

The Discoverie of Witchcraft

By Reginald Scot

Booke V

Chapter I

Of transformations, ridiculous examples brought by the adversaries
for the confirmation of their foolish doctrine.

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

First, as touching the divell (Bodin saith) that he dooth most properlie and commonlie transforme himselfe into a gote, confirming that opinion by the 33. and 34. of *Esaie*: where there is no one title sounding to anie such purpose. Howbeit, he sometimes alloweth the divell the shape of a blacke Moore, and as he saith he used to appeare to Mawd Cruse, Kate Darey, and Jone Harviller. But I mervell, whether the divell createth himselfe, when he appeareth in the likenesse of a man; or whether God createth him, when the divell wisheth it. As for witches, he saith they speciallie transubstantiate themselves into wolves, and then whom they bewitch into asses: though else-where he differ somewhat herein from himselfe. But though he affirme, that it may be naturallie brought to passe, that a girle shall become a boie, and that anie female may be turned into the male: yet he saith the same hath no affinitie with *Lycanthropia*, wherein he saith also, that men are wholie transformed, and citeth infinite examples hereof.

First, that one Garner in the shape of a wolfe killed a girle of the age of twelve yeares, and did eat up hir armes and legges, and carried the rest home to his wife. Item, that Peter Burget, and Michael Werdon, having turned themselves with an ointment into wolves, killed, and finallie did eate up an infinite number of people. Which lie Wierus dooth sufficientlie confute. But untill you see and read that, consider whether Peter could eate rawe flesh without surfetting, speciallie flesh of his owne kind. Item, that there was an arrowe shot into a wolves thigh, who afterwards being turned into his former shape of a man, was found in his bed, with the arrowe in his thigh, which the archer that shot it knew verie well. Item, that another being *Lycanthropus* in the forme of a wolfe, had his wolves feet cut off, and in a moment he became a man without hands or feete.

He accuseth also one of the mightiest princes in christendome, even of late daies, to be one of those kind of witches (so as he could, when he list, turne himselfe to a wolfe) affirming that he was espied and oftentimes seene to performe that villanie; bicause he would be counted the king of all witches. He saith that this transubstantiation is most common in Greece, and through out all Asia, as merchant strangers have reported to him. For Anno Domini, 1542, when Sultan Solimon reigned, there was such force and multitude of these kind of wolves in Constantinople, that the emperour drave together in one flocke 150. of them, which departed out of the citie in the presence of all the people.

To persuade us the more throughlie heerein, he saith, that in Livonia, yearelie (about the end of December) a certeine knave or divell warneth all the witches in the countrie to come to a certeine place: if they faile, the divell commeth and whippeth them with an iron rod; so as the print of his lashes remaine upon their bodies for ever, the capteine witch leadeth the waie through a great pool of water manie millions of witches swim after. They are no sooner passed through that water, but they are all transformed into woolves, and flie upon and devoure both men, women, cattell, etc. After twelve daies they returne through the same water, and so receive humane shape againe.

Item, that there was one Bajanus a Jew, being the sonne of Simeon, which could, when he list, turne himselfe into a wolfe; and by that meanes could escape the force and danger of a whole armie of men. Which thing (saith Bodin) is woonderfull but yet (saith he) it is much more marvelous, that men will not beleve it. For manie poets affirme it; yea, and if you looke well into the matter (saith he) you shall find it easie to doo. Item, he saith, that as naturall woolves persecute beasts; so doo these magicall woolves devoure men, women and children. And yet God saith to the people (I trowe) and not to the cattell of Israell: If you observe not my commandements, I will send among you the beasts of the feeld, which shall devoure both you and your cattell. Item, I will send the teeth of beasts upon you. Where is Bodins distinction now become? He never saith, I will send witches in the likenes of wolves, etc.: to devoure you or your cattell. Nevertheles, Bodin saith it is a cleare case for the matter was disputed upon before pope Leo the seventh, and by him all these matters were judged possible: and at that time (saith he) were the transformations of Lucian and Apuleius made canonicall.

