

Monstrous Megaliths: Ancient Stones in Folk Horror Film and Television – Showing, Telling and Making On-Screen Folklore

RODGERS, Diane A <<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3117-4308>>

Available from Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:

<https://shura.shu.ac.uk/35793/>

This document is the Published Version [VoR]

Citation:

RODGERS, Diane A (2025). Monstrous Megaliths: Ancient Stones in Folk Horror Film and Television – Showing, Telling and Making On-Screen Folklore. *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 22 (3), 364-386. [Article]

Copyright and re-use policy

See <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/information.html>

Monstrous Megaliths: Ancient Stones in Folk Horror Film and Television – Showing, Telling and Making On-Screen Folklore

Diane A. Rodgers, Sheffield Hallam University

Abstract:

Ancient stones and their surrounding landscape provide a source of enduring fascination for audiences, writers and directors. Piers Haggard, a director who has worked on folk horror, remarked, ‘stone circles are wonderfully interesting, because they *work* on your imagination about . . . sacrifice, moonrise, sunrise, festivals’, and Ben Wheatley notes that, living in the UK, ‘you can walk ten miles from wherever you are and find an ancient monument’. This article combines screen analysis with the folklore studies notion of mass-mediated ostension to examine how folklore and contemporary legends about British megalithic monuments, stone circles and monoliths have been presented on screen in film and television. I propose my own application of types of ostension here to describe the showing, telling and making of folklore on-screen and how these function in *wyrd* texts.

This article considers what ideas about such monuments persist in popular culture, how these notions are communicated and what cultural implications we might draw from this. Examining examples across a number of decades, including *Children of the Stones* (BBC1, 1977), *Quatermass* (Thames Television, 1979), *In the Earth* (2021) and *Enys Men* (2022), this article observes the legends surrounding the stones presented on screen, alongside notions from historical folklore and how these are woven into narratives. I reflect upon shifts in the use of legend types over recent decades in the representation of ancient stones on screen and how other aesthetic influences may be relevant to their interpretation, perhaps creating new meanings and legend cycles in their own right.

Keywords: folk horror; folklore; ostension; *wyrd*; Nigel Kneale; *Quatermass*; *Children of the Stones*; Stonehenge; Avebury; stone circles

Journal of British Cinema and Television 22.3 (2025): 364–386

DOI: 10.3366/jbctv.2025.0777

© Diane A. Rodgers

www.eupublishing.com/jbctv

Introduction

Cult classic mockumentary *This is Spinal Tap* (1984) features the following lyrics in a parodic prog rock song called ‘Stonehenge!’:

’Tis a magic place,
Where the moon doth rise with a dragon’s face.
Stonehenge! Where the virgins lie,
And the prayers of devils fill the midnight sky.

Additional lyrics conflate druids, demons, banshees, the Pipes of Pan, notions about ‘living rock’, sacrifice and fairies with the stone circle. Though the song’s performance is made ridiculous (due to a mistake in scale of the props), within the diegesis of the film the band’s intention was clearly to create a sense of awe and mystery which suggests a broad sense of popular fascination with mystical notions about ancient stones.

The startling breadth of this fascination was made apparent when, as I was researching for this article, a Tweet regarding my database of film and television titles that prominently feature stone circles and megaliths received an astounding response. My post resulted in 191,000 impressions and over 7,600 direct interactions with the post, which illustrates that standing stones and their on-screen depiction continue to be an enduring source of fascination for audiences. For example, *The Guardian* reported how *A Year in A Field* (2023), a reflective documentary centred on a 4,000-year-old Cornish menhir, received global attention and in the UK was moved to ‘bigger screens, such has been the interest’ (Morris 2023). Piers Haggard, director of British classic folk horror *The Blood on Satan’s Claw* (1971) and Thames Television series *Quatermass* (1979), described stone circles as ‘history with an added mystery factor ... Stone circles are wonderfully interesting, because they *work* on your imagination about ... sacrifice, moonrise ... festivals ... how the fuck did they get those stones [there] ... that’s amazing!’.¹ Contemporary directors share this fascination: Ben Wheatley, speaking about *A Field in England* (2013), stated that ‘there was something in the landscape that plainly terrified me’. He spoke to me about feeling surrounded by history in the UK and that ‘you can walk ten miles from wherever you are and find an ancient monument ... where I live, we walk the dog round a Saxon hill fort’.²

Work by directors such as these evokes a tangible sense of ancient, perhaps sinister, history present in the physical landscape, and megalithic stones are often used to enhance such a feeling. There are innumerable examples of ancient stones in fictional on-screen drama spanning decades: I have catalogued almost 300 film and

television titles dating back to at least the 1940s. In many of these examples, stone circles, monoliths and megaliths are prominent within the narrative, from *Fiddlers Three* (1944) and *The Black Knight* (1954) to *Shadow of the Stone* (1987) and *In the Earth* (2021).

I and others argue elsewhere that folklore is an integral element of folk horror (Cowdell 2019; Rodgers 2019). My own approach to the examination of folk horror and the use of folklore on screen involves combining approaches from folklore studies and screen studies to highlight the relationship between folklore and popular culture. Part of the enduring appeal of stone circles is, no doubt, the abundance of folkloric tales and legend surrounding them, as well as the lack of definitive answers about many aspects of their existence. Even in the well-documented case of Stonehenge, scholars such as Ronald Hutton can employ only 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’ (1996: 5). Although most scholarly speculation about stone circles concerns their being ancient sites of worship, celebration and communal gathering, there is still plenty of mystery and conjecture in popular culture linking them to aliens or supernatural purposes. Perhaps, then, it is not surprising that standing stones and associated folklore appear regularly in popular media and, especially, folk horror.

