Metaphors of monstrosity: The werewolf as disability and illness in *Harry Potter* and *Jatta*

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While vampires are proliferating in children's and young adult literature, the increasingly popular werewolf figure also deserves attention, particularly given the intriguing links that particular authors draw between the werewolf and disability. These links are seen in not only the two works I discuss in this paper, but others as well (for example, in *Howl's Moving Castle*, a man cursed into the form of a dog is said to have a 'terrible disability' [Jones 1986, pp. 119-20]). Readers might assume the authors are creating these associations with worthy intentions, but might also question if a werewolf, a monster, is indeed an appropriate metaphor for disability and illness. In this discussion, metaphor is understood in line with Fogelin's (1994) definition where 'both similes and metaphors express figurative comparisons: similes explicitly, metaphors implicitly' (p. 23). This paper explores the werewolf as metaphor for disability and illness in the *Harry Potter* series (Rowling 1999, 2003, 2005, 2007) and *Jatta* (Hale 2009).

The werewolf

Given the broad scope of this paper, I am less interested in providing a thorough classification or history for literary werewolves than in tracing the ways in which the notion of lupine shapeshifting intersects with disability and illness. However, to provide a brief background, we might look to Creed's (2005) summary of the major tropes of the werewolf figure: they transform at night usually during the full moon, infect others by biting them, run with a pack, and have no tail. Death is by a silver bullet or fire, and the werewolf has a 'terrible fury' (p. 126). Contemporary fictions about werewolves sometimes conform to these tropes, and sometimes reject them.

In terms of critical readings, werewolves have been read in a range of ways, from gender and queer theory (Creed 2005, Bernhardt-House 2008) to dichotomies of the human-monster:

> *representations of lycanthropy have also been consistently conceptualised around the related poles of civilized-primitive, rational-instinctual, public-private and masculine-feminine. In this sense, the werewolf has modelled the dualistic subjectivity that emerged through the Enlightenment in graphic, exaggerated – or monstrous – terms.*
>
> (Du Coudray 2006, p. 3)

Du Coudray (2006) discusses the 'grotesque imagery' of the werewolf, suggesting that 'In its monstrous lupine form, it is usually represented as an entirely alien other threatening the social collective' (p. 4). Creed (2005) reads the werewolf as uncanny, representing instability, disorder, lack of borders, the breaking of taboo; Bernhardt-House (2008) similarly seizes on the werewolf's 'hybridity and transgression of species boundaries' (p. 159). We can deploy these arguments outside the immediate context of gender, following Ward's (2009) focus on the possibilities offered by the werewolf figure, who writes that Rowling's *Harry Potter* werewolves are 'characters of ingenuity, of difference; they upset readers' expectations and force them to question their assumptions and beliefs, especially those about identity and difference' (p. 3). The particular ideas that are useful for the purposes of this paper include the concept of instability, in the context of difference in society.

Disability

Moving beyond recognising the general potential and possibilities afforded by the figure of the werewolf, however, I want to contextualise my analysis of the novels by briefly discussing some points relating to disability and illness. One term that has been used to mean the study of disability and abnormal development, especially congenital defects, is teratology. While the word can also relate to animals and plants, The Teratology Society (n.d) states that:

> *Teratology is the study of abnormal development. More particularly, it is the study of the causes, mechanisms, and manifestations of abnormal development, whether genetically, gestationally, or postnatally induced; and whether expressed as a lethality, malformation, growth retardation, or functional aberration.*

The word teratology is made up of two elements: terato, meaning monster (from the Greek, teras), and logy, meaning the knowledge, science or study of. Hence, teratology, the study of abnormality or disability, can literally mean the study of monstrosity (see also Costello 2006). This unsettling background seems to compound the problematic aspects of the trend of authors connecting disability and werewolves.

