

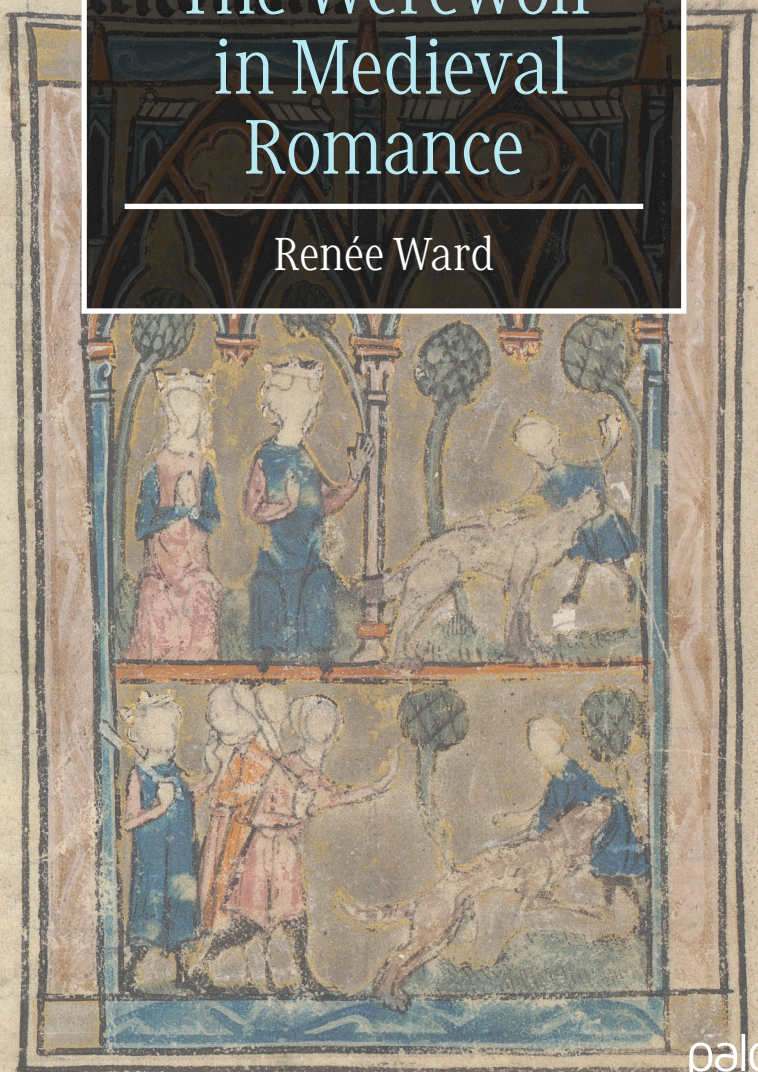


THE NEW MIDDLE AGES

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The Werewolf in Medieval Romance

Renée Ward



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Renée Ward

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For Mum and for Daren

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AND</i>	<i>Anglo-Norman Dictionary</i>
<i>DRBO</i>	<i>Douay-Rheims Bible Online</i>
<i>LOGEION</i>	<i>Logeion: Open-Access Dictionary of Greek and Latin</i>
<i>MED</i>	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i>
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
<i>OFED</i>	<i>Old French-English Dictionary</i>



CHAPTER 1

Introduction

MEETING THE MEDIEVAL WEREWOLF

In his *Topography of Ireland* (1186–1187), Gerald of Wales recounts the story told to him by a priest who has encountered two strange beings while travelling through the wilderness.¹ One evening, as the priest sits by his fire in the woods, a male wolf approaches him and unexpectedly utters “human words” [“humana uerba”] (2.19).² After proving his knowledge of the Catholic faith by answering the priest’s questions, the wolf then explains that he and his nearby female companion are, in fact, humans from Ossory, but that they have been cursed to live in the form of wolves for a period of seven years. At the end of those seven years, he continues, if they survive, they may return home and resume their human forms, at which point another couple will replace them. The wolf next requests that

¹ Asa Simon Mittman describes Gerald’s text as a collection that is “part history, part marvels, part miracle story and part topography.” See “The Other Close at Hand: Gerald of Wales and the ‘Marvels of the West,’” 97.