Robert Wynne-Simmons, writer of *The Blood on Satan’s Claw*, argues that using ancient sites on-screen ‘actually gives you part of the story’: because such ancient sites already have their own associated stories, legends and folklore, simply putting this type of landscape on screen brings those stories with them, present as a kind of palimpsest to the fictional narrative.³ Standing stones can thus combine several ideas from folklore and contemporary legend in one visual image and, therefore, when featured as part of a narrative (even if merely as an element of the *mise-en-scène*), directly suggest a legendary context to audiences. If such narratives are effectively unsettling and plausible in their 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. ‘Wyrd’ in this

context describes that which is strange, mysterious or frightening; something that displays qualities of unsettling eeriness and horror.

Ostension: communicating folklore on-screen

When folklore is enacted or represented in film and television, it can be examined via the folklore studies concept of mass-mediated ostension. Developed by Mikel Koven (2007), this draws from folklorists Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi's notion of ostensive action (1983) which describes behaviour based on, or influenced by, folklore and legend which, in turn, can create or perpetuate folklore. Koven thus uses the phrase 'mass-mediated ostension' to describe the showing or acting out of folkloric narratives in the media to suggest that the narrative dramatisation of a legend, or the presentation of folklore within on-screen action, is a kind of ostension in itself. Therefore, I am interested in how folklore and contemporary legends about British megalithic monuments, stone circles and monoliths are presented in film and television (most commonly in folk horror) and what kinds of ideas about them persist in popular culture because of these representations.

Furthermore, I posit that it is often because of the *way* folklore is communicated in film and television that certain folkloric notions (such as stone circles being linked with extra-terrestrial activity) remain prevalent in popular consciousness. I propose here three types of mass-mediated ostension in the *showing*, *telling* and *making* of folklore on screen.

Firstly, film and television 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: 389). Such narratives thereby perpetuate the possibility of persuading an audience of the 'truth' in such legends if, in reference to Noel Williams (1982: 43), the legend is shown as if it were real.

Secondly, the diegesis may include expository text about, or characters verbally discussing, 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 used specifically to contextualise or frame the presented action. In a critique of the 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' (1990: 3). In the present context, this echoes my own conviction that it is less important precisely what motifs or elements of folklore are presented on screen than the way in which they are presented.

For example, the Doctor Who serial *The Stones of Blood* (BBC1, 1978), about sacrificial Druidic rituals at a stone circle whose purpose turns out to be the resurrection of the stones themselves, which are in fact Ogri: bloodthirsty alien life forms. The dialogue references specific legends such as the Cailleach (a goddess from Celtic mythology) and Tom Baker's Doctor notes that Druidic lore is historically unreliable, with only the 'odd mention in Julius Caesar, Tacitus', stating that he 'always thought that Druidism was founded by John Aubrey in the seventeenth century as a joke'. Filming was carried out on location at the Rollright Stones, a real stone circle in central England, about which there is a legend that it is impossible to count the stones. At the end of the serial, the Doctor's dialogue fuels this recurrent folkloric motif by noting that the number of stones in the circle has changed (due to the removal of three Ogri and the addition of an intergalactic criminal imprisoned in stone). Explicitly drawing upon such traditional folklore and actual historical sources allows the 'telling' to frame the more fantastical story elements within a plausible context whilst traditional folklore shapes the reception, perpetuation and evolution of folklore itself.

The teller is often also significant: the Doctor is an intelligent hero whom the audience is led to believe and trust. In the Play for Today *Robin Redbreast* (BBC1, 10 December 1970), when Mr Fisher (Bernard Hepton), a character in a comparable position of authority to Lord Summerisle in *The Wicker Man* (1973), explicitly discusses the famous folkloric text *The Golden Bough* (1890), he is presented as a character with wisdom and knowledge, speaking with the utmost sincerity. When a vicar (George Benson) discusses local folklore in the Ghost Story for Christmas *A Warning to the Curious* (BBC1, 24 December 1972), he is presented as a respectable scholar. When Margaret (Veronica Strong) in *Children of the Stones* explains the history and folklore of Milbury, it is in a quiet museum with a lesson-like atmosphere. In *Quatermass*, when researcher Claire Kapp (Barbara Kellerman) shares archaeological history and folklore about stone circles, she is regarded highly by the eponymous professor. 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 on only one or two occasions within

a film, episode or even a series, which makes them stand out not only from the perspective of folklore studies but also in terms of the text 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: 5).

Therefore, in combining folklore studies with screen studies, there is a strong case for distinguishing a folkloric telling from showing. Instances of telling are not merely notable as information conveyed to audience (whether in dialogue or on-screen text) 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 and because of the way in which elements like editing, sound and camera present the telling to the audience. 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’ (fundamental to the communication of legend).

Thirdly, in the creation of television programmes themselves, when specific ways of retelling these stories or legends are repeated or paid homage to (even to the extent of employing the same sources, writing styles and techniques), this then becomes another form of ostension (making or recreating). For example, the use of vintage broadcast cameras in the creation of the Inside No. 9 episode *The Devil of Christmas* (BBC One, 27 December 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. Another Inside No. 9 episode, *Mr King* (BBC One, 27 April 2022), recreated the narrative of *The Wicker Man*, transposed to a school setting, whilst Mark Jenkin’s experimental folk horror film *Enys Men* (2022) is set in 1973 (the year of *The Wicker Man*’s release) and shot on grainy 16mm film stock in order to give it a certain period authenticity.

Here I clearly separate questions of belief and ostension. I do not suggest that creators of *wyrd* texts literally believe in the folkloric tropes they are representing, but that those working in television, in their sincere presentation of supernatural folklore, were striving to include a sense of authenticity in their work. This is similar to Michael Dylan Foster’s description of how ‘folkloresque’ texts function: as something which seems like folklore or legend in that they can

‘give the impression to the consumer . . . that they derive directly from existing folkloric traditions’ (Foster and Tolbert 2016: 5), whether this is literally the case or not.

