

# Spirits and Devils

By John Deacon and John Walker

If spirits and divels can truely and essentially tranforme themselves into true naturall bodies: or but change themselves into the true shapes and formes of such bodies. And this (I beleeve) doth break the very neck of those your supposed transformations of spirits and divels whatsoever.

*Lycanthropus:* This that you say is undoubtedly true, and yet still me thinke the divell should have power, so to transtorne himselfe, either in substance, or appearance at least although I my selfe am unable to render any one reason thereof.

*Orthodoxus:* It is verie ridiculous (saith one) for a man to leave manifest things, and such as even by naturall reason may soundly be proved: and so, to seeke after unknown things, which, by no likelihood may be conceived, nor yet tried out by any rule of reason but,

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

*Lycanthropus:* Good maister *Orthodoxus*? I am drawn (by the very force of your speech) into a marvelous perplexitie. For when I examine the weight of your reasons propounded, I am driven to denie the transformation of spirits and devils; but, so soone as I returne to the necessarie consideration of my present distressed estate, then, that former new-bredde conceit is cut in the necke, and squashed quite.

*Orthodoxus:* And why so I praie you?

*Lycanthropus:* Surely sir, because I my selfe am essentially transformed into a wolfe: I make no question, but that devils can also substantially change themselves into any true naturall bodie.

*Orthodoxus:* Verie true as you say the one is every way as possible as is the other.

*Lycanthropus:* Why, then alas, the Lord be mercifull to us: for what man in the world may possiblie be free from their malice;

*Philologus:* How now *Lycanthropus*, are you indeed in good earnest? doe you verilie imagine you are essentially transformed into a wolfe? now surely, this is the oddest jest that ever I heard.

*Lycanthropus:* Nay, nay (alas) it passeth a jest: for I finde it and feele it to be true by experience.

*Physiologus:* Well said *Lycanthropus*, now I perceive your name was not given you for nought: it being so proportionable answerable to your phantasticall nature. 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 worde, some Physitions do translate

*Daemonium Lupinum*, that is, a woolvish Demoniacke others *Lupina melaneholica*, and *Lupina insania*, that is a woolvish melancholie, or a woolvish furie and madnes. And it is nothing else in effect, but an infirmitie arising upon such phantasticall imaginations, as do mightily disorder and trouble the braine.

*Lycanthropus*: An infirmitie say you? It is a verie strange and fearefull infirmitie, that can so essentially transforme a man into a verie naturall wolfe? God blesse every good man from such kind of infirmities.

*Physiologus*: Had you lived in such a time, as beasts, and beares and wolves were supposed to speake like men: it had beene an easie matter (I perceive) to persuade you that you are a wolfe.

*Lycanthropus*: Yea, but how are you able to persuade me the contrarie?

*Physiologus*: That may easily be done, by describing briefly unto you, the verie true nature of that the aforesaid diseases, which so fearefully affecteth your minde, with these phantasticall imaginations and fond conceits.

*Lycanthropus*: I praie you then describe it plainly unto me.

*Physiologus*: With verie good will. Wherein you must principally consider, that the verie hrst matter which causeth *Lycanthropie*, or this woolvish Demoniacke: consisteth in the very selfesame matter of stufte that maketh in any other man else, a melancholike humour, for either of both are melancholike persons. Howbeit, the peculiar cause it selfe which more especially procureth *Lycanthropie*, is either that kinde of melancholy which ariseth properly of *choler adust* or that which comes of a simple and naturall melancholie. Sometimes also it proceedes of an impostume of bloud in the braine: but verie seldome of bloud adust. Now then, that Lycanthropie which ariseth onely of the abundance of a simple melancholie, as it is (for the most part) the verie woorst of all, & therefore is called *Lupina insania*, a woolvish furie or madnes: so is it commonly seated in the exterior parts of the braine, and hath an operation not unlike to the matter of a disease, called *Karabitus*, which is a hotte impostume of the head, seated in the verie ventricle of the braine it selfe, causing *choller adust*, and the melancholike matter verie much to abound. Whose vaporious humors (vitiating and corrupting the braine,) doe procure the patient unto a verie deepe sleepe. Wherein his phantasie is fearefully troubled with the dailie impression of such fearefull and strange imaginations as do cause the interior spirits of the braine to waxe verie wilde and fearfull by reason of those blacke and cloudie representations: which were received before in the phantasie. And heereof it is, that some unskilfull Physitions, do so rashly ascribe this humorous disease to the operation of the divell and that the ignorant people do absurdly imagine the partie thus affected, to be undoubtedly possessed of devils. Howbeit, they should certainly know, that a cholericke humour (so soone as an extreme adustion affecteth the same) is fourthwith converted to furie or madnes: neither is it then sated with an onely simple melancholike affection. This disease, it hapneth to men especially in Autumne through the malitiousnes of the humors abounding, and eftsoones is increased in the spring, & in summer: yea, & it is then the extreamest of all when the north-winde blowes, by reason of the drines [dryness] thereof. The signes that commonly fall fourth in the beginning of this disease, are these, namely, strange conceits and feares, a pronesse to anger: the partie affecting solitarinesses,

