but it didn't prosper him; he had a decent wife and children, but the more children he had, the less there was to feed them. If stones cropped up in his neighbor's field, boulders boiled up in his; if he had a horse with the spavins, he'd trade it for one with

the staggers and give something extra. There's some folks bound to be like that, apparently. But one day Jabez Stone got sick of the whole business.

He'd been plowing that morning and he'd just broke the plowshare on a rock that he could have sworn hadn't been there yesterday. And as he stood at the plowshare, the off horse began to cough—that ropy kind of cough that means sickness and horse doctors. There were two children down with the measles, his wife was ailing, and he had a whitlow on his thumb. It was about the last straw for Jabez Stone. "I vow," he said, and he looked around him kind of desperate, "I vow it's enough to make a man want to sell his soul to the devil! And I would, too, for two cents!"

Then he felt a kind of queerness come over him at having said what he'd said; though, naturally, being a New Hampshireman, he wouldn't take it back. But all the same, when it got to be evening and, as far as he could see, no notice had been taken, he felt relieved in his mind, for he was a religious man. But notice is always taken, sooner or later, just like the Good Book says. And, sure enough, next day, about suppertime, a soft-spoken, dark-dressed stranger drove up in a handsome buggy and asked for Jabez Stone.

Well, Jabez told his family it was a lawyer, come to see him about a legacy. But he knew who it was. He didn't like the looks of the stranger, nor the way he smiled with his teeth. They were white teeth, and plentiful—some say they were filed to a point, but I wouldn't vouch for that. And he didn't like it when the dog took one look at the stranger and ran away howling, with his tail between his legs. But having passed the word, more or less, he stuck to it, and they went out behind the barn and made their bargain. Jabez Stone had to prick his finger to sign, and the stranger lent him a silver pin. The

wound healed clean, but it left a little white scar.

After that, all of a sudden, things began to pick up and prosper for Jabez Stone. His cows got fat and his horses sleek, his crops were the envy of the neighborhood, and lightning might strike all over the valley, but it wouldn't strike his barn. Pretty soon he was one of the prosperous people of the county; they asked him to stand for selectman, and he stood for it; there began to be talk of running him for state senate. All in all, you might say the Stone family was as happy and contented as cats in a dairy. And so they were, except for Jabez Stone.

He'd been contented enough the first few years. It's a great thing when bad luck turns; it drives most other things out of your head. True, every now and then, especially in rainy weather, the little white scar on his finger would give him a twinge. And once a year, punctual as clockwork, the stranger with the handsome buggy would come driving by. But the sixth year the stranger lighted, and, after that, his peace was over for Jabez Stone.

The stranger came up through the lower field, switching his boots with a cane—they were handsome black boots, but Jabez Stone never liked the look of them, particularly the toes. And, after he'd passed the time of day, he said, "Well, Mr. Stone, you're a hummer! It's a very pretty property you've got here, Mr. Stone."

"Well, some might favor it and others might not," said Jabez Stone, for he was a New Hampshireman.

"Oh, no need to decry your industry!" said the stranger, very easy, showing his teeth in a smile. "After all, we know what's been done, and it's been according to contract and specifications. So when—ahem—the mortgage falls due next year, you shouldn't have any regrets."

"Speaking of that mortgage, mister," said Jabez Stone, and he looked around

for help to the earth and the sky, "I'm beginning to have one or two doubts about it."

"Doubts?" said the stranger not quite so pleasantly.

"Why, yes," said Jabez Stone. "This being the U.S.A. and me always having been a religious man." He cleared his throat and got bolder. "Yes sir," he said, "I'm beginning to have considerable doubts as to that mortgage holding in court."

"There's courts and courts," said the stranger, clicking his teeth. "Still, we might as well have a look at the original document." And he hauled out a big black pocketbook, full of papers. "Sherwin, Slater, Stevens, Stone," he muttered. "I, Jabez Stone, for a term of seven years—' Oh, it's quite in order, I think."

But Jabez Stone wasn't listening, for he saw something else flutter out of the black pocketbook. It was something that looked like a moth, but it wasn't a moth. And as Jabez Stone stared at it, it seemed to speak to him in a small sort of piping voice, terrible small and thin, but terrible human. "Neighbor Stone!" it squeaked. "Neighbor Stone! Help me! For God's sake, help me!"

But before Jabez Stone could stir hand or foot, the stranger whipped out a big bandanna handkerchief, caught the creature up in it, just like a butterfly, and started tying up the ends of the bandanna.

"Sorry for the interruption," he said. "As I was saying—"

But Jabez Stone was shaking all over like a scared horse.

"That's Miser Stevens' voice!" he said, in a croak. "And you've got him in your handkerchief!"

The stranger looked a little embarrassed.

"Yes, I really should have transferred him to the collecting box," he said with a simper, "but there were some rather unusual specimens there and I didn't want

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them crowded. Well, well, these little con-  
tretemps will occur."

"I don't know what you mean by con-  
tertan," said Jabez Stone, "but that was  
Miser Stevens' voice! And he ain't dead!  
You can't tell me he is! He was just as  
spry and mean as a woodchuck, Tuesday!"

"In the midst of life—" said the stran-  
ger, kind of pious. "Listen!" Then a bell  
began to toll in the valley and Jabez Stone  
listened, with the sweat running down his  
face. For he knew it was tolled for Miser  
Stevens and that he was dead.

"These long-standing accounts," said  
the stranger with a sigh; "one really hates  
to close them. But business is business."

He still had the bandanna in his hand,  
and Jabez Stone felt sick as he saw the  
cloth struggle and flutter.

"Are they all as small as that?" he asked  
hoarsely.

"Small?" said the stranger. "Oh, I see  
what you mean. Why, they vary." He  
measured Jabez Stone with his eyes, and  
his teeth showed. "Don't worry, Mr.  
Stone," he said. "You'll go with a very  
good grade. I wouldn't trust you outside  
the collecting box. Now, a man like Dan'l  
Webster, of course—well, we'd have to  
build a special box for him, and even at  
that, I imagine the wing spread would  
astonish you. But, in your case, as I was  
saying—"

"Put that handkerchief away!" said  
Jabez Stone, and he began to beg and  
pray. But the best he could get at the end  
was a three years' extension, with con-  
ditions.

But till you make a bargain like that,  
you've got no idea of how fast four years  
can run. By the last months of those years,  
Jabez Stone's known all over the state and  
there's talk of running him for governor—  
and it's dust and ashes in his mouth. For  
every day, when he gets up, he thinks,  
"There's one more night gone," and every  
night when he lies down, he thinks of the

black pocketbook and the soul of Miser  
Stevens, and it makes him sick at heart.  
Till, finally, he can't bear it any longer,  
and, in the last days of the last year, he  
hitches up his horse and drives off to seek  
Dan'l Webster. For Dan'l was born in  
New Hampshire, only a few miles from  
Cross Corners, and it's well known that  
he has a particular soft spot for old neigh-  
bors.

It was early in the morning when he got  
to Marshfield, but Dan'l was up already,  
talking Latin to the farm hands and wres-  
tling with the ram, Goliath, and trying  
out a new trotter and working up speeches  
to make against John C. Calhoun. But  
when he heard a New Hampshireman had  
come to see him, he dropped everything  
else he was doing, for that was Dan'l's  
way. He gave Jabez Stone a breakfast that  
five men couldn't eat, went into the living  
history of every man and woman in Cross  
Corners, and finally asked him how he  
could serve him.

Jabez Stone allowed that it was a kind  
of mortgage case.

"Well, I haven't pleaded a mortgage  
case in a long time, and I don't generally  
plead now, except before the Supreme  
Court," said Dan'l, "but if I can, I'll  
help you."

"Then I've got hope for the first time  
in ten years," said Jabez Stone, and told  
him the details.

Dan'l walked up and down as he lis-  
tened, hands behind his back, now and  
then asking a question, now and then  
plunging his eyes at the floor, as if they'd  
bore through it like gimlets. When Jabez  
Stone had finished, Dan'l puffed out his  
cheeks and blew. Then he turned to Jabez  
Stone and a smile broke over his face like  
the sunrise over Monadnock.

"You've certainly given yourself the  
devil's own row to hoe, Neighbor Stone,"  
he said, "but I'll take your case."

"You'll take it?" said Jabez Stone, hardly daring to believe.

"Yes," said Dan'l Webster. "I've got seventy-five other things to do and the Missouri Compromise to straighten out, but I'll take your case. For if two New Hampshiremen aren't a match for the devil, we might as well give the country back to the Indians."

Then he shook Jabez Stone by the hand and said, "Did you come down here in a hurry?"

"Well, I admit I made time," said Jabez Stone.

"You'll go back faster," said Dan'l Webster, and he told 'em to hitch up Constitution and Constellation to the carriage. They were matched grays with one white forefoot, and they stepped like greased lightning.

Well, I won't describe how excited and pleased the whole Stone family was to have the great Dan'l Webster for a guest, when they finally got there. Jabez Stone had lost his hat on the way, blown off when they overtook a wind, but he didn't take much account of that. But after supper he sent the family off to bed, for he had most particular business with Mr. Webster. Mrs. Stone wanted them to sit in the front parlor, but Dan'l Webster knew front parlors and said he preferred the kitchen. So it was there they sat, waiting for the stranger, with a jug on the table between them and a bright fire on the hearth—the stranger being scheduled to show up on the stroke of midnight, according to specifications.

Well, most men wouldn't have asked for better company than Dan'l Webster and a jug. But with every tick of the clock Jabez Stone got sadder and sadder. His eyes roved round, and though he sampled the jug you could see he couldn't taste it. Finally, on the stroke of 11:30 he reached over and grabbed Dan'l Webster by the arm.

"Mr. Webster, Mr. Webster!" he said,

and his voice was shaking with fear and a desperate courage. "For God's sake, Mr. Webster, harness your horses and get away from this place while you can!"

"You've brought me a long way, neighbor, to tell me you don't like my company," said Dan'l Webster, quite peaceable, pulling at the jug.

"Miserable wretch that I am!" groaned Jabez Stone. "I've brought you a devilish way, and now I see my folly. Let him take me if he wills. I don't hanker after it, I must say, but I can stand it. But you're the Union's stay and New Hampshire's pride! He mustn't get you, Mr. Webster! He mustn't get you!"

