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Across the past ten years, folk horror has emerged as perhaps the most fashionable topic in horror scholarship, amid what Paul Newland (2016, 163) calls "a contemporary 'cultification'" of the sub-genre. However, as amateur groups online who likewise engage with folk horror have illustrated, pretty much anything old and vaguely weird can get thus labelled, and uncritically too. Rather than offer a concrete definition of what folk horror is, I would like to suggest a discursive methodology to see what signification befalls a text when labelled "folk horror".

Folk horror exists at the convergence of three discourses – the Pagan, the Rural, and the Folklore. By discourse, I refer to those ideas initially suggested by Michel Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), wherein discourse analysis is a means of qualitative study which explores not only what a text says, but more significantly power, and how it shapes what the text cannot say. We cannot think beyond the limits of our society, despite any alternative possibilities, since such cannot be uttered because language, as a social construct, does not permit it. Any discourse, when manifested through analysis, must be viewed as a product, or limitation, of those who control it.

To illustrate this, I will first define and discuss these three discourses into a kind of discursive methodology. Secondly, I will apply this methodology to one of the key films in the folk horror canon, Robin Hardy's *The Wicker Man* (1973), an uncontested member of the folk horror sub-genre. Thirdly, I will apply this discursive approach to a different film, one whose folk horror credentials might be contested, *The Company of Wolves* (Neil Jordan, 1984). While the discussions developed are obviously going to differ between these films, taken together, they allow us to reflect on the range of possible discourse(s) in folk horror.

Pagan/Rural/Folk(lore)

The concept of the Pagan, is, in its etymology, defined by the Christian. All Others to the Christian are Pagan, unless the epistemology extends to somehow inculcate that Other into the Christian grand-narrative. Judaism, for example, is not Pagan, because Christianity has included it in its own, self-serving, chronicle – the Judeo-Christian tradition. Pagan consists of those Christianity cannot consume into its own story. Or, more damningly, the Pagan is Other because it refuses to recognize Christianity's "truth" and join the hegemonic order. One might also say, recognizing the psychoanalytic concept of the "return of the repressed", that Paganism is that which Christianity murdered and then denied murdering – the Pagan becomes abject for the Christian – and Paganism's revival appears like Banquo's ghost reminding the Church of its atrocities in the name of its God. Such a discursive dynamic may also partially explain why contemporary paganism is so popular with those who, likewise, not only do not wish to join the Christian hegemony, but who also seek to be as wholly Other to that hegemony as possible.

This still puts Christianity at the heart of the discourse; the ancient Celts, to use a crude characterization within popular culture, like in *The Wicker Man*, is only a *pre*-Christian belief system insofar as it was ultimately displaced *by* Christianity. Christianity is the victor; what existed prior is ultimately secondary. Such thinking denies the Pagan any agency in their own existence; they can only be seen through Christian eyes.

Alan Cameron's *The Last Pagans of Rome* (2011) traces the original Latin word, *paganus*, through to our modern conception of what the word "Pagan" means, in a discursive analysis that is not as straightforward as it might appear. The Latin *paganus* initially simply meant rural (Cameron 2011, 14). This association of the word with rurality persists, for example, in many folk horror films. However, inspired by socio-linguist Christine Mohrmann, Cameron notes that the word is further applied designate between dichotomies of civilian/military and Christian/non-Christian. What Cameron illustrates is not so much ever-evolving cultural dichotomous sets, but, in discursive form, the power imbalances between these two terms – one hegemonic and the other not – ultimately equating Christian and pagan with insider and outsider (Cameron 2011, 22).

The significant leap Cameron makes, by way of Mohrmann, is that the term "Pagan" is always used as an opposite, and is likewise, antonymically applied: this is how *we* define *you*. The Other is never allowed to identify themselves. Herein lies the beginnings of how we can see the word "Pagan" discursively: even to be in opposition to Christianity, to be anti- or non-Christian, is still to recognize the centrality of Christianity to the viewing position *by* its opposition. For the Pagan, to identify as Pagan is nonsensical because to do so would be to recognize the hegemonic power of the Church. As Cameron notes (2011, 27), "Fourth-century pagans naturally never referred to themselves as pagans, less because the term was insulting than because the category had no meaning for them". The term only has meaning for a Christian.

