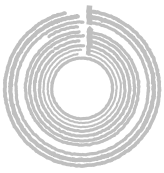

THE WEREWOLVES OF LIVONIA: LYCANTHROPY AND SHAPE-CHANGING IN SCHOLARLY TEXTS, 1550–1720

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the early modern period, the territory of Livonia, roughly corresponding to present-day Latvia and Estonia, was known as an abode of particularly vicious werewolves. Diabolic shape-shifting was a common feature in witch trials all over Europe, but no other country gained a similar notoriety as an alleged lycanthropy hot spot. During the last two decades, historians and anthropologists have devoted considerable attention to the topic, but their research has been predominantly focused on trial records and juridical sources. Complementing these contributions, this essay approaches the Livonian werewolves from a different angle: as a topic of theoretical considerations and scholarly treatises.

European men of letters first learned about the shape-changers of Livonia from Sebastian Münster's influential Cosmographia *in 1550. Five years later, the exiled Swedish bishop Olaus Magnus expanded Münster's succinct report into a detailed and fanciful description of the Baltic werewolves and their savage nature—an account that left a lasting impression on the imagination of European intellectuals. For the next 150 years, Livonian werewolves were regularly mentioned and discussed in demonological, ethnographic, and historiographic treatises, before the skeptical attitude of the early Enlightenment banished them from scholarly literature in the 1720s.*

KEY WORDS

Werewolves; Livonia; Scholarly Literature

In April 1924, at a meeting of the Society for History and Antiquities at Riga, the distinguished Baltic German historian Hermann von Bruiningk presented the most unusual paper of his scholarly career, "Der Werwolf in Livland." "The Werewolf in Livonia" was a detailed survey of a copious number of sources relating to the vicious shape-changers that supposedly inhabited the eastern Baltic littoral during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[1] With a certain

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indignation, Bruiningk noted that Livonia,[2] his home country, was reputed "to accommodate more werewolves than any other country"—"undeservedly," as he hastened to clarify.[3] If Bruiningk intended to restore the reputation of his allegedly werewolf-infested native land, his efforts failed miserably. If anything, his outstanding paper drew the attention of the scholarly community to the Baltic werewolves—who had, up to that point, only been a topic for local historians[4]—and confirmed Livonia's image as a "werewolf Eldorado."[5]

The man responsible for the popularity of the Livonian werewolves was "Old Thiess,"[6] the protagonist of a truly extraordinary trial whose protocol Bruiningk chose to include as an appendix to his paper.[7] Thiess was a Latvian peasant, roughly eighty-six years of age, who had to answer to charges of lycanthropy[8] at the local court at Jürgensburg (Zaube)[9] in 1691. The old man astounded the presiding judges—as well as generations of modern readers—with an immediate confession: he was a werewolf. And, it seems, he was very proud of this fact. In a remarkable reversal of roles, the elderly defendant then set about trying to convince the skeptical magistrates that he truly was a shape-changer; for their part, the judges initially suspected that the self-confessed werewolf was merely senile. When the officials tried to coax Thiess into confessing that he was in league with the Devil—the prerequisite for an animal transformation according to early modern demonological theory—he opposed them vehemently: he and his fellow werewolves were benevolent creatures, "Hounds of God" who had to fight the Devil and his sorcerers to ensure the prosperity and the fertility of the land.[10]

The Thiess trial contains several aspects that have intrigued modern researchers. In particular, the concept of godly werewolves, champions and defenders of rural society, seems completely incompatible with the learned knowledge of the seventeenth century and so has been interpreted as a unique example of peasant belief, the kind which is rarely documented in the sources. In this sense, the story has been read as a kind of popular counter-narrative standing in opposition to learned demonology.[11] The protocol provides vivid details about the defendant's worldview, characterized by an amazingly close coexistence of mundane and preternatural phenomena.[12] And, most important, Old Thiess himself, the stubborn, cantankerous, and often quite endearing elderly werewolf, still manages to captivate his audience after three hundred years.

In the decades following Bruiningk's publication, scholars drew widely differing conclusions from the Thiess trial. During the 1930s, the Viennese Germanist Otto Höfler interpreted the Livonian werewolves as epigones of an ancient

Germanic tradition. Such bands of ecstatic warriors, clad in ritual animal masks, were, to Höfler, the nucleus of Germanic statehood.[13] This interpretation had an obvious political subtext. After all, an antirational brotherhood of elite warriors, in the service of the Aryan race and the German state, was more or less how the SS presented itself. It is no coincidence that Heinrich Himmler and his associated ideologues greatly appreciated Höfler's theories, for they provided them with an opportunity to project their warped ideals onto the Germanic past.[14]

After World War II, Thiess and the Baltic werewolves were rehabilitated from Nazi abuse. In 1951, Will-Erich Peuckert questioned Höfler's theses and argued that the Livonian werewolves were no degenerate offshoot of Germanic warrior bands, but an authentic Baltic tradition.[15] Carlo Ginzburg advanced the most influential interpretation of the Livonian werewolf phenomenon. He stressed the remarkable similarities between the werewolf beliefs described by Thiess and a number of what he found to be comparable rural traditions in peripheral areas across early modern Europe. The most notable of these were the so-called *benandanti*, a fertility cult in Friuli. According to Ginzburg, such local belief systems were the remnants of prehistoric shamanistic traditions that had survived in the social and geographic peripheries of Europe well into the early modern period.[16]

During the last decades, interest in the Livonian werewolves has continued unabated. Historians and anthropologists have devoted considerable attention to the topic, but their research, inspired by the intriguing Thiess case and Ginzburg's fascinating and controversial hypothesis, has been predominantly focused on trial records and juridical sources.[17] In this essay, I intend to approach the lupine shape-changers of Livonia from a different angle: as a topic of scholarly inquiry. From the middle of the sixteenth to the early eighteenth century, the ethnographers, theologians, and historians who described the activities of the Baltic werewolves attempted to account for the phenomenon, centering their debate around the question of whether the extraordinary tales of diabolic shape-shifting were rooted in fact, or were merely the products of the imagination of superstitious peasants and gullible travelers. Scholarly theory underpinned the juridical practice and influenced the magistrates' attitude toward the accused werewolves. These early modern "werewolf treatises" have, nevertheless, received comparatively little attention by contemporary researchers.[18]

In 2000 the Latvian American historian Andrejs Plakans characterized the research on the Livonian werewolves as an "unfinished project."[19] I hope

that this essay can contribute to this ongoing project, by documenting and interpreting the relevant and representative scholarly texts written between 1550 and the 1720s. This selection of texts does not claim to be exhaustive—Livonian werewolves were, after all, a very popular topic and it would be impossible to list every statement on the matter. But I am confident that none of the relevant texts and major arguments is missing, and that all facets of werewolf lore in early modern Livonia are appropriately represented.

SOCIOPOLITICAL BACKGROUND: LIVONIA IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

Early modern Livonia was characterized by a strict social stratification that ran along ethnic lines. The nobility and the urban elites were mainly Germans, descendants of the crusaders and Hanseatic merchants who had conquered and colonized the land during the Middle Ages. The vast majority of the population, however, consisted of indigenous Estonians and Latvians. These so-called *Undeutsche* or non-Germans, as early modern sources poignantly labeled them, were mainly rural serfs working on the estates of the German nobility. They also comprised the lower layer of urban society, where they toiled as menial laborers, servants, and the like. Among contemporaries, Livonia was notorious for its strict system of serfdom, which many foreign observers regarded as unjust and oppressive.

Medieval Livonia, a loose confederation of the Teutonic Order and several local prince-bishoprics, collapsed in 1558 under a determined assault by Muscovy. At this, other local powers intervened, most notably Sweden and Poland–Lithuania. The result was the twenty-five-year Livonian War, which continued until 1583 when the Muscovites were finally repulsed. The conclusion of the war saw the country divided between Sweden in the north and Poland in the south, with Denmark retaining control over the large Livonian island of Ösel (Saaremaa). In the early seventeenth century, Sweden resumed its expansionist policy and forced the Poles to cede most of their possessions in Livonia in 1629. Denmark relinquished its hold over Ösel in 1645. With the exception of Latgale in the southeast, which remained under Polish control, and the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia in the southwest, a semi-independent state under nominal Polish sovereignty, by the middle years of the century Sweden had come to control the entire territory of what had been the medieval Livonian confederation.

The second half of the seventeenth century was marked by increasing tension between Swedish officials and the Baltic German nobility, the latter of whom sought to preserve their traditional liberties and privileges against the absolutist politics of the Swedish kings. This conflict between the centralizing tendencies of the Swedes and Baltic particularism remained unresolved at the outbreak of the Great Northern War (1700–21), which saw Russia at the head of a confederacy of allies enter the fray against Sweden. Despite initial Swedish victories, by 1710 Russian armies had succeeded in occupying the Baltic Provinces, a fact recognized in the 1721 Treaty of Nystad, in which Sweden formally recognized the Russian conquest of Livonia. Russia would retain control of Livonia for the next two centuries, up to the 1917 Russian Revolution.

MEDIEVAL PRECURSORS? DOG-HEADED MEN IN THE BALTIC REGION

The werewolf is, essentially, an early modern monster. Both ancient and medieval literature contain their share of accounts of human–wolf transformations, but these early werewolves have little in common with the diabolical shape-shifters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In Greek myth, for instance, Lycaon, king of Arcadia, was transformed into a wolf by Zeus as a punishment for his transgressions; Petronius's *Satyricon* contains the tale of Orcus, a shape-shifting soldier.[20] Werewolves feature commonly in some of the courtly romances of the twelfth century, where they are usually presented as virtuous characters unwillingly transformed into beasts as a result of malevolent sorcery.[21] But these werewolves are markedly different from their early modern analogues. In particular, these medieval werewolf texts do not contain any mention of the intentional pact the would-be lycanthrope contracted with the Devil, a feature of werewolvery that early modern theorists construed as central to the phenomenon. In this respect, the idea of a linear trajectory from classical and medieval wolf-men to the archetypal werewolves of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has to be considered tenuous at best—if not discarded altogether.