Dan'l Webster looked at the distracted man, all gray and shaking in the firelight, and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"I'm obliged to you, Neighbor Stone," he said gently. "It's kindly thought of. But there's a jug on the table and a case in hand. And I never left a jug or a case half finished in my life."

And just at that moment there was a sharp rap on the door.

"Ah," said Dan'l Webster very coolly, "I thought your clock was a trifle slow, Neighbor Stone." He stepped to the door and opened it. "Come in!" he said.

The stranger came in—very dark and tall he looked in the firelight. He was carrying a box under his arm—a black japanned box with little air holes in the lid. At the sight of the box Jabez Stone gave a low cry and shrank into a corner of the room.

"Mr. Webster, I presume," said the stranger, very polite, but with his eyes glowing like a fox's deep in the woods.

"Attorney of record for Jabez Stone," said Dan'l Webster, but his eyes were glowing too. "Might I ask your name?"

"I've gone by a good many," said the stranger carelessly. "Perhaps Scratch will do for the evening. I'm often called that in these regions."

Then he poured himself liquor was steaming into

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Then he sat down at the table and poured himself a drink from the jug. The liquor was cold in the jug, but it came steaming into the glass.

"And now," said the stranger, smiling and showing his teeth, "I shall call upon you, as a law-abiding citizen, to assist me in taking possession of my property."

Well, with that the argument began—and it went hot and heavy. At first Jabez Stone had a flicker of hope, but when he saw Dan'l Webster being forced back at point after point, he just sat scrunched in his corner, with his eyes on that japanned box. For there wasn't any doubt as to the deed or the signature—that was the worst of it. Dan'l Webster twisted and turned and thumped his fist on the table, but he couldn't get away from that. He offered to compromise the case; the stranger wouldn't hear of it. He pointed out the property had increased in value, and state senators ought to be worth more; the stranger stuck to the letter of the law. He was a great lawyer, Dan'l Webster, but we know who's the King of Lawyers, as the Good Book tells us, and it seemed as if, for the first time, Dan'l Webster had met his match.

Finally, the stranger yawned a little. "Your spirited efforts on behalf of your client do you credit, Mr. Webster," he said, "but if you have no more arguments to adduce, I'm rather pressed for time . . ." and Jabez Stone shuddered.

Dan'l Webster's brow looked dark as a thundercloud.

"Pressed or not, you shall not have this man!" he thundered. "Mr. Stone is an American citizen, and no American citizen may be forced into the service of a foreign prince. We fought England for that in '12 and we'll fight all hell for it again!"

"Foreign?" said the stranger. "And who calls me a foreigner?"

"Well, I never yet heard of the dev—of your claiming American citizenship," said Dan'l Webster with surprise.

"And who with better right?" said the stranger with one of his terrible smiles.

"When the first wrong was done to the first Indian, I was there. When the first slaver put out for the Congo, I stood on her deck. Am I not in your books and stories and beliefs, from the first settlements on? Am I not spoken of still in every church in New England? 'Tis true the North claims me for a Southerner and the South for a Northerner, but I am neither. I am merely an honest American like yourself—and of the best descent—for, to tell the truth, Mr. Webster, though I don't like to boast of it, my name is older in this country than yours."

"Aha!" said Dan'l Webster with the veins standing out in his forehead. "Then I stand on the Constitution! I demand a trial for my client!"

"The case is hardly one for an ordinary court," said the stranger, his eyes flickering. "And, indeed, the lateness of the hour—"

"Let it be any court you choose, so it is an American judge and an American jury!" said Dan'l Webster in his pride. "Let it be the quick or the dead; I'll abide the issue!"

"You have said it," said the stranger, and pointed his finger at the door. And with that, and all of a sudden, there was a rushing of wind outside and a noise of footsteps. They came, clear and distinct, through the night. And yet they were not like the footsteps of living men.

"In God's name, who comes by so late?" cried Jabez Stone in an ague of fear.

"The jury Mr. Webster demands," said the stranger, sipping at his boiling glass. "You must pardon the rough appearance of one or two; they will have come a long way."

And with that the fire burned blue and the door blew open and twelve men entered, one by one.

If Jabez Stone had been sick with terror

before, he was blind with terror now. For there was Walter Butler, the loyalist, who spread fire and horror through the Mohawk Valley in the times of the Revolution; and there was Simon Girty, the renegade, who saw white men burned at the stake and whooped with the Indians to see them burn. His eyes were green, like a catamount's, and the stains on his hunting shirt did not come from the blood of the deer. King Philip was there, wild and proud as he had been in life, with the great gash in his head that gave him his death wound, and cruel Governor Dale, who broke men on the wheel. There was Morton of Merry Mount, who so vexed the Plymouth Colony, with his flushed, loose, handsome face and his hate of the godly. There was Teach, the bloody pirate, with his black beard curling on his breast. The Reverend John Smeeth, with his strangler's hands and his Geneva gown, walked as daintily as he had to the gallows. The red print of the rope was still around his neck, but he carried a perfumed handkerchief in one hand. One and all, they came into the room with the fires of hell still upon them, and the stranger named their names and their deeds as they came, till the tale of twelve was told. Yet the stranger had told the truth—they had all played a part in America.

"Are you satisfied with the jury, Mr. Webster?" said the stranger mockingly, when they had taken their places.

The sweat stood upon Dan'l Webster's brow, but his voice was clear.

"Quite satisfied," he said. "Though I miss General Arnold from the company."

"Benedict Arnold is engaged upon other business," said the stranger, with a glower. "Ah, you asked for a justice, I believe."

He pointed his finger once more, and a tall man, soberly clad in Puritan garb, with the burning gaze of the fanatic,

stalked into the room and took his judge's place.

"Justice Hathorne is a jurist of experience," said the stranger. "He presided at certain witch trials once held in Salem. There were others who repented of the business later, but not he."

"Repent of such notable wonders and undertakings?" said the stern old justice. "Nay, hang them—hang them all!" And he muttered to himself in a way that struck ice into the soul of Jabez Stone.

Then the trial began, and, as you might expect, it didn't look anyways good for the defense. And Jabez Stone didn't make much of a witness in his own behalf. He took one look at Simon Girty and screeched, and they had to put him back in his corner in a kind of swoon.

It didn't halt the trial, though; the trial went on, as trials do. Dan'l Webster had faced some hard juries and hanging judges in his time, but this was the hardest he'd ever faced, and he knew it. They sat there with a kind of glitter in their eyes, and the stranger's smooth voice went on and on. Every time he'd raise an objection, it'd be "Objection sustained," but whenever Dan'l objected, it'd be "Objection denied." Well, you couldn't expect fair play from a fellow like this Mr. Scratch.

It got to Dan'l in the end, and he began to heat, like iron in the forge. When he got up to speak he was going to flay that stranger with every trick known to the law, and the judge and jury too. He didn't care if it was contempt of court or what would happen to him for it. He didn't care any more what happened to Jabez Stone. He just got madder and madder, thinking of what he'd say. And yet, curiously enough, the more he thought about it, the less he was able to arrange his speech in his mind.

Till, finally, it was time for him to get up on his feet, and he did so, all ready to bust out with lightnings and denuncia-

tions. But the judge being his center in their fore, and hounds ju looked, ar room thick he saw wh wiped his just escape

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And he that every freshness c young, and hungry, an when you' he turned good thing freedom, t talked of t of slavery, talked of t the men v wasn't a sg you see it. had ever bu

tions. But before he started he looked over the judge and jury for a moment, such being his custom. And he noticed the glitter in their eyes was twice as strong as before, and they all leaned forward. Like hounds just before they get the fox, they looked, and the blue mist of evil in the room thickened as he watched them. Then he saw what he'd been about to do, and he wiped his forehead, as a man might who's just escaped falling into a pit in the dark.

For it was him they'd come for, not only Jabez Stone. He read it in the glitter of their eyes and in the way the stranger hid his mouth with one hand. And if he fought them with their own weapons, he'd fall into their power; he knew that, though he couldn't have told you how. It was his own anger and horror that burned in their eyes; and he'd have to wipe that out or the case was lost. He stood there for a moment, his black eyes burning like anthracite. And then he began to speak.

He started off in a low voice, though you could hear every word. They say he could call on the harps of the blessed when he chose. And this was just as simple and easy as a man could talk. But he didn't start out by condemning or reviling. He was talking about the things that make a country a country, and a man a man.

And he began with the simple things that everybody's known and felt—the freshness of a fine morning when you're young, and the taste of food when you're hungry, and the new day that's every day when you're a child. He took them up and he turned them in his hands. They were good things for any man. But without freedom, they sickened. And when he talked of those enslaved, and the sorrows of slavery, his voice got like a big bell. He talked of the early days of America and the men who had made those days. It wasn't a spread-eagle speech, but he made you see it. He admitted all the wrong that had ever been done. But he showed how,

out of the wrong and the right; the suffering and the starvations, something new had come. And everybody had played a part in it, even the traitors.

Then he turned to Jabez Stone and showed him as he was—an ordinary man who'd had hard luck and wanted to change it. And, because he'd wanted to change it, now he was going to be punished for all eternity. And yet there was good in Jabez Stone, and he showed that good. He was hard and mean, in some ways, but he was a man. There was sadness in being a man, but it was a proud thing too. And he showed what the pride of it was till you couldn't help feeling it. Yes, even in hell, if a man was a man, you'd know it. And he wasn't pleading for any one person any more, though his voice rang like an organ. He was telling the story and the failures and the endless journey of mankind. They got tricked and trapped and bamboozled, but it was a great journey. And no demon that was ever foaled could know the inwardness of it—it took a man to do that.

The fire began to die on the hearth and the wind before morning to blow. The light was getting gray in the room when Dan'l Webster finished. And his words came back at the end to New Hampshire ground, and the one spot of land that each man loves and clings to. He painted a picture of that, and to each one of that jury he spoke of things long forgotten. For his voice could search the heart, and that was his gift and his strength. And to one, his voice was like the forest and its secrecy, and to another like the sea and the storms of the sea; and one heard the cry of his lost nation in it, and another saw a little harmless scene he hadn't remembered for years. But each saw something. And when Dan'l Webster finished he didn't know whether or not he'd saved Jabez Stone. But he knew he'd done a miracle. For the glitter was gone from the eyes of judge and jury,

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and, for the moment, they were men again, and knew they were men.

