*Chapter 2*

# Wolf, Man, and Wolf-Man

In the works of Marie de France, philosophy and poetry touch and diverge. Marie's prologue to her *Fables* (ca. 1190) praises the example of "li philosophe," wise teachers who write to instruct; she defends her fables on the ground that "n'i ad fable de folie / U il nen ait philosophie / Es essamples ki sunt aprés, / U des cuntes est tut li fes" ("there is no fable so foolish that does not offer 'philosophy' in the apologues that follow, where all the weight of the story lies").[1] Marie's *fable de folie* refers to the imagined narrative of talking beasts, and her term *philosophie* characterizes the admonitory lesson that follows the imagined narrative. Her distinction between foolish fable and wise philosophy turns on the moment when the animal characters evanesce into a lesson on human conduct. At that moment, the Aesopic beast fable asserts that it was never about beasts at all.[2] The beasts of fable do not even rise to the status of allegorical or metaphorical figures for humans, as Jill Mann explains; instead, the beasts offer a particular instance of anthropomorphic behavior that supports a general observation on the ways of humankind.[3] Retrospectively, the fable's narrative appears fanciful, amusing, but also foolish, insubstantial, just a lure for catching attention. The fable's very structure performs a disappearing act with animals.

Marie's contrast between *fable de folie* and *philosophie* adumbrates Jacques Derrida's distinction between *poésie* and *philosophie* in a work perhaps more influential than any other for critical animal studies: "Thinking concerning the animal, if there is such a thing, derives from poetry. There you have a thesis: it is what philosophy has, essentially, had to deprive itself of."[4] Derrida's *philosophie* encompasses long traditions of rational analysis stretching from antiquity through the twentieth century, and his *poésie* turns out to encompass imaginative writing of many kinds ranging from the Book of Genesis to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. He expands on his conception of *poésie* in

a further essay by associating poetry's teaching with hearts, not minds. "You will have had to disable memory, disarm culture, know how to forget knowledge" in order to read poetry, and instead to embrace "the dream of *learning by heart*. . . . I call a poem that very thing that teaches the heart, invents the heart, *that which*, finally, the word *heart* seems to mean."[5] This case for poetry's nonrational, affective teaching urges that there could be a way to see the foolish little narratives of Aesopic fable as separately and differently signifying components, not just as illustrations for the apologues' teaching.

The beast fables circulating in medieval Europe were not so much a genre as "an open field of opportunity," writes Edward Wheatley.[6] Still bearing traces of their Classical history as a rhetorical strategy of persuasive speaking, Marie's fables are recast to illustrate feudal vices and virtues such as treason, honor, and felony. The fables' address to a courtly audience, most overtly in Marie's dedication to a Count William, connects the *Fables* to a contemporaneous collection of courtly lays. Marie de France, as we call her from the epilogue to the *Fables*, may well be the same Marie who dedicated her *Lais* (ca. 1170) to a "noble king," Henry II of England or possibly his son Henry Plantagenet, who was called the Young King from 1173 onward.[7] Whether or not they share the same author, the *Fables* and *Lais* address the same or very similar Anglo-French aristocratic circles of the later twelfth century. Despite their overlapping audiences, Marie's fable of a priest and a wolf and Marie's lay about a werewolf offer two distinct versions of "beast" and "human," each version moving outside philosophical discourse while remaining in dialogue with it.

## The Trouble with Fable

From an animal studies perspective, the trouble with fable is above all that the form invites little thought on creatures other than human. Persistently under construction in medieval as well as post-medieval thought, the human is, as Diana Fuss wryly observes, "one of our most elastic fictions."[8] The *philosophie* of fables is a baby-steps version of high medieval philosophy's ongoing project of delineating the human. In the fables' move from narrative to apologue, the beasts of narrative are useful in that they illuminate human ways, but they are of no interest beyond that usefulness. The apologues insist "Thus it is with many people," "This is what great lords do," "It is like this at the royal court," "In this story of a fish we are taught about a wicked man. . . ."[9] Analogously, on a different level of sophistication and articulation, in the high philosophy

of Augustine of Hippo the animals other than human are of interest when they help to define humanity's special difference and closeness to God. "It is not so very absurd to think of animals as enjoying nourishment and all the bodily pleasures. However, only a living being possessed of reason can *use* anything. . . . Everything which is made is made for man's *use*, because reason, which is given to man, uses all things by judging all things."[10] Biblical commentaries such as Ambrose of Milan's *Hexameron* expound at great length how the created world centers around God's plan for humankind.[11]

In the work of church fathers as well as in the apologues of fable, the inferiority of animals to human purposes is more accurately an assumption than a topic of analysis. Reviewing the works of Augustine, Gillian Clark points out that "he never (and this in itself is important) engaged in sustained theological argument about the nature of animals and their relationship to God and to humans. He made assertions about animals, sometimes when expounding a text of scripture, often in the context of argument or exegesis on quite different questions."[12] Yet, however peripheral these assertions about animals may appear, they consistently sustain philosophy's project of delineating the human, as Karl Steel and others have shown.[13] On its much diminished scale, the Aesopic tradition deploys animals to teach so exclusively about human societies and polities that it seems inappropriate to interrogate the proud rooster, the cruel wolf, and the innocent lamb for any comment on animals other than human.

Fortunately, from an animal studies perspective, the trouble with fable is double. Fable presses its beasts into human shapes, but it also troubles the beasts' relation to the apologue, deflecting attention from the human and back toward the pleasure of imagining proximity to other animals. These less overt operations of fable arise as their narratives exceed their apologues, in excesses that Marie calls *folie* and that I have associated with Derrida's characterization of *poésie*. Even a compact exemplar, Marie's *Fable* 81, sometimes titled "The Priest and the Wolf," can hint at the arbitrariness inherent in juxtaposing a fanciful narrative and a proverbial apologue:

> Un prestre volst jadis aprendre
> a un lu lettres fere entendre.
> "A," dist li prestre, "a," dist li lus,
> que mut ert fel e enginnus:
> "B," dist le prestre, "di od mei!"
> "B," dist li lus, "[e] jo l'otrei."

"C," dist le prestre, "di avant!"
"C," dist li lus, "a i dunc itant?"
Respunt le prestre: "Ore di par tei!"
Li lus li dist: "Jeo ne sai quei."
"Di que te semble, si espel!"
Respunt li lus, il dit: "Aignel!"
Le prestre dit que verité tuche:
tel en pensé, tel en la buche.
Le plus [de ceus] dit hum suvent:
cel dunt il pensent durement,
e par lur buche est cuneü,
ainceis que seit d'autre sceü;
la buche mustre le penser,
tut deive ele dë el parler. (*Fables*, 81)[14]

Once a priest wanted to teach a wolf how to understand letters. "A," said the priest; "A," said the wolf, who was very cruel and deceptive. "B," said the priest, "say it along with me." "B," said the wolf, "I agree to it." "C," said the priest, "go ahead and say it." "C," said the wolf, "are there so many of them?" Replied the priest, "Now say it on your own!" The wolf replied, "I don't know what it is." "Say what looks right to you, spell it out!" The wolf answers and says to him, "Lamb!" The priest says he spoke truly: As in the mind, so in the mouth.

