MONSTERS with Iron Teeth

PERSPECTIVES ON
CONTEMPORARY LEGEND
Volume III

**Edited
by
GILLIAN BENNETT
and
PAUL SMITH**

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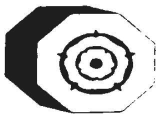

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years scholarly interest in legends has shifted away from such story types as hero legends, aetiological, place-name and local stories to a genre of narrative that has less obvious roots in traditional themes and preoccupations. The contents of these legends—macabre happenings, accidents with household machinery, encounters with off-duty royalty, dreadful contaminations of foodstuffs, environment or bodily organs, theft, violence, threat, sexual embarrassments—seem to be novel in legendry. The setting of the time in the recent past and the reliance of the story on modern lifestyles seem further to separate these new forms from traditional legends. Hence we have come to call them 'contemporary legends'.

Whilst interest in all aspects of the genre has grown steadily over the past ten years, there has until now been little opportunity for scholars to gather together and discuss their various approaches. However, since the summer of 1982, the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language has hosted an annual seminar for international scholars interested in contemporary legend. The purpose of these meetings has been to provide a forum for current research and an opportunity to exchange ideas.

This collection of papers presented at the 1985 seminar represents individual perspectives on the nature, form and function of contemporary legend, focusing in particular on three areas:

1. theoretical issues
2. case studies
3. legends and society

As we move further into the study of contemporary legend, more questions are raised than are answered. Consequently, these papers are by no means offered as final solutions to any specific problem. Instead they are, as the title of the volume intimates, *Monsters with Iron Teeth*, and deliberately designed to present individual perspectives, to stimulate food for thought, and to move contemporary legend research forward—at least one more step.

Gillian Bennett and Paul Smith
West Stockwith
February 1987

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The success of the 1985 *Perspectives on Contemporary Legend* seminar lies with all those who helped to organize the meeting and all those who participated. Firstly, we must thank the staff of the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language—Beryl Moore, Syndonia Donelly and Jean Alexander. We must also extend our thanks to John Widdowson for encouraging us in our flights of fancy and allowing us to think that a fourth conference was worth aiming for.

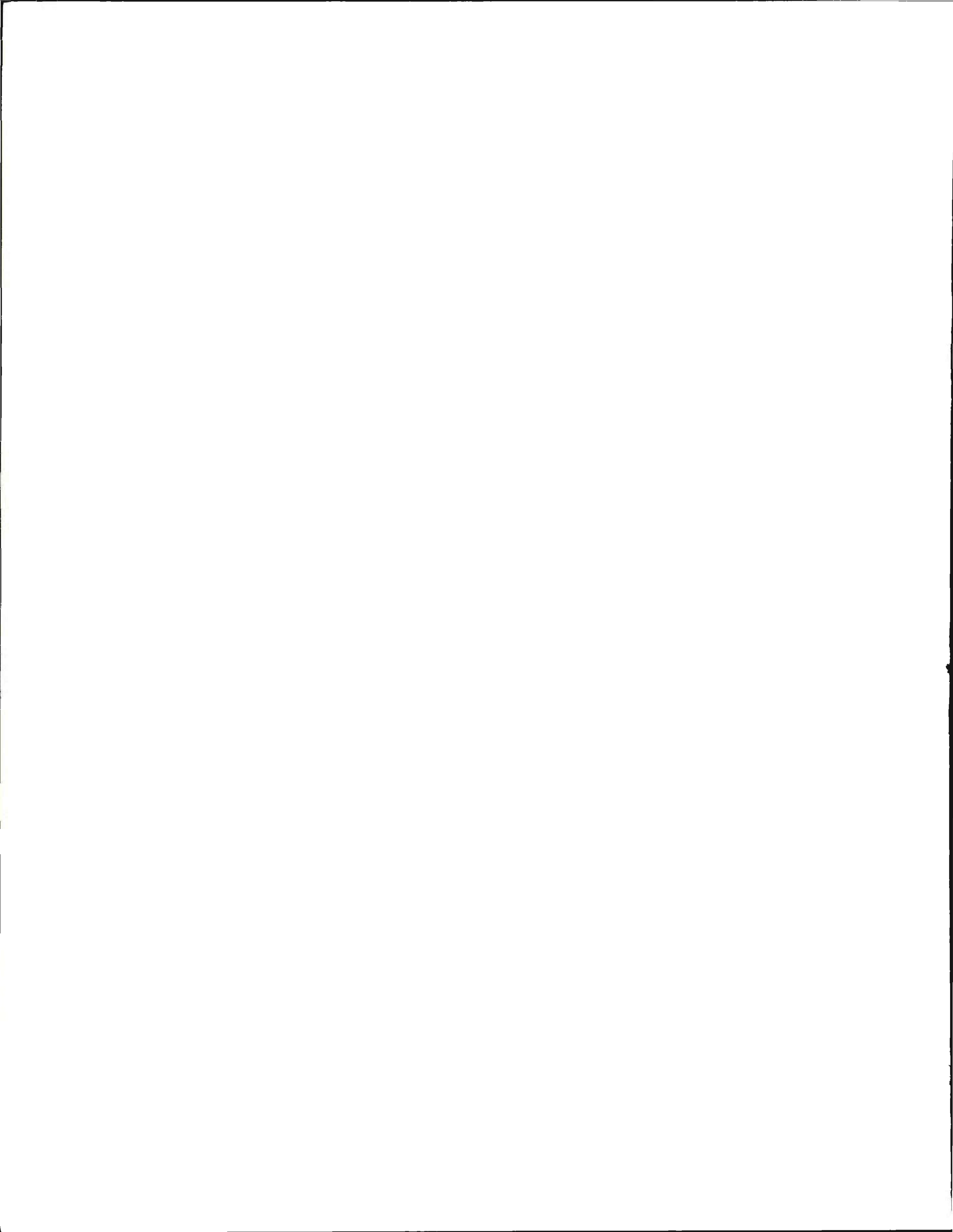
Our grateful thanks must also go to the staff of Halifax Hall of Residence at the University of Sheffield, where the conference was held. Particular thanks are due to the warden, Mary Sharrock, and the hall manager, Alan Walker—without them the meeting would not have run so smoothly.

Last, but not least, our gratitude is due to those who assisted with the production of this volume—Helen Hartnell for typing, Steve Roud for checking references, Derek Froome for proof-reading and the staff of Sheffield Academic Press for their professional expertise.

MODGENDLOGUE

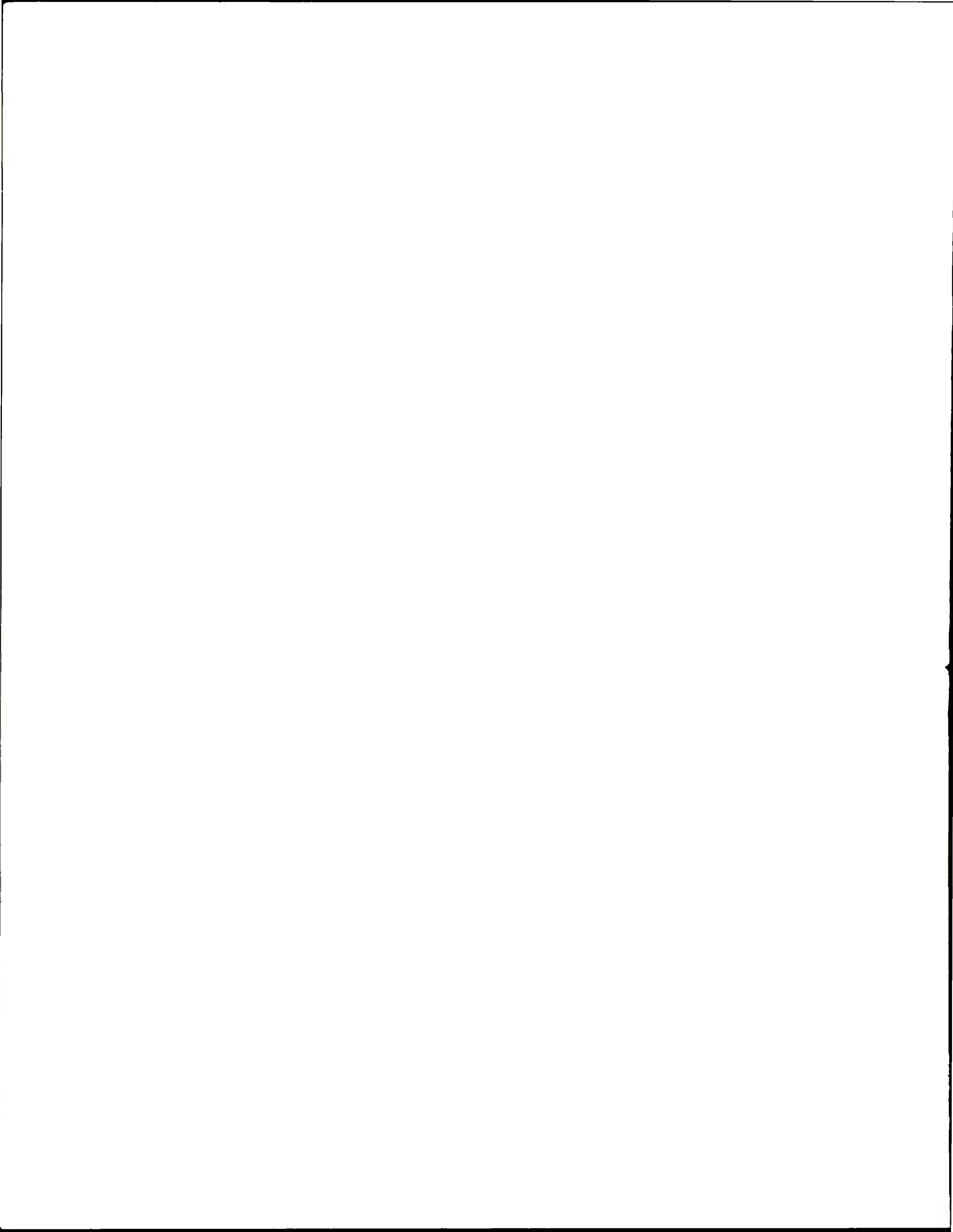
I heard it from a friend of a friend
And it's absolutely true.
That the devil in the discotheque
Got stuck with superglue.
He was dancing with Sirena
When her rosy cheeks grew pale
For he'd trodden with his cloven hoof
On her dainty mermaid's tail.
She'd just fixed him with superglue
When a monster with iron teeth
Rushed in and hurled the pair of them
To the fast food store beneath.
It was haunted by the cursing ghost
Of a Zuni medicine man,
Who turned them into pizza pies
And threw them in the garbage can.
But if you go out 'neath the waning moon
You may see that pair again
In some public toilet in Chesterfield
Swinging on the chain.
Now those Sheffield legend scholars
Did nothing to forestall it.
For all that they were worried about,
Was what the hell to call it.
'Sage' or 'legend', 'contemporat' or 'modgend'
'Kinderschreck' or 'mythology'.
Every year they meet in solemn style
To juggle with terminology.
But when they've dabbled in the booze
And drunk Paul's home-brewed beer,
They're ready to believe anything,
And they'll all be back next year.

Sheila Douglas
Sheffield, July 1985



PART 1

THEORETICAL ISSUES



LEGEND: PERFORMANCE AND TRUTH

Gillian Bennett

> 'Apparently', Joe remarked, 'Anything can be said in this place and it will be true and will have to be believed'.[1]

The words 'true' or 'truth' lie at the heart of all or most of our present definitions of legend—a legend is 'a story told as the truth or believed to be true'.[2] Not the least of the difficulties which lie at the heart of such formulations is the fact that they make legends almost impossible to recognise—what, for example, *is* a 'story'? Are *all* legends stories and only *stories*, legends? How can we possibly *know* whether a story is either true or believed? And what are 'truth' and 'belief' anyway? At the panel discussion on contemporary legend at the 8th Congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research in Bergen, June 1984, panellists were roundly taken to task by discussants for tossing such terms about without ever once defining them or specifying how one could recognize them in any given performance. This is, I think, fair criticism.

Though I trust we are not being asked to embark on the larger task of defining 'truth'—a task which defeated Socrates, Plato and several others—I do not think it too much to ask that we should make a start on the lesser labour. No one, not even performers themselves, can always say for certain whether a given narrative is *believed to be* true, but we can at least try to work out how it sounds to an audience if it is '*told as* true' and what it *means* for a story to be 'told as true'. One of the ways we could start would be to select two contrasting performances—a story told by an apparently believing narrator and one told by an apparent sceptic—and to compare the two in as much detail as possible. This process should, in Garfinkel's phrase, 'make commonplace scenes visible'[3] and allow us to begin to see what we mean when we say that legends are stories 'told as true'. That should, perhaps, not only help us to understand our basic terms better, but also show us whether we are right to use them in the first place.

Among the modern legends I recorded in Manchester in 1981, I am fortunate enough to have stories told by narrators who represent, or say they represent, opposite poles of the belief/disbelief axis. One of these storytellers is Mrs E., a retired businesswoman from Stockport, who tells a lively version of 'The Wife Left at the Roadside':

> This is very funny, but this is absolutely true. It was my aunty's neighbour who we knew very well. This just reminded me—'Someone's wife left at the roadside during a vacation journey'.[4]
>
> They went on a caravan holiday. It, it was a long time ago, because I believe nowadays you're not allowed to sleep in a caravan while you're driving it. But in those days there was no law about it. I should say it's about twenty to twenty-five years ago, and—er—they were coming home from Wales. It was late at night and she was tired. Her husband said, 'Oh, I'll drive. You go and sleep'.
>
> So, she went in the caravan, got undressed and put herself to bed, and they'd been driving about half an hour. She wasn't settled, and the car stopped, and she looked through the window. She saw her husband get out and go in the field [laughs], so *she* wanted to go in the field as well! She got out and—um—didn't tell him because he had gone by the side of the road and she went behind a tree or something, and he came back jolly quick and got in the car and drove off, and she'd *just* gone behind this tree, so she sort of ran out in her nightdress and shouted him, but off he went! [laughs]
>
> Anyway! [laughs] She was there on the roadside for ages in her nightdress, and a young boy came along, and he was only about eighteen, on a motorbike, and she sort of flagged him down, and he stopped, and she told him what had happened. Said could he take her home as her husband had gone, and he said, 'I can't, because I'm out late and my mother will kill me anyway!' So she said, 'But I'll come and *explain* to your mother. *Please*! You can't leave me here in the road!' She'd only got her nightie on. So anyway, he did take her, and they overtook this caravan. Her husband was absolutely staggered to see her, to see this woman on the back of the pillion.
>
> Hayes, their name was. That reminded me of that, but that's *true*, you know. There's no doubt about that.

In contrast my brother Michael (a teacher of chiropody, resident in Manchester and 31 years old at the time of recording) told a version of 'The Hairy-Handed Hitchhiker' which, he would have us understand, he just as plainly disbelieves. Whereas Mrs E. begins, 'This is very funny, but this is absolutely true', Michael begins by introducing his wife's brother (a forensic scientist—by implication an expert in crime) to discount the story

as 'nonsense', and whereas Mrs E., in spite of her chuckles and giggles at the climax of her narrative, ends on a serious note, Michael concludes with what can only be called 'rude guffaws':

> You know the one about the gentleman dressed as an old lady. It's Andrew's wife—my sister-in-law—came out with this. Andrew works for the Police Department and said, 'Oh that's nonsense!' You know, about the old lady carrying a basket, and—um—this girl picks this old lady up and—er—after they've been driving so far, realises that she's got rather large hands and rather hairy hands, and—er—starts to get very suspicious and tries to find some method whereby she can coax the gentleman out of the car and leave him—you know, ditch him—and hits on the idea that she doesn't think her brake lights are working or something like that, to get him out, and succeeds in getting him out of the car to have a *look* at this, and tears off, realizing in the meantime that this old lady, or pseudo-lady, has left the basket behind, and, of course, there's a big meat-cleaver in the basket. [laughs]

It is unusual good fortune, of course, to find narrators so willing to commit themselves as to say 'this is absolutely true' or 'that's nonsense', but Mrs E. and Michael also use other phrases which are designed to provide substantial attitudinal clues. Right at the start of their story, they drop pretty heavy hints about its performative status, on the one hand signalling 'Don't think I believe this myself' by using opening formulae common to jokes and anecdotes, by stressing the lineage of the story, by indicating directly 'I am in the know[5] and not to be fooled on this one'; on the other hand signalling 'Believe me' by the repudiation of words like 'story', by personalizing the account, or by attaching it to named (and reputable) people and places.

Michael's opening formula, for instance, is highly suggestive. 'You know the one about . . . ' or 'Have you heard the one about?' are conversational moves consistently used to introduce material known to be either traditional or current or both. They are used, of course, primarily in joke-telling, but they also crop up in gossip, in the recitation of in-group sagas about friends and colleagues, and in anecdote-telling: their use plainly signals that the narrator suspects (or, indeed, knows) that the item is going the rounds. For this reason, the traditional nature of the story is very often pointed up with an explicit reference to its source: Michael, for example, says that 'It's Andrew's wife—my sister-in-law—that came out with this'. Elsewhere, narrators may say 'It's a repetitive story that's going round', or 'I've heard it in several versions', 'What was it *I* heard?' or 'I've heard it *umpteen* times'—all of which expressions not only carry a claim to be

somehow in the know, but also to be ever so slightly superior to the gullible masses.

Mrs E.'s opening and closing formulae, on the other hand, contain not only a direct assertion that she does believe the story, but also personalizing ploys which attach the episode closely to her own life—'It was my aunty's neighbour who we knew very well', 'Hayes, their name was'. This personalizing of the relationship, together with the insistence on the name and the reproachful 'but that's true, you know' are direct challenges to audience scepticism. In other legends I collected in Manchester the personalizing takes the form of subjective reflection and comment ('and *I* thought it was absolutely *dreadful*!' 'and *I* would never eat in one of these foreign places!') or maybe the story is told at first- or second-hand instead of in the familiar 'friend-of-a-friend' form—that is, in what Georgina Boyes calls 'incorporated' or 'semi-incorporated' form.[6] In general, the more specific storytellers are about details, the more they are likely to be seeking to convince—to be telling their tale 'as true'. Whereas, for example, Mrs E. says that her story is about 'my aunty's neighbour who we knew very well' and sets the scene on a caravan holiday in Wales, Michael simply says, 'This girl picks this old lady up'.

Identical strategies may be found in stories of the supernatural (another narrative genre where the reality of the experience and the believability of the account are crucial to the success of the communication). Present-day tellers of memorates regularly claim that 'I *knew* that girl!' 'I've *experienced* it', 'I've *proof* of that', 'I remember that distinctly', or 'I can see it to this day'; in ancient texts we may likewise read that 'Mr [X] is a gentleman, of whose truth in this matter I have not the least suspicion'[7] or 'This story I have heard related by several Persons of good repute, that lived in the same Town with him, and heard it from his own mouth. The man I have several times seen',[8] and so on. These ploys, I would suggest, strongly signal 'Believe me', for, by making these claims and observations and attaching them so closely to their own experience, speakers are laying their reputations on the line. How humiliating it would be in these circumstances if their stories turned out to be 'nonsense' after all!

Similarly, the presence or absence of specificity about times and places also helps to distinguish the 'Believe me' narrator from the 'Don't think I believe this myself' one. In modern legend telling (and, of course, in many other forms of informal oral narrative), storytellers who wish to be believed structure their accounts with the precision of courtroom testimony,[9] paying painstaking attention to the fine detail in a strenuous effort after verisimilitude, accuracy and internal coherence—that is: to the 'truth' as we customarily judge it.[10] So Mrs E. is prepared to delay her story while

she explains that 'it was a long time ago because I believe nowadays you're not allowed to sleep in a caravan while you're driving it. But in those days there was no law about it. I should say it's about twenty or twenty-five years ago', and that, 'she . . . didn't tell him because he had gone by the side of the road and she went behind a tree or something'. Other 'Believe me' narrators say, 'It's that Chinese Restaurant at Shaw Heath—the one that's absolutely filthy. It's when the Gaumont Cinema was there', 'It was in connection with that . . . What's that show Esther Rantzen does? "That's Life". Westminster Bank it was. . . the National Westminster Bank. . . The National Westminster Bank' or are worried and apologetic when they fail to produce sufficient information ('I forget the details. I'm trying to remember the *details*') or add on references to times and dates when they wish to prove that their account is no 'story'.

There is a neat illustration of this effect in a description of 'The March of the Sewer-Rats' provided by another Manchester informant, Mrs H.[11]:

> Oh! My father-in-law saw that!
> [G.B. Oh, did he?]
> Ooh, yes! No doubt about that! When he was quite young. In Manchester!
> [G.B. Can you remember what this was?]
> Yes! He was—um—working quite late at the office, which he very often did, especially when he was younger, and he heard these stories
> [G.B. Yes]
> you know, of it happening, and it was a sort of damp, foggy November night and the King Rat, yes, did lead them. And he. . . You know how these big offices used to have these great big steps
> [G.B. Yes]
> and he got onto sort of the third step, and got into the doorway
> [G.B. Yes, yes]
> and he said 'They do! They move from one part of the town to the other part of the town
> [G.B. Oh]
> and there's a King Rat and he leads them.
> [G.B. Yes]
> Oh! he was—er—
> [G.B. Did he give you any details of this King Rat?]
> No, except he was absolutely petrified! It is the biggest rat of the . . .
> [G.B. Yes]
> the biggest rat of the . . .
> [G.B. Yes]
> whole shebang.
> [G.B. Yes]

> But he said he couldn't start counting them.They just moved . . .
> [G.B. Oh]
> Oh, yes! He was quite . . . Er—it was no story. He saw this!
> [G.B. Oh, yes, that's right. Well, you see, that's the point with a lot of these. Some of them are stories. Others aren't].
> But this, of course, was a true one. I don't know when. I'd be going back to
> [G.B. mm]
> before or just after the First World War.
> [G.B. mm]
> I should think round about that time.
> [G.B. Yes, that's when he saw them]
> Oh, I think so!

In contrast to 'Believe me' narrators like Mrs H. and Mrs E., Michael troubles about neither place nor time: there is not one reference to either in the whole of his 'Hairy-Handed Hitchhiker' story. He also consistently uses a vague universal present tense in his narration and a minimum of personal references (even pronouns are scarce). 'This girl picks this old lady up', he says, 'and—er—after they've been driving so far realizes that [. . .] and starts [. . .] and tries [. . .] and hits on the idea [. . .]', and so on. These aspects of his performance leave the narration adrift in time and space, unanchored to any specific reality. They therefore distinctly signal that he does not choose to be seen as staking even the smallest part of his reputation on the truth of his story. He is not only distancing himself from any imputation of belief, but also challenging any tendency to belief in his audience—'Don't think I believe this myself/ Believe me if you dare!'

Significant though all these small performative touches are, however, there is one even more dominant strategy that distinguishes the story 'told as true'. This is the choice and arrangement of the structural elements.

In the following discussion, I am going to use the terminology developed by Labov and Waletsky for their consideration of 'Oral Versions of Personal Experience'[12] (though that does not mean that I accept their narrative theory without reservation:[13] I use it simply as a familiar vocabulary for talking about the stages of narrative). Labov and Waletsky's definition of narrative is simple, based on an apparently obvious juxtaposition of past time and verbal sequence. In their view, time and sequence are also basic to the *structure* of oral stories, the narrator characteristically moving in orderly fashion through six stages—abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution and coda. The abstract gives a résumé of the events to come, the orientation sets the scene that

prevails throughout the time-span covered by the story, the complication sets the action up, the evaluation gives it 'point', the resolution tells of the outcome, and the coda brings events back to the present. Studies have shown how apt a model this is for many performances of legendary material,[14] but here I want to suggest that on other occasions the storytelling diverges in significant ways from this seemingly 'natural' and 'obvious' structure. Whereas, for example, Mrs E. uses all six structural elements of the Labov and Waletsky model in her rendition of 'The Wife Left at the Roadside', Michael does not, and what is more interesting is that the structural elements which Michael leaves out are exactly those which Mrs E. emphasizes. These patterns of narrative, I believe, have diagnostic power, allowing us to distinguish, at least in a rough and ready way, a story meant to be believed from one which is (probably) meant to be disbelieved or which the narrator wishes the audience to *think* is meant to be disbelieved.

When Mrs E. begins on her story, she starts with an abstract which introduces the characters and indicates the nature of the plot (paragraph 1 in the transcription). She then moves on to an orientation which sets the scene (paragraph 2), then (paragraph 3 and 4) to the complication and resolution stages, separating them with a piece of dialogue which Labov and Waletsky would call the evaluation stage, and lastly she adds a coda which brings time back to the present by referring to the questionnaire entry which has initiated the story and, at the same time, constitutes a final evaluation of the episode.

In contrast, after beginning with a brief abstract, Michael goes straight on to the main part of the story, providing no evaluation, no orientation, no coda, and only the briefest of resolutions. All the rest of the narrating time is taken up with outlining the complication.

I feel that these are not merely *chance* arrangements, nor differences in men's and women's storytelling styles. Rather, they seem to be patterns which inevitably arise from the differing attitudes which the storytellers assume towards their material, or wish to appear to assume, or wish their audience to assume—a question of whether or not on this occasion they are asking an audience to believe it.

The crux of the matter seems to lie in the proportioning of the narrative elements and, in particular, in the amount of orientation a narrator supplies. If we examine Mrs E.'s 'Wife Left at the Roadside', at first sight it appears that she gives roughly equal attention to orientation, complication and resolution. When the *content* of each of these sections is examined, however, some interesting anomalies appear. Whereas the orientation

contains only the information one would expect (that is, it functions as background to the main events), the complication and resolution are much more complex. In theory, the speaker should now concentrate on developing the action, but though Mrs E. does use these narrative stages to unfold the events, she does not do it in any straightforward way. There is a density of explanation and detail, a concentration of description and logical side-sequences, that actually tend to obscure the storyline. It is as if the orientation has broken its banks and flooded the rest of the narrative. This leads to a diminution in what we might call 'narrative velocity'.

To continue the watery image, such a narrative is like a youthful river. Rather than moving quietly and quickly to its endpoint, it keeps on getting obstructed. It moves through a series of stages in which the movement is temporarily dammed up and then suddenly released in a 'riffle and pool' effect. In Mrs E.'s story, for example, the orientation begins with a sentence to initiate the story ('They went on a caravan holiday. . . '), but is immediately halted and spreads out into a six-clause explanation of how the woman came to go to sleep in the caravan. Then the action is suddenly released ('It was late at night and she was tired and her husband said . . . '). Once moving, the narrative ripples briskly on ('and so she went in the caravan, got undressed and put herself to bed. . . '), only to get blocked up again seven clauses further on as she explains how it came about that the wife did not tell the husband that she had left the caravan and why she could not prevent him driving off without her. Having passed this 'pool', the story quickly bounds forward again ('so she sort of ran out and shouted him, but off he went!'). Only two or three clauses later, however, the action again stops while she reports the dialogue between the woman and the boy; then it suddenly resumes and hastens on to the conclusion in a couple of throw-away lines ('so, anyway, he did take her and they overtook this caravan. Her husband was absolutely staggered to see her. . . '). All the explanations and asides and bits of dialogue, together with the fast pace of the narrative when it does break the dam and cascade out, give the narrative the effect of life, speed and energy, but *velocity* it does not have. This way, it takes a long time for a simple tale to get told.

That is not to say that the story is jerky or inartistically performed—quite the reverse. Mrs E. guides us through the riffles and pools with considerable panache. Each vital stage or crucial bit of information is stressed by some form of 'rhetorical underlining'[15]—mainly reported speech and verbal placemarkers—and each section of the plot is held together by cohesive links and unitary sentence-structure. The narrative is thus neatly paragraphed.

The rhetorical underlining effectively divides the story into discrete sections, verbal placemarkers and reported speech together serving to indicate the boundaries of each significant story-stage. So the beginning of each stage is marked by 'so', 'anyway', and the climax by a bit of quoted dialogue. There are, for instance, three pieces of reported speech in Mrs E.'s story: one rounds off the scrappy reflections that serve as an abstract, one comes at the end of the scene-setting to simultaneously bring the orientation to an end and prepare the listener for the next stage, and one is placed at the resolution of the story to stress the climax, to make the drama more credible by adding human interest and to allow Mrs E. to keep up the suspense by delaying telling us whether the woman escaped from her predicament. Within each of these stages, the unitary character of the action, explanation and description is principally marked by the sentence-structure. Each stage is blocked in in broad sweeps by long sentences linked by 'and' or 'so'—the forty-four clauses of the complication and resolution are thus grouped into only nine sentences. Finally, a cohesive link ties the whole structure together, the words of the abstract ('This just reminded me') being echoed in the word of the coda ('That reminded me of that'). Though lively and energetic, then, this story is also *careful*. Mrs E. is concerned about the effect it will have on the audience; she *cares* about it and takes some trouble to tell it, not only convincingly, but also unconfusingly, logically and 'properly'. Why? Because she says she believes it, and her reputation therefore relies on her audience's believing it too. 'This is very funny', she says, 'but this is absolutely true'.

If, on the other hand, Michael were to express his attitude to his story, he might say 'This is very funny, and *who cares* if it is true?' One can see at every point that he is not hampered by the sort of considerations which structure Mrs E.'s account. He says he does not believe it himself and surely he will not expect anyone else to?

The first thing to notice is that he provides no orienting information at all, neither in a preliminary section nor during the main body of the story; nor is there any attempt to evaluate it in any way. Once he has provided his minimal abstract, the rendition rushes on with considerable 'narrative velocity', flowing directly and without interruption to its end. It lacks, perhaps, the vitality, energy and consistency of a story like Mrs E.'s, with its touches of humour and human interest, but it moves with some narrative force. His presentation of the plot is extremely bare. First, he cuts the story to the bone, then he leaves the action abruptly suspended at its most dramatic (though incredible) moment in an extremely brief resolution 'And, of course, there's a big meat cleaver in the basket'. The

effect, moreover, is heightened by there being no coda to interpret the events or lessen their impact.

The economy of the plot-presentation is matched by an economy of style. Once into his stride, Michael wastes no words at all. After the abstract, the whole story is told in a single sentence linked with basic conjuctions. There is no elaboration of syntax, no change of tense or mood to hamper its onward flow, and all the work is done by the verbs, nouns and an occasional adjective. The aim of the storytelling seems to be to arrive at the punchline and get a quick laugh. Likelihood and local colour are both sacrificed for dramatic effect: authenticity and 'truth' never enter the narrative equation.

Both Michael and Mrs E. know they are dealing with intrinsically incredible events. The difference is that Michael does not *care* (or, during this performance purports not to care) whether the events actually happened or not—they simply make a good story which he tells 'for laughs'. Mrs E., on the other hand, does care, for she is telling (or purporting to tell) her story 'for true'. Therefore throughout her rendition she attempts to:

> transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows . . . that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment that constitutes poetic faith.[16]

In the case of modern legends, where narrators telling stories 'for true' lay their reputation for good sense and sober judgment on the line (because the supposed events, though momentous, are at odds with received ideas about the nature of the world), they prefer, as it were, to bully their audience into belief by belabouring them with orienting facts.

The strategy of narrators telling stories 'for laughs', on the other hand, is to appeal to a different sort of 'fact'—common knowledge. They seek to imply by a variety of stylistic strategies, that they and everyone else are 'in the know' on this one and defy their audience to think the story either significant or novel.

If Michael's version of 'The Hairy-Handed Hitchhiker', for instance, is analysed to find what J.E. Grimes calls the 'structure of explanation',[17] we can see that what underlies his performance is an assumption that his audience is as familiar with the story and as sceptical about it as he claims to be. In speaking of expository discourse, Grimes notes that explanations commonly contain as little information and have as uncomplex a structure as speakers think they can get away with. Unless they foresee difficulties, they will only 'hit the high spots' of any argument or exposition. Shared

culture and knowledge will be relied on to fill in the details: a speaker counts on a hearer 'to have most of the elements and relations . . . already in his head, so that touching a few points is sufficient to activate the whole structure'. Detailed explanations are reserved for strangers and those considered to be in other ways or for other reasons 'not in the know'. The structure of explanation, says Grimes, 'sheds light on the depth and sensitivity of the speaker's estimate of who the hearer is'.

What is applicable to explanatory discourse is, it seems, applicable also to narrative discourse, for Michael's rendition of 'The Hairy-Handed Hitchhiker' only 'hits the high spots' of the plot and leaves the details to the audience. After his brief abstract, he begins on the main part of the story by simply stating that 'this girl picks this old lady up'. After that, the narrative proceeds through a succession of brisk verbs, nouns and adjectives ('driving', 'realizes', 'large hands', 'hairy hands', 'suspicious', 'tries', 'coax', 'leave', 'ditch', 'brake lights', 'succeeds', 'tears off', 'realizes', 'basket', 'meat cleaver') that will trigger whole scenes and episodes for anyone already familiar with the plot.

In this respect, Michael is explicitly treating 'The Hairy-Handed Hitchhiker' as if it were a folktale—that is, as known and traditional. Daniel Barnes, in discussing the peculiarities of modern legend plots, suggests that, in contrast to the folktale, the main characteristic of modern legends is their concealment of vital information:[18]

> so too is the thematic concern for appearance-vs-reality as a plot device in urban legends much different from that as found in tales. The listener to fables and *Märchen knows* all along that Trickster is stealing the butter from the spring house, *knows* that the Wolf has dressed up as Grandmother, because this is in each case an articulated element of the plot. The other animals may be fooled, Red Riding Hood may be deceived and therefore surprised; the listener is decidedly not. In urban legend, on the other hand, the moment of discovery is often sprung upon the listener at the most dramatically heightened moment, in much the same way that a punchline occurs in the joke and with much the same force. (This formal similarity is one reason why jokes of this kind and most urban legends seem less adaptable to (or compatible with) folktale structure—often, instead, more nearly resembling each other and riddles and proverbs than tales.) Thus in the currently popular legend of the woman and her daughter who come upon an elderly and apparently disoriented woman in the front seat of their car, the listener—like these potential victims—discovers only at the climactic moment (that is, with the protagonists themselves) that the apparently helpless old lady is in reality a frightening killer: a man, armed with a butcher knife, in his apparently

> harmless cake box. One might put it a bit differently: climactic moments in urban legends are defined affectively as the moment when the listener discovers the presence of hidden plot functions.[19]

In Michael's version of 'The Hairy-Handed Hitchhiker', however, no plot element is entirely concealed, and the 'surprise' ending is so well prepared for that it is hardly a surprise at all. As in folktales, as Barnes describes them, the audience is all along privy to nearly all the information at the disposal of the narrator. In introducing the story, Michael has already *told* us that it is 'the one about the gentleman dressed up as an old lady', and throughout the rendition he calls the hitchhiker 'the gentleman' or 'the pseudo lady' as often as he refers to him as 'the old lady'. Only the information that there is a meat-cleaver in the handbag is left unrevealed, and, after this build up, that is not entirely unexpected either! As with the story of Red Riding Hood, the plot is 'open' because it is assumed that there is no point in trying to conceal it. It is too familiar. The only point is to maximize its effect as much as possible.

There is good evidence too, not only that Michael assumes his story is well known, but that it is an established part of his repertoire. Most significantly of all, it has what Jean Ure calls a high 'lexical density'[20]—that is, the reliance on verbs, nouns and adjuncts that has already been noticed, plus a relative lack of fillers and grammatical service-items. Over forty per cent of all the words Michael uses are 'lexical' words carrying independent meaning and information: only just over half of them are the sort of anonymous, lexically empty words like 'the' and 'a', or fillers and markers like 'you know', 'anyway' and 'well, er', or grammatical glue like 'and', 'for', 'which' that usually account for seventy per cent of spoken English. A lexical density as high as forty per cent is rare: it is normally seen only in prepared speech like recorded instructions or in written English. Such a high lexical density strongly suggests that Michael's version of 'The Hairy-Handed Hitchhiker' has been rehearsed, probably by being told on many previous occasions—that is, it is part of a familiar conversational routine.

Taken together, these features build up a coherent picture of the aims and assumptions underlying Michael's narrative performance. The lack of orientation, the pared-down presentation of the plot, the high lexical density all suggest that he is telling a story which he knows well himself, which he thinks (or has chosen to assume) is already familiar to his audience, and which he is not expecting them to think he believes or to really believe themselves. As a consequence, he is telling it in such a way as

to absolve himself of commitment and blame, and to squeeze the maximum reaction from the minimum of words. This is a story told 'for laughs', not 'for true'; told as a traditional fiction, not as a real happening.

This brief examination of two very different storytelling styles allows us at least to make a start on drawing up a checklist of linguistic clues to performance strategies. Obviously, this is a tentative list, no more than an initial foray into this sort of detective work—no doubt more Doctor Watson than Sherlock Holmes—but I rely on other people to iron out its crudities. From the evidence of Michael's and Mrs E.'s performances, however, it seems possible to suggest that a narrator telling a story 'for true' might employ some or all of the following devices:

1. a direct assertion that the story *is* true
2. specificity about people, places and times
3. a semi-incorporated or fully-incorporated presentation, or other personalizing ploys
4. a typical 'Labovian' narrative structure, with . . .
5. stress on orienting information, which often creates. . .
6. a 'riffle and pool' progression in which the plot is halted from time to time for description, evaluation and elaboration and then moved briskly on to the next stage
7. oral paragraphing
8. general deliberateness and care
9. a lively air of conviction and performative energy

At the other extreme, we might suggest that a narrator telling a story 'for laughs' would use a selection of the following devices:

1. formulaic openings which include the phrase 'the one about' or other devices common to jokes, anecdotes and gossip
2. references to the source of the story or other 'in the know' ploys
3. vagueness about persons, places and time
4. a 'distanced' performance strategy
5. the universal present tense
6. a 'non-Labovian' structure which omits orientation and coda, concentrates on complicating action and ends with only a brief resolution akin to a punchline

We should also expect to find:

7. narrative velocity
8. lack of oral paragraphing
9. internal evidence that the story is a regular part of a narrative repertoire (this may take the form of high lexical density)
10. internal evidence that the narrator has chosen to assume that the story is already familiar to the hearers (this may take the form of 'hitting the high spots' only, or of revealing plot elements which for true dramatic effect need to be kept concealed)

At this point, of course, it might well be objected that perhaps the 'for laughs' style is merely Michael's own style and the 'for true' style, Mrs E.'s, and that differences in the context or in the personality, age and sex of the narrators and their relationship to their audience are responsible for the narrative effects, not narrator attitudes. Obvious as these suggestions are, however, they do not bear up under analysis. In the first place, though I have no examples of my brother telling legends in any other style, I do have an instance of Mrs E. using a narrative technique akin to Michael's; in the second place, I have examples of a single narrator on a single occasion swapping styles apparently in response to attitude changes; and in the third place, the styles can be shown to have independent diagnostic power.

Mrs E. told four legends, of which 'The Wife Left at the Roadside' was the last. Her third story was a version of 'The Hairy-Handed Hitchhiker' which she locates in the multi-storey car park attached to Manchester's smartest department store:

> I tell you what there *is* here that I was told. I thought it was absolutely *dreadful*, and I was told. It was a rumour that was going about and I was told. Some time ago . . . I'm trying to remember the details . . . Some woman had parked her car in Kendal's car park and when she went back to the car she found a funny old lady sitting in the car. Have you heard this? I can't really remember the details too well. I can't really remember whether she was sitting in the car or standing next to the door, and she pleaded and begged for a lift, she said she had to get somewhere and she wanted a lift, and this person gave her a lift. I can't remember whether I was told that this person refused or whether she *did* give her a lift, and then, when they were sitting in the seat (that's right!), she noticed that the hands weren't a woman's hands, it was a *MAN* dressed up as an old lady,

> and so this person was very clever, and she realised that it wasn't a real old lady so she stopped the car and made some excuse. I can't remember the details.
>
> She told it to me, she told it to me and it was going round Kendal's and then we sort of repeated it, and we were told that this was just a sort of story that somebody had concocted.
>
> [G.B. Can you remember how it ended?]
>
> Well, this person *got* the old lady out of the car somehow or other, you know—*tricked* them into getting out of the car, slammed the door—made some excuse for him to get out and slammed the door and drove off. But it wasn't an old lady it was a man. But we were told the police were looking for this person.

Even allowing for the fact that she has forgotten many of the details of 'The Hairy-Handed Hitchhiker' story, Mrs E.'s rendition is markedly different from her 'Wife Left at the Roadside'. She says that she was 'told' about it as a 'rumour that was going about' the hairdressing salon in the store, 'and then we all sort of repeated it'. Plainly, she is now 'in the know' on 'The Hairy-Handed Hitchhiker' and is aware that it is 'just a sort of story' which I might also have heard. In consequence, she does not say that it happened to anybody more specific than 'a woman' or 'this person' and gives no details about the events except that they were supposed to have happened in Kendal's car park. The story is presented in bare outline with the assumption that I can fill in the missing information myself. The plot is very sketchy, even given her lack of memory for the details (incidentally, surely it is significant that she *has* so easily forgotten such a macabre set of events?), and there is no attempt to stop the narrative for explanatory asides. The orientation is confined to the remark that the woman 'had parked her car in Kendal's car park', and the narration is nearly all taken up with the complicating action; the resolution is not given until asked for, there is no coda and no evaluation. The only touches of performative energy are where the 'funny old lady' is said to have 'pleaded and begged' for a lift and the information that the protagonist was 'very clever' to think up a ruse to get the man out of the car. Though Mrs E. is not telling 'The Hairy-Handed Hitchhiker' for laughs (she thought it was 'dreadful' when she first heard it, and her conversational repertoire runs to 'shock/horror' rather than to humour), and though it is clearly not part of a regular repertoire, plainly she is not telling it in the 'for true' style either. In style, structure and total effect this is a very different approach to storytelling from that which marked her 'Wife Left at the Roadside'. It indicates that

the performative techniques she uses in that rendition are not the only ones at her disposal.

Other narrators also switch styles in a similar way. My father, for example, has a number of legends in his repertoire, most of which he tells in a classic 'for laughs' manner, in one fast-moving 'and'-linked block with considerable narrative velocity, ending with a comic punchline which serves as a resolution, as in this version of 'The Granny on the Roof Rack':

> I heard this as a repetitive story that was going around and appeared in so many areas, and when I heard it first years ago they were touring in France, in Northern France, and their Granny died and they didn't know what to *do* about it because they didn't want to bury her there and they couldn't get back to England very quickly, so they wrapped her *up* in a blanket and put her on the roof rack, and while they were having lunch later on, the car was stolen and Granny with it, and they were never, ever, *recovered*.

The legend of 'The Cockroaches in the Hairdo', however, he says he believes. 'This would appear to be perfectly true, a first-hand experience', he begins, locating his version in a health clinic he once worked at, and presenting lots of authenticating information (including the standard treatment for head lice!), structuring the story in the Labovian manner and oral-paragraphing it with bits of reported dialogue. An excerpt from the end of his story gives the flavour of the whole performance. After telling how the woman whose children are being deloused complains to the health visitor that her own head is itching under her fashionable 'bee-hive' hairdo, he goes on:

> They said, 'How long is it since you had it [the hairdo] taken down?'
>
> 'Oh, I don't worry. I keep it like this for about three weeks'. So, when they opened it up, they found cockroaches inside. There were cockroaches. So they had to shave her head completely and she was most kind of indignant about it.
>
> But this was, as I say, as far as I'm aware, a *proper experience*, another story told. It was the relation of somebody that'd *done* it, related by the person who'd done it, one of the staff.

The contrast in the two styles, even allowing for personal stylistic preferences, is obvious—fast pace, broad-brush blocking-in of events, vagueness about persons and places and ascriptions of source characterize one: precision, Labovian structure, orienting information, oral paragraphing and asseverations of veracity characterize the other.

Similar style-shifts can be observed in even the briefest summaries. It does indeed seem that individuals adjust performances to attitudinal choices, and that, even through the vagaries of personal narrative-style and variations in context, one can observe storytellers shifting their strategy from 'for true' to 'for laughs' and back again according to definable 'rules'.

How efficient a diagnostic tool a checklist of these 'rules' might be can be judged by examining the transcription of a narrative from which the speaker's own direct assertion of belief/disbelief has been omitted, and seeing if we can still arrive at a just estimation of whether the story is told 'for true' or 'for laughs'. Here, for example, is Mrs D., a retired shopkeeper from Manchester, telling *her* version of 'The Wife Left at the Roadside':

> This is about a woman in her nightie, and they were driving along and she hadn't bothered to get up. They were going on a journey and she decided she wanted to spend a penny so her husband pulled off the road and, and her husband got back in and drove off and left her outside, left her outside the toilets in her nightie.
>
> Now my son told me this—somebody had told him this had happened—and then I heard it *umpteen* times.
> [G.B. What happened in the end? Did anything else happen?]
> Well, he went back for her. I mean, he saw she wasn't there. I don't know what happened to her in the meantime. I wouldn't know.

On examination, we find that:

1. Mrs D. begins with a phrase which is a variant of 'the one about . . . '—that is, 'This is about'
2. she gives the source of her information, and the 'in the know' factor is strongly, even contemptuously, emphasized
3. she seems to assume that the story is already familiar to the hearer: there is no 'surprise' element, a fairly high lexical density of 34.7 per cent and only the high spots of the plot are touched on
4. there is no resolution until one is asked for, and no coda (Mrs D. does not even explain that the couple are driving a caravan)
5. the story speeds on without pause or break or explanation with some narrative velocity.
6. there is no oral paragraphing whatsoever and the complication consists of a single sentence
7. the characters are described only as 'a woman in her

> nightie', 'they', 'she', 'her husband': there is no reference either to a time or a place. The presentation is extremely vague and unspecific.

Analysis therefore leads quite unequivocally to the conclusion that this is not a story told 'for true' (indeed, it seems that Mrs D. cannot even be bothered to tell it effectively 'for laughs' either!).

If the narrative is now quoted in its entirety, just as Mrs D. actually told it, such a judgment is plainly borne out. As she told it, the main part of the story goes as follows:

> This is about a woman in her nightie, and they were driving along and she hadn't bothered to get up. They were going on a journey and she decided she wanted to spend a penny so her husband pulled off the road . . . THIS ISN'T TRUE! I'M SURE!! . . . and her huband got back in and drove off and left her outside, left her outside the toilets in her nightie. . .

Naturally, not all storytellers will be as unequivocal as Mrs D. Many stories will fail to fit so neatly into one category or the other and will not be consistently told either 'for true' or 'for laughs'. Narrators will mix and change strategies in response to audience reaction or as their own confidence in their material waxes and wanes. This may apply, of course, not only from performance to performance, but also from moment to moment within a single performance. Even here, however, a linguistic analysis allows us to recognize and monitor the ebb and flow of change.

As an illustration, consider this version of 'The Hairy-Handed Hitchhiker' which was told by Miss L., a twenty-one-year-old secretary from Stockport:

> I heard that one about a criminal in a car. Well, that was, that was in . . . You know that big car park in Stockport? There was a man. Well, she didn't see the man. He must have been lying down on the floor. She got in the car and she started it up, and she looked through the mirror and she saw this man behind her and he had a great big . . . you know, one of those sledgehammer things.
> [G.B. A sledgehammer?]
> Was it a sledgehammer? Like a . . . Not like . . . What's it like? What are they *called*? You know, a knife, a great big knife . . .
> [G.B. A sickle? A dagger?]
> A dagger sort of thing with a bigger blade. I've forgotten what they're called. A CLEAVER! That's what he had—and he was sat behind her, and she tried to jump out of the car but she couldn't, and she had to drive, and she had this THING looking in the back, and all of a sudden she just

> DIVED out of the car, and the police got him. That was in STOCKPORT!!

Here, Miss L.'s performance is very ambivalent—as is, perhaps, her attitude to the story? Certainly, she never quite settles down to telling her story either 'for true' or 'for laughs'.

She *begins* as if she is going to tell 'The Hairy-Handed Hitchhiker' for laughs—'I heard that one about a criminal hiding in a car'. Immediately afterwards, however, she slips into a brief orientation which immediately gets dammed up in a 'pool' of troubled explanation ('Well, she didn't see the man. He must have been lying down on the floor') which suggests that she is struggling with problems of credibility—so now it appears that Miss L. is leaning towards a 'for true' strategy (after all, a 'for laughs' performer would not care enough to worry about such trivia). After this uneasy start, things do not improve: Miss L. never settles down to a single strategy, but continues to hesitate between the two. On the one hand, she completely fails to name names, referring to the protagonists simply as 'a man', 'he', 'she', and 'this THING'; there is broad-sweep blocking-in of the main story; a lack of oral paragraphing; and only a brief resolution ('and all of a sudden she just DIVED out of the car, and the police got him'). On the other hand, she gives at least a minimum orientation, setting the scene in a car park in her own home town and trying to imagine how the girl failed to see such an evil-looking man in the first place; there are give-away touches of performative energy ('this THING looking at her', 'all of a sudden she just DIVED out of the car') that suggest that she does want to engage the imagination of the hearer; and there is a coda which stresses the reality and immediacy of the incident ('That was in STOCKPORT!!').

The psychology of this performance is to create doubt in the hearer—about whether to believe it, about whether the storyteller regards the story as fact or fiction, about whether it is a truthful communication or something somebody has 'concocted'. Here, perhaps, is the crux of our problems with the contemporary legend genre.

In our culture, truthfulness is considered a *sine qua non* of meaningful communication: non-truths may be uttered without censure only under strictly-governed conditions. Structuring and framing an utterance as a 'story' is one such condition. Whereas conversation is governed by rules of plain speaking and honest dealing, narrative is understood to be subject to no such conventions, for, whereas the former is anchored in the real world of fact, the latter exists in the world of the imagination where 'anything goes'. Speakers and listeners have relatively few problems with expository

and procedural discourse where the truthfulness convention holds, or with formal narrative genres such as folktale where everyone knows that it is in abeyance, but they do meet difficulties with informal narratives such as contemporary legends, where 'stories' are not only met with in (and sometimes not sufficiently distinguished from)[21] conversation, but also have 'real world' qualities. A dichotomy of expectations is set up between the factual-seeming content and the conventionally non-factual mode.

Looked at in this light, it seems perhaps that what we are saying in our traditional definition is that legend is a genre capable of straddling the divide between fact and fiction, partaking of the nature of both. It would follow that it should also be capable of partaking of the nature of both narrative and conversation, the dominant fictional and factual modes in our culture. When we say that legends are told 'as the truth' we perhaps are explicitly announcing that they will or may have something of the nature of conversation or exposition about them. This is, of course, what Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi claim when they speak of the 'dialectic' of legend and say that legends are 'more conversational than other genres'.[22] It is also precisely what happens in narratives like Mrs E.'s 'Wife Left at the Roadside' with its 'pools' of evaluation, explanation and orienting factual detail. Substantial chunks of non-plot material are in each case injected into the storyline.

These chunks of extra-narrative are highly revealing to a listener. They not only contain many snippets of personal information, they also show (i) what sorts of things the speaker considers credible and/or relevant, and (ii) his/her perception of the audience. Because s/he is looking critically at (i) in the light of (ii), it also shows (iii)the narrator's attitude to him/herself. There is a constant process of assessment and judgment, self-revelation and self-monitoring, open for the audience to observe and intervene in, which invests the speech-act with a communicative dimension beyond the narrative.

Two sorts of information are potentially derivable from legend performances: information about events and information about the speakers; which, put together, create a third type of information: information about the world as the speaker sees it. This is an important (even dangerous) statement to have to take responsibility for, so speakers take advantage of the dual nature of legend, shifting its position along the axis from fact to fiction and back as circumstances or their view of human nature dictate. On the one hand, they can highlight the plot, emphasize the traditional nature of the account, omit all self-revelatory material and all traces of the conversational, factual mode—thereby moving their account firmly into

the sphere of fiction. They tell it 'for laughs' and the events are presented as happening in the world of the imagination. On the other hand, they can load the events with exposition and accurately observed every day detail, invest the storyline with the qualities of conversation and commit themselves to its truth—thereby moving it further toward the realm of fact. They tell it 'for true' and the events are presented as happening in the real world. Alternatively, of course, they can (and often do) duck and weave, shuffling about in their minds for an appropriate attitude and an appropriate performance strategy, shifting the story one moment towards fact, one moment toward fiction—hoping, perhaps, for inspiration or a definitive response from the audience.

We can see, then, that our conventional definition of legend as 'a story told as the truth or believed to be true' has some utility in suggesting the characteristics of one commonplace type of legend performance. It points out that an utterance which claims to be both a 'story' and a 'fact' will have certain characteristics not to be found in genres such as folktale. Such a performance will have been coloured by the conversational mode and by the convention which equates fact with non-fiction and therefore demands that the truth of a 'story' must be *proved*. The definition also draws attention to legend's psychological peculiarity—that is, that partaking of the nature of 'fact' by virtue of its content or personae yet partaking of the nature of 'fiction' by virtue of its mode, it has a *potential* for being a truthful account, but there is no guarantee that it *is*.

That said, it must be admitted that a definition which pinpoints one type of relevant performance but excludes others is not very helpful. In practice we recognize a rather greater variety of legends than those performed in the manner which in this essay has been called 'for true'. Accounts such as Michael's, Miss L.'s or Mrs E.'s 'Hairy-Handed Hitchhiker', or Mrs D.'s 'Wife Left at the Roadside', would be recognized by most people as 'legends', and many would also regard statements devoid of all narrative content (*Sagen* or *dîtes*) as 'legends' too. Furthermore, scholars cannot (except at the cost of being universally misunderstood) ignore the popular definition which specifically equates the term 'legend' with falsity and *mis*information (especially as this is an element in some scholarly thinking too).[23]

In summary, it does seem possible, by analysing individual performances, to tackle the question of what a narrative 'told as true' would sound like. Thus we are able to approach one of the difficult areas of our conventional

definition, disinter a meaning from it, and make it work for us. But this success is only a partial one, for we see by the same token that the old definition will not cover a wide enough spectrum of potential performance-options. Unless we are to outlaw utterances previously thought of as impeccable examples of the legend genre, the definition will have to be updated and expanded. However that may be, it seems clear that any change will have to come as the result of the analysis of actual performances and actual usage. Only so can we hope to 'make commonplace scenes visible' and begin to know the meanings both of the performances and the terms we use to describe them. Indeed, only by patient work on the small print of our fascinating but oh-so-tricky chosen genre, will we be able to pin down that elusive butterfly 'legend' and begin to have the slightest idea what we're talking about.

NOTES

My thanks to Craig Fees for his insightful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

1. This quotation from Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman* seems to me to sum up, albeit in an exaggerated way, our present attitude to legend.

2. This very common formulation is taken from Herbert Halpert, 'Definition and Variation in Folk Legend', in Wayland D. Hand, ed., *American Folk Legend: A Symposium* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California, 1971), p. 47. There are, of course, endless variations on this phraseology.

3. Harold Garfinkel, 'Studies in the Routine Grounds of Everyday Activities', in David Sudnow, ed., *Studies in Social Interaction* (New York: Free Press, 1972), p. 3.

4. Mrs E. is referring to a printed checklist I used to elicit information. See Gillian Bennett, 'Problems in Collecting and Classifying Urban Legends: A Personal Experience', in Gillian Bennett, Paul Smith and J.D.A. Widdowson, eds., *Perspectives on Contemporary Legend II: Proceedings of the Second International Seminar on Contemporary Legend held in Sheffield, July, 1983* (Sheffield: CECTAL/Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), pp. 15-30.