That which is 1976 folkloresque, however, is not necessarily ‘wyrd’ in the sense of being creepy or unsettling to an audience. I propose that mass-mediated communication of supernatural folklore (for example, how standing stones are presented on screen) can become an overt form of ostensive behaviour whereby contemporary directors deliberately and consciously evoke themes from earlier examples of wyrd film and television. Through re-enacting a style of presentation in their folkloric tales, directors working in folk horror aim to achieve the specific goal of unsettling contemporary audiences. As Bruce 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: 389).

In the showing, telling and making of legendary narratives in media texts, each of these levels of mass-mediated ostension can conjointly 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 film and television texts are important to examine as social documents which reproduce, perpetuate and even create examples of supernatural folklore and contemporary legend in their own right.

Here I use this methodological framework to examine how megalithic stones have been presented on-screen (and in what folkloric contexts), across folk-horror examples from the 1970s until the 2020s including *Quatermass*, *Children of the Stones*, *In the Earth* and *Enys Men*. In the Doctor Who serial *The Stones of Blood* and series such *Escape into Night* (ATV, 1972) as well as *Children of the Stones* and *Enys Men*, ancient stones themselves are presented as physically monstrous: animate and threatening (as opposed to being used by people in order to conduct rituals). A common feature of writing about the horror genre is the observation that ‘monsters’ enjoy revivals at times when they best act as a metaphor for social issues of the day: alien invasion in US science fiction of the 1950s representing fear of communism, and a revived trend for high-profile vampire movies in the 1980s and

1990s reflecting fears around attitudes to sexuality and the AIDS crisis. Classic 1970s folk horror and post-2000 folk-horror revival representations of spooky stones (often linked to alien threat, warnings from the ancient past or guardians of the earth) thus suggest fears linking to environmental, climate and energy crises and the existential threat we pose to our own species and planet. Many harrowing examples of *wyrd* film and television from the 1970s and into the 1980s reflected preoccupations with these themes, as demonstrated, for example, in the adaptation of Peter Dickinson's *The Changes* (BBC1, 1975), a series depicting British civilisation crumbling as the population is overcome by a strange madness which makes people want to destroy all technology. Teenage protagonist Nicky (Vicky Williams) discovers that an ancient subterranean monolith is responsible for this madness, triggered by the negative impact of humans upon the natural environment: 'Our machines, pollution, we've put it out of balance'. It is interesting that the 'ancient' in folk horror (from abstract notions of the 'old gods' to the physical presence of ancient stone) is often used to discuss 'the now': the sense of the past resurfacing to haunt the present is a recurrent theme in folk horror. In *The Changes*, this clash of ancient and modern is used to underline the extent to which humans have lost their way and forgotten their natural heritage, with dangerous and palpable impact upon contemporary society. The fact that it takes teenager Nicky, an untainted child, to restore balance to civilisation, suggests a need for a kind of societal rebirth.

Dawn Keetley makes the case for folk horror 'as an important source of ecological crisis fiction' (2021: 14). This can be extended to my conception of '*wyrd*' film and television (Rodgers 2019) which identifies commonly unsettling qualities across gothic, folk horror, folkloresque and hauntological narratives. For example, *Threads* (BBC1, 23 December 1984) and the Play for Today *Z for Zachariah* (BBC1, 28 February 1984), illustrated gloomy landscapes of post-apocalyptic doom, whilst *The Living Dead at Manchester Morgue* (1974) reflected pesticide-induced disaster and series like *The Changes* and *Noah's Castle* (Southern Television, 1979) presented similarly unsettling post-apocalyptic landscapes of bleak urban decay.

Quatermass

Nigel Kneale's 1979 *Quatermass* presents a similarly crumbling civilisation with violent gang warfare in the streets, the elderly driven underground and rolling power cuts. In 2020s Britain, following shocks such as Covid, Brexit and soaring gas prices certain news

media broadly warned of a looming winter of discontent, making opportunistic comparisons with the much-mythologised winter of 1978–9. However, the concerns of activist groups like Extinction Rebellion and Just Stop Oil would not be out of place in *Quatermass*.

Professor Quatermass was a fictional heroic scientist who appeared in various television, film and radio productions written by Nigel Kneale across many decades. In this version, the now elderly Quatermass (John Mills) searches for his missing granddaughter who has become a member of a quasi-religious youth cult, the Planet People, who believe they will be beamed to salvation in space. They are, however, being conditioned to gather at stone circles to be ‘harvested’ as a food source by a mysterious extra-terrestrial energy: the human race is facing extinction. Absolutely integral to the series’ narrative is a fictional stone circle called Ringstone Round.

Kneale’s original intention was to use Stonehenge (in name as well as location) as a real-world Neolithic monument and to weave a blend of recorded history and folklore about stone circles throughout his fictional plot. Stonehenge has unique status as the best-known prehistoric monument in Europe, thanks to a wealth of mystical theories accumulating since the Middle Ages about its construction and purpose. In the twelfth century, Geoffrey of Monmouth 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). In the 1960s, Erich von Däniken suggested that the site functioned as an alien craft landing pad, which fuelled a revival of theories about ancient alien astronauts in new-age culture, reflected in Kneale’s Planet People cult. Stonehenge was not in fact used for *Quatermass* due to permission being refused to film there but this inspired Kneale to invent his own megalithic circle which he wanted to give a resonant name; thus was born Ringstone Round.