Nonetheless, it does seem clear that Livonian werewolf beliefs as manifested in the early modern period were, to a certain degree, rooted in older traditions. Among these might be the *cynocephali*, the race of dog-headed men described by various fifth- and fourth-century B.C.E. Greek ethnographers.[22] The *cynocephali* were well-known in Europe because they were discussed by Pliny the Elder in his enormously influential *Historia naturalis*, and by Solinus in his

De mirabilibus mundi. Like the other so-called Plinian races, the one-footed *Sciapodes*, the headless *Blemmyae*, and other "Marvels of the East," the *cynocephali* were traditionally associated with India, where medieval travelers like Marco Polo and Odoric of Pordenone allegedly rediscovered them.[23]

Interestingly, however, there is also a parallel tradition that locates the cynocephali in the north of Europe. According to the so-called cosmography of Aethicus Ister, a text dating from the seventh or eighth century, dog-headed men inhabited a certain island known as Munitia, situated to the north of Germany. Indeed, the tradition was sufficiently current that Rimbert, archbishop of Hamburg–Bremen in the ninth century, expected to encounter cynocephali in the course of his missionary work in Scandinavia. He consulted his teacher, Ratramnus of Corbie, and asked for his advice as to whether he should attempt to convert them to Christianity. Two centuries later, Adam of Bremen, in his highly influential *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, provided an account of a race of cynocephali on the northern littoral of the Baltic Sea, claiming that they were the offspring of the Amazons who inhabited the area.[24] Similar examples abound: the eleventh-century *Passio Adalberti* notes that dog-headed men were among the pagan Prussians who mocked the missionary St. Adalbert of Prague before his martyrdom; the Franciscan traveler Benedict of Poland claimed to have discovered cynocephali in Russia in 1245;[25] the fantastic fourteenth-century Norse saga *Sturlaugs saga starfsama* has "Hundingjaland," the Land of the Dog-Heads, located in the utmost north of Scandinavia.[26] Finally, the German courtly romance *Wilhelm von Österreich*, also composed in the fourteenth century, notes Lithuanian warriors "who bore the heads of dogs" among the exotic auxiliaries of an oriental king.[27]

It would indeed be tempting to regard these medieval dog-headed people as the direct predecessors of the notorious Baltic werewolves of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially as they were associated with roughly the same geographical area. Such an assumption might be misleading, however, for medieval cynocephali were imagined as a collective; that is, they were construed as an entire race of dog-headed people, peculiar and monstrous to be sure, but part of God's creation. The early modern werewolf, on the other hand, was not a member of a wondrous race; rather, he was an individual human who had acquired the ability to change his shape, usually by means of a pact he had struck with the Devil. The contrast between an intentionally evil individual and an inculpable and redeemable race precludes a direct association between these northern cynocephali and early modern Baltic werewolves. But given that both traditions rested on the idea of a human–canine hybrid, it is likely that

they did not develop entirely independently. It seems plausible, then, that early modern authors who described werewolves were aware of medieval accounts of the cynocephali but recast them according to the cultural priorities of the day, and the contemporary fashions in demonological theory. The dog-headed men of medieval cosmography might, then, have served as one of the inspirations for the tales of vicious Baltic werewolves of later centuries, even though they had been thoroughly reworked to become one of the Devil's many instruments of terror.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE BALTIC WEREWOLVES: SEBASTIAN MÜNSTER (1550) AND OLAUS MAGNUS (1555)

European men of letters first learned about the existence of werewolves in Livonia from Sebastian Münster. An influential German humanist and one of the leading geographers of his time, Münster published the first edition of his *Cosmographia* in 1544. Although this edition made no mention of Baltic werewolves, when he revised the work six years later, he included an account of Livonia by Johannes Hasentödter, a Hessian scholar who had visited the eastern Baltic in 1547 and 1548. Borrowing from Hasentödter, Münster states in the 1550 version of the *Cosmographia*, "In this land there are many sorcerers and witch-women, who adhere to the erroneous belief—which they have often confessed before court—that they become wolves, roam about, and cause harm to all they encounter. Afterwards they transform back into human shape. Such people are called werewolves."[28]

These few lines mark the beginning of the Livonian werewolf tradition. In sharp distinction to the medieval dog-headed men, these beings are true werewolves in that they have been thoroughly diabolized—they are malevolent and evil shape-shifters whose preternatural abilities are linked to witchcraft and sorcery. That said, both Münster and Hasentödter consider the werewolf transformation to be a misconception. Certainly, some misguided sorcerers *believe* that they turn into wolves, but, they stress, educated men understand that such people are actually suffering from a delusion.

Throughout the early modern period, the possibility of lycanthropy was a hotly debated topic.[29] Only a minority of scholars—including, most importantly, the French philosopher and demonologist Jean Bodin—believed that the Devil was capable of physically transforming his servants into wolves. Instead, most demonologists argued that the alleged wolf transformation was nothing

more than a diabolical deceit. The Devil created the illusion of a lupine shape and then resorted to all kinds of trickery to make both the dupe and any witnesses that might see him believe that he had the power to turn a man into a wolf. Münster's point that Livonian sorcerers were under the "erroneous belief" that they could become wolves suggests that like these demonologists, he, too, thought the transformation was an illusion. Nevertheless, the fact that the werewolf himself was deluded by the Devil did not alleviate his guilt. As the French jurist and werewolf hunter Henri Boguet stated unequivocally, "Even if they were guilty in nothing but their damnable intention, they should still be thought worthy of death."[30]

A few theorists, though, proposed a third possibility. They argued that, in at least some cases, the putative werewolves were actually people suffering from a natural mental affliction.[31] This diagnosis of "wolf-madness"—or clinical lycanthropy in the strict sense of the term—did not necessarily involve a pact with the Devil, for the alleged werewolf was more likely ill rather than guilty of some form of diabolism. Unfortunately for the accused, judges tended to refrain from medical explanations and preferred to insist on associating werewolfery with demonism.

Münster's Livonian werewolves quickly became a popular topic among learned ethnographers and theologians. Münster himself was intrigued by the stories of the strange creatures of the North, and tried to amass more information about the region and its inhabitants. In particular, he had heard that Olaus Magnus, the exiled Catholic archbishop of Uppsala, was engaged in preparing a scholarly volume on the monsters of the North. Münster died in 1552 and never saw Magnus's *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, which was printed in Rome in 1555.[32] Despite the title, the *Historia* is more of a geography or ethnography than a history, for it is a detailed description of the inhabitants of Scandinavia, their customs and traditions, the local flora, fauna, and natural resources—and also the "Wonders of the North," the strange creatures and supernatural occurrences that can, allegedly, be observed in the northern lands.

Olaus Magnus devotes the last three chapters of the eighteenth book to the werewolves of the eastern Baltic area and provides a detailed account of their activities:

> In the Feast of Christ's Nativity, in the night, at a certain place that they are resolved upon amongst themselves, there is gathered together such a huge multitude of wolves changed from men that dwell in diverse places, which afterwards the same night do so rage with wonderful fierceness, both against mankind and other creatures that are not fierce by nature,

> that the inhabitants of that country suffer more hurt from them than ever they do from true natural wolves. For as it is proved they set upon the houses of men that are in the woods with wonderful fierceness, and labor to break down the doors, whereby they may destroy both men and other creatures that remain there.[33]

After the massacre, the werewolves search the cellars and usually drink all the beer they can find there. It is this habit, Magnus argues convincingly, that distinguishes these preternatural creatures from natural wolves.

Magnus states that anyone who wishes to harm other people and their livestock and who craves abilities forbidden by the divine order is capable of becoming a werewolf, regardless of whether he is a German or an indigenous peasant. Even some leading members of the nobility are found among the ranks of these shape-changing bands. Magnus then goes on to describe how, in order to become a werewolf, the would-be initiate shares a mug of beer with an experienced sorcerer. In turn, the sorcerer utters certain magic words that create the werewolf, giving him the power to change his shape at will. In a rite that bears some superficial affinity to the witches' Sabbath, once a year, several thousand werewolves gather at a ruin on the border of Livonia and Lithuania, where they test their agility by jumping over a wall. Their leaders mercilessly whip those that fail, a fate that often befalls those werewolves who have grown too fat.[34]

The erudite bishop adds three more anecdotes about the Baltic werewolves. The first centers on a nobleman and his serfs who are forced to spend the night in the wilderness. One of the peasants volunteers to provide the party with food, transforms into a wolf, and kills a sheep from a nearby flock. He brings the animal to his grateful companions and reverts to his human shape. The second story involves a noble Livonian lady who has a discussion with one of her serfs about the possibility of lycanthropy. The lady is skeptical, but the peasant wants to prove his point. He disappears into the cellar, and soon afterward a wolf is spotted near the estate. The beast is attacked by guard dogs, which rip one of its eyes out—and when later the peasant returns, he, too, is one-eyed. In the last account, the Duke of Prussia forces a man who is alleged to be a werewolf to demonstrate his abilities. Like the Livonian lady, the duke refuses to believe in such sorcery, but the prisoner proves him wrong and duly transforms into a wolf. At this, the duke immediately orders the unfortunate man to be burnt at the stake as a punishment for his idolatry.[35]

Compared to Magnus's evocative description of the Livonian werewolf menace, these three stories do not seem particularly terrifying. Sympathetic wounds

and harsh justice are common features in most early modern werewolf accounts. It is, however, worth noting that each of the three stories juxtaposes a member of the nobility with a werewolf—and, significantly, in the first two cases, the lycanthrope is described explicitly as an indigenous Livonian peasant. In each case, it is the noble who is contemptuous of the idea of shape-changing; in each case, the indigenous werewolf proves him or her wrong.

Magnus's *Historia* contains the only visual depiction of Livonian werewolves in the entire corpus of early modern sources. This is a vignette, accompanying Chapter 46, which depicts a large group of bipedal creatures—many of them with recognizably bestial features—armed with crude weapons. One of them appears to be riding an enormous badger, and the strange pack leads an ox with them. These "werewolves" face a rider on a flying creature that vaguely resembles a griffon. And the whole action is set against an eerie landscape where a moonlike face peeps out behind the branches of a leafless tree. It is an evocative image, but oddly unrelated to the phenomena that Magnus describes. As such, it is not especially helpful in the analysis of Livonian werewolf beliefs. Indeed, the image was designed for an Italian edition of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* and was reused for the *Historia* to save costs.[36] In itself, then, it is something of a red herring.

PHILIPP MELANCHTHON AND THE WITTENBERG HUMANISTS

When Philipp Melanchthon, the eminent Protestant reformer and influential humanist, heard about the Muscovite attack on Livonia in 1558 he was deeply worried, for he suspected that the invasion was part of the great tribulations that would precede the Apocalypse. Melanchthon, therefore, followed the Livonian War with interest through his network of humanist associates and friends, trying to comprehend both the political and eschatological implications of the struggle.[37] In 1558 he received a notice from a former pupil, Hubert Languet, apparently linking the werewolf rumors to classical authority. Languet, it seems, had traveled to Livonia because he wanted to determine the truth behind the stories of Baltic werewolves.[38] Melanchthon reproduced Languet's intelligence later that year: "This summer, the Muscovite occupied two cities in Livonia, *Nerva* [Narva] and *Derpta* [Dorpat/Tartu]. The name 'Nerva,' I believe, is derived from the *Nervii*, who are mentioned by Herodotus in his fourth book with the following words: 'among the Nervii, the people turn into wolves at a

particular time of the year, and afterwards they become humans again.' The same thing happened in Livonia the previous year, before the war, to a certain man, who himself told it to many trustworthy people, after he had become human again."[39] As Melanchthon notes, Herodotus had recorded certain rumors that claimed that the Neurians, a tribe in Scythia, assumed a lupine form once a year.[40] Melanchthon's historical considerations were often based on superficial onomastic similarities, for he and his pupils compared the toponyms and ethnonyms mentioned in classical sources and contemporary reports, and on this basis concluded that distant places and tribes were related if their names resembled each other. Melanchthon knew of the shape-shifting Neurians in ancient Scythia, and he had heard reports of the werewolves of Livonia. Therefore, the fact that there was a city in Livonia that sounded as if it might be related to the Neurians could not possibly be a coincidence.

