



PENSEZ A VOS ENFANTS!

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR CONTEMPORARY LEGEND RESEARCH

THE PLANE THAT CHASES CLOUDS AWAY:  
A Case Study of an Agricultural Rumor

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In most countries, a drought that goes on and on for several months synonymous with starvation. In affluent states, it merely leads to a conflict of interests between farmers, politicians and insurance companies. But wherever such a catastrophe takes place, "improvised news" plays its part in overheating peoples' spirits.

That is just what happened in the summer of 1986 in Dordogne. While a severe drought was hurting this region of France, a strange story began to circulate, explaining the true reason of the lack of rain. The farmers spoke of a plane that could chase and dissipate clouds before rain could fall. The story was substantiated by many subtle details. It was said that some large orchards and their insurance companies were hiring this mysterious plane to conduct clandestine cloud seeding experiments.

The local newspapers echoed the story when a petition signed by 500 cattle farmers reached the prefect of Dordogne: "They accuse the pilots of unknown tourist planes of dissolving the storm clouds by spraying them with silver iodide or even silver nitrate [*sic*], thus causing the dissipation of beneficial rain clouds. All that fuss to prevent losses to apple tree orchards from hail-carrying clouds" (La Montagne [5 august 1986], Clermont-Ferrand [Confusing silver iodide and silver nitrate was a revealing lapse].)

The drought of 1986 was quite localized in the southwestern France, not quite like the one in 1976 that caused a special drought-relief solidarity tax to be levied on all French taxpayers: "l'impôt sécheresse" of sinister memory. Therefore in 1986, the farmers had to convince the administration that their situation was as dreadful as in 1976. In addition, there were other rumors circulating in the rural areas afflicted by the drought, claiming that the price of grain was being artificially raised by unscrupulous distributors.

To try to calm the inflamed spirits, a meeting was organized at Excideuil by a town council member. About one hundred cattle farmers, some people representing the arboriculturists, a meteorologist and a civil aviation engineer were gathered in the city hall (Laval 1986; Kirkup 1989).

One has to be very cautious when trying to defuse a rumor in public. Every word counts, but maybe at the time there weren't many people locally who thought about this affair in terms of "a

rumor". There were the believers and those who thought it was just a "pack of lies." So the experts were asked for their opinion. The aviation expert said that a small plane could not approach a storm cloud anyway. However he put back doubts into the minds of the audience when he added that the radar operators didn't bother to follow each and every little tourist plane that flew by. The meteorologist said that in any case, although there were and had been tentative experiments to prevent hail by seeding clouds, preventing rain was impossible. His textbooks were adamant: it could not be done. But a man reacted in the audience stating he had heard on radio that the Russians had prevented rain from falling after the incident at the Chernobyl nuclear plant.

And the meeting ended on an ambiguous note when its organizer asked for letters to be addressed to the French senators demanding them to forbid all anti-hail experiments in the Dordogne region. After this, those who had believed in the rumor still believed it and those who had not, didn't know what to believe. The despair of many could lead to worse than exchange of mail. Some people had sworn, so went another rumor, to get even with the big orchards by going at night to cut the apple trees. But the spirits cooled by themselves when the rains came back two weeks later.

That was the time when, under showers of rain, I went to Excideuil to investigate. This deluge might explain why I found nobody who admitted to have believed in the dreaded airplane; it was always somebody else. To my dismay, I met nobody who was still a believer, although I learned later that the coming of the rain had not dissipated all suspicion of climatic foul play. However, I found many clues to help me understand why the story had caught on so well in and around Excideuil. There had been the combination of the farmers' hostility against the orchards and external factors which all led to controversies surrounding hail prevention techniques.

In Excideuil, the suspicion centered on a particular orchard because in 1974 it had subsidized an aviation company based in Agen to do a cloud seeding campaign to prevent hail. At the time, people were already whispering that this process could have the side effect of preventing rain from falling. But one person told me that, even before this, noise had circulated about how this orchard's installation modified the climate of the surrounding countryside: "when corn had been replaced by apple trees." Having introduced alien and disconcerting means of production, the exploiters were the ideal target for those who spread the story about the plane to compensate for their helplessness with the drought. The only weak point in the story's veracity was that the orchard was already protected from hail by a system of large nets spread over the trees. In addition, the orchard was also protected from the ravages of the drought by a system of irrigation.

I went to see the local manager of the orchard. They had used

the cloud seeding plane in 1974 but the results were inconclusive, as were their previous use of anti-hail rockets, so they bought the nets to insure a foolproof protection for the apple trees. The rumor did not affect the sale of apples and was just a little nuisance he had had to bear with year in and year out. But, even after the rain came back, he was still trying to convince the neighboring farmers that the orchard had nothing to do with the coming of the drought.

At the height of collective emotion, the plane was regularly heard but rarely seen. Those who described it to the journalists remarked that it was without markings as any mysterious airplane should be. There is a small airstrip near Excideuil and its presence made it quite easy to "perceive" the obvious signs of a cloud-chasing plot: if a tourist plane backed up when a storm menaced, it was under suspicion of having dissolved the clouds if rain didn't ensue.

I found out that many people had a very extensive knowledge of what planes were passing over their heads; real planes and not so real. They knew that cartographers's planes were photographing the farms and that the drought had helped the detection of unknown archaeological sites.

But other airships much more improbable came back in the conversations: the plane from which the "ecolos" or the pharmaceutical labs are releasing vipers in the countryside for reasons of their own (see Campion-Vincent 1990), or a peculiar "helicopter of the prefecture," whose mission was, so the story went, to watch for those clever guys who kept cleaning their cars or watering their lawns in time of drought.

There were also a number of external factors that contributed to the circulation of the story. The year 1986 was Chernobyl's year, and the news of how "the Russians had prevented a much more dreadful radioactive pollution by using planes to chase rain away from the catastrophe site" appeared on the front page of at least one French national newspaper, plus on radio and TV (see the declaration of the Soviet minister, M. Izrael, in *France-Soir*, 6 August 1986). Was the lack of rain that followed the disaster due to mere chance or to these planes? Anyway, that was news fit for the western media in the war of rumors that followed.

This Soviet announcement certainly had a major influence on the belief's development in Dordogne, but that didn't mean the story had emerged fully grown there. That same year, it was also heard in the Quercy region of France to account for the lack of "good truffle years": beneficial August storms were being prevented by the Tarn-et-Garonne arboriculturists who had rented a hail prevention plane. The supposed motives of these costly wrongdoings was that the sophisticated irrigation system of the fruit concerns could be upset by natural rain.

A bigger influence still on the presence of the rumor in Dordogne is the fact that it had been circulating in the south-eastern Spanish region of Murcia and elsewhere in Spain since at least 1985 and throughout 1986. It almost escalated into violence at the time. Spain had just entered the Common Market, and the agricultural question was under media scrutiny. As in Dordogne, the designated culprits were big companies: "The Tomato Moguls."

Other possibilities were discussed in the Spanish press in a somewhat amused manner. Some rumors, for example, accused the tourist industry of being behind the rain-stealing-planes for fear of tourists deserting Spanish beaches when their expectation of a perfect tan became clouded. A demonstration was organized in the streets of the city of Murcia to denounce the "artificial anticyclone of the tomato growers." Graffiti were found all over the walls of the city: "Death to the tomatoes, yes to rain." A

pamphlet circulated at the time: its author explained that the death of Franco and the return of democracy in Spain had troubled the "normal order of things," hence this unnatural drought. The controversy seems to have died out in Spain when inundation followed the drought in 1986 (Bowers and Westley 1985; Spanish Mystery Planes 1986).

The transmission of the Iberian polemic to Dordogne might have been helped by migrant fruit pickers, who work as seasonal farmhands in the south of Spain, and who came to Excideuil in September to gather apples. Stories of the stuff proto-legends are made from were circulating among these pickers. A Spanish journalist collected the following: "Despite a menacing storm, pickers from a "Tomato Mogul" exploitation are sent to the fields by a foreman who says the rain is not going to fall. After having heard the noise of a plane, everyone wonders how the cloud has dissipated without breaking. This is the reason of the drought!" (Para 1986).

