



LEYENDAS MONSTRUOSAS

A collaboration between CSU Chico and CSU East Bay

B-50 Gallery, Ayres Hall, CSU Chico

March 2-6, 2020

A TERRIFYING COLLABORATION

ANNA ALEXANDER, CSU EAST BAY HISTORY
JOSH FUNK, CSU CHICO ART & ART HISTORY

We always have, and we always will live in a time of monsters. While monsters have taken different shapes and served different purposes depending on the time and culture, their existence helps us more clearly understand humanity. To be human is to fear. And the presence of monsters tells us about a society's greatest anxieties at any given time. Today, we may not fear sea monsters or trolls under bridges, but for many, our newsfeeds and nightmares are beginning to blend.

When, in the early stages of collaboration, we tried to find a topic that would resonate with our students—history majors at CSU East Bay and art majors at CSU Chico—monsters immediately came to mind. We had to find a topic that would be challenging to research but would pique the interests of students in different disciplines. What we did not realize was that for our CSU students, many of whom identify as Latinx, they grew up with the monsters in this exhibit haunting their dreams. These urban legends had been passed down from generation to generation. Our students told us stories of their parents warning them to go to bed or else El Cucuy (the Boogeyman) would eat them, or other accounts of being afraid to go near the water because La Llorona (the Weeping Woman) would drown them. Even though these monsters are imagined creations, they provoke real actions, in this case, going to bed on time or not swimming alone.

For the CSU East Bay history students, the process of intellectualizing fables helped them better understand the unique historical contexts in Latin America. These monsters were not created in vacuums. Instead, they reflected social dynamics and moral codes. The legend of El Sombrerón, for example, outlines expected gender roles and helps us better understand colonial Guatemala. But locating monsters in the archive is a difficult

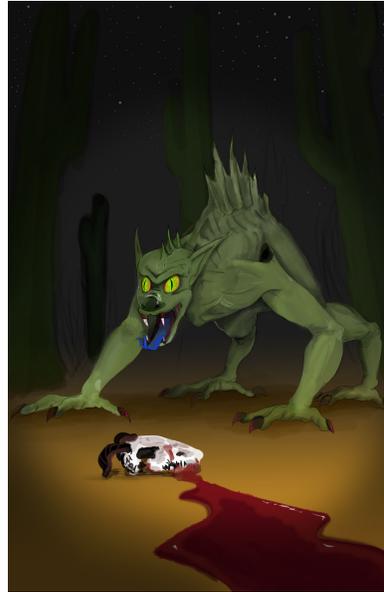
task. They come to life in folklore and oral traditions, rather than official documents preserved by librarians, thus presenting the history students with the added challenge of finding reliable sources. When the history students finished their research, they gave their essays to the CSU Chico art students to illustrate.

Editorial illustration, or the art that accompanies the written text found in magazines and newspapers, heightens the ideas in the text and entices viewers to learn more. Since the monsters in this exhibition have historically been described in multiple and sometimes contradictory ways, the artists had the difficult task of interpreting the text and creating a coherent image. Students in the digital illustration course first highlighted visually descriptive words from the text and then researched how their assigned monster had previously been depicted through illustration and media. For some monsters, such as El Chupacabra, the contradictory descriptions and adaptable appearance posed challenges. Students gave thoughtful consideration to the research and the geographic origins of the legends, and were tasked with finding the most compelling narrative and composition to entice viewers to read about these monsters.

Over all, this collaboration was eye-opening for everyone involved and helped us and the students understand and appreciate the other's craft on a deeper level. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the CSU Chico Department of Art & Art History, and the CSU East Bay Department of History for generously supporting this creative collaboration. A special thanks goes to David B. Hoppe, Professor Emeritus at CSU Chico, for conducting a mid-progress critique of the student artwork. We also want to thank CSU East Bay history major Karla Vega for translating the museum labels from English to Spanish.



OLIVIA YEE, *EL CHUPACABRA*, 2020.
CSU CHICO ART



AARON FISHER, *EL CHUPACABRA*, 2020.
CSU CHICO ART

EL CHUPACABRA

EMBODIMENT OF FEARS FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER

DAVE HARRIS AND JESSICA SPENCER
CSU EAST BAY HISTORY

In 1995, Madelyn Tolentino of Puerto Rico first reported to authorities a sighting of what she deemed to be El Chupacabra. It was not exactly a reliable account, as it seems her description matched exactly a creature from the movie *Species*, which she saw only weeks before. Most of the early reports of the Chupacabra come in the form of the discovery of dead farm animals whose bodies had allegedly been drained of blood. Although the tale of El Chupacabra is a relatively new one, its cryptid ancestry goes farther back in history. In the 1970s, there was a legend in the small town of Mocha, Puerto Rico, where a large number of sheep and goats had been killed and bled from a single puncture wound on the neck. The name given to the culprit was *El Vampiro de Mocha*. Another similar monster tale from South America describes the mosquito man who used his long nose to suck the blood of animals. Tolentino's alien-style Chupacabra remained popular until about 2001 when a Nicaraguan farmer found a hairless canine carcass and called it a Chupacabra. Since then, most sightings have included some quadrupedal dog-like qualities in the description.[1]

Scholarly accounts of El Chupacabra are challenging to find, and the lack of sources can easily lead researchers into the murky world of urban legends. For example, author Benjamin Radford is the leading cryptozoologist and pseudo-historian on the subject of Chupacabras. Cryptozoologists seek to prove the existence of monsters like Big Foot and Sasquatch. Radford has given life to the urban legend through his articles and books on the subject. Radford documents his five-year investigation in his book, *Tracking the Chupacabra: The Vampire Beast in Fact, Fiction and Folklore*. His reports of the creature are detailed and include everything from mutant, rabid, mangy dogs to bipedal gray-skinned aliens with large black or red eyes.[2]

While the description of the creature has evolved, the same way ghosts and other monsters have changed in popular movies and television, the Chupacabra seems to accommodate a transcultural meaning on both sides of the Mexican-U.S. border. In his research, historian Robert Jordan attributes El Chupacabra's Puerto Rican origins to the island's anxious ties to the United States, which translated well to other countries in Latin America. Puerto Rico

experiences a tenuous relationship with the United States federal government. In the 1990s, U.S. military bases and U.S.-based industries were both rapidly expanding, causing environmental concerns over their expansion into rural areas and their production of various pollutants.[3] The U.S. government was monopolizing the island's limited acreage, and in effect, the islanders had no political representation to stop it. In addition, the U.S. military was exploiting the island's resources to create industrial pollutants, like Agent Orange, bombs, and radiation. One resident reported that she was "nauseated by the odor," of the river behind her house because of industrial chemical dumping. [4] To some Puerto Ricans, the U.S. symbolized a creature that sucked resources and left the population in turmoil.

