

**"Wicked Artes": Human-to-Animal Transformations
in Early Modern Europe**

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Abstract

The idea of human-to-animal transformation has been around since antiquity, but is an under-examined area of research within the context early modern European witch trials. This paper will examine the trial of Peeter Stubbe and use this source as a comparison to other instances of transformations throughout Europe. Some of the issues that will be explored include the methods of triggering transformation, geographic impact on the type of transformation, and links between sexual violence within certain types of transformations. All forms of transformations will be considered, but with a focus on human-to-wolf transformations (i.e. Werewolves/Lycanthropes) due to their widespread nature. This research will examine the potential differences in belief structures and cultural thought processes in Germany and France. Primary sources on specific trials as well as scholarly work from the time will be used to analyze these beliefs.

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Introduction

In the spring of 1603 a boy in France admitted to being able to turn into a wolf at will.¹ This teenage boy reportedly told a small girl that he had become a werewolf after selling his soul to the Devil. Every time he transformed into a wolf, it was a noticeably large wolf with noticeably large teeth and claws. The boy taunted this small girl by telling her that he had killed a number of dogs in addition to two other girls. The girl immediately ran home and repeated the story to her parents. Eventually, the boy was investigated for being a werewolf. In the subsequent trial, he admitted to having been a werewolf for a few years, after he had been introduced to the Devil by a neighbor and received a wolf skin in order to transform whenever he wanted. He gave details about all of the dogs and children that he attacked while in wolf form and explained all of this was done under the instruction of the Devil, who he met in the forest. After this confession he was imprisoned for the rest of his life, narrowly escaping execution because of his youth.² The boy's name was Jean Grenier.

In Germany, only a few years earlier in 1589, another man was tried for being a werewolf. This man was an adult, but claimed to have also met the Devil as 12 year-old child. The Devil, he said, provided him with a number of supernatural abilities, including a belt that would allow him to turn into a wolf when he wore it. As a wolf he had huge paws with sharp claws. He was a very large wolf with exaggerated features. He may have even been missing a paw, which is how he was identified as a human when he was missing the corresponding hand. He was caught by the townspeople and, when threatened with torture, confessed to being the werewolf that they were seeking. He admitted to having killed a number of women and children

¹ Caroline Oates, "The Trial of the Teenage Werewolf, Bordeaux, 1603," *Criminal Justice History* 9 (1988), 1.

² Sabine Baring-Gould, *The Book of Werewolves* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2006), 85-97.

as well as having committed a number of other sins of the flesh, including adultery and incest. After this confession, the werewolf was placed on a wheel to be tortured and then beheaded as punishment for his crimes. His name was Peeter Stubbe.³

Monsters are a universal fear. Throughout time, creatures with remarkable similarity have appeared all over the world.⁴ Human-to-animal transformations are not restricted to one time period or any one geographic location.⁵ For instance, on some of the Asian islands there are a number of folktales that speak of a were-octopus.⁶ According to many anthropologists, monsters are frightening because of their existence in a state of in-between: they are hybrids that do not fall strictly into one category or another. While they are not human, the characteristics of monsters that often frighten people the most are the ones that are human—aggression and sexual violence.⁷ Monsters are not human, but nor are they strictly spiritual, and they often include some animal traits.⁸

Some studies of monsters exclude witches on the basis that they were once human and did not fully count as symbolic of internal fears.⁹ However, the hybrid nature of monsters can be expanded to include witches because witches are a combination of the human and the supernatural. This is particularly true when human-to-animal transformations are included in the

³ Anon, *A True Discourse. Declaring the Damnable Life and Death of One Stubbe Peeter*, Early English Books (At London: Printed [by R. Ward?] for Edward Venge, and are to be solds in Fleet-street at the signe of the Vine, 1590).

⁴ David D. Gilmore, *Monsters: Evil Beings, Mythical Beasts, and All Manner of Imaginary Terrors* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 1-4.

⁵ Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, "The Werewolf in Medieval Icelandic Literature," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 106, no. 3 (2007), 277.

⁶ Gilmore, *Monsters*, 3.

⁷ Gilmore, *Monsters*, 4.

⁸ Gilmore, *Monsters*, 6.

⁹ Gilmore, *Monsters*, 6.

category of witchcraft because it encompasses the idea of blending human and animal traits.¹⁰

In addition to witches being a source of fear, historians have long studied witchcraft as an attempt to gain insight into the ways that average people thought. This is true of early modern Europe due to the fact that this time period is often dominated by the history of the elite.¹¹ The overall study of witchcraft has been somewhat effective in bringing in this popular perspective. However, many authors have argued that the study of witchcraft does not go far enough in trying to explain the world of ordinary people. Some, like Robert Darnton, address this by researching something entirely different: folktales.¹² However, this research will attempt to address the issue by focusing on a subset of witchcraft—human-to-animal transformation—in order to better understand the general trends of thought in early modern Europe and to see if there are any national distinctions between France and Germany. By focusing on France and Germany, we are able to move away from the more abstract theory and delve into specific trials of, theoretically, real people.

The number of witchcraft trials increased somewhat dramatically after the year 1560. This increase is a large reason to focus on the early modern period and the cases of human-to-animal transformations since they are categorized as a type of witchcraft.¹³ Much effort has been spent trying to figure out what caused this increase in witchcraft trials. There are an abundance of theories of what societal/cultural factors could have caused this period of persecution. It is probably not due to an unusual belief in witches since witchcraft is found

¹⁰ Gilmore, *Monsters*, 6.

¹¹ Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999), xvi.

¹² Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*, xvi-xvii, 9-72.

¹³ Robin Briggs, "Dangerous Spirits: Shapeshifting, Apparitions, and Fantasy in Lorraine Witchcraft Trials," in *Werewolves, Witches, and Wandering Spirits: Traditional Belief & Folklore in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Kathryn Edwards (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2002), 59.

virtually all over the world.¹⁴ Some argue that the beliefs of the time allowed psychological terrors to grip large groups of people, and that it was these fantasies that spurred the persecution of witches.¹⁵ Others prefer to focus on a number of concrete societal factors, including drug use, as potential reasons for the popularization of witchcraft trials in early modern Europe.¹⁶ Still others focus on the Reformation and Counter-Reformation as the reason behind this increase in persecution, and the timing of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses in 1517 does seem to support this theory to a degree.¹⁷ However, most agree that it was a combination of these factors that led to a dramatic increase in the persecution of witches.¹⁸ This paper will assume a combination of factors and events led up to the witchcraft trials in order to move on to a newer realm of research. It will focus on what the transformation tell us about ordinary people in early modern Germany and France.

This paper is broken into four sections: historiography, the Peeter Stubbe pamphlet, historical background, and human-to-animal transformation themes. The historiography section is a review of the existing literature on human-to-animal transformations—most of which is about werewolves. The section on the Peeter Stubbe pamphlet provides some basic information about this document, the most substantial primary source about a specific werewolf trial. The historical background section traces the origins of werewolves in ancient Greece to the medieval occurrences of human-to-animal transformations in both continental Europe and Scandinavia.

