Werewolves in the works of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers

In a 1550 reprint of his Cosmographia Sebastian Münster wrote on the belief in werewolves shared by the inhabitants of Livonia: ‘In this land there are many sorcerers and witch-women, who adhere to the erroneous belief – which they have often confessed before court – that they become wolves, roam about, and cause harm to all they encounter. Afterwards they transform back into human shape. Such people are called werewolves (waurwölffe).’ This was the first time learned westerners were informed that Livonia was a home for werewolves. The first edition of Cosmographia, which appeared in print in 1544, did not contain a section on werewolves, as Münster had no information on the topic then. The information was forwarded to him by Johannes Hasentödt, a Hessian scholar who had visited the Eastern coast of the Baltic region in 1547–1548.

In 1555 Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus, by the Swedish priest Olaus Magnus, was published in Rome; it describes the activities of werewolves in Livonia at greater length. The inhabitants of Livonia were said to suffer more due to werewolves than real wolves. Around Christmas time the werewolves gather in Prussia, Livonia and Lithuania and harm animals as well as people. They break down doors, make their way into cellars and drink up all the beer they can find there. Magnus also writes on how the shape-shifting abilities can be acquired. To become a werewolf, the werewolf-to-be has to share a mug of beer with an experienced werewolf who has to recite a certain spell while doing this. Magnus also writes about a big annual gathering of werewolves at which several thousands of werewolves come together in some ruins on the border between Lithuania and Couronia. There they compete at jumping over the wall. Those who cannot cope with this task – for instance, because they have grown too fat – are beaten with a whip by their leader. It is not only local peasants but also members of the nobility who gather there. Magnus also retells three tales of werewolves. Firstly, there is a story about a nobleman and his peasant companions staying out in the woods at night; a peasant offers to bring the company some meat, turns into a wolf, goes off and fetches a sheep. The second story is of a Livonian noblewoman who is arguing with a serf on whether a human being can turn into a wolf. The serf wants to prove this: he goes into a cellar and soon a wolf appears in the same place. Dogs attack the wolf and rip out one of its eyes. When the peasant returns to the lady on the following day, one of his eyes is missing. The third tale speaks of a Prussian duke who did not believe in witchcraft of this kind and made a man accused of lycanthropy demonstrate this, later having him burned at the stake for having so gravely trespassed the laws of God and of people.

As there were very few descriptions of the Northern regions of Europe published at the time, these two works turned out to be extraordinarily influential in Western Europe. According to the Austrian historian Stefan Donecker, during the following 150 years no writing on Livonia by learned Europeans would fail to mention the local inhabitants’ ability of animal transformation. By the middle of the seventeenth century the knowledge of Baltic werewolves was so common that they were mentioned side by side with the lynx and hare in characterizations of Livonian fauna in the travel writing of early modernity.

It is worth mentioning that it was foreign writers rather than local Baltic Germans who were particularly prone to convey sensational stories of wild werewolves and their horrible deeds. An overwhelming majority of the authors associated the ability to turn into a wolf with the native peoples in Livonia. It was with the purpose of characterising them as unknown strangers that comparisons were needed that would prove evocative for the reader. Educated Western Europeans knew about the image of the werewolf, first and foremost due to the authors of classical antiquity. It was already back then that the wolf was associated with both conceptual and bodily wildness. Christianity made the image of the wolf even more negative. Thus, the (were)wolf turned out to be a productive symbol that helped the intellectuals of early modernity visualise the representatives of the eastern Baltic region in all their barbarity and paganism. On the basis of numerous sources it is known that Estonians were rather inert when it came to converting to Christianity and they did not abandon their pre-Christian customs and habits easily. One of the reasons for the religious inertia was the great distance between the upper classes, whose language belonged to another family of languages, and the peasants, who were serfs: it was difficult for the peasants to understand the Christian doctrine, which was conveyed in a foreign language. Seen from the perspective of the upper classes the distance contributed to the exoticisation of the peasants.

Donecker portrays the connection between werewolves and war as one of the aspects explaining the reasons for Livonia becoming an El Dorado
of werewolves in early modernity. Today’s historians have established that werewolf beliefs are more widespread during wars and in generally restless times.\textsuperscript{15} As the boundary lines between the supernatural and natural worlds did not run in the same places in the minds of the people of early modernity and today, and as wolves who behaved unusually were connected with werewolves anyway at the time,\textsuperscript{16} it is not surprising that a major role in the image of the werewolf becoming established and associated with Livonia was played by the Livonian war of 1558–1583, which had the most devastating consequences. Even historians of the time recorded the dire behaviour of wolves during the war and made note of the extraordinary numbers of wolves in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.\textsuperscript{17} A military motif appearing as the leader of werewolves equipped with a whip could be found already in Olaus Magnus’ description of werewolves.

That, in the following centuries, there were great numbers of wolves (as well as bears) in Estonia and Livonia, is also confirmed by travel accounts of the time: the topographic-ethnographic writings of local pastors and calendar articles.\textsuperscript{18} It was only in the second half of the seventeenth century that landowners were made to hunt wolves and bears and their numbers began to be reduced systematically.\textsuperscript{19} It is known that, in 1827 for instance, 935 wolves were killed in the Riga Governorate, while wolves killed about 138000 domestic animals there within a year.\textsuperscript{20}

Thus, the recurrence of the werewolf motif in connection with Livonia can be considered a sociopolitical means that helped to fashion the image of the inhabitants of the periphery of Europe. Firstly, it suggested that these strangers tending towards paganism had to be educated, brought to the Christian community (from among the wolves). Secondly, the werewolf image spoke of danger: If peasants are attributed magical abilities they are presumably capable of damaging the social order, despite their status as serfs who have been excluded from political power.\textsuperscript{21} Consequently, preventive disciplinary means should be used.\textsuperscript{22}

It is difficult to determine to what degree the motifs used by the authors of early modernity, in their werewolf descriptions, originate from the oral tradition circulating in Livonia or from the authors of antiquity and the Middle Ages. What is certain is that the readers of the time highly valued references to reputable old writings. The fact that Herodotus,\textsuperscript{23} the ‘Father of History’, had written about the Neuri of Scythia was more important than a thorough explanation of how the Neurians’ ability to transform into wolves occasionally could be related to the corresponding ability of the Livonian peasants.

