

Wolves in the Wolds: Late Capitalism, the English Eerie, and the Weird Case of ‘Old Stinker’ the Hull Werewolf

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Abstract

British folklore reveals a history of werewolf sightings in places where there were once wolves. I draw on theories of the weird and the eerie and on the turbulence of England in the era of late capitalism in my analysis of the representation of werewolves in contemporary urban myths. Werewolves are deliberately excluded from Mark Fisher’s notion of the ‘weird’, because they behave in a manner that is entirely expected of them. I contradict this by interrogating the werewolf as spectre wolf, bringing it within the realms of the weird. In examining the Hull Werewolf, I put forward the suggestion that he represents not only our belief in him as a wolf phantom, but our collective guilt at the extinction of an entire indigenous species of wolf. Viewed in this way, he can reawaken the memory of what humans did to wolves, and redeem the Big Bad Wolf of our childhood nightmares.

Keywords: werewolf, wolves, eerie, folklore, myth, Wolds, cultural memory

This article on Old Stinker, the Hull werewolf, departs from the earlier opinions of those who accounted for the disappearance of the werewolf in folklore as owing to the extinction of the wolf. I argue instead that British folklore is unique in representing a history of werewolf sightings in places in Britain where there were once wolves. I draw on theories of the English eerie and on the turbulence of England in the era of late capitalism in my analysis of the representation of werewolves in contemporary urban myths. My account of the werewolf departs from psychoanalytic studies which tie it to repression or the ‘beast within’: works by

Adam Douglas (1992), Brian Frost (2003) and Brent A. Stypczynski (2013), for example.¹ I reject the related Freudian term ‘uncanny’ (1919), or *unheimlich* (unhomely), with its unsatisfying notion of ‘castration anxiety’ as the cause of the disquiet.² I posit a theory that is rooted in landscape and absence in the present instead, taking inspiration from Mark Fisher’s *The Weird and the Eerie* (2016). Fisher argues that the eerie is found at the edges of genres; as a mode of film and fiction, of ‘perception, and ‘being’.³ ‘A sense of the eerie seldom clings to enclosed and inhabited domestic spaces; we find the eerie more readily in landscapes partially emptied of the human’(11). I extend this absence in the landscape to include vanished species such as the wolf. Fisher defines the ‘weird’ in contrast to the eerie as a particular kind of unsettlement, something that should not exist in the here and now, and involving a ‘sense of wrongness’ (13); however, he withholds this from the werewolf arguing instead that ‘the very generic recognisability of creatures such as vampires and werewolves disqualifies them from provoking any sensation of weirdness’ (15). Werewolves are deliberately excluded from Fisher’s notion of the ‘weird’ because they conform to particular lore, thus behaving in a manner that is entirely expected of them. My focus on the werewolf as spectre wolf contradicts this and brings the creature within the realms of the weird and the eerie. The eerie coincides with the era of late capitalism and a phase of severe environmental damage. In England, this has not taken the form of sudden catastrophe, but rather a slow grinding away of species (such as the native wolf). The result is a landscape constituted more actively by what is missing than by what is present, a spectred, rather than ‘a scepter’d isle’. This is the climate in which the spectre of the Hull werewolf has re-emerged (rising from the ashes of the flesh and blood wolf).

In 1865, Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924) argued that ‘English folklore is singularly barren of werewolf stories, the reason being that wolves had been extirpated from England under the Anglo Saxon Kings, and therefore ceased to be objects of dread to the people’.⁴ The

Dictionary of English Folklore similarly informs us that ‘there are no werewolf tales in English folklore, presumably because wolves have been extinct here for centuries’.⁵ These longstanding assumptions make the present-day sightings of the English werewolf known as ‘Old Stinker’ all the more unusual and prescient. What is most pertinent about this latest folk panic is that ‘Old Stinker’ is thought to inhabit a landscape which accommodated some of the last wolves in England.

The Victorian novelist Emily Gerard (1849-1905) explained the Romanian belief in the werewolf by equating it with a continuing fear of the wolf: ‘it is safe to prophesy that as long as the flesh-and-blood wolf continues to haunt the Transylvanian forests, so long will his spectre brother survive in the minds of the people’.⁶ The emergence of the English werewolf (‘Old Stinker’) in Hull in the present has challenged these assumptions about the spectre werewolf’s relationship to the ‘flesh-and-blood wolf’, as I will show. First, it is necessary to look briefly at the history of the wolf in relation to the werewolf.

In literature, Ishtar transformed her former lover, a shepherd, into a wolf in the Akkadian epic *Gilgamesh* (c. 2000 BC).⁷ Wolf fables begin with Aesop’s ‘The Boy Who Cried Wolf’ in 620-520 BC.⁸ Examples of the werewolf in antiquity through to the Renaissance have been well documented by Leslie A. Sconduto (2008).⁹ 1589, the year that saw the rise of werewolf trials appears to have been the werewolf’s *annus mirabilis*.¹⁰ Peter Stubb was executed as a werewolf in Cologne in Germany in that year. Werewolf trials in France include those of Roulet (1598), the ‘Werewolf of Châlons’ (1598) and the Gandillon family Jean Grenier, (1603). All of those put to death for being werewolves at this time were murderers with a taste for human flesh. Sabine Baring-Gould tells the story of Grenier, a werewolf boy who supposedly fell on and devoured several children.¹¹ The boy was said to have appeared to his victims in wolf form.¹²

Belief in sorcery is the key to understanding such accounts, according to Baring-

Gould. His explanation of werewolfism endured into the early twentieth century. Montagu Summers (1880-1948) posited a shared history of witches and werewolves, shown through his use of demonologies in *The Werewolf in Lore and Legend* (1933). We are reminded that James I's *Daemonologie* (1597), used widely in witchcraft trials, acknowledges the existence of 'Men-Woolfes'.¹³ British witchcraft trials focussed on the witch's metamorphosis into hare or cat, paralleling the preoccupation with shapeshifting in European werewolf trials.

