

An Italian Werewolf in London: Lycanthropy and *The Duchess of Malfi*

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1. The wolf was extinct in England by the end of the fifteenth century, [1] unless we believe the testament of Edward Topsell that there were “but none at al in England, except such as are kept in the Tower of London to be seene by the Prince and people brought out of other countries” (735). The werewolf enjoyed even less of an appearance on English soil: despite growing popularity on the Continent, there were no reported cases against lycanthropes in early modern England. Why, then, out of this environment, did John Webster pen a lycanthropic character into *The Duchess of Malfi*? This article will explore the theological, philosophical, and medical backgrounds of the lycanthrope in early modern thought in an effort to reconcile Webster’s unique choice with the wider concerns of his time: the precarious boundaries between animal and human, male and female, body and soul, sanity and madness, good and evil. In doing so, we may shed some light on the reasons for Webster’s construction of the only werewolf to appear on the Jacobean stage. [2]
2. The term *lycanthropy* carried multiple meanings in the early modern mind, due to the overlap of the subject into the discourses of theology, demonology, medicine, and folklore. On the one hand, lycanthropy referred to the *reality* of the werewolf, that is, the phenomenon of metamorphosis from human form to wolf. Simultaneously, the term also referred to the *delusion* that one was capable of such transformations, whether this delusion was the result of madness, melancholy, hallucinogenic drugs, illness, or the diabolic exacerbation of any number of these causes. In our present time, these two diverging definitions are distinguished: the former, relegated entirely to the domain of fiction and folklore, as *werewolf*, and the latter located within the discourses of medicine and psychology as *lycanthropy*. However, this distinction was foreign in the early modern period, since “at this point in English linguistic history the words *werewolf* and *lycanthrope* seem to be interchangeable” (Otten 8).

Transformation, Metempsychosis, and Theology

3. Animal transformations enjoyed currency in Classical literature, such as Homer’s tale of men “bristling into swine” (237) in Book X of *The Odyssey*, or Ovid’s account of the weaver Arachne’s transmutation into a spider in Book VI of his *Metamorphoses*. In these myths the metamorphoses “usually occurred because people exhibited the characteristics of an animal to an extreme degree” and in doing so “only made manifest the bestial nature that had been within” (Salisbury 159). Related to these accounts of bodily transformation was the doctrine of metempsychosis, that is, the migration of the soul into another body after death. Metempsychosis was exemplified in the teachings of Plato and Pythagoras who maintained that such migrations included those to and from animal bodies. [3] For example, in Book X of *The Republic*, Plato’s relation of the myth of Er includes descriptions of the “the soul that had once been Orpheus choosing the life of a swan”, as well as the souls of “a swan and other singing birds choosing the life of man” (454; 620a). Pythagoras’s opinion is similar to Plato’s, as reported by Ovid in Book XV of his *Metamorphoses*:

Al things doo change. But nothing sure dooth perrish. This same spright
Dooth fleete, and fiscing heere and there dooth swiftly take his flyght
From one place too another place, and entreth euery wyght,

Remouing out of man too beast, and out of beast too man.
But yit it neuer perrisheth nor neuer perrish can.
And euen as supple wax with ease receyueth fygures straunge,
And keepes not ay one shape, ne bydes assured ay from change,
And yit continueth alwayes wax in substaunce: So I say
The soule is ay the selfsame thing it was and yit astray
It fleeteth intoo sundry shapes.
(188)

However, metempsychosis (especially into animals) was clearly at odds with the majority of Renaissance thinkers, despite their tremendous efforts to synthesize as much of the newly 'rediscovered' literature of antiquity as they could into their Christian worldview. Like Shakespeare's Malvolio, the majority of Renaissance Neoplatonists thought "nobly of the soul" and could "no way approve his opinion" (*TN*. 4.2.43); with the notable exception of Guillaume Postel and Giordano Bruno, none of these thinkers "could tolerate the notion that human souls could be imprisoned in the bodies of animals" (Ruderman 131).

4. Biblical literature endorsed transformations (into animal or pillar of salt) as a divine punishment for wickedness or disobedience. The controversial doctrine of transubstantiation recognised the miraculous transformation of bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Christ during the Eucharist. However, despite this scriptural and liturgical precedent, the Church "steadfastly refused to accept the physical reality of the werewolf", and "it became the doctrine of the Church that werewolves do not exist" (Kratz 61-2). [4] It was inconceivable that God would allow the transformation of man into wolf (and thereby replace his soul with that of an animal) because it conflicted with the doctrine of divine charity. Therefore, the theological dismissal of the reality of the werewolf was based on the distinction between illusory and actual change. This distinction was articulated by St. Augustine in Book XVIII of *The City of God*, that

These things are either false, or so extraordinary as to be with good reason disbelieved. But it is to be most firmly believed that Almighty God can do whatever He pleases, whether in punishing or favouring, and that the demons can accomplish nothing by their natural power [...] Demons, if they really do such things as these on which this discussion turns, do not create real substances, but only change the appearance of things created by the true God so as to make them seem what they are not. I cannot therefore believe that even the body, much less the mind, can really be changed into bestial forms and lineaments by any reason, art, or power of the demons. (624)

St. Augustine's position on the subject of real and illusory change was affirmed by St Thomas Aquinas and incorporated into Canon law with the *Canon Episcopi*, which denounced many popular beliefs including transformations other than those by God:

Whoever therefore believes that anything can be made, or that any creature can be changed to better or to worse or be transformed into another kind of likeness, except by the Creator Himself who made everything and through whom all things were made, is beyond doubt an infidel. [5]

The notion that God could transform a man into an animal (or allow the Devil to do so) was certainly terrifying for Medieval and early modern Christian thinkers, since it threatened not only the concept of a charitable, loving God, but also that of sin and salvation: for if a man is transformed into a beast (and thereby divorced of his rational nature), he is not responsible for any sinful act he commits, since the rational consent of the sinner is lacking. This is not the case when relinquishing one's own sense of rational control: since any indulgence in carnal desire flows from the consent to abdicate restraint, a man who chooses to live like a beast is answerable for his sins. Thus, the Christian theological rejection of the reality of the werewolf is "essentially a rejection of two frightening notions: that God or the devil can divorce a living person from the possibility of Heaven", and "that a man can commit a sinful act for which he is not responsible" (Kratz 78).