However, several passages from the texts, describing the Livonian werewolves of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, refer to the use of motifs from popular discourse concerning werewolves – rather than to compilations of earlier written sources.

The werewolf in the protocols of witch trials

In addition to the descriptions found in chronicles, travel writings, sermon transcripts and other writings, which describe the local conditions already mentioned above, data about the belief in werewolves in the seventeenth century can also be found in the protocols of witch trials. According to the preserved data a little more than 30 people were accused of practicing lycanthropy at witch trials that took place on the territory of contemporary Estonia. Yet, when we consider the scarce scope of the preserved material and its lacunotic nature, this is still a relatively large amount.\textsuperscript{24}

The first witch trial for which data has been preserved\textsuperscript{25} and which involves an accusation of being a werewolf, took place in Tallinn in 1615: two women (one of them a widow) were accused of practicing transformation into a wolf and killing cattle in this shape.\textsuperscript{26} A somewhat more thorough protocol comes from the witch trial that took place in Kiviloo, Harju region, in 1617, in which the accused, Alit (Alheit), confesses to having been a werewolf ten years earlier and doing great harm. She also claims that, together with two more witches, she killed two oxen, two horses and other cattle and ate them. To the question of if she knew whose animals they were, the woman answered, laughing: ‘Does a wolf ever ask who the animals belong to before it goes and kills them?’ When questions were asked about eating the animals, Alit answered that they laid the wolveskins aside before boiling the meat, and that they’d boil the meat in their own manner.\textsuperscript{27} The same protocol says that the testimony of another accused person (the wife of Arends) coincides with that of Alit in all aspects, the only difference being that the second accused claimed that she had also killed and eaten her own animals. When the third accused, Anna Wesell, was questioned about torture about the time and place of transforming into a werewolf and killing the animals, Anna answered that this had happened a week before Whitsun in the village of Jakob of Lunden that was called Pergel. They also killed two pigs in their own village. All the accused – there were three more in addition to those mentioned above – were sentenced to be burned at the stake.\textsuperscript{28}

The main pattern of the trials involving an accusation of lycanthropy on the Estonian territory in the first half of the seventeenth century is the following: at first the accused deny their guilt, but after being tested by water and/or torture admit, among other sins, to having turned into werewolves and killing cattle, after which they are burned at the stake. From mid-century on the trials did not end with the death of the accused so often.\textsuperscript{29} For instance, in 1650 a trial was held in Pühalepa on the island of Hiiumaa. Among other accusations, the plaintiff claimed that his flock of sheep had been attacked by wolves acting like werewolves. The accused denied his
I have mentioned here only those protocols of witch trials that took place in the territory of contemporary Estonia. As I do not have complete data on the trials that occurred in present-day Latvian territory, I have left these out of the discussion. All in all it can be claimed that the belief in werewolves was in full bloom in the present-day Estonian territory up to the end of the seventeenth century. This can be concluded, not only on the basis of witnesses' testimonies, but also from other court materials. Thus, in 1695 a case of a woman from Rapla, who had died as a result of a gunshot, was studied at an inquest in Nabala. A suspicion was spreading that the woman had been a werewolf and the question arose if she could be buried in the churchyard. After the corpse had been examined by the royal surgeon, the court decided that the woman was to be buried in a separate place, not in the churchyard, and the pastor had to make the incident known from the pulpit to warn people against such godless persons.36

Folk tales from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

The richest source for studying the belief in werewolves in Estonia is the texts on the topic stored at the Estonian Folklore Archives. Most have never been published and are stored in manuscript, a small number in audio and manuscript, and a tiny number only as audio files. As regards genre, the largest part of the texts could be classified as legends; in addition, there are fairy tales belonging to the Aarne Thompson type 409,37 reports of belief and some occasional memorates. The material on werewolves was recorded from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the early twenty-first.

In addition, there are legends about werewolves in printed sources, both in Estonian as well as in German translation. The first printed folk tales on the topic of werewolves can be found in a travelogue by Christian Hieronymus Justus von Schlegel (1755–1842) Reisen im mehrere russische Gouvernements in den Jahren 1801, 1807 und 1815. Fünftes Bändchen. Ausflug nach Estland im Juni 1807.38 Von Schlegel was a man of wide knowledge, who had studied at the Gymnasium in Weimar, where Johann Karl August Musäus,39 one of the first authors of literary German 'folk' tales, was among his teachers. In the years 1780–1782 von Schlegel worked in Estonia as a private tutor, and married a local Baltic German girl in 1783. As Estonian folk culture was one of von Schlegel's favourite topics, and his writings on the topic are reliable,40 it may be believed that the Estonian tales of werewolves he translated into German do derive from the mouths of the peasants.

It is remarkable that as many as three of the four legends provided by von Schlegel (all in all the travelogue contains six folk tales, two of which are fairy-tales) deal with the topic of animal transformation.41 The first is a story of how in one winter there were more wolves around in the parishes of Torma and Laiuse than usual, but they killed only people. It was said that
the wolves had come from Russia, across the ice of Lake Peipsi; they were more terrifying than ordinary wolves as they were not afraid of people. It was difficult to catch the wolves. Finally, a German hunter decided to shoot them. He loaded two guns, one with an ordinary bullet and the other with a silver one, claiming that the latter could be used to shoot the Devil himself. He went out and saw a pack of wolves, but it was not sufficiently close to him. In the end a wolf with two black spots on its breast came near him to attack him. At first he took a shot using one gun, but to no avail. He reloaded the gun and took another shot, but still to no avail. The wolf was coming closer and closer. Then the hunter took the other gun, shot it and hit the wolf. The wolf still attempted to jump at him, but fell down dead. The dead wolf was so heavy that it was impossible to move it. Thus, the hunter invited people there so that they could skin the wolf on spot. It was a great surprise when the wolf skin revealed a dead woman who had transformed herself into a wolf with the help of witchcraft (durch Teufelkünste).

