



*Wyrd TV: Folklore, folk horror and hauntology in British 1970s Television*

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# **Wyrd TV: Folklore, folk horror and hauntology in British 1970s television**

**Diane A. Rodgers**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
Sheffield Hallam University  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**July 2022**

## Candidate Declaration

I hereby declare that:

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2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
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Name	Diane A. Rodgers
Date	July 2022
Award	PhD
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Director of Studies	Dr. David Clarke

## Abstract

This thesis combines the disciplines of folklore studies and screen studies to examine the on-screen representation of folklore and contemporary legend in 1970s British television texts. Using original interviews with creators of film and television (older participants having worked in the 1970s and younger participants working in present-day media) alongside archive material, the thesis draws out influential examples from the study period that affected those making film and television today. This thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge by employing the notion of mass-mediated ostension, as an approach unique to folklore studies, to examine the cultural context of 1970s British television drama and account for the impact on audiences of unsettling, supernatural and extra-terrestrial stories. The importance of children's television in this era is also emphasised. This study considers the emergence of folk horror and its resurgence in the post-2000 period, particularly in the work of Generation X creatives, and sets out defining characteristics of 'hauntological' and 'wyrd' texts. Programme-makers' reproduction and reinterpretation of folklore and contemporary legend are situated as central to the way such texts are made to seem plausible for an audience. The work of Nigel Kneale is highlighted as having been especially influential in this regard. Screen studies analysis is applied to paradigmatic examples of television programmes (notably *Quatermass*, 1979, and *Children of the Stones*, 1977) to assess formal methods and techniques used to represent folkloric and contemporary-legend motifs. In conclusion, this thesis reflects upon the continuing influence of 1970s folkloric television texts: how this remains manifest in British media and how it shapes the communication of folklore and the future of the folk-horror genre itself.



*To Baxter, for whom this study has lasted  
half a lifetime, and to Paul, whose  
conversation fuels my imagination.*

*Also for William Bennett, my grandad, who  
loved stories of horror and UFOs and  
let me stay up past bedtime to watch them.*

## Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my Director of Studies, Dr. David Clarke for the ceaseless support and guidance of my PhD study and related research, without whose encouragement I would not even have considered a PhD in the first place. His extensive knowledge, rational approach and generous advice in the field of contemporary legend studies has broadened my understanding of many different subject areas. His example sets a distinguished role model for my own research path to attempt to follow.

My unending thanks also go to my supervisor, Dr. Sheldon Hall, who has guided my learning since I was an undergraduate Film Studies student over 25 years ago. His incisive questions and suggestions have been integral to the shaping of this thesis. I have no doubt that his kind patience, estimable scholarship, attention to detail and interested scrutiny of my work will always play a significant role in my continued growth and improvement as an academic.

Sincere thanks also go to the department of Media Arts and Communication at Sheffield Hallam University, particularly Head of Department Dr. Geff Green and Deputy Head Dean Naidoo for supporting the funding of my research throughout my part-time study. Also thanks to my (sometime) managers Patrick Wichert, Sara Trentham-Black, Research Lead Dr. Joan Rodriguez-Amat, and Head of Culture and Creativity Research Institute Dr. Kathy Doherty for helping create such a supportive research environment and encouraging my development along every step of the way.

I would like to express appreciation to my Centre for Contemporary Legend research group colleagues including David Clarke but also Andrew Robinson and Sophie Parkes-Nield whose drive to do interesting things and explore our disparate but overlapping interests has broadened my understanding of folklore in general. Also thanks to the Folklore Society, the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research and the wyrd folk-horror communities (scholarly and otherwise) for being so warm, welcoming, interested and helpful.

Thanks to my parents, Andy and Allison Rodgers, for always being there when I needed them. Their constant and continued love and support, especially in recent

years and throughout pandemic difficulties, has meant so much and has been a huge comfort to me.

I am forever grateful to my husband Paul not only for his love, hugs, shared interest in the subject matter and intelligent conversation but also for letting me get on with it at times, encouraging me at others and making sure I take time out to do fun stuff when needed. Also to my son Baxter (7 years old when this study began, now a teenager) for being interested (sometimes), supportive (always), making me laugh, and being generally excellent company all round. And, finally, thanks to Dusty and Casper, for their constant affectionate feline companionship. They were present either on or beside me and my laptop (whether I wanted them to be or not) for almost the entirety of this study.

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## 1.0 Introduction: *'Re-enchantment is resistance'*

When I first considered this PhD in 2016, no-one envisioned a global pandemic or how the effects of Covid-19 would spread so rapidly throughout the world. No-one except, of course, creators of 1970s television programmes that this study was, in part, inspired by. *Survivors* (1975) presented British viewers with a killer flu pandemic accidentally released to the world from China, and *Noah's Castle* (1979) illustrated a post-economic-crash Britain where people fight in the streets over basic goods such as toilet rolls. Such events became a kind of reality in 2020 with not only the pandemic but also what news outlets such as the *Daily Mail* referred to as the 'perfect storm...of Covid, Brexit and soaring gas prices' (Pyman, 2021). News media also broadly warned of a looming 'winter of discontent', discussed widely in daytime television talk shows like *This Morning* (ITV, 24 Sep 2021), and government ministers made desperate reassurances to the public that 'There will be no three-day working weeks or a throwback to the 1970s' (Mason, 2021). Tabloid and broadsheet papers alike made direct comparison with the winter of 1978-79 (discussed later) and *Scarfolk* creator Richard Littler drew similar parallels with the unsettling television drama *Threads* (1984) (fig. 1).

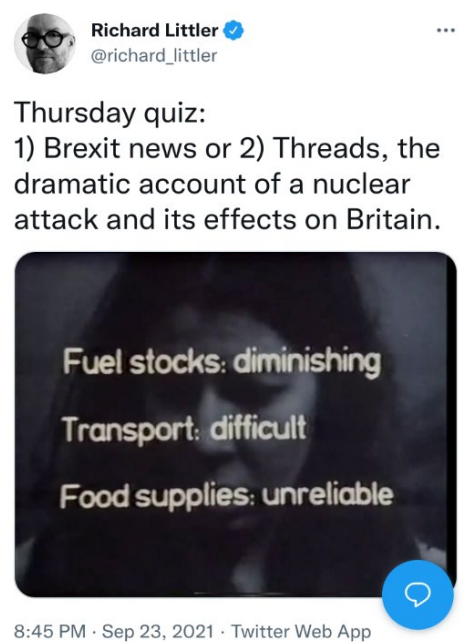


Figure 1: *Brexit or Threads?*

In addition to political and economic woes, the backdrop of global events in the 2020s included a worrying rise of right-wing violence, conspiracy theories, increased social and economic imbalances, protests and, of course, extended periods of lockdown life. This new context has led to a fuller appreciation of the contemporary relevance of the 1970s programmes under examination and the value of studying the communication of folklore on television amid such circumstances. Television has, in fact, become something for people to cling to during these times as a familiar sanctuary and form of escapism: Ben Page, CEO of Ipsos MORI (leading global market

research company), states that 'TV is again uniting Britain'. Television has been one of the few forms of leisure available during periods of lockdown, with Ipsos MORI reporting, in April 2020, a thirty-seven percent growth in shared family viewing figures, as compared with 2019. People are even watching more of the same material at the same time, whether they be working-from-home couples sharing lunchtime viewing or families 'creating new household TV habits around key news broadcasts and teens reconnecting with parents' or jointly choosing 'TV to suit everyone rather than meeting their individual viewing needs' (Ipsos MORI, 2020).

In light of my research about 1970s television, which incorporates discussion of hauntological nostalgia (see 2.1.3), it is interesting that lockdown circumstances have driven audiences to seek comfort in vintage television, often seen as a safe choice in terms of escapism. A comic strip in *The New Yorker* (Dator, 2020) considers this tendency in relation to the 1970s detective series *Columbo* whilst Ipsos MORI in April 2020 found that 'the familiarity of nostalgic comedy and other content gives us a break from worrying about the present, and allows audiences to reminisce about their youth, and even find company in old TV and films' (Ipsos MORI, 2020). Decades-old television has also become vital in a new and unforeseen way in its ability to inform upon the present. Media commentators have compared the kinds of 1970s dystopian dramas under examination here (such as *The Changes*, 1975, and *Quatermass*, 1979) with 2020s societal reactions to upheaval (discussed in 2.1.2).

Folklore itself (I discuss my use of the term for this study in chapter 1.1) has been highlighted during the pandemic as a means of expression for locked-down communities as well as global contemporary legends. New rituals have arrived and departed with different stages of the pandemic including rainbows in windows, painted pebbles and doorstep clapping in appreciation of the NHS. Many of these activities have centred on keeping children entertained and fostering community spirit.<sup>1</sup> The Queen's address to the nation on the crisis celebrated such 'expression of our national spirit', remarking that its 'symbol will be the rainbows drawn by children' (Dymond, 2020). Fuelling global discussion of contemporary legend, 2020 saw the discovery of mysterious monoliths across every continent (beginning in Utah and spreading throughout the world, including my own hometown of Sheffield). Though unexplained officially (and most likely the work of situationist artists), this



phenomenon has added an extra contextual dimension to my study of television series like *Children of the Stones* (1977) and *Quatermass*, whose narratives centre on megaliths and stone circles.

Dangerous conspiracy theories and beliefs, too, have surfaced alongside the rise of the right, from QAnon and its army of followers to anti-maskers and anti-vaxxers. It is worth noting, therefore, that in politically divisive times, folklore, myth and legend can be turned to for broadly nationalistic reasons and have even been 'appropriated by racist extremists' to justify 'xenophobia and acts of violence' (McMaster, 2020). In response, the Folk Horror Revival declared itself as an anti-fascist movement (Paciorek, 2018, fig. 2) and artist Lucy Wright launched her 'Folk is a Feminist Issue' manifesto, which

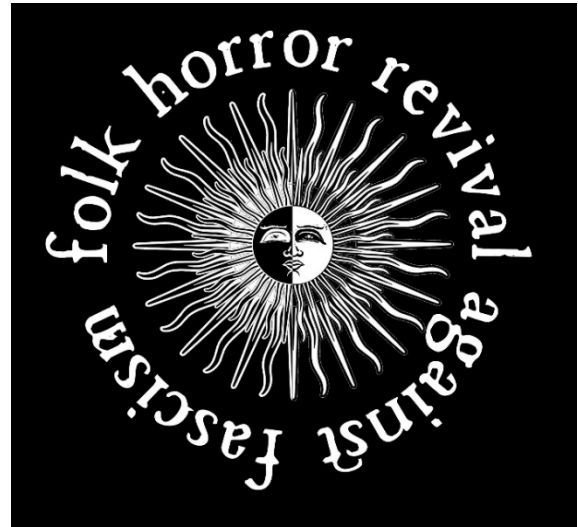


Figure 2: Folk Horror Revival Against Fascism

states: 'Folk is political. In a world that values only what can be bought and sold, folk is resistance' (Wright, 2021). An enduring facet of folklore is its capacity for resistance to oppression and to mainstream culture, often converting 'messages from popular and academic culture into resistant, subversive forms' (Beck, 2001). As David Southwell notes:

Folklore is the common wealth, but...[t]hose who love it find it increasingly weaponised to push spurious agendas of cultural or ethnic superiority; see it stitched uncomfortably into banners of hatred... How do we fight this?...As in the best stories, with magic. Re-enchantment is resistance (Southwell, 2019a, pp. 60-63).

The folklorist's perspective is to examine a popular history which can help us understand how a society can come to hold beliefs and how ideas are (mis)communicated. Therefore, I carry out this study in a spirit of inclusivity, to consider ideas which connect progressive thought across generations as opposed to seeing folklore as nationalistic and divisive. I also recognise this moment in time as ripe for scholars to reiterate that folklore is not something ancient, outdated and anachronistic, but as dynamic, relevant to our everyday lives. Jeffrey Tolbert states:

There's often a sense that folklore means old, rustic, rural. That's not right. Folklore is vernacular culture. Vernacular means everyday, ordinary. Normal stuff you do in your daily life, structured by tradition but subject to change, can be seen as folklore (Tolbert, 2020).

We are, therefore, regularly *doing* folklore and *watching* folklore. Through their communication and reinterpretation on television, folklore and contemporary legend play significant roles in everyday life, with the potential to shape audiences' beliefs, behaviour and the media of both current and future generations. Examining the cultural context of 1970s television, this study explains why this period gave rise to so many television narratives using supernatural folklore; the impact of this upon audiences; and how the influence of 1970s folkloric texts is manifest in popular TV today. This thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge by expanding upon the hypothesis of mass-mediated ostension, through its application to folklore studies. I build upon this to develop a theoretical framework which accounts for how television itself becomes its own legendary cycle of representation, reinterpretation and construction of unsettling stories drawing upon the supernatural and contemporary legend.

## 1.1 Project beginnings and reflexivity

My lifelong fascination with film and television horror began at an early age, as the strange, spooky fare of 1970s children's television spilled over into my childhood of the 1980s and through being allowed to stay up and watch programmes far beyond my bedtime. As a young adult, my film studies BA culminated in a dissertation on 1970s Italian horror cinema, as well as directing my own short 16mm B-movie horror film.<sup>2</sup> After several years working in the film, television and animation industries, I completed a film studies MA which piqued my interest in the magical realism of British cinema and led to my present teaching career. Informal conversations about my interests led to idly wondering why there were so many strange television programmes made in the 1970s and one casual comment, 'no wonder we grew up weird', struck a chord. I discussed this thought further with my colleague David Clarke who generously suggested that 'there's a PhD in there' and, with his support, I embarked upon this study.

My research idea began with recognising the phenomenon of a large concentration of 'wyrd' programmes broadcast on British television in the 1970s and wondering how to account for the quantity of folkloric content and its enduring influence. Identifying programme titles for potential case studies, I began by listing those most often cited in writing on folk horror to date. For example, *The Owl Service* (1969), *Robin Redbreast* (1970), *A Ghost Story for Christmas* (1971-1978), *Nationwide's* reporting on the Enfield poltergeist (1977), *Children of the Stones* (1977) and public information films like *Lonely Water* (1973) all frequently occur as paradigm cases in discussions about folk horror. This selection represents a varied mixture of entertainment and informational television aimed at both children and adults, and provided a foundation upon which to develop my research methods (chapter 1.2).

At this early stage of discussion (2016-2017), there were no academic books published specifically on folk horror and very few scholarly articles examining folklore and television. During the first year of my study, Adam Scovell's book *Folk Horror: Hours Dreadful and Things Strange* (2017) was published (discussed in chapter 2.0). This text quickly became a reference point for dedicated folk-horror panels at conferences (such as the University of Kent's 2017 *At Home with Horror*) and helped

coalesce a small network of folk-horror academics, myself included. Some significant newspaper and magazine articles paid attention to folk horror but, for the most part, none examined the *folklore* of folk horror, which is what interested me the most. Subsequent introduction to the work of Mikel Koven and the notion of ostension was when a serious framework for my own study first began to take shape. Koven's *Film, Folklore and Urban Legends* (2008) was invaluable in developing my understanding of folklore studies in relation to film and television and offered direction in combining my own screen studies background with the discipline of folklore studies. Because of this multidisciplinary approach, and my desire to foreground folklore studies in my research, I decided that two literature reviews (chapter 2.0) were necessary to develop my own knowledge and identify useful areas of synergy. I decided also to include a glossary (section 8.4) to clarify my own usage and understanding of some discipline-specific terminology.

As Linda Finlay notes in her discussion of reflexivity as an essential component for research, it is important to acknowledge 'the central position of the researcher in the construction of knowledge' and, thus, my considerations above were merely the beginning of a reflexive process. Born in 1977, I am a member of Generation X, a group discussed throughout this study as impacted by many of the television programmes under scrutiny. However, although I have personal interest in folk horror and was aware of unnerving television programmes when I was young, some material featured in this study was broadcast before I was born. My discovery of many titles as an adult allows me to more easily separate my own emotional and nostalgic response from balanced academic analysis. However, Finlay also suggests that reflexivity 'offers a tool where the problem of subjectivity in research can be turned into an opportunity' and can enable 'richer understandings', stating: 'don't ask *if* the researcher's biases are relevant but ask *how* they are relevant'. Therefore, it is valuable to use my own responses to help identify which texts may be 'eerie' (and why) to help prompt discussion in research interviews, aid mutual understanding in discussion with my interview participants and subsequently narrow the focus of examples for detailed exploration. I developed 'self-consciously critical systematic and analytical' methods in my data analysis, fully outlined in chapter 1.2, as I was keen to allow the data to drive the process rather than my own expectations, to ensure that the research is 'valid, rigorous and relevant' (Finlay, 1998, pp. 453-5).

The selection process for my interviewees (in 1.2.3) outlines how this influenced data collection and timescales for this research programme: because of the age of some participants, it was vital to conduct certain interviews first. However, I wanted to complete all interviews within the first two years of this study so that the bulk of my data was present before I commenced analyses. This allowed me to identify common themes across a body of work and decades of my participants' film and television experience, as well as usefully cross-reference interview data and pick up on themes from one interview to the next. I was conscious that additional interview opportunities might arise as part of my ongoing research (as in the case of Jeff Grant, discussed in 1.2.3) but for the purposes of this PhD study I wanted to be able to draw a line under the data-gathering stage before the final writing phase so I could sufficiently analyse and incorporate all of my interview data in a considered manner.

The biggest surprise arising from my interview data was the extent to which the impact of Nigel Kneale's work emerged (discussed in 1.2.5). Finlay states: 'the researcher brings to bear a number of expectations in advance of the research' (1998, p. 454). I had indeed expected perhaps one or two titles by Kneale to surface but it quickly became apparent that the influence of the writer himself and his use of folklore warranted far more attention than planned. Reflecting upon my findings, I decided it would be appropriate to place a chapter on Kneale at the heart of this study. A major hurdle I faced in the course of archival research for this chapter was the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on travel to the Isle of Man, where I had identified a valuable collection of papers relating to Kneale in the Manx National Heritage Archives. The border was closed to almost all non-residents from March 2020 other than in exceptional circumstances. Even when restrictions began to lift in May 2021, long periods of isolation were required for travellers and testing remained in place for a number of months, making a visit for my purposes impractical.<sup>3</sup> I managed to find a creative solution (explained in 1.2.8) to obtaining some of the archival material, which proved critical in the development of chapter 3.0, essential to this work.

Another theme which arose from reflecting upon my interview data was the age of my younger participants and the impact of television they had seen during childhood. Some of their viewing experiences corresponded with my own, which allowed me to use reflexivity, in this case, 'not to eliminate "bias" to be more neutral, but to use it as a focus for more intense insight' (Finlay, 1998, p. 455). I revisited some

series titles surfacing in interviews alongside others popularly cited in writing on folk horror, as well as relevant titles from my own childhood. In doing so, I observed not only the quality and intelligence of some television material made for children but also the historical lack of academic attention to children's television in general (an argument put forward by scholars like Helen Wheatley and Alison Peirse, discussed in 2.1.4). Therefore, inclusion of robust material on children's television and its potential impact on viewers (chapter 4.0) seemed vital.

I discuss the notion of 'eeriness' throughout my writing on the respective programmes. However, as the methods and techniques used in television texts to represent folkloric and contemporary legend narratives were central concerns of one of my research questions (see 1.2.1), it seemed more fitting to devote a later chapter to this. Separating case studies of television texts allowed earlier chapters to foreground discussion of folklore rather than television techniques. Thus, chapter 5.0 represents a more focused discussion of the formal elements of television in terms of how folklore is *made strange* and how the unsettling element of folk horror is constructed. This chapter also places different decades of television in direct comparison with one another, allowing me to draw out evidence of influence from one era to the next in the context of folkloric theory and television practice.

'Folklore' broadly encompasses many different types of tales, legends and beliefs. Brunvand defines folklore as 'the unrecorded traditions of a people', including 'both the form and content of these traditions and their manner of communication' (1998). The types of such traditions and their communication have been classified by the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language (CECTAL) under six categories: 'language'; 'childlore'; 'custom and belief'; 'folk narrative'; 'folk music, dance and drama' and 'material culture, work techniques, arts and crafts' (Widdowson, n.d.). It is therefore necessary to be more specific about my own use of 'folklore' in this study. The television programmes under examination combine elements of several of these categories including otherworldly, magical, supernatural and unexplained phenomena. The narratives themselves, therefore, could be called 'folk narrative', but their

substance falls under ‘custom and belief’ within which CECTAL includes ‘calendar customs...superstition, luck’ and ‘cosmic phenomena’. There is also an argument to be made in support of understanding the on-screen representation of folklore as ostensive practice (discussed in 5.2) as pertaining to the ‘material culture’ category of folklore. However, this study most often refers to elements which fall under CECTAL’s ‘custom and belief’, with inclusion of some legendary elements of folk narrative (Widdowson, n.d). Furthermore, Bob Trubshaw sets out several more specific categories of folk belief, including: the afterlife (such as ghosts); fairies; legends about places (such as prehistoric stone circles); and ‘modern beliefs’ (for example UFOs and Fortean phenomena) (2002, p. 98). It is important to note that such categories are not mutually exclusive and have a degree of fluidity, with several applying to folk-horror narratives.

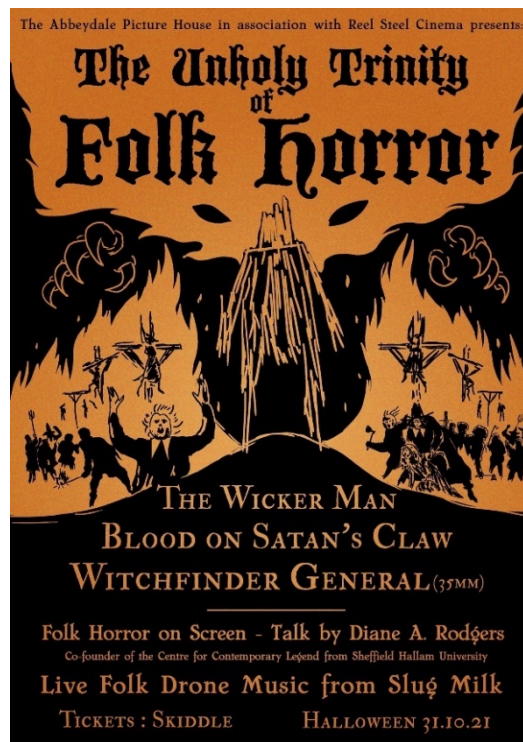


Figure 3: Halloween 2021 folk horror triple-bill

Therefore, I apply the term ‘supernatural folklore’ throughout to indicate concern with notions about the occult, paranormal and otherworldly, to include not only notions about hauntings, extra-terrestrial and unexplained phenomena but also ideas about magic, witchcraft and sinister rituals.

At time of writing, there are entire conferences devoted to folk horror (such as *Contemporary Folk Horror in Film and Media* at Leeds Beckett University, 2022), a number of forthcoming academic edited collections on folk horror (to which I have been privileged to contribute) and a wide range of popular public events (such as a Halloween triple-bill screening in 2021 of ‘The Unholy Trinity of Folk Horror’,<sup>4</sup> see fig. 3). This continuing and apparently growing interest in folk horror suggests that, even though a post-2000 folk-horror revival (discussed in chapter 2.1) may have been born out of the nostalgia of Generation X, fascination with *wyrd* media is more than just a passing trend. Folk horror seems to keep on finding new audiences and, as with folklore itself, continues to evolve with the times.

During the course of this study, some material has been published as book chapters like 'Et in Arcadia Ego: British Folk Horror in Film and Television' (Rodgers, 2021) and 'Isn't All Horror Folk Horror?' (Rodgers, forthcoming). Most notably, however, much of chapter 5.1 appeared in the *Folklore* article, 'Something "Wyrd" This Way Comes: Folklore and British Television' (Rodgers, 2019).



## 1.2 Methodology

Because my research combines the disciplines of screen studies and folklore studies with a variety of texts and data sources (outlined below), it seemed appropriate to apply several methodological approaches to exploring this material ('triangulation'). Too much reliance on one source or method may have inherent bias or an overly narrow focus whereas triangulation

means combining several...qualitative and quantitative methods. Here, the different methodological perspectives complement each other in the study of an issue, and this is conceived as the complementary compensation of the weaknesses and blind spots of each single method...none of the methods combined is seen as superior or preliminary (Flick, 2010, p. 27).

Identifying and combining relevant approaches can lead to a fuller picture of the phenomenon under study. I explored initial thoughts about my proposed combination of methods in a diagram (fig. 4).

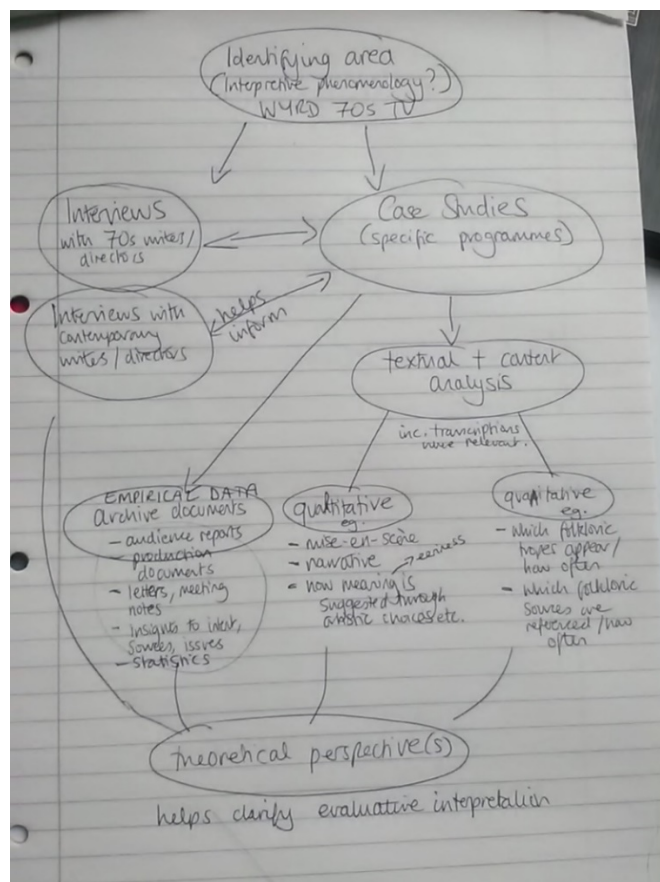


Figure 4: Methodology ideas diagram

My research centres around case study examples of television programmes about which there are many ways to collect data. It is important to consider various approaches where the context is as significant as the text itself. To build a contextual explanation for the programmes under discussion, it was necessary to gather archival material where available (discussed in 1.2.8). This type of qualitative data, alongside semi-structured interviews with carefully chosen participants (see 1.2.3), helps to build a significant body of source material. Integrating such qualitative approaches with quantitative data can provide additional understanding of the phenomenon under investigation by ‘confirming/expanding the inferences derived from one method of data analysis (e.g., qualitative) through a secondary analysis of the same data with a different approach (e.g., quantitative)’ (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2013, p. 21). Therefore, having compiled additional quantitative data in the form of my own spreadsheet database (detailing hundreds of relevant television programmes broadcast during the study period, outlined in 1.2.2), I am using mixed methods for this study.

Textual analysis is the most appropriate method I have employed to examine the representation of supernatural folklore in the television texts themselves. As opposed to content analysis, textual analysis allows for the examination and interpretation of *how* meanings and effects are created by breaking a text down into its component parts (such as lighting, sound, editing and so on) and analysing how they function both individually and as part of a whole (see section 1.2.2). Content analysis has been rejected as a central method here because it tends to focus on *what* is present rather than how elements are used to frame the representation of the subject matter. Content analysis is, however, able to look beyond ‘manifest content’ (‘physically present and countable’ elements) to ‘latent content’, which Neuendorf describes as ‘unobserved concept(s)’ that cannot be not measured as easily. In relation to screen studies, ‘scholarship has compared manifest content to denotative meanings and latent content to connotative meanings’ (Neuendorf, 2017, p. 32). For example, by observing ‘manifest’ stereotypical images of women in a text, we can thereby ‘measure’ the latent presence of sexism. Although such latent analysis allows for examination of subtler aspects of a text and for the identification of patterns and interpretations, this remains a means of describing or explaining *what* is there rather than *how* it is constructed and communicated on screen. Textual analysis therefore allows for examination not only of content but also the structure and function of

formal characteristics. Across a group of texts, I can thus explore the representation of supernatural folklore (and to what extent this may evolve over time) as part of a larger historical and cultural context. This method links directly with my research questions (in 1.2.1) which examine how supernatural folklore and contemporary legend are represented and reproduced in a variety of contexts.

Combining textual analysis with in-depth interviews acknowledges the world that exists outside of the texts. I had anticipated beginning my research with programme analysis, but it seemed important to speak directly to creators of relevant material and gather their stories as those involved in 1970s programming are advancing in age (I sought ethics approval early on because of this; see appendix 7.6). Semi-structured interviews (discussed in 1.2.5) can produce rich qualitative data from participants. Such interviews can help gain insightful understanding of the source of interest in folk motifs within the social and economic context of the era and help provide a sound basis for the selection of programmes for study. Because some of my interviewees are elderly, capturing and preserving primary data like this is invaluable. Additionally, interviewing current programme-makers whose work is influenced by 1970s programming may help explain affective folkloric elements in terms of response, memory and social impact, lending insights into personal, social and national identity (Bloor & Wood, 2006).

The interviews proved far richer than anticipated. An ethnographic approach to analysis 'typically insist[s] on the importance of coming to understand the perspectives of the people being studied' (Hammersley, 2006, p. 4) and aims to 'discover and confirm the participant's experiences and perceptions...to elicit a broad picture of the participant or native's world' (Fetterman, 2013, p. 555). I concluded, therefore, that this method would steer the focus away from answering my research questions about the television texts themselves. Whilst I could employ this approach somewhat when devising a discursive interview experience with my participants, understanding their personal experience is not the aim of this study. Therefore, in analysing the interview data, I used thematic analysis: a 'foundational method for qualitative analysis...a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). Thematic analysis allowed me to create a coding system to scrutinise my qualitative data in a structured, scientific

manner (detailed in 1.2.4), which could then drive the selection of programming for detailed study.

Although there are benefits to ethnographic and anthropological approaches to the study of folklore, this seems most fruitful when the culture of the participants as observed, or a particular aspect of folklore or folkloric practice as manifest in the 'real' world outside of a text, is the central focus of the research. For example, in relation to film and television, this may be ethnographic study of fan culture (when the behaviour of the fans rather than the texts themselves is of interest). Another example is folklorist Mikel Koven's study of zombie films, where it is useful to 'explore the anthropological literature in an attempt to ascertain the zombie film's verisimilitude with the living Haitian belief traditions' (Koven, 2008, p. 37). In this latter case, however, Koven combines this approach with other methodologies as part of his larger, detailed exploration of methodological approaches to the combined study of folklore, film and television.

As part of this exploration, Koven has developed the concept of mass-mediated ostension, on which I have chosen to centre my own approach. Mass-mediated ostension is concerned with *how* folklore and contemporary legend are communicated and reinterpreted, which is compatible with the aims of textual analysis (examining *how*, rather than *what*, representations are made manifest). As I discuss in chapter 2.2, Koven argues that modern contextual approaches to folklore studies are more effective than the mere collection and categorisation of motifs. This echoes the sentiments of Stith Thompson, an eminent American folklorist who developed classification systems of folktale types and motif-indexes, and who points out that a motif-index (a detailed catalogue of folkloric elements: a standard tool used extensively in folklore studies and folk tale-type analysis) is a means to an end and not an end in itself:

As a method in folklore, motif-indexing is merely spadework for future research. It is hardly research itself...The work has the same relation to future folklore research as a dictionary has to the writer of literature, or the map to the explorer who needs to keep his bearing (Thompson, 1955a, p. 9).

Importantly, mass-mediated ostension also helps to maintain a perspective unique to the discipline of modern folklore studies. The combination of methods outlined above is, therefore, the approach most appropriate to answering my research questions.

### **1.2.1 Research questions**

My research questions were developed, following a period of initial reading and research, to: account for the above phenomena; contextualise and group relevant programmes; identify what commonalities they share; explain the impact of such programmes and what this can tell us when examined from a folklore studies perspective.

1. What is distinctive about the period of British 1970s television such that it gave rise to a large number of texts drawing upon supernatural folklore and contemporary legend?
2. To what extent do 1970s programme-makers reproduce and reinterpret (adapt) existing supernatural folklore and contemporary legend?
3. What methods and techniques are used in 1970s television texts to represent folkloric and contemporary-legend narratives (motifs or tropes), and with what purposes and effects?
4. How does the influence of 1970s folkloric television texts subsequently manifest in British media texts by folk-horror revivalists?

### **1.2.2 Data collection - textual analysis**

To aid my analysis of texts made within the time period under study (discussed in chapter 1.3), I created a database detailing as many British television broadcasts as I could find with folkloric and contemporary legend as central to their narrative or theme (appendix 7.1).<sup>5</sup> In compiling this, I included titles that are ‘hauntological’ alongside those understood as ‘folk horror’ and those which I consider to be on the same spectrum of ‘wyrd’ programmes (these terms are defined in chapter 2.1 and the glossary 8.4). I have, therefore, omitted titles that feature straightforward presentation of traditional fairy tales, such as episodes of *Jackanory* (1965-1996) based upon stories by Hans Christian Andersen. An example of a programme I do consider important to include is *Bagpuss* (1974), a gentle animation for children about a ‘saggy

old cloth cat...loose at the seams' who comes to life along with other toys in a dusty antique shop. *Bagpuss* featured folk tales and folk music at its heart and is often discussed by Generation X writers in the same context as folk horror, as having an eerie, 'haunted' quality:

That gentle theme [has] an odd *affect*, a definite *effect* on someone like me...*Bagpuss* is a pagan figure...*Bagpuss* was folk horror...For me, as a child, *Bagpuss* was about a haunting. Now, as an adult, witnessing the working through of a second Haunted Generation, *Bagpuss* haunts me in a different way (Ingham, 2018, pp. 189-91, italics in original).

In this database, I recorded: series and episode titles; channel, date and time of first broadcast; length of programme; whether the title was aimed at children; whether the title was drama or factual; notable cast or crew; and which folkloric trope(s) were most evident. This list helps not only to evidence the quantity of relevant programming in the study period, but also contextualise the specific programmes under discussion within a much wider body of work. The data for this list were gathered from a wide variety of sources including: BBC Genome; the Television and Radio Index for Learning and Teaching (TRILT); contemporaneous issues of *Radio Times* and *TVTimes*; *The Times* Digital Archive; lists published in relevant scholarly texts on television (notably Wheatley, 2006 and Scovell, 2017); and encyclopaedic publications like *We Don't Go Back: A Watcher's Guide to Folk Horror* (Ingham, 2018) and *Scarred for Life* (Brotherstone & Lawrence, 2017). As a result, I have identified over 140 relevant series and programme titles broadcast on British television within the study period, amounting to over 1,280 individual episodes and in excess of 800 hours of screen time.

A goal of textual analysis is a better understanding of textual meanings and how these meanings are created:

Some researchers explore texts, their conventions and the relationship to realism, whereas others assess the construction and reinforcement of cultural myths...All texts...are designed to convey a preferred meaning...Textual analysis is used to identify what interpretations are possible and likely...understanding the construction of meaning in a variety of cultural texts (Lockyer, 2012, p. 2).

I can thus break down the selected television texts into component parts (mise-en-scène, cinematography, sound design, dialogue and so on) to describe 1) how folkloric

tropes are represented and 2) how 'eeriness' is suggested. A 'haunted' or 'eerie' quality is often cited as being present in 1970s television programmes, particularly in narratives where folklore is used (even in benign material like *Bagpuss*, as per Ingham's comments above). Examples of supernatural folklore presented in an 'eerie' manner are, of course, to be found in media narratives far beyond the boundaries of British television in films such as *Häxan* (1922), and series like *Elves* (2021). However, supernatural folklore itself is not always presented in frightening or unsettling terms and is even used in romantic or comedic narratives like *Blithe Spirit* (1945) and *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996-2003).<sup>6</sup> What is distinctive in the case of 1970s British television is that narratives of this era using supernatural folklore seem to be so consistently presented as eerie: unnerving, strange and fearful (discussed in 2.1). As a working hypothesis based on these initial observations, I posit that this 'eerie' or haunting quality is integral to such programmes and their enduring influence. I will therefore use textual analysis to examine how this quality of eeriness is constructed and made manifest on screen, which will help me determine the purposes and effects of the methods and techniques mentioned in my research questions.

Textual analysis can, of course, be subjective and I need to acknowledge my own bias, in that I may find some programmes plausibly 'folkloresque' (Foster & Tolbert, 2016), or as having a haunting quality that others may not find present.<sup>7</sup> Critiques of textual analysis suggest that, conducted in isolation, what we can learn from such examination is limited. However, when textual analysis is combined with other contextual study (such as interviews and other data discussed below) evidence can become more usefully robust. In my initial selection of programmes, I used cases frequently cited by others rather than acting on my instincts alone, though it may still be useful to note those which I find personally unsettling. As my study and interview cycle developed, I was able further to shape my selection of programmes as those most affective upon my participants. The capacity to operate reflexively (as discussed in 1.1) recognises a shaping of the research by the researcher and vice versa. This developmental approach (Attia & Edge, 2017) means that I can use my data to drive discussion and selection of material for analysis, acknowledge my own opinions about relevant programming, and continually review and develop my responses in this reflexive cycle, thereby reducing the chances of researcher bias affecting the study.

In a preliminary analysis, I compared episodes of the BBC's *A Ghost Story for Christmas*, 'The Treasure of Abbot Thomas' (1974) and 'The Tractate Middoth' (2013), to detail how folkloric tropes are represented and how the affective eeriness in these programmes is manifested, and to demonstrate the pervasive influence of 1970s programmes on more recent work (Rodgers, 2019).<sup>8</sup> During my data collection, I have also noted programmes which discuss belief about supernatural folklore in dialogue with reference to specific legends or folkloric texts. Here are three brief examples:

*Robin Redbreast* (1970):

- Mr. Fisher:** He would be treated like a king. Served and...pampered...And then, of course...
- Norah:** Killed.
- Mr. Fisher:** He would pass away, yes. Assisted to it, one might say. And from his blood, you see, the crops would spring...you must read a book by Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough* in seven volumes.

*Doctor Who*: 'The Stones of Blood' (1978):

- Leonard De Vries:** I am a humble scholar of Druidic lore.
- Doctor Who:** That must be very boring.
- Leonard De Vries:** Boring? What do you mean?
- Doctor Who:** Well there's so little of it that's historically reliable, is there? The odd mention in Julius Caesar, Tacitus. No great detail. I always thought that Druidism was founded by John Aubrey in the seventeenth century as a joke.

'A Warning to the Curious' (1972):

- Vicar:** Cooper, R.L. *Romances and Roles of East Anglia*. Fine publication, sadly out of print these many years. You were looking at the coat of arms?'
- Paxton:** Yes, there's a legend attached to it, isn't there?
- Vicar:** The buried crowns that guard the realm. That's in Cooper. It's still current folklore around here.



Two of these examples refer to actual texts and folklorists whilst the third is entirely fabricated. Scovell's remark that 'anything could effectively be put into the mix...and still come out looking relatively authentic' (2017, p. 29) helps underline the importance of examining material presented in such a way that gives

the impression to the consumer...[that such examples] derive directly from existing folkloric traditions', which are thus 'imbued with a sense of 'authenticity' (as perceived by the consumer...[with] the effect of validating the work in which it appears (Foster & Tolbert, 2016, p. 5).

Invented 'folklore' presented plausibly alongside historical folklore thus shapes the reception, perpetuation and evolution of folklore itself (Koven's concept of the 'folklore fallacy' is discussed in chapter 2.2). Folklore is never static or finite, but traditions, beliefs and legends are constantly shifting as part of a dynamic process. Media portrayal of folklore is a significant factor in this process, so it is important to examine the detail of how this is represented on screen.

### ***1.2.3 Data collection - interview subjects***

My interviewees (below and detailed in appendix 7.2) were selected based upon having worked on texts most commonly cited as core folk-horror viewing (such as in Scovell, 2017 and Beem & Paciorek, 2015), using the following criteria:

- They have worked in the creation of British media texts
- Their work draws upon themes related to supernatural folklore and contemporary legend
- Their work is cited as influential by others, or has been influenced by key film or television programming with folkloric themes

The interviewees I secured represented a broad range of involvement with *wyrd* television, including: producers, writers and directors of 1970s British television; writers and directors of post-2000 film and television; and creatives working post-2000 in other media who have in some way been directly influenced by 1970s British folk horror. I was keen to include both male and female voices where possible, but there were relatively few female creatives working at the forefront of British 1970s television and there are few even today, at least in the field of folk horror. I was, therefore, pleased to be able to include Moira Armstrong, who worked primarily as a director and producer from 1964 until 2010. Of 300 entries in the venerated BBC *Play for Today*

series, only a dozen were directed by women, five of which were entrusted to Armstrong, who had also directed productions for the anthology series *The Wednesday Play* and *BBC Playhouse*, such as 'Fairies' (1978). I had hoped to interview present-day screenwriter Amy Jump but, after being given a generous interview by her writing partner (and husband) Ben Wheatley, it seemed an imposition to press them for further time.

I separated my interviews into two 'phases', based on the age and generation of participants. Many of those who worked in 1970s television are now in their late seventies and eighties, so it was clear that 'phase one' interviews focusing on this age group should commence immediately. Moira Armstrong, eighty-seven at the time of interview, advised me to 'be very, very quick', stating bluntly that 'those of us that worked a lot in that period are dying off, I mean my contemporaries...are all gone' (pers. comm., 11 September 2017).

Phase one interviewees working in 1970s media:

- Moira Armstrong (*Armchair Thriller*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Adam Adamant Lives!*)
- Jeremy Burnham (*Children of the Stones*)
- Lawrence Gordon Clark (*A Ghost Story for Christmas*, *Casting the Runes*)
- Patrick Dromgoole (*Children of the Stones*, *Sky*, *Arthur of the Britons*)
- Jeff Grant (*Lonely Water*)
- Piers Haggard (*Blood on Satan's Claw*, *Quatermass*)
- Robert Wynne-Simmons (*Blood on Satan's Claw*, *The Outcasts*)

Initial contacts were made using internet searches for email addresses (I contacted Jeremy Burnham through his own website) and a connection with writer and journalist Tony Earnshaw, who generously shared his contacts with me. Earnshaw immediately put me in touch with Lawrence Gordon Clark and I wrote letters to those for whom I was given addresses, this more personal touch proving effective with Piers Haggard and Patrick Dromgoole. Haggard connected me with Robert Wynne-Simmons, whom he recommended for an interview (after which I briefly collaborated with Wynne-Simmons in lobbying for a DVD release of his 1982 film *The Outcasts*).<sup>9</sup> In seeking out Moira Armstrong, I came across details of a BFI retrospective festival on her work that had been held a few years previously. The press officer and programmer of the festival were kind enough to pass my details on to Ms. Armstrong, who shortly thereafter contacted me. My interview with Jeff Grant was carried out last, coming about upon

meeting the authors of *Scarred for Life* (Brotherstone & Lawrence, 2017), who were able to connect us. Because my telephone interview with Grant was carried out in unusual circumstances, during early stages of the initial Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020, it proved a welcome diversion for both of us, and we maintained a friendly correspondence for some time. David Rudkin (aged 81 at the time of contact), with whom I had been put in touch by an academic colleague, agreed to an interview, indicating he would prefer to meet in person. However, Rudkin sadly had to withdraw for health reasons.

Phase two interviewees working in post-2000 media:

- Jeremy Dyson (*The League of Gentlemen*, *Ghost Stories*)
- Ben Wheatley (*Kill List*, *A Field in England*, *Sightseers*)
- Jim Jupp (Ghost Box record label)
- Richard Littler (*Scarfolk*)
- Alice Lowe (*Sightseers*, *Prevenge*)

Due to the younger age range of my phase two participants, and this generation's comparative familiarity with computer technology, I was able more easily to contact potential subjects directly. This was, however, balanced with the fact that these people are still very much at the height of their careers and are thus less able to make time for interviews. I therefore considered myself lucky that Jeremy Dyson responded positively to my direct Twitter message (perhaps aided by my citing a mutual past acquaintance). Similarly, Jim Jupp and Richard Littler were contacted directly via social media, which may have some bearing on them opting to conduct interviews via email (the benefits and drawbacks of differing interview methods are discussed in 1.2.5). Ben Wheatley was contacted with the kind help of an academic filmmaking colleague. I managed to make tentative contact with writer-director Alice Lowe via social media but, unfortunately, I was not able to get enough sustained response to organise an interview. Nevertheless, I was delighted to discover an unedited, hour-long interview with her as part of a podcast episode on folk horror (*The Evolution of Horror*, 2018), in which she discusses several areas relevant to my study. I have transcribed the Lowe interview to use as a primary source as the topics covered (such as the nature of folk horror as a genre) are broadly and usefully comparable with the interviews I conducted myself.

The only restrictions to my selection of interviewees were in cases where I was unable to make direct contact or obtain a response, such as with Mark Gatiss, Stewart Lee and Reece Shearsmith, whom I hoped to interview due to their prominence in their field. I was able to contact Gatiss and Lee's agents, who passed on messages that led to no further follow-up. Television scholar Helen Wheatley kindly put me in touch with Shearsmith but his hectic work schedule made it impractical for him to make time for an interview.

I had considered other significant practitioners currently working in folk horror and hauntology, including journalist Bob Fischer and writers Andy Paciorek and David Southwell. We were lucky enough to gain all three as speakers on a featured panel at the Centre for Contemporary Legend international *Folklore on Screen* conference in 2019, which I helped organise at Sheffield Hallam University, at which their presentations satisfactorily covered the areas I would have questioned them about. I was able to discuss their work and ideas with them on the day and, with their permission, gained copies of their speaker notes, which they have generously allowed me to use as unpublished papers to cite in place of interviews. In this case, and because their papers articulated their uniquely personal impressions and reflections of growing up surrounded by 1970s media, it is right to note their invaluable contributions here.

#### **1.2.4 Data collection - thematic analysis**

Although Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis was initially developed in the field of psychology, its purpose was to articulate an approach that could be applied in any number of disciplinary contexts. Braun and Clarke's approach has subsequently been applied to many subject areas (including health and well-being, sports and exercise, education and sociology) and types of data (including interviews, focus groups, surveys, questionnaires and diaries) because of the transparent, systematic, accessible and flexible method of examining qualitative data that it provides (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke & Braun, 2017). The approach has been so successful, across so many disciplines, that the authors continue to develop their methods reflexively: 'the popularity of the method we outlined has exploded, the variety of TA approaches have expanded, and, not least, our thinking has developed and shifted' (Braun & Clarke,

2019, p. 589). Braun and Clarke propose six phases of thematic analysis, from initial data collection through to producing the final written analysis, which centres on the identification and coding of themes. They acknowledge that there are several ways in which to do this, but what remains important is that the researcher makes decisions along the way, with clear explanation and purpose at each stage. For instance:

An important question to address in terms of coding is what counts as a pattern/theme...there will be a number of instances of the theme across the data set, but more instances do not necessarily mean the theme itself is more crucial...So researcher judgement is necessary (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82).

For example, during an interview, a subject may mention the same thing (such as a television programme or a writer) many times, but it may only be relevant in one specific respect, or they might mention it twice but in different, equally relevant contexts, or it might only occur once, but in an absolutely vital context for the study. In such cases, Braun and Clarke suggest that the importance of a recordable instance does not necessarily lie in quantifiable measures, but rather in its relevance to the research question(s). The flexibility of thematic analysis allows for the researcher to determine the importance and relevance of instances in a multitude of ways, as long as the method employed remains consistent and ‘the finished product contains an account...of what was done, and why’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86). This is what I hope to do here. Thematic analysis, though a linear series of proposed phases, is a recursive process where the researcher can move back and forth between phases to develop themes for study. These phases simply help the researcher to shape and explain method and purpose during data collection and analysis, and to maintain close consideration of the research questions throughout.

#### ***1.2.5 Data collection - semi-structured interviews: questions and techniques***

Rather than determining participants’ personal notions about supernatural folklore, the purpose of my interviews was to identify what specific folkloric sources and texts participants might have drawn upon for their work, and which 1970s television programmes may have been influential upon the careers of those working today. Therefore, an ethnographic approach such as that discussed earlier, to ‘discover and

confirm the participant's experiences and perceptions' (Fetterman, 2013, p. 555), was less useful here than developing thematic strands around which I could formulate questions for structured coding at a later stage. For example, it was less relevant to my study whether a participant had a literal belief in the existence of ghosts than if they had opinions about how a ghostly presence should be represented. Moira Armstrong plainly states, 'I don't believe in the afterlife', but thought that the more 'real' the presence of a ghost can be made for an audience, the more unsettling it can be:

you can make hairs on people's necks stand up with that, the idea this person is not real, even though they look it...I've always felt that the more real somebody is, the more frightening it is (pers. comm., 11 September 2017).

Braun and Clarke's first phase of thematic analysis focuses on familiarising oneself with one's data and informally taking notes that can be returned to in subsequent phases when the more formal coding process begins. I identified five general, loose themes around which to base semi-structured interview questions (reproduced in appendix 7.3 and 7.4). These were designed to be discursive, to draw out anecdotes and the interviewee's own ideas, experiences and influences, in order to encourage as full a conversation as possible:

- background (the interviewee's own, their familiarity with supernatural folklore)
- research (folkloric source material)
- production and design (representing 'spooky' elements on screen)
- response (audience response to their work, their response to the work of others)
- analysis (reflecting on the impact of 1970s television and folkloric belief)

Regardless of interview method (discussed below), all interviews used these same thematic strands, with a slightly modified focus for each generation of participants. A semi-structured approach allows for individual interviews to follow unanticipated turns in the natural flow of conversation, or prompt supplementary questions for discussion, whilst maintaining a clear central focus. Additionally, some questions were specifically tailored to participants' work, such as Piers Haggard's *Quatermass*, 1979, or Richard Littler's *Scarfolk* project. In general, however, I stuck closely to the themes outlined in order to maintain comparable threads across all interviews for coding after transcriptions were complete.

In terms of 'background' and 'research' for phase one participants, I asked questions about their own career path and what drew them towards creating folk-horror narratives (personal interest or otherwise). In most cases, this was a useful way to open the conversation whilst allowing space to discuss relevant texts they may have come across in their personal lives. For example, Lawrence Gordon Clark mentioned M. R. James' stories being 'ingrained from childhood' (pers. comm., 11 June 2017), whilst Patrick Dromgoole referenced Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890) as 'hugely authoritative' (pers. comm., 22 August 2017). I also asked participants' opinion of the quantity of folkloric narratives on 1970s television and their appeal for audiences and broadcasters. This led, for example, to discussions about the social context of the period and 'feeling[s] that certain things had been repressed for a long time' (Wynne-Simmons, pers. comm., 22 May 2017). This helped to gain contemporaneous perspectives from programme-makers about this phenomenon. For phase two participants, I asked similar questions about their production and research backgrounds but was particularly interested in television programmes they had watched and specific titles that they felt may have influenced their work directly. In doing this I hoped to outline to what extent 1970s television had been instrumental in influencing not only career paths but also how these more recent programme-makers choose to represent supernatural folklore. For example, upon being asked whether such programmes affected his career path, Jeremy Dyson confirmed: 'Yes. *Absolutely*. One hundred percent...No question', stating that 1970s television 'showed me the way' (pers. comm., 15 March 2018).

Asking all participants questions about 'production and design', I aimed to gain practical insight in terms of how folkloric tropes are made manifest on screen, and why they might be framed using particular aesthetic approaches. This I hoped would provide useful context for textual analysis and I had wondered if stereotypical ideas of folkloric motifs might emerge (such as pale, floating phantoms, or velvet-robed pagans carrying out sacrifices). However, there was, in general, a clear desire from to move away from rigid, stereotypical ideas toward experimentation. Robert Wynne-Simmons' 'feeling is [to] break the rules...you don't want to have put in these stereotype images of what things are, it's much more interesting if you don't have that' (pers. comm., 22 May 2017), whilst Ben Wheatley states: 'I don't know if there are any rules' (pers. comm., 25 May 2018).

In terms of 'response' and 'analysis', I wanted to encourage phase one participants to reflect upon their own work with hindsight: how popular or influential they thought texts had become over time, if they saw any correlation with work created post-2000 and if so, how they might account for this. For phase two participants, similarly, I asked them to reflect upon their work and the post-2000 folk-horror revival, but more particularly in terms of influence from television of the 1970s. With these questions, I hoped to discover if participants themselves would connect examples of folklore communicated in 1970s media to any post-2000, and determine to what extent programme-makers attributed this to each other's work. For example, Piers Haggard notes that whilst *The League of Gentlemen* series is distinctly different from his work, there is something recognisable in it: 'Well, I mean they *are* fans of *Blood on Satan's Claw*' (pers. comm., 17 June 2017). Similarly, musician Jim Jupp states that he is 'directly influenced...by TV soundtrack and library music of the [1970s] period' (pers. comm., 22 May 2018).

All participants were provided with an advance copy of the appropriate questionnaire to allow them the opportunity to consider their answers and raise any potential issues (none requested any changes). Some interviews were conducted in person (for between one and two hours), some via telephone (for approximately one hour) and the remainder via email. It is worth noting the difference in interview technique and response data depending on the method by which each was conducted. I was able to visit both Piers Haggard and Moira Armstrong at their respective homes in London. Using a non-intrusive digital audio recorder which could be discreetly placed nearby meant that I had my hands free to take notes at ease. Holding a face-to-face interview in a space where the participant feels most comfortable to share information affords a relaxed, considered and nuanced discussion during which pauses, body language and facial expressions can be taken into account when reading responses (Cramer, 2018).

In cases where participants live a long distance away or have less time to spare, telephone interview was the next best option (Burnard, 1994), as was the case with Robert Wynne-Simmons, Patrick Dromgoole, Jeff Grant, Jeremy Dyson and Ben Wheatley. I was able to make a personal connection in speaking directly to each participant and judge the tone and direction of discussion accordingly, although it took noticeably longer for both interviewer and participant to feel more at ease in



conversation than with those conducted in person. During these interviews I took notes whilst holding a handset and wearing an earphone recording device, which creates less relaxed conditions but speaking directly with participants still resulted in rich discussion and personal connection with interviewees in every case.

The rest of my interviews were conducted via email, which affords less opportunity for personal and direct discussion, but does allow participants to construct their responses at a time convenient to them, with less pressure and immediacy than in face-to-face discussion. Email response removes the need for transcription and participants can edit their responses to create well-articulated answers as they see fit, perhaps to make a more precise point than the researcher's tidying of spoken word may reveal in some cases (McCoyd & Kerson, 2006). For example, Lawrence Gordon Clark, after sending me his initial detailed written response, some days later then sent me a revised version, to which I of course deferred at his request.

Most importantly, despite the potential benefits and drawbacks of each approach, the method of interview in each case was chosen by the participant, allowing them to select what they felt most comfortable with and, therefore, achieving the richest results possible. In every case, I sent a copy of the final transcription to my interviewees not only for their own records but also to allow them opportunity for revision if they should so choose. In one case, a participant was able to explain and clarify remarks which they were keen to emphasise were not in any way intended to seem disparaging about the work of anyone else. This allowed me better to understand and honour the spirit in which their comments were made.

Conducting the interviews, I realised I was getting incredibly rich, unique data, well beyond the prosaic listing of influences I expected. For example, Moira Armstrong, of all my phase one participants, seemed initially to be the most cynical about 'spookiness', yet ended up telling me stories of personal ghostly experiences; Patrick Dromgoole regaled me in scholarly detail about popular misconceptions regarding the King Arthur legend; and Jeremy Dyson outlined a rigorous understanding of Jungian psychoanalysis and representations of religious belief in *Doctor Who*.

In continuing to review my interview material, I was able to employ thematic analysis to help determine not only what themes to draw out, but also which case studies to focus on. This helped identify the most significant television programmes my interviewees had made, the influences that they were most commonly citing, and their

own perceptions of how to represent supernatural folklore. Braun and Clarke note that, in transcribing, detail such as punctuation can alter the meaning of the data, and that it is important that transcriptions should retain 'the information you need, from the verbal account, and in a way which is "true" to its original nature' (2006, p. 88). For this reason, I developed a system using italics for emphasis and dashes for pauses, and retained verbal idiosyncrasies, repetition and mannerisms of speech where they were relevant to the meaning conveyed. Where mannerisms or errors in speech were irrelevant to the meaning or purpose of the comment, I made only minor alterations or omissions for better flow and ease of understanding. In places, I added editorial comments and clarifications in square brackets, whilst maintaining the original speech in the text.

One of my first interviews was with Piers Haggard, who was selected not only for having directed one of the 'unholy trinity' folk-horror films, *Blood on Satan's Claw* (1971), and *wyrd* programmes for television, notably *Quatermass* (1979), but also because he is frequently credited with coining the phrase 'folk horror'. Haggard told me that he saw the use of folklore in his own work as an attempt at verisimilitude and that he was:

trying all the time to make it more credible, more authentic...[in order to] tap into the things which I thought were moving and interesting and which had emotional, historical cultural depth and resonance (pers. comm., 17 June 2017).

Jeremy Dyson, speaking about stories with folkloric themes, commented that such narratives:

always will be perennially fascinating to audiences because...if they're done well, audiences *cannot help* but watch them...it's hard-wired into us, it's so old, it's at the fundament of how we perceive and how we understand, we're compelled to go along with [it].

At this early stage, as part of this more informal phase of analysis, significant thematic strands emerging were:

- 1) The unique properties of television itself, its ability to blur fiction and reality with journalistic elements
- 2) The use of traditional custom and belief to suggest a plausible context to the work
- 3) The central influence of writer Nigel Kneale

Kneale is mentioned as influential by almost all my subjects regardless of age (Haggard also worked with Kneale directly). Kneale's work is often dismissed as cult genre material, so this additional evidence helps to celebrate his influence upon and importance to British television and culture, and is therefore the focus of chapter 3.0 of this study. Robert Wynne-Simmons summarised:

television as opposed to film, is largely a medium that's associated with journalism...what he [Nigel Kneale] did was to give us a certain feeling of documentary. That's what TV could do with these stories, it could make you feel that this is actually a documentary that we're trying to discover about things (pers. comm., 22 May 2017).

The fascinating idea that the presentation of supernatural folklore on television (as a medium incorporating journalism alongside drama) more easily blurs fiction and reality than other media, has been central to all the interviews, and is compatible with the notion of ostension in folklore studies. The sincere and conscious presentation to an audience of that which seems plausibly 'folkloresque', within the medium of television, is an idea I can explore to shape my theoretical approach.

### ***1.2.6 Data analysis - semi-structured interviews***

Braun and Clarke's second phase of analysis identifies features of interest in the data and generates initial ways of coding these: 'However, your coded data differ from the units of analysis (your themes), which are (often) broader' (2006, p. 88). Therefore, I tried coding for two types of pattern: specific named television programmes or sources of inspiration; and more general themes arising as broad topics of conversation that were discussed most extensively. To do this, I combed interview transcriptions for repeated thematic patterns and references, noting them in a spreadsheet and working systematically through the full set to calculate the relevant instances.

I included every instance of source material mentioned by interviewees, even if it was not apparently relevant to a folkloric context. I also made a note of the context within which each instance was discussed, as Braun and Clarke state:

code for as many potential...patterns as possible...you never know what might be interesting later...keep a little of the surrounding data if relevant, a common criticism of coding is that the context is

lost...[and] It is important to retain accounts that depart from the dominant story in the analysis (2006, p. 89).

For example, during one interview Nigel Kneale is referenced in relation to more than one television programme, so each instance can be counted as a separate influence in this respect. The context of discussion might also mean a specific television programme is mentioned but was not necessarily an influence or, at least, is not relevant to folklore but may help to form the overall picture. For example, Ben Wheatley discussed the work of Alan Clarke to a great extent and, while this is less relevant to the influence of folklore, here it remains important in the general background of a bleak, violent 1970s milieu.

To list the data, I noted each interviewee name, assigning each name a colour and three columns. In the first column, I listed all the media texts the interviewee has worked on in some capacity that are relevant to this study (not necessarily listing every single project each subject has ever worked on). The relevance of a text in this column was determined by its having a folkloric narrative, having been influenced by other media within the remit of this study or having been cited by an interviewee as relevant work of their own.

In the second column, I listed every source, influence and textual reference mentioned by each interviewee. This column included examples of books, films, television programmes, plays, music, artworks, geographic locations and other miscellanea. Again, I did not list every single item mentioned in passing but restricted the list only to those directly relevant: as an influence *upon* the interviewee (personally or professionally); something that has been interpreted as being influenced *by* the interviewee's work; or is in some way *comparable or relevant* to the field of folk horror or 'wyrd' media. Some sources have been attributed at two 'levels', with a main category and a sub-category. For example, 'Avebury' was categorised as 'Stone Circles: Avebury' to align it with other mentions of stone circles; *The Owl Service* was categorised as 'Alan Garner: *The Owl Service*' in order that each programme instance is counted separately but demonstrates a clear link to other work by the author. References to 'European folk tales' and 'fairy tales' have been categorised under 'traditional folk tales'.<sup>10</sup> These alterations have been made in order more usefully to group together sources relating to context of influence or discussion.

Finally, in the third column, I made a note of broad themes arising from interviews that can be used to group examples of more general discussion, such as 'British landscape and atmosphere' and 'Folklore as perceived authenticity' in storytelling.

### **1.2.7 Data analysis - searching for themes**

At this stage, I was able to embark upon Braun and Clarke's third phase, trying different ways of sorting the codes from primary-source interviews into potential themes and considering 'the relationship between codes, between themes, and between different levels of themes' (2006, p. 89). I developed a points system to sort the data and determine elements which repeated across interviews. For instances which were repeated several times across columns one and two, I gave each:

- one point if the source has been worked on by an interviewee
- one point for each time the source is mentioned in a different context during a single interview (for example, *A Ghost Story for Christmas* may have been mentioned in relation to more than one episode)
- one point for each mention by different interviewees (a different colour denotes another interviewee citing the same source).

To illustrate this method, *A Ghost Story for Christmas* received six points, as it was worked on by one interviewee (+1), mentioned by four different interviewees, each in relation to different episodes or aspects of the work (+4) and, in one of those interviews, was mentioned twice in relation to two distinct episodes (+1), as per the extract from the spreadsheet below:

**A Ghost Story for Christmas (TV, 7 episodes, 1971-1977)**

**A Ghost Story for Christmas: Lawrence Gordon Clark**

**A Ghost Story for Christmas: Lawrence Gordon Clark**

**A Ghost Story for Christmas: Whistle and I'll Come to You<sup>11</sup>**

**A Ghost Story for Christmas: Whistle and I'll Come to You**

**A Ghost Story for Christmas: The Signman**

This system enabled me to sort commonly cited sources, helping to indicate which are the most important within the data set, as well as directing me to where interview material best suits discussion of which themes. The fifteen most frequent occurrences (of thirty-nine unique sources cited) using this method are listed as follows in table 1:

SOURCE/INFLUENCE (context): sorted alphabetically within in each 'points' band	INSTANCES (points)
Nigel Kneale (specifically <i>The Stone Tape</i> , <i>Beasts</i> , <i>Quatermass</i> , and as a writer in general)	14
<i>Blood on Satan's Claw</i>	6
<i>A Ghost Story for Christmas</i> (especially as directed by Lawrence Gordon Clark)	6
<i>Children of the Stones</i>	6
<i>Doctor Who</i> (particularly 1970s episodes, considered the 'best' period by interviewees)	5
Alan Garner (specifically <i>The Owl Service</i> , <i>Red Shift</i> and <i>Alderley Edge</i> )	5
Ghost Stories: Late 19th Century, especially M. R. James	5
Stone circles (in general, particularly Stonehenge and Avebury)	5
Public information films (specifically <i>Lonely Water</i> , <i>Apaches</i> and <i>The Finishing Line</i> )	4
Traditional folktales (Fairy, Gaelic and European)	4
Ghost Box (record label and specific releases)	3
Greek myth and tragedy	3
Stanley Kubrick ( <i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i> , <i>The Shining</i> and <i>A Clockwork Orange</i> )	3
David Lynch ( <i>Twin Peaks</i> )	3
Dennis Potter (specifically <i>Pennies from Heaven</i> )	3
<i>The Tomorrow People</i>	3
<i>The Wicker Man</i>	3

Table 1: Most common sources and influences cited by interviewees

Omitting instances arising only once, I used the data to create a 'word cloud' image as a shorthand visual representation of those most frequently occurring influences cited, in which Nigel Kneale's name is most prominent (fig. 5).



Figure 5: Wordcloud<sup>12</sup>

I used a similar but much simpler sorting process for the themes in the third column, as shown in table 2:

'Britishness' of folk horror, landscape, atmosphere	10
Folklore as perceived authenticity in storytelling	8
TV (BBC) changing attitudes to audiences/production	8
Storytelling as genre, technique, practice	7
TV as impactful/influential/unique	6
Nostalgia, hauntology	5
Appeal of horror	3
Folk tales as perpetual, universal	3

Table 2: Most prevalent themes occurring in interviews

Braun and Clarke's fourth phase of reviewing themes suggests that 'Data within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes' (2006, p. 91). It is clear that much of my data is linked through the categories under which sub-categories fall and can fit together in a number of different ways, using a variety of themes. For example, *Doctor Who* is

relevant to a number of areas in the themes listed above such as use of landscape and atmosphere; attitudes to audiences (particularly with regard to children's television); and use of contemporary legend and traditional belief (including Earth mysteries; crypto-zoology; ancient astronauts; UFOs and witchcraft). From analysis of the data and the tables above, the most significant and prevalent themes are made clearer. This can then be used to develop distinct, but clearly linked, areas around which to form the context and basis of further discussion, and to select programmes for textual analysis.

### **1.2.8 Data interpretation - contextualisation and archive sources**

The fifth and sixth phases of Braun and Clarke's approach to thematic analysis incorporate defining and naming themes, writing up and presenting these in such a way 'which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of your analysis'. Each theme requires its own detailed analysis and clear situation within 'the broader overall "story" that you are telling about your data, in relation to the research question or questions' (2006, pp. 92-94).

My interpretation of this is to use data sorting to group the most significant sources and themes together in sets that will tell a story best within a common context (which can be used as a thesis chapter heading). For example, it is clear that the television series *Children of the Stones* is cited as significant in its own right but, when considering the data set as a whole, recurrent instances in the data involving television broadcasts aimed at children (particularly *Children of the Stones*, *Doctor Who*, adaptations of Alan Garner's writing and public information films aimed at children) suggest it may be most useful to examine the programme within the broader context of children's television of the period under study.

An associated pitfall in thematic analysis noted by Braun and Clarke is the use of data-collection questions (such as from the original interview schedule) as the 'themes' that are reported. My own interview questions were loosely based on thematic ideas (in 1.2.5) but are different from those I have developed for chapter headings, as I have allowed the results of the interviews to drive the research analyses rather than my initial expectations. For example, the significant presence of Nigel Kneale in the data clearly suggests the appropriateness of dedicating chapters to



examining television adaptations of Kneale's work. Similarly, the BBC's *A Ghost Story for Christmas* series (especially those adapted from stories by M. R. James and directed by Lawrence Gordon Clark) lends itself well to comparison with 21st century folk horror and the series' own post-2000 revival.

In addition to the textual analyses and interview data, I have also included empirical data from archival sources. I visited the BBC Written Archives Centre (WAC) in February 2016, where I gained access to production files (including letters from writers, directors, audience members, meeting memos, budgets) on a selection of relevant programmes. The audience-research reports I found (on a broad range of the programmes listed in appendix 7.1), detailing responses to programmes and viewing statistics, were especially valuable. I also gained information on viewing statistics, contemporary reviews and criticism, and broadcast contexts online from the Broadcasters Audience Research Board (BARB), *Radio Times*, the BBC Genome website and contemporaneous newspapers. Additionally, in June 2016 I contacted the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) Archive collection in Bournemouth, which holds production files on ITV programming (1955-1990), and the British Film Institute (BFI) Reuben Library, which has files relating to the production of 1970s public information films. However, I discovered that detailed files relevant enough to my study are either no longer in existence at either of these archives, or were never held in the first instance.

In June 2020, I located a vast collection of papers that had belonged to Nigel Kneale, held in the Manx National Heritage Library on the Isle of Man. The inventory includes original scripts, screenplays, correspondence, articles and news cuttings pertaining directly to Kneale's work examined in this study. Restrictions regarding the Coronavirus pandemic meant that travel to the Isle of Man from mainland UK was only allowed in exceptional circumstances, and I was unable to visit the archive in person. However, I was able to employ the services of a researcher based on the Isle of Man, who used my list of requirements to provide me with photographs of the extensive material I requested. It would have been hugely beneficial to conduct the archival investigation myself, as I received many hundreds of images which were in an incoherent order and sometimes difficult to identify or relate. Nonetheless, despite the time-consuming organisation which this entailed, the material itself proved extremely significant and valuable, particularly in terms of Kneale's own letters, notes and

background research. I am grateful to have had access to these papers by any means available given the circumstances, and I hope to travel to the archive myself in future to conduct further investigation.

This type of material where it does exist is extremely useful in providing context for the programmes (and themes) under discussion. Archival evidence helps determine the influence and reach of programmes at time of broadcast in terms of viewing figures, what programmes were in competition on other channels, comparative cinema box-office figures, and what trends were current in terms of content. Additionally, letters and miscellaneous production notes can help shape impressions of the attitude of broadcasters towards audiences, children's television, folkloric content, and how much artistic freedom was allowed to writers and directors. For example, a personal note in the BBC Written Archives by Graeme McDonald, the BBC's then Head of Drama Serials, to *Doctor Who* producer Graham Williams pleads: 'Please be careful how you handle the goat sacrifice...it could cause a lot of concern for children, adults and me' (BBC WAC, 1978).

Outside of archival data (and in addition to academic literature) I have drawn upon newspaper and magazine reviews to inform my discussion. I have looked not only at such sources cited above as *Radio Times*, and relevant broadsheet listings and articles in *The Times* and *The Guardian*, but also at relevant tabloid reportage in papers like the *Daily Mail* and *Mirror*. In addition, articles and interviews in magazines with a more niche, fan or genre-based focus like *Starburst* and *Video Watchdog* have been equally informative.

One last, but extremely important, issue Braun and Clarke note for consideration is that:

a thematic analysis has limited interpretative power beyond mere description if it is not used within an existing theoretical framework that anchors the analytic claims that are made (2006, p. 97).

Using thematic analysis alone would clearly be a weak approach, but its strength here lies in allowing my qualitative interview data to be used in a much richer way than anticipated: it is the driving force behind the areas of focus for the thesis. Issues around the communication of supernatural folklore on television, and the formal techniques used to represent this, emerged as key themes in the analytical process. This suggested that mass-mediated ostension would be an appropriate lens through

which these processes might be better understood. This theoretical approach (detailed in 2.2.5), unique to folklore studies, can be tested robustly by combining the results of thematic analysis with close textual analysis and contextual data, as a potential development for future study of representations of folklore in popular culture.

Because of the combination of disciplines and variety of texts and data sources, it is appropriate to establish clearly the time period and cultural context for the material under study, which I set out in the following chapter. This contextualisation also requires more than one literature review to examine thoroughly the various aspects and disciplines covered here. In order for me to draw these elements together in my own work, which will culminate in textual analyses, I must consider the background of academic writing in areas which have led me to this point of study. Therefore, chapter 2.1 examines literature on folk horror, hauntology and television whilst 2.2 considers folklore studies and ostension.

## 1.3 Cultural context for British 1970s television

### *1.3.1 'The 1970s' in the remit of this study*

'The 1970s' is used here to cover the period 1968-1984, to encompass programming in development following the cultural explosion of the 1960s (which would have been broadcast into the 1970s), alongside programming produced in the 1970s which remained prevalent in broadcast schedules throughout the decade and beyond. This period roughly coincides with the birth of so-called 'Generation X' (ranging from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s),<sup>13</sup> the demographic cohort following the baby boomers. The contemporary media creatives in phase two interviews for this study are of Generation X, whose work is arguably most affected and influenced by 1970s television. Ben Wheatley (born in 1972) cites discussions with peers such as producer Andy Starke (collaborating with Wheatley on *Kill List*, 2011, and *A Field in England*, 2013), who concur that the influence of a particular decade's style and culture can take time to take hold:

decades really go from the middle to the middle, so it's '75 to '85 instead of '70 to '80...I think it's always that [influence] creeping [across decades]...when you look at stuff from the '90s and it looks like the '80s, it just does creep [over] (Wheatley, pers. comm., 25 May 2018).

Taking the research period up to the mid-1980s also allows, in turn, for inclusion of media texts produced during, based upon, or taking influences from the end of the 1970s. This accounts for several relevant programmes made in the 1970s that would either have been repeated well into the 1980s or were cultural products of the 1970s but production of which continued beyond the decade itself. For example, *Bagpuss* (1974) consisted of just thirteen episodes but was repeated frequently by the BBC until 1986.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, both *Sapphire and Steel* and *Tales of the Unexpected* began broadcasting on ITV in 1979 but ran until 1982 and 1988 respectively.

As evidenced by my spreadsheet data (see appendix 7.1), supernatural folklore and contemporary legend were so pervasive in British television of the 1970s that broadcast programming containing folkloric themes was in excess of 1,200 individual episodes and 800 hours of screen time. Themes represented in such programmes

include: witchcraft and covens (*Beasts*, 1976; *The Changes*, 1975); pagan ritual (*Robin Redbreast*, 1970); hauntings (*The Stone Tape*, 1972; *A Ghost Story for Christmas*, 1971-1978); and stone circles and sinister villages (*Sky*, 1975; *Children of the Stones*, 1977; *Quatermass*, 1979). Helen Wheatley, in her book *Gothic Television* (2006), lists forty-six UK television programmes and series broadcast over a period of seven decades (1946-2004). Every title on Wheatley's list can be described as having supernatural folklore and contemporary legend at the core of the narrative (though not all necessarily folk horror) and, significantly, over a third of the titles fall into the shorter era under consideration for this study. The significant proportion of titles from this era featuring in Wheatley's study supports the contention that this late 1960s to mid-1980s period was not only important in terms of wyrd television but also rich in British television in general.

Jonathan Miller's version of *Alice in Wonderland* (1966) is an example often cited by writers on the counterculture as marking an experimental approach which had memorable and unsettling effects upon audiences (Young, 2010, p. 447). Miller's absurdist *Beyond the Fringe* sensibility applied to Lewis Carroll's surreal children's tale resulted in darkly adult themes being brought to a broad television audience:

Alice's long, strange trip into the world of adults...takes...that Kafkaesque 'illogicality of dreaming' — and magnifies its estranged human component, laying the groundwork (directly or indirectly...for David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* and *Eraserhead*...and onward (Thill, 2003).

*Alice*, initially broadcast in a timeslot aimed at adults, at 9:05pm on 28 December 1966, was described as 'controversial' by *Radio Times* (BBC Genome):

Twelve and a half millions [sic] viewers watched - a 26% share of the viewing audience (at a time when there were only three channels). BBC audience survey material...privilege[s] the reactions of those outraged by the film (McWilliam, 2011, p. 241).

Nonetheless, when *Alice* was repeated in a family-friendly Sunday afternoon slot, at 4:35pm on 2 April 1967, many people watched it *because of* the adverse publicity generated during the previous festive season. McWilliam states that, based upon BBC audience research reports, some viewers felt more able to appreciate Miller's original approach on a second viewing, whilst others found it extremely disquieting. Significantly, parents reported that their children expressed indifference: one boy quoted in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* 'complained that it was not frightening and "nowt

compared with Batman''' (McWilliam, 2011, p. 241). However, *Alice* remains an important milestone in television. Helen Wheatley notes that Miller's widely acclaimed adaptation of M. R. James' ghost story *Whistle and I'll Come to You* (1968) (described by the BBC's 1969 press release for its second broadcast as 'remarkable...for its uncanny sense of period and atmosphere') owed much to his work on this earlier film: 'styles of direction and performance built on those developed in Miller's adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland* for the BBC two years previously' (2006, p. 42). Programmes like *Alice*, and television as a medium in that era, 'highlighted the difference between the mass of the population and the artistic avant-garde' and accentuated 'conflicts between modernism and the wider culture throughout the twentieth century' (McWilliam, 2011, p. 242). This era has come under scrutiny by academics and practitioners alike in recent years:

Why has an era from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s had such a profound effect on the children who grew up during it [?]...I think it's a collision of different cultural, sociological and technological influences, that all came together during that era (Fischer, 2019a).

