

The Werewolf: Past and Future

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ABSTRACT

Since before recorded history, werewolves have captivated human imagination. Simultaneously, they represent our deepest fears as well as our desire to connect with our primal ancestry. Today, werewolves are portrayed negatively, associated with violence, cruelty, cannibalism, and general malevolence. However, in ages past, legends depicted them not as monsters, but as a range of neutral to benevolent individuals, such as traveling companions, guardians, and knights. The robust legacy of the werewolf spans from prehistory, through ancient Greece and Rome, to the Middle Ages, into the Early Modern period, and finally into present-day popular culture. Over the ages, the view of the werewolf has become distorted. Media treatment of werewolves is associated with inferior writing, lacking in thought, depth, and meaning. Werewolves as characters or creatures are now generally seen as single-minded and one-dimensional, and they want nothing more than to kill, devour, and possibly violate humans. Hollywood depictions have resulted in the destruction of the true meanings behind werewolf legends that fascinated and terrified humans for so many ages. If these negative trends were reversed, perhaps entertainment might not only discover again some of the true meanings behind the werewolf myth, but also take the first steps toward reversing negative portrayals of wolves themselves, which humans have, for eons, wrongfully stigmatized and portrayed as evil, resulting in wolves receiving crueler treatment than virtually any other animal. To revive the many questions posed by lycanthropy, entertainment must show respect to the rich history of the legend – and rediscover the benevolent werewolf.

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Since before recorded history, werewolves have captivated human imagination. Simultaneously, they represent our deepest fears as well as our desire to connect with our primal ancestry. Today, werewolves are portrayed negatively, associated with violence, cruelty, cannibalism, and general malevolence. However, in ages past, legends depicted them not as monsters, but as a range of neutral to benevolent individuals, such as traveling companions, guardians, and knights. The robust legacy of the werewolf spans from prehistory, through ancient Greece and Rome, to the Middle Ages, into the Early Modern period, and finally into present-day popular culture. Over the ages, the view of the werewolf has become distorted. Media treatment of werewolves is associated with inferior writing, lacking in thought, depth, and meaning. Werewolves as characters or creatures are now generally seen as single-minded and one-dimensional, and they want nothing more than to kill, devour, and possibly violate humans. Hollywood depictions have resulted in the destruction of the true meanings behind werewolf legends that fascinated and terrified humans for so many ages. If these negative trends were reversed, perhaps entertainment might not only discover again some of the true meanings behind the werewolf myth, but also take the first steps toward reversing negative portrayals of wolves themselves, which humans have, for eons, wrongfully stigmatized and portrayed as evil, resulting in wolves receiving crueler treatment than virtually any other animal. To revive the many questions posed by lycanthropy, entertainment must show respect to the rich history of the legend – and rediscover the benevolent werewolf.

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Introduction

For tens of thousands of years, even before recorded history, humanity believed in the werewolf: a being that could transform between human and wolf. The concept of lycanthropy is deeply ingrained in the human mind: the duality of man¹ and beast and of civilization and savagery. While the dual nature of lycanthropy and its relation to mankind – whether one believes in monsters or not – presents an entire subject in itself, as do the many other facets of the werewolf that could be explored in fiction today (although, as this study will show, they are not explored at all), contemplating the werewolf also prompts an important question: is the legendary werewolf good or evil? Such a question has been asked and answered many times throughout both historical legends and fiction, with the responders ranging from historians and theologians to modern fiction writers and occultists, and while the answers have varied over time, the generally accepted answer today is simple: werewolves are malevolent.

Although there are many other questions that could be asked regarding werewolves, one pressing question is: what does one mean by “malevolent?” Are all werewolves this way, according to both those who believed they exist and those who write about them in fiction? Is a person who is cursed to become a werewolf doomed to become evil also, even if he or she was once good? Does this change affect both the human and the animal form? These questions have been debated as well, and depending upon the source, a werewolf may not necessarily have been a bad person, but he or she will carry out inhuman acts of savagery, violence, and – more often than not – cannibalism while in his or her wolfish form. The idea of a werewolf as an insane

¹ In this study, all instances of “man,” “men,” and “mankind” refer, unless specified literally or contextually, to *humans* and *humanity*, including both men and women. Similarly, this study uses male pronouns when speaking of werewolves generally; this is not meant to imply that there are no female werewolves.

being is one deeply ingrained in cultural history, and this idea has been welcomed into popular culture to the point that, today, finding a werewolf committing an act of benevolence is almost as preposterous as believing in werewolves themselves. In fact, the fairly modern term, clinical lycanthropy, refers to a specific mental disease, in which one imagines that he or she is transforming into a wolf.² Thus, long have werewolves been associated with madmen.

In addition to associations with insanity, werewolves are frequently equated to evil itself: malevolence, rather than just animalistic behavior. Generally speaking, the average consumer of popular culture thinks of werewolves as being not only violent beasts, but also evil monsters, often associated with demons. Such connections spring from many different roots, including how the wolf animal itself has always been cast as a villain – a fate that the werewolf has also shared for quite some time, and it is a fate most undeserved.

Unfortunately, society refuses to release both werewolves and wolves from such stigmas: they remain malevolent beings, or at least troublemakers and undesirables, with their better qualities cast into the background in favor of the images of ferocity, gluttony, violence, thievery, and evil that have been imposed upon them across cultural history. How did this idea of werewolves become so deeply ingrained into popular culture? What gave rise to the concept of werewolves at all, and why are they portrayed so negatively today? Which depictions are the ones that fiction writers today usually reference – and are these depictions based on any kind of legend at all? Were werewolves, in fact, ever seen in a *positive* light, or at least a more sympathetic one than the maddened, terrifying beast depicted now? A thorough study of history reveals many of the answers.

Thus, this study will begin by examining the original werewolf legends and the natures of

² Garlipp 19

the werewolves therein – in particular, their morality – throughout history, leading up to present day distortions of these old myths, and then ultimately it will present how benevolent portrayals of werewolves could benefit society as a whole, including improvements upon storytelling, education, and lessening of the unwarranted hatred and fear with which wolves have been viewed for millennia. The first chapter, “The Ancients and Werewolves,” will explain the very earliest legends in werewolf history, such as those in prehistory, as well as the ancient Greek and Roman concepts of lycanthropy, which still influence werewolf perceptions today. The second chapter, “Werewolves of the Middle Ages,” will discuss the many different ways in which werewolves were seen and portrayed throughout the Middle Ages, ranging from Scandinavian tales to medieval romances such as Marie de France’s *Bisclavret* – which are very different from most modern concepts of werewolves based in the medieval period, as seen throughout many films and video games. “Chapter III – Werewolves Go Feral: The Transition into Modernity,” will highlight the contrasting depictions of werewolves in the Middle Ages to werewolves in the Early Modern Period, transitioning into what is common today, with a particular focus upon the rise of the modern conception of werewolves as madmen, symbols of insanity, and servants or spawn of the Devil. “Chapter IV – The Moon Waxes: The Werewolf Popularity Surge,” will extensively examine and discuss the recent resurgence of werewolf popularity, such as the earliest werewolf films, the werewolf films of the 1980s, and the *Twilight* series, which, for better or for worse, brought werewolves into a more popular light than ever before; this chapter will, of course, also include perhaps the single most pivotal point in the creation of the werewolf concept ingrained so deeply in society today: the 1941 film *The Wolf Man*. The final chapter of this study, “The Benefits of Reintroducing the Benevolent Werewolf,” as well as the epilogue, “Turning the Tables,” will discuss how depicting the legendary werewolf as a benevolent being

could, potentially, benefit society as a whole.

If popular culture began exploring werewolves as benevolent beings, then not only would this view provide much-needed variety among werewolf stories and possibly encourage writers to perform primary research regarding these legendary creatures, but also it would introduce to modern society the idea that the wolf itself is, as an animal, not an evil monster to be hunted and feared. By depicting the lycanthrope as benevolent, society could return the werewolf to its ancient status as a symbol of morality and a means through which stories explore the nature of humans and animals, as well as concepts of wilderness and civilization, among many other themes. Likewise, the return of the benevolent werewolf might achieve two important goals. It might, to begin with, improve storytelling by providing more thematic depth and moral exploration, particularly in terms of human “versus” animal (and whether there is, or should ever be, this idea of “versus” between these two entities). In addition, portrayals of benevolent werewolves could aid in creating recognition that werewolf legends have a rich and varied history in nearly every culture in the world, thus providing an argument against the modern idea of the werewolf as a simplistic monster with no complexity or meaning. Finally, negative portrayals of werewolves also influence society’s conception of wolves (which are, themselves, depicted in an unfairly negative manner, and have been for many ages) – a conception that is rooted in primal hatred and fear, and these negative views of wolves result in humanity committing great cruelty, harm, and slaughter to wolves today.

The purposes of this study, then, are to provide context for the werewolf legend and its status in modern culture, to examine the werewolf legend throughout history, and, ultimately, to argue that portraying werewolves in a positive light could aid in creating more meaningful and thought-provoking stories, in bringing about a realization that the werewolf legend is a truly

ancient concept that exists across multiple cultures, and finally in fostering a more positive understanding of the wolf as an animal. After all, if a malevolent werewolf is a creature who is both man and wolf, society is not only condemning wolves – it is also condemning man’s own nature and willpower.

Chapter I – The Ancients and Werewolves

In order to understand the means through which werewolves came to be seen as simplistic, malevolent monsters by modern society, and why this is a historically inaccurate and ignorant depiction (at least, in terms of the history of legends), one must first be made aware of the earliest origins of the werewolf myth. Werewolf legends were told by many societies throughout time, even before recorded history; indeed, scholars argue over what represents the “first werewolf,” in part because there is no real way of knowing the age of the werewolf legend – particularly since, like many legends, a great deal of werewolf stories were only oral legends. Ranging from the earliest humans and even pre-humans to the Greeks and Romans, the werewolf in ancient times takes many shapes across multiple cultures, spanning, essentially, the entire world. Among perhaps the most important of all werewolf legends, and some of the earliest to be recorded, were the ones told by the ancient Greeks. The belief in werewolves was, naturally, then carried over into ancient Rome, but the werewolf also independently arose in other cultures around the world, particularly Europe. However, the belief in werewolves may have existed as early as the Paleolithic Age, around 45,000 BP.³

One might wonder exactly what led the earliest humans to believe in animal transformation, even causing some to revere the ability, but these beliefs are now largely irrelevant to popular culture today. Although there have been many changes in society since the days of shamanistic hunter-gatherers, werewolf legends may have had their roots in such cultures. Matthew Beresford makes plain in *The White Devil: The Werewolf in European Culture* that the idea of a person turning into a wolf most likely arose in Europe because shape-shifting

³ Beresford 19; the year is given by Beresford as BP (Before Present), due to the carbon dating process of prehistoric artifacts.

legends generally take the form of the animal a society fears the most.⁴ While this is clearly true, werewolves also appear in nearly every culture on earth that had wolves at any given point in history, rather than just Europe,⁵ and those depictions were not always necessarily undertaken because society “feared” the wolf in a negative way. Indeed, although other shape-shifter legends certainly existed across various cultures, werewolves boast the widest range and the longest-lasting impact across multiple societies through time.⁶

In terms of prehistoric European cultures, the idea of men transforming into wolves was often portrayed in a positive light, given that early humans revered predators for their ability to hunt prey. Likewise, humans wore wolf skins on their backs when going on a hunt, so that they might better blend in with their surroundings and also gain the then-coveted power of the wolf.⁷ Early man domesticated wolves, so that they eventually became the assorted breeds of domestic dogs so loved today. Since wolves and men cultivated that unique relationship, humans felt a kinship with wolves that they did not share with other predators that they were unable to domesticate.⁸ Overall, the earliest werewolf legends sprang from the domestication of wolves, as well as man’s admiration of them as efficient predators. Early societies craved to have the hunting prowess of a wolf pack, leading them to create strange rituals, including the wearing of

⁴ Beresford 19-20

⁵ Douglas 25; “Evidence of belief in the werewolf legend is found throughout the whole range of the wolf’s former habitat: from the northern tundra of Europe and Asia down to the shores of the Mediterranean, as far east as India and China, and throughout North America in the west.”

⁶ All of these instances refer to the time frames previously provided by Beresford, dating as far back as 45,000 BP.

⁷ Beresford 23-24

⁸ Beresford 24. Beresford’s theory regarding animal domestication certainly carries weight, but it does not take into account certain other transformation legends around the world. For instance, in Old Norse, there are many legends regarding human-bear transformation. Granted, these legends do not share the same themes as many werewolf myths, as the transformation is sometimes a voluntary shift to a more peaceful lifestyle, whereas werewolf legends more often question man’s true nature, etc.

wolf skins in order to harness some of their power, as well as using wolfdogs to hunt.

Perhaps the most important trait carried over from the werewolf legends of early man may be the idea that werewolves transform when the moon is full, at least according to Adam Douglas, author of *The Beast Within: A History of the Werewolf*.⁹ Douglas claims that the full moon's association with werewolves also predates recorded history,¹⁰ in that the full moon became a symbol of the hunt. Although Douglas provides many reasons for the full moon being associated with hunting, including the simple fact that wolves howl more often during a full moon,¹¹ he does not draw much attention to the fact that the full moon has long been thought to change human and animal thought patterns, nor does he directly mention how these ideas of the moon and hunting lead him to postulate that a werewolf transforming during this time originated in the prehistoric era.

Thus, werewolves – or wolves, or hunters wearing wolf-skins who sought the power of the wolf – were often seen in a positive light in prehistory. They were, at the very least, respected and revered for their keen hunting prowess. Naturally, society's views on wolves and their supernatural relations changed over time, particularly following the beginning of recorded history, just as more precise ideas of actual werewolves themselves – meaning men who physically transform into wolves, rather than just early humans in wolf skins hunting by the light of the full moon – came into the minds of men.

⁹ Douglas 46-47

¹⁰ To be precise, Douglas claims this “unarguably” originated in the prehistoric period, though he provides primarily conjecture and strange guesswork, all of which seem generally unrelated to the actual act of a man (supposedly) transforming into a wolf, as appears in later werewolf legends and in the Hollywood films mentioned by Douglas himself.

¹¹ Douglas seems intent on mentioning just about every conceivable reason why the full moon could be a symbol of the hunt, except for the fact that the moon provides humans more light by which to see (and he makes no mention of the various scientifically proven psychological influences of the full moon).

One may ask, then, who or what was the “first werewolf?” To claim that one can trace werewolf legends – many of which predate recorded history – back to the “first” one is surely a combination of arrogance and ignorance, but, today, it has become a popular notion to assert that King Lycaon, from Greek mythology, was the “first” werewolf.¹² Other scholars, such as Adam Douglas, claim there are other “first” werewolves; Douglas states that Ishtar causing the transformation of a shepherd into a wolf in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, written around 2750 BC, is the first recorded instance of a human’s transforming into a wolf.¹³ Defining the “first werewolf,” however, depends largely upon how exactly one wants to define a “werewolf,” along with a willingness to acknowledge that records of whichever legend *truly* told of the “first werewolf” could not possibly exist. For the purpose of this study, a werewolf means – quite simply – a man who undergoes a physical transformation, voluntary or involuntary, into a wolf. Therefore, it is important to start with the popular favorite “first werewolf:” King Lycaon of Arcadia.

The Greek king named Lycaon ruled over the region of Arcadia, which is often considered a pastoral paradise, at least in Early Modern culture. Although most scholars refer to

¹² The *Teen Wolf* MTV TV series, for example, conveys its own werewolf history and lore, stating that Lycaon was the first werewolf, and that the curse originated with him. Other stories, such as the novel *Hunted* by Nick Stead, follow this example, whether independently or not.

¹³ Douglas 48. However, counting this instance from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* as “the first werewolf” is an odd statement. Yes, the shepherd is turned into a wolf, which is the same as many other werewolf legends (even Lycaon’s), but the choice of turning him into a wolf seems insignificant in terms of meaning. The fact that Lycaon’s transformation was intended as meaningful lends more power to the idea that King Lycaon may be the earliest recorded instance of a werewolf legend, since his actions led him to be specifically turned into a *wolf*, rather than into some other creature. The shepherd in *Gilgamesh* is only turned into a wolf so that his dogs will attack him, and other animals are substituted in later tales of this exact same type (such as Artemis turning a mortal into a deer so his dogs will rip him apart in a later Greek myth), making the choice of a wolf in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* feel arbitrary enough that it seems almost unfair to give it such importance in the history of werewolf mythology.

the version of this tale as retold in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, many variants of Lycaon's story exist, one of which – told by the Greek poet, commentator, and grammarian Lycophron – says that Lycaon, as well as all his sons, and even all the other people of Arcadia were turned into wolves. Ovid, however, tells a different tale: Lycaon doubted the divinity of Zeus when the god visited Arcadia. In order to test Zeus's divinity, Lycaon attempts to feed him cooked human flesh and have him assassinated in the night. When Zeus realizes what Lycaon is doing, Lycaon tries to flee in fear. But as he runs into the fields of Arcadia, Lycaon is transformed into a wolf.¹⁴ Lycaon thus represents not only one of the first werewolves, but also one of the few werewolves to have a transformation sequence of sorts, as well as an early example of an involuntary transformation with negative connotations. Not only is Lycaon transformed into a wolf, but his change seems to be permanent, unlike the transformations in many of the later tales of Arcadian werewolves.

Although King Lycaon is usually the first legend to spring to mind in terms of werewolves in ancient Greece, many other tales also existed, as told by Greek and Roman authors such as Virgil, Herodotus, Pliny, Petronius, and many others, including Pomponius Mela and Agriopas.¹⁵ Consistent among many ancient Greek accounts is the idea that the people of

¹⁴ Ovid 8. Ovid's description of Lycaon's transformation further solidifies the idea that Lycaon was the first werewolf, particularly in the traditional sense, as werewolves in popular culture now feel incomplete without a terrifying transformation. Ovid says, "[he] howled his heart out, trying in vain to speak. / With rabid mouth he turned his lust for slaughter / Against the flocks, delighting still in blood. / His clothes changed to coarse hair, his arms to legs— / He was a wolf, yet kept some human trace, / the same grey hair, the same fierce face, the same / Wild eyes, the same image of savagery." Other translations of Ovid take a more or less visceral stance when describing the change. Indeed, later werewolf legends do not mimic Lycaon's tale in terms of detailing the werewolf's transformation from man into beast, providing yet another way in which the legend of King Lycaon remains one of the most influential and important werewolf stories from a historical standpoint.

¹⁵ Baring-Gould, *Book 9-10*

Arcadia, since the cursing of King Lycaon, adopted werewolf rituals into their very culture. Other werewolf tales vary a bit more wildly, with some werewolves undergoing a voluntary transformation as opposed to an involuntary one. Others retain the ability to transform back and forth as they please, while some must remain in their wolf form for a particular amount of time before they resume a human shape, and some will not become a wolf again unless once more engaging in the same ritual.

In *The Book of Were-Wolves*, noted werewolf scholar Sabine Baring-Gould gives a concise list of almost every ancient Greek and Roman mention of werewolves, and from his citations, other scholars have discussed these instances in further detail. One such example appears in the writings of Herodotus, who says that the Neuri people are “sorcerers, if one is to believe the Scythians and the Greeks established in Scythia.”¹⁶ He further states that, once a year, the Neurians transform themselves into wolves, and they maintain this form for several days before returning to their human shape. Herodotus, however, does not provide any details regarding exactly why they do this, nor does he give any details about their behavior. Pomponius Mela also states that the Neurians undergo willing transformations to and from the form of a wolf, though he does not provide the same level of specificity as does Herodotus.¹⁷

Multiple sources describe various strange werewolf rituals in ancient Greece, particularly in Arcadia, the region ruled, at one point, by King Lycaon. For instance, Pliny cites Evanthes as discussing a festival, Jupiter Lycaeus, named after the Arcadian portrayal of Zeus, in which a

¹⁶ Baring-Gould, *Book 9*. Herodotus referring to the Neurians as “sorcerers,” as opposed to simply “werewolves” serves to highlight that not all cases of wolf transformation were specifically categorized as “lycanthropy,” particularly during this time period. Similarly, many creatures and myths in folklore are not so sharply categorized as researchers – or even fiction writers – would prefer for them to be today.