This was not the only time that Melanchthon commented on the werewolves of Livonia. In one of his lectures at the University of Wittenberg he mentioned that he had received a letter written by a certain "Hermannus ex Livonia," a very trustworthy man. Melanchthon's informer was, in this case, most likely Hermann Wilken—perhaps better known by his humanist name, Wittekind, another one of his former pupils.[41] According to this letter, a prisoner had recently confessed to being a sorcerer and a werewolf. Before his execution, the unfortunate man explained that he had annually assumed a lupine shape and been a wolf for twelve days: "After Christmas, a vision of a small boy appeared and ordered him to become a wolf. If he did not do so, a horrible specter with a whip came, and so he was transformed into a wolf. Afterward, he joined numerous other wolves, and they roamed through the woods, lacerating livestock, but they could not hurt human beings. . . . This happened each year for twelve days; afterward he reverted into human shape."[42]

After Melanchthon's death in 1560, his successors at the University of Wittenberg continued to disseminate the werewolf reports among the academic elites of Protestant Europe. The most important of these was Caspar Peucer, Melanchthon's son-in-law, who in his 1560 *Commentarius de praecipuis generibus divinationum* (Commentary on extraordinary forms of divination) reproduced the argument that the Neurians were ancestors of the Livonians, and retold Wittekind's account of the werewolf activities during the twelve nights after Christmas, embellishing it with a few more sensational details.[43] In Peucer's version, the werewolf bands are said to be several thousand strong (a detail possibly inspired by Olaus Magnus, who reported a similar number); the boy who summons the werewolves limps on a lame leg, a sign intended to underscore

his diabolical nature; and the specter with the whip is now capable of dividing rivers so that the werewolves may cross on dry ground. Despite all this, Peucer emphasizes that the putative werewolves are not truly transformed; they are deluded by their master, the Devil, and merely believe that they have assumed a lupine shape.

Peucer also adds a new story to the canon. This, too, had most likely been sent to Wittenberg by that ever-resourceful werewolf expert, Wittekind.[44] In this tale, a drunken peasant loses consciousness in the presence of several witnesses. When a horse is found dead the next morning, the peasant confesses that he had been transformed into a werewolf during the night and killed it. For Peucer, this story confirmed that lycanthropy was a diabolical delusion. It was the Devil who had killed the horse while the peasant was unconscious, and it was the Devil who then made the wretched miscreant believe he had been responsible. "In this way," Peucer concluded, "the demons play among one another with the damnation of men."[45]

But Peucer's report also adds an interesting detail, for the misguided peasant claims that werewolves hunt witches. He had pursued a witch "in the shape of a fiery butterfly" (*veneficam ignei papillionis specie*) and killed the horse by accident when the witch hid behind the animal. This is the first record of the alleged hostility between Livonian werewolves and witches, a peculiar detail that occasionally resurfaces over the next 130 years.[46]

After providing Melanchthon and Peucer with inspiring reports, Hermann Wittekind finally published his own account of the Livonian werewolves in 1585, more than twenty years after his stay in Riga. His *Christlich bedencken und erjnnerung von Zauberey* (Christian consideration and reminder of sorcery), printed under the pseudonym Augustin Lercheimer, became famous as the first notable criticism of the European witch persecutions published in the vernacular.[47] In this work, Wittekind provided two accounts of werewolves. Neither is explicitly associated with Livonia, for he wanted to avoid any association between them and his own career in order to maintain his anonymity. However, it is apparent that this is where they originated.[48] The first is Peucer's story of the drunken peasant, which is reproduced almost verbatim.[49] The second case is similar, but centers on a miserable, simpleminded man who was imprisoned in a tower. Transforming himself into a wolf shape, he had then flown over a river and visited his family twenty miles away. He returned to his confinement only because he was forced to do so by his "master." Wittekind, with the characteristic skepticism he deployed so effectively when examining witch persecutions, emphasized that such an alleged werewolf deserved to be pitied rather

than executed. With satisfaction, he noted that his intervention had saved the poor wretch from death at the stake.[50]

THE BANALITY OF THE WEREWOLF

The accounts published by Olaus Magnus, Philipp Melanchthon, and his pupils secured the lupine shape-shifters of the Baltic a well-established place in the imagination of Europe's erudite elites. The existence of ravenous werewolves in Livonia became a commonly known fact among early modern men of letters. Magnus's *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* was extremely popular in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially since there were hardly any other scholarly descriptions of the North available. Moreover, the fact that one of the two major testimonies on the Livonian werewolves was written by a Catholic bishop and émigré, and the other by influential Lutheran humanists, ensured that the Baltic werewolves were known among Catholic and Protestant intellectuals alike.

During the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many scholars copied the available reports of Baltic werewolves, mainly based on the accounts of Magnus and Peucer. Johann Weyer, well-known for his scathing criticism of witch prosecutions, *De praestigiis daemonum* (1563), was the first notable recipient of the Livonian werewolf accounts.[51] A great variety of authors followed: the infamous French witch-hunter Pierre de Lancre,[52] the skeptic Reginald Scot,[53] the Italian bishop Simone Majoli,[54] the Oxford pioneer of cognitive science Robert Burton,[55] the assistant to the famous Jesuit polymath Athanasius Kircher, Caspar Schott,[56] along with numerous Protestant preachers[57]—to list but a few examples. Livonia had become an abode of murderous diabolic shape-shifters—or, depending on the opinions of the respective authors, an area where delusion, superstition, and melancholy caused disturbed people to believe that they were wolves. The association between Livonia and lycanthropy was, in any case, firmly established among the *res publica litterarum*.

Interestingly enough, though hardly surprising, local scholars who lived and worked in Livonia were far more reluctant to comment on the vicious werewolves that roamed their land than were their sensationalist-minded colleagues abroad. Balthasar Russow, for instance, the most important historiographer of sixteenth-century Livonia, did not mention any werewolves, even though he commented on the unnatural behavior of wolves during the siege of Tolsburg (Toolse) during the Livonian War.[58] Salomon Henning, who inspected the

rural parishes in Courland by order of Duke Gotthard Kettler during the 1560s, listed shape-shifting among the idolatrous habits to which the peasants had previously adhered, but provided no details.[59] A particularly intriguing episode was reported by Jesuit missionaries stationed in Riga in 1594/95, who complained that their Protestant opponents had spread a rumor among the gullible peasants that a Catholic priest had transformed himself into a wolf. If true, this would be an unusual instance of learned theologians trying to convince commoners of the reality of a werewolf transformation.[60]

Travelers who visited Livonia during this period regularly mentioned the perilous werewolves in their letters and accounts. Johann David Wunderer, a student from Rostock, and Raffaello Barberini, an Italian merchant, anticipated an encounter with the infamous local werewolves, or at least pretended to do so, to impress the readers of their travel accounts.[61] The learned jurist and diplomat Johannes Gödelmann was more cautious. When he visited Riga and Königsberg (Kaliningrad) in 1587, he discussed the topic with the locals, only to learn that most educated people did not actually believe in werewolves at all.[62] Nevertheless, Samuel Kiechel, a merchant from Ulm, claimed that he had personally witnessed the search for a werewolf at a small, decrepit mansion in northern Livonia, after several sheep had mysteriously disappeared.[63] For his part, Antonio Possevino, the papal nuncio, reported on ravenous wolves on the road to Pleskau (Pskov) in a letter to the Duchess of Mantua—he claimed to have seen four of them, including one that was completely white, and reported that they had killed and devoured more than 150 people, including many pregnant women (their preferred victims).[64] Although Possevino did not explicitly mention werewolves, from the context of his description it seems very likely that he had Olaus Magnus's account in mind.

By the mid-seventeenth century, werewolves had become a something of a sine qua non in descriptions of Livonia; they were almost an iconic symbol for the country, rarely absent in any travelogue, ethnographic, or geographic treatise. Friedrich Menius, professor of history at the local university at Dorpat (Tartu) during the early 1630s, quipped that "the outrageous lycanthropy of the Livonians is so common that even those who can't tell the difference between their right and their left hand are usually familiar with it."[65] The werewolf had become a commonplace, a rather banal fact that hardly needed any further explanation, entrenched as it was in the accessible, authoritative accounts of Magnus and Peucer.

This attitude is best illustrated by one of the typical guidebooks that were available to early modern travelers, David Frölich's 1644 *Bibliotheca, seu Cynosura*

Peregrinantium: "Livonia is a marshy, flat, densely forested land traversed by navigable rivers rich in fish. The fields are arable and very fertile. Boars, elk, foxes, lynxes, marten, sables, ermines, and beavers dwell in the woods. The rabbits change their color depending on the season. In winter they are white, and during summer gray. Horses, cattle, and fattened pigs are plentiful, and they are expediently bred. Werewolves are very common in this region."[66] Werewolves are just part of the fauna of the eastern Baltic area, along with the fattened pigs. The shape-changers of Livonia had established for themselves a place in the imagination of the learned elites—up to the point where they had almost become a mundane phenomenon.

WEREWOLF RESEARCH IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY: PAUL EINHORN, FRIEDRICH MENIUS, AND CHRISTIAN KORTHOLT

In his groundbreaking paper on the Livonian werewolves, Hermann von Bruiningk chose to ignore most seventeenth-century documents, for, as he said, "to examine the clutter of tract literature and the pseudohistorical writings of the seventeenth century is not worth the effort."[67] One of the few later authors he deems worthy of attention is the Protestant theologian Paul Einhorn. Admittedly, the werewolf literature had become formulaic, derivative, and a bit banal by this point, especially as there were few new reports to include (although the little-known account of Christian Kortholt, mentioned below, certainly deserves attention). But Bruningk's dismissive statement disregards the fact that seventeenth-century scholars devoted considerable efforts to rationalize and explain the werewolf phenomenon.

Among these scholars was Paul Einhorn, an influential clergyman who later became superintendent of Courland, and who, in 1627, published a tract titled *Wiederlegung der Abgötterey und nichtigen Aberglaubens* (Refutation of idolatry and idle superstition). This was the first of a series of books penned by Einhorn to advise his fellow pastors on how to deal with religious deviance among their Latvian parishioners. The sixth chapter, devoted to werewolves, boldly asserts that "it is undeniable, and cannot be refuted, that . . . men, incited by the Devil, appear in the shape of a cruel wolf and roam the land, and harm both men and livestock."[68]

Previous scholars had primarily collected reports on the Livonian werewolves, but any attempt to explain the phenomenon was superficial: Münster and

Peucer thought the transformation a diabolical illusion; while Magnus seemed to imply that it was a factual transformation, but did not elaborate on his opinion. Einhorn, on the other hand, was determined to provide an explanation.