The other tale was about a wild bear in Simuna parish, which would steal cattle from the cowsheds every night. In the end, a cowherd set up an iron trap to catch it, but it was useless. Subsequently, he shot a burst of shots into the bear’s body, upon which the bear released a heifer it had just stolen and disappeared, roaring. The brave cowherd followed it at a distance, unnoticed. The man saw the bear enter a cabin and listened at the door as the bear warned its children against choosing its path: now his last hour had come and he was in the hands of the Devil. The cowherd entered the house, saw a bearskin on the floor and a man upon the bed. He made the man confess that it was he who transformed into the bear with the help of the Devil. After the man’s death his name was made known to everybody and his family was put to shame. His cabin was burned and his children imprisoned. The site of the cabin is still known today.

The third tale is of a peasant who was driving through the forest when he heard voices calling up to him: ‘Take us along!’ He looked around but saw no one. In the evening he heard the voices again. Now he crossed himself, muttered a quick prayer, and went towards the sound. He reached a wooden house in which a woman was sitting with her child. ‘Why did you cross yourself?’ she asked, ‘otherwise you would have been ours.’ Her eyes were gleaming red like the eyes of a wolf and, at the same moment, the woman and the child did turn into wolves and ran off into the forest.

Von Schlegel’s folklore collection contained more folk tales than published in print. This is shown by the manuscript texts found in the collection of the Literary Society of Estonia in the Estonian Folklore Archives (EFA). I have already written on von Schlegel’s fairy-tale that contains the motif of the werewolf and was probably also recorded in 1807. It is interesting that another – but Estonian language – version of the same fairy-tale also dates back to the first quarter of the nineteenth century, although the exact date is not known. As the recording of Estonian fairy-tales on a considerable scale started as late as the 1870s, while wide-scale collection began only in the final decade of the nineteenth century, these are very early texts in the history of collecting folklore in Estonia.

Most of the werewolf legends were written down in the first half of the twentieth century, particularly from the time directly after the foundation of the EFA in 1927. The great number of texts reflects the intensity of folklore collection during this period in comparison with other periods. In addition, it is important to note that the EFA contains more material related to folk belief than any other archives of a similar type. Firstly, this is due to Jakob Hurt, the great collector of folklore who, at the end of the nineteenth century, encouraged his correspondents also to collect ‘old faith’ among other materials; and secondly, this is due to Oskar Loorits, the founder of the EFA and its first director, who considered folk belief a topic with plenty of ‘gaps’ in the archives that should be filled during field expeditions when questioning village people.

The fact that the EFA employees specifically attempted to collect material on werewolves in the years immediately following the founding of the EFA can be seen from brief (so-called belief) reports recorded in 1930–1931, of which some examples can be given here:

Werewolf – unknown (Who knows what kind of an animal it might have been)?

Werewolf – this is a wolf as well.

People made of wolf.

Werewolf, real wolf – there is no difference anyway.

The texts rather demonstrate the fieldwork methods adopted in the early times of the EFA, and say less about folk belief. However, the numerousness of short reports of this kind does not reduce the significance and reliability of the werewolf legends or even memories recorded from other people during the same period.

It is clear that, over the ages, communities and societies have consisted of people with different mental worlds. People with similar thinking (in other words, personality structures) form channels through which stories of belief move from the consciousness of one person to that of another. If the tale meets a person who is not capable of receiving it, the channel ends in an impasse, or joins another channel in case modifications arise. If, however, a particularly good narrator and a number of persons with similar mental worlds belong to the links of the channel, it can start producing numerous new branches with the help of new retellers. If a storyteller is masterful with words and evokes mental pictures in the mind’s eye of the listener, a sympathetic listener will relate the story very closely to the experiences of
his or her own life. The resources needed to make sense of the world, that arise in a listener’s consciousness, are very similar to the resources we use to understand the world through personal experience.56

This explains the why the teller of a legend suddenly switches to using the first person in the singular or plural.57 We can analyse the werewolf legend of Ann Pilberg (recorded in 1933) from this theoretical point of view (Figure 9.1). The elderly female informant of the folklorist Richard Viidalepp connected a werewolf story belonging to fairy tale type AT 409 with events from her own life: as a child she and her mother had seen a wolf come out of the woods, take off its wolf skin, put it onto a stone and, in the shape of a local woman, suckle her human baby upon another stone. She willingly showed the same stones to Viidalepp, who took pictures of these and added the photos to the werewolf tale told by Pilberg in the EFA volume.58

The conduit theory can explain the existence of very different world views side by side — for instance, the scepticism of Herodotus regarding the existence of werewolves, and the conviction of Jean Bodin, nearly 2000 years later, and of Montague Summers as much as 2400 years later, that humans indeed can turn themselves into wolves.59 In order to understand the case of the werewolf Thies applying conduit-theory and the ideas of experiential resources will not suffice60; rather, in addition to that, the ingenious old man should be approached as a bricoleur,61 who could make inventive use of experiential resources gained when living through life events and listening to tales, as well as employ his storytelling skills according to the requirements set by the occasion. In the same way Chornd Stoecklin described by Wolfgang Behringer used motifs of folk belief in order to justify his role as a magical specialist, Thies joined his narrating skills, familiar motifs of folk belief, and his reputation with the villagers as a healer in a way that allows him to be truly called ‘a virtuoso of folk culture’, to use Behringer’s terms.62

I myself have recorded the tales of a final link in a channel of werewolf legends and delivered the recordings to the EFA. Namely, in addition to several other folk tales, Ksenia Müürsepp,63 a 90-year-old woman of Seto origin, told the folklorists who visited her in 2001 the legends of ‘Merchant into a Werewolf’64 and ‘Bridal party into Werewolves’, and claimed that werewolves could be recognised by the fact that the hair below the neck was white.