Demonology and Witchcraft

5. Whilst the Church was concerned with distancing itself doctrinally from accepting the reality of actual transformations from man into wolf, demonology picked up where theology left off, tackling the logistics of illusory change. Absorbing lycanthropy into the wider discussion of witchcraft, demonologists “agreed that shape-shifting was achieved through demonic agencies and pacts with the Devil”; however, “they disagreed among themselves over the precise mechanisms by which such a metamorphosis was accomplished” (Sidky 218).
6. Common procedures included donning magic items obtained from the Devil, such as a belt or wolf pelt, or the application of magic ointments or salves. Henri Boguet, in his *Discours des Sorciers* (Lyon, 1590), argued that these salves were used to deaden the senses and induce sleep, allowing the Devil to commit those acts “which the witch has in mind to do, giving himself the appearance of a wolf”. Upon completion of these diabolic activities, Satan “so confuses the witch’s imagination that he believes he has really been a wolf and has run about and killed men and beasts”. This also allowed Satan to afflict on the body of the witch any sympathetic wounds sustained whilst in wolf form. Boguet, however, did not excuse the witch from responsibility for these demonic acts, since “even if they were guilty in nothing but their damnable intention” those who harbour such intentions have “first renounced God and Heaven”. [6] Nicholas Rémy, who agreed with Boguet, argued that although the lycanthropic acts were carried out by demons, criminal prosecution was justified on the grounds of moral violation; that witches and werewolves are “so notoriously befouled and polluted by so many blasphemies, sorceries, prodigious lusts and flagrant crimes” that they are “justly to be subjected to every torture and put to death in the flames” (*Demonolatry* 118).
7. Alternatively, Jean Bodin maintained in *De la Demonomanie des Sorciers* (Paris, 1580) that actual transformation was “an absolutely certain, true and undoubted thing”, since so many respectable witnesses, historians, classical thinkers, doctors and philosophers firmly believed its reality; [7] whereas Johann Weyer’s *De Praestigiis Daemonum* (Basle, 1563) was attacked by Bodin for arguing that lycanthropy was the result of the demonic exacerbation of mental illness. Other Continental demonologists relied on illusions and glamour alone (Lancre), illusions and demonic substitutions (Guazzo), or demonic exacerbation of hallucinogenic unguents (Nynauld) to account for lycanthropic transformations, whilst others relied upon variations of the models set out by Boguet, Rémy, and to a much lesser extent, Bodin.
8. English demonologists were, for the most part, more sceptical than their counterparts on the Continent. Examination of the demonological tracts published in England during this period uncovers a trend from a representation of lycanthropy as a manifestation of the demonic exacerbation of illness, madness, or melancholy, to one set out in wholly medical terms. In *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London, 1584), Reginald Scot dismissed lycanthropy and actual transformations as “verie absurdities” (89), holding that “the transformations, which these witchmongers doo so rave and rage upon” is “a disease proceeding partlie from melancholie” (102), while denying outright the possibility of demonic intervention in such cases. Henry Holland, in *A Treatise Against Witchcraft* (London, 1590), considered the “transformation of men and women into wolfes and cattes” to be “clean contrarie against nature”, and the product of “Sathanicall delusions” in those who “abound in melancholy” (Ch II, F3^R).
9. Later authors would expand on this theme, suggesting that the Devil preyed on those who suffer from abundant melancholy, and were therefore more susceptible to delusions of lycanthropy: for example, in *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraftes* (London, 1593), George Gifford writes that the Devil can “make the witches in some places beleeve that they are turned into the likeness of wolves”, since he “can set a strong fantasie in the mind that is oppressed with melancholie” (K3^R). The then King James VI of Scotland wrote in his *Daemonologie* (Edinburgh, 1597) that lycanthropes, or “men-wolfes”, are the product “of a naturall super-abundance of Melancholie”, which had reportedly “made some thinke themselves Pitchers, and some horses, and some one kinde of beast or other” (61). Similarly, John Deacon and John Walker rejected the supernatural aspects of lycanthropy in favour of a medical model, in a dialogue between the lycanthrope Lycanthropus and the physician Physiologus:

You are called *Lycanthropus*: that is, a man transformed to a wolfe: which name is verie fitlie derived from the verie disease it selfe that disorders your *braine*, called *Lycanthropia*. Which word, some *Physitions* do translate *Daemonium Lupinum*, that is, a *woolvish Demoniacke*: others *Lupina melancholia*, and *Lupina insania*, that is a *woolvish melancholie*, or a *woolvish furie* and *madnes*. And it is nothing else in effect, but an *infirmities arising upon such phantasticall imaginations, as do mightily disorder and trouble the braine*. (159, emphasis original)

The trend seemed to step backward with *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, 1608), in which William Perkins, defending belief in witchcraft, returned to the argument that lycanthropy was the result of “brains possessed and distempered with melancholy”, of which the Devil exacerbated:

The devill knowing the constitutions of men, and the particular diseases whereunto they are inclindes, taks the vantage of some, and secondeth the nature of the disease by the cocurrence of his owne delusion, thereby corrupting the imagination, and working in the minde a strong perswasion, that they are become, that which in truth they are not. (24)

Other authors on witchcraft were hesitant or unable to accommodate transformations within the discourse of medicine, and so clung to the familiar territory of supernatural causation. However, it must be noted that the majority of these writings barely mention lycanthropy, or transformations in general for that matter; and on those rare occasions mention is only in passing. For example, Thomas Cooper’s *The Mystery of Witchcraft* (London, 1617) provides a voluminous examination of all aspects of witchcraft; nonetheless, Cooper’s discussion of transformations, “as a Witch into an Hare and Cat”, is completed in a paragraph – that Satan “cannot change one creature into another”, and that “this is a meere delusion of the sense” (Ch III, 55). [\[8\]](#)

10. Despite these infrequent deviations, which were more the product of neglect than intention, the trend returned to its course: the physician John Webster’s *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* (London, 1677) argued that “many persons, by reason of Melancholy in its several kinds” had been “mentally and internally (as they thought, being deprived in their imaginations) changed into Wolves”; however, “the change was only in the qualities and conditions of the mind, and not otherwise” (Ch V, 95).
11. It is significant that lycanthropy entered into the discourses of demonology and witchcraft, since it reflects the broader popular concerns with evil and *maleficia*, particularly from the middle of the sixteenth century onwards, with the increased dissemination of Continental witchcraft pamphlets, trial accounts, and other demonological literature into England. [\[9\]](#) However, English demonologists could afford to be more sceptical towards the accounts of werewolves from their neighbours on the Continent, since the chances of being attacked by a supernatural wolf, let alone a natural specimen, on English soil were negligible. The werewolf, like the wolf, was at best a theoretical threat for the English, and consequently little “benefit shal come to the knowledge of them by the English reader” (Topsell 749). No less an authority than the King himself insisted that if werewolves existed in England they were to be found solely in the deluded minds of severe melancholics (James VI, 61).

