The Year of the Wolf – 1981 and the Hollywood Lycanthrope Boom

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Introduction

The Werewolf as Enduring Myth

Cultural anthropologist Joseph Campbell, in his work on the persistence of myths in popular culture, stated one way to look at myths was a form of public dreaming[1]. This often-quoted aphorism proves useful when applied to the werewolf, as it not only points towards a persistence and pervasiveness of the legend throughout cultures throughout the world, but also points towards the notion of the recurring myth, which, like the recurring dream occurs when there is need for it. Campbell was well aware of the usefulness of shapeshifters to provide meaning, and, influenced by Swiss psychoanalyst Carl Jung, pointed out their reoccurrence as archetypes in his most famous theory; that of the 'hero's journey', a reoccurring metanarrative throughout history and culture. Chantal Bourgault Du Coudray, in the one of the first modern scholarly looks at the werewolf myth in culture, touches upon this idea. Du Coudray suggests that as people have become civilised, the werewolf myth would reoccur, almost like a system of checks and balances, to remind society of what the wolf in person (or the person in the wolf) could represent: -

> The symbiosis of human and wolf in the figure of the werewolf has presented the opposition of nature (represented by the wolf) and culture (represented by the human) in potent terms; terms that were further developed in the romantic period, which witnessed the emergence of a subjectivity of a subjectivity imaged through an internal-external or depth-surface duality.[2]

Using the theme of this duality[3], Du Coudray tracks the werewolf not only through the romantic periods, in which the werewolf is seen as a reaction to the enlightenment, but through the Victorian era, in which the werewolf is summoned as an evolutionary throwback, with all the implicit dangers that could entail, before finally articulating how the werewolf in the modern era, and especially in fantasy literature, can shrug off the negative connotations and stand as an example of

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[1] CAMPBELL, J., & MOYERS, B. (2011). *Power of Myth*. New York, Random House US. pg40

[2] BOURGAULT DU COUDRAY, C. (2006). *The curse of the werewolf: fantasy, horror and the beast within*. London, I.B. Tauris. pg3

[3] As the subtitle of the book 'Fantasy Horror and the Beast Within' would imply.

transhumanism – the postmodern dream of ascending from the human condition, and seeing the 'curse' of the werewolf transformation as a blessing.

It is this usefulness that has given werewolves such a long cultural history, with the oldest mention of a man transforming into a wolf appearing in the Epic of Gilgamesh, itself one of the oldest known texts. The story concerns a shepherd who is transformed into a wolf and subsequently eaten by his hunting dogs, all due to inadvertently displeasing a Goddess. This story, as an early Mesopotamian religious text, is imbued with moral imperatives. Here, to anger a Goddess is a transgression against the sacred that carries with it the punishment of losing humanity, a transmutation curse that might be considered to set a precedent for classical Hollywood werewolf films of the 1930s and 40s. in which people were considered 'cursed' by God. Later, in 380 BC, Plato similarly used the story of the ancient Greek King Lycaon[4] to warn against the dangers of power. In book eight of his *Republic*, he points out the transition between a guardian, or hero, and a tyrant is almost an inevitable consequence of the human condition:

Is it not something the same with a protector of the people? Once he controls a mob that obeys him, he cannot restrain himself from tribal blood, but he prosecutes unjustly, the sorts of things men love to do, and brings a man into court for murder, eliminating the life of a man—and with tongue and unholy mouth that have tasted the murder of his kind, he exiles, kills, and promises the cutting of debts and the redistribution of land. Is it not by necessity that such a man is fated either to be killed by his enemies or to become a tyrant, to turn into a wolf from a man?[5]

Again, the transformation from man to wolf, from guardian to beast, is seen as something intrinsically linked both to fate (the inevitable regression to the bestial) and as a punishment, for the guardian stands in place of God, in terms of representing and upholding moral order, and is eventually driven mad for the arrogance in supposing these things to be capable of a mortal. The sin of pride is punished and replaced with the stigma of shame of reversion to a bestial form.

[4] From whom we derive the term 'lycanthropy'.
[5] PLATO, & LEE, D. (2003). *Plato: the republic*. London, Penguin. Book 8, section 565.

It is a myth that also survives cross-cultural pollinization, with the werewolf of one country has very little to differentiate itself from the werewolf of another. However, from these earliest beginnings there has been very little variation from that basic theme – other than a person being transformed into a wolf.[6]

The Horror Genre as Cultural Mythology

The horror genre is famous for repeating cycles and formulas. The 'slasher boom' of the 1980s (actually started in 1978 by H*alloween*[7]) saw a glut in the market, with as many as 50 slasher films being released in 1981 alone. Other subgenres also saw films with a similar theme released in quick succession, starting with the Universal cycles of Dracula and Frankenstein films. Whilst Dracula[8] was to have a daughter, a son and a house, and Frankenstein[9] was given a bride, a son, a ghost and a (presumably) neighbouring house, Universal studio's third man on the totem pole, the wolfman was not accorded the same favour. The cycle began in 1935's Werewolf of London[10], with Henry Hull as the titular lycanthrope, but didn't find its hairy feet until 1941's The Wolf Man[11]. Lon Chaney Jnr starred as Larry Talbot, and yet subsequent outings in House of Dracula[12] and Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman[13] all saw him as a junior partner in the narrative, or an often just an extended cameo. Ironically, Chaney was the only actor of 'the big three' who was to play the same character in each film, Lugosi and Karloff relinquishing the roles that had made them famous early in the Universal horror runs. Chaney was identified with the role, but it never received the same traction as Dracula and Frankenstein, who also had the highbrow credentials of springing from authentic literary

[6] And when that symbol manifests itself in a seemingly spontaneous and unrelated group of texts within a very small time-period, there seems to be greater cultural forces at play. I use the terms 'spontaneous' to mean not relating to any of the accepted reasons for the appearance of films with a similar theme in a small time-frame ('cycles').
[7] *Halloween* (1978). CARPENTER, J. dir. Compass International Pictures
[8] *Dracula* (1931). BROWNING, T. dir. Universal Pictures
[9] *Frankenstein* (1931). WHALE, J. dir. Universal Pictures
[10] *Werewolf of London*, 1935. WALKER, S. dir. Universal Pictures
[11] *The Wolf Man*, 1943. WAGGNER, G. dir. Universal Pictures
[12] *House of Dracula*, 1945. KENTON, E. dir. Universal Pictures
[13] *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man*, 1943. NEILL. R. W. dir. Universal Pictures

sources. Instead, variations on the theme of the werewolf, like the same year's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*[14], and later *Cat People*[15] emerged and were critically lauded. These films had a little more highbrow cache then lumbering Larry Talbot. The first was based on a genuine literary classic and starred respectable, stolid Spencer Tracy, and the latter added shades of psychology to give it depth, as well as an ambiguity about whether anything supernatural was even going on to begin with. The wolfman, it seemed, could not catch a break. He couldn't, unlike Frankenstein, the Mummy and the Invisible Man, even receive equal billing when he met Abbott and Costello.

Hammer Films did little to redress this. Like Universal they rode a wave of renewed interest in Frankenstein (seven films between 1957 and 1974[16]) and Dracula (nine films between 1958 and 1974[17]) with only one film made in the werewolf sub-genre.[18] Interest in the werewolf film seemed sporadic, in the same way that re-occurring cycles of vampire films or slashers films didn't. However, what is obvious was that by re-using the same monsters, these threats could be perceived and received in different ways by audiences and still have relevancy. The films of what is referred to as 'the classic' period of horror addressed the concerns of the audience at that time, until such concerns were pressed onto the next generation, who saw their fears reflected in the 'modern' period of horror. Of course, some concerns were universal for both groups, and Andrew Tudor has meticulously tracked the changing progression of the genre, which (in broad strokes) is typified with

[14] *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1931). MAMOULIAN, R. dir. Paramount Pictures
[15] *Cat People* (1942). TOURNEUR, J. dir. RKO
[16] *The Curse of Frankenstein*, (1957). FISHER, T. dir. Hammer, *The Revenge of Frankenstein* (1958). FISHER, T. dir. Hammer, *The Evil of Frankenstein* (1964). FRANCIS, F. dir. Hammer, *Frankenstein Created Woman* (1967). FISHER, T. Hammer, *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* (1969). FISHER, T. dir. Hammer, *The Horror of Frankenstein* (1970). SANGSTER, J. dir. Hammer and *Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell* (1974). FISHER, T. dir. Hammer.
[17] *Dracula* (1958). FISHER, T. Hammer, *The Brides of Dracula* (1960). FISHER, T. Hammer, *Dracula: Prince of Darkness* (1966). FISHER, T. dir. Hammer, *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave* (1968). FRANCIS, F. dir. Hammer, *Taste the Blood of Dracula* (1970). SASDY, P. dir. Hammer, *Scars of Dracula* (1970). BAKER, R. W. dir. Hammer, *Dracula A.D. 1972* (1972). GIBSON, A. dir. Hammer, *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* (1973). GIBSON, A. dir. Hammer and *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires* (1974). BAKER, R. W. CHEH, C. dirs. Hammer/Shaw Brothers
[18] *Curse of the Werewolf* (1961). FISHER, T. dir. Hammer Studios

a shift from external to internal threats, and from a secure society to an insecure one. Unsurprising that the American films Tudor, and other critics, cite as the shift from classic to modern should occur in the 1960s to the mid 1970s, a decade in which the post-war Fordist idealism would be replaced with homegrown underground movements such as the Weathermen, the SLA and the Manson family attacking the nation from within, as well as increasing distrust of societal bulwarks like religion and government. These modern films, beginning with *Psycho*[19] and progressing through such genre standards as *Night of the Living Dead*,[20] *Rosemary's Baby*[21], *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*[22] and *Shivers* (or *They Came From Within*)[23], defined the times they were released in as much as the Universal horror films of the 1930s and 1940s.

Also, what each of the films of the modern horror period had in common with each other was a move away from the archetypes of the classic period, most notably the vampire, the werewolf and the monster created by science. However, the myth that each of these represented was not absent, but either transmuted (Norman Bates can be said to be a werewolf in his own regard, a cursed man given to involuntary homicidal impulses) or ironically reappraised, such as in *An American Werewolf in London* and *The Howling*, both of which use 1941's *The Wolf Man* and its encoded law as a metatext. This makes these films both of the modern era and of the classic era in an almost unique way, articulating the need for the myth to be constructed and understood, and yet at the same time deconstructed and contextualized by audiences.

[19] *Psycho* (1960). HITCHCOCK, A. dir. Paramount Pictures
[20] *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). ROMERO, G. dir. Continental Distributing
[21] *Rosemary's Baby* (1968). POLANSKI, R. dir. Paramount
[22] *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974). HOOPER, T. dir. Bryanston Distributing Company
[23] *Shivers* (1975). CRONENBERG, D. dir. Trans American Films

The Cycle of the Werewolf

This study will focus on three texts all released in the same year, 1981, and that present protagonists who are lycanthropic shapeshifters: *Wolfen*[24], *An American Werewolf in London*[25] and *The Howling*[26]. There were other films that mark this year out as one in which narrative about transformation were foregrounded, including Larry Cohen's *Full Moon High*[27] and Phillipe Mora's *The Beast Within*[28], as well as Ken Russell's *Altered States*[29] and Paul Schrader's remake of *Cat People*[30]. What makes this study particularly significant is the fact that while similar in terms of characterisation overall, the texts themselves are all markedly different. Perhaps, it is not entirely unexpected that at this historical moment there existed a spate of films with the concept of change at their heart. Indeed, these works both formally and thematically represent different modes of filmmaking, a disparate group of filmmakers and a contemporaneous culture embroiled in paradigmatic shifts associated with the advent of postmodernity. Likewise, these films span from smaller, arthouse dramas of 'Indywood' and the 'New Hollywood' era to the 'Blockbuster' archetype that would likewise come to pervade the decade.

To expand from the year to the decade, it is also my intention not to categorise these films as something as simplistic as '80s films'. Likewise, I will not reduce these works to generic terms, representatives of horror cinema, as they were received at the time of their release. Additionally, problematic is a teleological conceptualisation that suggests that a film takes as long to make it as the age of the people who made it. In other words, I will not argue that each film, as a creative endeavour, took as long to create as the trajectory of artistic development of the creator. Instead,

[24] *Wolfen* (1981). WADLEIGH, M. dir. Orion Pictures
[25] *An American Werewolf in London* (1981). LANDIS, J. dir. Universal Pictures
[26] *The Howling*, 1981. DANTE, J dir. Embassy Pictures
[27] *Full Moon High* (1981). COHEN, L. dir. Filmway Pictures
[28] *The Beast Within* (1982). MORA, P. dir. United Artists
[29] *Altered States* (1980). RUSSELL, K. dir. Warner Brothers
[30] *Cat People* (1982). SCHRADER, P. dir. Universal Pictures

rather than looking at these films as auteurist 1980s horror films, I will follow Edward D Berkowitz who defined as the 1970s period as beginning with the 1973 withdrawal of American forces in Vietnam under the Paris peace accords and culminating in the inauguration of Ronald Reagan in 1981[31]. From a defeat in an unpopular war until what Reagan himself defined as a 'new morning in America' a conceptualisation of a 'long 1970s' offers instead an interesting space in which the seeds of these films were planted. During this time America saw economic turmoil, an oil crisis, a bicentennial, cultural trends such as the blockbuster film and the mass-marketing of the VCR player, the Watergate scandal, an end to the Red Scare with one-term president, Jimmy Carter, granting Communist China full diplomatic recognition. A man who, ironically, gave a poignant assessment of the era by describing the overall climate as one of 'malaise'. It is presumably this malaise that the young tourists of *An American Werewolf in London* are escaping with a trip to Europe, which both shows American abroad as being prey to both the thrills of travel beyond their own country (sex with Jenny Agutter, beautiful scenery and a connection with well-known cultural landmarks) as well as the dangers, such as violent attack, anti-American sentiment and the dangers of cross-cultural misunderstanding. In Michael Wadleigh's *Wolfen*, the economic turmoil is evident in the wasteland of the Bronx that the film was set in, and the bicentennial that involved not only a reappraising of the founding of the country but the genocide of indigenous populations that give the film its narrative impetus. Joe Dante's *The Howling* speaks directly to the combination of new age beliefs, self-help movement, and the proliferation of psychiatric terminology and psychoanalysis into the mainstream, lampooning these concepts by contrasting them with the ancient myth of the werewolf.

[31] BERKOWITZ, E. D. (2007). *Something happened: a political and cultural overview of the seventies. New York, Columbia University Press.* Pg5

Whilst a few of the filmmakers involved have given interviews about their werewolf films, and Ken Russell has written an autobiography[32] detailing his time working in the industry, studying the creative process to view these works as being the result of an orchestrated plan misses the point. Certainly, there were deliberate plans; Larry Cohen speaks quite clearly of his intent to blend the currently successful horror and high-school genres with a remake of I Was A Teenage Werewolf, even to the extent of making a new film with the same title: -

> I went to American International Pictures and said, "look, I think I can make a comedy out of I Was A Teenage Werewolf," which was a horror film they had made in the 1950s starring Michael Landon. Since AIP owned that movie and thought my proposal to do a comedic version was a good idea, they let me use the premise of having a teenage werewolf attending high school. I resisted using the title I Was A Teenage Werewolf – which I could have done – and decided to call it Full Moon High.[33]

The idea of these films being remakes, or reinterpretations of existing films would certainly be a useful yoke to bring these films together, and there is certainly plenty of evidence in the texts themselves that suggest it. Paul Schrader's *Cat People* is, on the surface, the most openly suggestive of a remake. It's title, and it's most basic, stripped down plot elements (a young woman tries to resist sexual urges lest her violent impulses be released through shapeshifting into a big cat), and yet, as we shall see, the film is a conscious attempt to do everything differently from Val Lewton and Jacques Tourneur's 1942 original. What was implicit in 1942 (the necessity for inbreeding, the transformation between human and panther) becomes not only central to Schrader's remake, but is violently exaggerated through visceral, tangible physical effects (which is, as we shall see, central to most of the films in discussion here), but a fecund, twisted eroticism in which little is left to the imagination. If Larry Cohen's intent was to produce an affectionate remake, and to some extent a homage, of a film he remembered fondly from his youth, then Schrader's remake is a deliberate attempt to break away from the original and make a film that is such a violent break from the source material that it has to be considered on its own terms. Everything about it is deliberately modern, in

[32] RUSSELL, K. (1992). *Altered states: the autobiography of Ken Russell*. New York, Bantam Books.
[33] DOYLE, M. (2015). *Larry Cohen: The Stuff Of Gods And Monsters*. Albany, Bearmanor Media. pg 242

a way in which everything about Cohen's film is deliberately nostalgic. Schrader's actors were anti-establishment types like A Clockwork Orange's Malcolm Mcdowell, and his lead actress was the daughter of iconic troublemaker Klaus Kinski, Natassja Kinski who had courted controversy herself with her appearance in Hammer film's *To the Devil A Daughter*[34], in which the then 14-year-old actress had appeared fully nude.[35]However, a tearing away from the past is an equal acknowledgment of the past as much as a nostalgic re-enactment, and the referencing of texts from the 1940s in a lot of these films prefigures a large wave of nostalgia for the 1950s that will inform a lot of 1980s culture.

For Landis and Dante there seems to be more of a blend between homage, remake and violent divergence from any predecessors. Landis's film title suggests both a blend of *Werewolf of London*[36] and Mark Twain's 1889 novel A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court[37]. This is an intriguing blend of horror and comedic references that will define the reception of *An American Werewolf in London*[38] to its contempory critics, as we shall look at shortly. However, both he and Dante take

[34] *To the Devil a Daughter* (1976). SYKES, P. Hammer

[35] The soundtrack is awfully, terribly modern too, a collaboration with Giorgio Moroder and David Bowie. Bowie's career, always predicated on being one step ahead of trends, had already suggested a lot of the themes discussed in the thesis a year before they happened – with 1980's aptly titled album *Scary Monsters (and Super Creeps).*

[36] *Werewolf of London*, 1935. WALKER, S. dir. Universal Pictures.

[37] Explicitly referred to in the film itself, as the novel that Nurse Price reads to David before his third nightmare sequence.

[38] And *An American Werewolf in London* takes great pains to make itself a 'contemporary' film. From the casting of a TV commercial star (an exemplar of disposable, 'of-the-moment' stardom) as its lead actor to its many cultural references, this film is very much a product of 1981. The end credits state: "Lycanthrope Films Limited wishes to extend its heartfelt congratulations to Lady Diana Spencer and His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales on the occasion of their marriage - July 29th 1981." Securing the film as belonging to a certain time in culture and reflecting how much the 'London' of *An American Werewolf in London* is a construction. Ironically, considering his holiday is cut-short, David Kessler's sojourn in London hits a lot of the instantly recognisable, cultural landmarks as well as any other non-afflicted American tourist. Kessler sees (albeit sometimes unwillingly) London Zoo, the London Underground and Piccadilly Circus, Tower Bridge and Trafalgar Square. Away from the landmarks, Kessler meets a British 'bobby' on the beat as well as a gang of punks, at a time when 'punk' was becoming as tame and commercialised as an image of London as the Beefeaters or Pearly Kings and Queens. The films constantly remind the viewer of a central location and time, which fixes the more fantastic elements of the plot in a 'real-world' or at least a construction of a 'real-world' by using universally recognised cultural landmarks. As we shall see in the last chapter of this thesis, Michael Wadleigh's *Wolfen*

more inspiration from George Waggner's 1941 film *The Wolf Man* (the closest thing the werewolf film genre has to an ur-text), whether it be in its covert acceptance of its established lore as 'fact' (the use of silver as a weapon, the idea of a transformation occurring on the full moon) or overt references to the original text within the text. Interestingly, the acceptance of Waggner's film takes place for both films during moments of implied post-coitus, suggesting, perhaps that the couples who discuss them have put the beast behind them, at least temporarily. In Landis's film Alex and David discuss whether the Waggner's film vital premises, that a werewolf must be killed by someone who loves them, is correct. Alex (Jenny Agutter) patriotically confuses the Waggner film with the Oliver Reed starring *Curse of the Werewolf*[39]*.* Although she has the wrong film, both films result in the same point – the werewolf being killed by someone he loves, in this case a father or father figure. Of course, the whole narrative begins with Jack's character gaucheness in pointing out the pentacle on the wall of the Slaughtered Lamb, leading them both to be exiled to their fate. The pentacle, Jack whispers to David, has occult significance:

JACK: It's a pentangle, a five-pointed star. It's used in witchcraft. Lon Chaney Jr. at Universal Studios said that's the mark of the Wolf Man.[40]

Jack relates the symbology to cinematic werewolves, not the real ones the boys will encounter, drawing a line between Universal Studios and Chaney's 'fictional' world and their 'real' experience. This is not a sequel, nor a remake, Landis is insisting, but it does share the lore that has already been established, with room for the narrative to regard (lunar transformations) and disregard (silver bullets, being killed by someone you love) at will.

also uses the more localised, but no less effective, 'urban blight' of Manhattan in the late seventies and early eighties.

[39] *Curse of the Werewolf* (1961). FISHER, T. dir. Hammer Studios

[40] *An American Werewolf in London* (1981). LANDIS, J. dir. Universal Pictures

In Joe Dante's *The Howling*, George Waggner's film is once again referenced as the establishing folkloric text, with a few twists. The characters of Chris (Dennis Dugan) and Terri (Belinda Balaski) watch it in bed. This sequence establishes that the eventual hero of the film will be Chris, rather than Bill, who has just fallen prey to the sexual wiles of Marsha, and will be unable to help and protect his wife, Karyn. The younger couple watch the sequence that spells out doom for Bill; first Claude Rains and then Maria Ouspenskaya tells Lon Chaney that his fate is inevitable: -

SIR JOHN TALBOT: Even a man who is pure in heart, and says his prayers by night; may become a wolf when the wolfsbane blooms and the autumn moon is bright.

And then: -

MALEVA: Whoever is bitten by a werewolf, and lives, shall become a werewolf himself.[41]

And yet both films are more homage (or at best, a very loose remake) than spiritual sequel to Waggner's film. A repeated visual trope in both director's work is to have in situ characters watching films, either on television or in cinemas. To such self-confessed film geeks as Dante and Landis this not only reinforces their own films in a pre-existing genre, but also keeps that genre at a distance by delineating the in-film 'reality' from the cinematic 'reality' his characters observe.

The director of *Wolfen*, Michael Wadleigh, is very much outlier to this, resisting the idea that an obvious connection between these films is discernible. Wadleigh, who only broke out of the arthouse circuit with 1970's *Woodstock*[42], a labour of love that he has returned to over and over again through numerous cuts and rereleases.

[41] *The Howling* (1981). DANTE, J dir. Embassy Pictures
[42] *Woodstock* (2000). WADLEIGH, M. dir. Warner Home Video.

So, if these films can't be yoked together by the easy causalities of the types of cycles show above, how do we understand the existence of these films as 'connected'? By looking at the way in which these films were perceived, marketed and reviewed at the time, both by critics, by fans and by audiences, we can endeavour to track commonalities between them. This is not entirely new – Kim Newman points out that *The Howling* and *An American Werewolf in London* were both made at the same time due to a leap forward in special effects: -

> These shapeshifters are the children of Alien, arriving at the same time not because of the zeitgeist was somehow suddenly favourable to lycanthropy, but because of the advance in special effects technology…. after Alien, men like Rick Baker, Rob Bottin and Stan Winston realised there was more to monstrosity than furry opticals. They have perfected make-up appliances which allow us to see faces elongate and become wolfish, the human body twist into lupine shape and teeth and fangs flick like switchblade knives.[43]

This reliance on special effects to achieve verisimilitude in a werewolf narrative is a double-edged shift. The use of lap-dissolves and judicious utilisation of shadows to achieve the metamorphosis of the Universal wolfman cycle had set the standard technique for the next three decades that followed it. The special effects industry was undergoing a sea-change at the end of the 1970s, both in terms of what it could achieve through technology, and also as a commercial selling point in a post-*Star Wars* Hollywood landscape. This reliance on technology was both a draw and a yoke though. An overreliance on special effects can be seen as problematic; Reynold Humphries subtitles the last chapter in *The American Horror Film: An Introduction*[44] 'What price special effects?' and as we shall see from the reviews of *An American Werewolf in London*, the technology is regarded by some critics as negating any other aspect of the film.

