



**Universitat de les  
Illes Balears**

Facultat de Filosofia i Lletres

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# Not Into Bad Guys Anyways: Scott McCall, or Positive Representations of Masculine Identities in US Supernatural Teen Drama

Ariadna Martín Ferrando

**Grau d'Estudis Anglesos**

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DNI de l'alumne: 43210785H

Treball tutelat per Rubén Jarazo Álvarez  
Departament de Filologia Espanyola, Moderna i Clàssica

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## Abstract

This paper examines the representation of non-toxic masculinities in US supernatural teen TV drama at the beginning of fourth wave of feminism through the character of Scott McCall in *Teen Wolf* (Davis, 2011). Worshiped and idolized by the millennial generation, *Teen Wolf* presents at least two characters who, prior to the recent social awakening regarding gender rights and considering its phallogocentric historic-geographical context, particularly challenge conventional gender discourses and practices of hegemonic and accomplice masculinities. Through the interactions and decisions presented in the series, the protagonist, Scott McCall, is constructed breaking the grounds of traditional masculine performativity previously depicted in vampire and werewolf narratives. Consequently, such changes in gender display pave the way for positive representations of male characters in fantasy television, which constitute a necessary tool to wreck the cements of patriarchy and end an archaic social infrastructure founded on the systematicity of oppression exerted on deviant cultural agents. Thus, and as the plot develops, the public not only witnesses a mere teenager who is now a werewolf coping with regular high school drama, but an adolescent constructing his masculinity surrounded by a group of individuals contributing to its development in a safe and respectful environment, where the main priority is the survival of a pack in which does not exist a hierarchy but a bond that is unbeatable. By providing an in depth analysis of this character and how he allows himself to be positively influenced by those around him, the main aim of this paper is, on the one hand, to explore why the construction of Scott's masculinity as a contraposition to other toxic supernatural masculine figures in the TV series is crucial for male audiences in order to provide the public with alternatives to hegemonic masculinity, further interrupting the legitimization of violent and oppressive gender performances. And, on the other hand, how women play a significant role not only in the unity of the pack but also in the formation process of the male identities in the show.

Keywords: werewolf, positive masculinity, sexuality, gender identity, pop culture

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## 1. Introduction

Supernatural teen drama in the United States is probably one of the most consumed genres among population, especially millennials and Gen Z. This particular category feeds on preexistent otherworldly creatures from different mythologies all around the globe to create entertaining cultural products ignoring the impact they might cause in a societal structure. Considering that television is one of the first and most accessible Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), such productions need to be carefully revised so as to prevent encoding certain cultural discourses and practices that result oppressive for minority sectors of the population, such as women, LGBTQ+ members and racialized individuals, among many others. *Teen Wolf* (Davis 2011) does not escape from this stereotype: it too contains lumbersexualized stereotypes of toxic and hegemonic supernatural figures; notwithstanding, why does it reject such aspects in its protagonist considering it is a representative TV series for this genre? There exist many works on gender and sexuality within the supernatural community, even homoerotic fanfic parallel narratives between characters. However, in none of the articles or books revised there was evidence of Positive Psychology/Positive Masculinity (PPPM) —positive aspects of traditional masculinity such as resilience, sense of duty, responsibility, desire to protect others and justice among others— applied to the character of Scott McCall. According to Joshua J. Espinoza, the show contains “rampant homoeroticism” and a “questioning [of] sexuality” (32–6), as well as “genuine portrayals of gay men” (45). This argument, together with Evie and Zachary Kendal’s, only reinforces the show’s innovative approach: “for the werewolves in *Teen Wolf* there is no such tolerance of male violence” (34). Nonetheless, positive masculinity remains to be an unexplored topic regarding the non-toxic male characters of the TV series.

*Teen Wolf* (Davis 2011), then, presents the first protagonist to exhibit positive masculinity features in supernatural teen television drama in the United States. Examining the character of Scott McCall, and drawing mostly on the works on masculinity published by Raewyn Connell (2005) and Michael Kimmel (2000; 2008), as well as aligning with Louis Althusser’s (1970) and Michel Foucault’s (1994) theories on cultural agents and cultural discourses respectively, several aspects will be analyzed regarding the construction of his identity: first, hegemonic masculinity related to previous representations of lycanthropy in television; followed by a particular insight of the social dynamics between the protagonist and other characters that identify him as a true leader (e.g. true alpha); and finally Scott McCall will be compared with other masculine —toxic— figures in other relevant contemporary US supernatural teen narratives and how the representation of positive masculinities in this genre

paves the way for a future representations of the werewolf trope more respectful with feminism. Consequently, the aim of this paper is, by providing a close textual analysis of verbal language—together with a study on corporeality, display of emotions and behavior, and interactions with other characters—in the most significant scenes throughout the show in relation to Scott’s construction of identity, to raise awareness on the existence of positive masculinities in US supernatural teen drama, in an era when toxic masculinities are continuously represented in audiovisual and literary products. Such representations must cease to be present nowadays, especially after fourth-wave feminism, since cultural products created by powerful ISAs are at risk of being legitimized as hegemonic discourses instead of being decoded and subsequently rejected by cultural agents.

