

The Beast Without: The Cinematic Werewolf as (Counter)cultural Metaphor

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While in-depth cultural histories have been devoted to such classic horror monsters as the vampire, the zombie and Frankenstein's monster, the cinematic werewolf has long been considered little more than the basis of a Freudian allegory for the dark side of man. Accepted thinking on horror cinema would have it that countercultural 'New Horror' films such as George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), Wes Craven's *The Last House on the Left* (1972) and Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) marked a turning point in the genre's importance, proving that it could be a site for social, cultural and political debate. Yet, while individual films – such as *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* (1957) and *Ginger Snaps* (2000) – have been afforded a reasonable amount of scholarly attention outside of psychoanalytic discourse, the werewolf film is still generally regarded as a sub-genre with little cultural resonance and continues to be framed in the context of 'the beast within'.

This paper will argue that the term is ultimately a restrictive concept that prevents us from engaging with the werewolf as a complex and constantly transforming cultural metaphor. It will concentrate on *Werewolves on Wheels* (1971), *The Boy Who Cried Werewolf* (1973) and *The Werewolf of Washington* (1973), three werewolf films contemporaneous to the birth of the 'New Horror' associated with Romero, *et al.* By providing cultural readings of these films – often considered little more than lurid footnotes in horror film history – this paper will show that they are as subversive, political and culturally important as their lauded contemporaries and provide just one example of how the werewolf can be considered not just in the context of the psychoanalytic 'beast within' but the cultural 'beast without'.

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