Conjunctive Anomalies: A Reflection on Werewolves

Carlo Ginzburg
Why did I choose this topic for our discussion? There are several answers; let’s begin with the most obvious. In the increasingly globalized world we inhabit, a comparative approach to either history or anthropology is unavoidable. Stories about werewolves spread from Europe to other continents: any approach to this topic will necessarily involve a comparative framework, but comparison should not be taken for granted: we should also reflect on its aims, assumptions and methods. I will try to do this, focusing on a specific case study involving a rather special kind of werewolf.

1. Underlying my choice there is also a personal reason. Fifty years ago I published my first book, I benandanti, translated into English as The Night Battles. The Spanish translation, published by the University of Guadalajara, echoed the Italian title and subtitle: Los benandanti. Brujería y cultos agrarios entre los siglos XVI y XVII (2005). The book explored, on the basis of a series of Inquisition trials, some of them very long and detailed, a previously unknown phenomenon recorded in Friuli, on the Northeastern border of Italy, not far from Venice. Men and women, mostly from a peasant background, who called themselves benandanti (i.e. people for the good) argued before the inquisitors that, having been born in a caul (i.e. wrapped in the amniotic sack), they were compelled to leave their body in spirit four times a year, sometimes transformed into animals, to fight against witches and wizards in order to ensure the fertility of the crops. As a weapon, the benandanti used fennel branches, while the witches used sorghum sticks. “And if the benandanti won,” one of them said, “that year the harvest will be rich.”

The inquisitors heard those tales in astonishment: they had never come across anything like that (my reaction in discovering those documents was no different from the inquisitors’ reaction—an analogy which I began to reflect upon some years later [Ginzburg 1989b]). The benandanti claimed to be counter-witches; the inquisitors, on the contrary, regarded them as real witches who participated in a diabolical cult. Relying upon different strategies—leading questions or, occasionally, torture—the inquisitors tried to convince the benandanti. After fifty years and many trials punctuated by endless questions and denials, the benandanti ultimately (although not completely) started to confess to being witches, introducing the hostile image imposed on them by the inquisitors.

---

1 I have developed some implications of this point in my essay ”Microhistory and World History” (2015).
What I had discovered in the Friulian archives was, I argued, a fragment from a deep layer of peasant culture: the inquisitors’ astonished reaction to the *benandanti* description of their nocturnal battles with the witches was eloquent enough. But to what extent was the Friulian case, undoubtedly exceptional from a documentary point of view, also related to a unique reality? In my book I advanced the following hypothesis: what happened in Friuli had presumably also taken place in other parts of Europe (and perhaps, I would say today, in other continents as well). Peasant beliefs, mostly centered on matters of fertility and possibly rooted in a pre-Christian past, were reinterpreted by the inquisitors as diabolical cults—and subsequently uprooted. A single, also exceptional, case seemed to support my hypothesis: a trial which took place in 1692 at Wenden, today Cesis, not far from Riga (at that time Livonia, presently Latvia). The defendant, an old man nicknamed “Old Thiess” was accused of heresy: he counteracted by objecting that he was a werewolf and therefore used to go to Hell with other werewolves three times a year during the night to recover the seeds of grain that had been taken away by witches. “We are the hounds of God,” Thiess said, referring to werewolves, thus subverting the traditional stereotype that identified them with diabolical beings. Here was a werewolf saying that he used to fight in spirit, together with other werewolves, against witches for the fertility of the crops. Could I compare Thiess’s isolated, anomalous case to the Friulian *benandanti*? I thought so—but what kind of comparison could I use? Morphological? Or historical? The former perspective takes only formal analogies into account, disregarding both space and time, while the latter analyzes the same analogies from a perspective based on space and time that raises the possibility of mutual influences, of a common filiation, etc. I had first come across this alternative as a student when I read Marc Bloch’s great book *Les rois thaumaturges* (1924, translated into English as *The Royal Touch*). In the introduction, Bloch contrasted two different kinds of comparison: “ethnological” (he did not use the word “morphological”) and “historical,” based on phenomena related to societies that had either been disconnected or connected in historical times, respectively. Following Bloch, in my first book I explicitly chose to limit myself to historical comparison only—a choice which compelled me to suggest that the resemblances between the *benandanti* and Thiess, the Livonian werewolf, pointed to a (completely forgotten) historical connection between Friuli and the Baltic region, possibly implying Slavic elements that they both have in common.