² Latin quotations here are from John J. O’Meara’s edition of Gerald’s first recension of *Topographia Hibernica*, in “Giraldus Cambrensis in *Topographia Hibernie*”; unless otherwise noted; all English translations are from Thomas Forester’s translation of *The Topography of Ireland, and the History of the Conquest of Ireland*, in *The Historical Works of Giraldus Cambrensis*. The account of the werewolf is in Distinction (Book) 2 of the *Topography*, in Chapter 19, “Of the Prodigies of our Times; and First, of a Wolf Which Conversed with a Priest” [“De mirabilibus nostri temporis. Et primo, de lupo cum sacerdote loquente”]. Citations reference Book and Chapter.

the priest provide the rites of the church for his perilously ill partner, leading him to a female wolf who emits “human sighs and groans” [“gemitus et planctus humanos”] (2.19). Although the priest administers the sacraments, he stops short of offering the extreme unction. In response, the male wolf calls upon God and entreats the priest not to deny his partner such divine aid. To further support his request, “and, to remove all doubt, using his claw for a hand, he tore off the skin of the she-wolf, from the head down to the navel, folding it back. Thus she immediately presented the form of an old woman” [“Et ut omnem abstergeret dubietatem, pede quasi pro manu fungens, pellem totam a capite lupe retrahens, usque ad umbilicum replicavit: et statim expressa forma uetule cuiusdam apparuit”] (2.19). Beseeched by both wolves (humans?), and although afraid, the priest acquiesces, offering the final rites to the female. Afterwards, the male wolf rolls the skin on his partner back to its original position, once again covering the human form with its lupine exterior.

For modern and medieval readers alike, the uncanny existence of these speaking wolves unsettles. How does one read the wolves’ bodies, which present both as animal and as human, blurring species boundaries? What does one make of the skin that folds back to reveal beneath an entirely different being? Are these unusual lifeforms humans merely disguised by a material object—the animal pelt—or have they indeed transformed into another species? Despite their exterior, lupine appearance, they engage in human behaviours; does this go both ways? If they survive and return to human form, will any wolfish traits persist? Are these beings human, animal, or something in-between?

The questions raised by the Ossary wolves vexed Gerald, so much so that he revised the *Topography* repeatedly, gradually expanding his account of the priest’s tale to almost twice its original length.³ More specifically, he used this story to explore the relationship between the body and the soul, and to question the possibility of theriomorphic, or human to animal, metamorphosis. In a later recension, Gerald ponders Biblical and theological accounts of similar transformations before declaring, “the Almighty God, who is the Creator of natures, can, when he pleases, change one into another, either for vindicating his judgments, or exhibiting his divine power” [“omnipotentem Deum, sicut naturas creare, sic et easdem cum voluerit in se invicem permutare, seu vindicando, seu diviniæ potentiam

³ Gerald’s revisions are at the heart of Caroline Walker Bynum’s study, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, and are explored especially in the Introduction, pages 15–18.

declarando”] (2.19).⁴ Ultimately, he concludes, one must accept the unusual nature of the beings the priest encounters because they evidence God’s will.

Gerald’s account of the Ossary wolves contributes to the twelfth-century resurgence of texts ruminating on metamorphoses and species boundaries that constitute what Caroline Walker Bynum calls a “werewolf renaissance.”⁵ Indeed, Gerald was not the only medieval writer to grapple with questions arising from the complex body of the werewolf and all that it evokes. Gervaise of Tilbury’s early thirteenth-century *Recreation for an Emperor*, a text generically similar to Gerald’s *Topography*, also describes unusual lycanthropic beings within the context of discussions focusing on the role of transformation within Christian doctrine.⁶ In the Icelandic and Norse literary traditions, especially the sagas, werewolves likewise abound, and are often presented as warrior figures; in many such instances, wolf-skins feature as an external influence or force that facilitates change.⁷ Writers of medieval romance, particularly in Britain and France, deployed the werewolf as they too explored the possibilities and implications of metamorphosis. For Bynum, Marie de France’s Breton lay *Bisclavret* typifies the romance tradition, although she includes alongside Marie’s tale three others—*Guillaume de Palerne*, *Arthur and Gorlagon*, and *Melion*. These narratives, she suggests, present stories of individuals “changed into wolves ... but who retain the ‘intelligence and memory’ of rational human beings,” collectively evidencing the medieval tradition of the