Within the folk horror discussions currently in vogue, Paganism slips synonymously towards Witchcraft and even Satanism; one becomes the other, despite these three being quite different things. What all three terms have in common is their discursive relationship to Christian hegemony, the default viewer position. It is less an issue of Paganism=Witchcraft=Satanism than it is between those who recognize Christian hegemony, and those for whom Christianity is irrelevant to their existence. This is the first discourse.

The governmental bodies the American Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) and the British Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), both define the Rural likewise antonymically, as "not-urban"; based primarily on population density. Such definitions exclude rural self-definition. The power imbalance between amounts of budgeting allocated to rural populations is tilted in favour of those classified as urban. Rural, as discourse, much like Pagan, suggests an antonymic relationship whereby it is defined by what it is not (not-urban).

While Adam Scovell's "folk horror chain" (2017, 8) gives some recognition to the discourse of Pagan as the presence of "skewed belief systems and morality", the centrality of the landscape in his theory roots folk horror within the discourse of the Rural, but without interrogating the Rural as discourse, as a negotiated space of ideological division. Thurgill (2020, online), notes "it [the Rural in folk horror] derives from a deliberate attempt to exploit the *othering* process manifest in the presentation of pastoral communities as something outside of the normative". The Rural, therefore, is the second discourse.

The key discourse least developed from almost all discussions of folk horror is that which seemingly gives the genre its name: Folklore. Folklore exists in the folk horror discussions in a popular "common-sense" guise and nobody I have encountered who writes on folk horror to date, bothers to define what *Folklore* is. The word, Folk-Lore, was coined by William John Thoms in 1846 to describe "the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, etc., of the olden time" (quoted in Bauman 1992, 29). Thoms' own definition was designed to replace the previously used term, "popular antiquities", which covers the material Thoms lists. "Weird old shit," by any other name. As Bauman notes (1992, 31), "To view an item of folklore as traditional is to see it as

having temporal continuity, rooted in the past but persisting into the present in the manner of a natural object". It is very much in this sense that folk horror scholars understand the Folklore in folk horror: those items from the past which have persisted to the contemporary. However, the discursive aspects of Folklore need interrogation. And that discourse rests on the relationship Folklore has with Tradition.

Barre Toelken refers to the "twin laws" of Folklore: that in any given time and place, an item of Folklore will embody elements of both continuity to the past and readaptation in the present (Toelken 1996, 39). Whether the Folklore is presented as romantic and authentic, or as constructed and artificial, determines the power inequity inherent by the discourse. Late 20th century historians, and other cultural theorists, began to challenge not only ideas regarding "authentic" national identity (Anderson 2006), but also investigating the (relatively recent) construction of Tradition (Hobsbawm 1983). Folklore was likewise re-evaluated, particularly in its relation to Tradition, with Baumann stating that "Tradition … [must be] seen as a selective, interpretive construction, the social and symbolic creation of a connection between aspects of the present and an interpretation of the past" (Bauman 1992, 31-2).

Folklore does not simply lie in the furrows awaiting discovery; it is a continuous process of signification. This is also noted by Scovell, who further defines folk horror as "a work that presents a clash between such arcana [items of folklore, "popular antiquities"] and its presence within close proximity to some form of modernity…" (2017, 7). The haunting by Tradition, in this regard, is particularly apt for the discussion of folk horror. Folklore as discourse surely therefore must be at the centre of any consideration of folk horror; and it is conspicuously absent from most of the discussions. Folklore is the third discourse.

Folk horror then, is the convergence of these three discourses: Pagan, Rural, and Folklore. While each can be considered in isolation, folk horror is only meaningful, or can be said to be meaningful, when the three discourses come together.

The Wicker Man

Robin Hardy's *The Wicker Man* (1973) is probably the most written about film within the folk horror canon. I do not wish to add to the pages produced on this film, except as an application of what I proposed in terms of a reading protocol of the intersection of the three above noted discourses: Pagan, Rural, and Folklore.

