

THE WAKE



PAUL KINGSNORTH

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The Wake

Paul Kingsnorth

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About the author

Paul Kingsnorth is the author of two non-fiction books, *One No, Many Yeses* (2003), and *Real England* (2008), and a collection of poetry, *Kidland* (2011). A former journalist and deputy editor of *The Ecologist* magazine, he has won several awards for his poetry and essays. In 2009, he co-founded the Dark Mountain Project, an international network of writers, artists and thinkers in search of new stories for troubled times. Much of his writing can be found online at paulkingsnorth.net. *The Wake* is his first novel.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Non-fiction

One No, Many Yeses

Real England

Uncivilisation

Poetry

Kidland and other poems

Contents

[The Wake](#)

[A partial glossary](#)

[A note on language](#)

[A note on history](#)

[Sources](#)

*I have persecuted the natives of England beyond all reason.
Whether gentle or simple I have cruelly oppressed them.
Many I unjustly disinherited; innumerable multitudes
perished through me by famine or the sword.
Having gained the throne of that kingdom by so many
crimes,
I dare not leave it to anyone but God.*

Deathbed confession of Guillaume le Bâtard, 1087

England is become the residence of foreigners and the property of strangers...they prey upon the riches and vitals of England; nor is there any hope of a termination of this misery.

William of Malmesbury, 1125



*the night was clere though i slept i seen it. though i slept i
seen the calm hierde naht only the still. when i gan down to
sleep all was clere in the land and my dreams was full of
stillness but my dreams did not cepe me still*

*when i woc in the mergen all was blaec though the night
had gan and all wolde be blaec after and for all time. a
great wind had cum in the night and all was blown then
and broc. none had thought a wind lic this colde cum for all
was blithe lifan as they always had and who will hiere the
gleoman when the tales he tells is blaec who locs at the
heofon if it brings him regn who locs in the mere when
there seems no end to its deopness*

*none will loc but the wind will cum. the wind cares not
for the hopes of men*

*the times after will be for them who seen the cuman
the times after will be for the waecend*

who is thu

who is thu i can not cnaw

what is anglanþ to þu what is left of anglanþ
i specs i specs
but no man lystens

songs
the songs from the holt

songs yes here is songs from a land forheawan folded
under by a great slege a folc harried beatan a world brocen
apart. all is open lic a wound unhealan and grene the world
open and grene all men apart from the heorte. deofuls in
the heofon all men with sweord when they sceolde be with
plough the ground full not of seed but of my folc

aefry ember of hope gan lic the embers of a fyr brocen in
the daegs beginnan brocen by men other than us. hope falls
harder when the end is cwic hope falls harder when in the
daegs before the storm the stillness of the age was writen
in the songs of men

so it is when a world ends
who is þu i can not cnaw but i will tell þu this thing
be waery of the storm
be most waery when there is no storm in sight

feoht
tell them
feoht

loc it is well cnawan there is those wolde be tellan lies and those with only them selfs in mynd. there is those now who specs of us and what we done but who cnawan triewe no man cnawan triewe but i and what i tell i will tell as i sceolde and all that will be telt will be all the triewth. triewth there is lytel of now in this half broc land our folc wepan and greotan and biddan help from their crist who locs on in stillness saen naht. and no triewth will thu hier from the hore who claims he is our cyng or from his biscops or those who wolde be his men by spillan anglisc guttas on anglisc ground and claiman anglisc land their own

ah but we is broc now dreaned we is too small to feoht mor we has borne it too hard we secs now only to lif. and if there is any left who thincs to lif after his triewth or after the laws of the crist if there is any thincs him self abuf this through luf or through mildness of heorte then he will die with his wif and his cildren for all is broc now

all is broc

still i will stand and i will tell the triewth the triewth of what i done and for what i was feohtan and how i was brocen by those ficol hores what i stood and cwelled for. i has not forgot i has cept it for there is micel must be telt and words now is left my only waepens and none wolde sae i has efer been afeart to wield what waepens i has

because of what is wispred it moste be telt what befell

i was a socman of the blaec fenns a free man of the eald danelagh where there was no ealdors too high for the folc to cum to and if they wolde pull down. thu wolde not cnaw

it to see me now my nebb blaec all is broc a lif in fenn and
holt but i was a free man of anglan a man of parts in my
land i was born this way i is still a free man i is still a free
man