According to Davis (2006b), disability is the single greatest minority group within the USA, at 15%, a number greater than any ethnic or racial minority (pp. xv,xviii). Despite this prevalence, in humanities studies 'disabilities are still often forgotten when the litany of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and so on are articulated' (Davis 2006b, p. xiii). In terms of popular depictions of disability, Tressider (2007) writes that films limit their engagement with disability to three main stereotypes:

> *Those which treat disability as grotesquerie, for whatever purpose [...] Those which use disability as a cynosure for pity or redemption [...] Those which use disability as a hook for a distinct 'issue', usually war or a social cause.*

> (p. 6)

We can see these tropes in literature as well. As Davis (2006a) notes, few main characters in literature have a disability; disabled characters are often villains, or sometimes objects of pity to teach the main non-disabled character a lesson, such as Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol* (p. 11).

In the genres of fantasy and science fiction, in particular, plots of superhumans and enhanced abilities problematise and implicitly attack the concept of dis-ability. Such plots can invoke the spectre of eugenic philosophies, and as much as texts may warn of the dangers of scientific pursuits of a superhuman race, there remains an aestheticisation of superhuman, more-than-able-bodied characters. While eugenic plots may seem either unreal or restricted to one time in real-life history in Nazi Germany, Pernick's (1996) work reminds us that there has been one strand in American medicine that has long argued for similar eugenic goals, proposing the termination of deformed or weak babies. Current health care debates about aborting babies with particular conditions or about reproductive rights of people with disabilities are not, therefore, modern concerns only.

One of the developments in disability studies is the critique of conceptions of normality. Davis (2006a) argues against the concept of 'normal', writing that 'the "problem" is not the person with disabilities; the problem is the way that normalcy is constructed to create the "problem" of the disabled person' (p. 3). In particular, critics have targeted the understanding of disability solely as a medical condition. As Tremain (2005) notes, 'people classified as "handicapped" or "disabled" have developed sociopolitical conceptions of disability in order to counter medicalized approaches' (pp. 1-2). Davidson (2006) explains this development as 'a shift from a medical to a social model of impairment' (p. 119):

> *The medical definition of disability locates impairment in the individual as someone who lacks the full complement of physical and cognitive elements of true personhood and who must be cured or rehabilitated. The social model locates disability not in the individual's impairment but in the environment – in social attitudes, institutional structures, and physical or communicational barriers that prevent full participation as citizen subject.*
>
> (p. 119)

The social model of disability has its critics, such as Shakespeare (2006) who claims it implies that people are only disabled by society and not by their body. He suggests that this potentially means 'rejecting medical prevention, rehabilitation or cure of impairment' (p. 200). A better view, Shakespeare proposes, takes into account that people are disabled by both their body and society.

And so with these issues in mind, I will look at what we might call the social model of werewolves, so to speak, where we unravel the fictional society's reaction to the werewolf character. There are serious limitations in reading the werewolf itself as a direct metaphor for disability; the focus in this discussion is instead primarily on the use of werewolves as metaphors for society's reaction to disability and illness in *Harry Potter* and *Jatta*.

JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* series

One of the minor recurring characters in JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* series is Professor Remus Lupin. Theoretical and popular readings of Lupin have included linking the werewolf figure to Rowling's mother's multiple sclerosis (Kirk 2003), complexities of good and evil (Natov 2001), queer theory (Bernhardt-House 2008; Pugh & Wallace 2006), and the Other (Green 2009). My reading, however, relates to disability and illness, not simply because Rowling herself refers to this, but also because of the growing trend to relate the werewolf to a range of minority figures.

Lupin is a werewolf who appears initially in Book Three, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (Rowling 1999), where readers learn that he was bitten as a young child and could not be cured (p. 258). Like the classic werewolf, he transforms during the full moon and is a danger to any human around him and cannot retain his human mind; he calls himself 'a fully fledged monster once a month' (p. 258). Lupin describes the transformations as 'terrible. It is very painful to turn into a werewolf' (p. 259). As teenagers, Lupin's friends learned how to transform themselves into animals to keep him company during the werewolf time, and this helped him retain some of his human mind (p. 260). As adults, Lupin's former enemy Snape gives him a potion that allows Lupin to retain his mind during the full moon, which keeps him 'safe': 'I keep my mind when I transform ... I am able to curl up in my office, a harmless wolf' (p. 258). Readers may assume that werewolves are normal or ordinary in this world of fantastical creatures, but Lupin has difficulty finding employment and he is isolated and feared by those around him.