¹⁷ Baring-Gould, *Book 9*

member of the Antaeus family was selected by drawing lots. The chosen one was brought to a lake in Arcadia, where he hung his clothes on a tree, swam across the river, and exited the other side as a wolf. The story says that if he did not eat human flesh for the nine years he spent in his wolf form, he could swim back across the lake and return to his human form.¹⁸ Agriopas writes that Demaenatus, a contender in the Olympic games, once partook in an Arcadian ritual also related to Jupiter Lycaus, during which he ate human flesh. As a result, he immediately transformed into a wolf and remained that way for ten years. When he returned to his human shape, he went on to participate in the Olympic games.¹⁹

Also referencing werewolf legends in Arcadia, Montague Summers in *Werewolf* – as cited elsewhere by other sources – quotes extensively from the eighth book of Pausanias’s *Description of Greece*, in which Pausanias lengthily describes werewolf rituals and legends in Arcadia.²⁰ Among these descriptions are mentions of a son of Lycaon, Pelasgus, building a city named Lycosura on Mount Lycaeus: which is often known today as Mount Lykaion. The Arcadians referred to Zeus as “Zeus Lycaean,” or as the Romans later described him in writings about the same portrayal, “Jupiter Lyaeus.” Pelasgus also founded the Lucaean games, similar to the Olympics, all named after his father, Lycaon, and involving sacrifices to their Lycaean Zeus, who transformed his faithful servants into wolves following the completion of their sacrifice ritual. Pausanias, however, makes note that he does not believe in the wolf transformation, saying that he thinks it nothing but a story, although “it has been handed down among the Arcadians from antiquity, and probably in its favor... They say that from the time of Lycaon

¹⁸ Baring-Gould, *Book* 9-10

¹⁹ Baring-Gould, *Book* 10

²⁰ Summers, *Werewolf* 134-135

downwards a man has always been turned into a wolf at the sacrifice of Lycaean Zeus.”²¹ It is, yet again, important to note that this transformation is different than the transformation of King Lycaon: it was never permanent, and after nine years of not eating human flesh, the werewolf returned to his human form.

Another werewolf tale from this time period endures in *The Satyricon*, by Petronius: the oft-cited tale told by Niceros.²² The story is a simple one, though it displays many stranger aspects later adopted by other werewolf legends, particularly others in the same region. In his story, Niceros stays with a host whom Niceros asks to accompany him on evening walks. One night, when “[t]he Moon shone bright as day,”²³ they stop around a “Burying-place,”²⁴ where the host pauses to gaze at the stars.²⁵ When next Niceros looks at his host, he sees him nude, having shed his clothes by the side of the road. The host then urinates around his clothing and transforms into a wolf, running away with a howl. For whatever reason, and perhaps due to some form of comic irony from Petronius, Niceros feels the need to punctuate his story with the reminder of this event’s reality, implying the possibility of some disbelief or at least skepticism in transformation legends at the time, saying, “Don’t think I jest, for I value no Man’s Estate at that rate, as well to tell a Lye.”²⁶ Niceros approaches the host’s clothes, which have now turned

²¹ Summers, *Werewolf* 134

²² Much like the story of King Lycaon, Niceros’s tale is cited and discussed by nearly every werewolf scholar through history, including two of the most influential: Baring-Gould and Summers.

²³ Petronius 231. This line implies that the transformation may have been connected, at least somewhat, with the moonlight and/or a full moon.

²⁴ Petronius 231. The fact that this event takes place in a graveyard bears great similarity to later werewolf tales, particularly beliefs regarding werewolves as madmen in the Early Modern period.

²⁵ Alternatively, the host could be gazing at the moon before his transformation. The text specifies “star-gazing,” but depending upon one’s outlook, this could easily be taken to indicate the influence of the moon, or at least the night, on the host turning into a werewolf.

²⁶ Petronius 233

to stone. When Niceros returns to his lover at the house in which he is staying, she tells him about a wolf who slaughtered many cattle before a servant managed to wound it in the neck. Shocked, Niceros returns immediately to the clothes that had turned to stone, but he finds that they are gone, replaced by a pool of blood. Coming home again, Niceros discovers his host in bed with a dressed wound in his neck. Niceros ends his story by saying, “I understood afterwards that he was a Fellow that could change his Skin, but from that day forward, could never eat a bit of Bread with him, no if you’d have kill’d me.”²⁷

Niceros’s story displays many aspects important to werewolf tales, as mentioned by Leslie A. Scoduto in her book *Metamorphoses of the Werewolf*,²⁸ as well as other scholars, such as Douglas in *The Beast Within*.²⁹ Niceros emphasizes how afraid he is of the werewolf and his transformation: something often exhibited in werewolf fiction today. Likewise, as Scoduto and Douglas also emphasize, Niceros’s tale includes a motif that becomes very important in later werewolf stories in that the werewolf, in human form, carries wounds that others inflicted upon his wolf form. Douglas also notes the moonlight in the scene,³⁰ although he notes primarily that Niceros needed the moonlight to see the transformation and that the moon shone brightly, without speculating whether or not there existed some connection between the moonlight and the transformation. Thus, although it exhibits many of the more unusual aspects of werewolf transformations that were not carried over into modern popular culture, Niceros’s tale forms a very important early werewolf legend.

²⁷ Petronius 233

²⁸ Scoduto 9-12. It should be noted, however, that Scoduto herself makes clear that her study is not meant to be a history of werewolves (as she says on page 7, “It is of course not the purpose of this study to trace the history of the werewolf through its metamorphoses in modern films.”), though she includes much werewolf history, anyway, and studies thereof.

²⁹ Douglas 51-53

³⁰ Douglas 52

One small detail, overlooked by a few scholars, is that Petronius uses the term “*versipellis*”³¹ to describe the werewolf, rather than the term “werewolf” itself. The Latin word *versipellis* means “turn-coat” or “turn-skin,”³² implying a sort of shapeshifter. However, when using it again in his own works, Pliny specifically notes that this word is used to describe various Arcadian rituals and other beliefs of men turning into wolves, hinting that “*versipellis*” may simply be another word from antiquity for “werewolf,” much like other terms discussed in later chapters. Pliny writes of the legends with great skepticism, unlike his contemporaries, saying that they are “meere fabulous untruths.”³³ Of course, in either case, he is unsure enough of his skepticism to cite numerous examples of werewolves in Greece, nonetheless.

Plato, Homer, and Virgil allude to werewolves as well, completing a large set of Greek and Roman writers who mention the legendary beasts. In book eight of Plato’s *Republic*, he alludes to the werewolf rituals in Arcadia,³⁴ doing so in a sufficiently neutral manner that he does not reveal a stance on whether he believes in such legends, instead only stating that he has heard of the rituals and transformations. Homer refers to an entire race called the Lycians, who worshiped the god Lycegenaeon Apollo, meaning “born of the wolf.”³⁵ When Leto transformed herself as a wolf, she descended into the land of the Hyperboreans, calling that region Lycia: “of a wolf.” Apollo also went to Lycia in the form of a wolf. Although the Lycians may not transform into wolves as specifically as the Arcadians did through their sacrifices to Zeus, given a lack of further history regarding them (provided by Homer or any other source), we cannot be sure of what beliefs and rituals they may have had, and in either case, the gods they revered both

³¹ Baring-Gould, *Book 10*

³² Summers, *Werewolf* 138

³³ Summers, *Werewolf* 138

³⁴ Summers, *Werewolf* 142

³⁵ Beresford 46

transformed into wolves, themselves. Virgil also mentions werewolf transformations, though it seems scholars often take less interest in general with his tale, for whatever reason.³⁶ In his eighth *eclogue*, around 37 BC, Virgil includes a character called Moeris, who “turn[s] [into a] wolf and hide[s] in the woods.”³⁷ Instead of undergoing cannibalistic rituals, being cursed by a god, or willfully taking the wolf form through some other unknown means, Moeris apparently can adopt this shape using alchemy. There seems to be no negative stigma attached to his transformation into a wolf, and Moeris can clearly change back whenever he pleases, as he willingly turns into a wolf to “hide” from others, very much unlike many werewolves found in popular culture today.

Despite what many consumers of popular culture may believe, many of the most important werewolf legends originated in antiquity, rather than the Middle Ages. Although the very first werewolf legends originated well before recorded history, the Greeks and Romans told tales of werewolves that truly began the tradition still carried on today in popular culture, though they varied far more regarding the werewolf’s transformation, nature, and morality than does much of today’s fiction. Other civilizations across the world had legends of werewolves, each independently conceptualized, with particularly influential tales originating in the regions of Scandinavia and North America.³⁸ However, it is the stories from the Middle Ages that provide

³⁶ Not many sources include Virgil’s mention of wolf transformation, except for Baring-Gould’s *Book of Were-Wolves* on page 9, who quotes the source in its original Latin, providing no translation or further discussion, and Scoduto on pages 8-9.

³⁷ Scoduto 8

³⁸ As Sabine Baring-Gould so expertly phrases it on page 11 of *The Book of Were-Wolves*, “Half the world believes, or believed in, were-wolves, and they were supposed to haunt the Norwegian forests by those who had never remotely been connected with Arcadia [the primary seat of many Greek werewolf legends that survived history]: and the superstition had probably struck deep its roots into the Scandinavian and Teutonic minds, ages before Lycaon existed; and we have only to glance at Oriental literature, to see it as firmly engrafted in the imaginations of the Easterners.”

the most interesting and strange variety of werewolf appearances, personalities, and abilities, rather than the very oldest of tales – and it is these medieval legends that form a primary focus of this study, given medieval tales often depicted werewolves far more sympathetically than did the cursed werewolves of antiquity.

Chapter II – Werewolves of the Middle Ages

The Middle Ages arguably represent the most important time period in the history of the werewolf legend; if for no other reason, one could consider this period important to werewolves because of its influences on the modern idea that the werewolf is a medieval creature (even if such modern depictions seem incredibly unaware of the *actual* werewolf tales from the Middle Ages). Although the idea of werewolves certainly originated before the medieval period, and several concepts that have maintained their hold in popular culture today did not even originate in medieval tales, werewolves have nonetheless become closely tied to the Middle Ages, particularly in fantasy fiction. Werewolves continued to run rampant in stories all across the world during the Middle Ages, including most prominently Europe and Scandinavia, from which have been recovered many assorted werewolf tales: some that people believed to be true, others that they (most likely) knew to be fiction. Werewolves in the legends of the Middle Ages vary wildly in terms of appearance, nature, personality, and abilities – including some of the most morally just and sympathetic werewolves to ever appear in any kind of story, such as portrayed in Marie de France's *Bisclavret*. Given how many werewolf legends arose in the Middle Ages, however, there are far too many to include, particularly in detail, in a study such as this one. Therefore, the focus of this chapter will be to convey an understanding of the rich detail and thought-provoking themes of the varied medieval werewolf tales, as well as detailing those most pertinent to this study of the morality and nature of werewolves in legend and popular culture.

In Scandinavia, werewolf traditions appear across all forms of literature, though they appear perhaps most notably in multiple sagas and in the legends of the berserkers or *ulfheðnir*. So many tales are there of animal shape-shifting in Scandinavian legend that one could dedicate an entire essay or even a book to these alone, including men turning into wolves, bears, boars,

and more.³⁹ Werewolves were particularly common, given the natural wolves in the region and their, presumably, relatively frequent interactions with humans. Interestingly, in old Norse tales, the methods one had to use to become a werewolf – or any manner of shape-shifter – varied much more wildly than in popular culture today, including wearing a magical skin, the soul departing the human body and entering the shape of an animal, and lastly, chanting an incantation to assume an illusionary animal form, though the latter two examples did not result in “true” shape-shifting.⁴⁰ Perhaps the most well-known werewolfish incident in a Norse saga occurs in the *Völsunga Saga*, when Sigmund and Sinfjötli find two sleeping men with wolf skins hanging in their house, and upon donning the skins, Sigmund and Sinfjötli transform into wolves and cannot change back. Although they are said to assume a wolf’s nature, they still seem capable of speaking to each other, as they make an agreement that they will each test their strength against seven men, and they are to howl if they get into trouble. Ultimately, they kill seven men and then Sigmund kills eleven alone, after which Sigmund and Sinfjötli get into an argument and later shed their wolf forms and curse them, with Sigmund blaming the wolf forms for their argument.⁴¹

An important and interesting element in Scandinavian werewolf legends is the berserkers,

³⁹ Baring-Gould, *Book* 12-18. Shape-shifters were so common in Scandinavian lore, in fact, that they had many names to refer to such individuals. For instance, they called them *eigi einhamir*, or not of one skin. They were said to change from one body to another, and when they shifted, they assumed the nature of the creature in question. Such individuals were extremely strong, and those imbued with their own strength as well as their animal form’s power were called *hamrammr*. Some *eigi einhamir* could assume wolf forms, but they were not restricted solely to wolves, which is why they are not discussed in more detail in this study. However, it is important to note that these shape-shifters not only increased their strength, but they maintained their intelligence regardless of their form.

⁴⁰ Baring-Gould, *Book* 12

⁴¹ Baring-Gould, *Book* 13

or ulfheðnir, warriors who went into battle wearing the skins of wolves or some other animal.⁴² The ulfheðnir are mentioned in a few sagas, such as the *Vatnsdæla Saga*, in which they are described as “Those berserker who were called *ulfheðnir*, had got wolf-skins over their mail coats.”⁴³ In the *Holmverja Saga*, one character is described as being “son of *Ulfheðin*, wolfskin coat, son of *Ulfhamr*, wolf-shaped, son of *Ulf*, wolf, son of *Ulfhamr*, wolf-shaped, who could change forms.”⁴⁴ According to legend, berserkers were warriors who had the ability to fly into a superhuman rage and gain the might of an animal, and as a result, they were feared warriors all across Scandinavia. Berserkers supposedly could endure impossible amounts of pain and perform inhuman feats of strength when they entered into their enraged – or berserk – state, in which they behaved like maddened animals: “Their eyes glared as though a flame burned in their sockets, they ground their teeth, and frothed at the mouth; they gnawed at their shield rims, and are said to have sometimes bitten them through, and as they rushed into conflict they ... howled as wolves.”⁴⁵

Numerous more examples of werewolves and werewolf-like figures, including other berserkers, appear throughout Norse sagas and other accounts. For instance, a man named Ulf –

⁴² For years, scholars (including Baring-Gould himself, who makes mention of it in *The Book of Were-Wolves*) have debated the meaning and origin of the word “berserker.” Some say it comes from words meaning “bare of shirt,” and others say it means “bear-shirt,” implying that they wear bear skins. In my own research, however, and from asking individuals who both speak and study Old Norse, I have found that the idea of “berserker” implying these warriors wore *no* shirt is far more accurate than the idea that they are “bear-warriors,” given both the etymology of “berserker” and the fact that nearly all of our surviving depictions and mentions of berserkers in writing and imagery shows them wearing wolf skins, like the ulfheðnir (who are generally mentioned when berserkers are, or sometimes without any mention of the word “berserker” at all). There were mentions of bear warriors as well, and certainly bear transformations in Scandinavian folklore, but the berserkers overall seem more closely connected to wolves than bears, and their etymology does not seem to imply any specific connection to bears, either.

⁴³ Baring-Gould, *Book 19*

⁴⁴ Baring-Gould, *Book 19*

⁴⁵ Baring-Gould, *Book 21*, quoted from a Roman account.

meaning wolf – went on Viking expeditions, and he was an intelligent man whom others often sought for advice. As the day ended, however, at dusk, “he became so savage that few dared exchange a word with him ... People said that he was much given to changing form, so he was called the evening-wolf, *kveldúlfr*.”⁴⁶ Baring-Gould also mentions other werewolves in Scandinavia, saying, “It is said of these men in the engagement who were were-wolves, or those on whom came the berserkr rage, that as long as the fit was on them no one could oppose them, they were so strong.”⁴⁷

Although the fact is not specifically related to werewolves, it is noteworthy that the Norse had a double meaning for the word for wolf, *vargr*, and this may have further aided in casting werewolves in a negative light in later ages. According to Baring-Gould, “*Vargr* is the same as *u-argr*, restless; *argr* being the same as Anglo-Saxon *earg*. *Vargr* ... signified a wolf, and also a godless man.”⁴⁸ Baring-Gould even quotes a legal sentence as saying, “[H]e shall be driven away as a wolf, and chased so far as men chase wolves farthest.”⁴⁹ The etymology of the various terms for werewolf can potentially come into question here, as Baring-Gould spends time breaking down words such as *werewolf* (English for werewolf, from Old English “man-wolf”), *loup-garou* (French for werewolf), *varulf* (Danish), *vaira-ulf* (Gothic), and others, searching for connections between these words and the Norse term for an outlaw, in an attempt to discover whether *vargr* as a word for “outlaw” bears any connection with the negative portrayal of werewolves.⁵⁰ Ultimately, such negativity most likely stemmed more from Christianity, which will soon be discussed.

⁴⁶ Baring-Gould, *Book 22*, quoted from the *Aigla*

⁴⁷ Baring-Gould, *Book 23*

⁴⁸ Baring-Gould, *Book 24*

⁴⁹ Baring-Gould, *Book 24*

⁵⁰ Baring-Gould, *Book 24*

However, not all werewolves in Scandinavia were seen as being directly connected to a violent nature or to criminals; in fact, the region hosts a wide variety of werewolf legends, and the Scandinavian cultural view of wolves was not as overtly negative as the viewpoint of many other Europeans, particularly before the rise of Christianity. Although wolves were also seen as tricksters and scavengers of the battlefield,⁵¹ and some wolves were giant monsters, such as the great wolf Fenrir, wolves were nonetheless sacred animals of the ancient Norse god Odin.⁵² As Beresford mentions, Odin created the first wolves, Geri and Freki, to provide himself with companions in the loneliness of his wanderings. Because Odin wandered everywhere, and his wolves followed him, wolves spread all across the world, and “[t]he way the wolves celebrated life filled Odin with joy.”⁵³ According to legend, when Odin created the first humans, he told them to look to wolves for instruction: “The wolf could teach them how to care for their family, how to cooperate with each other in the hunt for food, and how to protect and defend their families.”⁵⁴ A final quotation from this same tale regarding Odin solidifies the fact that wolves were seen as a positive force: “The wolf gave much wisdom and skill to the early humans. In the old times the wolf was respected. ‘To be Wolf Clan (*Ulfhednar*) was a great honor. A Wolf Brother.’”⁵⁵ However, as the Vikings converted to Christianity near the end of the tenth century, their view of wolves and werewolves changed: “No longer was it accepted practice for a man to

⁵¹ This is why, in some tales, valkyries were said to ride giant wolves. As the “choosers of the slain” (as valkyries were often called) were said to appear on abandoned battlefields, valkyries were associated with the animals people often saw looking among the dead: wolves, ravens, and other kinds of birds.

⁵² Odin himself has now found a means to enter broader popular culture, through the Marvel *Thor* movies, although his legendary wolves do not appear in those films.