5. Sandy Hobbs, 'The Social Psychology of a "Good" Story', in Bennett, Smith and Widdowson (1987), pp. 133-48.

6. See Georgina Smith, 'Modern Urban Legend as a Performance Genre', *Lore and Language* 2/10, pp. 41-44.

7. Joseph Glanvil, *Sadducismus Triumphatus* (London: Thomas Newcomb, 1681), p. 83.

8. Richard Baxter, *The Certainty of the World of Spirits* (London: H. Howell, 1840), p. 138. First published in 1691.
9. See Gillian Bennett, 'Narrative as Expository Discourse', *Journal of American Folklore* 99/394 (October–December 1986), pp. 428-30.
10. See, for example, Lance W. Bennett, 'Storytelling in Criminal Trials', *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 64 (1978), pp. 1-22.
11. Resident of Gatley, Manchester, about 55 years old at the time of recording, housewife and local charity organizer.
12. William Labov and Joshua Waletsky, 'Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience', in June Helm, ed., *Essays on the Visual and Verbal Arts* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1967), pp. 12-44.
13. See Bennett (1986).
14. Principally W.F.H. Nicolaisen in 'The Linguistic Structure of Legends', in Bennett, Smith and Widdowson (1987), pp. 61-76.
15. The term is R.E. Longacre's. See his discussion of 'Plot and Similar Structures' in his *An Anatomy of Speech Notions* (Lisse: Peter de Ridder, 1976), pp. 197-231.
16. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (London: Dent, 1947), p. 147.
17. J.E. Grimes, *Thread of Discourse* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), pp. 57-58.
18. See also Nicolaisen (1987), p. 72: 'It seems . . . to be a significant feature of the legend to have an essential portion of the Orientation delayed until after the telling of the Complicating Action, and much of the success of legend-telling apparently depends on the clever handling of this device'.
19. Daniel R. Barnes, 'Interpreting Urban Legends', in Reimund Kvideland and Torunn Selberg, eds., *Papers III: The 8th Congress for the International Society for Folk Narrative Research, Bergen, June 12th-17th 1984* (Bergen: Forlaget Folkekultur, 1985), pp. 99-100.
20. Jean Ure, 'Lexical Density and Register Differentiation', in G.E. Perren and J.L.M. Trimm, eds., *Applications of Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 443-52.
21. See, for example, Keith Cunningham, '"This is the Story they Tell Me": Legends in Paradise', *International Folklore Review* 4 (1986), pp. 81-89, where (p. 83) he discusses the offence felt by a fieldworker who thinks he has had an unpleasant trick played on him by an informant. The fieldworker fails to pick up the 'tags', as Cunningham calls them, which label the communication as 'legend', so he wrongly assumes that he is being given reliable factual information about 'where old Butch Cassidy hid out'. As a consequence he has an exhausting and fruitless trip up a very steep hill.
22. Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, 'The Crack on the Red Goblet or Truth and Modern Legend', in Richard M. Dorson, ed., *Folklore in the Modern World* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), p. 253.

23. See, for example, Friedrich Ranke, 'The folk legend is a popular narrative with an objectively untrue imaginary content' ('Grundfragen der Volkssagenforschung', *Neiderdeutsche Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 3 [1925]), p. 14; Carl Wilhelm von Sydow, 'in the form they have taken, they cannot have happened' ('Kategorien der Prosa-Volksdichtung', in *Volkskundliche Gaben John Meier dargebracht* [Berlin and Leipzig, 1934], p. 74); Jan Harold Brunvand, 'to some degree . . . urban legends must be considered false' (*The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends and their Meaning* [New York and London: Norton, 1981], p. xii.)

THE FAST-FOOD GHOST: A STUDY IN THE SUPERNATURAL'S CAPACITY TO SURVIVE SECULARIZATION

Bill Ellis

> Simple folk, living uncritically, may . . . be forgiven for holding fast to quite inconsistent ideas and observances.
>
> Gordon Hall Gerould[1]

When I was unable to attend the 1983 Seminar at Sheffield, Paul Smith was kind enough to read my paper, 'Why Are Verbatim Transcripts of Legends Necessary?' The response, he later reported, was mixed; one camp liked the ideas, but 'The other camp, basically because their approaches *never* required such analysis, thought it "interesting" but not particularly useful to them'.[2] It is true that theoretical or methodological polemic often seems an end in itself, and the onus lies on the author to follow up his alleged theoretical advances with more practical studies. This essay cuts again into the thorn-choked area of verbatim texts, in order to ask two pragmatic questions. First, can analysis of fine linguistic and paralinguistic detail lead to insights into the messages communicated by a complex, seemingly inconsistent performance? Second, can these insights in turn lead to a better understanding of contemporary legends and the processes that keep them vital in tradition?

In my previous essay, I argued that legends could not adequately be studied outside active legend-telling; otherwise our texts, however accurate, would be texts of legend summaries, not legend performances.[3] This failure to examine the genre in context, in turn has led English-language folklorists (as Bill Nicolaisen has shown us) to consider 'legends' as a typical kind of story, while German-oriented scholars, including Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, think of '*Sagen*' in terms of variability and dispute.[4] Like the blind sages palpitating the multiform elephant, both sides speak truth, but *Sagen*/legends are neither peculiar kinds of stories nor unstructured debate; rather, they are distinctive forms of speech acts,

in which the boundaries of culture—the known and the unknown—are explored and provisionally identified.[5] Further, as Dégh and Vázsonyi have observed and I have tried to examine through analysis of performance, this speech act involves the conscious assumption of *dramatis personae* that in turn have a powerful impact on how the narratives so dramatized are to be interpreted. In Goffman's memorable phrase, 'we spend most of our time not engaged in giving information but in giving shows'.[6] In order to see what a given legend 'means', then, we need to pay attention to the specific ways in which it is presented and responded to in context.

Of course, valid study of a legend performance must be tested and refined by close analysis of other such performances and a knowledge of the beliefs and cultural norms widespread in the performer's culture and subculture. Only so can we see what is genuinely traditional and what is idiosyncratic to the single performance being transcribed and studied. Simultaneously, we must acknowledge and allow for the Heisenberg principle of folklore: those aspects of the performance that are distinctively reactions to the fact of recording.[7] Still, examination of the genre in performance, however problematic, alerts us to the dynamics of legends that are the most important to the persons who ensure their preservation in tradition. We can more closely approach the cultural forces that influence the ways they change in tradition, and, perhaps more significantly, we can get closer to the heart of the genre—the human needs and anxieties that motivate and perpetually renew legends.

This issue is especially important when we consider supernatural legends in the United States. One prominent folklorist has suggested that supernatural elements have dropped out of many Anglo-American ballads, 'presumably because [Americans] are hard-headed and practical . . . ', yet a few pages later the same scholar summarized surveys indicating that the level of superstition among college students had remained at a steady, high rate since the beginning of the century.[8] At about the same time, sociologist Andrew M. Greeley reported that, according to his surveys, almost one-fifth of the American population frequently experienced paranormal events, including extrasensory perception, clairvoyance and communication with the dead.[9] The debate realized in legend performance, therefore, has ample grounding in U.S. culture: priding itself in its capacity to leave the past behind and move ahead into the world of Star Wars, Americans nevertheless are unable to rid themselves of their fascination—and contact—with the supernatural.

There is, however, need to contain this potentially threatening contact.

Churches are kept full, but only on Sunday, and contact with the divine is carefully mediated through ritual and a professional class of holy men; in the same way, the outlying areas are kept full of haunts and madmen whom adolescents can contact, but only within carefully restricted limits and invoked by carefully prescribed rituals. The uncanny side of life is thus given its half acre near most American communities, so that it can be invoked, witnessed, then left behind as the teenagers drive their technologically up-to-date autos back to the artificial light of their comfortable, safe suburban homes.

American hard-headedness, therefore, does not eliminate the supernatural, but rather seeks to concentrate it into culturally safe locations and channels of expression. The result is a complex form of what Gerould would call cultural inconsistency, illustrated graphically by two texts collected in 1979 by Tracy McCullough, a student of mine.[10] They involve a puzzling apparition said to have been witnessed by employees of a Pizza Hut in a small town in central Ohio, which I shall call 'Arbordale'. Identical to thousands of others nationwide in its reinforced-concrete architecture and anonymous, interchangeable interior furnishings, the 'Arbordale' Pizza Hut reflects the franchise's menu: unchanging from coast to coast; indeed, using a limited number of sauces and flavourings for everything on the limited menu. For the employee, contact with other people is limited, personal choice is carefully restricted ('Extra cheese?' 'Onions on your sub?'), and the entire operation of the restaurant is geared to convenience: getting customers in, served, out, and cleaned up after. The environmental surfaces, from the tables to the rest rooms, are sanitized, and service is brisk and impersonal. Unlike fast-food restaurants specializing in quickly prepared, easily stockpiled foods, the Pizza Hut at least has a waitress to bring the pizza to the patron's very table. But this is because pizza cannot economically be prepared in advance and held indefinitely. While waiting, though, diners can exercise a modicum of personal choice at the salad bar, where osterized vegetables and vats of dressing (protected from germs by a hanging glass 'sneeze guard') can be combined into an appetizer. For the customer, personality is quietly effaced in the interest of bland but predictable food, served quickly so that he or she can go and do something more important. The intrusion of the paranormal into such a setting, therefore, would seem to be a jarring dissonance.

Traditionalizing the Supernatural: Louise's Legends

The first text was collected by my student during a group conversation focusing on adolescent legends and scary stories told at summer camps and slumber parties. Tracy McCullough, the collector, had invited 'Louise', a former employee of the Pizza Hut, and two other girls from the Arbordale area over to make a tape for her folklore class. The result was about an hour's worth of reminiscences, all more or less artificially focused on the topic of supernatural legends or 'ghost stories'. The participants first told the stories that most intrigued them, then, as they exhausted their active repertoires, they began to give more and more fragmentary or detached accounts of other supernatural legends. At one point, as Louise was giving a detailed account of a house owned by a friend that was the site of poltergeist activity, she commented, 'I can tell about the Pizza Hut ghost too', but she continued with the story at hand, and this reference was not immediately pursued by the others. A few minutes later, though, after the girls had been unable to remember any other scary stories and the conversation had ground to a temporary halt, Louise reintroduced the subject.

The transcription of her conversation uses the following orthographic conventions:

1. Shifts in intonation, where several words in a series are spoken in a distinctive way that affects meaning, are identified in italics within square brackets.
2. Square brackets also enclose italicized descriptions or characterizations of sounds by the transcriber ([*Nervous laugh*]), as well as indications of where the tape recorder is turned off ([*Recording terminated.*]).
3. Momentary pauses are indicated by commas, more definite pauses by line breaks, and pauses of longer than a second by the notice (within square brackets), 'Pause:—seconds'. Lines that run too long to fit on the printed page are indented at the left margin on continuation.
4. Momentary use of louder dynamics is indicated by printing the passage in capital letters ('somebody was WATCHING me').
5. Elevation of pitch for emphasis is noted by reversed angle brackets:
   >slight raise<

>>significant raise<<
>>>extreme raise<<<

6. Softening of dynamics (usually accompanied by lowering of pitch) is noted by parentheses:
   (slight lowering)
   ((significant lowering))
   Significant elevation of pitch for emphasis is noted by reversed angle brackets within parentheses:
   (lowered but >emphatic< pitch)
7. Lowering of pitch without softening of dynamics, for ironic purposes, is noted by regular angle brackets:
   <mildly ironic>
   <<very ironic>>
8. A dash (—) is used within the line to indicate the drawing out of words for effect or for thought ('leading to a—yeah a doorway'). At the end of a line a dash indicates a pause on a levelled pitch tone, indicating incomplete expression ('I saw the Fast Food Ghost—').
9. Italics outside square brackets indicate where, for reasons of privacy, personal names or places have been replaced by pseudonyms or synonyms.

Louise's Story

Louise:	[Taunting] Well then there's the >Pizza Hut< ghost.	
Mary:	[Inhale] There's one at high school too.	
Tracy:	That's not a ghost story.	
	[Laughing] What was the Pizza Hut ghost.	

[Indistinct; several people speaking simultaneously.]

Alice:	I know if you don't know.	5
Louise:	Oh.	
	[Laughs] OK.	
	[Taunting] >OK<—	
Alice:	[Laughing] We all got white knuckles when we talked about that.	
Louise:	[Taunting] The <<Pizza Hut ghost.>>	10
	[Narrative] I ever tell you about the Pizza Hut ghost?	
Tracy:	Not that I know of.	

Louise: [Taunting] Oh <yes.>
Um people would not close <alone> at the Pizza Hut in *Arbordale*
'cause of him. 15
'Cause there's supposedly a man was killed on the site where the Pizza Hut was built—
and
one—this is, [Conversational] oh I don't know if it's all true or not, everybody, some people say it is, some people say it isn't, but—
[Narrative] OK, *Bruce* was closing once and we had like this like little room in the back for his office—
and he said
he turned around once and he saw this—
somebody—was—standing—there. 20
[Pause: one second].
you know, and—
and he
kind of shook his head and it was gone.
Then *Jim Landers* said HE was there once by himself at night and— 25
he—
was back in the back doing the books,
and he came OUT and there was the guy standing right in the *'frig-, right in front of the refrigerator—*
[Pause: one second] 30
and he said he—
he saw him STANDING there and—
[Pause: one second].
the guy then kind of drifted out into the—
into the—
dining room and, *Jim* went up, by the 'frigerator and stood there, and it was, just ice cold 35
even though the 'frigerator wasn't open it was just >REAL COLD where he was standing.<
And he said there was >NO WAY< he was going to WALK OUT INTO THAT DINING room.
>>NO WAY!<<
So he
went back into the back and just [laughing] kind of sat there and— 40
[two mock—'shivering' sounds]

and I think then he left real quick [brief nervous laugh].
And then *Molly Jones* was going into the bathroom once—
[Pause: one second].
and she was coming OUT of the bathroom— 45
and—
she couldn't get out of the bathroom.

Alice: Oh.

Louise: Something was holding onto her and she couldn't get out. 50
>She's going <['Feminine'] >>>'*BRUCE*!<<<
>>>*BRUCE*!'<<<[short laugh; taunting] and she RAN—
or he ran in there and said, ['Feminine']>'What's the matter?'<
[Narrative] Then she yanked and she <got her purse out.>
But she couldn't get out. 55
And *Lois Brown* once was in there, cleaning the bathroom underneath the toilet—

[Phone rings]

Louise: and she felt, somebody tap her on the shoulder and she, went up real quick and she knocked herself out.
[Pause: one second].
'Cause she was so scared. 60

[Simultaneously, Mary answers the phone in the background; indistinct conversation: 'Hello? Which one? Yeah this is her'.]

Tracy: [Conversational] Yeah but—
[nervous laugh]
um—
Well wha— 65
was there any story behind that though?
I mean like—

Louise: [over Tracy's last words; taunting] <<YEAH>> [Narrative] there was a man that was supposed to be—
HUNG on that site.
[Background phone conversation: 'I THINK so'].

Louise: he was—it was uh, supposed to be a farmer
'cause 70
Jim said he had bibs on.

	Or he had like—	
	a flannel, old flannel shirt on and—	
	JEANS.	
Tracy:	Uh-huh.	
Louise:	[Taunting] And a <<HAT.>>	75
Tracy:	And he was buried on that site.	
Louise	Uh-huh.	
Tracy:	Well isn't there supposed to be something about the high school was—	80
	buried, or over a graveyard or something?	
Louise:	I don't know, I never heard that.	
	[Pause: two seconds].	

The conversation continued for another half-hour, covering a variety of other adolescent legends including 'Mary Ruth', a variant of the cursed witch's grave prevalent in the midwest[11], as well as a lengthy account of a farm said to be inhabited by a coven of witches. The Pizza Hut ghost came up once more in conversation, and Louise recalled a few more poltergeist-type occurrences said to have happened there: pizza pans flying around, and lights coming off their fixtures, for example.

Immediately we notice one puzzling feature: despite the incongruity of the setting, the story provokes surprisingly little interest. Although one of the listeners comments, 'We all got white knuckles when we talked about that' (line 9), the performer does not display any anxiety and the listeners remain impassive. Indeed, the key moments of the incidents related are performed with a calculated staginess: just before the ghost appears, Louise breaks off a statement in mid-phrase, and after it appears, she pauses dramatically. The effect, once perceived, is almost parodic:

and he said
he turned around and he saw this—
somebody—was—standing there.
[pause: one second]
(20-23).
and he came OUT and there was the guy standing right in the 'frig—,
right in front of the refrigerator—
[Pause: one second]
and he said he—
he saw him STANDING there and—
[Pause: one second]
(32-34)

Yet none of the three accounts consists of any detail intended to make the apparitions seem concrete or verifiable. Rather, in most cases, Louise places much more stress on dramatizing the witnesses' reactions than on presenting the ghost itself:

> And he said there was >NO WAY< he was going to WALK OUT INTO
> THAT DINING room.
> >>NO WAY!<<
> So he
> went back into the back and just [laughing] kind of sat there and—
> [two 'mock-shivering' sounds]
> and I think then he left real quick [brief nervous laugh]. (39-44)

> >She's going <['Feminine'] >>>'BRUCE!'<<<
> >>>'BRUCE!'<<<[short laugh; taunting] and she RAN—
> or he ran in there and said, ['Feminine'] >'What's the matter?'< (52-54).

Significant here is the way in which Louise uses extreme contrast in dynamics to indicate fear, but only when she dramatizes the words or the feelings of other people. The supernatural details are told more flatly, in what I have described as 'narrative intonation', and the resolution of each incident invariably comes as an anti-climax. Bruce has only to 'kind of' shake his head, and the ghost is gone; Jim Landers feels an inexplicable chill in the air, which may or may not be related to his standing by a refrigerator; Molly Jones hysterically yanks her purse loose and then is free, suggesting that it was her purse that somehow was holding her in. The final, interrupted incident seems no different: Lois Brown knocks herself out 'Cause she was so scared' (line 60), but no effort is made to describe the tap on her shoulder as anything other than a momentary delusion. Nothing in Louise's narration, of course, makes it necessary that we see each incident as explainable in rationalistic terms, but neither is this specifically excluded; the debate between the rational and the supernatural simply never takes place.

Louise thus adopts a self-consciously playful persona, from the beginning of her performance on. Twice she lets the others know this by using 'taunting' intonation in her opening phrases:

Louise:	[Taunting] >OK—<. . . .
	The <<Pizza Hut Ghost.>>

[Conversational] I ever tell you about the Pizza Hut ghost?
Tracy: Not that I know of.
Louise: [Taunting] Oh <yes.>
Um people would not close <alone> at the Pizza Hut in *Arbordale*
'Cause of him.
(lines 8, 10-15)

This point is further underlined by her admission that 'this is—[Conversational] oh I don't know if it's all true or not, everybody, some people say it is, some people say it isn't but—' (line 18). This statement does not prove that Louise disbelieves in the stories—she says only that she can't say that it is *all* true. But the persona she adopts here allows her to relate the stories at arm's length, playing with them as stories, not as evidence for the reality of the supernatural.

Many of these consciously dramatic techniques appear a short time later in her performance of 'Mary Ruth'. Here again we see the same distancing of self from the story, combined with self-evidently dramatic gestures and overblown dynamics:

Louise: [Conversational] Oh she was the one that
they accused of witchcraft?
and they burned her on the—
burnt her on the >Square<.
And that's the one that they say 5
[Narrative] if you spit on her grave
[pause: one second].
you get killed?
And Diane Dugan knew these two boys?
These two guys you know, they were in high school? 10
Or junior high, and they were driving around—
[conversational] (no must have been high school 'cause they could drive.)
Well that doesn't make any >difference, they >>COULD<< have been< driving—
[Narrative] but one—
they went out to the graveyard when the graves were still up? 15
[Conversational] Mary Ruth's grave was still up?
Alice: Was this out at Greenfields?
Or out by—

Louise: No, this is out on Dare Road.
Alice: Oh.
Louise: And um—
[Narrative] the one
one guy spit on the grave, and the one didn't.
And they were coming home
you know, they were just cruising around and they came back 25
from it [inhale]
and the one [sigh]
and they were in a wreck
and the guy who spit on the grave died
and the one who didn't 30
['Feminine'] >>didn't die!<<
[Narrative] And the, doctor said there was
>no reason >why that< one shouldn't have died.<
But it was because HE spit on ['Feminine']
>Mary—Ruth's—>>GRAVE!<<
Tracy: OK—
Right.

Again, the story is told in such a way as to preclude any debate. Although an authority known to the group is given ('Diane Dugan knew these two boys' [line 9], in this context it functions as no more than a conventional opening formula: 'Diane Dugan told me this story about two boys'. No doubt the graveyard is real, and it is important to one of the listeners to locate it more exactly. But the shift into high-pitched, parodic 'feminine' intonation at the climax of the story makes it clear that Louise is acting as if she were a slumber-party 'girl' (the same age as the alleged 'boys') who could still be impressed by the legend's mechanical interdiction/violation/death format. That the 'validation' is not to be taken seriously is signalled in advance by her conspicuous yawn at lines 26-27. At the end the collector acknowledges the receipt of a story, but does not respond with any further requests for evaluation or metacommentary; nor do the others.

Perhaps this lack of comment is a result of the artificial mode of collection: my student was aiming for a complete list of local supernatural legends, not just the ones that intrigued the group. Hence, the conversation had already been extended beyond normal length and, since these stories were already known to most of the group, further commentary may have been unnecessary. But other narratives in the conversation provoked many

more details and discussions about the reality of the events narrated. It is more likely that both the Pizza Hut ghost and 'Mary Ruth' are, for this group, so neatly harmonized with existing traditional motifs that no further dispute is called for. Louise begins both stories with schematic statements clearly tied to folk beliefs widespread in adolescent legends. The first:

> Um people would not close <alone> at the Pizza Hut in Arbordale 'cause of him.
> 'Cause there's supposedly a man was killed on the site where the Pizza Hut was built—
>
> (lines 14-16).

connects the stories that follow with motif *E 411.10: Site of tragic death haunted by ghosts*, easily the most widespread motif in Ohio adolescent legend-trips.[12] And, when Louise concludes her accounts, Tracy's somewhat flustered request for more informaton draws an ironic, slightly variant version of this schematic: '<<YEAH>> there was a man that was supposed to be—/HUNG on that site' (lines 67-68). And the collector, trying to harmonize the story further with one she knows about her high school suggests the further motif *E 334.2: Ghost haunts burial site*. Louise is willing to concur—perhaps the result of poor collecting methodology, but more likely a sign that she is more interested in accommodating her story to her audience than sticking to the 'facts'.

In general, then, we can characterize Louise's performance, adapting Dégh and Vázsonyi's terminology, as a 'dormant legend'. Typically, they observe, the keynote of active legends is 'the compulsion to criticize. The teller of the legend . . . has to speak her mind'.[13] Louise, however, cagily does not, and the listeners' criticism is defused by her detachment from the incidents; at least for the moment, 'no one is interested if anyone believes them to be true'.[14] This is not to say that the material community-wide is treated in a detached, humorous way; Louise's introductory remark acknowledges that 'some people' say it is 'true' (line 18). Nor should we conclude that Louise adopts only one persona in this conversation. Elsewhere she is graphic and involved in presenting poltergeist activity,[15] but in this particular context the incongruity of the event and the dispute of the legend have been rationalized within the terms of the tradition. On the one hand, the content is rigidly harmonized with a widely distributed legend-trip motif which allows the teller to treat it as half a game. On the other, the reported experiences of witnesses are so described as to allow the

listener to reject them as delusions or mistaken interpretations of natural happenings. At best, Louise is telling the group that it may be a verifiable case but she knows of others where the activity was more substantial and the informants more convincing. At worst, it is, like her dramatization, a case of overblown emotions.

Supernaturalizing Rationality: Bruce's Memorate

Louise's version of the legend, however dormant, intrigued Tracy McCullough and she took the initiative of contacting one of the persons mentioned as an alleged witness of the ghost. 'Bruce' was a former manager of the Pizza Hut and had been a high-school classmate of Tracy's, though they had known each other only slightly. When contacted, however, he agreed to relate his first-hand experiences in the restaurant, and, on the night of 22nd February, he came over to Tracy's dormitory room, bringing a pizza. The second version of the Pizza Hut ghost legend exposes the powerful tensions beneath the defused, official version. The following is a transcription of the complete taped interview.

Bruce's Memorate

Tracy: [Conversational] OK—
NOW.
>Just—<
(you know)
[Pause: one second].
>start< telling me. 5
Bruce: OK.
['Rational'] The *Arbordale* Pizza Hut Ghost.
Uh—
>I< saw the Pizza Hut Ghost—
(now this was back in uh—) 10
[Pause: one second]
either late seventy-four or early seventy-five is the first time >I< saw him. (I don't remember the exact date.)
(I was working late one night.)
I was in the back of the Pizza Hut. I was washing dishes 15
at the time in these
large, industrial-size sinks.

M I I D

Now there's a >wall—<
leading to a—yeah a >doorway—<
[Clarifies positions with his hands]
another portion of the wall (and then another doorway).
(And a—refrigerator there.) 20
['Amazed'] I was >standing there and I had the darndest >feeling that somebody was WATCHING< me.
(OK?)
Now I >KNEW I was the only one in the <store and that I had >locked the store.<
And I—>HAD this< feeling and I—>THOUGHT< originally that it was just uh (I'm getting nervous and antsy about being in there—) late. 25

Tracy: Mm-hmm.

Bruce: It >kept up and I >>finally looked up<< and looked >>over.<<
and I >>THOUGHT<< I >>SAW<< someone.
(OK, a, a) man.
Standing in that second doorway by the freezer area. 30
And I thought—>didn't think anything of it and went >back to washing dishes< and it >clicked—<
that
>there's >>somebody STANDING<< there.<
and I >LOOKED< again.
And I >looked at the< guy. 35
['Rational'] and I >noticed that he was wearing< what look—, appeared to be a >flat-brimmed< hat—
(a, a), FELT type hat.

Tracy: Mm-hmm.

Bruce: (OK, broad and [inaudible].)
[Phone rings.]

Bruce: And a— 40
and a, a >buckskin type jacket—
BROWN.
>buckskin jacket—<
[Phone rings.]

Bruce: >couldn't make out his< face.
[Conversational] (OK I'll let you stop there and get the phone.) 45
[Recording interrupted for a few minutes.]

Bruce: ['Rational'] OK I >think< where we were at would be—
uh—I had seen the guy, he was in the flat-brimmed hat

and buckskin jacket.

['Amazed'] I—>STOPPED what I was doing< and >STARED at >him< and

when I >STARED at him he APPEARED to move SIDE<WAYS. 50

['Rational'] OK, into the, another hallway (like where) the dishwashing area is (in the Pizza Hut).

Tracy: Mm-hmm.

Bruce: And move >SIDE<WAYS (just like) take a step to his—

HIS right, my left. 55

['Amazed'] Uh—I reacted and >RAN over< to see >who in the< hell was >in the< store—

OK?

>>NOBODY WAS THERE.<<

[Pause: one second]

>>NOT A SOUL.<< 60

>And I >>SAW him move<< across—

out of the >picture—<

out of my >view—<

and nobody was THERE.

I >IMMEDIATELY checked all the< doors— 65

checked the restroom—

[Pause: one second]

RAN around the store—

>PANICKING< almost, thinking

There's GOT TO be somebody here— 70

It CAN'T be happening.

Uh—

[Pause: one second]

I didn't know what to do.

I was scareder as the devil, OK? 75

I >finally got myself back to the point< where I was

(you know, I was just imagining this, it couldn't be anything).

And went back, finished up the dishes and left and (didn't sleep worth a >damn< that night).

(OK, it) scared me—now—

>later on there were other reports< of it a >girl working >there< named *Mary Taylor*— 80

>Also< saw him.

This is before *Louise* or any of the other people you may

have talked to worked there.

Tracy: (Mmm.)

Bruce: SHE saw him.
>Strange things would< happen, noises, voices— 85
You'd be >SURE somebody was talking< to you -
calling >your name—<
and, and you wouldn't—
nobody would be there or—
the people were there would say you're NUTso. 90
[Pause: one second]
['Rational'] OK, it went on—
Jim Landers SAYS he had an experience with that—
>in the Pizza Hut there's an< area underneath where you MAKE the pizzas, where you store the COOKING pans.
OK, there's three sizes of cooking pans on two SHELVES. 95
OK, they're VERY HEAVY—
they're, they're oven type, heavy gauge >steel.<
>He was closing< one night, aGAIN washing dishes in the back where he's out of the way of the—
uh—
[Pause: one second] 100
view there.
>S—UDDENLY he< hears this
>MASSIVE< crash.
OK, and >all of these< pans—are—strewn from the >back< door
to the >cash< register. 105
Which in the >Pizza Hut's—about—<
oh—(twenty-four feet).

Tracy: (Mmm.)

Bruce: And—
['Amazed'] >there's >>NO WAY, the SHELVES<< did not collapse— 110
(OK.)
And they >just didn't FALL OFF—not ALL of them would< have >fallen.<
[Pause: one second]
They were >ALL—< over.
Something appeared to have (knocked them out). 115
(Just like) SHOVED them.

Out of the—
(the area they were at).
['Rational'] Now I >once again saw< the ghost
in—nineteen-seventy-SEVEN— 120
(that would have been).
Late SUMMER of seventy-seven.
[Pause: one second]
(Late summer—is that right?—yeah 'cause the ground was clean).
Uh— 125
I was walking to the BANK (which is) right next door to the building.
>And it was< MY store so I always checked it out to check to see if any lights were missing outside and how it looked, looking through the windows.
['Amazed'] And I >saw someone< moving.
And I thought—
IMPOSSIBLE. 130
CAN'T be.
CAN'T be, it's got to be >my reflection.<
['Rational'] Well I moved my arm [waves his arm] to see if it was my reflection and—it—didn't.
OK, I thought, well somebody's walking out in front of the building, looked—
>THROUGH the windows< to see if anybody was moving and it WASN'T. 135
The >figure was moving<
[Pause: one second]
in a direction
OUT toward the FRONT of the store—
OK? 140
NINETY degree angle to me.
[Clarifies position with his hands].

Tracy: Mm-hmm.

Bruce: Moving out toward the front of the store—
>just on the other side of the salad< bar (which is in (the centre of the dining area.)
['Amazed'] I >>STOPPED—<< 145
and WATCHED, thinking it's got to be
>HEADLIGHTS< it's got to be something—
>>nothing moved except this<< figure.
A>GAIN the guy in the flat-brimmed< hat.
(OK?)

He >started—<
[Pause: one second] 150
>>through the salad bar<<—not THROUGH the salad— >>beyond the salad<< bar, got to the >>end of the >>salad bar<<—and—just—vanished.
[Pause: one second]
>Flat-out—<
VANISHED. 155
[Pause: two seconds]
['Rational'] Now I had >left everything in the< store.
I >wasn't quite< done, >that night< I just walked in, turned off the lights and (went out and left.)
Uh—>didn't complete< what I was supposed to do, caught all sorts of hell for it in the morning—
from my employees. 160
['Amazed'] (I have told them that they could do whatever (they want [nervous laugh] I wasn't going to do it (that night).
['Rational'] There were various sightings, *Lois Brown* felt someone touching her once while she was in the restroom—
uh—
[Pause: one second] 165
voices as I've said.
>It was kind of spooky< at times.
>People, some people flat-out< REFUSED to close the store by them>selves< because they'd been > frightened.<
Guy named *Dave Lucas*, *Dave*'s—
not an exceptionally BRAVE man but he's a BIG man, he's six-foot-six and three hundred pounds. 170
Scared to DEATH of it.
Told me he—I could FIRE him before he'd ever close that store by himself again.

Tracy: ((Mmm.)) 175

Bruce: He was FRIGHTENED by it.
Uh—he SAYS he heard it (one night).
[Pause: one second]
['Amazed'] >It's kind of strange, I checked into it in< local history, now there's—
[Pause: one second] 180

>WHERE the store is located is near< where the original settlement of *Arbordale* was.
(OK, *Smith's Crossroads* at the time I think was what it (called, what it was called.)
But there's >no record of anyone being KILLED< there—
but it's a >possibility< 185
((OK.))
['Rational'] Uh—the records are unclear about what DID happen there, it was fairly swampy in that area, it was the trail leading into town—
or the village there.
(Uh—)
None of the local historians, uh—*Joyce Miller* (or uh— 190
(what the hell's her name, *Helen*—uh—*Davis*—)
have been able to HELP me on that.
['Amazed'] But I'm >kind of trying to check it out for >my< curiosity, I >>DON'T BELIEVE<< that there's >such a thing <as a >>GHOST—<<
but I damn well want to find out WHAT there was.

Tracy: Mm-hmm. 195

Bruce: Just to—
(you know)
So I can rest at nights.
(And go in there and not think about it.)
(Uh—) 200
He's >never bothered< anybody in the sense that he's >hurt< anybody but he's (scared a lot of people).
[Conversational] Any other questions?

Tracy: [Nervous laugh]
>That's pretty good.<
>I didn't, I didn't know that—< 205
>I don't talk to *Fred*< or any of those other ones.

Bruce: [Conversational] >I don't know if *Wilson* ever worked there—<well *Fred* worked there for a WHILE—
>I don't know if he'd have been there when any of this happened.
Uh—the >crew originally—< 210
the >crew originally—<
>none of them—<
I haven't seen the original crew when I first sighted the

guy in years—
in TWO years at least.
Tracy: What, were you the—
were you the first one to— 215
Bruce: ['Rational'] >No—<
Tracy: —experience him?
Bruce: I >think *Mary* had seen him< before I had
because when I came into the store the next day and said, I, you know, I saw this—
the stories started coming out about the strange things that had happened, it was like [quickly] nobody-wanted-to-admit-it-because-everybody-else-would-have-thought-they-were-NUTS. 220
Tracy: Mm-hmm.
Bruce: [Conversational] (Uh—)
(it was uh—)
[Loud clang; Bruce has picked up a round pizza serving tray].
Bruce: (You know that's funny.)
Uh— 225
Tracy: [Nervous laughter].
Bruce: [quickly] Nobody-else-would-ADMIT-it.
Tracy: Oh.
Bruce: (It was kind of a strange—)
['Rational'] But >I< saw him twice, uh— 230
I don't know if anybody else will admit they've seen him or HAVE seen him (either for that matter.)
THAT'S WHY I want to find out IF there IS something there.
Am I just seeing things or is there something there.
I >THINK there's something there< because of (everybody having these spooky things happening—
(the noises and everything.) 235
Tracy: Yeah but you don't think it's a ghost?
Bruce: ['Amazed'] >I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS, I >>>REFUSE<<< to believe in a ghost.<
Tracy: >Oh?<
>Yeah?<
['Rational'] >It's just a< matter of PRINCIPLE. 240
Tracy: Mm-hmm?
Bruce: WHAT it is, is what I want to find out.
As far as ghosts—

uh, you know, uh—the sheets and the Hollywood version
of a ghost or a spirit of the dead, >I don't know.<
I don't know >WHAT it would be,< there COULD 245
>conceivably be something< on that >line<.
A force that we're not a>ware< of.

Tracy: Like more of a spirit than a—
Bruce: Well, >say just a, a—<
Tracy: —quote, ghost?
Bruce: (—a—) 250
(physical—force).
(OK, a—) magnetic energy (for want of a better term).
Tracy: Mm-hmm?
Bruce: But as far as a ghost that will make CONTACT with you
that—would have been—
necessarily a human form because he was damned to 255
be here for all time or something like that, (I'm not
sure of).
['Amazed'] (Maybe—it—was—because—of—something—
but (I, I don't know I >want to find< out).
(I'm >curious.<)
[Pause: one second]
((Uh—it's—mostly I'm >scared.<))
((Being frightened, I'll be honest.)) 260
[Pause: two seconds]
((I didn't like it any, either time.))
((It's a >terrible< feeling—))
((>not< knowing what it is.))
Tracy: And not being able to explain it? 265
Bruce: (And not being able to explain it, right.)
Tracy: Yeah.
Bruce: ['Rational'] If I drop something on my foot I hurt it and I
don't like it but I know why it hurts and I know why
I don't like it.
Tracy: Mm-hmm.
Bruce: ['Amazed'] (Uh—but when I see something like that (I— 270
>can't< explain it and—)
[Pause: two seconds]
((uh—))
((my traditional frame of reference is just totally
useless.))
((I can't touch it, I can't see it—))

	[Pause: two seconds]	275
Tracy:	Mmm.	
	OK.	
	[Recording terminated]	

Unlike the other tape, which includes much incidental chatter and scene-setting, the tape Tracy recorded is brief; Bruce evidently gave no prelude and artificially cut off the taping at the end. It is therefore difficult to say what discussion prefaced the recording. Almost certainly Tracy paraphrased what she had learned from Louise, since Bruce alludes to her at line 82. Further, Bruce appears to be responding consciously to the 'official' legend-motif interpretation of the events when he incongruously uses Louise's term 'Pizza Hut Ghost' (line 8) despite his insistence that what he saw was no ghost. And his abrupt mention of checking into 'it' in local history (line 179) presupposes awareness of motif *E 411.10.* Still, while Bruce's performance is carefully, almost symmetrically structured around the two appearances of the 'ghost', Tracy's surprised, incoherent response (lines 203-206) rules out any preliminary rehearsing. Likewise, Bruce's defensive response to her challenge (line 237) makes little sense if the two had previously agreed about what he would say. In sum, the tape records a spontaneous dispute on two levels: between collector and performer and, simultaneously, between two sides of Bruce's personality. And like the active legend, the debate reaches no resolution.

The issue here, though, is not whether Bruce's performance is structured, but why it is structured the way it is. In her paper in this volume, Gillian Bennett proposes typical differences between legends told 'for laughs' and those told 'as true', which at first seems to fit the contrasting features of Louise's and Bruce's performance. But laughs and 'truth' are not the concepts at loggerheads here; rather, it is tradition and experience that collide. The major distinction, then, is not the subjective *purpose* of the structuring—which may be psychologically unrecoverable—but rather *what* the performers are consciously, visibly structuring. Louise is passing on a story, restructuring in words the words she has received from others. Having received the legend in a form that has already placed a social interpretation on the events, she understandably distances herself from the empirical status of the events and emphasizes the entertainment value of the story. Bruce, by contrast, is structuring primary experiences—sensory impressions that came to him without the reassuring mantle of cultural explanations. His performance embodies a structure, but it is one that he has imposed, and not successfully, on the uncanny events that have

challenged his rational understanding of the world. To improvise a little on a theme by T.S. Eliot, the main difference between the two performers is that Louise offers her audience 'words as words', a story told as a story, while Bruce presents 'words as the world', or, as another storyteller explained to me (in words), 'This is not a story, this is something that happened to me'.[16] This distinction between referents cuts deeply and—to previous scholars—invisibly through the entire corpus of legend performances.

Since Bruce's own 'rational' interpretation of his experience ultimately fails, within his performance we can see two subdivisions, which we might call 'rational' tone and 'amazed' tone, corresponding to the contradictory attitudes Bruce expresses about the experience[17] is more like the classic narrative tone described in 'The Hook' and in Louise's version of the Pizza Hut ghost; flattened, almost sing-song, it serves to relate events without comment. The 'amazed' tone, by contrast, is initially hushed, with quieter, lower-pitched dynamics, but it frequently includes abrupt leaps to higher pitch and louder dynamics that contrast dramatically with this background. Bruce uses the 'rational' tone to begin each of his accounts with fact-heavy orientations and descriptions of occasions:

Ok.
['Rational'] The *Arbordale* Pizza Hut ghost.
Uh—
>I< saw the Pizza Hut ghost -
(now this was back in uh—)
[Pause: one second]
either late seventy-four or early seventy-five is the first
    time>I< saw him (I don't remember the exact date).
(I was working late one night.)
I was in the back of the Pizza Hut I was washing dishes at
    the time in these
large industrial-size sinks.
Now there's a >wall—<
leading to a—yeah a >doorway—<
another portion of the wall (and then another doorway).
(And a—refrigerator there.)

(lines 7-20)

The sheer amount of detail contrasts sharply with Louise's abrupt orientation: 'OK, Bruce was closing once and we had this like little room in the back for his office' (line 19). But the detail, though apparently

inconsequential to the story that follows, is important to establish the persona telling the story as a critical, factual observer.[18] The use of the same persona in the second memorate is more telling:

['Rational'] Now I >once again saw< the ghost
in—nineteen-seventy-SEVEN—
(that would have been).
Late SUMMER of seventy-seven.
[Pause: one second]
(Late summer—is that right?—yeah 'cause the ground was
clean.)
Uh—
I was walking to the BANK (which is) right next door to
the building.
>And it was< MY store so I always checked it out to
check to see if any lights were missing outside and
how it looked looking through the windows.

(lines 119-26)

Here the rational stance is necessary to the effect of the narrative. The scrupulousness with which Bruce settles on the specific details of time and place now applies to the details of the apparition, fitting its manifestation into an empirical surrounding and suggesting its concreteness. Thus while Louise indicates that the ghost was insubstantial, and all Bruce had to do was 'kind of' shake his head to make the apparition vanish, here Bruce describes the ghost as doggedly substantial, defying all his logical hypotheses.

['Amazed'] And I >saw someone< moving.
And I thought—
IMPOSSIBLE.
CAN'T be.
CAN'T be, it's got to be >my reflection.<
['Rational'] Well I moved my arm [waves his arm] to see
if it was my reflection and—it—didn't.
OK, I thought, well somebody's walking out in front of
the building, looked—
>THROUGH the windows< to see if anybody was moving and
it WASN'T.
The >figure was moving<
[Pause: one second]
in a direction
OUT toward the front of the store—

OK?
NINETY degree angle to me.
[Clarifies position with his hands]
Tracy: Mm-hmm.
Bruce: Moving out toward the front of the store—
>just on the other side of the salad< bar (which is
in (the centre of the dining area.)

(lines 128-44)

Where Louise ironically suppresses scepticism in her version but allows it the upper hand through her playful editing of the episodes, Bruce quite deliberately incorporates the sceptic into his performance, allowing him to make the obvious rational statement: 'IMPOSSIBLE./CAN'T be./CAN'T be. . . ' (lines 130-32). The result is a different kind of irony, as the statement is made in Bruce's 'amazed' intonation, and the careful description that follows in 'rational' tone leads only to more exact observation of the impossible and therefore to greater certainty that something supernatural is empirically there. Thus in both memorates the controlled 'rational' intonation leads into the contrast-ridden 'amazed' intonation, as raises in pitch become more consistent and extreme and frequently contrasted with much softer expressions. Both rise to two emotional peaks. The first comes when Bruce becomes convinced that he is witnessing something supernormal, as in the first episode:

['Amazed'] It >kept up and I >>finally looked up<< and
looked >>over—<<
and I >>THOUGHT<< I >>SAW<< someone.
(OK, a, a) man.
Standing in that second doorway by the—freezer area.
And I thought—>didn't think anything of it<and went
back to >washing dishes and it >clicked—<
that
>there's >>somebody STANDING there.<<

(lines 27-33)

The second follows when the apparition finally does vanish, and Bruce is forced to try to reconstruct the event and determine exactly what he did see. This, in both episodes, leads to a section in which Bruce lowers his voice to an undertone, describing his 'alienation', or psychological disorientation following contact with the supernormal.[19]

['Amazed'] Uh—I reacted and >RAN over< to see who in
the hell was in the store—
OK?

>>NOBODY WAS THERE—<<
[Pause: one second]
>>NOT A SOUL—<<
>And I >>SAW him move<< across—<
>out of the picture—
>out of my view—<
and nobody was THERE.

* * * *

Uh—
[Pause: one second]
I didn't know what to do.
I was scareder as the devil, OK?
I >finally got myself back to the point< where I was
(you know, I was just imagining this, it couldn't be
anything.)
And went back, finished up the dishes and left and
(didn't sleep worth a >damn< that night.)
(OK, it) scared me—now—

(lines 56-64, 74-79)

In general, then, the tension of Bruce's account of the events contrasts the 'rational' perspective, which attempts to gain or maintain equilibrium through careful, sceptical observation, and the 'amazed', which is not credulous, attempting to gain or maintain equilibrium through careful sceptical observation; and one 'amazed', not credulous or attracted to the magic or mythical, but reacting to contradictory empirical evidence with an equally unstable, contrast-filled intonation. This linguistic phenomenon is not merely a 'clue' to the narrator's emotions, as Robert A. Georges would have it.[20] It appears in a consistent, dramatic way in both memorates, and in somewhat foreshortened form in the validating legend of Jim Landers's experience framed by the memorates. Louise uses extreme pitch abruptly and without warning to characterize what her characters 'say', and in so doing makes them seem light-headed and foolish. By contrast, Bruce builds to climaxes of pitch and volume against a flatter, more 'rational' intonation, making them the more credible as 'amazed' reactions to genuinely supernormal events.

The Ghost Beyond the Salad Bar: Legendry versus the Experience

Why, then, the puzzling refusal in the metacommentary to grant the

cultural interpretation so blithely posited by Louise—that the apparition is the ghost of someone killed or buried there? Bruce's voice rises twice more to emotional peaks, both times in response to this theory. After acknowledging that he has looked into local history, he admits that 'there's >no record of anyone being KILLED< there—/but it's a >possibility</ ((OK))' (lines 184-86). Still, even as he leaves the door open for this 'possibility', he quickly claims that 'I'm >kind of trying to check it out for my> curiosity, I >>DON'T BELIEVE<< that there's >such a thing< as a >>GHOST—<</but I damn well want to find out WHAT there was' (lines 193-94). Later he repeats. 'I >THINK there's something there< because of (everybody having these spooky things happening—)/ (the noises and everything)' (lines 234-35), but as soon as Tracy presses him to call it a 'ghost', he reacts emotionally, his intonations audibly contrasting with each other: '["Amazed"] I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS, I >>>REFUSE<<< to believe in a ghost< . . . /["Rational"] >It's just a< matter of PRINCIPLE. . . . /WHAT it is, is what I want to find out' (lines 237, 240, 242). Bruce's performance, therefore, is pulled in two distinct directions—toward validating the reality of the apparition ('I >THINK there's something there<'), and against giving it an easily applied cultural tag ('I >>DON'T BELIEVE<< that there's >such a thing< as a >>GHOST<<').

To explain this seeming inconsistency, we need to stand back momentarily from the performance and consider again the physical context of the alleged apparitions. As we have said, the fast-food restaurant is archetypically associated with a modern way of life predicated on convenience at the expense of individuality. To this extent, ghosts—the survival of the individual personality beyond death—are philosophically at odds with such a setting. Ghosts do appear in restaurants, but only those that are self-conscious links with earlier days and modes of thinking. In this context, far from being a threat, ghosts often provide good advertizing. Compare, for instance, the many 'country inns' in the U.S. that combine atmosphere, family-style (i.e. bland) cooking, and ghosts. The Maple Grove Hotel, in Berks County, Pennsylvania, uses as its logo 'a "gentlemanly" ghost whisping [sic] forth from a doorway', and the menu combines local history and legend in a self-consciously quaint way:

> The Inn, built ca. 1783, had a long and vicarious [sic] history. For one thing, it is said that when Thomas Edison was conducting some of his experiments here in the East Penn Valley, he made his headquarters at

> 'The Maple Grove'. On the other hand, an Indian was supposed to have been hanged in the 'common room' and another 'guest' was supposed to have been murdered in a second floor closet.
>
> In any case, the ghosts of these unfortunates still are reputed to be haunting the Inn where the present owner, Colin Heffley, is serving the most delightful drinks and dinners in a country Inn full of charm and history . . . and a ghostly atmosphere.[21]

One might expect this to be no more than fakelore, or at best akin to the kind of extinct legend that involves a love-lorn Indian maiden who jumped to her death off one of the innumerable 'Lover's Leaps' across America. But such legends are often quite active: owners and employees of such establishments are quite willing, 'at the drop of a bump in the night', to give circumstantial accounts of their supernatural experiences. The explanation seems to be that, in a setting where legends of the romantic past are expected, personal contact with the supernormal is sanctioned, even encouraged. Going to such a restaurant, in this sense, is like going to an adolescent legend-trip site, in that it gives the diner and the employee licence to experiment with unconventional modes of perceiving 'reality'. A sympathetic journalist ended his account of the Maple Grove Hotel by saying:

> You can believe what you've just read, or dismiss the various incidents as natural, not supernatural, occurrences. But if you're enjoying a quiet meal or a few drinks at the Maple Grove Hotel one evening and the chandelier starts to sway, the iron fireplace crane starts to shimmy, or you feel a ghostly presence sitting next to you, you'll believe . . . you'll believe![22]

At the same time, such cultural licence allows adults to leave the spirits behind in the past. Like youngsters at a summer camp, they can pretend they are in an antiquated world and so can tell stories that in another setting would be ridiculed as superstitious.

Such a licence is denied to those in an environment associated with modernity. Bruce alludes to the ways in which people who told about their experiences in the Pizza Hut were ridiculed, or at least feared ridicule, the second time using a peculiar, nervous, rushed intonation to do so:

> ['Amazed'] >Strange things would< happen, noises, voices—
> You'd be >SURE somebody was talking< to you—
> calling >your name—<
> and, and you wouldn't—

nobody would be there or—
the people were there would say you're NUTso.
(lines 85-90)

['Rational'] I >think Mary had seen him< before I had
because when I came into the store the next day and said,
I, you know, I saw this—
the stories started coming out about the strange things
that had happened, it was like [quickly] nobody-
wanted-to-admit-it-because-everybody-
else-would-have-thought-they-were-NUTS.

[quickly] Nobody-else-would-ADMIT-it. . . . .
But >I< saw him twice uh—
I don't know if anybody else will admit they've seen him
or HAVE seen him (either for that matter).
(lines 218-20, 227, 230-31)

Parallels to this kind of reticence are difficult to find in folklorists' collections, perhaps because of narrators' fear of the supercilious rationalism that is said, rightly or wrongly, to motivate professorial types. But in the popular press it is easy to find similar cases. The journalist quoted earlier on The Maple Grove Hotel was also contacted by an informant with a less traditional story which concerned his visions of his dead Uncle Frank:

> For several months, perhaps once or twice a week, I received mysterious telephone calls from a man who said he lived in Wyomissing but offered little else in the way of identification. He claimed that he was 'too well known' in the community to allow his name to be attached to something as misunderstood as ghostdom. This man was scared. His conversation turned hushed or ended abruptly when his teenage son entered the room in which he was speaking. His voice, authoritative and rational, quivered as his stories intensified, lending credence to my belief that he was really experiencing what he told me, and his 'haunting' was no imaginary tale.
>
> 'One time, my wife and son and I were walking through the Berkshire Mall', the caler [sic] whispered over the phone. 'I was glancing over at the people walking up the other side, toward us, and to my shock, there was Uncle Frank!' A chuckle of amazement leaped from my lips and struck like a bullet of incredulity on the other end of the line. The man shot back. 'Yeah, I know you don't believe me', he snorted. But for some quick psychological jousting on my part, my chuckle may have cost me this story. I assured him that the giggle was not borne [sic] of disbelief, but of

M I I I.

> amazement. Even as I tried to soothe the man, I added that I had never heard of a ghost being sighted in an enclosed shopping mall.[23]

Despite the journalese of the style, the dynamics of performance on both sides are significant. Like Bruce, the Wyomissing informant takes pains to set his 'amazed' reactions against the background of a recognizable 'rational' intonation. Yet he is almost painfully reticent, stopping even when he fears he is overheard by his own family. The journalist's reaction is as typical. Versed in all the popular ghost-story motifs of the area, and generally sympathetic, he still cannot resist a 'giggle' when someone tries to tell him about a ghost in, of all things, a shopping mall. Yet the man is still 'scared'—not so much of Uncle Frank, whose manifestations are, we find, characterized by a wry sort of humour and friendliness, but of the social sanctions that would be invoked if he tried to communicate his experiences. And these penalties are hardly limited to ridicule. The stewardesses who claimed to have seen the ghost of a dead pilot aboard an airborne jet liner were hesitant to speak to an equally sympathetic journalist, for fear that they would be labelled as neurotic and forced by management to see the company psychiatrist. One said to him, 'This referral to the company shrink is no joke . . . It's the first step in getting laid off. Also, we could be just plain held up to ridicule. That's hard to take, too. We're taking a big chance right now in trusting you not to identify us'.[24]

The actual events described by these reticent sources, and by Bruce, are not, after all, so different from those described by those who experience the supernormal in teenage haunts and quaint old restaurants. Why then the discrepancy? We seem to be stumbling over the boundaries of what Mihály Hoppál has termed 'a belief-language', with the help of which each culture can use its 'belief-vocabulary' to 'compose meaningful communications'.[25] If this concept is valid, then there is a culturally derived vocabulary that determines which supernatural experiences can be shared with licence. Thus, while it is not intrinsically foolish to say, 'I feel God's presence', or 'Last night I saw a ghost', one must be careful not to make such statements in what we might call an experientially ungrammatical way.

For example, take this statement: 'Last night, when a bunch of us guys were at Gore Orphanage, I saw a ghost of one of the orphans that were burned there'. This statement may provoke any of the conventional responses within the tradition of supernatural legends—ranging from admiration to crass scepticism—but it is a grammatical experience, in that such things are, according to the tradition, seen there. A person who says

he saw a ghost at that spot may be sincere, mistaken, or even lying in order to get a girlfriend to accompany him there that night—but he is acting within the terms of the belief-language, and this set of traditions, as Dégh and Vázsonyi point out, 'enable the recipient to make his choice between belief . . . and disbelief . . . without experiencing qualms of conscience or dangerous social consequences'.[26] Indeed, Kenneth A. Thigpen observed that adolescents' actual contact 'with what is thought of as the supernatural does not necessarily have a profound or stable influence on one's belief system'.[27] Ironically, then, one function of culturally 'grammatical' supernatural legends is to insulate our hard heads against our innate fear of irrationality. Perhaps this is why the Grimm Brothers so rhapsodically insisted that 'the constant motion and lasting security of folk legends represent the most reassuring and most refreshing of God's gifts to man'.[28]

But if a witness's empirical experience cannot be fitted into this belief-language, then its shock hits the listener without insulation. Still, if the teller insists that the experience was real, his auditors will still try to use the belief-language to channel deviant details into safe channels of expression. In translating the memorate into a grammatical legend, they may resolve the dissonance in two ways. First, they may reconcile words to words, harmonizing the teller's unique words with the culture's traditional words. Hence, inclusion of traditional motifs like those we have noted is necessary to consider the 'ghostly' experience legitimate. Failing this, they may simply reject the world the teller presents in words, labelling him 'crazy' and his story so deviant that it must be suppressed, except as evidence of the teller's unsoundness. Sanctions can range from incredulity and ridicule to loss of employment and forced therapy for culturally defined neurosis. Both options, brought to fruition, effectively end the life of the legend; that is, once debate is resolved, the narrative becomes dormant, though it may live on in tradition purely for its narrative interest. More likely, though, the majority of supernatural experiences will never be translated into legends and hence will be told, if at all, under extremely restricted circumstances.

This hypothesis would explain why, as David Hufford found, perhaps as many as twenty-five per cent of Americans have experienced the supernatural paralysis-attack experience he terms 'the Old Hag', yet published descriptions are difficult to find and, among folklorists and psychologists, the phenomenon has remained obscure and poorly interpreted. Hufford suggests that the lack of a traditionally accepted term for

such attacks was partly to blame, commenting 'the presence of convenient language indicates the presence of a consensus, which in most cases provides assurance that one's experience is not somehow monstrous'. In the absence of such vocabulary, he concludes, 'the experience remains largely unshared and unknown',[29] even when this leads to considerable psychic stress.

Extending this idea a step further, we can say that one reason we instinctively smile at the notion of meeting ghosts in convenience restaurants or in shopping malls, is because such statements are patently ungrammatical in terms of the belief-language. Such places are important in tradition, but we do not meet ghosts there. Rather, we might find worms, human fingers, or rat tails in our convenience foods; or our daughters might be abducted by ethnics in a shopping mall. Such legends confront us with forces that we recognize all too well from the media and our own experience: they may be extreme in their horror, but they are not uncanny. To put it another way, a Pizza Hut may be marginal and culturally dangerous, but it is not numinous; it is not holy ground.

The Empirical Numen: Rationality in Amaze

The Pizza Hut is not holy ground; that is, unless the performer blesses, or remythologizes it.[30] It is important that Louise prefaces her performance with the flat statement that 'supposedly a man was killed on the site where the Pizza Hut was built' (line 16) and Bruce spends significant time trying to locate and verify this statement in local history. Nevertheless, Bruce is faced with two sets of dilemmas. The first he states directly at line 233: 'Am I just seeing things or is there something there?' The first, as we have seen with Louise's version, leaves him open to ridicule as credulous, easily fooled, or hysterical. Bruce is at pains to deny this characterization: he presents his own supernormal experiences against a background of 'rational' intonation, he collates them with other employees' uncanny testimony, and he investigates, instead of uncritically accepting, the culturally provided explanation of a ghost tied to a grave or death site. His metacommentary concludes, 'I >THINK there's something there<. . . ' (line 234). But then, if something is there, what is it?

The question, given our culture's belief-language, is perhaps unanswerable in Bruce's terms. Lauri Honko has done us folklorists a favour by allowing us to speak of a 'numen', a vision seen and recognized as supernormal but not yet interpreted.[31] When interpretation comes,

whether by the witness or by another, such unexpected visions normally are harmonized with cultural values, interpreting them, for instance, as spirits come to warn or punish violators of norms. Hence, according to Honko's primary model, Bruce's fatigue and sensory deprivation admit the possibility of hypnagogic hallucinations, the content of which are often based on cultural models. Retrospection thus heightens their traditionality, so, as Honko has noted elsewhere, often 'the tradition is already present in the experience'.[32]

Although Hufford disparages Honko's essay as a 'major example' of the cultural source hypothesis,[33] a close reading shows that Honko does not in fact say that cultural models are the sources of all supernatural experiences. Indeed, he admits that 'for one reason or another, an explanatory model from tradition cannot be found for many supernatural experiences and they remain at the numen stage', and in a significant note here, he continues:

> In just this way came about the ever fresh tradition which tells of indeterminate specters and ghosts. With admirable ease it has passed through those cultural changes which cause weakening and death to belief in spirits.[34]

Honko's admission that cultural models often do not help the witness explain his numen, leaves the door open to the suggestion that numinous apparitions are not, after all, culturally derived. Like Hufford's Old Hag, they appear to defy, indeed they threaten to destroy, artificial models set up to explain them. Put bluntly, instead of limiting the supernormal to 'approved' locations like graveyards or old country inns, what Americans have done is to limit people's capacity to talk about their supernormal experiences, unless they (the witnesses, not the numina) limit themselves to hallowed turf.

