

Horror Studies

Volume 1 Number 1

© 2010 Intellect Ltd Article. English language. doi: 10.1386/host.1.1.49/1

ROBERT SPADONI

Case Western Reserve University

Strange Botany in *Werewolf of London*

ABSTRACT

Werewolf of London (Walker, 1935) depicts a man struggling, unsuccessfully, to control urges that would make him an outlaw in society at large and especially, the film makes clear, in his already troubled marriage. The film transforms the werewolf legend (in large measure by infusing it with liberal doses of botany) to create a portrait of a werewolf as a gay man, to represent homosexuality as a form of gender inversion, and to explore the horrors of being a gay man living in a violently repressive society.

KEYWORDS

classic horror cinema
werewolf films
Werewolf of London
queer studies
gender studies
gender inversion

As for the sudden and uncalled-for revival of the genre at the moment, it can only be explained as further evidence of Hollywood's determination to leave no closet door untried during its present period of embarrassment.

William Troy, 'Through the Closet Door,' Review of
Werewolf of London, *The Nation*, 29 May 1935

Where shall I begin my tale?

This one has neither beginning nor end, but only a perpetual unfolding,
a multi-petaled blossom of strange botany.

Guy Endore, *The Werewolf of Paris*, 1933

Werewolf of London (Walker, 1935) has always stood in one shadow or another. When it was first released, the film opened within days of both *Mark of the*

1. In New York, a 7 May preview of *Werewolf of London* (hereafter *WWL*) was followed, on 8 May, by the opening of *Bride of Frankenstein* (Anon. 1935a). *Mark of the Vampire* opened on 2 May (Senn 1996: 264).
2. A typical comparison in which *WWL* pales alongside *The Wolf Man* is in Brunas et al. 1990: 133.
3. For example, of the four films mentioned above, Benshoff writes the least about *WWL* (1997: 39–51, 59, 77–81, 89); Berenstein writes about gay subtexts in *The Old Dark House*, *Bride*, and *Dracula's Daughter* (1996: 24–28, 85–87, 122, 135–36, 142–47); and Skal mentions them in *Bride and Dracula's Daughter* (2001: 184–85, 199–200). A recent exception to the trend is Peirse, which contains a chapter titled 'Homosexual Desire and the Male Body in Pieces: Masochistic Looking Relations in *Werewolf of London*' (2007: 148–88). Another to give *WWL* serious consideration, Reynold Humphries, sees the film's subtext dealing primarily with incest (2006: 29–30, 38–41).
4. Colton's homosexuality is mentioned in Mann 2001: 207; Brunas et al. 1990: 125; Vieira 2003: 79; Madsen 1995: 12, 52; and Hanke 1999: 30.
5. Throughout this essay, quoted dialogue refers to the film unless I indicate that it comes from the screenplay.

Vampire (Browning, 1935) and the much anticipated *Bride of Frankenstein* (Whale, 1935).¹ Then, six years later, *The Wolf Man* (Waggner, 1941) turned Universal's first try at a werewolf film into a list for checking off everything the studio got right the second time around.² A more recent shadow has been cast by other classic horror films, including *The Old Dark House* (Whale, 1932), *Bride of Frankenstein*, and *Dracula's Daughter* (Hillyer, 1936), which seem to have more interesting gay subtexts than *Werewolf of London* does.³ One reason for the critical neglect of this dimension of the film, I believe, is that it is in many ways so obvious. Not all aspects of the gay subtext, however, are easy to spot. Subtly, the film resonates with an influential theory of homosexuality, circulating in 1935 and earlier, which saw homosexuality as a form of gender inversion. Looking at the film alongside its screenplay, by gay playwright and screenwriter John Colton, reveals how this nearly explicitly queer werewolf film also invites its viewers to 'look below its surface' to an extraordinary degree.⁴ To do so is to see a film that challenges narrow and restrictive definitions of what it means to be normal and human, and a film that, with deep ambivalence, makes a plea for locating gay men within both these categories by construing its main character's condition as a natural variation along a continuum that includes us all.

SURFACE CONDITIONS

To his botanical gardens comes Dr. Yogami, a strange Oriental, in whom Glendon recognizes something strangely familiar. As it is quickly realized that Yogami is a werewolf, one of Glendon's buds develops.

'The Werewolf of London,' *Motion Picture Herald*, 4 May 1935

Even a brief summary of the plot begins to make clear the overtness of the film's gay subtext. *Werewolf of London* (hereafter *WWL*) opens with Wilfred Glendon (Henry Hull) hiking through the wilds of Tibet in search of the Mariphasa Lupino Lumino, a rare plant that blooms only by moonlight. At the moment he finds the plant, he is attacked and bitten by a wolf-like creature. He returns to London, where he meets Dr. Yogami (Warner Oland), another botanist who, he tells Glendon, in wolf form bit him back in Tibet. Yogami explains that he needs Glendon's Mariphasa plant, the juices of which can be used to counteract 'werewolfery'. Glendon refuses Yogami's request, and he refuses to believe in werewolves until he himself transforms and takes his first victim. Meanwhile, Glendon wife, Lisa (Valerie Hobson), has become reacquainted with her childhood sweetheart Paul (Lester Matthews), who still loves her and who senses her unhappiness in her marriage. At the climax, Glendon transforms, kills Yogami, and nearly kills Lisa before being fatally shot. The film ends with Lisa and Paul flying to California to begin their new life together.

If this story outline suggests that Glendon is drawn into an outlaw lifestyle by the same-sex, same-profession, same-curse character of Yogami, while Lisa finds her far more conventional ideal partner in Paul, a closer look at the film reveals how much farther it goes to equate Glendon's and Yogami's curse with homosexuality. Not-so-subtle signs of this equation include when Glendon, attacking Paul, appears to mount him from behind; and loaded dialogue exchanges, such as when Glendon asks Yogami, 'Have we met before, sir?' and Yogami replies, 'In Tibet, once, but only for a moment, in the dark.'⁵ The reply is made to seem more suggestive by Warner Oland's pause before

'in the dark' and by the heavy emphasis he lays on those words. As these two characters, who have just met, converse, they stand so closely together that their bellies appear to be touching; and when their conversation ends, Yogami grasps Glendon's sleeve and strokes the spot where both know the scar of the bite lies hidden.⁶ The characters' encounters, laden with a tension that is easily read as sexual in nature, contrast Glendon's interactions with Lisa, which are always strained and uncomfortable. As one reviewer, Glenn Erikson, who finds the gay subtext impossible to miss, writes: Glendon's 'unholy bond with the mysterious Dr. Yogami completely overwhelms his jealous/indifferent relationship with his unfulfilled wife. Together, he and Yogami share "secrets" unacceptable to the police and society at large' (Erikson 2001). Colton writes in his screenplay that running between the husband and wife is 'an undercurrent of frustration and anxiety which cannot be entirely identified as either' (Colton 1935: B-6).⁷ One senses this undercurrent in every scene the characters share, and in ones where Lisa, apart from Glendon, frets about her increasingly remote husband.

If *WWL* seems in places to be wearing its queerness on its sleeve, in others the film presents itself as a textual surface that hides as much as it reveals. Take the names and attributes of certain key elements in the story, starting with Glendon's and Yogami's condition. Yogami refers to it as 'werewolfery' one moment and as 'lycanthrophobia' the next. The second name struck *The Nation* reviewer as fanciful enough to report (inaccurately) that Glendon 'contracts a very bad case of what will hereafter be known to all film patrons as lycanthropia' (Troy 1935).⁸ The *Los Angeles Times* noted that Universal 'invented two new words for lycanthropy' (Scheuer 1935). *Variety* gamely invented a third name when it wrote that Glendon is 'afflicted with lycanthrophobia (slang for werewolfitis)' (Bige. 1935). Such comments suggest that these names could seem excessive both in number and in important-sounding syllables, that they could be interpreted as signs that the film is trying too hard to sell its premise and legitimize its dramatic action with an air of scientific validity, and that they could have the opposite effect, which is to make Glendon's condition seem, even for a werewolf film, lightweight, arbitrary, and made up.

A similar impression is made by the name of the rare plant at the story's centre. In the space of an inch, Colton calls it the 'maraphasa' and the 'Mariphasa' (Colton 1935: C-1 and C-2). Glendon calls it, in the screenplay, the 'mariphasa lumino lupino' (Colton 1935: A-21), but Henry Hull, when he says this line, calls it the 'mariphasa lupino lumino'. Yogami at one point refers to it as the 'mariphasa lumina lupina': you can see Oland hesitate for a moment as he struggles and fails to get the line right. Writers on the film over the years have been no more careful. Variations include 'mariphasa Lupino lumino' (Gifford 1973: 115), 'Marifasa Lupina' (Clarens 1997: 77), 'mariphaisa lumia lupina' (Senn 1996: 288), 'Marifesa lupina lumina' (Benshoff 1997: 47), and 'merefesa' (Douglas 1966: 80). Arguably, the film encourages us to view this plant as a flimsy substitute for something more substantial when Lisa's aunt, Ettie Coombes (Spring Byington), remarks that 'only God can make a daffodil,' and Glendon says, 'The poet said, "Only God can make a tree," Aunt Ettie.'

