

COURTLY ANGER, BEASTLY VIOLENCE, AND THE ANIMAL-AFFECTIVE
PROSTHETIC

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APPROVAL PAGE

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and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Dr. Emma Lipton

Dr. Lee Manion

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To Mom, who would have read and (pretended to have) loved every page.

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ABSTRACT

This project is an examination of four medieval romances that feature human-animal contact: Marie de France's *Lai of Bisclavret*, the Latin *Narratio de Arthuro Rege Britanniae et Rege Gorlagon lycanthropo*, Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain, le Chevalier au Lion*, and the Middle English *Richard Coer de Lyon*. In imagining the human-animal contact found in each of these texts as an animal-affective prosthetic, I argue that their human characters (and authors) appropriate animal bodies—and the affective "freedom" that is ascribed to them—as tools to temporarily alter human bodies and thus make accessible new ways of performing affect. Lion bodies and wolf skin become affective "limbs" with which the knights and kings in these romances can, through transgressively-performed anger, enact a fantasy of the perfect defense of normative identity. And yet, despite the careful attempt in these texts to draw a line between the human and animal, the courtly body and bestly limb, the two nonetheless blur into one another. These texts ultimately suggest that the transgressive performance of anger enacted by those animal bodies is in fact an essential part of chivalric—and, indeed, human—identity.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important ways in which medieval writers separated themselves from the rest of creation was to assert that humans alone held claim to a rational mind; the animals, on the other hand, were irrational beasts. In his *Literal Commentary on Genesis*, Augustine writes that humans have dominion over animals because "man was made to the image of God in that part of his nature wherein he surpasses the brute beasts. This is, of course, his reason or mind or intelligence, or whatever we wish to call it."¹ Because of their seeming lack of rationality, medieval thinkers attributed "animal action to instinct, and animals (unlike humans) were incapable of acting apart from instinctive behavior."² This divide between rational humans and irrational animals was further distinguished by the way animals perform affect: like the subhuman wild men that haunted the fringes of medieval thought and civilization, lurking in the forests, naked, hairy, and living on raw meat,³ animals were "slaves to desire and unable to control their passion."⁴ This inability to "control passion" is an important element in the Othering of various identities. As Sara Ahmed has noted, to be emotional "is to be reactive rather than active, dependent rather than autonomous... Emotions are associated with women, who are represented as 'closer' to nature, ruled by appetite, and less able to transcend the body

¹ As quoted in Karl Steel, *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2011), 33.

² Joyce E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 5.

³ See Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages: A Study in Art, Sentiment, and Demonology* (New York: Octagon Books, 1970).

⁴ Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, 151.

through thought, will and judgement."⁵ Just as men subordinate affect to define themselves against women, humans more generally are defined as "not-animal" through their ability to control their performance of affect, to rein in their "passions."

And yet being a "slave to desire" could be as liberating as it was limiting. In addition to describing animals in terms of bondage, medieval bestiaries often presented them as free to act as they please: the twelfth-century bestiary translated by T. H. White explains that animals "are known as 'wild' (*ferus*) because they are accustomed to freedom by nature and are governed (*ferantur*) by their own wishes. They wander hither and thither, fancy free, and they go wherever they want to go."⁶ This freedom exists beyond the social rules that restrict human behavior. As Joyce Salisbury writes, "Here animals are marked by further differences from humans. Animals do not abide by social expectations that bind humans."⁷ Part of that freedom from social expectations is a freedom to perform affect in ways humans cannot. While animals might be slaves to their passions, they are free from social rules, such as codes of chivalry or expectations of courtly behavior, that demand the careful regulation of bodies—including the affective performance of those bodies.

A key characteristic of animals' uninhibited affective performance is violence. White's bestiary claims that creatures "are called Beasts because of the violence with

⁵ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 3.

⁶ T. H. White, *The Book of Beasts: Being a Translation from a Latin Bestiary of the Twelfth Century* (London: W.S. Cowell, 1954), 7.

⁷ Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, 5.

which they rage."⁸ Because animals are not bound to expectations of courtly behavior, they are able to express anger, fury, and rage through acts of violence markedly different from human violence. They are more vicious, more unpredictable, and more dangerous. Salisbury cites Thomas Aquinas on the uniqueness of animal violence: "Savagery and brutality take their names from a likeness to wild beasts which are also described as savage."⁹ Animals, unlike humans, are free to express their rage through "savage" and "brutal" violence; their bodies, with their sharpened claws and teeth, are able to perform anger through the tearing and rending of flesh, an intimately somatic performance considered taboo and transgressive in humans.

This duality in medieval thought on animals—as both enslaved (to passion) and free (from social or moral responsibility)—points to what I have identified as a through-line in romance narratives that feature human-animal contact: humans (here, male nobles) must enter the affectively permissive space of the animal in order to effectively assert and defend the boundaries of their normative identities and the courtly space in which they exist. They must remove themselves from the world of chivalry in order to gain an animalistic affective ability—an animal-affective prosthetic, if you will—that allows them the freedom of affective performance necessary to police their ultimately normative positions. I use the term "animal-affective prosthetic" (sometimes abbreviated to "affective prosthetic") in this study because I think it does a number of things for our understanding of the intimate human-animal contact found in these narratives. First, by

⁸ White, *The Book of Beasts*, 7.

⁹ As quoted in Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, 5.

conceptualizing that contact as a functional object serving a specific purpose in a text, it shifts our attention to the question, "What *work* is contact with animals doing in these texts?" Thinking about contact with animals as a narrative device that, like a prosthetic limb, is designed to perform a specific task, we can observe how medieval writers anthropocentrically appropriate the affective freedom ascribed to other creatures for human ends—both within the text, as a means of effectively policing human society and normative identity in the narrative, and as a way of making the actions required for that policing more acceptable to their audiences. Using the term "animal-affective prosthetic" to describe human-animal contact also points to the nature of the transformation this contact causes: characters are portrayed as becoming something more-than-human through the addition of this new affective limb, while at the same time retaining their essential human boundaries. The prosthetic adds to the body, temporarily changing its shape and allowing it to perform affect differently, but, reassuringly, does not change the fundamental nature of the human body that uses the prosthetic. This is important, as it again works to suggest that these are humans *behaving* like animals, not becoming them.

Employing an animal-affective prosthetic becomes a means for medieval writers to fantasize a more perfect and complete defense of normativity (human, heterosexual, able-bodied). However, the fact that this fantasy requires humans to use this prosthetic in order to emerge as emphatically human in a world they have made assuredly normative suggests that, despite their best efforts, these texts fail to relegate affective permissiveness entirely to other creatures. To put it another way, by making transgressive violence *necessary* for these men to defend courtly society, and by trying to incorporate

that animal limb into courtly life (turning wolves and lions into domestic dogs, for instance), these texts undermine their own efforts to attribute that violence to the affectively erratic non-human. Despite using an affective prosthetic intended to suggest that this affective performance is inhuman, the boundaries blur, and the limb is ultimately revealed to be human flesh and bone.

In transforming into, working with, or performing like an animal body, humans gain access to new ways of using their bodies to perform affect. In describing affect as performative and somatic, I borrow from the work of Sara Ahmed and other scholars working in affect studies who consider emotion as social in nature; feelings originate "out there" and move into a person, rather than the other way around.¹⁰ Ahmed also reads affect as somatically bound: "Emotions shape the very surfaces of bodies...In Spinoza's terms, emotions shape what bodies can do."¹¹ Thus, humans do not swap "human" affect for "animal" affect when they come into contact with animals; rather, those affects press against, shape, and express themselves through their bodies differently. One's affect does not change in the move toward the animal, but what one's body can do with and through that affect does—that is, the performance of that affect changes. Animal bodies perform affect differently than human bodies, and this performance is part of what defines those bodies as "animal." As suggested above, a key aspect of that somatic performance is transgressive violence. Animals, unrestricted by social mores or taboos, are shaped by and help shape their affect through the performance of transgressive violence that breaks

¹⁰ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

rules of courtly or chivalric behavior; they are able to express their rage, their jealousy, their anger, by tearing, clawing, biting, and rending other bodies. It is this performance that humans gain access to in their contact with animals, and it is this performance that allows them to effectively defend the very chivalric rules they break in the process. By expanding the scope of Ahmed's work on the somatic nature of affect to include not only how it works to subjugate particular human identities (including the feminine and queer) but also the non-human, we gain a clearer picture of the way bodies are shaped by and help shape the affect that moves through and between them.

That I refer to affect in terms of ability and disability stems from recent work done by scholars on the nature of disability in the Middle Ages, the difference between impairment and disability, and the assertion of many working in disability studies that disability, like other identity categories, is socially constructed.¹² Thus, if we consider affect as tied up with bodies, shaping and being shaped by them, we can also consider the ways in which a person's social environment renders them affectively "disabled" in much the same way social environments can render bodies physically disabled. Their bodies are restricted by social rules and expectations, which then restricts or limits their ability to perform affect. Indeed, the social nature of disability, when connected with affective performance, can help make sense of how that performance could be interpreted as disabling. From an anthropocentric perspective, an animal's body and the affective performances that body enacts are a disability: it excludes the animal from human

¹² See Irina Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking About Physical Impairment during the High Middle Ages, c. 1100-1400* (London: Routledge, 2006) and Edward Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks Before the Blind: Medieval Constructions of a Disability* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010).

society, forcing them to exist beyond its borders. However, when looked at from a different perspective, that body's range of performances can be viewed as enabling—it might prevent that animal from moving in one affective space, but it simultaneously opens up new kinds of movement that the conventionally "able-bodied" human does not have access to. That is why I describe humans in close proximity with the animal as using an affective "prosthetic": it is as though their contact with the animal serves as a new limb which, while marking them as different, as less able-bodied than their fully human counterparts, nonetheless provides them with a new form of movement, access to formerly impossible expressions of anger achieved through a violently transgressive performance of that anger.

My use of the term "prosthetic" to describe a particular narrative device was inspired by David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder's book *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*. In that study, the authors use the term "narrative prosthesis" to refer to texts' efforts to erase bodily difference: "*Narrative Prosthesis* is first and foremost about the ways in which the ruse of prosthesis fails in its primary objective: to return the incomplete body to the invisible status of a normative essence."¹³ (8). Although I employ "prosthetic" as a way characters are made more deviant rather than less so (and have thus chosen to use a slightly different word), I still read within the movement away from normativity an effort to carefully distinguish between the human character and the animal aberrancy of which they temporarily take advantage. In that sense, the texts I examine also strive to return bodies to their "normative essence." And,

¹³ David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 8.

as I suggested above, this effort likewise ends in failure. The use of the animal as an affective prosthetic ultimately cannot keep the two bodies from blurring into one another.

A disability studies lens also allows us to think about how bodily abnormality is so often connected to other kinds of marginalized identities. Mitchell and Snyder write, "[P]hysical or cognitive inferiority has historically characterized the means by which bodies have been constructed as 'deviant'... This socially imposed relationship between marginalized populations and 'inferior' biology situates disability studies in proximity to other minority approaches."¹⁴ They cite examples such as the practice of linking femininity to hysteria, using biology to justify racism, and categorizing homosexuality as a pathological disorder. In fact, they go on to write that "[o]ne might think of disability as the master trope of human disqualification."¹⁵ I think animality could potentially trump disability there, but the two are so often intertwined. Animal bodies are the epitome of disabled (from an anthropocentric perspective) because they completely fail to meet the standards of the human form. Indeed, in the texts I examine, we can see the ways in which other marginalized identities are often attributed to animal bodies: they are not only less able-bodied, but often queer and feminine as well. The characters who make use of the animal-affective prosthetic must temporarily Other themselves in a number of ways in order to ultimately return as assuredly normative.

