

Putting the Luna in 'Lunatic': Werewolves, Wild Spaces and the Feral State of Madness

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This paper will investigate the relationship between the werewolf, the wild spaces it inhabits and the Feral state of madness, primarily through analysis of two contemporary texts: *The Wolfman* (Johnston, 2010) and *Dog Soldiers* (Marshall, 2002).

The Feral State is one of the three states of madness present in horror/science-fiction/fantasy texts. It is characterised by a savage wildness; in both appearance and behaviour the Feral lunatic is chaotic, animalistic and dishevelled. I argue that those in the Feral State as associated with werewolves in that their strange and brutal metamorphosis (traditionally catalysed by the moon) results in a beast, driven by primal desires and free from moral and social constraints.

The werewolf and the Feral lunatic share a liminal space. They are both unhuman; a hybrid beyond human but not quite fully creature. Their behaviour is unpredictable and their transformations linked with the overriding reaches of ancient and innate myths. Therefore, they commonly appear in Wild Spaces: the untameable forest and the inhospitable moorlands directly reflecting the mental landscape of those in the Feral state.

The Wild Spaces the wolf calls home are chaotic, savage, uncontrollable and unstoppable. Additionally, they are actively antagonistic, trapping and deceiving anyone unfortunate enough to cross their borders. In werewolf cinema, the camera acts as the predatory eye of the Wild Space, staring at human prey from high angles or peering out from behind vegetation. Anyone entering these spaces is either destroyed or gives in to their wilder instincts, falling victim to a primal unconscious - the "Beast Within" – and an intoxicating Dionysian insanity.

Despite the ideal of Nature as a healing entity found in Romantic literature, Bruno Bettelheim notes that deep suspicion of the forest is woven into our ideology through fairytale. This is compounded by Carol Clover's work on the Urbanoid horror film. Werewolf texts manipulate both these theories in order to culture the uncanny and irresistible Wild Space. Nature here is both savage and healing, cathartic and catastrophic, symbiotic and

antagonistic. But ultimately, it is all-consuming and claims the “lost”, whether these are lunatics who have become lost from reality or themselves, or simply the outsider who has strayed too far into the woods.

Works cited:

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Clover, Carol J, *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992)

Dr Catherine Pugh is an independent scholar, who completed her PhD at the University of Essex in 2014. Her research interests lie in the area of the transformative properties of cinematic insanity and real-life mental illness in regard to the body and external landscapes, which her thesis, entitled ‘Unhuman Borderlands: Madness, Metamorphic Monsters and Landscape in Contemporary Horror Films’, explores. She is also the author of several plays produced at the Lakeside Theatre, Colchester, and is currently writing her first novel.

1. The Changing Role of Dogs and Wolves in Mythology and Horror
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Abstract Two

This paper will discuss the rich and engaging history between the canine beasts and dog gods of ancient civilisations, the wild black dogs of folklore, the hypnotic wolves of fairytales, the brutal, vicious attack dogs of historical atrocities and the domestic dog-companions of contemporary horror.

The dogs that stalk the liminal places of British and Irish folklore are found on borders, crossroads, ley lines, graveyards and thresholds. In some texts they provide comfort and protection, in others they are little more than menacing, blood-thirsty beasts. They are symbols of both loyalty and of the barbaric. As they pad along the thin line between purity and depravity they act as a bridge between the extremes of our “good” civilised selves and our instinctual, primitive, rage-filled “bad” selves. Dogs and wolves are traditionally associated with the darker side of the supernatural; linked with death and melancholy.

Many different breeds of dog are used in horror films; however, there is a prevalence – particularly in contemporary film – for German Shepherds. Visually, they are reminders of the horror aspects of the wolf: big and powerful with bushy tails, long muzzles, erect ears, thick fur and strong jaws. Historically, they are associated with intimidation and torture. This is not to suggest that they are the only breeds of dog used in horror, nor that the breed itself is aggressive, but the frequency of their appearance, along with the changing role of the dogs in recent cinema, suggests that there is a more complex relationship with dogs – and by extension, wolves and werewolves – than at first glance.

Traditionally domestic dogs have mostly been cast simply as a tool used by the villain in order to intimidate or attack their victims, or as a savage beast let loose on the world. However, dogs can also be the victims themselves, or act as a substitute “human” character. Additionally, these companion dogs also act as guides for the protagonist, acting as a

reminder that survival in horror can sometimes depend on accessing a more instinctual, animalistic nature. The dogs of contemporary horror are associated with both aggression and victimisation, prone to outbursts of external (violence) and internal (emotional) trauma.