Chris Evans, a Jungian psychologist, contemporaneously observed a 'widespread revival in the mystical', the occult and the supernatural, and in academic spheres a 'growing interest in universities in such subjects as witchcraft and psychical research' (1972, p. 195). Evans attributed this in part to a natural tendency of people toward 'superstition or primitive patterns of thinking which bias us achingly towards a belief in the supernatural' (1976b, p. 51). However, Evans also notes that the 'immense power of the media' greatly affected 'how vigorous and widespread' this revival was (1976a, pp. 10-11). Evans observed publishers exploiting lucrative new markets for occult literature from the early 1970s, and noted that, alongside books, 'Television, movies, magazines...have made the home-spun themes of classical religion look drab and out-of-date' (1972, p. 195). Evans, a scientifically-minded sceptic, explained the far-reaching effects of this occult revival upon mainstream media. For example, Evans described how Uri Geller was invited by the BBC to demonstrate his mental 'powers' on television, which (according to Geller) included not only his infamous spoon-bending abilities but also 'direct contacts with spaceships and space beings' (1976b, p. 50). Presented uncritically to audiences, Geller was allowed to carry out his 'demonstrations' on national television relatively unchallenged.

Bob Fischer's article 'The Haunted Generation' (2017) suggests that television broadcasts such as these that had a profound effect on audiences. Fischer describes a televisual sense of unsettling 'wyrdness' so wide-ranging that it continues to affect the creative output of a number of Generation X-ers to this day: 'the range of disquieting television cited as influences by this "haunted generation" of the 1970s comfortably spans the gamut from pre-school whimsy to full-on adult weirdness' (2017, p. 31).

This chapter will, therefore, examine how such a rise in folkloric and 'wyrd' television content came about during the 1970s, what part the format of television itself played in having such influence and the context in which supernatural folklore was communicated by mainstream media at the time.

### ***1.3.2 The 1970s - an occultural context***

The initial swathe of folkloric television texts in the 1970s was catalysed by the occult revival in the late 1960s: 'the 1960s and 1970s witnessed the second great wave of interest in folklore and folk culture of the modern period' (Hutton, 1999, p. 283). In 1976, Evans described this revival as 'so rapid and so far reaching' that interest in the occult had 'enthusiastic support from people in all walks of life - from astronauts and cosmologists to housewives and dustmen' (1976a, p. 10). In 1972, Marcello Truzzi presented a variety of solid evidence to support claims of 'a widespread boom of things occult' and increased interest in the supernatural as a movement 'of great cultural significance'. Truzzi explained that although the revival seemed primarily to be a youth phenomenon (born in part from acid-culture and the popularisation of Zen Buddhism by writers of the 1950s Beat Generation), in fact a 'broad spectrum of persons has been involved in this boom...many persons outside the youth culture are interested in the occult'. Dominant areas of interest include: astrology; witchcraft-satanism; parapsychology; Eastern religious thought; strange monsters (including werewolves, vampires and sea serpents); UFOs ('A massive literature and following exist for the "flying saucer" phenomenon') and many others (Truzzi, 1972, pp. 16-18). *Time* magazine noted in 1968 that 'A mystical renaissance is everywhere, from television to department stores' ('That New Black Magic', p. 42) and, Truzzi notes, after decades of poor sales of Ouija boards, 'companies reported over two million sold in 1967...thereby outdistancing the sales of *Monopoly*' (1972, p. 17).

The popular British press frequently contributed its own sensationalist coverage of occult, paranormal and otherworldly stories throughout this period, at both local and national levels. One front-page story of the *Kent & Sussex Courier* suggests that the desecration of a local burial ground was 'linked with witchcraft rites' (1969, p. 1) whilst the *Birmingham Daily Post* makes claims for connections 'between the practice of witchcraft and drug taking', targeting the use of L.S.D. in particular for this 'problem simmering' (1971, p. 20). A later cover story from the same paper ('Witch Group Mother Hunt') blames a local 'witchcraft group' for a young woman's disappearance (1976, p. 1). The *Daily Express* (a national newspaper claiming to be 'The Voice of Britain') exclaimed on its cover in large print 'Flying Saucers Galore!', fuelling readers' credulity by stating 'UFO reports pour into the Express. Surely they can't all be misguided?' (McGowan, 1978, p. 1). The *Daily Mail*, one of the United Kingdom's most widely-circulated newspapers,<sup>15</sup> regularly published stories exploiting revived interest in the occult with headlines such as 'Blackmail by witchcraft' (1967, p. 9) and the enticing cover story 'Z-car chases star spangled UFO for 14 miles' (Duffy, 1967, p. 1, fig. 6). The prevalence of such stories across print media could only have helped to foster the public's interest and keep folklore about the supernatural prominent in the nation's consciousness.

Evans makes it clear that this booming revival was not just restricted to the USA or the UK but was also 'washing through most countries of the non-Communist world' (1976a, p. 10). In the UK, playing a significant role alongside the rise in countercultural ideas, the hippie movement and psychedelia, was the British folk-music revival. Folk clubs had been appearing rapidly around the UK from the late 1950s: 'by the mid-1960s, every town in the country had at least one traditional folk club, where

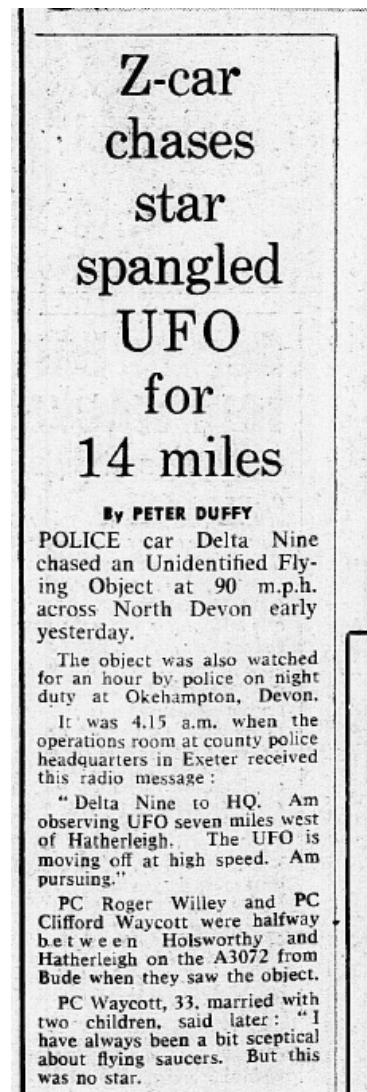


Figure 6: A *Daily Mail* front page story, 25 October 1967



performers were singing songs and telling stories often with a supernatural feel, from centuries ago' (Fischer, 2019b).

A revival of interest in folk, folklore and alternative ways of being and thinking in this period was widespread enough for the British mainstream press to comment on the commercial appeal of occult ideas in the UK: one *Sunday Telegraph* headline confirms 'There's money in myths and magic' (Williams, 1970, in Truzzi, 1972, p. 16). This marketability led to the popularisation of books about folklore such as Margaret Murray's *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* (1921). Murray (1863-1963) had a substantial reputation in the fields of Egyptology, archaeology, anthropology and folklore, also devoting time to the first-wave feminist movement and expanding professional boundaries for women in academia (Sheppard, 2013, p. xiii). Murray is also 'one of the most famous past presidents of the Folklore Society' (serving from 1953 to 1955), 'best known for her theories about the "witch cult" and the "god of the witches"' (Oates & Wood, 1998, p. 7). Murray's work helped to promote the notion that witches were members of ancient secret societies, preserving a fertility cult through the ages, but her 'deeply flawed methods and illogical arguments' have since been widely discredited by academics like Jacqueline Simpson: 'No British folklorist can remember Dr Margaret Murray without embarrassment and a sense of paradox'. Murray's work was nevertheless received by many as a valid scholarly contribution and she 'is one of the few folklorists whose name became widely known to the public' (Simpson, 1994, p. 89). In the 1960s and 1970s when historians began robustly challenging her ideas, some Wiccans 'vehemently defended Murray's hypothesis against academic critique, viewing it as a significant article of faith' whilst others, though accepting her theories were not legitimate, instead drew upon 'the Murrayite story as a mythical history for the Craft' (Doyle White, 2016, p. 77). Murray perpetuated notions of blood sacrifice in what she referred to as the 'Old Religion' in her 1933 sequel to *The Witch Cult*, entitled *The God of the Witches*. This publication was 'put out by a popular press, Sampson Low, and aimed far more obviously at a mass market' (Hutton, 1999, p. 196).

Murray 'became an almost literal godmother to modern pagan witchcraft by writing a supportive foreword' to *Witchcraft Today* (1954) by Gerald Gardner (regarded as the 'father of modern witchcraft'). The first book devoted to establishing Wicca as 'a viable religion in its own right' (Hutton, 1999, p. 244), *Witchcraft Today*

captured 'the imaginations of spiritual seekers everywhere' (Blackwell's, 2011) and fuelled a press 'feeding frenzy' of 'headlines about lurid rites and evil black magic' (Tappenden, 2014). Nevertheless, Murray's foreword describes witchcraft rites as forms of sincere worship 'descended from ancient rituals' (in Gardner, 1954, p.5) and, therefore, at a time of rising interest in witchcraft and alternative religion, Murray's name and ideas remained at the fore. Similarly, Montague Summers' *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology* (1926) and *The Geography of Witchcraft* (1927) reached a wide audience: 'Like that of Murray...his work reached its greatest popularity in the mid-twentieth century; his main *History of Witchcraft* was reprinted three times between 1965 and 1973' (Hutton, 1999, p. 255).

Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890), a significant precursor to the work of Murray, 'a lifelong admirer of Frazer' (Hutton, 1999, p. 195), was also the text most drawn upon by creators of *wyrd* 1970s film and television. Patrick Dromgoole, behind countless *wyrd* programmes including *Sky* (1975), *Children of the Stones* (1977) and *Arthur of the Britons* (1972-1973), 'was a great believer in *The Golden Bough*...Frazer was a hugely authoritative man to me' (pers. comm., 22 August 2017). The most well-documented usage of Frazer's ideas on screen is by Robin Hardy and Anthony Shaffer as the 'principal research source' for *The Wicker Man* (1973), for which many details 'came straight from the pages of *The Golden Bough*' (Brown, 2000, pp. 24-5). Hardy and Shaffer were drawing from Frazer's central notion of a sacred king, which Murray later developed: a human sacrifice offered back to the earth to rejuvenate the land. Though scholars have pointed out the 'folklore fallacy' and problematic usage here (such as Koven, 2007, 2008 and Anderson, 2019a), it remains notable *because* Frazer's text was so unquestionably an influence upon significant cultural products of the 1970s. John Bowen's teleplay for *Robin Redbreast* (1970), a BBC *Play for Today* pre-dating *The Wicker Man*, explicitly quotes Frazer: village sage Mr. Fisher states 'the goddess of fertility in the old religions...would couple with the young king...and from his blood the crops would spring...You must read a book by Sir James Frazer - *The Golden Bough* in seven volumes.' Though Frazer's notions are now widely discredited and considered problematic by contemporary folklorists, *The Golden Bough* inspired a number of other well-known texts such as *The Pattern Under the Plough* (1966) by George Ewart Evans, who 'produced a series of books between 1966 and 1979 in which he asserted...[notions of] a pre-Christian fertility religion' (Hutton, 1999, p. 61).

Though the book is academically problematic and factually inaccurate, it is important to note that Frazer's ideas have proved (and remain) popular for use in folk-horror narratives. For example, *The Golden Bough* was used as source material for *A Field in England* (2013) by screenwriter Amy Jump, who 'did her own research, reading *The Golden Bough*...we were just looking for stuff to take from that' (B. Wheatley, pers. comm., 25 May 2018). However, director Wheatley is keen to clarify that this was used alongside 'folkloresque' notions that were '*made up* and not researched', in order to avoid 'stepping on the toes of actual religions or actual paganism' and academic critique: 'it was a fear that Amy had of getting strung up by academics and historians' (pers. comm., 25 May 2018). Although Wheatley and Jump's overall aim was not to present 'accurate' or 'historical' folklore, Frazer's ideas were still viewed as a valid preliminary source of information in this context.

A popularly influential figure in the history of modern magic was Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), himself describing Frazer's work as 'invaluable'. Crowley was less interested in religion per se than magical traditions and practices, seeing the relationship of what he called 'magick' as closer 'to science rather than religion' (in Hutton, 1999, pp. 172-74). Though Crowley acquired a reputation as a wicked satanist, he did not believe in a literal Satan but reappropriated Christian symbols of the Beast 666, the satanic idol Baphomet and the Whore of Babylon to re-invest them with positive values and challenge acceptance and understanding of the Christian faith. Crowley became firmly established in the public consciousness as a notorious figure and, following his death, Crowley's literary executor John Symonds wrote a sensational biography of the dead magician in 1951. The commercial success of this book allowed Symonds to publish 'an increasing number of the master's manuscripts during the next two decades, which consolidated that reputation during the great burgeoning of interest in the occult which occurred in those years' (Hutton, 1999, p. 180). The inclusion of Crowley on the album sleeve of The Beatles' *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* in 1967 helped to capture a popular, rising interest in Crowley from the psychedelic counterculture. As an advocate of free love, drugs and 'sex magick', Crowley was seen by many in the hippie movement as a visionary way ahead of his time. Into the 1970s, too, Jimmy Page and Robert Plant of Led Zeppelin invested themselves in an 'exploration of Albion's landscapes of legend and the occult' (Young, 2000, p. 407). Page funded an occult bookshop (named Equinox, after Crowley's book

series of the same name), attempted a soundtrack for Kenneth Anger's satanic-themed film *Lucifer Rising* (1972) and even purchased Crowley's former home Boleskine House on the banks of Scotland's Loch Ness.

Two of the world's most famous bands were, then, effectively populist advocates of the psychedelic counterculture and occult interests, reflecting upon previous eras to help define and explain their own contemporary cultural explosion: The Beatles' outfits on the cover of *Sgt Pepper* evoke Edwardiana, as do the opening credits of *Bagpuss*. Sepia photographic images of 'blank-faced children in old-fashioned pinafores' (Fischer, 2019a) greet viewers at the start of each *Bagpuss* episode, for which Sandra Kerr, folk singer and voice of *Bagpuss*'s rag doll Madeleine, and animators Oliver Postgate (1925-2008) and Peter Firmin (1928-2018) were similarly drawing on their own childhoods and the influence of their parents' memories (Fischer, 2019b).<sup>16</sup> Fischer's query about the influence of the 1970s on Generation X applies equally to the 'Baby Boomer' generation drawing on the cultural products of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Though the focus period for this study is the 1970s, it is nonetheless important to note that, although each generation's cultural products may indeed have their own distinct characteristics (discussed in chapter 2.1), we should not consider them as standalone phenomena but as links in a chain of influence and evolution: 'virtually all humans, at all times, have turned to the past to legitimize and authenticate the present' (Hutton, 1999, p. 64).

The quantity of paperback books in print with occult topics rose by 207 per cent between 1968 and 1969 (rising from 169 titles to 519 in this period), and the quantity of hardback volumes in print dealing with occultism rose by eighty-three per cent between 1967 and 1969 (rising from 198 to 364 titles) (Truzzi, 1972, p. 17). Another popularly influential text, *Folklore, Myths and Legends of Britain* (1973), was published by the Reader's Digest Association, which tended to focus on the family market. Copies found their way 'into who knows how many households as Reader's Digest was pretty much at the height of its popularity' (Willis, 2015). A number of Generation X children found themselves fascinated by the book, aided by the dramatically-embossed cover and illustrations within (fig. 7). *Folklore, Myths and Legends of Britain* is often cited in the context of the folk-horror revival and the shaping of Generation X,<sup>17</sup> with fond nostalgia:

it called to the children of the household. Ask anyone of my generation who knows this book and they'll tell you how they spent hours poring over it...This was Britain transformed into a country of deep mists and moonlight as alien as any Tom Baker might encounter. Its bitesized curios and spooky, out-of-time illustrations hooked us gently (Willis, 2015).

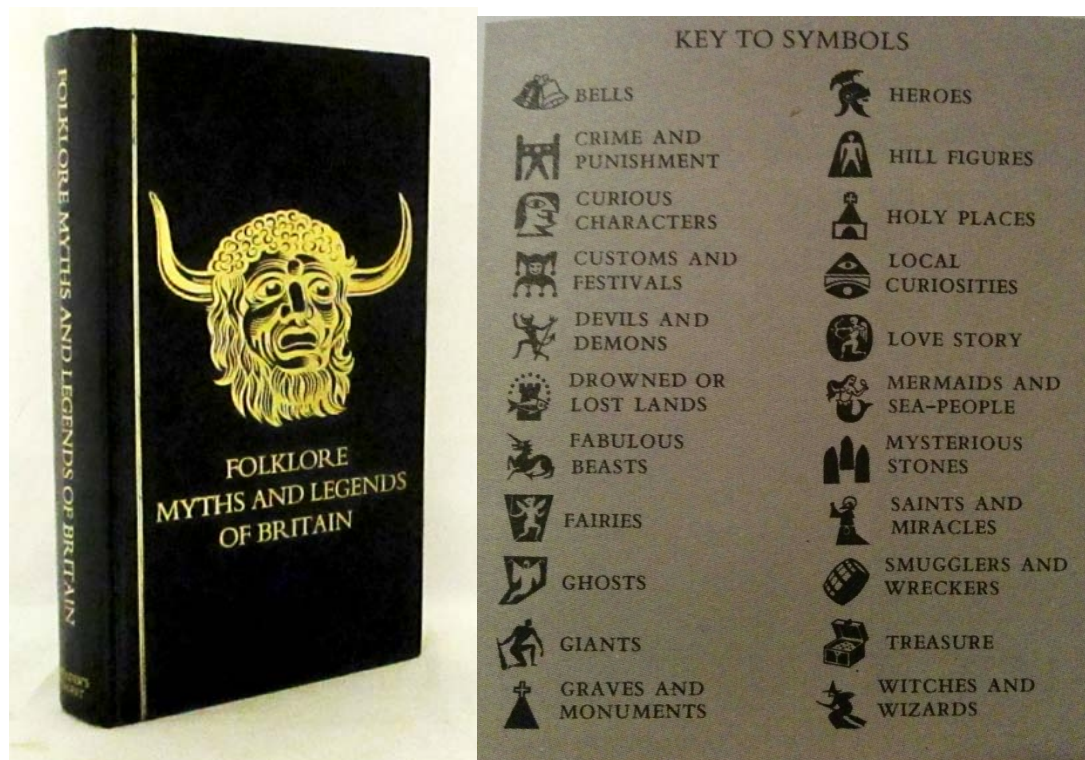


Figure 7: *The Reader's Digest book of Folklore, Myths and Legends of Britain*

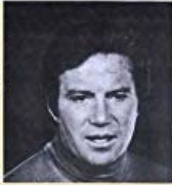
Popular texts like this, alongside the republication of others on occult topics, meant that many significant texts from the 1920s and '30s were 'rediscovered' in this sense by New Age hippies seeking an 'authenticity' and with a desire to reconnect with spirituality and the natural environment. Alfred Watkins' *The Old Straight Track* (1925) claims discovery of a 'complex system of "leys" criss-crossing the English landscape, aligned through focal points such as churches, wells, prehistoric mounds and long barrows' (Young, 2010, p. 22). Watkins' work remained largely forgotten until it was rediscovered in the late 1960s when notions of mystic power and connected landscape were seized upon by John Michell, mystic geographer, and the New Age began to look not only to the past and the land for answers, but also to the skies. As part of the rising interest in occult and alternative beliefs, Michell's 'writings on the connections between landscape, folklore and flying saucers became popular in the mid 1960s'. Michell's *Flying Saucer Vision* (1967) re-interpreted Watkins' idea to suggest landscape lines were more than just ancient trading routes but energy lines linking sacred places

(such as Glastonbury Tor) to an unknown energy source that was recognised by ancient peoples and even used as navigation beacons by UFO pilots. This romanticised interpretation, transforming 'Watkins' simple observation into a portentous vision...[which] fitted in with hippie sensibilities', was a 'revelation...of a network of lines, standing out like glowing wires all over the surface of the country' (in Clarke & Roberts, 2006, p. 117).

The ideas and motifs of this New Age outlook are widespread in 1970s television. In *Sky* (1975), a mysterious alien boy arrives on Earth with a quest to locate the 'Juganet', a circle of power that is revealed to be Stonehenge. Similar motifs occur again in Nigel Kneale's *Quatermass* (1979), in which the Planet People, a hippie youth cult, gather at prehistoric stone circles to worship alien beings who, in turn, are using the sites as entry points to lines of energy, in this case to harvest humans. The notion of visiting aliens guiding the evolution of mankind had previously been dealt with by Kneale in *Quatermass and the Pit* (1958-1959), in which primitive mankind had been given psychic powers by a race of Martians. This idea also greatly informed Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), in which the discovery of a featureless extra-terrestrial monolith affects the stages of human evolution. Erich von Däniken's writing, especially *Chariots of the Gods* (1968), widely promoted such theories of ancient astronauts. Though academically critiqued as 'ludicrous', *Chariots* was, in the mid-1970s, 'in sales terms one of the most successful books ever published' (Evans, 1976a, p. 10).<sup>18</sup> Von Däniken's continued popularity inspired contemporary film and television to bring his ideas to a broader audience, such as a BBC *Horizon Special* episode, 'The Case of the Ancient Astronauts', broadcast on 25 November 1977.<sup>19</sup> The documentary film *Captain Kirk's Alien Mysteries* (1976, aka *Mysteries of the Gods*), presented by *Star Trek* icon William Shatner, was based on one of von Däniken's sequel books, *Miracles of the Gods: A Hard Look at the Supernatural* (1975). One poster for the film proclaimed, as if it were plain fact, 'We are the Children of Spacemen' (fig. 8).



# WE ARE THE CHILDREN OF SPACEMEN.



The ancient legends are true. Milleniums ago superior men from distant galaxies came to earth, loved earthwomen and founded the human race.

## See!

- THE CRYSTAL SKULL THAT NO HUMAN TOOL COULD HAVE CARVED.
- GIANT ANTENNAS THAT TALK TO DISTANT PLANETS.
- JEANE DIXON PREDICTING THE ARRIVAL OF ALIENS FROM OUTER SPACE.

## See!

- THE PREHISTORIC INDIANS WHO KNEW OPEN HEART SURGERY AND TELESCOPES.
- A PRIMITIVE TRIBE'S SQUADRONS OF AERO-DYNAMICALLY PERFECT AIRCRAFT.
- NASA EXPERTS AGREEING ON SPACE VISITORS PAST AND FUTURE.

## See!

- THE PRIEST-KING'S TOMB WITH A CARVING OF A SPACE MODULE AND INSTRUMENT PANEL.
- THE 3000-YEAR-OLD JUNGLE DANCE THAT SIMULATES NEIL ARMSTRONG'S MOONWALK.



## See!

- THE PREHISTORIC WEAPON WHICH HAD TO BE INVENTED BY A SPACE TECHNOLOGY.
- THE MAMMOTH WORLD-WIDE LANDING FIELDS FOR MEN FROM BEYOND OUR GALAXY.
- THE BIRD MEN OF MESOPOTAMIA WITH ROCKETS ON THEIR BACKS.

## See!

- PLATINUM ON EARTH 5,000 YEARS BEFORE OUR TECHNOLOGY COULD PURIFY IT.
- POCKET UFO DETECTORS.
- EXTRAORDINARY NASA PHOTOS, SHOWING UFO'S, NEVER BEFORE RELEASED.

## See!

- THE FLYING BIBLICAL WHEEL WHICH IS AERODYNAMICALLY PERFECT.
- ANCIENT INDIAN DOLLS AND PRIMEVAL RITUAL HEADMASKS WITH SPACE HELMETS.
- AND DOZENS MORE.

Now For The First Time - See Their Astounding Legacy.

# WILLIAM SHATNER'S MYSTERIES OF THE GODS

As Incredible As Star Trek

G GENERAL AUDIENCES  
ALL AGES ADMITTED

Based on "Miracles of the Gods" the new best-seller by Erich von Daniken  
© 1976 Miracles of the Gods Associates In Color A Hemisphere Pictures Release



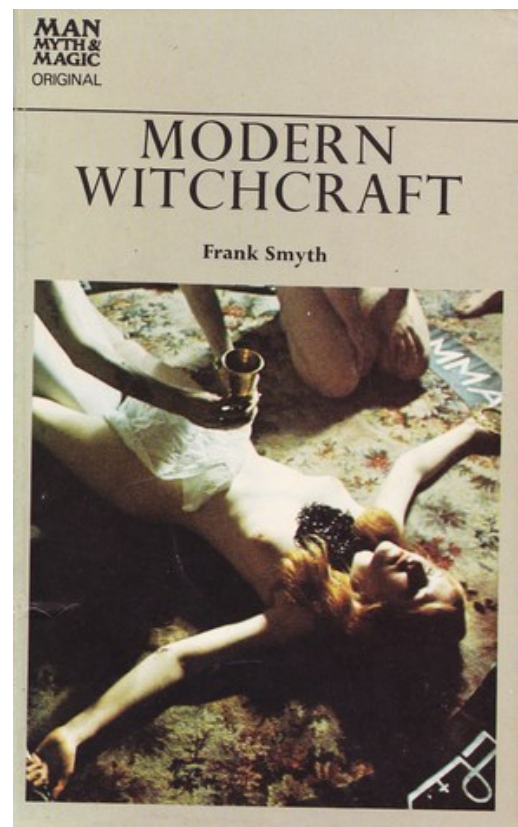
Figure 8: *Mysteries of the Gods* (1976)

A number of popular periodicals sprang up as part of this continued interest in all things otherworldly and occult, such as the British weekly magazine *Man, Myth & Magic*, which commenced publication in 1970 and ran for 112 issues. Spin-off books were published following the magazine's popularity, such as Frank Smyth's *Modern*

*Witchcraft: The Fascinating Story of the Rebirth of Paganism and Magic* (1970), billed as a 'Man Myth & Magic Original'. Smyth described the unique spirit of the era:

the last few years of the 1960s saw a flowering of interest in occult matters which would have been inexplicable to an earlier generation: the forties and early fifties were sternly practical times, overshadowed by war...Now, twenty years later, it seems scarcely possible to pick up a newspaper or turn on a television set without some reference being made to ghosts, demons, magicians or witches. The occult, which lay dormant for so many years, is once again up and thriving all around us (Smyth, 1970, pp. 14-15).

The existence of such publications suggests that there was broad enough interest and curiosity in the occult and supernatural to create new popular markets to exploit. Smyth makes efforts to counter the notion of modern witchcraft as being morally corrupt and sex-centred, claiming that the press is largely to blame for the general public's impression of the occult; he cited sensationalist stories in the *News of the World* as guilty of 'overdo[ing] the sexual aspect'. However, despite Smyth's blunt arguments that 1970s witches were far more inhibited and less sexualised than the 'Sunday newspaper reports' claimed (1970, pp. 21-22), the publishers of *Modern Witchcraft* did not shy away from perpetuating titillation themselves. The cover image of the first paperback edition of Smyth's book (featuring a naked young woman, apparently involved in some kind of ritual, fig. 9), is clearly intended to exploit the general public's impression, undoubtedly with a view to boosting book sales.



*Figure 9: Modern Witchcraft*

Children were equally a market for supernatural and occult publications: *How to Make Magic* (1974, fig. 10) was widely available in national retail chain W.H. Smith and



presents a collage of folkloric belief for children, assuring readers that ‘science cannot give us all the answers...perhaps you are one of those rare people gifted with real magical powers’. The book shows children how to cast a magic circle, use pixie dust, make a Ouija board, cure warts with bacon rind and illustrates dowsing procedures. Most worryingly, perhaps, *How to Make Magic* asks the reader ‘Has your teacher, or a friend, made you a little angry lately?’, proposing some ‘less nasty black magic spells that you can try’ (Finmark & Wickers, 1974, pp. 2, 54).

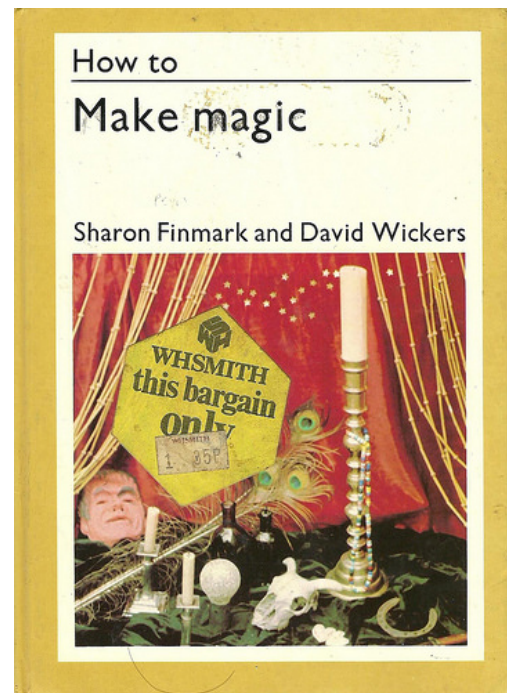


Figure 10: *How to Make Magic*

Usbourne’s *World of the Unknown: Ghosts*, first published in 1977, was part of a trilogy of books for children that also included volumes on *UFOs* and *Monsters*.<sup>20</sup> *Ghosts* explained the techniques and equipment of ghost hunting and, though it tells how ‘ghosts’ have been exposed as fakes or explained away as natural phenomena, it also includes theories that attempt to explain the possible existence of ghosts. Interestingly, in 2019, 2020 and 2021 respectively, the *Ghosts*, *UFOs* and *Monsters* books were republished due to popular demand (fig. 11), largely from nostalgic members of Generation X who recall being deeply affected by this series. Folklorist David Clarke (who has written extensively on UFOs and acted as official spokesperson when the Ministry of Defence declassified many of their UFO documents from the National Archives) describes Usbourne’s *UFOs* as ‘far superior to any other book aimed at an under-18 audience for this subject matter...This title with its wonderful illustrations and engaging practical tasks – such as how to fake a UFO photograph – fired my imagination’ (Clarke, 2020). The foreword for the *Ghosts* reprint by Reece Shearsmith, a key figure in folk-horror-revival television, attests:

as I forged a career writing and starring in such darkly comic TV shows as ‘The League of Gentlemen’, ‘Psychoville’ and more recently ‘Inside No. 9’, I realised how indebted I was to the book you now hold...Its macabre contents stayed with me my whole life. Shaped it, even (in Maynard, 2019, p. i).

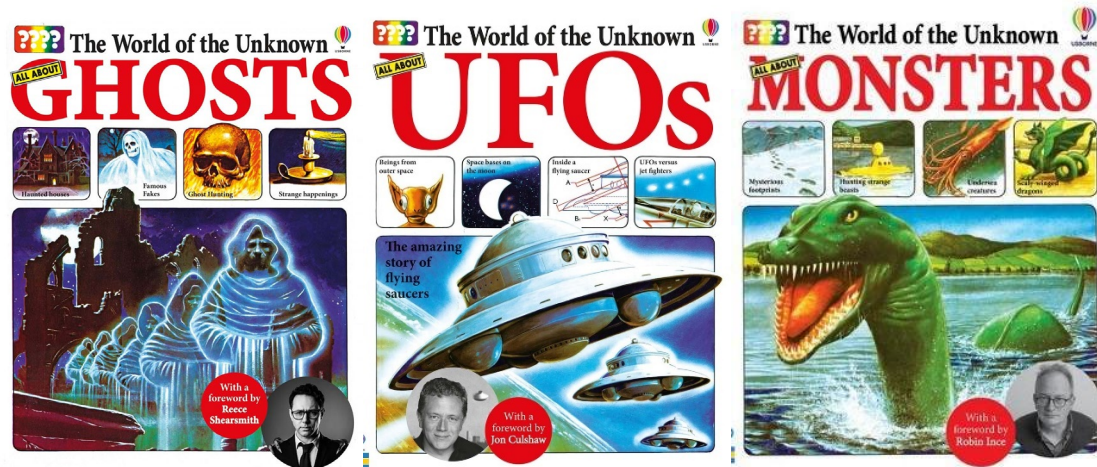


Figure 11: Usbourne's 2019, 2020 and 2021 reissues of its 1977 books

Given the underground and hippie movements during the 1970s, subsequent rising interest in alternative culture and the abundance of 'rediscovered' and readily available literature, it is unsurprising that folkloric and supernatural subject matter proved a fertile ground for inspiration and commercialisation, spilling over into the television of the day and the imaginations of children.

### 1.3.3 The 1970s television landscape

Whilst folkloric themes are continually revived across a variety of media, it is more often than not *television* of the 1970s that is cited as a central influence upon 'revivalists' who are producing folk horror and hauntological media texts today.<sup>21</sup> *Children of the Stones* (1977), *The Owl Service* (1969, adapted from Alan Garner's novel), and *Penda's Fen* (1974) are among the examples film director Ben Wheatley cites as most affective on him: 'Seventies shows...were really impactful in a way that drama doesn't seem to be any more. You felt your mind being scarred and you were never the same again afterwards' (in Bonner, 2013). Bob Fischer describes such 1970s television as 'suffused with melancholy and disquiet', while contemporary musician Jim Jupp explains: 'There was something in the *look* of television from that era...there's something in the television images of that period that's just not *right*. It's kind of otherworldly' (in Fischer, 2017, pp. 30-31).

The 1970s was a unique time in a variety of ways for television as a mass medium, sandwiched between the 1960s, when many families obtained their first

television sets, and the 1980s, when videocassette recorders first became commonplace, leading into the digital era when the recording of every aspect of daily life became routine. Television programmes in the 1970s were still either broadcast live or transmitted and then gone, with no possibility to rewind, rewatch or catch up later.<sup>22</sup> Also, in an era when television was less determinedly chasing ratings, commissioners made space for more ambitious, intellectually-challenging fare such as the *Play for Today* (1970-1984) series: 'during this era [1950-1975] "serious" social issues were often negotiated through fantasy genres such as science fiction and horror, with the single-play drama a natural home for this kind of thought-provoking content' (Jowett & Abbott, 2013, p. 2). Such programmes often made a strong impression upon viewers, leaving them with a profound yet fuzzy memory of an image or atmosphere. Bob Fischer describes the experience as being entwined with the technology of the era and this 'haunted generation' as 'amongst the last to remember their childhoods in this fractured, dreamlike fashion...the last "analogue" generation' (Fischer, 2017, p. 36).

Most 1970s British viewers were restricted to three channels, BBC One, BBC Two and ITV,<sup>23</sup> with one television set in the house, rather than the multiple screens in the average household of today. Television audiences were thereby much more highly concentrated, and some popular programmes (such as the BBC's *Doctor Who*, from 1963 onward) were treated as national events watched by the whole family, often excitedly discussed in playgrounds and workplaces at the first opportunity. Thus, despite the limited opportunities to see them, the influence and reach of individual television programmes was much greater than today, with the proliferation of channels and dilution of audiences that followed the advent of cable and satellite television (which became prominent in the 1980s) and the arrival of the internet from the 1990s onward. In illustration, the BBC ghost story episode 'The Treasure of Abbot Thomas' was originally broadcast on 23 December 1974, BBC One, at 11:35pm and achieved 5.3 million viewers, which was 9.5 per cent of the total UK population in 1974 and 62 per cent of everyone watching television during that timeslot.<sup>24</sup> In comparison, the 2013 BBC ghost story episode 'The Tractate Middoth' was originally broadcast on 25 December on BBC Two at 9:30pm. In this prime-time slot, the programme gained 1.7 million viewers, which was 1.5 per cent of the total UK population in 2013 and just

4 per cent of everyone watching a main UK channel (BBC One, BBC Two, ITV, Channel Four or Channel 5) at the time.<sup>25</sup>

The notion of almost two-thirds of the television-viewing population watching the same programme at the same time has become so distant in the digital age that 'event television' has been reinvented as a modern marketing concept. Entire series (such as *Stranger Things*, 2016 onward) are now released at once as digital 'box sets', consumed as quickly as possible to avoid 'spoilers', and channels have returned to presenting live television events:

Viewers are actually watching more television but less of this viewing is collective, or taking place at the same time. This rise of an 'on-demand culture' has led to live (or 'as live') 'event television' programmes such as...*Strictly Come Dancing* (BBC) which cannot be time shifted, precisely because the pleasure is about the here-and-now result (Ibertazzii & Cobley, 2013, p. 523).

Today's broadcasters fight for a share of a larger and more disparate audience who are also able to record and watch time-shifted programmes across multiple devices.

Therefore, the entire culture of television viewing was different in the 1970s: in a sense, *all* television then was 'event' television. Programmes were often reasons for social gatherings, and previews and reviews of programming in print media and television guides were widely read. Commentary in print media was, in the case of newspapers, able to provide immediate feedback upon television from the night before or, throughout an era of peak popularity for magazines like *TVTimes* and *Radio Times*, to pique an audience's interest in programmes for the week ahead.<sup>26</sup> For example, one column in a 1975 issue of *TVTimes* builds anticipation for Nigel Kneale's latest contribution: 'On Sunday, *Murrain*...deals with the ancient art of witchcraft in the contemporary setting of a small, north Nottinghamshire village. To say more would give the plot away' (Coleman, 1975, p. 20). Therefore, programming could achieve far greater influence and impact in several ways beyond the broadcasts themselves.

The format of television as a domestic medium is recognised by writers and directors such as Robert Wynne-Simmons as having the potential to add gravitas to folkloric narratives:

It's more insidious, I suppose you might say, because it comes into your home...Television, as opposed to film, is largely a medium that's associated with journalism...it's very powerful when it uses the

documentary element...this could be real...you can step, very easily, from normal events into supernatural events and then back again (pers. comm., 22 May 2017).

Although beyond the time frame for this study, some examples of British television programmes with supernatural themes have claimed direct impact upon audiences because of the medium and the way in which the folkloric narratives have been presented. Famously, 1992's *Ghostwatch* used children's-TV presenter Sarah Greene and chat-show stalwart Michael Parkinson to present such a convincing 'live' haunting that the BBC received thousands of complaints from viewers after being fooled (Woods, 2017). Mikel Koven's discussion of the ghost-hunting series *Most Haunted* (2002-present) and the convergence of 'folkloric supernatural belief traditions and popular television' (2007, p. 183) notes that the programme presents dramatic folkloric content within the framework of reality television, which is sometimes also presented as a 'live' broadcast. This 'deception' by *Most Haunted* and spin-off programme *Most Haunted Live* (2002-present) was the subject of several viewer complaints to communications regulator Ofcom, prompting investigation into 'occasional assertions by the programme that what viewers are witnessing is real' (BBC News, 2005). Ofcom ruled that, overall, the programme content was not in breach of the Broadcasting Code and 'should be taken to be a programme produced for entertainment purposes', not as a 'legitimate investigation' into the paranormal. However, the regulator also notes that 'ensuring that it is clear to viewers whether or not a programme is intended for entertainment purposes can be a fine judgement' for broadcasters to make and the ruling allows for a degree of flexibility in the framing of a programme's presentation (Ofcom, 2005, pp. 17-18).

Koven argues that it is, in part, the televisual framing itself which causes the audience to contemplate the '*possibility* that the phenomenon was real, even if entertained momentarily' which raises questions about 'the role that television programmes about the supernatural play as legend-tellers' and their effect upon an audience (2007, pp. 183-94). *Inside No. 9*'s 2018 Halloween special 'Dead Line' added social media to this concept when its 'live' broadcast interacted in real-time with the actors via Twitter to persuade the viewer of the 'reality' of events.

Television is, therefore, a hybridised format that brings film, serialised and one-off drama (of all genres), documentary, news and sports together with animation,

children's programming and even online interactivity. Stories of climate disaster, political corruption, murders, bombings and dramatic or controversial subject matter are thus delivered into our homes by the same screen that displays bouncy pre-school content and hum-drum weather reports. Reality and fiction can thus more easily be blurred on television and 'certain events are made all the more frightening by being broadcast on TV within the domestic space' (Jowett & Abbott, 2013, p. xii). The presence of supernatural folklore and folk horror in this context is afforded an additional eerie resonance by the nature of the medium alone.

Programme-makers in the 1970s were able to combine the unique format of television and technologies available to them with their contemporary folkloric interests to lend credibility to their work. Piers Haggard, in applying folklore to his brand of horror, was 'trying all the time to make it more credible, more authentic' (pers. comm., 5 June 2017). Alan Garner, too, renowned for his keen involvement in television productions of his own work such as *Red Shift* (1978) and *The Owl Service* (1969), used mythology and supernatural folklore to give plausible historical context and depth to his work (discussed in *Celebration: Alan Garner*, 1980).

#### **1.3.4 Folklore on television**

Television played a significant role in the transmission of folklore to audiences of all ages in the 1970s, when supernatural folklore and contemporary legend became treated with some gravity throughout mainstream media: 'a deliciously credulous era, when reported hauntings would be treated as semi-serious news...you could believe in this stuff...as a kid, it seemed almost like...a fact that there are UFOs...or that there are ghosts' (Fischer, 2017, p. 33). The wyrd effect of 1970s programmes extended beyond drama to television news and documentary, genres which also fostered contemporary legend and potential belief amongst their audience, especially those of an impressionable age (now Generation X) but also influencing contemporaneous adult audiences.

Of the 1,280 individual broadcast episodes identified for this study (appendix 7.1) at least 35 per cent were aimed directly at children, having been first broadcast in a pre-5pm slot commonly reserved for children's programming on BBC and ITV. They included titles such as *The Witch's Daughter* (1971) and *The Tomorrow People* (1973-

1979). An additional 10 per cent of titles identified were originally broadcast between 5pm and 7pm, such as factual documentary and news features, and dramas like *Sapphire and Steel* (1979-1982) and *The Tripods* (1984-1985). It is reasonable to assume that this time slot was ideal for family viewing, during which programmes were seen by audiences of all ages. Therefore, my research shows that almost half of the titles identified (at least 45 percent) were aimed at, or predominantly viewed by, a young audience, and so folkloric and supernatural narratives were equally pervasive in programming for both adults and children. A number of titles originally broadcast after the 9pm watershed were repeated during the daytime within the study period.<sup>27</sup> This further supports the claim that Generation X would have been widely exposed to wyrd programmes, both factual and drama (which at times may have included exposure to challenging or unsettling thematic subject matter discussed in section 1.3.1), hence chapter 4.0 of this study is devoted to examining 1970s programming for children.

Vic Pratt observes the era as a 'cultural moment when witchcraft and the occult were no longer ludicrous...ancient superstitions seemed to some a viable alternative' (2013, p. 2). In 1970, Frank Smyth attested to the proliferation of the occult in popular mainstream media: 'Witches appear on the "David Frost Show", they chat with Joan Bakewell on "Late Night Line-up", and have their say in the glossy pages of women's magazines' (1970, p. 16). The following year the BBC broadcast a solemn journalistic documentary about witchcraft in contemporary Britain, *The Power of the Witch* (1971). Author David Southwell notes that it wasn't just the content of such factual programmes that was significant during this period, but the tone and the frequency with which it was delivered, as well as the confidence of the general public in broadcast news, current affairs and documentary in the 1970s: 'If it was broadcast, material, however strange, was gifted authority...Broadcast journalism was trusted. Broadcast journalism was believed'. This impression was intentionally maintained by broadcasters at the time, as Southwell's interview with Andrew Gardner, an ITN newsreader between 1962 and 1977, shows:

the position of all newsreaders then, was one of authority and trust. Management did everything possible to maintain this. They didn't want...dancing newsreaders on Morecombe [sic] and Wise...They would not even let us go out in public to a fete opening if we weren't dressed in jacket and tie...anything that lessened you in the public eye was a no-no because the next day you might be announcing how

many had died in an IRA bombing or even that people needed to get ready to be nuked (in Southwell, 2019b).

This air of sincerity therefore meant that anything covered by the news, including witchcraft, UFO abductees and ghost hunting, seemed convincing and, in some cases, terrifying. In 1977, newspapers like the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror* reported the case of the Enfield Poltergeist, in which single parent Peggy Hodgson and her children Margaret, Janet and Billy (14, 11 and 7 respectively at the time) claimed to be haunted by violent supernatural activity in their house in Enfield, London. The story was featured as a news item in November of that year on BBC One's long-running news and current affairs programme *Nationwide* (1969-1983). It is important to consider the context of this broadcast: *Nationwide* was trusted family teatime viewing, on television at 6pm for five days a week from 1972.<sup>28</sup> The episode in which the Enfield Poltergeist story featured, aired on 23 November 1977, was preceded by children's animation *Ivor the Engine* and the news headlines, followed by sporting family favourite *The Superstars*.<sup>29</sup> BBC Two's evening schedule in 1977 didn't begin until 7pm, so the only other contender for a share of the television audience would have been ITV's news, sandwiched between soap operas *Emmerdale Farm* and *Crossroads*. It is fair to assume that the BBC One programming would have been favoured by families with children, obtaining many millions of viewers.

In a large chunk of the programme dedicated to the poltergeist story, *Nationwide* viewers saw the Hodgson children interviewed by the BBC, 'Without sneer, without undue display of scepticism, with absolute impartiality and seriousness'. The interviewer, aiming to capture proof of the supposed haunting, invites response from the 'spirit', asking: 'Is there anybody there?', after which his solemn wait for a reply is allowed to play out for almost 30 seconds of screen time. Viewers also are presented with 'evidence' of a possibly-possessed child growling in an otherworldly voice, and unexplained knocking and barking sounds, allowing television to become a possible receiver for what Southwell refers to as 'ghost transmissions' (Southwell, 2019b). The reporter's closing remarks present no easy resolution for the audience, allowing for the possibility of a supernatural explanation:

Poltergeists seem to thrive on an atmosphere of tension that is partly sexual. The fact that most of the focuses are adolescents seems to contribute to the mischievous nature of the effects, leading some to



suggest that the kids are faking...But to create all the bizarre effects that went on in this house either involves a gigantic conspiracy with the neighbours or a disruption in our laws of mind and matter (*The Enfield Poltergeist Special*, 1977).

Another 1976 *Nationwide* feature introduced Dr Anne Ross as 'one of the country's leading experts in Celtic studies' and treated her account of an apparent werewolf encounter with 'the utmost gravitas'. In the story, bizarrely also related to a pair of supposedly Celtic stone heads, 'labelled "Evil" by the local and national press', Dr Ross describes seeing in her house something 'half-animal and half-man. The upper part...was a wolf and the lower part was human...covered with a kind of black, very dark fur' (*Fortean Times*, 1976, n.p.). The BBC broadcast 'reported on Dr Ross' werewolf story in all seriousness'. In it, she also recounted her teenage daughter's experience of the creature 'as near a werewolf as anything' (Brotherstone & Lawrence, 2017, pp. 735-6).<sup>30</sup>

A similar tone was adopted by earlier, serious BBC documentaries on contemporary-legend subjects such as those produced by Hugh Burnett, including *The Ghost Hunters* (1975), *The Mystery of Loch Ness* (1976) and *Out of This World* (1977, about UFO cults and believers), all of which demonstrated 'a commitment to impartiality and serious investigation...[allowing] us to make our own judgements...[which do] not direct us towards an editorial narrative, choosing to give primacy to context and the viewer's own reaction to testimony' (Southwell, 2019b). All three programmes were initially broadcast at around 10pm on BBC One but were all repeated at least another two to three times during the period under study. Many repeats were at family-friendly times,<sup>31</sup> allowing audiences of all ages to take even the most extreme claims in as serious a manner as the broadcasters were presenting them:

*Out Of This World* features no sneering or sniggering despite featuring...kagooled-up Aetherius Society changing prayer batteries in Devon, assorted [UFO] contactees...talking about 'beautiful space people with gorgeous page boy bob hair'...one of the production staff on the documentary...said 'People on both sides of the divide took it seriously, therefore so did we. We gave even-weight to debunkers and believers, trusted the public to make their own minds up...the schedulers treated the strange as just another facet of belief...If we weren't going to call the Archbishop of Canterbury a raving fantasist

back then, that courtesy also got extended to those who believed other odd things' (Southwell, 2019b).

The widespread prevalence of supernatural folklore in news and documentary media of the 1970s was reflected in 1970s drama. The character Norah in *Robin Redbreast* grimly observes: 'Every now and again there's a song and dance about it in the Sunday papers. Devil worship. Graves dug up...stories of blood'. In turn, television audiences wondered whether events in *Robin Redbreast* 'could really happen' or noted that 'after living in a small village in the South-West we can well believe [it]' (BBC WAC, 1970). This self-reflexivity and the tendency of 1970s television to draw upon supernatural folklore for subject matter were themselves made subject in ITV's 1979 television play *Casting the Runes*, loosely based upon the M. R. James tale of the same name, directed by Lawrence Gordon Clark (who also directed the BBC's *A Ghost Story for Christmas* series). Blurring fact and fiction, Prudence Dunning (Jan Francis) is a television producer, who has made a programme covering 'alchemy, witchcraft, demonology', along the lines of actual BBC documentaries mentioned above, although with a debunking approach, as she laughs with a colleague about it: 'Didn't you just love the man doing Uri Geller, getting it all wrong!' Upon revising the programme's end credits, Prudence discovers that, post-broadcast, spooky writing has mysteriously appeared in the print of the programme without any possibility of it having been spliced in, as her colleague confirms: 'curiouser and curiouser, there aren't any joins' (fig. 12). The physical substance of television (shot on film, in this instance) has become a 'ghost transmission' itself; a conduit for witchcraft related to the occult mystery in which Prudence becomes entangled.

At one point we also see Prudence conducting research for her work, borrowing books on the occult from a library: a mixture of texts including Montague Summers' aforementioned *History of Witchcraft and Demonology* (fig. 13). This shows such folkloric texts continuing to be drawn upon late into the 1970s as a resource for cultural products of the era: even if only on screen as a prop, it is significant that such texts were selected as plausibly authoritative reference points for a television producer of the day.



*Figure 12: Casting the Runes: Cursed Credits*

Because the supernatural was treated with such gravity throughout mainstream media, with the Enfield Poltergeist and the Loch Ness monster granted airtime in news bulletins and investigative documentaries, there was less of a distance, particularly in the imagination of children of the 1970s, between

the everyday and the otherworldly...we had no reason to believe the creepy, otherworldly things that we saw on fictional TV shows and read in our favourite books couldn't happen to us, because THE NEWS proved that this kind of thing happened in real life all the time (Fisher, 2019, capitals in original).



Figure 13: Casting the Runes: Popular folkloric texts used on TV, for TV about TV

### 1.3.5 TV as a ground for experimentation

An element directly affecting television production from the late 1960s to the 1970s was the expansion of the medium itself. BBC Two launched in 1964 and, in 1967, became the first channel in Europe to broadcast in colour (BBC, 2014). Drawing inspiration from new trends, folk artists provided music for children's television: Sandra Kerr and John Faulkner provided the music for *Bagpuss* in 1974; Mike Harding composed music for a number of animated series including *Dangermouse* (the original version running from 1981 to 1992); Julie Felix hosted her own programmes on the BBC, such as *Once More with Felix* (from 1968-1970); and Bob Roberts, a folk singer

and storyteller, told a number of tales on *Jackanory*, which began on BBC One in 1965. The title *Jackanory* itself was taken from a folk rhyme, first recorded in *The Top Book of All, for little Masters and Misses*, which appeared in 1760 (Opie & Opie, 1951, p. 233).

Bob Fischer notes that for ‘a prime example of this link-up between scary folk traditions and kids TV’ (2019) we need look no further than toddler-television staple *Play School*, broadcasting throughout the childhood era for Generation X between 1964 and 1988. Toni Arthur states that she was in a folk club when approached by a BBC producer about auditioning as a children’s presenter (*Mystic Challenge*, 2012, 02:10). Arthur is remembered by many as ‘the enthusiastic, female, polo-necked co-presenter of toddler show *Play School* and its all-singing, all-dancing big brother *Playaway* [sic]’ (Young, 2010, p. 438). What children and parents may have been unaware of, however, was that Toni and her husband Dave Arthur were already established figures on the traditional folk circuit, having recorded albums such as *Hearken to the Witches Rune* (1970, fig. 14).



Figure 14: *Hearken to the Witches Rune* LP cover

The album includes songs which link traditional folk tales with the supernatural and occult, such as:

The Standing Stones, about a brutal murder and a ghostly visitation amongst the mystical stones of Orkney; Alison Gross, about the ‘ugliest witch in the North Country’; [and] Tam Lin, about a woman [who] ends up becoming pregnant to an elf who has been held captive by the Queen of the Fairies (Fischer, 2019a).

One is led to wonder: ‘would parents have been so keen on exposing their little ones to the acoustic guitar-wielding wrangler of Big-Ted [and] Humpty...had they known that Toni had recently attended naked pagan ceremonies conducted by Britain’s self-styled “King of the Witches” [Alex Sanders]?’ (Young, 2010, p. 438).

Following the countercultural revolution of the 1960s, some writers and directors working in 1970s film and television saw this period as a time for experimentation, with a relaxation of censorship and an opportunity to blur lines between fantasy and reality, playing with notions of supernatural folklore in their work:

there was a feeling that people were not so restricted as to what they could actually come up with...there was a need for it to come out, at that time...There was a feeling that certain things had been repressed for a long time...things had been too clearly compartmentalised (Wynne-Simmons, pers. comm., 22 May 2017).

Complementary to this was a tendency to be more creative with media forms, particularly in television, music and their combination:

it was an era when exposure to the avant-garde was considered to be healthy...*Doctor Who*...employed The BBC Radiophonic Workshop to make experimental electronic music that was atonal, scary, and at the cutting edge of technology. The state broadcaster - funded by taxpayers' money - using its public service remit to bring very non-commercial media to a mass audience (Fischer, 2019a).

With the avant-garde having presence in the mainstream and programme-makers experimenting with alternative ways of thinking, drawing upon folkloric sources to use supernatural, occult, otherworldly and legendary subjects to ignite the imaginations of audiences of all ages, it is little wonder that children who grew up in the 1970s felt 'haunted' in some way. As several sources above mention, through its presentation in various television genres, the otherworldly seemed as tangible and believable as the everyday, ever present in the domestic space.

In *Traditions of Belief*, folklorist Gillian Bennett acknowledges that popular media can directly influence the shaping of public conceptions about supernatural folklore (1987, p. 44). Deborah Macey, Kathleen Ryan and Noah Springer also note that television's varied 'narratives, and cultural forms are not simply entertainment, but powerful socializing agents' (2014, p. 6). Ian Brodie's work on children's television is pertinent here, noting that scholarship on children's television is thin on the ground even though television aimed at children and families is 'often among the first encounters with traditional narrative [and the supernatural] a child might have'. Brodie uses *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You?* (1969-present) as an example of television



presenting spooky material to children ('we know it is spooky...because Velma says it is spooky') and a world where 'belief is always potential'. This is useful as an example of mass-mediated ostension which, as mentioned earlier, is the approach I will use in this study (see chapter 2.2 for detailed discussion of ostension). The potential for the perpetuation of folkloric belief is ever-present throughout *Scooby-Doo* and, even though the villain may be unmasked in one episode, the possibility of a real haunting is always present in the next. Brodie states that programmes like this

are early and formative texts for how the post-baby boom North American population and beyond sees the supernatural.<sup>32</sup> Even if eventually supplemented and replaced with a more serious canon, palimpsests remain (Brodie, 2018).

It is therefore of vital importance to clarify and contextualise history and folklore as presented by popular film and television texts *because* of their ability to affect and perpetuate contemporary folkloric belief.

This wyrd effect on a generation, however, can be attributed to more than the presence of supernatural folklore in television alone: impending doom in the news, technological advances and civil unrest contributed to a wyrd and eerie atmosphere in the 1970s, filtering into and transmitted by the television broadcasts of the day. Rob Young's exhaustive account of British folk music suggests an accumulation of events that helped to bring alternative ideas and feelings of unsettlement to the fore:

In the late 1960s and early 70s, fear of annihilation, technological progress, and a vision of alternative societies filtered through popular and underground culture, conspiring to promote the idea of 'getting back to the garden'. 'Folk' is only one of many ingredients in the mix during these charged moments (2010, p. 7).

The following chapter will, therefore, problematise generic definitions of 'folk horror', alongside notions of 'hauntology' and 'eeriness', proposing 'wyrd' as a more adequate term for the works considered within this study. My broader literature review will then develop these notions and the discussion of ostension within the context of folklore studies.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> A saga in my local area, which began in December 2020, is the ongoing jocular legend of 'Colin the Crosspool traffic cone', who has his own shrine outside the local pub, the Crosspool Tavern.

<sup>2</sup> *Psycho Squirrels in Garden of Hell* (1999) featured 'evil' squirrel puppet monsters and was filmed on location in Sheffield's Botanical Gardens.

<sup>3</sup> It is only as of 4 October 2021 that travel restrictions eased fully enough to make possible a research visit, which I hope to conduct for future work.

<sup>4</sup> This public talk and screening event drew a crowd of over 300 at the Abbeydale Picture House in Sheffield, 31 October 2021.

<sup>5</sup> My Wyrd 1970s Teleography in appendix 7.1 has a list of these titles and is a simplified version of my full research database.

<sup>6</sup> Prominent folklore studies of supernatural folklore show examples of it being made comedic and non-threatening by children (see Goldstein, Grider & Thomas, 2007, pp. 113-23) whilst others include memorates (oral narratives told from memory, relating a personal experience) that recount paranormal experiences in a matter-of-fact or prosaic manner (see Bennett, 1987, pp. 132-4).

<sup>7</sup> For fuller discussion of the term 'folkloresque', see chapter 2.2.

<sup>8</sup> I return to this comparative study in chapter 5.0, contextualising it as part of the overall discussion of this thesis.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Wynne-Simmons provided me with an unofficial copy of *The Outcasts* on DVD (currently unavailable elsewhere) and copies of various related press articles. I was able to contact the Irish Film Board, track down copies of original prints and press materials, and liaise with the BFI, who decided it was not financially viable to pursue a release at that time. *Cinema Retro* published my article 'The Outcasts: A forgotten, wyrd classic of British folk horror' in 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Mythology and the influence of Celtic or Greek myths (for example) didn't come up specifically in terms of themes discussed. However, the broad notion of 'folklore' and 'folk tales' (encompassing fairy tales, religious belief throughout the ages, and ideas about ghosts, witchcraft and so on) as ever-present, recurring throughout all eras, is represented within the theme of 'folk tales as perpetual, universal' in table 2.

<sup>11</sup> Originally broadcast as part of the BBC *Omnibus* series, 'Whistle and I'll Come to You', based on an M. R. James ghost story, is often discussed in the same context as the BBC's *A Ghost Story for Christmas* series (which began in 1971, inspired by the earlier production and also mainly featuring adaptations of stories by James). Because of the close relationship between these adaptations, I have grouped them together.

<sup>12</sup> Created using [www.wordclouds.com](http://www.wordclouds.com)

<sup>13</sup> See Barr, 2019, and Fry, 2020.

<sup>14</sup> The last transmission date of a full episode of *Bagpuss* is recorded as 7 October 1986, at 1:30pm on BBC One (BBC Genome).

<sup>15</sup> According to Sweney, in *The Guardian*, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Firmin was making folklore-inspired linoprints and woodcuts right up until his death, which occurred during the course of this study. A few months before Firmin died, my husband contacted him to buy me a print of Firmin's 'Hand of Glory' woodcut as a Christmas gift, which has been displayed in our hallway ever since.

<sup>17</sup> As recently as May 2022, at the *Horrifying Children: Hauntology and the Legacy of Children's Fictions* conference, this book was cited by Richard Littler as his 'desert island' hauntological book of choice, stating it 'deeply influenced' him (Littler, 2022).



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<sup>18</sup> Even today, von Däniken continues to be described as ‘arguably the most widely read and most-copied nonfiction author in the world’ whose books have ‘sold more than 63 million copies’ (Penguin Random House, 2021).

<sup>19</sup> The programme was shown after the 9pm watershed on BBC Two, but was repeated on the same channel the following day, Saturday 26 November 1977, at 4:30pm and again on Friday 9 February 1979 at 5:40pm, both family-friendly timeslots that would have reached an even wider audience. It was also broadcast in the USA in 1978 by PBS as part of their *NOVA* series (with dubbed American narration), which the channel describes as ‘the most-watched prime time science series on American television’ (PBS, 2022).

<sup>20</sup> The volumes on UFOs and Monsters were originally published in 1977, and all three in the trilogy were published as a compendium in 1980.

<sup>21</sup> Post-2000 ‘folk horror revivalists’ who regularly use ‘wyrd’ themes in their work include, amongst others: Mark Gatiss (*The League of Gentlemen*, TV, 1999-2002; *The Tractate Middoth*, TV, 2013); Jeremy Dyson (*The League of Gentlemen*; *Ghost Stories*, film, 2018); Reece Shearsmith (*The League of Gentlemen*; *Inside No. 9*, TV, 2014-); Ben Wheatley (*Kill List*, film, 2011; *A Field in England*, film, 2013); Richard Littler (*Scarf*, blog, 2014); and Jim Jupp (Ghost Box record label, founded 2004). My research to date has included collection of the stories of, and folkloric influences upon, several of the above via first-hand interviews.

<sup>22</sup> Most major programmes would have one repeat transmission, but this was often many months later and on a different day or time in the schedule.

<sup>23</sup> However, due to the regional structure of ITV, some viewers in borderline areas could receive more than one ITV station and, therefore, sometimes different programmes.

<sup>24</sup> With almost two thirds of the total television audience (BBC WAC, 1975; Office for National Statistics, 2018), the ghost story was the favourite choice of viewers willing to stay up past midnight: BBC Two was simultaneously offering festive *Christmas Music from Hampton Court*, while on ITV in London Thames broadcast the 1969 comedy film *The Best House in London*. Of the twelve regional variations from Thames, a quarter of local stations were broadcasting news or sports updates at this time while half were broadcasting films (including comedy, drama and horror). All these films began at 10:30 pm or thereabouts, well before ‘Abbot Thomas’. Although a film in this slot must have had wide appeal for those willing to stay up late, it is plausible that many viewers had already watched a film that evening (*The Graduate*, 1967, was on BBC One from 9:20-11:05 pm). Alternatively, some viewers of the later ITV films may have turned over to the BBC out of curiosity, halfway through the film or during an advertising break, and decided to stick with the intriguing ghostly fare.

<sup>25</sup> *The Tractate Middoth* was rated seventeenth overall in terms of viewing figures for all programmes on BBC Two that week (week ending 29 December 2013). Although in a favourable timeslot, it was broadcast in competition with a special Christmas episode of *Mrs Brown’s Boys* (‘Buckin’ Mammy’) on BBC One and the *Downton Abbey* Christmas special (‘The London Season’) on ITV (which gained 11.52 million and 7.75 million viewers, respectively). Thirty-six per cent of the UK population was watching one of the main five channels at the time of broadcast—this figure is of course inflated when taking into account additional digital channels (BARB, 2018).

<sup>26</sup> For example, the BBC’s *Radio Times* reached average weekly sales of 8.8 million in 1955. Though this figure was closer to four million in the mid-1970s, *Radio Times* nevertheless ‘sailed confidently through the seventies, adding local radio listings as the

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BBC launched these across the country'. In 1988, *Radio Times* gained a place in the *Guinness Book of Records* when the Christmas edition sold over eleven million copies, making it the biggest selling edition of any British magazine in history (History of the BBC, n.d., 'The Radio Times'). Figures published by the Audit Bureau of Circulations for the latter part of 2017 show the magazine's reach being greatly reduced at an average of 631,960 weekly copies (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2018). There is now, of course, a vast range of online content about television programming (also several competing listings magazines and extensive weekly listings in newspapers, which was not the case until 1991), but this is still consumed in a less concentrated way than in the 1970s.

<sup>27</sup> For example, documentary *The Mystery of Loch Ness*, originally broadcast after the watershed on 8 June 1976 at 9:55pm on BBC One, was repeated on the same channel during the festive season's school holidays on 29 December 1977 at 12:50pm.

<sup>28</sup> The programme settled into a 5:55pm timeslot from 1976 until its end in 1983.

<sup>29</sup> Thanks to James Harrison for confirming the exact date of the *Nationwide* Enfield Poltergeist broadcast (*The Times*, 1977).

<sup>30</sup> This episode of *Nationwide* was broadcast on BBC One at 6:00pm on 20 February 1976. By all accounts the video portion of this report apparently still exists, but the audio is missing. However, *Fortean Times* printed the full transcript in issue 15 in 1976. Even in the 2020s, people cite this broadcast as having 'left its mark on many' (Folk Horror Revival, 2020) and scaring 'the bejesus out of me' (neil harrison, 2020). One remembers the broadcast 'vividly. Freaked me out tremendously. Going up stairs was a big problem thence for several years' (Greensmith, 2022). A staggering 1994 transcript of an interview by David Clarke with Dr Ross and her husband Dick Feachem sees the interviewees elaborate on the werewolf encounter, conflating it with ghosts and spirits ('the haunting was that of a werewolf') as well as discussing psychic ability, exorcism and stone tape theory as part of the experience with the stone heads (Clarke, pers. comm., 6 May 2022). Though Ross pursued 'her Ancient Celtic theory' in relation to the 'cursed' stone heads (known as the Hexham Heads) 'her fellow academics weren't so easily swayed...[and] no consistent conclusions were reached as to their origins' (Brotherstone & Lawrence, 2017, p. 736). Ross also presented the BBC *Chronicle* documentary 'The Twilight of the English Celts' as a subject expert, broadcast at 8:10pm on BBC Two on 27 October 1977 that dealt with 'strange ceremonies ritually performed...head worship and blood sacrifice' (*Radio Times*, 1977).

<sup>31</sup> *The Ghost Hunters*, initially broadcast on 4 December 1975 at 10:15pm on BBC One, was repeated on 30 December 1977 at 12:55pm, 16 December 1978 at 4:30pm and 8 August 1984 at 2:00pm. *The Mystery of Loch Ness*, originally broadcast on 8 June 1976 on BBC One at 9:55pm, in addition to the repeat on 29 December 1977, was also repeated on 2 December 1978 at 4:30pm. *Out of This World*, originally broadcast on 10 May 1977 at 9:55pm on BBC One, was repeated on 28 December 1977 at 12:45pm, 9 December 1978 at 4:50pm and 6 August 1984 at 2:00pm.

<sup>32</sup> *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You?*, described in *Radio Times* as 'A new suspense-filled cartoon series' (BBC Genome), began broadcasting in the UK on 17 September 1970 at 5:20pm on BBC One.

## 2.0 Literature review

### 2.1 Folk horror, hauntology and weird television

Folklorist Dan Ben-Amos points out that ‘the roots of folklore studies reside in the fertile ground of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century’s thought and art’ (1973, p. 118). It was the Victorian era in the nineteenth century, though, which saw the foundation of the Folklore Society in 1878, ‘one of the first organisations established in the world for the study of folklore’ (The Folklore Society, n.d.), and when ‘scholars calling themselves “folklorists” flourished’ (Bronner, 2017, p. 16). Early folklore scholarship tended to be antiquarian in nature, ‘collecting’ folk customs and traditions as (supposed) survivals of ancient pagan practice, with a perception that ‘middle and upper class people’ studied ‘those whom they regard socially inferior’ (Ben-Amos, 1973, p. 119). However, as Ben-Amos also points out, the ‘motivation that initiates these social relationships is not necessarily related to class-consciousness or to a derogatory attitude’, with scholars often expressing admiration for their subjects of research. Emphasis of scholarly practice in the formative years of folklore study tended to remain upon this concept of collection and categorisation: ‘the construction of research tools such as classification systems, indexes, bibliographies, and annotated collections’ (Ben-Amos, 1973, pp. 115-9).

Ben-Amos argues that focusing on cataloguing held folklore studies back from developing more fully and that it took the discipline some time to return to the ‘aims of folklore studies and their relationships to the general understanding of human nature and social conduct’. Modern folklore studies seeks to ‘extend the range of theoretical issues’ with which it deals and relocate itself ‘in the midst of the main core of the intellectual discourse about the nature of man’ (Ben-Amos, 1973, pp. 116-8). It is this rejuvenated strain of thinking in the mid-twentieth century which led to the recognition of folklore as not a static, tangible object or ‘an aggregate of things, but a process - a communicative process’ (Ben-Amos, 1971, p. 9).

Theoretical approaches to the communication of folklore in the mass media are discussed further in chapter 2.2, but it is important to outline that the study of folklore *as a communicative process* is most relevant here to contextualise the examination of folk horror (and of the representation of folklore on television) within the history of

folklore studies. The way in which folklore is *passed on* is at the heart of its definition: 'Almost from the beginning, the most accepted characteristic of folklore...has been its transmission by oral means...without the aid of any written texts' (Ben-Amos, 1971, p.8). This echoes Marshall McLuhan's declaration that 'the medium is the message' (1964). Jan Harold Brunvand states that folklore is passed on 'by word of mouth and informal demonstration or imitation from one person to another and from one generation to the next' (1998, p. 12), thereby also placing primacy on the means of communication rather than necessarily the content itself. He notes that there are various modes of transmission by which this can take place.

Folk horror (and the 'wyrð', defined in 2.1.3) is one such mode via which folklore is communicated: each such communication medium has a 'qualitative uniqueness in relation to other modes of communication in the respective media of sound, motion, and vision' (Ben-Amos, 1971, p. 12). Folk horror not only draws heavily upon folkloric motifs and narratives but is also a mode of communication which displays its own distinct aesthetic properties, as addressed by my research questions and discussed later in this chapter. The structure of the mode, and the manner and context in which folklore is presented, is of interest to the folklorist as the 'communicative event', beyond simply *what* folklore is presented:

The telling is the tale; therefore the narrator, his story, and his audience are all related to each other as components of a single continuum...Folklore is the action that happens at that time...It involves creativity and esthetic response, both of which converge in the art forms themselves...it is a definite realistic, artistic, and communicative process (Ben-Amos, 1971, p.10).

Scholars such as Mikel Koven have shown how folklore studies, in more recent decades, have recognised the importance of examining popular cinema and television from a variety of perspectives, which can be revealing of popular (mis)understanding about folklore and the ways in which it is commonly represented: 'folklorists are able to observe and trace the process of homogenizing cultural expressions' (2003, p. 176). Adam Scovell proposes that folk horror can be considered as a mode which utilises 'forms of popular conscious memory', channelling aesthetic or thematic supernatural folklore 'for eerie, uncanny or horrific purposes' and presenting a close link between arcania and modernity (2017, p. 7).

Just as studying the manner of presentation of supernatural folklore (in this case, televisual folk horror) can be revealing about social and cultural attitudes, so too can those same attitudes and context provide an explanation for the style of presentation itself:

The social context, the cultural attitude, the rhetorical situation, and the individual aptitude are variables that produce distinct differences in the structure, text, and texture of the...product. The audience itself, be it children or adults...affects the kind of folklore genre and the manner of presentation (Ben-Amos, 1971, p. 4).

Key ideas that Scovell proposes as underlying the folk horror mode are about the 'old ways' persisting as remnants of archaic belief or a pagan past, in secluded villages, fields and forests. The concept of such elements as 'pagan survivals', having been driven underground by Christianity and modernity, returns discussion to early folklore scholarship and Victorian and antiquarian notions. That these notions remain dominant in representations and reinterpretations of supernatural folklore and traditional belief in the relatively newly defined genre of folk horror (outlined below) suggests that, though the study of folklore may have moved on, common and popular perceptions in the communication of folklore have not.

### **2.1.1 Defining folk horror**

This study's intent is not merely to define the folk-horror genre from a screen-studies or genre-study point of view. It is rather to understand the resurgence of interest in folkloric narratives and the context from which this arose, and to make connections between how supernatural folklore was communicated in 1970s British television and the impact of this upon later generations. This study thus draws together disciplinary approaches of folklore studies and screen studies, including elements of: contemporary legend; ostension and folklore in the media; television scholarship, including children's and gothic television; folk horror; and hauntology. Folk horror is a nexus of these elements and, therefore, is a useful place to begin in terms of considering literature on the subject.

The phrase 'folk horror', though having been traced back at least as far as 1936, is most popularly attributed to director Piers Haggard, who used the term in 2003 to

describe his film *Blood on Satan's Claw* (1971).<sup>1</sup> The use of the phrase 'folk horror' was less about Haggard naming and defining a particular sub-genre than distinguishing his work from what he saw as clichéd and exploitative horror:

the definition was initially defensive...when I made [*Blood on Satan's Claw*] the dominant mode of horror was absolutely the...Hammer tradition...[*Satan's Claw*] was a very left-fieldish project, that didn't...tick the obvious boxes...years later when talking about it I just said in conversation 'well of course this isn't really a *horror-horror* film, this is...a *folk* horror really' trying to tap into the things which I thought were moving and interesting and which had emotional, historical cultural depth and resonance (pers. comm., 5 June 2017).

In his 2010 series for BBC Four, *A History of Horror*, discussing *Satan's Claw* alongside *Witchfinder General* (1968) and *The Wicker Man* (1973) - now widely referred to as the 'unholy trinity' of folk horror films - Mark Gatiss noted that a key element of folk horror is 'a common obsession with the British landscape, its folklore and superstitions'. Definitions of folk horror continue to be much debated. Gatiss' television series helped to stir popular interest in the genre, with various folk horror blogs and hauntology sites emerging online from fellow enthusiasts shortly after its broadcast. Notable examples are Adam Scovell's *CelluloidWickerMan.com* (2010) and Stephen Prince's *AYearintheCountry.co.uk* (2014), but most simply offered prosaic lists or reviews of folk-horror titles. When I commenced this study in 2016, print publications on folk horror were few and far between and, where wider discussion of the genre has taken place (largely online), it tends to focus on the generic conventions of folk horror, particularly its use of landscape.

Dawn Keetley emphasises how 'In folk horror, things don't just happen *in* a (passive) landscape; things happen *because* of the landscape. The landscape does things; it has efficacy' (2015, italics in original). Tanya Krzywinska's paper on 'British Pagan Landscapes in Popular Cinema' further outlines the distinct use of landscape on screen to imbue narratives with a legendary quality, where stone circles, eroded earthworks and monoliths invoke 'the British countryside as a place where pagan practices continue to abide in the Christian era', in which 'the locals may look ordinary, but they are in fact members of barbaric pagan cults' (Krzywinska, 2007, p. 78).

Rob Young's seminal *Sight and Sound* article 'The Pattern Under the Plough' (2010) perceptively examines commonalities of tone and folkloric content across a

disparate array of examples, from period drama and children's television to narratives using mythology and contemporary legend. Young does not use the term 'folk horror' but does 'identify a specifically British film tendency - more of a pervasive undercurrent than a tradition or genre' and draws attention particularly to films 'made at the heart of an extremely fertile but seldom recognised moment' of 1960s and '70s British cinema (2010, p. 17).

Adam Scovell's book *Folk Horror: Hours Dreadful and Things Strange* (2017) is the most comprehensive study of the genre to date, frequently cited by academics and enthusiasts. Scovell's main contribution is his attempt to define a study framework for the genre, proposing elements linking folk-horror texts which combine to create a loose narrative template or 'folk horror chain'. These elements include: use of landscape as a location acquiring the status of a character in the drama; an isolated community within this landscape; 'skewed belief systems and morality' of the local populace due to its isolation, which culminates in a final 'happening/summoning'; and an horrific fallout 'resulting action from this skewed social consciousness' (2017, pp. 17-18). However, Scovell also proffers several other ways to define folk horror that contradict or lend imbalance to arguments he sets out earlier, usefully noting that not all folk horror is horrific and that the phrase 'folk horror' itself is problematic. Consequently, however, as Keetley notes, there is a lack of clear argument and application in his work: 'Scovell tries to impose some order at the beginnings and endings of chapters, but the vast middles are a hodgepodge of summaries and claims that often feel random and that are not developed in any sustained way' (2017, p. 137). Though Scovell acknowledges the difficulties of clearly defining folk horror, reiterating throughout that 'wyrd' eeriness is hard to characterise in a brief set of criteria, his useful framework is not the solid academic text that it could be. In his discussion of urban wyrd (what might otherwise be termed folk horror in an urban, rather than rural, setting), he presents an additional set of elements to extend his earlier proposed 'chain' (2017, p. 144). Rather than underlining commonalities between rural and urban representations of folk horror, and focusing on any specific folkloric aspects of the two, his examples present a disjointed approach which aims to cover far too much ground and has no centre at all...It's hard to see, for example, how *Death Line* (1972) or *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) fit within even the most generous definitions of the genre (Keetley, 2017, p. 138).