In interview, Rowling (2002) has identified disability and illness as the meaning behind Lupin:

> *Professor Lupin, who appears in the third book, is one of my favourite characters. He's a damaged person, literally and metaphorically. I think it's important for children to know that adults, too, have their problems, that they struggle. His being a werewolf is a metaphor for people's reactions to illness and disability.*

Elsewhere, Rowling (2008) stipulates AIDS as the meaning, where Lupin operates as:

> *the H.I.V. metaphor. It was someone who had been infected young, who suffered stigma, who had a fear of infecting others, who was terrified he would pass on his condition to his son. And it was a way of examining prejudice, unwarranted prejudice towards a group of people. And also, examining why people might become embittered when they're treated that unfairly.*
>
> (p. 73)

Here, Rowling deflects literal readings of werewolves as disability or illness and instead highlights the distinction raised by the social model of disability: she talks about Lupin as a metaphor not for disability or illness, but for people's reactions to disability and illness.

Reading Lupin in this approach draws out the ways in which disability resonates with the werewolf figure in Rowling's interpretation. One of these intersections is the concept of passing. Because the shapeshifting occurs only once a month, Lupin is able to hide his condition most of the time. At one point he tells Harry he is 'off-colour' (Rowling 1999, p. 118) when he is actually suffering the full

moon effects, and this is highly suggestive of the concept of passing. While passing is often related to race, Linton (2006) notes that it is also a common concept amongst other minority groups, including people with disabilities, where 'passing may be a deliberate attempt to avoid discrimination or ostracism' (p. 166). Lupin's fear of discovery proves justified when his condition is discovered: 'the owls will start arriving from parents – they will not want a werewolf teaching their children' (Rowling 1999, p. 309). He is neither fully human nor fully animal, at once both and neither. Lupin's attempts to pass as either human or werewolf are unsuccessful: once humans discover his identity they reject him, and the werewolf population do not trust him because of his 'unmistakeable signs of having tried to live among wizards' (Rowling 2005, p. 313).

Lupin internalises this rejection and attempts to cut himself off from the human world by rejecting another character, Tonks, whom he loves. He tells Tonks that he is 'too old [...] too poor ... too dangerous' for her (Rowling 2005, p. 582) because of his werewolf status. Although they do marry, at one stage he regrets it because he has made her an 'outcast':

> *You don't know how most of the wizarding world sees creatures like me! When they know of my affliction, they can barely talk to me! Don't you see what I've done? Even her own family is disgusted by our marriage, what parents want their only daughter to marry a werewolf? And the child – the child [...] My kind don't usually breed! [...] how can I forgive myself, when I knowingly risked passing on my own condition to an innocent child? And if, by some miracle, it is not like me, then it will be better off, a hundred times so, without a father of whom it must always be ashamed!*
>
> <div align="right">(Rowling 2007, pp. 175-6)</div>

Lupin's problem can be managed, with potion or otherwise, but society does not want to manage it. Instead, it wants to isolate, control and oppress it. The Ministry of Magic requires that all werewolves be listed on a registry. Lupin is restricted by society: society's reaction to his werewolf status, his so-called disability, is one of fear, persecution, and control.

This is precisely what some disability studies scholars insist lies at the heart of oppression in disability in real life. McWhorter (2005) argues that our real world is governed by legislation, registration, and control, and we can apply her comments to Lupin's situation in *Harry Potter*:

> *power-knowledge networks that produce and regulate disability also produce and regulate ability, ableness, normality. The practices and institutions that divide, for example, the 'able-bodied,' 'sane,' and 'whole' from the 'impaired,' 'mentally ill,' and 'deficient' create the conditions under which all of us live.*
>
> <div align="right">(p. xv)</div>

