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Public and Private Layers of Clothing and Tongue: Marie de France's Medieval Werewolf as Palimpsest

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Marie de France's twelfth-century lai Bisclavret reveals the significance of the use of transparent technologies to construct a paradigm of the public versus private werewolf, human versus beast, Self versus Other, and illustrates the importance of these technologies to social perceptions and to one's assertion of one's own humanity, revealing that the human and the werewolf are not as different as the human attempts to profess. Both the human and werewolf are palimpsests: beings constructed from perceptions based on the addition and removal of layers of speech and clothing.

In his 2011 short essay, "The Werewolf's Indifference," Jeffrey Jerome Cohen says, "a werewolf is the problem of animal difference expressed in monster's flesh. This compound creature asks how intermixed with the bestial (-wolf) the human (were-) might already be."¹ He continues to suggest that "the werewolf is therefore not an identity-robbing degradation of the human, nor yielding to a submerged and interior animality, but the staging of a dialogue in which the human always triumphs. Hybridity is therefore a simultaneity of unequal difference."² Cohen's werewolf demonstrates that the human and the werewolf are not as different as medieval readers would like them to be. One such werewolf is the subject of Marie de France's twelfth-century lai, *Bisclavret*.³ *Bisclavret* is the story of a baron who takes the form of a wolf three days a week; he is ultimately betrayed by his wife and her lover, who steal his clothes, thus trapping him in wolf form for a year until he is rescued by the king. *Bisclavret* reveals the significance of the use of transparent technologies to construct a paradigm of the public versus private werewolf, human

¹ Cohen, "The Werewolf's Indifference," *In the Middle*, last modified October 16, 2011, <http://inthemedievalmiddle.com/2011/10/werewolfs-indifference.html>.

² Ibid.

³ All quotations are from Marie de France, *Bisclavret*, in *The Lais of Marie de France*, trans. Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby (London: Penguin, 1999): 68-72. Pagination rather than line number is used.

versus beast, and Self versus Other, and it illustrates the importance of these transparent technologies to social perceptions and to one's assertion of one's own humanity, revealing that in the use of such technologies the human and the werewolf are not as different as the human attempts to profess. Both the human and werewolf are palimpsests: beings constructed from perceptions based on the addition and removal of layers of speech and clothing or fur.

In werewolf stories, human characters can be bestial and bestial characters can be human. Sometimes not even the skin or clothes they wear confine them to one state or another. The transparent technologies⁴ and identity markers of language and clothing that are used by humans are challenged by the werewolf. The werewolf as Möbius strip is a common reading produced by Wood and adopted by Miranda Griffin. For Wood, the werewolf is "a Möbius strip that turns the inner self into a surface and then retrojects that manifest identity into the human being as its essential nature."⁵ A Möbius strip is a three-dimensional shape that consists of one surface that is simultaneously the inside and outside of itself. By comparing the werewolf to a Möbius strip, Wood suggests that the werewolf shows both its internal mechanisms and external realities at the same time. The werewolf is not hiding anything in its identity; the werewolf only needs to be examined from a different angle to see all of the layers happening at once. According to Griffin, "the lining and layering of human skin and animal skin represents another troubling of the fundamental relationship between inside and outside".⁶ This transformation of "the inner self into a surface" and "troubling of the fundamental relationship between inside and outside" as described by Wood and Griffin are part of the problem of the palimpsest. A palimpsest is a written surface on which

⁴ Andy Clark, *Natural-Born Cyborgs: Minds, Technologies, and the Future of Human Consciousness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 37. As aforementioned, "transparent technologies" include language and clothing, tools that humans use but to which they have become desensitized, to the point that these tools are rendered them nearly invisible.

⁵ Lucas Wood, "The Werewolf as Möbius Strip, or Becoming Bisclavret," *Romantic Review* 102.1/2 (2001): 5, accessed November 6, 2014, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion&rft_id=xri:lion:rec:abell:R04779290.

⁶ Miranda Griffin, "The Beast Without: Animals and Clothing in Werewolf Romance." Presented at The International Courtly Literature Society, British Branch, 2012.

previously erased layers are still visible under the new text.

