

## Dog-Faced Deities, Wolf Mothers and other Canine Women from Classical Myth, and their Representations in Modern Popular Culture

Dr Amanda Potter

The Open University

The image of the dog-like woman is prevalent in classical mythology. In Greek tragedy the canine female is a representation of vengeful excess. In the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus the Furies hunt down their victims in a pack, and Queen Clytemnestra as the avenging mother can be seen as one of them. In the *Orestes* and the *Electra* of Euripides the Furies are unusually described as dog-faced, a description picked up by writers of the television series *Charmed* in the episode featuring the Furies, 'Hell Hath No Fury' (4.3). Other televisual representations of the Furies, in *Xena: Warrior Princess* and *Blood Ties* choose not to pick up on this dog motif. In Euripides' *Hecuba* the avenging mother mysteriously turns into a dog, after killing the sons of the murderer of her own son.

In Roman myth the canine mother is an actual wolf, who suckles the twins Romulus and Remus, leading to the founding of Rome. This she-wolf also has her modern daughters. Livia, 'the bitch of Rome' in *Xena: Warrior Princess*, who returns to her non-Roman ancestry as Eve after being reunited with her mother Xena. Marada the She Wolf, a comic book character from the 1980s created by Chris Claremont and John Bolton for Marvel comics, is a female warrior in the time of the Roman Empire.

In this paper I discuss how the image of the dog is used to characterise female characters in the ancient sources, and how modern writers have reinterpreted these ancient canine women.

**Amanda Potter** is a Research Fellow with the Open University, after completing her PhD there in 2014 on viewer reception of classical myth on television. Amanda has published on *Torchwood*, *Charmed*, *Xena: Warrior Princess* and HBO-BBC *Rome*. Amanda is particularly interested in how fans engage with the classical world through television and film, and she is currently working on fan fiction and *Doctor Who* and Starz *Spartacus*.