



Our Old Monsters: Witches, Werewolves and Vampires from Medieval Theology to Horror Cinema

Brenda S. Gardenour Walter

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The witch, the vampire and the werewolf endure in modern horror. These "old monsters" have their origins in Aristotle as studied in the universities of medieval Europe, where Christian scholars reconciled works of natural philosophy and medicine with theological precepts. They codified divine perfection as warm, light, male and associated with the ethereal world beyond the moon, while evil imperfection was cold, dark, female and bound to the corrupt world below the moon. All who did not conform to divine goodness--including unholy women and Jews--were considered evil and ascribed a melancholic, blood hungry and demonic physiology. This construct was the basis for anti-woman and anti-Jewish discourse that has persisted through modern Western culture. Nowhere is this more evident than in horror films, where the witch, the vampire and the werewolf represent our fear of the inverted other.

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