

Admirable Histories

By I. Goulart

To the former Histories, we will joynesome, touching the Licanthropes and mad-men, the which wee will consider of two sorts. For there be Licanthropes in whom the melancholike humor doth so rule, as they imagine themselves to be transformed into Wolves. This disease as Aetius doth witnessse lib. 6. Chap. 11 and Paulus lib. 3. Chap. 16 with other late writers, is a kinde of melancholie, but very black and vehement: for such as are toucht there-with, goe out of their houses in Februarie, counterfet Wolves in a manner in all things, and all night doe nothing but runne into Church-yardes, and about graves, so as you shall presently discover in them a wonderfull alteration of the braine, especially in the imagination and thought, which is miserably corrupted, in such sort, as the memorie hath some force: as I have observed in one of these melancholike Licanthropes, whom we call Wolves: for he that knew mee well, being one day troubled with his disease, and meeting me, I retired my selfe a part, fearing that he should hurt me. Having eyed me a little, hee passed on, being followed by a troupe of people. Hee carried then upon his shoulders the whole thigh and the legge of a dead man. Beeing carefully looked unto, hee was cured of this disease. Meeting mee another time, hee asked mee if I had not beene afeard, when as hee incountred mee in such a place, which makes mee to thinke that his memorie was not hurt nor impayred, in the vehemencie of his disease, although his imagination were much Donat de Hautemer, Chap 9 of his *Treatise of the cure of Diseases*.

William of Brabant writes in his Historie, that a man of a settled judgement, was some-times so tormented with an evill spirit, that at a certaine season of the yeare, hee imagined himselfe to bee a ravening Wolfe, running up and downe the Woods, Caves and Deserts, especially after young Children. More-over hee saith, that this man was often found running in the Desarts, like man out of his wittes, and that in the end by the grace of GOD, hee came to himselfe againe, and was cured.

There was also as Job Fincel reports, in his 2. *Booke of Miracles*, a Countri-man unto Pavia, in the yeare 1541 who thought himselfe to bee a Wolfe, setting upon divers men in the fields, and slew some. In the end being with great difficultie taken, hee did constantly affirme that hee was a Wolfe, and that there was no other difference, but that Wolves were commonlie hayrie without, and hee was betwixt the skinne and the flesh. Some (too barbarous and cruell Wolves in effect) desiring to trie the truth thereof, gave him manie wounds upon the armes and legges but knowing their owne error, and the innocencie of the poore melancholie man, they committed him to the Surgions to cure, in whose hands hee dyed within fewe dayes after. Such as are afflicted with that disease, are pale, their eyes are hollow, and they see ill, their tongue is drye, they are much altered, and are without much spittle in the mouth. Plinie and others write, that the braine of a Beare provokes brutish imaginations. And he saith, that in our time some made a Spanish Gentleman eate thereof, whose phantasie was so troubled, as he imagined that he was transformed into a Beare, flying into the Mountaines and deserts J. Wier, lib. 4. Chap. 13. *Of Divilish devices*.

As for those Licanthropes, which have the imagination so impayred and hurt, that besides by some particular power of Sathan, they seeme Wolves and not Men, to them that see them runne, doing great spoile. Bodin disputes very amply in his *Demonomana*.lib.2.Chap.3 where he maintaines, that the Divell may change the figure of one body into another, considering the great

