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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR CONTEMPORARY LEGEND RESEARCH

ORGAN THEFT RUMORS IN GUATEMALA:
Some Personal Observations

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In the slang of Guatemala a 'bola' is a story, a rumor, or a juicy piece of gossip which purports to explain the truth behind a matter of national significance. After more than twenty visits to that country over the past three years, I can attest to the fact that Guatemalans have a peculiar passion for these stories, so much so that they sometimes laughingly refer to their country as 'Guatebolas'. In light of the nation's long history of military dictatorship, it is perhaps understandable that official statements and press reports are read with suspicion. Unofficial stories spread by word of mouth allow Guatemalans to maintain a healthy skepticism about their government. But they sometimes lead to violence, as in the case of the organ theft rumors which led to attacks on American citizens in two separate incidents in early 1994.

I first heard the story from my secretary in December of 1993 in Guatemala City. She assured me that the body of a small child had been found at the side of a road with its chest cut open and its heart and other organs missing. A note which said "Thanks for the organs" (in English, of course) had been left in the chest cavity. In the next few weeks, the bodies seemed to multiply. Some people claimed that five had been found, some said seven. Other versions of the story replaced the note with U.S. currency, in amounts ranging from a few dollars up to one hundred. Both the note and the money were sometimes said to have been found in the children's pants pockets instead of the chest. A completely different story concerned a street urchin found wandering around blind and dazed in Zone 1. When he was finally taken to the hospital, doctors determined that his corneas had been removed. This child's pockets had also been stuffed with American money.

These stories were so grotesque—and so unbelievable—that I immediately took them to be urban legends. I also reasoned that if the bodies really existed, lurid photographs would be splashed across the front page of every newspaper in the city, in full color. There is no press censorship in Guatemala, nor do the media

subscribe to the same standards of taste (or self-censorship) which Americans are used to in their publications. The body of a child with its chest cut open would be no worse than the photographs of accident victims and exhumed corpses which are published daily in *Prensa Libre*, *Siglo 21*, *El Grafico*, and other local papers. Of course no such pictures were ever printed, but almost every Guatemalan I talked to had heard some version of the story, and believed it to be true.

I left Guatemala in late December, and returned in February of 1994. It seemed that the organ theft rumors had died down by then, at least in Guatemala City. Residents of the capital were expecting a *coup d'état*, which gave them something else to talk about. I remember getting a scare one night while listening to a radio talk show. A woman called in and asked the announcer, "Is it true what I've heard, that tanks and armored vehicles are taking up positions around the presidential palace?" "No, we have no information to that effect," replied the host. "But where are you calling from if I might ask?" After a few seconds and a burst of static, the woman replied, "Paris, France." How fast and how far these rumors travel!

But the attack on Melissa Larson in Santa Lucía Cotzamalguapa, and the riot which grew out of her arrest, were major news stories. By the next day the press began speculating about organ transplants. *Prensa Libre* published a chart listing various organs and body parts along with their supposed prices on the black market. One of the television stations produced a particularly irresponsible "investigative report" on the issue. The scene I recall most vividly was when the reporter went to an orphanage to investigate illegal adoptions. In a room filled with cribs and crying babies, he picked up one squirming child by the legs and asked the social worker, "How much are this one's eyes worth? His liver? His kidneys?" This program seemed to do a lot to revive the rumor. It reinforced people's beliefs, and many cited it as "proof" that babies were indeed being kidnapped and killed for their organs. But in fact, no proof was ever presented, either by this program or by anyone else.

Around this time anti-American graffiti began appearing on walls in Guatemala City: *Gringos robachicos!* (gringo baby thieves). Someone threw stones at a group of Peace Corps volunteers in Zone 1, and

shouted anti-American slogans. Though I never felt threatened personally, all of this did make me very self-conscious. There are children all over Guatemala, and I would come into contact with them every day. Sadly enough, you see them panhandling or selling flowers in the streets at all hours of the day and night. It is human nature to be nice to them, but I found myself avoiding any contact with children, even those of my friends.

After the second incident, in which tourist June Weinstock was attacked in San Cristóbal Verapáz, the U.S. State Department issued a warning urging Americans to avoid nonessential travel to Guatemala. This, and the particularly violent nature of the attack (which was filmed and presented on television), seemed to bring people to their senses. Doctors appeared on television to explain the complicated procedures required to preserve organs for transplant, and that it was impossible for tourists to carry hearts and livers back to the United States in their luggage as some of the wilder rumors had claimed. The U.S. Embassy issued statements from medical groups in the United States explaining the safeguards which are built into transplant procedures specifically to prevent the theft or misuse of organs.

Local newspapers then began to print editorials blaming the attacks and the rumors themselves on various groups. Some speculated that the armed forces were attempting to destabilize the country in order to overthrow the president, or that they were trying to scare away foreigners in order to resume covert military operations in the highlands. Other columnists blamed the guerrillas, who were already carrying out a campaign to cripple the nation's economy. As the fastest growing industry in the country, tourism seemed a logical target.

In Santa Lucía and San Cristóbal, where the violence had occurred, residents pointed the finger at a traditional target: the indigenous population. While these are for the most part ladino towns (meaning non-Indian), it was pointed out that both incidents took place on market days, when large numbers of Indians arrive from the interior to sell produce and crafts.

But the American Embassy has to take the prize for the most original theory. In a weird echo of the Cold War, they blamed the rumors on the KGB.

Personally, I don't think that a massive conspiracy by the Army, the guerrillas, or the KGB is required to explain what happened in Guatemala in early 1994. The recent "Blue Star" hysteria in the United States—in which tens of thousands were convinced that LSD-laced tattoos were being sold to young children—proved once again how willing people are to believe whatever they hear. Of course as with most rumors, there was an element of truth to the organ theft stories. Children do disappear in Guatemala, and there apparently is a large trade in illegal adoptions. In my opinion it was these basic facts, combined with other elements of Guatemalan folklore (the story of the *llorona* for example, which concerns a woman whose children are

killed as a result of her carelessness) and irresponsible journalism which led to the rapid spread of the rumor and the resulting violence.

One of the few Guatemalans I met who did not believe the rumors had this theory: he said that the country was paying the price for promoting its indigenous people as tourist attractions. Based on my own experience, I think there is some truth to this. Tourists sometimes do not realize that their presence is seen by many as a mixed blessing. While the economic benefits of tourism cannot be denied, the presence of so many automobiles, buses, and strange people can cause problems in cultures which have a traditional suspicion of outsiders.

Many times I have seen tourists in small villages giving candy to children, patting them on the head, and filming them with video cameras. During an Easter procession in Antigua, at the height of the baby-stealing paranoia, I watched a middle-aged American woman coo at a little indigenous boy, chuck him on the chin and rub his hair. The child's mother was clearly uncomfortable, and dragged him away by the hand.

There's no getting around the fact that these children are very cute, especially when dressed in colorful indigenous clothing. But I have children of my own, and I would feel very uneasy if a stranger were to touch or photograph them. Most people have sense enough not to do things like this in their own country. Indeed, I don't think many would consider going to an Indian reservation in the U.S. to photograph native American children. We recognize that this would be patronizing, as well as an invasion of privacy. Unfortunately, some tourists who come to Guatemala seem to leave their cultural sensitivity at home.

As a footnote to this story, by the time I left a new rumor was developing, and this one threatened to start a religious war. One of the legacies of the Spanish conquest of Guatemala is a large collection of religious statues, found in older churches across the country. These four-hundred year-old wooden figurines of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints are highly valued both by collectors and by the nation itself, as part of its cultural patrimony. But although Guatemala is traditionally Roman Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical faiths have won many converts in recent years. Guatemalans are serious about religion, and this fervor has caused tension at all levels of society. Families break up, and old friends part because of religious differences.

In May, the Archbishop of Guatemala created a controversy when he accused two evangelical churches in Quetzaltenango (Guatemala's second-largest city) of requiring their members to burn these ancient statues as part of a ritual to prove their break with Catholicism. But of course no ashes were presented—no smoking gun. While a number of statues have in fact disappeared over the years, it seems far more likely that they are in the hands of collectors. The bishop's story has the familiar ring of an urban legend, one of the many 'bolas' which surface from time to time in Guatemala.

[**Editor's Note:** NBC's news program *Now* produced a segment investigating these incidents, which ran on 17 Aug. 94. Produced by Bert Medley and edited by Greg Bertrand, the story was narrated by Mike Boettcher. It included graphic home-video footage of the attack on June Weinstock in San Cristóbal Verapáz. Eyewitnesses to the event were also interviewed, and Francisco Goldman repeated his belief that the legend was based on real baby-trafficking for illegal adoptions, which was protected by high government officials.

More History. Previous issues (*FN* 30:10, 32:10) have referenced similar panics from before 1900. To these reports we can add the following, from the early 20th-century witch-hunter Montague Summers, who wanders onto the topic while discussing satanic rites of cannibalism. *Summers comments:*

It was long thought by the ignorant country folk that the doctors of the hospital of Graz enjoyed the privilege of being allowed every year to exploit one human life for curative purposes. Some young man who repaired thither for toothache or any such slight ailment is seized, hung up by the feet, and tickled to death! Skilled chemists boil the body to a paste and utilize this as well as the fat and the charred bones in their drug store. The people are persuaded that about Easter a youth annually disappears in the hospital for these purposes.

[*Summers's reference:* V. Fossel, *Volksmedizin und medicinischer Aberglaube in Steiermark*, Graz, 1886. *Eds. note:* for "tickling to death," see *FN* 13:2, 14:5. The notion of doctors boiling one patient to make medicine is also found in Giovanni Francesco Poggio-Bracciolini's *Liber Facietiarum* [Witty Stories] (1450), no. 190. Here an agent of Landolfo di Maramaur, Cardinal of Bari (d. 1415) is said to have cleared a hospital of deadbeats by announcing that one of them would be chosen by lot to be boiled down for ointment.—BE]

After mentioning blood libel rumors, *Summers adds:* The riots which have so continually during three centuries broken out in China against Europeans, and particularly against Catholic asylums for the sick, foundling hospitals, schools, are almost always fomented by an intellectual party who begin by issuing fiery appeals to the populace: "Down with the missionaries! Kill the foreigners! They steal or buy our children and slaughter them, in order to prepare magic remedies and medicines out of their eyes, hearts, and from other portions of their dead bodies." Baron Hübner in his *Promenade autour du monde*, II (Paris, 1873) tells the story of the massacre at Tientsin, 21 June, 1870, and relates that it was engineered on these very lines. In 1891 similar risings against Europeans resident in China were found to be due to the same cause. Towards the end of 1891 a charge was brought in Madagascar against the French that they devoured human hearts and for this purpose kidnapped and killed native children. Stern legislation was actually found necessary to check the spread of these accusations.

[*Summers's reference:* *Le Temps*, Paris, 1 Feb. and 23 March, 1892. *The History of Witchcraft* (1925; rpt.

Secaucus NJ: University Books, 1956): 161-62.]