Most often people speak thus: whatever they are thinking about is made known by their mouth before anyone else has heard about it. The mouth reveals the thought even when it should speak of something different.

The closing lines recruit the little narrative to illustrate a general observation, casting the observation as proverbial wisdom and inscribing the observation even within the narrative when the priest voices the proverb himself—"As in the mind, so in the mouth." Yet the apologue is far from self-evident; other versions of the fable draw other conclusions. When Pope Urban II cites the story, the wolf who cries "lamb" does not evoke people who speak their minds too readily; instead he represents those clergymen who care more about worldly than about spiritual things.[15] In Urban's and Marie's conclusions, the wolf rather than the priest is the target of critique, but in a third instantiation of this fable, carved on Parma's twelfth-century cathedral, the priest is an ass.

Holding the staff of pedagogy between his front hooves, this teacher looks naive or stupid to have taken a wolf for a student (Figure 3). The fable now illustrates neither the risks of indiscretion nor the attraction of worldly goods but the folly of attempting to educate the wicked—or perhaps the folly of education itself.[16] None of these conclusions about the narrative is untenable, and none of them accounts entirely for the narrative. As Frank Kermode remarks, diverse interpretations of a single parable are "actualizations of its hermeneutic potential, which, though never fully available, is inexhaustible."[17] Parable and fable alike offer narratives that, by the very nature of narrative, brim with interpretive possibilities. The encounter of priest and wolf fits but also exceeds each of its potential apologues, inviting an endless stream of them.

Once the bond between *fable de folie* and *philosophie* is loosened, once the assignment of the *philosophie* is exposed as a formal exercise visited on narratives that are always in excess of that exercise, the fables' *folie* is free to yield meanings that are less (or more) than rational. These implicit poetic meanings arise from the pleasure of incongruity. Before *philosophie* turns everyone human, "The Priest and the Wolf" imagines a wolf attempting to read. Not a "novice" or a "princeling" but a "wolf." What a folly! In this through-the-looking-glass

Figure 3. The Wolf at School. Duomo, Parma, Italy. Scala/Ministero per i Beni e le Attività culturali/Art Resource, New York.

world, the priest's plan to teach a wolf may be extravagant, but his desire for the encounter and the spectacle of a rapacious carnivore reciting the alphabet could make any scholar smile. The wolf's animality is intensified by contrast with his human teacher, so pedagogic, so Christian. *Philosophie* may gloss the wolf as a man, but initially "wolf" and "priest" invoke two different species with absurdly mismatched priorities.[18] The fable's next incongruity confuses the representation of species by mixing anthropomorphism with its inversion, zoomorphism—the attribution of animal qualities to humans. The wolf's anthropomorphic speaking and reading facilitate the encounter, but the beast who is in some sense a student is simultaneously a student who is in some sense a beast. A, B, and C are challenging enough ("are there so many of them?"), but the priest's next instruction, "di que te semble, si espel!" ("say what it looks like, spell/sound it out!") whiplashes the poor student from rote learning to something like phonics.[19] Who cannot identify with this brain-freezing moment when thought is asked to take a new step? Zoomorphism can generate its own exhortations and reproaches, but before the moralizing kicks in, as the scene of instruction unfolds, the wolf's clueless insouciance depressurizes the educational process. The impossibly high standards for the "human" relax for a moment. What a pleasure to experience the wolfish scholar in this scene, to care with him so little for teaching, to think on lambs instead of letters.[20] This anti-rational, affective experience constitutes the *poésie* of fable, the expression of human proximity to other animals—before the fable delivers its negative comment on that proximity, Marie's "think before you speak" or Urban's "care for the spirit, not for the world."

"The Priest and the Wolf" heightens its species incongruities by evoking them in the context of an exclusively human accomplishment, the acquisition of letters. For high philosophy, a primary differentiation between human and animal is that animals' knowledge is inborn, not learned (see Chapter 3). Lessons on animal intransigence abound in medieval fable collections: never try to get away from your nature, nature is stronger than nurture, you cannot escape your nature.[21] Yet the fables also abound in schemes for change, acts of bravado, and clever reversals of fortune that run counter to their closing assertions that nature is unchanging. The fox harassing an eagle, the mouse mobilizing many mice to save a lion, the rooster tricking a fox, and the wolf at school variously resist the apologue's *philosophie* on the stability of nature.[22] These innovative schemes often fail, crossed by counter-schemes or doomed by their outsized ambition, but the potential for change is persistent and not persistently thwarted. The fox rescues his cub from the eagle, the mouse

counteracts weakness with numbers, the rooster saves his life by learning the fox's trick, and even the priest has an outside chance at reforming the wolf by teaching him letters. The wolf begins his lessons "cruel and deceptive" but forgets himself sufficiently that his "mouth reveals the thought." What is that thought? Christian education commingled reciting the ABCs with learning to make the sign of the cross and speak a first prayer, "Christ's cross me speed."[23] In this context, could the wolf's uncensored answer "Lamb!" evoke the sacrificial symbol of the Christian faith? Less optimistically, perhaps the wolf answers with a transgressive lupine version of Christianity: yum, pass me that sacrificial lamb!

When taken sequentially and rationally, the fables' *philosophie* damps down the sparks spinning off their foolish narratives. The fable form could even be indicted for exploiting the pleasures of *intimacy* with animals in order to insist on the *difference* of the human. When taken nonsequentially as a poetry of affect and imagination, the fables contradict their reductive apologues in their topsy turvy narratives. Identifying what the fable "teaches by heart" involves reading them against the grain, however, so that fable can easily seem inhospitable to animal studies. In contrast, Marie's *Lay of Bisclavret* invites reflection on the animal continuum, deploying a carefully specified metamorphosis to consider how one creature might become another while still retaining some relation to his other states of being.

## Animal Philosophy

Much of the scholarly work on medieval poetry, like much philosophical work, has been organized around a basic distinction between humans and all other animals. This distinction or boundary has served medieval studies well: scholars have demonstrated how thoroughly it has structured cultures from late classical times onward, and they have traced moments when the boundary is enforced, crossed, or reasserted. Medieval poetry, however, 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. In Marie's *Lay of Bisclavret*, shared qualities of body, mind, and ethical capacity converge in a wolf-man who is neither outlaw nor monster. His strange virtue flourishes in the climate of wonder and adventure peculiar to Marie's lays, a space of imagination that can do without the clarifying dichotomy between man and wolf.