We can see the convergence of affect, disability and the animal in a number of medieval texts. Medieval writers often argued that "the upright human form both allows

¹⁴ Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

and reminds humans to direct their eyes away from mundane desires and toward the heavens. As for animals, the tradition characterizes their bodies as prone to the ground and their eyes directed only at their food."¹⁶ Bartholomaeus Anglicus, for instance, writes that "man strives for heaven, and is not like livestock obeying its stomach, with a mind fixed on the earth."¹⁷ An even more suggestive link between physical disability, affect, and animality comes from William of St. Thierry's *Physics of the Human Body*, in which he writes:

Although nature had given man hands for many life functions in way and in peace, yet before all it is for this: if man had no hands his mouth would have to be fashioned like those of quadrupeds so he could take food from the ground. The length of his neck would have to be increased, his nose shaped like that of a brute animal. He would have to have heavy lips, thick, coarse, and projecting, suited to cutting fodder... Thus if hands had not been provided for the body, an articulated and modulated voice could not exist... But now, with the hand serving the mouth, the mouth serves reason and through it the intellectual soul which is spiritual and incorporeal. This is something not shared with irrational animals.¹⁸

Without hands, humans would lack language, and thus the rationality and affective restraint that separates them from animals. Affect is presented here as somatically bound; in order to gain an animally-affective ability, the human's body must change.

¹⁶ Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 45.

¹⁷ As quoted in Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 47.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

By considering human-animal contact through the lenses of affect and disability studies, this project contributes to the field of animal studies by continuing the conversation of how medieval people attempted to differentiate themselves from other animals, as well as how that project of differentiation fails, breaks down, or is imaginatively subverted. Jeffrey Cohen has written about the way animals could serve a particular function in the minds of medieval writers:

Animals...offered 'possible' bodies to the dreamers of the Middle Ages, forms both dynamic and disruptive through which might be dreamt alternate and even inhuman worlds. In animal flesh could be realized some potentialities for identity that might escape the constricting limits of contemporary race, gender, or sexuality. Animals were fantasy bodies through which denied enjoyments might be experienced and foreclosed potential opened to exploration.¹⁹

In thinking about how human-animal contact serves as an affective prosthetic, opening up new types of affective performance, I too suggest that animals allow humans to "escape...constricting limits," not only of various identity categories, but of chivalric codes of conduct and the restrictions they place on how bodies can express affect. Rather than considering this use of the animal as a way to imagine "inhuman" worlds, however, I read this contact as a way of imagining a more perfect *human* world. The "fantasy bodies" (or, in this project, the fantasy "limbs") of animals are used to defend normative

¹⁹ Jeffrey J. Cohen, "Inventing with Animals," in *Engaging with Nature: Essays on the Natural World in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Barbara A. Hanawalt and Lisa J. Kiser (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 40.

identities and the unproblematically human world in which they reside. Imagining new bodies becomes an anthropocentrically-oriented practice that attempts to assert human dominance, not question it.

This focus on the way humans assert dominance over animals places my work in conversation with scholars such as Karl Steel, who argues that acts of violence against animals are central to distinguishing humans from other creatures: "These acts of boundary-making subjugation include the acts not only of eating, taming, and killing, but also categorizing... To put it simply, an animal is human when it can be murdered."²⁰ I shift the conversation away from the violence enacted *against* animals toward the kinds of violence ascribed *to* animals, the ways they are able to relate to the world through their bodies that are not permitted to humans. As Steel notes, the project of human-animal differentiation inevitably requires some admittance to similarity. Animal likeness to humans must be continually invoked in order to be denied—the denial of likeness can only be meaningful if beasts are in some way comparable to humans.²¹ By considering affect and ability as categories in which humans both share similarities with animals (they feel the same affects) as well as differences (the differences in their bodies result in different ways those affects are performed), we gain an important perspective on the line that is simultaneously drawn and blurred between "human" and "animal" in the Middle Ages.

²⁰ Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 14-15.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

While Steel reads human-animal contact as an attempt to assert human difference and superiority over the animal that sometimes slips or momentarily fails, other scholars, in a manner similar to Cohen, see instances of this contact as explicit attempts to blur that line. Susan Crane reads medieval poetry in particular as a genre (or set of genres) that "sometimes unfolds a contrasting conception that humans and other animals occupy together a field of resonances, equivalences, and differences—and not differences that precipitate into a sharply delineated binary."²² As with Cohen's animal "fantasy bodies" that undo the human, Crane argues that human-animal contact can often serve as an explicit attempt to question the distinction between humans and animals. While this might at times be the case, I believe (at least in the texts I examine here) that in the presentation of human-animal contact—especially when that contact is particularly intimate, as it is with physical transformation or close human-animal relationships—there is a visible effort to draw this line more distinctly. By considering what that contact allows humans to *do*, the actions it allows those humans to perform, we can see the texts' attempt to draw a line between human and animal behavior: the former is in control of his affect, the latter is controlled by it, the former's body is restricted and bound by the rule of court and chivalry, the latter is free to use its body however it pleases. This distinction is conceptualized through the affective prosthetic—humans do not *become* animals, they only *use* animals for specific, and always very human, goals. In examining the use of this prosthetic, however, we can see how this effort at delineating human and animal does in fact break down, as the necessity of animal behavior to defend courtly society implicitly

²² Susan Crane, *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 48.

undermines the separateness of the two identities. By suggesting that humans *need* to at times act like animals to ensure their ability to continue living as humans (with social rules enforced and firmly established) these texts leave open the possibility that humans are always-already animal, despite their best efforts to insist otherwise.

In thinking about how human bodies relate to animal bodies, I am also indebted to Dorothy Yamamoto's work in *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature*. While that book does not employ the language of disability studies, her examination of human and animal bodies as sites of cultural meaning, as center and periphery which remain in conversation and work to define each other, has helped me make sense of how humans attempt to distinguish themselves from animals. As she writes, "Every society...sends out messages about the kind of body it is good to have."²³ I add to this conversation by including affective performance as an aspect of this bodily differentiation; not only do the way bodies look (hairy and stooped versus hairless and upright) and the places they are found (the forest versus the court) determine human centrality, but the way in which they perform affect (uninhibited freedom versus socially-imposed restraint) help to do the same. Indeed, by examining how humans use an animal-affective prosthetic to move into the periphery (by assuming a temporarily Othered position), and how that movement allows them to more effectively protect and defend, and more perfectly assume, their place in the center, we gain a clearer picture of how the peripheral animal and central human positions interact with each other.

²³ Dorothy Yamamoto, *The Boundaries of the Human in Medieval English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.

One genre in which this movement from center to periphery frequently occurs is romance. I examine four romances (or, at least, romance-like texts) in this study in an effort to examine how medieval writers negotiated human, courtly identity through the animal bodies that inhabit the wilderness lurking at its edges. Part of the justification for that choice is the simple fact that each text includes examples of the kind of human-animal contact I have been describing. Whether humans wrap themselves in animal skin, befriend and work alongside an animal partner, or simply use their human bodies in ways that resemble animals, these narratives present a variety of ways in which humans take advantage of the affective permissiveness ascribed to animals for their own ends. The texts I have chosen also reflect an important aspect of this affective permissiveness: the transgressive violence that plays such an important role in the animals' performance of anger. Each text features episodes of violence that violate taboos and break the rules of courtly behavior. These acts of violence are a recurring thread in how these characters work to enact anger through their own bodies. Besides these practical justifications, romances have also been considered a genre in which cultures are able to imagine collective identities; Geraldine Heng, for instance, argues that romance is a genre particularly well-suited for imagining national identities.²⁴ In a similar vein, romance can also be read as imagining a *human* identity, explicating what makes that identity different from that of the animals with which we come into contact so frequently.

While my focus on the body, and on how human bodies can perform affect like animals, lends itself to narratives of human-animal transformation, romances like *Yvain*

²⁴ See Geraldine Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

and *Richard Coer de Lyon* present other forms of animal contact that function in much the same way, problematizing the need for a literal transformation into an animal body in order to gain the freedom provided by an animal-affective prosthetic. In the former, Yvain does become temporarily reminiscent of the hairy, subhuman, irrational wild man, but his primary use of the animal is found in his relationship with his lion. His lion companion, who refuses to leave his side and only rarely does so, going so far as to share a bed with the knight, serves as Yvain's affective prosthetic—allowing him to fight with a violence that falls outside the rules of courtly knighthood and to ultimately regain his position as normative. This human-lion dynamic might best be understood using Deleuze and Guattari's theoretical work on "identity machines," as used by Jeffrey Cohen in *Medieval Identity Machines*. Like the knight and horse of that study, Yvain and the lion create an "inhuman circuit, an identity machine that violates the sanctity of the human body,"²⁵ a new identity shaped through the interaction of one body with another. Richard, on the other hand, approaches the animal on a metaphorical level—he assumes the role of a carnivorous beast in his confrontation with an actual lion, which he tears apart with his bare hands and, in true lion-like fashion, consumes the raw heart of his conquered prey. His own name—Lionheart—becomes the prosthetic that allows him to perform in that transgressively carnivorous way, imaginatively placing a lion's heart in his human body as he redirects that violence at Saracens. He consumes their flesh without qualms or social repercussions, and without resorting to rendering those Saracens as essentially animal themselves. Indeed, part of the military effectiveness of his anthropophagy lies in

²⁵ Jeffrey J. Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 37.

his insistence on his victims' humanity, making his own use of the animal all the more necessary.

Werewolf texts such as *The Lai of Bisclavret* and *Arthur and Gorlagon* present cases of the physical transformation mentioned above. Here we see courtly figures—a knight in the former, a king in the latter—excluded from the normative world of the able-bodied, heterosexual, and courtly because of their wolfish bodies. However, the affective prosthetic provided by their lupine skin allows them to perform their anger through acts of transgressive violence, expressing their rage and jealousy through brutal acts of revenge against those who do not operate within the proper boundaries of courtly values (chiefly, their wives). They inhabit a disabled, queer, and animal identity for a time, only to emerge, having used their status as Other to act as they could not otherwise, as unproblematically able-bodied, heterosexual, and human. These texts suggest that one's normative identity can only be asserted through a violence that is only permitted to those beings who exist beyond that normative position.

My hope is that, through this study, we can gain a clearer understanding of the work animals perform in romance narratives, and how that work plays a key role in medieval writers' efforts at delineating the differences between humans and animals—as well as how those differences can be appropriated to make human actions less troubling. By examining that work as affective in nature, and in considering affect as not only somatically inscribed but also a category of able-bodiedness, we can see how the transformation of one's body results in a change in one's ability to perform affect. And we can see how that bodily transformation, that shift in affective, performative potential, can

result in a failure of social expectations—here, rules of chivalric or courtly behavior—to contain and regulate those new somatic, affective configurations. The human body, when in contact with an animal body serving as an affective prosthetic, becomes something more, something queer—something dangerously, but usefully, aberrant. These transformed bodies, replete with claws, teeth, and, often, an appetite for human flesh, gain an ability to perform anger and hatred through transgressive violence, a performance that forces those bodies out of the normative, courtly, human space they previously inhabited, while also allowing those bodies to more effectively, more ideally, enact a defense of that normative space. The animal becomes a somatic tool, a way to temporarily transform a human's affective ability, in the same way an artificial limb temporarily transforms a body's physical ability. But, while we as readers are able to witness these characters' transgressively violent performances of rage with the comforting knowledge that it is in some sense animalistic—that it is essentially inhuman—the text cannot quite erase the anxious suspicion that this transgressive, terrifyingly vicious violence is in reality a very human way of expressing one's anger.

