

My part in the Centre for Contemporary Legend

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Diane Rodgers – CCL at Creating Knowledge conference 11 Jun 2020

SLIDE 1

Hi – I'm Diane Rodgers, Senior lecturer in Media – also currently half way through part-time PhD, I've always been interested in folklore, I also have a background in Film Studies and interest in wyrd old telly (encouraged by Dave as my Dos, and supervisor SH who is in film studies, has a multidisciplinary approach). My research looks at the communication of folklore in wyrd British 1970s television, and the impact it has had on content creators of today.

SLIDE 2

That is, looking at how folkloric tropes such as witchcraft, ghosts, stone circles, UFOs and other contemporary legends, and ideas about these things (often referred to as folk horror) are used in television drama, childrens TV, news, PIFs and documentary and their impact on society. (Some of you may recall examples pictured here). British folk horror television has not yet been examined much in academia, and it is only in relatively recent years that folklorists like ourselves are seriously considering popular culture. As part of this PhD study I've interviewed a number of high profile film and TV directors who consider themselves strongly influenced by such fare including Jeremy Dyson (League of Gentlemen) and Ben Wheatley amongst others.

SLIDE 3

One of the modules I teach is called Storytelling in Film and TV, into which I am able to incorporate some of my research, I am a strong believer in research and teaching feeding into and driving and developing one another – a film which is considered one of the cornerstones of British folk horror, *The Wicker Man*, is one that always goes down well with students and remains influential today, inspiring things like the more recent *Midsommar* (2019).

SLIDE 4

Following the success of our first symposium, drawing from mutual interests and capitalising on a rise of resurgence of interest in folk horror, we staged a 2-day international conference titled Folklore on Screen, supported by invaluable CKIP funding, and extensive encouragement from Kathy D and research centre which were invaluable.

With folklore on screen, we wanted to foreground a rising interest in folklore study and popular culture, and looking at not just what folklore is represented on screen but **how** folklore is communicated by various forms of media, how is it framed and in what contexts? And this stems not just from a rise of interest in folk horror and its various, devils, demons, pagan rituals, but also we see folklore on screen relating to - UFOlogy, hauntology and wyrdness, urban and rural, wider folkloric tradition. Folklore on screen isn't just film and tv but also videogames, the internet, photography, and so on. We're excited to embrace the varied disciplines that folklore studies crosses and unites mutual fascinations with folklore and contemporary legend.

SLIDE 5

We had speakers from not only all over UK but also the world including Australia, Germany and so on). Over the duration of the conference there were 100 people in attendance, with opening keynote on the film *GET OUT* and zombie films as contemporary allegory for slavery, closing keynote on haunted landscapes in tv ghost story. Other panels included talks on countercultural werewolf films of 1970s, Momo, creepypastas and digital urban legends, UFO photography, haunted paintings, satanic narratives and much more. We also worked with the Hubs to provide an evening of live hauntological music, and even had our own Wyrd Beer!

The conference was a significant and huge success, can't overestimate the overwhelmingly glowing, positive feedback across the board - praising the organisation of the event, attention to detail in design (stairs in Cantor particularly made me happy) and collegial, friendly yet scholarly atmosphere. Notably feedback praised the range of speakers, particularly the inclusion of practitioners and creative professionals alongside academics "Led to some interesting interactions and complimented each other well" and for it being inclusive to the public beyond an academic audience "This was my first time as a conference, as a non-academic, and I found this wonderfully accessible, friendly, fascinating and inspiring. Thanks so much!"

SLIDE 6

Since led to the CCL research cluster getting something of a reputation being invited a many high profile events and outcomes – including speaking as a panel at a recent prestigious Folklore Society annual conference. The CCL were also invited to speak at the BlueDot festival this summer at Jodrell bank on rather a large stage postponed til next year, Leeds Folk Horror Conference, Dave invited to Uni of to speak at Festival of the Mind.

Along with David and Andrew, I have also contributed a chapter to a forthcoming edited collection on folklore and the nation. Personally I have also had two recent peer reviewed journal articles published (folklore society journal and online academic journal *Revenant*), as well as book chapters on Christmas horror and articles on *wyrd* 70s TV in books and magazines. As a team and individually we've been invited by the BBC a few times recently, as the folk horror arm of the CCL to write short online articles and speak on the radio about horror and folklore.

Public engagement is important to us and something that fits quite naturally with our subject area, and we've also started to think about our discipline in terms of the current situation (as Andrew will speak about). My interest applies quite naturally to 'Covid Customs' as relating to the role television and radio are playing, as the media creates and reinforces new customs, rituals and reshapes itself for the present era.

I am hoping to find time to actually finish my PhD at some point and, help the CCL to continue to grow and develop !

Hand over to Andrew (stop screen share)