Dirty, Wild Beasts! Representations of the Homeless as Werewolves in Horror Films from *Werewolf of London* (1935) to *Underworld: Rise of the Lycans* (2009)

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Abstract:

This study will look at the ways in which the homeless in America have been correlated with the figure of the werewolf in horror films since the 1940s. Coming out of the Great Depression of the 1930s and the increasing migration of people from small towns into the cities after WWII, the homeless signified both a return to the past and an uncontrolled and controllable element of the population. Films such as *Werewolf of London* (Walker: 1935) and *The Wolf Man* (Waggener: 1941) will be examined to demonstrate how the werewolf is constructed to represent poverty and homelessness and the contagious nature of both. The present study will further show, in light of films like the *Underworld* (2003-present) series, that these signifiers remain part of contemporary configurations of lycanthropy, particularly since the global economic crisis of 2008.

Keywords: Werewolf, poverty, homelessness, lycanthropy, disease, capitalism.

This study will look at the ways in which the homeless in America have been correlated with the figure of the werewolf in horror films. Coming out of the Depression of the 1930s and the increasing migration of people from small towns into the cities after the Second World War, the homeless signified both a return to the past and an uncontrolled and uncontrollable element of the population. So much so that over time they have become increasingly ostracized and, ostensibly, completely removed from the areas inhabited by the rest of society. This ejection from the mainstream population sees them configured, at least in literary representations, as 'animals' (DePastino 2010: 204), or animalistic, and a 'societal disease' (Allen 2004: 75). The homeless or extreme poverty was rarely shown in pre-war mainstream films, but the werewolf – a figure that shares many common features with that of a homeless person – became a stalwart of pre, and post-World War Two monster movies. Although, the connection between the two might not be obvious at first, this article will make it apparent that the fear around the werewolf is utilized to signify the same anxieties around the homeless.

The werewolf has always been cast as a social outsider and even its earliest appearances on film, such as *The Wolf Man* (Waggener: 1941), saw lycanthropy as a condition indicative of Gypsies and traveling people – those that were considered to steal from and prey upon society. More recent representations such as the *Underworld* series (2003-present) reinforce this signification, casting werewolves as equivalent to a homeless underclass that live in the sewers and tunnels that run under the city. Further, in these films, and indeed in many others, lycanthropy, not unlike poverty, is seen as a disease that can be caught, a point reinforced in the various adaptions of the original *Wolf Man* film, where a wealthy heir loses all his riches due to a disease he catches from gypsies and is subsequently cast out of society because of the fear that he will infect others with this sudden poverty, making them wild and uncontrollable just like himself.

The Wolf at the Door

The werewolf has never existed easily within civilized society. Unlike the vampire it is largely unable to resist the primal urges that take control of its body and indeed, according to Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's reading of the Lycaon story, also purposely remove it from the hospitable company of humanity. In describing Lycaon's attempted murder of Jupiter, the king of the gods, he relates how 'the enraged Jupiter punished this violation of the host-guest relationship by transforming Lycaon into a monstrous semblance of that lawless, godless state to which his actions would drag humanity back' (1996: 13). Lycaon 'flies in terror and, gaining the field, howls aloud attempting in vain to speak' (Ovid 1984: 156-62), beginning his life as

an outcast from society, exiled from home, wealth and language. As a proto-werewolf Lycaon contains many tropes of werewolfery that have continued up until the present day: the half man, half wolf hybrid that still retains a trace of the human it once was; instant expulsion of exile from the society they were once part of; the uncontrollable blood lust; and the knowledge that he brought the curse upon his own head; that werewolfery is due to a psychological flaw in the one afflicted by it. We do not hear whether Lycaon is able to pass on his curse but writing at the turn of the nineteenth century, Montague Summers, the self-styled expert on all things supernatural, has no doubt about how the disease is passed from one to another. Summers writes, 'werewolfery is hereditary or acquired; a horrible pleasure born of the thirst to quaff warm human blood, or an ensorcelling punishment or revenge of the dark Ephesian art' (Summers 2003: 2). Interestingly, Summers distinguishes between two sorts of werewolfery: that which is a physical manifestation/transformation, and that which afflicts the mad:

> It should be remarked that in a secondary or derivative sense that the word werewolf has been erroneously employed to denote a person suffering from lycanthropy, that mania or disease when the patient imagines himself to be a wolf, and under that savage delusion betrays all the bestial propensities of the wolf, howling in a horrid long drawn note. (Summers 2003: 2)

Summers sees the second type as of no concern to his serious study of the phenomenon but both strands become entwined in the cinematic narratives featuring werewolves from the 1930s and 1940s. Of these probably the most well-known is *The Wolf Man* series of films by Universal, beginning in 1941, starring Lon Chaney Junior in the lead role, but it is worth considering an earlier entry of the werewolf onto the cinema screen, and that is the *Werewolf of London* by Stuart Walker from 1935.