⁴The Latin quote, from Gerald’s revisions to *Topographia*, is taken from *Topographia Hibernica et Expugnato Hibernica*, in James F. Dimock’s edition, *Giraldi Cambrensis: Opera*, 5.1–201. In his discussions, Gerald cites, from the Bible, the examples of Lot’s wife turning into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:1–38) and Jesus’s transformation of water into wine (John 2:1–11), and, from *The City of God* (*De Civitate Dei*), Augustine’s example of the Arcadians, who live as wolves for nine years before resuming their human form. See the *DRBO* and *De Civitate Dei*, 2.18.

⁵Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, 94.

⁶Gervaise presents the story of an outlawed knight’s lycanthropy as evidence that salvation for the damned soul is possible. See *Otia Imperialia: Recreation for an Emperor*, 3.120.

⁷For foundational and recent works detailing the Old Norse and Icelandic tradition, see Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir, “The Werewolf in Medieval Icelandic Literature,” and Minjie Su, *Werewolves in Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: Between the Monster and the Man*. Both authors also note the Norwegian *Bisclavretz ljóð*, an adaptation of Marie de France’s *Bisclavret*, although only Su treats it in detail.

“sympathetic” werewolf.⁸ However, Bynum distinguishes between these romances and Gerald’s text, noting that in the former “shape-shifting is real,” while in the latter separation between human and animal is maintained through the external skin.⁹ One offers transformation, while the other offers overlay or containment.

For me, other divergences exist between the Ossary wolves and the werewolves of the romance narratives, raising additional questions to the ones with which Gerald grappled. Gerald’s werewolves appear and remain within the forest, exiled from their human community, for a pre-determined duration as part of a community-based cultural ritual.¹⁰ The werewolves in the romances, however, traverse multiple domestic and non-domestic spaces while in lupine form. Although they experience exile to varying degrees, they quickly reintegrate with communities—human or otherwise—in ways the Ossary wolves do not. The spaces they traverse also have strong connections to sovereign figures and sovereign power, and, in many instances, have significant bearing upon the actions or behaviours of the wolves. Further, while the wolves of the romance tradition, like Gerald’s wolves, participate in behaviours that evidence their humanity, these behaviours can be juxtaposed to actions that appear particularly wolfish, suggesting that their metamorphoses provide opportunities for exploring possible slippage between species boundaries. Given that transformation initially exiles the protagonists of these tales from their original domestic setting to the purportedly uncivilized space of the forest, one might ask, then, does space inform how they comport themselves? Do the furnishings and materials of the former, or the flora and fauna of the latter,

⁸ Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, 94–95. The concept of the sympathetic werewolf has roots in the early critical materials on the werewolf and connects to Kirby Flower Smith’s identification of “voluntary” and “involuntary” werewolves. Both retain some element of their human self, but the former desires transformation and, once a wolf, is overcome by a “bestial ferocity which takes possession of him at the moment of transformation”; in contrast, the latter is passive, transformed by an external force and an unwilling victim. See “An Historical Study of the Werewolf in Literature,” 4–5. Other early studies perpetuate this binary, including Montague Summers, *The Werewolf*, which offers an extensive etymological discussion of the werewolf.

⁹ Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, 95.

¹⁰ This feature evokes some of the classical werewolf narratives in which individuals or entire groups transform for set periods as a process of ritual cleansing. Examples include Varro’s account of the Arcadians cited by Augustine and Herodotus’s record of the Neuri in *Histories*, 2:105. For a recent study on classical werewolves, see Daniel Ogden, *The Werewolf in the Ancient World*.

shape their experience? What roles do objects and ritualistic behaviours play in determining what is understood as human versus non-human behaviour? In short, how do spaces and their contents act upon the bodies which occupy and use them?