Body-parts and the Law. *Bernard J. Sussman reports:* There was a very real dust-up in Washington DC early this year on this topic. It turns out that someone discovered, reading the very poorly printed and almost completely unavailable *District of Columbia Register* (the DC municipal equivalent of *Statutes at Large*) that the city council had adopted a local law, about 3 years ago, authorizing doctors in DC to remove from local corpses the corneas and heart valves for transplanting—without the consent or even the knowledge of the next of kin. This discovery made a big stink for a short period. It was claimed, by the city officials, that, so far, the law was merely ornamental since no organ extractions had been done under it yet.

The choice of body parts was significant: corneas can be removed a full day or so after life ceases and with no noticeable loss to the cosmetic quality of the corpse. However, removing the heart valves involves cutting into the chest and—more importantly—must be done before the body cools as they deteriorate almost instantly. That means the surgeon practically has to be at the dying person's bedside at the moment of death; it also means that doctors may be so anxious to acquire heart valves that they might neglect chances to revive the patient or even accelerate death for the convenience of their operating schedule. I believe that once this fuss emerged the city council repealed the law.

Also, about 8 years ago, I was working as the law librarian for a personal injury law firm and was asked to help research a case that had just walked in the door. A local family, evidently downscale economically, had come in with this story: Their teenage son crashed his car into a telephone pole and was brought to a certain local hospital already brain dead, but was kept on life support machines for days. During that time, doctors and nurses kept asking family members keeping vigil to sign organ donor forms. They refused, since the boy had expressed some distaste for the idea. Eventually the hospital staff gave up asking, and shortly thereafter the family got the call that their son had died. They gave the hospital instructions to send the body to a local funeral parlor.

Two days went by, and the body was not delivered. Finally, the funeral director called, and the father and older brother went to make final plans. After talking business, they asked to see the body. The director became upset and said things like, "You really shouldn't see him," but they insisted. When they were shown the body, they were appalled: the torso was misshapen, all the organs had been removed (presumably for transplanting), and the body was stuffed with sawdust.

I researched the topic (there is a 2-volume text on laws relating to dead bodies) and suggested the firm file a Writ of Replevin, a court order that specific property be returned to its previous owner, not merely paid for. In this case, it would force the hospital to remove the transplanted organs from the recipients to have them buried with the boy. It was my opinion, that the hospital would offer enormous sums of money, the

real goal of the lawsuit, to avoid that prospect. But my suggestion was taken *very* badly, and soon after I parted company with that law firm. I do not know what became of the case, which was never mentioned in the newspapers. I later bumped into one of the firm's legal secretaries, who did not recognize the case at all.

It is likely that the clients who came in with the story were lying, trying to get attention, or maybe get "advances" from the firm. Several other swindlers had done that, or tried, with various elaborate stories. Maybe they hoped to extort money from an innocent hospital, and their falsehood was detected and they were whisked out the door.

MORE "LINKLETTER LEGENDS"

Our last issue presented a survey of legendary and legend-like comic narratives published by Art Linkletter in books drawn from his popular radio and television talk shows (*FN* 33-34:1-8). Already responses have proved the traditionality of many items preserved in these books. In future issues of *FOAFtale News*, we'd like to follow up on which of these stories did circulate as legends. And we'd encourage readers to consult Linkletter's books to see if he preserved other traditional stories that we did not identify. Also, we solicit narratives similar to his that circulated in oral tradition. Finally, we encourage interested researchers to survey other known popular media collections of narratives for contemporary legends. The various reader-contributed columns of *Readers Digest*, for instance, deserve to be surveyed and catalogued.

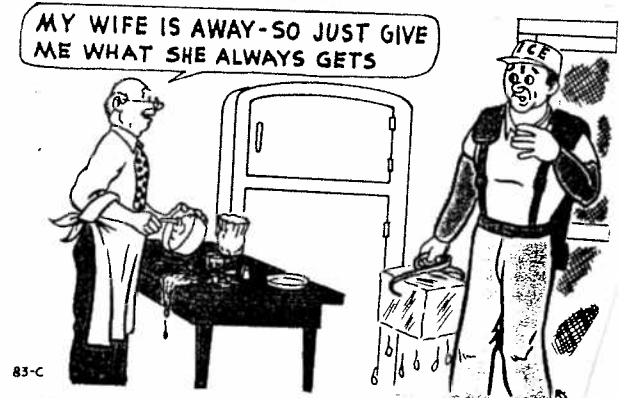
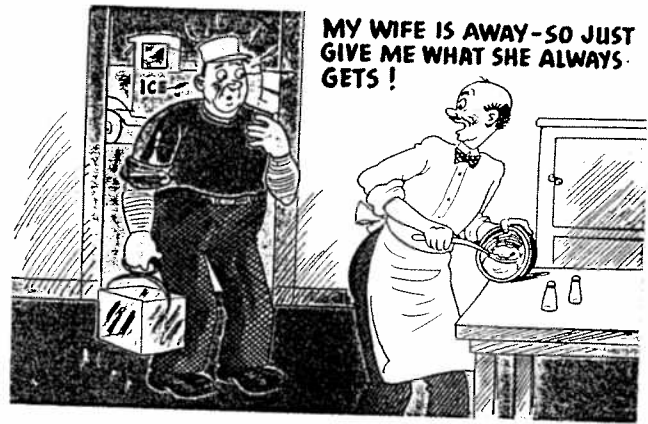
Here are further notes on "Linkletter legends," contributed by the editors or by readers. References are to the page and column of the original article.

The Unintended Proposition (5:1-2): The legendary status of this story type is confirmed by 3 items. First, "Dear Abby" recently printed a letter that seems too close to Linkletter's story line to be a mere coincidence. "Red-Faced in Fresno" says:

I was all set to step into the shower when I realized that my bath towels were in the dryer. My washer and dryer are on my back porch, so I quickly ran back there to get a towel. Before I could open the dryer door, I heard the milkman coming down the walk. He always left the milk on my back step, but I was afraid he might glance in the back screen door and see me, so I jumped into the back porch closet. I was standing in the closet, waiting for him to leave the milk and go. Suddenly, the closet door swung open and there I stood, naked as a jaybird. It was the meter reader!

In his surprise, he looked me up and down. In my embarrassment, I blurted out, "Oh, my ... I thought you were the milkman!" [19 Jul.94.]

Then, Alan E. Mays found two versions of a comic postcard that tells the story with a significant sex reversal. Note that the cartoon presents the male in an effeminate-looking apron, taking over the traditionally female job of cooking; hence the milkman interprets his request as a homosexual proposition.



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Finally, another "homosexual" variation of this story lines circulated in the 15th century. In Linkletter's version, a wife, wishing to patch up a quarrel, writes a steamy sexual invitation to tuck in her husband's coat pocket. She also makes out an order for the milkman. When the puzzled husband comes home with the milk and butter, she realizes she had left the sexy note for the milkman and quickly changes companies (*Oops!* 72).

The same story is no. 138 in Giovanni Francesco Poggio-Bracciolini's *Liber Facetiarum* [Witty Stories] (1450). Poggio-Bracciolini's version was heard in the Vatican's *Bugiale*, or Liars' Club, during which he and other papal secretaries "collected the news of the day, and conversed on various subjects, mostly with a view to relaxation, but sometimes also with serious intent" (*Facetiae*, 18). Later, he translated many of these narratives into Latin.

The story is attributed to a Neapolitan knight named Francesco di Ortano, who received two letters one day: one from his wife asking him to return home and fulfill "his conjugal responsibilities," and one from a merchant demanding immediate payment of a debt. Ortano wrote a level note to the merchant, promising to pay up soon, and also a lascivious letter to his wife, "promising that he would in his own phrase fuck her in a multitude of ways." As in Linkletter's story, the letters are misdirected, and the outraged merchant denounces Ortano to the king, saying he had "been offered a roll in the hay [*coitus*] instead of the money which was owed him [and] he had been sufficiently fucked on the day when he lent the money." The court laughed at this, Poggio concludes, and "even more so later when the mixup of the letters was discovered." [Trans. Bernhardt J. Hurwood (NY: Award Books, 1968):121-22.] [BE]

Bruce Tindall <tindall@mercury.interpath.net> adds: I'd be surprised if there aren't a lot of such stories (many of them true) in recent years involving e-mail or Usenet: it's so easy to reply to the wrong person or to post something publicly that's supposed to be private.

Something non-electronic but similar actually did happen in my office the other day: a couple who both work at the same company had had a spat the night before; husband writes romantic note of apology, puts it in interoffice mail envelope, but forgets to cross out previous addressee's name and write wife's name on envelope; note goes to woman colleague.

"The Tagged Lady" (5:2): Sean Dees <Sean_Deese @mindlink.bc.ca> writes: One story that is similar is this: This lady is working at a garage sale for the Salvation Army or something, and all the employees have cute little adhesive stickers on their front saying: "Ask me how much" (in reference to the garage sale). At some point she has to use a phone, and the nearest phone is in the next store pub or bar. (You get the picture.) I found it in a *Reader's Digest* about 3 years ago.

Editor's Note: There is also a version in which a woman knits a set of Chinese characters she found in a restaurant menu into her sweater. She wonders why Asians laugh at her until one translates: "This dish cheap but unmistakably good" or "Although inexpensive, this dish is tasty." In one of his news columns not collected in his books (6 Nov.90), Jan Harold Brunvand traces this story at least as far back as a 1965 *Saturday Review* column by poet John Ciardi. [BE]

Rebecca Voris <rvoris@max.tiac.net> adds: This was told as a first-person narrative in *Reader's Digest* at one point. It went something like, "I like to knit, and I copied some beautiful characters from a Chinese menu for a sweater. Then someone told me they meant 'White rice included with all entrees', or something like that" I think this was when I was in junior high, so it would be 1979-1981.

Anil Das <anil@nkernel.tandem.com> adds: Heard this in college. Lady tourist in China/Japan/Korea/some such place buys and wears T-shirt with nice Chinese lettering on the front, but is unaware of the fact that they spell out "Fresh Milk."

Paul Hahn <manynote@library.wustl.edu> adds: I read this one in *Reader's Digest* in the 70s. This version took place on a guided bus tour; a man notices the guide trying to conceal amusement at the dress one of the women on the tour is wearing, and asks why. The reply is that the dress was obviously bought from a store that used it as part of a window display, because the Chinese characters on it read "Good stuff inside—price cheap".

And the tabloids: "Some of the funnier embarrassments and disasters are recounted in a new book, *Great Holiday Disasters* (London: Helm, 1987) by Perrott Phillips.

A businessman's wife was delighted with an ornate medallion her husband brought her from Hong Kong. She wore it to a dinner soon afterwards and a Chinese guest took her husband aside. It turned out the medallion, embossed with Chinese characters and an official-looking seal, said: 'Registered Prostitute No. 95. Licensed and

certified free of disease by Kowloon Department of Health and Hygiene' " [Bill Norman, "Travelers' Wacky Tales," *The Sun* (8 Dec.87):28]. (Does anyone have a copy of this book? —Ed.)

Teacher's Dress Rolled Up in the Map (6:1) Joseph P. Goodwin writes: When I took my teaching methods course at the University of Alabama during the spring semester of 1973, one of the instructors told us of her supposed personal experience: She was teaching a unit on the War between the States [this was the South, remember]. She'd just finished detailing Sherman's March to the Sea. Atlanta was in flames. The class was almost in tears. With a grand, final gesture, she reached behind her and tugged on the map so that it would roll up. It caught her dress and pulled it up over her head, leaving her standing in her slip, with all the pins and adjustments showing. It never occurred to me to question her story. And in fact, she might well have read it in Linkletter.