It is a curious film that links the Wolfman mythos to that of the *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), and though Stevenson's story notes Hyde as 'savage' (2006: 19), and snarling and screeching like an animal (2006: 57), it is predicated more, as noted by Gregory Reece and Alison Pierse, on the success of the film of the same name from 1932, directed by Rouben Mamoulian, starring Frederich March. Pierse observes, 'both films feature an upper-class, educated protagonist who works in a private laboratory attached to his house and whose scientific endeavours unleash a murderous double' (Pierse 2013: 149). In Mamoulian's version of Robert Louis Stevenson's novella the good doctor releases his inner beast with Mr. Hyde looking something like a large ape – the make-up is not hugely different

from that worn by the wolf in *Werewolf in London*. Jekyll's animalistic alter ego is drawn to the slum districts of London, drawing an equivalence between the beast and the poor, which is further seen in the way that Hyde can only spend money while the doctor is the one that earns it – the beast drains Jekyll of his wealth and position. The linkage between the animalistic and the lower and criminal classes was one originally made by Cesare Lombroso, the Italian criminal anthropologist, who published his findings on conducting post-mortems on criminals in 1876, and published in English in 1911. Translated as *Criminal Man*, it posits that certain classes of humans have devolved to be more like animals than the rest of society, as noted by David Punter and Glennis Byron – who also quote Lombroso:

> Lombroso's moment of revelation came, when conducting a post mortem on a criminal, he opened up the skull to find a distinct depression comparable to that in lower animal forms: a sign of reversion, a vestige of the primitive. At this moment he realized 'the problem of the nature of the criminal,' and saw the explanation for both the distinctive physical traits and the behavioral tendencies that he observed. (Punter and Byron 2004: 23)

> Thus were explained anatomically the enormous jaws, high cheek-bones, prominent supercillary arches, solitary lines in the palms…sessile ears found in criminals, savages, and apes…the irresistible craving for evil for its own sake, the desire not only to extinguish life in the victim, but to mutilate the corpse, tear its flesh, and drink its blood. (Lombroso-Derrero 1911: xxv)

This description captures the representation of Hyde in Mamoulian's film, but even more perfectly that of the werewolf as shown in the films of the 1930s and 1940s. So when the films' main protagonists become infected, they descend from being civilized, moneyed members of society, down to a lower evolutionary species and of a lower class, i.e. moneyless criminals that devour flesh and blood to survive.

Consequently, *Werewolf of London* sees well-respected botanist Dr Wilfred Glendon in search of a rare orchid, but in his pursuit of said plant in Tibet, he is attacked and scratched by a large wolf-like creature. He returns to England, his fiancée and life in respectable society, only for it to begin to unravel when there is a full moon. On the night of his first transformation the wolf is shown shabbily dressed, like a vagabond, prowling the streets of the nearest slum areas and releases a howl that is heard over London. Aunt Etti, one of the circle of well to do society within which Glendon normally circulates, observes 'that's the worst district in London over there, knife you for a shilling, positively'. Following the precedent of Mamoulian's film, the wolf is equated with the poor – he gets progressively shabbier as the

film progresses – and forces Glendon to be exiled from London society. This linkage between the beast/wolf with the poor or sudden unexpected poverty, is given a level of increased plausibility when one remembers that Stuart's film was made in the 1930s during the Great Depression in America and what has since been seen as a time of national crisis. The monster is a signifier of that catastrophic event on American society, something which David Skal notes in relation to Tod Browning's *Dracula* from 1931, but can equally be applied to all American monster films from the 1930s and 1940s, where the werewolf/mummy/Frankenstein's monster embodies 'the fear that preceded fear, that shadowy harbinger of the Depression that was now at every throat' (Skal 1993: 169). The werewolf, more than the other monsters at that time, actually physically characterized the crisis in masculinity caused by the Depression rather than just the ontological fear induced by it – as, say, Dracula or Frankenstein's monster did – and as Timothy Connolly observes:

> The onset of the Great Depression caused a crisis at all levels of American culture. Whilst emerging as an economic crisis, the subsequent job losses set in motion a range of events that suggested a demise in the American way of life… the lengthening breadlines and regular sight of men out of work on the street, pointed to the demise of something less tangible: American masculinity. (Connolly 2004: 34)

This brings about an intersection of ideas around sudden poverty, the de-humanizing of the poor and a crisis in the then normative expectations around masculinity.

At the start of the twentieth century men were expected to be the breadwinners of the family unit, their ability to work guaranteeing their place within the familial and social hierarchy. Once this was taken away from them, and during the Great Depression this could happen extremely quickly, they became alienated from the normal social order. Pierre Burton, writing of his experience of the out-of-work and homeless during the Great Depression described what he observed as follows: 'they stare at you with an expression half sullen and half detached. They consider themselves outcasts from society with no part in the normal activities of men' (Burton 2001: 271). Similarly, Russell Freedman writes of one Chicago social worker during the Great Depression:

> one vivid, gruesome moment of those dark days we shall never forget. We saw a crowd of some fifty men fighting over a barrel of garbage that had been set outside the back door of a restaurant. American citizens fighting for scraps of food like animals. (Freedman 2005: 5)

Such personal observations still provide concrete evidence of how formerly civilized citizens can be quickly categorized as other and animalistic in their behaviour, all due to sudden poverty and ostracization of a society unprepared, or unwilling, to accept them. The *Werewolf of London* begins to configure the ways in which the anxiety around such sudden and unexpected changes in social circumstance can affect one, and particularly men. The setting of the film in London is an obvious displacement of those anxieties to a distance from which they can be safely observed as Robin Wood explains: '[i]n the 1930's [sic] horror is always foreign..; it is always external to Americans' (Wood 2004: 124). However, what Walker's film does, and which is absent from the Jekyll and Hyde mythos, is intimate that such a crisis in masculinity is not just an isolated case but is, in some way, potentially contagious. *Werewolf in London* limits this idea of a disease of poverty, mainly as Dr Glendon is more the mad-scientist rather than an average member of society, but this is not the case in the next, and possibly the most famous example of the werewolf genre, *The Wolf Man* from 1941.

Even a Man Who is Pure in Heart

Reynold Humphries, as quoted by Alison Pierse, comments that *The Wolf Man*, 'is of importance historically insomuch as…it "codified" the werewolf movie, therefore looking ahead to later developments' (Humphries 2006: viii). *The Wolf Man* stars Lon Chaney Jnr in the lead role – himself something of a werewolf as he played the role six times in the 1940s – and the tropes the narrative establishes encompass that of a person coming of age. In Chaney's case it is family responsibility, an accidental encounter with the werewolf which leaves them changed forever, and expulsion from society. With Chaney in particular, even though playing the self-confident son, Larry Talbot, who has returned to the family home in Wales from his adventure in America he is very much an average man until he is infected by the werewolf. As noted by Gregory Reece, 'unlike Lugosi's exotic Dracula or Karloff's lumbering monstrosity, Chaney could be you or me. If he could be a wolf-man, then anyone could' (Reece 2012: 109-110). This is an important aspect of the film, no longer is it just the members of high class society that become suddenly infected with poverty – a possible allusion to Wall Street financiers and investors suddenly being declared bankrupt. It can be your average Joe who just happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. For Larry Talbot this happens to be a night out with his potential girlfriend and her companion visiting some traveling gypsies to have their fortunes read. After some worrying readings where the companion is told she will die, they leave the gypsies only for the girl to be attacked. Larry tries to save her and kills the wolf-like creature assailing her with his newly acquired silver topped

