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**From the Editor**

Warm thanks to Ian Brodie and Jodi McDavid for everything they did to make the 2009 ISCLR conference such a success. There were many outstanding papers, including some excellent presentations by graduate students, and interesting discussions of legend theory. I had never been to Nova Scotia before and enjoyed our sojourn in the seaside village of Baddeck.

Every evening during the conference, some of us got together on the outdoor veranda of our conference hotel to talk, tell stories, and share a bottle of wine. It should be no surprise to hear that legend scholars tell great stories! Some told of surprising, amusing, or touching events at previous ISCLR conferences, others of get-togethers with fellow folklorists when memorable things happened.

Because of those good storytelling sessions, I would like to suggest that we start including some narratives about ISCLR in upcoming issues of the newsletter. It is important to preserve the folklore of folklorists. While I realize that some stories might be more sharable than others, I am sure we have some that would be good for our newsletter.

I'll begin this new venture by sharing one of my favorite ISCLR memories. At our conference at Logan, Utah in 2007, Bill Ellis invited all of us to watch some Japanese animé shows with him. On the designated evening, Linda Dégh, my husband Geof, and I joined Bill in the meeting room to watch animé features based on legends and folktales. Our favorite was "Mushishi": a series of television programs about a green-eyed, white-haired figure named Ginko with an affinity for the supernatural. As the sun set behind the Utah mountains, Linda, Bill, Geof, and I watched several episodes of "Mushishi," spellbound by their subtle expression of Japanese folklore of the supernatural. Afterwards we talked about the remarkable demonstration of cultural traditions that television makes possible.

I would be delighted to receive stories about ISCLR meetings from you, as well as articles and book reviews. This is a short issue, but I hope that *FOAftale News 74*, which will include a call for papers for the Amsterdam conference, will be longer. Thanks very much!

Elizabeth (Libby) Tucker

**Our Man in Andorra: James Kirkup, 1918-2009  
Sandy Hobbs**

James Kirkup, who has recently died at his home in Andorra, was a prolific writer in many genres, including travel, autobiography and translation. However, he was best known as a poet. Born into a "modest" family in the North of England, he took a degree in Modern Languages at the University of Durham. He earned his living in many ways, principally as a teacher, and he spent many years on the faculty of Japanese universities. Obituaries in the British press have paid particular attention to a notorious incident, arising from the publication of his poem, "The love that dares to speak its name", in the magazine, *Gay News*. The poem centred on the homosexual fantasies of a Roman soldier on duty at the crucifixion of Christ. A private prosecution for blasphemy was taken against the magazine and its editor. The judge refused to hear evidence of literary or theological merit and the prosecution was successful. Kirkup was said have deeply regretted the scandal and said later 19182009that the poem had actually failed aesthetically.

One aspect of Kirkup's writing which obituarists seem to have overlooked is his interest in urban legends. His *Modern American Myths: The Folktales of the Young Today in America* (1984) was one of the relatively early books on the subject to appear. It was aimed primarily at Japanese students learning English (there are notes in Japanese). Most of the tales included are similar to those dealt with in slightly earlier works by Rodney Dale and Jan Harold Brunvand. They include *The Killer in the Backseat*, *The Boyfriend's Death* and *The Dead Cat in the Parcel*. However, despite the title, there are some references to such stories circulating in Japan, including a distinctive version of *The Vanishing Hitchhiker*, concerning a taxi driver whose ghostly passenger sends him to the scene of a fire.

After publishing this book, Kirkup became aware of the fact that there was a community of scholars interested in contemporary legends and began to correspond with some of them. One result was that *Foafale News* No. 14 contained a short contribution from someone whom the editor at the time, Bill Ellis, playfully called "our man in Andorra". This reported an item which had appeared in *The News*, an English language newspaper published in France, referring to various "rumours". One of them was the story that, as a result of being scooped up with the water being collected by firefighting planes, the skeletons of divers were being found in burnt out trees, accompanied by their oxygen bottles.

The next issue of *Foafale News* (No. 15, September 1989, pp. 2-4) contained a much longer piece by Kirkup, "Truth Stranger Than Legend: Contemporary Legends in Europe and the Orient". It begins by reporting his shock that his mother, whom he had believed free of racist sentiments, confidently believed that "blacks" ate cans of dog and cat food. He then went on to deal with a variety of legends he had come across in France, Switzerland and Japan. One of the Japanese stories concerns *kuchisake onna*, the "split-mouth woman". This legend has its roots in traditional lore. The modern version tells of children expressing surprise that beautifully dressed woman should be wearing a mask. Expecting her face to be as attractive as her dress, they ask her to remove the mask, only to be confronted with "a gaping mouth slit from ear to ear". This story has since become well known outside of Japan, being the subject of manga and films.

