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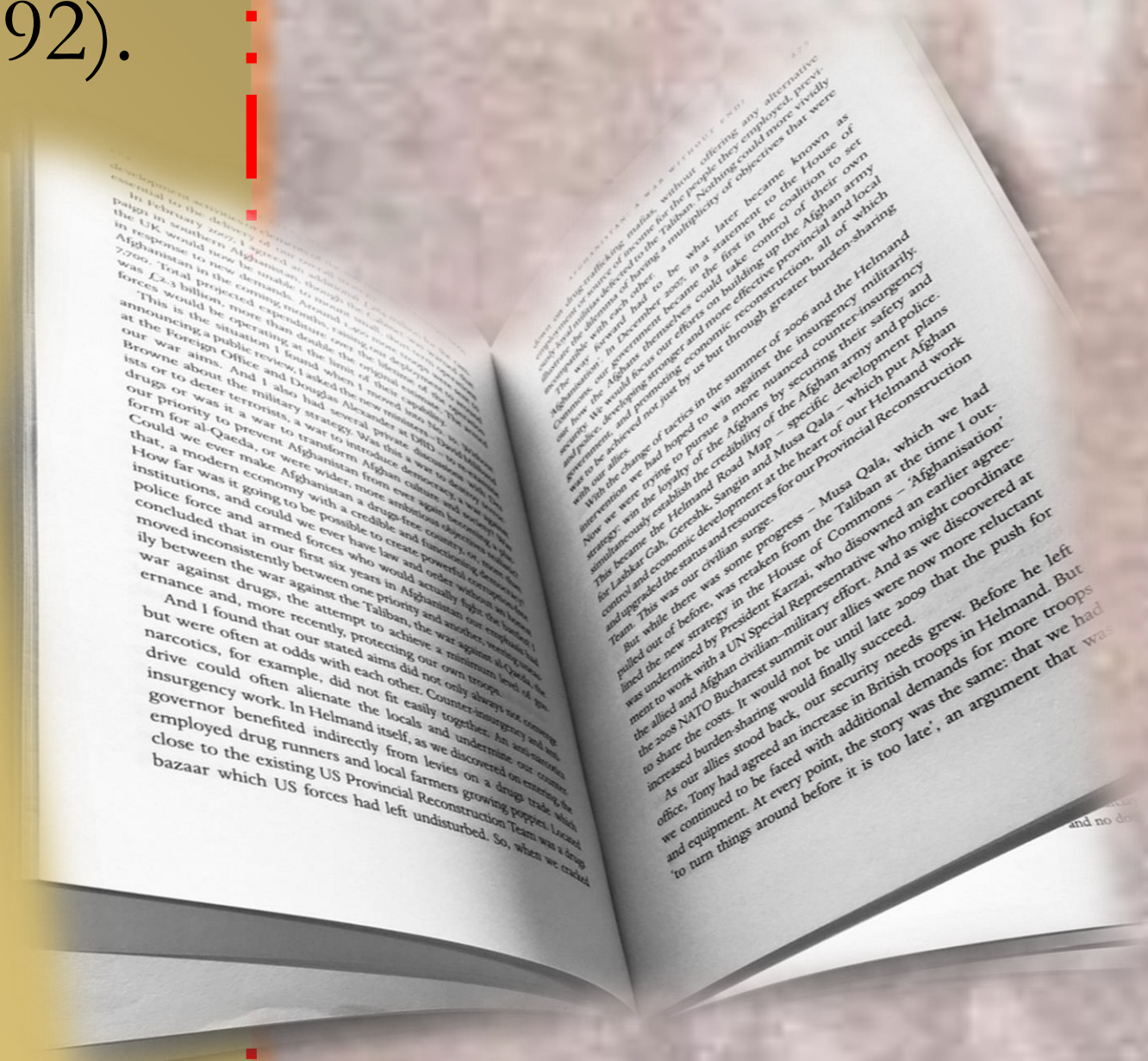
A Golden Approach to the Modern Legend in Young Adult Literature

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Introduction

Young Adult Literature (YAL) comprehends those texts appreciated by adolescents and whose topics are usually not preferred by the adult public: like “cars, sports and romance novels” (Small, 1992). Young readers may enjoy material chosen to Reflect upon the interests and problems they might have. Small (1992) also points out that YAL should not avoid controversial topics that are related to teenagers such as sexuality, substance abuse, identity and death so as to establish a better connection between the reader and the story.). One of the many genres included in YAL is represented by means of urban legends, since they can fulfil many of the YAL characteristics and deal with these topics.



The story

In the urban legend *Golden Hand*, it can be noticed from the beginning that the source of the story is unknown and the aspect of a spooky story is enclosed in each part of the narration. The atmosphere of a city block myth surrounds *Golden Hand*, where a woman with a golden hand is murdered by a neighbour.



Method

The purpose of this work is to analyze some characteristics and topics in the urban legend *Golden Hand* by S. E. Schlosser in which they are featured so as to engage young adults in reading using Becker, Emery, Kayne, and others as a theoretical framework.



What is an urban legend?

David Emery (2010) explains urban legends as a type of folklore, beliefs and stories of ordinary people ("the folk") primarily transmitted from individual to individual, and only in atypical cases via mass media or other institutional means. Urban legends are the essence of storytelling since they can have as many variants as there are tellers of a tale (Emery, 2010). YAL is embedded with the nature of beliefs (Lord, 2011). In fact, young adult catchy elements in urban legends are surely represented by the source of these myths: “they seem to come from nowhere” and by the presence of the unexpected, “a twist in the story that is outlandish but just plausible enough to be taken as truth” (Kayne, 2011).