The representation of Paganism in *The Wicker Man* is an obvious topic for scholars (see Koven 2007; or Hutton, and Zwissler, in this current volume). The juxtaposition between the Christian Howie and the Pagans of Summerisle create the key dramatic tension in the film. If the Summerislanders were Jews, Muslims, or Buddhists, Howie might appear less antagonistic since such belief systems are at least recognized by Christianity. Within the theological backstory to the film, Lord Summerisle's grandfather, who originally bought the island and introduced the "Old Gods" back into active worship effectively reversed two thousand years of British-based theological genocide; while Christianity wiped Britain of all remnants of its earlier belief systems, the Lords Summerisle, for at least three generations, have wiped the island of Christianity. This is what Howie cannot comprehend: for him, Christianity is the "true faith", Christ is the "true God".

What is upsetting for Howie is his realization that, on Summerisle, *his* God is not at the centre of creation or worship. If, as Robin Wood asserted, the basis of horror is "normality is threatened by the monster" (2018, 83), then Howie is *The Wicker Man*'s monster, as he is a threat to the stability of the "normality" of the island. And that monstrousness emerges from his Christianity. Howie

experiences what non-Christians do on a day-to-day basis when they live in a country that might "tolerate" their existence but excludes them in more subtle ways. Howie's initial response is to view the people of Summerisle as delusional and completely misinformed. The horror of *The Wicker Man* is supposing Christianity's failure. Might a Pagan victory in this culture war leave only relics of churches marring the landscape in the future? We already see evidence of that on Summerisle, even while Howie tries feebly to re-sanctify the island's dilapidated church with two pieces of a broken Summerisle Apples crate. As Pagan is an antonym to Christian, Howie is forced to realise antonyms are two-way streets; his Christianity is antonymic to the people of Summerisle. He is the monster to them. The evil on Summerisle is thus a moribund Christianity.

Beyond simply noting that the people of Summerisle are, in fact, Pagan; and that their Paganism is a resurrected reconstruction courtesy of Victorian anthropology and theories of cultural evolution, Pagan as discourse opens the film to larger discussions regarding the theological power relations inherent in the word Pagan. The dominance of Christian hegemony in contemporary Britain is experienced without question, and as such, it silences, if not outright *denies*, alternatives to the Western ubiquity of the Christian world view. Could *The Wicker Man* be made without *any* recourse or reference to Christianity? Could the people of Summerisle be subject, rather than object, of the cinematic gaze? Such reconstruction of the cinematic discourse of Paganism is impossible when the Church, as institution, is so woven into every part of the national British fabric. But we only see this impossibility, and the extent of the Church's impact on our thinking, if we can see Paganism discursively.

The discourse of the Rural returns us to Scovell and his "folk horror chain". To see the Rural as discourse is to recognize the centrality of the rural/urban split in our culture. Firstly, as we explore the ideas of this chain and its relation to the discourse of the Rural, the phrase Scovell uses to characterize the belief system within these communities ("skewed belief[s] … and morality") is deeply imbued with the kind of self-righteous prejudice that Sergeant Howie characterizes the Paganism on Summerisle. To what are the beliefs of the isolated community "skewed" against, if not, implicitly, Christianity? Paul Newland notes the following (2008, 120): "Summerisle is a territory in which Howie encounters the type of degenerate practices that he believes should have no place in what he sees as a modern, Christian Britain". This "skewing" also effects the residents of Summerisle's "morality", as their morality is at odds with Christian hegemony. The imposition of Christian morality onto the "immorality" of the Summerisle sex rituals is, within the folk horror chain, a direct result of their isolation. And here is where the Rural becomes discursive: the very idea that country folk are running Pagan sex cults reveals strong urban biases against the Rural. Or, as Paul Newland put it (2008, 126), a "backwards, rural folk-type of British communities in which evil stirs". Implicit in this criticism is that due to their isolation and the difficulties of their terrain (in the case of Summerisle, being on a privately owned island off the Highlands of Scotland; in other words, about as remote as possible in the United Kingdom), such is the perfect soil for "skewed beliefs and morality" to flourish.

