

UBIQUITOUS IN TIME:  
TOWARDS A DESCRIPTION OF THE SUPERNATURAL FOLKLORE OF TIME TRAVEL

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The proliferation of mass-media representations of time travel has, since the late 1800s, created a metatraditional perception that all such variants originated from that selfsame sphere of influence. This has manifested most strongly in the view that prior to H. G. Wells' 1895 novel *The Time Machine*, notions of time travel and time travelers were not extant. Seeking to prove this belief incorrect, the following thesis charts out an evolutionary pathway for time travel which demonstrates not only strong historical roots within folk traditions of the past, but a very much vibrant and active practice today. The contemporary manifestations analyzed within this work include the time slip phenomenon as reported by first-hand experiencers, ostensive practices inspired by *supernatural time travel* lore, and a look at the uncanny figure of the time traveler who often sits at its core.



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TOWARDS A DESCRIPTION OF THE SUPERNATURAL FOLKLORE OF TIME TRAVEL

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*For Shabat—a friend in time.*

*To the beguiling past, the elusive future, and the transitory present which yearns for them both.*

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## INTRODUCTION

**“‘Upon that machine,’ said the Time Traveller, holding the lamp aloft, ‘I intend to explore time.’”**

H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine*<sup>1</sup>

On June 16, 2012, having arrived at the Paramount Theater for a scheduled appearance at the Seattle Science Festival, theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking participated in a brief Q&A session with the press. It undoubtedly came as no surprise to Hawking that one of the first questions asked, submitted by Arik Korman of 95.7 KJR, and read by Michael Venables, regarded the possibility and implications of time travel. Hawking’s answer to this question, pretty much well-rehearsed by that time, however, contained a relatively new facet:

We are all travelling forward in time anyway. We can fast forward by going off in a rocket at high speed and return to find everyone on Earth much older or dead. Einstein’s general theory of relativity seems to offer the possibility that we can warp space-time so much that we could travel back in time ... I have experimental evidence that time travel is not possible. I gave a party for time-travelers, but I didn’t send out the invitations until after the party. I sat there a long time, but no one came. (Hawking, “Stephen Hawking on Time Travel”)

Hawking’s party—or as it was originally termed: a reception for time travellers<sup>2</sup>—is ultimately indicative of a lot more than the scant few lines he throws out during his response to the feasibility of time travel. For immediate purposes, this is mostly because it calls into question

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<sup>1</sup> Wells, H. G. *The Time Machine*. Bantam Classics, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> NOTE: The paper will contain a mix of the US-based spelling of “traveler” and the UK-spelling of “traveller.” While “traveler” will be used as the spelling of preference in general, “traveller” will also be observed and used when appropriate.

just who were Hawking's intended guests. After all, time travel is most strongly associated with the realm of science fiction and popular culture today, and *time traveler* is conceived of as a title with no more real-world implications than that of *Jedi*, right? So, was Hawking trying to tempt Arnold Schwarzenegger's T-800 or Michael Biehn's Kyle Reese from James Cameron's *Terminator* franchise into an appearance? Or, perhaps less hazardously, was he hoping that Michael J. Fox's Marty McFly and Christopher Lloyd's Dr. Emmett Brown, from *Back to the Future*, would stop by? The answer to these questions, and similar ones associated with the potentially thousands of other time travelers suffusing the realm of pop culture, is: no. The truth is, by throwing his reception, Hawking had constructed and undertaken an ostensive ritual to commune with the time travelers that exist in contemporary supernatural folklore. for as he once acknowledged: "some people would claim that we have already been visited from the future" (Hawking, *Brief Answers* 137). It is this belief—that anomalous travel from one temporality, be it past, present, or future, to another may be possible—that forms the core of a wide complex of legends and traditions extant in the world today.

The above being the case, it is ultimately that understanding which sits at the core of this work. New legendry and the identification of hitherto unrecognized types of supernatural lore inexorably becomes the backbone upon which further inroads in the field of folkloristics can be undertaken. Recognizing that there has not been any real comprehensive look at the complex of time travel lore in the available scholarship to date, this work will attempt to establish a beachhead in this academically-unexplored tradition, opening the way for not only further study of its legend type and precipitated ostensive practices, but also, its applicability and potential contributions to the understanding of supernatural folklore and its many constituting considerations.



So, to begin, what is so supernatural about time travel? In all fairness, it is a valid question. Time travel—and really any contemporary meditation on the nature and flow of time—has, for the better part of two centuries, been conceptualized within institutional discourse as a science-fiction vs science-fact debate. In fact, it was the publication of H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine* that galvanized several generations worth of scientists, academics, philosophers, and lay individuals alike to tackle the question of whether humanity could ever master, through the power of science, the navigation of time as it was just beginning to with space. This very chain of contention is exactly what would lead Hawking, in that lobby in 2012, to once again face down that all elusive scientific white whale: time travel. However, in there resides the ultimate twist of fate. As a piece of speculative literature, Wells' time machine could have been simply dismissed out of hand as a flight of imaginative fancy. Most people who initially responded to Wells' premise approached it in just such a manner. A deluge of very critically-reasoned and scientifically penned opinions began to appear in the academic landscape. And yet, despite such a heavy institutional onslaught, it, for all intents and purposes, simply refused—and, till this day, refuses—to yield, as a concept, within the popular collective consciousness. In that lobby, in 2012, and a few years back, in 2009, when the time travellers reception was held, Hawking had finally understood that he was not attempting to go up against a pen-and-paper, hypothetical construct. H. G. Wells' *The Time Traveller* is/was nothing but a projection, a shadow upon the wall of literary fiction. Yes, time travel is, was, and continues to be something else altogether. An institutional white whale, yes. But also, a spectral whale adrift in a vernacular sea, most of all. And what scientific rationale need such an entity ever fear? This is why Stephen Hawking, ultimately, decided to throw his party.

Recognizing the spectral nature of time travel, it now becomes important to conceptualize its location upon the aforementioned vernacular sea. Institutional disciplines have always sought to settle the question of time travel within the confines of their own domain, relying on the power afforded to them within such a construct to do the job. However, as has been observed above, this is not the place where the folk belief in time travel ultimately resides. This is why, no matter how inhospitable the waters of science may become, humanity's affinity for all things "time travel" never really seems to dissolve into nothingness. Popular culture likewise presents as just another domain where time travel casts its shadow, if not also as a place to achieve wider dissemination and maintain its broad appeal. No, time travel resides, at its core, within the vast waters of the folk vernacular, in the realm of the supernatural. As Juha Pentikäinen observes, the supernatural encompasses "the entities, beings, or other phenomena that form, control, and manifest humanity's ultimate concerns, those that are believed to be beyond human control but that can be experienced in ritual encounters and within other supernatural spheres of activity or circumstances" (1170). And so, at last, time travel can be perceived from a proper vantage point. As was identified above, and as should now be more plainly visible with Pentikäinen's definition, Hawking's reception was a ritual that sought to bring him an encounter with a time traveler, an entity that controls and navigates the phenomenon of time, whose ultimate nature and progression is perhaps one of the quintessential anxiety-inducing mysteries man has ever attempted to conceptualize. And, no, the breath and scope of the legends associated with time travel do not begin and end with Hawking. Although, he is quite a useful figure to illustrate many concepts.

As was mentioned by Hawking above, there are many who "claim" that we have been visited from the future. This, however, is but a small fraction of what is claimed. There are also

claims that we have been visited from the past. There are those who claim to have visited the future, just as there are those who claim to have gone into the past. There are tales of visitors, travelers, visions, messages, items, anomalies—on and on, these tales of supernatural time motility have emerged and circulated. Some of these tales have died and been forgotten, others have died and been reborn, and others have simply thrived and evolved. As such, it is important to note that these individual claims represent a tradition onto themselves, while also projecting outward, comprising ever increasing layers of concentric traditionality. Traditions are in themselves simply things which get passed on, not just to subsequent generations, but also passed onto those currently around us, constantly linking the past to the present, and the present to itself (Allison 1201; Kaplan 124; McNeill 13). Although, *supernatural time travel* may now broaden this to include the future as another linkage, if claims such as those cited by Hawking are to be believed. This, then, raises another important question: is engaging with *supernatural time travel* correlative with a belief in time travel?

There is a great probability that at some point or another every single individual has interacted with time travel lore and not even been aware of it. Perhaps they have heard a joke about time traveling or being a time traveler, such as Twitter user @vtg2 made when she posted the following to comment on the way the year 2020 was shaping up: “I’m beginning to think ‘hindsight is 2020’ was some kind of message from a future time traveler that we all misunderstood.” Or, maybe, they have seen time travel invoked as the substantiating basis for an assortment of predictions ranging from the winner of a sporting game to the outcome of a political contest, such as Twitter user @Towns22 did in 2017 when he proclaimed: “Rams will win the Super Bowl 2022. Believe me, I am from the future.” Sometimes, those predictions even come to pass: the Los Angeles Rams did win Super Bowl LVI after defeating the Cincinnati

Bengals with a final score of 23-20. Other vectors of exposure to time travel lore come from news and media sources, such as when *The Daily Telegraph* and other outlets carried a story which originated from Iran's state-run Fars News Agency, in April 2013, stating that a 27-year-old scientist named Ali Razeghi, managing director of the Center for Strategic Inventions, claimed to have built a functioning time machine. Quite different in execution, the machine was ultimately described as "a device that fits into a 'personal computer case' whose algorithms can discern key details about the next five to eight years of a user's life based merely on a fingertip impression"—Fars, reportedly, would delete the story after seeing that it had attained such wide-reaching circulation (Ackerman). How is it that these examples are so easily decipherable to us? How is it that we understand them and their implications? This is thanks to the traditionality of *supernatural time travel*. The traditionality of the variant may be foreign to us, but the type is easily recognizable. As such, where does the question of belief come in? For most laypeople, the question of belief is tied into notions of truth, and while folklorists try hard not to take a stance on the question of factuality when it comes to such things, there is an understanding that these are decidedly murky waters. For instance, there is the question as to what part belief plays in the recounting of a legend, which the sharing of any of the above examples must undoubtedly entail. In other words, what is the perspective shared by the teller of such tales, their reason for sharing it? Originally, legends were seen to function as a way to give validity to a belief—to some scholars, specifically, a traditional belief—if this objective were not served, then the legend would be thought to simply die or be told only for entertainment purposes (Mullen 407; Ward 302). Termed "belief legends," this perspective, on the surface, sounds appealing. After all, if someone were to recount @Towns22 Super Bowl prediction, in the face of it having panned out, would it be capable of serving as anything else but proof that he was from the future and a time

traveler? Yet, that does not seem to be the case. Likewise, it is not recounted and proffered as proof of time travel's non-existence, which it would serve as very poor evidence of. So, it must be for entertainment purposes then. This, however, sidesteps the issue that in order for someone to share a legend as entertainment, they must have already made an internal assessment of its validity regardless, and actively be trying to communicate it. Neutrality, supposing that it is achievable, and even as an integral component of an entertainment legend, is in itself a statement of belief. Most scholars recognize this, with some like Tim Prizer going so far as to conceptualize a "complex belief-disbelief continuum" to capture the aggregate disposition representation within legend performances (132). As a modification, it would perhaps be best to also capture what could be termed *uncertainty* as the center of that spectrum. Neutrality may be impossible, but uncertainty is an oft overlooked disposition when it comes to belief. Much like Schrodinger's cat, it is a state which exists only when it goes unexamined. However, when it is, it resolves itself to one or the other gradated extreme, even if it is done multiple times in rapid succession. In either case, the inescapable conclusion must be that belief is fundamental to all legends, and with it comes the recognition of an ideological foundation which underpins them (Dégh, "What is a Belief Legend?" 34). In the case of time travel, as the Hawking example elucidates, there is the scientific foundation which champions the time-travel-disbelief interpretation, while the folk tradition runs counter to it, giving recourse to the masses seeking to believe in its existence—extending validity where science would deny it. Robert Glenn Howard terms these ideological foundations *institutional authority* and *vernacular authority*, characterizing the validity cached within each as "trust" utilized by people depending on their position in relation to them (80). He further explains, using Simon J. Bronner's work on the "handiness" of tradition, that these authorities, representing traditions themselves, function as

tools readily invoked by individuals to adjudicate the circumstances which confront them by the interconnectedness they imply (Bronner 186; Howard 78). In the case of Hawking, his perspective that time travel is impossible is usually buttressed by his appeal to current scientific convention, something he can commandingly invoke thanks to his position as a figure of renown within it. Against other scientific figures of less repute, their trust may pale in comparison. In either case, trust can be seen as the currency of validity and belief.

To close this introduction, it should be noted that this work—which is broken down into four core chapters and a conclusion—will mostly engage with time travel as it manifests in contemporary legendry. In Chapter One, “Somewhen in Time: The Forgotten Folklore of Time Travel,” this work will take a look at the lost traditionality of *supernatural time travel*, attempting to recontextualize the primacy of H.G. Wells and *The Time Machine* as its perceived genesis within the metatradition. Following this, three legend texts will be utilized to provide structure to the remaining chapters. In the second chapter, “The Permeable Past: *An Adventure* and the Timeslip Phenomenon,” the claim by everyday people that they have anomalously and spontaneously slipped into a different temporality will be analyzed in the light of extant scholarship detailing memorates and the legend forming process. Next, in Chapter Three, “The Liminal Present: The Dodleston Messages, Time Travel, and Contemporary Ostension,” some of the practices which have arisen to engage with time travel legendry will be explored, especially those occurring in digitally mediated environments. Lastly, in the fourth chapter, “The Cataclysmic Future: John Titor and Monstrous Time Travelers,” the image of the time traveler will be deconstructed and analyzed utilizing current scholarship in the field of monster theory.

The spectral whale of time travel blows before us, its silhouette beguilingly obscured. For generations it has been written of and rendered into various forms to various ends. However, it

has been spoken of for much longer than that—longer than before it even had a name or a hint of a form. As these stories bring us closer to it, so are we all brought closer to ourselves, and the whale elusively continues on into eternity.

## CHAPTER 1: Somewhen in Time: The Forgotten Folklore of Time Travel

**“That was the day I invented time-travel. I remember it vividly. I was standing on the edge of my toilet, hanging a clock. The porcelain was wet. I slipped, hit my head on the sink, and when I came to, I had a revelation. A vision. A picture in my head.”**

Dr. Emmett “Doc” Brown, *Back to the Future*<sup>3</sup>

As was explored briefly in the introduction to this piece, there is no denying that H. G. Wells’ literary work, *The Time Machine* (1895), looms large upon the metadiscourse of time travel. James Gleick aptly observes in *Time Travel: A History*: “When you write about time travel, you either pay homage to *The Time Machine* or dodge its shadow” (27). In institutional discourse, however, mostly in the fields of science and philosophy, *The Time Machine*’s shadow functions mostly as a counter-intellectual straw man—a static target upon which to hold one-sided debates, ultimately ending with a final one-two punch reference to it as nothing more than a work of science fiction and wishful thinking. The reason for such a tactic, oddly enough, lies in one of science’s chief virtues: much like all supernatural legends, it, too, is constantly evolving. As such, scientists ready to render their final judgement on the possibility of time travel must aim for an easily quantifiable counter-argument to overcome. Time travel as nothing more than a product of popular culture usually fits the bill quite nicely because the question of the supernatural can be sidestepped by doing so. Hawking himself displayed this interplay when he concluded his chapter on the possibility of time travel in *Brief Answers to the Big Questions* by noting the following: “But science fiction fans need not lose heart. There’s hope in M-theory” (Hawking 142). As far as academic institutions are concerned, the outcome is a forgone

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<sup>3</sup> *Back to the Future*. Directed by Robert Zemeckis, performances by Michael J. Fox, Christopher Lloyd, Lea Thompson, Crispin Glover, and Thomas F. Wilson, Universal Pictures, 1985.



conclusion. But, once again, there is a gulf between forgone conclusion and absolute certainty. Within that space, the vernacular sea seeps in, and the spectral whale of time travel continues to thrive.

The above conception ultimately brings us back to *The Time Machine*'s (1895) role in the formation of contemporary legendry. As Bill Ellis explains: "Many legends about historical and supernatural events may circulate quietly and steadily over many years because of their narrative value, but contemporary legends emerge briefly yet explosively as truth claims requiring immediate action" (*Aliens, Ghosts, and Cults* 47). Another key aspect to this definition is the recognition that contemporality is not meant to denote items in relation to the objective present, but rather *contemporary* refers to the time in which they were first actively in circulation (McNeill and Tucker 8). The subsequent chapters will attest to the emergence of such legendry, but what resides at the heart of this one is the question of whether there is a unilateral relationship between H. G. Wells' opus and the extant legend complex of *supernatural time travel*, such as James Gleick asserted when he penned the following:

How strange, then, to realize that time travel, the concept, is barely a century old. The term first occurs in English in 1914—a back-formation from Wells's "Time Traveller." Somehow humanity got by for thousands of years without asking, What if I could travel into the future? What would the world be like? What if I could travel into the past—could I change history? The questions didn't arise. (Gleick 25)

Even if Gleick's claim was correct from the outset, this would ultimately not be a problem as far as the folkloric discourse of time travel would be concerned. Its permeation into the folk vernacular landscape would be nothing unique—on the surface, anyway. More on that to come. Although its implications have been an evolving discussion, there has been a relatively stable

consensus among the discipline that quite liberal appropriation of popular cultural elements is a feature of the folkloric process. Further still, the converse is also true: popular culture appropriates—and quite extensively at that—from folklore (Goldstein et al, “Old Spirits in New Bottles” 5). As such, the question is finally put forth: where did time travel originate? As a response to Gleick’s above cited declaration, this question is ultimately fraught with quite a few pitfalls. What does he mean by the *concept* of time travel? Taking his book as a whole into account, it is not that much of a stretch to assume he means mechanical time travel. In other words, the use, by a human being, of a man-designed-and-made machine to, consciously and decisively, navigate to a specified point in time. The verbosity of such a definition is ultimately a mark of its specificity in scope. However, if this definition was to be taken at face value, what would it say about other forms of time travel such as the time slips mentioned in the introduction to this work? The methodology of the achieved travel must then be thrown out as nothing but a red herring in the construction of a definition. Mechanical time travel, unquestionably, is nothing but a subtype of the concept of time travel. But if this is the case, then what of the etymological pedigree of the term? Would it not be didactically incorrect to allow for a term coined to encapsulate a concept to eventually cease to uniquely define it? The answer to that should be, very apparently, no. Terms often expand and contract as they encounter different manifestations of their inciting concept. Just because the term *time travel* would not solely encompass mechanical time travel, it does not mean that the term has ceased to be applicable to it. The scope of the term would have just expanded. Also, and while it is not this work’s intention to become lost within a lexical labyrinth, it is imperative to understand that while *time travel* could have been reverse-engineered using Wells’ name for his protagonist, *The Time Traveller*, the concept directly behind it, traveling in time, predates it. Strangely enough, Gleick makes mention of this

in a footnote, but ultimately chooses to ignore it beyond that passing acknowledgement. This work will look at this occurrence later in the chapter. Suffice to say, taking into account all that has been covered—plus Hawking’s observations, used in the introduction to this work, that everything in existence is in a perpetual state of traveling forward in time—this work will operate under a definition of *supernatural time travel* that runs concurrent with folklore’s established deference to the subjective: *an entity or item which feels it is, or is externally deemed to be, anomalously interacting outside of, or discordantly with, what would otherwise be assumed to be it/their natural temporal progression*. Needless to say, this definition is not absolute, and certainly to be skewered by any scientific institution—but all the same, it will serve as a discursive tool for the remainder of this work. Lastly, and back from this terminological aside, there is Gleick’s final proposition that humanity had never, prior to Wells’ work, *ever* pondered the question of traveling to the future or the past, which is the question that lies at the heart of this chapter: is there a tradition of time travel within the folklore of the supernatural that predates its formulation within popular culture, thus countermanding its metatraditional conception as a product solely born from it? And if so, can this elusive tradition be traced through Wells’ work to the contemporary legendry of today?

