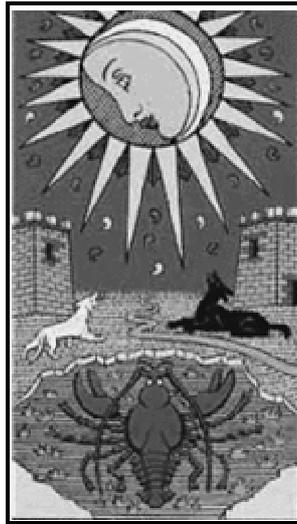


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The concept of the *lupo mannaro* in the literary tradition of northern and southern Italy from the 19th to the 21st century.

A comparative analysis.



Lycanthropy would appear to be a current condition if recent film production and contemporary literature are to be believed. In her essay, Gianfranca Ranisio probes the current interest in the subject of the *lupo mannaro* in the Italian cultural context, as the media have attempted to revitalize traditional folklore using state-of-the-art instruments and special effects. This phenomenon is manifested first of all by the most recent expression of the reintegration of the legendary past into modern life and, secondly, by the confirmation that its folkloric culture has an inexhaustible and evergreen undisclosed intellectual value.

La credenza nella licanthropia, che potrebbe essere assunta [...] come traccia o prodotto di vicende culturali di un tempo già trascorso, in quanto ormai ridotta a ruolo di relitto culturale, riceve in questo modo nuova vitalità perchè inserita in un prodotto di massa quale è quello dell'industria cinematografica. [...] In questo modo il tema folklorico viene inserito in una produzione di tipo intellettualistico al fine di ottenere effetti spettacolari.

[Belief in lycanthropy, which could be assumed . . . as a trace or product of cultural situations of the past, because it has now been reduced to the role of a cultural wreck, thus acquires new vitality because it has been included in a mass product such as that of

the film industry . . . Thus, the folkloric theme is inserted into an intellectualistic type of product with the aim of achieving spectacular effects].<sup>1</sup>

The media revival of this “folkloric horror” must be included in the cultural process whose aim is to rescue, save and protect the rural origins of Europe’s preindustrial community from the vacuity of the modern middle class and its moral emptiness. According to Ranisio, it is

il mondo urbano borghese che avverte il vuoto dei valori etico-sociali e che è alla ricerca, quando non di nuovi valori, anche solo di nuovi e diversi contenuti e stimoli e finisce col ritrovare il nuovo nell’antico e cioè in quel patrimonio di usi, costume e credenze e leggende che è il patrimonio demologico europeo.

[the bourgeois urban world that senses the void of ethical-social values and, even if not seeking new values, it may merely be seeking new and different contents and stimuli, and ends up finding the new in the ancient, i.e. in that legacy of customs and beliefs and legends that we call the European demological heritage.]<sup>2</sup>

Solid confirmation of Ranisio’s explanation came recently with the projection of Catherine Hardwicke’s *Red Riding Hood* at Italian cinemas, as part of the systematic adaptation – along the lines of a horror story – of traditional fairy tales such as *Sleeping Beauty* and *Beauty and the Beast*, and the Italian translation of Glen Duncan’s *The Last Werewolf*. Both works offer the Italian cultural market the recollected image of the ancient legend of the werewolf. Hardwicke develops her film story by revisiting the Grimm brothers’ fairy tale of *Rotkäppchen* – the story is set in the desolated woods of an isolated village in the Middle Ages – and, from a gender standpoint, the werewolf is not a man as traditionally described in legend but a young woman, i.e. Little Red Riding Hood. Instead, Duncan’s most recent horror novel evokes a pastiche that oscillates between an unusual Gothic novel and a 19th-century *feuilleton*. Despite these structural differences, however, both works focus on the werewolf process and its indissoluble link with the negative and murderous power of the moon. Astrologically speaking, the moon has always been considered the obscure side of the Self, the indefinable aspect of the human soul: a grey area that can lead to unexpected brutal and violent actions such as those revealed by lycanthropy. From a magical standpoint, the moon has mainly been associated with the night and its inexplicable shadows, and psychoanalysis has always identified the moon with the mysteries of the soul that are not seen or manifested directly. Therefore, the moon is the other “face” of the sun: it illuminates but does not generate. Yet the moon is also connected with the cyclical renewal of biological life, for it influences not only natural elements but also human ones, as in the case of water and the female reproductive system. The moon nourishes aquatic and terrestrial fauna

1 Gianfranca Ranisio: “Il lupo mannaro. Una tematica folklorica rivisitata dall’industria cinematografica”. In *La Ricerca folklorica*, Vol. 7/1983, pp. 129–135.

2 Ibid., p. 132.

alike. The tarot of the moon exemplifies all of these aspects, showing the profile of a beautiful and smiling young girl gazing at two dogs or wolves and a crab. The animals, in turn, look towards the moon and the nourishment it can provide, the metaphorical drops of a vaguely defined existence between life and death. The symbolism of the tarot summarizes and recalls the key factors that constitute the double and legendary dimension of the life of a werewolf, starting with the fascinating seductive power of the moon that leads certain forms of earthly life to become its chosen initiated priests. The initiation process to which I am referring evokes both mythological and folkloric traditions that culminate with the zoomorphic metamorphosis of a man/woman into a wolf. The first mythological description of such a transformation can be found in the Greek Evanthes and his reconstruction of the Lycaon myth.<sup>3</sup> The episode, which is closely connected with human sacrifice and cannibalism (a man became a wolf after eating human innards in Lycaon's sanctuary to Zeus), is then also mentioned in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*<sup>4</sup> and Plato's *Republic*.<sup>5</sup> Similar narrations were also reported by Pliny the Elder in his *Historia Naturalis*<sup>6</sup> and by Petronius in Chapter 12 of his *Satyricon*.<sup>7</sup> Although all of these ancient Greek and Roman descriptions focus on lycanthropy, they describe different aspects referring to the cause and circumstances of the werewolf process. While Greek mythology underlines that the werewolf transformation should be considered a naive popular credo (Evanthes), but also divine punishment following the desecration of a religious place such as Lycaon's sanctuary to Zeus (Ovid), ancient Roman culture focuses on a ghostly setting (a graveyard at night), an obscure ritual (the strange design traced by a soldier with his urine around his clothes) and the werewolf's brutality, rather than the actual cause of this metamorphosis. Comparing Greek and Roman sources on the description of the werewolf transformation, it proves to be both part of the external divine presence in man's life and the specific borderline area between life and death: a dark cemetery solely illuminated by the moon.<sup>8</sup> But the world of ancient Rome associates lycanthropy not only with an uncontrolled and thus irrational animal condition provoked by the untouchable divine presence in man. Roman scholars such as Claudius Galen cited lycanthropy as a congenital illness, a pathological natural condition that was physically and psychologically revealed by the werewolf's complexion and behaviour.

Coloro i quali vengono colti dal morbo, chiamato lupino o canino, escono di notte nel mese di febbraio, imitano in tutto i lupi o i cani, e fino al sorgere del giorno di preferenza sco-

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3 Erberto Petoia: *Vampiri e lupi mannari*. Rome: Newton Compton Editori 1991, pp. 58–59.