"The defense rests," said Dan'l Webster and stood there like a mountain. His ears were still ringing with his speech, and he didn't hear anything else till he heard Judge Hathorne say, "The jury will retire to consider its verdict."

Walter Butler rose in his place and his face had a dark, gay pride on it.

"The jury has considered its verdict," he said and looked the stranger full in the eye. "We find for the defendant, Jabez Stone."

With that, the smile left the stranger's face, but Walter Butler did not flinch.

"Perhaps 'tis not strictly in accordance with the evidence," he said, "but even the damned may salute the eloquence of Mr. Webster."

With that, the long crow of a rooster split the gray morning sky, and judge and jury were gone from the room like a puff of smoke and as if they had never been there. The stranger returned to Dan'l Webster, smiling wryly.

"Major Butler was always a bold man," he said. "I had not thought him quite so bold. Nevertheless, my congratulations, as between two gentlemen."

"I'll have that paper first, if you please," said Dan'l Webster, and he took it and tore it into four pieces. It was queerly warm to the touch. "And now," he said, "I'll have you!" and his hand came down like a bear trap on the stranger's arm. For he knew that once you bested anybody like Mr. Scratch in fair fight, his power on you was gone. And he could see that Mr. Scratch knew it too.

The stranger twisted and wriggled, but he couldn't get out of that grip. "Come, come, Mr. Webster," he said, smiling palely. "This sort of thing is ridic—ouch!—is ridiculous. If you're worried about the costs of the case, naturally, I'd be glad to pay—"

"And so you shall!" said Dan'l Web-

ster, shaking him till his teeth rattled. "For you'll sit right down at that table and draw up a document, promising never to bother Jabez Stone nor his heirs or assigns nor any other New Hampshireman till doomsday! For any hades we want to raise in this state, we can raise ourselves, without assistance from strangers."

"Ouch!" said the stranger. "Ouch! Well, they never did run very big to the barrel, but—ouch!—I agree!"

So he sat down and drew up the document. But Dan'l Webster kept his hand on his coat collar all the time.

"And now may I go?" said the stranger, quite humble, when Dan'l'd seen the document was in proper and legal form.

"Go?" said Dan'l, giving him another shake. "I'm still trying to figure out what I'll do with you. For you've settled the costs of the case, but you haven't settled with me. I think I'll take you back to Marshfield," he said, kind of reflective. "I've got a ram there named Goliath that can butt through an iron door. I'd kind of like to turn you loose in his field and see what he'd do."

Well, with that the stranger began to beg and to plead. And he begged and he pled so humble that finally Dan'l, who was naturally kindhearted, agreed to let him go. The stranger seemed terrible grateful for that and said, just to show they were friends, he'd tell Dan'l's fortune before leaving. So Dan'l agreed to that, though he didn't take much stock in fortunetellers ordinarily. But, naturally, the stranger was a little different.

Well, he pried and he peered at the lines in Dan'l's hands. And he told him one thing and another that was quite remarkable. But they were all in the past.

"Yes, all that's true, and it happened," said Dan'l Webster. "But what's to come in the future?"

The stranger grinned, kind of happily, and shook his head.

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"The future's not as you think it," he said. "It's dark. You have a great ambition, Mr. Webster."

"I have," said Dan'l firmly, for everybody knew he wanted to be President.

"It seems almost within your grasp," said the stranger, "but you will not attain it. Lesser men will be made President and you will be passed over."

"And, if I am, I'll still be Daniel Webster," said Dan'l. "Say on."

"You have two strong sons," said the stranger, shaking his head. "You look to found a line. But each will die in war and neither reach greatness."

"Live or die, they are still my sons," said Dan'l Webster. "Say on."

"You have made great speeches," said the stranger. "You will make more."

"Ah," said Dan'l Webster.

"But the last great speech you make will turn many of your own against you," said the stranger. "They will call you Icha-bod; they will call you by other names. Even in New England some will say you have turned your coat and sold your country, and their voices will be loud against you till you die."

"So it is an honest speech, it does not matter what men say," said Dan'l Webster. Then he looked at the stranger and their glances locked.

"One question," he said. "I have fought for the Union all my life. Will I see that fight won against those who would tear it apart?"

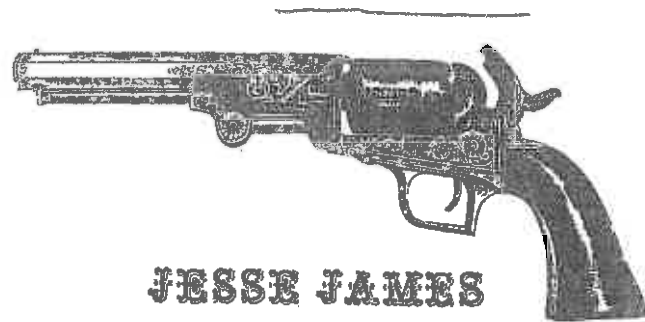
"Not while you live," said the stranger grimly, "but it will be won. And after you are dead, there are thousands who will fight for your cause, because of words that you spoke."

"Why, then, you long-barreled, slab-sided, lantern-jawed, fortune-telling note shaver," said Dan'l Webster with a great roar of laughter, "be off with you to your own place before I put my mark on you! For, by the thirteen original colonies, I'd go to the Pit itself to save the Union!"

And with that he drew back his foot for a kick that would have stunned a horse. It was only the tip of his shoe that caught the stranger, but he went flying out of the door with his collecting box under his arm.

"And now," said Dan'l Webster, seeing Jabez Stone beginning to rouse from his swoon, "let's see what's left in the jug, for it's dry work talking all night. I hope there's pie for breakfast, Neighbor Stone."

But they say that whenever the devil comes near Marshfield, even now, he gives it a wide berth. And he hasn't been seen in the state of New Hampshire from that day to this. I'm not talking about Massachusetts or Vermont.



*As Jesse James is, after Mark Twain and possibly Harry Truman, the most famous son of Missouri, he is also, next to Robin Hood, the favorite hero of outlaw ballads, of which there is a cycle. Where, when, and by whom the following ballad about him was made up is still a matter of uncertainty. The following is what Professor Belden called "the vulgate version." "Mr. Howard" was the alias of Jesse at the time of his death.*

Jesse James was a lad that killed many a man.  
He robbed the Danville train.  
But that dirty little coward that shot Mr. Howard  
Has laid poor Jesse in his grave.

It was Robert Ford, that dirty little coward,  
I wonder how he does feel;  
For he ate of Jesse's bread and slept in Jesse's bed  
And laid poor Jesse in the grave.

## (Chorus)

Poor Jesse had a wife to mourn for his life,  
His children they were brave;

o From *Ballads and Songs*, Collected by the *Missouri Folk-Lore Society*, edited by H. M. Belden (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Studies, Vol. XV, No. 1, 1940), pp. 401-4. Reprinted by permission of the University of Missouri.

## 444 FOLKLORE IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

But that dirty little coward that shot Mr. Howard  
Has laid poor Jesse in the grave.

It was his brother Frank who robbed the Gallatin bank  
And carried the money from the town.  
It was at this very place they had a little chase,  
For they shot Capt. Sheets to the ground.

They went to the crossing not very far from here,  
And there they did the same;  
With the agent on his knees he delivered up the keys  
To the outlaws Frank and Jesse James.

It was on Wednesday night, the moon was shining bright,  
They robbed the Glenville train.  
The people they did say, for many miles away,  
It was robbed by Frank and Jesse James.

It was on Saturday night, Jesse was at home,  
Talking with his family brave.  
Robert Ford came along like a thief in the night  
And laid poor Jesse in the grave.

The people held their breath when they heard of Jesse's death  
And wondered how he ever came to die.  
It was one of the gang called little Robert Ford,  
He shot poor Jesse on the sly.

This song was made by Billy Gashade  
As soon as the news did arrive.  
He said there is no man with the law in his hand  
Can take Jesse James when alive.

## Geronimo—Apache Hero

Geronimo (c. 1829-1906), whose true Chiricahua Apache name was Goyathlay or Goyakla ("he who yawns"), was perhaps the most famous—and legendary—of all Indian "outlaw" warriors. When he was a young man, his entire family was wiped out during a surprise raid by Mexican troops, and Geronimo swore vengeance, which he continued to fulfill for most of his life. Something of a maverick, he became known as one who had spiritual power and could tell where the enemy was well before they came into view. While he never was the actual leader of a band in the political sense, he became a fierce leader of raids upon the Mexicans and later the Americans who began to filter into Chiricahua territory. He was no more (or less) fierce than many other Apache war leaders, but his exploits came to be better known and more exaggerated than others'.

Several times he and the people he was with were caught, arrested, and placed on reservations, and each time he broke out and went on the warpath again. Finally, leading a group of some fifty Apaches (mostly women and children), he eluded five thousand U.S. troops for about a year and then, in September 1886, was persuaded to surrender. The U.S. army then rounded up all the remaining Chiricahuas—not just renegades, but those who had been living peacefully on the reservation, and even those who had served the army as scouts—and sent them all as prisoners of war to Florida, then Alabama, and finally Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

At the time, Geronimo was the very emblem of the hated Apaches in the minds of the Anglos and Mexicans in southern Arizona, and his exploits were the topic of perfunctory tales in the penny press. In captivity, Geronimo came to be lionized in non-Arizonan circles and enjoyed his fame, visiting the St. Louis World's Fair and riding in the front of Teddy Roosevelt's inaugural parade in 1905. Americans have always had a peculiar admiration for outlaws, especially those who are old, tame, or dead.

Thus did the man who was perceived for a time internationally as the worst of the "bad Indians" become something of a hero to the people who had pillaged his land and been pillaged in return.

## Custer's Last Stand—Two Versions

Many stories have been told—in writing and in film—about the death of George Armstrong Custer at the hands of Native Americans. "Cus-



*Big Wolf*, by Howling Wolf, Southern Cheyenne, 1849-1927. From *Oberlin Ledger*, p. 64. Gift of Mrs. Jacob D. Cox, 04.1180. Courtesy of The Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College.