The answer to these questions, through the lens of folkloristics, is most certainly, yes. As Bill Ellis, once again, helpfully notes: “‘Nothing new’ should be the motto for studies of contemporary legends. What we see today as our modern folklore may in fact be only universal human hates and anxieties in a contemporary cloak” (Ellis, *Aliens, Ghosts, and Cults* 57). It is undoubtedly true that there is a large body of time travel legendry which has existed and continues to spring forward with features vaguely resembling Wells’ fictional work. However, at the same time, there are others which are wildly different. Resemblance to Wells’ work, within

legendry, usually just boils down to the following narrative units: lone inventor, time machine, and time travel. This, broadly speaking, is a collection of motifs. These motifs can ultimately come to denote—collectively or individually—a specific structure known as a *tale type* (Uther 938). This being the case, we can then see, utilizing the reasoning laid out before, that not all of these motifs are necessary for a time travel tale—there is no need for, specifically, an inventor or a machine. Therefore, it is safe to consider the Wells-legend-corollary a specific sub-type of a dominant *time travel* tale type: the contemporary cloak Ellis was referring to. The first outlying motif of a lone inventor can easily be decoded as merely a person who experiences or somehow interacts with *supernatural time travel*. Every legend has a focal-point, a human protagonist to whom the circumstances unfold around, so this is as much a given as it would be a necessary component. As for the second, the time machine, it can be translated as just the process under which *supernatural time travel* is achieved. The machine or process is, in a broad sense, part of the legend negotiating process. After all, sometimes the method is quite obvious, like a machine, or a complete unknown process, such as in time slip legends.

So, at last, a stable legend type has been established and traced back, at least, to the subtype extant in Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895). The question now becomes, does it stretch back even further beyond it? It is this chapter's assertion that it does. Motif tracking holds a quasi-dubious reputation within folkloristics depending on which scholar one consults. As emergent legends tend to be seen as spontaneous, performative products, the ascription process to one-or-another type tends to be viewed as a reductive, etic construction. There may be a bit of validity to this perspective—especially given what the rest of this chapter will seek to undertake. However, there is also quite a bit to be gained from it. As Diane Goldstein, Sylvia Ann Grider, and Jeannie Banks Thomas aptly observe:

While the chicken and egg issue of which came first—the popularity of a particular theme in folklore or in popular culture and mass media—requires incredibly complicated research of massive scope to demonstrate true causality, mutuality of appeal and mutual use of themes can be demonstrated with greater certainty and raises equally interesting issues. (“The Spectral Turn” 214)

The question of research quantity aside, the ultimate validity of any conclusive assertion made must inexorably be borne out within the discourse it inevitably generates. No absolute, irrefutable truth is arrived at alone, if at all, and an inability to do so should never be proffered as an excuse not to at least begin the work that others may yet dismiss, continue, conclude, and/or improve upon. What follows is such an endeavor. As always, the usual disclaimers apply. The following should not be construed to be a complete reconstruction of the *supernatural time travel* legend type chronology. While some works are included, others may be left out, missing, mentioned in passing, or simply unknown to the author of this work at the time of its assemblage. The goal of this exercise is to begin to put some of the pieces together in hopes that it will engender further scholarship and discourse as a whole. Now that that is out of the way, let us begin.

The most apt place to start the reconstruction is with the year 1895, the year Wells’ *The Time Machine* was published, then proceed backwards. However, almost instantly, there emerges an anomaly: another time machine. While most casual fans assume, as Gleick does, that the idea of mechanical time travel was the once-in-a-lifetime brainchild of Wells, this is not the case: the idea of a time machine was actually born twice. In 1887, a book called *El Anacronópete*—released in English over a century later under the title *The Time Ship: A Chrononautical Journey*--was published in Barcelona by a Spanish diplomat and playwright named Enrique

Gaspar. Though, to spare all involved the mere appearance of plagiaristic intrigue, it is best to take a moment to state that it is very unlikely that Wells ever read Gaspar's novella—its impact being quite minor, it seemed to fade into obscurity almost as quickly as it was published (Molina-Gavilán and Bell "Introduction;" Cooperson Introduction). Written more in the vein of a comedy than anything else, the plot centers around the character of Don Sindulfo Garcia and his quest to marry his young ward—and niece—Clara, who is herself in love with her cousin Don Luis. Don Garcia eventually constructs a time machine as a means to achieve this goal. For the purposes of this chapter, the only important thing to note about this work is the time machine itself, whose description runs as follows:

The Anacronópete, which is a kind of Noah's Ark, derives its name from three Greek morphemes: *ana*, which means backward, *cronos*, which means time, and *petes*, which means that which flies, thereby indicating the objective to fly backward in time...It's engine is run by electricity, a current that science has been unable to move without conductors even if it has come close to doing so, and that I have been able to subjugate by controlling its velocity...Given its driving agent, everything else about its mechanical procedure is of little interest, especially to a public who knows the works of Jules Verne by heart. (Gaspar Ch.3)

As a method of time travel, Gaspar's machine is quite indicative of the time it was created—the reference to Jules Verne aside. Of primary significance is its highlighted power source: electricity. As Jeffrey Sconce's book, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television*, notes: "The focus of much popular scientific interest in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, electricity was for many a mythical and even divine substance that animated body and soul" (7). It is therefore no wonder that Gaspar chose to present it as the cornerstone to Don

Garcia’s successful challenge to the flow of time. Further still, Gaspar’s machine—along with Wells’ for that matter—joins quite the slew of real-world machines being designed and built at the time, spirit phones and the like, and today—recall Ali Razeghi from the introductory chapter of this very work—to pierce, decipher, and navigate the metaphysical realm. One such device’s conceptional function came distinctively close to what could be termed a time machine, for towards his waning years, Guglielmo Marconi, inventor of the radio, worked on a device that “would receive living voices from all human history” (Sconce 61). After all, if such a device had worked, it would only have been a matter of time before a microphone would have been attached and communication attempted. This topic will be revisited later in the chapter.

So, two simultaneous time machines, unrelated to each other, coming into existence at the same time. Two threads to follow. For the sake of simplicity, Gaspar’s will be first. So, where did the idea of time travel come from for him? Surprisingly enough, that is easy to track. Enrique Gaspar’s novella was originally intended to be a play—an adaptation of an existing work. Supported by the existence of a letter dated 18 October 1875 to Gaspar, the playwright was originally at work on a stage adaptation of the French astronomer Camille Flammarion’s novel *Lumen* (1872) before deciding to turn his efforts towards his own original publication (Molina-Gavilán and Bell “Introduction”).

Camille Flammarion’s novel is a conceptionally distinct type of time travel than that which Gaspar evolved from it. As such, it becomes necessary to once again recognize that the primary focus of this chapter is the *supernatural time travel* tale type. The use of a machine is only a variant of the “method of travel” motif, which is not a vital component in the legend type. With this in mind, it then becomes easier to recognize Flammarion’s use of the properties of light and the speed at which it travels to gaze into the past as variants in much the same vein. In the

novel, following his death, the spirit of the titular Lumen travels to another planet where he is able to gaze back at Earth and see Paris as it was in 1793. This leads the character Quærens, to whom Lumen is explaining all this to, to ask: “If the luminous ray which comes from that star takes nearly seventy-two years to reach us, it follows that we see the star as it was nearly seventy-years ago?” (Flammarion 45). Lumen says that it is so, which is scientifically accurate in real life. It is this aspect which makes Flammarion’s novel such an important, though not unique, bridging entry: it illustrates traditionality in attempts to reconcile *supernatural time travel* to scientific possibility. As Jeannie Banks Thomas points out: “it is a deep cultural desire to mix both the scientific and the supernatural” (26). This is ultimately what makes such works significant in deciphering the state of contemporary time travel lore. Whether it is the nature of light or machines created to bridge the present to the past or future, these constructs were only ever just modern cloaks, the refashioning of *supernatural time travel* in contemporary garb. But even with that being the case, we have yet to reach the end of this thread, for even Flammarion’s work had a precursor which inspired it: Sir Humphry Davy’s posthumously published, quasi-autobiographical *Consolations in Travel; or, the Last Days of a Philosopher* (1830) (Cooperson Introduction).

Much like *Lumen* (1872), Davy’s work is quite a mishmash of philosophies, ideas, and beliefs all rolled into one. The first chapter, titled “Dialogue the First. The Vision,” centers around Davy’s time in Rome, during the early part of the nineteenth century, when he undertakes a visit to the Colosseum with two friends. These companions are given the pseudonyms: Ambrosio and Onuphrio. As their visit unfolds, the trio spend much of their time discussing various aspects of human achievement and progress. Their conversation is of little note, if only to provide a kind of prelude to what ultimately befalls Davy next. The discussion hits a sort of



stalemate, and remembering a prior engagement with a certain high-society lady, Davy's companions seek to quit The Colosseum in order to attend it. Davy, on the other hand, affected by his surroundings and their talk, decides to spend more time among the ruins in solitude, asking of his friends to send the carriage back for him in one hour. By his account, Davy then proceeds to walk among the ruins and contemplate the content of the recently concluded discussion, eventually taking a seat in an area, he surmised, once reserved for the patricians of Rome. Having done so, Davy, suddenly, and quite dramatically, makes an out-loud declaration about the nature of time. As soon as it is uttered, he recounts the following:

I had scarcely concluded this ideal sentence when my reverie became deeper, the ruins surrounding me appeared to vanish from my sight, the light of the moon became more intense, and the orb itself seemed to expand in a flood of splendour. At the same time that my visual organs appeared so singularly affected, the most melodious sounds filled my ear, softer yet at the same time deeper and fuller than I had ever heard in the most harmonious and perfect concert. It appeared to me that I had entered a new state of existence, and I was so perfectly lost in the new kind of sensation which I experienced that I had no recollections and no perceptions of identity. On a sudden the music ceased, but the bright light still continued to surround me, and I heard a low but extremely distinct and sweet voice which appeared to issue from the center of it. (Davy 24)

Davy would eventually discover that the voice belonged to a superior intelligence, appearing before him as a guiding spirit to remove his preconceived notions and acquaint him with a true view of the history of the world and the grander, universal systems which humans are but a small part of. In order to achieve the first task, the genius, as Davy calls him, employs a bit of time travel. Davy describes the process as follows:

At this moment the bright light disappeared, the sweet and harmonious voice, which was the only proof of the presence of a superior intelligence, ceased; I was in utter darkness and silence, and seemed to myself to be carried rapidly upon a stream of air, without any other sensation than that of moving quickly through space. Whilst I was still in motion, a dim and hazy light, which seemed like that of twilight in a rainy morning, broke upon my sight, and gradually a country displayed itself to my view covered with forests and marshes. (Davy 25)

From this point onward, the landscape before Davy begins to play out in fast-forward, the spirit acting as narrator, explaining humanity's greatest hits. The whole thing is very reminiscent of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843), which this work predates. Among the time traveling there is also trips to other planets and meditations on the intellectual states which precipitate upon an individual after death, just as in *Lumen* (1872). Eventually the extensive trip ends with Davy being awakened by a servant who had arrived upon the promised carriage. Carrying a torch, the man informs him that he had been searching for Davy amongst the ruins, with difficulty, for the last hour. Davy's experience with *supernatural time travel* is special for what it indicates chronologically for the tale/legend type, but another aspect which gives them folkloric resonance occurs in the next chapter where Davy recounts his attempt to explain his experience to his companions.

In the following chapter, Davy does not repeat the same narrative from the first when he relates the tale to Ambrosio and Onuphrio, leading to the conclusion that he saw little variance between what he wrote and related. This is a bit of a shame, as modification between performances is a hallmark of legend sharing. Chapter Two does, however, record, in the form of a dialogue, the conversation which immediately follows Davy's legend-telling session. Among

the many exchanges, most of which fall squarely in the legend formation process to be covered in this work's next chapter, Davy's companions extract from him the following admission:

I will acknowledge, if you please, that the vision in the Colosæum is a fiction; but the most important parts of it really occurred to me in sleep, particularly that in which I seemed to leave the earth and launch into the infinity of space under the guidance of a tutelary genius. And the origin and progress of civil society form likewise parts of another dream which I had many years ago, and it was in the reverie which happened when you quitted me in the Colosæum that I wove all these thoughts together, and gave them the form in which I narrated to you...I do not say that they strictly are so, for I am not quite convinced that dreams are always representations of the state of the mind modified by organic disease or by associations. There are certainly no absolutely new ideas produced in sleep, yet I have had more than one instance, in the course of my life, of most extraordinary combinations occurring in this state, which have had considerable influence on my feelings, my imagination, and my health. (Davy 56)

Davy's concession is ultimately fascinating. This is because he is actively showing his appeal to the supernatural in order to substantiate his scientific notions. Despite his narrative being a hodgepodge of dreams and ideas, *supernatural time travel* ultimately becomes a rhetorical tool that Davy uses to give his beliefs regarding human progression validity—the process covered in the introduction to this work. Where science allows him only to posit and offer conjecture, the supernatural allowed him to propose first-hand experience and certainty. Tellingly enough, even admitting the above to his companions was not enough for him to forgo continuing to speak of it and share it as an actual occurrence. Either way, for now, this is where the Gaspar time machine tale-thread leads, to a *supernatural time travel* memorate.

Now, once again, Wells' much better known *The Time Machine* (1895) must take center stage. Having already established that Gaspar's *El Anacronópete* (1887) had no direct influence on Wells' work, the question then becomes: is there a thread to follow from it to a stable, preexisting legend-type? And, yes, there seems to be. This is because it is a quasi-obscure fact that *The Time Machine* (1895) is not, in fact, Wells' first work dealing with time travel. In 1888, Wells published a short story called "The Chronic Argonauts" which he would retool, years later, as the basis for what would become *The Time Machine* (1895). That being the case, looking back at this original work, the inspirations for the time machine and *The Time Traveller* are more apparent. However, to understand these precursors, it is best to become acquainted with Michael Dylan Foster's concept of the folkloresque: "popular culture's own (emic) perception and performance of folklore" (5). As it will be shown, it is for this very reason that Wells' creations did not strain the bounds of credulity for his readers; they were drawn from and referencing preestablished images and concepts already extant in the folkloric landscape.

The story of Wells' "The Chronic Argonauts" (1887) begins when the time-traveling-hopeful—actually given a name in the work, as opposed to his literary successor *The Time Traveller*—Dr. Moses Nebogipfel, arrives at the small, rural Welsh village of Llyddwdd. Once there, Wells' protagonist takes up residence in a big, run-down house locally known as the Manse. As Wells writes: "The house had got a bad name, and adolescent man and Nature combined to bring swift desolation upon it" ("The Chronic Argonauts" 1). Basically, Dr. Nebogipfel chose to live in a haunted house. Further still, this would only add flavor to the character as he is molded in the image, as folklorists would recognize, of an *uncanny entity*—just the type of being who local lore would say resides in such a locally-notorious residence. In fact, right from the onset, legendry begins to instantly accrete around the good doctor:

Rumor, indeed, vaguely averred that he was seen to arrive by a certain train from London, and to walk straight without hesitation to the Old Manse, giving neither explanatory word nor sign to mortal as to his purpose there: but then the same fertile source of information also hinted that he was first beheld skimming down the slopes of steep Pen-y-pwll with exceeding swiftness, riding, as it appeared to the intelligent observer, upon an instrument not unlike a sieve and that he entered the house by the chimney. Of these conflicting reports, the former was the first to be generally circulated, but the latter, in view of the bizarre presence and eccentric ways of the newest inhabitant, obtained wider credence. (Wells, "The Chronic Argonauts" 1)

Wells' use of witch-imagery is very overt, made all the more so later in the plot when the townsfolk begin to refer to Dr. Nebogipfel as a warlock and a necromancer. It is also worthwhile to point out that, at this time, the language for what would eventually come to be understood as a *time traveler* did not exist, both in reality and the world within the plot. As such, Wells is illustrating, himself, and with the populace of Llyddwdd, the tradition of naming anomalous events and people *witchcraft* and *witches*, respectively, when "institutions do not provide convenient language" for them (Ellis, *Lucifer* 27). Noticeably, in his writing, Wells seems to fumble a bit with conceptionally capturing his protagonist outside the world of the novel, using his physical description to do a majority of the heavy lifting:

He was a small-bodied, sallow faced little man...that gazed forth from under his phenomenally wide and high forehead...It seemed to be great beyond all preconceived ratio to the rest of his countenance. Dimensions, corrugations, wrinkles, venation, were alike abnormally exaggerated. Below it his eyes...so over-powered and suppressed the rest of his face as to give an unhuman appearance almost, to what would otherwise have

been an unquestionably handsome profile. The lank black hair that hung unkempt before his eyes served to increase rather than conceal this effect, by adding to unnatural attitude a suggestion of hydrocephalic projection: and the idea of something ultra human was furthermore accentuated by the temporal arteries that pulsated visibly through his transparent yellow skin. No wonder, in view even of these things, that among the highly and over-poetical Cymric of Llyddwdd the sieve theory of arrival found considerable favor. (Wells, “The Chronic Argonauts” 3-4)

Wells’ descriptions draw on quite a few different traditions in order to bring his time traveler into focus. In the instance above, the use of hydrocephaly—typically a childhood disorder—brings with it intonations of congenital abnormality. And, in fact, *monster* was once an old term for children born with such deformities (Eberly 59). As such, Wells paints Dr. Nebogipfel as not only uncanny, but monstrous as well. Much in the vein of Davy’s experience with a transcendent intelligence capable of navigating time, Wells, too, seemed to conceived of a time traveler as a man almost quite literally bursting out of his own humanity—a sort of middle step between a normal person and the hyper-intellectual, incorporeal entity of Davy and Flammarion. Further still, going on from the witch motif, this work also sees the time machine itself as something more supernatural in construction as opposed to the electric powered marvels of science and engineering found in *The Time Machine* (1895) and *El Anacronópete* (1887). Electricity is still a component of Dr. Nebogipfel’s machine, but whereas Gaspar cut his explanation at this ethereal element, Wells clearly evokes the folkloric/chemical aspects of material construction in order to bridge the gap between form and function. Dr. Nebogipfel’s machine is constructed out of a symphony of exotic materials such as brass, nickel, mahogany, ebony, and ivory—nothing about these materials gives even the vaguest idea as to how they scientifically come together to harness

time. Yet, the audience is not lost by such lacking explanation. Why? It may be because Wells' time machines—as these materials are also mostly mentioned in *The Time Machine* (1895)—bear a striking similarity to traditional aspects of fetish crafting. Fetishes themselves are most broadly understood to be material objects which, as the product of unofficial institutional practices, when crafted properly, are seen to be imbued with certain magical/supernatural forces (Ellis, *Lucifer* 49). This being the case, the crafting of a time machine, which is a maligned pursuit in traditional scientific circles, and has the supernatural power to bend time, can easily be seen to fall within such a category. And yet, that aside, does Wells' "The Chronic Argonauts" (1888) offer anything as to the traditionality of *supernatural time travel*? Well, yes, it does, in a way. Wells himself was often asked about his inspiration behind *The Time Machine* (1895), and by extension "The Chronic Argonauts" (1888). Of this topic, Wells wrote, in 1933, the following:

I have been trying, for a day or so, to reconstruct my vision of the world as I had it in those days, to restore the state of my brain as it was about 1878 or 9 when I was in mid-schoolboy stage. I find it an almost impossible task. I find it impossible to disentangle the things I saw and read before I was thirteen, from the things that came afterwards. The old ideas and impressions were made over in accordance with new material, they were used up to make the new equipment. This reconstruction went on from day to day, and so, in order and detail, they are lost beyond recovery.