⁵³ Beresford 79

⁵⁴ Beresford 79

⁵⁵ Beresford 79

aspire to take the wolf's form."⁵⁶

Much like what happened with the Vikings, as the medieval world converted to Christianity, werewolves were cast in a steadily more negative light. The king of England from 1016-1035, King Cnut, issued the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances XXVI*, in which he specifically mentions the werewolf in relation to the Devil, saying, "[be watchful, that] the madly audacious were-wolf do not too widely devastate, nor bite too many of the spiritual flock."⁵⁷ This passage marks one of the earliest instances in which the term "werewolf" is virtually equated to the Devil or demons in general in Christianity, which becomes common in later medieval writings – and it also marks the first use of the word "werewolf." Instead of the wolf being a brother and wolf transformations being desirable, or at least not worthy of condemnation, Christianity altered the view of werewolves, turning them into demonic creatures associated with evil and witchcraft, who romp across the countryside leaving death and destruction in their wake. As stated by Beresford, "[T]he use of the werewolf as a religious scapegoat by the Church throughout the Middle Ages is intrinsic to the development of the myth of the modern beast. What was once ... a highly revered and worshipped beast, emerges in the medieval period as a savage creature, poisonous, destructive and wholly evil; a beast to be feared and not imitated."⁵⁸

Perhaps one of the most important reasons the Middle Ages began seeing werewolves as malevolent monsters, much as they are still seen today in popular culture, is due to the stamp of evil put upon wolves and all their kin during this time period, and, by the twelfth century,

⁵⁶ Beresford 80

⁵⁷ Beresford 80, quoting *Ecclesiastical Ordinances XXVI* by King Cnut of England

⁵⁸ Beresford 88. However, in this passage, he does not seem to wholly take into account just how many medieval werewolf legends existed, and how some of them were not necessarily demonic – these were, however, more often than not, unrelated to the Church (except for a few cases, which Beresford himself also cites in his book), so his point largely still stands.

werewolves were almost equivalent to Satanic witches. The wolf became a creature of allegory, cited in nearly every bestiary as being “the devil, who is always envious of mankind, and continually prowls round the sheepfolds of the Church’s believers, to kill their souls and to corrupt them.”⁵⁹ The stigma of malevolence put upon the wolf in the medieval period naturally carried over to werewolves as well, as the wolf and werewolf alike become “symbol[s] of all the carnal, bestial wrongs of society, from which God alone can protect Man,”⁶⁰ particularly because “[i]n Holy Writ the wolf is ever the emblem of treachery, savagery, and bloodthirstiness.”⁶¹

When the question arose as to whether or not someone with a soul could be transformed into something they are not (specifically, an animal or animal-like creature), the belief in werewolves had such a strong hold over society that not even the Church could entirely stamp it out. In 1487, the *Malleus Maleficarum*, or the *Hammer of Witches*, stated that it was impossible for a man “to be transformed into any shape or likeness, except by the Creator Himself.”⁶² However, people disputed even this official doctrine by the Church, as powerful as werewolf beliefs were at the time, and the assertion that werewolf transformation is impossible did not hold much power over the people of the Middle Ages. Thomas Malory alludes to werewolves in his *Morte d’Arthur*, two years before the *Malleus Maleficarum* was published, highlighting the

⁵⁹ Barber 70, a translation of a 13th-century manuscript. Bestiaries were, in part, intended to relate the symbolism of certain animals, as the Church frequently said that animals are each representations of different sins or virtues. Thus, some animals should be looked to and upheld for their positive aspects and behaviors, which represented some Christian virtue, whereas other animals embodied sin and should be shunned and avoided. Although the wolf, in earlier times, was often seen as a positive creature, much of medieval Christian doctrine disagreed.

⁶⁰ Beresford 105

⁶¹ Summers, *Werewolf* 65

⁶² Summers, *Malleus* 111. This is quoted from Summers’s translation of *The Malleus Maleficarum*. In this chapter, Chapter VIII, the *Malleus Maleficarum* discusses “Of the Manner whereby they Change Men into the Shapes of Beasts,” referring to witches. The chapter discusses at length the idea that anyone can take on an animal shape, quoting the Bible and discussing instances of transformation therein, but werewolves are never explicitly mentioned.

normalcy of someone believing in werewolves.⁶³ Perhaps most notably, the Swiss physician Paracelsus claimed that all humans have a spirit divided into two parts: a human spirit and an animal spirit, and that if a person behaved malevolently in life, his spirit “would be released in the form of a wolf, cat or bear.”⁶⁴ Christianity led to different portrayals and even scientific and theological studies of werewolves in the later Middle Ages, particularly during the sixteenth century, during which werewolves became associated with insanity more than witchcraft and legend – but this will be a topic for the next chapter in this study.

Of course, there are also many other examples of werewolves throughout Europe during the entirety of the Middle Ages, and while some certainly changed under the influence of Christian doctrine, others seemed largely unaffected by it, and a few even defied the traditional Christian view of werewolves as demonic (something that also formed stronger roots in the later medieval periods and into the Early Modern era, more than in the Middle Ages themselves). There exist a few examples of Christians portraying werewolves in a positive light, such as a Mercian priest named Werwulfhum, mentioned in Asser’s *De Rebus Gestis Aelfredi*.⁶⁵ Another prime example appears in the *Topographia Hibernica* by Giraldus Cambrensis,⁶⁶ written in 1187,

⁶³ Beresford 108. He quotes a passage from Malory, which says, “Sir Marrok was a good knyghte, that was bitrayed with his wyf, for she made hym seuen yere a werwolf.” Interestingly, seven years is a very common amount of time for one to be a werewolf, as seen in other medieval legends, as well, much in the way that the Arcadian werewolf legends have werewolf transformations lasting ten years at a time.

⁶⁴ Beresford 108. This also indicates that bears were increasingly seen as malevolent, like wolves, although bears were also often seen as not harmful or even benevolent in some earlier legends. Whatever the case, bears have certainly never suffered under the same level of harsh stigmas as have wolves (which applies even today, as will be discussed later in this study). Cats and their association with witchcraft and malevolence is an entirely different, and very broad, topic; however, the irony should not be lost that cats today are still seen in a much more positive light than wolves, despite the fact that dogs (animals descended from wolves) are more popular pets than cats.

⁶⁵ Beresford 58

⁶⁶ Giraldus Cambrensis, also called Gerald of Wales, was a Welch cleric and chaplain to Henry

in a section entitled “Of the Prodigies of our Times, and First of a Wolf Which Conversed With a Priest.” In this section, Giraldus relates what he calls history rather than legend, in which a wolf approaches a traveling priest and his young companion as they rest by their fire one night. The wolf speaks, telling them not to be afraid, and “add[ing] some orthodox words referring to God.”⁶⁷ The exchanges of the priest and the wolf are detailed, during which the wolf behaves with Christian grace and manners, telling the priest that he and another woman are ““natives of Ossory, who, through the curse of one Natalis, saint and abbot, are compelled every seven years to put off the human form, and depart from the dwellings of men. Quitting entirely the human form, we assume that of wolves.”⁶⁸ The wolf has come to beg the priest to aid his sick and dying partner, and he leads the priest to a she-wolf, whom the wolf reveals to be a human as he “tore off the skin of the she-wolf, from the head down to the navel, folding it back. Thus she immediately presented the form of an old woman.”⁶⁹ In gratitude for the priest’s help, the wolf watches over him for the night and leads him out of the woods in the morning. Giraldus later says in the same account, “[W]e find that at God’s bidding, to exhibit his power and righteous judgment, human nature assumed that of a wolf. But is such an animal to be called a brute or a man? ... We reply, that divine miracles are not to be made the subjects of disputation by human reason, but to be admired.”⁷⁰ Thus, Giraldus expresses no negative opinions of werewolves, at least as he describes them in his particular account, calling their transformation an act of God rather than an act of the Devil.

II. *Topographia Hibernica* is the longest source on Ireland from the Middle Ages, and it is one of the most influential.

⁶⁷ Cambrensis 57

⁶⁸ Cambrensis 57

⁶⁹ Cambrensis 58

⁷⁰ Cambrensis 59

In another Christian account, the story of fourteenth-century Saint Francis of Assisi, the Saint travels to Gubbio, in Italy, where he tames a wolf in an allegorical story of Christian doctrine. A wolf killing livestock began to kill humans, until it eventually would eat nothing but human flesh, and the beast was impervious to all attempts to kill it. However, Saint Francis approached the wolf and addressed it, saying, “Come hither, brother wolf; I command thee, in the name of Christ, neither to harm me nor anybody else.”⁷¹ The wolf obeyed, lying at his feet, and he told the wolf what evils he had committed, but pardoned him, saying “it is hunger which has made thee do so much evil,”⁷² commanding that the wolf will do good so long as he is not driven to evil by hunger. The wolf, “bowing his head, and, by motions of his tail and of his ears,”⁷³ told Saint Francis he agreed, becoming a beloved friend and companion to all the townsfolk, visiting each home to receive food and kindness. Saint Francis’s conversion of the wolf from evil to good highlights that not all Christian accounts showed wolves as hopelessly evil beasts, and the same held true for werewolves, although such sympathetic wolf stories became less common over time.

Other werewolf legends from the Middle Ages – of which there are far too many to consolidate and list in their entirety, at least for the purposes of this study – did not necessarily portray werewolves as malevolent; more often than not, they were helpful, or at least not inherently malicious. Olaus Magnus, Archbishop of Uppsala in Sweden,⁷⁴ mentions werewolves in his writing, including one tale wherein a werewolf peasant traveling with a nobleman offered to fetch him a lamb from a nearby flock, “if all the rest would hold their tongues as to what he

⁷¹ Beresford 103

⁷² Beresford 104

⁷³ Beresford 104

⁷⁴ Beresford 108

should do.”⁷⁵ Famished, the nobleman agreed, and the peasant then transformed into a wolf, brought the noblemen and the other peasants a lamb, and returned to his human form. In *History of the Northern Peoples*, Olaus Magnus mentions that there exists a “species of [wolves] who are transformed from men, and which Pliny confidently says we should account false and fabulous ... [but they] are to be found ‘in great abundance’ in more notherly countries.”⁷⁶

One of the countries specifically mentioned by Olaus Magnus is Livonia, a land along the eastern Baltic Sea, which has quite a few surviving werewolf tales, including some of the most outright “benevolent werewolf” legends during the Middle Ages. One Livonian story concerns the wife of a nobleman voicing her doubt to a slave that it is possible “for man or woman thus to change shape.”⁷⁷ However, her servant said he could prove it is possible, and he left, transforming into a wolf, having his eye torn out while in his lupine form, and then returning to her minus that same eye. Records of Livonian court trials also indicate that there were werewolves and werewolf-like creatures who actually fought to protect innocents and defeat evil beings, including the *Benandanti* (“those who journey to the Blessed Realm”) and Livonian werewolves, who were said to battle witches.⁷⁸

Several more stories exist that do not necessarily state that werewolves are malevolent, nor do they portray werewolves as mindless or exceedingly violent creatures. For instance, an interesting Irish tale from the medieval period coincides with the Arcadian rituals from ancient times, in which Saint Patrick supposedly transformed Vereticus, a king of Wales, into a wolf. Also, the abbot Saint Natalis put a curse upon “an illustrious family in Ireland; in consequence of

⁷⁵ Baring-Gould, *Book 26*

⁷⁶ Beresford 108

⁷⁷ Baring-Gould, *Book 26*

⁷⁸ Beresford 102

which, every male and female take the form of wolves for seven years and live in the forests and career over the bogs, howling mournfully, and appeasing their hunger upon the sheep of the peasants.”⁷⁹ This curse of Natalis’s is the very same mentioned in the account of Giraldus Cambrensis, in which – as previously detailed – these cursed individuals are portrayed as being good and Christian, despite their wolf form.

However, of all werewolf tales to come out of the medieval period, perhaps some of the most influential of all are stories that – arguably – no one ever believed as true: court tales and Breton lais, including *Bisclavret*, *Melion*, *Bisclarel*, *Arthur and Gorlagon*, and *Guillaume de Palerne*, all of which used the word “werewolf” for a sympathetic and noble being, even though they were written around the same time as the ecclesiastical writings that condemned werewolves as demons.⁸⁰ Many of these texts are extremely similar in terms of the story and the morals conveyed therein: the werewolf in each tale is an innocent individual who was wronged by a woman, and either becomes a werewolf or is stuck in werewolf form because of the evil acts of a lady. Perhaps the most popular and well-known of these tales is Marie de France’s *Bisclavret*, or simply “The Werewolf,” in which a noble werewolf knight falls in love with a woman, but upon telling her he is a werewolf, she traps him in his wolf form. *Bisclavret*, as a wolf, finds the king and treats him with such grace and nobility that the king takes him in; when *Bisclavret* attacks his wife, she tells the king the truth and he demands she allow *Bisclavret* to return to his human form. *Melion* tells almost the very same tale as *Bisclavret*, in which a knight

⁷⁹ Baring-Gould, *Book 27*

⁸⁰ These writings date from various time periods: *Bisclavret* during the early or mid twelfth century, *Melion* from around 1190-1204, *Bisclarel* from around 1319-1342, *Arthur and Gorlagon* from the fourteenth century, and *Guillaume de Palerne* from around 1220. This means that *Bisclavret* would have been written around the very same time as King Cnut first used the word “werewolf.”

in King Arthur's court turns into a wolf using a magic ring, in order to retrieve stag meat for a woman who claims she will die without it; however, the woman runs away with the ring and traps Melion in his wolf form, who is only rescued when King Arthur hears of the deed and demands the ring back in order to cure Melion. *Bisclarel* is almost certainly a reworking of *Bisclavret*, particularly given its title, as the tale is almost exactly the same, with one of the few differences being that the king is instead specifically King Arthur. *Arthur and Gorlagon* tells the very same tale again, but this time within a frame story of King Arthur seeking to understand women. He meets Gorlagon, who tells him a story almost exactly like *Bisclavret* and the other sympathetic werewolf tales, and in the end of the frame story, Gorlagon tells Arthur that he himself was the werewolf. Lastly, *Guillaume de Palerne* stands apart from the others in that the werewolf in the story has been transformed through a curse put upon him by his stepmother, and he aids two young, royal lovers who have become fugitives. Once the heroes defeat the villain and win back their kingdom, the curse upon the werewolf is removed.

Of all these tales, *Bisclavret* may be the most interesting to examine and undoubtedly the most influential.⁸¹ Perhaps the most outstanding difference *Bisclavret* shows from the other werewolf tales is that the werewolf is not truly "cured" of his lycanthropy, at least not in the same way. Instead of being cursed into a permanent wolf form or using a magic spell or item to transform into a wolf, *Bisclavret* is a werewolf initially, and we have no reason to believe he will not continue his regular werewolf transformations even after the story is finished. Marie de France opens her tale by discussing werewolves, saying, "Such beasts as he [the werewolf] are

⁸¹ *Bisclavret* came before the other tales, and thus almost certainly influenced them, especially considering the subject matter. Today, it is uncommon to hear about almost any of these stories, but if one hears any of these titles, it will almost certainly be *Bisclavret*, especially as it was written by Marie de France, whose lays provide historians with a look into medieval life and culture, even if they are fantastical.

known in every land. Bisclavret he is named in Brittany, whilst the Norman calls him Garwal.”⁸² Marie de France seems to find werewolves common enough, at least in terms of this story, as she remarks, “It is a certain thing, and within the knowledge of all, that many a christened man has suffered this change, and ran wild in the woods, as a Were-Wolf.”⁸³ Although she describes a werewolf as “a fearsome beast,”⁸⁴ the werewolf in her tale reflects none of the evil and violent qualities she describes initially. In *Bisclavret*, the werewolf requires his clothing to return to a human form, as he sheds this same clothing before each transformation, and the transformations occur “three whole days in every week.”⁸⁵ In the end of the story, when the knight’s clothes are returned to him and he can return to his human form, the king – who has, all this time, taken care of the noble werewolf – finds him in human form: “The King ran swiftly to the bed and taking his friend in his arms, embraced and kissed him fondly, above a hundred times.”⁸⁶ The King later showers the knight in gifts and returns his land to him, casting out his treacherous wife and displaying absolutely no concern regarding the knight’s future werewolf transformations, which will clearly continue as they always had. Although Marie de France opens her tale with descriptions of werewolves that “goeth to and fro, about the solitary place, seeking man, in order to devour him,”⁸⁷ the werewolf in her story is a truly chivalrous, loyal, and noble baron who displays every virtue desirable in a courtly knight, making *Bisclavret* the quintessential werewolf tale of the noble, sympathetic, and even benevolent werewolf that appears in medieval tales.

⁸² de France 256

⁸³ de France 256

⁸⁴ de France 256

⁸⁵ de France 256

⁸⁶ de France 261

⁸⁷ de France 256

Werewolves in the Middle Ages abound in so many legends across so many regions that it is impossible to encompass them all without writing a very large book dedicated to that sole purpose. However, these examples provide an overview of the werewolf of the medieval world: both those stories of the Middle Ages that portray the werewolf as a sympathetic, even noble, individual instead of a ravaging monster, as well as those stories and beliefs that convey the growing shift to the Christian doctrine of seeing werewolves as malevolent. It is with good reason that the Middle Ages is the era many often consider to be the time of the werewolf, even as untrue as it may be, given that it was the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance during which werewolves entered the minds of scholars and scientists and came under the strongest scrutiny by the Church, and werewolf legends were told long before the medieval era. However, as the early Middle Ages gave way to a world, especially a European world, dominated by Christianity, stronger governments, and an increase in scientific thought, the view of the werewolf changed yet again. Instead of being an individual who undergoes a physical transformation into a wolf – whether this is accomplished through means of a magic skin, ring, ointment, or other object; a curse; an inherited condition; a regularly-induced transformation, the origin of which is not specified; or a transformation set upon one by God or even the Devil – the werewolf instead is viewed, more often than not, in one of two ways: a product of witchcraft or insanity. In some cases, the werewolf may be described as an evil witch using Satanic magic to transform, who can neither have nor retain any chivalrous behavior. More commonly, however, as will be seen in the records of numerous werewolf court trials that abounded in later periods, particularly sixteenth-century France, the werewolf is said to be nothing more than a madman.

Chapter III – Werewolves Go Feral: The Transition into Modernity

As seen in the previous chapter, during the early and middle Middle Ages, Church doctrine dictated that werewolves were malevolent creatures aligned with the Devil himself, but stories and accounts – many of them Christian in nature – still abounded portraying the wolf and werewolf as sympathetic, and in some cases, still noble and kind. However, by the later Middle Ages and into the Renaissance period, the church reinforced its idea that werewolves could never be morally acceptable. All across Europe – and perhaps particularly in France – as governments and the Church became more powerful, people were put on trial under accusations of witchcraft and werewolfery, and the idea of the werewolf came under great scrutiny and criticism. Scholars and scientists also turned their interest to the supernatural, studying the would-be werewolves and attempting to justify mankind's widespread belief in their existence while also passing judgment on the werewolves of their time period. During this era began the connections between werewolves and madmen, as – despite the outstanding opinions and views of many individuals, and even some theologians – the Church and scholars alike ultimately found that the only reasonable explanation for the legend of the werewolf was insanity.

For the entirety of the Middle Ages and into the Early Modern period, France represented a region in which werewolf legends thrived more than almost any other, compared even to Germany. In fact, although some sources indicate that the idea of a werewolf transforming at the full moon began in Greece, southern regions of France – even into the 1800s⁸⁸ – believed that

⁸⁸ Baring-Gould mentions this in his *Book of Were-Wolves*, written during the 1800s. His intention with the book was to find people who still believed in werewolves (the belief was still widespread during this time, and meeting those who warned him of a werewolf nearby inspired him to research werewolves in the first place) and argue that werewolves do not, and cannot, exist. He found people throughout Europe (including in France, Greece, and Eastern Europe) who still believed in the werewolf during his time.

werewolves “transformed into wolves at the full moon. The desire to run comes upon them at night.”⁸⁹ It is only fitting, then, that in the later Middle Ages during the sixteenth century, France practically became the seat of werewolf trials. As time passed, researchers began to declare that being a werewolf was a form of madness. Specifically, the term “lycanthropy” came to be used as referring to a mental disease, particularly by those eager to disprove the idea that werewolves could ever be real, such as Sabine Baring-Gould: “It was not till the close of the Middle Ages that lycanthropy was recognized as a disease.”⁹⁰ It was in France, then, that one of the most famous of the werewolf court trials took place.