Important international economic agreements also coincided with surges in El Chupacabra activity. The first sightings happened less than a year after the signing of the North American Free-Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and about ten years later, sightings surged more broadly through Central America around the signing of the Central American Free-Trade Agreement (CAFTA). These treaties boosted trade among the countries that signed them, but it was the large, U.S.-based companies that gained the most at the expense of small farms and businesses in Spanish-speaking countries and Puerto Rico.[5] There was also some cultural predisposition causing such a creature to emerge. The U.S. military's plan in the 1960s, known as "Plan Dracula" has possibly contributed to the rise of El Chupacabra.[6] In this case, the U.S. inadvertently gave itself a vampiric image in the eyes of Puerto Ricans.[7] Plan Dracula, as it was called by Puerto Rican author, Evelyn Velez-Rodriguez, occurred during the Kennedy Administration. The plan authorized the military to take over a Puerto Rican island called Vieques by removing all of its inhabitants, not only living, but dead as well. Plan Dracula forced residents, and all of their cemeteries to leave the tiny island of Vieques to make way for military occupation, hence the macabre name. For some, the mythic Chupacabra may represent the United States and its overbearing U.S. dominance in the Americas.

Others want to reimagine the Chupacabra as a symbol of Chicano identity. Carlos G. Gómez, an artist of Brownsville, Texas, puts an alternative spin

on the Chupacabra's meaning. In his paintings, he inserts the Chupacabra into various aspects of Mexican daily life. In an interview for the *Brownsville Herald*, Gómez states that the Chupacabra represents Chicanos. Gómez depicts El Chupacabra in the vein of Rodin's *The Thinker* along with various other famous poses and styles. Gómez also uses the creature to represent Mexico by draping it in the colors of the Mexican flag: green, white and red. El Chupacabra is a lonely creature with human characteristics. Gómez explains, Mexican immigrants are also feared and misunderstood and it was his intention to familiarize Americans with Mexican culture through a mutually mysterious creature, El Chupacabra.[8]

Does the Chupacabra exist, or is it something that has culminated only from the unexplained killing of livestock? The Chupacabra does exist! It exists the same way that any other creature of folklore fills an explanatory void. Indeed, after Mrs. Tolentino's report in 1995, the Puerto Rican news media leapt to conclusions that drove further sightings of the creature, and perhaps this helps explain the rise in cryptozoological folklore. In reality, puncture wounds on the necks of livestock are most likely those from sick or weakened canines that cannot chase a rabbit or deer, or hunt in the open, and instead prey on more dormant animals. And, short of DNA evidence to prove the contrary, El Chupacabra will most likely go down in history as the first internet-age cryptid.[9]

NOTES

[1] Benjamin Radford, "Slaying the Vampire: Solving the Chupacabra Mystery," *Skeptical Inquirer* 35, no. 3 (May 2011): 45-6.

[2] Radford, "Slaying the Vampire," 46-7.

[3] Robert Jordan, "El Chupacabra: Icon of Resistance to U.S. Imperialism" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Dallas, 2008), 8-9, 20.

[4] Jordan, "El Chupacabra," 17-18, 22.

[5] Jordan, 19-20, 74.

[6] Jordan, 13-15.

[7] Deborah Berman Santana, "Resisting Toxic Militarism: Vieques Versus the U.S. Navy," *Social Justice* 29, no. 1 (Spring-Summer 2002): 37-47.

[8] Emma Perez-Trevino, "Local artist sees Chupacabra as a metaphor for Mexican-Americans," *Brownsville Herald*, February 19, 2006.

[9] Benjamin Radford, *Tracking the Chupacabra: The Vampire Beast in Fact, Fiction, and Folklore* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011).

LA SIGUANABA

THE RIVER TEMPTRESS, A MISUNDERSTOOD WOMAN

JEWEL CARISSA LOPEZ, JASMYN MURRELL, AND
PAMELA S. ROUSE, CSU EAST BAY HISTORY

La Siguanaba is a mythical Central American figure, derived from Mayan mythology,[1] who appears in Salvadorian, Guatemalan, Honduran, and Costa Rican folklore.[2] Prior to the Spanish conquest of Central America,[3] she was known as Sihuehet, which means beautiful woman in the Nahuatl language.[4] According to legend, Sihuehet was a peasant who used a witch's brew to captivate the Mayan Prince Yeisun, son of the supreme god Tlaloc, into marriage and thus became a queen.[5] While married, she had many affairs, one of which led her to conceive a son named Cipitio.[6] The legend says that Sihuehet was an inattentive mother because she was consumed with her lovers and her need for power. In order to claim the throne for herself, and possibly one of her lovers, she tried to poison her husband with a potion during a feast. Instead of dying, her husband was transformed into a monster that killed many people but was eventually killed by one of the guards. The god Tlaloc was furious and cursed Sihuehet for his son's death.[7] From then on, Sihuehet (most beautiful woman) became Siguana (a horrible woman).



MARITZA BARRAGAN, LA SIGUANABA, 2020.
CSU CHICO ART



ELIZABETH KIRBY, LA SIGUANABA, 2020.
CSU CHICO ART

Attractive at first glance, La Siguanaba transforms into a monster with the face of a horse or skull.[8] She is condemned to roam near rivers at night,[9] luring men in with her beauty and frightening them, causing some to go crazy and others to die.[10] Additionally, her son Cipitio was cursed because of his mother's affairs and betrayal. His curse is that he remains eternally a child, with

deformed features like backwards facing feet that he uses to commit harmless trickery and get travelers lost.[11] The myth of Siguana appears to have been used by Spanish colonists to control the local population by saying that she lures unfaithful men and steals their souls.[12] Throughout the Spanish colonization of the Americas, indigenous people were subjugated under European rule and the strict moralization of the Catholic Church, which pressured women to keep chaste.[13]

While La Siguanaba could be an ominous tale warning men and women to remain faithful and pure, for women, it created a narrative of a two-faced enchantress who teased men and then drove them to distraction or death. La Siguanaba's empowerment took a different form in the 1980s and 90s when Latinx feminists, critical of American interventionism in Central America, engaged in solidarity movements and found strength within their communities. According to Ana Patricia Rodríguez, "during those decades, the United States provided military and economic aid to Central American regimes, particularly in El Salvador,

Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, to fund wars of genocide and general destruction.[14] Throughout the war between the Salvadoran government and left-wing guerillas, the civilian communities were targeted and forced to flee for their lives. Women were essential to this trans-migratory period. Anthropologist Mirna Carillo talks about the binary of Salvadoran women, who live between two worlds and two cultures, not unlike La Siguanaba: "As an interstice, La Siguanaba's body contains and continually manifests and redefines the conflict

between indigeneity and colonialism.”[15] Carillo further explains that La Siguanaba is both frightening and powerful, and “she is an undeniably Salvadoran icon bound to live in between the worlds of the Pipiles and the colonizer.”[16] In their new worlds in the United States, Salvadoran women did not completely leave behind these political struggles. Multiple waves of Salvadoran migrants have settled in the U.S. over the years, influencing the West (and Southern California, in particular) creating concentrated regions of Salvadoran-specific vernacular and culture.[17]

La Siguanaba is terrifying and empowering.[18] For men and the unfaithful, La Siguanaba is used as a warning or message: keep thoughts clean and pure of infidelity and curiosities, or else you might fall victim to La Siguanaba’s curse. This concept of La Siguanaba is enacted culturally to keep men from having affairs or staying out late and getting into mischief.[19] Her folklore lives as a moral warning about how one should behave, and how one lives in society.

NOTES

[1] Sylvia Malán-González, “The Judge Torres Study Guide,” *Teatro Milagro National Touring Production*, Season 35 (2019),

2, https://milagro.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/S35_02_JudgeTorres_StudyGuide_ENG_FINAL.pdf

[2] Maria Herrera-Sobek, “La Siguanaba” in *Celebrating Latino Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Cultural Traditions* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2012), 669.

[3] Ana Patricia Rodriguez, “The Fiction of Solidarity: Transfronteriza Feminisms and Anti-Imperialist Struggle in Central American Transnational Narratives,” *Feminist Studies* 34, no. 1-2 (2008): 199-226.

[4] Mirna Carrillo, “La Siguanaba Haunts with Bravery and Doubts: Second-Generation Salvadoran Women” (MS thesis., UC San Diego, 2011), 2.

[5] Malán-González, “The Judge Torres,” 2.

[6] Malán-González, 2.

[7] Malán-González, 2.

[8] Mauricio Interiano, “Central Americano Legends and Folklore,” *Arthur Newspaper*, November 1, 2016, <http://www.trentarthur.ca/centro-americano-legends-and-folklore/>

[9] Carillo, “La Siguanaba Haunts with Bravery and Doubts,” 1.

[10] Carillo, 1.

[11] Interiano, “Central Americano Legends and Folklore.”

[12] Interiano.

[13] Herrera-Sobek, “La Siguanaba,” 670-71.

[14] Rodriguez, 199.

[15] Carillo, 2.

[16] Carrillo, 2.

[17] Carrillo, 40.

[18] Carrillo, 3.

[19] Interiano.

LA LLORONA

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LATIN AMERICAN FOLKLORE AND NINETEENTH CENTURY WATERBORNE ILLNESS

BODHI BAWER DEAN YOUNG AND
SRISHTI SUMBLI, CSU EAST BAY HISTORY

“Condemned to wander the earth in search of the children she sacrificed,”[1] La Llorona, or the Weeping Woman, is a traditional folktale told throughout Mexico and the Southern United States, with variations found throughout Latin America. Folkloric traditions describe the origin of La Llorona as starting with a young woman named María. After finding out her husband, the father of her children, had run off with another woman, she drowned her two children in a river as an act of grief stricken revenge. Immediately overcome with remorse and regret, she drowned herself as well. Instead of easily passing over into the afterlife, her eternal soul was punished. The only way for her spirit to rest in peace is for her to find the bodies of her children who had

been washed away by the river. Now, she resides at waterfronts, lakes, rivers, and streams, luring children into the water and drowning them in hopes that they might make a suitable replacement for her own lost progeny.[2]

The true origins of the weeping woman, La Llorona, are still unknown, but the first murmurings of her appeared in a sonnet from the late 1800s where she was described as a young woman who had been killed by her husband.[3] Through generations of oral tradition, this legend would eventually evolve into the contemporary ghost story told to scare children into good behavior and impart caution while playing near waterfronts. This Latin American folktale developed during a time of great fear, when the waterborne disease cholera was ravaging communities in Mexico and the United States.

Medical historian, Charles Rosenberg, explains, “there is no human crisis more compelling than an epidemic of plague, yellow fever, or cholera. These phenomenon are, indeed, so dramatic and so terrifying that most physicians and historians have tended to view them as something alien, something outside society and contending with it.”[4] According to the Center for Disease Control, *Vibrio Cholerae* Infection, more commonly known simply as Cholera, is “found and spread in places with inadequate water treatment, poor sanitation, and inadequate hygiene,”[5] and if left untreated, can cause death mere hours after the disease’s incubation period. Cholera killed hundreds of thousands of people in Mexico, and children were the most vulnerable to the pathogen.[6] Cholera epidemics coincided with the housing and city development boom of the mid-to-late 1800s, and the infection ravaged cities like New York City and Los Angeles. The first cholera epidemic of Mexico would soon follow the arrival of the disease in the port city of Veracruz.[7] The city was susceptible to the disease due to its immediate proximity to water and because of the city’s poor water treatment and lack of understanding of germ theory. Shortly after its arrival in Veracruz, cholera would contribute to, “six deaths a day,” but this figure soon jumped, “to three hundred a day” and “eighteen hundred people out of an estimated population of six thousand had died.”[8] These types of citywide epidemics would hit almost every major city in Mexico and the southern United States that had direct proximity to a water source.

After the Mexican cholera epidemics of 1833 and 1850, the population was forced to cope with the loss of so many lives. Forefront in their mind was figuring out a way to reduce the number of lives lost in future epidemics. This normalization and fear of death can be seen across cultures and epochs, and serves to push society past such tragedies. The cholera outbreak in Mexico and the surrounding region would lead to the advancements of water filtration, management, and cleaning as well as creating a new cultural significance to water and the effect it had on the most vulnerable members of society. Despite the advancements made to combat infections and deaths from cholera, the fear of the loss of children still permeated in households throughout Mexico and the southern United States. This led parents to restrict children’s interaction with those water sources, which could possibly contain deadly pathogens.