For those recounting it, this story authenticated the rumor of the cloud-stealing-plane by setting it in a particular place and time. My theory is that, leaving Excideuil in October 1985, the Spanish pickers would have left behind stories similar to this one, ready to be used as material for the following year's rumor.

At last, my inquiry was directed to the heart of the matter: the weather modification controversies. The technique of seeding clouds was put to the test in the mid 1940's in the USA. It consists of spreading silver iodide or other substances so that tiny icy particles may form in clouds. You may accordingly obtain rain in time of drought or prevent hail by precipitating it before large hailstones can aggregate. An enthusiasm reminiscent of the one displayed by the rainmakers of the nineteenth century followed this discovery (Spence 1980).

A few private entrepreneurs set up commercial rain-making concerns and started to sell their know-how to American farmers. At last, it seemed possible to open at will the faucets of the sky. But as the years went by, cloud seeding techniques were accused of causing climatic mishaps. The problem facing these modern days rainmakers was the same that confronted their counterparts in the previous centuries: no two groups want the same weather at the same time.

In 1964, the Blue Ridge Weather Modification Program, a seeding campaign started in 1957 to protect orchards against hailstorms, was halted due to the fears of the neighboring cattle farmers that it was strengthening the ravages of the drought. The same argument was heard again during 1977 in the San Luis Valley, where another seeding program was stopped because its opponents thought it was diminishing rain and because its promoters lost their confidence in its effectiveness (Arnett 1980). Cloud seeding by planes or ground generators was used elsewhere, in France and Spain for example. It seems that the "fears" that accompanied these techniques also leaped across the borders.

Experts haven't yet reached agreement on whether silver iodide seeding is effective. Some meteorologists have even warned that under certain conditions, cloud seeding might decrease rainfall or increase hail. It is quite difficult to measure the real impact of the seeding amid the noise of natural climatic variations. The ambiguity of the results have divided the people involved, meteorologists, university researchers, insurance men and farmers into believers and skeptics. But theories circulating among a small band of meteorological experts soon were used as explanations by the farmers who identified themselves as victims of these experiments when meteorological catastrophes like drought or hailstorms followed.

Some meteorologists who doubt that cloud seeding has any effect at all assert that it just offers psychological relief: it is better to do something than to feel helpless. The impetus for farmers to do something against the ravages of hail has not changed throughout the centuries; only the means of protection are different. Some quite "folkloric" techniques are used today in different parts of the world, such as modernized hail guns fired by computer, anti-hail rockets, or even weirder methods like the burning car tires to dissipate hail clouds.

In the past, collective ways existed to propitiate the meteorological powers that be. These practices haven't totally disappeared in our days of farming individualism. In France, for example, Catholic priests continue to pray for rain in time of drought, and one can still hear stories of special people who were able to disperse hail at will in the old days, such as those "grêleur" well remembered in some winemaking regions. Other modern practices of weather manipulation include the neo-reichians' use of cloudbusters. It is just a coincidence, but some French disciples of Wilhelm Reich experimented with such a device in Dordogne in 1977, stating in a published article that they were able to dissolve clouds with it (Cardinet and Couturier 1977).

Attributing the rumor of the cloud-chasing plane to the a rural population's "credulity" misses the real point of the hail prevention controversy. This rumor is just one in a family of stories that circulate about negative aspects of weather-making. Most of all, the advocates of these techniques tend to accuse the concurrent seeding processes not only of being ineffective but furthermore of causing a reaction opposite to the result required. So I have heard that "anti-hail rockets have triggered "water-spouts," "cloud seeding planes have prevented rain from falling," and "ground silver iodide generators are known to send hailstorms over the neighboring region."

These accusations are interchangeable and have helped to impede research into alleviating intemperate weather. Further research on the history of these techniques worldwide might show how these stories of negative weather manipulation are no longer created as in traditional folklore by denouncing evil people, but by attacking the technology that has superseded old farming ways.

[This article is a shortened version of "Une rumeur de sécheresse," in Communications 52 (1990):85-98.]

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[Editor's Note: Similar incidents have occurred in the US but have not been studied by folklorists. For instance, in 1983 many people in western Maryland believed that an unusual drought affecting a 50-square-mile area was being caused by people "trying to modify the weather by dumping chemicals into the clouds." Although the cloud-seeders were never apprehended, 6000 farmers signed a petition of protest. A state law banning illicit cloud-seeding was passed by state lawmakers and was signed into law by the governor in 1983 ("Rumors of Satanism," Hagerstown [MD] Herald-Mail [24 October 1990]). Readers, any other incidents? --BE.]

#### "A STRANGE SORT OF POWER THAT I HAD IN MY POSSESSION": An Ostensive Version of "The Vanishing Hitchhiker"

[This text was self-collected in spring 1975 by Neil R. Mortine of Newcomerstown, Ohio, an undergraduate taking an introductory folklore course at Ohio State University from Dr. Jean MacLaughlin. Text from his collection project, "Legends and Folklore of Appalachian Ohio," in the Ohio State University Folklore Archives, Columbus, Ohio.]

One summer night in early June of last year, a Newcomerstown, Ohio (Tuscarawas County) youth, Jeff Orr, was driving his car near the tiny hill hamlet of Gilmore, Ohio (Tuscarawas County). Approximately three miles east of Gilmore, he saw a young girl walking along the side of the road. Because of the lateness of the hour, Jeff stopped his car and asked the girl if she would like a ride. The girl graciously thanked him and climbed into the seat.

She told him that her name was Jane Murphy, and that she was having trouble getting her car to start. Jeff noticed that she was shivering uncontrollably, so he gave her his sweater to wear. They drove in silence for awhile until suddenly the girl pointed out her house. Jeff stopped the car and let the girl out. She thanked him again, waved, and walked into the house.

Jeff sat and stared at the building for awhile. It was very old and run-down, and much in need of repair. Its appearance was more of an old shack than of a house. He glanced at his watch, noticed it was getting very late, so he started on down the road.

Just before Jeff got into Newcomerstown, he remembered that he had left his sweater with the girl. So he turned the car around and drove back to her house. He found the place again with no problem, got out, and went to the door. It was a good five minutes before he heard someone walking down the steps to answer his knocking. A porch light went on as an old lady cautiously peered out her screen door at Jeff.

He explained to the woman that he had given her daughter a ride home, and that he had forgotten to get his sweater back from her. The old lady began to sob very softly to herself, and tears started rolling down her face. When Jeff asked what the matter was, the woman told him between her sobs that her daughter had died ten years ago on her birthday in a car wreck. She told him that every year on the anniversary of her daughter's death, some young man always stops by for a sweater which the girl had borrowed from him.

Jeff stumbled his way back to the car and started off down the road at a high rate of speed. He had no particular destination in mind, but he just wanted to drive around to collect his thoughts. He was sure that the girl in his car had been real and not a ghost, and his sweater was definitely gone.

Jeff suddenly realized that a cemetery was just down the road from where he was. He stopped his car at the gate and started

walking through the graveyard trying to find the girl's grave. At the end of the lawn he suddenly froze. He was staring right at a tombstone which read:

JANE MURPHY  
BORN JUNE 6, 1948 DIED JUNE 6, 1964  
MAY SHE REST IN PEACE WITH THE LORD

And hanging on the edge of her grave was his sweater.

As far as I know, not a word of this story is true. I first heard it when I was just a little kid as a song on the radio. I remember then that song really scared me, and I made my aunt turn the radio off. As I grew older and my fears subsided, it came to me that if I was so easily frightened by this song, then I could no doubt frighten others younger or less mature than myself by making up a story following the basic plot of this song while adding local facts and references to make it more believable. This is exactly what I did, with some rather startling results.

I told this story, as I have previously given it, when I was a senior in high school to a friend who was a year behind me. We were driving through the country at night along the same route that Jeff Orr had taken this girl home (supposedly, according to the story). The setting was perfect and I was really serious and completely unfunny, telling this story in an eerie monotone.

Just as I finished we pulled up alongside this cemetery (Hartwood) where the girl was buried. The guy in the car with me, Joe, was visibly shaken by what he had heard, but he still refused to believe me. I offered to take him into the graveyard and show him the girl's grave as proof. Upon this offer he suddenly changed his position, saying that he now believed me, but he definitely didn't want to go into that graveyard.