Furthermore, he saith, that through this art they are so cunning that no man can apprehend them, but when they are a sleepe. Item, he nameth another witch, that (as *M. Mal.* saith) could not be caught, bicause he would transforme himselfe into a mouse, and runne into everie little hole, till at length he was killed comming out of the hole of a jamme in a windowe: which indeed is as possible, as a camell to go through a needels eie. Item, he saith, that diverse witches at Vernon turned themselves into cats, and both committed and received much hurt. But at Argentine there was a wonderfull matter done, by three witches of great wealth, who transforming themselves into three cats, assalted a faggot-maker: who having hurt them all with a faggot sticke, was like to have beene put to death. But he was miraculously delivered, and they worthilie punished; as the stone saith, from whence Bodin had it.

After a great manie other such beastlie fables, he inveieth against such physicians, as saie that *Lycanthropia* is a disease, and not a transformation. Item, he mainteineth, as sacred and true, all Homers fables of Circes and Ulysses his companions. inveieng against Chrysostome, who rightlie interpreteth Homers meaning to be, that Ulysses his people were by the harlot Circes made in their brutish maners to resemble swine.

But least some poets fables might be thought lies (whereby the witchmongers arguments should quaile) he mainteineth for true the most part of Ovids *Metamorphosis*, and the greatest absurdities and impossibilities in all that booke: marie he thinketh some one tale therein may be fained. Finallie, he confirmeth all these toies by the stone of Nabuchadnezzar. And hicause (saith he) Nabuchadnezzar continued seven yeres in the shape of a beast, therefore may witches remaine so long in the forme of a beast, having in all the meane time, the shape, haire, voice, strength, agilitie, swiftnes, food and excrements of beasts, and yet reserve the minds and soules of women or men Howbeit, S Augustine (whether to confute or confirme that opinion judge you) saith; *Non est credendum, humanun corpus daemonum arte vel potestate in bestialia lineamenta converti posse.* We may not beleve that a mans bodie may be altered into the lineaments of a

beast by the divels art or power. Item, Bodin saith, that the reason whie witches are most commonlie turned into woolves, is, bicause they usuallie eate children, as woolves eate cattell. Item, that the cause whie other are truelie turned into asses, is; for that such have beene desirous to understand the secrets of witches. Whie witches are turned into cats, he alledgeth no reason, and therefore (to helpe him foorth with that paraphrase) I saie, that witches are curst queanes, and manie times scratch one another, or their neighbors by the faces; and therefore perchance are turned into cats. But I have put twentie of these witchmongers to silence with this one question; to wit, Whether a witch that can turne a woman into a cat, &c: can also turne a cat into a woman?

Chapter II

Absurd reasons brought by Bodin, and such others,
for confirmation of transformations.

These Examples, and reasons might put us in doubt, that everie asse, woolfe, or cat that we see, were a man, a woman, or a child I marvell that no man useth this distinction in the definition of a man. But to what end should one dispute against these creations and recreations, when Bodin washeth away all our arguments with one word, confessing that none can create any thing but God; acknowledging also the force of the canons, and imbracing the opinions of such divines, as write against him in this behalfe; Yea he dooth now (contrarie to himselfe elsewhere) affirme, that the divell cannot alter his forme. And lo, this is his distinction, *Non essentialis forma (id est ratio) sed figura solùm pmutatur*: The essentiall forme (to wit, reason) is not changed, but the shape or figure And thereby he prooveth it easie enough to create men or beasts with life, so as they remaine without reason Howbeit, I thinke it is an easier matter, to turne Bodins reason into the reason of an asse, than his bodie into the shape of a sheepe which he saith is an easie matter; bicause Lots wife was turned into a stone by the divell. Whereby he sheweth his grosse ignorance. As though God that commanded Lot upon paine of death not to looke backe, who also destroyed the citie of Sodome at that instant had not also turned hir into a salt stone. And as though all this while God had beene the divels drudge, to go about this businesse all the night before, and when a miracle should be wrought, the divell must be fame to doo it himselfe.

