LECTIO III: THE FABLES OF 'WALTER OF ENGLAND'
(twelfth century)

GLOSSES AND COMMENTARIES are not always self-contained works intended to be read alongside or even independently of the texts upon which they comment. Very often, glosses are written *within* a text, either in its margins ('marginal gloss') or even between its lines ('interlinear glosses'). Such glosses are added for many reasons; one of these is pedagogical. For instance, several manuscripts of Boethius' *Consolatio philosophiae* bear suprascript letters (a, b, c, etc.) above words in the more difficult poems. These letters indicate to the student in which order the words ought to be construed. Many standard texts within the grammatical curriculum attest to this practice of pedagogical glossing.

One such text (or rather collection of texts) was Aesop's Fables, whose place in the grammar curriculum was established early: both Quintilian (first century) and Priscian (early sixth century) recommend that the young pupil's first assignments include fables for parsing and paraphrase. By the twelfth century, 'Aesop' appeared regularly on the lists of official school *auctores*. The most successful of the various medieval versions of 'Aesop' was a twelfth-century versified collection, identified in several manuscripts and early printed editions as the work of an otherwise unidentifiable 'Gualterus Anglicus.' The complexity of the elegiac distich provided the medieval pupil (no less than the modern reader) with endless challenges in parsing and construing, while the poet's sophisticated diction offered useful material for vocabulary study. In many of the preserved manuscripts of Walter's fables, the verse texts are accompanied by a full academic apparatus for the benefit of teacher and pupil. Interlinear glosses provide synonyms for new or unfamiliar vocabulary, while the pupil's understanding of the frequently obscure verses is eased by 'construe marks' or numbers, as in the Boethius manuscripts mentioned above. Many codices likewise go on to offer detailed retellings of each fable in prose; these summaries can be based either on a 'reduction' of Walter's verses themselves or on some other Latin version of the same fable.

We will proceed as follows: for all assigned poems, read the **prose summary first**, although it follows the poem in most manuscripts as in our edition. After reading the summary, proceed to the poem. This will enable you to approach the poem with its narrative outline firmly in mind. A word of caution though: the grammar and syntax of the poem **must** govern its translation; do not allow your narrative expectations to govern the grammar. The prose summary is a paraphrase, and its syntax will differ, sometimes considerably, from the versified form. For the syntax and vocabulary, pay attention to the interlinear glosses; they will help. They are generally of three types: (1) vocabulary glosses (introduced by *i.* = *id est*) offer synonyms – in the appropriate case – to more obscure or unfamiliar terms or phrases; (2) context glosses (*s.* = *supple*) supply the antecedent of pronouns and relatives, understood subjects, and the like; and (3) grammatical glosses (*s.* = *scilicet* or *supple*) inform the reader how to construe ambiguous forms – *panis* for instance may be glossed *s. alicuius*, which confirms that *panis* is genitive singular, not nominative. Use the summaries and glosses to your advantage. They are not to be ignored.