to them i wants to cnaw it i is named buccmaster of
holland

the songs will be sung for a thousand years

our fathers was freer than us our fathers fathers stalcced
the wilde fenns now the fenns is bean tamed efry thing gets
smaller. for efry cilde born there is sum new law a man
sceolde be free and alone on his land the world sceolde not
cum in until he ascs it. freedom sceolde there be in anglan
again lic there was in the eald daegs in the first daegs of
the anglisc

freedom in anglan

now if this bastard is gifan to lif the fenns will be succd of
the sea and gifan to the land gifan ofer to man and the gods
of the secg and the water will die and the spirit of our folc
in these lands will die. the wilde will be tacan from these
fenns and the wilde will be tacan from in me for in efry man
there is the wind and the water and his worc until he is
tacan is to cepe the wilde lands from the tamers

cwell the bastard

cwell the bastard

cwell the bastard

in these places there is wihts uncnawan to man there
moste be no law put on us by sweord or by word of ingenga
cyng

bastard tamer with stan and style the wilde is all

wood not stan

it will tac thu baec

water not the lea

it can wait long

the hafoc not the ox

but we colde not wait long we colde wait no mor

an unfree land breeds an unfree folc

and i moste go baec now baec before the storm baec to
when things was still lic the springmere

go baec yes

go baec



see i had cnawan yfel was cuman when i seen this fugol
glidan ofer

a great blaec fugol it was not of these lands it flown slow
ofer the ham one daeg at the time of first ploughan. its
necc was long its eages afyr and on the end of its fethra
was a mans fingors all this i seen clere this was a fugol of
deofuls. in stillness it cum and slow so none may miss it or
what it had for us. this was eosturmonth in the year when
all was broc

what is this fugol i saes to my wifman

i cnaw naht of fugols she saes why does thu asc me of
these things

wifman i saes lysten this is sum scucca glidan ofer us
what does thu mac of this

naht she nefer saes naht

i tell thu sum thing is cuman

sum thing is cuman she saes lic specan my words will
scut the mouth they cum from. sum times this wif she
needed laws though there was many wimman things she
was learned in. it is not a mans job to spec of the loom nor
the water pael nor to asc of brewan nor of reapan all these
things my wif done well and in stillness. many was called to
beat their wifs mor than i many there was whose cildren

ran wilder sum whose wifmen was drifan nacod from their
hus for the fuccan of their neighbours behind the raecs at
haerfest but this wif of mine most times she was a good wif
only she did not lysten

it is no good to spec to thu i saes these is not wifman
things i will spec to sum other

what thu wysc my husbond she saes

so what i done i gan to the ham. my land and my hus was
apart from the ham as is right for a socman this land was
good land good ground it was the land of my father i will
not spec of my father to thu

i was no i is a socman of holland a part of the scir of
lincylene where the ground was blaec and good and deop.
our ham was an ealond in the fenns on all sides the wilde
on all sides the dabdic the water wulf the lesch and the
deorc waters. our folc cnawan this place lic we cnawan our
wifmen and our cildren. we cnawan fiscan and fowlan the
gathran of the lesch the ploughan and the pannan of the
salt we cnawan the paths through the fenns the ways with
the ael and the alor mastors we was of the blaec lands

so i will go to the ham i saes to my wifman and i will asc
what the gerefa macs of this fugol. she was wefan on her
great loom in my great hus as i left this hus was sum thing
to see. raised of ac timber it was the roof laid with secg
from the fenn all carfan on the door frames wyrms and the
runes of the eald times. treen we had and sum seolfor
things a great crocc greater than many in the ham many
men was lustan after my hus

three oxgangs of good land i had and two geburs to worc for me on it and four oxen of my own for the plough this was mor than any other man in this ham. baerlic i had and rye sceap and hors also i had swine pasture holt my own water aeppels on many good treows

a great man i was in my ham all cnawan me a seat i had on the wapentac and free i was from the worc of other men. this was my land it was my fathers land i will not spec of my father. geld wolde i gif but only to the cyng not to the thegn. sum lytel worc wolde i do for the thegn for this was how things was but no man was ofer me no man will be ofer me