Scovell's work nonetheless remains a touchstone for many, having inspired a variety of scholarly debates about folk horror, which he suggests is best understood as 'a prism of a term...not simply as a set of criteria...but as a way of opening up discussions on subtly interconnected work and how we interact with such work' (2017, pp. 5-6).

It remains, therefore difficult to find a succinct definition of folk horror. I summarise folk horror as a subgenre in which the horror is not necessarily horrific and supernatural folklore, contemporary legend and traditional belief are employed to unsettling ends. The finer details of folk horror's generic conventions, loosely modal though they may be, tend to lie in use of landscape, atmosphere or traditional customs of isolated communities. My own contribution to simplifying discussion of the genre places 'paradigm examples of folk horror alongside those typical of mainstream, classic horror' to distinguish folk horror more clearly in terms of its formal elements and arthouse sensibilities. In doing so, it becomes clear that 'folk horror in on-screen convention alone is not typical of the broader horror genre and, in fact, has many generic conventions that are uniquely distinct'. The looser narratives, inconclusive endings and experimental style apparent in folk horror (elements most often associated with arthouse cinema) 'suggests that films like *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) can be aligned with folk horror' whilst mainstream horror (including examples featuring folkloric monsters such as vampires, werewolves, and villains based on urban legend), less so (Rodgers, forthcoming).

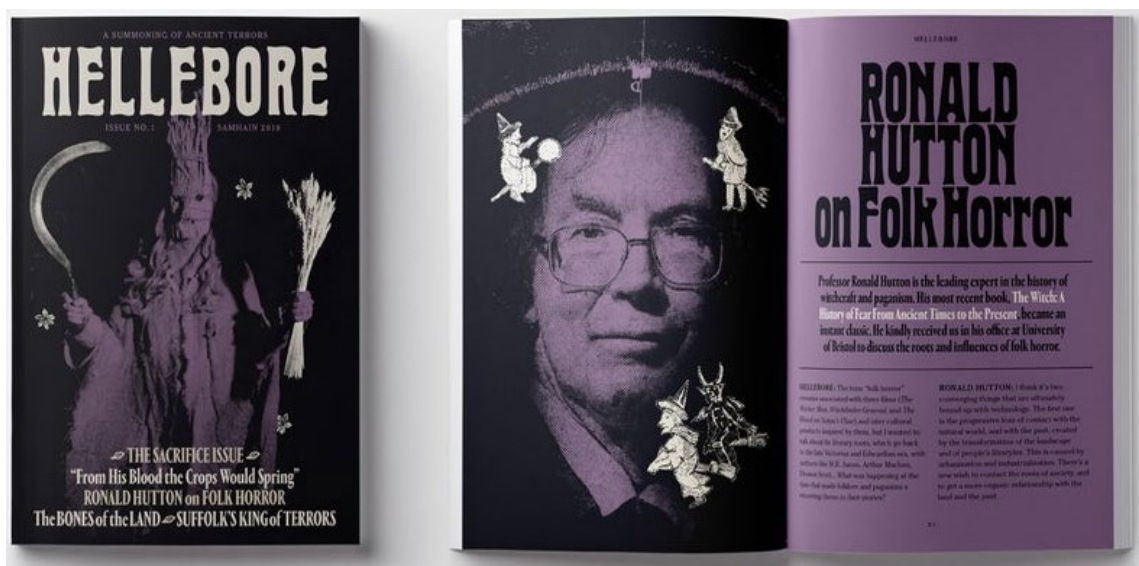


Figure 15: The Sacrifice Issue: Hellebore magazine



Notably, since 2010, there has been an explosion of *popular* interest in folk horror. Howard David Ingham's *We Don't Go Back: A Watcher's Guide to Folk Horror* (2018), though a comprehensive and considered tome, is an encyclopaedic collection of essays and personal reviews of folk horror titles rather than a methodological academic framework. Helping widely popularise the genre, Andy Paciorek created the *Folk Horror Revival* project across a variety of media (including the popular Facebook group established in 2014, which, as of February 2022, had over 24,000 members). Paciorek is also creative director of Wyrd Harvest Press, which has published collections of essays and interviews by a wide range of academics and prominent folk horror figures in books such as *Folk Horror Revival: Field Studies* (Beem & Paciorek, 2015). Paciorek has been instrumental in defining the genre: whilst acknowledging folk horror as an international mode, he notes that modern examples often draw from

British movies of the late 1960s and '70s that have a rural, earthy association to ancient European pagan and witchcraft traditions or folklore...as well as some creepy British children's television shows of the era (in Beem & Paciorek, 2015, p. 9).

Paciorek also makes explicit the links between folk horror and science fiction, 'not the Sci-Fi of laser battles and robots in far flung galaxies, but speculative fiction occurring within our times'. He particularly refers to the work of Nigel Kneale in this context,



Figure 16: *The Haunted Generation* April 2017

which I examine in chapter 3.0 alongside notions of contemporary legend. Paciorek makes further important connections between the folk-horror revival and a variety of media platforms using notions of hauntology (including contemporary music, theatre and literature): creative works which display 'a sense of nostalgia for yesterday's vision of the future'. As with Scovell, Paciorek remarks that folk horror is not easily defined and that 'the style of delivery, the atmosphere and aesthetic are key points. There is frequently an indefinable "certain something" that makes

a work appear more or less Folk Horror’ (in Beem & Paciorek, 2015, pp. 11-15). This study proposes that the way supernatural folklore is represented on screen is a significant part of this ‘certain something’ and this will be discussed further below.

Aimed at a similar audience to *Folk Horror Revival*, *Hellebore* (fig. 15) positions itself as a popular ‘zine, or small-press magazine, ‘devoted to folk horror and the themes that inspire it’ (2019).<sup>2</sup> Whilst not an academic journal, *Hellebore* has notable folklore scholars (including Ronald Hutton and Katy Soar) and folk-horror writers (including Dee Dee Chainey, co-founder of the popular *Twitter* hashtag #FolkloreThursday and David Southwell, creator of *Hookland*) as contributors. Both *Hellebore* and material from Wyrd Harvest Press examine folklore and folk horror in broader wyrd contexts including scholarly essays on aspects of urban wyrd, folklore and history, alongside poetry and prose from a practitioner perspective.

Even more widely popular magazines have acknowledged the rising interest in folk horror arising from 1970s British culture. Bob Fischer’s article ‘The Haunted Generation’ in *The Fortean Times* (fig. 16) discusses television programmes and other 1970s media which gave Fischer and others the ‘overwhelming and inexplicable feeling of strange, melancholy disquiet’ (2017, p. 30). The article had a significant response, as Fischer notes: ‘It had a lovely reception, and I was delighted when the magazine’s editor...offered me the opportunity to update readers on this ever-expanding scene on a bi-monthly basis’ (2019a). This prompted Fischer to launch dedicated website

*TheHauntedGeneration.co.uk* and spurred *The Fortean Times* on to including more folk-horror content in subsequent issues (fig. 17).

Publications such as these clearly

demonstrate not only a broadening public interest in folk horror, hauntology and nostalgia for 1970s culture, but also a general interest in folklore itself. Despite the growing number of commentators on folk-horror film and television, the focus of



Figure 17: Folk horror special issue of *The Fortean Times* July 2019

discussion still tends to remain within the realm of screen studies, examining generic form, style and use of landscape. Only a limited area of folk horror study is conducted from a folklore-studies perspective (discussed below) and, even then, is still largely skewed towards film rather than television.

### 2.1.2 *The folklore in folk horror*

As discussed in ‘Something Wyrld This Way Comes’ (Rodgers, 2019), the notion of folklore as an integral element in folk horror has been somewhat overlooked by academics. Though noting that there is further work to be done in examining the folklore of folk horror, Scovell argues that the genre ‘is never all that fussed with a genuine, accurate recreation of folklore’ (about which he is non-specific) and that ‘anything could effectively be put into the mix of practices and customs, and still come out looking relatively authentic’ (2017, p. 29). So, although Scovell ‘offers a productive lens through which to grasp some of what folk horror is doing’ (Keetley, 2017, p. 138), I suggest that supernatural folklore, traditional belief and contemporary legend are much more integral to folk horror than Scovell gives credit. David Southwell’s definition puts folklore at the very heart of the matter:

Folk horror is an active infection of past and place. *It is an absolute refusal to use folklore as mere tinsel for a story, but [instead to] recognise it as integral infrastructure*’ (2019b, italics mine).

Scovell expresses a somewhat dismissive tone toward this approach, stating that folklore academics tend to express ‘frowning disapproval’ at the ‘broad-stroke folklore, [and] historical plagiarism’ employed in films such as *The Wicker Man* (2017, p. 29). He makes particular reference to Koven’s discussion of specific elements taken from Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (1890) as liberally employed by *The Wicker Man*. Koven’s essential purpose, however, seems less to be critical of what is clearly a piece of fiction of interest to folklorists (acknowledging ‘it is a bit too grand to expect verisimilitude of anthropological discourse in a low budget horror/fantasy film’, 2008, p. 33) than to highlight the relationship between folklore and popular culture.

Beyond Koven’s work, few folklore scholars have written about the folk-horror genre to date, though a few have written about specific films (such as Cowdell, 2019)

and *The Wicker Man* invariably gains the most detailed attention (Anderson, 2019b). More recent films such as *The VVitch* (2015) and *Midsommar* (2019) or even calendar customs such as Halloween or Christmas (when horror and spooky tales are seen as tradition) create spikes in media interest in supernatural folklore and folk horror. This tends to prompt discussion of the genre in the media; for example one *New Statesman* story in December 2016 was titled: 'The fear of other people: these Folk Horror ghost stories are perfect for Brexit Christmas' (Smith, 2016). Paul Cowdell argues, however, that the subgenre of folk horror came about *because* of the study of folklore, that folk horror

essentially owes its structure and character to thinking around the historical emergence and development of folklore as a discipline in Britain. It is the intellectual history of British folkloristics...that explain[s] the characteristics of Folk horror as a subgenre (2019, p. 296).

Attention to such texts from scholars approaching film and television from the perspective of folklore studies should not therefore be understood as disapproving, despite fears 'of getting strung up by academics and historians' noted by filmmakers like Ben Wheatley (pers. comm., 25 May 2018). Modern folklorists (this study included) are not seeking fault with potentially inaccurate representations of folklore; rather they are interested in how these representations arise, develop and function. The examination of how folklore adapts and evolves through such representations within film and television is integral to Koven's work on mass-mediated ostension (2008) and to Michael Dylan Foster and Jeffrey Tolbert's notion of the 'folkloresque' (2016), discussed in the next chapter.

Nevertheless, this still leaves room to account for texts which are less obviously or directly 'folkloric'. 'Folk horror' does not adequately acknowledge equally disquieting television of the 1970s, with its eerie urban or dystopian narratives which were part of the milieu for the 'haunted generation'. Beyond the use of folkloric narratives that made television drama of the 1970s unsettling and impactful, there was also a pervasive sense of environmental and apocalyptic doom: *Doomwatch* (1970-1972) saw its protagonists 'battling such diverse apocalyptic threats as toxic pollution, climate change, chemical weapons, mind control experimentation [and] a plastic eating contagion'; *Survivors* (1975-1977) presented a 'Britain crippled by a virulent

disease that has reduced the survivors to living in small communities'; and *Noah's Castle* (1980) 'delivered a lawless Britain besieged by economic ruin, civil unrest and anarchy to tea-time telly' (Paciorek, 2019a). With hindsight, of course, many of these series gain an added degree of strange prescience. In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic meant that the storyline from *Survivors* (about a killer flu-like plague pandemic accidentally released by a Chinese scientist) and scenes from *Noah's Castle* of people fighting over toilet rolls and other basic groceries (due to an economic crash and shortage of affordable goods) suddenly became a kind of reality. Programmes like these resurfaced as reference points for Generation X during the crisis. Charlie Brooker, creator of dystopian drama *Black Mirror* (2011-present), makes a direct (and uncharacteristically upbeat) comparison in his *Antiviral Wipe* programme, produced and broadcast during a period of strict lockdown in May 2020:

In my youth I watched a lot of apocalyptic TV shows, things like *Day of the Triffids* and, in those, society always descended into looting and destruction within about five minutes whereas now, that hasn't actually happened yet. Instead you're more likely to be stuck indoors watching *Tiger King*...or sketching rainbows or applauding the NHS...and those are the types of things that don't tend to happen in dystopian dramas. There's been more unity than dramatists like me might have expected (Brooker, 2020).

Other examples of dystopian drama such as *The Changes* (1975) combine strands of folk legend and horror with urban industrial disaster (similarly to *Quatermass*), in which the population of Britain is driven mad by a strange noise emanating from machinery, with a consequent desire to destroy all technology. *The Changes* shows society revert to a pre-industrial age, as seen through the eyes of teenage schoolgirl Nicky. Abandoned by her parents, she has to make her own way journeying across Britain, during which she is tried for witchcraft. Harrowing television plays like *Threads* and *Z for Zachariah*, both broadcast in 1984, illustrated gloomy landscapes of post-apocalyptic doom, leaving children of the 1970s like Andy Paciorek thinking 'that nuclear war was not only possible but possibly imminent...I wondered and worried where I would be...during the 3-minute warning' (Paciorek, 2019b, p. 51).<sup>3</sup> The broadcasts were followed not long after by the traumatic real-life disaster of the nuclear power plant at Chernobyl where safety tests had highlighted potential problems since 1982 (Eden, 1999, pp. 9-10). The reactor core at Chernobyl overheated in 1986 causing what is still considered the worst nuclear disaster in history.

Scovell's folk-horror chain does not account for such texts with an urban or industrial focus which have often been included in folk-horror discussions, for which reason he developed his own concept of urban *wyrd* as a mode with links to folk horror. Again, however, Scovell does not propose a clear framework but only loose narrative connections with folk horror, which include 'the past coming to haunt the present...isolated communities and individuals...and the psychological ghosts of trauma re-manifesting'. Scovell sees 'the strangeness of the everyday' in urban *wyrd*, and emphasises a difference between this and folk horror, suggesting that although they share modal qualities, they are not the same (2019, pp. 11-12). Paciorek summarises urban *wyrd* as:

an ambience, an atmosphere, a feeling of otherness in regards to the built-up environment, cities as well as suburbia, edge-land locations, roads, railways, some haunted houses and also technology and to the deeper, stranger relationships that people have with these edifices, areas and objects. An oft-found topic that has resonance with the Urban *Wyrd* and particularly within British media is that of dystopia (Paciorek, 2019a).

### **2.1.3 Hauntology, eeriness and *wyrd***

Although Scovell distinguishes 'folk horror' from 'urban *wyrd*', this study aims to identify the common modal eeriness that resonates throughout examples of eerie 1970s television. Looking beyond folk horror, I include that which isn't *necessarily* horrific: examples of eeriness may focus on the rural, the urban, apparently ancient folklore or modern contemporary legend. The general strangeness underlying folk horror is defined in Robert Macfarlane's 'The eeriness of the English countryside' (2015) as not only 'far more alarming than the horrific' but also as peculiarly English. Though discussing the idea of English eeriness across a variety of media, Macfarlane combines many reference points cited by folk-horror commentators: M. R. James, Alan Garner, *Witchfinder General*, *The Wicker Man* and *A Field in England*. Across all these examples, Macfarlane describes eeriness as 'the skull beneath the skin of the countryside' (2015, 10 April).

Taking a holistic approach to the overall effect and atmosphere of *wyrd* 1970s television, using the idea of Young's 'pervasive undercurrent' (2010, p. 17) rather than generic characteristics, allows for the examination of an unsettling quality common to a range of programmes which so deeply affected and impacted upon the 'haunted'

Generation X. Bob Fischer describes this quality as equally discernible in *Bagpuss* as in *Doctor Who*:

[*Bagpuss* is] filled with old things, lost things, tatty puppets and sadness; folk tales, ships in bottles, abandoned toys and long-ago kings...It's like television [which] makes me feel, for want of a better word, haunted...This wasn't just a feeling that I got from *Bagpuss*; it seemed to pervade much of my 1970s childhood. A feeling of vague disquiet, and unsettlement (2019a).

The unnerving dissonance of the 1970s television era can thus be observed extending well beyond folk horror and boundaries of genre and medium to include science fiction, fantasy, television plays, television series, children's animation and even news and public information films. As discussed in chapter 1.3, this sentiment of being 'haunted' has come in retrospect, with Generation X viewing a childhood filled with unsettling folkloric texts from an adult perspective. Baby boomers had tended to use the trappings of British heritage and attitudes of their parents to play with ideas of authority and tradition, rebelling against the 'old guard' to fuel a pop-cultural explosion with bright colours and a sense of fun. As with the *Sgt Pepper* album sleeve, this generation was painting culture in a psychedelic hue, setting themselves apart from their parents' (and grandparents') generation whose outlook would have understandably been much more austere, having witnessed two world wars and the Great Depression.

There are, however, differences between this type of generational expression, drawing upon the historical and cultural products of the previous generation to establish a new youth culture, with the folk-horror output of Generation X. At the time I conducted my second phase of interviews with prominent creatives in folk horror and wyrd media, they had all reached, or were approaching, middle age (in their forties or early fifties; see appendix 7.2). For example, Richard Littler first began *Scarfolk* as an online blog in 2013, when he was already in his early forties. Although there is an underlying anti-establishment rhetoric to some of Generation X's work under discussion, the tone is not overtly expressive of radicalism, rebellion or an attempt to separate themselves from the past. There seems to be far more of a particular desire to reflect upon and connect with the media of their own childhood: to muse on the feelings they created and the psychological impact of having grown up with 1970s television. It is meaningful that Stephen Brotherstone and Dave Lawrence titled their

book about 1970s pop culture *Scarred for Life*. The authors present the experience of being a child in the 1970s as paradoxical: 'traumatic...scary and...shocking' and simultaneously 'a very sheltered experience' because 'All the things we saw, we saw on our television sets. We were experiencing things second hand' (2017, p. 739).

Such works on 1970s television share much in common with modern folk-horror television as well as other media texts including Littler's *Scarfolk* and music released by Ghost Box, all of which incorporate a 'nostalgia for lost futures'. In writing on the subject, there are recurring references to nostalgia and to indefinable qualities of eeriness and unsettled, fragmented memories conjured up by such programmes. 'Hauntology' is a term that regularly appears alongside folk horror to describe media texts evoking a sense of troubled nostalgic reverberation which, in most cases, stems from 1970s Britain.<sup>4</sup> Merlin Coverley's exploration of the concept highlights the distinctiveness of the 1970s as 'an era that hauntology appears to hold in preference to all others' (2020, pp. 14-15).

The term was appropriated from the writings of French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1993), who used it to describe the spectre of Marxism looming over post-Cold War Europe. Derrida's discussion centres on the concept of haunting not in terms of a literal spirit, but rather in the sense of our own awareness (whether conscious or unconscious) of either the *lack of* something or the *presence of* something out of time or place:

Derrida's rehabilitation of ghosts as a respectable subject of enquiry has proved to be extraordinarily fertile...replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive...a wholly irrecoverable intrusion in our world, which is not comprehensible within our available intellectual frameworks, but whose otherness we are responsible for preserving. Hauntology...[however] has nothing to do with whether or not one believes in ghosts (Davis, 2005, p. 373).

Giving a specific name to a rather abstract concept, describing a liminal state of presence or absence otherwise difficult to define, has proved useful to writers on the effect of 1970s media on Generation X. Whilst this term was originally applied to music culture by Simon Reynolds, Joseph Stannard and Mark Fisher, Fisher's work explores the concept further across a variety of media formats, popular culture and psychological theories. Fisher discusses 'the lost futures that the twentieth century taught us to anticipate...what hauntological music mourns is less the failure of a future



to transpire...than the disappearance of this effective virtuality' (2012, p. 16). This distinct nostalgia for lost visions of the future is central to hauntology, including notions perpetuated by the era of the space race, brutalist architecture and the creation of New Towns such as Milton Keynes and Peterborough. Bob Fischer describes the 1970s as a period witnessing 'an explosion in labour-saving household technology. A future of monorails and jetpacks and extended leisure that DIDN'T HAPPEN' (2019b, capitals in original). These visions of utopia are then juxtaposed with the dystopian future more prevalent later, of pandemics, 'nuclear war, or rabies, or giant, psychopathic plants [such as those in 1981 television series *The Day of the Triffids*]' (Fischer, 2019a). Mark Fisher recognises that it is this juxtaposition of 1970s sensibilities and sense of 'lost futures' which the work of post-2000 hauntological artists has 'both revived and made a bid to continue' (2012, p. 18).

In 'What is Hauntology?', Mark Fisher states that 'much hauntological music is as much about film and TV as it is about music', explaining that the movement as an artistic genre is directly fuelled by 'the canon of an audiovisual culture of the near past' (2012, p. 18). He particularly discusses the effect of *British* television and, importantly, highlights where there is significant crossover with the folk-horror genre. *The Stone Tape* (1972), *Whistle and I'll Come to You* (1968), 'A Warning to the Curious' (1972), *Quatermass and the Pit* (1958-1959) and Alan Garner's work adapted for television, *The Owl Service* (1969) and *Red Shift* (1978), are cited by Fisher as having hauntological resonance, all of which contain supernatural folklore as absolutely integral to their narratives:

The Britishness of this lineage is no accident - neither is the fact that most, but by no means all, of the artists that have been described as hauntological are British. The yearnings detectable in much hauntological music were no doubt stirred up by the expectations raised by a public service broadcasting system and a popular culture that could be challenging and experimental (2012, p. 18).

The peculiar conditions of British culture and British television in the 1970s (see chapter 1.3) have, therefore, combined with unique effect upon audiences, affecting the cultural production of artists today. It is interesting, too, that examples of modern hauntological television to which Fisher refers (*Red Riding*, 2009; *Life on Mars*, 2006-07) are set in the 1970s and share, along with the adapted works of M. R. James, Nigel Kneale and Alan Garner, a folk-horror sense of landscape: a sinister character in itself

‘stained by time, where time can only be experienced as broken, as a fatal repetition’ (2012, p. 21).

Before ‘hauntology’ became a widely-used term, Helen Wheatley discussed eerie affect in her book *Gothic Television* (examining both American and British titles), using similar concepts that can be usefully applied to folk horror and hauntology. Though she does not discuss ‘folk horror’ as such, Wheatley draws attention to the restrained eeriness of British horror and argues that ‘any discussion of the Gothic as it appears on television must acknowledge the centrality of the uncanny as one of its defining concepts’ (2006, p. 6). Sigmund Freud’s notion of the ‘The Uncanny’ (Das Unheimliche), as discussed in his 1919 essay, often takes on connotations of the strange, unfamiliar, creepy or sinister. For Freud, the uncanny is a specific, though mild, form of anxiety, related to certain phenomena in real life and to certain forms in art, especially in fantastic literature. Examples Freud uses include the double or doppelgänger, strange repetitions, the confusion between the animate and inanimate (such as ventriloquists’ dummies), and other experiences related to madness, superstition or death.

Wheatley argues that Freud’s use of the two terms ‘heimlich’ (familiar or homely) and ‘unheimlich’ (literally un-homely, or uncanny) are inextricably linked, demonstrating ‘that the uncanny cannot be found without the presence of the familiar’ (2006, p. 6). Freud, therefore, suggests that the specificity of the sensation of the uncanny lies in the fact that something is frightening, not because it is unfamiliar or new, but because what used to be familiar has somehow become strange. Freud states that this sensation is described precisely by German philosopher Schelling who summaries everything ‘unheimlich’ as that which ‘ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light’. This description applies to the use of supernatural folklore and traditional belief in folk horror, such as notions of ancient witchcraft and pagan rites and their use on screen in a contemporary setting, or folkloric themes of ‘unearthing’ that may not be necessarily horrific but rather have an unsettling effect: ‘the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar’ (Freud, 1919, pp. 219-24).

This unsettling juxtaposition of the familiar with the unfamiliar also links with hauntology: a sense of something that is out of time or place: something disjointed that is neither present nor absent, dead nor alive. Mark Fisher looks beyond the notion

of the uncanny to the terms 'weird' and 'eerie'. He notes that both terms relate to that which is strange and frightening but argues that 'it would be wrong to say that the weird and the eerie are necessarily terrifying' (2016, p. 8). Fisher tries to distinguish the two terms, suggesting that the weird is 'that *which does not belong*', bringing something 'outside' or unusual to the familiar in a form of montage: 'the conjoining of *two or more things which do not belong together*'. 'Eeriness', in Fisher's terms, relates less to a presence or conjoining of things than an absence: 'we find the eerie more readily in landscapes partially emptied of the human. What happened to produce these ruins, this disappearance? What kind of entity was involved? What kind of thing was it that emitted such an *eerie cry*?'. Fisher suggests that fundamental to the eerie is a question of agency: what or who is behind such actions is unclear or misleading due to 'a failure of absence or by a failure of presence. The sensation of the eerie occurs either when there is something present where there should be nothing, or there is nothing present when there should be something' (2016, pp. 1-8, 61, italics in original). Macfarlane's notion of contemporary eerie culture is similarly defined as 'the experience of being watched by a presence that you cannot perceive...being observed by unseen forces'. Relating his examples to state surveillance, he suggests that this is 'like all eerie phenomena - glimpsed but never confronted' (2015).

'Eeriness', as experienced by a television audience, can in part thus be translated as a lack of narrative resolution or linear plot cohesion. Audiences, used to mainstream traditional patterns of storytelling and realist programmes, may find that with folk horror, hauntological and Gothic texts of the 1970s they are left with questions such as: 'Was it a ghost that haunted her, or was it in her mind all along?', 'Did she believe it was a ghost, or was she making it up?' or 'Could this really happen?'. This can be found as much reflected in the conclusion of *Nationwide*'s Enfield Poltergeist news report as any episode of *A Ghost Story for Christmas* (or indeed as discussed in chapter 2.2 alongside examples of *Scooby-Doo*). Such presentation raises questions in the minds of an audience, creating potential for the perpetuation of folkloric belief that is integral to the study of how supernatural folklore, custom and belief are communicated in the media.

Wheatley discusses this in direct relation to television, noting that the uncanny can be found in the formal elements of the medium, in the

very structure of Gothic television...in an aesthetic which combines traditionally realist, familiarising programme making and non-naturalistic, disorienting filming and editing...The uncanny is therefore located in the moments in Gothic television in which the familiar traditions and conventions of television are made strange, when television's predominant genres and styles are both referred to and inverted (2006, pp. 6-7).

Wheatley allows here for textual analysis of programmes to discern how formal elements are used to represent that which seems intangible and 'uncanny'.

In a 2020 article, Wheatley develops the notion of television itself as an uncanny, spectral space in relation to hauntology and trauma, especially pertaining to the case of Jimmy Savile, who haunts the memory of a generation of viewers and their recollection of popular programmes like *Top of the Pops*.<sup>5</sup> Wheatley describes the potential of television (and even the institution of the BBC itself by association) to be 'haunted or possessed' where images of Savile are 'remediated, recontextualized, in a way that often underscores a sense of spectrality' which has a 'clear sense of the uncanny' with 'the horror of this spectral return rendering the once familiar, once banal, horrifying, haunting' (2020, pp.74-81).

Wheatley's foregrounding of the generic hybridity of television can be extended to the overlapping discussions of folk horror, hauntological, eerie and gothic media texts, for which I prefer the use of 'wyrd' as an umbrella term, to transcend generic definitions and media formats. Wyrd can be found in all genres of media texts (fiction and non-fiction) that have folkloric content and a common spooky or unsettling effect. 'Wyrd' allows exploration beyond that which is present on screen to that which is lacking, and the examination of narrative questions left unanswered. My use of wyrd here is not intended as a new coinage (it has been used in this sense by the Folk Horror Revival community [Paciorek, 2015] and by Scovell in terms of 'Urban Wyrd', 2019), but to define it as a considered revival of the Old English term to encapsulate otherwise quite disparate material from a variety of genres. *Wyrd* (the Anglo-Saxon original of 'weird') describes that which is strange, mysterious, or even frightening, and connects the common element of eeriness across all relevant genres (thus avoiding frequent repetition of 'folk horror, hauntology and gothic horror'), while suggesting a sense of the ancient, the folkloric and the unexplained. The earliest uses of wyrd in Old English describe agencies of fate and destiny (relating to the consequences of one's actions) or powers of foresight with magical or legendary elements. Later definitions

from the 1800s suggest 'a supernatural or marvellous occurrence or tale' (Oxford English Dictionary, 'weird', n.d.). Wyrđ, therefore, appropriately links storytelling and folk belief (and its perpetuation) with more intangible hauntological notions of eeriness and horror.

#### 2.1.4 Generation X: generation hexed?

It is of course easier to spot cultural phenomena or media trends in retrospect, and it is important to note that not all who were there at the time necessarily recognise the 1970s as a period when television was swathed in occulture, supernatural folklore and hauntological themes. Moira Armstrong, for example, a Scottish television director (born 1930) whose career spans five decades with credits including episodes of *Adam* *Adamant Lives!* (1966-1967) and *Armchair Thriller* (1978-1981), states:

I think it's a case of people nowadays noting something in the past that people from that era can't remember...I really didn't notice at the time there was an abundance of [folkloric narratives]...on television, there wasn't a great big wave of the same sort of thing, which rather knocks the theory on the head a bit (pers. comm., 11 September 2017).

It is possible that programmes with folkloric narratives, though accounting for many hundreds of broadcast hours in the 1970s, were spread widely enough throughout the schedules to avoid any concentrated impact.<sup>6</sup> Armstrong's comments, however, contradict the experience of her contemporaries interviewed for this study. Patrick Dromgoole (also born 1930), whose credits include *Arthur of the Britons* (1972-1973), *Children of the Stones* (1977) and *Robin of Sherwood* (1984-1986), and *Blood on Satan's Claw* writer Robert Wynne-Simmons both recognise working in children's television of the era as an opportunity not only to use supernatural folklore as an inspiration but also as a chance to experiment with this overlooked area of the medium:

the major companies...supplying the networking programme, weren't particularly interested with children's programming (Patrick Dromgoole, pers. comm., 22 August 2017).

that was the attitude of the BBC at that time, I can quite clearly remember it. They thought that anything to do with fantasy was to

do with children (Robert Wynne-Simmons, pers. comm., 22 May 2017).

It is possible that Armstrong, in her forties during the 1970s, was less aware of the quantity of children's television of the period with folkloric themes than those either producing it or growing up as its target audience or, perhaps, her own career was less singularly focused in terms of genre.<sup>7</sup> Evidence in research interviews with Armstrong's contemporaries and the obsessions revealed in the work of Mark Gatiss and Jeremy Dyson, the output of Richard Littler and Ghost Box, and the musings of Bob Fischer, David Southwell and other Generation X artists strongly suggest that there was indeed something prevalent in this era to haunt and influence future generations.

Jeremy Burnham (born 1931), co-creator (along with Trevor Ray) of *Children of the Stones*, recognises that there was a proliferation of spooky stories on British television in the 1970s, but also that 'it never occurred to either Trevor or myself that we were part of a trend'. In retrospect, Burnham suggests that the appeal of such tales, to broadcasters and writers at least, was largely financial, because 'they make money!'. In keeping with this, Burnham doesn't cite the classic texts or sources like *The Golden Bough* which influenced his contemporaries. Rather, Burnham notes Thomas Tryon's bestselling pulp novel *Harvest Home* (1973) as having 'the sort of creepiness we were looking for' (pers. comm., 13 April 2017).<sup>8</sup> Tryon's tale of outsiders from a city moving to a remote New England village only to be caught up in sinister ancient pagan fertility rites and rituals is nonetheless based on similar notions made popular by such folkloric texts as those discussed in chapter 1.3. Representations of folklore can thus be taken from one form of popular culture and adapted for another, evolving new versions of folklore in their own right which can, in turn, regardless of the source material, still have a significant effect upon viewers:

Even now, nearly fifty years later, I still receive letters from viewers all over the world who were children in the seventies, thanking me for 'ruining their childhood', which (I hope) was intended as a compliment (Burnham, pers. comm., 13 April 2017).

As evidenced in 1.2.5, prominent members of Generation X who have grown up to become film and television writers and directors like Jeremy Dyson make direct links between watching *wyrd* television and their subsequent careers. Alice Lowe (born

1977), writer of *Sightseers* (2012) and *Prevenge* (2016), acknowledges the influence television had on her:

It's really interesting...it's not something I particularly thought I was going to make my career out of...I grew up watching all the weirdest [programmes] late at night on BBC Two and Channel 4...my mum and dad worried that I watched too much TV 'cause I just was [an] obsessive TV watcher basically (*The Evolution of Horror*, 2018).

From my research interviews and spreadsheet data (appendix 7.1), it is evident that not only did wyrd television have an impact on my participants who were watching as they grew up, but also that a large portion of it was aimed directly at children or was broadcast at family-friendly times when children were likely to be watching. That this has also been more widely noted is evidenced by publications such as *Scarred for Life*, in which the authors discuss 1970s television programmes which 'informed us, they influenced us and, of course, a lot of them scared the living daylights out of us' (Brotherstone & Lawrence, 2017, p. 12).

Helen Wheatley, seeking to broaden the perspective of television scholarship in *Gothic Television* (2006), later highlights the lack of serious attention given to children's television, which is 'often disregarded by those scholars seeking to write a history of 'serious' or 'important' television drama' (2012, p. 383). Maire Messenger-Davies, too, remarks:

Little critical attention has been given to content, despite the fact that children's material has unique features worthy of critical notice. Children's drama is less bound by the constraints of realism than adults'; magic, fantasy, fairytale and slapstick humour are staple ingredients, which producers, writers and performers find liberating. Genuinely innovative, even avant-garde, material may be produced (in Creeber, 2001, p. 97).

Wheatley echoes the sentiment that children's television drama can be of an extremely high standard and worthy of study: 'often eloquent and intelligent television drama, formally experimental, and written, directed and produced by significant figures in the history of British television drama' (2012, p. 384). Alison Peirse argues further the importance of examining children's television of bygone decades, due to the changing nature of the media landscape, and the impact upon future generations of programmes and programme-makers:

children's television as a whole is under threat...it seems unlikely that children's telefantasy can thrive, which makes the study of those

aesthetically, technically and generically challenging children's dramas of the [past]...even more important (2010, p. 122).

For these reasons, and the acknowledged gap in literature on children's television, I devote chapter 4.0 of this study to *wyrd* children's drama and the value of children's television.

### 2.1.5 *Scarred for life*

Although Brotherstone and Lawrence's book *Scarred for Life* tends to focus on personal, anecdotal descriptions of *wyrd* 1970s television programmes (including all those mentioned in this study), there are also haunting memories of popular *wyrd* toys, games, books, comics and even sweet and food wrappers (fig. 18), which demonstrate how children of the era were surrounded by contemporary legends and monsters.<sup>9</sup> The 2017 publication of *Scarred for Life* was accompanied by a live discussion show in theatres (where the authors were joined by *Fortean Times* journalist Bob Fischer), which continues to tour and is described (half-jokingly) as a 'support group' for those who experienced such examples of 'childhood trauma' (MAC, 2020). The *Scarred for Life* show suggests that it was not simply television drama but an entire range of cultural sources (such as in the case of sensationalist tabloid press discussed in 1.3.2) that picked up on revived interest in the occult, supernatural and contemporary legend, and affected members of Generation X who

create works of folk horror and the urban weird...From a practitioner perspective, the impact of television news and documentary output in terms of content, tone and frequency is as an important formative factor on *Hookland* and my other creative output as the fictional film and TV canon of the same period. It is the same for many others currently producing work in the field (Southwell, 2019b).

Comparable with David Southwell's 'Hookland' (fictional lost county of England), is 'Scarfolk', a fictional town in northern England which hasn't progressed beyond 1979, created by Richard Littler. Littler has produced a raft of parodic public-information posters based on what he perceives as prevalent *wyrd* themes and authoritarian attitudes of the era. He cites a broad range of sources affecting him from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, albeit noting that 'Much of it went in unconsciously/subliminally'. Littler mentions sources (including several discussed in



1.3.2) such as: *Doctor Who*; the Usbourne Supernatural Guides (recently republished, Maynard, 2019, Wilding-White, 2020); *The Unexplained* magazine (1980-1983); *Folklore, Myths and Legends of Great Britain* (1973); The Beatles' era from 1967-1969; the cartoons of Ralph Steadman and Gerald Scarfe; and *Mad* magazine (founded in 1952), 'especially a free booklet that came with one issue about nuclear war' (pers. comm., 22 June 2018). As with Southwell's comments, Littler notes the significance of



Figure 18: Spooky snacks for children of the 1970s

the tone of reportage in news and current affairs programmes, compounding the notion that the supernatural could be real by their covering otherworldly stories in a factual manner directly alongside more mundane subjects.

Public information films (PIFs) made an equally significant and lasting impression upon children of the era. Bob Fischer's 'haunted generation' notion helps describe his recognition 'that there was a burgeoning artistic movement being created by people who had similar memories of their childhood' (Fischer, 2019a). Others, including Andy Paciorek (Wyrd Harvest Press), found themselves

subjected to a host of grisly doom-laden scenarios in the form of Public Information Films that alerted us to stranger danger and the multitude of ways we may shuffle off this mortal coil. Public Information Films may be seen as the fairy-tales of the times. Cautionary narratives that replaced dungeons with fly-tipped fridges and water trolls with dark and lonely spirits (Paciorek, 2019a).

*The Finishing Line* (1977, fig. 19) and *Lonely Water* (widely known as *The Spirit of Dark and Lonely Water*, 1973, fig. 20) are two examples Littler cites as having a lasting



Figure 19: *The Finishing Line* (1977)

impression upon him for reasons which return to discussion of the uncanny. The combination of unreal elements, 'the figure of death in the latter and a sense of surreal, nightmarish unease in the former', combined with practical instructions and real-world information, are what make the familiar strange. The 'combination of the supernatural and quotidian' takes everyday situations or places and makes them unfamiliar, haunting and dangerous (Littler, pers. comm., 22 June 2018). Stephen Brotherstone describes the visceral impact of PIFs, often broadcast between programmes without context and in an age before trigger warnings:

Depending upon the film, this could lead to anything from slight apprehension to mild panic, all the way up to blind, screaming terror. We could bear witness to some poor kite-flying kid getting a thousand volts right up his bum, or an unfortunate motorcyclist bouncing off a car bonnet. We had no advance warning of any kind,



no time to mentally prepare ourselves (in Brotherstone & Lawrence, 2017, p. 342).



*Figure 20: Lonely Water (1973)*

Although such PIFs are often discussed with nostalgia in an amused, somewhat incredulous fashion, their lasting emotional effect upon children of the era, who were exposed to such material within the safe space of children's television or even in schools (my own included), is apparent.<sup>10</sup> Ben Wheatley echoes the unsettling experience of being shown difficult material in school with no contextual explanation:

we were shown [material like this] at school, just totally blind, like 'we're going to watch something now' and you don't know what it is, out of context and...you were like '*fuck, oh my god!*' ...and you come out of it...shaking, going 'now I am absolutely terrified' (pers. comm., 25 May 2018).<sup>11</sup>

This type of encounter is further evidence that texts for children, including those broadcast on television, can substantially affect a generation, the impact of which is so significant in some cases that, for example, Brotherstone remains unable to watch one PIF even now into his forties 'so strong are my childhood fears of it' (Brotherstone & Lawrence, 2017, p. 343).<sup>12</sup> The impact and context of children's television of this era will thus be considered in chapter 4.0.

### 2.1.6 The ghost box: technology, influence and technique

The technology of television itself in the 1970s also played a role in terms of the hauntological effect of programmes. The nature of broadcast schedules without the ability of viewers to 'catch up' on missed programmes, and sometimes the lack of picture or audio clarity, meant that content usually only lived on in memories, blurred, distorted or magnified over time:<sup>13</sup>

the fuzziness and vagueness of analogue technology played a part...not just TVs that drifted in and out of tune...but also the transience of the media...some of the most important memories of my early life were things that I have no record of...So life had a nebulous quality, and memories have become fuzzy and jumbled...lots of artists from the hauntology movement are...filling in the gaps with absurd fiction that looks for all the world as though it MIGHT have come from that era (Fischer, 2019a).

This 'fuzziness' is ascribed in retrospect by Fischer to describe his memories as such, rather than the medium itself. His discussion alludes to a time when visual records of everyday life were relatively scarce: photography was usually reserved for special events and holidays. Therefore memory, which can fade over time, is the only record which might exist of a childhood bedroom, favourite toy or television programme, and may seem 'fuzzy' when trying to recall specific details. Edward Parnell, in his hauntological memoir *Ghostland*, refers to recalling childhood with the disquieting dissonance of 'the real and the half-remembered' (2019, p. 2). Richard Littler suggests that eeriness is, in part, created by this sense of 'fuzzy memory', connecting with Mark Fisher's concept of eeriness as an absence or an incomplete presence. For *Scarfolk*, Littler drew upon

a (half) memory that I wanted to investigate, or an image or sound that produced a Proustian involuntary memory. Scarfolk is almost an act of biased restoration: me filling in the gaps of memory fragments...Eeriness is also created by subverting the viewer's own incomplete memories and then filling in the missing parts with darker content (pers. comm., 22 June 2018).

Applying these concepts of combining authenticity, fuzzy memory and fabrication in his work, Littler produces amusing yet unsettling results, taking imagery from the 1970s and altering it to create a dark twist on the original text or make social

commentary on the present era. The effect is hauntological, uncanny and ‘weird’, recalling Mark Fisher’s description of ‘that *which does not belong*’, bringing something ‘outside’ or unusual to the familiar in a form of montage (2016, pp. 10-11, italics in original). To achieve his desired wyrd effect, Littler states:

Images have to look as genuine and period authentic as possible. The process of creating an unsettling feeling is always to wrong-foot the viewer right away so that they’re not sure if something is real or not. That small doubt is what leads the viewer to become unsettled (pers. comm., 22 June 2018).

Littler’s series of ‘Rabies’ posters (fig. 21) were, in fact, so convincing that in 2018 one recommending ‘If your child has rabies, don’t hesitate, shoot’ (fig. 22) was included accidentally in an official government publication for civil servants on the history of government communications (BBC, 2018).

Littler’s notion of creating a plausible context and perceived authenticity for his work (e.g. fig. 23) is shared by a number of writers and directors of wyrd film and television. For *Blood on Satan’s Claw*, Piers Haggard created a sinister chant as a simple but effective way for the Satan-worshipping children in the film to appear intimidating. Haggard drew from his knowledge of medieval plainsong (from directing Albert Finney in John Osborne’s 1961 play *Luther*, set in the 1500s) to create his own version ‘to suggest a kind of coarse, degraded, bit of derivative, pseudo-plainsong’. Rather than employing fantastically shocking horror elements, Haggard’s aim was to make it ‘feel authentic as it would be from their point of view’ (pers. comm., 5 June 2017). Similarly, Lawrence Gordon Clark, for the 1970s *A Ghost Story for Christmas* series, wanted to create a sense of authenticity for his representation of ghosts: ‘I do not believe in ghosts and have certainly never seen one but their creation on film, to make them both frightening and believable in the fictional sense, is a challenge I love’ (pers. comm., 11 June 2017). It is important to reiterate in the light of this statement that, in my discussion of representations of supernatural folklore (and application of ostension, developed in the following chapter), the *literal* belief in folkloric elements by either the director or the audience is not at issue. Most important here is the *manner in which* folkloric elements are presented and to what degree this presentation may affect an audience. It is apparent that the presentation and plausibility (as perceived by an audience) of wyrd texts is a significant factor in how strong an effect they have, and may continue to have, on generations of audiences. As



Figure 21: Official government 1970s Rabies posters (L), Scarfolk 'Babies' posters (R)

Lawrence Gordon Clark states, 'If you don't scare the audience you shouldn't be in the business', which is, after all, 'the main reason for making ghost stories'. In textual analysis of how the formal elements of television are used in these creations of on-screen eeriness, it will therefore be important to consider not only folkloric influences



noted by interview participants, but also those affecting their understanding of film, television and formal technique. For example, Clark notes that, alongside the work of M. R. James:

My other master is Alfred Hitchcock, who has influenced every dramatic film I've made. Hitchcock's interviews with François Truffaut are seminal to anyone who wants to make a film, let alone a ghost story. Hitchcock understands better than any other director how to create suspense, how to stretch his audience's nerves to screaming point (pers. comm., 11 June 2017).

An interesting result of my research data was a general trend of interview participants from Generation X citing audio-visual media in general as vastly more influential upon them in terms of folklore than the literary sources referenced by older participants who had created television in the 1970s.

Literature mentioned by Generation X interviewees tended to be texts discussed in chapter 1.3 which had been published as part of the wave of popular interest in the occult, such as the Reader's Digest book *Folklore, Myths and Legends of Britain* and the Usbourne Guides. Jeremy Dyson expressed a fondness for *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Magic* (Newall, 1974): 'that was a big one for me, I used to pore over that...I still keep it on my shelf' (pers. comm., 15 March 2018). However, the discussion of film and television writers and directors outweighed references to literature in the context of my phase two

interviews: the directorial work of Stanley Kubrick and David Lynch was particularly noted in terms of eeriness and hauntological effect. Ben Wheatley draws a direct comparison between wyrd 1970s British television and the work of David Lynch, stating that the televised series of Alan Garner's *The Owl Service* 'is like a lost David Lynch thing, ten years before he made anything, it's really bizarre' (pers. comm., 25 May 2018).<sup>14</sup> The writing of both Dennis Potter and Alan Garner is also cited as

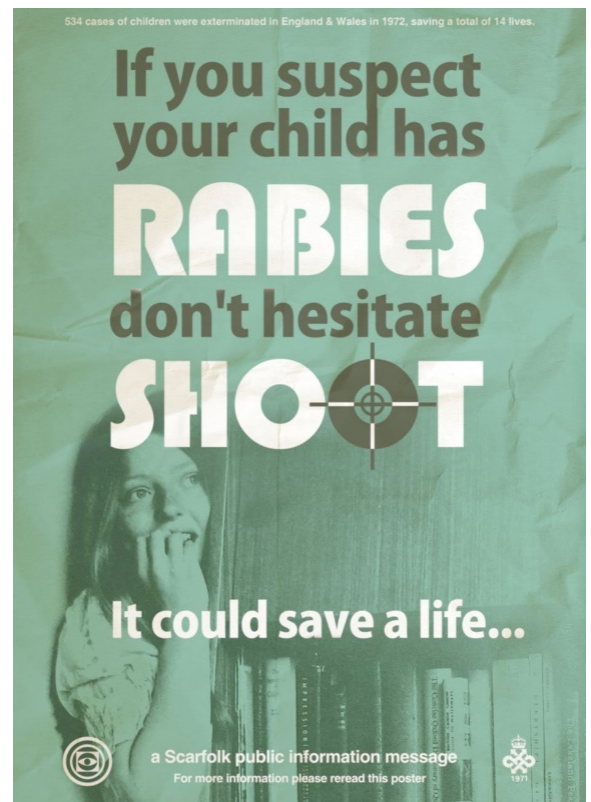


Figure 22: Scarfolk image included in 2018 government publication

particularly influential by several Generation X participants. Potter, known for his interest in questions of authenticity and fabrication (though in an autobiographical sense rather than folkloric), states that 'it's a function of fiction...to tell the truth' (in Fuller, ed. 1994, p. 11). Potter's style, which often openly pretends to be autobiographical, 'subverts the more conventional documentary form' and can blur lines of reality, leading to 'authenticity [being] mistaken for the authentic' (Ferguson, 2003). This central quality is often shared with *wyrd* texts: Alan Garner states in television documentary *Celebration: Alan Garner* (1980) that he used 'mythology and folklore...not to deflect the attention away from reality but to focus the attention...on the reality behind apparent reality'. Using supernatural folklore and traditional belief to generate a context of perceived authenticity, it seems Garner hopes to create an artistic reflection of apparent truth.



Figure 23: *Radio Times* cover from 1984 featuring post-apocalyptic drama *Threads* (L) and *Scarfolk* 'Radio Times' post-apocalyptic Christmas issue (R)

Whilst television relating to the work of these writers will be considered in this study, the most cited significant influence, across all interviewee participants, is the work of television writer Nigel Kneale. Because supernatural folklore and contemporary legend are represented extensively in Kneale's work, which continues to have cultural impact and hauntological effect across generations, his work receives detailed attention in chapter 3.0.



The formal techniques and stylistic methods used in television adaptations of Kneale's work, as well as in other examples of *wyrd* 1970s British television like Clark's work on the BBC *Ghost Story* series, continue to be admired and drawn upon by those making television today. Subsequently, when specific *ways* and techniques of retelling folkloric stories or legends are repeated by post-2000 folk horror revivalists or hauntological artists, this suggests a conviction on their part that techniques employed by *wyrd* programmes of the 1970s were effective ways to present folk horror. For example, until the 1980s television broadcast cameras used cathode-ray tubes, which often produced unplanned lighting effects of ghostly traces across the screen during camera movements. The creators of *Inside No.9* episode 'The Devil of Christmas' (2016) chose to use vintage 1970s cameras in order to achieve an 'authentic re-creation' of the atmosphere and the look of 1970s television (writer-actor Steve Pemberton in Oglethorpe, 2016). Producer Adam Tandy hoped that it 'recaptures the spirit' of eerie programming from the era (BBC Studioworks, 2016). This recalls Koven's ideas of mass-mediated ostension, with the programme-makers deliberately acting ostensively: consciously bringing supernatural folklore to the screen, with a particular look, feel and approach derived from 1970s horror to achieve a special kind of strangeness in the presentation of unsettling tales. It is this notion of ostension and its place within the study of folklore and contemporary legend that I outline in chapter 2.2.

## 2.2. Folklore studies and ostension

Nick (Reece Shearsmith): Hares are associated with witchcraft and trickery in almost every culture in the world.

Maz (Weruche Opia): How do you know?

Nick: Because I did a PhD in ethnology and folklore.

Maz: Then why are you here acting as a glorified binman?

Nick: Because it didn't get me anywhere, did it? Like having a degree in washing up.

(from 'Tempting Fate', *Inside No. 9*, 2018)

### **2.2.1 Finding a framework**

This study will examine the formal methods and techniques used to represent contemporary legend on screen to understand how legend is reinterpreted and made effectively unsettling and plausible within the context of the television text. By examining paradigmatic cases of wyrd British television (aimed at both adults and children), I will examine the extent to which 1970s programme-makers brought their own influences and interpretations to representing or creating depictions of supernatural folklore and how this, in turn, impacts on and manifests within the work of future generations of television- and film-makers.

One historical problem of folklore study is that it is so often seen as a poor relation to other academic disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology, ethnology, psychology and cultural studies. These subjects all have significant areas of crossover with folklore studies and may examine elements of storytelling, myth and legend, but each foregrounds something other than folklore itself (notice that folklore study is not bestowed with an '-ology'). Much of what folklore studies has achieved in Britain has thus been subsumed in other fields, side-lined in England in particular (the place of the discipline's birth); by comparison, far greater prominence is given to the subject in Scottish, Irish and Welsh universities, often with a focus on Celtic studies.<sup>15</sup> Ervin Beck states that, in the case of the appropriation of folklore studies by cultural studies, the latter 'tends to neglect analysis of high culture in favor of analysis of popular culture—and to ignore folk culture altogether'. This context has led to the perception of a lack

of a clear theoretical framework in English folklore studies in particular, with folklorists pointing to the fact that 'folklore has never thrived as an academic discipline in England, apparently because it has not been able to separate itself from its origins in a genteel English antiquarianism' (Beck, 2001). The study of folklore in England has, therefore, been most associated with 'survivals' of traditional customs and rituals like mummers' plays, Morris dancing and 'revivals' as with folk music in the 1960s. Bob Trubshaw, in 2002, pleads: 'I sincerely hope that someone considering writing an introduction to British folklore studies in, say, 2020 will have a greater variety of approaches - preferably successful ones! - to assess' (p. 36). There has been academic progress in recent decades but John Widdowson remarks in 2016 that the study of folklore in England 'stands at a crossroads' (2016, p. 260).<sup>16</sup>

Although Widdowson states 'Folklore remains a neglected or scorned field of study in England', as *Inside No. 9*'s above dialogue seems to reinforce, 'it flourishes in the United States' where some cultural studies and sociology scholars have tried to rebrand the discipline as 'folkloristics' (2016, p. 260). Adopted by American folklore studies in the late twentieth century to refer to the study of folklore, the term 'folkloristics' (though not embraced by all folklore scholars) implies a broadly contemporary outlook (Bronner, 2017, pp. 20-21) combined with a 'systematic and disciplinary approach' (Jones, 1994, p. 2). Whilst all traditions are important areas of folk culture for study, as Beck remarks, 'contemporary folklorists are much more interested in the emergent and dominant folk traditions' (2001) which range from urban legend, internet memes, streaming media and video games to the communication of politics, fake news and public-health information.<sup>17</sup>

Some examinations of folklore studies have noted that there is no single clear 'theory or perspective that has been able to unify the many disparate viewpoints, past and present, that constitute the theoretical pursuits of scholars in the discipline' (Burns, 1977, p. 110). However, scholars robustly argue that it is the very nature of folklore studies' collection of approaches, 'skills, perspectives and methods that set the folklorist apart from the anthropologist, the historian, the literary critic, the sociologist, the psychologist, and the political scientist' and give the discipline its unique strength and breadth of knowledge (Dorson, 1972, p. 6). Michael Owen Jones, in a comprehensive overview of the development of folklore studies and folkloristics (1994), states that because 'in their research and analysis, folklorists are

multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary', they are able to 'perceive the larger whole, which many cannot do because of disciplinary blinders...[and] consider valuable and important what others often overlook' (1994, pp. 26-28). Thanks to leading scholars like Alan Dundes, Linda Dégh, Elliot Oring, Bill Ellis and Dan Ben-Amos, it is in American folklore studies that, arguably, the most significant theoretical developments have been made in recent decades, shifting the notion of folklore from merely that which is ingrained tradition to further incorporate that which is newly emergent. Ben-Amos theorises folklore as 'very much an organic phenomenon' and 'an artistic action...It is a definite realistic, artistic, and communicative process' which should be understood as evolving in relation to its context whether in terms of genre, category, social, political, historical or contemporary (1971, pp. 4-10). Though I will be using the folklore-studies concept of ostension as central to this thesis (explored later in this chapter), my own methods and theory reflect a multidisciplinary approach primarily combining screen studies and folklore studies.

To begin with a broad theoretical outlook, new historicism has been described as having an anti-establishment ethos, most often applied to literature but which can be transposed to media texts. New historicism takes the approach of examining history and historical circumstance through texts and the culture within which they are produced. Using this approach, not only can the media texts themselves be examined but also the types of folklore communicated by them and the folkloric texts that are drawn upon, alongside the cultural context of relevant media texts: the intention behind them and their impact and reinterpretation. This approach allows consideration of not only the historical context but also the present context within which the material is being reinterpreted: these are intrinsically linked in terms of cultural importance. This perspective also aligns with the notion of folklore as an organic, evolutionary process within shifting contexts. Sara Maza outlines new historicist Stephen Greenblatt's ideas that:

there is (or was) a real social world, though that world is (or was) constantly being shaped by the very texts it produces (or produced). Instead of staking out a theory, Greenblatt prefers to describe and illustrate the point that literature and the social are always simultaneously engaged in acts of mutual creation (2004, p. 253).

In *Practising New Historicism* (2001), Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt explain that the very point of bringing together literary and historical texts is that they

‘make sharply different claims upon the actual’; both the literary and the non-literary acquire deeper resonance when they are made ‘to be each other’s thick description’ (2001, p. 31). Similarly, Clifford Geertz, an anthropologist whose subject specialism links closely with folklore, states about this ‘thick description’ that: ‘Society’s forms are culture’s substance’ (1973, p. 28). In short, Gallagher, Greenblatt and Geertz are making clear that cultural texts and the social context within which they are produced reflect upon, inform and shape one another. We can examine this group of television texts that emerged from Britain in the 1970s with common *wyrd* themes and consider the cultural and social context that produced them but also how the language and culture used within them communicate supernatural folklore. That includes the formal elements of television, the visual realisation of folkloric tropes, and the impact this has had and continues to have in shaping culture today. Of course, this is not a new approach, but it provides a framework within which to draw ideas from different disciplines. Geertz states: ‘Theoretical ideas are not created wholly anew in each study...they are adopted from other, related studies, and, refined in the process, applied to new interpretive problems’ (1973, p. 27).

From the nineteenth century, Sir James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (1890) and Margaret Murray’s *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* (1921) reinforced the dominant assumption among folklorists that British local customs and folklore were ‘survivals’ from a primordial pagan past, with a traditional concentration on rural customs and beliefs. Though these ideas are no longer taken seriously by folklorists (it is now commonly believed that notions of ‘ancient’ Druidism and rituals of the ‘noble savage’ are much more recent inventions), such texts remained popularly influential until as late as the 1980s. Trubshaw states that whilst these popular misconceptions persist, the folklore student observes this as a nonetheless important part of how folklore is created and evolves: ‘It is not for nothing that folklorists sum up the folk tradition as being “evolved, adapted and fabricated”’ (Trubshaw, 2002, p. 37). It is through such perceptions that folklore is often reinterpreted and reproduced, and the media play a role in the communication of this. Both Geertz’s and Trubshaw’s approaches reflect the general philosophical approach to contemporary folklore study, which can usefully employ a range of methodologies from a variety of disciplines. As I illustrate above, it is possible to draw here from psychology, literature and screen studies as well as folkloristics.

### 2.2.2. Contemporary legend study

The study of legends in the context of folklore studies itself has changed dramatically in recent decades. A legend can be understood as a story that spreads primarily through informal channels, particularly via word of mouth or contemporary forms of social media. Simpson and Roud's *A Dictionary of English Folklore* defines legend as: 'a short traditional oral narrative about a person, place, or object that really exists, existed, or is believed to have existed; even when it recounts a supernatural or highly unusual event, this is claimed to have occurred in real life' (2003, p. 212). Customarily, both the storyteller and listener understand the legend to be true, and the story 'may include elements intended to authenticate it, such as being set in a familiar location such as a local mall, or being told as something that happened to a friend of a friend' (Tucker & Best, 2014).

Before the 1960s, traditional folklorists looked at legends as stories believed to be true 'that focused on older supernatural beliefs assumed *not* to be true by academics and indeed not shared by other "hard-headed, rational"' thinking people (Ellis, 2003, p. xiii, italics in original). Many ideas underlying folklore study, such as those of Frazer and Murray discussed earlier and, along with them, concrete assumptions about the lack of literal truth in legendary tales, were robustly challenged by scholars in the 1960s and 1970s. Jacqueline Simpson further scrutinises the work of Murray in her 1994 research article 'Margaret Murray: Who Believed Her, and Why?'. Though highly critical of her long-debunked 'deeply flawed methods and illogical arguments', Simpson situates Murray's legacy in the historical context of folklore study itself, wishing that 'some prominent folklorist had tackled her errors openly in the 1930s or 1940s' (pp. 89-96). Simpson thus critiques the discipline itself whilst highlighting how much modern scholarship had progressed.

*Contemporary Legend: The First Five Years* (Bennett & Smith, 1990) contains papers from leading folklore scholars grappling with defining 'contemporary legends' (sometimes also called 'modern' or 'urban' legends): Nicolaisen states 'the acceptable meaning, let alone precise definition...is not much clearer now than it was in 1982, despite much...profound and painful examination'. Paul Smith notes that there are several 'fundamental contradictory questions regarding the nature and status of

contemporary legend as a folklore genre' (in Bennett & Smith, 1990, pp. 7, 42). Noel Williams, too, usefully problematised the definition of contemporary legend, outlining inherent difficulties in attempting to do so. For example, Williams suggests that a text may be presented in the form of contemporary discourse but may have the structure (or be a revival) of a much earlier text, or even have no temporal location at all.

Another problem is of textual autonomy:

The rise in information flow and information technology increases 'borrowings' across genres which blur their edges. Thus alligators in the sewers of New York occur in Thomas Pynchon's 'V'; the radio programme 'Stop the Week' ostensibly discusses the legends (whilst actually recounting them *with the same effect as in a paradigm setting*), 'Little and Large' write a sketch derived from an urban legend (in Bennett & Smith, 1990, p. 43, italics in original).

Screen-studies scholars are familiar with such genre hybridity and intertextuality: part of the evolutionary process of any genre is often a tendency to self-reflexivity, with texts referencing and acknowledging themselves within a wider discourse. As media scholar Gill Branston notes: 'Texts are tissues of meanings that draw on prior knowledge of other texts. As such, texts have no clear boundaries but always refer to other texts – more or less explicitly' (2006, p. 55). Therefore, perhaps the lack of textual autonomy in contemporary legend is not a *problem* of the genre, but an unavoidable defining characteristic, given how legends are retold, reinterpreted and represented in a variety of time periods and contexts.

This echoes Trubshaw's comments and those of other modern folklore scholars, such as Bill Ellis, who tend to favour examining legend as an adaptive and evolutionary process reworking legends for contemporary audiences:

Overall, folklorists have come to see the contemporary legend as an *emergent* form best understood as a folk process, not a static form (Ellis, 2003, p. xiii, italics in original).

Therefore, contemporary legends are not necessarily new in terms of content or confined to urban settings but tend to deal with 'issues that were contemporary for their tellers', adapted for new audiences and generations in any given context or time period. Ellis describes the nature of legends as emerging in relation to their political and social context, stating such conditions play an important role in legend development. He asserts that the supposition that legends are *not true* is an old-

fashioned assumption which 'oversimplifies complex social situations in a way that impugns the credibility (and intelligence) of those who pass them on' (Ellis, 2003, pp. xiii, xiv). Ellis suggests that, in fact, stories can reveal social tensions, bring them to the surface and perhaps even motivate actions and events which may relieve such anxieties. The *question* of truth, therefore, remains central to legend: 'In a legend, the question of truth must be *entertained* even if that truth is ultimately rejected' (Oring, 1986, p. 125). Williams proposed that, given the complex attitudes towards notions of belief and the problematic nature of defining something as 'believed to be true', a more useful premise for discussion of contemporary legend might be a story 'told as if believable and/or possible...with the aim of persuading a hearer that it could be true' (in Bennett & Smith, 1990, p. 43). This proposition helps to frame an examination of the representation and communication of legend in television in the context of more recent developments in contemporary-legend studies.

Burns, in seeking to outline what he perceived as useful folklore theory for future study of the discipline, comments: 'The communications approach is the only perspective that even has the capacity to propose itself as able to generate a unified theory of folklore' (1977, p. 110). This relates to the notion of ostension, which is entirely about the communication of folklore, how it is passed on and acted upon, understanding folklore as 'a process - a communicative process, to be exact' (Ben-Amos, in Paredes & Bauman, 1972, pp. 9-10). Ostension, in its appropriation by Dégh and Vásonyi, is quite unique to folklore study and Mikel Koven's work as a substantive development of this concept allows an explanatory context for the process of how folkloric themes and contemporary legend are reproduced in popular culture via film and television. Using a general new-historicist scrutiny of not only wyrd 1970s television texts themselves but also a wealth of contextual material across a given period (and how these have shaped one another), the concept of mass-mediated ostension can be tested further as a robust methodological approach, unique to the study of folklore and contemporary legend. Mass-mediated ostension focuses on that which is fundamental to folkloristics: where stories, legends and beliefs come from, how they survive, are communicated and continue to be reinterpreted. Koven summarises:

'mass-mediated ostension'...recognises that *presented* legend materials, whether dramatised or 'documentary', is the medium through which extra-textual debates surround the legend's veracity



occur...but such textual debates...are not essential to a mass-mediated ostensive legend-matrix (2007, p. 185).

### 2.2.3 The roots of ostension

Understanding the idea of ostension fully requires a close examination of its development and implementation within the field of folkloristics. It is necessary here to argue for the importance of examining and developing what is unique to the subject. As discussed in 2.2.1, there is a perceived methodological weakness of folklore studies as a discipline. In England, John Widdowson notes, it 'lacks a common purpose, its work tends to be fragmented, and it has been largely ineffectual in asserting its educational, social, and cultural importance'. However, it is important to note that Widdowson remarks that severe financial cutbacks to arts and humanities subjects and 'the prioritizing of so-called "practical" and "vocational" academic programmes and courses' are largely to blame for 'the lack of comprehensive academic programmes in the discipline' rather than the theory or methods of the subject itself. Widdowson notes that, in fact, a substantial number of academics

in kindred disciplines...who have teaching and research interests in folklore and related subjects...In the absence of fully-fledged programmes in the discipline...continue to maintain and advance the study of folklore (2016, pp.259-61).

However, *because* there are useful concepts and methods drawn from other disciplines and a natural crossover of subject interests which helps to sustain folklore studies, 'Contemporary legend scholarship should be cautious of losing [its] disciplinary identity' (Ellis, 2003, p. 25). It is vital for the subject to use its unique strengths to continue development in its own right, particularly in terms of advancing folklore study in England. Therefore, mass-mediated ostension, developed by North American contemporary legend scholars, is a strong and progressive foundation for this research project.

Linda Dégh and Andrew Vásonyi's original appropriation of the notion of ostension, in their seminal article 'Does the Word "Dog" Bite? Ostensive Action: A Means of Legend Telling' (1983), cannot be underestimated as a significant point in modern folklore studies. The word 'ostension' itself derives from the Latin *ostendere*, to show, and was used by semiotician Umberto Eco to refer to non-verbal

communication when people substitute actions for words, such as raising a finger to the lips indicating a need for quiet.

Dégh and Vásonyi's notion of ostensive action describes behaviour based on, or influenced by, folklore and legend (legendary tales being those which, whilst they might not literally be true, have the *possibility* of truth) and which, in turn, can create or perpetuate folklore: ostensive action or behaviour is that which occurs based on a legend. The legend, presented in narrative action, thus becomes reality, and action and belief affect and perpetuate one another: 'not only can facts be turned into narratives but narratives can also be turned into facts'. A grimly illustrative example is the authors' discussion of murderous assaults and subsequent copycat killings, the details of which can inevitably spread through society in a variety of ways:

People retell the story. Some folklore bearers, for example, retell it by word of mouth; some newsmen, for example, through the media; and others: mad killers, by means of communication reminiscent of, but to be distinguished from, imitation - ostensive action (Dégh & Vásonyi, 1983, pp. 12-15).

Satanic rites and sacrifices can be the subject of scary campfire stories and legendary tales or, through ostensive action (as legend-tripping for example, discussed below), carried out based on some kind of belief, can become literal reality. Action and reproduction of the legend (maintaining a *possibility* for belief) is the crucial factor here, which Bill Ellis develops in relation to ostension and the communication of folklore. Ellis notes that, though Dégh and Vásonyi discredit the notion of legendary 'truth', they maintain that 'belief is an inherent and the most outstanding feature of the folk legend' (in Ellis, 2003, p. 6). Again, literal truth is not part of the equation, but legends inherently encourage debate about the *possibility* of truth or falsity:

Thus even the most hardened skeptic who relates an alleged encounter with a ghost, only to refute and ridicule it, nevertheless concedes by doing so that this is a narrative that requires disproof...folklorists agree that while tales are certain fiction, needing no refutation, the legend is regarded as no less than *potential fact* (Ellis, 2003, p. 6).

Dégh and Vásonyi suggest that what may begin as a folktale can act as inspiration for ostensive action to some people who might never have otherwise committed crimes or acts of satanic ritual 'without the exposure to recurrent actual or imaginary precedents, without actual or imaginary models' (1983, p. 13). Ellis, too, uses the

example of satanic ritual and murder, outlining the dangers of legends as an ostensive 'map for action': 'Legends can help the folk relieve themselves of contemporary fears, but they may also serve as patterns for psychotics - or even sane but cunning criminals - for provoking the same fears' (1989, p. 202). An outbreak of apparent ritual activity, or at least satanic hysteria in the British press, occurred as recently as November 2019 when stories reported by national media, including the *Mail* and the *Telegraph*, mentioned Satanism in the headline. Both described similar details of sheep and cattle having been fatally stabbed in Hampshire, with one sheep having been marked with a cross and a pentagram. Both newspapers were quick to link the event to witchcraft and satanic cult activity, albeit based on conjecture from local commentators. The *Mail Online* quotes local vicar, the Reverend David Bacon: 'There's been witchcraft round here for hundreds of years - the New Forest is well known for witchcraft and black magic happening, and this has obviously gone up a level' (Wood & Wynne, 2019). The *Telegraph*, meanwhile, includes comment from a Hampshire resident whose wife came across a dead sheep whilst walking their dog: 'It's related to something other than simply a desire to injure animals...witchcraft or whatever. It's rather worrying' (Wilford, 2019).

Although these extreme cases help to frame ostension, not all examples of ostensive action are quite so severe: Dégh observes that 'ostension can be harmless, especially in connection with Halloween', for example. Visiting Halloween-themed haunted houses, 'legends enacted in pranks' and even instances of ghost hunting 'using the latest available smartphone technology' all make close connections between amusement and fright (in McNeill & Tucker, 2018, pp. 12-13).<sup>18</sup> This type of ostensive action falls similarly into the category Ellis discusses as 'legend-tripping', a subject to which the International Society for Contemporary Legend dedicated its first legend casebook (McNeill & Tucker, 2018). 'Legend-trip' describes visiting a place associated with a legend, usually taking place as a group journey (often consisting of teenagers), to isolated areas such as a haunted house or remote bridges to face supposed supernatural or legendary phenomena. Legend-tripping behaviour tends to seek, quite simply, 'a good scare' which

serves as prudent preparation for the real shocks of a dangerous life; while yet others, using the more sophisticated language of an unidentifiable vulgar-Freudianism, like to speak of the stimulation of a 'wholesome catharsis'...adults seem to grab the opportunity to

frighten as a means necessary to exorcise authority from their usurping children (Dégh & Vásonyi, 1983, p. 16).

Perhaps it is reasonable to suggest that this type of thrill-seeking ostensive behaviour can be extended to the viewing of horror films and television programmes, most relevant to narratives which claim to be 'based on a true story' or draw upon traditional belief in some way, as do the television programmes discussed in this study. Carl Lindahl notes that, although the tendency of some studies relating to ostension was to dwell on extreme and macabre examples of sinister satanism, Halloween threats and copycat murders, there are lighter and more playful examples:

ostension can also transcend horror and inspire a sense of wonder in those who bring legends to life...[in] a sort of *ostensive play*...these legend-trippers express an extraordinary range of ostensive action, from thrill-seeking play to humbled reverence (2005, p. 165).

A relevant example of this kind of 'ostensive play' here is the BBC documentary *Out of This World* (1977), which opens with footage of two middle-aged male friends skywatching, demonstrating UFO-detecting equipment for the camera: 'if there's any flying saucers about or extra-terrestrial craft, we may be fortunate enough to detect something'. The legend-trippers go on to discuss what they believe to be their UFO sightings to date and explain their pursuit: 'What we're trying to do is to obtain either actual contact or, possibly, pick up some type of intelligent message relayed from the people who man these craft'.

Before applying the notion of ostension more widely to the context of mass media, it is useful to make clear the categories of ostension which Dégh and Vásonyi set out. Firstly, there is **ostension** itself, or 'pure' ostension, as the physical enactment of actions. In this case, for example, a ghost or supernatural apparition exists and appears to an observer, or a group of people may carry out a satanic ritual or séance in the attempt to raise spirits. Dégh and Vásonyi acknowledge however, as with David Hufford's 1982 discussion of the experiential basis for belief in the supernatural, that the observer may 'not have recognized the ghost [or attempted ritualistic activity] if [they were] not already familiar with the necessary ingredients from legends' (Dégh & Vásonyi, 1983, p. 19).

Dégh and Vásonyi secondly outline '**pseudo-ostension**' which, in essence, is a hoax that may, for example, imitate 'the outlines of a known narrative' such as 'youngsters tampering with their own trick-or-treat candy to create a stir' or hiding in a

supposedly haunted location dressed as the ghost in question to scare visitors (Ellis, 1989, p. 208). Importantly, with pseudo-ostension, the observer or target audience does not recognise the deception and is duly misled by the hoaxer, yet the knowledge of both as pertaining to the legend 'is situated in a common frame of reference...from the same source, very likely unknown by both the hoaxer and the dupe...[following] a collective script supported by society' (Dégh & Vásonyi, 1983, p. 19). The knowledge of both hoaxer and intended audience may draw, for example, from common assumptions of what a ghost may look like and how it may present itself.

Thirdly, '**quasi-ostension**' refers to 'a misunderstanding of something that takes place' (McNeill & Tucker, 2018, p. 11). For example, an observer may misinterpret evidence to create an account for apparently occult or supernatural events such as in the reports from the *Mail* and the *Telegraph* outlined earlier (where injury to an animal may be construed as satanic ritual). As Ellis remarks, this again supports Hufford's hypothesis that:

only a person who believes in a concept will actually experience it...[for example] most experts feel that 'mutilated' animals have died of natural causes [but]...observers prepared to find evidence of satanism will 'map' such evidence in terms of known rituals...[such mutilations apparently confirming] to the observer...'The satanists have been here too!' (Ellis, 1989, p. 208).

In this case 'the subject of ostension is imaginary, not real, and thus the term *quasi-ostension* is appropriate' (Dégh & Vásonyi, 1983, p. 20, italics in original): the *misinterpretation* is the ostension, or legend performance, not the actions themselves. Additionally, Dégh and Vásonyi propose '**proto-ostension**', which McNeill and Tucker describe as 'a narrator's appropriation of a legend as his or her own experience' (2018, p. 11). This might take the form of telling a tale about witnessing a supernatural apparition, whereby, for purposes of dramatic authenticity, the narrator tells the tale in the first person.

This sense of authenticity or plausibility seems central to aiding ostension and ostensive behaviour, as is the debate about truth or falsity that is central to the function of legends or the *possibility* of belief itself. The literal truth of a tale or legend is virtually irrelevant: if the legend is presented in such a way that it has the *possibility* of truth or if the audience *entertains* the possibility of truth (and may modify their

behaviour or belief as a consequence, even to a minor degree), then ostension has occurred in each case.

In Dégh and Vásonyi's discussion of the haunted-house attraction, they use examples of characters played by actors, some of whom may be based on those from horror film and television (such as Leatherface from *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, 1974, or the fictitious legend of Dracula), to jump out and spook the thrill-seekers. The suspension of disbelief in this case is perhaps comparable with the viewing of media presentations of these figures, but is made more complex by encountering these characters in a real-life context:

A portion of the audience might actually acknowledge some of these characters as physically present, for at this point we no longer face a totally fictitious story, a story not meant to be believed. We experience, instead, the air of a legend vibrantly active and powerfully persuasive in achieving its inherent goal: to make the story believable. What the viewer obtains is not mere 'enchantment' but at least partly, deception...actors in the haunted house make an effort to provide the visitors with a false sense of 'reality' as distinct from 'play'...[scaring] nonbelievers who are at best willing to suspend their disbelief temporarily (1983, p. 23).

The type of ostension at play in the haunted-house scenario, then, can vary depending on the audience's interpretation of events, even though a type of ostension has already occurred in the representation and performative action. Some visitors may accept the scene as presented, and that here are scary figures to be afraid of, such as thinking an actor representing a ghostly figure is a 'real' apparition, in which case this is a type of pseudo-ostension. Others, whilst accepting this specific apparition is mere representation in the haunted house, may entertain the notion that such figures *could* exist and the possibility of being frightened is very real. The audience are not, however, the intended victims of a hoax, rather they accept the pretence as a temporary kind of reality. Others may even understand the entirety of the haunted-house pretence but retain a belief that 'Dracula' actually exists; this Dégh and Vásonyi call a kind of pseudo-imitation.

The representation and framing of a legend can affect the type and level of ostension that occurs. The legend in question may be framed as part of a legend-trip or ritual, or a representation of contemporary legend within film and television, as outlined above. Typically, a legend places a narrative 'as precisely as possible in the group's conception of the real world, and the events it narrates or alludes to challenge

in some way the boundaries of what the world is or should be...and in turn provokes further discussion and performance' (Ellis, 2003, p. 11). Therefore, the style and manner in which the legend is presented (such as can be examined in textual analysis of a film or television text) is crucial to the legend's plausibility for the audience.

Ellis discusses the importance of examining how the legend is represented and what elements are reproduced over evolving incarnations of such tales: 'we must try to say as closely as possible *what* it is that continues'. He remarks that even Dégh noted that claim for belief (or plausibility) is rooted in the style, structure and artistry of the legend and the way it may present convincing evidence for an audience. This again suggests a strong case for the analysis of what elements of legends are represented within media texts, how such elements are framed and the depiction of folk behaviour itself. We can, therefore, consider relevant media texts themselves as folklore: 'what we should be trying to define is not the style of legend *texts* but rather the style of legend *performance*. In other words, legends are not folk literature but folk *behaviour*' (Ellis, 2003, p. 10, italics in original).