¹⁴ Briggs, "Dangerous Spirits," 61.

¹⁵ Lyndal Roper, *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004). 9.

¹⁶ H. Sidky, *Witchcraft, Lycanthropy, Drugs, and Disease: An Anthropological Study of the European Witch-Hunts* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997).

¹⁷ Gary K. Waite, *Eradicating the Devil's Minions: Anabaptists and Witches in Reformation Europe, 1525-1600* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

¹⁸ Briggs, "Dangerous Spirits," 51.

The final substantive section presents themes within human-to-animal transformations. It includes an examination of how the transformation takes place as well as an assessment of the role of sexual violence in popular notions of the werewolf. Both of these can help us understand greater cultural trends in France and Germany.

The analysis in this paper on the different human-to-animal transformations, and Peeter Stubbe in particular, with the help of some previous scholarship on similar topics, emphasizes the possibility of being able to isolate a distinct German thought process and a distinct French thought process regarding werewolves/human-to-animal transformations. These are illustrated by the ways the two countries respond to with their human-to-animal transformation myths and trials. Regardless of how factual these accounts may or may not be, they are important for understanding how people thought and what they believed in. This can be even more important than having strictly factual information because facts mean nothing if we do not know how they would have been interpreted.

Historiography

Werewolves as a topic of historical research come in and out of fashion rather drastically; they are studied a lot for a while and then almost not at all. This may be because the focus has been on witchcraft as a whole and werewolves are generally considered to be a subcategory of witches. But there are some authors that spend time on werewolves specifically. Better known as the writer of *Onward Christian Soldiers*, Sabine Baring-Gould also wrote *The Book of Werewolves* in 1865.¹⁹ There are disputes over whether Baring-Gould brought the topic of werewolves into the mainstream, particularly since Baring-Gould was the first person to publish on the subject. Baring-Gould's writing has many issues, primarily the issue of taking everything

¹⁹ Baring-Gould, *The Book of Werewolves*, viii.

at face value and not providing very many critical explanations of the events that are described. However, despite this lack of factual information, Baring-Gould does provide a lot of insight into some specific trials—Jean Grenier—as well as insight into some of the thoughts that the people who believed that they encountered these supernatural events might have had about their circumstances.²⁰

Despite his slightly later date, this werewolf trend is thought to begin with Montague Summers in the 1930s. Summers was a relatively famous occultist/clergyman of the 1920s and 1930s. He is credited with the first English translation of the *Malleus Maleficarum* and the rediscovery of an English pamphlet that details the trial and execution of the werewolf, Peeter Stubbe (Stumpf, Stump, etc...) in Germany.²¹ Due to his deeply held personal belief in the Devil, witchcraft, and werewolves, he was a prolific writer on the occult.²² Despite being almost universally ridiculed by other historians, he is still considered by many to be the founder of the modern field of werewolf study, in spite of the fact that he was later than Baring-Gould.²³ This culminated in the 1933 work, *The Werewolf*.

Despite Summers' importance in beginning the study of werewolves—and many of the occult aspects of the Middle Ages in general—it is hard to ignore his flaws. He and Baring-Gould have many of the same flaws in their writing styles. However, it seems that it was the success of Summers' later work that propelled Baring-Gould and his work on a similar subject into its own prominence. His religious bias, as well as his desire to present these examples of werewolves and magic as factual, makes it difficult to glean useful information from his

²⁰ Baring-Gould, *The Book of Werewolves*, 85-100.

²¹ Montague Summers, *The Werewolf* (New York: University Books, 1966); Anon, *A True Discourse*.

²² Sidky, *Witchcraft, Lycanthropy, Drugs, and Disease*, 73.

²³ J. H. H., "Review: 203," *Man* 34, Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland (1934).

writings. However, he does provide some information buried within religious ramblings. Most of his first chapter is dedicated to using linguistics to help him explain the translation issues involved with werewolves. There are many words that modern readers might assume meant literal werewolves but could also mean regular wolves that people should beware of.²⁴ This section is very useful because it indicates how to avoid making similar mistakes with the primary source.

Instead of a religious focus, some authors attempted to concentrate on the fact that many of the werewolves were tried and executed for their crimes and the legal issues included in this process. This has led modern historians to focus on particular trials. Caroline Oates examines the Jean Grenier trial, in France, through a legal lens in her article “The Trial of a Teenage Werewolf, Bordeaux, 1603.”²⁵ The main reason that Oates’ article is useful to those that do not focus on legal history is the breadth of her bibliography and her detailed recounting of the trial provides good insight through another case study.²⁶

Another method of examining werewolves is through an anthropological perspective. In H. Sidky’s book *Witchcraft, Lycanthropy, Drugs and Disease: An Anthropological Study of the European Witch-Hunts*, the goal is to explain why these witch-hunts occurred in the first place.²⁷ Sidky posits an anthropological explanation for why the witch-hunts occurred by explaining how different conditions made society ripe for hysteria, although he does not specifically focus on werewolves. Sidky relies heavily on the work of historians that came before him, but he does provide some interesting analysis of werewolves by including scientific research on the drugs

²⁴ Summers, *The Werewolf*, 4.

²⁵ Oates, “The Trial of the Teenage Werewolf,” (1988).

²⁶ Oates focuses on the same Jean Grenier that Baring-Gould discusses in his book *The Book on Were-Wolves*.

²⁷ Lycanthropy is a ‘scientific’ term for werewolves. It can refer to the modern mental disease or the actual process of a human turning into a wolf; Sidky, *Witchcraft, Lycanthropy, Drugs, and Disease*, 1-22.

and diseases of the time that could have caused errant behavior.

Yet another approach to werewolves is one that is rooted a little more in the reality of wolves as animals than some of the previous methods. Joyce Salisbury discusses animal behavior and reminds the readers that humans are a type of animal in her book, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages*.²⁸ In addition to her scientific approach to studying animals, she also explains the phenomenon of werewolves—and human-to-animal shape shifting in general—in terms of humans remembering their animal nature.²⁹ Salisbury's book provides background information because it combines modern animal behavior sciences with medieval animal behavior myth.

Another book that takes a more scientific approach to werewolves as animals is *Wolves and the Wilderness in the Middle Ages* by Aleksander Pluskowski.³⁰ Pluskowski examines the prevalence of wolves in the Middle Ages, the perception of them at the time, and the ways in which they exist in the religious structures. He also dedicates an entire chapter to the discussion of “human wolves.”³¹ This section of the book is most useful to this research because it examines why the concept of a human morphing into an animal was so horrifying to the people of the Middle Ages.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are also a number of literary analysis approaches to the study of werewolves. *Metamorphoses of the Werewolf: A Literary Study from Antiquity through the Renaissance* by Leslie Sconduto, is an overview of the perceptions of werewolves throughout time.³² She does so by detailing werewolf stories from antiquity to the modern

²⁸ Joyce E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

²⁹ Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, 161.

