THE EVER-CHANGING NATURE OF THE BEAST

CULTURAL CHANGE, LYCANTHROPY
AND THE QUESTION OF SUBSTANTIAL TRANSFORMATION
(FROM PETRONIUS TO DEL RIO)

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Cor eius ab humano commutetur et cor ferae detur ei
et septem tempora mutentur super eum (Dan. 4,13)

O levem nimium manum / Nec potentia gramina,
Membra quae valeant licet, / Corda vertere non valent!
(Boethius, Consolatio 4.3)

Cultural change and magical metamorphoses

Werewolves have been part of the European imagination for more than two millennia. The unsettling metamorphosis from man into beast with its clear echoes of prehistoric animal magic and shamanistic beliefs from the religious life of ancient communities of hunters, became a literary topic in post-classical Antiquity and the Middle Ages, not as a subject of anthropological inquiry, but rather as a parameter of cultural change and even cultural unease. Classical authors tended to look upon lycanthropy as a punishment for sacrificial violence, or as a relapse into some primordial aggression. Christian authors from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries found themselves challenged by the question of substantial transformation, and the werewolf-lore from that period bears witness to the intellectual and cultural struggles between Christian beliefs and pagan traditions. It was a period of great intellectual vitality, in which the werewolf, for a while, lost some of its ferociousness. The demonologists of the later Middle Ages and early modern period, however, tended to regard lycanthropy as a dangerous element of the more encompassing threat of heresy and witchcraft. Consequently, they made it a topic of philosophical and judicial inquiry. These

1 For general discussions of the material on werewolf-lore, the reader may be referred to Douglas, The Beast Within, Otten, Lycanthropy Reader, and Summers, The Werewolf: See also Woodward, The Werewolf Delusion, and Copper, The Werewolf; on werewolves in popular culture.
varying interpretations display not so much historical interest, as a certain apprehension regarding cultural and intellectual developments and changes. It is the purpose of this contribution to survey some of the werewolf literature in the light of the cultural anxieties and intellectual concerns they embody, in three major transitional eras: late Antiquity, the period around 1200, and the late medieval and early modern period.

In the classical and medieval sources the religious roots and ritual functions of lycanthropy are frequently hinted at but nearly always framed if not reorganised and reinterpreted in a new cultural setting, in which not religious beliefs, but the nature of the transformation itself becomes the object of reflection. Consideration of the causes and conditions of man-wolf metamorphoses has prompted scholars to distinguish between 'real' and 'illusory' transformations as a means of classifying werewolf-lore. The former category is meant to encompass all werewolf-stories closest to pagan indigenous European traditions, whereas the latter denotes all reports that regard man-wolf transformations as myths or – in a Christian context – demonic illusions. The distinction is useful mainly in reminding students of werewolf-lore that the tradition of this metamorphosis has undergone a noticeable change throughout late Antiquity and the medieval period. The processes of urbanisation, rationalisation and Christianisation have exhausted ancient cultic beliefs and have refocused attention on the question of the transformation itself. Although deprived of their proper cultural setting, the man-wolf metamorphoses survived in the language of mytho-

2 Mnard, 'Les histoires', pp. 213 ff., makes a distinction between (a) 'les faux loups-garous' and (b) 'les vritables loups-garous'. Fake-werewolves come about through a unique and involuntary metamorphosis, caused by the intervention of an exterior agent (magician, deity): they retain some essential human characteristics (reason, speech). Real werewolves undergo a voluntary and periodical metamorphosis brought about by nature or magic and supported by tradition. A similar distinction is made by Harf-Lancner, 'La métamorphose illusoire', pp. 208 f., who speaks of real and illusory metamorphoses. The latter are regarded as diabolic illusions and can be found in apologetic literature produced by clerics. The former is an element of lay culture and can be found in profane literature. Cf. also Bynum, 'Metamorphosis', pp. 1001 f. Bacou, 'De quelques loups-garous', pp. 30 ff., attempts a classification for both classical and medieval sources and makes a distinction between the exterior and internal causes of a transformation. As exterior cause she mentions a superior instance, a deity, punishing a man, guilty of some transgression by turning him into a wolf. Internal causes are the individual's relations with the community (hunters) which, for the purpose of integration, make the werewolf the object of an initiation ritual. Distinctions such as these are useful, but not decisive. What the history of werewolf-lore shows is not a transformation of lycan-thropes (from real to fake – why would a werewolf changed through magic be less real than a werewolf transformed by the full moon?), but a rationalisation of the metamorphosis-concept.
graphers, philosophers, poets, social critics, doctors, clerics, or inquisitors. Hence, werewolves are virtually always seen through the eyes of these authors, and there can be as many metamorphoses as there are perspectives. As a result, 'real' werewolves do not exist. Artists envision substantial changes that philosophers deem impossible and that clerics attribute to demonic illusions, but all these metamorphoses are cultural reinterpretations of motifs handed down from a distant past or a different culture.

The causes of man-wolf transformations are various and can be grouped into a number of categories that we shall encounter in the course of this contribution. Diachronically these categories seem to display a gradual process of rationalisation, which we hope to trace in the analysis of the sources. Reflections on the nature of the metamorphosis also allow us to glimpse the cultural and intellectual transformations involved, in which the lycanthropes are depicted sometimes as images, sometimes as tangible manifestations of moral deprivation or demonic danger. In the following paragraphs we shall distinguish five categories of causes.

(1) In some of the classical and medieval sources, especially the literary ones, the metamorphosis is brought about by magic, performed by a magician. A fine instance is Vergil's eighth Eclogue in which a woman tries to enchant her lover by means of magical herbs from Pontus, which she received from a sorceror named Moeris. Such herbs also enabled the sorcerer to change himself into a wolf. He would then hide in the forests near the Black Sea, raise the souls of the dead from their graves, and use his powers to move corn from one field to the next. Magic, however, easily sustained in poetic fictions, would lose its potency at the hands of philosophers. Boethius would turn the metamorphosis into a metaphor. In his Consolatio, he explains how moral decline debases human nature, so that 'you cannot think of anyone as human whom you see transformed by wickedness. You could say that someone who robs with violence and burns with greed is like a wolf. In the verse that follows, Boethius tells the story of Circe who turned Odysseus's men into animals (such as a boar, a lion, or a tiger):

Another becomes a wolf, / Can't weep, can only howl.

Yet Circe can only change the bodies, not the minds of her victims.

Her herbs were powerless;/ They changed the body's limbs
But could not change the heart;/ Safe in a secret fastness

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3 Vergil, Eclogue 8.97-99: *his (herbis) ego saepe lupum fieri et se condere silvis /
Moerim, saepe animas imis excire sepulcris / atque satas alio vidi traducere messis.*

The motifs of the land of the dead and the moving of crops resemble similar motifs in the story of the Baltic werewolf Thiess, see infra.

The strength of man lies hid.

Even in the poetic metaphor the poet exercises philosophical restraint.

(2) Another cause of the metamorphosis lies in the forces of destiny that instil a duality of nature in the lycanthropes. They transform because the Fates, or nature, or even the moon bring it about periodically. We shall encounter a telling example of this in Petronius, but for the moment we might briefly look at a medieval handbook of penance from the eleventh century, namely the Corrector of Burchard of Worms. Burchard scolds those who believe that the Fates (Parcae) exist and can cause a person to change into a werewolf. He regards this as 'vulgar folly' and prescribes a penance of ten days on water and bread. In the early Middle Ages, folklore, it would seem, was pernicious only to the extent it was deemed irrational.

(3) By far the most frequently mentioned cause of metamorphosis is that of the avenging and deity. Zeus turned men into wolves for having made human sacrifices (Pausanias); God, through the person of a saint, did the same as a punishment for those who opposed the new faith (Gerald of Wales). The werewolf emerges here at a cultural turning point and appears to capture the moment when civilisation turns away with a sense of guilt and remorse or even despair and hostility from a past that cannot be made to concur with the present, but that nevertheless rears its head with a final howl. A famous biblical instance, which one encounters frequently in medieval literature, though it is not a metamorphosis proper, and certainly not a case of lycanthropy, is the madness of Nebuchadnezzar who was bereft of his senses as a punishment for personal pride (Dan. 4). The story was occasionally used by demonologists in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to demonstrate that lycanthropy was an illusion resulting from mental weakness, but, more importantly, for medieval readers the king’s condition also implied the end of a rule, and hence a change of culture.

(4) Occasionally lycanthropy is explained from psychic disorders. There are physicians from late Antiquity like Paulus Aegineta, who treat
lycanthropy as a form of melancholy, and similar explanations can be found later in Avicenna, and, naturally, in Robert Burton’s Anatomy of Melancholy (1621). A well-known modern example is Freud’s classical case of the wolf-man, which was reinterpreted by Carlo Ginzburg as an expression of cultural anxieties. Freud’s Russian patient, Ginzburg surmised, was in fact a lycanthrope, a man born with the caul and hence culturally predestined to be a shape-shifting shaman, at least according to the pattern of folk belief engrained on the mind of the Russian patient by his njanja, his nanny. This old cultural setting did not agree with the new enlightened culture of western Europe and this cultural friction made the werewolf change into a neurotic rather than into a wolf. Freud’s mistake had been his failure to appreciate the elements of folk-belief in his patient’s narratives, which led him to reduce the problem to sexual trauma.9

(5) A form of mental alienation also played a part in the explanations forwarded by Christian demonologists from Augustine to Del Rio. They looked upon lycanthropy as a demonic illusion. Examining the question of substantial transformation, they diligently analysed the extent to which demons could affect nature and the ways in which demons could interfere with human perceptions. This ultimately led to a redefinition of the very concept of magic, which in the Middle Ages and the early modern era was lifted from folk-ritual to natural philosophy by virtue of speculative thought. For the man-wolf metamorphosis this implied that the myth was not discarded as a fiction but that lycanthropy, as a demon-wrought phenomenon, was believed to abide by laws of nature yet to be examined. Man-beast metamorphoses were only one symptom of the machinations of the much dreaded ‘secret society of witches’ that was believed to aim at overturning religion and society. Unrelenting demon-beliefs dominated the world-view of an era now regarded as an important cultural turning point. Those who believed that man-wolf metamorphoses were caused by magic or madness, by deities or demons, or simply by nature itself, never went so far as to admit that the werewolf originated in the conventions of earlier rituals and later fictions. Some form of objective existence was attributed to werewolves, especially to the illusory ones of the demonologists that were believed to obfuscate sense and reason. Hence these werewolves retained their compelling and threatening nature. In a wider context such a confusion of nature and convention was criticised by Karl Popper for producing a magical world view which, common to tribal societies, echoes what he

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called a 'despair of rationality' in more complex civilisations.\textsuperscript{10} Something close to a 'despair of rationality' we shall encounter in the demonological discussions of lycanthropy of the early modern era.