## 2. Body

### 2.1. Hegemonic masculinity and lycanthropy

Robert Brannon’s theory on the rules of masculinity must be pondered when discussing male gender identity/expression:

1. “No Sissy Stuff!” Being a man means not being a sissy, not being perceived as weak, effeminate, or gay. Masculinity is the relentless repudiation of the feminine.
2. “Be a Big Wheel.” This rule refers to the centrality of success and power in the definition of masculinity. Masculinity is measured more by wealth, power, and status than by any particular body part.
3. “Be a Sturdy Oak.” What makes a man is that he is reliable in a crisis. And what makes him so reliable in a crisis is not that he is able to respond fully and appropriately to the situation at hand, but rather that he resembles an inanimate object. A rock, a pillar, a species of tree.
4. “Give ’em Hell.” Exude an aura of daring and aggression. Live life out on the edge. Take risks. Go for it. Pay no attention to what others think.

(quoted in Kimmel 2008, 45–6)

Such characteristics, however, vary in degree and there exists no evidence of what “being a man” truly means. Studies, on the contrary, have categorized masculinity according to repetitive behaviors found, usually in cultural products, from which theories and hypothesis have been extracted. The most common theory on masculinity as an active entity operating through the hands of heteropatriarchy is *hegemonic masculinity*. Hegemonic masculinity exerts social inequality upon the individuals within community, usually Western societies. If hegemonic

masculinity appears to constitute the ultimate and most “manly” performance of the predominant gender over any other subject or deviant gender performances, in *Teen Wolf* this hegemony is rejected openly by two of the main male characters<sup>1</sup> —Scott McCall and Stiles Stilinski—, among other secondary ones, while still witnessing several figures reinforcing such violent gender performance. According to Raewyn Connell, there exists a relation among different expressions of masculinity: hegemony, subordination, complicity and marginalization (2005, 77). These categories, from my point of view, can be divided into two: the dominant masculinities —hegemony and complicity—, since both are as equally dangerous, and the subjected masculinities —those affected by the former—. Regarding the dominant masculinities, every aspect of their construction and performance possesses a complexity beyond the limits of the human understanding: both rely on the consent they are given in order for them to be performed. If there is not consent, there is no hegemony or complicity: “The concept of hegemony is really a very simple one. It means political leadership based on the consent of the led, a consent which is secured by the diffusion and popularization of the world view of the ruling class” (Gramsci 1975, 352). He adds, as well, that “the ‘normal’ exercise of hegemony in a particular regime is characterized by a combination of force and consensus variously equilibrated, without letting force subvert consensus too much, making it appear that the force is based on the consent of the majority” (363). Hence, and applying Antonio Gramsci’s view on the topic, together with Brannon’s and Connell’s, during the first season of *Teen Wolf* the main characters seem to be subjected to the figure of the big bad wolf, in this case the alpha, Peter Hale, until they finally break free of subjugation by interrupting the competing force. It is worth outstanding that only through knowledge and experience (Davis 2012, 28:10–28:55), mostly provided by another non-toxic masculine figure in the show, Deaton<sup>2</sup>, that Scott and his friends are victorious in such battle, as opposed to the physical force that is repetitively used and represented as the only solution in other supernatural audiovisual products as, for example, *The Twilight Saga* (Meyer 2008) or *The Vampire Diaries* (Williamson and Plec 2009)

#### 4.2. The werewolf trope

Considering the early represented lycanthropy, defined by Cary Crossen as a man (or increasingly, a woman) who turns into a wolf (2019, 3), a werewolf is a mere predictable creature but at the same time uncontrollable monster that would shape-shift once a month to abandon his humanity and end with the life of every living being crossing its path, usually

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<sup>1</sup> The analysis will only focus on the supernatural individual.

