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An Analysis of Livonian Werewolves in the Early Modern Era

Livonian Werewolves, 1500-1700s: An assessment of their historical significance and origins through the case of Old Thiess

Liu Jiaxin[1]

[1]Hwa Chong Institution, Singapore

ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to do an in-depth investigation on the phenomenon of Early Modern era (1500-1700s) Livonian werewolves. Noting their uniqueness in comparison to contemporaneous werewolves hailing from different geo-graphic areas, I suggest that the Livonian werewolf is a metaphor for Livonian society at that time, one which was characterized by social turmoil and strict class hierarchy. This metaphor was utilized by different classes to establish their own interests in society, and thus I conclude that the werewolf is a mutable artifact whose value is contingent on its social context. I demonstrate this with the particular case of Old Thiess - A poor, elderly Livonian peasant who gave an unorthodox and anomalous testimony when accused of being a werewolf. In his defense, I show how Thiess was in fact alluding to social tensions by lambasting the rich, German elite and establishing the righteousness of the peasantry of which he was a member of.

Methodology

A close reading method was utilized, where I focused on the trial transcript of Old Thiess with heavy reference to Carlo Ginzburg & Bruce Lincoln's collaborative work *Old Thiess, a Livonian werewolf: a classic case in comparative perspective.* Through a contextual reading of Livonia's social atmosphere, I sought to draw connections between the content of the trial to wider societal disturbances happening at the time. My thesis - that the werewolf is a flexible metaphor for social milieu - was further buttressed by numerous contemporaneous sources that I detected with similar messages as Thiess' transcript. This demonstrates that my conclusion does not suffer from the insufficiency of just relying on one source. Here, numerous first-hand accounts are utilized, which was accessed mostly through the works of Stefan Donecker, Willem de Blécourt, and Bruce Lincoln. Their articles were obtained via online copies, JSTOR, and open access platforms.

Introduction

It was April 1691, in the district of Wenden, some 90 kilometers northeast of Riga, the capital of Latvia. A trial was being conducted on a village thief named Pirsen Tönnis, and justice was expected to be meted out. An unexpected turn of events happened when one of the witnesses, the local innkeeper Peter, smiled. This inappropriate gesture - so at odds with the solemnity of the circumstance - merited an explanation to the judges. When asked "why did he do that?", the answer was illuminating - Peter found it funny that his tenant, an old, poor, and "thoroughly powerless" individual named Thiess (a nickname for Mātiss, the Latvian equivalent for Matthew) had to swear the prerequisite

oath of honesty for testifying at the trial. Thiess had a notorious reputation of "going around with the devil and was a werewolf." Peter knew that Thiess, being the stubborn, inveterate zealot as he was, would definitely say things that would irritate, or even shock the judges. The embedded humor thus lay in the oath's ineffectuality: swearing on God might spur other people to tell the truth, but certainly not Thiess, whose warped and unorthodox beliefs had made him thoroughly fearless of such measures. With their interest piqued, the judges shifted their attention from Tönnis to this octogenarian, potentially seeking a more meaningful target to indict and validate the authority of law. Little did they know that this attempt would backfire, and instead of tacitly submitting to their narrative that he partook in crime as a werewolf, Thiess vehemently argued that he was in no wrong while transformed.

The elderly peasant narrated with detail his experience as a werewolf much unlike the stereotypical man-beast we today and the piously Christian judges of high social status and German ethnicity associate with. Replacing the bloodthirsty man-eater who transforms with each full moon and dies by silver ordnance was a lupine Robin Hood who hunted witches, eradicated evil, and distributed stolen food to the common folk. Rather than pleading guilty to making a pact with the devil as a werewolf, Thiess argued his clear conscience; in fact, he went further, professing that the "devil was an enemy", and he was doing good for society. Faced with a barrage of unrelenting questions that seek to prove his culpability, Thiess stood firmly on his own and rejected everything as misinterpretation or slander, claiming that "he understood these things (implications of being a werewolf) far better" than the court. Underneath his decrepit exterior lay a powerful, spirited personality that opposed everything the judges stood for. His unique portrayal of the werewolf isn't just a frivolous concoction to be dismissed; it reveals social, ethnic, and to a lesser extent - religious - tensions in early modern (approximate time frame of 1500-1700s) Livonia, a historical region encompassing the majority of the modern day nations of Latvia and Estonia. Particularly, we can decipher ancient, simmering animosities the ethnically Livonian peasants of low social status directed towards the wealthy German aristocracy who colonized the area since the early 1200s through the lens of Thiess' werewolf.

One example amongst many, the peculiar phenomenon of lycanthropy - the transformation into werewolves - was a recurring motif in Livonia from the 1500s to the 1700s. As Stefan Donecker explains, "throughout the seventeenth century, the werewolf was one of the focal points of Baltic ethnography." Sometimes, but not always, indicative of deviousness and barbarity, these creatures were looked upon negatively. Yet, surprising cases such as the one of Thiess curiously portrayed these werewolves in a gentle, even positive light. This paper uncovers the origins and significance of this mythical creature, arguing that its formation lies in social, religious, and ethnic tensions which typified Livonian society during this particular time period. Notably, the fearsome werewolf is a fantastic metaphor for the milieu in early-modern Livonia - one which was heavily characterized by ethnic, social, and religious stratifications. We can see how such hierarchical categorization was highly unstable, evidenced by how there were attempts from both the wealthy, aristocratic Germans and the poor Livonian peasantry, including Thiess, to *utilize* the werewolf to further their own agenda and exert their control in society. Connecting them to wider circumstances of external war, internal conflicts, and long-standing hostilities between the Germans and the Livonians, the werewolf provides us a rare, unadulterated glimpse of Livonian society in the 16th to 18th centuries.

The Werewolf: A Complex Figure that Eludes Generalizing

To gain a better understanding of its Livonian subset, it is equally important to have some rudimentary knowledge of the werewolf in general. Earliest definitive mentions of werewolves, or to use the scientific term, lycanthropy, occurred in Ancient Greece. Pausanias, a Greek geographer from the second century AD, recorded instances of werewolfery amongst the Arcadian Greeks, with the most notable example being its King, Lycaon. Punishing his temerity for questioning divine omnipotence by serving human flesh as tribute, Zeus transforms Lycaon into a man-beast *"howling in his vain attempts to speak"*. Lycaon was thus not merely an animal: he was cognizant that he had become a "howling" wolf, yet his frustration stemmed from his inability to verbalize and "speak", an exclusively human behavior. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, we glean a closer look on Lycaon's metamorphosis: "his appearance took on a kind of madness and he exercised against the flocks the lust for slaughter … (and) began to take pleasure in blood." What

is emphasized here is the undesirability of the werewolf. It signifies a reversion of human civility to the cruel indifference of the animal kingdom, where killing prey is necessary and no moral boundaries exist.