The history of lycanthropy can be read as an index of cultural change and intellectual development; the literature recording this mythology, is always marked by a 'change of heart' and by the ensuing tension between old loyalties and new obligations, former beliefs and current doubts, past prospects and present despair, or earlier superstitions and current convictions. Werewolf-lore occupied a distinct albeit modest place in the minds and beliefs of the authors with whom we shall be dealing, and their representations of the werewolf clearly betray their ideas on history, society, and the human condition (on the animal part of the \textit{animal rationale}). Of the classical period it is especially Petronius who appeals to the modern reader: his werewolf tale has a touch of the Gothic, and it will serve as our point of departure for an analysis of late antique lycanthropy.

\textit{Petronius: the wolf in the moonlight.}

Petronius, a dandy at the court of Nero, a man, according to Tacitus, given to idleness and extravagance,\textsuperscript{11} wrote a work known as \textit{Satyricon}, as loose in structure as the morals of the decadent nightlife and dinner-parties at Trimalchio's house which it depicts. One of the amusements amid the abundance of food and drink, discussions of poetry, drunken brawls, acrobats and the fue-alarm that will in the end drive the guests away, is the story of a werewolf told by Niceros, a former slave. One evening, in the absence of his master, Niceros desired to visit his mistress Melissa, but somewhat apprehensive about making this evening walk in the full moon on his own, he asked a guest from his house, a soldier named Orcus, to accompany him. After a while, taking a rest among the tombstones along the road, Niceros, much to his amazement, saw the soldier take off his clothes and put them on a pile, around which he urinated. The soldier then changed into a wolf, and ran howling into the forest. Niceros was surprised to discover that the bundle of clothes had turned into stone. Overcome by fear, he made his way to the house of Melissa where he learned that a wolf had entered the house and killed some of the sheep. A servant had chased the wolf away by stabbing the beast in its neck. At daybreak Niceros returned home. On the spot where the petrified clothes had lain only a few hours earlier, there was now a pool of blood, and at home he learned that the soldier was in bed

\textsuperscript{10} Popper, \textit{Open Society}, vol. 1, pp. 12 ff., 57 ff. Popper pointed at the tradition in the West that looked at sociohistorical mutability from the perspective of a metaphysics of stability or permanence. I apply his argument of the confusion of nature and convention especially to the unquestioned demon-beliefs of the demonologists.

\textsuperscript{11} Petronius, \textit{Satyricon}, introduction, p. ix.
while a doctor tended a fierce neckwound. Niceros swore he had stayed clear of the werewolf *(versipellis)* ever since. The guests were astonished and Trirnalchio contributed to the general atmosphere with another horror story about witches stealing the dead body of a young slave-boy; but when the sentiment of pleasant fright was exhausted, the party soon moved on to other amusements.  

The transformation from man into beast is not ill-suited to the decadent years of Nero's reign. The werewolf tale not only betrays the period's taste for the macabre, it also gives us a reinterpretation of obsolete beliefs and archaic myths. Lycanthropy, once a cultic or religious phenomenon in a tribal community, changed in the classical and post-classical era into a topic for moralising literature (e.g. Ovid). Petronius stands apart from this, for moral lessons do not concern him. The lycanthrope in his narrative is fated to undergo his transformation at full moon – the victim perhaps of a fickle decree of nature or Destiny. The werewolf is also a clear literary fiction and shows us the kind of psychological reactions it is meant to provoke. The past lives on in an entertaining but nevertheless disturbing way, for this fear is both fictional and real. The world of Trirnalchio and the other characters of the *Satyricon* is not based on social stability or moral determination; it is a highly mutable world of moral decay and danger. Its author, Petronius, the Arbiter of Elegance at Nero's court, incurred the envy of a rival who played on the "emperor's lust for cruelty" and compelled a slave to inform against him. Most of Petronius's household were imprisoned and Petronius himself retired, slicing his veins and slowly bleeding to death, leaving a will in which he included an account of the emperor's sex-life.  

Niceros's tale gives us horror, laughter, dissolution, and a justified despair of the future. The story also raises the question as to what its possible sources may have been. Lycanthropy appears to be a marginal topic in Graeco-Roman culture, largely centred on an ancient Arcadian ritual which is referred to in passing by a number of authors, from Plato to Augustine. The most important of these, from a historical point of view, are Pausanias and Pliny.

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12 Petronius, *Satyricon* 61-62, pp. 132-139 (Niceros's story); *Satyricon* 63, pp. 138-141 (Trimalchio's story). McMahon (*Paralysin Cave*, p. 195) argues that the werewolf story attests to 'culturally shared anxieties about the unstable nature of the everyday world' and gives the petrified clothes as an example. I agree with him on the story expressing anxieties, but the petrification of the clothes is instrumental to the myth. The clothes serve as a boundary-marker and are the wolf's only guarantee for returning to his former self. The petrification can even prevent theft. See the discussions of Pliny and Marie de France below. Cf. Buxton, 'Wolves', pp. 69-70, and Ménard, 'Les histoires', p. 229.

13 For another instance of the influence of the moon, see Propertius 4.5.13.

since they provide us with clues regarding ritual practices and religious beliefs and may shed some light on the story of Petronius.

**Pausanias and the wolf-tale of Arcadia**

Pausanias, the Baedeker of his day (second century AD), wrote an extensive travel-guide for the whole of Greece in which he collected a vast amount of ethnographic and antiquarian material. One of his reports concerns Arcadia, an isolated region on the Peloponnes, hemmed in by mountains, where local mythology bears traces of werewolf-lore, both in its etymologies ('lykos', wolf, appears frequently) and in its beliefs. Pausanias's descriptions are critical, for being confronted with arcane rituals involving human sacrifice and lycanthropy, he finds it hard to bring them in line with his more modern religious beliefs.¹⁵

Pausanias reports how Lykaon, the son of Pelasgos, the first king of Arcadia, founded the city Lykosura on Mount Lykaion ('the oldest city in the world'),¹⁶ where he also instituted the Lykaia festival. He worshipped Zeus whom he gave the surname Lykaios, and sacrificed a baby on the altar of the deity. This angered Zeus Lykaios and, according to the legend, Lykaon was turned into a wolf as a punishment. Pausanias makes Lykaon the contemporary of Cecrops, the king of Athens, who was the first to worship Zeus as the supreme god who forbade human sacrifice, and thus Pausanias can blame Lykaon for being unwise in matters of religion. He is convinced of the truth of the metamorphosis-story, for he argues that in former days righteous and pious men dined with the gods and were deified for their merits, while sinners were openly punished. But now sin had increased to such an extent that people no longer turn into gods, and likewise sinners will receive their punishments in the afterlife. The awareness of moral decline renders the miraculous devoid of significance and present-day lycanthropy-stories are discarded by Pausanias as lies. He mentions the belief that 'ever since the time of Lykaon a man has changed into a wolf at the sacrifice to Zeus Lykaios, but the change is not for life; if, when he is a wolf, he abstains from human flesh, after nine years he becomes a man again, but if he tastes human flesh he remains a beast forever.'¹⁷ In the eyes of Pausanias this belief is a superstitious concoction and he declines to investigate whether wolf-rituals during the secret sacrifices to Zeus Lykaios are still in practice: 'I was reluctant to pry into the details of the sacrifice; let them be as they are and were from the beginning.'¹⁸

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¹⁶ Pausanias 8.38.1.

¹⁷ Pausanias 8.2.6 (*Description of Greece*, vol. 3, p. 353).

¹⁸ Pausanias 8.38.7 (*Description of Greece*, vol. 4, p. 95). Pausanias's words have
Arcadian werewolf-lore is referred to by a number of other classical authors. Perhaps the oldest and most condemnatory remarks can be found in a section in Plato's *Republic*, where the change from party leadership to dictatorship is discussed. Plato uses the Arcadian myth as a metaphor: those who in celebration of Zeus Lykaios taste the entrails of a human sacrificial victim turn into wolves, and in much the same way do violent leaders, who do not shrink from spilling the blood of their fellow countrymen, turn into tyrants and dictators.\(^{19}\) From the text it is evident that civilised society abhors human sacrifice and that the story of the physical metamorphosis for Plato is a myth and at best a convenient metaphor.

Some of the material we encountered in Pausanias also surfaces elsewhere, for instance in the *Bibliotheca* attributed to Apollodoros, an extensive collection of mythographic material, presumably from the second century AD.\(^{20}\) Again we come across Lykaon, son of Pelasgos, but it is not he who makes a human sacrifice, but his eldest son (one of *fifty*) called Melaneus. These *fifty* sons excel in pride and impiety and when Zeus visits them in human guise they slaughter a boy and serve him as a dish to the guest. Zeus is enraged and *killed* forty-nine sons with his thunderbolts; only the youngest escapes. This mythographic collection clearly agrees with other sources on human sacrifice and cannibalism, but it does not mention the transformation into a wolf. Instead it introduces another element, be it hesitantly: Zeus's rage over the monstrosities of Lykaon's sons may have occasioned the great flood in the age of Deukalion.

This motif was taken up by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* where we can read how Jupiter, in a council of the gods, contemplates the destruction of the *human* race by means of a flood on account of the sins of Lykaon.\(^{21}\) Jupiter appeared to the Arcadian king in human guise, but Lykaon refused to do him homage and believing he was not a god even planned to *kill* him. On top of that, a hostage was killed, cooked and roasted and served to the guest, but Jupiter's rage destroyed the house and turned Lykaon into a wolf. The crime was so atrocious that Jupiter was quite resolved to eradicate the human race. For Pausanias, Plato, Apollodoros, and Ovid it is evident that human sacrifice and cannibalism are crimes and that the story of Lykaon belongs to a remote past, separated from the present by means of a watershed. Somehow society changed its views on lycanthropy and human sacrificial have been interpreted as suggesting that in the second century AD human sacrifice was still in use, but this has not been corroborated by archeology. See Buxton, 'Wolves', pp. 68–69. Cf. also Burkert, *Greek Religion*, pp. 279–280, on a mystery cult in Arcadia.