Summers perpetuates this association between witches and werewolves in the twentieth century by documenting the historical sources and the authorities on shapeshifting witches in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland and by appending material on 'witch ointments' to his study of the werewolf.

Ointments or salves, and enchanted girdles are evidence of magical explanations for voluntary human to wolf transformations in Sabine Baring-Gould's and Montague Summers's accounts ('were-wolves are certain sorcerers, who hauing annoynted their bodyes, with ointment [...] and putting on a certaine girdel [...] seeme as wolues').¹⁴ This notion of sorcery co-exists with a belief in lycanthropy as a punishment, a judgement of the gods, a curse; a sign of bestiality, or at worst, of cannibalism.¹⁵ Sabine Baring-Gould defines lycanthropy in 1865 in both magical and cannibalistic terms before turning to the notion of insanity: 'Truly it consists in a form of madness, such as may be found in most asylums' (p. 14). Summers further medicalises the condition, defining lycanthropy in 1933 as 'that mania or disease when the patient imagines himself to be a wolf' (p. 2).

Lycanthropy, then, supposedly existed in the mind; it had undergone a dissociation from magic, coming to represent the 'beast within' or everything animal that we have repressed in terms of our human nature. Freud was instrumental in rejecting sorcery, though he remained interested in early demonologies.¹⁶ He went on to write about the latent symbolism of wolves, associating them with a 'primal scene' of psychosexual development

in his case history of the 'Wolf-Man' in 1914.¹⁷

This history of werewolfism is important because I want to depart from these well-worn theories. I will argue instead that the history of werewolfism is inextricably bound up with humankind's treatment of wolves. The popular pamphlet, *A Discourse Declaring the Damnable Life and Death of One Stubbe Peeter, A Most Wicked Sorcerer, who in the Likeness of a Wolf Committed Many Murders* (1590), for example, corresponds with the extinction of the wolf in England in the 1500s.¹⁸ Peter Stubbe (variously spelled Stump, Stumpf, or Stube), the werewolf of Bedburg, whose story is retold here, is a seminal case.¹⁹ He was executed as a werewolf in Cologne in 1589. Following Stubbe's execution a likeness of a wolf was framed in wood and set above a pole which contained his severed head. The pole was placed through the wheel on which he had been tortured as a permanent monument to both the killing of the werewolf and the destruction of the wolf.²⁰ English monarchs had a large part to play in the eradication of the British wolf. King Edgar, who reigned from 959 to 975, was the first monarch to set about cleansing and ridding the country of these ravenous creatures. It was thought that within four years of his campaigns no wolves would remain in Wales and England.²¹ Dead wolves were coveted as trophies in Anglo-Saxon Britain and Edgar demanded that his Welsh subjects pay him 300 wolf skins a year; some criminals were encouraged to pay their debts in wolf tongues.²² English wolves were almost totally eradicated under the reign of Henry VII (1457–1509). Wolves held out in Ireland until the 1700s (though they were extinct in Scotland by the late 1600s).²³ British and Irish wolves were exterminated much earlier than wolves across Europe, the complete extinction of which did not occur until the 1800s.

There are a number of sympathetic accounts of the last UK wolf by Mrs Jerome Mercier, Michael Morpurgo, Jim Crumley, and others but otherwise there has been little sympathy around the persecution, slaughter and extinction of British wolves due to the way

these animals are perceived.²⁴ Garry Marvin, for example, documents what he calls ‘lupophobia’ in a history of humankind’s hatred and fear of the wolf.²⁵ In eighteenth-century Britain, Oliver Goldsmith, translating the work of the natural historian Buffon, wrote that wolves ‘are in every way offensive, a savage aspect, a frightful howl, an insupportable odour, a perverse disposition, fierce habits [...] hateful while living and useless when dead.’²⁶ Even in the twentieth century, wolves had few defenders and continued to be much maligned. Montague Summers, for example, is notably devoid of sympathy for the wolf, arguing for the creature’s

Unbridled cruelty, bestial ferocity, and ravening hunger. His strength, his cunning, his speed were regarded as abnormal, almost eerie qualities, he had something of the demon, of hell. His is the symbol of Night and Winter, of Stress and Storm, the dark and mysterious Harbinger of Death.²⁷

Despite this demonising of the wolf, Summers reminds us that ‘of all British animals that have become extinct within historic memory the wolf was the last to disappear’.²⁸ This is significant because whilst very few accounts of werewolfism in England and Scotland exist, I have uncovered instead a history of literature on hauntings or spectres in landscapes where there were once wolves. In 1912, Elliott O’Donnell described wolf phantoms in remote parts of Britain.²⁹ The first was in North Wales, where a Miss St Denis witnessed ‘a nude grey thing, not unlike a man in body, but with a wolf’s head’ in lonely farmland in Merionethshire.³⁰ She subsequently learned that ‘in one of the quarries, close to the place where the phantasm had vanished, some curious bones, partly human and partly animal had been unearthed’.³¹ O’Donnell concludes that what she had seen ‘might very well have been the earth-bound spirit of a werewolf’.³² Similar incidents occur in Cumbria and in the Valley

of the Doones in Exmoor, where the tall grey figure of a man with a wolf's head is believed by the observer to be 'the spirit of one of those werwolves [sic] referred to by Gervase of Tilbury and Richard Verstagen – werewolves who were still earthbound owing to their incorrigible ferocity'.³³ Elsewhere, in the Hebrides, a human skeleton with a wolf's head is unearthed in a tarn by a geologist. This causes the monster to appear in spirit form at the window later in the evening, before the bones are reinterred and the werewolf laid to rest.³⁴ Summers recounts a similar story, only this time it is an Oxford professor in Merionethshire who discovers the ancient skull of a large dog in a lake and takes it to his abode, whereupon the hideous face of a wolf with the eyes of a man appears to his wife at the window. The creature is eventually chased back to the lake and the skull is returned to the water.³⁵ Summers argues that this is evidence of 'the phantom werewolf [...] whose power for evil and ability to materialise in some degree were seemingly energised by the recovery of the skull'.³⁶ Such watery hauntings, absences and phantoms, are features of the English eerie that are notably repeated in descriptions of 'Old Stinker', the Hull werewolf, to which I now turn.