An important element of ostensive ‘telling’ directly woven throughout the dialogue of *Quatermass* is the use of Kneale’s invented traditional nursery rhyme ‘Huffity Puffity, Ringstone Round’. Quatermass’s suggestion that the rhyme is an old one remembered across generations, with its accompanying actions, puts it plausibly into context with well-known real examples like ‘Round and Round the Garden’ and ‘Ring-a-ring o’ Roses’, whilst also hinting at underlying supernatural folklore directly connected to the history and purpose of stone circles. This notion of psychological memory and folkloresque meaning in nursery rhymes is filled out in Kneale’s novelisation of *Quatermass* (1979), in which Clare Kapp cites examples including the

origins of the 'Grand Old Duke of York who had ten thousand men' and the claim that 'Ring-a-ring o' Roses' is about the plague.

There is evidence that some believe 'Huffity Puffity' to have older origins as a 'real' nursery rhyme or piece of folklore: one website reports the belief that the rhyme 'comes from the English West Country' and was 'sung by children as they played among megalithic stone circles like Stonehenge' (Yannucci 2021). The rhyme is even discussed by folklorist Jacqueline Simpson in conversation with 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. Both Pratchett and Simpson do, however, acknowledge that the rhyme has been made up (only Pratchett is aware of the accompanying tune) but neither mentions a source (Brown and Sutton 2010: 2). Pratchett adds an extra invented line to his recollection and other variants continue to emerge on social media such as 'Higgledy Piggledy Ringstone Round',⁴ Simpson noting that the rhyme's development of variations 'is of course the mark of true folklore' (ibid.). 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 to function as mass-mediated ostension. 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, therefore, an example 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.

Kneale describes the form of nursery rhyme acting 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' (1979: 60–1). This again recalls the clash of the ancient and the modern: a very old warning communicated by the purity of youth, unheeded or forgotten by the rest of society. This dichotomy of old and new is also evident in *Quatermass* in the juxtaposition of standing stone mythology and ancient aliens (as discussed below) with *Quatermass*'s solution of exploding a nuclear bomb, an essentially modern human scientific development, at a stone circle in order to neutralise the alien force. The naive flower-power optimism of the hippy culture (that was

in part responsible for the revival of interest in folklore, the occult and new-age thinking from the late 1960s onward) here embodied by Kneale's Planet People is something that both Kneale and Quatermass challenge. Quatermass pits modern science directly against not only the alien threat but also the mystical ideas of the Planet People in an aim to save these people (and indeed the entire world) from the foolishness of their beliefs. Indeed, Kneale, much of whose work is extremely critical of youth cultures, bleakly mused of *Quatermass* that 'I'm not sure if the young people were worth saving' (quoted in Wells 1999: 55).

Petrifying stones

Another stone circle created for *Quatermass* is 'the stumpy men', recalling petrification legends associated with stone circles which are commonly reflected in their name (see Bord and Bord 1976; Grinsell 1976). The Merry Maidens in Cornwall, the Nine Maidens in Devon and the Nine Ladies stone circle in Derbyshire all have attached to them traditional beliefs about the monuments depicting women turned to stone as a punishment for dancing on the Sabbath.⁵ Folklore about the Rollright Stones, featured in Doctor Who, tells that a witch turned a king, his knights and army to stone whilst the witch herself became an elder tree which, if cut, 'the spell is broken [and] the Stones will come back to life'.⁶ The 'motif of *petrification* as punishment for wrongdoing' and the notion of standing stones containing or trapping people in some way, are common in supernatural folklore (Grinsell 1976: 66, italics in original). Similarly, the fictional Seven Witches stone circle in *Psychomania* (1973) is said to be made of petrified witches who 'broke a bargain with superior powers and had to be punished'. In the film, the site is used as a ritualistic meeting place by the Living Dead youth motorcycle gang who themselves are turned to stone within the circle, frozen in time with their ancient counterparts, suffering the same fate for playing with black magic. Again, the on-screen clash of the ancient and the modern channels contemporary anxieties about youth culture through older fears about standing stones and witchcraft.

This type of petrification is tightly woven into the plot of *Children of the Stones*, often described as the 'scariest children's tv series ever made' (Hinman 2020) and is frequently cited in discussions about folk horror. The story follows Professor Adam Brake (Gareth Thomas) and his son Matthew (Peter Dinklage) visiting the fictional village of Milbury to conduct scientific research on neolithic stones, filmed within the real stone circle at Avebury, the largest prehistoric stone circle in the

world according to UNESCO. Adam explains to Matthew that ‘by the time Stonehenge was completed, people had been worshipping’ at Milbury for over a thousand years. Matthew also notes that the village is encircled by the stones (‘scary!’), as is true of the real Avebury (whose real history is woven in the series’ narrative, plot and dialogue) where the stones remain ‘intertwined with the fabric of the village’ (Parnell 2019: 408).

One reason why *Children of the Stones* continues to be popularly cited as an example of a frightening children’s television series is 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. Accompanied only by the sound of wind, this establishes a strange and threatening atmosphere from the outset, continuing over menacing low-angle shots of more standing stones. The series title also appears in a font design close to a form of uncial script, long associated with ancient Celtic texts and Druidism (Bonwick 1894: 307).⁷ Since the late 1960s occult revival, this type of Celtic styling is often used as shorthand to suggest connotations of myth, legend and ‘the concept of a magical and distant past’ (Falconieri 2019: 142). The sinister village squire Rafael Hendrick (Iain Cuthbertson) provides a Druidic link in the narrative, overseeing Milbury’s village celebrations, remarking upon ‘old festivals’ and noting that ‘rituals are important, traditions are very strong in this part of the country’. After Hendrick is revealed to be using the power of the stones to control the villagers, Adam describes him as ‘some sort of priest’ and as making a ‘sacrifice to his God’. Indeed, at the series’ conclusion, we see Hendrick transformed by an otherworldly power into ancient Druidic form with long white hair, beard and robes, connecting his temple at the centre of the stones’ power with the notion of pagan gods. Therefore, from the programme’s opening, the featured ‘showing’ of the stones themselves, along with how framing, editing, sound and titles are employed, create a sense of threat that is suggestive of being rooted in ancient beliefs about the distant past.