The discursive biases the Urban have towards the Rural suggest that, in a "civilized" area, one which is not so isolated by the landscape, Pagan sex practices would not be able to survive due to the civilizing environment of the city. The relative safety of the city in marked opposition to the "wild west" associations of the country is not borne out by the statistics on "abhorrent sex practices", like child sexual abuse, in Rural vs Urban areas. Population density, and the available resources, do not determine "skewed beliefs and morality" of a community. But how much rural horror implies murderous sexual deviancy in isolated rural environments? In a similar way that the discourse of the Pagan in *The Wicker Man* operates from a Christian hegemony, so too does the film's discourse of

the Rural reveal its urban bias; a point also raised by Thurgill (2020, online). As *The Blood on Satan's Claw* illustrates, a director who grew up in the countryside would understand a different expression of the discourse on the Rural to that which Hardy gives us in *The Wicker Man.*

The final discourse to be applied in *The Wicker Man* is Folklore, or specifically, Folklore's relationship with Tradition. There are two key points to make, both of which I made (albeit poorly) in my 2007 article on *The Wicker Man*, what I called "the folklore fallacy". The first point is that the film's director, Robin Hardy, and its screenwriter, Anthony Shaffer, did minimal research for the film. There is an irony that the rituals of Mayday, which play so central to the film and occur across the film's final half hour, are fully explained to Howie in a few short hours of library reading in the Summerisle library. He appears to have only consulted a single book – likely James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough*; the same singular book which Hardy and Shaffer appear to have read. So, what they know about ancient "folklore" is no more than what Howie discovers in his short library visit. Their superficial research grabs hold of all (highly visual) "popular antiquities" used to fill up their mise-en-scene, regardless of their context or function within the traditional societies the authors of the film pilfered from. *The Wicker Man* is like a museum room filled with poorly labelled arcana collected via the Colonialist project over several centuries of theft, exploitation, and genocide. Particularly during the Mayday celebrations leading up to Howie's "appointment with the Wicker Man", we are presented with a huge list of Folklore items – John Barleycorn, the Salmon of Knowledge, Punch, the Hobbyhorse, the Hand of Glory, the Sword-dance, and the Mayday procession itself. All of these items, while legitimate pieces of traditional folk culture, are decontextualized simply as "tradition".

As noted above, the Pagan culture of Summerisle was a 19th century construction by the grandfather of the current Lord Summerisle. So, contrary to what I wrote in 2007, the authenticity of *The Wicker Man* is the authenticity of a 19th century folklore reconstruction, not of ancient Celtic rites, which Shaffer and Hardy claimed. In this way, as Bauman noted (1992, 31), Summerisle is very much in keeping with those Victorian folklore romantic ideals in opposition to the horrors of modernity. Grandfather Summerisle sought to recreate a pre-lapsarian (pre-Christian) Celtic community based on the 19th century ideas he was familiar with. The Folklore then is presented, by Hardy, in this sense of colourful and exciting romanticism. So, Folklore, as discourse, by way of Tradition and its connection to 19th century romanticism attempts to recreate a Celtic paradise.

But there is another side to the discourse of Tradition, one which addresses the position of Tradition within the diegesis, as well as for the film's audience(s): there is an assumed reality to the constructed society of Summerisle, one which Shaffer, Hardy, and actor Christopher Lee spoke to whenever asked about the film. In the documentary, *Burnt Offering: The Cult of the Wicker Man* (Andrew Abbott and Russell Leven, 2001), and included on the 2013 Blu-ray edition of the "Final Cut", Robin Hardy makes the point that, in constructing the gigantic bonfire with which the film concludes, its like had not been seen in Britain for two thousand years. Implicit in Hardy's comment is that he fully recognized the Wicker Man constructed and burnt for the film was a modern build, but that by orchestrating this ritual (as the film's director), he was engaging in a very old, but very real, ancient rite. What Hardy, Lee, and Shaffer fail to realize is that "no they didn't", or rather the evidence against ancient Celts engaging in this kind of blood sacrifice ritual is highly sceptical. Ronald Hutton, in this current volume, discusses extensively how constructed the stories about ancient Celtic barbarity were, including recognizing the unlikeliness that the ancient Celts burned human sacrifices in wicker effigies; the Celts were, for late Classical writers like Julius Caesar, "a litmus test for savagery" (Hutton 2022, ms 3), and this is a perception *The Wicker Man* is all-too willing to exploit. Howie makes this explicit when he refers to "pagan barbarity which [he] can scarcely believe as taking place in the 20th century".