³⁰ Aleksander Pluskowski, *Wolves and the Wilderness in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2006).

³¹ Pluskowski, *Wolves and the Wilderness in the Middle Ages*, 172-92.

³² Leslie A. Sconduto, *Metamorphoses of the Werewolf: A Literary Study from Antiquity through the*

period. However, unlike the primary sources that were mentioned earlier that explain the legal ramifications of being a werewolf, these are literary sources that are more of a window into cultural perceptions of the time rather than factual accounts. A poem or a story about a werewolf does not indicate that people actually believed in werewolves the same way that a trial does, but are useful in understanding the cultural beliefs that this paper attempts to uncover.

The book *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked: Sex, Morality, and the Evolution of a Fairy Tale*, by Catherine Orenstein also uses a literary analysis to approach the study of werewolves. She includes information on the origins of the Little Red Riding Hood story in the Middle Ages as well as the possibility that it was a werewolf in the original oral versions.³³ Orenstein also spends a chapter discussing the infamous case of Peeter Stubbe. Her reason for including this was to contrast with the relatively clean nature of even the more gruesome versions of Little Red Riding Hood. Stubbe's story is a graphic and gory series of events that make it hard to reconcile his brutality with the fairy tale version and the wolf that is defeated simply by a hunter/woodsman.³⁴ Orenstein is the only author that has openly acknowledges the potentially sexual nature of the Stubbe case, which makes her very useful to a certain group of historians.³⁵

There are other aspects of the study of werewolves that are discussed more in articles than in books. For instance, articles by Darryl Ogier and Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir discuss the outsider nature of those accused of being werewolves. They both also mention the potential

Renaissance (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2008).

³³ Catherine Orenstein, *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked: Sex, Morality, and the Evolution of a Fairy Tale* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 3-15, 68.

³⁴ Orenstein, *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked*, 91-106.

³⁵ The pamphlet on Stubbe explains in detail his incestuous relationship with his daughter as well as the murder of two pregnant women whose unborn children were ripped from their wombs.

victimization of werewolves since it could be construed as an uncontrollable transformation.³⁶

But these are the only two sources that really deal with the issue of control and accountability in the transformation of a werewolf.

Another method of approaching the topic of werewolves in the existing literature is through a gendered lens, particularly the issue of masculinity. The two books that address this topic the most thoroughly are *Man as Witch: Male Witches in Central Europe* by Rolf Schulte and *Witchcraft and Masculinity in Early Modern Europe* edited by Alison Rowlands.³⁷ Schulte's main contention is that the werewolf may have been the masculine alternative to the witch, which might explain the slightly higher prevalence of men as werewolves rather than men as witches.³⁸ Schulte makes a compelling argument because he provides a number of statistics on the case study that he is using (werewolves in Burgundy).³⁹

Witchcraft and Masculinity is an anthology that includes the article "The Werewolf, the Witch, and the Warlock: Aspects of Gender in the Early Modern Period" by Willem de Blécourt who also attempts to navigate the gender issues surrounding witchcraft and apply gender theory to the study of werewolves.⁴⁰ Ultimately, Blécourt is less effective than Schulte because he only concludes that "werewolves only constituted a tiny minority among the witches, and the handful of female werewolves are, in their turn, a tiny minority among the predominantly male

³⁶ Guðmundsdóttir, "The Werewolf in Medieval Icelandic Literature"; Darryl Ogier, "Night Revels and Werewolfery in Calvinist Guernsey," *Folklore* 109 (1998).

³⁷ Rolf Schulte, *Man as Witch: Male Witches in Central Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Alison Rowlands, *Witchcraft and Masculinities in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

³⁸ Schulte, *Man as Witch*, 9-11.

³⁹ Schulte, *Man as Witch*, 35.

⁴⁰ Willem Blécourt, "The Werewolf, the Witch, and the Warlock: Aspects of Gender in the Early Modern Period," in *Witchcraft and Masculinity in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Alison Rowlands (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 191-213.

werewolves”⁴¹ so it was not possible to draw any real meaning from his findings.

Another collection of shorter works is the book *Werewolves, Witches, and Wandering Spirits: Traditional Belief & Folklore in Early Modern Europe* edited by Kathryn A. Edwards. The two articles in the anthology that are the most useful are “Dangerous Spirits: Shapeshifting, Apparitions, and Fantasy in Lorraine” by Robin Briggs and “Such an Impure, Cruel, and Savage Beast: Images of the Werewolf in Demonological Works” by Nicole Jacques-Lefèvre.⁴² Briggs attempts to bridge the gap between belief in witchcraft and the structures in place that operate with witchcraft, like the trials. Despite the fact that Briggs claims that individuals involved in the trial were very concerned with accidentally finding an innocent person guilty, that the accusations and trials actually supported the systems that they were a part of, like the judicial system.⁴³ Jacques-Lefèvre focuses on the symbolic nature of the werewolf by illustrating why certain periods of time have more prevalent werewolf tales than others. Jacques-Lefèvre uses periods of civil war to demonstrate this by explaining that werewolves are scary due to their inherent nature of cannibalism and how a civil war is similar to this because of the violence against one’s own people.⁴⁴

This paper will attempt to prove that the Peeter Stubbe pamphlet demonstrates a distinctly German culture in both Stubbe’s crimes and in the German response to these crimes.

This will be done under the guidance of Robert Darnton’s *The Great Cat Massacre* chapter

⁴¹Blécourt, “The Werewolf, the Witch, and the Warlock,” 207.

⁴² Briggs, “Dangerous Spirits: Shapeshifting, Apparitions, and Fantasy in Lorraine Witchcraft Trials.”; Nicole Jacques-Lefèvre, “Such an Impure, Cruel, and Savage Beast: Images of the Werewolf in Demonological Works,” in *Werewolves, Witches, and Wandering Spirits: Traditional Belief & Folklore in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Kathryn Edwards (Kirkville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2002).

⁴³ Briggs, “Dangerous Spirits: Shapeshifting, Apparitions, and Fantasy in Lorraine Witchcraft Trials,” 1, 23.

⁴⁴ Jacques-Lefèvre, “Such an Impure, Cruel, and Savage Beast,” 196.

“Peasants Tell Tales: The Meaning of Mother Goose.”⁴⁵ This particular chapter focuses on what can be learned about the average French person through the fairy tales of the time. However, Darnton makes some very interesting points about what these fairy tales might say about the different European cultures. These cultural characteristics are centered around whether cunning was valued more than brute strength depending on whether someone was a part of Germany’s culture or France’s culture.

One particular werewolf trial will be used as a method of framing the concepts that will be discussed in this paper. This particular primary source—a pamphlet detailing the trial of Peeter Stubbe—will be used to address the various methods of transformation, sexual violence, and cunning versus brute strength as valuable traits.⁴⁶ Darnton’s theories can almost certainly be applied to the human-to-animal transformations—with a focus on Peeter Stubbe’s Germany.