Flower Bulbs Eaten by Mistake (7:2): a brief item proved to have a complex past. Linkletter simply says that a new bride once "served up a dish of beautifully glazed onions—or so she thought. What she glazed and served were gladiola bulbs" (*Oops!* 73-74). But Bernard Sussman writes: This is, in fact, a historical (or nearly historical event, having been described (as happening with a tulip bulb) in the Alexandre Dumas (père) historical novel *The Black Tulip* (1850), describing the wild speculation in tulip bulbs that gripped the Holland economy circa 1634. Supposedly a family's nest-egg had been invested in a single tulip bulb on the expectation that it would bloom some exotic color which would fetch a fortune, and the cook mistook it for an onion and chopped it up.

Editor's Note: The most influential statement of the tulip-eating legend in English is given by Charles MacKay in his *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* (1841, 1852), which was reprinted in 1932 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux and kept in print in an inexpensive Noonday Press paperback. MacKay devotes 10 pages to the "Tulipomania" or speculation in bulb futures, which reached a height and crashed in 1636-37. During the peak of this speculation, MacKay says, people were "led into awkward dilemmas by their ignorance."

In one, a merchant is said to have given a herring to a sailor who told him that one of his ships had arrived. Seeing what appeared to be an onion on the merchant's counter, the sailor went off with that as well. It was a "Semper Augustus" tulip bulb worth 3000 florins (\$24,000 or £15,000), and the sailor was located by the frantic merchant just as he was swallowing the last bit of it.

MacKay apostrophizes: "Little did he dream that he had been eating a breakfast whose cost might have regaled a whole ship's crew for a twelvemonth; or, as the plundered merchant himself expressed it, 'might have sumptuously feasted the Prince of Orange and the whole court of the Stadtholder.' Anthony caused pearls to be dissolved in wine to drink the health of Cleopatra; Sir Richard Whittington was as foolishly magnificent in an entertainment to King Henry V.; and Sir Thomas Gresham drank a diamond dissolved in wine to the health of Queen

Elizabeth, when she opened the Royal Exchange; but the breakfast of this roguish Dutchman was as splendid as either. He had an advantage, too, over his wasteful predecessors: *their* gems did not improve the taste or the wholesomeness of *their* wine, while *his* tulip was quite delicious with his red herring." (92-93).

MacKay's story proved influential, both directly and indirectly through the version that P.T. Barnum's plagiarized from him into his *Humbugs of the World* (1865). The narrative has since appeared often to illustrate the folly of tulip speculation (e.g., *Smithsonian Magazine* [Apr.77]:71-72).

But economist Peter M. Garber debunks MacKay's legend, and indeed his entire view of this trade as a "bubble" or reckless speculation craze. To begin with, the 1636-37 trade was a futures market, not a sale of actual bulbs. In fact, these could only be lifted from June to September; the tulipomania market peaked in February, so no one could have handled bulbs at this time, let alone eat or slice them. The only tulips that brought high prices, he adds, were "broken" bulbs affected by a virus that weakened the plant's vigor but produced beautiful variegations in the flowers' color. Since such bulbs were essentially unique art objects, they commanded high prices similar to gemstones or fine paintings, before, during, and after the "bubble." ["The Tulipmania Legend," *Working Paper Series #CSFM-139* (New York: Center for the Study of Futures Markets [Columbia Business School], August 1986).]

In fact, the earliest verifiable print version of the legend in English is in MacKay's (uncited) source, Johann Beckmann's *History of Inventions, Discoveries, and Origins*, trans. William Johnston; 4th edn. revised and expanded by William Francis and J.W. Griffith (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1846). Beckmann's narrative is simpler than MacKay's ornate text and is specifically dated *after* the time of the speculation mania:

When John Balthasar Schuppe [d. 1661—ed.] was in Holland, a merchant gave a herring to a sailor who had brought him some goods. The sailor, seeing some valuable tulip-roots lying about, which he considered as of little consequence, thinking them to be onions, took some of them unperceived, and ate them with his herring. Through this mistake the sailor's breakfast cost the merchant a much greater sum than if he had treated the prince of Orange (1:30).

MacKay added a second narrative, set too during the tulipomania. Here an English amateur botanist spots an unfamiliar bulb in a wealthy Dutchman's conservatory. He peels and slices it, taking notes, and when asked what he was doing by the furious host, he replies calmly, "Peeling a most extraordinary onion." It proves to be an "Admiral Van der Eyck" worth 4000 florins (\$32,000 or £20,000) and the ignorant botanist ends up in prison for grand larceny (93). This also is a heavily embellished and altered form of Beckmann:

No less laughable is the anecdote of an Englishman

who travelled with Matthews. Being in a Dutchman's garden, he pulled a couple of tulips, on which he wished to make some botanical observations, and put them in his pocket; but he was apprehended as a thief, and obliged to pay a considerable sum before he could obtain his liberty (1:30-31).

The allusion is to Henry Matthews (1789-1828), who published a popular account of his travels on the continent in 1820; hence this story is nearly contemporary with Beckmann and MacKay. Can German or Dutch readers trace either narrative before 1820? [BE]

Bruce Tindall <tindall@mercury.interpath.net> adds: I read this in a wine book some years ago: A non-wine-savvy woman marries an oenophile. He plans a dinner party at which the entree is to be Coq au Vin and the wine is to be an extremely old and priceless bottle of Chateau Lafitte Rothschild. His wife, having heard that you should cook with the same wine you're planning to drink, pours two bottles of the invaluable fluid into the cooking pot.

This story may be a way for wine snobs to reassure themselves that, snobby though they may be, there are others even snobbier. I think the story was told as a way of illustrating that the "cook with the same wine you're planning to drink" rule is silly and over-the-top and leads to excesses like the one illustrated in the story. Of course you can tell from the start that it's not a true story, because wine snobs only marry other wine snobs! :-)

Pet Food Served for Dinner (7:2): On 15 Feb.93, the syndicated tongue-in-cheek etiquette column "Miss Manners" printed a reader's letter that asked advice on the following situation: a hostess served a "turkey salad" snack that the guests found strange-tasting. Afterwards, one of them secretly went to the kitchen to investigate, where she found that the cans of turkey meat were stored beside identical-looking cans of cat food. Under the sink were two empty cans of cat food: "We had been served cat-food salad." (Miss Manners chided the reader for snooping—"the real etiquette violation here.") [BE]

Rule-Breakers Exposed: There are many more undiscovered or under-documented legend types of this sort. One, which we could call *The Interfering Policeman*, may have roots to ancient analogs. *David Herreshoff* writes: During the Era of Ceausescu, the dictator decided there weren't enough Roumanians for his purposes. His solution was to ban contraceptives and require the signatures of 6 physicians to an opinion that an abortion was required to save the life of a pregnant woman.

In 1984, while walking with a companion in the Cluj park, I was told the following:

A policeman arrested an 18-year-old boy and 14-year-old girl in the park, caught in the act. They were brought before a judge and a verdict handed down. The girl received a reprimand for indecent exposure in a public place. The boy was sentenced for 3 months in

jail for contributing to the delinquency of a minor. And the policeman was imprisoned for 2 years for interrupting a pregnancy.

In *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, I find the following:

Seneca says that Piso condemned a man on circumstantial evidence for murder; but when the execution was about to take place, the man supposed to have been murdered appeared. The centurion sent the prisoner to Piso, and explained the situation to him; whereupon Piso condemned all 3 to death, saying, *Fiat justitia....* The condemned man was executed because he had been sentenced, the centurion because he had disobeyed orders, and the man supposed to have been murdered because he had been the cause of death to two innocent men.

What I wonder is this: could the interrupted pregnancy story could be viewed as a descendant through oral tradition of the story we get from Seneca? To me, Piso and the Roumanian judge seem to have the same approach to the law. Contact David Herreshoff, Box 835, Kaslo, British Columbia, CANADA V0G 1M0

Editor's comment: Seneca's story (from *De Ira* 1:8) appeared in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* as ll. 2017-42 of "The Summoner's Tale," a compilation of many medieval *exempla* and scatological stories. A variant was included as Tale 140 of the *Gesta Romanorum*, a collection of *exempla* written in simple Latin for use in sermons. There the story is attributed to "The Emperor Heraclius, [who,] amongst many other virtues, was remarkable for his inflexible justice" [trans. Charles Swan and Wynnard Hooper (1876; rpt. NY: Dover, 1959):245-46]. From its use as a sermon illustration, it may have passed into tradition, perhaps in the form of a parody. What may be a jocular retelling of Seneca was recorded in 1919 from an Idaho informant by G. Legman:

A policeman stumbles on a young couple making love in a graveyard, and takes them to court. The judge asks the boy what they were doing in a graveyard at midnight. "Nothing wrong, your Honor. We were just burying the old stiff." The judge turns to the girl. "And how about you?" "I was the undertaker." The judge turns angrily on the policeman. "You idiot, I fine you \$25 for interfering with the burying of a *corpus delicti*!"

[7.III: Policemen and Priests; *Rationale of the Dirty Joke* (NY: Grove Press, 1971):415.]

This story hinges on a complex legal pun, suggesting that it was circulated by law students familiar with Latin: the *corpus delicti*, literally, is the physical evidence for a crime, but often refers to the corpse of a murder victim, which police must normally locate in order to charge a person with the crime. Seneca's story, interestingly, plays on the legal problems that emerge when this principle is neglected.

But "delicti" is almost identical with a Latin word meaning "delight, pleasure." Legman's story differs from the others in that the principal lawbreakers go free, ironically by "burying the old stiff" and so disposing of the *corpus delicti*—the erect penis that is the hardest evidence of their crime. But as in Seneca's and the modern Roumanian story, the judge reserves the harshest penalty for the centurion/policeman who interferes with matters of life and death.