In the universe in which my brain was living in 1879 there was no nonsense about time being space or anything of that sort. There were three dimensions, up and down, fore and aft and right and left, and I never heard of a fourth dimension until 1884 or there about. Then I thought it was a witticism. (Wells, *Experiment* 83-84).

While the above quoted line may not directly provide a clue as to the provenance of contemporary time travel lore, it does give a view into the recombinant nature that is a factor in both legend making and fiction. It also shows that Wells at least perceived that the majority of inquiry regarding his works was centered around the notion of time as the fourth dimension, not of time travel in general. In other words, the fascination revolved around the methodology, not the phenomenon itself. As Wells writes later in the same book: “The idea of treating time as a fourth dimension was, I think, due to an original impulse; I do not remember picking that up. But I may have picked it up, because it was in the air” (Wells, *Experiment* 590). The notion of being “in the air” is a powerful sentiment in the study of legendry, it implies that there, too, may have been something of *supernatural time travel* in the air during the years preceding the publication of “The Chronic Argonauts” (1888). And as luck would have it, preserved within the text, just like a mosquito in amber, there is a line of dialogue between Dr. Nebogipfel and the Reverend Elijah Cook which speaks directly to this:

“Then I will begin. Do you read fables? Modern ones?”

“I am afraid I must confess to a good deal of fiction,” said the clergyman deprecatingly. “In Wales the ordained ministers of the church have perhaps too large a share of the leisure—”

“Have you read the Ugly Duckling?”

“Hans Christian Andersen’s—yes—in my childhood.” (Wells, “The Chronic Argonauts” 23-24)

It would be understandable if, at the mere use of this quote, the objection immediately arose that “The Ugly Duckling” (1843) is in no way about time travel. However, the mere mention of Hans



Christian Andersen will suffice because at this moment is when we return to a previously made point in this chapter: the concept of traveling in time predating any work on time travel by Wells by a margin of decades—two, to be precise. So where does the linguistic formation of traveling in time originate from? Well, it is, in fact, the fanciful musings of an unnamed travel writer, recording his thoughts during a trip through Transylvania. Their work would appear as an article in *The Cornhill Magazine*, published in November 1866. Titled merely “Transylvania,” the writer establishes much of the theme in his work when he wrote:

The charm of travelling would become perfect if we could travel in time as well as in space—if, like a character in one of Andersen’s fanciful stories, we could sometimes take a fortnight in the fifteenth century, or, still more pleasant, a leap into the twenty-first...and to those who can appreciate it, that is precisely the pleasure to be obtained by a journey in Transylvania. (“Transylvania” 567)

Now it should become apparent why Wells’ mention of Andersen is so critical—not to gloss over the fact that this article may also contradict Wells’ claim that there was no “nonsense” regarding time and space, or anything of the like, floating about in 1879. So, leaving aside the Andersen connection for now, was this article “in the air” and known to Wells when he wrote “The Chronic Argonauts” (1888) and/or *The Time Machine* (1895)? There is a stronger case to be made regarding the later work, rather than the former, as there are quite a few striking correlations. For instance, as a travel article geared towards others who may one day undertake the journey themselves, it tends to recount some experiences via an impersonal, third-person construction, “the traveller,” such as in the following line: “The vehicle to which the traveller generally entrusts his bones is a peasant’s cart, drawn by two or three horses” (“Transylvania” 572). Seeing as how the lexical formation of traveling in time seems to have originated within

this work, it is no great stretch to assume that Wells' use of *The Time Traveller* could have been a natural extension of this article's writing style. The other interesting connection comes from the article's observations regarding the different peoples of Transylvania. In *The Time Machine* (1895), Wells describes two races of people, the childlike and virtuous Eloi and the brutish, subterranean Morlocks. The travel article itself takes quite a bit of space to comment on a race of people living in Transylvania called the Wallacks. There is even a relationship between the Wallacks and some other races which eerily matches up with the Morlock/Eloi dynamic in *The Time Machine* (1895)—minus the cannibalism. The article notes:

The Wallacks, such as they are, form nearly half of the total population. It was depressing to travel through their miserable villages, and look at the slovenly, shiftless population which filled them, and which, inferior as it is in every respect, seems to be encroaching rapidly upon the two dominant races. The Germans and the Magyars, on the other hand, are people in whom it is impossible not to take a lively interest. The Germans, or Saxons, as they call themselves, form distinct and very remarkable colonies. ("Transylvania" 578)

The writer of "Transylvania" (1866) even makes mention of a church whose bells were once rung to announce incoming Wallack raids. These parallels are striking, but ultimately not the thread this work is interested in tracking. It is the Hans Christian Andersen connection that is most intriguing. Why? Because the awareness of Andersen in two texts commenting on time travel is strong proof of at least a throughline connection. So, is there a Hans Christian Andersen tale which involves time travel? Yes, there is. And it is a virtual certainty that, while neither work explicitly mentions it, both authors were aware of it. The fable is called "The Goloshes of Fortune," and it was first published in May of 1838.

Andersen's literary fairy tale begins at a house in Copenhagen, on the eve of a large party. Amongst the many goings-on there is a conversation that involved one Counsellor Knapp, the lady of the house, and an unrecounted group of others regarding an essay written by Oersted and if contemporary time was "more full of interest" than that of the Middle Ages (Andersen Ch. 13). In the end, Counsellor Knapp comes down on the opinion that the times of the Danish King Hans were "the noblest and happiest" (Andersen Ch. 13). As the conversation ensues, the story shifts focus to the ante-room of the house, where the guests' cloaks, sticks, and galoshes are being stored during the festivities. Within that room, two fairies are in middle of a conversation regarding their day. One of them eventually chimes in with the following:

"I must tell you," said she, "that today is my birthday; and in honour of it I have been intrusted with a pair of galoshes, to introduce amongst mankind. These galoshes have the property of making every one who puts them on imagine himself in any place he wishes, or that he exists at any period. Every wish is fulfilled at the moment it is expressed, so that for once mankind have the chance of being happy." (Andersen Ch. 13)

Naturally the other fairy disagrees with the assertion of happiness, but nonetheless the galoshes are placed at the door and none other than Counsellor Knapp ends up mistakenly taking them as his own. With the conversation he had been embroiled in at the party still playing out in his head, the galoshes take this as a wish and whisk him back in time to the aforementioned reign of King Hans. The plot progresses from there with Counsellor Knapp at first totally oblivious to the fact that he is no longer in his own temporality as he attempts to navigate his way home. Slowly, the anachronistic nature of his surroundings become more and more apparent to him until, finally, in a scuffle with some tavern patrons, the galoshes are pulled from his feet and he returns to his

own time. Counsellor Knapp ends his part of the tale pondering: ““Is it possible that I have been lying here in the street dreaming?” (Andersen Ch. 13).

The fact that Wells’ work traces back to a literary folktale is a good sign for establishing the traditionality of *supernatural time travel*. This is especially so when it is to such a high-profile writer as Hans Christian Andersen, who made no qualms about the fact that nearly all of his works borrowed heavily from traditional folk stories, myths, and legends—as Jens Andersen notes in *Hans Christian Andersen: A New Life*, his biographical work on the writer, these were “the nourishing roots for a large part of the fairy tales and stories that Andersen wrote for forty years” (240). Case in point, the Galoshes of Fortune are themselves a reworking of the folkloric item known as the Seven-League Boots (Bane, “Galoshes of Fortune, The” 71). These more traditional boots are themselves quite prolific in the folklore and fairy tales of a large part of the world—most notably in Germany, Great Britain, and Scandinavia—however, rather than granting wishes, their original function was to allow their wearer to traverse seven leagues in a single stride (Bane, “Seven League Boots” 137). Quite coincidentally, this reimagining of the boots seems to scientifically correlate to the established relationship between space, speed, and notions of time. Further still, these boots can be seen as the precursors to the time machine—items which provide a method under which time travel is possible. In fact, there are a few commentators today who would classify the first time machine to have been invented by Edward Page Mitchell for his short story “The Clock That Went Backward” (1881). However, the clock is only itself a magical item, having attained its time travelling properties after being struck by lightning a few times—electricity once again functioning as an all-powerful time travel catalyst. Either way, it still provides quite the interesting ancestral link between it, the boots, and recognizable time machines. Leaving this aside, we are left to wonder about time travel once

again. From where did it come from? And once again, Jens Andersen offers up a route, as he notes:

It was especially in old Danish folktales and legends, fables, parables, and proverbs that Andersen constantly found material for his own fairytales. Many of his retellings demonstrate how brilliantly he made use of not only the foreign fairy-tale tradition but also the wealth of folk literature from his own century, which was still very much alive in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Andersen revitalized the folktale genre by giving these gruesome and crude stories a little more innocence, as well as a refined psychology, a little philosophy, and, in particular, a linguistic artistry that completely exploded the bounds of the original, primitive narratives. Like no Danish author either before or since, he managed to fill the old and often stereotyped stories with all manner of lively details. By injecting his characters with a life that was deeper and much more individual than in the classic, one-dimensional folktales, Andersen was able to make all his readers experience and share the timeless sorrows and joys of his fairy-tale figures. (J. Andersen 245)

In order to fully appreciate the past-generational link that the above affords, it is best to note that there is another time travel fairytale which has retained its popularity quite well into contemporary times: Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" (1819). Hardly necessary to go over the plot of such a well-known tale, a sufficient summary does well to note the following: the story centers around the titular Rip Van Winkle one day escaping to the "Kaatskill" mountains to avoid his wife's nagging—he encounters a group of individuals playing nine-pins with whom he eventually shares a drink with from a keg in their possession—eventually Rip falls asleep, and as the plot unfolds, upon waking, he discovers that he has been asleep for twenty years (Irving, "Rip Van Winkle" 25). Side stepping, for the moment, whether sleep is a viable analog for time

travel, it must here be noted that just as with Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895), Irving, too, saw quite a bit of inquiry arise regarding his fairytale's underlying inspiration in the face of its staggering popularity. However, unlike with Wells, Irving's centered more on questions of plagiarism. As Irving would write:

I find that the tale of Rip Van Winkle, given in the Sketch-Book, has been discovered by divers writers in magazines to have been founded on a little German tradition, and the matter has been revealed to the world as if it were a foul instance of plagiarism brought to light. In a note which follows that tale, I had alluded to the superstition on which it was founded, and I thought a mere allusion was sufficient, as the tradition was so notorious as to be inserted in almost every collection of German legends. I had seen it myself in three. I could hardly have hoped, therefore, in the present age, when every source of ghost and goblin story is ransacked, that the origin of the tale would escape discovery. In fact, I had considered popular traditions of the kind as fair foundations for authors of fiction to build upon, and made use of the one in question accordingly, I am not disposed to contest the matter, however, and indeed consider myself so completely over-paid by the public for my trivial performances, that I am content to submit to any deduction, which, in their after-thoughts, they may think proper to make. (Irving, *Bracebridge Hall* 189n12)

Irving's comments bring better focus to the above-quoted passage by Jens Andersen. Hans Christian Andersen's familiarity with Danish folk tradition, themselves ethnically Northern Germanic, must have brought him into contact with the German tradition that ultimately inspired Irving. Even if that were not the case, both quotes make ample mention of the thriving environment which was the 19<sup>th</sup> century for folk traditions of all kinds. Irving himself confirms to having seen the source upon which he based his version in at least three collections, while Jens

Andersen attests to Hans Christian's more-than-likely familiarity with them. And, last but not least, both quotes attest to the hardly-covert "ransacking" of these—now more widely circulating—traditions for fodder to fuel newer storytelling iterations. So, what was the tradition that served as inspiration for Irving and, perhaps, informed Hans Christian Andersen's "The Galoshes of Fortune" as well? It was the tale of Peter Klaus.

When it comes to the tale of "Peter Klaus," there is likewise hardly any need to go over the plot as Irving's version differs from it only in superficial detail. The most noticeable of these is the relocating of the tale from the Kyffhäuser Mountains in Germany to the Catskills in New York. Everything else remains mostly unaltered, the encounter with a group of strangers upon the mountains, the game of nine pins/skittles, the imbibing of some drink with potentially magical properties, and falling asleep for twenty years. Beyond this, there is only the need to dig a bit into the tradition that informed it. A good place to begin is the end note that James Baldwin adds to his inclusion of the tale in his 1905 collection of tales titled *Thirty More Famous Stories Retold*. He recounts: "Such is the old, old story of Peter Klaus. Hundreds of years ago the people of Germany talked about it and laughed over it. It is perhaps even older than the second part of the legend of Frederick Barbarossa, which, as you will remember, has some resemblance to it and also relates to a mysterious cavern in the Kyffhauser Mountain" (Baldwin 220). It is this mention of Barbarossa which provides the next link in the chain.

The Barbarossa legend has its own unique history. In John Freed's *Frederick Barbarossa: The Prince and the Myth*, he recounts the legends presence in a title called: *Folk Book of the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa*, anonymously published in 1519, characterizing it as "a curious mixture of misremembered history, legend, and contemporary events" (520). However, there is no need to follow this thread any further. This is because the tale itself is so

well circulated that it merited inclusion in Stith Thompson's tale type index. Of it, he writes the following:

In another connection we have noticed the story of The Sleeping Army which is only waiting to come back from the dead at the moment of supreme need. Hardly to be distinguished from this legend is that usually known as Kyffhauser (D1960.2) from the mountain in which the aged Barbarossa sits through the ages surrounded by his men. Whether this is death or magic sleep, his beard has grown through the table (F545.1.3) from long sitting and he, too, will not stir except to rescue his folk when they need him most. This story of the sleeping king belongs, of course, definitely to medieval historical legend. But the related tale of The Seven Sleepers (D1960.1) is much older and is connected with the early days of the struggling Christian Church. The legend of these pious young men who awake in their cave after a sleep of many years is attached to the city of Ephesus. But there have been a series of analogous tales extending over the centuries to Rip Van Winkle and beyond. (Thompson 264-265)

From the above, the most important connection which should be taken from the Rip-Van-Winkle-Peter-Klaus-Barbarossa throughline is their association with tale type D1960.1 to which "The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus" (~6<sup>th</sup> century BCE) and "Rip Van Winkle" (1819) lend their form as defining characteristics. In the tale of the seven sleepers, the titular characters themselves slumber for around 300 years. Other traditions which fall into the same type category are those of the Jewish scholar Honi HaMe'agel (~1<sup>st</sup> century BCE), of which there are two traditions claiming that he slept for seventy years each, and the philosopher Epimenides (~6<sup>th</sup> century BCE) who legend holds fell asleep in a cave for fifty-seven years whilst chasing a wayward sheep—quite similarly to Peter Klaus who sought after a missing goat. Ultimately, the reason



these tales are so important to the tradition of *supernatural time travel* is the fact that enchanted/anomalous sleep was, until the conception of a time machine, the predominant methodology by which it was achieved. In fact, most speculative works regarding the future—much like Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895) does with the year 802,701 CE—carry within them quite overt parallels or references to this tradition.

The earliest works which can be pointed to where the tradition makes its entrance into the popular culture landscape is Louis-Sébastien Mercier's *L'An Deux Mille Quatre Cent Quarante, rêve s'il en fut jamais* (which translates as, *The Year 2440: A Dream If Ever There Was One*; however, the title was arbitrarily changed to *Memoirs of the Year Two Thousand Five Hundred* for the English edition), published in 1771. The novel itself opens with an unnamed, French narrator engaged in conversation with an equally anonymous Englishman about the contemporary state of Paris, namely its socio-political climate. For context, this is eighteen years prior to the French Revolution. All the same, the discussion eventually runs its course and the pair decide to call it a night. It is at this point where the time travel element comes into plays in the text:

It was midnight when my old Englishman left me. I began to be weary; I fastened my door, and retired to rest. When I had closed my eye-lids, I dreamt that ages had passed since I laid down to rest, and that I was awake(*a*). I rose, and found a weight oppressed me to which I was not accustomed; my hands trembled, and my feet stumbled; when I looked in the glass, I could scarce recollect my visage; I went to bed with black hair and a florid complexion; but when I rose, my forehead was furrowed with wrinkles, and my hair was white...I did not find, however, that I had any ill-nature, the too common companion of old age. (Mercier 15-16)

The narrator's externally evident signs of aging are some of the classical hallmarks of the seven-sleeper tale type—beards in particular. It is perhaps this motif's eventual expungement from subsequent variants which ultimately begins a speciation from it, into a recognizable, proper time-travel tale type. That notion aside, another thing which ultimately makes Mercier's work such a strong contender as a recognizable site for the crossover of the folk tradition into the popular culture zeitgeist is the fact that he alludes to it in the text. Tied to the footnote of the "(a)" annotation in the quote above, Mercier notes of his character's nap into the future: "(a) When the mind is much affected with any object, it readily returns in fleep. There are aftonishing circumftances attending dreams. This, as will appear by the fequel, is not very extravagant" (Mercier 15na). It is these aforementioned "astonishing circumstances" associated with dreams—sleep, in less negotiated terms—that really stands out. It reads as a substantiating reference—an appeal to tradition to lend validity and allay skepticism in the kind of experience Mercier has crafted for his character by assuring the reader that tales and experiences of the type are quite common, and that this is just another such occurrence. In other words, suspension of disbelief achieved in a fictional work by referencing its extant counterpart in the folkloric landscape. This approach appears to have yielded positive enough results wherein anomalous sleep ultimately became the go-to methodology for journeying into the future in subsequent works of speculative fiction.

The next work to take up this approach appeared in 1836, in a novel by Mary Griffith titled *Three Hundred Years Hence*. Edgar Hastings, the protagonist of the piece, in an appeal to the scientifically-inclined century which would eventually see the rise of a man-made time machine (within fiction), is presented as a talented genius and pursuer of many fields of knowledge. Having purchased an estate in Pennsylvania, and married a woman named Ophelia,

Hastings soon begins construction of a mansion upon the land, residing in a small stone farm house on the grounds in the interim. It is near the completion of this new residence when the plot eventually kicks off. Being suddenly called away on business to New York, Hastings takes leave of his wife and begins to walk towards a dock where he intends to catch a steamboat. However, as he does, he suddenly decides to stop by the old stone farm house he had been residing in. As he nears it, he takes note that, on a hill overlooking it, a great snowbank had accumulated, and that should it fall, it would undoubtedly crush the roof and bury the house. Hastings eventually makes his way inside, and once he does, the following takes place:

Knowing that he should hear the steam boat bell, and feeling cold, he drew an old fashioned chair, something in the form of an easy chair, and fell into one of his old fits of musing...In vain he tried to rouse himself and shake it off; he closed his eyes, as if by doing so he could shut out thought, and it did, for in less than five minutes he fell fast asleep (Griffith 5-6).