This explains why Bruce, in spite of his refusal to believe in ghosts, is reluctant to reject this cultural model absolutely. First he admits, 'it's a >possibility<' (line 185), then he says more dubiously, 'a spirit of the dead, >I don't know.<' (line 244). The collector is anxious to end the uncertainty, and prompts him to call it a ghost; when he refuses she again tries to get him to accept a slightly revised view: 'more of a spirit than a— . . . /—quote, ghost?' (lines 247, 249). Bruce will have none of this, although his strongest emotional reaction, leading directly to the termination of the recording, comes immediately after he has made his fullest statement of the ghost hypothesis:

['Rational'] But as far as a ghost that will make CONTACT
with you that—would have been—
necessarily a human form because he was damned to be here
for all time or something like that, (I'm not sure
of).
['Amazed'] (Maybe—it—was—because—of—something—but I,
(I don't know I >want to find< out.)
(I'm curious.)
[Pause: one second]
((Uh—it's—mostly I'm >scared.<))
((Being frightened, I'll be honest.))
[Pause: two seconds]
((I didn't like it any, either time.))
((It's a >terrible< feeling—))
((>not< knowing what it is.))

(lines 254-64)

The *principle* behind Bruce's refusal, therefore, is not simply scepticism or agnosticism, though he implicitly ridicules the pop-culture model, 'the sheets and the Hollywood version of a ghost' (line 244). He would like to believe, if he could satisfy his rationalist scruples and locate evidence that the Pizza Hut was built on an old grave or death site. Nevertheless, Bruce indicates that he would be more comfortable if he could define the manifestation in quasi-mechanical terms, as 'A force that we're not >aware< of . . . (—a—/(physical-force./(OK, a—) magnetic energy (for want of a better term).' (lines 246, 250-52). Such a 'physical' force, obviously, would not be out of place inside a technologically-advanced fast-food restaurant, and would thus baptize (and so lay) the ghost by naming it in secular, demythologized terms. But Bruce can do so only by positing that the force is one 'that we're not >aware< of', so putting him, with the parapsychologists, outside the cultural definitions of reality on yet another front.

And again the belief-language is more a hindrance than a help. If Bruce buys the first of these suggestions, then he has to admit that ghosts, spirits, or whatever can appear at any place at any time, in spite of culture's efforts to limit their power to socially acceptable spots—for who can tell when he is standing on a centuries-old grave? If, however, he chooses the second option, then he is left speculating about unknown forces and energies that lead to empirical results—visions, flying pizza pans—but which cannot be described empirically. As Bruce says:

/'Amazed'/ (. . . when I see something like that I—
>can't< explain it and—)
[Pause: two seconds]
((uh—))
((my traditional frame of reference is, is just totally
    useless.))
((I can't touch it, I can't see it—))
[Pause: two seconds]

(lines 270-75)

Faced with this irreconcilable dilemma, Bruce retreats into official silence. What lies behind these gaps is perhaps best expressed by Dégh and Vázsonyi:

> A positive legend . . . is surrounded by innumerable concentric circles spiraling into cosmic distances. The first and closest circle will indicate that ghosts exist if there was one somewhere at a given time. Yet, if ghosts exist they must act according to the unknown rules of their existence . . . What is even worse, they might undermine man's faith in the normal order of things, his reason and his principle of causality, upon which the average man's feeling of the relative security of the human condition is based.
>
> In the domain of the concentric circles at that distance, it is a mysterious twilight that rules. If ghosts do exist or can exist (in other words, if their existence cannot be disproved beyond doubt, and how could it be?), what kinds of other unfathomable things might also exist? Bodiless entities, inscrutable rules, unconceivable relationships, immeasurable forces—anything, within the confines of everyday life . . .
>
> Is there anything one can hang onto?[35]

We might add, who can such persons talk to but the folklorist? 'The folklore scholar is fortunate', Donald Ward says,

> inasmuch as he need not concern himself with the question of the existence or non-existence of paranormal phenomena. For the subject who is a believer, the experience is real, and it is the reality of experience and its relation to tradition which interests the folklore scholar . . . The folklorist is thus interested in the reality of the supernormal experience and not in the reality of paranormal phenomena[36]

This statement is perceptive, so far as it goes; the folklorist need not and should not become an amateur ghostbuster in order to examine how a culture sets up a belief-language to respond to the threat of the numinous.

But there is a danger in taking this approach too far. Ward prefers to see man 'as a being who is governed by social restraints, fears, and who is capable of attributing mystical significance to his creative perceptions'.[31] This assumes, however, that experiences or visions not sanctioned by 'rational' modes of description are, *ipso facto*, the result of creative imagination. The supernatural experience thus becomes little more than an aesthetic puzzle to be solved, and we are free to take Bruce's terror in the face of the unknowable and dissect it for a pleasant afternoon's pastime. Yet the person who has witnessed the supernormal *knows* he has had a real experience; what he is interested in is precisely the question of the existence of paranormal phenomena: 'THAT'S WHY I want to find out IF there IS something there./Am I just seeing things or is there something there./ I >THINK there's something there< . . . ' (lines 232-34).

In this respect, Honko again seems closer to the mark in stressing that:

> Belief in the existence of spirits is founded not upon loose speculation, but upon concrete, personal experiences, the reality of which is reinforced by sensory perceptions. In this respect spirits are empirical beings. Although the investigator himself is unable to see the spirits, he must admit that his informant really saw them.[38]

Like Ward's, this is a slippery statement, but, unless we grant it, our analysis of Bruce's memorate must necessarily reduce it to the status of Louise's legend. We may suggest (with Honko) that the spirits are born of hypnagogic hallucination, or (with Ward) that they are the products of a special 'part of the brain which is not normally used . . . ', [39] or (with Dégh) that they come from 'group psychosis'[40]—but it is central to Bruce that what he saw was empirical, not merely the reflection of what he wanted to see or has been culturally trained to see. Given statistics that suggest that such supernatural experiences are far more frequent than investigators have suspected, the folklorist ought to be the first not only to accept, but to defend the empirical status of the numen.

This is not to say that we must admit that 'ghosts' exist, for folklorists' power and utility reside in their marginal status. They have the right to *refuse*, in the best sense of the word; that is, to decline to accept as privileged any cultural explanation of numina—not souls of the dead, not swamp gas, not even magnetic forces or hypnagogic hallucinations. So empowered, we have the capacity, should we choose to exercize it, of

looking more closely at what witnesses are experiencing, and also at the linguistic difficulties they confront when they attempt to be true, not to the words of tradition, but to the world, to the empirical evidence they critically perceive. When we deny this power, we *refuse* in the meanest sense of the word; that is, we deny importance to our informants' critical nature and we affirm only our uncritical adherence to 'rationality'. For behind this kind of mean refusal, and behind the social sanctions, behind the ridicule, behind the threat of being called insane, we may hide the uneasy suspicion that the fault, after all, lies not with the 'irrational' beholder but with 'rationality' itself; that, for all our hard-headedness, we are still all a-mazed in this world.

So the numen, and the dispute it provokes, persist even into a demythologized age. Just as legends 'conceived in technology', as Dégh says, 'can be the vehicles of new ideas',[41] so too old phenomena and old ideas will continue to co-exist with technology. This puts two responsibilities on folklorists sincerely interested in contemporary supernatural legends. On the one hand, the actual phenomena described ought to be considered without cultural prejudice from the folklorist; too often those we collect from have already suffered enough psychic stress without our official disdain. On the other, the dispute and the precise linguistic forms needed to express such phenomena in public, need to be examined and described as exactly as possible.

For just as the numen is not the legend tradition, the legend tradition is not the memorate, and the three elements as often collide dissonantly as they co-exist harmoniously. By paying close attention to the microcosm of the individual performance, the folklorist can indeed discover important structural oppositions that extend beyond the idiosyncratic limits of single texts. It is true that such analysis needs to be careful to show how these oppositions appear in other materials collected and analysed, both by scholars and amateurs. But the issues are important, and, if, as I have suggested, legends are most active where the cultural belief-language least adequately explains empirical experiences, then further work in this direction will have two practical values beyond being merely 'interesting'. First, we will be determining in what ways our cultural vocabulary and grammar restrict our capacity to describe experience, and second, we will be hearing, perhaps for the first time, what our informants so desperately are trying to say in the face of legendry.

NOTES

* For Daniel R. Barnes, for not despairing. An earlier version of this was presented at the 1985 meeting of the Pennsylvania Folklore Society, Philadelphia, PA. Thanks are due to Kenneth Goldstein, Linda Oxley and Peter Rojcewicz for helpful criticism of this version.

1. Gordon Hall Gerould, *The Ballad of Tradition* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 152.
2. Personal communication to the author, 26th January 1984. My thanks also to Mark Glazer and Bill Nicolaisen for communicating the audience's reactions to me and giving me helpful advice on revising this essay, in Gillian Bennett, Paul Smith and J.D.A. Widdowson, *Perspectives on Contemporary Legend II* (Sheffield: CECTAL/Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), pp. 31-60.
3. Cf. Richard Bauman's warning that oral texts, however accurately transcribed, 'may nevertheless not be the products of performance, but of rendition in another communicative mode. How many of the texts in our collections represent recordings of informants' abstracts, résumés, or reports of performance and performance forms rather than the performances. . . ?', *Verbal Art as Performance* (Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1977), p. 8.
4. Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, 'The Dialectics of the Legend', *Folklore Preprint Series* I/6 (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Folklore Institute, December 1973), pp. 5-6, 40-42. See also Linda Dégh, 'The "Belief Legend" in Modern Society: Form, Function, and Relationship to Other Genres', in Wayland D. Hand, ed., *American Folk Legend: A Symposium* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California, 1971), p. 62.
5. Ellis (1987) and also 'Legends and Legend-telling', unpublished manuscript in the author's possession.
6. Dégh and Vázsonyi (1973), pp. 30-32; even in accidental gatherings, they note, 'Each of these actors will faithfully feature their accented image assumed for one occasion or for a lifetime . . . ' (p. 30). See also Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 508.
7. See especially Lee Haring, 'Performing for the Interviewer: A Study of the Structure of Context', *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 36 (1972), pp. 383-98.
8. Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Study of American Folklore*, 2nd edn (New York and London: Norton, 1978), pp. 183, 223-25.
9. Andrew M. Greeley, *The Sociology of the Paranormal*, *Sage Research Papers in the Social Sciences*, 3 (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1975), p. 7; quoted in David Hufford, *The Terror That Comes in the Night* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1982), pp. 247-48.
10. Tracy C. McCullough, 'The [Arbordale] Pizza Hut Ghost', folklore collection project for English 270 (Introduction to American Folklore), Ohio State

University, Columbus, OH, March 1979. All texts have been retranscribed by the author from the original interview tapes. At the collector's and interviewees' request, all names of persons, places, and establishments have been changed to protect individuals' privacy. My thanks to Ms McCullough for providing me with the interview tapes and allowing me to use them.

11. See Bill Ellis, 'Legend-Tripping in Ohio: A Behavioral Survey', in Daniel R. Barnes, Steven Swann Jones and Rosemary O. Joyce, eds., *Papers in Comparative Studies* 2 (Columbus: Ohio State University) (1982-83), pp. 61-73; Kenneth A. Thigpen, Jr, 'Adolescent Legends in Brown County: A Survey', *Indiana Folklore* 4 (1971), pp. 141-215; and William M. Clements and William E. Lightfoot, 'The Legend of Stepp Cemetery', *Indiana Folklore* 5 (1972), pp. 92-141.

12. Ellis (1982-83), p. 62. Out of 175 'haunted' sites, at least 80 had this motif attached to the locale.

13. Dégh and Vázsonyi (1973), p. 5.

14. Dégh and Vázsonyi (1973), pp. 8-9. They actually contrast 'extinct' legends, which are 'not heated by internal flames nor strained by internal forces' to 'active' legends, which are 'dominated by thrill, anguish, the mysterious, the dismal, the extraordinary'. They leave room, however, for legends that might seem extinct but prove 'to be only dormant' and 'By some unexpected cause . . . might warm up again . . . ' (pp. 10-11).

15. Thigpen, in particular, notes that even those informants who gave him accounts debunking particular legends also narrated memorates of contact with supernatural phenomena. He suggested that the act of discrediting certain supernatural phenomena actually intensified the tension between the natural and the supernatural (Thigpen [1971], p. 207). One might add that one's willingness to debunk some legends makes one also appear a more reliable informant for the legends one believes.

16. He was, of course, lying to me, but his orientation-heavy narrative was rhetorically convincing. A few scholars have touched on this distinction: William Labov and Joshua Waletzky note, for instance, that 'orientation sections are typically lacking' in narratives that 'fail in other ways to carry out referential functions', for instance, a child's 'narrative of vicarious experience' from a TV show. But, as they warn, and Edgar Slotkin dramatically shows in his paper (this volume), not all narratives that emphasize experience (or serve referential functions) are memorates; nor are all memorates orientation-heavy. Labov and Waletzky emphasize that 'it is essential to preserve the context of the narrative. Because such originating context is often missing and cannot be reconstructed in traditional folk tales, it is more difficult to relate analysis to the originating functions' ('Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience', *American Ethnological Society Proceedings* [Spring, 1966], p. 32). See also Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, 'The Memorate and the Proto-Memorate', *Journal of American Folklore* 87 (1974), pp. 225-39; and Sandra K.D. Stahl, 'The Oral Personal

Narrative in Its Generic Context', *Fabula* 18 (1977), esp. pp. 22-31.

17. It is difficult to locate adequate terms in the English language, which is weak on terminology relating to the supernormal. The germ of this contrast is Will-Erich Peuckert's assertion that the legend 'documents the wrestling of a magic or mythic *Weltanschauung* with that of the rational, the sensible' (trans. and quoted by Dégh and Vázsonyi [1973], p. 13). Certainly one side of Bruce is self-consciously rational; but I doubt that one can call the other magical or mythical. Another of Peuckert's terms, 'alienated', is more accurate in the sense he uses it, describing the witness's state of mind after he has encountered the supernormal (*ibid.*, p. 28). But this term carries a special meaning in American English that I find confusing here.

'Amazed' seems the best of a poor set of options, particularly if we combine the usual psychological sense with a folklorist's knowledge of the supernormal experience known as being 'pixy-led', or being bewitched by a supernormal power into seeing the natural world as a maze or puzzle that cannot rationally be solved. See Katharine Briggs, *An Encyclopedia of Fairies* (New York: Pantheon, 1976), pp. 330-31.

18. Otto Blehr, among others, has observed how important details as to time, place, and person are to narratives involving folk belief. He argues that such elements in 'folk belief stories' should not be considered for their own content, but 'rather for how convincing they make the folk belief elements in the same story' ('The Analysis of Folk Belief Stories and Its Implications for Research on Folk Belief and Folk Prose', *Fabula* 8 [1967], p. 260). This is fair, but in this case it seems that the rationality of the narrator is the matter being 'proved', rather than any particular folk belief. The role of what William Labov has called 'orientation' in personal narratives remains to be analysed in its complexity. In my '"Ralph and Rudy": The Audience's Role in Recreating a Camp Legend', *Western Folklore* 41 (1982), pp. 183-84, I discuss a narrator who made extensive use of stumbling and fact-heavy orientations in order to make what he and his audience recognized as a fictitious story more compelling.

19. Dégh and Vázsonyi (1973), p. 28.

20. Robert A. Georges, 'The General Concept of Legend: Some Assumptions to be Reexamined and Reassessed', in Hand (1971), p. 10.

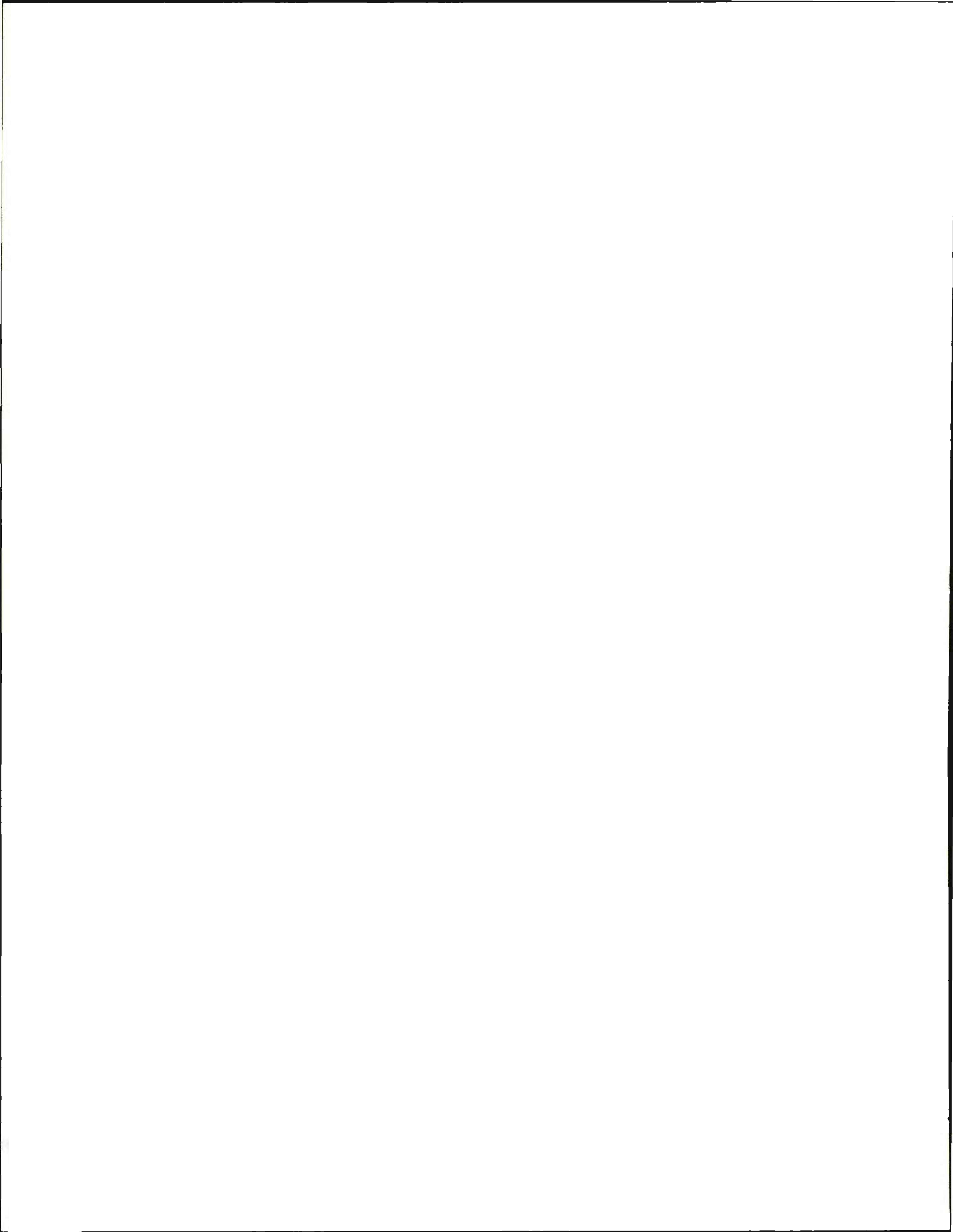
21. Charles J. Adams III, *Ghost Stories of Berks County: Book Two* (Reading, PA: Exeter House, 1984), pp. 59-60. Ellipsis is the author's and does not indicate omission. Other similar examples from Ohio are The Old Mansion Restaurant, Columbus, and The Columbian House, Waterville, both described in 'Beyond Incredible', *Ohio Magazine* (November 1980), pp. 40, 42, 45. The author recalls similar stories cheerfully circulated about the Old Worthington Inn, Worthington, and the Buxton Inn, Granville.

22. Adams (1984), p. 69. Ellipsis is the author's and does not indicate omission.

23. Adams (1984), pp.5-6.

24. John G. Fuller, *The Ghost of Flight 401* (New York: Berkley Medallion, 1978), pp. 134-35.

25. Quoted in Dégh and Vázsonyi (1973), p. 33.
26. Dégh and Vázsonyi (1973), p. 5.
27. Thigpen (1971), p. 207.
28. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, 'Foreword', *The German Legends of the Brothers Grimm*, trans. Donald Ward (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981), I/3.
29. David J. Hufford, *The Terror that comes in the Night: An Experience-centred Study of Supernatural Assault Traditions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1982), pp. 52-53.
30. Compare Hufford's account of an interview with a Pennsylvania family who lived in a house plagued by poltergeists: 'They thought it unusual that a new house should have such phenomena associated with it, but this was tentatively explained by the possibility that the house had been built over "an Indian grave", as had been suggested by a neighbor' (Hufford [1982], p. 101).
31. Lauri Honko, 'Memorates and the Study of Folk Beliefs', *Journal of the Folklore Institute* I (1964), p. 16.
32. Quoted by Dégh and Vázsonyi (1974), p. 237.
33. Hufford (1982), p. 14 n.1.
34. Honko, 'Memorates and the Study of Folk Beliefs', *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 1 (1964), p. 17.
35. Dégh and Vázsonyi (1973), pp. 27-28.
36. Donald Ward, '"The Little Man Who Wasn't There": Encounters with the Supranormal', *Fabula* 18 (1977), p. 216.
37. Ward (1977), p. 218.
38. Honko (1964), p. 10.
39. Ward (1977), pp. 222, 225.
40. Dégh (1971), p. 66.
41. Dégh (1971), p. 60.



GERMAN *SAGE* AND ENGLISH *LEGEND*: TERMINOLOGY AND CONCEPTUAL PROBLEMS

W.F.H. Nicolaisen

There is nothing more disconcerting in any discipline than to find reputable and respected scholars disagreeing completely on a given topic or one of its major aspects. Such disagreement is even more alarming when the discipline in question attempts to bring innovative and imaginative thinking to the interpretation of contemporary phenomena; for widely differing, indeed clearly contradictory, statements regarding the subject matter which is the main focus of the discipline, seem to question its very validity or, even more drastically, its very existence. While controversy can be harnessed as a constructive force when the circumstances are right and when there is enough goodwill offered by the contestants, apparently irreconcilable differences of opinion can have destructive consequences which, at the very least, produce severe self-doubt leading to reluctance, debilitating introspection, or complete inertia.

On a more personal level, I feel uncomfortable and threatened when I find myself saying things about the linguistic structure of contemporary legends which completely contradict the findings of, let us say, Leopold Schmidt and Linda Dégh, for I greatly respect both of them as scholars and am aware of the fact that their own engagement with and interrogation of folk narrative material was (in the case of Leopold Schmidt) or still is (in the case of Linda Dégh) of much greater duration and intensity than my own involvement with form, meaning and function of story in the folk-cultural register. What has worried me ever since I first presented a paper on this particular aspect of legends in Sheffield in 1983,[1] is the ease, the nonchalance, with which I have claimed, together with others, not only that contemporary legends have linguistic structure but that this structure is such that they can, on the one hand, be differentiated from, for example, *Märchen* and jokes and, on the other, be placed in the vicinity of personal experience narratives, thus straddling unashamedly and with no little peril

to themselves the taxonomic barbed-wire fences which have been erected by archivists and mental categorizers between *fabulate* and *memorate*, between *Ereignisbericht* and *Erlebnisbericht*, between third-person and first-person narratives. What has been worrying me is not the fact that we have made this claim, but that we have made it in the face of equally substantial counter-claims by others that legends are formless and without structure or, even more extremely, are incapable of having predictable and persistent form and structure.[2] How is it possible for two such diametrically opposed views to exist side by side, without making nonsense of one another? Is there anything in the subject matter which may persuade one side to abandon its convictions and go over to the other side? Would an extended debate exploring, with both tact and intensity, all the facets involved, resolve this situation one way or the other, or will we have to be content with irreconcilability as an end in itself? Will those who rely on us to think these things through for them never know whether contemporary legends have linguistic structure or not?

Not that this is the only point at issue. The question of believability has had similarly controversial attention and has suffered a similar fate. There appear to be those who regard a legend's truthfulness, and its perception as true by both teller and listener, as one of its essential hallmarks, whereas others tend to play down or reject such contention.[3] Again, I have my own position in this controversy because I cannot conceive of any contemporary legend as not being at the very least potentially believable, even if it seems to be in the very nature of these stories to stretch the boundaries of believability to their very limits. Indeed, I do not see any problem in connecting the two issues in hand by observing in, and ascribing to, contemporary legends both deliberate, appropriate and expected linguistic structure and the soubriquet of 'stories told and heard as true'. But where does this leave me when it comes to searching for common intellectual ground with those who accept neither a specific form nor an essential element or intention of believability—not 'belief', mind you, but 'believability'[4]—in a definition of legend features? In other words, am I just being difficult and inflexible, or is my point of view justified as well as right? Are there perhaps, despite the seemingly unbridgeable gulf, reasons and arguments which would allow us to assert that both views are justified and right, and therefore acceptable?

What has occurred to me is that those who represent these opposing schools of thought are perhaps not talking about the same thing or, if they are, that their thinking is shaped by different concepts engendered, as is so

often the case, by different terminological constructs. It has struck me that those who insist on formlessness for this kind of story primarily have the German term *Sage* in mind, especially in its historical dimensions, while those who discern a particular linguistic structure operate in terms of English *legend* or *personal narrative*. It may therefore be profitable, and a potential way out of our dilemma, to examine a little more closely the terminology used, especially the connotations of *Sage* as in *Totensage, Teufelssage, Riesensage, Zwergensage, Wildgeistersage, Glockensage*, but also *Lokalsage, Stadtsage, Regionalsage* and *Wandersage*.[5] A little etymological and historical excursion concerning this German term is therefore in order.

Modern German *Sage* has its antecedents in Middle High German *sage* and Old High German *saga*. These are cognate with, among others, Old Norse *saga* and Old English *sagu* which have given us the Modern English loanword *saga* and *saw* 'a saying, a proverb', respectively. German *Sage*, of course, has the same base as the German verb *sagen* 'to say, to narrate', and no speaker of German can use it without being, at least subconsciously, aware of its undertones and strong implications of oral, verbal, perhaps even narrative performance. Grimm's *Deutsches Wörterbuch*[6] gives as its Latin equivalents *dictio, sermo, fama* and *rumor*, in recognition of its wide semantic spectrum, and emphasizes the narrowing shift of meaning which has taken place since the Middle Ages. In its earlier phases, the word referred both to the 'ability to speak' and to 'what is said': that is both to any kind of statement and to the ability to make it orally. Later the semantic scope of *Sage* became more focused in two ways, via the notion of 'a report in oral tradition about something'. On the one hand, the term was used in connection with contemporary matters, frequently with the perception of the uncertain, the unbelievable and the libellous; on the other hand, it could refer to something in the, often distant, past, which had been passed on from generation to generation. In this latter sense, it developed the particular connotation of news or intelligence about events in the past for which there is no historical proof, and also the notion of a naïve historical narrative or tradition which has undergone many imaginative changes in oral folklore and is often associated with important events, persons and places.

While claiming that, in ordinary German linguistic usage, there is no difference between *Sage, Mythus* and *Märchen*, the Grimms emphasize that *Sage* is used in contrast to the historical song: that is, again stressing its affinities with the spoken word, it is something *said* not *sung*. In this

sense it presumably also developed the idea of unscriptedness not just unwritten-ness, in contrast to *Legende* which never completely lost its connection with medieval Latin *legenda* 'things to be read', especially in the sense of 'story of a saint's life, or a collection of these' or 'book of historical lessons'. In this process, the Latin neuter plural *legenda* re-interpreted as a feminine nominative singular and rendered in German as *die Legende*[7]. However, in German, *Sage* parallels *Legende* in the later meaning of 'non-historical, improbable, unbelievable story', which the term *legend* takes on in English in post-medieval times—a meaning, by the way, which the Oxford English Dictionary regards as obsolete. The old-fashioned, or obsolescent, cognate English word *saw* has not shared this usage but has restricted the meaning 'what is said' to 'proverbial saying' while nowadays in German scholarship *Legende* is again limited to the earlier meaning of 'saint's legend'.

Consequently, we have a situation in which for German-speaking folklorists the term *Legende* has become unavailable for application to the narrative genre which their English-speaking counterparts have lately been in the habit of calling *legends*. In contrast, for folklorists in the English-speaking world the term *saw* is out of reach while German *Sage* offers itself as a convenient label for the same folk-narrative category. It would therefore be a bold person indeed who would be prepared to challenge the lexicographer's assumption that English *legend* equals German *Sage* in this context and that one is the proper 'translation' of the other, at least if one looks at these two words in isolation. However, words do not exist in isolation and without links and relationships with other words in the same language. In fact, words only 'mean' when they are in such relationships. This is where the concept of the semantic field, borrowed from physics, is so helpful because it enables us to specify the precise location a word has in the lexicon of any given language or, more characteristically, in any particular conceptual sector of the lexicon.[8] It is my contention that, although vaguely equivalent, English *legend* and German *Sage* do not occupy the same spot in their respective semantic fields of folk-narrative terminology and that valid definitions of one do not necessarily coincide with valid definitions of the other. In particular, the German noun *Sage* has never been able to free itself from its close contiguity to the verb *sagen* and also from phrases like *man sagt, dass* 'it is said that' which immediately bring the Grimms' *dictio*, *fama* and *rumor* into play, with their almost accusatory reference to the alleged, the rumoured, the unverifiable, the unbelievable, the proofless, the untruthful.

Even more so, the field associations are with the contents rather than the form, a factor which has found unexpected and unwarranted confirmation in the Grimms' presentation of their collection of German *Sagen* and in those of their imitators who cast their examples rather in the form of summaries than of actual narratives, a practice which unfortunately folklorists interested in comparative folk-narrative research have perpetuated.

As long as we are mainly intent on, and content with, the presentation of our material by type (so many versions of 'The Vanishing Hitchhiker',[9] so many variants of 'The Choking Doberman',[10] so many *Totensagen*, so many *Hexensagen*, so many *Gründungssagen*, so many *Baumeistersagen*, so many variants of 'The Prodigious Jump'),[11] *Sagen* and *legends* will indeed look formless and perhaps even incapable of having linguistic structure. We may not always be able to follow completely Bill Ellis's good advice with regard to the *verbatim* transcription of legends,[12] including their potential emergence through narrative participation and the blurring of narrator and listener roles, but we certainly need more recordings and publications of legends as narratives, as stories. It is perhaps not surprising that the impetus for this kind of folk-narrative scholarship has come over the last two or three decades, in German- as well as in English-speaking countries, from folklorists' belated interest in personal experience narratives, in *Erlebnisberichte*,[13] and their linguistic structure, since these two genres are so closely related. It is therefore probably also unfair to chide those who worked on *Sagen* before this new phase in narrative research for not having noticed now obvious connections. I do not think, for example that after the kind of work Gillian Bennett has done and after the papers she has read and the articles she has published, anybody can with honesty revert to the older notions.[14] As Lutz Röhrich says, commenting on Otto Brinkmann's recording of *Sagen* in a village community: '. . . the *Sage* has to be preserved in the way in which it is naturally related in reality'.[15]

There is no doubt in my mind, therefore, that the published versions of *Sagen* from the Grimms onward helped to reinforce an existing and continuing preoccupation with the content and, in the wake of this, with the function of these stories. It was, however, a reinforcement only made possible through the lexical location of German *Sage* in its semantic field and its own etymological connections. Thus the noun *Sage* has remained inseparable from the verb *sagen*, and, although scholars have treated it as a folk-narrative genre like *Märchen*, *Legende* and *Schwank*, *Witz*, and so on, their chief interest has been focused on what it has to say rather than how

it says it. It is therefore, paradoxically, still one of the least known and understood of all narrative genres, and the Sheffield symposia have, for that reason alone, a very fruitful role to play. When scholars like Schmidt and Dégh speak of the formlessness of the *Sage*, and by extension the latter also of the *legend*, it is particularly this concept of *Sage* as *dictio, fama* and *rumor* which underlies their assumptions—this non-narrative, or perhaps better 'unnarrated' tale. It is sometimes admitted by them and others close to them in their thinking that, in the hands of the best storytellers, the narratively actualized *Sage* can become an accomplished story, but this would, of course, be true of all folk-narrative genres; some stories are more skillfully crafted than others, some storytellers are better narrators than others. But if we want to treat *Sagen* as full members of the folk-narrative family, it is primarily, possible even exclusively, their narrative actualizations which must receive our attention. *Sagen* must be treated as stories if they are to be the true equivalents of *legends*. They are not just full of narrative possibility, they are potentially narratable, though in some unpredictable form. They are not just structurally amorphous beliefs, they are peculiarly structured stories. Naturally, those other aspects of *Sage*, especially in its relation to belief systems, and therefore its potential believability, are also the folklorist's legitimate concern but these are not, in the first place, the remit of the student of folk-narrative.

It would be highly satisfactory to be able to say at this point that, since speakers of English use the term *legend* and not *Sage* (or *saw*), scholarship in English-speaking countries has been immune to this kind of etymological and semantic interference. After all, the *legend's* place in its equivalent lexical field is much closer to the written, the visually structured, the permanently scripted. Its etymological signals all point to reading rather than telling, to conditioned listening rather than astonished hearing, to the scriptorium and the venerable rather than the village pub and the irreverent. To all intents and purposes, however, usage has obliterated, or at least partially obscured, etymology (except, of course, in the sense of 'inscription' which cannot be discounted altogether as a constant reminder of roots as well as of current homonymity). English *legend*, too, like German *Sage*, has therefore found an undisputed place in the vocabulary of those dealing with the oral components of expressive culture, and the very fact that it is now being used for the fourth year running in the title of the Sheffield symposium seems to indicate its indestructibility in this context. Yet it never suggests 'saying' or 'sayings' in the minds of those who use it competently, and it would be difficult to dissociate it from story and

narration and therefore also from narrative structure. One might even conclude, in this etymological and semantic environment, that the idea of unnarrated items of belief, of allegation, of lack of documentation, of falsehood is not easily insinuated by a term like *legend*. Surely it is always story first and belief second, and it is, for that reason, perhaps more amenable to scholarly manipulation so that it can mean without unreasonable distortion what we want it to mean. As a result, there seems to be some justification in employing it for the kind of folk-narrative item under discussion, in support of the claim that the idea that legends might have linguistic structure is not only not a cranky absurdity but a positive *desideratum*.

It is my hunch, then, that the current situation in *Sage/legend* scholarship is not as paradoxical and controversial as it may seem at first glance, if one takes into account the etymological, historical and semantic environment of the two major terms employed in our niche of folk-narrative research—German *Sage* and English *legend*. The former, of necessity, implies formlessness or multiformity in its relentless reference to the spoken word in general; the latter, because of its association with scripted story as didactic means takes linguistic structure for granted and only leaves the question open as to what that structure might be. The question is not whether contemporary legends or any kind of legends have structure but what kind of structure they have, and in an earlier paper I acted on that assumption. Since *Sage* and *legend* do not occupy the same relative location in their respective semantic fields, they are not exact equivalents in the two languages to which they belong and do not, in all instances, function as translations of each other, especially since English *legend* has also retained the meaning of German *Legende*.

In fact, the question still remains whether *Sage* and *legend* are the most appropriate terms to use for the kind of folk-narrative items that concern us. Granted that those items share many, though not always the same, properties of both *Sagen* and *legends*, is this sort of limited congruity enough to warrant continued usage of these two terms, even if we restrict them to European and European-derived cultures? Does not the surface confusion which prompted this response demand greater terminological and, by implication, greater conceptual clarity? Gillian Bennett has already drawn attention to the 'peculiar synthesis of legend, tall-tale, fable and personal experience story elements' which characterize these stories.[16] Are we therefore right in continuing to regard and understand them as part of the *Sagenschatz* of a people in one respect, and as part of its *legendry* in

another? I am no genre-mongerer and have never enjoyed the petty squabbles and quibbles of those whose chief delight seems to be in intellectual boundary disputes or in the intricate strategies of pigeon-holing, but it seems to me that in this particular case we have a responsibility to serve ourselves, our colleagues and our students better and to provide adequate demarcation and definitions. The strange problem is that the concepts are there but that, for once, we lack the terminology to express them.

Naming Day in Eden is not yet over for our particular beast and, until it is, it will get more and more difficult for us to talk to others about the narratives we have in mind or, what is even more frustrating, we will keep talking *past* each other. A satisfactory, imaginative terminological solution is, for all these reasons, highly desirable. Otherwise this 'Urform der Dichtung', this 'Gemeinschaftszeugnis', as Max Lüthi has so felicitously termed it,[17] will remain eminently and embarrassingly elusive.

NOTES

1. W.F.H. Nicolaisen, 'The Linguistic Structure of Legends', in Gillian Bennett, Paul Smith and J.D.A. Widdowson, eds., *Perspectives on Contemporary Legend, II* (Sheffield: CECTAL/Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), pp. 61-76.

2. Leopold Schmidt, *Die Volkserzählung: Märchen, Sage, Legende, Schwank* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1963), pp. 107-108; Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, 'Legend and Belief', *Genre* 4/3 (1971), pp. 281-304; Linda Dégh, 'Folk Narrative', in Richard M. Dorson, ed., *Folklore and Folk Life: An Introduction* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1972), p. 73. For a fuller account see Nicolaisen (1987).

3. Most scholars still favour some reference to 'truth' or 'truthfulness' in their definitions of what a *legend* or *Sage* is.

4. In fact, believability may not be the right term either because what we are talking about is probably a mixture of credibility on the part of the teller and credulity on the part of the listener. It is a facet of the social contract of legend telling that both credibility and credulity gaps should be bridged. See further on this point, W.F.H. Nicolaisen, 'Perspectives on Contemporary Legend', *Fabula* 26/3-4 (1985), pp. 213-18.

5. These are among the legend types mentioned in Lutz Röhrich, *Sage*, Sammlung Metzler, 55 (2nd edn; Stuttgart: Metzler, 1971)

6. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Vol. VIII (R—Schiefe), ed. Moriz Heyne (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1893), *s.v.*

7. Hellmut Rosenfeld, *Legende* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1961), p. 1.

8. For the notion of the 'semantic field' see, among others, S. Öhman, 'Theories of the Linguistic Field', *Word* 9 (1953), pp. 123-34; and L. Schmidt, ed., *Wortfeldforschung: Zur Geschichte und Theorie des sprachlichen Feldes*, Wege der Forschung, 250 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973).

9. Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends and their Meanings* (New York and London: Norton, 1981).

10. Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Choking Doberman and other 'New' Urban Legends* (New York and London: Norton, 1984).

11. W.F.H. Nicolaisen, 'The Prodigious Jump: A Contribution to the Study of the Relationship between Folklore and Place Names', in Fritz Harkort *et al.*, *Volksüberlieferung: Festschrift für Kurt Ranke* (Göttingen: Schwartz, 1968), pp. 431-42.

12. Bill Ellis, 'Why are Verbatim Transcripts of Legends Necessary?', in Bennett, Smith and Widdowson (1987), pp. 31-60.

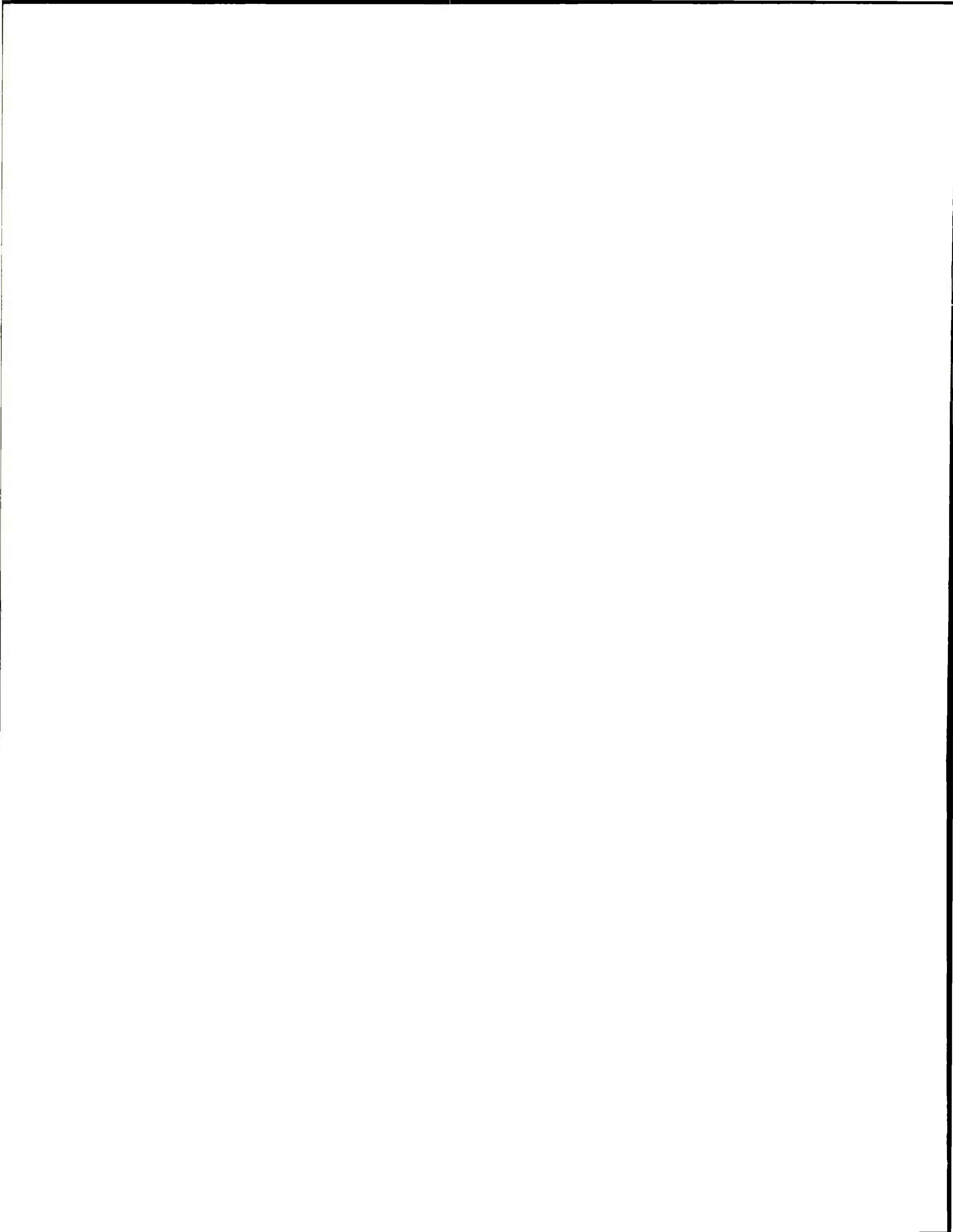
13. *Erlebnisbericht* and *Erinnerungserzählung* are two German equivalents of the English term *personal experience story*; all of them are roughly congruent with von Sydow's *Memorat*.

14. Gillian Bennett, 'The Phantom Hitchhiker: Neither Modern, Urban nor Legend?', in Paul Smith, ed., *Perspectives on Contemporary Legend: Proceedings of the Conference on Contemporary Legend, Sheffield, July 1982* (Sheffield: CECTAL, 1984), pp. 45-63; 'Heavenly Protection and Family Unity: The Concept of the Revenant among Elderly, Urban Women', *Folklore* 96 (1985), pp. 87-97; 'Women's Personal Experience Stories of Encounters with the Supernatural: Truth as an Aspect of Storytelling', *ARV* 40 (1984), pp. 79-87; 'What's "Modern" about the Modern Legend?', *Fabula* 26/3-4 (1985), pp. 219-29; 'Narrative as Expository Discourse', *Journal of American Folklore* 99 (1986), pp. 415-34.

15. Röhrich (1971), p. 8.

16. Bennett (1985).

17. Max Lüthi, 'Gehalt und Erzählweise der Volkssage', in *Sagen und ihre Deutung*, introduced by Will Erich Peuckert (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), pp. 11-27, esp. pp. 17-18.



LEGEND GENRE AS A FUNCTION OF AUDIENCE

Edgar M. Slotkin

I begin with the sort of thing you may run across if, like myself, you double as a folklorist and a medievalist. In Nennius' *Historia Brittonum* there is a concluding section devoted to the wonders of Britain. One of these wonders has to do with the tomb of a son of Arthur called Amr. The measurements of the tomb, Nennius (or his source anyway) tells us, change each time they are taken, 'sometimes six feet long, sometimes nine, sometimes twelve . . . *et ego solus prohavi*, and I have tried it myself'.[1] The effect of reading this passage is not unlike encountering the following information that Don Yoder collected from a Frank Eckert, a butcher from southern Pennsylvania:

> And I wouldn't butcher in the takin' off [waning] of the moon. I always butchered in the growin' of the moon, killin' a beef or killin' my own hogs. I said, other, I'd butcher anytime they'd want done, but not for myself. And I said that I wouldn't butcher in the takin' off of the moon, because that meat, them hams and shoulders, that you'd cure fer your own use, would all shrink up in a certain amount that they'd lose, it seems. The meat would dry up . . .
>
> And I said it was *proven*, that I *done* it, and *seen* it done. I say that anybody that wants to try it can try it and find out for their own satisfaction.[2]

Perhaps the first thing to notice about such pieces—rather like what Bill Ellis called 'storytelling as experience'[3]—is how we respond to them. First-person validation of a traditional belief-statement which on the face of it seems, if not untrue, at least uncanny, changes the nature of our response to it, even more so if we encounter this sort of thing in print. While generally agreeing with Dégh and Vázsonyi that 'the legend as a social manifestation is a *debate* regarding its function'[4] and that legends operate as a dialectic along the various conduits they pass through, I have found that this sort of first-person claim to the veracity of something I recognize

as a folk belief or a legend tends to alter the direction debate can take, sometimes even ending debate. It would be hard to say to Mr Eckert, for instance, were we to meet him face to face, 'Sir, you are lying' or, 'You're wrong; you're deluded; you were hallucinating'. Indeed, if we believe Mr Eckert to be a man of probity and with reasonable powers of observation (and we have no reason to think otherwise), we are left not knowing what to think about such statements other than taking his suggestion and trying to butcher a hog during a waning moon ourselves. Speaking for myself, I have found the vagaries of human efforts to determine phenomenal cause and effect, and the capacity of even careful scientists to see whatever it is they want to see, so pervasive that I have yet to be driven to hog butchering. Still, the effect remains a very different sort of response from that which we experience hearing a *third*-person account of runaway grandmothers, vanishing hitchhikers, spiders in the coat lining or ghosts in the Pizza Hut.

From the more professional point of view, the question of what to *call* either the Nennius passage or the Eckert account has been fraught with knotty efforts at genre definition, in part because of this response to *Ich-Bericht* narrative. Where folkloristics should help clarify the nature of such narratives, it has itself been tangled in a set of ambiguities. Of course, genre definition has been an evolving, on-going effort throughout folklore studies and there are still few really settled or fixed points; but legends, as most folklorists are too well aware, have been particularly hard to define.[5] Within (or maybe around) the notion of legend, subtypes have proliferated. For instance, in order to situate the genre of personal experience stories among other genres, Sandra Stahl (in *Fabula* 18) heroically runs through memorates, true stories, chronicates, *minnessägen*, the legend proper, the anecdote, tall tale, hero tale, jokes, family stories, local histories, rumour, gossip, conversation and reminiscences.[6] It is clear enough from her article, which I use as a recent, representative effort to make some sense of the proliferation, that genre or subgenre definitions run into trouble since they are based on a variety of incommensurate criteria. Content and structure are the two criteria most at odds, but also contextual information and performance practice and performance style, are some of the elements used to map oral narrative genres. No doubt, if all these elements were systematically employed in genre definition, we should have no confusion, but they are not and we have. What, for instance, do we call the Nennius passage? Excluding the first-person intrusion at the end, it is not exactly a narrative. Nor for that matter is the Eckert passage. Formally they are

belief statements and, supposing their content to be traditional, such statements have been defined by von Sydow as *dites*.[7] However, once the personal experience elements *have* been added to them, they become, according to Honko or Mullen for instance, memorates;[8] and for Honko and Bill Ellis, at any rate, the memorate is not the same thing as a legend.[9]

The memorate has been in itself a source of confusion. Von Sydow's definition—'narratives of personal happenings which pass into the tradition as *memorial sagns* [Erinnerungssagen]'[10]—posits the memorate as a category of *Sagn*, which Bødker in his preface to the *Selected Papers on Folklore* is careful to distinguish from *sägn*, *Sage*, and 'legend'.[11] How much confusion translation has caused is hard to calculate, though Professor Nicolaisen has helped us considerably with two of the terms.[12] But Swedish *sagn* means 'tradition' (and that raises the question of what a *nonmemorial* tradition is). In another place, however, Bødker says of the memorate that it 'has not the nature of fiction and is not tradition'.[13] He clearly regards it as a personal experience story, which Stahl maintains (correctly in my view) is a separate genre. In his 1968 article 'Belief, Memorate, and Legend'[14] Juha Pentikäinen has done a valuable service in working through the various efforts to grapple with the term, although even he seems to be confused in his interpretation of von Sydow's original 1934 views. A careful reading of von Sydow's 'Kategorien der Prosa-Volksdichtung' reveals that the *Sage* is not one of his categories at all. Indeed, it seems clear from his introduction that von Sydow wished to undermine the notion of *Sage* in general and replace it with a set of categories that would be equal, commensurate genres, not subgenres. To be fair to Pentikäinen, he later makes it clear that von Sydow '*made the concept of legend unnecessary in scientific meaning*';[15] but initially he sets up a dichotomy between *Sage* and memorate in a chart which leaves a fairly strong impression. I would suggest that, if we employ von Sydow's 'memorate' as he intended it, we cannot agree with Honko that there is a distinction between the memorate and the *Sage* or legend; there is a distinction between the memorate and the fabulate and the chronicle notes and the other categories that von Sydow proposes, but such a thing as a *Sage* simply does not exist in his genre list.

Probably a good many of the efforts to clarify the term 'memorate' have emerged from a general unwillingness to abandon the notion of legend and substitute fabulate (= *Sage*) and so forth for it. Given Nicolaisen's analysis of the semantic range of *legend* versus *Sage*, it is clear that we cannot

abandon either concept, since they are referring to somewhat different things. And I suspect that some folklorists regard the memorate as a legend subgenre in part because, even if the contrast *Sage*/memorate holds, the contrast legend/memorate does not. In other words, the general principles underlying von Sydow's classification proposals did not take hold. But interpreting what the memorate is within the context of legends in general has produced a good deal of theorizing. Honko, Mullen and Ellis clearly seem to feel that a memorate is formally a first-person narrative.[16]

Pentikäinen offers three examples which, he says, easily distinguish a belief concept (or *dite*), a memorate and a migratory legend. Example A goes: 'The ghost looks like the person who started the first fire in this house or in this hut'. Example B starts: 'At that time I was living in Keuruu at the farmstead Kureniemi near Kolho. I had an infant. When he cried early one morning, I got up to quiet him . . . ' Example C begins: 'The fire spirits were talking among themselves. The spirit of one house said: "At our house they don't ever cross themselves when the oven door is closed"'.[17] The only substantive difference between B and C is first-person narration. So it would seem from these examples that the memorate is essentially a first-person narrative about a supernatural or supranormal experience. However, contradictorily, not all memorates are first-person accounts according to Pentikäinen, since he defines the memorate as 'an account about a supranormal tradition experienced by the narrator or a person known to him'.[18] Under the latter condition it is the traditional nature of the narrative *plot* which for Pentikäinen distinguishes memorates from fabulates or *Sagen*. The *Sage* belongs to what he calls 'the collective tradition' whereas a memorate does not. Moreover, some memorates employ *Sage*-like plots which he calls stereotypes, a halfway genre which 'allows for the recognition of motif affinities—the conscious choice of a traditional element according to a model or association with a legend [*Sage*] and other traditional forms'.[19] In other words, Pentikäinen recognizes that sometimes memorates look like *Sagen* and *Sagen* like memorates. Indeed, in a later 1970 article, the length of the transmission chain seems to be the crucial distinguishing mark for Pentikäinen, with the implication that memorates, if sufficiently distanced from their originators, turn into *Sagen*.[20]

The most radical attack on this general position was offered by Dégh and Vázsonyi in 'The Memorate and the Proto-Memorate'.[21] They are able to show that the fluidity of oral narration makes the various criteria upon which the notions of memorate and fabulate rest too unstable to consider

the memorate in any way a viable genre. Certainly, if we take our Nennius example as typical of a statement that we have in some sense 'collected', we will find it impossible to tell if we are dealing here with a belief concept with a memorate attached or a memorate proper or a legend, since the data to determine collective tradition, chain of transmission or the other criteria which might clarify the genre are lacking. Such data are frequently lacking, even in recently collected material. So that if we agree with Pentikäinen's statement that in the end, 'it is naturally the analytical usefulness that will decide the worth of the terminological distinctions',[22] we shall find *his* distinctions not very helpful. Dégh and Vázsonyi have already addressed the problem of defining a memorate as distinct from a fabulate through the criteria of the transmission chain and the supposedly personal nature of the former. They demonstrate how first-person narration can nonetheless be traditional and migratory. They show the difficulty and often the meaninglessness of trying to validate what tradition, especially collective tradition, is. The passage of memorate into fabulate, they point out, is frequent but so is the passage of fabulates into memorates or 'pseudo-memorates'.[23] 'At the end of our journey around the Sydowian memorate definition', they conclude, 'we must admit that we have lost hope of validating any part of it'.[24] Nonetheless, although I have not seen any serious challenge to this conclusion, folklorists are still using the term 'memorate' to describe certain kinds of oral narratives, which is to say that just as von Sydow was not able to wipe the notion of legend from our palette, Dégh and Vázsonyi have not managed to kill off the memorate either. It may be, then, that the concept of memorate is still analytically useful even if it is an incoherent notion. Alternatively, of course, it may be that folkloristics is frequently incoherent. We may ask, does it help in *not* making a distinction between first- and third-person accounts of supra-normal phenomena? If such accounts can move freely between various narrative voices, why do they do so? Should we distinguish between such performances and on what grounds?

I would like, having asked these questions, to present an oral narrative performance from the Cincinnati Folklore Archives and use it and one other as touchstones to the difficulties. I have transcribed a tape made on April 13, 1980 by Mrs Adeline Johnson as part of a collecting assignment for my folklore class in which she was a very good student. The transcription is intended as a reasonable guide to the performance, not an ideal transcript. The informant was Mrs Johnson's husband's stepfather, LeRoy Gruber, seventy-two or seventy-three years of age at the time. The

late Mr Gruber was considered the family storyteller, and Mrs Johnson had already collected a number of narratives from him when she prompted him as follows.

SWINGING CHAINS (Text 1[25])

Informant: LeRoy Gruber, Deer Park, Ohio, April 13 1980; Collector: Mrs Adeline Johnson.

Johnson: Well, I want to hear the story about the, about where you used to work with the chains.

Gruber: Oh. Well, this is absolutely, uh . . . I know this, knew this man. Was short man, 'bout five feet four. He was an awful good engineer. But because he was short, he always wore overalls an', an' a blue shirt, an' he never could get overalls short enough, an' I don't know why they didn't cut 'em off, but he, he'd just roll 'em up. He'd have 'em rolled up about four times on each leg and about, and he'd always have a rags hanging out a the one pocket, a red handkerchief hanging out a the other pocket. That's common for an engineer to do, hanging around oil an' engines.

Johnson: Yeah.

Gruber: An' I talked with him many, many times. I had worked there in the plant when he was there, and I left the plant.

Johnson: What plant was that?

Gruber: An' uh. I went somewhere else and got a job. An', uh, he was still there when I left; an' when I came back, there was practically a whole different crew there. Still, they had one old engineer there. Been there for fifty some, fifty-five years he worked in that plant.

Johnson: Um-hm.

Gruber: An'. . . this is how I know part of the story. This old engineer, this short guy . . . the boiler room, the engine room, you went through double doors right into the boiler room an', uh, what? Oh, went to the boiler room about, oh, eighty-five feet. An' then there was a row of pumps an' then there's two enormous sized water heaters

heated by exhaust steam for the, furnished hot water for the whole factory. In back of them there was a space about twelve feet wide; we used to take our work clothes back there, an' they had half barrels and drums and everything else back an' soak our work clothes in 'em an', an' take their hot water hose on 'em, an' at first we'd wash dirt out o' 'em, didn't have to scrub 'em.

Johnson: Mmm.

Gruber: an' hang up on the line an' let them dry.