The consumption of infected water was easily controlled within the home but, the consumption of water outside of the home was nearly impossible to control due to the lack of understanding of germ theory and how the pathogen spread. To protect children from interacting with potentially infected water, something had to be developed to caution children away from rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and other sources of external water. Parents would caution children that played too close to water with the threat of drowning in those same rivers, lakes, and other bodies of water. The fear and normalization of death that came with the cholera epidemics of the mid-1800s coincided with the transformation of the La Llorona legend to include infanticide.

The idea of death by dehydration and the loss of fluids caused by severe diarrhea may not have resonated with children during the nineteenth century, but the story of La Llorona’s affinity for drowning children and her proximity to water may have had an effect. Mortality rates in children



JACKSON KEEN, *LA LLORONA*, 2020.
CSU CHICO ART



ALEX CRAGO, *LA LLORONA*, 2020.
CSU CHICO ART

drastically decreased after the epidemic with individual cases only popping up sporadically and in isolation.[9] Though this connection is tenuous, it may shed some light on the origins of this mysterious monster of Mexican folklore. The evolution and development in the mid-to-late nineteenth century of the mythical La Llorona may have protected children from the real-life horrors of cholera.

NOTES

[1] Domino Renee Perez, *There Was a Woman: La Llorona from Folklore to Popular Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), x.

[2] Ryan Bergara and Shane Madej, "The Hunt for La Llorona - The Weeping Woman," YouTube video, 23:47, "Buzzfeed Unsolved Network," April 4, 2019, 2:23.

[3] Michael S. Werner, *Encyclopedia of Mexico: History, Society & Culture - Vol. 1* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1997).

[4] Charles E. Rosenberg, *Explaining Epidemics: And Other Studies in the History of Medicine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 110.

[5] "General Information: Cholera: vibrio cholerae infection," Center for Disease Control, last reviewed: May 11, 2018.

[6] "General Information: Cholera: vibrio cholerae infection," Center for Disease Control.

[7] C.A. Hutchinson, "The Asiatic Cholera Epidemic of 1833 in Mexico." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 32, no. 1 (1958): 23.

[8] Hutchinson, "The Asiatic Cholera Epidemic," 23.

[9] Hutchinson, 23.

LOOGAROO

THE WOMAN IN CAHOOTS WITH THE DEVIL

PEDRO GUZMAN AND ASHLEY SAYAT
CSU EAST BAY HISTORY

In the Dominican Republic and Haiti, the word "Loogaroo" has two meanings. On the one hand, it describes a demonic vampire witch who made a pact with the Devil and sucks people's blood to remain powerful. On the other, the term "loogaroo" is a derogatory term used to describe women, especially powerful women. According to oral tradition, Loogaroo first got her power by making a pact with a Devil. In return, she was obligated to suck the blood of people every night before sunrise and give it to the Devil as an offering. The urban legend of the ghastly vampire Loogaroo is intended to keep women bound to male expectations of the status quo. By labeling powerful, wealthy, and successful women monsters who feed off of innocent victims, this limits women's abilities to rise in Caribbean society.



SADIQ DESAI, LOOGAROO, 2020.
CSU CHICO ART



ERICKA BERRY, LOOGAROO, 2020.
CSU CHICO ART

The story of the Loogaroo, also known as Soucouyant, varies throughout the Caribbean. The most common description of the Loogaroo tells of a woman by day, who at night, transforms into a demonic, blue fiery vampire. At night, the Loogaroo sheds her skin and hides it underneath a tree, so that no one can find it. Much like a vampire, she flies off into the night sky searching for victims and feasting on their blood. Despite some inconsistent details from story to story, a couple factors always remain the same: Loogaroo is a woman, and she selfishly kills people and drinks their blood to maintain her power. In Jeffrey Cohen's book *Monster Theory*, he explains that society's create monsters to help explain what is out of the ordinary in society, and that they are an "embodiment of difference." [1] For Loogaroo, both the monster and the successful Caribbean woman, her power is seen an unnatural thing made only possible with the help of evil forces.

In an article written by Anita Baksh, she describes that maintaining the status quo is part of male society in the Caribbean. She explains that with colonization and the mixing of African, European, and native cultures, masculinity changed and "creolization offered access to certain signifiers of masculine power such as status and privilege but threatened to disrupt their relations with women and other men, specifically their ability to establish Indian domestic patriarchal power." [2] In a study about masculinity and femininity in the Caribbean, gender expert Rhoda Reddeck explains how men perform masculinity, and that this "includes the everyday-as in hegemony over their women as well as in the publicly accepted values of success, e.g. wealth, politics, sport, and sexual performance (not necessarily in that order)." [3] Some may argue that in order for men to maintain dominant roles in society, they must discredit women's accomplishments and call them names such as loogaroo.

In the story, in order for Loogaroo to go out into the night and eat her prey, she must shed her skin so she is free to do her evil deeds. This could be a metaphor or symbol for a few different things when we take into consideration the history of colonialism and

slavery that occurred in Haiti and the Dominican Republic that spurred a complex relationship with race and identity in the region. One way she can be defeated is through the destruction of her skin by applying salt or lemon on it, thus preventing her from putting it back on. This is very similar to when Haiti was still under French colonial rule and during slavery, the Black Codes (Code Noir) stated that after whipping an enslaved person, salt, pepper, and lemon were to be added to the wounds. [4] Another historical connection to Loogaroo's myth comes from the Haitian Revolution from 1791-1804, which today remains the only successful uprising of enslaved people in world history. In the Haitian Revolution, the enslaved populations rose up against the white plantation owners, giving whiteness a negative connotation. Furthermore, in Haitian Vodou beliefs, "to be without skin is to be white and to be white is to be a devil." [5]

Loogaroo is a term associated with women who have obtained roles in society that defy the status quo, and puts down women who have achieved and surpassed the limits placed on them by cultural standards.

NOTES

[1] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Preface: In a Time of Monsters," in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), x.

[2] Anita Baksh, "Indo-Caribbean Working-Class Masculinities at Home and Abroad: David Chariandy's *Soucouyant* and Ian Harnarine's *Doubles with Slight Pepper*," *Journal of West Indian Literature* 25, no. 1 (2017): 94-111, 125.