But this link is admittedly speculative: any more evidence of this story type in tradition, either as legend or joke? [BE]

BULLETIN BOARD

1994 ISCLR SEMINAR. The Twelfth International Conference on Perspectives on Contemporary Legend was held 18-22 July 1994 at the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme in Paris, France. Program Chairs were Véronique Campion-Vincent and Mark Glazer. The following papers were scheduled to be delivered:

Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi Fornicating with the Devil: A Psychological Approach to Contemporary Satanism Legends

Thomas E. Barden and John Provo Contemporary Legends and Belief Tales of the Vietnam War

Gillian Bennett Medical Aspects of the "Bosom Serpent" Legend

Rolf Brednich The Reader as Researcher, Experiences of an Editor of Contemporary Legends

Oliviane Brodin Individual Differences in Sensitivity to Contamination Rumors: An Experiment about Two Rumors on Leader Brands of Food Products

Peter Burger The Maculate Conception: Legends of Impregnation and Childbirth

Gary R. Butler Contemporary Cultural Discourse: The Generation And Transformation of Experience Narratives

Véronique Campion-Vincent Sharing by Error: An Overview of the Short Films

Nicolae Constantinescu Treasure Hunting and Fortune-Making Stories in a Transition Society

Frederic Dumerchat The Conspiracy of the Short Greys: The French Version of American Tales

Bill Ellis Satanic Ritual Abuse Claims as Contemporary Legend: Second Thoughts

Hilary Evans From Fait Divers to Folklore to Fait Divers

Gary Alan Fine & Jeff Victor Satanic Tourism: Adolescent Dabblers and Identity Work

Mark Glazer Proscription, Loss of Control and Contemporary Legend

Diane E. Goldstein More Welcome to the World of AIDS: The Merging of Legend and Reality

Anna E. Guigne The "Dying Child's Wish" and Reality: Highlights of A Case Study

John A. Gutowski Contemporary Legend in Lovecraft

Sandy Hobbs and David Cornwell Hanging the Monkey

Christine Shojaci Kawan Contemporary Legend

Research in German-Speaking Countries

Bengt af Klintberg The Functions of Legend Narration in the Modern World

Janet L. Langlois Angel Sights/Sites/Cites: Personal Encounters with the Divine, Contemporary Legend and American Culture

Jean-Loic Le Quellec Letters, Chains and Marvels

Robert M. MacGregor Steatopygia, Rolypoly Bums: Spike Lee and the Liz Claiborne Rumor

Mark Moravec Legends, Memorates and Mythologies: The Case of UFO Folklore

Genevieve Paicheler Legends about the Origins of AIDS in the French Public: from Conjectures to Certainty

Leslie Prosterman Narratives of Art: Legends and Paintings of Edvard Munch

Jean-Bruno Renard Truth from the Mouth of Babes

Sigrid Schmidt The Worker Built In the Oker Dam in Germany

Ingo Schneider Indexing Contemporary Legends: Problems, Chances, Aims

Jacqueline Simpson Are the Terms "Modern" and "Contemporary" Synonymous?

Sherry Cook Stanforth "It's All Right, It's Okay": Grief Narratives and Continuity in a Mutable Social Context

Paolo Toselli Child Kidnapping and the Body Parts Black Market

Patricia A. Turner Lights Out

Lucia Vecchia Classification and Cataloguing of Contemporary Legend

Jeffrey S. Victor The Ostension of Contemporary Legends in Psychotherapy

Donna Wyckoff And I said to myself, "Now it all makes sense!"

NEW FOAFTALE NEWS EDITOR. Effective with the next issue, the editor of this newsletter will be Philip Hiscock. Philip, who has just finished writing his doctoral thesis, is an experienced Internet user who has been active in tracing and documenting contemporary legend as they emerge and documenting contemporary legend as they emerge over the information highway. Send research notes and queries from now on to:

Philip Hiscock

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Alan E. Mays continues as News and Bibliography Editor, and Bill Ellis will contribute as duties allow.

JUST IN!

THE PEANUT BUTTER AND DOG SURPRISE. In June, a new version of "The Surpriser Surprised" emerged on computer discussion groups and in print and broadcast media. Earlier versions featured the discovery of a nude man or couple. [See Brunvand, *Vanishing Hitchhiker*

(1981):140-46, and William Hugh Jansen, "The Surpriser Surprised: A Modern Legend," in *Readings in American Folklore*, ed. Brunvand (NY: Norton, 1979):64-90]. This one involves an unclothed woman with peanut butter smeared on her genitals, which her pet dog is licking off. One of the earliest media accounts of the legend appears in *Frank*, the Canadian satirical magazine:

A story that sounds suspiciously like an urban legend is making the rounds at the Dept. of [National] Defence and Canada Post.

The apocryphal tale goes like this: A popular DND (or Post Office) employee is celebrating a birthday, so her co-workers decide to organize a surprise party. During coffee break, one of them rifles through her purse, takes her keys, and makes a copy of her house key. Then a group leaves the office early, enters her house, and waits in the basement to surprise her.

Shortly after, the woman comes home and goes upstairs to the bedroom. Ten minutes later, the woman's dog comes bounding down into the basement, followed by the woman calling, "Lucky? Lucky?"

When she turns on the lights, her friends jump out and yell "surprise!"

And what a surprise it is—the woman is standing stark naked, with peanut butter slathered all over her nether regions. The woman is so mortified that she calls DND/Post Office the next day and resigns...or so the story goes.

Anyone with more information or other versions of the story is invited to contact FRANK at the usual number.

["Crunchy or Smooth?" *Frank* 171 (7 Jul.94):13. C: Jennifer Clarke Wilkes.]

In a subsequent letter to the magazine, reader Trevor Tymchuk suggests that the peanut butter story came from "The Apology Line," a private US telephone service which allows callers to listen to confessions and to record their own tales of criminal, sexual, or other personal misdeeds. "If you were hoping that there actually was someone in DND or Canada Post who had done this," he writes, "I'm sorry to disappoint you." [10 Jul.94 C: Jennifer Clarke Wilkes] The "confession" evidently appeared in a new subject area on the line called the "Apology Pet Corner," which, as one reporter confirms, "has received some unprintable admissions, involving dogs, cats, and a jar of smooth peanut butter." [Jonathan Freedland, "Interview: The Man Who's Glad You're Sorry Now," *Guardian* (30 Jul.94):27].

The legend also cropped up on call-in radio programs during the summer, including syndicated columnist Dr. Judy Kuriensky's "Love Phones" radio show. And in July, newspaper columnist Richard Roeper wrote about a colleague who told him the tale of a surprise birthday party in which the guest of honor was found "expressing herself in, um, a highly personal manner that involved a jar of peanut butter." No mention of a dog, however. [Richard Roeper, "Tale of Peanut Butter Spreads Latest

Legend," *Chicago Sun-Times* (26 Jul.94):11].

Analogous woman/dog scenarios figure in other narratives. Gershon Legman observes that "Jokes on sexual relations of women with animals have not been collected, unless a punning reference to a woman's pet cat that dies of a pubic hairball can be considered a joke. Stories of this type are generally told, not as jokes, but as true anecdotes demonstrating the sexual greediness and depraved appetites of women in general." As an example, he relates the story about a woman having intercourse with a dog. In the midst of the act, the dog becomes startled, unexpectedly pulls out of the woman, and "turns her organs inside out like a glove." A gynecologist, from whom the narrator allegedly heard the story, is called in to put her anatomy right. [G. Legman, *Rationale of the Dirty Joke*, First Series (NY: Grove, 1971):212 (3.III.2: Zoophily). For a similar mishap, see "Cora and the Bottle," which Vance Randolph collected many times "always ... as a true story, with the name of some local girl," *Pissing in the Snow* (Urbana: U Illinois Pr., 1976):117-18. C: BE].

A recent humor collection contains a joke that relates more closely to the peanut butter story. A mother superior complains to a priest that her nuns have nothing to do during the cold winter nights, since they can't indulge in worldly pleasures like watching TV or listening to music. He suggests that she get a dog, one of "God's creatures," to keep them company. Later, the priest asks how the nuns like their new pet. The mother superior says all is fine, except that having the dog has resulted in some strange behavior. "Last night," she tells the priest, "I walked downstairs unexpectedly and found the whole convent douching with Gravy Train [a brand of dog food]" [Julius Alvin, *Repulsively Gross Jokes, Volume XVI* (NY: Zebra Books, 1994):93.

A compilation of female sexual fantasies includes a story about a woman who uses chocolate cake batter and Bovril (concentrated essence of beef) on her breasts and pubic region to attract her pet dog [Nancy Friday, *My Secret Garden: Women's Sexual Fantasies* (NY: Pocket Books, 1974):166-68].

Accounts of the legend on computer discussion groups vary widely. The substance the woman uses to entice the dog is almost always peanut butter, though margarine, whipped cream, and dog food are specified once each. (Once, a cat is enticed with tuna fish.) The woman usually applies the peanut butter to her genitalia, although she may also spread it on her breasts or cover herself "from head to toe." The dog may be named Lucky, Chief, Kippy, or Skippy (the last being a brand name in the US for both dog food and peanut butter). The woman may be a newly-wed wife, a nurse who lives alone, a woman about to be married, or a coworker whose life centers on her pet dogs. The site of her misdeed is often the kitchen or bedroom, and her surprisers may hide in the basement or living room. In her shame, the woman calls off her wedding, quits her job, sells her house, or leaves town immediately.

Following are sample variants and discussions posted to Usenet groups or sent directly to me. [AEM]

=====
3 June 1994. Heard this story about a government employee in Ottawa...

The woman's coworkers decide to throw her a surprise birthday party. During coffee break they get her house key out of her purse, then a group of them leave work early, go to [her] house, and hide in her basement.

The woman comes home and goes upstairs. After about half an hour, the woman's dog "Lucky" comes bouncing downstairs into the basement. The woman follows calling for the dog.

When she gets downstairs, her coworkers all yell surprise. Whoops! It seems the woman is naked and her crotch is covered with peanut butter.

She is so mortified that the next day she calls work and resigns...or so the story goes.

Can anyone tell me if they've heard this before?

Thanks, *Glen McGregor, alt.folklore.urban [afu]*.

=====
3 June 1994. Here's a variation on the classic "Surprise!" UL. A friend I was helping move told me it happened to a friend of a friend, who was actually at the party. She (and the others there, who had heard it) called it the peanut butter story.

This guy decided to have a surprise party for his wife. So my friend and everyone hid in the living room and waited for this woman to show up. They heard her come into the kitchen, and they waited a few minutes. Then they all ran into the kitchen and shouted "Surprise!" The woman was laying on the floor. She had spread peanut butter all over herself, and the family dog was going down on her. She ran out of the house. That was three weeks ago, and she hasn't been heard from since.

I didn't question her friend's voracity. It was too good a story to mess up like that.

Jeremy "Crunchy or creamy?" Hornik, *Northwestern University, afu*.

=====
6 June 1994. Hi, guys. I don't know how true this is (duh) but I found this an interesting story:

My boyfriend has a teammate whose girlfriend goes to UF [University of Florida]. She and a few of her friends decided to give one girl a surprise birthday party, since the girl had been grouching about not doing anything special, especially since it was her 21st b-day. Well, the group of friends had planned the whole party out, got the girl's roommates to let them in and prepare, and were waiting expectantly to surprise the girl.

They all heard the girl drive up, park, let herself in, and go into the kitchen. The party-givers waited in the living room (next to the kitchen) expecting the b-day girl to come in. 15 minutes passed, and she seemed to still be in the kitchen. So the party-givers decided to go into the kitchen and surprise her. The next part I'll try to put delicately, but please don't flame me if you are offended--I'm just relating a story:

The party-givers turned on the light and yelled surprise, to find the b-day girl sprawled on the floor in a compromising position (let's just say it involved

her dog and peanut butter). Needless to say, no one has seen nor heard from the girl since. The guy I heard this from added insult to injury: "you know, when dogs get peanut butter stuck to the roof of their mouths, they just keep licking."

Jennifer Ann Johnson, University of Maryland, College Park, alt.folklore.college.

9 June 1994. I see the source of this thread as a fusion of the earlier "surprise party" story and the "tuna fish" story, which I will relate for the few who haven't heard it. Warning: If posts of a graphic sexual nature offend you, read no further. A young woman, usually known to be promiscuous, goes to her gynecologist complaining of itching in her genitals. Upon examination, he finds maggots in her vagina.

"Have you been indulging in any deviant sexual practices?" he asks. She refuses to answer, telling him to "just prescribe something."