<sup>2</sup> (Davis 2014, 37:50–38:15).

females in distress. This trope as a representative embodiment of humanity's beastly, savage and repressed impulses (18) has led to incorrect perceptions in lycanthropy literature:

“Being a werewolf, then, is about more than being able to change physical form. There must be a psychological aspect too. I do not count the beast within as a representation of this wolfish spirit, or wolfish mind. The beast within is a separate entity from the unfortunate human who turns into a monster depending on the phases of the moon.” (4)

Crossen argues as well that despite wild wolves being quite sociable animals, their literary and cinematic representations have been exceptionally isolated because the werewolf has been ostracized from the natural world due to its unnaturalness, and from humanity because of its beastliness (13). However, there is a shift in the depiction of werewolves from the 1980s and it is due to the individual's “acquisition of subjectivity [...] as consciousness: an awareness of self, thoughts, feelings and the possession of memories and lived experiences [...]; also based upon the possession of agency: the subject wields power over oneself and others, and is affected by them” (10). This subjectivity, then allows the werewolf to become a part of both societies, the lycanthropic and the human, reconceptualizing identity as a signifier of group membership rather than individualism (13). As a matter of fact, this change is visible to such extent that, in this case, the plot of *Teen Wolf* revolves exclusively around the construction of Scott McCall's masculine identity through his interactions and interpersonal relationships with other individuals, both close friends and external threatening figures; as in the first season finale (Davis 2011, 20:42), when Scott himself is dealing directly with a ruthless alpha that triggers him to unknowingly begin to be a proto-alpha to his own pack by rejecting what he has experienced first-hand so far with Peter Hale, who acts by the Machiavellian motto in order to achieve the maximum amount of power possible, reestablishing, in this way, his lycanthropic hegemonic masculinity.

Contrary to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century werewolf cinematography, where the monster is depicted as an outcast, an individual external to the normativity of the community —as in Rod Daniel's *Teen Wolf* (1984)—, in later productions the subject is placed at the epicenter of the plot by becoming and embodying the norm. According to Bridget Liang, who personally considers “norm” as the intersection of many markers of privilege such as gender, ethnicity and sexuality among many others, states that “the normate is a way to make intelligible the complexities of multiply intersecting identities and how multiply marginalized folks experience more kinds of oppression the further they are from the normate” (2019, 170). This is the reason



why once someone turns into a werewolf in the MTV show, both their physical appearance and abilities are almost hyperbolized so as to be closer to the hegemonic discourse by belonging to a supernatural world that has become normative. In the case of Scott, the audience evidences his evolution from an asthmatic, shy and unnoticeable teenager to a hyper-desirable and talented athlete who not only has come to be the center of attention, but also the object of obsession of other alpha-males. As a matter of fact, most, if not all, of the “wolf man” discourses share a “consensus belief that men are born to be hierarchical, predatory pack of animals and that this predisposition arises from the expression of inherited instincts” (Shell 2007, 112), somehow justifying human violence and oppression under animal biological determinism. In addition, she also mentions how “pack psychology” is constructed through a system of social hierarchies and discarding democracy as applied to dog/human relationship (113):

The popularity of “alpha-male” in common parlance suggests that men are seen as sharing the canine genetic imperative for dominance behaviors. “Alpha” was originally used in twentieth-century studies of animal behavior to refer to the dominant individuals in rigidly hierarchical animal societies, such as some types of insects and, in later work, large mammals like primates and wolves. (113)

Thus, if the early studies on hierarchic societal constructions within animal communities already focused on wolves, it is evident that the subsequent cultural products on lycanthropy would legitimize oppressive discourses towards subject individuals, due to its connection to patriarchy, as well a power structure.

#### 4.3. “Pack mentality” (Vlaming 2011)

Nevertheless, and deviating far from most representations, Scott’s pack is not hierarchical at all. If, as previously mentioned, masculine interrelations tend to be hierarchical—especially considering the lupine context in which the TV series develops—, in *Teen Wolf* the concept of hierarchy is shattered once Scott starts to gain confidence, a confidence provided by the satisfaction and success in the resolution of obstacles carried out by the whole pack instead of only him. Although this statement could be contested by Scott eventually becoming alpha (3.12 34:20–35:35<sup>3</sup>), his case is exceptional and very rare (Davis 2013, 34:08; 40:10). According to the script, in *Teen Wolf* one becomes alpha only if they steal the power from another alpha (Davis 2011, 36:55–37:20) by ceasing their life, reinforcing, in this way, the idea