Kirkup also published a short story, "Living Doll," based on a contemporary Japanese legend. It concerns two tourists visiting a village inhabited by the ethnic minority Ainu people, widely regarded by other Japanese as particularly hairy. They take home an Ainu doll as a souvenir and are horrified when they discover that, day by day, the doll's hair grows longer. Since Kirkup placed his work in a wide variety of publications, some of them ephemeral, he may have written essays on legends or short stories based on them, of which I am unaware. I would be grateful to any reader of *Foafale News* who could help me locate such writings.

**The Evil Clown**  
**Jean-Bruno Renard**  
**(Translated by Elizabeth Tucker)**

Whether it is spiteful, murderous, demonic, the evil clown is an oxymoron, a combination of contradictory ideas: someone who theoretically expresses kindness and inspires laughter becomes a malevolent being who causes fear. This figure of speech appears frequently in the field of urban legendry, where something agreeable hides a frightening reality.

Among the evil clown's precursors are the "Joker" of the *Batman* comic designed in 1940 and the young, ultra-violent people wearing false noses in Anthony Burgess's future-oriented novel *A Clockwork Orange*, published in 1962 and adapted for the cinema by Stanley Kubrick in 1971. From 1970 to 1980, two real events contributed to the formation of the evil clown motif: mainly the case of John Wayne Gacy, an American serial killer who was arrested in 1978 and named a "clown killer" by the media because he liked to disguise himself as a clown to amuse children, even though he had never worn his clown costume during his crimes or attacked children; secondarily, through the influence of the above-mentioned case, rumors spread through the United States in May of 1981. According to these unsubstantiated rumors, several clowns drove through city streets in a small truck, trying to kidnap children (Brunvand, 2001: 313-315 ; Campion-Vincent and Renard, 2005: 294-295).

The novel that develops the evil clown motif in the greatest depth is *It* by Stephen King (1986), who probably heard the rumors described above. King describes a confrontation between a group of preadolescents and an evil-doing entity that kidnaps, kills, and devours the children. The entity takes multiple forms that match childhood fears: mummy, werewolf...but the clown is the first and the best developed. All of the traditional attributes of the clown are there, but disturbing elements elicit fear; the clown lives in a sewer, his hands look like claws, and his red smile looks bloody. Imagery of the evil clown uses and abuses the clown head with a wide smile that reveals pointed teeth.

The success of *It*—and its adaptation for television in 1990—encouraged an evil clown craze. In literature, we note *With the Clowns Came Tears (Doch mit den Clowns kamen die Tränen)*, 1987) by Johannes Mario Simmel, a detective novel that begins with the massacre of spectators by clowns, and two horror novels, *The Midnight Clown (Le Clown de Minuit)*, 1994) by Alain Venisse and *The Nightmare Factory* (1996) by Thomas Ligotti. Children's fantasy literature made use of the evil clown motif in Joan Lowery Nixon's *Catch a Crooked Clown* (1996), Betsy Haynes' *Killer Clown of Kings County* (1998), and Robert L. Stine's "Afraid of Clowns" in *Nightmare Hour* (1999).

The evil clown motif has also appeared in films—for example, *Killer Clowns from Outer Space* (1988), a parody of science fiction films from the 1950s, *Clownhouse* (1989), *Killjoy* (2000), *S.I.C.K. Serial Insane Clown Killer* (2002), *Fear of Clowns* (2004)—in episodes of television series, in comic books, and in video games. On the Internet, one finds sites which express detestation or fear of clowns (called coulrophobia), such as

<http://www.clownz.com>, or which celebrate provocation of evil clowns, such as <http://www.badclown.com>.