CHAPTER 1:
COURTLY BODIES, WOLFISH SKIN

Werewolf stories are an important source of information when considering how people living in the Middle Ages thought through human/animal differences, about what makes a human "human," what makes an animal "animal," and the way those boundaries can be blurred, crossed, or broken. They are spaces where one is invited to imagine what it might be like to operate in a foreign (wolfish) body, in a foreign (wild, wooded) space; one is invited to imagine what it might be like to exist outside of the realm of human social rules. While classical tradition (such as Ovid's Lycaon, which was an important source for many medieval writers²⁶) figures the werewolf as a man²⁷ who gives himself over entirely to irrationality, stepping out of one category and into another by transforming from a human into a violent animal, many of the werewolf tales of the high and late Middle Ages often present the werewolf as sympathetic, as retaining his essential humanness underneath his wolf skin.²⁸ It is this incompleteness of his transformation, the fact that he seems to straddle the human and animal—to both remain human and become something more—that makes him ideal for examining how human bodies can make use of animal bodies to temporarily change their somatic make-up and how they embody

²⁶ Caroline W. Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 72.

²⁷ Indeed, as Leslie Dunton-Downer notes in "Wolf Man," in *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey J. Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 203-18, werewolves were (and still are) almost always presented as male.

²⁸ *Metamorphosis and Identity*, 95. Bynum notes that, because these werewolves retain the "intelligence and memory of rational human beings," several scholars have even categorized them as "fake" werewolves.

affect. These characters graft an animal limb (in these texts, a wolf's pelt) onto their human bodies, which opens up new possibilities for performing their anger and jealousy.

Two romance texts that tell the stories of such "sympathetic" werewolves are Marie de France's *Lai of Bisclavret* and the Latin Arthurian romance *Narratio de Arthuro Rege Britanniae et Rege Gorlagon lycanthropo* (more commonly referred to as *Arthur and Gorlagon*). Both of these texts feature the transformation of a courtly figure (a knight in *Bisclavret*, a king in *Arthur and Gorlagon*) into a wolf's body. I read these werewolves as humans making use of an animal prosthetic, emphasizing their animal bodies as an addition to, rather than a replacement of, their humanness. In this respect my argument differs from those of other critics. For example, there has been disagreement on the exact nature of the werewolf's transformation, particularly in criticism on *Bisclavret*. Susan Small identifies what she terms the "overlay model" and the "fusion model" of reading werewolf skin,²⁹ the former presenting "animal skin...as an adjunct to human skin" while in the latter "human skin and animal (specifically wolf-) skin constitute the recto and verso of the same organic surface."³⁰ She then sees *Bisclavret* as an example of the "fusion model," a more thorough merging of human and animal flesh (and natures) than other werewolf texts, such as the romance *Guillame de Palerne*. Caroline Walker Bynum, on the other hand, seems to categorize the text under the "overlay" model, writing that

²⁹ In "The Medieval Werewolf Model of Reading Skin," in *Reading Skin in Medieval Literature and Culture*, ed. Katie L. Walter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 83, Small presents a fascinating reading of werewolf texts, making a linguistic connection between werewolves and parchment. She points out that the Latin noun "*ver-sipellis, is, m.*, literally 'one whose skin turns over,' means 'werewolf'" and that, because the word is linked to *verso*, werewolf skin "can then be seen as analogous to parchment or vellum, its human side corresponding to the recto, or flesh side, of the writing surface, the wolf side to its darker, hairy underbelly."

³⁰ Small, "The Medieval Werewolf Model of Reading Skin," 83.

"[a]lthough the bisclavret is wolf-shaped and deprived of speech, we are dealing with a sharper soul-body or person-skin dualism...there is in Marie a suggestion of over and under, inner and outer, a person under the shaggy wolf."³¹ Bisclavret becomes a man in a wolf costume, rather than a true wolf-man hybrid.

I agree with Bynum and other scholars who insist that Bisclavret retains much of his humanity during his time in a wolfish body, but in conceptualizing that wolfish body as a prosthetic grafted onto the human, I argue that this transformation serves a specifically human goal. That the werewolf in this tale (as well as in *Arthur and Gorlagon*) retains his rational, human mind while operating as a wolf is important because it demonstrates a distinctly *human* use of the animal-affective prosthetic that I have identified in these narratives. Because these characters retain their human *ratio*, they are able to use their wolfish skin for very human purposes: it serves as an affective prosthetic that allows them to enact a fantasy of revenge through a transgressively violent performance of anger and jealousy. A number of scholars have noted the role violence plays in werewolf tales.³² Aleksander Pluskowski argues that the werewolf in *Bisclavret* "can be read as a critique of the knightly ideology of violence"³³ and that "in many

³¹ Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, 172.

³² Concerning *Bisclavret*, specifically, Matilda T. Bruckner argues for the necessity of violence in maintaining identity boundaries not only between human/animal, but male/female in "Of Men and Beasts in *Bisclavret*," *Romantic Review* 82, no. 3 (1991): 251-69. Emma Campbell also sees the text as asserting the use of violence legitimized through political power to define the human in "Political Animals: Human/Animal Life in *Bisclavret* and *Yonec*," *Exemplaria* 25, no. 2 (2013): 95-109. Dunton-Downer similarly sees the werewolf as "a figure for violence in the male human" in "Wolf Man," 206.

³³ Aleksander Pluskowski, *Wolves and the Wilderness in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), 177.

contexts this state explicitly represented an identity of violence."³⁴ While it is true that violence is an important part of chivalric identity, I believe these texts knowingly present a kind of violence that, in its transgression of chivalric codes of conduct, exists outside the realm of knightly existence. Indeed, as wolves, the characters in these romances are free from rules of chivalry and courtly conduct, thus allowing a performance of anger through a violence that transgresses courtly behavior in its physical intimacy, its unexpectedness, and its potential for the consumption of human flesh.

Bisclavret and *Arthur and Gorlagon* both demonstrate transgressive violence as an embodied performance of anger that exists on the edges of courtly identity, and imply that this performance is necessary in order to maintain normative identities (be that noble/knightly, heterosexual, or human). These texts also reveal the need for an animal-affective prosthetic in making this violence presentable; the wolf's body becomes a way of making those actions more acceptable to readers. This new affective "limb" provides access to the transgressive violence necessary to defend and protect their normative identities.³⁵ Through their wolfish skin, *Bisclavret* and *Gorlagon* are able to operate outside of the borders of courtly identity; they are able to enact their anger by satisfactorily sinking their teeth and claws into the bodies of those who, because they have broken conventions of courtly behavior, need punishing. Not bound by chivalric

³⁴ Pluskowski, *Wolves and the Wilderness in the Middle Ages*, 190.

³⁵ Pluskowski points to Gervase of Tilbury's *Otia Imperialia* (1215), which describes the story of a werewolf who transforms back into a man after a woodcutter chops his paw off, commenting that "the severing of limbs freed people from this condition" in *Wolves and the Wilderness in the Middle Ages*, 178. It is interesting that the severing of a limb is what returns werewolves to their human form. It seems fitting in light of my discussion of affective prosthetics—the werewolf must lose a limb, must be made less able to move into transgressive spaces, in order to be made human again.

codes of conduct that require the careful control of bodies and their affective performances, they can paradoxically use their animal bodies to do what is necessary in defense of the normative identities they have temporarily been forced to abandon. The wolf skin that hides these characters' humanness becomes an affective prosthetic that simultaneously excludes them from courtly space, forcing them out into the wilderness, and provides access to new modes of affective performance necessary to protect that space. These texts also suggest that, even when the characters have returned to their human form and their place in courtly life, traces of that animal contact remain—and were perhaps always there to begin with.

Despite keeping their human identity intact, the potential for transgressive violence these werewolves contain within their animal prosthetic marks them as ambiguously Other, and thus unable to remain integrated in courtly society. We can see this ambiguity surrounding the status of the werewolf as human in the opening lines of *Bisclavret*. Marie seems to first identify the Ovid-based werewolf tradition, writing:

in times gone by
 —it often happened, actually—
 men became werewolves, many men,
 and in the forest made their den.
 A werewolf is a savage beast;
 in his blood-rage, he makes a feast
 of men, devours them, does great harms... (5-11)³⁶

³⁶ All *Bisclavret* translations from "The Lai of Bisclavret," in *Marie de France Poetry*, trans. Dorothy Gilbert (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015), 48-65.

Here she uses the Norman word "garvalf" to refer to the man-wolf hybrid who consumes other people as an enactment of his "blood-rage." Clearly, this type of creature transgresses courtly behavior in its anthropophagous affective performance. At the end of that stanza, however, she writes, "Well, for now, let us leave all that; I want to speak of Bisclavret" (13-14). A number of scholars have read this as Marie asserting a new werewolf tradition;³⁷ she acknowledges the tradition of the fully animal, fully irrational monster, but she is setting that aside and instead telling the story of the more sympathetic, and more human, Bisclavret. This might not be as clear as some make it out to be, though. Marie can also be seen to put the words "bisclavret" and "garvalf" on equal terms. She writes, "*Bisclavret*: so named in Breton; / But *Garwaf* in the Norman tongue" before describing the violence and anthropophagy attributed to the "garvalf" (3-4). Thus, the poem leaves open the possibility that he, when transformed into a wolf, is as "savage" and bestial as any other werewolf,³⁸ and is thus unable to remain in the company of other humans.

This ambiguity continues when Bisclavret's wife asks him where he goes each week for days at a time. When he finally gives in and tells her his secret, he explains:

I become a bisclavret.
 In the great forest I'm afoot,
 In deepest woods, near thickest trees,
 And live on prey I track and seize. (63-66)

³⁷ Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, 170-171.

³⁸ Jeffrey Cohen points to this possibility in his article "The Werewolf's Indifference," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 34 (2012): 354.

While this is less specific about the kinds of bodies he is seizing than the initial description of the "garvalf," it does not exclude the possibility of anthropophagy. As Jeffrey Cohen writes, the "prey" referred to here "could be deer, rabbits, and foxes. Or not."³⁹ Bisclavret's dwelling in the "deepest woods, near thickest trees" echoes Marie's description of the garvalf,⁴⁰ who "in the forest made [his] den" (8) and who "in vast forests lives and roams" (12). We are again provided with an implication that, perhaps, Bisclavret does not act quite as "human" when prowling the forest for dinner as we would like to think. Even excluding anthropophagy, the act of hunting down animals with one's teeth, biting and tearing into raw flesh, is an image of brutal and transgressive violence.

It is this violence, allowed by the wolf-skin hidden beneath the clothes that he must don and doff in his transformation from wolf body to human body, that excludes him from the courtly (and heterosexual) space in which he initially resides. The poem introduces us to Bisclavret by asserting his identity as a well-established courtly figure:

In Brittany there lived a lord
 —wondrous, the praise of him I've heard—
 A good knight, handsome, known to be
 All that makes for nobility.
 Prized, he was, much, by his liege lord;
 By all his neighbors was adored. (15-20)

³⁹ Cohen, "The Werewolf's Indifference," 354.

⁴⁰ Crane, *Animal Encounters*, 58.

He is here presented as the ideal knight, fully integrated into his courtly community. He is loved by his lord, loved by others, and also loved by his wife, as the poem continues:

"He'd wed a wife, a worthy soul, / Most elegant and beautiful; / He loved her, and she loved him too" (21-23). Bisclavret is established here as occupying a variety of normative identities: courtly, heterosexual, male, and able-bodied (the emphasis on his appearance ["handsome"], as well as his ability to perform as a "good knight," indicates as much).

However, his animal-affective prosthetic, once revealed, excludes him from these identity positions. As soon as he tells his wife the truth of where he goes for three days of each week, she responds with repulsion and fear:

She blushed deep red, from her pure fear.

Terror , she felt, at this strange tale.