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<sup>3</sup> Derek already recognized Scott as his equal, “already an alpha of your [his] own pack” (Vizzini and Antosca 2012, 39:40)

that power is something tangible rather than abstract that, consequently, can be taken away by means of physical force; and that power, as a tool of dominance, consolidates under no circumstances by trust and consent but by fear politics and deadly consequences. However, the reason Scott is first considered by several characters and, at some point, becomes a true alpha is simply because he possesses the purest essence. Despite not being explicitly mentioned, his wit, kindness, his loyalty, his bravery and his uncorrupted soul are what make Scott a true leader—as opposed to the time frame when Derek Hale is an alpha— (Davis 2012, 29:30). In accordance with this, the mechanics of his heterogeneous pack need to be analyzed so as to understand the construction of his masculine identity as a werewolf. In *Teen Wolf*, the “pack psychology” characteristic of lupine structures is completely subverted: 1) regarding the main characters and not external subplots, there is no acquaintance whatsoever of a hierarchical power structure followed by any of Scott’s close friends or relatives; 2) there exists however an inflection point where pack mentality starts to appear and the creation of a proto-pack emerges (Vlaming 2011, 24:00–26:35) always under the premise of respect, performing the greater good and consensual decision; 3) the supernatural component of an individual does not imply more status within the pack, it only provides different abilities to the group when battling the enemy (Taylor 2013, 31:20<sup>4</sup>); and 4) women in the pack are not only listened but also looked up to for advice and resolution—since they are considered to be extremely intelligent and rational (Vizzini and Antosca 2012, 38:30; Davis 2013, 18:45–20:15)— instead of embracing secondary and passive roles. These four pillars are what sustain Scott’s pack: instead of pledging allegiance to the alpha, they pledge allegiance to each other. What is more, and as opposed to other heroic narratives, the protagonist does not fulfill the role of epic hero, since despite being in fact destined to be true alpha due to his nature, he does not assume the proper characteristics of a hero as the only savior, but rather exemplifies the epitome of the power residing in the community (Davis 2017, 48:40-50:30)<sup>5</sup>. Hence, and when compared to other contemporary supernatural cultural products containing werewolf narratives such as *The Twilight Saga* or *The Vampire Diaries*, among many others, it could be stated that *Teen Wolf* breaks the scheme of conventional supernatural literature by providing equity of members within the social community regardless of the different factors by which their identities are

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<sup>4</sup> Since during this episode all werewolves are poisoned by wolfsbane, what causes them severely dystopic hallucinations, and the human members of the pack are the only ones capable of saving their lives. Other scenes representing this argument are located in season 2, episode 12 (Davis 2012, 24:40; 31:55) and season 6, episode 20 (Davis 2017, 48:33).

<sup>5</sup> The last episode reinforces what Derek stated back in the first season about finding strength in unity (Macer 2011, 07:25)

consolidated instead of legitimizing discourses of power and oppression based on oligarchy and dictatorship.

Another worth-mentioning aspect about the TV series is the role of the parents and the influence they have on their children. The first Ideological State Apparatus (Althusser 1970, 14-15) cultural agents —people— encounter in their life are family members. During the developmental stage of the child's character, the interactions between progenitors and babies are crucial to legitimize and encode positive core memories. Thus, if there exists a healthy relationship between members without drawing upon hierarchical positions within the family, then the child will grow up to resolve and face life as their parents would. Although it occurs throughout the whole show, especially with the relationships between Allison and Chris Argent, and Stiles and Sheriff Stilinski<sup>6</sup>, this project will only focus on Scott and Melyssa McCall, whose relationship is the closest ever seen between a supernatural individual and their consequent beloved relative. The strong connection between Scott and his mother results from the abandonment of his psychologically abusive father; they have been on their own most of the protagonist's life since Rafael McCall is but “a gene donor [...]; and that's all” (O'Donnell 2014, 26:50). As a consequence, the only family-related ISA Scott has ever known is his mother—a courageous, strong and brave nurse that offers him comprehension, kindness and love— (Davis 2014, 34:30–35:30). Furthermore, the fact that it was a rational and gentle woman who raised a boy on the grounds of kindness and respect towards everybody, especially towards other women due to previous mistreatment received from adult men, is what forges Scott's personality and, therefore, identity as a young male individual. Hence, it can be firmly stated that a great percentage of Scott's positive masculinity is the result of Melyssa McCall's work.