Conforming to layman perceptions as a terrifying evil, we see further echoes of this godforsaken cannibal in Early-Modern Europe, especially during the witch craze happening in contemporaneity to the widespread appearance of the Livonian werewolf. Peter Stumpp, “the werewolf of Bedburg", was the most paradigmatic example. He practiced sorcery from the tender age of 12, and was provided the device - an enchanted girdle - for transformation by the devil. While transforming, he assumed “the likeness of a greedy, devouring wolf, strong and mighty, with eyes great and large, which in the night sparkled like fire, a mouth great and wide, with most sharp and cruel teeth, a huge body, and mighty paws.” His bestiality - detailed with such care and attention - combined with deep-rooted devilish influence since his formative years paved the road for his atrocious crimes: he killed 14 children and ate 2 pregnant women, whose fetuses he "ate their hearts panting hot and raw.” Compared to Lycaon, Stumpp seemed to be a purer embodiment of evil. Rather than having an amoral attitude, Stumpp was immoral to the extreme. Crucially, Stumpp’s metamorphosis did not stem from external and uncontrollable compulsions such as divine punishment or animal instincts. His awareness of the deeds that he had committed highlighted voluntary involvement in choosing to murder and cannibalise innocent humans.

Nonetheless, we also have werewolves on the other end of the spectrum. In the 12th to 14th century vein of Franco-English oral tradition, the werewolf became a model of admiration and sought to prove its humanity despite being universally shunned due to its ungodly exterior. The werewolf often invoked commiseration after suffering a Christ-like ordeal of misunderstanding before a savior, often a king, recognized his sensibility and aided him in exacting revenge. In *Bisclavret* (The Werewolf), an oral transcript of a Breton folktale - or lais - recorded down by Marie de France, the knight was unceremoniously transformed into a werewolf after his wife betrayed him by stealing away his clothes. Aggrieved and disillusioned, he curried favor with the local king and inflicted revenge on his former partner. *Melion,* also a Breton lai, is structurally similar, although it assumed a darker nature as the wolf went on a bloodthirsty rampage after being abandoned by a fabled Irish princess. *William of Palerne,* a French Romance poem commissioned by Countess Yolanda of Hainaut circa 1200, was even more obvious in demonstrating the werewolf’s humanity. Instead of vengeance, the main theme was the protection of posterity, and Alphonse the werewolf often risked his life to secure the safety of William and her lover out of pure goodness as they were not connected by any obligation such as kinship.

It is sufficiently clear that the diversity of werewolves across space and time warrants no convincing generalizable conclusion, that the werewolf is not a singular phenomenon. Oftentimes, the accounts are so different that they can appear incompatible. Resultantly, the variety points to phenomena endemic to geographically divergent locales possibly influenced by the domestic social climate in that time period. Perhaps a more elegant summarisation was done by Willem de Blécourt, who pithily remarked: “There is no werewolf history; there are only histories of werewolves.” Understanding the complexity of lycanthropy from a wider scale not only nicely segues into the more manageable topic of Livonian werewolves, but also allows us to better appreciate the particular socio-historical context of early modern Livonia. Like every other account of werewolves, the Livonian werewolf takes on meaning only in the specific climate of where it appears.

Old to Early Modern Livonia: A History of Discord and Turbulence

Livonia has always had a turbulent history. Situated far away from the metropolitan influences of the dominant civilizations of Rome or Greece, it is on the periphery of classical *mappa mundi* - medieval maps. The strong connotations of paganism and “backwardness” thus invited numerous religio-military expeditions ever since the 12th century to appease the voracious Christian appetite for evangelization. In 1193, Pope Celestine III called for a military conversion of Northern Europe, and Germanic warrior-priests such as Berthold of Hanover and Albert of Riga fought a “perpetual crusade” to establish ecclesiastical states following the Catholic faith. Direct resistance was fierce: Berthold, a German warrior-monk and the first major figure in such continuous takeovers of Livonia, saw an untimely death by the pagans

who opposed him. Even after agreeing to a truce, hostility still resumed whenever Christians stepped across their fortifications into pagan territory, and scuffles would ensue. During one such skirmish, Berthold chased the fleeing natives but his horse gave up on its master, resulting in an unfortunate fall which created a perfect window for a stab in the back by a Livonian named Ymaut. The struggle seemed irreconcilable, and to fight fire with fire, Pope Celestine's successor, Pope Innocent III, called for a formal crusade with much greater organizational scale than its previous unofficial incarnations. To avenge Berthold, Albert of Riga founded the Livonian Brothers of the Sword in Riga (also known as the Livonian Brotherhood), equipped with manpower meant to permanently settle the region after conquering it.

Concurrently, Albert saw the trade potential of Livonia, being a nexus between Slavic Russia, Scandinavia, and Germany, and induced the development of the established Hansa presence in Riga. The Hanseatic league - a loose confederation of city-states that shared the common legal body of protection on trade and commerce - made forays into the less developed Baltics to economically exploit the untouched natural woodlands of Livonia rich in fur, resin, wood and other commodities. The enduring success of the Hansa provided impetus for sustained migration, and "Germany had not ceased to send the flower of its aristocracy, the élite of its burghers, its monks and its priests, its merchants and citizens, it's landsknechte and mercenaries to these northern coasts". While never large in numbers - it constituted roughly 5-6% of the population - an insidious German colonization more subdued and continuous than its military counterpart had begun to take root in the Baltics since Lübeck traders affirmed a presence in Riga in the 1160s. The Baltic German merchants were xenophobically exclusive, which was reflected in severe restrictions to non-German traders. Within the same walls, native Livonians and Russian traders were barred entry to direct trade with other Hansa ports, and guilds - industry-specific labor unions that controlled production, quality, and price points of artisanal goods - rejected apprentices of non-German ethnic stock since the mid 14th century. Wealthy and thus powerful, Hansa merchants monopolized the economy in Livonia. Such influence was more manifest in rural-urban interactions, where the average Livonian peasant often had an asymmetrical relationship with the merchants, whom they engaged in transactions. Collecting raw resources from the peasants for production in the cities, merchants offered in return agricultural tools. Yet, the exclusivity of artisanal production rendered such goods price-inelastic. Merchants could thus afford to exploit the farmers, whom they knew would have no one else to turn to if they refused to bargain. Already, we see a noticeable racial divide manifested through differences in wealth, status, and privelige, which can also be gleaned from a reading of Thiess' case.