How can we explain the strength of this motif? Gérard Lenne (1970: 161-65) reminds us that laughter and fear are two modalities for expression of strong emotion in response to the monstrous: that which frightens us can also make us laugh (as in the Grand Guignol) and that which makes us laugh can also frighten us. We know that some children fear clowns. Anthropology has clarified the clown's ambivalence: in the rites of American Indians, contrary clowns ("clowns contraires"), which invert normal behavior, simultaneously evoke laughter through incongruous actions and fear through calling for the murder of humans or, by default, animals (Vazeilles 1996: 164-82). At the circus the function of the clown, according to Luc Routeau (1980), is to be a symbolic victim, sacrificed in public. His ugliness, his awkwardness, and his stupidity make him a marginal figure, a scapegoat who receives blows and applause. The evil clown is a victim who seeks revenge.

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### Book Review

Hilary Evans and Robert E. Bartholomew. *Outbreak! The Encyclopedia of Extraordinary Social Behavior*. San Antonio, Texas and New York, New York: Anomalist Books, 2009. 784 p. [2 cols each], 90 ills, 21x28 cms. \$39.95.

This *Encyclopedia of Extraordinary Social Behavior* and of the *Outbreaks* that signal them is the achievement of the former studies of its two authors. One, Hilary Evans, is closer to the anomalist trend and a specialist of the study of visions and apparitions (Evans 1984, 2002). The other, Robert E. Bartholomew, is closer to the social sciences and his studies center around moral panics (Bartholomew 2001a, 2001b). The two authors had already co-signed in 2004 *Panic Attacks. Media Manipulation and Mass Delusion*.

It is a real encyclopedia, containing some 340 articles of very variable length. The scope and diversity of the bibliography are remarkable; it includes numerous

references from other languages than English. The large choice of nineteenth century French studies, mostly medical, of visions and apparitions is especially notable. Original sources are often referred to, and the quotations of Renaissance or seventeenth century books are numerous. This does not exclude modern references as will be shown in the example from Iraq.

This *Encyclopedia* is not a simple juxtaposition of oddities but presents theories and analyses of non-standard phenomena. With the interest presented by the bibliography, there is in this book a real information source for the social sciences. For, as indicated by the authors: "In bringing these narratives together in a single volume, we are [...] making a significant contribution to our understanding of why people behave in these extraordinary ways. For though each of these events possesses its own individual interest, they acquire additional meaning by juxtaposition and comparison: patterns emerge, similarities are revealed, enabling the identification of common factors that make possible a more complete and more fully rounded understanding". [Introduction p.x col 2]

Let us quote examples of long articles:

Images that Move, Weep and Bleed, 14 cols [This article is quoted in the Preface under its first version as "Moving Images." However, the letter M being very important, it has been alphabetized as I. This is the only (and minor) error of this type found in this book whose quality of quotations references and of cross-references must be remarked].

Iraq Prison Abuse Affair, 5 cols [quotes the famous study by Stanley Milgram (1974) but also the recent online remarks made by Philip Zimbardo, from his 1971 Stanford Prison Experiment ( Zimbardo 1973) and the « Fact Sheet » set up by the American Psychological Society in 2004].

Mass Hysteria, 6 cols; Mass Hysteria in Work Settings, 24 cols; Mass Hysteria in Schools, 20 cols; Mass Hysteria Synonyms, 1 col. Mass Suicide Cults, 8 cols.

Riots, 6 cols. Rumors, 7 cols.

Satanic Cult and Ritual Abuse Scare (USA 1985-1995), 4 cols [quotes Victor 1993]. Satanism, 13 cols.

This set gives a fair idea of the *Encyclopedia's* approach and interest.

The authors clarify their approach in the introduction: one must be conscious that non-standard social behavior implicates both the individual and the group. However – rejecting outdated interpretations such as those drawn from Gustave Le Bon's *Psychologie des Foules* (1895, 1903) who: "have suggested that individuals lose their personality when they become components of a crowd"– they indicate that there is not a loss but a temporary transfer of personality "the switch from being an autonomous individual to being a member of a crowd, implies *transfer* not loss: an abandonment of personal goals and interests in favor of those of a collective with which the individual, for the time being at least, identifies himself" [Introduction p.xi cols 1 & 2]

Warning against despising explanations, they remind that these phenomena are far from being the sign of an overcome past to be explained through human ignorance

and stupidity [which constitutes the basis of the explanations during a nineteenth century marked by a total trust - today disappeared- in the infinite possibilities of Progress] but that they have their own logic, are universal and reflect the values of the group within which they take place.

Corresponding to the Witchmania of the Europe of yesterday, one has noticed in the United States from 1985 to 1995 a "great fear" towards mostly imaginary satanic cults said to inflict on innocent babies or very young children "ritual abuse", [See Champion-Vincent 2008, Nathan & Snedeker 1995, Rabinowitz 2003, Richardson, Best & Bromley 1991, Victor 1993].

