

Call for papers

deadline: 28 February 2019

11th International Academic Conference of the Academy of the Diocese Rottenburg-Stuttgart

Study Group for Interdisciplinary Witchcraft Studies (AKIH)
and the Centre for the Historical Study of Europe, Saarland (ZHEUS)

Witches and Animals

The Animal Turn in Witchcraft Studies?

Directed by: Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Behringer, Prof. Dr. Iris Gareis, Dr. Rita Voltmer,
Dr. Willem de Blécourt, Dr. Petra Steymans-Kurz

Conference Site:: Akademie der Diözese Rottenburg-Stuttgart / Tagungshaus Weingarten (Oberschwaben)

Conference date: 25th – 28th September, 2019

Conference languages: German / English

We invite everyone, who is interested in our topic, to send a proposal and an abstract of the paper planned (only one page) to Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Behringer (Universität des Saarlandes): behringer@mx.uni-saarland.de and Dr. Rita Voltmer (voltmer@uni-trier.de).

The deadline is 28th of February 2019

In due course, we will then inform you, whether your proposal is accepted.

In early modern art witches are often depicted with an animal as their attribute, a depiction which remains open to multiple interpretations. Metamorphosis into animals is well-known; with or without the help of the devil witches changed, or confessed to changing, into wolves, dogs, cats, frogs, birds, or even whales.

It is often overlooked that the topic of *Witches and Animals* is much broader than this. Apart from changing into animals it can entail, amongst others: genuine animals as witches' companions, ghosts or demons in animal shape (for instance the German drakes), familiars and other animalistic house demons, animal spirits, animal doubles (such as the Mesoamerican naguals), animals and animal disguises in shamanism, maleficent magic in the form of vermin, and the conjuring of animals (particularly mice) in the late witch trials and subsequent folklore. This topic can also include mysteriously observed animals or the noises they were supposed to have made, devils in animal form or magical animals. Last but not least, it also includes the animals who were the victims of malicious witchcraft and those animals which were executed in cases of sodomy, together with the human perpetrators.

Moreover, by way of the enigmatic abilities ascribed to them, animals played a significant part in popular customs and in learned rituals, both with a magical character. The examples of gods and wizards in animal shape can be traced back to the origin of religion and literature. Christian theology is familiar with the adoration of the golden calf, Beelzebub as Lord of the Flies, animals as the abode of demons after an exorcism (Mat. 8:32), the Lamb of God and the depiction of the Holy Ghost as a dove.

The theme *Witches and Animals* also pertains to theological and art historical aspects, such as animals as symbols, metamorphoses in literature, art, film and the virtual worlds of the World Wide Web. Animals even turn up as symbols in modern celebrations such as Hallowe'en. Animals are not often what they seem.

In reference to these multi-layered relationships between animals, magic, sorcery, diabolic witchcraft and the supernatural in general – **do we need an Animal Turn in Witchcraft Studies?**

The interdisciplinary and international conference of the AKIH at the conference venue Weingarten of the Catholic Academy Stuttgart not only welcomes leading researchers, but also invites Ph.D. students to engage with the divergent and ambivalent dimensions of magical and demonical animals and the ways they were seen and comprehended. In addition the lecturers, conference participants will consist of interested members of the public. Each lecture will be followed by an active discussion.

Applications for papers will be received until the 28th of February 2019.

Registration for the conference without a paper is possible until the 25th of August 2019.