In 1603, in France, a supposed werewolf by the name of Jean Grenier ravaged the countryside, and Sabine Baring-Gould retold Jean Grenier’s case in a rather extrapolated version of the story, written as a non-fictional narrative, instead of republishing it in its original form as a case study and a trial record. Baring-Gould most likely fictionalized certain events – namely the detailed dialogue between Grenier and some of his victims – since what is known about Grenier is simple: he was a madman, who at the age of fourteen admitted that he “had sold himself to the devil, and that he had acquired the power of ranging the country after dusk, and sometimes in broad day, in the form of a wolf.”⁹¹ Grenier also admitted to devouring several children, since “the flesh of little girls ... he regarded as supreme delicacy.”⁹² In court, he told his story: ““When I was ten or eleven years old, my neighbour ... introduced me, in the depths of the forest, to a M. de la Forest, a black man, who signed me with his nail, and then gave to me ... a salve and a wolf skin. From that time I have run about the country as a wolf.”⁹³ Grenier’s description of the

⁸⁹ Baring-Gould, *Book* 46

⁹⁰ Baring-Gould, *Book* 56

⁹¹ Baring-Gould, “Jean” 64

⁹² Baring-Gould, “Jean” 64

⁹³ Baring-Gould, “Jean” 65

devil-worshiper who signed his pact with the Devil as “black” is particularly interesting; he may not necessarily mean someone of African descent, because medical accounts of the time period often described European lycanthropy victims as being black or dark in complexion due to assorted diseases. However, not enough is known about this M. de la Forest figure to assume his heritage. Grenier’s werewolf transformations are very different from anything featured in other legends, as he actually transformed “when the moon was at the wane,”⁹⁴ instead of when it was full, and he said that the “Lord of the Forest had strictly forbidden him to bite the thumb-nail of his left hand, and had warned him never to lose sight of it, as long as he was in his were-wolf disguise.”⁹⁵ In this case, the court decided “that Lycanthropy ... [is] mere hallucination ... and that the change of shape existed only in the disorganized brain of the insane, consequently it was not a crime which could be punished.”⁹⁶ Ultimately, Grenier was sentenced “to perpetual imprisonment within the walls of a monastery at Bordeaux, where he might be instructed in his Christian and moral obligations, but any attempt to escape would be punished with death.”⁹⁷ Grenier, however, never recovered from his insanity, and he “ran frantically about ... upon all fours,”⁹⁸ devouring raw meat and behaving strangely. At the age of twenty, after seven years in confinement, he died, and he was described around the time of his death as “diminutive ... very shy, and unwilling to look anyone in the face. His eyes were deep set and restless, his teeth long and protruding, his nails black, and in places worn away, his mind was completely barren, he seemed unable to comprehend the smallest things.”⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Baring-Gould, “Jean” 66

⁹⁵ Baring-Gould, “Jean” 66

⁹⁶ Baring-Gould, “Jean” 67. These statements highlight the fact that lycanthropy, at this point in history, increasingly viewed only as madness.

⁹⁷ Baring-Gould, “Jean” 67

⁹⁸ Baring-Gould, “Jean” 67

⁹⁹ “Stubbe” 68

Much like France, Germany is a region from which popular culture has received many of its ideas about werewolves, and also like France, Germany was home to one of the most historic of supposed werewolf trials: Peter Stubbe, who was tried in 1589.¹⁰⁰ The original transcript of the trial begins by saying that Stubbe “from his youth was greatly inclined to evil and the practising of wicked arts, surfeiting in the damnable desires of magic, necromancy, and sorcery, acquainting himself with many infernal spirits and fiends.”¹⁰¹ According to the transcript, the Devil gave Stubbe a girdle that allowed him to turn into “the likeness of a greedy, devouring wolf, strong and mighty, with eyes great and large, which in the night sparkled like brands of fire, a mouth great and wide, with most sharp and cruel teeth, a huge body and mighty paws.”¹⁰² When he removed the belt, he returned to his human form. Stubbe committed numerous atrocities using his wolf shape, and he even raped several women in his human form before killing them as a wolf,¹⁰³ marking the first instance anything werewolfish has been associated with rape (despite what some movies of today may indicate).¹⁰⁴ Likewise, Stubbe popularized the association between werewolves and cannibalism, as the account mentions he “ate their [his victims’] hearts panting hot and raw, which he accounted dainty morsels and best agreeing to his

¹⁰⁰ Also called Stubbe Peeter, Peter Stumpp, Peter Stube, or Peeter Stubbe, as well as various spellings of Abal Griswold.

¹⁰¹ “Stubbe” 69

¹⁰² “Stubbe” 69

¹⁰³ Stubbe” 70

¹⁰⁴ Werewolves have never been a symbol of rape. Although some horror movies and stories of today (and especially of the 1980s, as shall be discussed later in this study) use werewolves as symbols of sexual deviants and rapists, this development has never been indicated in ancient legend, and Stubbe’s trial record created the single arguable connection between rape and lycanthropy in any historical and/or mythological account. At their very worst and most malevolent in legends, werewolves were symbols of gluttony, ferocity, violence, cunning, bloodlust, and sometimes cannibalism (although this was only in a very few later stories; earlier stories used werewolves as a means to highlight the humanity of the cursed individual in that they resisted eating another human’s flesh), but never sexual offenses.

appetite.”¹⁰⁵

Indeed, the account of Peter Stubbe lists so many unspeakable atrocities that he alone may have caused the great shift from the conception of werewolves as sympathetic to that of werewolves as wholly malevolent. Stubbe’s crimes not only included rape and cannibalism, but murdering animals to eat raw “as if he had been a natural wolf indeed;”¹⁰⁶ killing pregnant women and tearing their children from the womb; committing acts of incest with his family and even his own daughter, with whom he had a child; and killing his own son and eating his brains. The account mentions that “oftentimes the inhabitants [of Germany] found the arms and legs of dead men, women, and children scattered up and down the fields, ... knowing the same had to be done by that strange and cruel wolf, whom by no means they could overcome.”¹⁰⁷ After rampaging for twenty-five years, he was captured only because he removed his girdle and transformed back into a man at an inopportune time: he was seen transforming, and as he could not be defeated as a wolf, he was apprehended as a man. After being tortured on a rack, before he could be tortured further, he confessed to all his crimes, most importantly to the girdle given to him by the Devil. For his crimes, Stubbe received a brutal execution by “first to have his body laid on a wheel, and with red hot burning pincers in ten places to have the flesh pulled off from the bones, after that, his legs and arms to be broken with a wooden axe or hatchet, afterward to have his head struck from his body, then to have his carcass burned to ashes.”¹⁰⁸ A monument, including a carving of a wolf in the wheel upon which he was executed and also featuring Stubbe’s own head on a stake, was erected in order to warn others of the fate he suffered for his

¹⁰⁵ “Stubbe” 70

¹⁰⁶ “Stubbe” 70

¹⁰⁷ “Stubbe” 73

¹⁰⁸ “Stubbe” 75

sins.

However, the account of Peter Stubbe and his association with werewolves is questionable today for many reasons, not least of which is that Stubbe is referred to only as a “sorcerer,” and *never* as a “werewolf.” The very title of the account describes Stubbe as “A Most Wicked Sorcerer, Who in the Likeness of a Wolf Committed Many Murders.”¹⁰⁹ Likewise, Stubbe’s actions do not bear many similarities to those told in previous werewolf tales, highlighting the fact that he is more a sorcerer than a werewolf: he was tried and convicted of “sorcery,”¹¹⁰ with no mention made of lycanthropy in his entire trial – and no mention of insanity of any form. Stubbe was convicted as a truly malevolent man, who committed his crimes solely out of a desire to do evil and derive pleasure from it, going so far as to make a pact with the devil. Even madmen convicted of lycanthropy – whether as a clinical disease and a form of insanity or as “true” shapeshifting – were offered more sympathy than was extended to Stubbe. Therefore, although the influence Stubbe’s trial account exerts over certain werewolves in popular culture today is all too apparent,¹¹¹ it seems almost unfair to use this trial as any kind of basis for werewolves. Unlike other werewolves who were not referred to as “werewolves,” such as King Lycaon,¹¹² the detail that Stubbe turns into a wolf holds no particular significance: he could have just as easily turned into a lion, a bear, or some other predatory animal. King Lycaon’s wolf transformation was intended as a punishment and an irony, given his name and the beliefs of his people, but Stubbe’s wolf form does little other than provide wolves with a bad name. While many werewolf stories are referred to only as “werewolf” legends and accounts

¹⁰⁹ “Stubbe” 69

¹¹⁰ “Stubbe” 74

¹¹¹ Such as the sexually obsessed werewolves of *The Howling* film.

¹¹² As seen in Chapter I of this study.

much later, since Stubbe's account was written during a time period in which the terms "werewolf" and "lycanthropy" were both used and yet neither term is seen in the writing, Stubbe should be viewed as a sorcerer rather than a werewolf. Stubbe's account has little place among other werewolf accounts or lycanthropy trials, as his connection with wolves serves less as an example of a belief in werewolves, and more as an example of a belief in witchcraft, as well as offering another example in which wolves are cast in a malevolent light, thanks to an association of them with the Devil. Consequently, today's scholars are inaccurate in terming as "werewolves" those sorcerers who only turned into wolves but otherwise were never said to be "werewolves." If people of the era believed people like Peter Stubbe to be "werewolves," instead of sorcerers, they would have identified them as such, since terms for werewolves existed at this point in history, unlike in the stories from ages past that we now call "werewolf legends." Through witchcraft, sorcerers turned into a great many animals, including wolves and cats, yet we do not find scholars referring to witches turning into cats as "werecats."¹¹³

In line with the assorted other late medieval accounts of werewolves as madmen, some events in 1541 further reflect the changing ideas of who and what exactly was a "werewolf," as werewolves of the later Middle Ages were not always believed to undergo a physical transformation. In events recounted by Montague Summers,¹¹⁴ a peasant in Pavia, Italy, went mad believing himself to be a wolf, and he attacked a group of fellow peasants in a field, lashing out at them with his teeth, rending their flesh, and killing several. He was – with great difficulty,

¹¹³ Of course, it is important to note that the term "werecat" in itself is a modern contrivance; in ancient folklore, the term "werewolf" is unique among shapeshifters, and any modern terms for other shapeshifter legends ("werebears," "werecats," etc.) owe their very modern etymology to the ancient term "werewolf."

¹¹⁴ He credits the account of these events to one Job Fincel, a humanist and physician alive during the mid-1500s.

according to accounts – finally captured, but he refused to give up his delusion of being a wolf. The peasant told his captors that “whereas wolves are hairy outside, my fur grows within my body.”¹¹⁵ Bystanders made deep wounds in his arms and legs to investigate the truth behind this, and the peasant was later taken to physicians, but he died in their care. This account provides one of the most overt references to werewolves having fur that grows under their skin, which is a relatively obscure belief in werewolf lore that nonetheless appeared in some plays in the late medieval and Early Modern eras. It is, however, noteworthy to mention that the man who wrote the account of the mad peasant clearly felt sympathy for him in his insanity. After the peasant mentioned the fur under his skin, Fincel described the bystanders who attacked him as “showing themselves to be more cruel wolves than he” when they mortally wounded him in order to find the truth,¹¹⁶ which is, of course, yet another reference to how wolves were – and, in many cases, still are – seen to be evil creatures.

Of the many werewolf court cases heard in the 1600s, however, perhaps the most unusual is one in which the accused werewolf proclaimed that he and his kin were benevolent in nature. Willem de Blécourt discusses this particular court case in his article “A Journey to Hell: Reconsidering the Livonian ‘Werewolf’,” in which he stresses a need for scholars to investigate beyond the modern portrayal of insane werewolves. The court case in question occurred in 1691 in present-day Latvia, and the would-be werewolf in question was named Thies of Kaltenbrun. Initially, the case concerned a church robbery, but then the court was informed that Thies “consorted with the devil and was a werewolf.”¹¹⁷ Surprising the court, Thies admitted to being a werewolf in the past, and he said he broke his nose in Hell when he traveled there with other

¹¹⁵ Summers, *Werewolf* 160-161

¹¹⁶ Summers, *Werewolf* 161

¹¹⁷ Blécourt 49

werewolves, in order to retrieve some grain. Thies had told this to the court once before and they laughed him off, but this second testimony of lycanthropy concerned them, particularly as “several people present in court ... knew him well [and] said that his common sense had never failed him. It also emerged that his status had risen since his previous encounter with the law.”¹¹⁸ Of all the details around Thies’s case, the most important distinction between his story and that of other werewolves is that Thies declared werewolves to be benevolent. When told werewolves were allies of the Devil, Thies disputed this, saying that werewolves battled Satanic wizards in hell, and werewolves were the Hounds of God: “The souls of the werewolves went to heaven while those of the wizards were seized by the devil. Thus the werewolves only went to hell to recapture cattle, grain, fruit, and fish in order to ensure a good crop for the coming year.”¹¹⁹ Thies was also a local healer, who blessed crops and animals, as well as casting charms against wolves. It was for his blessings that the court decided he was sacrilegious, as his blessings did not mention God (although Thies himself said he was a Christian, and in these blessings “God simply was not mentioned”¹²⁰). Therefore, the judges “sentenced [Thies] to be flogged and banished for life.”¹²¹ As Blécourt himself states in this same article, “The primary scholarship on werewolves was developed on the basis of French demonological treatises.”¹²² Such medical examinations dismissed all ancient belief about werewolves as shamans and healers, or any kind of benevolent figure at all, as did the Church when judging werewolves on the basis of Satanic witchcraft, but physicians cast werewolves as pathetically insane individuals, much as did the court that judged Jean Grenier. As Adam Douglas said in *The Beast Within*, “the essential role of

¹¹⁸ Blécourt 49

¹¹⁹ Blécourt 50

¹²⁰ Blécourt 50

¹²¹ Blécourt 50

¹²² Blécourt 50

diagnosing who was a ‘witch’ or a ‘werewolf’ began to pass from the judge to the physician. The process is clearly marked at the end of the era of werewolf trials in sixteenth century France.”¹²³

During the late 1500s and early 1600s, as werewolves that underwent true, physical transformations were no longer being accepted as real by institutions such as the Church, physicians began to hold more sway over how a suspected werewolf was judged. Many authors, including Reginald Scot, Henri Boguet, King James I of England, John Deacon and John Walker, I. Goulart, Robert Burton, and Robert Bayfield, described lycanthropy as a medical condition, generally boiled down to melancholy. Though the accounts from these various physicians, demonologists, and other influential individuals vary slightly, they seem to have taken elements from one another over time, in order to shape the general conception of what is, today, termed “clinical lycanthropy.”

The first of these many investigations into the true nature of werewolves, entitled “Of Transformations,” was written in 1584, by agriculturalist¹²⁴ Reginald Scot in *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*. Although more of a theological or spiritual approach to explaining the werewolf than a medical one, Scot’s work nonetheless has been used by many scholars as a look into werewolf beliefs of the late 1500s. Scot opens his first chapter with the very blatant summary, “Of transformations, ridiculous examples brought by the adversaries for the confirmation of their foolish doctrine.”¹²⁵ Scot investigates several examples brought to him of “*Lycanthropia*”¹²⁶ throughout the chapters of his book, ultimately deciding that “the transformations, which these witch-mongers doo so rave and rage upon, is (as all the learned sort of physicians affirme) a

¹²³ Douglas 260

¹²⁴ Otten xi

¹²⁵ Scot 115

¹²⁶ Scot 115

disease proceeding partlie from melancholie, wherebie manie suppose themselves to be woolves.”¹²⁷ Therefore, Scot paved the way for other physicians reiterating the idea of this time period that all werewolves, past and present, originated from a melancholic disease or disorder.

In 1590, Henri Boguet, demonologist and Chief Justice of Saint-Claude,¹²⁸ wrote “Of the Metamorphosis of Men into Beasts” in his *Discours des Sorciers*, in which he recounts many different trial records of werewolves and examines his own beliefs regarding “Of the Metamorphosis of Men into Beasts, and Especially of Lycanthropes or Loups-garoux.”¹²⁹ As a preface for his examination regarding whether or not he believes wolf transformation to be real, Boguet lists many historical instances of people turning into wolves, such as the legends of Arcadia, the account of Job Fincel, accounts of Herodotus, and more, such as how “[w]hen the Romans were trying to prevent Hannibal from crossing the Alps, a wolf came amongst their army, rent those whom it met, and finally escaped without being hurt,” ultimately ending his discussion by asking, “Who, then, can doubt but that these wolves were Lycanthropes?”¹³⁰ However, Boguet marks a difference between werewolves and witches that have turned into wolves, repeating a common belief that, when witches turn into animals, they have “no tails.”¹³¹ Later, Boguet again changes his mind and decides werewolves and witches are the same thing. Over the course of his discussion, Boguet tends to indicate his disbelief, questioning the idea of lycanthropy being real: “Nevertheless it has always been my opinion that Lycanthropy is an illusion, and that the metamorphosis of a man into a beast is impossible.”¹³² To Boguet, it

¹²⁷ Scot 126

¹²⁸ Otten ix

¹²⁹ Boguet 77

¹³⁰ Boguet 79

¹³¹ Boguet 79

¹³² Boguet 83

becomes a matter of what happens to the werewolf's soul when it transforms, as he does not believe a soul can either return to a body if the beast form goes mad, or that a human soul can inhabit the body of a beast if the werewolf retains his sanity. However, Boguet does not question this idea as a scientist, but a theologian, who refuses to believe that the soul could undergo such changes, even while admitting that the *body* physically could. Regardless of Boguet's beliefs about the spiritual and physical, he too he too considers only one possibility, that werewolves are malevolent creatures of madness, concluding his work with the judgment, "I should be sorry to leave this subject without reprimanding those who would excuse them [werewolves] and cast the blame for all that they do upon Satan, as if they were entirely innocent."¹³³

Although not medical in nature, perhaps one of the most interesting treatises on werewolves from the late Middle Ages was "Men-Woolfes," not necessarily because of any important statements therein, but simply because the treatise was written in 1597 by King James I of England. Originally from his book *Daemonologie*, King James I wrote a section addressing lycanthropy to respond to it as an issue. When asked about his opinion on "war-woolfes," King James I replied that he found it to be "but of a naturall super-abundance of Melancholie."¹³⁴

Although only a brief section, the fact that lycanthropy was of such importance that King James I felt the need to address it certainly signifies that it was a legitimate concern for many centuries.

The English preachers¹³⁵ John Deacon and John Walker provided very little explanation for werewolves in their "Spirits and Devils" excerpt from their 1601 *Dialogicall Discourses of Spirits and Divils*, instead dismissing lycanthropy entirely as "illusions and sleights of the devil

¹³³ Boguet 90

¹³⁴ James I 128

¹³⁵ Otten x

to deceive.”¹³⁶ The account is presented in the form of personified Orthodoxy (named Orthodoxus) discussing lycanthropy with two other figures: Philosophy (Philologus) and lycanthropy itself (Lycanthropus). After much discussion, Orthodoxus ultimately declares, “many good writers, yea, and the Popes owne canons do all jointly condemne and pronounce this peevish opinion concerning the supposed transformation of divels, to be impious, absurd and divellish, and the maintainers thereof to be woorse than Infidels.”¹³⁷ Although werewolves in general are one of many ancient pagan beliefs turned into Satanism by Christianity,¹³⁸ Deacon and Walker say that someone believing in werewolves is “woorse then a Pagane.”¹³⁹ The prompting of Orthodoxus and Philologus has Lycanthropus admit, “praising the Lord with all my hart, for bringing me thus to behold the folly thereof: yea, and am hartely sorry, for being bewitched therewith so long, being also ashamed now of my odious name.”¹⁴⁰ Deacon and Walker do not attribute belief in lycanthropy to madmen, melancholy, or any combination thereof, instead boiling it all down to a devilish illusion of a nonspecific, but certainly sacrilegious, nature.

Perhaps one of the most influential treatises regarding an explanation behind the supposed existence of werewolves is a section from *Admirable and Memorable Histories* by I.