Other techniques link the presentation of the stones directly with traditions of the horror genre. Breathy, ghostly male voices emerge on the soundtrack during this sequence, accompanied by steady but discordant tones held by higher female voices. 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, ‘howling, moaning, groaning, [and] sighing voices’ blended into ‘an eerie melody’ (Richardson

1995: 43), recur during haunting moments across the entire series, maintaining frequent aural reference to the stones. At the end of the credit sequence, a sudden, rapid montage of stones echoes the discordant nature of the soundtrack. The camera, hand-held and unstable, frantically lunges toward a stone, then quickly cuts between movements around different stones, giving the impression of the stones themselves moving, framed so as to pick out details that resemble faces. The cacophony of voices, howling and chanting on the soundtrack, builds to a wailing crescendo, with the images of stones featuring large gaping holes resembling open screaming mouths, suggesting these as the source of these sounds. These techniques have far more in common with horror than anything more usually 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 rushing forwards (usually towards victims), low to the ground, whilst the soundtrack features guttural vocal groans, establishing both visual and aural parallels with parts of *Children of the Stones*.

The use of voices here underlines the notion of the landscape and stones as characters but also creates confusion between the animate and inanimate, a defining feature of the uncanny and the type of unsettling anxiety that it can cause. Director Peter Graham Scott consciously wanted a sound for voices without words to suggest early 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' (quoted in Richardson 1995: 44).

This uncanny notion of petrification of life is echoed from the moment of the Brakes's arrival in *Children of the Stones*. As Adam drives himself and Matthew to the edge of Milbury's stone circle, Matthew turns his gaze from the megaliths 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. 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, who turns out to be their housekeeper during their stay, posed like the glimpsed stone. Several other events connect villagers with the stones—for example, when, using information from the museum, 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.

In line with Adam Scovell's notion of landscape 'as a location acquiring the status of a character' in folk horror (2017: 17), the

topography and stone circles at Avebury dominate *Children of the Stones* thematically, visually and narratively. The opening sequence of every episode includes aerial shots of Avebury showing the village framed by the stone circle, emphasising that it is 'literally encircled by the past' (Parnell 2019: 411): almost every outdoor location shot throughout the series features the stones.

Just as Nigel Kneale draws comparison with Stonehenge for Ringstone Round in *Quatermass*, the use of real place and history in *Children of the Stones* lends a plausible context to the narrative. Milbury even 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 shows details which largely replicate Avebury's own history, including the type, weight and number of original stones. An element of real Avebury history woven into the narrative 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 that of a travelling barber surgeon or tailor, helping Avebury villagers to dig out the underside of the stone when it fell, crushing and entombing him beneath it. It has since been suggested that the man had been buried beneath a stone rather than crushed by it 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, it has been suggested, was to clear land for farming, but a preferred theory now is 'that the stones were broken up because the Church disapproved of their Pagan associations' (BBC News 1999). Margaret, the museum curator, as ostensive telling, recounts the story of the barber surgeon, whose skeleton resides in a display case: 'He was helping to bury one of the stones when it crushed him to death' and '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 a painting of the village that Matthew owns 'shows people turning to stone' and his friend Sandra (Katharine Levy) asks: 'You mean all those stones out there might be people?'.

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 authoritative, confirms is 'a reasonable assumption'. By extension, young viewers are thus directly challenged to entertain possibilities presented by the narrative.

Ancient aliens

Several elements in *Children of the Stones* imply that events there are related to extra-terrestrial involvement and the notion of ancient aliens. For example, Matthew's strange painting depicts a beam of light apparently coming from space to the centre of the circle: his research reveals that the stones are 'dead upright' and 'pointing in one precise direction'. Adam discovers there is a giant stone dish buried beneath the village centre which he theorises was designed to receive signals 'from a source directly above', perhaps from 'some obscure power up there'. Additionally, an apparent 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, 1978, 1993 and 2007), whose plot reveals that extra-terrestrial life forms are replicating humans without emotions or individuality. When Adam questions Hendrick about the mysterious disappearance of a body, he 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, and presenting these alongside one another equally, gives the more fantastical elements a degree of plausibility by their proximity to those that are grounded in fact or commonly held views. In contrast, however, to the notion of an alien force using stone circles' energy to take something from humans (as in *Quatermass*), in *Children of the Stones*, the beam of light originates from the stone dish under the village: 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 aligned with the stars, channels a beam into space that not only cleanses villagers of fear and anxiety, but also removes their individuality and personality.

In *Quatermass*, Ringstone Round and other megalithic sites are ‘markers’ of alien visitation to which the Planet People are being drawn. The inexplicable lure of stone circles is suggestive of Julian Jaynes’s 1976 concept of the ‘bicameral mind’ which proposed that a non-conscious or more ‘instinctive’ mentality existed in early humans before consciousness originated as learned behaviour around 2000 BCE (which dates closely to the origins of the Stonehenge and Avebury stone circles). Jaynes suggests that this state of pre-consciousness in humans was characterised by people experiencing voices or auditory hallucinations as god-like commands which would guide their actions. He offers comparison with the voices heard by Joan of Arc or William Blake and suggests this as explanation for ‘the origin of gods’ (1986: 10). This notion links explicitly to both Matthew’s ‘visions’ in *Children of the Stones* and Kneale’s Planet People: it is likely that contemporaneous writers were familiar with Jaynes’s ideas which gained popular attention on their original publication.

