

White trash in wife-beaters? Television Werewolves, Gender and Class

Lorna Jowett

The werewolf has been consistently aligned with the masculine. As Chantal Bourgat du Coudray points out in the 1980s the werewolf's monstrous body 'still tended to be coded in terms of excessive masculinity' (2006, 85) in movies. Many 21st century TV representations take this route too, from *True Blood* to *The Vampire Diaries* and *Teen Wolf*. Cashing in on the popularity of both the supernatural and the paranormal romance, such series frequently position the (male) werewolf as the opposite of the (male) vampire, who has, according to writer Brian McGreevy, become an 'emo pansy.' US TV werewolves in particular exhibit particular traits aligning hypermasculinity with social class. The male werewolf is often violent, bestial, blue-collar, macho, manly, aggressive, 'hot' blooded compared to the vampire's cold, and frequently coded as trailer trash, or a 'bit of rough'. This chapter examines how ongoing narrative arcs in *True Blood*, *The Vampire Diaries* and its spin-off *The Originals* develop their werewolf characters (and their werewolf mythologies), as well as how channel branding and audience demographic inflect the trope of werewolf-vampire rivalry. Yet werewolves also appear in one-off episodes of ongoing series and this can offer a disruption of the status quo, both in terms of the series and of the werewolf trope and *Supernatural's* self-contained episode 'Bitten' (8.4) is examined from this angle. The episode uses the characteristic features of found footage horror to stage an exploration of masculinity via horror's clash of the mundane and the fantastic, contrasting the series' previous uses of the reality TV format by offering a serious first-person perspective that shifts attention away from the two male protagonists. Finally, drawing on these examinations of both the typical and the disruptive TV werewolf, the chapter explores how *Hemlock Grove's* apparently typical presentation of its vampire-werewolf protagonists simultaneously extends and subverts some of the key features of the trope, particularly in relation to whiteness, class and masculinity.

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