After much prodding and name-calling, I finally got Joe out of the car, and we began to make our way toward the graveyard, with Joe clutching to the sleeve of my shirt. The beam of my flashlight went over several different gravesites before it struck the tomb of a JANE MURPHY at the end of the lawn, and on the edge of the tomb there was hanging an old gray sweater (which had been placed there several hours previously).

This was all that was needed, for with a double-take and a gasp of horror, Joe promptly keeled over backwards, fainting from the shock. This action was met by uproarious laughter from five of my friends who were hiding in some nearby trees.

I can't really explain the emotion I had at that moment. It was a kind of fear that I had caused Joe to have a heart attack or something, mixed with the feeling of a strange sort of power that I had in my possession through the telling and manipulation of this story and others like it.

Anyway, I finally revived Joe, and we got back in my car and raced off down the road. To this day (it's been about three years now), Joe still turns white as a ghost when he tells about what happened that night. He fully believes that story, and as a result of this, many other people now believe it.

"BLOMMETJIE GEDENK AAN MY"  
[Oh My Flower, Remember Me]:

A South African Vanishing Hitchhiker Song

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1. In Skraal wind waai oor n'ghoeniebosse  
a mean wind blows over the-n'goenie-bushes  
op die pad buite Uniondale.  
on the road outside Uniondale  
Elke paasnaweek staan die spookmeisie daar  
Each Easter-weekend stands the ghost-girl there  
as die herfswind\* hoeka al huil.  
as the autumn-wind long-ago already howls.

2. Met haar lang swart hare onder sekelmaan  
With her long black hair under sickle-moon  
tuur sy oor die vlaktes haai,  
stares she over the plains barren  
en haar klere blink spookagtig saam  
and her clothers shine ghostly with  
en haar duim vra om haar op te laai.  
and her thumb asks her on to load [i.e.,  
asks for a lift]

Chorus: En die kammanassie spook geil  
And the Kammanassie ghost\*

as hy klippe bergaf rol,  
as he rocks off-mountains rolls  
en die spookmeisie van Uniondale  
and the ghost-girl of Uniondale  
wat duim ry en droewig sing:  
who thumbs ride and sadly sings  
"Blommetjie gedenk aan my,"  
flower-little remember about me  
en sy lig haar duim na bo.  
and she lifts her thumb to above  
"Blommetjie gedenk aan my,"  
flower-little remember about me  
sing die spook van die Klein Karoo.\*  
sings the ghost of the Little Karoo  
(Repeat second four lines)

3. Die reisigers verby Uniondale  
The travellers past Uniondale  
het haar dikwels opgelaai,  
have her often up-loaded [given her a lift]  
en verderaan so uit die neit  
and farther-on so out the nothing  
verdwyn sy in die wind wat waai.  
disappears she in the wind that blows

4. So as jy saans in die langpad dwaal  
So as you evenings on the long-road roam

oor die Pase middernag,  
over the Easter midnight  
pas op vir die spook van die Klein Karoo  
look out for the ghost of the Little Karoo  
tensy jy gaan spook jag.  
unless you go ghost hunting

[Repeat Chorus]

Notes: 1.3-4. Since the seasons are reversed south of the Equator, Easter is an autumn holiday in South Africa. Easter week, particularly the night of Good Friday, takes on the atmosphere of Halloween in Europe and North America.

C.1. The Kammanassie mountains are just west of the Uniondale.

C.8. "Karoo" is a Hottentot word meaning "dry country." The Big and Little Karoo are arid plains located on the southern tip of the continent, the Little Karoo lying between the coast and a range of mountains near Oudtshoorn.

[Editor's notes: Dr. de Bruyn was kind enough to send a cassette tape of a performance of this song from an old 45 rpm. record that he located. The musical accompaniment--electric guitar, drums, and synthesizer--is hardly folk-like to American ears, but the lead singer cleanly and impersonally enunciates the lyrics in classic ballad style. I'd be glad to dub the piece for any reader who sends me a blank cassette.

A free English translation:

1. A wicked wind blows over the n'goenie bushes  
On the road near Uniondale.  
There a ghostly girl waits, every Good Friday night  
As the eternal autumn winds howl.
2. With her long black hair, under the sickle-shaped moon  
She gazes over the barren plains,  
And her clothes shine with a ghostly glow  
And she stands there, begging for a ride.

Chorus: As the Kammanassie ghost  
Rolls rocks down the mountain,  
The phantom girl of Uniondale  
Thumbs a ride and sadly sings:  
"Oh, my flower, remember me!"  
As she holds her thumb in the air:  
"Oh, my flower, remember me!"  
Sings the ghost of the Little Karoo.

3. Those who travel past Uniondale  
Have often given her a lift,  
But down the road, out of nowhere,  
She vanishes like the wind.
4. So if you should happen down this road after dark,  
Near midnight, around Easter,  
Look out for the ghost of the Little Karoo  
Unless you're out looking for a ghost!

It is interesting that this local legend, like its international analog, has inspired popular songs. A valuable study might survey the various transformations of this story: children's fiction, movie scripts, paranormal literature, and popular song--BE.]

BODY BAG BACKLOG:  
A Contemporary Legend?

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A friend narrated the following tale in Sheffield, UK, in 1984. I took it to be a contemporary legend and wrote it down immediately, checking the details and some aspects of the formulation with the informant. I thought that I might hear this tale again at a later date, but never did; nor have I seen it recorded in the literature on contemporary legends. The title is the one the informant thought appropriate:

Body Bag Backlog

Police and the press in America were expecting the return of a number of body bags from Nicaragua, as a result of American forces fighting there. Two hundred casualties had been announced. During the first week, however, 800 frozen bodies arrived for military burial, and during the next week 1400 were flown in for an honorable military funeral.

A smart journalist realized that you could check the number of dead in the casualty figures by attending the military funerals. So he attended the military funerals, and counted the number of dead. He found the figures didn't square with the official reports of the number of dead--there were far more bodies than there should have been. He decided to try to discover the names of the dead--not easy, because many were marked "unknown."

Eventually, however, he traced a number of names back to the Vietnam War. It turned out that there were thousands and thousands of frozen bodies, awaiting an honorable military funeral!

Essential to this tale is the fact that the Americans--and I think only the Americans--have the policy of bringing home for burial the body of every soldier killed in action abroad. The grotesque idea underlying this tale is that there is a huge backlog of frozen bodies from previous wars awaiting the opportunity of a proper military funeral.

This tale seems to have a number of features in common with other contemporary legends, for instance:

- a. The contents of the tale are implausible. The Americans there were supposed only to be advising in Nicaragua, not fighting there. In the event that they were actually in combat there, they would have been unlikely to publish casualty figures acknowledging large numbers of dead.
- b. The tale was told me by a friend, who heard it from a friend, who claimed it was true.
- c. The theme of death is quite common in legends.
- d. There is a strong element of horror, of the macabre, the shocking, which again is common in contemporary legends.
- e. The authorities, over whom we have little control, are again shown to be unreliable and guilty of scandalous behavior.
- f. The linguistic structure of the tale is typical of legends. A crucial piece of information is withheld until the end.
- g. There are other legends about the Vietnam War and also about body bags.

I would be interested to know whether readers of FOAFtale News have heard versions of this legend.

## BULLETIN BOARD

1991 PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEMPORARY LEGEND CONFERENCE. The International Society for Contemporary Legend Research will host the Ninth International Perspectives on Contemporary Legend Conference at the Radisson Resort Hotel, South Padre Island, Texas, USA, on 7-10 May 1991. First held in 1982 at Sheffield, England, these meetings have provided legend scholars with a forum for exchanging ideas and keeping in touch with current research.

The 1991 meeting is to be organized as a series of seminars, at which the majority of individuals attending will present papers and/or contribute to discussion sessions. If you wish to participate in the conference, please forward a title and abstract for your paper (up to 400 words, double-spaced) to the convener at the address below. Deadline: 1 February 1991. Similarly, if you would like to propose any special discussion sessions or events, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

For information regarding the conference, please contact:

Mark Glazer, College of Arts and Sciences  
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E-mail: MG68E8 at PANAM.BITNET.