Ringstone Round thus performs a similar narrative function to what Mark Fisher calls ‘xenolithic artefacts’ which he describes as ‘autonomous, sentient inorganic demons in specific (hauntological) landscapes’ (2012: 21). This in turn echoes Dawn Keetley’s discussion of ‘stone-centric’ folk horror texts which dislodge the more dominant anthropocentric form of folk horror. In such stone-centric examples, ‘humans are thoroughly dislodged from the centre of both plot and ecology by the disconcerting power of the non-human’: it is the ‘things’ in nature, the stones themselves which exert power and agency (2021: 23). This narrative device is apparent in other examples of notable folk horror from the study period such as the Ghost Story for Christmas episodes *Whistle and I’ll Come to You* (BBC1, 7 May 1968) and *A Warning to the Curious*, which use an old whistle and a crown respectively as xenolithic artefacts that summon ancient forces. The suggestion that objects themselves can be a threat, ‘operating as fatalistic engines, drawing characters into deadly compulsions’, can equally be applied to megalithic structures in *Quatermass*, luring the Planet People to annihilation (Fisher 2012: 83).

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 the episodes of the series. It becomes apparent in episode two that genocidal events like that which occurred at Ringstone Round have also happened around the world. Quatermass bases his assessment on evidence that the mysterious extra-terrestrial force seems to be calling on the youngest and therefore ‘most vulnerable of human

organisms' to gather in huge crowds at megalithic sites, connecting these gatherings with the potential historical purpose of stone circles. Another character, Annie (Margaret Tyzack), asks about a stone circle in Brazil called '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 stone circles in Brazil, but not with this name) and the name in fact translates from Portuguese as 'the bogeymen'.⁸ The notion of standing stones having been accidentally dropped by giants (or the Devil) is common in English folklore (Simpson and Roud 2000: 342), echoed by Annie's suggestions which combine a sense of warning and fairytale, and the idea that there may be literal meanings hidden behind rhymes, stories and legends.

Contemporary folk horror

In contemporary examples of British folk horror, similarly sinister notions about ancient stones persist. In Ben Wheatley's *In the Earth* (2021), scientists venture into a forest and encounter strange occurrences linked to an ancient force within a large monolith. The film's opening is dominated by the stone, multiple references in the dialogue suggest that people are 'drawn to it from all over' and, even though there is no circle of stones, characters express the sense of being contained: 'Everything seems to just keep us here'. The way the stone is depicted along with the narrative's legend-telling draws from similar themes to the examples above: one character worships the stone, to the extent of offering sacrifice. He tells a story of a 'practising necromancer and alchemist' who was trapped, 'inducted into the stone ... into the ancient matter of the forest', which again refers to examples of traditional folklore that tell how evil-doers were turned to stone for disrespecting the Sabbath, or for witchcraft (Simpson and Roud 2000: 342).

The suggestion that the stone has sentience ('if it wants to talk, we have to listen') and ancient wisdom to impart, frames its function as a watcher or a guardian over the Earth. This raises overtly ecological themes, with the stone looked to for advice about 'how we can all live together without destroying each other'. A similar notion of ancient stones having not only this sense of sentient guardianship but also a kind of self-preservation is evident in the episode *Stones* (BBC2, 27 October 1976) of the BBC's supernatural anthology series *The Mind Beyond*. This story sees government ministers trying to relocate Stonehenge in an effort to boost tourism, triggering a kind of preternatural defence system. The megaliths themselves seem

telepathically to eliminate anyone who might tamper with them: 'Harvey Fenton-Jones, the newly appointed Minister of Tourism, had been killed that morning in a car accident. No other vehicle had been involved . . . Amidst the wreckage was found a model for the projected re-erection of Stonehenge in Hyde Park' (Shubik 1976: 100). These examples recall Keetley's discussion of 'larger geologic and planetary forces as drivers of sacrifice' (2021: 31). Keetley notes that *Children of the Stones* was filmed during the summer of 1976, a time when global warming was an unfamiliar term, yet heatwave records that summer remained unbroken for decades. Thus this period of 'stone-centric' folk horror which, as Keetley states, saw a 'dawning awareness of a dangerously warming Earth' (ibid.: 31), is comparable to *In the Earth's* production taking place during the first heightened global wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Though Covid is not specifically mentioned, masks and PPE feature prominently in the film's *mise-en-scène*, adding a visual warning of external environmental elements.

Mark Jenkin's *Enys Men*, set on an uninhabited Cornish island where a conservation volunteer makes daily observations of rare local plant life, has similar ecological themes. The film has been described as *The Shining* (1980) on a desert island (Fear 2023) but is perhaps more comparable with Robert Eggers's *The Lighthouse* (2019), as the narrative follows the central character's loss on her grip of reality in an abstract way. The landscape in *Enys Men* is dominated by one ancient stone, prominent throughout the film. There are connotations that the stone acts as a way-marker or memorial for a site of a tragic mining accident, using folklore as a political metaphor for the displacement and exploitation of local working people. The stone is a physical reminder of the 'figures that keep our local industries going', upon whom profits rely, and of 'how easily they are forgotten' (Rogers 2022). The stone is presented distinctly as a character watching over the island: it is a forbidding, looming presence on screen and over the course of the film the audience becomes familiar with its physical location on the island in proximity to the volunteer's house. This makes one moment in the film truly shocking when the stone suddenly, briefly, appears to be standing at the doorway of the volunteer's home; it is jarring to see it so wildly out of place. This uncannily blurs the animate and inanimate and moves away from the notion of a trapped soul or consciousness, as in some of the examples above. The idea of the stone itself having its own agency has roots in traditional folklore which records multiple stories of 'prehistoric megaliths in England which walk, turn round, or go to a river to drink, when they hear the

clock strike twelve ... [they] return to their places' (Simpson and Roud 2000: 342).