*ter's last stand" has become a part of American legend—mostly European American legend—as in this song of the 1930s:*

Across the Big Horn's crystal tide, against the savage Sioux;

A little band of soldiers charged, three hundred boys in blue;

In front rode blond-haired Custer bold, pet of the wild frontier,

A hero of a hundred fights, his deeds known far and near.

...

The night came on with sable veil and hid those sights from view,

The Big Horn's crystal tide was red as she wound her valleys through;

And quickly from the fields of slain those gloating redskins fled—

But blond-haired Custer held the field, a hero with his dead.

*Another version is told from the point of view of the Cheyenne and Arapaho, who, with all Indian resisters of American oppression, are the collective heroes here. This story was told to Indian researchers Alice Marriot and Carol K. Rachlin by Mary Little Bear Inkanish. John Stands-in-the-Timber, and John Fletcher, members of the Cheyenne tribe, and Richard Pratt, an Arapaho.*

After the treaty of Medicine Lodge Creek, in 1871, the Cheyennes and the Arapahos, who were old allies, sat in the council tipi together. All the leading chiefs were unhappy and disturbed, for among the white men

present at the signing of the treaty had been Yellow Hair—George Armstrong Custer.

Custer was known to have a Cheyenne wife and a half-Cheyenne son. The same man who disobeyed his commanding officer's orders so that he might make a dash to Fort Riley, Kansas, to see his white wife, also spent many nights in a Cheyenne tipi. How could the chiefs trust him? He would trick women, disavow his son's parentage, and lie to his friends. He could not be trusted.

They sent a young man, as messenger, with a word that Custer should come to Black Kettle's camp and smoke with him. Black Kettle was a peace chief of the Cheyennes—an old man, loved and respected by everybody. His wife prepared a feast for the visitors and they all sat down and ate together.

After the feast, the young messenger brought Black Kettle a pipe bag. It was of the finest fawn skin, and was beaded in horizontal red, yellow, black, and white bands. Black Kettle's wife belonged to the women's secret society, and she had the right to make that kind of beaded work.

From the bag, Black Kettle drew out a T-shaped pipe of red pipe-stone, with a straight white dogwood stem. He fitted the stem to the pipe bowl, and filled the pipe with native tobacco mixed with shredded sumac bark. Very carefully Black Kettle lifted a coal from the tipi fire, using a pair of sticks for tongs, and lighted the pipe. When he had blown smoke to Maheo above, to mother the Earth, and to the four corners of the world, Black Kettle spoke.

"Yellow Hair," he said, "we have called you to our council because we all wish to make a peace and keep the peace. We have set our marks on paper, but that is the white man's way. Now we ask you to swear the peace in the Indian way, too. Smoke with us, Yellow Hair."

Custer tossed back the long yellow locks that lay on the shoulders of his fringed and beaded buckskin shirt. He never wore a uniform if he could help it and that was another thing the Indians didn't like. If he joined the soldiers, if he gave orders to the soldiers, then he should dress like them. The yellow locks might be thinning on top, but they still hung thick from the sides and back, and fell across his shoulders.

One thing every Indian knew about Custer, he never smoked. Even smelling tobacco smoke, he said, made him feel sick. But success and advancement depended on his control of these Indians, so Yellow Hair put out his hand for the pipe.

Yellow Hair followed Black Kettle's motions, and let a little smoke trickle from his mouth to each of the six directions. He didn't swallow any smoke, but he put the pipe to his mouth six times, and blew out six

puffs of tobacco smoke. Now Custer was joined to the Cheyennes and the Arapahos in what the Indians hoped would be a lasting and safe peace. The other chiefs smoked in their turns.

"Now, Yellow Hair," Black Kettle said, "you have smoked with us, and promised us peace. You may go."

Custer left the tipi, denoting the ground with the heels of his boots. Black Kettle shook the dottle from the pipe into the palm of his hand, and sprinkled a pinch of it in every heel print.

"Yellow Hair has gone," he said. "Hear me, my chiefs. If he breaks the promise he has made us today, he will die, and he will die a coward's death. No Indian will soil his hands with Yellow Hair's scalp."

"Hah-ho," said all the other chiefs. "So be it. If Yellow Hair breaks the promise he has sworn in the peace treaty, then let him die a woman's death."

Two years later Black Kettle and his band made their winter camp on the banks of the Washita River. It was a peace camp, a settled camp. There were brush windbreaks around many of the tipis, and the children played in safety. In the center of the camp stood the beautifully beaded tipi where Black Kettle and his wife lived, and to one side of them and to the other were the keepers of the Cheyenne sacred medicines.

The weather was bitterly cold, for a blue norther had swept across the plains that afternoon, and everyone shivered under its weight of hail and sleet. People huddled inside their tipis, away from the force of the wind, sat close to their fires, and, after they had eaten dinner, told stories of the old days and the old ways. It was a rich camp. The women of Black Kettle's band worked hard, and they were well supplied with dried meat, fine clothes, and painted, beaded, and quill-embroidered robes.

By midnight the camp was silent, and then Yellow Hair struck. He and his troopers, with the storm at their backs, had ridden the seventy miles from Camp Supply in two days, and now, in the darkness, they attacked the peace camp.

Custer had divided his forces, sending a small detachment of troopers downstream to attack a camp of visiting Arapahos. He, with the main body of troops, struck at Black Kettle's camp. The old man died in the ruins of his flaming tipi and fell with the United States flag—given him at Medicine Lodge as a token of the peace he was to keep—still clutched in his hand. Black Kettle's wife stabbed herself and fell dead across her husband's body.

Downstream there was shooting at the Arapaho camp, and then there was no more shooting.

The troops of the Seventh Cavalry gathered together all the wealth

of Black Kettle's camp and set fire to every beautiful thing those Cheyennes possessed. Even some of the soldiers cried when they saw the destruction of robes and food belonging to women and children.

By daylight, with Sharp's carbines, the troopers shot all the horses in the great herds pastured across the river.

And still there was no more shooting from downstream. Yellow Hair sent a detachment to see if the Arapahos had been wiped out like the Cheyennes. The troops found that the Arapahos and their camp were gone. On the ground were the bodies of Major Joel Eliot and his men—all scalped.

Yellow Hair had broken the peace, but his men had died like men.

Now the proud Cheyennes became for a time a broken people. They suffered imprisonment, and death from disease and starvation. Yellow Hair reported his great victory over Black Kettle, but he also had to report that he had let men be killed without sending them support. Even "Woonsinton" could not let that go by. They sent for Yellow Hair to go east, and they punished him by making him stay there for one whole year.

Then Yellow Hair and his white wife came back to Fort Abraham Lincoln. His Cheyenne wife had died of grief, and her sisters had taken her son and hidden him, so he could be raised as an Indian. Fort Abraham Lincoln was far away, north on the Yellowstone, so the southern Cheyennes sat and waited and worked out a plan.

Quietly, messengers moved from tribe to tribe, up and down the plains. They went to the Arapahos, of course, and to the many different bands of Sioux. The Crows and the Pawnees, who had taken the white man's uniforms, and served the Army as scouts, the messengers avoided.

In time, just as quietly, the villages moved. A few camps at a time drifted into the territory of Sitting Bull, the Hunkpapa Sioux chief. Here the groups spread out, along the Little Big Horn and Tongue Rivers, and waited until all the men were armed and ready.

The Crows and Pawnees came into Fort Abraham Lincoln with word that the tribes were gathering. They might attack the white settlements or the fort. Trouble was on its way.

There was a council of the white soldiers, and General Terry, the commanding officer at the post, gave his orders. Yellow Hair would go one way, he himself would go another, and Major Marcus Reno would go the third. They would all come together to surround the great camp on the Little Big Horn.

With Custer would ride his brother, Lieutenant Tom Custer, and Captain Myles W. Keogh. Captain Keogh was famous everywhere for

his devotion to his big bay gelding, Comanche. The two talked to each other like brothers, and Comanche seemed to know what the Captain thought before the words had formed in the man's mind.

The night before they set out, these three men, with some other officers, gathered in Custer's quarters for a farewell dinner. Elizabeth Custer and her Negro cook, Eliza, provided a good one, of venison, and roast sage hens, and any other game the men had brought in. Late in the evening, Tom Custer, Yellow Hair, and Keogh shaved their heads with horse clippers. Elizabeth wept when she saw the fading golden locks fall to the floor; then she comforted herself with the thought that perhaps the Indians would be less likely to recognize and attack her husband if they did not see his long hair.

Early in the morning, the troops rode out of the fort, and the women watched them go. Some women wept, and others held back their tears and bravely waved their handkerchiefs in good-by. As the women and the post guard watched and the band played "The Girl I Left Behind Me" and the regimental marching song, "Garry Owen," one of those miracles of plains light appeared. Riding above the troopers were their images, mirrored against the sky by a mirage. Someone cried, "They are riding to their death!" but the shout was quickly stilled.

If the Pawnees and the Crows knew what was happening in the Indian camps, the Sioux, the Cheyenne, and the Arapaho knew what was happening at Fort Abraham Lincoln. They were prepared, and when the charge came the Indians met it like rocks.

Custer and his troops were driven back, and took refuge on top of a steep hill, almost a bluff, north of the Little Big Horn. There the Indians could surround them, and slowly, methodically, tear them to pieces. Major Reno was pinned downstream by the Arapahos. General Terry had not yet come up in support. Yellow Hair died as Major Eliot had died, in the center of a ring of soldiers, killed by "the finest light cavalry in the world."

The Indian women struck camp and loaded their horses while the battle still went on. When victory came, the Indians melted away into the Black Hills. By the time General Terry relieved Major Reno, and rescued his detachment, the only being left alive on the hilltop was Captain Keogh's great horse, Comanche. The dead man's hand still clutched the reins. Those two were like brothers and no Indian would separate them. Later, General Terry took Comanche to Fort Riley, Kansas, and there he lived until he died of old age—no rider ever mounted him again, but he was led in every review on the post. Comanche's body is still preserved in the Kansas State Historical Museum.