AMERICAN FOLKLORE SOCIETY PANELS AND FORUMS FOR 1991-92. The Folk Narrative Section of the AFS proposes to sponsor two sessions at the 1991 meeting in St. Johns, Newfoundland. One, a panel of papers, will focus on the idea "Speak of the Devil." We would like to include essays on images of Satan or demons in a variety of genres, including folktales, legends, and personal experience narratives. Contact Mark Glazer, address above.

The second, a discussion forum, will discuss "Bilingual Narrators: Problems in Fieldwork and Analysis." We hope to include both scholars working on Cajun and other French communities in the Louisiana Purchase and those who have worked in Quebec and the Maritime Provinces. Contact Bill Ellis, Penn State, Hazleton Campus, Hazleton, PA 18201 if you are interested in participating in or chairing this forum. E-mail WCE2 at PSUVM.BITNET. (Off line 1 December-15 January).

The Children's Folklore Section is also considering a panel on "Children's and Adolescents' Magical Rituals," which may be of interest to folk narrative researchers. Contact Judith Haut, 2733 Halsey Road, Topanga, CA 90290.

Looking ahead to Jacksonville, Florida, in 1992, the section will sponsor a series of panels discussing "The Vanishing Hitch-hiker" from a variety of cultural and methodological perspectives. Gary Alan Fine has also proposed a forum on folk narrative and performance for this meeting. Those interested in participating in either of these sessions should contact Bill Ellis, address above.

JUST IN!

### HALLOWEEN IN AMERICA

REALISTIC IMAGES OF DEATH. On 20 October, customers on a hay-filled wagon passed several Halloween fright exhibits in Lakewood, New Jersey, before arriving at a very realistic image of a man hanging from a gallows. The driver of the wagon, however, became concerned when the hanged man, Brian Jewell, 17, failed to deliver a speech that he normally gave with the noose around his neck. Investigating, customers found that Jewell was really dead. An

official explained that the noose had worked perfectly other nights. An autopsy revealed that Jewell had suffocated; hayrides at the attraction resumed on October 26 after the gallows had been dismantled. [AP, 23 and 30 October 1990.]

"The Amazing Joe," an escape artist who claimed to be "the next Houdini and greater," volunteered to perform a Halloween escape at Blackbeard's Family Fun Center in Fresno, CA as a benefit for a local drug rehabilitation center. "Joe" (Joseph W. Burrus, 32), himself a recovering addict, was handcuffed, wrapped in chains, and locked inside a coffin. Then he planned to have himself lowered into a 7-foot-deep grave and buried. As the coffin was being lowered, assistants realized something had gone wrong when Burrus began knocking on the side of the coffin. Before he could be raised again, however, the sides of the grave collapsed, and when rescuers reached the coffin, Burrus was dead. Reporters noted that Houdini had also died on Halloween night, in 1926. [AP, 1 November 1990.]

SANTA MONICA "CANDY POISONING." Ariel Katz, 7, had been collecting candy in a Santa Monica, CA, neighborhood on Halloween night together with a group of friends and two adult chaperones, when after eating candy from her bag, she suddenly collapsed and died. Authorities tested candy from her bag for poison and urged parents to "withhold sweets collected in the area where she had been trick-or-treating." An autopsy, however, showed that Katz who had a congenital heart defect, had died of cardiac failure. [AP, 1 and 2 November 1990.]

### EYE ON SATANISM

ROCHDALE: ROW OVER RITUAL CHILD ABUSE. A vocal dispute broke out in September over British social services departments involved in detecting underground rings of satanic child abusers. The affair began quietly in March, when a 6-year-old boy from a lower-class housing project between Manchester and Rochdale began volunteering stories to his teacher about bizarre rituals. The teacher called in social workers, who questioned the boy further under the guidance of NSPCC [National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children] specialists. A "ghost" would come to him at night, the child told investigators, and offer him sweets and lemonade. Then he would be taken somewhere else, where people would stab sheep and eat them, kill babies, dig up graves, and burn crosses.

On 29 March, the Rochdale social services department obtained a court order to take custody of the boy and his sister, who after repeated questioning told more stories about ghosts, castles, and horrors. Parents were not questioned before their children were taken into protective custody; later they admitted that the two had watched rented videos like The Evil Dead, The Klan, and Dungeons and Dragons. Police searches revealed nothing.

By June, investigators were sure that a satanic cult was in the Rochdale development, so on the morning of 14 June police raided four homes, taking 16 more children into custody. Since initial news coverage of the incident had given (authorities felt) too many clues to the families' identity, they obtained an injunction preventing parents from seeing their children or making official inquiries about the charges against them. Newspapers too were blocked from publishing information or even making inquiries relative to the case. Later, social workers added that they feared that parents would "use special trigger words and secret signs to gag the children," preventing them from identifying the cult.

On 9 September, The Mail broke the silence, denouncing the investigation as "totalitarianism . . . creating an atmosphere which is beginning to be reminiscent of the days of the Nazis."

The feature concluded, "if an assault had been committed upon the children of Rochdale then it looks as if that assault has been committed by the judges, by the social services department and by all those involved in this appalling case." ["SILENCED! They stole their children--and then they took away their rights," The Mail (9 September 1990):1; Barbara Jones and Andrew Chapman, "Scandal of the Stolen Children," The Mail (9 September 1990):12-13; Steve Crowther, "Parents are parted from children in Satanic row," Daily Express (11 September 1990):17.]

In the public uproar that followed, police admitted that the children showed no medical sign of abuse, and that they had never located any hard evidence for their charges. Despite initial denials, The Mail concluded that several key investigators had gone to a three-day conference on satanism held in Reading in September 1989 [See FN 16:8]. During this event, which was closed to the press, Robert J. Simandl, a Chicago police officer and cult-hunter, had described children being sexually abused in underground tunnels and even being cooked alive in a microwave oven. He circulated lists of "Satanic indicators" and warned social workers that they would be disbelieved, attacked, and ridiculed by the media, yet it was their duty to stop satanism: "Children knew what was happening. . . . We had to believe them."

Another speaker, Maureen Davies, circulated information from The Reach-Out Trust, a Wales-based Christian organization devoted to combatting the occult. This described how children are made to drink blood and eat spiders, and often "are passed around as [sexual] objects for the entertainment of adults." When girls reach puberty, they often have to kill their own children. "This makes them guilty of murder which is then used to bring about another aspect of fear, showing them they are in the system and can't get out. After the sacrifice, they take the heart, spleen, and eyes and eat them. The children are taught how to remove these parts of the body. . . . The fat is used for candles and the bones ground down and the powder is used as an aphrodisiac."

A social worker attending commented, "I have never heard such gobbledegook in all my life . . . there was never one solid fact to back it all up." Yet, he told The Mail, "I admit I did not have the courage to get to my feet and voice my doubts. Everyone was taking copious notes. There was an atmosphere of hysteria around which I found frightening." The Reading seminar was quickly followed by other "teach-ins" organized by participants in other British cities. [Barbara Jones and Andrew Chapman, "Where the devil is the evidence?" The Mail (16 September 1990):12-13,15.]

Meanwhile three more children were taken into custody by Rochdale officials on 10 September, as Gordon Littlemore, director of social services for Rochdale, defended the investigation. The charges, he countered, were based several children's corroborating testimony. Shortly afterwards, reporters determined that at least three members of the NSPCC child sexual abuse team in Manchester had not only attended the Reading conference, but had given presentations there. Littlemore himself had attended one of the follow-up seminars only weeks before the first Rochdale raids. In response, Manchester council bosses called the NSPCC's work in the area "unsatisfactory" and withdrew its £160,000-a-year grant; a similar move by Rochdale Council is pending. [Tom Sharratt, "Satanic abuse total grows," The Guardian (11 September 1990); Mark Christy and Anthony Walton, "Satan Witch Hunts," Daily Star (20 September 1990):4-5; Tom Fullerton, "Who Was at Teach-ins?" Daily Star (21 September 1990):11; Patrick Mulchrone and John Jackson, "NSPCC Sacked in Child Abuse Row," Daily Mirror (25 September 1990). All references courtesy Bill Thompson.]