Therefore, to see Folklore itself as discourse, is to interrogate the film's use of Tradition: whether as a romantic connection to an unproblematic, or uncontested past; or as a modern construct attempting to give our present meaning by connecting it to the past. But in order to access Folklore's discourse we need to do the research into the traditions represented and interrogate their connection to, in this case, Britain's bloody past of colonial exploitation and murder.

The Company of Wolves

The Company of Wolves (Neil Jordan, 1984) is rarely written about in the context of folk horror; Scovell mentions it in passing (2017, 95) and a separate essay on the film by Monique Lacoste is included in Ingham's book (2018, 133-141). Although significantly, neither writer discusses the film *as* folk horror: Scovell's comment is about rural horror and Lacoste presents a feminist critique of the film informed by Jungian analysis. Elsewhere, the film generated debates in feminist literary circles, as well as by folklorists discussing the film's relationship to the fairy-tale film (see Snowden 2010, Zipes 2011, Jowett 2012, and Hughes 2020). However, by applying the discursive approach suggested in this current paper, *The Company of Wolves*' place as a folk horror film is as relevant as any of the "unholy trinity".

Based on three short stories by Angela Carter, "The Werewolf", "The Company of Wolves", and "Wolf-Alice", all of which appear in her collection *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), *The Company of Wolves* is a "Chinese box" (Lacoste 2018, 134) of storytelling each echoing variations on the "Little Red Riding Hood" fairy tale. A framing narrative sees a contemporary young teenage girl, Rosaleen, asleep in her room in the middle of the afternoon. Her parents arrive home to their large country house, and her elder teenage sister, Alice, cannot wait to "grass" on Rosaleen's bad behaviour. The main narrative of this film are Rosaleen's dreams: the first one sees Alice chased and then killed by a pack of wolves, and the monstrous-sized toys we have just seen in Rosaleen's room. Rosaleen's second dream is an extended narrative following the "Red Riding Hood" story: Rosaleen's sister is killed by wolves (echoing the previous dream), and she goes off to stay at Granny's for the night. Rosaleen returns to her village and home and is witness to the men-folk going out to hunt the wolf which killed Alice. Meanwhile, Rosaleen is flirting with a local boy her own age, listed only as "Amorous Boy", before she is sent to Granny's with a basket of goodies. While *en route*, she meets a mysterious and handsome Huntsman who seduces her, and they playfully wager on who will get to Granny's first – Rosaleen or the Huntsman. The Huntsman wins the bet, kills Granny, and lies waiting for Rosaleen to show up. Cue the "what big teeth you have" exchange between Rosaleen and the Huntsman, before he transforms into a wolf. But rather than consume Rosaleen, the girl takes pity on the wolf/man, and instead chooses to join him as a wolf/woman. At key points in the main Rosaleen narrative, first Granny, and then Rosaleen herself, tell a combined total of four stories, each of which is dramatized.

While *The Company of Wolves* includes no explicit reference to paganism or witchcraft, Granny does tell one story about a young boy who makes a deal with the Devil to speed up his maturation and is transformed into a wolf, perhaps suggestive of an origin story to the werewolves of the forest. Reference is also made throughout the film to these werewolves being "people of the forest" (it is how the Huntsman introduces himself to Rosaleen), and suggestive of a tribe of shapeshifters inhabiting the liminal spaces surrounding the village (forest, wells). But these explicit references to Otherness and contra-Christian/demonic forces are but surface details. Let us consider instead the geography in Rosaleen's dream, and in this regard, the Pagan overlaps tremendously with the Rural. There are at least three spaces in the dream: the village, Granny's house, and the forest. While all

