

the theme of the consequences of complacency and inaction in the face of the oppression of, principally, male blackness.

The editors suggest that the essays in the final section, “Disruption and Incorporation,” “consider how film examines questions of cultural identity” (6). I find this a bit of a stretch, particularly as one could argue that all the essays in this anthology examine these questions in one form or another. Rather, this section is comprised of two exemplary essays that do not find a natural home under a larger rubric.

The first is K.A. Laity’s “The Virgin Victim,” a study of Ingmar Bergman’s *The Virgin Spring*, which was based on the Scandinavian ballad “Herr Truelses Daughter,” and of Wes Craven’s *The Last House on the Left*, which was in turn based on Bergman’s film. Comparing the three settings of the versions—conservative medieval Scandinavia where religious authority was absolute; post-war Scandinavia where authority was displaced; and Vietnam-era America where notions of authority were being overthrown—she analyses the ways that the characters are presented, how the transgressive incident is enacted, and how revenge is sought. It is a brilliant piece of work. LuAnne Roth, meanwhile, turns to the role food plays in three recent American films (*American History X*, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, and *Along Came Polly*) as an indicator of Otherness. I wouldn’t have thought I would find readings for my foodways course in a film text, but it is an effortlessly delightful demonstration of the meal as identity negotiation.

Some minor issues aside (the book could have gone through one more proofread, as typographic errors abound), this is a significant contribution both to folklore and—I would suggest—film studies. It would be an obvious contender for the primary text in any course on folklore and popular culture at an upper-level undergraduate or graduate level.

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Noriko T. Reider. *Japanese Demon Lore: Oni from Ancient Times to the Present*. 2010. Logan: Utah State University Press. xxvi + 241 pages. ISBN: 978-0-87421-793-3 (hardcover). Foreword by Peter Knecht.

Noriko T. Reider has compiled a comprehensive and informative account of both folk and sophisticated handlings of the *oni*, one of the most common forms of Japanese *yōkai* (roughly, “hobgoblins” or “bogeys”). While the book’s main title refers to this tradition as “demon lore,” this is misleading for Western readers, who might expect the book to deal with entities like the grotesque “Jersey devil” or the

brimstone-scented figures who come to claim the souls of sinners. True, *oni* have horns (mostly just one), and there is often a moral element to the narratives in which they appear, but in fact the closer Western parallels come from tales about cannibalistic giants and mysterious creatures like the mountain-dwelling ape-men who abduct women to have children by them (see Czubala 1993, Ellis 1993 and Yanagita 2008:14-15).

There are motifs that are common in legends of this sort: *oni* have superhuman size and strength; they carry grotesque weapons such as nail-studded clubs; and, most commonly, they crave human flesh and blood and use a variety of tricks, including shape shifting through glamour, to entice both males and females into their clutches. They may be revenants, or the physical bodies of dead people who are unable to rest in the ground because of some unsatisfied grudge, or ordinary humans who have given in to a powerful hatred that deforms their bodies as well as their souls. Sometimes they are simply strange beings who live in wild areas remote from civilized villages.

Reider argues that, whatever else *oni* are, they represent a form of “marginalized other,” that is, a person or group “marginalized and/or silenced by hegemonic authority and/or mainstream society, willingly or involuntarily, temporarily or permanently.” For that reason, the *oni* legends are often radically ambiguous. The beings are, of course, inhuman and a threat to society, and so they are to be avoided or exterminated. But the legends and the literary and popular works they inspire present them more as victims as much as victimizers. At times, Reider shows, they represent a sense of morality that is purer and more consistent than that of the “normal” culture that marginalizes them. Overall, paradoxically, Reider finds that the *oni* narratives, ancient and modern, work to humanize these uncanny beings, using them to express and understand tensions that exist within the Japanese culture of that historical period. In so doing, she suggests that these folk traditions function much like some kinds of contemporary legends that, as Gary Alan Fine and Irfan Khawaja suggest, “arise from the attempt to make intelligible the actions of an otherwise unintelligible being” (2005: 189). While the *oni* may remain beyond the pale, narratives featuring them allow disenfranchised and silenced parties within Japanese culture a voice and a right to be heard.

The scope of the work is broad, dealing with the earliest surviving texts describing *oni* from ancient chronicles, then discussing variations that emerged later during medieval and Early Modern periods. A number of traditional Noh plays enact such narratives, and Reider perceptively discusses both the texts of these dramas and the records of actual performances to reconstruct the ways in which famous actors

(males portray both sexes) have interpreted the roles. These discussions are helpfully illustrated with vintage scroll paintings showing how contemporary artists familiar with the dramas visualized these stories.