Item, he affirmeth, that these kind of transfigurations are more common with them in the west parts of the world, than with us here in the east. Howbeit, this note is given withal; that that is ment of the second persons, and; not of the first: to wit, of the bewitched, and not of the witches. For they can transforme themselves in everie part of the world, whether it be east, west, north, or south. Marrie he saith, that spirits and divels vex men most in the north countries, as Norway Finland, &c: and in the westerne islands, as in the west India but among the heathen speciallie, and wheresoever Christ is not preached. And that is true, though not in so foolish, grosse, and corporall a sense as Bodin taketh it. One notable instance of a witches cunning in this behalfe touched by Bodin in the chapter aforesaid, I thought good in this place to repeat: he taketh it out of *M Mal.* which tale was delivered to Sprenger by a knight of the Rhods, being of the order of S. Jones at Jerusalem; and it followeth thus.

Chapter III

Of a man turned into an asse, and returned againe into a man
by one of Bodins witches. S. Augustines opinion thereof.

It happened in the city of Salamin, in the kingdome of Cyprus (wherein is a good haven) that a ship loaden with merchandize staid there for a short space. In the meane time many of the souldiers and mariners went to shoare, to provide fresh victuals. Among which number, a certaine English man being a sturdie yoong fellowe, went to a womans house, a little waie out of the citie, and not farre from the sea side, to see whether she had anie eggs to sell. Who perceiving him to be a lustie yoong fellowe, a stranger, and farre from his countrie (so as upon the losse of him there would be the lesse misse or inquirie) she considered with hir selfe how to destroie him; and willed him to staie there awhile, whilst she went to fetch a few eggs for him. But she tarried long, so as the yoong man called unto hir, desiring hir to make hast: for he told hir that the tide would be spent, and by that meanes his ship would be gone, and leave him behind. Howbeit, after some detracting of time, she brought him a few eggs, willing him to returne to hir, if his ship were gone when he came. The yoong fellowe returned towards his ship; but before he went aboard, hee would needs eate an eg or twaine to satisfie his hunger, and within short space he became dumb and out of his wits (as he afterwards said). When he would have entred into the ship, the mariners beat him backe with a cudgell, saieng; What a murren lacks the asse? Whither the divell will this asse? The asse or yoong man (I cannot tell by which name I should terme him) being many times repelled, and understanding their words that called him asse, considering that he could speake never a word, and yet could understand everie bodie; he thought that he was bewitched by the woman, at whose house he was. And therefore, when by no means he could get into the boate, but was driven to tarrie and see hir departure being also beaten from place to place, as an asse; he remembered the witches words, and the words of his owne fellowes that called him asse, and returned to the witches house, in whose service hee remained by the space of three yeares, dosing nothing with his hands all that while, but carried such burthens as she laied on his backe; having onelie this comfort, that although he were reputed as asse among strangers and beasts, yet that both this witch, and all other witches knew him to be a man.

After three yeares were passed over, in a morning betimes he went to towne before his dame; who upon some occasion (of like to make water) staid a little behind. In the meane time being neere to a church, he heard a little saccaring bell ring to the elevation of a morrowe masse, and not daring to go into the church, least he should have beene beaten and driven out with cudgels, in great devotion he fell downe in the churchyard, upon the knees of his hinder legs, and did lift his forefeet over his head, as the preest doth hold the sacrament at the elevation. Which prodigious sight when certeine merchants of Genua espied, and with woonder beheld; anon commeth the witch with a cudgell in hir hand, beating foorth the asse. And bicause (as it hath beene said) such kinds of witchcrafts are verie usuall in those parts; the merchants aforesaid made such meanes, as both the asse and the witch were attached by the judge. And she being examined and set upon the racke, confessed the whole matter, and promised that if she might have libertie to go home, she would restore him to his old shape, and being dismissed, she did accordinglie. So as notwithstanding they apprehended hir againe, and burned hir and the yoong man returned into his countrie with a joifull and merrie hart.