Also manifesting a suspicious arbitrariness is Yogami's race and ethnicity. Writers have called him a 'strange Oriental' (Anon. 1935b: 39), a 'Hindu Botanist' (McDermid 1935), a 'Japanese scientist' (Aylesworth 1972: 61), and a 'gypsy doctor' (Douglas 1992: 248). What is the country of origin of this character with the Japanese-sounding name, played by a Swedish actor best known, in 1935, for playing Fu Manchu and Charlie Chan – and who,

6. On the intimacy these characters share, see Hanke 1999: 33. On this scene's homosexual undertones, see Peirse 2007: 158–61, where she notes how closely together they stand (2007: 160).
7. 'B-6' denotes shot B-6.
8. At one point in the screenplay, Yogami calls it 'lycanthropia' (Colton 1935: I-5). No one calls it this in the film.

9. Yu in *The Painted Veil* (Boleslawski, 1934), Achmed in *Bulldog Drummond Strikes Back* (Del Ruth, 1934), Lomi in *As Husbands Go* (McFadden, 1934).

in 1934 alone, played characters named 'General Yu', 'Prince Achmed', and 'Hippolitus Lomi'?'⁹ Clarifying nothing is the institution where the doctor currently holds a position: the University of Carpathia. Ettie gives voice to doubts about the real significance of this character's surface attributes when she calls him, three times, 'Dr. Yokohama'.

Making the outward appearances of these elements seem still more insubstantial, unstable, and beside the point is the ease with which one can evoke another – even when they are supposed to be opposites. Consider the moon, the Mariphasa, and the werewolf. The plant, like a man marked with the werewolf curse, thrives under moonlight, and both react to the moon with moment-by-moment sensitivity. In the screenplay, the blossoms shimmer when the moon is out and appear dull when it is obscured by clouds (Colton 1935: A-39). In the film, in his lab, Glendon's hand falls under a lamp producing artificial moonlight and hair instantly sprouts there. The screenplay describes a moment when the 'moon goes behind a cloud and Yogami-wolf seems to turn into hairy man' (Colton 1935: A-48).

Werewolf and plant mirror each other in other ways as well. Right after the attack in Tibet, according to the screenplay, 'some of the flowers have fallen from the plant. They are dull and lifeless but as the moon comes from behind a cloud they glow like cut crystal. Glendon's hand reaches for them. His arm is torn and bleeding' (Colton 1935: A-50). Stressed here is the simultaneous woundedness of the plant and man. The film encourages us to read one as an analogue of the other – and draws Yogami into the equation – when, in Tibet, Yogami-wolf and Glendon struggle and the flower, in the foreground of the shot, overlays them both. The producers strengthened the Mariphasa-werewolf link when, to save money, they reduced the number of plants in the Tibetan valley from many, as Colton envisioned, to one (Seymour 1995: C8). Now the incredibly rare plant calls to mind the fugitive Glendon's feelings when, asked by the innkeeper, Mrs Moncaster (Zeffie Tilbury), if he is single, he replies, 'Singularly single, Madame. More single than I ever realized it possible for a human being to be.'

Pointing to another way the cursed man and the curse's antidote mirror each other is a book in Glendon's study which states that 'unless this rare flower is used the werewolf must kill at least one human being each night of the full moon or become permanently afflicted.' The flower, then, must be administered *or* the werewolf must kill. The flower can prevent a transformation – but the signal activity of the werewolf, killing, has a preventative power as well. Colton also rhymes the means of contracting werewolfism with one of the two for staving it off. During the climactic fight between Glendon and Yogami-wolf: 'Both men rush to secure the flower. Glendon grabs it, tearing it off stem ... tries to pierce his wrist with thorn. Yogami bites him, causing Glendon to drop flower' (Colton 1935: I-65 – 66). Catch the disease with a bite, treat it with a pierce: this is one treatment. The other, the kill, does not resemble – but is identical to – the most horrible manifestation of Glendon's disease.

Reflecting on the exigencies of the narrative does not turn up easy explanations for why the werewolf and the plant should share so many qualities. As the perplexed reviewer in *The Nation* wrote:

It can be seen that one of the difficulties with this particular descent into the night-soul is that the machinery of the occult and the quasi-scientific which it is necessary to build up is somewhat more than the average

mind can follow with any degree of ease. It is not clear, for example, exactly why both the disease and the flower which is its antidote have a preference for the full moon.

(Troy 1935)

One way to start to answer this question is to look back into the werewolf lore and fiction, where one finds a tradition of flowers not relieving the disease but causing it (O'Donnell [1912] 1996: 174, 175; Frost 2003: 112–13). In *WWL*, then, the werewolf, moon, and Mariphasa form a tightly bound triad, one we can see inscribed in the plant name's evocation of the other two terms: moonlight (*lumino*) and wolf (*lupino*). 'Lumino' and 'lupino', the same but for a letter, threaten to change places at any moment, and indeed they do more than once in the course of the film.

Made-up sounding names, and similarities that make supposedly distinct and separate entities seem about to collapse into each another, support impressions of these entities as arbitrary and interchangeable, merely placeholders. One should hesitate before taking anything in this film at face value. Inspiring the same cautiousness is the pronounced tendency of characters in the film and screenplay to be urbanely witty. They routinely say things that can be taken two or more ways, sometimes without the speaker's awareness. Leading this trend is Ettie Coombes. In the screenplay, she jokes at the soirée she hosts: 'I want to warn *everybody to be careful who they murder here tonight* – ha ha ha – we have with us no less a person than Colonel Sir Thomas Forsythe, Chief of the Metropolitan police of Scotland Yard' (Colton 1935: D-32, emphasis original). This night, Glendon-wolf will nearly kill Ettie in her bed, and when she says this line, we have already seen him transform. Viewers are in on this second meaning – as most are when, unhappy at having to dress up and entertain guests, Glendon tells his wife with mock seriousness, 'I'll not only divorce you but I'll beat you as well if ever again you get me mixed up in a mess like this.' Viewers not yet suspecting that Glendon will pose a threat to Lisa later learn, from Yogami, that 'the werewolf instinctively seeks to kill the thing it loves best.'

Characters wrap sentiments in cleverly metaphorical and hyperbolic language. At the Glendon garden party, Ettie quips to Lisa that 'marrying any man is risky. Marrying a famous man is kissing catastrophe!' It is not enough merely to *court* catastrophe. Spicing up the language makes it more suggestive – with the suggestion here being that the 'catastrophe' of Lisa's marriage has a sexual basis: an impression reinforced by the icy and forlorn distance between the two, evident, for example, in Lisa's limp-armed unresponsiveness when Glendon embraces and kisses her. Other statements announce their second meanings more quietly. When Paul, pretending to be angry at Lisa for stepping on a party guest's train, warns, 'I shall take you home in a minute!' we know that both characters would like nothing more than for Paul to make good on his threat.

Alerted to the prevalence of these two-edged statements, we can spot them at less happy moments, such as when Lisa, in the screenplay, tells Glendon, 'You're disagreeable to me now – you never used to be' (Colton 1935: E-11). Is Lisa saying that Wilfred's behaviour has changed or is she talking about a change in her own feelings toward her husband? The film wipes out this ambiguity when, instead, she says, 'You're short-tempered with me now. You never used to be.' Another exchange, just in the screenplay, invites

10. On the emphasis on 'orality' (through biting and the Madagascar *Carnalia* plant), and throats (through strangling), and its connection to the film's homosocial themes, see Peirse 2007: 151, 157, 166, 182.
11. In the film, Glendon asks Lisa if she's in that mood, and Ettie holds a strawberry, but the talk about asking nothing more of life is in connection with Paul owning his own flying school, not strawberries or tragedies of consummation.

us to wonder about the real reason for Glendon's social discomfort and his far-flung excursions. He chats with a party guest:

Miss Charteris: What an interesting life you must lead, Doctor Glendon
... Madagascar, Kamaschatcha, Java, Thibet!

Glendon (miserably): It has its theres and heres.

Miss Charteris (coquettishly): Which do you enjoy the most? The theres
or heres?

(Colton 1935: B-24)

Glendon, whom we saw in Tibet 'fired with the hope of success for his search' (Colton 1935: A-24), the 'fanatic light of the collector's mania' (Colton 1935: A-26) in his eye, clearly prefers the theres. There, far from Lisa, he searches for a flower and grapples with a man-wolf on the ground – in an encounter Colton telegraphically and suggestively describes as 'wolf and man blend in weird tangle' (Colton 1935: A-43).