"I can't treat you unless you're honest with me," he demands. Finally, she relents. It seems that her boyfriend was out of town a week or so ago, and, in search of sexual gratification, she spooned tuna fish into her vagina and let her cat lick it out. She didn't clean her genitals well enough, hence the maggots.

I think the fusion of the two stories is obvious. This happens a lot in urban folklore.

Stu, University of Nebraska--Lincoln, afu.

17 July 1994. [A coworker's] sister-in-law has just returned from Toronto. She was up there staying with a girlfriend who was also from Newfoundland. The friend invited her to a surprise birthday party for a female coworker. On the appointed evening, a bunch of the coworkers get together (one having a key to her apartment), enter the apartment, hide, and turn off the lights. A short time later, the girl returns home, unlocks the door, and goes straight into the bathroom without turning on the lights. There are sounds of running water.

No one knows what to do as turning on the lights was supposed to be the cue to jump out and yell "surprise," etc. So they sit there in the dark for a while longer. Presently the girl leaves the bathroom and proceeds into the kitchen (still no lights) and closes the door. Everyone is getting restless. From the kitchen they hear her calling her dog, then the usual lapping, slurping sounds of a dog feeding. Figuring this would be as good a time as any, the group tiptoes over to the kitchen, throws open the door, and switches on the light. Much to their horror and amazement they discover the girl sitting naked in a kitchen chair with peanut butter spread all over her crotch and the dog merrily licking away!

The tale ends at this point with no details as to the fate of the girl (or her faithful companion). There were only the usual comments of "I'd sure like to be that dog," "at least she washed it off for the dog first," etc., etc.

Male federal government worker, Newfoundland, C: Philip Hiscock.

19 July 1994. The version I heard went like this:

There's this twentysomething female bank clerk who shares an apartment with another woman. Although attractive, she never has time to date or go out because of unusual constraints of her job. Her roommate somehow discovers that the clerk's birthday is impending, and manages to gather the clerk's few friends and get them to the apartment for a surprise party.

Apparently, the clerk's undeviating behavior when she gets off work is to spend a couple of hours at the athletic club, then come straight upstairs and take a shower. Anticipating this, the roommate ushers all of the friends and coworkers upstairs to one of the bedrooms.

The crowd listens quietly and soon the front door opens with a jingle of keys. They listen for the sound of the clerk climbing the stairs, but it never comes. Five, ten minutes pass. Eventually, the group decides to sneak down the stairs and surprise the birthday victim there.

The throng climbs down very quietly and it becomes obvious that their friend and coworker has to be in the kitchen. So they gather themselves at the door and then, all at once, throw the door open and scream "surprise."

Whereupon they are presented with the tableau of the bank clerk, standing with her sweatpants around her ankles, whipped cream spread over her crotch with her pet dog licking it off. Apparently, the woman had to leave town the next day. She had her final check mailed to her. The coworkers never saw her again. Whatever.

The way this was told to me: A coworker's roommate said that HER friend was the bank clerk's roommate. I brought up the word FOAF to my coworker, who told me that, no, he could identify the bank clerk's roommate. Which never happened, so there.

I live in San Francisco, incidentally, and my coworker told this to me in February or so. The events supposedly occurred in Marin County (north of SF).

Reid Fleming, alt.folklore.suburban [afs].

20 July 1994. Yeah, I heard a Philadelphia version and one for Washington, DC, within 24 hours of each other 2 weeks ago. Both were classic UL-type experiences, as both of the two different people swore "A friend in their office" is related to one of the people at the party. Weirder still, one insisted that the parents of the groom were present, and that they were fundamentalist Iranian Christians.

Toni Burnham, afu.

2 Aug. 1994. Here's one that I think is a new one. Supposedly, it actually happened to a guy in my brother's office. I have my doubts. The story goes something like this. If you offend easily, then you might want to skip this one.

A guy gets a bunch of friends together to have a surprise birthday party for his newlywed wife. They're hiding in the basement of the house, where the family room is, waiting for her to come home. She comes home,

and they can hear her up in the kitchen putting the groceries away. Suddenly, the wife starts calling for the dog (Kippy) who happens to be downstairs with the hiding friends. "Here Kippy! Here Kippy! Come get your peanut butter snack. Here Kippy!" The dog goes ballistic at this point, but the husband is holding the dog.

The wife starts walking down the stairs into the dark basement (the light switch is at the bottom of the steps). "Here Kippy!" She gets to the bottom of the steps and throws the light switch and...she's topless. And she has peanut butter spread all over her breasts. Twenty people are standing there just dumbfounded. The wife goes running upstairs crying with the husband running after her. The partygoers leave without a word.

Anybody else heard this one? It's almost too good to be fiction.

Brian Quick, Angola, IN, afu.

=====

29 Aug. 1994. This is a FOAF story but the FOAF, whom I know, claims she knows the person it is supposed to have happened to (yeah, yeah I know it's 4 degrees of separation already but it's a GREAT story :)). It was this woman's (blonde, sexy, the works if you please) birthday and her friends had planned a surprise party for her. So they all crashed into her house (quietly through a back door while the woman was in) and were hiding in the woodwork, etc. They were also trying to keep the woman's friendly labrador quiet to prevent him from giving them all away. After a while, they heard the woman shout, "Here, Chief, here, Chief--time for your treat, Chief!" So the bunch started following Chief upstairs who was, by this time, yelping and tearing up the stairs for his "treat." At which point, the woman stepped out of her room completely naked and covered from head to toe in sweet peanut butter!!

Ajay Dhankhar, Yale University, afu.

=====

6 Sept. 1994. I heard this story from my wife who works for the provincial government.... She heard it from a colleague in another department who refuses to be named, and she, in turn heard, it from her roommate who works as a scrub nurse....

The story is of a nurse, who lives alone, and her dog Skippy. Seems it's her 40th birthday and she decides to give herself a birthday present involving the use of Skippy peanut butter, her dog's liking for said confection, and its application to, shall we say, certain delicate areas of her anatomy. "Here Skippy," she calls. It also seems that this occurs in the kitchen of her abode while, unbeknownst to her, her friends have gained access and are hiding out in her living room for the usual surprise birthday party.

There is, of course, the public revelation of her peculiar habit and the almost immediate removal to parts unknown.... If timing is of any importance, I heard this story around the end of June, 1994.

Newfoundland, C: Philip Hiscock.

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THE PEANUT BUTTER/RITUAL CHILD ABUSE LINK.

Six-year-old Angie McMahon bit down on a tremendous potato chip, as if to prop open her mouth.... [She] concentrated harder on the snacks than on the prosecutor's questions, and Judge [William L.] Harth cautioned the attorneys: "We may have to be more patient with this child than we have with others." Angie's responses were shot all over the place.

[Prosecutor] Glenn [Goldberg] asked, "What did you see Kelly [Michaels] do with peanut butter?"

"She, uh, put it on herself," said Angie, in long wide words. Then, swirling her finger in her mouth, playing with potato chip mulch, she provided the next bit of information: Kelly had used both peanut butter and jelly.

Glenn asked: "Where did the jelly come from?"

Angie was breathless, little gasps between her words, "Mm, um, from her vagina."

Out in the courtroom, her grandfather groaned.

"Did you have to lick that off her?"

"Yes," she slurred.

Feet braced on the conference table, Angie reached forward for the bag of chips.

[Lisa Manshel, *Nap Time* (NY: Morrow, 1990):219-20.]

Based on this and similar evidence, on Apr.15, 1988 a jury found Kelly Michaels guilty of 115 counts of sexual abuse. Michaels had worked as a teacher and teacher's aide at Wee Care Day Nursery in Maplewood, New Jersey, for 7 months in 1984-85, without raising any suspicions or complaints from children or staff. But shortly after she left the center for another job, she became the focus of an intense investigation by county prosecutors and the New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services. Suspicions were raised when one child, whose pediatrician was taking his temperature rectally, remarked, "That's what my teacher does to me at nap time at school.... Her takes my temperature." (Michaels told investigators that she and other aides used a forehead strip to take temperatures, and, ironically, the jury acquitted her of the charge of anal penetration that this remark produced.)

Intensive questioning of this child and the others at the day care center produced a complex story, in which she had assaulted children with kitchen implements and Lego blocks, played "Jingle Bells" on the piano in the nude, and forced them to consume human waste and menstrual blood. In August 1988, Michaels was sentenced to 47 years in prison. Her case became a *cause celebre* among critics of ritual child abuse investigators, and eventually Morton Stavis, founder of the Center for Constitutional Rights, took on her case at no charge. After his death in Dec.92, the noted trial lawyer William M. Kunstler directed her appeal.

On 26 Mar.93, a New Jersey appeals court overturned the verdict, finding that Michaels had been denied a fair trial. The decision was particularly critical of expert witnesses, who used the theory of child sexual abuse accommodation syndrome "as an alleged scientific

process of determining whether the children were actually sexually abused ... [leading] the jury to believe that the process was rooted in science and thus was a reliable means of determining sexual abuse." It also criticized Judge Harth for playing with the children and holding them on their lap, whispering encouragement in their ears, as they gave testimony against Michaels. "The required atmosphere of the bench's impartiality was lost in this trial," the decision concluded. Prosecutors promised a retrial, but Michaels was freed on bail 4 days later.

[Lisa Manshel's *Nap Time* presents the prosecution's side of the affair; defenses of Michaels came from Debbie Nathan, "Victimizer or Victim? Was Kelly Michaels Unjustly Convicted?" *Village Voice* (2 Aug.88), and from Dorothy Rabinowitz, "From the Mouths of Babes to a Jail Cell," *Harper's* (May'90):52-63. Manshel responded to her critics in "Reporters for the Defense in a Child Abuse Case," *Washington Journalism Review* (Jul./Aug.91): 17-21, which led to thorny exchanges with Debbie Nathan (Sept.91):9-10 and with Stephen Squire (Oct.91):8-9. The reverse on appeal and Michaels's release were covered in *NYT* (27 Mar.93):A26 and (31 Mar.93):B5; she published a bitter account of her experience, "Eight Years in Kafkaland," in *National Review* (Sept.6'93):37.]

The two most sensational charges were that Kelly Michaels had, variously, smeared peanut butter on herself and made children lick it off, or that she herself had licked it off the children's genitals. Investigators at first found such details almost too bizarre to investigate, but were struck by how the children seemed to attest them independently. The charge remained one of the strongest charges against Michaels, although co-workers testified that they had never seen peanut butter go missing from the day care's kitchen.

Now, the emergence of a contemporary legend scenario that links perverse sex with peanut butter licking raises disturbing questions about the case. The present legend might incorporate submerged details from the intense media publicity given the Kelly Michaels case, with the child transformed to a family pet to transpose the story from horror to bawdy humor. But equally, since the genre of contemporary legends about women "caught in the act" appears to predate the Wee Care case, children or investigators may have projected details from an earlier version of the legend into the case.

A second major charge that appeared from children's disclosures, was that she had played the piano in the nude and taught the children "Buffalo Bill," a game in which they took their clothes off and rolled around together. This scenario is identical with the "Sex Education Horrible Example" contemporary legend actively circulating at least as far back as 1969. A Florida reader, distressed by columnist Abigail Van Buren's support of public school sex education, wrote in:

Why, I heard that one teacher got so carried away while conducting a sex education lecture that she completely DISROBED in front of the class!