cane – the top shaped like a wolf – but in doing so is scratched. The following day he awakes in bed but the wound mysteriously heals, but the body of one of the gypsies, brutally beaten to death, is found in the woods near the spot where the girl was killed. Larry's story of saving the girl seems oddly thin to the local police and suspicion of both murders falls on his head. Later, however, he discovers that the dead gypsy was in fact the werewolf, and that he now carries the curse; a curse which means he will kill those he loves most dearly – similar to the man that can no longer provide for his family. This part of the story throws up two further points of intersection to those already part of the Wolf Man mythos: that of gypsies as social outsiders – homeless in terms of no stable location or part of the accepted social hierarchy – that serve as inevitable carriers of contagion; and that the curse of the werewolf is as much a psychological affliction as it is a physical one. Consequently, Talbot is infected as much by the gypsies – one of whom is the werewolf – as much as he is by the bite of the werewolf itself, and the resultant crisis is propelled by Talbot's fractured state of mind. This is partly due to Hollywood's ongoing fascination with Freudian psychology, it more directly points to the crisis in masculinity, noted before, and as observed specifically about the Wolf Man films by Chantal Bourgault du Coudray:

> The Wolfman cycle of films also consolidated the werewolf as psychologized and masculine. The explicitly gendered title of the werewolf in this series is only the most obvious signifier of a pervasive concern with masculine subjectivity in crisis, and Chaney's anguished performance of masculine struggle with the 'beast within'. (du Coudray 2006: 79)

Talbot's loss of masculinity through his sudden social exile and poverty – no longer heir to the family fortune – leaves him a broken man, no longer sure of himself and racked with doubt and self-loathing, he is literally no longer human and is reduced to being an animal. Not unlike Glendon in *Werewolf of London*, Talbot finds it progressively difficult to stay inside buildings or near towns and people, and his clothing gets more and more shabby. Larry, though, looks less animalistic than Glendon, and at times in the film looks more like an extremely unkempt homeless person, something emphasized by his shoeless state.

The film names Larry's affliction as being lycanthropia, which is explained by his father, Lord Talbot, as follows: 'the scientific name for it is lycanthropia. It's a variety of schizophrenia…it's a technical expression for something very simple. The good and evil in every man's soul. In this case evil takes the shape of an animal'. For Lord Talbot, family and the wealth to provide for them is seen as good, while not being able to, or even worse not

wanting to, is necessary evil and animalistic. This links it back to Montague Summers' curious observation that lycanthropy is a mania that makes the 'patient' think he is a werewolf, positing that Talbot's affliction is a form of male hysteria, brought on by poverty and societal exile; one that sees his psychological state leak from his mind and into the very muscles and sinews of his body. This notion of leakage ties into du Coudray's further observations that in 'the horror films of the 1930s and 1940s…the body had been displayed as a site of leakage, corruption, permeability, impurity, disease or painful metamorphosis' (du Coudray 2006: 83). This suggests that if male hysteria can take its infection from the brain to the body, then it can just as easily move from one body to another. This worry is clearly exampled in *The Wolf Man* both by society in general – when Larry goes to church for the memorial service of one of the wolf's victims, the entire congregation turn and stare at him until he leaves – and in particular the group of important and moneyed men that gather around Lord Talbot – Dr Lloyd and Colonel Montford. This group of men exemplify the kind of moneyed, dependable and responsible masculinity that is supposed to be part of but in fact becomes the cause of his hysterical state. As du Coudray comments:

> If individual masculinity by an unconscious programmed with bestial drives, then a fraternal model of masculinity was a logical way for men to keep each other in check, while still maintaining and protecting male authority. The presence of such a fraternal grouping clustered around Larry's father… (which was otherwise so instrumental in establishing the suffering of the individual werewolf) lends support to this idea. (du Coudray 2006: 99)

The moneyed men, acting as guardians, also unconsciously create the hysterical infection of the homeless werewolf. This is a point confirmed when Larry asks Dr Lloyd what is producing the delusion from which he is suffering:

> **Larry:** But if a man isn't even thinking about the thing, isn't interested in it, then how could he hypnotise himself with it?
> **Doctor:** It might be a case of mental suggestion, plus mass hypnotism.
> **Larry:** You mean by that he could be influenced by the people about him?