In 2015, newspapers reported that the Hull Werewolf 'Old Stinker' or 'The Beast of Barmston Drain' was terrorising women with his human face and very, very, bad breath (hence his name).³⁷ The two most recent sightings were reported in the popular press in 2016 ('Women Says She Ran from Hull Werewolf Old Stinker', *Hull Daily Mail*, 29 August 2016) and 'Woman Met Eight foot Werewolf Old Stinker With Human Face and Extremely Bad Breath', *Metro*, 31 August 2016).³⁸ There has been something of a folk panic in Yorkshire following the sightings of this eight-foot werewolf living in the Wolds.³⁹ A myth has grown up that 'Old Stinker' inhabits a landscape that is thought to have seen some of the last UK wolves; newspapers have since reported a full-scale werewolf hunt. 'Old Stinker' has apparently eaten a German Shepherd dog and has been seen leaping over fences like a modern day Spring-Heeled Jack.⁴⁰

This very English werewolf can be found in descriptions of Yorkshire's Weird Wolds (existing as local or particularised knowledge). Travelogues or tourist accounts describe the Yorkshire Wolds as 'a relatively small crescent of rolling chalky countryside, arcing from glorious Filey with its miles of golden beaches in the north to bustling Hessle, home of the world-famous Humber Bridge, in the south'.⁴¹ The Yorkshire Wolds Way is a seventy-nine-mile National Trail and extends through the East Riding of Yorkshire into Ryedale. Featuring the widest of wide open spaces; the Yorkshire Wolds is apparently 'the perfect place for anyone looking to escape the rat race' (or a dog-eat-dog world, perhaps!).⁴²

The Wold's many myths and legends are unmatched. According to Charles Christian, they include 'vampires, green-skinned fairy folk, headless ghosts, screaming skulls [. . .] a black skeleton, a Parkin-eating dragon, sea serpents, turkeys galore, England's oldest buildings, enchanted wells and of course werewolves'.⁴³ Christian is the author of *A Travel Guide to Yorkshire's Weird Wolds* (2016). He has identified what he terms as 'The Wold-Newton Triangle', an uncanny region where most of these beasts and sightings can be located.⁴⁴ Speaking of the landscape that inspired his work, he informs us that:

Part of the country was once infested with wolves [...]. [U]p until the eighteenth century there was still a wolf bounty for anyone killing them. It was known for the wolves to dig up the corpses from graveyards. From that sprung the idea that they were supernatural beings, who took the form of werewolves. There is the legend of a werewolf called Old Stinker – a great hairy beast with red eyes, who was so called because he had bad breath [...]. When I was a child, I remember someone saying they would not drive along the road from Flixton to Bridlington after dark because of those fears.⁴⁵

What Christian presents as personal memoir is, of course, a deliberate attempt to gothicise the landscape in a way that appeals to tourists with gothic sensibilities. It has an affinity with what Emma McEvoy defines as ‘gothic tourism’; such ‘edutainment’ ‘relies on a community of taste [...]. [I]t plays to those already in the know, those who are possessed of knowledge – of a specific body of texts, their conventions, narratives and tropes’.⁴⁶ The knowledge or body of texts that inform Christian’s writing make up what I term, following the definitions of Mark Fisher, Robert Macfarlane and others, the English eerie. Christian succeeds in drawing attention to the dark side of the landscape, ‘a place where Kings built hospices to protect weary travellers from wolves’ (2), and reinventing the werewolf myth. The wolves, we are told, ‘were regarded with particular loathing because they scavenged in graveyards for freshly buried corpses’.⁴⁷ And this is not all: ‘their habit of suddenly descending in large packs on areas where they’d previously been unknown, gave rise to the belief they were not ordinary wolves but human beings who adopted a wolf-like shape by night’.⁴⁸

The key to understanding this myth is a place called Spital Ho, which Christian claims is associated with an ancient charter dating back to AD 939. This declared that a hostel be built to protect wayfarers from the Wold’s ravenous wolves. The wolf shelter was supposedly restored in 1447 so that people would continue to be safe from being devoured by wolves.⁴⁹ The Yorkshire Wolds were seemingly infested with wolves, which would come down from the hills to attack not only flocks of sheep but the shepherds who protected them. In fact, Christian argues that ‘the Yorkshire Wolds were one of the last strongholds for wolves and there were reports that some parishes were still offering wolf bounties up to the eighteenth century’ (14).