4 Ibid., pp. 59–60.

5 Plato: *Republic*, Book X, vv.6 14a–6 21d.

6 Pliny the Elder, *Historia Naturalis*, Book VIII, vv.80–85. Turin: Einaudi 1983, pp. 195–97.

7 Petronius: *The Satyricon*. <http://www.igibud.com/petron/satyr/satyr.html>.

8 This evokes the funeral tradition of ancient Egypt, where the god Anubi, a man with the head of a jackal, transported the bodies of the dead to the world of shadows.

prono le tombe. Tuttavia si possono riconoscere le persone affette da tale malattia da questi sintomi. Sono pallidi e malaticci d'aspetto, e hanno gli occhi secchi e non lacrimano. Si può notare che hanno anche gli occhi incavati e la lingua arida, e non emettono saliva per nulla. Sono anche assetati e hanno le tibie piagate in modo inguaribile a causa delle continue cadute e dei morsi dei cani; e tali sono i sintomi. E' opportuno invero sapere che questo morbo è della specie della melanconia: che si potrà curare, se si inciderà la vena nel periodo dell'accesso e si farà evacuare il sangue fino alla perdita dei sensi, e si nutrirà l'infermo con cibi molto succosi.

[Those who are affected by the disease, called lupine or canine, go out at night in the month of February, fully imitate wolves or dogs, and until the break of day they prefer to open up tombs. Nevertheless, those suffering from this disease can be recognized by these symptoms. They are pale and sickly in appearance, and their eyes are dry and do not lacrimate. One can also see that their eyes are hollow and their tongues dry, and they have no saliva. They are also thirsty and their shinbones are covered in sores because of their constant falls and dog bites; and these are the symptoms. Indeed, it is good to know that this malady is a type of melancholy: that it can be cured if one lances the vein during an attack and discharges the blood until the person faints, and the patient must be fed very juicy foods.]<sup>9</sup>

Galen's objective medical description includes first the symptoms of the werewolf pathology and then the necessary remedies for its treatment, without specifying a time (traditionally nine years) or spatial setting (the crossing of a water source).<sup>10</sup> Galen's reference to the werewolf's recovery indicates – indirectly – that this condition can be cured in human life and is not necessarily connected with endless killing. It must also be associated with a particularly positive outlook such as that of the Luperci in their Lupercalia. Celebrated annually in ancient Rome on 15 February in order to commemorate the foundation of Rome and the rescue of Romulus and Remus by the female wolf in the Lupercal Cave, the Lupercalia are described in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* as propitiatory rural rituals that protect livestock from wolf attacks and augment the fertility of village women.<sup>11</sup> With the advent of Christianity the strange combination of man and wolf was seen as the abominable expression of the presence of Evil in man's life and was understood as a form of man's submission to the devil in order to receive favours and benefits. It was in the Middle Ages that hunting werewolves became as frequent and popular as witch hunts. This was because the werewolf metamorphosis was mostly interpreted as the manifestation of sorcery and those who practised it thus had to be condemned to be burnt at the stake.<sup>12</sup>

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9 Claudius Galen: *Ars Medica*.

10 Referring to Galen's medical description of lycanthropy, in his voluminous compendium *Ars Medica*, published in 1558 (pp. 63–64), the famous doctor Donato Antonio D'Altomare compares the werewolf with mental illness and suggests regular bleedings, baths in fresh water and a diet of milk.

11 The Lupercalia. URL: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lupercalia>.

12 Erberto Petoia, pp. 265–72.

This introductory analysis on the subject of werewolves in the Greek and Roman worlds in its legendary, mythical, scientific and medical dimension emphasizes an intrinsic combination of negative and positive aspects, human and non-human factors, and ancient and modern components, laying the groundwork for the study of the gendered duplicity of the werewolf's Self in the modern and contemporary literature of southern and northern Italy. In this presentation of the werewolf motif on the Italian literary panorama from the 19th to the 21st century through an overview of short stories and novels, we will examine the writers who have combined ancient rural legends with metropolitan reveries to underscore the complexity and obscure double life of the werewolf. In southern literature Giuseppe Pitré's rural reports in Sicilian dialect and the simple provincial narrations of Luigi Capuana, Emma Perodi and Luigi Pirandello oscillate between a comic gallery of revisited short stories appealing to the collective imagination, in the form of Phaedrus' fables, and an anecdotal review of concrete and dramatic events. The northern Italian fiction of Carlo Lucarelli and Luca Tarenzi instead tends to focus on the hidden and manipulative cruelty of modern political representatives, whose unscrupulous quest for power reminds us of the werewolves.

Chronologically speaking, the short story by Luigi Capuana (1839–1915)<sup>13</sup>, entitled *Il lupo mannaro* (1882), marks the first popular attempt to transfer the werewolf legend to the simple rural life of Sicily. Combining the magical and religious aspects of the past werewolf tradition with the real context of the rural Sicilian setting, Capuana presents the werewolf motif in a deconstructive process. In his fairy tale, the werewolf, normally associated with the devil and its destructive power, becomes the magical power that seemingly brings life rather than death. The secret pact signed by the king and the stranger to ensure the queen's pregnancy echoes Faust's pact.<sup>14</sup> Both the desperate king and Faust yearn for happiness and are thus ready to undertake any kind of agreement with the devil.

Otto giorni dopo, si presentava un forestiero, chiedeva di parlare in segreto con il Re:

- Maestà, ho il rimedio per guarire la Regina. Ma prima facciamo i patti.
- Oh, bravo! Facciamo i patti.
- Se nascerà un maschio, lo terrete per voi.
- E se una femmina?

Se una femmina quando avrà compiuti i sette anni, dovrete condurla in cima a quella montagna e abbandonarla lassù: non ne saprete più nuova.

[Eight days later, a foreigner arrived, asking to speak to the king privately.

- Your Majesty, I have the remedy to cure the Queen. But first we must reach an agreement.

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13 Luigi Capuana, writer and journalist, has usually been defined as the "father" of the Verist movement in Italy; he was a contemporary of Giovanni Verga, who was also born in the province of Catania. Influenced by the French Naturalist Émile Zola, Capuana wrote a large number of short stories and theatrical works on life in rural Sicily, mostly in Sicilian dialect.

14 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: *Faust*, Vol. I.

- Excellent! Let's stipulate the agreement.
- If it's a boy, you will keep it.
- And if it's a girl?
- If it's a girl, when she is seven years of age you must take her to the top of that mountain over there and leave her, and you will never see her again.]<sup>15</sup>

The birth of a daughter in the king's family is marked by the stranger's death verdict, which must unequivocally be interpreted as a consequence of the queen's refusal to give alms to a poor old woman. The latter's physical metamorphosis into the mysterious stranger, the werewolf ("La Reginotta è alle mani d'un Lupo Mannaro, quello stesso che dié il rimedio e fece il patto col Re" ["The Queen is in the hands of a Werewolf, the very one who gave her the remedy and made a pact with the Devil"]<sup>16</sup>), does not follow the conventional stereotype of the werewolf transformation, as Capuana does not speak of any animal transformation.