He states that there are two theories for werewolfery current among Livonians. Some, he notes, argued that what occurred was a transmigration of the soul of a man into the body of a wolf, leaving the human body effectively empty and motionless. This theory coincides with the cases reported by Peucer and Wittekind in which the body of the alleged werewolf lay in a semi-comatose state while the soul carried on in its lupine guise. Others, though, insisted that lycanthropy is a form of shape-shifting in which man is transformed into a wolf, body and soul.[69] Both opinions, Einhorn emphasizes, are wrong: the Devil is incapable of physically transforming a man into a wolf, since he, as a fallen angel, is himself a created being, not the creator; thus he cannot alter the human body, which God had shaped in his own image. Likewise, Einhorn thinks it impossible for the soul to leave the body and return afterward, for if the soul is detached from the body, death is inevitable—and all accounts agree that werewolves are not undead, but rather are living beings.

The truth is, according to Einhorn, actually quite simple.[70] The Devil, as a great liar and deceiver, only shrouds his followers in illusionary wolf shapes to delude and beguile observers. Skeptics might argue that a werewolf has far greater strength than does an ordinary man, but, Einhorn explains, the Devil is physically present when one of his villainous followers, in lupine disguise, attacks humans and cattle; it is the great ferocity and power of the Devil that survivors falsely attribute to the alleged werewolf. In Einhorn's hands, werewolfery becomes another of the Devil's various schemes to mock humanity, God's most glorious creation, and to undermine faith.[71]

Shortly after Einhorn, the notorious academic adventurer and itinerant scholar Friedrich Menius offered up an historical explanation for Livonia's werewolf problem. Languet, Melanchthon, and Peucer had all argued that the indigenous peasants of the region had inherited their supernatural abilities from their ancestors, the shape-shifting Neurians from Scythia that Herodotus had described. According to Menius, the original homeland of these enigmatic wolf-men was Mesopotamia. The unbearably hot climate, worsened by an infestation of poisonous snakes, had forced the Neurians to leave the Near East, and migrate to the lands north of the Black Sea. There they were drawn into a war between King Darius of Persia and the Goths under their leader, Authinus. Again the Neurians had to abandon their lands, and together with various other barbarian tribes they withdrew even farther northward, finally reaching Livonia

in the early fifth century B.C.E. There they settled in the area of Narva, which, as Melanchthon had observed, still bears their name.

Some elements of this strange migration, such as the serpent plague or Darius's campaign north of the Black Sea, are clearly borrowed from Herodotus and quoted out of context. But Menius's bold hypothesis, unsupported by any of the available sources, provided the Livonian werewolves with a suitably exotic and mysterious pedigree, one that was enhanced by Mesopotamia's association with the origins of magic. It also indicates a certain shift in the historical methodology. Seventy years earlier, a superficial similarity between the toponym Narva and the ethnonym of the Neurians had been sufficient to justify a connection. In the 1630s this was no longer enough. Menius now had to postulate a migration hypothesis that explained *how* the Neurians came to Narva—even if his solution was not very plausible.

Perhaps the most important addition to the canon of werewolfery in the seventeenth century came in a 1677 treatise on witchcraft and diabolism in Scandinavia titled *Nord-Schwedische Hexerey, oder Simia Dei, Gottes Affe* (Northern Swedish witchcraft, or *Simia Dei*, the Ape of God). Writing under the pseudonym Theophilus Sincerus, the influential theologian Christian Kortholt retold the extraordinary experiences of a German traveler who had visited the eastern Baltic littoral forty years earlier.[72] According to Kortholt, at Christmas in 1637 an acquaintance he describes only as a "very trustworthy person," was staying at the city of Doblen (Dobele) in Courland. That evening, several of the resident Germans invited him, as a fellow countryman, for a drink at the local inn. While the men were sitting there, a group of Latvian peasants approached the Germans' table. In a friendly manner, one of the peasants raised his mug and offered a toast in his own language: "To you, sir, as it is to me." The traveler, who did not speak any Latvian, was familiar with a similar phrase, "To you, sir," but failed to notice the subtle difference. He thought it appropriate to return the favor and wanted to reply kindly and bless the man's drink. His German companions, however, immediately jumped to their feet and told him to be quiet. At that, the men turned on the well-meaning Latvian, beating him until he was bleeding, then chasing him and his fellow peasants out of the inn. At this, Kortholt's trustworthy acquaintance was understandably confused: why had they beaten up a peasant who had done no harm but to offer up a friendly toast? If he had blessed the peasant's drink, his compatriots explained, he would have been turned into a werewolf during the night. The peasant was himself clearly a werewolf, and it was only by tricking another into such a blessing that he could be cured of his affliction. "Such trickery and deceit," the

drinkers ominously explained, "had befallen many Germans who were ignorant of the local language."[73] To confirm the truth of their warning, the next morning the Germans showed Kortholt's acquaintance a large number of werewolves returning home after their nocturnal forays.

Though Kortholt's account seems remarkable, it does draw on elements established in earlier sources. In the first place, it seems significant that the encounter took place around Christmas, for both Magnus and Peucer had emphasized that the Livonian werewolves were particularly active at that time of the year.[74] Given the popularity of these two authors, it seems likely that locals and well-prepared travelers knew they had to be particularly careful during the long, dark nights of midwinter. Second, here as in Magnus and Einhorn, werewolf initiation is connected to beer drinking.[75] It hardly seems a coincidence, then, that Old Thiess testified during his trial that he had been inducted into the werewolf community when someone offered a toast and breathed into his mug three times. He also admitted that he planned to pass his ability to a successor in the same manner.[76] These ideas seem to have had a long life, for according to various ethnographical surveys, such beliefs could still be found in Livonia and Lithuania as recently as the nineteenth century.[77]

WEREWOLVES IN ACADEMIA: STUDENT ORATIONS AND DISSERTATIONS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Werewolves and shape-shifters were not only a topic for experienced scholars. During this period, many students chose lycanthropy as a topic for their academic orations and dissertations, addressing the subject from various points of view, including theological, philosophical, medical, and zoological perspectives. Early modern dissertations[78] were not expected to contain any new theories or innovative research. Rather, the student simply had to prove that he was able to treat the chosen subject in a formally correct manner, and that he was familiar with the opinions of the relevant authorities, both classic and modern. The werewolves of Livonia are regularly mentioned in dissertations on lycanthropy, although most students were usually content reproducing the standard passages from Magnus, Bodin, or Peucer.[79]

That said, a slightly different picture emerges from these dissertations when either the student or the presiding professor were native Livonians[80]—a situation in which one of the parties might have a personal, firsthand perspective on the werewolf menace. To my knowledge, there are four such dissertations and

orations, held between 1615 and 1650, three of them abroad and one at the local Livonian university at Dorpat (Tartu): Heinrich von Ulenbrock (Rostock, 1615) and Jacob Scott (Dorpat, 1639) mentioned the werewolves as a local peculiarity in their speeches on Riga and on the history of Livonia, respectively. Georg Preuss (Königsberg, 1650) and Michael Mej (Wittenberg, 1650) presided over dissertations explicitly devoted to shape-shifting.[81] In addition, an oration *De lycanthropis* was held at Dorpat in 1644, although in this case the speaker was a Swede rather than a native Livonian.[82]

Concerning the Baltic werewolves, Preuss's dissertation *De Magica Transmutatione in Bruta* and Scott's oration *Historia de Livonia* are the least significant among these five texts. Preuss and Scott show little interest in the notorious shape-changers of Livonia, apart from generic references to Caspar Peucer and Olaus Magnus, respectively.[83] By contrast, Michael Mej, a native of Riga, authored a dissertation in which he tried to refute the existence of werewolves in Livonia. He based his arguments on the usual litany of sources, but the conclusions he drew were quite unconventional, for he placed a strong emphasis on naturalist explanations. Wolves and other animals are known to behave with unusual ferocity during their mating season, he argued. During the cold winters and frequent snows in Livonia, when prey is scarce, their aggressive behavior worsens, resulting in attacks against beasts and men. Never one to turn down an opportunity to spread deceit, upon seeing such attacks the Devil manipulates people who suffer from an imbalance of the humors, causing them to recast the natural predation of wolves as the work of werewolves.[84] Throughout the text, Mej's embarrassment about the dubious reputation of his native land is almost tangible. As a Livonian abroad, he was constantly associated with werewolves, and this seems to have been quite irritating for him, for he complained at one point that "the most famous, but nevertheless completely spurious metamorphoses in Livonia, have become so entrenched in the minds of certain people in foreign lands that if you dare to tell the truth, they object with falsehoods."[85]

An even more emotional oration on the werewolf menace was delivered by Andreas Arvidi, a student from Strängnäs in Sweden, at the local Livonian university at Dorpat in 1644. After a summary of the standard reports and theories, Arvidi emphasized a detail that previous scholars had ignored: werewolves were said to be particularly active during Christmastime, as Magnus and Peucer had testified.[86] Arvidi's oration was held on December 18, so he decided to contribute to the audience's Christmas spirit by pointing out how outrageously werewolves besmirched the birth of Christ: "Pious are the men who, at the feast of Nativity, gather at the churches in great numbers, to hear the holy

angel's praise. . . . But opposed, oh abominable shame, this horrendous cabal of lycanthropes! Hastily following the boy with the lame leg—that is to say, a demon—and the infernal man equipped with the whip of iron straps. Oh what profanity! O tempora! O mores!"[87]

Arvidi's outrage is, to a certain degree, a formal exercise in rhetoric. The printed version of the oration indicates that this part of his speech is an *amplificatio*, an enhancement of the argument. Thus it is quite probable that Arvidi wanted to prove he could declaim in a properly dramatic way. But his oration is, nevertheless, the only early modern text that commented on the peculiar fact that the fiendish Livonian werewolves chose the second most important Christian holiday for their raids.