socmen was free men socmen is free men still. in other parts of angland men was thralls in thrall to the thegn their land their lifs gifen to ealdors and higher men and now to the frenc men but not in holland not in lincylene not in the east. free men we was in the fenncs free on our land free men we is still naht will mof us not the frenc

i was specan of this fugol i will not spec yet of the frenc

i gan through my lands i gan along the path to the ham where there was six hus six cynns most not free men with land but with micel owed to the thegn. when i was seen these men was always in awe

buccmaster they all saes gretans to thu buccmaster

sum times i wolde sae naht to this for i was a socman with my own lands with three oxgangs and they was thralls but this daeg this fugol was in my thincan

what of this fugol i saes what of this fugol thu has seen
this yes

fugol they saes fugol. dumb lic hunds was these men
this fugol i saes this great blaec fugol cuman ofer
fugol

oft i lost my mynd with them

the heofon is full of eorcas this daeg has thu men seen
naht

well saes one jalf was his name sum gebur he was sum
esol not free. well saes this jalf there is many fugols here of
course buccmaster it is odd thu sceolde spec of one when
all is the same to mine eages

fewer of these fugols wolde be better saes sum other
they eats my beans

there is noddan at this. fewer fugols saes all these esols
has thu no eages thu nithings blind thu moste all be blind
of course they saes naht to this only locs at their feet

thu wasts my time thu geburs where is ecceard find me
ecceard

ecceard was the gerefa of this ham in sum ways a man to
tac care around. he colde tac geld or spec of thu to the
thegn micel colde he do to harry thu if he ceos. but ecceard
was also a plough owner of sum greatness ecceard wolde
cnaw about this fugol

ecceard was in his hus doan naht drincan ealu only
sittan. his hus was smaller than my hus though he was
gerefa his floor all straw not clene his windows smaller his
fyr smaller though his ealu was well brewed

it is a good lif as gerefafa yes ecceard

buccmaster thu is well cum here it is always good to see
an eornost man

has thu not worc ecceard sum geburs to harry sum hors
to loc at sum geld to tac from sum eornost man

has thu cum here to tell me my worc buccmaster

i jocs i saes and i laughs. no i has cum here to spec with
thu of this fugol

the great buccmaster cums to spec to me of fugols well
this is an odd daeg

now lysten i saes i is sic of this ham. lysten i was standan
in my feld and abuf me passed this great blaec fugol this
was a scort time baec. this fugol its eages were afyr it had
arms lic any man it spac to me lysten. this fugol i seen it it
was glidan ofer the ham there is sum thing cuman

a fugol of the deoful then saes ecceard well these is sum
tidans indeed

this is no cristian fugol

there is no cristian fugols ofer thy land buccmaster

do not joc with me ecceard this is a graef thing

none wolde dare joc with thu buccmaster of holland my
wise freond. well sceal we send to the preost to ring the
bell or sceal we call to the thegn to cum and hiere us spec
of fugols or sceal we call a moot of the wapentac to thinc
on this. it may be we colde mac this fugol gif geld for its
misdeeds

does thu mocc me ecceard

buccmaster i moccs thu only with mildness

this fugol was an yfel thing

well i has seen no fugol none here has seen such a fugol
buccmaster or i wolde haf hierde of it. men in this ham thu
cnawan them sum hara passan through their baerlic at
night they tacs as a word from crist their cildren coughs
and it is the deoful specan. a specan bird with eages of fyr
if this had cum here i colde not cepe down the madness
across all this scir

it was a word but not from the crist

then what sceolde i do buccmaster about this thing what
wolde thu haf me do

sum thing is cuman ecceard

what wolde thu haf me do tell me what is cuman

this is what i want to cnaw

then go buccmaster and loc to the heofon again and it
may be thy fugol will tell thu

well ecceard was no help these geburs they was no help
the smith the fuccan preost the cottars none seen this
fugol. this is why i is a man of greatness while others still
lifs off water snaecs from the fenn these men has no eages
in their fuccan heafods. o fugol they saes o buccmaster has
thu hierde he talcs of sum fugol o

next month it was

next fuccan month they cums to me and now there is no
smerc on their nebbs

not three wices after the fugol and now buccmaster is
sum wis man

next fuccan month we seen the star

a grene treow will be heawan in two and one half of this treow will be tacan awaeg three furlongs and there planted deop in anglisc ground. and not until this treow is hol again and bers aeppels again with no help from man will anglanð be hol also for thy god has ceosan this folc to feel his wrath