Yet, merchants were only one of the two types of upperclassmen in Livonian society, with the other being the warrior-monk elite. While military advances have been made by Albert and the vast territory was nominally controlled after the last untamed region, Courland, was titularly incorporated in 1230, relationships between the natives and the foreign conquerors remained rocky. Notably, the Livonian Brotherhood was nearly decimated in a disastrous defeat in the Battle of Saule in 1236 by a band of unruly Semigallians and Samogitians, ethnic groups hailing from Southern Latvia and Northern Lithuania. Over 4000 soldiers were killed in this momentous conflict, where the heavy cavalry of the Brotherhood was bogged down by the marshy terrain which the Livonian natives were most comfortable in. "In the swamp, they could offer but weak resistance", and the natives exploited their military advantage of light cavalry and footmen to wear the enemy down. Worse still was the reaction: prompted by the victory, fellow subjugated ethnic groups rekindled the flame for independence and 30 years' worth of conquest left of the Daugava river evaporated within years. The defeat was so complete that the Brotherhood had to be subsumed under a larger chivalric order - the Teutonic Order - to survive, eventually becoming an autonomous branch named the Livonian Order. At least in the early stages of Livonian history, the relationship between the foreign conqueror and the local peoples never constituted a unilateral projection of power, but can instead be figuratively described as a see-saw that fluctuated temporally. Until the consolidation of the Livonian Order where there was a gradual but definite subjugation of the local populace, direct resistance in the form of uprisings were still a recent memory in the time of Thiess. Even as late as 1341 on St George's night (April 23), battle cries such as "kill all the Germans along with their wives and children" reigned heavily in the social landscape of the Duchy of Estonia, which was under the Kingdom of Denmark in Northern Livonia, where a massive peasant revolt took 2 years to suppress and ended up being so devastating that the region

was sold for 19000 marks to the Teutonic Order. Through an understanding of early Livonia's society, the portrayal of Thiess' werewolf as the antithetical image of the judges' preconception finds potential justification in the history of bad blood between the poor Livonian masses - of which Thiess was a part of - and the wealthy aristocratic Germans - of which the judges represented.

Following the establishment of the order, a different kind of tumult took place: a multi-pronged conflict centered around the disagreeing interests of significant players such as the large city states, the Catholic church, the military elite, and external powers. These new social struggles were more complex than the previously binary tensions between conquered and conqueror. Most salient were the internal conflicts between the city states, the Church and the Monastic Order, as well as external conflicts prompted by nations such as Denmark, Russia, Poland-Lithuania and Sweden. From the outset, the Church and the Order were starkly different entities: While both nominally existed in the name of God, the Catholic Church heeded callings from Rome or Avignon, while the Livonian Order was an independent entity of chivalric knights premised on Christian virtues. Holding considerable political sway, the Catholic church were landowning nobility who had vassals, but so was the Livonian Order. The two were thus often in direct conflict, coming into odds in civil war from 1297-1330. To worsen matters, city-states such as Riga, which have increased in prosperity due to trade, became both a target of contention by the two parties but also an independent actor due to the mighty leverage from the wealthy Hanseatic merchants and the urban elite. Hence, the city was gradually emerging to be of crucial importance in influencing the political climate of Livonia. The diversification of powers inevitably resulted in fault lines within Livonian society as the region "retains an increasingly archaic confederation character." Rather than being efficiently centralized, power was diffused among multiple players vying for control, engendering constant dissent and social turmoil. The ruling class often engaged in internal conflicts, and the peasants suffered collateral damage to their economic livelihood and security, with many moving to cities to ensure greater stability at a time where ethnic restrictions in urban life were still not fully ingrained. Internal weakness thus allowed for dissatisfactory sentiments among the peasants targeting the ineffectual authorities, potentially conveyed in metaphors such as the werewolf. The burgeoning presence of friction within society can be seen in the introduction of the diet (*landtag*) in 1419, an initiative whereby representatives of multiple parties in society sought to reconcile arguments by holding occasional assemblies to discuss important questions. Yet, such measures were often ineffective due to deep-rooted vested interests which were often at odds with each other. Appealing to foreign powers for help had thus been a recurrent theme whenever internal disagreements became intractable. For example, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was called upon as allies in the Battle of Turaida in 1298 by the city-state of Riga to fight against the Order after an unsuccessful mediation of disputes by the archbishop. This instance of foreign intervention would only herald the start of many more in the next few centuries. Political impotence engendered by internal division invited land-hungry neighbors that sought to gain this commercially viable territory. An already deteriorating domestic climate was exacerbated by foreign incursions.

External interference from Muscovy under the reign of Ivan the Terrible culminated in the Livonian war (1558-1583), a grueling campaign that saw complicated alliances, unforeseen developments and perennial changes in territory. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Denmark, Sweden, and Transylvania all partook in this protracted conflict. Ransacked by multiple invaders, Livonia changed from an order into a confederation into a duchy then into a kingdom in a short span of 30 years. Following yet another 30 year war fought between Poland and Sweden from 1600-1629, a climactic closure to decades of instability was finally indicated by transferring the Duchy of Livonia and Estonia - Polish territory at that time - to under Swedish control while the Duchy of Courland remained under the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Yet, even such peace was tenuous, as the "struggle for hegemony between these two powers remained unresolved." In summary, as Toivo Raun put it, incessant warfare from the 16th and 17th centuries "devastated Baltic life." Plague, famine, and poverty were widespread, especially in Northern Livonia, where contemporary Swedish records noted massive outflows in population happening in coincidence with the most geographically contested sub-region in the war. The fire of warfare greatly weakened the already ineffective power centers of Livonia, allowing submerged historical tensions between the ethnic Livonians and Germans to resurface. In Harjumaa and Läänemaa, the most serious peasant revolt within 200 years happened in 1560 as 4000 farmers

torched noble estates in a fit of anger. In a descent towards anarchy during the Livonian War, we once again note strong negative sentiments towards the elite manifested in the form of direct confrontation, although that became increasingly rare with systemic changes to society as expounded below.