having a fearefull swimming and turning about of the braine. Howbeit, when the disease is once growne to perfection: then there folowes verie fearefull and strange effects. For, some are afraide the heavens will overwhelme them forthwith: some feare the earth will swallow them quicke: some stand in continuall dread of theeves: and others againe, that woolves will enter into them. Some imagine themselves to be divels, birds, and vessels of earth yea, and that they be truly transformed into woolves, and therefore they do counterfeit their voices, & wander about in the fields. This undoubtedly is your present disease & this is that which makes you so resolute concerning the supposed possession of spirits and divels. All which you may plainly perceive, is nothing else in effect, but a phantasticall conceit, occasioned only upon those disordered humours which hurt and trouble your braine. That which any further concerneth the nature, the causes, the circumstances, and cure of *Lycanthropie*: you may see more at large in Wierus his workes.

*Lycandiropus*: This is very strange I assure you, and more then ever I heard albeit I have felt the experience thereof in my selfe.

*Physiologus*: Not so strange as true and therefore, forsake your folly in time.

*Orthodoxus*: I pray you hartely doe so, and that so much the rather by how much the divel (in working upon that disordered humour) will be ready eftsoones to abuse you afresh. In consideration whereof, I will shew you what the Ancyran councill and others have carefully decreed against such humerous persons, saying thus. Whereas certeine gracelesse women (seduced wholly by satans illusions) doe verely imagine themselves (for certeine howers in the night) to be riding upon woolves and beasts with Diana the pagane Goddess, and to passe through sundry countries through which erronious conceite, they (being grossly abused) doe verely beleeve those things to be true, yea, and (in beleeving the same) do fearefully straggle from the true saving faith. It appertaineth therefore to the ministers (in every their severall churches) to publish and confute the falshood hereof and withall, to strengthen the minds of their people against every such phantasticall and fond illusion of satan. Who eftsoones assailing the minds of humerous women, and (through infidelity) coupling them sure to himselfe, deludes their said minds with dreames and visions making them sometimes mery, and sometimes sad: shewing them sundry persons, both knowne and unknown yea, and leading them dangerous bi-wates to their owne destruction. Thus you see the counsels decree against these roving conceites, wherewith your selfe (at this present) is fearefullie tainted and therefore, forethinke you thereof in time.

*Lycanthropus*: Are there then no essentiall transformations at all?

*Orthodoxus*: No verily, whatsoever they seeme in shewe, they are but illusions and sleights of the divel to deceive and theretore I advise you to winde your selfe from them with speede, for feare of a further mischiefe. And, because you shall not imagine this councill I give, to be but a dreaming devise of my owne: therefore, (besides that which was spoken before) I will yet further make knowen unto you, how generall counsels, many good writers, yea, and the Popes owne canons do all jointly condemne and pronounce this peevish opinion concerning the supposed transformation of divels, to be impious, absurd and divellish, and the maintainers thereof to be woorse then Infidels, saying thus Whosoever beleeveth that any one creature can be made or

changed into better or woorse, or to be transformed into any other shape, or into any other similitude, by any other then by God himselfe the creator of all things: without doubt, he is but an Infidell, and woorse then a Pagane. And therewithall, this reason is rendred. Because (say they) they doe therein attribute that power to a creature: which onely belongeth to God the creator of all things. By this you may plainely perceive, of what reckoning these your supposed transformations have beene in former times.

*Philologus:* Lycanthropus? Your opinion (it appeareth) is plainely condemned of all: and therefore, forsake it for shame.

*Lycanthropus:* So I do I assure you: praising the Lord with all my hart, for bringing me thus to behold the folly thereof yea, and am hartely sorry, for being bewitched therewith so long, being also ashamed now of my odious name.