#### 4.4. Sexuality

This mechanism of equative social relations among the members of a cultural community is also reflected in the manner in which teen sexuality is represented in the TV series. To begin with, sexual attraction and its subsequent practice never appears in *Teen Wolf* as the driving force of the plot, as opposed to, for example, the love triangle between Edward Cullen, Bella Swan and Jacob Black throughout *The Twilight Saga*. In the case of Scott, sex is, in fact, the highest consummation of the romantic love he feels for Allison. This statement, on

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<sup>6</sup> Both relational family dynamics —Allison's (Davis 2014, 22:30–23:30) and Stiles' (Wallace 2014, 07:05–07:50)— are worth-analyzing, since they constitute great examples of attentive and protective parenting without establishing physical force to reassure the progenitor's position; but rather presenting a bond built upon trust, loyalty and love. However, due to the space limit of this paper, the only case study examined will be that of the protagonist and his closest family member.

the contrary, does not establish demisexuality as the only valid option for experiencing sex but, instead, provides with an unconventional but rather healthy representation of supernatural male protagonist figures in which sexuality plays a second fiddle and is not used in any context as a tool for reinforcing and consolidating neither power nor status within such social community. Nevertheless, despite sex as a regular activity among teenagers not being given too much credit in the show, it results fascinating how the theme of consent, consensual sex and safe sex are indeed given extreme importance on several occasions:

SCOTT: I don't want you to feel like you have to do anything you don't want to do.

ALLISON: I'm not doing anything I don't want to. Are you?

SCOTT: Are you seriously asking me that question?

(Sinclair 2011, 15:44)

According to Evie and Zachary Kendall, in the TV series the characters not only “approach conversations about consent without “killing the mood” and how youth sexuality is discussed without imposing conservative, heteronormative rhetoric or resorting to ‘slut-shaming’” (2011, 26), but also “rather than allowing this potential power imbalance [supernatural vs. human] to lead to sexual violence, *Teen Wolf* takes a more sex-positivist approach by promoting enthusiastic consent and a more equal power dynamic” (31) and that “by this approach, consent is never implied for sexual activity but must be actively sought, and ambivalence, like explicit resistance, is recognized as a distinct lack of consent” (31):

HEATHER: Do you want to? I mean would you be ok with that?

STILES: Would I be ok with that? I believe so, yeah. No yeah, very.

(Mulcahy 2013. 3:40)

Furthermore, the show's format is so innovative that it includes homosexuality and homoeroticism without falling into the stereotype of the feminized gay man. This topic, instead, is not developed further than what it is presented in the plot: simple romantic or sexual relationships between men that do not need to be explained any more than heterosexual practices do: by legitimizing its existence as something ordinary rather than stigmatizing the matter is what contributes to its acceptance in hegemony. Similarly, *Teen Wolf* does not propose heterosexuality as the first option for categorizing individuals according to their gender performances, much less werewolves who, as previously mentioned often fulfill all the

characteristics to be considered hegemonic masculine figures, according to Robert Brannon and Raewyn Connell. Thus, by breaking Brannon's first rule of masculinity "No Sissy Stuff", the TV series sets a precedent for different representations of male sexuality in supernatural narratives that pave the way for the future decoding of the normative cultural discourses and practices, and that legitimize diversity as a cultural component for the construction of a nation.

#### 4.5. Positive Masculinity

To legitimize diversity, it first needs to be recognized. "Masculinity is a way to explain men [...] to refer to the innate qualities and properties of men that distinguish men from women" Greig and Kimmel argue, at the same time acknowledging that men's privileges, whether those be political, economic or cultural, arise from their physical advantage opposed to that of women (2000, 3):

Understanding masculinity as discourse broadens the focus beyond men and the biological or cultural bases of their masculine nature or identity. The challenge confronting development practitioners concerned with men's relationship to gender equality is to place this relationship in the context of relations of power not only between but also within the genders. Addressing masculinity as discourse [...] helps this placement by clarifying the values and practices that create such hierarchies of power. [...] Pluralizing masculinity into masculinities is more than a way to explain there are many ways to be a man. It is useful for understanding the connections between masculinities and the distribution and effects of power and resistance among the different forms of masculinity. This has significant implications for development work on men and gender equality. It suggests that such work should not be confined by a concern to work on masculinity in order to reform the male identity and offer men better ways of being a man, however useful such work may be to specific individuals. (6)

Henceforth, and as a consequence of Feminist Studies, the emergence of Positive Psychology/Positive Masculinity (PPPM) arises during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although there does not exist a standardized definition for PPPM, the premise of any positive psychology branch is to emphasize the study of strength and virtue over disease, weakness and damage (Kiselica and Englar-Carlson 2010, 277). Thus, studying and promoting in their project the positive aspects related to traditional masculinity with the aim of further understanding the construction of identities among boys and men: relational styles, ways of caring, group orientation, use of humor and heroism among others (277–8). Considering Kiselica and Englar-