Ed ecco gli usci si spalancano da loro stessi, e di fondo alla fila delle stanze viene avanti un cosino alto un cubito, vestito d'una stoffa a trama d'oro, con un berrettino rosso e una bella piuma più alta di lui.

[And so the doors open on their own, and at the end of the row of rooms there advances a creature that is a cubit tall, dressed in a fabric shot with gold, with a little red beret and a lovely feather taller than he is.]<sup>17</sup>

The description of Gomitetto, the werewolf, is so unconventional, as it does not convey fear or disgust, that the king's daughter begins to hug and stroke him as if he were a puppet or a doll. The werewolf's legendary wildness and brutality has been transformed into a sense of beauty and innocuousness so that he can more readily betray his victims.

Quel Gomitetto è il Lupo Mannaro. Ti s'è dimostrato a quel modo per non farti paura. Ma ora che sei grande, fra qualche giorno t'apparirà col suo vero aspetto.

["That Gomitetto is the Werewolf. He has shown himself that way so you won't be afraid. But now that you're grown up, he will soon appear to you as he truly is."] <sup>18</sup>

Once the disguised werewolf has imprisoned his victim, he proposes that the king's daughter become his wife.

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15 Luigi Capuana: *Il lupo mannaro*, USRL: [www.lettregiovani.it/Capuana/Il\\_lupo\\_mannaro.htm](http://www.lettregiovani.it/Capuana/Il_lupo_mannaro.htm), p. 1.

16 Ibid., p. 2.

17 Ibid., p. 3.

18 Ibid., p. 4.

Si spalancarono gli usci, ma, invece di Gomitetto, venne avanti il Lupo Mannaro alto, grosso, peloso, con certi occhiacci e certe zanne, che Dio ne scampi ogni creatura! La Reginetta si sentì mancare.

[The doors opened, but instead of Gomitetto there advanced the Werewolf, big, tall and hirsute, with huge eyes and teeth. God save all creatures! The young princess swooned.]<sup>19</sup>

The poor old woman tells the queen and her daughter how to fool the werewolf with a series of rural tricks to lure the monster from his underground shelter and gain enough time to delay the marriage. The werewolf unwittingly finds himself outdoors, where he sees not the poor old woman but a beautiful lady, the fairy queen, surrounded by a dazzling light. The werewolf dies the moment he sees the fairy queen. There is no doubt that the appearance of the fairy queen symbolizes the Christian Madonna: Good defeating the Devil.

Inspired by a fairy-tale atmosphere Giuseppe Pitré (1841–1916)<sup>20</sup> wrote his collection of popular Sicilian legends and traditions entitled *Usi e costumi del popolo siciliano*, which includes “Il lupo mannaro in Sicilia” (published posthumously in 1989). The collection presents a gallery of imaginative anecdotes set in 19<sup>th</sup> century rural Sicily, and most of them revolve around wolves and foxes rather than human figures. Pitré’s narrative structure oscillates between the fantastical and the metaphorical meaning of the animal duo drawn from the ancient Roman classics. Taking Phaedrus’ fables as his model, Pitré describes the wolf as the incarnation of the ingenuous and dull-witted creature whose only positive quality is its brutal force. The fox is instead characterized as cunningly clever, an animal that can run circles around the wolf. The wolf and the fox episodes narrated by Pitré are mostly structured in a dialogue form and can be compared to a series of parables designed to enlighten the reader about specific human qualities and flaws. The gallery of these zoomorphic virtues and vices highlights the dichotomy between Nature and Culture. While the wild force of the wolf represents Nature, Culture is symbolically portrayed by the keen intelligence of the fox. Pitré’s demystification of the wolf is interesting, because its traditional superiority as the king of the forest appears to have been converted to a condition of complete subjection to the fox. Nevertheless,

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19 Ibid., p. 4.

20 The Sicilian Giuseppe Pitré, who studied the folkloric anthropology of southern Italy, was the first Italian intellectual to collect the most traditional and popular anecdotes of local rural life. Thanks to his monumental historical and poetic work in Sicilian dialect published in the two volumes entitled, respectively, *Biblioteca delle tradizioni popolari siciliane* (“Library of Sicilian Popular Traditions”, 1871) and *Fiabe, novelle e racconti popolari siciliane delle parlate siciliane* (“Sicilian Fairy Tales, Stories, and Folktales”, 1875), the southern literary production of the 19<sup>th</sup> century enriched the cultural panorama of such research. Two years before his death Pitré was elected Senator of the Italian Republic.

Pitré's message is not based on a separate consideration of the wolf and the fox. What he suggests is an associative understanding of both animals through a metaphorical interpretation of the duality of human nature, which embraces both instinct and reason.

The writings of Capuana and Pitré demonstrate that the werewolf motif is not only the manifestation of a brutal, unbeatable and unnatural force, but that it is also the image of a certain primordial ingenuity that allows its ancestral violence become milder and much more human.

This hidden dimension of the werewolf's nature is precisely what is described in Emma Perodi's *Il lupo mannaro* (1893).<sup>21</sup> This short story, which is part of the collection entitled *Le novelle della nonna*, follows a symmetrical structure in which the story of Carlo and Annina's marriage in the rural context of Camaldoli (a village near Arezzo, in Tuscany) is interwoven with the grandmother's tale of the werewolf legend. While the village peasants concentrate on organizing the wedding, the children are instead entertained by the grandmother's traditional fairy tale. Both settings, constructed in Boccaccio's narrative format (amusing the reader while awaiting the big event), must be interpreted in a complementary way. Annina is a good-hearted peasant, whereas Carlo is a well-established landlord; Teresona is an ugly but generous woman, whereas Sir Spini is young and handsome, but mysteriously ill. The characterization of the two couples is strongly specular and suggests an interwoven reading revealing aspects that are similar but are conveyed differently. Annina's intelligence allows her to perceive why Carlo decided to marry her – he is as sick as Spini – and Teresona's good heart is responsible for Spini's recovery. Both Annina and Teresona love two men who suffer indirectly or directly from the same illness: epilepsy, i.e. the werewolf pathology.

Questi non era più immobile come lo aveva lasciato. Ma si dibatteva per terra e mandava gridi che somigliavano a ulri di lupo affamato. [...] ma appena la luna inondò con la sua luce argentea la vasta pianura, egli si addormentò, e dal sonno passò alle convulsioni; si dibatteva, mandava bava alla bocca, e urlava come un lupo affamato. [He was no longer immobile, as they had left him, but was writhing on the floor and his cries resembled the howls of a hungry wolf . . . . [B]ut as soon as the moon flooded the vast plain with its silvery light, he fell asleep and went from slumber to convulsions; he flailed, foamed at the mouth and howled like a hungry wolf.]<sup>22</sup>

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21 Emma Perodi (1850–1918) was a journalist and children's author whose best-known short-story collection was *Le novelle della nonna* (1892–93), in which young and adult readers alike can discover a fantastical world, filled with the elements of Gothic and horror fiction.