In another school, the teacher herded the whole

class into a dark closet and told them to "feel" each other!

I could tell you much more, but you wouldn't believe it.

Abby responded:

I have heard all these wild tales (and more) but have been unable to locate the teachers who supposedly did the above, the schools in which these incidents were supposed to have occurred, or any of the children who were actually present" [8 Sept.69].

At the same time, Ernest Dunbar found such stories widespread in literature being circulated by the John Birch Society and Billy Hargis's Christian Crusade, two militant far-right-wing organizations. In one especially popular story, "In some other city (usually quite distant), a teacher ... put some very young children in a dark room and encouraged them to experiment sexually with each other."

Such acts, Dunbar finds, are said to be part of "an international Communist conspiracy to subvert America by corrupting the minds of our young." The media, Parent-Teacher Associations, and the American Medical Association were also said to be part of this communist plot. ["Sex in School: The Birds, the Bees, and the Birchers," *Look* (9 Sept.69):15 ff.; cited by Rosan Jordan de Caro, "Sex Education and the Horrible Example Stories," *Folklore Forum* 3 (1970):124-27.]

Ritual abuse claims, in themselves, may not be "urban legends," as crusaders have argued with some justice. But we cannot conclude that the two phenomena have nothing in common, as shown by the present popularity of the "Licking peanut butter" version of "The Surpriser Surprised" and the past popularity of "The Sex Education Horrible Example." It remains all too possible that the charges against Kelly Michaels reflect not independent witnesses of criminal acts but knowledge of common legend types. Again, we recognize the contemporary legend's ability to leap the generic boundaries scholars try to erect between fabliau and witch hunt, and to produce chilling consequences in real life. [BE]

EYE ON SATANISM

THE NETHERLANDS. Peter Burger sends the following detailed accounts of the satanic ritual abuse flap now in progress in Holland:

Dutch Official Report: No Evidence for SRA. The study group supported by the Ministry of Justice has presented its findings in April, after examining about thirty cases (no exact numbers are given) dating from 1985 to the present. One case—that never made it to court—involved allegations of 1600 murdered babies. Neither police investigations, nor interviews with therapists, social workers, police officials and alleged victims yield any evidence for the existence of ritual abuse, the report states. A number of victims, though, appeared to be traumatized by other forms of abuse.

[*Rapport van de werkgroep ritueel misbruik*, April 1994]

In spite of this official dismissal, rumors continue.

Lacking both a strong fundamentalist lobby and a network of experienced "cult cops", claims making about satanic threats in the Netherlands mainly rests in the hands of a group of mental health professionals. A mildly skeptical article in the daily newspaper *Trouw* (23 April 1994) presented their view that MPD can be purposely *created*—a conviction hitherto restricted to a professional audience—to the public at large. Said a 34 year old woman who discovered in therapy that she had been the victim of satanist parents and claims that the cult made her sister disappear: "I have *structured* MPD, which means that the cult has created all those alters."

According to therapists the mind control techniques used by the cult have been developed by the Nazis and subsequently carried to perfection by the CIA. Cult meetings, they say, often occur in the vicinity of military complexes. (On the Nazi connection, see *FN* 27:6 and 29:9.) Therapists estimate that thousands of victims have been successfully programmed, the majority of which are unaware of even being in a cult.

Sources for allegations such as these are therapists Onno van der Hart, Suzette Boon and Olga Heijtmajer Jansen, who report to their peers in their forthcoming paper "Ritual Abuse in the Netherlands: A Clinician's Perspective", to be published in George Frazer (ed.), *Ritual Abuse—Therapist's Issues* (APA Clinical Series).

Update on the Yolanda Van B. Affair: Emotions still run high over what Dutch newspapers termed "the sex offence trial of the century" (see *FN* 33-34:16-17). In the small town of Epe, in the heartland of the Dutch Bible Belt, Jolanda (now Yolanda, 25) and Evelien van Baak (26) accused their parents and other relatives of severe sexual and physical abuse, including forced abortions and child murder. Controversy raged, both in the courthouse and in the media, about the truthfulness of the accusations.

In a previous trial in 1991 Yolanda's parents, former husband, brother and a fifth suspect had received sentences ranging from 7 to 1½ years on charges of sexual and physical abuse and rape. The second trial took 5 days and ended on 11 February of this year. All 6 suspects were found guilty, the parents and Yolanda's former husband of forced abortions, three others of raping Yolanda and abusing her 3 young children. Sentences range from 5 (the father) to 2 years. All suspects have appealed the sentence.

For the proceedings of the trial see Hendrik Jan Korte rink, *Epe, het proces. De complete zaak Jolanda van B.* (Haarlem: Single Media, 1994). Yolanda tells her own story in Yolanda & Bob Snoijink, *Yolanda. Mijn Verhaal* (Den Haag: Bzztoh, 1994. ISBN 90-5501-063-4), published one hour after the trial ended. Since the trial Yolanda has appeared on talk shows and in a 4-part series of television interviews devoted to her life, aired in April 1994. *Mijn verhaal* has proved a best-seller, drawing the attention of French, German and Swedish publishers.

One detail from the previous report is legendary in

itself, I believe: that "the rights for musical treatment have also been purchased." As far as I know, they have been purchased by a man who happens to produce musicals, but does a lot of other producing besides. Only I cannot find anything about that in my files.

Between 31 May and 5 June of this year all six defendants in the affair appealed their verdicts before the Arnhem Court of Justice. A number of witnesses and expert witnesses were heard by the court. The expert witnesses took the recovered memory debate into the courtroom, discussing the reliability of trauma victims' memories. Psychologist Nel Draijer (co-author of *Multiple Personality Disorder in the Netherlands*, see *FN* 31:7) suggested that the contradictions in Yolanda's statements have been caused by alter personalities with conflicting opinions. According to the psychologist who tested Yolanda, however, Yolanda does suffer from a personality disorder, but shows no indications of dissociative behavior, let alone MPD.

During the trial a new example of Yolanda's inclination to incorporate other people's experiences in her testimony came to light. On 4 March 1993 Yolanda had stated that she had been regularly abused by a man who had been arrested the week before, charged with the murder of two Belgian schoolgirls—a case that had made the headlines of all the national newspapers. The fact that Yolanda got all the information about this alleged regular customer of the Epe SM-parties from the newspapers eluded the Epe detectives.

The investigations by the local Epe police force came in for heavy criticism from two highplaced crime analysts. One of them, Carlo Schippers, who worked with the FBI's Ken Lanning, labeled the Epe affair "a typical ritual abuse case." During the investigation, he had advised the Epe task force to record all statements and interrogations on video or audio tape and to investigate the involvement of therapists. Their advice was ignored.

Therapist involvement was one of the key issues during the appeal. According to one of Arie van Baak's attorneys, Yolanda had been undergoing therapy involving hypnosis for half a year, when she informed the police that a baby of hers had been killed. Before informing the police, she had fifty conversations with a police officer that were therapeutic rather than investigative. The officer concerned told the court that he had used the techniques of the American therapist Barry Goodfield, who sets great store by the so-called "non verbal leak." Initially Yolanda could only tell her police confidant major parts of her story "with the help of lists of synonyms and body language."

Yolanda's sister Evelien, who did not make an appearance in the previous trial, did take the stand this time. Her social worker stated that she had written down Evelien's recollections of baby murder and abortion without the involvement of therapists. Psychologists judged Evelien the more reliable witness. The defense team also questioned the reliability of the defendants, most of whom had initially confessed, but later recanted. The defense accused the police of putting the defendants under heavy pressure during the inter-

rogations and of using the "guided memory" method, that resembles hypnosis, when questioning the girls' father.

In court, a psychiatrist of the Pieter Baan Center for forensic psychiatry called Ronald van Z., who was charged with abusing Yolanda's children, highly suggestible. At one time, one of the Center's psychologists had asked him whether he had noticed that the psychiatrist had worn a *blue* wig the other day. Initially, Ronald denied this, but when asked: "Is something the matter with your eyes?" he remembered the non-existent wig.

The efforts of the defense to cast doubt on the reliability of both accusations and confessions were well rewarded. Only those accusations that could be corroborated by Evelien have been accepted by the Arnhem court of justice. In appeal, Yolanda's parents were sentenced to four years in prison, on charges of forced abortions performed on Yolanda and Evelien. The previous trial judges had sentenced father Arie van B. to five years in prison, mother Dinie to three. Yolanda's ex-husband—previously sentenced to two and a half years—was acquitted. [NRC, *Het Parool*, *De Telegraaf*, *Trouw*, *de Volkskrant*, 1-7 June 1994; *de Volkskrant*, NRC, 18 June 1994]

Oude Pekela revisited: Controversy about the 1987 Oude Pekela affair was stirred up again this spring, following the publication of an article by Jonker & Jonker and the release of a movie based on the Netherlands' most sensational child abuse scare to date. In March, the husband-and-wife team of Fred and Ietje Jonker, general practitioners in Oude Pekela and staunch defenders of the ritual abuse hypothesis, published the results of their research. Their article (F. Jonker and P. Jonker-Bakker, "Onderzoek in Oude Pekela." *Maandblad voor Geestelijke Volksgezondheid* (1994): 251-76) is a more extensive version of their previous publication, "Experiences with ritualist child sexual abuse: a case study from the Netherlands." *Child Abuse & Neglect* 15 (1991):191-96.

In the same issue of *CA & N*, Putnam chided the Jonkers for their lack of methodological rigor. Although their latest effort does little to meet his criticism, it provides more detail, at least of the way in which they obtained their data, if not of the alleged abuse. The article contains checklists with signals of satanic abuse and the full text of the questionnaires, which beg for a new definition of "suggestive." (First question: "Are more children from your family involved at this moment?"). The questions assume that the abuse has taken place and are aimed at uncovering its methods and effects.

The Jonkers interviewed the parents of 87 children, about 6 weeks and 2½ years after the presumed mass abuse was discovered. Except for 2 children, all were "certainly" or "probably" abused, parents said. The Jonkers make much of changes in behavior (such as nightmares, bedwetting and using four letter words), but do not provide comparison data or indicate what is normal for children of that particular age who—moreover—have just undergone stressful medical examinations and

live in a town that is making the headlines all over the world. When the Jonkers started their survey, 27 children had already been tested for AIDS and examined for traces of vaginal and anal penetration.

Sixty-three children reportedly said they had been threatened not to tell anything. 50 mentioned videos, 48 swimming pools, 12 children spoke of babies being killed, 10 or less talked about robes, altars and crosses. A minority mentioned sexual acts. Interestingly, the kidnappers dressed up as clowns that became the trademark of the Oude Pekela affair, are never mentioned in the article.

None of the presumed sequelae of ritual abuse showed up frequently. Most frequently mentioned were thoughts about death, fear of spiders and being in some nonspecified way concerned with fire. Comfortingly, not more than two children were reported to suffer from severe problems caused by the abuse.