In turn, this interest in the technology used in the creation of the iconic transformation sequences in *The Howling* and *An American Werewolf in London* does not account for greater commonalties in the

[43] NEWMAN, K. (1988) *Nightmare Movies: Revised And Updated*. London: Bloomsbury.pg177
[44] HUMPHRIES, R. (2002) *The American Horror Film: An Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

way these films were received, nor does it account for the other films in the cycle I am highlighting here. I will suggest in this thesis that rather than being solely a product of a breakthrough in technology as Newman suggests in the above quote, these films come at a point where a return to the werewolf narrative, suggests a greater societal concern with metamorphosis, both inter-personal and cultural.

In the first chapter I will show how a public fascination with psychology and new age beliefs throughout the post-war era culminated in a new sort of cultural phenomena and an avatar of change – the pop-psychology guru. Sigmund Freud, whose shadows looms largely over pop psychiatry, guru iconography and repression theories, treated a patient who came to be known as 'The Wolf Man', and the wolf has always had a close relationship with the symbolism of the mind. I will show how the figure of this guru (in these films represented most evidently through *The Howling*'s George Waggner, played by Patrick McNee) is a combination of the traditional figure of the madhouse doctor, the Freudian psychiatrist combined with the spirit of the mystic cult-leader, and how these two figures have a long cultural history as malevolent forces. I will also show how this figure would have been very recognizable to a generation that were conversant with psychiatry, new age beliefs and the pervasive atmosphere of self-analysis and the possibility of self-improvement (typical of what cultural commentator Tom Wolfe refer to as the 'me' generation). I will also show how other aspects of the films tie in with both pop-psychology fads of the time, the ubiquity of pop-psychology in the society and how Joe Dante's film, *The Howling*, satirizes that.

In the second chapter of this thesis, I will investigate the aforementioned problem of special effects as part of a wider discussion about the importance of special effects in the films under analysis, and in the filmmaking industry generally. This will be done through a discussion of how the marketing of *An American Werewolf in London* began by emphasising the film as a 'John Landis film' and then

became a ‘special effects film’ due to the critical recognition and public interest in the special-effects sequences over most other aspects of the film. I will place this recognition and interest into a revitalised aspect of filmmaking within the burgeoning magazine industry that gave *Fangoria* its raison d’etre during its first few years of publication, as well as highlighting how integral special effects could be to realising the vision of the filmmaker, and the subsequent effect this had on the relationships between the special effects artists and the directors. Through the lens of genre specific journalism and reviews of the film from sources outside the horror fan press, I will see how the other films in the study came to be seen as reliant to a lesser or greater extent on special effects. Finally, I will analyse how the special effects themselves are used in the film to aid the narrative, the performances and the themes of the films, as well as theoretical considerations such as how ‘body horror’ supplanted and grasped the possibilities of the new technology.

In the third chapter I will focus on how the locations of these films speaks to the changing perception of the city. Primarily focusing on *Wolfen*, I will show how the film’s location, New York City and primarily the Bronx, act as a crucifer for the concerns of the viewing audience. This included a gradual distrust of the city as the crown jewel of modernity, and the changing way in which New York City was seen as a locus for that. New York, more than any other city in North America, had seen its fortunes and public perceptions shift in the post-war era, and in this chapter I tie that decline into the other recurrent themes of *Wolfen*.

My methodology will be grounded primarily in contemporaneous reviews and critical evaluations of the primary texts. This will establish not only how well the films were received, but also how they were understood, not only as films, but as elements of culture. Also, these reviews will also help establish how the genre was considered in 1981, as well as its historical perception in print media. To this end I will look at a variety of different reviews, from the perceived ‘highbrow’ *New York*

Times, the industry-focused *Variety* and the perceived 'lowbrow' fan-specific *Fangoria*, amongst others.

I will engage with the primary texts to see how they make efforts to engage with the cultural landscape of 1981, paying attention to political and social themes that the films bring up to show how the filmmakers themselves were products of their time. This will also encompass reading the original source materials for these films, where they are adaptations, to see how the message of the film was changed to tailor it too the 1981 audience.

In order to locate these debates, I will engage in a study of popular American periodicals including Time and The Nation to locate concerns from both sides of the liberal and conservative divide. These readings will be informed not only by primary research, but also investigations into secondary sources of film theory so as to best address research questions. To date, there have been few examples of critical engagement with the cinematic werewolf. Bourgault du Corduray's excellent *The Curse of the Werewolf*[45] gives an history of the cultural werewolf, especially in how it re-occurs throughout certain 'flashpoints' throughout history, but it is primarily limited to novels and short stories, not cinema. Craig Ian Mann's meticulous *Phases of the Moon*[46] covers a more varied range of medium but does not engage with the three films under study in this thesis as being connected by anything more than special effects and a greater trend in 1980s films for the re-introduction of the 'monster' archetype. However, both have been invaluable starting places for an understanding of what exactly the werewolf is, and why in 1981, he was being talked about more than ever.

[45] DU COUDRAY, C. B. (2006). *The Curse Of The Werewolf: Fantasy, Horror And The Beast Within*. London, I.B. Tauris.
[46] MANN, C. I. (2020) *Phases Of The Moon: A Cultural History Of The Werewolf Film*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Chapter One: The Sorrows of Jung Werewolves, or the Loopy Gurus of the Loup-Garous.

Introduction

In an early scene from Joe Dante's *The Howling*, a discussion ensues between the characters about how to frame a diegetic documentary upon which they are working and whose subject will be the serial killer Eddie 'The Mangler' Quist. The two journalists approach a prominent pop psychologist, Dr George Waggner (Patrick Macnee) for his opinion on an approach that they plan to adopt. They confide to Waggner that "We're pushing Fred for a half-hour special called The Mind of Eddie Quist...although we're focusing, really, on the beast in all of us."[47] Waggner, as an expert not only on the human mind, but also on media representations of the psyche offers that the approach should be not only accessible to the general public, but also lurid so as to attract the widest possible audience. He goes on to suggest that while the ostensible topic of the film should be Quist, it would be essential that the real focus indeed be us, the viewers.

For Waggner, the killer and the average person are equally prone to potential psychotic episodes that could likewise result in violence. This scene foregrounds several essential thematic concerns of *The Howling* that might be traced throughout the entire text. First, in figuring a prominent television pop-psychologist as a key character, the film foregrounds a contemporaneous concern with self-help media. Secondly, in presenting this character who is not only a self-help guru but also a werewolf this work likewise addresses the concept of 'the beast within' - a defining mechanism in the werewolf mythos overall. It is in this way that this film, and all the films in this dissertation, engage with the specific cultural milieu out of which it arose while at the same time addressing the primary concerns of the historical werewolf narrative overall.

[47] *The Howling*, 1981. DANTE, J dir. Embassy Pictures

In order to reveal the ways in which *The Howling* presents these themes, this chapter will first establish the relationship between and differentiation of psychoanalytic theory and self-help methods. Once established, this understanding will be interpolated into a historical overview of representations of psychiatry in American film. Both of these concerns, it will be argued, provide privileged insights into the film itself especially as relates to how this discourse is interpreted within work of 1980s popular culture. Finally, a recreation of the creative process and research into the film's reception at the time of its release will be engaged, both of which will be used in the service of questioning the extent to which these aforementioned concepts were not only intentional on the part of the filmmakers, but also elicited contemporaneously within the minds of the viewing public.

Pop Psychology versus Freudian Psychoanalysis Histories and Representations in Post-War American Media

In 1910, thirty-eight years before Abbott and Costello had the pleasure, Sigmund Freud met the Wolf Man. As a patient of Dr Freud's, the Wolf Man (real name Sergei Pankejeff) underwent what was seen at the time as ground-breaking therapy involving the interpretation of dreams. As a child Pankejeff had experienced a recurring dream of a group of white wolves sitting in the branches of a walnut tree, who suddenly became cognisant of being watched by the young, dreaming Pankejeff. Aware of being seen, Pankejeff was filled with terror of the animals, and awoke. Freud, saw something in the posture of the upright wolf that suggested what he referred to as the 'primal scene'; parental coitus. Freud postulated that witnessing this act was the trauma that caused Pankejeff his substantial distress re-interpreted through the subconscious as a dream of being placed in peril by wolves. Freud tied this into his then nascent Oedipal theory, which hinged on the

child's desire to kill the father and replace him as a sexual partner for the mother so as to return to a state of primary narcissism. The case became something of a cause celebre for Freud in and for psychoanalytic theory overall. When the case of the Wolf Man was published in 1918 it established a cornerstone for Freud's theory of dream interpretation, as well as the catharsis that came out about the 'solving' of a dream's meaning. [48]

This catharsis seemed to pass Pankejeff by, and he spent the rest of his life undergoing therapy, even to the point of suffering a breakdown with accompanying hallucinations a few years after Freud had proclaimed him 'cured'. An aspect of Pankejeff's condition, that he suffered from gonorrhoea, is only briefly mentioned by Freud, as is the suicide of Pankejeff's sister and father, pointing more towards a pathology routed in the family than the individual. Even the sobriquet that Freud gave to Pankejeff, the 'wolf man', falls short of the mark. In subsequent consultations, Pankejeff clarified that the animals were closer to foxes or sheepdogs than wolves, and in later interviews (and an autobiography) downplayed or negated Freud's treatment and then his subsequent fame as a 'poster-boy' for Freud's theories:

Freud's version of the supposed trauma, however, was contradicted by the Wolf Man himself, Sergei Pankejeff, in an interview with Karin Obholzer, a journalist who tracked him down in Vienna in the 1970s.

Mr. Pankejeff saw Freud's interpretation of his dream as 'terribly far-fetched.' Mr. Pankejeff said, 'The whole thing is improbable,' since in families of his milieu young children slept in their nanny's bedroom, not with their parents.

Mr. Pankejeff also disputed Freud's claim that he had been cured, and said he resented being 'propaganda' and 'a showpiece for psychoanalysis.' Mr. Pankejeff said, 'That was the theory, that Freud had cured me 100 percent.' However, 'It's all false.'[49]

Whilst the case study of Pankejeff has been widely studied, and often critiqued, it should not be seen as enough to unseat Freud's position as the 'grandfather of psychoanalysis', or his reputation

[48] Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardoner, no doubt.

[49] GOLEMAN, D., 1990, 'As a Therapist, Freud Fell Short, Scholars Find: Research depicts founder of psychoanalysis as manipulative and not always truthful.' *New York Times*, March 6th

as someone who genuinely cared for, and attempted to help, his patients using techniques that were, for the most part ground-breaking, if controversial.

Freud's more lasting contribution to the understanding of the wolf man was actually more use to Universal Pictures and *The Wolf Man*[50] screenwriter Curt Siodmak than in his treatment of Pankejeff. Freud was deeply influential, not only in his theories of repression, a reaction to which would determine the nature of psychosocial discourse in the latter half of the twentieth century, but also in his understanding of 'the beast within'; the relationship between the 'id' (the wild, uncontrolled aspect of our psyche that reacts on instinct, harnessed to the subconscious) and the 'ego' (the civilised, social aspect of our characters linked to the conscious aspect of existence) which is a central tenet of the werewolf myth.

Freud argued that psychological trauma lay in the conflict between the conscious and subconscious mind, and as Chantal Bourgault Du Coudray describes in *The Curse of the Werewolf,* the friction between the two might be seen as the fight against 'the beast within'. Bourgault Du Coudray argues:

> In giving his patient Sergei Pankejeff the alias of 'Wolf-man', Freud was almost certainly drawing on narratives which juxtaposed the contending demands of the 'primitive' and the 'civilised' in the human personality.[51]

Freud also described his patient in terms that suggest a deeply divided nature in Pankejeff, alternately displaying, in Freud's own words, "[A] charming and responsive personality, with sharp intelligence and refined way of thinking, and his complete lack of restraint at the level of the drives."[52] In other words, Freud argued that the cure for Pankejeff might be achieved through a

[50] *The Wolf Man* (1943). WAGGNER, G. dir. Universal Pictures.
[51] BOURGAULT DU COUDRAY, C. (2006). *The Curse Of The Werewolf Fantasy, Horror And The Beast Within*. London, I.B. Tauris. pg69
[52] FREUD, S., & HUISH, L. A. (2003). *The "Wolfman" And Other Cases*. New York, Penguin Books. pg23

cathartic realisation of the root of his neuroses, and an acceptance of the same. For Freud, that which is unhealthily repressed must be confronted and removed.

In 1941's *The Wolf Man* the repressed beast is extemporised and dealt with in the same way the other archetypal horror figures of Universal Pictures are, which is to say they are hunted down and exterminated. The screenwriter Curt Siodmak became the creator of the classical horror werewolf with his codification of what a werewolf could and could not do in *The Wolf Man*, and recounts in his autobiography about how his father tried to 'cure' him of the 'bestial sin' of masturbation:

He had leather corsets fashioned for us with a metal container for the penis and testicles which we had to wear night and day. Those corsets had locks to which only (Father) held the keys. I can't even visualise the embarrassment if other children had discovered that medieval chastity belt. I was terrified to go to the toilet in school, afraid of exposing myself.[53]

Hardly surprising that this cure did nothing to tame Siodmak's visualisation of a 'beast within', that could conquer our purer selves, no matter how often they said 'their prayers by night' and were 'pure of heart'.

However, it was partly this conceptualisation of what is 'healthy' and Freud's understanding as to what constitutes a 'cure' that allowed a rift to develop between Sigmund Freud and his colleague, Carl Jung.[54] Like Freud, Jung saw the wolf, or at least a patient's pre-occupation with wolves, as being a representation of the subconscious, the base of psychological drives. However, unlike Freud, Jung believed that the only way to achieve a cure was to incorporate an awareness of this part of the

[53] SIODMAK, C. (2001). *Wolf Man's Maker: Memoirs of a Hollywood Writer*. Lanham, Scarecrow Press. P24
[54] Like Freud, Jung was very interested in wolves as symbolic archetype, and wrote about the fate of the sorcerer Wotan, a version of the Norse God-King Odin. Wotan is killed by Fenrir, the wolf in Norse mythology that was thought to be the harbinger of the end of the world. Fenrir is, in turn, killed by Wotan's son Vidar, thus through conquering his own 'wolf/shadow' Wotan is effectively reborn. This creature is obliquely referenced in *Wolfen* – the terrorist group Gotterdammerung's motto is "The end of the world, though wolves."

personality, which he referred to as the 'shadow' archetype, into the whole person (the 'persona'), rather than negating it. The idea that the wolf was something to be incorporated into a personality had less cultural traction than Freud's idea of the dark half that we keep hidden. We will see this played out again in *The Howling*, where the curse of the lycanthropy is something either to be repressed and driven out (Karyn White's burning of the Colony at the denouement) or it is something to be embraced and incorporated into the self, no matter how psychotic or dangerous that synthesis may be (Marsha and Eddie Quist's unrestrained lust for sex and predation).

While prevalent in continental Europe up until the advent of World War II, psychoanalysis didn't really get a foothold in the United States until after the Second World War, and even then the public perception of the discipline was tinged with suspicion[55]. Montgomery Clift played Freud for John Huston's biopic *Freud: The Secret Passion*[56] as a man who seems as equally neurotic as his patients. Likewise, the therapeutic community that is the setting for Hitchcock's *Spellbound*[57] contains a pathologically emotionally repressed Doctor (Ingrid Bergman), a psychopathic Doctor suffering from nervous exhaustion (Leo G. Carroll) and a Doctor who isn't even a Doctor, but a guilt-ridden amnesiac suffering from hallucinations (Gregory Peck)[58]. The slightly more all-American film *The*

[55] The rise of fascism in Europe, which considered psychoanalysis, and especially Freudian analysis, to be both decadent and irredeemably Jewish, effectively ended Europe's reign as the home of psychoanalysis. Up to this point, America had marginalised the work of home-grown 'alienists' such as Adolf Meyer and William James in favour of extreme measures such as transcranial lobotomies and electroshock treatment. Indeed, more lobotomies were performed in the United States then every other country combined in the 20th century, the 'quick-fix' solution again reflecting a society that was impatient for the future, and distrustful of the sex-obsessed, guilt-ridden introspection of classical Freudian analysis. To that end, mental health was often trusted to the neurosurgeons (or indeed anyone with a steady hand and an icepick) than a psychotherapist.

[56] *Freud: The Secret Passion* (1962). HUSTON, J. dir. Universal-International
[57] *Spellbound* (1945). HITCHCOCK, A. dir. United Artists
[58] Notice that in *Spellbound* the director and antagonist is English, the lead actress Swedish, the pivotal role of psychology guru Bulov is played by a Russian, and the real star of the film is Spanish Salvador Dali's surrealistic designs for the protagonist's tortured dreams. In much the same way Gary Brandner's novel which formed the basis of *The Howling*, presents an all American blonde-haired and blue-eyed couple Karyn and Roy Beatty who are lured to the village of Drago secluded in the wilds of northern California. The first thing that strikes Karyn is the lack of shops in the village, which seems inhabited by a people with an odd mishmash of European names

Cobweb[59] attempts to synthesis European psychoanalytic practices with a more American, post-war ideology. The film uses the now established trope that those who investigate mental illness are often those who are most prone to it. The head of the institute is a serial adulterer suffering from imposter syndrome, and the head psychiatrist (Richard Widmark) is a workaholic who often seems on the verge of slapping his patients and co-workers around[60] with a wife he has pushed to the verge of a nervous breakdown. By contrast, the patients themselves seem fairly docile, with only John Kerr (in a role originally intended for James Dean) running amok when his designs for the curtains in the patient's libraries are foregone in favour of a rather pleasant floral pattern[61] . The problems the patients and the staff manifest are all codified psychological complaints, most based in repression, and yet the film itself goes for large moments of melodramatic catharsis instead of the European method of a long-term commitment to therapy, often throughout the patient's life. 'The Trouble Began…', the opening caption reads over the lush fields surrounding the Manninger Institute. 'The Trouble Was Over…' reads the caption just before the final credits roll, ignoring the long held psychiatric idea that the trouble begins much earlier on, and the trouble is rarely 'over'.

All of the aforementioned films equally provide examples of the reception in the public consciousness of Freudian psychoanalysis that had landed a beachhead on the East coast of the United States after the second world war. Just as in the 19th century a line had been drawn between mental illnesses that were curable and incurable, which is to say could be locked in an asylum as opposed to treated at a spa or by office practice depending on the wealth of the patient. It is also worth mentioning at this point that the term 'psychoanalyses and 'psychoanalyst' refer specifically

– Etienne Olivet (French), Dr Volkmann (German), Anton Gadak and Marcia Lura (generic Eastern European). Their ways are different, and secretive, right up to the fairly predictable twist that the novel isn't 'guess the werewolf' as in *The Beast Must Die* (1974), but that everyone (including Roy, who has become corrupted by his dalliance with Marcia) is a werewolf.

[59] *The Cobweb* (1955). MINELLI, V. dir. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer
[60] Perhaps a result of miscasting then the script.
[61] A plot contrivance that could really only breathe in a Vincente Minelli film.

to the school of treatment established by Freud in the 1880s, albeit working from the already existing work of other practitioners. By focusing on the subconscious as the root of mental disorder, Freud, his followers and their concept of psychoanalysis distinguishes itself from psychiatry and psychology. The former is qualified medical doctor who deals with clinical cases, such as schizophrenia, normally in a clinical setting, and with the use of medication. The latter, the psychologist, deals with the same emotional issues as the psychoanalyst, but does not directly engage with the unconscious as the seat of emotional problems.

However, all of these terms have slight differences and variations between cultures. Also, as we shall see, the term 'pop-psychology' tends to feed off aspects of all of them. These grey areas, and the mutability of meaning between them is extemporised in the figure of The Howling's George Waggner, who is nominally a psychiatrist, but also fulfils the role of therapist, guru, cult leader and television pundit.

Psychiatry, Self-Help, and the Legend of the Werewolf

Such a concept as post war-Freudian psychoanalyses, with its elitist, East Coast, European influenced history not only found itself open to suspicion in cultural representation but also ridicule. The neurotic in thrall to his own neuroses and the monolithic presence of a psychanalyst became an intrinsic part of the comedic appeal of every Woody Allen film not to mention Charles Schultz's famous 'Peanuts' comic strip, in which a psychiatrist booth replaced the lemonade stand as the cottage industry of the industrious Lucy. In the latter of these, hapless Charlie Brown would bemoan his lot to the uncaring, brash Lucy, who was more interested in her own narcissism and the five-cent

fee she garnered from each patient. As we shall see, the idea that psychiatry and psychoanalysis are a 'hustle' or inherently untrustworthy is a recurring motif.

In Larry Cohen's *Full Moon High*, Adam Arkin plays Tony, a hapless American teenager, who, like David Kessler in An *American Werewolf in London* is bitten by a werewolf whilst on holiday. Despite the fact that Tony is bitten by a werewolf behind the Iron Curtain in Romania (who walks off the path whilst looking for The Museum of Mental Illness) and David is bitten on the Yorkshire Moors, there are some interesting similarities between the two films aside from their werewolf trappings. It is worth noting that both Tony and David have accompanied someone else, a father and a best friend respectively, who have come to Europe on a priapic mission. Tony's father, who is using the trip as double bluff (pretending to be a CIA spy who is pretending to be on a father and son bonding holiday) to indulge in sexual tourism, entertaining a stream of prostitutes in his hotel room under the gaze of a portrait of Lenin. David's friend Jack has come to Europe to rendezvous with a prospective conquest in Rome and talks constantly of meeting women on the way. Through sexual obsession leading to instruction (forcing Tony out of the hotel room to bitten) and distraction (diverting David's attention and making them forget to 'stay off the moors') both young men are infected by the bite of the wolf.

Cursed with immortality, Tony wanders the earth until returning back to high school in the year 1981. After a series of non-lethal assaults (nipping, rather than biting) Tony decides to admit his werewolf status through getting his girlfriend (who warns Tony that when viewed, people will "think it's special effects") to film his own transformation as proof, which also echoes the constant

repetition of 'seeing' in *The Howling*[62] .When Tony's film is watched by his high school class (switched for a film on sex education), the authorities are convinced enough to bring in "America's greatest abnormal psychiatrist" to help Tony with his condition. Dr Brand[63] is introduced haranguing a suicidal man standing at the edge of a roof. Brand certainly looks the part, with his button-down shirts, Tyrolean hat and tweed sports coat, his appearance denotes professionalism. A bystander goes on to explain; "He belongs to the ridicule and insult school of psychiatry", and that Brand will "shame" the man down. Unsurprisingly the appeal to shame is unsuccessful, and Brand's treatment of the suicidal man ("I bet you were a pansy in school!") causes a nearby firefighter to become so angry that in a scuffle both the firefighter and the suicidal man fall from the roof. The message is clear – psychiatry is absurd and callous and no help to anyone. It's an exaggerated caricature, but it does reflect an aspect of psychiatry that people would have been familiar with – guilt and shame.