According to Andy Clark, humans are cyborgs because they are users of “transparent technologies.” Transparent technologies include language and clothing, tools that humans use but to which they have become desensitized, to the point of rendering the user unconscious to them and the tools nearly invisible to the user.⁷ Werewolves are cyborgs in the same way that humans are because their transformations and exclusion from human society depend on the use and removal of these technologies. The most common transformation motif of the werewolf-narrative is the removal of human clothes⁸ or the donning of animal skins.⁹ Unlike the legendary berserkers who put on animal skins to trigger their transformations, Bisclavret removes his clothes to trigger his.¹⁰ Bisclavret reveals to his wife that “if [he] lost them [his clothing] and were discovered in that state, [he] should remain a werewolf forever.”¹¹ Not only does his transformation into a wolf rely upon the removal of his clothing, but his subsequent transformation back to human form depends on him putting his clothing back on.

By removing these identity markers of transparent technology,¹² a specifically lycanthropic human can transform into a werewolf and mark its difference from other humans. However, even when wearing clothes and confined to human form, the werewolf is a werewolf. In *Bisclavret*, the baron is still referred to as “Bisclavret” whether he is in his knightly human form or his wolf form. Bisclavret as wolf and Bisclavret as human are the same being; the only difference is that the latter wears clothing. The transparent technology of clothing allows it to function in the human realm in the same way that language does. Clothing does not truly separate the human from the beast—it allows the beast to mingle with the

⁷ Clark, *Natural-Born Cyborgs*, 37.

⁸ Leslie A. Scoduto, *Metamorphosis of the Werewolf: A Literary Study from Antiquity Through the Renaissance* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2008), 13.

⁹ Peter Orton, “Theriomorphism: Jacob Grimm, Old Norse Mythology, German Fairy Tales, and English Folklore,” in *The Shadow-Walkers: Jacob Grimm's Mythology of the Monstrous*, ed. Tom Shippey (Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University and Brepols Publishers, 2005), 305

¹⁰ Marie de France, *Bisclavret*, 69.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Clark, *Natural-Born Cyborgs*, 37.

human.

Bisclavret the human—the Self—and Bisclavret the wolf—the Other—are perceived as different beings though they are the same. Heidi J. Figueroa-Sarriera argues similarly of the Self in her chapter for *The Cyborg Handbook*, in which she describes the Self as “paradoxically [claiming] simultaneous difference from and equality with the 'Other.’”¹³ The two beings are the same being, yet at the same time are different from each other due to the presence or lack of clothing or fur. What clothing does that fur does not is it designates the boundary “between the self and the rest of the world.”¹⁴ Therefore, to remove that clothing is to remove the boundary and make one a part of nature. This crucial distinction between the human and the animal harkens back to Adam and Eve’s discovery and consequent shame of their nakedness after partaking of the Forbidden Fruit in the Garden of Eden. When Bisclavret’s clothes, his human identity markers, are stolen and he is trapped in his wolf form,¹⁵ he can no longer participate in the human realm. It is his clothing that marks him as human in the eyes of the public, though his mind remains human.

It is often forgotten that the werewolf has a human form, bound up in clothing, which can walk upright and speak in human tongues. The body, of the human and of the werewolf, is animal and a container for the mind, “incarnat[e] of [...] being,” but not being itself; it is a container that limits and a limited container. The psyche, or in other words, the soul as well as the mind, is described as “impersonal and transcendent,” as well as always in “categorical opposition to the body.”¹⁶ The mind of a being does not depend on the form of its body; the body may change but the mind will remain intact as Bisclavret

¹³ Heidi Figueroa-Sarriera, “Children of the Mind with Disposable Bodies: Metaphors of Self in Text on Artificial Intelligence and Robotics,” *The Cyborg Handbook*, ed. Chris Hables (New York: Routledge, 1995), 128.

¹⁴ Figueroa-Sarriera, “Metaphors of Self,” 129, 131.

¹⁵ Marie de France, *Bisclavret*, 69.

¹⁶ David Williams, *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Mediaeval Thought and Literature* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 176.

demonstrates in his recognition of his king¹⁷ and his wife,¹⁸ though he is in his wolf form. The werewolf and the human are both bestial-rational hybrids as they contain divinely bestowed intellect in an animal body;¹⁹ they are composite bodies that make use of the transparent technologies and identity markers of language and clothing.