Medicine, Madness, and Melancholy

12. As we have seen, attitudes towards lycanthropy were changing by the close of the sixteenth century, and this was reflected in the approach adopted by the courts. The last major werewolf trial of the century began in 1598, with the discovery of the body of a fifteen year-old boy in Angers. A group of men stumbled upon the corpse being mutilated by a pair of wolves, which scampered into the undergrowth when the men gave chase. Following the trail of bloody paw prints, the men found a half-naked man crouching in the bushes; his teeth were chattering and his hands, described as claws with long nails, were red with blood. The man was a poverty-stricken mendicant by the name of Jacques Roulet. During the trial, Roulet testified that his lycanthropic ability was the result of a magic salve in his possession. The trial court sentenced Roulet to death, and an appeal was launched. The appellant court held that “there was more folly in the poor idiot than malice and witchcraft”, and his sentence was commuted to two years’ imprisonment in a madhouse, where he was to receive religious instruction. [\[10\]](#) Subsequent cases, such as that of the young werewolf Jean Grenier in 1603, [\[11\]](#)

affirmed the new approach by the courts, which tended to view the werewolf as “no longer the product of a fleshy, demonic transformation, but of an unstable mind” (Fudge 54).

13. It is at this point that the discourses of demonology and medicine intersect: as we have seen, English demonological opinion on the werewolf and transformations in general tended toward ascribing lycanthropy to madness and melancholy, although a minority continued to profess its traditional, supernatural origin. The opinions of the physicians of the time elicit a similar trend: moving towards a wholly medical model based on natural infirmity, whilst at the same time having to sever any lingering earlier distinctions between spiritual and natural causes. In *A Treatise of Melancholie* (London, 1586), Timothy Bright attempts to draw careful distinctions “between spiritual and physiological melancholy”, however these “repeatedly collapse”, since “both states are characterised by the same symptoms” and each predisposes the sufferer to the other (Neely 319). The publication of Edward Jorden’s *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* (London, 1603) continued the effort to distinguish the spiritual from the natural, bewitchment from insanity. Jorden argued that experienced physicians, like himself, are “best able to discern what is naturall, what not naturall, what preternaturall, and what supernaturall” (5; C^R) and so could give unique insight into the credulity of witchcraft victims during trials. Appearing simultaneously was Samuel Harsnett’s *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* (London, 1603), which attacked the (then illegal) Catholic and Puritan practices of exorcism, on the grounds that both demonic possession and exorcism were fraudulent spectacles.
14. Although witchcraft prosecutions continued in England until the end of the seventeenth century, the growing tendency “to medicalise the behaviour of witches and the bewitched” evinced by these treatises and others functioned not only to question the authority of the trials, but of the supernatural mentality that supported it; and in the areas of “bewitchment, possession, witchcraft”, and lycanthropy, the emerging medical model would provide “a psychological alternative to conditions formerly defined as supernatural in origin and treatment” (Neely 321).
15. Perhaps the representative contemporary English medical diagnosis of lycanthropy is Robert Burton’s discussion in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (London, 1621). Burton refers lycanthropy “to Madness, as most do”; although he reports that some authorities have considered it “a kind of Melancholy”. Renaissance authorities generally treat the terms melancholy and madness promiscuously, and consequently it is difficult to discern any line of distinction between them. Nonetheless, if any distinction can be made at all, it is one of degree; for Burton, this degree is one of violence:

Madnesse is therefore defined to be a vehement *Dotage*, or raving without a fever, farre more violent then *Melancholy*, full of anger and clamor, horrible lookes, actions, gestures; and troubles the Patient with farre greater vehemency both of Body and Minde, without all feare and sorrow, with such impetuous force, and boldnesse, that sometimes three or foure men cannot hold them. [12]

The testament of the later physician Robert Bayfield affirms Burton’s position in his account of lycanthropy: “Wolf-madness, is a disease”, writes Bayfield, who follows with the story of a patient of his, “a certain young man” with “a wild and strange look” who set about “barking and howling”. In the course of his inspection, Bayfield “opened a vein, and drew forth a very large quantity of blood”, which was “black like Soot”. The patient, having been provided with a potion and a vomitive to remedy his abundance of black bile, “became perfectly well” (Bayfield 49-50).

Webster’s Werewolf

16. Having duly considered the theological, demonological, and medical backgrounds up to Webster’s time, the discussion will now turn to the lycanthropic character of Ferdinand, with particular attention to the cause of his lycanthropy. The Duke’s affliction is first reported by the doctor as a “very pestilent disease” (5.2.5), which

In those that are possess’d with’t there o’erflows
Such melancholy humour, they imagine

Themselves to be transformed into wolves.
(5.2.8-10)

The doctor proceeds to inform Pescara (and the audience) that lycanthropes not only imagine themselves wolves, but also act accordingly, running about “churchyards in the dead of night” to “dig dead bodies up” (5.2.11-12). As it turns out, Ferdinand has been seen at midnight behind a church, “with the leg of a man / Upon his shoulder” (5.2.14-15) and howling. When approached during this particular incident, Ferdinand “said he was a wolf”, and that while “a wolf’s skin was hairy on the outside”, his was hairy “on the inside” (5.2.16-18). This diagnosis reveals that Ferdinand’s lycanthropy is a *natural* illness, since it is referred to as a “very pestilent disease” (5.2.5) and a “madness” (5.2.26), and it is treated as such: although he is “very well recovered” (5.2.20), there are still fears “of a relapse” (5.2.23).

17. Albert H. Tricomi has recently argued that Ferdinand’s lycanthropy is a supernatural phenomenon, that is, an episode of demonic possession. [13] However, his argument relies on the supernatural overtones of other events in the play and on a heavy-handed interpretation of the doctor’s use of the word “possess’d” (5.2.8). There is nothing in the text of the play to suggest that Ferdinand’s lycanthropy is an instance of demonic possession: in fact, the only reference to any character being “possessed with the devil” (1.1.45-46), or anything else for that matter, is the Cardinal, who is “able to possess the greatest devil and make him worse” (1.1.46-47), and in whose lips “the devil speaks in them” (1.1.186). [14] Notwithstanding, an element of the demonic undoubtedly informs the play – the dead man’s hand, the grotesque wax figures of the “murdered” Antonio and his children, the echo – but this, coupled with the literal interpretation of a term intended to be taken figuratively, is not enough for Tricomi to maintain that Ferdinand’s lycanthropy is “an inadequately understood, rare but terrible spiritual disease that possesses his whole being”. [15] On the contrary, Ferdinand’s lycanthropy is clearly treated in medical, natural terms, as are other instances of disease in the play.
18. Aside from Ferdinand’s lycanthropy, there are many cases of actual and supposed illness in *The Duchess*: Antonio diagnoses Bosola’s “court-gall” (1.1.23) as resulting from “foul melancholy”, “too immoderate sleep” and “want of action” (1.1.76-80); upon eating the apricots offered to her, the Duchess remarks that “this green fruit and my stomach are not friends” (2.1.154), and the swelling and sweating that follows are treated as an instance of stomach ache, or a possible poisoning (2.1.155-69); and, before the masque of madmen begins, the servant explains each individual’s madness in terms of emotional and occupational stress:

There’s a mad lawyer, and a secular priest,
A doctor that hath forfeited his wits
By jealousy; an astrologian
That in his works said such a day o’th’month
Should be the day of doom, and failing of’t,
Ran mad; an English tailer, craz’d i’th’brain
With the study of new fashion; a gentleman usher
Quite beside himself, with care to keep in mind
The number of his lady’s salutations,
Or ‘How do you’, she employ’d him in each morning;
A farmer too, an excellent knave in grain,
Mad ‘cause he was hinder’d transportation.
(4.2.45-56)

In each of these instances, illness is treated in wholly natural, medical terms. So too are their cures: for example, to counter the effects of the apricots Delio suggests that the Duchess “use some prepar’d antidote” (2.1.171); and Ferdinand calls for rhubarb “to purge [his] choler” (2.5.13), although he later suggests a more radical therapy:

Apply desperate physic:
We must not now use balsamum, but fire,
The smarting cupping-glass, for that’s the mean

To purge infected blood ...
(2.5.23-6)

19. Thus it is clear that Webster had “considerable physiological, pharmaceutical, and psychiatric learning” (Babb 70-1), and his presentation of lycanthropy reflects this medical knowledge. Although the doctor is unable to cure Ferdinand (a point that Tricomi may well have used in support of his argument), his failure is not an indication that “more needs [he] the divine than the physician” (*Mac.* 5.1.64); rather, it is another poignant example of Webster’s condemnation of “corrupt physicians and bogus cures” (Hunt 39), such as the Duchess’s censure that –

... physicians thus,
With their hands full of money, use to give o’er
Their patients.
(3.5.7-9)

20. Having established that Ferdinand’s illness is a natural phenomenon, we must now examine its cause. According to humoral theory, the body comprised of the four humours blood, phlegm, choler, and melancholy; and pathological conditions are the result of humoral abnormalities. These imbalances may be due to excess or deficiency of a particular humour, to improper concentration, or the presence of an unnatural form of melancholy (usually the result of *adustion*, or unnatural heat, arising from excessive hot passions). The term melancholy carried multiple meanings, encompassing the cold, dry humour itself and the various mental diseases brought on by its excess. Melancholic personalities are characteristically cold and distant, tending toward solitude, and plagued by fearfulness and sorrow. When in excess, the condition only differs from the complexion in degree, and is occasioned by exaggerated sadness and fear, hallucinations, seclusion and lethargy, aloofness, and darkness.
21. Ferdinand is clearly not of a melancholic character. Rather, he is choleric in temperament: he is passionate, intemperate, and prone to rashness and anger. He is constructed as having “a most perverse, and turbulent nature” (1.1.169); whose passionate, furious eyes “mock the eager violence of fire” (3.3.49-50). During a particularly telling scene with the Cardinal, Ferdinand becomes “so wild a tempest” (2.5.16) that he needs “to purge [his] choler” (2.5.13) with rhubarb. The Cardinal, so taken aback by this “stark mad” (2.5.66) spectacle, compares his brother’s belligerent shouting to “violent whirlwinds”, whose “intemperate noise” is likened to “deaf men’s shrill discourse / Who talk aloud, thinking all other men / To have their imperfection” (2.5.51-53).
22. Whether Ferdinand’s intense fascination with his sister is the manifestation of latent incestuous desires or otherwise,[\[16\]](#) the result is the same: he is “deform’d so beastly” by his “intemperate anger” (2.5.57-58). His intemperate anger, as a hot passion, heats the choler in his system which “becommeth blacke [...] dries up and burnes” (Mornay 160), fostering the creation of *adust* melancholy. It is the presence, and excess, of this unnatural form of melancholy that manifests itself in Ferdinand’s lycanthropy. Alternatively, as Burton suggests, lycanthropy may be the result of madness, which differs from melancholy only in its degree of violence; as it stands, there is not enough evidence from the text to distinguish with any degree of certainty whether Webster’s werewolf is the product of the one or the other.
23. Out of all of the pathological conditions in the catalogue of Renaissance medical lore, why was lycanthropy Webster’s disease of choice? Why would Webster choose a malady that was so alien to his English audience that he need outline its symptoms, in detail, onstage? Ferdinand’s lycanthropy was unquestionably an intentional addition to *The Duchess of Malfi*, since there is no mention of it in Webster’s source for the plot, William Painter’s *Palace of Pleasure* (London, 1567). Scholarship has established Simon Goulart’s *Admirable and Memorable Histories* as the source for Webster’s werewolf, in particular his report of a man

in the yeare 1541 who thought himselfe to bee a Wolfe, setting vpon diuers men in the fields, and slew some. In the end being with great difficultie taken, hee did constantlye affirme that hee was a Wolfe, and that there was no other difference, but that Wolues were commonlie hayrie without, and hee was betwixt the skinne and the flesh. Some (too barbarous and cruell Wolues in effect) desiring to trie the truth thereof, gaue him manie

wounds vpon the armes and legges: but knowing their owne error, and the innocencie of the poore melancholic man, they committed him to the Surgions to cure, in whose hands hee dyed within fewe days after. (387)

The resemblance between the doctor's description of Ferdinand's lycanthropy and Goulart's passage "is so striking as to settle the question of Webster's source immediately" (Boklund 32). However, Goulart's report on werewolves hardly satisfies the question of *why* Webster incorporated lycanthropy into his play, and for this we must look elsewhere.

24. It has recently been argued that Henri Boguet's *Discours des Sorciers* is a "pertinent source" for the werewolf as well as the dead man's hand in *The Duchess*; however this argument is not convincing, since there is no evidence to suggest that Webster read Boguet in the original (as no English translation was available) and, at any rate, the werewolf tale reported by Boguet is barely analogous to the play. [17] If any Continental werewolf text informs the audience's reception of Webster's play, it is the translated *Stubbe Peeter* pamphlet of 1590, which reports

the damnable life and death of one Stubbe Peeter, a most wicked Sorcerer, who in the likeness of a Woolfe, committed many murders, continuing this diuelish practise 25 yeeres, killing and deuouring Men, Women, and Children. (Title page)

Although Webster would have clearly enjoyed reading such a provocative pamphlet, it does not appear to be a source for his play since the only similarities between it and *The Duchess* are that both involve a werewolf and incestuous desires. [18] Even so, the incest motif in Webster's play remains debatable, and differs from *Stubbe Peeter* in that Ferdinand's alleged desires are directed towards his sister (as opposed to his sister and daughter) and are nonetheless, to our knowledge, never fulfilled. Whatever his sources may be, Webster's motivation must surely have rested upon the consequences, dramatic and moral, of constructing a villain afflicted with lycanthropy.