The characters' double talk discloses motifs that suggest that Colton, far from merely encouraging viewers to look below the surface, is working through a systematic, hidden agenda. One pattern is initiated at the garden party, when Ettie says, 'I must have my tea, quick. My tongue is hanging out.' This motif, elaborated more extensively in the screenplay than in the film, equates food (and drink) with sex, and signals a desire for the latter with expressions of hunger (and thirst) for the former.¹⁰ At the party, Colton writes, Ettie 'immediately descends on the huge bowl of strawberries on the center of the tea table' (Colton 1935: B-28). When Lisa says, 'Wilfred – you aren't eating any strawberries! – They're the first of the season – Didn't you tell me how once in Thibet the thing you wanted most in the world was an English Strawberry?' Ettie interjects, 'Wanting is the comedy of life – consummation the tragedy!' following which she 'pops a strawberry into her mouth' (Colton 1935: B-32). The overloaded dialogue continues when, amid the talk of tragedy, strawberries, and wanting nothing more from life, Glendon, watching Lisa and Paul together, asks, 'Are *you* in that mood, Lisa?' (Colton 1935: B-33, emphasis original). Ettie says, 'Anyway – *I'm* in that mood – it's all these flowers – everywhere!' (Colton 1935: B-34, emphasis original).¹¹ In the screenplay, Ettie says of Yogami, with whom she will later attempt to flirt, 'What a perfectly delicious man!' (Colton 1935: C-23).

Glendon refrains from eating perhaps because he fears to, or maybe because he craves something more 'exotic' than an English strawberry. He will later try to suppress his burgeoning hunger through abstinence. Near the end of the film, he tells the servant Timothy (Reginald Barlow) to lock him up in the Monk's Rest, a room at the top of a tower on Lisa's family estate. When Timothy, in the screenplay, asks, 'Are you sure I can't bring you some supper?' Glendon answers, 'Not a thing' (Colton 1935: I-17). In both the film and screenplay, he refuses a bed. Glendon's strategy of self-denial will fail when he rushes headlong into the tragedy of consummation prophesied by Ettie.

Food stands in for another sort of indulgence, and werewolfism stands in for another sort of 'disease.' Encouragement not to take Glendon's condition at its face value comes in the form of another motif. Lisa makes an excuse for a drunk, giggling Ettie, saying, 'My aunt is feeling a little ill.' A patrolman explains that upon hearing a scream, he 'took off as fast as anybody could that was suffering from broken arches.' When Paul asks about Lisa's sullenness, she says, 'I have a toothache today. I never seem to be able to rise above a toothache. It makes me want to howl, break things, pull noses, tweak ears,

screech!' Paul replies, 'It isn't toothache that's troubling you today.' Viewers, like Paul, see through Lisa's sham malady, and Colton cloaks her malaise in wolf-like behaviour to lead viewers to the larger point, which is that Glendon's malady, too, is only a surface condition.

We are thus invited to view *WWL* as an exceedingly *interpretable* text. Aspects of the film's production history encourage the same, for changes were ordered during production that acted to warp and disguise elements that Universal, or the Breen Office (Hollywood's self-censoring organ), deemed too potentially objectionable to risk. For example, Jack Pierce's werewolf make-up design, close to the one that would be used for *The Wolf Man*, was scaled back to the not-very-hairy design seen in the film (Brunas et al. 1990: 132).¹² Also, the studio reshot the prologue to include a missionary telling Glendon and his travelling partner, Hugh Renwick (Clark Williams), before they enter the valley, that 'there are some things it is better not to bother with' – an addition, a Breen Office memo indicates, meant 'to introduce a morality note of sorts' (Stuart 1935). Further, two lines were cut that, Breen claimed, referred to British dirty jokes (Breen 1935). And Glendon's first victim was changed from a prostitute to a beggar woman (Stuart 1935).¹³ But these covered-over bits can have a way of 'poking through' the finished film. Glendon's first victim, for example, has not struck every viewer as a beggar by profession. Producer Robert Harris laboriously explained to Breen that

the girl, being of the lower class, is wearing a skirt which is not too lengthy, possibly having shrunk when she herself washed it, being quite without money to send it to be regularly cleaned, and carried a handbag such as is carried by millions of respectable women today, large enough to hold the miscellaneous vanities which women carry today.

(Breen 1935; and see Humphries 2006: 57–58)

Viewers without access to Harris's explanation have been free to draw different conclusions. One writer, for example, refers to the scene where the werewolf 'kills a prostitute' (Douglas 1966: 81).

Other camouflaged elements can raise bulging blank spots on the filmic text. I will argue that the Mariphasa stands in for a love that dares not speak its name. Sometimes the name of this surrogate item itself dares not be spoken, such as when a character inquires, 'And where shall I get this ... posy?' On hearing Yogami's description of a werewolf, Glendon asks, 'How did these unfortunate gentlemen contract this, uh, this medieval unpleasantness?' These substitutions push the film's hidden subject to a second remove – the equivalent of handling this subject with kid gloves pulled over kid gloves.

Another moment marked by the unsaid comes just before Glendon enters the Monk's Rest. He tells Timothy, 'Miss Lisa and I miss the old times, too.' Then, Colton indicates, Glendon 'smiles at Timothy as though to say, "Now do you understand?"' (Colton 1935: I-12) As Timothy has no knowledge of Glendon's affliction, it is not clear what he might now understand. More of the unsaid percolates underneath this exchange, which appears in the film, minus Glendon's question, virtually as Colton describes it:

Yogami stops, regards Glendon with his strange melancholy eyes –
Yogami: Remember this, Glendon – the werewolf always seeks first to
kill the thing it loves best ...

As the two men measure each other ... Glendon asks, trying to make
his voice casual –

12. For a drawing of the original design, see Riley 1993: 44.

13. On communications between the Breen Office and Universal on *WWL*, see Worland 2007: 124–25; and Skal 2001: 194.

14. On werewolves and boundary crossings, including between animals and humans, nature and culture, and masculinity and femininity, see Bourgault du Coudray 2006; and Creed 2005: 124–52.

Glendon: Er – by the way – how would an afflicted person apply this blossom to ensure ‘normalcy?’

(Colton 1935: C-25)

Why put ‘normalcy’ in quotes? Had Colton gone further than he did, he might have put ‘werewolf’ in quotes, too.

Looking in this film’s margins, at what appears in it only in disguised and fragmentary forms, becomes a necessary strategy (and one with the screenplay at its centre) for understanding how the film engages contemporaneous debates over whether homosexuality is an immoral lifestyle choice or something that no person chooses; and whether it is an abominable condition or a perfectly normal variation along the human spectrum.

MEN, ANIMALS, AND PLANTS

Mother God Damn: To-night we dip into the darkness, eh?

Charteris: Yes – to find our devils!

Mother God Damn: My foxes, your badgers; my wolves, your dogs; my wasps, your spiders; my wild cats, your swine; we start all the insects, all the animals in both of us – fighting, howling, snarling, in the black night you plan!

John Colton, *The Shanghai Gesture: A Play*, 1926

Lady Stevens: You’re in love. Well, what could be more natural?
An African moon, two healthy young animals –

Ronald: Oh, stop it!

The Invisible Ray (Hillyer 1936),
screenplay by John Colton

One way to begin to piece together the film’s reflection on these debates is to return to the moon/wolf/Mariphasa cluster and, singling out the moon, note that it comes to the film loaded with romantic associations. These the film foregrounds when Ettie, flirting with an uninterested Yogami, asks, ‘Don’t you just love moonlight?’ and when Lisa, after Glendon begs her to return from her ride with Paul before the moon rises, replies, ‘I shall ride tonight, tomorrow night, and the next night, in fact every night there’s a moon. Come, Paul.’ Or we could start with the Mariphasa, which Harry Benshoff calls ‘the key signifier of the homoerotic male couple’s lycanthropy in *Werewolf of London*’ (Benshoff 1997: 47) – or with Glendon’s occupation as an overreaching scientist, a stock character in horror films but a relatively rare one in the werewolf sub-genre. Colton calls Glendon ‘a man of great power and determination, a thinker, a discoverer’ (Colton 1935: A-8). For Benshoff, Hollywood horror films sometimes use science ‘to suggest that “normality” needs to update its thinking on queer matters’ (Benshoff 1997: 39).

If *WWL* features – like *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Mamoulian, 1931) and *Frankenstein* (Whale, 1931) – a scientist who goes too far, it is arguably better suited than these other ‘mad scientist’ films to explore ideas about crossing boundaries, and this is crucial for understanding the film’s gay subtext. *WWL* goes further than other horror films in this regard partly because the

werewolf legend supplies Colton with a rich array of tropes with which to work.¹⁴ Moreover, if transgressing and dissolving traditionally construed boundaries, such as between humans and animals, is something that virtually any werewolf film can claim to do, *WWL* stands out within the sub-genre by attacking these distinctions especially forcefully. One way the film does this is by making its two werewolves botanists, thus drawing plants into the mix.