three spaces are distinctly "Rural", some are more isolated than others. The village, for example, where Rosaleen lives with her parents, is centred around a communal well. In a small community like this, everyone's safety is mutually reassured by the close proximity to their neighbour. The village is also "protected" by the Church, and its attendant priest. Granny's house is outside of the village, seemingly by several miles, and whilst safe(ish), is less safe due to its relative isolation. Granny herself plays with Paganism, not in the sense of witchcraft, but in her verbal antagonism, towards the Old Priest. As Granny tells Rosaleen, in the Churchyard with the Old Priest overhearing a story about priests impregnating young parishioners, "Well you can't trust anyone, least of all a priest. He's not called 'Father' for nothing". Despite Granny's apparent irreverence towards Christianity, in the one scene inside the Church, Granny is an active parishioner. While the entire world of Rosaleen's dream is Rural, and there is no mention of any kind of larger settlement or city, there are degrees of rurality. The village is certainly Rural, but Granny's house is *more Rural*.

In between these two states of relative safety lies the danger of the forest. The association of the forest with danger runs all the way back to the first versions of "Red Riding Hood". The path through the forest, while recognized as dangerous, demarcates some degree of safety through all the danger. It is safer than the woods, but less safe than the village. A shot of Granny and Rosaleen walking along the path through the forest is an echo of an earlier shot, during the opening credits of the film and taking place in the contemporary framing story, where we see a car (diegetically, driven by Rosaleen's and Alice's parents returning home) driving through another/the same (?) forest suggesting we have always relied on the existence of paths to help us navigate our way through danger. The Church may be one such "path" (metaphorically speaking), while Granny's wisdom is another: as she famously states to Rosaleen:

> You've got a lot to learn child. Never stray from the path, never eat a windfall apple [an apple that has fallen to the ground], and never trust a man whose eyebrows meet.

Granny's wisdom is a perversion of Christian doctrine (a "skewering" if you will). Later that evening, as Granny and Rosaleen are sitting by the hearth, Granny tells her granddaughter that

> A wolf may be more than he seems. … The wolf that ate your sister was hairy on the outside, but when she died, she went straight to Heaven. The worse kind of wolves are hairy on the inside, and when they bite you, they drag you with them to Hell.

Granny's isolation outside of the safety of the village encourages her warping of Christian virtue: here again we can see Scovell's "skewed belief systems and morality" as both the consequence of her isolation, as well as hinting toward a counter-Christian paganism. And yet, given her references to Heaven and Hell, the Christian world view is still present, but "skewered". It is a homespun Christian virtue, not official Church doctrine; a kind of folk religion, if you will. The Rural is the site for non-doctrinal Christianity to develop, a motif seen in many rural horror movies.

In *The Company of Wolves*, the Pagan is present explicitly in its single evocation of the Devil and the hinted-at tribe of werewolf-people, but is further suggested by the antagonism between Granny and the Old Priest, and Granny's own "skewered belief system" despite its grounding in vague Christian doctrine. The Rural is likewise evoked through the film's regional geography – of village, forest, and fringe - and such geography feeds into the discourses of paganism the film suggests.

But it is the discourse of Folklore, and specifically Folklore's relation to tradition that *The Company of Wolves* grounds itself in the folk horror genre. As is all too obvious, as *The Company of Wolves* is based on the fairy tale of "Red Riding Hood", and fairy tales are a major narrative genre of Folklore, then the film's Folklore is worn on its shredded sleeve; and that connection is mostly from the