synn is upon this grene land biscops moccs the word of god earls fucc in the sight of the crist ceorls drincs ealu and is druncen. there is deop synn all through this land and thu will be strac down o anglanð for what thu has done

i see in the heofon a haeric star this star will beorn for eight daegs and nine nights gods hand is upon thu the word of his wrath is upon thu. and in my bed my death bed now two capd men of the crist i sees and they specs to me

o edweard cyng they saes o ealdor of anglanð thy folc is in thrall to the eald deorc deoful they has wandred from the path and now the lord will stric them down. soon thy sawol will be tacan o edweard cyng and thu will be gifted the cyngdom of heofon for thy worc but on thy folc there will cum a great fear. the sea will teorn to blud and braec upon thy southern strand and thy cyngdom will be gifan into the hands of the deoful for this be his will

o what can be done i saes to them what can be done for my poor folc and they saes there is naht to be done edweard cyng that thu has not done by now through thy triewe cristian luf. the treow will be heawan it is the will of

*the crist and time alone and death will bring it together. lie
in thy bed o cyng of men and cum now to the end that will
bring thu to the wide felds of heofon and thy folc to the
open gaets of hel*

when we was in the brunnesweald nebbes all blaec hydan in
the grene holt lic the afeart bucc oft i was thincan of my
grandfather. a great man he was strong in all he wolde
weep to see what angland has becum. efen he strong man
that he was wolde weep lic a cilde to see us hidan there
runnan from ingengas in our own land that is no longer our
own land

tales he wolde tell me of many things. of the great scips
he seen cuman in from the sea with the wilde denes all afyr
callan for the blud of their gods. of eald aethelred cyng he
who broc us of the great death at maldon the sea druncen
with anglisc blud. of cnut who was denisc then becum
anglisc and other tales from farther baec of the time of his
grandfather of great aelfred and of aethelstan of the eald
wundors of angland

of this haeric star i was specan but my grandfather a
great tall man he was hwit beard hwit haer his own sweord
all on the beam of his hus what becum my hus. he wolde
spec micel of the eald daegs of the anglisc of our folcs
cuman here to these grene lands from across the wid sea.
and those daegs he wolde always sae those daegs was best

for our folc for we was as one agan the ingenga and we was free. no thegns there was then no preosts no crist no cyng of anglanþ but free men alone in the wilde tacan the land men in freodom not in thrall. marc this he saes this is how anglanþ moste always be gif no geld lysten to no law if þu can run from it for always they will cum to tac from þu what is thine always the geref a the thegn the wapentac the eorl the cyng always this thought is in them what can i get from these free men how can i tac from them and cepe them down. mor years of this saes my grandfather mor years of this and we will be thralls lic the wealsc tac heed

þu will see why i tells þu these things but lysten now the haeric star

o but why sceolde i spec now of these things why sceolde i tell þu all is gan now all is too laet. what can cum now by specan of these things at efry teorn the gods was agan us

for so long i felt sum thing was cuman try to lif thy lif when sum thing is cuman when ahead of þu on the path is sum deorcness. try to lif lic this none can lif lic this the deorcness waitan for þu i will not tell þu mor i can not

no i will go on i will tell it i moste

it is early in the mergen it is gan eostur now when the land waecens from winter all the land is cuman open all is grene and waecnan. water crows is callan in the fenn the alor treow is grene haras is in the felds fugols in the water and the heofon there is micel goodness here beyond what man has macd. my folc was in the fenns before the crist cum to anglanþ this ground is in our bodigs deop

two geburs i had to worc for me on my land these geburs was bound first to my father they did not loc up to him none did but they locd up to me for what i done. they was bound to me two daegs in efry wice and three daegs at haerfest

this mergen early with the sunne high in the heofon the wind clene a wundor it is to be in the fenns in these times a wundor it was before the beornan cum. this mergen i was on my land i was sean to my geburs they was sawan flax. one man he was called gamel i had put him to haro the blaec ground with blaec thorn twigges the other he was called asger he was sawan the seed after. this asger i moste tac care of always for he was an esol of a man. bound to me he was but it wolde be better sum times for my swine to do this worc so dumb was he