My study takes up these questions, and the ones posed above, in relation to six twelfth- to fourteenth-century romance narratives from France and Britain, written in French, Latin, and Middle English: the anonymous *Guillaume de Palerne*; Marie de France's lay, *Bisclavret*; the Latin romance known as *Arthur and Gorlagon*; the anonymous lay *Melion*; the alliterative *William of Palerne*, a Middle English adaptation of *Guillaume*; and *Biclarel*, an adaptation of Marie's tale by a Clerk of Troyes. Although they are often discussed in smaller subsets, these six tales rarely appear alongside each other *in toto* in critical discussions.¹¹ Core features unite them, however, suggesting they should be considered as a corpus—a werewolf romance corpus, if you will.¹² The authors of these texts present the werewolf story as an extended, complex narrative, positioning the werewolf specifically as their protagonist, and his lycanthropy as the catalyst for action.¹³ Additionally, as is often the case with romance, the protagonists are male, chivalric figures—a knight in most instances, but, in one, also a prince, and, in another, specifically a king. This characterization raises further questions: What is the purpose of associating the werewolf explicitly with a masculine and chivalric identity? What connection does this figure

¹¹ Bynum's study omits entirely *William of Palerne* and *Biclarel*, as do many examinations of the werewolf or of metamorphosis more generally. See, for instance, François Suard, "'Bisclavret' et les contes du loup-garou: essai d'interprétation"; Philippe Ménard, "Histoires du loup-garous"; Mihaela Bacou, "De quelques loup-garous"; Sophie Quénet, "Mises en récit d'une métamorphose: le loup-garou"; Christine Noacco, *La métamorphose dans la littérature française des XIF et XIIF siècles*; and Claude Lecouteux, *Fées, Sorcières et Loup-garous au Moyen Âge*. *Biclarel* receives brief mention in Laurence Harf-Lancner, "La métamorphose illusoire: des théories chrétiennes de la métamorphose aux images médiévales du loup-garou," and Miranda Griffin, *Transforming Tales: Rewriting Metamorphosis in Medieval French Literature*; is central to Amanda Hopkins's study, as seen in her Introduction to *Melion and Biclarel: Two Old French Werewolf Lays*, and appears in Corinne Pierreville, *Loups-Garous du Moyen Âge: Textes édités, traduits et commentés par Corinne Pierreville*. Hopkins makes note of *William* in her Introduction, as does Leslie A. Sconduto, in *Metamorphoses of the Werewolf: A Literary Study from Antiquity through the Renaissance*.

¹² Harf-Lancner similarly suggests a corpus of werewolf tales including the French and Latin texts listed here, but she excludes the Middle English text. See "La métamorphose illusoire," 217.

¹³ Harf-Lancner outlines the narratorial patterns uniting these texts (albeit excluding *William*) in her study. See "La métamorphose illusoire," 219–20.

have to martial violence? And what role does he play in the creation and maintenance of sovereign power?

Across the chapters that follow, I propose answers to the various questions this werewolf romance corpus poses, developing two connected lines of argument. First, I posit that these tales disperse the werewolf's identity across a variety of assemblages, including not only human and animal bodies, but also physical spaces and the animate and inanimate beings or objects therein. These spaces range from the orchard and forest to the hall and chamber, and the beings or objects within range from flora and fauna to banquet tables and beds. The breadth of dispersal articulated in these texts suggests that even when the werewolf appears to occupy a fixed biological form, whether lupine or human, his identity remains fluid; that is, it remains a perpetual becoming. Moreover, it is a becoming with extensive queer potential, and, in some narratives, this queerness significantly disrupts heteronormative practices and social relationships. Second, I posit that these narratives extend their understandings of identity to incorporate political systems and violence, specifically through the werewolf's status as a knight, prince, and/or king. As I show, the narratives engage the werewolf to recall and, in some instances, critique actual knightly conduct, linking him explicitly to moments of excessive violence or by associating him with narratorial elisions that evoke excess. They also employ his figure to legitimate the subjective and systemic violence perpetrated by the authority figures that maintain the social hegemony. Within these tales, the werewolf is an expression of sovereign power and an extension of the identity the sovereign presents, and he often functions as a blunt instrument of the crown.