Actual audience response to such texts is interesting but not central to such an examination. As with 'literal truth', similarly, 'literal belief' is far less relevant than the contemporary-legend text merely providing a space for debate: ostension has already occurred in the presentation or representation of the legend. Nonetheless, interesting contextual data in terms of audience response may reveal that a film or television text has indeed aroused questions in the minds of an audience, inviting them to participate in the legend process; 'The legend does not presuppose or compel belief, but it does demand that the teller and listener take a stand on the legend':

'Yes this sort of thing could happen' 'No it couldn't'; 'Well, maybe it could' ...So *a legend is a narrative that challenges definitions of the real world and leaves itself suspended, relying for closure on each individual's response* (Ellis, 2003, p. 60, italics in original).

There are, therefore, possibilities for types of ostension to merge: Ellis observes that the main 'three forms of ostension function synergistically' (1989, p. 213), whereby one form can shift into another and narrative can become fact.

Ostension centres on the transmission and communication of folklore. As Dégh, Vásonyi and Ellis point out, folkloric legends or tales can inspire action which thus becomes reality, which can then become narrative again and so the cycle continues. In the context of new historicism also, we can hence see folklore and reality as fluid, each

reflecting upon, informing and shaping the other, evolving over time, being ‘each other’s thick description’ (Gallagher & Greenblatt, 2001, p. 31):

A legend communicated by signs might switch into a legend communicated by ostensive action, only to be turned eventually into a legend again, transmitted orally, in writing, on the screen, on the stage or otherwise. Afterwards it might continue its journey via intermittent communicative means, thus again and again turning itself into self-exhibiting ostension: fact (Dégh & Vásonyi, 1983, p. 26).

For folklore studies this approach is essential: ‘Our conception of folklore, therefore, must be expanded to consider the ways in which legends reflect both what has “really” happened but also what a person or persons can make happen’ (Ellis, 1989, p. 218). I propose examination of the plausible representation of supernatural folklore and contemporary legend on screen, how this affects what audiences are encouraged to *believe* could ‘really’ occur and how this, in turn, has the possibility to affect subsequent representations of folklore and legend. Plausibility as a crucial element of ostension (creating space for debate and potential belief) can be examined in terms of how contemporary-legend narratives are presented in television texts using the formal elements of the media. In the media-dominated landscape of the postmodern era, where ‘actual’ reality is debatable, understanding what the ‘collective script supported by society’ (Dégh & Vásonyi, 1983, p. 19) accepts as assumed truth, and how folklore and legend are presented and understood within this, is far more important than a concern with ‘literal’ truth. Whitney Phillips addresses this issue in her discussion of fake news, stating that using a folkloric frame and the concept of ‘folk news’ to examine the social processes that facilitate the spread of particular stories (or memes) can be much more valuable than the veracity or surface phenomena of the stories themselves:

Folkloric content can, of course, accurately reflect the world, i.e. be true. But the frame doesn’t begin and end with veracity. It begins and ends with participation...the folkloric frame sidesteps myopic focus on the text itself and instead foregrounds how and why resonant memes spread across specific collectives...rather than externally imposing what is true or false, it takes seriously—and explores the organic functionality of—the values, assumptions, and behaviors of participants, essentially replacing the more accusatory ‘what you are sharing is wrong’ with the more curious and engaged ‘in what ways is this true for you?’ (Phillips, 2017).



Understanding this 'collective script' of what may be true for specific groups within society, whether based on literal truth or otherwise, is fundamental to modern folkloristics:

for a researcher, a legend is not a legend because it is untrue. Actually, legends might be as much true as they are untrue, objectively or subjectively; it really does not make much difference. What matters is that the legend raises the question of plausibility and makes people reflect (Dégh, 1994, p. 30).

#### **2.2.4 Ostension and the media**

Modern folklore study is much more interested in the function and purpose of contemporary beliefs than, for example, attempts to explain them as survivals of pre-Christian religions. Therefore, popular culture, and the development of television as a significant component of this, is socially and culturally important to popular belief, as is the study of the folklore driving some of the most affective works within the medium. Dégh and Vásonyi briefly touch upon media in their exploratory discussions, making it evident that television is indeed an affective force with relation to folklore and belief:

In general, movies (particularly those shown on television) launch stories that instantly enter the folklore circuit...there are viewers who take the shows for real just as there are viewers who take real reportage for invention. The first discernible station for many folklore sequences is the film or the television...with the influence of a TV movie, transforming it into live ostension...we have to accept that fact can become narrative and narrative can become fact (Dégh & Vásonyi, 1983, pp. 28-29).

However, it is in *American Folklore and the Mass Media* (1994) that Dégh examines the effect of popular culture on behaviour and folkloric belief in more depth. Dégh does not use the phrase 'mass-mediated ostension' but does discuss 'mass-mediated folklore': how popular media communicates and influences folklore. Significantly, as Burns discussed in 1977, Dégh echoes the call for a wider and more serious consideration of the communications approach to folklore studies, particularly in the electronic and digital age. Dégh suggests a communications approach as a path for the otherwise slow development of contemporary folklore theory, one which may allow the discipline to thrive effectively into the future:

The time is ripe for folklorists to think about a new type of fieldwork for a more systematic, scientific study of folklore transmission in the age of the electronic explosion. We are slow in theorizing...I feel that during its long history, the discipline of folklore has developed some useful ideas concerning transmission and variation that can be reviewed and developed further for future research (1994, p. 5).

Even in the twenty-first century, as Trubshaw, Widdowson and others have remarked, folklore studies has retained a tendency to look backward to historical tradition and antiquarian 'collecting' rather than evaluate contemporary culture and legend. Much of Alan Dundes' work focused on liberating the notion of folklore from associations with rurality, opening up folklore study to include cultural texts of groups of all socio-economic backgrounds. Dundes describes 'folk' as

any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is – it could be a common occupation, language, or religion – but what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some traditions which it calls its own (1965, p. 2).

However, it is only in recent decades that the study of popular culture and communication of contemporary and urban legends has gained much ground. In 1989, folklorist Bruce Jackson commented upon the need to examine film and television through the lens of folklore:

Film is the dominant narrative mode of our time. Film and television provide much of the sense of community in a mobile and electronic world: the verbal and imaginative referents we utilize in ordinary face-to-face encounters are as likely to come from our separate-but-shared media experiences as anywhere else. Film and television are far too important to be left to the media studies and literature scholars (1989, p. 389).

Paul Smith also observed film and television as a significant area overlooked by folklorists: 'very little attention has been given by folklorists to the role of the film and television industry as users and disseminators of contemporary legend'. Smith noted the 'need to be aware of the media as an agent of communication' and, a decade on from Jackson, argued that this remains 'a new area for folklorists, and much, if not everything, has yet to be done' (1999, pp. 138, 153). The area had perhaps not been quite as overlooked as Smith suggests, as illustrated by Mikel Koven's 2003 critical survey of 'Folklore Studies and Popular Film and Television'. Koven identifies various contextual approaches more effective than simply recognising narrative patterns or

spotting folkloric motifs in film and television. He usefully details several studies already conducted in this area which examine 'the ways in which popular culture can behave like traditional folklore forms' (2003, p. 190).

In Brunvand's *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia* (1996), Sharon Sherman outlines 'Film and Folklore' as a field of study within the discipline of folklore, examining 'films used to document or present folklore'. Whilst two-thirds of the entry focuses on this documentary or ethnographic approach, Sherman notes that 'A unique twist to the study of film and folklore is the popular use of folklore as the primary plot line or unifying thread for commercial feature films'. Sherman gives examples including: *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1988), whose narrative utilises the practices of voodoo; *When a Stranger Calls* (1979), based on the urban legend of a babysitter frightened by a telephone caller; and *Candyman* (1992), in which a student of folklore investigates the legend of 'The Hookman'.<sup>19</sup> Although Sherman notes that folklore 'becomes a thematic wellspring for films' and that folk beliefs have 'spawned a whole genre of horror films' (1996, pp. 549-52), writing seven years later Koven observes that, 'while relevant for folklorists to discuss, given the correct contexts, popular cinema remains tangential and an adjunct to the main tenants of folkloristics' (2003, p. 190). British cinema has been discussed in these terms to an even lesser degree than American film and, in the case of British television, hardly at all.

The study of popular culture as folklore has not always been encouraged within the discipline, as Dégh discovered: 'No one thought much of mass-mediated folklore...In fact, many colleagues told me that folklore was contaminated and destroyed by the mass media' (1994, p. 10). Dégh recontextualises folklore studies as framed by Marshall McLuhan's notion of the 'global village'; that, due to technological development, society passes on information, messages and of course folklore much more quickly and to much larger groups. Dégh states that these groups are 'also identifiable as folk or folklore-transmitting communities', which necessarily alters how legends are communicated and affects the evolution of folklore itself:

the 'interference' of mass media vehicles not only accelerates the folklore process but also contributes to...a never-before-experienced inflation of folklore...the return of folklore on the wings of the media, with more vigorous circulation, gaining more significance than ever...Folklorists in the modern world should keep pace with technological developments and not romantically idealize the preliterate folk. We have to recognize that we are a consumer-

oriented society, that the market produces for us what we need to conform to tradition in our social interactions, to participate in ritual life and entertainment (1994, p. 24).

Although she briefly touches on film and television, for the most part Dégh's work discusses media in a generalised way, with a focus on advertising, press and glossy magazines. The significance of this work, however, is that she paves the way for the examination of how popular culture shapes behaviour and folklore and vice versa, recognising that mass media not only play a role in the communication of folklore, but have become a part of folklore which 'addresses through mass media devices a much larger audience, united by a common notion-inventory and earlier variants into which the just-received version is accommodated' (1994, p. 5). Gail de Vos, writing on ostension in 1996, picks up on Dégh's discussion in the sense that many groups of people exhibit ostensive behaviour based on a general belief in something that is often unsubstantiated, due to its appearance and reproduction in mass media. Again, this recalls Phillips' call to frame 'fake news' in a folklore-studies context, to examine 'why a particular story is believed, and what that belief reveals about the broader cultural landscape...how a particular belief coheres within a particular paradigm' (Phillips, 2017, italics in original).<sup>20</sup>

For example, a commonly held notion in America has been that Halloween treats may contain things harmful to children, which has led to suspicion and fear amongst communities and parents keeping their children at home:

Today, Halloween is surrounded by suspicion and fear because the warning has been so frequently and systematically repeated [by the media] and believed. The warnings (which are unsubstantiated) have become part of the Halloween ritual (de Vos, 1996, p. 58).

Bill Ellis equates the representation of fictional legend in the media with the Halloween haunted-house experience, and ostension with the requisite suspension of disbelief in both cases, arguing for a broader examination of what constitutes contemporary folklore and legend:

Such narratives are neither 'real' legends nor tales but narratives deliberately designed to fit the gray area between...it is the entertaining kind of fear one feels watching John Carpenter's *Halloween*; it tempts the audience to give in to the feeling of being alone in anguish but stops short of convincing it that the boogiemer is waiting outside the theater. Such a legend – a mock one,

recognized by its audience as talelike in execution and function – can be useful too, and in its light we need to broaden our conception of legends (2003, pp. 44-45).

Ellis here suggests that legends that are presented as literally true may contain many similarities (in terms of style, content and realistic context) to legends presented within fictional media and thus the ‘truth’ of the narrative is not determined in its representation, but ‘*by the audience’s perception of the narrative in context*’ (2003, p. 45, italics in original). Therefore, the potential for belief may be equally present in the represented legend, fictive or otherwise, and thus warrants examination as a type of folklore in its own right. Of the types discussed above, pseudo-ostension has perhaps come the closest to how legendary texts in film and television function; as with Ellis’ example above, the filmmaker does not (necessarily) want to convince the audience that the monster is *literally* under their bed, but encourages them to entertain the thought that it *could be* in order to achieve a desired effect. However, some audience members may be left with a general impression, due to the plausible way in which folk legends are reproduced, that there could be some truth in the tale, a process which is more fittingly described by Koven as ‘**mass-mediated ostension**’. Koven offers this useful concept as a framework within which to study film, television and folklore, and this is what I will use to develop the notion of television as a contemporary form of folklore, as I outline below.

### **2.2.5 Mass-mediated ostension: a methodological framework**

Amongst the first scholars to examine popular film specifically as a form of folklore were Sharon Sherman and Mikel Koven. Well into the 2000s this remains an exploratory area for the discipline: ‘Looking at film as a way of conducting folkloristic research is a new conception, one which folklorists can use for a reflexive stance about their own practices’ (Sherman, 2005, p. 158). Juwen Zhang, drawing upon the work of Sherman and Koven, uses the term ‘filmic folklore’ (2005) to describe films illustrating ‘a folklore that either does not exist in real life or is entirely taken out of context. But audiences see the representation as real. Thus, the filmic presentation of a non-existent folklore creates a totally new form of folklore’ (Sherman, 2005, p. 158).

Urging modern folkloristics toward a more serious consideration of popular culture, Sherman asks: 'Does popular cinema become folklore? If so, how? And how might popular cinema create, reflect, and refract folkloristics?' (2005, p. 161). Additionally, much study of film and folklore to date, where it does exist, largely focuses on American media, which is perhaps understandable as folkloristics is taken more seriously as a discipline in the United States than in the United Kingdom at present. My folkloristic study of British television drama is breaking new ground in this respect, and to date Koven's work best presents a methodology for a development of this. Koven suggests that the narrative dramatisation of a legend, or the presentation of folklore within on-screen action, is a kind of ostension in itself which

implicitly recognises an audience by encouraging some form of post-presentation debate regarding the veracity of the legends presented...Whether...believed or not, such veracity is secondary to the discussion of their *possibility*; which I would argue is an essential aspect of the legend in general (Koven, 2007a, p. 185, italics in original).

Koven extends 'mass-mediated ostension' beyond film to include television and the convergence of folklore and popular media in general: to use 'an ostensive methodology, [in] looking at how a television series...can be considered a form of ostension' (2007a, p. 183). Koven notes that 'Dégh and Vázsonyi would not have considered film or television use of legend materials as ostensive', but rather a pseudo-imitation, as they argue that audiences are aware that they are not witnessing a presentation of literal reality, but a story represented as a possible or plausible version of reality. However, Koven uses the phrase 'mass-mediated ostension' to address this issue directly, describing the showing or acting out of folkloric narratives in the mass media whilst recognising the importance of the part played by film and television in the evolution and adaptation of the folklore which it represents.

Using the example of the ghost-hunting television show *Most Haunted*, Koven notes that Dégh and Vázsonyi would argue that the stylisation of the televisual construction (which incorporates on-screen discussion of the show's editorial process and *Most Haunted* camera and sound operatives at work) makes *Most Haunted* less 'real' than a 'proper' investigation into supernatural events. However, Koven argues that this stylistic use of the show's own apparent behind-the-scenes construction actually

increases the veracity of the show's presented evidence...Dundes noted what he calls 'the visual metaphor' within American culture, wherein visual evidence is tantamount to ontological proof; what *is* [sic] is what can be *seen*...by seeing the construction of the show, *Most Haunted* attempts to validate its own truth-claims...largely predicated upon what can be *seen* – that is, the *presentation* of supernatural phenomena – and not the representation of those experiences through the telling of legend narratives and memorates. Therefore...I would argue that *Most Haunted* is more than just 'entertainment'; it is *ostensive* entertainment...it is the televising of these belief debates that demonstrates how the convergence of traditional belief and popular media operates (2007a, p. 198, italics in original).

More recent examples of television drama, too, use explicit televisual construction and method to increase the veracity of evidence, at the very least to exaggerate the impact of suspension of disbelief. For example, the *Inside No. 9* episode 'The Devil of Christmas' (2016) is a narrative about the making of a wyrd 1970s television programme, revealing layers of folkloric horror. The programme is presented initially as a 1970s television drama (suggestively similar to the late-1970s series *Tales of the Unexpected*) based on the European Krampus legend. The programme also includes 'outtakes' and 'behind-the-scenes' footage from the (supposed) production in the 1970s, revealing that the Krampus tale is actually a television episode being made as a programme-within-the-programme. Additionally, in a postmodern twist, a voiceover reveals that the viewer is witnessing a kind of DVD commentary being recorded many years later by the programme's original director. Each layer contains its own part of the overall story and adds plausible context to the existence of such a programme and the shock ending.

The same series' Halloween special 'Dead Line' (2018) was presented as a live broadcast, employing a number of elements to convince the viewer of the 'reality' of events. The BBC continuity announcer preceding the programme informed the audience that they were about to see a live television special but, less than five minutes into the programme, the show appeared to suffer technical difficulties. The announcer returned to apologise and explain that in its place, the BBC would air 'A Quiet Night In', an older episode of the same series. This was, of course, part of a misleading ploy to convince viewers that there was a ghost in the machine. Further calculated technical 'glitches' in the programme led to the broadcasting of live CCTV footage from the dressing room of the (supposedly) frustrated stars Reece Shearsmith

and Steve Pemberton. To confirm the actors' apparent bewilderment in finding their dressing room on BBC Two, Shearsmith live tweets 'Are me and Steve Pemberton on BBC two now?' to which *League of Gentlemen* colleague Mark Gatiss tweeted back (in real time) 'YES!!', encouraging the audience to directly interact with the programme on social media. Further sinister developments and fatal technical glitches interweave folklore and history about Granada studios into the narrative (including alleged hauntings as investigated on the programme *Most Haunted*). These elements helped to fool a number of viewers into thinking what they were watching was literal truth and found audience members live-tweeting cast members to offer condolences or even switching channels and missing the ending (the technical glitches were so plausible that the show lost twenty percent of its less patient viewers, Harrison, 2018).

*Ghostwatch*, in 1992, similarly fooled viewers, featuring several techniques that led to the blurring of fact and fiction. A 91-minute play, *Ghostwatch* was presented on BBC One at Halloween as a piece of reality television investigating supernatural activities in the house of a single mother and her two young daughters. With clear similarities to the story of the Enfield poltergeist, the play 'employed all the visual language, presentation and techniques of a live broadcast show in a convincing way'. This included using the authority of real-life BBC presenters Michael Parkinson, Sarah Greene and Mike Smith, all of whom were familiar to and trusted by viewers at the time: 'many viewers believed the show was real simply because Parkinson was presenting it'. The team were investigating the supposed presence of a spirit known as 'Pipes', and viewers were encouraged to telephone the studio with their own supernatural experiences.<sup>21</sup> The apparently-live broadcast in fact took six weeks to produce and, due to its convincing nature, received an unprecedented reaction from viewers, with an estimated 20,000 callers ringing the BBC during the climax of the show, with 'over 100,000 calls to the BBC about the show in total'. Despite heavy pre-publicity stating that *Ghostwatch* was a drama and the late transmission time of 9:25pm, parents and viewers were outraged, even calling Scotland Yard and Northholt police about the alleged events in the programme, claiming that their children were too scared to sleep: "'My kids were terrified!" commented Mrs Valerie McVey in the *News of the World*' (Screen, 2003, pp. 58-60). A tragic event linked with the programme, fuelling a media attack with *Mail on Sunday* headlines like 'This TV Programme Killed Our Dear Son' (Chapman, 1992), was the suicide of one teenage



viewer, Martin Denham, an 18-year-old with learning difficulties, who hanged himself from a tree near his Nottingham home five days after watching the programme. Denham's parents complained to the Broadcasting Standards Commission, arguing *Ghostwatch* caused their son's death but, although 'a coroner made no reference to the programme when he announced his verdict that Denham had taken his own life', the Commission nevertheless ruled that the BBC 'had a duty to do more than simply hint at the deception it was practising on the audience. In *Ghostwatch* there was a deliberate attempt to cultivate a sense of menace' (Frean, 1995, p. 12). A study in the *British Medical Journal* later reported several cases of post-traumatic stress in children who had watched the programme (O'Connor, 2017). It is extremely unlikely that Shearsmith and Pemberton would not have been familiar with the history and methods of *Ghostwatch* when planning 'Dead Line' and their own misleading tactics.

Not all examples of ostensive drama are as extreme in their methods and efforts to 'fool' an audience, but these lend significant weight to Koven's argument. Any media text, even a straightforward dramatised ghost story, for example, in its presentation of legend, is recognised as mass-mediated ostension. Whether explicit debate occurs about a legend within the text itself, or the text merely encourages debate on the part of the audience, is peripheral. Ostension has occurred simply in the presentation of the legend: 'the *possibility* that the phenomenon was real, even if entertained momentarily, makes the incident legendary. And that this phenomenon is *presented* for us, makes the event ostensive' (Koven, 2007a, p. 194, italics in original). Another example is the spoof documentary *Alternative 3*, shown on ITV in 1977, presenting a supposed investigation uncovering a plan to make the Moon and Mars habitable for human colonies due to terminal environmental catastrophe on Earth. The broadcast's final message is that those viewing the 'documentary' are those who have been left behind on Earth to die by conspiring governments. Originally intended as a prank for April Fool's Day, the hoax of *Alternative 3* would have been less immediately apparent in its postponed June broadcast and caused viewers to worry that the presented events were real: 'Anglia's switchboard was jammed...Thames TV logged over 100 calls of complaint'. Newspapers like the *Daily Mail* 'tied the film into the Watergate scandal of a few years earlier' and Mary Whitehouse, whose conservative crusade against broadcasters was informed by her Christian values (BBC, 2008),

remarked that 'the film was brilliantly done to deceive' (Brotherstone & Lawrence, 2017, p. 148).

Koven proposes 'mass-mediated ostension' as a framework within which to study and understand *how* film and television uses folklore. *How* legend is reproduced, using what techniques, is central in the examination of mass-mediated ostension in both the presentation of narratives and in making them plausible for an audience. Folk-horror film and television audiences are often left with the impression that folkloric elements employed in narratives are drawn from factual historical record, whereas, as Koven's discussion of *The Wicker Man* (see 2.1.2) shows, various folkloric elements illustrated as pieces of 'action and mise en scène are intended to evoke a feeling of authenticity within the diegesis' but, in fact, 'it is the indiscriminate inclusion of any and all forms of "folklore" into the...diegetic mix, which creates' what Koven terms the 'folklore fallacy'. Because Hardy and Shaffer's own confidence in Sir James Frazer's text *The Golden Bough* is used uncritically, the representation of folklore in *The Wicker Man* 'becomes highly problematic, in that they unintentionally reproduce many of the flaws of Frazer's original' (Koven, 2007b, pp. 271-9).

I return here to Scovell's argument that folk horror 'is never all that fussed with a genuine, accurate recreation of folklore' and that 'anything could effectively be put into the mix...and still come out looking relatively authentic' (2017, p. 29). This claim to authenticity or, at least, plausibility is precisely why examination of such folkloric presentation *does* matter. As Dégh and Ellis make clear, what and why beliefs persist, develop, are acted upon or reproduced in culture is absolutely integral to modern folkloristics, as is the concept of ostension itself. A useful example Jacqueline Simpson gives is the fabricated legend of the three crowns of East Anglia, as used by M. R. James in *A Warning to the Curious* (adapted for television in 1972). Robert Lloyd Parry's documentary *Dim Presences* (2019), about the origins of James' tale, discusses the convincing nature of the legend and suggests that James combined 'an obscure local legend' that tells of 'the final resting place of three unknown British kings' with wider myths concerning supernatural protection from European mythology and medieval tales. The tale is given such 'plausible details, many readers now assume that this antiquarian "legend" which James wove into his fictional tale is authentic folklore' (Simpson, 2011, p. 286).

So, in the on-screen presentation of a legend or folkloric narrative, ostension has occurred:

if a particular tele-play presents the narrative to us (the audience) as dramatic recreation, it is ostensive...Ostension occurs when we are sutured into the diegesis (and the mechanisms for that suturing) and we experience it directly, as opposed to being told the story. Ostension is action (Koven, pers. comm., 3 August 2018).

For example, in episodes of *A Ghost Story for Christmas*, we see characters being 'haunted' (e.g. 'The Treasure of Abbot Thomas' and 'A Warning to the Curious'), and in *The Owl Service* we see uncanny events occur as characters become strangely affected by Welsh legend; thus the programmes are ostensive. Interestingly, in examples of the programmes under study, there are also points at which characters discuss supernatural folklore and belief (or lack thereof) or known folkloric texts, history and local folklore. Koven refers to this kind of discussion of folklore, *telling* as opposed to *showing*, as 'representation of the belief nexus rather than a product of it' (pers. comm., 3 August 2018). *Telling* (verbal representation) is less ostensive than *showing* (presenting or dramatised) but both function as types of ostension within many of the TV programmes in this study and, I propose, each complements the other. For example, in one serialised *Doctor Who* story, 'The Stones of Blood' (1978), we see characters participating in ritual ceremonies at a stone circle: ostensive action. However, characters also discuss traditional belief within the diegesis; the Doctor has a conversation about the foundations of Druidism: 'I always thought that Druidism was founded by John Aubrey in the seventeenth century'. The combination of 'showing' and 'telling' may accentuate the verisimilitude for the audience and, therefore, the overall ostensive effect.

Recalling the potential affect of popular media as discussed in 1.3.5, the derivation of supernatural folklore employed in television is, therefore, integral to examine in terms of explaining the enduring influence and often-acclaimed eeriness of that which is *wyrd*. What Koven refers to as 'motif-spotting' is therefore a less useful approach than one based on a more general examination of how (and which) folk beliefs are represented: 'To understand *how* popular film and television uses folklore motifs, we must dig deeper to see what happens when such motifs are recontextualised within the popular media text' (Koven, 2008, p. 70).

Some folklore scholars have explored popular media and ostension in specific programmes: Catherine Tosenberger's study of *Supernatural* (2005-2020) hopes 'to suggest possibilities for further research into the depiction of folklore...in popular culture in general' (2010, p. 8.1). She describes the series as one which 'not only uses ostension because it is a mass-media text that dramatizes folk narratives, it also actively and consistently depicts ostension as a process' (2010, p. 1.5). Because the plausible representation of legend involves a possibility of belief, it is also vital to examine narratives aimed at children, as televised legends are 'often among the first encounters with traditional narrative a child might have' (Brodie, 2018). For example, Stewart Lee (writer, comedian and *Children of the Stones* fan) asks Matthew Holbrook, a Druid: 'It's reasonable to assume that your life would have been very different, then, had you not seen *Children of the Stones* as a child?' Holbrook replies: 'It had a dramatic effect on me...very much so, because I wouldn't have...[otherwise] been introduced to stone circles and paganism' (*Happy Days*, 2012). In this case, watching *Children of the Stones* has influenced the course of at least one viewer's real-life belief and related behaviour.

As noted in an earlier chapter, the study of children's television has been woefully lacking in research and attention from television scholars (Peirse, 2010; Wheatley, 2012) and folklorists alike. Brodie observes that Linda Dégh, in her work on the mass media, wrote in passing 'about children's television as part of the contemporary belief process' through which children become acquainted with notions of evil and the supernatural (2018). However, Brodie also remarks that when Dégh turned her attention more fully to television, her examination focused solely upon programmes for adults.

Gillian Bennett has expressed a dismissive attitude to mass media, remarking that commerce and popular culture have created cartoonish stereotypes of the supernatural and that the 'supernatural has been officially demoted to the nursery world of grown-ups and children alike, where it is frankly so synthetic a concept that it can serve no useful purpose at all' (1987, p. 210). However, Brodie states that, from television programmes like *Scooby-Doo*, young viewers are actually 'learning the grammar of mystery and legend' and, given the popularity and influence of such programmes, 'we can learn a vernacular epistemology of late-twentieth century

belief'. Brodie's discussion of *Scooby-Doo* highlights the relevance of examining the construction of belief in children's television in which

villains are, in a process of pseudo-ostension, appropriating and exploiting vernacular belief systems that are presented as active. And, implicit in an episode and made explicit as a recurring theme for every episode over the course of the series, disproving a supernatural explanation for a particular experience does not disprove the supernatural as a category of possibility...belief is always potential (2018).

Michael Dylan Foster and Jeffrey Tolbert propose 'the folkloresque' as a way of looking at how folklore functions in the world of popular culture, specifically to 'reenvision categories such as *folklore* and *popular culture*, to explore how they mutually influence each other, and to productively problematize distinctions between them'.

'Folkloresque' here is different from what I describe as 'wyrd'. Wyrd describes narratives employing folklore in order to unsettle an audience, with eerie effect rather than outright horror. 'Folkloresque' is popular culture's own version of folklore: something which *seems like* folklore or legend but is not necessarily 'wyrd' in the sense of being creepy or unsettling to an audience. Folkloresque is a useful term in this burgeoning branch of folklore studies, as it describes creative, often commercial texts (such as film and television, games and graphic novels) 'that give the impression to the consumer...that they derive directly from existing folkloric traditions' (2016, pp. 4-5, *italics in original*), whether this is literally the case or not.

Paul Cowdell discusses Koven's 'folklore fallacy' alongside Foster and Tolbert's 'folkloresque' as a way of examining how folklore functions in the world of popular culture and, as discussed earlier, how 'approaches to folklore and its theory find their way into cultural productions. The discipline of folklore itself has shaped and informed their development' (Cowdell, 2021, p. 193). Foster and Tolbert, with reference to Koven's work, do not discuss ostension in detail but note that a perceived sense of authenticity is central to the folkloresque. Therefore, in their discussion of that which 'seems like' or may be interpreted as folklore (intentionally or otherwise), Foster and Tolbert describe the folkloresque as that which may not be 'real' folklore but which retains a plausibility for an audience in its presentation.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the literal truth or veracity of the media or fabricated legend is less relevant than its representation. Foster and Tolbert's discussion of the folkloresque closely relates to the communication of folklore and mass-mediated ostension:

A common aspect of a folkloresque term of popular culture is that it is imbued with a sense of 'authenticity'...derived from association with 'real' folklore...[which] has the effect of validating the work in which it appears...[and] leads to greater exposure to a wider audience for local and culture-specific traditions; in some cases this inspires a feedback loop in which the folkloresque version of the item is (re)incorporated into the folk cultural milieu that it references (2016, p. 5).

Elsewhere however, Tolbert (2013) draws upon Koven more heavily to develop his notion of 'reverse ostension'. The term itself is a little misleading, suggesting backwards action, or even inaction, but 'reverse ostension' is actually used to describe a reflective, adaptive activity. Using the Slender Man internet phenomenon as prime example, Tolbert describes a kind of 'reverse engineering' process in which participants connect fragmentary elements and fabricated facts to create a legend narrative where none previously existed. Tolbert remarks, however, that although creative acts (including filmmaking) may self-consciously construct their own folklore, this does not necessarily constitute what he sees as reverse ostension. Tolbert sees reverse ostension as a conscious creative process, but also that it is the *collective and participatory experience of legend construction* (such as within web forum interaction) that is an equally vital element of this process 'particularly suited to contemporary Internet-based fan culture' (2013).

Nevertheless, on-screen performance and representation of contemporary legend is, in Koven's conception, mass-mediated ostension. Foster and Tolbert highlight the importance of examining the ways in which types of folklore are expressed throughout popular culture, specifically in terms of understanding how perceived 'authenticity' is 'constituted and performed through popular media' (2016, p. 37).

#### **2.2.6. Mass-mediated ostension: my application**

In a similar manner to Bruce Jackson's understanding that 'feature films have *at least* three kinds of folklore': narrative content, craft and technology, and audience interaction, I propose here three types of mass-mediated ostension communicated by television. Firstly, television programmes where folklore 'is part of the substantive content' of the narrative may include obvious folkloric elements such as traditional

music or folk legends and rituals presented in action through re-enactment (*showing*) on-screen (Jackson, 1989, p. 389, italics in original). Such programmes thereby perpetuate the possibility of persuading an audience of the 'truth' in such legends if, in reference to Williams (in Bennett & Smith, 1990, p. 43), the legend is shown as if it were real (such as *Children of the Stones* promoting as popular belief Frazer's outdated notions of ancient British Druidic rituals).

Secondly, the diegesis may include characters verbally discussing, or expositional text about, supernatural folklore (*telling*). This use of reference to traditional belief or folkloric texts may assist the framing of the action for the audience in support of a plausible context, which may similarly encourage the audience to entertain the notion of the *possibility* of truth. This is a different use of folklore as substantive narrative or thematic content from that described above, with this latter type of representation specifically used to contextualise or frame the presented action. In a critique of interpretive separation of cinematic dialogue from action, V. F. Perkins argues that "Statements always come in a context which guides the assessment we can make of them" (Perkins, 1990, p. 3). I entirely concur that on-screen elements, including dialogue, cannot be separated from their context nor any associated action in terms of interpreting the poetic meaning of the whole. This, in fact, echoes my own conviction that it is less important *what* motifs or elements of folklore are presented on screen than the *way in which* they are presented (see 2.2.4).

When Mr. Fisher, presented as a character with authority and knowledge, discusses Frazer's *Golden Bough* in *Robin Redbreast*, it is with the utmost sincerity. When the Vicar speaks of local folklore in 'A Warning to the Curious', he is presented as a respectable scholar (see 1.2.2). When Margaret in *Children of the Stones* explains the history and folklore of Milbury to Matthew, Sandra and Adam (see 4.2.3), it is in a quiet museum with a lesson-like atmosphere. When Claire Kapp shares archaeological history and folklore about stone circles, she is regarded highly by Quatermass (see 3.3.5). In each of these cases, the 'teller' is posited as an expert (often a sympathetic character), overtly discussing folklore in a sombre, quiet or scholarly setting: the character, context and presentation suggest that the audience take them seriously. These moments tend to occur perhaps only on one or two occasions within an episode or even a series which makes them stand out not only from the perspective of folklore studies but also in terms of the programme itself and the 'prominence with which' the

makers 'present an item of information to its importance in the film's [or television programme's] scale of values' (Perkins, 1990, p. 5).

Therefore, in combining folklore studies with screen studies, I believe there is a strong case to distinguish a folkloric *telling* from *showing*. Instances of *telling* are not notable merely as information conveyed to audience (whether in dialogue or on-screen text, see fig. 81) but are distinctive because of the way they function as part of the whole, *because of* the character doing the telling, *because of* the setting, *because of* the way in which elements like editing, sound and camera present the telling to us. The telling, therefore, is not separate from the whole interpretation, but performs a slightly different ostensive function to *showing*. I suggest that these first two types of presentation (doing or *showing* in action) and verbal representation (*telling*, as a kind of folkloric exposition) function together to create a more plausible diegetic context for the audience and, in doing so, combine to accentuate the *possibility* of persuading the audience that 'this could really happen/have happened' (fundamental to the communication of legend).

Thirdly, in the creation of television itself, when specific *ways* of retelling these stories or legends are repeated or paid homage (to the extent that the same sources, writing styles and techniques may be used), this then becomes another form of ostension (*making* or recreating). For example, the use of vintage broadcast cameras in the creation of *Inside No.9* (2016) to encourage an 'authentic' atmosphere of 1970s television is acting on a conviction that 1970s horror is a map for creative behaviour: that its approach and techniques lend a special kind of plausibility. Here I again clearly separate questions of belief and ostension. I do not suggest that creators of *wyrd* television literally believe in the folkloric tropes they represent, but that those working in television, in their sincere presentation of supernatural folklore, were striving to include a sense of authenticity in their work (in similar terms to how Tolbert above describes 'folkloresque' texts as functioning). This mass-mediated communication of supernatural folklore can become an overt form of ostensive behaviour whereby contemporary directors deliberately and consciously evoke themes from *wyrd* television programmes, re-enacting a style of presentation in their folkloric tales, in order to achieve a similar specific goal of unsettling contemporary audiences. As Jackson suggests, folklore is a



central component of the technology itself [in the sense that] the crafts are learned as any other, in formal and informal ways; the groups making the films have all the characteristics of occupational folk communities (1989, p. 389).

Alan Garner, renowned for keen involvement in television productions of his own work such as *Red Shift* (1978) and *The Owl Service* (1969), understood the medium as a means to explore the boundaries of fact, fiction and credulity: 'There is absolutely no way of telling that what you see on television is any more fantastic than life itself. The whole thing is really an illusion. Or it is real' (*Celebration: Alan Garner*, 1980).

In the *showing, telling* and *making* of legendary narratives in media texts, each of these levels of mass-mediated ostension can work together to blur fact and fiction, combining existing folkloric sources (whether published or commonly understood as existing in oral tradition) with those which may be entirely fabricated for the text. Literal truth, as in all forms of ostension, becomes irrelevant if both 'real' and fictive sources, both folklore and the folkloresque, are presented as equally plausible, even if simply within the diegesis of a media narrative. If such a narrative is effectively unsettling and plausible in its communication of supernatural folklore, then *wyrd* television programmes are important to examine as social documents which reproduce, perpetuate and even create examples of supernatural folklore and contemporary legend in their own right.

To begin my application of these ideas to 1970s British television, I examine in the following chapter the work of the writer Nigel Kneale. As outlined in 1.2, Kneale's name occurs in multiple contexts in almost every interview I conducted, with both generations of participants citing his work as a significant influence upon them. Despite this high regard from his peers, historically Kneale's work, which often places folklore and contemporary legend at the fore, has been broadly underappreciated. I therefore aim to address the cultural significance and impact of Kneale's work in 3.1. Using case study examples in 3.2 and 3.3 I explore what existing notions about supernatural folklore and contemporary legend Kneale draws upon but, more importantly, *how* they are reinterpreted in the context of the programme narratives' *showing* and *telling* of folklore. Additionally, I consider in detail the formal techniques and stylistic methods used in these televisual representations of folkloric and contemporary-legend narratives and what purposes and effects these may achieve.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Author Sarah K. Marr traced the use of 'folk horror' back to a 1936 edition of *The English Journal* (Skaldsummerisle, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Issue 1 of *Hellebore*, 'The Sacrifice Issue', was edited by Maria J. Pérez Cuervo and published on 31 October 2019.

<sup>3</sup> I myself recall lying awake in bed at night as a child in the early 1980s, worrying about what would happen should nuclear war break out. Disquieting contemporary parallels with Russia's invasion of Ukraine in March 2022 once again prompted anxious discussion of nuclear capabilities in mainstream media (and numerous discursive references to *Threads* on social media).

<sup>4</sup> Best outlined by Mark Fisher (2014).

<sup>5</sup> Savile, a long-time radio and television presenter in British light entertainment programming (in the 1970s and 1980s in particular), was revealed in the 2010s to be 'one of Britain's most prolific sex offenders and a serial rapist who used his position to abuse and attack hundreds of women and children, including those he came into contact with while making programs for the BBC' (Wheatley, 2020, p. 71).

<sup>6</sup> See appendix 7.1 in which I have detailed over 135 programmes and series titles (amounting to over 800 hours), broadcast in the UK between 1968 and 1986, with *wyrd* themes or subject matter at their core.

<sup>7</sup> It is, perhaps, worth noting that, at 87, Armstrong's memory may not have been at its peak. During my interview with her, we went on to discuss a number of programmes and sources which she seemed to have forgotten about, such as *The Stone Tape*. It is therefore possible she may have forgotten some such programming existed, she was busy more with *making* television than *watching* television or was simply never aware of such content; this doesn't mean that it wasn't evident in broadcast schedules.

<sup>8</sup> *Harvest Home* entered the *New York Times* bestseller list for adult fiction at number five on 15 July 1973, hovering around the middle of the table for a few months before finally dropping out of the top ten by 18 November 1973 (Hawes Publications, n.d.).

<sup>9</sup> In 1973-74, Lyons Maid began selling ice lollies named 'Red Devil' and 'Haunted House', with suitably lurid wrappers featuring devils, ghouls and monsters. In 1974-75, Walls released lollies including 'Count Dracula's Deadly Secret' (marketed as 'deadlier than ever with blood red jelly!' and, for *Doctor Who* fans, a chocolate-and-mint-flavoured variation called the 'Dalek's Death Ray' (Brotherstone & Lawrence, 2017, pp. 650-4).

<sup>10</sup> One PIF shown to my year group at school (perhaps between 1982 and 1984, when I was aged between five and six) especially affected me. I recalled the film ending with joyriding teenagers in an horrific car crash with 'blood' dripping down the frame and turning the entire screen red, which left me confused and upset. Over 35 years later, as part of this study, I was able to identify the film as *Seven Green Bottles* (1975), a 34-minute educational film made in association with the Metropolitan Police, warning of the consequences of juvenile delinquency. The scene in question in fact takes place halfway through the film and seems even more chilling upon review: the violent crash is accompanied by the sound of a child crying in pain and a loud heartbeat which markedly stops as a realistic congealing-blood effect slowly turns the screen to black.

<sup>11</sup> Wheatley particularly recalled being shown Alan Clarke plays and films such as *Contact* (1985) and *Scum* (1979), which he describes as being 'like a really grim version of *Grange Hill*' (pers. comm, 25 May 2018), at an inappropriately young age, with no warning or contextual explanation from teachers. It is unlikely that Wheatley refers to

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the original 1977 *Play for Today* version of 'Scum', as it was banned by the BBC from broadcast until 1991, having been deemed to be too violent and controversial (BBC, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> The PIF in question is *Rabies Means Death* (best estimates place the film's creation between 1975 and 1979), about which Brotherstone comments: 'I've only recently realised that what I figured was a childhood fear response has transformed into a genuine phobia over the decades...I just can't go anywhere near it!' (pers. comm., 4 February 2022).

<sup>13</sup> Programmes were repeated, but usually months or even years later, and often at a different time during broadcast schedules.

<sup>14</sup> Lynch had in fact been making animations and short films since the 1960s but his first feature film *Eraserhead* was not released until 1977.

<sup>15</sup> The Englishman William Thoms 'coined the Anglo-Saxon compound "Folk-Lore" in 1846 to replace the phrase (and old-fashioned notion of) 'popular antiquities' (Jones, 1994, p.1; Ben-Amos, 1971, p.4). Three decades on, in 1878, the Folklore Society was founded in London (mentioned in chapter 2.1), and the American Folklore Society ten years later in 1888.

<sup>16</sup> An MA in Folklore Studies at the University of Hertfordshire ran for the first time in 2019-20 but, at the time of writing, is the only course of its kind offered in England.

<sup>17</sup> For example, the 2021 international conference *Perspectives on Contemporary Legend* included papers on topics such as US campus rumours and legends; Donald Trump, sharpie pens and internet memes; conspiracy theories in modern media; disinformation in the Covid-19 pandemic; and my own paper on ritualistic use of Zoom technology as reflected in film and television during lockdown.

<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Tucker's article 'There's an App for That: Ghost Hunting with Smartphones' proposes the term 'hypermodern ostension' to describe a type of ostension that 'relies upon smartphone technology and popular media' (2017, p. 29).

<sup>19</sup> 'The Hookman' is an urban legend about a killer with one hand replaced with a pirate-like hook. According to Brunvand, the story began circulation in 1950s America, becoming widespread amongst teenagers by 1959 and continuing expansion into the 1960s (1981, pp. 49-50). Mikel Koven devotes a chapter of his book *Film, Folklore, and Urban Legends* to examining the 1992 film *Candyman* through the lens of folkloric ostension (2008, pp. 137-52).

<sup>20</sup> Folklore and fake news were also the subject of a special issue of the American Folklore Society's *The Journal of American Folklore*, (131), 522, Fall 2018.

<sup>21</sup> The phone number given out was real, but the 'callers' heard in the drama were actors. Real viewers who did get through on the telephone were told that the programme was a work of fiction (Screen, 2003, p. 58).

<sup>22</sup> Tolbert (2013) describes 'real' folkloric legends as narratives which arise from and are accepted within a community as part of that community's culture, regardless of whether said narratives are literally true or not.

### 3.0. Nigel Kneale

#### 3.1 'That Quatermass fellow'

From the creation of Quatermass, via various BBC teleplays, feature films, television series and beyond, Nigel Kneale's work has reached several generations of viewers. Kneale remains, however, underappreciated as a writer, especially in comparison to contemporaries such as Dennis Potter, even though there have been new productions and adaptations of Kneale's work on television, film and radio in almost every decade since the 1950s (see appendix 7.5).<sup>1</sup> Kneale is described by admirers as 'one of the most influential writers of the 20th century' (Simpson, 2007) and even as 'having invented popular television' (Gatiss, 2006). Piers Haggard, who directed Potter's acclaimed television series *Pennies from Heaven* (1978) and worked closely with Kneale on *Quatermass* (1979), describes Kneale as 'the best science fiction writer in Britain' (in Fleming, 1980, p. 14) and 'very intelligent...[one of] the most substantial writers...to use the supernatural element [as] something quite weighty' (pers. comm., 5 June 2017). Jeremy Dyson says it is difficult to overestimate the influence of Kneale, who

did that brilliant thing of fusing genres and drawing, simultaneously, on horror and science-fiction tropes, and I think was an influence that hung over a *lot* of the other stuff...I think he's a lens or a prism through which much television passes...And an unacknowledged one as well, underappreciated (pers. comm., 15 March 2018).

Kneale's first success as a writer came in 1950 when he won the prestigious Somerset Maugham Prize for *Tomato Cain and Other Stories* (1949).<sup>2</sup> Kneale is best known, however, for the fictional character Professor Bernard Quatermass, an heroic scientist who is Head of the British Experimental Rocket Group, part of Britain's space programme. Quatermass appeared in four television serials written by Kneale (played by a different actor in each production), the first three of which were transmitted live by the BBC, each in six weekly instalments: *The Quatermass Experiment* (1953), *Quatermass II* (1955) and *Quatermass and the Pit* (1958-1959). The fourth serial, *Quatermass*, made for ITV, is of most interest for this study, alongside other examples of his work broadcast in the 1970s. The aim here is not to detail Kneale's background fully (for a comprehensive biography, see Murray, 2017). However, although the early *Quatermass* serials are not within this study's time period (and are written about

elsewhere in greater detail than most of Kneale's other work),<sup>3</sup> it is important to establish briefly the basis of Kneale's television career in terms of his thematic focus and approach to the medium.

Kneale had been working on adaptations of plays and novels for the BBC in the early 1950s but *The Quatermass Experiment* was an original creation by Kneale and unlike anything shown on television before, making 'the kind of impact a television drama could only dream of making nowadays' (Hearn & Rigby, 2003, p. 8). In part, this was the result of 'an accident' when the BBC discovered a gap in schedules which amounted to six weekly half-hour slots between 18 July and 22 August 1953 (Fleming, 1980, p. 15). Kneale recalls the BBC drama department's plea: "'For God's sake write something, because the programme is empty in the summer. Please, somebody, think of something'". So I did' (in Murray, 2017, p. 37). The BBC had made science-fiction dramas before, but they had tended to be adaptations and one-off dramas, such as a version of H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine* in January 1949.<sup>4</sup> At a time when very little material was written specifically for television, *The Quatermass Experiment* was Britain's first-ever original science-fiction serial, firmly establishing Kneale as 'That Quatermass fellow' (Coleman, 1975, p. 20).

An additional factor indirectly leading to the serial's success was the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Broadcast live on 2 June 1953, just over a month before *The Quatermass Experiment* aired, the coronation was an 'event that did more than any other to make television a mainstream medium' (History of the BBC, n.d., 'The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II'). There was a rush for sales of television sets before the live broadcast: 'In 1947, the government issued 14,560 TV licences...six years later, the figure was 3.2 million' (Ryan, 2018, p. 22). It is estimated that over twenty million people watched the live coronation, outnumbering radio audiences for the first time, with many who didn't own their own television squeezing 'into the front room of any friend or relative who did...After the broadcast, many were inspired to go out and buy their first television' (Murray, 2017, p. 37). Weeks later, *The Quatermass Experiment* was highlighted in *Radio Times* as prime-time Saturday viewing, in the 8:15pm slot (fig. 24). The plot revolved around a British space rocket mission from which, mysteriously, only one of the original three astronauts returns. It becomes apparent that the remaining crew member has been infected by an alien life-form and has brought the deadly cargo back to Earth. The story's climax in Westminster Abbey features a

parasitic monster seeking to reproduce itself. The same location having just recently welcomed the Queen on television screens around Britain, Kneale was aware of the potential effect on viewers:

I set it in the Abbey because, apart from any symbolic overtones, it was the place that remained vividly in the audience's mind from the Coronation a few weeks earlier (in Meikle, 2019, p. 13).

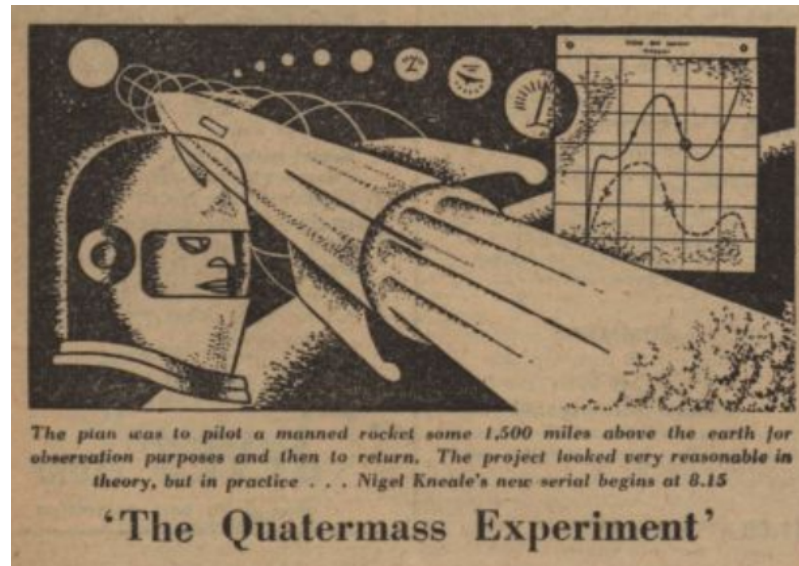


Figure 24: *Quatermass* featured in *Radio Times*

The impact of *The Quatermass Experiment* was enormous, affecting those who would go on to create Britain's cultural production, beyond just those working in television: author Philip Pullman called *Quatermass* 'the most enthralling TV serial I've ever seen'. Children who grew up to be countercultural musicians were also deeply affected, such as Ringo Starr, who was so 'terrified by Quatermass' that he was 'always terrified that someone would...[mark me] and then I would start walking like [a zombie]'. David Bowie, too, watched 'a tremendous amount of...*The Quatermass Experiment* from behind the sofa when my parents thought I had gone to bed...I would tiptoe back to my bedroom rigid with fear' (in Murray, 2017, pp. 110, 148-9).

The impact of television itself as a medium in this context should not be underestimated (discussed in chapter 1.3). Neither should the contributions of Kneale's colleagues, such as the director of all three BBC *Quatermass* serials, Rudolph Cartier. Cartier, an Austrian émigré who had worked with Billy Wilder and Emeric Pressburger before fleeing Nazi Germany, brought a cinematic sensibility to the small screen, Kneale recalling that 'The more difficult and improbable it was, the more keen [Cartier] was to do it' (in Ryan, 2018, p. 23). Using a different approach to the

dependency upon close-up shots in what Kneale saw as unambitious 'intimate' dramas, Cartier was praised by Kneale 'for his ability to deliver epic productions within limited television resources' (Rolinson & Devlin, 2008, p. 48). In a 1959 *Sight and Sound* article, Kneale advocated a continuation of pushing 'hard against the [television] medium's limitations, detailing how he and Rudolph Cartier had done so time and again' (Murray, 2017, p. 113). With characteristic prescience, Kneale suggests that such restrictive techniques might have been a thing of the past: 'In a few years screens will probably measure about five feet by three, and have far higher definition than today...The 'intimacy' idea will only be of antiquarian interest, like the tiny screens that produced it' (1959a, pp. 86-88). Cartier himself argued that the television *Quatermass* stories were more effective than the subsequent cinema versions 'because of the "hypnotic" power emanating from the T.V. screen to the viewer, sitting *isolated* in his darkened room' (Cartier, 1958, p. 10, italics in original).

Jowett and Abbott's study of the horror genre leaves no doubt that such televisual impact on an audience is significant:

television is, and has always been, a significant location for horror...Watching horror on television in all of its variations has shaped the creators of and commentators on the genre (ourselves included) and this has led to new and exciting forms of televisual horror that continue to appear on our screens...Through television, horror begins at home as we all sit frozen in front of our television screens (or hidden behind the sofa).

Kneale's television work has even had influence beyond British culture: 'the quality of his writing has influenced [directors John] Carpenter and Joe Dante' (Jowett & Abbott, 2013, pp. xv, 223). Carpenter credited his own screenplay for *Prince of Darkness* (1987) to 'Martin Quatermass'<sup>5</sup> and Dante, who used the name 'Professor Bernard Quatermass' on an office door as a brief homage in *Gremlins 2: The New Batch* (1990), noted that Kneale's writing 'had an intellectual depth', describing Quatermass as 'a remarkable achievement' (*Quatermass and the Pit* [sic], 2011).<sup>6</sup> *Alien* (1979) screenwriter Dan O'Bannon stated that he 'worked very hard to understand and emulate some of what Nigel Kneale had done' (in Murray, 2017, p. 235). Similarly, Kneale's writing has provided undercurrents for work by Stephen King and Stanley Kubrick along with *The X-Files* (1993-2002), for which Kneale himself 'rejected an offer to write, with its own paranoid thriller/black slime content to match *Quatermass II*' (Rolinson & Devlin, 2008, p. 64).

### 3.1.1 Research interview data – the Kneale effect

In my research interviews with pivotal writers and directors in folk horror, over half spoke about how directly influential Kneale's work has been upon them, which interested me greatly.<sup>7</sup> As seen in table 1 (in 1.2.7), references to Kneale arose in fourteen instances, more than double the number of the next most frequent instances, namely *Blood on Satan's Claw*, the BBC *A Ghost Story for Christmas* series and *Children of the Stones*. These titles are more commonly associated with folk horror and I was surprised to see Kneale's name far outweigh these in discussion. Other than a mention of two programmes written by Kneale (*The Stone Tape* and *Quatermass*) amongst a list of 1970s television programmes included in my original information for participants, none of my communications specified Kneale's work as a central focus. Therefore, in most cases, Kneale's influence was raised spontaneously in discussion by participants themselves.

My proposed interview questions made it clear that my study's interest in television was from a folkloric perspective and, as mentioned earlier, Kneale is mainly associated with science fiction and horror. For Kneale's name and work to come up so often, then, in this context suggested that there is clearly something significant about his work relating to supernatural folklore and contemporary legend that requires greater study than it has previously been afforded. It also reveals that Kneale has long been widely admired as a writer by those working in similar fields despite his lack of broader critical acclaim.

Another interesting point arising from my data analysis was that Kneale was mentioned by interviewees of all ages, from those born in the 1930s to those born in the 1970s. The older participants are not only of an age to have seen the original live *Quatermass* broadcasts and Kneale's other early work, but also to have been working contemporaneously in television and film themselves, making them Kneale's peers (Kneale having been born in 1922, slightly earlier than my oldest participants). Piers Haggard (born 1939) worked with Kneale on *Quatermass* and considers him an influence, with evident admiration for his work, describing him as 'a clever man, clever man' (pers. comm., 5 June 2017). Even those who had not worked with Kneale, such as Moira Armstrong (born 1930), remember programmes like *The Stone Tape*: 'I thought



that was actually rather good' (pers. comm., 11 September 2017). Robert Wynne-Simmons (born 1947), speaking about his own writing, commented that Kneale was 'an influence on me...certainly *Quatermass* and *The Stone Tape*...[which] I found fascinating' (pers. comm., 22 May 2017).

The younger participants in this study are too young to have seen many original broadcasts of Kneale's work: Ben Wheatley (born 1972) would have been just three or four years old when *Beasts* was aired in 1976. Others such as Jeremy Dyson (born 1966) may well have seen broadcasts of programmes like *Beasts* and *Quatermass* despite being relatively young at the time. Even though Kneale's teleplays were 'always really aimed at an adult audience' (Kneale, in Fleming, 1980, p. 16), Dyson was aware that they were 'done so skilfully...I could pick that up as a ten-year-old child' (pers. comm., 15 March 2018). However, whilst viewing such programmes at an impressionable age may account for a degree of the impact of Kneale's work upon some younger individuals (see discussion on children's television in chapter 4.0), the detail and extent of their appreciation for Kneale as a writer suggests that his work has been sought out by this group, revisited and shared via physical media, including programmes that were not easily available or had never been repeated on air. Jeremy Dyson confirms this regarding *Beasts*:

when I finally got my hands on it again in adulthood, which was with quite a gap, because it wasn't really available until, well actually Mark [Gatiss] had some bootleg tapes in the late '90s and that was when I re-engaged with it...I was looking at it as a practitioner. I was floored by how good the best of it was (pers. comm., 15 March 2018).

Ben Wheatley equates Kneale's writing with the critically-acclaimed work of director Alan Clarke ('Penda's Fen', 1974; *Made in Britain*, 1982; 'Scum', 1991). Wheatley suggests that the best examples of television work from the 1970s have characteristics of political playwriting, which are

all over the Kneale stuff...everything feels deliberate and kind of slightly stagey but super serious in a way that things aren't serious any more...there's no irony in any of it, it's not a joke...There's a sincerity to the seventies stuff and an urgency, and I think it's possibly to do with where the writers have come from, and it's like the seventies writers would have been dug out of agitprop theatre (pers. comm., 25 May 2018).

Similarly, other interviewees of this generation equate Kneale's work with acclaimed literary writers often associated with not only science fiction and horror but also folk horror and contemporary legend. Jim Jupp (of record label Ghost Box, born 1968) mentions 'Kneale's notion of the supernatural colliding with the mundane...the scientific and modern versus the ancient and magical', a folkloric thread he sees prevalent thematically throughout British horror and science fiction

evident in the work of John Wyndham, Nigel Kneale and Alan Garner...It's that peculiar fictional conceit of the supernatural bleeding into the suburban and mundane. The small English town is maybe odder than the traditional gothic or sci-fi settings but somehow more plausible and certainly more creepy (pers. comm., 22 May 2018).

Where specific programmes were mentioned throughout my interviews, *Beasts* and *Quatermass* arose frequently in discussion and, therefore, will form the basis of the textual analysis which follows.

### **3.1.2 Genre, authorship and folklore**

One reason Kneale has been critically overlooked is because he largely worked in what is often dismissed as genre fiction. Gatiss argues that a condescending critical reaction to Kneale's work, because of an association with science fiction and supernatural tales, 'has forever kept him in the "cult" bracket, legendary to some but never considered alongside Dennis Potter, David Mercer and Alan Plater' (2006). Even scholars highlighting Kneale's vital importance in influencing 'the development of British television drama' also invariably note his underappreciation and 'relative critical neglect' (Rolinson & Devlin, 2008, p. 45). Although television science fiction 'has dealt with topical themes and issues as seriously as any [critically acclaimed] *Wednesday Play* or *Play for Today*', Kneale's work in particular meeting criteria often related to radical drama such as social and political commentary and aesthetic innovation, the genre has, comparatively, 'been paid little serious critical attention' (Cooke, 2003, p. 124).

Jowett and Abbott note that Kneale was 'one of the first British television screenwriters who saw the potential for television as an art form' and has been described as not only as a 'pioneer of British television drama' but 'the father of British

science fiction television'. They argue a strong case for Kneale as a 'horror auteur', noting that critics often describe his work as 'chilling, uncanny, disturbing and downright frightening' (2013, pp. 92, 96). Even in this case, as with science fiction, 'the horror genre has also been neglected in television studies' and, as Lez Cooke states bluntly, 'the history of TV horror has yet to be written'. Cooke cites examples of Kneale's work from the 1970s as 'important' horror programmes such as *The Stone Tape* (broadcast on Christmas Day 1972), 'the seriousness of which was in marked contrast to the light-hearted fare usually on offer' (2003, pp. 125-6).

Any close examination of Kneale's work reveals that it is, in fact, more nuanced and complex thematically than either typically generic science fiction or horror, Kneale himself arguing that *Quatermass* was 'Not science fiction, but just uses its forms' (1979a, p. 4). Kneale distances himself from generic convention, stating that he finds 'the formulas and concepts of Science Fiction...too often mechanistic or facetious' (in Rigby, 2000, p. 57). Kneale even goes so far as to condemn science fiction as being to 'real writing' what 'painting-by-numbers' is to art, starkly summarising science fiction as 'Overwritten, overblown and oversold' (c.1979a).<sup>8</sup> Kneale similarly distanced himself from horror, stating that 'The Quatermasses were never meant to be "horror" stories. There's more humour than horror in them' (in Fleming, 1980, p. 16). Kneale even made clear that he had 'no great respect for horror films' and stated that a 'TV cult equivalent to the glut of horror films would, I think be terrible' (in Knowles, 1976, p. 2).

Nonetheless, Kneale often grafted elements of supernatural horror and science fiction together, effectively creating a new subgenre with *Quatermass* and, in his examination of the supernatural in plays like 'The Road' (1963), subverting the tropes of ghost story fiction. In fact, the tropes most common throughout Kneale's original work are less generally 'horrific' and more closely align with folk horror and my concept of 'wyrd' television.

Elements of supernatural folklore and contemporary legend are woven throughout Kneale's fictions, often attributed to his Manx heritage and Celtic background that 'imbued in him a fascination for folk-tales and legends' (Meikle, 2019, p. 15). Kneale himself confirms this: 'There's always been a traditional belief on the Isle of Man in things you can't quite see' (in Bryce, 2019, p. 21). Stone circles, hippie cults and alien invasion are central to versions of *Quatermass*: folkloric creatures such as the

yeti are the subject of films like *The Abominable Snowman* (1957) and the series *Beasts* features werewolves, poltergeists and possession. Supernatural hauntings are dealt with in teleplay *The Stone Tape* and witchcraft, magic and pagan ritual loom large in the film *The Witches* (1966, fig. 25).<sup>9</sup> Paul Cowdell's discussion of *The Witches* notes that folklore itself has, in general, been overlooked as an integral element of folk horror, arguing that 'Placing folklore itself in the shaping of these [folk horror] films provides a defining element in their identification as a cinematic subgenre' (2019, p. 320).



Figure 25: Poster for *The Witches*

Recurring stylistic, narrative and thematic tropes across Kneale's writing broadly include a frequent 'clash of the old and superstitious with the new and rational' (Murray, 2006, p. 4) and a staging of the strange, eerie or supernatural within everyday, often domestic, settings. Indeed, 'the uncanny ability to effectively blend ancient and contemporary phobias became one of Kneale's greatest strengths' (Bissette, 1992, p. 38). Supernatural folklore and an uncanny sense of eeriness are frequently present in Kneale's work, his narratives often studies 'of rural superstition quizzed by contemporary rationality' (Newman, 2007, p. 67). Rolinson and Devlin summarise:

It is striking that many of his horrors come from long history and dark traditions...the constant battle between old and new...ancient

folklore...computer language...the urge to move forward and the compulsion to look back...As in Freud's concept of the *unheimlich* (unhomely), Kneale's combination of the familiar and the uncanny often employs dark fantasy to problematise our sense of personal or national selfhood (2008, p. 64).

Placing supernatural folklore and traditional belief at the heart of the enquiry, an idea central to this thesis, allows a shift *away* from screen-studies genre debates whilst widening discussion of Kneale's work in terms of artistry and authorship. Although credit is of course due to those with whom Kneale had productive collaborative relationships, such as Cartier discussed above, director Peter Sasdy on *The Stone Tape* and producer Nick Palmer on *Beasts*, 'creative authorship is clearly attributed to Kneale through the on-screen credit "by Nigel Kneale", privileging the screenwriter as author' (Jowett & Abbot, 2013, p. 91) as is standard in British television. In opposition to classical film theory in which authorship is 'invested in the director who turns a screenplay into images and who animates the conventions of the genre', it is more commonplace in television studies to accord the status of 'auteur' to the writer. John Caughie argues that the most respected, honoured and 'serious' writers in television drama

are those who invent new forms of expression, bringing cultural prestige to television by preventing it from being routine...by being 'original' rather than 'conventional' (2000, pp. 127-8).

This respect bestowed upon a 'serious' television writer such as Dennis Potter, for example, often reverently referred to as 'playwright' or 'dramatist' rather than 'screenwriter', reflects a hierarchy of script over image which, in turn 'reflects the privilege given to theatre as the cognate form which brings prestige to television'. Therefore, if 'art television, like art cinema, is less bounded by generic conventions', moving discussion of Kneale's work away from genre allows for examination of his unconventional work beyond the frameworks of science fiction and horror within which it is usually discussed (Caughie, 2000, pp. 128-9). The context of folklore studies and the representation of supernatural folklore allows for a new perspective on Kneale's narratives and thematic concerns:

Kneale's view of the witchcraft to be portrayed [in *The Witches*] was almost directly opposite to [director] Frankel's, and he reportedly wanted to use the film to mock contemporary witchcraft practitioners...He was unhappy with the studio and Frankel pulling

the film towards a straighter view of witchcraft. Both Kneale and Frankel, approaching the topic from opposite directions, link their cinematic vision to a reading of folklore (Cowdell, 2019, p. 315).

As established in chapter 2.0, 'wyrd' is used in this thesis to describe narratives which combine the use of supernatural folklore and contemporary legend (whether in an 'ancient' or modern setting, rural or urban) with the intention of an unsettling effect upon the audience. 'Wyrd' embraces these ideas, whilst avoiding the need for blunt genre definitions. Kneale's work, although related as much to the horror genre as it is to science fiction, is rarely 'horrific' in an overt sense, being more often described as creepy or eerie. For example, rather than evoking terror, the teleplay *Murrain*, which 'deals with the ancient art of witchcraft in the contemporary setting of a small, north Nottinghamshire village', was described in *TVTimes* as 'a pretty wholehearted piece of creepiness' (Coleman, 1975, p. 20). Mark Fisher argues that 'what is most characteristic of Kneale's best work is its sense of the eerie...operating on the interstices between genres (especially horror and science fiction)' (2016, p. 83). Kneale's use of supernatural folklore and contemporary legend, and the techniques used to achieve a sense of eeriness in the representation of this, is, therefore, an ideal case study for the ideas in this thesis. Textual analyses of examples of Kneale's work can help to understand *how* folklore is represented within television programmes. It may also help to explain the enduring influence of 1970s television upon subsequent generations of TV and filmmakers who continue to produce similar folkloric narratives in their own work.

### 3.2 Beasts: Baby

*Beasts*, a television series of six episodes (each a stand-alone teleplay), with narratives concerned with rural settings, remote communities and pagan beliefs, is far closer to folk horror than the science-fiction genre with which Kneale is more often associated. The episode 'Baby' is cited by some of today's most prolific television writers as especially memorable and is discussed at length by Jeremy Dyson in my interview with him. It is, therefore, a useful sample for analysis. Russell T. Davies cites 'Baby' as 'still the most frightening thing I've ever seen',<sup>10</sup> Mark Gatiss describes the episode as 'probably the most disgusting piece of television I've ever seen!' (in Murray, 2017, pp. 193-4) and Jeremy Dyson regards it as 'still one of the most terrifying bits of television that I've seen'. Dyson links 'Baby' directly to folklore and eeriness, 'because it's drawing on English history and witchcraft, there's a very heavy atmosphere that hangs over the whole thing' (pers. comm., 15 March 2018).

The plot of 'Baby' follows a young couple: heavily pregnant Jo (Jane Wymark) and her husband Peter (Simon MacCorkindale), a vet, who have recently moved from the city to the countryside for Peter's new job. The only other characters in the play are Stan and Arthur, builders carrying out maintenance on the couple's rural farmhouse, Dick, Peter's new veterinary practice partner, and Dick's wife, Dorothy. During building work on their cottage, Peter and Jo discover a strange, mummified creature in an urn, sealed up behind a kitchen wall. Jo increasingly feels unsettled and in danger in what should be the safe space of her home as her sense of worry and panic build over the course of the episode.

Having written the screenplay for director Tony Richardson's adaptation of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1959), often cited as a 'breakthrough' film for British New Wave cinema (Nicholson, 2013, p. 117), Kneale was well versed in British social drama. 'Baby' is a prime example of Kneale's 'relocation of horror to the everyday' (Jowett & Abbott, 2013, p. 92). Bringing the supernatural to the kitchen sink blurs lines between genre conventions as Kneale avoids more typical gothic locations by placing horror in a domestic setting:

the strangest things ought to happen in the most ordinary of places. If a monster appears in an everyday place, it's much more frightening than in some Gothic castle where you would expect it to be (Kneale, in Wells, 1999, p. 55).

Given Jowett and Abbott's framing of Kneale as a significant television horror auteur, it is thus interesting that his work is not mentioned in Helen Wheatley's discussion of British TV ghost stories (2006), which does include several folk horror titles, such as the BBC *A Ghost Story for Christmas* series. Perhaps this is in part because work like *Beasts* is so atypical of the genre and does not have *conventional* gothic trappings of British horror, even though it relates closely to *wyrd* television on many other counts.

The original ATV publicity brochure for *Beasts* emphasises the combination of 'supernatural and realism', describing Kneale as 'an acknowledged master of screen suspense and mystery' rather than making overt links with science fiction or horror (ATV, 1976, p. 1). The latter was, again, something Kneale wanted to avoid: 'I don't want people to think it is going to be horror, horror, horror all the way, although in each story there is an element of the shivers up the spine' (in Knowles, 1976, p. 2). The series' spine-tingling theme is emphasised by the original publicity as 'the mystifying influence of animals, usually malevolent and menacing, in eerie circumstances' (ATV, 1976, p. 1), which returns to Mark Fisher's discussion of Kneale's work as a hauntological paradigm.

### 3.2.1 Sounds and establishing atmosphere

One of the most distinctive uses of the formal elements of television in 'Baby' to create and build an ominous atmosphere is that of sound, a notable element across the entire series of *Beasts*. There is no music in the episode, but the soundtrack is instead punctuated throughout by the cawing of crows, akin to the looming, threatening presence of corvidae in Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963).<sup>11</sup> In fact, every single outdoor scene in 'Baby' is accompanied by crows cawing in the background. Corvids have made many appearances throughout Celtic myth and legend. According to John Rhys in *Celtic Folklore: Welsh and Manx (volume II)*, there was a prevalent belief in Cornwall that King 'Arthur himself, instead of dying, was merely changed by magic into a raven, a form in which he still goes about; so that a Cornishman will not wittingly fire at a raven' (1901, p. 611). In folklore, corvidae commonly symbolise darkness and death: 'The raven, for instance, has a wide-world reputation as the harbinger of evil and ill-



luck...If ravens come cawing about a house it is a sure sign of death, for the raven is Satan's own bird' (Wilde, 1888, pp. 176-7).

The programme opens with a birds-eye view shot from the cottage chimney, tilting down to reveal Arthur (the elder of two builders working on renovations for the couple) climbing a rickety ladder to remove a bird's nest from the eaves. Arthur notes that none of the eggs has hatched ('Dud ones maybe, the bird should know') and that he'll keep the 'pretty' things for his grandchild. Arthur's younger mate Stan is less respectful, flinging them to the ground as 'filthy, stinking, addled!'. The series title then appears letter by letter on the screen over a close-up of the discarded eggs splattered on the ground (fig. 26), each letter accompanied by the harsh squawk of a crow. A sinister atmosphere is thus established from the start: the opening high-angle shot suggests characters are being observed whilst the cawing of the birds reinforces the sense of a sentient presence, as implied by the aforementioned Celtic legend. Folkloric connections with doom prevail more strongly, however, as the only birds we see are in the form of unhatched eggs, introducing the notion of babies dead and unborn. The bird's cry over the letters and smashed eggs is akin to angry, threatening screams.



*Figure 26: 'Beasts' title lettering over broken eggs*

Further examining the use of cawing on the soundtrack of 'Baby', Shelley O'Brien points out that the presence and volume of cawing throughout the episode becomes more threatening on the soundtrack as the story progresses, noting that 'the collective noun for a group of crows is "a murder" and that crows have also been

regarded historically as “harbingers of death” (2011). However, despite the significant use of their cries, we never actually see any crows or ravens, which adds to the unsettling effect and heightens Jo’s increasing discomfort.

The audience never learns if Jo herself can see any birds, or what the source is of an ambiguous animalistic sound she later hears: an unnatural combination of braying, growling and a gobbling, electronic cry. It is evident from Kneale’s screenplay that his intent was to use sound to imply a threat and to obfuscate its origins: he describes a ‘sound...extraordinary and gruesome. Low and hoarse, between animal and human...between a snuffling cough and a rasping effort to speak’ (1975, p. 36). In one unsettling scene, when Jo ventures outside the cottage to investigate a noise, the camera remains on her reaction to the sound, cutting from a long shot to a close-up of her face whenever the strange animal noise is heard. On each cut to close-up, Jo snaps her head to her right (fig. 27), suggesting that there is a distinct spot from which the sound is coming. Jo’s wide-eyed searching indicates that she cannot see anything and the effect for the audience, unable to see where Jo is looking, accentuates a sense of fear and frustration.



*Figure 27: Jo searches for the sound’s source*

Focusing directly upon her reaction leads the viewer to empathise with Jo’s claustrophobia in her new surroundings: the scene ends with her fleeing, screaming in fright to her husband, who dismissively orders her to ‘stop waffling, woman’. The audience remains unaware if Jo herself could see anything at all, even though the sound and editing imply an ominous presence. This leads the audience to wonder what the source or purpose of the strange cry was, as Mark Fisher discusses:

A bird's cry is eerie if there is a feeling that there is something... behind...the cry...that there is some kind of intent that we do not usually associate with a bird. Clearly, there is 'something which does not belong'...Is there something anomalous about this bird's cry? What exactly is strange about it? Such speculations are intrinsic to the eerie (2016, p. 62).

Jo's initial arrival at the cottage is greeted not only with the cawing of crows: her cat (named 'Mudslinger', or Muddy for short), which she carries to the house in a basket, begins to mewl incessantly upon the crossing the threshold, getting louder and louder, reminiscent of a baby. As Jo goes to make a phone call in the lounge, the cacophony increases. Muddy's caterwauling combined with the sound of building work from the next room (the piercing tap, tap, tap of Stan's hammer and chisel), along with Jo herself trying to shout unconvincingly down the phone 'Oh yes, everything's fine' whilst shushing the cat, makes the soundtrack uncomfortable and the viewer apprehensive from the start.



*Figure 28: Uncomfortable physical space*

The physical space adds to the uneasy atmosphere: to get to the telephone, heavily pregnant Jo has to wrestle her way around an awkward living-room layout while carrying her large wicker cat basket. The room is divided by intrusive beams, chairs, empty shelves, piled books and a staircase: the mise-en-scène presents barriers everywhere, creating an unwelcoming obstacle course (fig. 28). The cat, sensing threat,

bolts from the cottage at the first opportunity never to return, which Jo attributes to the location: 'It was this place...he didn't like it...he was fine until I brought him inside'.

### ***3.2.2 Discovery of the creature***

It is into this atmosphere that the mummified creature is introduced, found sealed in an earthenware urn bricked up in a wall. The unusual discovery takes place within a prosaic context: Jo prepares cat food in the kitchen, talking to Peter whilst he sizes up for a discount freezer. He then decides to take up chiselling at the brickwork where Stan has left off for the day. Two minutes of screen time are given to Peter's do-it-yourself and, for one full minute of this after the couple notice a hollow inside the wall, there is no dialogue, only the sound of hammer and chisel. Jo stands quietly, closely watching Peter as he removes the brickwork and reveals the urn in real time. The domestic setting and mundane chatter establish what should be a very ordinary situation, but visual focus on the brickwork and Jo's silent anticipation (heightened by close-ups of her watching Peter) make this an anxious scene. The eeriness here is in the awkward length and understated technique: an unusual, unsettling find is presented in a very straightforward manner, mostly in brightly-lit mid-shots of the couple, with no sound effects, music, camera movements or fast editing.



*Figure 29: 'Oh God, it's something dead': the creature is discovered*

Discovery of the creature inside the urn is treated quite matter-of-factly, Jo handing Peter kitchen tongs to fish it out and laying newspaper on the table for him to



place it on (fig. 29). The audience is shown the creature clearly, with no artifice in how it is presented but instead a well-lit, full-screen close-up (fig. 30). The creature is prominent and brightly lit in several scenes (in shots which amount to almost two full minutes of screen time): when characters examine it, the viewer is invited to also. Despite this clear view, however, the creature itself is uncanny: it resembles a familiar animal but has indeterminate details and form. We can see it is mummified with folded limbs but we are unable to determine their length. The creature also has some kind of animal teeth, fur and claws, and is curled up in what might be a foetal position.