Upon the advantage of this stone *M. Mal.* Bodin, residue of the witchmongers triumph; and speciallie bicause S. Augustine subscribeth thereunto; or at the least to the verie like. Which I

must confesse I find too common in his books, insomuch as I judge them rather to be foisted in by some fond papist or witchmonger than so learned a mans dooings. The best is, that he himselfe is no eiewnesse to any of those his tales; but speaketh onelie by report, wherein he uttereth these words: to wit, that it were a point of great incivilitie, &c: to discredit so manie and so certeine reports. And in that respect he justifieth the corporall transfigurations of Ulysses his mates, through the witchcraft of Circes: and that foolish fable of Praestantius his father, who (he saith) did eate provender and haie among other horssees, being himselfe turned into an horsse. Yea he veriheth the starkest lie that ever was invented, of the two alewives that used to transforme all their ghests into horssees, and to sell them awaie to markets and faires. And therefore I saie with Cardanus, that how much Augustin saith he hath seen with his eies, so much I am content to beleeve. Howbeit S. Augustin concludeth against Bodin. For he afhrmeth these transubstantiations to be but fantastically, and that they are not according to the veritie, but according to the appearance. And yet I cannot allow of such appearances made by witches, or yet by divels for I find no such power given by God to any creature. And I would wit of S Augustine, where they became, whom Bodins transformed woollves devoured But

. . . ô quàm

Credula mens hominis, & erectoe fabulis aures!

Good Lord! how light of credit is
the wavering mind of man!
How unto tales and lies his eares
attentive all they can?

Generall counsels, and the popes canons, which Bodin so regardeth, doo condemne and pronounce his opinions in this behalfe to be absurd; and the residue of the witchmongers, with himselfe in the number, to be woorsse than infidels. And these are the verie words of the canons, which else-where I have more largelie repeated; Whosoever beleeveth, that anie creature can be made or changed into better or woorsse, or transformed into anie other shape, or into anie other similitude, by anie other than by God himselfe the creator of all things, without all doubt is an infidell, and woorsse than a pagan. And therewithall this reason is rendered, to wit: bicause they attribute that to a creature, which onelie belongeth to God the creator of all things.

Chapter IV

A summarie of the former fable, with a refutation thereof,
after due examination of the same.

Concerning the veritie or probabilitie of this enterlude, betwixt Bodin, *M. Mal.* the witch, the asse, the masse, the merchants, the inquisitors, the tormentors, &c. First I woonder at the miracle of transubstantiation: Secondlie at the impudencie of Bodin and James Sprenger, for affirming so grosse a lie, devised beelike by the knight of the Rhodes, to make a foole of Sprenger, and an asse of Bodin Thirdlie, that the asse had no more wit than to kneele downe and hold up his forefeete to a peece of starch or fiowre, which neither would, nor could, nor did helpe him: Fourthlie, that the masse could not reforme that which the witch transformed: Fiftlie, that the merchants, the inquisitors, and the tormentors, could not either severallie or jointlie doo it, but referre the matter to the witches courtesie and good pleasure.

But where was the young mans owne shape all these three yeares, wherein he was made an asse? It is a certeine and a generall rule, that two substantiall formes cannot be in one subject *Simul & semel*, both at once: which is confessed by themselves. The forme of the beast occupied some place in the aire and so I thinke should the forme of a man doo also. For to bring the bodie of a man, without feeling, into such a thin airie nature, as that it can neither be seene or felt, it may well be unlikelie, but it is verie impossible for the aire is inconstant, and continueth not in one place. So as this airie creature would soone be carried into another region: as else-where I have largelie proved. But indeed our bodies are visible, sensitive, and passive and are indued with manie other excellent properties, which all the divels in hell are not able to alter: neither can one haire of our head pensh or fall awaie, or be transformed, without the speciall providence or God almightie.