[3] Rhoda Reddock, "Indo-Caribbean Masculinities and Indo-Caribbean Feminisms: Where are We Now?" in *Indo-Caribbean Feminist Thought: Genealogies, Theories, Enactments*, ed. Gabrielle Hosein and Lisa Outar (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 272.

[4] Joan Dayan, *Haiti: History, and the Gods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 265.

[5] Dayan, *Haiti: History, and the Gods*, 266; Bertin M. Louis Jr., "Haiti's Pact with the Devil?: Bwa Kayiman, Haitian Protestant Views of Vodou, and the Future of Haiti," *Religions* 10, no. 464 (2019): 1-15.

PISHTACO

PERU'S AGELESS KILLER

BRANDON GUTIERREZ, HIROTAKA TAMAE AND TRAVIS VAN OOSBREE
CSU EAST BAY HISTORY

In the highlands of the Andes Mountains, a sinister predator haunts the night. He is Pishtaco and his quarry are the indigenous inhabitants of rural Peru. This pale-skinned hunter can be seen prowling the outskirts of small villages dressed in a leather coat, tall boots, and a wide-brimmed hat. He seeks out natives who have strayed too far from the central village, lost travellers, drunkards or those who are otherwise distracted. Brandishing a long knife, he dismembers his victims, butchers them and harvests their body fat (or unto in the native tongue.)^[1] He sells this ill-gotten unto to foreign industry as material components for their factories and machines. For centuries Pishtaco has terrorized the native Peruvians, all the while adapting his means and motives to keep up with the changing world in which he lives. Pishtaco has evolved as his legend has grown. As his earliest iterations, in the times of the Spanish conquest, used the stolen fat for the mysterious process of metallurgy and the production of church bells, so too did his successors utilize their harvest as lubrication for the machines of the industrial revolution, until today, when his bounty is sold for cosmetics and pharmaceuticals.^[2] The legend of Pishtaco has long served as a warning against outsiders and foreigners in rural Peruvian life. As Peru continues to modernize, and contact with the developed world increases, the indigenous communities of Peru show no signs of embracing their light-skinned neighbors, as tales of Pishtaco live on to this day.

The word Pishtaco is derived from the Quechua word “pishtac,” which means “to behead”. The tradition of the Pishtaco coincided with the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.^[1] Body fats from Indians were used for the treatment of wounds and diseases among Spanish soldiers.^[2] Moreover, Catholic missionaries sought out indigenous body fat to improve the sound of their church bells. Even after these practices vanished, the strong impression left by Spanish culture has never been forgotten by the native people of the Andes. During the nineteenth century, Pishtaco was described as a merchant who seeks indigenous body fats to make soups, medicines, and supplies for factories.^[3] By that point in time, Pishtaco had become not only a horrific murderer, but also came to typify the members of the political and economic elite. The Pishtaco legend is also representative of the stark differences between social and racial classes. Pishtaco is always described as a white or mestizo male. When considered from the darker skinned Indians’



MIA MORSE, PISHTACO, 2020.
CSU CHICO ART



LINNEA CARR, PISHTACO, 2020.
CSU CHICO ART

perspective, whites and mestizos are believed to have become rich because they have exploited the lowest class of the society, the Indians.[4]

As time went on, Latin American culture began to evolve and grow with the modernization of the industrialized world; Pishtaco evolved alongside it. The shadowy figure began to take a new shape as multinational corporations turned their sights to Latin America, a land rich in profitable resources. Just as big business extracted value from the land, tales of Pishtaco extracting fats from vulnerable communities endured. The parallels between corporate greed and Pishtaco's violence are highlighted by the native tribes' inability to resist an invading force and feelings of helplessness that had permeated indigenous culture since the Spanish conquest.

The legend has again gained new life in a string of crimes committed by Latin American gangs. According to CNN, gang members were arrested having been found harvesting human fat with the intention to sell it illicitly to cosmetic and pharmaceutical companies on the black market.[1] While those responsible for the crimes were connected to gangs and not Pishtaco directly, the similarities are abundant. The publicity of this crime wave gave rise to a new round of Pishtaco narratives. In them, Pishtaco received a transportation upgrade in the form of a car instead of a horse. The mirrored evolution of Pishtaco and industry is critical to his long-lasting relevance. As technology becomes rapidly more pervasive, the future of Pishtaco is unclear.

For centuries the legend of Pishtaco has served as a warning amongst the aboriginal communities of Peru against the invading influence of European culture. With Pishtaco's long history of adapting and evolving to continuously represent the current industry in which foreign powers operate, the Pishtaco of the twenty-first century may take on an entirely new modus operandi. A digital Pishtaco may not be too far away. Instead of preying on drunkards or lost travelers, perhaps he will find his victims in those who are too deeply distracted by their smartphones and tablets. The instantaneous exchange of ideas provided by the internet has created an age in which cultural barriers have

become more porous. Peruvians have seen their traditional ways of life disintegrating ever since the introduction of white men to the Americas and the constant fear of Pishtaco has served to distance native Peruvians from the erosive nature of their corrupting force. But with more of the outside world reaching the heart of indigenous Peruvian daily life, one is left wondering what new forms Pishtaco will take, who will be his desired target, and where will he strike next?

NOTES

[1] Anthony Oliver-Smith, "The Pishtaco: Institutionalized Fear in Highland Peru," *American Folklore Society*, (1969): 363.

[2] Andrew Canessa, "Fear and loathing on the kharisiri trail: Alterity and identity in the Andes," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 6 (2000): 706.

[3] Ernesto Vasquez del Aguila, "Pishtacos: Human Fat Murderers, Structural Inequalities, and Resistances in Peru," *América Crítica*, 2, no. 2 (December 2018) 143.

[4] Oliver-Smith, "The Pishtaco: Institutionalized Fear in Highland Peru," 363-364.

[5] Vasquez del Aguila, "Pishtacos," 144.

[6] Vasquez del Aguila, 144.