READING THE WEREWOLF OF MEDIEVAL ROMANCE

Underpinning much of my work is a reading of the werewolves within the romance narratives informed by Timothy Morton's concept of queer ecology. Morton builds his concept upon the foundations of previous critics who question heteronormative dichotomies that establish clear divides between inside and outside (or interior and exterior) when dealing with both humans and the natural world.¹⁴ All life-forms are interconnected, he

¹⁴Morton cites Judith Butler's ideas about performativity and Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject as key foundational studies in this vein. See Morton, "Queer Ecology," 274. On performativity, see Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*; and, on the

insists, existing “in relation to each other,” and he argues that life-forms demonstrate liquidity as they constitute identity, their own or those of the beings around them with which they interact.¹⁵ Morton’s longer articulation of queer ecology is particularly influential on my thinking: “life-forms constitute a *mesh*, a nontotalizable, open-ended concatenation of interrelations that blur and confound boundaries at practically any level: between species, between the living and the nonliving, between organism and environment.”¹⁶ This idea allows me to read the identity of each romance narrative’s protagonist as dispersed across spaces and objects in meaningful ways, and to track, as well, how a reciprocal relationship forms between them.

Spatial and thing theory are both at play in Morton’s concept of queer ecology and are thus influential on my own thinking. As Henri Lefebvre revealed in his ground-breaking *The Production of Space* (1974), social relationships are intrinsically bound to and shaped by the spaces in which they occur or are constructed. Further, divisions between various spaces are artificial: “Social spaces,” he writes, “interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another.”¹⁷ Boundaries that give the appearance of separation (walls or doors, for instance) belie the “ambiguous continuity” characteristic of space.¹⁸ Similar ideas exist concerning how inanimate objects operate, a point poignantly made by Karen Barad in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2003). What might, at first, appear a lifeless entity gains agency through its influence on the beings that interact with it. For Barad, these encounters constitute “intra-action,” or “the mutual constitution of entangled agencies.”¹⁹ Like space, she argues, objects shape the beings with which they come into contact: “Bodies do not simply take their places in the world. Rather, ‘environments’ and ‘bodies’ are intra-actively co-constituted. Bodies (‘human,’ ‘environmental,’ or

object, see Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Drawing upon Derrida’s idea of *différance* and the deconstruction of human-animal boundaries, Morton elsewhere expresses similar ideas about the elision of boundaries between various life forms. See “Ecologocentrism: Unworking Animals”; for Derrida, see *Différance* and *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Derrida’s latter text contributed greatly to the animal turn in critical studies.

¹⁵ Morton, “Queer Ecology,” 275.

¹⁶ Morton, “Queer Ecology,” 275–76 (emphasis original).

¹⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 87.

¹⁸ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 87.

¹⁹ Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, 33.

otherwise) are integral ‘parts’ of, or dynamic reconfigurings of, what is.”²⁰ Agency and meaning arise only through the intra-action of spaces, objects, and bodies as they encounter each other.

Such intra-actions are central to my study. In the chapters that follow, I demonstrate how intra-action with spaces, objects, and beings contributes to the werewolf’s identity network. I examine the werewolf’s encounters with exterior spaces—such as orchards, parks, and forests—and interior spaces—such as halls and chambers—as well as with the various life-forms and objects within them—including flora, clothing, beds, feast tables, and place settings. Many of the entanglements (to paraphrase Barad) critical to the werewolf’s identity link him directly to the political systems that regulate or oversee the various spaces, objects, and beings he encounters. More specifically, they link him to the sovereign of each realm and the power he executes over it.