For his part, Heinrich von Ulenbrock, a young patrician from Riga, delivered a eulogy in praise of his native city at the University of Rostock in 1615.[88] Ulenbrock's patriotism was beyond doubt, but he also wanted to impress his learned audience with some outrageous "facts" about his native land, including the superstitious customs of the indigenous serfs. Even today, among people who have been baptized and instructed in the true faith, he notes, the erroneous belief that men transform into wolves has not been overcome: "Oh vanity of vanities! Oh deplorable delusion! Have the peasants of Livonia been once maddened by such ungodliness, I wonder, that they succumb to the same insanity today, in the light of the Gospel, and that they even dare to invoke a most precious title for their diabolical cabal? For they consider themselves to be in friendship and familiarity with God, and they call themselves the friends of God."[89]

It is hardly surprising that Ulenbrock condemns the peasants' shape-changing beliefs as delusion and madness. As we have seen, Einhorn was to voice a similar opinion a few years later, and so we may assume that such a verdict amounted almost to the semiofficial position of the Lutheran Church in Livonia.[90] But it is far more interesting that, according to Ulenbrock, the alleged werewolves, these delusional villains who allowed themselves to be deceived by the Devil, dared to claim to be "friends of God." Peucer and Wittekind had mentioned, en passant, that at least one werewolf, in his confession, stated that he and his kind were deputed to hunt witches. Such hostility toward witches, the quintessential agents of the Devil, might indicate that this one particular werewolf considered himself to be acting on behalf of God. Of course, it is also possible that by casting himself as a witch-hunter the putative werewolf might have been hoping to secure a milder sentence from the authorities. However, the alliance and friendship between God and the werewolves is far more explicit in Ulenbrock's oration, compared to the accounts of Peucer and Wittekind.

The same argument, in almost identical phrasing, reappears eighty years later in the trial of Old Thiess. At the height of the proceedings against him, Thiess surprises his judges with the bold claim that he, as a werewolf, is a "Hound of God." And as such, he hunts and fights sorcerers; accordingly, he can be certain to enter heaven as a reward after his death.[91] A direct connection between Ulenbrock's oration and the Thiess case is improbable: the illiterate defendant certainly had no access to scholarly texts. It is possible that one of the learned judges could have known of Ulenbrock's argument and, through leading questions, caused Thiess to come to the same conclusion. But it would be a very unlikely coincidence that one of the judges was familiar with the contents of an obscure student oration, held abroad almost a century earlier, and conveyed the idea of the werewolves as "friends of God" to the defendant. It seems far more plausible that Ulenbrock and Thiess, independently of each other, were both drawing on folk beliefs—beliefs that stood diametrically opposed to the diabolical werewolf described by the scholars. Though separated by almost a century, and taken from different realms, it is likely, then, that in Ulenbrock's oration and Thiess's trial we have two distinct windows onto the world of a peasant counterculture in which the idea of a "benevolent werewolf" was neither an oxymoron nor the obsessive ramblings of a senile old man.

THE DECLINE OF THE LIVONIAN WEREWOLVES IN ENLIGHTENMENT SCHOLARSHIP

By the end of the seventeenth century, the werewolves of Livonia remained a common feature in scholarly accounts of the region, but their importance was waning. In 1695 Christian Kelch, pastor at Reval (Tallinn) and one of the most important historiographers of his time, admitted that there were still some sorcerous peasants capable of transforming themselves into wolves. But fortunately, he added, such misdeeds had almost disappeared, thanks to the continuous efforts of the clergy to instruct the peasants in the Christian faith.[92]

This shift in attitude during the early Enlightenment becomes apparent in the discussion between Samuel Rhanaeus, pastor at Grenzhof (Mežamuiža) in Courland, and the German naturalist Johann Kanold at Breslau (Wrocław). In 1725/26, the two learned gentlemen corresponded on the legendary werewolves of Livonia.[93] Rhanaeus, the local expert, expressed a very traditional approach to the topic. He conceded that the alleged werewolves had been treated far too harshly, with the result that many innocent people had died

on the stake; nevertheless, like Einhorn, he was convinced that apparent cases of lycanthropy were actually a result of diabolical beguilement and illusion.[94] To that end, Rhanaeus sent Kanold three reports, pointing out that they were "no old wives' tales, but perfectly authentic occurrences."[95] In each case, the werewolf is a Latvian peasant; the informers, on the other hand, are usually Germans.

Rhanaeus made sure his reports seemed as reliable and verifiable as possible. He included the names of witnesses and the exact date and location of each encounter. In one case he even quoted an autopsy report, which revealed that a peasant had been killed by lead shot that his master had fired at a wolf—strong evidence, according to Rhanaeus, that the victim had been shrouded in the likeness of a wolf.[96]

Kanold, however, remained unconvinced. He stated that "the idea of true werewolves . . . has always seemed suspicious, uncertain, and wrong to me."[97] Despite Rhanaeus's assertion that supernatural forces were involved, Kanold was skeptical. Lycanthropy, he stated categorically, was merely a delusion of the mind. Superstitious people blamed werewolves for the damage caused by natural wolves, and in some cases malevolent denunciators raised accusations they knew to be wrong.

To prove his point, Kanold published the letter of a scholar who had visited Courland in 1719.[98] The anonymous traveler had heard all kinds of sensational reports about the witches and werewolves of Livonia, but had witnessed nothing unusual during his stay in the country. The traveler's explanation was very simple: the local peasants were ignorant and extremely superstitious, and so their fear of wolves caused them to fantasize about shape-shifters. Moreover, the superstition built on itself, for many peasants liked to boast that they were werewolves, knowing that such tall tales would strike other villagers with terror and wonder. Even the learned men in Courland liked to spread werewolf stories to impress foreigners and gain their attention, he concluded.[99]

By the 1730s, it was obvious that the skeptical stance of men like Johann Kanold and the anonymous "learned traveler" had come to prevail against conservatives like Rhanaeus. In 1737 the physician Johann Jacob Bräuner summarized the venerable werewolf accounts of Peucer and Wittekind and explained that such delusions were induced by the "coarse, dense air" in the northern regions, which affected the mind and caused melancholy, phantasms, and vivid dreams.[100] The Enlightenment theologian Eberhard David Hauber ridiculed Kortholt's report on the Latvian peasants who supposedly tried to afflict Kortholt's acquaintance

with the werewolf curse when he met them in a Couronian tavern. "It is an obvious untruth," he wrote, "or even a despicable lie that does not even require to be refuted. . . . A tavern is certainly not the right place, and the drunkards assembled there are not the right company to learn important truths, or to prove them from their conversations."[101]

Near the end of the eighteenth century, the Baltic werewolves were still mentioned occasionally, as relics from an unenlightened age. Seemingly, only superstitious simpletons and irredeemable obscurantists still believed in such stories. In some cases, scholars arrived at very peculiar reinterpretations of the werewolf tradition. August Wilhelm Hupel, one of the leading proponents of the Enlightenment in Livonia, defined werewolves as "a particular kind of very small wolf that, according to the delusions of simple-minded people, crawls into larger animals, for example cattle."[102] Under the stern criticism of the Enlightenment, the proud werewolves that had once terrorized the land had degenerated into rather pathetic bovine parasites.

CONCLUSION: MONSTROUS ETHNOGRAPHIES

For more than 150 years, the dreaded werewolves of Livonia captivated the imagination of the learned elites of Europe. The extensive scholarly literature dealing with the shape-shifting phenomenon developed various interesting elements: the evocative werewolf stories of Olaus Magnus and the Wittenberg humanists that piqued the interest of their fellow scholars; Paul Einhorn's meticulous efforts to unmask the alleged transformations as diabolical delusion; Friedrich Menius's attempt to explain the phenomenon with a far-fetched tale about the migrations of the ancient Neurians; and the fascinating idea of the werewolf as an agent of God, documented by Heinrich von Ulenbrock. But beyond all these intriguing facets, the basic, simple question remains: why did Livonia, of all countries, happen to gain the reputation as *the* werewolf hot spot of early modern Europe?[103]

Modern researchers have noted that reports on lycanthropy tended to be far more common during times of war and unrest.[104] Times of political and social strife, as Norman R. Smith has pointed out, call forth a fascination with grotesque monsters, "creatures whose deformed bodies seem to exemplify the discord of the times."[105] In this sense, werewolves perform a role similar to the ominous miscarriages and monstrous portents that fueled the imagination of medieval and early modern society.

To a certain degree, the association between lycanthropy and war resulted simply from the behavior of normal wolves during periods of unrest. In a rural area depopulated and devastated by war, wolves were far more likely to carry off livestock or, in rare cases, even kill a person. People might observe wolves scavenging for bodies on a battlefield, and the scarcity of prey after extensive foraging could force the animals into unusually aggressive behavior. All these factors could cause the local populace to believe that werewolves roamed the war-torn land.

More important, the werewolf served as a symbolic embodiment of disorder and trouble. A creature torn between humanity and bestiality is an apt metaphor to convey anxiety over the social ills and the individual and collective depravation that resulted from early modern warfare. The heyday of the Baltic werewolves corresponds almost exactly to the 150 years of military struggle for control over Livonia. From the collapse of the Livonian confederation in 1558 to the Russian victory in the Great Northern War in 1721, the region was wracked by almost incessant warfare between Sweden, Poland–Lithuania, and Russia.

The association between warfare and lycanthropy is strongly expressed by sixteenth-century Livonian sources: one of the influential early accounts, the report of Hubert Languet, is directly linked to the Muscovite invasion of 1558, which Languet witnessed. Melanchthon and Bodin, who disseminated the report, both retained the military context.[106] In Balthasar Russow's chronicle, the "amazing and extraordinary portent of wolves"—which resembles a werewolf case, though shape-shifting is not mentioned explicitly—also takes place during the hostilities of the Livonian War.[107] In his late sixteenth-century travel account, Samuel Kiechel described how the devastated area of northern Estonia, ravaged by a recent Muscovite campaign, provided the werewolves with a perfect setting for their raids.[108] During the slightly more peaceful decades of the seventeenth century, the connection between war and werewolvery was less pronounced, but the general tenor—a precarious, threatened sociopolitical order as a precondition for the beasts' activities—remained the same.

In his seminal description of the Livonian werewolves, Magnus had refrained from ascribing the shape-changing ability to a particular ethnic group. For him, any godless man willing to join the werewolf bands is able to do so—regardless of whether he is German or indigenous Livonian.[109] Despite Magnus's authority, however, no later scholars seem to have followed him in this argument. The possible existence of German werewolves is completely overshadowed by the numerous accounts of indigenous Estonian and Latvian peasants who excel in shape-changing. As we have seen, Magnus himself had provided three episodes

that put his statement on German werewolves into perspective. In these stories, German nobles appear uncertain about the werewolf phenomenon and seem unable to grasp it; by contrast, the indigenous peasants consciously exploit the lore as they wish.

In most seventeenth-century accounts, the Livonian werewolves were said to be "non-German" serfs.[110] Their ethnic affiliation was explicitly noted by Ulenbrock, Menius, Kelch, and Rhanaeus, among others. In the 1670s, the German physician Rosinus Lentilius toyed with the ambiguous meaning of the word *versipellis*, which could be translated as "treacherous" but was also used as a learned designation for "werewolf." The Latvian peasants, he wrote, are "vafra gens, versipellis et dolosissima."[111] To ensure that the reader does not miss his insinuation, he added that "lycanthropy is believed to be very common there."[112]

The ethnicity of the Baltic shape-shifters is particularly emphasized in Kortholt's story of the German traveler and his fateful encounter with the local werewolves in a Couronian tavern. The entire story is based on the idea that nefarious Latvians lure unsuspecting Germans to their doom by turning them into werewolves. Their ethnicity is even a prerequisite for the peasants' villainy: Latvian, as the account implies, is an incomprehensibly strange language, and the traveler is therefore unable to realize that he is about to become the victim of a magical spell.