One night the fireman, he'd been there for quite a number of years, an' it just happened to be after eight o'clock at night why things kind a slowed down a lil' bit. The load was steady an' a fireman could sit there two or three hours an' not do a thing. The coal came down out automatically in the stokers an' steam was all controlled by instruments. Once in a while you might have to get up to hear some unusual noise or somethin' like that or maybe move the water softener or something of that sort. Well, anyway, he was sittin' there at the table, an' I believe he had been eating a sandwich or somethin' an' he's sittin' back in the chair an' the old man walked in front of him, he says, 'I'm goin' back a the heaters, or somethin', he said to him. As he went by, these chains hung down from these gates. There's six cars an' six railroad carloads of coal right up overheads where we worked on that an' . . . and each stoker had two pipes ten inches in diameter came down to the stoker that supplied the coal. As long as there was coal up above came down automatically without shovelling. These chains hung down there, an' they was just about the height to hit a guy in the head, tall fella, hit a man in the head; but a short guy didn't bother, he'd walk under 'em. This guy had the habit a, as he'd walk by, he'd take his hand, as he'd get, I don't know why he done it, he'd hit these chains hanging down. Well, then he'd take, he was, four boilers, each one had two chains, there was eight chains hanging down row on row as he'd go by, they was about six feet apart; he'd go down, he'd have all them chains swinging as he went by. Well, he went back an' he went by an' he went back a the water heater. The guy sit there an' he waited an' he waited an' he waited, looked up at the clock. An' the guy

wasn't back yet; it was time to oil the engines, he said, 'Well, maybe he's busy washing his clothes or somethin''. He went out in the other room, the fireman did, an' he, he'd do it quite often for the old man, he oiled the engines up for him and checked the boilers and everything. Everything was all right in the engine room. He went back of the boiler, still didn't know where the old man, 'Damned old f. . ., old man go to', he said. Finally he got nervous, go back there an' found the old man laying there dead.

Johnson: Oh, jeez.

Gruber: He didn't, he thought at first that the old man had fainted, hadn't . . . This was on the second floor of a building where the boiler room, we operated a boiler. They had two enormous doors. They was five feet wide; they was about twelve feet high. And it was pretty chilly out. Well, if the old man fainted, he dragged him up to that door; he'd bring him to. He gets ahold of his shoulder an' he what. He was twice as big as the old man was an' he drugs the old man out by that door and he opened them two doors; an' when he got out there, he seen the old man was gone. He gets on the phone an' he called the company doctor an' he called the chief engineer an', oh, he had everybody in town aroused an' said, to tell 'em 'bout the old man died an' said, 'I guess he's dead. Anyway, he's laying there'. Said, 'You'd better get somebody else down here'. Said, 'I ain't goin' to run this place by myself'.

So the doctor came down. He called an ambulance. Well, hell, the old man was dead. That's, that's, that's just the way he died. But—the strange thing about it, if you happened to be down there about that same time at night, quite often you'd see them chains, just each one of them things, the things, 'bout time somebody go walk: each one, each one of the chains would start swingin'.

Johnson: Ohh.

Gruber: When you go back, you're about to hear some of them [A thump. Laughter.] You know, we had some guy, we had some guy scared to death. He, he wouldn't g.... He was an engineer an' he wouldn't go in that boiler room for love

nor money. He says, 'I ain't goin' where nobody died'. I says, 'He ain't goin' ta hurt ya. That old man never hurt nobody'.
Yeah, it's strange.

Johnson: Did you ever see him—when they were seen?

Gruber: Yeah, I seen him.

Johnson: Yeah? Mmm.

Gruber: I've just been tryin' to think. I think his name was Bert. Anybody seen the chains swing out, 'Hey, Bert, where ya goin'?' Nobody ever answered though.
Many strange things happened in that plant.

Johnson: What plant was it?

Gruber: Peter's Cartridge, King's Mills.

Johnson: Oh, King's Mills.

Gruber: We generated all our own power. Five hundred and fifty volts DC. Even C.G. & E. [Cincinnati Gas and Electric Company] was scared of it . . .

I think we can all agree that this is a narrative. One gross generic term for it based on its setting might be 'industrial legend'. That it contains traditional motifs is also beyond question: *E 280: Ghost haunts building; E 334: Non-malevolent ghost haunts spot where tragedy occurred; E 402.1.4: Invisible ghost jingles chains*. It is, however, only fair to say about the latter that in most occurrences of this motif the chains are invisible also and the chief testimony is aural, not visible as in this case. Nonetheless, the concatenation of chains and ghost seems perfectly natural, and it would not be hard to imagine a group making the connection between some real factory chains and a factory death, presuming the events here are based on fact.

It is well worth noting also how far this performance conforms to Gillian Bennett's criteria for 'the legend as true'.[26] It has a reasonably clear assertion of truth about it, specificity of detail, a Labovian structure with an enormous stress on orientation, the 'riffle and pool' effect (which I would rather call the 'staircase' effect after Shklovsky),[27] oral paragraphing, general deliberateness and a fairly high degree of performance energy.

There is a first-person element to this narration in that there is an effort made by the narrator to validate the narrative. In his first response to the

story Mr Gruber stopped short of saying 'this is absolutely true'. But he makes it clear that Bert was someone whom he knew somewhat and that the account is not fiction. However, interestingly, the other central character in the narrative—the fireman—is *not* validated even though it is through his eyes, as it were, that the main events take place. The night of Bert's death, in other words, is experienced by us through the third-person account of the fireman's reactions, what he did and thought. We are not told *his* name, though, nor much about him at all, nor that Mr Gruber knew *him*. At the end Mr Gruber reverts to the first person to tell us part of the significance of the tale: that is, its use as a kind of initiation test for new engineers and as a mark of worker-seniority in the plant (the 'old engineer', Bert, is known only to long-time employees). But the *narrative* part of this text is third-person, and I take it to be a ghost legend as we normally think of 'ghost legends', though with a factory setting. I rather think, however, that Pentikäinen and others would take this text as a memorate. I think they would argue that we cannot find the exact *plot* of the narrative repeated elsewhere in tradition (at least I couldn't find it) and that the events are close enough to the narrator, and therefore close enough to personal experience, to warrant a memorate label. The traditional elements which occur in the narrative are just those stereotypes which in themselves do not 'yet say anything about [the narrative's] place in the collective tradition'.[28] 'Swinging Chains' is *not* a *Sage*, they would argue I believe—at least not yet. On the other hand, the counter-argument might be offered that the narrative itself offers evidence that 'Swinging Chains' was part of the collective tradition of the factory. Just how collective does a tradition have to be after all? If the story was used as part of an initiation experience for engineers, as part of the lore that experienced workers knew, then how far outside the plant need we look to validate the tale as traditional? Indeed, might not the problem be that collecting factory folklore is a relatively recent phenomenon[29] and that this legend just hasn't turned up yet in the comparatively few collections made and the fewer indexed? Should our notions of genre hang upon our deficiencies as collectors?

The real interest of this performance, however, it seems to me, lies in events subsequent to its collection. This event occurred in the spring quarter of the 1979-80 academic year. The spring quarter at the University of Cincinnati generally lasts from the last week of March to the first week of June, and Mrs Johnson, an exceptionally responsible student as well as a good one, had collected a tape full of legends from Mr Gruber by mid-

quarter instead of waiting until the last week as most students do. Coming to me for advice about what to do with the material now that she had collected it, I took the opportunity of her early industry to suggest that she should collect them again a month later and see what differences, if any, she could discern between the two performances. Therefore, on 17 May she had another taping session with Mr Gruber. This time there were others present—her mother-in-law Mrs Gruber and her foster-son, aged about eleven, to whom Mr Gruber stood in the relation of grandfather. Mrs Johnson's initial appeal for the stoıy is in the context that the grandson had seen the factory but had not heard the story. Here is Mr Gruber's second performance of 'Swinging Chains'.

SWINGING CHAINS (Text 2[30])

Informant: LeRoy Gruber, Deer Park, Ohio, May 17 1980. Collector: Mrs Adeline Johnson. Also present: Mrs Gruber and the informant's grandson.

Johnson: I was told, gran', that you had a story about the mill, the place in King's Mills that we saw, because he [the grandson] saw that when he was with us.

Gruber: This is absolutely legit. This is all my experience.

Mrs Gruber: This is true. I'll vouch for that. It's true.

Gruber: Yeah. Little ol' guy . . . about . . . wasn't any bigger than Addie is, little short guy. He never could get any overalls with legs short enough an' he, he'd roll 'em over, sometimes been up so far, he had to pull 'em legs up that far; he'd double them on his legs. An' he always walked around . . . he always had a, carried red handkerchief, an' he always carried a bunch of rags, well all engineers do, carried rags, used to put 'em in their pocket; we used rags. An' he, he took care of the engine room, oiled the engines, checked out the generators, an' I was firin' boilers for him. An' he . . . he had a habit, we, he was clear down to the boiler room, oh, the boiler room was over a hundred feet long; an' he went down to the boiler room, all four boil . . ., an' past the four boilers an' into the pumps, into the water heaters, an' back of the water heaters we used to wash our clothes, our work clothes, an' hang 'em back of the line because it was warm, it would dry faster. This old guy, he'd walk by there an' he said something as he went by. In front of each boiler there was chains; ah, they

was big, heavy chains, hung down from the coal bins that was up overhead with six carloads of coal above that boiler room at all times. And these chains shut the gates off that let the coal come down through ten inch of pipes, running two pipes for each boiler; that is eight chains hanging in. This old guy, he'd just as he went by, his head didn't hit the chains, but he'd take his hand, make them chains swing. But as I went by, I'd a duck 'em. An' every time, he had a habit, every time he went by he hit at them chains, he'd hit 'em with his hand, he liked to get 'em all swingin'. I don't know why he did it.

Well, he went back of the water heater; I didn't know what he was doin' back there, was washin' clothes or whatin', an' I was sittin' there at the table. We had a table an' chair an' I was sittin' there at the table an' waitin', waitin' for him to come back an' he didn't. Well, I'd a go do somethin' else an' I don't know, check the boilers or something, I . . . What the hell happened in all that time for him to be oilin' them engines he ain't here. The old man was layin' back there dead. He died. Right then . . . he went back there an' died. He had his hand on a . . . round overflow pipe come down from the heater. An' I thou . . . the pipe was hot. I thought first he had burned it an' that he wasn't smart was he . . .

I didn't know what to do. I got up to call the chief engineer, said, 'Send . . . something's happened to the engineer', I said, 'I don't know what. He's laying back of the heater'. An' the chief engineer said, 'I'll be right down. Leave him'. Said, 'I'll call the doc an', Doctor Brown, an' get him down there an' . . . ' Ah, he called Doc Brown an' both of 'em came down together an' in the meantime I, well I thought maybe the old man needs air. We had double doors. The boiler was on the second floor. They had big double doors; they'ze about four feet wide and ten feet high. You'd open one of them doors, an' you'd get any breeze, you'd got it. Drug the old man out there. Yeah, he was dead as a doornail at least. Why, I had a go oil the engines up 'cause the engines had to be oiled every so often. I oiled the engines up, an' about that time I heard somebody pushing the bell on the outside of the fireplant an' I went down there an' there's Doc Brown an' the chief engineer. An' Doc Brown, he come up an'

examine his . . . He said, 'He's gone'. I said, 'I could a tole you that afore you come down here'. He said, 'I guess he just had a heart attack an' that was it'. An' I said, 'Well, he went by, he didn't act like no heart attack as he went by me'.

Well, he's having to call an ambulance. He declared him dead an' the chief engineer, well, he said, 'I don't stay down here the rest of [the] shift. I'm goin' to call somebody'. An' he couldn't get nobody. So I said, 'I'll stay down here'. Said, 'Got some paperwork to do'. He said, 'Can you run both places?' An' I said, 'Well', I said, 'I've done it before'. Said, 'Do it every Sunday'. 'Well you run the engines an' take care of the boilers too'. Well, didn't have too long to go, maybe three hours. The chief engineer, he would sit in the office, an' I would take care of the whole thing. But old Bert, he was a goner.

You know, after that you could sit there an' you'd see them chains swingin'. I'd see the first one swing then the next one then the next one pretty well like that, an' I said, 'There goes old Bert again'.

Mrs Gruber: . . . the wind made 'em go, I bet.[31]

Gruber: 'Cause there was no reason why them chains would ever swing unless you touched 'em. 'Cause they were heavy chains.

Mrs Gruber: Whoo.

Johnson: Did you ever see his ghost or did you just see the chains?

Gruber: No. I thought once I saw him disappear around the back, but I didn . . ., I couldn't a been sure. Maybe it was my imagination. Because the way he was dressed all the time, damned rags hanging, he was short anyway, them damned overalls turned up, he . . .

Mrs Gruber: You can imagine a lot of things too.

Johnson: Yeah, that's true, especially if you're there alone at night, I guess you could imagine it pretty easily.

Mrs Gruber: I'd imagine I'd see something . . .

Gruber: He was engineer, he was an engineer there when they first built the plant.

Mrs Gruber: . . . a dark room you could actually see the form but not really. It was just in your mind. I've done that a lot of times.

Johnson: Oh, me too.

Mrs Gruber: Anybody can do that.

The literature on legends certainly records instances of third-person narratives for some performers becoming first-person narratives for others, and more rarely other scholars have indicated that some narrators will switch persons in different performances the way Mr Gruber did.[32] However, comparatively few students of legend have been interested in accounting for such a switch as we note in this second performance, Georgina Smith being a notable exception. Just as our response to the first-person validation remarks in Nennius and Eckert force us into a different reception of their belief material, this second performance of Mr Gruber, *if all we had were this second performance*, would lead us to a very different consideration of the sort of speech act his performance is. I would suggest that it is an inherent reaction to this type of first-person supranormal experience story to want to consider it a different genre than the first performance, especially if two different narrators are responsible for them.

Let me expand on that observation. For Pentikäinen this second performance, without consideration of the first, is without question a memorate, conforming closely to von Sydow's meaning. But, as I have already suggested, I think many scholars, at least before Dégh and Vázsonyi, would take *both* performances, observed in isolation from each other, as memorates. Dégh and Vázsonyi, in rejecting the memorate, would regard both performances in isolation as *legends*, and regard the two together as evidence that the memorate defined as a personal experience is compromised, since the narrator can relate the same tale both as a personal experience and as somebody else's experience. According to Bennett's criteria, this performance must rate even higher on the 'told as truth' scale, and hence both performances represent narratives of the same genre from her point of view. We might say, then, that these points of view regard the two performances as belonging to the same genre, and only disagree about what that genre is. It seems to me that this conclusion is in part correct, though in an odd way.

The oddity arises from the fact that the efforts to define or undefine memorate, fabulate and the like have emerged pretty much from an 'etic'

point of view. 'Analytical usefulness' is Pentikäinen's criterion, and this criterion is accepted as the argumentative base of Dégh and Vázsonyi's critique of the memorate concept. What has seemed to me lacking in these studies is any empirical concern about folk genre distinctions, any concern with 'emic' genres of legend categories. Not that I am suggesting that etic and emic genre classifications need be the same or that one set should take priority over another. But when folklorists seem to be muddled or confused over their analytical categories, it might be advantageous to ask what we are trying to analyse and what pre-existing categories exist for the analysis. Emically, and from the narrator's point of view, I would suggest that the two performances of 'Swinging Chains' represent the same genre, for Mr Gruber obviously felt free to switch persons when asked to narrate the story. For him there was the story, which he could present in a number of different discourses that did not violate that story. So in this sense the emic perception of story and the etic analyses of genre agree that the two performances of 'Swinging Chains' are examples of the same thing, whatever it is.

However, I think most of us see some immediate objections to that conclusion. Ellis has made the distinction between narratives which are 'words as words', which might apply in some part to the first text, and narratives which are 'words as experiences', which applies to the second text.[33] But, of course, in this latter instance we are faced with the knowledge that 'experience' may not really be involved with the words at all, that the epistemological status of the experience in the second performance has been undermined by our witness to the first performance. Let us consider, then, since we have some evidence to allow us to do so, why the second 'Swinging Chains' emerged in the form it did.

The chief variable between the two performances, the *only meaningful* variable I would suggest, is the different audience Mr Gruber had the second time. The presence of his wife and his grandson, especially his grandson, seems to account for the narrator's first-person performance. You will note that Mrs Johnson directs his performance towards the grandson, and this was deliberate on her part. The grandson's presence at the session was in part calculated to provide a reason for a second tale-telling session; hence all Mr Gruber's stories were directed at him. The other narratives, however, did not lend themselves to personalization. On the other hand, more than in the first session, Mr Gruber related a number of narratives which were 'personal experience stories' in the generic sense

employed by Stahl ('a prose narrative relating a personal experience; it is usually told in the first person and its content is nontraditional').[34] Just previous to 'Swinging Chains' Mr Gruber related what we might entitle 'My First Dead Body'. Perhaps this personal experience story made the transition into personalizing 'Swinging Chains' easier. He certainly jumped on the opportunity and affirmed immediately that this story too was *his* experience. In other words, Mr Gruber's first response to being asked to tell the story was to claim that it belongs to the same category of story as he had just finished relating. In this sense, Mr Gruber *did* regard *this* 'Swinging Chains' as a different category of story from other, third-person, narratives he had been telling. Mr Gruber, it might be said, *does* make a distinction between the same story occurring in different discourses, and different stories occurring in the same *kind* of discourse.

It might be worth digressing, if it is digressing, to note how this first-person performance proceeds. It exists in this form, I would hazard, in order to impress the grandson, as a way for an old man to be of interest and to achieve a simple, understandable and human form of ego-assertion. This need for assertion is enhanced throughout the session since, off and on while he is relating tales, Mrs Gruber is carrying on a parallel, sometimes related conversation; in other words, husband and wife are subtly competing for attention. Mrs Gruber, you will note, affirms the truth of the story at the beginning, although it would be wrong to interpret her remarks as validating the experience as a first-person experience. The story, in one form or another, had been in the family for a long time. It is possible, I suppose, that Mr Gruber normally told it as an *Ich-Bericht* narrative and shifted into third person when his daughter-in-law was the only audience for fear of being thought a liar or a chump. But, having subsequently checked with the family, I found that such was not the case. The first performance was the typical performance. So I am not certain that Mrs Gruber grasps at this point that Mr Gruber is going to substitute himself for the anonymous fireman. At the end of the performance, although it is hard to pick up everything Mrs Gruber says in the background, it is clear that where the legend allows for dialectic she is ready to provide it. She offers an anti-legend explanation of the chains and disputes Mr Gruber's admittedly tentative indication that he saw the ghost. Mr Gruber is reduced at the end to the clearest fact about the story, that Bert was an engineer, although he adds new information also—that Bert was coeval with, and hence a sort of synecdoche for, the plant itself. At the time the performance was recorded (and as the grandson saw it) the

plant was deserted, in itself a kind of ghost.

One central difference between the two versions in terms of significance or meaning has to do with being left alone on the job. In the first text the fireman demands of the chief engineer that someone be sent down because he can't or won't run the plant by himself. The swinging chain motif, which emerges directly afterwards, is an assertion, an ambiguous one to be sure, that one is *not* alone in the boiler room, that Bert is there, a comfort to old workers perhaps, a terror to those unfit. In the second text, however, the emphasis switches to self-assertion. Mr Gruber is the fireman and *volunteers* to stay there alone. A great point is made of his ability to run the plant by himself, that he is used to doing it and doesn't need an engineer. Indeed, he is more capable than even the chief engineer who sits in the office while Mr Gruber takes care of 'the whole thing'. Old Bert and the swinging chains are considerably less important than this information, and Bert's revenant status exists as a kind of imprimatur for Mr Gruber's living status as inheritor of his ability and seniority. These changes seem directly concerned with Mr Gruber's desire to impress his main audience with his importance, and I do not think it is too much to claim that *all* the main differences between the two performances are a function of audience.

Perceiving this inherently rhetorical connection between form, content and audience allows us, I believe, to approach texts like the Nennius example in a slightly different way. I would suggest, for instance, that considerations of truth content or epistemological status are completely superfluous—even in a work which bills itself as an *historia*—when we recognize that we are getting material we might provisionally call 'legend-like'.[35] Paul Ricœur's philosophically oriented approach to narration can be used here. This approach bridges historical and fictive narration by showing the crossing-over of fiction in history and history in fiction, and seems especially *apropos* to this sort of oral or written text.[36] Indeed, we might characterize those discourses we recognize as legends by saying that they situate themselves rather more to the centre of this crossover than other discourses normally do.

Letting the question of genre remain moot for the moment, we can begin to question for whom the phrase *et ego solus probavi* was intended. As it turns out, this is a crucial question in Nennius scholarship for there are nine different recensions of the *Historia Brittonum*, some of which include the miracles of Britain, some of which do not. As David Dumville, the current editor of the proposed ten-volume edition of Nennius, makes clear, the various recensions are a function of preparing the text for different

audiences at different times.[37] The recently published Vatican Recension, for instance, was composed for the clerics and court of King Edmund about 934 and, as we might expect of a version for an Anglo-Saxon audience, much of the material relating to the glories and wonders of Welsh-speaking Britons is missing. In general, then, in order to understand first-person accounts of supranormal experiences we should ask ourselves what sort of speech acts were being performed to what sort of audience.

To return to the question of genre, then, I have suggested that Mr Gruber made no distinction between his two versions in terms of *story*, while there is some indication he distinguished his *discourse* the second time from the other, third-person, narratives he was telling. This distinction between story and discourse emerges in Russian formalism and was there much influenced by folklore considerations.[38] We might, for instance, consider a tale type a kind of story which exists in various, myriad discourses. Indeed, some of the discourses are not what we would call folktale discourses at all: Aarne-Thompson 510, for instance, appears as a *Märchen* of course but also as an opera, a play, narrative poems, a cartoon and so on. Genre, then, as the world normally conceives it, is a discourse feature, not a story feature, as we know from observing *Märchen* turn into legends and *vice versa*. Part of the confusion about the legend as a possible genre, a genre we do not wish to abandon, and the memorate as a possible genre, which we have not discarded despite Dégh and Vázsonyi, is a confusion between story and discourse. In other words, if we are to come up with analytically useful, genuinely descriptive categories for oral prose narratives we should be less concerned with content or plot than with the meaningful form of discourse the performance occurs as.

Dégh and Vázsonyi, therefore, can be trenchant in their criticisms of attempts to define legends in terms of types of plot (traditional *versus* non-traditional ones for instance), since it becomes very clear this distinction is not an emic one and that the same discourse forms can project different kinds of plot while the same plot can turn up in different discourses. So the judgment that the two versions of 'Swinging Chains', for instance, are both memorate *as opposed to legends* seems to be missing the formal way in which legends work, which Dégh and Vázsonyi have so brilliantly shown. On the other hand, reducing the two versions to precisely the same category of narrative misses not only the emic perception that they are different but also (and this may not be any different from the emic perception), our natural inclination to respond differently to speech acts which validate themselves as first-person narratives than we do to speech

acts which report on events which happened to third parties, the distinction Ellis has so reasonably made.[39] As I suggested earlier, debate takes on a different form when a legend takes an *Ich-Bericht* form. If not cut off entirely (Mrs Gruber did find a way in which to challenge the legend), it is either severely reduced or is initiated through discourses which avoid direct conflict. We cannot scoff in the same way that, for instance, I once scoffed at my wife's account of bears attacking women in American national parks because bears are attracted and enraged by the smell of menstrual blood. 'Easy for you to scoff', she says to me to this day, which is certainly one aspect of the legend's significance. But can one imagine scoffing at a first-person account of someone *who has really been attacked by a bear*, even if one does not give credence to the reasons proposed for the attack? The danger of scoffing at *Ich-Bericht* experiences is the danger of moving from intellectual debate to personal confrontation and hostility, a situation which most people most of the time make some effort to avoid. One strategy is, of course, to relate another narrative, another legend or personal experience story, which might offer counter-evidence to the first. This approach avoids saying, 'I think you are wrong or deluded, or your experience is invalid, or a lie'; it says, 'Here is another valid experience which expresses another point of view'. Obviously, the best strategy in this sort of dialectic is to offer a counter *Ich-Bericht* narrative, since a third-person account opens up the possibility of direct refutation. Perhaps for this reason personal testimony is an important feature of certain religions, especially evangelical ones in which external boundaries and group-oriented structures are lacking.

The upshot of these observations would seem to be that, taking the case of 'Swinging Chains', we need a genre designation to indicate the important ways in which the two performances are formally related and we also need a sub-genre distinction to indicate the important ways in which the two are formally different speech acts. It will not do simply to call both performances either 'memorates' or 'legends' and leave it at that. We certainly need a category for a legend that formally looks like and proceeds to act like a personal experience story. I think we have been using the term 'memorate' for just that purpose, although if folklorists wish to rename the genre that would be all right with me. But if we stick with 'memorate', we shall have to conclude that memorates are sub-genres of the more general term 'legend', which implies in turn that a fabulate cannot be identical to the legend but also a sub-genre. Or, to synthesize von Sydow with Nicolaisen's observations, we might say that a fabulate is identical with a

Sage, both a sub-category of legend. This is only to recognize that the form a particular content takes is central to the perception and meaning of the content, that etic and emic perceptions of genre cannot be totally separate, and that genre is not fixed to content but a function of the performance situation, especially the narrator's relationship to his or her audience. In our efforts to understand the processes and significance of oral narrations, to both particularize and generalize about them, we need to develop categories of explanation and description that are sensitive to both meaningful similarities and differences, not an impossible task if folklorists contribute our individually limited but collectively rich understanding of the narratives we collect and analyse.[40]

NOTES

1. Nennius, *British History and the Welsh Annals*, ed. and trans, by John Morris (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1980), pp. 42, 82.
2. Don Yoder, 'Witches Tales from Adams County', *Pennsylvania Folklife* 12 (1962), p. 36; reprinted in Richard M. Dorson, ed., *Buying the Wind: Regional Folklore in the United States* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1964), p. 128.
3. Bill Ellis, 'The Fast Food Ghost: A Study in the Supernatural's Capacity to Survive Secularization', in this volume, pp. 37-77.
4. Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, 'The Dialectics of the Legend', *Folklore Preprint Series* 1/6 (Bloomington and London: Indiana Folklore Institute, December 1973), p. 42.
5. See especially Robert A. Georges, 'The General Concept of Legend: Some Assumptions to be Reexamined and Reassessed', in Wayland D. Hand, ed., *American Folk Legend: A Symposium* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California, 1971), pp. 1-19.
6. Sandra K.D. Stahl, 'The Oral Personal Narrative in Its Generic Context', *Fabula* 18 (1977), pp. 18-39.
7. C.W. von Sydow, 'Popular Dite Tradition: A Terminological Outline', in *Selected Papers on Folklore*, Laurits Bødker, ed., (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1948), pp. 106-26.
8. See Lauri Honko, 'Memorates and the Study of Folk Belief', *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 1 (1964), pp. 5-19; Patrick B. Mullen, 'The Relationship of Legend and Folk Belief', *Journal of American Folklore* 84 (1971), pp. 406-13; See also the useful comments in Herbert Halpert, 'Definition and Variation in Folk Legend', in Hand (1971), p. 53.

9. Honko (1964); and Ellis (1983).

10. C.W. von Sydow, 'The Categories of Prose Tradition', in von Sydow (1948), p. 87. This is the English summary of 'Kategorien der Prosa-Volksdichtung', in von Sydow (1948), pp. 60-85.

11. Laurits Bødker, 'Preface', in von Sydow (1948), p. 9.

12. W.F.H. Nicolaisen, 'German *Sage* and English *Legend*: Terminological and Conceptual Problems', in this volume, pp. 000.

13. Laurits Bødker, *Folk Literature (Germanic)* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1965), p. 195.

14. Juha Pentikäinen, 'Belief, Memorate, and Legend', trans. by Josephine Lombardo and W.K. McNeil, *Folklore Forum* 6 (1973), pp. 217-41. The original article, 'Grenzprobleme zwischen Memorat und Sage', appears in *Temenos* 3 (1968), pp. 136-67.

15. Pentikäinen (1973), p. 221; his emphasis.

16. See notes 8 and 9 above. Honko cites illustrative examples much like Pentikäinen.

17. Pentikäinen (1973), pp. 230-31.

18. Pentikäinen (1973), p. 233. This definition is ultimately the same as his interpretation of Honko's chart of the legend process in Honko (1964), pp. 16-17.

19. Pentikäinen (1973), p. 232. I have added the *Sage* here since I think in general in this article we must substitute *Sage* for the English 'legend'. See Nicolaisen (1988).

20. Juha Pentikäinen, 'Quellenanalytische Probleme der religiösen Überlieferung', *Temenos* 6 (1970), pp. 110ff.

21. Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, 'The Memorate and the Proto-Memorate', *Journal of American Folklore* 87 (1974), pp. 225-39.

22. Pentikäinen (1973), p. 230.

23. Dégh and Vázsonyi (1974), p. 228.

24. Dégh and Vázsonyi (1974), p. 239.

25. Cincinnati Folklore Archive Tape 80002. The title was Mrs Johnson's.

26. Gillian Bennett, 'Legend: Performance and Truth', in this volume, pp. 13-36.

27. See Viktor Shklovskij, 'Svjaz' priëmov sjuzetoslozenija s obscimi priëmami stilja', *Poètika* (1919), pp. 121-29. For translation see Viktor Shklovskij, 'La Construction de la nouvelle et du roman', in Tzvetan Todorov, ed., *Théorie de la littérature* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), pp. 170-96.

28. Pentikäinen (1973), p. 232.

29. See Bruce E. Nickerson, 'Is There a Folk in the Factory?' *Journal of American Folklore* 87 (1974), pp. 134-39. Note how recently this question is posed.

30. Cincinnati Folklore Archive Tape 80003.

31. Mrs Gruber is speaking in the background through the last 'paragraph' of her

husband's narration, and her words are not always discernible. This comment, however, came through clearly.

32. See Hermann Bausinger, *Formen der 'Volkspoesie'*, Grundlagen der Germanistik, 6 (Berlin: E. Schmidt, 1968), p. 174; Barbara Allen Woods, *The Devil in Dog Form* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California, 1959), p. 11; Will-Erich Peuckert, *Sagen: Geburt und Antwort der mythischen Welt* (Berlin: E. Schmidt, 1965), pp. 14-16; and Georgina Smith, 'Urban Legend, Personal Experience Narrative and Oral History: Literal and Social Truth in Performance', *ARV* 37 (1981), pp. 167-73.

33. Ellis (1988), p. 59.

34. Stahl (1977), 20.

35. Dégh and Vázsonyi (1973), p. 21: 'The mutable judgements on objective truth, therefore, do not have any theoretical bearing on legend definition'. This view is challenged in Smith (1981) but not successfully in this writer's opinion. Smith tends to confuse 'objective truth' with 'belief'. Moreover, she does not show that what a folklorist would take as a *legend* through formal criteria is at all affected by either the objective truth or the belief in the narrative. That various sub-genres may be a function of belief or that belief or lack of belief may condition sub-genre form is beyond doubt and perfectly in accord with Dégh and Vázsonyi. Smith writes, '. . . this factor combined with the context of performance influences, sometimes to a marked degree, the form of the redaction chosen for a narrative held in any performer's repertoire' (p. 168). My paper certainly confirms the context of performance side of this statement. I rather prefer, though, as far as the belief factor goes, Bennett's terminology: 'told as true' and 'told for laughs' (see Bennett [1988]).

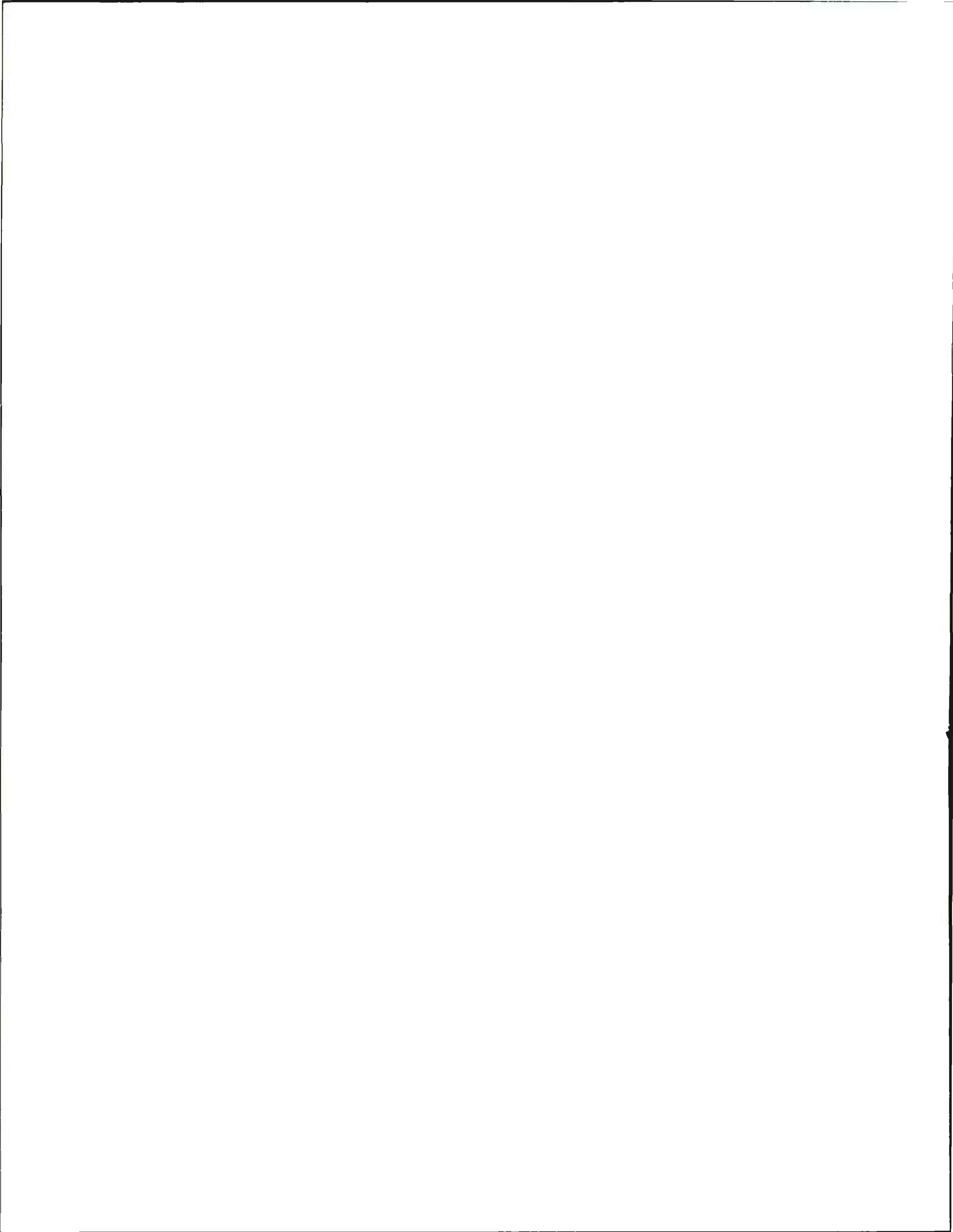
36. See Paul Ricœur, 'The Narrative Function', in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, ed. and trans. John B. Thompson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 274-96. For a fuller treatment of narrative, see Paul Ricœur, *Temps et récit* (Paris: Seuil, 1983).

37. David N. Dumville, ed., *The Historia Brittonum 3: The 'Vatican' Recension* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1985), pp. 3-23 and David N. Dumville, '"Nennius" and the *Historia Brittonum*', *Studia Celtica* 10/11 (1975/1976), pp. 78-95.

38. See Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History—Doctrine*, 3rd edn (New Haven: Yale University, 1981), pp. 204-206, 242-50. The literature on the story/discourse dichotomy is voluminous. I like Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1978) and Mieke Bal, *Narratologie: Essais sur la signification narrative dans quatre romans modernes* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1977). Bal suggests a ternary structure involving narration, discourse and story that seems to me most useful for students of oral narrative and which can be well integrated with Ricœur's more abstract approach.

39. Ellis (1988), pp. 58f.

40. I am grateful for the suggestions and advice offered me by Gillian Bennett and Georgina Smith following the oral presentation of this paper. They helped me to improve this draft.



PART 2

CASE STUDIES

HUNTING THE MONSTER WITH IRON TEETH

Sandy Hobbs and David Cornwell

> ...behold, a fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong; and it had great iron teeth.
>
> Daniel 7.7

Introduction

In 1954, hundreds of children in the Gorbals district of Glasgow were reported to have stormed a local cemetery, hunting for a 'vampire with iron teeth'. According to press reports at the time, they said that the vampire had 'killed and eaten two wee boys'. This incident was initially linked to 'horror films' showing locally. However, it was soon reinterpreted as being due to 'horror comics' against which a campaign was being organized at the time. A recent study of that campaign states that the incident 'passed into legend' as a symbol of the mental and moral influence of the comics.[1]

In 1978, one of us[2] tentatively suggested that the event might be accounted for in part as arising from a local legend of a 'monster with iron teeth'. This argument had limited plausibility because it was based on a single reference to that legend. In this paper we re-examine the events in the light of further evidence, both documentary and oral. Two particular strands of argument are stressed:

(a) legendary 'bogeymen', including 'Jenny wi' the airn teeth', used to frighten children;
(b) children's responses to the frightening.

The Hunt and the Reaction

The hunting of the vampire with iron teeth was first reported in the now

defunct Glasgow morning paper, *The Bulletin*. It has been possible to trace how the event became a news story through interviews with the original reporter and the policeman who was his main source.[3] Malcolm Nicolson, a crime reporter, regularly rang round police stations to check for stories. On the evening of 23 September 1954 when he rang Lawmoor Street station he was at first told there was nothing newsworthy. He heard laughter in the background and someone saying that he should be told about the vampire. This led him to visit the police station, talk to Constable Deeprose and write up the story that evening, in time to make later editions of next morning's paper. The account (Figure 1), is quite brief but it did appear on the front page accompanied by a picture of Deeprose. A number of decisions by different people led to the story appearing as it did. There was the usual decision-making about the newsworthiness of the story; there was the police decision to pass it on and, moving further back in time, the police involvement was itself due to a decision by someone who saw the 'hunt'. Nicolson's account is almost entirely descriptive. It reports the children's behaviour and observer reactions. Later in this paper we shall distinguish between two aspects of the event: the notion of children *hunting* something out of the ordinary, and the notion of the *thing hunted*. The report contains no reference to injuries or damage or arrests; no later report we have seen differs from the original in that respect. There is a single exception to the overall descriptive character of the writing: the final sentence, set apart, which implicitly suggests a possible explanation or influence, a horror film. One must naturally treat newspaper reporting with caution, but no serious doubts have since been cast on the general correctness in this case, and we have taken the original report to be broadly a correct account of the 'vampire hunt'.

Only *The Bulletin* carried the story that morning—it was that paper's scoop. The following day, a Saturday, *The Bulletin* reported a repetition of these events the next night. Its third and final story exclusively devoted to the vampire was on the Monday, when local children were reported as laughing at the idea of a vampire, a neat rounding-off of the story. The reactions of other papers were rather different. In particular, another Glasgow morning paper, the *Daily Record*, took it up and linked the incident clearly with a campaign against so-called horror comics.[4] In Figure 2, we summarize the contrasting ways in which *The Bulletin* and *Daily Record* handled the Gorbals vampire in the week after the story first appeared.

Figure 1

Police Had To Clear "Vampire" Hunters

HOUSEHOLDERS in Caledonia Road, Glasgow, phoned the police last night to complain of the clamour raised by hundreds of children swarming into the Southern Necropolis to track down and slay a "vampire with iron teeth."

The "vampire," according to the children, was credited with killing and eating "two wee boys."

They came from all over Hutchesontown. Some were so young they could scarcely walk, but most were armed with sticks or stones prepared to do battle with the menace.

Shouts, Screams

The hunt began shortly after school hours, when grown-ups first noticed a steady trek towards the cemetery. The children climbed the walls and scoured the grounds in the search for the "vampire."

Then their excited shouts and screams became so loud that normal conversation was impossible.

Phone calls of protest were made to Lawnmoor Street police office.

Constable Alex. Deeprose said afterwards :—" When I appeared I felt like the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

" All shapes and sizes of children streamed after me, all talking at once and telling me of the 'vampire' with the iron teeth.

" This I could handle, but when grown-ups approached me and asked earnestly, 'Is there anything in this vampire story?' it made me think."

As darkness fell the hunt tapered off and was finally called off by the rain.

Note.—An "H" film appeared at a local cinema this week.

Figure 2

(G.V.= Gorbals Vampire)

The Bulletin

Friday 24 Sept, page 1 (G.V. central)
POLICE HAD TO CLEAR 'VAMPIRE' HUNTERS
Comics link: nil
Film link: An 'H' film appeared at a local cinema this week.

Saturday 25 Sept, page 1 (G.V. central)
VAMPIRE HUNTERS OUT AGAIN
Comics link: . . . local mothers blame 'horror comics' . . .
Film link: nil

Monday 27 Sept, page 3 (G.V. central)
VAMPIRE DOESN'T SCARE ANY MORE

Comics link: . . . councillors . . have made
strong condemnations of 'horror' comics and
films which were blamed for . . .
Film link: see above

Friday 1 Oct, page 4 (G.V. incidental)
BE CAREFUL HOW WE BAN THE 'COMICS'
Comics link: . . . perhaps the recent case
where Glasgow children . . . focused national
attention on them . . .
Film link: nil

Daily Record
Saturday 25 Sept, page 1 (G.V. central)
HORROR FILM BLAMED FOR THE VAMPIRE
Comics link: A horror film . . . plus . . . American
comics were two of the reasons given . . .
Film link: see above

Monday 27 Sept, page 8 (G.V. incidental)
IS THIS THE KIND OF COMIC YOUR CHILD IS READING?
Comics link: Do not laugh off Glasgow's 'vampire
scare' . . .
Film link: nil

Tuesday 28 Sept, page 8 (G.V. incidental)
SO EASY TO GET THE 'HORRORS'
Comics link 'If American comics are responsible
for this sort of thing' said . . .
Film link: nil

Tuesday 28 Sept, page 8 (G.V. incidental)
PARENTS! YOU MUST STOP THIS SEDUCTION
Comics link: We all smiled indulgently . . .
'The Seduction of the Innocents' should wipe
the complacent smile off our faces.
Film link: nil

Wednesday 29 Sept, page 7 (G.V. incidental)
AND THE BAILIES SHUDDER
Comics link: The comics were brought . . . by
Bailie John Mains. He represents Hutchesontown
where . . .
Film link: nil

In Figures 1 and 2, a substantial move can be observed from the one-sentence coda mentioning a horror *film* to an emphasis on horror *comics*: the Gorbals Vampire became an adjunct to the comics campaign. In his interview with us Nicolson refers to his story going round the world. That it did so seems to a large extent due to the link made with the anti-horror-comics campaign which was already underway. The phrasing of statements linking the Gorbals Vampire to comics shifts rapidly from various forms of tentative, qualified, attributed claims through tacit assumption to unequivocal assertion. The *Daily Record* items we cite nowhere say 'comics caused the vampire hunt' but the reference to the incident in the course of articles primarily about horror comics clearly implies a link. The first unqualified assertion we have found is in the *Catholic Observer*, 1 October 1954, where the front-page lead story says:

> Two Glasgow catholics . . . have launched an attack against lurid sensational American comics of the type which this week threw children of the Hutchesontown area into a panic of fear of a vampire with iron teeth that killed two boys.

A few weeks later, Norman Buchan in the *Scottish Educational Journal* made the same assumption when writing of the danger of horror comics:[5]

> despite such striking examples as the vampire scare in the Gorbals . . . an attitude still tends to persist among teachers and others that their danger has been exaggerated.

References to the vampire hunt as inspired by comics multiplied. Perhaps the most telling example is to be found in an exchange in the House of Commons during the second reading of the Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Bill.[6] Arguing for the Bill's withdrawal, Roy Jenkins MP said:

> We should be mindful of how little we really know about the direct causal relationship between horror comics or anything else people may read and people's actions, whether undesirable or not . . . We should not jump too quickly to the conclusion that, because two things happen, one necessarily happens as a result of the other.

Later, John Rankin, a supporter of the Bill, referred to Jenkins's argument: 'Generally that is true . . . Nevertheless one can give many examples . . . ' However, he actually gave one example, the Gorbals vampire hunt. He concluded:

> We can see how the children . . . had their minds gripped by this idea, and how easily the idea spread and their impulses were directed to a particular end. The police found exceeding difficulty in controlling these children which is an added reason why I hope that this Bill will receive unanimous support in the House.

Here, as elsewhere during the campaign, the Gorbals vampire is cited because it seems to be good evidence. At the time there was very little dissent.[7] Yet, the case hardly stands up to investigation. Nobody seems to have tried to identify any children taking part, to investigate their reading habits or to interview them. Nobody identified a comic with relevant content. One comic was specifically mentioned by Bailie John Mains, *Startling Terror Tales* No. 1.[8] However, it contains no vampire, no hunt, no iron teeth. Perhaps he meant only that this was an example of the *type* of comic which might have had an influence. A strong tendency for campaigners to prefer the general to the specific is one aspect of the campaign stressed by Barker.[9]

When first reported, the Gorbals Vampire Hunt was not linked to horror comics. A week later, the link was widely assumed and stated. That shift did not take place as the result of the emergence of evidence. In effect, all that happened was that more and more people were presenting statements about the comics and statements about the hunt side by side. We do not wish to suggest that comics were *not* implicated at all. That would be a very difficult case to demonstrate. What we *do* claim is that it is appropriate to look at the Gorbals vampire in a wider context. Were the children who took part subject to other influences which might be relevant? How unusual was this incident? Are there other cases of 'hunting'? Are there other cases of children being frightened by monsters with iron teeth? There are.

Social Setting

In looking at influences other than the horror comics we shall be stressing mass media, popular culture and folk beliefs. However, the socio-economic context is also worth noting. 'Gorbals' and 'Hutchesontown' were the names of adjacent wards within the City of Glasgow, but 'Gorbals' was often used as a generic term for a rather wider area, including both wards. Hence both terms were used in describing the hunt. People we interviewed during our investigations said that, though living in Hutchesontown, they thought of themselves as 'in the Gorbals'. The word 'Gorbals' became

almost proverbial for inner-city slums and deprivation, with some justification. Statistically, Hutchesontown ward, at the closest relevant census (1951) was the worst in the city in terms of housing and overcrowding.[10] Gorbals ward was not far behind. Census figures show that the number of persons per room was much higher in Hutchesontown than in the city generally. Houses were, in addition, almost exclusively closely packed tenements, giving a person per acre rate of well over 500 compared with 163 for residential Glasgow overall, itself a fairly high figure. It is hardly surprising then that children in the area spent much time out of doors, even though there were few special play areas.[11]

Reading

The assumption was made during the comics campaign that reading could substantially influence a child's behaviour. This is not unreasonable. What *is* unreasonable is to assume without evidence that one particular source had exerted the influence in this case. We are not aware of any study of what Gorbals children read at the time but there is no reason to believe they did not read the nationally popular British comics, as distinct from the American imports and reprints under attack. Popular newspapers also flourished at the time and might have been read by some children. We have considered some of these sources, not in order to find a single alternative 'cause' of the hunt, but to see if there are any items or themes which might plausibly be linked to it. The most phenomenally successful British comic, *The Beano*, was at the time building up towards its peak sales.[12] This development was associated with the work of new young artists who had recently joined it, in particular Leo Baxendale. His very popular characters, the Bash Street Kids, had first appeared in February 1954 in a strip then called 'When the Bell Rings'. It normally featured a large scene of children playing together in broadly mischievous ways after school. If the readers, who were beginning to send a substantial volume of fan mail, formed strong identifications with the Bash Street Kids, it might be that this would have encouraged comparable communal mischief, for which a fairly strong tradition was probably already present in the area in any case.

The popular Glasgow press provides numerous items in news and features which could have helped create an atmosphere of anxiety and curiosity in young readers. This includes both those papers which featured the vampire story and those which did not. *The Evening Citizen* (28

August 1954) had an episode of Ripley's 'Believe it or not' on Gilles de Rais, whom it credited with murdering one hundred children. Two days later, the same paper had a feature, 'The Monster of Glamis', concerning the first-born of a noble family who was a vampire and kept out of sight in a mysterious room in Glamis Castle in Angus. The *Daily Record* and its companion paper *Sunday Mail* were running features on child molesting and homosexuality (between which they did not trouble to distinguish very clearly). There appear to have been two reasons for this coverage of macabre crime, one national, one local.

Nationally, the Wolfenden Committee had just started to take evidence.[13] In Glasgow itself, there was a sensational murder of a welfare worker who was also a part-time actor on a popular radio programme.[14] The suspect, later convicted, had fled to the continent. The homosexual element in the case, made clear later at the trial, could be as yet barely hinted at. Feature articles on homosexuality were a substitute. The *Daily Record* (16 September 1954) carried an article about 'The Ballet Dancer' who brings 'fear . . . terror . . . shame . . . humiliation'. The article is *not* specific as to what this child molester actually does but it does stress that everyone should be vigilant. The police will accept a hundred false alarms, it says, provided one leads to his arrest. Of course, we are *not* suggesting that this article or others like it[15] 'caused' the Vampire Hunt. We do suggest, however, that in so far as the hunt may have arisen from general feelings of anxiety amongst local children, such an article could have contributed to childrens' rumours more directly than any horror comic so far identified.

Films

The possible influence of a horror film on the hunt did not survive beyond the Monday papers (see Figure 2). In his interview with us, Nicolson could not recall any details of the 'H-film' he mentioned at the end of his article.[16] Cinema-going was particularly popular in Glasgow in the 1950s. There were around one hundred cinemas in Glasgow, eight of them in the Gorbals-Hutchesontown area.[17] We have been able to establish through press advertisements many, but not all, of the films showing locally in the weeks preceding the hunt. Very few seem to have the type of content to link them to the Vampire hunt. The 'X' certificate had been introduced into British film censorship in 1951, superseding the 'H' category used by Nicolson. Few horror films were being released at the time.[18] Films with 'X' certificates, in theory, were not seen by children, though some cinemas

may have been lax in applying the regulations. However, a film would not necessarily have to be seen to have an effect. Children might be influenced by advertizing, and by word-of-mouth accounts which could magnify the horrors. Newspapers could also play such a part. In the week of the incident, *Them*! was showing at a first-run cinema in the Gorbals.[19] The *Evening Times* preview (18 September 1954) carried the headline 'Monsters on the Loose in a Big City' and said: 'There is definitely no admittance for children, perhaps because they might dress up and scare the wits out of their elders after seeing what happens in the film'. This was five days before the vampire hunt. The monsters in *Them*! were not vampires, however, but giant ants.

One sort of horror film which children could see was the comedy horror. Two such films featuring the Bowery Boys were on show in the Gorbals around that time.[20] One case was a one-day-only revival of *Spooks Run Wild* from the early 1940s; the other was a new release, *The Bowery Boys Meet the Monsters*, one of their most commercially successful films. The film was 'replete with . . . horror house clichés' including vampirism. Although the actors were no longer teenagers (the characters first appeared in 1937) their films still portrayed a teenage style of gang with which young audiences might identify, particularly in such a gang-orientated culture as the Gorbals.

Folk Tradition

We turn now to the possibility that the Gorbals vampire can be interpreted as part of folk tradition. One of us put this notion forward tentatively some years ago,[21] but on the basis of admittedly flimsy evidence. The evidence accumulated by our recent investigations seems rather stronger. The initial premise of the previously stated case remains firm; no comic or film has emerged where a frightening figure with iron teeth appears. In contrast, a legendary monster with iron teeth is said to have been a belief amongst children not far from Hutchesontown in the nineteenth century.[22] Hugh Macintosh writing in 1902, but referring to a period about a hundred years earlier, describes a belief amongst the youngsters of the East End of Glasgow that an ogre existed in the garden of a house near Glasgow Green. This house stood near the River Clyde and only a few hundred yards from the Southern Necropolis. Macintosh explains the earlier belief thus. Local children made frequent raids from a public path through Glasgow Green into the garden of the house which was occupied by two spinster ladies named Allan. One of them had

> rather prominent teeth, which had been operated upon by a clumsy dentist, who had left the metallic fixings quite too apparent; and in the course of her expostulations with the raiders an addition to her molars was spotted at once by the belligerents, who dubbed her 'Jenny with the iron teeth'.

This name became exaggerated as time went on.

When the speculative link between the Gorbals Vampire and Jenny with the iron teeth was mentioned in a radio interview,[23] a number of listeners drew our attention to Alexander Anderson's poem (Figure 3) which had appeared in his *Ballads and Sonnets* (1879).[24] Two aspects of the poem seem particularly noteworthy. First, a mother uses the figure with the iron teeth to frighten a child into good behaviour at bedtime. So Jenny, in the poem at least, is a parents' 'bogey'.[25] Did Anderson invent this concept or did he draw on a tradition? We suspect the latter, but before elaborating on that, let us note the second noteworthy aspect of the poem, the fact that it has been included in anthologies, some for use with children in schools.[26] Thus the monster's iron teeth *may* have reached the children not through the much-criticized horror comics but from their mothers or their teachers!

Figure 3

JENNY WI THE AIRN TEETH

What a plague is this o mine, winna steek his ee,
Though I hap him owre the head as cosie as can be?
Sleep! an let me to my wark, a they claes to airn:
Jenny wi the airn teeth, com an tak the bairn!

Tak him to your ain den, where the bogey bides,
But first put baith your big teeth in his wee plump sides
Gie your auld grey pow a shake, rive him frae my grup—
Tak him where nae kiss is gaun when he waukens up!

Whatna noise is that I hear comin doon the street?
Weel I ken the dump-dump o her beetle feet.
Mercy me, she's at the door, hear her lift the sneck;
Whist! an cuddle mammy noo, closer roun the neck!

Jenny wi the airn teeth, the bairn has aff his claes,
Sleepin safe an soun, I think—dinna touch his taes;

Sleepin weans are no for you; ye may turn aboot
An tak awa wee Tam next door—I hear him screichin
oot!

Dump, dump! awa she gangs back the road she cam;
I hear her at the ither door, speirin after Tam.
He's a crabbit, greetin thing, the warst in a the toun;
Little like my ain wee man—Losh! he's sleepin soun!

Mithers hae an awfu wark wi their bairns at nicht—
Chappin on the chair wi tangs to gie the rogues a fricht.
Aulder weans are fleyed wi less, weel aneuch, we ken—
Bigger bogeys, bigger Jennies, frichten muckle men.

ALEXANDER ANDERSON

The question arises of how old the phrase 'Jenny with the iron teeth' is. Macintosh's account implies its existence in the early nineteenth century. One correspondent[27] directed us to an item in a book of early nineteenth-century notes and cuttings which she had consulted in Paisley Public Library some time ago. Unfortunately, the particular cutting is now missing, but her notes indicate that a 'Jenny wi' the airn teeth' was associated with Castle Semple Loch, Renfrewshire. Her interest had been aroused because her father, born in 1878, had been threatened by this Jenny with the iron teeth when he misbehaved, again suggesting that it was a parent's bogeyman or *Kinderschreck*. The use of iron teeth to frighten children is not confined to this Jenny. We have come across some other examples which are summarized in Figure 4.[28] There are various uncertainties and qualifications about this list. The 'Tom Dockin' description is the most straightforward but we lack information as to the circumstances of its use. 'Tante Arie', on the other hand, was apparently used as a threat. We have found two versions of the same Baba Yaga tale in English, one which mentions the iron teeth, one which does not. There is a Dragon of Wantley with iron teeth who once ate three children at one meal but we have not included that on our list as it seems essentially a literary product for adults. If we were to go beyond the specific idea of iron teeth to the broader theme of children being eaten by monsters, the list would of course become very long.[29] Furthermore, we wish to stress at present the extent to which 'iron teeth' may have been used by adults to frighten children.

It might be argued, of course, that the use of bogeymen to frighten children is dying out in the age of Dr Spock.[30] The extent to which the

technique is still used, or was used in the Gorbals in the 'forties and 'fifties, is uncertain. Two slightly later investigations in other areas give conflicting impressions. The Newsons, asking mothers in Nottingham, found only about one per cent admitting to the use of a frightening figure. Green, asking grammar-school boys in Leeds, on the other hand, found about fifty per cent saying they had been threatened with bogeymen and the like.[31]

Figure 4

OTHER IRON TEETH CHARACTERS

Name	*Character*	*Location*	*Source*
Tom Dockin	A bogie with iron teeth, devours bad children	Yorkshire	Wright, 1918
Tante Arie	Iron teeth, goose feet	Juras	Hoffmann-Krayer, 1915
Baba Yaga	Iron teeth, chicken legs, often eats children	Russia	Scholastic Book Services (no date)
(Mermaid)	Iron teeth, lives in distillery dam	Banffshire	C. Forsyth: Letters (5 March, 1985, 14 April 1985)

The discrepancy is not hard to explain. Mothers responding to enquiries by psychologists are likely to be influenced, at least in part, by their notions of what psychologists consider 'correct'. It may not be acceptable to admit to the use of bogeymen; actually using them in the privacy of one's home may be a different matter. In 'The Social Psychology of a "Good" Story', a paper delivered at the Perspectives on Contemporary Legend seminar, 1984, Sandy Hobbs drew attention to the various influences on a person's social behaviour, such as past history, the setting and the actions of others present. The question may have been posed to seek information about the mother's past experiences; the mother's answer, however, may be substantially influenced by the setting or her perception of the person asking the question.