As the werewolf shows, the mind does not depend on the nature of the beast to reflect it. Such a mind is not bound to a single body. The mind of the human and the werewolf is always in relation to the body, in the same way that the human, the Self, is always in relation to the werewolf, the Other. The mind marks its similitude and the body marks its dissimilitude. The werewolf body, like the human body, is merely a vessel to contain the mind and potential of being in the physical realm. However, containers are boundaries, and, as Cohen suggests, trespassing boundaries is the forte of the monstrous.

The werewolf is a monster which challenges the idea of what it means to be human. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen suggests seven theses of the monstrous in his essay "Monster Culture." His third thesis, "The Monster is the Harbinger of Category Crisis," can be coupled with his second thesis, "The Monster Always Escapes," "because it refuses easy categorization."²⁰ According to Cohen, "this refusal to participate in the classificatory 'order of things' is true of monsters generally: they are disturbing *hybrids* whose externally *incoherent bodies* resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration."²¹ Humans and werewolves are both paradoxical and hybrid by nature, and the two are not so different from each other. Both are composed of a rational mind and animal body, and both use external, physical markers to maintain and trespass the divides between the human and animal and between the Self and Other. The werewolf narrative is paradoxical. It (re)discovers the human in the animal and the animal in

¹⁷ Marie de France, *Bisclavret*, 70.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁹ Irven Michael Resnick and Kenneth Kitchell, "On the Natural and Divine Properties of the Human," in Albertus Magnus, *On Animals: A Medieval Summa Zoologica* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), 1445.

²⁰ Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 6.

²¹ *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

human—the Self in the Other and the Other in the Self. The werewolf shows that the human is not so different from itself, shows the human exactly what it is, what it can become, and why its futile attempts at identity distinction and control allow for the Other, the werewolf, to exist. Covered in layers of clothing, fur, skin, and tongue, the werewolf is never as it appears and is more like the human than medieval humans would like to admit.

The werewolf shows what humans perceive the wolf, the bestial, to be, and the werewolf shows the human what it can become. Both instances are matters of perception and of the public and private. The narrator states that Bisclavret becomes a werewolf for three days every week.²² For three days of the week, Bisclavret is something he is perceived not to be during the other four days. He disappears from the public scene in order to undergo a very private and frequent transformation of his body. Bisclavret is a private werewolf, wrapped in the skin of a public knight and husband. He is unlike the werewolves of public knowledge, the Garwaf. Marie de France describes the Garwaf as a ferocious type of werewolf who is afflicted with madness and who eats men.²³ However, this werewolf is not the same type of werewolf as Bisclavret, and he is not the wild beast that his wife perceives him to be upon learning his secret.²⁴ To his wife, Bisclavret is now a public werewolf and the only other known public werewolf is the Garwaf. The public werewolf is seen as a threat and the private werewolf is misidentified.

Bisclavret does not wish to become a public werewolf, specifically a public animal, and having his secret known even by his wife causes him great anxiety.²⁵ Public werewolves have a bad reputation and as soon as his secret is out, that is all his wife can see him as. Bisclavret's wife sees him as what humans view wolves to be: violent invaders, human-eaters, and frenzied attackers.²⁶ Bisclavret without his clothes and with his secret revealed is forced into the space of the public werewolf. He fears he will be hunted

²² Marie de France, *Bisclavret*, 68.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 68.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

like the Garwaf.²⁷ The public werewolf is considered more violent than its private werewolf counterpart. For Bisclavret to reveal his lycanthropy to the public would allow the rest of humanity to deem him a public werewolf, capable of the same mindless violence and to be feared in the same way. The Garwaf is every horrible perception of animality personified and that is what inspires fear of the werewolf in general.

The Bisclavret is shown in both human and beast form, both while he is wearing his clothing and speaking with his human tongue, as well as when he is forced to convey his humanity while trapped in a private wolfish container that does not match his public human persona. Bisclavret's Self, his public identity as a human being, is contingent upon the clothes that he wears and his role as husband. He fears the consequences for sharing his secret with his prying wife, declaring he will have "great harm" come to him, "lose [her] love," and "destroy [his]self".²⁸ Without his clothing, Bisclavret will be seen as purely Other. He will only be seen as nonhuman—as a public werewolf.