She thought what means she could avail

Herself of how to leave this man.

She could not lie with him again. (98-102)

Their relationship cannot continue with the knowledge of his human-animal nature out in the open; the emphasis on the impossibility of sex in line 102 indicates that Bisclavret has been excluded from heterosexuality. Some scholars have read the wife, with her negative reaction and subsequent plotting against Bisclavret with her newly-accepted lover, as the "true" monster in the text;⁴¹ if the werewolf is more human than not, the wife becomes more animal than not. It is possible, however, to read the wife more sympathetically.

After all, given the tradition of werewolf lore that Marie has provided, of intensely

⁴¹ See, for instance, Campbell, "Political Animals," 95-109.

violent, amoral, and transgressively anthropophagous monsters, who could blame the wife for her panic and disgust? And it is not until his wolfish nature is revealed that she considers accepting her long-denied chevalier: "She had not loved him, nor had she / Granted him any surety / That she, too, loved" (107-9) before she knew the truth about her husband. But after the truth comes out, she hurriedly tells this chevalier:

I grant you now without delay;

I'll not hold back in any way.

My body and my love I grant;

Make me your mistress, if you want! (113-16)

This seems to present her duplicitous affair as more of a necessity than anything else. She needs help in getting rid of her threatening monster of a husband, and this is her surest path to getting that help. Together they steal Bisclavret's clothes, trapping him in his wolfish body. The poem suggests here that it is not the wife's own monstrous nature that forces Bisclavret out of the world of courtly heterosexuality, but rather his lupine affective prosthetic which causes this exclusion.

At the same time that Bisclavret is excluded from his previously normative identity, we see him move into a variously Othered space. Where once he was able-bodied, as a wolf he is impaired: he is rendered mute, unable to explain his true identity to the king he encounters in the woods. He must resort to nuzzling the king, placing "a kiss upon the leg and foot" (148) to demonstrate that he is not a threat deserving of the hunting party's intent to "rend and tear him" (143-44). This scene opens the possibility of

queerness as well.⁴² The king subsequently takes the wolf in; he "loved the wolf and held it dear" (169). While nothing between Bisclavret and the king is beyond the scope of the homosocial bonds of knight and king, the suggestion of something more lies just beneath the surface. Bisclavret, once brought to the king's court, "slept close by the king" (177), and

where the king might walk or ride,
 There it [the wolf] must be, just at his side,
 Wherever he might go or move;
 So well it showed its loyal love. (181-84)

This dedication to the king replaces his heterosexual relationship even at the end of the poem, when he has returned to his human form; his wife is banished, and we are not told that he remarries afterward. Finally, some critics have identified in Bisclavret a feminine position.⁴³ Indeed, Pluskowski points to the thirteenth-century *Ancrene Wisse* as a text emblematic of the frequent association of women with the lupine in the Middle Ages. The text describes an angry woman as a wolf: she "does nothing but howl," she "looks like someone who has turned into a wolf" and has a "wolf's voice" to God's eyes and ears. She must "shed that rough pelt...and make herself smooth and soft...as a woman's skin is by

⁴² See Judith Rothschild, *Narrative Technique in the "Lais" of Marie de France: Themes and Variations* Vol. 1 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, 1974), 137 n. 122.

⁴³ Bruckner makes this argument, as well as Michelle Freeman, who reads androgyny in the poem: the wife attempts to achieve masculine ends through masculine actions, while Bisclavret demonstrates feminine behavior. See "Dual Natures and Subverted Glosses: Marie de France's 'Bisclavret,'" *Romance Notes* 25, no. 3 (1985): 288-301.

nature."⁴⁴ In becoming animal, Bisclavret becomes irreconcilably Othered; he was once normative, but has become queer, female, disabled, and, as each of these identities are so often treated individually, bestial.

While it is his animal body that renders him Othered and pushes him out of his normative position, it is this same body that allows him to exact revenge on those who have broken courtly codes of conduct—and which then allows him to return unproblematically into that former normative space. While perhaps more sympathetic than some have admitted, the wife has nonetheless committed adultery; Bisclavret is "ruined, betrayed, by his own wife" (126) and thus she must be punished. The chevalier she leaves Bisclavret for had "long been in love with her" (104), and had, well before the truth of Bisclavret had come out, pursued her as a lover. In his wolf body, Bisclavret is able to effectively remove this threat, with its potential (and then realized) breach in chivalric behavior.

As I have suggested above, Bisclavret's movement out of normative identities and into the space of the Other, from the court and into the wilderness, is also a move out of human (here, chivalric) social rules and into the violently transgressive affectivity of the animal. We have already seen this potential for transgression in the ambiguity of Bisclavret's status as a new type of werewolf or the savagely anthropophagous *garvalf*; this transgressive violence is fully realized in his anger-fueled attacks against his wife and his wife's lover. In his performance of that anger, he is able to brutally and intimately

⁴⁴ As quoted in Pluskowski. *Wolves and the Wilderness in the Middle Ages*, 178. It is of interest to note the suggestion of ability/disability (or, at least, ugliness/beauty) here: the woman's anger makes her rough, unpleasant to look at, monstrous and unnatural, and she must become "smooth and soft" as she is expected to be according to "nature."

assault them, rending and tearing their flesh with his mouth and claws, enacting a fantasy of satisfying punishment (both in terms of its effectiveness and its appeasement of physical and psychological appetites) against those who have broken social conventions.

Bisclavret's violent performance of anger is first directed at the chevalier who has married his wife. After spending some time as a sort of pet to the king, Bisclavret encounters the chevalier at court. As soon as he sees him, Bisclavret "ran up furiously, / sank in his teeth, and dragged him close. / Many injuries and woes / He would have suffered" but the king stops him, "brandishing his staff" (198-203). The vividness of the line "sank in his teeth," the physicality of "dragged him close," give one a sense of the inappropriately intimate nature of this fury-fueled violence. It is also transgressive in that it breaks chivalric codes of conduct; as a wolf, Bisclavret is able to suddenly and unexpectedly attack the chevalier. As a knight, such an unforeseen assault would most likely have been frowned upon as uncourtly and ungenerous. The use of teeth, the image of biting into flesh, also presents the possibility hinted at earlier in the poem of anthropophagy: if left to his own devices, would the werewolf have eaten him?

This question of consuming human flesh, and the transgressive nature of Bisclavret's performance of anger, returns when he attacks his wife. The loyal werewolf accompanies the king into the forest. The wife hears that the king is nearby and visits him, well-dressed and bearing gifts. As with the chevalier, Bisclavret immediately attacks upon seeing her:

No man

Had strength to hold him as he ran

Up to his wife in rage and fury.

Hear of his vengeance! Hear the story!

He tore her nose off, then and there.

What worse could he have done to her? (231-36)

We are again presented with an image of anger ("rage and fury") performed through transgressive violence: the wolf bites into her face and tears away a hunk of her flesh. That the attack is directed at her face, the seat of one's personal identity, makes this visceral act perhaps even more transgressive than the previous one. It is also less clear what becomes of her nose. Does the werewolf spit it out? Does he eat it? The text does not say, but the possibility of anthropophagy is certainly strongest in this moment. The inappropriate nature of the attack is evident in the surrounding crowd's reaction. While with the chevalier they were content simply to stop the wolf's assault, here we see a more serious response: "From all sides now, and full of threat / Men ran and would have killed him" (237-38). A "wise man" (239) quickly realizes that this attack must be in some way justified, and calls off these angry men. Nonetheless, this initial uproar and desire to immediately kill the werewolf provide a sense of its shocking and disturbing nature.

Paradoxically, it is this transgressively inhuman(e) violence that reveals Bisclavret's human nature. When he attacks the chevalier in court, the others begin to suspect that there is more to the story than meets the eye:

all felt dismay,

For none had seen the beast display

Toward anyone, in any way,

Such viciousness. There must be a reason,

The household said... (204-8)

The wise man mentioned above echoes these sentiments after Bisclavret attacks his wife. He insists that she be tortured in order to determine "why the beast feels for her such hate" (257), and it is after doing so that the truth of Bisclavret's human nature comes out. He is provided his clothes, and is able to transform back into a human body. While it is his status as animal that allows him to spring into violence, it is the appearance of rational justification for that violence that allows him to return to his human body and his place in courtly society. What I have attempted to trace here is a movement precipitated by Bisclavret's affective prosthetic and the transgressive violence that embodies his affective performance, made possible by that animal "limb." This prosthetic excludes him from the courtly society he had so successfully been a part of by marking him as Other; it also provides him the freedom to move beyond the affective boundaries of that society. He is free to perform an idealized vengeance on those who have transgressed social mores: free not only to lash out suddenly and swiftly, but to do so through use of his teeth. He is free to taste (and possibly consume) his victims' flesh, to latch on to it and tear, tug, and ultimately break their bodies in the enactment of his anger and jealousy. That wolf-skin prosthetic provides access to new forms of movement while still allowing the use of his human rationality. Because of this, the prosthetic allows the performance of bestial violence to be paired with human intention, and, once completed, permits him to return to the world from which he had been excluded.

So the human turns animal flesh into an affective limb, which can be used when necessary (to render transgressive violence unproblematic) and removed when no longer needed. The werewolf moves from human to wolf and back again. But this is not necessarily the entire story. As Susan Crane points out, Bisclavret transforms not only into a wolf—he also becomes a dog. In examining how the text attempts to integrate Bisclavret-as-wolf into the court by rendering him a domesticated dog, we can see the text grapple with an anxiety over knightly identity and the violence it requires that is not entirely erased in the werewolf's animal-affective prosthetic. Crane identifies this shift from wolf to dog in the narrative when Bisclavret encounters the king and nuzzles his foot in an effort to communicate: "[I]t seems as plausible that one of the king's dogs might lick his foot as that one of his huntsmen might kiss it. To the extent that the werewolf's gestures recall a dog's, they are not evidently due to the 'mind of a man.'"⁴⁵ Indeed, although the king exclaims in wonder that the wolf has a "man's mind" (154) and "has intent" (157), he seems to forget the wolf's indication of humanness pretty quickly. After taking the wolf in, he asks his followers to "not mistreat the animal. / No one must strike it; and, he'd said, / It must be watered and well fed" (172-74). The wolf's role in the king's court does not become that of a man trapped in a wolf's body, but of a loyal, domesticated dog. Crane writes, "Building a dog story into her werewolf story, Marie unclarifies whether the bisclavret's bites express human *logos* or rather the storied loyalty of dogs. Or both?"⁴⁶ Cohen also sees the text as making dog and knight the same: "Well

⁴⁵ Crane, *Animal Encounters*, 59.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

fed and watered, full of proper submission but also ready to unleash proper violence, he is at once like a favorite hunting dog and like a good household knight. He learns the equivalence between two forms that seemed mutually exclusive, learns their indifference."⁴⁷ I would push against the idea of "proper violence," however. As I have demonstrated, this violence might be proper for a dog (or wolf), but not for a human.

And it is here that the domestic dog becomes such a powerful figure in the text. In its ability to integrate itself into courtly life—to exist as a loyal, obedient member of the king's retinue—and its simultaneous ability to unproblematically lash out in savage, wolf-like (and inhuman) violence when the need arises, the dog becomes a figure of the ideally (and necessarily) animalistic knight. Just as Bisclavret the wolf-man must use his animal skin to protect the king and the society he rules, moving away from and back into the affective space of the human, so too does the dog; he exists both within and beyond the regulation of human affective performance. He is integrated into courtly society and is, in some respects, expected to behave as appropriately "human," but he can, when necessary, perform sudden and seemingly irrational violence in a manner not allowed to humans. The text presents the dog as human—and, in so doing, suggests that the ideal knight must be, in some ways, an animal.