All of this was entirely speculative and exceedingly vague. A growing feeling of dissatisfaction with this kind of hypothetical history probably reinforced my attraction to morphology—an attraction already nourished by my interest in art history, and most particularly in connoisseurship (art history attributions usually start from purely formal features). What I found so challenging in morphology was its ahistorical orientation—its disregard, as I have said, of both space and time, which makes it uninteresting, or even distasteful, to most historians. But for a long time I have felt a personal attraction to the devil’s advocate: the fictitious character who, according to the rules of early seventeenth-century canonization trials, asked difficult, sometimes aggressive, questions about potential saints. I belong to the generation that witnessed the triumph of structuralism: an approach that Claude Lévi-Strauss repeatedly counterposed to history. Structuralism, and more specifically, Lévi-Strauss, played the role of a challenging interlocutor for me for many years—a sort of devil’s advocate. I regarded morphology, not as an alternative to history, but as a tool that might have opened up the possibility of overcoming the lack of historical evidence, throwing some light upon the puzzling analogies between the Friulian *benandanti* and the old Livonian werewolf. I suspect that, at a subconscious level, I was under the influence of the line from Vergil’s *Aeneid* that Sigmund Freud took as a motto for his *Interpretation of Dreams*: “Ilectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo” (*Aeneid*, VII, 312), translatable as: “If I cannot deflect the will of superior powers, then I shall move the River Acheron” or “If I cannot deflect the will of heaven, then I shall move hell.” For me, heaven was history; morphology was hell.

Needless to say, I was not comparing myself to Freud: but Freud has certainly been for me, for many years and in many ways, an intellectual model. Not entirely by chance, perhaps, the next step in my research focused on one of the most famous of Freud’s case studies: “The Wolf Man.” At the age of three, four, or possibly five, the patient, a Russian, had a dream: six or seven white wolves were sitting on the branches of a tree, staring at him intensely. This was the beginning of a long history of neurosis. In my essay “Freud, l’uomo dei lupi e i lupi mannari” (1986) (“Freud, the Wolf Man and the Werewolves”), I focused on a detail from the patient’s life, which Freud duly recorded without realizing its relevance. The patient was born in a caul. In Russian folklore, werewolves were born in a caul. Without realizing its relevance. The patient was born in a caul. In Russian folklore, werewolves were born in a caul. The dream of the little Russian child was presumably nourished by his *nianja* (nanny’s) stories. It was comparable to the initiatory dreams of the Friulian *benandanti*, who were also born in a caul. “In the wolf-man’s nightmare,” I wrote, “we discern a dream of an initiatory character, induced by the surrounding cultural setting or, more precisely, by a part of it. Subjected to opposing cultural pressures (the nurse, the English governess, his parents and teachers), the wolf-man’s fate differed from what might have been the case two or three centuries earlier. Instead of turning into a werewolf, the patient became a neurotic on the brink of psychosis” (Ginzburg 1989b, 148).

I have discussed the methodological implications of my case study on Freud’s case study elsewhere; here I will focus on the werewolf dossier that I have...
been constructing (and reconstructing) thus far. The Wolf-Man, Freud’s Russian patient, made me become aware of an element that I had initially missed: as I have said, in Russian folklore, werewolves, like the Friulian *benandanti*, were believed to be born in a caul. I must point out that this detail was not mentioned in the trial against “Old Thiess.” Many years later, after a long research trajectory, I subscribed both the Livonian case and the *benandanti* in a much larger (in fact, Eurasian) perspective, focusing on shamanism and its varieties: one of the elements, I argued, that ultimately entered into the stereotype of the Witches’ Sabbath (Ginzburg 1989a; 1991b; 2003).

My book, *Storia notturna. Una decifrazione del sabba* (1989a) (translated into Spanish as *Historia nocturna. Un desciframiento del aquellarre*) has been hotly debated, both as a whole and in detail. In particular, my interpretation of the Livonian trial has repeatedly been criticized, most recently, and most authoritatively, by Bruce Lincoln, professor of History of Religions at the University of Chicago (Blécourt 1993; 2007a; 2007b, 128-129; Lincoln 2015a; 2015b). Lincoln firmly rejected the possibility of identifying some fragments of ancient beliefs in the speech “Old Thiess” delivered to the astonished judges of Wenden. After having evoked a number of scholars (including myself) who assumed that Livonian beliefs about werewolves were “a survival of some deep cultural and religious layer,” Lincoln commented: “the results of this kind of comparison remained hypothetical to the very best; the history of those large comparative projects remained hypothetical to the researcher can study closely; (b) are equally attentive to relations of similarity and those of difference; (c) grant equally dignity and intelligence to all parties considered and (d) are attentive to the social, historical and political contexts and subtexts of religious and literary texts” (Lincoln and Grottanelli 2012, 123).

