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978-0-521-62934-8 - Speak of the Devil: Tales of Satanic Abuse in Contemporary England

J. S. La Fontaine

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Allegations of satanic child abuse became widespread in north America in the early 1980s. In Britain shortly afterwards there were similar claims that sexual abuse, torture and murder were taking place as part of rites of witchcraft and devil worship. Jean La Fontaine, a senior British anthropologist, was funded by the Department of Health to undertake research into the allegations and found that there was no independent corroboration of these allegations in the many cases she studied. The problem then was to explain why they continued to be believed. Professor La Fontaine draws parallels with witchcraft accusations in the classic literature of anthropology and also with the witch-hunts in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe, showing how this contemporary social movement drew on different elements in British society and was fostered by the climate of socio- economic change and insecurity.

Persuasively argued, this is an authoritative and scholarly account of a controversial, emotive issue.

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# Speak of the devil

*Tales of satanic abuse in contemporary England*

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## Acknowledgements

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