*Figure 30: Well-lit close-ups of the creature*

The concept of a creature buried in the wall of a house is not unfamiliar in folklore: apotropaic marks or concealed deposits are most commonly assumed to be

devices to ward off malevolent forces or spirits from a home. Such deposits, as Ceri Houlbrook discusses, frequently derive from animals such as

the remains of chickens, dogs, donkeys, bulls, rabbits, sheep, and (notably widespread) horse skulls. One of the most common is the cat, found bricked up in walls or sealed beneath floorboards and hearthstones (2018, p. 198).

Scholars note that although some cats found in such places may have been accidentally enclosed, there is more than enough evidence to suggest some were deliberately concealed for a specific purpose. Houlbrook's summary of such possible purposes, whether foundation sacrifices, for luck or fertility or to scare natural (or even supernatural) vermin, seems to suggest that in every case, the purpose is to ward off malevolent forces and bring luck or protection to the house's occupants. Margaret Howard too suggests that the cat 'came to be used as a luck-bringer or building sacrifice and also as a protector against magic or pestilence' (1951). In her examination of recorded cases of dried cats, one image even somewhat resembles the creature in 'Baby' (fig. 31).



(b) CAT AND RAT (LIST NO. 20) IN SALISBURY MUSEUM  
*The group has been posed after death, and may have been intended as a rat-scare.  
By courtesy of the Salisbury, South Wilts and Blackmore Museum*

*Figure 31: Dried Cat and Rat (in Howard, 1951, Plate K)*

Interestingly, in 'Baby', the only pointed conversation about the purpose of such an entombed creature seems to suggest exactly the opposite to common folklore.

A brief conversation between Jo and Arthur, the elder of the builders, is the only moment that nears explicit discussion of folkloric belief. Arthur confirms that, rather than to bring good fortune, in this diegesis at least, the most likely folkloric function or purpose is bad. There is no specific mention of witchcraft, but it is heavily alluded to. Jo wonders if the creature is a kind of charm, which fits scholarly notions of apotropaic devices, yet her instincts oppose commonly-held notions of protection, as she asks if it is to 'make something bad happen'. Arthur's dialogue alludes to, but doesn't explicitly mention, a curse, suggesting that this creature has been placed in order to

put harm on a person or a place...on lands it was often done [by] somebody wise in them powers...To cast 'em and to fix 'em. Now, that little brute you found, they always had such as those...to hold the power, to bind it.

This is the most overt reference made in the dialogue to witchcraft and a witch's familiar. Arthur's younger colleague Stan is quick to mock Arthur for talking about such beliefs, suggesting that for the modern common man this type of folk belief is



Figure 32: Stan (centre), ill-at-ease

outdated. However, Stan's nervous manner (fig. 32) indicates he is less *disbelieving* than wanting to change the subject, or that this topic is, at least, not appropriate for open discussion. Arthur's language provokes disgust, linking the notion of a baby with a sense of the unnatural and how the creature might have been used in witchcraft: 'A

thing like that, it'd have been suckled, you know...human suckling. To set it to work.' Stan can clearly tell Jo is shaken, encouraging her not to mind Arthur's words, but we see from her worried expression it is enough to raise her concern and potential for belief.

The scholarly understanding of the purpose of apotropaic devices seems in general to be the opposite of Kneale's use here. Of course the 'baby' is not a cat but an unnatural creature, so the premise is different from the outset, but Kneale's familiarity with folkloric traditions allows him to reproduce them to create a suitably plausible context whilst simultaneously reinterpreting them imaginatively for narrative discomfort and sinister effect. In Houlbrook's accounts of people finding mummified or skeletal cats, the tendency seems to be to keep them in their original place of concealment for luck, whereas Jo suffers precisely because she is unable to get rid of the creature from the household. One example Houlbrook gives is a man who discovered the remains of a cat under the hearthstone in of his farmhouse in Cumbria. Keeping it in place 'seemed to be the right thing to do...It had been there for 200 years plus...so it just seemed right to put this little skeleton back' (in Houlbrook, 2018, p. 206). Brian Hoggard states the purpose of dried cats found in walls is 'almost certainly some kind of protective magic' (1999), protecting a building and its inhabitants from witchcraft or to counter a witch's curse. Hoggard's extensive research in this area catalogues 161 'cases of dried cats...reported for England' alone, noting that countless more 'are discovered but never formally reported'. A typical example Hoggard gives is of one Suffolk builder who 'discovered about a dozen in the area' and believed they were placed 'to protect the place from fire and evil spirits. It was a sort of sacrifice', noting that upon discovery of a dried cat, he 'had always put them back' (2019).

In 'Baby', Jo's natural instinct is to try to get rid of the creature from the start, a sentiment echoed only by Arthur. He is the only character in the teleplay who treats nature and traditional belief as well as Jo herself with respect. Jo is at various points dismissed, ignored or talked down to by all the other characters. The audience is encouraged to sympathise with Jo from the outset: it is her story we follow and we see Jo when she is alone as well as interacting with others. The camera emphasises the viewer's connection with Jo: even when Jo is not participating in action or dialogue, we are still directed to her emotional response in close-up whilst close shots of other characters are few and far between. Therefore, as Jo listens intently to Arthur's talk of



curses and warnings, the audience too is inclined to take his words seriously. There is no explicit mention of magic, but because there is enough *suggestion* of witchcraft in Arthur's dialogue, the audience is led to fill in these ideas, fuelled by Jo's increasing on-screen fear and belief. The ordinary domestic setting encourages viewers to entertain the possibility of belief in some supernatural threat in this otherwise everyday space, and Jo's attempts to get rid of or destroy the creature are thus framed as reasonable actions.

### 3.2.3 Dialogue

Unnerving dialogue is used throughout 'Baby' to describe the creature. Although we are shown the creature quite clearly, the fact that neither we nor the characters can quite make out what it is or adequately describe it is disconcerting. Peter and Dick, trained in animal biology, are equally unable to place the creature's origins, which accentuates the disturbing nature of the find. Peter wonders if it might have been someone's pet but upon examination confirms is not a cat: 'Mind you, it's not a dog either, or a puppy of any kind. A lamb?'. He concludes that the creature is a 'farmyard monster, a cross between two animals that ought to have known better'. He resolves to show it to Dick who, equally inconclusive, jokingly refers to it as 'a giant spineless hedgehog', 'a she-goat's kitten' and 'a whatsit'.

The men inspect the creature gleefully, as if it were a new toy or entertaining puzzle (fig. 33), which contrasts with their grim and disturbing language: 'there's so much distortion and shrivelling, the bones may still have been soft' and 'I'm not sure it was ever actually born'. Kneale's dialogue here sets a troubling tone, combining emotive words such as 'monster' and 'distortion' with concepts of unnatural sex and foetal death. The dialogue continues to reference death, things unborn and aborted, such as in discussion of brucellosis, the cattle sickness on the land surrounding the cottage, about which Jo asks bluntly, 'You mean...contagious abortion?'. Peter and Dick's cheerful, carefree demeanour makes such dialogue not only unsettling but emphasises the characters' lack of sensitivity in relation to Jo's heavily pregnant condition. Easily-overlooked comments and phrases in Kneale's script often help craft anxiety and discomfort. For example, during a telephone call, Jo briefly comments that things are 'going to be all right this time'. On an initial viewing, this may seem

inconsequential small talk about the house move but, on reflection, it adds shade to the narrative, obliquely implying a previous miscarriage. Jo's vulnerability is thus accentuated, and her fears seem increasingly plausible and rational. As Peter and Dick discuss the local case of brucellosis, Jo is the only character to express disgust, fear or sense any ill omens here: again, the audience is aligned with Jo as we see her reactions almost exclusively in close-up in this scene. The men merely treat her concern with derision.



*Figure 33: Peter and Dick (L-R), excitedly curious about the creature*

Peter and Dick are similarly dismissive of long-held local beliefs about the land having something wrong with it. Dick says any issues were 'all ancient history even before my time', calling the previous owner 'a loony' and saying that the locals 'just won't listen' to scientific explanations. Dick tells Peter and Jo that the previous owner 'had a notion to breed Alsations' and 'paid the earth for a prize bitch', only for the dog to 'misfire', frequently losing her puppies. He describes how the owner would get

angry, 'raving at her, cursing at her, cursed me too! And then he blamed the land and got rid of her'. This is the only time the word 'curse' is used by any character and, in this context, suggests Dick refers to the use of foul language rather than witchcraft. However, the phrasing is carefully chosen: Dick's story gives historical context to Arthur's earlier warnings and again links the idea of the land with a curse.

Taken out of context, some of the emotive phrasing in the dialogue may seem overly dramatic or heavy-handed, but such phrases are peppered subtly throughout, and played with sombre conviction. As Jeremy Dyson comments:

the tension is built brilliantly, the tempo of the scare is built...so that not that much happens at first and gradually cranks the tension up...there's no archness, [Kneale] absolutely goes for it hell for leather and that's quite unusual I think in genre stuff, there's no wink to the audience (pers. comm., 15 March 2018).

The dialogue (and its sincere delivery) is therefore a significant factor in how Kneale sets his work apart from what he sees at the more campy, hammy (and Hammer) horror fare of the 1960s and '70s, which he describes as 'tongue in cheek, laughing at itself because it doesn't really know how to do it properly' (in Knowles, 1976, p. 2). A subtle, steady drip-feeding of imagery in the dialogue gradually builds and maintains a level of discomfort and sense of monstrous foreboding beyond the physical scale of the creature's mummified skeleton we see.

### **3.2.4 Visual eeriness**

Aside from seeing the mummified creature itself, unsettling moments created by things *shown* are far less common than things *heard*. There are three scenes in 'Baby' during which Jo sees as well as hears something, witnessed also by the audience in point-of-view shots from Jo's perspective. Jo is the only character present on these occasions and visual evidence of a threatening presence is brief, largely suggestive and ill-defined, lasting for a combined on-screen total of no more than fourteen seconds. Nevertheless, all three moments are jarring peaks of strangeness in the narrative and important to examine in terms of how televisual techniques are used to capitalise on the unsettling atmosphere already established.

The first of these scenes occurs immediately after Jo's conversation with Arthur where witchcraft was implied. The effect of this, combined with discussion of brucellosis, has created links for Jo (and the audience) between the notion of curses

and the land surrounding the cottage, leaving her clearly worried. The audience is led to follow Jo's train of thought as she entertains the possibility of supernatural occurrences, establishing an anxious, unsettled tone as she ventures into the woods to search for her missing cat.

Considering Jo's mindset at this stage of the narrative is important, as point-of-view shots from her perspective emphasise that the representation of events is subjective. The scene in the woods begins with a low-angle shot, looking up at the trees as we hear a loud caw of a crow immediately on the cut, accompanied by more bird cries in the background. The camera slowly reveals Jo in long shot, small in the frame but clearly heavily pregnant, stepping carefully through the trees (fig. 34).



*Figure 34: Jo struggles through the trees*

This is enough to suggest that the woods, towering over the vulnerable figure of Jo, are threatening, with the cawing adding to the unwelcoming atmosphere. Lengthy takes of Jo walking awkwardly amongst trees are intercut with close-ups of her face and subjective shots searching the space. Although the scene is slowly paced to begin with, the inclusion of Jo's point of view through unsteady hand-held shots creates an anxious expectancy of seeing something (fig. 35).

The cawing birds are heard as if a lurking background threat, with the occasional silent lull broken by a jarringly loud caw: a simple but effective way for the soundtrack to maintain an unsettlingly punctuated atmosphere. A couple of long shots of Jo are also at a slightly canted angle (fig. 36), a familiar technique in horror cinema



*Figure 35: Jo's anxious search, and her POV*

to suggest all is not well (whether with the world or even with a character's mental state, as famously used in *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, 1920). Here, the canted angle emphasises Jo's physical struggle, making it seem as though she is walking uphill, having further difficulty clambering through the trees. The outside environment is made difficult and unwelcoming to her, comparable with the way that her lounge is earlier presented as full of obstacles for her.

When Jo stops as if she has seen something, her eyes fix on a point rather than searching the landscape, and a point-of-view shot reveals a pond with an indeterminate dark mass in its middle. Whilst Jo searches for her cat, gently calling 'Muddy?', close ups of her face are well lit and unobstructed throughout the scene. From this point on, however, there are distinct, angular shadows cast across Jo's face,

which not only literally darken the image but suggest a potential physical threat (fig. 37).



*Figure 36: Canted angles suggest an uphill struggle*



*Figure 37: Shadows cast on Jo's face*

There is a possibility that the shape in the pond is the cat's body, and a sudden loud caw on the soundtrack on a cut to a closer shot of the mass again indicates something unpleasant. As Jo turns the clump with a stick, it is still not obvious what it is (fig. 38), although the mass resembles the dead body of a bird rather than a cat, which emphasises the folkloric link between crows, death and portents of doom (discussed in 3.2.1). As Jo breathes a sigh of relief, a shadow moves across the pond and catches her attention. This is the first moment that the audience witnesses a strange visual occurrence. The shadow falls across the pond in a flowing manner which suggests





*Figure 38: A mass in the pond*

something uncanny: to have this effect, there has to be something large rising up steadily to block out all the spots of white light reflected from the sky amongst the trees (fig. 39).



*Figure 39: Light is blocked out across the pond*

Close-up shots of Jo reinforce this, as her eyes trace the movement upward, fearful as if something is high above her (fig. 40), and we see one more point-of-view shot of a large shadow moving up through the trees. These two shots, though brief, subtly suggest a threatening physical presence of some kind.





*Figure 40: Jo watches the shadow rising*

The uncanny nature of this presence lies in its implied size (by Jo's eyeline), the manner and speed by which it rises and the lack of sound or disturbance to the surroundings. There is, however, an accompanying sound of the strange animal noise (described in 3.2.1) which first occurs here as the shadow falls across the pond. This sound is thus established as being associated with a presence, and explains Jo's fearful searching when she later hears the sound again. This element is foregrounded by the original programme synopsis:

Jo is even more nervous when, searching for the cat, she hears a gruesome sound, half-way between animal and human, as if trying to speak (ATV, 1976, p. 5).

In this brief description, the suggested sound of a presence 'trying to speak' comes across as having a more distinct purpose than that realised on screen whilst manifested as a shadow. Nevertheless, the strange sound, beginning at a low volume, becoming louder as Jo looks up at the shadow, becomes more persistent as Jo turns to run back through the woods in the direction she came from. Jo is clearly unsettled and fearful enough to run away from what she perceives as a threat, despite this being difficult (and perhaps unsafe) in her pregnant state. The incessant animal sound suggests she is being pursued, as fast cutting followed by an extended shot of Jo running through the woods emphasises a long, perilous pursuit. As what sounds like many crows cawing becomes increasingly loud over this long shot of Jo stumbling through the woods, adding to the perceived threat, the text 'BEASTS: END OF PART

ONE' appears. The culmination of these elements functions as a cliff-hanger, carrying notions of threat and pursuit into the ad break.

In terms of a tangible threat, the audience has seen nothing more than a shadow, and heard nothing more untoward than bird or animal sounds. But these moments are strategically constructed upon earlier discussions about folklore and belief; a persistent use of language alluding to death; editing focusing our attention on Jo's concern; and camerawork aligning the audience with Jo's point of view. These techniques combined build an unnerving atmosphere and, although some kind of threat is *suggested* rather than revealed, we are encouraged to entertain the plausible possibility of a supernatural presence or folkloric curse as explanation for these events. Other subtle visual techniques increase a sense of claustrophobia around Jo in her own home, a place where she should be safe but which is itself becoming increasingly 'unheimlich', or unhomely (in terms of Freud's notion, discussed in chapter 2.0). For example, when Jo is later contentedly sewing, she hears a noise that sounds like the builder moving paint pots around, though it is clear no-one else is in the house, and goes to investigate. Jo's shocked reaction to finding the kitchen door open and the urn that contained the creature in the middle of the floor suggests that these things are not as they should be (fig. 41). This suggestion that inanimate objects themselves are behaving oddly is strengthened when Jo later finds her rocking chair moving by itself when no-one is around: what should be familiar has somehow become strange. Mark Fisher describes Kneale's work as containing what he calls an 'eerie Thanatos', with reference to Freud, whose 'positing of Thanatos is that *nothing* is alive...all life is merely a route to death'.<sup>12</sup> The idea of death as an ever-present inevitability is infused throughout the language of 'Baby' and, of course, adds weight to an unnerving atmosphere given Jo's pregnancy, but Fisher's argument makes the urn itself significant in this context. Fisher links Thanatos with the material world, stating that in Kneale's work what may be supernatural in one sense can not only be explained scientifically or materially in another but also vice versa: that 'the material world in which we live is more profoundly alien and strange than we had previously imagined'. Therefore, objects themselves can be a threat, 'artefacts operating as fatalistic engines, drawing characters into deadly compulsions', here driving Jo along a path of worry towards doom (Fisher, 2016, pp. 83-84, italics in original).



*Figure 41: Jo finds the urn out of place*

Philosopher Reza Negarestani outlines similar notions to those which Fisher uses to link eeriness, death and materiality:

Pulp-horror, archaic science fiction and the darker aspects of folklore share a preoccupation with exhumation of or confrontation with ancient super-weapons categorised as Inorganic Demons or xenolithic artifacts...generally depicted in the shape of objects made of inorganic materials (stone, metal, bones, souls, ashes, etc.). Autonomous, sentient and independent of human will, their existence is characterised by their forsaken status, their immemorial slumber...The mask in Kaneto Shindo's *Onibaba*...the cube in Clive Barker's *Hellraiser*...the lamp in *Aladdin*...all these are examples of inorganic demons which share common peculiarities and vectors of contagion...Inorganic demons are parasitic by nature, they...generate their effects out of the human host (2008, pp. 223-4).

The displaced urn is an example of this: the question of agency, i.e. what or who is behind its movement, is raised here. The urn is present where there should be nothing and, equally, there is no-one present to have moved it. This 'failure of absence or...failure of presence' is, again, what Fisher suggests exemplifies eeriness. Jo herself, from the perspective of Thanatos, is creating a self-fulfilling prophecy, being propelled along a drive of death: 'there is an agency at work in us (the unconscious, the death drive), but it is not where or what we expected it to be' (Fisher, 2016, pp. 61, 85).

The camerawork accentuates this also as, in the tradition of horror, an audience might commonly expect a fearful character investigating a sound either to be confronted by a frightening sight or monster, or by a view of things as normal, and briefly experience relief, only immediately afterward to cut to a monster or other such 'jump-scare' moment. Neither of these generic conventions is adhered to in this scene, as we cut to a close-up of the urn which, whilst it is out of place, is not horrific in itself: it is instead Jo's reaction which directs the audience response. The eeriness in part is thus fuelled by the conventions of television which are themselves made strange, the uncanny surfacing as 'television's predominant genres and styles are both referred to and inverted' (Wheatley, 2006, pp. 6-7).

Following the scene at the pond, there are only two other moments during 'Baby' when we see a strange presence manifest, both occurring in the final minutes of the teleplay. One occurs when Dick and his wife Dorothy have come round for dinner with Peter and Jo, and all are merrily drunk except for Jo, not drinking because of her pregnancy. Jo is clearing up alone in the kitchen and, hearing the strange animal sound, appeals to Dorothy, who has entered from the lounge. Dorothy talks over Jo and remains oblivious to her concern. Jo turns away from Dorothy, who continues talking and leaves the room off camera. When Jo turns back, she squints into a dark passageway, behind where the urn was found, asking hesitantly, 'Dorothy?'. For just one second, we see a dark bulk disappearing around a corner (fig. 42). Its shape implies someone or something larger than Dorothy and has the appearance of being hooded or cloaked.



*Figure 42: A shape in the kitchen*

The brevity of the appearance and the uncanny nature of the form are unsettling as, combined with the animal noise, it has the effect of the viewer just catching sight of

something from the corner of their eye, but the nature of this intrusion into the household is unknown and unclear. The possibility remains that the shape could have been Dorothy but, as Jo runs to the lounge and sees Dorothy there, she quickly halts in fear. The framing suggests that Jo has been literally stopped in her tracks (fig. 43): she seems trapped and the composition emphasises the lack of possible escape. Jo's isolated fear is further accentuated in a shot of the other three characters framed together (fig. 44), laughing drunkenly, unaware of Jo's worries, remaining both physically and emotionally separate from her.



*Figure 43: Jo is stopped in her tracks*



*Figure 44: Jo is isolated from the others, oblivious to her fears*

The final scene sees visual realisation of a presence in a bleakly shocking climax, drawing upon ideas originally introduced by Arthur's discussion of supernatural



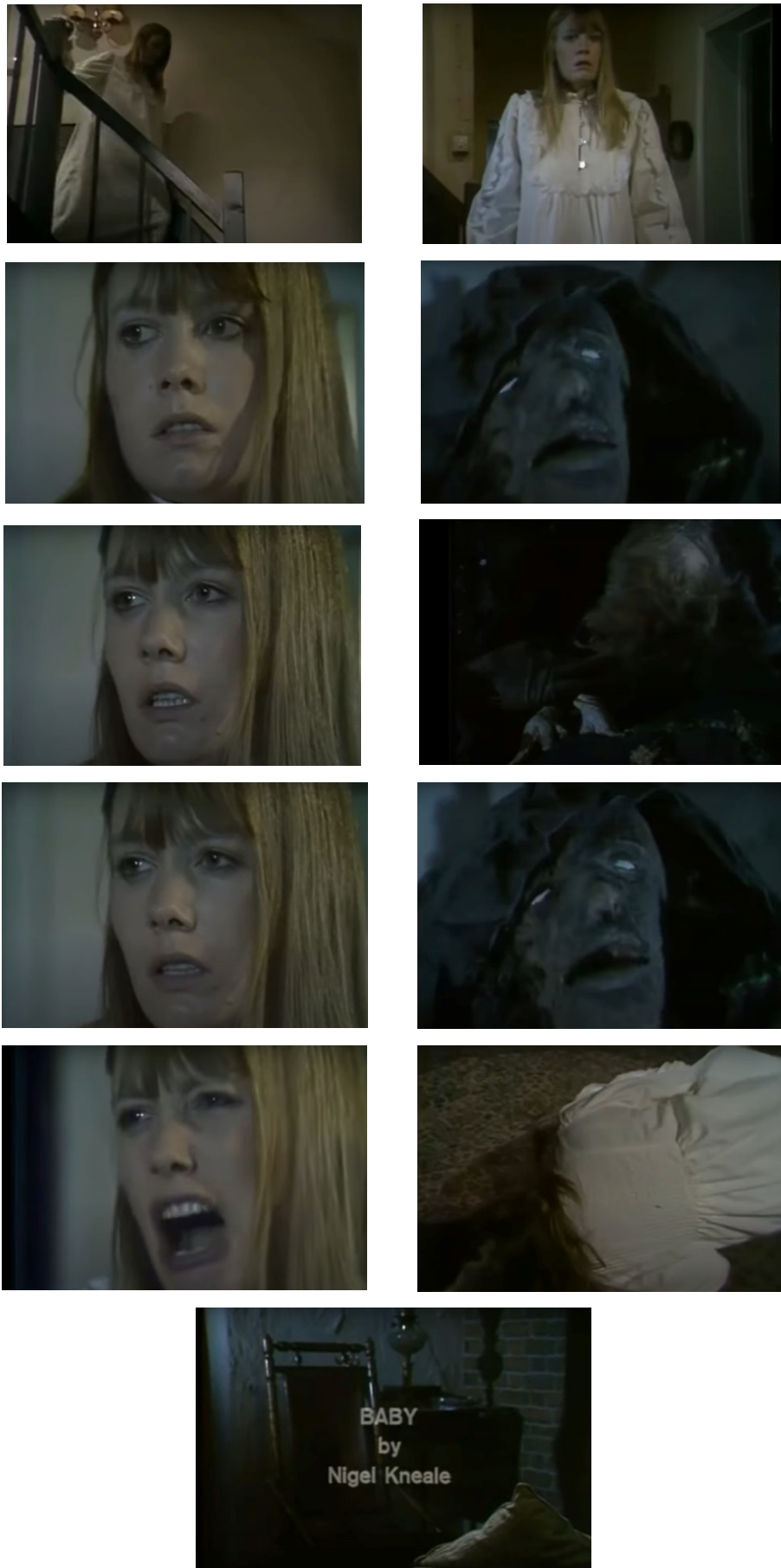


Figure 45: Final sequence of shots

folklore. Jo, having heard a noise whilst in bed at night, gets up to investigate and, as she descends the stairs, the soundtrack remains silent. The camera looks up at Jo from the foot of the stairs, in a long take, zooming slowly from a long shot to a medium close-up. Towards the end of the shot, a quiet noise (like a cross between a human and an animal cooing) can be heard, causing Jo to pause. The camera then cuts to another angle of Jo from the lounge and, in another long take (in medium long shot), Jo resumes her descent, towards the camera's new position. By her movements, we can tell that Jo is aware that the sound is coming from the lounge and is hesitant to turn her head to look. The next cut to a close-up of Jo sees her eyes widen and she reluctantly turns slowly toward the noise as it becomes louder and clearer as a sucking sound. The camera here seems to be leading Jo's movements, as if drawing her towards the source of her fear, remaining on Jo and therefore not giving the audience any more visual information than she has. A crash zoom from long shot to close-up of a figure in the rocking chair is sudden and jarring. The figure's face is hooded, barely recognisable as human and distorted as if charred from burning. The brief shot, apparently from Jo's point of view, is accompanied by the more aggressive, threatening version of the animal sound heard earlier, which continues in loud repetition as if shouting or barking at Jo over the remaining few shots (see fig. 45 for shot sequence). These shots cut between Jo's terrified response in close-up, a shot of the figure's lap upon which sits a small pig-like animal (presumably the creature) and another brief glimpse of the figure's distorted face. In the final close-up of Jo, screaming 'No! No!', the camera cuts to a medium long shot as she screams 'No!' for a third time and falls to the floor clutching her stomach. The animal sound ceases immediately upon this cut, and the audience is left with silence as Jo's final cry dies out and the camera (after following Jo to the ground where she remains lying) pans back to the rocking chair, now revealed to be entirely empty and still.

The 'presence' itself is on screen for no more than six seconds in total but, because of the slow build-up, the fast cutting and the lack of distinct visual evidence of a supernatural presence elsewhere in the teleplay, this is a shocking moment. The imagery and sound effects here connect the discussion about witchcraft and suggestions of an unnaturally 'suckled' witch's familiar to the notion of a curse on the land and the fertility of those within it. Kneale's screenplay notes reinforce this, stating that the sound is to suggest 'whimpering and a nuzzling...the sound of suckling'

(Kneale, 1975, p. 53). We can easily infer that Jo has suffered another miscarriage (and has possibly even died herself), perhaps as a result of the curse. Nevertheless, as is apparent in the final shot sequence, the emphasis lies more heavily on Jo's own perception of events: we are led by the camera to follow her movements, response and point of view.

The ending remains open to interpretation however, and there is evidence that Kneale himself was involved in directing the visual element, favouring the inclusion of a witch figure on screen:

Kneale and producer Nick Palmer clashed with *Baby's* director [John Nelson Burton]...not least because Burton was set against the climactic revelation of the witch and her familiar...Kneale and Palmer mocked up the scene – and filmed it themselves. The end result made a resounding impact on many young viewers (Murray, 2006, p. 6).

Indeed, the ending is what many who cite the programme as unsettling found particularly influential upon them. For example, Jeremy Dyson describes the 'witch's familiar' in 'Baby' as 'twisted and rotten', calling 'upon the mother that fed it which is the shock ending of the episode...a horrific thing to look at' (pers. comm., 15 March 2018). Dyson drew upon his memory of this for direct visual reference in the second episode of *The League of Gentlemen*, in which the character of Tubbs suckles a pig at her breast (fig. 46).



Figure 46: *The League of Gentlemen* (L) pays homage to 'Baby' (R): 'A thing like that, it'd have been suckled, you know. Human suckling. To set it to work.'



### 3.2.5. *Baby: conclusions*

Kneale's 1975 play *MurRAIN* bears striking resemblance to 'Baby', featuring a newly arrived vet who finds the local community of a farming village has ostracised a lonely, elderly lady whom they think, in all but name, to be a witch. The villagers suspect she is responsible for their livestock becoming afflicted with a mysterious ailment that has begun to spread to the people whilst the vet tries to show them scientific reason. 'MurRAIN' itself is an archaic term for a plague or pestilence, relating specifically to infectious disease in cattle and stemming from a Latin term for death (OED, n.d.). Its use by Kneale reveals his interest in exploring not only the roots of ancient and traditional belief but also the clash with contemporary society where such beliefs persist. This notion is further explored in 'Baby' with its discussions of brucellosis and cursed land. Ingham suggests that

Kneale's relationship with this is complex. On the one hand, he clearly doesn't think much of folklore – in Kneale's writing, to give yourself up to magical thinking is madness. But at the same time, fighting it is very often madness too...This is essential to British folk horror: the outsider who stands for progress and modernity, who not only doesn't understand the 'old ways'...but refuses to...who sees the superstition that threatens them as a retrograde step: we don't go back. We don't go back because the past holds fears and darkness. But because we don't go back, we cannot be armed against these primeval terrors. Because we don't go back, we are lost (2018, p. 45).

Whatever the explanation for events in 'Baby', the unearthing of the urn, tales of witchcraft and associated folklore within the narrative play a vital role in shaping Jo's perception of events and cause her to act on her subsequent fears and beliefs. In turn, the audience are encouraged to entertain, if not the possibility of witchcraft itself, at least the plausibility of Jo's actions based upon *her* gradual belief in local folklore. The frequent visual separation of Jo from other characters suggests that, other than Arthur (whose ideas are dismissed by the younger and more 'cosmopolitan' characters), only Jo has potential belief in folklore about local legends, which fuel her worries. To the others these things are easily forgotten and overlooked. The final reveal of the empty chair (which the camera lingers on, in silence, for over thirty seconds of credits)

maintains the possibility that the strange occurrences we have seen could be a result of Jo's imagination:

Not a single thing in *Baby* has an irrational explanation – even the final reveal could be the hallucination of a lonely woman put under a great deal of stress – but that makes it so much worse...you can run away from a witch or a monster, but you can't run away from something in your imagination (Ingham, 2018, p. 47).

Nevertheless, in the case of 'Baby' I am unconvinced that Kneale is as dismissive of a folkloric or supernatural explanation as Ingham suggests. The only sympathetic characters are Arthur and Jo, who are at least open to the possibility of a supernatural explanation that is rooted in local traditions and belief, whilst the audience is strongly encouraged to sympathise with Jo. For example, Peter is shown as more concerned with his own reputation than with either his wife or the animals for which he is supposed to care and is frequently seen to be bullying and dismissive of Jo. In this context, we are therefore encouraged to take Jo's perspective seriously: perhaps there are grounds for her fears, and her instinct to rid the cottage of the unearthed creature. The synopsis of the final scene in the publicity brochure (which it is highly likely Kneale wrote himself, as it echoes directions in his screenplay),<sup>13</sup> describes events in concrete visual terms, with no suggestion that Jo is imagining events:

In the room, a dark bulk is crouched in the nursing chair...the noises are nuzzling, moist and gratified...Then the familiar grisly rasping, but somehow softened, as if trying to speak to the suckling creature. It is a monstrous mockery of a mother comforting her baby (ATV, 1976, p. 6).

There is just enough visual representation of unsettling events and figures along with carefully placed dialogue to invite the viewer to participate in the process of forming or developing a legend. 'Baby' and its inconclusive ending raises questions in the minds of the audience about the plausibility of witchcraft and legend, inviting them to create their own explanation or, as Ellis puts it, 'take a stand on the legend' (2003, p. 60, see 2.2.3). The eeriness in 'Baby' does not necessarily lie in *what* is shown but in *how* it is shown, and in the folkloric context set out in the narrative. The low budgets available to much British television drama of this period certainly played a part in what could be realised, as Jim Jupp states:

There is a uniquely British sensibility in a lot of this television...from a technical point of view there's a low budget, underlit handmade,

knocked-together in a shed vibe at work, that's certainly always been absent in American TV and cinema (pers. comm., 22 May 2018).

What Jeremy Dyson also calls a 'slight creakiness' (pers. comm., 15 March 2018), perhaps most apparent in the special effects of the era (such as the 'witch' in fig. 45), is also part of what encouraged writers and programme-makers to make inventive use of other, simpler techniques such as camerawork, editing and sound. As outlined, all these elements play significant parts in the way folkloric elements are presented, how the audience is increasingly aligned with Jo's perception of events, how she is made vulnerable and how the unease, strangeness and plausibility of events are made manifest on the screen.

Kneale's notion of the supernatural colliding with the mundane makes the invasion of the occult or supernatural all the more *wyrd* in a domestic setting. The backdrop to 'Baby' sees a couple settling into a new home, with practical considerations of building work, a new job and a new baby: Kneale's 'work ties the prosaic with the uncanny; it makes the everyday brutal, and painful, and beset by forces that we can't control or reason with' (Ingham, 2018, p. 44). The structure of the story, Kneale's creative reinterpreting of folkloric traditions and his use of dialogue build and maintain an 'eerie Thanatos' throughout. The atmosphere is redolent with the notion of the unborn or aborted from the outset of the narrative, beginning with the discovery of addled birds' eggs and ending with Jo's likely miscarriage. The combined use of sound effects, brief suggestive shots of a presence and unsettling vocabulary in the dialogue are used to build tension steadily over the course of the narrative, which Jeremy Dyson sees as a conscious systematic approach by Kneale, whom he describes as 'a fantastic structuralist' (pers. comm., 15 March 2018).

### 3.3 Quatermass: Ringstone Round

#### 3.3.1 Background

Compared to 'Baby', which focuses on domestic claustrophobia, the 1979 television series *Quatermass* is quite the opposite in narrative scale. The story traverses not only the urban and rural landscapes of the United Kingdom and societal roles of both the young and old, but also incorporates global scientific cooperation, Earth's pre-history, the cosmos and alien life. In *Quatermass*, Kneale combines a fascination with supernatural folklore surrounding stone circles, landscape and nursery rhymes with contemporary legend and 'theories advanced by writers on flying saucers about the possibility of there having been "ancient astronauts"' (Meikle, 2019, p. 15). Such theories, popularised by writers like Charles Fort in the early 1920s and Erich von Däniken from the late 1960s onward, propose that 'ancient alien astronauts' have been visiting Earth throughout human history,<sup>14</sup> had specific involvement in human development, influencing society and religion, and even have responsibility for the origin of the species itself (Clarke & Roberts, 2007, Grünschloss, 2007). Ideas such as these sought to provide explanations for structures like the pyramids of ancient Egypt, South American Aztec temples and the Moai figures at Easter Island. This is problematic not least in terms of the underlying racist assumptions that so-called 'primitive' non-European civilisations were incapable of producing intricate and complex architecture without the intervention of superior gods from outer space (a point well made by Birns and Rogers,



Figure 47: Meme highlighting racist assumptions inherent in 'ancient astronaut' theories (Birns & Rogers, 2021)

2021, see fig. 47). Nevertheless, Kneale was able to use the presence of these ideas, widespread in 1970s popular culture (see 1.3.2), as a background to the disastrous events portrayed in the plot of *Quatermass*.

In a near-future Britain which has crumbled into virtual anarchy, the now old and weary Professor Bernard Quatermass (John Mills) searches desperately for his missing granddaughter. She has become a member of a growing quasi-religious youth cult, the Planet People, who believe they will one day be beamed to their salvation in space whilst actually being conditioned to gather in vast numbers to be 'harvested' by a mysterious extra-terrestrial force. Quatermass becomes involved in investigating these catastrophic global events and, discovering older people are unaffected by the hypnotic alien power, forms a team of aged scientists to lure the attention of this force to a baited trap, where an atomic bomb awaits.

The series, written in 1973, has a complicated production history. After the BBC rejected the project (largely for budgetary reasons), *Quatermass* was taken up in the late 1970s by ITV company Thames Television and its subsidiary, Euston Films, which had already begun to produce television programmes shot on film (including *The Sweeney*, 1974-1978, and *Minder*, 1979-1994). *Quatermass* was a comparatively expensive project, produced as a television serial of four fifty-minute episodes, as well as a feature-film version aimed at overseas markets, with an 'almost unheard-of budget' of £1 million (Rolinson & Cooper, 2010, p. 163). Reflecting high hopes for *Quatermass*, Piers Haggard was brought on board, fresh from directing the award-winning BBC series *Pennies from Heaven* (1978), written by Dennis Potter. It is unclear if Kneale was aware of Haggard's work on *Blood on Satan's Claw*, but he described Haggard as a 'director for whom I have great admiration' (c.1979b). Haggard calls *Pennies from Heaven* an intelligent, 'weighty TV series that was really interesting', comparable with *Quatermass* as 'artistically substantial...it was rich...It connected and resonated...with my culture' (pers. comm., 17 June 2017). Haggard's work thus provides an interesting link between Potter and Kneale, further inviting broader critical appraisal of Kneale's work as a contemporary literary dramatist.

In articles and interviews about *Quatermass* from recent years, the consensus seems to be that Kneale was disappointed with the production not only for reasons of narrative imbalances between the film and television versions (Rolinson & Cooper, 2010), but also with the story itself:

I was quite unhappy about it really. Though it was interesting to write about a future in near collapse, the rest of the story was a little disappointing...there is not as much suspense as I would have

liked...Also, by then Quatermass had had his day, I think (Kneale, in Wells, 1999, p. 55).

Critical reception for the 1979 series over the decades has ranged from a lack of enthusiasm to outright dismissal, such as Denis Meikle's brutal condemnation of *Quatermass* as Kneale's 'mid-life crisis'. Meikle describes the series as a 'tediously predictable...depressing diatribe' and 'a bleak and bile-filled encore' for an otherwise optimistic science fiction icon, also critiquing Haggard's input as 'unsympathetic' and Mills' 'reluctant' portrayal of the character (2019, pp. 19-20). Kneale himself has reflected that Mills 'didn't have the authority for Quatermass' (in Murray, 2017, p. 213). However, Kneale's above tone of resignation and disappointment is not present in his own archive papers and interviews from the time, which in fact suggest satisfaction in the presentation, stating that 'Sir John Mills plays the new one in a way that's exactly right for the story. I find his performance very moving' (c.1979d). Whilst it would be fair to acknowledge that Kneale may have been promoting the new *Quatermass*, throughout his archive papers he does not come across as someone to make disingenuous statements and, in places, has made handwritten corrections to printed material to ensure that Haggard is particularly singled out for admiration. Additionally, Kneale refers to the 'inventive, startling settings' and 'highly skilled work' of the *Quatermass* production team (c.1979b) and one contemporary reviewer hailed Quatermass as 'a triumph for all concerned' (Brosnan, 1980, p.7). Therefore, it is possible that Kneale's view of his own work and elements such as Mills' interpretation became coloured over time by unfavourable reviews.

### **3.3.2 'The legend returns': Professor Bernard Quatermass**

When the character of Quatermass returned to screens in 1979, it was after a twenty-year absence from television following the BBC's original broadcast of *Quatermass and the Pit* in 1958-1959.<sup>15</sup> Once head of the fictional British Experimental Rocket Group and pioneer of the British space programme, Professor Quatermass is depicted in every incarnation as highly intelligent, pragmatic and moral in character. Quatermass is entirely Kneale's own prescient fictional invention (four years before the 'space age' was launched with the Sputnik satellite in 1957), as evidenced by his notes in

preparation for *Quatermass and the Pit*, revealing that the character was not based on any real historical figures or events:

Since I invented him, I have found Professor Bernard Quatermass a phenomenon of increasing interest...His origin was casual enough. Producer Rudolph Cartier and I picked his name at random from the telephone directory. It had the unusual quality that seemed to fit the director of a Rocket Group...Unusual because it was 1953, when such things were still fiction...Since then...we have all been shot into a factual Space Age...And since men of his profession have evolved from creatures of fiction into having actual power over our lives, we may hope they show some of his pangs of conscience and loathing of bureaucracy (Kneale, n.d., 'Quatermass the Man').

The name Quatermass, and Kneale's own by association, still resonated with the British public, whose 'huge enthusiasm' for *Quatermass* was proudly defended by the author (Kneale, 1979a), protective of his creation.<sup>16</sup> Although Quatermass may not be real in a literal sense, the character had weighty cultural significance, following the impact of the original series (discussed in 3.1). Nigel Kneale was, to many, 'the Quatermass man' (Dyson, pers. comm., 15 March 2018), described by *TVTimes* as 'the writer who created the legendary Quatermass' (Kneale, 1979a, p. 4).

The reappearance of Quatermass was therefore, after two decades, highly anticipated and treated akin to a folk hero returning to save a troubled society, as publicity material declared 'The legend returns...to British television screens' (Thames Television, 1979). This sentiment is echoed by Kneale's own project notes: 'This story is called QUATERMASS, just the name of the man himself', as if the name itself is enough to convey a sense of story (Kneale, c.1979c). It is possible, then, to propose Quatermass as a fictional folk hero whose name and legend are embedded in the popular consciousness. Orrin E. Klapp identified several common types and features of popular folk heroes, pointing out characteristics which suggest that they conform to a 'folk pattern'. Whilst Klapp remarks that 'the roles attributed to legendary heroes' are diverse and some may display 'perhaps only one typical action', Quatermass performs four of Klapp's nine folk-hero roles:

*The Quest* [hero faces]...a prolonged endeavor toward a high goal...*The Clever Hero*...either vanquishes or escapes from a formidable opponent by a ruse...[and is] usually smaller and weaker than those with whom he is matched...*The Defender or Deliverer*...characteristically rescue[s] a person or group from danger or distress. *The Martyr*...In the manner of their death there is an

implication of triumph...[proving] their 'invincibility' even in defeat...[making a] voluntary sacrifice for a cause (1949, pp.17-22, italics in original).

Quatermass begins the 1979 series on a quest, to find and 'save' his granddaughter. Quatermass first appears emerging from a taxi at night amid a derelict urban wasteland, baffled by the dystopian decay surrounding him. Kneale's notes state that the character has lived for years as 'a recluse in a lonely part of Scotland' (c.1979b) and the screenplay describes everything he is greeted with as 'designed to upset him' (Kneale, c.1978a, p. 1). Mills' confused reaction indeed suggests a character plucked out of time and placed into an unsettling, unfamiliar world. This displacement affords Quatermass a sense of timelessness: he has been invited to appear on television in a scientific capacity because, as the producer states, 'someone remembered his name', as if he were a folk hero revived from the 1950s to save the world once again.

Quatermass is also both the clever hero and the defender. Although invited to appear on television because producers are aware of his knowledge as a 'grand old space boffin', Quatermass reveals his true purpose is to search for his missing granddaughter. Typical of Klapp's clever hero, his relative weakness and vulnerability are emphasised: we see Quatermass mugged by a gang of youths outside of the television studio and later he desperately pleads to the studio cameras of his mission, 'I'm an old man trying to find a child'. When he discovers the extra-terrestrial threat to Earth's young people, Quatermass also becomes their defender, as he works to save them from extermination. However, the young, violent populace do not want his help as they mistakenly believe the alien threat to be their salvation, so they too represent an opponent to Quatermass. Therefore (again aligning with Klapp's clever hero) it is Quatermass' cunning intellect which he must use to fool and vanquish the extra-terrestrial threat and save the youth, albeit against their will.

Unlike his earlier incarnations, in the 1979 series Quatermass also becomes Klapp's folk-hero 'martyr', sacrificing himself to carry out the final stage of his plan and trigger the necessary atomic explosion. Although the voluntary sacrifice provides a dramatic conclusion, in keeping with Klapp's model, the narrative context posits Quatermass's sacrifice as a rather bleak and hollow triumph, in keeping with 1970s doom-laden drama (see chapter 2.1). Quatermass bluntly states to fellow scientist Kapp, in the final stages of their grand operation, that there is in fact 'no question' of



destroying the alien force. Quatermass explains that at best they can only hope to 'send a shock through its ganglia...like a man who's stepped on a hornet. That's all'. There is no evidence to suggest this will prevent the extra-terrestrial force returning as, although the world returns to normal for the time being, the final voice-over narration states 'We pray it will never come again'. Only in his final moments is Quatermass reunited with his granddaughter, who cooperates with him in detonating the bomb. However, this reunification is only symbolic: Quatermass is robbed of any meaningful time with his granddaughter and has failed in his original goal of ultimately rescuing her. Bleakly, Kneale himself mused that 'I tried to have the older generation saving the young people, but I'm not sure if the young people were worth saving' (in Wells, 1999, p. 55). There remains, nevertheless, a sense of the martyr's 'invincibility in defeat' and, as long as the name Quatermass is remembered, the legend lives on.

Mills' portrayal, despite the critical misgivings outlined above, is integral to this 1970s depiction of the character. In his seventies at the time (born in 1908), John Mills has a long history in British cinema, familiar to audiences from films including *In Which We Serve* (1942), *Scott of the Antarctic* (1948), *Dunkirk* (1958) and *Ice Cold in Alex* (1958). Though echoing the view that Kneale himself was disappointed with the 'insufficiently heroic' casting of Mills, Mark Fisher states that 'Mills' quiet anger, his compassion and disgust for humanity, his slighted but enduring dignity' in fact make him 'the definitive Quatermass' (2016, p. 90). Mills' filmography displays a successful history of representing tough but vulnerable everyman characters, empathetic heroic failures like Scott and his infamous defeat in a race to the South Pole, or the alcoholic Captain Anson's bittersweet goal to reach a cold lager in *Alex*. Traditionally, British audiences respond warmly to flawed heroes due to a fascination with failure, in part due to a cultural 'tendency towards self-deprecation' but also suspicion 'of over-achievers' (Brooke, 2014). Mills' place as something of a national treasure was formalised in 1976 when he was knighted (having already been awarded a CBE in 1960). Director Haggard states 'having John Mills was essential to making [*Quatermass*]' (pers. comm., 17 June 2017): his familiarity to audiences as portraying flawed heroes suits the disillusioned dystopia of 1970s television and the embodiment of the definitive version of Quatermass. The end of Quatermass' story leaves him a martyred folk hero who, having gambled the future of humanity on educated guesswork, will never know if his sacrifice was a success or failure.

### 3.3.3 Dystopian society & urban wyrd

Because of lengthy negotiations resulting in production of *Quatermass* taking place years later than intended, writers including Kneale himself have commented that by the time of broadcast, elements of the story appeared ‘a bit out of date’. For example, the Planet People more closely resembled ‘flower children instead of punks’ (Kneale in Wells, 1999, p. 55). Piers Haggard recalls thinking during production that it was a pity *Quatermass* ‘wasn’t made a little bit earlier because it would have been a bit more relevant but, still, it’s not irrelevant now because...[it] links to current sociological things, it felt really rich’ (pers. comm., 17 June 2017). Elements of jarring anachronism may in fact enhance the unsettling dystopian tone of *Quatermass*, which resonates with the likes of *Threads* and *The Changes* (see chapter 2.1). The series presents similarly post-apocalyptic landscapes of bleak urban decay against which civilisation has crumbled into violent gang warfare and the elderly have been driven underground. This jaded, misanthropic view of society seems less misplaced than uncomfortably contemporary, with its narrative inclusion of rolling power cuts and nihilistic youth, broadcast just months after Britain’s ‘Winter of Discontent’ when the nation was ‘crippled by strikes and power cuts, rubbish was piled high in the streets, and unemployment reached levels not seen since the 1930s’ (Duguid, n.d.).

The audience is introduced to this urban dystopia at the opening of episode one where, as voice-over narration informs us (with relevance to lockdown conditions during the 2020-2021 Coronavirus pandemic), ‘the whole world seemed to sicken, civilised institutions whether old or new fell as if some primal disorder was reasserting itself’. After his arrival in London is met with graffiti-covered, destroyed buildings and physical assault by muggers, Quatermass is rescued by Dr. Joseph Kapp (Simon MacCorkindale), a fellow scientist who drives them to the television station. Apparently one of the few remaining institutions (the BTV logo is obviously modelled on the BBC’s at the time), this looks less like a broadcasting organisation than a war zone or military base, fortified with barbed wire, sandbags and signs stating ‘Stop or Suffer’ and that guards are ‘authorised to shoot’ (fig. 48). Inside the production gallery of the studio itself is a clearly marked ‘Power Cut Rota’, suggesting that the power

crisis and regulations on limited electricity use, which came into effect in Britain at the end of December 1973, could remain for years to come.<sup>17</sup>



*Figure 48: Stop or Suffer: a dystopian reimagining of BBC Television studios and their 1970s BBC logo*

Whilst Kneale is clearly aware that television, as a medium, can be a platform for intellectual exploration in British culture, he sees the future of popular broadcasting as a descent into crude vulgarity. Kneale's earlier acclaimed teleplay *The Year of the Sex Olympics* (1968) depicts 'The Hungry Angry Show', in which obese contenders bombard each other with food (perhaps a fictional ancestor of the gluttonous challenges of *Man v. Food*, 2008-present), and 'The Live Life Show', which darkly foreshadowed reality television like *Big Brother* (2000-2018). Kneale similarly takes a swipe at populist programming in *Quatermass* as, in episode three, Quatermass interrupts a broadcast to make use of the station as a means of international communication. The programme interrupted, 'Tittupy Bumpity', described in *Quatermass* as 'what used to be called a family show' and 'the only show

anyone watches any more', consists of dancers, wearing mostly just lingerie and a variety of fake animal heads, cavorting around a pair of papier maché breasts with a giant banana (fig. 49). It looks not unlike 2020's *The Masked Singer*, which brought nightmarishly surreal images to Saturday-night family television (fig. 50) and has been described as dystopian wackiness for the *Black Mirror* generation (St. Felix, 2019).

The vision of crumbling civilisation which Kneale presents in *Quatermass* is, therefore, the epitome of urban wyrd, a notion Scovell describes as 'haunting, sleazy, unnerving, disturbing, horrifying but, above all, it is still recognisable...It is us and the space we live in. It is the strangeness of the everyday' (2019, pp. 10-12). During the Cold War when Kneale was writing, the post-war literary tradition depicting dystopian futures was particularly distinct, popular not only in terms of the examples of dystopian fiction discussed in chapter 2.1 and franchises like *Planet of the Apes* (Pierre Boulle's original 1963 novel spawning five films and two television series between 1968 and 1974 and a Marvel comics series from 1974-1977) but also non-fiction such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), critiquing the use of pesticides and their detrimental effects on the environment.<sup>18</sup>

The urban environment of *Quatermass* is made unnerving with the abandoned, destroyed buildings and threatening graffiti that we see but also in terms of what lies beneath the surface. The elderly population in *Quatermass*, due to a lack of care from society and fear of the youth gangs, are living in underground tunnels beneath a scrap yard, in what Kneale's screenplay describes as a 'catacomb of metal, tunnels shored up entirely with scrap' (Kneale, 1978b, p. 5). The space they inhabit is reminiscent of cell-like air-raid shelters; in their seventies and eighties and wearing threadbare clothes it seems as if they, like Quatermass himself, have been abandoned and forgotten for many decades. The elderly are set apart as a societal 'other': ghosts haunting the urban environment just beneath the surface. As is typical of the urban wyrd, there is a 'feeling concerning a densely human-constructed area or the inbetween spaces bordering the bucolic and the built-up' which is 'somehow unnerving or unnatural' (Paciorek, 2019, p. 7). This neglect of the elderly is clearly unnatural and inhumane but, sadly, not unfamiliar in recent decades. In 2020, a BBC television documentary series

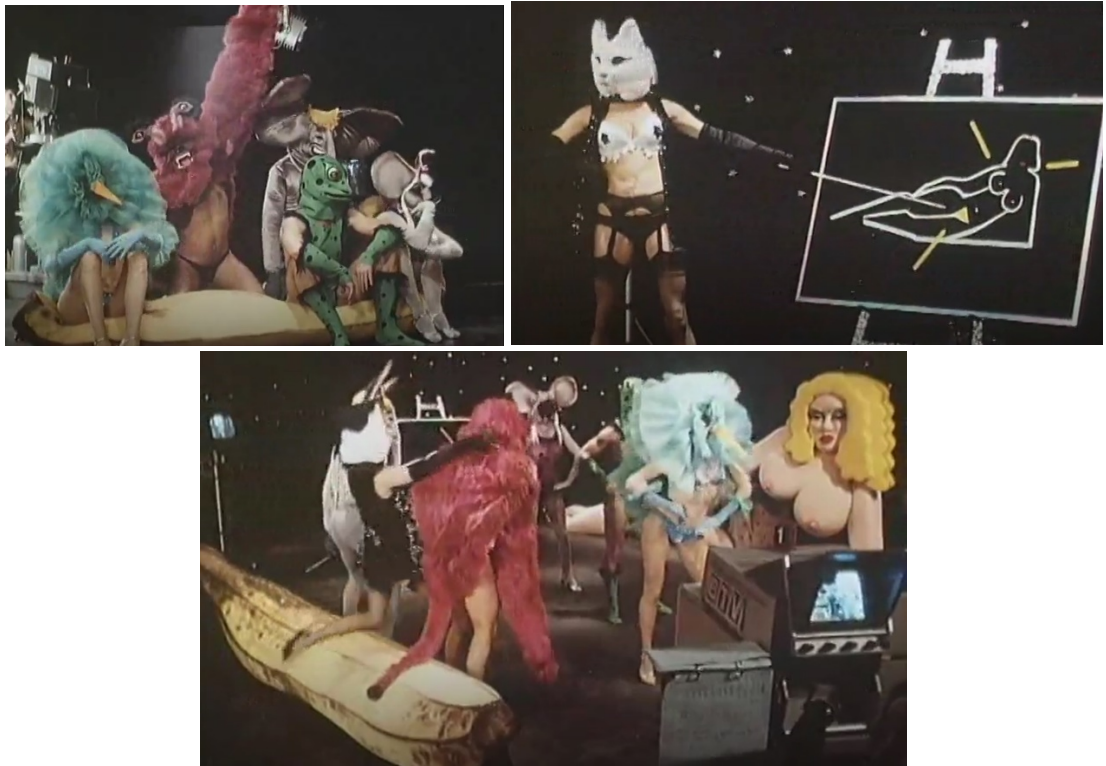


Figure 49: Tittuppy Bumpity: 'what used to be called a family show'



Figure 50: The Masked Singer: Tittuppy Bumpity for the Black Mirror generation

cast new light on the Harold Shipman murders and how 'social attitudes towards the elderly allowed him to kill with impunity for decades' (Burn, 2020). Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted disregard of the elderly, with many 'in care homes abandoned to die amid government failures' (Amnesty International, 2020). Part of *Quatermass'* hauntological wyrdness (defined in 2.1.3) stems from notions of the past haunting the present and the narrative draws upon a 'strangeness beyond the reasonable confines of what we consider part of city life...the horror that rumbles under the pavement, in-between the forgotten cracks' (Scovell, 2019, pp. 10-12). Therefore, the urban wyrd as a mode of folk horror, and the uncanny prescience of much of Kneale's work, taps into the undercurrents of city life to reveal universal social truths beneath the surface of the narrative and is essential to the unsettling effect of *Quatermass*.

One brief but notable scene introduces *Quatermass* to another facet of this strange new world, in which Kapp drives him through an abandoned oil refinery, now host to something reminiscent of a medieval street market or distorted village gathering.<sup>19</sup> The eeriness here comes from the folk themselves, who have reverted to primitive ways. We see sellers of cat skins, a sinister snake oil salesman with ragged feathers adorning his clothing and an aggressive preacher selling charms which supposedly contain the power of a dead Hells Angel whose hanged corpse is displayed: 'Every one of these envelopes carries the magic of Gutsucker!' (fig. 51).

The mise-en-scène reinforces desperation and disillusionment as slogans like 'GIVE ME FOOD' and 'KILL SCIENCE' are graffitied on the walls and one market table, piled high with books, displays a sign stating 'Guaranteed to Burn Well'. An elderly, bedraggled accordionist with a crumpled Union Jack top hat (fig. 51) lends a dystopian English-country-fair atmosphere to proceedings, all of which seem to belong to the distant past rather than contemporary Britain. This troubled society, with its dystopian landscape and scattered communities, presents the perfect backdrop for a variety of skewed, folkloric or conflictual beliefs to develop, hinted at by this market scene and the sellers' wares. It is examples of supernatural folklore like this in wyrd television, and the actions of folk *based on* folkloric belief, which most commonly shape the narrative eeriness to such programmes as *Quatermass*, which is what I examine in the following section.





*Figure 51: An accordionist (bottom) brings village fair flair to a primitive street market and its sinister vendors*

### **3.3.4 Skewed beliefs: folklore, religion and science**

Skewed belief (and morality) is one of the defining facets of Scovell's folk-horror chain. Interestingly, in *Quatermass*, there is not just one skewed or 'ancient' belief system set against another (as in *The Wicker Man* with paganism and Christianity, for example), but there are multiple notions of belief relating to folklore, religion, philosophy and science that Kneale plays against one another throughout the narrative. Scovell notes that skewed belief can manifest on screen as the apparent 'halting of social progress' (2017, p. 18) but, in the case of *Quatermass*, can be seen as a reversion or regression, such as outlined in the market scene above.

The central notion of belief in *Quatermass* is most overtly dealt with in relation to the Planet People, whose ideas are set against the rationality of science and, as counterpoint, the Jewish faith of the Kapp family. We are first introduced to the Planet People when Joseph Kapp and Quatermass drive away from urban 'civilisation' into the countryside. Though the trees and fields are a distinct contrast to the urban decay, the

landscape is not depicted as an escape. Instead, it is presented as subject to a different kind of threat as a type of plumb bob in the foreground swings across the country backdrop, commanding the attention of the audience and the Planet People who, though dressed like hippies, seem fixated, anxious and agitated rather than peaceful or calm (fig. 52).



*Figure 52: The Planet People are introduced*

Quatermass recalls that the Planet People, whom Kapp dismisses as ‘mad people who believe in mad things’, have ‘some strange belief’. Though they appear less physically dangerous than the urban youth gangs, Kapp says ‘they’re violent in a different way: to human thought’. Kneale describes followers of this mystical youth cult as ‘possessed by the belief that they might somehow escape to some other planet’ (c.1979b) because the Earth is sick and poisoned with pollution. Though Kneale intended the cult to reflect elements of hippie culture, there are obvious links with New Age and alternative religions (discussed in 1.3.2) that emerged in the 1950s and ’60s such as Scientology and the Aetherius Society.<sup>20</sup> Founded in Britain in the 1950s, the Aetherius Society’s central tenets include the item of faith for members that ‘Jesus, Buddha and



other religious leaders were of extra-terrestrial origin', there is 'intelligent life on other planets' and that some UFOs are piloted by 'benign aliens who are here to help mankind' (Clarke & Roberts, 2007, p. 80). These align with the Planet People's convictions.

Quatermass questions a group of Planet People, sincerely trying to understand their beliefs whilst Kapp angrily mocks them: 'Where's the launch pad? Come on, I want to know! This is one lift-off I really want to see!'. The Planet People follow the group's leader, who swings an elaborate golden plumb bob, whilst they all repeatedly chant 'ley, ley, ley', walking in single file as if following a line across the field (fig. 53). This draws directly from theories about ley lines as described in *The Old Straight Track* (1925) by Alfred Watkins, whose work was later used by New Age writers like John Michell to connect landscape and folklore with ideas about mystic power, ancient peoples and UFOs (see 1.3.2). Ley lines, or leys, 'are straight features in the landscape accentuated by human endeavours...or invisible lines marked by features such as barrows, holy wells and churches' (Wallis & Blain, 2003, p. 312). At the time of Kneale's writing *Quatermass*, prevalent notions about leys posited them as arterial energy lines running across the landscape which could be traced through dowsing. Although their use is associated with traditional dowsing techniques, the way the golden plumb bob is swung at the head of the group here is equally reminiscent of a chain censer used in procession at Catholic mass and other religious rituals (fig. 54).



*Figure 53: Planet People, plumb bobs and ley lines*



*Figure 54: A Catholic thurible, or chain censer (JotaDeJordi, 2009)*

In fact, since the late 1980s, the link between dowsing and ley lines has been severed by academics, with prominent Earth mysteries researcher Paul Devereux asserting that ‘too many people want belief systems in preference to the rigours of research’ (1989, p.4). With their repetitive chanting and fervent belief, the Planet People here seem to be on a spiritual quest which connects their actions with Devereux’s more contemporary suggestions that ley lines ‘were used as “spirit tracks” by prehistoric shamans...in trances’ (Wallis & Blain, 2003, p. 312). The tracks in *Quatermass* turn out to be leading young people toward megalithic sites such as Ringstone Round, an ancient stone circle, where, at the end of episode one, the Planet People’s beliefs are seen as potentially borne out.

Some interpretations of ley lines and stone circles frame them as connected outlets of energy: hidden currents flowing throughout the land along ley lines to monuments acting as something akin to electrical sockets where the power can be channelled. First described as ‘Earth mysteries’ in 1974, this ‘extraordinary multi-disciplinary’ field of interest emerged in the 1960s as one which brought together approaches from archaeology, ‘the study of folklore, dowsing, astronomical aspects, geomancy’ and many other areas to obtain as broad an understanding of ancient sites as possible. Early study of Earth mysteries was problematic due to ‘considerable naïvety’, ‘unfounded opinion and sheer invention’ confusing ‘genuine attempts at understanding’ (Devereux, 1990, pp. 40-41). More serious Earth mysteries research,

however, was particularly attributed to *The Ley Hunter* journal ('The Magazine of Earth Mysteries') (fig 55).

*Ley Hunter* editor Paul Devereux, with Don Robins, a chemist and researcher in archaeology, founded the Dragon Project in 1977, which brought together various specialists in archaeology, physics, electronics and dowsing. The aim of the group was to apply formal methods of scientific study to 'Earth energy', which Robins describes as 'a kind of synthesis of various forms of electromagnetic and mechanical energies, which arose from the Earth's crust and interacted with solar and cosmic radiation'. Such groups drew upon what is commonly referred to as the Stone Tape Theory (discussed in 4.2.4, named after Kneale's television play *The Stone Tape*), to record and detect energy at ancient sites like Stonehenge in Wiltshire and the Rollright Stones in Oxfordshire in order to show 'that stone circles do indeed emit anomalously high and anomalously low levels of several forms of radiation. Whatever they are, whatever purpose they serve, stone circles are not just points on a landscape' (Robins, 1982, p.166).

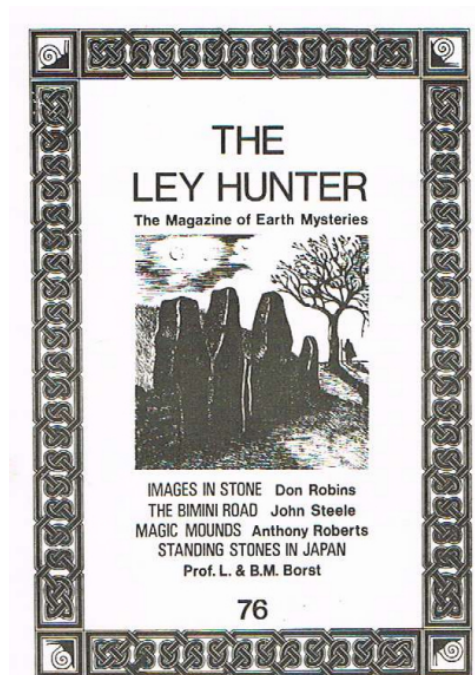


Figure 55: Cover of *The Ley Hunter* (1976)

In *The Secret Country: An Interpretation of the Folklore of Ancient Sites in Britain*, for example, Janet and Colin Bord state that such energy outlets

are thought to exist at ancient sites and particularly in the huge blocks of stone which were erected as circles or single standing stones by the ancient race who must originally have gathered, channelled, and used the earth currents (1976, p. 37).

Kneale draws on these notions with the conclusion of this episode, as an eerily unsettling event (when Planet People gather to be taken by their supposed alien saviours) suggests that there is evidence that such beliefs cannot be dismissed within the narrative as merely harmless or misguided. Quatermass tries to convince the hundreds of young people at the stone circle to leave, but they break out into a riot against police who are trying to remove them. We then hear a jarring electronic sound as Quatermass and Clare Kapp (wife of Joseph) look up, wincing in pain from the noise. The camera circles the pair as they search the sky, emphasising the notion that the sound is reverberating everywhere above them as a blinding beam of light also appears (fig. 56).<sup>21</sup>



*Figure 56: Quatermass and Clare Kapp are surrounded by noise and light*

A cut to Quatermass' point of view of Ringstone Round reveals that the beam, emanating from an indistinct source high above, is focused on the stone circle (fig 57). A three-second shot, accompanied by the sound of a brief scream, fades quickly in and out over the previous point-of-view shot. Difficult to distinguish clearly, this moment looks as though it might be filmed from the middle of the Planet People amongst the stone circle, looking upward towards the light (fig. 58).

The scream on the soundtrack accompanying this shot, and the horrified reactions of Quatermass and Clare, suggests that this wholly unexpected event is unlikely to be the action of a benign alien saviour, though it confirms an extra-terrestrial presence and some foundation to the Planet People's beliefs. In a chilling

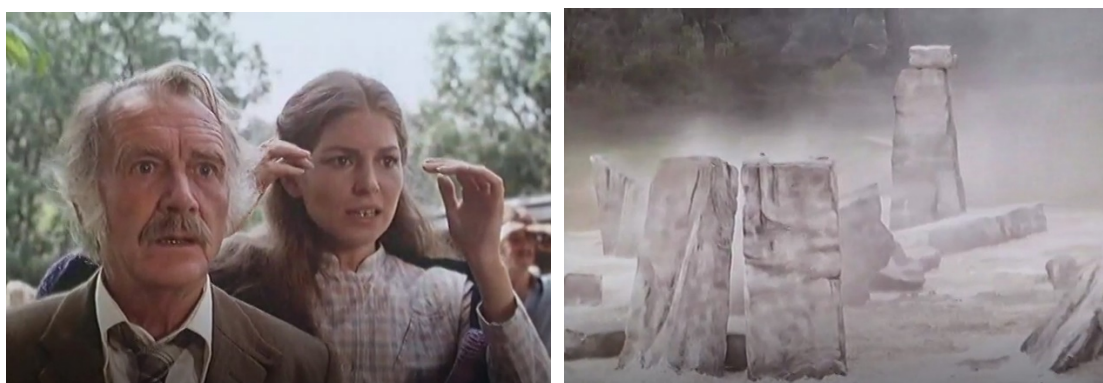


*Figure 57: Quatermass' point of view of Ringstone Round*



*Figure 58: A brief suggestive shot possibly from within the circle*

moment, the episode ends with a shot of the stone circle, panning slowly from left to right across the stones now encircled in drifting dust and ash, with only a low electronic buzz on the soundtrack fading away as the picture fades to black (fig. 59).



*Figure 59: Stones and dust: the chilling conclusion of episode one*

We are thus left with a jarring cliffhanger, clearly an unexpected shock even to Quatermass himself, and without any music on the soundtrack to guide an emotional



response. The audience, as with the scientists, is left to interpret the evidence as to whether the Planet People have indeed been 'taken' or destroyed somehow and, if so, for what reason. The event is explained in contrasting ways by different characters in episode two: when more Planet People arrive at the site, full of dust and ash, they immediately declare 'They did it! They got away! They've all gone!', as if they now have proof their beliefs were correct. This echoes discussion of quasi-ostension (in 2.2.3) and is an example of this occurring on screen, as the Planet People's misinterpretation of evidence accounts for otherwise unexplained events based on their understanding of legend or folkloric belief (Ellis, 1989). Quatermass and Kapp, also examining the site, point to fragments of bone, distorted bodies and a sickly survivor on the outer edges of the circle which the Planet People immediately dismiss as merely those who were 'unlucky'. Here, then, in *Quatermass'* Planet People, we see mass-mediated ostension not only in terms of actions (following ley lines and gathering at ancient sites), but also in their misinterpretation of evidence, which acts as a representation of quasi-ostension. Set against Quatermass' more scientific analysis of evidence throughout the series (which suggests the young people are being harvested rather than 'rescued'), Kneale demonstrates, in representations of different types of ostension, the dangers of such misinterpretation and enacting of notions based on supernatural folklore.

Ideas about popular belief and vernacular religion are examined by Kneale from multiple perspectives, not only in terms of the 'possessed' belief of the Planet People, but also the respective scientific curiosity and cynicism of Quatermass and Kapp. Quatermass himself is depicted as open to adapting his own notions over the course of the narrative but based purely on evidence, however impossible it may seem. Quatermass states that although the Planet People's belief 'that somehow they're going to be taken away to another planet...always seemed like nonsense', nevertheless '*something* happened'. Although he declares in one episode that 'As a belief, it's possible' and in another that 'perhaps evil is always somebody else's good, perhaps it's a cosmic law', Quatermass also makes it clear that there isn't any evidence to support the belief as scientific fact: 'all I *know* is that we had one survivor'. Quatermass' subsequent actions are based upon his scientific inference rather than hard evidence, so this too has at least a degree of faith to it, but his educated guesswork is drawn

from observation and previous knowledge rather than the blind faith of the Planet People or their blunt dismissal by Kapp.

An interesting counterpoint to the notion of faith is the Kapp family's Judaism. Though Joseph Kapp is one of the strongest denouncers of the Planet People's apparently unfounded 'mad' belief, he wears a Star of David around his neck throughout the series. In episode two, Kapp is almost apologetic to Quatermass about his faith when he sees a menorah set on the dinner table (foregrounded in a close-up shot, fig. 60): 'We're not very religious, but every once in a while...'.



*Figure 60: The Kapps' menorah (multibranched candelabra used in the rituals of Judaism)*

Here, Kneale's specific inclusion of Judaism seems to function less as a comparative faith with the Planet People's in the narrative and more as a way of reinforcing the Kapps' family bond and their sense of love and protection towards their children.<sup>22</sup> When Quatermass first arrives at their home, it is depicted as an idyllic refuge with chickens and a vegetable garden, and the family are all given equal prominence in the frame regardless of age or gender (fig. 61). The interior of their home is warm and cosy, filled with books, knick-knacks and toys put together by the Kapps themselves over a period of time (fig. 62). The sense of idyllic refuge is presented as one which would not look out of place in a catalogue of ideal designer homes from the 1970s period (such as fig. 63).

This style of self-reliant, make-do-and-mend living was a popular notion in the 1970s, epitomised in mainstream sitcom *The Good Life* (1975-1978) in which a middle-class couple eschew nine-to-five office life in favour of growing their own food in their



*Figure 61: The Kapp family home*



*Figure 62: The Kapp home interior*





Figure 63: Images from Terence Conran's *The House Book* (1974)

suburban garden. Director Haggard emphasises this sentiment about the Kapp home in *Quatermass*: 'it's a very simple handmade house with vegetables and so on, it's...absolutely a symbol of '70s back to nature living...post-apocalyptic survival techniques, which are very touching and visually interesting' (pers. comm., 17 June 2017). The family's Judaism, therefore, functions effectively as part of this 'cosy' mise-en-scène, as Joseph Kapp states: 'The old Jewish thing always concentrated on the home, bit of cosy ritual to make everything safe'.

Because of the relative comfort and sanctuary of the Kapp's home being established in such warm terms, it is all the more shocking when Kapp returns at the end of episode two to find that this home (situated near a stone circle) and his family have been obliterated by another extra-terrestrial beam of light. Like 'Baby' (chapter 3.2), this is an example of Kneale using domestic space to accentuate a sense of unsettling eeriness. With only an electronic tone on the soundtrack shifting uneasily between two notes, the

effect is jarring as we see Kapp return to this once-homely space, devastated to find broken-down windows and doors and a layer of ash covering his children's toys. The episode ends bleakly, Kapp framed literally as a shadow in his former home, hopelessly calling: 'Children? Children?' (fig. 64). Whilst Kneale has elsewhere been accused of having an 'innate misanthropy' (Meikle, 2019, p. 20), and has himself mused that perhaps the young people were not 'worth saving' (in Wells, 1999, p. 55), in his presentation of the Kapp family he outlines kind, worthwhile elements of humanity.<sup>23</sup> The destruction of this loving family unit here functions to create empathy in the audience and, again, Kneale's notion of the otherworldly colliding with the familiar and mundane makes the invasion more uncomfortably *wyrd* in a domestic setting.



*Figure 64: The Kapp home: destruction and devastation*

### ***3.3.5 Ringstone Round: folklore and the folkloresque***

Though Ringstone Round is a fictional stone circle in *Quatermass*, Kneale creates a plausible history and folkloric context for it, framing its presentation with recorded folklore, nursery rhyme and archaeological fact. Kneale's original intention was to use

Stonehenge (in name as well as location) as a real-world Neolithic monument and a blend of recorded history and folklore about stone circles to centre the plot on.<sup>24</sup> Kneale's early story notes and the original version of the *Quatermass* screenplay specify Stonehenge as the focal point for the end of episode one where it is 'Clare who starts the expedition to Stonehenge' and is shocked by the 'occurrence at Stonehenge' (Kneale, n.d., 'Kapp's People'). The only reason Stonehenge *wasn't* used was due to budgetary and filming restrictions: 'the Department of the Environment...refused to allow filming at Stonehenge' (Thames Television, 1978, p. 10). Making the stone circle appear as authentic as possible was an important consideration for the production, as it had to perform a specific narrative function. Piers Haggard explains:

the worry [was] how you were going to *do* them, I mean how you'd make them look convincing...[the stones] were all constructed...not nearly as big as Stonehenge actual so, it's a small one, Ringstone Round...we had no money really for special effects, we had a tiny budget (pers. comm., 17 June 2017).

Rather than thwarting Kneale's plans, however, this shift seems to have excited him in terms of dramatic possibilities:

In fact, Stonehenge is something we can do without...It seems far better to invent our own megalithic circle...but even more dramatic to look at and only just the size we actually need. We can give it some resonant name, mount it on a far more dramatic site than the real Stonehenge (Kneale, n.d., 'New Elements').

So, despite the physical scaling-down, Kneale was inspired to create folkloresque aspects of his own stone circle, adding not only to the drama but also a perceived sense of authenticity paralleling Stonehenge in a real-world context, as *Quatermass* states of Ringstone Round: 'Last time I was there, it was swarming with tourists'. Kneale's notes include a full page setting out Ringstone Round's invented history, location and surrounding folklore (Kneale, n.d., 'Ringstone Round').

In his notes, Kneale alters 'the edge of Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire' near the site of Stonehenge as the location, to 'in Dorset' (Kneale, n.d., 'Ringstone Round'). There are several stone circles in Dorset including the Nine Stones and the Kingston Russell stone circle, believed to date back to between 2500 and 1000 BCE, and up to 4000 BCE respectively (English Heritage, n.d.). According to Kneale, radiocarbon dating puts the origin of Ringstone Round 'at approximately 3000 B.C.' which makes it 'much older

than Stonehenge' and 'may well have been the prototype for it' (Kneale, n.d., 'Ringstone Round'). This is a comparable age with equivalent stone circles: Stonehenge, until recently considered to have its origins around 2500 BCE, has been evaluated by more recent dating techniques as dating back 500 years further to 3000 BCE (Kennedy, 2013). Kneale's notes provide detail about formation of the stones ('megalith-and-quoit')<sup>25</sup> and even reference an argument about its history put forward by 'Professor I. A. Anwar' in a book published in 1976 by Oxford University Press titled 'In the Beginning – Ringstone Round' (Kneale, n.d., 'Ringstone Round'). This text is entirely invented, reminiscent of M. R. James' fabrication of the 'three crowns' legend (discussed in 2.2.5) and, though it is not referenced in the dialogue of the programme itself, such notes blending fiction with historical fact reinforce Kneale's intent to create a perception of authenticity.

The stone circle itself, as a 'marker' of alien visitation, performs a similar narrative function to the urn in 'Baby' (see 3.2.4) as what Mark Fisher frames as a 'xenolithic artefact': 'Autonomous, sentient inorganic demons in specific (hauntological) landscapes...stained by time'. This narrative device is apparent in other examples of notable folk horror from the study period such as *Whistle and I'll Come to You* (1968) and 'A Warning to the Curious' (1972), adapted for television by Lawrence Gordon Clark from the work of M. R. James, which use an old whistle and a crown respectively as a 'xenolithic artifact...that calls up ancient, vengeful forces'. The suggestion that objects themselves can be a threat, 'operating as fatalistic engines, drawing characters into deadly compulsions', can therefore be applied to megalithic structures in *Quatermass*, luring the Planet People to annihilation (Fisher, 2012, pp. 21, 83).

An important element directly woven by Kneale throughout the narrative and dialogue of the series, is the use of 'the traditional nursery rhyme: Huffity puffity, Ringstone Round'. The folkloresque manner in which Kneale presents this (discussed in 2.2.5) is significant as it is not only given plausibility as a 'real' nursery rhyme, but also hints at underlying supernatural folklore connected to the history and purpose of stone circles. Kapp's daughter Sarah, during discussion about the stone circle, mentions that she knows a rhyme about it:

Huffity, puffity, Ringstone Round,



If you lost your hat it will never be found...  
So pull up your britches, right up to your chin...  
And fasten your cloak with a bright new pin...  
And when you are ready, then we can begin.  
Huffity, puffity, puff!