Children's Hunts

Our appeal in local press and radio for people who either observed or took part in the Gorbals vampire hunt had only limited success as far as our original aim was concerned. However, what did emerge was that a number of people had memories of *similar* events. From interviews with these people, with the addition of a case which was reported in the press during our investigations, we have compiled Figure 5, a table of 'hunts'.[32] With the exception of the Kilmarnock ghost hunt and the Gorbals vampire itself, our authority in each case is one person who recalls observing or taking part in the event in question. Statements about location were in each case precise, but we would be unwilling to place too much reliance on estimates of the numbers involved. It may or may not be significant that the four earliest cases are recalled by participants, the more recent cases not. It might be that people are reticient in early adulthood about admitting to behaviour which they come to think of as embarrassing. Three of the objects of the hunt are clearly in the folk tradition—that is, the Banshee, White Lady and Grey Lady. The 'Maniac' and the 'Miniman' we are unable to comment upon, the former because of its vagueness, the latter because we cannot interpret it. 'Springheeled Jack' is particularly interesting, not simply because it occurs twice. Although both incidents took place in the same area of Hutchesontown as the vampire hunt, the details differ. One informant particularly recalls standing with other children in Erroll Street looking up at an open window waiting for Springheeled Jack to appear. The other recalls going on several occasions to a street near 'Dixon's Blazes' iron works where large numbers of children waited in anticipation. What they 'saw' seems to have been illusions created by escaping gas.[33] Springheeled Jack has appeared in popular literature on a number of occasions. The origin of the name is disputed but whatever it may have been, it seems to have caught the popular imagination. In a number of cases, it seems to have been thought of as a real local threat rather than a literary figure. Of additional interest, in the context of the present discussion, is the suggestion that the name was used by parents to frighten children.[34]

We have been using the word 'hunt' to refer to these incidents, for want of a better term. What the events have in common is that substantial numbers of children went *together* to seek out some frightening figure. The fact that they acted together may well have meant that they were willing to be more adventurous than they might have been on their own. However,

we doubt if it is particularly helpful to think of their behaviour simply in terms of mass hysteria. Children on their own or in small numbers often show a mixed reaction to the frightening. On the one hand, they may wish to get away from the object to reduce their anxiety, on the other hand, they may wish to learn more, which draws them to the object.[35] The presence of others may strengthen the latter tendency at the expense of the former.

Figure 5

'HUNTS' BY CHLDREN

Date	*Place*	*Scale*	*Object*	*Sources*
early 1930s	Glasgow: Govan	"huge number"	Banshee	Letter (E. Crofts, 4 March 1985)
1934/6(?)	Glasgow: Linthouse	100-150; 2-3 nights	White Lady	Interview (J. Richardson 11 April 1985)
1935/6(?)	Glasgow: Hutche-sontown	hundreds	Springheeled Jack	Interview (G. Lynch, 28 February 1985)
1938(?)	Glasgow: Hutche-sontown	thousands; several nights	Springheeled Jack	Interview (E. Firestone, 24 April 1985)
1954	Glasgow; Hutche-sontown	hundreds; 2 successive nights	Vampire with Iron Teeth	Various
1960?	Paisley: Foxbar	c. 100; successive nights	Maniac	Interview (J. Gilchrist, 4 February 1982)
1969/ 70(?)	Paisley: Glenburn	Bands of c. 10; one afternoon	Miniman	Interview (S. Tierney, 7 April 1982)
1985	Kilmarnock: Dean Castle	More than 100; several nights	Grey Lady (ghost)	*Evening Times* (13 March 1982)

What we have called 'hunts' involve relatively large groups of children but there may be significant ways in which the behaviour in these larger groups follows a similar pattern to those in small groups. Two or three children may approach the house of a 'witch' or some other frightening figure. Their behaviour may not have the same dramatic impact on the bystander as a hunt, but similar psychological processes may be at work. An informant gives an account of the only time she ventured near the dam where the mermaid with iron teeth lived:

> I'd have been about six or seven at the time, and remember clearly going up the wood to the dam along with older children. When we reached the steep bank at the mouth of the dam, I refused to go further, because I was terrified of seeing the water, rather than the mermaid. However, I was so taunted by my companions that I eventually wriggled on my stomach, far enough up the bank, to raise my head for a split second, see the water, and slither quickly down the bank again.[36]

Conclusion

At the present then, our conclusion is that contemporary commentators misconstrued the Gorbals Vampire hunt. In contrast to their implicit single cause/single effect model, we suggest that the behaviour can best be understood in the context of multiple life-long and current influences.[37] The behaviour of the children was not as aberrant or unusual as they seem to have thought. If children go 'hunting' a frightening figure, they do so because the presence of others strengthens their curiosity at the expense of their fears. The notion that such a frightening figure exists *may* be set off by the mass media, but on the evidence so far, it is rather more likely that the hunt for the figure will be the outcome of a longer-standing tradition passed on in various ways, including parent to child. We would urge others to look at the relationship of contemporary legend and childhood. Are there legends peculiar to—or more common amongst—children? Do some legends survive longer amongst children than amongst adolescents and adults?

NOTES

1. Martin Barker, *A Haunt of Fears* (London: Pluto, 1984).
2. Sandy Hobbs, 'The Folk Tale as News', *Oral History* 6/2 (1978), pp. 74-86.
3. *The Bulletin*, (24th September, 1954), p. 1; M. Nicolson, interviewed

February 7th, 1985; A. Deeprose, interviewed February 5th, 1985.

4. In addition to the *Bulletin* and *Daily Record* items listed in Figure 2, the following papers referred to the incident in the following week:
Friday September 24th: *Evening News*, *Evening Times*
Saturday September 25th: *Scottish Daily Express*, *Evening News*
Sunday September 26th: *Scottish Sunday Express*, *Sunday Mail*, *Sunday Post*
Monday September 27th: *Evening News*
Wednesday September 29th: *Scottish Daily Express*
On Monday October 4th, the *Daily Record* featured several readers' letters on horror comics, one of which, headed 'Blame Gorbals', referred specifically to the Gorbals vampire.

5. Norman Buchan, 'Voyage to Hysteria: I. The World of Comics', *Scottish Educational Journal* (November 5th, 1954), pp. 706-707. Part II appeared on November 12th, 1954, pp. 717-18. See also George H. Pumphrey, *Comics and Your Children* (Comics Campaign Council, 1954), p. 18 and *Children's Comics* (London: Epworth, 1955), pp. 57-58.

6. *Hansard* Series 5, vol. 537. The debate which took place on 28th February, 1955 is in columns 1072-1186. The Jenkins quotation is from col. 1096, Rankin, cols. 1149-50. Jenkins was not present during Rankin's speech and hence did not reply to this point.

7. An exception is the letter to the editor, *Daily Record*, cited in note 4 above. The anonymous writer favoured banning horror comics but linked the children's behaviour to social conditions in the Gorbals. E.S. Turner, *Boys Will be Boys* (revised edn; Castle Hedingham: Daimon, 1962), p. 200, accepts that the incident suggests that horror comics are 'not without effect'; however he does conclude that it would be easy to make too much of the affair: 'no doubt most of the participants thoroughly enjoyed it'. More recently, Alex Breadner has adopted the more sceptical approach exemplified by Barker in 'The Gorbals Vampire', *Fusion* 5 (1985), pp. 16-24.

8. See 'M.P.s May Hear of "Monster"', *Scottish Sunday Express* (September 26th, 1954), p. 5. We are grateful to Martin Barker for lending us his copy of the comic, *Startling Terror Tales* 1 (London: Arnold, 1954). The comic was featured in an article, 'This Stain on the Minds of Britain's Children', *News Chronicle* (September 30th, 1954).

9. Barker (1984, pp. 34-35) argues that the campaign required a lowest common denominator to bind together its varied supporters ranging from communists to right-wing populist newspapers. He suggests that the claim that the influence of horror comics on the vampire hunters was, if anything, a 'mental and moral effect' rather than a specific demonstrable link helped make the incident a prominent element in the campaign.

10. See J. Cunnison and J.G.S. Gilfillan, *The Third Statistical Account of Scotland: Glasgow* (Glasgow: Collins, 1958), for a discussion of these conditions.

The Glasgow city average in the 1951 census was 126.8 persons per 100 rooms. Hutchesontown ward had the highest rate, 181.6, Gorbals ward had the third highest, 165.8.

11. An autobiographical account of childhood in the Gorbals around this time is to be found in Jimmy Boyle's *A Sense of Freedom* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1977). Playing in the Southern Necropolis is described. A somewhat earlier period is portrayed in the opening chapters of John Burrowes's life of Benny Lynch, *Benny* (Glasgow: Collins, 1984).

12. See Donald Rooum, 'The Master of Bash Street', *Peace News* (December 24th, 1965), pp. 6-7 and Leo Baxendale, *A Very Funny Business* (London: Duckworth, 1978). In *The Beano* (June 5th, 1954), the Bash Street Kids were portrayed as auditioning for a horror film.

13. 'The Evil Among Us', *Daily Record* (September 14th, 15th, 16th, 1954), were three articles dealing with homosexuality, prostitution and child molesting respectively. The first refers to the Wolfenden Committee (which had been appointed on August 24th, 1954) starting to take evidence. The *Sunday Mail* had carried articles on child molesting and homosexuality on August 15th and August 22nd.

14. The finding of the body of George McNeill was reported in the *Evening Times* (August 3rd, 1954). The story was in and out of the newspapers for some time during the search for John Gordon, who was eventually found guilty of murder (see *Glasgow Herald*, March 23rd, 1955). McNeill's homosexuality and its possible relevance to the circumstances of his death were mentioned during evidence given by Dr George MacLeod of the Iona Community (*Glasgow Herald*, March 2nd, 1955).

15. The *Evening Times* had started a serialization of Jack House's *Square Mile of Murder*, a book about Glasgow murders, on September 21st, 1954. On September 5th and 12th, the *Sunday Post* featured the murder of an eleven year old boy in Wigan. On the latter date it took the opportunity to state that three hundred murderers were at that time loose in Britain. Of a slightly different character was a report in the *Daily Record* on September 23rd, the day of the hunt. The previous night phone calls had flooded into the office about a mysterious 'thing' in the sky over Glasgow. The newspapers identified it as a light plane on an advertising stunt.

16. After consulting a map and being shown where the cinemas in the area at that time were, he suggested tentatively that the film he had in mind may have been showing at the Paragon in Cumberland Street. This cinema did not usually advertize its programmes in the local press—a sign both of its relatively modest status and of the fact that it probably drew largely on a distinctly local catchment area for its audiences. We have been unable, so far, to discover what films were showing there that week.

17. Mr Deeprose was able to list six cinemas operating in the Gorbals at the time

as soon as asked! George, Green's, Palace, Paragon, Ritz, Wellington. This list seems to be complete, except that he did not count as truly 'Gorbals' cinemas, the two first-run cinemas, the Bedford and the Coliseum, situated in Eglinton Street, a main road on the edge of the Gorbals. Our main source for Glasgow cinemas of the time is *Kelly's Directory of Glasgow* (1954), supplemented by local newspapers. See also T. Louden, *The Cinemas of Cinema City* (East Kilbride: the author, 1983).

18. See Dennis Gifford's *A Pictorial History of Horror Movies* (London: Hamlyn, 1973), and his *British Film Catalogue, 1895-1970* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973). Also useful in this respect is Michael Weldon, *The Psychotronic Encyclopaedia of Film* (New York: Ballantine, 1983). There is a problem of terminology, however. How widely is the term 'horror film' to be used? Science fiction films had begun to achieve prominence in 1950. Furthermore some films might be regarded as 'horror' wthout achieving an 'H' or 'X' certificate. Henry Lane, 'How Do You Like Your Horror?', *Picturegoer* (June 19th, 1954), pp. 16-17, noted the contemporary decline of traditional 'horror' film and the rise of space fiction.

19. *Them*! (Warner Brothers, 1954, dir. Gordon Douglas) is described by Weldon in the book cited in note 18 thus: 'This classic science fiction film was the first of the oversized-bug movies'. It features a little girl so frightened by the giant ants that she can only say 'Them! Them!' Alex Breadner in the paper cited in note 7 suggests the relevance of *Devil Girl from Mars*, which was shown at Green's, Gorbals Cross, on 6th, 7th and 8th September, 1954. However, he withdrew this suggestion in 'The Gorbals Vampire Revisited', *Fusion* 6 (1985), pp. 16-17, having learned more of its content. This judgment may have been a little hasty. *Devil Girl From Mars* (Spartan, 1954, dir. David Macdonald) deals with the landing of a space ship in Scotland. As mentioned earlier (note 15) there had been a mysterious object in the sky over Glasgow the night before the hunt. The *Daily Record* reported that 'flying saucer' had been one interpretation. The *Scottish Daily Express* (September 25th, 1954) reported certain subsidiary beliefs associated with the hunt. 'A man with a green mask had landed from Mars' and 'A space ship crashed into the cemetery and caught fire'.

20. *The Bowery Boys Meet the Monsters* was shown at the Coliseum in the week beginning August 6th, 1954; *Spooks Run Wild* was shown on Sunday, September 12th, 1954 at Green's. For the Bowery Boys and their films we have drawn on David Hayes and Brent Walker, *The Films of the Bowery Boys* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel, 1984). Strictly speaking *Spooks Run Wild* featured the 'East End Kids' rather than the 'Bowery Boys' but the leading gang members were played by Leo Gorcey and Huntz Hall in both of these films.

21. Hobbs (1978).

22. Hugh Macintosh, *The Origin and History of Glasgow Streets* (Glasgow: Hedderwick, 1902). The children who applied the name 'Jenny with the Iron Teeth' to Miss Allan may have been using an already current phrase. One correspondent,

C. Harris recalls as a child applying the name to a somewhat strange looking woman in another locality; the woman died more than twenty years ago. Our point is that even if Macintosh's story is accurate it does not mean that the sole origin of the phrase has been established.

23. *Macgregor's Gathering*, BBC Radio Scotland, March 4th, 1985. We are grateful to Fiona Couper and Jimmie Macgregor for their cooperation.

24. Alexander Anderson, *Ballads and Sonnets* (London: Macmillan, 1879). Thanks are due to several people who drew our attention to this poem: S. Brown, Gordon McCulloch, Chris Morgan, Fay Stewart, Elizabeth Simmons.

25. Two papers by John Widdowson have drawn attention to this topic, 'The Bogeyman', *Folklore* 82 (1971), pp. 91-115, and 'The Witch as a Frightening and Threatening Figure', in Venetia Newall, ed., *The Witch Figure* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 200-20. In the latter he points out the lack in English of a term equivalent to the German, *Kinderschreck*. 'Bogeyman' is rather too specific in its reference and it may be as well to borrow *Kinderschreck* for use in English.

26. We have consulted George Burnett's *A Book of Scottish Verse* (London: Methuen, 1932), which also contains 'The Boo-man', 'Jenny wi' the Lang Pock' and 'Jenny Kilfunk', poems in a similar vein. Chris Morgan informs us she has a tattered copy of *A Book of Scots*, edited by W. Robb (Grant Educational), originally issued in the classroom, which contains Anderson's poem. It is also in Robert Ford's anthology, *Ballads of Bairnhood* (Paisley: Gardner, 1913). The question of using a figure linked to the idea of going to sleep is too large to be dealt with here. William Miller's 'Wee Willie Winkie', also in Burnett's anthology, seems a relatively benign figure. However, the Sandman is a somewhat more problematic case. 'The Sandman is coming' could be calming or threatening depending on the tone, or how it is performed. In one fictional example, the film *Les Portes de La Nuit* (Pathé-Cinema, 1946, dir. Marcel Carné), Diego says to the sleepy boy 'Le marchand de sable passe' with tenderness and the boy repeats the phrase sleepily. However as Freud points out Hoffmann portrays the Sandman as someone who carries off children's eyes to feed to his own children on the moon, a strikingly different type of figure. See Sigmund Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', pp. 368-407 in *Collected Papers*, Vol. IV (New York: Basic Books, 1959) (German original of this article, first published 1919). 'The Sandman' is included in E.T.A. Hoffman, *Tales of Hoffman*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982). Dorothy Bloch, *So the Witch Won't Get Me* (London: Burnett, 1979) is a relevant work in the Freudian tradition dealing with children's fears.

27. Mrs Catherine Hymers very kindly re-copied for our use 'The Curse of the Warlock of the Peil' which she had found in one of the volumes of notes and cuttings collected by Andrew Crawfurd and deposited in Paisley Public Library, under the general heading *Cairn of Loch Wynnoch Matters*. In the volume 'Cuttings of Newspapers, Vol. X', which we consulted in March 1985 there is another item called 'The Curse of the Warlock of the Peil' on a sheet part of which

appears to have been cut away. The pagination of the volume at this point is also irregular.

28. Sources: Elizabeth Mary Wright, *Rustic Speech and Folk-lore* (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), Eduard Hoffmann-Krayer, 'Die "Tante Arie"', *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde* 25 (1915), pp. 116-23. Hoffmann-Krayer refers to children dressing up as Tante Arie to frighten others and also to Tante Arie being used to threaten misbehaving children. 'Tais-toi, ou je te conduirai à la roche à la Tante-Airie [sic]' (Be quiet, or I'll take you to Aunt Arie's rock) is quoted as a threat, Arie living in a cave in a rock. In the anonymous volume, *A Ghost, A Witch and A Goblin*, illustrated by Rosalind Fry (New York: Scholastic Book Services, no date), the story 'Baba Yaga' is said to be translated from *Baba Yaga* (Paris: Flammarion, 1932). We have not consulted the French text. The same story appears in *Russian Fairy Tales*, illustrated by A. Alexeieff (London: Routledge, 1946). However, Baba Yaga is not credited with iron teeth in this version. We are not at present able to say whether Baba Yaga has iron teeth in any Russian version or whether it is a translator's addition. Chris Forsyth, in two letters, gave us details of a mermaid with iron teeth (made by a blacksmith?) in Knock Dhu distillery dam in Banffshire in the 1930s. She believes that it may have been either a way of discouraging children from going to the dam, or, alternatively, a story brought in by children boarded out from Glasgow. Other examples of iron teeth, as far as we know, have not been used specifically to frighten children. Two James Bond films feature 'Jaws', a steel-toothed villain played by Richard Kiel (*The Spy Who Loved Me*, United Artists, 1977, dir. Lewis Gilbert and *Moonraker*, United Artists, 1979, dir. Lewis Gilbert). J.A.C. Brown refers to children being frightened by a witch with iron teeth but it is not clear what source or sources he has in mind (*Techniques of Persuasion* [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963]). K.M. Briggs in *A Dictionary of British Folk Tales* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971) includes 'The Dragon of Whatley' which has forty-four iron teeth and once ate three children. However, Jacqueline Simpson, 'Fifty British Dragon Tales', *Folklore* 89 (1978), pp. 79-93, gives as the original the poem in Percy's *Reliques* and refers to the text used by Briggs as an 'expurgated prose version'. See H.B. Wheatley's edition of Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1887), vol. III, pp. 279-88, for the supposed historical basis of this satire (located at Wharncliffe, Yorkshire). *O.E.D.* under 'Tooth' has a quotation 'our fear of the iron-teeth of the law' dating from 1659.

29. Two or three examples will suffice to illustrate our point. Iona and Peter Opie's *Children's Games in Street and Playground* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969) contains a number of games which involve implicit reference to children being eaten. What's the time Mr Wolf? (pp. 102-103), Dead Man Arise (pp. 106-108), Ghosties in the Garret (p. 307), Mother the Cake is Burning (pp. 317-29), Fairies and Witches (pp. 342-43). The poem, 'Jenny Kilfunk', cited in note 26, has a line: 'Where goblins on bairns but dine'. Alan Smith, 'The Image of Cromwell in

Folklore and Tradition', *Folklore* 79 (1968), pp. 17-39, quotes a verse about Cromwell from nineteenth-century Lincolnshire: 'Sups and dines and lives reliant, everyday on naughty children'.

30. Benjamin Spock writes, 'Naturally you should never threaten a child with bogeymen or policemen or the devil. Avoid films and frightening T.V. programmes and cruel fairy stories. The child is scared enough of his own mental creations' (*Baby and Child Care* [revised edn; London: Bodley Head, 1958]).

31. John and Elizabeth Newson, *Four Years Old in an Urban Community* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970). The results of their questioning on this point are on pp. 479-81, but see also pp. 209-11 for a discussion of children's fears of 'things which are nearly normal but not quite' such as ventriloquists' dolls or men dressed as women. A.E. Green's paper to the Folklore Society was summarized in *Folklore* 81 (1970), p. 328.

32. We have hints of other 'hunts', information on which was too limited to justify inclusion in the table. It seems highly improbable that those listed make up more than a fraction of such events. We have been able to interview only two people who said they had participated as children in the Gorbals vampire hunt. R. Fry (interviewed 24th February, 1985) was about fourteen years old at the time, lived in Pollok and went to school in Govanhill, which lies to the south of Hutchesontown and the Southern Necropolis. He did not recall actually being at the cemetery, but does remember older children hoaxing others by pretending to see frightening figures, for example 'the man with the vampire teeth'. This seems to confirm that the concept was part of local child culture, but whether his recollection is of the same days as the 'hunt' or before or after seems unclear. S. Tierney (interviewed 7th April, 1985) was eleven years old, lived in Centre Street, Tradeston, to the east of the Gorbals, and recalls preparing with other children for what they considered to be a long trip to the Southern Necropolis. The older children, including himself, made fun of younger ones who were preparing to take home-made tomahawks as weapons. The arrival at the cemetery was an anti-climax, the gates being locked and there being no activity. It seems possible that it was on the second night that his trip took place. The *Evening Times* report of the Kilmarnock case links it to the showing of the film *Ghostbusters* (Columbia-Delphi, 1984, dir. Ivan Reitman). However it should be noted that the children were reported to be looking for a traditional Scottish 'Grey Lady' rather than a ghost character from the film. Leaving aside the Gorbals Vampire, in no other case did our informants offer an 'explanation' of the object of the hunt. We have not included in the table of 'hunts' cases where people told us of going with other children to a 'witch's' house or whatever. Only when it was claimed that substantial numbers were involved in some form of mass action does it appear in the table. We doubt whether there is any self-evident cut-off point. Of the cases in the table, the Paisley 'Miniman' may be the most marginal, but we felt justified in including it because, although the children were in groups of about ten, there were

several groups, and their actions aroused the interest of adults in the vicinity. Although all the cases brought to our notice were from the West of Scotland, we doubt whether 'hunts' are confined to that region and would welcome additional cases.

33. 'Dixon's Blazes' was an iron works immediately adjacent to the Southern Necropolis. Burrowes, in the book cited in note 11, writes of the noise and light from Dixon's Blazes dominating life in the Gorbals and our informant, Ellis Firestone, spoke in similar terms. Burrowes also claims that it was used to threaten naughty children; the furnace fires were pointed out as the 'bad fire' to which they would be sent if they misbehaved. In addition to iron teeth, Dixon's Blazes and Springheeled Jack (discussed below) we have noted two other objects of fear in the Gorbals. Jimmy Boyle in his autobiography (see note 11) refers to a belief in a figure called 'the Fiddler' in the Southern Necropolis, fear of whom meant children would not play there after dark. Mr Boles (interviewed May 1st, 1985) recalls a ghostly, disembodied Hand said to frequent St Francis School, where it wrote on blackboards and shifted statues. Sometimes children congregated outside the school when there was a rumour that 'the Hand' had appeared at the window of the school. Fiona Harkin (letter, March 18th, 1985) refers to a fantasy man in Dalmarnock, not far from Hutchesontown, 'Staring Eyes', who wandered around and could be seen up dark closes because of his lit-up staring eyes.

34. Springheeled Jack is discussed in *Notes and Queries*, 10th Series, Vol. VII (1907), pp. 206, 256, 394 and 496 and Vol. VIII (1907), pp. 251 and 455, E.S. Turner (1962), p. 37, and Paul Begg, 'The Terror of London', *The Unexplained: Open Files* 6 (1984), pp. 34-37. Turner and Begg cite various fictional presentations including penny dreadfuls and a film. Begg writes that a century ago mothers said 'Be good or Spring-heeled Jack will get you!' In the works cited will be found a number of examples where people believed that Springheeled Jack was at work in a particular locality, including Aldershot, Limehouse and Warwickshire. Two correspondents in *Notes and Queries* heard about him as children. An additional reference of some relevance is Katherine Traill, *Reminiscences of Old Aberdeen*, 2nd edn (Aberdeen: Wyllie, 1937). As a child in Old Aberdeen in the 1860s or 1870s she was thrilled by stories of Springheeled Jack who was reputed to wander the Town. 'To us he was very real indeed, and we gloated over stories of his prowess' (p. 20). C. Harris (Letter, March 4th, 1985) writes that 'when we were at school, or playing about later at night we used to say to scare our pals "Here comes Springheeled Jake" [sic]'. 'Springheeled Jackson' is cited as a frightening figure by J.D.A. Widdowson, *If You Don't Be Good: Verbal Social Control in Newfoundland* (St John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1977).

35. One of us has observed a child watching the BBC television serial *Dr Who*, torn between fear and interest, switching the set off and then moments later switching it on again. To be under conflicting 'pulls' to explore and to feel comfortable is not confined to humans. In his experiments on young rhesus

monkeys reared with surrogate mothers, Harry Harlow was able to observe monkeys alternating between examining unfamiliar objects and returning to cling to the 'mother' for reassurance ('Love in Infant Monkeys', *Scientific American* Offprint No. 429, first published June 1959). We have not examined here the possible links between 'hunts' and mass hysterical illness. M.J. Colligan, J.W. Pennebaker and L.R. Murphy, eds., *Mass Psychogenic Illness* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1982) is a useful recent work. Two particularly valuable recent studies consider the relationship between susceptibility and recent events in the individual's life history: C.W. Small and A.M. Nicholi, 'Mass Hysteria among School Children', *Archives of General Psychiatry* 39 (1982), pp. 721-24 and H.B. Roback, E. Roback and J.D. La Barbera, 'Epidemic Grieving at a Birthday Party', *Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics* 5 (1984), pp. 86-89.

36. A. Smith (1968) refers to children in 1905 looking for the site of a cottage near Worcester where Cromwell had convened with the Devil (Chris Forsyth, letter, April 14th, 1985).

37. In 'The Social Psychology of a "Good" Story' (see Gillian Bennett, Paul Smith and J.D.A. Widdowson, eds., *Perspectives on Contemporary Legend II* [Sheffield: CECTAL/Sheffield Academic Press, 1987], pp. 133-48), Sandy Hobbs discussed the various influences at work influencing the telling of a legend. The same general model may be applied to cases such as that discussed in the present paper, where the key feature appears to be that the children 'acted upon' the legend, as distinct from telling it.

THE SUPERGLUE REVENGE: A PSYCHOCULTURAL ANALYSIS

Mark Glazer

According to Klintberg, revenge is of major importance to the interpretation of contemporary legends.[1] He argues that in many cases the events lead to accidental revenge—accidental, because modern society views itself as too civilized to indulge in revenge directly. He adds a Freudian twist to this argument by claiming that, in the legends, revenge takes the form of symbolic castration. Revenge and castration certainly are main themes in the superglue legend—it tells of a wronged wife's use of superglue (or sometimes a knife) to avenge herself on her unfaithful husband by castrating him.

The legend creates two important difficulties for Klintberg's thesis: (1) it unashamedly makes revenge its central theme; and (2) it openly discusses sex, and the castration is real not symbolic. But before beginning on an alternative theoretical analysis, let us first review the contents of the tale and analyse its context and some demographic information about the storytellers.

A. *The Superglue Revenge: A Content Analysis*

'The Superglue Revenge' is one of the newer stories in the repertory of contemporary legends in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas (it must, however, be noted that its general distribution has not so far been studied). The total number of superglue and related stories collected to date is twenty-two. In twenty versions the wife's revenge is symbolic or actual castration, which is by means of superglue in twelve versions and by other means in eight. These latter I shall call 'The Wife's Revenge' to distinguish them from the superglue versions.[2]

(1) '*The Superglue Revenge*'

> This really happened in . . . The names are withheld because they are very well known people in the community. A couple in . . . were having some problems in their marriage, nothing outstanding. The wife worked outside the home, and the man was a very wealthy businessman . . . One day the wife decided she was really going to try to talk to her husband to go to a professional counsellor so that they could work out their problems. She decided to leave her work early and surprise him. When she got home, she heard voices coming out of the bedroom. A little frightened, she tiptoed upstairs, and to her surprise, grief and amazement, she heard the voices of her husband and her next door neighbour (a not too good-looking woman in her early thirties). She was ready to barge in, but she decided against it. She tiptoed out of the house and drove away, her humiliation, pain and grief unmeasurable. In a few minutes she decided what to do. This time she walked upstairs, and found her husband drunk and fast asleep. She went to the bathroom and found a tube of superglue which her children had bought for a school project. She took the tube and spread his legs with it, walking out of the house. When the man woke up he couldn't move. He yelled and screamed until one of his young sons walked in, called an ambulance, and took him to his doctor. The doctor sent him to Houston so that he could be operated. The woman had her revenge, and the man could not prosecute her because of the scandal. This actually happened.
>
> [Informant: I.A., forty years old, female, beautician, Mexican American, speaks English and Spanish. Heard the story about a year ago from a customer in her beauty shop. Collected by R.E. in McAllen, March 12 1984.]

This version of the legend is typical. The wife is surprised to find her husband with another woman and determined to avenge herself. The teller insists that the people involved in the tale are well known in their community. The next story is similar, but has a different twist in the plot.

(2) '*The Wife's Revenge*'
In the eight versions of the tale where superglue is not used, the wife cuts her husband's genitals off with a knife (four stories), with a straight razor or an axe, sets them on fire with lighter fluid or shoots him in the groin (one story for each motif). The following is the version where the wife uses the straight razor.

> There was this man that liked to drink and fool around with women. He was married. His wife would always get phone calls from women he used to [go] around with and get her annoyed by telling his wife that they had gone out with him. Of course, she was led to believe that what was being told to her over the phone was true, since he would come home with the obvious signs of his spending time with other women. One day she had gotten upset with what was happening and decided to put a stop to it. So she went to the store and bought herself a straight razor to utilize on him. She went to her original plan by arousing him to have sex with her. After he was sexually aroused, she got the straight razor, which was hidden within her reach and cut off his penis. He let out a loud yell which was heard by the neighbours. The neighbours ran towards the house to see what had happened. Upon entering the bedroom they noticed that he was bleeding profusely from what had happened, they also noticed the wife just stood there looking without offering any assistance. Since the neighbours realized that she wasn't making any effort to help him they took the liberty and called an ambulance. After the incident he had planned to take her to court but latter dropped the charges and is living with her still. This incident is known to be a true story.
>
> [Informant: R.V., approximately thirty-two years old, tax clerk, Mexican American, speaks only English. Story was first heard around 1978. Collected by V.R. in Alton, Texas, on October 29 1982.]

The above story is slightly atypical, as the husband is not caught in bed. On the other hand, the wife's obtaining an erection for her husband before cutting off his penis is one of the main characteristics of the non-glue versions.

B. *The Superglue Revenge: Culture and Context*

All the tales under discussion were collected in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. This is a border area, situated in the South East of Texas and rather isolated from the rest of the state and country. The area does, however, share the basic repertory of contemporary legends with the rest of the country, though it adds its own twists to them. The aim of this section of this paper is to review the cultural background of the story, its context, and relevant data about the informants.

1. *Cultural and ethnic background*

The population of this area is about eighty per cent Mexican American, and most of the folklore collected here is Chicano lore. Though very little

folklore crosses ethnic lines in South Texas, the tale is equally well known by both Mexican American and 'Anglo' communities.[3] Of the twenty-two stories, seventeen were reported by Mexican Americans and five by Anglos. This is close to the distribution of the communities in the area. One of the cultural features of the Anglo community in the Lower Rio Grande Valley is its tendency to think that only Mexican Americans have folklore. It is not uncommon for an Anglo from another part of the country to tell a story and for surprised locals to insist that it is not a 'story' at all, but an event which really happened. When asked about the superglue legend, for example, Anglos generally reply that they have heard about it, and it 'really happened'.

2. *Context*

Of the twenty stories involving castration, only one was told to our informants as a tale, but eighteen were told as gossip or rumour (in the remaining case, we do not have any information about the context in which it was heard). A wide variety of situations feature as appropriate contexts for the story to be told:

> 'At break time'
> 'Sitting talking about the news'
> 'A group of men at a "pachanga" [Mexican American party]'
> 'Sharing gossip during a band trip'
> 'At a bar'
> 'At a bridal shower'
> 'We were waiting around . . . when my friend told me'
> 'Her sister-in-law's husband was running around and his mother was afraid that the same thing might happen to her son'

The last item is one of my favourite bits of contextual information. It makes an important point in telling us that the storyteller believes the rumour enough to worry about the fate of her own son!

Many contextual characteristics suggest that this narrative is an active rumour legend. It is recognized by many people apart from our informants and many, if not most, claim it is a true story. A variety of real names are given for the castrated husband, a grocery-store owner being the most commonly named victim/culprit, although other individuals are also mentioned. The man is sometimes said to be Anglo and sometimes Mexican American. It is interesting to note that many of the women storytellers and student collectors state that they would have done the same thing in the circumstances!

3. *Who the informant heard the story from*
The individuals who told the story to the informants are as varied as the contexts of the telling, and there is no doubt in my mind that it should be viewed as a rumour legend. Two informants heard the story at a 'pachanga'; others heard it from co-workers, employees and customers (four stories). The most common source is given as friends (six stories) and five tales were told by relatives, most often mothers. The source is given as the friend of a cousin in one case, three informants had forgotten who had told them the story, and the information was not available for another.

4. *Approximate date the tale was first heard*
One of the interesting pieces of information that have come from the processing of contextual materials has to do with the approximate dates our informants give for their first encounter with the legend. The versions where the wife used a knife or other such instrument seem to be older and go back to the 1960s. In contrast, the earliest of the glue stories is supposed to have been heard in 1973. On the basis of this information, the superglue stories, then, may be slightly newer variants of the older story where the husband's genitals are cut rather than glued. Of the twelve superglue legends, nine were heard during 1979 or later, one was heard in 1973, and in two cases the informant could not give a date. Of the stories where the wife uses a knife, four were heard during or before 1979 and four during 1980 or later. Although this may be insufficient to *prove* that the knife version is earlier, it is useful information. Another significant aspect of the dating of versions is that 1979 appears to be the year when transmission of the story peaked.

5. *Informants' ages*
The age of our informants is worth noting. None is under twenty years old, and, in the case of the superglue variant, most (i.e. seven) are over forty. Four are under thirty, and one has not given his age. For the versions where a knife is used, three informants are between thirty and thirty-five, three between thirty-five and forty-five, and two between forty-five and forty-seven. Together, then, we have seven informants between twenty and twenty-eight, three between thirty-two and thirty-five, seven between forty and forty-seven, and two between fifty-seven and sixty. This is most interesting, for it contradicts the usual pattern where contemporary tales are told to and by teenagers.

6. *Informants' sex*
Of the twelve stories involving glue, seven were told by women and five by men; of the eight other versions, five were told by women and three by men. Taking both versions together, then, we have twelve stories told by women and eight by men. This follows a familiar pattern for the Lower Rio Grande Valley: tales involving women seem regularly to be told *by* women. The legend of 'La Llorona', the weeping woman, for example, is most commonly told by women; whereas 'The Vanishing Hitchhiker', which features a male traveller and a female ghost, is told equally frequently by both men and women.

In summarizing the contextual information, it can be said that 'The Superglue Revenge' in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas is told in a bi-cultural area by members of both the Anglo and Mexican American communities. The story is told predominantly as gossip, news and rumour, mostly by friends and family in a non-storytelling situation. 1979 seems to be the year when the rumour was at its height. Our informants are all twenty years old and over, adults rather than adolescents, and most often women. This information gives, I hope, a clear account of the contextual and cultural background to the legend.

C. *'The Superglue Revenge': An Interpretation*

As noted earlier, Klintberg claims that any revenge in urban legends is an accidental effect of the action, rather than a deliberate intention.[4] Accordingly, the stories are used to avenge in the imagination situations with which the weak are normally powerless to deal in real life: they express the need for revenge in cultures or cultural situations where it cannot be openly exacted.[5] He views typical legend incidents such as the maniac's hook breaking off when stuck in the doorhandle (as in 'The Hook'), the burglar's fingers being bitten off by the doberman (as in 'The Choking Doberman'), and the finger caught in the chain (as in 'The Chain') as examples of *accidental* vengeance[6] or, one may want to say, '*poetic* revenge', the characters themselves not directly inflicting the punishment which eventually so justly befalls the evil-doer. All the incidents described above he regards, in a Freudian light, as symbols of castration, because in every case it is some extremity that is removed.[7]

Superglue legends, however, may cause one to review this attractive theory. The castration is not symbolic, but real—coolly premeditated and thoroughly carried out; and there is no need for poetic justice because

there is direct punishment for the offence committed. Again, the wife in these legends does not exactly fall into the category of the powerless! This does not mean, however, that the cultural function of the tales has changed; it still addresses itself to the turning of the worm but it does so overtly, not through symbolic action.

In search of another alternative analysis, we may here turn to structuralist models. One of the binary oppositions most often noted in such studies has been that of Nature versus Culture.[8] In the superglue revenge legends, culture plays a secondary role to nature. Here personal aspects of life take precedence, and Nature transcends Culture. Social norms would dictate, for example, that husbands should not have extramarital affairs and that wives should not take cruel revenge, but in this tale the passions of nature are stronger than cultural norms. The Nature versus Culture opposition, therefore, is no more useful than Freudian analysis here. Just as the story brings sex and castration into the open, so it also brings the passions of nature. We cannot therefore see the tale as an allegory of human wishful thinking at either of these levels.

It may, therefore, be profitable to use another binary opposition in order to explore the story, that between marital infidelity and revenge. The mediation between revenge and infidelity seems to be lack of sexuality. In the legend both marital infidelity and revenge lead to a no-sex situation for both husband and wife. It is significant that in many versions the couple actually stay married. The underlying theme (the 'moral', if you will) of the story may very well be, then, that over-indulgence in 'natural' behaviour to the extent of ignoring social norms will lead eventually to an inability to enjoy nature at all. Therefore, as is so often the case, Culture is in the last resort more potent than Nature, and transcends Nature in human affairs.

NOTES

1. Bengt af Klintberg, 'Why are there so Many Modern Legends about Revenge?', in Paul Smith, ed., *Perspectives on Contemporary Legend: Proceedings of the Conference on Contemporary Legend, Sheffield, July 1982* (Sheffield: CECTAL, 1984), pp. 141-46.

2. Jan Harold Brunvand has a version of this tale in his *The Choking Doberman and other 'New' Urban Legends* (New York and London: Norton, 1984), pp. 146-49, but does not document its provenance. For a wife avenging herself in a different

manner, see pp. 66-67 of the same volume. In two unrelated stories superglue is used in different ways. In one, the wife uses it on the toilet seat and the husband gets stuck (cf. the British version where a man gets stuck on the toilet seat—the glue is blamed on vandals—and the ambulance crew have to unscrew the toilet to carry him to the ambulance. They are, however, laughing so hard that they drop the stretcher and he breaks a leg. See, Rodney Dale, *It's true . . . It Happened to a Friend* [London: Duckworth, 1984], p. 82). In a non-revenge story, the glue is accidentally used instead of lubricant, with disastrous sexual results. I heard this story in Istanbul about thirty-five years ago. A minor difference between the two versions is that the one from Turkey involved ordinary glue. A second difference is that the lovers in this version call for a doctor, and the doctor turns out to be the woman's husband! For a British version with superglue, see Paul Smith, *The Book of Nasty Legends* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), pp. 43-44. For similar tales, see Brunvand (1984), pp. 142-46.

3. On the American side of the USA/Mexico border, the term 'Anglo' is used to refer to all non-Mexican Americans, whatever their ethnic origins may actually be.

4. Klintberg (1984), p. 141.

5. Klintberg (1984), pp. 142-43.

6. Klintberg (1984), pp. 143-44.

7. Klintberg (1984), p. 145. Another rumour tale which may be viewed as a revenge legend is that of the three white women and the black man with the doberman. Here it is the black man who is revenged, though very directly and positively. See Brunvand (1984), pp. 18-28.

8. On the incest taboo, see Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structure of Kinship* (Boston: Beacon, 1969), pp. 3-25. For the concept of structure in structuralism see David Robey, *Structuralism: An Introduction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), pp. 1-2; and Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'Social Structure', in *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), pp. 269-319. For the principles of structuralist analysis see Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 41-65. For binary oppositions in structuralism see Philip Petit, *The Concept of Structuralism: A Critical Analysis* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California, 1975), pp. 73-76.

THE DEVIL IN THE DISCOTHEQUE: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF A CONTEMPORARY LEGEND[1]

Maria Herrera-Sobek

The mythical figure of the devil has been an enduring entity in legend since time immemorial. He is well known for appearing when called upon (*G 303.6.1.2*), for riding a horse (*G 303.7.1*), for being dressed in black (*G 303.3.1.2*) and so on.[2] The longevity, resilience and popularity of this type of narrative can be also discerned in contemporary lore which transfers the devil from a rural or village setting to an ultra-modern urban setting such as a discotheque. The focus of the present article is a semiotic analysis of the concept of evil, and its concomitants of guilt and punishment, as manifested in a contemporary devil legend. By reducing the sign system encoded in the devil narratives to elementary psychological and social vectors, we can more clearly explain the persistence of these legends and their ability to survive in a sophisticated, technological environment.

I have found the application of a semiotic analysis to devil legends particularly useful, in as much as the semiotic process isolates the psychological and social parameters on which these narratives focus into a cohesive sign.[3] The study underlines the fact that people in urban technological societies still have fundamental human desires and needs, and that, when folk beliefs migrate with the folk to the cities, they undergo only superficial changes. Thus, whereas in previous Mexican legends the devil made his presence known to village or small-town young people at local dances, we now encounter him in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico (population approximately 100,000) at a discotheque.

The fundamental premise of semiotic analysis is that human interaction inherently uses a system of signs to accomplish communication. I propose to demonstrate, through an analysis of the signs encoded in devil narratives, how both sender and receiver of the message in the legend are actually participating in a philosophical discussion of greater depth than they are aware of. Futhermore, I propose that this subterranean current of

metaphysical thought permeating the devil legends accounts for their widespread appeal and longevity.

The following four versions of 'The Devil in the Discotheque' were tape-recorded in May and June of 1985, from three Mexican American graduate students at the University of California in Irvine. The fourth one was collected from a taxi driver in Tijuana in June 1985.

THE DEVIL IN THE DISCOTHEQUE

Version 1

David: Oh, I met this friend of mine at the Jai Lai [a famous sports centre in Tijuana, Mexico] whose name is Javier. And he was commenting on an event that happened in Tijuana, especially at the Club Aloha [a popular discotheque in Tijuana]. And he was telling me that a young woman who was a friend of his, uh, wanted to go out dancing on a Friday but her mother told her not to go. And she stubbornly, stubbornly went to dance. And this happened about midnight. She was sitting in front of the dance area and there was this young man that was dancing. He looked like he was projecting a certain image through his eyes, a certain brilliance. She became interested in dancing with the young man; and she started dancing with him, disco music. And they danced for at least twenty minutes. And the ambience in the Aloha, uh, spread like a fire, like a fire. The spectators became aware that when she was dancing that she began to rise, see . . . she was rising above the ground, see, and all the people around the dance floor began to run. And she was not aware of what was happening. Smoke was coming from the two of them all over. And the following day they found her body had been burnt and the Aloha was burnt down.

Sobek: All the people left?

David: They all left running. She did not realize what was happening. And the following day they took her to the hospital. And they found her back was burnt. And that's where the legend comes. That the girl danced with the devil. And let me add a bit more: I remember that my mother went to church and the priest was commenting about the devil's apparition that happened in Tijuana.

And it was a moral type story in the sense that women should not disobey their mothers.

This happened about two years ago. They closed the Aloha for a certain period of time.

[Informant: David Becerra, from Tijuana México. Age thirty-six. Graduate at U.C. Irvine. Recorded in May 1985.]

Version 2

Juan: I had told you about a young woman that (it's almost the same as David's) but it doesn't have the ingredient of disobeying the mother or anything like that, no. This girl went to dance, that is her friend [went to dance] and was dancing with a man.

Sobek: Do you know both girls?

Juan: No, I only know one of them, [the girl that told him the story]. Yes, that is I know the friend; [but] the girl to whom this event happened I do not even know who she is. This girl told it to me—the narrative—but she said she was also there, she was present, that she was accompanying her friend. What happened was . . . the girl danced with this man (and I suppose it was within the tradition of the devil, right?—a handsome man, a dandy, well dressed and all that). All he needs is the sulphur ingredient [informant laughs].

Sobek: And did this event take place at a discotheque also?

Juan: It happened [someplace] on Revolution Avenue but she did not say where . . . It was in Tijuana on Revolution Avenue . . . which is more or less a symbol of sin. The sinful avenue. And what is known is that this girl [who danced with the devil] was scratched—not burnt—scratched. And if I remember correctly she was found dead.

Sobek: Dead?

Juan: Yes, she was dead.

Sobek: Your friend's friend?

Juan: My friend's friend. This, this [event] was documented in

a very famous Mexican news magazine called the *Alarma* (*The Alarm*). [This was said tongue-in-cheek. The *Alarma* is a rag-type news weekly published in Tijuana.]

Sobek: Is that right? Do you have that news magazine?

Juan: No.

Sobek: Can we get it?

Juan: Yes, I believe we can, but this happened around the 1970s.

[Informant: Juan Bernal, Tijuana, México and San Diego, California. Age twenty-nine. Graduate student at U.C. Irvine. Date recorded: May 1985.]

Version 3

Guillermo: The version I know originated, as I understand it, in Chihuahua, in Santa Barbara México. In general, the people that tell these legends about the devil are the mothers, the women. And they tell them with the purpose of teaching their sons and daughter, that is to moralize. It is a didactic legend, so to speak.

The most famous version that I know in Santa Barbara, Chihuahua, is the one about the mother that had two daughters and the daughters wanted to go to a dance, they wanted to go dancing. But their mother said no, that they had to first do their household chores. And the daughters insisted on going because it was a Saturday and the whole town was going to go dancing at the 'Casino Nuevo'. The daughters disobeyed their mother and they went dancing.

After they arrived to the Casino they sat down and waited for someone to ask them to dance. But no one asked them to dance. And the girls were very frustrated, and in a bad mood because no one would ask them out to dance. They would see their friends out dancing and they just sat there.

Suddenly out of nowhere appears a young man, like no other. A handsome young man, tall, blue-eyed, well-dressed. And he asked one of them out to dance. He danced with her a while and after two or three songs he asked her sister out to dance. They say one of the girls

began to notice a certain odour, a strange sulphur smell. They say the devil smells like sulphur. Well, they say that the young lady did not pay much attention.

The young man offered to take the girls home after the dance. While walking home they say one of the girls noticed, she had not noticed at the dance, that the young man had one foot like a burro's and the other like a rooster's claw. And that the odour increased in intensity, that is the sulphur odour became more unpleasant. One of the young women also noticed that the back part of the man's coat was raised and she did not know why. Then one of the girls decided that while the other was walking in front with the handsome man she would walk behind in order to see what was going on in back. The girl could see all from the back and she noticed, yes definitely that it was no other than the devil himself. My town lacks electricity, therefore sometimes things do not appear as they should.

The girls lived on the other side of the river, far where there were some poor run-down houses, and there was not much light. And the girl noticed that sure enough the man's coat was bulging out in back. The girl runs toward her sister and says: 'That is the devil: Mother told us the devil was going to appear to us!'

'No', says the other girl. 'How can he be the devil?'

At that moment one of the girls pushed the other and makes her fall and when she turns around she sees the man is indeed the devil. He had two horns and there was smoke coming out from his nostrils and his ears.

They say the girls fainted but that while they were unconscious they had a dream and that dream consisted of the devil making love to them. But they say the devil did not have a sexual organ. That he made love to them with his tail. This is the version.

I know other versions that tell how when the devil makes love, he introduces his tail—his tail has a triangle at the end.

Afterwards people said that one of the girls came out pregnant and when the baby was born he was born with a pig's head and his feet—one was like a burro's and the other like a rooster's.

[Informant: Guillermo Retana, Santa Barbara, Chihuahua, México. Age thirty. Graduate student at U.C. Irvine. Date recorded: May 1985.]

Version 4

While riding from Revolución Avenue towards the border on our way back to the United States, I asked the taxi driver if he knew the discotheque 'Aloha'.

T.D.: Yes, that is an older one an older discotheque. The 'in' place now is—a new disco place with three different stages to dance in. They have different types of music at each stage. That's where the kids are going now. The Aloha is not too good now. It has degenerated a lot. Lots of black people go there.

Sobek: They say the devil appeared there once. Do you know anything about that?

T.D.: Nooooo, wait a minute, yes he did appear. He appeared here (in Tijuana) and in Mexicali. Yes, it was during Lent about five years ago. These girls went to Aloha and danced with this dude.

Sobek: How was he dressed?

T.D.: Just regular. Just like a regular guy. Then the girls went to the bathroom. When they came out they looked at the guy's feet and there they noticed that his feet were strange. One foot looked like a horse's hoof and the other looked like a rooster's claw. It came out in the newspapers and everything; it even came out in the radio.

Sobek: Is it true the place burned down?

T.D.: Yes, it did. Then they remodelled it. Yes they did.

[Informant: Taxi driver from Tijuana, México. Age about thirty-five years. Date: June 8th 1985.]

The four legends are plainly part of the widely diffused 'Devil at the Discotheque' cycle. The versions of this legend collected by folklore scholars such as Glazer, Robe, Miller, Hinckle and Wallrich[4] evidence a series of motifs and themes basically similar to those in the versions I collected. All of them have the following kernel of story:

1. Young person
2. Disobeys parents
3. Goes to dance
4. Devil appears
5. Punishment

a pattern which adheres to the interdiction—violation—sanction structure common to many stories, including the Eden myth.[5] Here the forbidden fruit which the young woman enjoys is the dance, an ancient activity replete with its own complex sign-system.

J. E. Cirlot in his *Dictionary of Symbols* associates dance with:

> The corporeal image of a given process, or of becoming, or of the passage of time. In Hindu doctrine, the dance of Shiva in his role as Nataraja (the King of Cosmic Dance, symbolizing the union of space and time within evolution) clearly has this meaning. There is a universal belief that, in so far as it is a rhythmic art-form, it is a symbol of the act of creation. This is why the dance is one of the most ancient forms of magic. Every dance is a pantomime of metamorphosis (and so calls for a mask to facilitate and conceal the transformation which seeks to change the dancer into a god, a demon or some other chosen form of existence). Its function is, in consequence, cosmogonic. The dance is the incarnation of eternal energy: This is the meaning of the circle of flames surrounding the 'dancing of Shiva'. Dance performed by people with linked arms symbolizes cosmic marriage, or the union of heaven and earth—the chain-symbol—and in this way they facilitate the union of man and wife.[6]

Encoded in the dance we can thus detect numerous symbols associated with creation, and erotic connotations pervade the overall imagery.

The figure of the devil hidden behind the facade of a handsome young man is yet another familiar sign. The devil is *par excellence* the symbol of evil in western civilization: in Christian myth it is Satan, in the form of the serpent, who appears to tempt Eve into tasting forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge. Cirlot indicates that the devil is often portrayed as having 'the head and the feet of a he-goat' and that he 'is related to the instinct and to desire in all its passionate forms, the magic arts, disorder and perversion'.[7] The fires associated with the devil are another major sign, encoding both good (vital heat) and bad (destruction and conflagration).[8] The fire imagery connotes 'energy which may be found at the level of animal passion as well as in the plane of spiritual strength',[9] and Christianity associates flame both with the eternal punishment of hell and the purification of purgatory.

In his study of 'Continuity and Change in Legendry', Mark Glazer provides an excellent analysis of the history of 'The Devil at the Discotheque' and 'La Muerte' legends[10] and perceives these narratives as having adapted well to contemporary society. He expertly pinpoints their

social function within the context of Mexican cultural expectations of proper behaviour:

> It must be concluded that the devil and 'La Muerte' are cultural agents designed to keep the rebel spirit in cultural tow. It is the function of these personages by example to punish behaviour which is viewed as being deviant and not conforming with social norms.[11]

I am in accord with this hypothesis: at a macro level the legend advocates proper behaviour towards parents and society. However, like other instances of narrative discourse, the legend can be subjected to various levels of exegesis. At a more metaphysical and perhaps significant, level, the contemporary devil legend is a correlative of the Adam myth. Within its structure is encoded the universal preoccupation of humankind with the concept of evil, a preoccupation that, no matter how urbanized and no matter how sophisticated we become, lies deep in our subconscious. The need for humans to communicate and to verbalize this fundamental preoccupation lies at the core of the propagation of these legends. Thus they are not necessarily told by parents to disobedient adolescents, but circulate among the young adults themselves as 'rumour legends'.[12] Primitive humans felt this philosophical urge to invent, to construct, these early myths: their persistence attests to that imperative necessity of the unconscious to grapple with the mystery of evil as conceptualized by modern society.

Paul Ricœur, in his brilliant study *The Symbolism of Evil*, demonstrates myth's continuing relevance for modern day men and women, explaining that:

> For us, moderns, a myth is only a myth because we can no longer connect that time with the time of history as we write it, employing the critical method nor can we connect mythical places with geographical space . . . However in losing its explanatory pretensions the myth reveals its exploratory significance and its contribution to understanding, which we shall later call its symbolic function—that is to say, its power of discovery and revealing the bond between man and what he considers sacred. Paradoxical as it may seem, the myth, when it is thus demythologized through contact with scientific history and elevated to the dignity of a symbol is a dimension of modern thought.[13]

'The Devil at the Discotheque' legends, while not 'true' myths, do have mythic elements which supply them with the deeper, more profound dimensions of which Paul Ricœur speaks. Fear of defilement, of becoming

'stained' or 'impure' lies at the heart of the interdiction not to go to the dance (for to dance, as we saw earlier, implies sexuality and eroticism, in a fundamental association of sex with sin).

> One is struck by the importance and the gravity attached to the violation of interdictions of a sexual character in the economy of defilement. The prohibitions against incest, sodomy, abortion, relations at forbidden times—and sometimes places—are so fundamental that the inflation of the sexual is characteristic of the whole system of defilement so that an indissoluble complicity between sexuality and defilement seems to have been from time immemorial.[14]

Not only is the dance an important *sign* encoding sexuality, some versions are *explicitly* sexual. Version 3, for example, has an explicit description of the sexual act, and the informant goes so far as to say that, after the devil had copulated with the young women, a greenish, sulphur-smelling stain was left behind (the informant says that, though Santa Barbara, Chihuahua, where the event allegedly took place, is a mining town where sulphur deposits are often found, the local people still attribute the greenish stains to the devil's semen). Through a system of signs, therefore, 'The Devil in the Discotheque' articulates ideas about sin, guilt, defilement and punishment into a cohesive structure we are capable of understanding.

Ever since humans conceived the universe in terms of opposed pairs—up/down, day/night, man/woman, good/evil—they have been forced to confront the problem of evil, its purpose and origin. Legends like 'The Devil at the Discotheque' therefore provide a forum through which metaphysical concerns may be articulated. When I asked one of my informants if he believed in the existence of the devil (whether the devil *could* actually appear to someone) he did not hesitate to respond 'if there is a God there has to be a devil, right?' As long as this question is not satisfactorily answered, devil legends will continue to flourish.

NOTES

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seminar on contemporary legend held in Sheffield, England, summer 1985 and my informants David Becerra, Juan Bernal, Guillermo Retana and the Tijuana taxi driver.

2. See Elaine Miller, *Mexican Folk Narrative from the Los Angeles Area* (Austin: University of Texas, 1967), pp. 35-55 where she discusses the various narratives in which the devil appears.

3. See Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology* (London: Cape, 1967); Maria Corti, *An Introduction to Literary Semiotics* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University, 1978); Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University, 1977); Thomas A. Sebeok, Alfred S. Haynes and Mary C. Bateson, eds., *Approaches to Semiotics* (The Hague: Mouton, 1964); Cesare Segre, *Semiotics and Literary Criticism* (The Hague: Mouton 1973); Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California, 1977); Michael Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University, 1978).