‘Old Stinker’ is then associated with one of the last strongholds of British wolves through the landscape he inhabits; he is originally found near Flixton and not in Hull:

One of the few historical exceptions to the No Werewolves Please, We're British rule is to be found haunting the roads around Flixton. This creature, sometimes called 'Old Stinker' because of the terrible stench of its breath, is described as having large red eyes that glow in the dark that are sometimes mistaken by passing motorists for being the rear lights of another car.⁵⁰

'Old Stinker' last made an appearance in the 1960s and is linked to 'an ancient wolf-like creature 'walking upright and having a particularly long and powerful tail, almost as long as its body, that it used to knock its victims to the floor'.⁵¹ After this, sightings of the English werewolf disappear only for him to reappear again in the twenty-first century. Hull is only thirty-five miles from Flixton, and the myth of Old Stinker was subsequently transferred to Hull when Christian informed journalists of the story following newspaper coverage of the 'Beast of Barnston Drain'. This eventually led to a full-scale werewolf hunt on 21 May 2016 when Christian, his animal behaviourist wife, Jane, the journalist Mark Branagan, and the local historian Mike Covell went in search of 'Old Stinker'. Their journey, at the time of the full moon, led them to Saint Mary's Graveyard in the Sculcoats area of Hull and on to Barnmston Drain, the scene of the recent sightings. The crew did not come face to face with 'Old Stinker' but they did find animal tracks and encounter what they thought was a large dog (Alsatian or Husky). Christian began to link the werewolf to Black Shuck, a ghostly dog that is thought to haunt Eastern England.⁵² The myth of Old Stinker endured, however, and has continued to enjoy attention in the British media.

The story of 'Old Stinker', the spectre werewolf in the weird wolds, is a powerful example of English eerie. In a phrase reminiscent of T. S. Eliot's 'Whispers of Immortality' (1918, 1919), Robert Macfarlane has defined English eerie as 'the skull beneath the skin of

the countryside'.⁵³ This is more than supernaturalism – it is a cultural and political response to contemporary crises and fears. Writers such as M. R. James (1862–1936) exemplify the English eerie because of their understanding of landscape as constituted by uncanny forces, part-buried memories and contested knowledge.⁵⁴ Landscape in James is never there to offer picturesque consolations. Rather it is a realm that troubles. He repeatedly invokes the pastoral only to traumatise it. James's influence has rarely been more strongly with us than now. For as Christian's text shows, there is, across what might broadly be called 'landscape culture', a fascination with these Jamesian ideas of unsettlement and displacement:

When I was a teenager growing up in nearby Scarborough, the local legend was Old Stinker returned at dawn to sleep in a tomb in the churchyard of St John the Evangelist in the neighbouring village of Folkton. (Fans of supernatural fiction will recognise that the M. R. James ghost story 'An Episode of Cathedral History' has a similar theme. And, coincidentally, the first short story I ever sold – to the now long extinct Argosy magazine – was based around the legend of Old Stinker).⁵⁵

Mark Fisher and Robert Macfarlane have defined the English eerie, which, for me, such descriptions of Old Stinker exemplify.⁵⁶ The eerie is located, as I have said, like the story of Old Stinker himself, within a spectred rather than a 'sceptred isle'. For landscape theorists writing on the English countryside:

Such concerns are not new, but there is a distinctive intensity and variety to their contemporary address. This eerie counter-culture – this occulture – is drawing in experimental film-makers, folk singers, folklorists, academics,

avant-garde antiquaries, landscape historians, utopians, collectives, mainstreamers and Arch-Druids alike, in a magnificent mash-up of hauntology, geological sentience and political activism. In music, literature, art, film and photography, as well as in new and hybrid forms and media, the English eerie is on the rise. A loose but substantial body of work is emerging that explores the English landscape in terms of its anomalies rather than its continuities, that is sceptical of comfortable notions of ‘dwelling and ‘belonging’, and of the packaging of the past as ‘heritage’.⁵⁷

The contemporary eerie feeds off its earlier counterparts. There is a renewed interest in director Robin Hardy’s 2013 print of *The Wicker Man* (1973) for instance, and the *Witchfinder General* (dir. by Michael Reeves, 1968), films whose landscapes reveal an underlying sense of psychotic breakdown and brutal violence rather than invoking an English idyll. The eerie has grown to incorporate a huge variety of genres (silent Scandinavian cinema; public information films and the music of Ghost Box records; the writings of M. R. James, Susan Cooper, and Arthur Machen).⁵⁸ Adam Scovell defines this genre in relation to (mostly British) landscape as ‘the evil under the soil, the terror in the backwoods of a forgotten lane, and the ghosts that haunt stones and patches of dark, lonely water; a sub-genre that is growing with newer examples summoned almost yearly’.⁵⁹

There is an element of ‘folk horror’ here too, a term popularised by Mark Gatiss in 2010 to refer to films which ‘shared a common obsession with the British landscape, its folklore and superstitions’.⁶⁰ This has since been expanded by Adam Scovell in 2017 to define ‘a work that uses folklore, either aesthetically or thematically, to imbue itself with a sense of the arcane, for eerie, uncanny or horrific purposes’.⁶¹ Also influential is the 2014 reissue of Alfred Watkins’s cult book of landscape mysticism, *The Old Straight*

Track (1925).⁶² It is this work which popularised the idea of ‘ley lines’, a supposed alignment of many places of historical and geographical interest, such as ancient monuments, megaliths, ridges, and so on, which mark very old trackways, often believed to be used for ceremonial or mystical purposes. The central thesis is discredited and eccentric but it still has the ability to re-enchant the landscape for writers such as Christian.⁶³ It would be easy to dismiss such writing as an excess of dark mysticism or an unnecessary eruption of gothic tourism. But engaging with the eerie emphatically doesn’t mean believing in ghosts or spectres. What is under way, across a broad spectrum of culture, is an attempt to account for the turbulence of England in the era of late capitalism.