thu will haf my wifman to answer to if this does not cum up i saes to this gebur. my wifman she colde spin flax from all of anglan so micel linen does she mac if there is no flax i will haf no scyrte and thu will haf no hands a blue feld i wants to see two month from now. asger he saes naht to this only locs at me. to be triewe to him i wolde haf to sae that asger is a good man though with no wifman and no cildren thus he must worc for me but his hus is not the wyrst still he is a gebur and dumb lic a hund

there was a barn by my hus and ofer the winter sum timber had gan rotin and i was needan to see to this. i was about to be leafan this asger to his luc when i hierde the

sound of folc from the path what cum ofer the fenn from the ham

buccmaster cums this call buccmaster and ecceard is cuman up to me under the welig and alor treows from the west and not alone. ecceard has with him two men from the wapentac of course i is thincan they is cuman to put sum thing on me

this is my ground ecceard i saes and there is naht thu has on me. i can find twentig oath helpers in one daeg to spec agan what efer thu puts on me do not cum here with these men to afryht me on my own ground my grandfathers sweord is in my hus i is a free man

ecceard cums to me with these two ealdors eadbert it is from crugland where there is a great abbodrice and also lidmann of the holt by durwins water. these is high men of the wapentac nefer has i seen them near this ham befor

buccmaster of holland saes ecceard thu is thincan wrong now loc thu cnawan these men. he is right i cnawan these men lic them i has a seat on the wapentac as a great man i greets them well now as i seen they is cum in freondscipe

buccmaster saes ecceard how is it thu is worcan on thy ground lic it is any daeg

thy ham is all afeart saes this lidmann all hams in these parts is

sum thing is cuman saes ecceard this is what thu saed buccmaster thu spac to me of sum fugol and i mocced thu well it colde be this was wrong of me

it cannot be seen from this ground saes eadbert he is
locan to the heofon all these treows

lic him i locs to the heofon then and my geburs they locs
too

the fugol is baec i saes does thu smerc now ecceard

no saes ecceard no there is no fugol cum with me we
moste go a lytel way. he walcs then ofer to my hus and past
my hus and my barn we gan beyond the ox hege and to the
east of the strips to the ecg of the holt where i has my
swine

now loc saes ecceard and i locs baec ofer to where these
geburs sceolde be sawan my flax but they has cum with me
and i cannot harm them now for the heofon has sum thing
greater for all of us and it is scinan lic another sunne efen
in the daegs bryhtness

what is this fuccan thing i saes

this is a haeric star saes lidmann buccmaster of holland it
is cum to spec to us

we is telt thu seen sum other sign before saes eadbert a
fugol

this is triewe i saes it was wid lic a hus it spac to me it
breathed fyr it saed buccmaster of holland sum thing is
cuman

this fugol spac thy name saes eadbert in sum wundor. of
course i colde haf saed mor but loc at this haeric star. the
daeg was high and clere but this star it was bright lic the
mona as if it was mid night and lic the mona it cum ofer the
heofon and from it a tael lic fethras

we has spoc to the preost saes eadbert he has hierde
from the biscop this haeric star it is bad for angland

the preost i saes thu might as well spec to my oxen

buccmaster thu will not spec these things to the men of
the wapentac saes ecceard and he specs to me lic it is a
warnan

it is the cyng saes lidmann then and he specs lic a man
what is dragged from water

what saes ecceard

it is this cyng the crist is agan him

spec not this way of our cyng saes eadbert

well there is none to hie in this fenn the biscop specs
thus when there is none to hie. this cyng he is not of
cyngs blud he brings the frenc man and the dene on us for
his corona now there is this haeric star the crist is tellan us
our cyng has synned

harald godwineson is our cyng saes ecceard gifan the
corona by a witan of triewe anglisc men. who wolde thu haf
as thy cyng there is none other he is an anglisc man a man
of wessex not to be tacan from his place by ingengas

the crist will tac him if he ceoses saes lidmann there has
not been a thing lic this in angland that any lifan has seen.
fugols specan to thy socman here now this haeric star in
the heofon

sum thing is cuman i saes i has telt thu

then it may be sige saes ecceard sige for angland

thu will lysten next time ecceard i saes

this is from the deoful saes lidmann it is from the deoful