**GULF BREEZE, ANTICHRIST, OUIJA BOARDS, AND DEMON-CHOSEN TEENAGERS.** Gulf Breeze, Florida, where Ed Walters claimed to have photographed UFOs at close range and spoken to extraterrestrials; was in the news again when six US soldiers were arrested there on 13 July and charged with deserting their posts in Augsburg, Germany. In public statements, the six denied any special interest in UFO matters, claiming that they had only been visiting a mutual friend who lived in Gulf Breeze. Eventually, charges against the group were dropped, but three of them chose to remain in Gulf Breeze rather than return home.

Nevertheless, rumors circulated at the time of the arrests and later that the six were members of a religious sect called The End of the World Group and believed that Jesus would arrive soon in a spaceship. The most circumstantial version holds that the six held frequent sessions with a Ouija board, which accurately predicted the Kuwait invasion and other events. At one point, the board instructed the group to go to a Munich restaurant, where a mysterious woman handed them papers written by William Cooper, a former naval officer who claims to have seen documents proving that the US government has concluded a secret treaty with satanic aliens [see FN 17:6]. Before leaving their base, they burned books and records and gave away possessions to friends, telling others they were ready for the Rapture, the physical assumption of believers into heaven before Armageddon. Other witnesses claimed the six said they were going to look for Antichrist. (Ed Walters expressed fears that he was the target of the soldiers' search.)

Military critics noted that the six had top security clearances and access to confidential information. But Defense officials discounted these attacks, one source noting, "whether we allow soldiers with religious, or what some consider bizarre beliefs, to have access to intelligence information, the answer is it is not appropriate for any DoD agency to investigate religious groups." [Colin Hughes, "Dotty six in a devil of a fix," The Independent (22 July 1990):18; AP, 30 July 1990; "Hold the Back Page," Magonia 37 (October 1990):20; " 'Gulf Breeze 6' Charmed by Ouija," UFO 5:6 (November/December 1990):5.]

Meanwhile, CUFOS released a special report, revealing that Walters had been in the habit of holding "seances" for adolescents at his house. During one ceremony, he would position three girls inside a chalk circle, ask the group to repeat the 23rd Psalm backward, then take Polaroid photographs of each one. One photo, he predicted, would have a "ghost" on it, indicating which girl was the "chosen one" to be possessed that night. One such picture shows a shadowy demon-like figure hovering over the girl's left shoulder and holding out a beckoning arm. Walters dismisses the seances as improvised party games and the "ghost" as an accidental reflection off a mirror or glass door. Skeptics analyzing the photos counter that Walters' prediction assumes that he knew that one shot did contain a latent image of a "ghost," a trick photography technique that could account for Walters' UFO shots. [Zan Overall, Gulf Breeze Double Exposed: The Ghost-Demon Photo Controversy (Chicago: CUFOS, 1990).]

**MEANWHILE, IN ZIMBABWE.** A Harare columnist reports that at least three covens of satanists are active within 50 km. of the nation's capital city. In Epworth, Goromonzi, and Melfort (all in Mashonaland East province), the "covens of depraved men and debauched and degenerate females hold the immediate local population to ransom because of fear and a total and unspoken dread . . . it is strongly rumoured, that in one of these three cult assemblies, a public official whose family originated outside our borders, was himself a high-ranking member of the coven."

Known locally as "gure dancers," the covens meet about twice a

month, marking off the area of their secret devil-worship ceremonies by tying pieces of red cloth to bushes. Hiding their identities behind "hideous traditional masks, similar to the masked groups from outside our borders, now accepted as part of the welcoming dancers . . . at Harare airport," the gure dancers assemble at sites of recent burials. "They open the grave, cut parts of the mortifying flesh from the corpse--and eat those parts. This to the accompaniment of dancing and invoking the devil to recharge them with their evil and ability to harm others. Still at the desecrated graveside, their female partners, wives with young and even infant children accompanying them--lie nearby in a row, unclad and ready and available, for sex with each and every male member of the coven. When this orgy is completed, the women with their innocent children, will leave the site...."

The gure dancers claim to have the power to leave their bodies at night, travel to distant places, and bring death to sleeping victims. "In similar covens of witches in Britain," the columnist notes, "where the practice of witchcraft has become greatly prevalent again in the last half century . . . this fairly common phenomenon is described as astral voyaging, and is not regarded as particularly unusual." The columnist complains, "how is it possible, that . . . the local authorities of law and order, seem totally unaware?" [Pandora, "Satanism thrives in Zimbabwe," The [Harare] Herald (18 August 1990). Courtesy Cynthia Hind.]

AND IN CORSICA. Police at Ajaccio reported on 3 December that they had found evidence of satanic rituals in a local mausoleum. Twenty-one coffins had been opened and the remains scattered, and vandals had written "Satan worshippers will destroy you" on the walls. The bodies of several chickens were also found in the remains of a fire. No suspects have been found, though police noted that the mausoleum had recently become a hangout for young people to drink and take drugs, both new problems in the predominantly Catholic island. [AP, 4 December 1990.]

AND IN SWITZERLAND. Two Zurich adolescents, aged 13 and 14, killed themselves by leaping from a 14-story apartment building on 24 October, after apparently going into a trance during a seance. One of their friends reported that for more than a year the two and other teens had dabbled with "le jeu du verre" [the glass game], learned from a weekly magazine for young people. "The game goes like this: after writing all the letters of the alphabet and the letters from 1 to 10, one puts a wine glass in the center of a round table. The participants, touching each others' hands, are supposed to concentrate and invoke a spirit. Theoretically, this spirit causes the glass to move and communicates 'messages.' 'It worked,' said the friend, 'but the demon told us terrible things.' Constantly the demon repeated, 'Two of you will never live to the age of 18.' " The two left suicide notes for their parents, then leaped. ["Spiritisme: deux adolescentes se suicident," Le Figaro (27 October 1990). Courtesy James Kirkup. For more on the background of this European analog to Ouija boards, see Bengt af Klintberg, "Black Madame, come out!" ARV 44 (1988):163-164.]

#### ALSO HEARD

THREE MEN AND A BABY GHOST. Starting in August, journalists in Utah began to receive requests for information on the background of the 1987 Touchstone Pictures production Three Men and a Baby. The plot concerns the problems caused among three swinging bachelors when one of the men's former girlfriends abandons a newborn baby at the door of the apartment. During a scene in which the baby's father, played by Ted Danson, appeals for help from his mother (Celeste Holm), the camera pans past a curtained

window. There a human image can be seen through the curtains, apparently clad in jeans and a T-shirt, staring directly ahead.

According to a common rumor, the film had been made in an abandoned New York apartment, in which a young boy had committed suicide (or had been murdered) shortly before. When the boy's parents saw the film (after its release on videocassette), they noticed the image, played it back in slow motion, and identified the figure as the ghost of their son, wearing the clothes he died in. The rumors also claim that the couple has appeared on national news programs like 60 Minutes or 20/20, backing up their claim with stills from the film and photos of their son.

Walt Disney Studios, the parent firm of Touchstone, initially refused comment, but information released during the film's run in studios showed that the film was not made in an apartment, but on a specially built sound stage in Toronto. Further investigation showed that earlier scenes had included a cardboard cutout figure of the Danson figure (who plays a popular actor), and that the "ghostly" figure may be the cutout stashed behind the curtains. Nevertheless, the rumor boosted rentals of the film just as Disney was preparing to release Three Men and a Little Lady, the film's sequel. A Disney publicist denied that the rumor was started as publicity for the new film, although he added that he wished he had thought it up. [Chris Hicks, "Haunting question sends Utahns swarming to rent Disney video," Deseret [Salt Lake City] News (12 August 1990):E13; Chris Hicks, "There really were just 3 men and baby--no ghost," Deseret [Salt Lake City] News (26 August 1990):E11; Anita Manning, "Spreading legends on a global scale," USA Today (16 November 1990):1D-2D. Courtesy Jan Brunvand.]