Whether, as the Cheyennes say, no one recognized Yellow Hair with

his head shaved; whether, as the Arapahos say, he was a coward and not worth scalping, we do not know. We do know that his body, unlike others on that battlefield, was not mutilated. Yellow Hair lay on his back, with a woman's knife thrust through his chest, but he was dead before that Cheyenne woman struck him, so they say.\*

## THE GHOSTS OF THE BUTTE ALONGS

by Vachel Lindsay

*Vachel Lindsay liked to think of his native city of Springfield, Illinois, as a future capital of the world and frequently concerned himself with the history of his prairie state. He had no difficulty in imagining the hordes of buffalo which once lived on the grasslands in the valley of the Mississippi River, and he pictured them as so many stampeding demons. The poem is enriched by many of the strident acoustic effects which made his so-called "jazz verse" memorable.*

East night at black midnight I woke with a cry,  
The windows were shaking, there was thunder on high,  
The floor was a-tremble, the door was a-jar,  
White fires, crimson fires, shone from afar.  
I rushed to the door yard. The city was gone.  
My home was a hut without orchard or lawn.  
It was mud-smear and logs near a whispering stream,  
Nothing else built by man could I see in my dream . . .

Then . . .  
Ghost-kings came headlong, row upon row,  
Gods of the Indians, torches aglow.

They mounted the bear and the elk and the deer,  
And eagles gigantic, aged and serene,  
They rode long-horn cattle, they cried "A-la-la."  
They lifted the knife, the bow, and the spear,  
They lifted ghost-torches from dead fires below,  
The midnight made grand with the cry "A-la-la."

\* From Vachel Lindsay, *Collected Poems*. Copyright, 1943, by The Macmillan Company, and used with The Macmillan Company's permission.

The midnight made grand with a red-god charge,  
 A red-god show,  
 A red-god show,  
 "A-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la."

With bodies like bronze, and terrible eyes  
 Came the rank and the file, with catamount cries,  
 Gibbering, yipping, with hollow-skull clacks,  
 Riding white bronchos with skeleton backs,  
 Scalp-hunters, beaded and spangled and bad,  
 Naked and lustful and foaming and mad,  
 Flashing primeval demoniac scorn,  
 Blood-thirst and pomp amid darkness reborn,  
 Power and glory that sleep in the grass  
 While the winds and the snows and the great rains pass.  
 They crossed the gray river, thousands abreast,  
 They rode in infinite lines to the west,  
 Tide upon tide of strange fury and foam,  
 Spirits and wraiths, the blue was their home,  
 The sky was their goal where the star-flags were furled,  
 And on past those far golden splendors they whirled.  
 They burned to dim meteors, lost in the deep.  
 And I turned in dazed wonder, thinking of sleep.

And the wind crept by  
 Alone, unkempt, unsatisfied,  
 The wind cried and cried—  
 Muttered of massacres long past,  
 Buffaloes in shambles vast . . .  
 An owl said: "Hark, what is a-wing?"  
 I heard a cricket carolling,  
 I heard a cricket carolling,  
 I heard a cricket carolling.

Then . . .  
 Snuffing the lightning that crashed from on high  
 Rose royal old buffaloes, row upon row.  
 The lords of the prairie came galloping by.  
 And I cried in my heart "A-la-la, a-la-la,  
 A red-god show,  
 A red-god show,  
 A-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la, a-la-la."

Buffaloes, buffaloes, thousands abreast,  
 A scourge and amazement, they swept to the west.  
 With black bobbing noses, with red rolling tongues,  
 Coughing forth steam from their leather-wrapped lungs,

Cows with their calves, bulls big and vain,  
 Goring the laggards, shaking the mane,  
 Stamping flint feet, flashing moon eyes,  
 Pompous and owlish, shaggy and wise.  
 Like sea-cliffs and caves resounded their ranks  
 With shoulders like waves, and undulant flanks.  
 Tide upon tide of strange fury and foam,  
 Spirits and wraiths, the blue was their home,  
 The sky was their goal where the star-flags are furled,  
 And on past those far golden splendors they whirled.  
 They burned to dim meteors, lost in the deep,  
 And I turned in dazed wonder, thinking of sleep.

I heard a cricket's cymbals play,  
 A scarecrow lightly flapped his rags,  
 And a pan that hung by his shoulder rang,  
 Rattled and thumped in a listless way,  
 And now the wind in the chimney sang,  
 The wind in the chimney,  
 The wind in the chimney,  
 The wind in the chimney,  
 Seemed to say:—  
 "Dream, boy, dream,  
 If you anywise can.  
 To dream is the work  
 Of beast or man.  
 Life is the west-going dream-storms' breath,  
 Life is a dream, the sigh of the skies,  
 The breath of the stars, that nod on their pillows  
 With their golden hair mussed over their eyes."  
 The locust played on his musical wing,  
 Sang to his mate of love's delight.  
 I heard the whippoorwill's soft fret,  
 I heard a cricket carolling,  
 I heard a cricket carolling,  
 I heard a cricket carolling,  
 I heard a cricket say: "Good-night, good-night,  
 Good-night, good-night, . . . good-night."



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## European American Monsters

European Americans brought European tales of monsters with them to the New World. But the very mystery of this largely uncharted world, with its endless forests, towering mountains, killing deserts, and unfamiliar animals and plants, encouraged the production of new monsters. These monsters and fabulous beings became characters in a favorite European American art form, the tall tale.

A time-honored part of tall-tale telling has been what might be called unnatural history, the creation of an improbable bestiary inhabiting the wilderness. The amusement of these tales also often arose from the gullibility of the visiting greenhorn, who would spend anxiety-filled and wakeful nights near the campfire, fearing the arrival not just of such real animals as bears but of even more ferocious creatures.

(Greenhorns to this day are invited on snipe hunts. The snipe is variously described, most often vaguely but more or less like a highly tasty woodchuck. The locals provide the greenhorn with a sack, perhaps a burlap bag, and tell him to wait in a particular place in the dark while they go forth to locate a snipe and drive it, by beating the brush, to the place where the greenhorn can catch it in the bag.)

The forests where Paul Bunyan worked and played (see page 135) were filled with otherwise little-known animals like the harmless stone-eating gylascutus, a sordid beast with ears like a rabbit and the teeth of a lion. Its telescopic legs permit it to graze on hillsides, where it feeds on rocks and lichens. Like many other woodland beasts of this kind, it is rarely seen except after a case of snakebite or a jug of whiskey. Among birds are the gillygaloo, which lays square eggs so they won't roll down the steep inclines where it nests (boiled, the eggs made dice for the lumberjacks), and the goofus bird, which always flies backward, needing to

know only where it has been and not where it is going. The venomous hoop snake puts its tail in its mouth and rolls after its prey with lightning speed; escape is achieved only by leaping through its hoop.

The black hodag (*Bovirus spiritnalis*) is a rare creature found only in the swamps of Wisconsin. Its primary food is mud turtles, water snakes, and muskrats, but it also eats human flesh. A ferocious animal, it has horns on its head, huge bulging eyes, and sharp claws, along with a line of sharp spines that runs along its back and long tail. It is not known ever to lie down; instead, it sleeps leaning against the trunk of a tree.

### Bigfoot

Throughout the world, people dwelling in or near forests have spoken of windigo-like forest monsters and also more humanlike creatures with hairy pelts, walking upright on two legs, usually gigantic in size. In the Mongolian steppes, the creature is called the almas; in China it is known as the Wildman; and European forests were believed to harbor wild men—hairy, nocturnal, and dangerous. In the upper (and unforested) reaches of the Himalayas, it is known as Yeti, or the legendary Abominable Snowman, and in North America it is called Sasquatch (a name derived from the Indians of the Northwest) or—because of the giant tracks it seems to leave behind—Bigfoot.

One can speculate that these wild giants of the wilderness are some form of archetypal dream or nightmare, or a nearly species-wide recollection from the time protohumans left the forests of Africa and the resident apes behind and went timidly off to make a living in the nearby savanna. But with Bigfoot and its other cousins around the world, we enter a realm that may be considered legend but is also called cryptozoology.

Here the bogeyman, designed perhaps to scare children into good behavior, becomes instead a distinct possibility. As in the case of the Loch Ness monster, or "Nessie," there are earnestly reported sightings, even putative photographs, the sort of "evidence" that no one expects in discussing such folkloric beasts as Paul Bunyan's giant blue ox or the hodag. In 1887, for example, a Russian explorer named Nicolai Przewalski collected reports of "wild men" (almas) on an expedition to Mongolia and also, pursuing other local legends about small untamed horses, discovered what we now know as Przewalski's horse. Several large animals, including a relative of the giraffe called the okapi, have come to light only in the twentieth century. That some secretive, perhaps mostly nocturnal, humanlike relative might still wander mostly unseen in the



few yet-to-be-overrun wildernesses of the planet remains a scientific possibility, though less likely with every passing year as forests are debimbered and satellites look with increasingly fine resolution down on the earth's most intimate affairs.

In the United States (and Canada), reports of a giant, humanlike creature are rife, from the early nineteenth century till today, and from as far east as Pennsylvania to the main Bigfoot region, the Pacific Northwest, where vast tracts of relatively untrammeled forest still exist. Sometimes a sighting may consist only of the perception of an unpleasant odor and a shadowy movement in the dark; others report seeing the creature briefly before it disappears into the trees.

The Mount Vernon monster, which for a few years in the late 1970s, inhabited the area near George Washington's home in Virginia, was known only by its nocturnal roar, a very low rumbling sound that terrified local inhabitants and brought to mind the notion of a Bigfoot-type monster roaming this exurban neighborhood. It was widely reported in local papers and on television. Assiduous investigators taped the roars and brought the tape to Eugene Morton, an ornithologist at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., and an expert at interpreting sonograms (voice prints) of animal sounds. It turned out to be the chirp of a baby robin played at one-eighth normal speed, turning it into a low rumble, and once this finding was announced it was never heard again in the Mount Vernon area.\*

In the Pacific Northwest, however, Bigfoot is not so easily disposed of. There are hundreds of reports (and castings) of tracks—prints left in mud or snow of feet more than sixteen inches long. Some of these tracks may well have been elaborately faked, occurring (as do some of the sightings) not far from human activity. But other prints have been found in wilderness areas where no hoaxer would expect his work to be discovered. And some of the tracks seem to exhibit whorls of fingerprintlike markings, which would be nearly impossible for a hoaxer to produce. So overwhelming are the number of prints found in the northwestern forests that Sir John Napier, a primatologist who was employed by the Smithsonian during the 1960s, said flatly that "Sasquatch exists."<sup>†</sup>

Only a handful of other scientists agree, and few will even discuss the matter seriously, finding the existence of a gigantic hominid remaining in our midst so long after humans evolved as at best implausible. Why, after all these years during which several adventurers have dili-

\*Personal communication from Eugene Morton to Jake Page, February 24, 1997.