Carlson's arguments, it can be firmly stated that the figure of Scott McCall constantly constructs his masculine identity by promoting positive masculinity through 1) his relational style regarding the way he develops a friendship bond and intimacy with other members, especially with Stiles (Taylor 2013, 36:13–37:10)<sup>7</sup> and Allison (Davis 2014, 38:45–40:25); 2) the externalization of feeling and caring for everyone around him and his will to protect them all, even if it costs him life (Taylor 2013, 34:35); 3) the value and sense of belonging and stability that the pack provides him (Davis 2016, 21:30–21:44); 4) the use of humor as a way to establish bonds between individuals, concretely the explicit bromance he maintains with Stiles; and 5) his tendency to heroism, which is primarily driven by numbers 1–3, as another way of demonstrating bravery, nobility, loyalty and respect to his pack (Davis 2014, 36:10–38:10). Henceforth, and pondering all the evidences already presented, it remains concluded that not only does Scott McCall perform a positive masculine gender identity, the first in teen supernatural narratives before fourth-wave feminism, but also instigates other individuals to question the canonical werewolf stereotype, given all the oppressive and dictatorial connotations it implies, and reject discourses of violence until it is the last resource to solve a problem, which will always be as defense rather than offense to an external threat.

#### 4.6. Similar contemporary productions

To understand completely the thesis of this paper, *Teen Wolf* must be juxtaposed to other contemporary productions containing supernatural narratives, as for example, *The Twilight Saga* or *The Vampire Diaries*. It results outstanding how werewolves are depicted in these shows, which, for the record, were produced around the same time —within a 3-year span:

“The wolf-men in the novels appear as the epitome of hyper masculinity, they posture amongst themselves and metaphorically “mark their territory” (Schell 114) by offering up evidence of their fearlessness, from volunteering to kill vampires to jumping from dangerously high cliffs as a show of competitiveness (New Moon 150). They also walk around in states of undress to reveal their muscular torsos. What this actually equates to is a Darwinian display of sexual selection, ‘a struggle between the males for possession of the females’ (Darwin 73).” (Kubiesa 2017, 56)

In this sense, hence, lycanthropes in literature and cinematography tend to be heavily lumbersexualized, performing a very high level of toxicity through a hegemonic masculinity

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<sup>7</sup> Previously witnessed in season 1, episode 6 (Sinclair 2011).

that exerts power not only among pack members, but also external individuals, especially weaker males and women. As Mark A. Rademacher and Casey R. Kelly argue:

Lumbersexuality represents an explicitly gendered identity project [...], embraced by a group of mostly White, young, middle - to upper-middle-class, urban-dwelling men [...] that subscribe to a gender-normative taste regime that harkens back to the trappings of the stereotypical lumberjack of cultural imagination [...] as a means to reclaim an authentic masculinity in an era of demasculization (Jeffords, 1989, 1994). (2019, 27)

In addition, they add, lumbersexuality feeds on “the appropriation of cultural identities and symbols to construct skewed versions of history that strip actual ‘work’ of meanings and value and that often perpetuate imperialistic and exaggerated masculine stereotypes” (28) and men struggle with a contemporary crisis of masculinity in a world of fluid and contradictory masculinities (29). Thus, after a hipster era, where male gender expressions were much less binary and more flexible, masculine entities responded back to this identity crisis by turning back to canonical stereotypes of masculinity, often built on the grounds of hegemonic masculinity and toxic discourses. This factor, applied to the conventional werewolf trope priorly discussed, has only magnified the level of toxic masculinity represented in supernatural TV productions parallel to *Teen Wolf*, in this case Jacob Black, from the *Twilight Saga* and Tyler Lockwood from *The Vampire Diaries*.