Engaging spatial and thing theory alongside queer ecology allows me to expand upon another concept that informs my reading of the werewolf—the chivalric circuit. In *Medieval Identity Machines* (2003), Jeffrey Jerome Cohen emphasizes representations of human-animal relations that understand identity as a type of interspecies cooperation, specifically those within martial environments. He proposes an approach that considers identity as more of “a Deleuzian ‘circuit’ or ‘assemblage,’” as a fluid system that makes room for these uncontained bodies.²¹ In his second chapter, “Chevalerie,” he outlines what he calls the chivalric circuit, the intersubjectivity of horse, rider, and all martial accoutrements (e.g., weapons, armour) in action. The result of this cooperation between human, equine, and technological elements, he argues, results in something that is “no longer human” but an entirely new identity formation.²² Taking up Cohen’s idea in her essay “Chivalry and the Pre/Postmodern” (2011), Susan Crane argues that the comingling of humans, animals, and technology is essential to the performance of knighthood.²³ The chivalric circuit, she suggests, links directly to understandings of medieval masculinity and

²⁰ Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 170.

²¹ Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, xxiv. See especially Chapter 2, “Chevalerie,” 35–77. Cohen makes similar arguments in “Inventing with Animals in the Middle Ages,” 39–62.

²² Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, 55.

²³ Susan Crane, “Chivalry and the Pre/Postmodern,” 69–87. For an expanded version of this article, see Crane’s chapter “Knight and Horse,” in *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain*, 137–68.

to martial hierarchies, as the mounted knight was the preeminent fighting force for much of the Middle Ages. Crane's examination of the chivalric circuit foregrounds not only the extensive training of both horse and rider required to create this interspecies subjectivity but also the violence inherent in both this process and its outcome. In battle, especially mounted combat, the primary goal of this entity is the dismemberment of other similarly constituted bodies, the pulling apart of other identity assemblages, as bodies, human and equine, are sundered, and as armour and weapons are shattered. The chivalric figure is therefore "equivalently a matter of organic and inorganic destruction."²⁴ Acts of violence form the chivalric identity, yet the destruction of this very identity becomes one of its primary purposes.

This point requires that I also pay attention to the moments of actual or evoked violence, subjective or systemic, associated with chivalric figures (in either lupine or human form).²⁵ In combat, the knight and his actions constitute a form of subjective violence, a visible or tangible harm enacted upon the bodies of others. The interspecies assemblage of the knight, if I may draw upon Slavoj Žižek's terminology, thus functions as one of the "disciplined repressive apparatuses" which perpetrate violence.²⁶ The knight is, after all, an agent of sovereign power, the martial arm of the crown. Key to any understanding of the werewolf romances is ultimately an understanding of the narrative's articulation of subjective and systemic violence. In all six narratives, the werewolf's identity as a knight inextricably links him to the socio-political systems he upholds as well as to the head of these systems, the sovereign. The relationship between the knight and forms of violence becomes even more pronounced when it is revealed that the werewolf is not just a knight but also a royal figure himself, a prince or king. His identification with systems of violence is therefore compounded, as he is both the martial arm of the law and the very law itself.

The concept of the chivalric circuit and its connections to martial violence are particularly important for my reading of the eponymous

²⁴ Crane, "Chivalry and the Pre/Postmodern," 77.

²⁵ Here, I draw upon Slavoj Žižek, who describes subjective violence as the most visible form of violence, "direct physical violence," and systemic violence, which I frequently refer to as coercive violence, as the violence which includes, as well, "the more subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence." See *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, 10.

²⁶ Žižek, *Violence*, 10.

protagonist of *Guillaume de Palerne* and that of its later redaction, *William of Palerne*. Guillaume/William epitomizes the chivalric circuit, and his story demonstrates how readily this identity network can extend beyond the tripartite system of horse, rider, and accoutrements—incorporating lupine companions, key interior and exterior spaces, material objects, and political systems. This expanded network offers a model for reading Guillaume’s literary counterparts. Although Marie’s knight Bisclavret never appears mounted, for example, nor do readers ever see him engage in cavalry tactics, his knightly identity can be similarly understood as dispersed across various human and non-human life forms and objects, likewise constituting a complex assemblage that has similar connections to martial violence. The same is true of the wolves in *Arthur and Gorlagon*, *Melion*, and *Biclarel*.