A glance into the development history of Estonian werewolf legends

If Estonians adopted the werewolf concept from Germans,65 then one of the factors that made such a transfer, and the ensuing rapid spreading of the idea, possible is the fact that the image of animal transformation had been familiar in local folk belief for a long time. For instance, this is proved by an old folk song called The Song of the Fish Maiden in Estonia. The song is about a brother who goes out to fish, brings a fish home and, when starting to cut it up, discovers beads, a chaplet, a brooch, an apron or other attributes of a maiden.66 Antti Aarne, who has written a comparative study of the Finnish-Karelian and Estonian versions of the song, claims that the Estonian and Karelian versions have a common origin. The song has been included in the Finnish national epic, the Kalevala. In the Kalevala, Väinämöinen goes down to the sea and catches a fish. At the moment when he intends to cut the fish up, it jumps back into the sea and announces it is Joukahainen’s sister whom Joukahainen had promised to Väinämöinen in marriage, but who would not marry him and went to live in the sea as a fish instead.67

The motif of finding objects belonging to people under the fish’s skin is similar to the motif of finding human beings or objects belonging to humans under a wolf’s hide when skinning the wolf. The motif, that can be found in Estonian werewolf legends with different plots, can also be found in a folk tale published by von Schlegel. It only rarely appears in werewolf legends from the rest of Europe. In the few cases when a human being is found in a wolf skin in the traditions of other peoples, it is just the human

Figure 9.1 The story teller Ann Pilberg from Karlatsi (South-Estonia) in 1933, ERA, photo 192. (Reproduced with permission of the Estonian Folklore Archives, Estonian Literary Museum (Eesti Kirjandusmuuseum), Tartu)
body and not jewellery or accessories. In Estonian folklore, however, it is very common that, either pieces of jewellery (most often a brooch or beads) or an element of clothing (a silk scarf, a ribbon around the neck or the like), is found under the skin of the wolf. The plot is not always fully developed; occasionally just short belief reports can be found, such as the following:

Once a wolf who had come to the village was killed and beads were found around her neck.\(^{69}\)

Finding the objects is very often accompanied by abandoning the plan of skinning and burying the werewolf. Thus, for instance, in the 1890s Jakob Hurt recorded a tale in the Seto region of how a village near the edge of a forest was pestered by a werewolf. The werewolf would chase children and snatch at them with its teeth. It killed nobody but kept the whole village in fear. In the end the wolf was shot with a gun. When the skinning started, a large bridal brooch and beads were found under the skin. Since then no one in the village dared to kill any more wolves.\(^{70}\)

It seems that, although nineteenth-century calendars encouraged peasants to kill wolves and monetary rewards were offered for this,\(^{71}\) the peasants were not particularly eager to do this, apparently partly from fear that they could unwittingly kill a human who had transformed himself or herself into a wolf,\(^{72}\) partly because wolves were respected and it was believed that they were necessary for something. The wolf's right to its prey was recognised – it was believed that wolves have been allotted their share from each farm that they have to get. When a sheep was killed, the first vertebra from the neck was thrown into the forest to the wolf. Wolves stealing dogs from farmyards in the winter was not disapproved of, as it was believed that wolves needed to eat dog's meat before the start of the rutting season or else they would not be able to conceive.\(^{73}\) It was believed that, when wolves killed some of the cattle in the herd it was good for the herd, for it contributed to the cattle's fertility.\(^{74}\) At the same time, writers who aimed at enlightening people admonished the peasants for having too reverent attitudes towards wolves.\(^{75}\) The wolf's significance, and its special status in comparison with other animals, is testified by the Estonian language having more euphemisms for 'wolf' than for any other animal, and by the folklore connected with the wolf, which is richer than that of any other wild animal.\(^{76}\) The wolf would chase and kill evil spirits, thus rescuing humans many a time.\(^{77}\) It is possible that the positive characteristics of the wolf and the special attitude towards it are a continuation of one-time totemic ideas.

A particularly interesting detail about werewolf beliefs in Estonia is the fact that both the texts from the EFA, as well as the materials of witch trials, show that women would transform themselves into wolves somewhat more often than men. I believe that an important reason for the popularity of female werewolves was the fact that, before the Christianisation of Estonia in the thirteenth century the position of women was stronger here than in any other part of Europe.\(^{78}\) The transition into a patrilineal and patrilocal society brought along such great changes in the status of women that following the rules of the new social order would have been impossible without compensating for the status of the subjugated in genres of folklore. Stories of and beliefs about werewolves were – at least from the sixteenth century – one of the so-called safety valves that offered women a possibility to experience their selves in an alternative manner.

An example of how a tale of werewolves reached Estonia, most likely mediated by Germans, and was modified to fit the world picture of the local peasants, and meet their expectations according to the specifics of their environment, is the tale of two girls on their way to a manor.\(^{79}\) There are 35 different versions of the tale, collected in various places in Estonia stored and at the EFA. The first published version comes from J.B. Holzmayer's work Osilhana, dating from 1873.\(^{80}\) The following example comes from a manuscript that was recorded on Saaremaa, Estonia's largest island, as was Holzmayer's version:

Once two girls from Räägi village were going to the manor of Reo to do their statute labour. Their road went through the manor's paddock where the foals of the manor were pasturing. One girl said to the other: 'Look at how nice and fat the foals are!' The other took a look but did not answer anything right then; afterwards she said: 'Why are we in such a hurry; we'll come to the manor too early, let us rather lay down for a while, I so want to sleep!' The first girl agreed and they laid down to sleep. The first acted as if she had fallen asleep and was snoring rather loudly, the other stayed awake, listened for a while and, thinking that the other was asleep, stood up and went behind a bush. There she turned three somersaults and became a wolf, ran to the foals, killed the nicest and fattest of them, drank its blood and ate some of the raw meat, also storing some of it in her box. The first girl did not dare to watch any more, came away from behind the bush and laid down to sleep again. Soon the other girl came back to the first one in the shape of a wolf and listened to whether she was still asleep. The first girl acted as if she was sleeping heavily and guessed that if the other understood she was awake, she would surely kill her. The other, having understood that there was nothing to be worried about, again turned three somersaults and was a human being again. She went to the first one, woke her and they started to walk towards the manor together.

