

Declassifying and Reclassifying Medieval Werewolves

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In medieval literature, four particular werewolves—Bisclavret from Marie de France's *Bisclavret*, Alphonse from the verse romance *Guillaume de Palerne*, Gorlagon from the anonymous *Arthur and Gorlagon the Werewolf*, and Melion from the anonymous *Melion* lay—are part of a rich literary werewolf history that has unfortunately caged these medieval monsters into very black-and-white classifications, that only focus on the wolf or human aspects of their transformations. This sort of binary reasoning has stymied the scholarship from realizing that these medieval werewolves should not be thought of as *just* men turning into wolves, as they are more complex creatures. Instead, there needs to be a new approach when analyzing these particular werewolves. They are exceptional within the literary canon for they remove themselves from the stereotypical qualifications of the vicious werewolf that precede and follow them, and branch out to form a different type of monster, a werehundwolf. Within the medieval werewolf form lies a human, wolf, and a dog. The characteristics of the human, wolf, and dog are intertwined because at any point the werewolf can exhibit a trait that can be thought of as both human and dog, or even wolf and human, or dog and wolf. The stories of Bisclavret, Melion, Gorlagon, and Alphonse demonstrate that our understanding of medieval werewolves has been askew, and by bringing in the idea of a dog into this werewolf scholarship, a new perception of this monster can commence.

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