



CURIOUS MATTERS

Transgressing Boundaries: On Wolves & Werewolves

WEDNESDAY 11 JUNE 5.30PM-8.30PM

THE GRANT MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY, UCL
THE ROCKEFELLER BUILDING, 21 UNIVERSITY STREET, LONDON

Human-wolf relationships have evolved throughout history in response to cultural, social, geographic, religious and environmental circumstances. Wolves have been feared and reviled, venerated and preserved, as well as being the subject of folktales, myths, fiction, films and artworks. Indeed humanity's historic proximity to wolves, and fear of wolf attacks, contributed to the emergence of stories of people becoming-wolf, taking on the feared and beastly characteristics of these creatures in the form of werewolves. However, the proliferation of these tales, and beliefs that some attacks were perpetrated by werewolves, appeared to wane as wolves were gradually eradicated as a pest and a threat. Vehement hunting, trapping and poisoning culminated in this animal being wiped out in the UK and across much of Europe and America, and many species of wolf became listed as endangered.

Yet today, at a time when conservation efforts have resulted in the reintroduction of wolves to American national parks, European wolf populations are becoming reestablished, and conservationists, agriculturists and the general public continue to deliberate the rewilding of wolves in the UK – all amongst much controversy – the werewolf proliferates throughout art and popular culture. Could ambivalent attitudes towards wolves – should we fear them or conserve them, are they a threat or an asset – result in the resurgence of interest in the werewolf?

This interdisciplinary event, organised by Sarah Wade, explores the entanglements of human and animal, wild and domestic, fact and fiction, which might be embodied in both human attitudes towards wolves and the myth of the werewolf.

Participants include: Carys Crossen (literature and pop culture scholar, University of Manchester), Andrew Dodds (artist, London), Garry Marvin (Professor of Human-Animal Studies, University of Roehampton), Caroline Oates (The Folklore Society/The Warburg Institute), Mark Pilkington (Strange Attractor Press) and a show reel of werewolf transformations by Stephanie Scaife (film writer and blogger at *Brutal as Hell*, London).

Please register to attend by emailing sarah.wade.13@ucl.ac.uk

Transgressing Boundaries: On Wolves & Werewolves - Programme

5.30-5.45pm Sarah Wade: Welcome and introduction

Part One: Wolves

5.50-6.10pm Garry Marvin - Wolf: A Social and Cultural Creature

In this talk I would like to offer some thoughts on how and why the wolf has been admired and revered in some societies and cultures and feared and reviled in others. In particular I will focus on how, in specific cultures, the image of the wolf shifted from that of being a natural hunter to that of an unnatural predator. This image of the wolf is one of an intrusive and transgressive animal with an unnatural appetite – a creature onto which people could project concerns about cruelty, evil and the threat of the wild.

6.15-6.35pm Andrew Dodds - Paradise Regained: Reintroducing the Irish Wolf

Artist Andrew Dodds's durational, engaged project, *Paradise Regained*, is at once speculative yet pragmatic. From 2011 to 2012, Dodds worked with, and in, a small rural community in western Ireland to explore the possibility of reintroducing the wolf to the Irish landscape. Purportedly extinct since the late 18th century the wolf has continued to loom large in Irish mythology and identity. Through public meetings, talks by specialists and the artist's own role 'between disciplines', *Paradise Regained* sought to explore the wider social and cultural resonances the wolves' return might affect. Ultimately political in terms of gently prodding imminent notions of civic mindedness and social re-assembly – what Bruno Latour has called the 'not yet' – the proposition conjures a physical and psychological place in which we might remodel our relationship with and amongst 'nature'.