The dynamics of the Quileute’s are quite simple: the werewolf gene runs in their veins and some sort of traumatic event triggers the turn. However, this shift from boy to werewolf has many more implications than it does in the TV series analyzed in this project. To begin with, they fully shift into a wolf, thus losing their complete humanity during the time of the metamorphosis. The physical change, which includes growth of body hair and changes in muscular physiognomy, together with an evolution towards aggressivity and violence, is linked directly associated to male puberty, reinforcing, in this way, extreme replications of heteronormative masculinities (Weitz 2009, 00:39:00 vs. 00:53:30 and 00:55:55). On the other hand, the public experiences Tyler Lockwood as a far more toxic man prior to the shift than it occurs with Jacob. This is due to the lycanthrope mechanics within the TV series. In *TVD*, werewolves only turn if they kill -accidentally or voluntarily- a person, and, like in the *Twilight Saga* and opposed to *Teen Wolf*, they are also stripped of any humanity left in their bodies only once the full moon arrives. Despite the similarities in the dynamics of the shift from human to (were)wolf, in the first example presented, lycanthropy not only implies a systematic external

and evolutive change with respect to the physique, but also an internal downgrade into toxic masculinity—for all the specimens—. However, in *Mystic Falls*, the turn does not explain or justify discourses of violence; it only magnifies their true self, which in the show is presented usually as a white, middle-upper class men with influence in the community (Williamson and Plec 2009, 6:30; Plec and Dries 2011, 15:30)<sup>8</sup>.

In *Teen Wolf*, nevertheless, there exist instances of hegemonic lumbersexual masculinity, concretely through Derek Hale, who is at first represented as the canonical werewolf trope but whose character ends up evolving towards a more insightful questioning of his *modus operandi*, leaving toxicity behind, in part due to the influence of Scott's leadership abilities. Derek is depicted hypersexualized, mysterious and appealing, clearly targeted to the male-attracted audience, since all the aspects conventionally related to masculinity are extremely heightened through his character (Macer 2011, 21:20). Furthermore, his personality is presented as manipulative, dark, untrusting, convenient and, to a certain extent, even toxic during the first two seasons of the show (Passmore 2012, 12:50–13:35). Thus, within the same show that provides the public with healthy representations of masculinity which contribute to rejecting toxic heteropatriarchal discourses, there exist also instances of hegemonic supernatural masculine figures that serve the purpose of constructing and enhancing Scott's gender identity as a young man, rather than legitimizing discourses of violence. Notwithstanding, “despite the power available to the series' heroic werewolves, they are always responsible for controlling their own behaviour [...]. There is always a choice and barring incidences of total mind control [...]” (Kendal and Kendal 2015, 34). Therefore, although finding evidence of justification of violence through lycanthropy in some of the cultural products analyzed, there is no clear correlation between the werewolf gene and hegemonic masculinity but a magnification of toxic masculine traits to which the werewolf shift contributes to consolidating a hegemonic masculine status within the community, since it grants the individual extra physical force, the first tool for power dominance.

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<sup>8</sup> Such pieces of evidence correspond for the before and after becoming a werewolf respectively. In *The Vampire Diaries*, toxic behaviors among male supernatural characters are less explicit than in *Teen Wolf* due to the legitimization process of violent discourses perpetuated by patriarchy. Since they constitute hegemony, those traits are hardly questioned neither by the audience nor by the producers, and therefore are not perceived in the manner of criticism, as it occurs in Jeff Davis' TV series.



#### 4.7. A future projection of the werewolf trope respectful with feminism

*Teen Wolf* is the first supernatural teen drama presenting positive masculine figures in their show. From the protagonist to secondary characters, the TV series has made a clear statement regarding toxicity: it must not be represented any further, so there is no risk of replication in real life. It is an undeniable fact that the show does indeed contain toxic and hegemonic masculine figures, such as Peter Hale, Derek Hale to a certain point in the plot, and Gerard Argent (Davis 2012, 25:35), among others. Nonetheless, these villains serve the mere purpose of reaffirming positive masculine identities in *Teen Wolf*, instead of being given too much voice. They are only present to reassure Scott's, and his pack's, benevolence and will to maintain the natural balance as equilibrated as possible, without the interference of toxic male figures to destroy it for prowess and dominance (Davis 2013, 27:00–28:10). Scott McCall is the living proof of a positive masculinity not only in the magic world, but also in the real world. This feminist insight the TV series offers sets the precedent for future supernatural productions in which girls, firstly, and boys secondly, will not legitimize and encode discourses of violence as something normal, but rather recognize their appearance in cultural products as something existing that needs to be questioned and rejected so as to finally wreck the pillars by which heteropatriarchy is sustained.