\(^{19}\) Plato, *Republic* 565d. Human sacrifice as part of the Lykaia celebrations is also suggested by the Platonic *Minos* 315c.


fice, and beliefs from the past are now, in the light of reason, discarded as myths. In a sense, the story of Lykaon marks a cultural transition towards a more civilised and urbanised community.22

Pliny: lycanthropy as a rite of passage

Pliny follows this line of thought and scolds the Greeks for their credulity regarding the fable of the werewolf.23 Basing himself on Varro, he makes mention of the story of an earlier author, Euanthes,24 who reported how a young man, a member of a particular family (ex gente Anthi), underwent a ritual test whereby he undressed himself, hung his clothes on an oak tree, swam across an Arcadian lake, and came out on the other side in the shape of a wolf. He would remain in that condition for nine years after which he would turn into a human again when swimming back through the same lake and retrieving the clothes he had left behind, under the condition that he would not eat human flesh during his time among the wolves. It has been pointed out that there are no references in this account to the feast of the Lykaia and its sacrifices, which may be explained by the rise of urban culture in Arcadia which changed the cult and made it more civilised. The hypothesis might be put forward that a traditionally minded group or family preserved a major element of the ancient cult, namely the man-wolf transformation.25 Pliny mentions human sacrifice in relation to another story which derives from Skopas, who wrote on Olympian champions. An athlete named Demaenetus of Parrhasia had eaten from a human offering made to Zeus Lykaios by the Arcadians, and had turned into a wolf. Ten years later he changed back to his old guise and became a victorious boxing champion once again.26

There are some striking parallels between Pliny's (or Varro's) account of the young man hanging his clothes on an oak tree and swimming across an Arcadian lake, and Petronius's soldier putting his clothes on the ground and urinating around them. In all likelihood this points to an ancient initiation rite, followed by a nine-year-period of wolf-life. Originally this may

22 Buxton, 'Wolves', p. 73: 'Lykaon is a bringer of culture as well as a criminal, and the whole narrative in Pausanias is from another point of view the story of the origins of civilisation in Arcadia'.
23 Pliny, Natural History 8.82: mirum est, quoprocedat Graeca credulitas!
24 Pliny, Natural History 8.81. Pliny was not the only one to quote Varro on this topic; cf. Augustine, De civitate Dei 18.17.
26 Pliny, Natural History 8.82. Cf. Pausanias 6.8.2, who speaks of the boxer Damar- chus, an Arcadian of Parrhasia who changed into a wolf at the sacrifice to Zeus Lykaios, and turned into a man again after nine years. Pausanias expresses his disbelief of this metamorphosis.
have been a period of military training, but for Petronius this echo from the past also reveals a cultural barrier. For a moment the garment of civilisation is removed and the skin of a different, more savage life is put on in answer to a call from a brutal past, that still has to be morally vanquished. Moral indignation and rational scorn are dominant in Plato, Ovid, Pliny, Apollodorus and Pausanias, but not in Petronius, where much of madness and more of sin are the soul of the plot.

From magic to madness

Werewolves rarely wag their tails in other quarters of the classical world. There is the earlier mentioned story of the sorcerer Moeris (in Vergil’s eighth Eclogue) who changed himself into a wolf by means of magical herbs. In his Metamorphoses, Apuleius parodies this magical shapeshifting when he describes the comic fate of the magician Lucius who turned himself into an ass by using the wrong ointment; much to his regret, for he had expected a nobler animal. Apuleius himself had to face trial for his detailed descriptions of the ointments, which incurred a charge for sorcery. Lycanthropy or other animal transformations no longer thrived on religious beliefs; they became the food of poets and parodists — and of doctors. Marcellus of Side regarded lycanthropy as a form of melancholy and prescribed bloodletting. The Alexandrian physician Paulus Aegineta (seventh century AD) knew of people suffering from melancholic lycanthropia who roamed around cemeteries and howled until dawn. These patients had feeble vision, very dry eyes and tongues, ulcerated legs, and they should be treated with baths, bloodlettings, strict diets, and opium to keep them sedated and to prevent their nightly wanderings (which took place, by the way, in February during the Roman feast of the Lupercalia). Thus the werewolf lost its fangs: he changed from an initiate or a magician into a madman.

The animal appearance was no longer a medium for communicating with the gods. The identification of man and beast as initiation had lost its purpose. Not only did Greek religion change from partly theriomorphic to wholly anthropomorphic, but also the rise of philosophy had a profound

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29 Burkert, Homo necans, pp. 103-104; Otten, Lycanthropy Reader, pp. 13, 41; Buxton, 'Wolves', p. 68. See also the medical sources quoted by Del Rio, Disquisitions II.18, p. 188a.
impact on theology and the concept of God,\textsuperscript{30} and this cast a completely new light on man-beast transformations. Lycanthropy, which may have been a ritual of initiation, was reinterpreted as divine punishment for canni-balistic sins, or became simply a metaphor for political violence. This change of religion was no doubt tied up with a change of culture whereby ancient hunting societies changed into agricultural and later urban communities. There are literary traces of this change, for instance in Homer who reports how Odysseus was initiated in the boar-hunt by his maternal grandfather Autolykos ("the very wolf"), an event which scarred Odysseus for life. It was this scar on his leg which much later served as a mark of identification for his old nurse when he returned from his journeys.\textsuperscript{31} Even more telling is the story of Romulus and Remus, the legendary founders of Rome who were suckled by a she-wolf. The emperor Augustus wished to re-suscitate this myth in the context of the festival of the Lupercalia (so named after the cave Lupercus where the she-wolf first rescued the twin), but cynical Romans did not take the myth too seriously and suggested the twin was raised by a \textit{lupa} (whore, she-wolf).\textsuperscript{32} Thus urban society makes ancient rituals redundant and the fate of the werewolf in the late classical period ends with literary amusement and madness, the unsettling impact of which can be read from Petronius.

\textbf{Augustine: old wolves and new questions}

But the path of the wolf does not end here. The breakdown of Roman culture coincides with the rise of Christianity, and where the former had conveniently put the wolf to sleep, the latter woke him up again. Christianity looked on pagan rituals and beliefs with some distrust and deemed it unwise to simply label them as ineffective myths or fables. Pagan religion had distinct dangers since it might involve the worship of demons, and demons, so

\begin{footnotes}
\item[30] Burkert, Greek Religion, pp. 64-66 (on problems relating to the evolution from a theriomorphic to an anthropomorphic religion), and pp. 305 ff. (on the rise of a philosophical religion). Cf. also Burkert, \textit{Anthropologie}, pp. 30-31 (some remarks on the urban revolution).
\item[31] Homer, Odyssey 19.392-466. Odysseus's grandfather may have been named Autolykos for his skill 'in theft and in oaths'. On the relation between the wolf-image and trickery, see Buxton, 'Wolves', p. 64.
\item[32] Livy 1.4.6-7, 1.5.1; cf. Bremmer, 'Romulus'. Scepticism about she-wolves suckling twins may have incited people to introduce a prostitute into the myth (Acca Laurentia, the only \textit{lupa/prostitute} available in Roman mythology). She was portrayed as the wife of the shepherd Faustulus, who raised Romulus and Remus (p. 32). A minor Greek mythographer used the Romulus and Remus story for another twin-myth: Lykastos and Parrhasios were nurtured by a she-wolf and became local chiefs in Arcadia (p. 31). On the Lupercalia, see the lemma by Baudy in Der neue \textit{Pauly}, vol. 7.
\end{footnotes}
the stories of the Gospels made clear, could plague people’s bodies and souls. This caused an important shift in the understanding and appreciation of lycanthropy in western culture.

The single most important witness regarding the wolf-rituals in the transition from pagan to Christian culture is Augustine, who, in drawing a comparison between the City of God and the city of the world, sums up the excesses of idolatry concomitant with the latter. His main source on lycanthropy is Varro and the small chapter in his De civitate Dei which he dedicates to this topic gives us the stories we already encountered in Pliny. Augustine mentions Circe who turned Odysseus’s companions into swine, and the wolf-transformations of the Arcadians, in which a werewolf swam across a lake, lived as a wolf among wolves for nine years and then returned again to his former human shape. He also mentions Varro’s account of the Olympian boxer, Damaenetus, who tasted from the human sacrifice to Zeus Lykaios, and was turned into a wolf for a period of over nine years. Finally Augustine quotes Varro saying that from these mystery cults the Roman Luperci were derived. Arcadians believed such transformations could be achieved only through divine power, and this is exactly what triggers the interest of Augustine: quid credendum sit de transformationibus. Such transformations are the work of demons, and the greater the power of demons, the stronger we have to cling to Christ. Augustine is not inclined to believe that transformation-stories are pure fictions. He has heard stories about Italian landladies using magical arts to turn travellers into pack-animals, and he believes Apuleius’s Golden Ass is quite a case in point.

Now demons cannot create new substances, but they can change the outward appearance of creatures. It was generally believed that demons lived in the atmosphere and could freely manipulate particles of air to assume different shapes and guises, but this is not what Augustine has in mind. He speaks of a person’s phantasticum – a creative mental image which exists in thoughts and dreams and can be changed and altered in countless ways. The images are not physical objects, but on the basis of the elements of memory they can assume a physical guise. The phantasticum, present in one person’s mind, can in some inexplicable way (ineffabili modo) present itself to others when their physical senses are blocked out. In other words, Augustine believes that demons can fool people by presenting images of non-existing things to their interior senses, while impeding the

33 Augustine, De civitate Dei 18.17.
34 Augustine, De civitate Dei 18.18.
35 Augustine, De civitate Dei 18.18: Quanto quippe in haec ima potestatem daemonum maiorem videmus, tanto tenacius mediatori est inhaerendum.
36 Medieval authors seem not too keen to criticise Augustine for being credulous or superstitious. Such criticism was, in fact, vented much later by Reginald Scot, Discoverie 5.3, ed. Nicholson, pp. 76-77.
exterior senses. Thus a man may believe himself to be a wolf whilst being in a state of torpor, and the image is transferred by demons onto others who will then share the same illusory conviction. In the mean time the actual bodies of the lycanthropes are lying somewhere, alive, but in a trance, deeper than sleep. Demons, in Augustine's eyes, are masters of virtual reality, and illusions of this type are necessary for fortifying idolatry.