Meanwhile, structural changes were happening within the farms and villages as the different parties in Livonian society vied for control, furthering social divisions. Due to its recent incorporation into Europe civilization proper, institutions such as manorialism and serfdom held root very late in Livonia, which was often agreed to be around the 16th century, and even as late as the 17th century. Before that, Livonia did have social stratification based on wealth and prestige, but there never appeared structurally permanent features of hereditary servility or protection systems that defined institutional feudalism. Rather, the majority of the landholding farmers - the *adramaa* - were beyond the reaches of eccleastical control and governmental taxation, and there existed a sizable proportion of a fluid population including free and landless peasants that had sufficient geographical and social mobility. Many "fleeing peasants" flocked to big cities such as Tartu and Riga by hearsay of prosperity or to escape debt in the 15th century, and it was only in the 16th centuries that taxation increased to a relatively significant number of 25%. Entrenchment of institutions concurrently developed in the time of Thiess, where strong relations of dependency become fixed. Rather than tilling on farms out of economic advantages, a cultural codification of rules systemized and fixed peasants' role in society with the emergence of terms such as *Errbauer* (hereditary peasant) and *Eberherr* (hereditary lord). By institutionalizing socio-economic differences, the divide between rich and poor grew greater, eventually being manifested along ethnic lines. Most notably, it was first recorded in the 16th century the cleavage between the *undeutsch* (non-German) peasants and the *deutsch* (German) elite, a narrative that became embedded in Livonian lycanthropic accounts.

Summarizing, stifling seigneurial regulations by power-hungry authorities competing for dominance and an increase of fiefs, vassals and manors under institutional change have accentuated already existing divides during the 16th-18th centuries. In fact, Stefan Donecker pointed that the relatively late institutional developments indicated that contemporaries in more "civilized" regions of Europe regarded Livonia to be "notorious for its strict system of serfdom" which they deemed "oppressive and unjust". Moreover, running latent under the immediate strain between the wealthy Germans and the Livonian peasants was a history of ferocious resistance against authority in the form of uprisings and revolts, partly contributed by deep elements of paganism uncorrupted by the still relatively recent attempts to Christanize. More generally, civil strife combined with large scale foreign invasions in recent years have made Livonia politically unstable, a powder-keg prone to explode and unleash unresolved tensions. In comparison to contemporaneous France or Britain where efficient centralization and paucity of foreign invasions have led to relative stability characteristic of their absolute monarchies, Livonia's feudalistic political climate and constant foreign interference provided a unique opportunity for the marginalized populace to oppose the dominant classes.

Livonian Werewolves: An Expression of Social Milieu

It is in this milieu of the 1500-1700s where we see an explosion of contemporary records on lycanthropy. The earliest direct attestation of werewolves in Livonia was by Sebastian Münster, an influential German humanist who, in his 2nd edition of his 1550 book *Cosmographia*, explicitly emphasized the ubiquity of such phenomena in Livonia. "In this land there are many sorcerers and witch-women … (who) become wolves, roam about, and cause harm to all they encounter. Afterwards they transform back into human shape. Such people are called werewolves." First among many, Münster's ethnographic account of the exotica in Northern Europe prompted more detailed mentions on the peculiarity of lycanthropy in Livonia. Olaus Magnus, an exiled Swedish archbishop, dedicated 3 chapters to Baltic lycanthropy in his 1555 book *A Description of the Northern Peoples.* On special occasions (notably the Feast of Christ's Nativity), "in the night, at a certain place there is gathered together such a huge multitude of wolves changed from men that dwell in diverse places". These werewolves "set upon the houses of men that are in the woods with wonderful fierceness and labor to break down the doors" and engaged in characteristically human acts such as "invade(ing) beer cellars and drink some barrels of beer or mead then pile the empty mugs in the middle of the cellar". Following accounts

were also made by numerous scholars and theologians such as Kaspar Peucer and Hermann Wittekind between 1570-1590, who argued the presence of werewolf bands several thousand strong driven by a tall man with a whip. The abundance of evidence suggests that Livonian lycanthropy was not only ubiquitous, but also unique. Contemporary accounts in other regions of Europe remained few and far between. In the *Malleus Maleficarum* - the most important document on medieval heresy - lycanthropy only occupied fragments due to their tangential nature to witchcraft. Additionally, E.W Monter notes: "available evidence indicates that in most parts of Christendom, werewolves were extremely rare". Modern researchers have discerned that in times of turmoil, the resurgence of fantastic, grotesque monsters "seem to exemplify the discord of the times", as raised by Norman R. Smith. Half-beast and half-man, it is an apt metaphor for the renunciation of human sensibility and a deterioration into bestial disorder. It is an imaginative figment which exaggerates and romanticizes the squalid state of affairs in society, a conduit to materialize such abstract emotions by giving them a physically tangible form. The Livonian werewolf, being so intensively recorded in a relatively short period of time, seems to be a fitting expression of the religious, ethnic, and social strife which epitomized Livonian society in the 1500-1700s.

The relationship between strife and werewolves has even been directly mentioned, although sparingly, by a number of first-hand accounts. Balthasar Russow, an important Livonian historiographer, noted the "amazing and extraordinary portent of wolves" during the war who gathered in "row of masses" at close proximity to soldiers, having uncharacteristically lupine behaviors. In a similar vein was Samuel Kiechel's - a German merchant - description of Northern Livonia, where he noted that the devastated lands provided a prime environment for werewolves to roam about. Haunting the Baltic imagination in the time of strife was the furtive shape-shifter who roamed the countryside.