¹³⁶ Deacon 133

¹³⁷ Deacon 133

¹³⁸ Essentially, every pagan ritual, belief, and myth was turned into devil-worship by the rise of Christianity (save for those that were incorporated into holidays to help calm and stabilize local populations, such as Christmas trees and the fertility rituals of the Easter bunny and eggs). Satyrs and other Greek forest spirits became devils, lending the Devil his goat-like depictions with goat legs and horns; likewise, werewolves became demonic instead of great warriors and noble knights, or sympathetic individuals, or helpful shamans and healers, and familiar spirits became the companions of witches instead of spirits meant to protect and guide individuals. Much of witchcraft and devilry from the late Middle Ages and Early Modern period originate from once harmless or even benevolent tales, as do werewolves themselves.

¹³⁹ Deacon 133

¹⁴⁰ Deacon 133

Goulart,¹⁴¹ published in 1607. Goulart calls werewolves “melancholike,” and he says that they “imagine themselves to be transformed into Wolves,” accusing them of going out “in Februarie, conterfet Wolves in a manner of all things.”¹⁴² Such descriptions of werewolves also hold true in later medical examinations by Robert Burton and Robert Bayfield. However, Goulart distinguishes between different types of lycanthropes: the sick and the Satanists. The former he describes as being very ill, saying that they “are afflicted with that disease, are pale, their eyes are hollow, and they see ill, their tongue is drye, they are much altered, and are without much spittle in the mouth.”¹⁴³ The latter, however, are “by some particular power of Sathan, they seeme Wolves and not Men.”¹⁴⁴ Goulart argues that all occurrences of werewolf legends in history can be divided into these two camps, saying that most werewolves are “all (as it seemes to them) changed and transformed into Wolves.”¹⁴⁵ Goulart himself, however, does not offer his own explanation or opinion as to whether any of these werewolves are truly “real,” saying, “But we will leave their controversie to such as will looke into it.”¹⁴⁶

Goulart’s medical description of lycanthropy, however, made an impression on at least two later authors: Robert Burton, who mentions werewolves in “Diseases of the Mind,” included in his 1621 *Anatomy of Melancholy*; and Robert Bayfield, in “A Treatise,” written in 1663 in *A treatise De Morborum Capitis Essentiis & Prognosticis*. Burton was a clergyman, whose book *Anatomy of Melancholy* “is an encyclopedic treatment of mental illness, including religious

¹⁴¹ “French historian, collector of memoirs and journals” (Otten x). His frequent subjects included both medicine and demonology.

¹⁴² Goulart 41

¹⁴³ Goulart 42

¹⁴⁴ Goulart 42

¹⁴⁵ Goulart 43

¹⁴⁶ Goulart 44

melancholy and love melancholy.”¹⁴⁷ However, when Robert Burton mentions lycanthropy in his text *Anatomy of Melancholy*, written in 1621, he questions whether lycanthropy is specifically melancholy, though he does not deny that it is a disease, which he instead calls “Wolf-madness.”¹⁴⁸ As do other medical texts of the 1600’s, Burton specifically designates running and “howling about graves and fields in the night”¹⁴⁹ as qualities of the madmen who suffer from lycanthropy and believe that they are wolves. Burton cites other scholars and authors who discuss the issue, though he does not see lycanthropy as being a “Melancholy,” and instead refers to it as a “Madness, as most do.”¹⁵⁰ Whether he believes it to be melancholy or some other form of madness, Burton’s descriptions correspond with his contemporaries’ evaluations stating that werewolves are madmen who stalk graveyards. Bayfield, a British physician who published many books about anatomy, pharmacology, disease, and theology,¹⁵¹ essentially echoes everything said by Burton, saying, “Wolf-madness, is a disease, in which men run barking and howling about graves and fields in the night ... and will not be persuaded but that they are Wolves.”¹⁵² Like previous discussions on the subject, Bayfield describes those suffering from “wolf-madness” as having “usually hollow eyes, scabbed legs and thighs, very dry and pale.”¹⁵³

Even while under such great scrutiny by scientists and by the Church, or perhaps especially because of it, werewolves continued to appear now and then in fiction of the time period, including various dramas. In *The Duchess of Malfi* by English dramatist John Webster, written in 1612-1613, the villain of the play, Ferdinand, is said to be a werewolf, almost exactly

¹⁴⁷ Otten ix

¹⁴⁸ Burton 46

¹⁴⁹ Burton 46

¹⁵⁰ Burton 46

¹⁵¹ Otten ix

¹⁵² Bayfield 47

¹⁵³ Bayfield 47

like the werewolves from many trial records, accounts of sightings,¹⁵⁴ and medical records of Webster's time period. Many of the descriptions of Ferdinand and his actions in *Duchess* reflect almost word-for-word descriptions of lycanthropy patients in certain medical accounts, such as those of I. Goulart. For example, Ferdinand's doctor describes lycanthropy – or, as he calls it, lycanthropia – as a disease “In those that are possessed with't there o'erflows / Such melancholy humor they imagine / Themselves to be transformèd into wolves,”¹⁵⁵ and that werewolves “Steal forth to churchyards in the dead of night / And dig dead bodies up.”¹⁵⁶ Throughout the play, Ferdinand equates himself and his family members to wolves and seems obsessed with wolfish imagery. At one point, Ferdinand all but proves his lycanthropy when he meets someone on the lane behind a church while carrying “the leg of a man / Upon his shoulder; and he howled fearfully; / Said he was a wolf, only the difference / Was, a wolf's skin was hairy on the outside, / His on the inside.”¹⁵⁷

Likewise, other Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists have at least made reference to lycanthropy in their plays, though their works are perhaps not as famous as *The Duchess of Malfi*.¹⁵⁸ John Ford mentions werewolves in his 1629 play *The Lover's Melancholy*. A character, Rhetias, enters to recite several lines regarding his insanity, blaming it on lycanthropy and referring to his transformation into a wolf. Stage directions indicate that Rhetias is to enter with “his face whited, blacke shag haire, long nailes, a piece of raw meate.”¹⁵⁹ Although Ford also

¹⁵⁴ Job Fincel's werewolf account seems to have very heavily influenced Ferdinand's character and some of the lines in *The Duchess of Malfi*.

¹⁵⁵ Webster 5.2.8-10

¹⁵⁶ Webster 5.2.11-12

¹⁵⁷ Webster 5.2.14-18

¹⁵⁸ Charlotte F. Otten, editor of *A Lycanthropy Reader*, mentions in the introduction to the book that her first encounter with werewolves was in *The Duchess of Malfi*.

¹⁵⁹ Summers, *Werewolf* 161, quoted from *The Lover's Melancholy*

refers to elements of werewolf lore not mentioned by Webster, such as “the Moone’s eclipsed,” he refers to numerous elements found in *Duchess*.¹⁶⁰ For instance, Rhetias, the lycanthropic madman, says he will “to the Church-yard and sup : Since I turn’d Wolfe, I bark and howle, and digge vp graues, ... tis midnight, deepe darke midnight.”¹⁶¹ Rhetias is also found in a churchyard, as is Ferdinand, which is supposedly a common haunt of lycanthropic madmen. A physician in the play, Corax, says of Rhetias’s condition, “This kind is called, *Lycanthropia*, Sir, When men conceiue themselues Wolues.”¹⁶² In his *The Chronicle Historie of Perkin Warbeck*, written in 1634, John Ford has King Henry’s chaplain, Urswicke, make reference to witches turning into wolves – which, although arguably not directly related to lycanthropy or werewolves given that they are not mentioned by name, is nonetheless a reference to the idea of shapeshifting sorcerers, like Peter Stubbe.¹⁶³

The search for the reason behind werewolf legends is not exclusive to the late Middle Ages or Early Modern period, just as widespread belief in werewolves is not exclusive to ancient times and the Middle Ages. The entirety of Sabine Baring-Gould’s *The Book of Were-Wolves*, published in 1865, was written as his own personal attempt to prove that a werewolf is nothing more than a delusional madman. Baring-Gould opens his book by describing an encounter with some people just outside of Paris, France, all of whom tell him not to go walking at night for fear of “the loups-garoux.”¹⁶⁴ Baring-Gould says, “This was my first introduction to were-wolves, and the circumstance of finding the superstition still so prevalent, first gave me the idea of

¹⁶⁰ Summers, *Werewolf* 161, quoted from *The Lover’s Melancholy*

¹⁶¹ Summers, *Werewolf* 161, quoted from *The Lover’s Melancholy*

¹⁶² Summers, *Werewolf* 162, quoted from *The Lover’s Melancholy*

¹⁶³ See Summers, *Werewolf* 162. Any variations of terms for werewolves, including “lycanthropy,” are not included, leading one to believe that the would-be werewolf here is more just a sorcerer like Stubbe, rather than someone specifically accused of lycanthropy.

¹⁶⁴ Baring-Gould, *Book 6*

investigating the history and the habits of these still mythical creatures.”¹⁶⁵ Apparently, Baring-Gould set out to acquire a werewolf, an attempt which he admits was – unsurprisingly – unsuccessful.¹⁶⁶ Despite sentiments he expresses later in the book, Baring-Gould begins with some skepticism about werewolves: “the werewolf may have become extinct in our age, yet he has left his stamp on classical antiquity, he has trodden deep in Northern snows, has ridden rough-shod over the medievals, and has howled amongst Oriental sepulchres. ... Yet who knows! We may be a little too hasty in concluding that he is extinct.”¹⁶⁷ However, Baring-Gould later attributes lycanthropy to the innate cruelty in humans, turning to examples of children and young boys “who assemble around a sheep or pig when it is about to be killed, and who watch the struggle of the dying brute with hearts beating fast with pleasure, and eyes sparkling with delight.”¹⁶⁸

Baring-Gould’s *The Book of Were-Wolves*, in his attempt to debunk werewolf legends, discusses extensively his own investigations into the human mind and general human behavior to eventually come to the conclusion that all madmen are, essentially, werewolves, and vice versa. He says “that children by nature are cruel, and that humanity has to be acquired by education.”¹⁶⁹ Following many accounts of insanity and cannibalism, none of which remotely relate to werewolf legends, Baring-Gould makes the assertion that “[t]he cases in which bloodthirstiness

¹⁶⁵ Baring-Gould, *Book 7*

¹⁶⁶ Baring-Gould (in *The Book of Were-Wolves*) clearly states he was searching for a “real werewolf,” saying, “I must acknowledge that I have been quite unsuccessful in obtaining a specimen of the animal,” on page 7. One might be led to assume, judging from the direction his book later takes, that Baring-Gould became disgruntled in his fruitless search and decided that werewolves were madmen instead of ever possibly being a distinctive creature. Unlike Montague Summers, Baring-Gould not once entertains the notion of a human transforming into a wolf or wolf-man.

¹⁶⁷ Baring-Gould, *Book 7*

¹⁶⁸ Baring-Gould, *Book 56*

¹⁶⁹ Baring-Gould, *Book 57*

and cannibalism are united with insanity are those which properly fall under the head of Lycanthropy.”¹⁷⁰ However, Baring-Gould here does not use the proper idea of clinical lycanthropy, which is – in fact – a person having delusions of turning into a wolf or some other animal,¹⁷¹ rather than anything specifically related to cannibalism or bloodthirstiness. Nonetheless, Baring-Gould decides that all of the cases he lists in Chapter IX of his book are instances of clinical lycanthropy, assuming that they “point unmistakably to hallucination,”¹⁷² despite no account actually specifying this. Indeed, Baring-Gould seems so passionate in his determination to paint all werewolf legends as being nothing more than tales of madmen that he forgets an essential component of werewolf tales: a connection and usually a transformation into a wolf. In his texts, Baring-Gould essentially defines all individuals who suffer from insanity to be “lycanthropist[s],”¹⁷³ regardless of whether they exhibit any delusions related to wolves. Baring-Gould’s writing expresses a frustration with the idea that anyone could ever believe a werewolf legend to be true, to the point that he not only attempts to debunk the myth by calling werewolves madmen, but also takes a much greater leap, saying that *all* madmen are werewolves – a sentiment not exactly shared by those of the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern period, but certainly an example of how, by the 1800s, scholars still felt the need to try to debunk werewolf legends and deal with locals who actually believed in them.

Likewise, throughout his book *Werewolf*, written in 1933, Montague Summers recounts many legends of locals believing in werewolves, even during the 1800s-1900s, and Summers

¹⁷⁰ Baring-Gould, *Book* 61

¹⁷¹ Garlipp 19. As mentioned throughout the article and defined in the opening sentence, although the word “lycanthropy” is derived from the Greek word for “wolf” (lykos), it can refer to a patient suffering delusions of being transformed into any kind of animal.

¹⁷² Baring-Gould, *Book* 61

¹⁷³ Baring-Gould, *Book* 61

himself believed in human transformation – while also dismissing the prospect of passing off lycanthropy as madness, saying that the term werewolf is often misused by other scholars to refer to madmen who have no connection with werewolves. In the 1600s, in Italy, werewolves were referred to as *lupo mannaro*, and they were actively feared as monsters.¹⁷⁴ The Italians of the Alpine provinces believed in demons who could “transform [themselves] into a wolf,”¹⁷⁵ further highlighting connections that the Church asserted between werewolves and Satan. These demonic wolf shapeshifters were said to have an unquenchable thirst for blood, and werewolf scholar Montague Summers attests to having personally “met peasants who firmly believed in and dreaded the *lupo mannaro*,” though he wrote his book *Werewolf* during the 1900s.¹⁷⁶ These *lupo mannaro* are but one of many examples of local werewolf legends that Summers details throughout his extensive and thorough research, even if he frequently injects his own biases.

In the introduction of his study, Summers mentions *The Book of Were-Wolves* by Sabine Baring-Gould, saying, “[H]e devotes no less than three chapters ... to a highly romantic and not very accurate account of Gilles de Rais, who was a Satanist certainly, but not a werewolf.”¹⁷⁷ Summers even dismisses Baring-Gould’s would-be scientific explanations of lycanthropy, calling his chapters on the subject “unacceptable.”¹⁷⁸ Indeed, Summers spends an entire paragraph in his introduction discussing that too many scholars do “not realize that werewolfery [is] a terrible and enduring fact,”¹⁷⁹ according to him. He says, in a very eloquent argument in

¹⁷⁴ Summers, *Werewolf* 162. *Lupo mannaro* literally means “werewolf,” and it seems to be the only phrase in which these words are conjugated in such a way.

¹⁷⁵ Summers, *Werewolf* 162

¹⁷⁶ Summers, *Werewolf* 162

¹⁷⁷ Summers, *Werewolf* xi. Summers also takes issue with Baring-Gould categorizing so many broad types of madmen and Satanists specifically as “werewolves,” as was mentioned earlier in this chapter.

¹⁷⁸ Summers, *Werewolf* xi

¹⁷⁹ Summers, *Werewolf* xi

favor of his theological (if, obviously, highly unconventional) point of view,

I approach these problems entirely from the theological and philosophical point of view, where alone the solution can lie. Far be it from me to seem in any way to depreciate or underreckon the valuable work which has been done by anthropologists in collecting parallels from many countries and tracing significant rites and practice among primitive and distant folks, but they cannot read the riddle, and only too often have their guesses been far away from the truth. It could not be otherwise if they disregard the science of God for the science of man. Anthropology is but the humblest handmaid of theology.¹⁸⁰

However, despite his strong feelings regarding others who dismiss actual belief in werewolves, Summers acknowledges that the insane individuals whom other researchers refer to as “werewolves” are indeed madmen, but he claims the proper term for that insanity is “lycorexia or lycorrhexis,”¹⁸¹ as lycanthropy is, at least to Summers, the *physical condition* of transforming into a wolf, not a form of insanity or delusion as claimed by those other researchers. Summers’ writings emphasize the spiritual side of lycanthropy, but even so, he also emphasizes the evil within wolves and werewolves alike; essentially, Summers believes that werewolves are real, but they are created by Satanic magic.

The late 1500s and early 1600s became the ultimate transition period for lycanthropy: all

¹⁸⁰ Summers, *Werewolf* xii

¹⁸¹ Summers, *Werewolf* 51. When he provides this definition, Summers is sympathetically detailing another werewolf court case, in 1852, in which a man went insane and believed he was transforming into a wolf. Summers describes the madman’s death as “fearful mental agony, accusing himself of and being tortured by the guilt of heinous offences which he certainly had not committed. He died ... seemingly in the utmost spiritual dereliction. But this, we may hope, was the climax of his trial, for there appears little doubt from reading the details of the case that here we have a plain case of diabolical possession” (51), thus attributing this particular madman’s insanity to possession rather than what Summers believes to be “true” lycanthropy (a physical transformation not a delusional one).

traces of benevolence in werewolf legends were abolished by a combination of Christian theology and science, and the very definition of a “werewolf” became confused. Beresford perhaps states it best when he says that, during this time, the werewolf became little more than a “religious scapegoat,”¹⁸² along with so many other pagan beliefs. As if the already broad specifications – mostly put in place later by scholars – that define a “werewolf” were not strange enough, during the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern period, werewolves became everything from sorcerers to madmen, some of whom did not even have delusions related to wolves. In the ancient era and the Middle Ages, lycanthropy was used in a variety of ways: it could be a morality lesson, often with the werewolf not even the individual at fault, or the werewolf in a story might be merely a person doing a favor for their traveling companions, or perhaps the werewolf was a noble knight or fearsome and respected berserker. However, during the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern period, werewolves transitioned into beings associated solely with evil, atrocities, and insanity: they were criminal madmen and Satanists of various sorts, condemned by Christianity. Forgotten were the moral stories Christianity had previously used involving wolves and werewolves, such as *Bisclavret*, Giraldus Cambrensis’s wolf that conversed with a priest, the wolf of Gubbio, and so many more. During these time periods, werewolves and wolves became only symbols of evil and insanity, far more strongly and universally than they had been at any point in history. Such negative ideas of werewolves and wolves are only exaggerated further by today’s scholars, who have so broadly labeled any case related to wolves as being a “werewolf trial,” such as the many madmen discussed broadly by Baring-Gould, and especially the case of Peter Stubbe the sorcerer. Indeed, if any one account from the late Middle Ages and Early Modern period were to hold more power today than the

¹⁸² Beresford 88

rest, it would be that of Peter Stubbe, whose case as a sorcerer taking the form of a “strange and cruel wolf”¹⁸³ is full of elements never before associated with werewolves, in legend or even in other trial records of the same period. The labeling by modern scholars¹⁸⁴ of Peter Stubbe as a werewolf instead of a Satanist sorcerer – for he was condemned as such: “a warning to all sorcerers and witches”¹⁸⁵ – is perhaps one of the single greatest reasons werewolves are still portrayed in such a negative light, even today. Thus, with werewolves becoming increasingly associated with Satanic transformations and illusions,¹⁸⁶ and many other werewolves summed up as simple but violent and cannibalistic madmen,¹⁸⁷ werewolves and wolves alike are left depicted only as beings of utter malevolence, and these depictions are what the legendary werewolves, as well as their real and unsuspecting animal counterparts, unfortunately carried with them into the popular culture of the modern age.

¹⁸³ “Stubbe” 73

¹⁸⁴ A reminder: Peter Stubbe was never called a “werewolf,” “lycanthrope,” or accused of “lycanthropy” in his own trial records, even in a time period in which courts believed in the existence of both werewolves and Satanic magic, and even in a connection between the two.

¹⁸⁵ “Stubbe” 76

¹⁸⁶ A decent amount of this association, however, also comes from modern scholarship, as mentioned previously with Peter Stubbe and certain others.

¹⁸⁷ At times, even including madmen lacking in any kind of wolfish symptoms or delusions, making any possible connection with werewolves questionable, to say the least.