4. Mark Glazer, 'Continuity and Change in Legendry: Two Mexican American Examples', in Paul Smith ed., *Perspectives on Contemporary Legend: Proceedings of the Conference on Contemporary Legend, Sheffield, July 1982* (Sheffield: CECTAL, 1984), pp. 108-27; Catherine J. Hinckle, 'The Devil in Spanish Folklore', *Western Folklore* 8 (1949), pp. 123-25; John Keller, *Motif-index of Medieval Spanish Exempla* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1949); William J. Wallrich, 'Spanish American Devil Lore in Southern Colorado', *Western Folklore* 9 (1950), pp. 50-55; and 'Some Variants of the Demon Dancer', in the same volume, pp. 144-46; Stanley L. Robe, 'Four Mexican *Exempla* About the Devil', *Western Folklore* 10 (1951), pp. 310-15. See also Barbara Allen Woods, *The Devil in Dog Form: A Partial Type-Index of Devil Legends* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California, 1959) and Artell Dorman, 'Speak of the Devil', in Mody C. Boatright, Wilson M. Hudson and Allen Maxwell, eds., *And Horns on the Toads*, Publications of the Texas Folklore Society, 29 (Dallas: Southern Methodist University, 1959).

5. See Estella Cortich, ed., *Teatro Medieval* (México: Colección Literaria Server, 1961); and Arthur León Campa, ed., *Spanish Religious Folktheater in the Spanish Southwest (First Cycle)* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico, 1934) for two versions of the shepherds' play concerning Adam and Eve.

6. J.E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962), p. 76.

7. Cirlot (1962), p. 80

8. Cirlot (1962), pp. 106-107.

9. Cirlot (1962).

10. Glazer (1984), pp. 108-27.

11. Glazer (1984), pp. 125-26.

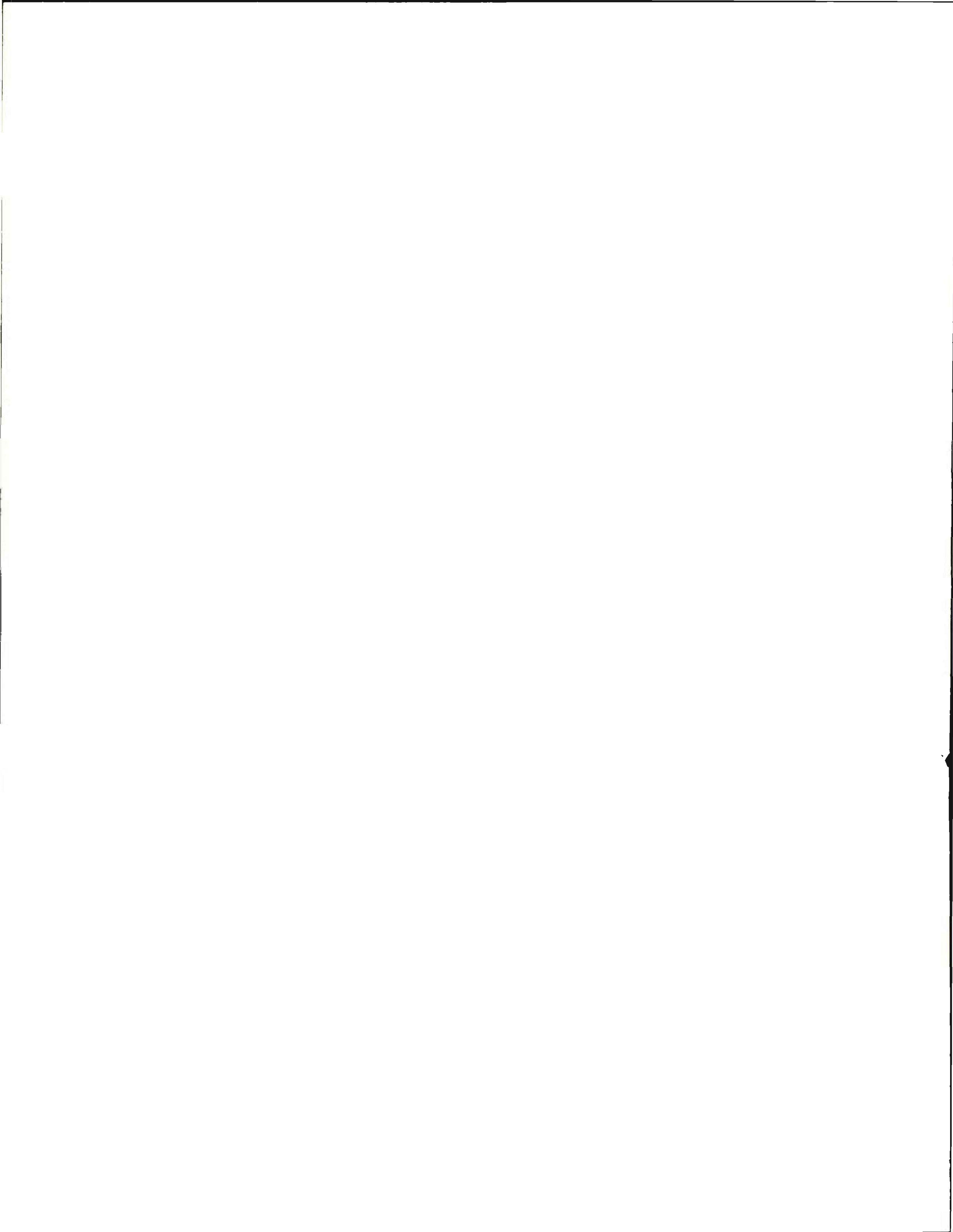
12. See Georgina Boyes, 'Belief and Disbelief: An Examination of Reactions to the Presentation of Rumour Legends', and Paul Smith, 'On the Receiving End: When Legend becomes Rumour', in Smith (1984), pp. 64–78 and pp. 197-215 respectively.

13. Paul Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon, 1967), p. 5.

14. Ricœur (1967), p. 28.

PART 3

LEGEND AND SOCIETY



THREE LOCAL STORYTELLERS: A PERSPECTIVE ON THE QUESTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

Linda-May Ballard

Storytelling retains its popularity in the north of Ireland in the present day. 'The Vanishing Hitchhiker' may, figuratively, rub shoulders with the hero of *Märchen* at the fireside, while traditional tales are finding their way on to the concert platform. Interest is increasing in the tales preserved in the audio archive of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. Storytelling is alive, well, and stimulating attention.

There are a variety of reasons for this resurgence, especially of formalized interest in the contents of the audio archive. Some are related to current educational policies aimed to encourage the capacity for verbal communication, others to an associated desire to improve community contacts, particularly between young and old. Other reasons, which may be of particular relevance to the less formalized interest in storytelling, are reflected even by local landscape, and may be deduced from the words of storytellers as they relate and discuss their tales.

There is, for instance, a fairly conscious desire to state continuity, to relate present to past. One woman, an urban-dwelling school teacher, remarked on her reasons for continuing to place mayflowers outside the door of her modern town house,

> I think it's a nice idea, you know, that eh, Mary [i.e. the Virgin Mary] would come to the house. I remember when I was small, I used to get up in the morning and rush out to see if the flowers looked crushed, and then I really believed she had stood on them. I know now it was just that they were withered, you know, from lying there over night. But em, at the time, I thought this was great, you know, that she actually had come and stood outside our door, and that our house was going to be blessed for the year. And really that's, you know, I just think it's a nice idea, and I'd hate it to die out.[1]

Bonfires blazing on Midsummer Night outside newly built rural dwellings also illustrate an awareness of past tradition which in some cases may be continued simply because it is traditional. In other cases, the observance itself retains sufficient energy and significance to ensure its maintenance as a part of everyday or seasonal life. Eleventh Night bonfires (lit the night before the annual Orange Processions on 12th July celebrating King William's victory at the Battle of the Boyne, and Protestant supremacy in Ulster), and fairy trees inconveniently situated outside the kitchen window of yet another modern bungalow and left unmolested 'for fear', are among the many examples of past traditions keeping pace with the present day.

Protestant and Catholic cultures in Northern Ireland, while they appear to be diametrically opposed, do in fact have many points of contact. The Protestant Orange procession of 12th July has its counterpart in the Catholic Hibernian march of 15th August. While much, even of that which is apparently divergent, may in fact be shared (for example both some Catholics and some Protestants may believe in fairies), there is a tendency to think of anything to which the title 'folklore' might be attached as 'Irish' and therefore Catholic. Consequently it may either be claimed as an emblem or shunned as undesirable. The Irish language can evoke similar responses, being eagerly learned by some, and avoided by others. One storyteller expressed his views on this question as follows:

L.B. What do you see as the importance of a knowledge of Irish?

Inf. Well, it's the badge of nationality for one thing. I don't want to go into the political aspect of it. But eh, it's the badge of a nation. A country without a language is only half a nation. And, the, the soul of Ireland is in the Irish language. The tradition of Ireland is in the Irish language. And along with that, it's a beautiful language. Some wonderful poetry and literature in it which is completely lost when translated. And, I believe that everyone . . . I mean, I don't want . . . I don't want Irish . . . Ireland to be unilingual. I would like that everyone knew Irish and, and English as well . . . When I talk about Ireland, I don't mean the political thing. I mean the Insula Sanctorum et Doctorum, the, the Ireland of Columcille, and Patrick and Brid of course, Pearse and Connolly as well, I mean, I don't want to, I believe in a United Ireland, I would love to see Ireland united, and em, though I don't always agree with some of the things that's being done by people who are trying to achieve that aim. And eh, what else can I tell you?

L.B. Well I mean, to someone like me, now, who is Protestant, what, eh,

what would you say to me if I wanted to learn about Irish culture?

Inf. Go ahead with it, there's nothing to prevent you. Incidentally I was at a, a get together in [. . .] on Friday, and eh, one of the leading lights of the [. . .] Gaelic Association is a Protestant . . .

. . . I never had, really, very much interest in politics. I was always very Irish in my outlook, but I never was associated with any political party, or any political organization. I have strong opinions, you know, about all sorts of things, about religion as well as politics. I don't see eye to eye with a whole lot of things, you know?

L.B. What would your view of a United Ireland be like?

Inf. Well, I would like to see a United Ireland where the Church and State would be separated completely and that there would be equal opportunities and equal liberties for all persons, and respect for all traditions. I would like the Irish language to be the first official language, and English the second official language, as it is now in the twenty-six counties. And, I would like some sort of a parliament to be here in Ulster, when I say Ulster, I mean the three other counties as well, Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan along with the six counties [constituting the political unit of N. Ireland, often loosely referred to as 'Ulster'—L.B.] for to protect the rights of the, of the Protestant majority, I'd like that. Eh, I'd like also a regional parliament for Leinster and for Connaught and Munster with a central government maybe in Athlone or somewhere near the centre of Ireland, and I think every, all people's rights would be regarded then . . .[2]

Some attention needs to be focused on this issue, as it bears a relationship to the repertoires of three local contemporary storytellers to be reviewed.

All three are practising Catholics. Their repertoires therefore are not being put forward as representative of the entire spectrum of contemporary narrative in the north of Ireland. Rather, they have been selected in order to highlight the significance of the issue of cultural identity, an issue which informs their repertoires, and which is also significant to the way in which such storytelling may be perceived in the north of Ireland.

The three men are not acquainted with each other. Their repertoires therefore are not related by actual contact nor by the possibility of mutual influence. 'John McBride' and 'Sean MacManus' were born within a few weeks of each other in 1916. 'James McVeigh' is about fifteen years younger. All are urban dwellers, although in 1971, the population of the town in which James McVeigh lives numbered 7,634.[3] John McBride is now

resident in a Scottish New Town, but he was born in a rural environment, posthumously, and was raised by his grandparents. It was from his grandfather that he began to learn his substantial repertoire. The selections are intended to illustrate both form and plot used by each storyteller.

James McVeigh, the youngest of the trio, might be described as a 'passive tradition bearer'. He is an ardent member of Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann, the organization devoted to the promulgation of Irish traditional music, but although he may occasionally sing, he does not consider himself to be a musician. A sporting man with a taste for hunting, greyhound racing and other pursuits, he argues that sport and music do not mix with politics. He traces his interest in local tradition to his habit in his boyhood and as a young man of 'ceiliing' (night visiting) in the home of an older man for whom he retains a profound respect. From this older man, who was well versed in the lore of the area, James McVeigh learned a considerable amount of local history. His storytelling repertoire, and his skills as a narrator, are perhaps not as great as those of the other two storytellers. He is, however, intimately acquainted with the lore, history and geography of the area into which he was born.

There is a distinction between the general body of oral tradition known to James McVeigh and his repertoire of more tightly structured oral narratives, although, as the examples chosen from his repertoire show, most of these are also closely related to his home area. Most of his narratives tell of fairly recent events, interpreted in a familiar 'traditional' framework. The first of the three accounts deals with the familiar idea of the curse of the alien or gypsy woman, and includes the theme of a tract of water claiming a life. The tale encapsulates or closely relates to traditional themes, although its setting is modern. The second of James McVeigh's tales asserts proper order and refers to the warning of 'the old people' that this must be observed. His third tale asserts the power of the priest, and, like the second, states the rectitude of the Catholic faith. Many of his tales deal, as do these three, with the working of fate, a theme which may have become especially important to this storyteller in the wake of personal tragedy.

1. There's a, there's a rumour going now, I suppose you heard about it, that, eh, you remember the wee itinerant lad that was drowned in the canal at Newry? And eh, the gypsy woman was supposed to put a curse on the canal that it would claim the lives of fourteen . . . the child's mother. Do you remember, he, he stole a car or something,

and . . . he stole a car in Dundalk, or something, and, and he was only a young fellow, seventeen or eighteen years of age and the police car chased him, and you know where the itinerant camp is in Newry, there? He run down, and he jumped into the river, and he was drowned.

2. He was a great fiddle player. In fact, he's, he's a member of that pop group now . . . and I had heard him playing one day, and we were up at the Fiddler of Oriel competition in Monaghan, and I met his father, John, and he had the wee lad with him, I suppose he would have been eleven or twelve year old at this time, and eh, I got the lad to play me a couple of tunes, he was a good fiddle player, and eh, the father said, he said, 'We haven't much time', he says, 'we're going till a concert'. They were doing a concert that night in Ballyconnel or somewhere, down in County Cavan. And eh, he played a few tunes for me, anyway, but eh, the father invited us to come some night, up to Derrylin for a, a night's music. But we never managed to get up, and eh, I hadn't saw John for maybe three or four years, and I met him one day, and I asked him, says I, 'Well, what about the young fellow, did he stay at the violin, or did he give it up?' And he told me that he was dying with leukaemia. And eh, Jimmy McGurk, the man we were talking about, his daughter-in-law comes from Co. Fermanagh . . . and she kept me informed about the progress of the fellow how they were, lad was going on. And I was down in it one night and she told me that he was in the late stages of the leukaemia and his hair had fell out, and that they were bringing him to Lourdes, and that eh, the doctors and all had advised against it, that he wouldn't make the, he would hardly make the trip. And eh, they brought him on anyway, and eh, he came home from Lourdes and his hair, the hair started to grow again, and he started to put on weight, and was starting to live a normal life again and starting to play the violin again. And he was brought to Enniskillen Hospital for to do tests, and eh, they could find no traces of leukaemia. They brought him in for a check-up, and then they brought him back in again, and they kept him for three months. And they brought specialists across till examine him, and they could find no traces of leukaemia, and now, he grew, he grew out, he's a massive size of a fellow now, and he's, he's living a normal life and playing music away. And there was a big write-up in the *Sunday World*, it was the whole middle page, about this case that was at Lourdes. But eh, the church is very slow, like, for to claim anything like this, it has to be, it has to be checked and rechecked, like, and, but the fellow's living a

normal life now, and he's playing with the group now, and that's fifteen or sixteen years ago. The fellow's still normal, leading a normal life . . .

And, eh, his sister was a young girl, in the pink of her health, and she was going to Dublin to do a bit of shopping, shortly before Christmas. And she was killed in a freak road accident. And eh, the old people would tell you, 'Never . . . ' if anybody's sick, or dangerously ill, that you should never pray for them to get better. You should pray for God's will to be done. And, if it's God's will that they get better, if it's God's will that they get better, well and good, but for to ask that they get better, that if they do get better, there'll be someone else in the family taken in their place. And eh, this girl was in the prime of life, and in perfect health, and she was killed, and the young fellow, he was cured, and he's better, and she, of the family, that they least expected to go, she, she's dead.

3. There was a Protestant woman here in Dungannon and she had a child in the South Tyrone hospital, and Dean Quinn was going in, to make his visits round the hospital and he met this woman just at the door coming out, crying, and he stopped her and asked her was there something wrong. And she said, eh, 'My child's dying'. And he said, 'And who told you your child was dying?' And she said the doctors had give him up, and there was no hope for him . . . and the nurses had told her like, that to prepare for the worst, that the wee fellow wouldn't live much longer, he would hardly over the night.

And the Dean put his hand on the woman's shoulder, and he says, 'Come on in to we see your wee boy', he says. And he went in, and he prayed at the wee fellow's bed, and he said to woman, he said, 'Missus, go you home, your wee child'll be alright'. And she still insisted, like, the doctors had, had no hope for him. And he said, 'There's nobody can tell you that your child's going to die. There's nobody can tell you when he's going to die', he says. He says, 'There's only one man', he says, 'can tell you that, and that's the man above'.

So, the child got better, made a great recovery, and got better. But there was two Catholic women, and they were going on one of these pilgrimages to Lourdes, and eh, this Protestant woman was a neighbour woman of theirs, and was out and in of their houses, you see. And she was talking about, the woman were talking about, they were going to Lourdes, and this Protestant woman said, 'Well, I suppose it'll be an experience, the trip, out to Lourdes and all, it'll be an experience for you. But', she says 'you don't have to go to

> Lourdes', she says, 'for a cure'. She says, 'You have Lourdes at home with you', she says, 'and yous don't know it'. She says, 'It was Dean Quinn', she said, 'that cured my child'. And that woman, like, to this day will swear, that it was whatever the Dean said, or whatever, he was a very saintly man, and a very, very humble man, like. He was, he was no man for the limelight. He was, he was, he was a great man and he knew every one of his parishioners, every one of them, he knew them by their Christian names, like, from the youngest to the oldest, he knew them all, and he made it his business of going round, and meeting them, and seeing them.

James McVeigh states that he is not interested in politics, thus dissociating himself from the confused contemporary political condition of the north of Ireland. Nonetheless, his repertoire of stories and his knowledge of local oral history combine to assert his links with the past and to make an indirect statement of his sense of cultural identity, very much in the spirit of the remarks on the Irish language, quoted above. In James McVeigh's third story, even the Protestant woman states the power of the Catholic priest, just as it needs to be stated that a prominent member of the Gaelic Association is Protestant. One implies, the other states, the need for 'all people's rights' to be regarded and for faith to be retained in one's own set of values. Incidentally, some Protestant storytellers continue to recount tales in which a Catholic priest succeeds in exorcizing an undesirable spirit when a Protestant clergyman has failed. When told by Protestants, and often when told by Catholics, this tale is recounted in order to express a similar idea.

Like James McVeigh, *John McBride*'s storytelling is an expression of links with the past. He began at an early age to learn tales from his grandfather, and continued to assimilate information about the history and lore of his birthplace. From this oral history, he compiles genealogies of families from his home area, and his story repertoire includes *Märchen* and legend, in addition to historical material. He has taken great trouble to preserve this information. Lacking an audience for his stories in an era during which, in his own words, people preferred to listen to Bing Crosby, he wrote his tales down in order to maintain them in his memory. He first agreed to have his stories recorded out of concern that they should not be lost after his death. This awareness of the significance of his stories as cultural artefacts is entirely his own, and he is a perfectionist, diffident about his own performance as a storyteller, which he claims presents only a shadow of the manner in which these old tales were told to him.

He is ecumenically minded and, while he tells many stories which assert the power of the Catholic priest and the rectitude of the Catholic faith, he dissociates himself from the ideas which they express. Before telling them to me for the first time, he courteously established that I, a Protestant, would not be offended by them. On the first occasion that I heard from him the well-known story of the Protestant recalled from Hell (the third of his stories) I enquired, 'Is it traditional Catholic thought that all Protestants are condemned to Hell?' Characteristically, the narrator responded with a story:

> There's the story told about, eh, a man went up to heaven, and straight up the middle of the place was a very high wall. And he says to Peter, he says, 'What's that high wall all about?' He says, 'That's the Protestants in there', he says. 'The Catholics think there's nobody in heaven but theirselves. They're all on the other side.'[4]

John McBride is fully aware of the ideas communicated through stories such as 'Biddy give us a drink', the first of his stories (the title is the narrator's). He prefers to tell tales like 'The Blacksmith', the fourth tale (also the narrator's title), and is concerned that he should not be misunderstood when recounting the others. These he faithfully preserves as a facet of the cultural background in which he was reared, but he is critical of their content, describing them as holding 'the seeds of Ireland's problems'. His pride in his heritage is tempered by this awareness of the contextual implications of certain of his stories.

1. The girl in this story was a Catholic girl, and she was aged about sixteen. She worked for a non-Catholic family. She was a good worker, and they treated her well. Her mistress was in her late fifties, and a very pleasant [?Protestant] she was. One day they were out in the garden sewing, and all of a sudden the mistress asked Biddy if she would sit all night with her when she died. It was an unusual request, so Biddy hesitated for a minute, but not wanting to offend her mistress, she said she would be glad. 'Well', she says, 'if you do, I will leave you forty pound in my will'.

   Well now, forty pounds was a lot of money in those days, and I suppose you could say, to Biddy it was a fortune. At first the promise did, didn't bother Biddy, but as time passed, she began to get worried, and to seek advice she went to see her priest. They talked it over, and when Biddy decided to keep her promise the priest said that he would give her all the help [s]he needed.

   He told her to get a Bible, a white rod and some holy water and

when the woman died, Biddy was to place a table and a chair in the centre of the dead woman's room, draw a circle with the rod on the floor and on the ceiling enclosing the chair and the table and herself. Then sprinkle the holy water around the circle.

Time passed, and the mistress, who was then an old woman, died, and when Biddy heard the news she was terrified. However, she had given her word, and she was determined, but reluctant, to keep it. Before it got dark, B . . . Biddy carried out the instructions to the letter, and went and sat down at the table. She didn't know what to expect. Nothing seemed different from any other wake she had been, attended.

Then the time came. Biddy heard a slight noise coming from the direction of the bed. Was it a cat, or was it her imagination? No sooner had she dismissed the idea, that she heard it again, but this time much louder. Biddy did not look up, because her instructions, she was told to keep on reading at her Bible, and never to lift her eyes off it.

The sound got louder, Biddy was no longer in any doubt. The dead woman got up on her elbow in the bed, and said, 'Biddy, give me a drink'. Biddy didn't answer, but continued reading. The request became louder, and when Biddy did not answer, the request became a command, and when this had no effect on Biddy, the dead woman jumped out of bed, and without touching the ground, floated towards Biddy. But when she got the length of the circle, she couldn't penetrate it. Then she flew round, and up to the ceiling, still unable to get it. She flew a few times around the circle, looking for an entrance, but when she found none, she flew or gently floated out of the window. After some considerable time, she returned, went into her bed, and lay back motionless, just as she had been. But Biddy's vigil wasn't ended. She had to remain there till the morning sun came up, and then she was free to go. It was a long night, one that Biddy won't . . . won't want to experience again. It was a hard earned forty pounds . . .

Now, the first thing Biddy did the following morning was to go to the priest, and [s]he told him how the dead woman flew to the window etc. He says, 'I know all about it, she came to see me'. What the priest did or said, he didn't tell her. I wasn't told, but now that it's all over, I hope Biddy lived and enjoyed her hard-earned forty pounds.

2. Now, after the discussion was held in Omagh, there was a Father McCaffery, who was the parish priest of Omagh, and one Saturday

night he was going into Omagh, for confessions and on his way home, he was, eh, stopped by a number of em, people were going to shoot him. So eh, using his priestly power, he stationed the boys on, down on their one knee where they were pointing the gun at him, and left him there. The following morning, the ordinary people around there, going into the Sunday Mass, and then they were going out past them and the boys were still there. So he, being the oldest man, he went into the eleven o'clock, or the twelve o'clock Mass, and whenever he came back home after that, which would be around one o'clock, 'Well, yous have been there all night, yous can go home now'.

So eh, of course the gunmen had been seen by the people going and coming from Mass, and when they were released, they ran away, and most of them emigrated. True or false, I say down here, I don't know, it's just worth the telling.

L.B. Were those Protestants who were going to shoot him, then?

J.M. Uhuh.

3. And em . . . the students out at Maynooth used to walk from Maynooth to Lough Derg once a year and they would be led by a couple of priests, and they walked it. So they would stop in this farmhouse the night and they would stop in this, and sleep in the shed, I suppose, in those days. And there was one farmhouse along the road who was a Protestant. So, this year when they were approaching this farmhouse, the man in charge, the priest in charge of them says, he says, 'I wonder what kind of a reception will we receive here this year?', He says, 'You know the man's dead'. And he continued on, he says, 'It's a pity', he says, 'that he's in Hell, because he was a good man'. Which seems a contradiction. But I'm only, I'm now telling the story as, without comment.

G.T. Yes.

J.M. So they arrived at the house and they were suitably entertained as the old father had entertained them, and the next morning the young, young owner of the farm was standing at the door bidding them goodbye. So he . . . the line up was ended by the priest, so when he came to him, he says, em 'When you were approaching my house last night, you said my father was in Hell. Well', he says, 'if you don't prove it to me now', he says, 'I'll empty the contents of this gun in you'.

G.T. Uhuh.

J.M. So he, eh, got out his prayer books and started to pray, and after he's been praying a considerable time, he called on the old man by name. Continued praying again, and eh, called him again. And the third time he called him, the old man appeared, the dead man appeared in the room with him. So, he turned round, and he said to the son, he says, 'Is that your father?' 'Yes', he says, 'it is'. So he turned round to the father, and he says, 'When were . . .? Where were you, the first time I called you?' He says, 'I was in Hell'. 'Where were you the second time I called you?' He says, 'I was going out through the gates'. And he says, 'The third time you called me, I was coming up through the floor'. So, it was then he turned to the son, and he says, 'Is that your father?' He said, 'It is'. 'Well', he says, 'you can keep him now'. So, at this point, the son was fairly upset, and he pleaded with eh, the priest to send the father away again. So, whether he could or couldn't, or didn't I don't know, but he says, 'I'll confine him to one of your rooms'. So he confined him to a room and they eh, built up the door, and they built up the windows of the room. They confined the dead man.

Now, this story was told to me by an uncle of mine, and you remember, he used to sell milk round the town?

G.T. Uhuh, Joe.

J.M. And there was this particular house he used to call in for, and have a cup of tea in it, this was where his tea, and he says, 'I told that story, in this house where the women was preparing my tea. And there was an old man who any, who was his, her father, was sitting beside the fire. And when the story was ended, the old man says, he says,'That story you have told is true'. He says, 'I knew the men, I knew the people well, they were Millars'. Now, my uncle finished the story by saying, 'Now, I can't remember whether he said they were Millars by name, or millers by professions'. That's the end of that story.

4. Now, once upon a time there was a blacksmith called Dan, and he had a forge or workshop in Magherninny. He was a very happy man, and always singing at his work. And then, one day, things seemed to go all wrong, things seemed to get on the top of him. A number of people had paid . . . hadn't paid him for his work done, and some had even taken permanent loan of his tools.

When he reached for his sledge hammer, it wasn't there. This was the last straw. As he moved around the anvil looking for his hammer, a dog crossed his path, and in his bad temper he kicked it. And the

poor . . . the dog was, of course innocent. Not knowing why the dog . . . Not knowing why he had been kicked, the poor dog went yelping out of the forge, and as the dog rushed out, a man walked in, dressed in black. He bid Dan time of day in the usual way, and continued. He said, 'I have been passing your forge for the past forty years, and today is the first time that I've been able to enter. You were always so happy at your work, your company didn't suit me. You see, I am the devil, and I only seek out the company of disillusioned and angry and distressed people. And that is why I've called to see you today'.

Dan knew what the devil had said and, was true, so, naturally, that he began to excuse himself, and pour out a litany of his troubles. The devil was not interested in his recital, he only wanted Dan for himself. 'Now', says the devil, 'I will make a bargain with you. I will give you three wishes, any wish you like, and if you agree to come, agree to come away with me at the end of seven years'.

The idea appealed to Dan, for he saw in the offer a way to get his own back on those who had caused him all his sadness. 'Right', says he, 'it's a bargain. Now, here are my wishes. I wish that if anyone steals my tools, that their hands will become locked around them, until I say "Yes". That if anyone climbs my apple tree, he will have to remain there till I take him down, because I have been troubled for some time with people stealing my apples, and that no money will ever leave my purse without me saying so'.

'Your request', said the devil, 'will be granted. So have a good time for this next seven years, till I come back!' The devil then departed.

From that moment onward, everything went well with Dan. His conscience gave him a little prick now and again, but that soon passed, as he was too busy working and making money. Time passed quickly. At length the seven years came to an end. The days of sunshine are over, and the winter was round the corner. Promptly on time, the devil arrived, and addressing Dan he said, 'Well, Dan, I have kept my part of the bargain. Put on your coat and come with me'. 'Okay', says Dan, 'just give me time to finish shoeing this horse. This girl is one of my best customers and I never disappoint her'.

'That'll be all right', says the devil, 'but don't take, take up too much of my time'.

'Hand me over the sledge', says Dan.

So, the devil went over, and brought over the sledge to Dan, but when he went to hand it to Dan, he couldn't let it go. So, the devil says, 'You've me beat'.

'Well', says he, 'I won't let you go', he says, 'except you promise to go away'.

'All right', he says, 'I'll go away and I'll give you another seven years'.

Dan agreed, and the devil left the forge, and his tail between his legs.

This seven years was a bonus and Dan made the best use of it. Time passed, and the seven years came till an end, and the devil arrived for, for Dan a second time. He was determined there'd be no mistakes this time, so he stood at the door and waited on Dan to join him.

There was nothing Dan could do about it, so he pulled on his coat and joined the devil. As they were passing the garden, Dan saw an apple. He said to the devil in a casual way, 'Go over there and get me an apple. I want one for you, and one for myself. It will help us to keep the thirst off on our way'.

Off the devil went, and as soon as he climbed up the bush, he became stuck and he couldn't get down again. Dan was delighted, and of course the devil was furious, but there was nothing he could do about it, so he promised Dan if he let him go, he would give him another seven years. Dan agreed, and the devil went.

Looking forward to seven years again, was a very long time, but the period came till an end, and the devil came back again for Dan. This time the devil was very alert and determined not to be taken in by Dan a third time.

Dan closed his forge, forge, his [laughs] forge door, looked around the place where he had spent so many years and then he turned round and walked with the devil down the road. Now, their journey took them through the village, so he said to the devil, 'I'm going in here for a last drink. I never passed this pub in my life'. The devil wasn't suspicious and insisted on accompanying Dan into the pub. As they were about to enter the pub, Dan put his hand in his pocket and found that he had no money, so he said to the devil, 'You turn yourself into a coin, and when I buy the drink with it, and they put you into the money till, you can slip out, and we'll have the drink for nothing'.

The devil obliged, and Dan put the coin in till his purse and returned home. You'll remember that one of the gifts the devil gave Dan, that was, any money went into his purse couldn't come out without his permission. The devil was a prisoner in Dan's purse. Dan put the purse down on the anvil and began to beat it with his hammer. The devil began to squeal and beg for mercy and he said to

Dan that if he let him out of the purse, he will go away and never trouble him again.

Dan agreed to this, and the devil went off, defeated. And what about Dan? Well, what's your guess? I'll tell you. He lived happy ever afterwards.

Like James McVeigh and John McBride, *Sean MacManus* has an interest in the past and a strong respect for his predecessors. It was he who voiced the cultural and political aspirations quoted at the beginning of this paper. It is clear that he has a strong sense of cultural identity, and this has a bearing on one of the uses to which he puts his repertoire. This includes anecdotes culled from personal experience, fictional stories made by himself on the basis of personal experience, stories heard from his father and from other oral sources which, when told by him, may exhibit a degree of literary influence, and stories modified by himself from literary sources, such as the tales of Hans Anderson. He describes himself as a compulsive tale-teller, who used to entertain his children with nightly storytelling sessions, and he now tells stories on any social occasion when he is given the opportunity. He has written a book (in Gaelic) of his reminiscences of life in Belfast, and he has also made cassettes accompanied by scripts of selections of stories in Gaelic. While he is skilled at storytelling both in English and in Irish, he uses stories told in Gaelic as a medium through which the language itself may be communicated and taught.

1. Albert Fry was President of the Gaelic League a few years ago, and he was always very busy opening Feiseanna and all sorts of Gaelic functions. One day he was on his way to Newcastle to open Feis an Dun to give an oration, driving his car through Co. Down and he was just about a mile outside Balyhornan when the car suddenly stopped. So Albert got out of the car and examined . . . the clutch was all right, the tank was full, the wheels were alright, the brakes, engine, everything seemed O.K. Wondering, standing there scratching his head, trying to think what could be wrong with the car when he heard a very coarse voice saying behind him. 'An bhfuil rud eigin cearr le' do gluaisteann, a dhuine uasal?' [Is there anything wrong with your car, sir?—L.B.]

He looked round, didn't see anybody. He says, 'Who spoke to me?' And this big horse says till him, 'I spoke to you. I was asking you what was, is there anything wrong with your car'.

Oh, he nearly nearly, collapsed, he nearly fainted. And he says,

'Oh, oh, I don't know'. So the horse came out, and he looked in, into the car, and he says, he's still talking in Irish all along. He says, 'It's the points. Your points is spent'. He says, 'Have you another set of points?' Albert says, 'Aye'. 'Well', he says, 'get them in. That's what's wrong with your car, get the points in'. So, he put the points in and put the key into the ignition and turned it and the engine started. The horse says, 'Ta tu ceart go leor anois. Slan leat'. [You're alright now. Cheerio.—L.B.] Albert got into the car, in trembling, headed into Ballyhornan, went into the pub, and he said, McKeown's pub, in Ballyhornan, and he says to John McKeown, he says, 'Give me a glass of whiskey quick. I'm after getting a terrible, terrible fright'. McKeown says, 'What happened you?' 'My car stopped down the road there, and I didn't know why, I couldn't figure out what was wrong with it, and this, this big horse came out of a field and spoke to me in Irish, and told me in Irish what was wrong with it'. McKeown says, he says, 'Was it a big black horse?' He says, 'Aye, it was'. He says, 'You're damn lucky it wasn't the brown horse. He doesn't know a word of Irish, and he knows damn all about motor cars!'

2. Then there's another one about a horse. This is another one I used to tell. Eh, Willie McCann and Paddy O'Neill were two fellows were at school along with me. They were great friends of mine, and they were both born on the same day, they were great mates, they always knocked about together. They were born on the same day, and the same water baptised them. And they grew up to be men, and they still were great comrades, and discussed all sorts of things with one another, religion and politics. So, they made a pact that whichever one would die first, if at all possible he would come back and let the other fellow know what the other world was like.

So, Willie McCann died, eventually. Paddy O'Neill was heart broken. But he was waiting every day whether he'd get word from his old friend. Years went past, and he never got any word, until one day he was walking up Divis St, and he just got to the corner of Dunlevey St there, when someone . . . he heard a voice saying, 'Awk, is it yourself, how are you doing Willie, [sic] how are you doing?' And Paddy looked round, he couldn't see anybody he says, 'Who spoke to me?' And this big horse, it was a horse and cart and coal cart, and big, big white horse. The horse says, 'I spoke to you'. He says 'Do you not recognise me? I'm Willie McCann, your aul mate. Remember the way we used to talk about the other world? There is no other world'. He says, 'You come back in this world, you come back as cat, or dog, I'm lucky', he says, 'I come back as a horse'. He

says, 'There was a fellow died the same day as me, and he come back as a snail'. He says, 'Buddha was right after all'.

So they started talking to one another, about what it was like to be a horse. 'And', he says, 'a horse's life's not too bad. I'm working for Paddy McParland, the coalman. Right enough, I've a hard time of it sometimes. Now, that coal cart', he says, 'is nearly empty now, but this morning when I got it filled, down at the Queen's Quay it was a terrible weight, and pulling it through all these cobbles, cobble streets, was a hard job'. But he says, 'Paddy McParland's very good to me. He has a great big field up at the top of the Glen Road, with plenty of grass in it, and a lovely stable for me to sleep in. And there's a big mare up there, and she and I get on great together'. And while this conversation was all going on, all of a sudden, the horse says, 'Take yourself off quick', he says, 'I'll see you again sometime. Here's Paddy McParland coming, and if he knew that I could speak, he'd have me shouting "English coal"'.

They used to shout that, you know, years ago. That's another one. I made that one up myself.

3. This is the version that I heard from my father. Willie Gallagher was a blacksmith. He was a scoundrel, and drunkard. And eh, he used to go out every night and come home paralytic, small hours of the morning. One night he was in the pub among his friends, he was complaining about the hard life that he had in the forge, working hard, the sweat of his brow, for all the money he got. He says, 'There must be an easier way of getting money, than working as a blacksmith in a forge'. And his mate says, 'Oh aye, there's an easier way than that. Did you ever hear tell of the Black Art?'. 'Oh', he says, 'I did. That's to sell your soul to the aul lad below'. He says, 'Aye'. He says, 'How do you get in touch with him?' 'Oh', he says, 'you just say the Lord's Prayer back to front'. 'Is that so?'

So he went home, and he was thinking and thinking about this, and for the first time in many years, he never went to Mass, or never prayed, or anything. For the first time in many years, he got down on his knees at the bed, and he said the Lord's Prayer backways. He had to go and get a prayer book first of all, he hardly knew it frontways, never mind backways. But he said the Lord's Prayer backways. And no sooner had he finished than there was a flash of thunder, flash of lightning and a blatter of thunder and when he turned round, the devil was standing on the floor. He says, 'I'm Lucifer, the Prince of Darkness. Why have you called me?' He says, 'Well, what do you want? How much do you want for it?' 'Well', he says, 'I want a . . . a

purse of money that'll never be empty. No matter how much I take out of it, it'll still be full. And', he says, 'I want three wishes as well'.

The devil says, 'All right, what are the three wishes?' Willie says, 'If anyone sits in that chair there, in the corner, he'll not be able to rise out of the chair, until I let him. And if anyone lifts that brush in the other corner, he'll not be able to leave it down until I give him permission. If anyone puts his hand on the apple tree at the bottom of my garden, he'll not be able to take his hand off the apple tree, till I give him permission'. The devil says, 'Fair enough', he says. 'There's your purse. And I'll come back in seven years, seven years from today, to take you to hell with me'. And off the devil went.

And eh, he emptied some of the money out of the purse. He looked in the purse, the purse was full, still full. He emptied it up again. The whole table was covered with sovereigns. Willie says, 'This is great. I'm going to have the time of my life'. He spent more time than ever at the, in the pub now. His whole life was just wine, women and song, and he forgot all about the devil. One night, he was lying in a drunken stupor, and eh, was a blatter of thunder and flash of lightning, he looked round, and the devil was there. The devil says, 'The seven years are up, come on, you're coming to hell with me now'. 'Aw', he says, 'well, if I have to go, I have to go'. But, he says, 'I don't like leaving this . . . I wonder would you sit there, sit down there in that chair till I'll get my hat, and I'll go with you'. So the devil sat down in the chair and he couldn't get up. The way I said it in the Irish version was, 'Bhi a thoin greumadh d'en cathair'. His backside was stuck to the chair, he just couldn't get up.

And the devil says, 'Let me get up out of this chair'. 'Aw', he says, 'you can sit that chair, sit there to Till's Eve, you're never going to get up out of that chair. I'll tell you what, I'll let you get up out of the chair if you give me another seven years'. 'All right', says the devil, 'you've another seven years'. And so, off the devil went.

Aw, Willie carried on, drinking and gambling and womanizing and, the end of the seven years, he was just getting ready to go out on, on, on the booze again and when the devil came to the door, and caught hold of him. He says, 'Now, you're not getting away this time. I've got the hold of you, and I'll not let go of you until you're in the deepest pit in Hell', the devil says. 'Well, I tell you what, I'll be with you in a minute. Wait till I get my coat, but I wouldn't, I would like to leave this house a wee bit cleaner for the people that's coming after me. I wonder would you mind brushing the floor, and I'll be with you in a minute?'

The devil lifted the brush, couldn't put it down, and eventually he got another seven years. So, at the end of the seven years he come back and the devil says, 'Now, you're not getting away from me this time, you're coming to Hell now'. And then Willie says to him, he says, 'Satan', he says, 'do you ever be thirsty?' 'Thirsty?', he says, 'I've been in hell for millions of years. I'm sure you've often heard of the devil's own thirst. Certainly, I'm always thirsty'.

'Well', says Willie, 'lovely big juicy apples growing there at the bottom of my garden. Away out and get one. Quench your thirst for you'. So the devil went out and he put his hand on the tree and, hand was stuck to the tree, he couldn't move it. And eh, he says, 'Let me go. Let me go'. 'Oh', says Willie, 'you're not going. You'll stay there for ever'. 'I'll give you fourteen years'. 'I want you to promise me that you'll never come back near this house again, if I let you go'. The devil says, 'Fair enough'. So he let him go.

And eh, Willie says, 'This is great. No danger of the devil coming back in seven years or in fourteen years, and I'm going to have', he says, 'an awful hell of a time of it'. But that night, he died in his sleep. He went up to the Golden Gates of Glory, and St Peter put his head out, and he said, 'Oh, is it you, Willie Gallagher? Didn't you sell your soul to the enemy? Take yourself away to Hell's gates out of this'.

So he went down to Hell's gates, and he knocked at the gate, and the devil put his head out, and he says, 'Is it you, Willie Gallagher? Oh, you're not coming in here. You, and your chair, and your, and your, and your brush, and your, your apple tree. You'll play more, no more tricks on me'. 'Well, what am I going to do then?', he says. 'Where am I going to go? St Peter won't let me into Heaven, you won't let me into Hell, where am I going to go?' 'Wait a minute', says the devil. So he went, and he came back with a big wisp of straw, and he lit it from the fire, and he says till him, 'There you are, take this off, and make a Hell of your own'. And according to what the old people round Donegal say, that if you're out in the marshes at night out on the bog, you'll see a sort of a light in the distance, and if you head for that light, it seems as far away as it was the first time and if you keep following it, you'll get lost in the bog, for that's Will-o-the-Wisp and he has his own Hell along with him.

All three men show a strong sense of their awareness of and respect for the past, and while John McBride is critical of the attitudes in some of his tales, each man expresses a strong sense of cultural identity by means of his stories. James McVeigh exhibits these ideas in anecdotes which are completely assimilated into everyday life, and the traditional is maintained

in harmony with the contemporary. John McBride, making his wonderful repertoire of traditional tales available for future generations, sees himself almost as a bridge between past and future, and has deliberately brought with him from the past cultural items which, even in the face of indifference, he knew ought not to be lost. Sean MacManus uses traditional oral tales as part of his repertoire in order to promote an interest in 'the soul of Ireland'. He actively uses cultural means as his way of voicing and, if possible, implementing his political ideals. Similar ideals permeate the repertoire of James McVeigh, although less self-consciously. John McBride, while he tells stories which encapsulate the ideal of Catholic rectitude, tells them with reluctance. Each of these storytellers wishes to explore his links with the past, to uncover and to express his cultural heritage. If this heritage appears to be divisive, each finds a technique with which to deal with this without aggression, thus maintaining his cultural identity. Both James McVeigh and Sean MacManus disavow any contact with 'organized' politics, and while John McBride honestly tells tales such as the story about the 'Omagh Discussion', he tells them not to reveal an attitude he holds personally, but in order to communicate the attitude of his forebears. This is his technique for dealing with issues which might in other circumstances be given quite a different significance.

There is, of course, a strong similarity between the ideas of cultural identity implied or stated by these storytellers, and the thoughts which informed the nationalistic Gaelic revivalists of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In the preface to his collection of Ulster proverbs, published in parallel Gaelic and English text in 1907, Henry Morris remarked:

> Irish proverbs [are found] on the lips of the people. The average English speaking Irishman has not more than a few dozen proverbs that he knows and can make use of: the average Irish speaker has anything between three and five hundred proverbs, some even more, and he makes use of them every day of his life. They contain a good deal of his philosophy in a very handy form, and he uses them as guides and principles of action. The writer has often seen some of the most important issues of life decided by reference to some time honoured proverb. Now if we are to become Irish again, this Irish characteristic must not be lost. Our young people must be made familiar with the proverbs which have been the heritage and the helpmates of unnumbered generations of our ancestors; they must be encouraged to use them and keep them alive and to hand them down for future generations. It is for such young people that this book is compiled.

> The philosopher, the archaeologist, the folklorist, and the linguist may each find something of interest in its pages, but it is for the young man and the young woman who are endeavouring to get acquainted with their native and natural speech that this collection of proverbs and sayings is especially intended.[5]

The same writer had a sadder comment to make in his preface to a collection of the works of Art McCooey, a poet who is generally believed to have been born in south Armagh in the early eighteenth century. This book was published towards the end of 1916:

> I have to thank those friends of mine and of Irish literature who have shared with me the financial burden of this publication, for despite all our patriotism, books of this kind must still be published as a loss. But this very fact only demonstrates the need for such books: in a normal Ireland such a book would sell by the thousand, and pay for itself many times over. However, a sympathetic study of books of this kind will help to produce and recreate in us much of that mentality which a normal Ireland would have, for there are in these neglected poems thought waves which like the current in a live electric wire, only require our coming into contact with them, in order to communicate to us their inspiration, and charge us with thoughts and feelings that are alien and strange to an anglicised generation of Irishmen.[6]

If the Gaelic revivalists were doing no more than giving voice to a strain of popular thought, we can observe that this current of thought remains influential in shaping contemporary storytelling in the north of Ireland, and therefore in formulating and expressing facets of locally held attitudes and values. If, however, they found it necessary to manufacture a sense of cultural identity, their aspirations have had a profound and lasting effect. Bryan MacMahon remarks in his essay on the renowned storyteller Peig Sayers:

> Peig thought that what she had to say was unimportant until Maire Mi Chinneide and Lean Connellan, visitors who came to the island to learn Irish, convinced her of the opposite . . . towards the end of her days she complained that she was unrecognised but this was something of an exaggeration on her part. 'There will never again in Ireland be an old woman as Irish as me', she told me once in a plaint that is echoed in her work. By this she meant that there would never again live in Ireland a woman who had so indefatigably and eagerly committed to note a vast store house of oral lore and who had held the key to this treasury locked in her mind and heart and tongue, awaiting the day when Ireland,

> through her scholars, was again attuned to accept it and who also felt that her trusteeship would not go unregarded in Irish racial memory.[7]

Peig may have learned her sense of identity from outsiders, but it is clear that exactly this attitude has now become for many absorbed into the fabric of folk tradition. Whatever the history of such ideas, it is their presence and their influence which cannot be ignored. This is fundamental to the dilemma faced by each of the narrators cited here. Each simultaneously acknowledges the richness of this cultural heritage, the contribution it can make to contemporary society, and the potential divisiveness of these tales, or at least of the ideals they express and represent.

The study of contemporary storytelling in the north of Ireland must encounter these issues. Ideas of cultural identity, which are by some advanced with pride, may for others be the basis of fear and suspicion. Despite the complications, the contemporary storyteller must often respond to the urge to locate himself in a traditional pattern as he perceives it. This re-emphasizes the vitality of storytelling as a social force, and brings us into contact with the issues faced by our three storytellers.

NOTES

I am indebted to Mrs Maire O'Donnell, and to Liam MacCarrain, Johnny McHugh and Frank McKenna for all their hospitality and kindness to me, and for their help with the preparation of this paper.

1. Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Reel Recording (hereafter U.F.T.M. R) 85.208. This informant was describing a tradition which she had brought from Strabane to Newry. Usually, yellow flowers were (and in some cases, are) left outside houses to ward off the fairies and other influences. This lady sprinkles a mixture of blue and yellow flowers around, in order to welcome the Virgin Mary on May Eve.
2. U.F.T.M. R85.100.
3. Figure from Northern Ireland General Register Office, Census of Population 1977.
4. U.F.T.M. R84.149.
5. Enri O Muirgheasa, *Seanfhocla Uladh* (Dublin: Connradh na Gaedhilge, 1907) pp. vii, viii.
6. Enri O Muirgheasa, *Abhrain Airt Mhic Cubhthaigh agus Abhrain eile*

(Dundalk: Dundalgan, 1916), pp. xxviii.

7. Bryan MacMahon, 'Peig Sayers and the Vernacular of the Storyteller', in Alison Feder and Bernard Schrank, eds., *Literature and the Folk Culture, Ireland and Newfoundland* (St John's Newfoundland, Canada: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1977), pp. 83-85.

'FRANKLIN WAS WITCHED BY A HORSE': CONTEMPORARY ZUNI NARRATIVE

Keith Cunningham

Background

My wife Kathy announced the date (September 29th, 1984) and began asking 'Helen' (our funding agency requires that informants are guaranteed anonymity, so all names are changed) about Zuni health, 'What do you think is the condition of the health of the people at Zuni?' and listening to her answers. 'Uh, there are a few health problems . . . '

We were at Zuni, New Mexico, in Helen's home. The three of us and her younger daughter were sitting around the kitchen table, and Helen was looking at the pictures Kathy had taken of her painting pottery with a yucca brush and traditional natural paints. Her other two children were in the next room watching a movie being played on the family's videocassette recorder. The contrast between the centuries old tradition of Zuni pottery and the VCR well represented the reasons we were here. We were here because of a longstanding desire to work with one of the most frequently studied groups in the history of cultural analysis, and because we were testing the methodology we had devised to analyse Native American views of illness-health and disability-rehabilitation through their telling of conversational narratives.

Our interest in working at Zuni had begun almost exactly a quarter of a century ago in 1959 when my professor in a course on religion and culture had introduced me to what he called 'the Pueblo problem'. He had begun the exercise by having the class read and summarize Ruth Benedict's monumental work *Patterns of Culture*. Benedict used American Pueblo Indian culture in general, and the Zuni in particular, as examples of what she termed Apollonian cultures, '. . . all of whose delight is in formality and whose way of life is the way of measure and sobriety'.[1] Her famous account of the Zuni, particularly in comparison with a 'nasty' tribe described in a

later chapter, made their society seem like a Utopia realized. In marked contrast, the professor had us read Cushing's account of his life at Zuni.[2] Although Cushing never actually said so, it was clear from his many anecdotes that he considered Zunis to be backward, primitive, dirty and dangerous. After encountering these two very different views of the Zuni, the class read a number of other ethnographic reports and articles about the Zuni by anthropologists such as Stevenson[3] and Parsons.[4] None of the articles completely agreed with Benedict, Cushing or each other as to the essential nature of Zuni culture. My wife and I carefully read and discussed the class readings. We, like the class in general, were unable to draw any general conclusions, but the experience left us with a lasting interest in Zuni.

In 1978 we had an opportunity to actually visit Zuni for the first time. We had gone along on a field trip arranged by a Northern Arizona University colleague. He was interested in investigating traditional architecture and invited us to accompany him because we had done some work on the subject among Anglo-Americans. When we got there, we discovered that there was a night dance scheduled for that evening, and we arranged to stay and watch. Because she was known to our colleague, we had dinner that evening at Helen's mother-in-law's, and she volunteered to act as our guide to the dances. It was a bitterly cold evening (one thing that unites most of the descriptions of Zuni traditions is that it always seems to be bitterly cold when the dancers are dancing) and very dark. We had parked the university vehicle along a main road and were walking toward one of the houses where the dancers would perform. As we were going along a narrow passageway between two buildings, Helen's mother-in-law suddenly grabbed our arms and pulled us back against the wall. As we turned, we saw a young man dressed in a traditional kilt and moccasins with his body painted in a diagonal design, half turquoise and half white, and with tortoise shell rattles and copper bells ties around his ankles, which made an eerie clink-chunk, clink-chunk sound as he pranced by. During the next few years we made trips to Zuni whenever possible to witness night dances and *Shaloko*, the major event of the Zuni ceremonial year, and to research and photograph traditional Zuni activities. We prepared and published articles on a Zuni tale told in English,[5] and on Zuni breadmaking,[6] prepared a number of presentations for instructional use, and, as a part of the process, spent a great deal of time with Helen and her family. She and her culture were quite frankly one of the most interesting encounters we had ever had. At the first dance we attended, I

noticed one of the dancers had made a slight concession to the bitter cold and in addition to his kilt, bells, and rattles had added a sweat shirt which read, 'Evel Knievil Sucks'. It was precisely this blend of the familiar aspects of Anglo-American culture, and elements so alien that we felt we had been transported to another planet, that fascinated us. Helen's family had been leaders at Zuni, telling stories to anthropologists for at least one hundred years, and she told stories of what her grandmother told her Stevenson told the Zuni. She seemed to be at home in the worlds of the dancer and the sweat shirt. After spending some time visiting with her, my wife and I agreed we wanted to know Zuni better.

The second reason we were in Helen's kitchen had to do with folklore theory and methodology. Our interest in folklore, like that of many of our contemporaries, began with the so-called folk song revival of the 1960s and centred around folk music and folk instruments. This early interest gradually changed from the lore to the folk and the question of how people and culture are continually shaping and being shaped by one another. I had been one of the fieldworkers involved in the Library of Congress Nevada Folklife Project, and we had compiled an index to the 320 field tapes for the Library. As an outgrowth of that project, we had become convinced that the informal narratives people tell in conversation are an important indicator of their beliefs and attitudes and, when gathered from many tellers, a guide to Benedict's 'unconscious canons of choice'[7] which form the patterns of culture. We had spent the better part of three years listening to and classifying the 620 narratives we found on the Nevada tapes and had presented a convention presentation[8] and a paper scheduled for publication in the 1986 issue of *International Folklore Review*[9] which attempted to explain and demonstrate a method of collecting a substantial number of narratives from a wide number of people and analysing them as a window into culture. When an organization of our university sent out a request for proposals to become a part of an interdisciplinary project on Native American rehabilitation research and training, we were thus ready – or at least thought we were. Our final proposal, 'Concepts of Disability and Rehabilitation among Native Americans: An Ethnographic Approach', involved in its first phase extensive interviewing and tape recording at Zuni, identification of conversational narratives, and analysis of them in performance in order to discover the Zuni views of illness–health and disability–rehabilitation.

Zuni Narrative

Our contribution and the entire proposal apparently seemed convincing because they were funded. Here we were in Helen's kitchen, therefore, at the moment of truth which sooner or later comes to grant proposals. We had written and rewritten the proposal; we had drafted and revised a questionnaire; we had developed an accession and indexing system for the field tapes; and here we were asking questions and waiting to see if Helen's answers would involve relevant narratives which we could analyse.

The interview initially did not seem to be going as we had expected and predicted. Helen gave us a great deal of information about diabetes, paralysis, home nursing care programmes and other health care issues, but very few narratives and none which demonstrated that there were cultural factors involved in Zuni views of illness-health and disability-rehabilitation. We had stated in our grant proposal that the interview process would elicit the telling of informal conversational narratives about illness-health and disability-rehabilitation in addition to asking a standardized list of questions. The standardized list of questions seemed to be gathering standardized responses, and it was obviously time for some eliciting, and then the right comment did just that. My wife said, 'I remember when your daughter had pneumonia. Tell me about it'. And Helen did:

Helen: She had gotten—Oh, Mary had gotten pneumonia. She had it for a month and two weeks, and that's you know, and I, you know. She had gotten real skinny, you know. Her bones were showing and her ribs. And that's when the girl next—that works at the store—had come over here for a break. And she came to have some coffee and a cigarette, and she was lying on the couch, and I told her—Oh, she heard her coughing, and she said that she sounded like she was witched, you know. So I said, 'Are you sure?' you know, because I didn't think she was, you know.

I don't know how—how she could tell or what, but so that night we got a medicine man to come check here, uh, and he took a *lot* of stuff out of her that, you know, that much, you know. She had been complaining she couldn't keep her eyes open, and here he had taken stuff out of her eyes! And she couldn't hear, and I guess her ears had been clogged, and he took stuff out of her and her head, and her throat, and her chest, and her arms and legs and her joints.

Kathy: Oh, that poor little girl!