WWL demonstrates a strong preoccupation with the question of what it means to be human. The film considers, but ultimately rejects, constrictive definitions. Glendon promises his disappointed wife, 'As soon as I've completed that experiment, I'll try to be more ... well, more human.' She lightheartedly replies, 'It isn't in you,' then goes on to suggest that one definition of 'being human' is to be a good spouse: 'Ever since you came back from Tibet, I have had a feeling you were planning to divorce me and marry your laboratory.' Lisa would narrow the sense of what it means to be human: other characters seem intent to broaden and problematize it. In the screenplay, Renwick remarks that 'man's a funny little animal, isn't he?' (Colton 1935: A-29), suggesting that humans should be included in the *animal* category rather than set off against it. Here is one boundary blurred. Another boundary, this one between animals and plants, blurs when the film shows a Venus flytrap in action.¹⁵ The film's most striking challenge to the separateness of the animal and plant kingdoms comes in the form of the giant, carnivorous Madagascar Carnalia that Glendon keeps in his greenhouse. At one point, Yogami remarks that the Madagascar 'makes one wonder just where the plant world leaves off and the animal world begins.'

Further complicating both human/animal and animal/plant distinctions is Glendon's head gardener, Hawkins (J. M. Kerrigan). Uneasy about Glendon's Mariphasa specimen, he says, 'I got a feeling that mariphasy ain't a human plant, sir.' That Hawkins can find some plants 'human' indicates that he is not working with a literal definition of the term. How can a plant be human? The screenplay gives an answer, and suggests that Hawkins is wrong about the Mariphasa, when Yogami, trying to revive the specimen, 'injects a darkish fluid into the soul of the plant' (Colton 1935: I-59). Is the common element a soul? A less ethereal possibility is put forward by Yogami when, in the screenplay, he tells Glendon that 'there is enough blood in that flower to save us both if it blooms in time' (Colton 1935: I-62). The plant has a soul, and blood – and even a voice: when Yogami crushes the plant, 'The flower dies with an agonizing cry. A ray of moonlight shoots from the dead flower to the moon ... the soul of the flower returned to its final resting place' (Colton 1935: I-70).

These touches, absent in the film and perhaps too esoteric to be seriously considered by a Hollywood studio trying to turn out a horror picture, suggest that Colton is sorting through a coherent set of ideas. The servant Hawkins has probed less deeply into life's mysteries than his intrepid master. Glendon stands on a vanguard – while Hawkins, no trekking botanist but a mere head gardener, trudges somewhere behind. Yogami, meanwhile, is, if anywhere, ahead of Glendon. To a guest who, agape at the Madagascar, exclaims, 'Heretic! Bringing a beastly thing like that into Christian England!' Yogami coolly replies that 'nature is very tolerant, sir. She has no creeds.' A moment later he muses that 'evolution was in a strange mood when that creation came along.'

Yogami is at ease with these strange plants inhabiting his world. The film implies that Yogami and Glendon belong on one side of a divide, and

14. On werewolves and boundary crossings, including between animals and humans, nature and culture, and masculinity and femininity, see Bourgault du Coudray 2006; and Creed 2005: 124–52.
15. The association of werewolves with plants, and the transgressive qualities of plants seen in the film, are discussed in Peirse 2007: 157–58.

16. Humphries finds Yogami "vaguely "effete" and "nonvirile" in appearance, talk, and behavior" (2006: 64).

Hawkins belongs on the other, by making the pair scientists – and werewolves, creatures closely aligned with the night and with things nocturnal (especially in this film, where they have so much in common with a moon-plant) – while Hawkins's name implies that he is a creature of the day, since hawks are diurnal animals. His antipodal nature to theirs would explain why, when Glendon, in the screenplay, referring to his experiments with the moon-lamp and the Mariphasa, asks, 'You don't approve of this, Hawkins?' the servant – called by Colton 'the personification of disapproval' – answers, 'It's all kind o' creepy o' to me, sir' (Colton 1935: C-3 – C-4).

But just as between humans and animals, and animals and plants, a sense of a clear-cut distinction between the servant and his master cannot be sustained. Hawkins, like Yogami, shares moments of physical intimacy with Glendon that seem excessive for a Hollywood film. (In one scene, for example, Glendon grasps the gardener's arm for eighteen seconds.) Moreover, while nowhere near the cutting edge of botanical knowledge, Hawkins is still a *gardener*. He cannot be an utter stranger to strange botany, after all. If Glendon can claim a certain superiority over one less knowledgeable than himself, Hawkins shows that he can do the same when he tells a butler: 'Of course, Mr. Plympton, you being a mere indoor person has no idea of the mysteries of nature.' Lastly, the character's name might conjure up a diurnal bird but his swept-back hair and round eyeglasses make him look like a nocturnal one, an owl. The film underscores this resemblance when, after the lamp makes Glendon's hand sprout hair, he snaps at Hawkins, 'Don't stand there staring at me all solemn and owl-eyed.'

Perhaps Hawkins makes Glendon nervous, and disapproves of his experiments so strenuously, because Hawkins understands *too well* the desires that send his master into distant and forbidden valleys. Dreading the moonrise, Glendon prays aloud in the Monk's Rest. His prayer runs longer in the screenplay than in the film:

Glendon: I know. It isn't God. God doesn't let such things happen. It's the devil. It's something creeping out of Hell. God has nothing to do with it. It's man – poor pitiful man – who cannot bear the face of God – (moans – grovels) Some must win – some must lose – ... It's the law – but why must *I* be lost that others may learn? Why, God, why?

(Colton 1935: F-14, emphasis original)

Maybe Hawkins 'wins' because he manages to keep a tight lid on what is, after all, as natural for him as nocturnal prowling is for an owl (or wolf) – even an owl that goes about disguised as a hawk. To either side of Glendon, then, stand two figures, one bold enough to wear his difference on his sleeve (Yogami is exotically – if unspecifically – foreign, and openly champions such 'heretical' concepts as evolution), the other keeping his difference under wraps (even though we see through them).¹⁶ Returning to Glendon's despairing question, maybe he 'loses' because in a society that, to recall Benshoff, has not updated its thinking on queer matters, the actions he dares to base on his own self-knowledge can lead only to his death. But a gleam of hope is held out in the thought that Glendon must be 'lost that others may learn.' *WWL* attacks orthodox definitions of the normal, the natural, and the human, and suggests that Glendon dies not because he represents an abomination against nature but because he remains dangerously true to his own.

Glendon yields to his secret, inner nature. Werewolf stories about beasts that body forth from within provide Colton with promising raw material for fleshing out this idea. As Chantal Bourgault du Coudray writes:

The symbiosis of human and wolf in the figure of the werewolf has presented the opposition of nature (represented by the wolf) and culture (represented by the human) in potent terms: terms that were further developed in the romantic period, which witnessed the emergence of a subjectivity imaged through an internal-external or depth-surface duality. This spatialization of subjectivity resonated with the human exterior-lupine interior (or vice versa) imagery of the werewolf.

(Bourgault du Coudray 2006: 3)

Werewolves, as Bourgault du Coudray notes, can inspire a writer interested in exploring human psychology in terms of inside/outside oppositions. Here again, Colton multiplies the possibilities for doing so, and for spatializing his protagonist's subjectivity, by placing his protagonist in a *botanical* werewolf story.

Aside from the few growing in Tibet, overwhelmingly the plants we see in this film are inside Glendon's house. Hawkins dismisses the butler as a 'mere indoor person,' even though this is where most of the plants on view in this film are to be found. Colton indicates that the door to Glendon's lab 'must suggest the secrecy of the interior of the laboratory' (Colton 1935: B-5). The reinforced interiority of the lab, and the enclosed nature of the conservatory adjacent to it, invites us to read the lush contents of these spaces as representations not of the great outdoors but of Glendon's inner nature. In *WWL* plant nature, as much as wolf nature, stands in for Glendon's own. This nature Glendon tries, with less success than Hawkins, to keep bottled up inside. That its unleashing proves to be his undoing does not mean that the film condemns Glendon for the turn of events that ends his life. This will become clearer as we turn more fully to the plants that, for a werewolf film, claim an unusually large share of the narrative centre stage.

MARIPHASA

'Well,' said Aymar, 'I shall see what can be done, but first tell me. Do you ever ... well ... change?'

Bertrand hung his head again.

'Indelicate question, huh? Like asking a girl if she – Yes, I quite understand.'

Guy Endore, *The Werewolf of Paris*, 1933

The Mariphasa *is* human, then, and Hawkins and society need to update their thinking and broaden their definition. Changing 'human' to 'man' can help us target the film's implicit concerns more precisely, for through the Mariphasa, the film suggests that understanding what it means to be a man should be expanded to include qualities and attributes that have traditionally been understood to belong to women. *WWL*'s undermining of the separateness of the human, animal, and plant worlds lays the foundation for the real work of the film, which is to challenge traditional distinctions between the male and female genders.

