



# 'Monsters!' Study Day

Saturday 25 January, 10.00-16.00, Building 65 Avenue Campus

## 10.00-10.10 Coffee

## 10.10-10.15 Welcome

### 10.15–11.00 Professor Catherine Clarke: Grendel and his kin: the monsters of *Beowulf* in the Old English poem and modern re-workings.

This presentation will look at the monsters of the Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf*, as well as their later re-interpretation in sources such as John Gardner's novel *Grendel* (which re-imagines the story from the monster's perspective), graphic novels and comics, and recent film adaptations (including Robert Zemeckis' motion-capture version, starring Ray Winstone and Angelina Jolie). We'll ask what makes the monsters of *Beowulf* so terrifying – and whether the poem's warrior hero has a touch of the monster about him too.

### 11.00–11.45 Professor Mike Kelly: Beasts, wolves and fascists'

After the Second World War, writers and artists in France struggled to represent the inhuman face of the war. Using a popular comic book 'La bête est morte', we will see how the big bad wolf stood for the wicked fascists, and was surrounded by other disfavoured animals. But how easy is it to present these evil monsters as radically different from the good animals who fought them? Do we all carry the mark of the beast?

## 11.45–12.00 Coffee

### 12.00–12.45 Professor Linda Williams: Rosemary's babies and monstrous children.

This presentation investigates demon children, uncanny children and robot children in American cinema since the 1960s. It asks what cultural and psychological anxieties these representations confront (and sometimes attempt to deny). It also discusses how child actors perform monstrosity, and addresses what are the implications of asking them to do so. The talk includes a wealth of clips from a variety of science fiction and horror films from the last 50 years.

## 12.45–13.45 Lunch

### 13.45–14.30 Professor Stephen Foster: Inverse Reverse Perverse: YBAs and the Depiction of Monstrosity.

The YBAs (Young British Artists) of the late 1980s were let loose upon the world by Charles Saatchi and the 'Sensation' exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1997. As the title might suggest, they were primarily aiming to cause a sensation, but many of them did so by addressing taboos in their work. The most notable in this respect were Chris Offili's Virgin Mary, Marcus Harvey's image of Myra Hindley made out of children's hand prints, Jake and Dinos Chapman and of course, Damian Hirst. Described by the BBC as 'an exhibition of gory images of dismembered limbs and explicit pornography' it was an incredibly successful exhibition, helped enormously by the adverse publicity. I will explore whether the monsters were the artists or the subjects that they portrayed.

## 14.30–14.45 Tea/coffee

### 14.45–15.30 Dr Aude Campmas: Who's the monster? Beauty and The Beast in Victor Hugo's novels'

Victor Hugo, nineteenth-century French author of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *The Man Who Laughs*, *The Toilers of the Sea* and *Les Misérables*, was obsessed by odd couples: Esmeralda and

Quasimodo; Dea (Latin for 'goddess') and the 'monstrously' disfigured 'man who laughs'; the solitary fisherman Gilliatt and a giant octopus; the good Jean Valjean and the devil Javer.

These anomalous literary couples all make us think about the various and sometimes contradictory significations of monster and monstrosity. Who is the monster? The deformed man? The evil one? The foreigner? The outlaw? The beast? The woman? Victor Hugo was both a 'monstre sacré' ('sacred monster', or superstar) of French Literature, and a political outlaw condemned to live in exile. I would like us to reflect with him on these categories which ensnare individuals within a particular role and exclude them from the norm, the community. Ultimately, what does the monster, as a reflective figure, tell us about society?

### **15.30–16.00 Questions & Discussions**