In some circles, the debate over the apparition's nature grew to a nearly ritualistic intensity. Connie Leinen of Marshall University reported on 30 November that the rumor was one of the hottest topics of conversation among students in dormitories there. "The way the story is being told around here: it seems that the apartment in which the movie was filmed was owned by a family with a young son (about 8--sometimes 4 and sometimes 6 or 10 years old). Because of the publicity and crowds of on-lookers during filming, the family bought a shotgun to protect themselves from crazy fans trying to break in when the filming was over. The child accidentally shot himself with the shotgun.

"Furthermore, in the scene where Ted Danson's mother is telling him she will not take care of the baby because it's time he became responsible, you are supposed to see an image of the boy in the window. In this particular scene, a cut-out of Ted Danson in a top hat and tuxedo is to the left and the window is to the right (my comments later). The camera then cuts back to Ted and Mom. It later goes back to the window when they are leaving the room--at that point you are supposed to see a shotgun in the window (my comments later).

"Now before I started reading alt.folklore.urban, my husband came home (he travels) and said he watched a show on CNN [a cable news channel] where they were discussing this. According to my husband (the most pragmatic, rational, down-to-earth, I-don't-believe-in-ghosts man you would ever hope to meet), CNN did slow-mo and enlargements, etc. Their commentary also indicated that they believed there was no trick photography involved and that it did seem that the boy was in the window holding the shotgun.

"A couple of days later, Karman [my work-study student] came in and told me how everybody was sitting around the dorms watching this film. They all saw both the boy and the shotgun. However, they saw the boy in one scene and then the shotgun alone (no boy) later. Jerry [my husband] says he saw the boy and the shotgun together. A couple of weeks later . . . the movie is shown on



network television--so we watch it (me for the first time). We get to the scene in question, and sure enough there is something in the window that looks like a boy. I never saw the shotgun.

"Well, we taped it. We looked at it a couple of times that night. Jerry saw a boy with a shotgun, and I saw a boy in a top hat. Later that night, I decided that the boy in the window had to have been a reflection of the cut-out, because why else is a boy wearing a top hat? I'm the only person I know that thinks s/he saw him wearing a top hat. So I decided it was just a reflection. Later I read alt.folklore.urban, where that explanation was being offered. I felt pretty smug.

"So I offered this explanation to Karman, who said no way!!! Then she starts telling me how the boy's mother is all upset and is suing to have the scene cut from the movie, etc. etc. She says a friend of hers saw the mother on a talk show (Oprah Winfrey, Donahue or somebody). I questioned Karman about why a little boy would be wearing a black suit and top hat. Again she says no way --he's wearing jeans and a sweatshirt. Now the big hobby in the dorm right now is watching this movie (which explains why Karman needs time off prior to finals) and she's seen these scenes a bunch of times and she is insistent.

"I've looked at our tape five or six times, and I'm just as insistent. My husband is just as insistent on what he saw. So we've got three people watching the same thing who see three different things.

"I'll never trust eyewitness testimony ever again."

The rumor, as Brunvand has pointed out, has analogs in many local legends about ghosts that appear in photographs. In this part of Pennsylvania, people still recall the "Breaker Boy Picture": Supposedly taken around 1916, it showed a group of employees posed around a breaker at the entry of a mine in Moosic. When printed, the picture contained an extra figure not in the pose; later, a local family identified the figure as a boy who had died in the mine three years earlier. The clincher was that when the image's face was enlarged, the boy's eyes had no pupils.

Similar stories about "spirit photographs," Barbara Allen notes, have been popular since the late 1860s. In most cases, draped figures appear transparently behind living people posing for studio portraits. In one 1890 variant from Los Angeles, a photographer repeatedly asked the woman posing whether anyone was standing behind her, then finally gave up after several exposures. When the woman asked what was wrong, the photographer showed her the developed plates, in which a shrouded figure appeared beside her, holding out its hand as if to beckon. The woman, identifying the image as "a person who had been very near and dear to her and who had recently died," denounced the photo as a fraud, but soon became convinced "by absolute proof" that the photographer was not tricking her. ["The 'Image on Glass': Technology, Tradition, and the Emergence of Folklore, Western Folklore 41:2 (April 1982):85-103.]

THREE GOOD REASONS NOT TO DRIVE THROUGH ROCHESTER. On 30 August 1989, Odis R. Sitton was driving down a main road of Rochester, New York, when a 110-pound [50 kg.] manhole cover flew off the road ahead of him. The cover crashed through Sitton's windshield, fatally injuring him. Police first suspected that the cover had been dislodged by a gas explosion, but this proved impossible. Later, they guessed that the cover, which had been installed only a day earlier, had not been a perfect fit and had been flipped into the air like a tiddlywink by a heavy truck. [Fortean Times 54 (Summer 1990):6; includes photo.]

On 22 December 1989, the car of Gilbert T. Nettles broke down on I-390 outside Rochester. While walking down the road for help,

Nettles was struck by James A. Vandermeer, his body lodging in the shattered windshield on the passenger's side. Vandermeer drove on nearly 9 miles [14.5 km.], with Nettles' body on the hood. Police saw the vehicle pass, but were unable to pursue him. Finally, Vandermeer arrived at his Rochester home and called police to report an accident; police found Nettles' body still on the hood. Vandermeer was charged with drunken driving. [AP, 23 December 1990; courtesy Charles Farkas.]

Trucker Luther Johnson had just passed through Rochester on 27 July 1990 when he found that his steering had become sluggish. Fearing a flat tire, he pulled off the road and found a "tiny red Japanese car" stuck to the front of his cab. The driver, Stephen Spring, said that he blacked out shortly after turning onto the interstate highway and came to screaming when he realized he was being pushed sideways down the highway. The car's tires were completely rubbed off during the ordeal. No charges were filed against the "bemused" truck driver. [Stewart Dickson, "Car Goes for a Ride ... On Front of Truck!" Daily Mirror (28 July 1990):3.]

#### NOW IN PRINT

RUMEURS ET LÉGENDES CONTEMPORAINES SPECIAL ISSUE. The November 1990 issue of Communications (vol. 52) is a special collection of essays on rumors and legends, a new topic in French scholarship. Prepared by Véronique Campion-Vincent and Jean-Bruno Renard, this volume integrates the folkloristic approach with the sociological and psycho-sociological approaches more common in France. To analysis of the communication process is added study of the narrative structure of the narratives, of their themes and motives, often grounded in the collective memory of popular culture.

Campion-Vincent, Véronique, and Jean-Bruno Renard.

"Presentation" [Foreword] (5-9).

Renard, Jean-Bruno. "Les décalcomanies au LSD: Un cas limit de rumeur de contamination" [LSD Tattoos: A Case Study of a Contamination Rumor] (11-50).

Campion-Vincent, Véronique. "Situations d'incertitude et rumeurs: disparitions et meurtres d'enfants" [Situations of Uncertainty and Rumors: Disappearances and Child Murders] (51-59).

Kapferer, Jean-Noel. "La rumeur en Bourse" [Rumor in the Stock Market] (61-84).

Brodu, Jean-Louis. "Rumeurs de sécheresse" [Drought rumors] (85-97).

Kapferer, Jean-Noel. "Le contrôle des rumeurs. Expériences et réflexions sur le démenti" [The Control of Rumors: Experiments and Thoughts about Denial] (99-118).

Rouquette, Michel-Louis. "Le syndrome de la rumeur" [Rumor as Syndrome] (119-123).

Paillard, Bernard. "L'écho de la rumeur" [The Echo of Rumor] (125-139).

Reumaux, Françoise. "Traits invariants de la rumeur" [Invariant Traits of Rumor] (141-159).

Askevis-Leherpeux, Françoise. "Croyance au surnaturel et instruction: Examen critique de l'hypothèse intellectualiste" [Belief in the Supernatural and Educational Level: A Critical Examination of the Intellectual Hypothesis] (161-174).

Meurger, Michel. "Les félins exotique dans le légendaire français" [Exotic Cats in French Legendry] (175-198).

Barloy, Jean-Jacques. "Rumeurs sur des animaux mystérieux" [Rumors about Mysterious Animals in France] (197-218).