When Brand meets Tony in prison, he repeats the same schtick, requesting a mirror so that Tony can once again observe himself ("So that the sickie can tell me what he sees, as opposed to what we, the healthy, see.") in what Brand refers to himself as a "jackass experiment". And yet he has unquestioned authority - to enter prison cells, order the police around and attempt to murder Tony under the auspices of his 'science'. When the police refuse to shoot Tony in the climatic sequence, it is Brand who picks up the gun to try and finish the job. "You're a mad scientist!" Tony's girlfriend

[62] In *The Howling's* opening sequence, Karen (Dee Wallace) watches what appears to be the filmed rape of a young woman in the backroom of an adult bookshop. There, Eddie Quist (Robert Picardo) urges Karen to keep watching, establishing the reality of seeing something shocking and uncomfortable as a precursor to making Karen witness his own transformation into a wolf. This transformation is interrupted by the police, who kill Eddie (temporarily) and rescue Karen (again, temporarily). At the end of the film, Karen inverses the roles, and demands that her own transformation be transmitted live to convince people of the new reality of the existence of werewolves amongst us. Again, it is dismissed by the viewers as "special effect

[63] Played by leading man Adam Arkin's father, Alan. This casting not only brings to mind *The Wolf Man*, in which the father must kill the son, as Brand attempts to do to Tony at the climax of the film, but also their physical resemblance allows them to act as doubles for one another, as their respective roles of hunter and hunted switch throughout the narrative.

states, lumping Brand, and his profession in with a well-worn category of professional villain, as well as confirming the prejudice that anyone who deals with the mad must be insane themselves.

Interestingly, a solution to a form of psychology that is palatable to a post-war America seemed to present itself in *I Was A Teenage Werewolf*[64]. Dr Brandon (Whit Bissell) takes charge of the care and rehabilitation of Tony (Michael Landon) a delinquent example of what audiences might be thinking was an entirely new (although always extant) demographic, the teenager. Brandon does this through injections of scopolamine[65] and regressive hypnotherapy (confirming his position as a mad psychiatrist rather than a mad psychoanalyst) resulting in Tony regressing, like Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr Jekyll, into an earlier state of evolution. Brandon believes that only by reverting people back to this 'natural' state that people can avoid a coming calamity. We can see this is as a break from Freud's idea that repression is a necessary thing for the good of society, by both removing the repression as well as the society. The idea itself would have a lot of currency on the West Coast in the countercultural ideas of the 60s and 70s, which, like Dr Brandon, would see repression as the enemy, and drugs and a return to nature as the solution. The problem with Doctor Brandon, however, is that he is a square. He looks, talks, and dresses like a square, and has a square office (by the ultimate Squaresville, the airbase[66] no less) with a frumpy assistant and dingy walls. What was needed was something that would appeal more to the burgeoning counterculture and couched in such a way that a new Dr Brandon wouldn't have to tie his subjects down to a chair and inject them – they would do it themselves.

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[64] *I Was A Teenage Werewolf* (1957). FOWLER, G. dir. American International Pictures

[65] Ironic, given the werewolf Tony's propensity to slobber, that scopolamine is normally used to stop salivation before surgery.

[66] The same year the film was made, air force General Curtis LeMay left SAC (Strategic Air Command). Perhaps if he had run into Brandon they would have found common ground; LeMay is famously quoted as stating that that the solution to intractability of the enemy in North Vietnam was "to bomb them back into the Stone Age", a planned destination Brandon seems to desire on a global scale.

The West Coast reaction to the European form of psychoanalyses was an American form of psychiatry that would not only be, to some extent, home-grown, but also resolutely positive. After the second world war we can see the roots of what was later to be known as the Human Potential Movement (HPM) redefining psychology for the 1960s and 1970s. The HPM is often used as a synonym for the 'new age' movement and can even be seen to have its roots in the 'occultism' movement of the earlier half of the twentieth century. Rather than looking back at past traumas as the root of current neuroses, this idea of humanistic psychology believed that the individual's goal was to achieve 'self-actualisation', a form of perfection of the self. This catered to what cultural critic Christopher Lasch, the author of *The Culture of Narcissism*[67], refers to as "psychological man"[68], that is the post-world war two generation who had benefited from the prosperity of Post-Fordian America. The new person was:

> Plagued by anxiety, depression, vague discontents, a sense of inner emptiness……Therapists became his principal allies in the struggle for composure; he turns to them in the hope of achieving the modern equivalent of salvation, *mental health.*'[69]

The founders of the Esalen Institute, Lifespring and EST (Erhardt Training Seminars) were taking notes. By combining an emphasis on the self's potential for improvement, inspired by Russian psychologist Abraham Maslov setting out what he referred to as 'The hierarchy of needs'[70], they attracted many followers, and catered to a country that was turning inwards towards self-absorption.

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[67] LASCH, C. (1978). The culture of narcissism: American life in an age of diminishing expectations. New York, W.W. Norton.

[68] Lasch also describes the modern America, beset between social order and endless choice in tellingly familiar terms: "Outwardly bland, submissive, and sociable, they seethe with an inner anger for which a dense, overpopulated, bureaucratic society can devise few legitimate outlets." The modern man at the end of the 1970s is at least part werewolf, so unsurprisingly they would find much to enjoy in the glut of werewolf films of 1981. ibid, pg11

[69]ibid, pg13

[70] A pyramid of requirements that started with acquiring the basic necessities of life (food, shelter etc), before working towards the apex of the pyramid – self-actualisation.

In a country that had seemed to denigrate the self to statistics, such as the amount killed in seconds in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or partisan groups, such as the race divide being fought by the civil rights movement all over the country, the idea of that one person still had value and meaning was an attractive one. It's tempting to see this valuing of the individual seeping through the 1970s HPM into the 1980s Reaganomics and the 'greed is good' mentality, and indeed the HPM movements that survived into the 1980s often saw themselves repurposed into consultancy firms, pyramid schemes and wealthy spa retreats which offered expensive courses in discovering the self with fine dining and luxury hotel facilities.

To this end, the HPM movement often seems less a psychiatric movement than a religion, and the charge of being a cult was often pejoratively applied to EST (Erhard Seminars Training) and the Esalen Institute. L. Ron Hubbard's Scientology movement, which was one of the forerunners in the HPM, is still considered to be either a cult, a religion, a scam or a therapeutic organisation depending on the prejudices of the observer. What is obvious is Hubbard (who never received any training as a doctor, psychiatrist or scientist, although he was to magnanimously award himself a doctorate eventually) had a distaste for psychiatry, although with typical arrogance the scientologist's own version of psychiatry, called 'auditing' has very little difference from most other HPM therapeutic methods. Scientology is also interesting as a precursor to HPM for its mistrust of European values, and its insistence that scientology was a wholly American invention. At a time when cold war battle lines were being drawn, Hubbard saw a very visible one between traditional European psychoanalysis and a new a new American form of therapy. Hubbard's great ambition was to replace the entire discipline of psychotherapy with his own version of it, called Dianetics, which was a hybrid of psychiatry and pseudoscience. Despite the push to distinguish itself from classical Freudian therapy, Dianetics distinction between the 'reactive' and 'analytical' mind are little more than synonyms for Freud's ideas of subconscious and conscious respectively.

Robert De Grimston (real name Robert Moore) was kicked out of the scientology movement in 1962, and, seeing how popular the appeal of Hubbard's blend of disciplines was, promptly founded his own organisation, the Process Church of the Final Judgement. Despite the apocalyptic name[71], the Process (as it came to be known) focused primarily on the psychiatric practices of scientology (referred to by Hubbard as 'auditing') and incorporating the teachings of Alfred Adler, a former part of Freud's Vienna coterie who specialised in the importance of the inferiority complex. As the 1960s progressed, this therapeutic commune became more and more like a church, with its therapies ritualised, edging more towards the Manson family or Jim Jones's compound[72] than a therapeutic commune. However, as *The Howling* indicates, the line between the two is thinner than we might think.

It is in this odd mix of psychotherapy, new age beliefs and salesmanship that we can find a lot of the backbone of the character of Dr George Waggner, the therapist/self-help guru who runs 'The Colony' in *The Howling*. However, his form of pop psychology, being equal parts classic therapy, new age beliefs and capitalist construct has a counterpart in another character, the shopkeeper played by Joe Dante's regular collaborator, Dick Miller. Miller plays Walter Paisley[73], a character he played before, and would go on to play a number of times after *The Howling*. His first appearance was for director

[71] Indeed, the original name of the organisation was 'Compulsions Analysis' which sounds suitably therapeutic and could have easily been an alternative title for George Waggner's book The Gift.

[72] Both Manson and Jones are mentioned in *The Howling*. Manson by bookshop owner Walter Paisley, and the blaze that destroys the Colony is described as a 'Guyana-like spectacle' in the finale. Both men were also connected with pop-psychology and the HPM – Manson visited Esalen, thinking them kindred spirits, and Jones studied psychology at the University of Bloomington. Around his compounds and churches he liked to have copies of *Psychology Today* magazine to hand, a popular magazine with the bland motto 'Here to Help'.

[73] The name perhaps a combination of the equally bathetic character Walter Mitty from James Thurber's 1938 short story and the paisley pattern that would soon be reclaimed by the hippies of the 1960s.

Roger Corman's *A Bucket of Blood*[74]. Like *The Howling*, *A Bucket of Blood* is a blackly comic satire that lampoons a countercultural movement, in this case the 'beatniks' and conceptual art worlds.

Joe Dante and John Sayles had both cut their teeth under Roger Corman, and even gave Corman a cameo in *The Howling.*[75] Both Corman and Dante would also try to feature the distinctive features and irascible performances of Dick Miller in as many of their films as possible. In *The Howling*, Miller plays Walter Paisley as the proprietor of an LA bookstore that clearly delineates it priorities – a dingy, brown-on-brown sign reads, "The Other Side – Occult Objects For Special People." Another, more centrally placed, cleaner and distinctly more conspicuous sign reads, "WE BUY BOOKS."

The first shot of the store shows two nuns wandering in to look at the bust of a horned devil. Paisley sighs, shakes his head and explains, "We get them all. Sun worshippers, moon worshippers. Satanists. The Manson people used to hang around here and shoplift. A bunch of deadbeats." The range of shoppers is complimented by the range of merchandise. The Other Side, like the therapeutic communities, caters to all those who are looking for answers, for knowledge. The range may be esoteric. As the proprietor boasts, "I got chicken blood, dog embryos, black candles, wolfsbane." However, it is no less appreciably strange than the new age range of therapies of the Human Potential Movement.

[74] *A Bucket of Blood* (1959). CORMAN, R. dir. American International Pictures

[75] A reference to William Castle's cameo in *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), in which producer Castle plays a man waiting for the heroine of the film, played by Mia Farrow, to finish using the phone. Both films use these cameos for more than just an 'in-joke' – at this point in Polanski's film, a man waiting outside the phone booth could easily be part of the network of Satanists that will enmesh Rosemary in the finale of the film. In *The Howling*, there is a flicker of unease that the man outside the phone booth could be the serial killer 'Eddie the Mangler' who is setting up a meeting with Dee Wallace's Karyn. Instead it turns out to be Roger Corman, whose parsimonious habits are slyly referenced by his character checking for pennies in the return slot. Both cameos presumably have their genesis in Alfred Hitchcock's trademark cameo appearances in his films, specifically the 1940 adaptation of Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca*, in which Hitchcock walks outside a phone booth after George Sanders finishes his call.

To an extent, this incarnation of Walter Paisley is a curious one. This character at once corrects common misconceptions about werewolves, differentiates between 'Hollywood' and 'real' lycanthropes, and yet at the same time claims to run the shop for purely financial reasons. He is both believer and non-believer simultaneously, and it is this concept that is parodied in *The Howling*. Hypocrites were nothing new, indeed, after the fall of Richard Nixon in the Watergate scandal, they were seemingly everywhere. However, the cult leader/guru/pop psychologist/capitalist diffusion we see in characters like Paisley and Waggner would have struck a chord with people who had witnessed the rise of L Ron Hubbard. The concept of the guru is, appropriately enough, identified as being a wolf in sheep's clothing.

The quest for meaning by the individual at this time seems reflected in the myriad number of ways that this meaning could be obtained, and the practice of psychotherapy, religion, alternative religions, occultism[76] become diffused and overlap in fascinating ways, and nowhere is this better illustrated than at George Waggner's Colony. As Donna, one of the Colony's patients states: -

Before I hooked into Doc, I did it all- EST, TM, Scientology, Iridology, primal screamers, you name it. I figure another five years of hard work and I'll be a human being.[77]

Here, Sayles is commenting upon the type of behaviour that former radical Jerry Rubin talked of when moving from New York City, to the West Coast at the beginning of the 1970s. Rubin moved from a volatile, politically charged life, including standing trial with the 'Chicago Eight[78]' and co-founding the 'Yippie[79]' movement to what appears to be a desperate attempt for 'inner' meaning rather than the societal change:

In five years from 1971 to 1975 I directly experienced EST, gestalt therapy, bioenergetics, rolfing, massage jogging, health foods, tai chi, Esalen, hypnotism, modern dance, meditation, Silva Mind

[76] All of which, in the words of Miller's character "take Master Charge, American Express."
[77] *The Howling* (1981). DANTE, J. dir. Embassy Pictures
[78] Eight defendants accused of incitement to riot at the Democratic National Convention in 1968.
[79] A nickname for the 'Youth International Party', a 1960s radical anti-war group.

Control, Arica, acupuncture, sex therapy, Reichian therapy and More House – a smorgasbord in New consciousness[80].

What is interesting here is that psychotherapy as it would have been understood fifty years ago has now become something else entirely through exposure to a counter-culture's willingness to try anything to achieve some sense of being 'a human being'. Christopher Lasch refers to Rubin's West-Coast experience as a form of retail, in which Rubin "shops voraciously – on an apparently exhaustible income- in the spiritual supermarkets of the West Coast."[81] No doubt if Rubin was a lycanthrope, one of the stops of his tour for meaning would have been Waggner's The Colony[82]. Lasch is rather damning of Rubin's dilletante method of finding the solution to Rubin's personal existential crisis, seeing it as indicative of an obsession with the self beyond all healthy measure. Although it should be noted that a reading of Rubin's autobiography does reveal, for the most part, a scepticism about the different therapies he partakes in albeit with an almost desperate yearning for "true meaning". What is interesting to note in this regard is how the balance of power has shifted away from the psychotherapists and to the patient; in an increasingly consumer culture, in which freedom of choice is at a premium, the kind of lifelong therapy that Sergei Pankejeff signed up to under strictly Freudian analysis seems hopelessly old-fashioned. Instead, as Lasch so incisively calls to it, mental health therapy becomes a 'supermarket' in which one can switch from aisle to aisle, product to product with a facile ease that speaks of a much greater dislocation at the heart of these pop-psychologies and their offspring. After all, if thirty different therapies don't work, why choose any to begin with? Jerry Rubin reached an understanding of the self, but its result was a rejection of

[80] RUBIN, J. (1976*). Growing [up] at thirty-seven*. New York, N.Y., Evans. pg20

[81] LASCH, C. (1978*). The culture of narcissism: American life in an age of diminishing expectations*. New York, W.W. Norton.pg14

[82] Rubin was also an admirer of Charles Manson, stating in his book *We Are Everywhere*: "I fell in love with Charlie Manson the first time I saw his cherub face and sparkling eyes on national TV…Manson's soul is easy to touch because it lays quite bare on the surface. He said he was innocent of the Tate murders and was being persecuted by the pigs because of his lifestyle… Is Charlie innocent or guilty? What is innocence and what is guilt? Can Amerika, after all it has done to Charlie Manson, now put him on trail?" In many ways, Manson was just another guru, or just another embodied philosophy that Rubin could play with. RUBIN, J. (1971). *We are everywhere*. New York, Harper & Row. pgs 239-240

his 60s revolutionary youth and his 70s therapy shopping in favour of an embracing of capitalism. Always a canny self-promoter, who had published his diaries and books on revolution in the 1960s, cultural shape-shifter Rubin joined a Wall Street brokerage in 1980, and as we shall see in the third chapter, that was when the wolves were moving in.

Repression and the Beast Within

It's understandable that conventional forms of psychotherapy, with almost a century of history and fairly rigid boundaries would have difficulties keeping up. Therapists were often called upon to shed their old skin and gain new to keep up with the increasing demands of patients who wanted something more than the rigid, Freudian method. In a consumer culture, choice and money determine structure, not tradition and best practice. In Gary Brandner's sequel to his novel of *The Howling*,[83] Karyn Beatty is undergoing therapy for her experiences in Drago. Her therapist is fairly useless, partly because of a failure to believe her backstory with werewolves, and partly because:

> 'Karyn, whether I believe or not isn't important. What happened in the past or didn't happen really doesn't concern us. Our bag is the here and now. All that matters to us is how you feel about it.' Karyn met the doctor's sincere gaze. He was having a difficult time making the transition from the traditional Freudian to the trendy transactional school of analysis. Everybody's got problems, she thought.[84]

As a psychology major, John Sayles would have been well aware of both the history or psychiatry, and how it was being spliced into the 60s counterculture to produce the 70s 'new age' of self-improvement. Lee Gambin, in his meticulous dissection of the film in *Joe Dante's The Howling – Studies in the Horror Film*, quotes producer Mike Finnell with crediting Sayles for adding this to the narrative:

[83] Which thankfully does not have anything to do with the sequel to the film of *The Howling*, namely *Howling II: Striba – Werewolf Bitch (*1985). MORA. P. dir. Hemdale Film Corporation

[84] BRANDNER, G. (1979). *The Howling II*. New York, Ballantine Books. Pg23

We brought in John Sayles who had written Piranha for Joe (Dante) and the first thing he did was introduce the idea of this Esalen living. John was a big fan of sixties and seventies counterculture and he knew a lot about that Northern Californian fad of Esalen living which was an institute where people who congregate and find their inner-whatever! So John has the idea that the Patrick Macnee character, Dr Waggner, was one of those gurus who ran one of these institutes for werewolves who had come to cope with being a werewolf and understand their lycanthropy.[85]

Another hallmark of the difference between the East-coast, European inspired psychoanalysis and the West-coast, counterculture inspired new-age movement was in the positioning of a concept that was to run through any discussion of psychocultural behaviour in the latter half of the twentieth century – repression. Repression, Freud believed, occurred when a thought, memory or feeling became too dangerous to the individual for the individual to deal with directly. As a subconscious process, repression is hard to deal with, except through hypnosis and, as we shall see, psychotropic 'trips', both of which sidestep the conscious mind. By the time of Freud's death, and as the new age movement was beginning to gain traction in the United States, repression as a concept was being repurposed. It was no long just a memory or a feeling which could be repressed, but an entire 'self' or even a society. This found favour with French cultural philosopher Michel Foucault, who applied the concept of repression to the modern world, stating:

If repression has indeed been the fundamental link between power, knowledge, and sexuality since the classical age, it stands to reason that we will not be able to free ourselves from it except at a considerable cost.[86]

Repression, and freeing oneself from repression thus becomes the battlefield on which society makes war on itself. The myriad therapies that started after the second world war, became the new age movement and eventually pop-psychology almost always dealt with repression as the root cause of problems. After all, if the individual person is of primary importance, anything that stops that person wishes to do, or be, because of a repressive society become the sine qua non. The satire inherent in the Howling relies on the fact that Dr George Waggner is an uncertain guru in this war,

[85] Mike Finnell, as quoted in GAMBIN, L. (2018). *The howling: studies in the horror film*. Lakewood, Colorado, Centipede Press pg113

[86] FOUCAULT, M. (1990). *The History Of Sexuality*. New York, Vintage Books. pg5

who ends up one of its casualties. He is both the enemy and the arbiter of repression. In the beginning however, he espouses the prevalent doctrine about repression:

Humanity is a rare thing. Something we have lost, deep within our self. It is after all what we are. Repression is the father of neurosis, of self-hatred. Now stress results when we fight our impulses. We've all heard people talk about animal magnetism, the natural man, the noble savage as if we'd lost something valuable in our long evolution into civilised human beings. Now there's a good reason for this. Man is a combination of the learned and the instinctual, of the sophisticated and the primitive. We should never try to deny the beast, the animal within us.[87]

This is channelling Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the French philosopher who believed that the ideal state of living was in the 'state of nature' and that the civilisation that corrupted this state was inherently wicked due to going against what was 'natural'[88]. The contradiction between freedom and repression is the central paradox of *The Howling*, and the eventual cause of Waggner's downfall. As Lennard sums up in his book on the animalistic in the horror film, *Brute Force*: -

Waggner advocates a sort of Freudian hedonism in which repressed desires are safely expressed.[89]

An impossibility, as we shall see, and we shall see these irreparable conflicts played out in *The Howling*, and some of the other films under study here, as the dichotomy between the 'wild' and the 'civilised' is reconfigured. Repression is also, Waggner suggests, holding us back from our true selves. This ties in to what is revealed to be his real work – the pastoral and psychological care of himself and his fellow werewolves at The Colony. He recommends that the disturbed Karyn White joins them, "It's a place where you can recharge your batteries. It'll enable you to try and get back to what you really are……(with) seminars, group therapies. It's very low-key."[90] However, the colony is an exercise in controlled repression, so the idea of Karyn White being cured here is ludicrous. Indeed, it is very much to Waggner's benefit that Karyn is literally repressing the memory of seeing the opening stages of Eddie Quist's transformation in his attack on her at the adult bookstore. She is also

[87] *The Howling* (1981). DANTE, J dir. Embassy Pictures
[88] An odd paradox is that Rosseau thought it 'natural' to abandon his own five children to orphanages as babies, whereas the wolf makes an excellent parent, and a female wolf will take on a foster cub as a matter of nature. Homo homini lupus, but thankfully lupus est lupus ad lupum.
[89] LENNARD, D. (2020). *BRUTE FORCE: animal horror movies*. [S.l.], STATE UNIV OF NEW YORK PR. Pg220
[90] *The Howling* (1981). DANTE, J dir. Embassy Pictures

considered, by Waggner at least, to be repressed in terms of her potential to be a werewolf, one who, as a media personality, could be very useful in changing the public's perception of his fellow werewolves. Her eventual (unwilling) lycanthropy will certainly do that – her choice to transform into a werewolf (albeit a curiously unthreatening one that resembles a Pekingese) does raise a small amount of awareness. This realisation of what Waggner sees as Karyn's 'potential' is undercut by the script she reads before the transformation, which tries to inform the public that the werewolves are completely inhuman whilst being half human, and not to be trusted. The achieving of potential here is to reinforce the barriers between the wild and the civilised, with a warning not to exist in the lacuna between the two. It's a masterful note in a film that parodies the idea that human potential is limitless and that 'letting go' is always the healthier course of action. It is further undercut by Karyn performing an assisted suicide after the on-air transformation; her inability to accept her achievement of potential is a corollary to an inability to live on with this newfound state.

This sequence refers to the on-air suicide of Christine Chubbuck in 1974. Christine Chubbuck had seen a psychiatrist for most of her adult life, and suffered from depression and, according to her co-workers, an inability to make meaningful connections with people. In July 1974, Chubbuck, under the guise of reading a news report before her scheduled community affairs talk show, produced a .38 revolver and shot herself, stating beforehand, "In keeping with Channel 40's policy of bringing you the latest in blood and guts, and in living color, you are going to see another first—an attempted suicide." Always a professional, Chubbuck left a script for the next person who would follow, obviously knowing that, like the TV viewers who watch Karyn's transformation, they would continuity of content rather than a pause to reflect. This finds an echo with the character of Fred Francis (Kevin McCarthy), who cuts Karyn's first attempt at going back on camera after the attack by Eddie Quist short with his own pre-taped editorial which rails against "the culture of violence." Francis, painted very clearly as a hypocrite, has pulled Karyn's account of her violent attack (which

will make her the "sinecure of all eyes", a rather florid way of saying the ratings will be incredible) and their own lurid trailing of the 'Eddie the Mangler' story for an editorial which justifies his own seedy practices. However, Waggner is as much as a hypocrite as Francis, for all his veneer of equality and kindness. His ultimate ambition for Karyn is the same as Francis – he wishes to recruit her into the werewolf commune of The Colony to act as a mouthpiece for his own views, an acceptable face that will persuade the mainstream of the compatibility of werewolves and people. As masterplans go, it is as equally foolish and lacking in insight as Dr Brandon's in *I Was A Teenage Werewolf,* but at least it's sincere. What is more egregious about this plan is how it conflates Francis and Waggner. It is probably apt to use psychological terms here, so let's describe Waggner and Francis at the beginning of the film as representing the Jungian concepts of the Good Father and the Tyrant respectively. Waggner is caring, softly-spoken and authoritative without being overtly didactic. It is Waggner who persuades the Tyrant, Francis, into postponing an interview with Karyn immediately after her attack by Eddie Quist, thereby (seemingly) prioritising her welfare. Francis, when seeing weakness in Karyn on her return, arranges her replacement with cold hearted efficiency and a very thin veneer of concern[91].