This bisclavret's proliferating interpenetrations are at odds with authoritative strains of medieval philosophical thought. As in Marie's fables, in Marie's lays philosophical and poetic thought are not isolated from one another; on the contrary, they express different emphases and commitments within a shared literary culture. Genre is one point of entry into the contrast between poetry and philosophy: Breton lay and romance offer climates or environments where habits of mind can flourish that differ from the analytical habits of mind that flourish best in philosophical genres such as the summa and the biblical commentary. These latter genres interpret the first two chapters of the Book of Genesis as establishing a hierarchy in which human difference from other creatures is constitutive and highly valued, and human relation to other creatures is delimited and denigrated.[24] The double nature assigned to humans, eternal but also fleshly, takes on a didactic role: we should turn away from our animal desires toward heavenly goals; even our bodily posture admonishes us to raise our thoughts from earthly to eternal life. As the twelfth-century English bestiaries take the topos from Isidore of Seville, "the human stands erect and looks toward heaven so as to seek God, rather than look at the earth, as do the beasts that nature has made bent over and attentive to their bellies."[25] Patristic exegesis focuses especially on Genesis 1:26: "And [God] said: Let us make man to our image and likeness; and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth, and every creeping creature that moveth upon the earth."[26] Commenting on the conjunction in this verse of "image and likeness" in the first half with "let him have dominion" in the second half, Augustine concludes that we are to understand that Adam is like God in the same way as he is unlike animals: "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."[27] Augustine's interpretation has correllatives in Classical philosophy as well: most of the late Neoplatonists endorsed Plato's and Aristotle's view that nonhuman animals were *aloga zôa*, living beings without *logos*, rendered in Latin as *ratio*. Encompassing the capacity for rational thought, thought's expression in language, and knowledge of God, *logos* or *ratio* is the human faculty that all other creatures lack.[28] Closer to Marie's milieus, the English bestiaries recount that in Genesis 2:20 Adam named the animals "calling each by a name that corresponded to its place in the natural order."[29] Adam's meaningful names demonstrate his likeness to God.

Not only in Classical philosophy and medieval theology but in the post-medieval humanist traditions as well, positing a profound distinction between

humans and other animals has united philosophers who are often adversaries in other respects. René Descartes stands apart from medieval and early modern tradition in many ways, yet he sides with Thomas Aquinas in comparing the unreasoning animals to mechanisms such as clocks.[30] Moving to some degree against the humanist hierarchization of creatures, Martin Heidegger nonetheless continues to define animal mentality as inferiority, not alterity, on a single scale of plenitude and lack: animals are "poor in world," sunk in being without the capacity to affect their environment, whereas humans "have world" by that very measure: they are "world-forming."[31] From an ethical standpoint, Immanuel Kant specifies that humans can only have direct moral duties to other humans. Dog on the one hand and God on the other are outside the uniquely human terrain of rational embodiment, and therefore outside the possibility of ethical relationship. In an unfounded epicycle to his argument, Kant asserts that animals should be well treated in spite of their exclusion from the ethical sphere because maltreating them might harden us against our fellow humans.[32] However these rationalist philosophers may differ in other respects, they are united by their commitment to a "human" radically superior to other creatures.

At certain moments in rationalist philosophies, human supremacy extends beyond possessing the *logos* that other creatures lack to rendering lack in the animal body as well. To exemplify a being "with neither ethics nor *logos*," Emmanuel Levinas recalls a dog named Bobby who, for a few short weeks, changed the dehumanizing conditions of a Nazi internment camp by greeting the prisoners daily, "jumping up and down and barking in delight."[33] As one of these prisoners who were to their guards no more than a "gang of apes," Levinas recalls Bobby's behavior in moving detail, but he refuses to grant Bobby ethical status because dogs are "without the brain needed to universalize maxims": a dog could express some canine equivalent of "I love you," but he could never formulate his commitment in universal terms—"love thy neighbor."[34] Since for Levinas, following Kant, it is only in relation to such universals that the other gains a "face" and solicits ethical treatment, a dog has no face: we can look at Bobby but we can have no ethical relationship to him. Asked in a later interview about animal faces, Levinas tentatively conceded to certain animals a face secondary to that of humanity: "The human face is completely different and only afterwards do we discover the face of an animal. I don't know if a snake has a face. I can't answer that question. A more specific analysis is needed."[35] Heidegger similarly asserts that animals have no hands: even the apes, he argues, do not think and therefore do not produce

culture. "Only a being who can speak, that is, think, can have hands and can be handy in achieving works of handicraft."[36] I'm fascinated by these images in which a mental lack ascribed to animals (no maxim making, no culture making) is figured as a physical lack (no face, no hand). Heidegger and Levinas mean their locutions simply as memorable figures for the animal's intangible mental lack, but when they render the intangible lack as a physical difference, they contradict the very opposition they have posited between the physicality other animals share with humans and the culture-making mentality that sets humans apart and above. If what distinguishes us is our minds, it seems excessive, perhaps anxiously so, to present our mental superiority in terms of the physical: *we* have the face and hand *they* lack. From a medieval perspective, the animal's missing face and hand recall judicial mutilation: the mark of an invisible failure or crime transferred to the body and posted visibly there. I will return to Levinas's and Heidegger's physical figurations of animal lack at the moment in *Bisclavret* when the werewolf tears the nose off his wife's face.

The intense scrutiny that rationalist philosophies have received within animal studies subtends my very condensed summary.[37] Condensation can emphasize how broadly credible a decisive cut between "the human" and "the animal" has been across many centuries and schools of thought. As in the work of Augustine, the reductiveness results from philosophers' disconcern with the binary's second term; they are clearing a space for close focus on "the human." A landmark critique with influences spreading throughout scholarship on animals came with Derrida's ten hours of lectures at Cerisy, published piece by piece after 1997 and finally in book form as *L'animal que donc je suis* (2006).[38] The French title plays on the best known assertion of rationalist philosophy, the Cartesian maxim "je pense donc je suis" ("I think therefore I am"), which is homonymic with "I think therefore I follow." Inserting "animal" into the maxim displaces what it is to be human from *rational* animal to rational *animal*: "the (human) animal that therefore I am." Just as in everyday parlance, however, the "animal" of this title can encompass the human or exclude it. In the latter mode, "the (nonhuman) animal that therefore I follow" revises the Cartesian maxim's exclusive focus on the human to implicate all beings in the situation of human being. This "being" of the title's "I am" is shot through with its homonymic "I follow," opening the "I" to temporality as well as contingency on other animals. "I am following" myself and other animals together, Derrida asserts, unsettling both selfhood and animality by overlaying them on one another and also by emphasizing their shared subjection to time: "I follow" brings temporality into the transhistorical stasis of "I

am." In their subjection to time, living creatures acquire a historical dimension that opens them to relationship, change, and mortality. In brief, Derrida's title prepared for a deconstruction of the human/animal binary of the kind he had been practicing all through his career on philosophical distinctions whose false clarity, he argued, hindered rather than advanced philosophical discovery.

Following out the implications in his title, Derrida traces several interlocking problems with the traditional animal/human binary. Three of these have special relevance for reading Marie's *Lay of Bisclavret*. First, the traditional conflation of other-than-human animals into a single category is obviously distorted: humankind is not symmetrical with an oppositional term encompassing aardvarks, amoebas, and apes. Once the category "animal" is seen to be plural, its relations to the human redistribute in a superbly complex design. Not incompatibly with Derrida's philosophical argument, post-Darwinian science has transformed our understanding of how mind and body are interrelated within and across species. The discovery of similarities is, of course, compatible with recognizing differences. To forget difference would be, as Derrida puts it, "plus bête que les bêtes," more asinine than any beast.[39] His project consists "certainly not in effacing the limit, but in multiplying its figures, in complicating, thickening, delinearizing, folding, and dividing the line precisely by making it increase and multiply."[40] This multiplication of difference generates a second critique of the radical cut between human and animal: it appears that *logos* is proper to the human, but one of Derrida's core projects has been to show that language and meaning are not under the control of any speaker. Language passes through us; it is not an inborn trait of our species; it is a technology we learn awkwardly to adopt. Functions of *logos* that once appeared unique to humanity, such as signification, response, and deception, move and morph around in the heterogeneous expressions of the living. Deconstruction replaces the concept of the sign with that of the trace, always mobile, repeatable, erasing itself, belonging to no speaker. The trace, in referring to tracks as well as remainders, has resonance for Derrida with nonhuman modes of signification.[41] And in a third critique, reconceiving the binary as a single field of interrelations entails reconceiving the ethical aspects of relationship.[42] When animals graduate from irrelevance to the status of beings in relation to which the human recognizes itself, animals come inside the circle of ethical consideration, alongside those other others, strangers and slaves and Samaritans, who have preoccupied Christianity and humanism for so many centuries.