25. While he is a werewolf, is Ferdinand still morally responsible for his actions? In terms of theology, the responsibility for sinful acts rests upon the rational consent to commit the sin, and there is surely adequate evidence in the final act of the play to contend that Ferdinand lacks this ability. But if Ferdinand is not a werewolf for the entire play, when does the Duke *actually* become a werewolf? Certainly his rational ability (and therefore moral culpability) is not lacking in the earlier parts of the play. If we accept that the masque of madmen (4.2.60-112) is a projection of Ferdinand's own degenerative mental state, then it may be argued that he was "distracted of [his] wits" (4.2.279) during the Duchess's murder, as he attests. Bosola later reflects that Ferdinand is "much distracted" (4.2.336) at this time. As further evidence of his impending affliction, Ferdinand frequently mentions wolves, calling the Duchess's children "cubs" (4.1.33) whose "death [as] young wolves is never to be pitied" (4.2.57), foreshadowing his own bestial demise. We can suppose with some certainty that Ferdinand is known to be "sick" upon his arrival in Milan (5.1.56-59).
26. If we concede that moral culpability requires rational consent, and that by his arrival in Milan Ferdinand is known to be "sick" (5.1.56-59) and suffering from lycanthropy, it follows that he is not morally responsible for the deaths of Bosola and the Cardinal. On the other hand, Ferdinand's complicity in the death of his sister's children and the Duchess herself is less obvious: although his illness is clearly beginning to take hold, Ferdinand still has the presence of mind to act in a calculated fashion, as he does in the chilling episode with the dead man's hand (4.1.28-55).
27. Indeed, lycanthropy poses important questions of moral responsibility, but other mental infirmities would have had the same effect. Even if Ferdinand's affliction is the result of demonic possession or divine punishment, this is accompanied by a moral ambiguity in respect of his subsequent actions. Webster then must have chosen lycanthropy on other criteria. Any effort to identify these criteria surely must rest upon one essential question: what is it about the werewolf that sets it apart from all other conditions?
28. The significance of the werewolf is that it is a border creature. By virtue of its precarious position between the human and bestial, the werewolf "constantly threatens the ontological status of being human" (Jacques-Lefèvre 195), and as such engages in a range of anxieties about identity. The

lycanthrope blurs the lines between man and beast – a distinction that was under increased scrutiny during the early modern period – and begs the question, are we indeed *that* far removed from the animal? The possession of a human body itself was no longer sufficient to distance the human from the animal, since

Theology taught that human form was no guarantee of humanity when angels or devils might take that shape; when, under certain circumstances – as in the case of children, the mad, the colonised other – creatures that appeared human might also be understood to be closely associated with the animal.[\[19\]](#)

29. If, then, the only intrinsic difference between man and beast is our capacity for reason, is our humanity forfeit upon our loss of that capacity? It is on this basis alone that animals, unlike man, are not capable of sin. The werewolf therefore threatens the identity of being human and the precarious boundary between man and beast, as well as undermining the theological framework of sin and salvation; since the werewolf, as an animal (or non-human), is excluded from divine judgment and the possibility of salvation that stems forthwith.
30. While there are descriptions of individuals believed to have “transformed into animals such as birds, gerbils, rabbits, and pussy cats”, there are, to my knowledge, “no reports of injury or death inflicted by vicious thumping or pecking”. Accounts of lycanthropy, however, usually include the “most gruesome acts of murder, mutilation, and cannibalism” (Franzini 64). The werewolf is not only dangerous because it is capable of committing such depraved acts, but because it is a *hidden* threat: unlike the wolf, which is “hairy on the outside” and clearly identifiable, the werewolf is hairy “on the inside” (5.2.16-18). Identifying evil within early modern society was particularly problematic for this reason, and was not limited to werewolves alone. In 1612, while Webster was writing *The Duchess*, ten of the nineteen accused witches were sentenced to death at the assizes in Lancashire. [\[20\]](#) Witches, werewolves and secret Jews all threatened a Christian society concerned with identifying and purging a perceived evil that was essentially no different in appearance from itself. Cannibalism was one method of establishing otherness in early modern representations of all three groups. This anxiety about the hidden Other, the ever-present cannibalistic enemies within the society it threatened, stemmed from a “growing fear for the disintegration and loss of Christian community and identity” (Zika 101), of which the figure of the werewolf is but one articulation.
31. Webster’s werewolf also engages in contemporary anxieties about sexual identity, as Ferdinand’s lycanthropy not only threatens his humanity, but his masculinity as well. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, female sexuality is essentially aggressive, thus interrogating the traditional boundaries between male and female: the Duchess initiates the controversial relationship with Antonio; and Julia is at once Castruchio’s wife, mistress to the Cardinal and the initiator (at pistol-point no less) of the short-lived affair between her and Bosola. Male sexuality, for the most part, is passive or only asserted defensively. Although the Duchess laments that she is “forc’d to woo, because none dare woo [her]” (1.1.442) Antonio recognises her usurpation of his role, since “these words should be mine” (1.1.472). Similarly, Julia usurps Bosola’s role in initiating the relationship between them, and is apparently frustrated by his failure to do so, ordering “put yourself to the charge of courting me / Whereas now I woo you” (5.2.183-84). Further, Bosola feels he has to distance himself from the feminine act of crying, resolved that his tears are “manly sorrow” and “never grew / In [his] mother’s milk” (4.2.361-63). The Cardinal appears to be the only assertive masculine figure, although he too seems under Julia’s control, with her “tongue about his heart” (5.2.222). Ferdinand, on the other hand, is incapacitated sexually by his melancholy, and seems only to engage his “poniard” (1.1.331) vicariously through his sister. Thus melancholy is figured as “a disruption in the symbolic order”, a social contagion. Whereas lycanthropy disrupts the corporal order, melancholy disturbs the “functional order of the body” and its representation, which “profoundly unsettles” the “recognisable difference between male and female subjects” (Enterline 91). While the boundary between masculine and feminine is already blurred by the aggressiveness of female sexuality in the play, Webster’s representation of masculine sexuality, whittled away by melancholy, further interrogates these distinctions.
32. Melancholy is not the only vehicle through which the traditional boundaries between male and female are examined. The opposition between Ferdinand and the Duchess further highlights the contested site

of masculinity: she is the “excellent hyena” (2.5.39) set against his lycanthropic wolf. Topsell reports that, since Pliny, the hyena was thought to be a hermaphrodite, where both male and female “have under their tails a double note or passage”: in the male “there is a scissure like the secrets of a female” and “in the female a bunch like the stones of the male” (435). In constructing oppositions of wolf and hyena, male and hermaphrodite, Webster frames an anxious masculine identity whose ontological status is severely undermined, since it can only be defined in terms of opposition from its other; that is, how different is the male when the female is described as possessing “a bunch like the stones of the male”? [21] It seems that Ferdinand’s lycanthropy figures not only the precarious boundary between man and beast, but man and woman.