Werewolves – hairy, ruled by bloodlust, and explosively aggressive – are easily seen to embody qualities of masculinity. However, the werewolf template again provides Colton with rich material to work with, for werewolves

17. Visually and aurally, 'Mariphasa' also calls to mind *mariposa*, Spanish for butterfly and slang for an effeminate homosexual (Stewart 1995: 160). Colton's obituary notes that 'brief service on a New York magazine and with troops on the Mexican border came shortly before his playwrighting career' (Anon. 1946).
18. 'Carnalia' appears under 'not spiritual, in a negative sense', and, within that, under "'Carnal things," temporal or worldly goods'.

also carry associations with femininity. One basis for this association, Walter Evans points out, is the monster's connection to the moon and its monthly cycles (Evans 1984: 56). A link can also be traced linguistically: in Italian, *lupa* means both wolf and vulva (Jones [1931] 1949: 136), and from it derive words for whore and strumpet (Summers 1934: 69). Linda Badley finds werewolves feminized by their status as not only aggressors but also victims (Badley 1995: 120–21). Bourgault du Coudray aligns werewolves with women when she notes 'the pervasive cultural association of femininity with nature, embodiment and biology' (Bourgault du Coudray 2006: 112). And Barbara Creed argues that because women are mutable and 'unstable' in ways that men are not (they bleed on a monthly basis, and change shape during pregnancy), when a man turns into a wolf, he exhibits a similar instability and this feminizes him (Creed 2005: 128–29; also see Creed 1993a: 124–26).

WWL pushes the potential for a werewolf to display its feminine side to a new level. Several elements in the film can be read as feminine in nature and to have a feminizing power. The Mariphasa grows in a 'vaginal' depression, a valley, where Glendon receives a gash that, when it heals, leaves a distinct V shape on his forearm. This is Glendon's 'scarlet letter,' the secret Yogami indicates he knows when, earlier, he grasps Glendon's sleeve. The Mariphasa's soft, fleshy, convex bloom constitutes another emblem of the feminine: a sense of the plant that gathers force through its link to another specimen under Glendon's care, the Madagascar Carnalia.

MADAGASCAR

The hairs grow inward – the wolfish coat is within – the wolfish heart is within – the wolfish fangs are within.

Charles Robert Maturin, *The Albigenses, A Romance*, 1824

Seldom, very seldom, is the wolf lucky.

Montague Summers, *The Werewolf*, 1934

Much less central to the narrative than the Mariphasa, but more grotesquely spectacular, is the Madagascar, which the Mariphasa calls to mind by starting with the same letter and by having the same number of syllables, with the stresses on the same (first and third) syllables – all similarities of a sort that Ettie's 'Yokohama' slip invites us to notice.¹⁷ I will argue that the two plants can be linked in other ways as well, as I move the Madagascar – by far the most overdetermined figure in my reading of the film's gay subtext – to the centre of the moon/wolf/Mariphasa triad.

Ettie again serves as our helpful, if clueless, interpretive guide when she asks, 'I wonder, where is that ... that horrible Madagascar plant? The one that eats mice and men?' Renwick corrects her, 'Mice and spiders, Miss Ettie.' Ettie once more demonstrates her talent for making comments with two or three meanings, since a plant that 'eats men' can be construed as a signifier of vampish femininity, or male homosexuality, or possibly of both at once.

'Madagascar' sparks a connection to 'Mariphasa,' while 'Carnalia' folds into itself a bundle of dripping connotations. The entry for 'Carnal' in the *Oxford English Dictionary* includes 'Carnalia' and lists these senses: 'according to the flesh,' 'pertaining to the body as the seat of passions or appetites; fleshly, sensual,' 'sexual,' 'not spiritual, in a negative sense,' and 'carnivorous' (entry for 'carnal,' in Murray et al. 1991).¹⁸ Does the plant live up to its name?

Answering this question requires us to remember our strategy of looking in *WWL*'s margins, for traces of things that Colton envisioned and that did not find their way into the finished film. A scene featuring the Madagascar, shot and subsequently deleted, was to have occurred shortly after Ettie's 'mice and men' comment. In it the Madagascar attempts to eat a boy who strays too close to its maw. The film gives us barely a glimpse of the aftermath of this incident, after Glendon has rescued the boy and returned him to his mother. I break up the sequence Colton wrote below.

The giant Madagascar Carnalia, a pink fleshy looking plant, in appearance rather like an octopus, is waving its tubular leaves in wild agitation. One of these snakish tentacles has reached out over the railing and is grasping a little boy of four or five around the middle. A short distance off someone is holding the child's hysterical mother. Glendon forces his way through the crowd, pats the child's head.

(Colton 1935: B-38)

The Madagascar, animal-like in appetite and appearance, resembles a nest of writhing snakes, or an octopus. The colour Colton stipulates calls to mind human flesh that, in its pinkness, suggests delicate inner folds rather than a calloused extremity that has seen plenty of sunlight. Among the meanings spilling out of this image is a sense of these tubular appendages, waving 'in wild agitation,' as monstrously hyper-phallic and highly aroused by the young boy. The 'leaves' swirl around a furry maw that it does not take much effort to see as a vaginal orifice and therefore as another symbol of femininity associated with Glendon.

The scene continues:

Glendon (soothingly): There – there – we'll have you out of this in a jiffy
– (looks about him) Has anyone a long pin?

(Colton 1935: B-38)

Glendon 'stabs sharply at the ugly mouth like opening in the middle of the plant' (Colton 1935: B-39). He 'thrusts the pin into the plant's head. A spurt of black looking juice spurts upward' (Colton 1935: B-40). This juice smells terrible. The guests hold handkerchiefs to their faces.

We can draw parallels from this moment to others in the screenplay and film. The pin stabbing the head of the Madagascar resembles the technique for administering the Mariphasa antidote, described more explicitly in the screenplay than in the film, which is to puncture one's flesh with a thorn and then squeeze the plant's essence out of the bulb at the stamen's base (Colton 1935: C-25). It also calls to mind when Yogami injects the 'darkish fluid' into the Mariphasa – only here the function (to nourish) and the direction of the fluid's movement (into the plant) have been reversed. Man, Mariphasa, and Madagascar all receive similar treatment in Colton's text.

Following the screenplay to the next moment brings us back into the film, to the guest's remark about 'bringing a beastly thing like that into Christian England,' and Yogami's about nature having no creeds. The next moment takes us back out again. Pierced, 'the plant's tentacle quivers and begins to loosen its grip on the child. Glendon speaks in calm reassuring tones,' saying, 'There – there – poor Madagascar Carnalia was hungry, that's all! – lucky for you – you were rather too big a spoonful for her to manage' (Colton 1935:

19. For a recent set of essays that explore the concept of 'inversion' from a number of directions, see Cassar 2008.
20. See for example: Ellis 1908: 183–84; Symonds 1928: 137–38; Carpenter 1908: 19; and Sedgwick 1993: 56. Freud doubted the existence of 'psychical hermaphroditism' ([1905] 1953: 141–44). For an overview of Freud's theories of homosexuality contrasted with ones that came before his, see Davis 1995: 115–32.

B-42). The comment, like Ettie's about being hungry because of 'all these flowers,' entwines the film's food and botany motifs.

The Madagascar, though barely in the film, nevertheless makes an impression through its monstrosity and size. The larger role Colton planned for it clarifies the plant's central importance to understanding how the Madagascar, and Glendon, confound traditional gender definitions in a way that is alarming and frightening and that, at the same time, demands our understanding and possibly even our full acceptance. The Madagascar *Carnalia* densely registers the film's ambivalence toward Glendon and his situation.

To understand this ambivalence, we need to consider how this vaginal, phallic, boy-hungry, animal-like plant embodies a theory of homosexuality that was popular in the first third of the twentieth century. This theory construed homosexuality as a form of 'gender inversion.' It understood the orientation to be less a matter of sexual preference than a constitutive fact of one's gender make-up. Inversion theory asserted that a man experiencing same-sex desire possessed a feminine gender identity. Such a man was thought to represent a 'third sex' made up of qualities of both the male and female genders. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick writes, 'inversion models [...] locate gay people – whether biologically or culturally – at the threshold between genders' (Sedgwick 1993: 172, my ellipsis). Such a view, which originally could be quite literal in its thinking about the biological basis of inversion, represents a form of what Richard Dyer describes as 'in-betweenism' (Dyer 2002: 30–37; also see Dyer with Pidduck 2003: 33–37). He notes that third sex theories persisted in popular views of homosexuality long after science had abandoned them, and that in the twentieth century in-betweenism has characterized how some gay men have thought about themselves (Dyer with Pidduck 2003: 34; and see Dyer 2002: 37).¹⁹

Accounts of how this third sex blends qualities of the male and female genders can call on models that posit inside/outside oppositions. Some theorists pictured a woman's spirit or soul trapped in a man's body. Others pictured a woman's mind or brain so trapped.²⁰ In 1928, John Addington Symonds, working within psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing's taxonomy of inverted types, described an extreme case of inversion:

The inverted bias given to the sexual appetite, as part of the spiritual nature of the man, can never quite transmute male organs into female organs of procreation. But it modifies the bony structure of the body, the form of the face, the fleshy and muscular integuments to such an obvious extent that Krafft-Ebing thinks himself justified in placing a separate class of androgynous beings (with their gynardrous correspondents) at the end of the extraordinary process.

(Symonds 1928: 141)

Here, a limit case of inversion induces a bodily transformation from the inside out.

This description, like inversion theories generally, resonates with aspects of the werewolf archetype. Some versions of the legend, for example, claim that werewolves wear their hairy hides on the inside and transform by flipping their skins inside out (Baring-Gould 1865: 64–66; Jones [1931] 1949: 137; Summers 1934: 160–61; Douglas 1992: 231–232; Frost 2003: 13). In such accounts, the transformation comes about literally through a process of inversion.