When Derrida turns to "poetry," he takes his first example from the

opening chapters of the Book of Genesis, providing for my purposes a transition back to *Bisclavret*, in which these opening chapters of Genesis are an obscure point of reference. Derrida reads the creation story to pivot not around the moment in the Priestly text when God creates male and female in his "image and likeness," but instead around the moment in the older Judean text when God watches Adam, newly created from slime, naming each animal:

> And the Lord God said: It is not good for man to be alone; let us make him a help like unto himself.
>
> And the Lord God having formed out of the ground all the beasts of the earth, and all the fowls of the air, brought them to Adam to see what he would call them: for whatsoever Adam called any living creature the same is its name.
>
> And Adam called all the beasts by their names, and all the fowls of the air, and all the cattle of the field: but for Adam there was not found a helper like himself.[43]

Patristic commentaries on Genesis find Adam's radical difference from animals consolidated here as he takes dominion over them by speaking their names.[44] In Derrida's reading, the scene is instead a challenge to conventional exegesis. Adam's first act of *logos* recognizes differences among animals, and his first self-definition takes place in relation to these animals as he looks among them for a "help like unto himself." The animals are Adam's first experience of the Other; Eve will be the second: he names her "woman" in a similar act of recognition and self-differentiation.[45] To whom is Adam speaking as he names animals? In the Vulgate Bible God is watching "to see what he would call them"; for Derrida as for the medieval illuminators of this scene, the animals watch him as well, expressing their obedience in attentive gazes and postures. Figure 4, from a bestiary manuscript that dates from the decades in which Marie was writing, resembles numerous further depictions of the scene.[46] The animals' responsive, submissive gaze complements God's overseeing gaze; all acknowledge Adam's naming. Part of the pressure Derrida puts on Adam's *logos* emerges here: the animals' gaze amounts to a "power of manifestation" or "language of mute traces" that brings them into relationship with Adam.[47] This trace of meaning in their gaze has ethical implications. Derrida's recurring assertion "les animaux me regardent" means both "animals look at me" and "animals are my concern, animals have to do with me." In the double meaning of "se regarder,"

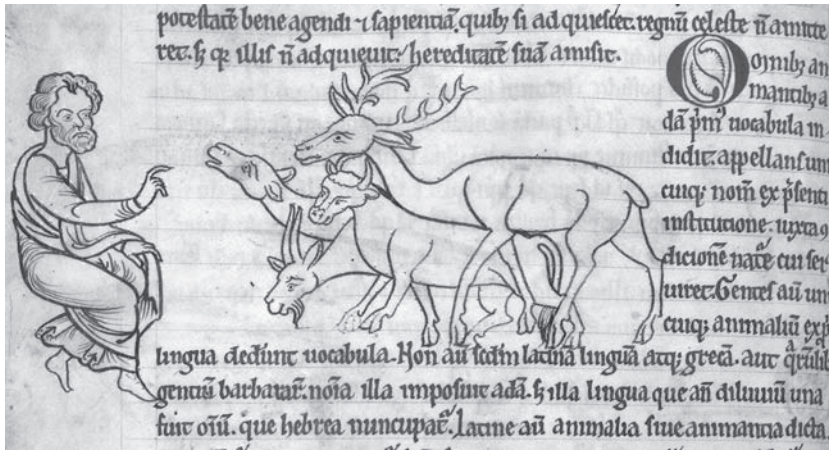

Figure 4. Adam names the animals in the second-family bestiary. © The British Library Board. London, British Library, MS Add. 11283, folio 11v.

to look at and to be of concern, Derrida begins his reply to Levinas on whether animals can solicit humans into an ethical relationship.[48]

Derrida's critique of the longstanding rationalist distinction between human and animal can help us see how Marie's *Lay of Bisclavret* goes about interrogating distinction. Extensive scholarly work has investigated the many social, sexual, and political issues this lay engages: its juxtaposition of marital and feudal loyalties, its delineation of sovereignty and baronial rights. These discussions tend to understand the werewolf as a loss or a failure of the knight's identity. If the powerful tradition of the human/animal dichotomy can be pushed aside just enough to appreciate Marie's revisionist poetics of animality, the lay reveals in place of that dichotomy a fascinating array of contiguities, and these contiguities link up not just two but three creatures in the *bisclavret*.

## *What Is a Bisclavret?*

The *Lay of Bisclavret* comments first of all on the diversity of pagan, Christian, and folk beliefs about werewolves.[49] Marie's *Lay of Bisclavret* evokes in particular two extremes of the full spectrum of werewolf accounts. In some of these, transformation into a lupine state is an unmitigated disaster, a manifestation of the human capacity for sinful and lawless behavior or a total evacuation of the human self. In other accounts, the change from human to wolf is a slighter affair of body-hopping—changing in outward form only, as if changing a garment. Early in its narration *Bisclavret* sets up these contradictory

models: the sinful descent from humanity into bestiality on the one hand and, on the other, the physical transformation of a man who retains his human mind within the beast's body. Given the well-documented influence of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in other lays attributed to Marie, it may be that Marie would have traced these two extremes of transformation to Ovid's Lycaon, so wolfish in his anthropophagy and his horrific hosting that becoming a wolf was the full expression of his inhuman depravity, and Ovid's Acteon, so differently the hapless victim of an unfortunate circumstance that trapped him in animal form unable to call off his own hounds and huntsmen.[50] Whatever Marie's full frame of reference for composing *Bisclavret* may have been, her lay only begins by representing these two contrasting kinds of metamorphosis. As the lay proceeds, her werewolf turns out not to be predicated on dichotomy, nor is his story designed to contrast bestial and human behaviors.

In the *Lay of Bisclavret*, a good and widely respected knight lives happily with his loving wife. Scholars note a whiff of Eden before the Fall in the knight's harmonious relation with his lord, "sun seinur" (*Bisclavret*, 19), and in the couple's mutual love—soon to be betrayed by the wife, as Eve betrayed Adam with her blandishments. The wife questions why the knight vanishes from home for three days each week. Insisting he should trust her, the wife eventually persuades him to reveal that he leaves his clothes outside a ruined chapel and becomes a werewolf. Frightened and repulsed, the wife tells a neighboring knight to take the clothes from their hiding place so that her husband will not be able to return from his next transformation. She marries this neighbor knight after her husband has been missing for a certain time. A year later, the king's hunters and dogs nearly kill the werewolf, but he kisses the mounted king's foot and leg to convey that he is humble and docile. The king keeps the werewolf at court until one day the wife's new husband pays the king a visit. The werewolf bites the new husband of his traitorous wife, and later bites off the wife's nose. Recognizing that the werewolf must have reason to attack this couple, the king has the wife interrogated and she reveals the whole adventure. The werewolf ignores his recovered clothing until given the privacy of the king's bedchamber; then he reclothes himself and becomes a man again. The wife and second husband are exiled, and many of the wife's female descendants are born without noses.