⁴⁷ Cohen, "The Werewolf's Indifference," 356.

Arthur and Gorlagon, another twelfth-century werewolf tale⁴⁸ (one of the few Arthurian romances written in Latin), makes the same suggestion.⁴⁹ In that text it is a king (Gorlagon, who is telling this story to Arthur) who is turned into a werewolf. Similarly to *Bisclavret*, it is his wife that traps him in a wolf's body. In this case, however, the wife had already committed to a lover, and the plot to transform her husband is explicitly an effort to get rid of him so she can remarry. The king, like *Bisclavret*, has a secret. He keeps a sapling in his garden with unique properties: "whoever should cut it down, and striking his head with the slenderer part of it, should say, 'Be a wolf and have the understanding of a wolf,' he would at once become a wolf" (45).⁵⁰ The king knows this, and thus watches it closely; he visits the tree several times a day. The king's wife, like the wife of *Bisclavret*, takes offense at her husband's keeping a secret from her, not telling her why he spends so much time in the garden. When the truth finally comes out, she attempts to use the sapling on him but botches the curse. Instead of saying "Be a wolf and have the understanding of a wolf," she says "have the understanding of a man" (47). Thus, Gorlagon becomes like *Bisclavret*: wolf in appearance, but with his reason and memory still intact.

So, like *Bisclavret*, Gorlagon's transformation into a wolf is associated with a breakdown in a marriage. Gorlagon, who is "noble, accomplished, rich, and far-famed for

⁴⁸ See Lindy Brady, "Feminine Desire and Conditional Misogyny in Arthur and Gorlagon," *Arthuriana* 24, no. 3 (2014): 38 n. 1.

⁴⁹ Indeed, there are many parallels between the two narratives; some have argued for *Bisclavret* as one possible source for *Arthur and Gorlagon*. See F. A. Milne and A. Nutt, "Arthur and Gorlagon," *Folklore* 15, no. 1 (1904): 64.

⁵⁰ All translations are from Milne and Nutt, "Arthur and Gorlagon," 40-67.

justice and truth" (44), is forced out of his successful position in the center of courtly society because of his secretive potential for transforming into an animal that he seemingly both fears and cherishes, going so far as to refuse food each day until he has visited the magical sapling. After being transformed, he immediately flees from his home and into the forest, "roaming for a space of two years in the recesses of the woods" (47). Like Bisclavret, his animal-affective prosthetic forces him out of his normative position, banishing him to the wilderness, to the fringes of society.

Also like Bisclavret, this move away from normativity provides Gorgolon the opportunity to explore new, Othered modes of being. Perhaps most interesting is his relationship with another wolf: he "allied himself with a wild she-wolf, and begot two cubs by her" (47). Immediately after this line, the text reminds us that he "was still possessed of human understanding" (47), making this moment even more bizarre. Gorgolon, while remaining a human in mind, enjoys a bestial relationship with another animal, procreating as a wolf. This explicitly queer⁵¹ relationship is not commented on further, is not condemned, and we as readers are not told what to make of it. It is simply something Gorgolon is able to explore in his wolfish body that he would not have been able to otherwise.

As with Bisclavret, Gorgolon's lupine affective limb not only allows an exploration of Othered identities, but also allows him to perform anger and jealousy through transgressive violence. He and his wolf family work together to transgressively

⁵¹ See Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, 91. She discusses the similarity in penitential punishments for bestiality and sodomy, which suggests that "the animal partner became just that, a partner in an 'unnatural' act, just as homosexuality was an act between two partners."

attack the Queen's family in order to exact vengeance for her betrayal. Gorlagon, this "human wolf, took his she-wolf with her cubs one evening, and rushed unexpectedly into the town, and finding the two little boys of whom the aforesaid youth [the queen's lover] had become the father by his wife...he attacked and slew them, tearing them cruelly limb from limb" (47-48). Far more gruesome than either of *Bisclavret's* attacks, we are again presented with the werewolf using his status as animal to launch suddenly and viciously at unsuspecting victims. The text dwells on the brutality of the violence and the rending of the bodies. And, although these children are offspring of the queen's illegitimate marriage, they are nevertheless innocent children; just before the attack, they are "playing by chance under the tower" (48). Gorlagon, free from the social constraints of courtly life, is able to transgress chivalric codes of behavior in a savage performance of anger. Soon after, Gorlagon returns to the town and sees two of the queen's brothers "playing at the gates," and he attacks again, "tearing out their bowels" (48). We are again invited to linger on the physicality of the violence, on the image of teeth and claws tearing apart flesh. And just as Gorlagon is permitted to perform this violence through his animal skin, we are permitted to imagine it, to even find a kind of perverse pleasure in its transgressive nature, because of that same skin.

Just as *Bisclavret* suggests that, like a loyal dog, knights must be able to straddle the affective spaces of both humans and animals, *Arthur and Gorlagon* continues to present its audience with transgressive violence even after Gorlagon has managed to return to his human form. After he has finished telling Arthur his story (without revealing that it was about him), Arthur asks:

Who is that woman sitting opposite you of a sad countenance, and holding before her in a dish a human head bespattered with blood, who has wept whenever you have smiled, and who has kissed the bloodstained head whenever you have kissed your wife during the telling of your tale? (59)

No mention of this woman or the head on a dish has been given before this question. In answer, Gorlagon explains, "[S]he it was who, as I have just told you, wrought so great a crime against her lord, that is to say against myself. In me you may recognize that wolf who, as you have heard, was transformed first from a man into a wolf, and then from a wolf into a man again" (59). He then goes on to explain that, as punishment for her betrayal, his former wife must kiss the embalmed head of her lover each time he kisses his new wife. This strange and rather horrifying scene, in a manner similar to Bisclavret's removal of his wife's nose, presents a fantasy of an ideal (yet transgressive) punishment against those who have broken social codes. Just as Marie writes, "What worse could he have done to her?" (236), Gorlagon says that he "knew no punishment could be more grievous to her" (60). The fact that the bloody head sits on a dish, and that the woman must press her lips to it repeatedly, adds a whiff of anthropophagy to the transgression. It is also worth noting that, when Gorlagon reveals to Arthur that he was the werewolf of the story, he does not say, "In me you may recognise that man" who was transformed into a wolf and back again, but rather "you may recongise that *wolf*." The suggestion here seems to be that there is still something wolfish about the king; he has managed to retain something of his animal self that remains recognizable. Despite having returned to his

identity as human, having been restored to the center of the courtly sphere as king, and having reasserted his heterosexuality through marriage, traces of his wolfish past remain and allow him to more effectively police the society to which he belongs. Just as Bisclavret equates dogs with knights and asserts that both are capable of donning or doffing an animal-affective prosthetic, *Arthur and Gorlagon* insists that, to be an effective a ruler, one needs to occasionally look (and act) like a wolf.

In each of these narratives, we are presented with fantasies of revenge and retribution, of ideally enforced social codes, through a violently transgressive performance of anger and jealousy. The werewolves in each of these texts, pushed from the courtly realm and into the wilderness because of their lupine skin, have the freedom to perform that anger through a violence not permitted in other humans. Just as the text uses this wolfish prosthetic in an attempt to render this transgressive performance less problematic, we as readers are also able to enjoy these violent scenes with fewer qualms, assured of the acts' less-than-human nature by the wolf bodies that commit them. The animal-affective prosthetic is useful in these narratives because it allows humans to act like animals without the fear that the clearly-drawn boundaries of either body become blurred (although, as we have seen, these texts nevertheless fail to render those boundaries entirely separate). Affect, as somatically determined and socially performed, becomes central to identity. Bodily configurations determine how one performs affect, and that performance determines whether one is categorized as human or animal. The only way to change how one performs affect is to change one's body—in the case of these texts, by grafting a lupine "limb" onto the human.

CHAPTER 2:
LIONS AND LION HEARTS

In both *Yvain* and *Richard Coer de Lyon*, we see courtly figures move dangerously close to the animal—in both cases, the lion—in their attempts to defend their courtly worlds. Unlike the werewolf texts we examined, there are no literal transformations into animal bodies in either of these romances. Rather than wrapping himself in a lion's skin, Yvain uses an actual lion as an affective prosthetic. Working as a unit, Yvain's lion gives him the ability, like Bisclavret and Gorlagon, to defend and return to the courtly realm from which he has been excluded. Using the lion's wild and ferocious performance of anger to prove himself as a knight in a decidedly unknighthly fashion, he transgresses rules of chivalric conduct in his battles against the monstrous Others who pose a threat to normative, courtly identity. Richard, too, never steps into a lion's body. Instead, he uses his human body to mimic a lion's, first by killing and consuming a lion, then by turning that carnivorousness against his human enemies. The consumption of a lion's heart is the catalyst for this metaphorical transformation, but it is ultimately his name—Richard Lionheart—that works as the prosthetic that allows him to perform his anger and hatred for the religious Others who threaten Christian, European, courtly life as a lion would: embodying that anger through an enactment of transgressive violence, using his teeth to tear into and consume human flesh.

Lions were significant animals in the Middle Ages. Bestiaries often presented them as the "king of beasts," and were thus often associated with kingship and royalty. For instance, one medieval writer, in the twelfth-century bestiary translated by T. H.

White, claims that the lion's Greek root, *leon*, "is a muddled name, partly corrupted, since 'leon' has also been translated as 'king' from Greek to Latin, owing to the fact that he is the Prince of All Animals."⁵² Borrowing from ideas found in the Old Testament and the *Physiologus*, medieval writers often associated the lion with "notions of pure bloodline, kingly virtues, and just rule."⁵³ Indeed, hagiography and romance both frequently present lions as creatures capable of recognizing and submitting to spiritual and/or courtly authority.⁵⁴ In that sense, lions are often "civilized" animals in medieval texts, capable of acting more like humans than animals. *Richard Coer de Lyon* is an obvious exception; when Richard encounters a lion, it does not submit to him in meekness, but must be brutally torn apart. *Yvain*, on the other hand, is often given as an example of the lion's courtly, civilized proclivity.⁵⁵ However, while it is true that the lion in *Yvain* acts quite human at times, he is certainly not unproblematically human-like. He is capable of joining Yvain as a servant and companion, but nonetheless retains a wildness that reminds us as readers that no matter how knightly he seems, he is still an animal, and able to act in ways that humans like Yvain are not. Yvain, as a knight, is required to be in complete

⁵² White, *The Book of Beasts*, 7.

⁵³ Margaret Haist, "The Lion, Bloodline, and Kingship," in *The Mark of the Beast: The Medieval Bestiary in Art, Life and Literature*, ed. Debra Hassig (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), 3.

⁵⁴ See Lynn Shutters, "Lion Hearts, Saracen Heads, Dog Tails: The Body of the Conqueror in *Richard Coer de Lyon*," in *Masculinities and Femininities in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Frederick Kiefer (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 80. She cites several tales found in *The Golden Legend* concerning lions submitting to saints, the most popular being one in which a lion approaches St. Jerome in his monastery. The saint, rather than running away in fear, notices the lion's injured paw and has it cared for. The lion then lives peacefully in the monastery.

⁵⁵ Shutters, for instance, offers *Yvain* as a counterexample to *Richard*, in which the lion exemplifies "the strength, bravery, and loyalty that are also Yvain's chivalric ideals." See "Lion Hearts, Saracen Heads, Dog Tails," 81.

control of his body, including that body's affective performance. Knights practice restraint; animals, including the lion in *Yvain*, do not.