Hastings eventually wakes up three hundred years in the future to discover that while he had slept, the boat he intended to catch had exploded. The force of the explosion had then caused the snowbank he had noted to fall upon the farm house, crushing its roof, and entombing the sleeping Hastings within a block of ice. Naturally, his family expected that he had perished on the boat he had intended to catch, and overcome with grief, paid little attention to the now buried farm house. He would only be discovered so many years later by pure luck as the ground the farm house once stood upon was being developed to have a street run through it. Convoluted nature aside, it should be apparent that Griffith's work, much like Mercier's before it, was once again using the supernatural motif of "sleep" in order to substantiate her character's foray into a distant future. However, unlike Mercier, and unlike any other form expressed in the folk tradition at the time,

Griffith's character did something that had never been done before: he returned to the time he originally came from.

After a whirlwind tour of the new time he finds himself in, accompanied by his descendants, the group are on their way back to the estate in Pennsylvania when they pass by the stone farm house Hastings had originally been trapped in. Feeling nostalgic, Hastings steps out of the car and decides to take a look around as the house is scheduled to be demolished. Upon entering the structure, he mechanically sits himself in the old arm chair that he had been occupying when he first become entombed, deep in thought. However, just as soon as he does, a loud explosion jars him and the house. It is the signal canon of the steamboat he had been waiting for back in 1835. Just as this happens, Hastings's wife and father-in-law appear, explaining that they had been searching for him as a letter had arrived to inform him that his presence in New York was no longer required. Hastings, for his part, is shown to now be unsure as to what he had just experienced, the novel simply ends with him saying: ““And is this reality?—do I indeed hold thee to my heart once more, my Ophelia—oh, my father, what a dream!” (Griffith 65). Aside from this end-scene rationalization, the thing that also makes Griffith's work fascinating is her utilization of ice as a preserving medium for the time traveling Hastings—undoubtedly a nod to the ice trade of the nineteenth century and its use as an early refrigeration method for food. All the same, it may also represent, perhaps, the earliest encroaching of scientific rationalization into the folk tradition, something which would see its ultimate expression decades later with the advent of the time machine itself.

Lastly, the closest fictional precursor to Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895) to feature recognizable aspects of the sleep motif as the methodology for time travel is a short story which ran in *The Dublin University Magazine*, published anonymously in 1838, called “An

Anachronism, or Missing One's Coach." It too, it would seem, appears to be the first such story which took the motifs of the tale type and used them to travel into the past as its primary destination, as opposed to the future. The appearance of such a variant also brings into focus the connection that existed—or was being recognized—between enchanted sleep and time in a broader sense, the nascence of recognizable time travel. No, sleep was more than just a precipitator of lost time, or an *ex post facto* rationalization, it could be masking a very real—albeit subjective—experience which could transport one to another temporality. As for the story itself, it is a rather straightforward tale about a man who finds himself, while traveling, in Newcastle. Disappointed, at first, at having to stay in some inn, he happens by chance on a coach which offers him the opportunity to keep going instead. As such, he engages a seat on the coach. However, rather than wait ten minutes for the coach to set off, the narrator collects his belongings and begins walking out of town, intent on catching his ride along the way. Having walked for more than the ten minutes he had assumed he would be; the narrator begins to fear that his hired ride has been delayed. As such, he quits the road for the summit of a hill, intent on seeing whether he can note any sign of the coach's imminent arrival. From there, the narrator recounts the following set of events:

In fact, when I reached the summit of the hill, I listened in vain for either the rattling of wheels, or the bugle. In that luckless—or, shall I say lucky—moment, I descried, a little to the left, a rising ground, whence the course of the river might advantageously be seen. At the risque (almost the certainty) of losing my place, I darted towards this eminence; and finding, when I reached it, a tempting seat, upon the gnarled roots of a decayed oak, I sat down; yes, I sat; and as my skeptical reader will tell me, nodded and slept. This explanation of what follows I am, however, resolved not to admit; and yet even if this

was granted, it would be not the less certain that I looked around me, as I sat with as clear a consciousness of plain reality, as I had had a while before in taking my stake at the Swan. (“An Anachronism” 703)

It may seem, from the outset, that the narrator’s insistence that sleep was not a precipitating factor in what he would later experience that this tale does not hold much correlation to the seven-sleepers tale type. However, there is more to it than is at first apparent. As will be discussed in Chapter Two of this work, the legend formation process ultimately involves navigating the diverse, external rationalizations which eventually are what begin to give a memorate shape. This story is ultimately playing, more than likely subconsciously, with this dynamic. By making mention of sleep as a rationalizing construct, rather than as supernatural methodology, the author seeks to unshackle the experience from the method. Humorously enough, this also mirrors Hastings’ experience in *Three Hundred Years Hence* whom we recall, also, did not exactly go to sleep in order to return to the past from the future he found himself in. All the same, there is something of an awareness of the original tradition in the story, which is why we see the use of the decaying oak as the location from which time travel is achieved correlating well with the traditional use of out-of-the-way places, mostly caves, common in the legend/tale type.

So, where did the idea of time travel come from? In the end, it is this chapter’s assertion that the notion of *supernatural time travel* has existed long before the language describing it ever did, in folklore. As can be seen from the different traditions comprising the seven-sleepers tale type, its popularity was so prolific that works of fiction eventually took up the motif of falling asleep as a method for characters to touch and describe a future which they would otherwise never be able to comment upon. These legends mostly concerned themselves with microscale

time travel—a few decades here and there, two or three generational leaps at the max. However, literature saw grander and grander scales, from a few hundred years, at first, right along to hundreds of thousands of years by the time Wells' *The Time Traveller* pulled the lever on his machine. It was only with this advent in changing methodology that the nature of what was exactly being achieved came into question. Sleep as a mechanism was very convenient mostly because, on an experiential level, the idea of shutting one's eyes for more than the accustomed forty winks seemed like an easy conceit to make. However, practical implications soon gave way for a modification and modernization of the tale. Whereas the primary concern for the legend type was remoteness, so that the time traveler remained undisturbed, modern popular culture, hyperbolic to the extreme, preoccupied with greater spans of time, needed more and more variables so that surviving the journey did not become laughably impossible—not that anyone could have survived more than a few days without food or water, asleep or not.

This construction is perhaps just the most prominent link between contemporary time travel legendry and an older traditional form. Its simplicity, recounted in a few pages, could be misleading in presentation because it may sidestep some of the external traditions and sources which could have also played a part in shaping modern notions of *supernatural time travel*. Case in point, there are similar examples of asynchronous temporal anomalies recounted in fairylore, where time in the land of the fey passes at a different rate than it does in the human world. In Japan, the tale of Taro Urashima (~8<sup>th</sup> century CE) also features a similar concept, wherein the titular character saves the daughter of the Dragon-King of the Sea (who had taken the form of a tortoise), twice, and for his kindness is invited to his palace in the Land Where Time Stands Still. Urashima ends up marrying the princess and residing with her. However, it eventually turns out that the Land Where Time Stands Still is a bit of a misnomer. As the story notes: “Taro's heart

sensed that three years had passed as if they were but three days in his life” (Rosenberg 426). This turns out to be a gross underestimation, for feeling homesick Urashima asks to be allowed to visit his home, and when he does, finds that three hundred years have elapsed instead. Regardless of time travel methodology, the similarities to tales such as “Peter Klaus” and “Rip Van Winkle” (1819) are quite noticeable.

So, what is the final take away? There is no doubt that contemporary *supernatural time travel* has been irrevocably colored by the work of H. G. Wells. The proceeding chapters of this work will undoubtedly attest to this. However, it should not be lost on the reader that this is a natural aspect of legend progression. As Linda Dégh notes: “There can be no question that the folk process, the creation and transmission of tale and legend types and variants, results from a constant interdependence between oral and written formulations” (*American Folklore* 20). These written formulations, in the case of *supernatural time travel*, include all the literary works which have been examined above. Each of them took the traditional time travel motif and augmented it to suit the contemporary world in which they were being reborn into. In this way—and borrowing the terms Dégh uses—pop culture must be seen as a “force which stimulates and accelerates variation” (*American Folklore* 20). H. G. Wells’ *The Time Machine*’s (1895) did this. It provided a pivotal variant which revitalized not only a pop culture genre, but the original tale type as well. It perhaps did this so well that it created a false perception that it was the originator of the type all together, as evinced by James Gleick’s assertion at the beginning of this chapter. However, this should not be tacitly accepted. The spectral whale of time travel has always been there, Wells just created terms by which we could all formally address it, as well as a new way to conceptualize it.



## CHAPTER 2: The Permeable Past: *An Adventure* and the Time Slip Phenomenon

“‘Can’t repeat the past?’ he cried incredulously. ‘Why of course you can!’”

Jay Gatsby (James Gatz), *The Great Gatsby*<sup>4</sup>

It may come as a surprise to some that current *supernatural time travel* traditions are not all about visitors from the future and the sophisticated machines which they use to achieve their wonderous feat. As a matter of fact, contemporary legendry has an experiential tradition within it that involves everyday individuals spontaneously, and mostly unknowingly, stepping out of their own temporality into either the past (most commonly) or into the future (Von Braschler “Introduction”). This phenomenon has gained the nomenclature of “time slip” and it has slowly begun making its way into the popular consciousness thanks to increased exposure by news outlets in recent years. Examples of these include Lucie Elven’s *The New York Times Magazine* article “How I Became Obsessed with Accidental Time Travel” and Flic Everett’s *The Daily Mail* piece “Have You Experienced a Time Slip?” However, the experience of time slips long predate these works, and it will be this chapter’s aim to look at the phenomenon through the lens of folkloristics in hopes of better understanding both the tradition and the processes at work within it.

The best place to start with such an endeavor is with a legend and then to work one’s way out. As the title of this chapter has given away, this will be Charlotte Anne Moberly and Eleanor Jourdain’s experience with time slips as recorded in their 1910 book *An Adventure*. The pair’s tale begins on an afternoon in August, in the year 1901, during their visit to the Palace of Versailles. Having spent quite a bit of their day walking the rooms and galleries of the main

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<sup>4</sup> Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. Kindle Ed., Scribner, 2004.

complex, and discovering that there was still a bit of time left in their day, Charlotte Moberly suggested to Jourdain that their next destination be the Petit Trianon, a small chateau located on the grounds. Utilizing a map at their disposal, the women set off in its direction. By their account, the pair did in fact reach the general location of their intended destination. However, feeling that they did require some direction to navigate more specifically to the chateau proper, the duo turned for assistance to a pair of men they stumbled upon, whom they took to be gardeners. According to Jourdain, there was something odd about these men, being both casual and mechanical in their bearing and speech. However, their directions were simple enough—to continue going straight—and the women proceeded as instructed. Although, this is when the atmosphere seemed to change around them. As Eleanor Jourdain recounts: “Following the directions of the two men we walked on: but the path pointed out to us seemed to lead away from where we imagined the Petit Trianon to be; and there was a feeling of depression and loneliness about the place. I began to feel as if I were walking in my sleep; the heavy dreaminess was oppressive” (Moberly and Jourdain, *An Adventure* 2). Just as this feeling seems to reach its zenith, a man suddenly ran up behind the pair, shouting for them to stop. By both their accounts, they recalled that the man had a very peculiar way of pronouncing words, with some aspects of his dress being equally odd—Jourdain notes the man wore buckled shoes. Despite all this, the man proceeded to inform them that they must not continue on the path they were on, pointing out another route which would lead them to their destination. The pair thanked the stranger and advanced as instructed while the man veered off down a parallel track. From there on, the twosome would encounter or spot different individuals, some noticed by both women, some noticed only by one and not the other, who seemed at odds with the times in both dress and manner. In the end, they would get swept up into a French wedding party, the abovementioned

oppressive feeling finally dissipating, before finding themselves outside and able to hire a coach to take them back to their hotel.

The above synopsis may not entirely do justice to Moberly and Jourdain's experience, but ultimately it will suffice to acquaint readers with it. *An Adventure* is also a lot more than just a legend telling performance by its two authors. This is because their recollection of events represents only a handful of pages out of the overall work. The remaining pages, and ultimately the majority of the work, actually represents the research the women did in order to contextualize and substantiate the nature of their experience: their interpretation of those events. Despite its inclusion within this chapter, neither author ever makes mention of time slips within the pages of their original work. So, how then did it come to represent perhaps the earliest example of the phenomenon within the tradition? The answer, as usual, can be found in folkloristics.

Moberly and Jourdain's *An Adventure* is ultimately what is termed by folklorists to be a memorate: a personal legend, which is often a first-hand account. This, however, can also prove to be a slippery slope as current academic thinking has evolved to postulate that personal experiences are not exactly necessary for memorates so long as the narrator knows the person who had the experience, or the person who knows the person who had the experience, etc.—up to, possibly, four links removed, but this could be more (Dégh, *Legend and Belief* 60-61). All the same, with the propensity for tellers to shorten this chain, either intentionally or subconsciously, in order to bolster authority over the narrative and/or proximity to the events, this may not be a worthwhile consideration to highlight here (Dégh and Vázsonyi, "The Memorates" 231). After all, personal experience can come from any perception of factors, one may not have personal involvement with the events, but experience of the narrative telling could prove to be an equal substitute depending on the predisposition of the audience. Regardless, legends tend to become a

nesting doll of experiences, the shortcomings of one narrative layer may yet be bolstered or augmented by the addition or stripping of another, sometimes with no one the wiser. It is ultimately this factor which makes *An Adventure* such an interesting work: as a printed work, it retains a fixed core which can be returned to if desired. Yes, its story may evolve and undergo the augmentation process of folklore, just as the above synopsis demonstrated, but it can also reach a point where it may serve as a catalyst to undertake a legend trip to ascertain the unmodified version of this tale, either to a library or a digital repository. This may seem to come into conflict with folklore's core tenet that a tale be a novel performance, each instance distinct from the other. However, reading, even to oneself, can be seen as a performative act. Yes, all readers may be reciting the same words to themselves, but it could be argued that it too is an interpretive act, which makes the reader both the performer and audience, creating just the same variance as would be encountered in a more traditional legend sharing session. Case in point, the specific inflection, attention, and construal approach which is unique to each individual reader. In a more simplistic example, a person skimming *An Adventure* could be said to be performing a uniquely truncated version of the legend to themselves.

Notwithstanding the above considerations, what should be first and foremost recognized is that *An Adventure* is ultimately Moberly and Jourdain's performance of their memorate. This is something that the pair fully acknowledge, minus the terminology, in their original preface:

It is a great venture to speak openly of a personal experience, and we only do so for the following reasons. First, we prefer that our story, which is known in part to some, should be wholly known as told by ourselves. Secondly, we have collected so much evidence on the subject, that it is possible now to consider it as a whole. Thirdly, conditions are changing at Versailles, and in a short time facts which were unknown, and circumstances

which were unusual, may soon become commonplaces, and will lose their force as evidence that some curious psychological conditions must have been present, either in ourselves or in the place.

It is not our business to explain or understand – nor we pretend to understand – what happened to put us into communication with so many true facts, which, nine years ago, no one could have told us in their entirety. But, in order that others may be able to judge fairly of all the circumstances, we have tried to record exactly what happened as simply and as fully as possible. (Moberly and Jourdain, Original Preface)

The sentiments expressed in this preface ultimately come to highlight quite a bit of what makes legend sharing such a complex process. In the very first opening lines, Moberly and Jourdain reveal that their story has already entered the vernacular sphere, being shared amongst people, but by their estimation in an incomplete fashion. More than anything, this comes to symbolize quite nicely that the sharing process ultimately creates variable copies of the same tale each time that it is passed on: one version of the tale remains with the narrator, others are carried off by the audience who may eventually attempt to perform the legend themselves. It should be noted here, however, that humans are themselves very poor photocopiers. These mental transcription errors are, among other factors, inevitably what comes to distinguish these differing versions, and also why most legends tend to propagate in a fragmented fashion. Either way, this is what opens them up to communal reconstruction/reinterpretation efforts, wherein participants of a legend-session begin to assemble their knowledge, of not only the occurrence but of applicable traditions, in order to assign an ordered understanding to an otherwise anomalous event (Dégh, “The ‘Belief Legend’” 63). In other words, to ascribe meaning to it. This, however, tends to become a double-edged sword. Adopting a tradition ultimately creates a common frame

of reference which then allows further details to be omitted as they would be considered synonymous and ultimately negligible, further increasing that specific instance of the tale's fragmentary nature (Dégh and Vázsonyi, "Legend and Belief" 103). Taking for instance Sir Humphry Davy's memorate from the first chapter of this work—mentioning it now, within this chapter, may be the first time that his tale has been cited in the same context as a time slip. There are certain correlations between it and the events expressed by Moberly and Jourdain. For instance, both tales involve stepping into the past, and they just happen to occur in locations with deep historical significance (The Petit Trianon and The Colosseum). Although Davy's tale, as known to the reader of this work, contains quite a bit more in terms of content, there is a section of it which reads as follows: "I opened my eyes, and recognized the very spot in which I was sitting when the vision commenced. I was on the top of an arcade under a silken canopy, looking down upon the tens of thousands of people who were crowded in the seats of the Colosæum, ornamented with all the spoils that the wealth of a world can give" (Davy 30). This small excerpt ultimately highlights one of the hallmark aspects of a time slip: "stepping out of normal time" (Braschler Ch 1). Normally there is also no remove. The individual does not stand upon a distant star, or in the void of space, and look down upon the scene—they are in it and move amongst it. As such, this fragment of the tale, divested from the rest of Davy's original memorate, becomes an excellent representation of a time slip. It becomes an adapted memorate—a tale which has been traditionalized to accentuate its parallels to established patterns, becoming more representative of what the experience should have been, rather than what it was (Honko, "Memorates" 11). In becoming so, it creates within the audience an expectation that the tale is complete because the tradition does not include within it an anticipation for a guiding, celestial genius and/or interplanetary travel. Also, we see that such fragmentation is also a potential

chance for speciation. Davy's tale remains his own, but traditionalized versions of it can exist within time travel, alien, and/or astral projection traditions, bolstering each one, some, or none at all. This is why Moberly and Jourdain's publishing of their account makes such narrative sense. They themselves have a stake in what sphere their memorate is ascribed to, as it will be one, some, or all of those traditions, and their attending baggage, which will fuel its longevity and understanding. Despite their claims to have no business in such matters, or proffering an explanation as to what happened to them, they clearly have a vested interest in at least avoiding a few of them, such as when they go out of their way to take a strong stance against occultism and ghosts. Then there is also the fact that, within the work, they do offer a hypothesis as to what happened: "We wonder whether we had inadvertently entered within an act of the Queen's memory when alive {this is Jourdain's key theory – not that they had travelled into the past, but that they had somehow walked into Marie Antoinette's memories}, and whether this explained our curious sensation of being completely shut in and oppressed" (Moberly and Jourdain, *An Adventure* 12).<sup>5</sup> This hypothesis ultimately forms a frame for their experience. In other words, the subsequent research that the pair do for the majority of the book is all to substantiate this perspective: that they had experienced the Petit Trianon as it had once been in 1792, both in terms of landscape and inhabitants. This approach is warranted as receivers of memorates are often liable to ask what proof can be offered to corroborate a teller's claim to truth (Dégh, *Legend and Belief* 66). However, this is not the full extent of it. As was mentioned above, there is also a strong pull to categorize the event. Termed the "the Rumpelstiltskin Principle" by Bill Ellis, this is the understanding that a state of stress is sustained by the witness so long as they remain unable to name/narrate the experience in acceptable cultural language, thereby giving

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<sup>5</sup> Bracketed observation by Tony Walker, editor of the version of *An Adventure* used for this chapter.

them power over it (Introduction xiv). This then gives Moberly and Jourdain's hypothesis a certain sense of appropriateness. In order to speak about an event, common language is a necessity; without it, communication tends to break down and a heavy reliance on similes and metaphors may be necessary (Hufford 41). Moberly and Jourdain are aware of ghost lore which would provide them with an ample vocabulary and a considerable legend complex of corroborating narratives, but they refuse it (Moberly and Jourdain 69; Kinsella 58). As such, they attempt to create their own language—memory reenactment—as a workaround construct that encapsulates what they feel are the most important aspects of their narrative. This, however, proves to be a tall order for their audience, to whom the concept is alien—and even to the authors themselves who would choose to publish their work under a pair of pseudonyms: Elizabeth Morison (Moberly) and Frances Lamont (Jourdain). How does this track? Well, the truth of the matter is borne out in the understanding that speaking of experiences without the aid of an established tradition is often a difficult prospect, with many would be narrators succumbing to external pressures and simply keeping their stories to themselves for want of a sympathetic and respectful audience (Hufford 40). By shunning established traditions, Moberly and Jourdain's *An Adventure* became a Hail Mary attempt to avoid being subsumed into a tradition which, they felt, would mischaracterize their personal experiences. It also acted as a way to invite others to participate in discourse, all with the aim of creating language and more aptly naming the occurrence. In other words, they were hoping to build consensus. It is ultimately this perspective that brings us back to the notion of time slips—a non-extant tradition at the time, completely unknown to Moberly and Jourdain. As a worthwhile point of note: their encoding of their memorates in a fixed and static text allowed for it to survive in a semi-native form until a



more suitable tradition emerged to contextualize it. Basically, despite predating the tradition, it survived to find the suitable language Moberly and Jourdain had been so desperately in want of.