The Peeter Stubbe Pamphlet

On October 31st in 1589, Peeter Stubbe was executed. Peeter Stubbe was accused of consorting with the Devil, murder, incest, cannibalism, and black magic (i.e., turning into a wolf). The pamphlet relating to the life, capture, trial, and execution of Peeter near Cologne in Bedburg, Germany is arguably the most important primary source in the study of human-to-animal transformation.⁴⁷ This pamphlet was published in London in 1590 and was a reprint of the original German pamphlet. The German version’s location is unknown or the original German source has been destroyed. The particulars of this pamphlet include the woodcut illustrations that add visuals to the written descriptions provided in the nineteen pages of the

⁴⁵ Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*, 9-72.

⁴⁶ Anon, *A True Discourse*.

⁴⁷ Anon, *A True Discourse*.

original source. From what information is provided on pamphlet itself, it seems that the pamphlet was brought to England by one of its signatories and translated into English almost immediately, within a year of the trial. Due to this rapid translation, it can be assumed that the versions are relatively similar since a great time lapse did not happen between the two versions.

Peeter Stubbe confessed, according to this pamphlet, to having practiced the “wicked Artes” since he was 12 years old.⁴⁸ This manifested itself primarily in his dealings with the Devil and the “girdle” or wolf hide that allowed him to turn into a wolf at will and carry out his crimes against other people.⁴⁹ Stubbe was thought to have killed at least sixteen people, many of whom were children and two of whom were pregnant women. Stubbe also reportedly raped many of the women before he killed them and there were also accusations of cannibalism after the murders. In addition to all of this, Stubbe supposedly kept many mistresses and even engaged in an incestuous relationship with his daughter. Eventually, the townspeople hunted and caught Stubbe, whom they tortured and finally executed for his crimes. Stubbe apparently confessed simply under the threat of torture, but once he was found guilty he was placed on a wheel, torture, and eventually beheaded for his crimes.

⁴⁸ Anon, *A True Discourse*.

⁴⁹ Anon, *A True Discourse*, 3.



Figure 1 Anon, *A True Discourse*, Cover page.

The woodcut drawing above is originally from the Peeter Stubbe pamphlet and was a method of illustrating what the authors were discussing in the document. The first panel (going bottom to top, left to right) illustrates Stubbe's change into the wolf and one of the people that he attacked while in that form. This panel concentrates on the transformation process. The second panel focuses on a party townspeople hunting down Stubbe while he was in wolf form. By the fourth panel there is finally a trial, where Stubbe is presumably found guilty. The fifth, sixth, and seventh panels depict the torture of Stubbe on the wheel after he is convicted. First, burning tongs were used to rip the flesh off of Stubbe and then he was beheaded. As a final punishment, and perhaps a warning to others, Stubbe's head and body are displayed on separate pikes in the town. The imagery is important because it was included with the pamphlet and it is useful to see the violence that the readers of the original pamphlet would have seen.

This pamphlet is written in a very matter-of-fact manner, indicating that the authors were convinced, not only of Peeter's guilt, but also of his transformation into a wolf. This is not a scholarly piece of writing, like many of the other primary sources from this time period; however, it must have been written by a relatively well-educated group of men.⁵⁰ The pamphlet does not address some of the arguments surrounding physical transformation that many of the intellectuals cited in this paper will, but does describe the transformation process as it was perceived, and illustrated, at the time.

The main issue with this pamphlet is whether or not there is any truth to what it says. In addition to the fact that most people want to be skeptical since it begins by addressing werewolves as fact, there is also the question of whether or not Peeter Stubbe existed in any

⁵⁰ The pamphlet is discussed as having more than one author because there are multiple signatures at the end. Obviously, we do not know for sure if they were all involved in the writing process, but it seems plausible.

state. This is called into question because there are very few surviving supporting sources other than the pamphlet.⁵¹ There are those that believe that no such trial took place and that Peeter Stubbe never existed under this name or any other.⁵² There is also the issue of the available source being the English translation. At most, it is suspicious that the original German account no longer exists, but most likely there are simply a few subtleties that are lost in the translation into English.

Despite the fact that these potential issues call the accuracy of the account into question a little, there is a fairly simple explanation of why the English version survived and the German one did not. The Peeter Stubbe trial was not the only werewolf trial in Germany in this time period, but there were no cases of werewolves in England.⁵³ Due to this difference, it is easy to suppose that the English version survived because of its exotic nature while the German version disappeared because of its lack of originality. In general, it is perfectly plausible to believe that there is some degree of veracity in the Peeter Stubbe account. There is no reasonable explanation as to why a fictional trial would be marketed as real in several different cities as the pamphlet was published in a number of different languages.⁵⁴ While it seems likely that the trial did occur in some capacity, the pamphlet provides a window into early modern cultural beliefs and this serves as the centerpiece of this thesis regardless of how strictly factual it may or may not be.

Historical Background

The first known mention of humans turning into wolves comes from Greek mythology and the story of King Lycaon. In this story, Lycaon (the root of the word lycanthropy) is turned

⁵¹ Blécourt, "The Werewolf, the Witch, and the Warlock," 196-97.

⁵² Blécourt, "The Werewolf, the Witch, and the Warlock," 197.

⁵³ Sidky, *Witchcraft, Lycanthropy, Drugs and Disease*, 222.

⁵⁴ Orenstein, *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked*, 93.

into a wolf as punishment for attempting to trick the gods.⁵⁵ This early myth demonstrates how familiar the idea of human-to-animal transformations is in most cultures, but particularly western history. There is also a tradition of human-to-animal transformations within the Scandinavian sagas and Norse mythology. In Scandinavia there were two different interpretations of the term ‘werewolf,’ one of them much older than the other. The old definition is the one that is particularly interesting since the newer definition originated in France. The old definition comes from the Viking Age and has to do with the concept of ‘berserkers.’ These were warriors who became so involved in the battle that they either began to imitate or turned into wolves. This is the root of the modern concept of ‘going berserk.’⁵⁶ This is illustrated in *The Saga of the Volsungs* when two members of the Volsung house put on wolf skins and turn into wolves.⁵⁷ While this does not directly correspond to the kind of werewolf that Peeter Stubbe was accused of being, it does—once again—illustrate the seemingly familiar nature of the idea of transforming into a wolf, or other animal.

This was the precursor to Olaus Magnus’ *Description of the Northern Peoples*, written in 1555.⁵⁸ Magnus writes about Scandinavians—whom he refers to as ‘northern people’—and discusses the superstitions that remain from the pagan days in some parts of this book. These superstitions include many about the way that the cold affects the wolf population—it gives them some supernatural power—and a description of a man drinking the blood of a bear in order to

⁵⁵ Ovid, "Metamorphoses," trans. A.S. Kline (University of Virginia) Bk 1: 199-243.

⁵⁶ Guðmundsdóttir, "The Werewolf in Medieval Icelandic Literature," 279-82.

⁵⁷ Jesse L. Byock, *The Saga of the Volsungs: the Norse Epic of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 44-47.