source material, Angela Carter's short stories. Director Jordan takes the Folklore discourse further. In the film's opening credit sequence, establishing the frame narrative, a large German Shepherd dog is sniffing around an abandoned well. The dog unearths an old-fashioned porcelain-headed doll, long forgotten. Leaving the doll where s/he found it, the dog runs through the forest. It is in this sequence where the shot, noted above, with the sisters' parents returning home in a car, is included. The well will play a much more significant role later in the film. It is the centre of the dreamt village, a centre for the community to revolve around; and its inclusion in the opening credits suggests that the village may have once stood where the family's Georgian style country manor now stands. The well is also the means of ingress and egress, into and out of the village, for the wolf-woman in the story Rosaleen tells the Huntsman/Wolf toward the film's conclusion. As Lacoste notes (2018, 135), "Wells have long held spiritual significance, positioned in different mythic systems as sources of life, as representations of the womb, and as passageways between the material and the spiritual". The porcelain-headed doll too is later echoed in how Granny's head explodes when it is flung against the wall by the Huntsman/Wolf. But it is the action of the dog unearthing the long-abandoned doll which speaks to the film's problematising of Tradition. Much like the discovery of the "fiend in the furrows" which opens *Blood on Satan's Claw*, the dog's discovery brings to the present that which had been buried. Jordan evokes several key themes of the film's use of Folklore in this moment: the rediscovery of things from childhood we have lost – abandoned dolls, fairy tales, innocence; the German Shepherd running through the forest reminds us that our modern and much-loved pets are barely removed from the wildness of wolves; and that the past and tradition are never too far from our modernity and contemporaneity. Folklore, the film suggests, is just under the skin, under the surface, in the underbrush, abandoned and left behind, but never hidden for very long. We even travel along the same routes of safety through the woods that our ancestors traversed so many generations past.

Linked with this discussion of Tradition and Folklore, is the sense of cultural inheritance. In these opening sequences of the framing narrative, a pan around Rosaleen's room shows many antique-looking toys (incongruous for a young girl in 1984), including the teddy bear and little sailor doll which grow to enormous proportions, and will attack Alice in Rosaleen's first dream. It is the hand-me-down suggestion of the antiquated toys in Rosaleen's room which function as signifiers of inheritance. Nothing feels "new" in Rosaleen's room, as if everything she has was first somebody else's. In her dream, Rosaleen receives a silver cross from her mother, which was once her sister's, and at the end of the film, it is this cross hanging around the she-wolf's neck which enables Rosaleen's mother to recognize what happened to her daughter. Ironically, the silver crucifix, given "for protection" to Rosaleen, saves the girl, not from the wolf, but from being murdered by her own father (who does not recognize her as anything other than a wolf). Folklore, like the toys in Rosaleen's room, or the silver crucifix, are connections to the past; much like the abandoned well and the suggestion of continuity from the dream village to the contemporary country house.

They key inheritance the film presents is, of course, storytelling; a point made explicit by Kim Snowden (2010, 167): "The film … refer[s] to oral storytelling traditions, particularly passing down stories through generations of women". Rosaleen is the recipient of two of Granny's stories, the aforementioned boy who meets the Devil in the woods, but also a complicated narrative which needs some unpacking. In Granny's first story, she tells of a young village woman who marries "a travelling man" (Irish Traveller) but her husband disappears on their wedding night, seemingly taken by the wolves when he went outside to urinate. The young widow marries a second time, and in a few short years has several children from her second husband, when her first reappears on her doorstop. Angered that she had not kept her vows while he was gone, he attacks her, she defends herself, and in a tremendous rage, the Traveller transforms into a wolf. The second husband returns,

beheads the wolf, and slaps her hard across her face seemingly for allowing a strange man into the home, if not for the emasculating reminder that he was not her first man. Granny's narration is light and superficial – "but she was a young thing. And cheerful of temperament. And she soon found another husband" – but the images Jordan includes of the young woman's life with the second husband are grim and difficult: cooking, cleaning, and raising several screaming children. We do not know the occupation of the second husband, but we can clearly see that he is away and is not helping with the family life. However, in another sense, the return of the first husband, suggests the psychoanalytic concept of the return of the repressed, where that which is repressed comes back in monstrous form until it is properly "dealt with". Here, the first husband's return is literally monstrous in that he is a werewolf, and his transformation into the monster is marvellously gory using the practical effects technology of the day. This monster is "properly dealt with" in that he is beheaded by the second husband. But the second husband also turns out to be monstrous as an abusive wife-beater, slapping the young woman across the face. But this second monster is *not* dealt with. An abusive husband is simply a woman's lot in life. Some monsters are acceptable in tradition, like abusers; some monsters need to be killed, like werewolves. But this double standard is there for us watching the film to problematize the concept of tradition; as it may also be for Rosaleen listening to Granny. For Granny, this is just the way the world is. Folk horror embodies the return of the repressed graphically. Folklore, when ignored, when denied, remains just below the surface; it takes very little for it to be unearthed: it only takes a dog rummaging around an abandoned well, or a young farmer ploughing his field for it to be discovered.