At the manor, the second girl offered the first one some meat from her box. The first one had gained courage and told her: 'I don't want your raw foal's meat, you can eat it yourself if you like it.' The other girl became angry, took a piece of the meat and threw it into the eyes of the first one, saying: 'See for yourself if it is raw!' The piece of meat, however, was so hot that the face of the first girl was burnt.\(^{81}\)
The book _Deutsche Sagen_ (1816), by the Brothers Grimm, includes a legend with a similar plot that is still relatively different from the Estonian version, the most significant differences being that the German legend has male characters and its ending lacks the motif of the meat becoming baked on its own.

The self-baking meat motif becomes less puzzling when the werewolf is treated as someone who transgresses boundaries and is capable of moving between the supernatural and natural worlds. The supernatural world (sphere) is where various resources come from and exists in a place that is difficult to access. This imperceptible sphere, which remained beyond the activities of the ordinary peasant, became more perceptible through Thies, and other talented virtuosi of folk culture, who evoked it in front of their listeners with the tales they told and performed, claiming that they were the mediators and transgressors of the boundaries on which the welfare of the ordinary world depended. The accused of several seventeenth-century Latvian witch trials claimed that their souls had visited Hell, taking the souls of dead cattle with them to be revived there. The Latvian peasant Thies also claimed, before a seventeenth century court, that the abundance of the harvest of the following year depended on his and other werewolves' visits to Hell on St. Lucy's Day.

It seems that the crossing or meeting places of the two spheres displayed a specific potential. Thus, the most often occurring way for a wolf to change back into a human in the legend type ‘Farnhand does as his master’ is to rub one’s body against the corner of the pigsty. As a rule, the pigsty used to be the building on the farmyard that was furthest away from the house, thus a place suitable for returning from the sphere of the wild. Whenever an element of the quotidian world of humans entered the wild sphere, a radical change took place there: if a wolf was given some bread in the depth of the forest, it changed back into a human being. If a rebuking human voice interrupted the main wolfish activities of a werewolf, the meat of an animal just killed suddenly became baked on its own accord. In addition to the legend of the two girls on their way to the manor, the motif also often occurs in the EFA as a separate belief record, or part of a lengthier description of a werewolf:

When a werewolf kills cattle without anyone seeing this, it must eat the meat raw; if it is seen and shooed away, the meat will bake on its own and therefore the saying goes: when a wolf is shooed away, meat is being baked for the werewolf.

As soon as the home wolf's teeth touch an animal whom it wants to kill, it said to become as if cooked and not at all raw any more.

In the last example the mere fact of the wolf killing the animal not being an ordinary one, but a human wolf connected with the quotidian sphere is sufficient for the meat to become baked. It is possible that the phrase ‘the one upon the stove’ – an old name for werewolf – is connected with the werewolf's supernatural ability to heat meat. Alt's testimony, given before a court in 1617, and Thies' testimony from 1692, according to which werewolves do not eat raw meat but bake or cook it before eating, seem to refer to the same belief complex. Both of the accused take up the topic without being asked directly about it.

**Concluding remarks**

Individuals considered capable of moving between two spheres certainly existed, even before the witch trials. A change that occurred in the sixteenth century at the latest was the idea of a werewolf, imported from abroad, that facilitated connection with the people moving between spheres with wolves. It is not known if the connection was first created by external observers, or by the local inhabitants. Either way, the concept proved to be most productive, and mutually profitable: writers would win more readers with their exotic descriptions, that may also have had socio-political aims; eloquent locals boasted of their supernatural talents, both in front of their own kind and local Germans, as well as those who had arrived from abroad.

At the same time it is interesting that Germans, on the one hand, and native local inhabitants, on the other, had widely differing conceptions of the werewolf. One of the important reasons for this is the difference in associations connected with the wolf. It is possible that the idea of the werewolf, introduced by demonologists, was easily adopted by the peoples of the eastern Baltic in the sixteenth century, specifically because it offered something positive in comparison with the entirely negative image of the witch spread by demonologists. The clever and eloquent witches who were brought to court – particularly those who were active as healers and mediators between the above-mentioned two spheres – did not have to deny all of their useful activities, but could in a way introduce the topic in their testimonies.

In the testimonies of the witch trials, and in the legends stored at the EFA, the motif of wolf transformers killing only smaller animals occurs quite often. If killing an animal would increase the fertility of the cattle it apparently made sense to kill smaller animals. No reports of people being attacked can be found in any materials of witch trials containing accusations of lycanthropy. The Estonian materials at the EFA only extremely rarely contain the motif of a werewolf killing a human being. The text introduced above about a werewolf chasing children in a Seto village (recorded by Jakob Hurt) stands out as an exception among the EFA materials. It is much more common for the werewolf to not harm people, but only domestic animals. The mild behaviour of Estonian werewolves towards people is all the more remarkable if we take into account that there are relatively many reports of...
either rabid or man-eating wolves with disturbed behaviour from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.¹⁰⁰

The above suggests that one and the same term can refer to rather different phenomena in different cultures. It can also be concluded, on the basis of the above, that folk tales and concepts adopted from other peoples can develop into fascinating modifications when travelling into new environments and finding fertile ground for growth there, becoming so rooted in tradition that they are soon accepted as something inherent to the people.

Notes

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1. The name of Livonia came into use in the beginning of the 13th century to denote ‘the new Christian colony which covered broadly the territories of modern Estonia and Latvia and was inhabited by diverse ethnic groups’ (Marek Tamms, ‘Inventing Livonia: The Name and Fame of a New Christian Colony on the Medieval Baltic Frontier’, Zeitschrift für Osteuropäische Forschung 60 (2011), 186–209, 196). The meaning of ‘Livonia’ has changed over time. In the 18th and 19th century, Livonia was the region that was located in contemporary South-Estonia and the Northern part of Latvia.