[7] Arthur Brice, "Arrests Made in Ring That Sold Human Fat, Peru Says," *CNN* (Cable News Network, November 21, 2009), <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/americas/11/20/fat.dea.d.humans.peru/index.html>



ANTONIO CHASE ROSARIO, *EL SOMBRERÓN*, 2020.
CSU CHICO ART



GABRIELLE PATE, *EL SOMBRERÓN*, 2020.
CSU CHICO ART

EL SOMBRERÓN

STOLEN INNOCENCE WOVEN IN BRAIDS

SHIRLEY DAVIS AND KARLA VEGA
CSU EAST BAY HISTORY

A figure wanders the streets at night, ambling past the houses that are found in the village he has chosen to explore. In those houses, are young women whom he is hoping to seduce and impregnate.[1] This figure, when presenting itself in human form, looks like a short indigenous man who dons a large hat made of *petate* (material made of dried palm leaves), and sometimes has backwards facing feet.[2] When not presenting himself as a human, El Sombreroón is seen as a ball made of *hule* (rubber), that bounces of its own accord.[3] Carrying around a guitar when in human form, El Sombreroón seduces women who have long hair and large brown eyes.[4] He sings to them by their window, and when they fall under his spell of seduction, he enters their home and impregnates them, whether they realize that he has done so or not.[5] Once he has done what he wants with them, he leaves their hair braided or entangled. These women can only be saved before they have been impregnated by El Sombreroón if their fathers cut their hair and take them to the church to be blessed.[6]

The exact origins of the legend of El Sombreroón are unclear. Some sources claim that the story was inspired by a Mayaquiché legend.[7] The legend tells of a Mayan woman who is seduced by the grandson of the god of fertility, who is represented by El Sombreroón.[8] Another source places one of the tales in the church La Recolección, which was finished in the eighteenth century. In a novel by author Miguel Ángel Asturias, he describes the origin of El Sombreroón as happening just outside a church, which would have been built after the Spanish arrived in Latin America.[9] Regardless of the differing origin stories, it is clear that this legend is a cautionary tale for indigenous women. They are the victims in the stories of El Sombreroón, and they have no choice in the matter. These women lack agency in these tales, and are only portrayed as weak individuals who succumb to seduction by a demonic and dangerous man. The women are also powerless to save themselves and must wait for the men in their lives to rescue them from the clutches of El Sombreroón.[10] The moral seems to be that women should not trust any men, except those in their family. El Sombreroón could be a representation of men who want to take the virginity of a

young women. Strange and intricate braids in a woman's hair after a visit from El Sombrerón, also represent how he has toyed with the women in a perverse way, as hair often represents sexuality in women.[11]

Aside from the overtly gendered lessons from the encounters with El Sombrerón, his presence in oral histories and folklore reveal traces of the Spanish overlords and their relations to the native Guatemalans. It comes into focus how the legends continuously single out El Sombrerón's indigenous description and preference for indigenous women. The women he kidnaps are described as the embodiments of a native woman, who were known to wear "abbreviated skirts"[12] with their uncut long hair; which is sometimes worn in braids.[13] Why would the legend specify one descriptive group of people? Why not the "restrained, pious, and chaste" Spanish colonial women?[14] Why is El Sombrerón depicted as a mestizo, a "person of mixed Indian and Spanish descent," instead of a creole, or an Español?[15]

According to Richard Nyrop, the indigenous in Guatemala "adhere to a syncretic set of beliefs that combines elements of Mayan and Roman Catholic ritual and mixes the aboriginal pantheon with Catholic saints." [16] If El Sombrerón is dated back to the Mayaquiché legend, but the modern tale speaks of an indigenous spirit preying on indigenous women who are only saved by the will of a priest and his power of God through him, then the legend's intended audience becomes clear: El Sombrerón is almost exclusively a warning to native women. If she continues to participate in her "pagan" beliefs and strays from the decorum of civilized society, she would be exposed to his desires and evil.[17] A woman would be safe if she listened to the words of her father and of God, and live a pious life like that of a proper European lady.

Why would the Spanish bother in appropriating an ancient Mayan legend? Perhaps, since native peoples continuously refused to abandon their pre-Christian beliefs and practices, the Spanish conquerors used the natives' own legend to help further assimilate them.[18] The legend could incite fear in young native women and persuade them to

cut their long braids or wear longer European skirts when alone, or perhaps all together. El Sombrerón vanished if their wild hair was cut and blessed in the name of God. Indigenous deities held no power over El Sombrerón and only the Spanish had the means to protect the women.

In the end, the legend of El Sombrerón speaks of the gendered standards women were and still are held to today. However, it also tells of Guatemala's history and the ways in which its native people were forced to change to the standards that their European rulers saw fit.

NOTES

[1] Beatriz Mariscal Hay, "La Máscara Culta de Folclor," *Anales de Literatura Hispanoamericana* 42 (January 2013): 166.

[2] Hay, "La Máscara," 166.

[3] Hay, 166.

[4] Hay, 166.

[5] Hay, 167.

[6] Hay, 167.

[7] The Mayaquiché are Mayan people who reside in Guatemala, see Edward John Mullen Jr, "A Study Of 'Contemporaneos: Revista Mexicana De Cultura' (1928-1931)" (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1968), 154.

[8] Mullen Jr., "A Study Of 'Contemporaneos'", 155.

[9] Miguel Angel Asturias, *Leyendas de Guatemala* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1957), 47-51.

[10] Hay, 167.

[11] Hay, 167.

[12] John Lloyd, *Guatemala: Land of the Mayas* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1963), 31.

[13] Lloyd, *Guatemala: Land of the Maya*, 81.

[14] Barbara L. Voss, "Gender, Race, and Labor in the Archaeology of the Spanish Colonial Americas," *Current Anthropology* 49, no. 5 (October 2008): 868.

[15] Amos Megged, "The Rise of Creole Identity in Early Colonial Guatemala: Differential Patterns in Town and Countryside," *Social History* 17, no. 3 (October 1992): 421-422.

[16] Richard F. Nyrop, *Guatemala: A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1983), 68.

[17] Nyrop, *Guatemala: A Country Study*, 68.

[18] W. George Lovell, *Conquest and Survival in Colonial Guatemala: A Historical Geography of the Cuchumatán Highlands, 1500-1821* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985), 87.

EL CUCUY

THE BOOGEYMAN'S BOOGEYMAN

BRIANNA DEVLIN AND JIA YU WANG
CSU EAST BAY HISTORY



ISABELLA McMURRY, EL CUCUY, 2020.
CSU CHICO ART



NARDEEN MATIAS, EL CUCUY, 2020.
CSU CHICO ART

Most countries in Latin America have their own version of El Cucuy, but his myth varies depending on the region. El Cucuy has become an all-encompassing umbrella term for many of the behavior correcting legends that have been retold in Latin American communities, including the supernatural monsters of La Llorona, El Chupacabra, and even the Devil.[1] El Cucuy is a monster created to correct misbehavior, as his tale warns children to listen to their parents lest they are ready to face his wrath. El Cucuy has become a summation of universal mistakes and lessons that children face as they grow in life.