Bisclavret is a private werewolf essentially, but for the rest of the narrative will be a public werewolf. However, this public werewolf comes to be perceived not as a Garwaf, but as a loyal companion—a housedog. Bisclavret is never assumed by the king to be a Garwaf; he already is *like* a man, just covered in fur and on all fours. This man is found asleep in the king's bed and not so different from when he was in wolf form.²⁹ There is no danger besides a perceived danger; actions and containers have already determined the identity of the beast. Clothing and verbal language are the identity markers that mark Bisclavret as human; though truly he is still a wolf, he is merely contained to human form. He is wearing his human skin that is publically recognized and accepted, but his fur remains as a hidden layer of his identity.

As aforementioned, a lack of clothing harkens to the shame of Adam and Eve in their nakedness;

²⁷ Ibid., 69.

²⁸ Ibid., 68-9. Emphasis added.

²⁹ Ibid., 72.

humans have an inherent fear of nudity. More precisely, humans without clothing lack one of the few identity markers that distinguish them from other animals. Bisclavret hesitates to reveal his method of transformation to his wife because he fears that his clothing will be lost as a result, thus confining him to a nonhuman form.³⁰ He is metaphorically and literally an animal when naked. The perception of others degrades the Bisclavret as a public werewolf, as an animal to be feared, and as nonhuman.

Bisclavret's wife is the first to allow her fear of her unclothed husband and her knowledge of public werewolves to alter her perception of her husband. She questions him about his secret and the workings of his lycanthropy, displaying a surprising knowledge of werewolf stories when she asks one key question: "whether he [goes] undressed or remained clothed."³¹ A clothed werewolf draws attention to the "were," the man portion of the hybrid. However, a naked werewolf functions just as a naked human, drawing attention to the "wolf," the animal that is feared. Bisclavret's wife treats her husband as if he is the fiendish Garwaf and no longer wishes to lie with him, as though his animality, which never threatened her while they were in private, will now emerge in bed. He will behave like a wolf or Garwaf, a savage eater of humans. However, as Marie de France shows later on, in bestial form the private werewolf poses no threat to its roommate(s). In his lord's private chamber he behaves as a human and sleeps among the knights and king without incident.³²

At the end of the lai, Bisclavret is embarrassed of his transformation just as he was at the beginning. When his lycanthropy is made public, he fears what identity others will attempt to confine him to. He will not transform in the public sphere—he will not put on the identity marker, clothing, and reveal himself as human in the company of others. Ironically, he is given the privacy of the king's bedchamber to conceal his bestial body.³³ A public yet private space is used by a public yet private werewolf.

³⁰ Ibid., 68.

³¹ Ibid., 69.

³² Ibid., 70.

³³ Ibid., 72.

In *The Shadow-Walkers*, Peter Orton writes that “the werewolf is the site of a struggle between the human and the animal in man,”³⁴ while in the same book Sarah L. Higley states that “the compound reflects the process of limitations set on what is human, what is proscribed, and what is driven from social consciousness and meaning.”³⁵ The fear of nudity is part of the anxiety of what it means to be human that the werewolf narrative addresses. Without the transparent technologies of clothing and language, the human fears it will be degraded by society and seen as an animal. As Griffin writes, “animal and human are interdependent categories” that can only be defined in relation to each other.³⁶ The human without is not so different from the animal without. The difference is that the animal is not aware that it is without clothing or human language. Wood claims that the use of the lycanthropy motif in Marie de France’s *Bisclavret* “rearticulate[s] the problem of human appearance and reality as a question about animality and the limits of the human.”³⁷ The werewolf shows humanity its limits—being confined to language and clothing—and that without these identity markers, they become the beasts they fear. However, more so, they become what they perceive the beasts they fear to be: without reason.

Bisclavret reveals that to be without clothing and human verbal language is not the same as being without reason. Language and clothing are important in *Bisclavret* as identity markers that distinguish the werewolf from the human, and also allow the werewolf to act as a human among humans in human form. That being said, language comprehension, human nonverbal communication, and behaviour demonstrating courtesy allow *Bisclavret* to live as a human among humans, although he is trapped in the form of a wolf. In this sense, he functions more as a housedog than as a perceived human or public werewolf. The verbs used to describe the transformed baron indicate that he remains human in nature.

³⁴ Orton, “Theriomorphism,” 333.

