

The Benevolent Medieval Werewolf in *William of Palerne*

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The werewolf is gradually becoming more recognised for its sympathetic portrayal in the medieval romance, which revises its condemned role in clerical and folkloric tradition. The medieval romance presents the werewolf as a creature with a rational human soul trapped within the body of a beast. Yet the werewolf of the medieval romance does not only display anthropomorphic behaviour; in fact, its behaviour is often comparable with modern analyses of the wolf. In the dualistic medieval world of nature versus society, this seems inconsistent. What are the implications for contemporary lupine realities of the medieval werewolf? How does the medieval werewolf exhibit realistic traits of the wolf?

I plan to assess the realistic lupine qualities of the werewolf Alphouns in the Middle English poem *William of Palerne* to justify my argument. Citing examples from his actions in the wilderness, I argue that Alphouns' lupine behaviour is comparable to contemporary ecological traits such as cognitive mind-mapping and surrogate parental roles. I will concentrate on his behaviour in the wilderness as well as his attitude towards William and Meliors to justify my argument.

I aim to illuminate the realities of wolf ecology in the poem and dispel mythologies about the wolf's maligned nature. Recognising the ecology of the (were)wolf of the medieval romance helps to better understand its role as metaphor and its relationship to humans and society. Furthermore, its lupine aspects expose the realities of its ecological niche, and cast insight into the more benign interpretation of the late medieval werewolf.

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