Marie uses two terms for "werewolf" as she titles the lay, Norman French *garvalf* and Breton *bisclavret*. Settling after ten lines on the Breton term for the remainder of the lay, she emphasizes her act of translation and the exotic material she is bringing into French and into the court of King Henry.[51] Her

two terms can also suggest, as do the alternate titles proffered for *Chaitivel* and *Eliduc*, that the lay contains more than one interpretation of the werewolf. Marie indeed uses the terms *garvalf* and *bisclavret* quite differently, and their etymologies can reinforce her rejection of the French term in favor of the Breton. *Garvalf* is cognate with English *werewolf* and francique **wari-wulf*, a combination of the nouns *man* and *wolf* into man-wolf or in English more colloquially wolf-man.[52] The garvalf, a double entity flipping back and forth between its manifestations, is the frame of reference against which the term *bisclavret* will emerge:

> Jadis le poeit hum oïr
> E sovent suleit avenir,
> Hume plusur garval devindrent
> E es boscages meisun tindrent.
> Garvalf, ceo est beste salvage;
> Tant cum il est en cele rage
> Hummes devure, grant mal fait,
> Es granz forez converse e vait.
> Cest afere les ore ester:
> Del bisclavret vus voil cunter. (*Bisclavret*, 5–14)

> Long ago one could hear and often it came to pass that men became *garvals* and dwelt in the woods. A *garvalf* is a savage beast; in his rage he devours men and does much harm; he lives and wanders in great forests. Now I am putting that subject aside: I want to tell you about the *bisclavret*.

The men who became garvals, whatever they may have been like while they were men, were the worst of beasts while transformed, just as natural wolves were thought to be the worst of beasts in medieval Europe, the most violent and anthropophagous, the most evil-intentioned.[53] Marie follows this characterization of the garvalf with a heavily marked transition: "now I am putting that subject aside: I want to tell you about the bisclavret." Why would speaking about the bisclavret be distinct from speaking about garvals? In the elliptical mode characteristic of her lays, Marie's transition suggests that the bisclavret is an entity worth close attention, but not one that will be easy to grasp. Linguists have parsed Marie's Breton term *bisclavret* as "speaking wolf," "rational wolf," and (less grandly) "wolf in pants."[54] Contention still

surrounds the Breton etymology, but if these proposals have some accuracy, they are true to the lay's representation of a creature that does not simply oppose man and wolf, but is rather more like an enhanced, unprecedented wolf.

A characteristic feature of lay and romance sustains the bisclavret's elusiveness: these genres tend to test their knights in magical or wondrous adventures. This knight's transformation into a werewolf is an unexplained, unmotivated marvel with important measuring and testing functions for the knight's merit, including the testing of his moral worth. Gervase of Tilbury's *Otia Imperialia* (ca. 1210), a vast collection of marvels dedicated to a grandson of England's Henry II, defines marvels: "We call those things marvels which are beyond our comprehension, even though they are natural: in fact the inability to explain why a thing is so constitutes a marvel."[55] Among Gervase's marvels of nature are several werewolf anecdotes. Marie too asserts the palpable reality of her wonders: "l'aventure k'avez oïe / Veraie fu, n'en dutez mie" ("the adventure you have just heard truly happened, do not doubt it": *Bisclavret*, 314–15). Her truth claim fulfills her definition of the Breton lay as a commemoration of past events.[56] At the same time, in the courtly mode of adventure, the marvels of Marie's *Lais* challenge noble personages to distinguish themselves from the ordinary.[57] The king in *Bisclavret* feels great fear on first encountering the werewolf but comes to value him highly. "He considered the beast a great marvel and held him very dear" ("A grant merveille l'ot tenu / E mut le tient a grant chierté": *Bisclavret*, 168–69). The betraying wife, in an indicting contrast, "heard this marvel and turned scarlet from fear; she was terrified of the whole adventure" ("oï cele merveille, / De poür fu tute vermeille; / De l'aventure s'esfrea": *Bisclavret*, 97–99). She compounds her dishonesty and disloyalty by rejecting the wondrous adventure of marriage to a werewolf.[58] More on her plight later.

The werewolf, then, is the knight's challenge to adventure. He must engage a mysterious mechanism that sweeps him away like the unmanned ship in Marie's *Lay of Guigemar* or the bronze horse in Chaucer's *Squire's Tale*. Pushing the concept of adventure to the limit, the knight of *Bisclavret* does not merely enter the wilderness to encounter the unknown, he merges with the unknown in becoming animal. The verbs for this metamorphosis are "perdre," to lose, and "devenir," to become: "she lost him for three days each week"; "his people often lost him"; "the knight who has been lost for a long time" on the one hand, and on the other "I become a werewolf"; "she told him what her husband became"; "we shall see if he becomes a man again."[59] In the interplay of losing

and becoming, the knight faces a uniquely organic challenge. He must face the unknown by becoming different from himself without losing himself.

Becoming is not yet being: the bisclavret is a creature in motion. As the plot of *Bisclavret* begins to unfold, the werewolf at first appears to keep his human and animal qualities neatly distinct. He is a much loved and respected man, yet he tells his wife that as a werewolf he goes into the "great forest" and "lives on prey and plunder" ("en cele grant forest me met . . . S'i vif de preie e de ravine": *Bisclavret*, 64, 66), recalling the definitional garvalf who "devours men and does much harm; he lives and wanders in great forests" ("Hummes devure, grant mal fait, / Es granz forez converse e vait": *Bisclavret*, 11–12). The knight identifies his clothing as the means of his transformation—he leaves his clothes hidden in a rock and dresses again to return home—implying that his transformation is a departure from whatever clothes signify: human modesty, social insertion, moral standards. This garvalf-like flipping from respected knight to inhuman ravager soon gives way to the opposite version of a werewolf in Marie's milieux, a version just as bifurcated as the garvalf. On the king's hunt we see a creature that appears to be entirely human within and bestial without.[60] What both these models share is a certain clarity that soon evanesces in more fascinating directions. The rapacious garvalf of the lay's introduction splits man from wolf temporally, like Jekyll and Hyde: the two states succeed one another. On the king's hunt, the werewolf appears instead to be split within himself between human mind and animal body—a human without language, or a wolf with a human mind. The lay's audience may perceive him in the former mode, knowing he was earlier a man, and the king perceives him in the latter mode:

> "Seignurs," fet il, "avant venez!
> Ceste merveillë esgardez,
> Cum ceste beste s'humilie!
> Ele ad sen d'hume, merci crie.
> Chaciez mei tuz ces chiens ariere,
> Si gardez que hum ne la fiere!
> Ceste beste ad entente e sen." (*Bisclavret*, 151–57)

> "Lords," he said, "come here! Look at this marvel, how this beast is humbling himself! He has the mind of a man, he cries for mercy. Call off those hounds for me, and let no man strike him! This beast has understanding and sense."