However, the more they try and contain him – at one point he is even chained to a chair – the more unstable and porous he becomes, escaping from civilization and potentially infecting others (though in *The Wolf Man* series, he has the capability to spread the infection, he always kills his victims). The end of the film is almost inevitable, and Larry, no longer control-

lable by moneyed, masculine, authority, is killed by his own father – the leader of the guardians of capitalist, patriarchal normativity. It is also unsurprising that to kill the werewolf of poverty one needs silver, a symbol of wealth, and so the final scenes see Lord Talbot clubbing the werewolf to death with his silver cane – literally beating the poverty out of Larry's body. The proof of this is seen as Lord Talbot stops swinging his cane and his son returns to his human, normalized, state, no longer infected with poverty.

Poverty Never Dies

Of course events like the Great Depression never go away, particularly when economic strategies such as free markets are largely dependent on abstract qualities like investor confidence, economic markets in other countries and the availability of produce and materials abroad, most of which were immediately affected by World War Two. It is not coincidental then that the *Wolfman* films ran for the course of America's involvement in the conflict. As noted by Skal, 'Talbot's four-film quest to put to rest his wolf-self is, in a strange way, an unconscious parable of the war effort…beginning with the first year of America's direct involvement [1941], and finishing up just in time for Hiroshima' (Skal 2001: 217-218). The present study would also argue that the Wolf Man's continual resurrection during the War years also reflects the ongoing fear of a return of poverty, homelessness and the destruction of home due to the absence of the nation's men – and that when they returned they would be too animalistic to be reintegrated into civilized society again. This last point very much taps in to the anxieties during and after the Depression, that once men had been reduced to animals they would be unable to be reintegrated back into civilized, normative, capitalist society. Consequently, even though the end of *The Wolf Man* saw the death of Larry Talbot, the start of the next instalment, *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* from 1943, sees him unceremoniously brought back to life proving that poverty never truly dies. The film begins with Talbot interred in the family crypt and to prove that he has been reintegrated into the family of privileged masculinity, a gold ring with the family crest has been put into his hand, effectively warning away the infection of poverty that once plagued his body and mind. However, two grave robbers break into the crypt and remove the ring, also allowing moonlight to enter the chamber and cast its light on Larry's prone body. The latter revives him, while the former allows the animalistic infection of poverty to return, changing him back into a werewolf causing him to kill one of the thieves. Later he is found unconscious in the nearby town, and is taken to hospital where a surgeon heals the broken and fractured bones caused by Talbot's father, which originally brought about his death. It transpires that it is four years since Talbot

was killed and placed in the family tomb, and, consequently, no one believes him when he tells them his name - they rather believe him to be suffering from some form of mental instability. More worryingly for Talbot it is intimated that his condition – his poverty – is eternal and he will never be able to escape it and the social stigma it produces. As soon as he is able to move Talbot transforms into the wolf again, looking extremely shabby and street-worn, escapes the hospital, and is immediately drawn to the poor areas of the town. It is not long before he is drawn to the gypsies camped near the town and is then taken by one of them away from Wales into the middle of Europe, to a location not far from the infamous Dr Frankenstein's castle and laboratory.

The narrative from this point develops a storyline that is consistently copied across the rest of the series – *House of Frankenstein* by Erle C. Kenton from 1944 and *House of Dracula* also by Kenton, from 1945 – that sees Talbot attempting to find some kind of medical cure for his affliction which, almost always, ends in disappointment. Also interesting across the series is the attraction Talbot inspires in the women around him, from *The Wolf Man* to the *House of Dracula*, an emotional attachment that inevitably is futile as, just as the out-of-work men from the Depression, Larry cannot support them or start any kind of family – he is literally worthless as a man within the normative, capitalist system. Equally, all the films see his condition as being largely mental, and that the original psychological infection, that has seen him lose his wealth and position within society, continually leaks into his body no matter what happens to him – even death. In *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man*, the doctor who performed the operations to repair his skull follows him to Frankenstein's Castle and tries to find a cure for Talbot in the diaries of the monster maker, but it all ends in failure. In *The House of Frankenstein,* a crazed Doctor, played by Boris Karloff, offers to transplant Talbot's brain into another body to cure his affliction, suggesting that the infection lies in his body rather than his mind, but once again it ends in disaster. It would seem that no matter what Talbot does he cannot escape from the overwhelming contagion of poverty that constantly threatens to consume him and those he loves, a point similarly made about masculinity and the Depression by Philippa Gates:

> The Great Depression, which lasted from 1929 to the early 1940s, brought with it a sense of disillusionment to American society, as one quarter of American men were unemployed. (see Hatty 137) The Depression was the American Dream gone wrong; instead of being able through hard work and determination to achieve anything, suddenly it seemed almost impossible even to survive. (Gates 2006: 64)

The Wolfman perfectly exemplifies this as each time he struggles and strives to save himself, he is either killed – *The Wolf Man* and the *House of Frankenstein* – or frozen in ice – *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man*; he is unable to escape the jaws of poverty no matter what he does, that is until *House of Dracula*. Curiously though at this time Columbia Pictures produced their own monster movie featuring the Wolfman, *The Return of the Vampire* (Landers 1943), which also offered some form of release from the jaws of destitution. Here they used Bela Lugosi – reprising his earlier role as Dracula – as the vampire, Armand Tesla, with Andreas Orby (played by Matt Willis) as his werewolf man servant. When the vampire is alive the Wolfman is kept in servitude by him and forced to do his evil bidding. This is until the undead oppressor is staked and buried releasing the Wolfman from his hold and allowing him to be rehabilitated into society as the assistant to Dr Ainsley – it is a somewhat clumsy storyline that sees the Wolfman change from a slave, with no free will, to a servant that chooses to serve. However, a bomb during World War Two disturbs the vampire's grave and he revives. If the Wolfman's servitude is seen as one linked to enforced poverty and social disenfranchisement, with his rehabilitation seeing him 'allowed' back into society, then the reappearance of the vampire represents the view that destitution is written in someone's DNA. No matter how much Andreas resists he is inevitably pulled back into his inherent state of a disenfranchised slave. The film, in the spirit of many World War Two films, shows the triumph of good over evil in the conflicted male hero fighting his malignant overlord and causing the destruction of the vampire, it also signifies that the only release from poverty is death.

Returning to the Universal Wolf Man films, in the last in the series, the physician that Talbot travels to see in a final attempt to cure himself is a Dr Edelman, who specializes in unusual cases – he is also trying to cure Dracula of his vampirism at this stage in the film. Edelman ascertains that Talbot's illness is partially caused by pressure on the brain, caused by his skull, and his strong belief that he is a werewolf. Consequently, these pressure points overstimulate certain glands that release hormones into his body that translate his mental delusion into a physical reality. However, Edelman, not dissimilar to Glendon in *Werewolf of London*, has discovered a plant with unusual properties. The spores from this miraculous plant have the ability to soften hard tissue, such as bone, which would allow for the pressure points in Talbot's brain to be removed, thus curing him. Indeed, this is what happens in the film and though Dracula, Frankenstein's monster and the now crazed by vampirism Dr Edelman all die at the end of the film, Talbot, who now remains unchanged in moonlight, walks away with nurse Morelle. This would appear to signal the end of the anxiety over poverty, just as it marked the end of World War Two as noted by Skal above, but a virulent con-

tagion does not die so easily. Talbot's unwillingness to pass it on to others makes it even stronger within himself, so it is no surprise that three years later, in *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (Barton: 1948), Larry Talbot appears alone and succumbing to the wolf of poverty that consumes his human form, making him an uncontrollable animal once again.

Gone but Never Forgotten

The werewolf as signifier of poverty, social exclusion and loss of humanity caused by the Great Depression is specific to a certain historical moment, but as Judith Halberstam notes in relation to gothic monsters created during the nineteenth century, later appearances of them, in whatever form, still contain 'traces' of the original (1993: 349). In this way, many later adaptations of the Wolf Man story still show the werewolf as exemplifying not just social ostracisation, but also homelessness and the constant struggle against poverty – this is often in contrast to other supernatural characters, such as vampires, that more often easily blend into society and manage to accrue wealth with a certain amount of ease. Subsequently films such as *An American Werewolf in London* (Landis: 1981) and *Wolfen* (Wadleigh: 1981) all construct their respective werewolves with this in mind. The former sees its hero, David, a backpacker from an affluent American family, bitten by a werewolf when walking on the Yorkshire moors and then waking up in a hospital in London, somewhat reminiscent of Larry Talbot's encounter with the gypsy in *The Wolf Man* and his later rival at the start of *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man.* If the opening scenes represent the forces of homelessness and poverty running wild beyond the economically controlled environment of the city, the later scenes in London depict the these same forces underlying even the most civilized and socialized spaces. And so the newly transformed David prowls the subterranean tunnels of the underground, tracks and kills some homeless people and then lures a couple from their house before killing them. Finally he wakes up naked in London Zoo. All these actions align him in some way with the destitute and the areas they inhabit, or those that have money and a home and are safely part of the system which has expelled David from his formerly secure, moneyed life. Even his hours as a human become increasingly disturbing as he sees visions of his dead friend warning him of the curse/contagion he has acquired and will be unable to ever rid himself of. This too hints at the mental instability that is often the root cause of poverty and homelessness in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Not unlike Andreas from *Return of the Vampire* before him, David sees his only escape through death and so willing takes it when the chance arises.