Enys Men is Cornish for Stone Island, and the film uses the real Boswens Menhir (a site which, according to local myth, animals fear approaching). Traditional beliefs about stones in Cornwall combine the idea of stones being alive and of having a kind of conscious authority: the stone's apparent movement in the film to block the path physically suggests a cautionary warning. T. G. F. Dexter, writing on the *Origins of Stone Worship in Cornwall*, states 'long ago, stones were alive. They spoke and delivered judgments, distinguishing the rightful king from the usurper, the honest man from the thief' (1932). Used in the context of *Enys Men*, the notion communicated is less about stones petrifying and trapping people than acting as a force of nature sitting in judgement as guardians of the past.

Monstrous monoliths: conclusions

Beyond folklore and legends about stones, an obvious aesthetic influence on the use of megaliths as monolithic presences on-screen is *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1969). Though explained in more detail in the Arthur C. Clarke's novels, the monoliths presented in the film *2001* (and its sequel *2010: The Year We Make Contact* [1984]) are relatively enigmatic. When they are discovered in unexpected locations, we are led to wonder whether they act as way-markers of human progression, a sign from aliens or warnings to proceed no further. In late 2020 a series of real monoliths appeared around the world initially in Utah and then across the globe including Dortmund, Germany and Sheffield, UK. Although the monoliths were most probably the work of situationists, the nature of their appearance, particularly in the heightened Covid era, captured people's imaginations. They appeared worldwide in mainstream news media, including under prominent headlines such as 'Artist or Aliens?' in NBC News (Kesslen 2020) and in stories making direct comparisons with *2001*. As with ancient megaliths and stone circles, speculation was driven not only by traditional folklore but also by concepts derived from film in television, such as those discussed above, prompting popular imagination to try to derive meaning from them, either as warnings from an otherworldly, supernatural source or as ecological, existential commentaries on the human condition.

Images from a 1990s US Department of Energy project exploring proposed designs for warning people away from radioactive waste storage facilities (titled, for example, 'Spike Field' and 'Forbidding Blocks'), and these look not unlike standing stones. The literal purpose

of such structures is to keep people in the distant future away from nuclear waste sites (Chapman 2022) and there are debates about how this might best be communicated to people in, say, 10,000 years time. Hauntingly, this recalls Quatermass's description of the Ringstone Round nursery rhyme acting as this type of message as a warning from the past: 'Like nuclear waste set harmlessly in blocks of glass' (Kneale 1979: 60–1). Quatermass further hypothesises 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'.

Fascination with megaliths, stone circles and ancient sites has clearly not waned over the past decades in film, television and the popular imagination in general. A recent collection of short stories about stone circles published by the British Library acknowledges that 'these enigmatic monuments continue to captivate and enthrall, and that magic and the supernatural cling to these places still' (Soar 2023: 11): many of the same folkloric tropes continue to surface in narratives time and time again. Folk-horror film and television examples from both the 1970s and the 2020s equally reflect heightened periods of environmental concern, parallelling real-world ecological disaster: in 2022, UK temperature records were broken for the first time since the extreme heatwave of 1976. Across examples of folk horror in particular, megalithic stones on-screen continue to be used in an unsettling way: whether as emanating a monstrous threat in themselves, as a warning from the earth beneath or as indicating an alien peril. The way they are shown on screen, as looming or encircling presences, is most often accompanied by a legendary telling about the stones, thus enhancing the sense of threat, whether from supernatural folklore or sinister invented history.

The making of these narratives shows folk horror writers and directors choosing to persist in moving far beyond notions about ancient stones as spiritual sites of worship and, instead, resolutely presenting ancient sites as places where bad or dangerous things can happen. Perhaps there is a suggestion that we should be keeping away from megalithic sites rather than visiting them on weekends or holidays or, at the very least, that people should treat the environment with far greater care and respect than humankind has done to date. It is hard not to wonder whether humans in 10,000 years (presuming we are still here) will be legend tripping nuclear warning sites, wondering what our ancient tribes of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries were trying to communicate or worship. Perhaps, as Nigel

Kneale's Quatermass wonders, ancient stones were indeed a way of our ancestors trying to warn us against ourselves.

For the purpose of open access, the author has applied a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) licence to any Author Accepted Manuscript version arising from this submission. © 2024. This work by Diane A. Rodgers is openly licensed via CC BY 4.0.

Notes

1. Personal communication with the author, 17 June 2017.
2. Personal communication with the author, 25 May 2018.
3. Personal communication with the author, 22 May 2017.
4. H. Bowen (@huwbowen), 'Oh drat, now Higgeldy Piggeldy Ringstone Round is looping in my head!', *Twitter*, 19 March 2021. Available at <<https://twitter.com/huwbowen/status/1372949789764157444>> (accessed 19 March 2021).
5. English Heritage, 'Nine Ladies Stone Circle'. Available at <<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/nine-ladies-stone-circle/history/>> (accessed 17 November 2021).
6. The Rollright Trust, 'Folklore and legends'. Available at: <<https://www.rollrightstones.co.uk/articles/story/folklore-and-legends>> (accessed 13 January 2022).
7. 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.
8. According to both BabelFish (<<https://www.babelfish.com>>) and Google Translate (<<https://translate.google.co.uk>>).