The king finds the "mind of a man" in the beast when the beast makes gestures of submission, kissing the mounted king's leg and foot to ask for protection ("quere merci": *Bisclavret*, 146). The king's perception fits the orthodox view that language, a deployment of signs that carry meaning by convention, is exclusive to humanity. In the king's terms of perception, the man trapped inside the wolf is fortunate to live in what Jacques Le Goff has termed "a culture of gesture," that is, of ceremonial and ritual expression in which kisses, clasped hands, prostration, and even standing and sitting can convey meaning as effectively as words.[61]

The narrative, however, sets in motion a series of equivocations around both the werewolf's way of life and the king's perception of his mind. This werewolf confesses no anthropophagy to his wife, nor is his living "on prey and plunder" distinctively animal: the king's hunting party parallels that way of life in graphic detail. The werewolf is nearly torn to bits by the king's huntsmen and hunting dogs. Hunting in the woods for prey is a doubled site of animal-human contact. Werewolves hunt for prey and so do hunting parties: "both the huntsmen and the dogs chased him all day, until they were just about to take him and tear him apart." ("A lui cururent tute jur / E li chien e li veneür, / Tant que pur poi ne l'eurent pris / E tut deciré e maumis": *Bisclavret*, 141–44). Is the implication that the partnership of man and dog in hunting is not so very different from the co-presence of man and wolf hunting together in the werewolf? At the least, the werewolf's forest encounter with huntsmen and dogs bent together on killing their prey makes his own hunting unexceptional.

In the king's assessment, the werewolf's sign-making could only spring from a man's mind deploying the *logos* that beasts lack. The king is in good company: Derrida notes that "logocentrism is first of all a thesis regarding the animal, the animal deprived of the *logos*, deprived of the *can-have-the-logos*: this is the thesis, position, or presupposition maintained from Aristotle to Heidegger, from Descartes to Kant, Levinas, and Lacan."[62] To the king it seems the werewolf has Adam's mind if not, for the moment, Adam's tongue. The werewolf's mute plea for mercy, however, has two equally plausible analogues. Surrounded as he is by hunting dogs, the cross-species template for his wolfish kisses might resonate as strongly with the animal as with the human. That is, it 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."[63] The lay's narration is in the mode of wonder and marvel, and in just that mode

some kind of nonhuman *logos* emerges as a possibility. "It would not be a matter of 'giving speech back' to animals," Derrida hazards, "but perhaps of acceding to a thinking, however fabulous and chimerical it might be, that thinks the absence of the name and of the word otherwise, and as something other than a privation."[64] A beast's resourcefulness could give rise to the bisclavret's eloquent foot-kissing as plausibly as could the "mind of a man."

The lay's central term *bisclavret* is similarly indeterminate, designating both the quadripedal and the bipedal knight. To his wife, the knight confesses, "Lady, I become a bisclavret . . . . If I were to lose my clothes . . . I'd stay a bisclavret forever" ("Dame, jeo devienc bisclavret. . . . si jes [= mes dras] eüsse perduz . . . bisclavret sereie a tuz jurs": *Bisclavret*, 63, 73, 75). The same Breton word also designates the knight when he is in human form. The two uses, as common noun for the wolfish creature and proper noun for the human creature, alternate throughout the lay. "Li bisclavret" is chased through the woods, "li bisclavret" follows the king home, "li bisclavret" attacks the new husband (*Bisclavret*, 138, 162, 197). Threaded through these events, "so Bisclavret was betrayed, ruined by his own wife," until a year later "Bisclavret saw her coming" and attacked her; then the wife confesses that "she was quite convinced that the beast was Bisclavret" (*Bisclavret*, 125, 231, 273–74). In the last of these lines it is especially clear that the common and proper noun designate both of the knight's manifestations. "Bisclavret" is both an individual's proper name and the generalized noun for something like a species. The two designations interrupt one another rather than ordering themselves in a temporal sequence. They are equivalent representations of the creature. One might rationalize that the knight's own name conjured his capacity to transform, or conversely that his capacity has generated his name despite the secrecy of his transformations, but the lay endorses neither sequence. In my discussion below I have found it difficult to avoid using "the bisclavret" for his wolfish form and "Bisclavret" for his human form—to do otherwise seems willfully confusing—and yet it would be more accurate to the lay's insistence on their inseparability to use "li bisclavret" for the whole tangled phenomenon.

### *The Bisclavret's Domestication*

The king ends his hunt by responding to the bisclavret's wordless supplication: "I will give my peace to the beast and hunt no more today" ("A la beste durrai ma pes, / Kar jeo ne chacerai hui mes": *Bisclavret*, 159–60). This new relationship between the bisclavret and the king partly reconstructs a relationship that preceded Bisclavret's wife's betrayal. As the lay opens, Bisclavret

> Beaus chevaliers e bons esteit
> E noblement se cunteneit.
> De sun seinur esteit privez
> E de tuz ses veisins amez. (*Bisclavret*, 17–20)
>
> was a good and handsome knight who conducted himself nobly. He was an intimate of his lord and was loved by all his neighbors.

The later relationship of bisclavret and king replays this earlier relationship with a strange distortion. On the one hand, the bisclavret is treated like an animal: the king instructs his courtiers that no one may strike him and that he must be fed and watered well (*Bisclavret*, 170–75). The king makes no further effort to hear from that "mind of a man" he perceived on his hunt. On the other hand, the relationship is suffused with affections and virtues reminiscent of Bisclavret's earlier intimacy with his lord and his neighbors. The bisclavret sleeps near the king, he clearly loves the king ("bien s'aparceit que il l'amout": *Bisclavret*, 184), and he conducts himself impeccably: "never did he wish to do any wrong" ("unques ne volt a rien mesfeire": *Bisclavret*, 180). The king and his household hold the bisclavret dear ("chier," "a grant chierté") because he is so "francs e deboneire," terms appropriate to nobility with meanings ranging around generosity, gentility, openness, and kindness (*Bisclavret*, 169, 178–79). The conflicting aspects of the bisclavret's life in court, still fed and watered and subject to discipline like an animal but also loved and well-behaved, introduce a third species into the commingled presence of wolf and knight in the bisclavret. The werewolf story is becoming also a dog story.