<sup>†</sup>This quote is from Napier. The rest of this account derives from *Mysterious Creatures*. The chapter on Sasquatch in that book was written by Jake Page.

gently sought out Bigfoot, is there no direct and incontrovertible physical evidence—bones, for example? But to others who prefer to think that the planet may still harbor surprises, that there is room not only for monsters of the imagination but real giants in the thickets that range from Oregon north into British Columbia, twenty-four feet of motion picture film taken in October 1967 still give heart.

Roger Patterson was a onetime rodeo rider, a part-time inventor, and a firm believer in the existence of Bigfoot. Short and sinewy, he had been looking for the giant for years, and this October he was at it again with a friend named Bob Gimlin, a construction worker and a good horseman.

They had been out in the highland forests of northern California, near the Oregon border, for more than a week, looking for tracks. A bulldozer operator named Jerry Crew had reported tracks near there only a few months earlier; others in the area—road builders—had made casts of tracks with humanlike sixteen-inch-long feet, and the Eureka newspaper had published the finds as a front-page story.

It was Friday, October 21, in the early afternoon, and Patterson and Gimlin were making their way on horseback along the hundred-foot-wide, shallow bed of Bluff Creek, which flows eventually into the Klamath River. The waters of springs past had kicked up a fifteen-foot-high tangle of logs and trees ahead of them, which obscured their view, so the two horsemen made their way toward the tangle, and then came abreast of it.

And then they saw her.

She was crouched over a fallen tree. At the snort of one of the horses, she stood erect and stared across the water at the two men. Maybe it was her smell or just her looming presence, but the horses screamed and backed away, one of them rearing so high it threw its rider, the seasoned horseman Patterson, onto the ground.

Immediately he grabbed from his horse's saddlebag the 16-millimeter camera he had been using to photograph the scenery as part of a documentary he aspired to produce of a Bigfoot sighting. He started the camera and ran through the wet sand toward the creature, which moved off behind some low piles of logs.

"Cover me!" Patterson shouted to his companion, who readied his rifle as a precaution. Patterson crouched and kept the camera running, pointed at the creature. At one point she swiveled her torso and head around and looked back at her pursuer while still striding away.

"Oh, my God," Patterson now shouted. "I'm out of film!"

By now the horses had bolted, and the two men decided it was wiser

to catch them than to pursue the Bigfoot. Once they collected them and returned to the site, the creature was long gone, but they made plaster casts of the inch-deep footprints it left in the ground as it disappeared. They were fourteen inches long each and showed a stride of forty-two inches.

The unprecedented find, of course, was the film. About a minute of film showed a broad-shouldered creature with pendulous breasts. She was covered with dark reddish hair, except for her face, nipples, palms and soles, and she appeared neckless, with a forehead that sloped back to a point on her head, not unlike the crested skull of a gorilla. As she loped off, the camera showed long thick arms and strong legs moving in a strikingly smooth gait, each knee bending like that of a cross-country skier as it received her weight.

Millions saw this brief moment of cryptozoological history on their televisions, and most scientists assumed the film was an elaborate hoax. A British expert in biomechanics named Donald Grieve said that if the film had been shot at the standard speed of 24 frames per second (fps), the creature could have been—and probably was—a human in disguise. But, he added, “the possibility of fakery is ruled out if the speed of the film was 16 or 18 fps. In these conditions a normal human being could not duplicate the observed pattern.”

Patterson could not remember the setting. He knew that 24 fps was more acceptable for television use, but thought it might have been changed when his horse spooked. There was no way of telling.

But there was a way of telling. Russian analysts noted that the film also recorded the manner in which Patterson ran toward the creature, bobbing up and down with each step. If the film had been shot at the standard 24 fps, Patterson would have to have been taking six steps per second, faster than an Olympic sprinter. So, according to the Russians, the film had to have been shot at 16 fps; therefore it was not a hoax.

Subsequently, upon analyzing the film, technicians at the Walt Disney studios said that if Patterson's film was a hoax, it was a better hoax than they could have perpetrated themselves. They could not find “the zipper in the suit.” And later an anthropologist at Washington State University named Grover Krantz pointed out a detail that no rodeo rider would probably have known enough about to include in a hoax: Given the creature's apparent size and weight, it would require a foot formed differently than a human's—notably a heel that extended farther back from the ankle. And this is just what the creature on the film possessed.

There the matter rests. Legend or evolutionary relic? A recurrent dream or a hoax—or a real offshoot from the human family tree? People

still seek it out, whatever it is, and in several local jurisdictions in the Pacific Northwest, Sasquatch is listed as a legally protected species.

### The Jersey Devil

*The Jersey Devil, or Leed's Devil (it is said to have been born at Leed's Point), is a fabulous being of the South Jersey shore. He or she (no one knows its gender) has long haunted people along the shore. Its footprints are often found on the beaches and its screams are heard at night.*

*There once was an old woman, so the story goes, who had ten or twelve children and dreaded having any more. In a rash moment she said she hoped that if she had another child it would be a devil. When a monster was, in fact, born to her she kept it hidden in an old house until it grew large and escaped. Now it peers into the windows of innocent shore inhabitants and does other sorts of mischief.*

### The Leeds Devil

WITHIN recent times the Leeds Devil has ramped about the New Jersey pine region, between Freehold and Cape May, though it should have been “‘jaid” many years ago. Its coming portends evil, for it appears before wars, fires, and great calamities.

Albeit a sober Quaker in appearance, Mother Leeds, of Burlington, New Jersey, was strongly suspected of witchcraft; and suspicion became certainty when, in 1735, a child was born to her. The old women who had assembled on that occasion, as they always do assemble wherever there is death or birth or marriage, reported that while it was like other human creatures at first, the child changed, under their very eyes. It began to lose its likeness to other babes, and grew long and brown; it presently took the shape of a dragon, with a snake-like body, a horse's head, a pig's feet, and a bat's wings. This dreadful being increased in strength as it gained in size, until it exceeded the bulk and might of a grown man, when it fell on the assemblage, beating all the members of the party, even its own mother, with its long, forked, leathery tail. This despite being wreaked, it arose through the chimney and vanished, its harsh cries mingling with the clamor of a storm that was raging out-of-doors.

That night several children disappeared: the dragon had eaten them. For several years thereafter it was glimpsed in the woods at nightfall, and it would wing its way heavily from farm to farm, though it seldom did much mischief after its first escape into the world. To sour the milk by breathing on it, to dry the cows, and to sear the corn were its usual errands. On a still night the farmers could follow its course, as they did with trembling, by the howling of dogs, the hoots of owls, and the squawks of poultry. It sometimes appeared on the coast, generally when a wreck impended, and was seen in the company of the spectres that haunt the shore: the golden-haired woman in white, the black-muzzled pirate, and the robber, whose head being cut off at Barnegat by Captain Kidd, stumps about the sands without it, guarding a treasure buried near. When it needed a change of diet the Leeds Devil would breathe upon the cedar swamps, and straightway the fish would die in the pools and creeks, their bodies, whitened and decayed by the poison, floating about in such numbers as to threaten illness to all the neighborhood. In 1740 the service of a clergyman was secured, who, by reason of his piety and exemplary life, had dominion over many of the fiends that plagued New Jersey, and had even prevailed in his congregation against applejack, which some declared to be a worse fiend than any other, if, indeed, it did not create some of those others. With candle, book, and bell the good man banned the creature for a hundred years, and, truly, the herds and henneries

From *American Myths and Legends*, by Charles M. Skinner, Vol. I, pp. 240-243. Copyright, 1903, by J. B. Lippincott Company. Philadelphia & London.

#### GHOST TALES

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were not molested in all that time. The Leeds Devil had become a dim tradition when, in 1840, it burst its cerements, if such had been put about it; or, at all events, it broke through the clergyman's commandments, and went whiffing among the pines again, eating sheep and other animals, and making clutches at children that dared to sport about their dooryards in the twilight. From time to time it reappeared, its last raid occurring at Vincentown and Burrville in 1899, but it is said that its life has nearly run its course, and with the advent of the new century many worshipful commoners of Jersey dismissed, for good and all, the fear of this monster from their minds.

## The Irrepressible Backwoodsman and Original Humorist

Davy Crockett, the irrepressible backwoodsman, who adopted the coonskin cap for his symbol, was a walking bundle of contradictions—a fairy-tale character and a real live historical personality, an innocent child of nature and a wily politician, a semiliterate butcher of the King's English who penned a quite readable (probably ghostwritten) autobiography, a friend of wild critters who killed forty-seven bears inside of one month, an Indian lover whose rafters were decorated with numerous redskins' scalps, a buffoon and frontier comedian who died a hero's death, a one-time Tennessean who ended his life as a Texican.

He could play the fiddle, dance the Irish jig, and shoot out a squirrel's eye at a hundred paces. "The Yaller Blossom of the Forest" was born in Tennessee on August 17, 1786, in a crude cabin near the Nolichucky. His Irish father, John, had fought at King's Mountain during the War of Independence. He later erected a water mill that was swept away by a flood. His mother, née Rebecca Hawkins, was a right sprightly woman who, so the legend has it, could still in her old age jump a seven-foot fence backward, dance a hole in the puncheon floor, and make love three times a day without flinching. She was one of those frontier women who danced so hard on Sunday nights that Davy had to rake up their toenails on Monday mornings.

Young Davy had little schooling because he ran away from a birching. He "jest loved the wimmin," and got a number of girls in the family way. At one time he was paying court to a Quaker girl. In his own words: "For though I have heard people talk about hard loving, yet I reckon no poor devil in this world was ever cursed with such hard love as mine has always been, when it came on me."



She would have none of him as her heart was set upon a sober-minded, nonswearing, mild-mannered Quaker cousin.

"This news was worse to me than war, pestilence or famine; but still I knowed I could not help myself. I saw quick enough my cake was dough, and I tried to cool it off as fast as possible; but I had hardly safety pipes enough, as my love was so hot as mighty nigh to burst my boilers."