However, as the narrative progresses, it is revealed that Waggner is equally ruthless. He places Karyn in harm's way by bringing her to the Colony, where he knows Quist's family is waiting and resentful of her. Also, his overall plan is to use Karyn in exactly the same way as Francis – as an acceptable face for his own agenda rather than a person in her own right. Francis's quickness to cut to his own editorial mid-programme, as well as his despotic control over seemingly every aspect of the news programme, makes he and Waggner little more than chess players, with the prize the attention of the viewing public, and their pawn Karyn White. There may be something in the homonym between

[91] In a wonderfully sharp bit of Sayles's writing, Francis asks for Karyn's replacement to be "that Fujiyama or Fujimoto or whatever the hell her name is." Not only is Karyn replaceable, but to Francis her replacement doesn't even have a fixed enough identity to be worth memorising - she is just, as she referred to later on "that Asian girl."

the ’porn’ Karyn is surrounded with in the opening of the film, and the ’pawn’ these two media-savvy middle-aged men wish to use her as, but that maybe straining the credulity of the premise. Although there may be something to the fact that the idea that pornography objectifies women, a saw that would have been very familiar at the time of the film's release, with the potential objectification of Karyn by the two fathers that she eventually turns against – first by speaking out against the werewolf and their incompatibility with modern life, and then by turning into a werewolf and dying by her own violation. Like Chubbock, Karyn finds a third way out of her situation, and turns the media against those who would wish to control it.

The pursuit of greater ratings (and in turn greater advertising revenue) leads us on to something is not present in *The Howling*, conspicuous by its absence perhaps, but that would become very important to pop-psychology throughout the 1980s – money. Waggner is undoubtedly a salesman as well as a psychologist, and his easy handling of the television interview at the beginning of the film we see a man who has both studied his Bruce Barton whilst remaining Jung at heart. The flashes of his book, ‘The Gift’, as well as the plush trappings of his L.A. office, as well as the access he has to media personalities like Karyn and Bill all speak to a successful person capable of selling others not only on his message, but also himself. And yet his true ambition, the Colony, is a very different proposition. Nobody seems to pay for anything, and Waggner’s offer to Karyn to relax at the colony should immediately arise her suspicions for no other reason than it is offered gratis.

The inhabitants run the gamut between the rich (prosperous landowner Charlie Barton), the gauche lower middle class (Donna and Jerry Warren) and those who appear to be living on the fringes of the economy if not for the Colony (the Quist family, brothers Eddie and T.C. and sister Marsha, as well as the decrepit Erle Kenton). One can speculate that Waggner’s goal is to not only socialise the werewolves into the mainstream through not only learning to control their impulses, but also add

the by-product of making the Quist's live somewhere other than a beaten-up shack, and teaching the near-feral T.C. to eat with a knife and fork. Marsha throws Waggner's book in his face after she catches T.C. reading it, telling Waggner to leave T.C. alone. She values not only the true freedom of the werewolf transformation, but also the ambiguous freedoms of living outside bourgeois society [92]. Waggner is again revealed to be a hypocrite, who values personal freedom, but only up to a point.

Whilst an economic interpretation of the treatments are speculative, it is not without historical evidence. The communes and retreats that had focused on self-improvement, narcissism and self-love found themselves with a quandary in the 1980s, when a neo-liberalist resurgence, typified by the economic policies of Ronald Reagan, reemphasised the place of the currency markets to determine society rather than governments. The 'self' came to mean something else - the usefulness of the self as a consumer and freedom being freedom of choice rather than a freedom of 'being', a nebulous concept that was the hallmark of the new age movement. EST, Esalen and Lifespring all rebranded themselves as management training courses, in which the emphasis wasn't achieving one's own best, but how to inspire employees to achieve their own best, a curious sort of outsourcing of actualisation.

Conclusion

In this chapter it has been argued that the common understanding of The Howling as a satire on pop-psychiatry is part of a greater tradition of a distrust and tendency to parody psychological

[92] Intriguingly, in Brandner's original novel, Marsha is one of the few characters who runs a business, a chintzy giftshop in the village of Drago. She is pitted against the novel's Karyn White, who is a housewife and wholly dependent on the income of her husband.

practice in popular culture. Classical psychoanalysis, with its key concepts of introspection and a focus on sexual behaviour was seen as highly suspicious and irredeemably European when it was transplanted to the United States during the rise of fascism and the exiling of what was seen as a 'Jewish' science. Psychoanalysis flourished in the cosmopolitan cities of the East Coast, but the increasing mechanisation and 'quick-fix'[93] mentality of the majority of the country could not allow themselves the impossibility of a quick cure and a lifetime of analysis that Sergei Pankejeff (Freud's 'Wolf Man') required, or the nebbish neuroses that tormented the character Woody Allen played in every film.

Pop-psychiatry was the answer to this, and its flourishing in the latter half of the twentieth century was down to what Christopher Lasch and Tom Wolfe saw as an increasingly narcissistic generation that had abandoned the ideals of the radical 1960s for a more self-focused attempt to understand the 'self'. Classical psychoanalysis was filtered through new age beliefs to form what was known as Human Potential Movement, bringing the idea that 'repression' (considered by Freud to be necessary to functioning life to an extent) was the enemy, equating it with 'authority', which should be eradicated as an act of homage to the sacred self.

What *The Howling* does is point out the absurdity of this, not only by mocking the neurotic people who flock to pop-psychiatry, but also pointing out the central paradox. Repression and the freedom of the self sound like high-minded commendable ideals, but it's greatest practitioners of the 1970s were Charles Manson, Jim Jones and Ted Bundy. The idealism that came with the 1960s counterculture, when channelled through 1970s self-absorption can only lead to friction, resulting in violence. As Erle Kenton (John Carradine) sums up towards the end of *The Howling*, "You can't tame

[93] Pioneered at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

what's meant to be wild, Doc.", pointing out the error of Doctor George Waggner in trying to be both simultaneously saviour and prison-warden, wild and tamed, wolf and human. The pop-psychiatry belief that you can be a 'whole person', *The Howling* suggests, is fundamentally flawed. And as we shall see in the next chapter, the binary between man and wolf is established and understandable, anything between the two, or an attempt to harmonise them, is madness.

Chapter Two – Building a Better Werewolf: The Special Effect of An American Werewolf in London

Introduction

Who is the star of *An American Werewolf in London*[94]? The two leads, which is to say the two people on the American distribution poster, are David Naughton and Griffin Dunne, neither of whom were household names, or had the recognisability of the last John Landis film, *The Blues Brothers*[95] which starred *Saturday Night Live*[96] regulars John Belushi and Dan Ackroyd, both of whom had their name above the title of the film on the American publicity posters. David Naughton was famous at this

[94] *An American Werewolf in London* (1981). LANDIS, J. dir. Universal Pictures
[95] *The Blues Brothers* (1980). LANDIS, J. dir. Universal Pictures
[96] *Saturday Night Live* (1975-). NBC

point for being the star of a series of commercial for the soft drink, Dr Pepper. These ads, which featured Naughton wandering over the United States like Johnny Appleseed, proselytizing the benefits of being ‘a Pepper’ were very successful. Naughton achieved some modicum of fame from the back of it, including the lead in a short-lived sitcom (the *Saturday Night Fever* influenced *Makin' It*[97]), a deal with Walt Disney Studios to appear in a film (*Midnight Madness*[98]) and press coverage including interviews on *American Bandstand*[99]. More pertinently, it put him on the radar of John Landis when casting for *An American Werewolf in London* began. With his affable manner, and non-threatening Robby Benson haircut, Naughton made a splendid fit for one of the pair of naïf tourists attacked by a werewolf on the Yorkshire moors. The second lead, the ill-fated David Kessler, was played by Griffin Dunne, the son of writer and producer Dominic Dunne, and brother of the actress Dominique Dunne[100]. Dunne had, like Naughton, very little experience in film acting, yet fitted the bill of a young, fresh-faced American tourist exploring Europe.

The remainder of the cast (except for Frank Oz, in what is more of a cameo than a role) were English, unsurprisingly given the setting and the Union stipulations on John Landis to hire a certain amount of English cast and crew to be allowed to film in the UK. The likes of Brian Glover and John Woodvine would not have been cast due to any name recognition, certainly. The other ‘lead’, Jenny Agutter played Alex Price, the English nurse who cares for David Kessler after he is attacked and infected by a werewolf on the Yorkshire Moors, before becoming his love interest. Agutter would have been one of the few members in the cast with a relatively high-profile film career, albeit in such diverse fair as *The Railway Children*[101] ,*Walkabout*[102] and *Logan's Run*[103], showing a preference for appearing in

[97] *Makin' It* (1975). CBS
[98] *Midnight Madness* (1980). WECHTER D. & NANKIN M. dirs. Buena Vista International
[99] *American Bandstand* (1952-). Dick Clark Productions
[100] Dominique Dunne would later, like her brother, go on to star in another early 1980s horror film in which the visual effects would achieve great fame, *Poltergeist* (1982). HOOPER, T. dir. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer
[101] *The Railway Children* (1970). JEFFRIES, L. dir. Universal Pictures
[102] *Walkabout* (1971). ROEG, N. dir. 20th Century Fox
[103] *Logan's Run* (1976). ANDERSON, M. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

films of different genres crossing back and forth between twee English nostalgia and big-budget Hollywood science fiction. Such versatility very rarely translates into the kind of easily categorizable film star, and Agutter, while a continually interesting screen presence, could not have been seen as a 'name' to draw in crowds.

John Landis had been exclusively a director of comedies before making *An American Werewolf in London*, often very successfully. Before *National Lampoon's Animal House*[104] and *The Blues Brothers*, he had made his debut with *Schlock*[105], and after that the episodic *Kentucky Fried Movie*[106]. *Schlock* is a tribute to monster movies incorporating the cheap and cheerful melodramas of the 1950's monster movie heyday into the 1970s. Landis himself playrf the titular Schlock, a reanimated ape-man running wild in Los Angeles, in a monkey suit designed by Rick Baker. *Kentucky Fried Movie* is more of the same, following 1974's *The Groove Tube*[107] format of spoofing TV advertising, kung fu films, public announcement broadcasting and the blaxploitation genre. It was funded partly by the Zucker brothers, who would use the same sensibilities, the same actors and even a few of the same jokes in their disaster film spoof *Airplane!*[108]. Playing squarely to Landis's interests, such as kitsch culture, anarchic humour and even another ape-man (this time played by the suit's creator, Rick Baker), it was financially successful enough to attract the producers of *National Lampoon's Animal House*. Landis's trajectory from *Schlock* to *The Blues Brothers* seems fairly clear; increasingly larger budgeted, more sophisticated, technically more ambitious comedies. It is apparent, on the surface at

[104] *National Lampoon's Animal House* (1978). LANDIS, J. dir. Universal Pictures
[105] *Schlock* (1973). LANDIS, J. dir. Jack H. Harris Enterprises
[106] *Kentucky Fried Movie* (1977). LANDIS, J. dir. United Film Distribution Company
[107] *The Groove Tube* (1974). SHAPIRO, K. dir. Levitt-Pickman
[108] *Airplane* (1980). ABRAHAMS J., ZUCKER D., ZUCKER J. dirs. Paramount Pictures

least, that *An American Werewolf in London* was seen as very much an unusual step for Landis, given the quantities of blood and gore that are actually on display here[109].

In this chapter I will be looking into the importance of what was seen as one of the major appeals of John Landis's 1981 film *An American Werewolf in London*, the special effects. The majority of the discussions about these films, especially those that place them into a group, mention that the practical visual effects are both the 'star' of the film and one of the largest sources of fascination with its enduring appeal. To this end, I will show how the marketing of the film reflected this shift, before moving on to a discussion about how the foregrounding of special effects had a corollary effect in foregrounding the special effects artists through a burgeoning fan press.

I shall end by looking at how the special effects 'revolution' of which this film was a part of did not progress further by using the well-known, codified figure of the werewolf, but instead found its apex in the 'body horror' movement of the 1980s.

An American Werewolf for Sale

The early marketing for the film consists of a two-shot of Naughton and Dunne, looking warily back to the full moon. The werewolf itself is not shown both to heighten suspense, but also because the famous 'transformation' scene was shot, along with most of the special effects shots, after the majority of the filming had begun. The poster seems designed almost wholly around the concept inherent in the title – this is 'The Monster Movie', from 'The Director of Animal House', already

[109] There is a sequence in *Kentucky Fried Movie* in which a spokesman gives an appeal for the United Appeal for the Dead, requesting that the dead not be excluded from the world of the living just because of their apparently trivial distinction of having shuffled off the mortal coil. In the same way that the living corpse of Jack is later juxtaposed in the mundane settings of a bathroom, lounge and cinema*, Kentucky Fried Movie* features (inanimate) corpses at family meals, in swimming pools and spectating at sports events.

aligning itself within the area between the classic tradition of the monster film, and the recent popularity of Landis's *National Lampoon's Animal House*, a film that had adroitly combined nostalgia, broad comedy and sex to great box-office results. The combination of the promise of titillation and horror was designed to be irresistible, and yet when the film was released in Europe, after the American critics had discussed it as a film with uncertain genre conventions and an emphasis on the transformation sequence, the posters were redesigned to reflect an aspect of the film that seemed to really catch another 'star' of the film – special effects supervisor Rick Baker. Baker was lauded for the effects work in the film, even to the point of winning the academy award for best make-up. Landis was correct in his concerns that the special effects would become the focus of the film, as reflected in influential film critic Roger Ebert's assessment for the *Chicago Tribune*. Ebert called the film: -

Curiously unfinished, as if director John Landis spent all his energy on spectacular set pieces and then didn't want to bother with things like transitions, character development, or an ending….There are time when the special effects almost wipe the characters off the screen…..It's not a very good film, and it falls well below Landis's work in the anarchic *National Lampoon's Animal House* and the rambunctious *The Blues Brothers*.[110]

This is the theme of all mediocre to negative reviews of the film; that not only is the film neither horror nor comedy, but the technical wizardy of the make-up effects eclipse both.

The UK poster is dominated by a photograph of the face of the werewolf, caught near the end of the transformation. As the werewolf, David Naughton is unrecognisable. As an un-augmented actor he is relegated to the lower left-hand side of the poster. He is pictured nude, cupping his genitals and looking suitably embarrassed at being confronted by a shocked, older woman who bears a resemblance to one of UK vaudevillian Dick Emery's drag characters[111]. In the months between the

[110] https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/an-american-werewolf-in-london
[111] He would pay the price, too – due to the nudity on display in *An American Werewolf in London*, Naughton lost the Dr Pepper commercial role.

American release date (21 August 1981) and the UK release date (12 November 1981), a different emphasis seems to have been placed – the werewolf, or rather the transformation between man and wolf, is the star. The periphery image, burlesque between Naughton and the lady is an appeal to the British audiences, who would recognise the cheekiness inherent in it from the Carry On films or Benny Hill. To an American audience, this piece of naughtiness may have reminded them of director John Landis's previous success with the highly popular, and bawdy, *National Lampoon's Animal House*.[112] The suggestion seems to be that the horrific visual effects are the star, but also that it contains comedic elements.[113]

A de-emphasis on the actual 'star' of the film as a way of selling a film became something of a boon for less well-known actors, as Linda Badley suggests in the introduction to Film, Horror, and the Body Fantastic: -

The monsters and the actors, the Karloffs and Lugosis, were subsumed by the monster makers – the Dick Smiths, Rick Bakers, Rob Bottins and Tom Savinis – and the effects themselves.[114]

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[112] It is not only the level of bawdy humour that Landis re-uses from *National Lampoon's Animal House* however. The opening scenes of both films are almost identical – a pair of close friends, strangers in a strange land, walk along a moonlit path, looking for a sanctuary. One they arrive, due to their perceived outsider status and a misunderstanding of social mores they are exiled. Once exiled, they face the bestial – for David and Jack this is the werewolf who transfigures both of them, for Pinto and Flounder it is in meeting Bluto, who (like an animal) urinates on them both, marking them as 'Deltas'. As an addendum, John Landis's prologue section of 1983's *Twilight Zone the Movie*, also features two friends taking a moonlit trip along the back roads. A more poetic writer might point out that this film can be seen as Landis's own fall from innocence due to the on-set deaths, reflected in the fact the two moonlit travellers have now grown older (as must we all) and, in the shape of Dan Akroyd's shapeshifting, murderous companion, have grown to prey on each other.

[113] The Japanese poster is equally bold, with a slight twist in terms of what the appeal of the film might be. The visual effects are once again centre stage, with David Kessler caught supine in mid-transformation, reaching out to the observer. To the right, his face is shown mid-transformation. The left contains full face images of the 'Nazi demon' from one of David's dream sequences, a shot of David's friend Jack at the height of his putrescent progress and the fully transformed werewolf seen towards the end of the film. The outlier is an image of a naked couple from the waist-up, locked in passionate embrace. We presume this is Naughton and co-star Jenny Agutter, albeit with the latter given an enhanced bust size for reasons so obvious as to appear churlish to mention. Again, as with the UK release poster, the meaning is obvious – special effects allowing the audience to witness the transformation between man and wolf is the draw to audiences. A rarer, and less used Japanese poster is in the cartoon style and emphasises the comedic and erotic aspects instead. A be-fanged David Kessler is shown being drowned in a brandy glass being filled to the brim from a water-tap, whilst in the foreground a bipedal wolfman lifts a caricatured Nurse Price over his head, his snout disappearing under her skirt. In the background, the American flag is raised above the houses of parliament. Whether the Japanese audiences were disappointed when none of these events were featured in the film is a matter of guesswork.

[114] BADLEY, L. (1995). *Film, horror, and the body fantastic*. London, Greenwood. Pg7

Eponymous roles, like the leads *An American Werewolf in London* or *The Elephant Man* went to theatrical actors, unknowns or less-well known actors like David Naughton and John Hurt due to their ability to act as a blank canvas without pre-conceived audience expectations; the special effects artist did not have to deal with how the actor would appear to an audience that was already familiar with them. It is worth noting that in the first two *Omen* films, the lead actors are the well-established and easily recognisable Gregory Peck and William Holden, and in a duo of films that have a selling point of elaborate, gory death sequences, their characters suffer discrete deaths with no elaborate mechanisms and very little gore – a shooting and a stabbing respectively. The film industry is constantly defining and redefining what is meant as a 'star', and the special effects boom of the late 1970s and early 1980s was now playing a factor in that.

The film awards industry, always slow to move, eventually recognised this shift at the beginning of the 1980s. Whilst the category of 'best visual effects' had been an academy award since 1929 (going under such names as 'best engineering' and 'best special effects') the term had been used a catch-all for a wide variety of techniques, including matte painting, green screen, computer effects, stop motion animation and special make-up. This summed up the spectrum of special effects created by John Dykstra for *Star Wars*[115] whose academy award represented recognition for a wide variety of these techniques as a whole. However, a separate academy award category recognising makeup solely was not instigated until 1981, due to what was felt as a snubbing of *The Elephant Man*[116] in 1980 and with the incredibly elaborate full body make-up built by Christopher Tucker[117]. Up until this point a 'best make-up award' had been given before as honorary 'one-off' awards to the make-

[115] *Star Wars* (1977). LUCAS, G. dir. 20th Century Fox
[116] *The Elephant Man* (1980). LYNCH, D. dir. Paramount Pictures
[117] Who would go on to design his own werewolf transformation, and nominated for a BAFTA for it, in *The Company of Wolves* (1984) JORDAN, N. dir Palace Pictures.

up artists behind *The Seven Faces of Dr Lao*[118] (William Tuttle) and *Planet of the Apes*[119] (John Chambers).

Coupled with the interest in films which were led by visual effects, was interest in the special effects artists themselves. Tom Savini, who had produced legions of zombies and exploding heads for George A Romero's zombie films was a regular guest on David Letterman's late-night talk show. Savini would come out and demonstrate exactly how effects were achieved, reducing the make-up effects used in films to a mechanical process to a receptive live and television audience. The inference was clear - there was a public fascination with these films that was partly the result of the work of one person, or a small team, who were essential to the creation of these films.

Time Magazine, in an article entitled 'Wizards of Goo and Gadgetry' quotes Dick Smith as saying "(recently) there have been half a dozen films in which makeup was vital. The same certainly cannot be said for costuming, sound or design"[120]. To Smith, whose work include such wide-ranging fare as *Little Big Man*[121], *The Godfather*[122], *The Exorcist*[123], and *The Deer Hunter*[124] the make-up was as integral to creating the film as the script, for it was only by creating the highest quality special make-up effects could the film be believable. If the viewer thinks Linda Blair looks like a little girl wearing creepy make-up, *The Exorcist* doesn't work. If we think she looks possessed, the film has a shock and effect that lasts longer than our time spent watching the film and becomes iconic. It was Smith who led the charge, and won, against the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (note that both 'art' and 'science' very rarely combine more effectively in films than in the field of visual effects) to

[118] *The Seven Faces of Dr Lao* (1964). PAL, G. dir. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer
[119] *Planet of the Apes* (1968). SCHAFFNER, F. dir. 20th Century Fox
[120] CLARKE,.G. (1981) 'Wizards of Goo and Gadgetry'. *Time Magazine,* August 31, pg61
[121] *Little Big Man* (1970). PENN, A. dir. National General Pictures
[122] *The Godfather* (1972). COPPOLA, F. dir. Paramount Pictures
[123] *The Exorcist* (1973). FRIEDKIN, W. dir. Warner Brothers
[124] *The Deer Hunter* (1978). CIMINO, M. dir. Universal Pictures

create a permanent category honouring special effects. This is partly due to the fact that if such a category had already been extant, Dick Smith would have probably won each year for the past ten years and partly due to the fact that the field of special effect technicians was growing exponentially each year, with scientific advancements giving them greater and greater scope and capabilities.

Fangoria, Fan Press and the Stars of Special Effects

However the article quoted above from the venerable Time magazine must have seemed liked old news to the demographic of fans who had picked up the first issue of a magazine called *Fangoria* in 1979. The title itself, as Philip Brophy suggests in *Horrality* acted as an indicator that the magazine would be deliberately appropriating and taking a 'left field' approach to the genre: -

> The title speaks volumes: gore, fantasy, phantasmagoria, fans. It simultaneously expands a multiplicity of cross references and contracts them into a referential construct. This semantic effect strangely echoes the relationship between the emergence of Fangoria and the development of the contemporary horror film, whereby an ever growing cult journal expands and contracts a critical voice for a mutant market that of the contemporary film: a genre about genre; a displaced audience, a short circuiting entertainment.[125]

When Brophy coined the term 'Horrality' (a portmanteau of "horror, textuality, morality, and hilarity") he used to define the films that he saw were shifting away from the slasher film archetype that had dominated the late seventies and early eighties. This shift, as the words that made up 'horrality' would suggest, would be towards a more complex, artistically playful horror film that was first typified by the limits of the human body in *An American Werewolf in London*, before moving through to the 'body horror' movement. Central to this was the work of the special effects artist, who could create the kind of spectacle that Brophy articulated. The idea that the special effect supervisor was not only integral but an artist in their own right was about to have its own standard

[125] BROPHY, P. (1986). *Horrality— The Textuality of Contemporary Horror Films*. Screen. 27, pg3

bearer in *Fangoria*, a magazine that would not only speak to a fanbase, but also the creators of the texts, often in direct conversation.