22 Emma Perodi: *Il lupo mannaro*, USRL: [http://it.wikisource.org/wiki/Il\\_lupo\\_mannaro\\_%28Perodi%29](http://it.wikisource.org/wiki/Il_lupo_mannaro_%28Perodi%29), pp. 4–5.

According to Perodi's narration, the condition of the two men shows no destructiveness towards the leading female characters but, rather, a protective attitude. By metamorphosing into a werewolf the male character acquires physical strength that allows him to protect himself and his beloved from danger. This is exactly what happens in the scene of the procession of the friars engaged by the community to defeat the devil with holy water and crucifixes in Teresona's shelter:

In quel momento messer Spini fu assalito dalle convulsioni; egli incominciò ad urlare, e il suo corpo prese a un tratto l'aspetto orribile di una bestia villosa, con una testa enorme e una bocca fornita di zanne minacciose. L'animale, sempre urlando, si fece sulla porta, e pareva pronto a gettarsi addosso al primo che si accostasse. Il giovane monaco che recava la croce ed era in testa alla processione, appena vide il mostro, fuggì; l'abate che sperava tanto nell'acqua santa, se la diede a gambe, e in breve Teresona vide le tonache bianche dei monaci sparire dalla pianura di Campaldino. Quando più nessuno rimase in quei dintorni, messer Spini riprese sembianze umane e Teresona respirò. Tutti e due capirono che quella trasformazione era avvenuta per intervento celeste e ringraziarono le loro Protettrici.

[From that point on, Sir Spini was overcome with convulsions; he began to shout and his body suddenly acquired the horrible appearance of a hairy beast, with an enormous head and dangerous fangs. Continuing to howl, the animal went to the door and seemed ready to attack the first one to go near him. The young monk bearing the cross and leading the procession fled the moment he saw the monster; the abbot, who so strongly believed in the holy water, ran away. Within moments Teresona saw the monks' white tunics vanish from the plains of Campaldino. When there was no one left, Sir Spini regained his human features and Teresona breathed a sigh of relief. Both of them knew that the transformation had occurred through heavenly intervention and thanked their protectors.]<sup>23</sup>

The last sentence of this passage underscores the deconstruction of the traditional werewolf motif. Since the werewolf condition is no longer the expression of the devil but of God's benevolence, the representatives of the Church – with their religious symbols – thus become the threat that must be removed. In Perodi's short story the werewolf legend, completely restructured and inverted, acquires a fully positive connotation of salvation.

Soltanto quando qualcuno voleva avventurarsi vicino alla casa, mandava urla da lupo, e se v'era qualche spirito forte che si accostava con l'intendimento di uccidere il lupo mannaro nella sua tana, il fiorentino prendeva subito le sembianze del mostro e faceva fuggire il mal capitato.

[He howled like a wolf only when someone tried to approach the house, and if there was a strong-minded soul that came with the intent of killing the werewolf in his lair,

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23 Ibid., pp. 6–7.

the Florentine immediately took on the guise of the monster and drove off the hapless person.]<sup>24</sup>

Thanks to Spini's lycanthropy, the initial narrative disorder caused by the difficult relationship between Teresona and her father as well as the entire community is overcome and the short story comes to a happy ending.

[...] messer Spini narrava a tutti la devozione di cui era stata capace quella creatura così buona e coraggiosa [...] per dimostrarle la sua gratitudine volle farla sua moglie [...] le nozze furono celebrate senza pompa nella cappella del palazzo Spini, dove la sposa visse lunghissimi anni venerata e stimata dal marito e dagli amici di lui, e dove morì in tarda età. [Sir Spini told everyone of the devotion shown by that creature, so good and brave . . . and to demonstrate his gratitude he wanted to make her his wife . . . [T]he wedding was celebrated without great pomp in the chapel of the Palazzo Spini, where the bride lived for many years, worshipped and esteemed by her husband and his friends, and where she died at a very old age.]<sup>25</sup>

A parallel happy ending can also be found in the story of Carlo and Annina, as Perodi writes:

L'Annina era troppo furba per non avere capito tutto. Il cuore le batteva forte forte, e quel certo mistero che ancora avvolgeva un fatto di cui non poteva avere più dubbio, le faceva provare una grande, una immensa felicità. Non sapeva spiegarsi come il sor Carlo avesse proprio scelto lei, e quando fu a letto, sicura che nessuno la vedeva, pianse e rise dalla grande felicità.

[Annina was too clever not to have understood everything. Her heart was pounding and the air of mystery that still cloaked something she could doubt no longer made her immensely happy. She could not explain why Mr Carlo had chosen her, and when she was in bed, sure that no one could see her, she wept and laughed for joy.]<sup>26</sup>

Luigi Pirandello used a similar deconstructive approach in his short story *Male di luna* (1922).<sup>27</sup> Like Pitré and Perodi, Pirandello revisits the werewolf motif, showing the positive side of its ugliness and brutality, inspiring male protectiveness towards

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24 Ibid., p. 7.

25 Ibid., p. 7.

26 Ibid., p. 8.

27 Luigi Pirandello (1867–1936) started his literary activity as a writer and dramatist in the group of Luigi Capuana and Giuseppe Verga, but after a short period in the Verist movement he shifted towards unrealism, embracing the conception of man and life in a much more complex way. Each human being must be considered a social animal with the great capability of adapting to circumstances. Pirandello was interested not only in the objectivity of tangible everyday life, but also the dark sides of the human soul that reveal the unconsciousness. The complexity of the human soul can be found in Pirandello's motto, "One, no one and a hundred thousand", meaning that each man has more than one identity based on his specific life circumstance.

women. Pirandello's leading characters, Batà and Sidora, are husband and wife, and they live in a desolate farmhouse in a rural Sicilian village. In their young life together – Batà and Sidora are newlyweds – they must suddenly deal with an unexpected event marked by the full moon on a summer night, when Batà turns into a werewolf. The prelude to Batà's werewolf transformation is represented by the weather in this deserted rural setting, where the heat is stifling, combined with uncommon stillness and Batà's strange behaviour: Batà is overcome with desperate sadness, comparable to a mortal state of solitude.

Buttato sempre là, in quel suo pezzo di terra lontano, non si sapeva come vivesse; stava sempre solo, come una bestia in compagnia delle sue bestie, due mule, un'asina e il cane di guardia; e certo aveva un'aria strana, truce e a volte da insensato. [...] Batà mugolò di nuovo, si scrollò tutto per un possente sussulto convulsivo, che parve gli moltiplicasse le membra; poi, col guizzo di un braccio indicò il cielo e urlò: 'La luna!'