33. The werewolf is, among other things, a site of contention over civility and wildness, and “lycanthropy (like any other cultural form) may be seen as having a political dimension”. Lycanthropy was used as a literary motif expressing un-Englishness: Milton and Marvell, in charging their “Protestant opponents with lycanthropy” imply that “Salmasius and [Samuel] Parker are types of the deeply perverse, darkly superstitious, un-English intellect”, further “guilty of intellectual, if not theological, Catholicism” (Edwards). Webster’s characterisation of Ferdinand clearly has similar motivations – that by presenting an Italian character as a werewolf, Webster endorses the popular association between Italians and depravity. For Webster’s audience, Italy was perceived as a site of political intrigue, economic power, decadence, and moral decay:

Italy represented a nation among whose famous identity effects were Popery, atheism, sodomy, murder and poison, deceit, “practice”, erotic obsession and sexual promiscuity, and a preternatural propensity for revenge, any and all of which were available for the playwrights’ use in plot devices that both shocked and titillated. (Bovilsky 627)

Even the mythical city-state of Venice was tainted by its Italianate excesses: [22] for example, in *The Merchant of Venice* Shakespeare depicts Venice as a mercantile state whose economic openness, the very reason for its financial success, literally threatens the lives of its (Christian) citizens. Jonson’s vision of Italy in *Volpone* is one of such moral decay that men of wealth and power use their position only for decadence and deceit, whilst others disinherit their sons and sacrifice their wives in the pursuit of monetary gain. Amidst these contemporaneous examples, Webster’s corrupt and unbridled Machiavellian – a Duke whose depravity is literally inhuman – is hardly out of place.

34. Coupled with these attitudes towards foreigners, Jacobean audiences were also suspicious of Catholics, who were perceived as a threat to both nation and religion. Webster’s presentation of a lecherous, murdering Cardinal is hardly unexpected, since it belongs to a tradition of anti-Catholic rhetoric and *ad hominem* attacks that already spanned a century since the Reformation. The fox and the wolf also appear as emblematic figures in this tradition, such as in Spenser’s *Shepherd’s Calendar* (London, 1579), where Spenser uses “the fox to indicate a member of the Church of England who harboured secret Romish beliefs” and the wolf to represent “a committed and outwardly-professed member of the Catholic Church”. [23] Similarly, the “grim wolf with privy paw” (128) in Milton’s *Lycidas* is a reference to Catholic proselytising in England. The wolf is also emblematic of the Jesuits, whose ‘popish plots’ and conspiracies (both perceived and real) constantly threatened the English state and faith, since the coat of arms of its founder Ignatius Loyola includes two grey wolves about an argent cauldron and sable chain. [24] The drama of the age also relied on these allusions, as Alison Brunning has recently argued in the case of Jonson’s *Volpone*. Is it not then plausible that Ferdinand, as a werewolf and corrupted member of the court, is simply another manifestation of this traditional fear of Catholic deception and pollution of the state? For a Jacobean audience, the werewolf and the Catholic were similar beasts: both were essentially ‘wolves dressed as men’, otherwise indistinguishable from the rest of society but still a threat to church and state, and both as depraved, bloody, and ruthless as each other.

35. The figure of the wolf in early modern England is not only emblematic of Catholics, but often a topical allusion to the Irish as well. For instance, it has been argued that Rosalind’s description in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* of the interplay between the would-be lovers as “like the howling of Irish wolves against the moon” (5.3.92-3) is “possibly a reference to Hugh O’Neill’s rebellion” against Queen Elizabeth, “since Elizabeth was invariably associated with the moon” (Hadfield 48). According to medieval authorities, the Irish shared a special relationship to wolves. Gerald of Wales recalls a tale

of an Irish werewolf in his *Topographia Hibernica* (1187), reflecting his anxiety about “human-animal hybrids that result from human-animal sex, a practice he thinks ‘barbarous’ and particularly Irish” (Bynum 1000). Later chroniclers like William Camden reported that the Irish praised the moon and maintained a brotherhood with wolves, who would not attack them; [25] and that the Irish are prone to yearly transformations into wolves (which he deems a fable, or otherwise a melancholic delusion). [26] Spenser confirms these representations of the Irish in *A View of the State of Ireland*, concluding that “the Irish are descended from the Scythians”, since both are wild and bloody pagans who are “once a yeare turned into wolves” (63-4). Aside from literary representations, the relationship between wolves and the Irish was perpetuated iconographically, as Richard McCabe has recently noted:

The relevant paradigm was established in 1553 with the publication of *The Vocacyon of Johan Bale to the Bishoprick of Ossorie in Ireland*. The woodcut on the title page displays two contrasting figures, ‘The English Christian’ and ‘The Irish Papist’. The one is meek and civil, like the sheep that shelters by his legs, the other violent and savage, like the wolf that accompanies him. (*Spenser’s Monstrous Regiment*, 106)

Thus the emblem of the wolf cemented iconographically the danger of the bloody Papist, whether this threat was from over the waters on the Continent, over the border in Ireland, or hidden away in secret on English soil. Webster was certainly aware of this popular conception of the Irish when he penned his earlier play, *The White Devil*, which is rife with derogatory references to the “wild Irish” (4.1.137), and their “howling” at funerals (4.2.96-7). Although *The Duchess* lacks direct references to Ireland and the Irish, it is not implausible to suppose that Webster and his audiences may have noted the similarities between the Italian werewolf Ferdinand and the howling, wild Irish closer to home.