Throughout the seventeenth century, the werewolf was one of the focal points of Baltic ethnography. According to most contemporary observers, the Estonians and Latvians were unruly, devious, and barbarous villains, religious deviants who stubbornly clung to their heathen beliefs and superstitious rituals, despite baptism.[113] The fact that they, in addition to all their other dubious traits, routinely turned into wolves confirmed this general stereotype in a particularly emphatic way.

At the same time, their alleged magical abilities seemed to empower the socially and politically impotent peasants. From the perspective of the learned elites, they constituted a danger to the social order, one that had to be met either by coercion and strict discipline, or through education and enlightenment. As such, the werewolf motif could be utilized to justify a wide range of sociopolitical agendas.

The unsettling reports of fiendish werewolves roaming the forests and marshes of Livonia, which seemed to unnerve and fascinate the scholarly elites of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were intimately linked to warfare and political discord, as well as to notions of otherness and ethnic demarcation. Both aspects were typical for early modern Livonia. Few countries in Europe, if any,

displayed both aspects—a strict social hierarchy along ethnic lines, combined with frequent warfare—as distinctively as Livonia. It is therefore no coincidence that the ethnography of the eastern Baltic appeared, to contemporary observers, thoroughly monstrous. Lycanthropy was an apt metaphor to express the particular situation of war-torn Livonia and its allegedly barbarous indigenous peasants. In its monstrous hybridity, through the merging of human and bestial traits, the Livonian werewolf was an embodiment of both discord and otherness.

NOTES

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1. Hermann von Bruiningk, "Der Werwolf in Livland und das letzte im Wendenschen Landgericht und Dörptschen Hofgericht i. J. 1692 deshalb stattgehabte Strafverfahren," *Mitteilungen aus der livländischen Geschichte* 22 (1924): 163–220.

2. Livonia is the medieval and early modern designation for an area in the eastern Baltic region roughly corresponding to the modern republics of Estonia and Latvia.

3. Bruiningk, "Der Werwolf in Livland," 167.

4. Among the older contributions, the most notable is Carl Rußwurm, "Ueber Wehrwölfe," *Das Inland: Eine Wochenschrift für Liv-, Esth- und Curland's Geschichte, Geographie, Statistik und Litteratur* 3 (1838): 261–66.

5. Karlis Straubergs, "Om varulvarna i Baltikum," in *Studier och översikter tillägnade Erik Nylander den 30 januari 1955*, ed. Sigurd Erixon (Stockholm: Samfundet för svensk folklivsforskning, 1955), 110.

6. "Thiess" is an abbreviation of the name "Matthiess," commonly rendered as "Matīss" in modern Latvian secondary literature that treats the case.

7. Bruiningk, "Der Werwolf in Livland," 203–20.

8. Lycanthropy, in the strict sense of the word, refers to a psychological disorder during which a patient believes himself to be a wolf. Seventeenth-century physicians already knew about this condition. See Homayun Sidky, *Witchcraft, Lycanthropy, Drugs, and Disease: An Anthropological Study of the European Witch-Hunts* (New York: Lang, 1997), 238. In most cases, however, lycanthropy is used in early modern texts to denote all kinds of werewolf-related phenomena, including supernatural shape-shifting.

9. Throughout the essay, I use the historical German designations for Livonian cities and villages, with the modern names added in parentheses.

10. See Willem de Blécourt, "A Journey to Hell: Reconsidering the Livonian 'Werewolf,'" *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 2 (2007): 50.

11. An earlier trial, dated 1683, also seems to imply an antagonism between sorcerers and werewolves. See Straubergs, "Om varulvarna i Baltikum," 121–23.

12. Cf. Blécourt, "Journey to Hell," 49, 63. In Thiess's imagination, evil sorcerers and good werewolves settle their differences at the local district court. The entrance to hell is located

half a mile from the estate of the presiding judge (who was probably quite surprised to learn that he had such infernal neighbors). And the political antagonism between Russians and Livonians is mirrored in the otherworld, for both sides muster their own werewolf bands, which compete with one another trying to recover the fertility of the land. For Thiess, tangible reality and werewolf mysteries are closely interwoven.

13. Otto Höfler, *Kultische Geheimbünde der Germanen* (Frankfurt: Diesterweg, 1934), in particular 341, 357.

14. See Hermann Engster, *Germanisten und Germanen: Germanenideologie und Theoriebildung in der deutschen Germanistik und Nordistik von den Anfängen bis 1945 in exemplarischer Darstellung* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1986), 80–83.

15. Will-Erich Peuckert, *Geheimkulte* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1988), 116.

16. Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath* (New York: Pantheon, 1991). See also Blécourt, "Journey to Hell," 52–56.

17. See Blécourt, "Journey to Hell"; Tiina Vähi, "Werwölfe—Viehdiebe und Räuber im Wolfspelz? Elemente des archaischen Gewohnheitsrechts in estnischen Werwolfvorstellungen," in *Tierverwandlungen: Codierungen und Diskurse*, ed. Willem de Blécourt and Christa Agnes Tuczay (Tübingen: Francke, 2011); Tiina Vähi, "Hexenprozesse und der Werwolfglaube in Estland," in *Die Bedeutung der Religion für Gesellschaften in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, ed. Manfred L.G. Dietrich and Tarmo Kulmar (Münster: Ugarit, 2003); Merili Metsvahi, "Werwolfprozesse in Estland und Livland im 17. Jahrhundert: Zusammenstöße zwischen der Realität von Richtern und von Bauern," in *Folklore als Tatsachenbericht*, ed. Jürgen Beyer and Reet Hiiemäe (Tartu: Estnisches Literaturmuseum, 2001); Maia Madar, "Estonia I: Werewolves and Poisoners," in *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

18. The seminal research by Latvian folklorist and philologist Kārlis Straubergs has been published only in Swedish and Latvian and so has received little attention from the scholarly community. See Straubergs, "Om varulvarna i Baltikum," 107–20; Kārlis Straubergs, "Vilkaču ideoloģija Latvijā," in *Latviešu vēsturnieku veltījums profesoram Dr. hist. Robertam Viperam*, ed. Margers Stepermanis et al. (Riga: Gulbis, 1939). For a recent perspective, see Tiina Vähi, "The Image of Werewolf in Folk Religion and Its Theological and Demonological Interpretations," in *The Significance of Base Texts for the Religious Identity*, ed. Manfred L.G. Dietrich and Tarmo Kulmar (Münster: Ugarit, 2006).

19. Andrejs Plakans, "Witches and Werewolves in Early Modern Livonia: An Unfinished Project," in *Rätten: En festskrift till Bengt Ankarloo*, ed. Lars M. Andersson (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2000).

20. See Jan R. Veenstra, "The Ever-Changing Nature of the Beast: Cultural Change, Lycanthropy, and the Question of Substantial Transformation (from Petronius to Del Rio)," in *The Metamorphosis of Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer and Jan R. Veenstra (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 138–42.

21. See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 94–97; Adam Douglas, *The Beast Within* (London: Chapmans, 1992), 112; Veenstra, "Ever-Changing Nature of the Beast," 150–51.

22. See Werner Petermann, *Hundsköpfe und Amazonen: Als die Welt voller Monster war* (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer, 2007), 41–103.

23. Ibid., 44–48.

24. Ibid., 50–51, 68–69; Ian N. Wood, "Categorising the *cynocephali*," in *Ego Trouble: Authors and Their Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Richard Corradini et al. (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010), 128–31.

25. Rudolf Wittkower, *Allegory and the Migration of Symbols* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1977), 73.

26. Katja Schulz, "Trollfrauen, Hundsköpfige und heidnische Priesterinnen: Vom fantastischen Spiel mit literarischen Genres in der Sturlaugs saga starfsama," in *The Fantastic in Old Norse/Icelandic Literature: Sagas and the British Isles*, ed. John McKinnell et al. (Durham: Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006).

27. Helmut Birkhan, "Altgermanische Miszellen 'aus funfzehen Zettelkästen gezogen,'" in *Festgabe für Otto Höfler zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Helmut Birkhan (Vienna: Braumüller, 1976), 36–37.

28. "Es hat dis land auch vil zauberer und hexen weiber/und seind inn dem onglauben wie sie in der vergicht offtmals bekant/das sie zů wölffen werden lauffen/und beschedigen was sie an kommen/und verwandeln sich darnach wider zů menschen/und solliche heißt man warwölff." See Sebastianus Munsterus, *Cosmographei oder beschreibung aller länder* (Basel: Henrichus Petri, 1550), 930. See also Straubergs, "Om varulvarna i Baltikum," 110–11. Note, all translations, unless noted otherwise, are the author's own.

29. For an overview of the debate, see Nicole Jacques-Lefèvre, "Such an Impure, Cruel, and Savage Beast . . . Images of the Werewolf in Demonological Works," in *Werewolves, Witches, and Wandering Spirits: Traditional Belief and Folklore in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Kathryn A. Edwards (Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 2002); Michael Siefener, *Hexerei im Spiegel der Rechtstheorie: Das crimen magiae in der Literatur von 1574 bis 1608* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1992), 145–53; Sidky, *Witchcraft, Lycanthropy, Drugs, and Disease*, 215–20.

30. "Et puis quand il n'y auroit autre chose, que la damnable intention qu'ils ont: pourquoi ne les iugerons nous pas coulpables de mort." See Henry Boguet, *Discours execrable des sorciers* (Paris: Denis Binet, 1603), 124.

31. The medical aspects of lycanthropy were particularly stressed by learned physicians like Jean de Nynauld and Johann Weyer who, however, differed considerably in their conclusions. While Weyer was generally critical of witchcraft beliefs and witch persecutions, Nynauld was firmly convinced of the reality of witchcraft and just rejected the possibility of animal transformations, arguing that the idea that the Devil could alter the shape in which God had created men was blasphemous.

32. Olaus Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (Rome: de Viottis, 1555).

33. "In festo enim Nativitatis Christi sub noctem, statuto in loco, quem inter se determinatum habent, tanta luporum ex hominibus diversis in locis habitantibus conversorum copia congregatur, quae postea eadem nocte mira ferocia cum in genus humanum, tum in caetera animalia, quae feram naturam non habent, saevit, ut maius detrimentum ab his, istius regionis inhabitatores, quam unquam a veris & naturalibus lupis accipiant. Nam uti compertum habetur, aedificia hominum in sylvis existentium, mira cum atrocitate oppugnant, ipsasque fores effringere conantur, quod tam homines, quam reliqua animantia ibidem manentia consumant." See Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, 642. Translation based on the abridged English version, Olaus Magnus, *A Compendious History of the Goths*,

Swedes, and Vandals, and Other Northern Nations (London: John Streater, 1658), 193, with modernized spelling.