The supernatural and paranormal have always been a means of figuring powers that cannot otherwise find visible expression. Contemporary anxieties and dissents are here being reassembled and re-presented as hauntings, shadows or phantoms – a nod to Marx, perhaps, who used the image of spectrality in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848).⁶⁴ What is clear is that we are certainly very far from nature writing, and we have entered into a mutated cultural terrain that includes the weird and the punk. Among the shared landmarks of this terrain are ruins, fields, pits, drains, fringes, relics, buried objects, hilltops, demons, and deep pasts. In much of this work, suppressed forces (capital, violence, state power) pulse and flicker beneath the ground and within the air or water, waiting to erupt or to condense.

Elliot O’Donnell’s accounts of werewolf hauntings described above feature strikingly similar landscapes ‘full of seams and fissures’ and gloomy slate quarries ‘half full of foul water’.⁶⁵ ‘Old Stinker’ is famously associated with the ill-smelling Barnston Drain.⁶⁶ This drain runs through derelict factory and industrial sites, as well as along the edge of two graveyards. It also has a macabre reputation because of supposed accidental drownings in the heavily polluted water, and as the site of murders and suicides (though this is unproven).⁶⁷ This werewolf is firmly situated within the English eerie and as such represents suppressed

forces in an era of late capitalism. Taken together in all its variety, this movement suggests what the writer and archaeologist Eddie Procter recently called a ‘new landscape aesthetic’ and there are increasing number of writers, artists and film-makers who are reinvesting the landscape with esoteric and mythic imagery which I think articulates pressing contemporary concerns.⁶⁸ So what are the sources of this unsettlement? Clearly, the recent rise of the eerie coincides with the era of late capitalism and a phase of severe environmental damage. This is the climate in which the spectre of the Hull werewolf has re-emerged (rising from the ashes of the flesh and blood wolf).

New sightings of the Hull werewolf began to appear in 2015. The reappearance of this very English werewolf coincided with new debates about the re-wilding of the wolf in the UK, the myth of the last wolf, and the possibility of re-wilding large species in Britain, including wolves and lynx.⁶⁹ Research groups within the academy had also begun to openly question what would happen if wolves returned to our forests.⁷⁰ Interestingly, the reintroduction of wolves has since been seen by many as a symbolic process of atonement for the sins of the destruction of wild environments and the eradication of species due to human wrongdoing.⁷¹ This acknowledgement of guilt is linked to the rise of Old Stinker, to which I again turn.

I began by stating that in the 1880s British traveller Emily Gerard accounted for the Romanian belief in werewolves by equating it with fear of the wolf. The emergence of the Hull werewolf ‘Old Stinker’ has reopened debates about the werewolf’s relationship to the ‘flesh and blood wolf’, inhabiting as he does a landscape which saw some of the last wolves in England. Local historians, such as Charles Christian and Mike Covell, claim that ‘Old Stinker’ was first reported in the eighteenth century and is not a recent phenomenon.⁷² However, the reappearance of Old Stinker in Hull in the present could not be more significant or serendipitous, given that 2015 marked our Company of Wolves conference and saw our

collaboration with the UK Wolf Trust. He represents not our belief in him as a supernatural shapeshifter, but our collective guilt at the extinction of an entire indigenous species of wolf. Far from dismissing the myth, my instincts are to embrace it and see it as a manifestation of our cultural memory around wolves. There exists a tension between what is recorded by historians and what subsists within a culture's collective memory. The collective memory is supposedly stored in the literary-cultural.⁷³ I have argued then that the violence of the English countryside, the English eerie, the era of late capitalism, and our cultural memory around what humans did to wolves have combined to create the myth of Old Stinker. And to quote Kathryn Hughes, speaking of late capitalism and alluding in *The Guardian* to an increased interest in werewolves, in response to our symposia, 'in our dog-eat-dog world, it's time for werewolves'.⁷⁴

Contrary to the assertions of earlier writers such as Gerard, the 'Old Stinker' story tells us that belief in werewolves lives on beyond the actual lives of the wolves that were thought to inspire them. Rather than being dismissed as a rather fishy tale, the 'Old Stinker' myth can allow us to lament the last wolves to run free in English forests. As a werewolf he is far from being a curse; in fact, he is a gift: he can reawaken the memory of what humans did to wolves, initiate re-wilding debates, and redeem the big bad wolf that filled our childhood nightmares, reminding us that it is often humans, not wolves or the supernatural, that we should fear.

Notes

1 The psychoanalytical approach has prevailed and is still prevalent in contemporary critical works on the werewolf, though some studies now approach it with a sense of irony. See Brent A. Stypczynski, 'Its all in your head', *The Modern Literary Werewolf* (Jefferson, NC:

McFarland, 2013), pp. 17-37; Chantal Bourgault du Coudray, ‘I used to be a werewolf but I am alright nowoooo’, *The Curse of the Werewolf: Fantasy Horror and the Beast Within* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 65-90. Adam Douglas’s 1992 study is primarily a history of this approach, as the title suggests: *The Beast Within: A History of the Werewolf* (London: Chapman, 1992). Brian J. Frost has anthologised ‘beast within’ stories in his *Essential Guide to Werewolf Literature* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), pp. 144-87. For a summary of medical explanations of the werewolf myth, see Matt Beresford, *The White Devil: The Werewolf in European Culture* (London: Reaktion, 2003), pp. 165-94.

2 Sigmund Freud, ‘The Uncanny’ [1919], trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003).

3 Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie* (London: Repeater Books, 2016), p. 9. All subsequent quotations are from this edition. Page numbers are given in brackets in the text.

4 Sabine Baring-Gould, *The Book of Werewolves* [1865] (Dublin: Nonsuch, 2007), p. 77. All subsequent quotations are from this edition. Page numbers are given in brackets in the text.

5 Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud, *A Dictionary of English Folklore* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 386.

6 Emily Gerard, *The Land Beyond the Forest: Facts, Figures and Fancies from Transylvania*, 2 vols (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1888; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), I, p. 324.