The Case of Old Thiess: A Close Reading

Yet, by undertaking a more specific analysis, we can see that the Livonian werewolf differed not only from its ubiquity, but also in its behavior, personality, and characteristics. Unlike the one-dimensionalized demon that we are often familiar with, the werewolf was often portrayed to have greater richness and depth in character. In the case of Thiess, the central point of conflict lay in Thiess' proclamation that while transformed, he was beneficial to society: he was a "hound of God" (*Gottes Hunde)* who ran to hell, battled witches (*Hexen*) to take back the grain blossoms that these agents of evil had unjustly procured, before sharing it with the populace. This ran contrary to the judges' designation of werewolves, whose mere existence was indicative of satanic influence as according to Christian theology, it couldn't be a creature of God. The soul is the "image of God", and the only suitable carapace for such a holy entity was the human body. Fundamentally, the werewolf's blurry ontological status of being a shape-shifter threatens the establishment of biblical taxonomy, which clearly demarcated mankind to "have dominion … over all the wild animals of the earth". The werewolf destroys such hierarchy by blatantly admitting man and beast can coexist as one entity. It is likely that while centuries of Christianization have ostensibly reduced the "backwardness" associated with Baltic paganism, deep, penetrating attempts to thoroughly proselytize remains lacking due to the highly scattered and ineffective power centers. The Church, much less powerful than elsewhere as it often had to contend with secular powers such as the military and the burghers, was unable to exert unyielding and continuous influence conducive for complete Christianization. This was evidenced by strong displays of pagan beliefs still present in the countryside: Elaborate burial rituals, syncretic worship of Christian saints as House Gods, and heavy involvements of tutelary spirits in everyday life. Thiess' benevolent werewolf thus partly found its existence in the pagan beliefs of Livonia before Christianity's arrival.

Crucially, Thiess demonstrated human attributes that the highbrow judges would regard as absent in their conceptions of the blood-thirsty beast in the act of eating: "The werewolves tore pieces off with their teeth, and with their paws they stuck the pieces on spits that they found, and when they consumed the meat, they had already turned back into men … They took salt with them from the farm as they departed." Both the judge and Thiess were alert to the werewolf's status as an in-between figure between the categorical divide of man and beast, yet their treatments of the werewolf's actions were different. Thiess highlighted the aspect of human sensitivity when it came to eating,

stating that the werewolves transformed into men and ate the meat "roasted" with the addition of condiments such as salt. There was an active effort to emphasize the humanness inherent in the werewolf by carefully describing anthropomorphic actions through consumption, a watershed activity that best delineates man from beast as eating cooked food is a fundamental condition of civility. Thiess repudiated the judge's preconceived interpretation of the werewolf: a rapacious beast with a biological penchant for uncooked flesh, being reflected in the inherent surprise in the judge's initial query "why didn't they eat meat raw, as wolves do?"

Instead of relenting, Thiess' testimony diverged from the official narrative on all levels. Facing the 9 *Herrs (*an honorific, english equivalent of "sir") of Germanic descent who presided the hearing, Thiess' powerful defense seemed to be alluding to wider social discontent against the powerful foreign elite who often villainized native Livonians by equating them to werewolves. The word *"versipellis"*, a byword for Livonian werewolves - translated literally to "turned skin" or "shape shifting" - also had a double meaning of "treacherous" and "deceitful", human qualities that aptly designated the often hostile attitude native Livonians harbored towards their conquerors. The ethnic dimension of the werewolf is further fleshed out in a little-known yet highly revealing story narrated by German theologian Christian Kortholt. In 1637, his acquaintance, with a band of friends, were invited to a local inn for a drink. Beside their table was a group of native peasants, one of whom offered him a toast by reciting precisely "To you, sir, as it is to me." Struggling to comprehend the foreign tongue, the acquaintance was about to reciprocate by thanking him in the most general way possible, but was stopped by his friends who suddenly beat the peasant and chased him out. Little did he know that it was customary practice for beguiling Germans to fall for this apparent act of kindness, and if he had indeed thanked the peasant, he would have transformed into a werewolf. Long gone were the forms of direct confrontation in the 16th to 18th centuries where social institutions such as serfdom had taken root, hence dissatisfaction towards the Germans was expressed in more oblique methods such as trickery, intrigue, and subterfuge. The werewolf is thus inextricably intertwined with the "perfidious", devious Livonian peasant whose hatred for Germans remains strong after centuries.

In summary, Thiess' werewolf was an inversion of the traditional narrative. In doing so, he corrected the negative stereotype of the werewolf, establishing how they were creatures fighting *against* evil forces. But he went further than that. Thiess, in a manner similar to elitist designations of lycanthropy to be a property of ethnic Livonians, launched a counter-attack by equivalating German ethnicity with evil. The symbolic discourse the werewolf represents can be attested with greater clarity when we analyze Thiess' descriptions of his nemesis. To Thiess, hell was a "storehouse of a great manor", whose lord, the devil, commanded the sorcerers to steal grain for his well-being. To rectify such a grave misconduct, the werewolves went "to the place at the end of the lake called Puer Esser, in a swamp below Lemburg about a half mile from Klingenberg, the estate of the Herr substitute President. There were lordly chambers and commissioned doorkeepers, who stoutly resist those who want to take back the grain blossoms and the grain the sorcerers brought there." The devil and his acolytes stole on a cyclical basis, often happening during St.Lucia's eve, and their unfailing consistency was contrasted by the werewolves' retribution arc which might not guarantee victory. If that was the case, it could foreshadow infertility for the following year's harvests.

The mentions of a great manor replete with servants and guardsmen were heavily reminiscent of the rich, wealthy German elite who had in the recent centuries established a chokehold presence in the rural landscape of Livonia as overbearing barons of the countryside. This was traceable to recent developments of institutionalized feudalism in the 16th - 17th centuries where unpaid, or corvée, labor was established as a norm. Thiess' emphasis on the agricultural motive of the werewolves further alluded to the nobility as they often excessively exploited their indentured farmers, who toiled until death without receiving any form of compensation. The seasonality of such raids, combined with the unerring regularity of the procurement of such grain, seemed to be metaphorical parallels to the phenomena of small-scale peasant uprisings and taxation, which was rarely collected in monetary form. Meanwhile, from Thiess' narration, we understand that the location of the Lord's dwelling seems to be specifically situated in the local topography, roughly 4 miles away from Thiess' abode and approximate to the manor of Bengt Johan Ackerstaff, a *Herr* who not only presided over Thiess' court trial but was also his previous employer. It would not be a baseless supposition to believe Thiess' hatred was specifically directed. The subterranean nature of the manor thus makes sense

if Thiess was trying to dramatize and attach certain infernal associations to the German landlord. Perhaps more direct corroboration was found in a separate trial of 1651, where another accused werewolf testified that "the Evil One appeared in person, in black German clothing." An ironic reversal of the dominant, Germanic attitudes towards the native Livonians, the peasants attributed Germanic ethnicity to wickedness. More specifically, as attested by Udo Vulk, "images of demonic evil acquired a concrete embodiment in the figure of the German landlord". Strong indications of antagonism displayed through the discourse of the werewolf are coincidentally cohered by the class system and unstable politics that characterized early modern Livonia.

