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Dogs and Death: A Changing Association

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Introduction

Dogs have a strong association with death. This includes an association with the devil, connections with graveyards and gods of death, and omens in general. However, this relationship is no longer present in the modern world. Instead, dogs have become more human like and thus any association with death is usually sad. We all know that a dog dying in a film is much more heartbreaking than any human character. Dogs have also become a symbol of protection in the past, often being associated with guardians of the dead or dying. Their associations are always changing, but how and why have these associations changed? Perhaps it is the humanization and civilization of dogs that has changed our perspective on their roles to something more positive than harbingers of death.

Past

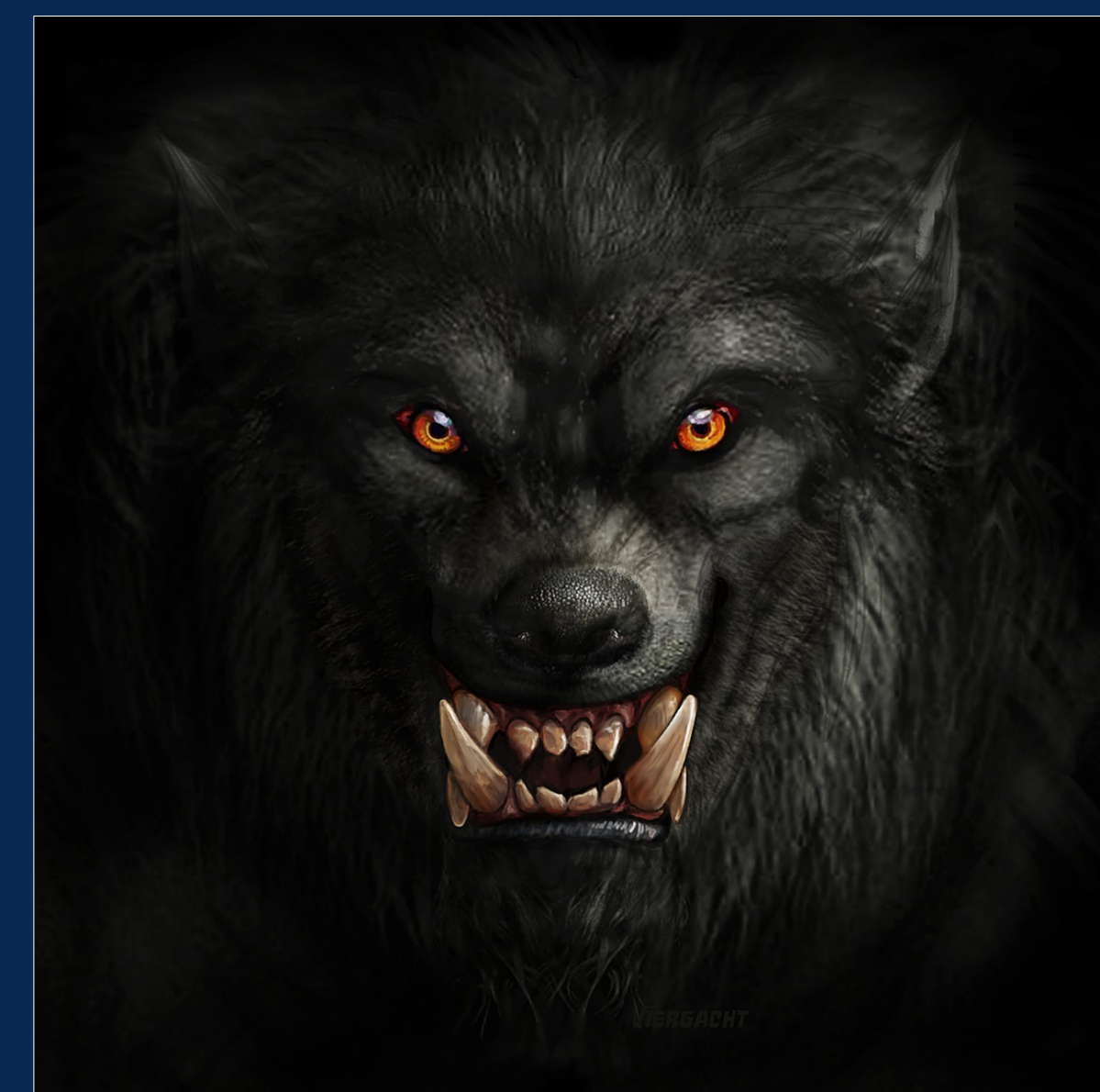
Dogs have been associated with devils and with being guardians.

1. In Ancient cultures dogs were thought to give devils physical forms.
2. Eventually dogs became associated with being guardians of souls instead of destroyers.

Present

In modern times we hope to avoid the association between dogs and death. It is not uncommon to hear of dogs saving people or waiting for dead owners. When a dog passes, they are treated with as much, if not more, respect and sadness as a human family member.

Figure 1 – Dogs and Death in the Past



Left: Many ancient dog myths, such as the loup-garou, hellhounds, and Black Dogs, resembled this illustration. Source: [Needpix](#). Right: A Church Grim thought to protect the souls of the recently deceased. Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#).



Figure 2 – Dogs and Death in the Present



Many dogs are now honored in graveyards after their passing. Source: [Pxfuel](#).

Conclusions

The behavior of dogs has not changed over time – they have always watched over and waited for us. The reason their associations with death have changed is because of their relationship with us. As humanity realized that dogs were loyal companions who would warn us of danger, we became less wary of them and the world around us, helping us become better. The only question that remains is if this happened because of our relationship with dogs, or if the relationship changed because of us. I believe they have had more of a positive impact on us than we could ever have on them.