It is this wildness, this freedom to act in ways knights at court are forbidden—as with the werewolf texts, manifested as an embodied expression of anger performed through transgressive violence—that I will examine across these two romances. In both texts, the protagonists use lions as an affective prosthetic in a manner similar to Bisclavret and Gorlagon's use of their wolf skin. They are able to perform their anger, their rage, and their hatred in ways that transgress chivalric codes of conduct and force them out of the courtly realm and into the wilderness, but simultaneously allow them to more effectively police normative identity.

While my reading of Yvain's lion as an animal-affective prosthetic places an emphasis on his status as nonhuman, many scholars have read the lion as essentially human—or even divine. The lion's status as the "king of beasts" connects it to Jesus Christ, and it is in this context that one line of criticism on *Yvain* reads that romance's lion. Scholars like Julian Harris, for instance, argue that Yvain's lion acts as a symbol of Christ.⁵⁶ Thus, in helping Yvain in his battles, the romance presents a transformation of "the perfect worldly knight into a highly religious knight."⁵⁷ Others, like Norris Lacy, have considered the lion an extension of or supplement to Yvain's chivalric identity. Lacy writes that the lion is chiefly defined by his "gratitude, devotion, and service to his master."⁵⁸ Thus, the lion is identified as a personification not of Christ, but of Yvain's

⁵⁶ Julian Harris, "The Role of the Lion in Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*," *PMLA* (1949): 1143-63.

⁵⁷ Lacy, "Yvain's Evolution and the Role of the Lion," *Romance Notes* 12, no. 1 (1970): 198.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 201.

return to an idealized knighthood. While these scholars assume that "we are dealing not simply with a lion, but specifically with a *tamed* lion,"⁵⁹ it is my goal to push against this notion and examine the ways in which Yvain's lion companion retains his animality, the ways his leonine body marks him as different from his human counterpart. Doing so gives us a clearer understanding of the work that the animal does in this text—the significance of his being an *animal* companion and not a human one. It allows us to examine the ways in which the text distinguishes knights from their animal counterparts, humans from beasts: animals, because of their freedom from the restraint demanded by chivalric conduct, are able to use their bodies to perform anger in transgressive, but potentially useful, ways.

Part of my justification for resisting the tameness of *Yvain's* lion, of reading against the text's efforts to humanize him, is the recent scholarship that has traced Yvain's own instability over the course of the romance, both before and after his time as a "wild man." Marc Pelen, for instance, argues that the language of inhuman madness pervades the entire text, well after Yvain has been "cured" of his wildness. In fact, he reads the lion as, at least in part, connected to Yvain's continued instability. In examining the language used to describe the lion's attempt at suicide after thinking Yvain had died from grief, he writes:

The word 'forsenez'—applied many times by Chrétien to Yvain to characterize his unstable condition—is crucial here, because it appears to assimilate the lion to Yvain's instability, which may not yet be cured.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 201.

And, at other points in the romance...the lion, despite his merits of gratitude and affection toward his master, indulges in wild behavior.⁶⁰

Rather than mirroring the chivalric qualities of his master, the lion can be read as reflecting his instability and wildness. Pelen sees this connection continued in Yvain's fight against the giant Harpin, in which "Yvain's combat with the giant is singularly violent, and supported by the lion's fury."⁶¹ It is this "support" I would like to examine more carefully, as I believe the lion's presence does not just reflect Yvain's wildness, but is the means through which he behaves in such a wild way; the lion's fury, performed as transgressive violence, becomes a part of Yvain's own affective performance.

Perhaps a better way of putting it is that the lion's presence gives Yvain the *ability* to act wildly: the lion as an affective prosthetic provides him the bodily configuration necessary to perform his anger through transgressive violence in a way that can be directed at the enemies of courtly, normative identity. While his violently transgressive performance of anger, when enacted in his human body, results in his expulsion from the world of the court and into the wilderness, it is that same performance, when channeled through a leonine affective "limb," that allows him to effectively defend that courtly realm. Michael Ovens' reading of transgression as an important motif leading up to Yvain's estrangement from Laudine and his subsequent time spent as a wild man has been a boon to my understanding of Yvain's movement away from the court and into the wilderness. He argues that Yvain's battle with Esclados the Red, when compared to a

⁶⁰ Marc M. Pelen, "Madness in *Yvain* Reconsidered," *Neophilologus* 87 (2003): 364.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 364.

similar moment in Chrétien's earlier romance *Erec et Enide*, is indicative of Yvain's transgressively violent mode. While Erec and his opponent Yder show "mutual respect and concern for honour," these virtues "are completely absent in the battle between Yvain and Escaldos," and while Erec shows Yder mercy after dealing him a blow to the head, Yvain's brutal attack is mortally wounding: Erec's strike "did not touch the brain," while Yvain's "split his head to the brain" and "caused him such great pain."⁶² According to Edward Schweitzer, this gruesome scene provides "a glimpse of disturbing inhuman ferocity which transgresses the limits of a courtly ideal."⁶³ Yvain is perhaps more animal than human early in the poem, which culminates in his time as a wild man living in the forest.

While I read that transgression as an important aspect of the poem after Yvain's time in the wilderness, Ovens, in reading Yvain's later confrontation with the two sons of the devil at *Pesme Aventure* as an allegorical battle against fear and shame, sees the latter part of the poem as Yvain's triumph over his transgressive past, which allows him to return to his wife and the courtly life he formerly led.⁶⁴ Strangely, Ovens says next to nothing about the lion's role in this return. Yvain's transgression does not go away after his wild man episode, it simply moves from his own body to the lion's. The lion's body becomes the animal-affective limb through which the transgressive violence Ovens identifies in Yvain's earlier actions is channeled. But, because the lion acts as an affective

⁶² Michael Ovens, "Violence and Transgression in Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain, le Chevalier au Lion*," *Parergon* 32, no. 1 (2015): 59-60.

⁶³ As quoted in Ovens, "Violence and Transgression," 59.

⁶⁴ See Ovens, "Violence and Transgression," 72.

prosthetic—a useful source of animal affectivity that is nonetheless safely contained and kept from the boundaries of Yvain's body—that affective performance can be directed productively in the defense of courtly society. Transgressive violence as an embodied performance of affect, when contained in Yvain's leonine "limb," can work to bring Yvain back into and effectively defend courtly society, instead of banishing him from it.

As an affective prosthetic, an animal limb through which Yvain performs anger as transgressive violence, I argue that the lion is not only a companion to Yvain, but an extension of his body as well. In so doing, I borrow from Jeffrey Cohen's work in *Medieval Identity Machines*, in which he relies on the theoretical work of philosopher Gilles Deleuze and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari to think through the ways in which bodiliness is dispersed across a combination of objects, rather than contained within the finite confines of one flesh-and-blood unit. He writes that Deleuze and Guattari distribute

bodiliness across a proliferation of 'desiring-machines,' decomposing the human and conjoining its fragments to particles organic and inorganic... the body, medieval and postmodern, becomes through these combinatory movements nonhuman, transformed via generative and boundary-breaking flux into unprecedented hybridities.⁶⁵

These "desiring machines" are in constant motion, continuously bringing in new components and losing others; they "incessantly collide, combine, converge, combust, rendering bodies a *perpetuum mobile* of production and metamorphosis."⁶⁶ So, for

⁶⁵ Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, XIII.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, XIV.

example, a knight and his horse can be read as a "Deleuzian 'circuit' or 'assemblage'" of identity, combining man, horse, saddle, and armor into "a dispersive network...that admixes the inanimate and the inhuman."⁶⁷ Thus, animals working in close concert with knightly bodies become a part of a larger somatic assemblage, transforming and shaping each other into a new kind of combinatory body.

In much the same way a knight and horse can be considered one body, I use this notion of a "Deleuzian assemblage" to read Yvain and his lion companion as one somatic unit working in unison. Doing so allows us to consider the lion's performance of anger—when enacted in battle and in concert with Yvain—as Yvain's performance as well. The lion, though not literally fused with Yvain, as is the case with Bisclavret and Gorlagon's lupine pelts, can nonetheless serve as a part of his body, and, thus, a part of his embodied performance of anger. And while this network of human and animal bodies is not as physically connected as a knight and horse might be, one resting atop the other, there does seem to be an emphasis throughout the poem on the close proximity of its components. After Yvain saves the lion from a fire-breathing serpent, the lion bows to him in gratitude. As Yvain begins to leave, "the lion / Began to walk beside him, / Determined never to leave, / But always to go wherever he went, / To serve and protect him" (3411-15).⁶⁸ And, indeed, the lion rarely does leave his side, going so far as to share a bed with him. Upon entering the Castle of Infinite Misfortune, the lord of the castle and his family treat Yvain to a large feast (assumedly as a way of placating him, before giving

⁶⁷ Ibid., XXIV-XXV.

⁶⁸ All translations are from *Yvain: The Knight of the Lion*, trans. Burton Raffel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

him the news on the next day that he would not be allowed to leave until he fought the two demon brothers who guard the place). After eating, Yvain retires for the night, and "no one dared to come near him / Once he had taken to his bed. / The lion lay at his feet, / As he always did" (5444-47). Here we are again reminded that the lion, even when Yvain wishes to be alone, is near at hand.

But beyond proximity, the text suggests that the two bodies are connected in more intimate ways. After spending some time together, Yvain and the lion approach the spring where Yvain first encountered Esclados. Presumably because the sight makes him recall his estranged relationship with his wife, he faints, and "his sword slipped from its scabbard / And its well-sharpened point nicked him / On the cheek, above the neck, / Cut him through the rings of his mail-shirt" (3498-3501). The lion, seeing his master bleeding and assuming him dead, loudly laments his loss, and, after roaring and rolling on the ground in grief, "decided to kill himself / With the sword he thought had killed / His loving master" (3512-14). He averts his charge toward the sword at the last minute when he sees Yvain awaken. Nevertheless, the lion's intense affective response to his master's death suggests two bodies closely intertwined. Indeed, the lion's performance of grief, embodied like his rage in a transgressive violence directed at his own flesh, becomes closely connected to Yvain's own grief. After witnessing the suicide attempt, Yvain asks himself, "Why can't he / Kill himself, this miserable / Creature from whom joy has fled? / Or lord, why don't I do it?" (3531-34). In his abrupt shift from asking why the lion does not follow through with his suicide attempt to asking why he himself does not, Yvain draws an intimate connection between their two bodies and their performance of grief:

the "miserable / Creature from whom joy has fled" retroactively comes to refer to both lion and knight. After claiming that anyone who has lost happiness because of their own wrongs, like himself, should kill themselves, Yvain says, "And haven't I seen this lion, / Who felt such grief for me / That he was ready to set my sword / Against his chest and thrust it / In? Should I be afraid / Of death, who changed joy to sadness?" (3548-53). His language here continues to assert a close connection between the lion's body and his own. He uses the lion's performance of grief as a model for his own; as he imagines the lion's suicide in detail, meditating on the sword piercing his chest, one gets the sense that he is simultaneously imagining the same happening to his own body. He does not follow through with it, of course, but only because his wallowing is interrupted by Lunette, who then approaches.

This scene suggests that what happens to one of these bodies effects the other, to the point that both are (nearly) victims of the same sword, momentarily and imaginatively linked by the same wounding object, capable of piercing both bodies' flesh in a transgressively violent performance of grief. The two are inextricably bound together, and, as we will see momentarily, this knightly-leonine assemblage works in much the same way the werewolves Bisclavret and Gorlagon do: it uses its somatic assemblage to perform anger through transgressive violence, breaking rules of chivalry in an effort to defend the courtly realm that upholds them.