The Jonkers' article provoked a reply from Ineke Wessel and Harald Merckelbach: "Onderzoek in Oude Pekela (2)." *Maandblad voor Geestelijke Gezondheidszorg* (1994): 554-56, followed by an "Antwoord" by the Jonkers (556-58). Wessel & Merckelbach attack the Jonkers' loose methodology, and the Jonkers defend themselves by pointing out that theirs was the kind of emergency situation in which laboratory standards do not apply. According to an article in *Der Spiegel*, the Jonkers are now offering their services in Germany as experts in mass child abuse cases. [Gisela Friedrichsen & Gerhard Mauz, " 'Jetzt ist niemand sicher'." *Der Spiegel*, 20 Jun.94:94-109.]

In March, too, director Gerardjan Rijnders released his movie *Oude Tongen*. Dubbed the Dutch answer to *Twin Peaks*, *Oude Tongen* is set in a small town much like Oude Pekela. The protagonists are closely modeled on those of the Oude Pekela affair, with a doctor couple cast as the leading abuse advocates. Rijnders mainly takes his cue from the mass hysteria hypothesis as set forth by Benjamin Rossen (*Zedenangst. Het verhaal van Oude Pekela*. Lisse: Swets & Zeitlinger, 1989), but also hints at darker goings-on than mere gossip mongering. In May *Oude Tongen* was broadcast as a three part television series.

Swiss Bluebeard: The Swiss "Bluebeard" René O., mentioned by Sherrill Mulhern in *FN* 32:8, was sentenced to two years in prison last February. Extremely rich, he owned two houses in Amsterdam—apart from his domicile in Switzerland. Five videotapes were found which show O. horribly abusing two Swiss girls. He had prepared a variety of nasty instruments to kidnap children, abuse them and dispose of their bodies—the latter purpose would be served by piranha's and acid baths. In Amsterdam O. was sentenced to 2 years in prison for attempted kidnapping of children and illegally possessing firearms. O.'s ex-girlfriend and accomplice got 1½ years. After serving their prison sentence, both will be extradited to Switzerland, where they will be tried for more serious offences. (*HP/De Tijd op zondag* 7 Feb. 1993; *de Volkskrant*, 4 Feb. and 29 June 1993, 10 and 24 Feb. 1994)

CULT CONVOY TRAPS PAIR IN TENNESSEE. On Aug. 9, David Smith and Heath Bullard, from near Palmerton, PA, were driving along Interstate 40 toward Arizona, where Bullard, a Kutztown College education major, had a job as a student teacher. Near Little Rock, Arkansas, they saw that they were being followed by a convoy of 20-30 cars and trucks. Bullard pulled off at a rest stop and confronted some of the drivers, but they claimed ignorance. Back on I-40, they were turned back by the convoy short of the Texas line, pursued back through Arkansas and driven into a rural area north of Memphis, along US 51. There, the pair abandoned their pickup truck in a muddy field near Covington, TN, and fled on foot.

Separated from his friend in the dark, Bullard spent the night in a swamp, then in the morning got a resident to help him get to the Memphis airport. Smith was not so lucky: when he reappeared days later, he told police a complex story of being pursued through the woods by a bizarre cult. Emerging from the swamp in the next morning, he encountered assailants who fired paint-balls and bullets at him. Cornered, he saw one of them encourage his 8-year-old boy to kill him with a hunting rifle, but he escaped when the child faltered.

After a full day and night of pursuit, the group captured Smith the next morning. He told authorities:

There were about 20 of them there. They had a big piece of wool, like a blanket, and they were cutting up sheep and pigs and putting blood on this blanket.

They surrounded me, circled, like they had me in an arena. They rolled around in the blood. I saw three heads, they were decomposed, they were human, hanging from a tree.... The people ... wore emblems, a big round circle with an A in the middle and a smaller circle with a witch, under the big emblem.

Escaping again, Smith spent a third night in the woods. In the morning, he came to a church that had the same occult emblem on lighted poles outside, then to a home where a woman tried to trap him in a shed and shoot him, and finally to an empty house, where he broke in to phone relatives in the Allentown area.

Taken to a psychiatric hospital, Smith "was afraid to say too much about what had happened because I think police were involved." Besides, he said one of the nurses told him "they actually use their own family members as sacrifices sometimes." When relatives contacted the woman who had helped Bullard, she posed as a relative to smuggle him out of the hospital and took him to the airport.

Contacted by reporters, Covington officials responded with mirth. A local police officer confirmed that area residents had complained of a prowler and found it logical that they would have shot at him. But he identified the "occult" church as "just a little old small country church" used by the predominantly black population. Asked about local cults, he admitted "Anything's possible," but found Smith and Bullard's story of being chased by a convoy "certainly not plausible. It's sort of an enigma wrapped in a mystery." Another county sheriff said, "Oh, that sounds crazy. Ain't nothing like that around here. He

must have been somewhere else. We've had a little touch of cults, you know, just reports. And we got some gang stuff here. Spray-painting and such." Asked about the animal sacrifices, the sheriff simply laughed.

Smith remained firm that police were part of the cult that chased them. "People are going to think we're crazy," he said. "But if people go down there, it could happen to them." Bullard conceded that he had gone without sleep for 50-60 hours during the chase and that he believed authorities would "try to pin this on sleep deprivation." But he stressed that this did not explain why both of them had experienced the same events during the chase. "I wonder," he told reporters, "how many missing people were abducted? If no one was looking for a person, no one would ever know." [For a similar scenario of cults waylaying and sacrificing travellers, see "The Barn House," a legendary satanic tourist "trap" described in *FN* 22:9.]

Although feature stories in the Allentown *Morning Call* presented the pair's stories at length, the paper's columnist was not so kind. Comparing it to the time when he was 8 and mistook a tree stump for a bear, he retold the story with sarcastic asides, ending, "And now I'm out of space and I can't tell you about the time I was kidnapped by Jimmy Hoffa and Elvis in a UFO." But Mark Roy, chief criminal investigator for one of the counties involved, took the affair seriously. He noted that two murders with satanic links had occurred the previous year in the area. One killing, in West Memphis, Arkansas, was committed by a 19-year-old "blood-drinking Satan worshipper." In another, in the northwest corner of Tennessee just south-east of where the two abandoned the car, a 19-year-old college student was mutilated. Trial testimony indicated that her heart had been removed and her blood drunk in worship of Satan.

Roy assured reporters that Tennessee police officers did not belong to cults, and that if he found evidence that they did, he would expose them. Conceding that he had never before been called to investigate satanic activity in the rural area where Bullard and Smith were chased, he still encouraged the two to return to point out the areas to him. He guaranteed them men safe passage to and from the Memphis area: "I'm a Roman Catholic, and have nothing to do with a cult.... I'll meet them at the airport." Neither was willing to return, though, fearing for their lives. Bullard said, "I don't plan on leaving this state, or at least never going any further south than the Mason-Dixon line."

[Tyra Braden, "It could happen to anybody" and "Man says cult abducted him," [Allentown] *Morning Call* (15 Aug. 94):B1,B4; *Ibid.*, "Southern officials doubt men's story of abduction," *Idem* (16 Aug. 94):A1,A5; *Ibid.*, "Cult tale still unconfirmed," *Idem* (23 Aug. 94):B1,B5; Paul Carpenter, "Cops callous over crazed cult convoy," *Idem* (16 Aug. 94):B1. C: Kathy Roland.] [BE]

HAVE YOU HEARD?

"THE BOYFRIEND'S DEATH." Michael Wilson is presently researching the oral narratives of teenagers for his

doctoral thesis at the Department of Drama, University of Exeter. As part of his research, he is working on "The Boyfriend's Death," an internationally distributed adolescents' legend: a couple parking find that the car won't start, and the boy leaves to seek help; after a night of weird noises, the girlfriend finds him murdered and hanging over the car. Wilson finds the popularity of the British version linked to the escape of Frank Mitchell, a violent criminal nicknamed "The Mad Axeman," from Dartmoor Prison in Dec. 1968 (he was never found). He seeks data on the following questions:

1) To what extent is "The Boyfriend's Death" popular among US adolescents today? Is its continued popularity related in any way to the declining popularity of "The Hook in the Door"?

2) Was the Frank Mitchell case as well-known in the US as Caryl "Hooknose" Chessman's case was in Britain?

3) Is "The Mad Axeman" image associated with US variants of "The Boyfriend's Death" as it is in the UK?

Any other information on this legend complex would be greatly appreciated. *Contact* Michael Wilson, 12, The Croft, South Zeal, Okehampton, Devon EX20 2NX UK.

CREAMED CURRY. *Mikel Koven writes:* I am currently doing some research on a CL that I heard in the UK: about a group of people getting sick at a curry house; one has her stomach pumped at the hospital; doctor asks if she's had oral sex that night; she says no; doctor concerned because is a heavy amount of semen in her stomach. Explanation: the restauranteurs, annoyed at these (Caucasian?) customers, decided to 'cream their curry' with something special.

Could readers could direct me to source material for any similar stories? *Contact:* mkoven@morgan.ucs.mun.ca.

THE CUTTING EDGE

BOOKS AND MONOGRAPHS

Bengt af Klintberg, *Den Stulna Njuren: Sägner och Rykten i Var Tid* (Nordsteds Fölag AB, 1994). pp. 291, introduction, 100 legend texts plus notes and commentary, bibliography. ISBN: 91-1-949042-9 (cloth). This sequel to *Rattan i Pizzan* features Klintberg's research on the progress of "The Stolen Kidney" (the title story). Also detailed are many others familiar to readers, including "Welcome the the AIDS-Club," "The Elevator Incident," "Wandering Gnomes," "Ding-Dong, Dinner Bell!" and miraculous photos of Jesus.

Trevor Beer, *The Beast of Exmoor: Fact or Legend?* Barnstaple, Devon: Countryside Productions, n.d. pp. 48, illust. £2.75. This unpretentious but detailed booklet examines the 1983-84 flap in North Devon surrounding a series of sheep killings accompanied by tracks and sightings of a mystery cat. Beer himself saw the beast under good conditions and provides a wealth of other sightings solicited through local papers. The booklet also summarizes local theories, ranging from rationalist (the animal as an escaped exotic) to supernatural (the phenomenon's links with local "black dog" ghostlore). Address: 'Tawside,' Park Avenue, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 2ES; Phone: (0271) 73520.

TELEVISION FEATURES.

W.S.H. Viewers in the United Kingdom and parts of Europe that receive BBC-2 will want to watch for "Weird Night" on 17 December, when this feature docu-drama will air. Directed by Bill Eagles, this hour-length film takes a sympathetic look at the new generation of contemporary legend scholars. Appearing as themselves, Bengt af Klintberg, Fredrick Koenig, Carl Lindahl, Michael Goss, Janet Langlois, and Bill Ellis get to tell a number of legends and comment on their relationship to real-life events. These scholars' ideas, however, are offset by the frequently surreal experiences of "Charles Pulling," a fictitious old-fashioned folklorist (played by Broadway veteran Ron Rifkin). Pulling's frustration over not being able to classify contemporary legends in terms of the Aarne-Thompson Motif Index is intensified by his growing realization that octopi are growing in his stomach. Eagles creates a vision of legend as a liminal realm parallel to everyday reality and always threatening to erupt into our nominally safe worlds.