Chapter IV – The Moon Waxes: The Werewolf Popularity Surge

Werewolves have held a place in fiction throughout human history, but in the past, the average person most likely believed in *real* werewolves as well as the fictional ones he or she read about in tales such as Marie de France’s *Bisclavret*.¹⁸⁸ Today, the average consumers of popular culture have particular images and biases in mind when they hear or read the word “werewolf,” particularly based on whatever work of entertainment first introduced them to the concept of lycanthropy – but that concept almost always involves either malevolence, or, at the very least, the werewolf in question becoming an uncontrollable beast when he transforms. Although werewolves today come in a wide variety when examined on the surface, the concept of the werewolf has, at the same time, become more generalized and more confused. On average, when one examines any werewolf from popular culture, the werewolf will probably be uncontrollable when transformed or at least be prone to bloodthirsty rages and nearly always be associated in some fashion with either the moon or nightfall. Almost paradoxically, however, the concept of a werewolf has also become more confusing in that many artists and public commentators today add their own elements to werewolves or else take elements from past popular culture, ignoring any relation to past legends. Most werewolves today are sensitive to silver, or belladonna or wolfsbane, and some even take elements from vampires and the undead in that they cannot cross running water, among other strange contrivances made in order to provide the werewolves of the story with some kind of “weakness” not present in any original folklore. In legends of the past, however, the idea of the werewolf – despite belief in the werewolf being a universal cultural phenomenon, spanning multiple continents and civilizations – feels more cohesive than today’s conception, in which werewolves have gone from a feared

¹⁸⁸ As covered in Chapter II of this study.

monster to a bit of popular culture upon which all writers attempt to put their unique stamp, often with flagrant disregard and ignorance of any legends. Regardless of how individual creators splice together their “unique” werewolf from their own ideas and concepts taken from other folkloric creatures never before associated with werewolves, however, one overarching element remains from the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern period: the werewolf, like its wolf counterpart, is still associated with malevolence and, more often than not, madness.

During the 1800s and early 1900s, werewolves were still what one might consider relatively unusual in entertainment, though a few notable stories included a single werewolf villain. In 1896, Clemence Housman published her first novel, *The Were-wolf*, an allegory about Christianity in which the devilish antagonist is a sexually obsessed seductress werewolf who lures men before she transforms into a werewolf to eat them, which seems to take a page from the rapacious sorcerer Peter Stubbe rather than any traditional werewolf legend.¹⁸⁹ Many other examples of werewolf fiction exist from the 1800s, such as G.W.M. Reynolds’s *Wagner the Wehr-Wolf* from 1847, in which the werewolf is the result of a deal with Satan. One could argue that Robert Louis Stevenson’s timeless *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, published in 1886, is a werewolf story, but there is no direct mention of werewolves in the novel itself, despite the themes being easily translatable to a werewolf. However, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* boasts far more appeal and renown than any werewolf story from this period – or, indeed, perhaps any werewolf story ever told. One novel that received a fair amount of praise was Guy Endore’s 1933 novel *The Werewolf of Paris*, which was later adapted into a film; however, *The Werewolf of Paris* provides yet another example of stories that turn werewolves into other

¹⁸⁹ As covered in Chapter III of this study, werewolves were never associated with sexual criminality and lust until the trial record of Peter Stubbe, who was actually tried as a sorcerer and not a werewolf, only to later be labeled a werewolf by scholars.

legendary monsters, particularly since the predictably malevolent werewolf of *The Werewolf of Paris* must suck the blood of a woman in order to aid in resisting his transformations, similar to some sort of vampire.

Although several films from previous periods featured werewolves, such as *The Werewolf* in 1913 and *Wolf Blood* in 1925, and the first werewolf movie of the sound era was *Werewolf of London* in 1935, the single most influential piece of popular culture upon the modern concept of werewolves today is undoubtedly *The Wolf Man* (1941), starring Lon Chaney, Jr. Though werewolves have never enjoyed considerable attention in mainstream media, even with the increase they have seen today (which will be discussed later in this chapter), there has never been any work, legendary or fictional, to exert so much influence over the societal idea of a werewolf as did this film. Put simply, *The Wolf Man* created the imagery, general storyline, character, and lore that are still so closely associated with the werewolf today. Werewolves still haunt the dark, Gothic architecture and haunted forests seen in the film, and many werewolf stories still tell the same general tale of someone being infected with lycanthropy, transforming, and eventually meeting some kind of tragic and occasionally ironic death.¹⁹⁰ Likewise, the character of Larry Talbot still survives today in much werewolf fiction: a nice and sympathetic character who must somehow attempt to cope with his monstrous and uncontrollable transformations, and in the end, the curse results in his death.

Of all the ways in which *The Wolf Man* so heavily influenced werewolves in popular culture today, perhaps the greatest contribution the film made to the modern concept of werewolves is the idea of silver as being the werewolf's one true weakness. The film writer Curt

¹⁹⁰ In Talbot's case, he is bludgeoned to death by his own father, using the silver head of his walking stick. Almost every other movie werewolf faces similar fates, and it is undeniable that – especially in film – the werewolf is nearly always killed.

Siodmak created this entire concept on his own, instead of drawing it from legend,¹⁹¹ and yet most people today accept it as truth that werewolves should be sensitive to silver, even if a few of the most modern werewolf stories are now attempting to shed this concept. As seen in legend, werewolves have no real “weaknesses,” and particularly not any that apply across nearly all their legends, as do most portrayals of vampires, making Siodmak’s contribution significant to modern werewolf portrayals, particularly since silver as a werewolf’s weakness has infiltrated popular culture so deeply that there now exist sayings about using a “silver bullet” when discussing something with only one weakness, almost like an “Achilles heel.” Likewise, other elements of the film have come to be generally accepted as the “proper” or “normal” portrayal of a werewolf, such as how the lycanthrope undergoes transformations into a werewolf against his will after being bitten by another werewolf. The werewolf transforming at the full moon, however, was actually popularized by the film’s sequel, *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* (1943), in which the film’s famous rhyme was altered to specify the transformation as occurring “when the moon is full and bright,” instead of “when the wolfbane blooms and the autumn moon is bright.” Therefore, *The Wolf Man*’s many contributions to the modern concept of werewolves, especially giving them silver as their only weakness and transferring the curse by bite, makes the film stand tall among other werewolf fiction as perhaps the single most influential werewolf story ever conceived.

Another very influential werewolf story took the form of a television show instead of a

¹⁹¹ Silver being a werewolf’s weakness is sometimes wrongfully attributed to legend, but before *The Wolf Man*, werewolves were never connected to silver in any way. Some authors, such as Brad Steiger and Robert Jackson, claim that the idea of silver killing werewolves originates with the legend of the Beast of Gévaudan, but they cite no reliable sources and their research seems very insufficient to back this claim. Likewise, it is arguable whether the Beast of Gévaudan should be considered a werewolf legend at all, even if a silver bullet really was supposedly used to kill the beast.

movie, when the Gothic soap opera *Dark Shadows* aired on ABC from 1966 to 1971. Although werewolves and vampires have sometimes been associated in legend, such as the vrykolakas in Greece and Eastern Europe, they had never appeared together as the headline monsters in a story – or, at least, not a popular one – until *Dark Shadows*, which starred many assorted monsters, including most prominently vampires, werewolves, and witches. It took many long years for the idea of vampires and werewolves existing in the same setting to take hold, but very recently, the idea has captivated audiences, and today, one is almost never found without the other, though they are generally portrayed as rivals, as will be seen in some examples featured later in this chapter.¹⁹²

After *The Wolf Man*, often werewolf movies were created, though none so influential or popular as its inspiration, which spawned various sequels, and it was not until the 1980s that werewolves saw another revival of sorts, which also took place in film. *The Howling* and *An American Werewolf in London*, both released in 1981, became prominent werewolf fiction of the modern era, with both predictably casting werewolves as irredeemable villains. In the case of *The Howling*, the movie varies the typical plot that werewolf movies largely retell from *The Wolf Man*, and instead the movie is about an entire mountain resort occupied by werewolves; however, true to the form popularized by *The Wolf Man*, the protagonist of the film is still

¹⁹² There are innumerable examples from modern fiction. A notable and unfortunate example is the *Underworld* film series, which features vampires and werewolves (or “lycans,” as the series calls them) at eternal war. However, there has never been a werewolf hero in the *Underworld* series, as the vampire protagonist played by Kate Beckinsale only slays both vampire and werewolf villains (the latter generally portrayed as incredibly unthreatening to the vampire heroine, whose sex appeal creates much of the film’s box office response, and the films are very aware of it), despite werewolves being cast as theoretically sympathetic in the setting of the films, since they were supposedly created by the vampires as a slave race. Expansion upon *Underworld* and its werewolves could be made, but the films are overall an unremarkable stain upon werewolves in popular culture, and to dedicate too much discussion to that series would ultimately degrade this study as a whole.

infected with lycanthropy and is killed in the conclusion of the movie. *An American Werewolf in London*, however, tells a tale almost exactly like *The Wolf Man*: an innocent man, in this case a tourist, is infected with lycanthropy and eventually dies tragically, with his lover watching. However, *An American Werewolf in London* makes strange alterations to the idea of the werewolf in the film, as the werewolf is haunted by the visages of the people he has killed, who insist he must commit suicide.

Another noteworthy film in terms of werewolf popularity is the 1985 comedy film *Teen Wolf*, starring Michael J. Fox. Unlike other horror movies focusing on werewolves, *Teen Wolf* portrays werewolves as not necessarily malevolent, but neutral. However, when the protagonist begins to transform into a werewolf, his father (also a werewolf) warns him not to lose his temper. Although the werewolves in the movie retain full control of themselves when transformed, and indeed the protagonist uses his lycanthropy to actually gain popularity within the school instead of being shunned as he originally fears he will be, they are nonetheless dangerous due to their powerful nature. *Teen Wolf* actually harkens back to some of the oldest werewolf legends (although it almost certainly does not do this on purpose), in that the werewolf, as a motif, is used to help tell a moral story about acceptance, self-discovery, self-control, and simply being different.

Many other werewolf movies have been created, largely inspired by *The Wolf Man*, and a complete list of werewolf films would be long and tedious – but the overwhelming majority of them share a stigma in common: not only is the werewolf usually malevolent, but also, werewolf movies are generally considered B-list films that do not receive much recognition or popularity, often rightfully so due to poorly written stories and equally poor production values. Whenever a film is branded as a “werewolf movie,” it often results in audiences preemptively judging the

film to be rather silly and most likely predictable and stereotypical horror, which essentially follows the plot set by *The Wolf Man* in the 40s or some other horror story. For instance, a typical werewolf movie (when it is not simply using the same basic plot of *The Wolf Man*) may be along the lines of survival horror films, like *Dog Soldiers* (2002), a film in which a squad of soldiers must survive an attack by bloodthirsty werewolves. Like so many werewolf movies before it, *Dog Soldiers* has helped werewolf films maintain their stigma of being little more than celebrations of gore (and, frequently, sex, again defying more traditional werewolf tales in favor of depicting werewolves as stereotypical malevolent horror figures), with the various characters killed in assorted shocking ways destined to garner strong audience reactions. Due to their usually very simple nature and even simpler stories, which are often crude and centered around little more than violence and sex, werewolf movies have, as a genre, embraced rather than combatted the stigma of werewolf movies as being low-quality, forgettable horror flicks. In film, werewolves are – even today – almost always solely malevolent in purpose and nature, and their characters are drawn far more often from sorcerous madmen like Peter Stubbe than from the werewolf of legend.

In past entertainment depictions, werewolves appeared with varied motives across different mediums, although they were still shrouded in obscurity, with the term “werewolf” usually taken to indicate a frivolous, cheap production, despite the potential quality of the story. A prime example of this stigma is found in *Captain America* comic book issues #402-#408, entitled the “Man And Wolf” story arc, first published in 1992. In this storyline, Steve Rogers (Captain America) must contend with werewolves that appear, at first, to be villainous, until he uncovers a dangerous plot – while, at the same time, turning into a werewolf, himself. Though harshly criticized by comic book fans, the “Capwolf” comics tell a robust and interesting story,

with very well-drawn artwork and interesting explorations into various characters and the lore of the Marvel universe, particularly where werewolves and their varieties are concerned. A likely reason for the derision of the comic series is simply that the association with werewolves makes it seem B-list and silly, although the comics do an excellent job tying together and telling a story about the various kinds of werewolves and werewolf-like beings and mutants in Marvel, and Captain America proves himself to be so interesting and effective as a werewolf that he exhibits werewolf transformations and powers in later comics, with some depictions of Capwolf persisting today. Despite their obscurity and the criticism from some comic fans, the *Captain America* “Man And Wolf” storyline stands out as an excellent depiction of werewolves, particularly those of a benevolent nature, most notably that of Captain America himself, which shows that werewolves need not always be portrayed, as they typically are, as one-sidedly malevolent.

Though werewolves have occasionally appeared in popular media, they have yet to be the primary focus of a popular and successful story, but they have assumed minor roles in other fantasy and paranormal works, such as the *Harry Potter* novel series. Although werewolves never take a particularly prominent role, some important supporting characters in the *Harry Potter* series are werewolves, most notably Professor Remus Lupin. Throughout the *Harry Potter* series, starting with *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Lupin proves himself to be among the kindest, humblest, and most helpful of all the characters, particularly among the professors at Hogwarts. However, even the protagonists of the novel react violently and with great fear upon learning he is a werewolf. Lupin later transforms and turns against his friends, though he ultimately runs off without doing them considerable harm. Therefore, Lupin’s benevolence as a character exists only while he remains in his human form, for if he transforms

into a werewolf (unless he takes a special potion that allows him to control himself), he becomes a malevolent and destructive monster. Other werewolves are mentioned broadly multiple times throughout the *Harry Potter* series, even if only in passing, and they are generally regarded with disdain and suspicion, particularly as characters in later installments of the series shun those who have werewolf friends.¹⁹³ Regardless of the sympathetic nature of Lupin, werewolves are still largely considered malevolent in the *Harry Potter* series, even though they are occasionally used as a means of representing misunderstood and marginalized minorities in society. Most werewolves are said to work with Lord Voldemort, the primary antagonist, and one of the later villains is a mad and bloodthirsty werewolf named Fenrir Greyback. Overall, though Lupin is a modern instance of a sympathetic werewolf, he is nonetheless uncontrollable and his wolf side is malevolent, and werewolves as creatures in the setting are evil and destructive.

Perhaps the greatest popularity surge werewolves have seen thus far, which still survives to some degree even now in 2017, occurred with the release of the *Twilight* novel series. Even though the werewolves in the series are unusual and many people attempted to turn werewolves into a laughing stock due to their appearance in the *Twilight* series, the overall success of the books undeniably resulted in an increase of interest in werewolves of all kinds. In the first installment of the series, *Twilight*, the werewolf character Jacob Black indicates that he and his ancestors are werewolves, and he calls them such, even though he says they are wolves that turn into humans, instead of vice versa. This is referenced in *New Moon* when Bella realizes what Jacob really is: “‘You see, the cold ones are the natural enemies of the wolf—well, not the wolf really, but the wolves that turn into men, like our ancestors. You would call them

¹⁹³ There are several instances in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* in which characters criticize Harry Potter for having once made friends with a werewolf (Lupin).

werewolves.”¹⁹⁴ Likewise, in *New Moon*, the first novel in the series to portray werewolves instead of merely mentioning them, when Bella initially figures out that Jacob is a werewolf, she thinks, “I didn’t know anything about werewolves, clearly. I would have expected something closer to the movies—big, hairy half-men creatures or something—if I’d expected anything at all,”¹⁹⁵ making reference specifically to the way the werewolves of the *Twilight* series turn into giant wolves, rather than the humanoid werewolf arguably more common to popular culture. The series also emphasizes that werewolves and vampires have a rivalry and have been enemies for many ages, as stated by Jacob; ever since *Dark Shadows* combined werewolves and vampires, it has become popular to turn them into rivals (which, of course, has absolutely no roots in legend), and the popularity of *Twilight* only aided in solidifying this idea throughout the series.

Regardless, the werewolves in *Twilight*, while they are said to have violent tempers, still retain control of themselves and are generally portrayed in a positive light, at least in *New Moon*.

However, despite being called werewolves throughout the book, the werewolves in *New Moon* are also identified as “Quileutes,”¹⁹⁶ and the fourth installment in the series, *Breaking Dawn*, changes the idea of *Twilight*’s benevolent werewolves. For whatever reason, in *Breaking Dawn*, Stephenie Meyer decided that her self-controlled werewolves were not actually “true” werewolves at all. *Breaking Dawn* specifies that the Quileutes, like Jacob and his pack, are shape-shifters, not true werewolves, which would mean that “true werewolves” are to be depicted as feral and uncontrollable, thus undoubtedly at least somewhat malevolent in nature as a result. This clarification comes, oddly, at the very end of the final book in the series, when Edward tells another vampire that the shape-shifters called “werewolves” throughout the series

¹⁹⁴ Meyer, *New Moon* 293

¹⁹⁵ Meyer, *New Moon* 298

¹⁹⁶ Meyer, *New Moon* 386

so far “aren’t even werewolves.”¹⁹⁷ Though there is no clarification regarding whether the “true” werewolves, the Children of the Moon, are malevolent or not in nature, it is specified that the shape-shifters like Jacob “think of themselves as werewolves, [but] they are not. The more accurate name for them would be shape-shifters. The choice of a wolf form was purely by chance. ... These creatures have nothing to do with the Children of the Moon. They have merely inherited this skill from their fathers. It’s genetic—they do not continue their species by infecting others the way true werewolves do.”¹⁹⁸ Apparently, in the *Twilight* series, the vampires – specifically, one named Caius – had hunted werewolves almost to extinction, again popularizing the idea of werewolves and vampires as ancient rivals. When Bella asks about the werewolves, Edward clarifies, “Full moon, yes, ... Silver bullets, no—that was just another one of those myths to make humans feel like they had a sporting chance.”¹⁹⁹ He also mentions that true werewolves, “rarely move in packs, and they are never much in control of themselves.”²⁰⁰ Although the *Twilight* series does subvert most modern werewolves by making them not sensitive to silver, the differences between the *Twilight* werewolves and more typical modern werewolves become lessened by the odd distinction between the shape-shifters and the “true” werewolves.

¹⁹⁷ Meyer, *Breaking Dawn* 704. At this point in the series, and after calling them “werewolves” for so long, it seems odd for Meyer to suddenly decide that the fact that they are wolf shape-shifters is sheer coincidence, instead of holding any significance regarding their being werewolves, the ancient enemies of the vampires. Apparently, however, the true werewolves of the *Twilight* series are actually far more powerful and intimidating than are the shape-shifters, which is at least an interesting change from many other forms of media featuring vampire and werewolf rivalries, in which the vampires are often more powerful – although the vampires in *Twilight* have, despite the supposed power of the werewolves, somehow managed to hunt true werewolves to the verge of extinction.

¹⁹⁸ Meyer, *Breaking Dawn* 704-705

¹⁹⁹ Meyer, *Breaking Dawn* 745

²⁰⁰ Meyer, *Breaking Dawn* 745

The *Twilight* series resulted in a considerable resurgence of interest in werewolves, inspiring many different werewolf stories: some continued the same werewolf horror trend, while others picked up on *Twilight*'s unconventional (to say the least) portrayal of werewolves, and lycanthropes began to appear more frequently in teenage romance. One of the most successful teen paranormal romances – and one of the few to focus exclusively on werewolves instead of vampires, along with a number of other supernatural beings – is the MTV television show *Teen Wolf*, which began its run in 2011 and continues today in 2017. Although the series is named after the 1985 comedy film previously mentioned, there are few similarities. Unlike its namesake film, the *Teen Wolf* series portrays werewolves as uncontrollable and dangerous, particularly in the first season, which also features a werewolf as the main antagonist. However, obviously, werewolves are largely portrayed as sympathetic throughout the show, and ultimately, the *Teen Wolf* television show represents one of the latest installments in a small but possibly growing trend of stories portraying werewolves as sympathetic and sometimes benevolent, even if this trend is still largely confined to the paranormal romance genre.