So, we are now refocused, once again, on the broader experience of time slips. As should already be apparent, David Hufford's work with "the Old Hag" in his book *The Terror That Comes in the Night* offers a very well-reasoned template by which to approach the phenomenon of time slips. Perhaps most applicable to this work is his cultural source hypothesis vs his experiential source hypothesis. Within the metanarrative of any *supernatural time travel* experiences—time slip, mechanical, or otherwise—the question must remain: what came first, the experience or the cultural conception? Recall that Chapter 1 only established traditionality of the tale type, at most. Firsthand experiences or claims need to be seen as separate. As such, Moberly and Jourdain's above recorded experience should provide an apparent wrinkle in the making of such a determination when it comes to the broader complex: *An Adventure* does not predate Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895)—used here as the most dominant expression of time travel which would have been available to them—and yet, it never enters the pair's conception that they had time traveled. Why? Obviously, chronology must have very little to do with ascertaining a culture vs experiential source. Language, however, does. Stable complexity, here, is the name of the game (Hufford 27). Misattribution away from the tradition, prior to its nascence or widespread recognition, likewise, cannot be overlooked. As was demonstrated with Sir Humphry Davy's memorate above, traditionality can be established by renegotiations within the legend-telling process. Furthermore, a lynchpin in Hufford's argument centers around the frequency of occurrence, with experiential source claiming that instances of the experience will feature regularly, while in the absence of a cultural source he predicts they will not occur with any more frequency than any other type of dream, misconception, or hallucination (27). Data is

of utmost importance in order to ascertain this. However, time slips have yet to be studied in any academic capacity, so for now this remains a moot point as far as this particular tradition is concerned.

Another aspect of time slips which may be worth highlighting is that, given its relatively recent development, it remains elusively ill-defined within the folk conception. As was explained above, as a tradition, it provides convenient language and relative examples by which a memorate-sharer may begin to express their own experiences. However, for now, that language is just as likely to define an experience as that experience is to augment the language. Case in point, the following memorate related on a Quora thread titled: “Have you ever experienced a time slip?” by user Ashley Adams:

I’m just realizing there is a term for this. When I was in 8th grade, 30 years ago, I woke up like any other day. I had breakfast and got ready for school at home. Nobody else was home. I walked in my garage. It was dark. All of a sudden I was in another reality. I was standing on a track during a track meet. Everything was black and white. A women was running with a number on her shirt and her hair blowing in the wind toward me. She did not see me. I could see the stands and others running. It was like I just walked right into another dimension. Several second later, with tear flowing down my face, I was able to hit the garage door opener and I was back to my garage.

if there is another term for me to research please let me know. I’ve always been curious. Also, I’ve had many many remembering of past lives over the years and some super natural experiences. (Adams)

What makes Adams' post so noteworthy is her opening statement regarding her discovery of the language of time slips. Another is her use of the term "alternate reality" rather than "temporality," which may be a remnant of the language she had originally used to express what had happened to her—such as when Jourdain spoke of having entered a memory as a metaphorical stand-in (hypothesis) for her experience/observations. The aspects of Adams' narrative which stand out are those which relate to the chromatic abnormality of the scene and her perception of not being noticed by the running woman—something which comes into conflict with Moberly and Jourdain who did interact with at least some of the people they encountered. Still, Adams' closing comment is by far the most significant: her request for different terms to research. Having posted her experience on the thread, Adams seems to have ascribed her memorate to the tradition—either intentionally or not, a copy of her narrative is now enshrined within the time slip legend complex. It is, after all, being used in a chapter about time slips. Yet, it is no great stretch to imagine that, should she research other terms, such as the glitch-in-the-matrix tradition, she would be inclined to reshare her memorate as an example of it, in equally inclusive terms. Adams would not be alone in this approach, as demonstrated by the following individual responding to a thread asking "Have you ever experienced a time slip or time glitch?":

Yes, on quite a few occasions, and I'm still researching whether:

1. it is a mental glitch, whereby a part of experience is omitted from memory and takes up from where it left off
2. it is possible to jump a time frame or two in the time dimension (theoretically, if you stopped moving *completely* in all spatial dimensions, you would travel through the time dimension at the speed of light and not actually experience time)

3. it is a glitch in the computer program of our Universe, assuming we live in a computer-based Universe.

At the present time (no pun intended!) I haven't reached any conclusive outcome, but I'll keep trying! (Bayne)

Much like Adams before her, Bayne too responds in the affirmative when asked whether her experiences conform to a perceived pattern of established traditionality known as a "time slip." Yet, almost instantly, without sharing those memorates, she begins to list a series of competing traditions/theories of which time slips are but second on the list. This begs the question, are both Adams and Bayne tradition shopping? Or are they simply seeking to farm out their narratives? Each of their opening comments seems to affirm that they believe "time slip" is apt enough terminology to describe their experiences, but perhaps there is more to say about someone who can explain their experience in multiple traditions. If this is the case, is there really any need for establishing categorical criteria within any established convention? Linda Dégh once remarked that:

At the beginning of its life, almost immediately at the moment of its emergence, the memorate touches society for the second time...Each experience reported has to face social pressure that immediately censors the anti-traditional features of the memorate...It might easily happen that both the attempt of violation and the traditional correction are performed by the same socially-controlled person, the memorate proponent him- or herself. (Dégh, *Legend and Belief* 77).

Taking this concept to heart, it may be prudent to comprehend that memorates are in a perpetual state of being born, both within the social subset they are shared in and within the narrator who shares it. Each performance of a legend is a unique expression of a given core. Yet, that core is

quickly obfuscated, even to the memorate-bearer themselves. This is because, in order to be understood by the largest swathes of society possible, in such a globally interconnected existence, it is prudent to be as flexible within the terminological landscape as one can be. Adams and Bayne may relate their experiences under any given set of lexical formations, but each and every time they do so, they are providing a snapshot of their narratives as they currently understand them and/or wish for them to be understood at that moment. Seemingly an extension of what Lauri Honko terms “small variation,” these adaptive changes are situational examples of meaning formation (“Empty Texts” 39). Case in point, someone like Adams may reframe their narrative within whatever tradition they wish, but as they do, they also modify their own understanding of it in a compounding fashion. This means that when the experience is first had it becomes a single faceted narrative; when it is shared it acquires a second; and when it engenders feedback, it gains even more. As the performer begins to intake and subsequently reperform this accreted complexity, they may become unable to express or even conceptualize that original experience again. They can only ever hope to recreate it, and then it would only be a manufactured recollection. Lastly, performers are only ever able to express a single perspective of their memorate at any given moment, which they do as a judgment call based on their audience. This essentially means that while a narrator may be able to appreciate their tale in three-dimensional complexity, they will only ever be able to express it in a static, less-dimensional-complex perspective at any given moment. All this to say, the more adept that Adams becomes at expressing her tale, the less representative it becomes of the inciting incident and, objectively, of any one tradition. This is why “fragments” are often the more widespread versions of a tale, they have lost this complexity, eroded in the vernacular sea, losing facets just as quickly as a narrator’s internal copy of the same tale may gain them. As such, they become

more simplistically malleable, again, and can be used to, say, create an etic criterium by which to define a tradition which is currently too volatile to be rigidly codified. At most, time slips can be said to currently exist as a spectrum which may bleed into other traditions, as demonstrated by Bayne's post. Some experiences may reside unnervingly close within its gray edges, but it is also just as likely that different manifestations of the same tale reside in multiple locations upon the definitional landscape, some more comfortably within what could be perceived as a recognizable center. All the same, this conception of time slips is constantly being negotiated, much like property lines within the real world. A personally held belief that one's experience falls within the edges is just as valid as a third-party's assurance of the same. In action, this manifests in the following manner, demonstrated by this post occurring on the same thread as Adams and Bayne's:

After reading several of the answers here, I suspect that something that happened to me back in the 1980's could fit. I've never known exactly how to categorize it. I was driving home from my parents' house and it was kind of late at night. I was on a road that runs through a residential section of the downtown area. As I came up to a side street that crossed the main road where I was driving, a car seemingly came out of nowhere. They had a stop sign but didn't stop. It happened so fast that my foot was off the accelerator but I hadn't had time to hit the brakes, and the other car went \*through\* the hood of my car. I stopped and looked down the side street in the direction where the other car was going and I didn't see it anymore. (Kane)

From the outset, it should be noted just how little Kane's story seems to share with Moberly and Jourdain's tale. Closer in proximity to Adams' memorate, the phantasmal nature of the automobile could be said to bear some corollary to her notion of not being seen by the runner in

her tale. Still, there is nothing within it which may hint at an altered temporality, save for Kane's own newly formulated understanding of what time slips are, perhaps skewed by a preponderance of the tales being shared on the thread having taken place in cars where the drivers claim their trips either took too long or not long enough to reach their target destination. And, yet, no one seems to challenge her interpretation of her memorate. In fact, it is shown support by being upvoted eleven times. So, what does this then mean? In comparison to Hufford's "the Old Hag" tradition, it would suggest that time slips are currently in a much earlier evolutionary stage of traditionality. Enough widespread consensus has accrued to give time slips a bit of widespread recognition and form, but its borders still remain too ill-defined for anyone to exert any quantifiable pressure on would-be-adopters of its language. It is for this reason that time slip memorates seem to accrete to each other to form the thread's ultimate understanding of what they are: traditionality by mutually extended consensus creating validation. This, however, is not the extent of it, just one avenue. There are also non-memorate legends, or fabulates, which are shared among the folk. In fact, many such fabulates begin their lives as memorates, changing from first-person accounts to third-person tales (Degh *Legend and Belief* 62). Such is the case with Moberly and Jourdain's story which has extended beyond just being their sole tale to one being reperformed by a variety of non-immediate narrators. In that case, validation can be established by invoking tales of such wide reaching traditionality. In other words, these fabulates, by their very nature of being shared as third-person, time slip exemplars, seem to denote the aspects which most concretely define the typical features of the tradition among the folk. Note the following post which served as the beginning of another thread calling for time slip tales to be shared:

I am wondering if there is anyone here who has experienced a time slip? (Different from lost time stories, but feel free to post those as well if you have them.) Out of all of my paranormal happenings, the time slip is the most confusing/strange to me, yet my husband and I both experienced one together.

It was a few years back when we were driving on an industrial road in the town we live in. We passed some train tracks and suddenly experienced the slip. It is hard to explain if you have never experienced it, but it is almost like something imprinted a memory on our brain. Instead of the industrial paved road, it was an older rural gravel road with tall golden grass and no buildings. It was very 1940's/50's. And a man was pulled off to the side of the road, looking angrily at us as if he had done something terrible and was angered we had come upon him. The mood was very "go now, or else." Then just like that, reality snapped back into place.

During this slip, there was no sound. It was only visual and lasting a fraction of a second. The best way to describe it is if all of our consciousness is a movie reel, and someone spliced a short flashback in the middle of the reel.

After the experience, my husband and I were both very quiet. And then he said to me, "Did you feel that?" I had him tell me what he experienced so that there was no way he could be changing his story to fit mine, and it all fit. It was one of the strangest things I've ever experienced.

That being said, time slips seem to be one of the most elusive phenomena out there. I hardly ever come across these stories but know it happened to me and my husband. I have read of an account on the Queen Mary that also had no sounded and lasted very



briefly. But then there is a story of a couple who stayed at an old hotel only to find out it didn't exist anymore the next morning. So I am curious if anyone else has stories.

Thanks! (u/Anemoia793)

This tale is strikingly more similar to Kane's tale regarding her incident while driving. However, unlike that tale, u/Anemoia793 story does note a prominent switch to an anachronistic environment. There is also the auditory abnormality of the scene, which plays as an interesting parallel to the visual ones noted previously by Adams. Yet, the most striking similarities belong to those shared with Moberly and Jourdain's tale. For instance, there is u/Anemoia793's use of "memory imprinting" language that closely parallels Jourdain's original "memory reenactment" hypothesis. There is also the oppressive feeling which seemed to suffuse the scene and the hesitancy/need to compare notes independently with the person the anomaly was experienced with, just as Moberly and Jourdain would do after their time slip. However, the one place u/Anemoia793 story stands the largest contrast from *An Adventure* is that it invokes a suitable language by which to interpret and express the incident it recounts. It claims kinship with time slip traditionality by its invocation of extant legends/lore in circulation, namely the Queen Mary and old hotel fabulates. It is the latter of these two which can be seen shared below, in active circulation, by another poster on another thread related to time slips:

Time slips are real. Scientists have not discovered how time slips occur but many reports said that there are such events all over the world. You can read more time slip incidents in "Space stuff". One such incident is this

The magical hotel. Year: 1979. A couple and their two friends went to France on their holidays or vacation. They visited many places, and enjoyed themselves. Then they decided to book a hotel. They were driving through a road, when they saw a amazing but

weird and strange hotel. They decided to stay in that hotel. When they went inside they saw something strange. They saw that the people were wearing very old fashioned clothes which were like several decades old. Unfortunately, the hotel was full. So they went to another hotel and booked their rooms but that hotel was also strange.... same old dressing style, same old architecture and all. They didn't think much about it.

They clicked many photos of the hotel. Then the next day they went to explore more place of France. After sight-seeing and enjoying, they were tired and they decided to go back to their hotel but.....when they came..... they found a big and empty ground in place of their hotel, both the hotels had disappeared. They were confused and scared because how can two hotels suddenly vanish in one day. Imagine that you realize that the hotel were staying in for one week existed 50 years ago.....

They asked the nearby people and the people told them that the ground was empty for several years and there used to be two hotels here several decades ago. They suddenly remembered the photos they clicked and when they saw the photo, they were extremely shocked and scared. The photos of the hotel were blank and empty. Most theories say that four of them experienced time slip into the past. Please follow "space stuff", share it, upvote it, and till my next post keep wondering. (Soni)

The tale that Soni relates is one which can be seen in circulation on many different sites and with varying degrees of detail included or omitted. All the same, Soni's version is reproduced here in order to present and elucidate his specific performance of it. Also, this version serves to capture just how unambiguously the fabulate is presented as being firmly ensconced within the time slip canon. The first thing worth noting is how the tale is framed, with the opening declaratory statement that "time slips are real" and the concluding assertion that the prevailing consensus is

that a time slip was at work behind the events sandwiched in between. The title of the tale, “the magical hotel,” however, does seem a bit out of place, and may in fact be a remnant of the originating source Soni attained it from. Whether magic and time slips are antithetical to each other remains a moot point of conjecture as the rest of the narrative seems stacked in favor of the latter: old fashion attire and architecture, and third-party verification within the tale that what was witnessed—namely the hotels—did exist at one point in time. Needless to say, once the framing devices Soni uses to affix the fabulate are removed, it can be seen how the tale becomes a bit more malleable. After all, what does separate the tale as told from being an example of a ghost hotel versus a time slip legend? The answer should quite obviously be Soni and his audience: the folk. It is this exact mechanism which is at work when Moberly and Jourdain’s *An Adventure* is likewise brought into consideration. Legend interpretations abound and are in fact quite prolific. The transitioning of a memorate to a fabulate creates, and is indicative of, widespread circulation, but it can also show a variant’s solid ascription into an established tradition. As Soni points out, there is consensus. But this is not unanimous. It can never be unanimous because this traditionalizing only exists within specific folk groups, even if those turn out to be quite large in composition. These traditionalized tales, however, are enshrined to codify the established patterns of the type as related by Honko above. It is for this reason that Moberly and Jourdain’s *An Adventure* receives almost continual primacy of place when the subject of time slips are mentioned, regardless of the fact that the tradition had no presence in the folkloric landscape at the time.

In the end, it may be worthwhile for folklorists to keep an eye on this tradition as it propagates into larger spheres of public consciousness. It may yet provide a clue as to how other traditions came to be established. Not that this would be a direct one-to-one example. Unlike

originally geographically locked traditions, time slips are evolving in a global/digital domain, something which has undoubtedly aided in its ability to take root within disparate cultural circles, inevitably bridging them into said larger spheres.

## CHAPTER 3: The Liminal Present: The Dodleston Messages, Time Travel, and Contemporary Ostension

**“Your intelligence has no wings...You speak with amazing assurance of your position in the universe. You seem to think that your wrenched little individuality has a firm foothold in the Absolute. Yet you go to bed tonight and dream into existence men, women, children, beasts of the past or of the future. How do you know that at this moment you yourself, with all your conceit of nineteenth-century thought, are anything more than a creature of a dream of the future, dreamed, let us say, by some philosopher of the sixteenth century? How do you know that you are anything more than a creature of a dream of the past, dreamed by some Hegelian of the twenty-sixth century? How do you know, boy, that you will not vanish into the sixteenth century or 2060 the moment the dreamer awakes”**

Professor Van Stopp, “The Clock that Went Backward”<sup>6</sup>

In 1989, Ken Webster released a book titled *The Vertical Plane* about a peculiar set of circumstances which occurred to him, his girlfriend Debbie, and assortment of other individuals while he resided at Meadow Cottage in the village of Dodleston, England. Although the events he would recount span three years, they began to take root in the late autumn of 1984 when a mysterious set of marks appeared on the walls of the cottage between the bathroom and kitchen: footprints. Peculiar in their own right, these footprints were then proceeded by the stacking of items into various configurations—towers, pyramids, etc.—and the feeling of a spectral presence on the premises. Things would only become more eerie from there the day Ken brought home a BBC microcomputer he had borrowed from his job as a teacher at Hawarden High School. This computer, in particular, had a word processing program called EDWORD, and it would be here that mysterious messages would suddenly begin to appear addressed to Ken, Debbie, and a few

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<sup>6</sup> Mitchell, Edward Page. “The Clock That Went Backward.” *The Time Traveler’s Almanac*, edited by Ann Vandermeer and Jeff Vandermeer, Kindle Ed., Tor Book, 2014.

others whenever it was left unattended. This phenomenon would eventually come to be known as The Dodleston Messages.