JOURNALS AND NEWSLETTERS

Dear Mr Thoms... A "folklore miscellany" focusing on contemporary folklore. **No. 35 (Aug. 94)** contains articles on book-length compilations of "Amazing Facts" and follow-ups on legends previously published: suicidal architects, monkeys pickled in alcohol or hanged as French spies, "The Broken Fork" bikers' legend, P&G/Church of Satan flyer. Also included are new versions of "Spider in Cactus," "Babysitter/Man Upstairs," Craig Shergold, 666 Licence Plate. A couple making love summon police when the woman touches the last-number-redial button with her toe. Photocopylore. Entertaining, well-edited, and useful. Ed. Sandy Hobbs and Gillian Bennett; irregular; ca. 6 issues £7.50; Subscriptions: 28, Brownsville Road, Stockport SK44PF.

FLS News: The Newsletter of the Folklore Society. Notes and queries plus announcements. **No. 19 (Jun. 94)** includes a report on Faxlore inspired by the Lorena Bobbitt penis-snipping case by Cathy and Michael Preston. Threads from previous issues are extended on secret tunnels underneath historical sites, on press reports of bad luck following cars bearing licence plates with 666, and on the "Witch's Stone" of Scrapfaggot Green. Accidents apparently do rise on Friday the Thirteenth; a 1939 war atrocity report says that Brits made glue from the skulls of dead Spaniards. Ed. Jacqueline Simpson and Jennifer Chandler; 2/yr.; free to members of the Folklore Society, non-members: 2 issues £3.00; address: 9 Christchurch Road, Worthing, W. Sussex, BN11 1JH.

Fortean Times. International news accounts and reports of anomalous phenomena, often with photographs. **No. 75 (Jun./Jul. 94)** contains part one of Peter Brookesmith's skeptical profile of William English, who claims to have seen the US Government "Grudge 13" report that confirms cattle and human mutilations committed by extraterrestrials. Bob Rickard places the Lorena Bobbitt affair in the context of previous real-life castrations and legend (including the one about the woman who has an epileptic seizure while engaged in fellatio). John Hymer

analyzes 4 more spontaneous human combustion cases; Edward Young discusses the California case in which a corpse gave off toxic fumes. Artists create works in fields inspired by crop circles; a "dead" dog digs itself up; Israeli bullets contain pork; mystery cats in north London; snakes in toilets; miraculous photo of Jesus; Jupiter/ comet impact portends the millennium.

No. 76 (Aug./Sept.94) concludes Brookesmith's profile of "Grudge 13" and features Hilary Evans's discussion of 4 psychics from the 1890s who received messages from Mars. Mike Dash and Bob Rickard review the Dale Akiki case and Jean La Fontaine's report on SRA in Great Britain. Paul Sieveking summarizes the Guatemala body-parts panic. Tony Healy and Paul Cropper are interviewed about mystery animals in Australia. Mystery assailant hoax, Stephen Spielberg plans to include real USAF footage of alien bodies in an upcoming film, classic Loch Ness photo exposed as a fake, wolves reenter Europe, tourists who steal rocks from Queen Mebh's grave in Ireland are cursed. Extensive reviews, letters. Ed. Bob Rickard and Paul Sieveking; 6/yr.; 6 issues £12.00; £15.00 or \$30.00 overseas; address: FT, 20 Paul Street, Frome, Somerset BA11 1DX UK.

Magonia. Britain's premiere journal for skeptical investigation of UFOs and claims of the paranormal. **No. 49 (Jun.94)** contains the beginning of another of Martin S. Kottmeyer's surveys of themes from science fiction that later emerged in UFOlore, in this case, the "God machine" invented by ETs to manipulate human life. Peter Rogerson continues his notes toward a history of abduction accounts with Betty and Barney Hill copycats that emerged in the late 1960s. An editorial comments on Jean LaFontaine's report on SRA in the UK. Reviews, letters. Ed. John Rimmer; 4/yr.; 4 issues £4.00, US \$10, Europe £5.00, other countries £5.50; address: John Dee Cottage, 5 James Terrace, Mortlake Churchyard, London SW14 8HB UK.

Millennial Prophecy Report, formerly *Millennium News* or *Times*, the newsletter of the Millenium Watch Institute, tracking ephemera produced by prophets of various sects, including Christians, New Agers, Jews, UFO cults, hollow-earthers, etc. **Vol.3:2 (May'94)** focuses on dates of the Second Coming publicized by various prophets, ranging from followers of medium Edgar Cayce to apocalyptic Mariologists. The death of Rabbi Schneerson, believed by many followers to be the Messiah, is reported. Ed. Ted Daniels; 10/yr.; \$30/yr; address: PO Box 34021, Philadelphia, PA 19101-4021.

News of the Weird. Bizarre news item summaries. **No. 29 (29 Apr.94):** Thieves break into a car and steal a box containing crematory ashes; a dead man's will stipulates that his skin be used to bind a copy of his poems; Nestle is fined when an employee falls into the chocolate and is whipped by paddles for more than a minute; a Philadelphia exotic dancer is cited for deceptive advertising when her bust size—127—turned out to be measured in centimeters; a cement truck fills a car with concrete, trapping the driver for 40 minutes.

No. 30 (10 Jun.94): A hospital patient complains that her legs and abdomen feel as if they are burning; nurses

find her covered with fire ants; a woman wrecks her car when her lizard gets loose; a bike abandoned in Washington state in time is enveloped by a fir tree and becomes a tourist attraction; 12 Hungarians commit suicide after buying earthworms in a pyramid scheme that claims that the feces can be sold overseas at a profit.

No. 30a (22 Jul.94): A New Jersey politician sends dead fish to a political foe, then claims he'd intended to send them to another person and mislabeled the packages; a Louisiana teacher has her eyes gouged out during a Christian ceremony to exorcise an evil spirit; a nun's life is saved when a stray bullet hits the prayer book she was carrying; more Bobbitt copycats; rumor holds that Catholic leaders plan to clone Jesus from DNA on the Shroud of Turin; salmon, moths, and bees are implanted with bar codes to help track them. Ed. Chuck Shepherd; irreg.; 7/\$10, \$11 Canada, \$16 foreign; Address: P.O. Box 8306, St. Petersburg, FL 33738.

Pennsylvania Folklife. Founded to document the lore of Pennsylvania Germans, this journal has now been reorganized to include material on a variety of ethnic and racial groups. **Vol.43:3 (Spring'94)** is a special issue on the Amish, with a concise history of the Old Order by Editor Gallagher and a perceptive new view of this sect's taboo on photography by Marilyn E. Lehman, who spent her childhood as part of this community. Numerous, well-reproduced illustrations. Ed. Thomas E. Gallagher, Jr.; 3/yr, \$15/yr, single copies and back issues \$5/each. Address: P.O. Box 92, Collegeville, PA 19426.

View from the Ledge. Ridiculous news items and headlines, many in facsimile. **No. 50 (29 Apr.94):** Sample revisions for Texas sex ed. textbooks (delete happy photo of Magic Johnson since "AIDS is death."); Papua New Guinea tribe worships a photo of Lyndon Johnson with his dogs; a fleeing drug dealer is nabbed when his pants fall and trip him; two others, handcuffed together, are caught when they try to split a pole. Ed. Chuck Shepherd; irreg., free with every 2nd copy of *News of the Weird*; Address: PO Box 8306, St. Petersburg, FL 33738.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

We are interested in 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 the UK. Forward references or offprints (if convenient) to Alan E. Mays, Heindel Library, Penn State Harrisburg, 777 W. Harrisburg Avenue, Middletown, PA 17057-4898, USA. For work in foreign languages, English abstracts would be appreciated.

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

Adams, Charles J., III. *Pennsylvania Dutch Country Ghosts, Legends, and Lore*. Reading, Pa. (P.O. Box 8134, 19603): Exeter House Books, '94.

* Adler, Jerry. "The Numbers Game." *Newsweek* (25 July

'94):56-58. [Statistical errors in reporting the incidence of domestic violence, abducted children, and disbelief in the Holocaust.]

* Allen, Andrew. "Toadies." *History Today* 44 (Aug. 94):50-52. [Live-toad swallows at 17th-and 18th-century English fairs.]

* "Apocalypse Soon." *The Economist* (23 July '94):25-25. [Harold Camping etc. predict the end of the world.]

Barry, Dave. *Dave Barry Is Not Making This Up*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1994. [Snakes in toilets, UFOs, and other lighthearted commentary from the author's syndicated newspaper column.]

* Begley, Sharon, with Martha Brant. "You Must Remember This." *Newsweek* (26 Sept.94):68-69. [Neurological basis of false memories.]

Bell, Ron. *Disorganized Crime: True Stories of Unlucky Thieves and Stupid Robbers*. Atlanta, Ga.: Longstreet Press, 1994. [Tales of inept criminals, including a version of "The Shoplifter and the Frozen Chicken," p. 37.]

* Bernays, Anne. "Spaced Out--and Other Delusions." *The Nation* 258 (27 Jun.94):904-6. [Criticizes John Mack's claims regarding UFO abductees.]

* Britton, Peter. "Cooties Were Made of These." *Popular Science* (Jul.94):34. [Rumors of lice contaminating virtual reality headsets.]

* Broad, William J. "Wreckage of a 'Spaceship': Of This Earth (and U.S.)." *New York Times* (18 Sept.94): sec. 1, 1, 40. [U.S. Air Force admits coverup of 1947 Roswell, NM, crash, which was a nuclear bomb detection balloon rather than a UFO.]

Busby, Cylin. "'This Is a True Story': Roles of Women in Contemporary Legend." *Midwestern Folklore* 20 (Spring'94):5-62.

Callahan, Bob. *Who Shot JFK?: A Guide to the Major Conspiracy Theories*. New York: Fireside Books, 1993.

* Caputi, Jane. "American Psychos: The Serial Killer in Contemporary Fiction." *Journal of American Culture* 16 (Winter'93):101-12.

* Carlton, Jim. "Befuddled PC Users Flood Help Lines, and No Question Seems to Be Too Basic." *Wall Street Journal* (1 Mar.94):B1, B6. [Computer legends.]

* Carpenedo, Karen. "Some Experts Say Restoring Cougar Would Be Difficult." [Erie, PA] *Times-News* (5 Jun.94): 1C, 2C. [Account of a conference on the Eastern Puma, a US mystery cat.]

* Carrol, Jon. "Will This Be on the Final?" *San Francisco Chronicle* (4 Apr.94): E10. [College exam legend.]

* Chan, Terry. "The Internet's Believe It or Not." *Harper's Magazine* (Oct.94):25, 28. [Excerpts from Chan's alt.folklore.urban Frequently Answered Questions (FAQ) file.]

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Included in this issue:

RESEARCH NOTES

John Shonder, "Organ Theft Rumors in Guatemala: Some Personal Observations."

* More historical references to body-parts rumors.

* Bernard Sussman on recent body-parts flaps in Washington DC.

"More 'Linkletter Legends' "

* The Unintended Proposition

* The Tagged Lady

* Teacher's Dress Rolled Up in the Map

* Flower Bulbs Eaten by Mistake

* Pet Food Served for Dinner

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* The Peanut Butter and Dog Surprise

* The Peanut Butter/Ritual Child Abuse Link

* Eye on Satanism: Peter Burger reports on The Netherlands

* Cult Convoy Traps Pair in Tennessee

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