References

- BBC News (1999), 'UK museum skeleton comes out of the cupboard', *BBC News*, 19 October. Available at <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/479190.stm>> (accessed 25 January 2024).
- Bonwick, J. (1894), *Irish Druids and Old Irish Religions*, London: Griffith, Farran & Co.
- Bord, J. and Bord, C. (1976), *The Secret Country: An Interpretation of the Folklore of Ancient Sites in Britain*, New York: Walker and Company.
- Brown, K. and Sutton, J. (2010), 'Sir Terry Pratchett in conversation with Dr. Jacqueline Simpson', Hilton Birmingham Metropole, 26 August. Available at <<https://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/terrypratchett/documents/transcripts/terry-pratchett-podcast-part-one.pdf>> (accessed 7 March 2021).
- Chapman, K. (2022), 'Speaking to the future', *Distillations Magazine*, 19 April. Available at <<https://www.sciencehistory.org/stories/magazine/speaking-to-the-future/>> (accessed 2 November 2023).
- Cowdell, P. (2019), 'Practicing witchcraft myself during the filming: folk horror, folklore, and the folkloresque', *Western Folklore*, 78: 4, pp. 295–326.
- Dégh, L. and Vázsonyi, A. (1983), 'Does the word "dog" bite? Ostensive action: a means of legend-telling', *Journal of Folklore Research*, 20: 10, pp. 5–34.
- Dexter, T. G. F. (1932), *The Sacred Stone—Origins of Stone Worship in Cornwall*, Perranporth: New Knowledge Press. Available at <https://www.cantab.net/users/michael.behrend/repubs/dexter_ss/pages/index.html> (accessed 24 February 2025).
- Falconieri, T. (2019), *The Militant Middle Ages*, Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV.

- Fear, D. (2023). 'Enys Men: imagine *The Shining* on a deserted island', *Rolling Stone*, 30 March. Available at: <<https://www.rollingstone.com/tv-movies/tv-movie-reviews/enys-men-review-horror-cult-classic-the-shining-mark-jenkin-1234704730/>> (accessed 2 November 2023).
- Fisher, M. (2012), 'What is hauntology?', *Film Quarterly*, 66: 1, pp. 16–24.
- Foster, M. D. and Tolbert, J. A. (eds), (2016), *The Folkloresque: Reframing Culture in a Popular World*, Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.
- Grinsell, L. (1976), *The Folklore of Prehistoric Sites in Britain*, Newton Abbot: David & Charles.
- Hinman, N. (2020). 'Scary kids' TV series *Children of the Stones* remade as podcast', *Wiltshire Times*, 1 November. Available at: <<https://www.wiltshiretimes.co.uk/news/18838423.scary-kids-tv-series-children-stones-remade-podcast>> (accessed 2 November 2023).
- Hutton, R. (1996), *The Stations of the Sun*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jackson, B. (1989), 'A film note', *Journal of American Folklore*, 102, pp. 388–9.
- Jaynes, J. (1976), *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Jaynes, J. (1986), 'Consciousness and the voices of the mind', *Canadian Psychology*, 27: 2, pp. 128–48.
- Keetley, D. (2021), 'Dislodged anthropocentrism and ecological critique in folk horror: from *Children of the Corn* and *The Wicker Man* to *In the Tall Grass* and *Children of the Stones*', *Gothic Nature*, 2, pp. 13–36.
- Kesslen, B. (2020), 'Artist or aliens? Mystery surrounds Utah monolith's appearance and disappearance', *NBC News*, 30 November. Available at: <<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/artist-or-aliens-mystery-surrounds-utah-monolith-s-appearance-disappearance-n1249424>> (accessed 2 November 2023).
- Kneale, N. (1979), *Quatermass*, novelisation, London: Arrow Books Ltd.
- Koven, M. J. (2007), 'Most haunted and the convergence of traditional belief and popular television', *Folklore*, 118, pp. 183–202.
- Morris, S. (2023). 'The rock's the star: meditative film about a Cornish stone goes global', *The Guardian*, 22 September. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/sep/22/the-rocks-the-star-meditative-film-about-a-cornish-stone-goes-global>> (accessed 1 November 2023).
- Parnell, E. (2019), *Ghostland*, Glasgow: William Collins.
- Perkins, V. F. (1990), 'Must we say what they mean? Film criticism and interpretation', *Movie*, 34/5, pp. 1–6.
- Richardson, D. (1995), 'Peter Graham Scott: classic director', *TV Zone*, 63, February, p. 43.
- Rodgers, D. A. (2019), 'Something weird this way comes: folklore and British television', *Folklore*, 130, pp. 133–52.
- Rogers, J. (2022). "'I like films that take you into the woods – then leave you there' – the beguiling folk-horror of Mark Jenkin', *The Guardian*, 27 December. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/dec/27/mark-jenkin-interview-enys-men>> (accessed 3 June 2024).
- Scovell, A. (2017), *Folk Horror: Hours Dreadful and Things Strange*, Leighton Buzzard: Auteur Publishing.
- Shubik, I. (ed.) (1976), *The Mind Beyond*, London: Penguin.
- Simpson, J. and Roud, S. (2000), *The Dictionary of English Folklore*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Soar, K. (ed.) (2023), *Circles of Stone*, London: British Library.

- Tolstoy, N. (2016), *The Mysteries of Stonehenge: Myth and Ritual and the Sacred Centre*, Stroud: Amberley Publishing.
- Wells, P. (1999), 'Apocalypse then! The ultimate monstrosity and strange things on the coast ... An interview with Nigel Kneale', in I. Q. Hunter (ed.), *British Science Fiction Cinema*, Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 48–56.
- Williams, N. (1982), 'Problems in defining contemporary legend', in G. Bennett and P. Smith (eds) (1990), *Abstracts and Bibliographies from the Sheffield Conferences on Contemporary Legend 1982–1986*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, p. 43.
- Yannucci, L. (2021), 'Huffity Puffity, Ringstone Round: songs & rhymes from England', *Mama Lisa's World*. Available at: <<https://www.mamalisa.com/?t=es&p=802>> (accessed 14 January 2022).

Diane A. Rodgers is Senior Lecturer in the Creative Industries Institute at Sheffield Hallam University, co-founder of the Centre for Contemporary Legend and President-elect of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research. She has published articles in *Folklore*, chapters in recent collections on folk horror from Routledge and Manchester University Press, co-edited *The Legacy of The X-Files* (2023) and is co-founder of the film festival FFS: Females/Films/Screens championing the work of women in cinema. She is currently writing a monograph about 1970s British folk horror television and hauntology for the BFI.