Yet despite the restrictions placed on werewolves in this society, the werewolf figure resists control. Creed (2005) argues that the transformation from human to wolf frees the werewolf 'from the dictates of the law for the period of the transformation' (p. 133). Ward (2005) points out that in Lupin's case it is no use regulating werewolves because 'Lupin's inability to retain his conscious mind and rational self when transformed places him outside of the control of the systems that regulate society' (p. 5). As Ward notes, control is a central concern. Given this, we should not

overlook Tonks's own shapeshifting abilities, for she is a Metamorphmagus, able to change her physical appearance 'at will' (Rowling 2003, p. 52). Yet the issue appears to be just this choice and 'will': Tonks's ability is valued and represents the attainment of control (and is the result of internal, genetic inheritance) – similar to the Animagi, who control their ability to shift – while Lupin's werewolf is feared and represents the loss of control (the result of external, outside infection). The references to the werewolf's condition as an infection or 'contamination' (Rowling 2005, p. 580) also invoke the idea of an uncontrollable spread. Sontag (1991) has pointed out there is the 'potential of AIDS as a metaphor for contamination and mutation' because it is invasive, infectious, and associated with 'the specific imagery that surrounds viruses' (p. 153). Lupin's condition poses a serious threat to even his friends and family. He is dangerous to them, and their fear is thus justified. Reading his condition too literally as disability is therefore unhelpful; reading him as reflective of the social model of disability has more to offer.

As other critics, such as Ward (2005, 2009) and Green (2009) have noted, Lupin's werewolf opens up intriguing possibilities about resistance to fixed identity and borders, which we can relate here to disability. Lupin's character can challenge our ideas about normality and difference, a theme that has been highlighted in disability studies more generally:

> *Normality has a history, a set of investments, an entire array of supports and assumptions that bring it into being, sustain it, and alter it when conditions so demand. To look at our world as it is seen by disability activists and scholars [...] is to open ourselves to the possibility of imagining something new.*
>
> (McWhorter 2005, pp. xv-xvi)

This possibility of imagining something new is akin to fantasy's ability to open our eyes to new ideas, and this is perhaps Rowling's achievement in that she has placed the popular Lupin character as the symbol of society's ills. Lupin's compassion and mercy are in stark contrast to the bigoted and ignorant hatred that he receives, and this does suggest that the problem is perhaps society's reactions rather than Lupin's condition alone.

In her categories of werewolves, Chappell (2009) classifies Lupin as a 'sympathetic werewolf' (p. 26), distinct from other classes of werewolves (monstrous, benevolent, non-essentialist, and incommensurable). The sympathetic werewolf is characterised by a split identity where 'their wolf form [is] an undesired outbreak of monstrosity abhorrent to their human selves' (p. 24). Chappell argues that Lupin's representation is 'problematic' (p. 26):

> *The sympathetic werewolf can only be tolerated and is understandably socially excluded because the wolf remains objectively dangerous and distasteful. The schema thus maintains a negative representation of biological difference.*
>
> (p. 26)

Chappell reads Lupin's wolf in racial terms, but her point is applicable to disability and illness. Chappell also contends that the infectious nature of the werewolf state can suggest the threat of other races and recall eugenic and racial ideologies where the problem (the werewolf/ race) must be eliminated (p. 26). The issue remains that a direct equivalence of werewolf and race (or, in the

context of this paper, disability and illness) is an inherently flawed metaphor that cannot be sustained without serious objection, for the wolves in Rowling's world are not misunderstood people but are very real monsters who threaten the safety of humans. That is, there is some justification for fearing werewolves.

Indeed, where literature produces sympathetic representations of disability intended to inspire, some have argued that such depictions are patronising and recall offensive and racist ideas. For instance, Linton (2006) suggests that 'The popular phrase *overcoming a disability* is used most often to describe someone with a disability who seems competent and successful in some way' (p. 165):

> The expression is similar in tone to the phrase that was once commonly used to describe an African American who was considered exceptional in some way: 'He/she is a credit to his/her race.' The implication of this phrase is that the 'race' is somehow discredited and needs people with extraordinary talent to give the group the credibility that it otherwise lacks [...] the implication [is] that the group is inferior and that the individual is unlike others in that group.