36. In the same way that Jacobean audiences perceived Italians or the Irish (or any Catholic foreigners) as a threat to notions of Englishness, the spectacle of the werewolf presents a challenge to notions of acceptable, civilised behaviour. Ferdinand’s lycanthropy is symptomatic of the political turmoil – “the corruption of the times” (1.1.14) – that occupies the court: it is both “specifically a mania generated by the court” and an “index of its moral crisis” (Wiseman 61). Consider Ferdinand’s behaviour at the beginning of the play:

FERDINAND. How do you like my Spanish jennet?
RODERIGO. He is all fire.
FERDINAND. I am of Pliny’s opinion, I think he was begot by the
wind; he runs as if he were ballasted with quicksilver.
SILVIO. True, my lord, he reels from the tilt often.
RODERIGO, GRISOLAN. Ha, ha, ha!
FERDINAND. Why do you laugh? Methinks you that are courtiers
should be my touch-wood, take fire, when I give fire;
that is, laugh when I laugh...
(1.1.116-24)

37. Upon entering the stage, Ferdinand is established as “the great Calabrian duke” (1.1.87), and the description is fitting. Ferdinand immediately dominates the scene and its participants: cutting Castruchio off mid-sentence (1.1.115); making bawdy jokes and *doubles entendres* (for example, “drawn their weapons, and were ready to go to it”, 1.1.113); and, as we have seen, asserting control over the actions of his courtiers, even their laughter (1.1.121).
38. Although Ferdinand begins as towering figure in the opening scenes, by the final act he is reduced to a cowering, confused madman attacking his own shadow:

FERDINAND. Leave me.
MALATESTA. Why doth your lordship love this solitariness?
FERDINAND. Eagles commonly fly alone: they are crows, daws, and
starlings that flock together:—look, what’s that follows
me?
MALATESE. Nothing, my lord.
FERDINAND. Yes :—

MALATESTES. 'Tis your shadow.
 FERDINAND. Stay it, let it not haunt me.
 MALATESTES. Impossible: if you move, and the sun shine :-
 FERDINAND. I will throttle it. [Throws himself down on his shadow.]
 MALATESTES. O, my lord: you are angry with nothing.
 FERDINAND. You are a fool: how is't possible I should catch my
 shadow unless I fall upon't?
 (5.2.28-41)

39. We have witnessed the transformation of an assertive, socially dominating stage presence, to a solitary, paranoid, cowering spectacle – what has happened between the opening scenes of the play and the final act to bring about such a radical change in character? Ferdinand's steady decline into madness parallels the mounting intrigue and eroding justice of the court, as both stray further away from their ideal, civilised forms. Thus, Ferdinand's lycanthropy represents not only the degeneration of the individual from the human, but also the deterioration of the society from the civil.
40. What is the essential cause of this degeneration? Perhaps it is as Alfred North Whitehead has suggested, that evil "promotes its own elimination by destruction, or delegation" (95), since it is by its very nature unstable. Whitehead's analysis seems pertinent to *The Duchess*, since both Ferdinand and the society in which he resides are clearly diminished by their involvement with evil – whether in the guise of intemperate anger, incestuous desires, cruelty, or corruption and injustice – each is degenerated from the human to the bestial, and the civil to the chaotic.

Man is Wolf to Man

41. As we have seen, the werewolf is a loaded figure, since it "inherits all of the attitudes underlying the real wolf" as well as "the tradition which metaphorically situates the relations between man and animal in terms of individual or social morality" (Jacques-Lefèvre 195). The wolf had been employed as an emblem of Catholic deception and savagery by poets and pamphleteers alike, as well as symbolically encapsulating the perceived wild and uncivil nature of the rebellious Irish. Similarly, medieval chronicles noted the propensity of the Irish to turn into wolves, and contemporary pamphlets and trial transcripts told of the havoc wreaked by lycanthropes on the Continent. Whilst authorities on the Continent turned to witchcraft and the supernatural to explain these accounts of butchery, the English (for the most part) cultivated a growing scepticism that looked to medicine and natural causes to understand such episodes.
42. Webster was no doubt aware of this when he penned Ferdinand's lycanthropy into *The Duchess of Malfi*. Webster was familiar with and critical of the medical practices of his age, and his scepticism is reflected in his treatment of doctors in his plays. Webster was certainly also aware of the cultural stereotypes and suspicions surrounding Italians and the Irish, and he was not above employing these in his drama: *The Duchess of Malfi* can boast some of the best characterisations of Italianate depravity and Catholic savagery on the Jacobean stage.
43. Against this background of ideas and preconceptions, it is hard to accept Tricomi's suggestion that Ferdinand's lycanthropy is simply a case of demonic possession. This is simply inconsistent with Webster's construction of the play as primarily a medical universe with eschatological overtones, rather than vice versa. The evidence is there in Webster's treatment of illness throughout the play as natural phenomena. There is no reason to extrapolate from the doctor's use of the term "possess'd" (5.2.8) an entire world of demonic possession and intervention. This is not to say that Webster's world is one completely free of supernatural intervention – since the graveyard echo clearly has ghostly connotations – but Ferdinand's lycanthropy is not one of them. The horror in *The Duchess of Malfi* comes, for the most part, from the knowledge that *real* people are capable of committing depraved acts; that intemperate anger and Machiavellian ambition can push a man past the limits of civility, and perhaps even past the border of the human.

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[1] The lack of wolves in England by this time has been attributed to intense hunting campaigns sponsored by the state and increased deforestation. An Elizabethan account of such a campaign is from Johannes Caius, in his *Of Englishe Dogges* (London, 1576):

Our shepherdes dogge is not huge, vaste, and bigge, but of an indifferent stature and growth, because it hath not to deale with the bloudthyrsty wolf, sythence there be none in England, which happy and fortunate benefite is to be ascribed to the puisaunt Prince *Edgar*, who to thintent ye the whole cuntry myght be euacuated and quite clered from wolves, charged & commaunded the welsheme (who were pestered with these butcherly beastes aboute measure) to paye him yearely tribute which was (note the wisdome of the King) three hundred Wolves. Some there be which write that *Ludwall* Prince of Wales paide yeerly to King *Edgar* three hundred wolves in the name of an exaction (as we have sayd before.) And that by the meanes hereof, within the compasse and tearme of foure yeares none of those noysome, and pestilent Beastes were left in the coastes of England and Wales. This *Edgar* wore the Crown royall, and bare the Scepter imperiall of this kingdome, about the yeare of our Lorde, nyne hundred fifty, nyne. Synce which time we reede that no Wolfe hath bene seene in England, bred within the bounds and borders of this cuntry, mary there haue bene divers brought ouer from beyonde the seas, for greedynesse of gaine and to make money, for gasing and gaping, staring, and standing to see them, being a straunge beast, rare, and seldom seene in England. (23-24)

Presumably this is the “tribute of wolves paid in England” (4.1.72) that Webster refers to in *The White Devil*.

[2] That is, the only *genuine* werewolf character, since a *staged* werewolf (in the sense that both the audience and the players onstage are aware that it is merely a theatrical device) appears as part of the ‘Masque of Melancholy’ in John Ford’s *The Lover’s Melancholy* (London, 1629), 66. Similarly, Shakespeare portrays characters with “wolfish” desires (*MV*. 4.128-38) or “wolvish visage[s]” (*Lr*. 1.4.263), but these figurative descriptions are not developed to suggest lycanthropy.