Quatermass too, says that he remembers the rhyme, helping with parts Sarah forgets, as she acts out a series of simple motions associated with it (fig. 65). Suggesting that the rhyme is an old one remembered across generations, with accompanying actions, puts it plausibly into context with well-known real examples like 'Round and Round the Garden' and 'Ring a Ring a Roses', both comparable with Kneale's invention. The name Ringstone Round, of course, blends elements from the title of each of these rhymes, in keeping with Kneale's expressed desire for a 'resonant name' (Kneale, n.d., 'Ringstone Round').<sup>26</sup>



*Figure 65: Sarah Kapp acts out 'Huffity puffity, Ringstone Round'*

Another real-world element Kneale uses to lend the notion of veracity to this rhyme is the on-screen inclusion of it in a book of traditional nursery rhymes that would be familiar to generations of people in Britain, in the style illustrated by Kate Greenaway (fig. 66). Greenaway (1846-1901) was an illustrator famous for her drawings associated with children and nursery rhymes, whose work is described as conjuring 'up a never-never land of rural simplicity and innocence – an escape from the squalor of Victorian

cities' (Penguin Random House, n.d.). This is in thematic parallel with the domestic rural setting of the Kapps' home, outside of crumbling urban civilisation and the family's desire to protect their children from the outside world. Both Kneale's script and novelisation of *Quatermass* specify that this rhyme is in a book by Greenaway and is visually presented as such, as Sarah flicks through the pages to find 'Huffity puffity' (fig. 67).

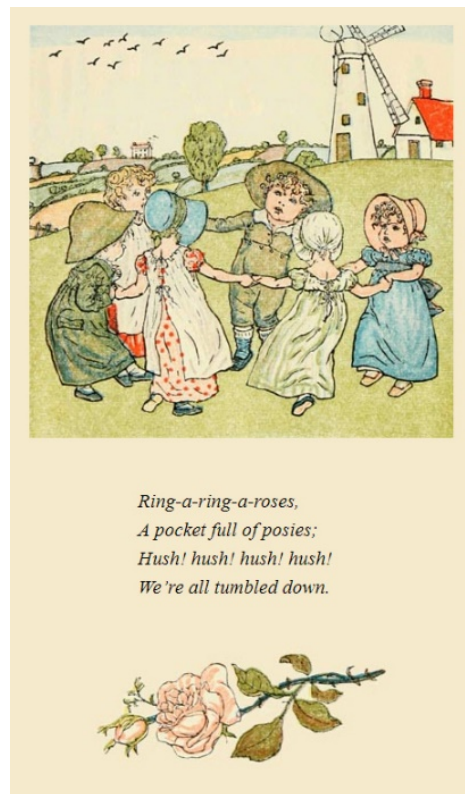


Figure 66: Greenaway's illustrated book of nursery rhymes from 1881

Kneale has intentionally taken steps to anchor the rhyme in existing folkloric tradition, as Haggard notes:

it's exactly *like* something, it's *brilliant* 'cause you think 'I've heard that before, isn't that in Mother Goose?' ...That very important book *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* [1959, Iona and Peter Opie] well established that in...[rhymes] like Ring-a-ring-a-roses about the plague, people know that in children's rhymes lies a treasure trove of psychological memory (pers. comm., 17 June 2017).

A meaningful history for the rhyme is briefly hinted at as Quatermass muses 'Curious about nursery rhymes. What else they might be saying?', to which Clare replies 'Yes,



Figure 67: Sarah flicks through the pages to find the 'Huffity puffity' rhyme (bottom right)

about politics or plague'. This folkloresque meaning and the notion of psychological memory is filled out in Kneale's novelisation of *Quatermass*, in which Clare explains that many nursery rhymes may have literal historical meaning and significance. Clare gives examples including the origins of the Grand Old Duke of York 'who had ten thousand men...And King Georgy Porgy' and, most pertinently, the claim that 'Ring-a-ring-a-roses' is about the plague. Kneale describes the form of nursery rhyme acting, in these cases, as compressed moments of history: 'Preserved as a memory, transmitted through the centuries of infants' singing. Like nuclear waste set harmlessly in blocks of glass' (Kneale, 1979b, pp. 60-61).

There is, in fact, evidence that some people believe the 'Huffity puffity' rhyme to have older origins as a 'real' nursery rhyme or piece of folklore. On a website about international music and culture, in a 'Songs and Rhymes from England' section, there is a page dedicated to 'Huffity, Puffity, Ringstone Round'. Here, one reported belief is that the rhyme 'comes from the English West Country...and was sung by children as they played among megalithic stone circles like Stonehenge'. Another, despite familiarity with *Quatermass*, suspects the rhyme may have older origins:

I remember watching the series...as a kid and, being from the west county, fascinated by the ideas it raised. We had lots of small stone circles around us...the possibility that there was once one called

ringstone round is a distinct possibility...it could be a real rhyme...I personally believe that Keale [sic] was drawing on some vague recollection of a rhyme he may have heard in childhood (Yannucci, 2021).

The rhyme is even discussed by folklorist Jacqueline Simpson in conversation with author Terry Pratchett as the latter quotes 'Huffity puffity' in full. Whilst neither Pratchett nor Simpson mentions *Quatermass* or Kneale, the rhyme crops up in their conversation about folkloric belief, stone circles and the notion that if you 'run round Chanctonbury Ring seven times at midnight the devil will come out and give you a bowl of soup'. Both Pratchett and Simpson do, however, acknowledge that the rhyme has been 'made up' (and only Pratchett is aware of the accompanying tune) but neither mentions a source (Brown & Sutton, 2010, p. 2). Pratchett adds an extra line to his recollection ('Ask me a riddle and we'll begin') and other variants from Kneale's version continue to emerge on social media such as 'Higgledy Piggledy Ringstone Round' (Bowen, 2021): Simpson notes that the rhyme's development of variations 'is of course the mark of true folklore' (Brown & Sutton, 2010, p. 2). The fabrication of this rhyme by Kneale and the plausible representation of its meaning, though not 'real' folklore, has the potential to be interpreted as such by an audience and thus function as mass-mediated ostension (discussed in 2.2.5). The literal truth or veracity of the rhyme (and any inferred legend about Ringstone Round) is less relevant than its representation, which has the ability to shape real folkloric legend. It seems, in some cases at least, that 'Huffity puffity, Ringstone Round' has been accepted and adapted as a living piece of folklore and is an example, therefore, of mass-mediated ostension.

In the context of the *Quatermass* series, giving the rhyme a plausible historical antecedent is used to hint at the background of Ringstone Round and, by extension, other stone circles. Stone circles and megaliths have long represented curious mystery, with much continuing interest revolving around what their purpose may be.<sup>27</sup> Piers Haggard summarises this historical fascination:

they are mysterious, though it is history with an added sort of mystery factor...stone circles are wonderfully interesting...because they *work* on your imagination about the lurid imaginings: sacrifice, moonrise, sunrise, festivals...they're incredibly rich sociologically -- how the fuck did they get those stones -- how did they get it or what did they do to get them there?! You know, that's amazing! (pers. comm., 17 June 2017).



A DVD release of *Quatermass* is accompanied by History Channel documentary *The Enduring Mystery of Stonehenge* (1998), covering geographic and historical detail, featuring interviews with experts including the director of Stonehenge for English Heritage, a folklore scholar and an engineer. Nevertheless, the documentary asks more questions than are answered, querying somewhat sensationally if Stonehenge is ‘a landing pad for alien spacecraft, a celestial computer, perhaps a temple for human sacrifices?’. Part of the enduring appeal of stone circles is, no doubt, the abundance of folkloric tales and lack of definitive answers about many aspects of their existence which acts as fuel for the imagination. Even in the well-documented case of Stonehenge, it is remarked upon by scholars like Ronald Hutton, who can only use educated guesswork about its origins. Stonehenge is ‘utterly atypical’ and ‘unique in its structure’ as it is the only stone circle to have the trilithon structure (two upright stones and a third across the top). Hutton notes that, although it is clear in British and Irish prehistory that positions of the sun had ‘considerable ritual importance’, when taking relevant prehistoric monuments into account collectively, ‘no overall or enduring pattern of cult can be detected’. He also confirms that ‘Literary sources do not tell us anything conclusive about the midwinter practices of the ancient British Isles’ (Hutton, 1996, p.5).

Kneale draws upon this sense of mystery, alongside existing recorded history and archaeology of stone circles. For example, engineer, master surveyor and statistician Alexander Thom developed theories (first published in the 1960s) that megalithic builders had an ‘extensive knowledge of practical geometry’ and used what Thom calls the ‘Megalithic yard’ to construct Stonehenge and other megalithic monuments (Thom, 1971, p. 9). Thom’s work suggests that many such sites were built principally, not as solar temples as had been thought, but as lunar observatories, whose architects ‘had measured and understood the three cycles of the moon’s movement’. Thom’s ideas, though widely rejected by the archaeological establishment at the time, gained a following in the 1970s from groups with alternative interests ‘who cherished lunar alignments...but had little interest in science’ (Sixsmith, 2009, pp. 94-96).<sup>28</sup> Kneale’s interest in the science of archaeology is evident in the character of Clare Kapp, who ‘has been a professional archaeologist...on major digs...she has done a barrow and extracted burial urns’ (Kneale, n.d., ‘Kapp’s people’). Kneale’s notes reveal that the scientific elements of the series were something he was keen to get correct,

requesting detailed advice on context for the areas discussed in dialogue.<sup>29</sup> For example, Kneale wonders specifically 'How far could Clare go in digging up a barrow?' and what would she do 'with beakers etc. she dug up?' (Kneale, n.d. 'Expert bits needed'). Clare is presented as thoughtful and educated: Kneale features her archaeological work as part of the narrative which lends it a context of historical and scientific fact. In the first episode, Quatermass recognises an earthenware jar in the Kapp home as 'a beaker' which Clare confirms was 'made by the Beaker Folk, five thousand years old'. Clare takes Quatermass to show him a small Neolithic burial ground and stone circle close to their home where she has dug a barrow and found Beaker pots, arrowheads and buttons. The Beaker Folk represent a significant cultural shift in prehistoric Britain, noted as 'the culture that brought Bronze Age technology to Britain' who 'marked the end of the Neolithic and the beginning of the Early Bronze Age' (McNish, 2018). The archaeological facts, however, are combined with a sense of historical folklore, magic and wonder, in the wistful way Clare speaks about them:

One day I put some fruit wine in that pot and I drank from it. And I thought somebody else was drinking from this pot...five thousand years ago and it, well it was as if they were standing next to me.

Clare also notes that the locals referred to the small stone circle as 'the stumpy men', which again recalls supernatural folklore about genuine stone circles, such as the Nine Ladies in Derbyshire, a small early Bronze Age stone circle named due to traditional belief that the stones 'depict nine ladies turned to stone as a penalty for dancing on Sunday' (English Heritage c, n.d.).

It is this backdrop of established knowledge, supernatural folklore and curiosity that allows Kneale to build a plausible thesis for Professor Quatermass about the purpose of megalithic monuments across subsequent episodes. It becomes apparent in episode two that genocidal events like that which occurred at Ringstone Round have also happened at similar locations around the world. Quatermass begins to base his assessment on the available evidence, such as one young survivor who is 'the only evidence we've got...of what this does to human tissue'. The fact that the mysterious extra-terrestrial force seems to be calling on the youngest and therefore 'most vulnerable of human organisms' to gather in crowds, 'huge assemblies...supposedly to listen to some leader or a pop star, but really just to crowd together', to Quatermass fits a 'dreadful pattern'. When discussing a disaster with District Commissioner Annie

Morgan, Quatermass connects the gatherings with the potential historical purpose of stone circles. Annie asks about the stone circle in Brazil, 'Os Papões', 'wouldn't that mean "the giants" or "the ogres" or something?'. This specific Brazilian megalith appears to be another invention by Kneale (there are equivalent stone circles in Brazil, but not with this name) and the name in fact translates from Portuguese as 'the bogeymen'.<sup>30</sup> This echoes Annie's suggestions, combining a sense of warning and fairytale, and the idea that there may be literal meanings hidden behind rhymes, stories and legends. It is this notion that leads Quatermass to present his hypothesis in episode three ('What Lies Beneath'), that:

I think that men may have raised those megaliths to commemorate, to mark places that had become *terrible* to them, places that had been *visited*...and left traces behind, perhaps *deep* under the surface. In our terms, guidance beacons set in the earth for *next time*.

The purpose of the alien presence, Quatermass guesses, is to harvest the human race. Notions about ancient alien visitors exploring, mining and experimenting on Earth 'have a longstanding non-fictional tradition' such as in Charles Fort's 1919 *The Book of the Damned*, which speculates that 'humankind was probably simply the "property" of these superior people'. These ideas, alongside discourse about aliens being taken for 'divine beings with supernatural powers' or ancient gods, have influenced notable fictional works including H. P. Lovecraft's tales of horror from the 1920s and '30s about Cthulu and other ancient monstrous beings from space (Richter, 2012, p. 225).<sup>31</sup> It is the work of writers like Fort and Lovecraft that influenced popular writers on the subject in the 1960s (see 3.3.1) and, therefore, it is likely that Kneale was aware of this tradition of thought about 'ancient astronauts' at the time of writing *Quatermass*.

Quatermass posits that any attempt at communication with the alien force would be utterly inconsequential, 'a ripe crop can't appeal to the reaper', and that 'the intelligence that made this is quite beyond our reach'. Quatermass confirms his notions in the apocalyptic conclusion, addressing the force directly: 'You came yesterday. Five thousand years ago. And tasted them and found them good and came again today'. It is interesting that we see Quatermass develop his ideas over the course of the series, open to adapting his ideas based on discussion and evidence that arise throughout the narrative, as opposed to the Planet People's belief or Kapp's notions about them, for example (discussed in 3.3.4). It is never confirmed for the audience what was ultimately behind the catastrophic events decimating Earth's young

population, but a final voice-over narration confirms that the scientist's actions have allowed 'the sky and the land' to become clean again. This is confirmed in the final shot of children playing under a clear sunny sky in an idyllic country scene: the earlier sickly yellow sky (pollution from the remains of those harvested by the alien force) is gone, and the narrator states a tentative hope that the presence 'will never come again'. For better or worse, Quatermass has become a sacrificial hero, gambling that his thesis was correct. Quatermass does rely predominantly upon scientific evidence but, importantly, Kneale represents him as a character who does not dismiss traditional beliefs, supernatural folklore and stories that surround significant locations and events, and even values them as useful context to shape and inform his actions.

### 3.4 Nigel Kneale: conclusions

There are so many strands of supernatural folklore and contemporary legend woven into Kneale's work they are impossible to ignore, from witchcraft and curses to ley lines, megaliths and 'paleo-SETI' or 'ancient astronaut' theory (Richter, 2012, p. 223). It is also evident in his requests for expert advice and background notes that Kneale conducted extensive research into the folklore he presents, something he continued throughout his career. For example, during development work on *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* (1982), Kneale requested material from producers at MCA Universal who sent Kneale books 'on "witchcraft" which may contain a portion of useful information for your research and writing' (Bernardi, 1982).<sup>32</sup> Additionally, amongst Kneale's research papers, there are pages of *The New Golden Bough* (Frazer, 1959), where Kneale has annotated sections on traditional customs at Celtic fire festivals, rituals related to the feast of all souls and the revitalisation of local communities. Kneale's handwritten notes show particular interest in a traditional rhyme about Halloween from South Uist and Eriskay (small Scottish isles) warning children about Halloween, witchcraft and fairies. Although such folklore is reinterpreted by Kneale (creating his own folkloresque notions in 'Baby' and a plausible background for Ringstone Round), this evidences the continued influence of earlier folkloric texts on writers across many decades, well into the 1980s. The representation (albeit in a dramatic context) of folkloric notions based on the work of Frazer and others (outlined in 1.3.2) extends the possibility for such ideas to persist and be adapted through their communication in mass media, including by those influenced by Kneale's work in later decades (discussed in chapter 5.0).

Kneale's use of real history, traditional custom and belief as context for his own detailed invention of legends like Ringstone Round and 'the stumpy men' circle reveals an intention to create a plausible presentation of events for an audience. Jeremy Dyson describes Kneale as 'an absolute master' (pers. comm., 15 March 2018) at creating contemporary legend, as shown in the example of the 'Huffity puffity' rhyme (and audience perception of supernatural folklore), which itself exhibits signs of having become 'real' folklore (see 3.3.5). Situating *Quatermass* in a near-dystopian future (exaggerating real circumstances in society, common to the bleak outlook of 1970s

television drama), whilst drawing upon notions of discomfort and disruption to the domestic space (also in 'Baby') frames a sense of ancient folklore and otherworldly contemporary legend in both modern and everyday terms. In this way, these lurking fears continually haunt the physical present and future in *Quatermass*, where 'the nightmares of the deep past and anxieties of the near future are brought into a direct and uncomfortable proximity' not only to each other but also for the audience (Coverley, 2020, p. 140). For example, the endings of each *Quatermass* episode (as well as the series overall) offer the audience little in the way of definitive explanation or comfort about narrative events, which leaves a lingering sense of threat: unexplained cult indoctrination could happen to anyone, or an ancient or alien threat could return at any time. This again echoes Fisher's 'eerie Thanatos' in that 'all life is merely a route to death' and the idea that 'the material world in which we live is more profoundly alien and strange than we had previously imagined' (2016, pp.83-84). Kneale's 1979 incarnation of *Quatermass*, therefore, is a paradigm case of hauntological media and folk horror that (in its uses of supernatural folklore, landscape, skewed belief and dystopian outlook), whilst not necessarily always *horrific*, is certainly *wyrd* throughout.

There are many areas of Kneale's work left to examine which go much further than the remit of this study, extending to: themes about society, culture and politics; questions of genre and format, and the history of television itself. Kneale's dedication to intelligent writing within television is central to the enduring influence of his work and the way in which he communicates ideas about supernatural folklore and traditional belief in the format, far beyond the limitations of any single genre like science fiction or horror. Kneale states as early as 1959 that 'The intelligent viewer must be won and kept, otherwise TV will just go down the drain'. Strict adherence to formulaic generic convention is something Kneale 'morbidly predicts...will then lead to automation; electronic computers that "turn out a beautiful plot, complete with dialogue and period costume"' (1959b). Six decades later, Kneale's statement (ironically) 'may sound like science fiction, but the idea of using computers to help write scripts and other tasks is gaining serious traction in Hollywood' (Lee, 2019). Therefore, not least in any future consideration of Kneale's work, there should be a revised appreciation of him as one of the foremost creative British writers, 'regarded

as the missing link between the haunting repetitions of M. R. James and the more technologically alert fictions of JG Ballard' (Coverley, 2020, p. 140).

Building on the examination of Kneale's work and how supernatural folklore and contemporary legend are represented in the case studies of 'Baby' and *Quatermass*, I move on in the following chapter to look at *Children of the Stones*, a series often cited by Generation X and arising in my interview data as being equally influential.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Kneale's work has been produced in all decades except the 1980s. The most recent broadcast adaptation of Kneale's work is from a 'lost' 1963 television play, *The Road*, starring Mark Gatiss which aired on BBC Radio 4, Saturday 27 October 2018. The original play was broadcast at 9pm on 29 September 1963 on BBC Television, with no recordings of the production known to exist. As part of *Nigel Kneale: a Centenary Celebration*, an event held in London on 23 April 2022 and supported by the BFI, in addition to screenings of Kneale's work there was also a live reading of his lost 1952 radio play *You Must Listen*, about a haunted telephone line.

<sup>2</sup> Subsequent winners of the prize include Doris Lessing, Kingsley Amis, Ted Hughes and Kneale's son Matthew. A full list of recipients dating from 1947 until the present is available from the Society of Authors at <https://www.societyofauthors.org/Prizes/Society-of-Authors-Awards/Somerset-Maugham/Past-winners>

<sup>3</sup> See for example Rolinson & Cooper, 2002; Chapman, 2006; and Meikle, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> *The Time Machine* was an hour-long drama, broadcast at 8:30pm on Tuesday 25 January 1949. Science-fiction serial *Stranger from Space* had been broadcast by the BBC in 1951, but this was fortnightly and in short instalments as part of children's variety magazine television programme *Whirligig* (1951-1956) rather than as a programme in its own right.

<sup>5</sup> 'Martin Quatermass' is described in the pressbook for *Prince of Darkness* as 'a graduate of Kneale University', whilst Carpenter's *In the Mouth of Madness* (1995) also features 'demonic events in a village called Hobb's End' (Rolinson & Cooper, 2002, p. 165). Additionally, Kneale worked with Carpenter on *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* (1982), although he was unhappy with the resulting film and refused screen credit (see appendix 7.5).

<sup>6</sup> *Gremlins 2: The New Batch* also features Christopher Lee as an eccentric scientist, an additional nod by director Dante to British horror history.

<sup>7</sup> My interviewee list appears in appendix 7.2.

<sup>8</sup> These statements are made on an unnumbered page in a box of Kneale's general correspondence papers relating to *Quatermass* (1979). The page, consisting of only two short paragraphs damning science fiction as 'a quasi-imaginative experience to those who have no imagination', appears to be unconnected with other letters and articles in the box and thus reads as something of a personal mission statement or manifesto to distance himself from the genre (Kneale, c. 1979).

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<sup>9</sup> Following broadcast of *The Stone Tape*, the phrase 'Stone Tape Theory' was retroactively adopted and applied to paranormal research ideas in parapsychology (Taylor, 2011). This notion is also discussed chapter 5.0.

<sup>10</sup> Russell T. Davies is known for writing and producing British television programmes including *Queer as Folk* (1999), *Doctor Who* (2005-2010) and *Years and Years* (2019).

<sup>11</sup> Corvidae is the collective term for species of the crow family, including ravens, rooks, jackdaws and magpies, amongst others.

<sup>12</sup> In Greek mythology, Thanatos is the personification of death.

<sup>13</sup> It is likely Kneale wrote the synopsis in the publicity brochure, in order to summarise the stories before the full teleplay of 'Baby' was written and, certainly, before it was shot. The first page of ATV's publicity brochure for *Beasts* outlines 'five productions' for the series (naming all episodes except 'Baby') which 'will be followed at a later date by a sixth programme based on another of the author's tales' (ATV, 1976, p.1). The synopsis of 'Baby' in this brochure also includes small details that differ from the finished production, such as the final scene taking place in an upstairs nursery rather than the downstairs lounge. Given the degree of control Kneale had over his work (such as taking over the shooting of the final scene), it is most likely Kneale himself who made these changes.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Fort's work on anomalous phenomena between 1919 and 1932 'laid the foundations of the idea of space alien interventions on earth'. Many writers have since developed explanations regarding ancient astronaut alien involvement in human origins (such as Robert Charroux and Zecharia Sitchin, amongst others). However, it is arguably Erich von Däniken's notion that 'Our ancient gods were alien astronauts' to which modern popular discourse around this subject owes the most, as discussed in 1.3.2 (Grünschloss, 2007, p. 207, 211).

<sup>15</sup> Hammer Film Productions had released *Quatermass and the Pit* (aka *Five Million Years to Earth*, 1967) during this period in cinemas, but this was only ever considered by Kneale to be a 'cheap film spin-off' at best (Kneale, c.1979d). This and Hammer's earlier releases *The Quatermass Xperiment* (1955) and *Quatermass 2* (1957) were broadcast on television, but each on no more than two or three occasions during this twenty-year period. All were film adaptations of Kneale's television series rather than bringing new Quatermass stories to the screen.

<sup>16</sup> Kneale challenges what he sees as an overly harsh critique of *Quatermass*, calling Clive James' 'hatchet job' article in *The Observer* a result of 'the Ugly Australian out on a pom-bashing' (Kneale, 1979).

<sup>17</sup> In 1973, Prime Minister Edward Heath announced stringent measures to conserve electricity: from 17 December, industrial and commercial users were limited to five days' electricity consumption during the fortnight ending 30 December and, from 31 December they would be limited to three specified consecutive days each week and prohibited from working longer hours on those days (The National Archives, 2016).

<sup>18</sup> Pesticide-induced disaster is a theme often returned to in 1970s dystopian horror, such as *The Living Dead at Manchester Morgue* (aka *Let Sleeping Corpses Lie*), a 1974 Spanish-Italian science-fiction horror, filmed in the North of England, in which the dead are accidentally revived as zombies by a farming tool using ultra-sonic radiation designed to kill insects.

<sup>19</sup> The oil refinery is a likely nod to *Quatermass II* (1955), also partly filmed on location at an oil refinery, as here, in this abandoned wasteland, Quatermass asks Kapp 'Remember the oil?...It was going to put everything right'.



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<sup>20</sup> Founded by L. Ron Hubbard in 1950, Scientology, ‘more properly [called] Dianetics’, includes beliefs that humans are immortal, spiritual beings with past lives lived in extra-terrestrial cultures (Clarke & Roberts, 2007, p. 75).

<sup>21</sup> The motif of a blinding blast of light heralding life-changing or otherworldly visions is common in supernatural literature and popular culture (such as *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, 1977, *Phenomenon*, 1997, and at significant points in *Children of the Stones*, discussed in chapter 4.0). Whilst this can be traced to biblical stories like the blinding ‘light from heaven’ which St Paul sees on the road to Damascus (NIV Bible, Acts 9:3), there is no direct evidence that Kneale is drawing from this. In fact, the original version of Kneale’s screenplay mentions a ‘trembling’ and ‘shuddering’ of the ‘air above the circle’, containing no reference to light or specific visual direction whatsoever (Kneale, c.1978a, p. 54). It is only revised versions of the script, broken up into shorter scenes more organised toward production planning, which mention ‘a beam of living light that flickers and bends and searches. Probing and spreading’. Under scene headings with mention of the ‘light’ there is explicit reference to these sequences as a ‘(TRICK SHOT)’ (Kneale, c.1978b, p. 64). Therefore, it is entirely plausible that the ‘light’ was inserted merely as a practical solution for how best to represent the event visually.

<sup>22</sup> It is worth noting here that Nigel Kneale’s spouse from 1954 until his death in 2006, Judith Kerr (1923-2019), author of well-known works such as *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* (1968) and *Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* (1971), was herself a German-born Jew who had fled Nazi Germany in 1935 with her family.

<sup>23</sup> Further countering the argument that Kneale was innately misanthropic, a 2022 *Fortean Times* article celebrating the centenary of Kneale’s birth commends ‘the new kind of hero’ represented by Quatermass, confident without being arrogant: ‘capable, intelligent, a little insecure...but knowing it’s up to him to sort things out’. Kneale is applauded for his ‘faith in humanity by trusting his audience to identify with the cleverest man in the room’ (Dear, 2022, p. 31).

<sup>24</sup> Stonehenge has unique status as the best-known prehistoric monument in Europe, thanks in particular to a wealth of mystical theories accumulating since the Middle Ages about its construction and purpose. In the twelfth century CE, Geoffrey of Monmouth, in his *History of the Kings of Britain*, described how it was ‘through the ingenuity of Merlin’, the wizard of Arthurian legend, that ‘the great megaliths of Stonehenge were brought...to Salisbury Plain’ by magic from Ireland (Tolstoy, 2016) and ‘set up with wonderful art’ (Geoffrey of Monmouth, trans. 1999, p. 194). Erich von Däniken suggested the site functioned as a landing pad for alien terrestrial craft, which fuelled a revival of theories about ‘ancient alien astronauts’ in 1960s new-age culture, as discussed in 3.3.1, reflected in Kneale’s *Planet People*.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Quoit’ is the Cornish name for a particular type of structure made up of several megaliths (large stones) forming a small chamber or tomb (Cornwall Heritage Trust, 2020).

<sup>26</sup> There is no indication of inclusion of a rhyme in the first version of Kneale’s screenplay, which references Stonehenge: it seems entirely inspired by the practical need for a change of location and name. There are additional handwritten notes by Kneale which suggest his trying out different names in the context of rhyming them, including ‘Rinbury’ and ‘Ringbury’ (Kneale, n.d., ‘Ringstone Round’).

<sup>27</sup> Recent speculation about the origins of Stonehenge has centred upon how the bluestones were moved to Salisbury Plain from Wales where they were quarried, covered in BBC documentary *Stonehenge: The Lost Circle Revealed* (2021).

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<sup>28</sup> It is now generally accepted that many notable monuments like Stonehenge are indeed ‘carefully aligned’ with significant astronomical sight-lines (English Heritage e., n.d.).

<sup>29</sup> Kneale lists a series of specific, detailed questions under the headings ‘Archaeology’, ‘Communications’ and ‘Biological bit’ in a handwritten page addressed to ‘Linda’, presumably *Quatermass* script editor Linda Agran (Kneale, n.d. ‘Expert bits needed’).

<sup>30</sup> According to both BabelFish (<https://www.babelfish.com>) and Google Translate (<https://translate.google.co.uk>).

<sup>31</sup> Lovecraft’s stories in turn drew upon late-Victorian speculation and concepts from Theosophy outlined by Helena Blavatsky, who made claims about the ‘eternal being of man’ and that the religion would come to eclipse all other world religions (Reis, 2013, p. 10). Blavatsky claimed that a secretive brotherhood of ‘ageless spiritual teachers’ with supernatural powers passed on to her an ‘ancient wisdom-doctrine’ and ‘letters of instruction via psychic transmission and materialization’ (Franklin, 2018, p. 190).

<sup>32</sup> A project from which Kneale was later keen to remove himself and all mention of his name, as he considered it to have been ‘abominable...I’d been Carpentered...I’m glad it was a flop’ (Kneale, 2002).

## 4.0. Children's television in the 1970s

In the 2007 BBC documentary *Children's TV on Trial: The 1970s*, television writer-producer Anna Home states that, amid the momentous cultural changes of the 1960s and '70s (and particularly with the rise of punk), 'there was a danger that children's TV would become too safe, too cosy, and too middle-class'. Programmes in the 1970s thus developed beyond catering to the gentler pre-school audience of *Watch with Mother* (1953-1975) to address older, more independent children and young adults. The invention of new genres and the arrival of modern mobile technology gave producers opportunities to be more innovative than ever before. Home herself worked on many ground-breaking programmes for children, including *Jackanory* (1965-1996) and *Grange Hill* (1978-2008), as well as series with distinctly folkloric themes, including *The Changes* (1975), *Lizzie Dripping* (1973-1975) and *The Witches and the Grinnygog* (1983). The narration of *Children's TV on Trial* describes children's programming of the 1970s as growing up fast to scale 'new heights of invention, ingenuity and irreverence' and states, by the end of the decade, children's television 'was no longer in an age of innocence'.

The field of children's broadcasting in the 1970s was, therefore, ripe for experimentation. Producer Monica Sims (Head of Children's Programmes at the BBC from 1967-1978 and, later, Director of Production at the Children's Film Foundation) expresses the desire at the time 'to extend children, not confine them' and provide them with more exciting and challenging programming (*Children's TV on Trial: The 1970s*, 2007). At the time of Sims' appointment in 1967, there had been no separate children's department in the BBC for a number of years, with children's programming reduced to a small concentration of programmes mainly aimed at younger children.<sup>1</sup> Because children's television had been traditionally overlooked in this respect, programme-makers were able to put new and revolutionary ideas into action, avoiding obstructive attention from the powers that be. Sims aimed to 'reinstate and expand a proper independent children's department' and actively 'encouraged new ideas, new young researchers and directors', of whom Anna Home was one (Home, 2018). Peter Graham Scott was frustrated by the 'very wearing' restrictive environment of adult drama at the BBC in the 1970s (working on programmes such as *Quiller*, 1975) and saw

the opportunity to direct *Children of the Stones* (1977) for HTV as a way to create more ambitious, thought-provoking work ('Interview with Peter Graham Scott', 2002). Patrick Dromgoole (producer of *Children of the Stones*) confirms that because those in charge of television networks weren't particularly interested with children's programming, '[as long as we made] quality children's programming...we could get it onto the network fairly easily' (pers. comm., 22 August 2017). Anna Home looks back on the 1970s as a unique period when 'you could have a go...try something and see whether it worked, which nowadays is much less likely to happen', suggesting that children's programming in more recent decades is created with much less freedom and a greater degree of scrutiny (in *Children's TV on Trial: The 1970s*, 2007).

#### 4.1 A wyrd education

In addition to the argument put forward by Helen Wheatley (2012) highlighting the lack of proper attention given by scholars to the dramatic content of children's television (discussed in 2.1.4), I propose that it is vital to examine children's television of the 1970s now its audience has come of age as the first generation to have experienced targeted programming for older children and young adults. This period was also unique in terms of the technological context (see 1.3.3), well before home video recording was prevalent and before the advent of the internet and streaming media fundamentally changed the broadcasting landscape. Alison Peirse, too, argues that this present context makes studying the impact of television of bygone decades 'even more important' (Peirse, 2010, p. 122).

Children's television had traditionally provided more opportunities for women than in other areas, with female executives adopting senior roles in broadcasting. Anna Home, like Sims, became a significant figure in children's television, working as programme controller at ITV networks and becoming Head of Children's Television at the BBC in 1986. In this era of second-wave feminism, it is interesting that Laura Mulvey's seminal work regarding female representation in cinema and 'the male gaze' (1975, p.11) was published in 1975,<sup>2</sup> the same year *The Changes* was broadcast, a series featuring a strong, female, teenage protagonist. Although Mulvey's focus was film, it is reasonable to transpose her discussion to television: gender politics was pushed to the fore of the medium on several occasions, such as when feminist activists

flour-bombed the live 1970 BBC broadcast of the Miss World finale.<sup>3</sup> It is therefore fair to assume that burgeoning feminist debates about the on-screen representation of women were present in the minds of female writers and producers like Home at the time. Oliver Postgate, who collaborated with Peter Firmin to write and create some of Britain's most popular children's programmes (including *Bagpuss* and *The Clangers*, 1969-1974), strongly believed that politics could and *should* be addressed for young audiences. Postgate had concerns 'about the winter of discontent and Heath and the miners and politics' and decided to make an episode of *The Clangers* titled 'Vote for Froglet!', examining political folly.<sup>4</sup> Examples like this showed the BBC that politics could be tackled head-on in a children's programme. Similarly, Roger Price, creator of *The Tomorrow People*, believed in overtly depicting equality on television in terms of both race and gender: 'you may as well impose some of your prejudices on it, especially if they happen to be the right prejudices. I insisted that if we were going to depict the next stage of human evolution it could not be an all-white next stage'. The influential nature of this is illustrated further in *Children's TV on Trial: The 1970s* in an interview with a fan of *The Tomorrow People* who, the documentary narration states, 'like many viewers...believes her career choice and her political views were influenced by the anti-establishment message of the series'. Therefore, it is important to examine television programming of the past and note that, in representing stories about supernatural folklore and folk horror themes, the *way* in which these are represented can be influential not only upon young viewers at the time of broadcast but also upon the development of future generations and notions about folklore, identity and politics.

The effect of providing mature, experimental and challenging programming is not to be underestimated in terms of its impact on its young audiences, particularly with regard to the proliferation of unsettling folkloric and 'wyrd' folk-horror themes. As discussed in 2.1.4, prominent Generation X film and television writers and directors make direct links between watching wyrd television and their subsequent careers. Not only were Jeremy Dyson and Alice Lowe influenced by watching 1970s television programmes like *Doctor Who* and having grown up obsessively 'watching all the weirdest' programmes (*The Evolution of Horror*, 2018) but also the effects of exposure to wyrd television are evident well into adulthood for other generations. Folklorist Ceri

Houlbrook (born 1986) states, for example: 'I for one am still traumatized by the television shows of my own childhood' (2021, p.14).

As discussed in 2.1.5, this notion of children being 'scarred for life' by wyrd media, in the sense of television programmes having a profoundly memorable effect on audiences, represents an important developmental stage for children and young adults. Childlore expert Julia Bishop, exploring the value of spooky folklore for children (particularly during the Covid era), suggests that:

kids are interested in much bigger, heavier topics than we give them credit for. They need to wrap their minds around death and dying just as much as we do...[Children relish] that delicious thrill...that comes with a child's first encounter with fear (in *The Green Lady in the Toilets*, 2020).

Folklorist Ian Brodie's work reinforces the value of (much-needed) scholarship in this area. As discussed in 1.3.5, Brodie describes television programmes as 'early and formative texts' that are often the first encounters with dark, folkloric and supernatural themes a child might have (2018). Children have long sought out that which is secretive or forbidden beyond their own safe, familiar world: 'Babies do not want to hear about babies; they like to be told of giants and castles, and of somewhat which can stretch and stimulate their little minds' (Johnson, 1786, in Opie & Opie, 1974, p.8). Patrick Dromgoole states that 'Children adore to be scared and it does them good' (in Killick, 1992, p. 35), a sentiment echoed by film critic Mark Kermode, who describes how the experience of horror as a child gave him 'something that was uniquely mine' (1997, p. 61). Horror can allow audiences to experience difficult or frightening situations in a safe context, acting as a kind of emotional rollercoaster ride and 'psychological safety-valve' (Newson, 1994, p. 273). Maire Messenger-Davis' research reveals children expressing enthusiasm for the horror genre and an enjoyment of scary television programmes and their effects. One child aged 10-11 liked 'watching *The X Files*, it makes me jump all the time and makes me feel ill and sick', whilst another 8-year-old requested more programmes featuring 'witches and monsters' and a special home to be made for them on 'the spooky channel' (2001, p. 164).

As many television scholars have noted, concerns about the impact of media images upon individuals 'are as old as the mass market for moving images' and 'No

aspect of television has been more hotly debated than its potential to help or harm children' (Miller, 2002, pp. 74, 80). However, for many decades, the focus has been directed heavily towards examination of television's potential influence in terms of the imitation of violence and aggression, or otherwise negative behaviours concerning consumerism and health. Messenger-Davies argues that although effects-driven research has 'never conclusively demonstrated...that media have direct, measurable, harmful effects on the young', there is nevertheless 'a continuing popular belief' to the contrary, particularly in relation to horror and scary stories. More recent perspectives advocate a shift in focus away from such examination of potential negative effects of children's television, in which writers tend to focus 'on regulation, effects, ideological contamination, commodification and bad examples' (in Creeber, 2001, pp. 97-99).

Therefore, as discussed in chapter 2.1, there is a gap in discussion regarding the *content* of children's television drama (identified by Peirse, Wheatley, et al.) and the distinct cultural contribution of individual programmes. This is not to contest the notion that television exerts influence on children, in fact quite the opposite, as media scholars acknowledge the construction of identity through discourse and the mediated organisation of experience, which begins in childhood. Messenger-Davies states that:

cultural representations, whether family traditions, or stories told on television...must, as Brecht argued, be influential in showing children how to behave. Indeed, it could be argued that the purpose of cultural representations, particularly dramatic ones...[is to show] children forms of behaviour which they cannot easily be taught through the routines of everyday upbringing. All cultural representations for children are a form of hypothesising 'what if?' (2001, p.160).

This 'what if' element is important in the context of this study, as it corresponds with a type of ostensive action postulated by Ellis and other folklore scholars (see 2.2.3). Supernatural folklore, folk horror and their close association with fairy tales and fantasy drama have natural links with children's television. The presentation of such tales on screen, with varying degrees of realism and credibility, still often allows space for the discussion of the 'possibilities' suggested by such stories (Koven, 2007a, p. 185). For example, whilst children may well understand that an evil queen with a magic poisoned apple in the story of *Snow White* may not literally exist, it is likely they will appreciate that there may be some inherent truth in the dangers of trusting, or accepting gifts from, a stranger.

Messenger-Davies suggests that, regarding fears surrounding the effects of horror, concerns about the ability of young audiences to distinguish reality and fantasy are 'misconceived' and that their understanding and interpretation are in fact far more sophisticated than are given credit. However, it is important to acknowledge that although media 'cannot be simplistically blamed' for social changes or trends in the behaviour of young people, similarly to the world of adults, they do nonetheless have the potential to 'contribute to such changes...[and have] effects on individual children' (2001, p.161). It is possible to conceive that, given the political context of the era and perspectives of those making television, programmes could shape audience perceptions not only in a negative sense and that, at least for those members of a young audience who enjoy a frisson of fear in their viewing, they may have shaped tastes to create horror fans (and even creators) of the future. As Messenger-Davies summarises: 'the child audience deserves to be seen, not just negatively, as people incapable of coping with adult material, but as a group with special interests, talents and needs of its own' (in Creeber, 2001, p.99).

Thus, the potential for children's television, including *wyrd* programmes, to shape notions and beliefs as a form of mass-mediated ostension is of great significance indeed. Through the lens of folklore studies, we can further understand not only *what* attitudes and notions might be present in society as influenced by television, but also *how* and *why* they develop, in some cases, from an early age. Teacher and educational consultant Jane Dobbin champions the educational potential of television:

Even the very young can gain by watching programmes not necessarily designed for them...Teachers, too, appreciate the value of children's programmes...[and] don't scorn TV as a learning device. ITV's space fantasy *Quatermass* interested youngsters in Stonehenge, stone circles, and the rites of ancient Druids, providing them with background material for future lessons. Thus history, geography and religion all become teaching material linked to TV...The potential of television to inform and educate has been underestimated (Dobbin, 1980, p.33).

Alan Garner, known for his prolific work incorporating folk tales and legend, was not only determined to use folklore as a way of revealing some element of universal truth in his stories (see 2.1.6) but also prized the medium of television itself in their communication. Garner saw television as the 'main cultural development' of the



twentieth century and recognises that it has been undervalued for the part it has played in children's development, particularly for children of the 1970s onward:

Television removes barriers...I maintain that children are now more aware, more humane, because they have learned more through television than we did...I would say that television presents facts and offers interpretation in a way that involves every area of our lives (Garner, 1997, pp.8-9).

It therefore seems vital to carry out a study of *Children of the Stones* in this context, given that it is not only the most significant *children's* programme cited in my research data, but is amongst the most significant named programmes for any age group indicated therein (see 1.2.7). Indeed, it is evident that *Children of the Stones*, decades on, continues to affect those who saw it, as writer Jeremy Burnham states:

Even now, nearly fifty years later, I still receive letters from viewers all over the world who were children in the seventies, thanking me for 'ruining their childhood', which (I hope) was intended as a compliment (pers. comm., 13 April 2017).

## 4.2 Children of the Stones

Although specifically produced for children, *Children of the Stones* is firmly accepted as 'key to discussion of Folk Horror' (Scovell, 2017, p. 68), 'among the most bizarre and thought-provoking prewatershed fantasy dramas of the 1970s' (Angelini, 2012, p. 90) and as 'gold standard' television, 'about as good as 1970s children's drama ever got' (Ingham, 2018, pp. 170-1). It is also repeatedly (by scholars, fans and those working in the media) described as 'one of the scariest' programmes ever made (Lee, 2012) and a 'touchstone for many', particularly of the Generation X era (Dyson, pers. comm., 15 March 2018). It is interesting, then, that even where it is mentioned in such glowing terms, there is rarely more than a single paragraph, page or brief blog post dedicated to examination or discussion of the series (other than one or two dedicated fan sites). An entry in exhaustive compendium of spooky 1970s media *Scarred for Life* sees eight pages devoted to *Children of the Stones* where the authors provide fuller commentary and context than most texts on the series. However, though they plainly state that were they to 'pick one TV series to embody the ethos of this book, it would be *Children of the Stones*...it is, quite frankly a masterpiece', their entry still only equates to barely one percent of the entire 740-page tome (Brotherstone & Lawrence, 2017, p. 104).

It is similarly difficult to find archival material in terms of screenplays, correspondence and other background files on the programme. On contacting the IBA archive at Bournemouth University (which holds Independent Television Authority and Independent Broadcasting Authority Archive materials from 1955 onward),<sup>5</sup> I discovered that they held no programme-specific documents for *Children of the Stones* and the only HTV West notes held at the National Archives relate to general regulatory and organisational information.<sup>6</sup> The National Library of Wales, too, has limited useful background material, holding only a few photographs and negatives of the production filming on location, other than viewing copies of the programmes themselves. Features and promotional materials about the series from the time of broadcast are equally few and far between, and do not always even discuss the content of the programme itself. For example, one short *TVTimes* feature, printed during the week of the final episode's broadcast, focuses on actor Veronica Strong's haircare routine: 'I find rosemary keeps it in perfect sheen' (Stokes, 1977, p.25). Even *Look-in*, the 'junior

TVTimes' magazine dedicated to children's television, has just a few brief paragraphs on the series (1977, p.2) which, on the inside cover, seems more of a promotional advert than an actual feature (fig. 68).



Figure 68: 'The Psychic Stones!' from Look-in, a weekly magazine dedicated to children's television

This lack of scholarship and background material is interesting given the wealth of interest in the programme due to the folk horror revival and frequent categorisation of *Children of the Stones* as 'The Wicker Man for kids' (Brotherstone & Lawrence, 2017, p. 98). *The Wicker Man* has come to be seen, even by some fans and practitioners in the folk horror genre as 'tediously overexamined' (Jim Jupp, pers. comm., 22 May 2018), whilst *Children of the Stones* remains relatively neglected. One can only assume that the traditional general disregard for children's television (discussed above) at least partly explains the series' oversight, in both archival and scholarly contexts, and is something I hope to address here.

### 4.2.1 Into the circle

The narrative of *Children of the Stones* is unusually complex for children's television of any era, combining elements of history, supernatural folklore, legend, astrophysics and psychometry, to name but a few. The series, comprising seven 25-minute episodes, opens with the arrival of astrophysicist Adam Brake (Gareth Thomas) and his teenage son Matthew (Peter Dinkins) in the isolated village of Milbury (based on the real village of Avebury) to study the ancient stones that surround it. After befriending other relative newcomers Margaret (Veronica Strong), the curator of the village museum, and her teenage daughter Sandra (Katherine Levy), the group discover there is something unusual about the other local inhabitants. Adam and Matthew's scientific investigations link the history and topography of the quiet hamlet with a black hole in space and the sinister secret of the lord of the manor, Rafael Hendrick (Iain Cuthbertson). It is revealed that Hendrick is using the power of the stones to control the villagers, none of whom can leave the circle, until the Brakes eventually work out how to escape the time loop that is keeping them prisoner. Throughout, the series uses dense, sophisticated dialogue and vocabulary, illustrating that the young viewer will not be patronised and will, in fact, be introduced to a number of perhaps unfamiliar theoretical ideas. From the outset, this is reflected in the relationship between Adam and Matthew, whose opening conversation sets the tone:

**Matthew:** Pretty fantasmagorical, with an 'f', which means more fantastic than fantastic.

**Adam:** Rubbish, it's 'ph', as in phantasmagoria: a series of illusions of phantoms.

Adam, an academic professor of science, talking to his young teenage son as a peer (or at least an adult student) and the pairing of the two with Margaret and Sandra as protagonists set all four characters on an equal intellectual basis, regardless of age or gender. The young audience is made privy to conversations between adults as well as children: the world of the narrative is not limited to the perspective of the young characters alone (as with many children's dramas), and the series is 'remarkable for the amount of scenes where adults are discussing matters with no children present',

some of which take place in the local pub (Coulthart, 2012). For example, many lines of dialogue cite detailed historical and cultural references, often without explanation or contextualisation, such as when Hendrick outlines his astronomical research:

I resigned my chair at Cambridge...because of some papers...given to me by a colleague, written in dog Latin, a style earlier than Bede's, about 6th century. A mish mash of fact and fiction about megalithic Britain...No-one had ever paid much account for them, like so much of that stuff at the Ashmolean. None of the stories were authenticated but there was one event...reported by bardic tradition.

It is difficult to imagine that most children watching *Children of the Stones* would be familiar with such references, not least the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford or the type of material on display there. There are many similar cultural references which it is likely many younger members of the audience would miss altogether. Fantasy illustrator John Coulthart remembers a passing comment by Matthew that 'he ought to sell his ruined bike to the Tate Gallery: I'd been to the Tate the year before, and it was a place you never heard mentioned on children's television' (Coulthart, 2012).

It was this layered, complex narrative style adopted by writers Jeremy Burnham and Trevor Ray that appealed to many of the cast and crew, and prompted director Peter Graham Scott, upon reading the script for episode one, to ask producer Patrick Dromgoole for reassurance: 'this is for children?' ('Interview with Peter Graham Scott', 2002). Gareth Thomas, Iain Cuthbertson and Freddie Thomas (Dai) agreed that it was 'more than a children's script...very, very good, exciting, unusual...that was why we all...wanted to do it'. The folkloric aspect, and mysterious notions surrounding stones circles in particular, seems to have been the central draw of the project for a number of those involved, including Thomas who cites the story's elements 'of mysticism...of the old folklore, ley lines...the stones themselves' as appealing ('Interview with Gareth Thomas', 2002). Scott, too talks about ideas presented in the script

that in a way we are ruled not only by the stars but by these stones erected by people in Neolithic times...stone circles have something to do with the stars and with some part of our brains...This was what really fascinated me (in Richardson, 1995, p. 43).

Burnham states neither he nor co-writer Ray 'can remember how the original idea for "*Children*" came up', but does mention 'several research trips to Avebury' before

writing began. Though the real location and existing folklore of Avebury were integral to the atmosphere and creation of a plausible context for the series (discussed further in 4.2.3), Burnham cites Thomas Tryon's 1973 novel *Harvest Home* as inspiration for the story because it 'had the sort of creepiness we were looking for' (pers. comm., 13 April 2017). The plot of *Harvest Home* follows a family's move from New York to an isolated New England village whose inhabitants are suspicious of newcomers and follow 'the old ways', including the Harvest Home festival which 'goes back to the olden times'. The plot combines witchcraft and fertility rites and, though this village is run by a matriarch, similarly to *The Wicker Man* and *Robin Redbreast*, there is a Harvest Lord sacrificed to ensure future crops, 'spilling his blood among the upturned clods' (Tryon, 1974, pp. 61, 408). At best, the novel is considered a piece of lowbrow, kitschy Americana which Stephen King reviewed as not 'a great book, not a great horror novel, not even a great suspense novel' which nonetheless demonstrates a sense of authenticity: 'it is a true book; it is an honest book' (King, 1976).

*Harvest Home's* sacrificial 'harvest lord' again emphasises the enduring prevalence of Frazer's notions (see 1.3.2) influencing cultural products of the 1970s. Although *Children of the Stones* producer Patrick Dromgoole, 'a great believer in *The Golden Bough*', states that the writing team 'wouldn't sit with *The Golden Bough* on our left hand...and the script on the right', he also notes that 'The scripts were written...under the guidance of the individual producers' and that 'insofar as I have any source for things like *Children of the Stones*...[*The Golden Bough* is] probably it'. Dromgoole's career history included many television series based upon his own fascination from childhood 'with myth and legend and its current relevance, or its recurrent relevance', including *Arthur of the Britons* (1972-1973) about Arthurian myth and legend and *Sky* (1975), based on notions about UFOs, ancient aliens and stone circles. Given this pattern, it is fair to assume that Dromgoole's influence and folkloric interests played a role in the development of the story for *Children of the Stones*, at least by his own account: 'when we were discussing the outline of storylines, I've always been inspired by the fact of "well what's the basic myth, which has appeared in dozens of different ways to match this situation?"' (pers. comm., 22 August 2017).

As an example of folk horror, although there are similarities with the Frazerian notion of sacrifice used in *The Wicker Man*, *Children of the Stones* far exceeds the

limitations of its frequent comparison with the film. The series not only exhibits all the thematic elements Scovell outlines in his 'folk horror chain' (see 2.1.1) but also combines a number of narrative devices seen in the work of Nigel Kneale. In utilising a wealth of 'real' folklore and contemporary legend, alongside intertextual cultural references (both real and fictional), combined with an approach of scientific reason as Kneale does in *Quatermass* (chapter 3.3), the series presents a plausible basis for what is more often categorised as children's fantasy drama.

#### 4.2.2 *Circle of fear*

In line with Scovell's 'use of landscape as a location acquiring the status of a character' in folk horror (2017, p. 17), the topography and stone circles at Avebury dominate *Children of the Stones* thematically, visually and narratively. The reason for Adam and Matthew Brake's arrival in Milbury (a fictionalised Avebury) is that Adam, a university professor, has been given a research grant to study and measure the electromagnetism of the standing stones (reflecting contemporary activities of the Dragon Project, see 3.3.4). Each of the seven episode titles foregrounds the stone circle ('Into the Circle'; 'Circle of Fear'; 'Serpent in the Circle'; 'Narrowing Circle'; 'Charmed Circle'; 'Squaring the Circle'; and 'Full Circle') and almost every outdoor location shot features the stones, whether predominantly or ever-present in the background. Jeremy Burnham states that he and Trevor Ray

knew from the beginning that Avebury was the perfect setting for our story. What we were looking for was an 'island' of seeming ordinariness in the middle of the English countryside, where strange things happen and everyone was under the influence of a strange and threatening force. Avebury, thousands of years older than Stonehenge, fitted that bill (pers. comm, 25 April 2017).<sup>7</sup>

Edward Parnell notes the hauntological eeriness of Avebury, whose striking physical features hold a 'furtive sense of history' and where the 'deep past haunts our present'. This echoes Fisher's notion of eeriness and the uncanny (see 2.1.3), where there is a presence that cannot quite be explained. Parnell describes the sense of mystery and narrative evoked by stone circles, suggestive of the 'unknowable lives and actions of previous inhabitants...[which] from so many generations before call out to

us, begging us to understand their barely uncovered existences' (2019, pp. 410-11). Whilst Gareth Thomas said Avebury didn't feel overtly 'spooky' during his time there, his observations are also eerily hauntological: 'There is an atmosphere...you are very much aware of the fact that you're sitting in the middle of something that's 4,000 years old, and we still don't really know why and how'. Thomas also recounts unexplained events which seemed to happen there, including a number of the crew's watches going 'completely haywire inside the circle. No apparent reason, just went haywire!' ('Interview with Gareth Thomas', 2002). Burnham described Avebury as having the right 'sort of creepiness', recounting a 'vivid memory of a crow standing on the back of a sheep, both motionless, and we knew we were on the right track' (pers. comm., 13 April 2017).



*Figure 69: The opening shot of Children of the Stones title sequence*

Among the main reasons *Children of the Stones* continues to be popularly cited as one of the 'scariest children's tv series ever made' (Hinman, 2020) are its striking opening credit sequence and unusual score. The opening shot zooms out from what begins as a black screen to reveal a standing stone in silhouette, looming over the camera with a glaring lens flare from the overhead sun (fig. 69). Accompanied only by the sound of wind, this establishes a threatening, abstract atmosphere from the outset. The shot dissolves to a steady tilt down from a close-up of another stone, again



seen from a low angle. As the camera moves down this stone, with less heavily contrasted lighting, the audience is more easily able to comprehend that this is a standing stone rather than an abstract shape. The series title also appears over this shot: the font design is close to a form of uncial script, which has long been associated with ancient Celtic texts and Druidism (Bonwick, 1894, p. 307).<sup>8</sup> Since the occult revival from the late 1960s (see 1.3.2), this type of Celtic styling is often used as shorthand to present a sense of myth, legend and the ‘the concept of a magical and distant past’ (Falconieri, 2019, p.142).



*Figure 70: Shot 2 – tilt down as the stone looms over the village*

The end of this title shot lingers for a moment as the unusual shape of the stone looms over the village, dominating the frame (fig. 70), whilst another standing stone is visible at the far right of the screen as if blocking the path. Voices emerge on the soundtrack during this shot: breathy, ghostly male voices are accompanied by four or five steady but discordant tones held by higher female voices. The wordless chorus is reminiscent of medieval plainsong, not unlike Piers Haggard’s use of ominous

chanting in *Blood on Satan's Claw* (see 2.1.6). However, there is little that could be described as melodic in the score for *Children of the Stones*, the strangeness of which is central to the programme's unsettling nature. Elements of the opening soundtrack, 'comprising howling, moaning, groaning, [and] sighing voices blended together into an eerie melody' (Richardson, 1995, p.43), recur during haunting moments across the entire series, maintaining frequent aural reference to the stones.



*Figure 71: Faces in the stones?*

Following the title shot, a sudden, fast-cut montage of stones echoes the discordant nature of the soundtrack. The camera, hand-held and unstable, frantically lunges toward a stone, looking up from a low angle, then cuts to a zoom out from another stone, then to another hand-held movement around a different stone, giving the impression of the stones themselves moving and framed to pick out details that might just resemble faces (fig. 71). At this point, the voices on the soundtrack make deep howling or chanting sounds rather than sung notes which, combined with the images, suggests that the stones themselves may be the source of these sounds. These techniques have far more in common with horror films than anything commonly heard on children's television. For example, the representation of the 'unseen force' in *The Evil Dead* (1982) is achieved by using a hand-held camera carried quickly forward (usually towards victims), low to the ground, whilst we hear guttural vocal groans, comparable with the *Children of the Stones* soundtrack and camera lunging toward the stones.

A fast-cut eight-second sequence, including no fewer than eleven shots, depicts an 'utterly nightmarish collage' of yet more standing stones (Brotherstone & Lawrence, 2017, p.97). In each shot, the stone dominates the frame whilst the varied

composition of the sequence suggests the stones are everywhere, filling all sides and spaces of the screen. The cacophony of voices, howling, chanting, quickly builds to a wailing crescendo, as the images of stones feature large gaping holes resembling open mouths, screaming: visually multiplying in parallel to the voices we hear (fig. 72).



*Figure 72: Screaming stones*

As the voices drop to a sigh, fading to the sound of distant wind and a hymn-like solo soprano, the conclusion of the opening sequence is seen from above. Aerial shots circle the village as framed by the stone circle (fig. 73), emphasising that it is ‘literally encircled by the past’ (Parnell, 2019, p. 411).



Figure 73: Milbury encircled

The use of voices here underlines the notion of the landscape and stones as characters in themselves but also creates confusion between the animate and inanimate, which is a defining feature of the uncanny and the type of unsettling anxiety it can cause (discussed in 2.1.3). Director Peter Graham Scott consciously wanted a theme for voices without words to suggest a type of Neolithic language:

we didn't know what Neolithic language was, but they must have communicated or else how could they have put up the stones? I wanted to create a sound almost like a work song, where they're heaving away (in Richardson, 1995, p.44).<sup>9</sup>

The 'motif of *petrification* as punishment for wrongdoing' and the notion of standing stones containing or trapping people in some way, tightly woven into the plot of *Children of the Stones*, are familiar from supernatural folklore (Grinsell, 1979, p. 66, *italics in original*). Petrification legends associated with stone circles (see Bord & Bord, 1976; Grinsell, 1976) are commonly reflected in their name. Traditional beliefs about the Merry Maidens in Cornwall, the Nine Maidens in Devon and the Nine Ladies stone circle in Derbyshire all tell that the monuments depict women who were turned into stone as a punishment for dancing on the Sabbath (English Heritage c, n.d.). The



Rollright Stones, on the borders of Oxfordshire and Warwickshire, comprises a number of monuments: the King Stone, the King's Men stone circle and the Whispering Knights burial chamber (which consists of four large upright stones and a fallen capstone). Folklore about the Rollright Stones tells that a witch turned a king, his army and his knights to stone whilst the witch herself became an elder tree: 'if it is cut the spell is broken [and] the Stones will come back to life' (The Rollright Trust, n.d.). These tales again uncannily blur the animate with inanimate: life and movement frozen in magic and time.

As Adam drives himself and Matthew to the edge of Milbury's stone circle, Matthew turns his gaze from the monuments at the side of the road toward one which, in a one-second point-of-view shot, seems to have appeared in the middle of the road (fig. 74). On the soundtrack the crescendo of voices heard in the opening rises again as Matthew yells for Adam to stop and the car screeches to a halt, as the voices fade again. When the camera cuts back to the road, there is a woman there instead, posed like the glimpsed stone.



*Figure 74: Are the stones alive?*

This frightening moment is what welcomes the Brakes to Milbury: the woman is Mrs Crabtree, who is to be their housekeeper during their stay. This event is made more eerie by her benign smile and politely dismissive attitude ('Never mind sir, no harm

done') as Adam and Matthew carry their luggage indoors. Several other events connect villagers with the stones, or suggest the stones as animate in some way. For example, when Dr Lyle (another recent arrival) tries to leave the village, he is apparently also thwarted by the sudden appearance of a stone in the road. After 'village idiot' Dai collapses on a hill, his body appears to have been mysteriously replaced by a sarsen which itself later disappears. Additionally, using information from the museum and the painting Matthew found (which appears to depict a cataclysmic event in ancient Milbury, fig. 75), Margaret and Matthew work out that the number of stones corresponds to the number of villagers: the stones and the residents contained within are intertwined.



*Figure 75: The curious painting owned by Matthew*

There is a sense of claustrophobia created by this containment, as Dai says to Matthew, 'Nobody leaves the circle'. This is emphasised by the studio interiors, where old-fashioned furniture, knick-knacks and beams crowd the on-screen space in Mrs Crabtree's house and the local pub is dingy, oppressive and unwelcoming, despite it being bright daylight outside (fig. 76). This type of claustrophobia and distrust with locals is common to folk horror where inhabitants are often portrayed as unwelcoming or strange to outsiders, as in *The Wicker Man*, *Robin Redbreast* and parodied in *The League of Gentlemen*. The notion of the small, sinister village, with a nod to wyrd 1970s television, is directly remarked upon in the 2020 podcast series remake of *Children of the Stones* in which the village of Milbury is described as 'the sort of place people get murdered in, in old TV shows...everyone here is weird'.



Figure 76: The claustrophobic interior of Mrs Crabtree's house and the Milbury tavern

All the local villagers are curiously happy and calm, other than the relatively recent arrivals, Adam and Matthew, Margaret and Sandra, and Dr Lyle and his son Kevin. Other than their placid manner, what sets the locals apart is the phrase 'happy day', frequently used as a village greeting or parting platitude. 'Happy day' makes the newcomers uncomfortable, and they refer to the locals as 'happy ones' or as if diseased with 'happy-day-itis'. Writer Burnham states that though the idea for this phrase arose 'out of a rather pissed lunch', it is nevertheless an otherwise unfamiliar phrase: 'nobody says "happy day" to each other, that's what makes it a bit eerie, that's what we wanted [to suggest], that this place isn't normal' (in *Happy Days*, 2012). There is a notable similarity with the use of the phrase 'be seeing you' in the cult television series *The Prisoner* (1967), another example of an inescapable, isolated village where this type of custom helps to distinguish characters as either local conformists or rebellious outsiders. As Adam notes, there is a conspiratorial tone to 'happy day', which 'sounds more like a password than a greeting', emphasising the sense of 'us' versus 'them'. Stewart Lee suggests that *Children of the Stones* had its own real-life cult following in the playground, where fans of the show could identify one another by saying 'happy day': 'their hive-mind greeting spawned a new playground catchphrase' (*Happy Days*, 2012). 'Happy day', therefore became a custom used offscreen to suggest a sense of belonging with a community of fans and a kind of insider knowledge. The custom persists even today in Avebury itself as residents state that 'when weird things happen in Avebury we still say it to each other' (Hinman, 2020).<sup>10</sup>

The strange difference between locals and newcomers in Milbury is especially highlighted in the portrayal of the village children and their classroom behaviour. The

newcomers sit at their own individual desks, making jokes and engaging in rough-and-tumble whilst the rest sit together as a group, 'curiously happy and calm, with little of the boisterous behaviour one would expect' (McGown & Docherty, 2003, p. 103). The larger group are curiously brilliant mathematicians: we see members easily solving complex equations far beyond the ability of most children their age (fig. 77). The ease with which the group tackle such work contrasts with the ability of the others, even Matthew, who we have learned is gifted at maths for his age and later makes his own theodolite. In this classroom context, there is quiet, threatening menace towards the newcomers, highlighted by teacher Miss Clegg, though polite and smiling, making it clear that they are falling far below expectations: 'Some of us have difficulty even with the simple stuff, don't we Sandra? And I suppose it's no use asking to see *your* work Jimmo, have you *any idea* what one and one makes?'



Figure 77: Unusual classroom behaviour

Even when provoked, the 'happy' children remain eerily blank: when Kevin angrily thumps Bob, after a disagreement about the school football team, Bob vacantly smiles and says 'See, it didn't solve anything, did it?'. Again, there are clear similarities with horror, such as the dominant otherworldly children in *Village of the Damned* (1960) and the blithe submission of *The Stepford Wives* (1975), both set in isolated or contained communities with a fear of one group by another. For a young audience, the sense of mistrust not only in authority figures like teachers but also their peers creates a frightening sense of isolation in the narrative. The anxiety is maintained in a variety of misleading ways which keep the audience unsettled. For example, Sandra, friend and ally to Matthew for the majority of the series, has a spooky introduction. Whilst unpacking, Matthew looks up to see a girl standing outside the window, peering in at



him (fig. 78). A brief cut to Matthew, and then back to a closer shot of the girl has the effect of a jump cut or double-take, as if we and Matthew are seeing something strange, underlined by sighing voices and a wailing soprano on the score. As Matthew goes to look outside, a point-of-view shot as he looks from left to right along the road reveals no-one in sight and we hear the voices' muted, sighing chorus once more. The soundtrack suggests something notably strange and, again, a sensation of eeriness is created, in Fisher's terms, by 'something present where there should be nothing, or there is nothing present when there should be something' (2016, p. 61, see 2.1.3). The editing, camerawork and soundtrack here suggest Sandra as a kind of ghostly or supernatural presence (although she is entirely real),<sup>11</sup> as if haunting Matthew in a way more commonly seen in adult drama, reminiscent of the 1973 *Ghost Story for Christmas* episode 'Lost Hearts', for example (fig. 79). The audience is encouraged to align themselves with Matthew who, though he shrugs off the moment, is surrounded by mystery in Milbury.



Figure 78: Sandra's ghostly appearance



Figure 79: 'Lost Hearts' (1973)

An isolated village community like this, 'in some way cut off from wider society', is typical of folk horror (Scovell, 2017, p. 17). However, there is an additional time-loop element in *Children of the Stones* that cuts off Milbury not only from society but also the present. This loosely connects the narrative with the legend of Brigadoon, a village

in the Scottish Highlands supposedly hidden under a magical curse. The mythical village is said to have become enchanted centuries ago, remaining unchanged and invisible to the outside world except for one special day every hundred years when it could be seen and even visited by outsiders (Lloyd, 2016). Although not revealed until the end of *Children of the Stones*, as a kind of ‘thought-provoking coda to the story’, Adam theorises that ‘it is not just the stones that encircled the village but also a ring of time...time has turned the circle and the whole nightmare is about to begin again’ (McGown & Docherty, 2003, p. 103). Despite the scientific background and approach of the central characters, these additional narrative links with supernatural folklore and legend retain an air of magical mystery and, though complex, are presented to a young audience in an unpatronising way.

#### ***4.2.3 Serpent in the circle: history, folklore & folkloresque***

Alongside the use of Avebury’s standing stones as a looming visual presence, elements of the real history and layout of the monument are used in the plot and dialogue of *Children of the Stones*. For example, upon initial arrival at the edge of the circle, Adam explains to Matthew that ‘by the time Stonehenge was completed, people had been worshipping here for, oh, a thousand years or more’. Adam can give no definitive answer to Matthew’s question ‘worshipping what?’, after Matthew also notes that the circle contains ‘the village inside it...scary’, as is true of the real Avebury (fig. 80) where the stones remain ‘intertwined with the fabric of the village’ (Parnell, 2019, p. 408).



*Figure 80: Avebury: the village within the circle (English Heritage f., n.d.)*

Recent dating techniques suggest that Stonehenge and Avebury are more comparable in age than Burnham (in 4.2.2) or, at least, *Children of the Stones* would have us believe. Nonetheless, Avebury's immense Henge contains the 'largest prehistoric stone circle in the world' (UNESCO, n.d). Matthew questions the purpose of the monument, which accentuates the notion of stone circles as ancient mysteries to be solved, firing the imagination of young viewers: 'it inspired in me a lifelong interest in stone circles and long barrows' (Stewart Lee in *Happy Days*, 2012). Just as Nigel Kneale draws comparisons with Stonehenge for Ringstone Round in *Quatermass* (see 3.3.6), this use of real place and history lends a plausible context to the narrative, a technique also frequently used by Alan Garner, who often sets stories in and around his native Alderley Edge. Edward Parnell writes that this use of real locations significantly affects to what degree an audience might entertain the possibility for belief in myth, magic and legend:

even though I'd never been to Alderley, I instinctively realised it was an actual location. Indeed [most]...of the book's place names...[can] be found at least on old Cheshire maps. That in turn lent the possibility to me as a young reader that other episodes within its pages might also be true (2019, p. 314).

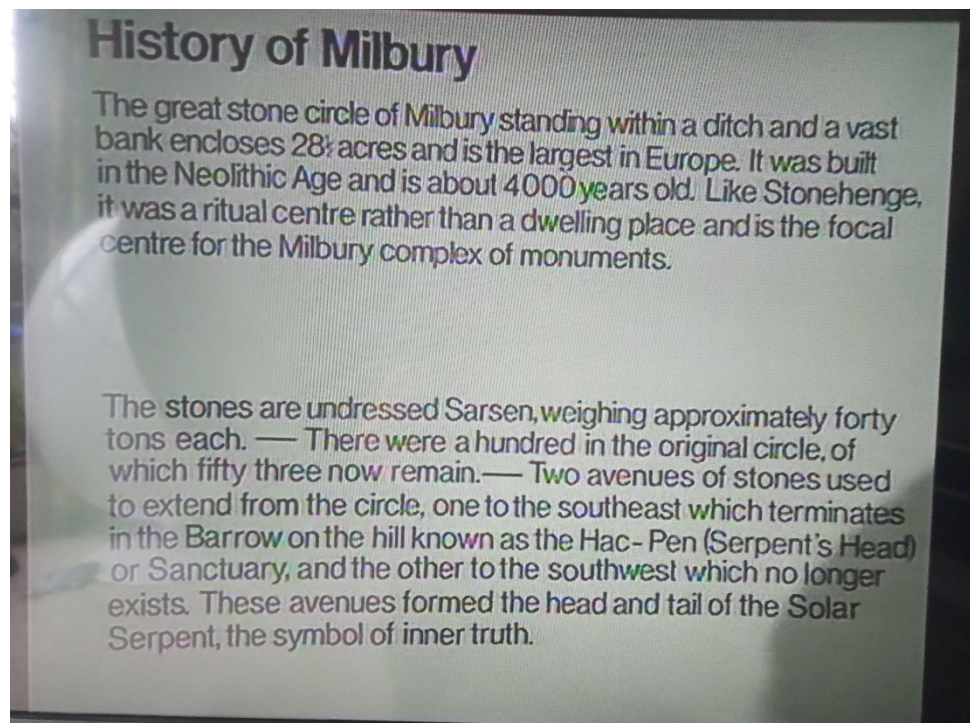


Figure 81: History of Milbury

In *Children of the Stones*, Milbury has its own museum exhibit dedicated to the stones, as does Avebury: the Alexander Keiller Museum, which lies beside the church. The museum is named after 'the great restorer of Avebury', who extensively excavated and restored several stones in the 1930s. At Milbury's museum (whose historical displays are featured at length on screen), an exhibit sign (fig. 81) from which Margaret reads aloud shows details largely accurate to Avebury's own history including the type, weight and number of original stones. William Stukeley, an antiquarian who pioneered scholarly investigation of the Stonehenge and Avebury monuments, produced the first book on Avebury in 1743, *Abury, a Temple of the British Druids*. Stukeley interpreted the Avebury complex as a serpent temple and was 'fascinated with ancient wisdom traditions' and the idea of a 'long lost serpent religion' (Francis, 2018, p. 38). James Fergusson, in *Rude Stone Monuments* (1872), explains that 'hak' signifies serpent and 'pen' means head, therefore 'head of the serpent': 'Hakpen became the head of the snake, the avenue its body; Avebury a convoluted part of it' (p. 4).<sup>12</sup>

The serpent motif is woven throughout *Children of the Stones*, appearing not only in Matthew's painting as surrounding the ancient depiction of the village but also on Dai's amulet (fig. 82). The fallen stone that briefly replaces Dai's body also features a carved serpent, linking the amulet and Dai himself to the painting and the Hac-Pen, or Sanctuary, where he lives. After the discovery of the amulet, Margaret, Sandra and Matthew discuss the potential significance of the serpent as 'the guardian of knowledge' and the idea that serpents 'were supposed to protect sacred hills and mazes'. Sandra recalls a serpent carved on the church font, and that her mother taught her 'it represents the battle between Pagan and Christian' and was probably 'intended as a warning'. The discussion is evenly balanced between adult and children who work through the mystery methodically using historical knowledge and evidence, leading the audience toward what, in context, seems a logical conclusion that there is 'no doubt' the amulet was intended to 'keep the owner from harm'. This is borne out when the amulet breaks, which fills Dai with fear and seems to be the catalyst for his collapse just after Dai tells the children he is their saviour 'from the past, and your future', and that 'something happened here in the past and it's happening again today'. This connects the notion of serpent and circle with the ouroboros, an ancient



symbol depicting a serpent eating its own tail, which can be used to represent the cyclical nature of time, reinforcing the isolation of Milbury and those trapped within.



*Figure 82: Serpents in the circle (top left: Matthews, n.d., bottom right: Daam, n.d.)*

Another element of real Avebury history woven into the narrative, linking Dai's collapse directly with past events and the stones themselves, is the barber surgeon of Avebury. During Keiller's excavations, a skull and partial skeleton of medieval date were discovered in 1938 under a fallen stone. The skeleton has been believed to be a travelling barber surgeon or tailor, helping Avebury villagers dig out the underside of the stone when it fell, crushing and entombing him beneath it (fig. 83). It has since been suggested that the man had been buried beneath a stone rather than crushed by it (Avebury-Web, n.d.) but, nevertheless, the 'medical probe, scissors and thirteenth-century coins' discovered with the remains allowed archaeologists to date a period when stone-burial was taking place. The purpose of this activity has been suggested to be in an effort for clear land for farming but a preferred theory is 'that the stones were broken up because the Church disapproved of their Pagan associations' (BBC News, 1999). Margaret recounts the story of the barber surgeon, whose skeleton resides in

her museum: 'He was helping to bury one of the stones when it crushed him to death' and that 'earlier this century, when they re-erected the sarsen his skeleton was found underneath'. When Adam asks why the villagers were burying the stone, her explanation links real elements of history with sacrificial notions from traditional custom and belief: 'The villagers believed that if they buried one of the stones each year, it would bring them luck'. This takes on increasingly sinister overtones when the children realise that Matthew's painting 'shows people turning to stone' and Sandra asks 'You mean all those stones out there might be people?'. Dai's fate is apparently intertwined with history as Margaret confirms that where the children saw him collapse is the exact spot where the barber surgeon was discovered, as if events are repeating themselves. Combining history, myth and folklore in this way not only creates a complex, layered narrative but also a plausible basis for mysterious events. Adam, presented to the audience as both authoritative man of science and likeable father figure, wonders about the painting of ancient Milbury that 'if the subject is real, it's likely the story it tells has some real significance', which Margaret, equally knowledgeable and authoritative, confirms is 'a reasonable assumption'. By extension, young viewers are thus directly challenged to entertain possibilities presented by the narrative.



*Figure 83: The real barber surgeon stone at Avebury (Champion, 2008)*

Various folkloresque elements featured in *Children of the Stones* have roots in real-life custom and ritual whilst others seem as if they *could be* folklore. For example,

what appears to be a celebratory Morris dance festival at the end of episode three underlines the strangeness of the 'happy day' locals. The scene opens with a shot of a hobby horse, teeth clacking, shown in close-up from a low angle against a standing stone (which towers over the horse itself, fig. 84). This shot is followed by brief close-ups of Morris dancers' feet stomping past the camera and a hand-held shot amid the dance as the performers whirl by. The effect is disorienting, jarring and, even though the activity takes place outdoors, these shots give an impression of claustrophobia: even in wide shot, the dancers are contained in the frame by the stone circle (fig. 84).



*Figure 84: Morris dancers contained in the circle*

Hendrick later describes the village festival as 'Wiccastane, our little celebration' which is 'only an excuse...they dance whenever they feel like it, on any day of the year, there's always some old festival they can use as a precedent'. Though the spelling of 'Wiccastane' is confirmed in the novelisation of *Children of the Stones*, when mentioned on television it easily sounds like 'Wiccas day' or, even 'Wicker day' conflating notions of 'wicca' (the modern Pagan religion based on witchcraft), May Day and *The Wicker Man*. However, 'Wiccastane' in itself (fictional as far as I am aware) sounds like it *could be* one of the real 'old festivals' to which Hendrick refers, such as Beltane, the Gaelic May Day festival.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, the etymology of 'stone' includes variants of 'stane' in Old and Middle English (OED, n.d.), therefore it is likely that the writers have consciously created a term with the suggestion of magic and legend, but with plausibly folkloresque roots.

