

'I'm Hairy on the Inside': Defining the Werewolf and the Nature of Lycanthropy in Contemporary Fiction

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What is a werewolf? Chantal Bourgault Du Coudray asserts that 'a werewolf is a human being who changes into a wolf.'¹ Charlotte F. Otten suggests much the same thing, stating that a werewolf is 'one who has literally been transformed from a human being into a wolf.'² This is the accepted definition of the werewolf – but how then do we explain a text like Hermann Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, featuring the man-wolf Harry Haller, who never actually undergoes a physical transformation? What about Angela Carter's 'Wolf-Alice', and Jill Paton Walsh's *Knowledge of Angels*, both of which feature human girls raised by wolves? And what about Jennifer Lynn Barnes's *Raised by Wolves* series, in which the alpha of a werewolf pack, Bryn, is fully human – but as strong and fierce as any lycanthrope?

This paper will examine whether or not the traditional definition of the werewolf is still an adequate one to apply to lycanthropes in popular culture, or whether or not it needs to be expanded to include these new werewolves, who do not alter forms but who cannot accurately be described as 'only' human. It will examine mostly contemporary texts, though it will also refer to modernist texts such as *Steppenwolf* and records from Medieval times in an effort to answer some questions. Where does the boundary between humanity and wolfishness really lie? And can the terms 'werewolf' and 'lycanthrope' be accurately applied to those who may be wolfish in spirit but who do not, or cannot, physically transform?

Carys Crossen received her PhD in English and American studies from the University of Manchester in 2012, and is currently studying for an MA in Library and Information Management at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her preferred areas of research are the Gothic, feminist theory, the Victorian era, and anything to do with monsters and the

¹ Chantal Bourgault Du Coudray, *The Curse of the Werewolf: Fantasy, Horror, and the Beast Within* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2006), p. 1.

² Charlotte F. Otten, 'Introduction', in *A Lycanthropy Reader: Werewolves in Western Culture*, ed. by Charlotte F. Otten (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986), pp. 1-17 (p. 1)

monstrous, though werewolves are her favourite topic of study. Publications to date include a chapter on Victorian female werewolves and an article on the *Twilight* series, and she is currently working on her first monograph (on werewolves, of course).