But even a restricted comparison immediately invalidates the alleged uniqueness of the “Old Thiess” case. After having quoted a text describing werewolves and their attacks against livestock, Bruce Lincoln mentions in a footnote a series of works that tell “similar stories.” But two of them, as I have noted in my book *Storia notturna*, stroke a different note (Lincoln 2015b, 114-115; Ginzburg 1989a, 130-134; 1966, 40). In his *Commentarius de praecipuis generibus divinationum* (Commentary on the most important kinds of divination, 1560) Caspar Peucer, professor of medicine and mathematics at the University of Wittenberg, referred to an episode he had learned about from a Livonian student, Hermann Witekind, who later published a book (1586) on witchcraft under a pseudonym (Augustin Lercheimer). A peasant who lived not far from Riga (i.e. in the same region where “Old Thiess” lived one century later) suddenly fell asleep. He was identified as a werewolf, since werewolves, before their imaginary metamorphosis into wolves, used to fall in a swoon (Peucer 1560, 141v-142r). As soon as the man woke up, Peucer went on, “he said he had been pursuing a witch who was flying around, turned into a flame butterfly (werewolves boast about being driven to keep witches away)” (Peucer 1560, 144v). From the section on werewolves in Peucer’s learned work on divination there emerge some “fragments

---

2 I have commented on these essays in my essay “Travelling in Spirit: From Friuli to Siberia” (2016).

3 All translations from this essay are my own.

4 Another critic of my approach, Willem de Blécourt, also failed to notice my discussion of Peucer’s text, thus weakening his argument: this has been noted by Matteo Duni (2015, 132-134). Duni, who did not focus on Peucer’s remark concerning werewolves’ hostility to witches, refused to unfold implications of his valuable analysis, based on inquisitorial trials held in Modena in the early 16th century, arguing that “the specific traits found in each of [the documents] would be diluted” (2015, 135). This self-defeating approach was contradicted in another passage of the same essay, that praised Maurizio Bertolotti’s demonstration of an “ancient and widespread complex of European folklore, typical of societies based on hunting” (Duni 2015, 126).

5 The description of the swoon of werewolves introduces a comparison with sorcerers (i.e. shamans) from Lappland: a detail which I should have mentioned, as Duni has rightly noted (2015, 140).

6 “Ait se veneician ignei papilionis specie circumvolitantem persequendum esse (gloriantur enim lycanthropi quod ad arcendas veneficas conducuntur).”
relatively immune from distortion, of the culture that the persecution set out to eradicate” (Ginzburg 1991a, 13). The tiny detail I just mentioned is particularly relevant because it shows that the unconventional image of werewolves as enemies of witches, on which “Old Thiess” insisted, was not without precedents. Individual inventiveness took place within the framework of a pre-existing grammar. To explore its features we have to go back to the huge historical dossier centered on werewolves.

5. But first, a warning from Bruce Lincoln’s “Theses on Comparison.” In one of them the “diffusionist type” is rejected on the following grounds:

[...] the attempt to show transmission of culture traits always advance —if only subtextually— a tendentious ranking of the peoples involved, constituting temporal primacy (“originality,” “invention,” “authenticity”) as the sign of superior status, while conversely treating reception as a mark of relative backwardness, need, and submission. (Lincoln and Grottanelli 2012, 123)

I wonder whether anybody has ever claimed, either directly or indirectly, that the invention of beliefs related to werewolves was a sign of superior status. But the real point lies elsewhere: it concerns the tacit equation of the “diffusionist type” with the “transmission of culture.” Diffusionism is a crude, simplistic explanatory model; diffusion, as the transmission of cultural traits, is a reality. Diffusionism must be rejected, since it takes diffusion for granted; but we should try to understand how the transmission of cultural traits is possible. A long time ago Claude Lévi-Strauss made some dense, challenging remarks on this issue:

Even if the most ambitious reconstructions of the diffusionist school were to be confirmed, we should still be faced with an essential problem which has nothing to do with history. Why should a cultural trait that has been borrowed or diffused through a long historical period remain intact? Stability is no less mysterious than change [...] External connections can explain transmission, but only internal connections can account for persistence. Two entirely different kinds of problems are involved here, and the attempt to explain one in no way prejudices the solution that must be given to the other. (Ginzburg 1991a, 225; Lévi-Strauss 1977, 258)