The very first message which appeared was a poem addressed to Ken, Debbie, and a friend/guest which had been staying with them named Nicola (Nic) under a new file name labeled “KDN.” Ken would print this message and save it, but not much would come of it until a few months later when he would borrow the computer again and a new file labeled “REATE” was discovered on it after once again being left unattended in their kitchen. This time, the message was no poem. Rather, it was a letter from a man who identified himself as “L W,” and it related that he had been experiencing similar unexplained disturbances, seeing glimpses of Ken and Debbie who seemed to be living in his house, although much changed. From here, and as was covered in the preceding chapter, this is where the legend forming process began for Ken, as he notes: “But it niggled me, those words of ‘LW’ spoke to me more than I could reason why. Nic was all for it being John. I scratched around for ideas, very few came. I’d show this message to a few of my colleagues, as I’d shown the poem weeks ago, to get some perspective on it” (Webster 29). This chapter’s focus, however, is not to retread this ground, it is to describe the way that people ultimately “act” a *supernatural time travel* legend once they have heard it—how they show/present it rather than tell/represent it—as a type of legend performance called ostension (Dégh and Vázsonyi, “Does the Word ‘Dog’ Bite?” 6-7; Ellis, “Legend Trips and Satanism” 97). As was also previously covered, memorates—in this case Ken’s own personal experiences—are also legends in and of themselves. This means that Ken also engages in ostensive acts contextualized by whatever version of the legend he is currently engaged with, even as they are unfolding. These versions are disparate and could entail a wide range of practices. Case in point, in the early months of Ken’s experience, he is torn between what exactly

is going on, pondering: “A ghost? A spirit? A joke? A poltergeist? No clear answers, no answers of any kind” (Webster 28). Each of these explanations ultimately represent—beyond just a base interpretation of the legend—actual distinct, independent version of that legend which blink in and out of existence/prominence based purely on Ken and his particular feelings at the moment he chooses to recall/reexamine them. And this is not solely confined to Ken. It is something which happens to everyone who holds the legend, such as Ken’s friend Peter Trinder who, fascinated by the language of LW’s message, and feeling it to be authentic, still came back to Ken a few days later to inquire if it was all a hoax. As we see, each of these interpretations has the potential to elicit actions in accordance to their attendant traditions. And, yes, even hoaxing is a traditional act (called pseudo-ostension), whether it is subordinated under a specific invoked tradition (ghosts, vampires, time travelers) or not. So, what are some of the contemporary, ostensive practices which are informed by *supernatural time travel* traditions? Well, this work has already recounted one, and taking a quick detour from The Dodleston Messages, we return to it now.

In the introduction to this work, Stephen Hawking’s “Reception for Time Travellers” was mentioned in passing to create a dramatic hook for the content which was to follow. However, outside of characterizing it as an “ostensive ritual,” there was not much else of scholarly note said about it. To leave the commentary on such an event as is would be a disservice to just how illustrative an example of *supernatural time travel* lore, in practice, it is. Stephen Hawking’s original time traveller’s reception took place on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Back then, just as he would later mention at the Paramount Theater almost three years later, this reception was conceptualized as a “simple experiment that could reveal if human time travel through a wormhole” was possible then or in the future (“Time Travel” 00:11:22-00:11:37). The nomenclature for such events is

usually group specific. Hawking terms his efforts an *experiment*, while a folklorist would look at them and say that they are an example of *play*—itself a type of ostensive act. Bill Ellis’ work on the subject is perhaps some of the best resources available when it comes to understanding the practice as conceived on the folkloric side of the spectrum. In simple terms, *play* involves a ritual that allows an individual to interact with a supernatural legend in a less rigidly prescribed and regimented fashion than would be sanctioned by institutional structures—basically, “a ritual crime” against those preestablished boundaries (Ellis, *Lucifer Ascending* 153). Originally such acts were perceived to be the domain of adolescent participants, but current scholarship has begun to broaden the field of recognizable would-be practitioners to just about everyone, and of any age (Prizer 136; McNeill 208). In fact, using Hawking’s own acts as an exemplar, we can even see that institutional figures themselves can, and do, undertake ritual-play to interact with less-than-sanctioned beliefs, of which time travel is one among the scientific field. It is this lack of recognition which ultimately makes the ritual itself criminal. However, the terminology also contextualizes the experience. As *play*, rituals take most of their meaning in the transgressive act that they represent, not the specifics of the actions undertaken. In other words, the power of the ritual lies in creating a situation or space (an *alternative world* or *antiworld*) where one intends for societal norms or boundaries to be violated or tested—known as *liminality*—not so much in the methodology employed to do so (Ellis, *Raising the Devil* 66). This is why there is a difference between an occult practitioner’s ritual raising of the devil and that carried out by a group of teenagers on a boring Friday night. So, yes, Hawking may term his reception an experiment, but in scientific circles it would be seen as rather threadbare in execution. As such, *play* becomes an apt sobriquet for the exercise as a whole—also because its performance flirts with a supernatural outcome, using it as a veneer, all the while safety-netted by institutionally



prescribed outcomes, regardless of what side of the belief-spectrum one originally approaches the experience from. In summation, Hawking created a watered-down experiment—an experiment in name only—that created a momentary situation where he would “allow” for time travel to assert itself above his scientifically held beliefs: an anxiety fueled moment akin to a stunt. Or so it appears to us: his audience.

One aspect that Hawking failed to mention during his response to Michael Venables question about time travel was that his reception was held as part of a segment he was filming for a series called *Into the Universe with Stephen Hawking* for the Discovery Channel. Just one of three episodes, there is not much of a negative connotation for this set of circumstances in a world where such things are common fodder for ghost hunting, haunted house, and cryptozoological TV shows. Still, omitting this detail does divest Hawking’s ritual of some of the baggage that would otherwise be associated with a full recounting of its particulars. Case in point, while ghosts and monsters may not have an opinion with regard to cameras and having their existence broadcast to the world, time travelers, who are conceived as human, may in fact have an issue just out of an abundance of caution, if not safety. Yet, that does not ever really enter the picture in Hawking’s postmortem, nor does a myriad of other particulars. In either case, these details are ultimately what open any ostensive practice to vernacular critique. By way of example, James Felton’s article, written thirteen years after the fact, “Why Did No One Come to Stephen Hawking’s Time Traveler Party?” enters the picture. In it, he opines:

So, why did no one show up?

There are a number of reasons why time travelers didn’t show. For example, the invites may not have lasted until time travel was invented, the time travelers might have

shown up but Hawking kept it secret to protect the space-time continuum, or perhaps you can only travel back to the point where time travel was invented.

Perhaps time travelers didn't like the look of the party and decided not to go. It is unlikely that they wouldn't have heard of Hawking though, as one of the planet's preeminent scientists and science communicators. *A Brief History of Time* has sold more than 10 million copies worldwide while astronomers are still trying to test his black hole paradox. (Felton)

Felton's points highlight something quite interesting about the type of *play* Hawking engaged in: it was public. As such, its methods are more open to scrutiny and interpretation than if they were solely being recounted as a memorate. That is not to say that Hawking is being deliberately deceptive when he shares his experience in as sparse details as recorded in the introduction. But it is, perhaps, indicative of his own personal interpretation of the evidence, such as it may be. At the conclusion of the reception, as portrayed in *Into the Universe with Stephen Hawking*, the theoretical physicist opines: "So, why didn't the experiment work? I think one of the reasons might be because of a well-known problem with time travel to the past—the problem of paradoxes" ("Time Travel" 00:13:14-00:13:27). Compared to Felton's interpretation of the outcome, Hawking seems to take the larger leap to a conclusion, Occam's Razor aside. Yet, this too is accounted for within folkloristics due to the understanding that witnesses, even digital ones, will often interpret the evidence to suit their own worldviews (Ellis, "Legend Trips and Satanism" 109). And these two interpretations give quite the insight into the worldviews they would seek to prop up. Felton's conclusions are all arranged to promote a worldview where time travel is still a possibility in one form or another. Yet, he also pays deference to the understanding that Stephen Hawking would be a noteworthy individual that any future-time-

traveler would be sure to come and visit, if they existed. As far as he is concerned, the ritual's failure has nothing to do with the practitioner. Hawking, on the other hand, takes the evidence and uses it as proof-positive that time travel into the past is impossible. Others, still, take further issue, such as this user comment made at the bottom of Felton's article: "The methodology is flawed therefore the experiment could not succeed. What if someone from the future turned up but then the invites were not sent? There are too many confounding variables for this test to prove anything except demonstrate that great intellects are not necessarily the smartest among us" (Tony D). Intellectual criticism aside, Tony D's observations allow us to refocus on the heart of the issue once again: Hawking's methodology/ritual. Where did it exactly come from? It may come as a bit of a surprise that such gatherings, ones intended to lure out time travelers, while not common, are not exactly unheard of. Examples of such ostensive acts include MIT's Time Traveler Convention (May 7, 2005), Perth's Destination Day (March 31, 2005), and the Baltimore Krononauts Meeting (March 9, 1982). Yet, despite this, there is no evidence to suggest that these events took any cues from one another. This means that, much like the idea of the time machine, they too emerged out of the social ether, each being developed by their attendant folk under different sets of influences. If such is the case, then criticisms like those of Tony D can be put into better context: they are the evolutionary mechanism by which ostensive acts are refined. This type of *Supernatural Time Travel* ostensive practice just happens to be in its nascency, hence why it seems to spring up disjointedly anew each time. If Hawking had not achieved the conclusion he had set out to, he may have felt inclined to continue to expand his knowledge of the lore and further develop his methods. Yet, that does not preclude that this process is not at work within others who have observed or heard of Hawking's ritual and seek to make it their own. So, what is at work when it comes to this? Thanks to Hawking being such a prolific

communicator, there is sufficient insight into his mindset to understand how his ritual came to be constructed. The first thing to note is that by 2009, Hawking's views on time travel had been well established. In a Darwin lecture given on January 1991, Hawking made this telling remark: "But the best evidence we have that time travel is not possible, and never will be, is that we have not been invaded by hordes of tourists from the future" (154). From this single sentence we can see what Hawking's unique interpretation of *supernatural time travel* was. Yes, in his conception time travel is impossible, but also, if it were not, time travelers would surely be vacationers, not murderous cyborgs (ala *The Terminator*) or government operatives (ala Jean-Claude Van Damme in *Timecop*). Even in this simple premise there is much to unpack. When it comes to ostensive acts, the scope that one engages with frames the endeavor. In other words, what entity does Hawking seek to engage with? As we have seen, it is a limited manifestation: time traveling tourists. Even if this particular manifestation did not emerge, there is ample room to allow for other types of travelers, those who would not be swayed into an appearance no matter what kind of champagne and company was promised, to exist. Yet, their non-appearance is proffered as proof of the broader manifestations non-existence: Hawking's worldview. In either case, this is Hawking's personal interpretation of *supernatural time traveler* folklore.

Next comes the construction of the ritual. The procedural relationship these two steps have cannot be overstated: first, an individual must envision/condition themselves mentally for the experience they want to have, then perform actions they believe will bring about that outcome (Tucker, "Early Studies" 35). These actions can be prescribed by extant tradition, if available, but they can also just as equally be the product of improvisation. When it comes to *supernatural time travel*, improvisation is ultimately the operating factor as attested to by the emergence of disconnected time-traveler-summoning-rituals. In other words, ritual construction

is ultimately a folk foray into experimental design—no successful rituals have been reported, so the process is still fluid for want of successful traditionality. As Michael Kinsella notes: “In the absence of institutionalized rituals that offer supernatural experiences, people will invent their own, often by using themes available to them through the traditional expressive forms found in their folklore” (Kinsella 29). Case in point, as Hawking sought to lure out a time traveling tourist, he constructed a situation which addressed both halves of that concept in equal measure: the natural and the supernatural. First, he addressed the tourist/natural side: a party. After all, what vacationer would pass up a chance at free food, champagne, and a celebrity host. This is the everyday stuff, the practitioner’s side. This can be anything from just driving to a specific location to setting up an arrangement of objects (such as pen and paper for some ghostly writing). Next comes the supernatural side of things. In Hawking’s case, this was sending out the invitations for the reception after it had ended. However, this can also—and often does—go beyond that. These improvisational aspects do not just extend to well-reasoned-out parameters precipitated by brainstorming safeties against false-positives. They also include borrowed or stereotypical elements from other traditions as direct ports, situational embellishments, or outright misconceptions. This is why ostensive acts, like legend trips, seem to have resonant/familiar roles and rules, no matter how new or different the practice or tradition may be—such as these acts taking place on dark and gloomy weekend nights, at midnight, under a full moon, and so on (Meley 84). In other words, much like decorating a room for a party, the more uncanniness and meaning that can be stuffed into the situation, the more resonant it will be, and the more likely the belief a supernatural result can be achieved. Such was the case in 1982, the Baltimore Krononauts held their meeting during the syzygy—a time when all the planets and the Moon are on the same side of the Sun—and the Crater Baltimore Committee used the

occasion to name a previously unnamed “hole” on the Moon as “Baltimore” (Franklin 20).

Incorporating such elements historicizes the act and also brings it into closer proximity to other established traditions—basically, implied traditionality by association (Ellis, *Lucifer* 93). Not all supernatural traditions act the same, but they are conceived to operate within the same aesthetic. As such, what works for one supernatural tradition may work for another.

All in all, ostensive acts are all about control. Although this may sound counterintuitive to some, the idea is basically predicated on giving up a bit of control in one area in order to achieve a greater measure of it in another where we are less so. Most of the time, this relinquishing of control comes in the form of a suspension of disbelief. We slacken the reins of our worldviews in order to grapple with supernatural manifestations of abstract anxieties over which we have little to no control. In current folklore scholarship, this anxiety has been well established in adolescents to center around death when analyzing their legend tripping experiences (Meley 90). However, death tends to haunt the footsteps of every individual, regardless of age. As such, death, the cessation of existence, can best be seen as an abstract, umbrella conception substituting for a more nuanced understanding of personal anxieties. This is why time travel may fit so well within the supernatural milieu: we fear the future—and not just our personal futures, which will end at the point of death, but the future we will precipitate for those left behind. These anxieties are abstract in an unwritten time yet to come, but time travelers are themselves the embodiment of those fears. To them the future is written, the outcome is known—and depending on what eventuality they recall, we will know that not only have we failed, we will continue to do so, for we are fated to it, never really capable of deviating despite our most ardent hopes. *Supernatural Time Travel* is about whether there is such a thing as fate, and if so, whether we are now, in our time, masters of it or merely subservient to it. Much like

death, time is another broad anxiety category. Perhaps there is comfort, then, in knowing that none of the above-mentioned time-traveler-summoning rituals succeeded. But if they did not, then why does the underpinning tradition persist?

At the beginning of this reexamination of Hawking's reception, one of the aspects which was mentioned with regard to it was its being safety-netted by institutional outcomes—in this case, current scientific convention. This, too, is another aspect of control. Hawking summons the time traveler to a specific location, at a specific time, exercising power over them by specifying the who, where, when, and how of their being. These conditions are, broadly speaking, hoops by which the time traveler will establish their supernaturalness, thereby making Hawking the ultimate arbiter of their existence. As such, we begin to see that the “truth” of the matter—the what—will only be reached by the acting out of the ritual parameters by the supernatural party as well (Bird 123). Yet, this also comes with its own set of problems. With so much control, Hawking is able to skew the outcome by virtue of it. Part of this control comes as an appeal to institutional outcomes. This is what allows Hawking to make such broad conclusions while others, like Felton and Tony D, may only find fault with his methods. As Maxine Miska notes: “it is precisely in the evaluation of the ritual performance that the resilience of a belief system is found: the failure of a ritual does not directly implicate the belief system. The responsibility may rest with the competence of the performers and the circumstances of the performance (91). What ultimately stands out regarding this is just what belief system underpins the ritual, which brings us back to Hawking's preestablished conclusion: time travel is impossible. External commentators may look at Hawking's ritual and see a failed outcome, but the reality is that such suppositions are entirely subjective. Folklorists like Carl Lindahl recognize that not all ostensive acts are about testing one's faith, they are sometimes about using it (166). In the light of such

understanding, we can now see why Hawking seems to make such broad extrapolations in regard to time travel, while others merely pick apart his methods and are not swayed one way or the other. Hawking sought to use his faith in scientific convention to achieve a negative result, and so achieved it. This may explain why he never seemed to make much effort to secure the knowledge of his reception so that it would survive into the future. Not that this may not happen on the strength of its status as legend.

So, as we have seen, ostensive acts are ultimately about control and the beliefs which underpin them. In the case of *The Dodleston Messages*, Ken and Debbie began to act out their understandings of their unfolding memorates by simply choosing to write back to the mysterious LW, who later would identify himself as Lukas Wainman<sup>7</sup>. As things progressed, different interpretations would lead to different actions like going to a bookstore to research poltergeists, looking into ley lines, and even contacting the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). Some of these activities would acquaint other individuals with the particulars of the goings-on at Meadow Cottage, and in turn some of these people would undertake their own ostensive acts—which could be something as simple as giving Ken a picture to show Lukas. Each of these acts, underpinned by a specific belief/understanding, ultimately serves the purpose of establishing the truth of the matter to the individual, which is how they exert control over it. At other times, the outcomes of these acts can cause a shift in understanding which opens the door to newer acts while closing those to others—or at least making them less prevalent. Case in point, the original phenomenon in the cottage all have the distinct tinge of ghostly activity. However, once Ken and

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<sup>7</sup> Lukas Wainman would later be revealed to have been a pseudonym employed by Tomas Hawarden (sometimes rendered as “Harden”) out of caution. Ken and Debbie would find proof of a man living under that name around the year Lukas claimed to be writing from. In either case, Tomas would request that he continue to be referred to as Lukas for the remainder of their correspondence.



Debbie begin to communicate with Lukas, they learn that he perceives himself to be very much alive and living in the year 1546. Furthermore, Lukas perceives Ken and Debbie to be ghostly figures haunting his house. This closed the door on most ghostly ostensive practices, and the participants began to improvise acts that leaned into a more *supernatural time travel* perspective.

One of the reasons The Dodleston Messages was chosen to serve as the backbone of this chapter was due to the role that the BBC microcomputer plays as a conduit, facilitating communion with *supernatural time travel*. The use of such a material artifact is actually not as uncommon as one would imagine given that similar roles are often played by anything from a mirror to a Ouija board in other traditions' ostensive practices (Kinsella 86). Even complex machines, such as cars, have been documented serving an analogous purpose, recognizing an extension of their normal function and role when used to convey would-be trippers to a particular legend site (Ellis, "Legend Tripping in Ohio" 66). While this may all seem pretty much par for the course in the case of Ken and Debbie, Lukas presents a fascinating wrinkle: there is no such thing as a computer in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Yet, Lukas intimates that he too is using a computer—as far as Ken and Debbie can ascertain—to communicate with them. Although he lacks the language to term it as such, Lukas takes to calling it a "leems boyste" or a "box of lights" (Webster 107-108). In the first chapter of this work, it was pointed out that construction of a time machine struck a very close association with that of fetish crafting. Within the example illustrated by Lukas, we can see that a shift in perspective opens up these "material objects" to being reinterpreted as fetishes. This means that consumer material objects—mass produced ones—can be imbued with supernatural forces to create liminality based solely on belief. As such, a time machine is not required to engage *supernatural time travel*. And, in fact, this has

become a recognized aspect within the subcategory of hypermodern—or digitally mediated—ostension (Tucker, “‘There’s an App for That’” 195-196).