(p. 165)

This can be applied to Rowling's work, where Lupin is very much portrayed as being 'exceptional' for a werewolf, unlike the other wolves in his goodness and humanity. Lest Lupin be reduced to an inspirational stereotype in the tradition that Linton labels offensive, however, Rowling gives him faults that undermine his status as a role model. He is morbidly aware of his own state and isolates himself because of it. At one point he abandons his pregnant wife because of his fear and self-loathing, although his actions are implicitly redeemed when he returns to his wife and they die as heroes in the final battle of the series. Nor is Lupin proactive in fighting for werewolf rights; instead he accepts rejection and remains silent, a passive reaction that Horne (2010) has pointed out is evident in other 'oppressed racial group[s]' in the novels (p. 93). Readers are thus unlikely to pity or sympathise with Lupin so much as admire those specific traits that make him far more human than all around him, including, at times, Harry himself.

While direct metaphors of werewolves and disability or illness offer little of value beyond objectionable inferences, returning to the concept of the social model of werewolves offers far more scope. The persecution and exclusion of Lupin can remind readers that society's treatment of those who are different is often ignorant and malicious. Sontag (1991) suggests that AIDS replaced cancer as a highly stigmatised disease, an 'illness which becomes identified with evil, and attaches blame to its "victims"' (p. 101). In this sense, using metaphors of (sympathetic) monstrosity may effectively highlight the unjustified stigmatisation faced by those with particular conditions. Rowling's reference to Lupin's werewolf as disability or illness thus interrogates constructions of normality and difference, creating a space where our own ideas and assumptions are subject to transformation, as is the werewolf. Rowling's work suggests that the problem of the werewolf – the disability, the illness – is indeed rather a problem of society's norms and attitudes. Although this challenge remains unresolved in the books, and despite the negative implications I have raised, the

werewolf in many ways nevertheless proves a powerful metaphor for Rowling to address her themes of difference and identity.

Jenny Hale's *Jatta*

Published in 2009, *Jatta* is the work of Australian author Jenny Hale. *Jatta* tells the story of a princess named Jatta in a fantasy kingdom called Alteeda. In this respect, the enclosed fantasy setting of this novel differs from Rowling's work, which uses a real world setting where the magical takes place unbeknownst to most people. Jatta is turning fourteen, and her mother was killed by wolves ten years ago, and now, as Jatta enters adolescence, she realises that she has become a werewolf – at each full moon she turns into a bloodthirsty wolf; in the morning she awakes, unable to remember.

Like the traditional werewolf, Hale's Jatta suffers from an inability to control herself when inhuman. She is a danger to those around her, even – and particularly – her family, who are closest to her. Unlike the angst-ridden emotive werewolves that populate so many children's and young adult texts today, Jatta's wolf is fierce and violent. Indeed, Jatta learns that the wolves were formed out of hatred:

> *In our tenth century A.M. the great Sorcerer Andro Mogon created a final punishment for our Isle's traitors: the wolf curse. Of all his curses, this be most terrible. His wolf continues in human form except on the three nights of the full moon. With the setting sun he transforms, having a wolf's instinct to hunt and a madman's passion. He kills throughout the night, first devouring his family and all who once loved him. All men detest him and drive him, if they can, from their midst. Even so, many fear a wolf's bite more than being devoured for, if King Brackensith commands it, the victim might also be cursed [...] taking inspiration from the monsters of his people's nightmares [...] the Dark Sorcerer's own contribution was deadliest, for the hatred that consumed his wolves was his own.*
>
> (pp. 31, 61-2)

Jatta's move into her teenage years is accompanied by her transformation into a wolf – her wolf 'emerged at puberty, when it should' (p. 334) – which suggests obvious parallels with female adolescence. In a discussion of masculinity and werewolves, Schell (2007) notes the significance of the adolescent theme in werewolf tales in that 'the tragic wolf man resonated with the coming of age of not just men but also women, with his loss of control, his recurring monthly "curse," and suddenly hairy body' (p. 112).

In *Jatta*, however, the werewolf functions less as a symbol of adolescence than a metaphor for disability and illness. On her website for the novel, Hale (n.d.) has linked the werewolf figure to the idea of disability:

I wanted to write a story about a princess with a disability, something that made her unpopular, something she had absolutely no control over. The afflictions that Jatta and Noriglade endure arouse my sympathy, even if most strangers would find them horrific and dangerous.