Reider's analysis suggests that such stories expressed changing power structures in Japanese culture through a narrative dynamic that she argues is "carnavalesque" in a Bakhtinian sense. That is, while the stories show *oni* being confronted and ultimately defeated by representatives of order, the ways in which they do this "flagrantly violate class, gender, and religious boundaries" (31). The warriors who infiltrate the stronghold of Shuten Dōji ("Drunken Demon") disguise themselves as priests, yet have no compunction about lying about their activities and even committing cannibalism in order to gain the *oni*'s confidence. Then they incapacitate the ogre with poisoned sake and murder him in his bed, leading him to cry out in protest, "There is nothing false in the words of the demons" (43). Reider, perceptively, notes that the narrative became popular at the very time when the warrior class became much more influential in political circles, challenging the authority of the aristocratic ruling class and even the emperor himself.

Reider is also perceptive in discussing popular Noh dramas featuring revenge-seeking women whose emotions transform them into dangerous *oni*. Noting that such beings, in folk tradition, are considered genderless, she suggests that such narratives show ways in which human females, who held a subservient social status at the time, saw their only alternative to hegemony was to shed their sexual identity and behave as "monsters." An interesting chapter on the widespread "mountain ogress" theme in *oni* lore finds important links to an underlying indigenous matriarchal mythology that was largely suppressed. While such beings remain uncanny, they function as benevolent characters in narratives, raising human children with care. However, the hegemonic reality intrudes when the ogress's male child re-enters society alone as a culture hero, leaving the benevolent monster-mother alone in the mountains.

Finally, a series of chapters presents the use of folk motifs in a variety of contemporary phenomena, including sophisticated literature, political propaganda, and the influential popular culture of manga (graphic novel) and anime (animation). As Japan developed intellectually, Reider notes, the interest in creatures such as *oni* shifted from literal belief to their value as cultural symbols. (Significantly, she notes, the authors who stated that they did not believe that *oni* actually existed were careful to state that they were not expressing skepticism in the paranormal world as a whole, just in this particular case.) This by

no means led to a decline in *oni* narratives, which continued to use the creatures to express nostalgia for the collective past but also to investigate their possibilities as rule-breaking characters in secular literature and popular culture.

In the book's most interesting section, Reider examines the ways in which *oni* allow sophisticated authors to explore themes of identity, sexual victimization, and the conflict between traditional beliefs and the increasingly technologized context in which they must be maintained. In so doing, Reider looks at a wide variety of works, sophisticated and popular, few of which are readily available to Western readers. In these modern works, she concludes, "it is not what *oni* will do to us humans, but what we humans can make out of them" (182). The durability of the theme, she maintains, is an indication that it is an adaptable expression of something deep in the Japanese psyche, provoking constant curiosity and efforts to understand what it could mean for contemporary culture.

*Japanese Demon Lore* is therefore a far-reaching and insightful review of this theme. For most generalists, however, it will remain a volume used for reference rather than one to be read and appreciated on its own. It demands a prior familiarity with Japanese history and culture in many places, and while the theoretical approach is well grounded in international scholarship, it could more frequently show how the material being studied relates to traditions found in other cultures. In this respect, Michael Dylan Foster's recent *Pandemonium and Parade* (2009) a more general discussion of the *yōkai* culture, is a more accessible work. It is regrettable that she does not deal more closely with the modern folklore inspired by the tradition, or ways in which contemporary folklore preserves similar models. Foster's more recent work on Japanese holiday customs (2011) shows that an *oni* figure who visits households during the New Year week to ensure that young children are obedient to their superiors remains vital in folk culture in many parts of the country. His observations show that the carnivalesque folk *oni* is still very much alive even in contemporary Japan.

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Carl Lindahl, ed. *American Folktales: From the Collections of the Library of Congress*. 2004. Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe. 729 pages, 2 vols. ISBN: 0765680629 (hardcover). Foreword by Peggy A. Bulger.

Carl Lindahl's two-volume anthology of American folktales from the collections of the Library of Congress makes a significant contribution to folklore studies and manages to be engaging and accessible for both general readers and academic ones. It is one of those classic works that all libraries (from public to high school to university) should have on their shelves, as should folklore and narrative scholars. Lindahl asserts that the "most important mission of the Library of Congress is to cultivate and sustain an American Memory" (xxiii), and these volumes are an important aid toward that end. Until their publication in *American Folktales*, the only way to encounter these stories was to trudge to the Library and listen to the narratives on tapes in the American Folklife Center's Reading Room. However, Lindahl has now done the trudging and, valiantly, the transcribing for us. In some cases, he listened to parts of the tapes over one hundred times in order to transcribe hard-to-decipher passages. Despite such difficulties of the tape-recorded interview, the stories themselves are vibrant, and their vitality is enhanced by the collection's organization around the tellers rather than the narratives and genres.

And what a collection of tellers it is: Aunt Molly Jackson, Son House, Woody Guthrie, Hector Lee, and Samuel Harmon, among many others. Whenever possible, Lindahl includes the tellers' own accounts of their experiences as narrators. Some sections also include the