She married the Quaker and Davy got hitched to a Scottish girl, Polly Findlay, reputedly a direct descendant of King Macbeth, with a disposition to match. To escape her Davy joined Old Hickory Jackson in the War against the Crees. When he returned, Polly was gone. "Without a tender and loving wife," Davy looked for, and found, a substitute in an ample-bosomed "widdler-woman" named Lizzy Potter. In time, Davy became known as the King of the Wild Frontier, who could outshoot, outdrink, outtalk, outhunt, outjump, and outfight any other two-legged creature in creation. Always he had with him Teazer, his dog, Kill-Devil, his rifle, and Big Butcher, his bowie knife, the longest and heaviest in the whole country.

He was a genius at bragging: "I'm a screamer and have got the roughest racking horse, the prettiest sister, the surest rifle and the ugliest dog in the district. I'm a leetle the savagest crittur you ever did see. For bitters I swallow a whole keg of aquafortis, sweetened with brimstone, stirred with a lightnin' rod, and skimmed with a

tornado. I can swim like a catfish, run like a fox, and fight like the devil. I make love like a mad bull and kin swallow an Injin whole if you butter his head and pin his ears back."

In 1827 Crockett was elected a member of Congress. In 1835, he lost his seat. He castigated his constituents who had failed to reelect him: "I told them, moreover, of my services, pretty straight up and down, for a man might be allowed to speak on such subjects when others are about to forget them; and I also told them of the manner in which I had been knocked down and dragged out, and that I didn't consider it a fair fight anyhow they could fix it. I put the ingredients in the cup pretty strong I tell you, and I concluded my speech by telling them that I was done with politics for the present, and that they might all go to hell, and I would go to Texas."

He went to Texas to keep his tryst with destiny. The legends show us Davy Crockett at the Alamo, his last bullets expended, gripping his Old Betsy by the barrel, wielding it like a club amid heaps of his fallen enemies. A postscript to his autobiography describes the hero's end:

The battle was desperate until daylight, when only six men of the Texian garrison were found alive. They were instantly surrounded, and ordered by General Castrillon to surrender, which they did, under a promise of his protection, finding that resistance any longer would be madness. Colonel Crockett was one of the number. He stood alone, the barrel of his shattered rifle in his right hand, in his left hand his large Bowie knife dripping blood. There was a frightful gash across his forehead, while around him there was a complete barrier of about twenty Mexicans, lying pell mell, dead or dying. . . .

General Castrillon was brave and not cruel, and disposed to save the prisoners. He marched them up to that part of the fort where stood Santa Anna and his murderous crew. The steady fearless step and undaunted tread of Colonel Crockett had a powerful effect on all present. Nothing daunted he marched up boldly in front of Santa Anna, and looked him sternly in the face, while Castrillon addressed "his excellency," "Sir, here are six prisoners I have taken alive; how shall I dispose of them?" Santa Anna flew into a violent rage, and replied, "Have I not told you how to dispose of them? Why do you bring them to me?" At the same time his brave officers plunged their swords into the bosoms of their defenceless prisoners. Colonel Crockett, seeing the act of treachery, instantly sprang like a tiger at the ruffian chief, but before he could reach him a dozen swords were sheathed in his indomitable heart; and he fell and died without a groan, a frown upon his brow, and a smile of scorn and defiance on his lips.

## Grinning the Bark off a Tree

That Colonel Crockett could avail himself, in electioneering, of the advantages which well applied satire ensures, the following anecdote will sufficiently prove:

In the canvass of the Congressional election of 18——, Mr. \*\*\*\*\* was the Colonel's opponent—a gentleman of the most pleasing and conciliating manners—who seldom addressed a person or a company without wearing upon his countenance a peculiarly good humoured smile. The Colonel, to counteract the influence of this winning attribute, thus alluded to it in a stump speech:

"Yes, gentlemen, he may get some votes by grinning, for he can outgrin me—and you know I ain't slow—and to prove to you that I am not, I will tell you an anecdote. I was concerned myself—and I was fooled a little of the wickedest. You all know I love hunting. Well, I discovered a long time ago that a 'coon couldn't stand my grin. I would bring one tumbling down from the highest tree. I never wasted powder and lead, when I wanted one of the creatures. Well, as I was walking out one night, a few hundred yards from my house, looking carelessly about me, I saw a 'coon planted upon one of the highest limbs of an old tree. The night was very moony and clear, and old Ratler was with me; but Ratler won't bark at a 'coon—he's a queer dog in that way. So, I thought I'd bring the lark down in the usual way, by a grin. I set myself—and, after grinning at the 'coon a reasonable time, found that he didn't want to come down. I wondered what was the reason—and I took another steady grin at him. Still he was THERE. It made me a little mad; so I felt round and got an old limb about five feet long, and, planting one end upon the ground, I placed my chin upon the other, and took a rest. I then grinned my best for about five minutes; but the cursed 'coon hung on. So, finding I could not bring him down by grinning, I was determined to have him—for I thought he must be a droll chap. I went over to the house, got my axe, returned to the tree, saw the 'coon still there, and began to cut away. Down it come, and I ran forward; but d——n the 'coon was there to be seen. I found that what I had taken for one, was a large knot upon the branch of the tree and, upon looking at it closely, I saw that I had grinned all the bark off, and left the knot perfectly smooth.

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"Now, fellow citizens," continued the Colonel, "you must be convinced that, in the grinning line, I myself am not slow—yet, when I look upon my opponent's countenance, I must admit that he is my superior. Therefore, be wide awake—look sharp—and do not let him grin you out of your votes."

## Davy Crockett on the Stump

"Friends, fellow-citizens, brothers and sisters: On the first Tuesday previous to next Saturday you will be called on to perform one of the most important duties that belong to free white folks—that are a fact. On that day you will be called upon to elect your members to the Senate and House of Representatives in the Congress of the United States, and feeling that in times of great political commotion like these, it becomes you to be well represented, I feel no hesitation in offering myself as a candidate to represent such a high-minded and magnanimous white set.

"Friends, fellow-citizens, brothers and sisters: They accuse me of adultery; it's a lie—I never ran away with any man's wife, that was not willing, in my life. They accuse me of gambling, it's a lie—for I always plunk down the cash.

"Friends, fellow-citizens, brothers and sisters: They accuse me of being a drunkard, it's a d——n eternal lie,—for whiskey can't make me drunk."

## The Drinks Are on Me, Gentlemen

While being on the stump during a local election, Davy Crockett found himself among a group of constituents, all of them dry as powder horns and, consequently, exceedingly thirsty. He had to treat them, but was helliferociously short of the wherewithal. Leading the crowd of voters to the nearest watering hole, he was eyed

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with great suspicion by the tightrwad boniface. Not in the least fazed, he slapped his famous headgear on the counter, calling for a cooncap's worth of whiskey, telling his eager constituents: "Gentlemen, the drinks are on me."

The bardog measured out the cap's worth in likker while the crowd broke into enthusiastic "Huzzahs for Crockett!" The publican picked up the coonskin cap and threw it up into the loft behind him. As soon as the glasses were empty, Davy called for another round. While the tapster's back was turned, Davy, observing that there was a lot of space between the logs which formed the loft, took his ramrod and fished out his skin cap from out between them. "I brung a passel of these to sell. Might as well swap 'em for some of the good creature." With that he put the same cap on the bar while the voters drank toasts to the Cunnel an' the Dimmicratic Party. This game the Yaller Blossom of the Forest played again and again, until the whole company had been well watered into insensibility, the boniface included. Assured of the necessary votes from his appreciative constituents, the Original Frontier Humorist retrieved his coonskin cap for the last time and departed whistling a merry tune.



### Gouging the Critter

In 1797 a Kaintuck long hunter took his ax and went into the woods to cut a broom handle for his wife. He was but a short way from his cabin when he was set upon by a large, ferocious bear. He was about to tackle the "varmint" with his ax, but his four-legged opponent snatched this weapon from him. So the two of them, bear and man, went at each other tooth and nail. Unfortunately, from the bear's point of view, the human contestant was of the half-horse-half-alligator type, an experienced rib staver who had bitten off many

an ear during a lively election-day fight. He now went about "gouging the critter," using the same methods he had employed when fighting river rats and card cheats—namely, by fastening his teeth upon the beast's nose, while doing some eye gouging and groin thumping. In no time at all the poor bear was reduced to "crying uncle" by crying so loud and pitifully that neighbors from a mile off came running to the rescue—of the man, they thought.

Soon Bruin's skin was lying in front of the bold "gouger's" fireplace after a great feast of roasted bear for the whole settlement. "How didje an' the bar make it?" one of the neighbors inquired of the happy ring-tailed squealer.

The victor flapped his wings and crowed like a rooster: "I'war nuthin'. Bars can't stand Kentucky play. Gougin' and twistin' of the privities is too hard on 'em."

### Jim Bowie and His Big Knife

Colonel Jim Bowie, now there was a man! A southern blueblood, he was fair-haired, and blue-eyed, jovial, soft-spoken, and ever polite to the ladies. He could rip apart a fellow with his knife, from the groin to the throat with a single swipe. He was born, in 1796, in Old Kaintuck, though there are some who say that he hailed from Georgia. It doesn't matter. The main thing is that he was born. Jim had four brothers of whom only one, Rezin, is worth mentioning. In 1802 Jim's Pappy took the whole gang of them to Catahoula Parish, Louisiana, where young Jim amused himself riding alligators, lassoing them and killing them with his butcher knife, making good money by selling the hides. Such doings gave people the idea that Jim was big and burly, but in truth he was a not overly tall, delicate fellow.

Jim and Rezin were tolerably good shots, but when it came to fighting, they preferred knives. As Jim used to say: "A knife is always loaded." How did Jim come by his famous knife? Well, according to some, he once found himself in a scrape with two mean-eyed sons of bitches with only a sword for a weapon. He tried to chop the head off of one of these fellows, but the blade broke in half and he had to

finish his fight with the stump. He did so well with it (he ripped up both these gents' bellies) that Jim said to himself: "A knife's the thing for me!"

But whoa! Hold on! The truth is that Jim didn't invent the bowie knife. His brother Rezin is the one who did it. Rezin was about to go on a hunting trip but had somehow lost his knife. He made himself a new one from a blacksmith's rasp, on account of the admirable quality of its steel, and so came up with the most formidable close-quarter weapon ever. Rezin later made a present of it to his brother Jim, saying: "You may some time find it useful. Should the occasion ever come, you may depend upon its temper and its strength."