Though it does not incorporate this neat transformation trick into its narrative, *WWL* more than makes up for it by adopting other means to associate

werewolves with inversion. There is Glendon's lab (a space that I have argued can be viewed as an analogue of Glendon's interior nature), which houses the Mariphasa – a plant that mirrors his nocturnal wolf identity and that constitutes a marker of difference that secretly ties him to Yogami. The shielded Mariphasa, living though in no conventional sense human or even animal in nature, emblemizes a view that sees outwardly ordinary appearances masking internal biological differences. The Mariphasa inverts the functioning of most plant life by blooming at night. Meanwhile, the Madagascar, a more alarmingly overt marker of difference, sits – dangerously for Glendon's cover – not in a locked lab but in full view of Glendon's party guests; Glendon's secret, like that of the owlish Hawkins, is already half out in the open. This most conspicuous embodiment of his secret evokes gender inversion in several ways.

A plant squirming with numerous long, independently dexterous 'phal-luses', all encircling a hairy maw, seems well designed to visualize theories that see gay men combining attributes of two sexes. The signifiers of maleness – construed one way, hideously extreme because they represent a desperate attempt to hide an essential biological truth with a grotesquely overcompensating show of masculinity – ring a vaginal centre. Alternatively, one could view the tentacles as pubic hairs and see the whole plant representing the secret truth that Glendon's (unpersuasive) husbandly demeanour is meant to conceal. The deleted sequence discloses three more figures of inversion. First, the plant spurts not a white liquid, as in a typical male ejaculation, but a black one. Second and third, as noted, the moment inverts the direction and function of the nurturing fluid Yogami injects into the Mariphasa.²¹ Finally, this dark outflow, in this scene jammed with more implications than it can control, can be understood to depict a sudden, convulsive, menstrual discharge.

Should the Madagascar be viewed as an abomination against nature or as simply a product of it? Yogami makes clear that his answer is the latter. But does the film give him the last word on this crucial question? Benschhoff reframes our question, and broadens its context:

In accordance with the prevailing construction of homosexuality as a matter of gender inversion rather than sexual object choice, medical studies continued to write about homosexuality as a disorder primarily having to do with gender nonconformity, even as the experts differed as to whether this was the result of nature or nurture. The origins of movie monsters were similarly contested: were they man-made creatures such as Frankenstein's monster, or part of a natural, but hitherto unexplored, territory, such as the werewolf?

(Benschhoff 1997: 38)

Benschhoff suggests that *WWL*, by virtue of the monster it depicts, comes down on the 'nature' side of the debate. I have argued that the human/animal/plant business involving the Mariphasa, the Madagascar, and Hawkins does the same. But Glendon gets the plant to bloom with help from an electric lamp, an artificial means; and this sullen, haunted character seems to hate himself, and the film kills him off. While all of this should be taken as signs of the film's ambivalence toward its main character, I believe that ultimately the film, even though it destroys Glendon, does not fault him for being what he is. A basis for viewing Glendon as guiltless, and his 'condition' as natural, is rooted in the concept of inversion itself.

21. For other 'forms of inversion' in the film, see Humphries 2006: 30.

22. On this claim, see Benschhoff 1997: 32–33.
23. This resemblance does not, for Peirse, by association figure in the film's feminization of Glendon. She writes that 'the filmic structures of *Werewolf of London* do not encourage a feminised reading at any point' (2007: 164).

Dyer notes that 'ideas of in-betweenism have been used by gay people themselves, not only in subcultural practices but in historically progressive activism' (Dyer 2002: 30–31). One who took a progressive view was Symonds, who wrote that

the accomplished languages of Europe in the nineteenth century supply no term for this persistent feature of human psychology, without importing some implication of disgust, disgrace, vituperation. Science, however, has recently – within the last twenty years in fact – invented a convenient phrase, which does not prejudice the matter under consideration. She speaks of the 'inverted sexual instinct'; and with this neutral nomenclature the investigator has good reason to be satisfied.

(Symonds 1928: 2 [unnumbered])

One could apply the term neutrally, and even laudingly. Edward Carpenter, in a 1908 study of 'intermediate types,' notes that 'the double life and nature certainly, in many cases of inverts observed to-day, seems to give to them an extraordinary humanity and sympathy, together with a remarkable power of dealing with human beings' (Carpenter 1908: 63).

Whether or not one felt celebratory about 'intermediate types,' a great deal was at stake in claims that placed 'inverts' on a continuum that included *males* and *females*, for as Dyer and others note, if inversion is inborn and biological, there can be no question of an immoral choice to be condemned (Dyer with Pidduck 2003: 34; also see Katz 1995: 29, 52, 88). As Symonds wrote passionately: 'What is human is alien to no human being' (Symonds 1928: 3 [unnumbered]). Humans should, according to this thinking, follow nature and, recalling Yogami, follow no 'creed' that would damn one of its own. The Madagascar, like the soul-crying Mariphasa, might represent an implicit plea for seeing homosexuality as human and a fact of nature.

But a sense of the film's hostility toward Glendon's situation cannot be shaken off so easily. The Madagascar also might represent the 'deviant' Glendon's gynophobia. Symonds, considering Krafft-Ebing, describes a class of homosexuals who 'shrinks from the female' (Symonds 1928: 139). Psychologist William Stekel notes that in some homosexuals, 'beyond the apparent indifference stands the fear of women' (Stekel 1922: 272).²² Here we can recall Glendon's visible discomfort in his interactions with Lisa and other women, where we see nothing like the rock-still intensity he exhibits whenever he locks into eye contact with Yogami.

Another negative view finds the Madagascar visualizing Glendon's dread not of other women but of the feminine within himself. Of effeminate characters in Hollywood films, Benschhoff writes that 'the male homosexual or queer is monstrous precisely because he embodies characteristics of the feminine' (Benschhoff 1997: 6). Relevant here is the Madagascar's resemblance, noted by Alison Peirse, to a *vagina dentata* (Peirse 2007: 157–58).²³ Does this voracious plant incarnate the monstrous femininity that threatens to devour Glendon from the inside out?

In 'The Taboo of Virginity,' Freud speculated on a source of 'a generalized dread of women,' writing that

perhaps this dread is based on the fact that woman is different from man, for ever incomprehensible and mysterious, strange and therefore

apparently hostile. The man is afraid of being weakened by the woman, infected with her femininity and of then showing himself incapable.
(Freud [1918] 1957: 198–99)

Creed notes that for Freud and others, ever looming behind this dread is a fear of castration (Creed 1993b: 196). Glendon, in danger of losing his social standing, his wife, and his life, has good reason to be horrified by the emasculating forces that attack him from within.

MEDUSA

Mother God Damn: You have reached a dangerous age, my man; your sex is shaky – you must have new excitements for your appetite, which hitherto have been so British.
John Colton, *The Shanghai Gesture: A Play*, 1926

To explore the deeper level at which the Madagascar holds the key to understanding this conflicted text's both best hopes for and deepest dread of Glendon's situation, we must consider the Madagascar's resemblance to a mythical figure that Creed sees as another manifestation of the *vagina dentata*: the head of the Medusa. This head, like the pierced Madagascar, bleeds – and this, Creed notes, supports readings of the Medusa as a representation of the menstruating female genitals (Creed 1993b: 65–66; and see Creed 2005: 23). Not surprisingly, Freud associates this figure with male fears of castration. He writes that 'to decapitate = to castrate,' and he links the figure to homosexuality: 'Since the Greeks were in the main strongly homosexual, it was inevitable that we should find among them a representation of woman as a being who frightens and repels because she is castrated' (Freud [1922] 1955: 273, 274).²⁴ More recent theorists have challenged Freud's thinking along this line. Creed, for example, asks, 'Is woman castrated or does she castrate?' and adds that 'the way in which the genitals might horrify is open to interpretation' (Creed 1993b: 158, emphasis original).²⁵

Another who sees the Medusa's head as semantically ambiguous is Richard Dellamora. He examines nineteenth century writers who view the Medusa as a liminal figure, signifying transition, and commingling life with death, beauty with corruption, pleasure with pain, and – in this female head with phallic locks – masculinity with femininity (Dellamora 1990: 81, 125, 139–40). Considering this ambiguity returns us to the possibility that the Madagascar represents a positive, tolerant, and hopeful attitude toward Glendon and his situation.

Dellamora describes a vein of criticism that finds the Medusa articulating a fantasy: a 'wish to be woman' (Dellamora 1990: 80). He sees this wish strongly evoked by a painting, once mistakenly attributed to Leonardo, *Head of Medusa* at the Uffizi. Reading this painting through nineteenth century art and literature critic Walter Pater, and noting what Freud misses in his reading of Pater, Dellamora writes that Freud suppresses 'the suggestion that Medusa and other images by Leonardo may be a figure of the passage from the conventional male state into a metaphorical state of "being-woman"' (Dellamora 1990: 137). The figuration of this passage, Dellamora argues, could potentially appeal to a gay man because it offers 'a means for men to own their desire for other men' (Dellamora 1990: 80). So viewed, the Medusa represents not a

24. On some critics' association of the Medusa with homosexuality, see Dellamora 1990: 136.
25. See Creed 1993b: 161–62, for where she links this line of thinking, through Lacan, to homosexuality. On the Medusa as a symbol of not the castrated but the castrating mother, also see Wilk 2000: 97–99.

