

Dr. Janet L. Langlois

Since 1971, when she became Linda Dégh's student, Janet L. Langlois has made many important contributions to the field. She has published seminal books and articles, taught inspiring classes, and given wonderful papers at ISCLR meetings. Janet is a quiet but forceful scholar who steadily produces significant work that influences her colleagues as well as the next generation.

Shining through all her work, Janet's concepts of "intimate ethnography," "shadow ethnography," and "shared ethnography" have greatly enriched the methodology of legend studies. With her keen ability to listen, her fieldwork exemplifies "intimate ethnography," which transforms legend fieldwork into a deeply meaningful conversation, whether employing "shared ethnography," giving credit to the consultant, or "shadow ethnography," acknowledging the process of learning from students' and others' gathering of information. Both of us rarely teach a folklore class without assigning at least one (and sometimes four) of Janet's articles. Our students respond to the clarity of her presentation and come to appreciate more fully the importance of considering deep context with full attention to the real lives of the individuals and complicated networks of the communities sharing their legendry.

Janet's early article "'Mary Whales, I Believe in You': Myth and Ritual Subdued" (1978) identified "Bloody Mary" legends/rituals and generated a lively dialogue that continues to the present day. Drawing upon structuralist analysis, participant observation, and interviews with many adolescents, her article expresses significant insights. Since its publication, Alan Dundes, Bill Ellis, Bess Lomax Hawes, and other scholars have analyzed this subject. Linda Dégh devoted a section of *Legend and Belief* (2001) to "Bloody Mary," acknowledging the importance of Janet's fieldwork and analysis.

Belle Gunness: The Lady Bluebeard (1985) established Janet's position as a leading feminist legend scholar with an interest in social deviancy related to gender roles. Rumored to have killed as many as twenty husbands, Belle Gunness is repeatedly described in terms of deviance; Janet's study of her legendry has become significant source material and a model of analysis for legend scholars. "Mothers' Double Talk" (1993) further demonstrates the strength of Janet's feminist analysis.

Janet has covered a wide range of topics with her articles about legends related to race, region, political conflict, and contamination. Her article about an angry AIDS patient, "Hold the Mayo" (1991), analyzes the transmission of legends related to people's fear of contamination. A later article, "Celebrating Arabs" (2005), explores post-9/11 legends with impressive insight and subtlety and has proven valuable to fellow legend scholars and journalists alike.

Janet's most recent research project has been based upon her interviews with hospice workers and patients' families in Detroit. Her "Other Worlds: Talking about the Dead Returning" manuscript is underway and will soon be submitted to the University Press of Mississippi. Anyone who has heard Janet's ISCLR papers on this project is aware of the depth and eloquence of her analysis.