Caudron, Dominique. "Le Baron Noir et ses ancêtres. Cronique des aéronefs fantômes" [The Black Baron and His Ancestors: A

- History of Phantom Airships] (219-248).
- Dumerchat, Frédéric. "Les auto-stoppeurs fantômes: Des récets légendaires contemporains" [Vanishing Hitchhikers: Some Performances of Contemporary Legends] (249-281).
- Lagrange, Pierre. "L'affaire Kenneth Arnold. Note sur l'art de construire et de déconstruire quelques soucoupes volantes" [The Kenneth Arnold Case: The Art of Constructing and Deconstructing some Flying Saucers] (283-309).
- Pinvidic, Thierry. "Des témoins pour une 'légende': un cas des apparition d'OVNI [Witnesses for a Legend: A UFO Appearance Case] (311-335).
- Méheust, Bertrand. "Les Occidentaux du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle ont-ils cru à leurs mythes?" [Did 20th-Century Westerners Believe Their Myths?] (337-356).

The volume also includes two annotated bibliographies of recent publications in the field, one on research in English, one on French research (published in FN 18 [June 1990]:1-5).

Please contact Éditions du Seuil, 27, rue Jacob, Paris 6<sup>e</sup>, for information on obtaining copies of this issue.

STOP ME IF YOU'VE HEARD ± ± ±

MICKY MOUSE LSD FLYERS. This well-travelled item of xeroxlore, which warns parents against drug dealers offering children "stickers" or "tattoos" laced with LSD, has cropped up again in parts of the US, Canada, and England.

United States. At least two forms of the flyer were circulating in October and November, both of which originated from computer networks. One, distributed before Halloween to children at Dana Elementary School in Nipomo, California, was a photocopy of a computer message originating from "SSGT REYNOLDS." A postscript at the bottom adds that it was sent from Nellis [Nevada] Air Force Base to Vandenberg AFB on 5 September. Other endorsements legible on the photocopy include a "retired Fire Chief [who] thought we might be interested in this article," the official "Received" stamp of the school district superintendent's office, and the elementary school principal's signature. [Courtesy David Gross.]

A notice of this flyer on alt.folklore.urban brought up a second computer network version that appeared on 24 October. Beginning "WARNING TO FOLLOW OFFICERS AND PARENTS," the posting ends with an invitation to "reproduce this article and distribute it within your community and workplace." Within a few days, identical copies were posted in a Chelmsford, Massachusetts, preschool; by 15 November it was being passed out in classes at California State University at Northridge, with the additional note "Received from a representative of Henry Mayo Hospital." This flyer is distinctive because it adds Bart Simpson (the cynical childhood hero of a syndicated TV cartoon series) to the list of images used to attract children to drugs. [Courtesy Gary Allen and Mimi Wellington, Apollo Computer, Chelmsford, MA.]

Canada. In mid-October a professionally printed version of the flyer was circulated in schools, day care centers, and hospitals. Dated "Sept. 1990," it claimed to quote information from the Beth Israel Medical Center in New York and warned readers to "call your local R.C.M.P. [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] if you come in contact with these products." The flyer also notes that additional copies were available at local restaurants. Beth Israel Gander disclaimed responsibility for the flyer, calling it a "hoax," and a Gander RCMP source also said there was no need to circulate it, adding, "I've never heard of [LSD-soaked tattoos] around here and I've been kicking around here for a while." The

story came to the local RCMP's attention in 1983, "when police in Corner Brook passed it on to us. Police in the States had told them about it and asked them to keep an eye out for any of these tattoos." A local hospital administrator found a copy on an office bulletin board, but could not trace a source: "Anything that goes up on the board has to be approved and initialed first. The sheet hadn't been initialed, so it wasn't authorized to go up on the board. We don't know who put it there." Dr. Paul Smith of Memorial University was quoted as calling the flyer "an urban myth" and added that such rumors are spread by people who want to peddle fear. "There's a certain undercurrent of conservatism on both sides of the Atlantic," he noted. "There are people out there who stand to gain by ramming things down other people's throats." [Sue Hickey, " 'Drug Alert' no cause for concern," Gander Beacon (17 October 1990):1A,7A. Courtesy Paul Smith.]

England. The headmistress of Sherbourne School for Girls in Dorset copied and distributed a version of the flyer, describing the danger as "a new Continental drug craze involving decorative self-adhesive transfers to enliven the limbs of fashion-conscious nubile." This flyer, sent to 465 sets of parents, continued, "The aim is ultimate dependency and, therefore, new customers. Many of my girls get taken on skiing holidays and may be at risk." Afterwards, the headmistress admitted that she may have acted hastily in circulating the flyer, adding, "I've heard it is a rumour spread from Ottawa." [Ottawa, Canada?--Ed.] [Ron Benson, "Head learns her lesson," Daily Express (9 November 1990).]

A more typical flyer, labeled "Issued by Essex County Constabulary," was circulated in schools in that area during the week of 23 November. One Basildon mother of a pre-schooler commented, "I was very worried when I read the warning. My youngster loves those tattoos that wash off when you are tired of them." Essex police quickly disclaimed knowledge of the flyer, calling it "without foundation. . . this letter has no official basis and does not come from any of the recognised agencies. We are puzzled about where it has originated from." While admitting that cartoon-labeled "blotter acid" exists, police sources stressed that there have been "no known cases" in the UK. [David Hyman, "Puzzle of drugs warning letters," Thurrock Gazette (23 November 1990); "Police deny link," Thurrock Recorder (23 November 1990); "Tattoo letter IS a hoax warn police," Yellow Advertiser (23 November 1990). Courtesy Michael Goss.]

SOUTH AFRICANS IN ELEVATORS. Cynthia Hind writes: Do you know the South African story--is this folklore--of the South African woman who went to the States on holiday. She was terrified of all black people as she felt they would realise she was South African and would penalise her for this. Well, she was staying at the Sheraton in New York City, when she had to get into the lift with a black man and his dog. As soon as the lift closed, the black man said "Down, Lady!" and the poor woman, nearly wetting herself with anxiety, sank down on the floor. The man started to laugh and said, "I was talking to my dog. Her name is Lady." The woman burst into tears and got out at her stop. The black man happened to be Lionel Ritchie, and the next day the woman went to pay her bill prior to leaving for S.A. when she found the bill paid by Ritchie.

There are various versions to this story, but it is typically South African--who else would be so terrified?

It reminds me of a true story. I was staying at the Holiday Inn in downtown Los Angeles some years back and got into the lift with two black Americans. They asked me what floor and I told them, making some remark at the same time. The one said, "Do I detect a British accent?" and I said, "No, it's African." He then said, "Not South African, I hope?" and I said, "Of course not, I live in

Zimbabwe." And he said, "Just as well; otherwise we would have gotten out of the lift." [See Brunvand, Choking Doberman 18-28.]

#### RECENT PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

We are always on the lookout for publications on any topic relevant to contemporary legends, especially those in journals or from publishing houses not usually read by academics in the US and Great Britain. Please forward offprints (if convenient) to Bill Ellis, Editor, FM, Penn State--Hazleton, Hazleton, PA 18201 USA. For publications in foreign languages, English abstracts would be appreciated.

Items starred (\*) are housed in a file in the Editor's office and can be made available to qualified scholars for reference. Books and articles from major publishers or standard folklore journals are not normally starred.

Ankarloo, Bengt, and Gustav Henningsen, eds. Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990. [Eighteen essays on the spread of witch-hunts in Europe 1350-1740. Argues that witchcraft grew from a conflict between older popular beliefs in magic and contact with the dead and emerging medieval rationalism. Includes material from Scandinavia, Hungary, Estonia, Portugal, and other countries, much not previously available in English.]

Baker, Robert A. They Call It Hypnosis. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990. [Critique of UFO abduction accounts obtained through regressive hypnosis.]

Bennett, Gillian. " 'And...': Controlling the Argument, Controlling the Audience." Fabula 31:3/4 (1990):208-216. [Contrasts male and female strategies in performing legends.]

\* Bowman, Marion. "Aubergines from Heaven: Folk Religion and Legitimation." Talking Folklore 9 (August 1990):1-7. [Reports of eggplants that, when split, reveal the word "Allah" or some verse from the Koran in Arabic script.]