[Always isolated there on that remote piece of land of his, he did not know how he managed to live; he was always alone, like an animal in the company of his animals, two mules, a she-ass and the guard dog; and he certainly had a strange, savage and, at times, senseless look about him. . . . Batà whimpered again, shook all over because of a powerful convulsive jolt, which seemed to multiply his limbs; and then his arm shot up as he pointed to the sky and shouted: "The moon!"]<sup>28</sup>

The association of topographical and astrological factors causes Batà's animal metamorphosis, observed by Sidora from a safe location (she is barricaded in her house, as Batà had suggested to her in advance).<sup>29</sup>

Asserragliata dentro, tenendosi stretta come a impedire che le membra le si staccassero dal tremore continuo, crescente, invincibile, mugolando anche lei, forsennata dal terrore, udì poco dopo gli ululi lunghi, ferini, del marito che si contorceva fuori, là davanti alla porta, in preda al male orrendo che gli veniva dalla luna, e contro la porta batteva il capo, i piedi, i ginocchi, le mani, e la graffiava, come se le unghie gli fossero diventate artigli, e sbuffava, quasi nell'exasperazione di una bestiale fatica rabbiosa, quasi volesse sconficcarla, schiantarla, quella porta, e ora latrava, latrava, come se avesse un cane in corpo, e daccapo tornava a graffiare, sbuffando, ululando, e a battervi il capo, i ginocchi.

[Barricaded inside, hugging herself as it to keep her limbs from falling off due to a continuous, growing, invincible tremor, she too was whimpering, mad with fear. She soon heard the long, feral howls of her husband, who was writhing outside, in front of the door, wracked by the horrendous malady brought to him by the moon, and he beat his head, feet, knees and hands against the door, scratching it as if his nails had become claws, almost in the exasperation of a brutish furious effort, almost as if he wanted to remove that door, to break it down, and now he bayed and bayed, as if there were a dog

28 Luigi Pirandello, "Male di luna", USRL: <http://www.filosofico.net/pirandellonovelle/dalnasosette.htm>, pp. 4–6.

29 Ibid., p. 5.

in his body, and he again began to scratch, panting, howling, and beating his head and knees against it.]<sup>30</sup>

Pirandello's quotation contains two core aspects of Batà's condition, i.e. he is struck by moon sickness, and he feels and acts as if he had a dog in his soul. These two factors thus imply that Batà's physical change is not characterized by murderous violence towards Sidora or other humans, but towards himself.

Ogni volta che la luna era in quintadecima, il male lo riprendeva. Ma era un male soltanto per lui; bastava che gli altri se ne guardassero: e se ne potevano guardare bene, perché era a periodo fisso ed egli se lo sentiva venire e lo preavvisava; durava una sola notte, e poi basta.

[Whenever the moon was full, the illness would return. But it was an illness only for him; all the others had to do was be careful around him: and they could be careful around him because it occurred regularly and he could feel it coming and it warned him; it lasted just one night and that was all.]<sup>31</sup>

Batà manifests his aggressiveness towards objects rather than people and thus towards himself, so that he is the only one who will be injured in the end.

Batà era lì. Giaceva come una bestia morta, bocconi, tra la bava, nero, tumefatto, le braccia aperte. Il suo cane, acculato lì presso, gli faceva la guardia sotto la luna.

[Batà was there, lying like a dead animal, face down in his slobber, black, bruised, his arms open. His dog, crouching nearby, watched over him in the moonlight.]<sup>32</sup>

This is not because Batà is affected by a pathology or has been the victim of witchcraft. His illness is epilepsy, commonly called "moon sickness" in the rural Sicilian context of the 19th century. Pirandello's description of Batà's illness eliminates any doubt.

[...] ma appena levato in piedi, quasi colto da vertigine, fece un mezzo giro su se stesso; le gambe, come impastojate, gli si piegarono; si sostenne a stento, con le braccia per aria. Un mugolo quasi di rabbia gli partì dalla gola. [...] E aveva la faccia sbiancata, torbida, terrea; gli occhi foschi e velati, in cui dietro la follia si scorgeva una paura quasi infantile, ancora cosciente, infinita. Con le mani seguitava a farle cenno di attendere e di non spaventarsi e di tenersi discosta.

[B]ut as soon as he got to his feet, he twisted around halfway as if a dizzy spill had come over him; his legs buckled, wobbling; he could barely hold himself up, his arms in the air. He uttered an angry moan . . . . And his face turned white, grim, ashen; his eyes were dark and veiled and, in them, behind the madness, one could glimpse childlike

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30 Ibid., p. 7.

31 Ibid., p. 13.

32 Ibid., p. 8.

fear, still conscious, infinite. With his hands he continued to motion to her to wait and not be afraid, and to keep her distance.]<sup>33</sup>

Although his illness debilitates him, Batà is rationally able to take care of his wife, controlling his animal brutality and offering her loving words of comfort. But Sidora's reaction is completely irrational: she is overcome by the desire to kill him but has no weapon at hand, and she seeks refuge at her mother's house, where she starts telling her relatives about Batà's transformation. Upon hearing Batà's sad story Sidora's neighbourhood reacts with stereotyped prejudice, evoking ancient superstitions such as the fact that a human being like him cannot be "natural", i.e. that he was generated by demonic forces<sup>34</sup> and that such creatures must be shunned by the community.<sup>35</sup> The instinctive reaction of Sidora's mother is totally different, as she suggests exploiting the situation and making fun of poor sick Batà. The two cunning women plan to betray Batà's conjugal fidelity using Sidora's cousin Sarno as a scapegoat. However, the young man is terrified by Batà's werewolf transformation and, instead of protecting Sidora in her house, he realizes that the women have tricked him and runs off into the night. And "che se di là dava tanto male al marito, di qua pareva ridesse, beata e dispettosa, della mancata vendetta della moglie." [while over there the moon did such harm to her husband, here it seemed to laugh, happy and mocking, over the wife's failed vendetta.]<sup>36</sup>

Tommaso Landolfi's short story *Il racconto del lupo mannaro* (1939), written in the first person, is also based on the werewolf motif as a pathological human condition in which the sick subject is victim of the exploitation and derision of the community, so that collective solutions are needed in order to overcome the illness.<sup>37</sup> The narrator, along with one of his friends, is framed in an Ossianic, sepulchral setting: a night with a full moon.

Al suo lume escono i morti sfigurati dalle tombe, particolarmente donne avvolte in bianchi sudari, l'aria si colma d'ombre verdognole e talvolta si affumica d'un giallo sinistro, tutto c'è da temere, ogni erbetta, ogni fronda, ogni animale, in una notte di luna. E quel che è peggio, essa ci costringe a rotolarci mugolando e latrando nei posti umidi, nei braghi dietro ai pagliai; guai allora se un nostro simile ci si parasse davanti! Con cieca furia lo sbraneremmo [...]

[In its light, the disfigured dead emerge from the tombs, especially women wrapped in white shrouds. The air is filled with greenish shadows and is sometimes filled with a sinister yellow. Everything strikes fear, every blade of grass, every leafy branch, every

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33 Ibid., p. 5.