Wolfen marks a significant shift from the exampled discussed so far in that poverty here is not a singular disease – in that a lone wolf passes it on to another – but it involves a pack and also, significantly, the action takes place in an American city rather than the Old World of Europe. These elements also appear in *The Howling* by Joe Dante from the same year, but *Wolfen* specifically focuses on the wealthy who have exploited the poor to get rich and unlike any of the earlier films shows those that have been made destitute and, having subsequently been disenfranchised because of the actions of the rich, wanting revenge. Set in New York the film makes this explicit from the start where a property magnate, earlier seen opening a new development in the South Bronx, walks round a deserted park at night with his cocaine-sniffing wife. Exhibiting the decadent behaviour of the extremely wealthy, they, along with their driver, are tracked and ripped apart by a pack of unseen assailants. As the film continues, a homeless person is killed in the area to be demolished for the development, and then a bridge worker. The detective captain assigned to the original murder, Dewey Wilson, starts to find connections to native Americans and the correlation between the disenfranchised former owners/inhabitants of the land and the werewolf pack is made – something that partially informs the werewolves/shapeshifters of the Quileute tribe in the later *Twilight Saga* (2005-8). The Wolfen, as wolf spirits, do not embody poverty so much as manifesting the revenge of the increasingly large amount of homeless and poor living in major cities – the underclass that rises up, not to take back what is theirs, but to punish those that keep them oppressed. It is interesting that this mini explosion of werewolf films in 1981 coincided with a severe global recession that occurred in the late 1970s and early 80s. It might be rather too coincidental, the turn from the singular victim spreading its contagion of poverty, to a wild roaming pack of the disenfranchised seeking revenge, is an unexpected turn, but it is one which appears again in a later set of films, the *Underworld* series.

Beginning with *Underworld* (Wiseman: 2003), the continuing series sees an ongoing class war taking place between vampires and Lycans (werewolves). As Jeffrey Weinstock notes, 'the vampire/lycan schism divides along class lines with vampires occupying the aristocratic position and lycans forced to play the role of slave labour' (Weinstock 2012: 114). Subsequently, the vampires live in a large-gated mansion, and the Lycans exist in the sewers and tunnels underneath the city. Further, the Lycans are shown as hirsute and largely unkempt, exemplifying a more extreme form of Talbot's successive hair. Another important distinguishing feature between the wolves and the vampires is their emotional state, with the Lycans being shown as unable to control their tempers, meaning they uncontrollably transform into their animal form when aroused. This has an important effect on how the wolves

are categorized in relation to the vampires. Even though they are shown as excessively masculine in stature – though that often denotes manual labour as a shape specific class distinction – the uncontrollability of their bodies both feminizes and others them from normative masculinity. As noted by Rosalind Sibielski:

> in this way the lack of self-control demonstrated by these characters serves a reciprocal function to the self-control demonstrated by the male [vampire] characters. It equally serves to gender manifestations of lycanthropy according to patriarchal constructions of sexual difference. (Sibielski 2014: 126)