The arguments presented in this volume are thus shaped greatly by the various “turns” in critical studies that deconstruct dichotomies and encourage readings that emphasize fluidity or movement across boundaries, especially those in the areas of queer, spatial, thing, and animal studies. Likewise important are studies that anticipate the animal turn especially, including works from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that explore medieval understandings of the boundaries between humans and animals with an eye towards fluidity between them.²⁷ For example, across her study *The Beast Within* (1994), Joyce Salisbury provides examples (such as the Greek *Physiologus* and the medieval bestiary tradition it informed) of texts in which medieval writers employed animal exemplars as representative of human traits, even entire social groups, suggesting that as humanization of the animal increases, so, too, does animalization of the human. Ultimately, she concludes, “humans and animals were more similar than Christian thinkers had been willing to admit.”²⁸ Dorothy Yamamoto, in *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature* (2000), similarly examines how animal and human identities intertwine in the romance tradition. Her discussion of *Valentine and Orson* is especially provocative, as she links the protagonist Orson’s martial success explicitly to his childhood experience of being raised in the wilderness by a female

²⁷ Although I note a few specific texts here, other significant works contribute to the animal turn, including, but not limited to Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*; Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Other Significant Otherness*; Cary Wolfe, *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal*; Karl Steel, *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages*.

²⁸ Joyce Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages*, 104.

bear. Once returned to human society, she says, Orson allies “his native ferocity with the human qualities of reason and intelligence,” and, because he does, overcomes the fearsome opponent that none of his peers can defeat, the Green Knight.²⁹ Her description of his “native ferocity” raises questions about innate versus learned behaviours, especially those linked to violence, suggesting that the human-animal divide needs to be understood as more porous or flexible in order for martial success to occur. Both texts had an early influence on my thinking, leading me to read the boundary between human and wolf as slippery rather than fixed.

Salisbury’s and Yamamoto’s works respond to and challenge the ideas of late-twentieth-century works to which I am equally indebted, specifically those that provided foundations for modern understandings of the werewolf in western medieval literature. Laurence Harf-Lancner looms large here as an early critic who considers the werewolf within the religious contexts of the twelfth century. She argues that while initially appearing to contradict Christian thought, medieval werewolf narratives do in fact conform to an understanding that insists upon the continuation of human reason despite physical change. “The werewolf,” she writes, “is not a man who transforms into a wolf but a man who *becomes* a wolf-man and who draws his formidable power precisely from this monstrous alliance of an animal body and a human understanding.”³⁰ The possibility of actual transformation, both the act and its implications, would ultimately be, she says, “too shocking” for Christian audiences.³¹ As my study shows, though, the shock factor, executed via public spectacle, is critical to meaning in some of the werewolf romances, *Arthur and Gorlagon* and *Biclarrel* especially. In both texts shock arises, however, not from the werewolf’s transformation, but from the punishment of the protagonist’s deceitful wife.

Bynum, in *Metamorphosis and Identity* (2001), expands upon the approach utilized by Harf-Lancner, emphasizing the sympathetic werewolf’s resurgence specifically within philosophical and theological contexts. She frames her study by detailing how the twelfth-century recovery of lost works by Aristotle was pivotal to the philosophical and theological

²⁹ Dorothy Yamamoto, *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature*, 195.

³⁰ “Le loup-garou n’est pas un homme qui se transforme en loup mais un homme qui *devient* homme-loup et qui tire justement son redoutable pouvoir de cette alliance monstrueuse d’un corps animal et d’un entendement humain” (original emphasis; my translation above). See Laurence Harf-Lancner, “La métamorphose illusoire,” 220.

³¹ Harf-Lancner’s words are “trop choquants” (my translation above). See “La métamorphose illusoire,” 220.

shifts contextualizing the texts by Gerald and others. Aristotle's *On Generation and Corruption* in particular had a profound impact on medieval thinkers. This text introduced new theories of change and provided alternate ways of thinking about species differentiation; it presented medieval thinkers with the philosopher's struggle to reconcile his beliefs in the immutable nature of the embodied soul with his beliefs in the possibility of real change, the change of a being from one thing to another.³² Thinkers in the Latin West now faced the possibility that change was indeed possible, and this possibility consequently brought into question the very nature of humanity. Bynum's study—like Yamamoto's—is on the cusp of the animal turn, gesturing towards the critical move that takes hold in the twenty-first century, which reads the boundaries between species as more fluid.