Helen: And her ankles. Gosh, she was a mess! And all. Her stomach because she couldn't keep anything down, and I guess what somebody had put

> in her stomach was just—she'd throw it up, you know, everything she ate, so she wasn't keeping anything down even liquids, so, uh, two days, right after the next day, you know, she just started eating again, and she kept her food in, and she got all right, and then, uh, within the next—within that week she was all ready to go back to school, and here I guess she had gotten over the pneumonia part maybe, but she, you know, just the other part that she had, too. She was trying to battle both of them at once, I guess, and just couldn't do it.[10]

Helen went on during this interview to tell stories about another time her daughter was witched, a time her other daughter was witched, when she and her mother were witched, and a story which opened another door:

> There was a little white—Franklin's classmate Harriet. She had, uh, about a month ago she broke her arm, and uh, she didn't—her mother and them were on a trip, and she stayed with a Zuni girl, and they had gotten a medicine man to, uh, to put her bones, and Joyce got her a medicine man to put her bones back into place, and when the mom came back, she took her to Gallup to, you know, have them X-ray the arm because she didn't believe her at first because that her arm had gotten broken because she fell out of a tree. The doctors there, you know, had seen the X-rays and they said, 'Yeah', her hand she had broken, and they were asking her all kinds of questions about how he did it and what did he do.[11]

After she had finished telling the story Helen added, in response to my question, that this kind of medicine man was a special kind called a bone presser who was different from the medicine man who treats people who have been witched. She also gave us more general information in response to the questionnaire, and after the tape recorder was turned off and packed away, she told us that she had another story that she wanted to tell but did not want to have tape recorded. It was the most marvellous (in the dictionary sense of 'causing wonder')[12] of all and told of the time her son was witched by a horse. The next time we interviewed Helen, I was very anxious to record this story and asked her about it very carefully. To my surprise she seemed to have no hesitation at all about telling it and rather seemed surprised at the extreme care used in asking her about it:

> He had been just playing outside at this lady's—that this lady and man that were working for my dad. Uh, and Ruth had come up, and they were all talking, I guess, and she just happened to look out the door 'cause my mom and dad had their door open, and she saw Franklin going by, and she saw that horse following him, so she thought, you know, that horse

> can do something to him, so she followed them, and here Franklin had gone and just, you know, squatted down behind a bush, you know, to hide from the horse, and he came up to him, and he just tapped him on the head. Well, I'd thought he had kicked him real hard 'cause, you know, I thought, that's what she meant, you know, 'cause she was pretty shook up, that lady. But anyway, it just came and it just picked up its foot and just hit him, tapped him on the head. I don't think it hit him real hard because he didn't, you know, he didn't—he wasn't crying or anything, and then it just went away. She saw—that lady is the only one who saw it 'cause everyone else at the other trailer and her husband was talking to my dad. It just happened so fast, you know, we decided to see what was going on.[13]

As I listened to Helen's stories of being witched, interspersed with information she gave us about diabetes and meningitis, I felt that our reasons for being in her kitchen were being fulfilled. We were at Zuni, and we were gathering an insider's view of what it meant to be Zuni, and it was every bit as exciting as we had expected. We were doing, furthermore, exactly what our grant proposal had said we would do; we were gathering (perhaps even eliciting) narratives which dealt with Zuni concepts of illness–health and disability–rehabilitation.

Since listening to Helen, my wife and I have gone on to conduct twenty-four other interviews at Zuni and have identified 105 narratives on the field tapes, ninety-two of which deal with illness–health and disability–rehabilitation. Of the ninety-two total narratives, twenty-four deal with witchcraft and/or medicine men's treatment of it, twenty-five deal with treatment by bone pressers, two describe a home remedy for fright, thirty-eight deal with illnesses perceived and/or treated in terms of the Euro-American tradition, and the remainder tell of personal experiences concerning subjects ranging from employment to artistic development. The twenty-five informants seem also to fall readily into three groups. Nine of them are from seven to twenty-nine years of age; nine of them are thirty to forty-nine; and the remaining seven are from fifty to seventy-five. We have begun to isolate the specific information contained in the narratives and are convinced that this phase of the project, too, is working. A clear, though extremely complex, picture of Zuni views of illness–health and disability–rehabilitation is emerging, and we are beginning to think in terms of a presentation on the subject for the National Symposium on the Cultural Dimensions of Native American Rehabilitation scheduled for the Autumn of 1986. We have begun the next year of the grant and are working

with the Ramah Navajo in another application of the methodology and generating another body of Native American narratives for comparison with the Zuni materials. Beyond their import and application to illness–health and disability–rehabilitation studies, the 105 stories are of value for folklore study and analysis in terms of the genres they represent, their prior history of collection, their contextual and performance characteristics, and their similarities and differences with other reported oral narrative forms.

Genre

The matter of genre classification of the Zuni narratives we collected is complex. We began simply by identifying narratives on the field tapes in terms of what Abrahams described as 'self-evident unity and integrity'.[14] For convenience in analysing the tales in terms of Native American concepts of illness–health and disability–rehabilitation as called for by our grant proposal, we grouped the stories in terms of the major topics they discussed (for example stories that 'deal with witchcraft and/or medicine men's treatment of it'), but from a larger folklore perspective the narratives are of only two basic kinds: personal experience narratives and supernatural legends.

A total of forty-four per cent of the stories are personal experience narratives, as Stahl described the form in her dissertation 'The Personal Narrative as a Folklore Genre',[15] and they deal with illness or accident and Euro-American health treatment in many cases. The topic is natural in light of the questions we asked, but it is also significant that fourteen per cent of the personal experience narratives did not deal with health but with various aspects of the informants' careers.

The informant who made the most use of personal experience narratives was a seventy-five year old lady who is one of the most famous inhabitants of the village. She is the granddaughter of one of the South-west's most innovative and critically acclaimed potters and is internationally recognized for her pottery work. During our first visit to her she told us a story of how she had learned to make pots as a child. Unfortunately, our tape recorder malfunctioned, and the tape which included that story is unintelligible. We visited her again (with a different tape recorder) and she again told us the story of how she learned to make pottery:

> They [my family] were going to the ranch, and I was too small to follow them that far [eight miles], and so they left me with my grandmother. We

liked our grandmother, so I liked to stay with her. She was making pots—all the work outside, you know. It's nice sunshine. She was just making so big pots, you know, and I watch her and watch her just wishing to ask her a little piece of clay, but I didn't say anything. Next time again, and she was making a dough, you know, to make some tortillas, or I don't know what she was going to make, and instead of clay I got a piece of that, you know, and made a pot from the dough, you know, and see, I put it on the stove, and it was there sitting up there, and I remember what I used to do. Before I tell you about this, I was making the little pots, you know, and putting them under the stove, and I remember what I did about the dough, too, and thing like that, you know. I just make them, shape them like animals, you know, and I put them on the stove, and they get nice and brown, and I eat them. And so one time I had—she went, 'Go to bed awhile now. I had some stew made and I wanted to warm it up for supper', she said. And so she went out to get some wood, and then I came in and got her clay, and she didn't see me. She brought some chips, she started a fire, and she moved the pot of stew over to the middle, and I kept on looking at, see if she find that where I got my clay, but I never tell her that I had the clay already making some pots, you know. As soon as I made one, you know, and I put it there and like that I didn't. I made lots of it, you know. The clay was about this big and then keep on breaking and smoothing them in my hand—palm of my hand, and then I just had a little cup of water, and I put my finger in that, you know, in my water, and I just shaped it like that. The next day I was in a hurry. I sure wanted to go home from school. I was down there again at the school. It was Friday that happened. I was making those pots, and Saturday and Sunday—Monday when we went to school I was so anxious to see them. And so when I came up, you know, she gave me some bread, you know. She said she made some tortilla bread with some beans. She dish out some beans and then a tortilla, and I ate that. Then I started to want to get at—but then I said, 'I haven't sweep, so I'm going to clean up before I can do on my pottery', she said. So I just went ahead and went out, you know, and calling some children, you know, and they play with me outside of our yard. And when finally Grandma she start sweeping behind the, oh! no! and she put her broom way under there, you know, and she started to sweeping, but she know that there is something there, and she keep on doing that, and then they start rolling around. 'What in the world?' And she pick up one and then said, 'Come here', she said, 'Did you make this?'

'Yes', I said.

'You should have sat by me, and I help you make these pots so you know just like your grandmother', she say to me.

> I felt sure she would say, 'You're wasting my clay', she might say. I was waiting for that kind of words, but she was too nice to, you know, tell me I should sit by her and she teach me to make pottery, so I learned how to make pottery just like Grandma.[16]

Her story goes on at great length to tell how her grandmother also generously provided clay for other children, but the most striking feature about the tale for us was the fact that it closely resembled the account she had given when we first visited her and the edited version which her biographer had collected from her and published in a book about her life and art.[17] Her familiarity with performing her story was further demonstrated by the fact that she stopped talking when the tape recorder clicked off because the tape was full and started again only when we had inserted a new tape and it was running. The other personal experience narratives also showed a high degree of polish in their performance, which indicated they had been thoroughly traditionalized by their tellers.

The remaining fifty-four narratives in the collection (fifty-one per cent of the total) deal with what would in Anglo-American culture be considered the supernatural. As Brunvand notes, supernatural legends (excepting ghost stories) are rare in Anglo-American tradition,[18] and there is a frequent tendency to rationalize such as do exist when they are told. For example, two of the supernatural legends which I have most frequently collected are stories of what is usually called 'The Spook Light' of Missouri and the 'Ghost of Coal Canyon', a story which is reported from northern Arizona. Both of these tales involve mysterious lights and both are frequently given rational explanations by those who tell them. Dr C.R. Hooper, a dedicated and innovative photographer and researcher, once spent a great deal of time in Coal Canyon until he was able to take a striking colour photograph which clearly shows the luminescence so often reported. He has, of course, a complicated explanation of the phenomenon which has to do with moonlight and reflection, and not the supernatural.

The stories we collected from Zuni about health care, however, though 'supernatural', do not suffer from these sorts of restrictions. The usual progression is from a description of some illness (such as tachycardia or a dermatological problem resembling worms under the skin) to a statement that the person was 'checked', the Zunis' English word for being examined and treated by a medicine man. The narrator may add that the sufferer 'got all right', but this outcome seems to be expected and assumed by the usual audience and performer and is often not mentioned. Other details, which

we elicited by direct questioning but which appear in most cases to be superfluous from the Zuni point of view, include the fact that the ill person 'had been witched', meaning that foreign objects such as blood clots or rotting human flesh had been magically inserted into his body by someone (questions of who and why seem to be of little importance) and then removed by a medicine man sucking or drawing them out. The stories about bone pressers had the same general structure. Someone has an illness involving a broken bone or general aches or pains, is treated by a bone presser, and 'gets all right'. The further information we gathered (again extraneous to or understood by the Zuni themselves) is that illnesses so treated are natural rather than witch-induced, and that the treatment consists of the presser, who has qualified for his position by having been struck by lightning, pressing on the afflicted spot with his hand or an arrowhead to 'put the bones back in place'.

The stories about bone pressers and 'being witched' share an emphasis upon the supernatural. Many of them are told as personal narratives; others are told of family; and some, like the story of the white girl who broke her arm and was cured by a bone presser to the astonishment of her family and the doctors at Gallup, are told in more general terms. It seems to me that the stories which are told in personal form are fully as traditional in context, structure and performance characteristics as those told about family or other people and that the differences could well be explained as a Zuni preference for the immediacy of a personal narrative rather than as a true genre distinction (which, anyway, might well be based on literary or aesthetic preferences from outside the culture). Especially in terms of narratives from other cultures such as Zuni, I feel strongly that there is no need to distinguish between first-person and third-person stories, and I shall hereafter refer to these Zuni stories simply as 'supernatural legends'. At any rate, the Zuni stories concerning their health care have a traditional structure, content and performance and constitute a major supernatural legend cycle existing among the Zuni, who live on the approximately one-half million acre Zuni Indian Reservation surrounded by other cultures which have different belief tales because they have different beliefs.

History of Collection

Anglo-Americans have been making extensive collections of Zuni oral narratives for over a century. There are many major published collections

of Zuni myth and Zuni folktale,[19] but the supernatural legends which are the basis for our current study have rarely been reported. Adair published one text which was clearly related to our materials:

> Yesterday my niece [age 4] was playing outside her house. Her playmate asked her why her brother didn't join them. 'Because he is sick', my niece replied. 'Oh, maybe that old woman____witched him.'
>
> She didn't know that old lady her playmate told her about. She came into my house and asked me what witching was.
>
> Other people say that maybe that old woman is a witch. She comes to visit at this house next door, but I don't tell my children she is a witch because they might say that in front of her and I don't want her to know that we are afraid of her. I am friendly to her and as long as I don't do anything to her she won't harm me.
>
> I would warn my children to keep away from her children and grandchildren.[20]

The story deals with fear of being witched rather than with being witched, but it is clearly related to those in our collection.

Beyond this story that Adair quotes, I have found few published examples of Zuni supernatural legends concerning health care. Tedlock, whose research concerning the performance of Zuni narrative is among the most recent and highly praised of its kind, wrote:

> Excluding less formal accounts of recent history and personal experience, Zuni narratives fall into two categories: Either they are a part of the *chimiky'ana'kowa* (origin story) which can be told at any time of day or in any season, or they are *telapnaawe* (tales) which are told only at night and during winter.[21]

Tedlock's analysis concentrates upon the two forms he describes and largely ignores informal narratives.

Context of Performance

It is an unwritten law that collectors collect whatever they are looking for, and that a major reason we found so many Zuni supernatural legends concerning health care was because we sought them out, but the question remains why there have been so few earlier reports of the form. The answer probably has to do with the people who most often tell the stories and with the context in which they are normally told. As promised by our

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grant proposal, we have looked diligently for correlations between the narrators and their narrations and have uncovered some interesting information. Education, for example, is of no value whatsoever in predicting whether or not a narrator will tell supernatural legends; among our stellar informants are a tenth-grade dropout and a lady with an Educational Specialist degree. Factors which seem to be significant are age and language and degree of traditionality.

Age and language appear to be important factors in the performance of Zuni supernatural legends concerning health care. The bulk of our narratives on the subject were told by individuals who are in their thirties and forties. Young or older Zunis interviewed told proportionately few of the stories. In fact, except for the children, interviewees under thirty or over fifty told only one of the stories. It is perhaps also significant that our informants in this supernatural-legend-telling age-group are also those apparently most at home with, and fluent in, the English language. Careful listening to their tapes reveals very few of the sorts of language problems which are commonly associated with Native American bilingualism, and these informants report that they usually tell the stories to others of about the same age, and that they often tell them in English.

The single most important factor we have discovered which correlates with the telling of supernatural legends about health care seems to be the informants' self-perceived degree of traditionality. A Zuni's degree of traditionality (or that of anyone, for that matter) is very difficult to assess. At the beginning of our project we struggled for a long time with the question of how to assess our informants' degrees of traditionality, until deciding to follow the commonsense advice of Dr Robert Currier, a clinical psychologist at the Black Rock Hospital, who told us that he always simply *asks* his Zuni patients about their traditionality. It seems to work. The people who told the greatest number of supernatural legends about health care were those who considered themselves 'somewhat traditional', while those who described themselves as 'very traditional' or 'not traditional' tended to tell far fewer.

Zuni Formal Narrative—A Comparison

The picture which emerges is that the Zuni supernatural legends concerning illness–health and disability–rehabilitation have a traditional content, form and structure and are told in informal conversational settings by Zunis in their thirties and forties who consider themselves

'somewhat traditional'. The content of the stories, their tellers and their context explain not only why they have been little collected in times past but also their relationship to other Zuni oral narrative forms which have been studied. Anthropologists who have conducted fieldwork at Zuni have tended to direct their attention toward the long, formal, highly polished myths and folktales which are a semi-official part of Zuni culture and are performed by men in the Zuni language. Thirty- to forty-nine-year old Zunis who consider themselves only 'somewhat traditional' are simply not the people previous collectors have sought.

Zuni supernatural legends about health care have also been largely neglected for the reasons which Stahl noted also impeded the collection and analysis of personal narratives: folklorists 'have considered the standard narrative genres more important or at least more interesting than such minor genres as the personal narratives'[22] and have felt 'that the personal narrative is not really folklore, or at least not a folklore genre'.[23] Stahl's dissertation convincingly disproves both of these assumptions, and what she clearly demonstrates to be true of the personal experience narrative is also true of Zuni supernatural legends concerning health care. These informal stories simply do not have the grace, majesty and appeal of the great cultural myths and tales told by the master oral performers, but they are believed narratives which are traditional in form and content and in certain performance characteristics as well. Tedlock identified twelve major performance characteristics used by his informants in their telling of Zuni formal myth and tale in the Zuni language, and it is instructive to note the similarities and differences in the use of these characteristics in Zuni English language narrative performance. The phonological performance characteristics[24] and word and phrase anachronisms[25] he noted—linguistic performance elements which he sees as meaningful and purposeful distortions of normal speech patterns—seem to be language-bound and are not a part of Zuni English-language narration. Likewise, onomatopoeia, which Tedlock sees as an important element of Zuni language formal performance,[26] seems to be rarely used in Zuni English-language narration (there is only one example on all of our interview tapes—the same number as in this essay). In fact, the slight tendency of our older narrators occasionally to use sentences longer than those of everyday speech[27] is the only grammatical variation in the performance of the English-language narratives.

In addition to the phonological performance characteristics, Tedlock also described three paralinguistic features: 'voice quality (tone of voice),

loudness, and pausing'.[28] The extremely complex and purposeful use of long and short pauses, which Tedlock carefully analysed as a part of Zuni language formal narrative performance, are not a part of the performance of Zuni informal conversational narratives; there are many pauses in the informants' narratives, but the pattern seems to be much less regular and performance-oriented than in the Zuni language narratives. Our older English-language narrators do make use of vocal dynamics in performances of their personal experience narratives but not in the highly structured, conventional ways Tedlock noted in formal Zuni-language narrative performance.

Tedlock quoted Boas and agreed that repetition was another major performance characteristic of Zuni formal-narrative performance and gave several examples from his recordings.[29] The older narrators on our field tapes, too, made extensive and effective use of repetition but again not in exactly the same ways Tedlock described as typical of formal Zuni-language performance.

In his chapter 'The Poetics of Verisimilitude', Tedlock noted further that the use of a great deal of quotation, the inclusion of aetiological detail and extensive keying were other Zuni-language formal-narrative performance characteristics.[30] Our older informants tended to make frequent use of quotation, but their percentage of quoted material was nowhere near the fifty per cent Tedlock noted for Zuni-language performance, and there is extremely little aetiological detail in any of the English-language conversational narratives we collected.

The very different use of keying between the formal tales Tedlock collected and our informants' narratives is particularly striking. 'Keying' is a term used in recent narrative study to describe the way conversation is transformed into narration. The keying used for formal Zuni tales, Tedlock found, involved extremely elaborate tags including audience response.[31] He also notes, 'There is some indication that the need for framing may be proportional to the extent to which the enclosed narration departs from what the audience accepts as reality'.[32] The personal-experience narratives and the supernatural legends we collected have almost no tags except for one unusual witchcraft story which was told by a lady who flatly stated that she did not believe in witches and began it with the statement, 'It's really weird'.[33]

What emerges from a close application of Tedlock's characteristics of Zuni formal oral performance to the informal English-language narratives we collected is that many of the characteristics he identified do not occur

in the performance of informal narratives and those that do are found primarily in the personal-experience narratives told by older informants who are undoubtedly more familiar with, and therefore influenced by, Zuni-language performance. It is important to reiterate that there is a sharp division among the performers not only in performance-style, but also in *what* is performed. Both the youngest and the oldest groups of informants include individuals who consider themselves either 'very traditional' or 'not traditional', but the younger people tell almost no narratives of any kind, and the older people concentrate on personal-experience stories about their career and lives, which reflect performance characteristics of formal Zuni-language narratives to some extent.

As a result of his extensive fieldwork at Zuni in 1947 and 1948, Adair predicted, in a 1963 tribal monograph published in 1966 as *People of the Middle Place*, that:

> We may postulate that when the present generation grows to maturity . . . the Zuni may find a new source of anxiety in the many individual problems besetting members of a rapidly changing culture. This anxiety may seek religious relief in an increased reliance on the activities of the curing societies.[34]

The generation Adair spoke of are now our older group of informants, and it is the group who were unborn at the time of his 1947-48 fieldwork and who were children at the time he prepared his tribal monograph in 1963 who contributed the bulk of the supernatural legend to our collection.

Richard Dorson wrote, 'A border separating—and connecting—two alien cultures is a fertile breeding ground for folk traditions. . .'[35] Dorson was, of course, referring to the area between the United States and Mexico, but there are temporal borders as well as physical. It is the thirty-to forty-nine-year-old informants in our study who live on the borders between cultures and between generations and most clearly feel their stresses. The young people's lives are still primarily controlled by their parents. The older (especially in a culture like Zuni which values maturity so much that its people tend to overstate ages as often as people in Anglo-American culture tend to understate theirs) seem to have largely resolved, or at least learned to live with, intercultural stress and cosmological concerns. It is the middle people of the Middle Place, in constant contact with Anglo-American and Zuni culture and daily beset with the complexities of child-rearing and parent pleasing, who need all the curing they can get, and who possess (and are willing to report to outsiders) one of the most extensive supernatural legend cycles in the United States of America.

NOTES

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18. Jan Harold Brunvard, *The Study of American Folklore*, 2nd edn (New York and London: Norton, 1978), pp. 108-109.

19. Frank H. Cushing, 'The Zuni Social, Mythic, and Religious Systems', *Popular Science Monthly* 21 (1882), pp. 189-92; Ruth Benedict, *Zuni Mythology*, 2 vols. (reprint; New York: AMS, 1969); and Elsie Clews Parson, 'The Origin Myth of Zuni', *Journal of American Folklore* 36 (1923), pp. 256-63.

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23. Stahl (1975), p. 5.

24. Tedlock (1983), p. 41.

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27. Tedlock (1983), p. 40.

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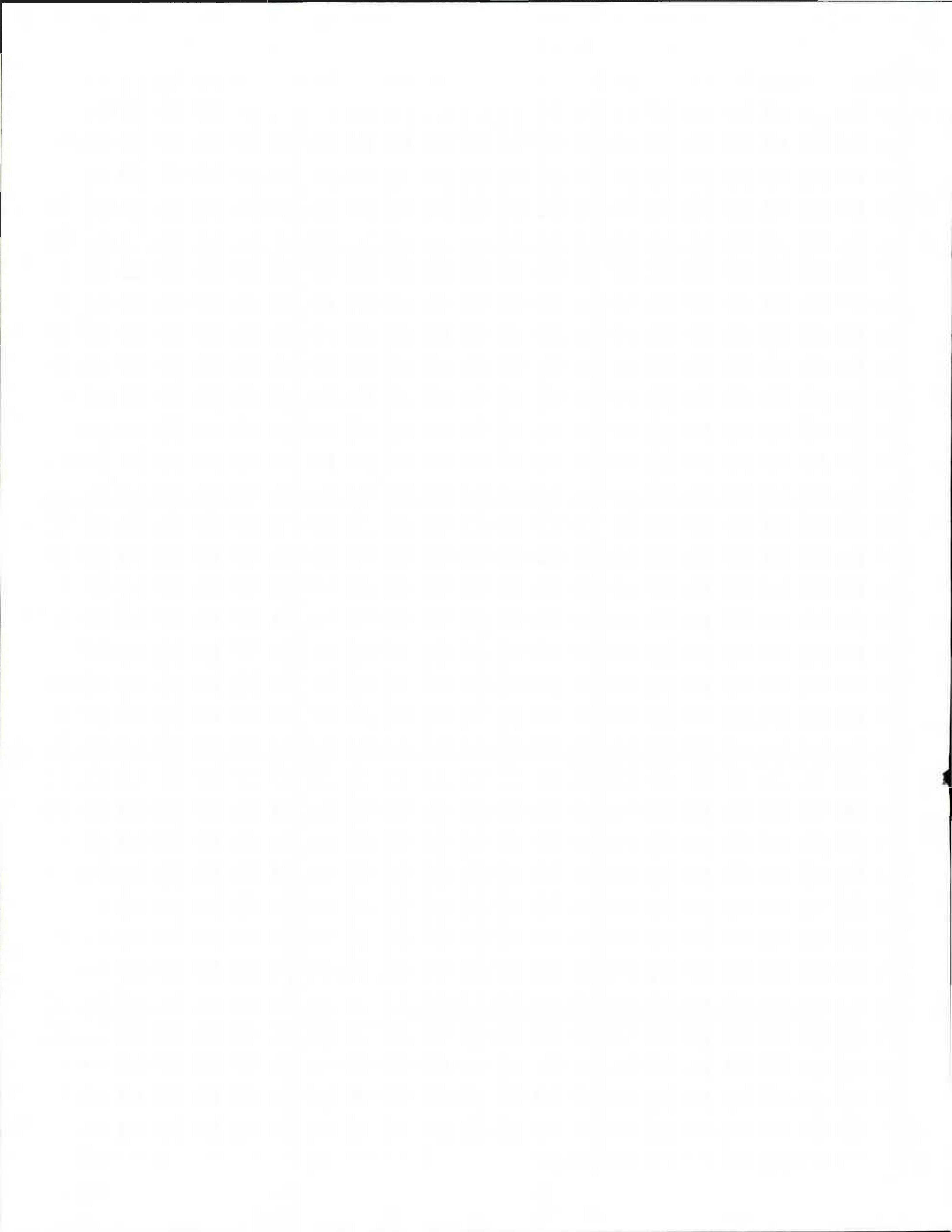
31. Tedlock (1983), pp. 159-64.

32. Tedlock (1983), p. 164.

33. NA85-KKBC-C7, recorded 17th May 1985, 36-year-old female interviewed by Keith and Kathryn Cunningham at Zuni, New Mexico.

34. Leighton and Adair (1966), pp. 53-54.

35. Richard M. Dorson, *Buying the Wind. Regional Folklore in the United States* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1964), p. 421.



THE CURSE OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST

Marcia Gaudet

Introduction

St John the Baptist Church in Edgard, a small village on the Mississippi River in South Louisiana, was established by Acadian and German settlers in 1770. The area remains fairly isolated, and the Catholicism is heavily coloured by folk beliefs and superstitions. An incident in the church parish in 1903, in which the priest was arrested and jailed, resulted in the contemporary local legend of the 'Curse of St John the Baptist'. The basic legend is that the priest pronounced a curse against the parish because of his arrest, and that consequently there would be divine punishment against the community for 100 years. This legend is typical in that: it is based on a historical incident; it is usually related as a true story; and it originated with the common people. In addition, it has supernatural components that cannot be explained by objective observation. In general, the legend is believed by the people who relate it, though there are varying degrees of belief and denial. It is often reported with a sense of communal guilt, and it has certainly contributed to the prevailing belief in a religion of fear in the community. The historical context of the legend and the continuing beliefs are essential to an interpretation of the legend and an understanding of why it continues to be told.

The History of the Curse

In his *History of St John the Baptist Parish* (1922), Lubin Laurent makes only a slight reference to this incident:

> In 1903, the church was closed because of some friction between the Church Wardens and the Diocese, but it was reopened a few weeks later when the church property was transferred to the Diocese.[1]

During an interview with Mr Laurent in November 1977, I asked him

about this. He seemed very reluctant to discuss the incident and said,

> The priest had done a lot of foolish things—some things I didn't want to elaborate in the history, on account of—we have a great respect, in St John, for priests.

The priest to whom he refers is Father Alexander Juille, pastor of St John the Baptist from 1899 to 1903. According to Mr Laurent, Father Juille was 'a sort of "wild" priest. He wasn't an easy going priest'. He scolded people in public, and this generated much resentment.

During this time, an organization of men called the *Marguilliers* owned the church and property and paid the salary of the priest. Though it was not considered a church organization, these men were actually wardens of the church and wielded great influence. Most, if not all, of the members were local men. There seems to have been some dispute about the control of the church and the ownership of certain property. Friction and tension grew between the Marguilliers, Father Juille, and the parishioners.[2] According to Mr Laurent and Mrs Beatrice Jacob (aged 102), who remember the incident, at the height of this tension one day in church Father Juille slapped a woman in the face. The parishioners were horrified, and Sheriff Paul Berthelot arrested the priest and put him into jail. He remained in jail for several weeks. According to Mrs Jacob, 'The Catholics were so bitter against him that no one would go his bail'. She said, however, that Lubin Laurent had told her that he, as a young altar boy, would go to the jail everyday to assist Father Juille at saying Mass. Finally, Mrs Jacob's father, Jules Joseph, 'the only Jew in town', put up the bond and Father Juille was released.

In the meantime, St John the Baptist was under interdict. It was 'put out' of the Catholic archdiocese of New Orleans, and for a time was a parish without a diocese. Shortly after, the archdiocese re-admitted St John the Baptist and took over the ownership of the property and the control of the church, and another priest was appointed pastor. According to the legend, however, Father Juille went up on to the levee bordering the Mississippi River before leaving, and there pronounced a curse on the parish that would last for one hundred years.

Within the next ten years, several tragedies occurred. The sheriff's large general store was burnt down, a hurricane flattened many homes and businesses, the church was destroyed by fire and there were typhoid and yellow fever epidemics: in addition, the sheriff's wife of twenty-five years divorced him, something almost unheard of in this small Catholic

community. The people were convinced that the parish was cursed, and when any misfortune occurred throughout the years, they said, '*Père Juille vient encore*' (Father Juille comes again). In 1975, when the pastor of St John the Baptist Church, his housekeeper and a nun were brutally murdered in the parish rectory, the parishioners again attributed this tragedy to the 'curse of St John the Baptist'.

Contemporary Belief

While there is in general some reluctance to discuss this incident, many informants *were* willing to talk about it and to express their feelings about a 'curse' on the parish. As one might expect, there are many conflicting versions of what happened, what caused the incarceration of the priest, about his stay in jail and whether or not he actually pronounced a curse on the parish. In a recent history of the church, Warren Caire mentions this incident briefly:

> Father Lavaquery was replaced in 1898 by Father Alexander Juille who served as pastor until July 16, 1903. It was during this time that a sad event of the conflict over a school building, between the priest and some people resulted in the pastor being put in jail and the church temporarily closed.
>
> Oral tradition has it that many parishioners stood by the pastor, but the regrettable event left its mark in the minds of many.[3]

This incident, more than any other event in the history of the area, left its mark on the people. Alma Weber (age 89) said, 'It's a hush-hush subject. I don't remember it'. Lola Matthieu (70) said it was something that everyone knew of and talked about:

> That's something my daddy used to relate all the time. Father Juille was the priest. They said they put him in jail, and he said he would put a curse on St John Parish. That I'll never forget. And when they wanted to put him out, he didn't want to get out. And my daddy believed it [the curse].

Mr Wilbert Sorapuru (age 92) spoke of what he remembered during the time Father Juille was in jail:

> I don't know the whole story. I remember he was put in jail. People was dying, no Mass, no funeral, just go bury them like an animal or anything right there in the graveyard. They had some very religious people that

> died during that period of time, and they din have no funeral. He din stay too long in jail, but things was upset for a good while.
>
> It look like the parish as a whole was in mourning. Everything was sad. The church was considered closed. No mass, no funeral. I don't know for what reason, but the Bishop din send nobody to take over . . . I heard that when he left, he had kind of condemned the parish more or less.

Virginia Baudoin remembers this incident, though she was a child at the time:

> The grown people could go to see him in jail, but they couldn't see him. They could talk to him through the wall. They say they will never have peace in this parish.

Lydia Roberts (early 80s) also spoke of the 'curse':

> They say St John the Baptist got a curse. The priest was put in jail and then he put a curse on the parish. And you know, there's hardly any whites left in St John. It look like nobody want to stay here.

When asked if people still believe that there is a curse, and if they talk about it, she responded, 'Yes, most people believe it. When something bad happens, they think about that'. Both Miss Roberts and Mrs Beatrice Roberts said that most people think that many bad things have happened in this area because the priest was put in jail. Miss Roberts said he was jailed because he had accused a young couple of kissing in church. The girl's parents then accused him of 'ruining the girl's reputation' and, 'because of the commotion he caused', he was arrested and jailed. Both believe that the murders of the priest, nun and housekeeper had something to do with the curse. They said no one had ever been convicted for the murders, and many other bad things have happened in St John (actually, the case has never come to trial because the three men accused of the murders were tried for previous murders and are serving ninety-nine year sentences). Both women said that their parents talked about the curse and said it will last one hundred years. Miss Roberts said:

> all the people think it could be . . . When the priest left the jail, he said he would pray to God that the people of St John would be punished. How we know that God din't send us that punishment?

Though the talk about a 'curse' is perhaps more prevalent among the black people, the story is certainly well known among the white people in the area also. Three white parishioners who prefer to be unnamed discussed

the curse. One said, 'Mais, yes, Father Roeten talks about it all the time. He put it in the bulletin'. Another said:

> I think that's why he's so excitable all the time. He has that on his mind that there's a curse on the parish. I think he's afraid it might affect him. He talks about it all the time, and the curse is because the people of the parish put a priest in jail.

The third person said:

> And this priest [Father Roeten] is the one who actually believes it. He believes there actually is a curse. He also brought it up that it was because of the curse that Father Clement, the sister, and Mrs Lajeune were killed—he believes it has something to do with the curse.

Another white parishioner said, 'The priest keeps bringing up the curse. I don't know whether he feels threatened by it'.

Father Winus Roeten was pastor of St John the Baptist Church from 1977 to 1982. When asked if he had ever heard about the belief that there is a 'curse' on the parish, he responded:

> God, I just raised it last night again with the bishop and priests at Confirmation. Somewhere in the records we have the details of the story, where there was some conflict over teachers and schools and the priest said something that might have been true, and it got some of the local politicians a little angry, and the way they retaliated was putting a lawsuit on him. Father Roussève has the details of the incident. But whatever it was, the priest got put in jail, and people from the East Bank got all excited and one hundred of them came out to get him out of jail, but he wouldn't get out, but anyway he spent the three days, or whatever it was, in jail. But the story is, he was so mad when he got out that he got on the levee and he pronounced a curse on the parish. Now whether he pronounced a curse or the people felt cursed, and I suspect there was a lot of guilt concerning that incident in the community, because everything bad that ever happened after that they blamed, or sort of explained, that that was punishment for what they did to Fr Juille. We had bad weather recently, and somebody said, 'Oh, *Père Juille vient encore*'. [Father Juille comes again]. The ferry broke down, '*Père Juille vient encore*'. You sense a completely different spirit in West St John from any other part of the river. I don't know if you've noticed that. You come down from Baton Rouge, along the river, Vacherie is booming, but the minute you hit West St John it's completely different—well they finally fixed the roads—but you don't see any new construction. You haven't had the concentration of population.

The pastor's assessment of the situation seems to suggest many reasons why the legend of a curse should have persisted for so long and why it continues to be actively told and believed by many people in the community. On the one hand, there is the apparent feeling of guilt among the people for having had a priest incarcerated and, on the other hand, there have been a seemingly disproportionate number of misfortunes, inexplicable tragedies and general lack of progress in the community. Moreover, most of the people do not regard the story of the curse as superstition: according to Father Roeten, the teachings of the Catholic church dominate the area and there is a deeply felt belief that 'to raise your hand against a priest invites violence'. Father Roeten explained:

> They had imaged God as a judge who rewarded and punished—and that they were like children who had to earn his love and if they misbehaved, they got punished for it . . . and that had coloured an awful lot of their faith. Oh God, I preach about a loving God and they react violently to it.

Interpretation

According to Brunvand, three elements are esssential if a legend is to survive in our culture. They are, 'a strong basic story-appeal, a foundation in actual belief, and a meaningful message or "moral"'.[4] While the legend of the curse of St John the Baptist obviously contains all three of these elements, the historical context and the kinds of things stressed by the tellers both suggest that the most important element in its survival is the message or 'moral'. In discussing the continuing effects of the curse legend in St John the Baptist parish, Father Roeten said: 'I detect a strain of self-pity, a kind of victim-stance. Of course, that's not atypical of blacks, but it seems to affect us all'. Certainly this 'victim-stance' is important in understanding both the reasons for, and the effect of, the persistence of this curse legend. Though there have been comparatively few folkloristic studies of curse legends, there have been analyses of the 'Mormon Curse'[5] and the curse in a Jewish community.[6] The effect of a curse is dependent upon the victim's belief that there is a higher power that can be invoked to punish him and a feeling that he is, in fact, deserving of punishment:

> Anthropological studies have frequently noted that attitudes toward wrong are intricately bound with concepts of justice. For example, E.E. Pritchard analyzed the curse among the Nuer and showed that since one's curse against another is only effective if the one pronouncing the

> curse is in the right and the one cursed is in the wrong, and once misfortune is thought to follow, the curse among the Nuer is a powerful sanction of conduct.[7]

It seems that these observations are also applicable to the parish of St John the Baptist. The conventional respect for priests would certainly have produced some guilt and, as almost immediate misfortune followed, there was sufficient impetus for the formation of a curse legend. The motif of divine punishment against a community is not uncommon in folklore and legend—Wayland Hand points out that 'the fate of sinners and mockers has always been held up as a warning to the unfaithful . . . ';[8] Dorson also records 'signs of divine punishment (a plague of smallpox) meted out against individuals' in New England because of persecution of the Quakers.[9] Father Roussève,[10] in outlining the history of Father Juille, explained that the people of the parish still feel guilty about the way they treated him and are afraid 'there is a spirit there to punish them'. According to folklore, he said, 'a spirit walks along the levee to punish the people'.

The church records, however, make no mention of a 'curse'. There is only a brief account of the incident (written in French) by Father Juille himself. Father Roussève said that Father Juille ended this entry with the words, 'God forgive those people who treated me that way'. The entry, Father Roussève feels, shows that Father Juille 'had no bitterness in his heart towards the people'. Though there is thus no evidence that Father Juille voiced, or even felt, any ill-will towards the parish or the people, this fact does not in any way change the effect of the legend. Dégh and Vázsonyi point out that many legends have a story contrary to the facts[11]: whether it is believed or whether it is untrue, it may equally easily be used for educational or fear-stimulating purposes. They further contend that:

> the *belief itself* . . . makes its presence felt in any kind of legend. The legend tells explicitly almost without exception that its message is or was believed sometime, by someone, somewhere.[12]

It is significant that the curse legend has undergone 'cycles of resurgence' after major tragedies like the murders of 1975. During such a time, even minor things will be attributed to the curse. In effect, the continued telling of the legend seems to warn against any kind of retribution for, or even questioning of, the actions of priests or Church in this area. This kind of thinking was evident in a recent court case in South Louisiana in which a Catholic priest was charged with fifty counts of child

molestation and paedophilia, and the Catholic diocese and the Archbishop were charged with allowing the priest to continue as a pastor for almost ten years after they were aware of his paedophiliac tendencies. Many Catholics in South Louisiana defended the Church's position, and many of the families who had brought the lawsuits against the church were ostracized by their communities.

The fear of 'divine retaliation' is still there regardless of the facts of Father Juille's real behaviour, for as Dégh says:

> The reason for telling a legend is basically not to entertain but to educate people, to inform them about an important fact, to arm them against danger within their own cultural environment'.[13]

This informative function seems to be uppermost in the telling of the legend of the curse. While it is sometimes told by non-believers as an amusing story, believers never tell it that way. To them, the curse is a fearful thing. They are caught up in a situation not of their own making; they must either come to terms with it or move away from the community. For most believers, the latter is not an option, so they find ways of enduring it and pointing its moral. Max Lüthi points out that 'more than once it has been shown that the historical legend in particular sketches man as someone enduring fate rather than shaping or mastering it'.[14] In legend, man is no more passive than in the *Märchen*, because he finds ways to endure—through moralizing, for example: 'moralising takes from the supernatural legend as well as the historical legend a part of their terror, because . . . the events acquire a tangible sense'.[15]

In a legend as curious and fascinating as 'The Curse of St John the Baptist', functional questions are plainly uppermost. Psychological ones, however, cannot be ignored. As Dundes says:

> As a matter of fact, in many of those legends whose actions are not yet completed, the sense of immediacy may produce genuine fear or other emotion. This suggests that legend might be much more appropriate than myth and folktale for psychological studies.[16]

Before leaving the legend of the curse, therefore, I want briefly to look at two interrelated aspects of its psychology—why has it flourished for so long, and why is the curse supposed to last for such a long time (100 years)? I would suggest that a defence mechanism is at work here, which expresses itself through projection, rationalization and intellectualization.

In discussing the importance of meaning and the unconscious in folklore

study, Dundes refers to projection as 'the tendency to attribute to another person or to the environment what is actually within oneself'.[17] As a defence mechanism it is based on fear of the threatened breakthrough of the unacceptable impulse: projection is the specific mechanism by which such unacceptable impulses in oneself are transferred to another, safer, medium. In the classic projection mechanism the impulse is always aggressive or sexual (and these are the examples which Dundes himself uses), but even without this sort of Freudian framework, the idea is useful as an interpretive tool. For example, the residents of the parish of St John, overwhelmed by tragedy and misfortune, rather than saying 'I curse the parish' (or, worse, 'I curse the God who sent these trials') say instead 'the parish curses *me*' or 'both parish and I are cursed, and we have no control over it'.

Alternatively, the legend-tellers may be seeking an *explanation* for their plight. Perhaps the legend of being cursed is the community's explanation for why their condition in life is so bleak and they fail to achieve any progress.

Finally, talking about the legend may also serve as an intellectualization of the fear generated by tragedy and anger against misfortunes and failure. Indeed, my own study of this story may possibly be said to be an intellectualization of my own subconscious fear of our ancestral complicity in the curse. One of my great-grandfathers was the sheriff who arrested the priest!

NOTES

1. Lubin Laurent, 'History of St John the Baptist Parish' (published in *L'Observateur*, 1922-23. Manuscript in Louisiana State University Archives), p. 44.

2. *Marguillier* is the French term for church warden. In his *Religion in Louisiana*, Wesley Jackson notes that they caused trouble in the Catholic Church in Louisiana for years. Roger Baudier in *The Catholic Church in Louisiana* refers to the 1800s when the *Marguilliers* ruled as the 'Dark Days'. Note, too that probably the best authority on the history and records of St John the Baptist Church is Father Maurice Roussève, a native of Louisiana and now living in a retirement home in New Orleans. He was ordained in 1934, one of the first black priests ordained in Louisiana. In a telephone interview, he said that the church records do not tell exactly why the priest was put in jail, but they show that it had to do with

the Marguilliers. The priest, Father Juille, had made a statement and was charged with 'defamation of character'. He was fined $100 and sentenced to one month in jail.

3. Warren Caire, 'Historical Perspective of St John the Baptist Catholic Parish', *St John the Baptist Church Directory* (Edgard, Louisiana, 1979), p. 6.

4. Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends and their Meaning* (New York and London: Norton, 1981), p. 10.

5. Jan Harold Brunvand, 'Modern Legends of Mormondom, or Supernaturalism is Alive and Well in Salt Lake City', in Wayland D. Hand, ed., *American Folk Legend: A Symposium* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California, 1971), p. 190.

6. Donna Shai, 'Public Cursing and the Social Control in a Traditional Jewish Community', *Western Folklore* 37 (1978), pp. 39-46.

7. Shai (1978), p. 39.

8. Wayland D. Hand, 'Index of American Folk Legends', in Wayland Hand, ed., *American Folk Legend: A Symposium* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California, 1971), p. 218.

9. Richard M. Dorson, *America in Legend* (New York: Pantheon, 1973), p. 53.

10. See note 2.

11. Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, 'Legend and Belief', in Dan Ben-Amos, ed., *Folklore Genres* (Austin: University of Texas, 1976), p. 97.

12. Dégh and Vázsonyi (1976), p. 119.

13. Linda Dégh, 'Folk Narrative', in Richard M. Dorson, ed., *Folklore and Folk Life* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1972), p. 73.

14. Max Lüthi, 'Aspects of the Märchen and the Legend', in Dan Ben-Amos, ed., *Folklore Genres* (Austin: University of Texas, 1976), p. 24.

15. Lüthi (1976), p. 30.

16. Alan Dundes, 'On the Psychology of Legend', in Wayland D. Hand, ed., *American Folk Legend: A Symposium* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California, 1971), p. 24.

17. Alan Dundes, 'Projection in Folklore: A Plea for Psychoanalytic Semiotics', in Alan Dundes, ed., *Interpreting Folklore* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University, 1980), p. 37.

THE LEGENDS OF SIRENA AND SANTA MARIAN CAMALIN: GUAMANIAN CULTURAL OPPOSITIONS

Marilyn Jorgensen

Background

In this essay I will discuss two legends from the United States South Pacific Territory of Guam, a relatively isolated thirty-one-mile island in the Marianas group, important militarily because of its strategic location near Japan, the Philippines, the Asian mainland and Australia. Guam was discovered by Ferdinand Magellan in 1521 and claimed for the Spanish crown. The Spanish occupation of the island and subjugation of the indigenous Chamorro population began with the seventeenth-century attempts of Jesuit missionaries to Christianize the Marianas. The legends to be discussed date back to this Spanish period which lasted until 1898 when Guam was seized by the U.S. at the outset of the Spanish/American War. The first narrative, 'The Legend of Sirena', is about a young Chamorro girl who disobeys her mother and is turned into a mermaid. The second, entitled 'Mary of the Crabs', is about the coming ashore on Guam of a statue of the Virgin Mary, escorted by two crabs; hence the name.

Mary is the patroness of Guam and the other islands in the Marianas, which are her namesake. Since she is most commonly called *Santa Marian Camalin* by the people there, I will refer to her by that local appellation throughout most of this essay. 'Santa Marian Camalin' means Maria, or Mary, of the Shed in English (in the Chamorro language, which is related to the Malaysian languages, the 'n' at the end of Marian shows possession or a linkage to the following word); 'Camalin' means a native boat-shed or shelter, which is where the statue was supposed to have been kept when it was first brought ashore. The Virgin Mary has several names in Guam in addition to 'Mary of the Crabs' (which is seldom used now), and she is also commonly referred to as 'The Blessed Virgin' and 'The Blessed Mother'. I will begin with some background information on Guamanian culture which I obtained during a seven-month fieldwork trip to the Marianas in

1983, and which will help to describe the cultural context in which the legends exist and aid the discussion of the oppositions found between the two traditional narratives.

The island's original Chamorro inhabitants have intermarried with the Spanish, Filipino and American ethnic groups for almost three centuries, but most of the non-Americans born on Guam prefer to think of themselves as Chamorros even if, as little as one generation back, the family came from the Philippines. For the purposes of this essay, I will use the term *Chamorro* to refer to the non-American native inhabitants and *Guamanian* to refer to both Chamorros and Americans who live on Guam and identify with it as their home.[1] An estimated ninety per cent of the 100,000 inhabitants of the island are members of the Catholic Church, which has been closely intertwined with Guamanian history and culture for at least three centuries. The Catholic Church plays an important role in the maintenance of Chamorro values and a sense of social cohesiveness. Some of the most important values in Chamorro society today include: the fulfilling of extended family responsibilities and obligations; reciprocity in personal relationships; the public honouring of elders and other worthy individuals; and the sharing of food and other means of hospitality with outsiders.

Perhaps the single most important Chamorro value, as far as this paper is concerned, is the high priority placed on extended family relationships and responsibilities. Strong family ties have traditionally been a source of comfort and security to Guamanians, particularly during times of extreme danger, such as the Japanese occupation of World War II. The kinship network is the principal social category in Chamorro society, and family ties and obligations on the mother's side of the family are considered to be the most binding. The kinship group gives important help and support in the form of financial aid, goods, services and advice, and this reciprocity is institutionalized in the *chinchule* system, which is especially useful in a society such as Guam's where the financial responsibility for fiestas, funerals or weddings is shared by all the family members. Underlying the *chinchule* system are the traditional Pacific Island values of communal cooperation, hospitality and the sharing of food with those in need, as well as reciprocity and obligation to one's duties. The tremendous emphasis placed on family responsibility and obligations is particularly important in an understanding of the Sirena legend, as we shall see later.

According to a 1975 survey, nineteen per cent of Guamanian households included members of the extended family such as widowed parents,

unmarried brothers or sisters, aunts and uncles, and so on. During my fieldwork I was told that sometimes Chamorro women prefer to marry American men, in part because, as wives of Americans, they are not required to take on such a heavy load of family responsibility. I was told by a Chamorro grandmother that I was very lucky to be unmarried and that I would be wise to stay so. She herself was not planning to remarry since her husband's death because she did not want to take on the extra burden of family responsibility again, but preferred to devote her time and resources to serving the island's patroness, Santa Marian Camalin.

Before moving on to a presentation of the legends themselves, one additional piece of information concerning godparents (and the importance of this form of social relationship in Chamorro culture) should be given, since a godmother figures prominently in the Sirena legend. Shortly after birth, items of food and gifts of money are presented by the godparents to the parents of the newborn child as a material means of showing their concern for the welfare of the child. The *nina*, or godmother, and *ninu*, or godfather, fulfil their obligations to him or her through the provision of extra resources and emotional support, and they also play a particularly supportive role in the Christening and First Communion and the celebrations that surround those events.

The Legends and the Expressive Traditions in Which they are Found

A. *The Legend of Sirena*

With this background information in mind, I will begin with a representative version of the Legend of Sirena, adapted from 'Legends of Guam', a 1981 publication of the Chamorro Language and Culture Program of Guam's Department of Education, which is widely used and known by Guam's schoolchildren:

> The Agana River meandered from the green jungle foliage and merged with the ocean surf near the village of Agana, the capital of the Island. It was near this stream at Monondo that a family once lived many, many years ago. Sirena was the youngest and prettiest girl in the family, and she enjoyed swimming more than anything else in the world. Her mother tried to teach her to sew, to cook, to sweep, to wash, and to do other dutiful things that a girl her age should know in order to become a good wife and mother. Sirena, however, wanted only to swim.
>
> One day Sirena's mother sent her out to get coconut shells to be used as

coal for the iron. Oblivious to time and duty, Sirena couldn't resist the refreshing river. There she swam while her mother called impatiently. Sirena's 'nina' or godmother happened to be visiting the family at the time. When Sirena's mother angrily cursed her daughter with the words, 'Since Sirena loves the water more than anything, she should become a fish', the godmother quickly added, 'but her upper half should stay the same'.

While Sirena was still swimming in the river, her feet changed into a fish's tail, and she swam out to the ocean and was never seen again by her mother or godmother.

It is often told that many fishermen and sailors have seen Sirena swimming in the sea, but whenever anyone gets too close to her, she swims away. It is said that a ship's captain once caught Sirena, but she escaped a few minutes later and disappeared into the depths of the ocean. According to tradition, she can only be caught with a net of human hair.

B. *The Legend of Mary of the Crabs*

The second legend, that of Mary of the Crabs, takes place in the southern part of the island near the village of Merizo. This version has also been adapted from the Department of Education's 'Legends of Guam':

> One day a fisherman was casting his net out on the reef when he saw a figure of a lady in the water approaching the land. On each side of the lady was a gold-spotted crab, bearing a lighted candle. Surprised to see such a vision and eager to see if his eyes deceived him, he followed in the direction of the lady. He saw her again and threw his net to catch her, but his efforts were futile. Disappointed, he started toward the shore when one of the crabs spoke to him, saying that he should go home and get fully clothed and then he could have the statue. Returning fully dressed, the fisherman saw the crabs, candles, and statue of the lady reappear, and he reached down and took the statue out of the water. The crabs and the candles then disappeared beneath the water. The fisherman took the statue to the village priest, and it was eventually placed in the Cathedral at Agana where it became known as 'Mary of the Shed', because it was first placed in a shed-like shelter called a 'Camalin'.

This legend, which describes the coming to Guam of a statue of the Virgin Mary, appears to be a 'patronal legend' (following the classification of religious legends made by Robert Smith).[2] It is concerned with the appearance and subsequent actions of an iconic representation of a saint or the Virgin, rather than with their actions while they walked the earth, as is

the case in most medieval saint's legends. The Legend of Mary of the Crabs is now used to explain how and why Mary is the island's patroness, and it fulfils the important function of localizing the belief in the miraculous powers of the Virgin Mary within the Guamanian social and geographical context. The legend is also used to explain how a specific, highly prized fifteenth-century statue of Santa Marian Camalin, now kept in a niche high above the altar in the Basilica at Agana, came to the island.

C. *The Expressive Traditions*

A statue of Santa Marian Camalin occupies a niche in the Basilica of Agana. Similarly, a statue of Sirena occupies a prominent position in Agana in the recently restored Spanish Bridge Park. The importance of the Sirena statue to Guamanians is attested to by the fact that it was commissioned by the present First Lady of Guam, Madeleine Bordallo, in 1978, during her husband's first term as Governor. Five years later on 11th December, 1983, on the occasion of Governor Bordallo's birthday, the Sirena statue was formally dedicated in a civil ceremony that took place just three days after the annual island-wide celebration held by the Catholic Church in honour of the Immaculate Conception of Mary on 8th December. Sirena's civic ceremony involved an elaborate unveiling in a fiesta-like atmosphere where young girls named Sirena were given the honour of participating in the dedication. The annual feast-day celebration dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of Mary also features young girls under the age of twelve. So it appears that both legends are concerned with female figures who will always be virgins, and the legends are celebrated in Guamanian society by the honouring of young girls who are virgins for the present time.

Other artistic, expressive manifestations include songs written about or dedicated to the heroines, poems and plays, and other iconic representations such as small replicas of the Santa Marian Camalin statue for use on home altars, or metal Sirena keychains in the shape of the bronze statue, as well as storyboards from Palau that are purchased by tourists. A film has been produced by the Guam Visitor's Bureau entitled 'Guam: Paradise Island', which features a local woman in a mermaid costume depicting Sirena in a beautiful beach setting.

Comparison

Now, for an analysis of the opposition in the legends themselves. First of all, it can be said that in the legend about the patroness, Mary comes from nature (the ocean) and ends her journey in the civilized world (on land), an observation similar to that made by William Christian in *Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain*,[3] where he points out that most Spanish patron-saint discovery legends involve a male hero who finds a sacred statue in a location away from civilization. In contrast, however, Sirena's lack of obedience to her mother takes her away from the civilized world on land to the world of nature.

In both legends, the lack of appropriate clothing seems to be a significant factor in the transformation process. In the legend of Mary of the Crabs, the donning of proper attire on the part of the Chamorro fisherman is given as a condition of Mary's allowing her image to be taken from nature into a civilized context on the land, where she will then serve as the people's patroness and protector. The association between clothing and civilization is important here, and it doubtless derives much of its relevance in this context from the remembrance of the strenuous efforts made by the early Jesuit missionaries such as Padre Sanvitores to convince the Chamorro people of the propriety of covering their naked bodies with clothing.

Both the sacred story of the Virgin and the secular story about the mermaid feature women as the main characters; more specifically, they are women who are virgins and, through supernatural intervention, will always remain virgins. Mary, although she later becomes a mother, is also the pure and unspotted Blessed Virgin of Catholic theology who has come through the ages to represent the contradiction of being a virgin and still giving birth. Although not explicitly stated, it can perhaps be assumed that Sirena will never be a mother in the human sense of the term, because the lower part of her body has been turned into the tail of a fish through her mother's curse and her godmother's intervention. The two legends can both be viewed as being about virgins, then; but whereas Sirena does not become a mother, Mary becomes the honoured mother of the Son of God.

Sirena is a disobedient young woman who starts out living on land, but, due to her neglect of familial obligations and her refusal to be properly socialized, is fated by her mother's curse to a lonely life of pleasure at sea, far away from family or friends. Santa Marian Camalin, also viewed as a

somewhat solitary figure, placed on a 'pedestal of adoring worship' as it were, comes from the sea and ends her journey on land, but as the honoured patroness of the Chamorro people. In her multiple roles as Blessed Virgin, Blessed Mother and Patroness, Mary represents to the Chamorro Catholic people the beauty of a life of dutiful obedience to the will of God, as celebrated and affirmed throughout the island at the Feast of Her Immaculate Conception on 8th December each year. The Blessed Virgin serves as a role model for desirable feminine traits for Chamorro Catholic girls and women, particularly with regard to obedience to God's will, faith, a life of devotion to the Church and family and the high value placed on motherhood and family responsibility. In short, as patroness, Mary attests to the importance of Guamanian cultural values, but Sirena is the negation of these values. Mary receives honour through the worship and devotion of her people, but Sirena ends her story in a solitary life in the ocean.

It might legitimately be asked why Sirena is so honoured in Guamanian society if she represents the negation of important cultural values. I think the answer can probably be found in the meaning of Sirena herself in Chamorro culture. It seems that, to the residents of the island,[4] Sirena represents something particularly Guamanian; and women in particular may identify with her very closely. Sirena may very well represent the part of life that is denied by the Virgin Mary image. Whereas the seductive Sirena, in her half-nakedness, must surely represent the traditional unclothed state of the indigenous Chamorro population before western values were introduced to the island, in the Mary of the Crabs legend the unclothed state of the fisherman cannot be tolerated and the Virgin will not allow herself to be brought ashore until the fisherman's nakedness is covered with proper clothes. During interviews on the importance of Santa Marian Camalin to the island's culture, one informant told me that many Chamorros still enjoy swimming without the benefit of swimwear, and this conflict of values between what has been handed down and believed over the generations in indigenous Chamorro culture and what the Catholic Church teaches about morals is still an important point of tension in Chamorro life. Sirena, then, represents the side of human life that seeks out and benefits from pleasurable experiences, as opposed to the heavy burden of duty and extended family responsibility that is an innate part of Chamorro culture. Perhaps it is through combining the models of both Sirena in her pleasure-seeking and the Virgin Mary in her dutiful and obedient behaviour that a fulfilling life that does not go the extreme in either direction can be worked out.