As in *Harry Potter*, Jatta's werewolf is dangerous to others, and therefore society's fears are in fact justified. Again, this makes a direct metaphor of werewolf as disability or illness problematic. However, Hale's reference to the negative reactions of others to Jatta's condition aligns her work with a social model of disability. This suggests that the problem is partly society's fault for its treatment of those who are disabled, or, in this case, werewolves. As with Lupin, the discovery of Jatta's status as werewolf isolates her from society, alienating her from family and friends. Wolves in Alteeda are feared and hated, and Jatta's condition excludes her from other people, despite being their princess. This is a blow to Jatta, who, even before the wolf, is shy and stammers (two features that again invoke disability in that shyness and anxiety are frequently described as 'crippling' or 'paralysing' experiences while stuttering is a speech disorder, an impediment). Her brother, Arthmael, calls her a 'freak' (p. 25), even though he alone stands by her.

In the earlier quote, Hale links the character of Jatta with Noriglade, a vampire, for their shared 'afflictions'. Noriglade is a vampire, one of the Undead, and Jatta's brother refers to Noriglade as having a 'handicap' (p. 344). Like the Hollywood vampires of other juvenile and adolescent texts that have saturated the market, Noriglade's beauty dazzles ordinary people; unlike such glamorous vampires, Noriglade hides her mouth full of black teeth and speaks of herself as a 'rotting, animated' corpse (p. 331). The reader's view of Noriglade is filtered through the eyes of Arthmael, who tells Noriglade: 'Listen, this is all new to me. Give me a chance. If I can adapt to Jay, I can adapt to you' (p. 328). It is clear that this is a problem of perceptions – it is Arthmael who must adapt and change his perceptions, not Noriglade.

The characters of Jatta and Noriglade thus reinforce the novel's interest in challenging perceptions. When Jatta meets Noriglade, she reacts with fear and horror in just the same way as those who have scorned Noriglade, unlike Lupin, whose interactions are tempered with compassion and kindness. However, Jatta's perceptions quickly shift as she attempts to accept Noriglade with the understanding she herself desires. Moreover, Jatta meets Noriglade in a different kingdom, Dartith, where werewolves and vampires are accepted by the ruling family: 'What lesser men dread, we royals embrace' (p. 334). In other words, a different social context provides a different social response to the same condition (although this theme is somewhat weakened by the fact that Dartith is a decidedly brutal place with little else to recommend it). While other themes may invoke the concept of overcoming disability – Noriglade is seen as unusually good for a vampire; she is 'nothing like other Undead' (p. 306) – in the sense that Linton (2006) argues against, it seems more useful to read the werewolf in *Jatta* as a challenge to ideas of normality and difference. The characters' shifting perceptions and contrasting experiences in Alteeda and Dartith are devices that add a layer of complexity by focusing on the concepts of difference and normality as subjective and cultural notions that can change over time and place.

The werewolf concept in *Jatta* differs to *Harry Potter* because the focus is more on the werewolf's battle with its condition and attempts to overcome it, rather than a passive resignation to the condition. There are also positive aspects to Jatta's journey. As she flees Alteeda and seeks a cure, she finds new confidence and discovers the true extent of her creative and imaginative powers. In the conclusion of the novel, Jatta transforms into a Sorceress and discovers her werewolf has disappeared. While it is difficult to interpret this, suggesting as it does that disability or illness can simply disappear, the close of *Jatta* leaves the protagonist with a new disability, one that Hale (2010) describes as an 'extreme sensitivity to touch' that makes physical contact painful.