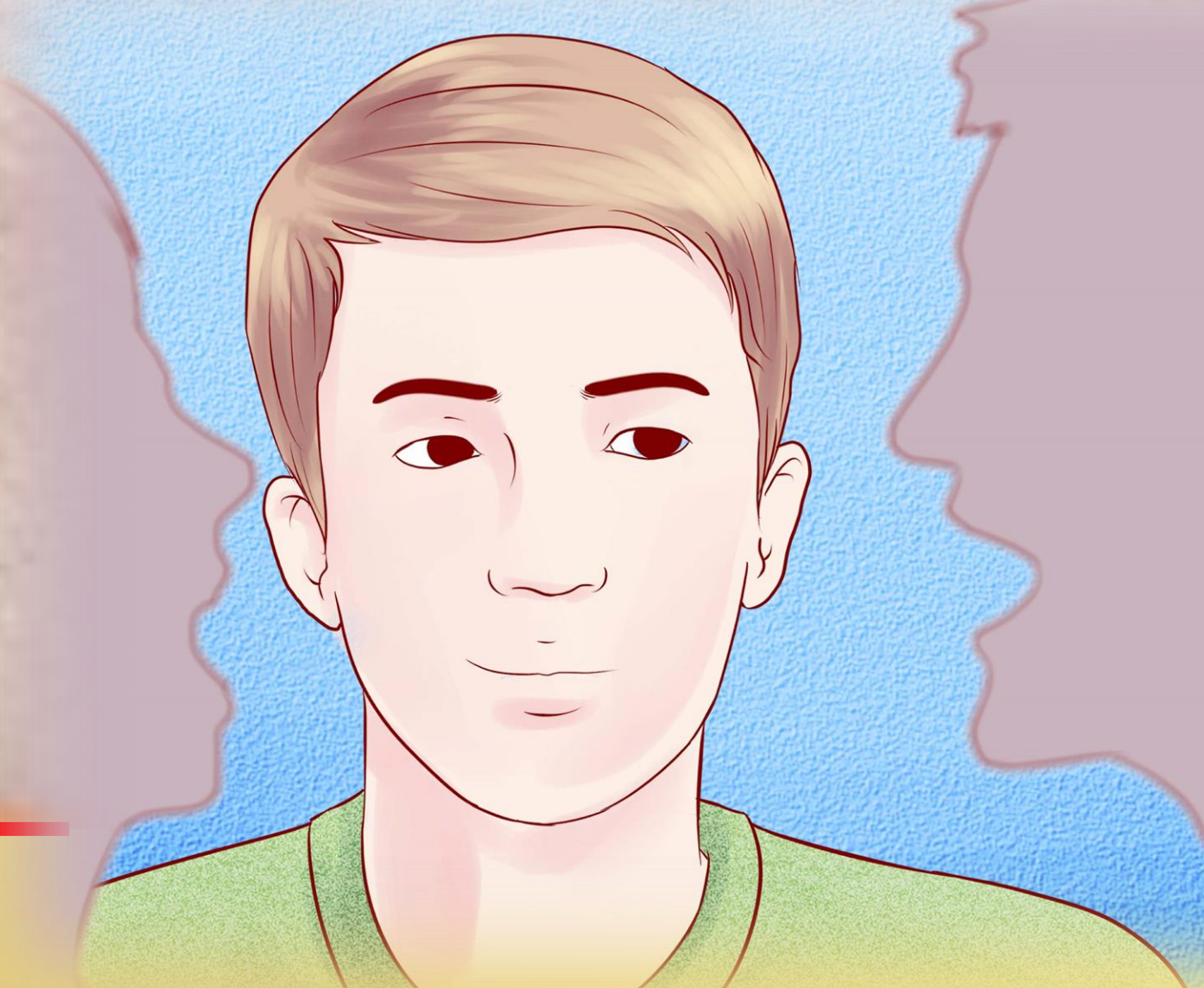


Analysis

The author of this story creates an almost perfect “Halloween atmosphere” in the introduction by saying, “It was a dark night. Clouds covered the moon, and the wind was whistling down the chimney and rattling the shutters of the town house”. *Golden Hand* is a creepy story and has some of the ingredients of an urban legend which have passed from mouth to mouth and that can eventually be modified by other tellers. This story would also be attractive for adolescents who may enjoy reading a short, simple and catchy plot so as not to get bored. For instance, the narration of the events can fill young readers’ expectation because they can feel represented by the main character who nurtures curiosity towards the mysterious lady as much as the incredible discovery her neighbour has made: the golden hand. The lust to possess the golden arm moves all the actions and it seems to be the connection line between the elements of surprise and the elements of fear that closes this tale as a ring when a phantom appears saying: “The glowing phantom moved closer to him, her once-lovely face twisted into a hideous green mask”. A fear can be less likely to disrupt a person's everyday life, and one can either learn to avoid the uncomfortable situations or learn how to relax and master them (Becker, 1973). Becker comments that young adult readers may feel attracted by scary stories due to the anxiety that fear generates and all these feelings can encourage the reader to continue reading till the end of the story.

Result

Teenagers particularly love mystery and creepy stories because they have the possibility to feed their imagination. Hence, it can be said that when speaking of tales, the character of fear might generally be connected with the transition to adulthood. In *Golden Hand*, adolescents can find some of the folktale elements of an urban legend which can stimulate their minds and make them enjoy when reading.



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