34. Ibid., 642.

35. Ibid., 643–44.

36. Johann Granlund, *Olaus Magnus Historia om de nordiska folken: Femte delen: Kommentar* (Stockholm: Michaelisgillet, 1951), 435.

37. Robert Stupperich, "Melanchthon und Hermann Wittekind über den livländischen Krieg," *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 103 (1955): 278–80.

38. An account very similar to Melanchthon's notes was later published by Jean Bodin in his 1580 *De la Démonomanie des sorciers*. Here Bodin identified his source merely as a German envoy reporting to the Constable of France on the Muscovite offensive in Livonia. On another occasion, however, Bodin explicitly mentioned Languet as one of his informers. Jean Bodin, *De la Démonomanie des sorciers* (Paris: du Puys, 1580), 98v; Jean Bodin, *Methodus ad Facilem Historiarum Cognitionem* (Amsterdam: Ravestein, 1650), 74. See also Paul Johansen, "Die Legende von der Aufsegelung Livlands durch Bremer Kaufleute," in *Europa und Übersee: Festschrift für Egmont Zechlin*, ed. Otto Brunner and Dietrich Gerhard (Hamburg: Hans Bredow-Institut, 1961), 48.

39. "Diesen Sommer nahm der Moscowiter in Liefland zwo Städte ein, Nervam und Derptam. Nerva, achte ich, habe den Namen von den Nervis, welcher gedacht wird beim Herodoto lib. 4. mit diesen Worten: Bei den Nervis werden die Leut zu gewisser Zeit im Jahr zu Wölfen, und dann werden sie wiederum zu Menschen. Dergleichen hat sich das vergangene Jahr vor dem Krieg in Liefland mit einem zugetragen, wie ers darnach, als er wiederum zum Menschen worden, viel glaubwürdigen Leuten selbst gesagt hat." See Philippus Melanthon, "Annales Ph. Melanthonis ad annum 1558. spectantes," in *Philippi Melanthonis opera quae supersunt omnia: Volumen IX*, ed. Carolus Gottlieb Bretschneider (Halle: Schwetschke, 1842), 717–18.

40. Herodotus notes that "it is not impossible that these people practise magic; for there is a story current amongst the Scythians and the Greeks in Scythia that once a year every Neurian turns into a wolf for a day or two, and then turns back into a man again. Of course, I do not believe this tale; all the same, they tell it, and even swear to the truth of it." See *The Histories*, trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1954), 276.

41. Between 1552 and 1561 Wittekind had taught at the cathedral school in Riga, during which time he corresponded with his former teacher and updated him on developments in Livonia. See Benedikt Sommer, "Apparat," in *Hermann Witekinds Christlich bedencken und die Entstehung des Faustbuchs von 1587*, ed. Frank Baron (Berlin: Weidler, 2009), 92; Stupperich, "Melanchthon und Hermann Wittekind," 276–77; Otto Clemen, "Zum Werwolfaberglauben in Nordwestrußland," *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde* 30–32 (1920–22): 141–42.

42. "Post natalem diem Domini vidisse se parvam speciem pueri, qui diceret, ut converteretur in lupum, postea cum non faceret, venisse speciem terribilem cum flagello, et ita conversum esse in lupum, postea concurrisse multos alios lupos, et cucurrisse per sylvas, lacerasse pecudes, hominibus tamen non potuisse nocere. . . . Et illa facta esse quotannis per dies duodecim, postea recepisse speciem humanum." See Philippus Melanthon, "Historiae quaedam recitatae inter publicas lectiones," in *Philippi Melanthonis opera quae supersunt omnia: Volumen XX*, ed. Henricus Ernestus Bindseil (Braunschweig: Schwetschke, 1854), 552.

43. Casparus Peucerus, *Commentarius de praecipuis divinationum generibus* (Frankfurt: Wecheli heredes, 1593), 280.

44. Wittekind published the same story twenty-five years later, and implied that he was personally present at the interrogation. See below.

45. "Ad hunc modum ludunt inter se Diaboli, de hominum pernicie." Peucerus, *Commentarius de praecipuis divinationum generibus*, 284.

46. Metsvahi, "Werwolfprozesse in Estland und Livland im 17. Jahrhundert," 179; Bruiningk, "Der Werwolf in Livland," 180.

47. Wittekind was preceded by the Dutch physician Johann Weyer, whose Latin tract *De praestigiis daemonum* (1563) was the first book that explicitly challenged the practice of witch persecutions. Weyer argued that cases of alleged witchcraft resulted from the delusions of the putative witch rather than from supernatural forces.

48. Augustin Lercheimer, "Christlich bedencken und erjnnerung von Zauberey," in *Hermann Witekinds Christlich bedencken und die Entstehung des Faustbuchs von 1587*, ed. Frank Baron (Berlin: Weidler, 2009), 29–30. See also Bruiningk, "Der Werwolf in Livland," 178.

49. The only difference between the two accounts is the shape of the witch. Wittekind describes her as "ein liechtflamm," a luminous flame, probably more similar to a will-o'-the-wisp than a butterfly.

50. Lercheimer, "Christlich bedencken und erjnnerung von Zauberey," 29.

51. Ioannes Wierus, *De praestigiis daemonum* (Basel: Oporinianus, 1568), 247.

52. Pierre de Lancre, *On the Inconstancy of Witches*, ed. Gerhild Scholz Williams (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 300.

53. Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, ed. Brinsley Nicholson (London: Elliot Stock, 1886), 72.

54. Simon Maiolus, *Colloquiorum, sive dierum canicularium Tomus Secundus* (Frankfurt: Schönwetter, 1613), 321–22.

55. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy: Volume I*, ed. Thomas C. Faulkner et al. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 133–34.

56. Gaspar Schottus, *Physica curiosa* (Nuremberg: Endteri, 1662), 121.

57. Rainer Alsheimer, "Katalog protestantischer Teufelserzählungen des 16. Jahrhunderts," in *Volkserzählung und Reformation: Ein Handbuch zur Tradierung von Erzählstoffen und Erzählliteratur im Protestantismus*, ed. Wolfgang Brückner (Berlin: Schmidt, 1974), 452, 502, 504, 507, 512.

58. "Ydt hefft sick ock disse Belegeringe auer, 14. dage vor dem afftage, ein seltzam vnde wünderlick gespenst mit den Wuluen erhauen vnde thogedragen, welckere etlike auende nha einander, by hupen vor dat Leger gekamen sint, vngeachtet, dar ein grote welt van Volcke, mit grotem geschrey dar lach, vnde hebben dar angefangen grüwlick tho hülende vnde tho galspernde, dat velen de Hare tho berge gestahn hebben" (During the siege, fourteen days before the withdrawal, there was an amazing and extraordinary portent of wolves. For several nights in a row masses of them gathered near the camp, in spite of the fact that there was a huge assembly of men there, making a great deal of noise. But the wolves began to howl and bay in a dreadful fashion and many a man's hair stood on end). Translation based on Jerry C. Smith, ed., "*The Chronicle of Balthasar Russow and a Forthright Rebuttal*," *by Elert Kruse and*

"Errors and Mistakes of Balthasar Russow" by Heinrich Tisenhausen (Madison: Baltic Studies Center, 1988), 151. See also Balthasar Russow, "Chronica der Prouintz Lyfflandt," *Scriptores rerum Livonicarum* 2 (1848): 101. In early modern sources, a clear distinction between natural wolves behaving strangely and true supernatural werewolves is often impossible to obtain. A similar case, an ominous and frightening assembly of wolves in the context of war and unrest, was recorded by the German officer Conrad Bussow in Russia during the Time of Troubles, in the late sixteenth century. See Bussow, *The Disturbed State of the Russian Realm*, trans. G. Edward Orchard (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 35.

59. "In Wolffes gestalt haben sie sich offt und vielmahls verendert, und vor Warwolffe, wie sie geheissen worden, gelauffen." Salomon Henningus, "Warhafftiger und bestendiger Bericht," *Scriptores rerum Livonicarum* 2 (1848): 295.

60. Eduard Kurtz, ed., *Die Jahresberichte der Gesellschaft Jesu über ihre Wirksamkeit in Riga und Dorpat, 1583–1614* (Riga: Gulbis, 1925), 87.

61. Johann David Wunderer, "Reisen nach Dennemarck, Rußland und Schweden 1589 und 1590," *Frankfurtisches Archiv für ältere deutsche Litteratur und Geschichte* 2 (1812): 189; Straubergs, "Om varulvarna i Baltikum," 118.

62. Ioannes Georgius Godelmannus, *Tractatus de magis, veneficis et lamiis*, 3 vols. (Frankfurt: Bassaeus, 1601), 2:24–25.

63. K. D. Hassler, ed., *Die Reisen des Samuel Kiechel* (Stuttgart: Litterarischer Verein, 1866), 126–27.

64. Locals attributed these horrible events to the work of sorcerers. Antonio Possevino, *Kiri Mantova hertsoginnale/Lettera alla Duchessa di Mantova*, ed. Vello Helk (Rome: Maarjamaa, 1973), 34.

65. "Livoniae Incolarum stupenda λυχανθρωπία, adeo vulgare est, ut etiam illis, qui dextram et sinistram ignorant, communem eam esse." See Fridericus Menius, "Syntagma de origine Livonorum," *Scriptores rerum Livonicarum* 2 (1848): 524.

66. "Livonia est regio palustris, plana, nemorosa, fluminibus piscosis & navigabilibus irrigua, agri pinguissimi & fertilissimi. In sylvis apes, alces, vulpes, lyncos, martes, Zabellos, Hermelinos & castores habet. Lepores pro anni tempestate . . . colorem mutant: Hyeme sunt albi, aestate cinerei. Equorum, boum & porcorum pinguium, magna inest copia & utilitas. In hac regione multi sunt, Lycanthropi." David Frölichius, *Bibliotheca, seu Cynosura Peregrinantium, hoc est, Viatorium* (Ulm: Ender, 1644), I/2, 329.

67. Bruiningk, "Der Werwolf in Livland," 184.

68. "Das . . . Menschen so auß anregen deß Teuffels in der gestalt eines grawsamen Wolffes sich sehen lassen und herumb lauffen/auch beyde Menschen und Viehe schaden thun/ist unlauchbahr/und kann nicht wol verneinet werden." See Paulus Einhorn, *Wiederlegunge Der Abgötterey und nichtigen Aberglaubens* (Riga: Rittaw/Schröder, 1627), 27–28.