Augustine achieved what no author before him would have even attempted: he gave the werewolf a new career in intellectual life. What according to men of letters was an obsolete religious belief, and according to doctors a mental illness, was according to Augustine one of the manifestations of idolatry whereby demons deceive humans by means of simulacra. In taking this position he made a number of philosophical points: (1) regarding the question whether or not substantial transformations really happen (he answered negatively); (2) regarding the power of demons to manipulate the human sensory system (he spoke of a modus ineffabilis but medieval thinkers would be more talkative); and (3) regarding the strength of the imagination and its importance for understanding the human mind. For Plato lycanthropy was an image, for Augustine it was a serious philosophical problem, and in the intellectual history of Europe it would henceforth be treated as such.

Metamorphosis and seminal reasons

It would take some time before scholars made lycanthropy into a set topic of demonological discussions. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it was mainly in the literary imagination, in works by Marie de France and Gerald of Wales, or in Guillaume de Palerne, that werewolves gained prominence. Yet it has been pointed out that literary interest in werewolves may well have been triggered by the general intellectual ferment of the period around 1200. The twelfth-century renaissance is marked by a strong interest in the dynamics and changeability of nature (relying on Augustine, Boethius, and Plato's Timaeus), further enhanced, a century later, by the impact of the Aristotle reception which gave rise to a welter of scientific speculation. Interest in the miraculous, in the processes of corruption and generation, in metamorphosis and metempsychosis, and even in the question of substantial

37 Augustine, De civitate Dei 18.18. Augustine in all likelihood did not know Aristotle's discussion of the interior senses and the imagination (De anima 427b17-429a9), though he may have known Plotinus's reference to the power of internal perception (Ennead 4.8.8.10). See esp. Rist, Augustine, p. 86, and Holscher, Reality of the Mind, pp. 45-57, notably pp. 53 ff.

38 Augustine, De civitate Dei 18.18.

39 Bynum, 'Metamorphosis', pp. 987-1013. For a general survey of the period, see Wetherbee, Philosophy, Cosmology and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance.'
transformation, surfaced in various places. Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* were read and commented upon in the twelfth century as a scientific and cosmological work, a poetic text-book on physical change. Alchemy experimented with the concept of the transmutation of substances, for which Albert the Great was willing to make allowances. He believed that a substance could be destroyed by heating which would remove its specific form and reduce it to prime matter, after which the material could be newly informed. Yet he limited this option to minerals. Still, free speculations on the nature of change, which drew their inspiration from the *Timaeus* and later from Aristotle, were checked by theological objections that sought to establish God as source and governor of all creation: Augustine's 'seminal reasons' rather than secondary causes provided the frame for explaining change. People may have looked with amazement at the wonders of nature, but *mirabilia* were clearly distinguished from *miracula*.

Aquinas more or less codified standard opinion. Material substances do not receive their forms from angels, the Christian counterpart of the intelligences, who as secondary causes are instrumental in the unfolding and development of nature in a neoplatonic cosmos. In the Christian world view, however, their powers are clearly limited. Matter is informed either through God, or through some agent itself composed of matter and form (whereby like can beget like), and material changes, especially those changes that are wondrous to the eyes of the beholder, are best explained in terms of Augustine's *rationes seminales*. These are formative principles strewn out by God across the whole of creation in the first six days. These will manifest themselves in the differentiation and perfection of nature only with the passage of time. Changes in matter brought about by angels or demons are therefore mainly operations through locomotion, whereby seminal reasons are activated. These result in *mirabilia*, but not in miracles, which can only be brought about by God.

This settled, once again, the question of substantial transformation and metamorphosis, which had captured the interest of scholars in the period

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41 Albertus Magnus, *Book of Minerals* 3.1.9, p. 179. Albert quotes Avicenna’s *De congelatione* which says that transmutation can only be accidental and never substantial (on Avicenna’s critique, see Holmyard, *Alchemy*, pp. 92-93), but Albert adds: *unless* the substance is reduced to prime matter.

42 Bernard Silvestris’s *Cosmographia* is a telling instance of the former, Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* of the latter. Cf. Colish, *Peter Lombard*, vol. 1, pp. 305 ff. (the Chartrain challenge) and pp. 336 ff. (on the Lombard’s critique).

43 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1a.65.4. Thomas takes his cue from Augustine, *De trinitate* 3.8.

around 1200. Quite tellingly, this era witnessed an upsurge of literary werewolf narratives in which elements of folklore and the belief in metamorphosis somehow titillated the intellect. Yet a more stable conception of nature would in the end prevail and the clerical and scholastic minds would look upon man-wolf transformations as illusions and explain them in terms of demons, locomotion and Aristotelian phantasmata. This becomes evident in William of Paris who in his *De universo* dedicated a chapter to the ways in which demons deceive men. He tells the story of a lycanthrope who was convinced that he turned into a wolf, though his body remained in a state of catalepsy (*tanquam mortuum*). Meanwhile the devil would creep into a wolf and would kill men and beasts. Fortunately a preacher came along and explained to the people of that region that this was a fiendish trick. He showed them the place where the poor lycanthrope lay in a trance and liberated the man of his demonic possession. William rounds off his discussion in Augustinian vein with a brief exposition on the workings of the phantasmata.

The great intellectual developments of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries created an air of optimism, of intellectual courage and audacity, that also became noticeable in the depictions of the werewolf. William of Paris’s preacher does not condemn the lycanthrope for sorcery (like his colleagues a few centuries later), but liberates him from the demon and comforts the frightened population by explaining how the devil performs his tricks. The devil, not the lycanthrope poses the threat.

**Gerald of Wales: the priest and the friendly wolf**

A clear instance of werewolf-lore surfacing at a cultural turning-point (in this case the Christianisation of Ireland) can be found in Gerald of Wales (Giralinus Cambrensis, twelfth century). He tells the story of a priest encountering a wolf who implores him to administer the Sacraments to his

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45 See the list in Harf-Lancner, *La metamorphose*, p. 217. Most of the sources listed there date from around 1200. They are: 1. Marie de France’s *Bisclavret* (1160-1170); 2. Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica* (1188); 3. The *lai* of *Mélion* (between 1190 and 1204); 4. *Guillaume de Palerne* (c. 1195); 5. A chapter from *Otta Imperialia* by Gervais of Tilbury (1209-1214); 6. *Arthur and Gorlagon* (fourteenth century); 7. The history of Biclarel (a reworking of *Bisclavret* in *Renart le contre-jâle*, c. 1320).


dying wife, a she-wolf. Through a curse by St. Natalis (Natal of Kilmanagh) they were exiled from the community and destined to live as wolves for seven years, at the end of which two others were to take their place. The seven-year period seems to be on a par with the nine-year period described by Pausanias and Pliny, but Gerald's story has another important element in common with the Greek and Roman authors. The transformation itself is not conceived of as part of a ritual but rather as a punishment or curse from a higher divine authority (in Gerald's story represented by St. Natalis, in the classical stories represented by a Zeus who abhors human sacrifice). Clearly this is meant to reject or condemn an older 'pre-civilised' cultural setting.

The wolf tears the wolf-skin from his wife, from head to navel, so that the priest sees an old woman, to whom he administers the Host, after which the wolf rolls back the skin. The priest performs his task hesitantly, more out of fear than out of compassion, but the friendly and civilised behaviour of the wolf, who puts the priest at ease by reassuring him that he need not be afraid, makes it clear to the reader that paganism is not a menacing threat. Pagan beliefs are represented as a hide that can be stripped off to reveal the true person reborn in the true faith.

Gerald's story has an intriguing and unresolved end: a local synod is convened in Meath to discuss what the priest has done, namely administering the Sacrament to a werewolf. The synod fails to reach an agreement and, at the instigation of Gerald, the priest is sent to Rome, but, sadly, the outcome remains unknown. The issue is not fully elaborated but one can surmise what the reasons were for calling the synod. The main question was: should the werewolf be regarded as a man or a beast? From Augustine it was known that real transformations were impossible, and that, hence, metamorphoses were fiendish illusions. Could it be, therefore, that the werewolf couple were under a demonic spell? For the priest this was not an issue. The werewolves he encountered are depicted as fully human and open to the true faith. The wolf-skins are a curse, but their souls are free and

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48 Boivin, 'Le prêtre', p. 55, and Milin, Les chiens, pp. 73-74, suggest that the werewolf motif was somehow mixed with the motif of the scape-goat: like the priest sending the goat into the desert, St. Natalis exiled the wolf-couple to cleanse the community. St. Natalis may certainly have been interested in 'cleansing', but the wolves' living apart from the community has clear parallels with the initiation period in the classical examples mentioned earlier, and has little to do with the motif of the scape-goat.

49 The change from nine to seven may suggest that Gerald's narrative makes an implicit link with the story of Nebuchadnezzar: et septem tempora mutentur super eum (Dan. 4,13).

50 A parallel story in Old Norse (c. 1250) relates how the Irish howled like wolves at St. Patrick preaching the Gospel. God punished some of them by turning them into wolves and condemning them to live in the woods for seven years. Ménard, 'Les histoires', p. 215.
certainly not in league with Satan. The priest was an optimist, and, despite some initial reservations, saw no harm in his charitable actions, but the other clergy did and examined the matter.

In a later version of the narrative Gerald follows suit and adds a lengthy exposé on Augustine's chapter on lycanthropy and transformation. Gerald himself believes in miraculous transformations done through magic, and gives the example of men changed into fat pigs and sold in the markets, but he adds that such beliefs should not be taken at face value: crossing water would break the spell, or otherwise the animals would resume their human form again anyway after three days. In toning down his own belief in metamorphosis, he allows himself to be guided by Augustine, explaining transmutation in terms of demonic tricks and illusions. The ambiguity that Gerald expresses (he compares the Incarnation to a man-wolf transformation) has been attributed to a struggle between a clerical and a popular conception of metamorphosis. For Gerald, in the end, clerical views prevail.

