Reviving the Undead

Thanks to a fellowship from the American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies, for part of this November and December, Brian Carroll will be traveling to the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts, a leading institute for the research of early American culture. While there, Professor Carroll will research and write part of his latest book project, *Burning the Hearts of the Dead: Medicine, Migration, and New England Vampire Belief*. Carroll received a fellowship earlier this year from Harvard University’s Center for the History of Medicine that allowed him to spend the summer at Harvard’s Countway Library of Medicine working on the project as well. *Burning the Hearts of the Dead* chronicles the introduction, development and decline of a macabre medical practice where, between 1782 and 1892, New Englanders suspected severe outbreaks of tuberculosis (then called ‘consumption’) were caused by the spirits of the dead who had perished from the disease coming out of their graves and siphoning the life from their surviving relatives. In order to stop the spread of the disease and save infected family members, desperate Yankees exhumed the corpses they thought were responsible, removed and burned their hearts, and made a medicine from the ashes that was administered to the infected. Although at the time they never used the term vampire to describe these creatures, the practice was based on the eastern and central European folk belief in the undead.

Carroll’s work reconstructs the story of how this foreign folk belief was brought to the region during the American Revolution by German military doctors serving in Hessian mercenary regiments that aided in Britain’s attempts to quell rebellion in its North American colonies. Dozens of German physicians became itinerant doctors in the aftermath of the war and, as they trekked through the area, taught Americans their belief in the undead. But because they were doctors, they introduced the practice not as something to combat the supernatural but as a legitimate medical practice to defeat disease. Thus, in America, vampire belief was medicalized—turned from a folk belief into what was perceived at the time as a cutting edge medical procedure. The exhumations were conducted like autopsies. Doctors used ‘scientific’ criteria and terminology when identifying and destroying supposed vampires. American doctors quickly caught on and began proscribing it themselves as a cure for the deadly wasting disease. Combing letters, diaries, town records, and newspaper accounts from the Early Republic, Carroll reveals that hundreds of these ‘vampire’ exhumations took place and at times became public spectacles. The doctors performing vampire exhumations were leaders in their field—members and sometimes presidents of professional medical societies or instructors at regional medical colleges. However, by the late 1810s and early 1820s, in response to competition from ‘alternative’ medical practitioners (many of them women) elite male doctors began “professionalizing” medicine—creating new educational standards and introducing medical licensing. Part of their efforts to clean up the reputation of American medicine and drive out “quacks” meant presenting...
Student

- History Club members and other interested students spent an evening in October playing a role-playing game based on colonial Atlantic trade. The game was developed several years ago by Brian Carroll in order to teach the vast scope and influence of transatlantic trade in the 17th and 18th centuries.

- Several students from Jason Dormady’s Religion in Latin America class, as part of a class assignment, constructed a Day of the Dead altar in honor of Petra Herrera, a woman who passed a man in order to fight in the Mexican Revolution. The students displayed their altar in the history department and at CWU’s commemoration of Day of the Dead.

Faculty

- Chong Eun Ahn presented at the Young Scholars’ Conference on China Studies at Hong Kong Baptist University in December. Her paper analyzes the ethnic Korean political self in northeast China (Manchuria) immediately after the Second World War. When the Japanese left in August 1945, the identification of ethnic Koreans from the former Manchukuo seemed to be an insignificant matter for nationalist forces, or even for the local ethnic Koreans themselves. By drawing on contemporary reports and memories, the paper asks: What influenced the ethnic Korean perceptions of their self-identity? How did the discourse of national liberation affect ethnic Korean political positions in the new China? Although ethnic Koreans were not totally ignorant of the political struggles between communists and non-communist nationalists, or of those between the socialist bloc and imperialists, such conflicts seemed possible only from the papers and the battlefields; they were not yet an apparent reality of their everyday lives. Looking into such political uncertainty not only nuances the complex histories of national liberation in northeast China, but also helps to connect ambiguous political concerns with transnational processes of ethnic identity making.

- Lacy Ferrell presented at the annual African Studies Association Meeting in San Diego in November. She was part of a panel on the social history of education in Africa and delivered a paper entitled “Learning to be Students in Colonial Ghana.” This is a culling from her dissertation, which she is currently turning into a book manuscript.

- Dan Herman gave an invited talk at the National Museum of Sporting and Animal Art in Middleburg, Virginia. The talk was entitled “Hunting Democracy” and was part of the Museum’s “Talks from the Rare Book Room” series.

