

Altered Beasts: The Werewolf in Popular Culture from Punishment to Power-up

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From its folkloric and literary origins, through to its presence in modern horror cinema, the prevailing attitude towards transforming into a werewolf has been that of a curse. Recent fiction and accompanying modern attitudes, though, have more closely aligned the werewolf as a being of fantasy, something desirable, and even romantic. When new literacies are considered, this changing perspective seems to be significant. Video games possess an extra dimension when compared to novels, short stories, film or television: gameplay. By changing the gaming experience, for instance players' goals or their limitations, alongside the transformation into a werewolf, video games are able to express the distinction between being human, social existence and the savage, bestial form in a manner other mediums cannot.

The starting point for this paper is *Altered Beast*, an arcade game later released on home consoles, which was famous for its players being able to transform into different were creatures. While *Altered Beast* was popular its representation of the transformation was simple; it empowered the player but otherwise the game largely stayed the same. While this empowerment is interesting in itself, particularly with regard to the werewolf as a figure of fantasy, it does not fully engage with the potential of new literacies.

The two games that form the primary examples that this paper explores are *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess* (2006) and *Sonic Unleashed* (2008). While the two games have more differences than similarities, particularly with regard to their critical reception, they both use the werewolf transformation to change the gameplay; they emphasise different aspects, engage with issues such as the werewolf's agency, the animal's perspective and whether this transformation is a curse, or a power-up.

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reoccurring elements of tyranny and torture across a range of Gothic novels and historical backgrounds. These include classic Gothic subjects such as the Spanish Inquisition, through to Victorian imperialism and even modern Gothic forms and science fiction hybrids.