Another curious point of Thiess' testimony is that he never once explicitly mentioned the relationship between peasant and elite, as well as the ethnic designations that came with this divide. Instead, we circumstantially glean key details that alluded to a greater picture of social reality. His roundabout manner might seem questionable if his motive was to demonstrate dominant peasantry sentiments against the rich, powerful Germans. Yet, his actions become understandable if we view his exposition as a court defense. Directly implicating the Germans would have disastrous consequences, as Thiess would be self-accusing. Crucially, he would suffer the wrath of law for a severe charge: sedition. After all, Thiess' virulence was not targeted towards any specific person; rather, it was a discontent directed at the society at large, specifically its ruling class, and at how peasants were not given their due and unfairly designated from birth their socio-economic status. Thiess probably commanded a great deal of respect - not solely due to his age, but also his role as a folk healer, an irreplaceable vocation for the normal functionings of village life as they had the ability to confer fertility, health, and prosperity. Both the judges and Thiess would thus surely realize that he could easily utilize his fame to inflame rebellious emotions, posing a considerable risk to authority. Speaking up would be dangerous. Yet, given the unique opportunity to speak in front of the judges that he harbored many ill feelings, it would be a waste for Thiess to succumb to their narrative. Therefore, he masterfully packaged a wondrous tale rich with meaning and significance, speaking via analogies a collective hatred towards the German aristocracy. When asked "were Germans found among them (werewolves)?", Thiess answer was intentionally ambiguous: "The Deutsche doesn't join their company; rather, they have a special hell of their own." Rather than directly associating the Germanic overlord to the devil, Thiess cleverly maintained a distance from that possible rhetoric. Instead, he implied his hostility with great caution via signs and symbols. His seemingly fictitious testimony required the art of decoding and interpretation, something which the supercilious judges deigned to undertake. Rather, many of them were satisfied viewing lycanthropy as mere peasant rabble, an interesting curiosity undeserving of further significance; to put a case in point, Heinrich Von Ulenbrock - a German patrician from Riga - denounced werewolves as "deplorable delusion!" and the shape-shifting peasants "maddened by ungodliness." In this case, Thiess' articulation was a perfect satire: he insults his enemy without them noticing it.

If Thiess' case was a solitary, one-off occurrence, it seems plausible that his testimony might not be in fact a clever disguise of current sentiments in Livonia. It is equally likely to be a rambling of a senile old man at death's door, or the product of an overly imaginative mind. However, many other accounts can be used to corroborate Thiess' testimony. Olaus Magnus, apart from his detailed description of werewolves, also raised 3 anecdotes about Baltic werewolves. The first concerned a peasant volunteer transforming into a wolf to procure fresh livestock for his lord, while the second and third anecdotes were quite similar - in both stories, the serf transformed in order to disprove the noble's skepticism about lycanthropy. Running throughout these stories was the dynamic between the lord and the serf, the Germans and the Livonians. Kaspar Peucer, in his 1560 work *Commentary on the Most Important Kinds of Divination,* mentioned a young Livonian peasant who suddenly collapsed in a banquet. After waking up, he professed that he transformed into a wolf in order to chase a witch, which has morphed into a butterfly. Once again, we see a reversal of the standard narrative when the werewolves became missionaries of good will. More tellingly, in the 1683 trial of Tomas Igund we almost see a one-to-one reflection of Thiess' account. Igund described how "for twenty years, he went about in wolf form, but he gave his wolf skin to his father's brother." in exchange for "a piece of meat" and a promise "to serve your master faithfully". Witches "lived beside the same place (as the werewolves' lord), whose job is to steal the blossoms of grain and take them to their lord, but these werewolves take them away from them and restore them to their owners, so that they will suffer no loss." Notably, when questioned why there was "prayer at holy

dinners", Igund answered that they were meant for a God that "left the job eight years ago and no longer flies about with the werewolves."

The transactional nature of passing the "wolf-skin" from people of different generations and serving a master indicate the presence of institutional organization. Being a werewolf thus initiated an entry to a social network which reinforced the phenomena by ensuring its continuity and persistent influence. Similarly in Thiess, we discover the social nature of the werewolf. When questioned about the origins of his lycanthropic beliefs, Thiess answered that "they have a wolf pelt, which only they put on. He had it from a peasant of Marienburg , who came from Riga, and he turned it over to a peasant from Alla a few years ago." One cannot help but hypothesize about the possibility of underground peasant organizations in the stifling atmosphere of Early Modern Livonia, who would bear arms if they saw injustice too great to bear - possibly gleaned from the perennial themes of oppression, despotism, and resistance in the *dainas,* Livonian folk songs. Moreover, as we have seen in Thiess, the werewolves were benefactors of society who sought to address the unfairness Livonian peasants experience on a common basis by hunting the malefactors - the witches. The specific reference to agricultural produce once again emphasizes not only how the struggle was closely intertwined with peasant life, but was more likely than not a direct reflection of reality. Yet, what was more salient - even though it had been discontinued - here is the "prayer at holy dinners". Clearly the God of worship did not refer to the Christian God; if that was so, Igund would not have reason to be tried. Rather, he - and the group of werewolves - seemed to venerate a very different God, one who had a fugitive presence and was unconventionally down-to-earth by "flying" with the werewolves for hunts. Instead of possessing the qualities of omnipresence and omnipotence, this God took on an image of a spiritual leader amongst a band of vigilantes. Upon closer examination, Igund's testimony seems to be an informative attestation on peasantry sentiments towards the German lords.

Livonian Werewolves: Being utilized by both Peasantry and Elite

Yet, there can be accounts of lycanthropy that are quite different from the detailed, biographical narratives from the peasantries. We can contrast the case of Igund and Thiess with Kaspar Peucer's *Commentary on the Most Important Kinds of Divination,* which seems to be less of a description of reality and more of an ideologically infused story. In the book, he mentioned that werewolves slaughtered cattle, but did not harm humans, and often formed huge contingents that underwent metamorphoses after walking through a shallow river, being led by a limping child while a tall man at the back made sure there were no stragglers. Certain key elements in the story alluded to the same themes we have discovered before, even though the account had a noticeably lurid tone. The nightly procession of crossing a river to achieve a lupine form was indicative of a ceremonial aspect in becoming a werewolf, further echoed by the more prevalent initiatory act of uttering magic words and sharing a mug of alcohol with a fellow werewolf as attested by Kortholt. Similarly, the "thousands of them" were exaggerations, but did point to the communal character of the werewolf. Yet, the atmosphere created was one which instilled uncanny apprehension: A deathly cavalcade driven by a solemn, imposing figure who used the iron whip and led by a hobbling child. Particularly interesting is the imagery of the child. Lameness is an indication of disability, thus rendering a person an incomplete whole. The self-representation of man as a bipedal, symmetrical creature is impaired. On a metaphorical level, the werewolf is also a cripple, since it is half-beast, and is therefore an entity distinct from the normal human. Such incompleteness - as suggested by Carlo Ginzburg - points to an infernal association with the Great Beyond, the supernatural realm of death, spirits, and ghosts which does not belong to the territory of the living that individuals of vitruvian proportions we are familiar and comfortable with inhabit.