The first issue of the magazine featured varied coverage of *Godzilla* films, fantasy artists, *Alien*[126] and the low budget *The Wolfman*[127]; the idea at conception is blatant – a 'broad church' to house fantasy, horror and science fiction. However, in a market already saturated with magazines about these genres, *Fangoria* floundered out of the gate, losing an estimated $20,000 per issue[128]. Rethinking the entire concept of the magazine, publisher Kerry O'Quinn realised that the one article that had actually resonated with his readers in the first issue was coverage of Tom Savini's make-up effects for George A. Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*[129] entitled the "New Master of Magical Make-up". From issue seven onwards, the emphasis had changed squarely in favour of horror, and the special effects fan had a publication to call their own. This idea reached its apotheosis in August 1981, at the very height of what I have referred to as the 'year of the wolf', in issue fourteen, in which the only four names on the cover highlights articles on, and interviews with, make -up artists Tom Savini, Chris Walas, Stan Winston and Rick Baker. The era of the special make-up effects artist as an integral, respected member of the crew was not a new invention. The legendary Jack Pierce[130],

[126] *Alien* (1979). SCOTT, R. dir. 20th Century Fox
[127] *The Wolfman* (1979). KEETER, W. dir. E.O. Productions
[128] O'Quinn's first *Fangoria* editorial is both an exercise in irony and florid charm. It begins with him describing a letter he had received from a reader of *Starlog* about how a viewing of *Superman* had moved them to write to the magazine and state "In a world of reality, we need more fantasy." For a magazine that would ditch fantasy when it didn't find an audience, this is heavily ironic. O'Quinn opines on this that "There is a spirit of adventure and of romance inside everyone – especially inside young people. Unfortunately, as they grow older, many lose that spirit and slowly, perhaps without knowing it, replace it with a sense of frustration, cynicism and bleak indifference. In other words, as they "mature," they gradually give up expecting that life will be exciting and wonderful. They grow up and start dying." The 'young people' that O'Quinn was trying to find would be found, but it wasn't fantasy they were into, it was the bridging of the technical and fantastical that make-up effects would wed so successfully. Presumably this rather purple editorial was not read by Margaret Thatcher when she requested *Fangoria* be banned under the Obscene Publications Act (1964). On the other hand, presumably O'Quinn never foresaw the day when a rolled-up copy of Fangoria would be used as a masturbatory aid by a possessed doll in *Seed of Chucky* (2004).
[129] *Dawn of the Dead* (1978). ROMERO, G. dir. United Film Distribution Company
[130] Pierce was the only person to win a 'Filmograph' award (not an Academy Award) for makeup, for 1932's *The Mummy.*

Universal Studio's inhouse special effects guru, achieved a level of fame of his work on Frankenstein (James Whale, 1931), again by working with an actor who, although he had already made upwards of eighty films, was not a 'star', Boris Karloff. The head of Universal, Carl Laemmle Jr, relied heavily on Pierce throughout the studios run of monster movies in the thirties and forties, allowing the authoritarian and perfectionist Pierce a great deal of leeway when it came to design. Pierce was to say: -

In so far as character makeup is concerned, the work of the makeup artist is closely akin to that of a cinematographer. Each is a creative art of the utmost order....The sole reason for any makeup, and particularly a character makeup, is not to proclaim the skill of the artist or the actor, but to help tell the story. Therefore, makeup must not be obviously 'makeuppy.' This in turn demands that it be supervised by a qualified artist, for the actor, no matter how skilled he may be in the technical detail of applying his makeup, rarely has the right perspective to judge the makeup without bias.[131]

Aware of the fact that the success of the Universal monster films was caused in some part by his own artistry, Jack Pierce clashed with stars like Bela Lugosi and Lon Chaney Jnr, often getting his own way, a tribute to the drive of the man and the importance placed upon his work.

The clash between the star and the star make-up effects artist is interesting, pointing to an actor's insecurity that visual effects will overshadow their own performance, and the visual effects artist's belief that all is subservient to creating reality in the execution of the special effects piece. Better still to hire relative unknowns like David Naughton and Griffin Dunne, or character actors like John Hurt. Jack Pierce's heir apparent, Dick Smith, clashed with Robert De Niro on the set of *The Deer Hunter* in 1978. Rather than being fired, Smith resigned, walked off set and was allowed the luxury of saying that he would refuse to work with "paranoid perfectionist"[132] De Niro ever again. Jack Pierce eventually ran afoul of the studio system he had helped to see through one of their most financially unstable times, and once cast out of Universal, found it difficult to find work elsewhere.

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[131] ESSMAN, S., DAU, C., & SANTOLERI, R. (2000). *Jack Pierce: the man behind the monsters.* Glendora, Calif, Visionary Media. pg3

[132] CLARKE, G. (1981) 'Wizards of Goo and Gadgetry'. *Time Magazine*, August 31, pg61

As an independent, Dick Smith (and later Rick Baker and Rob Bottin) relied on his talent to secure work, as well as the flexibility to innovate and establish their own primacy in and out of the studio system.

To this new wave of filmmakers in the second Golden Age of make-up effects, the relationship between the director and the make-up supervisor was a balancing act, both artistically and financially. Exact numbers vary, but even the most conservative estimates state that ten percent of the overall budget of John Carpenter's *The Thing*[133] was spent on the creature effects team headed by 21-year-old Rob Bottin. Even when the balance between financial and artistic considerations was struck properly, it could still be a fraught time; by the end of *The Thing*'s production, Bottin had a bleeding ulcer, pneumonia and nervous exhaustion. The fourteen-month shoot, working seven days a week, often for fourteen hours a day broke Bottin, leading to his hospitalisation. The special effects supervisor was not only integral to the production of films, but also hostage to the same artistic, perfectionist temperament as any other committed filmmaker.

The idea that the quest for better and more realistic special effects of any sort, not just make-up effects, could lead to disaster and dull the need for rational precautions and human safety would come to a head for John Landis on the set of *Twilight Zone: The Movie*[134] in which blurring the lines between filming a war and a real war would result in the deaths of three people in a helicopter accident. This was a new twist on the idea of a director working an actor to the point of death or near-death, as Francis Ford Coppola had done only a few years ago with Harvey Keitel on the set of *Apocalypse Now*,[135] or Alfred Hitchcock torturing Tippi Hedren on the set of *The Birds*[136]. The quest

[133] *The Thing* (1982). CARPENTER, J. dir. Universal Pictures
[134] *Twilight Zone: The Movie* (1983). LANDIS, J. SPIELBERG, S. MILLER, G. DANTE, J dirs. Warner Bros
[135] *Apocalypse Now* (1979). COPPOLA, F.F. dir. United Artists
[136] *The Birds* (1963). HITCHCOCK, A. dir. Universal-International Pictures

for more 'realism' was no longer just reflected in whether or not the lead was giving a performance that screamed 'verisimilitude', but also whether the special effects were equally 'real' enough. Both had become, in some cases, a matter of life and death.

Special effects were of utmost importance, Landis gives easily the longest answer in the interview to clear up what was perceived as a 'controversy' over the makeup.

> Let me read from the Werewolf script I wrote back in 1969: 'The metamorphosis from man to beast is not an easy one. As bone and muscle bend and reform itself, the body suffers lacerating pain. We can actually see David's flesh move, rearranging tissue. His mouth bleeds, his jaws and fangs stretch forth. His whole face distorts as the jaw extends, his skull literally changing shape before our eyes.' ….I understand Rob Bottin does that in *The Howling*, which disappoints me, since I conceived of the effect in 1969. I haven't seen The Howling, but I have read the script, and I see some major differences between the two films. The Howling is an exploitation film; there's no mistaking the motivations of its filmmakers. Don't misunderstand me though: I'm a big Joe Dante fan; I think he's real good.[137]

Joe Dante's *The Howling* has some intwined history with Landis's *An American Werewolf in London* that highlights just how integral the special effects were to making both films. The funding for Landis's film had been a long time in coming, mainly due to the fact that the script appeared to be neither fish nor fowl – too funny to be a horror film, and too scary to be a comedy film. However, all throughout the process of building a reputation as a bankable director whose films had credibility with the lucrative young adult and college crowd (*The Blues Brothers* (1980), *National Lampoon's Animal House* (1978)), the one constant was that the werewolf transformation scene would be shot from start to finish, showing every aspect of metamorphosis, and that the man to create these scenes for Landis would be his *Schlock* (1973) collaborator Rick Baker. Baker had learnt from his mentor Dick Smith, who as we have seen went on to point the way forward for the possibilities of horror and special make-up effects throughout his career and had just finished working on metamorphosis narrative *Altered States*[138]. Rick Baker had helped Smith on *The Exorcist* (1973), and

[137] (1980). *Fangoria*. New York, NY, Starlog Group, Inc. Issue 13
[138] *Altered States* (1980). RUSSELL, K. dir. Warner Brothers

exploded John Cassavetes in Brian De Palma's *The Fury*[139], and yet had also helped create a modern *King Kong*[140] for Dino De Laurentis, helped craft aliens for George Lucas's *Star Wars* and collaborated with Stan Winston on TV movie *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*[141]. Like Smith's work on *Little Big Man*, this was eye-catching, non-genre special effects that were integral to establish the realistic passage of time in the plot, and his work went on to win Baker an Emmy.

The idea of auto-didacts establishing an entirely new way of producing a traditional effect, in this case make-up, was symptomatic of the film industry as a whole. The directors who came up in the seventies and eighties had been amongst the first to be able to use handheld 8mm cameras at home, to make films as teenagers and experiment away from the Hollywood system. Rather than coming from a theatre background or working their way up through the system, a new wave of independent filmmakers like Sam Raimi and John Carpenter had been making their own films cheaply and cheerfully before deciding to go to film school and formalise their technique. They learnt through imitation, and through the dissimulation of information through magazines like *American Cinematographer*.

The transformation sequences themselves present different ways of displaying the same thing (a man's transformation into a wolf) each with it own's theoretical underpinning. The first thing that must be noted is that each transformation is designed to be witnessed – both by characters in the film and the viewer of the film. This may seem obvious, and indeed the early werewolf films were sold on the concept that the audience would witness the transformation, but only in the Howling and An American Werewolf in London is that truly realised. It is more oblique in Landis's film, but far

[139] *The Fury* (1978). DE PALMA, B. dir. Frank Yablans Presentations
[140] *King Kong* (1977). GUILLERMAN, J. dir. Paramount Pictures
[141] *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (1974). KORTY, J. dir. NBC

more effective. At a key point towards the end of David Kessler's transformation, he looks towards the camera, his eyes full of pain and beseeching. This breaks into what Paul Macdonald refers to as the voyeuristic pleasure that the audience has watching the 'star'(which is to say, at this point, the hybrid created by David Naughton's performance, Rick Baker's special effects and John Landis's direction) suffer the metamorphosis, to which he attributes "a sadistic pleasure in relation to the stars."[142] To Macdonald, this is the pleasure of watching the 'star' with the knowledge that we are ourselves are not watched, or acknowledged, a form of viewing as consequence free power. We have come to see the transformation between man and wolf, and yet the spectacle itself is one to be pitied[143]. Like the ancient texts mentioned in the introduction, Kessler is now a person cursed to suffer, to whom we feel pity. Little wonder that the film's highlight is this sequence, at once both unignorable and hard to watch. The wolf that comes out of the metamorphosis runs on all fours, and is the most bestial of the werewolves under study here, showing how low Kessler has fallen both literally and figuratively, and as how a victim of a curse he is 'brought low'.

In the *The Howling*[144], the main difference is that Eddie Quist's transformation is voluntary; he likes being a werewolf. His human life seems fairly bland – he works in dead-end jobs, lives in a grimy apartment and hangs around porno theatres. It is only as a werewolf that he seems alive, glistening with the steam and sweat of the metamorphosis. The witness to that isn't an acknowledged audience, but instead a potential victim – Quist transforms in front of her as a display of power, remaining in a bipedal posture to show his control, and that the psychosis that possessed the man remains in the wolf (all the better to kill you with, my dear). As we will see in the next chapter, this

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[142] HOLLOWS, J., & JANCOVICH, M. (2010). *Approaches to popular film*. Manchester, Manchester University Press. pg 87. MCDONALD, P. *Star Studies*.
[143] Philip Brophy compares it to "It's not unlike being on a tram and somebody has an epileptic fit - you're there right next to the person, you can't get away and you can't do anything." BROPHY, P. (1986). *Horrality—The Textuality of Contemporary Horror Films.* Screen. 27, pg5
[144] *The Howling* (1981). DANTE, J. dir. Embassy Pictures

could by symbolic of the lack of repression Quist feels about giving in to his 'beast within', as opposed the guilt and shame Kessler carries with him.

What is clear in his interviews with the fan press is that John Landis wishes to downplay any similarity between his film and Dante's, and the theme of the two films (werewolves) is less important than their central set pieces (metamorphosis between man and wolf on a technical level). Perhaps it is this concern that will eventually make Landis refute the following statement:

By the way, you won't see the wolf unless you see the movie. I think ALIEN was hurt by all the publicity skills of the creature, and I'm not going to release any wolf photos to the press.[145]

And yet *Alien* is not considered to be a 'special effects film' in the way in which *An American Werewolf in London* is. Reports of prolonged applause during the transformation scene in Landis's' film were not matched by similar displays at the end of *Alien* when we see the creature in (almost) full display. Referring back to the change in marketing of *An American Werewolf in London*, which showed a shift from not showing anything but Naughton and Dunne and highlighting Landis's standing as the director of *National Lampoon's Animal House*, to showing a close-up of the werewolf make-up, we can compare that back to the equally iconic *Alien* poster which only shows (at most) the egg from which the 'facehugger' launches. The *Alien* poster doesn't reveal the alien itself, and even on subsequent rerelease and re-issues, the alien is very rarely depicted on posters and cover art – Alien is not about aliens in the same was *An American Werewolf in London* is about werewolves. Ironically, the over-exposure of the creature to the detriment of film (and the parallel concern of the over-exposure of the special effects supervisor to the detriment of the director) is on Landis's mind during the set-interview with *Fangoria*: -

I'm really thrilled with Rick (Baker)'s work. This is the first time he's been given the opportunity to do his job correctly. This picture has been living with me for 11 years; it's very much my personal vision. But Rick Baker's contribution is unbelievable. In fact, the danger with his stuff is that you want to

[145] (1980). *Fangoria*. New York, NY, Starlog Group, Inc. Issue 5

show it too much, and I think you can overkill on that sort of thing. If you see it too long you start trying to figure out how this one is done. You'd never be able to figure out how this one was done[146], but I still wouldn't want you to see it too often, because it takes away from the special thrill you get when you do see it.[147]

Indeed, throughout the interview Landis seems pre-occupied with exactly how the film could be interpreted. When asked about the influences on the film, he dismisses most other werewolf films (*The Wolf Man*[148] – "ridiculous", *Curse of the Werewolf*[149] – "it stunk", *Legend of the Werewolf*[150] – "stinks", *Werewolves on Wheels*[151] – "very silly" but "actually not a bad picture"), and instead aligns his film with more highbrow affairs, all with blue-chip literary sources: -

Max Reinhardt's *Midsummer Night's Dream*[152], where James Cagney is turned into an ass, is pretty extraordinary, as is Fredric March in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*[153]. I think my favourite metamorphosis movie though was *Island of Lost Souls*.[154][155]

And yet, rather than alienate an audience who like a bit of titillation with their metamorphosis, Landis continues: -

…. there's a great deal of sex in the film, hopefully sensual, but also some pornographic. The movie is very adult.[156]

This dichotomy would certainly have appealed to the readership of Fangoria, who were not only interested in the special effects, but sex. Julia Badley succinctly summed up the appeal of the magazine in not only it's lurid content, but also its transgressive nature:

[146] At least until next issue's *Fangoria*, naturally.
[147] (1980). *Fangoria*. New York, NY, Starlog Group, Inc. Issue 5
[148] *The Wolf Man* (1943). WAGGNER, G. dir. Universal Pictures
[149] *Curse of the Werewolf* (1961). FISHER, T. dir. Hammer Studios
[150] *Legend of the Werewolf* (1975). FRANCIS, F. dir. Tyburn Film Productions
[151] *Werewolves on Wheels* (1971). LEVESQUE. M. dir. Dark Sky Films
[152] *Midsummer Night's Dream* (1935). REINHARTD, M & DIETERLE, W. dirs. Warner Brothers
[153] *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1931). MAMOULIAN, R. dir. Paramount Pictures
[154] *The Island of Lost Souls* (1932). KENTON, E. dir. Paramount Pictures
[155] (1980). *Fangoria*. New York, NY, Starlog Group, Inc. Issue 13
[156] ibid

In the 1980s, the horror fanzines proclaimed themselves gore's equivalent of *Playboy* or *Hustler*. *Fangoria* combined *Hustler*'s hardcore appeal with MAD Magazine's adolescent humour.[157][158]

It can seem often during this interview, one of the few Landis gave for An American Werewolf in London, that he is constantly hedging his bets. The references to sex are an indicator that he is aware that the audience who loved his National Lampoon's Animal House and Kentucky Fried Movie will also be the target demographic for his 'all-out horror show'. The two concepts that Landis is trying to combine, the monster movie and the sex movie, would be delineated further in the next issue of Fangoria, in which special effects supervisor Rick Baker and lead actress (and described "femme fatale") Jenny Agutter are both interviewed at length. Intriguingly, a response to a letter from a fan enquiring about whether Savini, Bottin, Baker et al have other jobs than make-up receives this response: -

They are treated by the movie industry as craftsmen, rather than the artists they are. They often see several months' worth of work scrapped because of a director's whim, or because of the ratings, or ruined because of improper lighting or bad direction. They often see the best jobs, and the best money, go to people of lesser talent because that person is a better salesman, and because many producers and directors just don't understand what makes one effects man better than the other.[159]

After the filming of *An American Werewolf in London*, at a time when Landis is already quoted as worrying that the special effects were being shown too much to the detriment of the movie, it is interesting to hear Baker take the opposite view: -

In this business, I'm just one of many people involved in the creation of the final product. John and I had differences of opinion over how it should be photographed and staged. I would have put the film together differently, but I'm not the director. What disturbs me is that I've been in this business over ten years professionally, and I still have never had the freedom that Rob got on Howling. He was really lucky.[160]

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[157] And the lines are even more blurred, with *MAD Magazine* establishing legendary horror artist Jack Davis, and magazines like *Hustler* being among the first places where one could find short fiction by Stephen King, Ray Bradbury and Theodore Sturgeon

[158] BADLEY, L. (1995) Film, Horror, And The Body Fantastic. Westport: Greenwood Press. Pg 11

[159] (1980). *Fangoria*. New York, NY, Starlog Group, Inc. Issue 14

[160] (1980). *Fangoria*. New York, NY, Starlog Group, Inc. Issue 14

And later, when Baker is asked if he would ever direct a film:

No, it's too much work and I don't feel qualified[161]. But I think I know how best to use the stuff I do. I'd like the opportunity Rob had in the Howling: he designed the transformation to be shot in a certain way and they listened to what he had to say and did it his way. I think that's the reason his effects in that film work so well. Don't get me wrong though, I really like John Landis. He's one of the most interesting people I know. John is John.; he's very strong-willed. So am I, and lot of times during shooting I said to myself, "If John weren't my friend, I would kill him!" But I guess he has every right to be that way; after all, it's his movie.[162]

And later, when Baker is asked about the current state of the special effects artists and their place in the film industry: -

These are really good times for people who do effects work. I've been doing this for a decade and this is by far the most lucrative time; I've never seen this many films with this many effects going on all at once. It used to be that you'd have to talk people into utilizing special make-ups; now they're coming up with things we can hardly do…. if this keeps up, we're going to see stuff like never before. Effects will make major advances, which hasn't happened in a long time. I'm really excited about the future.[163][164]

The special effects artist's status as a journeyman showed how they could transcend not only genre, but classification of films. The primacy of special effects in horror films meant that the burgeoning slew of lower-budget independent horror films, like Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead*[165] could establish themselves on a parity with a higher budgeted film from an established studio, like *An American*

[161] A promise Baker has kept to this day. The nearest Baker came to stepping out of his field was as producer on the special effects heavy films *Gorillas in the Mist* (1989) and *Gremlins 2: The New Batch* (1990)
[162] (1980). Fangoria. New York, NY, Starlog Group, Inc. Issue 14
[163] Ibid, p40
[164] One constantly gets the impression, particularly in this issue of Fangoria, of an industry that is having a halcyon day, in which all things are perceived to be possible. Whilst this may be true, it was still in 1981, and some things were more possible than others – a brief interview with one of the few female special effects artists, Jill Rockow (*The Howling*) describes how "It is kind of a rough job being a girl; when I call about a job they usually say 'You can have *him* call me back.' I'm not a libbest (ie 'woman's libber') but it does keep me from doing some jobs." Fangoria was (and still very much is) left-leaning at inception, and in its classified free ads at the back, in between pleas for pen pals and swaps on movie posters and bubblegum cards is this context-free utterance: 'Grant Lloyd and Jim Clatfelter urge all to support positive images of gays in movies and on television.' Issue 15 free ads gets a little more bifurcated, including 'Support positive images of gays and lesbians in movies and on T.V. I don't care what you say Mom! Long live FANGORIA and gore movies!' yet above that an ad reads 'I collect scenes of graphic violence on video.', before carrying on and asking perhaps redundantly, perhaps rhetorically; 'Am I alone?' The ad-placer then astonishingly goes on to add their name and home address.
[165] *The Evil Dead* (1980). RAIMI, S. dir. New Line Cinema

Werewolf in London. For all their subversion, Dante and Landis's films are studio productions, as Andrew Tudor points out: -

…..they occupy the 'respectable' end of the eighties market. Though not lacking in lurid special effects – Rick Baker's werewolf make-up for the first two (sic) makes their human-animal transformations singly compelling – they operate more firmly in the conventions of Hollywood realism than their cheaper neighbours.[166]

So, while the films themselves can be classified along such established lines as independent/studio or low/high budget, the special effects were treated as hors de combat – as either effective or not effective.

The editorial board of *Fangoria* had found a cause. As stated earlier, it was this issue that subdivided it's cover into four segments, each naming a special effects artist and showing an iconic, easily recognisable (to a *Fangoria* reader, at least) example of their work[167]. The special effects artist, with emphasis on the last word, was on a par with the director not only in terms of their importance to the quality of the film, but also in terms of talent and ability. Not all special effects artists were artists, *Fangoria* implies, just as not all directors were all auteurs, or great directors.

The venerable *New York Times* pitched its review somewhere in-between, aptly enough for a film that is attempting to straddle at least two stools. The title of the review, "'American Werewolf,' Horror Plus Laughs' sets out immediately that this is a horror film in which comedic things happen, and not the other way around. Janet Maslin describes the opening of the film as "equally balanced

[166] TUDOR, A. (1991). *Monsters and mad scientists: a cultural history of the horror movie*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell. pg77

[167] The interviews in that issue with Baker, Savini and the venerable Ray Harryhausen make the point with blunt rhetoric, beginning respectively with "Is there a fright film fan who isn't already aware of Rick Baker's contribution to the genre?" and "Tom Savini needs no introduction to our regular readers…" and "Ray Harryhausen needs no introduction for our readers…". This points out the ubiquity of the special effects artist to a fan-based readership, as well as the enthusiastic, if cliched writing style that typifies Fangoria.

between comedy and horror, and that also has a fine touch of restraint"[168], before going to mention Landis's track record as the director of *National Lampoons's Animal House* and *The Blues Brothers*, *and An American Werewolf in London*'s potential to outshine them both. However, according to Maslin, it is this juggling act in which Landis ultimately fumbles – the constant juxtaposing of comedy and horror makes the comedy seem like a callous response to the horror, thereby undermining any claims to depth the more emotional elements of the film may have, such as the conclusion of the film where Agutter's Nurse Price futilely attempts to reach the now fully lupine David Kessler.