Hale (2010) has explained that the wolf in *Jatta* is representative not only of disability but also illness. Arthmael tells Jatta that 'People are terrified of some epidemic' (Hale 2009, p. 59), and Jatta wonders about the castle being 'infected' and 'plague-ridden' (p. 31). In particular, the idea of cancer is evident in Jatta's wolf:

> *Eventually this tumour of hatred would prove lethal, would invade each human hour to murder her love for him. [...] This cancer of bloodlust was invading her soul. She felt it lurking silently inside to spread with the next wolf-moon. She was sinking, drowning, in dull, deadening hopelessness. She curled into a tighter ball. [...] Eventually she would be alone. Alone with her malignant, murderous wolf.*

(p. 365)

Here we see a metaphor of illness and cancer, but there is a second metaphor employed in that the cancer is a war. Words such as 'invade', 'invading', 'cancer of bloodlust', 'tumour of hatred' frame the illness (and the werewolf) as an invading enemy, attacking and destroying what it finds. This reflects common medical discourse where medical practice often draws on the language of war as patients and doctors 'fight' disease, where cancer cells 'attack' (Hodgkin 1985; Reisfield & Wilson 2004). Incidentally, the reverse is also true, where the language of war returns the favour by borrowing medical language such as clinical strikes and surgical bombings (De Leonardis 2008). Like Lupin, Jatta is able to 'pass' as human much of the time, or at least until others learn of her condition. As with the traditional concept of the split self in relation to the werewolf figure, cancer is often seen as a diminishing of the self (Sontag 1991, p. 98), and even in science fictional terms as a malicious external force, 'an invasion of "alien" or "mutant" cells' (Sontag 1991, p. 69). Jatta similarly feels like she is losing her 'self': 'It was only a matter of time, though. Her personality would decay [...] A black hole in Jatta's heart was expanding, swallowing her up. She would start to dissolve after next wolf-moon' (pp. 365, 388).

As others have noted, medical metaphors can be problematic. In Sontag's (1991) view, assigning too much meaning to illness can victimise those with the condition, robbing them of agency. The cultural meaning attributed to diseases may in fact deter patients from actively seeking and assessing treatment options:

> *the metaphoric trappings that deform the experience of having cancer have very real consequences: they inhibit people from seeking treatment early enough, or from making a greater effort to get competent treatment. The metaphors and myths, I was convinced, kill.*

[...] To regard cancer as if it were just a disease – a very serious one, but just a disease. Not a curse, not a punishment, not an embarrassment. Without 'meaning.'

<div align="right">(Sontag 1991, pp. 99-100)</div>

Likewise, Hodgkin (1985) points out that another metaphor of disease, 'diseases are objects', where the cancer is seen as an alien entity in the body, positions the doctors as active and the patients 'as mere vessels for disease [...] passive and less important than the disease itself' (pp. 1820-1). The metaphor of war, meanwhile, can be counterproductive when it comes to treating sick children, who 'associate war and battles with dying and death, so I think that is a pretty scary way to frame it for a child' (Penson et al. 2004, p. 710). We might wonder if framing the werewolf as a metaphor for disability, illness, cancer or AIDS is an equally difficult association for children to grasp. Despite this, *Jatta*'s success is in challenging perceptions and in focusing attention on society's treatment of those who are different.

Conclusion

It is worthwhile considering some of the positive and negative implications of linking disability and illness with the werewolf, a traditionally monstrous creature. Certainly there are difficult aspects of a literal reading. Given Fogelin's (1994) earlier stated distinction between similes and metaphors where metaphors provide implicit rather than explicit comparisons, it is more productive to dismiss literal attempts to read the werewolf as a metaphor for any of these conditions. Neither work sustains a literal reading because the werewolf figure remains dangerous, a malevolent force of contamination and monstrosity. For this reason, the werewolf will always fail as a direct metaphor for minority groups.

Yet *Harry Potter* and *Jatta* are two works that succeed in critiquing society's perceptions of normality and difference. The social model of werewolves shows that society's reaction to disability and illness can be ignorant and misplaced, and that the real monstrosity might just be located in particular social norms and concepts of difference. While the works discussed in this paper do not attempt to solve this problem, the werewolf figure nonetheless provides an intriguing way to conceptualise disability and illness in the social context. Despite the negative implications of rendering disability and illness as fantastical creatures, the werewolf as metaphor reminds readers that society's treatment of those it deems outside the norm (the disabled, the chronically ill) is not always justified, morally right, or even helpful. Indeed, such a metaphor of monstrosity suggests that society itself can become the monster, rather than those who wear the label.

Acknowledgements

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