Bronner, Simon J. Piled Higher and Deeper: The Folklore of Campus Life. Little Rock, AK: August House, 1990. [Includes chapter on legends circulating on US college campuses.]

\* Bullard, Thomas E. "America Strikes Back: Further Rumbles from Across the Atlantic." Magonia 37 (October 1990):5-11. [Critique of psycho-social approaches to UFO abduction.]

Burrison, John A. "Suatee and Wacoochee: Anatomy of a Lovers' Leap Legend." Southern Folklore 47 (1990):117-132. [Indian lovers' suicide in North Georgia; literary influenced.]

\* Cameron, Grant R., T. Scott Crain, and Chris Rutkowski. "In the land of dreams." International UFO Reporter 15:5 (September/October 1990):4-8. ["Dreamland," a top-secret sector of Nellis AFB in Nevada, where US military use UFO parts to build aircraft.]

Campion-Vincent, Véronique. "Contemporary Legends about Animal-releases in Rural France." Fabula 31:3/4 (1990):242-253.

\* Cassirer, Manfred. "The Mystery of the Stalled Car." Strange Magazine 6 (1990):20-21. [Historical analogs to autos that malfunction in the presence of the paranormal.]

Clark, Jerome. The UFO Encyclopedia, Volume 1: UFOs in the 1980s. Detroit: Apogee Books, 1990.

Colombo, John Robert. Mysterious Encounters: Personal Accounts of the Supernatural in Canada. Willowdale, Ontario: Hounslow Press, 1990.

Crockett, Art, ed. Serial Murderers. New York: Pinnacle Books, 1990. [Reprints of 1967-1990 Official Detective and Popular Detective accounts of Henry Lucas's confessions and other sensational mass-murder cases.]

Delaney, James G. "The Cock in Irish Tradition, with Special Reference to the Midlands." Lore & Language 9:1 (1990):61-72. [Legends about cocks crowing to detect or repel evil spirits; good version of "The Devil-Haunted Cardplayers" (ML3015).]

Ellis, Bill. "The Vanishing American Legend: Oral Narrative and Textmaking in the 1980s." Lore & Language 8:2 (1989):75-102. [Review-article of 10 books' collecting and transcribing methods.]

\* Faber, Mary. "The 'Horrors' of Halloween." NEA Today (October 1990):6. [Advice on how to deal with Halloween panics concerning satanists in high schools.]

Fine, Gary Alan. "Among Those Dark Satanic Mills: Rumors of Kooks, Cults, and Corporations." Southern Folklore 47 (1990):133-146. [Legends about companies' link to satanism, Ku Klux Klan, gun control, etc.]

\* Gonzales, Laurence. "Satanic Panic." Penthouse (August 1990):135+. [Skeptical account of a conference for psychologists run by cult "experts."]

Goodman, Felicitas D. Where the Spirits Ride the Wind: Trance Journeys and Other Ecstatic Experiences. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

\* Gordon, Stan. "Unusual and Unexplained." The Gate 6:3 (January 1991):7-8. [Crop circle case in W. Pennsylvania.]

\* Hopkins, Budd. "Abduction and deception." International UFO Reporter 15:5 (September/October 1990):15-17, 22. [Defense of UFO abduction research.]

\* Hufford, David J. "Rational Scepticism and the Possibility of Unbiased Folk Belief Scholarship." Talking Folklore 9 (August 1990):19-31. [Folklorists should suspend judgment about the truth or fallacy of folk beliefs, at least for a while. Includes a comment by Anne Rowbottom (31-33).]

Kafton-Minkel, Walter. Subterranean Worlds: 100,000 Years of Dragons, Dwarfs, The Dead, Lost Races & UFOs from Inside the Earth. Port Townsend, Washington: Loompanics Unlimited, 1989. [History of inner-world mythologies in folklore and pop. culture.]

Lasalandra, Michael, and Mark Merenda, with Maurice and Nancy Theriault and Ed and Lorraine Warren. Satan's Harvest. New York: Dell Books, 1990. [Two demonologists, a dissident Catholic bishop, and a sympathetic chief of police confront a demon at a farm in Warren, Massachusetts.]

\* Mater, Barbara. "Corn Circles--Divots or Devilment." The Gate 6:3 (January 1991):2-3. [Summary of clippings about crop circles in the US and UK.]

\* Musinsky, V. D. "Through the secrecy barrier." International UFO Reporter 15:4 (July/August 1990):14-15. [March 1990 UFO sightings in central Russia described in Soviet military reports.]

\* Opsasnick, Mark. "The Philosophy of Bigfoot Research." Strange Magazine 6 (1990):39. ["True believer" bigfoot networks are amateurish and often confused.]

Oring, Elliott, "Legend, Truth, and News." Southern Folklore 47 (1990):163-177. [Folklorists' distinction between contemporary legend and "news" is arbitrary and ethnocentric. 1990 Montell Folklore Prize winner as outstanding essay published in SF.]

Orso, Ethelyn G. "Folklore as a Means of Getting Even: Mythical Legends from Chira, Costa Rica." Southern Folklore 47 (1990):249-259. [Women use accounts of female supernatural beings to gain some balance over socially dominant males. Includes a fine "Vanishing Hitchhiker" on horseback.]

Raschke, Carl A. Painted Black: From Drug Killings to Heavy Metal--The Alarming True Story of How Satanism is Terrorizing Our Communities. New York: Harper & Row, 1990. [True believer book.]

\* Rogerson, Peter. "On a summer's day in the steel city of Sheffield, two cultures clashed, two visions were displayed. Bud

- [sic] Hopkins confronted his British critics." Magonia 37 (October 1990):1-4. [Account of a UFO conference featuring talks Budd Hopkins (UFO abductions), Paul Devereux (crop circles), and Andy Roberts (psychological explanations for UFOs.)]
- \* Rosenbaum, Ron. "Dead Reckoning." Vanity Fair 53:9 (September 1990):190+. [Biographical sketch of Henry Lee Lucas, who claimed to have committed hundreds of murders as satanic sacrifices.]
- \* Rutkowski, Chris. "The Canadian Wave: An Analysis." International UFO Reporter 15:4 (July/August 1990):6-13. [Statistical analysis of 141 UFO sightings in 1989: province, month, time, type, duration.]
- \* Schmitt, Don, and Kevin D. Randle. "Did a balloon crash at Roswell?" International UFO Reporter 15:4 (July/August 1990):4-5. [Contrast of Roswell crash debris with real weather balloons.]
- Schumaker, John F. Wings of Illusion: The Origin, Nature and Future of Paranormal Belief. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1990. [Capacity for paranormal experience is an evolutionary quirk that turned the human animal into a "pre-eminently autohypnotic creature" drawn to "psychic anesthesia" in the form of socially sanctioned beliefs.]
- \* Scott, I. "UFO studies in the scientific literature." International UFO Reporter 15:4 (July/August 1990):16-18. [Abstracts of five scientific papers on anomalous sounds and flying disk sightings. One found a statistically significant relationship between UFO activity and Israeli military activity.]
- Selberg, Torunn. "Personal Narratives on Healing." Fabula 31:3/4 (1990):284-288.
- \* Shoemaker, Michael T. "Measuring the Circles." Strange Magazine 6 (1990):34-35, 56-57. [Critique of the Meaden meteorological explanation for crop circles.]
- \* ----- "The White Dogs of Penny Hill." Strange Magazine 6 (1990):40-41. [Mysterious albino dogs in a cemetery in VA.]
- Simonides, Dorota. "Zur Methodologie der Sammlung zeitgenössischer populärer Erzählungen." [On the methodology of collecting contemporary folk narratives] Fabula 31:3/4 (1990):279-283.
- \* Stillings, Dennis. "A Note on the Dramatic Structure of Fantastical Productions." Magonia 37 (October 1990):11-12. [Critique of Bullard's structure of UFO narratives.]
- Top, Stefaan. "Modern Legends in the Belgian Oral Tradition." Fabula 31:3/4 (1990):272-278.
- FOAFtale News is the newsletter of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research. ISCLR was formed to build worldwide links among legend scholars. It encourages study of so-called "modern" and "urban" legends, and also of any legend that is circulating actively. We invite all who have an interest in this research area to join us.
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