But to proceed unto the probabilitie of this storie. What lucke was it, that this yoong fellow of England, landing so latelie in those parts, and that old woman of Cyprus, being both of so base a condition, should both understand one anothers communcatlon; England and Cyprus being so manie hundred miles distant and their languages so farre differing? I am sure in these daies, wherein trafficke is more used, and learning in more price, few yong or old manners in this realme can either speake or understand the language spoken at Salamin in Cyprus, which is a kind of Greeke, and as few old women there can speake our language. But Bodin will saie, You heare, that at the inquisitors commandement, and through the tormentors correction, she promised to restore him to his owne shape and so she did, as being thereunto compelled. I answer, that as the whole stone is an impious fabled so this assertion is false, and disagreeable to their owne doctrine, which mainteineth, that the witch dooth nothing but by the permission and leave of God. For if she could doo or undoo such a thing at hir owne pleasure, or at the commandement of the inquisitors, or for feare of the tormentors, or for love of the partie, or for remorse of conscience then is it not either by the extraordinarie leave, nor yet by the like direction of God; except you will make him a confederate with old witches. I for my part woonder most, how they can turne and tosse a mans bodie so, and make it smaller and greater, to wit, like a mowse, or like an asse, &C: and the man all this while to feele no paine. And I am not alone in this maze: for Danaeus a special maintainer of their follies saith, that although Augustine and Apuleius doo write verie credible of these matters; yet will he never beleeve, that witches can change men into other formes; as asses, apes, woolves, beares, mice, &c.

Chapter V

That the bodie of a man cannot be turned into the bodie of a beast by a witch, is proved by strong reasons, scriptures, and authorities.

But was this man an asse all this while? Or was this asse a man? Bodin saith (his reason onelie reserved) he was trulie transubstantiated into an asse, so as there must be no part of a man, but reason remaining in this asse. And yet Hermes Trismegistus thinketh he hath good authoritie and reason to saie; *Aliud corpus quàm humanum non capere animam humanam; nec fas esse in corpus animae ratione carentis animam rationalem corruiere*; that is, An humane soule cannot receive anie other than an humane bodie, nor yet canne light into a bodie that wanteth reason of mind. But S. James saith; the bodie without the spirit is dead. And surelie, when the soule is departed from the bodie, the life of man is dissolved: and therefore Paule wished to be dissolved, when he would have beene with Christ. The bodie of man is subject to divers kinds of agues,

sicknesses, and infirmities, whereunto an asses bodie is not inclined and mans bodie must be fed with bread, &c and not with hay. Bodins asseheaded man must either eat haie, or nothing: as appeareth in the storie. Mans bodie also is subject unto death, and hath his daies numbred. If this fellowe had died in the meane time, as his houre might have beene come, for anie thing the divels, the witch, or Bodin knew; I mervell then what would have become of this asse, or how the witch could have restored him to shape, or whether he should have risen at the daie of judgement in an asses bodie and shape. For Paule saith, that that verie bodie which is sowne and buried a naturall bodie, is raised a spirituall bodie. The life of Jesus is made manifest in our mortall flesh, and not in the flesh of an asse.

God hath endued everie man and everie thing with his proper nature, substance, forme, qualities, and gifts, and directeth their waies. As for the waies of an asse, he taketh no such care: howbeit, they have also their properties and substance severall to themselves. For there is one flesh (saith Paule) of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, another of birds. And therefore it is absolutelie against the ordinance of God (who hath made me a man) that I should flue like a bird, or swim like a fish, or creepe like a worme, or become an asse in shape. insomuch as if God would give me leave, I cannot doo it; for it were contrarie to his owne order and decree, and to the constitution of anie bodie which he hath made. Yea the spirits themselves have their lawes and limits prescribed, beyond the which they cannot passe one haire breadth; otherwise God should be contrarie to himselfe which is farre from him Neither is Gods omnipotence hereby qualified, but the divels impotence manifested, who hath none other power, but that which God from the beginning hath appointed unto him, consonant to his nature and substance. He may well be restrained from his power and will, but beyond the same he cannot passe as being Gods minister, no further but in that which he hath from the beginning enabled him to doo: which is, that he being a spirit. may with Gods leave and ordinance viciat and corrupt the spirit and will of man wherein he is verie diligent.