Specifically, when the bisclavret attacks the betraying wife with his avenging bite, the plot resembles Classical and medieval anecdotes of avenging dogs such as the Dog of Antioch whose widely circulated story appears in Ambrose of Milan's hexameral commentary on Genesis, Gerald of Wales's *Journey Through Wales*, and many English bestiaries.[65] This dog reveals the solution to a crime that only he has witnessed. His master having been murdered by a treacherous servant, the dog stands watch by the corpse as a crowd of onlookers gathers—including the murderer, who is passing himself off as an innocent bystander. Quoting again from a twelfth-century English bestiary manuscript, when the dog saw the murderer in the crowd, he

> took up the arms of revenge . . . and seized [the murderer] alone among all the others and did not let him go. Then [the murderer] was thrown

> into confusion, because he could by no objection escape such plain proof of his deed . . . and he could no longer deny the crime. And what was harder, he suffered punishment ("ultionem perpessus est") because he could not present a defense for himself.[66]

The parallels to the *Lay of Bisclavret* are several: Bisclavret has lost his human form (not his life altogether) through betrayal by a trusted intimate, and only he can reveal who the traitor is. His generally good behavior leads the onlookers to understand that there is a reason for his attack, and further interrogation—possibly interrogation under torture in the bestiary as well as in the lay—confirms the accusation.[67] As the werewolf's attack borrows from a dog's targeted revenge, the lay complicates the king's hypothesis that the werewolf has the "mind of a man" ("sen d'hume": *Bisclavret*, 154). Ambrose observes and the bestiaries repeat that "dogs have often been the means of convicting people accused of homicide by showing clear evidence of the crime committed. Reliance is made in many cases on their mute testimony."[68]

Thus the lay's moral concerns come to resolution in a doubly cross-species context. The first of these arises from a fundamental difference between the Dog of Antioch story and the *Lay of Bisclavret*: the bisclavret is *at the same time* the doglike avenger and the human victim of betrayal. A man has vanished through his wife's treachery, and only the mute testimony of a beast can reveal the crime. The bisclavret is master and dog of Antioch in one. 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? And second, the bisclavret is wolf and dog in one—a redoubled conflation of beings. Wolf-into-dog stages another morally charged story within the bisclavret: the story of wolf becoming dog. By far the most thorough domestication in human history, *Canis lupus lupus* becoming *Canis lupus familiaris* is a wonder of nature even from a sober biological perspective: the universally feared, man-killing, herd-raiding predator becomes the most warmly trusted defender of herds and men *against* wolves and other dangers. The lay has already briefly dramatized this profound change when the king's hunting dogs nearly kill what appears to be a wolf.

Both dog stories embedded in *Bisclavret*—the loyal avenging dog and the trustworthy dog descended from the predatory wolf—might seem to accrue virtue to the complex entity called bisclavret. The moral valence of a transition from wolf to dog is completely clear, for example, in the Irish hagiography of Chapter 1 when saints Fintán, Cainnech, and Fínán Cam command

wolves to give up killing cattle and guard cattle instead. These saints invoke divine authority to control a wolf as they would control a sinner, making the wolf behave "in humility and penance" by taking on the duties of a herding dog.[69] The reformation of these wolves is limpidly miraculous. In contrast, the bisclavret's transformation is an inexplicable wonder, not a miracle.[70] It might be tempting, as the bisclavret shifts from wolflike to doglike, to understand his third aspect to be saintlike. By analogy with so many saintly wolf wranglers, the knight's success in his adventure would then be in triumphing over his wolfishness in order to deserve his return to human form. The lay, however, does not endorse a reassuring moral superiority of man to beast. In the lay's closing evocations of Genesis, the bisclavret's shame when he returns to human form marks him, and his bite marks his wife, as two fallen creatures.

*Whose Vengeance, Whose Shame?*

The bisclavret's avenging bites do not distinguish the bestial from the manly. The king, rather missing the boat, takes the bites to be purely bestial when he threatens the bisclavret with a stick in order to control him: "He would have done great damage if the king had not called him off, and threatened him with a stick" ("Ja li eüst mut grant leid fait, / Ne fust li reis ki l'apela, / D'une verge le manaça": *Bisclavret*, 200–202). But the king's wise advisor and the household concur that the bites are meaningful and motivated—without concurring that therefore the bisclavret must be a man. Of the attack on the wife's new husband,

> Ceo dient tuit par la meisun
> K'il nel fet mie sanz reisun:
> Mesfait li ad, coment que seit,
> Kar volentiers se vengereit. (*Bisclavret*, 207–10)
>
> everyone all through the household said that he [the bisclavret] would not have done this without a reason. He [the new husband] had done him a wrong, whatever it was, such that he [the bisclavret] would want to avenge himself.

Everyone agrees that "se venger," to revenge oneself, explains the bisclavret's bites. Like the crowd of onlookers in Antioch, the king's household interprets the bites in the context of the bisclavret's behavior as a whole: says the king's advisor, all of us know this beast very well and never before has he acted

feloniously ("felunie ne mustra": *Bisclavret*, 246). Similarly violent and similarly meaningful is the bisclavret's attack on his wife:

> Vers li curut cum enragiez.
> Oiez cum il est bien vengiez:
> Le neis li esracha del vis!
> Que li peüst il faire pis? (*Bisclavret*, 233–36)
>
> He ran toward her in a rage. Hear how well he avenged himself: he tore her nose off her face! What worse thing could he have done to her?

The rhyming pair "enragiez/vengiez" (enraged/avenged), together with the wise man's legal term "felunie," embed the attack in a judicial context and initiate a judicial process, but adjudication does not entail the knight's return from bestiality to manhood. The husband's vengeance and the anthropophagy of werewolves are entangled phenomena. Whether the bisclavret swallows that nose or spits it out, tearing it off with his teeth evokes feeding all too vividly. This horrific recollection of the garvalf's anthropophagy underlies the positive reference to a more praiseworthy bite, that of a dog avenging a crime. As the wise man and the king's household concur that the bites respond to a crime and provide mute testimony for a judicial investigation, the bisclavret moves inside the ethical circle: retributive justice is no longer an exclusively human province.

Scholars have endorsed the bisclavret's vengeance in entirely human terms, associating it with the legal disfiguration of adulterers, the castration of a would-be castrator, and "the rightful human fury of a husband who has been seriously wronged."[71] I can agree that the bisclavret's bites take vengeance, but nowhere does the text specify that his vengeance is rightful or virtuous.[72] The narration does represent the vengeance as balancing the scales between husband and wife: the wife's disfiguration brings her and her husband into a new kind of parity. Scholars have tended to see this new parity as a final opposition between beast and human: the nose bite "marks her as a beast"; she "turns out to be the real werewolf"; she "has become the sole vicious beast" of the narrative.[73] However, to argue that the nose bite bestializes the wife in an evidently negative dehumanizing sense runs counter to the lay's poetic imagining of animality's dispersed potential for both violence and virtue. The superbly subtle trans-animality of the bisclavret urges a new interpretation of the wife's disfigurement. Certainly Levinas and Heidegger, as discussed above, would

interpret the nose bite in terms of animal lack: for them, the wife's missing nose would express her subhumanity, as do the ape's missing hand and the dog's missing face. Given, however, the lay's persistent premise that engaging with beasts is far from negative, the nose bite comes into better coherence with the lay as a whole if we see it not as a mark of "animal lack" but of "human lack" instead—a mark of sin and the Fall.