Gerald's werewolf is quite different from the frightening guilt-ridden creatures of late and post-classical Antiquity and, likewise, far removed from the demonic beasts that would hound the minds of the demonologists. The humane werewolf surfaces a number of times in the vernacular literary traditions of Northern Europe. In the next section we will give a brief survey.

Werewolves in medieval literature

Werewolves in courtly literature are usually depicted as victims of magic or malice. Although their transformation into a wolf is, on the whole, a natural process, they nevertheless become the involuntary victims of their wolfish state through the deceit of a woman. In line with clerical beliefs, the lycanthropes retain their humanity and their reason which enables their return to human society and gives them the possibility of having their revenge. Courtly werewolf-tales constitute a modest but coherent group and include Bisclavret, Biclarel, Mélon, and Arthur et Gorlagon.

Bisclavret, one of the Lais of Marie de France (twelfth century), is about the Breton knight Bisclavret, who for three days a week turns into a werewolf. He confides in his wife and tells her his secret, including the place where he keeps his clothes. This is crucial information because his clothes are his only guarantee for turning into a human again (also in the stories of Petronius, Varro, and Pliny the positioning of the clothes was important). But his wife betrays him, and has a suitor remove the clothes so

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52 Harf-Lancner, 'La métamorphose', pp. 223-224.
53 Marie de France, Lais, pp. 68-72. See also Bambeck, 'Das Werwolfmotiv in Bisclavret; Milin, Les chiens, pp. 76-79.
that poor Bisclavret is doomed to remain an animal. Bisclavret, however, is clever and in the end takes revenge on his wife. Bisclavret served as a model for two other werewolf accounts: Biclarel and Mélion.\textsuperscript{54} Biclarel is very similar to the lai of Marie de France, with the conspicuous difference that the wolf in Biclarel ferociously attacks and wounds the deceitful wife. In the anonymous Mélion, a knight of that name from the court of king Arthur has a magical ring with which he can ‘enmorphose’ and ‘demorphose’ himself. Unfortunately for him, his wife, entrusted with the ring, changes Mélion into a wolf and immediately makes for Ireland. The wolf has to win the favour of king Arthur to wreak vengeance.

The theme of woman’s inconstancy also features prominently in Arthur et Gorlagon, a Latin romance from the thirteenth or fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{55} King Gorlagon explains to king Arthur how his wife fell in love with a pagan prince and changed him, Gorlagon, into a wolf by means of a magical branch from a fairy tree. This tree was the king’s double, since they shared the same stature and were ‘born’ on the same day. In transforming her husband, the queen should have said: \textit{sis lupus et habeas sensum lupi}, but she made a mistake and said: \textit{sis lupus et sensum hominis habeas} – a mistake that conveniently parallels the theological and philosophical convictions that man’s heart and mind cannot be altered. By retaining his intelligence, Gorlagon is able to have revenge on his faithless wife. Traditional magical and ritual elements from werewolf-lore are clearly present in these narratives, especially in Mélion and Gorlagon where the lycanthrope’s life among the wolves is elaborated upon. Yet the dominant feature by far is the courtly setting of love and revenge which more or less determines the logic of the narrative and is chiefly responsible for organising the folkloristic motifs.

Literary romance likewise takes the fore in the werewolf-story in Guillaume de Palerne (earliest known French version 1194-1197) in which a Spanish prince called Alphonse is turned into a wolf by a wicked stepmother who uses a magical ointment. Even as a wolf, Alphonse is a romantic and sympathetic hero who rescues Guillaume, the son of the king of Sicily, and his mistress Melior. Elements of werewolf-lore surface in the story (Alphonse swims across the Strait of Messina, he rescues the lovers by hiding them in bear-skins; and his transformation into human shape is accomplished through a magical ring, a spell, an appropriate bath and the return of his clothes), but these are entirely subsidiary to the main plot.\textsuperscript{56}


A more forbidding image of the wolf, closer to indigenous traditions and untainted by the apprehensions of court and clergy can be found in the medieval Scandinavian sagas, especially the Icelandic *Volsungasaga*, committed to writing in the thirteenth century, but probably relying on older material. According to this saga, Sigi, founder of the Volsung family, killed a slave out of jealousy for being a more successful hunter, which caused him to be outlawed, to become a *varg i véum* (‘a wolf in the sanctuary’), but, like the biblical Cain, he founded his dynasty elsewhere, and became a successful warrior and looter. Later descendents, Sigmund and his nine brothers (also Volsungs), were threatened by king Siggeir who had Sigmund’s brother *killed* by a she-wolf. Through a trick, Sigmund managed to rip out the tongue of the animal, and thus killed it. The animal turned out to be a lycanthrope, the mother of Siggeir, who through witchcraft had turned herself into a wolf. Sigmund and another Volsung, Sinfjötli, go through a warrior initiation rite when they put on wolf-skins which they cannot take off for ten days. They more or less become wolves and howl appropriately. In this guise Sinfjötli outdoes Sigmund in bravery by *killing* eleven men on his own. After this wamor-initiation they burn the wolf-skins. The image of the wolf in these stories represents a threatening and numinous power, and the wolf-skin ritual is no doubt a wamor initiation.

These motifs also appear in other sagas. In Snom Sturlusun’s *Ynglinga Saga* there is talk of the *berserkgangr*, fierce wamors who assume a bear-skin to achieve a condition of ecstatic fury in combat. Also Odin himself assumes an animal shape, whilst his body is temporarily abandoned in a cataleptic state. A similar phenomenon is mentioned in *Hrólf’s Saga* where wamors fight in the guise of a bear whilst their bodies remain in a state of trance. The idea of a trance we already encountered in Augustine, who may have been aware that lycanthropy involved an ecstatic *ritual*, although he would not have read this in any of the classical sources discussed above.

From a comparison of the courtly romances from France and the Scandinavian sagas it is evident that European werewolf beliefs have cultic roots, even though the two types of literature bear witness to a clear distinction in cultural setting. The romances reveal the influence of clerical thought and courtly conventions, whereas the sagas seem to stand in closer proximity to the religious life of the hunting and warrior cultures of northern Europe. The lycanthrope in these types of literature is, on the whole, not a malevolent figure; quite the contrary, he is heroic, *warriorlike*, perhaps frightening and awesome, but also on occasion humane and benevolent.

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57 *Völusnagásaga* 1, in: *Isländische Vorzeitsagas*, vol. 1, p. 38.
58 Sigi resembles Lykaon in being both a criminal and a founder of a dynasty.
60 Davidson, ‘Shape-Changing’, p. 139, makes a connection with shamanistic lore.
This is certainly at odds with the image of the wolf imported from more southern climes with the Christianisation of Europe. In biblical terms the wolf could be an image of the devil and through Augustine the Middle Ages learned about the bad reputation of the Arcadian werewolves that already bore the stigma of condemnation in classical times. In a general sense all the vestiges of indigenous European paganism, including magic, witchcraft, animal transformations and the nightflights that so obsessed later demonologists, were, for the Church, elements of idolatry contrary to the true faith, and hence superstitions that had to be countered; in effect they were condemned as illusory. One of the most influential documents to make this point was the Canon episcopi (presumably ninth or tenth century) which was later incorporated in Gratian's Corpus juris canonici. It is made absolutely clear that nightly transvections and animal transformations (performed by the worshippers of Diana, the goddess of the hunt) do not happen in the body, but through devilish illusions in the spirit only. This was more or less Augustine's point and it was even confirmed by some indigenous traditions that spoke of ecstatic trances. The only weapon of condemnation that the Canon offered was excommunication, but this would change towards the end of the Middle Ages.

Werewolves on trial

Literature was not the only source where werewolf-lore surfaced. With the rise of the witchcraze at the very end of the Middle Ages also werewolves were hounded from their lair. In the sixteenth century a number of famous as well as gruesome werewolf-trials was conducted in Poigny, Angers, St.-Claude, Bordeaux, Dôle and other places, but the most famous lycanthropy trial took place a century later in Livonia.

In the year 1692, in a village called Jürgensberg in Livonia, a trial was conducted against an old man of eighty, named Thiess. He was accused of being a lycanthrope and because the judges were unsuccessful in persuading the old man into making a statement that he had concluded a pact with the devil, they sentenced him to ten whiplashes. The unsettling thing about Thiess's case was that he openly confessed to being a werewolf but vigorously insisted that he was an enemy of the devil. Thrice a year – on the night of St. Lucy, St. John, and Pentecost – the "hounds of God" would go out across the sea to engage in battle with the devil and the witches who

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61 Cf. John 10:12; Mat. 7:15-16 (where false prophets are compared to ravening wolves).
62 Robbins, Encyclopedia, pp. 74-77, also gives the text of the Canon in translation. Cf. Tschacher, 'Der Flug'.
64 That Livonian werewolves swim through a great pool of water to turn into wolves.
were out to jeopardise the fertility of the crops which would cause a famine and ruin the community. The victory of the wolves would secure the harvest for that year. Thiess stressed that werewolves engaged in night-battles for the greater good of the community and would be appropriately rewarded in Paradise.

Thiess’s case is untypical both regarding the statements he made in answer to the indictments, as well as with regard to the trial itself and the final sentence. Werewolf-trials had always occurred in relation to the witchcraft trials, and so far lycanthropes had confessed to making a pact with the devil and had identified their main activities as killing cattle and murdering children. In the absence of the werewolf-stereotype and because the old man refused to confess to having made a pact with the devil, the inquisitors apparently declined to follow the gruesome procedures of their earlier French and German colleagues (although in that same year, 1692, the witch-craze would have a renewed outburst in Salem, Mass.) and Thiess got away with a relatively mild sentence.