Whoa, hold it right there. This sounds too highfalutin. As a matter of fact, some folks tell a different story. Rezin did not make his mancarver himself but went to a knifsmith by the name of Jim Black. This fellow, then a blacksmith's apprentice, had run away from Philadelphia to set up shop for himself in the West. He had his own secret way of hardening steel, and his knives were famous for keeping their blades keen and razor-sharp forever. It was said that a man could cut hickory wood with one of Black's knives for a month and still have a blade keen enough to shave himself with. Rezin went to this fellow and asked him to make a knife to his specifications—not for picking his teeth, but for "killing stuff." Black came up with a man-slicer whose blade was fourteen inches long—the first bowie knife.

Whoa! Hold on again, because some friends of the Colonel vowed that the genuine original article had a blade exactly nine and a quarter inches long and one and a half inches wide. It broadened along the spine, tapering to a point, single-edged, but double-edged at the tip. This was a mighty handy tool. Besides being ideal for picking your teeth, it was good for shaving, whitening, trimming your nails, and cutting your beard. You could use it for slicing, and stabbing, and even throwing, because it was weighted at the tip. It was the ideal widow-maker. You could stab a fellow with it in the heart so nice and easy that he hardly felt a thing. As for cutting a throat, it was the dreamiest thing ever.

There are some folks saying that the colonel was so noble and dainty that he used his knife only once for its intended purpose. They are dead wrong. In 1827, on the most famous occasion, Jim Bowie used it during a free-for-all duel which came about by the colonel being dead broke. He went to a banker, Norris Wright, and

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applied for a loan. Wright told him that he was a bad risk. That made the colonel kind of wrothy. The anger simmered and came to a boil. To settle matters both men, together with several friends and supporters, met on a sandspit in the middle of the Mississippi River that the locals used for such affairs of honor. The parties lost no time palavering but went at it with a will. Wright shot Bowie down, "ventilating" him through hip and shoulder. Thinking that he had settled the colonel's hash for good, Wright stabbed him in the chest and, for good measure, gave him a terrific clout on the head, but there was still enough wildcat left in Jim to fight back. With a deft upward slash of his knife he neatly opened up Wright from pubis, via pelvis, to the shirt collar. He then proceeded to make coleslaw out of two other fellows to teach them not to stick their noses into other folks' business. A handful of gents bit the dust on this occasion, and word of the wonderful bowie knife spread through the whole country.

But whoa! Hold on! There are some so-called historians who say that the bowie knife had not been invented yet and that Colonel Jim had done his slicing with an ordinary butcher knife. It doesn't matter. Wright was dead and Bowie came out of it alive to do more deeds of derring-do.

During another battle royal, Bowie was set upon by three knife fighters, gents with their bark on who had been hired by a bardog whom Bowie had once carved up like a turkey. The colonel neatly decapitated the first would-be killer with a slash of his two-pound blade. The second assassin managed to inflict a leg wound on bold Jim who, in a tit for tat, disemboweled the fellow with a one-two-three swipe. The third hombre ran away, but Jim, though limping, caught up with him, cleaving his skull in two, "from crown to shoulder."

Not all of Jim's encounters had such bloody endings. In 1832 a lady traveling on a stage coach requested a fellow passenger to put his pipe away because it emitted clouds of vile, suffocating smoke. The ruffian ignored her and went on puffing and blowing, but another passenger quickly persuaded him to behave by holding a monstrous knife to his throat. The gallant passenger's name was Jim Bowie.

In 1813 Jim and Rezin moved to Texas where they opened the first steam-operated sugar mill in the state, but whoa! Hold It! The Bowies' real business was slaving. They got friendly with the pirate Jean Lafitte, who had built himself a fort on an island in the Gulf of

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Mexico. Lafitte and the kindhearted gentlemanly brothers, blessed with the gift of winning every man's heart (and every woman's love), began a brisk trade in "black ivory." The pirate brought in the slaves fresh from Africa. Jim and Rezin bought them at one dollar a pound, smuggled them into the States, and sold them there at three dollars per pound for a neat profit. The importation of slaves from Africa had by then been outlawed even though the "peculiar institution" was to endure for some fifty years more—until Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

Jim and Rezin settled down at San Antonio de Béxar, the colonel becoming, for a while, a citizen of Mexico. When the colonel's money ran out, he found a solution, both romantic and financially beneficial—he married beautiful Ursula de Veramendi, daughter of the Texas vice-governor, a rich caballero who settled a dowry of fifteen thousand dollars upon the teenage bride. The happy husband took to living high on the hog and to drinking more tequila and mescal than was good for him. When he found himself broke again, he and Rezin went prospecting for gold and silver, starting a legend within a legend—the Saga of the Lost Bowie Mine.

It began with Jim bribing Xotic, chief of the Lipan Apaches, with the gift of a silver-plated rifle, to adopt him into the tribe and show him their secret mines containing a million dollars' worth of silver. Rather than let the Bowies have their treasure, the chief told Jim where to find a still richer mine, on the San Saba River, near an ancient, deserted Spanish fort. On November 2, 1831, Jim and Rezin set out to recover this treasure. They took along with them eight others for mutual protection, six white men and two black slaves. Soon they found themselves waylaid by no less than 164 Caddo and Tehuacana Indians, determined to keep the treasure for themselves. The odds were fifteen to one. Jim had his men entrench themselves in a great hurry and put up some sort of a breastwork. Behind it the treasure seekers made their stand.

Before the shooting started, Jim tried to negotiate his party out of their predicament, sending Rezin and a man called Buchanan to parley with the Indians, who responded by crying: "How d'ye do? How d'y do? and firing a salvo that shattered Buchanan's leg. The ensuing do-or-die fight lasted all day. Bowie lost one man dead and three wounded. Of the Indians no less than fifty were killed and thirty-five wounded. They decided to leave Colonel Jim alone. There was no surgical kit in Bowie's parry, "not even a dose of salts" to treat the

leg. Jim "boiled some live oak bark, very strong, and thickened it with pounded charcoal and Indian meal, made a poultice of it, and tied it around Buchanan's leg. They then sewed a piece of wet buffalo hide around the leg to hold the whole mess together. Miraculously, Buchanan recovered completely. Eventually, Bowie found the mine, which was even richer than he had hoped for. He began shipping wagonloads of silver to San Antonio. But whoa! Hold it! Some low-down skunks insisted that there never was a Bowie Mine, and that Jim got his silver by robbing mule trains carrying precious ore from established mines to a number of refineries.

The search for the Lost Bowie Mine has never stopped since. Mexicanos and gringos, settlers, ranchers, prospectors, city slickers, clergymen, ruffians, and gentlemen, even grimly determined women, have torn up the earth, tunneled into hillsides, drained ponds, diverted lakes, and dug up huge boulders to get at Bowie's treasure—all in vain, though a stone gatepost of the old Spanish fort was found, bearing the inscription BOWIE MINE, 1832.

In 1833 tragedy engulfed Jim Bowie. A cholera epidemic struck San Antonio. Jim sent his wife and two small children to her parents' home in Monclova. There all five died of the dread disease, while Jim, in San Antonio, remained immune and unscathed, drowning his grief in oceans of whiskey.





In 1835 the outbreak of the Texas War of Independence made impossible any further treasure hunts or silver mining (or the robbing of bullion-transporting mule trains). Leading a ragtag company of volunteers, Jim Bowie was commissioned its colonel. With thirty men he joined the Americans and Texans defending the Alamo, vowing to die rather than retreat. Davy Crockett also arrived at the head of a dozen marksmen calling themselves the "Tennessee Mounted Volunteers." Such reinforcements heartened the defenders, but their enthusiasm cooled when Colonel Bowie and his men went on a colossal drunk, parading, reeling, through the streets of San Antonio, frightening sober-minded citizens out of their wits. In the course of events Colonel Bowie and Colonel Travis jointly assumed command of the Alamo. Well enough when he had arrived, Jim was at death's door toward the end, succumbing to the last stages of consumption. (But whoa! Hold it! Some said he was mainly suffering from a broken leg, the result of a fall from one of the Alamo's walls.)

General and Jefe Supremo Antonio López de Santa Anna, arrived to besiege and take the Alamo with 5,400 men and twenty-one cannon. Of defenders there were barely 180. The outcome was never in doubt. The Texans withstood assaults and bombardments for eleven days. On the twelfth day the Mexican bands played the *de güello*, a trumpet call signifying "no quarter," as Santa Anna launched his final assault. The defenders were overwhelmed and every male survivor put to the sword.

When the oncoming hordes of the Mexicans swept into and through the battered breaches, they found Bowie stretched upon his cot, his life fast ebbing away from attacks of his dread disease, consumption. With an unquailing eye he looked upon approaching death and seizing his pistols he determined to sell his life as dearly as possible. Two of the cowards who dashed toward him, fell beneath his steady aim and then he grasped the trusty knife that had served him so well upon that sandy battle-ground on the far-off Mississippi. The blood of the hero for a moment gave him strength and the noble steel was plunged into the bodies of three of his murderers, before his gallant spirit took its flight from that frail tenement now pierced by almost a hundred wounds.

The Mexicans tossed his body on their bayonets until his blood covered their uniforms and dyed them red. Thus ended the life of a knife fighter.

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The mythmakers were as busy with Bowie as they were with the likes of Davy Crockett or Calamity Jane. There are therefore almost as many versions of Bowie's death as there were mythmakers. One sample:

Two Mexican officers were detailed to pile up the bodies of the defenders and burn them. In the search they found a man still alive, lying sick on a stretcher.

"Do you know him?" asked one.

"I think," replied the other, "it is the infamous Col. Bowie." They berated him for fighting against the Mexican government; he repited by denouncing them for fighting under such a tyrant as Santa Anna; they commanded silence, he answered:

"Not when ordered by such as you."

"Then we will relieve you of your tongue," rejoined one of the officers.

The brutal order was given to the soldiers nearby, and speedily obeyed. The bleeding and mutilated body of the gallant Texan was thrown upon the heap of the slain, the funeral pile of the patriots saturated with camphene, and the tall pillar of flame that shot upward bore the soul of Bowie up to God.

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