The recent publication of a lecture entitled “A revolutionary science: ethnography,” that Lévi-Strauss delivered in 1937 to a group of left-wing militants, unveils the hidden, self-critical overtone of his later remark on “the most ambitious reconstructions of the diffusionist school” (Lévi-Strauss 2016). Lévi-Strauss’s early commitment to diffusionism was followed by a rejection of it, which identified diffusionism with history. I would argue, on the contrary, that the goal of history includes external and internal connections, change and continuity. But in order to attain that (admittedly ambitious) goal, historians should listen to the devil’s advocate: morphology.

6. The reasons behind the choice of my case study will now be clear. Werewolves typically confront us with a dilemma: the respective potential of broad vs. restricted comparison. The transmission of beliefs about werewolves implies a long chronological trajectory (two and a half millennia) and widespread diffusion. The central core of it seems pretty stable: in the 5th century B.C. Herodotus, the Greek historian, spoke of a population—the Neuroi—adding, in disbelief, that each of them “once in every year [...] becomes a wolf for a few days and then returns again to his original form” (Histories, IV, 105, 1–2). In the novel Satyricon, written five hundreds years later by the Latin writer Petronius (27 A.D. – 66 A.D.), the identification with a specific population disappeared. The story deals with an ordinary soldier who walks into a graveyard at night with a friend, who, “having pissed all around his clothes, suddenly becomes a wolf” (Satyricon, 42). The day after, the soldier’s companion learns that a wolf entered the farm and slaughtered the cattle; somebody transfixed the wolf on its neck. Later the companion sees the soldier lying on a bed, and a surgeon taking care of his neck: then he understands, “he was a werewolf” (intellexi illum versipellem esse). The Latin word versipellis means, literally, somebody who is able to change his own skin, shape-shifting; hence, metaphorically, sly, cunning, crafty. The transformation of the human into a beast is preceded by a ritual sequence: taking off clothes, pissing around them, becoming a wolf. In the meantime (Petronius’s character tells in horror), the clothes turned first into stone, and later into a pool of blood. Clothes are on the borderline between the human and the beastly world. In his Natural History, Pliny the Elder (23 A.D. - 79 A.D.) comments on versipellis, referring to a story told by a Greek writer: a man belonging to a certain family took off his clothes, hung them on an oak-tree, swam across a marsh, and turned himself into a wolf; after nine years he came back and found his own clothes. Pliny, who told the story in disbelief, regarded the last detail as an extreme sign of Greek credulity (Naturalis Historia, VIII, 34, 80–84).

To be born in the amniotic sack—a trait shared by Frulian benandanti as well as by Slavic werewolves—meant also to be wrapped in a special kind of cloth. “The amnion,” I wrote many years ago, “is an object that belongs to the world of the dead—or that of the non-born. An ambiguous, borderline object that marks borderline figures” (Ginzburg 1991a, 265; see also King 7 “At ille circumminxit vestimenta sua, et subito lupus factus est.”

Conjunctive Anomalies: A Reflection on Werewolves | Carlo Ginzburg
1986).\textsuperscript{8} Versipelles who are able to shift from one skin to another, from one world to another, were one of them. In the transmission of those beliefs a “primary experience of a corporeal character” played, I argued, a fundamental role (Ginzburg 1991a, 265-266). So much for morphology. But as I have pointed out, morphology may be seen as an instrument of history, not as an alternative to it. I am strongly in favour of a close-up approach to a single case—Old Thiess, for instance—but we cannot ignore the multiple contexts in which the single case is inscribed. From the frame to the picture, and backwards: this trajectory—you may call it, if you wish, microhistory—seems to me particularly promising.

