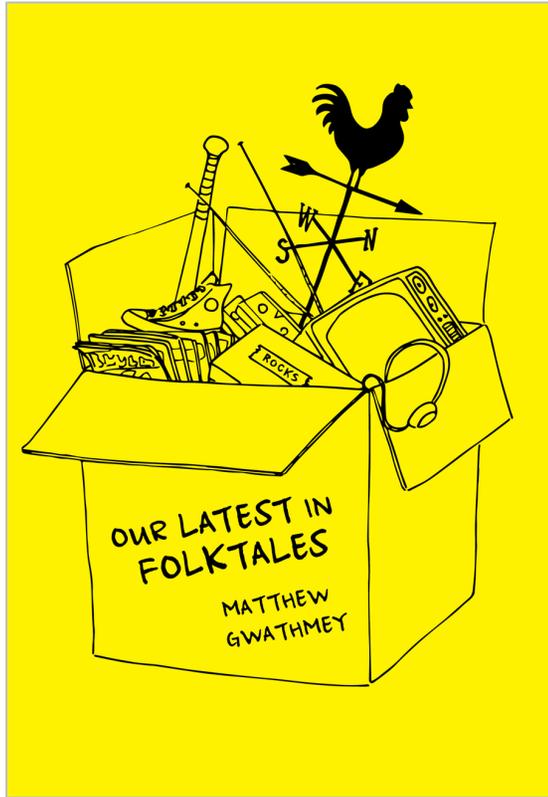


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# Our Latest in Folktales

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### London Buskers

We're shoved beneath a bridge, among peanut shells,  
to witness the most dangerous act in the city.  
In a quack's patter, the ringmaster spits superlatives;  
in place of topcoat and tails, he wears a hoodie.  
First enters dubstep, then two in tattoos and vests;  
they swallow swords from *The Song of Roland*—  
Durendal, Joyeuse, Curtana, Précieuse.  
With hands locked on hilts—a dervish, circling  
until they float above us, pulling out the blades  
then flinging their pierced organs at sterilized clouds,  
puncturing the canopy, torn pieces that our host catches.

### **New York Knickerbocker**

In the 96th Street subway station,  
an open-air display of off-brand watches,  
garish promises and potted geraniums  
tethers me to this netherworld hole.  
Hobbledehoy Earl the Pearl steps up  
for a pack of special-edition *Extra*,  
still sporting his vintage number fifteen jersey.  
He knows he's short but bets on reputation,  
trying to glean some freebie from former glory.

Muted *tap-tap-whir*. Seventy-nine cents.  
He scrounges his post-season pockets—  
three quarters to the counter, four pennies short.  
The tray's got a few new inbound plays.  
He adds them to his stash and checks the clock,  
prays for a last-second shot, another cent.  
Then, from behind the vendor's agile ear,  
appears a shiny, ball-shaped Abe Lincoln,  
fully grown and ripe for the picking,  
a no-look pass for the highlight reel.

### **Second Anniversary**

On the outskirts, at the end of a one-way street,  
a blind fiddler recreates our stroll down the aisle.  
Two flower girls dance together—twirling redheads  
secured by translucent strings—one to bow, one to scroll.  
A pause for vows. We jig to Scottish ceilidh tunes,  
the tracks we had chosen for our reception.  
The program's there on a stand in front of him,  
toasts and cake-cutting about to come. Bouquet toss pencilled in.  
The shopkeep, committing, ends our nuptials with a broom;  
he's going to sweep away the petals for a new trinity—  
fragrant perfumes, compact mirrors, stoles of fox fur.

**At Arcadia Dump, Later On**

We meet a shepherd among a trail of discarded electronics, his staff assembled out of PVC pipe. Impressive, his change from a parabola of methane to a camber of mercury, summing up the whole landfill season that stretched before us. “When I started,” he says, “I had everything I needed in the cloud.” The smell of sulfur caught in the art of natural selection—a breezy genetic drift. We watch a few beady-eyed sheep play off the dumping ground (darting noses, probing hooves against the slag heap edge, wool newly wet). Avian swimmers dodge steam-powered waves. Country folk dressed in hazmat suits search the undershow, snoop through garbage bags. At a yelp they huddle to marvel at a crunched statistic or a shiny zippo. The siren signals the next level of hide ye mouse and seek ye cat. Soon, the falling sky will be so close at hand.

**Franklin the Icebreaker**

Mid-October sees  
 steamers and barges slowed  
 down by bumpers of frost  
 along their polished hulls.  
 The freeze spreads from cape  
 to cape, closing the gash  
 in our abode.

Only pummellings  
 of gossip roam free,  
 wafting through stalled boats  
 waiting for the icebreaker.  
 Pointed bow, iron  
 rigging, the name *Franklin*  
 its only insignia.  
 As the game ship rises,  
 it cracks veins of passage  
 in the bay’s crust, releasing  
 long, muted thanks  
 from a multitude of horns.

### **Ninth Anniversary**

Stilled centurions, Tin Men, Victorian dames and gents,  
monochrome witches in star-encrusted beards,  
toys on pedestals on either bank of the driveway's gentle slope.  
Regarding some vague advice comes an unconvincing head-nod  
towards our shifting gears, our swaying helmets.  
Passing by our son—an emerald lizard on a lime bike—  
we find no amount of prodding will make his legs move.  
As a testament to us, the animate,  
we get this urge and ease him off his platform,  
detach his training wheels and push him to that first,  
unsteady motion where he has to pedal to keep upright.