There was thus an indication that werewolves, on an abstract level, were inevitably connected to otherworldly forces potentially demonic in origin. Meanwhile, the dark man reinforced such a mood by highlighting the presence of sinister forces. Comparing Peucer's first-hand account with other sources we have looked at, we can see two drastically different attitudes. It is not surprising that Peucer, a German reformist and philosopher indoctrinated in the standard elite narrative, would seek to paint a negative light of werewolves. This is illuminating: the attempt to disparage the "uncivilized" Livonians reveals unresolved strains within society that require active efforts by the dominant

class to cement their positions. Nonetheless, the varying accounts share commonalities, including but not limited to: the non-solitary nature of the werewolf, heavy ritualistic and communal significance in metamorphosis, and its "threshold" existence. The lupine figure thus provided a common vocabulary that both the elite and peasant could utilize to their own advantages. The peasants could emphasize the goodness of the werewolf's actions, while the elite were given the opportunity to designate the werewolf as the devil's spawn.

The following example can perhaps more clearly demonstrate how the werewolf could potentially be a metaphor working for the elite. Andreas Arvidi, a student from Strängnäs, Sweden, delivered an emotionally rousing polemic against Livonian werewolves at the university at Dorpat in 1644. In line with Peucer's rhetoric, we see the darker side of the Livonian werewolf. Almost recalling Peucer's tale verbatim, Arvidi made a passionate speech denouncing the existence of such werewolves: "But opposed, oh abominable shame, this horrendous cabal of lycanthropes! Hastily following the boy with the lame leg—that is to say, a demon—and the infernal man equipped with the whip of iron straps. Oh what profanity! O tempora! O mores!" The heavy utilization of literary devices, combined with explicit references to devilry, were indicative of Arvidi's emphatic attempt to convince his learned audience the diabolical nature of the werewolf. We do not have to infer or read between lines. Himself a part of the social elite, it was once again in the tradition of learned Germans such as Peucer that Arvidi sought to lambast the peasants through the medium of the werewolf. He particularly emphasized how these werewolves transformed on significant Christian occasions such as Christmastime. Conventionally a celebration for the birth of Christ, it instead became the inauspicious moment when werewolves were "born". Arvidi underlined the binary relationship between werewolves and God, evil and good, similar to our vilified conception of the werewolf. Through such parallels, we see conscious efforts to use the werewolf discourse against the peasantry masses. The werewolf was thus not the sole dominion of the native peasants; it could equally be used, interpreted, and twisted to suit the needs of the Germanic elite. The discourse worked both ways, and from the many different characterizations of the werewolf we sense messages meant for different classes. Yet, they all reveal obvious social tensions within society, most crucially via lines of ethnicity, status, wealth, and to a lesser degree - religion. Establishing this precept, we can further understand the uniqueness of the Livonian werewolf in comparison to its other counterparts in different geographical locales.

During the contemporaneous witch craze in Central and Western Europe, werewolves appeared in areas most devastated by religious strife amidst overtones of counter-reformation following the Protestant Divide: Franche-Comte, Lorraine, and Western Germany. In the Eifel region of Germany, we see staggering lycanthropy accusations nearing the ubiquity of Livonia. Between 1630 and 1635, 22 shape-shifters - mostly werewolves - were tried in the municipal parish of Schmidtheim. But we do not see any ambivalence in the werewolf's character or competing portrayals of it suggestive of an inter-ethnic or inter-class struggle. Rather, we see a bloody murderer devoid of humanity, a hollow shell inhabited by the devil, more suited to the religious discourse prevalent at the time where different faiths engaged in ideological wars against each other to condemn, belittle, or denigrate. Serving as "bulwark(s) against the spread of Protestant heresies", such peripheral regions were possessed with intense religiosity, manifested in the werewolves who were equivalated to religious waywardness: "forced denunciations of male and female werewolves and shape-shifters were directed against (those) who probably resisted the anti-witchcraft movements", including parish priests of Manderscheid-Blankenheim and Manderscheid-Gerolstein. Illustrative details always highlighted the element of religion: the devil appeared in the werewolf indictments by equipping them with "iron-teeth", ointments, girdles, or knives, who engaged in brutal acts of animal and human slaughter. A politico-religious complex is more prominent in the werewolf's construction, which seemed to be a product of religious struggle rather than socio-ethnic strife which defined the Livonian version.

The Cultural Significance of Wolves in Livonia: How the Werewolf came about

Yet, understanding the werewolf to be a mouthpiece for social struggles does not mean its existence is completely justified on its utility to transmit abstract ideas via a digestible and evocative image. Another reason why werewolves were so endemically unique and prevalent in Livonia is the cultural significance of wolves. The repeated occurrences

of lycanthropy point to a "framework of pre-existing grammar" where the elite and the poor could manipulate to further their own interests. Simply speaking, social struggles were merely taking advantage of the wolves' strong cultural presence in Livonia, and brought them to the forefront as a more horrifying creature: the werewolf. Here, Ginzburg, a foremost researcher on Thiess, uses linguistic concepts of *langue* and *parole* to illustrate the reasons for the werewolf as such a popular figure. In this particular context, the *langue*, or vocabulary, refers to the rich significance wolves are associated with in Livonian folktale. The *parole*, or the articulation of language, refers to the concrete instances whereby individuals proclaim themselves to be werewolves, or first-hand accounts which testify the existence of these creatures. Importantly, *parole* is both strictly limited by the cultural constraints of *langue* but at the same time engendered by it. This is not unlike our use of language, where despite being restricted by recognized words in the dictionary and acceptable syntax rules, we can also craft many different sentences, words, and phrases with variable meanings. The werewolf's significance as an expression of social tensions thus warrants a deeper dive into a cultural stratum that places special emphasis on the wolf.

