

The Wolfman Encyclopedia Article

The Wolfman

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The Wolfman—a bipedal, cinematic version of the werewolf archetype—dramatically embodies the Jekyll/Hyde (superego/id) dichotomy present in us all. The Wolfman first took center stage in Universal's *Werewolf of London* (1935), starring Henry Hull in a role reprised decades later by Jack Nicholson (*Wolf*, 1994). Soon after, Curt Siodmak (*Donovan's Brain*) finished the screenplay for Universal's latest horror classic, *The Wolf Man* (1941), directed by George Waggner. Lon Chaney, Jr. starred as Lawrence Talbot, an American-educated Welshman who wants nothing more than to be cured of his irrepressible lycanthropy. Make-up king Jack Pierce devised an elaborate yak-hair costume for Chaney that would come to serve as the template for countless Halloween masks. Siodmak's story differed from previous werewolf tales in emphasizing the repressed sexual energy symbolically motivating Talbot's full-moon transformations. Four more Chaney-driven Wolfman films came out in the 1940s; numerous imitators, updates, and spoofs have since followed.

Further Reading:

Skal, David. "'I Used to Know Your Daddy': The Horrors of War, Part Two." *The Monster Show: A Cultural History of Horror*. New York, W.W. Norton, 1993, 211-227.

Lon Chaney Jr. in character in the film *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman*.

Twitchell, James B. "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Werewolf." *Dreadful Pleasures: An Anatomy of Modern Horror*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1985, 204-257.