³⁵ Sarah J. Higley, “Finding the Man Under the Skin: Identity, Monstrosity, Expulsion, and the Werewolf,” in *The Shadow-Walkers: Jacob Grimm’s Mythology of the Monstrous*, ed. Tom Shippey (Tempe: Arizona State University and Brepols Publishers, 2005), 339.

³⁶ Griffin, “The Beast Without.”

³⁷ Wood, “Becoming *Bisclavret*,” 11.

He “kisses” the king's foot and begs for mercy instead of “licking” the king's foot and begging for scraps.³⁸ His actions speak for him in the place of human words and he is able to overcome one of the two barriers—in this case, the lack of human verbal language that keeps him in the bestial realm. Bisclavret is able to reaffirm his identity as the owner of a rational mind, though it may be contained in the body of a beast.

The werewolf reflects its humanity, not through words, but through its actions.³⁹ The werewolf does not wear clothing, nor does it speak while in its wolf form. However, the werewolf *does* wear clothing and *does* speak while in human form. The werewolf does not need to use human verbal language when it is not participating in human society as human. As Peter Orton suggests, there is an “awareness of the animal in [the hu]man”.⁴⁰ However, in werewolf narratives there is also an awareness of the human in the animal. The king acknowledges that the beast “has the intelligence of a human” and “possesses understanding,” and so the commonly perceived (were)wolf is ignored due to better evidence of a rational (were)wolf.⁴¹ The king does not immediately declare that Bisclavret is a human. Bisclavret becomes the housedog of the court, a tame werewolf, and his role as knight has not changed much. He continues to act as the servant and protector of his lord. He sleeps with the king at night and does no harm to anyone, for he is a noble animal.⁴² The king allows for Bisclavret to join the human realm once again as he is recognized as something more than an intelligent beast, though he is not recognized for his true *knight* self. Instead, the king recognizes something of the human in this animal.

As the human is recognized in the animal that is Bisclavret, it is the *animal* in Bisclavret that prompts the (re)discovery of his “true,” or human, identity. Two occurrences of violent behavior erupt from Bisclavret in the course of the narrative.⁴³ Had Bisclavret been a regular wolf, or even a Garwaf, his

³⁸ Marie de France, *Bisclavret*, 70.

³⁹ Sconduto, *Metamorphoses of the Werewolf*, 14.

⁴⁰ Orton, “Theriomorphism,” 320.

⁴¹ Marie de France, *Bisclavret*, 70.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*; Marie de France, *Bisclavret*, 71.

actions would not undergo questioning; they would be expected. However, had Bisclavret been such a beast, he would not have been accepted back into the human realm by the king and would have instead been hunted like any other threatening animal.⁴⁴

This human realm contains two people who have done the Bisclavret many wrongs: his traitorous wife and her lover. When Bisclavret attacks one of the king's knights, his wife's lover, it is decided that the knight must have done some harm to him, for the Bisclavret never acted like this before. No one except Bisclavret and his wife's lover know that a wrong was done, yet the knights base their ideas on their newfound perceptions of their public "dog." The other knights in the king's court assume that the Bisclavret has reason.⁴⁵ His actions precede him and his mind, though trapped by a bestial form, is not contained to the bestial form. It surpasses the limits placed on it. Bisclavret, as the king and knights know, has a rational mind that does not align with common perceptions of his animal externality.

Not long after his attack on the lover, Bisclavret attacks his wife and permanently disfigures her.⁴⁶ It is Bisclavret's inhuman actions that cause his "true" human identity to be discovered.⁴⁷ Due to the Bisclavret's recognized human intelligence his actions speak in place of words. Once again, the court acknowledges that this is not the way of the Bisclavret, that he is not a wicked being, and that it is the people he attacks who are wicked.⁴⁸ A wise man also speaks for Bisclavret, lending a voice, and another layer, to the beast so that his story can be told. Bisclavret, with some vocal, human help, demonstrates his human nature and reveals his wife's bestial nature in her noseless form. Bisclavret effaces part of her identity as human in his attack, thereby degrading her to the animal realm in the perception of the public.

Where Bisclavret's actions reflect his humanity in place of words, his wife's actions contradict her words. She tells him she loves him "more than the whole world" and that he should not doubt her when

⁴⁴ Marie de France, *Bisclavret*, 70.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁴⁶ Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, "Of Men and Beasts in *Bisclavret*," *Romantic Review* 81.3 (1999): 235.