Other early critics read the werewolf as a symbol of the human ability to overcome urges perceived as uncivilized or irrational, and, therefore, animalistic. In their discussion of Marie's *Bisclavret*, for instance, Robert Hanning and Joan Ferrante suggest that the lay concerns "the human capacity to manifest nobility even under the most trying conditions, and thus to transcend the animal part of our nature and garner the hard-won benefits of civilization."³³ An individual's ability to overcome his or her animalistic urges is also frequently connected to understandings of social norms, of acceptable and unacceptable social practices and behaviours. Leslie A. Scoduto makes such a connection in her discussion of *Guillaume de Palerne*. She suggests the romance has a didactic purpose, providing for its audience an example of appropriate "chivalric behaviour."³⁴ Here, the werewolf's overall comportment—his humanity, gentle demeanour,

³² Aristotle's theory of change, as articulated in *On Generation*, was not entirely unknown in the twelfth century because it received mention in the *Categories*. However, because this material was available only indirectly and in summary form, it had very little influence in the early medieval period. See Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, 197. For a recent, detailed examination of the key medieval philosophical shifts, see Nigel Harris, *The Thirteenth-Century Animal Turn: Medieval and Twenty-First-Century Perspectives*, especially Chapter 2, "Aristotle and Thirteenth-Century Animal Studies," 15–61.

³³ Robert Hanning and Joan Ferrante, "Bisclavret (The Werewolf)," 101.

³⁴ See Scoduto, Introduction to *Guillaume de Palerne: An English Translation of the 12th Century French Verse Romance*, 9. In the introduction to his edition of *Guillaume*, Alexandre Micha makes a similar suggestion: "Right from the start the romancer demonstrates in his prologue the [narrative's] didactic intentions" ["D'entée de jeu le romancier affiche dans son prologue des intentions didactiques"] (my translation). See Micha, Introduction to *Guillaume de Palerne, Roman du XIII^e siècle*, 34.

loyalty, and controlled use of violence—render him the ideal martial figure, while his suffering and sacrifice render him the epitome of Christian knighthood.³⁵ The quintessential knight, he enacts all of the appropriate behaviours expected of someone in his social role and, in doing so, provides a model for his ward, Guillaume. Recent scholarship linked to the various critical turns noted above demonstrate how fraught the human-animal dichotomy is, and how unsatisfying any reading that limits an understanding of the werewolf as either human or lupine can be. The six narratives of the werewolf romance corpus, and the complex bodies they contain, suggest that a nuanced approach should be employed when examining them.

My work is thus situated within an extensive conversation about the werewolf in medieval literature, and within the more focused conversations surrounding the texts of my study. By employing the intersecting turns arising from the queer, spatial, thing, and animal studies, the following chapters challenge traditional interpretations of the werewolf as a symbol of the human ability to overcome urges perceived as uncivilized or irrational and, therefore, animalistic. Further, they move beyond recent studies that emphasize the permeability of species boundaries in medieval understandings of identity. I propose a new, expanded assemblage specific to the werewolves of these six romances, one in which physical spaces, material objects, and political systems are as crucial to identity formation as its human and animal or lupine components. The werewolf's becoming is something informed not just by animal and human bodies or physical objects and spaces; it is something simultaneously informed by the roles he plays within the social systems which he upholds through his violence. Through his connection to the sovereign power, the werewolf conveys the political identity associated with that power.

THE WEREWOLF ROMANCE CORPUS IN THREE PARTS

Chapters 2–7 of this volume are grouped into pairs across three parts: Knightly Assemblages; Arthur and the Werewolf; and Adapting and Politicizing the Werewolf. The first part focuses on the twelfth-century romances *Guillaume de Palerne* and *Bisclavret*, demonstrating how these texts epitomize an understanding of identity as an assemblage that

³⁵ Sconduto, “Blurred and Shifting Identities: The Werewolf as Other in *Guillaume de Palerne*,” 124.