34 Ibid., p. 10.

35 Ibid., p. 11.

36 Ibid., p. 19.

37 Tommaso Landolfi (1908–79) was influenced by Eugenio Montale and Italo Calvino. Due to the complexity of his language and array of literary motifs, connected chiefly with the Gothic and romantic genres, he has not fully been appreciated on the Italian literary scene of the 20th century.

animal, on a night with a full moon. And, worse yet, it forces us to stumble about, wailing and baying in damp places, in the mire behind the barns; so heaven forbid if one of our kind should appear before us! We would tear him apart in a blind rage . . . .]<sup>38</sup>

The image of the moon – the cause and source of the bestial transformation of any man who falls in love with her – is described by Landolfi as the personification of the devil. She is malicious and repellent, because she illuminates the nocturnal world with a sinister light, the light of death. Indeed, here we find the reference to the graveyard and the resurrection of the dead. Consequently, the moon must be killed, eliminated from the face of the earth, and Landolfi's characters do their best to capture and destroy the bloodthirsty moon. As soon as they think they have captured her, they put her in a place where the moon's killing light cannot be seen.

[...] quando l'amico entrò all'improvviso recando in un grosso oggetto rotondo simile a una vescica di strutto, ma un po' più brillante, osservandola bene si vedeva che pulsava alquanto, come fanno certe lampade elettriche e appariva percorsa da deboli correnti sottopelle, le quali suscitavano lievi riflessi madreperlacei simili a quelli di cui svariano le meduse. [...] lasciamola andare qui sotto la cappa e, se non ci libereremo di lei, ci libereremo del suo funesto splendore giacchè la fuliggine la farà nera come uno spazzacamino. [W]hen his friend entered suddenly, carrying a large round object resembling a bladder of lard but a bit shinier, closer inspection revealed that it pulsed quite a bit, like certain electric lamps, and it seemed to be crossed by weak and almost imperceptible currents, creating pale pearly reflections such as those of jellyfish. . . . We'll release her here under the chimney, and even if we are not rid of her we will be rid of her deadly splendour, as the soot will make her as black as a chimney sweep.]<sup>39</sup>

The joy of their successful capture of the moon is only temporary, however, as she is still there in the night sky, though her brilliance and splendour are diminished. It was just an illusion: the moon cannot be defeated.

Giacchè non è che non ci fosse nel cielo, lo sentivamo bene invece che c'era e ci guardava; solo era buia, nera, troppo fuliginosa per potersi vedere e poterci tormentare. Era come il sole nero e notturno che nei tempi antichi attraversava il cielo a ritroso fra il tramonto e l'alba. Infatti, anche quella nostra piccola gioia cessò presto; una notte la luna ricomparve.

[So that it was not as if she were missing from the sky. We were well aware that she was there and was watching us, but she was dark, black, too sooty to be seen and be able to torment us. She was like the black and nocturnal sun that, in ancient times, crossed the

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38 Tommaso Landolfi, "Il racconto del lupo mannaro", USRL: <http://viadellebelledonne.wordpress.com/2008/08/14/il-racconto-del-lupo-mannaro-di-tommaso-landolfi/>, p. 1.

39 Ibid., p. 2.

sky backwards between sunset and dawn. Indeed, even that small joy soon ceased, for one night the moon reappeared.]<sup>40</sup>

Stories of captures and killings – not of the moon itself but of those who have been infected by its sickness, lycanthropy – characterize two of Carlo Lucarelli's<sup>41</sup> most popular and successful detective novels: *Il giorno del lupo* (1998) and *Lupo manaro* (2001). Both thrillers involve a detective, Coliandro in the first novel and Romeo in the second, who with their assistant Simona Stanzani, code name Nikita, must tackle the dirty dealings of the Mafia: prostitution, drugs and money laundering in underground Bologna.

Bologna città bellissima, rossa come i tetti delle case quando ci batte sopra il sole è una città complicate e contraddittoria, ha una metà nascosta, un centro antico, un cuore magico in cui gli opposti si incontrano e si uniscono. Freddo polare d'inverno e caldo tropicale d'estate. Comune rosso per tanti anni e cooperative miliardarie. Efficienza e gioia di vivere. Musei e supermercati. Sovversivi e cardinali. Tortellini e Bambini di Satana.

[Bologna, a very beautiful city, red like the rooftops of the houses when the sun strikes them, is a complicated and contradictory city. It has a hidden half, an ancient centre, a magical heart in which opposites meet and are united. Polar cold in winter and tropical heat in summer. A "Red" government for years and because of million-dollar cooperatives. Efficiency and *joie de vivre*. Museums and supermarkets. Subversives and cardinals. Tortellini and the Children of Satan.]<sup>42</sup>

Lucarelli's description of Bologna is central not only from a topographical perspective, as Bologna is the setting for both novels, but also because it reveals a dual metropolitan nature based on harmonized contradictions. The urban setting so structured, in which crime is rarely seen openly as it is a fully a part of the social fabric, mirrors the dual nature of the metropolitan werewolf. Above social suspicion for the most part, well known and well positioned on a cultural level, the metropolitan werewolf belongs to the upper middle class; he has a strong political position that earns him respect and makes him a charismatic figure in the community. But he

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40 Ibid., p. 3.

41 The writer and television journalist Carlo Lucarelli (b. 1960) started his literary career in 1990 when he introduced a new genre to the Italian panorama of crime stories and thrillers: the mystery. He combines the traditional aspects of crime fiction with a real-life stories in an attempt to explain the unexplainable. Lucarelli's approach to conceiving crime stories entails profound social and human analysis of contemporary life in big cities such as Milan and Bologna, where crime chiefly involves a factor of deceit in everyday reality. Inspired by *cinema noir* and Carlo Emilio Gadda's novel *Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana* (1957), Lucarelli has written a series of thrillers whose aim is to understand, explain and condemn the illegality of modern society. His novels reveal the desire for legality, for grasping the sick rules of criminality, in order to defeat them and rescue society.

42 Carlo Lucarelli, *Mistero in blu*. Turin: Einaudi 1999, p. 26.

hides a dark side, just like the town in which he lives: he is a serial killer, metaphorically a werewolf, who commits his crimes at night in the moonlight. Lucarelli's werewolf motif deals with an interior metamorphosis<sup>43</sup> rather than a physical one, as the werewolf continues to maintain his appealing and innocent look.

Mario Velasco, via Campitelli 31. Ingegnere. [...] E' l'amministratore delegato della Presenti e Presenti, questo lo saprà anche lei, è stato eletto in parlamento con...oddio, non che questo faccia differenza, per carità, però mi spinge a pensare che l'ingegnere incensurato e tra l'altro offertosi spontaneamente di collaborare [...] non sia proprio il tipo del mostro.

["Mario Velasco, no. 31 Via Campitelli. Engineer. . . . He is the managing director of Presenti e Presenti, as you are surely aware. He was elected to Parliament with . . . well, not that this makes any difference, of course, but it makes me think that the engineer with a clean record who, on top of that, volunteered to cooperate with us . . . is not exactly the monster type."]<sup>44</sup>

It is thanks to his extraordinary charisma that the metropolitan werewolf can capture his victims, mainly women considered the dregs of society. The monster selects drug addicts and prostitutes following a targeted "market survey", as he shamelessly declares when interrogated.