Most significant here to the plot is Margaret's concern as she recognises a farmer, Tom Brown, as one of the grinning dancers. She tells Adam that Tom is a relatively recent newcomer who has never before taken part and that he told her he



thinks Morris dancing is 'an anachronism, a complete waste of time!'. As the dancers hoist one of their number above them, Matthew and Sandra are shocked to recognise Tom's son Jimmo from their class, smiling and bedecked in Morris garb (fig. 85). As we cut from a close up of Jimmo to a standing stone, the eerie, wordless voices wail on the soundtrack once more, underlining this moment as a shocking revelation and an unsettling cliff-hanger for the audience as the end credits of the episode roll.



*Figure 85: Tom and Jimmo have become 'happy ones'*

We understand that Tom and Jimmo have, somehow, become 'happy ones' (Jimmo is subsequently shown to have developed overnight mathematical genius like other children in the school), and Morris-dancing here suggests a kind of initiation ceremony or unfamiliar local custom which in itself seems to pose a threat. A similar procession including a hobby horse and Maypole rituals are famously used in an unsettling



manner in *The Wicker Man* and threatening Morris dancers had also been seen on television in *Doctor Who* story 'The Daemons' in 1971 (fig. 86), in which the dancers attack Jon Pertwee's Doctor. The suggestion that seemingly-innocent celebrations have a much more sinister history or sacrificial purpose persists as a theme in folk horror and in the popular imagination, as director Alice Lowe remarks, in speaking about events local to her:

there's a May fair every year...and there's a procession through the town with floats, with the carnival queen and stuff.. it's slightly weird...strange traditions [that make you wonder] what's that linked to? (*The Evolution of Horror*, 2018).



Figure 86: Sinister local customs in *The Wicker Man* (L) and *Doctor Who* (R)

Adam addresses these notions in *Children of the Stones*, remarking that 'lots of villages round here have ancient rites and rituals they perpetuate, even though their origins are totally lost'. However, later, after Hendrick says how 'rituals are important, traditions are very strong in this part of the country', Adam makes links similar to those suggested by Lowe, asking if the villagers 'still practice human sacrifice'. Another custom used to unnerving effect in the narrative is, when Matthew looks for Dai one evening, he comes across the villagers in a circle, holding hands and chanting. This scene (another frightening episode cliff-hanger) is made more unsettling by the horror milieu, the village chorus appearing out of the mist not unlike zombies in *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). The otherworldly score and day-for-night camera effect further lends the setting and villagers' faces a strange, ethereal glow (fig. 87). Matthew says this 'wasn't just a Morris dance or village sing-song, the people were *possessed*'. Margaret explains that 'Clipping the Church' is an old custom in which 'parishioners clasp hands [around their church]...something to do with renewing one's faith', but remarks that in this case it makes no sense as not only is the local church

deconsecrated, but also, according to Matthew, ‘those people were nowhere near the church’. Church Clipping (or ‘clypping’), where the congregation encircle their church, is believed to be an ancient custom most likely in celebration and luck-bringing for the year ahead. It is a custom which continues to this day in many places including Wirksworth in Derbyshire where ‘the congregation surround their church, holding hands and singing, halfway through the service’ on a Sunday in September every year since the practice was revived in 1921 (Shepherd, 2018). In *Children of the Stones*, we discover the ritual takes place surrounding Hendrick’s house on evenings when villagers seem to become one of the ‘happy ones’, placing Hendrick at the heart of the mystery (see 4.2.4). As Nigel Kneale took the notion of apotropaic objects used for luck or charm and gave it a sinister twist (see chapter 3.2), *Children of the Stones* here takes a real custom and shifts it into a strange context visually and thematically, using supernatural folklore in an unsettling way.



Figure 87: *Night of the Living Children of the Stones* (*Night of the Living Dead* top left)

#### 4.2.4 Squaring the circle

In a fascinating development in 2017, a team of archaeologists from the Universities of Leicester and Southampton found a striking and apparently unique square monument

toward the centre of Avebury stone circle, suggesting that the circle had developed outward (rather than been constructed from the outside in, as was previously believed) from an Early Neolithic House. Publishing their findings in 2019, Gillings, Pollard and Strutt state that the implications of their new interpretation are

profound: the ancestry of one of Europe's great megalithic monuments can be traced back to the monumentalisation of a relatively modest dwelling...encased within the centre of the 'deepest' space of the henge, we hypothesise that it was the connections that this erstwhile building had with a significant, perhaps founder, lineage that led to it taking on a (mytho-)historic importance (2019, pp. 374-5).

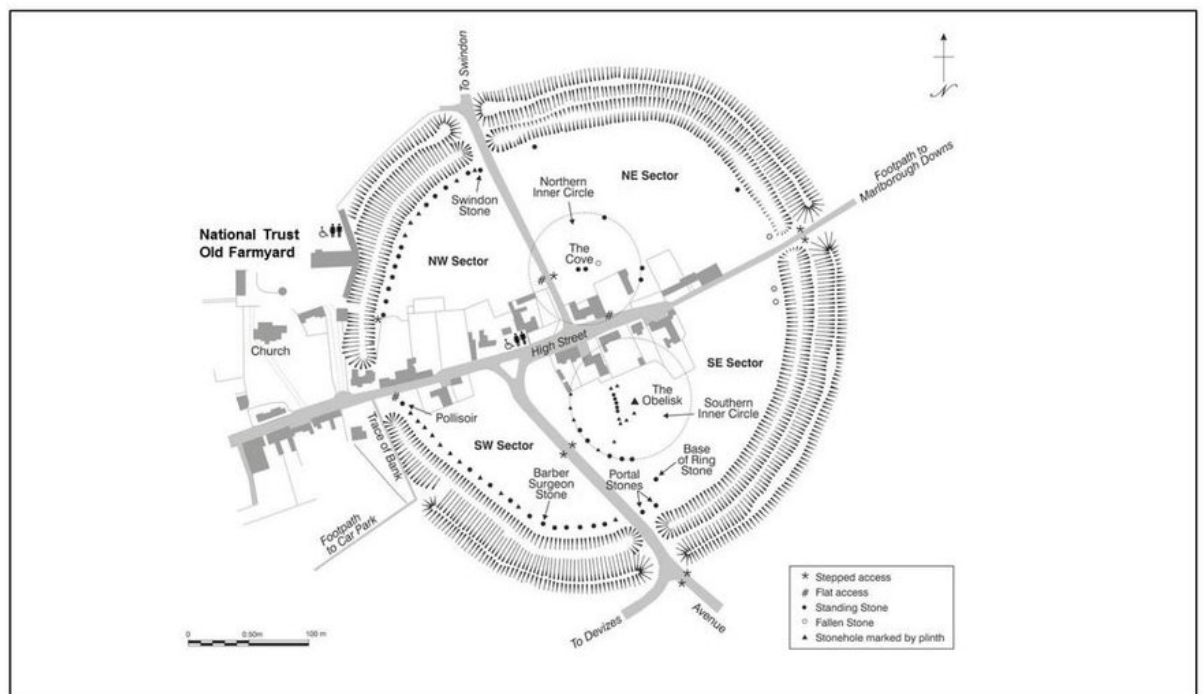


Figure 88: Map of Avebury stone circle with key interest points ('new' square monument is at the point marked 'Obelisk') (National Trust / Abby George, n.d.)

Gillings notes that evidence suggests it may have been 300 years after the house was built that the position was marked with a huge standing stone ('The Obelisk' in fig. 88) and square monument, suggesting that people 'decided to memorialize it' and by which stage 'it might have even been an ancestral place that had slipped into myth and legend' (in Brown, 2018). Of course, Burnham and Ray could not have been aware of these discoveries over forty years before they were made, but it is noteworthy that a major discovery made by Adam and Matthew in *Children of the Stones* is based on a similar idea. After realising that a series of ley lines runs directly to each of the Milbury stones, Matthew sees it is possible to use the lines on a map to create an inner circle

around Highfield house at 'the centre of the centre'. This house belongs to Hendrick and, Margaret informs us, 'was built on the site of earlier houses'; it is the epicentre of what Adam realises is 'a time shift that's caused by the energies received here in the circle'. Matthew suggests that Hendrick is channelling this power to alter and control the villagers (to whom he refers as his 'children'), as if Hendrick is 'some sort of priest, perhaps he thinks he's doing it for their own good...something that happened thousands of years ago...that keeps repeating itself'.<sup>14</sup> At the series conclusion, when the force of the power is accidentally turned upon himself, we see Hendrick appear in white robes and with long white hair and a beard, as if regressing to ancient Druidic form as founder father of the community from the beginning of the cycle when these events began (fig. 89).



*Figure 89: Hendrick reverts to an ancient Druidic form*

The notion of leys as lines of energy running across the landscape, connected to a stone circle as an outlet of energy (discussed in 3.3.4), is thus integral to the plot of *Children of the Stones*. It is introduced early in episode one when, in discussion with Margaret, Adam initially mocks the idea of belief in ley lines: 'Oh come on, invisible straight lines that are supposed to connect ancient sacred places?...my idea of hell? Write out one hundred ley lines'. Margaret explains: 'There are some interesting theories. Some people believe that ley lines are power cables and that the sacred places they connect are temples, built by Neolithic man as a storehouse of psychic energy'. Despite Adam's misgivings, Margaret's discussion prompts him to conduct

further research, whereupon he discovers that a 'tremendous energy has passed through these stones', causing an increase in their electromagnetism (again echoing ideas in contemporaneous Earth-mysteries literature).<sup>15</sup> Because Adam and Matthew's approach to their discoveries is both open-minded and grounded in science (like Quatermass in 3.3), their willingness to follow evidence, however apparently supernatural, encourages the audience by extension to take the ideas under discussion more seriously. Additionally, Adam and Margaret represent the position of both teacher and parent to young viewers (they are the only warm, reliable adults in the series and have respected standings as eminent scientist and knowledgeable historian). Therefore, to a target audience, the fact that these characters seriously contemplate supernatural and otherworldly explanations for events is likely to be influential as, previously cynical, Adam states: 'I've learned something since coming to Milbury. There are more things in heaven and earth than are philosophised about in my dreams'.

Significant 'evidence' for viewers occurs when Margaret asks Adam to touch one of the stones 'to see if you're the kind of man I think you are'. When his fingers reach the stone, Adam seems to experience a distressing vision, represented as a frightening moment. Eerie voices loom on the soundtrack with ethereal chanting just before Adam touches the stone and, as soon as his hand makes contact, the voices wail and scream loudly for at least fifteen seconds. As the screaming continues we see a series of shots superimposed over Adam's pained face, which include close ups of Sandra and Matthew screaming and a fast, tilted pan around a number of screaming villagers apparently standing in a circle (fig. 90). The screaming and superimposed shots stop abruptly as we see Adam thrown from the stone, with the effect of an electric shock. Adam explains the event as a result of 'electromagnetic energy, a perfectly natural phenomenon', which he has come to Milbury to measure. However, Margaret reasons with Adam that this was 'hardly' a common electric shock, reminding him that both he and the stone were earthed and perhaps 'psychic forces don't obey the same laws as electromagnetic ones'.





*Figure 90: 'to see if you are the kind of man I think you are'*

Connecting the notion of psychic energy to stone circles again directly draws upon work by the Dragon Project and 'Earth mysteries' groups in the 1970s (discussed in reference to *Quatermass* in 3.3.4). In turn, these groups drew upon what is commonly referred to as the Stone Tape Theory (following Nigel Kneale's television play *The Stone Tape*), to use scientific methods to record and detect 'energies' at ancient sites such as the Rollright Stones (Robins, 1982). David Taylor's examination of the historical origins of Stone Tape Theory dates back to the late nineteenth century. In 1892 Sir William Barrett, physicist and founding member of the Society for Psychical Research, suggested that hauntings may occur when past events or persons who lived in a particular place leave 'some kind of local imprint' which, in turn, becomes 'perceptible to those now living'. Such an imprint 'may take many forms; vague disquiet perhaps, or imaginary sounds or vague visions, or perhaps a dream or picture of the event as it occurred...the belief in such facts may be forced upon us' (in Taylor, 2011). This is a hauntological concept reinforced in *Children of the Stones*.

Controversial figure T. C. Lethbridge, in 1961, put forward the idea that hauntings were a form of psychic 'tape recording' imprinted upon the environment, suggesting that rather than a spirit presence, 'ghosts' are pictures and sounds produced by the receiving human mind. Lethbridge directly compares the experience, which can induce unexpected feelings of oppression 'ranging from a slight feeling of discomfort to full-blooded horror', with 'television pictures. The television picture is a man-made ghost' (pp. 54, 151). Taylor suggests that a more pragmatic approach to understanding a mid-nineteenth century belief that stone can act as a recording medium (at a time when awareness of modern geology was popularised) has been put forward by Trubshaw: the '(literal) "record in stone" of geology [may be] seen as a (metaphorical) parallel for a paranormal "record in stone"' (in Taylor, 2011). This directly links folk beliefs of the afterlife to folk beliefs and legends about places, specifically those referring to prehistoric stone circles and landscape. Lethbridge suggested that people with a certain type of 'sensitivity' would be able to perceive these types of recordings, an idea we see carried out in *Children of the Stones* with the psychometric abilities displayed by Adam and Matthew. Both father and son experience several 'psychic' visions during the series, caused by touching particular objects. Instead of showing recordings of the past, however, characters' 'visions' in *Children of the Stones* are of the present, or of potential future events. However, once we learn that Milbury and its residents are caught in a time loop, it is possible to understand these visions in terms of cyclical events recurring throughout history, experienced as what Earth mysteries researchers might describe as focused electromagnetic energy. Lethbridge's reputation as a 'New Age' maverick on the fringes of academia is obliquely referenced in Margaret's dialogue where she describes having read 'a fringe lunatic's book about the psychic force in standing stones...that only certain people, *perceptives* I think the writer called them, could feel'. As Kneale's work also makes 'links with Lethbridge's theory about the environment "capturing" psychic energy' (Finneran, 2003, p.112), regardless of Lethbridge's controversial reputation, the influence of his work (and folklore studies relating to it) upon popular culture is here in evidence.



#### 4.2.5 Narrowing circle

Several elements in *Children of the Stones* imply that events are related to extra-terrestrial involvement and the notion of ancient aliens (see chapter 3.3). For example, Matthew's strange painting depicts a beam of light apparently coming from space to the centre of the circle and Matthew's own research reveals that the stones are 'dead upright...All pointing in one precise direction...upwards'. Adam discovers there is a giant stone dish buried beneath the centre which he theorises was 'designed as a receiver...the signals must come from a source directly above...it is conceivable there's some obscure power up there'. Additionally, one vision causes Matthew to speak, trance-like, words often associated with the representation of aliens: 'Visitor, beginning, end, visitor, bright, shining, circle...power beam'. Intertextual references to adult horror and science fiction echo this, such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956, remade several times), whose plot reveals that extra-terrestrial life forms have been replicating humans without emotions or individuality. When Adam questions Hendrick about the mysterious disappearance of Dai's body, Hendrick pithily responds 'We're not *body snatchers*, you know'.

Weaving popular ideas into an already complex narrative filled with notions from history, supernatural folklore and contemporary legend presents these alongside one another equally so that the more fantastical elements are given a degree of plausibility by those that are grounded in fact or common perception. In a twist, however, on the notion of an alien force using stone circles' energy to *take something* from humans (later used in *Quatermass*), in *Children of the Stones*, the beam of light in fact originates from the stone dish under the village, as Matthew realises, 'the energy comes from here, it's a transmitter'. This dish is collecting power carried to the stones by ley lines and, at a certain time each day when correctly aligned with the stars, channels a beam that is somehow not only able to cleanse villagers of their fears and anxieties, but also sends their individuality and personality with it, out into space. This returns to the Frazerian notion of sacrifice: Hendrick is making an offering and intends to complete the circle by altering the remainder of the unchanged villagers, sending out what Adam describes as 'Hendrick's concept of evil, the capacity to do wrong' and that this is 'the priest's sacrifice to his God'.

Like Adam and Matthew's close father-son relationship, Sandra and Margaret also treat each other like equals and Sandra is Matthew's trusted confidante. The audience's perspective is aligned with these four characters working together as a team to solve the mystery of the 'happy ones'. This therefore accentuates the unease for the audience when Sandra and Margaret visit Hendrick's house for dinner. We know that the other villagers 'changed' after accepting the same invitation, and the distress at seeing familiar, trusted characters there is heightened. Matthew uses Sandra's scarf to maintain a psychic link to the pair as a way of monitoring and the audience witnesses moments through his perception. This adds a layer of supernatural oddness and dread to the representation of their change, as we see Matthew experience Sandra and Margaret's fear. This is conveyed in the strange effect of superimposed close-ups of the characters' screaming faces and the rise in wailing voices on the soundtrack once more (fig. 91).



*Figure 91: Matthew psychically observes Sandra and Margaret at Hendrick's house*

Hendrick's dining room is shown largely in wide shots, both from the side and above (fig. 92), emphasising not only the size and height of the space but also the significant

difference from other smaller, darker, more claustrophobic interior locations (see fig. 76). This reinforces Hendrick's authority and status but also underlines the importance of the room and implies that something significant is to occur here. The mise-en-scène mimics the stone circle of the village, lending a sense of enclosure despite the relative space in the room. One shot, tracking in a circle around the edge of the room, lingers for a full ten seconds on a position where the circles on Hendrick's throne are framed in the centre of a triangular candelabra, creating the suggestion of an 'Eye of Providence' (fig. 93). Also known as the 'all-seeing eye', this symbol of an eye set within a triangle has been associated with Freemasonry, the Illuminati ('a secret elite group allegedly seeking to control global affairs') and notions of 'ancient and esoteric' cults. However, the earliest examples of its use can be found 'in religious art of the Renaissance period to represent God' and to suggest the 'personification of "Divine Providence" ...as a sign of God's compassionate watchfulness over humanity' (Wilson, 2020). Used here, the symbol confirms Hendrick's perception of the space as a temple and himself as godlike 'high priest' of Milbury, as he conducts his ritual 'return to us the innocence that once we knew, complete the circle' (fig. 94).



*Figure 92: Hendrick's dining room*

As is common in folk horror, in the altering of Margaret and Sandra by Hendrick's 'religious ceremony', we see what Scovell describes as a final 'happening/summoning' in his folk-horror chain and an horrific fallout as 'resulting

action from this skewed social consciousness' (2017, pp. 17-18). However, there is another 'summoning' and 'fallout' in *Children of the Stones* when Hendrick later



*Figure 93: The camera creates an 'Eye of Providence' (Right: Ancient Origins, 2021)*



*Figure 94: 'Complete the Circle... It is time!'*

attempts this same ritual (we see him repeating the exact same words and motions) with Adam and Matthew. The pair manage to turn the tables on Hendrick, altering his clock so the ritual occurs at the wrong time of alignment, which results in them breaking the ceremonial 'clypping' circle which has formed around the house and waking the villagers from their 'happy day' trance. Nevertheless, what at first seems a triumph of science over religion in fact results in Adam's initial vision and the image depicted in the painting coming to fruition. The villagers run screaming from the now-unfocused source of power, depicted as a blinding light emanating from Hendrick's room, underscored by the sound of a deep klaxon-like warning siren. In this disturbing sequence, we hear harrowed screaming and wailing on the soundtrack for a full



minute and a half as we see adults and children trying to escape (in ghostly blue day-for-night lighting and mist) only to be turned to stone one by one (fig. 95). Fast cuts between the central characters trying to escape accentuate the urgency and the horror of the situation as we witness mother and daughter Margaret and Sandra screaming for one another as each is turned to stone (fig. 96).



*Figure 95: Ghostly lighting*



*Figure 96: Screaming in horror*

Only Adam and Matthew manage to escape to the place known as Sanctuary and, upon waking, time seems to have shifted to before the villagers were turned to 'happy

ones': Adam and Matthew drive away from the village unhindered. The final scenes suggest that Hendrick himself was a victim of the circle's magnetism and that recurring events are linked through time. We see Iain Cuthbertson, now playing Sir Joshua Lytton, arrive in Milbury to view the house at the centre of the circle for potential purchase, where Hendrick's aptly-named servant Link greets him, apparently for the first time. This suggests that Hendrick too was drawn to Milbury by some kind of magnetism as, driving away, Matthew wonders if any of it really happened: 'Time, perhaps that's circular too' and that 'It may already be happening' again to 'the people inside the time trap'. The power and energy of the stones persist, encircling the village, and the conclusion suggests that it will for evermore.

#### 4.2.6 Full circle: influences

It is fascinating to see such strong evidence, well over four decades since *Children of the Stones* was first broadcast, of the continued influence and impact the series seems to have had upon those who were its target audience at the time. Stewart Lee states that the purpose of making *Happy Days*, his 2012 radio programme about the series, was 'to try and understand why the series meant, and continues to mean, so much to a generation of...viewers, and to see how it inspired them'. As opposed to the concerns of many about the negative effects of children's television (discussed in 4.1), and despite the overt use of techniques more often seen in adult horror, there is evidence in Lee's documentary of fans having been affected in a positive way. For example, one fan spent 'most of the '80s trying to write computer games based on the programme' whilst others found it inspiring and 'incredibly educational, technical', appreciating the fact that there were 'strong female leads'. Lee himself saw it as part of a political undercurrent of 1970s children's television 'ridden with shaggy countercultural concerns' as a kind of morality play 'about resistance and nonconformity'.

Peter Graham Scott wanted to create an ambitious series for children, combining elements of supernatural folklore and contemporary legend with history that he thought would 'either look like absolute codswallop or people will believe it. Luckily...people did' ('Interview with Peter Graham Scott', 2002). As well as drawing from (and thus perpetuating) popular ideas about ley lines, ancient aliens and Frazerian notions of pagan sacrifice, the series producers also employed Dr Peter

Williams, a physicist and astrophysicist, as technical adviser to help ‘find a plausible way for the hero’ to make discoveries and lend a genuine scientific context to the plot (Williams, in ‘Production Overview’, 2002). This plausibility seems to have had its most significant impact on viewers like Matthew Holbrook (mentioned in 2.2.5), who states that the programme not only educated him about ‘spirituality [and] paganism but also technical’ and scientific notions (*Happy Days*, 2012). James McGowan, who runs a *Children of the Stones* website and Facebook group, states that watching the series ‘led directly to my undying interest in the real-life village of Avebury...Archaeology, my career into Science, and a curiosity for things paranormal’ (McGowan, 2008). McGowan also discusses a kind of legend tripping inspired by the series as, upon moving to England as an adult, he ‘immediately came to Avebury to see the stones...what I mostly did was re-enact the various scenes from the programme’ (*Happy Days*, 2012).



Figure 97: Hidden Britain's contribution to the ongoing folk horror revival

As part of the continuing folk-horror revival, *Children of the Stones* has been canonised as one of the definitive folk-horror texts of the 1970s. For example, Hidden Britain Sign



Co. produces specialist merchandise ‘from British Folk Horror and Unsettling TV, Film & Literature’ (n.d.). The designers have revived imagery relating to a number of 1970s programmes in a series of posters and homeware, placing *Children of the Stones* alongside Nigel Kneale’s *Beasts*, John Wyndham’s *Chocky* (1984)<sup>16</sup> and post-apocalyptic teleplay *Threads* amongst others (see fig. 97).

The remake of *Children of the Stones* as a podcast series for BBC Radio 4 in 2020 was created by Bafflegab Productions, a company formed in 2018 with a particular interest in wyrd tales. Their work includes several supernatural dramas including a 2019 adaptation of M. R. James’ *The Ash Tree* and a 2018 audio version of folk-horror classic *Blood on Satan’s Claw*. Interestingly, Bafflegab productions often regularly use Generation X writers and cast who are fans of this type of material, including Mark Gatiss, Alice Lowe and Reece Shearsmith. For example, Shearsmith, starring as Hendrick in the *Children of the Stones* podcast, recently bought his own Milbury sign and tweets ‘I intend to point it towards the huge standing stones in my garden’ (2021). Given this context, it is fair to suggest that *Children of the Stones*, which Jeremy Dyson refers to as a ‘touchstone’ (pers. comm., 15 March 2018), and programmes like it, influenced not only some views and opinions of those who may have watched it but also the type of media produced, and *how* it is produced, by some members of this generation. In the following chapter, I will consider the extent of this influence upon members of Generation X in terms of how the formal elements of television are used by them to make and share narratives based on supernatural folklore.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The BBC Children’s department, which had flourished in the 1950s, was disbanded in 1963 and in the process ‘lost its drama and entertainment output...to the relevant adult departments’ (BBC, n.d.) with remaining programmes under the umbrella of the newly formed Family Programmes department.

<sup>2</sup> Laura Mulvey’s famous essay ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ argued that the formal storytelling elements of mainstream Hollywood cinema typically place the viewer in a masculine subject position, making audiences look at women on screen as objects of desire (or at least in terms of their sexuality or relative weakness to men) through what she terms ‘the male gaze’ (1975, p.11).

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<sup>3</sup> The BBC broadcast the 1970 Miss World finale, hosted by Bob Hope, on BBC One at 9:20pm on 20 November. Members of the Women's Liberation Movement disrupted the event by throwing flour bombs and other missiles at the stage, causing the BBC to pull transmission of proceedings until order was restored (Hall, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> 'Vote for Froglet!' was broadcast on BBC One at 5:35pm on 10 October 1974.

<sup>5</sup> The archive includes internal documents and external correspondence of the ITA, regulator of commercial television in the UK (1955-1973) and also the successor regulator of both commercial radio and commercial television, the IBA.

<sup>6</sup> The National Archives holds meeting notes from HTV West (reference no. HO 245/339) from the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting (1974-1977): Minutes, Evidence and Papers.

<sup>7</sup> It is possible that Burnham meant 'hundreds of years' here, as Stonehenge was until recently considered to have its origins around 2500 BCE (as discussed in section 3.3.6) whereas English Heritage dates Avebury to 'roughly between 2850 BC and 2200 BC' (English Heritage, n.d.). More recent techniques date both Stonehenge and the earthworks of Avebury closer to 3000 BCE (Kennedy, 2013, Davies, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Uncial script is a style of handwriting commonly used by Greek and Latin scribes in manuscripts from around the fourth to the eighth century AD.

<sup>9</sup> Scott's ideas were inspired by music by the Polish composer Penderecki. *Children of the Stones* composer Sidney Sager 'obtained the Penderecki and heard exactly' what Scott wanted to emulate. London choral group the Ambrosian Singers 'really went into the spirit of it' to create the eerie sounds (in Richardson, 1995, p.44).

<sup>10</sup> It may be interesting to consider for future research the presence of a kind of behind-the-scenes or offscreen folklore surrounding production of folkloric narratives. For example, the *Children of the Stones* production team made several fake stones out of either polystyrene or fibreglass, to make the circle appear more complete on camera. Thomas amusingly describes how an elderly American lady 'pushed one of the stones and it was a polystyrene one and fell over and she went into hysteria...we just lay there crying with laughter 'cause she was quite convinced that she'd actually pushed a 4,000-year-old stone over!' ('Interview with Gareth Thomas', 2002). In the variants of this tale told by Jeremy Burnham and Peter Graham Scott the nationality of the tourist is Japanese or Dutch, but they usually tell of an older female accidentally pushing over a fake stone, with varying degree of shock ranging from 'couldn't believe their eyes' (Burnham, pers. comm., 13 April 2017) to being 'carried off in a stretcher' ('Interview with Peter Graham Scott', 2002) due to a collapse or fainting fit. The development of such variations in a tale, in Jacqueline Simpson's terms, is 'the mark of true folklore' (in Brown & Sutton, 2010, p. 2).

<sup>11</sup> It is worth noting that in the novelisation of the series, also written by Burnham and Ray, published before the series aired, there is no hint of mystery or the supernatural when Sandra walks up to Matthew, 'hugging a school satchel', to chat to him about his arrival (Burnham & Ray, 1977, p. 14). The example of Sandra's on-screen arrival suggests how Scott and Dromgoole shaped the presentation of the story to include a broader sense of eeriness.

<sup>12</sup> Hackpen Hill is also the site of the famous white chalk horse, known as either the Hackpen White Horse or Broad Hinton White Horse, which can be seen on the right when heading north from Avebury towards Swindon.

<sup>13</sup> I was unable to find reference to 'Wiccastane' myself and neither of my Centre for Contemporary Legend colleagues Andrew Robinson and Sophie Parkes-Nield (both of

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whom specialise in researching British calendar customs) had heard of 'Wiccastane' before.

<sup>14</sup> Hendrick's first name, mentioned only briefly in the series, is Rafael, which in Hebrew means 'God has healed' or 'healing of the Lord' (Dictionary.com, n.d.), reinforcing his sense of religious purpose to 'cleanse' Milbury's community of negative energy.

<sup>15</sup> This could be an example of art imitating life or, at least, accounts in early Earth mysteries literature (see 3.3.4) of experiences of 'foci of energy' in close proximity to prehistoric stones. Such accounts helped to inspire the Dragon Project researchers (Robins, 1982).

<sup>16</sup> *Chocky* was adapted for television from Wyndham's 1968 novel of the same name.

## 5.0 Generation hexed

As earlier chapters consider how folkloric and contemporary legend motifs are contextualised within narratives, the purpose of this chapter is more specifically to develop my examination of the formal methods and techniques used to represent such motifs (building upon my earlier analyses of *Beasts*, *Quatermass* and *Children of the Stones*). Given that my research questions aim to account for the oft-cited ‘eeriness’ of 1970s television, here I wish to investigate how supernatural folklore is *made strange* on screen. Therefore, chapter 5.1 considers how such narratives are given an unsettling context; how the ‘horror’ element of folk horror is achieved using the formal elements of television. This examination then forms a tangible basis for comparison with twenty-first-century representations of supernatural folklore to measure the influence of 1970s folkloric texts as manifested in more recent British media texts.

I propose that this, as part of a body of work by folk-horror revivalists, can in itself be read as a type of ostensive practice, using Andrew Peck’s (2015) extension of mass-mediated ostension. As part of my original contribution to knowledge, I suggest three levels of mass-mediated ostension in television. My definition of these as *showing*, *telling* and *making* is outlined more fully in 2.2.6 but, to summarise here, firstly, there is the ‘showing’ of supernatural folklore presented in action (such as the otherworldly rituals of the Planet People in *Quatermass*). Secondly, this is complemented by its ‘telling’ in verbal representation (such as discussion about folk history, ritual and belief in *Children of the Stones*). Thirdly, it is possible to understand the representational practices of television writers and directors as ‘making’ and ‘sharing’ versions of folklore. Showing, telling and making supernatural folklore can thus be framed as levels of mass-mediated ostension. It may also be useful to think of ‘making’ and ‘sharing’ in this context as comparable with what Peck calls ostensive practice, as I will discuss in 5.2.

## 5.1 On-screen legacy: *A Ghost Story for Christmas*

The methods employed throughout *Quatermass* to create uncanny or sinister moments are comparable to those in 'Baby' (see 3.2.4). Similarly, instances in *Children of the Stones* such as apparently ghostly appearances at windows (see 4.2.2) are comparable with the BBC's *A Ghost Story for Christmas* series, all paradigm examples of wyrd 1970s television. Many of these examples, whether aimed at audiences young or old, are highly *suggestive* of otherworldly or supernatural events using camera, sound and editing, with few narrative specifics being revealed to or confirmed for the audience.

To examine the influence of 1970s television, its on-screen manifestation of eeriness, folklore and the supernatural and how they continue to be represented on television, in this chapter I will discuss the content and structure of two episodes of the BBC *A Ghost Story for Christmas* series. This series was one of the most-cited examples of wyrd 1970s television by my interviewees (see 1.2.7) and is highly regarded by participants of both generations. 'The Treasure of Abbot Thomas' (1974) and 'The Tractate Middoth' (2013) were selected in particular as each episode reflects the work of a different generation and time period pertinent to this study: the former directed by interviewee Lawrence Gordon Clark, the latter by Mark Gatiss, whose Generation X contemporaries were interviewed in phase two. Beyond this, both episodes are adaptations of M. R. James stories, both have period settings in academic libraries (fig. 98), both have ghosts with characteristics that match the most popular traditional beliefs about ghosts, and both have been attributed a haunting atmosphere.<sup>1</sup> Directors Clark and Gatiss were reverential towards but not religiously faithful to James' tales, having made their own unique alterations to the stories and thus contributed distinctive entries to the canon of wyrd folk-horror television.

It is important to note that, although the last three instalments in the 1970s *Ghost Story* series are not adaptations of M. R. James stories, it is to James that the folk-horror ghost-story revival returned. The apparently very British antiquarian milieu of James' tales is epitomised by other television retellings such as *Ghost Stories for Christmas with Christopher Lee* (2000), in which the eponymous icon of British horror

plays the part of James, seated by a roaring fire while recounting his ghostly fare to students and colleagues at King's College, Cambridge.



Figure 98: Settings (L: *Abbot Thomas*, R: *Tractate Middoth*)

Although James draws from various sources, including British supernatural folklore, his spectres tend to be influenced most heavily by the Danish folk narratives of malevolent ghosts. The Jamesian ghost is usually 'palpably physical, menacing, evil or vengeful' rather than the more penitential British type (Simpson, 1997, p. 12). However, James' use of lore and legend allowed for a degree of authenticity (discussed in 2.2.5) and, for many, James' work epitomises the notion of a 'proper' literary ghost story.

#### 5.1.1 '*The Treasure of Abbot Thomas*' and '*The Tractate Middoth*'

'The Treasure of Abbot Thomas' is the fourth episode in the original *A Ghost Story for Christmas* series. The story revolves around a medieval history scholar, Reverend Somerton (Michael Bryant), who discovers clues and a coded riddle promising to lead to hidden treasure. The local legend of a mischievous monk, who has left a hidden treasure with a supernatural guard, captures the imagination of Somerton, an otherwise cynical academic who becomes consumed with an obsessive need to solve the puzzle. The haunting spirit matches elements which Katharine Briggs (having drawn extensively from folktale motif-indexes) cites as common in supernatural folklore: the most significant and frequent motif being 'Anything hidden before death, especially money, is said to cause haunting'.<sup>2</sup> Briggs notes that some ghost stories are, of course, exercises in folk fiction, but some remain legend with beliefs and ostensive action attached to them: 'country people are still careful not to hide even a tool in case it makes them uneasy after death' (1971, p. 415).

Gillian Bennett writes about changing folk belief in ghosts (1987, 1999) and notes that from the eighteenth century the motifs of evil men and 'bad death' became closely associated:

Either they are assumed to have had a malice so intense that it cannot die, or they are assumed to have had a death so cruel that the death itself cannot die and goes on being re-enacted somehow (1987, p. 200).

These motifs are equally applicable to 'Abbot Thomas' and the revenant in 'The Tractate Middoth' which, in keeping with the tradition of the original BBC television series, returns to M. R. James for its source material. 'The Tractate Middoth' centres on a missing will, hidden by a wicked uncle who, upon his deathbed, pits family members against each other by giving them only obscure clues as to its whereabouts. The first to find and decipher it will be the sole beneficiary of his fortune. In keeping with what Briggs notes as commonly-cited elements of supernatural folklore, including 'people who have done wrong' or 'a man who has been consistently evil' (1971, p. 416), the ghost is of a specific individual: an evil man toying with his family from beyond the grave.<sup>3</sup> As Simpson points out, this maliciousness of spirit is very much in the Scandinavian folkloric tradition and thus more Jamesian than the 'humble' British ghost. The titular 'Tractate Middoth' refers to a real Jewish religious text and, though itself more of a Hitchcockian 'MacGuffin' than integral to the narrative, this brings an additional level of authenticity to the story, typical of James.

Comparable with Somerton's driven obsession in 'Abbot Thomas', William Garrett (Sacha Dhawan) in 'The Tractate Middoth', becomes embroiled in the search for the book within which the wicked uncle's will has been hidden. The surviving niece, Mary Simpson, has been given only some numbers, a code which librarian Garrett becomes fixated upon cracking. Garrett is haunted by the mystery and the plot follows the unravelling of the whereabouts of the will.

In both television adaptations, the question of belief in the supernatural is raised overtly, with a suggestion that Somerton and Garrett, initially at least, perceive folk belief as something to be wary of or ridiculed. Both educated men of scientific reason are, nevertheless, shaken by their own personal experiences that force them to consider the possibility that stranger things may exist. Their prejudices betray their elite tradition of disbelief: a 'skeptical view of supernatural belief...has existed for



centuries...that supernatural beliefs arise from and are supported by various kinds of obvious error'. Modern folklore scholars (such as Hufford and Bennett) argue that this 'What I know I *know*, what you know you only *believe*' perspective (Hufford, 1982, p. 47, italics in original) is condescending and limited: an attitude that we see challenged in both Somerton and Garrett. Somerton, at the beginning of 'Abbot Thomas', is clearly marked as a cynic, mocking acquaintances holding a séance by informing them that they 'would have been burned as witches...these are more enlightened times are they not?'. Yet his experiences while hunting the hidden treasure cause him to reconsider his position: Somerton's protégé Peter (Paul Lavers) asks his teacher, incredulously, 'You really believe, do you not?'. Similarly, Garrett, after experiencing a haunting presence in the library, asks a colleague: 'Things like that just don't happen anymore, do they?'. His colleague retorts that this 'suggests you believe that once they did...We used to believe...that the moon was made of green cheese', to which Garrett wonders aloud, 'Maybe it is'.

Manifestations of spirits are most commonly described in supernatural folklore as transient or incorporeal: pale spectral beings with robe-like or flowing garments tending to haunt liminal places and times: 'betwixt-and-between, neither/nor regions...twilight between dark and day' (Bennett, 1987, p. 195). It is therefore useful to examine the way hauntings and ghosts are represented. For example, the figure in *Lonely Water* (1973) is depicted as robed, hooded and faceless, appearing at the edge of lakes or ponds obscured by mist.<sup>4</sup> However eerie or hauntological the effect of a *wyrd* television programme may be intended to be, the nature of the medium nevertheless requires practical decision-making by programme-makers about how to realise such apparitions and uneasy atmospheres tangibly. These effects are created in subtle ways in both programmes. Despite bright daylight outside struggling to make its way into the indoor locations, chiaroscuro lighting is used to create a dark claustrophobia, framing people as silhouettes against heavily draped windows (fig. 99). The effect of this not only suggests period atmosphere, but also causes the viewer to strain to see properly as the shadows create a sinister, unsettled discomfort.<sup>5</sup>



*Figure 99: Claustrophobic interiors (L: Abbot Thomas, R: Tractate Middoth)*

The mise-en-scène, location filming, editing and camerawork also contribute to an uncomfortable ambience. For example, early scenes in ‘Abbot Thomas’ filmed at Wells Cathedral show hooded, robed figures visible in the background of shots focusing on Somerton and Peter (fig. 100). This is as may be expected at a seminary, but their lingering, distant presence suggests sinister lurking rather than regular daily activity. Clark states that he likes to use historical locations as they

allow the camera to track behind the character as he leads us deep into the story. Half-seen, cowled figures can lurk in any alcove, establishing the aura of mystery, scholarship and surprise that James loved to tease his reader with (pers. comm., 16 June 2017).



*Figure 100: Hooded figures lurk in the background*

In one scene, the camera follows Peter walking out of a library (above Wells Cathedral cloisters) and briefly cuts away to his point of view of a hooded figure whose face is concealed (fig. 101), which suggests something disconcerting. The brevity of the shot has the effect of something just ‘catching the corner of your eye’, implying something that is out of the ordinary, possibly unnatural.



*Figure 101: Brief point-of-view shot*

Similarly, 'The Tractate Middoth' uses robed figures as visually suggestive of the supernatural. One such figure appears on the platform of a railway station, with steam from the train being evocative of an ethereal mist (fig. 102). In the mist, the figure's face is obscured, which draws upon a fear of the unknown or unnatural. A lack of complete reveal here and the blink-and-you'll-miss-it editing in 'Abbot Thomas' help to maintain an unsettled atmosphere. The audience is never given quite enough time or information to define what is being shown, while characters like Somerton and Garrett are no longer certain what to believe, what they have glimpsed, or what they may be about to see. The audience is therefore encouraged to peer, curiously and fearfully, into the mist along with them.



*Figure 102: Figure in the mist*

As well as the use of mist and briefly glimpsed or obscured visuals, dust and shadows accentuate a disconcerting atmosphere. In 'Abbot Thomas', Peter and Somerton discuss the mystery of the hidden treasure while standing by a huge stained-glass window. Very briefly and suddenly (in less than two seconds of screen time) an unexplained shadow flickers past the window which, combined with a loud fluttering sound, causes the characters to start, unsettling both them and the audience. In 'The Tractate Middoth', Mark Gatiss painstakingly worked on the visual effect of slow-

drifting dust, believing it to be ‘absolutely crucial’ to capturing something of the 1970s television ghost stories (*The Tractate Middoth Q&A*, 2013). Dust is used as a recurrent motif to create a thickly pregnant, haunted atmosphere, and characters eye it fearfully as if there is a threatening otherworldly presence (fig. 103). Gatiss’s style reveals not only a nostalgia for the 1970s series but also a belief in the techniques employed as those most effective in creating eeriness.



*Figure 103: Otherwordly dust*

In each programme, the haunting spirits themselves make ‘appearances’ in key moments of horror. Their on-screen representations, however, remain brief and are suggestive or transient rather than taking a clearly defined form. Helen Wheatley notes that the most eerily effective ghost-story adaptations avoid ‘the horror of visceral excess and abjection’, and centre instead on ‘the *suggestion* of a ghostly presence’ (2006, p. 55). The use of sound is just as significant as the image, if not more so, in creating this suggestion, illustrated in ‘Abbot Thomas’ when we witness what Somerton (at least momentarily) believes to be a supernatural attack. In a scene when both Somerton and Peter are beginning to track down the Abbot’s treasure, sudden jarring music suggests danger. While Somerton is surveying the grounds from a church roof, something suddenly frightens him. In a fast-cut series of shots, he looks up in fear, and there is a fluttering sound and the visual effect of something black flapping violently between Somerton’s face and the camera. All of this is over within five



seconds of screen time (fig. 104). Somerton's extreme fearful reaction clearly implies a haunted presence in a moment of terror, but this remains ill-defined. A final cutaway to a shot of black crows flying in the distance make this moment more ambiguous, suggesting that perhaps Somerton was unsettled by a bird or merely imagined something.



*Figure 104: Somerton is disturbed*

A comparable moment in 'The Tractate Middoth' is somewhat more concrete. When Garrett reaches the section in the library where the eponymous book is held, he sees a cloaked figure standing with its back to him. Although surrounded by a transient aura of dust, the figure slowly turns to reveal a horrific, skeletal face to Garrett, who faints in terror (fig. 105). The sequence is longer than Somerton's experience (running to forty-three seconds), but the apparition's face is only on screen for seven seconds of this.

The terror denouements in each programme are remarkably similar. Towards the end of 'Abbot Thomas' Somerton, unable to resist greed or curiosity, ventures alone into an underground tomb finally to uncover the treasure and solve the mystery. When he finds the spot, there is a sudden series of fast-cut shots which, in real time, are so brief that the images are unrecognizable. However, freeze-framing reveals a



*Figure 105: The ghost-monster revealed*

series of close-ups including: a slug crawling across a carved statue face; Somerton's anxious face; an upside-down, unidentifiable reflection of a face in what might be a puddle; a cobweb through which black slime pours, along with something which might be a face or hand; a skeletal hand over Somerton's screaming mouth; and a laughing, hooded (unidentified) face (fig. 106). This all occurs in less than nine seconds, and the soundtrack is similarly disparate: as the music ceases, we hear whispers, what might be a vomiting sound, Somerton's screams and someone's cackling laughter.

While the audience is left wondering what 'actually' occurred, it is made clear that Somerton becomes a changed man after this event. He hides fearfully in his rooms and we learn for certain that the black slime (linking to what Somerton apparently saw in the tomb) has manifested in his hallway, as verified by his charwoman: 'the unnatural slime on the floor, all over my carpet, the stairs...had to be scrubbed'. Apparently Somerton, (assuming he did not himself track the slime in) has been followed home by a spirit, which he describes as 'a thing of...darkness and slime'. Peter suggests that this thing is a guardian, not tied to one haunted location, that the Abbot put in place to watch over his treasure.

The major moment of terror in 'The Tractate Middoth' occurs when Mary Simpson's brother, Eldritch, finally has the book in his hands and retreats into secluded woodland to examine it. Unable to decipher the will hidden within, he experiences a moment of horror not unlike Somerton's. We are shown this moment in a combination



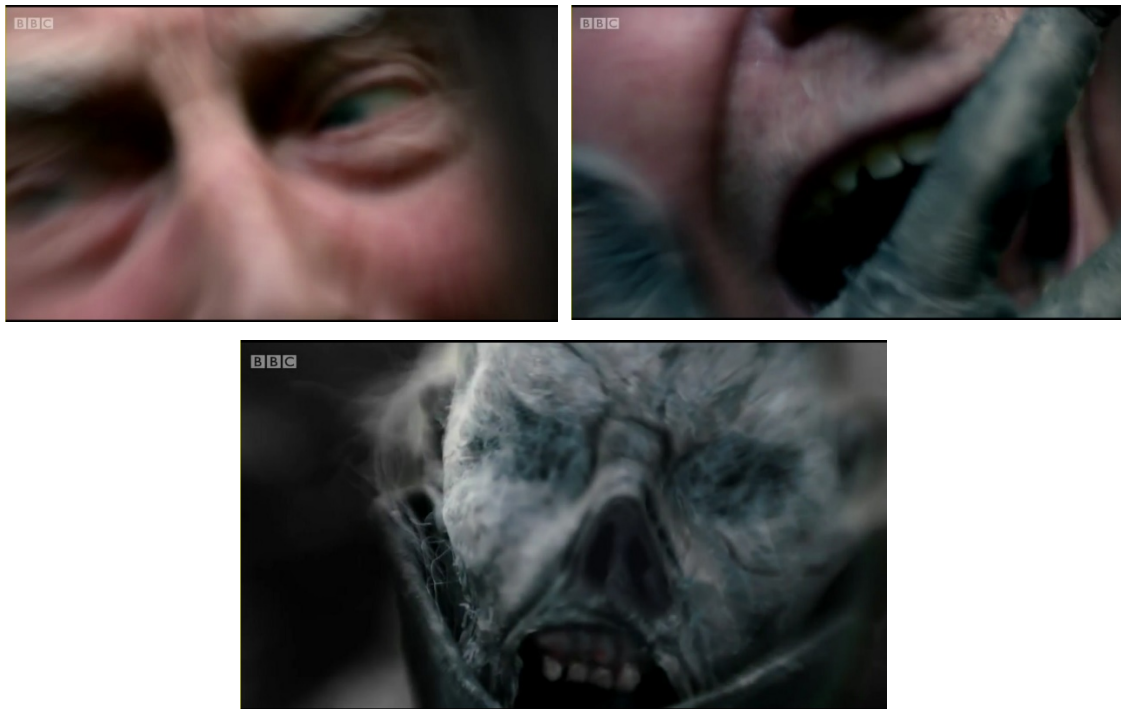
*Figure 106: Fast-cut sequence*

of Eldritch's own point of view and that of Garrett, who has covertly followed Eldritch into the woods. What the audience sees blurs lines between what we are to accept as possible 'reality' and what perhaps is simply the imagination of characters.

As Eldritch looks down at the book, we see what looks like a black ink spot spreading out across the page; frequent cutaways to Garrett watching Eldritch reinforce that we are watching from Garrett's perspective. A shadow is cast across Eldritch, which causes him to look fearfully to his side, and then we see a series of fast-cut extreme close-ups of hard-to-define images, some of which could be from the apparition's point of view. These images include a shot of the unpleasant face Garrett saw earlier and a skeletal hand over Eldritch's mouth (in an almost exact recreation of the corresponding shot of Somerton in 'Abbot Thomas', fig. 107). This sequence is four times longer than the 'Abbot Thomas' stab of terror; however, all of the shots here are distorted, in soft focus with desaturated colour. All natural sounds fade quickly from the soundtrack and are replaced by an intense, high-pitched ringing, whistling sound which is evocative of an unnatural scream. We see Eldritch scream, but his screams are silent, although we do eventually hear what we assume to be his last breath as he dies of shock. These techniques create an otherworldly 'betwixt and between' scene within



a scene, disjunctive with shots immediately before and after this sequence, which are of bright, lush, green woodland, where we can also clearly hear cheery birdsong.



*Figure 107: Moment of terror*

As Eldritch falls to the ground, in a shot back in the 'natural world', Garrett rushes to him, calling for help. It is unclear exactly what Garrett has witnessed, whether an apparition or merely a man falling to the ground, or perhaps he imagined reasons for Eldritch collapsing based on his own earlier experience in the library. The way the tone, atmosphere and moments of terror are created seems to be in parallel with those in 'Abbot Thomas', right down to details of editing, composition and use of sound.

The apparition, in both examples, is presented as an uncommunicative human figure with barely recognisable facial qualities and is accompanied by a use of unnatural sound. The manifestation, though a figure, is presented in a transient, unfamiliar way, creating a sense of the uncanny and, therefore, an eerie atmosphere, leaving the viewer with no clear explanation. The open ending of 'Abbot Thomas', in which we see Somerton in a wheelchair, recovering from an attack of nerves, blurs possibilities further. As he is told his doctor is due to visit, the camera cuts to Somerton's anxious face, then to a point-of-view shot showing he is being approached by a hooded, robed figure. The figure's face is obscured in silhouette and lens flare in

the camera suggests a clouding of Somerton's, and our, vision, signifying a fearful presence. A brief insert shot of the black slime seen earlier reinforces this sinister approach but, equally, might be reflective of Somerton's memory and anxious mental state (fig. 108). A final wide shot of Somerton in his wheelchair amid open, abandoned grounds leaves him appearing small and vulnerable as the robed figure strides towards Somerton without slowing in pace (fig. 109). The audience is left to consider a variety of possibilities: Somerton has had a breakdown and imagined everything; Somerton has had a breakdown because he has been haunted; or perhaps Somerton continues to be tormented by a malevolent guardian spirit that has attached itself to him. We do know that he is a changed man, who has gone from expressing confident scientific reason to anxious vulnerability and fear of the supernatural. This, in turn, leaves the audience unsettled and the story's end open to debate and interpretation.



*Figure 108: A threat, imagined or real?*

The presentation of ghosts in adaptations of M. R. James's texts is consistent with the tales about ghosts cited above by Briggs as most commonly manifested in British folklore (such as hauntings caused by hidden treasure). Interestingly, however, these presentations combine characteristics of what Bennett identifies as 'two opposed poles of belief – place-centered evil and purposeless manifestations on the



Figure 109: *The figure strides toward Somerton without slowing*

one hand, and the people-centered and purposeful visitations on the other'. Bennett notes that an 'essential difference between evil and good manifestations is always the absence or presence of *purpose*'. 'Purposeful' hauntings are usually understood to be benevolent and, even, directly helpful to a family member of the deceased, whilst evil occurrences are described as 'meaningless and intrusive disturbances' (1999, pp. 41, 50). In each of these television adaptations we see various locations haunted by a malign presence with a distinct purpose and, in *Tractate*, to terrorise descendants of the deceased. James, in giving direct purpose to evil spirits, takes common perceptions about supernatural folklore and gives them a more sinister edge.

However, the televisual representations of these ghosts lend an extra degree of distinction in that both tales diverge from James's original stories. The 'Abbot Thomas' screenplay (adapted by John Bowen, who also wrote the television play *Robin Redbreast*, full of supernatural folklore and pagan ritual) merges the book's main character of Mr Somerton, 'a man of leisure' (James, 1992, p. 155), with Mr Gregory, a rector. The reinvention of Somerton as an academic scholar of religion, described by his student as 'such a very *rational* clergyman', accentuates the cognitive dissonance that Somerton faces when experiencing supernatural events, after himself having described notions about such matters as 'higher forms of silliness'. This internal conflict recalls Hufford's case for experience-centred theory as contrary to the 'very powerful and old intellectual tradition' of assuming that folk beliefs about the supernatural are 'false or at least unfounded' and 'non-rational' (Hufford, 1995, p. 11).

The television adaptation also invents a new opening scene wherein Somerton mockingly debunks a séance by way of introducing him as a man of scientific method. James's story suggests an ambiguous unease which slowly builds over time, from characters expressing general, non-specific forebodings through to the revelation of the final horrific encounter. There are no comparable physical manifestations in James's writing of 'haunting' moments as with the televised 'flapping' in Somerton's face which startle and unsettle the viewer. Instead, James uses ambiguous suggestion to build the reader's expectation to a grand climax where his terror denouement is explored in detail throughout the final six pages. Given that the story is just twenty-nine pages long, this 'horror moment', which lasts for only a few seconds on screen, comprises twenty per cent of the entire written story. The experience in the vault (originally at the bottom of a well) is picked over in detail by James twice, as two different characters (Somerton and his manservant Brown) take turns to recount their recollection of events. Somerton's account in the written text is largely descriptive of his own anticipation, fear, and repulsion of the entire event which takes place in darkness. The manifestation of the supernatural itself is described initially as a bag which, when slipping off a ledge, '*put its arms around my neck*'. Somerton goes on to describe a smell of mould, a cold face pressed against his own and a creature 'with several...legs or arms or tentacles', while Brown describes an old man, 'the face very much fell in, and larfin' (James, 1992, pp. 175-7, italics in original). James combines references to darkness, smell, touch and sound over a number of pages to create in the mind of the reader an overwhelmingly unpleasant sensory experience. If Clark, however, had dwelt on outlining the 'terror' in such protracted detail, it would substantially diminish any shock impact on an audience, and thereby his goal of making ghosts 'both frightening and believable...a challenge I love and something I believe I share with James'. However, as much as Clark admired the work of James, he refers to Alfred Hitchcock as his 'other master', who 'understands better than any other director...how to stretch his audience's nerves to screaming point' (pers. comm., 12 June 2017). Therefore, in employing techniques unique to the screen (of fast-cut editing, location filming, close-up framing and atmospheric sound design), Clark creates a distinctive televisual sense of terror, while remaining true to the sensory abstraction that James's story communicates.

A small but pertinent detail in Gatiss's adaptation of 'The Tractate Middoth' is the alteration of Eldred's name to Eldritch. Eldred is a name of Anglo-Saxon origin and is composed of elements with meanings of 'old' and 'counsel', suggesting wisdom. Eldritch, however, is an adjective describing that which is unnatural, ghostly and weird (OED, n.d.) and, therefore, is an agreeably *wyrd* embellishment in this context.

Garrett's initial shock in the library is present in both story and television adaptation, Gatiss having faithfully interpreted James's frequent references to cobwebs, musty atmosphere and dust surrounding an encounter with an unpleasant cloaked figure. The tone of the denouement is similarly adhered to, as James describes something black dropping onto the book Eldred is examining, which leads to the appearance of 'a dark form...and from it two arms enclosing a mass of blackness came before Eldred's face and covered his head and neck'. This, however, is the totality of the description of the apparition James gives, which contrasts with Gatiss's representation clearly showing the same presence appearing at the beginning and end of the piece (and, briefly, in the middle, during a nightmare Garrett has on the train—a scene added by Gatiss). Gatiss thus removes a degree of ambiguity around the haunting. James's text contains no further apparent haunting and ends with an overt implication that Garrett had been quietly scheming all along to become 'prospective owner of Bretfield Manor, now in the occupation of his mother-in-law, Mrs. Mary Simpson' (James, 1992, pp. 232-4). The cynical motivation of human greed is downplayed by Gatiss, who presents Garrett as a helpful innocent and makes the possible return of the supernatural threat the focus. Although it is obvious Garrett has a romantic relationship with the young Miss Simpson, after the couple enters the newly inherited property at the end of Gatiss's adaptation, the concluding emphasis remains on the threat of a supernatural presence in a close-up shot of a shadow falling across the doorway behind them as thick dust begins to drift in.

Though Gatiss's apparition is recognisable from one appearance to the next, in both television texts there is a lack of definition to the threatening presence or figure; a facelessness or lack of complete reveal which brings a *wyrd* sense of the uncanny to even a ghost known to be the spirit of a particular person. The powerful impact of the 1970s programme with its very brief stabs of unsettling horror has had a stronger influence on televisual representations of ghost stories than James's tales alone. Gatiss in fact remarked that he changed the ending of James's story in order to be, as he saw

it, more in tune with the bleak outlook of the 1970s: 'the original text has a happy ending and I couldn't have that' (*The Tractate Middoth Q&A*, 2013). 'The Tractate Middoth' is more revealing of its spectre, with the recurring visual presence lasting longer, but this is still only visible for seconds of screen time. Gatiss also has more access to modern special-effects technology and, likely, much larger budgets than those Clark was working within but, as Clark states in 2012, he 'would love to get in there with a computer and add a few more nasties to it, even now' ('The Treasure of Abbot Thomas Introduction', 2012). So, perhaps Gatiss has realised what Clark would have liked to achieve had he had the resources at the time. In paying homage to work created in the 1970s, Gatiss has revived and is perpetuating preferred ways of effectively representing the supernatural, an approach I will consider in terms of ostensive practice in the following section.

## 5.2 On-screen folklore as ostensive practice

Gillian Bennett remarks that globalisation and the worldwide export of US popular culture have created cartoonish stereotypes of the supernatural that only exist in film and television as forms of entertainment. Bennett suggested that the 'supernatural has been officially demoted to the nursery world of grown-ups and children alike, where it is frankly so synthetic a concept that it can serve no useful purpose at all' (1987, p. 210). Across decades of film and television from both the UK and USA, such 'safe' stereotypes certainly predominate. The majority of ghosts in popular culture continue to be easily 'managed', whether caught in traps (*Ghostbusters*, 1984, 2016, 2021), exorcised, made friendly (*Casper the Friendly Ghost*, 1939,<sup>6</sup> 1995; Dennis in *Angel*, 1999; Annie in *Being Human*, 2008), unmasked as regular human villains (*Scooby-Doo*, 1969 onward) or presented as a 'presence' suggested by the slightest noises, barely caught on camera (*Most Haunted*, 2002 onward). With such synthetic, relatively harmless or dubious representations forming the most popular entertainment notions of society's 'collective script' (Dégh & Vásonyi, 1983, p. 19), such ghosts hardly represent the dreaded, malevolent, Jamesian spirits that might keep us awake in our beds at night.

While this is clearly true of the popular examples Bennett describes, consideration of the unique context of 1970s television, when the media were willing to treat the supernatural as more serious subject matter, subverts this perception. Wyrd television goes well beyond this two-dimensional, safe representation of the supernatural. British folk horror avoids such easy categorisation and cartoonish outlines; there are no straightforward explanations for these folkloric spirits or otherworldly threats whether in programmes aimed at adults or children, as evidenced in chapters 3.0 and 4.0. Even educated professors of science such as Reverend Somerton, Adam Brake and Bernard Quatermass in 1970s wyrd television are left unable conclusively to debunk or explain away supernatural events. They are often rendered weak or frightened by supernatural experiences which challenge their 'rational' traditions of disbelief. The earnest application of supernatural tropes by programme-makers, to unsettle viewers and invite them to question the realms of possibility, epitomises the enduring impact of wyrd television of the 1970s. The sincerity and credibility with which the subject matter is treated and presented,



alongside a complete lack of cartoonish unmasking, or any neat proof, clarity of definition or containment of supernatural threats, means that the plausibility spills beyond the confines of the programme itself. If current directors are elaborating upon 1970s television representations of supernatural folklore to create their own representations of folkloric motifs, then those motifs are not only perpetuated in themselves, but are also shaped by the ways in which television technique is employed to represent them. The eeriness which persists throughout *wyrd* television can be defined in part by style and technique, but much more as a combination with the venerative inclusion of folk beliefs about the supernatural. Though not necessarily such dedicated folklorists as M. R. James, the post-2000 folk-horror revivalists are keen students of the work of their 1970s predecessors, to which they closely adhere in their own creation of *wyrd* television. In doing so, this lineage of British television and filmmakers continues to reproduce and share with audiences many of the same folk beliefs and common motifs in supernatural folklore which thus endure in television and popular culture. Close adherence to the style of their predecessors suggests an acknowledgement of shared cultural lineage and themselves as a community of makers.

Peck, examining notions of sharing and community, extends Koven's ideas about mass-mediated ostension to the 'media-rich landscape of the internet'. Peck, using the Slender Man Internet meme as a case study, discusses networked communication as 'taking part in a *culture of sharing* – one that encourages ongoing reciprocal interactions, such as discussion, comment, critique, re-circulation, oneupmanship, homage, and play' (2015, p. 19, italics in original). Elements of these interactions are obviously present surrounding the broadcasts of *Ghostwatch* and *Inside No. 9*'s 'Dead Line' that directly invite viewers to take part in performative aspects of the programmes (see 2.2.5). However, if people creating folk horror or folkloresque media for online distribution (such as legendary stories about Slender Man, or as part of a project such as the SCP Foundation) are taking part in ostensive practice,<sup>7</sup> then so are those making television. Creators are preparing material for broadcast and sharing their reinterpretation of a legend in the public sphere with a potential to inspire debate as to its plausibility. This discourse is, in part, what defines a legend, recalling Ellis' assertion that a legend may not 'presuppose or compel belief, but it does demand that the teller and the listener take a stand on the legend',

whether believer or skeptic (2003, p. 60). This is evidenced by the impact of wyrd 1970s television upon not only its audiences in general (in chapter 4.1) but also those who went on to create television themselves. The making of wyrd programmes is part of the folkloric cycle: creators are inspired by folkloric texts (whether Patrick Dromgoole looking to *The Golden Bough* or Jeremy Dyson and Mark Gatiss looking to 1970s televisual representations of supernatural folklore), which feed into the narrative and script, which is then interpreted in a certain way on screen. The programmes are then broadcast in the public sphere where the audience can (particularly in the digital age) comment, critique, share and recirculate, potentially influencing the next generation cycle of material and so on.

Peck's discussion of ostension as a social activity seems pertinent to the folk-horror revival and the communities (both online and offline) that surround it:

Digital communication has encouraged the documentation and sharing of everyday behaviors, like ostension, across networks. The result of this affordance is that ostension becomes both more mediated and more visible. This...in turn, encourages a sense of collaboration. As users collaborate on ostensive practices, they begin to develop hierarchies of performance that privilege certain types of interaction, creating an atmosphere that facilitates vernacular critique. These dynamics of collaboration and critique enable reflection, the emergence of a...meta-discourse [which] offers a new opportunity for users to reflect not only on the nature of legends but also on the nature of the ostensive practices themselves.

The folk horror revival is exemplary of 'A group that forms around shared interest and experience [which] inspires the creation of further experiences' (Peck, 2015, pp. 16, 20): not only the media creatives discussed in chapter 2.1 but also tens of thousands of followers and fans on social media (using the popular Twitter hashtag #folklorethursday or Folk Horror Revival Facebook group).<sup>8</sup> Many revivalists are keen users of social media, frequently recommending examples of 1970s wyrd television. One recent #folklorethursday recommendation from a Twitter user featured *The Owl Service* (fig. 110), inspiring comments from others who described it as 'one of the greatest productions by ITV', noting that they 'only discovered it last year' and newly bringing it to the attention of others: 'They did a series of it?!' (MattLee, 2021).

It would be remiss to overlook the contribution of such communities to the folk-horror genre and the creation of wyrd television by those directly involved in the

‘showing’ and ‘telling’ of supernatural folklore. For example, Reece Shearsmith is not only a performer in modern folk-horror films directed by Ben Wheatley (*A Field in England*, *In the Earth*, 2021), creator and writer of television series like *Inside No. 9* but is also a keen Twitter user with links to the Folk Horror Revival. Shearsmith regularly participates in posting folkloric content online, such as indulging in his own annual ritual of sharing spooky material everyday throughout the month of October using the hashtag #halloweencountdown (fig. 111).

Peck suggests that this type of engagement ‘emerges collaboratively and through a variety of media and expressions (including creating, viewing, sharing, remixing, and commenting) and serves as the basis for further ostensive practices’ which ‘enables greater user awareness of generic conventions and variants of the practice with which they are engaging’ (2015, pp. 21). To return to the new-historicist perspective that text and context are of equal importance (see 2.2.1), this study concludes that the act of creating media, the complete media text and ensuing discourse are all stages of a reflective cycle which, in the case of folkloric content, also constitutes the dynamic evolution of folklore itself. Folk-horror practitioners like Shearsmith and Gatiss are arguably consciously taking part in a kind of ostensive practice in their professional behaviour. In their ‘making’, these creatives are drawing from wyrd 1970s television (whether thematically, stylistically or even using 1970s technology) to reinterpret supernatural folklore and contemporary legend in a way to inspire audience reaction and discourse and, thus, sharing, inspiring and informing future approaches to what constitutes eerie content.<sup>9</sup>

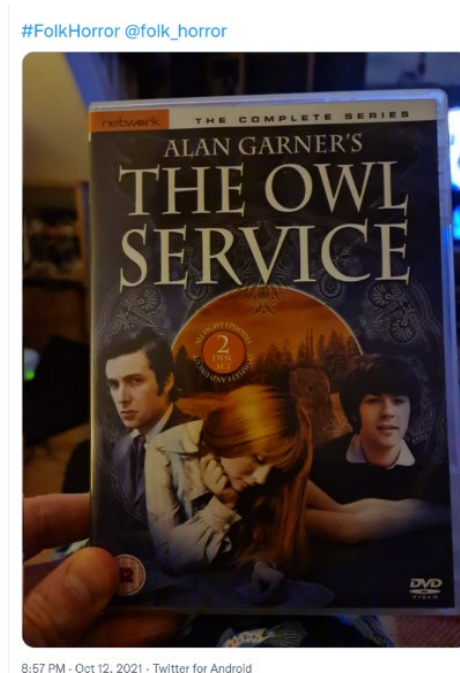


Figure 110: Recommendation on #folklorethursday Twitter thread 12 Oct 2021



Figure 111: Reece Shearsmith begins his Twitter 'Halloween advent' 1 Oct 2021

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> James' 'The Treasure of Abbot Thomas' and 'The Tractate Middoth' were originally published in 1904 and 1911, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> Briggs' work draws upon, to varying extents: the Aarne-Thompson Index *The Types of the Folktale* (Aarne, 1961), since expanded as the Aarne-Thompson-Uther type index *The Types of International Folktales* (Uther, 2004); Reidar Christiansen's *The Migratory Legends* (1958); *The Types of the Irish Folktale* by Seán Ó Súilleabháin and Christiansen (1963); and Gerald Bordman's *Motif Index of the English Metrical Romances* (1963). The two examples that Briggs highlights as 'indispensable' (1971, p. vii) are Stith Thompson's six-volume *Motif Index of Folk Literature* (1955, which is usefully cross-referenced with the Aarne-Thompson index) and Ernest Baughman's *Type and Motif Index of the Folk-tales of England and North America* (1966).

<sup>3</sup> For example, one indexed category of ghost tale is 'E221. Dead spouse's malevolent return' (Thompson, 1977, p. 491).

<sup>4</sup> Jeff Grant, director of 1973's *Lonely Water*, attributes the original idea of using a hooded figure to Christine Hermon, a writer at the Central Office of Information at the time. Grant, however, appreciated the cinematic potential in terms of the visual impact of such an image: 'Bergman's figure of death on the beach in *The Seventh Seal* [1957] terrified the life out of me...there was something so ominous about a black cowled figure you can put all your personal demons into that blackness.' It was Grant's idea to 'get it to turn round. And when it turns you're going to expect to see a face but there's nothing there. And that obviously works very well' (pers. comm., 30 March 2020).

<sup>5</sup> 'The Treasure of Abbot Thomas' is set in the nineteenth century and against the backdrop of a medieval abbey, filmed at Wells Cathedral and Library in Somerset,

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while scenes of 'The Tractate Middoth' (although set in the 1950s) are set and filmed in Chetham's Library in Manchester, believed to be the oldest public library in England, founded in 1653.

<sup>6</sup> The character Casper the Friendly Ghost appeared in children's books and comics from 1939 and 1949, respectively, and in animated cartoons from 1945 onward.

<sup>7</sup> The SCP Foundation (launched 2008) is an international online community-made invented archive of fictional objects, creatures, lore and legend, somewhat analogous to a web-based version of *The X-Files*. Entries in the project database are rich in folk horror such as SCP049, a creepy kind of plague doctor, SCP323, a wendigo skull with antlers resembling a mythical creature, and SCP-1437, 'a hole from another place', a Lovecraftian portal.

<sup>8</sup> As of 14 February 2022, @FolkoreThurs has 60,585 followers on Twitter and the Folk Horror Revival Facebook group has over 24,000 members.

<sup>9</sup> Amongst Shearsmith's latest contributions to the canon, along with co-writer Steve Pemberton, several episodes of the most recent *Inside No. 9* series broadcast on BBC Two have overt links both narratively and aesthetically with examples of 1970s folk horror and public information films. 'Merrily, Merrily', broadcast at 10:00pm on 20 April 2022, references *Lonely Water* whilst 'Wise Owl', broadcast at 10:00pm on 1 June 2022, draws directly upon the owl in *Play Safe* (1978) and mimics the animation style of the *Charley Says* public information film series broadcast in the UK in the 1970s and '80s. 'Mr King', broadcast on BBC Two at 10:00pm on 27 April 2022, draws upon Frazerian notions about a sacrificial king, in which a new teacher in an isolated community finds himself unwittingly at the centre of sacred harvest festival rites. This seemed, however, less like a reinvention of the genre for the contemporary era than a long-expected homage. One reviewer suggested the most surprising thing about the episode was 'that it's taken until now' for the series to 'offer up an entry for the folk horror canon' and asks 'Why the wait? Given its creators' previous work, this modern-day tribute to Robin Hardy's sinister seventies classic [*The Wicker Man*] and the likes of *The Blood on Satan's Claw* felt overdue' (Mellor, 2022).

## 6.0 Conclusions

### 6.1 Discussion summary

This study began with my curiosity about a group of weird British television programmes, and why their creation seemed to be concentrated around the 1970s. My first research question (in 1.2.1) asked what was distinctive about this period and how it might have given rise to so many examples. In chapter 1.3, I describe the cultural shifts and countercultural attitudes spilling over from 1960s alternative culture into the 1970s mainstream media, outlining increased openness to unconventional beliefs, notions about the occult and otherworldly phenomena, and how this led to a popular resurgence of literature from earlier eras. I discussed how interest in such revived works (Frazer, 1890, Watkins, 1925, and Gardner, 1954 for example) helped substantiate popular notions about witchcraft, paganism and UFOs and, in turn, fuelled the publication of new material aimed at mass markets of all ages which drew upon the past (such as Reader's Digest, 1973). Revived interest in supernatural folklore also gave rise to exploitative coverage in the mass media, evident in examples of newspaper headlines (in 1.3.2), such as 'Blackmail by witchcraft' (*Daily Mail*, 1967, p. 9) and 'Flying Saucers Galore!' (McGowan, 1978, p. 1). Earnest news coverage meant that supernatural folklore and contemporary legend were able to be taken seriously and their prevalence in print and on television news meant that contemporary television drama did not have to look far for inspiration. I set out the unique technological context of 1970s television (in 1.3.3) and the creative opportunities in the industry during the period (in 1.3.5 and chapter 4.1). These circumstances and cultural context meant that the television landscape was fertile ground for programme-makers to draw upon revived interest in otherworldly narratives to deliver programming to audiences of all ages.

My second research question asks how supernatural folklore and contemporary legend elements are reinterpreted for television and with what purposes and effects. I found it important to consider how elements of existing folklore and contemporary legend are reproduced and to what extent these are employed (in their *showing* and *telling*) to make narratives more *plausible* for an audience, an aspect addressed by the interview phase of this study.

From my interview data analysis (chapter 1.2), it was apparent that all participants had, to some extent, drawn upon folkloric literature or had a personal interest in supernatural folklore and contemporary legend. However, some participants (such as Ben Wheatley in using the work of Frazer) were keen to clarify that this was just one of several influences on their work. Nevertheless, I examine how motifs from folklore are reinterpreted and how, in several programme narratives, elements of recorded history or benign traditional practice are taken as a basis for creating sinister meaning. For example, I discuss how Nigel Kneale draws on traditional belief about magical house protection and luck rituals (in 3.2.2) and twists the purpose of the urn in 'Baby' to suggest an evil curse. I also outline how Kneale uses Stonehenge as the basis for his Ringstone Round and places his own invented nursery rhyme in an existing traditional Victorian book of nursery rhymes (see 3.3.5), which lends plausible historical context to the children's singing of the rhyme. Similarly, chapter 4.2 describes how *Children of the Stones* weaves detailed elements of the real archaeology and folklore of Avebury (including details of its physical geography and events like the unfortunate fate of a medieval surgeon) throughout the series' narrative and dialogue. I discuss how complex notions about supernatural folklore and contemporary legend are overtly debated in this context of children's television and examine how using a quasi-scientific approach in such narrative presentation offers the audience a plausible potential explanation for otherwise uncanny supernatural events.

My third research question, about the methods and techniques used in 1970s television texts focuses on understanding the construction of representations of supernatural folklore and contemporary legend. This line of inquiry necessitates examination of the formal elements of television: how they are used to frame folkloric narratives and direct audience response. My analysis aimed to account for how 1970s programmes sustain a distinctive 'eeriness' for which they have often been noted and explain how supernatural folklore is *made strange* for audiences.

For this, I used my interview research data (see chapter 1.2) to identify the selection of titles for close textual analyses. In chapter 3.0, I examine two examples of Kneale's work: the 'Baby' episode of *Beasts* and the 1979 *Quatermass* series. These examples arose from my data as influential on the work of others and as part of Kneale's work in general. Although the stories differ in terms of scale, thematically in both 'Baby' and *Quatermass* we see ancient elements clash with contemporary lives



within the *mise-en-scène*. For example, in the visual presentation of the urn and creature in 'Baby' (in 3.2.2), or the fallout of events at the Kapp family home in *Quatermass* (in 3.3.4), we see devastation brought directly and physically into contemporary domestic settings.

Throughout my analyses I also describe how television techniques can *suggest* rather than explicitly depict the supernatural. Examples in my discussion include oblique allusions to witchcraft in the dialogue of 'Baby' (in 3.2.3) and how close-up shots and fast-paced editing in 'The Treasure of Abbot Thomas' evoke the supernatural without revealing anything distinct to the audience. I also examine how music in *Children of the Stones* (in 4.2.2) and *lack* of music and the use of sound effects in 'Baby' (in 3.2.1) imply supernatural presences and provoke audience discomfort.

My final research question asks how the influence of *wyrd* 1970s television is subsequently manifest in various types of British media. I begin to address this in chapter 2.1 where I consider the emergence of hauntological media from the disturbed nostalgia of members of Generation X (in the work of artists like Richard Littler, for example). I outline how such artists and writers from this generation consider themselves to be *Scarred for Life* (Brotherstone & Lawrence, 2017) largely due to *wyrd* 1970s television they had experienced as children. As a tangible basis for measurement of the influence of 1970s folkloric texts upon twenty-first-century representations of supernatural folklore, I devote chapter 5.2 to analysis of 'The Treasure of Abbot Thomas' (1974) and 'The Tractate Middoth' (2013). These two episodes of the BBC *Ghost Story for Christmas* series, made almost forty years apart, reveal fascinating similarities in terms of subject matter, style, tone, directorial approach and formal technique. My findings enable my discussion to return to the notion of mass-mediated ostension in chapter 5.2, in which I consider (beyond *showing* and *telling*) that the *making of* such works and related material (or digital) culture can be part of the ostension process, an equally significant aspect of the sharing of and communication about folklore.

## 6.2 Further conclusions

Although the focus of the sustained popular interest in folk horror and the wyrd (noted in chapter 1.1, for example) remains on (usually British) film rather than television, the balance is being somewhat redressed by recent and forthcoming works. *Woodlands Dark and Days Bewitched* (2021) is a comprehensive and scholarly documentary which traces the roots of folk horror from the ‘unholy trinity’ and acknowledges ‘its proliferation on British television in the 1970s’ (Woodlands Dark and Days Bewitched, 2021). Whilst providing useful context, perhaps one of the most significant aspects of the documentary is that it highlights diverse and specific manifestations of American, Asian, Australian and European folk horror.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, although the edited collection *Folk Horror: New Global Pathways* (Heholt & Keetley, forthcoming) acknowledges that the roots of folk horror are most commonly attributed to British media, the volume seeks to address varied examples from diverse cultures and nations.