We have already seen the way in which Yvain is banished from courtly life due to his transgressive, potentially inhuman behavior, culminating in the final transgressive act of breaking his word to his wife when he fails to return to her after a year away

performing in tournaments with Gawain. He fails to perform his husbandly duty, and, because he has stepped beyond the values of courtly, heteronormative identity, he flees into the forest to live as a wild man. Dorothy Yamamoto eruditely argues that, during Yvain's time as a wild man, as with Bisclavret and Gorlagon's transformations, he never quite loses his humanness. She writes that in many of these knight-turned-wild narratives "there is often a concomitant emphasis on continuing human purpose and integrity... Yvain is not so lost in wit that he cannot equip himself with the bow and arrow he needs to survive."⁶⁹ So, while he exists outside of and disconnected from courtly society, he does not become entirely animal or inhuman. Yamamoto also cites Jacques Le Goff's examination of Yvain's diet while in the forest, and his progression from raw and bloody meat to rough bread given to him by a hermit, and finally to cooked meat. This progression "images [Yvain's] will to return from his wild-man condition to his formerly knightly status—a will that is operative even when he appears most deranged and alienated...every one of his actions predicates his eventual repossession of his true identity."⁷⁰ It may seem that Yvain regains this "true identity" (that is, his former status as fully integrated into courtly life) upon the complete restoration of his sanity, after some women who stumble upon his sleeping figure bath him, shave him (like other wild men, he has become excessively hairy) and, most importantly, rub his skin with a magic balm. And yet, if Yvain never really lost his humanness during his time in the forest, the return of his sanity is insufficient for returning him to his place in court.

⁶⁹ Yamamoto, *The Boundaries of the Human*, 179.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 185.

In other words, the text presents Yvain as having never *really* lost his status as human, so something more is needed to return him to his normative identity as a fully capable knight and husband. While he has not lost his humanness during his time as a wild man, he *has* been Othered: much like Bisclavret and Gorlagon, Yvain's move into the wilderness coincides with a failure in his heterosexual relationship. His homosocial adventures with Gawain have caused him to neglect his role as husband, and this failure is, at least in part, the cause of his banishment from the court and his time spent in the forest. To accomplish his return, he must, like the werewolves, demonstrate an ability to defend that normative, courtly realm from which he has been excluded.

As I have suggested, it is his lion companion, serving as a leonine affective prosthetic, that allows him to achieve this effective defense. Specifically, it is the lion's rage toward his enemies, performed through furiously aggressive (and transgressive) violence, that makes this defense possible. To prove himself a knight worthy of Laudine's forgiveness, Yvain must show that he can defend the boundaries of the court. And yet, as with the werewolves we examined, transgressing those boundaries becomes a necessity in that defense. By relegating his transgressive performance of anger to an animal prosthetic, Yvain is able to use it in a way that is acceptable both to other characters in the narrative and to us as readers. He is able to present himself as a knightly body in control of his affective performance, while still reaping the benefits of an unrestricted, unregulated, wildly transgressive enactment of anger.

One of the first moments we see Yvain benefit from the lion as an affective prosthetic is when Yvain challenges the giant Harpin, who holds a baron's sons hostage

and demands the baron's daughter as ransom. Yvain manages to cut the giant's cheek, after which the giant lands a blow "so hard / In return that he bent his [Yvain's] head / Down to the horse's neck" (4216-18). The lion, bristling with anger at the sight, leaps at the giant and "seized the giant's bearskin / And ripped and tore it like bark, / And bit out of his hide / A chunk of his hip, tore it / Meat and muscle alike" (4222-26). After the lion's attack, the giant is wounded enough that Yvain is able to deliver the final blow. The lion's actions here transgress chivalric behavior in a couple of ways. First, as with the werewolves, the form of violence used in his affective performance is inappropriately inhuman in its use of the body: the lion uses his teeth and claws in an intimate performance of the anger directed toward the giant, tearing and biting his flesh in a way that is impermissible in humans. Of course, the lion is not human in a literal sense. And yet, as one member of a knightly assemblage, as a part of a larger human-lion somatic network acting within a very human context (a knightly contest of combative prowess), the lion's actions, and the way those actions embody unregulated, uncontrolled anger, can be read as out of place. Even Harpin, the monstrous Other set against Yvain's normative, knightly identity, uses a club as a weapon.

The lion's affective performance is also transgressive in that it is, in a sense, a kind of cheating. Not only does he use his body to perform anger in a way incompatible with knightly behavior, but he does so unexpectedly and without warning. Much like Gorlagon's sudden attacks on townsfolk related to the queen, or Bisclavret's surprise assault on the chevalier who had married his wife, the unexpectedness of the lion's violent performance of anger reflects his status as animal and his ability to operate

outside the boundaries of chivalric behavior. While knights are expected to submit to chivalric codes of conduct, keeping control of their anger or hatred for the sake of acting as a member of the court should, showing respect and deference to their opponent, the lion is free to ignore those codes and express his anger in a physical performance that transgresses them. Yvain initially rides toward the giant alone, just after telling him, "Do your best, and I'll / do mine" (4192-93). There is no suggestion in Yvain's initial attack that he plans on using the lion's help in defeating Harpin, and he gives no such warning to the giant—this is single combat, one enemy against another. It is only when things go badly that the lion surprises the giant, leaping at him while he is attacking Yvain, and it is only because of this surprise attack that Yvain is able to defeat him. The lion ignores the rules of civilized combat, wildly rushing the giant when he is not expecting it and shifting the balance in Yvain's favor.

This element of disregard for the rules of combat in the lion's transgressive performance of anger returns in an even more explicit manner in later fights, demonstrating the utility of the lion as an affective prosthetic. Soon after his victory against Harpin, Yvain comes to the maiden Lunette's defense against three men who have falsely accused her of sins against her lady. The men agree to fight him, but under one condition: "Unless you curb your lion / And make him stand aside, / You'd better not linger here" (4460-62). Yvain agrees; he "ordered the lion to withdraw, / And stay still, and the lion did / Exactly as his master asked" (4472-74). However, the lion ignores this command as soon as it seems like the men are beginning to beat Yvain: "And the lion, watching all this, / Thought it was time to help, / For his master seemed to need

it" (4509-11). He leaps fiercely at one of the men, ripping the flesh from his shoulder and gruesomely biting until "the guts hung out" (4531). Tellingly, the narrator explains that

nothing Yvain could do
 Could drive him [the lion] off, though he hit him
 And threatened him and struggle to do all
 He could. Somehow the lion
 Seemed to know that his master
 Did not truly dislike
 His help, but loved him better
 For it. (4539-46)

Yvain's apparently insincere performance of chastisement renders him complicit in the lion's transgression; they have broken Yvain's promise to the men that the lion would not get involved in the fight. This transgression, as with the fight against Harpin, allows Yvain to emerge victorious against the men. What's especially interesting is that these men are in need of punishment for the same crime Yvain commits with his lion: lying. The men have concocted a false accusation against Lunette; Yvain, in his effort to defeat them, is also deceitful, breaking his word that the lion would stay out of the fight. So why does one lie end in decimated, bloody bodies while the other ends in victory and an increased reputation as a proper knight? It is because Yvain's deceit can be safely contained in his animal-affective prosthetic—he is not to blame for it, his wildly passionate lion is.

An even more explicit transgression of chivalric codes of conduct can be seen in Yvain's encounter with the two sons of the devil at the Castle of Infinite Misfortune; the lion's performance of anger once again works outside of those codes. Much like Lunette's accusers, the two devilish brothers tell Yvain: "You're not having help from him [the lion]. / You've got to do your best / Alone, without assistance! / It's only you against us" (5553-56). Yvain agrees, and the lion is locked away in a small room for good measure. But, as the battle begins and Yvain takes a number of blows to the head, the lion,

hearing how fierce
 And desperate and dangerous the battle
 Had become, his sorrow drove him
 Mad with despair. Hunting
 Again and again, he found
 That near the ground the threshold
 Was rotting, and he clawed at it, and squeezed
 Partly through. (5606-13)

After getting momentarily stuck, he manages to escape the room and rushes to his master's defense. He charges "so furiously, so wildly, / That his [the demon's] wounds were terrible" (5664-65). Once more, the lion ignores the rules laid out for the battle and desperately, madly, angrily attacks. Yvain again uses the lion as an affective prosthetic, able to make use of the freedom allowed to the animal body to perform his anger in a way that, in a purely human body, would be rejected as immoral or unjust. This transgression

is necessary to destroy the enemies of the courtly world (monstrous giants, demons, immoral men) and permissible due to the animal body in which it is performed.

The lion's transgressions, like the werewolves', are made permissible because they are performed by a nonhuman body. Yvain, using the lion's body as an affective prosthetic, is able to benefit from the ferocious, angry, dangerously ruthless violence necessary to gain victory, an affective performance made acceptable by safely containing it within a nonhuman body. By moving Yvain's initially wild and ferocious behavior into this animal-affective limb, his actions are made more acceptable to the romance's audience. And yet, in a way also reminiscent of *Bisclavret*, imagery of the courtly dog works to undermine this attempt at rendering this transgressive performance as unproblematic. Soon after saving the lion from the serpent, Yvain watches him chase after the scent of a deer, who pauses every so often to wait for his master to catch up. When Yvain realizes what his new companion is doing, he "urged him on, / Shouting as he'd shout to a pack / Of hounds" (3438-40). After the lion catches the deer, he "brought it where he saw his master coming, / And Yvain felt such a rush / Of affection that he took him to be / His companion through all the days / Of his life, so great was his love" (3449-55). This moment of courtly hunting can be read as an attempt to integrate this wild animal into courtly society—to render him, as Lacy puts it, "tame." As with *Bisclavret* upon entering the king's court, he becomes nothing more than a glorified hunting dog.

However, in the same way that *Bisclavret* becomes an amalgamation of loyal knight and dangerous wolf in the image of a dog at court, the lion's dog-mimicking hunt

intermingles wild animal and courtly knight. It likewise suggests that, despite the text's efforts at transferring Yvain's transgressive ruthlessness into the lion, treating the lion's body as a prosthetic that safely contains that negative performance of anger, the lion's actions are as much a part of courtly life as a dog's—or, by extension, Yvain's. We can see the text anxiously sort through what it means for a chivalric knight to be expected to both enact brutal violence against others and maintain mastery over his body and its affective performance. The text attempts to assuage that anxiety by employing an animal-affective prosthetic that makes that performance less problematic, separating the knight's body from the transgressive enactment of anger necessary to do his job. But it is moments like this, in which the text undermines that effort by trying to bring that prosthetic into the courtly realm and make sense of it in that space, that the text reveals a transgressive performance of anger to be a part of knightly identity after all.

In much the same way that Yvain's lion uses his body in a way reminiscent of a dog, Richard Lionheart, in *Richard Coer de Lyon*, uses his body in a way reminiscent of a lion. The most infamous of his lion-like behaviors is his anthropophagy, guiltlessly enjoying Saracen flesh as a substitution for pork. In her study on medieval romance and imagining national identity, Geraldine Heng reads *Richard Coer de Lyon's* anthropophagy as a racially charged moment that forges an English identity of "Christian Englishmen whose extraterritorial gustatory habits define their very identity"⁷¹ placed against the racially, religiously, and utterly Othered Saracens-as-food. This horrifying act would have been as ghastly and forbidden in the Middle Ages as it is today: Karl Steel notes that

⁷¹ Heng, *Empire of Magic*, 74.

thirteenth-century penitential texts include anthropophagy as one of the hardest-punished crimes, right up there with incest and bestiality.⁷² According to Heng, this transgressive act is voided of any problematic cultural baggage by utilizing "conventions of humor that make the transgression of taboos acceptable, narratable: Richard's barbarism... can be overlooked, even admired, in the English king's skillful manipulation of a joke's trajectory in overpowering limits of permission, in the push for the punch line."⁷³ This joke exposes the Saracen's "inhuman, devilish nature,"⁷⁴ revealing a racially Othered, black-skinned, madly grinning face that becomes nothing more than a pork dinner. Saracen armies become livestock to be slaughtered and served to hungry English crusaders. Heng considers this a "guilt-free, happy cannibalism"⁷⁵ and, if we were to judge by Richard alone, with his uproarious laughter at the revelation of the source of his "pork" dinner, with the performative gusto with which he eats a Saracen head, such a reading would certainly make sense.