#### 4.8. Socio-historical context of the TV series

The innovative component of *Teen Wolf*—apart from its progressive attitude towards criticizing toxic masculinities in the supernatural genre targeted to young adults as well as providing the public with lycanthropic representations that deviate from the traditional tendency of heteropatriarchal werewolves—is the content analyzed in context with the sociohistorical events occurring during the second decade of the century in the United States. To begin with, there had been a political transition from George W. Bush to Barack Obama, from a Republican Head of State (2001–2009) to a Democrat one (2009–2017), and the War on Terror started by George W. Bush ended with Barack Obama's announcement of the decease of Osama Bin Laden. Apart from the respective changes in foreign policy, among other issues, such political transition brought to the fore a new Presidential style: pragmatic, partisan, polite, but also empathetic, nurturing, or collaborative (Engbers and Fucilla 2012, 1131–2). Obama opted for embracing a nurturing and caring approach to leadership, setting new pop culture trends, which, in a way, will be reflected in cultural products. With reference to this social context, it is remarkable that the TV series (2011–2017) had been created under the wing of fourth-wave

feminism—which outstands for its connection to technology and the advantages it supposes for spreading digital activism (Soucie, Parry et al. 2019, 151)—containing a progressive tone and feminist discourse as opposed to other previous and contemporary productions of the genre; and the increasing concern and gradual achievement of women and LGBTQ+ member’s rights from 2012—the origin of the #MeToo Movement—. This era particularly coincides with most of Barack Obama’s presidency, one of the biggest positive masculine referents of the time in which *Teen Wolf* develops.

Considering that *Teen Wolf* was produced and first televised by the MTV, some aspects need to be considered so as to fully understand this work in context. The channel, launched in 1981, was originally designed to provide entertainment to millennials, and was popularized for its display of music videos, “a widely popular object of study in the 1980s and the early 1990s” (Fowler 2017, 4).

The video for Michael Jackson’s ‘Thriller’ made its international première on MTV at the very end of 1983 [...] and it included ambiguous elements that went beyond length and scope of the song. It was also one of their first videos by a black musician to appear on MTV and raised the bar for pop videos thereafter.” (63)

Noteworthy, the director of Michael Jackson’s first popular hit was John Landis, an openly homosexual film maker that also directed other supernatural productions containing canonical werewolves, such as *An American Werewolf in London* (1981).

Indeed, after Michael Jackson’s *Thriller*, there was an explosion in feature films that remained bold, imaginative, and fresh, whose rawness inspired youth across decades, and that consolidated a powerful body of work (74). Henceforth, the MTV was, and continues to be an entertaining tool that, despite promoting conservative ideologies by banalizing and demonizing the Anglo-Saxon working-class (Jones 2011), also offers a space for progressive ideas to be represented globally without letting other political ideologies interfere in the discourse the channel is legitimizing. This may be the most plausible reason why *Teen Wolf* had been first screened in MTV, because due to its progressive ideas regarding gender, sexuality and social equality might have been somewhat excessive to other TV chains such as Fox, which embraces a more conservative approach (Jones 2012, 178).

## 5. Conclusion

Considering that *Teen Wolf* proposes a male supernatural protagonist that aligns with Positive Psychology/Positive Masculinity by reinventing the werewolf stereotype through the rejection

of toxic traits found in other supernatural narratives —such as hegemonic masculinity and violent heterosexuality as the driving force of the plot— and the reinforcement of positive roles traditionally associated to masculinity —like heroism, responsibility, caring and bravery, among others—, it may be stated that the figure of Scott McCall, together with many others that have not been analyzed due to the space constraints, constitutes the first feminist friendly alpha male protagonist figure in US supernatural teen television who constructs his gender identity —and also his gender expression— under the premise of rejecting every male individual that contributes to the legitimization of toxic behaviors and discourses of oppression —considering the creator and showrunner of *Teen Wolf* is straightforwardly homosexual as a relevant factor for the depiction of a range of different masculinities in the show (2012 01:10–01:34)<sup>9</sup>—. In a world where the cements of patriarchy start to tremble, there has to be a shift in the focus of the study field: once the debate on toxic masculinity is more than drained, positive representations of masculinity need to emerge so as to instigate men-to-be to embody healthy expressions and identities of masculinity (Wilson, Gwyther, et al. 2021, 1). Hence, since television constitutes one of the biggest Ideological State Apparatuses in the digital era and assuming that due to the democratization of the television and the internet such cultural products are accessible to almost everyone, it is fair to state that Scott, then, as a character relatable to other teenagers undergoing the process of discovering their true identity, is the perfect tool to demonstrate reality: there exists diversity of masculinities and representing masculinities that are real but not given voice will cause a great impact for future generations. An era has ended. There is no room for Jacob or Tyler anymore. From now on, people only need Scott. After all, *he* is the *true* alpha.

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<sup>9</sup> No evidence of authorship of such video.

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