⁵⁸ Olaus Magnus, *Description of the Northern Peoples: Rome 1555*, ed. Peter Godfrey Foote, trans. Peter Fisher, vol. 1, (London: Hakluyt Society, 1996).

absorb the animal's strength.⁵⁹ While this later description does not relate as directly to the idea of human-to-animal transformation, it does show some consistency in thought and reemphasizes the idea of being about to take on animal characteristics, even when human.

There is also precedent for human-to-animal transformations in France and Germany. One of the most important primary sources on witchcraft in Europe, *Malleus Maleficarum*, briefly hints at the possibility of human-to-animal transformations.⁶⁰ Published in 1487 as a comprehensive guide to witchcraft and how to deal with it, this book technically predates the time period of this paper, but only marginally so the mentions of human-to-animal transformations can still be used in the analysis. There are two sections in the *Malleus Maleficarum* that are particularly useful: "The Methods By Which They [witches] Change Humans Into The Shapes Of Wild Beasts" and "Remedies For Those From Whom The Male Member Has Been Removed Through The Magical Art And For Instances When Humans Are Transformed Into Animals."⁶¹ These sections are quite brief when compared to the entire document, however they do provide evidence for the fact that it was a common enough question that the authors felt they had to defend the existence of the power to transform a human into an animal.

Not all the context for the early modern trials was historical. There is plenty of context for human-to-animal transformations in the early modern period that helps explain the Peeter Stubbe case. For instance, another one of the human-to-animal transformation cases comes from France. Jean Grenier was accused of being a werewolf around 1603 in France. He was fourteen

⁵⁹ Magnus, *Description of the Nothern Peoples*, 47, 257.

⁶⁰ Heinrich Institoris and Jakob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, trans. Christopher S. Mackay (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁶¹ Institoris, *Malleus Maleficarum*, 282-86, 384-88.

years old.⁶² Grenier was also accused of attacking, killing, and eating dogs and a few little girls in addition to simply turning into a wolf. Apparently, the flesh of small children, particularly girls, is much more appealing than dogs. It is also important to note that he had adult assistance in selling his soul to the Devil.⁶³ This case actually some similarity to the Peeter Stubbe trial, however, this one is portrayed far less gruesomely.

There were, of course, other cases of human-to-animal transformations that are somewhat less well-known. One of these cases is about a coven (group) of witches in Vernon that would turn into large cats and attack people that wandered into their space.⁶⁴ This was around the year 1566 and also provides an example of the broader belief in human-to-animal transformations, even outside of werewolves.⁶⁵ This was not the only case of human-to-feline transformations in early modern Europe. In Strasbourg, there are a few documented cases of women turning into cats on the Sabbat.⁶⁶ These cases were obviously somewhat rare, but there were probably enough of them that Peeter Stubbe seems to have been accused within a broader framework than just werewolves, but in a situation where any kind of human-to-animal transformation was thought to be possible.

However, the issues that have already been discussed are the kind that assumes the existence of human-to-animal transformation. Despite the fact that there are a number of examples where these transformations are taken as fact, there was also skepticism in early modern Europe. Two French scholars, Jean Bodin and Henri Boguet, were the clearest examples

⁶² Orenstein, *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked*, 96.

⁶³ Baring-Gould, *The Book of Werewolves*, 85-99.

⁶⁴ Jean Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1995), 123-24.

⁶⁵ Baring-Gould, *The Book of Werewolves*, 66.

⁶⁶ Henry Boguet, *An Examen of Witches* (London: J. Rodker, 1929), 141-42.

of this debate about the possibility of physical transformation into an animal. Jean Bodin was alive in France between the 1520s and 1590s and was a prolific writer of philosophy and history.⁶⁷ He was also one of the only scholars of the time who truly believed in the physical aspect of human-to-animal transformations.⁶⁸ His book is a discussion of witchcraft and the ways in which it is or is not presented.⁶⁹ Henri Boguet was a judge in the Saint-Claude, Burgundy and lived from the 1550s until around the 1620s. His book is a summary of his dealings with witches—as well as some of the older well-known cases—and how he examined their cases.⁷⁰

In *On the Demon-Mania of Witches* Bodin expressed his belief in human-to-animal transformations, by ridiculing those who attempted to attribute the belief in transformations to mental illness. He stated that “Thus it is really quite ridiculous to measure natural things against supernatural things, and the actions of animals against the actions of spirits and demons. Still more absurd is to cite illness, which would only be in the person of the Lycanthrope and not affect those who see the man change into a beast, and then return to his own shape.”⁷¹ Here, Bodin demonstrated just how strongly he disagrees with the scholars who try to dismiss human-to-animal transformation. Such an argument indicates that there was a reasonably persistent counterargument circulating at the time.

For his part, Henri Boguet, had a more nuanced idea of shape shifting. His book, *An Examen of Witches*, detailed specific cases of witchcraft that included a number of human-to-

⁶⁷ Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*.

⁶⁸ It is also important to note that many Scandinavians believed that the transformation between human and animal was strictly physical instead of a mental transformation; Pluskowski, *Wolves and the Wilderness in the Middle Ages*, 173-74.

⁶⁹ Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1997), 191-92.

⁷⁰ Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*.

⁷¹ Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, 128.

animal transformations.⁷² However, Boguet also stated that, “it has always been my opinion that Lycanthropy is an illusion, and that the metamorphosis of a man into a beast is impossible,”⁷³ but he did not reject the idea of transformation outright and presents two alternative theories. One is that “the Lycanthrope did its work in spirit only, whilst its body lay lifeless behind some bush.”⁷⁴ However, Boguet took issue with this idea as well since the Devil cannot bring people back to life. Eventually, we learn that Boguet believed in the Devil taking an active role in these instances when he wrote, “My own opinion is that Satan sometimes leaves the witch asleep behind a bush, and himself goes and performs that which the witch has a mind to do, giving himself the appearance of a wolf; but that he so confuses the witch’s imagination that he believes he has really been a wolf and has run about and killed men and beasts.”⁷⁵ Boguet believed in werewolves and witchcraft, as did Bodin, but he acknowledged some of the more fantastical elements of human-to-animal transformation and tried to explain them away.

The source that contradicts Bodin’s assertions directly is Reginald Scot’s *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*.⁷⁶ Scot lived in Britain from the 1530s to the 1590s. He was a member of Parliament who wrote this book as a part of an effort to disprove witchcraft, and represented the skeptical side of the debate. Scot was writing in response to Bodin’s *On the Demon-Mania of Witches* and took issue with Bodin’s claims about witchcraft in general, but specifically on the issue of human-to-animal transformations. The first chapter of Booke V begins with the subheading “Of transformations, ridiculous examples brought by the adversaries for the

⁷² Many of these cases he seems to have tried himself, as he was a district judge; Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*, iii.

⁷³ Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*, 143.

⁷⁴ Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*, 145.

⁷⁵ Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*, 146.