The success of books such as *Harry Potter* and *Twilight* has led to similar tales of magic with monstrous elements, and one can find both werewolves and wolves depicted in a variety of young-adult fiction today. They are, however, still generally cast as villains, and even if there are a few reasonably “good” and/or sympathetic exceptions, the “race” of wolves or werewolves are often evil as a whole, with only a few fairly recent young-adult novels starting to alter this trope. Unfortunately, such novels often go under the radar for “mainstream” popular culture, such as those books that become popular films and so deeply ingrain themselves in the common mind of society.²⁰¹ One exception to malevolent werewolves appears in Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard*

²⁰¹ This has primarily come in the form of good or sympathetic wolves, as opposed to

Book, which is essentially a Gothic retelling of Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, using ghosts, vampires, and werewolves instead of the various jungle animals. Like Lupin in the *Harry Potter* series, the werewolf in *The Graveyard Book* also has prematurely greying hair and an obviously wolfish name: "Miss Lupescu was not pretty. Her face was pinched and her expression was disapproving. Her hair was grey, although her face seemed too young for grey hair."²⁰² However, Gaiman's story takes an unexpected turn when the nature of the werewolves in *The Graveyard Book* is revealed to be benevolent. When Bod, the protagonist, first sees the werewolf, he believes it to be an evil monster planning to eat him, but it is actually Miss Lupescu descending into Hell to rescue him from being kidnapped. Later, he learns: "*Those that men call Werewolves or Lycanthropes call themselves the Hounds of God, as they claim their transformation is a gift from their creator, and they repay the gift with their tenacity, for they will pursue an evildoer to the very gates of Hell.*"²⁰³ Although Miss Lupescu meets the usual fate of the werewolf when she is killed, Gaiman subverts traditional popular culture by drawing from Thies's trial²⁰⁴ to portray werewolves as benevolent, serving God rather than the Devil.

Werewolves have also made numerous appearances in video games throughout the existence of the medium, dating back to *Altered Beast* in 1988 and several video games before it. In recent years, however, werewolves have become more prominent in some very popular video

werewolves. Examples of fairly recent works featuring sympathetic wolves include *The Cry of the Wolf* by Melvin Burgess, written in 1990; *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith, written in 1989; and a picture book *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig* by Eugene Trivizas and illustrated by Helen Oxenbury, published in 1993. Unfortunately, books such as these have not achieved exceptional popularity, even while receiving recognition through awards. Regardless, stories such as these are a good start to reversing the negativity of wolf portrayals.

²⁰² Gaiman 66

²⁰³ Gaiman 97

²⁰⁴ As discussed in Chapter III of this study.

games. The player character has been able to become a werewolf in nearly every installment of the *Elder Scrolls* series, most prominently including the second expansion pack to *Elder Scrolls III, Bloodmoon*, which released in 2003 and focuses entirely on werewolves and Hircine, the largely evil god who created and controls them. In *Bloodmoon*, if the player becomes a werewolf, he or she must devour the corpse of a humanoid NPC²⁰⁵ every night or be considerably weakened. *The Elder Scrolls* series skipped over werewolves in the fourth installment, *Oblivion*, but brought back playable werewolves in *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, though the system for werewolves is far less interesting, innovative, and robust than it was in *Bloodmoon*. Likewise, werewolves have appeared as a playable race or class in many other video games, mostly medieval fantasy RPGs,²⁰⁶ such as the Druid class in *Diablo II* (2000), and the Druid Shapeshifter class in *Baldur's Gate II: Shadows of Amn* and its expansion pack, *Throne of Bhaal*. In both *Diablo* and *Baldur's Gate*, the transformation of the player into a werewolf is a class ability that has no effect on how other characters in the game react to the player, unlike *Bloodmoon*, in which the world will turn hostile to the player if their lycanthropy is ever discovered. One of the latest major games to include werewolves is *World of Warcraft* (originally released in 2004), the most successful MMORPG²⁰⁷ ever created. In 2010, Blizzard – the company that develops *World of Warcraft* – released the expansion pack *Cataclysm*, which added the “worgen” (the setting’s term for werewolves) as a playable race, including the ability to cosmetically shapeshift between human and werewolf forms. These are, however, only the select few games that let the player become a werewolf – in the majority of video games that

²⁰⁵ Non-Player Character

²⁰⁶ Role-Playing Games. Trying to truly define “what is a RPG” is a long-standing argument that will not be addressed here. Needless to say, the games mentioned are all considered RPGs in some way or another, regardless of how true the definition may be in some cases.

²⁰⁷ Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game

include werewolves, they are simply evil monsters that will attack the player on sight and must be killed, often without much – if any – story or fanfare.

Just as werewolves appear in every other form of media, from movies and television shows to books and comics, and even to video games, lycanthropes have long had a place in music, particularly various genres of rock and metal. “Werewolves of London” by Warren Zevon may be among the best-known of werewolf songs, and it largely portrays werewolves in a comical – if violent and rapacious – sense, even while referencing several werewolf horror movies. However, the majority of werewolf songs continue the trend of associating werewolves with violence and madness, with few exceptions. For instance, the music video for Disturbed’s werewolf song “The Animal,” the lyrics of which discuss transforming under the moonlight and losing control to become a beast personifying Death, portrays what looks like Satanic ritual, and the lyrics include “we both shall dine in Hell tonight.”²⁰⁸ Metallica’s “Of Wolf and Man” actually portrays lycanthropy as a positive state, implying its oneness with nature, in both the refrain, “Earth’s gift, back to the meaning of life,” and the bridge, “Wildness is the preservation of the world / So seek the wolf in thyself.”²⁰⁹ However, the werewolf’s association with negativity, madness, and nightmare is so powerful today that it leaves audiences calling many songs “werewolf songs,” even if the songs in question do not overtly mention wolves or werewolves at all, such as “Monster” by Skillet, the refrain of which includes “I hate what I’ve become, the nightmare’s just begun / I must confess that I feel like a monster.”²¹⁰ Likewise, another popular werewolf song with no mention of wolves or werewolves is “Animal I Have Become” by Three Days Grace, with notable nightmare lyrics such as, “Somebody wake me

²⁰⁸ Draiman

²⁰⁹ Hetfield

²¹⁰ Cooper

from this nightmare / I can't escape this hell."²¹¹

The modern idea of a werewolf, then, is perhaps exemplified in the dark description offered by Stephen Jones, who compiled many werewolf and shapeshifter short stories (all horror, with the overwhelming majority portraying werewolves as irredeemable, sexually driven beings of evil) in his *Mammoth Book of Wolf Men*. Jones defines werewolves as follows:

“Condemned (usually through no fault of their own) to metamorphose during the phases of the full moon into bestial killers who destroy the ones they love, werewolves exemplify the classic dichotomy of Good versus Evil which ... lies at the core of most great modern horror fiction.”²¹²

Clearly, Jones defines the modern concept of lycanthropy, which, when put into perspective, appears alarmingly different from the classical, mythological conceptions of werewolves, even if werewolves of legend were also often cursed to transform during the full moon. Jones describes the werewolf as constituting the conflict of “good versus evil.” This idea is strange, particularly given that malevolent werewolves of legend were evil in *both* forms, more often than not.

Werewolves have, over time, taken a new shape in the mind of modern audiences, with the tragic result being that the wolf in the werewolf is used only to portray incredible evil. Further highlighting the strange modern idea of a werewolf, Jones concludes the introduction of his short story collection with the statement, “[G]et your silver bullets ready as the sign of the pentagram reveals the Beast that lurks within the heart of Man.”²¹³ By referring to silver and a relation to the pentagram (which is now considered a symbol of Satanism, with which the werewolf today has been associated since the court cases of the late Middle Ages and Early Modern period²¹⁴),

²¹¹ Gontier

²¹² Jones xii

²¹³ Jones xiii

²¹⁴ As covered in Chapter III of this study.

Jones is referencing only aspects of werewolves that originated in in *The Wolf Man*.

These examples and countless others of werewolves in entertainment across all forms of media – including many not covered here, such as card games, board games, and more – serve to highlight the fact that the overwhelming majority of werewolves are portrayed as malevolent. Today, popular culture has latched onto many ideas established by the writer of *The Wolf Man* (1941), Curt Siodmak, who portrayed the werewolf as a beast defeated only by silver, who transforms at a particular time of the year (established to be the full moon in *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* [1943]), and whose transformations result in his becoming a demonically-inspired monster driven solely by the need to kill humans.²¹⁵ Indeed, modern werewolf fiction frequently equates the werewolf side of lycanthropes with the Devil, the purest form of evil, an idea which has survived over the centuries into today from the trials of sorcerers and madmen of the late Middle Ages and Early Modern period, rather than from the many werewolf legends throughout history. Thus, although werewolves are still relatively popular today and have seen a popularity surge with *Twilight*, they are nonetheless portrayed as villains more often than not. Even when they are sympathetic, they are still considered uncontrollable, man-eating monsters, with often the most benign or benevolent (in human form) of them featured as secondary characters, who are killed by the end of the story. Surely now is the time for such an overwhelmingly negative portrayal of werewolves and wolves to change: not only are modern storytellers casting aside the deepest roots of the werewolf legend by always casting werewolves as villains – leading to inaccurate assumptions and ignorance of many powerful legends in the history of numerous

²¹⁵ In the film, the werewolf sees a pentagram on his next victim's skin. This was another contrivance created by Curt Siodmak, which has no foundation in folklore. Although the association between werewolves and pentagrams did not take nearly as powerful a hold on popular culture as did the idea of a werewolf being sensitive to silver, it is still noteworthy that any association found between the two today originated solely from the film, not anywhere else.

cultures around the world – but also these powerfully negative and destructive portrayals condemn a *real* animal: the wolf.

Chapter V – The Benefits of Reintroducing the Benevolent Werewolf

As shown throughout this study, werewolves and wolves have been portrayed in various ways by cultures around the world over the course of history; in ages past, they were frequently seen as benevolent or at least neutral, but with the advent of Christianity, the cultures that once revered the wolf as a brother and a mentor increasingly portrayed werewolves and wolves as malevolent associates of the Devil. By the late Middle Ages and into the Early Modern period, werewolves and wolves were believed to be beings of pure evil. These beliefs carried into the modern age, and they have never left us – today, the fictional werewolves and real wolves exist under an irrational stigma of malevolence, along with various negative characteristics that have been unreasonably attributed to them over the course of history: ruthlessness, gluttony, greed, selfishness, madness, and even sexual obsession. For many ages, and for the entirety of the modern period, werewolves and wolves have suffered under these negative portrayals, but it is time for these perceptions to change. Casting fictional werewolves solely as villains, modern storytellers dismiss or do not bother discovering the ancient roots of the werewolf legend, leading to inaccurate assumptions and ignorance of an array of myths both powerful and moral that exist across many cultures around the world. This depiction comes with extreme irony, in that wolves are considered villains for many attributes that other animals would theoretically represent far more efficiently, and wolves' many very positive behaviors are ignored entirely. Now that scientists have had the means and opportunity to examine animals so closely, it is hardly justice to portray male lions as symbols of great nobility and mercy, while condemning wolves to be symbols of selfishness and evil – but these trends continue due to ignorance and unwillingness to change from classical conceptions, and this is merely one example of many such undue biases. The depiction of werewolves and wolves as malevolent has resulted in

negative consequences, such as ignorance of historical legends, as well as extinction, endangerment, cruel methods of hunting, and general misunderstanding and hatred of real wolves: a hatred that mankind still refuses to leave behind, even today.

Unlike so many other animals – most notably other mammals, such as lions and bears – wolves have always suffered from a stigma of negativity, being cast as villains in everything from fairytales to modern-day children’s cartoons, and this is due in no small part to the relatively recent determination to always depict the wolves’ fictional half-human counterparts, werewolves, as evil. As stated by Barry Lopez in his book *Of Wolves and Men*, “The wolf exerts a powerful influence on the human imagination. It takes your stare and turns it back on you. (The Bella Coola Indians believed that someone once tried to change all the animals into men but succeeded in making human only the eyes of the wolf.) ... Wolf-haters want to say they are born killers, which isn’t true.”²¹⁶ For many ages, wolves have appeared in a variety of stories, and they feature perhaps most prominently in fairytales.

The wolf in fairytales is almost always portrayed as a villain and a kind of personification of gluttony, particularly given his insistence upon swallowing everything (and everyone) whole, such as in perhaps the most famous of wolf fairytales, “Little Red Riding Hood.” Although the tale has been told many times and in many ways, the original story did not have quite the happy ending that it often does today: instead, the wolf eats Little Red Riding Hood, and that is the end of the story: “Upon saying these words, the wicked wolf threw himself on Little Red Riding Hood and gobbled her up.”²¹⁷ Perrault, from whom we receive perhaps the oldest version of this tale, then reminds the reader of the story’s moral, saying that girls should not “listen to just

²¹⁶ Lopez 4

²¹⁷ Perrault 13

anyone,”²¹⁸ or they may be eaten by a wolf. Notably, Perrault adds that “I say a wolf, but not all wolves / Are exactly the same. / Some are perfectly charming, / Not loud, brutal, or angry, / But tame, pleasant, and gentle, / ... But watch out if you haven’t learned that tame wolves / Are the most dangerous of all.”²¹⁹ Clearly, Perrault is using the wolf to represent a malicious and rapacious individual – and he chooses a wolf because, unfortunately, in past stories, a wolf often was used to depict these very qualities in a person. In later versions of “Little Red Riding Hood,” such as the version told by the Brothers Grimm, the wolf is killed by a conveniently nearby huntsman, but these versions generally have the same moral. Today, “Little Red Riding Hood” survives in many different forms, often involving werewolves of some sort, such as in the movie *Red Riding Hood* (2011),²²⁰ and some renditions of this tale go so far as to twist the narrative extensively, portraying Little Red Riding Hood as a werewolf or monster hunter instead of as a victim.

Two other fairytales that follow the example given in “Little Red Riding Hood” of a gluttonous wolf who meets his end due to his foolish gluttony are “The Wolf and the Fox” and “The Wolf and the Seven Young Kids.” In “The Wolf and the Fox,” the wolf is killed when he becomes overly greedy while attempting to steal food, and although the fox manages to escape the farmers chasing them both, the wolf is caught and killed because he ate too much meat and cannot run very fast. The titular wolf in “The Wolf and the Seven Young Kids” meets a fate similar to that of other wolves in later, more optimistic renditions of “Little Red Riding Hood,” in that the wolf swallows whole six young goats and falls asleep; his belly is then cut open by the

²¹⁸ Perrault 13

²¹⁹ Perrault 13

²²⁰ It is noteworthy that this film, unlike the overwhelming majority of werewolf films as well as other ridiculous retellings of “Little Red Riding Hood,” is not actually terrible (even if the werewolf lore in the story is very Hollywoodian and stereotypically devilish).

goat's mother, filled with rocks, and eventually he drowns in a river as a result of the weight in his stomach.

Much like other fairytales featuring wolves, Thomas Bewick's collection of Aesop's fables, which he published in 1818, feature a wolf that is "innately evil, irreconcilably and fundamentally corrupt, and not very intelligent."²²¹ Although Aesop's wolf reflects the intelligence of the fox, the same aspects seen as positive in the fox are portrayed negatively in the wolf, deemed dishonesty instead of cleverness and cheating instead of craftiness. Likewise, wolves suffer a negative portrayal in the oral tradition of Isengrim the wolf and Reynard the fox: Isengrim is the villain, and he is often killed by the end of the story.²²² Generally speaking, the wolf in fairytales is a greedy, voracious, selfish, ungrateful, and generally malicious brute who is depicted as cunning at times and immensely unintelligent at others, and – more often than not – the wolf is defeated because of a combination of his gluttony (namely a tendency to swallow things whole) and his stupidity.

These examples and others are just a few of the many instances in which wolves are depicted as foolish, gluttonous, and cruel villains in classical folk tales, but, unfortunately, other examples can also be found throughout the overwhelming majority of children's literature²²³ and other works of fiction, notably including children's cartoons. A very recent example of this demonization appears in *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* (2010-), in which the pony Fluttershy, who can communicate with even the most seemingly vicious of animals, has a large group of woodland creatures who are her friends and companions. Her train of forest animals

²²¹ Lopez 255

²²² Lopez 259

²²³ One of the few exceptions is *The Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling, in which the wolves are a positive force, especially since they adopt Mowgli and serve as his immediate family.

notably includes raccoons, ferrets, birds, beavers, rabbits, insects, spiders, badgers, and more, notably snakes and a bear. However, an ordinary wolf remains unseen in the series, as the only wolf-like creatures are the Timberwolves, malevolent creatures with whom even Fluttershy apparently cannot communicate, who attack the protagonists every time they appear and are easily dispatched, making the depiction of wolves in this series a decidedly negative one.

One of the very worst offenders who portray wolves as malevolent and overly hostile, however, is Walt Disney Studios, which historically has almost never portrayed wolves in a good light. The few benevolent wolf characters who have appeared in Disney Studios stories only ever do so very briefly, such as the wolves in *The Jungle Book* (1967), despite these wolves having a large role in the original *Jungle Book* stories by Rudyard Kipling. Indeed, Disney Studios seems to see wolves as the standard minor, throwaway villains for heroes to encounter randomly and fight in the wilderness, and they are always unbelievably aggressive, far more so than any real wolf – as are the wolves seen in countless video games²²⁴ and other forms of media. Examples of such depictions of wolves by Disney Studios include the wolves in *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Frozen* (2013), and *The Sword in the Stone* (1963). Likewise, Disney Studios has other villainous wolves in other cartoons, such as the evil and inept Big Bad Wolf, as well as the Sheriff of Nottingham in *Robin Hood* (1973), a film that features many anthropomorphic animals, but only one wolf – who is, of course, villainous and incompetent. Likewise, the wolves and werewolves in C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* are wholly evil. Malevolent wolves are not, of course, confined solely to children's works, but appear in adult fiction as well. An example can be found

²²⁴ Wolves are among the most stereotypical of “low-level,” easy creatures to massacre in assorted video games, especially role-playing games and anything with survival themes (because anyone attempting to survive in the wilderness is bound to suddenly be the top priority of local wolf packs, at least according to entertainment).

in the film *The Grey* (2011), which is arguably the most ridiculous portrayal of wolves to date – and that is quite a feat, considering the many overly aggressive and outright malevolent depictions of wolves. Much like malevolent werewolves in fiction, wolves and wolfish creatures are almost always irredeemable villains of some sort, and they are nearly always killed or otherwise defeated by a hero or heroes.

A creature related to wolves that crosses an interesting line between positive and negative portrayals in both real life and fiction is the wolfdog: any canine that is part wolf, part dog. Wolfdogs have long been ridiculed as pets and companions, and they are often considered to be unpredictable and dangerous due to their wolf blood. However, wolfdogs generally receive a more positive reception in entertainment than do wolves themselves. For instance, the 1995 animated film *Balto* retells a version of the true story about Balto the sled dog; however, the film changes Balto from a husky into a wolfdog-husky mix, and the character is mistreated and judged for his wolf blood. Ultimately, to deliver the medicine to the sick during an outbreak of illness, Balto must make peace with his wolf blood, and he howls alongside a white wolf as he embraces his inner strength and uses it to complete his mission; although wolves are misunderstood and misjudged by characters throughout the film, including Balto himself, many of them realize that Balto's wolf heritage saved the day. Likewise, wolfdogs are portrayed positively in *White Fang*, a famous story about Jack London, in which the protagonist – White Fang, a wolfdog who is three-quarters wolf, one-quarter dog – comes from a wolf pack, is tamed, and saves the life of a human character before he settles down with a dog mate and becomes the companion to humans; in this story, wolves and wolfdogs alike are portrayed positively. Jack London also portrayed wolves in a positive light in his book *The Call of the Wild*, in which a St. Bernard-Scotch Shepherd dog named Buck runs off and joins a wolf pack. Thus, although

negativity still surrounds them today, wolfdogs have occasionally been portrayed as sympathetic by entertainment, and Jack London's novels offer a refreshingly positive conception of wolves and their kin.