6.40-6.55pm BREAK

Part Two: Werewolves

7.00-7.15pm Mark Pilkington - On Sabine Baring-Gould's *The Book of Werewolves (1865)*

7.20-7.40pm Carys Crossen - "A Slut, a Bitch, a Tease and the Virgin Next Door": The (Unchanging?) Female Werewolf in Film and Television

The female werewolf is a comparative rarity onscreen, in a medium in which the lycanthrope is traditionally encoded as male. She does not appear at all in such supernatural horror franchises as the *Underworld* series, and appears as a solitary aberration in the figure of Leah Clearwater in the *Twilight* saga. However, when she does appear onscreen, in films such as *The Ginger Snaps* franchise and *An American Werewolf in Paris*, the female werewolf is a compelling figure, a femme fatale, a predatory female, the monstrous feminine with uncontrollable appetites...

Angela Carter once made the observation that whilst a 'bad man' may be a liar, a bankrupt or a murderer, a bad or ruined woman is invariably a sexually active one, a rule that largely holds true in contemporary Hollywood (especially in the horror film, where having sex is an offence punishable by death). So, is the female werewolf, the ultimate bad girl – socially unacceptable, violent, promiscuous and even murderous – yet another metaphor for sexual (female) transgression? This paper aims to explore whether the female werewolf is limited by her sexuality, condemned to be a (literal) bitch or a slut, or whether female lycanthropy is beginning to be utilised in representing new modes of feminine deviance. Can a woman, even if she is a

werewolf, ever be something other than “a slut, a bitch, a tease or the virgin next door” in popular culture – or are they still invariably defined by their sexuality?

7.45-8.00pm Show reel of werewolf transformations in film - compiled by Stephanie Scaife

8.00-8.30pm Panel discussion and Q&A with participants - featuring Caroline Oates (The Folklore Society).

8.30-9.00pm Drinks

Participant Bios

Carys Crossen studied for her PhD in English and American Literature at the University of Manchester and currently teaches at the same university. Her research interests include Victorian literature, postcolonial literature, feminist theory, The Gothic and monster theory – werewolves being her favourite topic of study.

Andrew Dodds is a Belfast-born artist now working and living in London. His work is exhibited and commissioned by major public museums and galleries including Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead; the Architecture Centre, Bristol; the Natural History Museum, London; Gallery 400, Chicago; Azad Gallery, Tehran, among many others. Mark Dion described Dodds's recent book *I, Sparkie*, (Information as Material, 2013), which explores the archives and cultural resonances of Sparkie Williams (b.1958–d.1964) the world champion talking budgerigar, as "a beautiful..., marvelous and complex case study in the culture of nature". Further information at www.andrewdodds.com.

Garry Marvin is a social anthropologist and Professor of Human-Animal Studies at the University of Roehampton, London. He is particularly interested in how animal identities are socially and culturally constructed and in how human-animal relationships are developed and are experienced by the human participants. He has conducted research into, and published on, bullfighting in Spain, zoos, foxhunting in England, and hunters' trophies. Among his recent publications is *Wolf* (2012, Reaktion Books, London) – a book that explores historical, social and cultural issues of human-wolf relationships.

Caroline Oates is a librarian at The Folklore Society. Caroline completed her PhD *Trials of Werewolves in the Franche-Comté in the Early Modern Period* at The Warburg Institute and has subsequently taught courses on Magic & Myth in Medieval and Early Modern Europe at Goldsmiths.

Mark Pilkington founded and runs Strange Attractor Press, he also programmes and curates its events and exhibitions. He is the author of two books, *Mirage Men* (now a feature documentary film) and *Far Out: 101 Strange Tales from Science's Outer Edge*. Further information at www.strangeattractor.co.uk.

Stephanie Scaife is a horror nerd, freelance film journalist, screenwriter and blogger at *Brutal As Hell*.

Sarah Wade is working on her PhD *Reintroducing Wonder: Contemporary Artistic and Curatorial Engagements with Wildlife* in the Department of History of Art at UCL. She is particularly interested in how borders between humans and animals, human-animal relations and ideas of 'becoming animal' might be productive sites for experiencing wonder today.