⁷⁶ Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965).

confirmation of their foolish doctrine.”⁷⁷ Thus Scot made it very clear from the beginning of the section that he does not take any of the theories on transformation seriously. He continued on to state that:

Now that I may with the verie absurdities, contained in their owne authors and even in their principall doctors and last writers, confound them that mainteine the transubstantiations of witches; I will shew you certeine proper stuffe, which *Bodin* (their cheefe champion of this age) hath gathered out of *M. Mal.* [Malleus Maleficarum] and others, whereby he laboureth to establish this impossible, incredible, and supernaturall, or rather unnaturall doctrine of transubstantiation.⁷⁸

The excerpt demonstrates how ridiculous Scot believed people like Bodin to be by the use of the words “absurdities” and “impossible.” Scot went on to illuminate inconsistencies in Bodin’s argument surrounding the creation of different monsters, further taking apart Bodin’s claims.

While this is only a small sample of scholars from the period, it is important that we keep this skeptical literature in the back of our minds while we analyze the cases that include human-to-animal transformations in order to avoid making universal claims about beliefs. So while the fact that these trials were even occurring in the first place indicates a somewhat widespread belief in human-to-animal transformations, this should not be taken as a universal belief. Nor should it be assumed that everyone believed in the same type of human-to-animal transformations, many may not have believed that it was physical but an illusionary manifestation of a pact with the Devil. This was the intellectual context in which the Stubbe trial occurred, which may or may not have been different from how the everyday people perceived

⁷⁷ Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 92.

⁷⁸ Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 92.

events. It is difficult to know how well the intellectual discussions fit into everyday belief.

Analysis of Human-to-Animal Transformation Themes

Robert Darnton's *The Great Cat Massacre* begins with an important question, "Most Europeans were illiterate before the nineteenth century. How could a historian find traces of mental activity by people who had left no written record of it?"⁷⁹ Fortunately, Darnton also provides an answer to this question. He suggests the use of *l'histoire des mentalités*, which he defines as "the history of mentalities, or the study of the mental universe of ordinary people."⁸⁰ However this by itself does not answer the question of how? By defining *l'histoire des mentalités* more broadly as cultural history, Darnton is able to use fairy and folk tales as a method of determining how the average person thought in France in the chapter "Peasants Tell Tales."⁸¹ Darnton comes to a number of conclusions but the most applicable of all of them is, "whenever a French and German tale follow the same pattern, the German veers off in the direction of the mysterious, the supernatural, and the violent, while the French steers straight for the village, where the hero can give full play to his talent for intrigue."⁸² Obviously there are aspects of this quote that do not apply directly to the concept of human-to-animal transformation but there are elements, such as the German predilection for the supernatural and the violent in their stories, that can be used to analyze the individual cases of transformation that are used in this paper.

Darnton's overall study of French culture and his comparisons to German culture make his work perfect for the examination of human-to-animal transformations located in these two

⁷⁹ Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*, xvi

⁸⁰ Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*, xvi

⁸¹ Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*, 9-72

⁸² Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*, 55.

areas. Due to the general lack of sources, this analysis is going to be focused on the Stubbe case and, to a lesser degree, the Grenier case as the French counterpart. Wherever possible, these two trial analyses will be supplemented with other instances of human-to-animal transformations. Despite the deficit in source material, the focus on Stubbe and Grenier will enable some conclusions to be drawn about human-to-animal transformation and belief in early modern Germany and France using Darnton's findings as a guideline.

One question that comes up in discussion of human-to-animal transformations is what actually provoked the physical change? There are discrepancies between modern ideas about werewolves and early modern ones. An example of this is that the early modern werewolves do not seem to have been linked to the lunar cycle in anyway, but werewolves are heavily associated with full moons today. But, if there was no connection to the lunar cycle, how did the transformation occur? The Peeter Stubbe pamphlet explains how this possibly could have happened,

The Deuill who sawe him a fit instruemet to perfourm mischeefe as a wicked feend please with the desire of wrong and destruction, gaue vnto him a girdle which being put about him, he was straight transfourmed into the likenes of a gréedy deuouring Woolf, strong and mighty, with eyes great and large, which in the night sparkeled like vnto brandes of fire, a mouth great and wide, with most sharpe and cruell teeth, A huge body, and mightye pawes: And no sooner should he put off the same girdle, but presently he should appéere in his former shape, according to the proportion of a man, as if he had neuer beene changed.⁸³

This quote emphasizes the use of the girdle, provided to Stubbe by the Devil, as the method of

⁸³ Anon, *A True Discourse*, 4.

Stubbe's transformation. But is this the standard explanation for changing forms? In this quote, girdle probably means a belt-like object; was it always a girdle or could it be anything provided by the Devil? Did the Devil have to be directly involved or can the person involved take a more active role in transformation without the Devil assistance?

One method of transformation was the use of the skin of whatever animal that a person wanted to turn into. This method of transformation was the most common among the sources analyzed for this paper. Sometimes the skin was provided to the witch by the Devil, as was described in one of Boguet's accounts: "in order to turn themselves into wolves, they first rubbed themselves with an ointment, and then Satan clothed them in a wolf's skin which completely covered them."⁸⁴ Robin Briggs provides another example of this in his article in *Werewolves, Witches, and Wandering Spirits*. Briggs also makes the distinction that it was not just werewolves that resorted to wearing the skin of their animals:

'to take the form of wolves, which they did by means of a certain grease which Houbelat applied to them and a skin like a wolfskin with big teeth which he put over them.' ...

Jacotte's husband then came in with a light and saw two 'marvelously big and hideous' cats, the one black and the other gray, which left the room with a great noise. Penthecoste duly confessed to this joint attack, explaining that Persin put a cat-skin over each of their heads as they returned from the *veillée* to disguise them.⁸⁵

This demonstrates that wolf skins could be used to turn into a wolf and cat skins to turn into a cat. Both of these examples provide a good look into the idea of transforming using an enchanted/supernatural animal skin.

⁸⁴ Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*, 150.

⁸⁵ Briggs, "Dangerous Spirits," 9, 13.

In other regions, and in earlier times, the animal skin may have had a different symbolic meaning. For instance, in Scandinavia the wolf skins (*úlfhéonar*) and warriors have been intrinsically linked together in various Norse poets and sagas. However, this was not the only example of the use of animal skins in Scandinavia. There was also a heavily spiritual aspect to the wolf skin because wolves may have been associated with the protectors of shamans (*nigouime*).⁸⁶ In this case, the animal skins—and potential subsequent transformation—held their own innate spiritual meanings. This inherent spirituality of the wolf skin provides an interesting contrast to the continental idea of werewolves where the Devil, presumably, provided the necessary transformative powers to the skin.