As seen in the previous chapter,²²⁵ werewolves are often portrayed in an immensely negative light, as dangerous and violent monsters – but, today, there is arising a new association between werewolves and disease. It has become increasingly common for werewolves to be portrayed as almost nonthreatening, with their only danger being the curse they carry – instead of werewolves being depicted as powerful, rare monsters, they are portrayed as weak victims of an epidemic, thus crossing boundaries between werewolves and today's wildly popular concept of zombies. One such example of this cross-over can be found in the video game *World of Warcraft: Cataclysm*,²²⁶ in which the worgen²²⁷ are essentially compared to a plague of rats. Indeed, the worgen curse spreads so rapidly through Gilneas (the land in which the epidemic takes place) that there are worgen everywhere, literally overrunning the city, to the point that trying to move between buildings leaves the player wading through seas of worgen that fill the streets. The player must later massacre worgen in droves by blindly firing cannon shots into innumerable hordes of the beasts. *Cataclysm* provides just one example of how entertainment media today has begun to portray lycanthropy as an epidemic rather than as a unique and frightening curse meaningfully bestowed upon an individual, which results in that individual

²²⁵ Chapter IV – The Moon Waxes: The Werewolf Popularity Surge

²²⁶ An expansion pack to the popular MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game) *World of Warcraft*, as mentioned in Chapter IV of this study.

²²⁷ The setting's term for werewolves. Many settings today prefer to call werewolves something other than simply "werewolves," or at the very least they are called "lycans" (a mutilation of the word "lycanthrope"), for whatever reason. Werewolves today are also occasionally referred to as "weres," although this term makes absolutely no etymological sense, as the word "were" simply means "man."

turning into an almost unstoppable monster, who is so powerful that an entire movie can be spent attempting to defeat only one werewolf. Ironically, a few years after zombie media took from werewolf media the idea of a curse or infection spreading by bite, now entertainment featuring werewolves has decided that werewolves themselves can be like the unimpressive zombies who are only a threat because they are mindless hostiles that carry some kind of disease. Not only does this portrayal continue the degradation of werewolf legends, but it also portrays real wolves in a negative light: as if wolves themselves are little more than a completely destructive plague that must be destroyed before they overpopulate, leading to acts such as wolf culling, even though wolf populations are not unusually high.

Negative portrayals of werewolves and wolves are often attributed at least in part to the ancient societies who had to contend much more actively with wolves than people do today, and thus they feared and hated wolves for making their lives difficult by killing livestock; yet some peoples, such as Native Americans, who struggled with the wolf chose instead to embrace it for its positive qualities. Among many tribes “[t]he wolf was also held in high regard because, though he was a fiercely loyal familial animal, he was also one who took the role of provider for the larger community (for carrion eaters like the fox and the raven). This was something that tribal Indians [Native Americans] understood very well, for in difficult times a man had the dual responsibility of feeding his own family as well as others.”²²⁸ Various Native American cultures remain among the most prominent societies to revere the wolf instead of shun it: “This association with, and imitation of, the wolf among American Indians was absolutely pervasive,”²²⁹ and they even believed “that to kill a wolf was to invite retribution from other

²²⁸ Lopez 104

²²⁹ Lopez 105

wolves. ... And there was a widespread belief that a weapon that had killed a wolf would never work right again.”²³⁰ Unlike many Western civilizations, Native Americans saw the positive qualities of wolves in their blending of individualism with serving their society and protecting their families and packmates. These are the qualities that, today, society needs to recognize in wolves, instead of the baseless negative qualities with which wolves have become associated.²³¹

Further respect for wolves from the Native Americans can be found in a story retold by Adam Douglas in his book *The Beast Within: A History of the Werewolf*. Douglas details a Native American totem legend, which he attributes to the Wolf clan, in northwestern Canada, in a place called Towq.²³² The totem of Towq is crowned with a wolf head, because, during a time when the town was starving, a shaman named Kamlugyides heard wolf howls and went to investigate. The shaman came upon a wolf and “called out to [it],”²³³ prompting the wolf to approach.²³⁴ The wolf had a bone stuck in its throat, and Kamlugyides removed it. Grateful, the wolf licked him before rejoining its pack. Days later, however, Kamlugyides heard the howling again, “but this time it seemed to be calling out for Kalmugyides.”²³⁵ He found the wolf once

²³⁰ Lopez 109

²³¹ It is worth specifying that not every Native American tribe saw wolves in a positive light – only the overwhelming majority. Navajo, however, most notably have malevolent werewolf legends: “The Navajo word for wolf, *mai-coh*, is a synonym for witch. There is a good deal of witchcraft among the Navajo and belief in werewolves provides explanations for otherwise inexplicable (to them) phenomena. Witchcraft and werewolves are (the belief is current) more on the minds of some Navajos than others” (Lopez 123). Navajo werewolves killed others and “raided graveyards and mutilated bodies” (Lopez 123), not unlike some werewolf beliefs in Europe.

²³² Douglas 45-46

²³³ Douglas 45

²³⁴ This, of course, implies that either Kamlugyides can speak to animals, or else the wolf simply understood him. Given the wolf did not react violently, that aspect alone provides a more positive depiction of wolves than commonly seen, even in folklore. Animals, at times, have been shown to have a tendency to approach humans when they are in need of help, but the point still stands.

²³⁵ Douglas 45

more, and, happily, it led him to the body of a deer, which the shaman used to feed his village. The wolf brought Kalmugyides a deer each day, allowing his people to survive through their time of famine.

Today, due in no small part to the oppressively pervasive negativity imposed upon wolves and their mythological kin, wolves are often seen as dangerous pests that must be eliminated. In his book *Of Wolf and Man*, Barry Lopez deeply examines such beliefs, as he says, “I talked with men who saw nothing wrong with killing wolves, who felt it was basically a good thing to be doing.”²³⁶ For some individuals, Lopez determines that this hatred, which “they [struggled] to put it into words,”²³⁷ comes from a feeling that “wolves seemed better off than they [the hunters] were.”²³⁸ Although “We forget how little, really, separates us from the times and circumstances in which we, too, would have killed wolves,”²³⁹ there nonetheless exists today a struggle against those who would kill wolves for reasons not properly justified by science. In ages past, and to some extent even today, wolves have been the victims of baseless destruction and even torture, including individuals who “set wolves on fire and tore their jaws out and cut their Achilles tendons and turned dogs loose on them. They poisoned them with strychnine, arsenic, and cyanide, on such a scale that *millions* of other animals ... were killed incidentally in the process. In the thick of the wolf fever they even poisoned themselves, and burned down their own property torching the woods to get rid of wolf havens.”²⁴⁰ In the mid-1800s in the United States, wolves were slaughtered with extreme dedication, and today they are chased using airplanes and snowmobiles until they collapse from exhaustion. They are killed for entertainment

²³⁶ Lopez 137

²³⁷ Lopez 138

²³⁸ Lopez 138

²³⁹ Lopez 138

²⁴⁰ Lopez 139

rather than even attempting an excuse, and “[i]n Minnesota in the 1970s people choked Eastern timber wolves to death in snares to show their contempt for the animal’s designation as an endangered species.”²⁴¹

No matter the arguments claiming that such extreme hunting of wolves is not actually so cruel and unreasonable as it seems, wolves have long been regarded by society with hatred and fear that is displayed toward no other species of animal. Lopez provides countless more examples of the slaughter and torture of wolves throughout his book, which are far too numerous and extensive to retell here, leading to the simple question: why do humans harbor such great hatred and fear of the wolf? As Lopez mentions, this hatred and fear exist in part due to “theriophobia. Fear of the beast. Fear of the beast as an irrational, violent, insatiable creature. Fear of the projected beast in oneself. ... theriophobia is projected onto a single animal, the animal becomes a scapegoat, and it is annihilated. That is what happened to the wolf in America.”²⁴² The answer to the question as to why and how the wolf came to be the target of such hatred lies, quite simply, in the explorations behind werewolf and wolf beliefs already detailed throughout this study. As stated by Lopez,

The hatred has religious roots: the wolf was the Devil in disguise. And it has secular roots: wolves killed stock and made men poor. At a more general level it had to do, historically, with feelings about wilderness. What men said about the one, they generally meant about the other. To celebrate wilderness was to celebrate the wolf; to want an end to wilderness and all it stood for was to want the wolf’s head.²⁴³

²⁴¹ Lopez 139

²⁴² Lopez 140. Indeed, it also happened to wolves across many regions of the world, including England and Ireland.

²⁴³ Lopez 140

When mankind began to build great civilizations, the wolf got in the way. Lopez equates wolves to an embodiment of wilderness, and “the act of killing wolves became a symbolic act, a way to lash out at that enormous, inchoate obstacle: wilderness.”²⁴⁴

Such hatred and fear of the wolf began in Europe and spread to the rest of the world, with the greatest basis for this fear of wolves being that they were seen as wild animals, as killers of livestock, as predators with a frightening appearance – and as creatures that reflect many of mankind’s own social and behavioral qualities, but in a primal and untamed manner that disturbed the minds of most people. After all, was it not from wolves that humans acquired the domesticated dogs now called “man’s best friend”? Wolves and humans have an undeniable association and connection, and from these fears of seeing one’s reflection in the terrifying wolf arose the werewolf: the combination of man and an animal (one that almost mirrors many of man’s qualities and social behaviors) that many civilizations feared. Conversely, from the *positive* aspects of wolves rose the benevolent werewolf, associated with the desirable traits of the wolf as opposed to the negative ones. One could spend a great deal of time detailing the wide variety of negative writings about wolves themselves, not in a fictional sense or through fictional portrayals, but real ones – Theodore Roosevelt called the wolf ““the beast of waste and desolation.””²⁴⁵

A hatred for wolves is ingrained in humans from a young age by the endless children’s stories of evil wolves, and then exacerbated by media portraying violent and malevolent werewolves, and the time has come for these portrayals to change. Society today enjoys touting its superiority to the “medieval” mind and “medieval” ideas, which are often considered

²⁴⁴ Lopez 141

²⁴⁵ Lopez 142

primitive and even silly, yet contemporary society has done nothing but embrace the negative image of the wolf: “The medieval mind, more than any other mind in history, was obsessed with the image of wolves. ... Anything that threatened a peasant’s precarious existence was ‘the wolf.’”²⁴⁶ As Lopez also states, “The wolf ... continues to generate more adamant positions and to trigger more powerful emotions than any other large predator ... Some folklore about wolves ... is so deeply entrenched that its adherents completely shut out the emerging insights of field biologists, historians, religion scholars, and other researchers in the social sciences and humanities. In their rigid stances they are impervious even to reason.”²⁴⁷

Undoubtedly, the increasingly negative portrayals of werewolves throughout history have exerted terrible influence upon man’s destructive view of real wolves, and in addition, such portrayals disrespect and dismiss the considerable annals of legends – all far deeper and more moral than the simplistic werewolf stories of today – that created the werewolf myth. In ages past, werewolves were used in various ways, such as devices to question mankind’s humanity,²⁴⁸ to tell tales of individuals so noble and chivalrous that they retain their goodness despite their transformation,²⁴⁹ to highlight the positive aspects of the animal and encourage man to reflect those aspects,²⁵⁰ and finally, to test a man’s true nature.²⁵¹ Today, as extensively covered in Chapter IV of this study, the variously helpful, protective, benevolent, chivalrous, noble

²⁴⁶ Lopez 206

²⁴⁷ Lopez 292

²⁴⁸ This concept is, arguably, the basis for almost any werewolf tale: what makes someone human? Can someone still be human, if he or she takes the guise of an animal?

²⁴⁹ Namely the assorted medieval stories, such as *Bisclavret*, which have a noble werewolf (often a knight) who retains his manners even when in werewolf form. Such tales were covered in Chapter II of this study.

²⁵⁰ As seen in many Norse stories, as covered in Chapter II of this study.

²⁵¹ The werewolf curse was bestowed upon individuals to test their humanity in various stories, including some Christian stories (as discussed in Chapter II of this study), as well as ancient tales, such as the rituals of Arcadia (as covered in Chapter I of this study).

werewolves are gone, as are those who serve to highlight interesting moral questions, offer an examination into the connection between man and beast, and explore what it is exactly to “be human.” Werewolves need not be limited to simple plot devices, e.g. mindless monsters, that only create a conflict, a jump scare in a film, or a random enemy encounter in a video game. Ignorance has led to the dismissal of werewolves as nothing more than the simplistic, contrived, and standardized monster into which Hollywood turned them for the purpose of creating horror films, rather than the fascinating conception deeply ingrained in the minds of humans, such that belief in werewolves has existed since before the dawn of recorded history. Not only is such ignorance a slight upon the innumerable, mystifying legends that seem to appear in almost every culture around the world, but such simple negativity serves only to reinforce mankind’s age-old baseless fear and hatred of wolves themselves.

Many werewolf stories throughout history have proven that, originally, werewolves were seen as representing aspects far more important than the trivial monsters to which they have been degraded today – both tales that were believed to be true, and tales that were not (such as *Bisclavret*). Werewolves today are not only created in ignorance, with a total lack of knowledge about the legends and certainly lacking in any respect for their historical and moral value, but also so simplistic that they have become nothing more than the jump-scare monster in a B-list film, a meaningless zombie plague, an unremarkable monster randomly encountered in a video game, or the “monster of the week” in a TV show. All of these portrayals have resulted in the word “werewolf” often degrading the value of a story to the point that many will dismiss it as “cheesy” and lose interest the moment they realize werewolves are involved, particularly as these stereotypical werewolf portrayals today have become increasingly predictable, exhausted, and above all, utterly meaningless. Returning werewolves to their legendary roots could dramatically

improve the richness of the stories themselves, and could also create more interest in the myths of many cultures worldwide throughout history, as well as raise interesting questions about morality, the nature of man and animal and their relationships, an exploration of atavism, and what it means to be human. More importantly, this renewal could be taken a step farther: the occasional portrayal of the outright *benevolent* werewolf – as opposed to the relentlessly negative, malicious portrayals of werewolves today – could improve not only the aforementioned aspects of the story and provide for a more interesting and thematic narrative, but it could also serve to begin the slow process of reversing society’s deeply ingrained, negative view of wolves themselves.

As an aspiring author, I am using my own fiction to explore different portrayals of werewolves, especially benevolent ones, in an attempt to pursue some of these ideas. My first self-published novel, *Wulfgard: The Prophecy of the Six, Book I – Knightfall*, is a medieval fantasy story that centers on Sir Tom Drake, a knight who discovers that he has a mysterious connection to werewolves (ancient and feared shapeshifters resulting from a curse spread by bite; they are extremely dangerous, almost impossible to kill, and thought to be nothing more than malevolent monsters) after a white werewolf stalks him in a forest. The entirety of *The Prophecy of the Six* series focuses on werewolves in this setting, called Wulfgard, in which my brother and I plan to publish many more stories. Indeed, werewolves are a centerpiece of the entire setting itself, and the core of the story involves exploring the protagonist, lycanthropy, and the various aforementioned themes, morals, and ideas regarding benevolent werewolves. In this series and other stories I plan to write, I hope personally to create more meaningful werewolf characters, and werewolf lore in itself, to prove that werewolves need not be so simplistic and malevolent.

Benevolent werewolves in entertainment media have the potential to become a very

important first step in many directions: fostering more interest in, and respect for, the ancient legends of many cultures around the world (some of which are still believed today), as opposed to treating these stories with nothing more than lack of interest or outright ignorance of their very existence; creating deeper and more interesting werewolf stories and characters in general, thus removing werewolves from their association with low-quality entertainment; raising interesting moral and existential questions; and, of course, providing portrayals of wolves and wolf-related creatures that are not destructive. Teaching society about real wolves through science and research is effective, but only in so far as it reaches those who truly need to hear it – however, entertainment is a far more all-encompassing field, and the stories told through books, movies, TV shows, video games, and more, affect people in deep and profound ways on a subconscious level, of which even the audiences themselves may not be aware. If positive portrayals of werewolves and wolves alike appeared more often (or, indeed, at all) in entertainment, thus lessening the negativity toward them through benevolent and desirable portrayals, they could become the first major steps to undoing humankind’s thousands of years misrepresenting, mistreating, and misunderstanding not only werewolf legends, but wolves themselves. They could yet turn around the overwhelming ignorance of the culturally rich werewolf legends from ages past and dismissal of werewolves in fiction due to their lack of complexity, as well as the eons of extreme hatred and fear for animals that are no more evil beings of destruction, insanity, and bloodlust than are their descendants: mankind’s precious and loyal canine pets so increasingly revered in society today.

Conclusion – Turning the Tables

Negative portrayals of werewolves and wolves continue to thrive, resulting in both ignorance of virtually countless werewolf legends that were once believed throughout the world, as well as misconceptions and stigmas forced upon wolves that exist even today. Despite the beliefs of many ancient cultures regarding neutral or benevolent werewolves, and despite the reverence with which wolves themselves were once treated by our ancestors across the world, society today has chosen to condemn the wolf to being seen as a creature of evil and destruction. Entertainment has a far more powerful influence upon an individual's beliefs than many people would like to acknowledge, on both conscious and subconscious levels, and this effect is especially seen in developing children, whose conceptions are easily formed by the stories they are told as they grow. However, children's stories are perhaps the greatest offenders when it comes to negative portrayals of wolves (and, increasingly, werewolves, with many children's novels featuring them as villains as well), and as children grow older, they find even more media in which wolves – and their counterpart, werewolves – are depicted as malevolent.

These over-abundant malevolent portrayals of werewolves and wolves directly influence society's view of the real wolves that live around the globe – or, at least, the wolves that have managed to survive the coordinated extinction efforts put forth by humans. If cultures were to abandon the stereotype that wolves (and, in the case of fantasy, their cursed, half-human counterparts) are evil by including more positive portrayals of wolves and werewolves in entertainment media, this change could be the first step in reversing the eons of unfounded hatred and fear with which humanity has regarded the wolf for far too long. Wolves exist with humans as do other living creatures – they are the ancestors of our domesticated dogs, and, like dogs, they have their own instincts and feelings, none of which are inherently “evil,” as entertainment

so often portrays. Wolves have received an unbearable amount of cruelty from humans throughout history, and their suffering has not lessened in modern times – indeed, perhaps it has actually increased, with the use of many modern and exceptionally inhumane traps. Although positive portrayals of wolves in entertainment may not directly affect the treatment of wolves today (an issue that desperately needs to be addressed), perhaps changing the image of the wolf, the werewolf, the wolfdog, and other wolf-like creatures could be the first major step toward a world in which humans show toward wolves understanding, respect, and sympathy.

As explored throughout this study, werewolves of legend were not the simplistically malevolent, standardized monsters with contrived weaknesses and bloodlust, as popular culture portrays them today. In the past, werewolves were often developed in legend and in fiction to highlight a moral in a story, to blur and to bring into question the connections between man and beast, and to convey the primality that still exists in every human – for better or for worse. Werewolves were not always seen as negative entities of evil, instead being neutral or, sometimes, even benevolent, as protectors, and as shamans, healers, powerful warriors, and noble knights. The idea of lycanthropy had layers of interesting meanings that could be investigated in far more depth, such as the previously mentioned barrier between man and animal – and primality and civilization (making werewolves a prime example of incorporating atavistic themes into a story) – that werewolves so boldly cross. As fictional creatures, werewolves are capable of bringing far more to a story than they currently do to entertainment, as is highlighted by the numerous legends that popular culture has carelessly overlooked, leading to widespread ignorance of the werewolf myth and the now virtually inescapable association of werewolves with sub-par media. The return of the benevolent werewolf in fiction carries the potential to not only bring morality, complexity, and thought-provoking themes back to stories focusing on

werewolves (which are, right now, still derided as drivel, and generally rightfully so), but also to bring attention to many fascinating legends in folklore throughout the world (many of which serve not only to tell us more about various cultures, but also serve to highlight the morals of said cultures) that are now all but forgotten, while also aiding in the slow process of reversing society's negative view of wolves. For lycanthropy, there remains much to be said and explored – for, after all, the ancient legend of the werewolf would not continue to haunt our culture today if humanity did not still hold that same, undying fear: that a wolf lives within us all.

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