It is interesting that in another legend about the Virgin Mary and her coming to Guam to be its patroness (recounted in 1937 in *The Guam Recorder* newspaper by J. Torres), it is stated that she captured a giant fish that was endangering the island by eating the land away piece by piece.[5] Since the fish was superhuman, the only way that Mary could subdue it was by tying it up with pieces of her hair and keeping it captive so that it could no longer destroy the island. Just as Sirena can only be caught with a net of human hair, so Mary uses her hair to tame and capture something wild in the realm of nature.[6]

Conclusion

The many artistic uses of these two legends and their respective heroines in the Guamanian expressive tradition certainly point to the significance of legends in the contemporary culture of the island. In addition to the enthusiasm displayed by Guamanians toward these figures, however, one senses something deeper. There is a subtle, yet discernible, tendency for Guamanians to treat the statues which bring these legends to life as more than just inanimate art objects. The statues of these two heroines are often referred to in everyday speech as if they were living persons with a will and life history of their own—I believe this is because the people identify with them so closely and rely on them so strongly for their sense of cultural continuity and strength. One very knowledgeable Chamorro, whom I interviewed concerning the importance of Santa Marian Camalin as a symbol, made the perceptive statement that every group of people finds a symbol that is important to them and 'clings to it' for help and support. The people of Guam have made the heroines of these two stories into living representatives of their own culture: both statues have 'homes'—one in a niche in the Basilica, the other in a historic park specially restored for the purpose. Both statues have been stolen or vandalized several times, and in each instance they have been carefully repaired, and the public outrage was as great as if the acts of violence had been focused against a living being. Both statues have associated beliefs and memorates that attest to the possibility that the legendary characters are alive: the Santa Marian Camalin statue is reported to have shown anger, bled, cried or walked about at night. Similarly in the newspaper articles that report supposed sightings of the mermaid Sirena, one senses that a life-history saga is being generated that may someday supplement the original legend.

We may conclude that these two legends, the beliefs about the women

they represent, and the celebrations held in their honour, encapsulate important Chamorro values regarding family relationships and responsibility; taken together, they might be said to speak of opposing desires—pleasure-seeking versus duty and responsibility—decisions faced daily by individuals in any social setting. It is also evident that Guamanians have a great love for their legends and that they adapt their verbal traditions to a wide variety of other vital, artistic uses. Legend is used here as the basis for an added sense of beauty that is infused into the daily life of the isolated island, and it is also put to use in the Chamorro people's attempts to preserve and maintain their cultural identity and heritage and to achieve strength and unity as a people.

NOTES

1. There is also a large population of American military personnel who remain on the island for between two and four years at a time, but they do not think of themselves as Guamanian and therefore are not relevant to the purposes of this paper.
2. Robert J. Smith, *The Art of the Festival* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Publications in Anthropology, 6, 1975).
3. William A. Christian, Jr, *Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1981).
4. Based on the widespread usage of the mermaid motif in Mexican folk art (see Ericka Esau and George A. Boeck Jr, 'The Mermaid in Mexican Folk Creches', *Southwest Folklore* 5 (1981), pp. 1-10. Also in Mexican-American storytelling, see Mark Glazer, '"La Sirena del Mar": An Interpretation of Symbolism, Disobedience and Transformation in a Mexican-American Example', *Southwest Folklore* 5 (1981), pp. 55-69), I would judge that it is highly probable that the legend of Sirena reached Guam via the Spanish galleon trade route that culturally connected the Spanish colonies of Mexico, the Philippines, and Guam until the early 1800s. The Mexican-American variants of the Sirena story from the Rio Grande Valley discussed by Glazer seem to be similar enough in specific details (particularly with reference to the circumstances surrounding the mother's curse in variant no. 3 of Glazer's collection) to warrant the assumption that the similarity between the Mexican and Guamanian versions is not due to independent invention. However, the Guamanian and Mexican variants do contain examples of cultural adaptation in both colonial settings, particularly in the Mexican variants in which the transformation occurs on Holy Friday in connection with a broken taboo (an aspect of the Rio Grande stories that ties them to the Mexican Catholic belief

system) and in the Guamanian variants that include a godmother as an important figure in the narrative (a reflection of the cultural emphasis placed on godparents in Chamorro tradition).

5. 'Why the Central Part of Guam is Narrow', *The Guam Recorder* (February 1937), p. 613.

6. Nets of hair are obviously magical, but more specific cultural knowledge would be needed to draw any conclusions from the use of this interesting motif.

SUBURBAN/RURAL VARIATIONS IN THE CONTENT OF ADOLESCENT GHOST LEGENDS[1]

Nancy Kammer Peters

In May 1984, I collected a body of legend material at Harrison Junior High School in Harrison, Ohio. My original goal was to collect a variety of legends from junior high school students in an area of Greater Cincinnati which combines both rural and suburban lifestyles (in the United States, junior high school students generally range in age from eleven to fourteen years). Harrison, tucked into the south-western corner of Ohio on the Ohio/Indiana border, is set apart from Greater Cincinnati proper by approximately twenty miles. Kentucky lies just across the nearby Ohio River. This community is unusual in its markedly heterogeneous mix. Twenty years ago, Harrison was an almost entirely rural agricultural area made up in part of immigrants from Appalachia and the hills of Kentucky. Since that time, many middle- to upper-middle-class families have moved to Harrison from the more densely populated suburbs nearer to the city of Cincinnati. Most of these families maintain their urban occupations in the Cincinnati area. Within the past ten years suburbs have appeared around Harrison, and in 1980 Harrison was declared a city. Its current population is 6,000. However, rural inhabitants remain, living side-by-side with their newer suburban neighbours.

Despite the great surge in suburban population, there are only one junior high school and one high school in the area; therefore, the school offers a strong sense of community to its students. It is the main setting for establishing and maintaining personal relationships outside the family.

I collected a body of legends by visiting six individual seventh- and eighth-grade Reading and English classes. The original plan, co-ordinated with the help of my stepdaughter, who attended the school, and one of her teachers, was to collect legends from two classes. To prepare the students for my visit, I compiled a handout, distributed several days before my arrival, which defined legends and gave examples of eleven types: haunted

places; UFOs; horror stories; unusual occurrences; premonitions; fairies or witches; historical or prominent figures; ghost stories; camp tales; babysitter stories; and legends heard as a small child. I felt that this age group might wrongly assume that telling a legend is analogous to believing it. Young adults, like the rest of mankind, do not want to appear unduly credulous to their peers, so the definition of legend I provided stressed the idea that belief is not a prerequisite for relating a story which is 'told as true'. My definition was:

> Legends are stories with a specific time and place, handed down orally, which may or may not be true. They may be old, semi-historical stories (like George Washington and the cherry tree) or relatively recent and localised (like the ghost legend about a man who supposedly drowned while boating in Miami Whitewater).[2] I'm interested in stories that you have heard from your families, friends or neighbours to help in my research. It makes no difference whether or not you believe them; my concern is with the story itself.

My original intention was to visit only two classes, but, at the end of the second, my stepdaughter's teacher invited me to attend the rest of her classes that day, and I enthusiastically accepted. With the first two groups I had enjoyed the luxury of time, each class being fifty minutes long, but, since an assembly schedule was in effect on the day of my visit, the remaining classes lasted only twenty minutes and, in addition, I had to go into them without any preparation. In an attempt to keep the collection environment as close to that of the first two groups as possible, therefore, I distributed my handout and read it over quickly, before asking for the students' contributions. All narratives were tape-recorded. Owing to the sheer volume of legends collected, in this paper I want to consider the response of the first three groups only.

While reviewing the transcripts, I was struck by the number of legends about ghosts and haunted places. The third group, a seventh grade Remedial English class, for example, recounted nothing but ghost stories: in less than fifteen minutes they delivered a total of fourteen legends without any prompting at all. This paper, therefore concentrates on legends (or fragments of legends) about ghosts and haunted places. All transcriptions are literal. The first group of narratives was collected from an eighth-grade Reading class of academically average students, who received my handout a day or two prior to my arrival.

Collector: Does anyone know about any haunted places?

A1
There's this cemetery in Rising Sun (Indiana). It's about a glowing grave. It glows at night. There's supposed to be some guy who died in a nearby house. It glows when the moon's full.

A2
There's a crematory up on Buffalo Ridge. It's way back in the woods. You walk back through there and there's these real big pillars where the crematory exploded. Sometimes at night you can go around and find little pieces of bones and hear people screamin'. I thought I heard someone screamin' once but I didn't stick around.

A3
I used to live in this house that this lady died in and we'd be—we'd hear noises in the basement. We used to have a set of drums and at night we'd think we heard someone playing and we could also hear people in the garage talking. My stepdad used to tell us about hearing people in the garage talking, having conversations like there was a party going on.[4]

A4
Down pretty close to where I live there's this house that's close to the river and these people supposedly died there and they say that demons are there and stuff and that if people, if they lived there too long they'd scare 'em out. There's been about five people lived in it in the past three years. They usually take off about a month and a half after they move in. But these people who just moved in—they've been there about a month and a half now. They said nothin's wrong but everybody else said it's haunted.

A5
I have a friend and her first husband was killed in a jeep wreck and she thinks he's haunting them because where she used to live before she got married the second time she said all these strange things have happened. I don't know if they're true. They moved into a different house and the people who lived there before, they got it haunted. And she moved in there and all this strange stuff happened to 'em. Like, they have this picture—they found this picture. They were just sittin' there—it was just her and Connie—they were just sittin' there and umm, the dog jumped up and ran into the bathroom and was bitin' at the walls. So they went up into this attic and there was a painting of a dead baby hanging upside down.[5]

A6
This one's about hitchhikers. Down where my uncle lives, down in Kentucky, they

said every year on one certain night it will rain and there will be a lady and she'll be standing on this bridge and there will be a car and they would pick her up and they would start talkin' to her and they would turn around and she'd be gone. They said she died there—she got hit by a car. [Surprisingly, this is the only variant of the Vanishing Hitchhiker that I collected].

A7
This is like a dream. The neighbour—his dog was killed that night by a car wreck or something. He got killed and he said after he buried him, that night, he just woke up and the dog was sittin' on the bed. He said he didn't know what to do. The dog was just sittin there lickin' his hand.

Collector: Was it the dog's ghost?

Informant: They don't know.

The next group of legends was collected from an eighth grade Advanced English class. The academic performance of students in this group is superior to that of their peers. As with the first group, these students had received my handout prior to my arrival and were expecting my visit.

Collector: Anyone know of any haunted places?

B1
The Grand Finale Restaurant. Well, I know a midnight baker who works there and after all the customers leave they hear footsteps and she said the ghost also talks in other people's voices. She said all the other people that were there went down in the basement and she heard one of the people say her name and when she turned around all the people were still down in the basement. And one time they heard footsteps and they all looked and they thought they saw somebody but they weren't sure so they all went running out of the restaurant and umm, somebody came to fix a light one time and he got up on the ladder and was getting ready to fix it. There were two lights on both sides of the entrance door and he started to take the one light off and they heard him scream and they went out there and the other light lifted itself off and fell to the ground.

B2
Emery Theatre—or Emery Gallery—it's up at Edgecliff—there's supposed to be a ghost of a lady that used to live up there. I think it was, like, Emery's young daughter who died. They say they hear her and they see her.

B3
The locker room at the elementary school used to have this thing [at this point

there is much laughter from the class; apparently, many knew this legend] about a ghost that would go in the bathroom and shut every window and turn out every light. People used to go in on a dare.

Collector: Anybody ever dare you?

Informant: Yeah, once, but everybody got scared and ran out. [Again, much laughter from the class].

B4
We have a friend who, they have this really old house and they have a ghost there and they can tell it's a lady because they've seen her and her name is Rose Marie and whenever she's in the room you have, like a rose scent and you can smell her and, uh, she closes doors on you. You, like, walk in a room and she'll close the door on your face.

Collector: Has that ever happened to you?

Informant: Yeah. It's pretty weird because you know she's there because of the scent and because she shuts doors. I've seen her too. She wears a really strange pink dress and it's strange because it looks like a movie projector that hasn't hit the screen, you know, you just kind of see it in the air. That's what it looks like.

Collector: Has she ever spoken?

Informant: I don't know.

B5
This couple—everybody said this house was haunted—so they go over there, they're going to stay all night long and they get scared so they decide to hold hands so they won't be scared so they're sitting there and every once in a while they'd squeeze one another's hand to reassure themselves. In the morning, she heard some rustling like birds, she thought, so she knew pretty soon it was going to be morning and she realized he wasn't squeezing her hand back lately, but she figured he was probably asleep. She didn't fall asleep; she was petrified. Then she fell asleep herself and when she woke up she looked down and she was holding his hand but the body wasn't there [She begins to laugh so hard she has difficulty delivering the last line]. And his body was hanging in the rafters [Here the entire class laughs hysterically.]

The final group to consider is the seventh grade Remedial English class. These students are below average academically. You will remember that this class was not expecting my visit and, due to an assembly schedule that day, I spent a total of only twenty minutes with them. After this class was dismissed, several students followed me out into the hallway, wishing to

tell me more legends. Unfortunately, they were required to go immediately to the auditorium.

Collector: Does anyone know any legends?

C1
I have one. Well, where my grandma lives, in this one room, in this certain place where you go to bed, you suddenly wake up and you see this blue woman. It's in this one bedroom—when you come to the top of the steps you go straight back.

Collector: Do you think it's a ghost?

Informant: Yeah.

Collector: Does it speak to you?

Informant: No, it just looks at you. You wake up. You don't hear nothin', you just wake up. It just sets there and looks at you and after about five minutes it goes.

Collector: Are you afraid?

Informant: No. I freaked out the first time I seen it though.

Collector: Do you have any idea whose ghost it is?

Informant: No. She's pretty though.[6]

C2
My grandma, she smells old perfume, like from the 1960s, all the time, just her. A psychic came out but didn't figure out it was a ghost or anything.

C3
My dad has a funeral home. The guy that had it before us got shot. Now every once in a while I'll be working down the basement—there's a workshop down there—and I'll see him watching me.

Collector: Do you think it's a ghost?

Informant: Yeah.

Collector: Do you feel afraid?

Informant: When I first saw it, yeah.

C4
My grandma has lived in a lot of places—she can't stay in one place very long. She moved to this real old house one time and there was this blood on the step. They took a piece out one time and they were going to have it analysed to see what it was. They put it in this thing and went to sleep. The next morning they woke up and it

wasn't in there and they went back to my grandma's and it was right back in the same spot.[7]

C5
One of our firemen was killed in a fire. Now we see him roaming around the station. He doesn't talk—we just see him. One time I was sitting on the back of the fire truck and the guy was sitting next to me.

Collector: What guy? The ghost?

Informant: Yeah, on the back of the truck, we have straps—he was right next to there, right where I was sitting. The guy turned around and smiled at me and then he left, he vanished.

Collector: What was he dressed like?

Informant: In an old-time suit with a dress leather helmet—the old-time suits for firefighters. He looked weird. He was dressed in the uniform of the year that he died. [This informant's father is a fireman.]

C6
We have a graveyard right down the street from us and my friend—his mom, she had a boyfriend and he died and his father died right before he died and they said he saw the ghost of her boyfriend digging up her husband. That's in the graveyard behind their house.

Collector: So they were both dead?

Informant: And the boyfriend was digging up the husband's grave.

C7
We lived right by a graveyard and these old people, they used to tell us these old sayings and we never believed them. And we camped out just for fun up in the graveyard and this little kid ran out and saw this ghost with a white veil on. She got married. They said this girl got killed when she got married.

Collector: Was it an accident or was she murdered?

Informant: Murdered, yeah. They buried her and now she comes back every year on her anniversary. She just walks into the church and leaves.

The next two narratives refer to the same location—a small, white house and nearby graveyard in a rural section of Harrison. During the moments spent recounting these tales, the classroom seemed to be transformed into an authentic legend telling environment.[8] Students interrupted one another and spoke freely without waiting to be called upon. They became

so engrossed in the legends that they abandoned the rules of orderliness normally enforced in this particular classroom. Both narratives were related during the same class period, but not one after the other.

C8A

Informant 1: We live up here on New Haven, and there's this graveyard. And there's this white house or somethin' and my grandmother kept on tellin' us if we go outside we'll see this old man come out of it and start walkin' down the hill. So one night I went out around ten or somethin' and this old man starts comin' out and starts rollin' down the hill—I mean he's just rollin' down the hill. And then umm—I started runnin' in the house and then, um, I turned around for a second and he was gone.

Collector: Did anybody else ever see him?

Informant 1: Yeah, my cousin saw him.

Informant 2: I saw him too. It was late at night.

Informant 1: You know where I'm talkin' about, don't you?

Informant 2: Yeah.

Informant 1: That little white house up on that hill?

Collector: Did you see him roll? Why do you think he rolled?

Informant 2: Yeah. One time he rolled.

Informant 1: He didn't have no legs.

Collector: He didn't have any legs. Did he have legs when you saw him?

Informant 2: Yeah. There's a legend says some man came and . . . cut off his legs.

Informant 1: Yeah. And left 'em in there.

Collector: In the house?

Informant 1: Yeah. It's just, like, a little house. It's just like one big square house.

Collector: And nobody lives there now?

Informant 1: No. We go up there all the time. You know where Wiley Road is? Did you ever see that green house that's on the corner? That big green house? That's where I live and it's right up there behind the house up on that big hill. That little tiny one. It's a little tiny shack and if you go up there it looks like—it's got a bench on it. It's just like a little tiny shack. I didn't believe it until I saw it that one night. I got scared and I ran in the house and I said, 'Grandma, I saw that ghost!'

C8B
Informant 3: I went out there on Halloween night and people with white dresses were all the way across the hill.

Collector: Is this the same hill the guy was rolling down?

Informant 3: Yeah. They say most of them come from the graveyard.

Collector: Is the graveyard near there?

Informant 3: Yeah. It's right around the corner from it. Right around the corner's the graveyard. They say he's buried in the graveyard but I don't believe it. ['He' is the man whose legs were cut off.]

Collector: Have you ever seen any ghosts up by that house that have been harmful? Have they tried to hurt you in any way?

Informant 3: No. They just start walkin' down the hill. They do it every—they say they do it every Halloween. They just start walkin' down the hill.

Collector: How many are there?

Informant 3: Ten to twelve of 'em right straight across the hill. They just start walkin' down the hill.

Collector: Do you think all of these ghosts are people who lived in that house?

Informant 3: Yeah. No. That lived in the community. Because most of the people from that community's buried up there.

Collector: Do you know of anybody else who knows stories about that house?

Informant 3: That's all they say—that the man comes out and they have ghosts line up all the way across the hill and start walkin' down.

Informant 4: I could talk to the guy that manages the graveyard—the caretaker of that graveyard. They have all kinds of stories about it. I mean they have sightings and ghosts comin' and walkin' through people's houses.

Collector: Does anybody else have any legends to share?

C9
Well, my grandma, she wakes up in the middle of the night and she went downstairs and she thought that she saw my grandpa down there. She went back up and grandpa was in bed. She walked back down and there's this little boy, sittin' in the chair where my grandpa sits. It disappeared and grandma went upstairs and tried to get grandpa up to check it out.

Collector: Did your grandma or grandpa have any idea who the little boy was?

Informant: No.

Collector: Did they ever see him again?

Informant: No.

C10
I lived in Cincinnati for about three or four months when my mother was stayin' with this one lady—she was watchin' her and stuff—she had, like, a bad heart. She had got hit—she was in a car accident. Instead of reachin' to roll down the window she reached for the door handle and opened it and he was going about fifty or sixty miles per hour. Anyway, she opened it and fell out, and, umm, she cut her face and her leg was all messed up. But she was still livin'. My mother used to take care of her and stuff and she bought her, she bought her like, a little clock and you know, when somebody buys you something and gives it to you, you like it a lot. Well, she used to get up a lot and go over to the clock and wind it up and one day, after she died, we were moving upstairs from where she was living and I came downstairs and like, there was a bench right in front of the window and I was pickin' up a box and I turned around for a minute and she was turning around, winding up the clock. She turned around and smiled at me. I just started runnin' upstairs and my mom said, 'What's wrong?' and I said, 'Nothin', nothin''. I was scared. She turned around and started smilin' at me, still windin' up the clock. God!

C11
My dad told me a story about this car that was on this bridge and it fell off the bridge and there was this girl inside and it cut off her head. About four years ago we went by this bridge—it's still there—and we looked out and there was this girl with no head.[9]

C12
My grandma seen this woman one time—she looked like she was real but she wasn't. She walked past our house and was walkin' across the street and the car went right through her and she just kept walkin'. It was at my grandma's house in Indiana.

C13
[The informant for this story is the boy who related the legend about the ghost in the little white house who rolls down the hill. Just prior to giving this account, he told me that he was sixteen years old and still in the seventh grade. Later, his teacher confirmed this.]
I was in this group called the Searchers and we went to Pennsylvania for two weeks and we camped out at this one site and we made a shelter and they were tellin' ghost stories and stuff and they said that there was a legend where these, umm, bears go out and eat people. These bears just come out and eat people and they say one of them comes back, not the bears but one of the people, comes back and

haunts that place where we were at. So, I had to go out and use the restroom and this one person comes, she's walkin' behind me, she's walkin' and she's ummm, she's ummm, got no arms up to here [indicates forearm] and she's umm, she's sayin', 'Where's my hands and arms?' I just started runnin' from her.

Collector: Boy, you have to run away from ghosts fairly often!

Informant: I'm scared of 'em. I believe in 'em but I'm scared of 'em.

Collector: Now, what about the guy who was rolling down the hill in your other story, were you afraid of him?

Informant: No, I was just startled. I didn't know what it was at first. It just started rollin' down the hill.

Junior high school students, like ghosts and the houses they haunt, are nebulous by nature. Seventh and eighth graders are neither children, adults, nor even fully-fledged teenagers, most of them ranging in age from eleven through fourteen. Not unlike the revenants in the legends they tell, these adolescents are caught between worlds, searching to find their place in the social order. The legends reflect the tensions in the adolescent tug-of-war between adulthood and childhood.

While ghost legends were frequently told in all three classes, two significant, discernible groupings emerge. On the one hand, there are pupils who still firmly identify with childhood and with family ties. These students relate legends associated with parents and grandparents, and their stories are located around houses and graveyards in Harrison or near the home of a relative. On the other hand, there are maturer students who are broadening their horizon into the adult realm. Though they also tell legends about graveyards and other haunted places, the locales are urban or distant, and they tend to quote friends rather than relatives as their source of information. Ten of the fourteen legends told in the Remedial English class involve close family or relatives, and so do two out of five stories told in the Reading class. The Advanced English class, however, related no legends involving family members. Both the Reading class and the Advanced English class told legends situated outside their immediate environment, citing nearby towns, well-known places in the Greater Cincinnati area, city institutions, a college campus and a popular restaurant as the location for their narratives.

Of course, it is possible that these distributions reflect social and geographical patterns. Suburban students might transmit modern or urban legends, whereas rural students might have more contact with rural

legends, especially if they are isolated from their friends and have to rely on their families for companionship. Kenneth Thigpen, for example, in his study of adolescent legends, notes that their diffusion in the teenage community tends to follow lifestyle patterns.[10] Similarly, Dégh and Vázsonyi contend that, because legends are deeply rooted in social reality, they are not only territorially limited but also influenced by factors such as age, sex, religion and occupation.[11] We must remember, however, that the students form a distinct community of their own at the junior high, and that the legends were collected in this environment. They are more likely, therefore, to focus the immediate concerns of this community than to be influenced by any wider context. That ghost legends reflect the anomalous condition of the adolescent is an example of legends operating at a deeper, more unconscious level than the merely social.

When I left the junior high with my collection on tape, I had the distinct feeling that the students in the seventh-grade remedial class were the best storytellers, spontaneously providing me with a relatively large supply of legends. Yet when I transcribed the tape, I was surprised to find that, on paper, their narratives were not much different from the others. What had intrigued and captivated me had been the electricity and vitality of their performance. That the legends told by the remedial class were extensions of a belief system was obvious in the telling, but was lost in the single dimension of words on a page. During the performance, the students had projected an attitude about belief.

Dégh and Vázsonyi, along with Robert Georges, assert that one of the reasons legends are difficult to define is that we have only attempted to study legend in a one-dimensional form; we have failed to recognize the legend as a performance where our perception of a particular legend is determined by the complex interaction of narrator, his or her audience, and the attitudes of both, as well as the climate in which the legends are being told.[12] In his article 'Toward an Understanding of Storytelling Events', Robert Georges postulates a theory which is, in his words, 'holistic rather than atomistic', considering not only content, which constitutes nothing more than the written message, but the performance as a whole. The study of performance is vital in legend-telling since belief is at the legend's core, and a people's beliefs are tied up with their attitudes and their interaction with the audience.

The question, then, is, Why were students in the remedial group better performers? Anthropologist Mary Douglas describes the way individuals are defined by society by looking at two criteria: group and grid.[14] *Group*

measures the degree to which an individual feels constrained by, or part of, a given society, while *grid* relates to one's position or rank within that group. In the junior high school environment, students in the remedial class have a low sense of group and grid compared to the other classes. They do not identify strongly as a group and do not feel a keen sense of competition within their group; therefore, they are less inhibited in their performances. As expressed through the legends they tell, students in the remedial class view themselves more intently as part of a family group than a peer group. Two-thirds of the legends told in this class relate in some way to a close family member. Fifty per cent of the legends recounted are memorates and all but one (C13) are contingent upon an experience involving relatives. Students give credence to their legends by attesting that the uncanny event happened to or was witnessed by a family member or, as in one case (C5), the memorate centres around a parent's occupation.

According to Marcia Rowley, the teacher whose classes I visited, students in the remedial class vary widely in age, and the majority have been held back at least once from graduating to the next grade. As a result of this diversity in age, there seems to be less peer-group pressure than in the other classes. In fact, the peer group for some remedial students changes from year to year while students in the Reading and Advanced English classes will be likely to remain peers throughout their six years in junior and senior high school. They have a keen sense of group and are unwilling to take the chance of being ridiculed by their peers. Only one sixth of the legend accounts from the Reading and Advanced English classes attest to witnessing an uncanny event, while fifty per cent in the Remedial English class freely admit to a personal belief in uncanny experiences (C1, C3, C5, C8A, C8B, C10 and C13). It is difficult, and perhaps unfair, to draw conclusions regarding the adolescent community at Harrison Junior High School from an analysis based on legends collected from a small segment of the student population. Nonetheless, there appears to be some correlation among the types of legends told, the student's level of maturity, and his or her ability to perform academically in a grid-oriented, academic environment.[15]

NOTES

1. This paper is presented here as it was given orally at the 1985 Sheffield

conference. Another version appears in *Indiana Folklore and Oral History* 16/1 (1987), pp. 45-60.

2. Miami Whitewater Forest is part of the Hamilton County Park system and is located within several hundred yards of Harrison Junior High School. For an evaluation of the legend of George Washington and the cherry tree, see Alan Dundes, 'On the Psychology of Legend', in Wayland D. Hand, ed., *American Folk Legend: A Symposium* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California, 1971), pp. 21-36. In the same volume (pp. 1-19), Robert A. Georges considers the problems of defining legend in 'The General Concept of Legend: Some Assumptions to be Reexamined and Reassessed'.

3. All ghost legends, except C8A and C8B, are presented in the order in which they were told, although they have been extracted from a larger body of legends collected during my visit to Harrison Junior High School. C8A and C8B are grouped together in the interest of clarity. Both narratives were related during the same class period, but not one after the other. I intend to analyse the entire collection of legends as a total performance in a later paper.

4. Ruth Ann Musick records a variant of this legend in her collection, *The Telltale Lilac Bush* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1965), p. 31.

5. A5, C6 and C7 reflect modern family problems. Each of these legends relates tensions concerned with marriage, remarriage and divorce. Marcia Rowley, Harrison Junior High School English teacher, estimates at least one-third of her students have divorced parents.

6. Musick also collected a variant of the haunted bedroom tale. See Musick (1965), p. 77.

7. Although this narrative is rather incoherent and does not state the cause of the bloodstain, it contains a variant of *E 422.1.11.5.1: Ineradicable bloodstain after bloody tragedy*.

8. For a discussion of legend environment, see Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi, 'Legend and Belief', in Dan Ben Amos, ed., *Folklore Genres* (Austin: University of Texas, 1976), pp. 93-123.

9. Kenneth Thigpen lists seven variants of an apparition on a bridge in 'Adolescent Legends in Brown County: A Survey', *Indiana Folklore* 4 (1974), pp. 190-93. For further discussion of haunted bridges see Linda Dégh, 'The Haunted Bridges Near Avon and Danville and Their Role in Legend Formation', *Indiana Folklore* 2 (1969), pp. 73-88.

10. Thigpen (1974), p. 211.

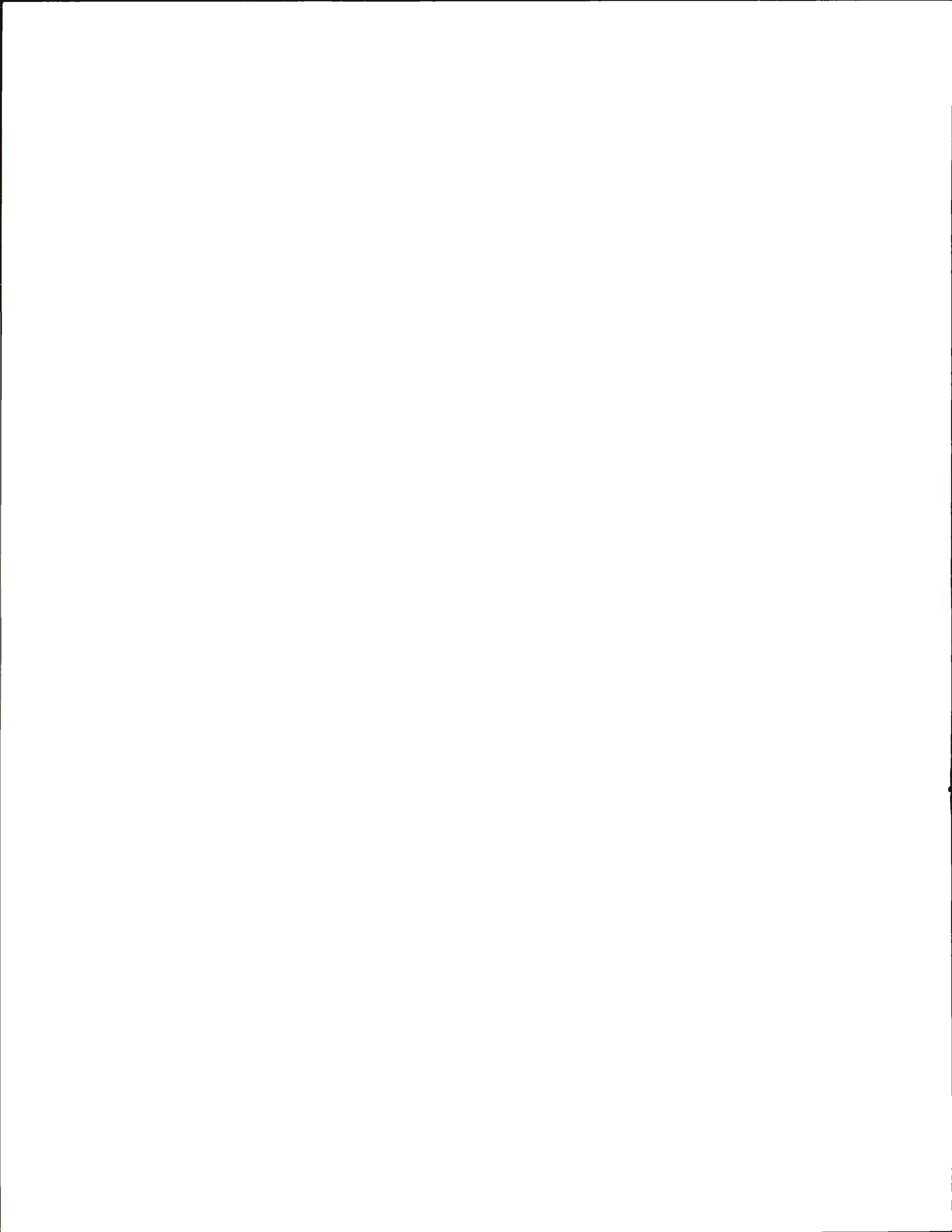
11. Dégh and Vázsonyi (1976), pp. 93-123.

12. Dégh and Vázsonyi (1976), pp. 100-101.

13. Robert A. Georges, 'Toward an Understanding of Storytelling Events', *Journal of American Folklore* 82 (1969), pp. 313-28. For other discussions on the relationship between legend and belief and the problems of defining legend see Georges (1971) and Linda Dégh, 'The "Belief Legend" in Modern Society: Form,

Function and Relationship to Other Genres', in Wayland D. Hand, ed., *American Folk Legend: A Symposium* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California, 1971), pp. 55-68.

15. I am grateful to Edgar Slotkin, Professor of Folklore and Celtic Studies at the University of Cincinnati, for his assistance with the bibliography and encouragement in the compilation of this paper.



PART 4

NOTES AND COMMENTS

GOSSIP, RUMOUR AND LEGEND: A PLEA FOR A PSYCHOLOGICAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL APPROACH

Daniel Decotterd

My background is the humanities and I do not claim to be a professional folklorist, but, whilst working on a thesis on local communication in Britain, I developed an interest in gossip, rumour and legends. My research involves studies of local communities and a close scrutiny of local and national newspapers in this country (I also read the Italian press quite frequently).

The insistence of academics on maintaining a rigorous conceptual framework for a given discipline is understandable, but leaving a door open for a somewhat divergent approach to the issues might be no bad thing—the challenge could be both stimulating and thought-provoking.

My central hypothesis is that a thorough study of urban legends could profitably be centred on the fundamental problems of psychology: that is, those revolving round the relationship of self and others. French philosophers could, for example, help us to gain new insights into the phenomena we are studying. Jean-Paul Sartre has, in philosophical treatises and plays,[1] forcibly described the irreconcilable conflict between man and man—'L'enfer c'est les autres' [Hell is other people].[2]

The deep roots of rumour and gossip could no doubt be found in the fear inspired by other people and in existential jealousy. We might well profit from looking at Merleau-Ponty's *Phénoménologie de la perception*.[3] Our perception of the world is slanted by our personal wishes and desires. Seen in this light, gossip, rumour and legend, transmitted in a community or by the media, reveal a lot about the mentality of the country in which they appear.

Few will deny that the French idea of privacy is very different from the British one. There seems to be a consensus not to harrass politicians with 'revelations' about their private lives—an outstanding feature of French

life that is stressed in John Ardagh's book, *The New France*. A 'Parkinson affair' would be harder to imagine in France, and would have been unlikely to get as much coverage as Fleet Street gave it. The conclusion seems to be that society does not make the same demands on the individual on both sides of the Channel. British society makes more demands about sexual morality, at least from its public figures, than French society does. This obviously affects the nature of gossip: the muckraking press in France does best when it can prove that a leader has been guilty of tax-evasion or of making illicit profits!

It also has a fascination with the British monarchy. Could a form of compensation be at work here? The French are egalitarian, watching people close to them to make sure they have no unfair advantage, but that does not prevent them from experiencing pleasure in identifying with the Queen and her glory. Dreaming over newspaper gossip, they get the best of both worlds! Another fascinating study which could be made in the light of the existential jealousy theory would address itself to gossip and rumour about cardinals in Rome, a city which is rife with 'good stories'. Could these stories be explained by frustration and resentment at the teaching of the Church about sexual matters? Do the Romans find some sort of grim satisfaction in imagining that the cardinals are just as bad as they are? Could it be that they bask in the ambiguity of gossip?—'It's only gossip; it was told me by a friend. You do not have to believe me.' Here again, the individual gets the best of both worlds.

Studying gossip and rumour in towns and villages, I came to the conclusion that the greater the frustration of the group, the more prone to belief it was. So rumour and gossip, read in the light of existential jealousy, could well serve as indices of the emotional condition of a group or nation, and give valuable clues to social workers, politicians and sociologists—not to mention folklorists!

NOTES

1. Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (London: Methuen, 1957); *idem*, *The Psychology of Imagination* (London: Methuen, 1972); *idem*, *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (London: Methuen, 1962).
2. Sartre, *In Camera* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1946).
3. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945).
4. John Ardagh, *The New France* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977).

PRACTICAL JOKES AND THE LEGENDS SURROUNDING THEM

Sheila Douglas

Stories told about practical jokes are usually a necessary adjunct of the jokes themselves, whether they are what might be described as 'public jokes' or 'private jokes'. Public jokes are those which are carried out in a situation which involves an audience or a large group of people and the stories may be told by anyone who has witnessed the event or who has spoken to someone who was there. Private jokes are very often known about initially only by the joker and his victim, so the stories will be told only by them or people to whom they have related the events.

An example of a public practical joke was the Deacon Brothers Hoax played by entertainer D.K. at a folk festival in Scotland in the early 1970s. It was set up many months in advance by means of an accomplice, an air hostess, who posted letters from the United States purporting to come from 'the famous Deacon Brothers', an imaginary singing group, one of whom expressed a desire to drop in at the Festival in the course of a projected European tour. The festival committee were taken in by this and when the 'Deacon Brother' arrived at Prestwick Airport, he was met by a civic car and driven to the venue of the festival, where an excited festival chairman introduced him to the audience, only to realize after a few minutes that it was D.K., and not some great American celebrity, who was leading the audience in the singing of a spurious song entitled 'The Wild Dogs of Kentucky', which had a chorus of howling. Almost everyone who was there has subsequently told the story of the occasion and many people who were not there have passed the story on and it has become a sort of legend. The versions differ according to how much the storyteller knows of the background to the joke, but in every case the effect of the story is the same: it enhances the reputation of the joker as a larger-than-life 'character'. Without the telling of the story, this enhancement would not take place and the joke would lose some of its purpose.

D.K. himself agrees that his jokes are intended to entertain people and to

add to his reputation, and, even if they are at someone's expense, they are not intended to hurt. In fact the joker, by putting himself in the leading part, is liable himself to take the biggest 'fall'. The function of the story is very clear in this context. By reporting the success of the joke, it increases the reputation of the joker. The way the story is told also indicates the reasons for its success: it plays on a modern 'cult of the celebrity' to show up its absurdity, and in laughing at it, we are laughing at ourselves.

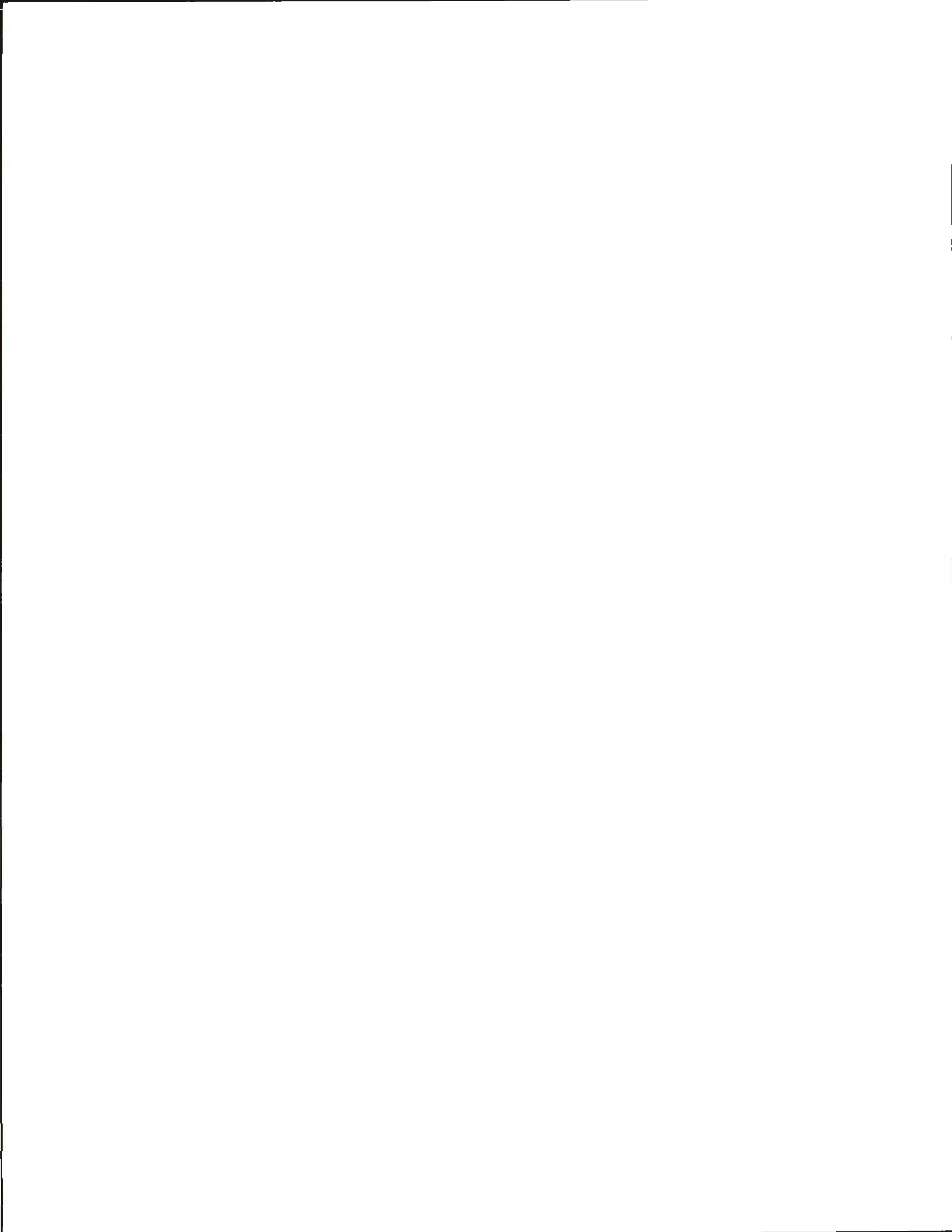
An example of the private practical joke is one I call 'The Genuine Punjabi Pflanjandrum'—a joke which was played by J.B., a musicologist who often buys and sells second-hand musical instruments. Passing the back premises of a theatre one day, J.B. picked up a stage prop—a stringed instrument. As often happens, it gave him the idea for a joke against a dealer he knew, so he took it to the shop and solemnly informed the dealer that this was a 'genuine Punjabi Pflanjandrum'. The man put it in the window with a price tag on it and the joker's intention was to let it stay there for two or three days, then tell the dealer of the trick. But when he went to the shop to do this, he found it had been sold, and, as the dealer was happy with the price, he did not reveal the truth. A few days later he was invited to the house of a friend, who was one of these people who are always boasting about their latest unusual acquisition. When the joker reached the house, he saw hanging on the wall the 'genuine Punjabi Pflanjandrum'. Since the man was so happy with his 'find', the joker again did not tell him the truth. The joker tells the story with great satisfaction, and clearly; he *has* to tell the story or the point of the joke would be lost. As before, the whole question is related to the character and circumstances of the joker. In this case, we have a man who has been the victim of the pretentiousness of others and who, though he does not take himself too seriously, needs to bolster his self-esteem. The jokes he plays and the stories he tells about them are clearly designed to do this.

The third type of story is perhaps the most interesting, because it may itself be a practical joke on the listener. R.F., who worked for six years as a gamekeeper, has a fund of such stories, one of which is 'The Bynack Stane'. According to the story, R.F. was helping a friend to renovate the outside of his house, when he was asked to drive a businessman to Edinburgh Airport, from a place in Fife. On the way the man confided in him that his daughter had just acquired a horse and he was deeply worried in case she had an accident with it. He was losing sleep over it and did not know what to do. R.F. told him of a talisman he had inherited from his great-grandfather called the 'Bynack Stane'. His grandfather had been gamekeeper

on an estate in Perthshire and one day when he was out with the laird, the laird's horse had gone lame just before it crossed a rustic bridge slung across a gully. His great-grandfather had undertaken to go for another horse and, as the way led across the bridge, he set out to cross it on his own horse. The bridge gave way under the horse's hooves. The horse was injured and his great grandfather only just escaped with his life. The laird thought the stone in his horse's hoof had saved his life and gave it to R.F.'s great-grandfather. It was called the 'Bynack Stane' because of the area in which it was found. R.F. then gave the stone to the businessman for £20. When he returned to his friend's house and told his friend the story, his friend was aghast that he should part with such a precious keepsake. R.F. then pointed out that there were plenty more like it on his friend's front path!

Like many of R.F.'s narratives, this story entertains the listener but leaves him uncertain whether it is true or not. Did the joker really play such a trick, or is it the story itself that is the trick? R.F. is an adventurous man who has done all kinds of work, had many strange experiences and is extremely resourceful and quick-thinking. There is also an air of mystery about him. He could, in most cases, have done all the things mentioned in any of his stories: at the same time, one cannot quite believe it. This is exactly the effect R.F. wants to create, and in fact, the very last thing the listener really wants is to know the truth, one way or the other.

The popularity of the stories and legends surrounding practical jokes seems to me to go back to people's deep-rooted desire to believe in magic and to see the great and mighty made to look foolish. As well as helping to express the characters of the jokers, the stories fulfil a universal psychological need.



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THE CENTRE FOR ENGLISH CULTURAL TRADITION AND LANGUAGE

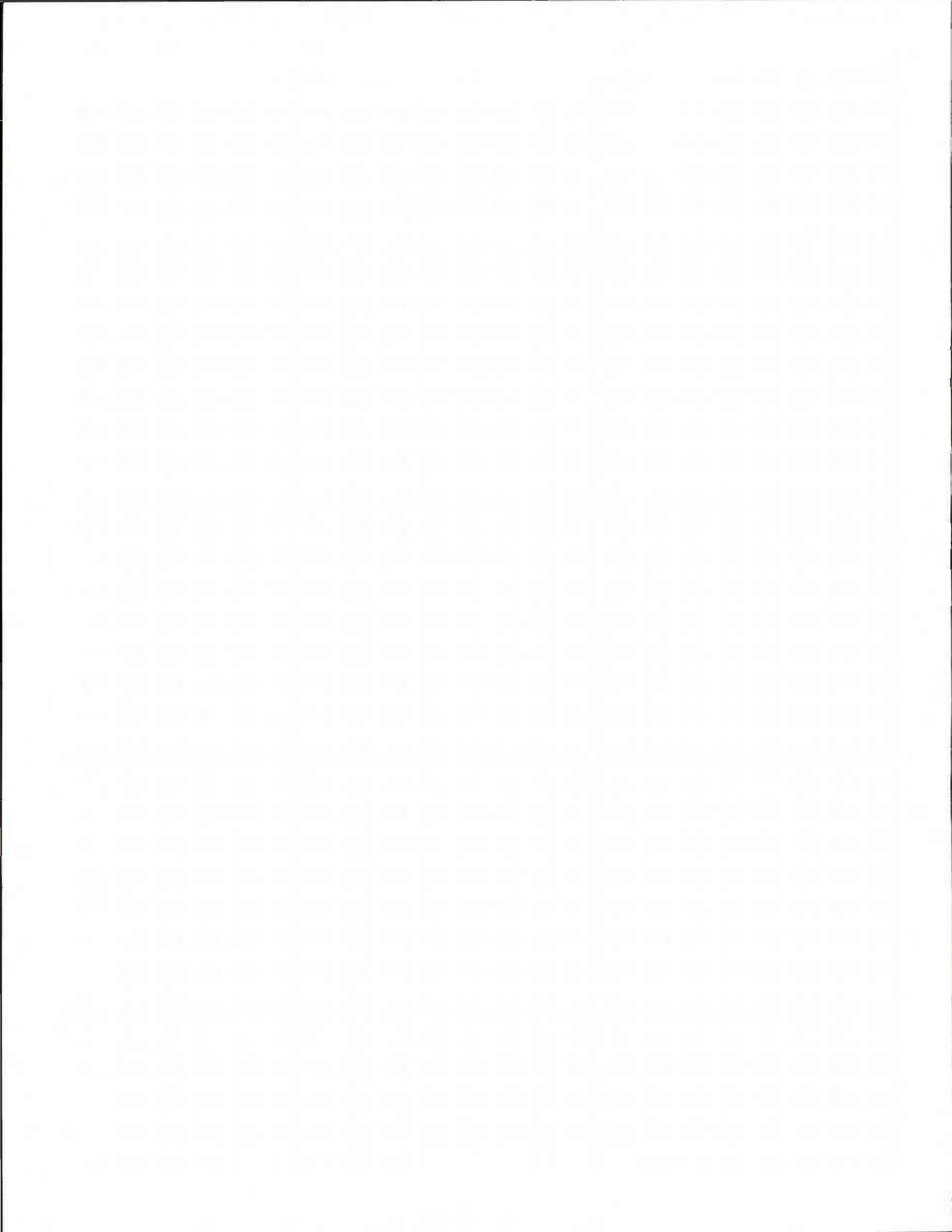
The Centre acts as a national repository for material on all aspects of language and cultural tradition throughout the British Isles. It is located at the University of Sheffield, where it forms part of the Department of English Language. It has close links with the University's Division of Continuing Education and the Departments of Folklore and English at the Memorial University of Newfoundland. The two Universities jointly sponsor the Institute for Folklore Studies in Britain and Canada.

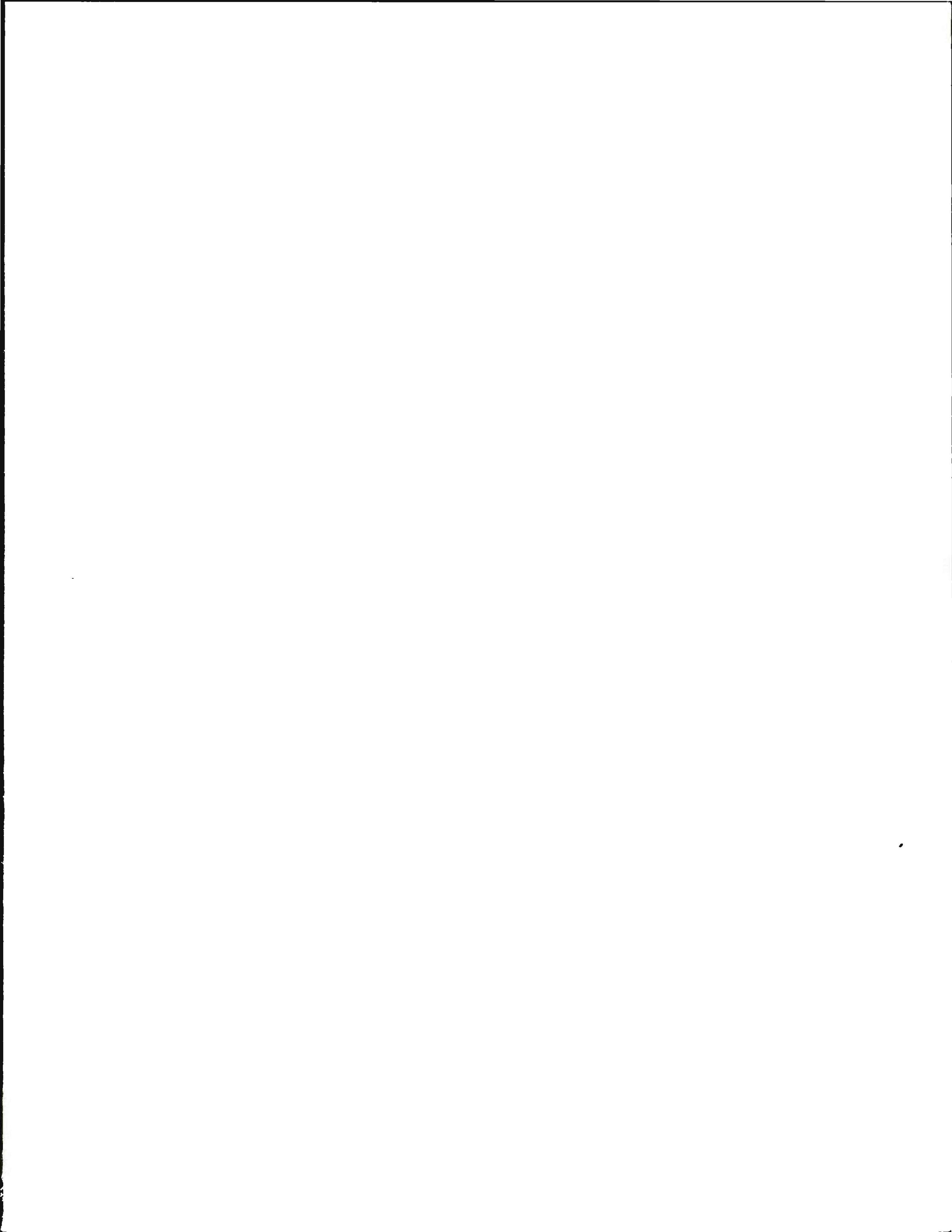
The Centre aims to stimulate interest in language and cultural tradition, encourage the collecting and recording of traditional material and provide a forum for discussion on all aspects of language and folklore. The Centre's Archives provide an extensive resource for reference and research. They include books, periodicals, monographs, dissertations, pamphlets, ephemera, photographs, slides, illustrations, audio-tapes, films and videotapes, along with extensive data on regional and social dialects, slang and colloquialism, blason populaire, occupational vocabulary, proverbs, sayings, childlore, custom, belief, traditional music, dance and drama.

The Centre sponsors and directs projects in children's language and folklore and is conducting a sytematic investigation of traditional verbal social control. The Centre's national Survey of Language and Folklore continues to gather information on occupational vocabularies and traditions, calendar and social customs, traditional health systems, and the lore of cosmic phenomena, plants and animals. Folk narratives, anecdotes and jokes are also well represented. Close links have been established with the Traditional Drama Research Group. In the field of folklife the Centre is conducting a study of the traditional lore and language of food. The Centre's Traditional Heritage Museum includes a representative collection of urban and rural traditional occupations, pastimes, arts and crafts.

The Centre contributes to both the postgraduate and undergraduate programmes in the Department of English Language which offers undergraduate courses in Folklore and Contemporary English. Postgraduate students may read for the Diploma and the degrees of M.A. in Modern English Language and English Cultural Tradition (by examination and dissertation) and M.Phil., and PhD. in Language and/or Folklore (by dissertation). M.A. degrees in Literature and Oral Culture, and in Local History, Literature and Cultural Tradition, and a Certificate in English Cultural Tradition are also offered.

For further information, write to: The Director, Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, The University of Sheffield, Sheffield S10 2TN (Tel: 0742-768555, Ext.6296).





MONSTERS WITH IRON TEETH

PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEMPORARY LEGEND VOLUME III

Edited by Gillian Bennett and Paul Smith

This volume is the third in the 'Perspectives' series, and brings together papers presented at the International Conference on Contemporary Legend held in Sheffield in July 1985.

The Sheffield meetings are designed to provide a forum in which scholars can discuss current research and exchange ideas. There is never any attempt to construct hard-and-fast models of legend processes or limit participants to any particular approach; rather, it is the hope that the interplay of voices will expand participants' awareness of the genre, increase their familiarity with the theoretical and practical problems it presents, and pave the way for a more sensitive understanding and a more subtle critique. The papers in this volume reflect these aims and approaches.

Three main perspectives on contemporary legend are offered to the reader: considerations of theoretical issues; case studies of particular legends; analyses of legend and society.

Among the studies of theoretical issues are W.F.H. Nicolaisen's 'German *Sage* and English *Legend*: Terminological and Conceptual Problems', and Edgar Slotkin's 'Legend Genre as a Function of Audience'. Case studies include Mark Glazer's 'The Superglue Revenge'; Maria Herrera Sobek's 'The Devil in the Discotheque'; and Sandy Hobbs and David Cornwell's 'Hunting the Monster with Iron Teeth' (from which the title of the volume is taken). Examinations of legend and society feature Linda-May Ballard's 'Three Local Storytellers: A Perspective on the Question of Cultural Heritage'; and Nancy Kammer Peters' 'Suburban/ Rural Variations in the Content of Adolescent Ghost Legends'.

Other contributors are Gillian Bennett, Keith Cunningham, Daniel Decotterd, Sheila Douglas, Bill Ellis, Marcia Gaudet, and Marilyn Jorgensen.

The volume never underplays the problems inherent in the genre. For the editors and contributors alike contemporary legends are 'Monsters with Iron Teeth'—difficult creatures, to be approached with caution and treated with respect.

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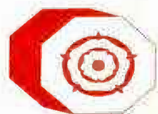

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