It should go without saying that one of the cornerstones of hypermodern ostension has been the creation of the internet. As such, where once ostensive action was dominated by transitions in physical space, there is now an understanding that digital space can equally come to represent a liminal divide. As this pertains to *supernatural time travel*, it stands as perhaps the aggregate field where this type of specific interaction can be achieved. After all, there seems to be a scarce number of physical time travel locations which to journey to due to the understanding that time travelers, unlike ghost or cryptids, exist mostly in a when, not a where. Trapped unyieldingly in the liminal present, would-be ostensive actors seek to enhance their range by increasing their temporal reach. This type of activity usually manifests in a slew of imaginative ways, but one of the more prevalent is worth mentioning here. For instance, there are those who scour the web for archived images or videos that may contain unrecognized time travelers captured, unknowingly, in the background, such as “The Time Travelling Hipster” (a photograph of a 1941 bridge opening purported to show a man in what appears to be modern/anachronistic attire) and “Chaplin’s Time Traveler” (an identified clip in the bonus material of a Charlie Chaplin DVD purported to show a woman walking in the background, talking into a cellphone) (Palma; Jackson). Interestingly enough, a majority of such cases tend to involve the anachronistic presence of cellphone technology prior to its introduction. All the same, this is where web forums and chat boards usually enter the picture, for it is here that proof and theories are shared and analyzed by the *supernatural time travel* folk. Further still, it is also on these very boards that would-be time traveler claimants make themselves known and available for questions. Are these pseudo-ostensive acts? It is possible. Yet, all the same, interacting with

them is equally ostensive in its own right, just as misidentifying a would-be time traveler photograph would be an example of quasi-ostension. It is all a matter of perspective.

The Dodleston Messages saga is ultimately one of many twists and turns. However, one of the greatest in its lore is that of just how Lukas came into possession of his “leems boyste” fetish. Throughout his communication with Ken and Debbie, Lukas at one point becomes confused when they inform him that it is the year 1985 for them. As it turns out, Lukas was under the impression that they were from the year 2109, just like the man (“a time voyager”) who had given him the computer had purported to be—Lukas even claimed to be in communication with them as well (Webster 232). It would not be long before Ken and Debbie began to address messages to this silent facilitator in the far-flung future. And in short time, they would get a response. Communication with 2109 proved to bring with it its own set of realities. Unlike the good-natured and mostly-forthcoming Lukas, 2109 claimed to be serving a secret agenda of which the communications between 1546 and 1985 were a part. Further still, they also presented themselves as being in control of the communications, seemingly being able to halt or interfere with them at will. For these reasons, and others, Ken would develop a strong distaste for 2109 and its machinations, of which he had almost no say over. It is one thing to make the supernatural appear before you, it is quite another to have it make you dance in the palm of its hand. As was mentioned above, ostensive acts are about establishing control. The elusive 2109, as such, presented itself as something which dictated terms, not met them. A higher point of anxiety could not be imagined since Ken and Debbie’s continued communication with their friend Lukas seemed to flow at the whim of 2109. Yet, this does bring us back to an earlier made point: a fear of fate. Ken and Debbie felt safe in their interactions with Lukas because in the temporal scheme of things, they existed beyond him in time and understanding. However, 2109

existed beyond them and claimed to know outcomes which they themselves may have wished to believe were still unwritten. Believing in Lukas' circumstance could have entailed believing in those of 2109, just out of proximity. Yet, Ken attempts to navigate this divide in order to validate the former while casting doubt on latter. However, as 2109 responds when pressed for proof (predictions and various scientific solutions) of their supernatural advanced-ness by other ostensive actors: "WE AR'NT HERE TO IMPRESS" (Webster 244). One could easily see this response coming in direct conflict with rituals such as Hawking's reception. If the devil is not willing to dance to a devilish tune, is he really any devil at all? The answer to that question still resides within the ostensive actors themselves. Sometimes the outcome is simple denunciation. However, for some, there comes the recognition of something decidedly other. Ken hits the nail on the head when he refers to 2109, in passing, as "time monsters" (Webster 250). However, that is a subject for the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4: The Cataclysmic Future: John Titor and Monstrous Time Travelers

**“‘Ghost of the Future!’ he exclaimed, ‘I fear you more than any Specter I have seen. But, as I know your promise is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear your company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?’”**

Ebenezer Scrooge, *A Christmas Carol*<sup>8</sup>

There are many versions of the following legend. While there may be little variation in some aspects of each instance, some points remain an active source of debate until this very day. John Titor came to be known to the public at large when he began posting on online chat boards starting in the year 2000. Claiming to be a time traveler from 2036, John would eventually identify himself as a member of a special military unit on a mission to acquire an IBM 5100<sup>9</sup> computer in the year 1975, which he revealed would be needed to debug certain failing legacy computer programs in the future. However, there is still much more to his story. According to *John Titor: A Time Traveler’s Tale*, a book purportedly released by John’s family, which is comprised mostly of John’s original posts along with some supplementary commentary by his mother, John had arrived at his family’s Florida home on July 27, 1998. Convincing them that he was a thirty-eight-year-old version of their then two-year-old son, John would stay with them for the next three years, until his departure back to 2036 sometime in March of 2001. Titor explained his presence in the years between 1998 to 2001 as a pitstop, the fulfilling of a promise made to his paternal grandfather who John claimed had helped him acquire the IBM computer in 1975. John’s mother would further comment that it was to prepare them for the, then, imminent Y2K event. However, John seems to have had other intentions beyond just keeping a promise. In addition to the online posts and the book, there are two faxes in circulation which are purported

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<sup>8</sup> Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol*. Dover Publications Inc., 1991.

<sup>9</sup> In earlier posts, the model number given is IBM 5110.

to have been sent by John, the first arriving on July 29, 1998. These messages were sent, addressed to Art Bell, in response to another time traveler claimant who had called into his *Coast to Coast AM* radio show stating that they had come from beyond the year 2500 AD. The sender of the faxes had reached out to explain that this was impossible as certain cataclysmic events in the future had precipitated an inability to travel beyond 2564, rendering existence beyond that year into mere nothingness. At the conclusion of the first fax, the sender proposed a theory about what may have led to this state of temporal oblivion (a nuclear explosion) and that it was their intention to look into it. The second fax simply restated that they intended to help out the present, along with a mention of the imminent catastrophe which Y2K would be.

The dreaded new year would eventually come and go, and no apocalyptic occurrence would befall the planet. No other faxes are purported to have been received afterward. However, this is where Titor's story began its most public phase. Borrowing a computer from his father, John would expose his identity<sup>10</sup> and the nature of his mission online, opening himself up to question about time travel and the future. The future Titor foretold was full of all the apocalyptic crises one would dread: civil war, nuclear strikes, World War III, pandemics, social collapse, and more. For the remainder of his stay in the past, John would tease out bits of the future, explain to the best of his abilities the science behind time travel, and even post pictures of his time machine<sup>11</sup> and its user's manual<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Titor freely identified himself as "John" on the IRC chat boards while posting under the username TimeTraveler\_0. He would use this same handle on the Time Travel Institute Forum as well. However, it was only when he began posting on Art Bell's Post to Post Forum that he began using the complete name "John Titor."

<sup>11</sup> Titor identified his time machine as a C204 Gravity Distortion Time Displacement Unit, manufactured by General Electric. He would also reveal the existence of a more advanced unit, the C206, which was capable of greater and more precise travel into the past than the unit he employed.

<sup>12</sup> These images can still be found online today. Some of the most widely circulated are pictures of the C204 unit in the vehicle Titor used to travel from 1975 to 1998, the cover page of the machine's operations manual, system diagrams from within the manual, and a photo taken in 2036 (during John's training) showing the machine's gravitational field causing a laser beam to bend.

In the previous chapter of this work, ostensive actions precipitated by *supernatural time travel* lore were explored. Among the views expressed, there was one which lightly touched on the figure of the time traveler—who is usually invoked, as Stephen Hawking did, or may sometimes be encountered, as was the case for Ken Webster. This chapter will not seek to retread the material covered in the last chapter. Also, it will make no judgment regarding the time traveler as an ostensibly created character (i.e., as a hoax or otherwise). It will look at the time traveler as presented and interpreted, not constructed. In other words, this chapter will center around the time traveler as an independent *uncanny entity*—these are the ubiquitous ghosts, zombies, vampires, werewolves, cryptids, and countless other beings which form the recognizable core ecology of supernatural legendry (Ellis, “Legend Tripping in Ohio” 63). Unsurprisingly enough, the term *monster* may be readily encountered in the field as a class designation for this collection. However, this is not the sum total of uncanny characters native to extant legend traditions. There are entities which are decidedly more human: vanishing hitchhikers, angels, eccentric loners, feral people, escaped mental patients, and witches, to name a few. So, are all *uncanny entities* really *monsters*? It may be deemed prudent to maintain a distinction between the two to aid in the classification of new emergent figures within folkloristics, but categories often seem to sacrifice cohesion in a bid to capture nuance. Case in point, the above lists’ exclusive inclusion of ghosts and witches in the categories they ended up in. Ghosts, as once-living human entities, could be argued to fit better as *uncanny humans*, made so by their simple transition from living to dead. Witches, based on whatever tale is being considered, and who is doing the considering, may be deemed to be more monstrous. In either scenario, it can readily be seen that monster classification grapples with a very distinct line in the sand: the delimiting boundaries of humanness (Levina and Bui, “Introduction”). Likewise, the

more categories that exist, the more boundaries can be created between the human “self” and the monstrous “other”—to become monstrous, one would need to sink through the intervening layers, and there undoubtedly is greater comfort in a larger number of them. But what is this distinction based on? As with everything else, it remains subjective. The subjective always sets itself apart, but with an inescapable knowledge that it must belong somewhere within the great schema of things. This is why there will always be subcategories—just that extra bit of definitional differentiation between the familiar, the related, and the other. As such, *uncanny entities* are broken down further into *monsters*, *uncanny humans*, and *monstrous humans*—not that recognizing this is anything more than a hedge against future claims of misclassification. After all, would it be so surprising to find that any one type of entity could conceivably claim representation in each category? To some, perhaps so. So far, this work has looked at *supernatural time travel* and danced around the figure which, in the collective consciences, sits at its core: the time traveler. In the previous chapter, Ken Webster remarked that 2109 were “time monsters,” this chapter will seek to prove his observation valid using the uncanny John Titor as its subject (Webster 250).

To begin this task, it is perhaps best to recall Chapter One of this very work, in particular H. G. Wells’ “The Chronic Argonauts” (1887) and its central character—the contemporary time traveler archetype—Dr. Moses Nebogipfel. As was briefly explained then, Wells used exaggerated physical traits to underscore and substantiate the character’s unnatural ability to cognize and harness the power of time. A hydrocephalic affliction was the most visible of these characteristics, given greater dimension in this piece by utilizing the work of Susan Eberly to highlight that children stricken with such deformities were once termed as *monsters*. The term itself has undoubtedly accrued and shed quite a bit of baggage over the ensuing centuries.



However, it is best to note that etymologically, a monster—from the Latin *monstrum*—originally denoted something marvelous and/or divine which could serve as a warning or revelation of something (Eberly 59; Cohen 19). As should be apparent from this definition, the folkloristic conception of *monster* is a bit more nuanced than the one extant in non-institutional parlance. However, this should not be seen as a game of semantics. Dr. Nebogipfel’s presence amongst the foundations of what is recognized as a time traveler persists through whatever external veneer currently informs the perception. In other words, H. G. Wells’ depiction of a gentleman time traveler in *The Time Machine* (1895) is nothing but a reinterpretation of a more traditional form, akin to what Bram Stoker would do with vampires in *Dracula* (1897). The fact that both depictions are the work of the same individual is of little importance as Wells’ redesign was in response to external pressures—similar to those present in the legend forming process—informed by the times and his audience.

Recognizing that there is a monster at the core of the time traveler definitional archetype is only half the battle. It needs to be restated that, like many other terms, there is no universal consensus when it comes to application. As was demonstrated above, not all-time travelers are monstrously equal, just as all monsters are not monstrously equal. Those looking for a repeating pattern of mutilated corpses and an overtly evil Terminator-like entity standing atop them will be disappointed. However, such perspectives are a misconception. To understand this, let us look at the subcategory which helpfully presents itself to bridge the gap between would-be recognizable monsters and their “human” (non/less-monstrous) counterparts: *human monsters*. In her article “Monstrous Strangers at the Edge of the World,” Alexa Wright defined *human monsters* as “confusing figures lurking on the margins of society. They are strangers, outsiders, law-breakers, and, above all, inherently transgressive characters that say more about those who create them

than about those that are branded monstrous” (275). This definition, rightly so, has some humbling implications for anyone who deigns to use the term. It recognizes that *monster* is not only an externally fixed valuation, but a reflective one as well: a mirror. Taking for instance the case of The Dodleston Messages from the last chapter, why did Ken Webster consider 2109 to be a monster, but not Lukas? Both engaged in the same method of *supernatural time travel*, but only one earned the monster appellation. Arguably, it is because time travel was happening to Ken and Lukas, but 2109 was bringing it about. 2109 was operating under a different set of rules than the other two participants, and as such was able to exert control over them. This capability to operate outside his own limited ability rankled Ken, as it would anyone, which is why the bond between Lukas and him was not replicated with 2109. This, in turn, may have also been another contributing factor for Ken’s use of the term. An inability to connect, equally, on humanistic terms with 2109 manifested by Ken “othering” the time travelling entity, stripping them of an implied humanity as a way to denote the inimical imbalance he perceived between them. As should be apparent, this process has very little to do with traditional displays of physical abnormalities. Fangs and claws are nice external designators of monstrosity, but ultimately a remnant of a simpler time when such “otherness” was expected to leave visual cues to aid in the labeling of outsiders. After all, in said times, one could only ever interact with others face-to-face. In hypermodern interactions, this is no longer exclusively the case. Contemporary monsters are more in the line of wolves-in-sheep’s-clothing. As such, the delimiting factors of today are more than just skin deep. In either case, this is simply the folk method for labeling the unknown—quantifying and qualifying the anomalous. However, setting that well-trod ground aside, we should return our focus, once again, to the descriptive aspects of Wright’s definition. With little effort, it should be noted just how apt a descriptor of time travelers they are. In the

case of John Titor, his presence between 1998 and 2001, as part of a secret future-government mission, brings with it all the anxiety fueled uncertainty that would corrupt any attempt at ostensive interaction. He is a stranger—literally, a man who has only just been born—a man outside of time who can maneuver it with more flexibility and control than those of us stuck living at a fixed temporal pace, breaking the very laws of physics that keep us firmly rooted to the narrow sliver of time we call the present. If Titor had appeared the night of Hawking’s reception, displaying knowledge of the event before it was even announced, but submitting to no other vectors of control, much like 2109 did, would not the word *monster* have crossed the host’s mind, too? After all, as Dean Lockwood notes: “anything that does not surrender to the gaze, anything that is not visible or representable, makes itself felt as monstrous and disavowed” (79). Visibility and representation are themselves just aspects of control. By way of an example, is it not our first instinct to turn on the light when entering a dark room? Once the light is on, there is little it can do to mitigate circumstances should an unknown intruder be standing there, unmoving—or worse, uncaring. This is because a base component of identification is visibility, but not its sum total. The lights come on to show us what is there, but not much beyond that. When it has illuminated the furthest reaches of our fears, we suddenly find that it is woefully inadequate in assuaging them. In other words, whatever is there may not fear identification, which is a very human fear and mechanism by which unilateral control can be established. An inability to make a quick visual identification then results in a drastic power imbalance. This is where representability enters the picture. It is an appeal to submit to categorical prodding—the “what” counterpart to the visible “who” component—which can only be achieved by way of an exchange of information, mostly in the form of questions and answers. The person who makes the inquires is in control, and likely to gain more as time goes on. However, if the respondent

party refuses to submit to said prodding, then the power imbalance remains skewed, and the only recourse left is disavowal. In the case of time travelers, one of the core folk components in their lore is that they would seek accreditation. As an all-too-common occurrence, claimants are subject to requests for a wide variety of prognosticative feats, all in the name of establishing the truth of the matter. And, yes, in most cases these inquiries are for financial tips, scientific breakthroughs, and imminent disasters. This dynamic is well represented by Amal Dorai, the graduate student who organized MIT's Time Traveler Convention (May 7, 2005), mentioned in Chapter Three of this work. During an interview about the event, he was asked to opine about the potential his event would have for imposters to show up and what method would be employed to screen them out. In response, Dorai remarked the following:

Yeah, there are a lot of ways to prove that you're from the future. One of them could be to tell me in private, you know, what the stock market will do on Monday, exactly what it'll do. More beneficial things to do would be to give us, you know, the cures for cancer or AIDS or global poverty. There are a number of ways that a time traveler could prove themselves. And we hope that they'll bring us some of those things. (Dorai)

As Dorai mentions, each of these predictions has the added outcome of providing a net benefit to the requesting present-time should they prove to be accurate. John himself faced just such requests, lamenting the following: "Are 'stock tips' really the first thing you want to know about the future? As a representative of your time period, do you realize what that says about you? You should probably know that this time is not remembered for its selflessness, charity or ability to work together" (*John Titor: A Time Traveler's Tale* 7). In the end, one wonders what is at the core of such requests: is it a search for incontrovertible proof or a selfish desire for material benefits? And this should not be construed as a base defect of but a few. After all, even Stephen

Hawking expected to be told the secrets of time travel technology as a way to establish credibility. John's mother added the following perspective to the dynamic: "The stock tip questions drove John crazy. To him, it meant they heard what he said but not only were they not paying attention, they wanted to benefit on the chance he was telling the truth. He was very tempted to give out specific stock tips but never did" (*John Titor: A Time Traveler's Tale* 7). So, what information did John provide? He revealed that time travel would be invented in 2034, a civil war would erupt in 2005, and another world war would occur in 2015. At the time, this did little to sway the needle on his credibility one way or the other. Instantly verifiable seemed to be the requisite criteria, something John took issue with as he decried being asked about specific times and places 36 years into his own past, a feat which would be difficult even for a non-time-traveler. Either way, John's openness to fielding questions and his desire to keep certain aspects excluded, saw a continuous cavalcade of posters engage him in a constant tug of war over his own identity. As the folk continually proffered accreditation in exchange for proof, Titor constantly expressed zero interest in the arrangement. As such, the consensus swung from one extreme to another on a case-by-case basis. Some accepted John's situation and moved on with the interaction, others seemed to take extreme animosity towards his recalcitrance, using their posts to attack his credibility and try to create consensus on his nature as a fraud.