- In October, Jason Knirck gave the plenary address at the Midwest Regional American Conference for Irish Studies at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. His talk was entitled “The First of the Small Nations: The Revolutionary Generation and Ireland’s Place in the World” and it highlighted how Irish politicians in the revolutionary era used references to other world regions to assess and assert Ireland’s historic nationhood, sovereignty, level of civilization, and economic development.

- Roxanne Easley is currently spending her sabbatical at the Sitka National Historical Park in Sitka, Alaska. While there, she is working on several aspects of Russian involvement in Alaska, including the role of the Russian Orthodox Church and the status and identity of peoples of mixed Russian and Native American heritage. Two recent CWU MA grads, Coleman Rushton and Jordan Bergstrom, are also currently employed by the US National Park Service in Sitka, working on a variety of projects related to Russian
There is life after being a dean, says Marji Morgan, who stepped down from her position as Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities in June of 2014 to return to the History Department. She wanted to spend her years before retirement teaching and learning about "The interviews offer a wealth of information on unique and award-winning Washington wines..."

Department

- The department recently hired two visiting lecturers as sabbatical replacements for Drs. Easley and Herman. Dr. Andrew Duffin received his PhD from Washington State University in 2003, specializing in environmental history and the American West. He is teaching a variety of US surveys, as well as upper-division courses in World Environmental History and the History of American Agriculture. Dr. Mandy Link received her PhD from Washington State University in 2015, specializing in Modern Irish, British, and World History. She is teaching several world history surveys, as well as upper-division courses on the First World War, the Second World War, and Britain's Global Empire.

- Steve Moore repeated his annual tradition of taking his UNIV 101 (freshman advising) students hiking up Manastash ridge. Several history majors and graduate students also made the trip and were rewarded with stunning views of the Kittitas Valley and exhaustive analogies between students' progress through the history major and the ascent up the ridge.

For more news on the department, please check out our Facebook page, Twitter feed, and brand new blog.

From Deaning to Radio

"The interviews offer a wealth of information on unique and award-winning Washington wines..."

There is life after being a dean, says Marji Morgan, who stepped down from her position as Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities in June of 2014 to return to the History Department. She wanted to spend her years before retirement teaching and learning about a field completely new to her: the history of food and drink. Last spring Marji taught a new course entitled “Food and Drink in Global History” and she is currently teaching the department's Historical Methods course with a similar focus. Students are exploring everything from the history of jello, to prison diets in Central Washington jails, to who was able to get alcohol legally during prohibition in Kittitas county.

One of the things that drew Marji to Washington state back in 2005 was the thriving wine industry, which she knew something about from her wine tasting groups in southern Illinois. During the past ten years she's learned a lot about the diversity of Washington wines, but also about the fascinating history and stories underlying the wines and wineries. Six months after stepping down as Dean, Marji launched an internet radio talk show with Washington winemakers entitled Lines on Wines. The show streams on Ellensburg Community Radio and podcasts are up permanently on the radio site and on Marji's Lines on Wines website at www.linesonwines.com. Each show is a half-hour interview and Marji streams a new episode every two weeks. The interviews offer a wealth of information on unique and award-winning Washington wines, the wine making process, and how the guts, dedication, and amazing creativity of our Washington winemakers and grape growers turned high desert lands full of sagebrush and rattlesnakes into world-class vineyards.

and Native American activities in Alaska.

- Jason Dormady recently published a collection of essays he co-edited entitled Just South of Zion: Mormons in Mexico and its Borderlands. Dan Herman also has an essay in this volume, which came out with the University of New Mexico Press.
themselves and their brand of medicine as ‘scientific.’ This entailed censuring and marginalizing forms of medicine that smacked of superstition. Vampire belief—which they had once endorsed—was now vigorously attacked by physicians in the press and as a result quickly fell out of favor with medical elites. However, the practice continued in isolated rural communities as a folk practice. A medical artifact of the era of the Early Republic, and a source of embarrassment for the region’s medical profession, its origin as a legitimate medical procedure was covered up in medical histories and conveniently forgotten.

New Spring Courses

HIST 498: The Era of World War Two (Dr. Mandy Link)

HIST 498: The History of American Agriculture (Dr. Andrew Duffin)

HIST 498: The Vietnam War (Dr. Steve Moore)

HIST 398: Popular Culture in East Asian History (Dr. Chong Eun Ahn)