Emily Gerard went with her husband, an officer in the Austrian army, to Transylvania for two years in 1883. In the years following, she wrote a full-length account of her travels there (published in 1888), together with several articles which Bram Stoker drew on when researching his novel *Dracula*. Chapter 25 of volume I of Gerard’s book is entitled ‘The Roumanians: Death and Burial – Vampires and Werewolves’ and is an account of the widespread belief in werewolves in amongst the people she encountered in the villages of

Transylvania. For a summary of her life and works, see ‘Emily Gerard’, *Orlando: Women’s Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present*

http://orlando.cambridge.org/public/svPeople?person_id=geraem [accessed 12 July 2018].

Kaja Franck has documented Gerard’s influence on the literary werewolf, particularly in relation to Bram Stoker’s work. See ‘Dracula: The Wolf in Vampire’s Clothing’, in ‘The Development of the Literary Werewolf: Language, Subjectivity and Animal/Human boundaries’, PhD thesis, University of Hertfordshire, 2016, pp. 38-78.

7 ‘You struck him, turned him into a wolf’ (*Gilgamesh*, trans. John Gardener, John Maier and Richard Henshaw (New York: Vintage, 1985), vv. 61).

8 Such key texts and facts are widely known within werewolf scholarship though the early dates vary and are only approximate. Adam Douglas and Garry Marvin are amongst those who have published chronologies or timelines of wolves, werewolves and wolf children. See for example Adam Douglas’s ‘A Werewolf Chronology’, in *The Beast Within*, pp. 264-67, and Garry Marvin’s ‘Timeline of the Wolf’, *Wolf* (London: Reaktion Press, 2012), pp. 182-83. Kaja Franck has also compiled an extensive table of werewolves in ‘The Development of the Literary Werewolf’, pp. 315-58.

9 Leslie A. Sconduto, *Metamorphosis of the Werewolf: A Literary Study from Antiquity Through the Renaissance* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008).

10. These trials are listed by Douglas in his ‘Werewolf Chronology’, p. 266. The seminal study of werewolfism in the period of these trials is Sconduto, *Metamorphosis of the Werewolf* (2008). Trial records, historical accounts and sightings are given in Charlotte F. Otten (ed.), *A Lycanthropy Reader: Werewolves in Western Culture* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986), pp. 49-91. She gives in full Sabine Baring Gould’s account of the trial of Jean Grenier (62-68), and the original trial transcript of Peter Stubb in 1590 (69-76).

Baring-Gould also documents the trial of Gilles de Retz earlier in the 1440s for the bloody murder of hundreds of children, detailing the charges and his sentence and execution (*Werewolves*, pp. 132-63). More recently, Garry Marvin has commented on the relationship between wolf attacks and the trial of werewolves, *Wolf*, pp. 53-60.

11 See ‘Jean Grenier’, in Baring-Gould, pp. 67-77. Baring-Gould relates that Grenier was not executed, due to his perceived neglect and imbecility. He was imprisoned in a monastery at Bordeaux and instructed in Christianity until the time of his death aged of twenty (p. 75).

12 Baring-Gould, *Werewolves*, p. 2.

13 The entry for ‘Men-Woolfes’ in *Daemonologie*, is anthologised by Charlotte F. Otten in *Lycanthropy Reader*, pp. 127-29. Leslie Sconduto makes this relationship explicit through her chapter on the church’s response to the werewolf, and the Renaissance werewolf (*Metamorphosis of the Werewolf*, pp. 15-26, 127-80). Montagu Summers’s focus on demonologies in his exploration of the werewolf points to a shared history for witches and werewolves. He claims, for example, that British Witchcraft trials detail metamorphosis into hares or cats (*The Werewolf in Lore and Legend* (1933; rpt. New York: Dover, 2003), p. 195. All subsequent quotations are from this edition. Page numbers are given in brackets in the text. There is a relationship to a preoccupation with shapeshifting in werewolf trials. His book on the werewolf contains detailed accounts of shapeshifting witches (191-204) and the historical sources and authorities on them in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland (193). He also appends material on ‘witch ointments’ to the book (279-81). This can be seen to further cement the relationship between witches and werewolves in the popular imagination.

14 Richard Verstagen, *A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence* (1605), cited in Summers, p. 3.

15. Baring-Gould, p. 14; Summers, p. 2.

16 He is reputed to have read extensively on western witch trials and to be an avid reader of Johann Weyer whose *De praestigiis daemonum* (1563) was reprinted in Paris in 1885 (see Douglas, *The Beast Within*, p. 169).

17 Sergei Pankejeff (1886-1979), known as the ‘Wolf-Man’, was the subject of one of Freud’s most famous case histories. The case was published as ‘The History of An Infantile Neurosis’ in 1918. See *The Complete Psychological Works Of Sigmund Freud*, Vol 17 (London: Vintage, 2001), pp. 22-48. For a brief discussion of the case see ‘Freud, the Wolf-Man and the Werewolves’, in Carlo Ginzburg, *Myths, Emblems* (London: Hutchinson, 1990), pp. 145-55. I recently commented on the wolf paintings of the famous Wolf-Man on display in the Wellcome Institute: ‘Wolves in the Asylum at the Wellcome’, *Open Graves, Open Minds*, 17 September 2016, <http://www.opengravesopenminds.com/exhibitions/wolves-in-the-asylum-at-the-wellcome/>.

18 ‘A Discourse’, pp. 69-76.

19 Charlotte F. Otten gives in full the original trial transcript of Peter Stubbe in English, translated from the Dutch in 1590 and supposedly based on eye witness accounts by Tyse Artyne, William Brewar, Adolf Staedt, and George Bores. See ‘A Discourse Declaring the Damnable Life and Death of One Stubbe Peeter’, in *A Lycanthropy Reader*, pp. 69-76.