Interestingly, Maslin's review is one of the few which doesn't spend a lot of time praising Rick Baker's transformation effects, partly because the sequence is considered to have already been played out in another film from the period that could not have succeeded without the special effects available at the time – Ken Russell's *Altered States*: -

When David makes his transformation, he goes through much the same ordeal William Hurt experienced in "Altered States," including very similar special effects.[169]

It is perhaps unsurprising to learn that the effects for *Altered States* were overseen by Dick Smith, who throughout the move towards realism in films in the 1970s had produced such extraordinary pieces as Dustin Hoffman's old age make-up for Arthur Penn's *Little Big Man* (1970). Altered States would mark, in Smith's own words, the hardest job he had ever done. The filmmaker's insistence that the metaphysical transformation of lead actors William Hurt and Blair Brown be done using the minimum of optical effects and a reliance of practical make-up effects made Smith experiment with new uses for the techniques he had created. The soft, polyurethane foam and flexible polyurethane rubber which Smith had pioneered the use of were used to create bodysuits that showed Hurt's character at various stages of metamorphosis. 'Moles', a special effect technique used to show the

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[168] MASLIN,J. , 1981, Aug 21. Film: 'American Werewolf,' Horror Plus Laughs: Yanks on the Moors. *New York Times (1923-)*
[169] ibid

movement under the skin that heralds Hurt's character's degeneration was achieved through bladders under synthetic skin which would be filled with air. Smith, in an interview with *Fangoria* makes a point of mentioning how this technology he pioneered was later taken up by the rest of the industry, and how 1980 really did mark a turning point for practical effects: -

The interesting thing about all that mole stuff is, that since I pass along all my findings to my friends, Rick Baker has incorporated some of my technologies into his werewolf picture *(An American Werewolf* in London, produced (sic) by John Landis), for the transformation scene. He, in turn, passed the word to Rob Bottin for his werewolf picture (Avco Embassy's *The Howling*). The irony of all this is that their pictures might be seen before mine! I want to lay claim to this process right here and now.[170]

The idea of body horror, and the paradigm shift it seems to represent in the horror genre in the early 1980s seemed to be of great concern to fans of the genre. David Cronenberg's work was covered extensively in the pages of *Fangoria*, and it was here that he laid down his credo in typically precise, clinical terms: -

One of the main facts of human existence and the human condition is the physicality of the human body; so most of my films are very body conscious. They have to do with physical existence and what happens when that physical existence breaks down in some radical way, through disease, violence or whatever.[171]

To achieve these ends obviously requires a unified vision between the director and the visual effects he employs, as Reynold Humphries discusses:

…his (Cronenberg's) cinema is a rare example of special effects being an integral part of the vision proposed, rather than some optional or optical extra……. how different this is from those special effects which are simply grafted ono the storyline as objects of fascination to be consumed passively in a state of rapt wonder and amazement.[172]

Whilst I would argue that these films do not simply graft special effects onto an existing narrative, there is something to be said for Humphries's insistence that Cronenberg's use of special effects is more than an ornament to his films but integral to his philosophy. The films in question here are often nakedly commercial and overtly nostalgic, both things that Cronenberg's oeuvre are not, and

[170] (1980). *Fangoria*. New York, NY, Starlog Group, Inc. Issue 10
[171] (1980). *Fangoria*. New York, NY, Starlog Group, Inc. Issue 3
[172] HUMPHRIES, R. (2005). *The American horror film: an introduction*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press. Pg184

of course, limited by the audience's expectations of the werewolf film and how a werewolf is understood by the viewer. As Mark Jancovich sums up: -

> ...the werewolf was a limited figure within the contempory context. The crisis of identity could not be limited to the werewolf's dual personality.[173]

Which is not to say that the 'traditional' horror film, or those filmmakers who would reference it, was dead, nor that the werewolf film and the body horror film were mutually exclusive. To the first part, both An American Werewolf in London and The Howling were commercial successes[174], with cult followings for both films growing the forty years since their release. Nor is it the case to suggest that Cronenberg's body horror existed sui generis; arguably Cronenberg's most successful body horror film, *The Fly*[175], is a remake of a 1950s science fiction film[176], with a very conservative subtext about our repulsion towards disease, infection and the dissolution of the body. The body horror genre ironically seemed to be at its most effective when it infects an established 'host' and changes it from inside.

This subgenre would have clearly proscribed features, most of which laid down by Cronenberg himself, who became something of an outlier in the pantheon of directors that horror fans had established. Cronenberg's contempories, Carpenter, Craven, Landis, Dante and Romero were all distinctly American, rooting their films in the malls and suburbia of a recognisable, almost archetypal United States. They also dealt in archetypes - the vampire, the zombie, the serial killer, and, of

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173 JANCOVICH, M. (1992). *Horror.* London, Batsford. Pg112

174 *The Howling* made a worldwide total $17,985,000 against a budget of $1,500,000. *An American Werewolf in London* made a worldwide total $61,973,114 against a budget of $5,800,000. This does not include the non-trivial amounts of money the films made with periodic subsequent releases on home video and subsequent formats.

175 *The Fly* (1986). CRONENBERG, D. dir. 20th Century Fox

176 Although Cronenberg's best film, *The Fly* (1986) is a remake of a 1950s science fiction film. Remaking the films of the 1950s for a 1980s audience (*Invasions of the Body Snatchers* (1978), *The Thing* (1982), *Invaders from Mars* (1986), *The Blob* (1988) with painfully real special effects can be seen as a pandering to nostalgia that is a hallmark of 1980s culture. Even genre films that weren't remakes, such as *The Monster Squad* (1987) and *Creepshow* (1982), were of great nostalgic import.

course, the werewolf. When Cronenberg did eventually deign to pay homage to the wellspring of American horror, Stephen King, the result was *The Dead Zone*[177], a film that feels like a bizarre hybrid of both men, with neither being satisfied. What *The Dead Zone* lacked was the body horror that Cronenberg was trying to establish, and that he was also failing to find elsewhere, as he told *Fangoria*:-

A lot of people have pointed out a similarity between the parasite in Alien and the parasite in Shivers. I was very disappointed with Alien – it had no metaphysics, no philosophy. The creature winds up as am man in a crocodile suit who chases a bunch of people around a room. I think that my own films do a lot more in touching a deep-seated nerve, more than the simple reaction that you don't want the crocodile to eat you…. Alien was just a $300,000 'B' movie with a $10-million budget. The parasite device isn't used in a metaphorical way, it wasn't used to evoke anything. In Alien, John Hurt has the parasite in him; he goes about his business as usual. In Shivers, the parasite stays inside the people and changes their behaviour and their motives. It's used for something more than simple shock value.[178]

It is in this hybridisation of an old, established archetype being infiltrated by a new disease of genre that we can see how these films not only relied on special effects to make their narrative coherent and their products sellable to an audience. Despite the trappings of *The Howling and An American Werewolf in London* as films that relate strongly to the past, such as both film's direct references to 1943's *The Wolf Man*, or John Landis setting his film in the UK as he perceived Europe as a crucifer of folklore, or Joe Dante's adherence to occult traditions to define his antagonists, there is also something of the future in them. The transition between man and wolf is more than a quick-change – in the liminal state between man and wolf, there is also something of the truly transcendent. The metamorphosis is more interesting than the solid binary states of the 'man' and the 'wolfman'. French philosopher Jean Baudrillard pinpoints this at the heart of humanity's relationship with animals:-

Nothing seems more fixed in the perpetuation of the species than animals, but yet they are for us the image of metamorphosis, of all possible metamorphoses.[179]

[177] *The Dead Zone* (1983). CRONENBERG, D. dir. Paramount Pictures
[178] (1980). *Fangoria*. New York, NY, Starlog Group, Inc. Issue 3
[179] BAUDRILLARD, J., & GLASER, S. F. (2010). *Simulacra and simulation*. Ann Arbor, Mich, Univ. of Michigan Press.p141

It is that potential for the animal in the person, and the person in the animal, that is most fascinating, not the realisation of it. Ironically, this liminal stage is articulated best by its own hybrid - in the utilisation of the full extent of special effects artists working in a brief period of relative creative freedom with filmmakers for an audience with a hunger to see exactly what was possible.

Dick Smith, in his work on *Altered States* points that way between the classic American werewolf film and its eventual future in the body horror genre. The sequence after Edward Jessup (William Hurt) has performed the first experiment under the influence of mushrooms in the sensory deprivation tank shows him waking up in the middle of the night (the room lit starkly by the full moon, naturally) is pure Universal studios. Jessup looks at his forearm and hand to see it grow increasingly thicker and hairier, Dick Smith's moles running under his skin to show muscles undulating and reforming. It is obvious, as Smith has already stated, to see the influence of this on *An American Werewolf in London* and *The Howling* in these moments. When asked what he is experiencing whilst in the sensory deprivation tank, Jessop could be narrating David Kessler's dream:

I'm one of them, and I'm killing, I'm killing a goat, I'm killing and eating, I'm eating the blood, the hot flesh of a goat.[180]

Jessup stares at himself in the bathroom mirror, as does David Kessler would later do, to see if any change is observable. What Jessup is changing into is not yet obvious, yet the sequence is framed like a werewolf film, right up to the moment when Jessup showers and looks down to see his spatulate, simian feet, matted with hair.

So if *Altered States* is read as a werewolf film, complete with hairy man running wild sequences and special effects, where does it transcend this labelling, and segue into body horror? It is during the film's finale, where Edward Jessup, no longer in control of the metamorphosis through the use of

[180] *Altered States* (1980). RUSSELL, K. dir. Warner Brothers

psychedelics and sensory deprivation, transforms one more time. Again, Dick Smith's moles running under the forearm herald the transformation, and due to the moonlit room and the late hour, we think Jessup is going to transform one last time and gobble up Blair Brown. Instead, the moment she reaches out and touches Jessup, to figuratively and literally 'bring him back', they are both transformed. Jessup, rather than an apeman, is transformed into a grotesque form, minus one arm, that looks to be neither man nor animal nor anything inbetween. His other swollen arm reaches up and grasp the back of his own head, losing definition as a limb and seeming to become part of the messy, inchoate shape he is becoming.

Baker and Bottin, both avid students and fans of Smith certainly turned this new technology to their benefit. The transformation sequence in *An American Werewolf in London* is shot entirely in a brightly lit, slightly cramped room. This was a stipulation that John Landis had demanded, both as a gleeful inversion of the coy, discreet transformations of *The Wolf Man*, but also as a challenge Rick Baker, one that would ironically see Baker surpass expectations and reframe the way the film was marketed and received.

Both *The Howling* and *An American Werewolf in London* do something similar – they show the conventional werewolf story of infection, they discuss overtly and covertly the age-old werewolf trope of 'the beast within', and yet by lingering on the transformation sequences, when the lycanthropes are neither fully wolf nor fully man, they point to a more abstract horror. Both the burgeoning horror fan press and the mainstream media were fascinated more by the nature of how the transition occurred, and its inchoate possibility, than with the end result of the transformation. The body horror movement, that would surpass the brief flirtation with the werewolf films as the 1980s progressed and the true 'body horror' of the AIDS epidemic influence public debate about

spheres of infection and disease[181], found true horror in the breaking down of such binary ideas as 'human' and 'wolf', 'within' and 'without'. As Andrew Tudor states in *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, this comes at a time when the classic monster such as the werewolf and the vampire, with decades of cultural coding and centuries of mythology is losing definition: -

An American Werewolf in London, The Howling (both 1981), *Cat People* (1982) and *The Company of Wolves* (1984) all make impressive use of the tradition in their different ways, but not on a scale which competes with the evident genre supremacy of invasive supernature.[182]

The invasive supernature narrative, as defined by Tudor, covers such as external threats as demonic possession, and a breaking down of the sureties and codes that govern the werewolf film. Instead it presents "A paranoid vision of a world imbued with inexplicable supernatural malevolence."[183]And it is this world of paranoia, uncertainty and inexplicability that replaces the classical narrative.

Creatures such as the combination of telepod/fly/man that emerges (still with a pathos-leaden human consciousness) at the end of Cronenberg's *The Fly*[184], or the dog/man/alien creature whose true shape is utterly unknowable at the end of John Carpenter's *The Thing*[185] were new monsters, whose monstrosity relied on their inherent lack of form, and our own inherent repulsion at that which not only eludes categorisation, but actively defies it. They actively break down the binary, as Badley explains about the eventual fate of Seth Brundle in *The Fly*: -

He identifies doubly as subject and object, body invader and colonized victim, norm and monster. [186]

Wolf and person, cultured and natural, civilised and tame, and so on. What future could a codified creature like the werewolf have in such a world? Myths rely upon the culturally inherent response of

[181] A context that Craig Ian Mann explicitly places in the blurring of sex and violence in The Howling in his cultural history of the werewolf, *Phases of the Moon* (Chapter 5: What Big Teeth You Have – Wolf Blood, Edinburgh University Press, 2020).
[182] TUDOR, A. (1991). *Monsters and mad scientists: a cultural history of the horror movie*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell. pg179
[183] Ibid pg180
[184] *The Fly* (1986). CRONENBERG, D. dir. 20th Century Fox
[185] *The Thing* (1982). CARPENTER, J. dir. Universal Pictures
[186] BADLEY, L. (1995). *Film, horror, and the body fantastic*. Westport (Conn.), Greenwood Press. P131

those who abide with it, whereas the breakdown of those myths relies upon nothing more than a nihilistic, postmodern need to destruct those myths.

Chapter Three: "The Graveyard of your Fucking Species": Wolves at the Gate of the City

Introduction

Wolfen[187], a film directed by Michael Wadleigh is a film that speaks to the end of an era. A film that speaks as a contemporaneous referent as eloquently as his previous film, *Woodstock*[188], makes great hay with the urban decay of his locale. A repeated term in the film, 'Gotterdammerung', meaning a twilight of the Gods, to whit the end of a halcyon era, is deliberately invoked, making Wadleigh's two films bookends of the 1970s. If a low angle extended shot of Jimi Hendrix playing the Star-Spangled Banner at Woodstock iconically represented the culmination of a sixties ethos as envisioned by this director, then the decay that opens *Wolfen* was an equally carefully chosen representation of the how the seventies ended. Another pivotal moment in *Wolfen* eloquently reinterprets William Butler Yeats's *The Second Coming*[189], likewise a meditation on the end of a decade as the end of the world. In this scene, Eddie Holt (Edward James Olmos) spins a bola around his head as his compatriot feeds a falcon from his own mouth before sending the bird away into the chaos. The next few lines of the

[187] *Wolfen* (1981). WADLEIGH, M. dir. Orion Pictures
[188] *Woodstock* (2000). WADLEIGH, M. dir. Warner Home Video.
[189] YEATS, W. B. (1927). *W.B. Yeats - Works*. London, Ernest Benn Ltd.

poem, “the centre cannot hold, mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,”, finally, sums up the overall theme of the film: the urban metropolis as violent vicious wasteland.

This chapter will endeavour to view *Wolfen* specifically in terms of its location, addressing how the urban werewolf breaks from traditional portrayals of the beast as a pastoral force. In contrast to its earliest foundations in myth and legend, right up to the majority of its portrayals in the classical horror cinema, it will be argued that the uncivilised reigns in the modern megacity rather than the bucolic village of old. Through this thematic focus, a link will be forged between this representation new urban werewolf and the way in which the city was viewed by contemporaneous audiences overall. In order to achieve this, this chapter will first build upon on the archetype that Clover speaks about, one in which the individual need not travel away from civilisation to meet the big bad wolf, because the beast may already be lurking in the city itself.

To the point that Wolfen is not a werewolf film, in that it does not show the actual transformation of a person into a wolf [190], I will address the fact that the common misconception of the film (that the Wolfen are either spirits of long-dead Native Americans, or transformed versions of Native American terrorists) suggests that the film is typically read as a werewolf film. This presumption is erroneous, even though the text seems to be leading up this revelation through the figure of Eddie Holt[191], prime suspect in the murders that ignite the narrative. In this chapter I will argue how this misconception is a dramatic misreading of what the film is actually about.

[190] A distinction that, to Craig Ian Mann, renders it outside of the cultural history of the werewolf, dismissed in a footnote. MANN, C. I. (2020). *Phases of the moon: a cultural history of the Werewolf film*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh U.P. p227n

[191] Who takes peyote to achieve a mental transformation rather than a physical one. His association with the Wolfen, eventually proved to be marginal, is vaguely implied by both ‘seeing’ the full moon through the thermal version lens that represents the Wolfen’s hypersensitive vision.

The Urban versus the Rural: Considering Academic Debate on the Horror Genre and the Werewolf Narrative

In her seminal look at gender in the modern horror film, Carol Clover through primarily looking at the slasher film, highlights one of the oldest oppositions that exist within the horror genre: that of the dangers inherent in the transition from city to country. Clover writes:

> Going from city to country in horror films is in any case very much like going from village to deep, dark forest in traditional fairy tales. Consider Little Red Riding Hood, who strikes off into the wilderness only to be captured and eaten by the wolf, read "rape" for eat, skip the woodsman (let Red save herself), and you have *I Spit on Your Grave*[192].

The use of *I Spit on Your Grave*[193] is an apt one, not only because it begins in the city of New York, which, as will be argued in this chapter, comes complete with its own connotations of transgressive morality and violence, but also because the film comes as part of a larger series of films, including *Deliverance*[194], *Straw Dogs*[195] and *The Hills Have Eyes*[196], that speak to the dangers of abandoning civilisation for the wild. Part of the danger inherent in a shift from the urban to the rural is in the encountering of violence, both externally in attack by others, and internally through a recognition of violence in retribution. The urbanisation of the majority of the first-world population[197] that figured as a key trope of the industrial revolution was due in part to an increasing view that not only did life in the city offer more opportunity, but that it represented a chance to live a vital, intense existence outside of the bucolic, rural homelives that had been the norm for thousands of years. Andrew Tudor likewise speaks of a trend in the horror films as the twentieth century progresses as typifying

[192] CLOVER, C. (1992). *Men, women, and chain saws: gender in the modern horror film*. London, British Film Institute. P124

[193] *I Spit on Your Grave*, 1978. ZARCHI, M. dir. The Jerry Gross Organisation

[194] *Deliverance,* 1972. BOORMAN, J. dir. Warner Brothers.

[195] *Straw Dogs*, 1971. PECKINPAUGH, S. dir. 20th Century Fox

[196] *The Hills Have Eyes*, 1977. CRAVEN, W dir. Vanguard

[197] https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/urban-and-rural-population-stacked

a move away from an external threat to internal peril, and from a secure society being attacked from without to an insecure society being attacked from within. Rosemary's Baby[198] is an excellent example of this pivot – due to her own internalised (and justified) paranoia, the heroine can no longer trust any aspect of her life whether in the gothic confines of the Bramford building, or in the city at large. The cause of the horror, the baby she is carrying inside her, is inextricably internalised. In the finale, her only escape from this is to capitulate. She can no more escape the city then she can her pregnancy, and latterly her maternal instincts.

The city, the socialised part of society, in these narratives becomes the place of danger.[199] Sabine Baring-Gould, in *The Book of Werewolves*, establishes this trope as being a cross-cultural hallmark of the werewolf legend. Here he relates how the wolf, and those associated with them were cast out of society:

Among the Anglo-Saxons an outlaw, or out-law, was said to have the head of a wolf. If then the term vargr was applied at one time to a wolf, at another time to an outlaw who lived as a wild beast, away from the haunts of men- 'he shall be driven away as a wolf, and chased so far as men chase wolves farthest[200].

Therefore to be cast out of society, to be cast out of the city, was not only a denigration that some people could not participate in civilisation, but that they could not by extension become modern. The idea that criminality was the result of an evolutionary throwback was a popular idea in the 19th Century by geneticists such as Cesare Lombroso, who believed that criminals could be spotted by

[198] *Rosemary's Baby*, 1968. POLANSKI, R dir. Paramount Pictures
[199] The slasher film, with its non-supernatural codification (for the most part) sets the majority of its texts within suburbia, or a manufactured, homogenised 'wild' setting such as a Summer camp, showing the trend that the threat was not necessarily in the deep dark woods, but in supposed 'safe' spaces. Vera Dika suggests that to a suburban and urban audience, these texts would be "positioned in a middle-class American setting, one that fosters the greatest degree of 'likeness' to the members of the film-viewing audience, or at least, to their mythical ideal." DIKA, V. (1990). *Games of terror: Halloween, Friday the 13th, and the films of the stalker cycle*. Rutherford, Associated University Press. Pg58-59
[200] BARING-GOULD, S. (2018). *The book of werewolves*. Longwood, FL, Battle Goddess Productions. Pg49

sloping brows, protuberant eyes and excessive hairiness. The exemplar Lombroso used was Louis Vacher, France's own werewolf murderer[201] who was driven out of the city, first to sanatoriums and then to a wild, vagabond existence in the countryside where he murdered a suspected 27 people between the years 1894 and 1897.

However, in the werewolf films released in the 1980s, this simple dichotomy or civilised/modern/city and wild/atavistic/rural becomes confused. It is the city as opposed to the countryside that acts as a corrupting force, going against the classical werewolf narrative as typified by *The Werewolf of London*[202] and *The Wolf Man*[203]. In the earlier works of classical horror and then later in the Folk Horror cycle, the civilised protagonist invades the country and thus becomes infected by the 'wild'.

The city is the corrupting force, going against the typical werewolf narrative (as typified in *Werewolf of London* and *The Wolf Man*) of the civilised protagonist going to the country and becoming infected by the 'wild'. *Wolfen* challenges this by showing the civilised world (as seen through the example of the city) as equally dangerous and chaotic. This is an already established narrative, one we have seen before in *King Kong*[204]. On Skull Island, Kong is a God because he is able to live life on his own terms in a primordial, uncivilised habitat. He fights, yes, but only in the context of an existing biosphere where he is top of the food chain, and when presented with a helpless Fay Wray as a sacrifice, he does not kill her. It is only when he comes to the city (New York, again) that his violence and aggression are unleashed and juxtaposed against the violence and aggression of civilisation's response to him. In *The Howling*, this point is made even clearer through the character Eddie Quist. Eddie, who had been living at Dr Waggner's 'Colony' with his nymphomaniac sister Marsha and feral

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[201] Vacher claimed that his murderous rages only began after being bitten by a rabid dog, a precursor to the idea that being bitten by a werewolf will similarly effect the victim.
[202] *Werewolf of London*, 1935. WALKER, S. dir. Universal Pictures.
[203] *The Wolf Man*, 1943. WAGGNER, G. dir. Universal Pictures
[204] *King Kong* (1933). COOPER, M. & SCHOEDSACK, E. dirs. RKO

brother T.C., has rejected Waggner's attempts to harness and control his 'gift' and moved from the pastoral beauty of the Colony to Los Angeles. There, with no control placed on him at all, Eddie has gone 'wild' (although it is also implied in the violent, bestial world of the city that he may have 'gone native') and murdered a string of women, earning himself the soubriquet 'The Mangler'. The city, is implied, has given nourishment and a fitting vessel in which Eddie can place his violent desires. In his grubby room, images of the werewolves he has sketched to remind him of his brethren back at the Colony, alongside a sketch of the beautiful, unspoilt coastline. These images seem quite romantic and almost quaint when set alongside the headlines Eddie has stuck up on his walls, all of which speak to the excesses of the non-werewolf, 'civilised' milieu he has found himself in: -

'"WEIRD CASE OF THE MURDERING MESSIAH"

"HOPE FOR 6-YEAR-OLD KIDNAP VICTIM FADES"

"THE 20-YEAR-OLD BEAUTY'S HEART HAD BEEN NAILED TO THE WALL"'

Eddie, for all his violent excess, is only one more violent creature in a city of violent creatures. Ironically, it is in the city that Eddie Quist can live out Waggner's imperatives against repressing the 'beast within', exposing the hypocrisy of Waggner's teachings; that the wolves under his charge should be wild, but not too wild. Waggner doesn't realise that wildness is something one is, or isn't, and is never about degrees. "He's so repressed." Eddie says of Waggner in his final confrontation with the character of Chris. This is not to say that Waggner is actively malevolent; he is at most an inadvertent antagonist, or simply a naïve man struggling with one of the classic twentieth century dilemmas – how are you going to keep them on the farm once they've seen L.A.?