Another method of facilitating human-to-animal transformations was to apply some sort of magical herb or ointment. It seems that these concoctions could be used by themselves or in combination with the animal skins. In the examples from France, the quotes specifically mention an ointment or grease that assisted in the transformation. Even the event with the cats discussed the use of a grease-like substance that aided in the transformation, although it was not directly mentioned earlier the description of the transformation process.⁸⁷ Bodin also mentioned a ritual or ceremony where the Devil transformed the witches into wolves by using an ointment to facilitate the change:

The accused were Pierre Burgot and Michel Verdun, who confessed to having renounced God, and sworn to serve the Devil. And Michel Verdun took Burgot to the edge of the Châtel-Charlon, where each one had a candle of green wax which gave a dark, blue flame, and they performed the dances and sacrifices to the Devil. Then after spreading

⁸⁶ Pluskowski, *Wolves and the Wilderness in the Middle Ages*, 180-182.

⁸⁷ Briggs, "Dangerous Spirits," 12.

ointment on themselves they were turned into wolves who ran with an incredible swiftness. Then they were changed into men, and often changed back into wolves.⁸⁸

This quote establishes that some French werewolves did use an ointment to induce the transformation. It would also seem that, in this case, there was no need for the animal skins in addition to the ointment, the balm was sufficient by itself. It is also not clear if the ointment was needed for the subsequent transformations to take place or if it was just needed to begin the initial process. However, there were cases where more than one method was employed. Jean Grenier apparently used both a wolf-skin and some sort of salve in order to transform into a wolf.⁸⁹ This indicates that human-to-animal transformation was probably not an exact science.

The last method of transformation is less of a method of physical transformation and more a philosophical discussion about what occurs if transformation is impossible. Boguet placed a lot of emphasis on the idea that the Devil was actually the wolf and that he just tricked the witch into believing that s/he had transformed into an animal. In addition to this idea of the Devil impersonating a witch—in the form of an animal—there is also the concept that the witch is still guilty, even if s/he was asleep, “Notwithstanding, I maintain that for the most part it is the witch himself who runs about slaying: not that he is metamorphosed into a wolf, but that it appears to him that he is so. And this comes from the Devil confusing the four Humours of which he is composed, so that he represents whatever he will to his fantasy and imagination.”⁹⁰ In Boguet’s mind thinking you had committed a crime is more important than whether or not you actually committed said crime. Therefore, it would follow that it does not really matter if a person actually transformed into an animal. The only important part, for Boguet, was whether or

⁸⁸ Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, 123.

⁸⁹ Baring-Gould, *The Book of Werewolves*, 93-94.

⁹⁰ Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*, 146.

not it was believed that the transformation occurred.

There is another concept that is loosely related to the idea of impersonation instead of transformations. In research about fairies, some authors choose to focus on the transformative properties and that they “could become visible or invisible at will; they could shapeshift between animal and human form and they could fly, sometimes traveling vast distances at great speed.”⁹¹ It is interesting to note that this notion of fairies might also have played a part in the idea of human-to-animal transformation. This is because it could be potentially difficult to tell the difference between a fairy that is changing between human and animal form and a human that is transforming into an animal. It is this potential confusion that could place the fairies in the same impersonator category as the Devil.

Examining the different methods of transformation is important because what people believed, and to what extent they believed it, is very important to understanding how the early modern Europeans thought about belief and what traits they valued. The use of animal skins is actually very logical. If someone is wearing an entire animal pelt—particularly from a larger animal—the individual will probably look like that animal they if they are seen at any sort of distance. Herbs and ointments are also somewhat explainable in the sense that medicine, at the time, was primarily herbal. When these medicinal traits were combined with the Devil’s power there was theoretically no limit to what could happen, so physical transformation was not unreasonable. With these explanations we see early modern Europeans doing exactly what is expected, trying to find rationality for events that they did not understand.

With the different explanations of how transformation occurred in the early modern

⁹¹ Emma Wilby, *Cunning Folk and Familiar Spirits: Shamanistic Visionary Traditions in Early Modern British Witchcraft and Magic* (Brighton, England: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), 19.

period, we gain a better understanding of the fact that, while an important source, the Peeter Stubbe pamphlet does not hold all of the answers about werewolves and general human-to-animal transformations from the time period. Stubbe can give us an indication of what might have been the preference in that particular region at that particular time. However, other than that, we cannot reach too many conclusions about the overall trends. However, as Robert Darnton points out, “where the German tales maintain a tone of terror and fantasy, the French strike a note of humor and domesticity.”⁹² While Darnton may have been discussing fairy and folk tales specifically, some of his larger points evident in this quote can be easily applied to the topic of human-to-animal transformation. The idea of a belt turning a person into an animal is far more fantastical than the idea of wearing an animal skin, which at least has the benefit of creating an imposing visible change even without a supernatural element. While there is very little humor in any of these cases, it does take a stronger belief in the supernatural to make the connection between a girdle and a magical transformation into an animal. The use of the belt over the use of an animal skin is one of the differences between the Stubbe case and the Grenier case.

The other aspect of human-to-animal transformations that should be discussed is the issue of sexual violence. This is because it is an aspect of the werewolf myth that has persisted into modern popular culture and is worth examining in some of the original cases of human-to-animal transformation. In the Peeter Stubbe trial, there is an abundance of sexual violence:

In these places, I say, he would walke vp & down, and if he could spye either Maide,
Wife or childe, that his eyes liked or his hart lusted after, he would waite their issuing out
of ye Cittie or town, if he could by any meanes get them alone, he would in the feedles

⁹² Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*, 22

rauishe them, and after in his Wooluish likeness cruelly murder them: yea often it came to passe that as he walked abroad in the feeldes, if he chaunste to spye a companye of maydens playing together, or else a milking of their Kine, in his Wooluishe shape he would incontinent runne among them, and while the rest escaped by flight, he would be sure to laye holde of one, and after his filthy lust fulfilled, he would murder her presentlye.⁹³

This quote illustrates the one of the ways that Stubbe was sexually violent by describing his propensity for rape. He was also accused of incest and of ripping children out of their mothers' wombs.⁹⁴ However, it is difficult to tell from this single source if this kind of violence was associated with human-to-animal transformations, werewolves, or if Peeter Stubbe was just particularly depraved.

Jean Grenier is, once again, a good comparison because he transformed into the same animal as Stubbe. The way that Baring-Gould relays the situation surrounding Grenier is very different from the way that the pamphlet describes Stubbe. While there are elements of Grenier's story that were gruesome, much of Grenier's cruelty seemed to be from mocking a small girl about his kills.⁹⁵ In addition, while he did prefer female victims, there is no mention of any explicit sexual violence.⁹⁶

In Burgundy, there was a series of men who were accused of being werewolves.⁹⁷ One case, however, involved a werewolf who only killed livestock and did not touch humans.⁹⁸ But

⁹³ Anon, *A True Discourse*, 5-6.

⁹⁴ Anon, *A True Discourse*, 6-7.

⁹⁵ Baring-Gould, *The Book of Werewolves*, 86-89.

⁹⁶ Baring-Gould, *The Book of Werewolves*, 89.

⁹⁷ Schulte, *Man as Witch*, 8-35.