5. For instance, 44 editions of Münster’s Cosmographia appeared in all European languages during the next 100 years. Eduard Laugaste, Eesti rahvaluuteteaduse ajalugu. Valitud tekst ja pilte (Tallinn, 1963), 290; Donecker, ‘The werewolves...’, 301.


8. Donecker, ‘The werewolves...’, 299. Balthasar Russow, who is of local origin, does write about the atypical behaviour of real wolves during the Livonian war, but is silent upon the topic of werewolves, Donecker, ‘The werewolves...’, 301.


10. Aleksander Pluskowski, Wolves and the Wilderness in the Middle Ages (Woodbridge, 2006), 12, 71.


12. That the use of the wolf in the sense of the un-Christian was widespread is proved by an extract from August Lercheimer’s (= Hermann Wittekind’s) Christlich Bedenken und Erlörung von Zaubery (Heidelberg, 1585) in which he writes of his own contact with a Livonian ‘werewolf’, calling a local peasant who considers himself to be a werewolf, a madman who knows as much of God as a wolf does, 26–28.

13. A source that proves this is provided by visitation protocols, see, e.g., P. Pedakmäe, Nõukogude Taanlaevel Saaremaa, Saaremaa museum. Rahvastamastan 1997–1998 (Kuresaare, 1999), 18–25. Christian Kelch writes in his chronicle that appeared in 1695, and is significant in Estonian and Livonian historiography, that the following proverb is known among Livonian congregations: ‘I must needs pay the clergymen, but know little of God and his word’. H. Krus, Eesti ajaloos lugunik II: valitud lugenipalad Eesti ajaloos 1561–1721. a. (Tartu, 1926), 50; see also J. Käek, ‘Ristiusk, teadus ja nõiaprotssid XVII sajandil’, in: J. Kivimäe (ed.), Religiooni ja ateismi ajaloodest eesti. Artiklite kogumik, III (Tallinn, 1987), 146–171, 158–162.

14. The first translation of the entire Bible into Estonian appeared in 1739; the first translation of the New Testament into South Estonian appeared in 1686 and into Latvian in 1685. In 1582–1625 most of Latvia and South Estonia belonged under Polish and Lithuanian Roman Catholic power. Jesuit preachers would use even more Estonian and Latvian than Lutheran pastors. It is possible that it was due to the activities of the Jesuits that Lutherans, who wanted to win the peasants’ souls back to their church, that the local languages started to be used more. Rein Taaegpere, ‘Albert, Martin und Peter Too: Their Roles in Creating the Estonian National’, Journal of Baltic Studies 42 (2011), 125–141, 132.


17. See, e.g., the description of Adam Olearius of how cattle, if not shut up close to the farms, would be presently taken away by the wolves, and that one had to carry a heavy stick to ward off wolves when walking on village roads; see Archiv für Geschichte, 330. See also Tiina Vähä, ‘Kirjalikud teadet eesti liibilitudipärime kohas kuni 20. sajandi alguseeni’, Õpetattud Eesti Selti aastaraamat (2010), 242–257, 253–254.

18. Ilmar Rootsi, Tall tusa soovikustu (Tartu, 2005), 52–54.

19. Rootsi, Tall tusa soovikustu, 228.

During Early Modern times Estonia and Livonia were used to belong to the regions in Europe in which serfdom was the most advanced. Katrin Kello, *Isikliku sõltumise pühad ja tunnused* 18. sajandi Liivi- ja Eestimaal pärasthulnusese tekst või muutustest kaitslevate kohtusõostuste põhjal. Magistraatu (Tartu, 2003), 4.

Danecker, ‘The werewolves...’, 313.

Danecker, ‘The werewolves...’, 299; Jean Bodin, *Von ausgelassenen Männern* (Strassburg, 1591), 123, on the importance of authoritative texts for the writers of later times see also M. Tamm, Liivimaal leitumine..., 212–213.


Danecker completing this article I learned about a trial that took place in Reval/Tallinn in 1596 that contains accusations towards different persons being wolves and also information about a witch trial two years earlier against two peasant women who were accused of changing themselves into wolves. The trial record from 1596 is obscure and misses the end. It has been published in: Paul Johansen and Heinz von Zur Mühlen, *Deutsch und Un Deutsch im mittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Reval* (Köln, 1973), 465–469.


A similar motif can be found in the materials of the court case of Thies. See also H. von Brüningk, ‘Der Werwolf in Livland und das letzte im Wendischen Landgericht und Döpschen Hofgericht i. J. 1692 deshalb stattgehabte Strafverfahren’, *Mitteilungen aus der livländischen Geschichte*. Band 22, 3. Hett (1925), 163–220, 205.


22. Actually, there is a great regional variation in the statistics of death sentences. For instance, the provincial court in Tartu sentenced quite a few witches to be executed as late as the 1680s, and the last execution of a witch known to history and based on the decision of the Tartu provincial court occurred in 1699. Madar, *Nõiaprotessid Eestis...*, 129–130.


31. Folk tales can be defined in different ways and also the stories retold by Olaus Magnus could be considered as folk tales in a case of a different approach. I am proceeding from the aims and definitions provided by the author. Von Schlegel has six folk tales printed in his travelogue in order to show Estonian folk tales to his audience and point at the difference between the tales of different peoples. Speaking of tales of animal transformation, he himself uses the expression ‘fairy-tale-like stories’ (*märchenhaften Erzählungen*); *Reisen im mehrere russische Gouvernements in den Jahren 1803, 1807 und 1815*. Fürstes Bändchen. Ausflug nach Estland im Juni 1807 (Meningen, 1830), 179–181.