Werewolves as benefactors for the community and as opponents of witches and other destructive forces were a relatively uncommon motif in the werewolf-cases of western Europe, but Ginzburg has drawn attention to the similarities between the transformation of Thiess and the night-battles conducted by the Benandanti in a state of ecstasy. The Benandanti came from a different area, namely from Friuli, in the Alps. Persecuted as witches, they constituted an elect group within the communities of this region, usually identified on the basis of a distinct mark, namely of having been born with the caul (which in the Baltic region is also the mark of a werewolf). This elect group was destined to fight for good harvests and fertility and to that end would go into lethargic or cataleptic trances whereby the spirit would leave the body and would cross a river or (as in the case of Thiess) the sea, either in the shape of an animal (a mouse, a butterfly, or in the Livonian instance: a wolf) or on the back of an animal (a cat, a hare, etc.) to enter the abode of the dead and the realm of spirits to fight evil powers, such as demons, or witches, who pose a threat to the common welfare. These formal similarities between the Benandanti from Friuli and the werewolves from Livonia justify the supposition of at least comparable fertility cults, although ideas on interrelatedness and a possibly common origin remain speculative. The great merit of Ginzburg’s discovery and analysis lies mainly in his providing a coherent explanatory and interpretative model which may shed new light on werewolf-stories and confessions but may also help explain the tenacity with which demonologists and inquisi-

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65 Ginzburg, *Night Battles*. 

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tors, next to witchcraft, dealt with the (relatively speaking) more marginal phenomenon of lycanthropy. The case of the Livonian werewolf shows that lycanthropy is part of a pagan ecstatic folk-belief and it demonstrates that the transformation from man to beast has religious significance.  

The German and French werewolf-trials are less informative largely because of the application of torture to extract confessions and because on the whole lycanthropes were treated as witches who made a pact with the devil and attended the sabbath. Yet some shreds of information are worth mentioning. The wolf transformations were sometimes achieved through magical means: some werewolves used an ointment or salve (a method described by Apuleius) like Pierre Bourgot (a Poligny werewolf, 1521), Georges Gandillon (one of the St. Claude werewolves, 1598), and Jean Grenier (Les Landes, 1603); others used a magical belt, like Peter Stubb (1589). An important motif in the story of Petronius, namely the wound that gave the werewolf away, also surfaces in one of the trials. A Poligny werewolf, Michel Verdung, attacked a traveller but was wounded by him; when the man followed the trail of the werewolf, he found Verdung wounded in a hut. A close parallel to the Livonian case can be found in the case of Pierre Gandillon, one of the St. Claude werewolves; in confessing to being a lycanthrope, Pierre Gandillon explained that the devil clothed him in a wolf-skin, while he lay in bed in a cataleptic state and attended a wolfish Sabbath.

Lycanthropy as a purely spiritual phenomenon, an illusion, or to put it clinically, as a mental derangement, was not borne out by many trials, but one does on occasion encounter marginal figures like beggars and recluses, and people who were mentally retarded. The fourteen-year old Jean Grenier, considered an idiot by his father, was accused of eating children, but the Parlement of Bordeaux brought in two physicians who

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67 See Boguet, Examen of Witches, pp. 136-155 (St. Claude werewolves; next to the Gandillon family, Boguet mentions Jacques Bocquet, Claudia Jamprost, Claudia Jangailleau, Thievenne Paget and Claudia Gaillard); Robbins, Encyclopedia, p. 537 (Poligny werewolves, 1521: Michel Verdung and Pierre Bourgot), p. 538 (St. Claude werewolves, 1598: Perrenette Gandillon, Antoinette Gandillon, Pierre Gandillon, Georges Gandillon), pp. 489-490 (Peter Stubb [Stump], 1589). The cases of Verdung, Bourgot (Burgot) and Gamier were dealt with by Jean Bodin in his Démonomanie des sorciers II.6 (see Oates, ‘Démonologues’, pp. 80-84). A transcript of the trial of Peter Stubb is in Otten, Lycanthropy Reader, pp. 69-76. Boguet, Examen of Witches, p. 140, also mentions the case of Verdung but spells the name Udon. For a long time, pictures of him and two other lycanthropes had hung in the church of the Jacobins at Poligny. Boguet, idem, pp. 140-141, reports another case of sympathetic wounding whereby a huntsman in the highlands of Auvergne cuts off the paw of a wolf only to discover that evening that the thing had turned into a woman’s hand belonging to the wife of his host; she was consequently burned.
diagnosed the boy's derangement as 'lycanthropy induced by evil spirits that create a delusion of the eyes'. The court took into account that he was the victim of neglect and imprisoned him for life, in a local monastery. Jacques Roulet (Angers, 1598) was a feeble-minded beggar suspected of murdering a child, and was hence sentenced to death, but an appeal to the Parlement of Paris changed this sentence into two years imprisonment in the insane asylum of St.-Germain-des-Prés, 'with instruction in religion'.

Lycanthropy trials yield interesting information regarding the nature of the metamorphosis. We might have a look at a practical classification of lycanthropy based on information from the Baltic region, the world of Thiess, a world replete with werewolves. Rhanæus, following Olaus Magnus, distinguished three classes of werewolves: (1) those who through hallucinations harm cattle; (2) those who in their sleep imagine they injure cattle, while in fact the devil incites real wolves to cause the damage; and (3) those who in their sleep imagine the same, while the devil changes himself into a wolf to perform mischief. Note that substantial transformation does not appear in the list. Properly speaking it is only to the first class of lycanthropes that one can arguably attribute liability, and even then one has to take into account several attenuating circumstances (madness, retardation, etc.). In the other two instances culpability lies with the devil, not with the slumbering lycanthropes. This, in fact, is precisely what Johann Weyer, one of the first opponents of the witchcraze, argued in his *De praestigiis daemonum* (1563). And oddly enough his premises that the devil is agent and cause of all *maleficium*, and that witches (and werewolves) are the victims of devilish illusions are shared by all demonologists writing in justification of the persecutions that swept across Europe. But demonologists emphasised the culpability of witches by attributing to them a demonic pact (which in practice torture could verify).

A special case in point is judge Henry Boguet, Chief Justice of the district of Saint Claude, who on the basis of his own practical experience concluded that werewolves, although deluded, were still the physical agents of the crimes attributed to them, and hence guilty. In his careful questioning...

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68 Robbins, *Encyclopedia*, pp. 233-235 (Jean Grenier, 1603), pp. 212-213 (Gilles Gamier, Dôle, 1573), p. 324 (Jacques Roulet, the lycanthrope of Angers, 1598). The case of Grenier was documented by Pierre de Lancre, *Tableau de l'inconstances des mauvais anges et démons* (Paris, 1612), IV.2. See Oates, 'Demonologues', pp. 91-97; Milin, *Les chiens*, pp. 129-133; and Otten, *Lycanthropy Reader*, pp. 62-68. In relation to the accusations of lycanthropes not only killing but also partly devouring victims, it should be pointed out that around 1600 France was plague- and famine-ridden and that cases of cannibalism may have occurred now and again.


70 Clark, 'Witchcraft and Kingship', p. 170: in Weyer's reasoning, 'the witch became totally redundant in the effecting of *maleficium*'.

71 Boguet, in many ways a scholar and skilled in subtle arguments, employs what
ing of Pierre Gandillon, Claudia Jamgguillaume, Claudia Jamprost and others, he weighs the evidence, checks whether the various confessions are in agreement, and pays close attention to physical and material clues, with a special interest in the salve or ointment, with which, he believes, witches dull their senses and create demonic illusions. Boguet’s careful methodology gives the impression that he is not simply a religious zealot; like Thiess’s interrogators, he may have encountered vestiges of pagan religion, but his condemnation of these is more severe. Behind the witchcraze (as is the case with all persecutions of heresy) is the thirst to repress and extirpate forms of belief alien to Christianity; in the midst of the witchcraze debate (for which demonologists wrote their voluminous works) is the question of the powers of demons, the question of substantial transformations, and the question of demonic illusion and the manipulation of the imagination.

Judges on the whole (Boguet is an exception) seem to have departed from the premise that metamorphoses and other forms of maleficium are real, but this was blatantly at odds with the earlier mentioned Canon episcopi which clearly stated that metamorphoses and transvections (the night-flights) are illusions. Demonologists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries always struggled with thisCanon, and unable to contradict it, they tried to neutralise it. Where the Canon said that the belief in the reality of metamorphoses and transvections is heretical, demonologists generally agreed on the illusory nature of these phenomena but in practice seemed to be saying that disbelief in their ‘reality’ is heretical. Their contradiction of the Canon mainly consisted in denouncing as heretical any doubt that maleficia are both harmless and inconsequential. In the early modern period, that saw both the rise of philosophical scepticism and of the witchcraze, demonologists were unable to replace the incertitudes of scepticism by new certainties, but countered them by other incertitudes and apprehensions about the stability of divinely instituted reality (for demons could manipulate nature) and about the reliability of sense and cognition (for demons could manipulate...

Clark has aptly phrased a ‘tortuous dialectic’. Boguet, Examen of Witches, p. 146: ‘My own opinion is that Satan sometimes leaves the witch asleep behind a bush, and himself goes and performs that which the witch has in mind to do, giving himself the appearance of a wolf; but that he so confuses the witch’s imagination that he believes he has really been a wolf and has run about and killed men and beasts. (...) Notwithstanding, I maintain that for the most part it is the witch himself who runs about slaying; not that he is metamorphosed into a wolf, but that it appears to him that he is so’. See Monter, Witchcraft, pp. 145-151; also in Otten, Lycanthropy Reader, pp. 161-167. Boguet pronounced 28 death-sentences, which is nothing compared to, e.g., Rémy who caused the death of thousands. Cf. Milin, Les chiens, pp. 120, 128-133.

72 These ointments may have been hallucinogenic drugs. See Sidky, Witchcraft, pp.
late human perception). On the whole these uncertainties echoed a despair of providence and a despair of rationality.

**Wolves according to Institoris**

The most significant document to contradict the *Canon episcopi* appeared in 1484. It was the bull *Summis desiderantibus affectibus* by pope Innocent VIII, which was directly aimed against the *malefici*, those who practise magic, who associate with incubi and succubi, and cause disease and impotence, and destroy fertility in man, beast and crops. The bull gave *carte blanche* to inquisitors to investigate and punish, and ended with the threat that anyone opposing its decrees would incur the anger of God, Church and Apostles. Where the *Canon* had attempted to evacuate pagan belief and ritual and declare it illusory and insignificant, the bull regarded its remnants as a major threat far from insignificant or illusory. It gave support to the work of the Dominican inquisitors Kramer (Institoris) and Sprenger, who, in spite of initial disbelief from both the clergy and the laity, acquired papal support to pursue their inquisitorial work. The bull was prefixed to every edition of their ideological and practical textbook for *witchhunters*, the *Malleus maleficarum*.