Contemporaneous accounts refer to Livonia's geography as a "marshy, flat, densely forested land." With its nature in relatively pristine condition due to slow economic development and the late arrival of advanced European institutions, its untamed forests had an ancient and mysterious ring to them. Wolves were thus common predators that stalked the undergrowth, preying on unsuspecting individuals. Ilmar Rootsi, in his doctoral dissertation, noted that as recent as the 19th century, over 111 wolf attacks had been recorded over a span of 50 years from 1804-1853. If we go further back to the 16th or 17th centuries, we find evidence that travelers were often armed with lances, crossbows, blowing horns, and all sorts of protective equipment to fend off against hungry wolves in food-scarce winters. The "overwhelmingly rural" landscape of Livonia would mean that wolves are habitual occurrences that always posed a potential danger to the countryside, preying on livestock and susceptible age groups. The image of this forest predator was likely to be deeply embedded in the psyche of non-town dwelling farmers, who constituted the majority of the population. Deep respect was accorded to these creatures, for the native Livonians knew that they neither had the bureaucratic power nor technological ability to completely cull these fiends. Wearing a wolf's tooth was thus said to be a talisman which warded off harm, and it was customary to leave offals in the forest to appease the wolves. They were seen as a manifestation of the forest spirit, and their sudden acts of barbarity were the forests' retribution for humans' wayward behavior in the woods.

The wolf thus had significant cultural import to the Livonians. It was a wandering brigand that oftentimes came into conflict with the sedentary farmers, and must be treated with due regard. It is thus no surprise that this particular creature was employed as the central figure to express long-standing animosity against the decadent lords who resided in manors waiting to be robbed. As Peter Jackson put it, "not only did the wolf dissimulate the dog as its undomesticated counterpart, it was also the quintessential 'enemy of the herd' and thus a looter's perfect token of identification." The wolf symbolized the untamed nemesis roaming in the forests, a bestial counterpart to the native pagans who were comparatively insulated from German influence. It came out and conducted raids on villages when hungry or threatened, similar to the occasional harassments peasants performed on the local elite when oppression had passed a tolerance threshold. Instead of manifesting the forest spirit, the wolf symbolized the anti-establishment desire of the natives. As if to argue the wolf's allegorical purpose, we see a blending of man and beast in the constitution of the werewolf. Assuming a beastly exterior and a human interior, this creature of imagination terrified the lords, and they saw it as a reflection of their disobedient subjects, exaggerating their lowliness by comparing them to beasts. But to the peasants, it was merely an augmented form which allowed them to express discontent through possibly concrete actions of vengeance such as recovering the grains that they had lost to excessive taxation. Wearing the wolf-skin was a badge of honor, not a mark of shame. Hence, when Thiess was acquitted due to insufficient evidence and him not pleading guilty, Judge Ackerstaff noted that he was "idolized by the peasants."

While the judges were exploring individuals related to Thiess to gain a clearer understanding of his crime, they came upon a peasant named Gurrian who beseeched Thiess to bless his livestock and heal his cattle even when he knew Thiess was a werewolf. Initially rejecting such a thing occurred, Gurrian began to crack under pressure. After swearing to the Almighty God his fidelity to truth, he admitted his wrongdoing by accepting Thiess' sorcery with "fear

and trembling". Better to suffer a temporary punishment in the earthly life than to receive eternal damnation. The judges, being unable to crack the tough nut that was Thiess, were able to find a less-than-ideal but satisfactory enough target to exemplify the power of law and demonstrate the power of true faith. Gurrian, "who was himself not the subject of evil rumors", committed no obvious crimes but was still punished by 12 strokes of cane by the High Executor. The tenuity involved in justifying the decision not only highlighted the increasing desperation of the court, but also the mutable image of the werewolf. As Bruce Lincoln pointed out, "better schooled than Thiess in the conventional relations of domination and submission, Gurrian assumed the role of the ignorant peasant and repentant sinner that Thiess had declined." Here, we see once again that the werewolf represents a discourse, a conversation which people from different backgrounds could chime in: whether it can be maximized to its fullest utility is ultimately dependent on the personnel involved. It is a flexible figure whose value and meaning is not predetermined. If Thiess possessed the same diffident temperament as Gurrian, it is highly likely that the court battle would end then and there. Yet, probably having less to lose and fear, Thiess forces a drawn-out struggle and refuses to submit to their narrative.

Conclusion

Even within Livonian werewolves, Thiess' case is *sui generis*. It is an anomalous example of the extreme, where the accused disagreed so completely with the prosecutors a sensible ending was nowhere in sight. The old man did not conceal his lycanthropy; in fact, he was proud of it. Again and again we hear him proclaiming his virtue along the lines of : "(I) have done God much service." and "werewolves cannot tolerate the devil." Neither did he omit details, nor were his professed actions too rose-tinted to be adequately believed; after all, he did concede that he killed many small livestocks such as "lambs, piglets, and the like" for sustenance. There was little evidence of circumlocution or an effort to be vague, as he expounded and clarified when there were further inquiries - the trial transcript was unusually long, standing at 19 pages. When tried with difficult theological questions, Thiess answered with great perspicacity, hinting to the judges that their questions were heavily inflected by preconceived notions and crude subjectivity. He established his position with great conviction, succumbing to neither "alternating kindness or threats". This was the most brilliant moment in his life. In his 80 or so odd years, he finally got the chance to verbalize his deeply held beliefs with clear thinking and sharp acumen that belied his age. But such defiance had a cost. Shaken by his indefatigable spirit, the court reconvened a year later in October 31, 1692 to deliver the verdict: In "regard to lycanthropy, as also the perpetration of other vexatious and highly forbidden misdeeds", "twenty pairs of blows will be administered by the hand of the *Scharftrichter (executioner)* of Lemburg before a public gathering of the peasantry in the parish" for preventative purposes "before he is banished from the land forever." This will be the last we ever hear of him. But beyond Thiess, through the werewolf that he identified with, we catch a glimpse of a social history mired in struggles, discord, and oppression. In a historical region devastated by warfare and internal strife, the werewolf appears as a lingering specter, personifying the collapse of order and deep social divides, as if to remind us the ethereal howls of the brute are accompaniments to the deathly wails of anguish ringing through the ravaged plains of Livonia.

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