What a beastlie assertion is it, that a man, whom GOD hath made according to his owne similitude and likenes, should be by a witch turned into a beast? What an impietie is it to artirrne that an asses bodie is the temple of the Holy-ghost? Or an asse to be the child of God, and God to be his father; as it is said of man? Which Paule to the Corinthians so divinellie confuteth, who saith, that Our bodies are the members of Christ. In the which we are to glorifie God for the bodie is for the Lord, and the Lord is for the bodie. Surelie he meaneth not for an asses bodie, as by this time I hope appeareth in such wise as Bodin, may go hide him for shame, especiallie when he shall understand, that even into these our bodies, which God hath framed after his owne likenesse, he hath also brethed that spirit, which Bodin saith is now remaining within an asses bodie, which God hath so subjected in such servilitie under the foote of man; Of whom God is so mindfull, that he hath made him little lower than angels, yea than himselfe, and crowned him with glorie and worship, and made him to have dominion over the workes of his hands, as having put all things under his feete, all sheepe and oxen, yea wolves, asses, and all other beasts of the field, the foules of the aire, the fishes of the sea, &c Bodins poet, Ovid, whose *Metamorphosis*, make so much for him, saith to the overthrow of this phantasticall imagination:

*Os homini sublime dedit, coelúmque videre
Jussit, & erectos ad sydera tollere vultus.*

The effect of which verses is this;
The Lord did set mans face so hie,
That he the heavens might behold,
And looke up to the starrie skie,
To see his woonders manifold

Now, if a witch or a divell can so alter the shape of a man, as contrarilie to make him looke downe to hell, like a beast; Gods works should not onelie be defaced and disgraced, but his ordinance should be woonderfullie altered, and thereby confounded.

Chapter VI

The witchmongers objections, concerning Nabuchadnezzar answered,
and their error concerning *Lycanthropia* confuted.

Malleus Maleficarum, Bodin, and manie other of them that mainteine witchcraft, triumph upon the stone of Nabuchadnezzar; as though Circes had transformed him with her sorceries into an oxe, as she did others into swine, &c I answer, that he was neither in bodie nor shape transformed at all, according to their grosse imagination; as appeareth both by the plaine words of the text, and also by the opinions of the best interpreters thereof but that he was, for his beastlie government and conditions, throwne out of his kingdome and banished for a time, and driven to hide himselfe in the wilderness, there in exile to lead his life in beastlie sort, among beasts of the held, and fowle of the aire (for by the wale I tell you it appeareth by the text, that he was rather turned into the shape of a fowle than of a beast) untill he rejecting his beastlie conditions, was upon his repentance and amendment called home, and restored unto his kingdome. Howbeit, this (by their confession) was neither divels nor witches doing; but a miracle wrought by God, whom alone I acknowledge to be able to bring to passe such workes at his pleasure. Wherein I would know what our witchmongers have gained.

I am not ignorant that some write, that after the death of Nabuchadnezzar, his sonne Eilumorodath gave his bodie to the ravens to be devoured, least afterwards his father should arise from death, who of a beast became a man againe. But this tale is meeter to have place in the Cabalisticall art, to wit: among unwritten verities than here. To conclude, I saie that the transformations, which these witch-mongers doo so rave and rage upon, is (as all the learned sort of physicians affirme) a disease proceeding partlie from melancholie, wherebie manie suppose themselves to be woolves, or such ravening beasts. For *Lycanthropia* is of the ancient physicians called *Lupina melancholia*, or *Lupina insania*. J. Wicrus declareth verie learnedlie, the cause, the circumstance, and the cure of this disease I have written the more herein; bicause hereby great princes and potentates, as well as poore women and innocents, have beene defamed and accounted among the number of witches.