In both *The Howling* and *An American Werewolf in London*, the city is not the source of the threat, but it is the place where the threat is unable to be contained. Eddie Quist runs amok in Los Angeles, and it is from that city that Chris Halloran (Dennis Dugan) sources the means to destroy the

werewolves. *The Howling* pays lip service to the romantic concept that a werewolf can only be destroyed by someone they love in its climax, when Halloran quells his unrequited love for Karyn just enough to shoot her, but up to that point it has been rather a different story. Carrying the symbols of modernity (silver bullets from the occult emporium and the slick, urbane Japanese convertible Mazda RX-7)[205] he brings death to the rural Colony, finishing it off (in true Roger Corman fashion) by burning down the place.

In *An American Werewolf in London* we are immediately presented with the juxtaposition of city and country. The title suggests an urban locus, yet the first scenes are set against the rolling hills of winding roads of along the Yorkshire moors. It is here that David Kessler is infected with the werewolf curse, but it is in London that it reaches fruition.

Wolfen, however, creates an intervention to these horror tropes by presenting the urban civilised world as being more dangerous and chaotic in relation to its bucolic other. Running counter to the traditional werewolf narrative, *Wolfen* represents a shift away from what Kim Newman refers to as "hillbilly horrors"[206] of the post-*Psycho* Contemporary horror film. *Wolfen* subverts this very concern by having the beast already established in the cityscape, navigating the urban with an ease that comes from an assured ownership over one's domain. Implied in the narrative, the wolves have survived undetected in the city for a very long time. Undaunted and unchallenged, they are revealed to fulfil a function that a society might find useful in extremis: a Darwinian pecking order in which the weak, the homeless and the destitute, being unable to fend for themselves, are removed by a more powerful entity. It is only when the Wolfen attack those with money that they are noticed. A

[205] The rural petrol station attendant abrades Chris, "Take it easy, pal. Not all of us got enough money for a Mazda. Some of us have to work for a living!"
[206] NEWMAN, K. (1989). *Nightmare movies: a critical history of the horror film, 1968-1988.* London, Bloomsbury. Chapter Five – Deep in the Heart of Texas

conflict of interest emerges; those who are planning urban gentrification at once pose a threat to the Wolfen habitat while at the same time in gentrifying the urban decay alleviate the need for the existence of this superior intelligent wolf pack once the city is cleaned up of crime and returned to its original state of iconic shiny steely modern splendour.

Fear City – New York as the End of the Modern World

Just as *An American Werewolf in London* takes great pleasure in juxtaposing the beautiful Yorkshire Moors and camera-friendly tourist landmarks with urban London where the gruesome murder victims and decaying corpses first appear and then reside, *Wolfen* imbues the landscape with symbolic significance. Filming on location in New York in 1981, Wadleigh makes manifest the blighted urban wasteland that the Bronx has become. As the most populous megacity New York was once the embodiment of modernity. American prosperity and the nation's reputation as an economic and cultural hub, however, was called into question with the rise of deindustrialization in the 1970s. Coupled with crippling runaway inflation, New York suffered a significant economic and social downturn and the subsequent "white-flight[207]" led to systemic corruption by organised crime not seen since the prohibition era. This confluence resulted in the curious development of urban liminal spaces cropping up throughout the city[208]. On upper Manhattan Island, entire blocks of the

[207] 'White flight' being the migration from traditionally white areas to another when other ethnic groups start to migrate into them. This can be caused by deindustrialisation, as in the Bronx, with manufacturing jobs moving from the city to the suburbs. Often this can lead to urban decay, often because the new multi-ethnic inhabitants of the vacated neighbourhoods are ignored or marginalised in terms of maintaining existing infrastructure.

[208] Wadleigh hadn't been the first to use this as set though*, Cat People* (1982) director Paul Schrader had set the script for his film *Taxi Driver* (1976) there only a few years before. Written by Schrader and directed by Martin Scorsese, *Taxi Driver* could easily be seen as one of the defining horror films of the 1970s, and in its depiction of New York as both a corrupted, rotten cityscape and a hunting ground for predators, it prefigures a lot of the concerns of Wadleigh's film. The success of *Taxi Driver*, as well as the increasing public perception of New York as a locus of not only crime but also transgressive, weird behaviour led to a strange bifurcation of New York in the cinema. The first wave of filmmakers who made films there in the wake of *Taxi Driver* got great mileage from the increasing levels of squalor, and films like *Driller Killer* (1979*)*, *Maniac* (1980), *The Warriors* (1980), *Fort Apache: The Bronx* (1981), *Escape from New York* (1981) , John Cassavetes's *Gloria* (1981), *Basket Case* (1983) and Lucio Fulci's *The New York Ripper* (1982) and *Manhattan Baby* (1982) were

Bronx were levelled through fire or neglect, whilst only a few miles south the financial global fortunes were handled and mishandled by Wall Street traders. Wadleigh constantly juxtaposes the high-rise apartments of the upper East Side, and the skyscrapers of Wall Street with the wasteland of the Bronx, highlighting how a widening gulf between the rich and the poor has led to a strange palimpsest, in which constant renewal and gentrification has led to a divided space. The Bronx was indeed the hardest hit by this strange bifurcation, and it thus acts, aptly, as the primary locus for a narrative enflamed in turf wars. The use of the Brooklyn Bridge as an opening location achieves two things that tie directly to this thematic concern. Firstly, it is a beautiful scenically, reminiscent of the big panoramas that Wadleigh had used so effectively to film the Woodstock festival in his previous film. Secondly, the bridge, and its history exemplifies one of the themes of the film the city as a place of death, and progress without conscience.

When the foundations of the bridge had to be dug out of the muck of the East River, large concrete enclosures, called 'caissons' were established. The miners would descend hundreds of feet to the

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often shot guerrilla style, with very little set-dressing required in the increasing wastelands of the city. Indeed, one of the key texts from this film, John Badham's *Saturday Night Fever* (1977), highlights this with great skill, and even lends itself to a traditional werewolf narrative – hirsute Tony Manero is bitten by the disco bug, and leaves his family home (after puffing up his bouffant hairdo and becoming even hairier) for strange, nocturnal behaviour, governed by esoteric ritual and bestial lust, all against the contrasting backdrop of working class squalor in the daytime, and a dreamlike, idealised nightlife.
This association got to be so ingrained in the minds of the cinema going public, that as the films became even more apocalyptic and violent, the very mention of the city of even a borough would act as a shorthand for a specific kind of ultraviolent narrative. Thus, after this first wave of New York-filmed ended, the next wave would often not even be shot in New York, but still carry the violent connotations. These films included the likes of *Bronx Warriors* (1982), *Bronx Warriors 2* (1983), *2019: After the Fall of New York* (1982), *The Bronx Executioners* (1989), *Endgame: Bronx Lotta Finale* (1983) and *Escape from the Bronx* (1983). Coupled with this is an even longer list of films that were set (and occasionally even filmed) in New York to give the audience the feel that they were in the urban jungle; *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980), *The Exterminator* (1980), *Fear City* (1984), *C.H.U.D.* (1984), *After Hours* (1985), *Combat Shock* (1986). It's not until 1989, when Spike Lee makes *Do The Right Thing*, that it seems audiences were reminded that the boroughs surrounding Manhattan were more than just a readymade backdrop or byword for apocalyptic squalor, and these films dwindle out. Abel Ferrara, the director of *Driller Killer*, gave the sleazy decay of New York a last hurrah in 1984 with the cynical, grisly serial-killer drama *Fear City*. The year after Martin Scorcese's *After Hours* (1985) shows the start of the clean-up of the city that would turn New York city into one of the most popular tourist destinations in the 1990s. *After Hours* portrays the city as essentially a playground for sophisticated children, with the urban decay curated into conceptual art, and a parade of eccentric, charming denizens who are more than willing to band together as a community to hunt down a burglar. In a word, the city was safe.

bottom of these caissons and clear out the sediment until the layer of workable bedrock had been reached. This was done with a hellacious combination of pressurised air, high explosives and wooden supports, leading numerous deaths and injuries. Even worse was the discovery that the men who descended into the caissons regularly were prone to decompression sickness, commonly called 'the bends', which caused trapped nitrogen in the bloodstream, leading to muscle cramping and sometimes a painful death. More aptly for a reading of *Wolfen*, the man who designed the bridge had his foot crushed during the construction. Even after the amputation of his toes, gangrene set it, leading to his eventual death. John Roebling was succeeded by his son, Washington, who contracted the bends supervising work in the caissons and spent most of the rest of his life as a bedridden invalid. While incapable of carrying out the work, the native Americans scaled the heights of the bridge with ease and it was only with their assistance that the work was finally completed. The tradition of Native Americans working on construction jobs at high altitude began in the nineteenth century, when suspension bridges were connecting together trade routes down the east coast of America. The most dangerous aspect was the riveting, which entailed connecting the cables at the highest joists of the bridges. Mohawk tribesmen volunteered for the work, the incentive being higher pay. For generations Mohawks specialised in this kind of work, and an urban legend sprang up that they were impervious from a fear of heights. Kyle Karonhiaktatie Beauvais, a sixth-generation Mohawk Ironworker, told the Smithsonian in 2002, "A lot of people think Mohawks aren't afraid of heights; that's not true. We have as much fear as the next guy. The difference is that we deal with it better. We also have the experience of the old timers to follow and the responsibility to lead the younger guys. There's pride in walking iron."[209][210] When the work switched from building bridges to building skyscrapers, the Mohawks adapted to that, leading to permeant settlements in major cities,

[209] LEVINE, L. AND LEVINE, L. (2021) *Men of Steel: How Brooklyn's Native American ironworkers built New York* | 6sqft, 6sqft. Available at: https://www.6sqft.com/men-of-steel-how-brooklyns-native-american-ironworkers-built-new-york/

[210] There was also the harder economic truth that a Native American was cheaper to replace than a white man, leading to the sort of political movements Eddie Holt is a part of.

such as the one we see exemplified by the 'Wigwam Bar' where the protagonists find refuge, and first hear about the Wolfen in the film.

These native workers, represented by Eddie Holt, who works the high steel is contrasted by Paul and Christine Van Der Veer, part of an 'old monied' New York family who attempt to build a new development that would squeeze the Wolfen out of their urban hunting ground. They, therefore, must be killed at an apt location: in a replica of what is alleged to be the first windmill in America, a symbolic reference to the first foray of the 'cultured' encroaching on the 'wild'. It must also be noted that the name Van Der Veer is Dutch in origin, a direct nod to the founders of what was then Fort Amsterdam in 1625, later New Amsterdam, and finally New York. Just as the film opens with their death and the eventual defeat of their project, and presents the destruction of a model of the Van Der Veer development by the Wolfen at the climax, the film ends with the native Americans scaling the Brooklyn Bridge the sole fait accompli. While commerce has built this city, as we are consistently reminded, it is usually at the expense of the lives of others. The thermal-view of the Wolfen as they hunt for prey through the city is contrasted with the thermal imaging used by CSS to detect truth in subjects. The point is not subtle but worth repeating – the Wolfen have similar 'tech' but for higher purposes, their culture not having any lies or trust issues, whereas the human world is inherently paranoid about themselves and everything around them.

Wolfen blurs the line between the urban and the wild in its depiction of New York. Whilst the bridges and skyscrapers are featured heavily, and New York certainly seems like a populous place, the section of the city where the Wolfen hunt and live, the South Bronx, is a very different affair. After the introduction of Eddie Holt's character on top of the bridge, we are shown in arial shot blocks and blocks of empty space, with derelict tenement buildings interspersed between them, their windows broken and no signs of life. By starting the shot at the World Trade's Centre, and then

panning down to Eddie Holt on the bridge, and then finishing on the ruins of the South Bronx, Wadleigh is reminding us that there is not only a hyper industrialised, modern, successful city, which was built on the backs of near-slave labour and then people from outside the city coming in over the bridge, before going even further into the detritus of all this rapid change: the empty Bronx tenements, the crucible for the predatory Wolfen.

Given this visual motif and thematic focus, it is no small wonder then that Reynold Humphries characterises the plot of Wolfen as being a riff on the trope of ancient Indian burial grounds. In encapsulating the plot, he describes it thusly, “The wolves are the spirits of long-dead Indians and avenge the real-estate exploitation of their sacred burying grounds.”[211] However, it is not as simple as the idea of a repressed and oppressed marginalised group taking revenge on capitalist society. For one thing, the land is question are not burial grounds, but hunting grounds. In *Wolfen*, the history of the city as a nexus for the oppression of certain groups are a red herring, an interesting bit of background dressing but in the end inconsequential to what is really being set up, much like the Patti Hearst inspired trust fund terrorist or the voodoo ring found on the dead chauffeur, whose death is collateral damage in the investigation of the rich and connected Van Der Veers. The way Humphries remembers the film, as being part of what critic Robin Wood would refer to as ‘The return of the repressed’ or as an ‘eco-horror’ in which nature has its revenge is very tempting, but ultimately fruitless, nor does it fit in with the ‘Indian terror’ films of that were released at the end of the 1970s such as *Prophecy*[212], *Nightwing[213],* and *The Manitou*[214][215]. There is an aspect of that, however, and

[211] HUMPHRIES, R. (2005). *The American horror film: an introduction*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press. p107
[212] *Prophecy*, 1979. FRANKENHEIMER, J dir. Paramount Pictures
[213] *Nightwing*, 1979. HILLER, A dir. Columbia Pictures
[214] *The Manitou*, 1978. GIRDLER, W dir. AVCO Embassy Pictures
[215] Problematic films from inception, given the ethnicity of the men playing Native Americans, respectively Armand Assante (Italian/Irish descent), Nick Mancuso (Italian/Canadian descent) and Michael Ansara (Lebanese). Wolfen does little to disrupt this trend by casting Mexican American actor Edward James Olmos as its Native American anti-hero.

what Wood refers to as a key trigger in 1970's horror cinema seems to play itself out for the majority of *Wolfen*. Wood argues:

Other Cultures: If they are sufficiently remote, no problem arises: they can simultaneously deprived of their true character and exoticized…. if they are inconveniently close, another approach predominates, of which what happened to the American Indian is a prime example.[216]

And that opening scene on the Brooklyn Bridge seems to show a rapport between the Wolfen and the Native Americans, in which Eddie Holt throws a bottle at the limousine carrying the Van Der Veers to the sight where they will eventually be torn apart by the Wolfen, as does the scene in which Eddie himself takes peyote and 'shape-shifts' (not physically, but mentally, and with the end result of foaming at the mouth in no more convincing a fashion than Michael Landon did in I Was A Teenage Werewolf), but like so many other narrative threads in Wolfen, this ends up being nothing more than another misdirection. Eddie Holt and his tribe are revealed not to be the ally of the Wolfen, but merely aware of them, they are not "brothers" as the Native American elder[217] corrects his fellows, but "another nation", and their motives have nothing to do with the past, the righting of wrongs or the collective will of a beleaguered indigenous people who have been harnessed to the city. Humphries hints at this later on in his discussion of the film, observing the Wolfen's regular choice of victim. As is revealed in the film:

They act out the unconscious of bourgeois society, eliminating those 'dregs' and 'leftovers' of capitalist indifference and inhumanity so that people can go about their business (literally) without having to concern themselves with its tragic and inevitable victims[218].

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[216] As quoted in JANCOVICH, M. (2004). *Horror, the film reader*. London, Routledge.pg28 "The American nightmare: horror in the 70s." WOOD, R.

[217] Wearing, big thick glasses to symbolise the further separation of the Native Americans from the hyper sensed Wolfen, as does the drinking of intoxicating beer.

[218]HUMPHRIES, R. (2005). *The American horror film: an introduction*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press., p107

The Wolfen's victims of choice are the marginalised and destitute and have refined it down to the point where they disregard a cirrhosis inflicted liver when it comes to divvying up the kill[219]. They kill the Van Der Veers because of the fact that their redevelopment of the South Bronx, an attempt to revitalise the city that foreshadows the eventual gentrification of the area in the following decade, is an encroachment on their hunting grounds. Much like the way the Van Der Veer exploit the entire world to secure their own positions[220], so do the Wolfen. It is best to think of the narrative as being more akin to the Wall Street, high-finance films that would come about later in the decade. This is essentially the story of a hostile takeover and the reaction to it, with the police investigation caught in the middle. Native American critics certainly knew what was going down: -

The movie, released in 1981, is set in times contempory with its making, and the Manhattan of the early 1980s is portrayed as a city in tumult. Rich folks are tearing down blighted neighbourhoods to put up expensive office buildings and condominiums, poor folks are squatting in the blighted neighbourhoods, and a number of homegrown and international militant groups (a la the Weather Underground and the Red Brigade) are trying to save the poor folks in the blighted neighbourhoods……. I kept waiting for a painful, but revealing transformation scene where the man becomes Wolfen, but all I get is the naked Eddie (played by Latino actor Edward James Olmos) splashing in the water and howling at the moon. He's not a shaman, or a holy warrior, or even a shapeshifter (though he is easier on the eye than the naked Albert Finney). It turns out he's just another stoner who got lost on the way to Woodstock and ended up in New York City.[221]

Hammering this point home, that this is a film about ownership of the city and not a sentimental evocation of the horrors of civilised man is the character of Ferguson. As an environmentalist, and an employee of the New York Museum of Natural History, he is very cynical about man's effect on nature being nothing more than a rapacious plundering. With his unkempt clothes and beard, he would have been very much at home in the background of Wadleigh's Woodstock film, and appears

[219] A feat which the coroner claims took him twenty-four hours, even with cutting edge medical technology. What the Wolfen do from instinct, people now rely on machines to do. As one of the city slickers in *Deliverance* remarks, "There's something in the woods and the water we've lost in the city." To which back-to-nature tough guy Burt Reynolds responds, "We didn't lose it; we sold it."
[220] From the script - "The families got interest on every continent. Funding a government overthrow. Putting a mine in holy ground. Moving a town." "A real friend of the third world."
[221] HOWE, L., MARKOWITZ, H., & CUMMINGS, D. K. (2013). *Seeing red: Hollywood's pixeled skins : American Indians and film*. East Lansing, Michigan State University Press. P126-128

to be edging towards fulfilling the role of righteous hero of this film. In both the book and the novel, Ferguson believes that he can attempt to communicate with the Wolfen, which will presumably lead to a level of mutual understanding between man and Wolfen[222]. He views them as noble, and weeps over footage of being shot and skinned. However, Ferguson disregards Wittgenstein's idiom that if a lion could talk, we wouldn't be able to understand him. Unbeknownst to him, a Wolfen is watching him weep over the murder of its (at best) distant cousins, and once he has pulled himself together and made his way through the moonlit zoo[223] on his moped, he is ambushed by the Wolfen and brutally murdered. They are fighting for their home, the city, and as we have seen, the city is no place for understanding, or even cooperation beyond anything but the pack. In the same way that we are reminded that the Van Der Veers are a successful, established family, so we see the same lineage and attitude in the Wolfen themselves. The narrative constructs this with complimentary scenes to establish the rivalry – a scene of Van Der Veer's construction crew destroying the Wolfen's 'turf' is followed by a scene of the Wolfen killing construction workers, and so on. The Van Der Veers are 'old money' but the Wolfen are ancient, with the city as a background between these two forces, which at a very basic level represent the civilised and the wild, although the line between which is which is constantly shifting, as the elder Native American reminds the policeman – "To them, you are the savages.".

In the finale, Wilson uses the only common language that the Wolfen and people have, destruction, to symbolically destroy the model of the proposed Van Der Veer development, and thereby cede the

[222] It's the same sort of thankless role as Carrington (Robert Cornthwaite) in *The Thing from Another World* (1951. NYBY, C. dir. RKO) or Pastor Collins (Lewis Martin) in *The War of the Worlds* (1953. HASKINS, B. dir. Paramount Pictures). Ferguson is something of a throwback in this regard, one of the few examples of the dwindling 'expert' archetype Andrew Tudor has noted in *Monsters and Mad Scientists* (pg 87-89); someone who believes that rapport can be achieved between the normal and abnormal.
[223] Both *An American Werewolf in London* and *Wolfen* feature wolves in prominent scenes, highlighting the incursion of the natural on the wild and vice versa. Schrader's *Cat People* would feature this with even less subtlety, making its nominal hero, played by John Heard, a zoologist who eventually ends up as the owner and custodian of a 'shifted' Nastassja Kinski.

hunting grounds back to the Wolfen. This brief moment of rapport is visually symbolised by Dewey ’seeing’ the Wolfen through their own visual lens.

The film, unlike a lot of the other films under study is very much about the ‘here’ of New York City, and the ‘now,’ the end of the seventies and the advent of a new decade. All of the historical trappings of the murders, such as the symbolism of the execution place, the involvement of ancient religions, symbolised through the voodoo ring of the Van Der Veer’s chauffeur, and 60s radical groups such as the Red Brigade and the Weather Underground, here renamed Götterdämmerung, amount to nothing when placed alongside the immediate, brutal fight for the city that is taking place. As author of the original novel, *The Wolfen*[224], Whitley Strieber suggests:

> The collapse of the South Bronx was at its height when I was writing The Wolfen. The fires were everywhere, set by landlords who could no longer afford the taxes. *I was haunted not by the ghosts of the past, but of the present*[225]*.*

Ironically, this urban wasteland was the result of not only deindustrialisation and ‘white flight’ but also economic concerns. As Joe Flood details in his book *The Fires*[226] this area of New York had tried to computerise their public service needs to allow a greater efficiency[227][228]. On paper this seemed

[224] STRIEBER, W. (1978). *The Wolfen*. New York, W. Morrow.
[225] Correspondence with author, February 2021, italicisation mine.
[226] FLOOD, J. (2010*). The fires: how a computer formula burned down New York City--and determined the future of American cities*. New York, Riverhead Books.
[227] This was undertaken by the RAND corporation a corporation that had been established just after the second world war with the idea of perfecting man and society through scientific research and an emphasis on the objective superiority of empirical data, who had the sheen of modernity, introducing computer programmes and reducing human error. The results of this mismanagement could be clearly seen in *Wolfen*, in which the RAND corporation are replaced by ESS (Executive Security Solutions) who also rely too heavily on computers rather than the sort of street instincts that the hero, Dewey Wilson, employs. In their rush to find a culprit, and prove the machines correct, they incorrectly round up a terrorist group as scapegoats
[228] There is an echo of this in another film in the cycle of ‘New York as Hell’, John Carpenter’s *Escape From New York* (1981). On the glider flight from Liberty Island to the World Trade Centre, the protagonist is able to view the city from computer map. From what appears to be a computer-generated wireframe map of the city (although actually the result of an old-fashioned physical model with some clever lighting) everything appears serene, ordered reducible to modelling and statistics. As the rough landing implies, however, the ‘real’ New York is chaotic, messy and unpredictable. Relating back to the previous chapter on special effects, and the

like a fine idea; during the 1960s, after the boom years following the second world war, infrastructure had collapsed, and human error, whether deliberate or as the result of widespread political corruption, seemed to be to blame. If not error, then at least greed. The first wave of fires that hit the Bronx in the early 1970s was often deliberately caused by arson. Landlords, stymied in their attempts to make money in an increasingly shrinking economy, were often stopped from raising capital by raising rents due to rent control agreements that had been in place for decades, both stopping a rise in rent and protecting the tenant from eviction. Frustrated to the point of moral fracture, some landlords burned down their own apartment buildings, seeing more money in an insurance claim then in low rental income. The public perception was of an area growing increasingly more lawless and dangerous, and the blame for the fires was often shifted away from landlords and to the tenants themselves. The primarily black and Puerto Rican families who had moved into the cheap housing were scapegoated as the cause of the majority of the fires.

Streamlining city services through the perceived infallibility of computerisation, promised an intact and thus financially solvent New York. The computer's solution was to remove firehouses from the poorest areas of the city, arguing that by concentrating on saving valuable real-estate in Manhattan and other more prosperous neighbourhoods, the overall economic value of the city would be stabilised. Old, decrepit firehouses in places like the Bronx were mothballed to save money. Unfortunately, this logic coincided with an increase in fires being set both deliberately and accidentally in the tightly packed tenement houses, very often resulting in fires burning out of

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special effects designer as integral to the production of films, John Carpenter told Starlog that he found John Dykstra's team (which included the man who would become the sine qua non of special effects supremacy over film production, James Cameron) who had designed the sequence, "*outrageous* beyond my wildest dreams… I couldn't believe their price and their attitude… They have the attitude that they're *celebrities*, and I don't understand it. I suppose they have the absolute right to act that way after a movie like *Star Wars*, They want to do something that's going to make them a whole lot of money." *Starlog*, July 1981.

control with no infrastructure to put them out in a timely fashion, nor help the people who became homeless as a result, nor rebuild after destruction.