32. J. G. v. Bunge (ed.), *Archiv für die Geschichte Liv-, Esth- und Curlands*, 96, 106. Von Schlegel himself wrote the following about his teacher Musäus: ‘selten ist ein Lehrer, der in seine Fache sich seiner Pflicht so brav entledigte, als Musäus. v. Bunge (ed.), *Archiv für die Geschichte Liv-, Esth- und Curlands*, 96. Musäus is said to have been a person of very nice character. Noticeable facts about him worth mentioning in this context include his hospitality as he often received house-guests from Livonia in his Weimar house and also invited common people (children in the street, an old soldier, old women) to come and visit him, asking them to tell him folk tales (for a small fee). Johann Karl August Musäus, August von Kotzebue (ed.), *Nachgelassene Schriften* (Mannheim, 1803), 14.

33. v. Bunge (ed.), *Archiv für die Geschichte Liv-, Esth- und Curlands*, 105–106. The fact that von Schlegel published many Estonian regi songs in his travelogues also shows that he was interested in folklore and considered it important to publish authentic popular texts.

34. The verrore called ‘legend’ (Sage) developed into an independent category only after the collection *Deutsche Sagen* (1816–1818) by the Brothers Grimm.


38. The version has also appeared in print: R. Järve, M. Kaak, K. Toomeorg-Orlaan (eds), *Eesti muinasajad I. Imemuinsuajad* (Tartu, 2009), 348–351; see also the comment on the fairy-tale on p. 559.

39. According to Mihhail Hiiemae ‘the fields that Hurt had called customs and habits and beliefs...’ gained even more attention than the main kinds of folklore? at the end of the 1920s and in the 1930s. M. Hiiemae, ‘Eesti Rahvaloode Arhivili rajuolemise’, in: Tiitu Jaago (ed.) *Pärimus ja tõlgendus*. Artiklid folklorika ja etnoloogia teoreetil, meetodil ning uurimispakkul alaTiitu (Tartu, 2003), 50–60, 51. See also p. 52 and p. 54 where it is pointed out that the Finnish, Latvian and Lithuanian folklore archives contain less material on beliefs.


some bread on a knife handed to it by a man sitting by a campfire. The man who gave the wolf bread goes into town and sees his knife in a shop window, enters the shop and learns that it was the merchant who was the wolf. The merchant thanks the man and gives him a reward (e.g., allows him to have free goods from his store throughout his life). On this tale, see also Felix Oinas, ‘Kirjallinen draama ’Libahvent’ ja selle rahvaluuleline tagapõhi, Kalevipoeg kütkeis ja muud esseid rahvaluulest, mučtoologi ja kirjanotomyist’ (Toronto, 1979), 77–89, 85.

65. The idea of the image of the werewolf being borrowed from Germans was expressed already as early as in the first quarter of the nineteenth century - see Vähi, 'Kirjallikud teated...'. 258. Loorits claimed that the earliest layer in the Estonian belief in werewolves could date back to the Viking era, but he was certain that werewolf belief flourished in Estonia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Loorits has also suggested that the idea of transformation generally appears to be of secondary importance in Estonian folk belief and the only mythological being representing it in a somewhat more advanced form is the werewolf: Loorits, Grundzüge des estnischen Volksbegriffen 1, 306, 311.


70. EFA, H II 60, 721 (1) < Vastselinn < Setu – J. Sandra 1897.

71. Maaraahe Kalender 1826 aaste pailee, pärast Jesus Kristuse sünnimist (Tartu, 1826), 23.

72. In 1822 O.W. Masing retells a tale of people in Tartumaa not daring to shoot two wolves who had come to the village, taking them for a couple of werewolves; Tiina Vähi, ‘Kirjallikud teated...’, 257; at the EFA a story can be found about there having been a law in Saaremaa according to which anyone who could shoot 100 wolves would have been given a pension to the end of his life; a man had killed 99 wolves but as the last one he shot was a human wolf, he did not gain the award, EFA, Ekin 4 5, 388/9 < Kerkha kih – W. Magi, 1899.

73. The generalisations are based on nineteenth-twentieth-century materials from the EFA, Rootsi, Tuli susi soovikust, 432–434.

74. Rootsi, Tuli susi soovikust, 435.

75. C. Köker, Lonisse ramat (Tartu, 1850), 39–40.

76. Rootsi, Tuli susi soovikust (Tartu, 2005), 431.

77. Examples of this, as well as other folk tales in which the wolf is a positive character can be found in, e.g., Oskar Loorits, Endus-Eesti clauolu II. Lugejaõpiku Metsasündet ja jähõndveest. ERA Toimetused 21 (15) (Tartu, 2004 (1st ed. 1941)), 305–313 (the electronic version can be found at http://www.folklore.ee/er/pubhe/ee/eloulu/elou2/198.html).

78. This is certainly connected with the matrilinial social system that was prevailing in Estonia at the end of the first millennium and probably also at the beginning of the second millennium: M. Mägi, 'Abielu, kristandiseerimine ja akuturaatio. Perekondliku korralduse varasemast ajaossed Fests', Arhade Lõne: nais- ja meesurutingute aiañik. 1-2 (2009), 76–101. See also Merili Metsvahi, 'Estonian Werewolf

97. As regards catalogues of folk tales a description of this type can be found only in the catalogue of Livonian folk tales, Oskar Looirits, Livische Mönch- und Sagenvarianten, FFC 66 (Helsinki, 1926), no. 166. On this legend type more can be read in Merili Metsvahi, 'Neul hundiks. Libahundimusundsend Teine puhkajatest murrab looma analuus,' Arildne Lõng. Nais- ja meesuringute ajakiri 1/2 (2001), 39–51.

80. Jean Baptiste Holmzayer, Osilana. Erinnerungen aus dem heilnischen Göttercultus und die Gebräuche verschiedener Art, gesammelt unter den Insel-Eston (Tartu, 1737); see also Metsvahi, 'Estonian Werewolf Legends Collected from the Island of Saaremaa.'