⁴⁷ Marie de France, *Bisclavret*, 71.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

he reveals his secret and the vulnerability of his transformation's required nakedness.⁴⁹ Yet that love is revealed to be a lie first by the narrator, and then by the wife herself as she offers her love to another knight.⁵⁰ Bisclavret's doubt is also justified as his wife reveals her husband's secret and vulnerability to her new lover in order to trap Bisclavret in his animal state.⁵¹ Bisclavret uses his actions to speak in place of his words in order to regain his human form, whereas his wife uses her actions to go against her words in order to destroy the connection between Bisclavret's wolf and human forms. David Williams claims that "language, the science derived from Him [that is God], retained something of the same monstrous dimensions in its own double nature, which consisted of immaterial meaning incarnated in sensuous sound."⁵² There is a duplicitous nature in language similar to the nature of the human and werewolf body. This double nature is not only found in Bisclavret, but also his wife. The narrative of *Bisclavret* is a palimpsest: it is layered with two parallel narratives in which the characters efface each other's humanity by removing layers of identity markers.

The truly "monstrous" werewolf is never the one suspected. In *Bisclavret*, there are two werewolves: Bisclavret and his wife. Matilda Bruckner deems Bisclavret's wife a "Femme Bisclavret," based partially on the Anglo-Norman text but also on that Bisclavret's wife function as his opposite and that she becomes a werewolf in another sense.⁵³ She wears her human skin and clothing, but her internal mechanisms are not noble like Bisclavret's—they are "hairy." Constitutional werewolves, as defined by Sarah Higley, are "wolves who wear the skins of humans; when they turn their inner 'hairiness' out, they are a menace to society."⁵⁴ Bisclavret's wife privately reveals her true self in the betrayal of her husband, and Bisclavret publically reveals his wife when he robs her of her nose.⁵⁵ When Bisclavret acts as his wife

⁴⁹ Ibid., 69.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Williams, *Deformed Discourse*, 9.

⁵³ Bruckner, "Of Men and Beasts in *Bisclavret*," 255.

⁵⁴ Higley, "Finding the Man under the Skin," 351.

⁵⁵ Marie de France, *Bisclavret*, 71.

expects him to—out of character according to the king, but assumed of the Garwaf and other beasts—is when the Femme Bisclavret loses everything and he regains everything.

Bisclavret and his wife form a diptych, two pictures side by side, simultaneously the same but different. Bruckner's Femme Bisclavret undergoes her own transformation just as Bisclavret does.⁵⁶ Bisclavret's wife becomes and embodies what she believes Bisclavret to be: first, an adulterer,⁵⁷ and then a beast that deceives and causes harm.⁵⁸ She represents every opposing aspect of the Bisclavret, who is loyal to his wife until she betrays him and who remains loyal to his lord, whereas she falls out of love with her lord and manipulates the emotions of her lover. Her noselessness marks her as Other and beast-like, just as she marked her husband as Other and beast-like by stealing his clothing. In both cases the true nature of the werewolf is revealed by these concealing identity markers. Bisclavret is a noble beast that lives first away from society in the woods⁵⁹ and then at the heart of society in the castle, whereas his wife is a deceptive beast who lives first in society and then is banished to the outskirts as she did to her husband.⁶⁰ She is chased away like a mongrel; she is a Garwaf on the inside. In *Bisclavret*, Bisclavret may physically be a werewolf, but his wife, the Femme Bisclavret, is the one who becomes what a werewolf is thought to be—or more specifically, what a Garwaf is thought to be. Each removes each other's layers in the hope of exposing the other's true nature and in doing so, address the question of what is human and what is animal.

Marie de France's lai concludes with both Bisclavret and his wife being revealed as public werewolves as the Femme Bisclavret is driven away by society while Bisclavret is embraced for his noble bearing. The lai demonstrates the human in the perceived animal and the animal in the perceived human. The werewolf narrative and diptych within it that Marie de France presents functions as a mirror for the

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 68, 69.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 69.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 70.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 71.

reader. Readers are shown that they embody the beast that they fear and that anyone can become a Garwaf. However, while anyone can become a Garwaf, any beast can also be a Bisclavret. The human-animal binary is not as strict as it is initially perceived to be. Instead it can be crossed and challenged in both public and private spheres.

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