20 See ‘A Discourse’, p. 76.

21 Edgar’s boast to rid the land of wolves is immortalised in poetry and plays from the period which are well documented in Montagu Summers, *The Werewolf*, p 181.

22 Garry Marvin, *Wolf*, p. 82. Summers is very detailed in his account of the extermination of British wolves in his chapter ‘England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland’ (*The Werewolf*, pp. 178-216). For a classic contemporary study of how wolves have figured in human cultures, see Barry Lopez, *Of Wolves and Men* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1978).

23 These dates are well documented by Garry Marvin and others. There is not a complete consensus on this but the dates roughly correspond in most accounts. I am using Garry Marvin's 'Timeline of the Wolf' (*Wolf*, pp. 182-83) for my evidence here.

24 See Mrs Jerome Mercier, *The Last Wolf* (Grange Over Sands: H. T. Mason, 1906); Michael Morpurgo, *The Last Wolf* (London: Doubleday, 2002); Jim Crumley, *The Last Wolf* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2010); Adam Weymouth, 'Was this the Last Wild Wolf in Britain?', *Guardian*, 21 July 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/science/animal-magic/2014/jul/21/last-wolf> [accessed October 3rd, 2015].

25 Garry Marvin, 'Lupophobia', in *Wolf*, pp. 35-81.

26 Oliver Goldsmith, cited in 'Wolf Children', from the *Chambers Edinburgh Journal*, no. 446 (1852), anthologised in Alexis Easley and Shannon Scott (eds.), *Terrifying Transformations: An Anthology of Victorian Werewolf Fiction* (Richmond, VA: Valancourt Books, 2013), pp. 310-11 (p. 311).

27 Summers, p. 65. Garry Marvin cites this as evidence of lupophobia in *Wolf*, p. 49

28 Summers, p. 179.

29 Elliott O'Donnell, *Werewolves* [sic] (London: Methuen, 1912).

30 O'Donnell, p. 94.

31 O'Donnell, p. 94.

32 O'Donnell, p. 94.

33 O'Donnell, p. 98. Richard Verstegen (c. 1550–1640) was the author of *A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence* (1605), cited in Summers, *The Werewolf*, p. 3. Gervase of Tilbury (c. 1150–1228), is mentioned the *Dictionary of English Folklore's* entry on werewolves, 'Tilbury wrote in 1211 that werewolves are common in England but the examples he gave are all French', *Dictionary of English Folklore*, p. 386.

34 O'Donnell, pp. 106-7.

35 Interestingly, accounts of the Lincolnshire 'Dogdyke' werewolf seem to draw directly on this story. I have outlined the return of this myth on the *Open Graves, Open Minds* blog: 'Dogdyke: The Lincolnshire Werewolf Returns', *Open Graves, Open Minds*, 2 November 2016, <http://www.opengravesopenminds.com/ogom-the-company-of-wolves/dogdyke-the-lincolnshire-werewolf-returns/> [accessed 12 July 2018].

36 Summers, p. 191.

37 The frequent sightings of the werewolf, dating back to December 2015, along the banks of the drain have resulted in the creature also earning the nickname of the 'Beast of Barmston Drain'.

38 The Hull werewolf has even caught the attention of the dark rocker Alice Cooper, who posted about him on his Facebook page and asked for further information. This story has been widely shared in the tabloid press in the UK; see, for example, Felicity Cross, 'Monster of Rock Alice Cooper VS Hull's Old Stinker', *The Daily Star*, 1 June 2016.

39 'Townspeople Gather to Hunt Werewolf in Hull Known as Old Stinker', *Metro*, 15 May 2015]; 'Haunted – Old Stinker Werewolf – Yorkshire's Bermuda Triangle', *Hull Daily Mail*, 21 October 2015; 'Sightings of Eight Foot Werewolf Known as Old Stinker Sparks Panic Across City', *Yorkshire and Humber News, Brief Report, HDM*, 31 October 2015; 'Eight Foot Tall Werewolf Old Sinker Prowling in Hull Industrial Estate', *Huffington Post*, 16 May 2016; 'Residents Tremble in Terror After Seeing Eight Foot Werewolf in British City', *Daily Express*, 15 May 2016.

40 Spring-Heeled Jack was a folk devil who terrorised Victorian London and was also sighted in the Midlands and Scotland (first seen in 1837). He was often depicted jumping over fences and transgressing spatial boundaries. A full length study of the folklore and

literature relating to him has been carried out by Karl Bell, *The Legend of Spring-Heeled Jack: Victorian Urban Folklore and Popular Cultures* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2012).

41 'Visit Hull and East Yorkshire', <http://www.visithullandeastyorkshire.com/yorkshire-wolds/> [accessed 1 October, 2016].

42 See 'Escape the World, Explore the Wolds', <http://www.visithullandeastyorkshire.com/yorkshire-wolds/> [accessed 1 October, 2016].

43 Charles Christian, *A Travel Guide to Yorkshire's Weird Wolds: The Mysterious Wold Newton Triangle* (n. p.: Urban Fantasist, 2015), Kindle Edition, n. p.

44 Christian takes this name from the Bermuda Triangle and the 'Wold Newton Universe', a literary invention of the science fiction writer Philip Jose Fermer (1918-2009). See 'Haunted by Old Stinker the Werewolf: Yorkshire's Bermuda Triangle', *Hull Daily Mail*, 31 October 2015

<http://www.hulldailymail.co.uk/haunted-old-stinker-werewolf-yorkshire-s-bermuda/story-28085904-detail/story.html#1HW67GrDlzzsVfJ.99> [accessed 5 September 2016].