[3] For a more detailed discussion of Plato and Pythagoras on this subject, see: Herbert Strainge Long, *A Study of the Doctrine of Metempsychosis in Greece from Pythagoras to Plato* (Baltimore: Furst, 1948).

[4] For a more detailed discussion of the theological debates surrounding bodily transformations and the Eucharist, see: Caroline Walker Bynum, “Metamorphosis, or Gerald and the Werewolf.” *Speculum* 73 (1998): 987-1013.

[5] Reported in Henry C. Lea, *Materials Toward a History of Witchcraft*, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1939) 180.

[6] Reported in Otten, 84, 90.

[7] Taken from Scott’s translation of Boguet, published as *On the Demon-Mania of Witches*, trans. Randy A. Scott (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1995) 127.

[8] Another example is John Cotta, *The Triall of Witchcraft* (London, 1616), which discusses the “seeming transmutations by the Divell of the substances of Men into Cattes, and the like” only as part of a much larger effort to establish that the Devil cannot act contrary to Nature, and therefore “cannot make a true transmutation of the substance of any one creature into another” (Ch VI, 34).

[9] Imported or translated literature relating Continental accounts of werewolves included: *A True Discourse Declaring the Damnable Life and Death of One Stubbe Peeter* trans. George Bores (London, 1590); Richard Verstegan, *A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence* (Antwerp, 1605) 236-7; and Simon Goulart, *Admirable and Memorable Histories of Our Time* trans. Edward Grimeston (London, 1607) 386-92.

[10] The Roulet case is reported in Sabine Baring-Gould, *The Book of Were-Wolves* (London: Smith, 1865) 69-84. The judgment of the appeal appears at 84.

[11] As reported in Baring-Gould 85-98. In Grenier's case, the court determined that he was incapable of rational thought, stating that "the change of shape existed only in the disorganized brain of the insane, consequently it was not a crime which could be punished" (98), and so sentenced Grenier to spend the rest of his life in a monastery.

[12] Robert Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy* (London, 1621), Part 1, Sec 1, Mem 1, Sub 4, 12-13 (emphasis original).

[13] Albert H. Tricomi, "Historicizing the Imagery of the Demonic in *The Duchess of Malfi*." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34.2 (2004): 345-72; and Albert H. Tricomi, "The Severed Hand in Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*." *SEL: Studies in English Literature* 44.2 (2004): 347-58. Although Tricomi tries to distance himself from Gunby's analysis of the play, both critics argue that Ferdinand's lycanthropy is a case of demonic possession: see David C. Gunby, "*The Duchess of Malfi*: A Theological Approach." *John Webster*, ed. Brian Morris, Mermaid Critical Commentaries (London: Benn, 1970), 179-204. Wiseman argues that Ferdinand is not possessed, although "the play's language toys with this possibility": Susan J. Wiseman, "Hairy on the Inside: Metamorphosis and Civility in English Werewolf Texts." *Renaissance Beasts: Of Animals, Humans, and Other Wonderful Creatures*, ed. Erica Fudge (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2004), 61.

[14] Also, before wounding his brother Ferdinand calls the Cardinal 'The devil!' (5.5.52).

[15] Tricomi, "Historicizing" 363.

[16] Representative studies that canvas Ferdinand's possible sexual interest in his sister include: Elizabeth Brennan, "The Relationship between Brother and Sister in the Plays of John Webster." *MLR* 58 (1963): 488-94; Charles R. Forker, "A Little More Than Kin, and Less than Kind': Incest, Intimacy, Narcissism and Identity in Elizabethan and Stuart Drama." *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 4 (1989): 13-51; and Richard A. McCabe, *Incest, Drama, and Nature's Law: 1500-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) 251-2. It has also been argued that Ferdinand's incestuous actions are political manoeuvres geared towards maintaining class structures: Frank Whigham, "Sexual and Social Mobility in *The Duchess of Malfi*." *PMLA* 100 (1985): 167-86.

[17] Tricomi, "The Severed Hand" 356. Tricomi recognises the "defect in designating Boguet as a source is that despite Webster's strong attraction to Continental sources, he usually resorted to them in translation" (351). However, Boguet's tale seems to be a source for *The Late Lancashire Witches* (1634) by Thomas Heywood and Richard Brome. This is explored further in my forthcoming note, "Werewolves and Severed Hands: Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* and Brome and Heywood's *The Witches of Lancashire*." *Notes & Queries*, March 2006.

[18] The implications of the *Stubbe Peeter* pamphlet in relation to *The Duchess of Malfi* are discussed by Wiseman, 59.

[19] Erica Fudge, Ruth Gilbert, and Susan J. Wiseman, "Introduction: The Dislocation of the Human." *At the Borders of the Human: Beasts, Bodies and Natural Philosophy in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Erica Fudge, Ruth Gilbert, and Susan J. Wiseman (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002) 3.

[20] Reported by the assizes clerk, Thomas Potts, *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the County of Lancaster* (London, 1613).

[21] Enterline discusses these oppositions and their implications in detail at 111-3.

[22] An important study of the varied English perceptions of Venice is David C. McPherson, *Shakespeare, Jonson, and the Myth of Venice* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1990).

[23] Michael G. Brennan, "Foxes and Wolves in Elizabethan Episcopal Propaganda." *Cahiers Elisabethains* 29 (1986): 83-86, at 84. The most detailed treatment of the fox and wolf in Spenser is Anthea Hume's *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet*, esp. 13-41.

[24] Flannagan's note in *The Riverside Milton* suggests that Milton's wolf is a reference to "the agents of the Roman Catholic Church, seeking converts", and that "The Jesuits, whose coat of arms included two wolves, were especially liable to be accused of such secret proselytising" (105, n. 54). The traditional explanation for the Jesuit coat of arms comes from the etymology of the name Loyola as a contraction of "Lobo y olla" ("wolf and pot"), supposedly referring to the reputation of the House of Loyola as being so generous to its armed retainers that even the wolves could feast on the leftovers.

[25] Nescio an Lunae diuinum honorem deferunt, cum enim primum ab interlunio vident, vulgo genu flectunt syluestres illi, & orationem Dominicam recitant, & sub finem, Lunam alta voce alloquuntur: *Tam sanos nos relinque, quam inuenisti*. Lupos sibi adsciscunt in patrimonios, quos *Chari Christ* appellant, pro eis orantes, & bene precantes, & sic se ab illis laedi non verentur. (601)

[26] Quod vero nonnulli Hibernici, & qui fide digni videri volunt, homines quosdam in hoc tractu quotannis in lupos conuerti affirmant, fabulosum sane existimo, nisi forte illa exuberantis atrae bilis malitia... medicis dicitur, corripiantur, quae eiusmodi phantasmata ciet, vt sese in lupos transformatos imagentur. (581)

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