Ritual magic had been an enduring concern for ecclesiastical authorities, since it touched on moral and pastoral issues, but with the introduction into the West of textbooks on learned magic and occult science, it also became a topic of profound intellectual concern. Learned *expositions* on the powers of demons and the hidden virtues of nature were meant to explain the existence of magical *mirabilia*, and these arguments were gratefully used and developed in the battles against heresy which culminated in that one great fight against the 'secret society of witches', the secrecy of which conveniently allowed it to encompass virtually all aspects of magic and pagan folklore found in Europe. Hence, also lycanthropy became a dish for the learned palate and the philosophical questions formerly posed by *Augustine* acquired a new relevance. This becomes apparent in the *Malleus* by Institoris, one of the foundational demonological texts.

Formally the *Malleus* is a summa, and its aim is to neutralise the *Canon episcopi*. In the section on lycanthropy and the transformation from man into beast the question whether witches can perform such a change is dealt

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74 Kramer, *Malleus*. I have used the translation of Montague Summers for its general availability. A new, annotated German translation was published recently: Kramer, *Der Hexenhammer*, transl. Behringer *et al.* It has been pointed out that Kramer (Institoris) is the sole author of the *Malleus*. See Segl, 'Institoris', pp. 116-117.
with in scholastic fashion, first with six objections (derived from Aquinas's commentary on the Sentences) stating that this is impossible, then with an authority contradicting these objections (in the present case Augustine's De civitate Dei 18, which we already encountered), followed by an elaborate responsio, and concluded by a list of solutions and replies to the objection. The position which Institoris defends is contained in the responsio. Following Augustine, he believes that demons can influence man's senses since it is generally taken for granted that both angels and demons can exercise an influence on material and physical reality through locomotion. This is a creaturely endowment that fallen angels have not altogether forfeited; yet their power is restricted to the physical world for man's rational soul they cannot touch. But of the physical interior senses, it is especially the imagination, the retainer of man's residual sense-impressions, that was believed to be a prey to demonic interference that could distort these impressions into delusions or metamorphoses. This is more or less in accord with what the Canon episcopi said, but it is clearly Institoris's aim to go beyond the Canon. He argues that the power of locomotion enables demons to actually move persons from one place to another, thus giving the nightly transvections a degree of reality which the Canon contradicts. Also demonic control over the body has for him far-reaching consequences for human psychology: 'Therefore the devil can, by moving the inner perceptions and humours, effect changes in the actions and faculties, physical, mental, and emotional, working by means of any physical organ soever'.

Institoris adds that this can only happen when God allows it, but with an eye to inquisitorial practices, one may fear that according to Institoris God had a very liberal policy.

With reference to Aquinas, Institoris argues that there are two ways in which animal transformations might take place: (1) one is when images from the imagination inform and condition the internal and external senses so that a person is convinced he witnesses a metamorphosis which can be confirmed by sight and touch; (2) the second is when the internal organs of perception are somehow changed, and sweet turns to bitter, or a man sees his wife in a hideous shape, but this does not differ significantly from the former. An important point is that the possibilities of transformation in reality and in the surrounding air are ruled out. In the series of objections and replies this is further specified. The argument that metamorphoses cannot be perceived since (e.g.) werewolves are non-existent objects of perception because it is impossible for two formative principles to exist in one and the same body, is confirmed in its premises but rejected in its conclusion, as is the argument that the devil cannot change the cognitive facul-

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77 I.e. substantial forms, in the *scholastic-aristotelian* sense.
It is argued that the devil is incapable of creating new substances or of transforming existing substances, and should he be able to operate on nature (which would then mainly consist in the manipulation of the hidden semina) it would still be within the bounds of nature’s laws (as in the case of spontaneous generation).\textsuperscript{78} But the metamorphosis of man into beast is clearly beyond the laws of nature and is hence based on deceptive illusions, arising from sensible images conserved in the imagination. But even here the devil cannot introduce his own substance into the human faculties of perception and imagination, nor can he substantially change these faculties. All he can do is, through locomotion, produce a bricolage of elements, of bits and pieces, that are already there. What \textit{Institoris} offers is a consistent naturalistic conception and at one point he even adds: ‘man does not sin in these fancies suggested by the devil (…) unless of his own will he consents to sin’.\textsuperscript{79} If the devil is the agent of all \textit{maleficium}, why persecute witches?

\textit{Institoris} applies this line of thought specifically to the case of man- and child-eating wolves, which may have natural causes when wolves are driven by famine or their own ferociousness, but \textit{Institoris} is more interested in wolves acting on the instigation of the devil. He believes the wolves are real wolves, and not demons in the guise of animals. He mentions the story of a bishop of Vienna who ordered the chanting of the \textit{minor} Litanies before Ascension, because wolves entered the city and publicly devoured men, probably for sins they committed since he sees the wolves (and the devils driving them) as instruments of divine vengeance.\textsuperscript{80} But there is also another context in which demon-possessed wolves feature: \textit{Institoris} mentions a story from \textit{William of Paris}\textsuperscript{81} about a man who believed that he turned into a wolf and went about devouring children. In actual fact there was a real wolf (possessed by a demon) attacking infants while the poor deluded man lay in a cave deprived of his senses. His sin, if any, will have been a sin of consent rather than of practice. Boguet was clearly more severe, but then again he was more pressed to find acceptable legal grounds for persecution and conviction.

One may wonder whether \textit{Institoris} is aware that his arguments regarding lycanthropy do little to incriminate witches. However, he repeats some of his points in the second part of the \textit{Malleus}.\textsuperscript{82} He attacks preachers who

\textsuperscript{78} \textbf{Kramer} adduces the well-known example of Pharaoh’s magicians turning their rods into serpents (Ex. 7:10-13). See also Kramer, \textit{Malleus} II.1.8, p. 123.

\textsuperscript{79} Kramer, \textit{Malleus} I.10, p. 63.

\textsuperscript{80} Kramer, \textit{Malleus} I.10, p. 65, mentions the biblical examples of the prophet Elisha who was mocked by a gang of boys, 42 of whom were torn up by two she-bears (11 Kings 2:24), and of the prophet who was slain by a lion (1Kings 13:24).


\textsuperscript{82} Kramer, \textit{Malleus} II.1.8, pp. 122-124.
claim in their sermons that such prestidigitatory transmutations are impossible and blames them for misunderstanding the Canon (which seems very unlikely). He elaborately paraphrases what Augustine has to say on animal metamorphosis, for there he finds the full spectrum of options the devil has in deceiving the human senses. He takes the example of landladies changing guests into beasts of burden to explain that demons (1) deceive the guests into believing they have turned into animals (by means of glamour); (2) carry the burdens themselves (so that the work done by the pack-animals in the illusion, is also done in actual fact); and (3) can make third parties (bystanders) share in the illusion. Demonic influence on human experience seems to have no bounds, and especially the human psyche is studied more closely. He elaborately deals with the question whether it is possible for a devil to be active in the human body next to the soul, since according to Aristotelian doctrine no two forms can exist in the same material substance. The soul, Institoris explains, resides in the heart as a life-giving principle, like a spider in its web: its operations are to inform and vivify matter, and hence differ fundamentally from the operations of a demon entering the head. A demon will enter into the back part of the head where the memoria is, and move mental images from thence to the middle part, where the cells of the imaginative power are. From there they are pushed forward to the front part where reason resides so that the phantasm inwardly perceived are actually believed to be there.

Witches have no immediate purpose in these naturalistic explanations, and Institoris's incrimination of witches mainly relies on exemplary cases. He narrates the story of a woodcutter, who beat up three cats that attacked him; they turned out to be three witches and were covered with bruises from the woodcutter's flogging. The case resembles that of the sympathetic wounds of the werewolves, and though Institoris emphasises it is a case of glamour, it is not an illusion of the inner perceptions only, since the witches actually went to the woodcutter to harm him. From his own experience Institoris tells the story of a priest, the son of a Bohemian from Dachov, who was possessed by a devil, because a witch he rebuked had cursed him. Institoris pretends that witchcraft is a commonplace ("no one doubts that witches can injure men through devils"), but when discussing the various ways in which demons can injure humans, he adds that this can be accomplished with and without witches.

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83 In Augustine's De civitate Dei 18.17.
84 Kramer, Malleus II.1.9, p. 127.
85 Kramer, Malleus II.1.10, pp. 131-132, esp. p. 132.
86 Kramer, Malleus II.1.10, p. 129. Demons can (1) injure the body; (2) injure the body and the inner faculties; (3) injure the inner perceptions; (4) deprive someone of his reason; and (5) change someone into the appearance of a beast.
The evil intentions of witches and lycanthropes are not convincingly
documented and resemble more a collection of fairy tales than a body of
evidence. In comparison this becomes even more clear when one turns to a
later *malleus*, namely Guazzo’s *Compendium maleficarum* (1608), in which
a small collection of man-beast metamorphoses is narrated, all centering
around the evil intentions of the *shape-shifter* and the sympathetic wounds
that give the culprit away. Like Institoris (and with reference to Augustine’s *De civitate Dei* 18.17), Guazzo regards all metamorphoses as decep-
tive illusions. He mentions the case (cf. William of Paris) of the sleeping
lycanthrope (Guazzo calls him a witch) and the devil who in his stead
assumes the shape of a wolf; but he also believes that witches themselves
can have aerial bodies in the guise of beasts, through the use of ointments
and spells. In this way they can leave the footprints of a wolf upon the
ground and be directly wounded (although in case the witch is not present in
the wolf-shape, the devil will nevertheless inflict on the witch the wound
which the wolf received; in which case it does not really matter whether the
witch is present of not). Guazzo derives examples (through Del Rio) from
Bartolomeo Spina and Rémy about witches who turn themselves into cats
with the explicit purpose of harming or killing people, or a shepherd called
Petronio (1581) who turns into a wolf with the express purpose of killing
his neighbour’s sheep.88