For behold, Bisclavret's avenging bite gets a mysterious endorsement. It extends to some of the wife's female descendants. The noseless wife condemned to birth noseless daughters replays God's sentence on Eve that she and her female descendants will bring forth their children in sorrow, suffering physically for her sin. This resonance with Genesis does not align the bisclavret with God: like the dog of Antioch, the bisclavret is an injured party seeking redress, not a divine judge reproaching Adam and Eve for the original sin. Instead, sin marks both the bisclavret and his wife—she in the disfiguring bite, and he as he returns in shame to human form. The bisclavret's shame when presented with his clothing again evokes Genesis, counterbalancing the lay's evocation of Eve's sin. The bisclavret's relation to Adam is strengthened by Marie's choice, out of all the lore about how men change to werewolves, of clothing alone as the necessary mechanism for change. No magic rings, no potions or chants or gestures, no hair of wolf, not even the liminal space of the deserted chapel is necessary for this werewolf's transformations—only the clothing.[74] "Sire," the advisor explains to the king,

> "Ne savez mie que ceo munte:
> Mut durement en ad grant hunte!
> En tes chambres le fai mener
> E la despoille od lui porter;
> Une grant piece l'i laissums.
> S'il devient hum, bien le verums." (*Bisclavret*, 287–92)
>
> "You don't understand what this means: he is feeling deeply a great shame about this. Have him led to your chambers and have the clothing taken with him. We'll leave him there for a good while. Then we shall see whether he becomes a man."

Derrida remarks in his revisionary assessment of Genesis that animals are generally imagined as "being naked without knowing it. Not being naked therefore, not having knowledge of their nudity, in short, without consciousness of

good and evil."[75] Adam and Eve feel shame after they have stolen the knowledge of good and evil which other animals do not share. This shame at their sinfulness informs their shame at their nakedness. As the bisclavret's shame recalls Adam's, it bends the wife's faultiness toward parity with her husband's. In their human condition both of them are fleshly and faulty descendants of Adam and Eve.

Derrida introduces animals into the dynamic of knowledge and shame by rupturing the chronology of Genesis to locate the first evocation of shame in the scene of Adam naming the animals. Under the eye of the watching animals, Derrida imagines, Adam or any son of Adam might see that he is "in truth naked, in front of the insistent gaze of the animal, a benevolent or pitiless gaze, surprised or cognizant."[76] Many of the bestiaries' illustrators similarly conflate Adam's naming with postlapsarian modesty, showing him clothed as he names, despite the anachronism of not showing him naked. In the illustration of Adam's naming from MS Additional 11283 (Figure 4), the clothed and seated Adam is given a status distinct from that of the naked beasts, who do not know they are naked, since they never gain knowledge of good and evil. This image and many like it in other bestiary manuscripts could illustrate Derrida's point that Adam has two differences from animals: his dominion is in paradoxical opposition to his sinfulness, so that his mastery is "at one and the same time *unconditional* [Godlike] and *sacrificial* [marked by sin, subject to numberless propitiations to God]."[77] Reflecting this compromised dominion, Adam's clothing presents him as both the perfect man, robed in Godlike dignity, and the fallen man, clothed in order to cover his nakedness.

The bestiary illustration's doubled time, simultaneously before and after shame, can illustrate as well the bisclavret's recovery of human form through clothing himself. For many readers, he ascends here to the hard-won superiority of human status. I see also a dissonant implication in which the odd spectacle of a werewolf expressing shame when presented with clothing represents man's fallen condition—his knowledge of good and evil, his sinfulness. The bisclavret inflicts a mark of shame on his wife, but shame also marks him as he leaves his animal body to take a man's naked form. Here it is not the other animals but their fallen human counterparts who exist in lack.

Moral self-assertion is just one aspect of the adventure of becoming a werewolf. The bisclavret's shame is the last in a substantial sequence of equivalences, overlaps, and parallels that commingle animal with human and species with species. In the course of Bisclavret's adventure, his body shifts from human to lupine, his mind appears human, then canine, his gestures slide

from lupine to human to canine. As he hunts, the bisclavret adumbrates in one body the hunters and dogs who capture him; as he accuses his wife and her husband, he is dog and murdered master in one. His story concerns both men changed into wolves and wolves domesticated into dogs; his revenge is indistinguishably bestial and chivalric. The wolf's bite, the dog's revenge, and the man's shame are bound up in the same creature. Although his story ends with apparent stasis in manhood, the simultaneity of animal states within the bisclavret rejects the familiar orthodoxy that humans have an animal "part" or "side" to control. In place of that dichotomy, Bisclavret's adventure offers a densely layered creature that resists compartmentalization. Derrida challenges philosophers, whose stock in trade is making clear distinctions, to rethink what the human-animal boundary "becomes once it is abyssal, once the frontier no longer forms a single indivisible line but more than one internally divided line; once, as a result, it can no longer be traced, objectified, or counted as single and indivisible."[78] Moving in and out of philosophy's great shadow, Marie's fables and lays undertake just such a rethinking.

### *Bisclavret and the Bestiaries*

The *Lay of Bisclavret* draws on a dog story such as the story of the Dog of Antioch, which was widely copied in the English bestiary manuscripts. Perhaps *Bisclavret* took inspiration as well from twelfth-century bestiaries' adjoining entries on Wolf and Dog, in which the two species are described as intimate enemies. In the group of bestiaries to be considered in Chapter 3, wolves and dogs are so close as to be capable of mating, producing offspring called *licisci*, "born from wolves and dogs when by chance they interbreed."[79] Close as they are in their bodily characteristics, Wolf and Dog are enemies through their opposite relations to Man. Dogs "stand in defense of their masters to the death; they happily run with the master in the hunt; they even guard their master's dead body and do not leave it. Finally, it is in the nature of dogs not to be able to exist without people."[80] Wolves, in contrast, are such implacable killers that the mere sight of a wolf takes away one's ability to speak; their malevolence makes them most like "the devil, who always looks malignly at the human race, and constantly circles the sheepfolds of the Church's faithful in order to afflict and destroy their souls."[81] The opposed orientations of wolf and dog toward man make them implacable adversaries: shepherd dogs "by vigilance guard the sheep folds from the attacks of wolves," while the wolf, in a deceptive imitation of his enemy, "like a tame dog goes back and forth at the sheepfold."[82] Here the bestiaries condemn species confusion and value

species distinction as they derive an elaborate grammar of being from God's creative act. Marie's destabilization of species and her exploration of empowering change contrasts with the bestiaries' project. Still, Marie's work shares enough detail with the bestiaries' juxtaposition of wolf, dog, and man that it seems possible she consulted a bestiary manuscript.

In a further resonance with *Bisclavret*, the bestiaries to be considered in Chapter 3 place their wolf and dog entries just before their account of Adam naming the animals. The bestiaries' cluster of wolf, dog, and Adam aligns suggestively with the bisclavret's shifting among wolf, dog, and man amid faint echoes of Eden before and after the Fall. The lay's interest in naming the werewolf (garvalf, the bisclavret, Bisclavret) may have some relation to the bestiaries' interest in species names and in the scene of Adam's naming. The bestiaries also share the lay's interest in how the human takes shape in relation to other creatures: it is often forgotten that the bestiaries' final entry is typically reserved for Man. *Bisclavret*'s poetic adventurousness distinguishes it, however, from the commitment to system and stability that characterizes the bestiaries. *Bisclavret* explores cross-species contact as an ineffable mechanism for self-testing and self-discovery. The bestiaries instead explore species difference and contact as a universal design of wondrous subtlety, a stimulus to reflection and study rather than adventure.