45 'Haunted by Old Stinker'.

46 Emma McEvoy, *Gothic Tourism* (London: Palgrave, 2015), p. 201.

47 Christian, *Travel Guide*.

48 *Ibid.*

49 *Ibid.*

50 *Ibid.*

51 *Ibid.*

52 For such myths, see S. J. Sherwood and W. E. Cousins, 'The Black Dog of Whitby and Kettleiness', *Anomaly*, 42 (2008), 2-9.

53 Robert Macfarlane, 'The Eeriness of the English Countryside', *Guardian*, 10 April 2015. I am indebted to this article for its exploration of the eerie.

54 The *Collected Ghost Stories* of M. R. James (London: Edward Arnold, 1931) have been hugely influential and a school of James criticism has grown up. See, for example, David Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, 2 vols (Harlow: Longman, 1996), II, pp. 67-95; Julia Briggs, *The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story* (London: Faber, 1977); Jack Sullivan, *Elegant Nightmares: The English Ghost Story from Le Fanu to Blackwood* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1978), pp. 69-90; Julian Wolfrey, *Victorian Hauntings, Spectrality, Gothic and the Uncanny* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2001). James has lately been enjoying a revival and is widely celebrated in Andrew Smith, *The Ghost Story 1840-1920: A Cultural History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), pp. 168-86.

55 Christian, *Travel Guide*.

56 See Macfarlane, 'Eeriness' and Fisher.

57 Macfarlane, 'Eeriness'.

58 For information on Ghost Box records, see their site at <http://ghostbox.co.uk/>. Mark Fisher, the author of *The Weird and the Eerie*, was instrumental in promoting this label.

59 Adam Scovell, 'Where to Begin with Folk Horror', *BFI*, 10 June 2016, <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/features/where-begin-folk-horror> [accessed 10 July 2016].

60 Mark Gatiss used it as an umbrella term to describe a number of films in his *A History of Horror* documentary for BBC4 in 2010. It was originally used by director Piers Haggard in 2003. See Adam Scovell, *Folk Horror: Hours Dreadful and Things Strange* (Leighton Buzzard: Auteur, 2017), p. 7.

61 Scovell, *Folk Horror*, p. 7.

62 Vital to the contemporary movement too, are the influential and eerie novels of Alan Garner and Susan Cooper, especially Garner's *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* (1960)

and *The Owl Service* (1967), and Cooper's dazzling *The Dark Is Rising* sequence, published between 1965 and 1977.

63 Christian writes that, 'Rudston, at the heart of the Wold-Newton Triangle, occupies a significant place in the country's network of ley lines'. He sees them as folkloric, comparing them to Irish 'fairy paths' or aboriginal 'songlines' (*Travel Guide*).

64 Marx famously begins *The Communist Manifesto* with an image of a gothic phantom ('A spectre is haunting Europe'). For an analysis of such tropes in his writing, see Chris Baldick, 'Karl Marx's Vampires and Grave-diggers', in *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity and Nineteenth-Century Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 121-40.

65 From Elliott O'Donnell, 'British Werewolves', in *A Lycanthropy Reader*, p. 91

66 A 200-year-old drainage channel that flows across 25 miles of open countryside and through Hull, emptying into the River Humber.

67 Christian claims that there are even newspaper reports, dating back to the early 1830s, of young children having been bitten by vicious dogs seen prowling close to the drain but there are no sources given (*Travel Guide*).

68 Eddie Proctor, 'Towards a New Landscape Aesthetic',

https://www.academia.edu/12129019/Towards_a_New_Landscape_Aesthetic [accessed 1 January 2017].

69 *The Guardian* newspaper group had picked up on the rising interest in these debates, publishing a number of articles in late 2014 on the topic. See, for example, Adam Weymouth, 'Was this the Last Wolf in Britain', *Guardian*, 21 July 2014; Adam Vaughan, 'Re-wilding Britain: Bringing Wolves, Bears and Beavers back to the Land', *The Observer*, 19 September 2014; Lucy Siegel, 'Why Bring Wolves and Lynx Back to the UK?', *Guardian*, 26 October 2014.

70 The *Open Graves, Open Minds* research group, which I convene together with Dr Bill Hughes and Dr Kaja Franck, hosted ‘The Company of Wolves: sociality, animality and subjectivity in literary and cultural narratives – werewolves, shapeshifters and feral humans’, University of Hertfordshire, 3-5 September 2015.

71 Garry Marvin discusses the complexities of the notion of ‘atonement’ in relation to re-wilding wolves, an idea that is particularly prevalent in Japan (*Wolf*, pp. 179-81).

72 ‘During the closing years of the eighteenth century [...] a huge wolf-like creature attacked a coach travelling along the York road near Flixton. The wolf fled after being shot by one of the occupants (although not with silver bullets) and was not heard of again until encountered by our lorry driver in the 1960s’ (Christian, *Travel Guide*).

73 I am in agreement with Maurice Halbwachs’s definition of collective memory. For an explanation of his version of ‘collective memory’ and how it differs from ‘history’, see Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis Ditter Jr (New York, Harper, 1980). Avishai Margalit has made a distinction between ‘shared’ memory and ‘common’ memory. ‘Shared memory’ closely approximates Halbwachs’s ‘collective memory’. A ‘shared memory’, Margalit observes, ‘integrates and calibrates the different perspectives of those who remember an episode [...] into one version’ (*The Ethics of Memory* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 51-2).

74 Kathryn Hughes, ‘In our dog-eat-dog world, it’s time for werewolves’, *Guardian*, 30 August 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/aug/30/werewolves-scarcity-fear-vampires-sexual-anxiety> [accessed 1 August 2015].