82. Brüder Grimm, Deutsche Sagen, Bd. 1 (München, 1993), No 213. In other German versions of the same tale the characters are also male, mostly farmlands, see, e.g., P. Zaubert (ed.), Westfälische Sagen (Jena, 1927), 259–260.

83. According to Thies and the other accused in Latvian witch trials, Hell was located somewhere far away, in a swampy region or a swamp, across the sea or underground, von Bruiningk, 'Der Werewolf in Livland...', 204.

84. The data from witch trials that took place on the territory of today's Latvia in 1608, 1637 and 1647, K. Strauberg, 'Zur Jenseitsstoppographie,' ARV, Journal of Scandinavian Folklore 13 (1957), 56–110, 87–88. Estonian werewolf legends do not include the motifs of the souls of dead animals being revived in Hell or there being an entity between werewolves and witches.

85. von Bruiningk, 'Der Werewolf in Livland...', 205–207.

86. Amti Aarn, Estnische Mönch- und Sagenvarianten (Hamina, 1918), 131–132, no. 75.

87. See Metsvahi, 'Muundumised libahundimusundsendeis,' 120. The most widespread way of transforming into a wolf involved magic movements (first and foremost rolling about on the ground, sonsaults, cartwheels, walking around a stone, a tree or a bush – 43 of the 63 versions of the given tale include different magic movements).

88. This is the most widespread motif in Estonian werewolf legends and belief reports concerning werewolves. In his testimony, Thies claimed that when werewolves had eaten meat and were full they transformed into people again without having to use bread (my emphasis, M.M.), von Bruiningk, 'Der Werewolf in Livland..., 205.

89. Killing animals is the most typical activity of werewolves on the basis of the witch trials as well as the EFA materials.

90. EFA, H, R 2, 10 (52) < Põlva – J. Hurt, 1866.

91. EFA, H, Jõgeve 1, 312 (105) < Karima – J. Jõgever, 1888.

92. See, e.g., F. J. Wiedemann, Estnisches-Deutsches Wörterbuch (St. Petersburg, 1893), 11.

93. Von Bruiningk, 'Der Werewolf in Livland..., 205.

94. Few written sources have been preserved from earlier times. One of the few reports that has been associated with shamanism derives from the Chronicle of Novgorod (1071) and speaks of a man of Novgorod who came to the land of the Chuds (= Estonia) to receive divination from a wise man. The body of the wise man was lying rigidly, while devils were at work at it. V. E. Laugaste, Eesti rahvalauleteaduse ajalugu..., 11–14.

95. The dating is based on the quotation from S. Münster introduced at the beginning of the chapter according to which the accused admitted being guilty of lycanthropy also in sixteenth-century trials.

96. The werewolf as a character does not occur in older genres, such as the regi song.

97. Dönecker describes an interesting occurrence in an inn in Curonia in 1637 described by Christian Kortholt as an experience of an acquaintance of his. A German Travelling in Curonia went into an inn in Dublin together with local Germans. There were Latvian peasants sitting nearby and one of them came up to their table with a friendly face, raised its stein and said in the way of a toast, 'To you, sir, as it is to me'. The travelling German did not know any Latvian, yet was about to say something similar in return. The local Germans jumped up and told him to be silent. They beat up the Latvian peasant and threw him out. When the surprised traveller asked why they had treated the friendly man like this, they answered that had he blessed the peasant's drink, he would have been forced to run around as a werewolf at night, Dönecker, The werewolves..., 505; on the basis of the experience of an anonymous traveller visiting Curonia in 1719 Johann Kranold writes: '(...) many peasants liked to boast that they were werewolves, knowing that such tall tales would strike other villagers with terror and wonder', Dönecker, 'The werewolves..., 431.

98. It is worth mentioning at this point that the Estonian words for the werewolf libahunt and soend were not used as yet during the witch trials; also, a great number of different words denoting werewolves can be found in the EFA texts, which is partly explained by different Estonian dialects having different words for the concept. Very often simply hunt (Wolf) is used where there would be 'werewolf' in German or English. Von Schlegel, writing in German, only uses the word Wolf. Also Knüpper who recorded the earliest werewolf fairy-tale in Estonia in the first quarter of the nineteenth century only uses Wolfhant. Looirts has noted that in the tale type AT 409 the concept of a werewolf does not appear, but the woman is simply turned into a wolf. Looirts, Grundzüge des estnischen Volksklaubens 1, 532. Mer hant appearing instead of the concept of libahunt often occurs also in case of other plots.

99. Even today, rõõd, the Estonian word for 'witch', has more positive connotations than the English 'witch' or the German 'Hexe', bearing also the meaning of a healer.

100. Roots, Tuli susi soovikusta, 102–227.
Werewolf Histories

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List of Illustrations

1.1 A werewolf in Geneva, 1580
1.2 Loup-Garou by Maurice Sand
2.1 Lycaon, workshop of Hendrik Goltzius
3.1 The dancing warriors from Torslunda
4.1 Representations of ‘wolf warriors’ from Gutenstein and Obrigheim, Germany
4.2 The ‘wolf warrior’ from Fen Drayton, England
4.3 Masks recovered from the sunken ship in Hedeby (Haithabu) harbour
4.4 Masked dancers in late medieval manuscript marginalia
   Wolf-rider, by Ludwig Pietsch
   Wolf-rider, unknown artist, in Ulrich Moltor, Von den unholden oder hexen
5.1 Page from the inquisition Contra Petrum et Jacobum strigos ad Bastiam, 1518
6.1 Jean Bodin and Johann Fischart, Von Außgelaßne Wüütigen Teufelsheer, 1586
7.1 Henri Boguet, Discours des sorciers, 1602
7.2 The execution of Peter Stump
7.3 Trial records of Manderscheids Mettel
8.1 Schleswig and Holstein, fragment Ortelius map, 1581
8.2 The town of Werl, 1661
   Le meneur de loups by Maurice Sand, 1858
9.1 The story teller Ann Pilberg
10.1 Evald Tang Christensen
11.1 Mourning, by Ivan Generalić