Rosaleen becomes a storyteller too, first to her mother, then to her beloved the Huntsman/Wolf, keeping the inheritance of storytelling alive. But, more important than the stories themselves, is what the stories reflect, the kind of folk wisdom they are passing on. And in this regard, Granny and Rosaleen are on opposite sides of the tradition/modernity divide. Jack Zipes notes (2011, 149)

> the film… could be viewed as a storytelling duel between a grandmother, who spreads idle superstitious lies to scare her granddaughter so that she will distrust men and sex, and her granddaughter who creates tales about outcasts who need more love and trust in the world, otherwise they will continue to be marginalized.

Granny's (skewed) morality is "old-fashioned" to Rosaleen, while Granny thinks Rosaleen's ideas are "foolishness". Consider the following dialogue early on in the film:

> Granny: Your only sister, all alone in the wood, and nobody there to save her.
>
> Rosaleen: Why couldn't she save herself?
>
> Granny: You don't know anything. You're only a child.

The dialogue may be heavy handed but speaks to the changes in generational attitude regarding gender. Granny expects someone to come to a young girl's rescue, Rosaleen thinks young girls should learn how to save themselves. Even Rosaleen's mother thinks Granny's ideas are outdated: Granny may think all men are beasts, but Rosaleen's mother tells her daughter that women can be beasts too. As Snowden notes (2010, 171),

> Rosaleen rejects these traditional roles and stories. The narrative that she hears from Granny but retells to her mother and the werewolf invokes women who stray from the path and are comfortable in the forest, who are kin to the wolves, recognizing themselves in these animals' otherness.

Folklore, particularly those transcribed tales in archives rather than the literary refashioning by 19th century men (i.e. the Grimms, Joseph Jacobs, Andrew Lang, and of course Charles Perrault two centuries earlier), bear witness to the centrality of women storytellers in the passing on of traditional folktales (cf. Darnton 1999, Warner 1994). Rosaleen may very well keep up the tradition of women storytellers in her family, but she will update and modernize the gender politics in them, reflecting the "twin laws of Folklore" I noted above.

Conclusions

Seeing the key discourses of the Pagan, the Rural, and Folklore converging opens the film text to additional discussions beyond the now trite representation of the rural and spooky old stuff which dominates folk horror. Foucauldian-inspired discourse analysis offers a reading protocol which suggests investigating how power inequity shapes and controls the processes of signification, illustrating larger ideological issues which any appreciation of these films must contend with. Of course, understanding any aspect of cultural hegemony is *de rigueur* for film scholarship, but examining key aspects of folk horror, in particular through the lens of discourse analysis, enables us to engage discussions larger than the film can present on its surface. Of course, the ambivalent discourses of Folklore and Tradition further complicate such explorations in that we can neither completely abandon our cultural pasts, nor always face the repercussions from those pasts. Any discussion must take into account the power relations inherent *in* that discussion.

I have applied discourse analysis in two ways here. *The Wicker Man*, a film which literally defines the folk horror film phenomenon, illustrates that a discursive methodology works. To apply the methodology to a film not always recognized as a folk horror film, *The Company of Wolves*, shows what new discussions are possible when we try to read the film with a folk horror discourse. Of course, we can play spot-the-motif and annotate either film's use of decontextualized Folklore. We can critique the film's prejudiced depiction of Celtic pagan excesses or challenge the authenticity of the storytelling. But unless we can problematize the centrality of Christianity in *de facto* discussions about paganism, recognize the urban bias in the creation of rural horror stories, and question the relative purpose of Tradition and Folklore in one's connections to the past, we risk simply duplicating what the film text already tells us. Huge layers of meaning lie undisturbed beneath the surface of these films. But, if the concept of the "return of the repressed" in horror cinema has taught us nothing, those things we try to bury, our cultural abject, have a nasty habit of catching up with us, usually in unpleasant ways.

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