Rob Young’s *The Magic Box: Viewing Britain Through the Rectangular Window* (2021) is a counterpart to his 2010 book *Electric Eden* (the latter examining folk and occultist music of Britain’s recent past). *The Magic Box* examines televisual ‘spectral dreamscapes...the brilliant, the bizarre and the unworldly’ (Sandhu, 2021) in an alternative cultural history of Britain, with consideration of several wyrd texts included in this study. A forthcoming collection edited by Derek Johnston, *Nigel Kneale and Horror: Critical Essays*, is part of an attempt to rebalance the appreciation and understanding of Kneale and his work, whilst the *Routledge Companion to Folk Horror*, edited by Wayne Johnson and Robert Edgar (forthcoming), is intended to provide the first comprehensive academic collection on folk horror. Alongside important work of television scholars like Helen Wheatley’s writing on ‘Haunted Television’ (2020), it seems that long-overdue scholarly attention is now being drawn to Britain’s wyrd televisual culture. There remains, however, a gap in the study of television (and its potential effects) from the perspective of folklore studies which this thesis helps to fill.

My original contribution to knowledge in this study has been my application and development of the theoretical framework of mass-mediated ostension to British television drama, using the perspective of new historicism to situate my findings in a

social, cultural and historical context. In particular, my examination is original with respect to expanding the theory to recognise distinct ways in which supernatural folklore is communicated on television, and how television creates its own legendary cycle in terms of its 'showing, telling and making' discussed in chapter 5.2. I also look at how the synergy between these helps create the 'folkloresque' on screen, emphasising potential effects in terms of audience understanding of, and belief in, the supernatural. I have used this approach to foreground folklore studies in the examination of popular media, something that has been largely overlooked in most discussion of folk horror and *wyrd* media to date. Because this method can be usefully applied to all forms of contemporary media, this study has opened up areas for further development. I hope that my work will allow future research to bring folklore to the fore more easily and to put folklore at the very heart of critical examination of storytelling across all forms of traditional media as well as evolving media platforms.

One particular area to which this study has drawn my attention is the continued social importance of television for children and the part it plays in shaping not only perception about the world but also how in many cases it affects people's actions. For example, a recent Saturday morning phone-in on BBC Radio 4 (*Saturday Live*, 2 October 2021) asked listeners to contact the programme regarding 'how television changed my life', particularly in relation to programmes they had viewed as children. Some of the responses reflect Bascom's functions of folklore and the part that folklore 'plays in education...the importance of the many forms of folklore as pedagogic devices has been documented in many parts of the world, [where] fables or folktales incorporating morals' are used to teach children about 'general attitudes and principles'. Whilst this can help maintain conformity in some cases, Bascom notes the 'basic paradox of folklore' in that the escapist fantasy it also provides (and its communication in the media) can function as inspiration and 'socially approved outlets for the repressions' which society may impose (Bascom, 1954, pp. 345, 349). In illustration, callers to *Saturday Live* cited 'inspirational' examples of television from which they had learned moral and ethical life lessons, through to television viewing having directly affected major career or life decisions, such as becoming a child psychologist or psychiatric nurse, moving to live in the Alps and moving across Europe to work as a teacher.

In 2021, Peter Turner conducted a survey asking participants about the extent to which watching horror as a child had affected them. Although the central concern of his research is film horror, many of his respondents' experiences relate to viewing them on television, and several even reference supernatural folklore, legend and belief directly. One respondent connects feeling 'compelled to watch' horror with living in 'an old village in Surrey which was full of historical stuff, folklore and ghost legends' whilst a number of respondents remarked that their response to horror on television was specifically related to their religious upbringing. Another respondent remembered 'catching a story on the news that must have been some kind of mock promo for *Gremlins*' which, because it 'appeared to be on the news', they 'actually believed that and it scared the hell out of me'. Interestingly, when the respondent watched the film *Gremlins* itself, they were 'not scared or scarred by it at all' (in Turner, pers. comm., 4 October 2021). This reinforces the unique properties of television as discussed in chapters 1.3 and 2.1 and the usefulness of Hufford's experience-centred approach (1995) in terms of understanding audience response.

Supernatural folklore is used in programmes examined in this study to present something spooky within a plausible context such as the urn in 'Baby', or the history of Milbury in *Children of the Stones*. Sophie Parkes-Nield, in her discussion of the use of folklore and customs within fiction, observes how this helps create engagement with a sense of everyday life for the audience:

we like to be able to...make it real in our minds, whether it is real or fantastical. We want to believe that the characters...are living and breathing, buying bread from their own village shop or picking up their children from their own village school (2020, p. 4).

This recalls Kneale's frequent use of domestic settings (such as the Kapp household in *Quatermass* or the cottage kitchen in 'Baby') within which supernatural folklore or familiar customs are used in an unsettling or unfamiliar way, thus having an uncanny and eerie effect. A recurrent theme in Kneale's work is ordinary people experiencing extraordinary events and, thus, fear frequently invades the domestic setting which, in turn, resonates with the idea of television horror invading the domestic household.

Kneale's use of traditional belief, supernatural folklore, history and science, combined with the complex political and social themes in his work, helps create

plausibly dystopian futures which have retained contemporary relevance over many decades. *The Quatermass Memoirs* (1996) includes Kneale's own narration (as himself), which mirrors his character Quatermass's reflections upon the past, as Quatermass (Andrew Keir) is interviewed in the story by a journalist named Amanda:<sup>2</sup>

**Kneale:** Racial unrest, violence and purges were certainly with us in the fifties, and I tried to speculate where they first came from.

**Quatermass:** Every war crisis, witch hunt, race riot, purge, is a reminder and warning...

**Amanda:** ...that *we* are the Martians now...And [we] poisoned the Earth and the air and the sea...I think I hate us.

*The Quatermass Memoirs* sees Kneale writing in the 1990s for a piece set in the 1970s, reminiscing about the 1950s, which remains eerily relevant to global events of the 2020s such as the Covid pandemic, Black Lives Matter protests, the pressing climate crisis and invasion of Ukraine. It is understandable then, that in the narrative of *In the Earth* (2021) which places the study and potentially magical properties of standing stones amid the practical realities of the Covid-19 pandemic, writer-director Ben Wheatley 'said he was going for "that Nigel Kneale feel"' (Dear, 2022, p. 33).

Perhaps because of the continued popularity of the folk-horror revival, the use of folkloric ritual has in some cases become used as shorthand for something spooky or a visual cue for eeriness. In particular, Frazerian (and Murrayite) notions (in 1.3.2) are returned to repeatedly in screen fiction as if to add a sense of sinister authenticity. For example, the BBC's adaptation of Agatha Christie's *The Pale Horse* (2020) injects a village harvest festival parade with sinister folkloric characters that has a sense of foreboding sacrifice and that would not look out of place in *The Wicker Man* (fig. 112).



Figure 112: *The Pale Horse* (2020)

This use of narrative tradition and ritual or, at least, folkloresque aesthetics may make for visually striking and arresting images but in cases like *The Pale Horse* it is not integral to the plot and, in fact, seems more of a lazy stereotype crowbarred into the narrative to create atmosphere and suggest threatening activity. Although this imagery featured significantly in press materials for the television adaptation of *The Pale Horse*, ‘There’s no creepy Lammas Fair or corn dollies in the book’ (Mellor, 2020). Some folkloric elements of tradition and ritual (such as an isolated village festival, corn dollies or wicker figures in examples like the above), in repeated overuse of their screen representations, are becoming expected formulaic tropes of folk horror. Even in cases of acclaimed arthouse films like Ari Aster’s *Midsommar* (2019), though they may be beautifully stylised, the basic plot and resolution follow the same formulaic pattern established by *The Wicker Man*, *Harvest Home*, *Robin Redbreast* and other similar sacrificial narratives. This notion of doom-laden human sacrifice has become a narrative cliché to the extent that films like *Calibre* (2018) play directly upon audience anticipation of such an outcome. *Calibre* turns the notion on its head, using suggestion of the tightly knit community’s annual celebration of the Alban Eiler festival as misdirection for the audience, who are led to wonder if it will be much more than just ‘a bonfire and a piss-up’.

Traditional belief and supernatural folklore, as employed in examples like *Children of the Stones* and throughout the work of Nigel Kneale, are effective because of how they are fundamentally woven throughout a narrative rather than appearing merely in terms of props or mise-en-scène, giving the story additional depth, complexity and plausibility. To return to David Southwell’s comment, the best examples of folk horror, and those cited as most impactful and influential upon audiences, demonstrate ‘an absolute refusal to use folklore as mere tinsel for a story, but [instead] recognise it as integral infrastructure’ (Southwell, 2019b). Thus, it is the representation and communication of folklore itself that deserves further ongoing academic attention.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> In further evidence of the continued and rising popularity of folk horror, this documentary as part of a 2021 DVD release by Severin Films is reportedly the company's most profitable release to date (Bryce, 2022).

<sup>2</sup> Keir was reprising the title role from the Hammer film version of *Quatermass and the Pit* (1967).



## 7.0 Appendices

### 7.1 Wyrd 1970s teleography

The data for the list which follows were gathered from a wide variety of sources, as outlined in section 1.2.2. In addition, a number of individual cult and fan-based websites proved most useful in tracking down details about some of the lesser-known and currently unavailable titles (such as ITV's *Come Back, Lucy*, 1978).

Because the programmes were broadcast forty to fifty years before this study began and many programmes were broadcast only once, were wiped from studio tapes or are otherwise obscure, lost or unavailable, it is plausible that there are many additional titles that I have not been able to include in this list. However, using search functions of index resources such as BBC Genome, the *TVTimes* and TRILT (using key words such as 'witchcraft' or 'haunting', for example), I have tried to be as exhaustive as possible in compiling my data.

Please note that the list below is a simplified version of the larger spreadsheet database which, in addition to the information provided below, also includes details of individual episodes for series mentioned, along with: production credits (notable writers, producers, directors and cast); time of broadcast; audience (adult or children); and notes about key folkloric elements in the narrative.

				Time of first broadcast
<i>Teleplay or Programme Title, Series Title</i>	[type]	Channel	Date(s)	
<i>A Girl's Best Friend, K9 and Company</i>	[television programme]	BBC 1	28/12/1981	17:45:00
<i>Ace of Wands</i>	[television series]	ITV	1970-1972	17:20:00
<i>Alternative 3</i>	[television play]	ITV	20/06/1977	21:00:00
<i>Apaches</i>	[public information film]	ITV	1977	10:00:00
<i>Armchair Thriller</i>	[television series]	ITV	1978-1981	20:30:00
<i>Artemis '81</i>	[television play]	BBC 1	29/12/1981	21:00:00
<i>Arthur of the Britons</i>	[television series]	ITV	1972-1973	16:50:00
<i>Bagpuss</i>	[television series]	BBC 1	1974	13:45:00
<i>Beasts</i>	[television series]	ITV	1976	21:00:00
<i>Behind the Horoscope, Horizon</i>	[television programme]	BBC 2	10/11/1980	21:25:00
<i>Box of Delights, The</i>	[television series]	BBC 1	1984	17:00:00
<i>Boy from Space, The, Look and Read</i>	[television serial (within a series)]	BBC 1	1971	10:25:00
<i>Boy Merlin, The</i>	[television series]	ITV	1979	16:45:00
<i>Boys and Girls Come Out to Play, Menace</i>	[television play]	BBC 1	31/05/1973	21:25:00
<i>Bye, Bye Mrs Bly, The Man Outside</i>	[television programme]	BBC 1	14/07/1972	21:20:00
<i>Camping and Fishing, Play Safe</i>	[public information film]		1978	unverified
<i>Carrie's War</i>	[television series]	BBC 1	1974	17:15:00
<i>Case of the UFOs, The, Horizon</i>	[television programme]	BBC 2	18/10/1982	21:30:00
<i>Casting the Runes, ITV Playhouse</i>	[television play]	ITV	24/04/1979	21:00:00
<i>Catweazle</i>	[television series]	ITV	1970-1971	17:30:00
<i>Changes, The</i>	[television series]	BBC 1	1975	17:20:00
<i>Child and a Half, A, The Wednesday Play</i>	[television play]	BBC 1	09/04/1969	21:15:00
<i>Children of Green Knowe, The</i>	[television series]	BBC 1	1986	17:00:00
<i>Children of the Stones</i>	[television series]	ITV	1977	16:45:00
<i>Child's Voice, A</i>	[television play]	BBC 2	29/12/1980	23:15:00

<i>Chocky</i>	[television series]	ITV	1984	16:45:00
<i>Chocky's Challenge</i>	[television series]	ITV	1986	unverified
<i>Chocky's Children</i>	[television series]	ITV	1985	16:45:00
<i>Classic Ghost Stories</i>	[television series]	BBC 2	1986	22:55:00
<i>Clifton House Mystery, The</i>	[television series]	ITV	1978	17:45:00
<i>Come Back, Lucy</i>	[television series]	ITV	1978	17:45:00
<i>Comet is Coming!: A prank by Nigel Calder, The</i>	[television play]	BBC 2	25/05/1981	18:50:00
<i>Count Dracula</i>	[television play]	BBC 2	22/12/1977	21:30:00
<i>Counterstrike</i>	[television series]	BBC 1	1969	21:30:00
<i>Dark Towers, Look and Read</i>	[television serial (within a series)]	BBC 1	1981	10:10:00
<i>Day of the Triffids, The</i>	[television series]	BBC 1	1981	20:30:00
<i>Dead of Night</i>	[television series]	BBC 2	1972	21:35:00
<i>Doctor Who</i> ('classic era')	[television series]	BBC 1	1963-1989	18:10:00
<i>Doomwatch</i>	[television series]	BBC 1	1970-1972	21:40:00
<i>Dramarama</i>	[television series]	ITV	1982-1989	16:45:00
<i>Earthquest, Everyman</i>	[television programme]	BBC 1	12/02/1984	22:50:00
<i>Edge of Darkness</i>	[television series]	BBC 2	1985	21:30:00
<i>Enfield Poltergeist Special, The, Nationwide</i>	[television programme]	BBC 1	23/11/1977	17:55:00
<i>Escape into Night</i>	[television series]	ITV	1972	17:20:00
<i>Fact, Myth or Superstition?, For Schools, Colleges: Scene</i>	[television programme]	BBC 1	29/11/1979	10:35:00
<i>Fairies, Play of the Week</i>	[television play]	BBC 2	27/09/1978	21:25:00
<i>Fear No Evil</i>	[television play]	BBC 2	07/07/1970	21:10:00
<i>Feathered Serpent, The</i>	[television series]	ITV	1976-1978	16:50:00
<i>Ferryman, The, Haunted</i>	[television play]	ITV	23/12/1974	21:00:00
<i>Finishing Line, The</i>	[public information film]		1977	unverified
<i>Fringe Medicine, Whicker's World</i>	[television programme]	BBC 1	13/02/1968	18:15:00
<i>Frisbee, Play Safe</i>	[public information film]		1978	unverified
<i>Georgian House, The</i>	[television series]	ITV	1976	16:20:00

<i>Ghost Hunters, The</i>	[television programme]	BBC 1	04/12/1975	22:15:00
<i>Ghost Story for Christmas, A</i>	[television series]	BBC 1	1971-1978	23:05:00
<i>Ghosts, ITV Playhouse</i>	[television play]	ITV	26/07/1977	21:00:00
<i>Ghosts and Spirits, Over to You</i>	[television programme]	ITV	02/02/1981	10:05:00
<i>Ghosts of Motley Hall, The</i>	[television series]	ITV	1976-1978	16:35:00
<i>Hammer House of Horror</i>	[television series]	ITV	1980	21:15:00
<i>Hammer House of Mystery and Suspense</i>	[television series]	ITV	1984-1985	22:30:00
<i>Handful of Horrors, A, Whicker's World</i>	[television programme]	BBC 2	27/01/1968	20:40:00
<i>Haunted</i>	[television series]	ITV	1967-1968	22:45:00
<i>If the Spirit is Willing, Man Alive</i>	[television programme]	BBC 2	08/03/1972	20:10:00
<i>Into the Labyrinth</i>	[television series]	ITV	1981-1982	16:45:00
<i>Into the Unknown</i>	[television series]	ITV	02/12/1975	22:30:00
<i>Is the Occult Fact or Faith?, Cross Question</i>	[television programme]	BBC 1	23/04/1978	21:50:00
<i>Journey to the Unknown</i>	[television series]	ITV	1968-1970	23:10:00
<i>King of the Castle</i>	[television series]	ITV	1977	17:45:00
<i>Kinvig</i>	[television series]	ITV	1981	20:30:00
<i>Kites and Planes, Play Safe</i>	[public information film]		1978	unverified
<i>Lancashire Witches, The</i>	[television programme]	BBC 2	17/06/1976	22:15:00
<i>Late Night Horror</i>	[television series]	BBC 2	1968	22:55:00
<i>Late Night Story</i>	[television series]	BBC 2	1978	23:55:00
<i>Leap in the Dark</i>	[television series]	BBC 2	1973-1980	22:20:00
<i>Lizzie Dripping</i>	[television series]	ITV	1973-1975	16:50:00
<i>Lizzie Dripping and the Orphans, Jackanory Playhouse</i>	[television play]	BBC 1	15/12/1972	16:40:00
<i>Lonely Water (aka The Spirit of Dark and Lonely Water)</i>	[public information film]		1973	unverified
<i>Matter of Witchcraft?, A, Strange Report</i>	[television programme]	ITV	31/10/1969	19:30:00
<i>Mind Beyond, The, Playhouse</i>	[television series]	BBC 2	1976	21:00:00
<i>Mrs Acland's Ghosts, Playhouse</i>	[television play]	BBC 2	1975	21:25
<i>Murrain, Against the Crowd</i>	[television play]	ITV	27/07/1975	22:15:00

<i>Mystery and Imagination</i>	[television series]	ITV	1966-1970	21:00:00
<i>Mystery of Loch Ness, The</i>	[television programme]	BBC 1	08/06/1976	21:55:00
<i>Mystic, the Witch, the Astrologer, The, Just a Nimmo</i>	[television programme]	BBC 2	22/04/1974	19:35:00
<i>Nightmare Man, The</i>	[television series]	BBC 1	1981	20:20:00
<i>Noah's Castle</i>	[television series]	ITV	1980	16:45:00
<i>Nobody's House</i>	[television series]	ITV	1976	16:45:00
<i>Omega Factor, The</i>	[television series]	BBC 1	1979	20:10:00
<i>One Pair of Eyes: Can You Speak Venusian?</i>	[television programme]	BBC 2	10/05/1969	20:25:00
<i>Out of the Unknown</i>	[television series]	BBC 2	1965-1971	21:05:00
<i>Out of This World</i>	[television programme]	BBC 1	10/05/1977	21:55:00
<i>Owl Service, The</i>	[television series]	ITV	1969-1970	16:15:00
<i>Penda's Fen, Play for Today</i>	[television play]	BBC 1	21/03/1974	21:25:00
<i>Photograph, A, Play for Today</i>	[television play]	BBC 1	22/03/1977	21:25:00
<i>Poor Girl, Haunted</i>	[television play]	ITV	30/12/1974	21:00:00
<i>Possessed, Man Alive</i>	[television programme]	BBC 2	21/03/1973	20:05:00
<i>Power of the Witch, The</i>	[television programme]	BBC 1	1971	22:40:00
<i>Psychic Youth, South of Watford</i>	[television programme]	ITV	18/01/1985	23:00:00
<i>Quatermass</i>	[television series]	ITV	1979	21:00:00
<i>Raven</i>	[television series]	ITV	1977	16:45:00
<i>Rebecca</i>	[television series]	BBC 1	1979	21:35:00
<i>Red Shift, Play for Today</i>	[television play]	BBC 1	17/01/1978	21:25:00
<i>Rentaghost</i>	[television series]	BBC 1	1976-1984	17:15:00
<i>Robin of Sherwood</i>	[television series]	ITV	1984-1986	18:00:00
<i>Robin Redbreast, Play for Today</i>	[television play]	BBC 1	10/12/1970	21:20:00
<i>Sapphire and Steel</i>	[television series]	ITV	1979-1982	19:00:00
<i>Satan Superstar, Everyman</i>	[television programme]	BBC 1	24/04/1977	22:30:00
<i>Season of the Witch, The, The Wednesday Play</i>	[television play]	BBC 1	07/01/1970	21:10:00
<i>Shadows</i>	[television series]	ITV	1975-1978	16:50:00

<i>Shadows of Fear</i>	[television series]	ITV	1970-1973	21:00:00
<i>Sky</i>	[television series]	ITV	1975	16:50:00
<i>Spine Chillers</i>	[television series]	BBC 1	1980	17:25:00
<i>Stone Tape, The</i>	[television play]	BBC 2	25/12/1972	21:25:00
<i>Supernatural</i>	[television series]	BBC 1	1977	22:10:00
Supernatural, The, <i>The Age of Innocence</i>	[television programme]	BBC 1	1974	18:20:00
<i>Survivors</i>	[television series]	BBC 1	1975-1977	20:10:00
<i>Tales of the Unexpected</i>	[television series]	ITV	1979-1988	22:00:00
That Old Black Magic (aka Black Magic, aka Which Witch is Which?), <i>The Goodies</i>	[television programme]	BBC 1	09/08/1973	20:00:00
<i>Threads</i>	[television play]	BBC 2	23/09/1984	21:30:00
<i>Thriller</i>	[television series]	ITV	1973-1976	21:00:00
<i>Timeslip</i>	[television series]	ITV	1970-1971	17:20:00
To Kill a King, <i>Leap in the Dark</i>	[television programme]	BBC 2	12/09/1980	22:20:00
<i>Tomorrow People, The</i>	[television series]	ITV	1973-1979	16:50:00
<i>Traveller in Time, A</i>	[television series]	BBC 1	1978	17:05:00
<i>Tripods, The</i>	[television series]	BBC 1	1984-1985	17:15:00
<i>UFO</i>	[television series]	ITV	1970-1973	17:00:00
UFOs, <i>Man Alive</i>	[television programme]	BBC 2	02/02/1972	20:10:00
UFOs: Fact or Fantasy?, <i>The Sky at Night</i>	[television programme]	BBC 1	11/12/1979	23:42:00
U-Friend or UFO, <i>The Goodies</i>	[television programme]	BBC 2	04/02/1980	20:10:00
Whistle and I'll Come to You, <i>Omnibus</i>	[television play]	BBC 2	07/05/1968	22:25:00
Wit to Woo, The, <i>West Country Tales</i>	[television play]	BBC 2	19/05/1983	22:05:00
Witch Guide to the Occult, A, <i>Aquarius</i>	[television programme]	ITV	31/10/1970	23:10:00
Witch Hunt, <i>The Borderers</i>	[television programme]	BBC 2	14/01/1969	20:00:00
<i>Witches and the Grinnygog, The</i>	[television series]	ITV	1983	16:45:00
Witches: New Fashion...Old Religion	[television programme]	ITV	07/01/1972	21:15:00
<i>Witches of Pendle, The</i>	[television play]	BBC 2	19/06/1976	21:30:00

Witches, Spells and Sorcerers...1972 Style, <i>Europa</i>	[television programme]	BBC 2	20/04/1972	20:00:00
<i>Witch's Daughter, The</i>	[television series]	BBC 1	1971	17:20:00
Witch's Daughter, The, <i>Jackanory</i>	[television serial (within a series)]	BBC 1	1968	16:40:00
<i>Woman in White, The</i>	[television series]	BBC 2	1982	21:45:00
<i>Worzel Gummidge</i>	[television series]	ITV	1979-1981	17:30:00
Would you Believe It?, <i>For Schools and Colleges: Television Club</i>	[television programme]	BBC 1	21/03/1974	10:25:00
<i>Zodiac</i>	[television series]	ITV	1974	21:00:00



## 7.2 Interviewee list

### Phase 1 interview participants (worked in 1970s film & television)

Name	Born (age at time of interview)	Notable Work	Date (interview method)
Jeremy Burnham	1931 (86)	writer of <i>Children of the Stones</i> (1977)	13 Apr 2017 (email)
Robert Wynne-Simmons	1947 (70)	writer of <i>Blood on Satan's Claw</i> (1971), writer-director of <i>The Outcasts</i> (1982)	22 May 2017 (telephone)
Lawrence Gordon Clark	1938 (79)	director of <i>A Ghost Story for Christmas</i> (1971-1978), <i>Casting the Runes</i> (1979)	11 Jun 2017 (email)
Piers Haggard	1939 (78)	director of <i>Blood on Satan's Claw</i> , <i>Quatermass</i> (1979)	17 Jun 2017 (in person)
Patrick Dromgoole	1930 (87)	producer-director of <i>Children of the Stones</i> , <i>Sky</i> (1975), <i>King of the Castle</i> (1977), <i>Arthur of the Britons</i> (1972-1973)	22 Aug 2017 (telephone)
Moira Armstrong	1930 (87)	director of episodes of <i>Armchair Thriller</i> (1978-1981), <i>A Christmas Carol</i> (1977), <i>Adam Adamant Lives!</i> (1966-1967)	11 Sep 2017 (in person)
Jeff Grant	1958 (62)	director of <i>Lonely Water</i> (1973)	30 Mar 2020 (telephone)

### Phase 2 interview participants (working in post-2000 media)

Name	Born (age at time of interview)	Notable Work	Date (interview method)
Jeremy Dyson	1966 (52)	writer-director of <i>The League of Gentlemen</i> (1999-2002), <i>Ghost Stories</i> (2017)	15 Mar 2018 (telephone)
Ben Wheatley	1972 (46)	writer-director of <i>Kill List</i> (2011), <i>A Field in England</i> (2013), director of <i>Sightseers</i> (2012)	25 May 2018 (telephone)
Jim Jupp	1968 (50)	creator of Ghost Box records (2004-)	22 May 2018 (email)
Richard Littler	1971 (47)	writer-creator of <i>Scarffolk</i> blog, author of <i>Discovering Scarfolk</i> (2014)	22 Jun 2018 (email)
Alice Lowe	1977 (41)	writer-actor in <i>Sightseers</i> , writer-director of <i>Prevenge</i> (2016), actor in audio version of <i>Blood on Satan's Claw</i> (2018)	21 Jun 2018 (found online, transcribed Nov 2019)

### 7.3 Phase 1 interview questions

#### RESEARCH

- What related folklore (texts, legends, stories) to your work were you aware of, if any? Did you or your team conduct any research into folklore?
- Were there any elements of your work based on 'true stories' or folk legends? If so, what sources were used?
- What 'rules' do you think there are for ghosts/UFOS/witches/covens/villages (where relevant); what makes a 'proper' folk horror story – where does this come from – were there specific elements you had to include? Where did you get your 'rules' from?

#### PRODUCTION / DESIGN

- Was there any resistance to or difficulties with this type of subject matter (or handling of it) – from studios, broadcasters, regulators, audiences?
- Something 1970s programmes of this nature are often cited for is a sense of 'creeping horror' or eerie atmosphere ; do you feel your work did this and if so how did you achieve this?
- How did you make decisions about descriptive/aesthetic/visual representations about images or atmosphere?
- Do you think there are certain 'rules' that should be/are adhered to; a right way/wrong way to deal with or to represent this subject matter? (for example, ghostly figures depicted as shrouded and in silhouette) I.e. character and performance, sound, music, cinematography, design/colour, lighting?

#### RESPONSE

- Were you aware of any feedback? Whether from audiences, reviewers, producers or broadcasters? Can you recall any examples?
- Have you seen any post-2000 folk horror related films or TV programmes? What do you think about the resurgence in (interest in) British folk horror? Have you noticed any recognisable elements from the 1970s or specifically from your own work?

#### ANALYSIS

- Why do you think 1970s TV programmes such as those created by yourself or others have been so influential? Memorable? Distinct?
- Do you think there is anything peculiarly British about this type of subject matter?
- Do you believe in any of the relevant folk legends/supernatural? Had any related unexplained experiences? Did your experiences/belief/lack of affected your work or the representation of the themes?

## BACKGROUND

- Why do you think so many programmes were made based upon folkloric themes during the 1970s (legend motifs such as ghosts/supernatural, stone circles, witchcraft, sinister villages and pagan rituals)?
- What do you think was the appeal for broadcasters of this type of material at the time?
- What do you think was the appeal for audiences of this type of material at the time?
- Why were you drawn to this subject matter, what motivated your interest in this (type of) story?

## 7.4 Phase 2 interview questions

### BACKGROUND (as a viewer)

- What was your first introduction into watching television/film 'folk horror', or horror in general? What did you love/hate? Why were you drawn to this subject matter, what motivated your interest in this (type of) story?
- What programmes did you grow up watching that stood out to you or stayed with you?
- What do you think it is about these specific programmes that stayed with you and why?
- If you found about it scared or unsettled you/why do you think that is?
- Something 1970s film/TV of this nature is often cited for is a sense of 'creeping horror' or eerie atmosphere – how do you feel that is best achieved?
- Are there programmes you have discovered or rediscovered as an adult that affected you?
- Could you say that any TV made in the 1970s has influenced you **personally**, directly and indirectly?
- Do you believe in any of the relevant folk legends/supernatural, and have there been any television programmes that affected or altered your beliefs in any way? Have you had any related unexplained experiences? Did your experiences/belief/lack of belief affect your work or the representation of the themes?

### RESEARCH

- Could you say in general if, and what, 1970s TV influenced you **professionally**, directly and indirectly?
- Which elements of your own work do you feel are based on 'true stories' or folk beliefs? What related folklore (texts, legends, stories) were you aware of, if any? Did you or your colleagues conduct any research into folklore? If so, what sources were used?
- What 'rules' or conventions do you think there are for presenting ghosts/witches/covens /villages? What makes a 'proper' folk horror story – where does this come from – were there specific elements (narrative, visual or otherwise) you felt you had to include, and why?
- Where did you get your 'rules' from?
- Did you specifically revisit any particular films or tv programmes in order to get inspiration for your own work? If so, which ones and why?

### PRODUCTION / DESIGN

- Was it easy to gain support for your work involving this type of subject matter (or handling of it) – from studios, broadcasters, regulators, audiences?
- Do you feel your work achieves a sense of 'creeping horror' or eerie atmosphere (like television of the 1970s) and if so how did you achieve this?

- How did you make decisions about aesthetic/visual representations about images or atmosphere?
- Do you think there are certain 'rules' that should be/adhered to; a right way/wrong way to deal with or represent this subject matter? For example: a static, robed figure in silhouette to suggest a ghost, specific sounds to accompany imagery of stone circles, particular costuming for witches/cults? I.e. character and performance, sound, music, cinematography, design/colour, lighting?
- Do you think television formats lends itself in a unique way to horror, and especially the folk horror, experience?

#### RESPONSE & ANALYSIS

- Are there any particular programmes from the 1970s period you would cite as especially important, influential, memorable or distinct to you?
- Why do you think these programme(s) are so influential?
- Do you think there is anything peculiarly British about this type of subject matter?
- How much do you think post-2000 horror owes to work of the 1970s, and how much do you think it creates its own brand of 'folk horror' or 'wyrd' tv? In what way is post-2000 folk horror unique or more successful than its predecessors?
- Were you aware of any feedback of your work at the time it was released/broadcast? Whether from audiences, reviewers, producers or broadcasters? Can you recall any examples?
- How do you account for the resurgence in (interest in) British folk horror?
- What other post-2000 folk horror related films or TV programmes have you seen? Do you notice any recognisable elements or influences from the 1970s or even specifically from your own work?

## 7.5 Nigel Kneale: select filmography (of original and related works, in chronological order\*)

\*I include here Nigel Kneale's screen writing credits *excepting* adaptations from the work of others which do not have discernible contemporary-legend narratives or 'wyrd' themes.

TITLE	FORMAT	FIRST BROADCAST / RELEASE	WYRD THEMES / NOTES
<b><i>The Quatermass Experiment</i></b>  1. Contact Has Been Established 2. Persons Reported Missing 3. Very Special Knowledge 4. Believed to be Suffering 5. An Unidentified Species 6. State of Emergency	TV series	<b>1953.</b> BBC.  18 Jul, 8:15pm  25 Jul, 8:25pm  1 Aug, 8:45pm  8 Aug, 8:45pm  15 Aug, 9:00pm  22 Aug, 9:00pm	Alien threat.
<b>BBC Sunday Night Theatre:</b> <b><i>The Creature</i></b>	TV Play	<b>1955.</b> BBC. 30 January, 9:15pm.	Cryptozoology (Yeti).
<b><i>The Quatermass Xperiment</i>,            aka <i>Shock!!</i>, aka <i>The Creeping Unknown</i></b>	Film	<b>1955.</b>  Hammer Film Productions Ltd.  26 August (UK première), 20 November (UK general release).	Alien threat.  Adaptation of Kneale's TV serial by Richard Landau and Val Guest. Kneale contributed an uncredited dialogue polish.
<b><i>Quatermass II</i></b>  1. The Bolts 2. The Mark 3. The Food 4. The Coming 5. The Frenzy 6. The Destroyers	TV series	<b>1955.</b> BBC.  22 Oct, 8:00pm 31 Oct, 10:15pm 5 Nov, 9:15pm 12 Nov, 8:00pm 19 Nov, 8:00pm 26 Nov, 8:00pm	Alien threat, infiltration, conspiracy, nuclear disaster.

<b><i>The Abominable Snowman</i></b> , aka <i>The Abominable Snowman of the Himalayas</i> , aka <i>The Snow Creature</i>	Film	<b>1957.</b> Hammer Film Productions Ltd. 26 August (UK general release).	Cryptozoology (the Yeti).  Adapted by Kneale from TV play <i>The Creature</i> .
<b><i>Quatermass 2</i></b> , aka <i>Enemy from Space</i>	Film	<b>1957.</b> Hammer Film Productions Ltd. 24 May (official UK première), 17 June (UK general release).	Alien threat, infiltration, conspiracy, nuclear disaster.  Adapted by Kneale from his TV serial, co-credited to Val Guest.
<b><i>Quatermass and the Pit</i></b>  1. The Halfmen  2. The Ghosts  3. Imps and Demons  4. The Enchanted  5. The Wild Hunt  6. Hob	TV series	<b>1958-1959.</b> BBC.  22 Dec 1958, 8:00pm 29 Dec 1958, 8:00pm 5 Jan 1959, 8:00pm 12 Jan 1959, 8:00pm 19 Jan 1959, 8:00pm 26 Jan 1959, 8:00pm	Ancient aliens.
<b><i>First Night: The Road</i></b>	TV Play	<b>1963.</b> BBC. 29 September, 9:00pm.	Ghosts, haunting, nuclear disaster.
Drama 61-67 - <b><i>Studio '64: The Crunch</i></b>	TV Play	<b>1964.</b> ITV. 19 January.	Nuclear threat, paranoia.
<b><i>The Road</i></b>	TV Play	<b>1964.</b> ABC (Australia). 17 June.	Ghosts, haunting, nuclear disaster.  Remake of Kneale's 1963 TV play by ABC Australia.



<b><i>First Men in the Moon</i></b>	Film	<b>1964.</b> Ameran Films. 6 August (UK general release).	Alien life.  Adaptation of H. G. Wells's novel.
<b><i>The Witches</i>, aka <i>The Devil's Own</i></b>	Film	<b>1966.</b> Hammer Film Productions. 21 November (London), 9 December (UK general release), February 1967 (USA).	Voodoo, witchcraft, ritual sacrifice.  Adaptation of Norah Lofts' (pseudonym Peter Curtis) novel.
<b><i>Quatermass and the Pit</i>, aka <i>Five Million Years to Earth</i></b>	Film	<b>1967.</b> Hammer Film Productions. 9 November (UK première), 19 November (UK general release), 16 February 1968 (USA).	Ancient aliens.  Adaptation of the 1958-1959 TV series.
<b><i>NET Playhouse: 1984</i></b>	TV Play	<b>1968.</b> NET (which became PBS, USA). 19 April.	Dystopian future, paranoia.  Adaptation of Orwell's novel.
<b><i>Theatre 625: The Year of the Sex Olympics</i></b>	TV Play	<b>1968.</b> BBC Two. 29 July, 9:05pm.	Technocracy, dystopian future.
<b><i>The Wednesday Play: Bam! Pow! Zapp!</i></b>	TV Play	<b>1969.</b> BBC One. 5 March, 9:05pm.	n/a
<b><i>The Wednesday Play: Wine of India</i></b>	TV Play	<b>1970.</b> BBC One. 15 April, 9:20pm.	Science fiction utopia/dystopia.
<b><i>Out of the Unknown: The Chopper</i></b>	TV Play	<b>1971.</b> BBC Two. 16 June, 9:20pm.	Ghosts, haunting.
<b><i>The Stone Tape</i></b>	TV Play	<b>1972.</b> BBC Two. 25 December, 9:25pm.	Ghosts, haunting, psychic phenomena.

<b><i>Bedtime Stories: Jack and the Beanstalk</i></b>	TV Play	<b>1974.</b> BBC Two. 24 March, 10:25pm.	Märchen, traditional tales.
<b><i>Against The Crowd: Murrain</i></b>	TV Play	<b>1975.</b> ITV. 27 July.	Witchcraft, villagers.
<b><i>Beasts</i></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Special Offer</li> <li>2. During Barty's Party</li> <li>3. Buddyboy</li> <li>4. Baby</li> <li>5. What Big Eyes</li> <li>6. The Dummy</li> </ol>	TV Series	<b>1976,</b> ITV.  16 October 23 October 30 October 6 November 13 November 20 November	Poltergeists, possession, ghosts, haunting, witchcraft, werewolves.
<b><i>Late Night Story: The Photograph</i></b>	TV episode	<b>1978.</b> BBC Two. 24 Dec, 00:25pm.	Tom Baker reading Kneale's original story.
<b><i>Quatermass</i></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ringstone Round</li> <li>2. Lovely Lightning</li> <li>3. What Lies Beneath</li> <li>4. An Endangered Species</li> </ol>	TV series	<b>1979.</b> ITV.  24 October 31 October 7 November 14 November	Ancient aliens, hippie cults, stone circles.
<b><i>The Quatermass Conclusion,</i></b> aka <i>Quatermass IV</i>	Film	<b>1979.</b> Euston Films, Thames Television. November (European première in Paris).	Feature edit of the 1979 TV serial.
<b><i>Kinvig</i></b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Mystery of Netta</li> <li>2. The Humanoid Factor</li> <li>3. Where Are You Miss Griffin?</li> <li>4. The Big Benders</li> <li>5. Double, Double</li> <li>6. Creature of the Xux</li> <li>7. Contact</li> </ol>	TV series	<b>1981.</b> ITV.  4 September 11 September 18 September  25 September 2 October 9 October 16 October	Aliens, conspiracy.
<b><i>Halloween III: Season of the Witch</i></b>	Film	<b>1982.</b> Dino De Laurentis Company, Universal Pictures. 22 October (USA), 9 June 1983 (UK).	Screenplay, uncredited: credited on-screen to Tommy Lee Wallace.

<b><i>Unnatural Causes: Ladies' Night</i></b>	TV Play	<b>1986.</b> ITV. 6 December.	Tradition, ritual, murder.
<b><i>The ITV Play: Gentry</i></b>	TV movie	<b>1988.</b> ITV. 31 July.	Urban Wyrld, class conflict.
<b><i>The Woman in Black</i></b>	TV movie	<b>1989.</b> ITV. 24 December.	Ghosts, haunting.  Adaptation based on Susan Hill's novel.
<b><i>The Quatermass Memoirs</i></b>	Radio series: docu-drama	<b>1996.</b> BBC Radio Three. 4 – 8 March.	Quatermass.  5 parts, written and presented by Kneale
<b><i>The Quatermass Experiment</i></b>	TV play	<b>2005.</b> BBC Four. 2 April, 9:00pm.	Alien threat.  Broadcast live. Remake of 1953 serial, scripted by Richard Fell, Kneale credited as 'creator'.
<b><i>The Stone Tape</i></b>	Radio play	<b>2015.</b> BBC Radio Four. 31 October, 10:00pm.	Ghosts, haunting, psychic phenomena.  Adaptation of 1972 TV script, by Matthew Graham and Peter Strickland
<b><i>The Road</i></b>	Radio play	<b>2018.</b> BBC Radio Four. 27 October, 2:30pm.	Ghosts, haunting, nuclear disaster.  Adaptation of Kneale's 1963 television play, by Toby Hadoke. Starring Mark Gatiss.

## **7.6 Ethics approval and participant consent**

### ***7.6.1 Ethics approval***

Ethics approval confirmed in 2017 by Professor Marcos A Rodrigues, FREC Joint Chair:

We have considered your submission for ethics approval and found all documents in good order. Your application is thus, approved under Chair's action (pers. comm., 17 March 2017).

Documentation available upon request.

### ***7.6.2 Participant consent***

All participants in this study received detailed information sheets and consent forms to sign in advance of interviews, allowing their information and answers to be used by the author. Dates upon which informed consent was given are as listed below (evidence available upon request).

<b>Name of participant</b>	<b>Date consent given</b>
Jeremy Burnham	4 April 2017
Piers Haggard	30 April 2017
Robert Wynne-Simmons	13 May 2017
Lawrence Gordon Clark	10 June 2017
Patrick Dromgoole	18 July 2017
Moirra Armstrong	11 September 2017
Jeremy Dyson	15 March 2018
Jim Jupp	19 May 2018
Richard Littler	22 June 2018
Ben Wheatley	21 August 2018
Jeff Grant	20 March 2020

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*Adam Adamant Lives!* [television series]. Dir. Moira Armstrong, Philip Dudley, Ridley Scott et al. BBC, UK, 23/6/1966 – 25/3/1967, BBC One.

*Alice in Wonderland* [television play]. Dir. Jonathan Miller. BBC, UK, 21.05, 28/12/1966, BBC One. 80mins.

*Alien* [feature film]. Dir. Ridley Scott. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, Brandywine Productions, USA, 1979. 116mins.

*Alternative 3* [television programme]. Wr. David Ambrose. Dir. Christopher Miles. Anglia Television, UK, 21.00, 20/6/1977, ITV. 52mins.

*Angel* [television series]. Cr. Joss Whedon, David Greenwalt. Prod. Joss Whedon, David Greenwalt, Tim Minear, et al. Mutant Enemy Productions, Kuzui Enterprises, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Television et al., USA, 5/10/1999 – 19/5/2004, The WB.

*Apaches* [public information film]. Dir. John Mackenzie. Graphic Films, Central Office of Information, UK, 1977. 26mins.

*Armchair Thriller* [television series]. Dir. Moira Armstrong, Robert Tronson, Colin Bucksey et al. Thames, Southern, UK, 21/2/1978 – 30/12/1981, ITV.

*Arthur of the Britons* [television series]. Dir. Patrick Dromgoole, Sidney Hayers, Peter Sasdy et al. HTV, UK, 6/12/1972 – 28/11/1973, ITV.

'Baby', *Beasts* [television episode]. Wr. Nigel Kneale. Prod. Nicholas Palmer. ATV, UK, 21.00, 6/11/1972, ITV. 52mins.

*Bagpuss* [television series]. Cr. Peter Firmin, Oliver Postgate. Smallfilms, UK, 12/2/1974 – 7/5/1974, BBC One.

*BBC Playhouse* [television series]. Prod. Graeme McDonald, Irene Shubik, Innes Lloyd et al. BBC, UK, 13/3/1974 – 20/5/1983, BBC Two.

*Beasts* [television series]. Wr. Nigel Kneale. Prod. Nicholas Palmer. ATV, UK, 16/10/1976 – 20/11/1976, ITV.

*Being Human* [television series]. Cr. Toby Whithouse. Prod. Matthew Bouch. Touchpaper Television, UK, 18/2/2008 – 10/3/2013, BBC Three.

*The Best House in London* [feature film]. Dir. Philip Saville. Bridge Film, UK, 1969. 105mins.

*Big Brother* [television series]. Cr. John de Mol. Bazal, Endemol UK Productions, Brighter Pictures et al., UK, 14/7/2000 – 5/11/2018, Channel Four, Channel Five.

*The Birds* [feature film]. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Alfred J. Hitchcock Productions, USA, 1963. 119mins.

*Black Mirror* [television series]. Cr. Charlie Brooker. Zeppotron, House of Tomorrow, UK, 4/12/2011 – present, Channel Four, Netflix.

*Blithe Spirit* [feature film]. Dir. David Lean. Two Cities Films, UK, 1945. 96mins.

*Blood on Satan's Claw* (aka *Satan's Skin*) [feature film]. Dir. Piers Haggard. Tigon British Film Productions, Chilton Film and Television Enterprises, UK, 1971. 93mins.

'Buckin' Mammy', *Mrs Brown's Boys* [television programme]. Dir. Ben Kellett. BBC, UK, 21.30, 25/12/2013, BBC One. 35mins.

*The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* [feature film]. Dir. Robert Wiene. Decla-Bioscop, Germany, 1920. 74mins.

*Calibre* [feature film]. Dir. Matt Palmer. Wellington Films, UK, 2018. 101mins.

*Candyman* [feature film]. Dir. Bernard Rose. Propaganda Films, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, USA, 1992. 101mins.

*Captain Kirk's Alien Mysteries* (aka *Mysteries of the Gods*, *William Shatner's Mysteries of the Gods*) [documentary film]. Dir. Harald Reinl, Charles Romine. Hemisphere Pictures, USA, 1976. 87mins.

'The Case of the Ancient Astronauts', *Horizon Special* [television programme]. Prod. Graham Massey. BBC, UK, 21.00, 25/11/1977, BBC Two. 90mins.

*Casper the Friendly Ghost* [feature film]. Dir. Brad Silberling. Amblin Entertainment, The Harvey Entertainment Company, USA, 1995. 101mins.

*Casting the Runes* [television play]. Dir. Lawrence Gordon Clark. Associated-Rediffusion Television, Yorkshire Television, UK, 21.00, 24/4/1979, ITV. 50mins.

*Celebration: Alan Garner – The Edge of the Ceiling* [television programme]. Dir. Stuart Orme. Granada, 1980, ITV. 25mins.

*The Changes* [television series]. Wr. Peter Dickinson, Anna Home. Prod. Anna Home. BBC, UK, 6/1/1975 – 10/3/1975, BBC One.

*Charlie Brooker's Antiviral Wipe* [television programme]. Wr. Charlie Brooker. BBC, 21.00, 14/5/2020, BBC Two. 49mins.

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*Chocky* [television series]. Wr. John Wyndham, Anthony Read. Dir. Vic Hughes. Thames Television, UK, 9/1/1984 – 13/2/1984, ITV.

*A Christmas Carol* [television play]. Dir. Moira Armstrong. BBC, UK, 18.30, 24/12/1977, BBC Two. 60mins.

*Christmas Music from Hampton Court* [television programme]. Prod. Ken Griffin. BBC, UK, 23.25, 23/12/1974, BBC Two. 105mins.

*The Clangers* [television series]. Cr. Oliver Postgate. Smallfilms, UK, 16/11/1969 – 1974, BBC One.

*A Clockwork Orange* [feature film]. Dir. Stanley Kubrick. Polaris Films, Hawk Films, UK, USA, 1971. 136mins.

*Close Encounters of the Third Kind* [feature film]. Dir. Steven Spielberg. EMI Films, Columbia Pictures, USA, 1977. 135mins.

*Columbo* [television series]. St. Peter Falk. Universal Television, Universal Network Television, Studios USA, USA, 20/2/1968 – 30/1/2003, NBC, ABC.

'Contact', *Screen Two* [television film]. Dir. Alan Clarke. BBC, UK, 22:10, 6/1/1985, BBC Two. 67mins.

*Crossroads* [television series]. Cr. Hazel Adair, Peter Ling. ATV, Central Independent Television, Carlton Television, UK, 2/11/1964 – 30/5/2003, ITV.

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*Dangermouse* [television series]. Cr. Brian Cosgrove, Mark Hall. Cosgrove Hall Films, Thames Television, UK, 28/9/1981 – 19/3/1992, ITV.

*The Day of the Triffids* [television series]. Cr. John Wyndham. Dir. Ken Hannam. BBC, 10/9/1981 – 15/10/1981, BBC One.

'Dead Line', *Inside No. 9* [television programme]. Wr. Steven Pemberton, Reece Shearsmith. Dir. Barbara Wiltshire. BBC, UK, 22.00, 28/10/2018, BBC Two. 29mins.

'The Devil of Christmas', *Inside No. 9* [television programme]. Wr. Steven Pemberton, Reece Shearsmith. Dir. Graeme Harper. BBC, UK, 22.00, 27/12/2016, BBC Two. 30mins.

'*Dim Presences*', *A Warning to the Curious* [documentary extra, DVD]. Prod. Robert Lloyd Parry. Nunkie and Thomthom Productions, UK, 2019. 60mins.

*Doctor Who* [television series]. Cr. Sydney Newman, C.E. Webber, Donald Wilson. BBC, UK, 1963-present, BBC One.

*Doomwatch* [television series]. Cr. Kit Pedler, Gerry Davis. BBC, UK, 9/2/1970 – 14/8/1972, BBC One.

*Drama out of a Crisis: A Celebration of Play for Today* [television programme]. Dir. John Wyver. BBC, UK, 22.45, 14/10/2020, BBC Four. 90mins.

*Dunkirk* [feature film]. Dir. Leslie Norman. Ealing Studios, UK, 1958. 134mins.

*Elves* (Danish title: *Nisser*) [television series]. Wr. Stefan Jawroski. Dir. Roni Ezra. Miso Film, Denmark, 28/10/2021, Netflix.

*Emmerdale Farm* (known as *Emmerdale* since 1989) [television series]. Cr. Kevin Laffan. Yorkshire Television, ITV Productions, ITV Studios, UK, 16/10/1972 – present, ITV.

'*The Enduring Mystery of Stonehenge*', *Quatermass* [documentary extra, DVD]. Narr. David Ackroyd. MPH Entertainment, Inc., The History Channel, UK, 1998. 44mins. [A&E DVD, AAE-71869, 2005].

'The Enfield Poltergeist Special', *Nationwide* [television programme]. BBC, UK, 17.55 (regional news variations; national segment began at 18.20), 23/11/1977, BBC One. 60mins.

*Eraserhead* [feature film]. Dir. David Lynch. AFI Center for Advanced Studies, USA, 1977. 89mins.

*The Evil Dead* [feature film]. Dir. Sam Raimi. Renaissance Pictures, USA, 1981. 85mins.

*The Evolution of Horror* [audio podcast, online]. Int. Alice Lowe. Mike Muncer, UK, 21/6/2018. 119mins. <https://www.evolutionofhorror.com/folk-pt-1?rq=folk%20horror>

'Fairies', *Play of the Week* [television play]. Wr. Geoffrey Case. Dir. Moira Armstrong. BBC, 21.25, 27/9/1978, BBC Two. 70mins.

*A Field in England* [feature film]. Dir. Ben Wheatley. Film4, Rook Films, UK, 2013. 91mins.

*The Finishing Line* [public information film]. Dir. John Krish. British Transport Films, British Railways Board, UK, 1977. 21mins.

## GHI

*The Ghost Hunters* [television programme]. Prod. Hugh Burnett. BBC, UK, 22.15, 4/12/1975, BBC One. 50mins.

*A Ghost Story for Christmas* [television series]. Cr. Lawrence Gordon Clark. Dir. Lawrence Gordon Clark, Mark Gatiss et al. BBC, UK, 24/12/1971 – 25/12/1978, revived 23/12/2005 – present. BBC One, BBC Two and BBC Four.

*Ghost Stories* [feature film]. Dir. Jeremy Dyson, Andy Nyman. Attitude Film Entertainment, Warp Films, Catalyst Global Media, Screen Yorkshire, UK, 2017. 98mins.

*Ghost Stories for Christmas with Christopher Lee* [television series]. Cr. M. R. James, Ronald Frame. Prod. Richard Downes. BBC, UK, 23/12/2000 – 31/12/2000, BBC Two.

*Ghostbusters* [feature film]. Dir. Ivan Reitman. Columbia Pictures, USA, 1984. 105mins.

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*Ghostbusters: Afterlife* [feature film]. Dir. Jason Reitman. Columbia Pictures, Bron Creative, Ghost Corps et al., USA, 2021. 124mins.

*Ghosts* [television series]. Dir. Tom Kingsley. BBC, Monumental Television, Them There, UK, 15/4/2019 - present. BBC One.

*Ghostwatch* [television programme]. Wr. Stephen Volk. Dir. Lesley Manning. BBC, UK, 21.25, 31/10/1992, BBC One.

*The Good Life* [television series]. Cr. John Esmonde, Bob Larbey. BBC, UK, 4/4/1975 – 10/6/1978, BBC One.

*Grange Hill* [television series]. Cr. Phil Redmond. BBC, Mersey Television, Lime Pictures, UK, 8/2/1978 – 15/9/2008, BBC One, CBBC.

*The Graduate* [feature film]. Dir. Mike Nichols. Lawrence Turman Productions, USA, 1967. 106mins.

*The Green Lady in the Toilets* [radio programme]. Pres. Emma Lee Moss (aka Emmy the Great). Boom Shakalaka, UK, 11.30, 15/9/2020, BBC Radio 4. 28mins.

*Gremlins 2: The New Batch* [feature film]. Dir. Joe Dante. Amblin Entertainment, USA, 1990. 106mins.

*Halloween III: Season of the Witch* [feature film]. Dir. John Carpenter. Dino De Laurentiis Corporation, Debra Hill Productions, USA, 1982. 98mins.

*Happy Days – The Children of the Stones*. [radio programme]. Prod. Stephen Garner. Pres. Stewart Lee. BBC, UK, 11.30, 4/10/2012, BBC Radio 4. 30 mins.

*Häxan* [feature film]. Dir. Benjamin Christensen. Svensk Filmindustri, Sweden, 1922. 105mins (restoration).

*Hearken to the Witches Rune* [vinyl album, LP]. Perf. Dave and Toni Arthur. Trailer Records, UK, 1971. [Trailer, LER 2017, 1971].

*A History of Horror* [television series]. Wr. Mark Gatiss, Dir. John Das, Rachel Jardine. BBC, UK, 11/10/2010 – 25/10-2010, BBC Four.

*Ice Cold in Alex* [feature film]. Dir. J. Lee Thompson. Associated British Picture Corporation, UK, 1958. 130mins.

*In the Earth* [feature film]. Dir. Ben Wheatley. Rook Films, Protagonist Pictures, UK, 2021. 107mins.

*In the Mouth of Madness* [feature film]. Dir. John Carpenter. New Line Cinema, USA, 1995. 95mins.

*In Which We Serve* [feature film]. Dir. Noël Coward, David Lean. British Lion Films, UK, 1942. 115mins.

*Inside No. 9* [television series]. Cr. Reece Shearsmith, Steve Pemberton. BBC, UK, 2014-present. BBC Two.

*Interview with Gareth Thomas* [documentary extra, DVD]. Int. Gareth Thomas. Second Sight Films Ltd, UK, 2002. 15mins 26secs. [Second Sight Films Ltd, 2NDVD 3039, 2002].

*Interview with Peter Graham Scott* [documentary extra, DVD]. Int. Peter Graham Scott. Second Sight Films Ltd, UK, 2002. 15mins 10secs. [Second Sight Films Ltd, 2NDVD 3039, 2002].

*Invasion of the Body Snatchers* [feature film]. Dir. Don Siegel. Walter Wanger Productions, USA, 1956. 80mins.

*Ivor the Engine* [television series]. Cr. Oliver Postgate. Smallfilms, UK, 1959 – 1964, 1975 – 1977, ITV.

## **JKL**

*Jackanory* [television series]. Cr. Joy Whitby. BBC, UK, 13/12/1965 – 24/3/1996, BBC One.

*Kill List* [feature film]. Dir. Ben Wheatley. Warp X, Rook Films, Film4 Productions et al., UK, 2011. 95mins.

*The League of Gentlemen* [television series]. Dir. Steve Bendelak. BBC, UK, 11/1/1999 – 20/12/2017, BBC Two.

*Life on Mars* [television series]. Cr. Matthew Graham, Tony Jordan, Ashley Pharoah. Kudos, BBC Wales, UK, 9/1/2006 – 10/4/2007, BBC One, BBC Four.

*The Living Dead at Manchester Morgue* (alternate titles include *Let Sleeping Corpses Lie* and *Don't Open the Window*) [feature film]. Dir. Jorge Grau. Star Films S.A., Flaminia Produzioni Cinematografiche, Spain/Italy, 1974. 95mins.

*Lizzie DrIPPING* [television series]. Cr. Helen Cresswell. BBC, UK, 13/3/1973 – 27/3/1975, BBC One.

'The London Season', *Downton Abbey* [television programme]. Cr. Julian Fellowes. Carnival Films/Masterpiece, UK, 21.00, 25/12/2013, ITV. 60mins.

*Lonely Water* (aka *The Spirit of Dark and Lonely Water*) [public information film]. Dir. Jeff Grant. Central Office of Information, UK, 1973. 1min 29secs.

*Look Back in Anger* [feature film]. Wr. Nigel Kneale. Dir. Tony Richardson. Orion, Woodfall Film Productions, ABPC, UK, 1959. 98mins.

'Lost Hearts', *A Ghost Story for Christmas* [television episode]. Dir. Lawrence Gordon Clark. BBC, UK, 23.35, 25/12/1973, BBC One. 35mins.

*Lucifer Rising* [short film]. Dir. Kenneth Anger. Puck Film Productions, USA, UK, 1972. 28mins.

## MNO

*Made in Britain* [television play]. Dir. Alan Clarke. Central Television, UK, 22.30, 10/7/1983, ITV. 76mins.

*Man v. Food* [television series]. Pr. Adam Richman, Casey Webb. Sharp Entertainment, USA, 3/12/2008 – present, Travel Channel, Cooking Channel.

*The Masked Singer* [television series]. Dir. Simon Staffurth. Bandicoot, UK, 4/1/2020 – present, ITV.

'Merrily, Merrily', *Inside No. 9* [television programme]. Wr. Steve Pemberton, Reece Shearsmith. Dir. Al Campbell. BBC, UK, 22.00, 20/4/2022, BBC Two. 30mins.

*Midsommar* [feature film]. Dir. Ari Aster. Square Peg, B-Reel Films, A24, USA, Sweden, 2019. 148mins.



*Minder* [television series]. Cr. Leon Griffiths. Euston Films, Thames Television, UK, 29/10/1979 – 10/3/1994 (original series), ITV.

*Most Haunted* [television series]. Cr. Yvette Fielding, Karl Beattie. Antix Productions, UK, 2002 – 2012, 2014 – 2019, Living, Really.

'Mr King', *Inside No. 9* [television episode]. Wr. Steve Pemberton, Reece Shearsmith. Dir. Louise Hooper. BBC, UK, 22.00, 27/4/22, BBC Two. 30mins.

*The Mystery of Loch Ness* [television programme]. Prod. Hugh Burnett, Peter Bale. BBC, UK, 21.55, 8/6/1976, BBC One. 50mins.

*Mystic Challenge: Chris Forster – Guest Toni Arthur* [user-generated content, online]. Creat. Psychic Events. 7/8/2012, 11mins 42secs. <https://youtu.be/fw9GVgAvCXU>

*Nationwide* [television series]. Cr. Derrick Amore. BBC, UK, 9/9/1969 – 5/8/1983, BBC One.

*Noah's Castle* [television series]. Dir. Colin Nutley. Southern Television, UK, 2/4/1980 – 7/5/1980, ITV.

*Once More with Felix* [television series]. Perf. Julie Felix. Prod. Stanley Dorfman. BBC, UK, 9/12/1967 – 29/6/1969, BBC Two.

*Out of This World* [television programme]. Prod. Hugh Burnett. BBC, UK, 21.55, 10/5/1977, BBC One. 60mins.

*The Outcasts* [feature film]. Dir. Robert Wynne-Simmons. Tolmayax, Ireland, 1982. 95mins.

*The Owl Service* [television series]. Wr. Alan Garner. Granada Television, UK, 21/12/1969 – 8/2/1970, ITV.

## **PQR**

*The Pale Horse* [television series]. Dir. Leonora Lonsdale. Mammoth Screen, Agatha Christie Productions, UK, 9/2/2020 – 16/2/2020, BBC One.

'Penda's Fen', *Play for Today* [television play]. Wr. David Rudkin. Dir. Alan Clarke. BBC, UK, 21.25, 21/3/1974, BBC One. 90mins.

*Pennies From Heaven* [television series]. Wr. Dennis Potter. Dir. Piers Haggard. BBC, UK, 7/3/1978 – 11/4/1978, BBC One.

*Phenomenon* [feature film]. Dir. Jon Turteltaub. Touchstone Pictures, USA, 1996. 123mins.

*Picnic at Hanging Rock* [feature film]. Dir. Peter Weir. B.E.F. Film Distributors, South Australian Film Corporation, Australian Film Commission et al., Australia, 1975. 115mins.

*Planet of the Apes* [feature film]. Dir. Franklin J. Schaffner. APJAC Productions, USA, 1968. 112mins.

*Play for Today* [television series]. Prod. Irene Shubik, Graeme McDonald et al. BBC, UK, 15/10/1970 – 28/8/1984, BBC One.

*Play School* [television series]. Cr. Joy Whitby. BBC, UK, 21/4/1964 – 11/3/1988, BBC Two, BBC One.

*Play Safe* [public information film series]. Dir. David Eady. The Electricity Council, Central Office of Information, UK, 1978.

*The Power of the Witch* [television programme]. Prod. Oliver Hunkin. Pres. Michael Bakewell. BBC, UK, 22.40, 15/12/1971, BBC Two. 60mins.

*Prevenge* [feature film]. Dir. Alice Lowe. Western Edge Pictures, Gennaker Group, Ffilm Cymru Wales, UK, 2016. 87mins.

*Prince of Darkness* [feature film]. Dir. John Carpenter. Alive Films, Larry Franco Productions, USA, 1987. 101mins.

'Production Overview', *Children of the Stones* [text extra, DVD]. Second Sight Films Ltd., UK, 2002. [Second Sight Television, 2NDVD 3039, 2002].

*Psycho Squirrels in Garden of Hell* [short film]. Dir. Diane Rodgers. Sheffield Hallam University, UK, 1999. 7mins.

*QUARTERMASS* [sic] *AND THE PIT – Interview with Joe Dante, Director of Gremlins and Piranha* [user-generated content, online]. Creat. StudioCanalUK. 6/10/2011, 3mins 4secs. <https://youtu.be/0TMpsNVXCEY> (accessed 27/1/2022).

*The Quatermass Experiment* [television series]. Wr. Nigel Kneale. Dir. Rudolph Cartier. BBC, UK, 18/7/1953 – 22/8/1953, BBC.

*Quatermass and the Pit* [television series]. Wr. Nigel Kneale. Dir. Rudolph Cartier. BBC, UK, 22/12/1958 – 26/1/1959, BBC.

*Quatermass and the Pit* (aka *Five Million Years to Earth*) [feature film]. Dir. Roy Ward Baker. Seven Arts Productions, Hammer Film Productions, UK, 1967. 97mins.

*Quatermass* [television series] Wr. Nigel Kneale. Dir. Piers Haggard. Euston Films, Thames Television, UK, 24/10/1979 – 14/11/1979, ITV.

*The Quatermass Memoirs* [radio series]. (1996). Wr. Nigel Kneale. Prod. Paul Quinn. BBC, UK, 4/3/1996 – 8/3/1996, BBC Radio 3.

*Queer as Folk* [television series]. Cr. Russell T. Davies. Red Production Company, UK, 23/2/1999 – 22/2/2000, Channel Four.

'A Quiet Night In', *Inside No. 9* [television programme]. Wr. Steven Pemberton, Reece Shearsmith. Dir. David Kerr. BBC, UK, 22.00, 12/2/2014, BBC Two. 30mins.

*Quiller* [television series]. Pr. Peter Graham Scott. BBC, UK, 29/8/1975 – 28/11/1975, BBC One.

*Rabies Means Death* [public information film]. Narr. Clive Swift. Central Office of Information, UK, 1975-1979. 48secs.

*Red Riding* [television series]. Cr. David Peace, Tony Grisoni. Dir. James Marsh. Revolution Films, UK, 5/3/2009 – 19/3/2009, Channel Four.

'Red Shift', *Play for Today* [television play]. Wr. Alan Garner. Dir. John Mackenzie. BBC, UK, 21.25, 17/1/1978, BBC One. 85mins.

'The Road', *First Night* [television play]. Wr. Nigel Kneale. Dir. Christopher Morahan. BBC, UK, 21.00, 29/9/1963, BBC TV. 55mins.

*The Road* [radio play]. Wr. Nigel Kneale. St. Mark Gatiss. BBC, UK, 14.30, 27/10/2018, BBC Radio 4. 44mins.

'Robin Redbreast', *Play for Today* [television play]. Wr. John Bowen. Dir. James MacTaggart. BBC, UK, 21.20, 10/12/1970. 75mins.

*Robin of Sherwood* [television series]. Cr. Richard Carpenter. Prod. Paul Knight, Esta Charkham, Patrick Dromgoole. HTV, Goldcrest Films, UK, 28/4/1984 – 28/6/1986, ITV.

## ST

*Sabrina the Teenage Witch* [television series]. Cr. Nell Scovell. Archie Comics, Hartbreak Films, Finishing the Hat Productions, Viacom Productions, USA, 27/9/1996 – 24/4/2006, ABC, The WB.

*Sapphire and Steel* [television series]. Cr. Peter J. Hammond. Prod. Shaun O'Riordan. ATV, Central, UK, 10/7/1979 – 31/8/1982, ITV.

*Saturday Live* [radio programme]. Pres. Nikki Bedi, Richard Coles. BBC, UK, 09.00, 2/10/2021, BBC Radio 4. 90mins.

*Scooby-Doo, Where Are You!* [television series]. Cr. Joe Ruby, Ken Spears. Hanna Barbera, USA, 1969 – present, CBS, ABC, THE WB et al., USA, BBC One, BBC Two et al., UK.

*Scott of the Antarctic* [feature film]. Dir. Charles Frend. Ealing Studios, UK, 1948. 110mins.

'Scum', *Play for Today* [television play]. Dir. Alan Clarke. BBC, UK, 1977. First broadcast 23.45, 27/7/1991, BBC Two. 78mins.

*The Serpent and the Rainbow* [feature film]. Dir. Wes Craven. Universal Pictures, USA, 1988. 98mins.

*Seven Green Bottles* [public information film]. Dir. Eric Marquis. Unit 7 Films, Metropolitan Police, UK, 1975. 34mins.

*The Seventh Seal* [feature film]. Wr. Dir. Ingmar Bergman. AB Svensk Filmindustri, Sweden, 1957. 96mins.

*Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* [music album, LP]. Perf. The Beatles. Parlophone Records, UK 26/5/1967. [Parlophone, PMC 7027, 1967].

*The Shining* [feature film]. Dir. Stanley Kubrick. The Producer Circle Company, Peregrine Productions, Hawk Films, USA, UK, 1980. 119mins (European release).

*Sightseers* [feature film]. Wr. Alice Lowe, Steve Oram. Dir. Ben Wheatley. StudioCanal, Big Talk Pictures, Film4, BFI Film Fund, Rook Films, UK, 2012. 85mins.

*Sky* [television series]. Wr. Bob Baker, Dave Martin. Prod. Patrick Dromgoole, Leonard White. HTV West, UK, 7/4/1975 – 19/5/1975, ITV.

*The Stepford Wives* [feature film]. Dir. Bryan Forbes. Palomar Pictures, USA, 1975. 115mins.

'The Stones of Blood', *Doctor Who* [television serial]. Wr. David Fisher. Dir. Darrol Blake. BBC, UK, 28/10/1978 – 18/11/1978, BBC One.

*The Stone Tape* [television play]. Wr. Nigel Kneale. Dir. Peter Sasdy. BBC, 21.25, 25/12/1972, BBC Two. 90mins.

*Stonehenge: The Lost Circle Revealed* [television documentary]. Prod. Peter Chinn. BBC, 21.00, 12/2/2021, BBC Two. 59mins.

'Stranger from Space', *Whirligig* [television serial]. Wr. Hazel Adair, Ronald Marriott. BBC, UK, 20/10/1951 – 20/12/1952, BBC TV.

*Stranger Things* [television series]. Cr. The Duffer Brothers. 21 Laps Entertainment, Monkey Massacre, USA, 15/7/2016 – present, Netflix.

*Supernatural* [television series]. Cr. Eric Kripke. Kripke Enterprises, Wonderland Sound and Vision, Warner Bros. Television, USA, 13/9/2005 – 19/11/2020, The WB, The CW.

*The Superstars* [television series]. Prod. Ian Smith. BBC, Trans World International, Candid Productions Inc., UK, 31/12/1973 – 29/12/2012, BBC One, Channel Five.

*Survivors* [television series]. Cr. Terry Nation. Prod. Terence Dudley. BBC, 16/4/1975 – 8/6/1977, BBC One.

*The Sweeney* [television series]. Cr. Ian Kennedy Martin. Euston Films Ltd, Thames Television, UK, 2/1/1975 – 28/12/1978, ITV.

*Tales of the Unexpected* [television series]. Cr. Roald Dahl. Anglia Television, 24/3/1979 – 13/5/1988, ITV.

'Tempting Fate', *Inside No. 9* [television episode]. Dir. Jim O'Hanlon. BBC, 22.00, 6/2/2018, BBC Two, 30mins.

*The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* [feature film]. Dir. Tobe Hooper. Vortex, USA, 1974. 83mins.

*This Morning* [television programme] Ed. Martin Frizell. Granada Television, ITV Studios, UK, 10.00, 24/09/2021, ITV. 150mins.

*Threads* [television film]. Wr. Barry Hines. Dir. Mick Jackson. BBC, Nine Network Australia, Western-World Television Inc., 21.30, 23/9/1984, BBC Two. 115mins.

*The Time Machine* [television play]. Prod. Robert Barr. BBC, UK, 20.30, 25/1/1949, BBC TV. 60mins.

*The Tomorrow People* [television series]. Cr. Roger Price. Thames Television, 30/4/1973 – 19/2/1979, ITV.

*Top of the Pops* [television series]. Cr. Johnnie Stewart. BBC, 1/1/1964 – 30/7/2006, BBC One, BBC Two.

'The Tractate Middoth', *A Ghost Story for Christmas* [television episode]. Dir. Mark Gatiss. BBC, 21.30, 25/12/2013, BBC Two. 35mins.

*The Tractate Middoth Q&A* [user-generated content, online]. Creat. BFI Events. 29/11/2013, 12mins 43secs. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MIKTDXWjioQ>

'The Treasure of Abbot Thomas', *A Ghost Story for Christmas* [television episode]. Dir. Lawrence Gordon Clark. BBC, 23.35, 23/12/1974, BBC One. 35mins.

'The Treasure of Abbot Thomas Introduction', *A Ghost Story for Christmas* [extra, DVD, disc 3]. Pres. Lawrence Gordon Clark. British Film Institute, UK, 2012. 10mins 39secs. [British Film Institute, B009XD7M2Y, 2012].

*The Tripods* [television series]. Dir. Graham Theakston, Christopher Barry and Bob Blagden. BBC, UK, 15/9/1984 – 23/10/1985, BBC One.

'The Twilight of the English Celts', *Chronicle* [television episode]. Pres. Dr Anne Ross. Prod. Roy Davies. BBC, 20.10, 27/10/1977, BBC Two. 50mins.

*Twin Peaks* [television series]. Cr. Mark Frost, David Lynch. Lynch/Frost Productions, Propaganda Films, Spelling Television et al., USA, 1990-1991, ABC (revival 21/5/2017 – 3/9/2017, Showtime).

## UVW

*Village of the Damned* [feature film]. Dir. Wolf Rilla. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, UK, USA, 1960. 78mins.

‘Vote for Froglet!’, *The Clangers* [television episode]. Cr. Oliver Postgate. Smallfilms, UK, 17.35, 10/10/1974, BBC One.

‘A Warning to the Curious’, *A Ghost Story for Christmas* [television episode]. Dir. Lawrence Gordon Clark. BBC, 23.05, 24/12/1972, BBC One. 50mins.

*Watch with Mother* [television series]. Cr. Freda Lingstrom, Maria Bird. BBC, UK, 21/4/1953 – 2/3/1973, BBC TV, BBC One.

*The Wednesday Play* [television series]. Cr. Sydney Newman. BBC, UK, 28/10/1964 – 27/5/1970, BBC One.

*When a Stranger Calls* [feature film]. Dir. Fred Walton. Melvin Simon Productions, USA, 1979. 97mins.

‘Whistle and I’ll Come To You’, *Omnibus* [television episode]. Dir. Jonathan Miller. BBC, 22.25, 7/5/1968, BBC One. 42mins.

*The Wicker Man* [feature film]. Dir. Robin Hardy. British Lion Films, UK, 1973. 88mins.

‘Wise Owl’, *Inside No. 9* [television episode]. Dir. Louise Hooper. BBC, 22.00, 1/6/2022, BBC Two. 30mins.

*The Witch* (stylised as The VVitch) [feature film]. Dir. Robert Eggers. Parts and Labor, RT Features, Rooks Nest Entertainment et al., USA, Canada, 2015. 93mins.

*The Witch’s Daughter* [television series]. Dir. David Maloney. BBC, UK, 4/10/1971 – 1/11/1971, BBC One.

*The Witches* [feature film]. Wr. Nigel Kneale. Dir. Cyril Frankel. Hammer Film Productions, Seven Arts Productions, UK, 1966. 91mins.

*The Witches and the Grinnygog* [television series]. Cr. Roy Russell. TVS, UK, 14/11/1983 – 19/12/1983, ITV.

*Witchfinder General* [feature film]. Dir. Michael Reeves. Tigon British Film Productions, American International Pictures, UK, USA, 1968. 86mins.

*Woodlands Dark and Days Bewitched: A History of Folk Horror* [documentary film]. Dir. Kier-La Janisse. Severin Films, USA, 2021. 193mins.

## XYZ

*The X-Files* [television series]. Cr. Chris Carter. Ten Thirteen Productions, 20th Century Fox Television, USA, 20/9/1993 – 19/5/2002 (original series), 24/1/2016 – 21/3/2018 (revival), Fox.

'The Year of the Sex Olympics', *Theatre 625* [television play]. Wr. Nigel Kneale. Dir. Michael Elliott. BBC, UK, 21.05, 29/7/1968, BBC Two. 105mins.

*Years and Years* [television series]. Cr. Russell T. Davies. Red Production Company, UK, 14/5/2019 – 18/6/2019, BBC One, HBO.

*You Must Listen* [radio play]. Wr. Nigel Kneale. Prod. Raymond Raikes. BBC, UK, 20.45, 16/9/1952, BBC Light Programme. 45mins.

'Z for Zachariah', *Play for Today* [television play]. Wr., Dir. Anthony Garner. BBC, UK, 21.35, 28/2/1984, BBC One. 58mins.



## 8.4 Glossary of terms

**Contemporary legend:** (also known as *urban legends*): legendary tales which are contemporary to their tellers (in any given time period), told as if believable or possible to an audience (such as having happened to a family member or 'friend of a friend').

**Folk horror:** a media subgenre in which the horror is not necessarily horrific and supernatural folklore, traditional custom and belief or contemporary legend are employed to unsettling ends.

**Folkloresque:** a version of folklore created in popular culture folklore which *seems like* folklore or legend but is not necessarily creepy or unsettling to an audience, as with *wyrd* media or *folk horror*.

**Hauntology/hauntological:** describes media texts evoking a sense of troubled nostalgic reverberation, suggesting a sense of something being disjointed in terms of time or place.

**Hypermodern ostension:** ostensive action reliant primarily upon technology (for example, the use of smartphones).

**Legend:** a story that spreads primarily through informal channels about a person, place, object or event that is believed to have existed or occurred in real life.

**Legend tripping:** visits to places associated with legends, such as haunted houses.

**Mass-mediated ostension:** the presentation (or acting out) of folklore within a media text.

**Ostension:** the presentation of (or action based on) folklore as opposed to representation.

**Proto-ostension:** a narrator telling a legendary tale in the first person, as if relating their own experience.

**Pseudo-ostension:** a hoax based on folklore or legend (such as hiding in a supposedly haunted location dressed as a ghost to scare visitors).

**Quasi-ostension:** misunderstanding or misinterpreting evidence (when the interpretation is mistakenly based on the observer's knowledge of folklore and legend).

**Urban legend:** see *contemporary legend*

**Wyrd:** that which is strange, mysterious or frightening; something that displays qualities of unsettling eeriness and horror.