And yet, as convincing as Heng's argument is in so many ways, I would like to push against the idea that the anthropophagy in *Richard Coer de Lyon* is rendered entirely unproblematic. I would suggest that the text is not able to successfully erase all vestiges of transgression in Richard's anthropophagy, and that an additional textual strategy is necessary to render the act permissible. When we focus our attention on Richard as human-eater, rather than on Saracens-as-food, we can see that, just as *Yvain* relies on the

⁷² Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 124.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

lion as an affective prosthetic to allow the performance of anger through transgressive violence, Richard must be verbally and metaphorically fused with the animal, by means of his name, in order to gain the ability to perform his anger and hatred toward his Saracen enemies in the same way. His name, and the image of a leonine heart that it attaches to his identity, becomes the animal "limb" that allows his body to express anger through transgressive violence, making his anthropophagy permissible to those around him, as well as the text's audience. Because he is not just "King Richard," but "King Richard *Lionheart*," he is able to use his body in an affective performance that would otherwise be unacceptable for a Christian, European king (or any other member of a Christian court). Like the other texts we have examined, in performing his anger and his hatred for his enemy in such a transgressive manner he is able to enact a fantasy of the perfect defense of normative identity. Here, however, that identity is presented as specifically Christian and set against the Saracen Other.

Of course, it is certainly true that the Saracens of *Richard Coer de Lyon* are often presented as subhuman and animalistic. In addition to the scenes of anthropophagy, the text frequently describes Saracens as "doggys wylde" (7026),⁷⁶ as "hethyn/hethene hound" (5232, 6136, 6480), or as "sheepe" (6986). Presenting enemies as animals has clear advantages; in dehumanizing them, one can attack and kill with impunity. But the scenes of anthropophagy (particularly Richard's Saracen-head banquet) can only work if the Saracens' human identity is *emphasized*, not downplayed. That is, if Richard's gustatory performance is to shock his Saracen audience (and we readers), the text must

⁷⁶ *Richard Coer de Lyon*, ed. Peter Larkin (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2015).

highlight the victims' status as human—they cannot be rendered entirely animal or the effect is lost. Heng is right to point out the racial difference of his first Saracen victim, but the description also serves another purpose: it reminds us that Richard did indeed eat *human* flesh. A slab of meat mistaken for pork is one thing; a "swarte vys," "blake berd," "whyte teeth," and "lyppys grennyd wyde" are unmistakably human features. Richard understands the effectiveness of asserting one's humanity through the face, which is why he serves his guests the heads of their friends, "Upward hys vys, the teeth grennand" (3430) and "Hys name faste abvoe hys browe, / What he hyghte and of what kyn born" (3432-33), rather than a plate of human spare ribs. The anthropophagy we witness here is not just about declaring Saracens as inhuman and, like animals, easily cooked and consumed. It is about affirming the Saracens as human and choosing to eat them anyway.

While Richard is seemingly unfazed by eating the glaringly human, the text points to the transgressive nature of his actions. One important example is the cook's reaction when forced to bring Richard the head of the Saracen cooked and served as pork, revealing the ruse and exposing his crime. The cook only does so when he "seygh non othir may bee" (3027), and, once he does bring the head to Richard, he begs for mercy: "He fel on knees and made a cry, / 'Loo, here the hed, my lord, mercy!'" (3209-10). Although Richard's response is to "lawghe as he were wood" (3215), the cook clearly expected him to react differently. In this moment, the cook's reluctance and worry signal the taboo nature of anthropophagy. The text could have presented the cook as in on the joke, knowingly revealing the head to Richard and laughing along with him, but he is

instead concerned about what he has done and afraid that he will be punished for forcing Richard to unknowingly transgress basic human values.

The portrayal of the Sultan's messengers and their reaction to the anthropophagic banquet likewise problematizes the text's efforts at dehumanizing the Saracens and rendering their flesh as easily consumable. The banquet guests "Fore here frendes syghyd sore, / That they hadde lost forevere more. / Of here kynde blood they were" (3471-73). They weep while Richard eats his Saracen head, and "hym hadde levere have ben at home, / With wyf, frendes, and here kynde" (3526-27). As they relate to Saladin afterward, "Us thoughteoure herte barst ryght insundyr!" (3605). These moments of emotion from the Saracen guests, reminders that they have friends and families and that some of those friends have been gruesomely served as their dinner, that they have eyes that can weep and hearts that can burst, serve to remind us that they are, in fact, human, thus reinforcing that the dinner is human too. These are instances, whether intentional or not, of sympathy for the Saracens (or, at the very least, open up the possibility for sympathy), which in turn remind us as readers—even if for only a moment—of the taboo and transgressive nature of Richard's anthropophagy.

These instances of Saracen humanity suggest the need for an additional narrative element to render Richard's actions palatable. If the text is unable to present the consumption of Saracen flesh as completely problem-free, as the "guilt-free and happy" cannibalism for which Heng argues, and if the Saracens are unavoidably, and perhaps necessarily, humanized, then we must ask: what about Richard allows him to consume Saracen flesh despite their humanity and their resistance to being presented as animal?

The Saracen messengers present what I believe to be an important clue: They recount that "With teeth he gnawed the flesh full hard, / As a wood lion he made" (3609-10). It is Richard's embrace of the animal, made permissible through his name, which acts here as a kind of verbal animal-affective prosthetic (what might be considered metaphorical human-animal contact), that provides access to a transgressive performance of anger that treats the consumption of human flesh something to laugh about. It is significant that Richard's association with lions is imagined through a body part—he has the heart of a lion. His name, reinforced by a literal ingestion of its metaphorical image, imagines Richard as having a body altered in some way by the animal. Like Yvain and the werewolves, Richard maintains his status as human, but the metaphorical lion's heart grafted on/into his human body gives him the ability to perform anger and hatred in a very animalistic manner: through the transgressive consumption of human flesh.

Not only does the very title of the romance suggest a combination of bodies—a man with the (metaphoric) heart of a lion—but so too does his encounter with a literal lion, in which Richard seemingly earns his name by besting the beast on its own terms, bare-handed, and then consuming its heart in a carnivorous and lion-like act. Although this moment serves as the narrative's explanation for why Richard is called "Lionheart," the romance's audience already knows that to be his name, both by virtue of the title and historical record. Thus, it is his name that serves as the animal "limb" which allows him to use his body in a leonine manner, reinforced and demonstrated by his killing of the lion. But, as mentioned above, I do not read Richard's encounter with the lion or his

anthropophagy as a sign of hybridity, as some scholars do.⁷⁷ Rather, he is presented, like the other figures we have examined, as having his humanity intact. He eats a raw heart like a ravenous lion would, but he does so by first squeezing it of excess blood and dipping it in salt, reinforcing his humanness even during his most animal-like moment. In a similar blending of the human and animal, he eats human flesh as lion might, but, at the banquet for the Saracen messengers, he does so for a clear political/military purpose: to instill fear and send a message to the Sultan. He does not become a lion in a human body, or a human in a lion body; like the other characters we have examined, he is presented as a human who appropriates the animal, using it to temporarily alter his body's configuration.

Richard's animal-affective prosthetic, like Yvain's, works to present the fantasy of an ideal defense of normative identity in a manner acceptable to the text's audience. Just as Yvain is able to claim (gruesome and violent) victory over threats to normativity like giants and demons because of his leonine limb's ferocious and intense anger, performed through transgressive violence, Richard is able to claim the ultimate victory over his Saracen enemies by means of his leonine heart, which allows him to perform his hatred for them through the taboo act of anthropophagy. After his cook reveals the source of his "pork" dinner, Richard says, "By Goddys deth and Hys upryste, / Schole we nevere dye for defawte / Whyl we may in any assawte / Slee Sarezynys, the flesch mowe

⁷⁷ Shutters, for instance, writes, "[O]n the one hand, animals can reflect the knight's prowess; on the other hand, knights can join with animals to create a circuit of identity that is not simply human. I...read Richard's consumption of the lion's heart not as a human appropriation of animal powers but as a moment in which we see Richard becoming 'something other, something new.' In this moment the hierarchy of humans over animals breaks down." See "Lion Hearts, Saracen Heads, Dog Tails," 83.

taken" (3218-21). The Christian armies will never be overcome if they can defeat their enemies and nourish themselves in the same act. And yet, this plan is not put into practice in the poem, as it is only Richard who has access to the animal-affective prosthetic necessary to make that action permissible. Readers can accept Yvain and Richard's transgressive violence because it is safely contained within the confines of their animal limbs.

Although Richard does not make use of a literal animal body in this romance, the effect is ultimately the same: he is able to use his body to perform anger and hatred as an animal would. Just like Bisclavret and Gorlagon, his use of the animal-affective prosthetic—here, a metaphorical lion's heart imagined as a supplement to his human flesh—allows him to bite, tear, and consume his enemies' bodies in a fantasy of the ideal defense of normative identity. In the same way, Yvain's alliance with a lion, serving as an extension of his body in much the same way a steed does for its knight—two bodies in a network of somatic potential—gives Yvain the ability to use that transgressive performance of anger, seen in the unexpected and vicious assaults the lion enacts, to defeat the various inhuman Others that threaten courtly life. Whether it is a lion's beating heart or an entire leonine body, the animal in each of these texts is used to make the transgressively-performed anger necessary in the defense of normative identity more acceptable to those witnessing it.

Over the course of this study, I have examined human-animal contact in a number of medieval romances—the wolfish skin of Bisclavret and Gorlagon, the lion's body that works in concert with Yvain's knightly one, the lion's heart imagined to beat in King

Richard's chest—asking, "What does this contact *do* in these texts? What work does it perform?" In theorizing that contact with the animal as an affective prosthetic, a new limb grafted onto the bodies of these texts' characters, I believe we gain important insight into the narrative role which that contact serves. Examining this contact through the lens of affect studies allows us to understand the way in which affect, as somatically-bound performance, serves as a major category of distinction between the animal and the human. Not bound to the rules of the court, not forced to submit their bodies and those bodies' affective performances to the restrictions and regulations of chivalric codes of conduct, as human knights are, animals have the ability to perform anger, fury, hatred, and rage through an extreme, transgressive violence to which those knights do not have access.

In considering that ability as a prosthetic limb used by human bodies, we can also see how these texts appropriate the performative freedom ascribed to animals to make their human, courtly protagonists affectively able-bodied, while at the same time marking their bodies as Other: donning the animal-affective prosthetic simultaneously pushes those characters out of the court and into the wilderness, and allows them to use transgressively performed anger to defend, police, and protect that courtly space. The prosthetic makes that wild, transgressive performance of anger an acceptable use of the knightly body in a way that would be impossible otherwise. In maintaining the humanness of each of these characters, keeping their human identities separate from the animal-affective prosthetics that they employ, these texts attempt to make that transgressive performance less problematic. And yet, despite these efforts, the very

necessity of that transgressively violent enactment of anger in the defense of the court and the normative identity that belongs to it, in combination with the anxiety displayed in several of these texts as they attempt to integrate that animal prosthetic into courtly life (Bisclavret and Yvain's lion as courtly, knightly dogs; Gorlagon as a wolfish king), these texts paradoxically suggest that, while it might not seem very human-like, the wildly, transgressively violent performance of anger seen in each of these characters is, in fact, an important part of chivalric identity.

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