Originating in Spain and Portugal, it is believed that the legend of El Cucuy is derived from other Christian legends, including that of La Vibria, a female dragon in the fourteenth century who symbolized the essence of evil and temptation.[2] The name El Cucuy derives from La Cuca Fera, which was a diverse representation of dragons, extending from Tortosa to Valencia on the Mediterranean Coast.[3] The legend of El Cucuy made its way from the Iberian Peninsula to the New World during the early colonization of Latin America. During the colonization, the indigenous folklore and myths were intertwined with those from Europe and Africa.[4]

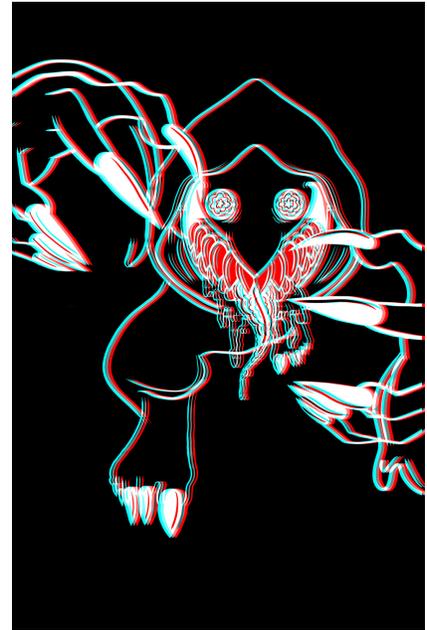
An older illustration of El Cucuy, drawn by Francisco de Goya, advocates the correction of moral education in order to break a child's cycle of ignorance and false beliefs through usage of superstitions.[5] El Cucuy is a monster that is adaptable to fit a parent's needs, and his tale can be used to enforce whatever lesson they see fit. Throughout time, El Cucuy's lore has changed drastically from one person to the next, as he is at his most feared when he is reimagined by an individual's fear and circumstance. The legend of El Cucuy has transformed throughout the centuries with many different cultural influences, but it still serves as a warning against disobedience, misbehavior, and giving into the temptations of evil.

The following short story is a retelling of Sarah Melissa's version of El Cucuy. She states that El Cucuy is well-known among Mexican-American communities, with parents telling their children a fragmented story, leaving their children to fill in the rest of the tale with their own fears.

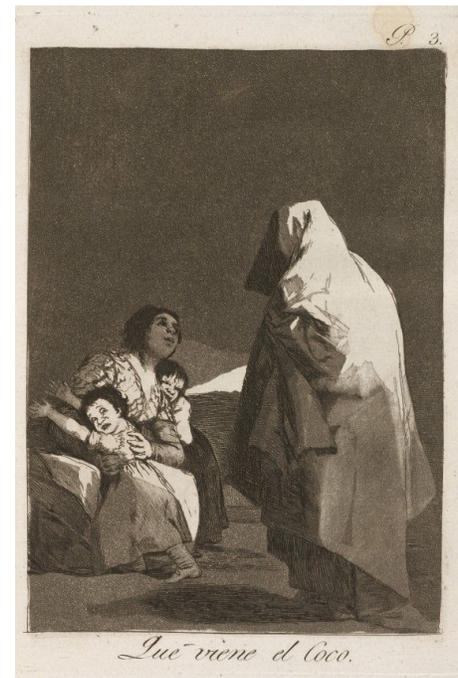
One evening, Juan and Rosie were walking back home from school and decided to take a shortcut through the town's cemetery. As the night sky grew pitch black, Rosie and Juan began to sing and dance among the dried flowers and dusty tombs in an effort to scare away the shadowy darkness.[6] While they sang, they saw a faceless figure, cloaked in several sheets walking towards them.[7] As the disturbing figure came closer, the cloaks covering him fell away and revealed a monster with a hummingbird like tongue and two rows of reddish teeth. The monster slowly and deliberately stalked around the couple, knowing that he was instilling fear in them. Juan gulped and asked the creature who he was, trying to keep his voice steady as he did so. The haunting creature made itself known as El Cucuy, and began to make its way towards Rosie. Juan jumped to her defense, and Rosie was able to escape. Unable to escape from El Cucuy himself, Juan was taken to the creature's lair. El Cucuy began carving into Juan, and his blood began to seep from the cuts. The scent of dairy in Juan's blood reached El Cucuy and he recoiled from the smell. While El Cucuy was distracted by his own disgust, Juan was able to escape the monster's lair. Juan had never been more thankful that he listened to his mother and drank his milk. When retelling their horrid experience to other children, they would always remind them to listen to their parents, as listening to his mother was the only reason Juan survived to tell the tale.[8]

NOTES

- [1] Redfern Garza, *Creepy Creatures and Other Cucuys* (Texas: Arte Publico Press, 2004), 1.
 [2] Jo Farb Hernandez, *Forms of Tradition in Contemporary Spain* (Oxford, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2005), 94.
 [3] Farb Hernandez, *Forms of Tradition in Contemporary Spain*, 95.
 [4] Amelia Meyer, "Brazil - Mythology And Folklore," last modified 2010, <https://www.brazil.org.za/mythology-and-folklore.html>
 [5] Jennifer Anne Steward, "Stoicism and Goya's Los Caprichos." (BA diss., University of Louisville, 2007), 57-58.
 [6] Tey Diano Rebolledo and Eliana S. Rivero, *Infinite Divisions: An Anthology of Chicana Literature* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993), 314.
 [7] Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, "Que viene el Coco," Metropolitan Museum of Art collection, accessed January 26, 2020, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/90028505>
 [8] Sarah M. Murray, "Please Obey All Traffic Laws: Stories" (MA diss., University of California, Davis, 2016), 42-49.