The incrimination of witches or werewolves in these cases requires
elaborate staging on the part of demons. A more economic though also
more extreme position is taken by Jean Bodin in his *De la Démonomanie
des sorciers* (1580), where he argues that substantial transformations can, in
fact, take place, since we are dealing here with actions of spirits that are
beyond the bounds of nature, and such ‘metaphysical’ operations cannot be
understood. His extreme views were supported by few and rejected by
many, and of this latter category especially Jean de Nynauld and Reginald
Scot deserve mention. Jean de Nynauld in his *De la lycanthropie, trans-
formation, et extase des sorciers* (1615) argues that Bodin’s position would
make all knowledge and the proper discrimination of truth-and falsehood
impossible, and Scot in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) adds it would be
easier to turn Bodin’s reason into the reason of an ass, than his body into the
shape of a sheep.89

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88 Another example is the story of the Russian chieftain and the Bulgarian werewolf.
The Russian has the lycanthrope chained and conducted into the next room, where
the Bulgarian changes into a wolf. Still bound in the chains he was tom to pieces by
two dogs. The unfortunate lycanthrope, Guazzo suggests, was not an illusion.
Guazzo, *Compendium*, p. 50.
Del Rio: werewolves and the definition of magic

The consistent assertion among demonologists that the 'existence' of werewolves is to be attributed to the imaginative faculty would do enough to dis-culpate witches, but common sense in the age of the witchcraze did not concur with common practice. Nor did common sense gain much ground in the intellectual field where the wolf in the imagination was felt to be in demand of an explanatory context and to be part of an encompassing theory of magic. Hence the question of substantial transformations and, in its wake, the werewolves became a stock issue in scholarly demonologies.

One of the most encyclopedic demonologies of the early modern period provides a good example of this. Martin Del Rio's Disquisitiones Magicae deals with all matters concerning witchcraft by departing from a general definition of magic. Magic is the art or faculty whereby unusual wonders (mira) can be produced by means of the natural powers of creation, of which the reason cannot be grasped by common understanding. From the point of view of its efficient cause, magic can then be further subdivided into: (1) natural magic, (2) artificial magic, and (3) demonic magic. Demon-ic magic is treated extensively by Del Rio in book II of his work, but it also surfaces in his discussion of natural magic (physica) when he speaks of two traditions of magical knowledge, one based on the idolatrous doctrines which the fallen angels taught to their offspring, the giants, and which were transmitted to the Egyptians, Persians and Chaldeans through the accursed Ham; the other consisting in the sciences which God gave to Adam and which Adam passed on to his posterity. The former is a forbidden, demonic magic (based on a demonic pact), the latter a legitimate, natural magic, propagating knowledge of the course and influence of the stars and the heavens, and of the sympathies and antipathies between the elements of


90 Martin Antoine Del Rio (1551-1608) was born in Antwerp, and became a Jesuit in 1580. He published his magnum opus Disquisitionum magiarum libri sex in 1599. The six parts are: 1. De magia; 2. De magia daemoniaca; 3. De maleficio, et de vana observatione; 4. De divinatione; 5. De oficio iudicum contra maleficos, sive de processu iudiciario in crimine magiae; 6. De oficio confessarii. The book was highly influential. Guazzo's Compendium seems to be an abbreviated version of it. Cf. also Walker, Spiritual and Demonic Magic, pp. 178-185.

91 Del Rio, Disquisitiones 1.2, p. 3: ut sit ars seu facultas, vi create, et non supernaturali, quaedam mira et insolita efficiens; quorum ratio sensum et communem hominum captum superat. Cf., e.g., Giordano Bruno's definition of magic in his De Magia (Bruno, On Magic, pp. 105ff.). Bruno gives nine different meanings of the term 'magic' including medicine and natural philosophy.

92 Del Rio, Disquisitiones 1.2, pp. 3-4. Del Rio defines forbidden magic as facultas seu ars, qua, vi pacti cum daemonibus initi, mira quaedam, et communem hominum captum superantia, efficiuntur.
creation, which enables magi (or demons) to perform marvellous feats. Artificial magic is subdivided into two kinds: magia *mathematica* which encompasses geometry, arithmetic and astronomy, and their applications, and magia praestigiatoria, which comprises all conceivable tricks, make-believe and sleight of hand (ludi, ludica and ludibria). Magic thus spans a whole gamut of arts and sciences that all share the same purpose, namely the production of mira, things that inspire a sense of wonder and amazement, and that hence seek to extend the habitual limits of perception and understanding.

Magic, eloquently promoted by Renaissance scholars such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino, rose in conjunction with scientific developments and was also understood in terms of the prevalent arts and sciences. Hence it also dealt with the questions that natural philosophy was facing. Del Rio addresses the issue of the limits of nature and argues that magic can never go beyond the natural order or the laws of the universe, thereby distinguishing magical mira, which are natural, from miracula, which are supernatural. The achievements of magic cannot be supernatural, but they can be preternatural (meaning natural in a wider than familiar sense) and can therefore extend one's perception of nature. The prime agents in examining the limits of nature are for Del Rio, not scientists doing empirical research, but good and evil angels.

Applying the concept of magical mira to lycanthropy, Del Rio does not excel in bold statements. The only limits of perception he extends are the geographical ones, for he notes that the belief in shapeshifting has also

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93 Del Rio mentions the example of how ships were set ablaze at the siege of Syracuse by means of mirrors (*Disquisitiones* 1.4, pp. 31 ff.; an abbreviated version is in Guazzo, *Compendium* 1.2, p. 4).

94 Wightman has pointed out that magic was neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition of scientific achievement. Wightman, *Science*, p. 143. Cf. also Copenhaver, 'Astrology and Magic', esp. pp. 296-300. Yet a precursor of the scientific revolution like Francis Bacon sought to restore the concept of natural magic in terms of his metaphysics.

95 Del Rio, *Disquisitiones* II.10, pp. 130 ff.: *Naturae ordinem mutare nequit, nisi auctor naturae, nec leges urzeri refrigere; nisi qui fixit.*

96 Del Rio, *Disquisitiones* 1.4.3, p. 49: *Altera est, ordo prodigiosus, qui ordo reipsa non excedit terminos naturalis ordinis, sed tantum dicitur excedere ratione modi, quem vel omnes homines, velplerique ignorant: et ideo solemus eum quoque vocare supernaturalum.*

large accepto vocabulo, clarus autem ac significatius vocatur ordo praeternaturalis: ad quem referuntur multae mirificae operaciones factae per bonos, vel malos angelos motu locali, vel subita naturalium agentium applicatione. Cf. also Clark, *Thinking with Demons*, pp. 170-171, and idem, p. 177, on the breakdown of the distinction between *mira* and *miracula*.

97 Del Rio deals with werewolves in the context of demonic magic (*Disquisitiones* II.18, pp. 186-190: *An corpora ex una in aliam speciem Magi queant transformare*).
THE EVER-CHANGING NATURE OF THE BEAST

penetrated the New World. For the rest he repeats the conventional positions. Metamorphoses are illusions as Augustine and the *Canon episcopi* make clear. The human soul cannot inform the body of an animal because the soul is defined as the active principle of the organic body, whereby all substantial transformation is excluded. Naturally there are people who believe that these transformations are real, but one should not confuse the concept of transformation with its concomitant effects. The usual damage inflicted by lycanthropes on cattle or people can be brought about by demons in the shape of wolves, by humans in the guise of a wolf, or by humans who, through an excess of black bile and a disturbance of the humours, suffer from melancholy or *insania lupina*. Only in the first two instances, when third parties give corroboration of having seen wolves, can one speak of magic, for demons can assume an aerial body in the shape of a wolf while the lycanthrope is asleep, or they can dress a person in wolves hide or compose an aerial body resembling a wolf that is fully geared to the body of a lycanthrope. Of this latter instance Del Rio provides a few examples, notably the case of *Petrus Stumfius*, and an interesting narrative, situated in a Flemish village, about the hostess of an ale-house changing into a toad and obstructing a farmer whom she blames for not having paid his bill. The toad is severely wounded with a sword, but vanishes, and the landlady shortly afterwards dies from similar wounds. In an age of liberal torture, sympathetic wounds were usually regarded as an appropriate argument with which to incriminate witches.

Although Del Rio is far from innovative in the question of lycanthropy, he does provide a place for it in an overall theory of magic. Magic encompasses all arts and sciences that explore the bounds of nature, produce remarkable feats and instil a sense of wonder. Next to magi and alchemists (to whom Del Rio dedicates a lengthy section), demons are still the most prominent protagonists and operators in these explorations. But demons also pose problems. The fundamental problem that demonological reasoning causes is that the distinction between illusion and reality is blurred. A theory of magic wherein demons can freely manipulate reality and the per-

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98 Del Rio, *Disquisitiones* II.18, p. 187: *Quinetiam in novem orbem haec opinio se penetravit*. Nam Nicaraguani credebant striges posse se in cattos, simias, porcos immutare; et Quahatemallani opinabant famosam illam maleficam Augustinam, in bovis forma grassatum.


101 Del Rio, *Disquisitiones* 11.18, p. 189. The story was copied by Guazzo, *Compendium*, pp. 52-53.
ception of reality (be it through exterior or interior senses), may create the belief that all is an illusion. A radical scepticism might be the result, whereby one distrusts one’s senses and even Providence itself. It is no coincidence that Descartes’s demon hypothesis (the possibility that an evil spirit might turn external reality into an illusion) arose in the age of the demonologists.\textsuperscript{102} Since supernatural operations were beyond their reach, demons were given a free hand in nature; but they ended up provoking doubts regarding both physics and metaphysics.

When demons were made redundant and were banned from the theories of natural philosophy, werewolves remained where the demonologists had put them: in the imagination, and ever since the age of the witch-hunts metamorphoses had to be re-enacted in fictions or virtual realities by people themselves. Rarely did a werewolf emerge outside popular culture (Freud’s wolf-man is an exception), and the question of substantial transformation lost its significance in the rise of modern science, though genetic engineering may revive it in some sense or other, along with its attendant cultural anxieties.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{102} Clark, Thinking with Demons, pp. 174-175.
\textsuperscript{103} This essay was written as part of a research project on angelology and demonology funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). The author wishes to thank Alasdair MacDonald, Arjo Vanderjagt and Jan Bremmer for their corrections and suggestions.