Renouncing the despising and dismissive designations of "irrational" such exceptional behaviors - and the beliefs which generate them - should be qualified as "non-rational", for the authors do not suggest to consider everything as equal, and the values of the minority group that thus express themselves must be analyzed.

One arrives then to what was designated yesterday as "The 'Madness' of Crowds" (Mackay 1852 about whom the authors recall the interest kindled in 1932 when the book was endorsed by investor Bernard Baruch and became for new employees on Wall Street "a primer on the potential of human folly" p. 345 which they had to read as a rite de passage) and is called today more neutrally "social delusion". The authors remind that a distinction is to be made between the psychiatric level (individual where one talks of delusions) and the group level: "Sociologists and social psychologists use the term social delusion in a different sense. It describes the spontaneous, temporary spread of false beliefs within a given population" [Introduction p. xiii col 2 ]

Their spontaneous and unorganized character and the lack of institutionalization differentiate social delusions from religious myths and popular folk beliefs. However, more and more visibly today, many sub-groups flaunt and share sets of social delusions, of extreme beliefs that differentiate them from the majority.

The notion of hysteria is than discussed. It is a psychological disorder in which symptoms displayed have no detectable organic cause. The authors recall the official dismissal of the term in 1994 by the American Psychiatric Association [APA] - and by the reference manual *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders [DSM-IV]* published by the APA - to the benefit of the term "conversion disorder", which centers on the description of the "process whereby mental conflict is converted into illness or disorder symptoms". According to them, however, this term too exclusively centered on the mechanisms does not suppress the need for designations such as mass psychogenic or sociogenic illness. Accepting the still widespread use of the term hysteria, they use it freely too but warn the reader: "So bear in mind that whether it [an *Outbreak*] is referred to as hysteria, conversion disorder or mass psychogenic or sociogenic illness depends on the context" [Introduction p.xiv col 1].

The preface indicates that as well as the narrations of the events, the authors have developed commentaries and analyses and also situated the contexts of appearance and development of these collective *Outbreaks* which they have also categorized, creating categories when necessary such as **Forced Marriage Syndrome** (2 cols) or **Convent Hysteria** (8 cols).

The Index, which concludes the *Encyclopedia* on 20 cols, is a real work instrument, especially on account of the entries regrouping several articles of the *Encyclopedia*. There are more than ten articles for the entries:

**Crazes. Fads. Hoaxes. Post-Sept 11 Terror Scares. Riots. Terrorism Scares. War-of-the World Scares.** And more than 20 articles for the entries: **Altered States of Consciousness. Animal Noises, epidemics of. Convent Hysteria. End-of the World Scares. Genital Scares, shrinking, vanishing. Imaginary and Contentious Conditions. Laughing Epidemics. Mass Hysteria. Monster Scares. Moral Panics. Phantom Attackers. Rumors** (2 cols). **Suicides, mass. Wish-Fulfillment, collective.**

Exceptional by its scope and the diversity of its sources, this *Encyclopedia* is an essential work instrument for those interested in the surprising extent of non-standard collective behavior.

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#### REMINDER

Now would be a good time to check whether your membership is up-to-date. To renew your membership, send a check made out to "ISCLR" for US\$40.00, UK£20, CAN \$42.50, or E30 to Mikel J. Koven, Arts, Humanities and Social Science, University of Worcester, Henwick Grove, Worcester WR2 6AJ, UK. Thanks very much for your support of ISCLR!

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**FOAFtale News** is indexed in the MLA Bibliography.

This newsletter is called **FOAFtale News** for the jocular term current among legend scholars for over twenty years. The term "foaf" was introduced by Rodney Dale (in his 1978 book, *The Tumour in the Whale*) for an oft-attributed but anonymous source of contemporary legends: a "friend of a friend." Dale pointed out that contemporary legends always seemed to be about someone just two or three steps from the teller — a boyfriend's cousin, a co-worker's aunt, or a neighbor of the teller's mechanic. "Foaf" became a popular term at the Sheffield legend conferences in the 1980s. It was only a short step to the pun "foaftale," a step taken by a yet-anonymous wag.

The opinions expressed in **FOAFtale News** are those of the authors and do not in any necessary way represent those of the editor, the contributors, the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research, its Council, or its members.

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