Vede, prima di iniziare la mia piccolo attività ho fatto, diciamo così, una accurate indagine di marketing che mi ha permesso di individuare una nicchia di mercato assolutamente sicura. Lei si sarà certo accorto che io tratto esclusivamente giovani tossicodipendenti che si prostituiscono in forma occasionale: un soggetto sociale che, mi consenta, riveste scarsissimo interesse per tutti. [...] No, signor commissario, il mio è un target ben preciso e che risponde perfettamente allo scopo col minimo investimento di tempo, impegno mentale e sforzo fisico.

["You see, let's say that before starting my little business I conducted a careful marketing survey that allowed me to identify an absolutely sure market. I'm sure you've noticed that I deal exclusively with young female drug addicts who occasionally sell their bodies: a social subject that, if I may say so, are of very little interest to anyone. . . . No, Mr Superintendent, mine is a very specific target that perfectly serves the purpose with a minimal investment of time, mental energy and physical effort."]<sup>45</sup>

In his statement, the engineer Mario Velasco, alias the werewolf serial killer in well-to-do Bologna, emphasizes his personal conception of his murderous activity by pointing out both the systematic and rational approach he uses to select his victims and their worthlessness. What emerges is a truculent sense of superiority that implicitly embraces the idea that the serial killing of underprivileged subjects is a way to eliminate that deprived part of society. In Verlasco's eyes, all of his brutal serial

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43 It was Cesare Pavese who, in *Dialoghi con Leucò* (1976, p. 115), first alluded to the existence of a werewolf-like interior condition evoking the ancient Roman term for werewolf, *versispellis*.

44 Carlo Lucarelli, *Lupo mannaro*. Turin: Einaudi, 2001, p. 30.

45 Ibid., pp. 48–49.

murders are dictated by a social need and he proclaims himself the Saviour, the one who has been given the divine mission of changing the social milieu. The impeccable engineer conducts a normal family life. He is married to Veronica, who knows nothing about his other life, has two children<sup>46</sup> and has a special passion for the women he sees on TV.<sup>47</sup> And, like a nightly executioner or a perversely passionate Peeping Tom, whenever there is a full moon he transforms himself into his double: the werewolf.

*Strinse la cintura così forte e all'improvviso che a Monica la lingua si graffiò sui denti quando un conato violento gliela spinse fuori tra le labbra socchiuse. [...] Allora gemette, piegando le labbra in fuori, roteò i polsi irrigidendo le braccia e rovesciò gli occhi, indietro, fino al bianco, mentre il primo morso le lacerava la spalla. [...] Quando la lasciò, tirandosi indietro sul sedile per appoggiare le spalle alla portiera, sentì sui denti il sapore dolciastro e appiccicoso del sangue. [...] Si aggiustò sul sedile, infilando la cintura nei passanti e i liscìò la camicia sotto i pantaloni con cura, prima di stringere la fibbia al solito buco, poi sfilò dalla tasca il fazzoletto e lentamente, sporgendosi verso il retrovisore appannato, si pulì le labbra, il mento, gli angoli della bocca.*

[He tightened the belt so hard and so suddenly that Monica's tongue scraped against her teeth with a violent spasm that pushed it through her slightly parted lips. . . . She groaned, curling her lips outward twisting her wrists as her arms stiffened, and her eyes rolled back until the whites were visible, as the first bite sank into her shoulder. . . . When he let her go, falling back onto the seat and leaning against the car door, he could taste her sweetish, sticky blood on his teeth. . . . He adjusted the seat, slipped the belt through the loops and carefully smoothed his shirt into his trousers before buckling his belt in the usual hole. Then he took a handkerchief from his pocket and, leaning towards the fogged-up rear-view mirror, slowly wiped his lips, his chin, the corners of his mouth.]<sup>48</sup>

The engineer's behaviour during his criminal acts is marked by a mixture of brutal violence and normal routine, as if being a torturer does not upset his usual lifestyle because it is fully a part of it. Moreover, his profession as a serial killer makes him feel better because it is a way to eliminate daily stress at work.<sup>49</sup> Lucarelli's serial killer has no feeling of guilt because he strongly believes in his messianic mission of cleaning up society.

Equally clever, ruthless and completely protected by his aura of "political correctness" is the untouchable magistrate whom Detective Coliandro and his assistant Nikita discover is abetting the Mafia and its dirty dealings. The picture that Lucarelli paints of the modern Mafia is that of a hungry pack of wolves that has lost its ancient sense of honour, replacing it with the unbridled desire for possession and domination at any cost.

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46 *Ibid.*, p. 52.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

48 *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

No, adesso ci sono I lupi...anche gli ominicchi e i quaraquaquà ora hanno messo i denti e sparano. Ecco, se avesse dovuto scriverlo adesso il suo libro, quel brav'uomo di Sciascia avrebbe dovuto chiamarlo *Il giorno del lupo*, altro che della civetta. [...] Gente che spara per le briciole, che vuole tutto e subito e non ha rispetto per nessuno. Lupi...e basta.

[“No, now there are wolves . . . even small-timers and squealers have become ruthless and shoot. You see, if our good Sciascia had written that book today, he would have had to call it *The Day of the Wolf* and certainly not *of the owl*. . . . People who shoot for crumbs, who want everything and right away, and have no respect for anyone. They're no better than wolves.”]<sup>50</sup>

In Lucarelli's stories the metropolitan werewolf moves through the jungle of organized crime but feels completely at ease because he utterly trusts his capability for divinatory salvation. Lucarelli's werewolves thus go unpunished and even seem to be socially and legally legitimized, as is also the case in Roberto Saporito's<sup>51</sup> noir fiction *Anche i lupi mannari fanno surf* (2002). Three old schoolmates, dressed as werewolves, rob an anonymous bank that is in the hands of organized crime. The purpose of this heist is to change their lifestyle, improve their social status, start a new life and get out of a boring routine. The pretext for seeking a new life is the death of Marta, who was a point of reference for one of the members of the group, as she gave his life order and meaning. Without Marta, there is no more order, no more sense of existence, and everything becomes meaningless, one-sided and too conventional. At the beginning of the novel Saporito writes, “E' la pazzia che ci rende felici” [It is madness that makes us happy], quoting the Austrian writer Thomas Bernhard, and this madness coincides with the metamorphosis into a werewolf. Becoming a werewolf – albeit through a temporary masquerade – means reacting against a former lifestyle that was like a cancer, a source of depression and solitude. It means finding a way out of loneliness and changing one's own destiny.

Siamo irrequieti, spaesati, perplessi, abbiamo trent'anni ma ci siamo ormai sradicati dalla vita precedente, abbiamo interrotto un flusso di vita che non ci piaceva, fuggivamo e non eravamo neppure inseguiti, almeno adesso fuggiamo da qualcosa di reale.

[We are restless, disoriented, perplexed, we're thirty years old but have now been uprooted from our previous life. We interrupted a flow of life we didn't like, we ran away and no one even followed us, but at least now we're fleeing from something real.]<sup>52</sup>

And in this work Saporito re-proposes the Italian southern literary tradition of moon sickness as a disease caused by a deep sense of sadness and dissatisfaction. After the joyful moment of feeling and acting like a werewolf, the three leading charac-

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50 Carlo Lucarelli, *Il giorno del lupo*. Turin: Einaudi 1998, p. 115.

