

The Wolf and Its Associations
in Natural Historical Narratives, 1590-1620

ABSTRACT (要約)

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Introduction

Ideas about wolves in early modern England were built up through observation and imagination. Among the period's genres, natural history played a fundamental role in enriching the imagery of wolves. Characterised by comprehensiveness, works of natural history present the readers with discourses in which animals are treated not only as embodied creatures but also as metaphors. Animals were perceived in relation to their associations with other creatures, plants and minerals. While natural historical texts are often regarded simply as sources to contextualise literary texts, they themselves convey preeminent narratives of nature that develop through a wide range of associations.

The thesis discusses how the natural history of wolves formed entertaining narratives of nature which facilitated people's understanding of various differences. To this end, it explores the wolf and its associations in natural history by identifying entertaining episodes of the genre. It deals with vernacular works of natural history as well as related texts that circulated between 1590 and 1620, when associations were particularly valued in comprehending nature. Primary works include *The Historie of Foure-footed Beastes* (1607) by Edward Topsell (1572-c.1625) and a vernacular translation of Pliny's *The Historie of the World* (1601) by Philemon Holland (1552-1637).

Chapter I. Ferocious Wolves in Entertaining Stories of Nature

Exploring the idea that natural history consists of miscellanies of narratives, the first chapter reevaluates the genre as comprised of vernacular entertainments of nature. As aforementioned, stories in natural history develop through diverse associations. Associations enabled the early moderns to evaluate the metaphorical as well as physical interrelationships of natural matters and ultimately to understand them through every possible perspective. Of the chief sources of natural history, *The Historie of Foure-footed Beastes* is the most significant because it explores a wide variety of associations and stories. The work expresses the contemporary mixed ideas about wolves in reflecting Topsell's own understanding of the animal. At the same time, it contributed to the augmentation of the English vocabulary in introducing new zoological terms and coinages.

The first chapter then discusses how the natural history of wolves becomes entertaining reading material when their ferocity is emphasised by analysing three types of Topsell's stories: moral tales, narratives of crisis averted, and "textual spectacles." The first group of tales, primarily based on biblical understanding of wolves, associates them with human evils. Describing wolves in a religious context, these stories demonstrate the figurative ferocity of evildoers. The second type exaggerates the presumed ferocity of wolves in narrating animal-human encounters and the miraculous survival of humans. The third type, which can be enjoyed as "textual spectacles," illustrates the battles between wolves and other animals, its vividness reminding the readers of the custom of animal baiting. In the latter two types, encounters between wolves and others are dramatised to the extent that the discourses become entertaining narratives.

Chapter II. Baffling Stories: Defining Wolves and Defining through Wolves

By further exploring narratives of natural history, the second chapter examines the undefinable quality of wolves. Since natural history inclusively categorises animals and encompasses wide-ranging discourses, the concrete definition of wolves is repeatedly challenged. First, according to the contemporary system of classification, even uncommon creatures and supposed hybrids such as sea-wolves and “thoes” are comprehensively categorised as wolves. Second, multiple retellings of wolf-mother legends featuring Latona, Romulus and Remus confuse the boundaries of wolves and humans. Moreover, inclusion of werewolf narratives in natural history unsettles the definitions of both wolves and humans. Whereas the idea of metamorphosis itself was strictly denied in the period, stories of werewolves worked as entertainment all the more because werewolves and wolves were not clearly defined and therefore could be freely explored.

In turn, the same wolves can be rhetorically utilised in defining new discoveries. While the definition of wolves is rather obscured, the rhetoric of wolves is used in the new-world context for the better comprehension of animals and inhabitants hitherto unseen by the English. Wolves and wolf-like animals are understood through inclusive categorisation or rhetorical comparison to what the English explorers knew as wolves. Commodification of such animals, sea-wolves or seals in particular, promotes their observation of and communication with locals. In the new-world narratives, wolves also represent the menace of the unknown wilderness. Wolves thus intermediate between two worlds as the marker of both difference and sameness.

Chapter III. Understanding Difference: Natural History of Wolves in Literary Works

The last chapter examines the natural history of wolves in Thomas Adams's sermons and John Webster's tragedies, based on the premise that the ideas about wolves were developed through the interplay of natural history and literature. Especially when interwoven in literary contexts, the natural history of wolves works as the marker of difference. The first half of the chapter traces natural historical elements and structures found in Adam's *Lycanthropy* (1615) and Webster's *The White Devil* (1612). Ubiquitously found in both works are what this dissertation calls "the commonplaces of natural history" about wolves. In *Lycanthropy*, Adams widely borrows the natural history of wolves to underscore the difference of evildoers. In *The White Devil*, the prevalence of natural historical ideas about wolves reflects the omnipresence of its wolfish characters, who see other characters as different from themselves.

As an attempt to unfold the many-layered meanings of canine metaphors in *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613-14) and to further observe the interplay of natural history and literature, the latter half of the chapter reconsiders the boundary crossings of the Duchess and Ferdinand from their respective perspectives. It examines the tragedy's web of animal associations which suggests that natural history functions on a breadth and scope beyond a mere repository of sources. While both the twins are associated with wolves, their difference is also conveyed through the motif of the same wolves. The Duchess's association with multiple canines marks the complexity of her nature as well as the significance of her cross-bred children. In contrast, Ferdinand's self-identification with a wolf expressed through his lycanthropy underlines his fatal inability to understand that he and his sister are different.

CONCLUSION

Ideas about wolves were revisited over and over again through stories of nature in the early modern period. The natural history of wolves, originally working in conveying religious meanings, can be enjoyed as entertaining narratives. When these stories are embedded in literature, wolves function as the marker of difference for the English when they attempt to interpret what may at first appear inexplicable and potentially threatening. The natural history of wolves, therefore, does not only provide comprehensive explanations of what people perceived as wolves, but also forms entertaining narratives that may advance their understanding of various differences.