69. Ibid., 28.

70. Einhorn's explanations correspond to the opinion of leading French demonologists like Nicolas Rémy or Henri Boguet, who also stressed the insubstantiality of shape-shifting. Such transformations are, in Remy's words, "Magica . . . portenta, ac praestigias, quae habeant speciem, non etiam veritatem earum rerum, quas ostendunt" (Magical . . . portents and glamours, which have the form but not the reality of their appearances). See Nicolaus

Remigius, *Daemonolatreiae libri tres* (Lyon: Officina Vincentii, 1595), 232; Boguet, *Discours execrable des sorciers*, 115–16, 118–19.

71. Einhorn's fellow pastor Hermann Samson, superintendent of Livonia, reached a similar verdict in one of his "witch sermons" published in 1626. See Hermannus Samsonius, *Neun Außerlesen und Wolgegründete Hexen Predigt* (Riga: Schröder, 1626), G2v–H2v. Samson, however, discusses the illusionary nature of magical transformations in general, and mentions werewolves only in passing. The only reference to the Livonian werewolf tradition is a short note on Peucer.

72. Theophilus Sincerus, *Nord-Schwedische Hexerey, oder Simia Dei, Gottes Affe* (s. l., 1677), E2r–E2v.

73. "Nach diesem habe er gefragt, warum sie den guten Kerls so unverschuldet geschlagen hätten, der es doch ihme so freundlich zugebracht habe? Darauf sie zur Antwort gegeben, wann er ihm hätte den Trunck gesegnet, wäre er des Abends für gewiß zu einem Währ-Wolff, jener aber dessen erlediget worden, und solte er es sicher glauben, dann dergleichen Verführung und böse Anführung seye schon vielen der Sprach unkündigen Teutschen widerfahren." Ibid., E2v.

74. Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, 642; Peucerus, *Commentarius de praecipuis divinationum generibus*, 280.

75. Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, 643; Einhorn, *Wiederlegunge Der Abgötterey und nichtigen Aberglaubens*, 28.

76. Given his age, the judges asked Thiess whether he wanted to die as a werewolf, hoping that he would repent and turn to God. The accused replied that he was indeed planning to "get rid" and "be free" of his shape-changing habits before his death, but not in the way the authorities expected. "Q.: Weil er nun schon so alt und abkräfftig sey, der ja seines todes täglich gewärtig seyn müste, ob er denn als ein wahrwolff sterben wolle? R.: Nein. Er wolle es vor seinem tode einem andern beybringen . . . Q.: Auff was art er es einem andern beybringen wolle? R.: Er wolle es so machen, wie ihm geschehen wäre, und dürffe nur einem ein mahl zutrincken und 3 mahl in die kannen hauchen und die worte sagen: Es werde dir so wie mir,—und wenn dann der jenige die kanne entgegen nähme, so hätte er es weg und referent würde dann frey davon." (Q.: Now that he is old and infirm and has to consider that his death might be imminent, does he want to die as a werewolf? R.: No. He wants to pass it on to someone else. . . . Q.: How does he want to pass it on to someone else? R.: He will do it like it had been done to him. He only needs to drink to someone, breathe into the mug three times, and say the words: It shall happen to you as it happened to me. As soon as the other person takes the mug, he is going to be afflicted and the respondent will be free.) See Bruiningk, "Der Werwolf in Livland," 208–9. See also Blécourt, "Journey to Hell," 50.

77. Straubergs, "Om varulvarna i Baltikum," 113. See also Gotthard Friedrich Stender, *Lettische Grammatik* (Mitau: Steffenhagen, 1783), 271.

78. On early modern dissertations as a textual genre, see Joseph S. Freedman, "Disputations in Europe in the Early Modern Period," in *Hora est! On Dissertations* (Leiden: Universiteitsbibliotheek, 2005).

79. See, for example, Christianus Wolff (praes.) and Christophorus Wantscherus (resp.), *Disputatio zoologica de lupo et lycanthropia* (Wittenberg: Wendt, 1666), B4r; Jacobus Thomasius (praes.) and Fridericus Tobias Moebius (resp.), *De transformatione hominum in bruta* (Leipzig: Hahnius, 1673), C3r–C3v.

80. "Native Livonian" refers, in this case, to a member of the Baltic German nobility or one of the urban elites. During the seventeenth century, it was virtually impossible for an indigenous Estonian or Latvian to acquire a university education.

81. Henricus ab Ulenbrock, *Encomion urbis Rigae Livoniae emporii celeberrimi* (Rostock: Pedanus, 1615); Jacobus Scott, *Historia de Livonia* (Dorpat: Typ. Acad., 1639); Georgius Preussius (praes.) and Casparus Cadaeus (resp.), *Dissertatio Philosophica De Magica Transmutatione in Bruta* (Königsberg: Reusner, 1650); Michael Mej (praes.) and Aegidius Strauch (resp.), *Discursus Physicus Lykanthrōpian Quam nonnulli in Livonia circa Natalem Domini verè fieri narrant, falsissimam esse demonstrans* (Wittenberg: Röhnerus, 1650).

82. Andreas Arvidi, *De lycanthropis oratio* (Dorpat: Vogelius, 1645).

83. Preussius and Cadaeus, *De Transmutatione*, A2v; Scott, *Historia de Livonia*, B2r.

84. Mej and Strauch, *Discursus Physicus*, B1v–B2r.

85. "Adeo enim famosissima illa, sed falsissima tamen per Livoniam metamorphosis, hominum nonnullorum, in exteris degentium oris jam persuasit animos, ut si vera dicere praesumas, illi falsa objicere." Ibid., A2r.

86. See Otto Clemen, "Altkurländischer Christnachtsaberglaube," in *Aus dem eroberten Kurland*, ed. Fritz Würtz (Steglitz: Würtz, 1919), 61–63.

87. "Pij qui sunt Homines, hisce feriis Natalitiis, ad Templa frequentes confluunt, ut Sanctum Angelum audiant concionantem. . . . Contrâ, O abominandum flagitium! horrendum illud λυχανθρώπων collegium, Puerum (Daemonium puta) altero pede claudum; Virumque Infernalem, flagello ex loris ferreis connexo instructum, insequitur properè! O scelus! O tempora! O mores!" Arvidi, *De lycanthropis*, C4v.

88. See Arnolds Spekke, *Alt-Riga im Lichte eines humanistischen Lobgedichts vom Jahre 1595 (Bas. Plinius, Encomium Rigae)* (Riga: Häcker, 1927), 21.

89. "O vanitatem vanissimam! O caecitatem deplorandam! Quid enim quaerar A. rusticos Livonos olim tanta profanitate dementatos fuisse, cum hodie dum eandem insaniam insaniant, & in tanta Evangelij luce specioso quoque titulo hanc suam Diabolicam societatem etiamnun indigitare ausint. Vocant enim Dei amicitiam seu eum Deo familiaritatem, & seipsos Dei amicos." Ulenbrock, *Encomion urbis Rigae Livoniae emporii celeberrimi*, A4r.

90. As mentioned above, Hermann Samson, the superintendent of Livonia, also argued that werewolf transformations were merely the result of diabolic illusions.

91. Bruiningk, "Der Werwolf in Livland," 207.

92. Christianus Kelch, *Liefländische Historia* (Reval: Mehner, 1695), 29–30.

93. Johannes Kanold, "Von denen berüchtigten Wahr-Wölffen und übrigen Zauber-Wesen in Curland," *Curieuse und nutzbare Anmerckungen von Natur- und Kunst-Geschichten*, supplementum 3 (1728): 52–87.

94. Ibid., 62.

95. "Sr. Hoch-Edl. lassen ihnen nicht zuwider seyn, davon nicht fabulas aniles, sondern gantz gewisse Begebenheiten zu vernehmen." Ibid., 53.

96. Ibid., 54–57.

97. "Mir ist das Vorgeben von wahrhafftigen Wahr-Wölffen . . . iederzeit als suspect, ungewiß und falsch vorgekommen." Ibid., 63.

98. Ibid., 71–87. See also Clemen, "Zum Werwolfaberglauben in Nordwestrußland," 143; Straubergs, "Om varulvarna i Baltikum," 119–20.

99. Kanold, "Von denen berüchtigten Wahr-Wölffen," 83–84.

100. Johann Jacob Bräuner, *Physicalisch- und Historisch-Erörterte Curiositaeten* (Frankfurt: Jung, 1737), 249–50.

101. "Es ist ein so offenbahres Mährgen oder vielmehr schändliche Lügen, daß es keiner Widerlegung bedarff. . . . Der Krug ist aber gewiß nicht der Ort, oder die darin versammlete Sauff-Gesellschafft die Leute, von welchen solche wichtige Wahrheiten gelernet oder aus deren Discursen bewiesen werden können." Eberhard David Hauber, "Curiose Erzählung von den Währ-Wölffen," *Bibliotheca acta et scripta magica* 29 (1742): 288–89.

102. "Wahrwolf, der, soll nach dem Wahn einfältiger Leute, eine besondere Art von kleinen Wölfen sein, die in größere Thiere z. B. in Rindvieh hineinkriechen." August Wilhelm Hupel, *Idiotikon der deutschen Sprache in Lief- und Ehstland* (Riga: Hartknoch, 1795), 258.

103. Throughout early modern Europe, werewolves are documented only occasionally. Apart from Livonia, the only areas that feature a similar accumulation of werewolf cases are the rural peripheries of the Franche-Comté and the Jura Mountains. See Douglas, *Beast Within*, 127–36.

104. Jacques-Lefèvre, "Such an Impure, Cruel, and Savage Beast," 191–97.

105. Norman R. Smith, "Portent Lore and Medieval Popular Culture," *Journal of Popular Culture* 14 (1980): 57–58.

106. Melanthon, "Annales Ph. Melanthonis ad annum 1558. spectantes," 717–18; Bodin, *De la Démonomanie des sorciers*, 98v.

107. Russow, "Chronica der Prouintz Lyfflandt," 101.

108. Hassler, *Die Reisen des Samuel Kiechel*, 126.

109. Magnus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus*, 643.

110. See Stefan Donecker, "Livland und seine Werwölfe: Ethnizität und Monstrosität an der europäischen Peripherie, 1550–1700," *Jahrbuch des baltischen Deutschtums* 56 (2009): 83–98.

111. The language is deliberately ambiguous, but the phrase might be rendered "cunning people, treacherous [or: shape-shifting] and most deceitful."

112. Rosinus Lentilius, "Curlandiae quaedam notabilia," *Latvijas Universitātes raksti* 11 (1924): 12.

113. See Stefan Donecker, "The Medieval Frontier and Its Aftermath: Historical Discourses in Early Modern Livonia," in *The "Baltic Frontier" Revisited: Power Structures and Cross-Cultural Interactions in the Baltic Sea Region*, ed. Imbi Sooman and Stefan Donecker (Vienna: University of Vienna, 2009), 46–50, with references to additional literature.