power which GOD hath given him in this elementarie world. Hee maintaines that there be Licanthropes transformed really from Men into Wolves, alledging divers examples and Histories to that purpose. In the end, after many arguments, hee maintaines the one and the other sort of *Licanthropia*. And as for this represented in the end of this Chapter, the conclusion of his discourse was, that men are some-times changed into Beasts, the humane reason remaining: whether it bee done by the power of GOD immediatly, or that this power is given to Sathan, the executioner of his will, or rather of his fearefull judgements, And if we confesse (saith he) the truth of the holy writte in Daniel, touching the transformation of Nabuchodonoser, and of the Historie of Lots wife, changed into an immovable Piller, it is certaine, that the change of a Man into an Oxe, or into a Stone is possible, and by consequence possible into all other creatures. But for that Bodin cites Peucer touching the transformation of the Pilappiens, and doth note relate plainly that which he doth observe worthy of consideration upon that subject, I will transcribe it as it is contened in his learned worke, intituled *A Commentarie of the principall sorts of divinations*. lib.4. Cap.9. according to the French edition. In the ranke and number of Ecstatiques, are put those which they call Licaons and Licanthropes, which imagine themselves to bee changed into Wolves, and in their forme runne up and downe the fields falling upon troopes of great and small Cattell, teare in peeces what they incounter, and goe roring up and downe Church-yardes and Sepulchers. In the forth booke of Herodotus, there is a passage touching the Neuriens, a people of Scythia, who transformed them-selves into Wolves, the which hee saith, hee could not beleeve, not withstanding any report that was made unto him. For my part, I have held it fabulous and rediculous, that which hath beene often reported of this transformation of men into Wolves. But I have learned by certaine and tryed signes, and by witnesses worthy of credit, that they be not things altogether invented, and incredible, which are spoken of such transformations, which happen every yeare twelve dayes after Christmas in Livonia and the Countries thereabout: as they learned by their confessions which have beene imprisoned and tormented for such crimes. Behold how they report it to be done. Presently after that Christmas day is past, a lame Boye goes through the Countrie, and calles the Divels slaves together, being in great numbers, and injoynes them to follow him. If they staye any thing, then presently comes a great man, holding a whippe made of little chaines of Iron, where-with he makes them to advance, and some-times he handles these wretches so roughly as the markes of his whippe sticke long by them, and puts them that have beene beaten to great paine. Being upon the way behold they are all (as it seemes to them) changed and transformed into Wolves. They are thousands of them together, having for their conductor and guide this Whippe-carrier, after whom they marche, imagining that they are become Wolves. Beeing in the open champian Countryes, they fall upon such troupes of Cattell as they finde, teare them in peeces, and carrye away what they can, committing many other spoiles: but they are not suffered to touche nor to hurt any reasonable creature. When they approche neere unto any River, their guide, (say they) devides the water with his whippe, so as they seeme to open, and to leave a drye path betwixt both to passe through. At the end of twelve dayes, all the troupe is dispersed and every one returnes unto his house, having layde away his Wolves formc, and taken that of Man againe. This transformation (say they) is done after this manner. Those which are transformed fall sodenly to the ground like unto them that have the Falling-sickness, and remaine like dead men, voyde of all feeling. They stirre not from thence, neither goe into any other place, neither are they transformed into Wolves, but are like unto dead carcasses: for although you shake them and rowle them up and downe, yet they make no shewe of life. From thence is sprung an opinion, that the soules taken out the bodyes, enter into these fantosmes or visions, running with the

shapes of Wolves: then when the worke enterprized by the Divell is finished they returne into their bodyes which then recover life. The Licanthropes them-selves confirme this opinion, confessing that the bodyes doe not leave their humaine forme, neyther yet receive that of a Wolfe but onelie that the soules are thrust out of their prisons, and flye into Wolves bodyes, by whom they are carryed for a time. Others have maintained, that lying in Irons In a Dungeon, they have taken the forme of a Wolfe, and have gone to finde out their companions many dayes journey off. Beeing examined how they could gette out off a strong and close prison? Why they have returned, and how they could passe over Rivers that were large and deepe? They answered, that no Irons, walles, nor doores, could hinder their getting out: that they returned by constraint, and that they did flye over Rivers and runne by land.

Hetherto I have set downe the wordes of Doctor Peucer, the which shew, that this transformation of Licanthropes, nor that of Sorcerers mentioned by Bodin, have no affinitie with the transmutation of the King of Babilon, nor with that of Lots wife: and that in this Licanthropsia, there are manifest illusions of Sathan, the which ought not to bee confounded with apparent testimonies of GODS visitation upon some persons as the Divines which have expounded these Histories, doe shewe more at large. Moreover John Wier is of a contrary opinion unto bodin touching the Licanthropes whereof wee speake, and disputes at large thereof, in the sixt booke of *Divelish Devises*, Chapter thirteenth and foureteenth where hee manifestlie denies Bodins reall transformation, and doth maintayne that it is onely in the fantasie troubled by the indisposition of the person, and by the illusion of Sathan. But we will leave their controversie to such as will looke into it.