⁹⁸ Schulte, *Man as Witch*, 12.

simply because they were violent, does not translate to the same level of fiendishness that the Peeter Stubbe story does. There was no mention of any kind of sexual violence in any of these trials.⁹⁹ In all of the cases of werewolves from France that have been examined there was no mention of violence that is strictly sexual. In terms of other kinds of human-to-animal transformations, the witches/cats at Vernon were vicious and attacked a number of men but the attacks seemed to be limited to claws and there does not seem to have been any sort of sexual attack.¹⁰⁰

From this sample of sources, it seems that some of the modern preconceptions about sexually violent werewolves stem almost entirely from the Peeter Stubbe pamphlet.¹⁰¹ All of the instances of human-to-animal transformations are portrayed as violent; that is not unique to Stubbe, but this is most likely in part to do with the association with the Devil and the fact that there would not be records of trials unless someone had been caught doing something that was thought to be wrong. However, violent and sexually violent are two very different things. It is difficult to understand how sexual violence was perceived in the early modern period, but the differences in the texts seem to indicate that, much like today, sexual violence is considered to be heinous.¹⁰²

In addition to the overall perception of sexual violence, the Stubbe case can be understood in the larger context of German culture in the same way that the Grenier trial can be understood in a larger French culture. If we accept the premise that sexual violence is somehow more violent than ‘regular’ violence, Darnton’s assertion about German versus French culture is

⁹⁹ Schulte, *Man as Witch*; Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*.

¹⁰⁰ Bodin, *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, 123-24.

¹⁰¹ Orenstein, *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked*, 103.

¹⁰² Anon, *A True Discourse*, 102.

still upheld in the examination of these human-to-animal transformations. While Darnton asserts that the French prefer humor, this part does not transition as well from the folk tales to the human-to-animal transformations. However, the idea of the French and German relationship to violence is much more applicable.¹⁰³ The French villains, like Grenier, were still violent in these cases, but it seems to be markedly less so than the German ones, like Stubbe. Sexual violence can be seen as the next level of violence and is only present in the Stubbe case. If these two trials were representative of the French and German mindset, it is not that extreme to draw the conclusion that the French preferred to assign trickster qualities to their villains while the Germans saw villains as simply brutes.

Conclusion

Early modern Europe was a place of turmoil. It was during cataclysmic events, such as the nailing of the Ninety-Five Theses by Martin Luther in 1517 to a church door and the beginning of the Protestant Reformation, that all of these cases of human-to-animal transformation were occurring. It is arguable that the German people experienced these events—and the subsequent disruptions—on a more personal level than other Europeans because they were at the epicenter of it all. This whole time period could be characterized as a period of unrest in Germany.¹⁰⁴ During all of this the German population grew somewhat dramatically and there was an increase in urbanization.¹⁰⁵ But there was also an increased awareness of the trials that peasantry faced, particularly as the population increase led to a corresponding increase in

¹⁰³ Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*, 22.

¹⁰⁴ Michael Hughes, *Early Modern Germany, 1477-1806* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992). 30.

¹⁰⁵ Hughes, *Early Modern Germany*, 12.

starvation.¹⁰⁶ Some historians even believe this went as far as to create a “psychology of decline” which was exaggerated by the perception of France’s increase in power and wealth.¹⁰⁷

It was in the midst of all of these events that Germany had the highest number of executions of those accused of witchcraft, at approximately 25,000, this may have been half of the total number of those executed for witchcraft in Europe.¹⁰⁸ It is fairly easy to infer that all of this chaos that was happening in Germany around this time was part of why there was a concentration of witchcraft trials in Germany in the first place.¹⁰⁹

Robert Darnton argues that the French are more receptive to cunning as a valuable trait while the Germans preferred physical strength, “Where the French tales tend to be realistic, earthy, bawdy, and comical, the German veer off toward the supernatural, the poetic, the exotic, and the violent. Of course, cultural differences cannot be reduced to a formula—French craftiness versus German cruelty—but the comparisons make it possible to identify the particular inflection that the French gave their stories, and their way of telling stories provides clues about their way of viewing the world.”¹¹⁰ While, in this quote, Darnton warns against reducing his conclusions too far, his research can be applied to human-to-animal transformations in early modern Germany and France by describing them as a preference towards understanding villainy either as brute force and violence or as cunning and trickery. It is through analysis like Darnton’s that the high number of executions in Germany, as opposed to France, may make more sense because of a culture that may have understood their villains as strictly violent, the response could have been correspondingly violent.

¹⁰⁶ Hughes, *Early Modern Germany*, 14.

¹⁰⁷ Hughes, *Early Modern Germany*, 20.

¹⁰⁸ Roper, *Witch Craze*, 7.

¹⁰⁹ Roper, *Witch Craze*, 6-7.

¹¹⁰ Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*, 50-51.

Obviously, not all of the characteristics that Darnton describes fit neatly into the conversation about human-to-animal transformations; Darnton was analyzing folk and fairy tales rather than events that were supposedly true. However, some conclusions can be drawn from these ideas using the evidence presented. The methods of transformation do not seem to have had a strict regional divide. However, since Stubbe used the girdle and Grenier used a wolf skins, some preliminary suppositions can be made about the difference between German and French culture. This area of human-to-animal transformation does not relate to Darnton's idea of violence, but rather his idea of the preference for the supernatural or the exotic. A belt as a method of transformation requires a stronger belief in the supernatural than the use of a wolf skin.

The area where the most distinction can be drawn is in relation to the sexual violence section. Peeter Stubbe was the only case to that included that level of atrocity, which does seem to augment Darnton's assertion that Germans were preoccupied with violence. In fact, Jean Grenier spent most of his time taunting people rather than actually killing them, which also supports Darnton's assertion about France preferring intellect or cunning. However, not everyone agrees with Darnton's conclusions about France having less of a preference for violence than Germany.¹¹¹ It has even been argued that France was particularly violent during this time period and that it was actually the Germans that were the beacon of civilization and the move into the modern period.¹¹² Which, when the French Revolution occurs shortly after these cases, the violence in French society is difficult to dismiss. However, examining the sources that exist on the subject of human-to-animal transformations in France and Germany, it is clear that

¹¹¹ Stuart Carroll, *Blood and Violence in Early Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹¹² Carroll, *Blood and Violence*, 3-4.

the German cases were far more violent than the French ones. Obviously, these are specific case studies and large-scale conclusions cannot be drawn from them, but it does seem important to note that they do support the main argument that Darnton makes.

The ability to suppose even a tentative conclusion about how the average German or French citizens thought adds a fuller understanding of the early modern period in Europe. Peeter Stubbe and Jean Grenier may not have existed, or they could have existed in an entirely different manner than the records of their trials indicate. But this does not matter as much as the fact that people probably believed that they existed and that people probably believed that they were guilty of at least some of the crimes that they were accused of committing. With every analysis of individual people and events, like Stubbe and his trial, we come closer to being able to understand the lives of people in the past and we come closer to being able to distinguish the life of someone in France from the life of someone in Germany based on their culturally influenced beliefs and thought processes.

Primary Sources

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