7. Bruce Lincoln would object that my approach is too hypothetical. Having spent many years reflecting on the issue of proof, I am very sensitive to this kind of criticism (Ginzburg 1999). Therefore, instead of insisting on my previous argument, I will try to rely upon a different strategy in order to prove it. I will develop the implications of an essay I published some years ago, dealing with a completely different topic: its title reads, in Spanish, “Semejanzas de familia y árboles de familia: dos metáforas cognoscitivas” (Ginzburg 2004; 2007). The first part of my essay deals with “composite photographic[s]”: an experiment conducted around 1880 by Francis Galton, the famous British statistician and polymath. Following a suggestion he had received from a New Zealand correspondent, Galton superimposed a series of transparent negatives of members of the same family and then took a picture of the piling up. The result is a single, compressed, haunting, phantom-like image:

A darker center surrounded by a lighter halo: the former corresponds to features that are recurrent in the family; the latter to less frequent or unique traits. A set of family resemblances is displayed in front of us, in a very unusual form. The experiment seems neutral, even innocent; it was not. It was inspired by eugenics, a project aimed at improving the genetic quality of human (in fact, British) population. Galton used photographs to identify types of specific social groups, suggesting that the reproductive capacity of marginal, potentially dangerous minorities, like Jews or criminals, should be controlled.

\textbf{Image 1.} Composites of the Members of a Family.

\textbf{Image 2.} The Jewish Type.

\textbf{Image 3.} Prevalent Types of Features among Men Convicted of Larceny (without Violence)—Normal Population. Officers and Men of the Royal Engineers.

\textsuperscript{8} Many thanks to Maria Luisa Catoni who pointed out the meaning of \textit{amnion} to me.
The model for good, controlled reproduction was explicit—horse-breeding:

The racist implications of the project were clear enough. It will be appropriate to recall in this context that the word “raza” (as well as its counterparts in other languages, like Italian “razza,” English “race,” French “race”) derive, as the Italian philologist Gianfranco Contini demonstrated a long time ago, from haras, an old French word meaning “horse-breeding.”

8. The impact of Galton’s “composite photographs” that I explored in my essay, was independent (as is often the case) of the ideology that inspired them. Most famously, Ludwig Wittgenstein repeatedly referred, both explicitly and implicitly, to Galton’s “composite photographs” first, stressing the traits shared by all family members, and later, reflecting on the overall result of the experiment in order to propose a different, looser definition of “family resemblances.” Galton’s experiments attracted the attention of Sigmund Freud, Gregory Bateson, and innumerable others. Galton’s visual presentation can be regarded as a cognitive challenge or a cognitive tool. What attracted me in those images was the compression of a chronological sequence (different generations within one family, for instance) into a single image, thereby turning time into space, or (as linguists would say) diachrony into synchrony. As you may have guessed, I immersed myself once again into my obsessive ruminations about morphology and history. But there was also something else. In my essay I advanced a comparison between Galton’s composite photographs and a different kind of visual artifact: genealogical trees. They were used for a long time as diagrams representing family relations; but since the early 19th century they were used by philologists as a metaphor to represent the genealogical relationship existing between different manuscript versions of the same text. This device was first used in 1847 by Jacob Bernays, the great philologist, in the form of a diagram to describe the manuscript transmission of Lucretius’s poem *De rerum natura*.
Let us look at composite photographs and genealogical trees side by side: what elements do they share? The answer is simple. One word, repeated twice, will be sufficient: reproduction/reproduction. On the one hand, you have a sequence related to reproduction in a biological sense: members of the same family, who may belong to different generations. On the other, reproduction in the material sense: different manuscripts copying the same text. I have been working for many years on this ambivalent notion —reproduction/reproduction— focusing on Dante (Ginzburg 2006; 2010a; 2010b). For a long time biological reproduction worked as a metaphor for mechanical reproduction. As an example, I will quote a famous passage by Erasmus, the sixteenth century humanist, as well as the comment made by Sebastiano Timpanaro in his fundamental book The Genesis of Lachmann’s Method:

In his Adagia [Erasmus] proposed a correction to a proverbial expression used in Aristotle’s Metaphysics, and observed: “The agreement of the manuscripts will not seem at all astonishing to those who have a modicum of experience in assessing and collating [that is, comparing] manuscripts. For it very often happens that an error of the archetype, so long as it has some specious appearance of the truth, goes on to propagate itself in all the books that form as it were its descendants ‘and the children of the children and those who are born later?’” (Timpanaro 2005, 49)

The last line is a quotation from Homer’s Iliad (20, 308) that Erasmus slightly adapted to the context. The point is clear: an error in the archetype (a word bound to become a fundamental tool, with different meanings, among philologists) will be propagated by its descendants. Cultural transmission took biological transmission as a model, using expressions like “family of manuscripts.” In the twentieth century, when biologists started to use expressions like “genetic code,” the metaphor was reversed.