So, did this development make Titor monstrous? John is himself merely an external token of a type yet to be sorted. In other words, as Wright noted previously, there is more to be gleaned from the categorizing process than from the subjects themselves, in some instances. As was discussed above, there exists in these interactions with time travelers a preestablished image of what exactly they should be and do. Chief among these seems to be an unyielding prejudice in favor of whatever time they find themselves in. As was expressed above, Hawking once argued

that if time travel were possible, then why had no one come to the past and told us how to achieve it, going so far as to posit: “Even if there were sound reasons for keeping us in ignorance, human nature being what it is it is difficult to believe that someone wouldn’t show off and tell us poor benighted peasants the secret of time travel” (Hawking, *Brief Answers* 137). Aside from the huge benefit this would be to the present, Hawking’s appeal to human nature is also something rather telling in the logical progression he employs—if time travelers are human, then there is every reason to believe, given our understanding of ourselves as a species, that they would seek to either extend some charity or engage in a bit of bragging. Yet, as Titor mentioned above, we are not remembered for being charitable. In either case, time travelers are envisioned by the present to fit an objectively human template as they understand it. Why? This is not entirely difficult to understand. One need only look at monstrous depictions in cinema, such as with novel alien creatures, to understand that most of what humanity imagines usually centers around core variations of itself. This can be anything as simple as the mere imparting of anthropomorphic qualities to these entities to more elaborate ascriptions that entail the aspirational virtues we long to see in ourselves, such as with the character Superman. When it comes to time travelers from the future, this is only the tip of the iceberg, and something rather interesting tends to happen.

*Supernatural time travel* is not the only tradition which has concerned itself with conceptualizing the denizens of the future. In fact, if time travel could be said to have a sibling tradition, it would most certainly be that of time capsules. In *Time Capsules: A Cultural History*, William E. Jarvis notes that engaging the tradition includes reflective thoughts about one’s own time, envisioning the future with which one hopes to engage with, and what valuations may be made by those who reside in times yet to come (16). It could be argued that the exact same

processes are at work when an interaction with time travelers is considered. While time capsules function with a view to one-way communication—a system where a response would not be expected—time travel allows for the existence of the other side of that conversation. As such, when time travelers tend to appear, there is a concerted, folk effort to reconcile them to the image constructed within one’s personal lore—to make them us. In other words, time travelers exert their existence over folk preconceptions. In ostensive terms, they corrupt the practitioner’s ability to self-determine not only their immediate ritual/interaction, but even their very futures in perpetuity. In a sense, this may explain the rampant volatility within the tradition itself. Time travelers are omni-present. Should one appear, as John Titor did, what procedure could possibly be undertaken to return to ostensive safety? One could shut down their computer, but the imparted predictions would persist for their scope extends beyond the immediate interaction. In his article, “Time Travel Testimony and the ‘John Titor’ Fiasco,” Alasdair Richmond observes that most “Titorists”—a name he uses for people who believe in John’s predictions—did not seem to act on their beliefs (19). Richmond’s understanding of this was limited to acts that entailed modifying personal behaviors, in large gestures, to forestall the impending calamities that Titor had foretold. However, as we have observed in the previous chapter, these are not the only acts which are precipitated by belief. All the same, Richmond does note the following: “One can imagine the extremists of many varieties using supposed [warnings] from the future as a catalyst for atrocities. Alternatively, a sort of doom-fatigue could set in and people [could] become so jaded with dubious apocalypses they discount real dangers” (20). These concerns are ultimately rather interesting as they encapsulate the unbound natures of time travelers—they could propagate behavior outside of the immediate *alternative world* or *antiworld* which are created to contain them. Not that this is something entirely unique to them. After all, there are

people in the world today feverishly preparing for the zombie apocalypse. Be that as it may, Richmond's assessment of what a credited time traveler could achieve does color in a very telling, monstrous dimension to these *uncanny entities*: they could turn us monstrous. However, the true corrupting occurs when we learn that we may have been monstrous all along.

Ultimately, the question must be: why do we envision time travelers? Why do we seek them out? In his seminal work "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," Jeffery Jerome Cohen notes the following:

The monster is born only at this metaphoric crossroads, as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment—of a time, a feeling, and a place. The monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy (attractive or incendiary), giving them life and uncanny independent...the monster signifies something other than itself: it is always a displacement, always inhabits the gap between the time of upheaval that created it and the moment into which it is received, to be born again. (Cohen 19)

As was covered here and in Chapter One of this work, time travelers were reborn at the hands of H. G. Wells in 1887 and 1895. In that moment, they gained a type classification and a new dimension was envisioned for them. Unlike the myriad of other folk and literary variants which predated them, Wells' characters became masters of time, not unexpected unfortunates to one of its malfunctions. This was a leap in independence for time travelers, born on the back of the industrial revolution, a time when rail and ships were bridging physical distances, with air and space travel just a handful of decades away. Time travelers could make their present be either in the past or the future, on command. For this reason, it can be said that Wells' works functioned as a type of *speculative folklore*. Its construction presented at such a pivotal time, against such an uncertain scientific/institutional response, that this particular type-rebirth broke free of its literary



roots and became every bit a valid folk manifestation as those which are native to it. Once this happened, this type of time traveler even achieved its independence from Wells himself, who, while able to comment on it, was never able to exercise complete control over it again.

John Titor, as a type of Wellsian time traveler, also functions within the same parameters. As indicated above by Cohen, John's appearance at the turn of the new millennium—much in the same way that such factors operate within the ostensive practices covered in Chapter Three—may go some way towards explaining the broad reach and resonance his legend had. In fact, Jarvis notes that 1999-2000 was also a time of mass proliferation for time capsules, noting: “there was a widespread urge to ruminate about our world today and how its future might be” (220). John's story likewise centered on the fears and anxieties of such a perceived transitional time in human history. On the immediate front there was the uncertainty regarding the Y2K phenomenon, but also his predictions touched on some of the long-term apprehensions of the world at large, namely politics and natural/manmade disasters. In other words, John came to represent a dystopian future contrary to the present's passive wishes, if not actions. Such a thing is not entirely unexpected, general pessimism about outcomes is a standard refrain in any decade, with the sure-end-of-things always, seemingly, right around the corner. Daniel Wojcik terms this phenomenon a belief in a “meaningless apocalypses,” the inevitable and senseless obliteration of humanity as perceived with feelings of helplessness and/or resignation present in equal measure (10). No matter how much time passes, these outcomes never seem to be avoided, they are only ever miscalculated in arrival. It is for this reason that some still reference John's predictions despite their appointed years having come and gone, such as in these posts appearing on one of Titor's original threads:

Can we talk about how his prediction seems to be coming true NOW, instead of when he said? What if that was due to divergence...? (BigMakAttack)

Just here to say hi. This subject of time travel has been very interesting for me and it really made me realize what we could be missing. As of right now, the predictions you made did not come true timetraveler but I have a feeling like they have been shifted back by a few years into the future. The world right now is in the same state, if not worse, as during the cold war. If everything keeps going the way it goes, I think we as a human species will cease to exist by 2060 or around that time.

Anyway, I'm just here to say hi, I don't really know if I believe this or not, but I'd rather try than not try. (KeenObserver-I99)

In other words, this made John's contemporary predictions a type of *Newslore*, "folklore that comments on, and is therefore indecipherable without knowledge of, current events" (Frank 7). However, this is taken a step further because they are also endlessly re-decipherable, as shown above, thanks to aspects inherent in *supernatural time travel*, such as the many world-lines interpretation—what BigMakAttack references as "divergence." Taken another way, Titor's predictions are insulated from timing out due to the idea that they may yet happen, just not in the same time frame he experienced/described them. In either case, the future is crystalized from something hopeless and unwritten into something inevitably monstrous by Titor's posts in those who seek to engage with his legend—even, potentially, stripping us of the notion that we are not the monsters all along, as noted in KeenObserver-I99's reply. Stephen T. Asma notes the following in his book *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears*: "Monsters are things that never fulfill their purpose or never make it to their goal, either because the development was accidentally arrested (by internal or external causes) or because matter

confused or retarded the realization of form or because some moral impurity deformed the creature's true potential" (Asma Ch. 15). As an emissary of the future, John Titor ultimately reflects the realization of the path the present is on—a tragic outcome precipitated by a moral/ethical shortfall. He is the outcome of our monstrousness—much in the same vein most of the monsters listed in the opening of this chapter are really corrupted versions of humans (werewolves, vampires, zombies, etc.)—with the notable exception that it is by our own actions. Furthermore, this can continue to color in the negotiations of his bona fides as a time traveler as an attempt to safely externalize him and the future he represents. It is here that we can then return to the second part of Wright's previously made observation regarding *human monsters*: what does it say about us? In one of John's most famous exchanges with an online poster, he laid out the following:

How can you possibly criticize me for any conflict that comes to you? I watch every day what you are doing as a society. While you sit by and watch your Constitution being torn away from you, you willfully eat poisoned food, buy manufactured products no one needs and turn an uncaring eye away from millions of people suffering and dying all around you. Is this the "Universal Law" you subscribe to?

Perhaps I should let you all in on a little secret. No one likes you in the future. This time period is looked at as being full of lazy, self-centered, civically ignorant sheep.

Perhaps you should be less concerned about me and more concerned about that.

(TimeTraveler\_0).

John's tirade makes it very clear that he is not subject to the expectations that the present places upon him. Rather, he is holding up a mirror and challenging us to change the future, if we are even capable of it. Jeffery Jerome Cohen notes that a monster's body is one where differences

are repeatedly inscribed, only for it to seek out its maker and confront them with the truth that they could have been made otherwise (30). Cohen invokes Frankenstein's monster to illustrate this point, but John Titor could also serve such a task. Tellingly enough, the differences inscribed on time travelers are those which reside in their memories. Some of John's most common exchanges center around the differences he notices between the time he is in and 2036, everything from books and movies to religion and social interactions. However, it is the impending catastrophes which sit heaviest amongst the exchanges. People ask John to be the solution to avoid tragedy, while John's responses border on pure indifference. Once again, it all comes down to power and control. Time travelers are perceived to be all-powerful in the realm of cause-and-effect, and a display of uncaringness is something most unsettling amongst the folk because it implies a lack of kinship. In a way, this is *supernatural time travels* version of an Epicurean paradox, or trilemma:

1. If a claimant is unable to prevent catastrophe, then he is no time traveler.
2. If a claimant is unwilling to prevent catastrophe, then they are inhuman.
3. If a claimant is both a time traveler and human, then why wouldn't they intercede on behalf of the present?

Reconciling these issues often sits at the heart of what makes time travel so appealing. Paradoxes themselves are often the logician's go-to approach for disproving the whole enterprise. All the same, the second point in the paradox sums this chapter up quite nicely. Human temporal tribalism will always engender us to find fault within the first point to reconcile any time travel claim. It is an appealing notion after all: time travel being the deciding factor between a fifty-fifty eventuality, removing responsibility from the folk entirely. It is for this reason that monstrosity displays in this tradition as a game of hot potato. Who really is the monster

responsible for the tragic future yet to come? The present folk who will precipitate it, or the time traveler who will not forestall it? Time travelers from the future point to the present, while the present interminably points back, both in eternal certainty there is a monster at the center of all impending calamity. The question is who? Yet, perhaps the fault lies in the assumption that time travelers are merely us, unchanging for decades or hundreds of years. We yearn to project ourselves into a glorious future, but are blinded to the notion that we may not remain *us* on the journey. We may become *other* relative to the present which will one day leave us behind. And if this is the case, we may never meet anything but monstrous time travelers in the liminal present we are doomed to inhabit.

## CONCLUSION

**“Hey, hey, listen to me. You come to that launch site at 5:00 PM, you take my hand, and I’ll show you who can’t time travel.”**

Kenneth Calloway, *Safety Not Guaranteed*<sup>13</sup>

We stand upon the end of a journey, having chased the spectral whale of *supernatural time travel* through a myriad of incarnations: from its earliest, currently-known origins to its most contemporary of manifestations. This work began with a simple premise: to illustrate the extant nature of the tradition within the folkloric landscape. However, it will be left to the reader to ultimately decide if this end was achieved. In the introduction, the notions of authorities and belief were raised, and it is to these themes that perhaps any concluding meditation would be best served returning to. But, as has been a constant so far, it should be done in the accompaniment of another contemporary *supernatural time travel* legend.

Back in the year 1997, the following ad appeared in the classifieds section of the *Backwoods Home Magazine*, it read:

**WANTED:** Someone to go back in time  
with me. This is not a joke. P.O. Box 322,  
Oakview, CA 93022. You’ll get paid after  
we get back. Must bring your own weapons.  
Safety not guaranteed. I have only done this  
once before.

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<sup>13</sup> *Safety Not Guaranteed*. Directed by Colin Trevorrow, performances by Aubrey Plaza, Mark Duplass, Jake Johnson, Karan Soni, and Jenica Bergere, FilmDistrict Distribution, 2012.

Shortly after its publication, the contents of the ad began to attract widespread attention, being shared on varying platforms from humble ones such as Craigslist to much grander ones such as *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno. Something about the ad had clearly captured the public's attention. However, this is not the end of the story. It is only the beginning. This is because the truth about the ad is that it was written by a man called John Silveira, a writer who was tasked by the *Backwoods Home Magazine's* publisher, Dave Duffy, to come up with filler for that particular issue's classified section which had come up short. As was covered in this work, Silveira's ad can be seen as an ostensive act, something which intended to evoke *supernatural time travel*. Silveira himself claimed the ad as a joke—interestingly coming into conflict with the ad's specific language claiming that it was not, which may make the whole thing read as a type of pseudo-ostension. As always, it is all just a matter of perspective.

So, what makes the *Backwoods Home Magazine* ad such a potent example by which to close this thesis out on? Chapter One of this work began by looking at the metatradition which conceptualized *supernatural time travel* as a tradition with a decidedly mass- or pop-culture pedigree, conceived to have begun with H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* in 1895. Demonstrating this to be a misconception, it also highlighted the mutualistic relationship that exists between it and folklore: traditional versions of *supernatural time travel* informed the creation of Wells' time machine/traveler which in turn informed the *speculative folklore* that allowed for them to suffuse back into the vernacular sphere, giving language and form to time travelers like John Titor and others such as the poster below:

I am back after 3 months of time travel my machine is broken now so maybe I will live in 2022 for one month as keenobserver said that in 2060 human species will cease but I it didn't because when I went to that time but there was the bright future but one thing I am

still not able to find jhon titer but any ways just one month more in 2022 then my machine will be repaired and my next plan is to go to year 1845.

Thanks for showing such interest on me see you later. (Findingtimetravler\_0)

Posts like these abound, and they owe their readability in the vernacular landscape to the lore variants—appearing both in the folklore and mass media spheres—which came before them. However, this relationship is not a one-way street, and some examples of *supernatural time travel* folklore have once again begun to inform pop-culture representations. Relevant to Silveira’s ostensive act, which forms the core of this conclusion, is the 2012 movie *Safety Not Guaranteed*, directed by Colin Trevorrow, which uses the ad above as the basis for its plot. There is also the John Titor legend complex which served as the basis for the visual novel, developed by 5pb and Nitroplus, released in 2009, called *Steins;Gate*—later adapted into a popular manga and anime series.

Chapter Three of this thesis focused on the ostensive acts which are precipitated by *supernatural time travel* folklore. This conclusion has already characterized Silveira’s ad as an example of ostension, but this is just the identification of an opening act, miniscule in comparison to the myriad its legend would inspire in others. Silveira would recount, in an article explaining the story behind the event, that for years to come, he would receive letters to the P. O. box listed in the ad. Of these, he would note the following:

What have the people who’ve responded wanted? Most seemed to have believed the ad. Several hundred, while admitting maybe it was a hoax, hoped it wasn’t and wanted to go back in time for the sheer adventure. Though pay was offered, many of those said they’d do it for nothing. (Hell, I would, too).



Some letters came from guys who gave me a list of some pretty sophisticated weapons they could bring along with their credentials: black belts in martial arts, explosives expertise, language skills, etc., along with assurances they can pretty much take care of themselves. I believe ‘em. (Silveira)

It is here where we once again return to the idea of institutions and beliefs. Current institutional belief—those forming around the fields within the scientific establishment—almost unilaterally side with the idea that time travel to the past is impossible for humans, despite the absence of irrefutable scientific proof (Halperin 111). The reason for the qualifier “almost” is because even within those lofty halls, there are those who, beguiled and inspired by *supernatural time travel*, seek to challenge this convention. Such is the case with Ron Mallett, a physics professor at the University of Connecticut, who inspired by H.G. Wells’ *The Time Machine* (1895), has spent his career trying to turn the belief in time travel—at best pseudo-scientific in nature—into valid science fact (Street). Silveira’s responders are no different: they likewise have engaged with the tradition, maybe in the guise of the mere idea of it, and suspended their institutionally mandated disbelief in the notion for an assertion of their own personally held belief in its feasibility—even if that belief can only be quantified as an uncertainty. As Silveira said, they hoped it was true. And that is what legends are all about: the pursuit and debate of what is possible in the world—questioning what is institutionally mandated as “real” and “proper” (McNeill, “Living Legends” 210; Ellis, *Aliens, Ghosts, and Cults* 12). In an abstracted sense, this is a revolt against the religious doctrine of science. There is hope in such a pursuit, but also equal measures of darkness.

Chapter Four of this work covered the idea of time travelers as monstrous figures, demonstrating that the appellation centered around notions of humanity and self-reflection. For

Silveira, who in an ostensive act took on the persona of a time traveler, this dynamic manifested in the following way:

But many letters came from people who wanted me to correct a past tragedy. Dozens, in prison, asked me to go back in time and talk them out of committing the crime that put them away. Others (and not a few) were from people who begged me to go back and save a loved one from a tragic death. Those letters were so heartbreaking I almost couldn't read them and I felt a certain amount of shame for not anticipating the false hope I placed in so many hearts. (Silveira)

As Silveira found out, there are certain expectations inherent to the *uncanny entity* termed as "time traveler" by the folk. In ostensibly acting as one, Silveira learned that time travelers represent a certain sense of hope whenever they can be reconciled to the human folk. However, they can become truly monstrous when the process fails. When this happens, the trail of destruction is all too apparent in the heartbreak and hopelessness which is left in the wake of its contemporary passing. Some people display this awareness all too knowingly, as was the case with those who wrote to Silveira threatening him with harm or outright death should he prove to be a fraud and the ad a "joke" or "scam." As Jeffrey Jerome Cohen notes: "We see the damage that the monster wreaks...but the monster itself turns immaterial and vanishes, to reappear somewhere else...No monster tastes of death but once...the monster's body is both corporal and incorporeal; its threat is its propensity to shift" (20). Those vowing to avenge themselves upon Silveira seem to be cognizant of this dynamic, perhaps evincing within their threats previous passings of the monster through their lives, each time in a different guise. Was this in the form of 2109? Or, perhaps, John Titor? It could conceivably be a myriad of others not explored within

this work, known or long since forgotten. In either case, the *supernatural time travel* tradition can be said to have remembered them all in deed, if not in name.

In the end, it is advisable for the field of folkloristics to turn its gaze onto the tradition of *supernatural time travel* as it seems to have gone completely unremarked upon despite evincing such vibrant lore. Since experiencing a bit of a renaissance in the later 1800s, time travel has begun to dominate many aspects of society as a whole. After all, there is hardly a movie, TV show, or novel which does not, on a consistent basis, reinterpret the tradition to suit one of its plots, reflecting within them an atavistic understanding of its potential as a source of redemption as well as unchecked catastrophe. And, yet, despite all this, *supernatural time travel* continues to beguile the folk, continually teasing them with the simple question: what if?

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