51 Roberto Saporito (b. 1962) studied journalism in Alba, but he is mostly active as an committed social writer and artist. His short stories and novels have been published in several international literary journals.

52 Roberto Saporito, *Anche i lupi mannari fanno surf*. Rome: Robin Edizioni 2002, p. 22.

ters in Saporito's story again probe the prior humble condition of their souls. This planned move towards an unknown destination brings the three young men to France, England and the Netherlands and, lastly, California, where they spend their free time enjoying the surf together and writing extensively, an activity that seems to be the solution to their damaged interiority.

Avevi esorcizzato una parte della tua vita scrivendo come un forsennato per alcuni mesi. Eri obbligato a vomitare fuori parole per sentirti di nuovo libero e leggero. E più scrivevi e più ti sentivi appagato.

[“You exorcised a part of your life by writing like a madman for a few months. You were forced to vomit words so you could feel free and light-hearted again. And the more you wrote, the more rewarded you felt.”]<sup>53</sup>

A comparative reading of the texts by Lucarelli and Saporito reveals a revisited and completely innovative description of the werewolf motif. Lycanthropy is no longer a negative aspect, i.e. the result of a demonic threat or a human pathology, but a necessary interior condition of the human soul in order to defeat and overcome a bad private or collective existence. Being a contemporary metropolitan lycanthrope means using the instinctive power of a wild spirit for the sake of one's identity and society as a whole. In this sense both writers have overcome several traditional aspects of the werewolf transformation, i.e. physical metamorphosis and the indispensable presence of the full moon, and have replaced them with new elements such as the interiorization of the werewolf's double nature, which mirrors the setting and the werewolf's social deceit.

The innovative tendency of the northern Italian thriller tradition vis-à-vis lycanthropy also characterizes Luca Terenzi's<sup>54</sup> novel, *Le due lune* (2009). The setting is not Bologna but Milan, and Terenzi tells the story of a high-school girl, Veronica Meis, who suffers from lycanthropy and must thus live a double life. Like Bologna, Milan is also traditionally described from a dual standpoint in crime fiction. It is the quintessential industrial city, the heart of the financial economy, and the centre of the birth and rise of the middle class, but it is also the town of corruption, the expansion of imported criminality and social contradictions. Milan's friendly hospitality is superficial and illusionary, as it is counterbalanced by the hidden hypocrisy and unctuous attitude of white-collar workers. According to Giorgio Scerbanenco (1911–69) and Antonio Perria (1924–2004) Milan is a city that has been injured morally by the unbridled thirst for power and irrational consumer culture of the

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53 Ibid., p. 40.

54 After studying the history of religions Luca Terenzi (b. 1976) concentrated his literary activity on fantasy novels and translations from English. He collaborates with many newspapers and publishers in the lecture role.

upper class.<sup>55</sup> This ambiguous metropolis is the home of seventeen-year-old Veronica, who discovers that a satanic group emulating the ancient Roman Luperci has chosen her as its next sacrificial victim. Veronica moves between a normal life at school during the day, marked by envy and the typical problems of teenagers, and her nightly activity as a werewolf, in which she undergoes a physical transformation. Veronica's werewolf condition is unconventional, as there does not necessarily have to be a full moon, the girl is rationally able to control her animal instinct and savagery, she can use her werewolf brutality to avenge the wrongs she has suffered at the hands of her envious classmates, and she maintains her female identity even as a werewolf. A cross between a fantasy novel and the modern adaptation of the classic Roman werewolf tradition (see the reference to the Luperci rituals, pp. 233–42), in the style of Lucarelli and Saporito, constitutes the essence of Terenzi's text, which views the werewolf motif in a positive light.

Veronica, tu sei il lupo. Pensi che questo non significhi nulla? Gli antichi avrebbero detto che sei stata toccata da un dio. Col passare dei giorni le tue forze aumenteranno sempre di più, e i tuoi sensi con esse: già ora vedi come non hai mai visto prima, e non ti sarà sfuggito che questa facoltà va crescendo. [...] L'essere che vive in te appartiene al mondo dell'immateriale. Se imparerai ad usare i suoi sensi, quel che scoprirai sarà al di là della tua immaginazione: vedrai le ragnatele dell'esistenza che collegano tra loro il Cielo e la Terra, sentirai la vibrazione del cuore umano, percepirai le porte segrete della realtà. ["Veronica, you are the wolf. Do you think that's meaningless? The ancients would have told you that you have been touched by a god. Day after day your powers will continue to grow, and your senses with them. Even now you can see as never before, and surely you must have noticed that this power is growing. . . . The being that lives in you belongs to the intangible world. If you learn to use your senses, what you discover will be beyond your imagination: you will see the webs of existence that connect Heaven and Earth. You will feel the vibration of the human heart; you will perceive the secret doors of reality."]<sup>56</sup>

The positive allure imparted to Veronica by her werewolf metamorphosis gives her special sensitive and divinatory powers: Veronica, the werewolf, is a deity who can plumb the depths of the human heart and of reality. Therefore, she should be thankful that fate chose her and no one else, rather than consider her unusual condition a burden or disgrace. The wolf has blessed her with "second sight" and it is now her duty to use it for the good of the community. Because he has innovated the werewolf motif by examining it from a female perspective, the writer underscores the positive side of the werewolf's nature, rediscovering the ancient maternal instinct of the she-wolf that fed Romulus and Remus. But Terenzi's novel is not only a contemporary re-adaptation evoking the werewolf legend. It is also a conventional love

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55 Massimo Carloni, *L'Italia in giallo. Geografia e storia del giallo italiano contemporaneo*. Reggio Emilia: Diabasis Edizioni 1994, p. 24.

56 Luca Terenzi, *Le due lune*. Milan: Alacran 2009, pp. 201–02.

story between the two teenagers, Veronica and Ivan. Their love must struggle with the fact that Veronica is a werewolf and Ivan is one of the Luperci and, as such, he must kill her, the werewolf. Nevertheless, Terenzi provides the reader with an unexpected happy end: the wolf decides to leave Veronica's body and the girl can finally celebrate her love for Ivan.

The comparative analysis of all these works pertaining to northern and southern Italian literature from the 19th to the 21st century, along with an introduction on the origins and meaning of the werewolf motif in Greek and Roman mythology, point to a gradual deconstruction of the subject of lycanthropy. The werewolf legend has gradually been deprived of its classical essence, which has always involved animal brutality and an uncontrollable murderous instinct. In modern and contemporary Italian short prose and crime fiction, the werewolf as a subject has been marked by an unconventional positivity that benefits the individual or community. Those who become werewolves are privileged, unconventional subjects; they have a divine nature and are no longer considered outsiders. Lycanthropy has lost its demonic or pathological dimension and has instead become a blessing. It has been transformed into a "second sight" that allows those to whom it has been granted to peer into the human soul and the deepest labyrinths of reality.

Author's note: The translations of the quotations in the text are my own.

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