26. Examples of these critics are Anon. 1935b: 38; Harrison 1935; Clarens 1997: 78.
27. Views of the character as unsympathetic are expressed in Gifford 1973: 117; Everson 1974: 214; Hardy 1994: 64; Senn 1996: 292; and Soister 1999: 230. Writers who find the character growing more sympathetic as the film progresses include Riley 1993: 28; and Brunas et al. 1990: 132. Another writes that the film 'places the viewer in the uncomfortable position of understanding a man without really liking him' (Hanke 1999: 37).

dread and a horror but a wish and a means. How it does this, and the figure's relevance to Glendon, centre on the figure's morbidity.

INVERTED, INVETERATE

'There can be no cure for hereditary madness until Judgment Day,' said Oliver, 'and every man's Judgment Day is the day he dies.'

Jessie Douglas Kerruish, *The Undying Monster: A Tale of the Fifth Dimension* – a werewolf novel – 1922

Some comparisons immediately spring to mind: the first with Dracula, who shares the widow's peak and twin fangs, the main difference being that Hull's werewolf has the fangs in upside down.

Adam Douglas, *The Beast Within*, 1992

Let us consider the Uffizi *Medusa* in conjunction with Glendon's death scene, when the film frees him from his curse, and from forever having to chase after stopgap remedies (the antidote, the kill), without quite letting him off the hook. He must die, and when he does his death does not strike the same tragic note as, say, the teary Frankenstein monster's when, in *Bride*, he pulls the lever that blows himself and his persecutors to pieces. *WWL* denies the monster a measure of this dignity through, in part, a framing choice at the moment of the figure's death. This scene comes at the end of a film in which the monster-victim has never aroused the sympathy we feel for Boris Karloff's monster or, in *The Wolf Man*, Lon Chaney's Larry Talbot.

Many critics note that they do not really like Glendon. Only a few find him sympathetic.²⁶ A common complaint is that Hull makes the character too stiff, though some find him growing on them as his situation darkens.²⁷ The film goes hard on Glendon, although in the end it offers him a sliver of redemption.

Again, it's a sliver. William K. Everson writes that 'in horror films the werewolf motif inevitably culminates with the monster changing slowly back into human form in his dying moments, with the suggestion, supplied by the incidental music, of the attainment of long sought peace' (Everson [1954] 2000: 25). This we get in *WWL*, although for me at least, a different version plays out in memory. On film, the werewolf expires and changes back into a man. What makes me remember Glendon dying and remaining a werewolf are two things: first, the character utters his last lines *as a werewolf* (as a man he is silent and inert); second, after the werewolf has tumbled down the steps, a medium close-up frames him upside down. He says his last words and dies. A moment later he returns to human form. Through all this, the figure remains upside down. Neuroscientists tell us that upside-down faces are harder to recognize than right-side up ones (Yovel and Kanwisher 2005: 2256–62). The last time we see Glendon right-side up is as a werewolf.

Then there are the last words themselves. He says: 'Thanks for the bullet. It was the only way. In a – in a few moments now, I shall know why all this had to be.' Then, thrusting marital discord back into spotlight, from which it has never strayed far, he adds, 'Goodbye, Lisa. I'm sorry I – I couldn't have made you happier.' The character's last lines are similar in the screenplay, although there he says: 'There was no place on earth left for me' (Colton 1935: I-93). There was no place on earth left for Glendon, but maybe he goes to a better place. Erikson writes that the final shots of Glendon 'hold his face

upside-down in the frame, visually robbing his death of a peaceful repose, in compositional terms' (Erikson 2001). Glendon's death scene simultaneously grants and denies him a release from his curse.

Compositionally, the shots of the dying and dead Glendon also send us back to the Uffizi *Head of Medusa*. Dellamora quotes Pater's description of this painting, in which the decapitated head is shown upside down:

The hue which violent death always brings with it is in the features; features singularly massive and grand, as we catch them inverted, in a dexterous foreshortening, sloping upwards, almost sliding down upon us, crown foremost, like a great calm stone against which the wave of serpents breaks.

(Dellamora 1990: 140; original text in Pater 1980: 83)

Glendon remains inverted to the last, and the film robs him of a dignified and reposeful death by hanging him upside down. But Pater, Dellamora writes, finds the Uffizi *Head of Medusa* (and Shelley's poem on this painting) expressing 'the possibility of a new life that lies on the other side of the death that the entry into sexual desire and activity portends' (Dellamora 1990, p. 140). Death, seen as an oblique figuration of the sort of transition and transformation that Dellamora envisions, is the only hope we will find this film extending to Glendon and his kind. In the world Glendon leaves, a man who expresses desire for another man can only be a monster, and the only cure held out to him will be a bullet.

CONCLUSION

The Werewolf of London is a nasty little fantasy.

'The Werewolf of London,' *Time*, 20 May 1935

Before it settled on a title for its film, Universal held a contest in which studio employees read a plot synopsis and submitted ideas. Some entries point to the dense tangle of themes that even a brief outline of the story suggests. A few register the slippery interchangeability of the narrative's central elements: 'The Curious Man' and 'The Curious Curse'; 'The Curse of the White Flower' and 'The Curse of the Werewolf'; 'The Moonlight Demon' and 'The Evil Flower'; 'Phantom Monster' and 'Phantom Moonflower'. Linking the werewolf and the Madagascar in one title is 'Man, the Carnivorous,' while 'Fangs of the Flower' links the werewolf to both the Madagascar and the Mariphasa.

The shame that wracks Glendon is suggested by 'Secrets of a Werewolf,' and by 'Safe in the Shadows,' which would be a good title for a film about clandestine lovers meeting in back alleyways. 'The Inhuman Man' hints at the natural/unnatural ambivalence I have traced in the screenplay and film, while 'The Innocent was Guilty' limns the film's dooming and yet sympathetic stance toward its protagonist. Other titles – 'Rendezvous with Moonlight', 'Bitten', 'The Bewitching Moon', 'Moonlight Interlude', 'Moon Struck', 'Desire Under the Moon', 'Kismet', and 'When the Moon is High' – sound like they were pitched for a love story, while 'The Moan in the Night' invites us to picture more than hand holding taking place under cover of darkness (various Universal Pictures employees 1935).

Another entry seems to tap a deeper vein of meaning. 'Gautama's Return' refers to the epiphany of the Buddha Gautama, who, after living a life of every

28. Other bits of my description are culled from Anon. 2008 and Keown 2003.

earthly luxury and comfort, renounces all and spends six years enduring the severest conditions of self-denial and mortification. One day, after fainting from weakness, he realizes that, as a 1907 encyclopaedia puts it: 'So long as he allows unholy desires to reign within him, there will be unsatisfied longings, useless weariness, and care. To attempt to purify himself by oppressing his body would be only wasted effort' (Baynes and Smith 1907: 384).²⁸ Seeking a 'middle way', Gautama starts eating again, and returns to the life from which he had sought to escape. This title, terrible for a Universal horror film of the 1930s, nevertheless registers a theme Colton manages to explore in his ambitious blueprint for a modest genre production: a film obsessed with the potential of surfaces to appear ordinary while they hide the alien, natural, abominable, human secrets that lie underneath them.

REFERENCES

- Anon. (1935a), 'Screen Notes', *New York Times*, 7 May, p. 28.
- Anon. (1935b), 'The Werewolf of London', *Motion Picture Herald*, 4 May, pp. 38–39.
- Anon. (1935c), 'The Werewolf of London', *Time*, 20 May, p. 32.
- Anon. (1946), 'John Colton Dies; Noted Playwright', *New York Times*, 29 December, p. 35.
- Anon. (2008), 'Buddhism', *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica Online, <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9105944>. Accessed 10 January 2009.
- Aylesworth, T. G. (1972), *Monsters from the Movies*, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott.
- Badley, L. (1995), *Film, Horror, and the Body Fantastic*, Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Baring-Gould, S. (1865), *The Book of Were-Wolves: Being an Account of a Terrible Superstition*, London: Smith, Elder and Co.
- Baynes, S. and Smith, W. R. (eds) (1907), 'Buddhism', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, volume 4, Akron: Werner Co.
- Benshoff, H. M. (1997), *Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Berenstein, R. J. (1996), *Attack of the Leading Ladies: Gender, Sexuality, and Spectatorship in Classic Horror Cinema*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bige. (1935), 'Werewolf of London', *Variety*, 15 May, p. 19.
- Boleslawski, Richard (1934), *The Painted Veil*, Culver City: MGM.
- Bourgault du Coudray, C. (2006), *The Curse of the Werewolf: Fantasy, Horror, and the Beast Within*, London: I. B. Tauris.
- Breen, J. (1935), memo to H. Zehner, 28 January, WWL PCA file, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS).
- Browning, Tod (1935), *Mark of the Vampire*, Culver City: MGM.
- Brunas, M. et al. (1990), *Universal Horrors: The Studio's Classic Films, 1931–1946*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Carpenter, E. (1908), *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women*, London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Cassar, I. (ed.) (2008), *Parallax*, 14:2. Special Issue on Inversion.
- Clarens, C. ([1967] 1997), *The Illustrated History of Horror and Science-Fiction Films*, New York: Da Capo.
- Colton, J. (1926), *The Shanghai Gesture: A Play*, New York: Boni and Liveright.