The Lycans, just like Larry Talbot before them, are then constructed as hysterical and unstable with their transformation to a wolf being emblematic of their lowly status – homeless, unemployed, criminalistic – not unlike Lombroso's phrenological connection between devolved humans, the lower classes and criminals. The most significant film in the series so far in terms of Lycans is the third one, *Underworld: Rise of the Lycans* (Tatopoulos: 2009), which is a prequel to the two earlier films and focuses solely on the beginning of the conflict between the vampires and the lycans. As Ken Gelder observes, 'this is a much simpler film, built around a Manichaean distinction between civilised vampires, who live like feudal barons on a castle, and "savage" lycans who roam the forest nearby' (2012: 122). More than the rest of the Underworld series, *Rise of the Lycans* intimates a racial aspect to the werewolves with their enforced slavery and abuse by their white vampire masters – the connection to African Americans is explicit, though this too points to a state where one is not allowed to own property, have money or be part of normative society -- not unlike the Native Americans in *Wolfen*. The society of vampires then configure the aristocracy that live off the work of others, just as Lord Talbot does in *The Wolf Man*. In this configuration, the lycans become the source of the vampires' wealth/life. However, even though the werewolves escape from this system, their freedom leaves them with no means of supporting themselves. It is not surprising then, that lycan children, wives or families are rarely, if ever, seen. Like Talbot – jobless, homeless and moneyless – they are necessarily excluded from such normative activities, and so only reproduce via infection. Notably, just as with the earlier examples, and indeed *Wolfen*, the large scale depiction of poor, homeless, bestial werewolves as seen in *Rise of the Lycans* coincides with an economic crisis. There is no explicit connection made to this in the film, or indeed in any of the later parts of the series, but the werewolves here share many

common features with both Larry Talbot and the Wolfen that came out of earlier financial travails.

Traces of the Wolf Man

The werewolf has evolved considerably since the 1940s – and there have been many more examples of the genre in film than those listed here – tropes established by the early Universal films remain buried beneath the surface of more contemporary examples. This became explicit again at the time of the financial crisis' of the early 1980s and in 2008 and once again the werewolf/lycan expressed the fragile state of manhood in late capitalist society, where excessive exhibitions of masculinity marked one out as other and automatically disenfranchised one from normative society. More obviously, in the *Underworld* series, the effects of poverty are represented as affecting all racial groups in America and equating the ongoing condition of homelessness, social exclusion and abuse with that of historical examples from the nation's own past. The body of the werewolf, then, looks like one thing, while representing another, as noted by David Williams speaking of medieval conceptions of the phenomenon:

> in the werewolf tales, those who rely on the material sign mistake the werewolf for a ferocious beast; only the wise who look beyond appearances, those who read past the sign, are able to read the true nature concealed beneath the wrong form. (Williams 1996: 124)

In this way the man is not a beast but one who is consumed by the ferocious animal that is poverty, which is a disease that will never be cured, while those who suffer from it are excluded and exiled from society as monsters. The current popularity of werewolf narratives in popular culture – and not just as additions to vampire serials as seen in *True Blood* (Ball: 2008-2014), *The Vampire Diaries* (Plec and Williamson: 2009-present), and its spin-off *The Originals* (Plec: 2013-present) – as seen in television series such as *Teen Wolf* (Davis: 2011-present) and *Bitten* (Armstrong: 2014-present) suggests that the werewolf is still an important figure in portraying the underlying anxieties of contemporary society. Whilst these two ongoing series do not prioritize the connection between lycanthropy and poverty, it lurks beneath the surface as seen in the early episodes of *Teenwolf* where the mysterious, homeless, outsider Derek creates discord upon his arrival and in *Bitten*, as Elena is torn from her luxurious urban existence by the pull of the pack she had thought she had left behind.[1] More interestingly perhaps, is the continuing dominance of the lycan-style 'pack' in these narratives over

the lone-wolf trope that comes from the *Wolf Man* and its adaptations, which suggests that the forces of disruption, of which poverty is a part, is a much larger worry, not just in terms of masculinity and social exclusion but that it is causing larger rifts in the fabric of society itself. Therein larger groups are creating their own hierarchies beyond the scope of normative control. This can possibly prefigure the kind of declaration made by Lucian at the end of *Rise of the Lycans*: 'I've lived by their rules my entire life. I've protected them. Envied them. And for what? To be treated like an animal. We are not animals! Is this want you want? We can be slaves, or we can be... LYCANS!' However, rather than a cry for revolution, Larry Talbot would possibly prefer to see a world where, as at the end of *House of Dracula*, one can see lycanthropy/poverty as no longer being immortal, but a disease that is finally, and irrevocably, cured.

[1] This is something of a selective view of these two series as poverty is by far one of the lesser concerns of either of them, however, the destabilization of normalized, capitalist, society by outside or hidden forces as seen in the original *Wolf Man* looms large.

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