The Carter presidency that oversaw this nadir of the megacity was beset with crises in 1979 with inflation and tumultuous rises in oil prices resulting in a lack of consumer confidence, which translated into a lack of confidence about Carter himself. We only need to look at the New York Times non-fiction bestsellers in 1981 to get an indication about the apocalyptic thoughts of the nation; *Crisis Investing*[229], by Douglas R. Casey offered ''Opportunities for investing in the coming Great Depression'', which sounded even more ghoulish than Casey's bestselling peer, the newly minted 'King of Horror' Stephen King, could manage, and spent eighteen weeks on the bestseller charts. *The Coming Currency Collapse*[230], by Jerome F. Smith which billed itself as an ''investment survival manual'' for the 1980s, presumably owed its popularity to the fears instilled by the tumultuous 70s, as well as the self-reliant, militaristic trend that would see 1982's *First Blood*[231] become one of the biggest films of that year. The city was becoming increasingly unsafe and fleeing to the suburbs seemed like a safe alternative. The best-selling book of 1981 was not set in New York City, but still has a lot to say about the idea of the city. In Stephen King's *Cujo*, the Trenton family have moved to Castle Rock, Maine from New York City, and an offer for the paterfamilias, Vic, to revisit the city for business almost sends him into a panic attack: -

...(Vic) had a morbid sense that New York had only been waiting these last three years to get him in its clutches again.....there would a crash on the Triborough bridge, their Checker crushed into a bleeding yellow accordion. A mugger would use his gun instead of just waving it. A gas main would explode and he would be decapitated by a manhole cover flying through the air like a deadly ninety-pound Frisbee. Something. If he went back, the city would kill him. [232][233]

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[229] CASEY, D. R. (1981). *Crisis investing: opportunities and profits in the coming great depression*. New York, Pocket Books.
[230] SMITH, J. F. (1980*). The coming currency collapse and what you can do about it*. New York, Books in Focus.
[231] *First Blood* (1982). KOTCHEFF, T. dir. Orion Pictures.
[232] KING, S. (1981*). Cujo*. New York, A Plume Book. Pg29
[233] Plenty of ways to die in the city. One of the most popular arcade games in 1981 was Konami's *Frogger*, in which the player must guide a series of frogs from a (presumably urban) starting point, over a busy road, over

Whether the success of Carl Sagan's *Cosmos*[234] at the beginning of the 1980s was due to an interest in science or a fear that the earth itself was becoming uninhabitable and the only future might lie in outer space is a matter for speculation.

Wolfen ultimately suggests that the Bronx is irretrievably lost to the Wolfen. Rather than shooting his foe in the final showdown, Albert Finney's Detective Wilson destroys the model representing Van der Veer's Bronx redevelopment, implying a capitulation on the part of civilisation in the face of reclamation by nature, as well as implying a new found acceptance as (at best) sharing the position of apex predator with another species. The city, it is suggested both figuratively and literally, has gone to the dogs. The future of the city, and the concerns as to its dissolution reflecting a greater concern about catastrophic change are evident. New York, the capital of the world was being destroyed from within by its own people, so how long before that rot spread? Maybe further South to Wall Street, where the signs of economic collapse and the smoke from burning Bronx could be seen from the windows of the World Trade Centre[235].

Conclusion

a bust stream and then on to lilypads*.* *Frogger* is notable for three reasons – its popularity; its reputation as the video games with the most ways to die (being hit by a car, jumping in water, eaten by snakes, otters or alligators, drowning on the back of a turtle, misjudging a jump into home and that most preeminent concern of the era, running out of time) and finally as its use as a metaphor for white (or in this case, green) flight from the city to a safe lilipad to raise the tadpoles in.

[234] SAGAN, C. (1980). *Cosmos*. New York, Random House

[235] Which can also be seen as the harbinger of New York's decline. On its construction in 1973, it displaced a lot of land from the port that had been the main reason for New York's success for the past few centuries. The docks allowed Elizabeth, New Jersey to become the preeminent port in New York State, furthering the immigration of people, small businesses and long-established communities off the island of Manhattan to the surrounding environs.

To view *Wolfen* as a film about location is to make it something outside of the normal run of werewolf films but to also to make it about something that is inherently at the heart of a territorial animal. The internal struggle between people and their 'beast within' becomes something externalised and inescapable – the struggle to remain civilised in a bestial world. At the end of the film, the land is ceded to the Wolfen. What that portends is ambiguous, although recent studies have shown that the mere presences of wolves are enough to drastically change not only an eco-system but a landscape[236]. To that extent, *Wolfen* moves away from the tired 'beast within' narrative that is parodied in *The Howling*. By allowing the Wolfen to win the territory that humanity has effectively abandoned, the Wolfen are granting it an immortality that was considered to be part of the 'curse' of the traditional wolfman.

Unlike *An American Werewolf in London* or *The Howling*, *Wolfen* never received a sequel, or a remake. To that extent, it may seem like the film had less impact than the other werewolf films of 1981. Writing this almost exactly forty years after these films were released, it is interesting to note that it has not, unlike Landis's and Dante's film, received the same kind of critical re-evaluation, complete with 4k transfer discs and nostalgic interviews. However, in many ways, and explicitly by locating the horror of the werewolf as an extemporised battle for the soul of the modern urban space, it has proved more prescient and influential. Both *An American Werewolf in London* and *The Howling* are very much of the modern period, so much so that the references they make to the classical period of horror is seen not as a continuation of that period, but as a postmodern comment on it. How can werewolves exist, the films ask, if we can watch films about them on television, and therefore are safe? *The Howling* ends with the exposure of real-life werewolves being disbelieved and dismissed are mere special effects, and *An American Werewolf in London* ends with the often-repeated trope of the werewolf reverting to human form upon dying, thereby not leaving any tricky

[236] https://www.yellowstonepark.com/things-to-do/wildlife/wolf-reintroduction-changes-ecosystem/

forensic evidence lying around. *Wolfen* ends with an awareness that history and civilisation (represented by the modern city) is a lie, and that our position as apex predator, as the most intelligent creature on the planet, has been an illusion.

After *Wolfen*, there will not be a werewolf film that is not either a family comedy or a spoof until 1994, and Jack Nicholson as the titular *Wolf*[237], a self-consciously 'adult' horror film, and part of another wave of classical horror films reinterpreted in the modern era[238]. What is interesting about *Wolf*, and the rest of the werewolf films that follow, is that the urban is now the favoured locale. After *Wolfen*, the city becomes the new hunting ground, and *An American Werewolf in Paris*[239], *Blood and Chocolate*[240], *Underworld*[241]*and Ginger Snaps*[242]are all set in cities and suburbia. Even a stylistic throwback like the remake of *The Wolfman*[243] speeds it's narrative along from the countryside to metropolitan Victorian London with undue haste. The modern werewolf had found a new home.

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[237] *Wolf* (1994). NICHOLS, M. dir. Columbia Pictures

[238] Including *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992). COPPOLA, F. dir. Columbia, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994). BRANAGH, K. dir. Tristar Pictures and *Interview with the Vampire* (1994). JORDAN, N. dir. Warner Brothers

[239] *An American Werewolf in Paris* (1997). WALLER, A. dir. Buena Vista Pictures

[240] *Blood and Chocolate* (2007). VON GARNIER, K. dir. Metro Goldwyn Mayer.

[241] *Underworld* (2003). WISEMAN, L. dir. Sony Picture Releasing

[242] *Ginger Snaps* (2000). FAWCETT, J. dir. Motion International.

[243] *The Wolfman* (2010). JOHNSTON, J. dir. Universal Pictures

Conclusion

I have argued throughout this work that the three films under scrutiny have an importance due to their engagement with various points of important change within film, society and culture. The fact that these films are linked by a common theme, whilst interesting in terms of the legacy of the werewolf myth, is secondary to the fact that within themselves they engage with such different themes, and in such stylistically and thematic ways.

The most frequent times that these films are linked together, is as an exemplar of the new techniques of special effects that were established by Dick Smith in his work on *Altered States* (1980), in which the use of latex skin over movable, inflating bladders allowed filmmakers to create an extreme, visceral representation of metamorphosis. As I discussed in the first chapter, it was this focus on special effects, and the spectacle of transformation, that ultimately came to define *An American Werewolf in London* as being marketed as a horror film, in which the special effects were the 'star', from a director who had previously established himself with comedic films. I also looked at how this newfound interest in special effects allowed for a burgeoning fan press to emphasise the importance of the special effects technician as 'artist', and how this distinction redefined the nature of the director. Finally I discussed how these special effects which allowed for the representation of limitless change, were eventually too limited by the codified binary of the 'werewolf' archetype, and how it was only through the more inchoate threats of the 'body horror' genre that it founds its apogee.

Whilst a superficial link is self-evident between *The Howling* and *An American Werewolf in London*, in terms of their emphasis on special effects, a blend of humour and horror, Joe Dante and John

Landis's shared experiences coming up in low-budget filmmaking and their reliance on 1942's *The Wolf Man* as both lodestone and metatext, the differences between them run deeper. Dante's film is a satire, explicitly stated by the filmmakers, and explicitly referred to as such by both reviewers at the time and critics now. It tells us more about the pervasiveness of pop-psychology and new-age beliefs at the end of the 1970s that were supposed to free people of repression, and the inherent malevolent potential of that in terms of how it was linked with such counter-cultural boogeymen such as Charles Manson and Jim Jones, both of whom preached an end to repression yet practiced repressive, controlling behaviour to murderous conclusions. Psychology, we are constantly reminded, can be used for both good or ill, especially in film narratives. Coupled with that is representation of those who seek to engage with the mentally ill, or use psychology as a tool, are often those who are the most unbalanced. In *Danse Macabre*, Stephen King locates the purpose of the horror story thusly:

> To affirm the virtues of the norm by showing us what awful things happen to people who venture into taboo lands.[244]

King was talking about his view that horror is essentially conservative, despite its transgressive elements, and we can certainly see how pop-psychology and gurus, looking both within the intimate spaces of the mind and sexuality and attempting to free both, would be a threat to this. The ultimate "taboo lands" lie within in the deepest thoughts and desires of the brain, in what Freud would call the subconscious, and the expression of these desires, through the 'id', would be horrifically extemporised in the werewolf Eddie Quist. No wonder then that there is a snapping back to conservatism and, as I have described in the second chapter, that a narrative for a typical seeker (or indeed an institute like Esalen) goes from revolutionary in the 1960s to psychic self-searching in the 1970s to corporate business in the 1980s.

[244] KING, S. (1981). *Danse macabre*. New York, Berkley. pg368

Finally, in the third chapter I looked at how Michael Wadleigh's *Wolfen* provided a breaking away from traditional werewolf narratives and their settings. By locating his film in the city, Wadleigh allows the audience at the time to engage with the destruction of the city, and the idea of the city as a living space, as a result of abandonment and violence. Wadleigh had captured the spirit of the generation in his documentary film *Woodstock* in 1970, primarily to record the end of an era, and in *Wolfen* shows us the results of what the interim ten years have done. Often misunderstood as an eco-horror, or a film about Native American vengeance on corporate America, I argue that (qv King), the film is essentially conservative in its representation of the Wolfen, who are indifferent to Native Americans, and instead care nothing more than territory, hunting ground and the elimination of the weak in perpetuance of their species. As in the pop-psychologists of *The Howling*, they shrug off new-age sensibilities at the beginning of the 1980s and build on their waterfront property portfolio.

What was evident in my research was how each of these films represented a form of transition. Whether from special effects becoming integral to genre filmmaking, or the population shift that saw the flight from the cities to the suburbs, these films speak to a society that was shifting from the uncertainties of the 1970s to the 1980s. This shift is seen as primarily political, with the burgeoning LGBT, feminist and environmental movements that achieved gains in the 70s being limited by an increasingly right-wing, Republican presidency under Ronald Reagan in the 1980s. An increasingly nationalistic worldview, bolstered by a strong economy, persuaded many of those who had fought for civil freedoms in the 1960s and 1970s to leave behind their idealism in favour of security and prosperity – the hippie becomes the yuppie. This accounts for the prevalence of nostalgia for the 1950s in the 1980s, in which the interim decades could be ignored and negated.

The werewolf genre's brief flourishing in the early 1980s did not establish a regular, long-lived renaissance of the classical wolfman archetype, but instead metamorphosed the character beyond

that, in the same way that the glut of vampire texts in 1979[245]showed how the classical vampire archetype underwent its own metamorphosis and reframing. Eventually the desire for audiences in the 1980s to watch a classical werewolf film in which the tragic elements of the character faded, and the werewolf was recast as supporting character and comic relief (as in *The Monster Squad*,[246] *Fright Night*[247] and *Fright Night Part 2*[248]) or filtered through the mass appeal family comedy film starring sitcom star Michael J Fox in the anodyne *Teen Wolf.*[249][250][251]

In *Teen Wolf*, the transition between teenager and werewolf is little more than an inconvenience, much like puberty. At first, the change is a little embarrassing and odd, but eventually the protagonist becomes more socially accepted and successful on the basketball court. The idea that what was once a punishment from God (or Gods) for moral transgression, or the result of tragic misfortune, has become a tool for advancement is very much indicative of the times. Even when the werewolf was still an external threat that could not be utilised for social mobility, such as in *Silver Bullet,*[252] the emphasis was now on the 'can-do' self-reliance of the young hero, played by Corey Haim to overcome the danger.[253]

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[245] *Love at First Bite* (1979) DRAGOTI, S. dir. American International Pictures, *Nosferatu the Vampyre* (1979). HERZOG, W. dir. 20th Century Fox, *Dracula* (1979). BADHAM, J. dir Universal Pictures and TV movies *'Salems Lot* (1979). HOOPER, T. dir. Warner Brothers Television Distribution and *Vampire* (1979). SWACKHAMMER, E. W. dir. ABC

[246] *The Monster Squad* (1987). DEKKER, F. dir. TriStar Pictures

[247] *Fright Night* (1985). HOLLAND, T. dir. Columbia Pictures

[248] *Fright Night Part 2* (1988). WALLACE, T.L. dir. Tristar Pictures

[249] *Teen Wolf* (1985). DANIEL, R. dir. Atlantic Releasing Company

[250] Like Larry Cohen's *Full Moon High*, *Teen Wolf* is essentially just a more optimistic spoof of *I Was A Teenage Werewolf.*

[251] Fox had found fame in the sitcom *Family Ties* (1982-1989, CBS), as the conservative son of liberal, former-hippie parents. A lot of the humour of the show relied upon the awareness that the hippies of the 1960s had either become, or sired, the Reaganites of the 1980s through backlash or disillusionment.

[252] *Silver Bullet* (1985). ATTIAS, D. dir. Paramount Pictures

[253] The wheelchair bound hero would have also drawn a lot of respect from a Reaganite perspective for not only his self-reliance, but in having his own wheelchair built at home. Useful given Reagan gutting $41 million from Carter's inherited budget, a large part of that coming from public health. Heaven knows what the same audience would have made of David Kessler's free NHS treatment in *An American Werewolf in London*, or Waggner's presumably free in-house treatment of the working class Quist family at his 'exclusive' Colony.

As we saw in the last couple of chapters, the transition from the uncertainty of the 1970s to the 'new morning in America' of Ronald Reagan's nationalistic presidency saw a shift away from the psychic soul searching of Tom Wolfe's 'me generation' to a more glibly self-centred focus on acquisition and upward mobility. Reynold Humphries saw the films that came after 1981 as a reaction to the traditional values that Reagan insisted were at the heart of the new America renaissance he presided over, so the horror came packaged with the nuclear family (*Parents*[254], *The Stepfather*[255]) or homeownership (*The Amityville Horror*[256], *Poltergeist*[257]), rather than the insular terror of 'the beast within'.[258] This created an increasingly divided society, based partly on economic lines, as Michael Schaller states, "the rich got richer, everyone else trod water."[259] And where better to tread water for the majority of people than in suburbia, the locus of stasis and routine? The rural threat of the classical werewolf, and the city-based threat of *Wolfen* and *An American Werewolf in London*, were surpassed by the suburban slasher. As a corollary to this, the director of the *The Howling*, Joe Dante, parlayed its success into a bankable career in Hollywood, and returned to the horror genre in *Gremlins*[260] and *The Burbs*[261]. Recognising that the times had changed, both films were set in suburbia and blended more family friendly humour into the horror film, achieving greater audience reach, but losing the satire and gruesomeness that *The Howling* had excelled.

However, this is not to say that an extended look at these films and the culture that received them should look to the future. The limitation of form in this thesis have precluded me from including a lot

[254] *Parents* (1989). BALABAN, B. dir. Vestron Pictures
[255] *The Stepfather* (1987). RUBEN, J. dir. ITC Productions
[256] *The Amityville Horror* (1979). ROSENBERG, S. dir. American International Pictures
[257] *Poltergeist* (1982). HOOPER, T. dir. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer
[258] HUMPHRIES, R. (2005). *The American horror film: an introduction*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press. P97 'Family Values' p102 'Real Estate Values'.
[259] SCHALLER, M. (1995). *Reckoning with Reagan: America and its president in the 1980s*. Oxford, Oxford University Press. P76
[260] *Gremlins* (1984) DANTE. J. dir. Warner Brothers
[261] *The 'Burbs* (1989) DANTE. J. dir. Universal Pictures

of other films that were released during the first few years of the 1980s that, like the three films under study here, also deal with the notion of transformation. As a testament to that, it would have been hard not to mention, even en passant, Ken Russell's *Altered States*, released in the last week of 1980. The seemingly unorthodox narrative of Russell's film, complete with hallucinatory sequences and drug-fuelled transformations touches on a lot of concerns that have been raised already in this study, as well as adding further culturally important context. In the former case, the special effects used in the film rely on the idea of 'moles', a form of movable air bladder under a latex skin designed by Dick Smith, mentor to Rick Baker. Without these 'moles' the transformation sequences that are the centrepieces of *An American Werewolf in London* and *The Howling* would not have been possible. However, Smith's use of them in *Altered States* acts as a precis for the special effects industry at the beginning of the 1980s – the early transformation sequence of Edward Jessup (William Hurt) into an apelike neanderthal is filmed in an eerily similar fashion to the *The Wolf Man*, complete with full moon lighting. The later transformation sequences, in which Jessup is stuck between forms and appears as inchoate mass predates the body horror excesses of *Society*[262] and *The Fly*[263].

Altered States also tracks the disillusionment of the 1960s radical into 1970s spiritual seeker into 1980s Yuppie[264] that I discussed in the second and third chapter of the book. Controversial psychologist Timothy Leary, an early pioneer of hallucinogenic drugs and counter-culture icon is

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[262] *Society* (1989). YUZNA. B. dir. Wild Street Pictures

[263] *The Fly* (1986). CRONENBERG, D. dir. 20th Century Fox

[264] Screenwriter and Russell's eventual nemesis, Paddy Chayefksy, would have known a thing or two about change, and a person's capacity for transmutation. His real name was Stanley Aaron, changed to 'Paddy' as an ironic joke when the Jewish Aaron had claimed to be Catholic to attend Mass and avoid work duty in the Army. It was there that he shapeshifted from the diffident intellectual Jewish Stanley Aaron to Paddy Chayefsky, a non-kosher, hard-drinking showbiz entity called Paddy Chayefsky. As Joseph Lanza writes in his autobiography of Ken Russell, "The diffident Sidney changed, almost in lycanthropic fashion, into the ill-mannered Paddy." Chayefsky himself stated that it was this schism that caused him to write his only novel, Altered States. The subject was obviously important to him, and for all the novel and film's modern trappings of hallucinogens and sensory deprivation tanks, it is a rather old-fashioned, almost gothic work. LANZA, J. (2008). *Phallic frenzy: Ken Russell and his films*. London, Aurum. Pg176

mentioned by name in the script, but only to highlight the disparity between his perceived flakiness and Jessup's safe, clinical and potentially lucrative experiments:

PARRISH: You guys get flakier every time I see you! I thought all that isolation tank stuff went our in the Sixties with Timothy Leary and all the other gurus!

And earlier in the script:

JESSUP: (On the 'trips' provided by isolation tank studies) There's some good people in the field….but most of it is radical-hip stuff, drug culture apologias. Obviously the first thing to do is set up some sensible methodology, see if we can't study these experiences under controlled conditions.[265]

However, in the conclusion *Altered States* is an essentially conservative film. Jessup experiments with the drugs of the 1960s, loses control and has to 'find himself' like Jerry Rubin in the second chapter, and finally puts that behind him to reunite in a monogamous, redemptive marriage to Blair Brown. The nuclear family is re-established, and Jessup has (presumably) put his drug past behind him. To use a Reaganism of the new decade Jessup is about to experience, he has 'just said no'.

Equally, a fuller discussion of the transformative narratives of 1981 would have looked closely at Larry Cohen's *Full Moon High*[266], particularly in terms of the nostalgic element that would proscribe the sensibilities of a lot of 1980s films, and what that says about the society in which it was received. *Full Moon High* begins in a similar way to *An American Werewolf in London*, in which a young student, Tony, travels with a more sexually promiscuous companion (in this case, his father) to Europe, where he is bitten and infected by a werewolf. In this case, however, the student takes the virus back to America, where he is rejected before travelling the globe for thirty years before returning home in 1981, ageless and unchanged. The film touches on many themes I have shown to be prevalent in other werewolf films of the era, including psychiatry and the dangers of the city, but it's main point of humour is in charting the effects of Tony's friends who have grown from optimistic,

[265] *Altered States* (1980). RUSSELL, K. dir. Warner Brothers
[266] *Full Moon High* (1981). COHEN, L. dir. Filmway Pictures

young people of the 1950s into bitter, disillusioned, sexually predatory middle-aged sell-outs. To remain young was a huge cultural concern, that this thesis is not large enough to touch on, hence the heyday of both aerobics and plastic surgery was at the beginning of the 1980s.

There were other films released at this time that would add to a more holistic reading of werewolf films of the early 1980s, most specifically Paul Schrader's *Cat People*[267] and Phillipe Mora's *The Beast Within*[268]. The former of these is fascinating in terms of the psychosexual overtones of the script, which make overt the suggestion of incest that is only hinted at in Jacques Tourneur's original. Mora's film is fascinating in showing how the expensive special effects of *An American Werewolf in London* were eventually used in the sort of low-budget, experimental films that made up a lot of the 'body-horror' movement discussed in the first chapter. The choice of turning a man into a cicada rather than the more commonly known wolf is an example of the kind of inventiveness that would supersede the films under study here, allowing them a brief, albeit memorable flourish at the end of one turbulent decade, and the beginning of another

This project began by challenging the conventional belief that these films were made to showcase special effects, specifically the state-of-the-art special effects pioneered by Dick Smith *in Altered States*, and that the films themselves were only linked for this reason and the fact they were 'werewolf' films. However, a closer reading of these films has shown that they are linked, as have transformation narratives for a long time, by a society that was dealing with its own painful metamorphosis. The exterior changes articulated by the special effects is against a backdrop of the belief that internal change, whether that by spiritual, psychological or even ethical was equally brutal. Whilst there has been some critical discussion of these films, few link more than *The Howling*

[267] *Cat People* (1982). SCHRADER, P. dir. Universal Pictures
[268] *The Beast Within* (1982). MORA, P. dir. United Artists

and *An American Werewolf in London* together. Most studies of 1980s horror film focus on the fertile ground of the slasher film, with its emphasis on sexuality and psychoanalytical readings, or on the 'body horror' movement, however it is my contention in this study that more study needs to be done on the positioning of classical archetypes, like the werewolf, in the modern setting. It is only through this juxtaposition of the modern horror film with the classical archetype that a more complete understanding of both can be achieved.

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