- Colton, J. (1935), 'The Werewolf of London', screenplay, 26 January. Purchased from <http://www.scriptcity.net/>. Accessed 9 August 2009.
- Creed, B. (1993a), 'Dark Desires: Male Masochism and the Horror Film', in S. Cohan and I. R. Hark (eds), *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema*, London: Routledge, pp. 118–33.
- Creed, B. (1993b), *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, London: Routledge.
- Creed, B. (2005), *Phallic Panic: Film, Horror, and the Primal Uncanny*, Melbourne: Melbourne UP.
- Davis, W. (1995), *Drawing the Dream of the Wolves: Homosexuality, Interpretation, and Freud's 'Wolf Man'*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Del Ruth, Roy (1934), *Bulldog Drummond Strikes Back*, Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Pictures.
- Dellamora, R. (1990), *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism*, Chapel Hill: University North Carolina Press.
- Douglas, A. (1992), *The Beast Within*, London: Chapman.
- Douglas, D. (1966), *Horror!*, New York: Macmillan.
- Dyer, R. (2002), *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representation*, second edition, London: Routledge.
- Dyer, R., with Pidduck, J. (2003), *Now You See It: Studies in Lesbian and Gay Film*, second edition, London: Routledge.
- Ellis, H. (1908), *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Vol. 2: Sexual Inversion*, 2nd ed., Philadelphia: F. A. Davis.
- Endore, G. (1933), *The Werewolf of Paris*, New York: Farrar and Rinehart.
- Erikson, G. (2001), review of WWL, *DVD Savant*, 26 August, <http://www.dvdtalk.com/dvdsavant/s305were.html>. Accessed 9 August 2009.
- Evans, W. (1984), 'Monster Movies: A Sexual Theory', in B. K. Grant (ed.), *Planks of Reason: Essays on the Horror Film*, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, pp. 53–64.
- Everson, W. K. (1974), *Classics of the Horror Film*, New York: Citadel.
- Everson, W. K. ([1954] 2000), 'Horror Films,' in A. Silver and J. Ursini (eds), *Horror Film Reader*, New York: Limelight, pp. 21–37.
- Freud, S. ([1905] 1953), 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality' (trans. J. Strachey), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, volume 7, London: Hogarth, pp. 123–245.
- Freud, S. ([1922] 1955), 'Medusa's Head' (trans. J. Strachey), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, volume 18, London: Hogarth, pp. 273–74.
- Freud, S. ([1918] 1957), 'The Taboo of Virginity' (trans. J. Strachey), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, volume 11, London: Hogarth, pp. 191–208.
- Frost, B. J. (2003), *The Essential Guide to Werewolf Literature*, Madison: University Wisconsin Press.
- Gifford, D. (1973), *A Pictorial History of Horror Movies*, London: Hamlyn.
- Hanke, K. (1999), 'Under A New Light: WereWolf of London', *Scarlet Street*, no. 33, pp. 28+.
- Hardy, P. (ed.) (1994), *The Overlook Film Encyclopedia: Horror*, Woodstock, NY: Overlook.
- Harris R. (1935), letter to J. Breen, 30 January, WWL PCA file, AMPAS.
- Harrison, P. (1935), 'Werewolf of London,' *Harrison's Reports*, 18 May, p. 78.
- Hillyer, Lambert (1936a), *Dracula's Daughter*, Universal City: Universal Pictures.

- Hillyer, Lambert (1936b), *The Invisible Ray*, Universal City: Universal Pictures.
- Humphries, R. (2006), *The Hollywood Horror Film, 1931–1941: Madness in a Social Landscape*, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow.
- Jones, E. ([1931] 1949), *On the Nightmare*, London: Hogarth.
- Katz, J. N. (1995), *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, New York: Dutton.
- Keown, D. (ed.) (2003), 'Siddhartha Gautama', *A Dictionary of Buddhism*, Online: Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t108.e1667>. Accessed 9 August 2009.
- Kerruish, J. D. (1922), *The Undying Monster: A Tale of the Fifth Dimension*, London: Heath Cranton.
- Madsen, A. (1995), *The Sewing Circle: Sappho's Leading Ladies*, New York: Kensington.
- Mamoulian, Rouben (1931), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Los Angeles: Paramount Pictures.
- Mann, W. J. (2001), *Behind the Screen: How Gays and Lesbians Shaped Hollywood*, New York: Viking.
- Maturin, C. R. (1824), *The Albigenses, A Romance*, London: Hurst, Robinson, and Co.
- McDermid, F. (1935), 'The Werewolf of London,' 5 March, synopsis read by studio employee title contest entrants – Cinema/Television Library of the University of Southern California (USC), Box 277/Folder 8560.
- McFadden, Hamilton (1934), *As Husbands Go*, Los Angeles: Fox Film Corporation.
- Murray, J. A. H., et al. (eds) (1991), *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- O'Donnell, E. ([1912] 1996), *Werewolves*, Hertfordshire: Oracle.
- Pater, W. (1980), *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry, The 1893 Text*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Peirse, A. L. (2007), 'The Destruction of the Male Body in Classic Horror Film', Ph.D. thesis, Lancaster: Lancaster University.
- Riley, P. J. (ed.) (1993), *The Wolf Man*, Universal Filmscripts Series, Classic Horror Films, volume 12, Absecon, NJ: MagicImage Filmbooks.
- Scheuer, P. K. (1935), 'New Horror Film Eerie,' review of WWL, *Los Angeles Times*, 19 May, p. 25.
- Sedgwick, E. K. (1993), *Tendencies*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Senn, B. (1996), *Golden Horrors: An Illustrated Critical Filmography, 1931–1939*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Seymour, B. (1995), "'Werewolf of London,'" Part II', *Classic Images*, no. 242, August, pp. C2+.
- Skal, D. J. (2001), *The Monster Show: A Cultural History of Horror*, revised edition, New York: Faber and Faber.
- Soister, J. T. (1999), *Of Gods and Monsters: A Critical Guide to Universal Studios' Science Fiction, Horror and Mystery Films, 1929–1939*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Stekel, W. (1922), *Bi-sexual Love: The Homosexual Neurosis* (trans. James S. Van Teslaar), Boston: Richard G. Badger, Gorham.
- Stewart, W. (1995), *Cassell's Queer Companion*, London: Cassell.
- Stuart, J. M. (1935), memo, 15 January, WWL PCA file, AMPAS.
- Summers, M. (1934), *The Werewolf*, New York: E. P. Dutton.
- Symonds, J. A. (1928), *Studies in Sexual Inversion*, Privately printed.
- Troy, W. (1935), 'Through the Closet Door', review of *Werewolf of London*, *The Nation*, 29 May, p. 640.

- Various Universal Pictures employees (1935), submissions to the WWL title contest, USC, Box 789/Folder 24373.
- Vieira, M. J. (2003), *Hollywood Horror: From Gothic to Cosmic*, New York: Harry N. Abrams.
- Waggner, George (1941), *The Wolf Man*, Universal City: Universal Pictures.
- Walker, Stuart (1935), *Werewolf of London*, Universal City: Universal Pictures.
- Whale, James (1931), *Frankenstein*, Universal City: Universal Pictures.
- Whale, James (1932), *The Old Dark House*, Universal City: Universal Pictures.
- Whale, James (1935), *Bride of Frankenstein*, Universal City: Universal Pictures.
- Wilk, S. R. (2000), *Medusa: Solving the Mystery of the Gorgon*, Oxford: Oxford UP.
- Worland, R. (2007), *The Horror Film: An Introduction*, Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Yovel, G. and Kanwisher, N. (2005), 'The Neural Basis of the Behavioral Face-Inversion Effect,' *Current Biology*, 15:24, December 20, pp. 2256–62.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Harry Benshoff and Mark Jancovich for their very helpful comments on a draft of this essay, and Rick Worland, Ned Comstock of the Cinema/Television Library at the University of Southern California, and William Claspy of Kelvin Smith Library at Case Western Reserve University for their assistance with the research.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Spadoni, R. (2010), 'Strange Botany in *Werewolf of London*', *Horror Studies* 1: 1, pp. 49–71, doi: 10.1386/host.1.1.49/1

CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Robert Spadoni is the author of the 2007 University of California Press book, *Uncanny Bodies: The Coming of Sound Film and the Origins of the Horror Genre*. An Associate Professor, he teaches Film Studies at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio.

E-mail: robert.spadoni@case.edu