9. Somebody might ask: what does all this have to do with the topic I started from, i.e. werewolves?

Here is my answer: I will consider the transmission of traditions and beliefs concerning werewolves to be something comparable (notwithstanding a fundamental difference I will mention in a moment) to the transmission of a text. Therefore, I will try to approach my topic using the techniques of textual philology, as described by Paul Maas in his Textual Criticism, a short, dense book which has become an indispensable reference ever since it first appeared for anybody working in the field of textual philology.

It can proved [Maas wrote] that two witnesses (B and C) [witnesses, i.e. manuscripts] belong together as against a third (A) by showing an error common to B and C of such a nature that it is highly improbable that B and C committed it independently of each other. Such errors may be called “conjunctive errors” ( errores conjunctivi). (Maas 1958, 43)

In what sense are they “conjunctive?” Because errors which are not banal prove that families of manuscripts are connected: either because they are dependent on each other, or because they derive from a common ancestor. (“Families,” “ancestor,” etc., as you may see, in this domain biological metaphors surface are unavoidable). This idea, which had already inspired the editorial practice of Poliziano, the fifteenth century humanist (as Timpanaro has shown), gave birth to modern textual philology (Timpanaro 2003, 17-18).

At this point I am confronted with a serious difficulty. Textual philology tries to reconstruct an (most often lost) original text, most frequently one that has been lost and which has usually been corrupted by copyists in its transmission. My aim in analyzing the traditions related to werewolves is completely different. I am not trying to reconstruct an original set of beliefs: I am interested in the ways in which some ancient (possibly lost forever) beliefs have been reworked and modified over the course of centuries and millennia. For this reason I am rephrasing Paul Maas’s notion of “conjunctive errors” as “conjunctive anomalies.” It must be noted that Maas, after having stressed the distinction between anomaly and singularity (but without clarifying it), referred to anomalies in the following terms: “As a rule, no writer will aspire to an anomaly for its own sake; an anomaly is a consequence of his desire to say something out of the ordinary for which the normal mode of expression was found to be inadequate” (Maas 1958, 13).

Maas is describing the activity of an individual writer who makes innovative experiments vis-à-vis literary tradition. I am trying to reconstruct cultural innovations vis-à-vis a common set of beliefs, transmitted by a group and articulated by specific individuals (Ginzburg 2004, 552). But the dates of the recorded evidence did not necessarily coincide with the date

9 Maas’s approach has been strongly criticized by Luciano Canfora (2012). If I am not mistaken, Canfora’s forceful argument does not affect the cognitive potential of errores conjunctivi (conjunctive errors): an argument that of course had a long history before Paul Maas.

10 The second chapter of the second part of my book Storia notturna was entitled “Anomalie” (Anomalies) (1989a, 99-114).

11 See also: “We must distinguish sharply between anomaly and singularity. What is unique is not for that reason alone to be regarded with suspicion” —here the author’s usual laconicity turns into evasiveness (Maas 1958, 12).

12 Contini (1986, 71) recalls that Gaston Paris, in his edition of La vie de Saint Alexis (Paris 1872) ”soggiungeva addirittura che invece di errore (‘faute’) si può dire: innovazione (‘modification’) comune; e a copisti (‘scribes’) sostituire: rimaneggiatori (‘renouveleurs’)”. 
of the innovations: as I wrote a long time ago “very recent testimony might preserve traces of much earlier phenomena” (Ginzburg 1989a, 28; XXVIII, 1991a, 14). I should have recalled what Giorgio Pasquali, the great philologist, had written in his book *Storia della tradizione e critica del testo: recentiores non deteriores*, that more recent manuscripts can preserve an uncorrupted version of a passage from an old text (Pasquali 1974, 41). My genealogical tree, therefore, will present a series of formal connections, disregarding both chronology and geography (traditionally regarded as the two eyes of history).

These anomalous traits (a, b, c, d) are too specific to be ascribed to chance: I consider them “conjunctive anomalies.” Therefore, A and B3, Friulian *benandanti* and the Baltic werewolf “Old Thiess,” fighting for the fertility of the crops, can be regarded as partially overlapping developments from a set of beliefs rooted in a distant, undocumented past; I have marked it with an asterisk.

Is the asterisk pointing to a single event or to a series of independent innovations, followed by a hybrid combination of different traits? We’ll never know.

This diagram translates a series of cultural transmissions related to different times and places into a synchronic image. Will this diagram be the conclusion of my argument? Only temporarily. From morphology I will have to go back to contexts, to actors, to history.

---

**References**