MADelyn ROBERTS, EL CUCUY, 2020.
 CSU CHICO ART



FRANCISCO DE GOYA Y LUCIENTES,
 "QUE VIENE EL COCO," 1799.
 METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART COLLECTION

LA PISADEIRA

BEWARE OF FULL BELLIES

KARISSA CHERRY AND ALEXIS KARST
CSU EAST BAY HISTORY

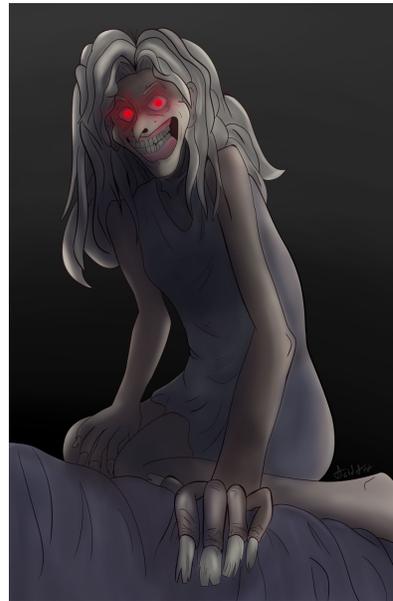
Imagine a night of overindulgence with your favorite meal. The type of meal that is so good you cannot stop eating and you leave feeling stuffed to the point of discomfort. You are so full that as you lie in bed you could not possibly sleep on your stomach, so you turn over to sleep on your back. You drift away. In the middle of the night you awake, but you are unable to move. You open your eyes to see a pair of glowing red eyes glaring down at you and an old woman with long yellow fingernails and a red cap is sitting on your chest. You want to scream for help, or runaway, but you are stuck, staring at La Pisadeira! At least that is what they call the sleep paralysis monster in Brazil. Different countries and cultures around the world have their own versions of sleep paralysis monsters or the hallucinations that appear when you awake from sleep unable to move. Although physically harmless, sleep paralysis is still a frightful experience and can leave people feeling uneasy about going back to sleep. Before medical professionals discovered the scientific reasons for these symptoms, different cultures throughout the centuries wholeheartedly believed that these terrifying events were an entirely supernatural occurrence. This gave birth to folklore about the “old hag,” demons, and La Pisadeira.

When the Portuguese arrived in Brazil, they brought with them myths from their home. In the sixteenth century they had “Fradinho da Mão Furada,” which translates to “Little Hand-Hole Friar.” The Friar would lay his heavy hand on someone’s chest

while they slept leaving them immobilized. Over time, the people of Brazil developed their own mythical explanation with La Pisadeira. In Brazilian folklore, she is often described as an old woman with glowing red eyes and long yellow fingernails. Her stature is tall and thin and occasionally depicted as wearing a red cap. She operates in the middle of the night, most commonly lurking on people’s roofs, but has also been known to watch people from outside their homes. She sneaks into homes and sit on the chests of people with full stomachs who are sleeping on their backs. Her weight makes it difficult to breathe and leaves them unable to move. However, some say that if you overcome the paralysis and are able to steal her cap, she is required to grant you a wish in order to get it back.



NATASHA MARTIN, *LA PISADEIRA*, 2020.
CSU CHICO ART



DONNELL HORTON, *LA PISADEIRA*, 2020.
CSU CHICO ART

There are few recorded sightings of La Pisadeira because the stories are passed down orally from family members in rural Brazil.[1] One of the few written records is from Cora Coralina, a popular Brazilian poet, who wrote about her own experience with La Pisadeira in her first book, *Poemas Dos Becos De Goiás e Estórias Mais*. In a translated version of her poem, from her

native language of Portuguese, Coralina recalls being told to sleep on her side because when, “you fill up your breadbasket, the Pisadeira comes, won’t let you sleep, and in the morning you’re broken like hell.”[2] La Pisadeira is clinically explained as a hallucination attributed to the symptoms of sleep paralysis, but for many people, especially those before modern scientific revelations, the creation of the monster was a justification for the strange experience and served as a coping mechanism for the incomprehensible phenomenon.

The experience of sleep paralysis is not unique to Brazil; it is a human experience. People all around the world, throughout all of history, have experienced sleep paralysis. It is still unclear exactly how many people suffer from sleep paralysis, but it is estimated that 7.6% of the general population will experience it at least once in their life, with the likelihood increasing when under extreme stress. [3] Over the course of history, several cultures have attributed the cause of sleep paralysis to demons or other monsters. In 1781, Henry Fuseli painted *The Nightmare*, which shows a figure sitting on the chest of a woman while she slept. [4] In northern Canada, the Inuit people believe shamans are responsible for the experience, while in Japan they believe it is the act of a summoned spirit. [5] Ghosts and spirits of various names are a popular rationale for the experience from China to Egypt. [6] In Nigerian culture there is a female demon named Ogun Oru that causes sleep paralysis, and in Newfoundland there have been accounts of an old witch that sits on the sleeper's chests. Cross-culturally the experiences are quite similar, each describing what is now classified as sleep paralysis. [7]

Visions of La Pisadeira are almost certainly hallucinations, but that does not discredit the very real fear the victims experience. It is easy to see how these episodes were mistaken as supernatural. Being stricken with sleep paralysis is a terrible ordeal and people around the world have developed

rationalizations for the hallucinations they see while affected. Prior to the current scientific understanding of sleep paralysis, it is understandable that people likened the affliction to terrifying monsters. It is interesting to note that no matter where you are on the globe, whether it be the icy tundra of Canada, the savannas of Nigeria, or the rainforests of South America, the folklore associated with incidents of sleep paralysis tend to pertain mainly to a witch or an old woman. What science has not yet been able to explain, is how people from distant times and disparate regions have experienced such similar apparitions without intercultural contact to spread such stories. It just might be La Pisadeira. So the next time you go to bed with a full belly, be careful.

NOTES

[1] José F.R. de Sá and Sérgio A. Mota-Romlin, "Sleep Paralysis in Brazilian Folklore and Other Cultures: A Brief Review," *Frontiers in Psychology* 7 (September 2016): 1-6.

[2] Cora Coralina, *Poemas Dos Becos De Goiás e Estórias Mais* (São Paulo: Global, 2014), 52.

[3] De Sá and Mota-Romlin, "Sleep Paralysis in Brazilian Folklore," 4.

[4] De Sá and Mota-Romlin, 4.

[5] De Sá and Mota-Romlin, 5

[6] De Sá and Mota-Romlin, 5.

[7] De Sá and Mota-Romlin, 5.

CONTACT:

If you'd like more information about the *Leyendas Monstruosas* collaboration, please contact:

Josh Funk- jfunk1@csuchico.edu

Anna Alexander- anna.alexander@csueastbay.edu

[HTTPS://WWW.CSUCHICO.EDU/ART/](https://www.csuchico.edu/art/)
[HTTPS://WWW.CSUEASTBAY.EDU/HISTORY/](https://www.csueastbay.edu/history/)